

Fresh Test dawn beckons Tigers and Lions in Galle

SPORTS REPORTER

As the new World Test Championship (WTC) cycle begins today, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh will look to rebuild and rise in Galle.

For Bangladesh, the 2023–25 cycle marked a step forward. After finishing bottom in the first two editions, the Tigers climbed to seventh last season, winning four matches – including three rare away Test victories in a single year, a feat previously unmatched in their 25-year Test history.

Yet, progress was uneven. Their away form surged, but home performances faltered – managing just one win from six home Tests. It was a stark reminder of how misleading momentum can be.

Najmul Hossain Shanto, who captained most of the previous cycle, returns at the helm with his leadership extended for another year. The core squad remains largely unchanged, and the task is clear: to build on last season's promise and aim even higher.

However, a repeat of past batting woes could stall that ambition. Bangladesh failed to cross 200 in 13 innings and managed scores above 300 in just four out of 24. Shanto admitted as much in yesterday's pre-match press conference, stressing the need for discipline and adaptability in a venue known to challenge batters and favour spinners.

"I think there are many cricketers who have the experience of playing in this condition," Shanto said.

"If they can use their experience,

Head-to-Head: Matches-26, Bangladesh-1, Sri Lanka-20, Draw-5
Tigers' record in Sri Lanka: Matches-14, Won-1, Loss-11, Draw-2
In Galle: Matches-2, Loss-1, Draw-1

*Bangladesh lost by 259 runs in the last Test they played in Galle, in 2017, before bouncing back to clinch a landmark first-ever Test win against Sri Lanka in the second and final Test in Colombo, coinciding with their 100th Test appearance.



PHOTO: SRI LANKA CRICKET

I think it will be good for us. But I think we need to play good cricket here.

"I think the batters will have the challenge. The spinners can take a lot of wickets here. If you see, there can be a lot of runs here in the first two to three days. There will be challenges in all conditions but it's important how much we enjoy those," opined the Bangladesh captain, adding that the Tigers will be waiting for recovering Mehidy Hasan Miraz until the very end before forming their playing eleven against a team they have beaten only once in 26 attempts.

Sri Lanka, meanwhile, are entering a new phase of their own. Though the Lions narrowly missed out on a place in the last WTC final – undone by key lapses at crucial moments – they remain a formidable home force.

Now, under Dhananjaya de Silva's leadership, they begin a transition. The squad features six uncapped players, with prospects like wicket-keeper Lahiru Udara, allrounders Sonal Dinusha and Tharindu Rathnayake stepping into the spotlight. The changes follow the retirement of former captain Dimuth Karunaratne, while veteran Angelo Mathews is set to bow out after the first Test.

"We had one hand on a spot in the final but a few brain fades at crunch moments cost us dearly," Sri Lanka captain Dhananjaya told reporters.

"We've learnt our lessons. A strong home start lays the foundation for success on the road."

HP aim to 'fast-track development' in Chattogram

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh High Performance (HP) team departed for Chattogram yesterday for the first phase of their training camp, slated to begin from June 17.

Twenty-eight players, including the likes of Jishan Alam, Mahfuzur Rabbi, Aich Mollah and Ripon Mondol, have been picked for the HP core squad till 2026, and the group will undergo training till July 14.

HP head coach David Hemp will be undertaking the session and said that the upcoming camp is not only to develop skills but also to build characters. "Obviously they are not finished products," Hemp said before the side's departure for Chattogram yesterday.

"So, the key bit for us is making sure the programme challenges the players, moves them out of their comfort zone, builds their characters and develops them not just as players but also their personalities.

"When they do step outside from us, they can actually impact the game and stay there for a longer period of time."

The Bermudian further informed that the purpose of the current camp is to facilitate faster development.

"In terms of the next group, we don't say we want five players to debut next year. It's more about what group of players we have and the talent available there, and make sure we are communicating with Phil Simmons and the coaches above us.

"Our job is to fast-track the development of these players," Hemp stated.

Meanwhile, the national players of the ODI setup who are not part of the Test side had begun their camp in Mirpur last Saturday. The white-ball players will depart for Chattogram on June 20 and play two intra-squad matches on June 23 and 25.

