Shubman Gill Left Out as India Announce 15-Man Squad for T20 World Cup 2026



NEW DELHI: India's squad for the 2026 T20 World Cup has been announced, with Suryakumar Yadav appointed captain and Axar Patel named vice-captain. The marquee tournament, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, runs from February 7 to March 8. Ahead of the World Cup, India will play a five-match T20I series against New Zealand from January 21 to 31 to fine-tune their combinations.

The announcement came after a meeting of the BCCI Senior Men's Selection Committee in Mumbai, followed by a press conference where secretary Devajit Saikia, captain Suryakumar Yadav, and selection committee chairperson Ajit Agarkar addressed the media. The panel confirmed that no standby players would be named for either the World Cup or the New Zealand series.

The most surprising development is the exclusion of Shubman Gill, who had served as India's T20 vice-captain. Recent struggles with the bat have seen him score just 291 runs in 15 matches at an average of 24.25, without registering a fifty.

A foot injury also ruled him out of the last two T20Is against South Africa, where he scored just 32 runs across three games.

Agarkar explained the decision, saying, "Shubman Gill is short of runs at the moment and missed the last WC too." He clarified that the omission wasn't about Gill's talent but about team balance: "Someone has to miss out, it's not because he's not a good player, and fortunately in Indian cricket we have options." Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar expressed surprise, stating, "The omission of Shubman Gill is a surprise. Class act, quality batter. I hope Shubman takes it in the right spirit."

Ishan Kishan earned a recall after shining in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, finishing as the tournament's highest run-scorer with 517 runs at an average of 57.44 and a strike rate of 197.32. His standout innings came in the final, where he scored 101 off 49 balls to help Jharkhand clinch the title.

Rinku Singh also returns to the squad, having impressed with 172 runs in seven matches at an average of 24.57, including a top score of 65. Singh, who had been a reserve in 2024, is now expected to serve as India's finishing option in home conditions.

Another highlight of the squad is left-handed batter Abhishek Sharma, who will make his maiden World Cup appearance. Known for his clean striking ability, Abhishek recently became the fastest Indian to reach 1,000 T20I runs in terms of balls faced, surpassing Suryakumar Yadav. He also led India's run-scoring in the Asia Cup with 314 runs at a strike rate of 200.

Suryakumar Yadav confirmed the top-order batting setup: "We've fixed number 3 for Tilak, 4 for myself, and then whoever is comfortable. We want to fix that role for Tilak so he knows his role and is happy in that position."

India's pace attack will be led by Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh, with Harshit Rana providing support. Spin options include Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy, while all-rounders Axar Patel, Hardik Pandya, Washington Sundar, and Shivam Dube complete the squad's balance. Bumrah, the previous World Cup Player of the Series, will be expected to spearhead the bowling attack on home soil.

India will open their World Cup campaign against the United States on February 7 at the Wankhede Stadium, followed by fixtures against Namibia, Pakistan, and the Netherlands. Having remained unbeaten in bilateral T20I series since August 2023, India entered the tournament as firm favorites.

Full Squad for T20 World Cup 2026 & New Zealand T20Is:

Suryakumar Yadav (Captain), Axar Patel (Vice-Captain), Sanju Samson (WK), Ishan Kishan (WK), Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Rinku Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakravarthy, Washington Sundar, Harshit Rana.

J&K Master Roller Hockey clinch National championship for 7th time

EARTH NEWS SERVICE



JAMMU: In the recently concluded 63rd National Roller Skating championship, held at Vizag, the J&K Masters roller hockey team under the captaincy of veteran player Rajesh Anand proved their mettle again and clinched the title for 7th time, proving they are best masters roller hockey team in India.

For the last six years, the team is winning gold medal and again they proved their superiority with solid performance by winning the championship.

The J&K masters roller hockey team played against Telengana (4-3),Haryana (16-1) and the match with Chandigarh was under pressure but all the players performed as a team and the match was resulted in draw(5-5).

J&K have benefitted most from the consistent performance of Krish Gupta who blew holes in the opponents armour.

