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McGrath set for Worcestershire

LONDON, June 20 (Internet): Worcestershire are poised to sign Australia's World Cup fast bowler Glenn McGrath on a two-year contract.

The New Road club's cricket committee chairman Martin Horton confirmed that Worcestershire had agreed terms with the 29-year-old who was wanted by three other counties.

It is a major coup for the Midlands club and is reminiscent of their double swoop in the 1980s when they signed Ian Botham and Graham Dilley.

McGrath had indicated before the start of the season that he wanted to try his luck at county cricket and Worcestershire are confident the Australian Cricket Board will not block the move.

The contract will be split into two halves with McGrath playing for Worcestershire in 2000 and 2002 either side of the Australian tour of England in 2001.

He will replace his Australian colleague and Worcestershire skipper Tom Moody as the county's overseas player.

Moody has decided to end his spell in England which has spanned 10 years - one with Warwickshire in 1990 and the last nine with Worcestershire where he has been a prolific batsman.

Horton confirmed: "Glenn hasn't actually signed yet for Worcestershire but it is pretty certain that he will. Everything is sorted."

"His agent has gone back to the ACB to formally request permission for Glenn to play for us and we are waiting confirmation."

"They might not particularly want a fast bowler to play county cricket but I understand they had previously stated they would not stand in Glenn's way."

Moin the motivator

LONDON, June 20 (Internet report): Pakistan chairman of selectors Wasim Bari today hailed broken finger victim Moin Khan as the team's "Mr Motivator" before World Cup final with Australia at Lord's.

Vice-captain Moin has been handicapped by the injury throughout the tournament - but it has not stopped him shining as wicket-keeper and at crucial times with the bat.

Now he will go through the pain barrier one more time against Steve Waugh's side - with former Pakistan captain and "keeper Wasim believing that whichever side holds their nerve will triumph in the showpiece.

Wasim said: "Moin has done a tremendous job and he is the great motivator of the team. He keeps the boys on their toes and is the backbone of the team. He has a great cricketing brain."

"He is playing with a fractured finger which is the worst possible injury for a wicket-keeper."

But he has kept wicket brilliantly and has also batted superbly at crucial times in important partnerships against top class people like Allan Donald and Glenn McGrath. He is amongst the players of the World Cup.

"Wicket-keepers have always been a special breed in being more motivated and more concentrated than anyone else and Moin Khan is part of the same breed."

Wasim believes that being able to handle the big occasion will decide who lifts cricket's most prestigious trophy.

He said: "Pakistan are full of spirit and will give their best but Australia are also a very tough team. It is evenly balanced and it doesn't matter who people regard as the favourites."

Whoever plays well on the day, whoever keeps their nerve is going to win because there will be a tremendous amount of pressure.

"The good thing is that the final will be between two of the best three sides, Pakistan, Australia and South Africa were always going to come through to the latter stages."

Wasim Bari knows that Pakistan can rely on fanatical support but also knows of the consequences and reaction if they come out second best.

Four years ago Pakistan fans were burning effigies of Wasim Akram who received death threats after a quarter-final reversal by India.

