

Kiwis get wet

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

New Zealand will start their campaign against the Tigers without any match practice as their lone limited-over warm-up game against BCB XI was called off at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

A spell of rain in the morning ensured that there was not a ball bowled in the game as there was no play possible due to a terrible outfield in the stadium on the outskirts of the city.

Braving the rain, the huge number of spectators who had turned out to watch the match returned home in utter frustration even as the sun came out in force later in the day.

The series will now kick off with the first one-day of the three-match series on Thursday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur while the second one-day and the second Test match of the two-match series will also be held at the same venue.

The third and final one-day international and first Test will take place at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

The visitors, who came here four days earlier than their original schedule, were desperate to get some match practice against the local selection but the home management was not ready to take a risk in such a sloppy ground.

"They (New Zealand) expressed their desire to play a lighthearted match in the dry side of the sta-

dium but we didn't find any reason to play the game. The outfield was really bad and it was risky to play in this kind of ground," said Rajin Saleh, captain of the BCB XI side.

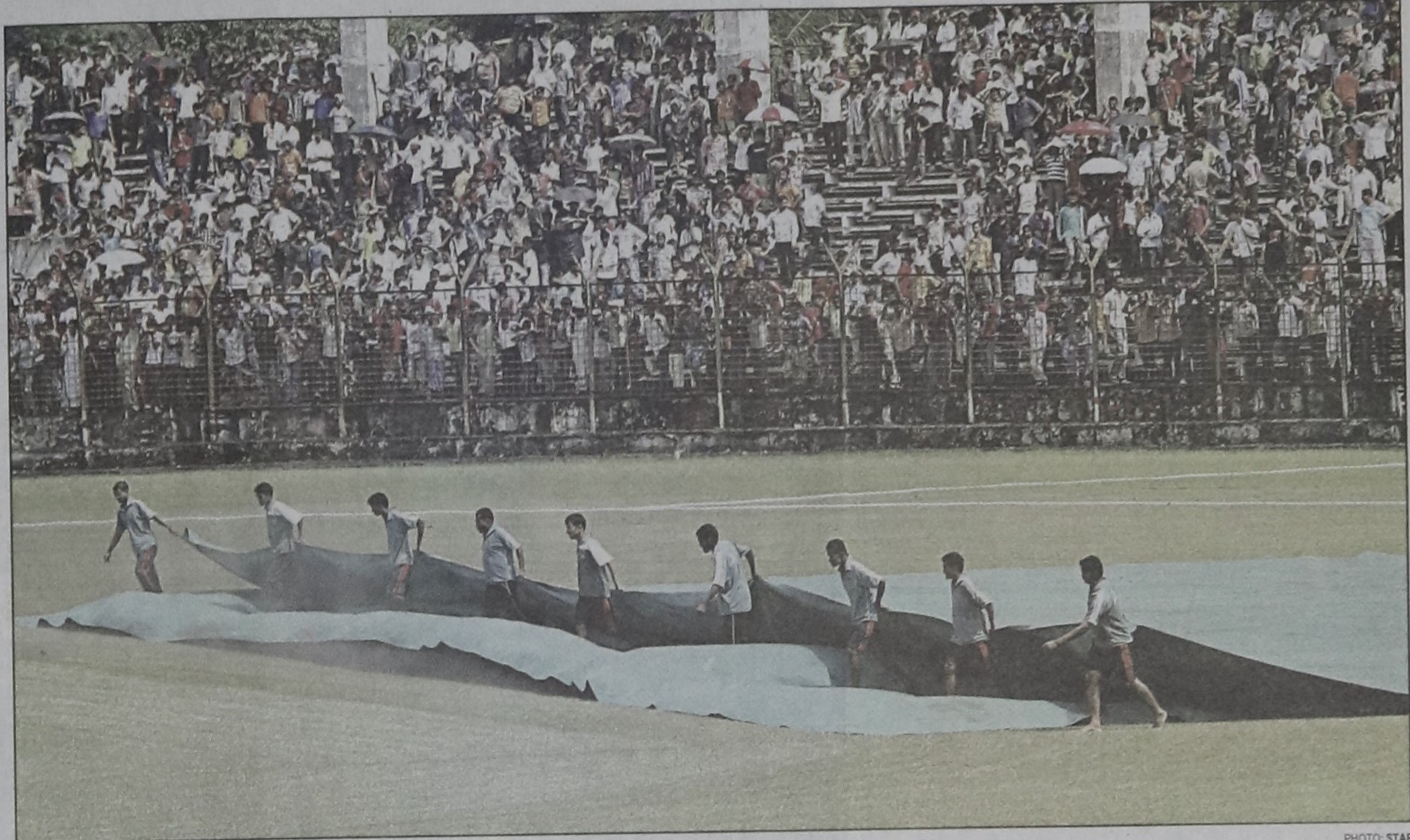
The local players left the stadium within a very short time after the umpires called off the game but Daniel Vettori's side remained undaunted about the shoddy conditions as they not only enjoyed a game of football in the rain but also carried out a full-fledged practice session including playing a match at the central wicket by splitting their side into two groups.

