

Top 4 Favourites to Win ICC T20 World Cup 2026: India, South Africa, England & Afghanistan Lead the Race

Category: Business

written by News Mall | February 19, 2026



The 2026 ICC T20 World Cup kicks off on February 7 amid a lot of controversy regarding where Bangladesh's matches would be played and whether the Bangla Tigers would end up participating in the tournament or would they get replaced by Scotland, who have miraculously found themselves in the reckoning after losing their qualification spot to debutants Italy.



Top 4 Favourite Win T20 World Cup 2026- South Africa, India, Afghanistan, England, and more...

A total of 20 participating teams would be competing in the upcoming tournament, with each team playing a minimum of four group stage matches. Group A contains favorites India, along with arch-rivals Pakistan, the USA, Namibia, and the Netherlands.

Group B is headlined by previous winners Sri Lanka and Australia, with Ireland, Zimbabwe, and Oman making up the rest of the group. Group C features England, West Indies, Scotland, Nepal, and Italy, with three European teams finding themselves in the same group after Bangladesh's withdrawal from the tournament.

Group D could prove to be the Group of Death as it boasts of 2024 edition runners-up South Africa, 2021 edition runners-up New Zealand, Afghanistan, Canada, and the UAE, with one of the three big-name teams a definite to crash out from the group stage.

Apart from co-hosts India, many teams would be hoping to lift the trophy and prove their credentials in the shortest format of the game. While New Zealand have lost both of the matches so far in the 5-match T20I series against India, the Black Caps could provide a formidable challenge and have a plethora of spin options which could come in handy on the surfaces of Colombo and Chennai.

Another team from down under, Australia are placed alongside Sri Lanka in Group B and the Kangaroos are packed with power from top to bottom, with skipper Mitchell Marsh, Travis Head, Glenn Maxwell, Tim David, and Marcus Stonis providing an enviable batting lineup. The presence of Cooper Connolly, Matt Short, and Maxwell, along with lead spinner Adam Zampa, would keep the 2021 T20 World Cup champions in good stead in the subcontinent.

Let's have a look at the top four favorites to lift the trophy in the 2026 edition of the ICC T20 World Cup as the T20 extravaganza returns to India after a gap of 10 years:

#4 Afghanistan

Rashid Khan is the heart of the Afghanistan team and would be eyeing the trophy in 2026

The Afghans are the dark horses in a multi-lateral tournament yet again, as Rashid Khan and co. have had a disappointing time since the conclusion of the last edition of the T20 World Cup. Afghanistan has only defeated Zimbabwe, Qatar, and the West Indies in the last 18 months, but Rashid's men have pressed the accelerator at the right time with the T20 World Cup less than a fortnight away.

Placed alongside New Zealand and South Africa in Group D, Afghanistan has the potential to knock out one of the juggernauts of international cricket in the group stage. The Afghans had a memorable campaign in the 2024 ICC T20 World Cup as they eliminated Australia from the Super Eight stage, exacting revenge for the 2023 ICC Cricket World Cup heartbreak.

The legendary spin quartet of skipper Rashid, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Noor Ahmad, and Mohammad Nabi is arguably the best spin contingent amongst the 20 teams, and the quartet would love the opportunity of bowling on Chennai and Colombo's spin-friendly pitches.

Full Squad: Rashid Khan ©, Noor Ahmad, Abdullah Ahmadzai, Sediqullah Atal, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Naveen Ul Haq, Mohammad Ishaq (wk), Shahidullah Kamal, Mohammad Nabi, Gulbadin Naib, Azmatullah Omarzai, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Darwish Rasooli, Ibrahim Zadran

#3 England

Group C favorites England will kick off their 2026 T20 World Cup campaign against Nepal, and Brendon McCullum will have a point to prove after the 4-1 drubbing in the Ashes at the hands of arch-rivals Australia. Harry Brook will be captaining the Three Lions for the first time in an ICC tournament, and all eyes will be on how England lines up with Jos Buttler set to take the No.3 spot in the batting line-up.

The 2022 T20 World Cup champions endured a tough time in the last edition as they lost to Australia, South Africa, and eventually to champions India in the semi-final, while rain protected them from a potential loss against neighbors Scotland in the group stage as well.

The spin quintet of Adil Rashid, Rehan Ahmed, Jacob Bethell, Will Jacks, and Liam Dawson signifies a change in direction for the English side, who have usually been packed with out-and-out fast bowlers in recent editions.

Full Squad: Harry Brook ©, Rehan Ahmed, Jofra Archer, Tom Banton, Jacob Bethell, Jos Buttler (wk), Sam Curran, Liam Dawson, Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Jamie Overton, Adil Rashid, Phil Salt (wk), Josh Tongue, Luke Wood

#2 South Africa

Runner-ups of the last edition of the ICC T20 World Cup, South Africa finally ended their hoodoo and took off the chokers tag when they lifted the 2025 ICC World Test Championship Mace by defeating Australia in the final at Lord's.

Skipper Aiden Markram, Quinton de Kock, Dewald Brevis, and David Miller make up a batting order which is well-versed with Indian pitches, while the star-studded pace quartet of Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi, and Marco Jansen would be supported by the spin duo of Keshav Maharaj and George Linde.

Heinrich Klassen and David Miller almost took South Africa over the line in 2024 T20 WC Final

In the wake of the recently concluded SA20 season, the Proteas have lost a few players to injuries, as Tristan Stubbs and Ryan Rickleton finally found their respective places in the squad after Donovan Ferreira and Tony de Zorzi were ruled out of the T20 World Cup. The inclusions of Stubbs and Rickleton could prove to be a blessing in disguise as both players are well-versed with the Indian conditions after representing Delhi Capitals and Mumbai Indians, respectively.

Full Squad: Aiden Markram ©, Corbin Bosch, Dewald Brevis, Quinton de Kock (wk), Marco Jansen, George Linde, Keshav Maharaj, Kwen Maphaka, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton (wk), Jason Smith, Tristan Stubbs

#1 India

Defending champions and currently ranked No.1 in the ICC T20I Team rankings, India would bear the load of more than a billion fans yet again in home conditions. While the support of fans could prove to be a boost, as seen in 2011, 2015, and 2019 editions of the Cricket World Cup, none of the previous nine editions of the T20 World Cup, barring the 2012 T20 WC, have even seen the hosts qualify for the final, let alone lift the cup in home conditions.

Gautam Gambhir will once again be under the scanner despite the proven performances of his side in the T20 format, owing to Indian team's poor run in ODIs and Tests. Suryakumar Yadav broke his 468-day jinx of not scoring a half-century in Indian colors, getting to the landmark in mere 23 deliveries in the second T20I of the 5-match T20 series against New Zealand.

After winning the 2024 ICC T20 World Cup, India head into the 2026 edition of the tournament as firm favorites, after winning 8 consecutive bilateral series and one multi-lateral tournament, the 2025 Asia Cup.

Full Squad: Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson (wk), Ishan Kishan (wk), Tilak Varma, Suryakumar Yadav ©, Shivam Dube, Hardik Pandya, Rinku Singh, Axar Patel (vc), Washington Sundar, Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Jasprit Bumrah, Kuldeep Yadav.

Contributed By– Mohak Arora, Parimatch Sports analytics expert