Ankush, Atul and Raibrinder's experience keeps everything simple, whereas Arvin and Vikram's contribution was clearly visible during all the matches. Goal keeper Gagan Singh's precious saves motivated the players to score goals against the opponents.

Pertinently, the Masters roller hockey team of Jammu did not even loose a single match for the last 7 years in the Nationals. Many veteran players congratulated the teams performance and hoped that they will continue this rhythm of becoming champion at Nationals.

Marketing agencies using AI in workflows serve more clients

Of all the many industries, it's marketing where AI is no longer an "innovation lab" side project but embedded in briefs, production pipelines, approvals, and media optimisation. A WPP iQ post published in December, based on a webinar with WPP and Stability AI, shows what AI deployment in daily operations looks like.

Here, we're talking about a focus on the practical constraints that determine whether AI changes daily work or merely adds another layer of complexity or tooling.

Marketing agencies' AI treats brand accuracy as something to be engineered. WPP and Stability AI note that off-the-shelf models "don't come trained on your brand's visual identity", so outputs can often look generic. The companies' remedy is fine-tuning, that is, training models on brand-specific datasets so the model learns the brand playbook, including style, look, and colours. Then, these elements can be reproduced consistently.

WPP's Argos is a prime example. After fine-tuning a model for the retailer, the team described how the model picked up details beyond the characters, including lighting and subtle shadows used in the brand's 3D animations. Reproducing these finer details can be where time disappears in production, in the form of re-rendering and several rounds of approvals. When AI outputs start closer to "finished", teams spend less time correcting and more time shaping narratives and adapting media for different channels.

WPP and Stability AI point out that traditional 3D animation can be too slow for reactive marketing. After all, cultural moments demand immediate content, not cycles defined in weeks or months. In its Argos case study, WPP trained custom models on two 3D toy characters so the models learned how they look and behave, including details such as proportions and how characters hold objects. The outcome was "high-quality images...generated in minutes instead of months".

The accelerated workflow moves rather than removes production bottlenecks. If generating variations becomes fast, then review, compliance, rights management and distribution, become the constraints. Those issues were always there, but the speed and efficiency of AI in this context shows the difference between what's possible, and systems that have become embedded and accepted into workflows. Agencies that want AI to change daily operations have to redesign the workflow around it, not just add the technology as a new tool.

WPP and Stability AI call out a "UI problem", wherecreative teams lose time interfaces to common tools are "disconnected, complex and confusing", forcing workarounds and constant asset movement between tools. Often, responses are bespoke, brand-specific front ends with complex workflows in the back end..

WPP positions WPP Open as a platform that encodes WPP's proprietary knowledge into "globally accessible AI agents", which helps teams plan, produce, create media, and sell. Operational gains come from cleaner handoffs between tools, as work moves from briefs into production, assets into activation, and performance signals back into planning. AI-powered marketing platforms are also becoming client-facing. Operationally, that pushes agencies to concentrate on the parts of the workflow their clients can't self-serve easily, like designing the brand system, building fine-tunings, and ensuring governance is embedded.

For AI to be used daily, governance needs to be embedded where work happens. Dentsu describes building "walled gardens", which are digital spaces where employees can prototype and develop AI-enabled solutions securely, and commercialise the best ideas. This reduces the risk of sensitive data exposure and lets experiments move into production systems.

The operational impact is not limited to production. Publicis Sapient describes AI-powered content strategy and planning that "transforms months of research into minutes of insight" by combining large language models with contextual knowledge and prompt libraries.

Cycling: Bajaj Pune Grand Tour trophy arrives in Jaipur

JAIPUR: The heritage-inspired Trophy for the Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026, has arrived in the 'Pink City' and it was unveiled on Saturday. The unvieling took place in presence of Deputy Chief Minister Diya Kumari and Jitendra Dudi (IAS), Collector, Pune District- the host city for the road race. The dignitaries were joined by Madan Rathore, Member of Parliament, Rajasthan, Dr. Niraj K Pawan (IAS) Rajasthan Sports Secretary, Onkar Singh, Chairman, Cycling Federation of India Commissioner and Sarika Choudhary, Chairperson, Selection Committee, Rajasthan Cycling Association. Organised by Pune District Administration led by Jitendra Dudi with steadfast support from the Government of Maharashtra, the Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026 is India's first-ever UCI 2.2 classified road race – drawing elite cyclists from across globe.

