

# NEWS TODAY

## India's Six broad principles for strengthening trade and investment with European Union (EU)

Outlined by **Minister of Commerce and Industry**, they tend to build a mutually beneficial partnership between the two.

### The Six Broad Principles

- Focus on **common values** of democracy, rule of law and independent judiciary.
- Build a **commercially meaningful, fair and equitable trade agenda**, addressing trade barriers.
- Exchange **best practices** and **harmonizing standards** to achieve **zero defect** and **zero effect** production capability.
- Develop **cutting edge technologies**, secure critical raw material supply chains and build resilient supply chain.
- Cooperation in trade and sustainable development conforming to **Common But Differentiated Responsibility**.
- Partnership in **mutual growth and development**.

### Significance of EU for India

- **Concerns regarding China:** Issues like China's global expansion via the Belt and Road Initiative, military adventurism in Asia, misuse of the multilateral trading system, etc.
- **Economic De-risking:** India has a large and growing **trade deficit** with China and is heavily dependent on it for strategically important inputs.
- **Critical and Emerging Technologies:** EU could offer attractive capabilities in emerging domains like Cyber, Space, Quantum technology, Synthetic biology, etc.



### India-EU Relations

- **Background: India- EU Strategic Partnership** signed in 2004.
  - ⊖ Adoption of **EU-India Joint Action Plan in 2005** dealing with political, economic, and development cooperation.
- **Economic Relations:** Bilateral trade estimated at over **\$180 billion in 2023-2024**.
  - ⊖ EU is a significant source of **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**, with total FDI estimated at \$117.34 billion till now.
- **Challenges with Bilateral Relations:** Non conclusion of **EU-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**, disagreements over labour and environmental standards, etc.

## Report "Takers not makers: The unjust poverty and unearned wealth of colonialism" published by Oxfam

The report highlights that the wealth of billionaires has skyrocketed to unprecedented levels, while people living in poverty all over the world continue to face multiple crises.

### Key findings of Report:

- **Rise in Billionaires:** In 2024, **billionaires' wealth** increased by a **rate three times faster than 2023**.
  - ⊖ Over 3.5 billion people continue to live on less than \$6.85 per day, whereas the **richest 1% now possesses more wealth than 95% of the global population**.
- **Colonial Inheritance:** Unearned nature of much of **extreme wealth of ultra-rich** is arguably a **result of colonialism**.
  - ⊖ Between 1765 and 1900, UK drained **\$64.82 trillion from India**, with \$33.8 trillion going to the **top 10%**.
  - ⊖ Colonialism is both a historical (**Historical colonialism**) and a **modern-day phenomenon (Neo-Colonialism)**.
- **Impact of historical colonialism on present-day inequality:**
  - ⊖ **Exploitation and Profound economic Inequality**, Border Conflicts due to arbitrary colonial partitions etc.
  - ⊖ **Social Divisions** (E.g. Racism), **concentration of landholdings** in the Global South, **Poor health Indicators** in global south, **global disparities in research and funding** etc.
- **Colonial Legacy in Contemporary Times(Neo-Colonialism):**
  - ⊖ **Digital colonialism** (Domination of digital resources by powerful corporations from Global North).
  - ⊖ **Exploitative corporate structures** (MNC exploiting poor workers in Global South to drive profits).
  - ⊖ **Unequal power in institutions** that govern our world (**Global governance institutions** are informally dominated by Global North).

### Wealth Drain from India During Colonial Period

- According to **Dadabhai Naoroji's "Drain of Wealth" theory**, followings were components of drain of wealth from India:
  - ⊖ **High Taxes:** Excessive land revenue drained agricultural income.
  - ⊖ **Trade Exploitation:** India supplied raw materials and bought British goods, collapsing local industries.
    - ◆ In 1750, India contributed 25% to global industrial output, but by 1900, this fell to 2%.
  - ⊖ **Other components:** Home Charges (Indian revenue funding British administration), **sending profits back to Britain**, Currency Manipulation etc.

