

German coaches take over hockey squad

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) has short-listed its 32-member preliminary squad to 20 yesterday for the coming Asia Cup...

"Our new coaching staff will work with these 20, whose names would be published tomorrow," Jamil said.

"However, ten more players will train with the squad so we can replace a player if someone is injured.

BHF's director of coaching Gerhard Peter Rach and head coach Oliver Michell Kurz, both from Germany, officially took over charge of the team yesterday.

"We are also keeping additional players because we will form an A team," added Jamil.

The Asia Cup was scheduled for May 8-18 in Dubai but it has been shifted to Malaysia. A new schedule has yet to be announced.

MCG is Mekong Cricket Ground!

AFP, Sydney

An April Fool's Day prank in Australia suggesting a Chinese firm wanted to buy naming rights for the famous Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) sparked a furious online reaction Wednesday.

In a sign of sensitivities at Chinese takeover activity in Australia's mining sector, the story on the Herald Sun's website saying the stadium would be renamed the Mekong Cricket Ground drew more than 200 comments by midday.

While many realised it was a joke -- with the story quoting a spokeswoman named April Fulton -- most expressed anger at the idea of renaming the 100,000 capacity ground regarded as a symbol of Australia's second largest city.

"Let's just give up this whole country to the Asians and be done with it," posted "MisterMaster."

"What did our diggers (soldiers) fight and die for in the past war??? And they still expect us to be patriotic. This country is selling its soul."

Anthony of Melbourne expressed similar sentiments.

"Are we serious... de we have to sell everything to the Asians!!"

"They are taking over the world, and we are letting them. I am not being racist when I say this, but aside from the Australian Asians, what possible interest do China have in the MCG?"

A reader using the name Cam linked the story to recent Chinese moves to buy stakes in Australian resources firms.

"The Chinese corporate takeover of Australia has begun," he posted. "OZ Minerals, Rio Tinto, Fortescue Minerals, now the MCG. What next?"

Mash leaves

FROM PAGE 17

recover from injury. However, there is little doubt that the Narail Express would be bowling his usual sharp medium pace when the second edition of the IPL starts on April 18 in South Africa.

Tigers captain Mohammad Ashraful, who will play for the Mumbai Indians in the IPL, will leave the capital for Mumbai on April 5 to join his squad.

Kolkata Knight Riders will face the Deccan Chargers from Hyderabad on April 19 in Newlands, Cape Town.

BCB hands

FROM PAGE 17

Shahidul Islam, acting CEO of BCB Nizam Uddin Chowdhury and BCB Councillor Kazi Shamim Ahsan handed over the cheque to Kazi Monirul Islam, father of the late Bangladesh all-rounder.

