



(Clockwise from top R) Bangladesh Test captain Mahmudullah Riyad had no idea what awaited the team when they boarded the bus for a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand yesterday. The Tigers decided to offer Jumma prayers but soon found themselves outside a mosque where an Australian national had opened fire on the unsuspecting congregation not moments ago. After fleeing the scene in fear for their lives, the team regrouped at the Hagley Oval before heading back to the hotel where they, still shaken from the incident, huddled together and watched news of the horrific attack flood in.

PHOTO: MAZHAR UDDIN & BCB



Tigers to return today

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh cricket team will return home tonight after escaping unharmed from yesterday's active shooter situation during Jumma prayers at a mosque in Christchurch. The incident was labelled as the worst terror attack on New Zealand soil.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) confirmed yesterday that nineteen members, including all fifteen players, of the team will return to Dhaka tonight at 10:40pm Bangladesh Standard Time. The remaining coaching staffs are set to fly back to their respective homes on the next available flights.

Soon after news of the grisly attack broke in the morning, people were anxious to know about the Bangladesh team's condition, in addition to the touring journalists, and when they would return home.

"We were, at best, 50 metres away from the mosque. Had we reached three or four minutes earlier, it would have been a massive accident for us. We watched in horror, like you see in movies, people coming out of the mosque with blood dripping. We were inside the bus for almost ten minutes with our heads bowed to avoid stray bullets. The players were absolutely distraught while watching this incident unfold," said the team's operations manager Khaled Masud.

Masud added that they did everything possible to confirm the team's immediate return.

The third and final Test between Bangladesh and New Zealand, scheduled to start from today at Hagley Oval, was called off in the aftermath of the event.

New Zealand Cricket (NZC) CEO David White confirmed the cancellation, saying: "On behalf of the NZC -- heartfelt condolences to those affected. We've cancelled the game. I've spoken to my counterpart at Bangladesh Cricket and we agreed that it's inappropriate to play at this time."

While also informed that the decision was a joint one between the two cricket boards and that the NZC were shocked and appalled by what had happened. The Bangladesh Cricket Board also released a statement.

"The Bangladesh Cricket Board is shocked and deeply saddened by today's dreadful attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. Our heartfelt sympathies to the families of the victims and our thoughts are with them at this time," the statement read. "The Board thanks New Zealand Cricket for ensuring that members of the Bangladesh National Cricket Team are safe and secure in Christchurch. Both national cricket bodies acknowledged that playing in these difficult times is not a practical choice and hence decided to call off the third and final Test."

WHAT THEY SAID

So sad to see what has happened in New Zealand... Sending my love to everyone there in Christchurch and the families affected.

--Mesut Ozil

Devastating news from New Zealand. My thoughts are with the victims and their families #Christchurch.

--Sergio Aguero

New Zealand's peace and tranquillity shattered by madness.. Thank God for Bangladesh team.. Peace and Love for all.

--Ramiz Raja

My thoughts and prayers go out to everyone affected by this tragic event in New Zealand.

--Tim Cahill

All my thoughts and my prayers go out to the victims and their families in New Zealand.

--Bafetimbi Gomis

Everyone's thoughts at Manchester United are with those who have been affected by today's attacks in New Zealand.

--Manchester United

Frightening experience

STAR SPORT DESK

There was widespread shock and condemnation from the cricketing fraternity yesterday after the tragic shooting incident in Christchurch, New Zealand, where at least 49 people have lost their lives. Bangladesh's Mushfiqur Rahim and Tamim Iqbal, two of those who were witness to the incident, took to twitter to express their mental state. Other legends, like Virat Kohli, Shahid Afridi and Shoaib Akhtar joined the condemnation of such a heinous attack while breathing a sigh of relief at the safety of the Bangladesh team.

Bangladesh batsman Tamim Iqbal was distraught as he was one of the players who were on their way to the Masjid AL Noor -- one of the mosques where the shooting took place. He wrote in his official twitter handle @TamimOfficial28:

"Entire team got saved from active shooters!!! Frightening experience and please keep us in your prayers."

Wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim wrote in his twitter handle @mushfiqur15:

"Alhamdulillah Allah saved us today while shooting in Christchurch in the mosque...we r extremely lucky...never want to see this things happen again....pray for us."

Bangladesh team's performance analyst Srinivas Chandrasekaran described his experience @chinu1501:

"Just escaped active shooters!!! Heartbeats pumping badly and panic everywhere!!!"

Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan -- currently in Bangladesh nursing an injury which forced him to miss the New Zealand tour -- was relieved to learn that his teammates were safe. His official twitter account @Sah75official said:

"I have nothing to say about the active shooting in New Zealand that took place all I want to say is I'm grateful to almighty Allah for saving my brothers my teammates! Alhamdulillah."

Pakistani legend Shahid Afridi spoke to Tamim over phone after the incident, enquiring about the team's safety. The popular all-rounder later posted this tweet @SAfridiOfficial:

"Horrible tragedy #Christchurch. I found NZ one of the safest, most peaceful places, people are friendly. Spoke to Tamim big relief Bangladesh squad/staff is safe. World must together! stop hatred! Terrorism has no religion! Prayers for bereaved families. May Allah bless the departed."

The scheduled third Test between hosts New Zealand and Bangladesh, which was scheduled to begin on Saturday in Christchurch, was cancelled after discussion between both cricket boards. International Cricket Council (ICC) praised the decision to cancel the Test.

ICC CEO David Richardson was quoted in a press release: "Our thoughts and sincere condolences go out to the families and friends of those affected by this horrendous incident in Christchurch. Both teams, staff and match officials are safe and the ICC fully supports the decision to cancel the Test match."

'Foreign hosts need to step up security'

SPORTS REPORTER



Following the horrific shooting incident in New Zealand's Christchurch where the Bangladesh team survived a close shave, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan said that the board will be asking for a minimum level of security before going on overseas tours. In the case that security requirement is not met, the team will not be allowed to tour.

During a brief to the media at his residence in Gulshan yesterday, the BCB president said that when it came to security issues, 'we don't demand too much in regards to security for our overseas tours; no one actually does

when they play in countries like New Zealand.'

He felt that the New Zealand authorities were not prepared for a situation like this. "I don't think they had any idea that something like this could happen there. For example preparation and everything, the amount of time it needed for the police to get there is not normal."

Then he said that it was now time to look at the safety measures properly and ensuring security of the players in a more robust way, adding that things will surely change now.

"What is certain after this incident is that we will ensure our minimum required security ourselves. We will only tour those countries which can provide that security or else we will not be able to visit."



NAZMUL HASSAN

He compared the security measures taken in our country to those ensured by the rest of the countries, implying that fool-proof security such as in Bangladesh is not usually ensured in most countries.

"What I feel is that the kind of secu-

rity overseas is not adequate. Because what we do [in terms of security] is a whole lot more," Hassan said.

When asked what security measures, if any, they would ask to the England and Wales Cricket Board during the upcoming World Cup, Hassan said that ICC implements its own security for the global events like the World Cup and that he was confident that the measures in England will be adequate to ensure safety for the team.

"ICC ensures security during their events. There is a minimum standard which they make sure are implemented. "Since England has seen this kind of incidents before and is very alert. My thinking is that they will provide good security. From our side, we will undertake extra measures as per requirement," he said.

Tides before and after the ides of March

MAZHAR UDDIN from Christchurch

Just what a sea change in outlook yesterday's tragic attack may have on the people of New Zealand can only fully be appreciated by someone who has witnessed the secure life in the small country before two mosques in Christchurch became the sites of a brutal shootings on March 15.

I have been in the country for more than a month to report on the fortunes of the Bangladesh cricket team, who escaped possible victimhood yesterday as

they had just reached the parking lot of the mosque in their bus for Jumma prayers as the shooter left the scene mere minutes ago.

Coming from Bangladesh, where touring cricket teams and the hosts alike are given state level security, it was jarring to see a complete absence of police or security presence around the team. There was no security in front of the team hotel or at the ground when they went to practice, and not even on the bus that they rode on.