## Uttarakhand Cabinet approves the manual for Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

Earlier this year, Uttarakhand Assembly's UCC Bill received President's assent paving the way for the State to potentially become the first state in India to enact the UCC.

### About UCC

- **Meaning:** It seeks to establish a set of **uniform personal laws** applicable to all citizens, regardless of religion, gender, or caste covering matters like marriage, divorce, adoption, inheritance, and succession.
- **Constitutional Provisions:** **Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV)** under **Article 44** provides for the State to secure for the citizens a UCC throughout the territory of India.
- **Current Status:** Presently, such matters are governed by the respective religious laws.
  - ⊕ **Goa through Portuguese Civil Code, 1867** has provisions similar to UCC.

### Need for UCC

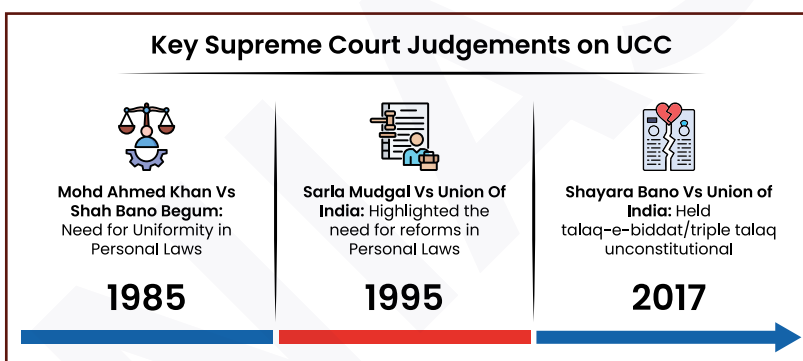
- **Gender Equity:** Laws governing marriage, divorce, etc., often discriminate against women.
- **Social Cohesion:** Religious and ethnic diversity in India's legal system can create divisions.
- **Reforming Indian Society:** Counteract many superstitious and ultra-conservative practices prevalent in the society in the name of faith and belief.

### Major challenges in Implementing UCC

- **Ensuring a Balance between Individual Rights and State Intervention:** **Article 25** guarantees the freedom of religion, **5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule** ensures protections to tribal customs and beliefs.
- **Opposition from Religious groups and leaders:** On the grounds that it could interfere with their religious laws and customs creating social and political tensions.

### Conclusion

There is a need to devise a **secular code** with its emphasis not on imposing uniformity but rather **upholding the Constitutional principles of equality, justice, and inclusivity.**



## US President signs executive order to withdraw from Key Global Institutions

Decision to withdraw from the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** and the **Paris Agreement** along with emphasising on **America First policy** has the potential to reshape norms and institutions related to **international cooperation.**

### Impact of USA's Withdrawal

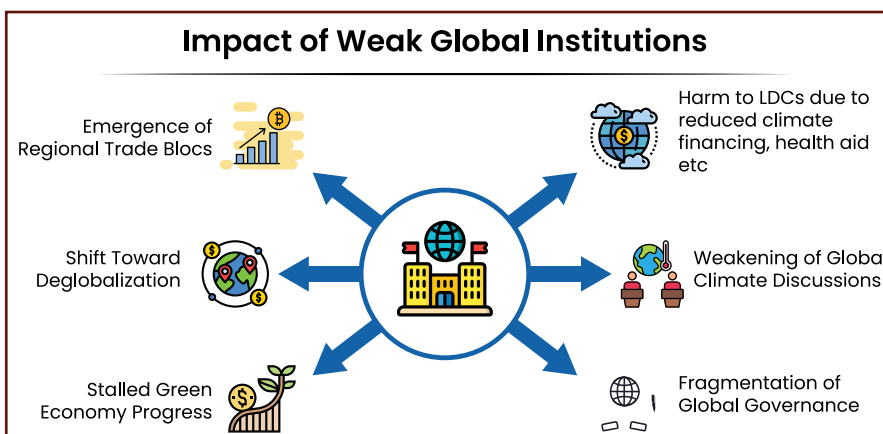
- **Shortage of Funds:** US exit could leave institutions with fund crunch. E.g., During 2024-25, USA contributed 19% of WHO's total revenue.
- **Undermine Climate Actions:** 2024 was recorded as hottest year and USA stands as the world's second-largest greenhouse gas emitter behind China.

