TAMIL NADU

- Twenty women officers from the Afghanistan defence forces are undergoing a military training course at the Officers Training Academy (OTA) in Meenambakkam.

- They will be trained in modern training methods and facilities during their four week stay at the OTA.
- This is the third time that women officers from Afghanistan defence forces are getting trained at the academy.
- The batch of women officers are being employed in various wings of the Afghan army like logistics, human resources, infantry and radio communication.
- Most of the officers have been in service for two to nine years.
- The training began after they landed in Chennai on November 24.
- The training areas include physical training, drill, weapon training, tactical training, leadership and human resources management, information technology and English communication.

- The Union environment ministry has given clearance for the expansion of Ennore thermal project with a condition that the project has to be completed within five years.
- The ministry had earlier given the approval for the project with a capacity of 660MW in 2009, but Tangedco could not complete the project.
Again in 2014, the ministry extended the clearance for another five years ending in 2019
Earlier this year, the ministry refused to further extend the clearance as only 17% of the work had been completed and wanted Tangedco to apply once again for clearance
The foundation for the project was laid by the former chief minister J Jayalalithaa
The project is coming up at the same place where 5 thermal units of 110MW and 60MW, with a total capacity of 450MW, functioned.
The units were decommissioned in 2017.
Total coal requirement for the project is 2 million tonnes and for this purpose, Tangedco has signed an MoU with MMTC Limited for the supply.
Coal will be brought to Ennore port from various mines in Chhattisgarh and Odisha, and then transported through conveyors to the plant.
The Tamil Nadu Coastal Zone Management Authority has recommended CRZ clearance to construct the pipe conveyors from North Chennai Power Plant to the project site.
The daily water requirement for the project will be taken from the sea.
A seawater intake pipeline of 3.15km and discharge pipeline of 1.55km will be provided to meet the water requirement of the plant.

NATIONAL

- Rajya Sabha - unanimously passed the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Sixth Amendment) Bill, 2019 on December 12
  - The bill seeks to extend reservation for Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes in Lok Sabha and state assemblies for a further period of 10 years and ending the provision for nomination of two Anglo-Indians.
  - The bill was earlier passed by the Lok Sabha on December 10
  - All 163 members present voted to pass the amendment
  - The reservation for SCs/STs in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies was due to end on January 25, 2020
  - It was provided an extension for a period of 10 years, with the last time it was given the seventh such 10-year extension, since the Constitution was enacted in 1950

- Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman - introduced the bill to amend Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code on December 12
  - The Union Cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister, approved the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019 on December 11
  - The amendments were being brought in to remove the difficulties and streamline the corporate insolvency resolution process
  - The new bill seeks to amend the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.
The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed by the Parliament on August 1, 2019 when it was passed in the Lok Sabha.

The amendment bill, seeking amendments in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016, was passed earlier by the Rajya Sabha on July 29, 2019.

The first amendment was passed by Parliament in July.

Soon all vintage vehicles - will get a special series of registration number with two letters (VA) common across the country

- The move will help in quick identification of these over 50-year-old vehicles
- VA will stand for vintage and these letters will come after the state code (Example – TNVA1234)
- These vehicles will have to display high security number plates both in the front and at the rear.
- This is for the first time the road transport ministry has worked out a draft norm for regulation of vintage vehicles
- Vintage vehicles will be exempted from compliance of some of the regulatory norms with regard to their construction, maintenance and emission norms.
- As per the proposed norm, government won’t notify the age to retire these vehicles.
- However, these will not be allowed on roads for regular use and for any commercial purposes.
- These would be used only for display in any exhibition, rally, show or museum.
- These can also be used for technical research, cinematography, historical, heritage tours and in ceremonies.
Moreover, the vintage vehicles will be allowed to be driven in the road only for fuel filling purpose or for taking them to mechanics for maintenance.

According to the draft regulation, every state will have a Vintage Motor Vehicles State Committee (VMVSC), which will decide about the approval or rejection of all applications.

Any vehicle to be categorized as a ‘vintage vehicle’ must be maintained in original form and should not have undergone any substantial overhaul.

The applicants will have to compulsorily submit a copy of the first registration of the vehicle, records of transfer of ownership and change of address, if any.

The registration of the vehicle will be valid for 10 years and it can be renewed further.

The owners would need to pay ₹20,000 to the state transport authorities (STA) at the time of registration.

**SPORTS**

- Kerala Grandmaster SL Narayanan - won his maiden international FIDE rated title at the Elllobregat Open in Catalonia, Spain.

It is the first time a Kerala GM has won an international Fide event, even though he was not a top seed.

The Kerala GM, who was the third seed in the event, secured the title over second seed Bartel Mateusz of Poland in the decisive ‘armageddon’ game, playing with white pieces.

The armageddon is a unique one-game playoff, employed as a ‘decider’ of the winner, when there is no clear winner at the end of a series of playoff games.

In the armageddon, white has more minutes on the clock compared to black, though a draw would be enough for the player with black pieces to be declared the winner.

- Three weightlifters, a boxer and a shooter - have been banned by National Anti-Doping Agency (Nada) – from two to four years – for various doping offence
World Cup medal-winning rifle shooter Ravi Kumar has been given a two-year ban by Nada’s Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel (ADDP) for the presence of banned drug propranolol in his body.

Ravi will serve the ban period from the date of his sanction order dated December 5, 2019 and will only be able to return to the shooting circuit on December 4, 2021.

He was tested during the Kumar Surendra Nath Memorial meet in May-June this year.

In other cases, 2017 Commonwealth Championships silver medallist weightlifter, Seema, has been handed over a ban for 4 years due to the presence of an anabolic steroid in her system.

Seema had finished sixth in the women’s 75kg competition at the Gold Coast CWG.

Olympian and former Asian silver-medallist boxer, Sumit Sangwan, who failed dope test for acetazolamide, a masking agent, informed Nada that he is voluntarily opting for provisional suspension and requested for an early hearing.

Penang Junior Commonwealth Championships 2016 gold-winning weightlifter Purnima Pandey’s ban period has been reduced from four to two years by Nada.

Purnima is the reigning national champion in the women’s +87kg category.

Another weightlifter Mukul Sharma has been slapped a ban for 4 years, while boxer Deepak Sharma (91kg) was handed over a 2-year ban.

HubSpot, a cloud-computing software company - grabbed the No. 1 ranking in the recently released Glassdoor’s annual rankings of Top 10 best places to work in US.

Facebook, which has been rated as the best place to work three times in the past 10 years, was ranked 23rd.

It’s the lowest position obtained by the social media giant, since it first made the list in 2011 as the top-rated workplace.
- Google, voted best place to work in 2015 and a top-10 finisher in the previous eight years, came in at No. 11 on the Glassdoor’s list.
- Apple, once a consistent top-25 finisher, was ranked 84th.
- Amazon, which has been struggling with internal company failures, failed to make the list for the 12th straight year.
- Microsoft was one of the lone big technology companies to jump in the rankings.
- The annual Glassdoor’s list ranks companies using employee reviews on areas such as compensation, benefits, culture and senior management.

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Source: Glassdoor