

# 'T20 kings': nation celebrates Indian romp to World Cup glory

Fans celebrate nationwide after India secures record-breaking third global title

● Virat Kohli hails "phenomenal" team display

● Fans celebrate across all major cities

AFP | New Delhi

Millions of euphoric Indians celebrated yesterday what cricket great Virat Kohli hailed as a "phenomenal" display in winning the T20 World Cup for a record third time.

The co-hosts and pre-tournament favourites swept aside New Zealand by 96 runs in Sunday's final in front of 86,000 spectators at Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium.

India became the first team to lift the trophy on home soil, the first to retain it and are now the most successful side in the history of the global showpiece.

Indian newspapers praised Suryakumar Yadav's men for their dominant performance, with the mass-circulation Times of India saying they had rewritten history in "bold strokes".



India's players celebrate with the trophy

"India didn't so much win the title as stroll to it. It was a coronation rather than a final," it said in a front-page report headlined, "Threemendous: T20 kings keep the crown."

The English-language Indian Express said it was the first

time India had won a showpiece event without a "larger-than-life megastar".

It credited coach Gautam Gambhir with "sowing the seeds" of belief in the team, calling him the "architect" of India's triumph.

Cricket is a national obsession in the world's most populous country, woven deeply into its cultural and social fabric.

Star players enjoy adulation and the game serves as a rare unifying force in an otherwise diverse nation.

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VIRAT KOHLI

Celebrations across country

As the victory became inevitable late Sunday, thousands of delirious fans converged on Delhi's India Gate monument waving tricolour flags, beating drums and dancing to blaring Bollywood hits.

Drivers came out of their cars on the broad avenues around the monument to join impromptu street celebrations that stretched long into the next day.

The scene was replicated in cities, towns and villages across the country.

Batting great Sachin Tendulkar hailed the Indian team as "totally deserving and rightful winners".

"What a fantastic performance by our team and a special brand of cricket on display," he said, referring to their fearless attacking game.

The 50-year-old shared a photo of fans gathered outside his Mumbai residence long after midnight, writing: "Not in Mumbai to witness the celebration... but it's happening all over the country."

Thousands of fans also celebrated outside the Ahmedabad stadium, where India suffered heartbreak in the 2023 50-over World Cup final.

"India has now won back-to-back. So we hope in the next World Cup we will win as well," Akshay, a 35-year-old engineer, told AFP.

Daval Shah, another fan, said he thoroughly enjoyed the game even though it was pretty one-sided.

"It's always been in one corner of our mind that we were defeated here," said Shah, 40, referring to the 2023 loss to Australia.

"It's like a jinx, but we have broken the jinx today."

Indian batting superstar Kohli, who retired from the shortest format of the game after India's 2024 title win, called the performance "phenomenal".

"Absolutely no match for the explosive cricket played by us throughout the tournament," he wrote on X.

## Double super-over drama to Allen's record ton: T20 World Cup moments

AFP | Ahmedabad

India thrashed New Zealand in the final of the T20 World Cup in Ahmedabad to retain their crown in style.

Here are some memorable storylines from the tournament:

### Double super-over drama

South Africa and Afghanistan played out a tie followed by a first-ever double super over in a T20 World Cup to decide the winner of their gripping group contest.

The drama unfolded after Afghanistan posted 187 all out in response to South Africa's 187-6 in Ahmedabad.

The teams were tied again after a breathless first super over before South Africa won off the final ball of a heart-thumping second sudden-death showdown.

Afghanistan batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz needed four sixes off four balls in the second super over to pull off a win but only managed three before being caught out.

### Shock Australia exit

Former champions Australia suffered a shock loss to the tournament's surprise packages Zimbabwe in a group game after they were dismissed for 146 while chasing 170 for victory.



India's Sanju Samson (C) and Kuldeep Yadav (C, right) celebrate with the trophy during a victory lap

Without injured fast bowlers Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood, Australia suffered another defeat to Sri Lanka to leave their campaign hanging by a thread.

Zimbabwe's rained-off match with Ireland showed Australia the door as the 2021 winners failed to make the second phase for only the second time in the event's history.

Australia signed off with a thrashing of Oman but skipper Mitchell Marsh said: "It's a bitterly disappointed changing room."

### Off-pitch tensions

There was an acrimonious and chaotic build-up to the tournament.

Pakistan vowed to boycott their group game against arch-rivals India in support of Bangladesh, who refused to play in India and did not take part in the competition as a result.

They were replaced at the 11th hour by Scotland.

After frantic negotiations with the International Cricket Council, the Pakistan government made a U-turn and the

blockbuster match went ahead in Colombo.

India beat Pakistan but it was tense on the field and there were no handshakes between the two captains and teams.

### Samson's redemption

India batsman Sanju Samson redeemed himself in a winner-takes-all contest against the West Indies as his unbeaten 97 helped the co-hosts chase down 196 and reach the semi-finals.

Samson was not in the original plans as opener but a loss of form for Abhishek Sharma and



Finn Allen celebrates his century

### Allen's record 100

New Zealand opener Finn Allen struck the tournament's fastest-ever century, off 33 balls, to own the stage in the first semi-final against South Africa.

South Africa, unbeaten until the knockout match, wilted in the face of Allen's onslaught as he smacked 10 fours and eight sixes.

New Zealand romped to the victory target of 170 with 7.1 overs to spare.

It was a brutal show of power-hitting by Allen, who surpassed the previous fastest century record, in 47 balls, by West Indies' Chris Gayle in 2016.

### Emotional Italy make history

Debutants Italy, the lowest-ranked side in the 20-team tournament, hammered Nepal by 10 wickets for a historic first win.

It left some of the Italy players in tears of joy and sparked dreams about a bright future for cricket in the football-mad country.

"I don't think you'll see many players cry on the field after a win in the group stages," stand-in captain Harry Manenti said.

"I think you've got to appreciate what Italy cricket is bringing to the game, understand that the passion is slightly different with the Italians."

the need to break a left-handed combination at the top got the wicketkeeper-batter back for the Super Eights.

After a cameo against Zimbabwe, Samson made the stage his own at Kolkata's Eden Gardens as India depended on his 50-ball knock laced with 12 fours and four sixes.

Samson, a devout Catholic, said a silent prayer after he hit the winning boundary and struck another match-winning knock of 89 in the semi-final against England, then starred once more in the final.