

# AUSTRALIA CANCELS BANGLADESH TOUR

## *How worried should you be?*

AZMIN AZRAN

When Cricket Australia announced that the Australian cricket team would not be touring Bangladesh, it was heartbreak for millions of fans. It's bad enough that Bangladesh will be missing out on a return to international cricket after a long break, but the apparent reasons behind it make it even worse.

A chance to take on Australia in a Test series after nine years was a relishing prospect for Bangladesh. We've been playing excellent cricket at home in the recent times and facing an Australian side that's relatively young could have made for a feisty contest, something Bangladesh rarely gets to share with Australia.

It's necessary to understand what has caused this, because to many it might seem confusing that an Australian team that visited us in the political turmoil of 2013-14 would cancel now, when things aren't nearly as bad. But this cancellation comes on the back of a warning from the Australian government that they have information that individuals or certain groups may target "Australian interests" in Bangladesh. Judging from the Australian governments political indulgences around the world, it is a likely scenario that this goes beyond what the domestic situation in Bangladesh is.

Cricket Australia thought it wise to



cancel the tour based on their government's concern for security, like when we cancelled our tour to Pakistan a couple of years back. The obvious response to that statement would be that Pakistan's situation at that time can't be compared to ours in any way. But if the Australian government has information that convinces them there's a threat to Australian interests in Bangladesh, they have the right to protect their citizens, and we must respect that.

There remains a nagging concern that this could be the beginning of a dark period for us, if teams might be unwilling

to tour Bangladesh in the future. We have mentioned Pakistan already, and after Australia cancelled a Pakistan tour in 2008 for security reasons, these concerns were confirmed a year later when a Sri Lankan team bus was attacked in Lahore. The fear that our future could follow the same path as our unlucky neighbours is difficult to live with.

Although there are reasons to fear such an outcome, there is enough evidence to also suggest that such concerns are baseless. Terrorist threats in Pakistan and Bangladesh are of two different natures, and law enforcement in Bangladesh has

shown their mettle in eradicating terrorists for the most part. We've seen with two major ICC events in the last five years that comprehensive security measures were taken to a successful end, and both of these events came and went without any notable hindrances. Another thing to consider would be Australia's history of cancelling tours, which makes curious reading when we see they cancelled their world cup matches in Sri Lanka in 1996 because of a Tamil Tiger bombing, but didn't think it was necessary to cancel when a similar incident took place in London during their 2005 tour. Their cancellation of Zimbabwe tour in 2002 was followed by them having no qualms about going there for world cup matches in 2003, or a series in 2004. If Zimbabwe seemed good enough to go back to a year later, so could Bangladesh.

From what we've seen and been told in the media, it seems as though the reason behind this unfortunate incident was more about them than us. If foreign cricket boards remain reasonable and the Bangladeshi authorities keep providing air tight security to the players and the fans, this could just as well be a one-time thing.

*When he's not obsessing over football, Azmin Azran spends his time devising ways of not getting mugged, only to fail miserably. Give him advice at fb.com/azminazran*

## STUDENT COUNCILS



## DO WE REALLY NEED THEM?

NOT ARKO

Schools in Bangladesh have never been a fan of students voicing their own opinions about how the school is run. It's common belief here that young people are naïve and make mistakes and so should not be trusted with great responsibilities. However, more and more schools worldwide are now putting emphasis on what the students have to say and are letting them create changes in schools. Should we follow in their footsteps?

Student councils are not given the highest esteem here in our country but they are still prevalent in many schools which aspire to be on a par with prestigious institutions around the world. However, our schools fail to grasp the actual concept of "student voice."

The student council in my school is basically nothing more than an event management group. Our opinions do not matter at all to the school administration and we are forced to keep our mouths shut about anything that we believe needs to be changed. Student minds are greater than this. Student opinions need to be taken into consideration on more pressing issues. Countries like USA, Canada, and the UK have introduced much more influential councils that can have representatives on the school board.

Student Voice, What Kids Can Do, Learning for a Cause, and SoundOut are a few notable organisations that promote student voice. Their main aim is to show people that the youth of their nations are capable of making

informed decisions and should be allowed to influence how their own education system works. Starting from things like the cafeteria food, the cleanliness of school toilets, to things like the quality of teachers and the method by which the curriculum is taught — students should have the right to speak up about any issue. Neither the school, nor the administration's say should be final and binding.

There are, however, concerns regarding the extent to which students should take part in making school decisions. Not everyone is capable of making mindful decisions. What the councils look for are students with leadership skills. A competition for a place in the council sometimes leads to unhealthy politics, which is one of the core reasons why student

councils are often unsuccessful.

Student councils also play an important role in shaping students for the future. Students get a taste of what it's like in the real world; they learn how to tackle new challenges and become a lot more responsible. Who knows, these young council members could even be future world leaders. Local school councils may be behind in terms of letting the students take any decision that really matters, but they still do teach students these invaluable skills.

Universities worldwide prefer students who have been part of their school's councils because they also believe that student councils are the perfect platform for future influential individuals. Our schools need to understand that student councils have the potential to both enrich the school and the students.