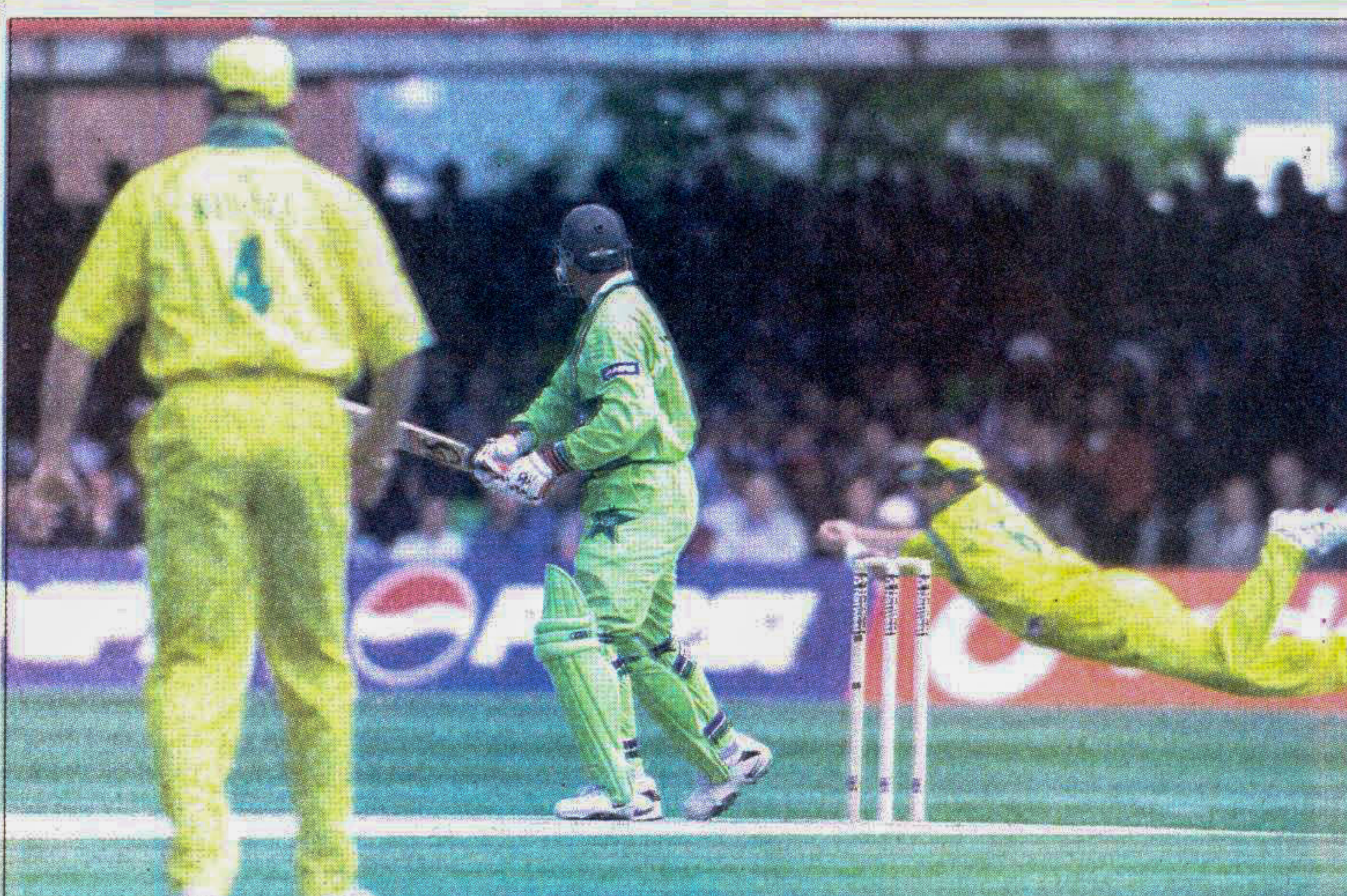
Wasim Bari said: "You only have to look at the support of the fans at The Oval and Old Trafford, the way they cheer runs and wickets, to see how they motivate the team."

But the kind of criticism that happened four years ago occur in our part of the world and when we lose the fans really go for the team. That's part of our heritage and we don't mind it."



Pakistan all-rounder Abdul Razzaq playing a lofted shot toward long-on yesterday.

— AFP photo



BEAT THAT! An airborne Mark Waugh (R) takes a sensational diving catch to get rid of Pakistan opener Wajahatullah Wasti at Lord's yesterday.

— AFP photo

Highlights of six finals

LONDON, June 20 (Reuters/Internet): World Cup finals highlights:

1975 - West Indies beat Australia by 17 runs.

The longest day of the year at the midpoint of the decade featured the first and best World Cup final.

West Indies' Clive Lloyd, at the peak of his powers, hit 102 against the blinding pace of Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson to take his team to 291 from their 60 overs.

Lloyd's opposite number Ian Chappell launched a spirited reply from the Australians who suffered five run-outs, three of them, to the electric Viv Richards.

One of the hundreds of spectators who ran on to the field at Lord's was the Middlesex opener

Mike Brearley, who was to captain England in the 1979 final.

1979 - West Indies beat England by 92 runs.

Richards, now the world's leading batsman in any form of cricket, savaged the England bowlers in an unforgettable 138 while Collis King bludgeoned his way to 86.

Brearley and Geoff Boycott put on 129 for the first wicket but England could not lift the tempo and the giant Joel Garner ran through the lower order to finish with five for 38.

1983 - India beat West Indies by 43 runs.

After India had succumbed for a meagre 183, Richards set about the bowling in a bid to finish the match by himself.

