



Current Affairs of the Day

Swine fever hits four Mizoram districts

Certain areas in four districts of Mizoram have been declared as epicentres of the African swine fever (ASF) that has so far killed 1,119 pigs in a month.

Highlights:

1. “Five of Mizoram’s 11 districts — Aizawl, Lunglei, Serchhip, Mamit and Siaha — are currently affected by ASF.
2. ASF was confirmed as the cause of death on April 16 by the Bhopal-based National Institute of High-Security Animal Disease laboratory. Officials have calculated the loss to pig farmers at more than ₹4.47 crore.
3. Officials said ASF cannot be transmitted from pigs to humans.

High Court dismisses FB, WhatsApp pleas

The Delhi High Court dismissed the plea of instant messaging app WhatsApp challenging a decision of the Competition Commission of India (CCI) calling for an investigation into its controversial new privacy policy.

Highlights:

1. WhatsApp had contended that since the issue of its privacy policy was before the Supreme Court, the CCI did not need to order the probe. Not only WhatsApp, but social media giant Facebook, which owns the instant messaging app, had also filed a similar petition challenging the competition watchdog’s decision.
2. WhatsApp had said the CCI “jumped the gun” and started the probe when this was not a competition issue. It had said the issue with respect to personal data of users, and sharing of personalised data was already before the Supreme Court, hence CCI ought not to have intervened.
3. The High Court, however, noted that CCI’s order of investigation could not be quashed merely because it did not await the outcome of the pending cases before the Supreme Court and High Court.



Data access

1. The CCI, on the other hand, had argued the probe order was made to gauge whether access to data would lead to abuse of the dominant position.
2. The commission had said it was dealing with the instant messaging app's new privacy policy that could lead to "excessive data collection" of consumers, the use and sharing of the data in an anti-competitive context.
3. The commission had said it was not concerned with the privacy aspect of the issue as the Supreme Court was already seized of it.

We expect a national plan from the Centre on oxygen, drugs: SC

Taking note of the 'grim' situation created by the massive surge in COVID-19 cases and deaths, the Supreme Court on Thursday said it expected the Centre to come out with a 'national plan' to deal with the proper distribution of oxygen and essential drugs for patients.

Highlights:

1. Observing that oxygen to patients infected with the virus was said to be an "essential part" of treatment, the court said it seemed that a certain amount of "panic" had been generated, due to which people had approached several High Courts seeking relief related to the prevailing situation.
2. A Bench, headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde, which took suo motu cognisance on the issue of distribution of essential supplies and services during the pandemic, said prima facie it was of the view that the distribution must be done in an "even handed manner" according to the advice of the health authorities.
3. The court said it was of the opinion that the Centre should respond, including on the existence or otherwise and requirement of setting up of a coordinating body to consider the allocation of the above resources in a consultative manner (with the involvement of the States and the Union Territories concerned).
4. It said the Centre should respond by considering the declaration of essential medicines and medical equipment, including the above articles, as essential commodities in relation to COVID-19 and also on coordination of logistical



support for inter-State and intra-State transportation and distribution of the above resources.

To hear Vedanta plea

In a related development, the Supreme Court, which termed the COVID-19 situation almost a ‘national emergency,’ agreed to hear Vedanta’s plea for the opening of its Sterlite copper unit at Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu on the ground that it would produce a thousand tonnes of oxygen and give it free of cost to treat patients. The plant has been closed since May 2018 over pollution concerns.

Uncertainty looms over vaccine rollout for all above 18 years

While 500 mn are expected to register, suppliers are unlikely to meet demand.

Highlights:

1. With registrations to be opened up from next week for vaccination of all those above 18 from May 1, uncertainty remains on whether the rollout will be smooth.
2. A senior government official, closely connected with the COVID management strategy, said the Centre’s decision was led by most States wanting the “flexibility” to domestically procure vaccines as well as import them.
3. The National Expert Group on Vaccination discussed the pros and cons of whether State and private hospitals should be allowed to source vaccines independent of the Centre.
4. To address the ongoing crisis, the way out was a “massively parallel process of rollout” and the “surge has also brought to the front the need for speeding vaccination.
5. In spite of having approved three vaccines — Covishield, Covaxin and Sputnik V — suppliers have said they will not be able to ramp up supply before July.

‘U.S. will cut emissions by 52% by 2030’

Clarion call: Biden tells world leaders that there is ‘an extraordinary engine’ of job creation in the climate response.



Highlights:

1. U.S. President Joe Biden announced that the U.S. would cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 50%-52% by 2030 relative to 2005 levels, in a clean break with the Trump administration policies on climate action.
2. Mr Biden also announced that the U.S. would double, by 2024, its annual financing commitments to developing countries, including a tripling of its adaptation finance by 2024.
3. The President made the new target announcements at a 'Leaders Summit on Climate', which he is hosting on Thursday and Friday and in which 40 heads of state and government are invited — including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President Xi Jinping of China and President Vladimir Putin of Russia.
4. The emissions targets — part of the Paris Agreement on climate — are non-binding and the details of how they will be achieved are not available.
5. However, in announcing the targets, the Biden administration is hoping to encourage other countries to increase their commitments. It is also seeking to bring America back into a leadership role on climate action after Mr Trump had withdrawn the country from the Paris Agreement.
6. Mr Biden's financing announcements are part of a \$100 billion a year commitment from developed countries to developing countries for the period 2020-25.

Jobs and growth

1. In selling climate action to the American public, which until recently was governed by an administration sceptical of the climate crisis, President Biden and his administration have linked climate action and clean technology to jobs and economic growth.
2. "And meeting this moment is about more than preserving our planet. It's also about providing a better future for all of us. That's why, when people talk about climate, I think jobs. Within our climate response lies an extraordinary engine of job creation and economic opportunity ready to be fired up," Mr Biden said.
3. "By maintaining those investments and putting these people to work, the United States sets out on the road to cut greenhouse gases in half — in half — by the end of this decade," Mr Biden said.



Modi announces climate partnership with the U.S.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India and the U.S. were launching energy and climate partnership during the U.S. President Joe Biden's Leaders Summit on Climate.

Highlights:

1. "As a climate-responsible developing country, India welcomes partners to create templates of sustainable development in India. These can also help other developing countries, who need affordable access to green finance and clean technologies," Mr Modi said.
2. India-USA launched 'India-U.S. climate and clean energy Agenda 2030 partnership'. It will help mobilise investments, demonstrate clean technologies, and enable green collaborations.
3. Its goal would be to "mobilise finance and speed clean energy deployment; demonstrate and scale innovative clean technologies needed to decarbonise sectors, including industry, transportation, power, and buildings; and build capacity to measure, manage, and adapt to the risks of climate-related impacts.
4. The partnership will proceed along two main tracks: the strategic clean energy partnership and the climate action and finance mobilisation dialogue, which will build on and subsume a range of existing processes.

Below 2 degrees Celsius

1. Despite our development challenges, India has taken many bold steps on clean energy, energy efficiency, afforestation and biodiversity. That is why India is among the few countries whose NDCs are 2-degree-Celsius compatible.
2. NDCs or Nationally Defined Contributions are targets defined by each country to help achieve the Paris Agreement's objective of keeping global warming to considerably below 2 degrees Celsius, preferably 1.5 degrees Celsius.
3. India is targeting a 2030 GDP emissions intensity (i.e., the volume of emissions per unit of GDP) that is 33%-35% below 2005 levels. It also seeks to have 40% of the power generated from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.