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10th MAR 2026 DESCRIPTIVE

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India emerges as world's second largest arms importer: SIPRI



- According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) report, India was the world's second-largest arms importer during 2021–2025.
- Ukraine became the largest arms importer globally in 2021–2025 due to the Russia–Ukraine War.
- India's arms imports declined by about 4% compared with the 2016–2020 period, reflecting efforts toward defence indigenisation.
- Russia remained India's largest arms supplier, accounting for around 40% of India's arms imports in 2021–25.
- France was the second-largest arms supplier to India, followed by Israel.
- Four countries from Asia and Oceania — India, Pakistan, Japan and Australia — were among the top 10 global arms importers during 2021–25.
- United States remained the largest arms exporter in the world, accounting for about 42% of global arms exports in 2021–25.
- Europe became the largest destination for US arms exports, mainly due to security concerns after the Russia–Ukraine War.
- SIPRI is an international institute that tracks global arms transfers, defence spending and security trends.

Kuwait and Papua New Guinea added to FATF grey list

- Financial Action Task Force (FATF) added Kuwait and Papua New Guinea to its “Increased Monitoring List” (commonly known as the Grey List) during the February 2026 plenary meeting.
- The FATF Grey List includes countries that have strategic deficiencies in combating money laundering and terrorist financing, but have committed to work with FATF to address these issues.
- Countries placed on the Grey List are subject to increased monitoring and must implement action plans within specified timelines to strengthen their Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Counter-Terrorism Financing (CFT) frameworks.
- Kuwait was added due to gaps in investigating and prosecuting money-laundering cases, confiscation of illegal assets, and oversight of financial institutions.
- Papua New Guinea was placed on the list because of weaknesses in financial intelligence systems, risk assessments, and enforcement against money laundering and terrorism financing.
- Being placed on the FATF Grey List can negatively affect a country’s international financial reputation, potentially leading to increased scrutiny from global financial institutions and investors.



➤ Apart from the newly added countries, jurisdictions currently under increased monitoring include Algeria, Angola, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Kenya, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Monaco, Namibia, Nepal, South Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, Vietnam, the Virgin Islands (UK), and Yemen. These countries have developed action plans with the FATF to address weaknesses in their anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing regimes.

About Financial Action Task Force (FATF):

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an intergovernmental organization.
- It was established in 1989 during the G7 Summit.
- The organization was created in Paris, France.
- FATF works to combat money laundering, terrorist financing, and other threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- Headquarters: Paris, France.
- FATF currently has 39 members, including India, and sets global standards for AML/CFT regulations.

Iran picks Mojtaba Khamenei as new supreme leader



- Mojtaba Khamenei was appointed as the third Supreme Leader of Iran by the Assembly of Experts, an 88-member body responsible for selecting the Supreme Leader.
- He succeeded Ali Khamenei, who served as Iran's Supreme Leader for about 37 years (1989–2026).
- Mojtaba Khamenei became the third Supreme Leader of Iran, after Ruhollah Khomeini and Ali Khamenei.
- In Iran's political system, the Supreme Leader is the highest authority, serving as Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, with powers above the elected President.
- Born in 1969 in Mashhad, Mojtaba Khamenei is the second son of Ali Khamenei.
- He participated in the Iran–Iraq War and later pursued Islamic seminary education in Qom.
- He has maintained close relations with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Iranian clerical establishment.
- His appointment marks a major leadership transition in Iran, making it an important development in West Asian geopolitics and international relations.

IRDAI nod for Allianz Jio Reinsurance and Kiwi General



- Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) granted Certificates of Registration (CoR) to Allianz Jio Reinsurance and Kiwi General Insurance, allowing them to commence insurance operations in India.
- The Certificate of Registration issued by IRDAI is the final regulatory approval required for insurance companies to start business operations in the Indian insurance market.
- Allianz Jio Reinsurance is a 50:50 joint venture between Allianz Group and Jio Financial Services.
- The company will operate in the reinsurance sector, which provides insurance coverage to insurance companies to spread and manage risk exposure.
- Kiwi General Insurance is backed by WestBridge Capital along with Neelesh Garg, the former Managing Director and CEO of Tata AIG General Insurance.
- The entry of these two companies is expected to increase competition and expand capacity in India's insurance and reinsurance sector.

