

## Topics of Discussion:

1. Rupee Depreciation
  2. Indian Army Receives Apache Helicopters
  3. India-Maldives Joint Military Exercise EKUVERIN
  4. PM Honoured with Ethiopia's Highest Award
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### Rupee Depreciation

- The rupee on Tuesday breached one more psychological mark by depreciating beyond 91 to 91.14 on the spot market against the U.S. dollar during intraday trade, making it one of the weakest major currencies globally this year and the weakest in Asia in 2025. But it gained a bit during the day to close at 90.93 as compared with its previous close of 90.78, down nearly 16 paise, a fresh all-time low.
- Anindya Banerjee, Head Currency and Commodity Research, Kotak Securities, said the pressure on the currency is being driven by three key factors: sentiment, capital flows, and the global macro backdrop. The uncertainty around the pending India-U.S. trade deal and the broader trade-war environment is weighing on markets.
- From a flows perspective, foreign portfolio investors have pulled out close to 2.7 billion in the first two weeks of December alone, already among the largest monthly outflows this year, with the month still unfinished.
- Globally rising U.S. bond yields and expectations of a Bank of Japan rate hike have triggered an unwinding of the yen carry trade. This has led to risk aversion across equities, credit, crypto, and some commodities, adding speculative pressure on emerging-market currencies, including the rupee.
- Stating that the rupee may head towards 92, he said, RBI's relatively limited intervention so far appeared deliberate. With India's growth strong and inflation contained, policymakers may be comfortable allowing some currency depreciation, especially in a global trade-war environment where a weaker currency can support export competitiveness.
- Neel Misra of Axis Bank, Head of Global Research at Axis Capital, and part-time member at the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, said the RBI is letting the currency move around a bit. Its not a bad idea. We will have to see at what level they would say in the

three-to-six-month basis, more than this volatility is not allowed. The mistake was in pegging it rupee to at 83. Those past sins are still haunting us.

- Finrex Treasury Advisors said the rupee made a new lifetime low as dollar buying continued with news that U.S. President Donald Trump had not agreed to the new proposals as he wanted agri and its products to be included in the proposal which India had not agreed to.

**Q. How does rupee depreciation influence inflation targeting and monetary policy transmission in India? Discuss the policy dilemma faced by the RBI.**

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### **Indian Army Receives Apache Helicopters**

- The Indian Army on Tuesday received the final batch of three AH-64E Apache attack helicopters, completing its six-unit fleet at the 451 Army Aviation Squadron based in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. The helicopters landed at the Air Force Station, Hindon, in Ghaziabad before being inducted into the service.
  - The Apaches were contracted in February 2020 under a 600-million deal with the United States. The first batch of three helicopters was delivered earlier this year, and the arrival of the final batch will ensure full operationalisation of the Army's dedicated Apache squadron.
  - The six advanced attack helicopters will be stationed at Jodhpur. The squadron was raised in March last year to cater specifically to operational requirements on the western front.
  - The deliveries come against the backdrop of a telephonic conversation between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and U.S. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth in July this year, during which both sides reviewed ongoing and upcoming initiatives to strengthen bilateral defence cooperation.
  - The first batch was delivered after a delay of nearly 15 months from the original delivery schedule of May 2024, primarily due to global supply chain disruptions.
  - The AH-64E Apache is regarded as the world's most advanced multi-role combat helicopter.
  - Developed by Boeing, USA. Inducted by US Army since 1984.
  - Sensor-Driven Targeting: Equipped with Longbow radar, thermal imaging, and night vision detects 256 targets, prioritises 16 threats in seconds.
  - Advanced Weaponry: Armed with 30mm chain gun, 70mm rockets, and AGM-114 Hellfire missiles for anti-Armor and precision strikes.
  - All-Weather, All-Terrain Ready: Operates in day-night, low visibility, high-altitude and extreme weather conditions.
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## India-Maldives Joint Military Exercise EKUVERIN

- The bilateral military exercise EKUVERIN between the Indian Army and the Maldives National Defence Forces (MNDF) concluded with a joint validation exercise in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday, marking the culmination of two weeks of intensive training.
- The validation phase was witnessed by Major-General R.D. Sharma of the Indian Army and Brigadier General Abdulla Ibrahim from the Maldivian side, along with observer delegations from both countries.
- The Indian Army said that the exercise focused on Counter Insurgency and Counter Terrorist operations in contemporary operational environments, with the aim of enhancing interoperability, operational synergy.

