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Sachin Tendulkar Becomes UN Global Champion for Road Safety



- The legendary Indian cricketer Sachin Tendulkar has been designated a “Global Champion for Road Safety” by the United Nations (UN).
- He has released a video message to raise awareness about road safety and to encourage responsible behaviour on the roads.
- Through public outreach and advocacy, Tendulkar will promote responsible road behaviour, including the use of helmets and seat belts, adherence to speed limits, and avoidance of distractions while driving.
- His involvement aims to amplify awareness and support the international goal of significantly reducing road fatalities and injuries by the end of this decade.
- The UN Global Champion title is conferred by the United Nations on influential public figures such as celebrities, leaders, and sports icons.
- These champions actively support major campaigns that advocate safe driving habits and aim to decrease road traffic fatalities worldwide.

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➤ The initiative supports the broader goal of significantly reducing road fatalities and serious injuries by 2030.

About United Nations (UN):

- Headquarters: New York City, United States
- Founded on: 24 October 1945
- Secretary-General: António Guterres
- Founding Members: 51 countries
- Present Members: 193 countries

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MILAN 2026 multilateral naval exercise concludes in India



- The Multilateral Naval Exercise MILAN 2026 was held from 19 to 25 February 2026.
- Hosted by the Indian Navy, the exercise took place in Visakhapatnam and the Bay of Bengal.
- The ceremony was led by Rear Admiral Alok Ananda, Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet.
- MILAN 2026 was held under the theme “Camaraderie, Cooperation, Collaboration”, marking the 13th edition of the exercise.
- This edition witnessed participation from over 70 countries, underscoring its growing global stature.
- Notably, the exercise saw the debut participation of nations such as Germany, the Philippines, and the United Arab Emirates, reflecting the expanding reach and inclusivity of this multilateral naval engagement.
- A total of 42 ships and submarines and 29 aircraft took part in the exercise.
- This included 18 ships from Friendly Foreign Countries, making it one of the largest editions of the exercise so far.

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About Exercise MILAN:

- MILAN is a biennial multilateral naval exercise hosted by the Indian Navy.
- Launched: in 1995
- Under the Andaman and Nicobar Command with participation from just four foreign navies: Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand
- It has since grown into one of the largest maritime engagements in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Aims to foster mutual understanding, trust, and professional interaction among maritime partners to promote a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based maritime order.
- **Comprises two main phases:**
 1. The Harbour Phase (seminars, subject-matter expert exchanges, etc.)
 2. The Sea Phase (focusing on interoperability, HADR, anti-submarine warfare, and tactical manoeuvres).
- The exercise serves as a key platform for India's Act East Policy 2014, the MAHASAGAR vision, and its role as a preferred security partner in the Indo-Pacific.

INS Sudarshini Makes Historic Port Visit to Safaga, Egypt



- The Indian Navy's Sail Training Ship INS Sudarshini berthed at Safaga, Egypt, as part of its Lokayan-26 overseas deployment, further advancing India's maritime outreach.
- The vessel traversed approximately 1,832 nautical miles in 16 days, sailing from Salalah to Safaga, exemplifying exceptional crew endurance, operational proficiency, and seafaring resilience.
- The ship received a ceremonial welcome from officials of the Egyptian Navy and representatives of the Embassy of India in Egypt, underscoring robust bilateral maritime ties.
- The Commanding Officer engaged in high-level interactions with Ramy Ahmed Ismail Mohamed, Base Commander, Red Sea and Safaga Naval Base, reinforcing professional synergy, interoperability, and defence cooperation.
- The port call featured structured professional exchanges, dissemination of sail training best practices, and community outreach initiatives aimed at fostering mutual goodwill and people-to-people connectivity.

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- The strategic transit through the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea constituted a demanding operational phase, necessitating advanced navigation amidst volatile weather patterns and congested maritime corridors, thereby showcasing superior seamanship capabilities.
- The visit aligns with the “Bridges of Friendship” initiative, consolidating the strategic maritime partnership between India and Egypt.
- The deployment epitomizes the Indian Navy’s steadfast commitment to maritime diplomacy, professional training excellence, and sustained international naval collaboration.

