

# SPORT



## PM asks for security review for future tours

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Saturday said Bangladesh will send its cricket team to any touring country in the future after examining and reviewing security measures there.

"In the future, whenever we send our cricket team, we'll do that after examining and reviewing the security measures there," she said.

The Prime Minister said this while inaugurating the four-lane second Kanchpur Bridge on the Shitalakhya River, four-lane flyover at Bhulta and a railway overpass at Latifpur on Dhaka-Sylhet Highway through videoconferencing from her official residence Ganobhaban.

Sheikh Hasina also said Bangladesh always ensures high security whenever any team of any cricket-playing nation comes here. "We ensure their appropriate security and we'll always do that," she added.

The Prime Minister was speaking after some of the Bangladesh national cricket team players narrowly escaped terror attacks on mosques at Christchurch that left 49 dead.

"Our cricketers were supposed to go to that mosque; they went their but on their way to it, a wounded woman did not let them to enter it and this is how they escaped," she said.

Condemning the attacks in New Zealand, Hasina said there is nothing more heinous than killing people while they are performing their prayers. "I hope the world community won't only condemn this incident, but also take steps to eliminate militancy and terrorism forever."

The Prime Minister said she always believes that militants and terrorists have no religion, country or nation. "They're just terrorists, and actions have to be taken against them considering them as terrorists."

Hasina mentioned that Bangladesh, with its hectic efforts, managed to protect the country from militancy and terrorism although many people raise many questions. "Militancy and terrorism can never bring any good to anyone," she said.

Talking about religious liberty in Bangladesh, the Prime Minister said this is the right of all people as the country has properly established this religious right. "The people of all religions can perform their respective rituals here freely."

Describing New Zealand as a peaceful country, she questioned the mosque attacks there and said that these were dreadful incidents.



The Bangladesh cricket team began their journey home after their tour of New Zealand was called off following terrorist attacks on two mosques in Christchurch which left 49 people dead on Friday. Amid heavy security, they boarded the flight before (INSET) arriving in Dhaka late on Saturday night.

PHOTO: BCB/FIROZ AHMED



## Sleepless Tigers return home

SPORTS REPORTER

The players of the Bangladesh cricket team returned home yesterday night after a harrowing experience in Christchurch, where they narrowly escaped a terrorist attack as they were headed to a local mosque for Friday prayers.

Upon arrival at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka, stand-in Test captain Mahmudullah Riyad and Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan held an impromptu press conference, but due to the overwhelming media presence and raucous atmosphere it was hard for them to speak and harder still for reporters to hear.

Mahmudullah, still shaken, said that the players had understandably been struggling to sleep since the incident.

"The only thing I can say that we are very lucky," the skipper was quoted as saying by AFP. "With all of your prayers... now we could return here alive. I cannot describe what is going inside us, what we have seen."

"All of us in the team could not sleep properly. The only thing that popped up in our mind was how lucky we are," he added.

Hassan added that as the team had gone through such a traumatic experience, they required a break from cricket. He advised that the players spend time with their families and try not to relive the memories from that day -- when the players were warned against entering the Masjid Al Noor by passersby and quickly got away from the scene of a gruesome attack that has claimed 49 lives.

Perhaps those who witnessed it firsthand will never be able to forget the brutal scenes and it is a certainty that the players will need

considerable time to return to living their lives normally.

Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal admitted it would take time for himself and others players who were present to heal.

"What we faced here, it will take some time for us to get over what we suffered," Tamim said before boarding the flight for Bangladesh.

However, the left-hander was optimistic that they could deal with the trauma in due time.

"It's good that we are returning to our families because everyone is worried. Hopefully we will overcome this with time," Tamim said.

The Bangladesh team were anxious before leaving the country but during a brief interview with Chinese news agency Xinhua, Bangladesh wicketkeeper batsman Mushfiqur Rahim said that the team still love New Zealand.

"New Zealand is one of the best countries in the world. We still love New Zealand," said

Mushfiqur, who offered condolences to the families of the victims.

Mushfiqur had earlier tweeted that they considered themselves lucky to have escaped. Asked about whether they had been offered support to cope, Mushfiqur said that it was enough for them to get out of the situation alive.

Paceman Abu Jayed too was not himself and said he would not feel completely okay until reaching home.

"Until I reach Bangladesh, maybe not," Jayed said when asked whether he had stopped feeling nervous.

Soon after the incident, the third and final Test against the hosts was called off following discussions between the visiting and host countries' cricket boards and the Bangladesh team were guarded by armed police before they boarded the flight from Christchurch.



Bangladesh Test captain Shakib Al Hasan (C) unveiled the BCB Academy Cup 2019 trophy alongside the participating teams' captains and BCB Director Khaled Mahmud at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The tournament, featuring 32 private cricket coaching academies from all over the country, will get underway tomorrow through an opening ceremony at the City Cub Ground.

PHOTO: STAR

## Shakib's NOC rests on next assessment

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury informed yesterday that Shakib Al Hasan's eligibility for a No Objection Certificate (NOC) for the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL), scheduled to begin from March 23, rests on a clean bill of health from his next assessment.

