
Sri Lankan cricketers now safe: shootout at Pakistan

Tuesday, 03 March 2009

Last Updated Tuesday, 03 March 2009

Six (06) Sri Lankan cricketers were reported injured including skipper Mahaela Jayawardene, wicketkeeper/batsman Kumar Sangakkara and Tilan Samaraweera in a shootout at Lahore in Pakistan this morning (March 3). According to Pakistan news sources, the visiting Sri Lankan cricketers were on their way to the Gaddafi international stadium minutes before commencing of the 3rd day's play of the second test between Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Reports received confirm that seamer Chaminda Vaas, open batsman Tharanga Paranawithana, spin sensation Ajantha Mendis also among the injured including the 4th umpire Ashan Raza.

Latest information from Lahore confirms that the Sri Lankan players are now out of danger and had received minor injuries. At least 5 Pakistan policemen providing security to the Sri Lankan players who had valiantly fought with the unidentified gunmen were reported killed. According to available information, 4 unidentified gunmen who had arrived in a white car had opened indiscriminate small arms and RPG grenade attacks at the bus and the escort vehicles that were transferring the Sri Lankan cricketers to the stadium. Tension prevails in the area with Pakistan security forces and Police engaged in hot-pursuit of the gunmen. Meanwhile, the Punjab provincial governor making an initial comment to media has said that the attack bears hall marks of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack on 2008. Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Dr. Palitha Kohona speaking to news agencies on the Lahore attack said that this incident is unlike to cause restraints between the two countries. He also emphasized commitment from the cricketing world to ascertain the presence of Pakistan as a major player in the game. Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India are all nations that are making stringent efforts to defeat the terrorist outfits in the South Asian region including the LTTE terrorists. Also, praising the Pakistani security forces for securing the safety of the cricketers, Foreign Secretary Kohona evoked the solidarity shown by both Pakistan and India towards the island nation during the famous 1996 cricket world-cup, when Sri Lanka was blacklisted as an 'unsafe' destination by foreign propagandists. Answering a question raised by a foreign journalist on the probability of shadows of LTTE terrorists behind the attack, Dr. Kohona said that, "We have to wait until Pakistan concludes initial investigations before drawing speculations", yet admitted the very existing links between LTTE and extremist terrorist organizations in the troubled borders of the south Asian region. Also commenting on the Sri Lankan situation itself, Foreign Secretary viewed hope of returning peace in the island, with the elimination of LTTE terrorists who are now cornered in a mere 40 Sq.km patch in Puthkkudiyirippu. Earlier, the terrorists refused all avenues provided by the GoSL to enter to mainstream politics. Courtesy: defence.lk