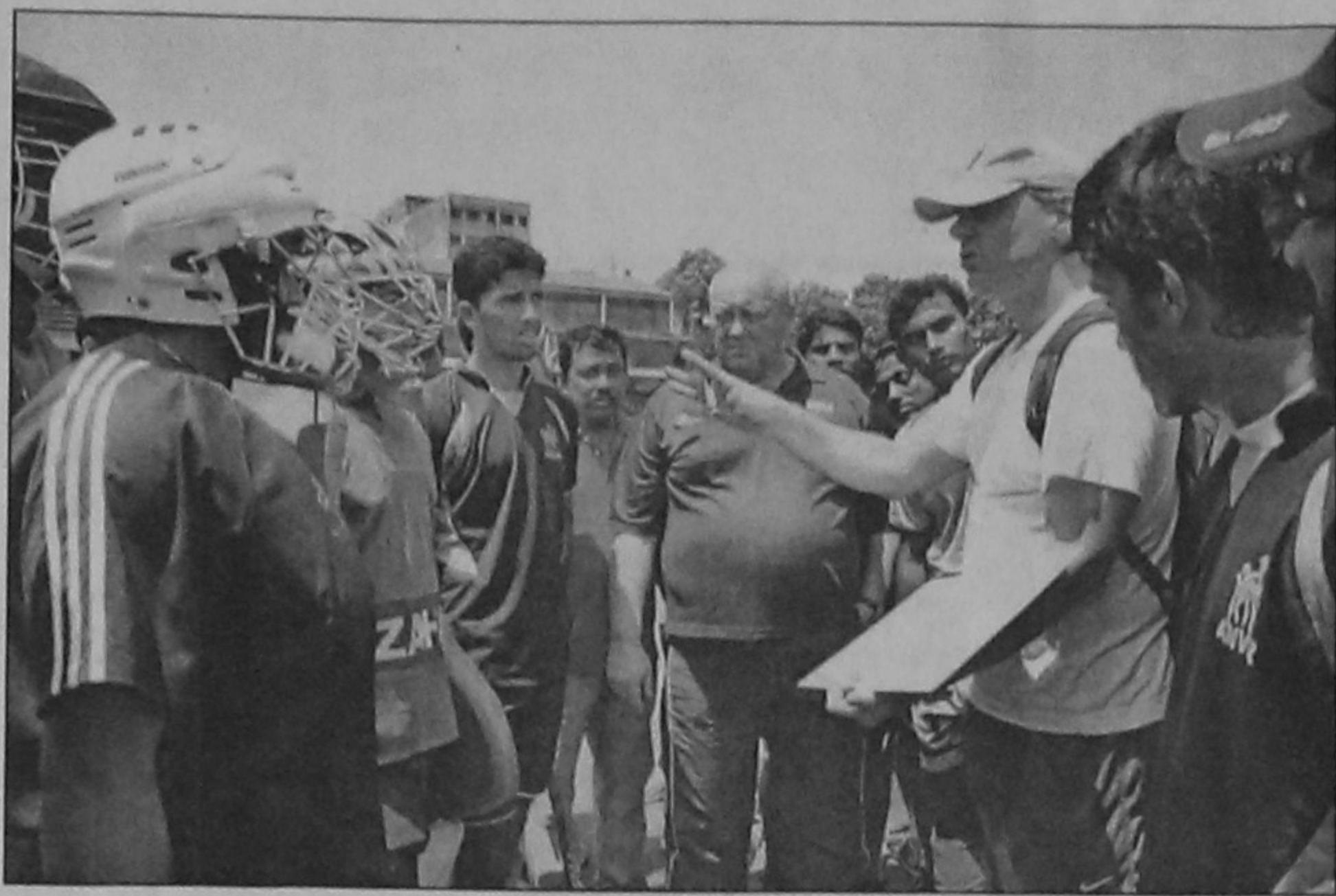
Hosts triumph

FROM PAGE 17

Min Min won their doubles match against Qatar's Jabor Al-Mutawa and Mousa Zayed by 6-1, 6-3.

In the last match UAE whitewashed Yemen 3-0 winning both their singles and the lone doubles match. UAE's Mahmoud Nader Al Baloushi and Hamad Abbas Janahi beat Yemen's Ahmed Sife 6-1, 6-1 and Momen Hasan 6-2, 6-1 in the singles round and Rashed Obaid Al Falasi and Faisal Yousef Bastaki of UAE defeated Yemen's Mohammad Sife and Fahd Thabit 6-0, 6-0.

Vietnam will play Iraq while UAE take on Yemen in Group A encounters and Myanmar take on Jordan in Group B matches.



Bangladesh Hockey Federation's director of coaching Gerhard Peter Rach (C) and head coach Oliver Michell Kurz (2nd from R) briefing the national hockey players before a training session at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Gautam impresses Kris

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Gautam Gambhir's match-saving 137 in the second Test against New Zealand in Napier has impressed Kris Srikkanth, India's chairman of selectors.

Srikkanth said Gambhir showed tremendous patience and maturity in playing according to the situation after India were asked to follow on.

A naturally aggressive player, Gambhir focused on occupying the crease and his innings spanned 643 minutes and 436 deliveries.

Srikkanth reflected on the progress Gambhir made since establishing his place in the side. "Gautam has come of age. He has now become a complete batsman," Srikkanth told the Indian Express.

"For the last couple of years he has been pretty consistent. But this Test saw him raise his game several notches.

"I don't think he has made any technical adjustments. But now he watches the ball more closely and till the end. He has tightened his offside game, especially leaving deliveries outside the off stump. His judgement as far as the corridor of uncertainty goes is a lot better."

Gambhir was the world's leading ODI run-scorer in 2008 with 1,119 at 46.62. His form in Tests was just as good, finishing fifth in the run charts with 1,134 runs at 70.87. He was also the second-highest run-getter in the Indian Premier League with 534 runs at 41.07, rounding off an exemplary year in all three formats.

Srikkanth felt that Gambhir had developed into a fine opener and his association with Virender Sehwag is currently the best in the world. "You don't grow into a job overnight. Everybody matures with time. He was always a very capable strokeplayer, but now he has proved that he can bury his head into the ground and guide the team to safety. He is a great player in the making."