### Q. EKUVERIN, a bilateral military exercise recently in news, primarily focuses on:

- A. Naval anti-piracy operations in the Indian Ocean Region
- B. Air combat manoeuvres and joint air patrols
- C. Counter Insurgency and Counter Terrorist operations in contemporary operational environments
- D. Peacekeeping operations under the UN mandate

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## PM Honoured with Ethiopia's Highest Award

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday was conferred with Ethiopia's highest award, The Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia, by his Ethiopian counterpart Abiy Ahmed Ali.
- The award was to honour Mr. Modi's role in strengthening India-Ethiopia ties, the Ministry of External Affairs said.
- India and Ethiopia also elevated their ties to a strategic partnership, after the leaders discussed issues of bilateral interest.



## Where is Ethiopia?

- It is a landlocked country located in the Horn of Africa, officially known as the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.
- The country lies completely within the tropical latitudes and is relatively compact, with similar north-south and east-west dimensions.
- The capital is Addis Ababa.
- Ethiopia is one of the world's oldest countries, its territorial extent having varied over the millennia of its existence.
- It is the tenth-largest country in Africa in terms of area.
- Ethiopia is located from Sudan in the southeast, Eritrea to the south, Djibouti and Somalia to the west, Kenya to the north, and South Sudan to the east.
- It is the most populous landlocked country in the world.

## [India Ethiopia relations:](#)

## 8 MoUs/Agreements signed between India & Ethiopia

Elevation of bilateral ties to 'Strategic Partnership'

Agreement on Co-operation and Mutual Administrative Assistance in Custom Matters

MoU for Establishing Data Centre at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia

Implementing Arrangement for Co-operation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Training (MoU)

Signing of the MoU on Debt Restructuring in respect of Ethiopia under the G20 Common Framework

Doubling of scholarships to Ethiopian scholars under ICCR scholarship programme

Specialized short term courses to the students and professionals of Ethiopia in the field of Artificial Intelligence under the ITEC programme

India to help augment the capacity of the Mahatma Gandhi Hospital in Addis Ababa in the fields of maternal healthcare, neonatal care

- Resilient India–Ethiopia Ties: Built on political continuity and export-led trade engagement.
- Bilateral Trade Volume: US\$ 550.19 million in FY 2024–25.
- India's Trade Position: Maintains a strong trade surplus, positioning Ethiopia as a key destination for Indian goods.
- Sustaining Engagement: Regular high-level political interactions and institutional mechanisms maintain momentum despite economic challenges.
- Investment Role: India as a major investor strengthens the strategic foundation of the relationship.
- Path Forward: Sustained political dialogue and trade facilitation to revitalise commerce.
- Strategic Importance: Reinforces India's broader Africa engagement and long-standing partnership with one of Africa's most influential nations.

## Nitrofurans

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched a nationwide egg safety drive after a viral video alleged the presence of nitrofurans (a banned antibiotic) in eggs of a popular brand.
- Nitrofurans are a group of synthetic nitrofurane-based antimicrobial agents. Common compounds include nitrofurantoin, furazolidone, nitrofurazone, and furaltadone.
- They are classified as chemotherapeutic antibacterial agents, not naturally occurring antibiotics.
- Nitrofurans were historically used in veterinary medicine to treat bacterial and protozoal infections.
- Due to their carcinogenic potential, they are banned in food-producing animals in India, the EU, and several other countries.
- Implications on human health: Carcinogenic risk, toxicity (neurological symptoms, gastrointestinal distress, hypersensitivity reactions), food safety concern (presence of residues in eggs undermines consumer trust and violates food safety standards), public health risk (long-term exposure, even at low levels, may pose cumulative health hazards).

**Q. Recently, *Nitrofurans* were in news in India. In this context, consider the following statements:**

1. Nitrofurans are naturally occurring antibiotics widely used in poultry feed.
2. Their use in food-producing animals is prohibited in India due to carcinogenic risks.
3. Presence of nitrofurane residues in eggs violates food safety standards under FSSAI regulations.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