- IRDAI also deliberated on the regulatory framework following the enactment of the Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Act, 2025.
- The Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Act, 2025 came into force on 5 February 2025 and aims to expand insurance coverage and strengthen India's insurance ecosystem.
- The approval aligns with India's broader objective of strengthening the domestic insurance ecosystem and attracting foreign investment in the insurance industry.

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India Sends 1,000 Metric Tons Of Rice To Malawi For Drought Relief



- India dispatched 1,000 metric tonnes of rice as humanitarian food assistance to Malawi.
- The aid was provided to help Malawi tackle severe food shortages caused by the El Niño weather effect.
- The rice consignment was shipped from Nhava Sheva Port, one of India's major ports.
- The initiative highlights India–Malawi cooperation for food security and reflects India's support for countries in the Global South.
- The assistance also demonstrates India's commitment to South–South cooperation and humanitarian support to developing nations.
- According to reports, over 4 million people (around 20% of Malawi's population) are facing acute food shortages due to drought conditions.
- The drought has been triggered by erratic rainfall linked to the El Nino climate pattern, which has also caused the drying up of major water bodies such as Lake Chilwa.
- Due to the worsening food crisis, the government of Malawi declared a state of disaster in the country.
- The humanitarian aid was announced by Randhir Jaiswal, highlighting India's continued support to partner countries.

➤ **About El Niño:**

- The term “El Niño” means “Little Boy/Christ Child” in Spanish.
- It is part of the El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle.
- El Niño is the abnormal warming of sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean.
- It usually occurs every 2–7 years.
- It forms due to weakening or reversal of Pacific trade winds.
- It often causes drought or weak monsoon in India.
- The opposite phase of El Niño is La Niña.

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Indian Armed Forces Contingent Arrives In Seychelles For Joint Exercise LAMITIYE-2026



- The 11th edition of Joint Military Exercise Exercise LAMITIYE is being conducted between the Indian Armed Forces and the Seychelles Defence Forces.
- The exercise is taking place in Seychelles at the Seychelles Defence Academy from 9–20 March 2026.
- LAMITIYE means “Friendship” in the Creole language, reflecting the strong defence cooperation between India and Seychelles.
- The exercise is a biennial (once every two years) military training exercise and has been conducted in Seychelles since 2001.
- LAMITIYE-2026 marks the first time participation of all three services of the Indian Armed Forces (Army, Navy and Air Force) in the exercise.
- The Indian contingent includes troops from the Assam Regiment, along with participation from the Indian Navy and Indian Air Force.
- Key Indian assets participating include the INS Trikand and a C-130 Hercules aircraft of the Indian Air Force.

- The exercise focuses on sub-conventional operations in semi-urban environments, including counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism training.
- It also aims to enhance interoperability, coordination, and joint operational capability during United Nations peacekeeping operations.
- The 12-day exercise will culminate in a two-day validation exercise to assess the operational effectiveness of the joint training.

About Seychelles:

- Capital: Victoria
- Currency: Seychellois Rupee
- President: Wavel Ramkalawan

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Gary Kirsten appointed as Sri Lanka men's team head coach

- Gary Kirsten was appointed as the Head Coach of the Sri Lanka Men's National Cricket Team by Sri Lanka Cricket.
- His tenure will begin on 15 April 2026 and will run for a two-year period until 14 April 2028.
- He replaced former Sri Lankan cricketer Sanath Jayasuriya, who previously served as head coach of the national men's team.
- One of his major responsibilities will be preparing Sri Lanka for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2027, which will be jointly hosted by South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe.
- Gary Kirsten previously served as Head Coach of the India national cricket team from 2008 to 2011, during which India won the 2011 ICC Cricket World Cup.
- He also coached the South Africa national cricket team from 2011 to 2013, helping the team become No.1 in the ICC rankings in all formats of international cricket.
- In April 2024, he was appointed as the white-ball head coach of the Pakistan national cricket team, but he resigned after about six months.
- Before joining Sri Lanka Cricket, he worked as a consultant for the Namibia national cricket team during the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup.
- During his international playing career (1993–2004), Gary Kirsten scored 14,087 international runs across Test and ODI formats.
- His record includes 21 Test centuries and 13 ODI centuries, making him one of South Africa's most successful opening batsmen.



