

# China warships docked in Cambodia 5 mths ago, govt says not permanent

**Phnom Penh:** Cambodia's defence ministry insisted on Wednesday that the months-long presence of two Chinese warships in a strategically important naval base that is being newly expanded with funding from Beijing does not constitute a permanent deployment of the Chinese military in the country.

Questions had arisen after the Centre for Strategic and International Studies reported last month that two Chinese corvettes that docked at the Ream Naval Base's new pier in Dec had maintained a nearly permanent presence there since. Satellite images confirm that the two ships remained there on Wednesday, more than five months since they initially appeared.

The US and others have long worried that the new pier at the Ream Naval Base, built with Chinese funding, could serve as a new outpost for the Chinese navy on the Gulf of Thailand, but Cambodia has said that would not happen. Asked about why the two ships had been there for five months, defence ministry spokesperson Gen Chhum Socheat said they were due to take part in a joint Cambodian-Chinese military exercise later this month, and that they were also involved in training Cambodian sailors. "We have been clear that Cambodia is not allowing any foreign forces to be deployed on its territory," he said.

He said the ships were also "testing" the new pier, and



The US has long worried that the new pier at the Ream Naval Base, built with Chinese funding, could be a new navy outpost for China

that they were on show for Cambodia, which was considering purchasing similar warships for its own navy. "The ships are docked for the training period only, they are not staying permanently."

Controversy over Ream Naval Base initially arose in 2019 when Wall Street Journal reported that an early draft of an agreement would allow China 30-year use of the base, where it would be able to post military personnel, store weapons and berth warships. The base sits adjacent to the South China Sea, where China has aggressively asserted its claim to virtually the entire strategic waterway, and also provides easy access to the Malacca Straits, a critical shipping route leading from it to the Indian Ocean.

China only operates one acknowledged foreign military base in the strategically key Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti, but many believe that it is establishing an overseas network. The US has more foreign military bases than any other country, including in the Asia-Pacific. REUTERS

## 65.7% turnout in Phase 3, almost same as 2019

**D**hubri saw the highest voter turnout among all 283 seats where elections have been held so far, registering 92.1% polling during the third phase on Tuesday, while in Nawada (Bihar), it was 43.2%, the lowest.

Amreli in Gujarat, with 50.3% polling, saw the lowest turnout in Phase 3, according to data available on EC's Voter Turnout app, **reports Dipak Dash**. EC updated the overall turnout in the third phase to 65.7% from 64.5% late on Tuesday. The comparable figure for 2019 was 66%. Of 93 seats that went to the polls, 39 saw higher turnout, which included all 7 seats in Chhattisgarh, all 14 in Karnataka and the two in Goa. All seats in Bihar and West Bengal saw a lower turnout during the third phase. **P 12**

## Excise Policy scam

# SC to deliver order on interim bail to Arvind Kejriwal on 10th

NEW DELHI, May 8 (PTI)

**THE** Supreme Court will deliver its order on granting interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam on May 10.

Justice Sanjiv Khanna, who headed the bench which heard Kejriwal's petition against his arrest in the case, said, "We will pronounce the interim order (on interim bail) on Friday. The main matter related to the challenge to arrest will also be taken on the same day."

Justice Khanna, who was sitting in a different combination with Justices M M Sundresh and Bela M Trivedi, made the remark after Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, who



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was appearing for the Centre in a matter related to Goods and Services Tax, sought clarification on the listing of Kejriwal's plea. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader was arrested on March 21 and is currently lodged in Tihar Jail under judicial custody.

On May 7, the bench, also comprising Justice Dipankar Datta, had reserved its verdict on interim bail to Kejriwal.

The two-judge bench had risen without pronouncing order on granting Kejriwal interim bail to enable him to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections. The bench had reserved its decision after hearing the arguments put forth by senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi and Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, who appeared for Kejriwal and the ED, respectively.

# India got \$111bn in remittances in 2022, first to cross \$100bn

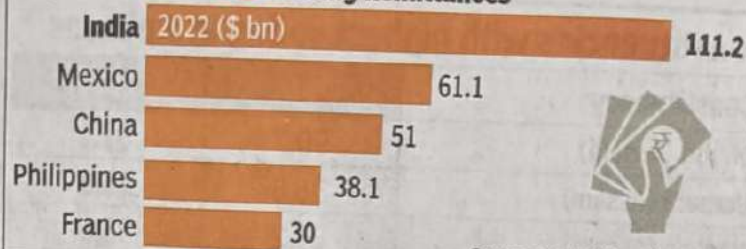
Lubna Kably | TNN

**Mumbai:** India is the origin of the largest number of international migrants—nearly 18 million, with large diasporas in UAE, US and Saudi Arabia. And it continues its march as the top country receiving remittances from its diaspora: the figure crossed \$110 billion in 2022.

According to the World Migration Report, 2024, released in Dhaka on Wednesday by the UN's International Organisation for Migration, India, Mexico and China were the top three remittance recipient countries in 2022, followed by the Philippines, France and Pakistan. India received \$111 billion, the first country to reach and even surpass the \$100-billion mark. In 2020, it had received \$83 billion. Mexico, with inward remittances of \$61 billion, was the second-largest recipient; in the previous year it had replaced China to occupy the second spot and continued to hold sway.

## MONEY FLOW

### Top Five Countries Receiving Remittances



Source: World Migration Report

The report points out that international remittances have recovered from the dip in 2020 due to the pandemic. Migrants sent an estimated \$831 billion in international remittances globally in 2022.

China's inward remittances in 2022 were \$51 billion. The contraction and its slipping to third spot has been attributed to multiple factors, including demographic shifts that have resulted in shrinking of the working age population and the country's zero-Covid policy, which prevented people from travelling abroad for work. During 2022, India's other neighbouring

countries Pakistan (rank 6) saw an inflow of nearly \$30 billion and Bangladesh (rank 8) received \$21 billion.

**Migration corridors:** In 1970, there were just 84 million international migrants, which translated to 2.3% of the world's population. By mid-2020 (per latest available data), nearly 280 million people lived in a country other than their country of birth, constituting 3.6% of the world's population.

The size of a migration corridor from 'country A' to 'country B' is measured as number of people born in 'country A' who were residing in 'country

B' at the time of the estimate. The Mexico-to-US corridor is the largest in the world at nearly 11 million people. This is followed by the Syrian Arab Republic to Turkiye and Russian to Ukraine corridors, attributed largely to displacement of people owing to civil unrest and invasions.

The India-UAE corridor is the fourth largest. An interactive map released by IOM shows there were 3.5 million Indians in UAE, followed by 2.7 million in US (which was the sixth largest international migration corridor) and 2.5 million in Saudi Arabia (in ninth position).

The report does not separately reflect the top source countries of inward remittances to India, but understandably it would be from the top diaspora-centric countries. US and Saudi Arabia were the top two in the list of those sending remittances overseas, with outflows of \$79 billion and \$39 billion, respectively, in 2022.

# To rein in migration, Aus raises minimum savings for student visa

**Sydney:** Australia said Wednesday it would raise the amount of savings international students will need to get a visa and warned several colleges of fraudulent student recruitment practices, as part of efforts to rein in record migration. From Friday, international students must show proof of savings of at least A\$29,710 (\$19,576) to get their visa, the second increase in seven months. It was raised to A\$24,505 from A\$21,041 in Oct.

The moves follow a raft of actions in recent months to tighten the student visa rules as the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions in 2022 triggered a sudden influx of migrants, exacerbating pressure on an already tight rental market.

English language require-



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ments for student visas were increased in March and the govt has been taking steps to end settings that allowed students to prolong their stay.

Home affairs minister Clare O'Neil said warning letters had been sent to 34 education providers for "non-genuine or exploitative recruitment practices". They could be jailed for up to two years and banned

from recruiting students if found guilty, she said.

International education is one of Australia's largest export industries and was worth A\$36.4 billion (\$24 billion) to the economy in 2022/23.

But record migration, mostly driven by international students, has put the govt under pressure with rental prices soaring across the country. Net immigration rose 60% to a record 548,800 in the year to Sept. 30, 2023. The govt expects its policies could halve Australia's migrant intake over the next two years. "We are significantly reducing migration levels—we are in the middle of the biggest drop in migration numbers in Australia's history, outside of war or pandemic," O'Neil said. REUTERS

# 3,500 Israel-bound bombs halted over Rafah use concerns, says US

## Report Says Israeli Officials Warned US Arms Pause Could Hit Hostage Talks

US Prez Joe Biden paused an arms shipment to Israel last week to prevent US-made weapons from being used in a long-threatened assault on the city of Rafah, administration officials said Tuesday night, a sign of the growing rift between the US and Israel over the conduct of the war.

Biden withheld 1,800 2,000-pound bombs and 1,700 500-pound bombs that he feared could be dropped on Rafah, where more than a million displaced Gazans have taken refuge, the officials said. The administration is reviewing whether to hold back future transfers, including guidance kits that convert so-called dumb bombs into precision-guided munitions.

The decision to delay the delivery of the 3,500 bombs was the first time since the Oct. 7 Hamas-led attack that Biden has used his power to curtail arms as an instrument to influence Israel's approach to the war that followed. A number of Biden's Democratic allies in Congress have for weeks urged him to limit or halt arms shipments to Israel, something he had refused to do until now because of his strong support for the effort to destroy Hamas.

Israeli officials disclosed the weapons pause to Axios earlier this week, but US officials refused to confirm it until Tuesday night. The fact that they finally did so was a clear indication of how much frustration is growing among administration officials that their Israeli counterparts are not heeding US warnings against a major operation in Rafah. Confirmation came hours after Israel sent tanks into the city.

US defence secretary Lloyd Austin also, on Wednesday, confirmed the weapons delay.



Displaced Palestinians arrive on a beach near Deir el-Balah in central Gaza

## Israel forces block Rafah border crossing. UN warns its teams are running out of fuel

Israeli forces have seized the Gaza side of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, pressing their offensive into the southern city on Tuesday. The closed border means UN humanitarian teams in Gaza will run out of diesel fuel by Wednesday, a senior humanitarian official said, leaving them unable to pump drinking water, maintain communications and deliver aid. Israel's air force said it had struck "over 100 terror targets" across the entire territory in the past 24 hours, including military structures and launching areas for rockets. The Gaza health ministry said Israeli bombardment since Tuesday had led to "a significant increase in the numbers of dead and wounded," particularly in Rafah. It did not provide specific numbers for those killed in Rafah but said Israeli forces killed 55 people and injured 200 more across the entire territory in the preceding 24 hours. AGENCIES

telling the Senate Appropriations Defence subcommittee that the US paused "one shipment of high payload munitions." He said, "We're going to continue to do what's necessary to ensure that Israel has the means to defend itself. But that said, we are currently reviewing some near-term security assistance shipments in the context of unfolding events in Rafah." Austin told lawmakers, "It's about having the right kinds of weapons for the task at hand. A small diameter bomb, which is a precision we-

apon, that's very useful in a dense, built-up environment, but maybe not so much a 2,000-pound bomb that could create a lot of collateral damage." He said the US wants to see Israel do "more precise" operations.

Axios, on Wednesday, reported that senior Israeli officials have warned their US counterparts that the Biden administration's decision to pause weapons shipments could jeopardise hostage negotiations, citing two unidentified sources briefed on the matter.

One US official said the ad-

ministration began reviewing arms shipments last month when it became clear that Israel seemed to be reaching a decision on a Rafah operation. Biden initially took the position that Israel should not attack Rafah without a plan to effectively minimise civilian casualties, but in recent weeks the White House has increasingly indicated that it did not believe such a plan was even possible.

Israel has not made clear whether it is on the verge of opening the assault on Rafah but has taken actions in the last couple of days that seemed to hint it was moving in that direction. Israeli forces ordered the evacuation of 110,000 civilians from Rafah and mounted air strikes against targets on the border areas of the city in response to Hamas rockets that killed four Israeli soldiers over the weekend. Israel called the entry of tanks into Rafah and seizure of the city's border crossing with Egypt on Tuesday a limited operation to eliminate Hamas fighters and infrastructure tied to the rocket attack.

Biden made no mention of his decision to withhold the bombs on Tuesday, but repeated his support for Israel. "My commitment to the safety of the Jewish people, security of Israel, and its right to exist as an independent Jewish state is ironclad even when we disagree," he said.

The administration is not halting all weapons to Israel. In fact, officials said the administration had just approved the latest tranche of aid amounting to \$827 million worth of weapons and equipment. The administration intends to send "every dollar" of the money just appropriated by Congress, the officials said. NYT & AP