### Major Global Institutions and Challenges Faced by them

- **United Nations:** **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**, the most powerful organisation within the UN has not witnessed an enlargement of its membership to include members from the developing countries.
- **World Health Organisation:** **Institutional deficiencies** along with political bias and partiality alleged during COVID pandemic.
- **World Trade Organisation:** There exists **broad disagreements** over matters like agricultural subsidies, trade barriers, emerging domains like E-commerce, Trade wars between US and China, etc.
- **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1994):** The recent Conference of Parties-29 (Azerbaijan) agreed to only USD 300 billion by 2035 against the demand of USD 1.3 trillion by developing countries.

### Some reforms needed in Global Institutions

- **Structural Reforms:** Offering independent, responsive, and representative institutions with increased accountability, integrity and legitimacy.
- **Greater Financing to Developing Countries:** To fight poverty and tackle global challenges, including climate change.
- **Others:** Frameworks to deal with **emerging challenges** like cybersecurity, **regional coordination**, etc.



## World Economic Forum highlights India's potential in building a resilient global digital health ecosystem

Digital healthcare infrastructure in India is evolving to bridge gap between urban and rural healthcare services, leveraging telemedicine, electronic health records, and AI driven diagnostics.

### Key Features of India's Digital Healthcare Infrastructure:

- **Interoperability and Standardization:** Ensuring seamless data exchange between stakeholders.
  - ⊕ **Ex-Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission** aims to create a nationwide digital health ecosystem by integrating healthcare service providers and patients through **unique health IDs**.
- **Public-Private Collaboration:** Encouraging partnerships for innovation and expansion.
  - ⊕ **Ex-Health Facility Register** (Repository of Health Facilities in India) will be centrally maintained and facilitate standardized data exchange of private and public health facilities in India.
- **Focus on Affordability and Accessibility:** Leveraging digital tools to make healthcare inclusive.
  - ⊕ **Ex- eSanjeevani Telemedicine Service** connects remote areas to healthcare through telemedicine, enabling millions of consultations.

### India as a global pathfinder in digital health revolution:

- India's digital infrastructure and large population provide an **ideal testing ground for developing global healthcare solutions**.
- Emulating India's digital health infrastructure worldwide can **address universal healthcare challenges** such as rising costs, unequal access, and chronic disease burdens.
- **Successful models like** Cross-sector partnerships, PPP, etc in India can be adapted for other regions, especially low- and middle-income countries.

#### India's Digital Healthcare Infrastructure Initiatives

- **U-Win Portal:** Maintaining vaccination records for pregnant women and children from birth to 17 years under Universal Immunization Programme.
- **Aarogya Setu** app brings a whole plethora of digital health services powered by the ABDM.
- **National Tele Mental Health Programme** to improve access to quality mental health counselling and care services.
- **e-Hospital application** for maintaining internal workflows and processes of hospitals.

## RBI revises guidelines on settlement of dues of borrowers by Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARC)

Guidelines are issued in exercise of the powers conferred by **Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI Act)**.

- **SARFAESI Act addresses problems of Non-Performing Assets & bad loans** by empowering banks and financial institutions to recover default loans by **auctioning collateral properties without court intervention**.

### Key highlights of the guidelines

- **Framing a Board-approved policy by every ARC:** For settlement of dues payable by borrowers covering **aspects such as eligibility criteria for one-time settlements etc**.
- **Settlement of accounts with outstanding dues exceeding Rs 1 Crore:** Can only proceed after a thorough evaluation by an Independent Advisory Committee (IAC) composed of financial, legal expertise etc.
  - ⊕ Also, **Board of Directors**, including at least two independent directors, **must deliberate on IAC's recommendations and evaluate alternative recovery options**.
- **For settlement of accounts with dues Rs 1 Crore or below:** To quicken resolution process, such cases can now be cleared by a competent authority established under a board-approved policy.
  - ⊕ **Officials involved in acquiring the financial asset cannot participate in the approval of settlement** to prevent conflicts of interest.

