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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 24-04-2026

NATIONAL NEWS

Indian Institute of Technology Madras Introduces OmegaBall in India

The Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) introduced OmegaBall, a three-team football format, marking its first-ever entry into India.

IIT Madras proposed the formation of a national-level OmegaBall Club to promote and expand the sport across the country.

The institute organized an inter-college OmegaBall tournament at its campus football field to mark the launch.

Participating institutions included Loyola College, Guru Nanak College, Dr. Ambedkar Law University, The New College, Saveetha University, and YMCA College of Physical Education, along with teams from IIT Madras.

OmegaBall is played with three teams simultaneously on a circular field with three goals, increasing ball interaction and scoring opportunities.

The format is gaining popularity in regions such as the United States, Brazil, and Europe, indicating its emergence as a global sport.

The initiative was launched under the leadership of V. Kamakoti, Director of IIT Madras, highlighting the importance of innovation in sports.

The introduction of OmegaBall aligns with the institute's vision of encouraging creativity, enhancing student engagement, and strengthening India's sports ecosystem.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Bannerghatta Biological Park Receives Four Cheetahs from South Africa

Bannerghatta Biological Park, located in Bengaluru, announced the successful arrival of four cheetahs, including two females from South Africa.

The cheetahs were sourced from Induna Primate and Parrot Park and arrived in India via Kempegowda International Airport.

The animals were received as part of an exchange programme involving four Asiatic elephants, strengthening international wildlife conservation cooperation.

The zoo is also set to receive other species including Capuchins, Jaguars, Pumas, and Chimpanzees, enhancing its biodiversity collection.

The import process involved extensive health screening and an initial quarantine period in South Africa to ensure animal safety.

The transfer was completed after receiving necessary regulatory approvals under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

NASA Confirms SpaceX Launch of Rosalind Franklin Rover Mission to Mars in 2028

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced that SpaceX's Falcon Heavy rocket will launch the Rosalind Franklin rover to Mars in 2028.

The launch will take place from Launch Complex 39A at Kennedy Space Center, located in the United States of America.

The Rosalind Franklin rover is part of the ExoMars mission led by the European Space Agency (ESA).

NASA has approved the Rosalind Franklin Support and Augmentation (ROSA) project to enhance mission success.

The primary objective of the mission is to drill up to 2 meters beneath Mars' surface to search for signs of past or present microbial life.

The rover will become the first Mars rover to explore subsurface life on the Red Planet (Mars).

Under the ROSA project, NASA will provide critical support systems and technologies.

NASA's role includes launch services, braking engines for the landing platform, and radioisotope heater units to maintain the rover's internal temperature in extreme Martian conditions.

In 2024, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA).

The MoU formalized the expansion of NASA's role in the ExoMars programme, strengthening international space cooperation.

BANKING

World Bank Sanctions USD 225 Million Funding for Rajasthan

The World Bank (WB) Board of Executive Directors approved a USD 225 million (approx. ₹2,080 crore) loan for the Rajasthan Highway Modernisation Project.

The loan has been provided through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).

The financing package includes a 35-year maturity period, a 5-year grace period, and India's first Step-Up Loan (SuL) mechanism.

The Step-Up Loan (SuL) helps reduce initial fiscal burden during the early high-risk phase and increases repayments later once the project stabilises and becomes suitable for market refinancing.

The project aims to improve the efficiency, resilience, and safety of state highways in Rajasthan.

Around 800 kilometres (km) of state highways will be upgraded and maintained under the project.

The initiative will support the transformation of the Rajasthan State Highway Authority (RSHA) into a modern, service-oriented highway agency.

The project is expected to benefit more than 3 million people and improve regional connectivity across economic corridors.

It will strengthen job creation in key sectors including agriculture, industry, mining, and tourism.

Rajasthan serves as a key gateway connecting about 40% of India's markets and is one of the country's largest states.

The project places strong emphasis on road safety management to reduce accidents and fatalities.

It will enhance climate resilience, making highways more safe, reliable, and durable for commuters.

The project will crowd in nearly USD 295 million in private capital through public-private partnerships (PPP) and market borrowing.