K.N. Panikkar, renowned historian, academic and public intellectual, passes away at 89



- K. N. Panikkar, a renowned historian of modern Indian history, passed away on 9 March 2026 at the age of 89 in Thiruvananthapuram.
- Born on 26 April 1936 near Guruvayur, he became one of India's most respected scholars in the field of colonial history, social movements, and historiography.
- He served as the Vice-Chancellor of Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit and played an important role in higher education reforms in Kerala.
- He was the founding Chairperson of the Kerala Council for Historical Research (KCHR) and the first Vice-Chairperson of the Kerala State Higher Education Council.
- K. N. Panikkar authored several influential books, including "Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar (1836–1921)", which analysed the Malabar rebellion as a peasant uprising against colonial rule and landlordism.
- His other important works include "Culture and Consciousness in Modern India," "Culture, Ideology and Hegemony," and "Communalism in India: History, Politics and Culture."

- In 2008, he chaired a Kerala government expert committee to review school history textbooks.
- He was also associated with intellectual platforms and launched the online journal “Indian Ruminations” in 2010 to encourage scholarly debate.
- In recognition of his contribution to literature and scholarship, he was awarded the Fellowship of the Kerala Sahitya Akademi in 2017.
- He is widely remembered for his contributions to modern Indian historiography and for strengthening historical research institutions in India.

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South Korean, U.S. forces kick off annual joint Freedom Shield exercise



- The annual joint military exercise ‘Freedom Shield 2026’ began on 9 March 2026 between United States and South Korea.
- The exercise is conducted from 9–19 March 2026 on the Korean Peninsula as part of the regular joint defence drills between the two allies.
- Freedom Shield is an annual large-scale joint military exercise aimed at strengthening combined defence readiness and interoperability of U.S. and South Korean forces.
- Around 18,000 South Korean troops are participating in the exercise along with U.S. forces.
- The drills include command-post simulations and field training exercises covering operations across land, sea, air, cyber, and space domains.
- The exercise is also linked with “Warrior Shield” field training drills, which enhance operational readiness and combat capability.

About Freedom Shield exercise:

- Freedom Shield was first held in 2023 by United States and South Korea.
- It replaced earlier joint drills such as Foal Eagle and Key Resolve.
- The exercise is conducted under the ROK–U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty, signed after the Korean War.
- It is organised by United States Forces Korea (USFK) along with the Republic of Korea Armed Forces.

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Kerala Police launches 'Nirbhaya Nisha' to ensure safe night travel for women



- Kerala Police launched the Nirbhaya Nisha initiative to ensure safe night travel for women in Kerala.
- The initiative is implemented under the Nirbhaya framework aimed at strengthening women's safety and preventing crimes against women in public spaces.
- Nirbhaya Nisha focuses on providing police protection and assistance to women travelling alone during late-night hours.
- Under the programme, special night patrol teams including women police personnel will be deployed in major cities and vulnerable areas.
- Police escort facilities will be provided to women travelling alone at night from public transport points such as bus stands and railway stations to their destinations if required.
- The initiative increases surveillance and police presence in public places during night hours to deter crimes against women.
- Women can seek immediate assistance through the Kerala Police emergency helpline number 112, which will coordinate quick response and support under the initiative.

➤ The programme aims to improve women's confidence in travelling at night and strengthen gender-sensitive policing in the state.

About Kerala:

- Chief Minister: Pinarayi Vijayan
- Governor: Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar
- National Parks: Eravikulam National Park, Periyar National Park, Silent Valley National Park, Anamudi Shola National Park, Mathikettan Shola National Park, Pampadum Shola National Park.

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