

BHF upset with Malaysia

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) General Secretary Khondoker Jamiluddin has expressed his unhappiness over the national hockey team's treatment by the Malaysian Embassy.

The national hockey team is scheduled to fly to Kuantan in Malaysia on May 6 to take part in the 8th Asia Cup Hockey and the team has apparently faced some difficulties regarding its visas.

"The Malaysian embassy has treated the national team very poorly. We had to send letters from different agencies and I even had to arrange for the DGI to call them but even then it takes six to seven days for the visa. The national team even had to stand in the same queue as the other applicants despite being a national entity. It is very tragic to see such a treatment and it is an act undermining us," said Jamil while announcing the squad for the upcoming Asia Cup at the BHF office in the Maulana Bhashani National Hockey Stadium.

Jamil also said that the National Sports Council (NSC) should be involved in such matters for easing the process of visa application and issuance.

"The NSC should be involved in this and the embassies should remember that we as a national team are not going to countries on anyone's mercy. We have qualified to go there as participants of an international tournament and it is imperative that the team get their due respect."

NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL

Army, Ansar champions

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army emerged champions in the men's division of the Spectra Group National Volleyball Competition beating Bangladesh Navy 3-2 in the final at the Sara Marowari ground in Iswardi yesterday.

In the women's division, Ansar and VDP outclassed Pabna 3-0 to become champions for the fourth successive time.

Prakash Chakraborty and Aslam of Army were adjudged as the best attacker and best setter of the tournament respectively in men's category. Ali of Rajshahi was declared the best defender also in the same category.

In the women's section, Lucky of Ansar was adjudged the best attacker, Pappa of Rajshahi was adjudicated the best setter and Yasmin of Pabna won the prize for the best defender.

Kuznetsova shocks Safina

AFP, Stuttgart

Svetlana Kuznetsova upset top-ranked Dinara Safina 6-4, 6-3 on Sunday to win the Porsche Grand Prix and capture her first WTA title since September 2007.

It was Safina's first tournament since becoming No. 1 two weeks ago.

Kuznetsova, the 2004 US Open champion now ranked No. 9, was in command in the all-Russian showdown with an aggressive, big-hitting game, winning on her third match point with an overhead smash.

Enamul levels

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steady the ship by adding 83-run in the third wicket stand.

Number six batsman Sabbir Rahman was the other notable scorer with an unbeaten 36 off 55 balls that saw four boundaries and three sixes.

Imesh Udayanjan picked up three wickets for 41 runs.

Sabbir also shone with his leg-spin bowling as his four-wicket haul helped his side to wrap up Sri Lanka under-19s for 204 runs.

U Jayasundara top scored with 49 off 105 balls for the visitors.



Did U Know?

Rafael Nadal is the nephew of former Spanish footballer Miguel Angel Nadal, one of Spain's most capped players. Miguel's brother Toni is the coach of Rafael.

