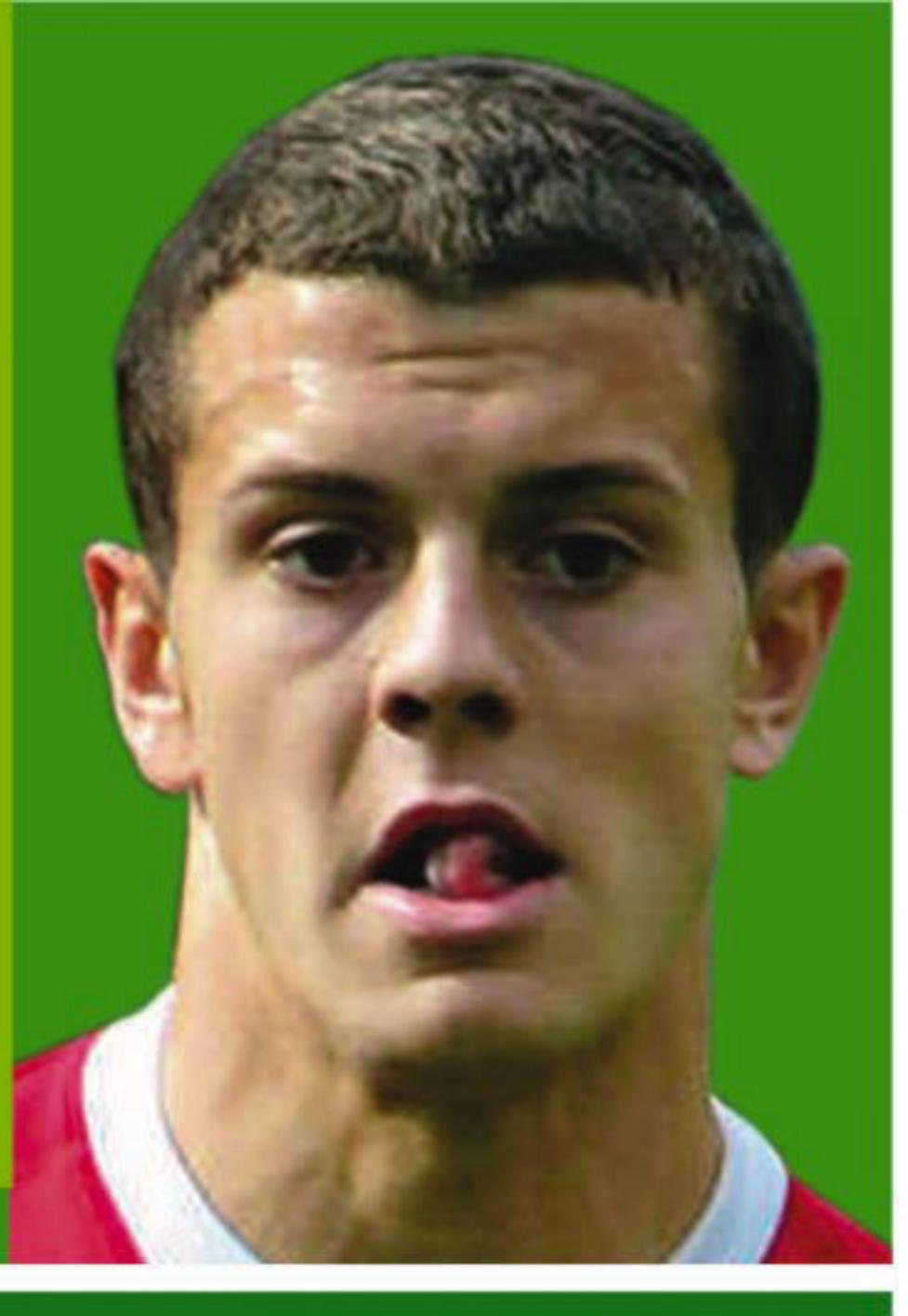


Wilshere's Euro heartbreak

England and Arsenal midfielder Jack Wilshere will miss this year's European Championship due to a persistent ankle injury, his Premier League club manager Arsene Wenger said on Monday. The 20-year-old has not played this season and after Arsenal lost 2-1 at home to Wigan Athletic in the Premier League Wenger said he had no chance of being fit for the tournament in Poland and Ukraine starting in June. Wilshere has made five England appearances since making his debut in 2010.

- REUTERS



Zim tour delayed



SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh cricket team will have to be content with playing minnows in the next few months after their August tour to Zimbabwe has been delayed to next year.

This was informed by Bangladesh Cricket Board director Enayet Hossain Siraj, the chairman of the cricket operations committee, after a meeting held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh were supposed to play two Tests, three ODIs and a Twenty20 during the tour but it will now be pushed back by eight months into a late southern African summer.

