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DHAKA SUNDAY JULY 6, 2008, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

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## Pawar allowed to hold 2 posts

CRICINFO, undated

Sharad Pawar, the International Cricket Council (ICC) vice-president, will continue as president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) till the end of his term in September. The ICC has amended its constitution during its annual conference to clarify that its vice-president, like the president, cannot hold dual posts. However, Pawar has been allowed a 'grace period' to hold both posts since his term as BCCI president ends in another three months.

"I can confirm that Mr Pawar has decided to continue as BCCI president till September," Niranjan Shah, the secretary of the Indian board, said. "Anyway, I believe the next ICC meeting he is scheduled to attend as his vice president comes after he steps down from the BCCI, so this is just a matter of procedure."

David Morgan, the ICC's new president, had similarly stayed on as ECB chairman for a few months after he was named as president-elect last year, till Giles Clarke took over the England board.

It was previously believed that Pawar would have to step down from the BCCI, in favour of an interim three-month arrangement in India, as soon as his role in the ICC was formalised at the annual conference. Shashank Manohar, the BCCI president-elect, will take over from Pawar at the Indian board's annual meeting in September.



BETTER OF THE TWO SISTERS: Venus Williams makes a cross-court return during her Wimbledon Championships final clash against younger sister Serena at the All England Tennis Club in London yesterday.

## Five-star Venus

AFP, London



Venus Williams outthrust younger sister Serena to claim her fifth Wimbledon crown in exhilarating fashion here

on Saturday.

The defending champion recovered from a whirlwind start by her younger sister to land her seventh Grand Slam title courtesy of a 7-5, 6-4 win.

Venus paid tribute to the performance of Serena, who had looked as if she might blast her big sister off court in the opening games.

"I can't believe it is five because when you are in the final against Serena Williams five seems so far away," said the champion.

"It's unbelievable especially with some of the injuries I have gone through. I love this place."

The quality of the meeting dispelled any suggestion that the two siblings were incapable or unwilling to produce their best tennis against each other.

But Venus admitted she never found it easy to take on Serena, who comfortably won their previous Wimbledon finals, in 2002 and 2003.

"My first job is a big sister and I take that very seriously," she said.

"It is hard for all of my family, although I like to think they want me to win."

Serena, who had won five of her previous six Grand Slam finals against her sister, admitted things had not gone as she expected.

"She was a little better today, but it didn't work out as planned," she said.

"But I'm so happy that at least one of us could win. We were glad to be in the final."

The lacklustre nature of some of the sisters' previous meetings had led some to voice fears that this would be another contest lacking in the intensity both women bring to bear on their rivals.

On that score, the opening point of the match was encouraging, Serena ruthlessly taking advantage of a short second serve with a searing forehand down the line.

Any lingering doubts that this would be as ferociously contested as any final of recent years were then completely banished by an exchange in the third game of the match.

Having followed up her break in the opening game with a service game to love, Serena was looking to take a stranglehold on the match.

So when the opportunity arose to punish an under-hit volley, she duly accepted, lashing the ball straight at her elder sister's midriff.

It must have been pure survival instincts that enabled Venus to get

her racquet on to the ball but somehow she squeezed it back over the net to win the point.

The defending champion managed to hold her serve but the momentum remained with Serena, who was denied a 4-1 lead when a forehand from her sister caught the top of the net and dropped almost dead on the second break point of the fifth game.

Venus was clinging on and her perseverance paid off when Serena's level finally dipped sufficiently for her to level things with a break for 4-4.

She then got her nose in front thanks to a sporting gesture from her sister. With Serena having exclaimed 'no' as she mishit a backhand, both sisters were surprised to see the ball drop in. The umpire ordered the point replayed but Serena conceded it and the game.

A tentative edge had appeared in Serena's game by this stage and, serving at 5-6, she gifted her sister the first set with a tamely netted backhand.

The first game of the second set saw Venus fired down a serve at 129 mph -- a Wimbledon record.

Yet it appeared Serena might have regained the initiative when she converted her seventh break point in a 14-minute third game of the second set.

But Venus hit back immediately to level.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

## Meek Tigers return today

SPORTS REPORTER



When India and Sri Lanka take to field for the Asia Cup glory at the Karachi National Stadium today keeping in mind that a score of 300-plus could guarantee nothing, the battered and bruised Bangladesh cricket team will take a flight back home contemplating how they were bowled out cheaply in the inconsequential last Super League game against Pakistan on this batting paradise.

Nothing could have been worse than the way the Tigers signed off from the exciting tournament on Friday. Senseless batting in the last game saw them bundled out for 115 runs, the lowest total in the batsmen dominated tournament, to continue the tag of 'consistently inconsistent'.

