

News in brief

◆ **Russia yesterday** claimed had destroyed the last major warship of the Ukrainian naval forces, which it said was stationed in the southern port of Odesa. "On May 29, a high-precision strike by the Russian Air Force on a ship anchorage site in the port of Odesa destroyed the last warship of the Ukrainian Navy, the 'Yuri Olefirenko,'" the Russian army said in its daily briefing. A spokesperson for the Ukrainian Naval Force declined to comment. The Yuri Olefirenko is a medium-size landing ship for troops and vehicles. First named "Kirovograd", the ship was renamed in 2016 in honour of a Ukrainian marine killed near Mariupol in 2015. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky decorated its crew in June 2022.



Russia claims destroyed Ukraine's 'last warship'

◆ **Five fighters** from a pro-Syrian Palestinian group were killed in an accidental explosion at a base in eastern Lebanon, a Lebanese security source said yesterday. A spokesman for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command (PFLP- GC) instead accused Israel of carrying out "overnight raids" at the base in Qusaya, near the Syrian border. Israel denied any involvement. "An old rocket exploded in an arms depot on the base and five fighters were killed," the security source said, requesting anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media. The Damascus-based group has close ties with the Syrian government and its main Lebanese ally Hezbollah, and has bases in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley as well as in Al-Naameh, just south of Beirut.

Blast at Palestinian base in Lebanon kills five: security source

◆ **Embattled Pakistan** opposition leader Imran Khan returned to court yesterday, as the nation's human rights watchdog warned all sides are to blame in a rapidly deteriorating democratic crisis. Khan's brief arrest earlier this month sparked days of deadly unrest before Islamabad orchestrated a crackdown on his party, including mass arrests and a pledge to try some protesters in army courts. The Islamabad High Court and a specialist corruption court granted Khan bail on Wednesday in the same graft case which prompted his arrest on May 9, his lawyers said. Islamabad says the arrests are justified because it was targeted by anti-state terrorism, while Khan claims his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party is being quashed ahead of elections due by October. But Hina Jilani, the head of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), issued a stark warning to "all political stakeholders". "Unless they desist from any further measures that could imperil the country's fragile democracy, they may find themselves unable to steer the country safely through the multiple crises it is facing."

Pakistan ex-PM Khan in court as rights watchdog issues warning



CURIOSER & CURIOSER

New Yorkers gather to watch 'Manhattanhenge'



The Sun sets in alignment with Manhattan streets running east-west, also known as Manhattanhenge, in New York City

New York

Snapping pictures with cell phones, hundreds of New Yorkers and tourists gathered in the streets to watch the sun set in perfect alignment between rows of the skyscrapers for which the city is famous. Right on schedule at 8:12 pm on Tuesday evening, the flaming orange ball could be seen perfectly framed by Manhattan's canyons of tall buildings on streets running east-west, such as 42nd Street, which runs through Times Square. This spectacle happens four times a year for two days, about three to four weeks before and after the summer and winter solstices. It has come to be known as "Manhattanhenge" after Stonehenge, the ancient mon-

ument in southern England where the sun also lines up perfectly during the solstices -- the moments when the sun appears to reach either its highest or lowest point in the sky. "It's a beautiful event. And it's some totally New York moment to do," said Jeanette Wolfson, a 47-year-old science teacher from Long Island who came into the city to take pictures for her students. She said she would remind them that "it's not the sun actually setting. It is the Earth rotating out of the light into the darkness." The event lures photographers with fancy lenses and regular New Yorkers and tourists who do not hesitate to stand in the streets for a few minutes, blocking traffic.

UAE withdraws from

AFP | Abu Dhabi

The United Arab Emirates has withdrawn from a US-led maritime coalition tasked with securing tense Gulf waterways that are vital to the global oil trade, it said yesterday.

The UAE "withdrew its participation" in the 38-nation Combined Maritime Forces two months ago, a foreign ministry statement said, without giving reasons for the move. "As a result of our ongoing eval-



File picture showing CMF Headquarter Staff outside Combined Maritime Forces Headquarters, Bahrain

Saudi population up third since 2010: cen

- Total population reached 32.2 million
- Total resident population is up 34.2%
- Among Saudis, 63% is below the age of 30
- Non-Saudi nationals account for 13.4 million

AFP | Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's population has grown by more than one third since 2010, and a majority of the kingdom's nationals are aged under 30, according to a census published yesterday.

The 2022 Saudi census marks the "most comprehensive and precise population survey conducted in the Kingdom's history,"



Representative picture

the General Authority of Statistics said. It set the total population of the oil-rich country at 32.2 million.

Of these, 58.4% are Saudi nationals and most others are from South Asia or elsewhere in the

Middle East and North Africa region.

The total resident population is up 34.2% since 2010 -- an increase of 8.2 m people, of whom 4.8 m are Saudi nationals.

Among Saudis, 63% of the pop-

ulation is below the age of 30.

Non-Saudi nationals account for 13.4 m, the majority of whom are Bangladeshis, followed by Indians, Pakistanis, Yemenis and Egyptians.

The national census, the fifth

North Korea spy satellite crashes into sea, Seoul salvages w

Seoul

North Korea attempted to launch a spy satellite yesterday but it crashed into the sea after a rocket failure, with the South Korean military retrieving part of the likely wreckage in a potential intelligence bonanza.

North Korea does not have a functioning satellite in space and leader Kim Jong Un has made developing a military spy satellite a top priority for his regime, despite UN resolutions banning its use of such technology.

Pyongyang had said in the build-up to the launch attempt that the satellite would be vital to monitoring the military movements of the United States and its allies.

But the rocket lost thrust and plunged into the sea with its sat-



South Korean sailors fish part of North Korea's satellite out of the sea near Eocheong Island (Courtesy of Mirror)

ellite payload, the official Korean Central News Agency reported.

It added that authorities would investigate the "serious defects" revealed by the launch and conduct another test as soon as pos-

sible.

South Korea's military said it had managed to locate and salvage a portion of the suspected debris.

It released images showing a

large barrel-like metal structure with thin pipes and wires at the bottom, which experts said might be a liquid fuel tank.

"Technical experts will be able to gain tremendous insight into North Korea's proficiency with large, multi-stage boosters from the recovered debris," US-based analyst Ankit Panda said.

Prior to Wednesday's launch, Pyongyang had launched five satellites since 1998, three of which failed immediately and two of which appeared to have been put into orbit.

Signals from those launches have never been independently detected, indicating they may have malfunctioned.

North Korea said Tuesday its new spy satellite would be "indispensable to tracking, monitoring... and coping with in advance