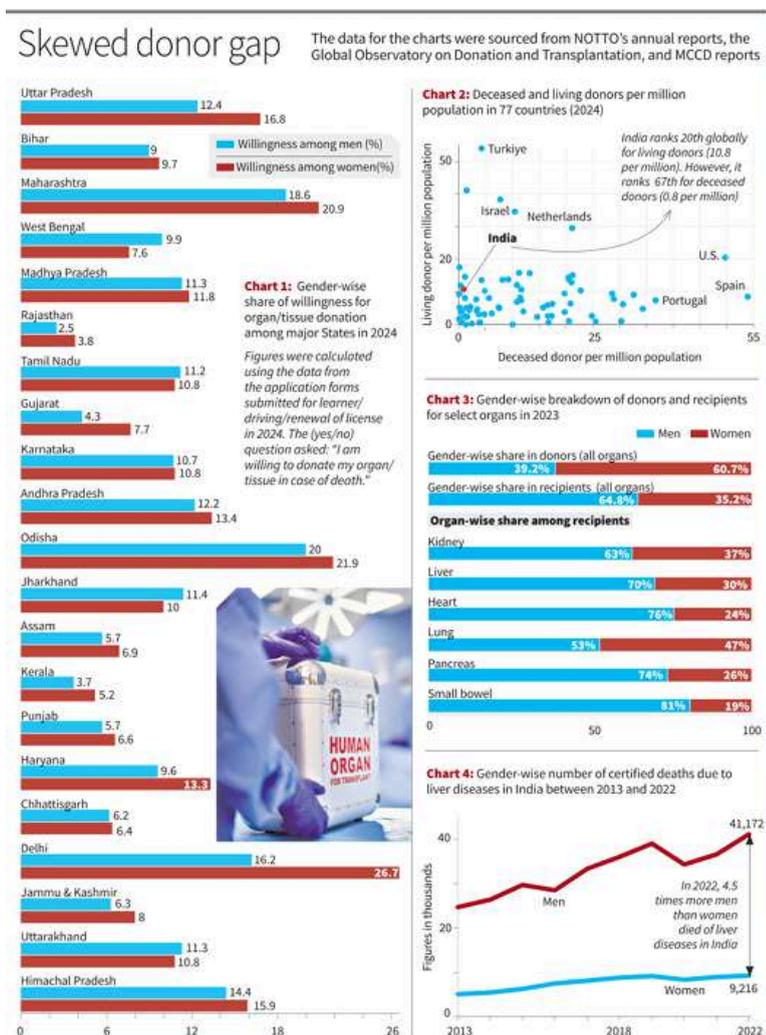
- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

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## Organ Donation Trends

- India belongs to a small cluster of nations where living organ donations vastly outnumber deceased organ donations. Ironically, this is not due to a lack of intent—data indicate that posthumous organ donation intent among Indians is relatively high.

- Crucially, women showed a greater willingness to donate organs after death. This sentiment aligns with the reality that women continue to shoulder the burden of donations.
- However, men significantly outnumber women among organ recipients—a trend that data suggest is driven not only by social factors, but potentially by a higher need among men.
- These insights stem from an analysis of Indian driving license applications submitted in 2024, which explicitly asked applicants if they were willing to donate their organs or tissue in the event of death.
- This trend holds true even in populous States such as Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, where willingness among women ranged from 17 to 21, while men lagged behind in the 12 to 19 range. The highest level of willingness among women was seen in Delhi (approximately 27), far outstripping the male share of 16. Meanwhile, Odisha led the charts for men with a national high of 20, yet even in that State, women were more willing, at 22.



- While India ranks a respectable 20th globally for living donors (10.8 living donors per million), it plummets to 67th for deceased donors (0.8 deceased donors per million).
- In sharp contrast, when we look at organ recipients, in 2023, nearly 65% were men. This is a lopsided ratio that reflects a long-standing and persistent skew in India's transplant ecosystem.