RBI Releases Guidelines on Exchange Facility for Currency Notes and Coins

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued Master Directions on Facility for Exchange of Notes and Coins to ensure smooth currency exchange services across India.

As per the guidelines, all bank branches across the country are mandated to provide free and non-discriminatory exchange services of currency notes and coins to the public.

Banks are required to provide key customer services including:

Issuing fresh and good-quality notes and coins of all denominations

Exchanging soiled, mutilated, or imperfect currency notes

Accepting coins and notes for transactions or exchange purposes

A “soiled note” is defined as a currency note that has become dirty due to normal wear and tear.

It also includes a two-piece note pasted together, provided both pieces belong to the same note and no essential security feature is missing.

Such soiled or damaged notes must be accepted by banks either for exchange over counters or for credit into customer bank accounts.

CheQ and AU Small Finance Bank Introduce India’s First Co-branded LED-Powered Credit Card

CheQ, a credit management platform, partnered with AU Small Finance Bank to launch the ‘CheQ AU Credit Card’.

The card is India’s first co-branded Light-Emitting Diode (LED)-powered credit card, designed to enhance digital payment experience and reward management.

The credit card focuses on simplified payments, maximised rewards, and a unified rewards ecosystem with tap-to-pay features.

The card lights up during transactions by using energy from the Near Field Communication (NFC) field of the Point-of-Sale (POS) terminal.

It operates without an internal battery, making it a battery-free LED credit card

The card supports dual payment networks, including Visa for global transactions and RuPay for Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

The annual fee is ₹499, which is waived on ₹3 lakh annual spends.

A ₹999 one-time fee applies for the LED variant, but it is waived until 31 May 2026 for CheQ customers.

The card offers a unified CheQ Points rewards system with multiple earning categories.

Users can earn up to 12% rewards on select platforms, 5% on everyday spends, 2.5% on UPI (RuPay) transactions, and 1% on other transactions.

Rewards can be redeemed for gift cards, travel bookings, and bill payments.

The card also includes a welcome EazyDiner membership worth ₹695, enhancing lifestyle benefits.

AWARDS & PRIZES

World Wide Fund for Nature National Award

N. Alim Yusuf, a botanist from Kerala, was honoured with the World-Wide Fund for Nature National Award at the National ECHO Youth Innovation Summit 2026, organised as part of the International Youth Biodiversity Conference in Hyderabad, Telangana.

He received the award for developing an Artificial Intelligence-powered mobile application "NeophyteID" designed to identify invasive plant species in Kerala.

During the summit, he was granted Rs 1.5 lakh as a seed fund by the World Wide Fund for Nature to support the further development and expansion of the application.

The NeophyteID application was developed by researchers at the Malabar Botanical Garden and Institute for Plant Sciences (MGBIPS) located at Olavanna, Kozhikode, Kerala, and is capable of identifying around 100 invasive plant species in the State.

The application uses the Machine Learning-based YOLOv11 model and currently supports two languages: Malayalam and English.

Dr. Ch. Srinivasa Rao Conferred with 9th Prof. M. S. Swaminathan Award 2026

Ch. Srinivasa Rao, Director and Vice-Chancellor of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), was honoured with the 9th Prof. M. S. Swaminathan Award in Hyderabad.

He received the award for his contributions to climate-resilient agriculture and natural resource management, supporting sustainable agricultural development in India.

The Prof. M. S. Swaminathan Award is instituted by the Retired ICAR Employees Association in collaboration with Nuziveedu Seeds Limited, recognising excellence in agricultural research, food security, and sustainability.

The 2026 edition of the award holds special significance as it coincides with the birth centenary year of M. S. Swaminathan, widely regarded as the architect of India's Green Revolution.

Dr. Ch. Srinivasa Rao has played a key role in promoting resource conservation technologies, development of district-level contingency plans for climate risks, and improving soil health and water management practices across agricultural regions.

His initiatives supported the adoption of sustainable farming practices across millions of hectares, strengthening India's capacity to manage climate variability, droughts, and extreme weather conditions.

The award presentation ceremony was attended by eminent personalities including M. Venkaiah Naidu, Tummala Nageswara Rao, Mandava Prabhakar Rao, and C. Vidyasagar Rao.