"They have informed us that both their grounds are not prepared so it won't be possible in August," said Siraj. "They proposed for the tour in October but it won't be possible in because we will have domestic season at the time. So we agree to hold it in April 2013."

As was planned, the Tigers will tour Europe to play Ireland in a four-day game, three one-dayers and two Twenty20 games. There is also consideration for matches against the Netherlands and Scotland during the tour.

The more pressing matter in hand however is the Pakistan tour, whether the Tigers will be given a schedule to train ahead of the two matches. Siraj said that they are playing in cool so far. "We have discussed the issue but we will wait for the ICC to let the board know about the progress," he said.

With less than two weeks left for the scheduled first game to be held on April 29, it is interesting to see the Tigers not training yet as it is increasingly becoming a hurriedly prepared tour.

Meanwhile, the BCB have been invited to send a team to Trinidad & Tobago for a tournament commemorating the island's Independence Day in August. The winners will get \$20,000 and the organisers will bear all expenses. A BCB Eleven could be sent, it was learned.



Cricket fans under the banner 'Save Bangladeshi Cricketers and Save Bangladesh Cricket Board' form a human chain during the day-long protest in front of the National Press Club yesterday against Bangladesh's tour of Pakistan. The tour has led to grave concerns about the safety of the players in a country where international teams have not visited since the March 2009 attack on the Sri Lankan team bus which claimed the lives of eight Pakistanis and led to injuries to seven cricketers and officials.

PHOTO: STAR

LOCAL SNIPS

SPORTS REPORTER

Wari Club completed their campaign of the second tier professional football league on a winning note when they handed a 1-0 defeat to Uttar Baridhara Club in the Premier Bank Bangladesh Championship League at the Cox's Bazar Stadium yesterday. Sujan struck the all-important goal in the 19th minute.

The fourth win in 12 matches took favourites Wari Club to the top of the 7-team table with 17 points while Uttar Baridhara are in the third position with 14 points from 11 matches.

Despite the win, Wari may not stay at the top as Cox's City are just one point behind them with two matches in hand. Victoria have 12 points and also have two matches to play.

If Cox's City win the next match, they will take an unassailable lead to emerge champions in the inaugural edition of the second tier league.

Nat'l Volleyball

Satkhira and Rajshahi became champions in men's and women's section respectively in the Padma Crown & Pepsi Inter-District Volleyball Championship beating their respective rivals at the Volleyball Stadium yesterday.

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Dinajpur make fine start

SPORTS REPORTER

Dinajpur beat Mymensingh by six wickets in the second round of the 32nd inter-district cricket championship at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna yesterday.

Batting first, Mymensingh were shot out for 167 runs in 47.4 overs with Salahuddin top scoring with an unbeaten 63. Jamil took three wickets for 14 runs.

In reply, Dinajpur made 171-4 in 43.3 overs with Arif making 47 runs.

A strange invitation

ATIQUE ANAM



The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) on Tuesday sent a press release to the different electronics and print media requesting members of the press to attend a 'reception' for the shooting team that will be leaving on Thursday morning for London for a training camp ahead of the 2012 London Olympics.

The press release, written in very unprofessional language and signed by the Director General of the BOA, says that the Deputy High Commissioner of British High Commission will be present at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to accord the 'reception' to the team which will be led by the Director General of BOA Colonel (retd) Waliullah. One assumes that it was 'see-off' which was actually meant rather than 'reception' which was written.

Another incongruity in the press release is that it asks members of the press to attend the program which is quite uncommon as it is not a press conference where press will be asked to attend, rather they will do so of their own accord.

However, the biggest cause of surprise was the presence of the Director General of BOA Colonel (retd) Waliullah as the leader of the 6-member team since he was not in the initial 5-member list. The initial list contained four shooters -- Sharmin Akter Ratna, Sadia Sultana, Sharmin Akter, Tripti

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Law given CA role

AFP, Brisbane

Cricket Australia (CA) announced Tuesday it had appointed former Bangladesh coach Stuart Law to a high-performance role at Australian cricket's Centre of Excellence.

Law, who played one Test and 54 one-day internationals for Australia, will return to his home city of Brisbane to take up the appointment.

He will assist Centre of Excellence head coach Troy Cooley in providing tactical and technical support and development to Australian cricketers in the state and national programs.

Law, 43, quit his role as Bangladesh coach this week less than one year into a two-year contract.

"The opportunity to return home to be closer with family and work in Brisbane with Australia's established and emerging talent was too good to pass up," Law said in a statement.

'No reason to be afraid'



SPORTS REPORTER

After attending the much-talked about International Cricket Council (ICC) executive committee meeting, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president AHM Mustafa Kamal returned home yesterday -- a return much awaited as there were questions to be answered.