- An earlier analysis revealed that in 2022, 4.5 times more men than women died of liver disease, a gap that has widened over the last decade.
  - Organ transplantation is a life-saving procedure where a failing organ (kidney, liver, heart, lung) is replaced with a healthy organ from a living donor (e.g., kidney, partial liver) or a deceased donor (brain-dead or after cardiac death) to restore function in end-stage organ failure. Common transplants include the kidney, liver, heart, lungs, pancreas, and intestines.
  - Status: India is the 3rd country in the world after the USA and China, in terms of the total number of transplants done in a year.
  - Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994 (amended in 2011): It regulates organ and tissue transplantation in India, covering post-death donation, setting rules for healthcare providers, and prescribing penalties for violation. The 2023 revised guidelines removed the 65-year upper age limit for registering to receive deceased donor organs and ended the state domicile requirement for such registrations.
  - National Organ Transplant Program (NOTP): It is being implemented by the Central Government to promote organ donation and transplantation across all States and Union Territories. Under this, several bodies have been established:
    - National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO): Under the Ministry of Health, set up as per the Transplantation of Human Organs Amendment Act, 2011.
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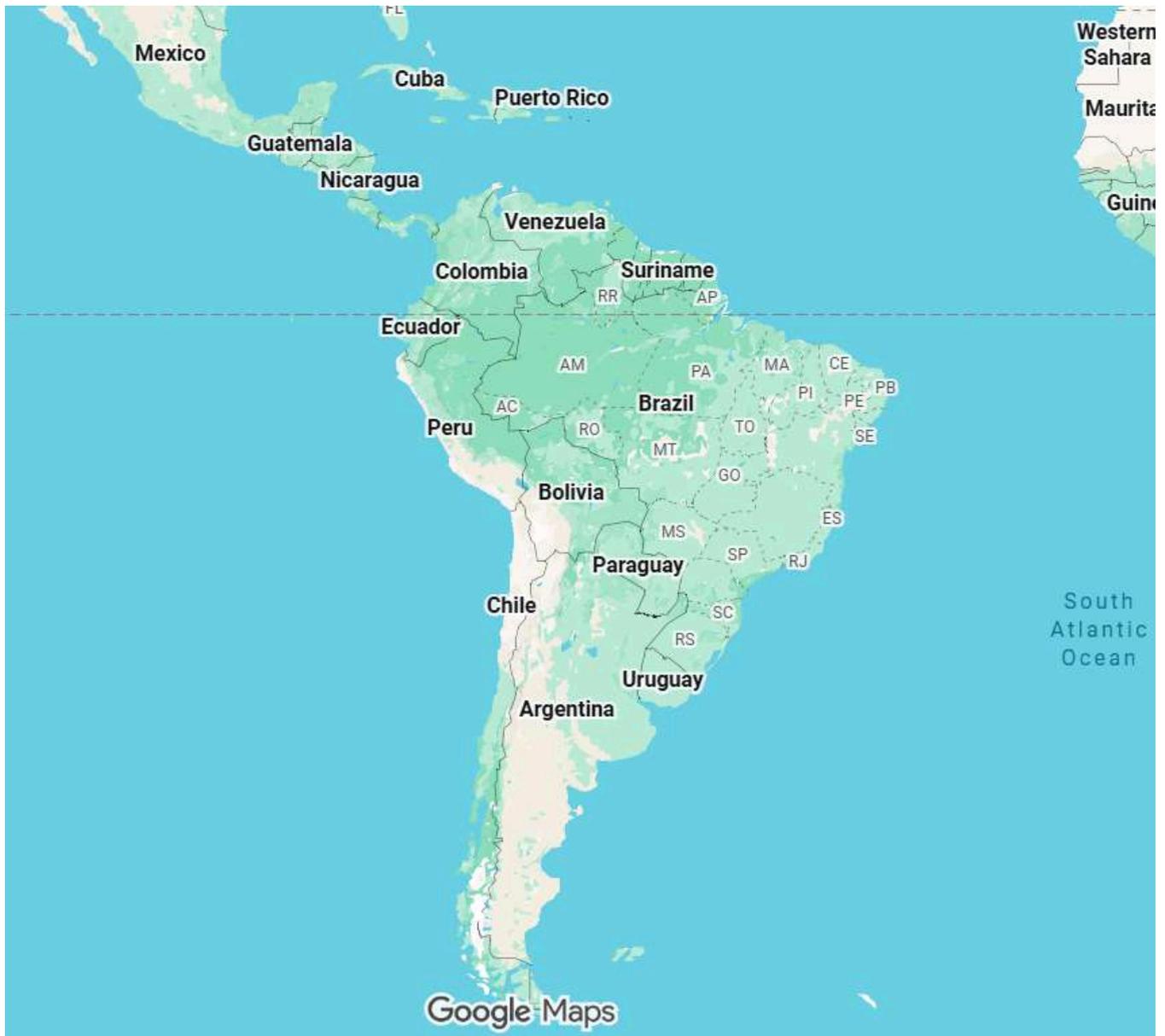
## India's Nuclear Governance