### What are ARCs?

- **Definition:** Financial institution that buys the **Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)** or bad assets from banks and financial institutions so that the latter can clean up their balance sheets.
- **Registration:** Registered as a company by RBI under the **SARFAESI Act, 2002**.

### Significance of ARCs:

- **Quicker resolution of stressed financial assets** and Frees banks from debt recovery, so that they can focus on their core activities.
- **Facilitates development of markets for distressed assets & alternate investment opportunities**.
- **Injects liquidity** into the banking system, **improves bank's valuation & their ability to raise capital etc**.

## Also in News



### Doctrine of Merger

Recently, Supreme Court (SC) highlighted the **Doctrine of Merger**.

#### About Doctrine of Merger

- It was explained in **Kunhayammed v. State of Kerala, (2000)**.
- As per this doctrine, that there **cannot be more than one decree or operative order** governing the same subject matter at a given point in time.
- Hence, **once the superior court** disposes of a case whether by setting aside, modifying, or confirming the **lower court's decree**, the superior court's order becomes the **final, binding, and operative, merging** the lower court's decision into it.



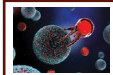
### Edelman Trust Barometer

Recently, annual **Edelman Trust Barometer** was released before the start of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting.

- Released by **Edelman Trust**, it is a survey of **28 countries** that studies the influence of trust across society – government, media, business, and NGOs.

#### Key Findings

- **India** slipped to 3<sup>rd</sup> position, after China & Indonesia in terms of **people's trust** in the government, businesses, media etc. (in low income population group).
  - ⊕ Within **high income group**, **India was ranked 4<sup>th</sup>**.
- **India ranked 13<sup>th</sup>** when it comes to **trust of people in other countries, in companies with Indian headquarters**.



### CAR T-cell Therapy

Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has approved 2<sup>nd</sup> **Living drugs, Qartemi, a Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy** for treating blood cancer.

➤ A "living drug" is a therapy that involves **extracting a patient's cells, modifying them, and then reintroducing them into the patient's body.**

#### About CAR T-cell Therapy

- CAR T-cell therapy is an innovative form of **immunotherapy where a patient's T-cells are genetically engineered** to target and attack cancer cells.
  - ⊕ T-cells are special cells (types of white blood cells) whose primary function is **cytotoxic, meaning killing other cells.**
- T cells are **taken from patient blood** and are changed in the lab **by adding a gene for a man-made receptor (called CAR).**
  - ⊕ **CARs are proteins that assist the T-cells** to recognise and attach to a specific protein present on cancer cells.
- CAR-T cells are then given back to the patient **to recognise the cancer cells and kill them.**



### Mount Ibu

Indonesia's Mount Ibu, on the remote island of Halmahera, **erupted 1,000 times this month.**

#### About Mount Ibu:

- As an active volcano, **Mount Ibu is part of the Pacific Ring of Fire**, a region known for frequent volcanic activity and earthquakes.
  - ⊕ The Ring of Fire, also called the **Circum-Pacific Belt**, is a **path along the Pacific Ocean** characterized by numerous active volcanoes and seismic activity.
- **Indonesia has numerous volcanoes** due to its location on **converging tectonic plates**, particularly the Pacific, Eurasian, and Australian plates.
- **Other Recent Eruptions in Indonesia:** Mount Sinabung and Mount Merapi.



### Chincholi Wildlife Sanctuary

Recently, **Karnataka forest department** initiated talks to **relocate Sheribikana-halli hamlet** located within Chincholi Wildlife Sanctuary.

