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I-League likely, even without foreigners

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Kolkata: Single venue, matches behind closed doors and absence of foreigners. These are some of the possibilities this season's I-League is staring at as the All India Football Federation plans to go ahead with the competition against the backdrop of the ongoing pandemic.

All international flights have remained suspended since March. While foreigners add a much-needed star value to the competition, AIFF general secretary Kushal Das has made it clear that the federation will go ahead with the league if it gets the government go-ahead.

"Even if the foreigners can't come, the league is expected to happen," he said. "A final decision is yet to be taken," he added.

With the AIFF looking to hold the entire league in a single city, Kolkata has emerged as a possible candidate "It will be difficult for teams to travel. As a result, it may be a curtailed league with a single venue hosting it. The ISL won't be possible at the Salt Lake Stadium this time because of the women's under-17 World Cup preparations. So, Kolkata can be an option by default (for hosting all I-League matches)," admitted Das during a webinar, organised by Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

With the AFC having proposed revised dates for India's remaining rounds of World Cup and Asian Cup qualifiers, Igor Stimac's side is slated to host Qatar on October 8. "We are looking for a possible camp in Bhubanswar, maybe in the third week of August. We are waiting for a response from the Odisha government," Das said. The AIFF official also hoped that an Indian coach might be in charge of the senior team soon.