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| THE NEWS TODAY | | | | | |
|  | THE DIGITAL NEWSPAPER | | | |  |
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|  | | |  | **Ratan Naval Tata, the iconic Indian buissnessman and philanthropist,has left an incredible mark on the global business landscape.As the former chairman of tata group, one of the India’s largest conglomerates,Tata’s visionary leadership transformed the company into a global powerhouse.**  **Tata’s tenure was marked by several notable achievements : Led Tata Group’s expansion into new sectors,including IT ,telecon,and healthcare .**  **Fostered innovation through investments in research and development .**  **Encouraged sustainability and corporate social responsibility initiatives .**  **Developed strategic partnerships with global companies .**  **“Businesses must think beyond profits and revenues .They must think about the impact they have on society .**  **-Ratan Tata** | |
| RATAN TATA: The Visionary Leader who transformed Tata Group into a global power house | | |
| *.*  Tata Sons Chairman Ratan Tata  Ratan Tata, who passed away on Wednesday, was idolised for his global vision and his humility.  Tata, who passed away in Mumbai on Wednesday, was known as much for his humility as he was for his expansive vision that vaulted the group to a more than $128bn revenue in 2022 and the ownership of celebrated brands such as Jaguar Land Rover and Tetley Tea.  The 86-year-old was mourned as one of the most beloved Indians for helping Indian businesses reach that scale, including on foreign shores, making it emblematic of the newly liberalising Indian economy.  Tata was “a visionary business leader, a compassionate soul and an extraordinary human being”, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted soon after Tata’s demise in a Mumbai hospital.  Tata took over the group’s reins in 1991, just as India began shedding its socialist-era protectionist policies. He set about transforming the more than century-old industrial group into an innovative, cost and labour-efficient, global conglomerate.  Top of Form    Bottom of Form  “I think his legacy will be how to think big and bold,” said Ravi Kant, who served as chief executive and then vice chairman of Tata Motors until 2014. “There may be something not even existing, but he could think of such an opportunity and make it happen.”  Often the correct paths to take could be long and arduous, but those would be the ones worth taking, he had once told CEAT group chairman Harsh Goenka when he asked for guidance, Goenka recalled to Al Jazeera.  Indeed, Tata navigated India’s fractious politics, its regulatory hurdles and protectionist-era mindsets to chart a new course for the group.  **‘Trying years’**  When Tata was named chairman of the group, at 54, it was a loosely held and fractious group of companies that he struggled to put his stamp on.  After studying architecture at Cornell University, he joined Tata Steel in Jamshedpur, one of the flagship units, as a junior executive. Later, he had mixed success at the group’s electronics venture, National Radio and Electronics (Nelco), and Empress Mills.  “Those were trying years, but he was gentle, soft-spoken and he stayed that way even later,” said Jehangir Jehangir, who was Tata’s executive assistant at Nelco.  It meant the group’s senior company heads, such as Tata Steel’s Russi Mody and Indian Hotels’ Ajit Kerkar, did not necessarily adhere to Tata in the early years. Each ran their company independently, collecting art on company accounts and flying on company jets for private personal trips.  “They saw him [Tata] as a bacha [a kid],” Jehangir recalled.  Tata Sons, the group holding company, had stakes in many group companies as low as 3 percent or 13 percent, opening them up to hostile takeovers. Tata began consolidating his hold over the group without personally increasing his small shareholding. He also set a retirement age of 75, leading to Mody’s exit, led a dramatic boardroom ouster of Kerkar and increased Tata Sons’ shareholding in group companies.  Advertisement  **‘Think global’**  In 1991, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh began dismantling India’s long-held Licence Raj, which scuttled competition and required foreign companies to have a domestic partner. Many Indian companies asked for protection  against foreign competition.  [Tata Sons chairman Ratan Tata poses in front of a Jaguar C-X75 Hybrid Supercar](https://www.aljazeera.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/AP120105015826-1728603899.jpg) Tata Motor acquired the celebrated but ailing British carmaker, Jaguar Land Rover [File: Manish Swarup/AP Photo]  But Tata began telling executives the opposite. “We should not restrict our thinking to India. We should think globally,” said a former senior Tata group executive, who had worked closely with Tata and did not want to be named. “Year after year, I remember writing in his annual reports – think global.”  This thinking helped group companies emerge unscathed from the Indian economic downturn of the early 2000s.  “We started buying coal globally rather than just mining coal [domestically], as we had done,” said the Tata group executive about Tata Steel. Tata Motors began making dyes for Jaguar, Ford and Toyota. “We went from a 500 crore rupees loss to a 500 crore rupees profit in just a few years,” Kant recalled about Tata Motors.  It also set the stage for the group’s global acquisitions. In 2000, Tata Tea acquired the much-loved British tea brand Tetley for $431m, bringing it to global prominence. But Tata had just begun. In 2004, Tata Motors bought the South Korean Daewoo Motors’ commercial vehicle arm for $102m.  And then, in 2007, Tata Steel acquired the Anglo-Dutch steelmaker Corus, in what was one of the biggest acquisitions in its time. The British government did not help with fundraising for the acquisition in the United Kingdom, making it a formidable challenge. But Tata’s mind was set. “By then, we had relationships with international bankers, and we were able to raise $10-12bn on our own,” said the former Tata executive.  