

## Serena staves off Elena

### Sister Venus sails past Dinara

AFP, London



Serena and Venus Williams will meet in the Wimbledon final for the fourth time after a rollercoaster Thursday which witnessed epic drama as well as a farcical no-contest.

Serena reached her fifth final with a 6-7, 7-5, 8-6 win over Elena Dementieva where she saved a match point in the longest semifinal in the tournament's history.

The American second seed's 2hr 49min victory went a long way to restoring some desperately-needed credibility to the women's game.

But Russian top seed and world number one Dinara Safina then suffered a spectacular Centre Court meltdown when five-time champion Venus coasted to an embarrassingly one-sided 6-1, 6-0 victory in just 51 minutes.

It was the most one-sided women's semi-final in 40 years.

Venus, who beat Serena in the 2008 final, will be playing in her eighth Wimbledon title

match.

"It's my eighth final here and it's a dream to be able to have the opportunity to hold the trophy again," said Venus.

"Dinara is a talented player but I have more experience on Centre Court and that helped a lot. It's so exciting to play Serena again, that will be the hard part."

While more questions will be raised over Safina's world number one ranking when she has yet to win a major, two-time champion Serena was praising Dementieva who fell in the semi-finals for the second successive year.

"It was really tough. Elena has been playing so well," said Serena, who saved match point at 4-5 in the final set.

"At match point I just thought it's my serve, just stay calm and think positive."

Dementieva was left to regret her missed match point.

With Williams approaching the net, the Russian went cross-court, rather than down the line, and the American gleefully accepted her opportunity with a simple saving backhand.

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PHOTO: AFP

American second seed Serena Williams exults after her absorbing Wimbledon semifinal triumph over a feisty Russian Elena Dementieva at the All England Club in London yesterday. Serena won the marathon three setter 6-7, 7-6, 8-6.

## Third ODI today

### India look to go in front

Cricket

AFP, Gros-Islet

India will be looking to edge closer to a rare one-day international series victory against the West Indies in the Caribbean before embarking on a well-earned break from the game.

They face West Indies in the last two ODIs of four this coming Friday and Sunday at the Beausejour Cricket Ground here.

India and West Indies shared the first two ODIs last Friday and Sunday at Sabina Park in Jamaica.

The visitors won the opening fixture by 20

runs, and the home team rebounded two days later to secure the second ODI by eight wickets.

On their five previous trips to the Caribbean in bilateral ODI series, India have only once overcome West Indies, and this was 2-1 in a three-match contest seven years ago.

But Mahendra Singh Dhoni's side has a couple of other reasons why they will feel the pressure in the next few days.

Their early exit from the Twenty20 World Cup in England a few weeks ago is still uppermost in their minds, as well as their fans who can be quite demanding, and do not take losing easily.

Dhoni has also identified banishing the

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## Zia atop alone

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman picked up his fourth straight win to take the solo lead in the

Mercantile Bank 35th National Chess Championship at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday.

Playing with Black pieces, the country's number one player adopted the Modern Defence of Tartakower system and eventually earned resignation from Fide Master Taibur after 37 moves.

Mohammad Hasan Emam of Air Destiny follows Zia, a Biman stalwart, closely with

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### STAR Sports

Wimbledon Championships

Men's Semifinals

Live from 6:00pm

### TEN Sports

West Indies v India

Third ODI

Live from 8:30pm

### ESPN

Sportscentre India

Sports News

Live at 9:30pm



### Jeff Thomson

(Australian fast bowling legend)

"I thought Ricky [Ponting] was crap when he was first captain in 2004 and nothing much has improved since then. I'm not the only one who thinks that...everyone at home thinks he's...at the captaincy."

## Pakistan relish SL tour

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan start their Test series against Sri Lanka Saturday riding the wave of a feel-good factor after winning the World Twenty20 and giving their country a much-needed respite from bombs and battles.

When Pakistan won the championship in England last month, the victory renewed the country's passion for the game, which had plummeted after an attack on the Sri Lankan team in March wiped out hopes of international cricket being played there again.

Eight Pakistanis were killed and seven Sri Lankan players and their assistant coach wounded in the sophisticated gun and grenade assault in Lahore on the third day of the second Test. The tourists were evacuated immediately.

There were fears that, with no more interna-

tional cricket in Pakistan, the sport would die a slow death, but captain Younus Khan hopes the tourists can build on their Twenty20 success when the five-day three-Test series begins.

"I hope this series will be very interesting and we play positive cricket to win it," he told AFP from Sri Lanka.

"It is very important that the interest generated by the T20 success back home is maintained during the Test series, which is the real form of the game," said Younus.

From President Asif Ali Zardari to the man in the street, delirium in Pakistan over the Twenty20 win has lifted the gloom of inflation, power cuts and a war that has made two million people homeless since April.

"Interest in cricket was waning after the attacks on the Sri Lankan team," said former captain Zaheer Abbas, nicknamed the Asian Bradman during his playing days for his superlative batting.

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PHOTO: INTERNET

West Indies skipper Chris Gayle honing his throwing skills during a practice session in St. Lucia on Wednesday.

## Teams look forward

Cricket

AFP, Galle

Pakistan and Sri Lanka make an emotional return to Test cricket on Saturday, almost four months to the day after a militant attack halted their last contest.

