

Houthis claim targeting US destroyer

SANAA, Dec 2 (IANS)

YEMEN'S Houthi group announced that it had targeted a US destroyer and three military supply ships in a 'qualitative and joint military operation.'

"We carried out an operation targeting an American destroyer and three supply ships belonging to the US military," Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said, Xinhua news agency reported quoting the Houthi-run al-Masirah TV channel.

He identified the supply ships as the 'Stena Impeccable,' the 'Maersk Saratoga,' and the 'Liberty Grace' but did not disclose the name of the targeted destroyer. The operation, conducted in the Arabian Sea and

the Gulf of Aden, involved 16 ballistic and winged missiles as well as a drone, Sarea claimed. He described the strikes as 'accurate and direct.'

Sarea warned that the Houthis would escalate their operations in the declared maritime operations zone, encompassing the Red Sea and Arabian Sea, until Israel halts its actions in Gaza.

"We will continue to carry out military operations at an escalating pace against Israel and the United States of America," he said. Earlier in the day, the Houthis claimed responsibility for launching a rocket at Israel, asserting it hit a 'vital target' in the Jaffa area. However, Israeli media reported that the Israel Defence Forces intercepted and

destroyed the rocket, launched from northern Yemen, early on Sunday. Since November 2023, the Houthi militia, which controls much of northern Yemen, has intensified its attacks on Israeli cities and disrupted shipping in the Red Sea linked to Israel. The group has framed these actions as solidarity with Palestinians amid the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Meanwhile, a Houthi drone attack on a popular market in Yemen's Taiz province killed six people and injured eight others.

The local pro-Government military official, who requested anonymity, said on Sunday that "the Houthi bombing occurred in the Maqbanah district of Taiz during a busy market day".

Putin to visit India in early 2025 at PM Modi's invitation

MOSCOW, Dec 2 (IANS)

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin is expected to visit India in early 2025 following an invitation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, confirmed Kremlin aide Yury Ushakov.

The visit is being planned as part of the ongoing commitment to annual meetings between the two leaders.

"Our leaders have an agreement to meet once a year. This time, it is our turn," Ushakov said during a press briefing.

He added that Russia has received the invitation from PM Modi and would respond positively. "We will figure out the ten-

tative dates early next year," he noted. The announcement underscores the deep ties between New Delhi and Moscow, even as global geopolitical tensions continue to shape international relations.

Putin's visit to India will focus on strengthening strategic cooperation in critical areas such as Defence, energy, and trade.

The last visit by the Russian President to India took place on December 6, 2021, during the 21st India-Russia Annual Summit in New Delhi.

Meanwhile, PM Modi held two high-profile visits to Russia this year. He attended the 22nd Russia-India Summit in July and

later participated in the BRICS Summit held in Kazan in October.

During the BRICS meeting, PM Modi reiterated India's commitment to promoting peace in the context of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict.

"We are in regular contact regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict. As I have mentioned before, we believe that disputes should be resolved peacefully. India fully supports the earliest establishment of peace and stability," the Prime Minister had remarked during his bilateral meeting with Putin in Kazan.

PM Modi also conveyed India's readiness to assist in resolving the conflict.

Farmers' 'Delhi Chalo' march halted

Protesters give 7-day ultimatum

NEW DELHI/NOIDA, Dec 2 (PTI)

FARMERS from different parts of Uttar Pradesh demanding adequate compensation for their lands acquired by the Government marched towards Delhi on Monday but were stopped at the Noida-Delhi border where they sat on a dharna.

The farmers said if their demands were not met within seven days, they would again march towards Delhi.

Raising slogans of "Bol Kisan, Halla Bol", the protesting farmers gathered at the Mahamaya flyover on the Dadri-Noida link road and began their 'Delhi Chalo' march around 11:30 am.

Massive traffic snarls caused inconvenience to commuters crossing the Delhi-Noida borders as police set up multiple layers of barricades and deployed



Police personnel deployed at Chilla border after security was heightened in view of farmers' protest march towards the national capital, in Noida on Monday. (PTI)

heavy security to stop the march, which coincided with Parliament's Winter Session.