Despite the brilliant sunshine in the remaining hours of the day it was impossible for the ground staffs to prepare the ground even for a Twenty20 match.

Due to persistent rain, the authorities shifted the match to Fatullah from BKSP as the sports institute ground was waterlogged but every-thing was at a loss to explain why the authorities made the change.

It was hard to believe the way this Test venue is maintained. "Actually we were only informed about the match three days back and you know there had been consistent rain for the last few days. We are actually taking preparation to hold the National Cricket League," defended BCB curator Shaiful Alam Belal.

"It is really frustrating the match was called off because of only half an hour rain. The drainage system in this stadium is really poor. I believe the new board will take care of this matter," said frustrated Gazi Ashraf Hossain, chairman of the BCB's cricket operations committee.



Groundstaffs at the purpose-built cricket stadium in Fatullah rush to protect the pitch from unfriendly rain much to the disappointment of hundreds of fans who turned out to watch the lone practice match of New Zealand against the BCB XI on Tuesday. The game was called off without a ball being bowled due to wet ground.

Constitution approved

BCB elections next month

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) councillors yesterday approved the new constitution, paving the way for elections next month.

BCB president Maj Gen Sina Ibn Jamali disclosed this at a press conference, held after the board's extraordinary general meeting (EGM) at a local hotel in the evening.

"After consultation with the councillors, we unanimously decided to approve the new constitution," said Jamali, adding that it was now up to the National Sports Council (NSC) to specify a date after ratifying the constitution.

"We kept most of the rules and regulations in the NSC constitution for federations. The NSC will tell us the date of the election and the next course of action," informed Jamali.

According to the new charter, there will be 25 directors, instead of 31 members of the earlier constitution. Of the twenty-five, the presi-

dent would be either nominated or elected, according to the NSC Act.

The councillors will elect 24 directors: 12 of them will come from Dhaka clubs, ten from divisional and district sports associations, universities and education boards while the NSC will nominate one director.

The one other director, that was supposed to come from the category of 16 former players, will now come from an expanded group of five NSC councillors, a maximum of seven from the different services, one each from Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA), Umpires and Scorers' Association, Women's Sports Association and BCB and two from the champions and runners-up of a tournament (corporate league).

It eliminates any chance of the sixteen former players to hold a place in the next cricket board. There was talk of including one director from fifteen former players but although including CWAB's councillorship has increased the number of councillors, they would now be lucky

enough to be elected from 34 councillors in the third category.

The discussion that spanned nearly two hours however didn't spring any major surprises with no big changes forthcoming in the draft constitution. However, there was talk of changing one ruling where one councillor cannot hold a post in two sports federations, including BCB. A section of the forum, argued that it will be taxing on them to handle so many sports at the same time.

It was decided that except councillors from two organisations (BOA and Women's), none of the others can hold posts in another federation.

The constitution left no loop-hole for any bias as the voting system in the constitution would end any chance of clouting power by any quarter. It also ensures the decentralisation of the country's most popular game.

BCB's acting CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury and legal adviser Barrister Tanzib Hasan were also present during the press conference.

Aussies against odds

Cricket

AFP, Bangalore

If statistics and experience alone won cricket matches, world champions Australia would be regarded as no-hopers in the Test series against India starting on Thursday.

At least 12 in the 15-man touring squad have a combined tally of only 130 Tests between them, the same number that India captain Anil Kumble has played and 20 fewer than batting superstar Sachin Tendulkar.

"This is the best chance for us to pull it off," said Kumble, determined to overturn the 2-1 defeat at home in 2004 and an identical loss Down Under earlier this year.

"We want to win this one badly. Good for us that the Aussies consider themselves the underdogs. We have to exploit their relative inexperience in our own conditions."

atmosphere in India before.

And the spin options are bare following the retirements of the legendary Shane Warne and his understudy Stuart MacGill, with no one to exploit wickets that traditionally favour slow bowlers.

On paper, the series would appear a cakewalk for the Indians. In real terms, however, it leaves an enthralling contest on offer for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy between two evenly-matched teams.

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"We want to win this one badly. Good for us that the Aussies consider themselves the underdogs. We have to exploit their relative inexperience in our own conditions."