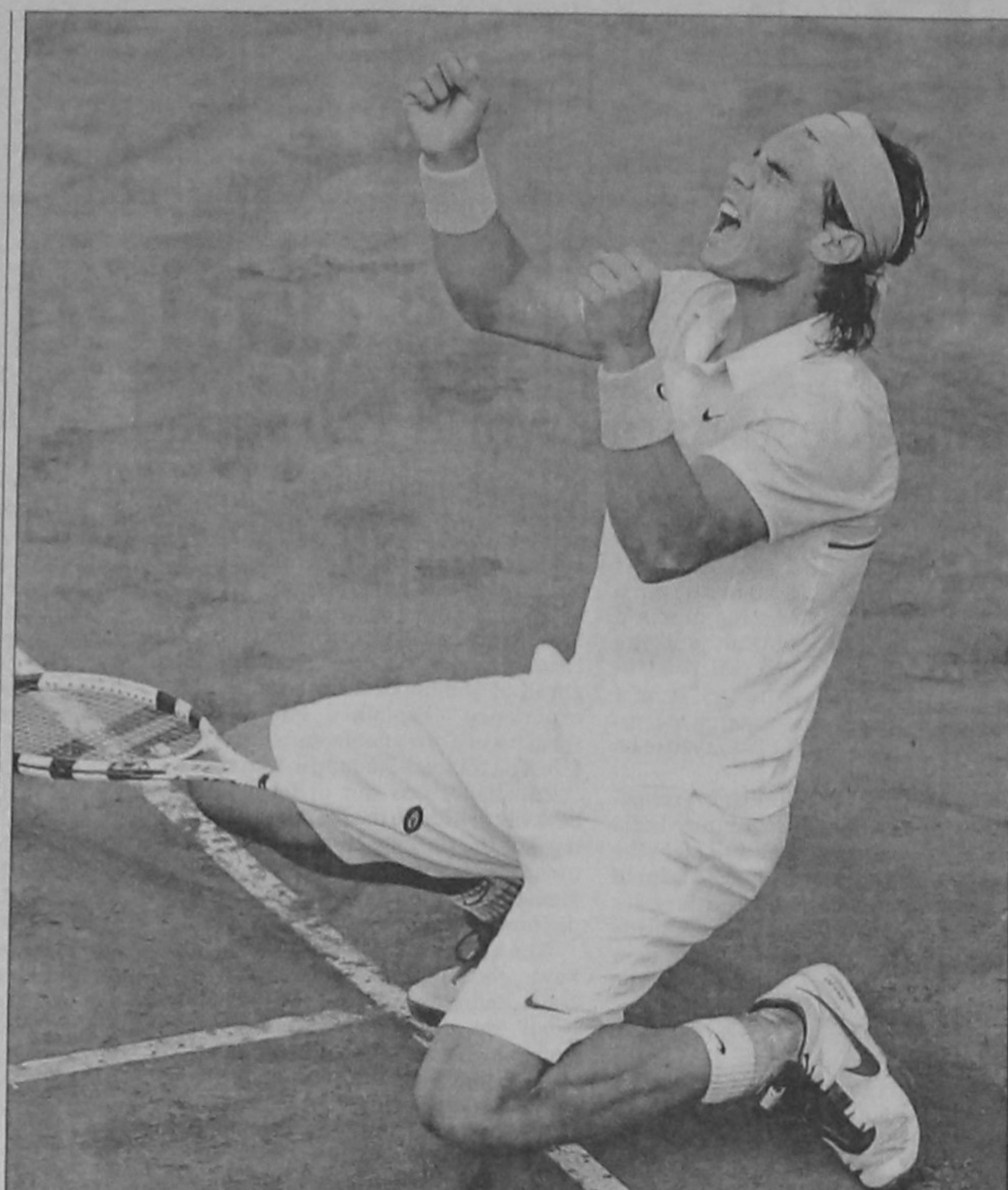


PHOTO: AFP

Spanish world number one Rafael Nadal jubilates after beating Novak Djokovic of Serbia in the Rome Masters final on Sunday.

Nadal rules Rome

Tennis

AFP, Rome

World number one Rafael Nadal won a record fourth ATP Rome Masters clay court title on Sunday, beating reigning champion Novak Djokovic 7-6, 6-2 in the final.

The 22-year-old Spaniard took his winning run on clay to 30 matches in just over a year while Djokovic's failure to retain his title saw him lose the world number three spot to Briton Andy Murray, who thus becomes the highest ever ranked British man since the computerised rankings system was introduced in 1973.

Although the match ended in two sets it was a high quality and close run affair until the very end when Serbian Djokovic wilted and Nadal, who has only dropped one set on clay this year, ran away with it.

It was the top seed's 15th Masters Series title and only Andre Agassi, with 17, has won more.

"I would love to have more than 17. Right now I have 15, I'm very happy for that. I'm going to try my best in the next tournaments," said Nadal.

"I started well. He led 40-15 in the first game but then I won it. That was important, the first break.

"But later it was really tough to return. The ball was bouncing really high and when he put the first serve in it was really tough."

Djokovic played brilliantly at times but the main difference was in unforced errors where he made 40 to just 22 from Nadal.

Asked what the difference was between the two, the Serbian said: "Well, obviously it's his patience on certain points.

"When I needed to, maybe stay a little bit more patient and just play the right shots, I made some unforced errors."

SL take rookie for World T20

AFP, Colombo



Udana for next month's World Twenty20 Championship in England as Kumar Sangakkara assumed charge as captain.

The June 5-21 event will be Sri Lanka's first official tournament since the team was attacked by armed militants in the Pakistani city of Lahore on March 3 on the way to play third day of the second Test against Pakistan.

Seven Sri Lankan cricketers

and an assistant coach were injured in the attack, which left eight Pakistanis dead.

Sangakkara, the team's premier wicketkeeper-batsman, takes over as captain from Mahela Jayawardene, who resigned after the Pakistan tour to concentrate on his batting.

Jayawardene was included in the 15-man squad, while veteran spinner Muttiah Muralidaran was named as Sangakkara's deputy.

Udana, 21, and batsman Indika de Saram, 35, forced their way into the squad with impressive performances in a recent domestic Twenty20 tournament.