Bumper-to-bumper traffic was witnessed at Noida's Chilla bor-

der for several hours as the protesters, waving banners and flags of various farmer groups, crossed the initial barricades.

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INS Vikrant fully operational: Vice Admiral

KOCHI, Dec 2 (PTI)

THE INS Vikrant, India's indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC), has achieved full operational status after completing its final operational clearance this year, Vice Admiral V Srinivas, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOCINC), Southern Naval Command, said on Monday.

Speaking to the media aboard the naval ship INS Shardul in Kochi, Srinivas said that INS Vikrant completed its final operations clearance this year. "With the completion of various trials and the ship's fleet integration, INS Vikrant is now fully operational and is operating under the Western Fleet," he added.

Srinivas emphasised that the ship, which is a symbol of pride for the country and the Navy, is fully capable of undertaking all operations and commitments of the Indian Navy. Commissioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2022, INS Vikrant is now under the Western Naval Command and is capable of handling naval assignments. Designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau (WDB) and built by Cochin Shipyard Limited, Vikrant is the largest ship ever constructed in India's maritime history. It boasts of state-of-the-art automation features and houses around 2,200 compartments, designed to accommodate a crew of about 1,600.

Indian Navy to explore hydrogen fuel for sustainable operations: Srinivas

KOCHI, Dec 2 (PTI)

VICE Admiral V Srinivas, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOCINC) of the Southern Naval Command, on Monday said that the Indian Navy is exploring the use of hydrogen fuel to promote environmentally sustainable operations.

Speaking to the media, he said the Southern Naval Command is in regular contact with agencies like Cochin Shipyard Ltd (CSL) to achieve this goal.

"We are in constant contact with various agencies working on fuels like hydrogen. Cochin Shipyard has developed small crafts, and we are collaborating with them. Also, we have always been actively promoting environment-friendly fuels and operations," he said.

The Vice Admiral stated that efforts are underway to ensure the Navy adopts the highest standards of environmentally friendly fuels and operations across the country.

India to ink deal on 26 Rafale-M jets, 3 Scorpene subs next month: Navy chief



NEW DELHI, Dec 2 (PTI)

INDIA is expected to seal separate contracts for the procurement of 26 naval variant Rafale fighter jets and three additional Scorpene submarines next month, Navy Chief Admiral D K Tripathi said on Monday as he asserted that activities of the navies of China and Pakistan are being closely monitored.

At a media briefing ahead of Navy Day on December 4, Admiral Tripathi also said the Government has accorded approval for building two SSNs (nuclear-powered submarines)

and that the plan is to have a total of six such boats.

The Navy chief said the first SSN should be ready by 2036-37 and the second one in 2038-39.

"Rafale Marine is at an advanced stage of negotiations and it is only one level short of taking it to the Cabinet Committee on Security. Since it is a Government-to-Government deal, it should not take much time," he said.

In July last year, the Defence Ministry approved the purchase of the Rafale-M jets from France, primarily for deployment on board the indigenously built

aircraft carrier INS Vikrant.

"We expect that if not this month, then next month hopefully, both these (Scorpene submarine) and Rafale-M (project) should be signed," he said.

"We are keeping a watch on extra-regional forces, including the PLA Navy, their warships and their research vessels, and know what they are doing and where they are," Admiral Tripathi said.

The Navy chief also said that 62 ships and one submarine are currently under construction within the country as part of efforts to boost its naval power.

On China helping Pakistan

boost its maritime prowess, the Navy chief said it showed Beijing's interest in making that country militarily stronger.

"Many Pakistan Navy warships and submarines are being built with Chinese support showing that China is interested in making Pakistan's Navy stronger," he said.

"Their eight new submarines will have significant combat potential for the Pakistan Navy but we are fully aware of their capabilities. That is why we are tweaking our concepts to be able to tackle all threats from our neighbours," he added.