About Egypt:

- Capital: Cairo
- Currency: Egyptian Pound
- President: Abdel Fattah el-Sisi
- Prime Minister: Mostafa Madbouly

Switzerland's President announces Geneva as host of 2027 AI Impact Summit



- Switzerland will host the 2027 AI Summit in Geneva, while the United Arab Emirates will organise the 2028 edition.
- Reflecting sustained global momentum towards structured and collaborative AI governance.
- The announcement was made by Guy Parmelin during his meeting with Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the India AI Impact Summit 2026.
- Switzerland is actively coordinating with India, South Korea, France, and Sweden to advance inclusive, transparent, and balanced frameworks for global AI governance.
- Bilateral relations between India and Switzerland have gained renewed impetus following the implementation of the India–EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) in October 2025.
- Which has accelerated trade, innovation, and economic cooperation.
- President Parmelin also underscored the prospective value of a bilateral Investment Treaty, aimed at enhancing Swiss investments in India and fostering sustainable employment generation.

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- The year 2024 marked 25 years of strengthened India–Switzerland relations, with TEPA further consolidating collaboration in emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, and research partnerships.
- The development highlights Switzerland’s strategic emphasis on AI leadership, multilateral research cooperation, and the deepening of long-term economic engagement with India.

About Switzerland:

- Capital: Bern
- Currency: Swiss franc
- President: Guy Parmelin

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India, Israel to ink pact on defence cooperation



- India and Israel signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance bilateral defence cooperation, with emphasis on joint seminars, industrial collaboration, and technology sharing.
- The agreement was facilitated during a strategic defence seminar and Business-to-Business (B2B) meetings held in Tel Aviv.
- The event was organised by SIBAT (under the Israel Ministry of Defence) in collaboration with the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers and the Ministry of Defence.
- The India–Israel Defence Industry Seminar was led by Yair Kulas, Director of SIBAT, enabling structured engagement between 30 Indian and 26 Israeli defence companies.
- The Indian delegation was headed by Ramesh K, with participation from J P Singh and Vijay Patil.
- Key focus areas: co-development, co-production, technology transfer, industrial partnerships, and interoperability enhancement.

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- Discussions highlighted the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2026, aimed at modernising procurement systems and promoting indigenous defence manufacturing under India's self-reliance drive.
- The initiative seeks to strengthen the India–Israel strategic defence partnership, expand defence industrial ecosystems, and promote advanced defence technology innovation.

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Slice Small Finance Bank Appoints Rajan Bajaj as MD & CEO



- Slice Small Finance Bank appointed its Founder, Rajan Bajaj, as Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
- He succeeded Satish Kumar Kalra, symbolising the institution's evolution from a fintech startup into a fully regulated Small Finance Bank (SFB).
- The appointment was approved by the Board, shareholders, and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), confirming that it met all required regulatory guidelines for Small Finance Banks.
- Founded in 2016, Slice underwent strategic transformation following its 2024 merger with North East Small Finance Bank, enabling its conversion into a licensed banking entity.
- The institution has scaled substantially, serving over 20 million registered users, employing more than 3,000 personnel, and raising over USD 250 million from prominent investors such as Tiger Global, Insight Partners, and Advent International.

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- Rajan Bajaj previously served on the product team at Flipkart and held the position of Executive Director (ED) at Slice prior to assuming the role of MD & CEO.
- In 2019, he established Quadrillion Finance, a wholly owned NBFC that leveraged technology-driven underwriting and advanced risk analytics to extend credit to retail customers and MSMEs; the entity was subsequently integrated into Slice's banking framework.
- The leadership shift underscores Slice SFB's strategic focus on digital banking innovation, regulatory consolidation, and expansion within India's evolving fintech-banking ecosystem.

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Norway Sets New Winter Olympics Record



- Norway created history at the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics 2026 by winning 17 gold medals, the highest number ever secured by a nation at a single Winter Games,
- The milestone was achieved after Johannes Dale-Skjevdal won gold in the men's 15 km biathlon mass start, delivering a flawless 20/20 shooting performance.
- His winning time was 39 minutes 17.1 seconds, seizing the lead after the first standing shoot despite adverse wind and slow snow conditions.
- The achievement surpassed Norway's previous record of 16 gold medals set at the Beijing Winter Olympics 2022.
- Silver was secured by Sturla Holm Laegreid, finishing 10.5 seconds behind and claiming his fifth medal of the 2026 Games.
- Bronze went to Quentin Fillon Maillet, finishing 25.6 seconds behind; it marked his ninth Olympic medal overall.