Sadhvi Satish Sail Crowned Femina Miss India World 2026

Sadhvi Satish Sail from Goa was crowned Femina Miss India World 2026 at the 61st edition of the Femina Miss India pageant held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

She was crowned by the outgoing titleholder Nikita Porwal, marking a significant milestone in her beauty pageant journey.

Rajnandini Pawar from Maharashtra secured the position of first runner-up in the competition.

Following her victory, Sadhvi Satish Sail will represent India at the Miss World 2027.

Sadhvi Satish Sail is a model and entrepreneur, and has participated in multiple fashion shows and promotional campaigns, along with co-founding a company in the construction and development sector.

Rajnandini Pawar is known for her achievements as a state-level dancer and squash player, highlighting a blend of sports and artistic excellence.

The Femina Miss India pageant serves as a major platform to promote confident, socially aware, and purpose-driven women, with participants evaluated on personality, communication skills, social awareness, talent, and stage presence.

SPORTS

ICC Launches Inaugural Women’s T20I Challenge Trophy 2026 in Rwanda

The International Cricket Council (ICC) launched the inaugural Women’s T20I Challenge Trophy 2026 in Kigali, Rwanda, starting to promote women’s cricket among emerging cricket nations.

The five-nation tournament features Rwanda, Italy, Nepal, the United States of America, and Vanuatu, representing different International Cricket Council regions.

All matches are being conducted at the Gahanga Cricket Stadium.

The tournament follows a double round-robin format, under which each team plays against every other team twice, and it will continue until May 2, 2026.

The opening fixtures included Rwanda vs Italy and Nepal vs the United States of America, while Vanuatu began its campaign on April 19, 2026, against the host nation Rwanda.

The Women’s T20I Challenge Trophy 2026 aims to strengthen associate member participation in women’s cricket, provide international exposure to emerging teams, and create a structured pathway toward higher-level global tournaments.

IMPORTANT DAYS

National Civil Services Day

National Civil Services Day is observed every year on April 21 in India to recognise and motivate civil servants for their contribution to public administration and nation-building.

The civil services in India include the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS), and Central Group A and Group B services.

The day commemorates Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the then Home Minister of independent India, who addressed probationary officers at the All-India Administrative Service Training School, Metcalfe House, New Delhi, on April 21, 1947.

During his address, he described civil servants as the “Steel Frame of India”, emphasising their critical role in strengthening the administrative structure of the country.

The first National Civil Services Day function was organised at Vigyan Bhawan on April 21, 2006, after which the day began to be observed annually.

On this occasion, the Prime Minister’s Awards for Excellence in Public Administration are presented to recognise outstanding performance by civil servants and government organisations.

World Earth Day 2026

World Earth Day is observed every year on 22 April to promote awareness about environmental protection and sustainability across the globe.

The theme for World Earth Day 2026 is “Our Power, Our Planet”.

The first Earth Day was initiated in 1969 by United States Senator Gaylord Nelson after witnessing the environmental damage caused by a major oil spill in Santa Barbara, California.

In 1970, thousands of colleges and universities across the United Nations member countries organized environmental protests supporting a healthy and sustainable planet.

In 1968, the United States Public Health Service organized the Human Ecology Symposium to discuss the impact of environmental degradation on human health.

In 1972, the United States Government established the Environmental Protection Agency and enacted the Clean Air Act to control air pollution and protect natural habitats.

In 1990, Earth Day became a global movement, with participation from more than 140 countries.

In 1995, Gaylord Nelson was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his contribution to the environmental movement through the Earth Day initiative.

OBITUTARY

Brazil Basketball Icon Oscar Schmidt

Oscar Schmidt, one of the greatest scorers in basketball history, passed away at the age of 68 after battling a brain tumor.

He had an extraordinary 30-year professional career, playing for clubs in Brazil and Europe, and retired in 2003 at the age of 45.

Oscar Schmidt represented Brazil in five Olympic Games and four FIBA World Cups, setting all-time scoring records in both tournaments.

He was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 2013, recognising his outstanding contribution to the sport.

Known for his exceptional scoring ability, he held an unofficial world record of 49,737 career points (club + national team combined).

His scoring record was later surpassed by LeBron James in 2024.

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