

TV drama
drags on

AFP, New Delhi

Barely a week before the start of the Test series between India and Australia, there was still no indication Tuesday if the matches will be televised -- or even if the series will be played at all.

India's Supreme Court on Tuesday heard arguments on the petition filed by Zee Telefilms against the decision of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to cancel telecast rights which the network insists were awarded to it for the next four years.

The Court, which heard lawyers from both the network and the cricket board, adjourned till Wednesday for further arguments.

The BCCI is hoping for an early resolution to the case so that the highly-anticipated Test series can go ahead as scheduled with the first Test at Bangalore from October 6.

Neither the BCCI nor Cricket Australia favour the series being played without live television coverage.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has said it is mandatory to provide video footage to assist the third umpire in all international matches.

"It is an understatement to say that we are running short of time," a BCCI official said. "Lots of arrangements need to be made to have television coverage."

Tres, Freddie
not going to
Zimbabwe

REUTERS, London

England have left out Marcus Trescothick and Andy Flintoff from their squad for the one-day tour of Zimbabwe.

The pair will join Steve Harmison on the sidelines after the pace bowler asked not to be considered for the five-match trip starting in November and which leads into England's tour of South Africa.

Several of England players have expressed reservations about playing in Zimbabwe, including Andrew Strauss, although he has been picked.

South African-born Kevin Pietersen, however, was included for the first time. The attacking right-handed batsman from Natal, has just become eligible for England after moving to Nottinghamshire in 2001.

SQUAD FOR ZIMBABWE

Michael Vaughan (captain), James Anderson, Gareth Batty, Ian Bell, Paul Collingwood, Ashley Giles, Darren Gough, Geraint Jones, Simon Jones, Kevin Pietersen, Matthew Prior, Vikram Solanki, Andrew Strauss, Alex Wharf.

SQUAD FOR SAFRICA

Michael Vaughan (captain), Kabir Ali, James Anderson, Gareth Batty, Ian Bell, Paul Collingwood, Andrew Flintoff, Ashley Giles, Darren Gough, Stephen Harmison, Geraint Jones, Vikram Solanki, Andrew Strauss, Marcus Trescothick, Alex Wharf.

Nat'l swimming
from Oct 5

BSS, Dhaka

The 20th National Swimming Championship will be held from October 5 to 8 at the Army Swimming Pool.

Twenty events for men's and 20 for women's will commence in the 4-day meet. Men's water polo and diving will also be included.

Keya Cosmetics (Pvt) Limited will sponsor the championship.

No Sachin relief
for the Aussies

AFP, Mumbai

Australia will not encounter Sachin Tendulkar on the field when they open their Indian tour with a three-day match here from Thursday, but there will be no respite from the master batsman of it.

Tendulkar, sidelined from active cricket for almost two months with a tennis elbow, has agreed to speak to his Mumbai teammates on Wednesday to pep them up for the clash with the world champions at the Brabourne Stadium.

"Sachin has agreed to my request to have a word with the boys and he has promised to meet them on Wednesday," said former Test wicketkeeper Chandrakant Pandit, who coaches the national champion state team.

"He is the right man to plan our strategy against the best team in the world."

Tendulkar, one of the most prolific batsmen in world cricket with 33 Test and a record 37 one-day centuries, has closely followed the fortunes of his home team even when away on international duty.

When Mark Taylor's Australians played Mumbai at the start of the 1998 tour, Tendulkar hit his maiden first-class double century to power his team to a stunning 10-wicket victory by tea on the third day.

Three years later, Steve Waugh's tourists again played Mumbai before the Test series and even though Tendulkar was unavailable, the hosts dominated the three-day game before it ended in a draw.

On both occasions, India went on to win the Test series 2-1 and current Mumbai captain Sairaj Bahutule was looking for an encore.

"We have twice undermined the Australians which has helped the national team do well when the Tests come," the leg-spinner said.

"We want to continue the same good work in this game too. It will benefit India if Mumbai does well."

Tendulkar, who was forced to miss

three successive limited-overs tournaments over the last two months due to the injury, is almost certain to be ruled out of the first Test which begins in Bangalore on October 6.

