

Gill ask cricket team not to tour; PCB still hopeful

Even as India's Sports Minister M.S. Gill asked the cricket team not to tour Pakistan, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) officials were resting their hopes on back channel diplomacy to save next month's home series.

Gill said it was not the right time to play cricket with Pakistan when 'people from their soil were indulging in mass murder in India'.

'Is it possible for one team to arrive in [Mumbai](#) and indulge in mass murder, and have another team go and play cricket in the winter afternoon sun at Lahore?' he asked.

Gill also said that sporting contacts are meant to enhance friendship between human beings.

'It requires those in authority in Pakistan to give a clear indication, satisfactory to the world, of doing everything possible to prevent such murderous incursions, and to root out the basis of it all,' Gill said.

Saleem Altaf, PCB chief operating officer, told IANS Friday board chairman Ijaz Butt is in India to discuss Pakistan's tour while diplomatic channels are also being used to ensure that the series goes as per schedule.

His comments came soon after India's Sports Minister M.S. Gill asked the cricket team not to tour Pakistan.

Altaf said India toured Pakistan in 2004 in spite of tensions between the two countries and hoped that the upcoming series would finally take place.

'We continue to hope that India will go ahead with the tour and have kept our standard operating procedures in place,' said Altaf, a former Pakistan Test pacer.

Altaf refused to comment on Gill's stance but was quick to add that Pakistan was hoping that diplomacy will help save the series. 'We hope that back channel diplomacy will work and India will clear the tour.'

PCB chairman Butt is currently in [Chennai](#) and is expected to meet Shashank Manohar, president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), to discuss the issue.

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