The three-Test series is the first between the two nations since armed gunmen fired on the Sri Lankan team bus while the players were on their way to resume a Test match in the Pakistani city of Lahore on March 3.

Seven Sri Lankan cricketers were injured and eight local security men were killed in the attack that forced the cricket world to abandon Pakistan as a venue for international cricket.

The upcoming series opens at the Galle International Stadium just two weeks after

Pakistan defeated Sri Lanka in the final of the World Twenty20 at Lord's in London.

Pakistan coach Intikhab Alam said he had no fears over security but was more concerned about how quickly his team would switch from the Twenty20 mode to the traditional five-day format.

"The key to winning the series against a strong Sri Lankan team will be our ability to adjust to demanding Test match cricket in hot and humid weather," said Alam.

"We can't afford to look back. Winning the Twenty20 title will mean little when the first ball is bowled in the Test series. It's a different ball game."

Pakistan have never lost a Test series in Sri Lanka, winning three -- including the past two in 2000 and 2006 -- and drawing the other two.

Its a creditable achievement considering

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## ASIAN YOUTH GAMES

### Bangladeshi cagers cave in

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh conceded embarrassing defeat in both of their FIBA 3 on 3 Basketball matches of the First Asian Youth Games at the Anglican High School in Singapore yesterday.

Bangladesh lost their first game against United Arab Emirates (UAE) 6-33 and then suffered an almost similar thrashing of 4-33 points at the hands of Thailand in the afternoon.

Bangladesh captain Khaled Mahmud Akash scored all the six points against UAE while Abu Obaida Adib scored three points against Thailand.

Bangladesh, who got walk-over against Malaysia in the inaugural match, will play their last group match against Palestine today.

Two Bangladeshi male shooters -- Shovon Chowdhury and Mahmudul Hasan -- will compete in the men's 10-meter air rifle on Saturday.

Earlier, Bangladeshi woman shooter Syeda Sadia Sultana of BKSP finished 7th in the 10-meter air rifle scoring 392 on Wednesday.

Earlier on Tuesday, both the Bangladeshi male and female athletes Mesbah Ahmed and Shirin Akhter got hit out in the heats of their respective 100-meter sprint.

## BSWA accords reception to Nizammuddin and Jalal

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Sports Writers Association (BSWA) on Thursday accorded a reception to two renowned sports writers -- Dr Nizammuddin Ahmed and Jalal Ahmed Chowdhury -- for their outstanding contributions to sports.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarkar was the chief guest at the reception held at the National Sports Council (NSC) conference room in the afternoon.

BSWA acknowledged the outstanding contributions of the two writers on a day Bangladesh was celebrating the World Sports Journalist

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## MEN'S SINGLES SEMIFINALS

## Roger, Andy chase history

AFP, London



Roger Federer will put friendship aside while Andy Murray must turn his back on national hype and growing media hysteria when they aim to set up a dream Wimbledon final on

Friday.

Five-time champion Federer, who is chasing a sixth title to give him a record 15th Grand Slam crown, tackles close friend Tommy Haas who, at 31, is two wins away from becoming the oldest Wimbledon champion for 34 years.

Murray, bidding to become Britain's first men's champion since Fred Perry in 1936, faces two-time runner-up Andy Roddick in his semi-final where he will be riding a wave of emotional support from a desperate nation.

Federer holds a 9-2 record over Haas but is aware of the danger posed by a man who almost shattered his French Open dream last month when the German won the first two sets of their last 16 tie before the world number two hit back.

Haas, playing in his first Wimbledon semi-final, put out world number four Novak Djokovic in the quarterfinals having had to save two match points in his marathon third round win over Marin Cilic.

"He's had a rough few years," said Federer of a man who was once the world number two before a catalogue of injuries sent his career into a tailspin.

"But it's so nice to see him back. We're good friends. I hope we can live up to the expectations and repeat a good match like we had in Paris."

Federer reached his 21st consecutive Grand

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## Harmy looks for weak link

Cricket

AFP, Worcester

Stephen Harmison believes Australia are short on confidence with the first Ashes Test in Cardiff just a week away.

The 30-year-old fast bowler, bidding to regain his England place, showed signs of his old form in taking three wickets for 67 runs for the England Lions against the tourists at New Road here on Wednesday in their final warm-up match.

In particular he gave novice Australian opener Phillip Hughes a thorough working over with the short ball before the left-hander fended a rising delivery to Joe Denly in the gully

after making just seven.

Harmison said Australia now without retired stars Matthew Hayden, Justin Lager, Adam Gilchrist, Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath, were missing much of their old swagger on Wednesday.

"This is my fourth time against Australia and the one thing I picked up ... is that they are not as brash and confident as they normally are."

"I can't put my finger on it. Maybe it is to do with the side gelling together or whether they don't have the big players of recent years, and the confidence you get from that."

"But they don't seem to be the confident Australia I've known. I think there is only Ricky Ponting and Brett Lee who have played more Ashes Tests than myself in the two squads."

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PHOTO: STAR

Dr Nizammuddin Ahmed (L) receives his crest from State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarkar during a reception organised by the BSWA at the NSC conference room yesterday.