"He [Sehwag] might not have had a very good Test in Napier, but make no mistake, over the years he has contributed immensely to help Gautam develop his game. Together, they are the best opening combination in world cricket at the moment."

Even if people don't come to the ground they will be watching it on TV."

Duminy made his international debut in 2004 but hit the headlines on his last debut last December with an unbeaten half-century to help AB de Villiers guide South Africa past Australia in Perth.

In the next Test in Melbourne, he hit a stunning 166, adding 180 with Dale Steyn, to help South Africa clinch a historic series win. It was a timely performance which got him the prized IPL ticket in the auction that immediately followed. However, he has since returned scores of 13, 16, 17, 29, 73 not out, 17 and 7 in the subsequent four Tests, of which the last three were in South Africa. "Yes, it hasn't gone according to plan," Duminy said. "Especially, in this return series in South Africa (which Australia won 2-1). It's not a huge worry though because I am still feeling fairly confident. Hopefully, if the one-day series can go well for me, I can take a bit of confidence going into the IPL."

Asked to assess the pitch and weather conditions in Newlands, where IPL plays out its first week, Duminy says the ground could throw up some big scores, but only if the weather permits. "The pitch has been really good of late but normally in May we get into the winter months," he said. "It could be a little bit cold at night and we might get some rain too. But it's going to be a great experience for me to try and perform in front of the home crowd."

But will the 36-day IPL, which has been tagged as an Indian domestic competition, attract enough crowds in South Africa? "Definitely, on weekends we are going to get good crowds in," he said. "I am not too sure about the weekdays. But there has been a keen interest in the IPL around the country and I am sure that never seen anything like this, the ball clearly went over the line but the referee ignored it," he said before leaving the post-match press conference without taking questions.

The close call woke up the South and they started pushing forward.

In the 65th minute, Lee Keun-Ho latched onto a Park Chu-Young pass in the penalty area but his drive went straight at the goalkeeper.

Three minutes later, nifty passes by Park Ji-Sung and Park Chu-Young found the charging Lee in the middle of the box, but his shot once again fell into the arms of Ri before Kim rescued the day with his late goal.

The Koreans resume qualifying on June 6, with the South travelling to the United Arab Emirates and the North hosting Iran.

Besides Pakistan, teams from Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia and other Asian countries will be invited to play in China, which will cultivate the youth in China who are already charmed by the game," he said.

"Referees must be fair. I've

Div I Cricket Kalabagan, Jatrabari inch closer

SPORTS REPORTER

Jatrabari KC drew closer to the race of winning the First Division Cricket League yesterday when they beat Baridhara Dazzlers by 23 runs at the Jagannath University Ground.

Federer rolled over American qualifier Taylor Dent 6-3, 6-2 while Spaniard Nadal was made to work for his 7-6 (7/2), 7-6 (7/4) win over Swiss No. 16 seed Stanislas Wawrinka.

Federer needed just 85 minutes to earn a berth in the final eight by ousting 27-year-old Dent who squandered eight break-point chances.

"I had to come up with some good passing shots to be able to make a difference," Federer said. "He might have got a bit tired towards the end."

Nadal needed two tiebreaks to beat the pesky Wawrinka in the two hour, 42 minutes marathon match. Wawrinka jumped out to a 3-1 lead in the second set before Nadal clinched it 7-4 in the final tiebreak.

Nadal and Wawrinka traded blows in the first set then Nadal stepped up his game in that tiebreak winning 7-2.

"Important win for me here. Very important," Nadal said. "To be in quarterfinals is always a good result."

"I was very focused and I played two good tiebreakers, so that's very good."

Russian eighth seed Svetlana Kuznetsova became the first semifinalist in the women's draw by beating Danish 13th seed Caroline Wozniacki 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-1.

Seven players are currently sharing the lead in the preliminary phase of the Mercantile Bank 35th National Chess Championship with 6.5 points after the eighth round games ended at the chess federation hall room yesterday.

Three players closely followed them with six points each.

In the day's eighth round matches, Shakil drew with Taibur, Parag drew with Debaraj, Jamal beat FM Aminul Islam, Nasir beat Monir Hossain, Mostafa beat Mahtabuddin Ahmed, Emon beat Imran Ali Elin, Palash beat Mohammad Ali and Shafiq beat Masum Hossain.

Udity edged past Rayer Bazar AC by a solitary goal in the only match of the Green Delta Metropolitan 2nd Division Hockey League at Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

Mohammad Nayeem scored the all-important goal for Udity early in the ninth minute.