Recognised for its challenging tours and vibrant culture, the inaugural Pune Grand Tour not only showcases excellence but also promotes Pune and India as key destination on global cycling map. As part of the nationwide Trophy Tour, the arrival of Bajaj Pune Grand Tour Trophy in the Pink City serves as a significant milestone for India, embracing global sports and blending its deep-rooted heritage with world-class event organisation.

Anthony Joshua knocks out YouTuber-turned-boxer Jake Paul to win boxing bout



NEW DELHI: Former world heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua knocked out YouTuber-turned-boxer Jake Paul in their controversial Netflix-backed bout in Miami on Friday.

The fight at the Kaseya Center, which saw both men reportedly splitting a mammoth purse of $184 million, had triggered alarm across boxing due to the gulf in physical size and class between Britain's two-time former world champion Joshua and Paul, an internet personality who has forged a lucrative career through a handful of novelty boxing contests.

In the event, however, Joshua made hard work of defeating his vastly less accomplished opponent, before his superior size and power eventually told in the later stages of the eight-round fight, with a sixth-round knockout.

A lackluster contest descended into farce at times, with Paul repeatedly dropping to the canvas and grappling at Joshua's legs.

At one stage even referee Christopher Young appeared to be losing patience, warning the fighters in the fourth round: "The fans did not pay to see this crap."

As Paul tired, the 6ft 6in (1.85m) tall Joshua began to land punches with more regularity, and after knocking down the 6ft 1in American twice in the fifth round, the end came swiftly in the sixth.

Joshua backed the 28-year-old into a corner and, after teeing up Paul with a crunching left, delivered the knockout blow with a right to the chin that sent his opponent crashing to the canvas.

"It wasn't the best performance," Joshua, 36, admitted afterwards. "But the end goal was to get Jake Paul, pin him down and hurt him.

"That was the request leading up, and that was on my mind. It took a bit longer than expected but the right hand finally found its destination."

Joshua meanwhile praised Paul for lasting into the later rounds.

"I want to give him his props -- he got up time and time again," Joshua said. "It was difficult in there for him, but he kept on trying to find a way. It takes a real man to do that."

Paul, meanwhile, his mouth bloodied from Joshua's final assault, said he believed his jaw had been broken -- but was satisfied with his performance.

"That was fun. I gave it my all," Paul said. "I had a blast. I think my jaw is broken by the way. But Anthony's one of the best to ever do it so. I'm gonna come back and get a world championship.

"I just got tired to be honest -- like it was so much handling his weight. I think with better cardio I could have kept it up and kept on fighting. But he hits really hard."

Friday's made-for-streaming contest, which came just over a year after Paul had fought a 58-year-old Mike Tyson in a much-derided Netflix fight, had been widely panned throughout boxing, with many warning that Paul risked serious injury.

Scientists identify promising new magnetic material for the AI era

A collaborative team of researchers from NIMS, the University of Tokyo, Kyoto Institute of Technology, and Tohoku University has shown that thin films of ruthenium dioxide (RuO_2) display altermagnetism, a key characteristic of what is now considered the third basic category of magnetic materials.

Materials with altermagnetic properties could address key drawbacks of today's magnetic random access memory, which relies on conventional ferromagnets. Because of this potential, they are drawing interest as candidates for future memory technologies that aim to deliver much higher speed and data density.

The study not only identifies RuO_2 as a promising material for these applications but also points to a way to further improve its performance by carefully controlling the orientation of its crystal structure. These results were recently reported in Nature Communications.

Ruthenium dioxide (RuO_2) has increasingly been studied as a possible platform for altermagnetism, which has been proposed as a third fundamental form of magnetism.

Traditional ferromagnetic materials used in memory devices make it relatively easy to write data using external magnetic fields. However, they are vulnerable to interference from unwanted stray fields, which can cause errors and place limits on how densely information can be stored.

