

India to launch professional basketball league

After football, now the professional basketball league in the country. The Basketball Federation (BFI) is ready with the blueprint for a pro league and is in the process of tying up sponsorship deal.

FIBA president Bob Elphinston told reporters here Friday the world body will do everything it can to raise the standard of the game in the country and make it a force to reckon with in the continent.

The BFI is ready with a six-team league and it is in the process of finalising a sponsor.

'India is strong and influential and we want it to play a bigger role in Asian basketball. Basketball is a popular sport across the world and if India succeeds in international competitions, the rest of the world will look at them with great respect,' said Elphinston on the sidelines of a Basketball-Without-Borders Clinic here.

'We will provide whatever help is needed to launch the national league. They can have players from other countries in the league and that would help India to get on a par with other major basketball nations,' he said.

Elphinston said India is a booming economic nation and there is enough scope for basketball to get commercial support.

'India's economy is growing and one of the objectives of FIBA would be to get commercial support for the sport through television and other market streams,' he said.

BFI President R S Gill said they are ready with the blueprint to start the pro league.

'We will start with the senior league for men and the women's league will follow soon. Some corporate houses have shown interest, but we are looking for someone to pour in the kind of money we need to start the league. We want to start with a bang and not with a whimper,' Gill said.

'We need to have proper infrastructure and facilities to start a professional league. Also, the right coaches.'

Initially, the top six teams of the country will compete in the league.

'It can be either state teams or departmental teams. We can bring players from Asia, Africa and [Europe](#) to play in the league. FIBA Asia is in touch with players who are interested in playing in India.'

'We have also asked FIBA Asia to send us teams of our level to play in India regularly. Teams like Thailand, the Philippines and other Asian nations can come here and play Test matches. Our boys need continuous international exposure. One or two exposure trips abroad a year is not going to help. FIBA Asia have given us one coach in Alexander who is working with the women's team. It will recommend another coach for the junior programme.'

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