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Australian cricket stars make IPL security demands

Australian cricket stars Tuesday refused to commit to this year's lucrative Indian Premier League (IPL) until a list of safety demands addressing "serious" security concerns had been met.



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Paul Marsh, head of the Australian Cricketers' Association, said players issued the demands, which follow a reported threat from an Al-Qaeda-linked militant, after a security consultant identified a number of shortcomings.

"From the outset it is important to reinforce that players want to play in this year's IPL," Marsh told reporters after a meeting with about 25 Australian players.

"However the independent report has identified some serious concerns with aspects of the current security process.

"Specifically these concerns relate to the reported direct threat against the event and the status and implementation of the IPL's security plan."

Marsh said players had agreed to take British security expert Reg Dickason's confidential findings back to their colleagues to prepare a list of demands, which would be relayed to the IPL by FICA, the international cricketers' union.

Until the IPL responded to their concerns Marsh said players would not commit to the tournament.

"The players are most certainly concerned, the IPL's had a direct threat ... and the IPL security plans are not currently in a state that we're happy with, those are the two issues," Marsh said

Fresh security worries surfaced last week when the Hong Kong-based Asia Times Online news website said it had received a warning from an Al-Qaeda-linked militant about attacking sports events in India.

The warning, from Ilyas Kashmiri, cast jitters over the glitzy Twenty20 tournament, along with the field hockey World Cup later this month in New Delhi, and October's Commonwealth Games

A right-wing Hindu group earlier withdrew a threat to prevent "kangaroo cricketers" from playing in Maharashtra state, which includes IPL hosts Mumbai and Nagpur, after a series of attacks on Indian students living in Australia.

Marsh previously warned that securing the IPL, which is spread over many venues across multiple cities, was a more difficult task than more concentrated formats such as the Olympic or Commonwealth Games.

Australian legspin great Shane Warne last week said the threats had him "thinking twice" about heading to India to captain-coach the Rajasthan Royals, describing them as of "deep concern to athletes across a number of sports."

Warne said the IPL had been moved last year at short notice to South Africa and, if the threats were proven, organisers should consider moving it again.

Organisers took the dramatic step of shifting the event abroad last March, after Indian authorities could not guarantee security because of a clash with national elections. Just weeks earlier gunmen in Lahore, Pakistan had ambushed the Sri Lankan team's convoy, killing eight Pakistanis.

Extremist attacks in Mumbai in November 2008 which left 165 dead had already prompted grave security fears for the IPL tournament.