

## India's Silver Medal at the Maruhaba Cup and Its Broader Implications for Surfing in India

Indian surfing, a sport still in its nascent stages, achieved a monumental feat at the Asian Surfing Championships 2024. The Indian team, comprising Kamali P, Ajeesh Ali, Srikanth D, and Sanjay Selvamani, secured a silver medal at the prestigious Maruhaba Cup, held in Thulusdhoo, Maldives. This landmark achievement reflects the growing strength of Indian surfers on the Asian circuit and marks a new era for the sport in India.



[Source: Live India]

## A Historic Milestone for Indian Surfing

While Japan dominated the final with a score of 58.40, India's score of 24.13 was enough to earn them a well-deserved silver medal, placing ahead of Taipei and China. This victory comes on the heels of India securing its first-ever quota in surfing for the Asian Games, making the silver medal even more significant. Beyond the immediate results, this achievement serves as a stepping stone for Indian surfing's development on the global stage.

## The Journey to the Podium: A Comprehensive Look

### 1. Team Composition and Performance



## India's Silver Medal at the Maruhaba Cup and Its Broader Implications for Surfing in India

India's silver medal at the Maruhaba Cup was a team effort, with all four surfers—Kamali P, Ajeesh Ali, Srikanth D, and Sanjay Selvamani—playing pivotal roles in the team's success. Each surfer brought unique strengths, showcasing their skillsets in wave riding, aerial maneuvers, and adaptability to the conditions at the Maldivian surf break in Thulusdhoo.

The synergy and teamwork displayed by the Indian squad were key to their progression through the competition. Their resilience and ability to read the waves allowed them to outshine seasoned competitors like Taipei and China. For a country that has only recently embraced surfing as a competitive sport, this performance highlights the immense potential for growth and the importance of nurturing homegrown talent.

### 2. Final Standings: A Snapshot of the Competition

In the final, Japan proved to be a dominant force, outscoring all other teams with a substantial margin. The final results were as follows:

- a. **Japan:** Gold Medal (Score: 58.40)
- b. **India:** Silver Medal (Score: 24.13)
- c. **Chinese Taipei:** Bronze Medal (Score: 23.93)
- d. **China:** Fourth Place (Score: 22.10)

Although Japan's comprehensive victory placed them well ahead of the rest, India's silver medal marks the first time the country has reached the podium in such a significant event. The close margin between India and Taipei indicates that Indian surfers are inching closer to becoming serious contenders on the international stage.

## Road to the Final: Semi-Final Success and Key Matches



## India's Silver Medal at the Maruhaba Cup and Its Broader Implications for Surfing in India



[Source: Newsx]

### 1. Semi-Final Breakthrough: India's Rise in Heat 2

The semi-final stage was where India truly made its mark. Competing in Heat 2, the Indian team not only outclassed their opponents but also demonstrated the tactical and strategic approach required for such high-stakes competitions. India's score of 32.16 placed them well ahead of Taipei, which recorded a score of 29.70, and the Republic of Korea, which finished with 27.74 points.

This semi-final victory was instrumental in propelling India into the final round and proved that they could stand shoulder to shoulder with Asia's top surfing nations. The ability to remain composed and focused during the semi-final round showcased the Indian surfers' growing maturity in the sport.

### 2. Key Performances from Indian Surfers

**a. Kamali P:** His power surfing and fluid style set the tone for India's semi-final win. Kamali's strong understanding of wave dynamics allowed him to execute critical maneuvers at crucial moments.

**b. Ajeesh Ali:** Known for his aerial maneuvers, Ali wowed the judges with his innovative surfing and consistency. His contributions were vital in maintaining India's lead during the semi-final.

**c. Srikanth D and Sanjay Selvamani:** Both surfers provided stability and showcased impressive versatility. Their complementary styles allowed India to maximize scoring opportunities and secure their spot in the final.

India's Silver Medal at the Maruhaba Cup and Its Broader Implications for Surfing in India

# The Broader Impact: What This Means for Indian Surfing

## 1. A First-Ever Quota for the Asian Games: A Historic Moment

The significance of India's silver medal at the Maruhaba Cup is amplified by the fact that it came just one day after the country secured its first-ever quota in surfing for the Asian Games. This qualification is a historic milestone that cements India's place in the growing Asian surfing community. Both the men's and women's surfing teams will represent India at the Asian Games 2026, which will be hosted in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan.

The inclusion of Indian surfers in the Asian Games not only opens up new opportunities for athletes but also raises the profile of the sport back home. With increased visibility, surfing has the potential to attract more investment, sponsorships, and grassroots development, further strengthening India's competitive edge on the international stage.

