



PHOTOS: AFP

THE TIGERS IN 2017: MORE TO PROVE

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After two seasons of success at home, Team Bangladesh will have its work cut out in 2017. Success will be vital to take our cricket to the next level, as all our confirmed games in the first half of the year are away from home including a couple of unconfirmed ones scheduled in the Future Tour Plan. Bangladesh's meteoric rise to an unprecedented level in the game has been questioned by some critics because almost all our cricket in the last two years was played at home. While the conditions have helped us, it'd be unfair to attribute our success only to that. In the harsh reality that is international cricket, we have not had the opportunity to prove ourselves abroad and simply made the most of our opportunities at home.

But 2017 comes with the challenging gift of games in different conditions. A

full series of tests, one-days, and T20s in New Zealand will test our batsmen on green pitches where the ball moves around, and our spinners will not have the assistance they get on home conditions. The good news is that these are the very conditions where Team Bangladesh shined in the last world cup, and with the addition of Mustafizur, our pace attack is a force to be reckoned with. The expectation in the limited formats will be nothing less than victory, while in tests, we want to give them a run for their money.

Bangladesh's history of being a full ICC member can be described as one of neglect. Nothing characterises it more than the fact that in one and a half decades, we are yet to tour India for a bilateral series of any nature. That is about to change this February when the team travels to Hyderabad for a solitary test match. Beating India in India is a long

order for any team, but the least we could do is give them a reason to regret past occasions of neglect. In conditions suited to batting and one that assists spinners in the latter half of the match, Bangladesh has the ability to do wonders if the team is on top of their game.

Our cricket then moves further west to the British Isles where we will face New Zealand, and hosts Ireland for a Tri-series. A tough test in challenging conditions, but these are the ones we need to overcome for us to become a big player in the international arena. Victory will be expected once again, as it is the norm nowadays in ODIs, but the main objective will be to get acquainted with the conditions and to prepare for the competition following this, the ICC Champion's Trophy.

Much has been said about ICC's implicit attempts to create a barrier between the so called 'top' teams and the newer members.

But Bangladesh has been able to break through this barrier and qualify for the ICC Champion's Trophy in England next summer. Having done that, it'd be a shame to meekly bow out of the competition.

Bangladesh has been drawn in a tough group with England, Australia and New Zealand, and to finish among the top two in this lot will require an almighty effort. But this might just be another turning point in a time that has been full of turning points for Bangladeshi cricket, and we might just announce to the world that the tigers' roars have escaped Mirpur and are now being heard around the world.

Azmin Azran is a 17 year old boy stuck in the body of a 17 year old boy. He talks a lot, mostly about football and politics because that's what's on TV most of the time. Contact him for an onslaught of uncomfortable jokes at [fb.com/azminazran](https://www.facebook.com/azminazran)