He raced to 33 but was then caught by Indian captain Kapil

Dev off a mistimed pull.

West Indies crumbled after his dismissal and India completed a famous victory.

1987 - Australia beat England by seven runs.

England set off confidently in pursuit of Australia's 253 for five, based on a fine innings of 75 by opener David Boon.

Bill Athey was narrowly run out for 58, Mike Gatting was caught for 41 off the most notorious reverse sweep in history and England finally ran out of overs.

1992 - Pakistan beat England by 22 runs.

Imran Khan capped a marvellous career by coming out of retirement to lead Pakistan to victory at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

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Life came to a standstill

KARACHI, July 20: Pakistani streets were deserted Sunday as people huddled in front of televisions in homes and restaurants as excitement over the Cricket World Cup final gripped the country, reports AFP.

Many were also gripped with a different kind of fever with

reports of heavy betting, mostly on Pakistan to beat Australia. Anyone rash enough to bet the other way faced booing and jeers from fellow punters.

The euphoria has been building up since Pakistan buried New Zealand in the semi-final, helping to take people's minds off the border tensions in Kashmir where Indian and Pakistani troops have been engaged in gunbattles for the past six weeks.

But the Kashmir flareup has stopped one fan from making a trip to England to watch the match in person - Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will be forced to watch the game at home, but an aide said he would be watching every ball.

"I feel the same great mo-

ments coming back when Pakistan won the 1992 World Cup in Australia," fan Fasih ul Haq said.

Pakistanis were supported by the Australian crowd when they beat key rivals England in 1992 and today the English crowd was expected to back Pakistan against the Aussies, he said.

Several restaurants in big cities and towns have made special arrangements to broadcast the proceedings live from Lord's.

In some luxury hotels waiters have been attired in Pakistani green and will serve dishes especially renamed after

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Four after Rixon's job

CHRISTCHURCH, June 20 (The Christchurch Press): Four coaches have been short-listed and interviewed for the New Zealand men's cricket coaching position to take over from Steve Rixon.

New Zealand Cricket operations manager John Reid said it was now a matter of deciding whether a second round of interviews is needed before a recommendation to the next board meeting on July 9.

The new coach will be named on July 12 after contractual matters have been tidied up with the successful candidate, Reid said.

At the same time five people have been interviewed for the manager's position which attracted some 20 applicants. About a dozen applied for the coaching role.

Reid said it was important that the coach and manager were compatible and had complementary skills.

"Managing and coaching a cricket team is a lot different to most sports teams and requires some different skills," Reid said.

Cricket teams were often on tour for up to 10 months a year with players living with each other for lengthy periods.

Reid said he and chief executive Chris Doig, currently in London, understood the complex roles better now after the appointments of Rixon and John Graham three years ago.

"I think we have seen changes for the better in how the players manage their private lives and they have improved their playing performances."

Reid said ideally the new coach and manager appointments would be for a two-year period.

He said the priority was to get the right people in the positions even if they were not available to start immediately. After New Zealand ends its

England tour in late August, its next trip is to India from late September to mid-November.

"Ideally, we would want the coach to start at the end of August for planning but there could be some flexibility."

Former New Zealand captain John Wright and Auckland coach David Trist are believed to be among the leading candidates for the coaching job.

Reid said any overseas applicants were interviewed by video link up. He declined to release names.

Retirement not his cup of tea

NEW DELHI, June 20: Mohammad Azharuddin has said that he has no intention of quitting as captain of the Indian cricket team.

"I've got a lot of cricket left in me. Bad patches come and go, people shouldn't look at age but performance. I haven't had a great World Cup but a decent one," the Indian cricket captain told India Today magazine, after the Indian team made its exit from the championship at the Super Six stage.