It was expected that the BCB boss will speak officially to the media immediately after his arrival. There were burning issues to address like Bangladesh's brief tour to Pakistan, which has kicked up quite a storm among the public, especially after two board directors failed to clear the air on Monday during an official press conference. But inconveniently, Kamal insisted on talking over telephone to clear his stance about the tour where security is a big concern.

"Someone should take the initiative to break the stalemate (bring back international cricket to Pakistan). I'm

going to take a leadership role in the ICC, so I came forward to do something and you know all member countries in the meeting appreciated my initiatives. So you should look positively at this issue," said Kamal.

He also firmly believes that Bangladesh cricket will benefit greatly from his cricket diplomacy.

"What I can assure you is that we will be benefited if we tour Pakistan subject to ICC's clearance," he added.

The main question surrounding the tour is whether Kamal has taken the positive step with or without the government's say-so. The BCB chief however responded with a vague answer, though it is the prevailing opinion that he should clarify the matter especially as touring Pakistan is such a sensitive issue.

"You know the ICC is against any government interference in running cricket activities in any country. On the other hand, you know very well that the BCB is also very much a part of the government and I am also appointed by the government, so the

board has got the right to take the decision," said Kamal when asked whether they got any clearance from the government and what was actually the observation of the security team which visited Pakistan last month.

He also said that he is sticking to his earlier stance which is that the ICC must provide neutral match officials and reminded that the evaluation of the ICC after it receives the detailed security plan from PCB is crucial to the tour going ahead.

"It is very clear that we must get the go-ahead from ICC, so the ICC assessment report is very important as it will decide whether neutral or non-neutral umpires will be provided," explained Kamal.

"There will be nothing wrong in touring Pakistan if ICC felt that the country is safe for the officials. And you know we are going to play only one one-day international and a T20 match in Lahore, so I don't think there is any reason to be afraid," said confident Kamal.



An action from the Inter-district Volleyball Championship women's final between Rajshahi and Rajbari at the Volleyball Stadium yesterday.

Is Pakistan safe?



SPORTS REPORTER

With Bangladesh's tour of Pakistan all but confirmed, the reality of an international cricket team touring the militancy-torn nation has elicited strong opinions in both countries. The website of the popular Pakistani daily Dawn ran a blog post by Hassan Cheema on Monday that queried if Pakistan was ready to host an international cricket series, and seemed to come to a conclusion that the risks outweighed the rewards.

Bangladesh are scheduled to play a one-day international and a T20 international in Lahore on April 29 and 30 respectively.

The post starts off by drawing a parallel between the 2010 African Cup of Nations (AfCON) in Angola and the 2009 Sri Lankan tour of Pakistan, both of which were disrupted by violent attacks on the sportsmen which led to a loss of lives. The AfCON attack happened in Cabinda, an exclave of Angola which had been a ground for separatist movement since independence. According to Hassan Cheema, Sri Lanka's motivation in touring Pakistan in 2009 "had been the same as the teams visiting Cabinda they were trying to show that normalcy existed in these lands."

The writer went on to question the wis-

dom of using sport and sportspeople as tools to lift the image of troubled nations. "For decades, regimes throughout the world had used sport to provide an illusion of something which wasn't there. Now, it seemed, it was time for the terrorists to make sure that didn't happen. The push from all sides in the importance of sport had meant that sportspeople had become an automatic target for publicity for the latest of monstrous deeds."

He then turned the spotlight to the proposed tour by Bangladesh. "Over the past five years Pakistan has seen the deaths of thousands of its citizens and army men. Despite a reduction in the violence (of the terrorism kind) in the past few months, there have still been a number of attacks in 2012 alone. It is with this as context that one questions the ideas that Zaka Ashraf is proposing."

"Surely, the proposals for international teams and players to tour Pakistan should come when we have reached a semblance of normalcy and peace. Instead we have decided to assume our existing state as normalcy. What do we have to gain from a tour? An improvement in the image of the country? For the sake of what? A probable attack and the loss of lives for guests of this country? We are told that they'll be provided maximum

AHF CUP HOCKEY
Bangladesh off to a good start

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh began their AHF (Asian Hockey Federation) Cup campaign in the right note as they defeated Chinese Taipei 4-2 in Bangkok, Thailand yesterday.

Striker Krishna Kumar gave Bangladesh a fourth-minute lead. However, after scoring the opening goal, Bangladesh faced tough challenge from the team which beat Bangladesh 7-5 in Asian Games Qualifiers in Dhaka in 2010. The first-half ended 1-0.

Bangladesh doubled the lead through Kamruzzaman in the 44th minute but Chinese Taipei bounced back to pull one goal back just one minute later. Two minutes later, they even levelled the margin.

But the boys in red and green defied the challenge to

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