

"2026 will be much, much bigger. I think this part of the world doesn't realise what will happen in 2026. These three countries will be turned upside down and then flipped again. The world will be invading Canada, Mexico and the United States. They will be invaded by a big wave of joy and happiness."

FIFA president Gianni Infantino



## Nadal intends to play at Wimbledon

AFP, Palma

Spanish tennis legend Rafael Nadal said on Friday he intends to play at Wimbledon but his final decision rests on how his troublesome left foot feels after training in London next week.

"My intention is to play at Wimbledon," Nadal said at a press conference in Mallorca. "The treatment and the last week of training tells me there is a chance. I will travel to London on Monday, play an exhibition and do a week of training to see if it's possible."

Nadal said injections meant his left foot felt "asleep" during the French Open final on June 5 -- he still beat Casper Ruud to claim a record-extending 22nd Grand Slam title.

Nadal travelled to Barcelona last week to begin "pulsed



Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan (4L) tries to inspire his side with some words ahead of the start of the second day's play of the first Test against West Indies at Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium in Antigua and Barbuda on Friday. However, the first hour of the morning brought more misery for the Tigers, who failed to review a chance while let a slip catch fly between two fielders. PHOTO: AFP



radiofrequency stimulation", a treatment aimed at reducing nerve pain. Nadal's spokesperson said the treatment would leave the nerves in his foot "temporarily numb".

"I'm happy. I've felt a bit of pain, but it's different to what I had before, which for me is progress."

Nadal has won Wimbledon twice in his career, in 2008 and 2010 but is hoping to make his first appearance at the All England Club in three years.

"I will travel to London, play two matches there before the tournament and follow my normal schedule to prepare for Wimbledon," Nadal said.

"Who knows what can happen in a couple of days -- if the situation changes or something more negative (happens), there will be a moment to explain."

"But I am excited to travel to Wimbledon and to play for the first time in three years."

He said his plan is to "play Wimbledon, rest, then Canada and then the US Open."

## Can Tigers overcome half a decade of top-order struggles?

MAZHAR UDDIN

Before the start of the first of the two-match Test series in Antigua, skipper Shakib Al Hasan mentioned that the Tigers would have to put up a better show with the bat, especially in the first innings, if they wanted to take control of the Test. It was pretty much a confession that Bangladesh's batting was the area of concern in the first innings of a Test match.

But yet another horrible batting display in the first Test on Thursday saw the visitors bundled out for 103 runs in their first innings and immediately be forced onto the back foot as the fear of losing yet another Test match comprehensively came to the fore.

On the other hand, West Indies replied strongly and ended the first day on 95 for two, eyeing a big first-innings lead that would give them full control of the Test match.

Bangladesh's first-innings debacles over the past five years have been something of a feature of the side, with the Tigers bundled out for 150 or below on seven occasions since 2018. Consequently, they

lost all those games by big margins.

Since 2018, those first-innings failures have also seen the Tigers lose 19 of the 28 Test matches prior to the first Test against the West Indies. In that time, they have won six and managed to draw three matches.

**Bangladesh could learn some lessons from their historic win in New Zealand, where the visitors posted 458 runs in their first innings before eventually registering a memorable eight-wicket win.**

Of those 28 matches, eight have resulted in innings defeats, which included an innings and 219-run defeat against the West Indies in Antigua in 2018, when the Tigers were bundled out for their lowest ever total of 43.

Interestingly, five of their six wins came

at home -- three against Zimbabwe and two against the West Indies. The only away win was against New Zealand earlier this year, when Bangladesh registered a historic win in Mount Maunganui.

Bangladesh could learn some lessons from their historic win in New Zealand, where the visitors posted 458 runs in their first innings before eventually registering a memorable eight-wicket win.

But the fact is that even when the Tigers posted over 300 runs, they have still ended up on the losing side on occasion.

Despite posting 430 runs against the West Indies in the first innings in a Test in Chattogram last year, Bangladesh ended up on the losing side while the latest ten-wicket defeat against Sri Lanka in Mirpur on May came despite the hosts posting 365 runs in their first innings.