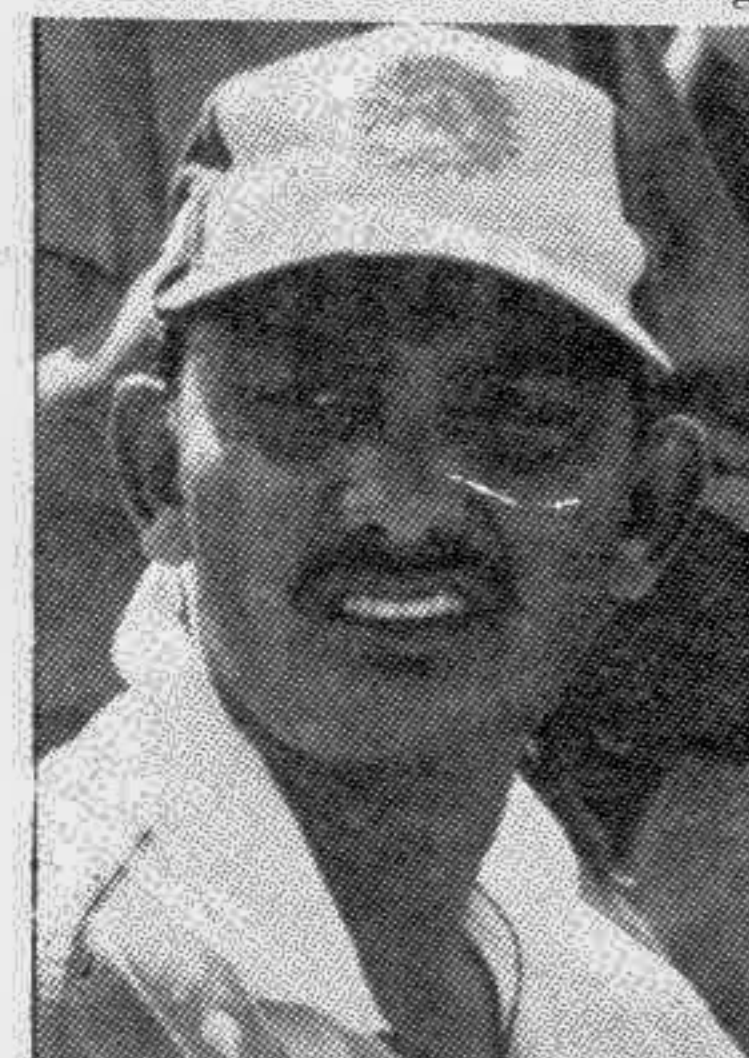
Azharuddin, 35, said he was not concerned about the flak from critics who felt that his captaincy was uninspiring and that the team required a person who was more extrovert if it had to raise the level of its game. "Why should I back out? I don't think that's the right attitude," he said.

Azharuddin also said that he has been constantly criticised by "players-turned-journalists" due to professional jealousy.

"If they don't criticise me or write my name every day, they have no articles, nothing to say. They are putting wrong things in people's minds," he said.

Both Azharuddin and man-

ager Anshuman Gaekwad have denied that any instructions were sent to the batsmen during



MD AZHARUDDIN

India's league round match with Zimbabwe which India lost by three runs. Sunil Gavaskar had alleged on television that the batsmen were instructed to finish off the match and that was

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Shane Warne takes his cap off after the fall of Saqlain Mushtaq - the last Pakistani wicket.

— AFP photo

ICC's no to SL Board

COLOMBO, June 20: An interim committee set up to run cricket in Sri Lanka is in a dilemma after the International Cricket Committee (ICC) banned its representative from attending the ICC's annual conference, officials said today, reports Reuters.

They said the ICC chief executive David Richards had written to Sri Lankan cricket officials saying it could not entertain representatives since the legality of both the elected board and the interim committee had been challenged in courts.

Richards said Sri Lankan officials should seek a clarification from the court about who could officially represent the country at the ICC conference in London on Wednesday.

"There is a problem at hand. We will look to fulfil the conditions set out by the ICC and try to make sure, through legal measures, that our representative can officiate," Renzi Wi-

jetilleke, head of the interim committee said.

The committee was set up earlier this month after a Colombo court renewed a restriction preventing some of the board officials from carrying out their duties.

With the help of the board's other officials, who were not named by the court, the interim committee will administer the game until the court rules on an election dispute involving board president Thilanga Sumathipala and rival candidate Clifford Ratwatte.

Ratwatte, who lost to Sumathipala in the board's election earlier this year, alleged in court that gun-toting intruders had prevented free and fair voting. Sumathipala was re-elected president by a 79-11 margin after a walkout by Ratwatte and his supporters in March.

A hearing on the allegations has been set for September.