Seasoned seamers Chaminda

Vaas and Dilhara Fernando failed to make the squad.

Sri Lanka have been drawn with Australia and the West Indies in Group C of the preliminary league with two teams advancing to the next round.

SQUAD

Kumar Sangakkara (captain), Muttiah Muralidaran, Sanath Jayasuriya, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Mahela Jayawardene, Chamara Silva, Angelo Mathews, Ajantha Mendis, Nuwan Kulasekara, Thilan Thushara, Lasith Malinga, Isuru Udana, Farveez Maharoof, Jehan Mubarak, Indika de Saram. Coach: Trevor Bayliss.

Mohammedan bow out

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doleful fashion. Only Shuvo stood in the ruins with an entertaining 29 off 24 balls.

In the day's second match, Brothers defeated Mohammedan in a low-scoring match thanks to a miserly bowling performance from left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak, who conceded only three runs in as many overs and took one wicket.

Brother, who got one point in a rain-hit tied match against Abahani on Sunday, posted a not-so-impressive 136-9 in their share of 20 overs with Tushar Imran hitting highest 29.

Sri Lankan Jehan Mubarak contributed 24 runs and opener Mehrab Hossain made 20.

Chasing an easy target, Mohammedan, who lost the

opening match against Top Sports, made a mess of it once their opener Ashraf Islam was out in the very first ball of the innings. Rasel Al Mamun scored 26 with four boundaries and the lone six of the match. But wickets never stopped falling like rain and they were eventually bundled out for 90 with two overs in hand.

Dollar Mahmud was adjudged man-of-the-match for taking three vital wickets conceding 26 runs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ISPAHANI SC: 175 for 5 in 20 overs (Shamsur 71, Rabbi 25, Jeevan Mendis 65; Waqqas 2-32, Shuvo 3-23).

PIRATES OF CHITTAGONG: 125 all out in 19.4 overs

(Salahuddin 17, Naeem Islam 15, Waqqas 19, Shuvo 29; Monir Hossain 3-18, Monir Dar-2-11). Result: Ispahani won by 50 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Shamsur Rahman (Ispahani) BROTHERS UNION: 136 for 9 in 20 overs (Mehrab 20, Jehan Mubarak 24, Kapugedara 10, Tushar Imran 29, Rejaul Karim 14, Abdur Razzak 11, Tarek Aziz 3-29, Rasel Al Mamun 2/13, Nayyer Abbas 2/26).

MOHAMMEDAN SC: 90 all out in 18 overs (Rasel 26, Nayyer Abbas 16, Dollar Mahmud 3-26, Yunus 2-16, Shahjada 2-18). Result: Brothers won by 46 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Dollar Mahmud (Brothers)

New Tigers called up

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Although the selection committee expressed their frustration over the postponement of the Pakistan series, Rafiqul said that they were quite optimistic about the team's progress in the World Cup.

"The best thing is that the boys have played together for a long time at different levels and form the nucleus of the national team that has also performed creditably against New Zealand, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. We made it to the Super Eight in the last World T20 competition and the initial target will be to repeat that and I am very hopeful that we'll

play some quality cricket in England," he said.

He was also not worried with his non-playing skipper Mohammad Ashraf and his deputy Mashrafe Bin Mortaza in the ongoing IPL in South Africa as he believed that five warm-up matches before the tournament proper in England would help tune them up.

"The players will play two T20 matches against the Bangladesh A team and three T20 games against the Maharashtra Cricket Association. And we have five practice matches in England, so I think we have enough opportunity to prepare our-

selves. On the other hand we think Ashraf and Mashrafe are learning something from the tournament," he said.

The Tigers are scheduled to leave for England on May 23 and will play additional warm-up games at Wormsley on May 26 (against New Zealand) and May 29 (against Scotland) and then travel to Kent to face Netherlands on May 28. Bangladesh's official practice games are against Australia (on 01 June) and Sri Lanka (on 04 June) at Nottingham.

Ashraf's men face India on June 6 and Ireland on June 8 at Trent Bridge in the group A matches.

Three zonal champs decided

SPORTS REPORTER

Shamsudozza Sriti Eleven of Narayanjanj, Mukti Sangha of Rajshahi and Nazrul Pathagar of Barisal all emerged as zonal champions of Faridpur, Rajshahi and Patuakhali respectively in the National Club Cup Championships.

Rain continued to affect the matches as two out of seven games were curtailed to shorter lengths.

At the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium, locals Mukti Sangha beat Sirajganj's Rahmatganj Young Association by six wickets in a match reduced to 41 overs aside due to wet outfield.