The tussle between India's battle-hardened batting veterans and Australia's pace firepower will provide the backdrop for one of the most eagerly-awaited four-Test series in recent times.

Tendulkar, 35, who needs only 77 more runs to overtake Brian Lara as Test cricket's leading scorer, heads the charge of the senior brigade that includes Rahul Dravid, 35, Sourav Ganguly, 36, and Venkatesh Laxman, 33.

Much would, however, depend on pugnacious match-winner Virender Sehwag, India's lone triple-century in Tests who has achieved the feat twice in the last four years.

India will look to Sehwag and his Delhi team-mate Gautam Gambhir to blunt the Aussie pace attack of Brett Lee, Stuart Clark, Mitchell Johnson and rookie Peter Siddle.

Clarke misses training

AFP, Bangalore

Australia suffered a setback ahead of the first Test against India when vice-captain Michael Clarke missed training on Tuesday because of a stomach virus.

Team officials said Clarke, 27, should recover in time for the Test starting on Thursday, but his absence from practice is not what the tourists needed before the four-match series.

All-rounder Shane Watson was forced to sit out of the tour opener in Hyderabad last week with a chest infection, missing valuable match practice.

Australia need a fit Clarke both as an accomplished middle-order batsman and left-arm slow bowler in the absence of better spin options.

Clarke said last week he was looking to make a positive impact in the Bangalore Test, just as he had done on the previous tour four years ago.

"I have had success before in Bangalore and hopefully I can repeat that this time too," Clarke said in Hyderabad.

Butt PCB's new boss

AFP, Karachi

Former Test wicketkeeper batsman Ejaz Butt has been appointed chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), an official said Tuesday.

The 73-year-old takes over from Nasim Ashraf, who resigned on August 18, the same day that Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf stood down to avoid impeachment.

"We have been verbally informed about the notification and Mr Butt has been appointed new PCB chairman by President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari," PCB chief operating officer Shafiqat Naghmi told AFP.

Butt, who played eight Tests in the 1950s with modest success, becomes the 27th chairman of the PCB. He is a former secretary of the BCCP (Board of Control for Cricket in Pakistan) in the late 1980s.

Ganguly to retire after Aussie series

Cricket

AFP, Bangalore

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly said Tuesday he would retire from international cricket at the end of the upcoming four-Test series against Australia.

"This will be my last series," Ganguly, 36, told reporters after a training session ahead of the first Test starting in Bangalore on Thursday.

"Before coming here, I spoke to my team-mates and hopefully I will go out with a winning knock." Ganguly was a surprise inclusion for the first two Tests after being

ignored for the five-day domestic Irani Cup tie last month, regarded as a trial match for the series.

Ganguly was India's most successful Test captain with 21 wins in 49 matches before he was sacked in 2005 following a public spat with then coach Greg Chappell.

The elegant left-hander, who made his Test debut in 1996, has so far scored 6,888 runs in 109 Tests at an average of 41.74 with 15 centuries.

Ganguly finished his one-day career with 11,363 runs in 311 matches, one of only seven batsmen in the world to cross the 10,000-run mark in limited-overs cricket.

Veeru quashes 'catches pact'

AFP, New Delhi

Aggressive Indian opener Virender Sehwag said Tuesday he was against a "catches pact" with Ricky Ponting's Australia in the upcoming Test series after bitter memories of the last tour Down Under.

"We suffered the most in the catches pact during the last series," Sehwag told ESPN-STAR Sports ahead of the four-match series starting in Bangalore on Thursday.

"There is no point in having such an arrangement when the Australians are claiming one-bounce catches. We'd have won the Sydney Test if they hadn't claimed catches off half-volleys in that game."

The Sydney Test ended the pre-series captains' agreement on taking the fielder's word on disputed catches, but Ponting recently said he was still open to the idea.

"I will have a think about it and see if I think it is the right idea to bring it up again," Ponting had said.

Anil was the one who did not want that after the Sydney Test for one reason or the other. We will have a chat (before this series) and it's important to us Australians to play the game in the right spirit and embrace the culture."

The Sydney match also almost saw Anil Kumble's Indians pull out of the series after a string of controversial umpiring decisions.

The tourists agreed to continue only after the International Cricket Council pacified them by standing down West Indian umpire Steve Bucknor from the subsequent Perth Test.

Sehwag said the hosts held an edge in the coming series as they had a balanced bowling attack.

"Bangalore, Mohali and Nagpur (venues for Tests) have offered good bounce in the past and we can take advantage of these conditions with tall, fast bowlers," he said.

"If we have spinning tracks, we have the spinners to extract advantage. Their spin department is weak and there is a wide possibility we can win the series either 3-0 or 3-1."



