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NEWS

KKR, Mumbai Indians set to become franchise owners in UAE-based Premier League T20

The Glazer family, owners of Manchester United, are also set to make their first foray into cricket

 **Osman Samiuddin**
4 hrs ago



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The owners of the Knight Riders franchise, the Mumbai Indians team and English football club Manchester United - the Glazer family - are set to be announced in the coming days as franchise owners in a new T20 league to be based in the UAE.

The six-team league has been sanctioned by the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) and is looking to make a space for itself in the January-February window, although its inaugural edition in 2022 is likely to be played in February-March.

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Now, however, according to an official involved in the planning of the league, discussions are in varying - but broadly advanced - stages with the six owners. Of those, the official said the Knight Riders owners are "on-board" while Reliance Industries, who own Mumbai Indians, are carrying out their own final due diligence, though terms and conditions have been finalised. "We just need a formal handshake [with Mumbai Indians' owners] to make it final now," the official told ESPNcricinfo.

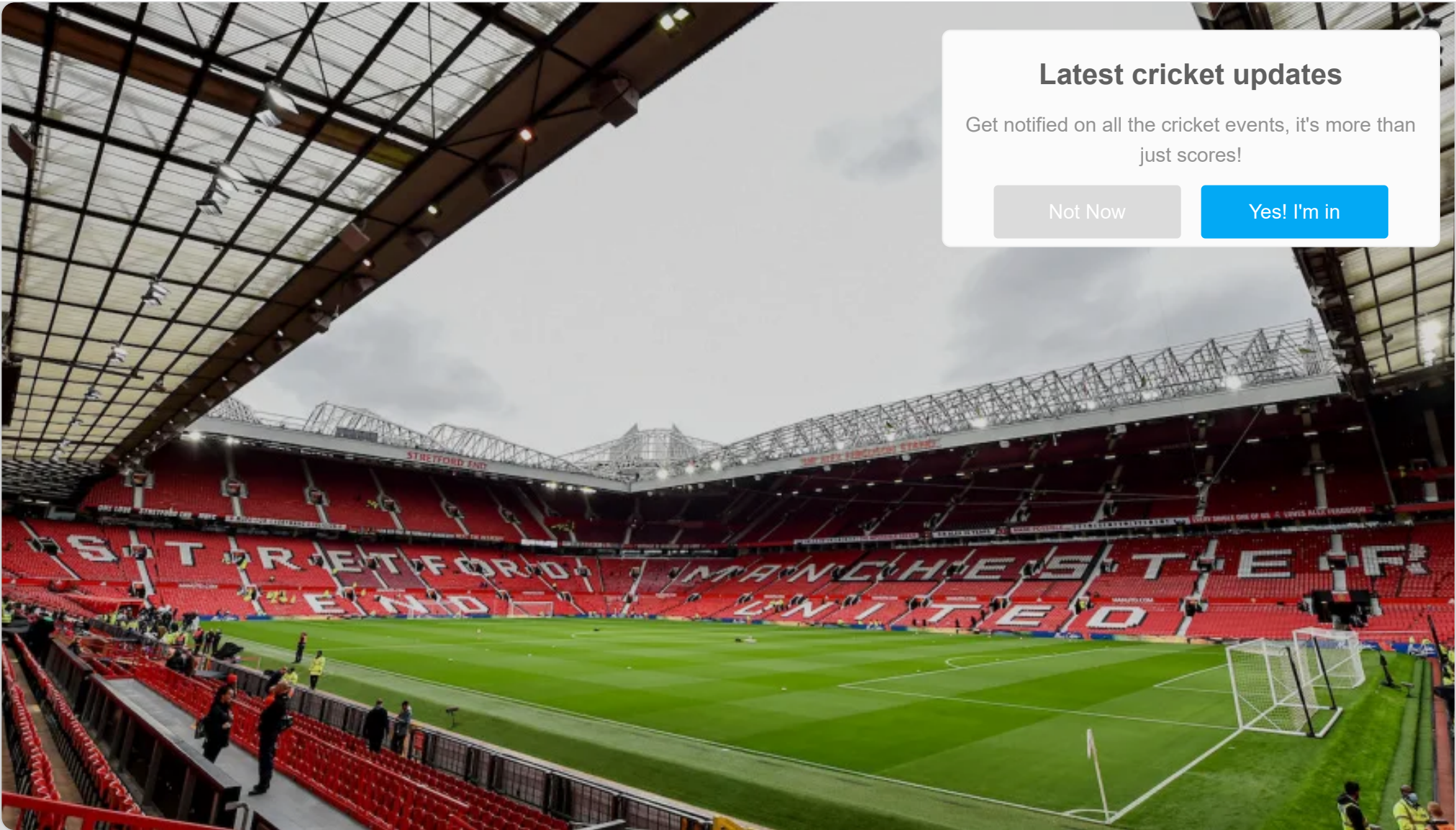
Other franchise owners include Capri Global, who bid recently but failed for an IPL franchise, the Big Bash League's Sydney Sixers, and Kira Kumar Grandhi, a co-owner of Delhi Capitals.

"With all six, contracts have been exchanged, and advanced discussions in place," the official said. "Financial terms have been finalised. The details are being gone through in most instances, with lawyers, advisors and so on."

The IPL slant could have been heavier. The Chennai Super Kings owners were involved in the earliest discussions around the league, which began a couple of years ago. Sunder Raman, a former chief operating officer of the IPL, and currently an advisor with the Super Kings, was also part of the early strategising around the league.

It will offer, however, a first proper dip into cricket for the Glazer family. The Manchester United owners were also one of the unsuccessful bidders for one of the two new IPL franchises.

As currently conceived, the league will be a double round-robin format with a knockout stage: 34 games in all, of which four will be part of a knockout stage with qualifiers, an eliminator and a final. As of now, no decision has been made on whether players will be brought in through a draft system, or an auction, though once the announcements have been made and plans are finalised, a consensus on that is not expected to take long.



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This will be a first proper dip into cricket for the Glazer family, owners of Manchester United Liverpool FC via Getty Images

Although the ECB has provided the sanction for the league, the league is being spearheaded by a team led by the board's vice-chairman, Khalid al Zarooni, the board's general secretary Mubashir Usmani and Subhan Ahmed, who is an advisor to the board and formerly a senior and long-time PCB official. They will oversee an operational team that is likely to include former IMG officials.

This isn't the first time a UAE-based T20 league has come close to fruition. The Emirates T20x was set to feature a number of the world's leading players, including AB de Villiers and Andre Russell, and was supposed to start in December 2018. But it was [cancelled](#) a month before after only two of the five planned franchises found buyers.



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With IPL franchises in the mix now, however, the PLT20 would seem to have acquired a more tangible shape. That involvement will also bring with it the prospect of enhanced financial status, with a mooted salary cap of "not less than USD \$1.5 million," according to the official. That together with the attractiveness of the UAE as a sporting destination, and proximity of its planned window in the calendar, will raise the eyebrows of the PSL.

The seventh edition of the PSL, in 2022, has moved to a January start and running through to the third week of [February](#) because of the visit of Australia in Pakistan's home season. Usually the tournament begins in February and runs through to March; it is not inconceivable that there is a direct clash at some point, if the PLT20 takes off, and that both leagues compete for a similar set of foreign players.

The official believes formal announcements of the franchise owners will start coming out in the next week; a broadcaster is expected to be

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