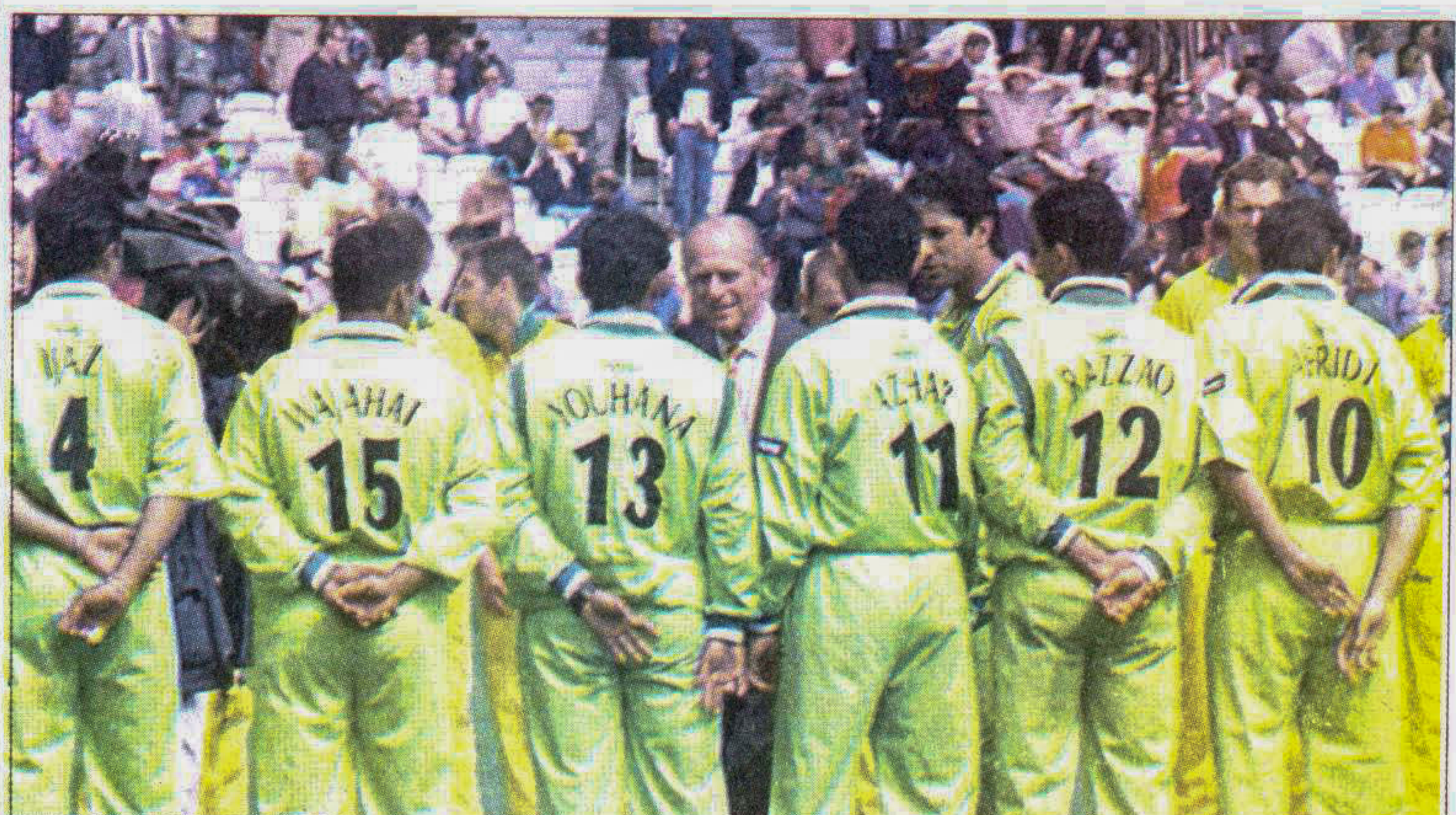
Officials said the seven members of the board against

whom the court did not issue the stricture had complicated matters after they challenged in court the legality of the interim committee set up by Sports Minister S B Dissanayake.

Dissanayake would now have to seek a court ruling before he could decide who could represent Sri Lanka at the ICC, they said.

Sri Lanka's cricketing establishment is in tatters after the players were unable to retain the World Cup they won in 1996.

The team, which was knocked out in the first round of the tournament, have lost 18 of their 25 one-day matches since last October and there is pressure on captain Arjuna Ranatunga to step down. The interim committee and a new selection board will have to pick the team for a one-day series against Australia and India that starts in August and then for a test series against the Australians, who will stay on.



Prince Philip (C) being introduced to the Pakistani players before the start of the final.

— AFP photo