

News monitored for: Pepsi - Corporate

Eden harvest for spud farmers

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Farmers Sheikh Sohrab and Dilip Sardar from Bengal's rice bowl were packing their travel kits on Friday for the show of their lifetime — an IPL match between Shah Rukh Khan's Knights and Chennai Super Kings at the Eden Gardens.

The two are among 30 farmers from across the state selected for Saturday's Eden derby by PepsiCo, the soft drink and chips major, for whom they grow potatoes.

The "invited guests" would be seated in Block K — quite a distance from King Khan's throne, Corporate Box B1.

That might deny Sohrab his singular wish. "Hope Shah Rukh Khan shows up tomorrow. I hope I can see his balcony from my seat," he gushed.

The chances are remote for the farmer from Belsor village, 100km from Calcutta, because he will need Superman's eyes to catch a glimpse of SRK — his hero since the 1995 release *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* — at his Eden high perch. Then again, there's no one confirming that SRK will take time out from shooting with Deepika Padukone for *Chennai Express* to fulfil Sohrab's wish.

For the record, he skipped the previous KKR home match owing to his movie engagements. Sohrab, who will be travelling in a chartered bus, was unaware of this.



Farmers Sheikh Sohrab (batting) and Dilip Sardar at a pre-IPL village friendly on Friday. Picture by Sanjoy Chattopadhyaya

For Sohrab, who cultivates 15 bighas of land with the help of sharecroppers, entertainment was until now a game of carom after dusk at the local clubhouse.

The Gautam Gambhir fan invited Sardar from neighbouring Chakundi village on Friday for a pre-match party.

At 11am, as the sun bore down on them, he was hitting a cricket ball (against the bowling of village lads half his age) well enough to make the KKR middle order sit up.

Sardar, who was behind

the wicket at the village friendly, was enjoying his celebrity status and quietly hating the trappings.

"The whole village knows about my good fortune. Friends are asking me if I could fetch them an IPL ticket or take them along," he said.

"I have watched IPL on TV. Tomorrow I will see the real thing. I support KKR, but want to see some big sixes from Dhoni. Who knows if I will ever be able to watch another match at Eden?" the MSD and Suresh Raina fan wondered.

Like Sohrab, he too is keen on the Bollywood bit. "Sometimes I have seen heroines (at IPL matches on TV). Will Katrina (Kaif) come to Eden tomorrow?" he asked.

Sohrab said there were many among the young bowlers he faced on Friday with an eye on Eden.

"The young fellows follow cricket closely. They want me to find out where at Eden IPL tickets are sold. They plan to pool in and go the next time," he said. His advice? They should rather grow potatoes.