

## Don't take action against ICL players, court tells BCCI

The Delhi High Court Monday stopped the Indian cricket board from taking any coercive action against cricketers aligning with the rebel Indian Cricket League (ICL), saying the rivalry between the two bodies should not impact on the players.

'Let the cricketers play. Don't take any action against them,' judge S.K. Kaul ruled after hearing an ICL petition on the issue, adding the players should not suffer.

'Why should players have swords hanging over their head?' the judge contended.

When senior counsel Harish Salve submitted on behalf of ICL that IndianOil Corporation and Air India have threatened their employees with termination if they join the ICL, the court retorted: 'The public corporations will not terminate the services or take action against its employees who seek to affiliate themselves with ICL.'

Kaul passed the direction on a suit filed by ICL promoter Essel Sports Pvt Ltd, a company floated by the Zee TV group, seeking a direction to BCCI against intimidating players who join the ICL.

The court asked the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), the central government and 22 state cricket associations to file their reply to the ICL petition and fixed Sep 28 as the next date of hearing.

'The public sector corporations governed by various ministries will not terminate services or take any punitive action (just because) its employees seek to affiliate themselves with the Indian Cricket League,' Kaul said in his order.

This comes as a big relief to players like J.P. Yadav and Dheeraj Yadhav who are employed by state owned companies and had been served with dismissal notices for joining the ICL.

The court also asked the government to clarify the position on the Indian cricket team and the BCCI's role in controlling the game in the country.

This was after Salve contended that the team fielded by the BCCI was not the India team and that the board could not intimidate the players who joined another group.

BCCI counsel Abhishek Sanghvi said the board would file its reply within three weeks.

In its petition, ICL also asked for directions to ensure that the BCCI did not prevent it from using stadiums in the country to organise its matches.

'The BCCI has submitted before the Supreme Court that it was a private body and the players were also playing for the board, so the team should not use the name of India and its flag during matches in India and abroad,' the ICL petition contended.

The league also accused the cricket board of threatening and intimidating it as well as other state organisations.

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