#### About Chincholi Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Location:** Kalburgi District, **North Karnataka.**
  - ⊕ Declared a sanctuary in 2011.
  - ⊕ **First dry land Wildlife Sanctuary in South India.**
- **Vegetation:** **Dry deciduous and Moist deciduous forest** in the core with **Acacia and Teak plantations** on the fringes.
- **Major Flora:** **Red Sanders and Sandalwood.**
- **Major Fauna:** **Black Buck, Four-horned Antelope, Fruit bat, Hyena, Indian Wolf etc.**
- **Key Highlights:**
  - ⊕ **Chandrampalli Dam:** Provide water to this wildlife Sanctuary.
  - ⊕ **Local Tribes:** **Lambani Tandas**



### Pralay missile and Pinaka rocket

Tactical ballistic missile Pralay & long-range Pinaka rocket system will be part of Republic Day parade.

#### About Pralay missile

- **Surface-to-surface** short-range ballistic missile (SRBM)
- Developed by **Defence Research and Development Organisation.**
- **Missile has a range of 150-500 km** and can be launched from a mobile launcher.
- **Missile guidance system** includes a state-of-the-art navigation system and integrated avionics.

#### About Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launcher (MBRL) system

- It is a **long-range artillery system** capable of **striking targets up to 75 kilometers** away.
- **Developed by DRDO**, it has multiple variants, which offer flexibility in terms of payload, firepower, and range.



### Indian Bison (Gaur)

Recently, Jharkhand Forest department initiated a study to revive the dwindling population of Bison at **Palamu Tiger Reserve.**

#### About Indian Bison

- **Characteristics:** Massively built, very strong, and social animal.
  - ⊕ **Grazing animal** and munches on leaves, fruits, stems, flowers and seeds.
  - ⊕ **Diurnal by nature** and remain active during the daytime.
  - ⊕ Their **pregnancy period** is 9 months same as humans.
- **Habitat:** Western Ghats.
  - ⊕ Prefer evergreen forests and moist deciduous forests.
  - ⊕ They generally stick to the foothills.
- **Threats:** Food Scarcity, Poaching, etc.
- **Conservation Status:** **IUCN (Vulnerable); Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (Schedule I); CITES (Appendix I).**



### Entity Locker

The National eGovernance Division, under **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**, has developed **Entity Locker.**

#### About Entity Locker

- It is a secure, **cloud-based solution** that **simplifies storage, sharing, and verification of documents** for large organisations, corporations, micro, small, and medium Enterprises, etc.
  - ⊕ It is a **critical component of India's Digital Public Infrastructure.**
- **Entity Locker offer:**
  - ⊕ **Real-time access and verification** of documents through integration with government databases
  - ⊕ **Consent-based mechanisms** for secure sharing of sensitive information
  - ⊕ **Aadhaar-authenticated role-based access management** to ensure accountability.
  - ⊕ **10 GB of encrypted cloud storage and Legally valid digital signatures** for authenticating documents.

## Place in News



### France (Capital: Paris)

India and France have agreed to jointly assess maritime threats in the Indian Ocean Region, focusing on piracy, terrorism, smuggling, etc.

#### Political Features

- **Land Boundaries:** **Spain and Andorra (South), Italy, Switzerland, Germany (East), Luxembourg (Northeast), and Belgium (North).**
- **Maritime Boundaries:** **Atlantic Ocean and Bay of Biscay (West), Mediterranean Sea (South), English Channel (Northwest).**

#### Geographical Features

- **Highest Peak:** **Mont Blanc**, part of the Alps.
- **Strait:** **Dover** (Separates it from Southeastern England)
- **Major Rivers:** **Seine River** (Paris located on it), **Loire River, Rhône River.**
- **Other Features:** **Massif Central** (forested plateau), **Pyrenees** mountain (border between France and Spain).



#### Errata:

- In 'News Today' dated **January 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024**, in the Also in News titled '**BRICS**', it was incorrectly mentioned total members: 11 including Saudi Arabia.
- The correct information is - **Total members of BRICS are 10.**
  - ⊕ **Saudi Arabia** was offered membership to the grouping in 2023, but the **invitation remains unanswered till date.**