## 2. Growth of Surfing in India: From Niche Sport to Mainstream

Until recently, surfing in India was considered a niche sport, primarily popular in coastal regions like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala. However, with the emergence of Indian surfers on the global stage, surfing is now transitioning into a more mainstream sport. Several factors contribute to this growth:

- a. Development of Surfing Infrastructure:** Surf schools and training centers have sprung up along India's coastline, providing young surfers with the opportunity to train in professional environments. The establishment of national surfing competitions, such as the Covelong Classic in Tamil Nadu, has also helped identify and nurture local talent.
- b. Role of Surfing Federations:** The Surfing Federation of India (SFI) has played a crucial role in organizing national and international events and securing representation for Indian surfers in global competitions. SFI's efforts to promote surfing as a competitive sport have been instrumental in achieving milestones like the Asian Games qualification.
- c. Support from Government and Private Entities:** The Indian government's increased recognition of surfing as a legitimate sport, along with sponsorship from private entities, has provided the necessary financial backing to support athletes. The success of the Indian team at the Maruhaba Cup is expected to further boost these efforts.

# The Road Ahead: Challenges and Opportunities



## India's Silver Medal at the Maruhaba Cup and Its Broader Implications for Surfing in India



[Source: Olympics]

### 1. Challenges Facing Indian Surfing

While the success at the Maruhaba Cup and the Asian Games qualification mark a turning point, Indian surfing still faces several challenges:

- a. Limited Access to Quality Training Facilities:** Despite the growing popularity of surfing, many athletes still struggle to access world-class training facilities. This is particularly true for surfers from remote coastal regions who lack the financial means to invest in proper training.
- b. Seasonal Nature of Surfing in India:** India's surf season is often dictated by the monsoon and weather patterns, which limit year-round training opportunities. Unlike countries like Japan or Australia, where surfers can practice throughout the year, Indian surfers face obstacles in maintaining consistency.
- c. International Exposure and Competitions:** Indian surfers need more exposure to international competitions to refine their skills and gain valuable experience. Regular participation in events like the World Surf League (WSL) and International Surfing Association (ISA) competitions is essential for developing competitive instincts and improving rankings.

### 2. Opportunities for Growth

On the flip side, the future of Indian surfing holds immense promise. Several opportunities are on the horizon:

## India's Silver Medal at the Maruhaba Cup and Its Broader Implications for Surfing in India

- a. Surf Tourism and Sponsorships:** India's vast coastline presents an untapped opportunity for surf tourism. As more international surfers discover the pristine beaches and surf breaks of India, surf tourism is expected to grow, bringing in sponsorships and investment for local talent.
- b. Youth Development Programs:** Initiatives focused on introducing surfing to young athletes could play a pivotal role in building a pipeline of future champions. Grassroots programs, surfing academies, and school partnerships can help foster a new generation of surfers.
- c. International Coaching and Partnerships:** Collaborations with international coaches, training programs, and surf academies could accelerate the growth of Indian surfing. Establishing partnerships with countries that have well-developed surfing ecosystems—such as Australia, Japan, and the USA—could provide Indian athletes with the mentorship and expertise needed to excel on the world stage.

Harish Muthu's Quarter-Final Run: Breaking New Ground

### 1. Individual Brilliance and its Significance

In addition to the team's achievements, Indian surfer Harish Muthu made history by becoming the first Indian to qualify for the quarter-finals of the Asian Surfing Championships. Muthu's performance was a testament to his skill and determination, as he navigated challenging wave conditions and faced tough competition from more experienced surfers.

Although his journey ended in the quarter-finals, Muthu's run represents a breakthrough for individual Indian surfers in international competitions. His success is likely to inspire a new generation of surfers, showing that it is possible to compete at the highest levels of the sport with the right training and dedication.

### 2. Muthu's Role as a Trailblazer

Muthu's performance at the championships is more than just a personal achievement; it serves as a catalyst for the entire Indian surfing community. By reaching the quarter-finals, Muthu has raised the bar for future Indian surfers and established a precedent for excellence. His journey is expected to motivate other aspiring surfers to push beyond their limits and aim for success in global competitions.

## Surfing's Bright Future in India

India's silver medal at the Maruhaba Cup and Harish Muthu's historic quarter-final run at the Asian Surfing Championships mark a significant leap forward for Indian surfing. These achievements demonstrate that Indian surfers are no longer mere participants but are now serious contenders on the international stage.

As India prepares to compete in the 2026 Asian Games, the future of surfing in the country looks promising. With continued investment in infrastructure, talent development, and international exposure, India has the potential to become a powerhouse in Asian surfing, inspiring generations of athletes to come.