Months later, Tata Motors acquired the celebrated but ailing British carmaker, Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), from Ford Motors. “When we saw the strengths of Tata Motors and the strengths of JLR, we thought we were on to something big,” Kant, who was then the chief executive of Tata Motors, recalled.  Advertisement  Tata and other company executives worked to bring out new models and efficient manufacturing and returned the company to profitability in a couple of years. “Jaguar was a British jewel that Ratan Tata had bought,” CEAT’s Goenka remembers thinking at the time.  Within months, the waters turned choppy for the group. The 2008 global financial crisis meant demand for steel came down and the Corus acquisition became a difficult one.  One of Tata’s great dreams was to make the world’s least expensive car at Tata Motors. “His favourite part of the job was to spend time at the research centre at Tata Motors looking into car design,” said Jehangir.  [Tata Company Chairman Ratan Tata gestures during the launch of Tata Nano at the 9th Auto Expo in New Delhi, India](https://www.aljazeera.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/AP08011003514-1728604110.jpg)Ratan Tata launched the world’s cheapest car, but it never found success [File: Saurabh Das/AP Photo]  He worked closely on developing the car. But mounting protests on the acquisition of land to set up the manufacturing plant in West Bengal state meant the project had to be abruptly abandoned midway. After meetings with chief ministers of several states, Tata Motors decided to relocate its plant in October 2008 to Sanand in Gujarat, cementing then-Chief Minister Narendra Modi’s investor-friendly image, a big win for him in the wake of interreligious riots in his state in 2002, which had tarnished his image.  While the plant was being moved across the country, Tata was determined to meet timelines for the car’s launch.  “We had one factory being dismantled, one being set up and one producing the car,” Tata Motors’ Kant recalled. “I don’t think it has ever been done before.”  At the launch of the Tata Nano in March 2009, Tata said, “A promise is a promise.” He had met his launch date and the 100,000-rupee ($2,000 then) price tag. In the end, the car was not a success and had to be discontinued.  Advertisement  **‘Formidable’**  In 2009, India’s Open Magazine released leaked tapes of Tata talking to lobbyist Nira Radia about obtaining telecom licences for the group’s telecom company. The tapes included him speaking informally about ministers and the auction process.  Tata asked the courts for an injunction to prevent the further spread of the tapes. Open’s editors approached dozens of lawyers for assistance in the case, but each one “would convey his regrets because he did not want to take on Ratan Tata”, editor Manu Joseph recalled in a piece in HuffPost.  “I am certain of one obvious quality of Ratan Tata, which is that he is formidable,” Joseph wrote in the 2016 piece.  It was a quality that also underscored his battle with his chosen successor Cyrus Mistry. Tata had retired in 2012, leaving the group in Mistry’s hands. But relations between the two had soon soured and in 2017 an executive search team brought in N Chandrasekaran as group chairman**.** He had been the chief executive of the group’s software services business, Tata Consultancy Services.  **Charitable work**  Increasingly frail, Tata switched his focus to charitable work through Tata Trusts, which holds nearly two-thirds of the shares of Tata Sons, and correspondingly, the group. In 2018, he called Jehangir, his former executive assistant, and asked him to join the board of Tata Trusts.  Advertisement  “He wanted to keep up the values and the culture of the group,” Jehangir recalled. “He really wanted the culture of the group to stay when he is not there.”  [Body of Indian business leader Ratan Tata who died on Wednesday night is taken for cremation with full state honors, in Mumbai, India](https://www.aljazeera.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/AP24284392652497-1728603775.jpg)The body of Indian business leader Ratan Tata, who died on Wednesday night, is taken for cremation with full state honours, in Mumbai, India [Rafiq Maqbool/AP Photo]  In the last few years, Tata retreated from public view for the most part. He worked on building a network of cancer hospitals and a pet hospital, and he supported research on sustainable development at the Oxford India Centre for Sustainable Development.  Jan Royall, principal of Somerville College, where the centre is housed, met Tata several times over the last few months including online when they could not meet in person.  “He was especially keen on research on health and technology and always showed deep knowledge on cutting edge research in this area across many disciplines,” Royall recalled. Even through his last months, Tata kept up their meetings. “He was a real academic at heart as well as a visionary leader.”  Tata was never married and had no children. He had a great love for dogs. Once, when Goenka asked him what his greatest luxury had been, Tata had replied that it was making a swimming pool for his dogs.  It was this frugal life along with his lofty corporate ambition that made many young people idolise him.  Days before he was admitted to Breach Candy Hospital in south Mumbai, rumours of his ailing health had been swirling in the city. The ever-self-effacing Tata had tweeted that he was fine, just going through regular medical checkups. “Thank you for thinking of me,” he had tweeted.  Advertisement  Maharashtra’s chief minister announced a state funeral for Tata. Mumbaikars who had for years seen Tata walking city streets with shopping bags from sensibly priced stores, or driving his own cars, turned out in throngs for his funeral. | |  |

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