The Tigers' Test and T20I skipper is currently undergoing a rehabilitation program for the injury he sustained during the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) final in February on his left hand's little finger.

"Shakib has come from an injury. I hope that it [Shakib's participation in the IPL] will get clear in the next assessment," said Nizamuddin.

Earlier, it was informed by BCB cricket operations committee chairman Akram Khan that the ace all-rounder has no chance of getting fit before at least March 20.

Nizamuddin also informed that, keeping in mind Bangladesh's World Cup preparations which are expected to begin from mid April, they will decide whether Shakib will be given an NOC for the entire duration of the IPL or just a part of it after discussing the matter with the team management.

## Sri Lanka fold for 225

AFP, Cape Town



A half-century by Kusal Mendis and an adventurous lower order partnership lifted a struggling Sri Lankan team in the fifth and final one-day international against South Africa at Newlands on Saturday.

Mendis made 56 in a Sri Lankan total of 225, which was boosted by an eighth wicket stand of 61 off 53 balls between Priyamal Perera and Isuru Udana.

Even so, Sri Lanka fell three balls short of batting out a full 50 overs, continuing a sequence going back to October 2018.

The only time in their most recent eight matches when they were not bowled out was in the rain-shortened third match of the current series when they were well short of the required run rate when play was halted.

Mendis played a measured innings in making his second half-century of a series in which none of his fellow top-order batsmen reached the 50 mark.

He was needlessly run out after a mix-up with Priyamal Perera in the 35th over at a time when he could reasonably have been

LATEST

A partial floodlight failure halted South Africa's run chase. Most of the lights on one pylon had failed. South Africa scored 135 for the loss of 2 wickets when play was interrupted. Markram was the top scorer batting on 67.

expected to start accelerating. He faced 84 balls and hit three fours.

Udana, the only other Sri Lankan to hit a half-century, again made a lively tail-end contribution, hitting 32 off 29 balls before he and Priyamal Perera fell off successive deliveries from Kagiso Rabada in the penultimate over. Rabada finished with three for 50.

Leg-spinner Imran Tahir, in his final one-day international in South Africa, took two for 33, while fast bowler Anrich Nortje took two for 35.

South Africa are seeking to complete a 5-0 clean sweep.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA: 225 all out in 49.3 overs (Fernando 22, Mendis 56, P Perera 33, A Perera 31, Udana 32; Rabada 3-50, Nortje 2-35, Tahir 2-33)

SOUTH AFRICA: 135-2 in 28 overs (Markram 67 not out, Dussen 28 not out; Thisara 1-20)

## Shah puts Afghans on top

AFP, Dehradun



Afghanistan batsman Rahmat Shah fell two runs short of his maiden Test century as he guided his team to a 142-run first innings lead over Ireland on the second day of the one-off Test on Saturday.

The Irish team lost captain William Porterfield in the closing hour of the game at 22-1 after Afghan batsmen had dominated the day in the north Indian city of Dehradun.

Maiden half-centuries by Asghar Afghan, with 67 runs, and Hashmatullah Shahidi (61) piled up 314 all out in reply to 172 from the visitors.

Afghanistan resumed the day's play at 90-2 with Shah (22) and Shahidi (13) sharing a second day 124-run stand for the third wicket before Andy McBrine picked up Shahidi.

Shah continued his journey towards

scoring the first ever Test century for the team but his innings ground to a halt at 98 off 214 balls when he chopped on a delivery by Tim Murtagh.

Murtagh, who saved the day for Ireland in the first innings after scoring an unbeaten maiden Test half century at number 11, had bowling figures of 1-33.

Ireland trail by 120 runs with eight wickets in hand on day three of the match after the team's battling line-up crumbled against the Afghan spin attack on day one.

Stuart Thompson picked three for 28, including the wicket of all-rounder Mohammad Nabi for nought. McBrine took 2 for 77.

SCORES IN BRIEF

IRELAND: First innings 172  
AFGHANISTAN: First innings 314 (Rahmat 98, Hashmatullah 61, Asghar 67; McBrine 2-77, Cameron 2-94, Thompson 3-28, Dockrell 2-63)  
IRELAND: Second innings 22 for 1

## BCB, NZC to discuss 3rd Test

SPORTS REPORTER

The third and final Test on Bangladesh's tour of New Zealand was called off in the wake of a horrific incident which left 49 people dead at a mosque in Christchurch on Friday.

However, Bangladesh Cricket Board CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury informed yesterday that they will decide on whether they should hold the cancelled Test at a later date during the next discussion with their New Zealand counterparts.

"It [the Third Test] was called off after communicating with New Zealand Cricket [NZC]. We regularly have discussions with all the boards about such matters. In the next discussion on scheduling matches for both teams, we will talk about this before taking a decision," Nizamuddin said yesterday. "The decision was taken by the two [New Zealand and Bangladesh] teams. Their [NZC] CEO informed us that it would not be right to continue the series under such circumstances. Then we informed them about our stance in the matter."



South Africa bowler Imran Tahir (R) celebrates after taking the wicket of Oshada Fernando during the fifth ODI against Sri Lanka in Cape Town yesterday. Tahir ended with figures of two for 33.

PHOTO: AFP