Antiferromagnetic materials, on the other hand, are robust against such external disturbances. However, because their atomic-level spins cancel each other out, it is difficult to electrically read information from them.

This has driven demand for magnetic materials that combine resistance to external disturbances with compatibility with electrical readout, and ideally also allow rewritability.

However, experimental results concerning altermagnetism in RuO_2 have been inconsistent worldwide, hindering a clear understanding of its fundamental nature. Moreover, the lack of high-quality thin-film samples with uniform crystallographic orientation has prevented conclusive experimental verification.

The joint research team successfully fabricated single-orientation (single-variant) RuO_2 thin films with aligned crystallographic axes on sapphire substrates. They clarified the mechanism by which crystallographic orientation is determined through optimal substrate selection and fine-tuning of growth conditions.

Using X-ray magnetic linear dichroism, the team identified the spin arrangement and magnetic ordering in which the net magnetization (N–S poles) cancels out. Furthermore, they observed spin-split magnetoresistance—a phenomenon in which electrical resistance varies depending on spin orientation—thereby electrically verifying the spin-splitting electronic structure.

The results of the X-ray magnetic linear dichorism were consistent with first-principles calculations on the magneto-crystalline anisotropy, demonstrating that the RuO_2 thin films exhibit altermagnetism.

This finding strongly supports the potential of RuO_2 thin films as promising materials for next-generation high-speed, high-density memory devices.

Building on these results, the research team aims to develop next-generation high-speed, high-density magnetic memory devices utilizing RuO_2 thin films.

Such devices are expected to contribute to more energy-efficient information processing by leveraging the inherently high-speed and high-density characteristics of altermagnetism.

Furthermore, the synchrotron-based magnetic analysis technique established in this study can be applied to the exploration of other altermagnetic materials and the development of spintronic devices.

This little-known plant could help save chocolate from climate change

Rising temperatures and the spread of crop diseases are placing increasing pressure on the global supply of cocoa. In response to these challenges, researchers at the National University of Singapore (NUS) began investigating ways to improve the flavor of carob, with the goal of positioning it as a more sustainable and attractive alternative to cocoa.

Carob pulp comes from Ceratonia siliqua (carob), a tough, climate-resilient plant that has drawn growing interest as a potential substitute for cocoa. When roasted, carob develops an aroma similar to cocoa, but its taste has not yet matched the richness consumers expect from chocolate. This flavor gap has been a key barrier to its broader use.

The research effort is led by Associate Professor Liu Shao Quan from the Department of Food Science and Technology (FST) at the NUS Faculty of Science. His team has introduced two new methods designed to significantly improve the taste profile of carob pulp.

"Our carob-based innovation meets the relatively untapped and nascent market of alternative chocolate sources. Additionally, our new techniques improve the taste of carob itself, without the use of additives such as flavorings. So, consumers can have the best of both worlds – better flavour and a simple ingredients list. With these innovations, we aim to make a meaningful contribution towards addressing the current challenges and needs of the chocolate industry," said Assoc Prof Liu.

Carob trees are leguminous plants native to the Mediterranean region and are well-suited to hot, dry environments where water is scarce. Unlike the Theobroma cacao tree – the source of cocoa – which can only grow under very specific climate conditions, carob trees are naturally drought-tolerant. This resilience makes them better equipped to withstand the effects of climate change and increasingly unpredictable weather patterns.

NUS scientists enhance the flavor of carob-based chocolate alternatives with novel methods. Credit: Faculty of Science, National University of Singapore

Beyond its climate resilience, carob also offers some nutritional advantages. With its natural sugar content, it could be used to create chocolate alternatives without added sweeteners – an increasingly desirable feature for health-conscious consumers. Carob is also caffeine-free and rich in d-pinitol, a compound that has been shown to have anti-diabetic effects.

Carob pulp is generated as a by-product during the production of locust bean gum, a common thickening agent in the food industry. Its flavor differs significantly from chocolate, with less bitterness and fewer of the rich, roasted notes that define cocoa-based products. These differences have so far limited the widespread use of carob pulp as a cocoa-substitute.