



21 February 2024

National and International News

<p>Maharashtra clears 10% quota for all Marathas</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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%,"
<p>'India to seek \$26 bn private investment in nuclear power sector'</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the first time that New Delhi is pursuing private investment in nuclear power, a



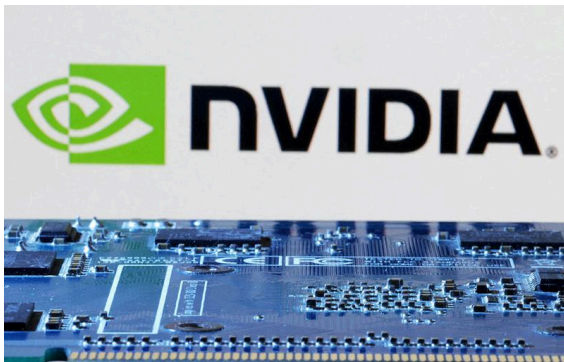
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non-carbon-emitting energy source that contributes less than **2% of India's total electricity generation.**

- 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.

Lab-grown diamonds put natural gems industry under huge pressure

Context:

- Man Made gems are reshaping the **\$89 bn** global diamond jewelry market, especially in **Surat where 90%** of the world's diamonds are cut and polished;



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lab-grown diamond exports from India tripled in value between 2019-2022 while exports rose 25% between April and October 2023.

Key points:

- The glittering diamonds sparkle the same but there are key differences: **mined natural gems are more than a billion years old, while laboratory-made rocks are new and cost less than half the price.**
- "It's the same product, it's the **same chemical, the same optical properties.**"
- 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.

Shehbaz to be Pakistan PM, Zardari to be President

Context:

- The **Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)** reached an agreement to establish a new coalition government in Pakistan after days of negotiations.
- PPP chairman Bilawal **Bhutto-Zardari announced that PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif is set to assume the role of Prime Minister again while PPP co-chairman Asif Zardari is slated to become the country's next President.**

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**



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(PP), polyethylene, polymethyl methacrylate, polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polystyrene, and polyethylene terephthalate (PET).



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