SHORT CORNER

'No control, no impact': Kirsten breaks silence on Pakistan exit

Former South Africa opener and celebrated coach Gary Kirsten has offered a frank assessment of his ill-fated tenure as Pakistan's white-ball head coach, revealing he felt sidelined from the outset and unable to effect meaningful change in a dysfunctional system. "Cricket teams need to be run by cricket people," Kirsten said.

Himu Bachar turns up the heat in Singapore

Himu Bachar scored the highest number of points for Bangladesh compound archer when he shot 707 in the qualification round of men's compound event in the 2025 Asia Cup World Ranking Tournament, Stage-2 in Singapore on Monday. Himu scored 707 points from his 72 shots (maximum 720 points) to finish fourth. Kushal Dalal of India topped the qualification round with a score of 714 points.

Auckland brought a pen, Bayern a panzer

Nathan Lobo perhaps had more on his mind than defending Michael Olise at the FIFA Club World Cup on Sunday. The 22-year-old Auckland City left-back had a university exam scheduled during the competition – to be taken from his hotel room in Cincinnati. Elsewhere in the line-up of the New Zealand side were a primary school teacher, a barber, a Coca-Cola salesman, and a part-time insurance broker.

***Read The Daily Star website for full stories.*

Mathews to sign off where it all began

AGENCIES

Sri Lanka are set to begin a two-Test series against Bangladesh in Galle on Tuesday, a match that carries special significance as it marks the end of Angelo Mathews's illustrious career in Test cricket.

The veteran all-rounder, who debuted at the same iconic venue beneath the ramparts of the Galle Fort in 2009, will bid farewell to the longest format after 118 Tests.

"It's been a dream run," said the 38-year-old Mathews. "The wins in England in 2014 and the whitewash of Australia in 2016 stand out. I've seen so many youngsters come through the ranks. I truly believe Sri Lanka's future is in good hands."

Mathews retires as Sri Lanka's third-

highest run-scorer in Tests, with 8,167 runs—trailing only the legendary Kumar Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene.

Sri Lanka's squad for the series includes six uncapped players, with at least one debutant expected. As always, spin will be central to their strategy, with Prabath Jayasuriya as the lead spinner and Akila Dananjaya returning to the fold.

Captain Dhananjaya de Silva expressed his team's motivation to give Mathews the send-off he deserves.

"The best thing we can do for Angelo is win the match for him and give him a good farewell. Unfortunately, we couldn't do that for Dimuth [Karunaratne] earlier this year. Personally, I'm hoping we can do it for Angelo," he said.



WOMEN'S WORLD CUP Tigresses set for heavy travel

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will shuttle between Sri Lanka and India four times for their round robin matches of the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup, which will be held in those two neighbouring countries from September 30 to November 2.

The quadrennial tournament will get underway at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru with the match between India and Sri Lanka.

Only Sri Lanka will make a more outbound trips than Bangladesh – five in total – for their seven matches while Pakistan will not have to travel at all

because they will play all their matches in Colombo, courtesy of the heightened geopolitical tension between India and Pakistan.

The semifinals are scheduled for October 29 and 30, before the final takes place on November 2.

The top four sides from the round-robin stage will progress to the semifinals, with first place playing fourth and second taking on third.

Bangladesh sneaked into the eight-team competition after sealing one of two qualification berths from Women's World Cup Qualifier, which was held in Pakistan in April, alongside the hosts.

BANGLADESH'S MATCHES

- Oct 2: Bangladesh v Pakistan -- Colombo (3:00pm)
- Oct 7: England v Bangladesh -- Guwahati (3:00pm)
- Oct 10: New Zealand v Bangladesh -- Visakhapatnam (3:00pm)
- Oct 13: South Africa v Bangladesh -- Visakhapatnam (3:00pm)
- Oct 16: Australia v Bangladesh -- Visakhapatnam (3:00pm)
- Oct 20: Sri Lanka v Bangladesh -- Colombo (3:00pm)
- Oct 26: India v Bangladesh -- Bengaluru (3:00pm)



PSG signaled their intentions of global domination at the FIFA Club World Cup with an emphatic 4-0 win over Diego Simeone's Atletico Madrid in their tournament opener at the Rose Bowl stadium yesterday. Fresh from their Champions League triumph, PSG delivered a dazzling display with goals from Fabian Ruiz, Vitinha, Senny Mayulu, and Lee Kang-in as the Parisians, who have already won four trophies, are looking to add more gloss to a superb season with a fifth title.

PHOTO: AFP



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