

## YEMEN'S COAST Houthi rebels attack three ships

AFP, Sanaa

Yemen's Houthi rebels said yesterday they targeted three ships off the country's coast with missiles and drones after maritime security firms said two vessels had caught fire after being hit by projectiles.

The strikes are the latest in a flurry of attacks by the Iran-backed rebels who have been harassing ships in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden since November in a campaign they say is in solidarity with Palestinians amid the Gaza offensive.

In a statement on social media platform X, Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree said the rebels attacked "two ships belonging to companies that violated" directives by the group not to enter Israeli ports.

He identified the vessels as the Liberia-flagged MSC Tavishi and the Norderney, which sails under the flag of Antigua and Barbuda.



Palestinians inspect the damage and debris of destroyed buildings a day after an operation by the Israeli Special Forces in the Nuseirat camp, in the central Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION Iran approves six candidates for June 28 vote

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday announced the six candidates, mostly conservatives, approved for the June 28 election to replace president Ebrahim Raisi, who was killed in a helicopter crash.

The candidates announced by the interior ministry were selected from 80 registered hopefuls by the Guardian Council, which oversees elections in the Islamic republic.

Among those approved are the conservative speaker of parliament Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and the ultraconservative former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili.

Just one reformist candidate, Massoud Pezeshkian, who is a lawmaker representing Tabriz in Iran's parliament, has been approved.

The conservative former interior minister Mostafa Pourmohammadi has also been authorised to run.

Others on the list include conservative Tehran mayor Alireza Zakaani and incumbent vice president Amirhossein Ghazizadeh-Hashemi, the ultraconservative head of the Martyrs' Foundation.

## ISRAEL'S DEADLY ATTACK ON GAZA REFUGEE CAMP UN official blasts West's double standards

AGENCIES

The UN's special rapporteur on the right to housing has rebuked countries he accused of bias on Israel's offensive on Gaza following a deadly attack by Tel Aviv on the Nuseirat refugee camp in the enclave.

"Countries that celebrate the release of four Israeli hostages without saying a word about the hundreds of Palestinians killed and thousands held in arbitrary detention by Israel, have lost moral credibility for generations and don't deserve to be on any UN

**"Countries that celebrate the release of four Israeli hostages without saying a word about the hundreds of Palestinians killed... have lost moral credibility for generations."**

Balakrishnan Rajagopal said on X

human rights body," Balakrishnan Rajagopal said on X about the attack that took place on Saturday.

Earlier, the Israeli army announced that it had launched attacks on various locations in the central part of the Gaza Strip and had successfully rescued four captives alive from two different areas.

Citing a US official, CNN reported that an American unit in Israel aided the efforts to rescue



the hostages.

US President Joe Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz were among leaders who greeting their release even as they have also called for a truce.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell welcomed the hostage release and said reports "of another massacre of civilians are appalling... the bloodbath must end immediately".

The Gaza-based Government Media Office said that at least 274 Palestinians were killed and more than 400 injured on Saturday in severe Israeli airstrikes targeting Nuseirat refugee camp, areas east of Deir al-Balah, and al-Bureij and al-Maghazi camps in central Gaza, coinciding with a sudden incursion of vehicles east and northwest of Nuseirat.

More than 37,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since the offensive began on October

7, according to local health authorities.

Eight months into the Israeli offensive, vast tracts of Gaza lay in ruins amid a crippling blockade of food, clean water, and medicine, reports Middle East Monitor Online.

Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice, whose latest ruling ordered Tel Aviv to immediately halt its operation in the southern city of Rafah, where over a million Palestinians had sought refuge.

"My child was crying, afraid of the sound of the plane firing at us," said one Gaza woman, Hadeel Radwan, 32, recounting how they fled the intense combat as she carried her seven-month-old daughter.

"We all felt that we wouldn't survive," she told AFP. Israel's top diplomat rejected unspecified accusations "of war crimes" in the operation.

## Ukraine hits Russian Su-57 jet for first time

Says military intel

REUTERS, Kyiv

Ukrainian forces have for the first time hit a latest-generation Russian Sukhoi Su-57 fighter jet at an air base inside Russia, Kyiv's GUR defense intelligence agency said yesterday, showing satellite pictures which it said confirmed the strike.

In a Telegram post, the GUR did not specify how the Su-57 was hit or by which unit of Ukrainian military.

A popular Russian pro-war military blogger who calls himself Fighterbomber and focuses on aviation said the report of the strike on the Su-57 was correct and that it had been hit by a drone.

The GUR said the aircraft was parked at the Akhtubinsk airfield, which it said was 589 km from front lines in Ukraine between Ukrainian and Russian invasion forces.

"The pictures show that on June 7, the Su 57 was standing intact, and on (June 8th), there were craters from the explosion and characteristic spots of fire caused by fire damage near it," the GUR said.

Ukraine has been fighting a full-scale Russian invasion since February 2022.

## Challenges for Modi in his third term as India PM

REUTERS

India's Narendra Modi was sworn in as prime minister yesterday for a third straight term, a rare feat that will also come with new challenges as the populist leader is forced to rely on allies to form a government. Here are some key issues Modi will need to tackle in office.

FUNDS, SPECIAL STATUS FOR ALLIES

In the third term, Modi's government may need to spend more to meet the demands of allies that helped him secure a majority in parliament, testing the government's purse.

Regional parties in Modi's alliance have already demanded more funds for their states and federal cabinet positions during negotiations on forming a new coalition government.

ECONOMIC DISPARITY

India's economy grew by 8.2 percent in the last fiscal year, one of the fastest rates among major economies, but voters have pointed to disparities on the ground, with growth more visible in cities than in the vast hinterland.

The economy has jumped five places to be the fifth-largest in the world in the past decade under Modi's rule and he has said he will lift it to the third position. But the country's per capita income still remains the lowest among G20 nations.

INFLATION ABOVE C BANK TARGET

Annual retail inflation INCPYI-ECI in April stood at 4.83 percent, slightly lower than March, but still above the central bank's 4 percent target.

Food inflation, which accounts for nearly half of the overall consumer price basket, was an annual 8.70 percent in April, compared with a 8.52 percent rise in the previous month. Food inflation has been at more than 8 percent year-on-year since

November 2023. Modi has banned exports of wheat and rice to contain domestic inflation.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment in India has also been one of the main issues in the election campaign with Congress accusing the Modi government of doing little to provide jobs for the youth.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lost a third of the seats it held in rural constituencies, an analysis of voting data showed, reflecting discontent in the countryside over lack of jobs and inflation.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

India's rising world stature and assertive foreign policy have been touted as major recent achievements by Modi's administration.

A key diplomatic strain, however, remains with China which was spurred by a 2020 border clash that left 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers dead. Modi said last month the countries should address the "prolonged situation" on their border.

Modi's government has been trying to attract foreign companies to diversify supply chains beyond China.

Relations with Canada have also been strained after Ottawa and Washington accused an Indian official of directing the plot in the attempted murder of Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, a Sikh separatist and dual citizen of the United States and Canada.

FARMERS

Stagnant farm income is a major sign of widening inequality between urban and rural India that has led to widespread protests. The BJP had promised to double farm income by 2022 in its manifesto for the last election, but has failed to do so.

LAND, LABOUR REFORMS

In February, a BJP spokesperson said Modi could make labour reforms a priority if he wins the general election. But with the pressures of a coalition government and a stronger opposition, Modi may have to delay such reforms.



## INDIA'S JAMMU & KASHMIR

## 9 killed as gunmen attack Hindu pilgrim bus: police

NDTV ONLINE

At least nine pilgrims have been killed and 33 others have been injured when their bus, reportedly attacked by terrorists, plunged into a gorge in Jammu & Kashmir's Reasi district.

It is not yet known how many have received bullet injuries, Reasi's District Magistrate Vishesh Mahajan told NDTV. The pilgrims were on their way to the cave temple of Shivkhodi.

The bus was severely damaged from impact and bodies lay strewn at the accident site. Several empty bullet casings were also found at the site.

Visuals from the spot showed locals helping in rescue operations as ambulances stood on the side of the road for immediate assistance.

Reinforcements from the police, army, and paramilitary forces were rushed to the spot, the police said, reported news agency PTI.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since their independence in 1947, and both claim the high-altitude territory in full.

Rebel groups have waged an insurgency since 1989, demanding independence or a merger with Pakistan.

The conflict has left tens of thousands of civilians, soldiers, and rebels dead.

Violence and anti-India protests have drastically fallen since 2019, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government cancelled the region's limited autonomy.



Women in traditional Hungarian dresses cast their ballots at a polling station in a school in Veresegyhaz, some 30kms east of Budapest during the European Parliament election yesterday. Voters across Europe cast ballots yesterday on the final -- and biggest -- day of elections for the EU's parliament, with far-right parties expected to make gains at a pivotal time for the bloc.

PHOTO: AFP

## Oceanic 'peace' pact signed in Costa Rica

AFP, San José

Over two dozen countries signed a wishful "declaration of peace with the ocean" on Saturday in Costa Rica, as a multi-day meeting to prepare for a major UN conference next year wrapped up.

Among the signatories were Germany, Spain, Sweden, Canada, Chile and South Korea, as well as Costa Rica and France, co-hosts of third UN Ocean Conference to be held next June in the French city of Nice.

"We are committed to scaling up transformative ocean actions to support nature-positive economies based on the best available science and scientific information, traditional knowledge and innovation," the document said.

About a year out from the major meeting, representatives gathered this week in San Jose for two days of discussions to prepare for the conference.