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## Daily Current Affairs Encyclopedia

21 February 2024

National and International News

**Maharashtra clears 10% quota for all Marathas**

**Context:**

- Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and his Cabinet approved a Bill to provide a **10% quota for the Maratha community in education and government jobs.**

**Key points:**

- The Bill, passed by the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council, is similar to the **Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Act, 2018** introduced by the then-government led by Devendra Fadnavis, which was struck down by the top court in May 2021.
- This is the third time in the last decade that the State has introduced legislation for a Maratha quota.
- While seeking to fulfill demands of poorer Marathas, this Bill does not disturb the existing OBC quota. It will push total reservations in Maharashtra to **62%, above the Supreme Court-mandated limit of 50%.**
- As things stand, reservation in the state is 52%. The break down: **13% for Scheduled Castes, 7% for Scheduled Tribes, 19% for OBCs, 2% for Special Backward Classes, 3% for Vimukta Jati, 2.5% for Nomadic Tribe (B), 3.5% for Nomadic Tribe (C) Dhargar, and 2% for Nomadic Tribe (D) Vanjari.**
- With the proposed Maratha reservation, the state's overall quota percentage goes up to **62%, just below Tamil Nadu, which stands at 69%.** "Maharashtra is not the only state to have above 60% reservation. Haryana and Rajasthan have 64%. Twenty-two states have more than 50%,"



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**'India to seek \$26 bn private investment in nuclear power sector'**

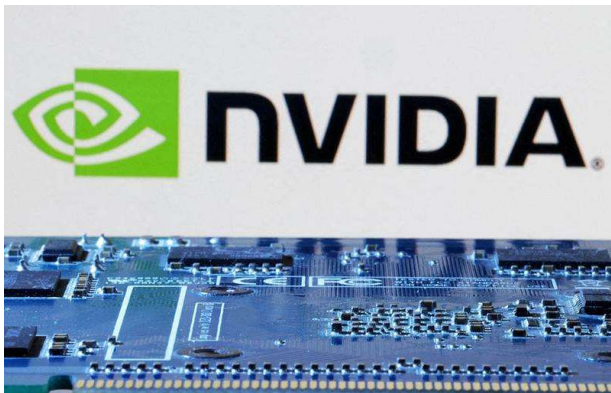
**Context:**

- India will invite private companies to invest about **\$26 billion in its nuclear energy sector** to increase the amount of electricity from sources that do not produce carbon dioxide emissions.

**Key points:**

- This is the first time that New Delhi is pursuing private investment in nuclear power, a non-carbon-emitting energy source that contributes less than **2% of India's total electricity generation**.
- The funding would help India achieve its target of having 50% of its installed electric generation capacity use non-fossil fuels by 2030, up from 42% now.
- The government is in talks with at least five private firms, including **Reliance Industries, Tata Power, Adani Power, and Vedanta Ltd.**, to invest around ₹440 billion (\$5.3 billion) each.
- With the investment, the government hopes to build **11,000 megawatts (MW) of new nuclear power generation capacity by 2040**, said the officials, adding that the plan is still being finalized.
- The state-run **Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL)** owns and operates the country's fleet of nuclear power plants, with a capacity of 7,500 MW, and has committed investments for another 1,300 MW.

**Nvidia dethrones Tesla as Wall Street's most traded stock**



**Context:**

- Chipmaker **Nvidia is replacing Tesla as Wall Street's most traded stock**, adding to its prominence after becoming the **third-most valuable U.S. company** and showing more evidence of how central AI-related bets have become to investors.

**Key points:**

- **About \$30 billion Nvidia shares changed hands daily on average over the past 30 sessions**, pulling ahead of Elon Musk's electric car maker, which averaged **\$22 billion per day over the same period**.
- Tesla since 2020 has dominated daily U.S. stock trading, as per LSEG data, with turnover — a stock's share price multiplied by the number of shares exchanged — peaking above \$35 billion several times in recent years.



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<p><b>Lab-grown diamonds put natural gems industry under huge pressure</b></p>	<p><b>Context:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Man Made gems are reshaping the <b>\$89 bn</b> global diamond jewelry market, especially in <b>Surat where 90%</b> of the world's diamonds are cut and polished; lab-grown diamond exports from India tripled in value between 2019-2022 while exports rose <b>25% between April and October 2023.</b></li></ul> <p><b>Key points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The glittering diamonds sparkle the same but there are key differences: <b>mined natural gems are more than a billion years old, while laboratory-made rocks are new and cost less than half the price.</b></li><li>"It's the same product, it's the <b>same chemical, the same optical properties.</b>"</li><li>The lab-grown industry has had its problems, too. Supply has skyrocketed and prices have dropped drastically, with wholesale prices down by 58% in 2023 alone.</li></ul>
<p><b>Shehbaz to be Pakistan PM, Zardari to be President</b></p>	<p><b>Context:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The <b>Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)</b> reached an agreement to establish a new coalition government in Pakistan after days of negotiations.</li><li>PPP chairman Bilawal <b>Bhutto-Zardari announced that PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif is set to assume the role of Prime Minister</b> again while PPP co-chairman Asif Zardari is slated to become the country's next President.</li></ul>

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### Amount of tiny plastic particles in bottled water underestimated



### Context:

- A study has confirmed the fragmentation of the plastic content of real-world water samples beyond the micrometer scale.

### Key points:

- A liter of bottled water can contain **more than one lakh particles of micro- and nano-plastics**, with 90% of those being the latter.
- Nanoplastics are difficult to analyze, mainly **due to their size and also due to the inability of different diagnostic techniques** to identify them.
- The study, conducted by **scientists at Columbia University in New York** and published on **January 8, 2024 in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences**, The investigation revealed the presence of around **2.4 lakh micro- and nano-plastic particles per liter of bottled water (give or take 1.3 lakh)**.
- The algorithm the research team used to track the presence of plastics in bottled water could spot following the types: **polyamide 66, polypropylene (PP), polyethylene, polymethyl methacrylate, polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polystyrene, and polyethylene terephthalate (PET)**.

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