BCB president Sina Ibn Jamali addresses to the council members during the extraordinary general meeting of the board at a local hotel yesterday.



India's most successful captain Sourav Ganguly smiles as he talks with teammates during a practice session at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore yesterday. Ganguly has announced that after the Test series against Australia he will retire from international cricket.

SA name squads against Bangladesh, Kenya

Cricket

CRICINFO, Undated

Ryan McLaren and Rory Kleinveldt are in line for international debuts while Johan Botha has been named as standby captain for the injured Graeme Smith in South Africa's squads for two upcoming home series, against Kenya and Bangladesh. Makhaya Ntini has been dropped from the ODI team, while Andre Nel doesn't find a place in any of the squads named by the selectors.

McLaren, the Eagles allrounder who is a Kolpak player with Kent, has been named for the ODIs against Kenya and Bangladesh. However, Cricket South Africa said McLaren's selection depended on his being released by Kent, where he remains on contract. He has also been picked for the Twenty20 international against Bangladesh

in Johannesburg on November 5, along with Kleinveldt, the Cape Cobras allrounder.

With Graeme Smith suffering from tennis elbow, Botha - an offspinner with 32 ODI caps - is expected to lead the side for the two games against Kenya on October 31 and November 2 and has been named vice-captain of the 14-man squad.

"Johan is to be congratulated on his promotion," acting selection convener Gerald Majola said. "He will, in all probability, captain the side in the two matches against Kenya as we expect Graeme Smith to recover from injury in time only for the ODI series against Bangladesh."

A 13-man squad was also named for the two Tests against Bangladesh in late November and there was no place for Nel, who was part of the attack in England this year. Monde Zondeki was named in the group along with JP Duminy,

who is yet to make his Test debut. TEST SQUAD: (for two Tests against Bangladesh) Graeme Smith (capt), Neil McKenzie, Hashim Amla, Jacques Kallis, AB de Villiers, Ashwell Prince, JP Duminy, Mark Boucher (wk), Paul Harris, Morne Morkel, Makhaya Ntini, Dale Steyn, Monde Zondeki.

ODI SQUAD: (for two ODIs against Kenya and three against Bangladesh) Graeme Smith (capt), Herschelle Gibbs, Hashim Amla, AB de Villiers, Jacques Kallis, JP Duminy, Ryan McLaren, Mark Boucher (wk), Justin Ontong, Johan Botha, Albie Morkel, Morne Morkel, Dale Steyn, Monde Zondeki.

TWENTY20 SQUAD: (for one-off match against Bangladesh) Graeme Smith (capt), Herschelle Gibbs, AB de Villiers, Loots Bosman, JP Duminy, Rory Kleinveldt, Ryan McLaren, Justin Ontong, Johan Botha, Albie Morkel, Morne Morkel, Dale Steyn.



Did U Know?

The Women's Tennis Association (WTA) was formed in 1973. It organizes the WTA Tour, the worldwide professional tennis tour for women.



Virender Sehwag

(Star India batsman)
"India is the only team that beat Australia in Australia twice. We beat them in Perth last time and before that in Adelaide. So, we are accepting the challenge and we will fight it out. Hopefully, we will do well and reclaim the Border-Gavaskar Trophy."



ESPN
AFC Champions League
Adelaide United v Kururuchi
Live from 2:55pm
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm



Citycell B. League
Ctg Mohammedan v Rahmatganj
(8:30pm)
Venue: MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong

Harbhajan holds the key: Akram

Off-spinner Harbhajan Singh holds the key for India in their series against world champions Australia, former Pakistan great Wasim Akram said on Tuesday.

India start as favourites in the four-match series which begins with the first Test at Bangalore on Thursday and Akram said that first encounter would set the tone for the matches to come.

"I think Harbhajan holds the key for India," Akram, who led Pakistan to victory in India in 1999, told AFP.

"India surely have the edge with their quality spinners Anil Kumble and Harbhajan and it will be a matter of how the Australians play these two, right from the first Test."

Akram said Harbhajan's aggression made him a match-winner.

"I like the way he bowls, with aggression and cunning, and those have paid dividends for him. He has tamed world's best batsman, Ricky Ponting, and can again plague the Australian master," Wasim said.

Ponting, rated among the top three batsmen in the world, has a meagre tally of 172 runs in 14 Test innings with a disappointing average of 12.28 on Indian soil.

Of his 14 innings, Ponting fell 13 times to spinners with Harbhajan dismissing him five times during India's 2-1 triumph in 2001.

Akram said India versus Australia had become the "mother of all series".

"The way India have performed against Australia, beating them at Adelaide in 2004 and then at Perth last year, has made the India-Australia series more high profile than even the Ashes," he said.