Cricket board doctor Anant Joshi declined to confirm if Tendulkar will be available for the remaining three Tests.

"All I can say for now is that he is recovering well," Joshi said. "We are monitoring him closely but I would not want to put a time frame on his

return."

The Mumbai team includes Tendulkar's childhood friend Vinod Kambla, a former Test batsman, and current international Ajit Agarkar.

Australia, meanwhile, are expected to field their likely Test eleven in the tour opener, the only warm-up match before the Bangalore Test.

The remaining Tests will be played at Madras (October 14-18), Nagpur (October 26-31) and Mumbai (November 3-7).



PHOTO: AFP

India A batsman Sridharan Sriram sweeps while India Seniors wicketkeeper Parthiv Patel (C) and Rahul Dravid look on during their four-day practice match at Bangalore yesterday.

Pakistanis can't wait



AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's cricketers are eagerly awaiting their tour to India early next year to settle scores against their sporting arch-rivals, captain Inzamamul Haq said Tuesday.

"I look forward to the tour and every player in the team anxiously waits for the tour," Inzamam told this news agency.

"Since we are playing better than we did against India at home I think we will be in a better position to settle the score."

Pakistan Monday announced it will tour India in February for three Test matches and five one-day internationals, following India's tour of Pakistan earlier this year.

India's tour, their first since 1989, followed a thaw in relations between the nuclear neighbours who came close to a fourth war in 2002.

India won both the one-day and Test series during the March-April tour, their first-ever victory in Pakistan.

"Cricket between Pakistan and India is the most sought after and is watched by billions and with it the quality of cricket improves. The competitive level is very high when we play India," said the Pakistani captain.

Pakistan last toured India in 1999 despite death threats and the digging-up of a pitch in New Delhi by Hindu fundamentalists.

"It's fantastic to play against India

and cricket is followed like a religion there so it doubles the rivalry," said Inzamam, one of four surviving members from Pakistan's last tour.

"We looked after them well and we are also welcomed like heroes in India so it's a reciprocal feeling on both sides which is very heartening," he said.

Inzamam's side take on Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe in a home tri-series from Thursday.

Experienced wicketkeeper Moin Khan, Shahid Afridi and Shoaib Akhtar were also on the 1999 tour in which Pakistan drew a two-match Test series 1-1 but beat India in the Asian Test Championship match in Calcutta.

Pakistan also won a tri-series on that tour which also featured Sri Lanka.

"India came to Pakistan after their tour of Australia so they were well prepared. In the same way we will also be going to India after the Australia tour, which will help us a lot on the India tour," Inzamam said.

The tour programme is still being worked out. But Pakistan are likely to play the Tests first, probably starting on February 25, two weeks after their return from Australia.

Pakistan, who won the last three one-day matches against India at neutral venues, have also agreed to play a one-day international in India on November 13 this year to mark the 75th anniversary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

The final is on Sunday.

Sharapova
on a roll

REUTERS, Seoul

Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova crushed Switzerland's Emmanuelle Gagliardi 6-1, 6-3 in the first round of the Hansol Korea Open WTA event on Tuesday.

The 17-year-old Russian broke Gagliardi's serve five times, beating her in 71 minutes in front of an enthusiastic crowd.

"I thought I played quite well, although the court surface was a little bit different to China. It's a little slower and I had to adjust in the first few games," Sharapova told reporters.

Sharapova lost 6-2, 6-2 to US Open champion and compatriot Svetlana Kuznetsova in the semifinals of the China Open on Saturday.

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Bowden
doesn't
like tech also

CRICINFO, undated

Billy Bowden has joined the growing list of umpires who have called into question the increasing use of technology in making umpiring decisions.

The New Zealander, a member of the International Cricket Council's elite umpiring panel, stood in several of the games at this year's Champions Trophy, where the ICC trialled some new technical aids for the officials.

The innovations included the wiring-up of umpires, via an earpiece, to the stump microphone, and the responsibility of calling no-balls being moved to the third umpire.

The use of Hawk-Eye technology in television coverage has increased the pressure on umpires when making lbw decisions. Many observers have called for the technology to play a further role in decision-making, but the idea doesn't appeal to Bowden.

