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## Four MHL players called up for national duty

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Four players have been called up to join the national men's hockey team for their fine show in the Malaysia Hockey League (MHL).

They are Muhd Najib Abu Hassan of Tenaga Nasional, Mohamad Ashran Hamsani of Universiti Kuala Lumpur and Terengganu's Luqman Nul Hakim Ahmad Shukran and Muhd Sufi Ismat Rohulamin.

There are now 28 players in the training squad, with 24 of them under the Podium Programme.

National chief coach Stephen van Huizen said he needed a bigger pool of players to cater for a hectic schedule this year.

He also needed replacements for injured

defenders Muhd Izad Hakimi Jamaluddin (meniscus tear) and Faiz Helmi Jali (shoulder).

"Out of the four called up, one or two will get a chance to play in the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup (in Ipoh from March 3-10)," said Stephen.

"I'll name the final squad of 18 players for the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup after two friendly matches against Argentina on Feb 26 and 27."

He said Malaysia's preparation for the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup was on track.

"I've 24 best players and there is no need to press the panic button by calling former internationals," said Stephen.

In the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup, Malaysia

will be up against world champions Australia, reigning Olympic champions Argentina, Asia Cup champions India, England and Ireland.

It will be a good warm-up tournament ahead of the Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia, from April 4-15.

Malaysia are also gearing up for playing tours in Argentina (June) and Australia (August) as preparation for the Asian Games in Indonesia from Aug 18 to Sept 2.

The Asiad gold medallists will qualify automatically for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Malaysia's other assignments are Asian Champions Trophy in Muscat, Oman, from Oct 18-28 and World Cup in Bhubaneswar, India, from Nov 28 to Dec 16.