Meanwhile, the six-team super league begins today at the same venue with Combined SC taking on Shantinagar SC and Rayer Bazar AC meeting Raktim Sangha.

Participating teams in the super league are Rayer Bazar AC, Combined SC, Udity, Dilkusha SC, Shantinagar SC and Raktim Sangha.

Bata wins

FROM PAGE 17 League, is being held without any sponsor. It was learnt that two companies took part in the bidding and Bata won the rights as the highest bidder by offering US dollars 2.25 lakh for three years.

KP 'fully

FROM PAGE 17 hadn't seen my wife since January 21. It's the longest period of time I've been away from her."

Pietersen confirmed he had asked for a 48-hour break to be with Taylor, who has been competing in the British television show 'Dancing on Ice'.

That request angered some England fans but Pietersen, who averages 51 in Tests and 46 in one-dayers, was adamant it had not caused a rift between himself and the rest of the squad.

"We decided it probably wouldn't be a good idea for the team going forward," he said. "There were no arguments, no nonsense, no disappointment on my behalf," Pietersen said. "I have been totally supportive of everything that has happened on this tour."

Pietersen was dramatically stripped of the England captaincy after the India tour following his admission he could no longer work with coach Peter Moores, a row which cost Moores, who has since joined Lancashire, his England post.

Miandad, who also returned as director general of the Pakistan Cricket Board on Monday, said he has proposed annual tournaments in China, to which other international teams will also be invited.

"Besides Pakistan, teams from Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia and other Asian countries will be invited to play in China, which will cultivate the youth in China who are already charmed by the game," he said.

Ahad urges

FROM PAGE 17 "We have a lot of works to do including the SA Games. So we need to set a target and all work together to reach that goal," Ahad Ali said adding that the ministry, NSC and the BOA should work as a team to make all these successful.

Federer, Nadal advance

Tennis

AFP, Miami

The 2006 champion will play in the semifinals Thursday against No. 11 Victoria Azarenka, who beat unseeded Samantha Stosur 6-1, 6-0.

Nadal's victory means eight of the top 10 seeds are into the quarterfinals for the first time in the tournament's 25-year history. It is also the first time there are eight seeds in the quarterfinals.

"I think that's good for tennis," Nadal said. "And I think we are in one moment of the tennis history that the best players are always winning."

"For that reason winning titles is almost more difficult than ever. Because all the time you have to play against the best."

Federer advances to the next round where he will face fifth seeded American Andy Roddick who advanced with a 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 win over France's Gael Monfilis.

"We've had some big matches over the years," Federer said of Roddick. "I played him at the Australian Open and played well against him. He seems like he changed a couple of things in his game so it should be a good match."

Serbian third seed Novak Djokovic also took a 6-3, 6-2 victory over Czech Tomas Berdych while British fourth seed Andy Murray routed Djokovic's Serbian teammate Viktor Troicki 6-2, 6-0.

Scotsman Murray will next face eighth-seeded Spaniard Fernando Verdasco, who bounced Czech 18th seed Radek Stepanek 6-2, 6-2.

"I didn't make a lot of mistakes, high per centage of first serves, used my slice well - just kept thinking all the way through the match," Murray said.

"Right from the start, to get a break early, set the tone for the rest of the match. He didn't really recover from that."

Djokovic, who won the Miami crown in 2007, pounced upon Berdych's every mistake to advance.

"I was trying to stick with him all the time, because I knew he's very aggressive, but not really consistent from the baseline," Djokovic said.

"He makes a lot of unforced errors, especially from the forehand side, so I changed the pace and I played a really good tennis."

Djokovic will next face French 10th seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, who eliminated seventh-seeded countryman Gilles Simon 6-7 (4/7), 6-3, 6-2 in another fourth-round match.

Tsonga, who felt slightly ill before the match, is the first Frenchman in a decade to reach the quarterfinals at Miami. And Djokovic knows he is in for a fight.

"I lost to Tsonga four times in a row, so he has a little advantage probably there," Djokovic said. "But I think all the matches we played were very close so it's going to be a challenge for me to win."

Kuznetsova fell the court in exhaustion at the completion of her two hour, 54-minute match in the mid-day heat.

"I was until 5-3 feeling very comfortable out there, but I got so dizzy and tired," Kuznetsova said. "The conditions played a big role in my game."

Wozniacki extended the match from 6-4, 5-2 down, but the Dane lost all momentum at the start of the third set.