The shot selection of the top Bangladeshi batsmen in the game raised many eyebrows, especially the way opener Nazimuddin attempted to pull a short delivery in the second over from outside off

stump and only managed to top-edge it to Shoaib Malik at cover. Mohammad Ashraful and Rokibul Hasan's attempted hooks at a crucial stage and more importantly Tamim Iqbal and Alok Kapali's meek surrender against the sharp bouncers.

The team management may still find something positive from the tournament by focusing on the victory against the UAE and the achievement of scoring 200-plus runs twice in the meet, but for a neutral cricket lover it would be difficult to find any improvement in the performance from what they did four years back.

There was actually hardly anything for the bowlers in the tournament but still Jamie Siddons' batsmen failed to end their long batting blues at the highest level.

If someone wants to pick one special moment from the Tigers' performance in the tournament then he or she would recall the eye-catching hundred of Alok Kapali (115) against India which enabled his side to score 283 runs.

It was refreshing for everybody to see the way the stylish right-

hander struck his maiden hundred after being recalled in the side after almost two years but his last two innings gave a grim reminder of long hibernation after a good knock.

The new style of batting of Bangladesh captain Ashraful in the few matches gave an impression that the talented batsman was all set to emerge as a consistent performer and he started the tournament brilliantly with a hundred against UAE which Bangladesh won by 96 runs.

But suddenly he got back to his old self and the end result was devastating for the team.

Rokibul Hasan however showed some consistency in his batting by scoring 195 runs in five matches and made many believe that he has got the ability to serve in the middle-order along with Shakib Al Hasan.

It was nice to see that the team think-tank wanted to give someone enough chance to show his ability but Nazimuddin was simply horrible in his batting by making 59 runs in five matches.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

## Bangladesh A begin Eng tour

SPORTS REPORTER

After a disappointing tour of Ireland, Bangladesh A team begin their England leg with a three-day match against England Under-19 team at the Hazelgrave Ground in Loughborough today.

Bangladesh A suffered a five-wicket defeat to hosts in the first one-day match at Bangor on June 29. Before that they drew the three-day match with their Irish counterpart, followed by an 82-run defeat in a Twenty20 encounter.

The second-string Bangladesh side will then play the second three-day match against Warwickshire on July 11-13, the third three-day match against Leicestershire on July 16, the fourth against Derbyshire from July 21 and the fifth against South Africa from July 25.

After the three-dayers, Bangladesh A will play one-day matches against Lancashire on July 30, Marylebone Cricket Club on August 1 and Durham on August 3. The Bangladesh A side is expected to return home on August 4.

## Grand finale today

SL bank on Mendis; Dhoni ready for tough game

AFP, Karachi



Sri Lanka will look to their new spinning sensation Ajantha Mendis to defend their Asia Cup title against batting juggernauts India when the two teams meet in the final here on Sunday.

The 23-year-old from Moratuwa has bowled impressively in a tournament dominated by batsmen, and after going wicketless in the first match took 5-22 against United Arab Emirates and 4-47 against Pakistan to lead his team into the final.

Sri Lanka rested him in the Super League match against India on Thursday after they had already

qualified for the final.

Captain Mahela Jayawardene played down the hype around his unorthodox spinner, who has six different deliveries in his armoury.

"We are not going to put lot of pressure on the guy," said Jayawardene of Mendis, who has been in the limelight since making his debut against the West Indies earlier this year.

"He (Mendis) has done what he is capable of doing, we are just going to give him the freedom to go out there and enjoy his first final playing for his country, that's how we are going to treat him," said Jayawardene.

Spinners Upul Chandana and Sanath Jayasuriya contributed to Sri Lanka's 25-run win over India in

the 2004 Asia Cup final in Colombo.

Jayawardene said resting Mendis and spearhead Chaminda Vaas in Thursday's game against Pakistan was part of the plan.

"We rested them because we wanted to rest them. It's about executing your game plan," said Jayawardene, whose team are trying to overcome poor form since finishing runners-up to Australia in the 2007 World Cup in the Caribbean.

Sri Lanka won only eight of their last 22 one-day internationals before this tournament.

"We set ourselves a goal to get into the finals, we now need to focus hard. After trying a few things, which we wanted to try (against India), we have an idea of

exactly how we want to go about in the final," said Jayawardene.

The pitch at National Stadium will help his spinners, Mendis and off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran, he added.

"We now have played six-seven matches on the squares, which are bound to deteriorate, and the spinners are getting enough spin on the ball. We've been very successful batting first, putting runs on board and defending."

Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni admitted it would be a tough final.

"We are playing Sri Lanka, a very good team, so we expect it to be tough, but we are ready for all kinds of challenges in this final," said

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



### Jamie Siddons

(Bangladesh cricket coach)  
"I think their minds were already on the plane home. I am just not sure they were here to play today."  
On Bangladesh's performance in the last Super League match of the Asia Cup against Pakistan on Friday.



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## Still Australia win

Cricket

AFP, Basseterre

Shane Watson kept his nerve, and the seventh-wicket pair of Denesh Ramdin and Darren Sammy failed to carry West Indies over the threshold, as Australia completed a thrilling one-run victory in the fourth One-day International on Friday.

Australia had set West Indies 283 for victory from 50 overs, and successfully defended the target score, when Watson -- with the home team needing eight runs from the last over -- conceded six runs from the final six balls.

The victory handed Australia a 4-0 lead in the five-match series,

after they won the opening match by 84 runs in St. Vincent, the rain-affected second ODI last Friday by 63 runs under the Duckworth-Lewis Method, and the third ODI last Sunday by seven wickets.

It also set the Aussies up to make a swing at a rare ODI series sweep in the Caribbean. Only South Africa (5-0 in 2005) and Pakistan (3-0 in the same year) have achieved this in the Archipelago.

Australia looked set to suffer their first defeat in the series, as West Indies captain Chris Gayle marched to a run-a-ball 92, Ramnaresh Sarwan coasted to 63 from 79 balls, and Shivnarine Chanderpaul gathered 53 from 71 balls.

But Australia responded with a crucial wicket every time West Indies appeared to be getting into

the swing of things.

Brett Lee was the most successful Australian bowler with three wickets for 64 runs from 10 overs.

After Lee had Xavier Marshall adjudged lbw for a two-ball duck with the third ball of the West Indies' innings, Gayle and Sarwan added 137 for the second.

Lee returned for a second spell and broke the stand, when he had Sarwan caught behind in the 24th over.

Australia were again put on the back-foot, when Shivnarine Chanderpaul joined Gayle and they added 50 for the third wicket. But Shane Watson had the West Indies captain caught at extra cover in the 34th over.

The Aussies were put through the ringers again, when Dwayne

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



FINISHER V VINTAGE OPENERS: India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (above) bats in the nets while (R) the devastating Sri Lankan opening pair of Sanath Jayasuriya (L) and Kumar Sangakkara talk during the two teams' final training sessions at the National Stadium in Karachi yesterday. India and Sri Lanka lock horns in Asia Cup final today.



## World Sports Journalist Day rally held

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Sports Writers Association (BSWA) organised a rally in the capital on Saturday to mark World Sports Journalists Day yesterday.

The rally started at 7am from the Public Library and ended at the Moulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium premises. Sports journalists, sports writers, photographers, players and organisers took part in the gathering.

Director of Exim Bank and chairman of the audit committee Nurul Fazal Bulbul opened the rally as the chief guest while BSWA president Sarwar Hossain and general secretary Rafiqul Islam were present on the occasion.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4

## Sangakkara bats for Asia

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Sri Lanka's wicketkeeper-batsman Kumar Sangakkara Saturday said Asia leads international cricket as the financial hub and custodian of the game which has pioneered unprecedented globalisation.

"Asia has transformed from minnows of world cricket to the true powerhouse of cricket and we are now the economic driving force behind the world cricket," said Sangakkara at a seminar marking the silver jubilee of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC).

The seminar, "past, present and future of Asian cricket" was attended by current and former cricketers and administrators from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and various other Asian countries.

The ACC was formed in 1983 and now has four full and 18 associate members. The seminar was hosted on the sidelines of ninth Asia Cup which is hosted by Pakistan.

Sangakkara, who will play for Sri Lanka in the final against India on Sunday, said Asia was now the spiritual home of the game.

"There is no doubt that Lord's in London has traditionally been accepted as traditional home of the game but, in my opinion, there has been a gradual shift with magnificent stadiums in Asia.

"The ravages of tsunami being soothed by the panacea that is cricket and when I see this all I have to ask has Asia not now become the new spiritual home of world cricket? I think it has."

Sangakkara said Asia had produced world class players who have revolutionised the game.

"Asia has produced teams that have impacted the game in pro-

found ways and cricketers who have individually shaped the way cricket is played and introduced new skills in the game," he said.

ACC chief executive Syed Ashraf Hossain said Asian cricket had come a long way in the last 25 years.

"From a body formed by some eight experienced administrators, the ACC has come a long way and so has Asian cricket. It is a long successful journey and we are proud to be the leaders of world cricket," said Hsu.

Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Nasim Ashraf, who will take over as ACC chairman from Sri Lanka's Arjuna Ranatunga on Sunday, said Asian cricket had progressed by leaps and bounds.

"Asian cricket is like Ferrari, going fast and smooth and if we follow the rules of transparency and integrity there is no reason why Asian cricket do not attain maximum heights," said Ashraf.



Sports journalists with colourful festoons and banners parade through Shahbagh intersection in the city yesterday to mark the World Sports Journalist Day.