stuttering halt. Bangladesh last made a trip to Pakistan in 2008 but the events of April 2009 when the Sri Lankan cricket team were attacked on their way to the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore certainly put a permanent stop to international cricket in the country. The 2011 World Cup was swiftly taken away from Pakistan and the national team had to play all its cricket abroad.

Further damage was caused by the Mumbai terrorist attacks of late 2008 when the already fraught relation between India and Pakistan hit another low, resulting in none of the Pakistani players going under the hammer in the big-moneyed India Premier League (IPL) auction for the 2009 season.

Shahid Afridi took serious affront to the 'planned' snub. Nonetheless, Afridi, Abdur Razzak, Rana Naved Ul Hasan, Umar Gul and Sohail Tanveer took off to play Twenty20 tournaments in Australia and England, though the pay was considerably less than the IPL. And there was just room for a few of the Pakistani players when most of them are considered the best when it comes to Twenty20 cricket.

Salman Butt himself had a contract with the Shahrukh Khan-owned glitzy Kolkata Knight Riders but it was terminated after just one season.

Clearly, the Pakistani players failed to understand how they had nothing from the delicious and cash-laden Twenty20 pie when some of the Indians, not even international cricketers, walked off with crores.

Even at a board level, Pakistani players are paid significantly less than Indians, South Africans, Australians or the English.

A few thousand dollars earned through a few no-balls was too tempting to let go.

Catching 'em young

When Mohammad Aamer walked out to bat in a harshly quiet Lord's on the day the NOTW story broke, the boy looked sad and lost. He got out meekly, a pale shadow of his exuberant run-up, his unkempt bangs bouncing around his eyes and his raw pace mixed with swing and venom.

Aamer was a breath of fresh air for a cricket team, or for that matter a nation, starved of good news. Aamer reminded everyone of Wasim Akram, mainly because he was a left-armer like the great man. But Akram had said earlier this year that he wasn't so good at only 18 when Aamer already started to make the ball talk and batsmen quiver.

But by the last days of August, the English who had taken Aamer to heart couldn't wait to see the back of him.

What made him an instant role model for the less advantaged in Pakistan, the youngster's tough upbringing, also spelled his doom.

He reportedly told a newspaper recently that



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