

SPORTS

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Man City will not seek virus furlough offer

AFP | London

Manchester City say they will not be furloughing employees at the taxpayer's expense after a number of Premier League clubs took advantage of the British government's scheme to fund non-playing staff during the coronavirus epidemic.

On Saturday, table-topping Liverpool became the fifth Premier League club to announce a furlough, accessing the government's job retention scheme, which means the public purse will cover 80 percent of wages.

There has been considerable criticism from former players, who believe the safety net is not being used as intended.

Liverpool announced a £42 million (\$51 million) pre-tax profit in February.

Liverpool's opponents in

last year's Champions League final, Tottenham, have also used the furlough option, along with Newcastle, Norwich and Bournemouth.

Britain's Press Association said City's stance was approved and staff informed before Liverpool's position became public.

"We can confirm, following a decision by the chairman and board last week, that Manchester City will not be utilising the UK government's coronavirus job retention scheme," the club said in a statement.

"We remain determined to protect our people, their jobs and our business whilst at the same time doing what we can to support our wider community at this most challenging time for everybody."

Liverpool, who are topping up the remaining 20 percent



Manchester City fans wave flags during a match (file photo)

of salaries, were criticised by former players Jamie Carragher, Dietmar Hamann and Stan Collymore.

Gary Lineker, speaking to the BBC on Sunday, also appeared to question the clubs' actions.

"The big clubs, you'd have thought, would have been savvy enough to perhaps try to help more of their workers when players are earning so much money," he said.

But Liverpool fan group Spirit of Shankly supported the club's move.

"The use of the furlough scheme maintains that commitment (to treat staff fairly) and it ensures that all lower-paid staff who run a variety of contracts will continue to receive 100 per cent of their wage. That's got to be seen as a positive," the group said in a statement.

World T20 organisers hopeful despite potential clash with other sports

Reuters | Melbourne

Organisers expect this year's Twenty20 World Cup to be a success even if it has to vie with Australian rules football and rugby league for viewers due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the head of the organising committee said on Sunday.

The Oct. 18-Nov. 15 tournament was slotted into Australia's sports calendar between the end of the football season and the beginning of summer cricket to draw maximum attention.

With both the Australian Football League (AFL) and National Rugby League (AFL) seasons suspended due to the pandemic, they may now clash with the Twenty20 World Cup when they resume.

"In the event they have extended seasons...we still think the World Cup is a really strong proposition that might not come here again for 10 or 20 years," Nick Hockley, CEO of the organising committee, told Australian Associated Press (AAP).

"People love a World Cup. Cricket is Australia's national



A general view of Sydney Cricket Ground (file photo)

sport ... and T20 is the format that appeals to the broadest possible demographic," he said.

"We're very encouraged already by the take up in terms of ticket sales."

The women's tournament proved a big success, with hosts Australia beating India in the March 8 final to defend their title.

The organisers expect the men's tournament to replicate that success despite uncertainty around it.

The governing International

Cricket Council (ICC) has maintained there is no change in its plans, and Hockley hoped they would not require any either.

"We're wanting to give ourselves the best possible chance of going ahead as planned, so there's no imminent or quick decision," he said.

"Hopefully it's all resolved and we go ahead. In the event that it isn't completely resolved, we are looking at all the different scenarios. Which is only prudent," he added.

Sri Lanka T20 team need fine-tuning, says coach Arthur

Reuters | Colombo

Sri Lanka's Twenty20 squad needs some adjustments, said coach Mickey Arthur, who will be overseeing the team's bid for a second 20-overs World Cup title later this year.

In home fixtures last month, Sri Lanka swept a three-match one-day series against West Indies but lost two Twenty20 Internationals.

"Our T20 side is still going to take some fine-tuning and this was amplified against a very strong West Indies team that simply had too much power for us," Arthur said in a chat with Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) media unit.

"I think the most important thing is building a method to win games based on the resources that you have at your disposal and then making sure that the players are under no illusion as to what that method is based on our strengths," he said.

Pressure grows for shortened IPL behind closed doors



Indian cricket fans wave national tricolour flags during the 2019 Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 final

AFP | Mumbai

months.

Players are putting pressure on cricket authorities to plan a shortened Twenty20 Indian Premier League later in the year to "kickstart" the sports economy after the coronavirus lockdown.

The world's richest cricket tournament has been postponed until April 15, which coincides with the end of India's 21 day nationwide shutdown to halt the spread of the pandemic.

But with the number of cases and deaths rising and India isolated from international travel, few believe any sport will be possible in the sub-continent for at least three

"Let's say July-August is the earliest," said Kevin Pietersen, the former England batsman.

"I do truly believe the IPL should happen. I think every single player around the world is desperate to play the IPL," he said on Indian broadcaster Star Sports.

Pietersen suggested the eight-team tournament be shortened from its normal eight-week duration and played behind closed doors.

"There could be a way in which to get some money into the franchises, into the economy by having a situation where you use maybe three venues which are completely closed to fans," said Pietersen.

Ex-Honduras president disgraced by FIFAGate dies aged 76

AFP | Tegucigalpa

Honduran ex-president Rafael Callejas, who pleaded guilty in the United States for his part in the sweeping FIFAGate football corruption scandal, died Saturday aged 76, his family said.

Callejas passed away of a heart attack in a hospital in Atlanta, Georgia, his family said.

"We are deeply saddened to announce that our beloved husband, father and grandfather has flown into the arms of the Lord," his wife Norma Gaborit de Callejas said in a statement.



FIFA president Sepp Blatter (R), gives a medal to the President of the National Football Federation of Honduras, Rafael Callejas (L) (file photo)

Callejas was born on November 14, 1943 in Tegucigalpa.

A former student of the University of Mississippi in the United States, he served as president of Honduras from 1990 to 1994.

As president, he implemented a neo-liberal economic policy, privatizing many public services.

He was also head of the country's football federation from 2002 to 2015, and is also a former member of FIFA's Television and Marketing Committee.

As such he became one of the

40 officials implicated in the vast corruption scandal known as FIFAGate which came to shake the football world.

Callejas was accused of receiving bribes in exchange for awarding Florida-based Media World the television broadcasting and commercial rights to Honduras' qualifying matches for the 2014, 2018 and 2022 World Cups.

He pleaded guilty in a US court. But Callejas also suffered from leukemia and his sentencing was postponed many times due to his health problems.

RCB burdened by title pressure - Kohli

Reuters | New Delhi

Royal Challengers Bangalore need to rediscover the joy of cricket if they are to end their Indian Premier League (IPL) title drought, captain Virat Kohli has said.

Star-studded Bangalore have reached three finals of the Twenty20 league but are one of only three existing franchises -- along with Delhi and Punjab -- not to have won the title.