

## Reading a 19-year landscape

EKUSH TAPADER

Cricket in the subcontinent carries an intensity that extends beyond the field. The game is shaped by conditions, crowd pressure and context, all of which influence how tournaments unfold. As the ICC Men's T20 World Cup approaches its tenth edition, the contrast between events staged in Asia and those held elsewhere remains a recurring point of analysis.

With India and Sri Lanka set to co-host the 2026 edition, that contrast is back in focus.

Since its launch in 2007, the T20 World Cup has become a fixed part of the global calendar. Unlike the ODI World Cup's four-year cycle, the shortest format's flagship event has appeared as often as two years, reflecting its adaptability and commercial reach.

Across nine editions, hosting duties have been shared almost evenly. Five tournaments have been staged outside Asia and four within it. When the 2026 edition begins, that balance will be level.

While T20 cricket was initially viewed as a novelty — entertaining, but secondary — its rapid professionalisation has



reshaped the sport's priorities. The subcontinent, in particular, has emerged as a central hub for the format's growth.

### Conditions and adaptation

For years, the distinction between Asian and non-Asian venues appeared clear. Slower pitches and spin-friendly surfaces in the subcontinent contrasted with pace and bounce elsewhere. Modern T20 cricket

has narrowed that gap.

The expansion of franchise leagues has produced players accustomed to varied conditions. Batters now prepare for both grip and bounce, while bowlers rely increasingly on variations rather than surface assistance. As a result, traditional assumptions about home advantage have weakened.

Tournament results underline

this shift. Of the four T20 World Cups held in Asia, only one was won by an Asian team — Sri Lanka in Bangladesh in 2014. India's titles in 2007 and 2024 both came away from home, while Pakistan lifted the trophy in England in 2009.

Non-Asian teams have also adapted effectively in Asia. West Indies and Australia have won titles by leaning on pace options, athletic fielding and aggressive batting, rather than attempting to replicate traditional tactics.

### Patterns under pressure

Asian teams have won four of the nine T20 World Cups to date, with non-Asian sides claiming the remaining five. On the surface, the split suggests balance. Over time, however, a different pattern emerges.

Following Sri Lanka's 2014 triumph, Asian teams endured a lengthy title drought despite regularly advancing deep into tournaments. Knockout matches often highlighted familiar issues: cautious decision-making, reliance on top order batting and limited flexibility under pressure.

By contrast, teams such as England, Australia and West Indies have consistently shown greater adaptability in high-

stakes matches. Defined roles, deeper bowling resources and sharper fielding units have repeatedly proved decisive in tournaments held outside the subcontinent.

In a format decided by narrow margins, execution under pressure has mattered as much as conditions.

### Context beyond the field

The most visible contrast between Asian and non-Asian tournaments often lies off the pitch. World Cups staged in England, Australia or South Africa tend to progress with limited administrative noise. In the subcontinent, major events are frequently accompanied by political and logistical debates that shape the build-up.

Cricket in South Asia remains closely tied to national identity, and scheduling or venue decisions can dominate pre-tournament narratives. Once the tournament begins, however, those factors usually fade.

History suggests that success in the T20 World Cup is determined less by location than by preparation, adaptability and composure. In 2026, amid the intensity that defines cricket in Asia, those qualities are likely to remain decisive.

### ROLL OF HONOUR

Year	Host	Winner	Runner-up
2024	USA & Windies	India	South Africa
2022	Australia	England	Pakistan
2021	UAE & Oman	Australia	New Zealand
2016	India	Windies	England
2014	Bangladesh	Sri Lanka	India
2012	Sri Lanka	Windies	Sri Lanka
2010	Windies	England	Australia
2009	England	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
2007	South Africa	India	Pakistan

### T20 WORLD CUP STATS

#### OVERALL

\*\* Bangladesh will miss the T20 World Cup for the first time since the tournament began in 2007.

\*\* No team has ever successfully defended a T20 World Cup title.

\*\* No host nation has won the T20 World Cup; Sri Lanka came closest in 2012, losing the final to the West Indies.

\*\* Sri Lanka and India share the record for most final appearances (three each). Sri Lanka reached finals in 2009, 2012 and 2014, winning in 2014. India made finals in 2007, 2014 and 2024, winning in 2007 and 2024.

\*\* Italy will make their T20 World Cup debut in this edition, the tournament's only new team.

#### TEAM

\*\* Sri Lanka hold the highest team total record with 260/6 against Kenya in 2007; their 172-run win in the same match remains the largest victory margin by runs.

\*\* The lowest team total is shared by the Netherlands (39 vs Sri Lanka, 2014) and Uganda (39 vs West Indies, 2024).

\*\* The highest match aggregate came in 2016 in Mumbai, when South Africa and England combined for 459 runs.

\*\* The lowest match aggregate occurred in 2014 in Chittagong, with just 79 runs in the Netherlands-Sri Lanka match.

\*\* England recorded the highest successful chase in 2016, scoring 230/8 to overhaul South Africa's 229/4 at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium.

#### BATTING

\*\* India's Virat Kohli leads all-time run-scoring with 1,292 runs in 35 matches, including 15 fifties, from 2012 to 2024.

\*\* Kohli also holds the single-edition record with 319 runs in 2014.

\*\* New Zealand's Brendon McCullum has the highest individual score: 123 vs Bangladesh in 2012.

\*\* West Indies great Chris Gayle holds the record for most centuries (two).

\*\* Gayle also tops the sixes chart with 63 in 33 matches between 2007 and 2021.

\*\* He also owns the record for most sixes in an innings, hitting 11 during his unbeaten 48-ball 100 against England at Wankhede in 2016.

\*\* The highest partnership remains the 170-run stand between England's Jos Buttler and Alex Hales against India at Adelaide in 2022.

#### BOWLING

\*\* Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan is the leading wicket-taker with 50 wickets in 43 matches from 2007 to 2024.

\*\* Afghanistan's Fazalhaq Farooqi and India's Arshdeep Singh share the record for most wickets in a single edition, with 17 each in 2024.

\*\* Sri Lanka's Ajantha Mendis holds the best bowling figures: 6 for 8 against Zimbabwe at Hambantota in 2012.

## When politics and security kept teams away from ICC events

STAR SPORTS DESK

International cricket tournaments have often been disrupted by political tensions and security fears, leading teams to refuse travel to host nations. From 1996 ICC World Cup to 2026 ICC T20 World Cup, many teams have refused to travel to host countries, citing different reasons that resulted in walkovers and replacements. There is also an instance of introducing a hybrid model when India refused to travel to Pakistan in the 2025 Champions Trophy. The instances are given below:

### 1996 ODI World Cup

Sri Lanka co-hosted the 1996 World Cup during a period of civil conflict, and a bomb blast in Colombo just weeks before the tournament intensified safety fears. Australia and West Indies refused to play their group matches there. Both teams forfeited those games, handing Sri Lanka crucial points. Sri Lanka, Australia, and West Indies still advanced to the knockouts, and Sri Lanka ultimately defeated Australia in the final in Lahore.

### 2003 ODI World Cup

The first African World Cup, co-hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Kenya, also faced disruption. England declined to play Zimbabwe in Harare due to the UK government's political stance against Robert Mugabe's regime. Meanwhile,



Kenya players in a relaxed mood after being awarded four points following the refusal of New Zealand to honour their matches in Nairobi during the 2003 ODI World Cup.

PHOTO: AFP

New Zealand refused to travel to Nairobi for a match against Kenya following a recent bombing in Mombasa. Requests to relocate the matches were denied by the ICC, and walkovers were awarded to Zimbabwe and Kenya. England were eliminated in the first round, while Kenya rode the awarded points all the way to a historic semifinal appearance.

### 2009 T20 World Cup

Tensions between Zimbabwe and the UK

resurfaced ahead of the 2009 T20 World Cup in England. Concerns over visa issues and diplomatic friction led to uncertainty about Zimbabwe's participation. Eventually, Zimbabwe withdrew from the tournament, although they received their participation fee. Scotland replaced them in the tournament.

### 2016 Under-19 World Cup

Australia pulled out of the 2016 U-19 World Cup in Bangladesh, citing persistent security threats. Ireland

stepped in as Australia's replacement.

### 2025 Champions Trophy

Pakistan was set to host its first ICC event in nearly three decades, but India declined to travel, citing lack of government clearance. A hybrid system was introduced, ensuring that India's matches were played at a neutral venue, Dubai. India went on to win the tournament.

### 2026 T20 World Cup

On January 3, Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman was dropped by the Kolkata Knight Riders under directives from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). On the following day, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) wrote to the ICC, refusing to travel to India, citing security concerns and the government's directive. After a series of discussions between two parties, the ICC had formally rejected the BCB's request to relocate Bangladesh's matches from India to Sri Lanka. A vote was held during the ICC Board meeting, where only the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) supported Bangladesh's stance, while the remaining members voted to retain the original schedule. On January 24, ICC confirmed Scotland as Bangladesh's replacement for the tournament that cost Bangladesh their place at the World Cup. Pakistan later boycotted their February 15 group fixture against India to show solidarity with Bangladesh.

## SAFF U-19 WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL

# Girls seek repeat win over India

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are approaching today's SAFF U-19 Women's Championship final at Pokhara Stadium in Nepal with caution, aiming to stay focused and avoid overconfidence.

Head coach Peter Butler has stressed the importance of a positive mindset as his five-time champions prepare to face India once more in the four-team competition, having beaten their familiar cross-border rivals 2-0 in the round robin phase.

"I have a fair indication of how they are going to play," Butler said in a video message sent by the Bangladesh Football Federation, urging his players to perform at their best to overcome India again.

"They [India] have some good players, and we will need to be on top of our game, fresh, and ready to play them again — and more importantly, beat them again.

"What is gone is gone; we have to put that behind us and approach this game with a positive mindset without being overconfident."

In their last group match against Nepal, Butler rested seven to eight regular starters, but Bangladesh faced little trouble in downing the hosts 4-0. He is expected to field his



full-strength side to bring another laurel to the country.

Training ahead of the final has been limited due to concerns over poor field conditions and potential injuries, though Butler has ensured his players study video footage of the opposition thoroughly.

"We have tried to limit training as much as we possibly can because the training field is not suitable.

Unfortunately, we have picked up a number of injuries, and my foremost objective is to ensure we have a healthy group of players on the pitch, as their welfare is of paramount importance."

The English coach also indicated that the final will help him assess which players are ready for the upcoming AFC Women's Asian Cup in Australia.



India's teenage sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi conjured up a storm in the ICC U-19 World Cup final in Harare, smashing a thunderous 80-ball 175 to power his side to a 100-run win over England and a record-extending sixth title. The 14-year-old struck 15 fours and 15 sixes, bringing up his century in just 55 balls as India posted 411-9. England's Caleb Falconer responded with a 67-ball 115 but the chase proved too steep as they were bundled out for 311 in 40.2 overs. Sooryavanshi's 175 is the highest individual score in a Youth ODI final or knockout match, surpassing Sameer Minhas's 172 against India in the 2025 Asia Cup final. It is also the highest score by any batter in an ICC tournament final, at either Under-19 or senior level, eclipsing Alyssa Healy's 170 against England in the 2022 Women's ODI World Cup final.

PHOTO: ICC