In another match, which was trimmed to 35 overs Chander Hat of Kishoreganj defeated M.C.C. Sherpur by eight wickets at the Mymensingh Stadium.

In other matches Nilphamari's National Cricket Club, Nazrul Pathagar, Shamsudozza Sriti Eleven, Jhainadaha's Kotchandpur Upazilla and Modern Club of Habiganj emerged victorious at different venues across the country.

School football

SPORTS REPORTER

RSKH Institute defeated Dariyapur School 5-0 at the Rajbari Stadium yesterday in the first round of the Citycell National School Football Championship.

At the same venue Islamia Alim Madrasa beat Rajibpur High School 2-0 later in the day.

At the Srimangal Stadium, Elliotganj High School crushed HMP High School 4-0 while Habiganj Govt. High School played out a two all draw against Ghorashal Pilot High School at the same stadium.

In other matches Govt. Nasirabad School, Muslehuddin High School, Kaliganj SM High School, BL Govt. High School, Azimuddin High School, Netrokona Dutta High School, Govindaganj High School earned victories at different venues across the nation.

Hatibandha SS High School, Chandana High School, Sangu High School and Manikchhari Rani Nihar Devi got walkovers from their opponents.

Three new

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The team will be playing a practice match a day after they arrive in Kuantan on May 6.

National coach Gerhard Peter Rach, his deputy along with a new German computer analyst Achim Mertens is already in Malaysia assessing the conditions and oppositions ahead of the meet.

BHF General Secretary has informed that it was the first time in the history of the country's hockey that a computer analyst has been appointed.

"Achim Mertens who is a computer analyst from Germany will join our team but he has been working for us since last month's Sultan Azlan Shah Cup Hockey Tournament in Malaysia. Mertens will be a part of our contingent till the end of the Asia Cup after which there is every possibility that we will extend his stay," said Jamil.

SA include Botha

CRICINFO, undated



South Africa have included their vice-captain Johan Botha in their 15-man squad for the World Twenty20 beginning on June 5 in England and are confident he will be eligible to play after the off-spinner was reported for a suspected act.

Botha was reported for a suspected illegal bowling action by match officials after the fourth ODI against Australia in Port Elizabeth in April. He will undergo a bio-mechanical assessment of his action, but is eligible to play international cricket at the discretion of Cricket South Africa (CSA) while the test results are pending.

"He hasn't been cleared yet but we are confident and positive that he will be," Gerald Majola, chief executive of CSA, told Cricinfo. "Of course, if he is not cleared, we will have to ask for a replacement."

Bruce Elliott, a professor with the University of Western Australia, had tested Botha last Thursday as per the revised ICC procedure. "We don't have the results yet, but we hope to have some numbers by the end of the week," Elliott told Cricinfo.

There were no new faces in the squad which comprised players who enjoyed success against Australia over the summer. Yusuf Abdulla, who made his Twenty 20 debut against Australia in

Centurion, was rewarded for his outstanding performances in the domestic tournament and for Kings XI Punjab in the IPL with a call-up. Abdulla is currently the IPL's highest wicket-taker with 14 wickets in seven matches.

"Our cricket is entering an exciting period," Mike Procter, South Africa's chief selector said. "We are top of the ODI rankings but have never won a major trophy and this presents the opportunity to do so in a limited-overs format."

"The players are all in good form and it is particularly pleasing to have so many quality all-rounders at our disposal. As always there are a couple of unlucky players and that emphasises the excellent competition we have for places. Form in the Standard Bank Pro20 domestic competition was a key factor in our selection process and it was encouraging to note how high the standard of our domestic cricket is at the moment."

South Africa coach Mickey Arthur was "delighted" with the squad. "It is a team with plenty of options -- great depth to the batting and plenty of bowling options. It is also an outstanding fielding unit."

SQUAD

Graeme Smith (captain), Johan Botha, Yusuf Abdulla, Mark Boucher, AB de Villiers, JP Duminy, Herschelle Gibbs, Jacques Kallis, Albie Morkel, Morne Morkel, Justin Ontong, Wayne Parnell, Robbie Peterson, Dale Steyn, Roelof van der Merwe. Coach: Mickey Arthur.

Shoaib back for Pakistan

AFP, Lahore



Pakistan on Monday included controversial paceman Shoaib Akhtar in their 15-man squad for next month's Twenty20 World Cup in England, despite jitters over his fitness.

The 33-year-old took part in four of the five one-day internationals which ended on Sunday in Abu Dhabi with Pakistan's 3-2 defeat against Australia, with the fast bowler taking six wickets.