India's toughest test

FROM PAGE 17

That even the New Zealand players are finding it cold shows just how big a factor the conditions will be. "I think they [India] will find it a little bit cold," Brendon McCullum said. "If we find it cold here, no doubt they will be freezing. I am sure, from their point of view, they will be hoping that the wind dies down and the sun comes out but, from ours, it will be great to have them on the park when the conditions are like this. I am sure we are going to find the conditions a little bit more pleasurable than they are."

Chris Martin said that New Zealand were used to the weather at the Basin Reserve, a ground on which they have "had some success in the past".

"It's something a lot of touring teams dislike and quite a lot of people playing here domestically find it tough as well," Martin said. "But it's character building, and is definitely something the supporters will have to put up with as well."

"I know most subcontinental sides that have come out here find it very difficult to keep their bodies warm and I think they might want their bowlers to get us out even quicker. But I suppose that's one of the things you have to put up with just as we put up with the heat in India and places like that."

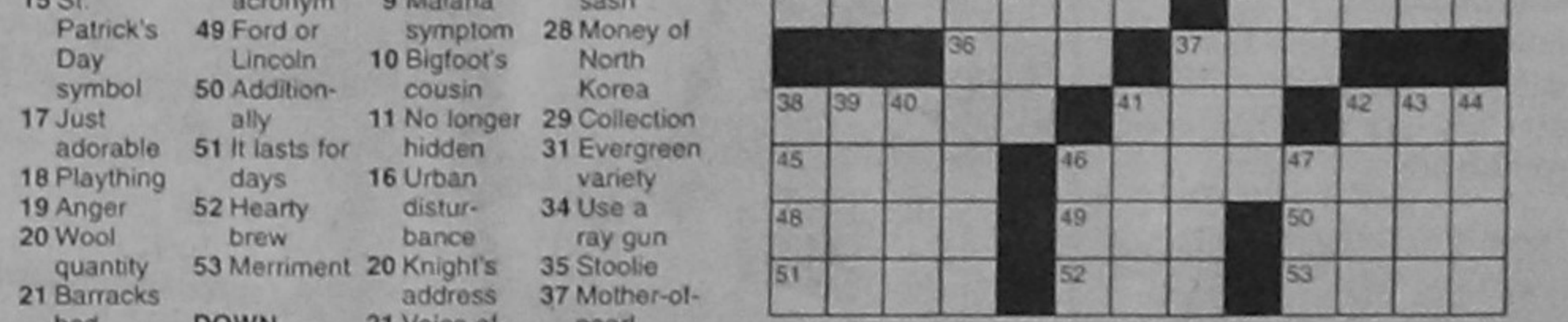
Gary Kirsten, India's coach, said his team was looking forward to the challenge posed by the conditions. "Little bit cold for the Indian guys, but we have adjusted pretty well," Kirsten said. "The guys are looking forward to it. There has been talk about the third Test within our camp. We have got a fair amount of rest watching the guys bat [in Napier]. So I think the bowlers are pretty keen to get out there."

Kirsten also said it was too early to change any plans because of the windy conditions. "We will have to see when we get out there," he said. "Conditions look good certainly for the first few days. But it does effect things a little bit, but you can only make those decisions when on the field."

When the sun is out, the Basin Reserve presents the spectators one of the best viewing experiences for a Test match. Without doubt it is the best cricket ground in New Zealand, and is protected by an Act of Parliament. It is fitting it should present a visiting team with the toughest test of the tour.

Press Conference

April 01, 2009 CIRDAP Auditorium



Sk Jamil Uddin (2nd from R), director of Akij Food and Beverage Ltd, addresses the 'Clemo Sports Development Program' press conference at the CIRDAP Auditorium in the city yesterday. With a motto 'Sports is the spirit of youth' the programme is designed to provide hi-tech training equipment like bowling machine, speed measuring ball, video camera analysis, training CDs and complete cricket manual to the country's youth. Former Bangladesh captain Khaled Mashud (2nd from L), the ambassador for the programme, was also present at the function.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

CRYPTOQUIP

JGJK YCKBIEQ VEIVUET GLKIQ CKY IOICKUE ZUIIOO JIEI DGLEQDT. L QNZZUQI 44-gin DGIT BGUQI DCZ JCDIE.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: MY DISC JOCKEY JUST KEEPS PLAYING THAT SAME TUNE REPEATEDLY. I GUESS HE HAS A ONE-TRACK MIND. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals E