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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 21-04-2026

NATIONAL NEWS

All India Council for Technical Education Launches VAANI 3.0 Scheme

The All-India Council for Technical Education has launched the third edition of the AICTE-VAANI Scheme (Vibrant Advocacy for Advancement and Nurturing of Indian Languages) to promote the use of Indian languages in technical education and research and improve accessibility for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

The scheme was launched by Yogesh Singh, highlighting the importance of making technical knowledge accessible in native languages.

A dedicated online portal has been introduced to simplify participation by institutions.

The scheme aims to promote research and publication in Indian languages, strengthen academia–industry collaboration, and enable students to understand technical concepts in their mother tongue.

The initiative addresses the language gap between school education and higher technical education, where many students shift from regional languages to English-medium learning.

Under VAANI 3.0, the Government will provide ₹4 crore annually to support academic activities.

More than 200 conferences, seminars, and workshops will be funded each year, with selected institutions receiving ₹2 lakh each.

Activities will be conducted in 22 regional languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Punjabi, and Urdu.

The scheme will support programmes in 16 emerging domains such as Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, Quantum Technology, Hydrogen Energy, Cybersecurity, Space and Defence, and Agrotechnology.

Applications from AICTE-approved institutions will be accepted between 18 April and 17 May 2026 through the AICTE Training and Learning (ATAL) Portal.

The scheme is expected to improve learning outcomes, increase participation in research and innovation, and promote inclusive technical education, especially for students from rural and regional backgrounds.

Bengaluru Water Board Becomes First in India to Receive ISO 50001 Certification

The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has become the first water utility in India to receive the ISO 50001:2018 certification for energy management.

The recognition, announced on April 14, 2026, highlights efforts toward efficient energy use and sustainable urban infrastructure in Bengaluru.

The certification was issued by Bureau Veritas, a global certification agency.

The certification covers key operations including: bulk water pumping stations at TK Halli, Harohalli, and Tataguni, operations at Cauvery Bhavan headquarters and continuous water supply systems across Greater Bengaluru.

ISO 50001 focuses on: improving energy efficiency, reducing operational costs and lowering carbon emissions.

The achievement is significant for rapidly growing urban centres like Bengaluru, where demand for water and energy is increasing.

Earlier, BWSSB also received certification from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) for its piped drinking water supply management system.

The milestone reflects BWSSB’s commitment to sustainable infrastructure and adoption of global best practices.

Meghalaya Grants Official Status to Khasi and Garo

The Meghalaya Government has approved the Meghalaya Official Languages Ordinance, 2026, granting official language status to Khasi and Garo along with English.

The decision was taken by the State Cabinet under the leadership of Chief Minister Conrad Sangma and aims to strengthen indigenous identity and improve administrative accessibility.

Khasi and Garo, spoken by the two largest tribal communities of Meghalaya, will now be used in government communication and administrative functioning.

English will continue as the linking language in the State.

The Meghalaya State Language Act, 2005 will be repealed following the new ordinance.

Members of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly will be able to speak and debate in Khasi and Garo.

The languages may also be introduced in government examinations and recruitment processes after implementation frameworks are prepared.

The move follows long-standing demands from local communities and aims to strengthen cultural identity and governance accessibility.

The decision is expected to support Meghalaya’s demand for inclusion of Khasi and Garo in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India, which currently recognises 22 languages and provides

support for language development, representation in official examinations, and greater national recognition.

The decision aligns with constitutional provisions such as Article 345, which allows States to adopt one or more languages for official purposes, Article 346 related to communication between States and the Union, and Article 347, which empowers the President of India to direct recognition of a language spoken by a section of the population for official use.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ISRO's Space Applications Centre Signs MoU with ATREE

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) through its Space Applications Centre (SAC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE).

The partnership aims to revolutionize sustainable land management in India.

The initiative will develop standardized protocols for ecosystem monitoring and generate policy-ready data for land-use planning.

It combines ISRO's satellite-based mapping technology with ATREE's field-based ecological validation.

The collaboration will support land-use planning, climate action, biodiversity conservation, and rural livelihoods.

The project will map nearly 319,675 square kilometres (sq. km), covering around 10% of India's total land area.

The focus will be on Open Natural Ecosystems (ONE) such as shrublands, woodland savannas, and saline landscapes.

The initiative is strategically important for helping India achieve its target of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) by 2030.

BANKING

Cabinet Approves Creation of 'Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool (BMI Pool)'

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the creation of a domestic insurance pool named the 'Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool (BMI Pool)'.

The pool will be backed by a sovereign guarantee of ₹12,980 crore to ensure continuous maritime

insurance coverage.

It aims to provide affordable insurance for vessels and cargo moving between international ports and Indian ports, including during transit through volatile maritime corridors.

The initiative addresses rising risks due to global volatility and geopolitical instability, which have increased marine insurance costs and uncertainty.

Currently, India relies heavily on the International Group of Protection and Indemnity (IGP&I) Clubs for third-party liability insurance.

These include coverage for oil pollution liability, wreck removal, cargo damage, crew injury and repatriation, and collision liabilities.

The BMI Pool will ensure domestic maritime risk coverage to maintain sovereignty and trade continuity, even during sanctions or geopolitical disruptions.

The pool will be operated by participating insurers using a combined underwriting capacity of around ₹950 crore.

It will help develop domestic marine insurance expertise, including underwriting, claims management, and legal capabilities in India.

A Governing Body will oversee the formation and functioning of the BMI Pool.

The sovereign guarantee supports objectives of self-reliance, sanctions resilience, and sovereign control over maritime insurance systems.

APCRDA to Raise ₹15,000 Crore from WB and ADB for Amaravati Development

The Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA) has secured ₹40,887 crore so far for the development of Amaravati, the greenfield capital city of Andhra Pradesh.

The state government plans to raise an additional ₹15,000 crore from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The total estimated requirement for the Amaravati capital city project exceeds ₹43,000 crore, indicating a funding gap that is yet to be addressed.

Major funding sources include NaBFID (₹7,500 crore), HUDCO (₹11,000 crore), and NABARD (₹7,387 crore), apart from multilateral loans.

The project includes development of over 1,200 km of last-mile connectivity, along with cycle tracks, footpaths, and underground utility infrastructure.

The Amaravati master plan integrates existing villages with new urban development, ensuring a balanced urban expansion model.

All 26 villages in the capital region have been classified as “R1 Zone” and retained wherever feasible in the master plan.

Land pooled under the scheme is being developed into residential, commercial, and recreational

zones to build a world-class capital city.

Farmers who contributed land under the Land Pooling Scheme have been allotted around 70,000 returnable plots.

They have received ₹1,800 crore as annuity and ₹618 crore as pensions, along with 5,024 housing units for the poor.

The project also provides access to healthcare and education facilities, supporting inclusive urban development.

World Bank Group Launches ‘Water Forward’ Initiative

Ajay Banga, President of the World Bank Group, announced the launch of ‘Water Forward’, a global platform to improve water security for 1 billion people by 2030.

The initiative is launched in collaboration with multilateral development banks (MDBs) and development finance institutions (DFIs).

Water Forward aims to expand reliable water services, enhance resilience against droughts and floods, and support economic growth and job creation.

The platform adopts country-led water compacts, aligning policy reforms, financing, partnerships, and investment-ready projects.

These compacts enable governments to define reform priorities, strengthen institutions, and create investment pathways in the water sector.

The World Bank Group (WBG) aims to provide water security to 400 million people by 2030, while partner institutions will cover an additional 600 million people.

Overall, the initiative targets 1 billion beneficiaries globally by 2030.

Currently, around 4 billion people face water scarcity, highlighting the urgency of the initiative.

The programme addresses challenges such as weak regulations, unclear policies, and financially unsustainable utilities.

It focuses on building strong, reliable water systems to support health, food security, energy, and livelihoods, impacting nearly 7 billion jobs worldwide.

About 14 countries have already announced national water compacts, with more expected to join.

Key participating institutions include the Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, European Investment Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, New Development Bank, and International Fund for Agricultural Development.

With 2 billion young people entering the workforce in developing countries, reliable water systems are crucial for sustainable development and employment generation.

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

World Economic Forum April 2026 Report

The World Economic Forum released its April 2026 report titled ‘Growth in the New Economy: Towards a Blueprint’ highlighting global economic trends.

The global economy is projected to expand by USD 56 trillion over the next five years, driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI), quantum computing, and other emerging technologies.

Growth will be concentrated in sectors where digitisation and automation significantly improve productivity.

Key growth sectors include Information Technology (IT) services, advanced manufacturing, energy, and other technology-driven industries.

Middle-income economies are expected to become major contributors to global expansion.

These economies are projected to contribute around 65% of cumulative global GDP growth (2025–2030).

In contrast, low-income economies, despite having the fastest growth rates, will account for only about 1% of global growth.

Regionally, Asia is expected to remain the primary engine of global economic growth.

Asia alone is projected to contribute more than 50% of total global growth during the period.

DEFENCE

Indian Ocean Ship SAGAR – INS Sunayna Departs Phuket

The Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) SAGAR – INS Sunayna departed Phuket, Thailand after completing a three-day Operational Turnaround (OTR).

This marked the successful completion of its second port call during the ongoing IOS SAGAR deployment.

During the visit, IOS SAGAR conducted professional, strategic, and cultural engagements with the Royal Thai Navy.

These engagements significantly strengthened bilateral naval cooperation between India and Thailand.

The Commanding Officer, Commander Siddharth Chaudhary, held a meeting with Rear Admiral

Sathaporn Wajarat, Chief of Staff, Third Naval Area Command (RTN).

The interaction reaffirmed a shared commitment to maritime cooperation and regional security.

Crew exchanges included a friendly football match and a joint Yoga session, promoting camaraderie and people-to-people connect.

A formal deck reception onboard INS Sunayna facilitated discussions on the IOS SAGAR mission and maritime cooperation.

The ship was also opened to visitors, strengthening public engagement and cultural diplomacy.

A Passage Exercise (PASSEX) was conducted with HTMS Klongyai, demonstrating operational interoperability.

The exercise included communication drills and formation manoeuvres, showcasing a “plug-and-play” capability between navies.

The visit aligns with India’s MAHASAGAR vision (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions).

IOS SAGAR has now proceeded to Jakarta, Indonesia, for its next port of call.

AWARDS & PRIZES

Nishita Yogesh Antarkar Crowned Miss Sake India 2026

Nishita Yogesh Antarkar was crowned Miss Sake India 2026 at an event held in Mumbai.

The event was organised by Hirohama India Pvt. Ltd. to promote Japanese sake culture and strengthen India–Japan cultural ties.

Nishita Yogesh Antarkar, a business owner and trained Kathak dancer with over 16 years of experience, was crowned Miss Sake India 2026.

The event was held at Robata Kuuraku and recognised her as a cultural ambassador of Japanese sake in India.

She was crowned by the outgoing titleholder Akansha Shrivastava.

The ceremony highlighted growing cultural cooperation between India and Japan through promotion of traditional sake culture.

Key dignitaries present included Toshihiro Kaneko, Chisato Tateno, Mika Onishii, and Mika Eoka.

During the event, Toshihiro Kaneko emphasised strong cultural similarities and ongoing cooperation between India and Japan, especially in regional and sustainable development initiatives.

The initiative has been organised in India for the third consecutive year to promote Japanese sake traditions and people-to-people cultural exchange.

Priyanka Sarkar from Bengaluru and Sakshi Khari from Delhi were named runners-up among the seven finalists in the competition.

IMPORTANT DAYS

World Liver Day 2026

World Liver Day is observed every year on 19 April to raise awareness about liver health and encourage preventive care against liver-related diseases.

The theme for 2026 is “Solid Habits, Strong Liver”, highlighting the role of healthy daily lifestyle choices in protecting liver function.

The liver is the largest internal organ in the human body, located in the upper right part of the abdomen.

It performs over 500 essential functions, including metabolism, digestion, detoxification, and nutrient processing.

The liver converts carbohydrates into glucose, metabolises fats, and synthesises proteins required for body repair and growth.

It removes toxins from the blood, produces bile for digestion, and supports blood clotting and immunity.

The day raises awareness about liver diseases such as Hepatitis, Fatty Liver Disease, and Liver Cancer.

Health organisations worldwide promote early diagnosis, screening, and preventive lifestyle practices through this observance.

The initiative aims to reduce the global burden of liver diseases by encouraging healthy habits and awareness about liver care.

OBITUARY

Former Indian Olympic Association and World Squash Federation President N. Ramachandran

Narayana Ramachandran (N. Ramachandran), popularly known as ‘Rami’, passed away at the age of 77 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

He was born in 1948 in Chennai and was one of India’s most influential sports administrators.

He served as President of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) from 2014 to 2017.

Earlier, he held key roles in IOA as Associate Vice-President (2001) and Vice-President (2005).

He also served as President of the World Squash Federation (WSF) from 2008 to 2016.

Additionally, he was the President of the Asian Squash Federation (ASF) from 2001 to 2009.

He played a major role in promoting squash globally and strengthening India's presence in international sports administration.

In 2000, he established the Indian Squash Academy (ISA) in Chennai to develop squash talent with world-class training facilities.

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