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- The biathlon 15 km mass start comprises 30 athletes, five 3 km ski loops, and four shooting rounds (two prone, two standing) with penalty laps for missed targets.
- Norway leads the all-time Winter Olympics medal tally with 405 medals (148 Gold, 134 Silver, 123 Bronze).
- The United States ranks second with 330 medals (114 Gold), followed by Germany in third with 267 medals (105 Gold).
- The 17th gold at Milan Cortina 2026 consolidates Norway's enduring dominance in biathlon and Nordic skiing, reinforcing its historical supremacy in Winter Olympic competition.

About Norway:

- Capital: Oslo
- Currency: Norwegian krone
- Prime Minister: Jonas Gahr Store

PM Modi becomes most followed world leader on Instagram with 100 million followers



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has crossed the massive milestone of 100 million followers on Instagram, making him the first world leader and politician to achieve this feat on the platform.
- Prime Minister Modi joined Instagram in 2014, and over the past decade, his account has evolved into one of the most engaging digital spaces among global leaders.
- Among major global leaders, Mr. Modi now has the highest number of Instagram followers.
- He has more than twice as many followers as U.S. President Donald Trump on the social media platform.
- The combined follower count of the next five major world leaders is still lower than Mr. Modi's individual total.
- U.S. President Donald Trump holds the second spot with 43.2 million followers. •

- He is followed by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto with 15 million followers, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva with 14.4 million followers, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan with 11.6 million followers and Argentine President Javier Milei with 6.4 million followers.
- In India, the gap in followers is significant, as Mr. Modi is far ahead of other Indian political leaders on Instagram.
- The second spot is held by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with approximately 16.1 million followers, followed by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with approximately 12.6 million followers.

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PM Modi conferred with Israel's 'Speaker of the Knesset Medal'



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred with the 'Speaker of the Knesset Medal' in recognition of his exceptional contribution to strengthening strategic relations between India and Israel.
- PM Modi is the first leader to receive this medal, which is the highest honour of the Knesset — the Israeli Parliament.
- Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana conferred the award on the prime minister after his address at the Israeli Parliament.
- The medal was conferred in recognition of the prime minister's exceptional contribution "through his personal leadership" to strengthen strategic relations between India and Israel.
- PM Modi is a rare world leader who has received top awards from both Israel and Palestine.
- In 2018, PM Modi was conferred the Grand Collar of the State of Palestine, which is the highest Palestinian honour for foreign leaders.

About Israel:

- Capital: Jerusalem
- Currency: Israeli New Shekel
- President: Isaac Herzog
- Prime Minister: Benjamin Netanyahu

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Veteran CPI Leader R. Nallakannu Passes Away At Age 101 In Chennai



- Freedom fighter, Veteran Communist Party of India (CPI) leader Nallakannu passed away at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (RGGGH) in Chennai. He was 101.
- Following the death of CPM veteran N Sankaraiah in 2023, Nallakannu was the last centenarian communist leader in Tamil Nadu.
- Comrade RNK, as he was fondly called by the people, remained an embodiment of integrity and selfless service for nearly eight decades he had spent in political limelight.
- Born on December 26, 1925, in Sri Vaikundam, Thoothukudi district (then Tirunelveli district).
- Drawn to Marxist ideals, he joined the Communist Party of India in 1946, when India was still under colonial rule.
- He served as the Tamil Nadu State Secretary of the CPI for several years.
- He fought tirelessly in particular for farmers and agricultural labourers.

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- He opposed exploitative landlords, campaigned against illegal sand mining in Tamil Nadu's riverbeds, and took up every issue that affected the ordinary citizen.
- He has been a staunch advocate for the environment, raising his voice against projects like the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant.
- Under his leadership, the CPI became a strong force in Tamil Nadu politics, advocating workers' rights, agrarian reforms, and social welfare.
- For 25 years, he led farmers' unions, building grassroots networks, and forging alliances with like-minded parties to advance progressive causes.
- His contributions have been recognised through awards like the Ambedkar Award in 2008 and the 'Thagaisaal Tamizhar' Award in 2023.