Although the Tigers still have the opportunity to stage a turnaround despite posting a paltry 103 in the ongoing Test against the West Indies, Bangladesh's batters will have to come up with something extraordinary in the second innings. Or else the visitors could well end up following in the footsteps of their past failures.

## 'I made Messi's only transfer'

AGENCIES



Lionel Messi is "on Olympus" as one of the greatest players in history, and former Paris Saint-Germain sporting director Leonardo cannot believe he brought the star to Ligue 1. Leonardo departed at the end of the 2021-22 campaign, with former Monaco and Lille transfer guru Luis Campos

joining the Ligue 1 champions. Nevertheless, he reflected gleefully on securing the services of the 34-year-old.

"We had thought about it a lot, yes. We had talked about it, but Messi had never thought too much about leaving Barcelona," he told L'Equipe.

"It was the last moments before his arrival that were decisive. Afterwards, everything becomes a bit more normal but, you made Messi's only transfer in his career!"

"Chronologically, there is Pele, Maradona, Messi. He is on Olympus. So when I take stock of my last three years, I see a Champions League final, a semi-final, the 10th league title, seven national trophies and I signed Messi."

## BFF shifts FIFA friendlies to Dhaka

STAR SPORTS REPORT

Considering the ongoing flood crisis in Sylhet, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has shifted the women's national team's two FIFA friendlies from Sylhet to Dhaka after Sylhet District Association expressed their helplessness to prepare the ground amid the



alarming situation.

The booters are scheduled to play two FIFA tier 1 matches against their Malaysian counterparts on June 23 and 26.

Mohiuddin Selim, secretary of Sylhet DSA and executive member of the BFF, had let the football federation know about their incapability to prepare the practice ground as well as the competition ground for the FIFA friendlies. Also, the Bangladesh Premier League's tie between hosts Rahmatganj MFS and Bashundhara Kings, slated for June 20 at Sylhet Stadium was deferred by a day and shifted to Munshiganj.

## England hit record 498 against the Netherlands

AFP, Amstelveen

England hit a world record one-day international score of 498-4 against the Netherlands in Amstelveen on Friday, with three men scoring centuries.

Eoin Morgan's side beat their own mark of 481-6 set against Australia at Trent Bridge in 2018, in the first match of the three-game series.

Jos Buttler, who finished on 162 not out, plundered his ton off just 47 balls -- missing his own record for the fastest England century by just one ball -- while Phil Salt and Dawid Malan also made three figures.

Liam Livingstone, batting at number six, made the fastest 50 in England's ODI history off just 17 balls -- the joint second-fastest of all-time.

The men in blue made their intentions clear early in their innings when Salt smacked Dutch right-arm medium pacer Shane Snater for six -- the first in slugfest of 25 sixes and

36 fours to follow -- in near-perfect batting conditions.

The Lancashire-based right-hander pulled a short ball over deep midwicket, landing just over the ropes to the ongoing delight of cheering England fans, many of whom made the trip by car across the Channel for the game.

The England batters then scored freely with beautiful stroke-play and never looked troubled by the Dutch attack.

Salt suffered an early scare though in his innings, when the Netherlands -- who surprisingly opted to field after winning the toss -- dropped him on 40 in deep cover off the bowling of Bas de Leede.

England too suffered an early wicket hard-hitter Jason Roy inside-edged a pitching delivery from Snater, and had to walk for a single.

Together with a stylish Dawid Malan, Salt put on a partnership of 222 before being caught on 122,

slicing at slower short ball by Van Beek.

Malan and Buttler then drove England with an even bigger partnership of 184 before Malan fell on 125 to a full delivery from Dutch skipper Pieter Seelaar, which Malan steered into the waiting hands of Bas de Leede at deep midwicket.

Malan looked trapped LBW on 25 off the bowling of the Dutch skipper earlier in his innings, but he got a reprieve after an initial out decision was overturned by the Third Umpire.

The Yorkshire left-hander smashed three sixes and nine fours, becoming only the third England player after Jos Buttler and Heather Knight to score a ton in all three formats of the game.

But in the end it was Buttler who gave the young players in the Dutch team a masterclass batting lesson, hitting seven sixes and 14 fours in a magnificent innings on a day of records.