"For lbws, for example, what good is technology?" he asked. "Are we going to use the Hawk-Eye? If we do there won't be any more four- or five-day Test matches, they'd be one- or two-day Test matches."

"At the moment the statistics are saying that we get about 92 per cent (of decisions) correct," he told the Associated Press. "I can say that players make mistakes, umpires make mistakes. Let's just get on and move on."

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals S

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

'Wall' in
Aussies' way

AFP, New Delhi

If Australia have prepared a hit-list for the Test series in India, Rahul Dravid's name is bound to figure at the top because of his ability to win matches from hopeless situations.

No Indian batsman, including Sachin Tendulkar, has troubled Australia in recent years as much as Dravid who has been on a roll since making a century against Steve Waugh's team at Calcutta in 2001.

Even Dravid's rivals did not begrudge him being named 'Player of the Year' and 'Test Player of the Year' by a panel of experts in London earlier this month.

Dravid was in awesome form last season upstaging even Tendulkar with his consistency and ability to deliver under pressure. He earned the nickname 'The Wall' for his impregnable defence and impeccable temperament.

He began the previous season on a whirlwind note, hammering a double-century against New Zealand in the opening Test at Ahmedabad before blooming in Waugh's farewell series in Australia.

Dravid was unstoppable Down Under, smashing a double-century in Adelaide to set up his team's rare away Test victory. His 300-run stand with Venkatsai Laxman revived nightmarish memories for Australia.

The same pair had put on 376 in the second Test at Calcutta in 2001 to script their team's victory after being forced to follow on.

To Australia's misfortune, Dravid was again among runs against them last season when he amassed 619 in four matches.

India drew the four-Test series 1-1, thanks to Dravid's sparkling performance.

Dravid continued in the same vein when India toured Pakistan for a historic three-Test series in March-April.

With the series tied at 1-1, India rode on Dravid's double-century in the third and final match at Rawalpindi to post an innings victory for their maiden Test series triumph in Pakistan.

Dravid was now no longer 'one of the stars' in the strong batting line-up, but 'the superstar'.

He has changed as a batsman of late, playing strokes with more freedom but without forgetting the virtues of patience. He is more domineering and lapses in concentration remain few and far between.

Del Bosque
living on the
edge

AFP, Istanbul

Turkish side Besiktas denied Tuesday a newspaper report that it had sacked embattled Spanish coach Vicente Del Bosque and would replace him with former Real Sociedad coach Raynald Denoueix.

The mass-circulation Hurriyet said the Frenchman would take over from Del Bosque right after Besiktas's UEFA first leg return match here Thursday with Norway's Bodo Glimt.

"There have been no talks with the coach in question," the club said in a statement. "Our coach Vicente Del Bosque is at the helm of the team and is working day and night to lead Besiktas to the next stage of the UEFA Cup."

Denoueix, however, confirmed that he had been offered the job.

"They approached me but I'm not interested at this time," he told AFP from Nantes, western France.

On Monday, a Besiktas spokesman said Del Bosque, the former Real Madrid coach, had been given a reprieve until after the Bodo game - the away game ended 1-1.

Reha Muhtar said after the team management had a long session with Del Bosque that "our first priority is to win against Bodo Glimt ... (Del Bosque) will be at the head of the team on Thursday."

Del Bosque, who was sacked from Real last year despite winning two Spanish and two European titles in three years, replaced Romanian Mircea Lucescu.

He has come under ceaseless fire from critics for everything from his insistence on a 4-4-2 formation, which has not worked, to leaving stars such as Romanian Daniel Pancu and Norwegian John Carew on the bench during crucial matches.

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Bowden earned his first match point at 5-4 with a fiercely-struck backhand pass only for Johansson to serve the 11th of his 13 aces.

Johansson survived two match points before upsetting sixth seeded Feliciano Lopez in the opening round of the Thailand Open on Monday.

The Swede, who won the 2002 Australian Open but missed the entire 2003 season with a knee injury, took one hour 49 minutes to edge through 6-1, 2-6, 7-6 against the tall Spaniard.

Lopez earned his