There was only a local liaison officer,

who followed the team around in his own car and sometimes changed it up by riding along with the cricketers on the bus.

The picture, however, was much different in the 2015 World Cup, which New Zealand co-hosted. Then, the security arrangements were quite closer to home and it was next to impossible for even accredited members of the press to approach players. International Cricket Council events are different because there is a uniform security requirement that every host -- regardless of how laidback their culture is -- have to abide by.

Although the lax security seemed strange -- it never seemed that an international tour was ongoing -- it should not invite anger towards New Zealand Cricket because security has never been much of a requirement in the country. People can just amble into the country's premier cricket venue -- the Basin Reserve in capital Wellington -- and walk along the boundary's edge on non-match days.

Yesterday evening, however, I saw two police cars in front of the team hotel -- signs that the ides of March has surely changed the tides in sleepy New Zealand.

MSC stretch winning streak

SPORTS REPORTER



Shafiqul Islam hit the last ball from left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny for a boundary as Mohammedan Sporting Club posted a one-wicket victory over Prime Doleshwar Sporting Club in a Dhaka Premier League match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

However, it was number eight batsman Sohag Gazi who ensured that Mohammedan's winning spree stretched to three consecutive victories as his blistering 51-ball 70-run innings helped the side recover from 125 for seven and chase down Prime Doleshwar's 248 for eight total.

Gazi launched a counterattack after a top order hiccup as the right-hander smote three fours and six sixes during his match-winning knock after taking one wicket for 37 runs in 10 overs. When Forhad Reza trapped Gazi

in front, Mohammedan required four runs from ten balls with one wicket in hand and Shafiqul made sure Gazi's valiant effort would not go in vain.

Earlier, Marshal Ayub (68) and Taibur Rahman (72 not out) guided Doleshwar to a fighting total.

At BKSP-3, Gazi Group Cricketers rode on pacer Kamrul Islam's five-for to register a three-wicket victory over Khelaghar Samaj Kallyan Samity. Khelaghar were bundled out for 138 runs, a total which Gazi overtook in 39.5 overs, courtesy of Shamsur Rahman and Parvez Rasool. Shamsur hit 51 off 77 balls while Parvez contributed with an unbeaten 59 off 79 balls.

Elsewhere, Sumon Khan took four wickets after Mahmudul Hasan's 66 as BKSP posted a 20-run win against Uttara Sporting Club at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah.

Uttara were all out for 181 runs in reply to BKSP's 201 for eight.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PRIME DOLESHWAR V MOHAMMEDAN

Prime Doleshwar: 248 for 8 in 50 overs (Farhad 19, Jashimuddin 20, Marshall 68, Taibur 72 not out; Shafiqul 3-64, Alauddin 3-49)

Mohammedan: 251 for 9 in 50 overs (Tushar 19, Irfan 30, Nadif 30, Shohag 70, Alauddin 38; Reza 4-55, Shykat 2-52, Nasim 2-28)

Result: Mohammedan won by one wicket.

KHELAGHAR V GAZI GROUP

Khelaghar: 133 all out in 47.5 overs (Mahidul 57, Nazimuddin 21; Mahedi 2-18, Kamrul 5-24)

Gazi Group: 142 for 7 in 39.5 overs (Shamsur 51, Rasool 59 not out; Robilul 5-41)

Result: Gazi Group won by 3 wickets.

BKSP V UTTARA SC

BKSP: 201 for 8 in 50 overs (Mahmudul 66, Kayium 19, Shamim 22, Aminul 33, Parvez 27 not out; Nahid 2-30, Gaffar 2-34)

Uttara: 181 all out in 49 overs (Jony 25, Raza 51, Shakhrir 50; Naser 2-23, Sumon 4-41, Murad 2-30)

Result: BKSP won by 20 runs.



Mohammedan batsman Sohag Gazi struck a blistering 51-ball 70 as the side registered a one-wicket win against Prime Doleshwar in a Dhaka Premier League encounter yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHME