

Yemen rebels claim attack on Norway-flagged tanker

AFP, Dubai

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels yesterday claimed responsibility for a missile strike on a Norwegian-flagged tanker a day earlier off Yemen's coast.

The naval forces of the Yemeni Armed Forces carried out a qualitative military operation against the Norwegian ship Strinda, which was loaded with oil bound for Israel, a military spokesman said.

The US military initially reported the strike, saying that a Navy destroyer had heard the ship's mayday call and was giving assistance.

The night-time attack occurred as the chemical tanker passed through Bab-el-Mandeb, the strait between Yemen and northeast Africa leading to the Red Sea, a key route toward the Suez Canal.

The Houthi rebels have launched a series of drone attacks since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.



A Palestinian woman climbs a wall to enter a warehouse of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) after having waited in queue to receive flour rations, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday, amid continuing battles between Israel and Hamas.

PHOTO: AFP

China, Vietnam agree to build 'shared future' Sign 37 cooperation deals



REUTERS, Hanoi

Old foes China and Vietnam, at odds over claims in the South China Sea, declared yesterday they want to boost ties and build a community with a "shared future", just three months after Hanoi upgraded its formal relations with the United States.

As Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Hanoi on his first trip as China's leader to Vietnam in six years, the two countries signed 37 cooperation deals in what can be seen as a triumph of Vietnam's "bamboo diplomacy" as both China and the United States vie for influence.

After China's push, Vietnam agreed to "support the initiative of building a shared future community for human kind", according to a joint statement shown to reporters.

The countries' diplomats had debated the "shared future" phrase for months, following Hanoi's initial reluctance to use it, say officials and diplomats.

The Chinese term literally means "common destiny", but its translation in English and Vietnamese is "common future", which may be seen as less demanding.

"One declaration, many translations," said a diplomat based in the Vietnamese capital, commenting on the interpretation of the term.

AFP, Rafah

Aid trucks stalled at the Gaza border, hospitals treating missing limbs: UN Security Council envoys visiting Egypt on Monday encountered the fallout of the Israel-Hamas war, days after the United States vetoed a ceasefire resolution.

The informal one-day trip organised by the United Arab Emirates and Egypt came amid a spiralling humanitarian crisis in war-devastated Gaza. Around a dozen ambassadors took part from countries including Russia and Britain.

But the US, which vetoed the Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire on Friday, did not send a representative and neither did France.

"I'm not sure what the US would have seen today would have been very pleasing for them," Russia's United Nations ambassador Vassily Nebenzia told AFP at the Rafah crossing, the main gateway into Gaza and the epicentre of the humanitarian response.

"They would have seen what is really happening and not what their geostrategic motives are shielding them" from, he added, calling the situation a "catastrophe".

Earlier, the envoys visited a hospital in El-Arish near the Rafah crossing, treating people who had been evacuated from the conflict.

Among those they met was

Wafaa Asaad, a 27-year-old from Gaza who was heavily pregnant when her house was hit by an Israeli strike, killing her husband and injuring her two daughters.

She was evacuated to Egypt for medical treatment and had an arm and leg amputated, but miraculously managed to give birth just hours after crossing the border, her sister Alaa told AFP.

"Our message to the UN is we want the war to stop," Alaa said, her newborn niece laying on a bed beside her.

Ecuador's envoy Jose de la Gasca told AFP he was "destroyed" by the visit to the hospital.

"I just met a young mother who lost a kid and has another little girl who is wounded," he said.

"I don't ever want to see again what I have just seen.

It's terrible."

The diplomats later visited the Rafah crossing via a stretch of road lined with aid trucks waiting for permission to enter Gaza.

Departures via the crossing are tightly controlled, with only foreign nationals and severely wounded people allowed to leave Gaza in most circumstances.

The entry of aid is also tightly restricted. Only a trickle has entered the coastal Palestinian territory

since a week-long truce broke down at the start of the month.

"The trucks, the long line of trucks, I could have never imagined this," said South Korea's incoming envoy who will take up a seat at the council next year.

Monday's trip marked a last-ditch diplomatic effort by the UAE to generate support for a ceasefire ahead of the expiry of its two-year term on the council at the end of the month.

Speaking at the start of the trip, UAE envoy Lana Nusseibeh said it was not official Security Council work, and members were taking part on their own "national and personal" initiatives.

Brazil's envoy Sergio Danese called the visit a "symbolic gesture."

"We are showing interest. We are showing that we are engaged in trying to do something more meaningful... but we need to do more," he told AFP, the black gates and wire-mesh of the Rafah crossing looming behind him.

Philippe Lazzarini, head of the UN's Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA, briefed the envoys on the humanitarian situation before he headed to Gaza for his third visit since the start of the war in October.



'I'm destroyed'

UN envoys encounter fallout of Israel-Hamas war while visiting a hospital near Rafah crossing

Environmental campaigners 'losing trust in COP'

Says leading activist; Arab officials attack bids to phase out fossil fuels

AFP, Dubai

Environmental campaigners are losing faith in the UN-led COP climate process after signs that a phase-out of fossil fuels may not be agreed in Dubai, a leading activist said yesterday.

Uganda's Vanessa Nakate, a Unicef Goodwill Ambassador, said activists were tired of being disappointed at the annual United Nations conferences to battle climate change.

She was speaking after the latest COP28 draft agreement dropped any mention of winding down fossil fuels, speaking only of a potential reduction in consumption and production.

"It can be tiring to keep coming to these places and to be constantly disappointed by the decisions that are made," the 27-year-old told a press conference.

"For this COP to be truly a success, it has to address fossil fuels."

"If leaders fail to address the root cause of the climate crisis after 28 years of climate conferences, then they aren't only failing us, but they're making us lose trust in the entire COP process."

Nakate's comments are reminiscent of 20-year-old Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, who famously

dismissed world leaders' promises on climate change as just "blah, blah, blah".

Thunberg, who in January said it was "ridiculous" that the United Arab Emirates' state oil company chief was the COP28 president, last attended a COP summit in 2021.

Some activists were in tears over the latest text. Joseph Sikulu of Pacific Island Warriors took several

seconds to compose himself before addressing the press conference with tears rolling down his cheeks.

Meanwhile, Arab officials yesterday hit out at attempts to secure the phase-out of fossil fuels at COP28. Kuwait's oil minister dismissed the proposal as an "aggressive attack", and accused Western nations of trying to dominate the global economy through alternative energy sources.

"I am amazed at this extraordinary insistence on depriving peoples and many countries, most of them in the developing world, of a basic source of energy," Saad Hamad Nasser Al Barrak told the meeting of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC).

Iraq's oil minister, Hayyan Abdul Ghani Al Sawad, said "fossil fuels will remain the major source of energy in the whole world. We cannot phase out the use of that energy."



Pak court overturns ex-PM Sharif's last graft conviction

Reuters, Islamabad

A Pakistan court yesterday overturned a conviction for graft of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, his lawyer said, removing one of the last major hurdles for him to qualify to contest national elections in February.

His Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party says he is a candidate to become prime minister for a fourth term. The veteran politician arrived back home in October from four years of self-imposed exile in London.

Sharif now just needs the removal of a life ban on holding any public office to qualify to stand in the elections, scheduled for February 8, 2024.

Yesterday, the Islamabad High Court overturned a 2018 conviction on charges of not being able to prove sources of income for setting up a steel mill in Saudi Arabia, his lawyer Amjad Pervaiz said.

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Memo No. 35.01.7587.190.17.017.23-2621

Date : 12.12. 2023

e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are invited in National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Superintending Engineer, RHD, Noakhali Circle, Noakhali for the procurement of following works :

Sl. No	Tender ID No	Package No	Description of Works	Tender Last Selling (Date & Time)	Tender Closing (Date & Time)	Tender Opening (Date & Time)
01	921985	ADP/SE/Noakhali/2023-2024/BMMHKUR/PW-04	Development of Bir Mukti jodha Marhum Hazi Kamal Uddin Road (Begumgonj) Globe Factory-Kabirhat Folahary, Z-1453 at Different Location by New Construction, Road Embankment Raising, Widening, Strengthening, Surfacing, Construction of Rigid Pavement, 3 Nos. Different Size RCC Box Culvert, Road Side Drain, Protective work & Road Safety work under Noakhali Road Division during the year 2023-2024.	09/01/2024 at 17:00	10/01/2024 at 12:30	10/01/2024 at 12:30

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@www.eprocure.gov.bd).

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Zelensky makes 11th hour plea for war funds

REUTERS, Washington

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday planned a last-ditch plea to US lawmakers to keep military support flowing as he battles Russia, in visits to the White House and Capitol Hill. Heading into winter, with tens of thousands of Ukrainians dead, a yawning budget deficit and Russian advances in the east, Zelensky was scheduled to press US lawmakers to replenish nearly depleted funding, before meeting with President Joe Biden. "If there's anyone inspired by unresolved issues on Capitol Hill, it's just (Russian President Vladimir) Putin and his sick clique," Zelensky said at a speech in Washington on Monday to a US military audience. Meanwhile, Ukraine's biggest mobile network operator, Kyivstar, said it was the victim of a powerful hacker attack yesterday morning which has temporarily knocked out its cellular and internet signal. The company, which is owned by Amsterdam-listed mobile telecoms operator Veon VON.AS, said it was working to repair the outage and was cooperating with law enforcement bodies. Separately, the co-founder of Monobank, a major Ukrainian payment system, said in a social media post that his company was currently suffering a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack, but that everything was "under control". Representatives of PrivatBank and Oschadbank, told media outlet Hromadske that part of their ATM machines and card terminals had been affected by the Kyivstar outage.

US ASSASSINATION PLOT India requests FBI to share intel on Sikh separatists

REUTERS, New Delhi

India has requested the United States to share intelligence on Sikh separatists living there amid investigations into an accusation that an Indian official was linked to a plot to kill a Sikh separatist on American soil, an Indian official said yesterday. The request was made by the National Investigations Agency (NIA), India's federal anti-terrorism agency, in meetings with visiting FBI Director Christopher Wray, said the official, who works at NIA and spoke on condition of anonymity. The issue of what New Delhi says are Sikh separatists operating against India from US soil was discussed in "greater detail by a team of internal security officials from both countries", the official said. "India has requested the US officials to share inputs on suspected individuals who have in recent years been recruited and embedded in the separatist movement," the official said. An NIA spokesperson said the agency did not have a comment when reached by Reuters. The US embassy's spokesperson said meetings between Wray and Indian officials were underway and he could not share details as yet. The movement for a Sikh homeland in northern India, crushed decades ago, has burst onto the global stage in recent months as the United States and Canada accused Indian officials of involvement in assassination plots against Sikh separatist leaders in North America. New Delhi denies any connection to a June murder in a Vancouver suburb but has announced an investigation into US concerns about an alleged plot in New York. It says such plots were not government policy and it is not hunting down Sikh separatists abroad. At the same time, Indian security and foreign ministry officials say Sikh separatists in North America and Europe raising money, training people and campaigning for India's division, is a concern for New Delhi.