

Sri Lanka condemns terror attack on cricketers, Rajapaksa cuts Nepal visit

The terror attack on Sri Lankan cricketers in Pakistan's Lahore city Tuesday led to outrage in the island nation, with President Mahinda Rajapaksa instructing that the players be brought home immediately.

Rajapaksa, who cut short his three-day visit to Nepal, 'unequivocally condemned the cowardly terrorist attack' in which six members of the cricket team were injured and five escorting Pakistani security personnel killed when the cavalcade was attacked by heavily armed gunmen as it was on its way to Gaddafi Stadium for the third day's play in the second Test.

'The president, who is at present in Nepal (on a three-day visit), has instructed that immediate action be taken to bring back to Sri Lanka all members of the team, ensuring their safety and security,' his office said in a statement.

'The president is returning Tuesday due to safety concerns after the attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Pakistan,' the Sri Lankan embassy in Kathmandu told IANS.

Foreign Affairs Minister Rohitha Bogollagama, who is also in Nepal, has been instructed to leave for Pakistan without delay.

'Instructions also have been given to the Sri Lankan high commissioner in Islamabad to facilitate the arrangements with Pakistani authorities on medical attention for the players in hospital and the safe return of the team to Sri Lanka,' the president's office said.

'The president expressed his sincere good wishes for the speedy recovery of all injured players and officials and their well being,' it said.

Sports Minister Gamini Lokuge said at least six members of the Sri Lankan team, including the assistant coach, were wounded.

The injured players include Captain Mahela Jayawardena, Kumar Sangakkara, Ajantha Mendis, Thilan Samaraweera and Tharanga Paranavithana.

'Tharanga has suffered a bullet injury in his shoulder while others have minor injuries. They are safe now but we are trying to get them out as soon as possible,' Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) CEO Duleep Mendis told IANS.

'We are making all possible arrangements to get the team (home) as soon as possible. The team might return home later today (Tuesday),' he added.

Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Palitha Kohona described the players as 'valuable assets' and the 'pride and joy' of the country.

'It is appalling that anybody should have targeted a sporting team in such a brutal manner. The attitude of targeting sportsmen must change,' he added.

Concerned family members of the players and team officials flocked to the SLC headquarters here

to inquire about the safety of their loved ones.

Sri Lankan Test team vice captain Kumar Sangakkara told a local radio station: 'All the players are completely out of danger. The injuries are not serious and we all are keeping safe and fine.'

Father of the outgoing team skipper Mahela Jayawardene said his son had called his wife from Lahore to say that he too had suffered minor injuries in his leg.

Kushil Gunasekara, manager of Sri Lanka's ace spinner Muttiah Muralitharan, said the player had called his family members and confirmed his safety.

'He has confirmed that all the players were safe, but was obviously shocked and dismayed to the extent that he could not speak for too long,' he said.

The incident that has shocked Sri Lanka was debated in parliament.

Sports Minister Lokuge said the Pakistan tour was undertaken after the authorities were satisfied with the security arrangements in Pakistan, which apparently had promised 'VVIP security' for the visiting team.

The Sri Lankan team was in Pakistan to play in place of India that pulled out of the series after the November [Mumbai](#) terror attack that was blamed on Pakistani terrorists.

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