Akhtar was last year banned for five years on discipline charges -- a punishment reduced to 18 months by an appeal committee -- while a knee injury and an assault on a team mate have also dented his reputation.

But chief selector Abdul Qadir said Akhtar was gaining rhythm.

"I have always said that a fit Akhtar is an asset for the team," Qadir told AFP from Abu Dhabi.

"He showed he has that firepower to get wickets, so we have selected him and this is a balanced squad on which we can pin our hopes of winning the title."

Akhtar played just four Twenty20 matches last year due to fitness problems. He was dropped from the team after he took only one wicket in two one-day matches against Sri Lanka

in February this year.

He was later ruled out of the two-Test series in February-March, and only returned to the squad for the series against Australia.

Akhtar was part of Pakistan's team for the inaugural Twenty20 World Cup held in South Africa in 2007 but he was expelled from the team after he hit teammate Mohammad Asif with a bat a few days before the start of the event.

Pakistan's current squad also includes 17-year-old rookie paceman Mohammad Aamir, who has played just 10 first-class and two Twenty20 matches at domestic level. Qadir said Aamir was an exciting prospect.

Another uncapped player is Shazaib Hasan, a 19-year-old off-break bowler and a right-handed batsman. Like Aamir, he has played just 10 first-class games and two Twenty20 matches in Pakistan's domestic competitions.

Pakistan's team is drawn in Group C of the June 5-22 Twenty20 World Cup along with hosts England and the Netherlands.

SQUAD

Younus Khan (captain), Salman Butt, Ahmed Shahzad, Misbahul Haq, Kamran Akmal, Fawad Alam, Shoaib Malik, Shahid Afridi, Sohail Tanvir, Yasir Arafat, Shoaib Akhtar, Umar Gul, Mohammad Aamir, Saeed Aijmal, Shazaib Hassan. Coach: Intikhab Alam.

T20 WC on Clarke's mind

Cricket

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Australia's stand-in captain Michael Clarke said Monday his team were focused on next month's Twenty20 World Cup in England, despite the looming challenge of the Ashes tournament in July.

The Ashes was "something all the players and public look forward to," Clarke said, but the Twenty20 World Cup was one in which "we have not been as successful as would have liked."

Clarke added, "our form in Twenty20 has been okay, but the Twenty20 World Cup is one tournament we haven't won, so we can't take our eyes off that just yet."

Clarke, who led Australia in the absence of regular captain Ricky Ponting, was speaking before returning home later Monday after guiding his team to a 3-2 win over Pakistan in the one-day series that ended Sunday.

Australia and Pakistan will play one more match in the United Arab Emirates -- a one-off Twenty20 match in Dubai Thursday in which Australia will be captained by Brad Haddin.

With batsman Michael Hussey and spearhead Mitchell Johnson -- who were also rested for the series against Pakistan -- returning to the squad next month, Australia would be at full strength for both the Ashes and the Twenty20

tournaments, Clarke said.

"Whatever squad we pick will be very keen to do well but it would be great... to be at full strength at the T20 World Cup, do our best and then wait for the Ashes," he said.

Nevertheless, Clarke acknowledged that the Ashes tournament had always been foremost on the minds of Australia's cricketers and its fans.

"The Ashes [is] something all the players and public look forward to. (England) is a wonderful place to play cricket and England have always been competitive, no matter where you play them," he said.

"My first Ashes was in 2005 and I have some terrible memories (of Australia's defeat in England), so have got to turn those round."

"I have got some good memories of 2007 (of Australia's victory in Australia), so hopefully I can keep those in front of my mind and 2005 at the back."

Clarke was happy Australia have quality bowlers to choose from, for both T20 and the Ashes.

"Dougie (Bollinger) has come up, (Brett) Lee is bowling again so we have lot of good bowlers but unfortunately there are only a certain amount of spots you can pick on an Ashes tour, so hopefully it will be a strong side."

Australia start the Ashes series on July 8 when they face England in Cardiff for the first Test. The Twenty20 tournament starts at Lord's on June 5.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across, Down, and Cryptiquip. Includes a solution time of 25 mins and a grid of letters.

Cryptiquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers. Includes a solution time of 25 mins.

CRYPTIQUIP
BJ PHT NSDHZS ZBESM BO
KCA AHOI HJ ZSARSM
DQHDHACRS NCEI, B'M ICP
PHT'ES DCTKQR BO DCOMP.
Yesterday's Cryptiquip: WHEN YOU GO DOWNHILL IN WINTER IN A REALLY LIGHTWEIGHT METAL SLED, IS THAT ALUMINUM SLIDING?
Today's Cryptiquip Clue: D equals C