

Merchant ship hit in Red Sea off Yemen

Says security firm

AFP, Dubai

A merchant ship issued a distress call after being struck in the Red Sea off Yemen, a security firm said yesterday, in what appeared to be the latest attack by Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

The ship was hit about 68 nautical miles southwest of the rebel-held port city of Hodeida, maritime security firm Ambrey said.

The company "assessed the vessel aligned with the Houthi target profile at the time of the incident", it said.

Houthis, who are at war with a Saudi-led coalition after ousting the government from Sanaa in 2014, have launched drone and missile attacks on shipping since November.

They say they are harassing the vital trade route as an act of solidarity with Palestinians during the Israel's offensive in the Gaza Strip.



Smoke billows from the site of an Israeli airstrike on Zibqin in southern Lebanon yesterday, amid ongoing cross-border tensions. Hezbollah fired big barrages of rockets at Israel yesterday and vowed to ramp up its attacks in retaliation for the Israeli strike which killed a senior Hezbollah field commander.

PHOTO: AFP

Form electoral pact against far right

France's Macron asks rival parties ahead of snap polls

REUTERS, Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday urged rival parties on both sides of the political centre to join him in forging a democratic alliance against Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally (RN) in upcoming snap legislative elections.

In what amounted to a campaign speech just days after his shock call for an election, Macron acknowledged making mistakes, saying the French had expressed their indignation but felt they were not being heard.

The election would provide clarity, Macron said. He called on "many of our compatriots and political leaders who do not recognize themselves in the extremist fever" to "build a new project... a coalition to govern, a coalition to act in the service of the French and for the republic".

He pledged to take a firmer hand in questions of immigration, security and justice, arguing that a far left prone to anti-Semitism would be too "lax," while the extreme right would bulldoze France's constitutional rule of law.

In a dig at the leader of the conservative Republicans party, Macron decried political horse-trading over the last few days, saying "the mask has come off" some parties seeking to forge "unnatural alliances."

Child victims of war spiked in 2023

UN report warns amid Gaza, Sudan crises

AFP, United Nations

Violence against children in armed conflicts reached "extreme levels" in 2023, particularly in Gaza and Sudan, according to a forthcoming UN report obtained by AFP on Tuesday.

The United Nations' annual "Children in Armed Conflict" report placed the Sudanese army as well as the rival Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on the blacklist for "the killing and maiming of children, and for attacks on schools and hospitals."

Also added to the blacklist were Hamas and the armed wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad for the October 7 incident, as well as the



disregard for child rights, notably the inherent right to life," the report said.

The conflict in the Middle East has led to a 155 percent increase in grave violations against children, the report said.

The UN verified that 43 Israeli children were killed in Israel and the West Bank during the October 7 attack, and a total of 47 Israeli children were abducted by Hamas and other Palestinian groups.

The report also confirmed the deaths of 2,141 Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip in 2023, with 2,051 killed between October 7 and December 31.

Over 23,000 reports of grave violations against children -- 3,900 Israeli children and 19,887 Palestinian children -- by all parties to the conflict had yet to be verified.

"It will take a long, long time to verify," said the UN official.

Israel reacted angrily when the news of its inclusion on the blacklist was leaked last week, with the country's UN ambassador Gilad Erdan saying he was "shocked and

disgusted by this shameful decision."

As for Sudan, it has seen "a staggering 480 percent increase in grave violations against children" against children from 2022 to 2023, the report said.

The RSF paramilitary force was listed for recruiting children and for "rape and other forms of sexual violence against children," as well as attacks on schools and hospitals.

"I am appalled by the dramatic increase in grave violations," Guterres wrote in the report, also noting a rise in ethnically motivated attacks and mass displacement of children in Sudan.

Covering some 20 conflict zones worldwide, the report includes the killing, injuring, recruitment, kidnapping and sexual violence against children.

It verified 30,705 "grave violations" committed last year, including during the offensive in Gaza.

The Russian army and "affiliated armed groups," remained on the blacklist for killing 80 children in Ukraine in 2023 and injuring 339.

The report placed Sudanese army, its rival RSF, Hamas and the Israeli army on the blacklist.

Israeli army for its offensive in Gaza.

"In 2023, violence against children in armed conflict reached extreme levels, with a shocking 21 percent increase in grave violations," said the report by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, which is due to be published today.

The UN verified 30,705 violations committed against children last year, including 5,301 killings, 6,348 injuries, 8,655 instances of children recruited and used in conflicts, 5,205 denials of humanitarian access and 4,356 kidnappings.

"We've never verified so many violations against children as last year," said a senior UN official speaking on condition of anonymity.

In 2023, "children bore the brunt of multiplying and escalating crises that were marked by a complete

INDIA'S JAMMU & KASHMIR

Police blame Pakistan for strife that killed 12 Dozens injured over the last three days

REUTER, Srinagar

Police in India's territory of Jammu and Kashmir yesterday blamed arch rival Pakistan for a spurt in militant attacks that killed 12 people and injured dozens over the last three days, just weeks after a large turnout for general elections.

Pakistan claims the Himalayan region, which has been roiled by militant violence since the start of an anti-Indian insurgency in 1989 that killed tens of thousands, although violence has waned in recent years.

"Our hostile neighbour wants to damage our peaceful environment," Anand Jain, police chief of Jammu, told reporters in a reference to Pakistan, which India has accused of stoking violence in the region for decades.

A spokesperson for Pakistan's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment from Reuters. It has denied such claims in the past, saying it has given only political and diplomatic support to the insurgency.

Gun battles in the area on Tuesday killed two militants and a paramilitary soldier while injuring a civilian and six security personnel, authorities said.

The incidents came two days after nine Hindu pilgrims were killed and 41 injured when militants attacked a bus taking

them to a Hindu shrine on Sunday, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi was sworn in for a third term.

The latest violence has prompted criticism of Modi by opposition parties demanding action against the perpetrators.

"Unless we talk to our neighbours we will not be able to solve the problem," Farooq Abdullah, a former chief minister of the region, told news agency ANI.

The sudden rise in violence comes after the region's director general of police, R R Swain, said the number of local militants was dropping, although 70 to 80 foreign militants continue to be active.

"We are moving from resident terrorism to foreign terrorism," Swain said last week.

Ties between the neighbours have been frozen since India ended the special status of Jammu and Kashmir state in 2019, splitting it into two federally administered territories.

On Monday, the leaders of the nuclear-armed rivals engaged in diplomacy on X as Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his elder brother and former three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif posted congratulations to Modi for his third term.



Mahathir denies corruption

AGENCIES

Malaysia's former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad has denied engaging in corruption, saying he earned his money from his salary during his decades-long political career and most of it is "now gone".

In an interview with Al Jazeera, Mahathir, who is under investigation by the country's anticorruption agency, hit out at current Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim over remarks that implied that he had used his time in office to enrich himself and his family.

Mahathir also accused Anwar of targeting his two eldest sons, Mirzan Mahathir and Mokhzani Mahathir.

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) in January ordered Mirzan Mahathir to declare all his assets in and outside the country as part of an investigation following revelations contained in the so-called Panama Papers, reports AFP.

BANGLADESH HOUSE BUILDING FINANCE CORPORATION
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Reference: HB/HO/CS/Recruitment of Security Guards- 1004

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following work:

e-Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of the work	Last Date and Time for Tender/Proposal Security Submission	Tender/Proposal Closing/Opening Date and Time
998099	HB/HO/CS/Recruitment of Security Guards-1004	Security Guards Services for Bangladesh House Building Finance Corporation (BHBFC).	04-July-2024 Time : 13:30	04-July-2024 Time : 14:30

This is an online tender where only e-tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited through online in any e-GP registered Banks' Branches.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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Memo No. 46.17.19.50.024.00.32.2023.1832

Tender Notice No. 13/2023-2024

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Sl. No.	Tender ID Number	Method of tender	Tender documents last selling date	Tender closing date & time
1.	977191 977192 977193 977194 977195 977196 977197 977198 977199 977200 977201 977202 977203 977204 977205 977208 977209 977210 977211 977212 977213 977215 977216 977217 977218 977219 977220 977221 977222	OTM	01-July-2024 17:00	02-July-2024 12:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender document from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited on line through any registered banks branches up to 17.00pm on 01.07.2024.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and also from E-mail: se@cocc.gov.bd Or Call to +88028165714.

Interested persons can communicate with the undersigned during office hours.

Signed
G. P. Chowdhury
Chief Engineer
Cumilla City Corporation

GD-998