- Nuclear power contributed only around 3% of the electricity generated in India in 2024-25. The government has set a target to install 100 GW of nuclear capacity by 2047, including from at least five indigenous small modular reactors by 2033.
- The SHANTI Bill proposes to change who can legally build and operate civil nuclear facilities. By allowing the Centre to permit nuclear energy activities through licences to government entities, joint ventures and any other company subject to conditions, SHANTI indicates that the intended new class of operators is domestic private capital rather than foreign plant owners.
- India being able to meet its 100 GW target will indeed require large capital mobilisation, and allowing licensed non-government entities expands the roster of entities that can share the construction risk.
- SHANTI also seeks to keep the most sensitive fuel cycles in state control while holding room for private participation in plant delivery and parts of the supply chain, reducing scope of commercial entry to those segments most relevant to scale power generation and keeping functions sensitive to nuclear proliferation with the state.
- The Bill could also mitigate the legal ambiguity new entrants face by putting safety, enforcement and dispute resolution and the terms of participation in the same statute. This could also reduce transaction costs for developers and shrink site approval and commissioning timelines.

- However, the Bill's liability and governance provisions warrant caution. The maximum operator liability for a nuclear incident is 3,000 crore. The Centre is liable for nuclear damage beyond the operator's cap and can also assume full liability for a non-government installation if in the public interest. These choices make investment risk easier to price but also ask whether the capped operator amount is adequate for victims and for environmental remediation.
  - Second, SHANTI requires operators to maintain insurance or other financial security, but exempts the Centre's nuclear installations, rendering clear public accounting very important. It also allows operator recourse only when expressly provided in a written contract or when an incident is due to an act or an omission with the intent to cause nuclear damage. This makes supplier accountability depend largely on what the operator secures by contract, which means how much recourse the operator has against suppliers can vary across projects.
  - Finally, India's nuclear governance needs to address its regulator's independence. While SHANTI creates a statutory framework, it also vests significant influence in appointments with the Centre and the Atomic Energy Commission. This is still not conducive to increasing public trust and may also deter investor confidence.
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### **U.S. Militarised Approach to Venezuela**

- In line with a series of hostile moves, the U.S. seized a Venezuelan oil tanker, Skipper, on December 10. Venezuela called it the latest example of Washington's piracy, kidnapping, theft of private property, extrajudicial executions in international waters.
- The tanker was part of Venezuela's ongoing efforts to support Cuba through subsidised oil shipments, with proceeds from resale to China providing Havana crucial revenue.
- For decades, Venezuela has sent oil to Cuba at highly subsidised prices, with Cuba sending doctors and security professionals to Venezuela.
- The seizure represents a troubling escalation in U.S. policy toward Venezuela under President Nicolás Maduro. It is also clear that the U.S. Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, a major hawk on U.S. foreign policy towards Cuba, has sought to disrupt one of the island nation's economic lifelines.
- The overt moves to engineer regime change in Venezuela and other brazen acts mark a new low in U.S. foreign policy, recalling the interventionist era of its Monroe Doctrine in Latin America.



- Before the seizure of Skipper, the U.S. had also conducted strikes in Caribbean waters on boats that Washington alleged were used by drug traffickers. These attacks appear to constitute acts of war carried out without clear legislative authorisation.
- The Trump administration insists that the operations are part of its war on drugs, but has not presented credible evidence to link Mr. Maduro to cartels or to drug trafficking networks.
- Be it the disproportionate economic sanctions that hurt Venezuela's ability to sell its crude oil, covert actions to take down the Maduro presidency, the ill-conceived recognition of an opposition politician, Juan Guaidó, as President, or the extrajudicial killings in the Caribbean and the seizure of the oil tanker, these actions are tantamount to flouting the rules of the international order that the U.S. purports to uphold.
- The parallel with U.S. policy towards Cuba since the Cuban Revolution in the 1950s is instructive. The U.S. has maintained an embargo on trade to force regime change in the island nation. The world must condemn these moves, even while maintaining the critique of the Venezuelan regime. A principled defence of international law that applies equally to all

actors, including the rich and the powerful, is an imperative so that the world does not descend further into anarchy.

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### **Physiographic Diversity of Venezuela**

- Andes Mountains: Includes Bolívar Peak (4,978 m), highest in Venezuela.
- Orinoco River Basin: Llanos—core for agriculture, cattle ranching, hydro-power.
- Lake Maracaibo: Largest lake in South America, major oil hub.
- Guiana Highlands: Mineral-rich plateaus, world's tallest waterfall (979 m).
- World's largest proven oil reserves—economic backbone. Rich in iron ore, gold, diamonds and hydroelectric potential.

