

France, UK, partners seize Russia-linked oil tanker

Kremlin calls seizure ‘international piracy’

AFP, Brest

France said yesterday it had detained a Russia-linked oil tanker in the Atlantic, with the Kremlin comparing the latest seizure aimed at tackling Moscow's sanctions-busting shadow fleet to “international piracy”.

Since September, France has boarded three other ships believed to belong to the shadow fleet, used by Russia to circumvent Western sanctions on its fossil fuel exports imposed over the Kremlin's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

The Tagor was detained on Sunday morning in international waters with the help of Britain and other partners, after its Russian captain refused to comply with orders, prosecutors said.

President Emmanuel Macron posted a video of the seizure, which showed



commandos rappelling from a helicopter onto the ship. “We consider these acts illegal. They border on international piracy,” said President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov.

“Russia is taking measures to ensure the safety of its cargo”. Suspected of carrying Russian or Iranian oil despite international sanctions, the Tagor is linked to petroleum shipping magnate Mohammad Hossein Shamkhani.

According to French authorities, the Tagor was on its way from Murmansk in northwestern Russia when it was boarded. The ship was falsely flying a Cameroonian flag and was heading toward Limbe, a seaside city in the west of African country, said a spokesperson for France's Atlantic maritime prefecture. Shadow fleet vessels frequently change flags they fly or use invalid registrations in an attempt to escape tracking.

“It is unacceptable for ships to circumvent international sanctions, violate the law of the sea, and fund the war that Russia has been waging against Ukraine for more than four years,” Macron said on X.

‘Cockroach’ party founder plans street protest in India

AFP, New Delhi

The creator of India's satirical “Cockroach People's Party” yesterday vowed to lead a protest in New Delhi to take the viral social media campaign to the streets.

The parody “Cockroach Janta Party” (CJP) — echoing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) — has won millions of online followers on social media sites since its launch last month.

It was set up after Chief Justice Surya Kant reportedly called young people who criticised the government “cockroaches” and “parasites” during a hearing. Kant later said his comments were taken out of context and that he was referring to those who use fake degrees. Abhijeet Dipke, the 30-year-old Boston University graduate behind the online movement, said on social media platform X he would return to India to lead a “peaceful protest” on Saturday.

He called for the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who has faced criticism over alleged irregularities in several key examinations.

“Students have committed suicide and the hard work of tens of thousands of students has been destroyed,” Dipke said in a video message posted online. Social media handles of the CJP, which calls itself “a political front for the youth, by the youth, for the youth”, have been blocked repeatedly in India.

Its Instagram handle has more than 22 million followers — more than double the BJP's 9.5 million followers on the same site, as well as the main opposition Congress Party's 13.9 million followers. Dipke called on followers to meet him at New Delhi airport before accompanying him to seek police permission for a demonstration.



People make their way on scooters as they flee the southern suburbs of Beirut, after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the military to attack targets in the suburbs, Lebanon, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

WAR WITH IRAN

US campaign reveals air power limits

Says former Pentagon official; experts cite Iran's underground missile sites

AGENCIES

The US campaign against Iran has shown the boundaries of what air power alone can achieve, said Adam Clements, a former Pentagon official and US defence attaché in Jordan and Yemen.

“There are certain limitations of an air campaign only,” Clements told Al Jazeera.

“The US campaign probably disrupted some of [Iran's] missile capabilities, its drone capabilities, but Iran would hide or at least reserve some of these missiles.”

He also said the effects of the war were being felt far beyond the region.

“Even South Asian states or Far East Asian states that haven't been directly involved are still indirectly involved because of the economic impacts,” he said.

“Collectively, all of those are considerations, in addition to just the pure military terms.”

Iran is poised to fire far more long-range missiles at Israel and other Middle Eastern nations after rapidly digging out its buried arsenals — an effort that highlights the limits to US bombing strategy, experts claimed.

For weeks, strikes by the United States and Israel restricted Iran's access to its underground missile sites by destroying roads and



People gather on a beach, as a vessel in the Strait of Hormuz is visible, near the beach of Bandar Abbas, Iran.

PHOTO: REUTERS

burying tunnel entrances.

But satellite images reviewed by CNN show how Iran has used simple equipment such as bulldozers and dump trucks to counter those costly campaigns — suggesting that Tehran's missile capabilities can't be destroyed just by targeting tunnel entrances, experts said.

While Iran and the US have reached a tentative agreement to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, months of work remain to hammer

out details.

If hostilities do resume, Iran is in position to “continue launching missiles so long as they have launchers and crews, even if production has halted,” said Sam Lair, a research associate at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies who analyzes Iran's missile capabilities.

“There's nothing to prevent the launchers from being armed with the ample stockpile of missiles that the Iranians still have.”

AI gains must benefit workers: UN

AFP, Geneva

The gains generated by artificial intelligence must benefit workers and do so in a fair manner, the United Nations' labour agency said yesterday.

AI is transforming the world of work, changing how value is created and how decisions are made, at speed and at scale, said Gilbert Hounbo, the head of the UN's International Labour Organization.

“Workers everywhere must be able to share the productivity gains generated by AI. Those gains must be distributed fairly through better wages, stronger labour protections, and more inclusive growth,” he told the annual International Labour Conference, which sets the ILO's broad policies.

The most prominent figures in AI are stepping back from dire predictions about mass unemployment, as the industry faces growing public hostility over AI's promised transformation of the workplace.

Most economic institutions say that AI has had only minor effects on employment so far. While AI technology is booming, ILO chief Hounbo said “future of work will not be determined by technology alone, but by the policies, institutions and social dialogue that guide it.”

MARITIME SECURITY

Philippines, Vietnam renew defence ties

AFP, Manila

The Philippines and Vietnam yesterday agreed to strengthen defence ties to help bolster maritime security in the region and maintain peace in the disputed South China Sea.

The Southeast Asian countries are among the nations in the region — including China — to lay claims to the Spratly chain, which sits near vital shipping lanes and is reputedly rich in minerals.

It comes just days after China's military drove away a Dutch navy vessel it accused of “illegally intruding” into the area around the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea. The Netherlands insisted that its frigate had been in international waters.

After a meeting with his Vietnamese counterpart To Lam in Manila, Filipino President Ferdinand Marcos said the partnership has become “increasingly important” as the region navigates uncertainty “marked by geopolitical fragmentation”.

The nations renewed a 2010 defence agreement, establishing that both would maintain “delegation exchanges for security and defence matters”, and step up “information exchange”.

They also agreed to collaborate on law enforcement to prevent transnational crime, including cyber scams, illegal migration, human trafficking, illegal gambling, among other challenges.

‘Undemocratic practices’

More than 250 Turkey writers slam court move against opposition

AFP, Ankara

More than 250 Turkish writers have signed a joint statement condemning what they described as “undemocratic practices” after a court overturned the main opposition party's 2023 primary, removing its elected leader.

The Republican People's Party (CHP) has been thrown into turmoil since a May 21 court ruling reinstated former leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu, in a move critics say is politically motivated by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to weaken the opposition.

“The ruling party has once again dealt a blow to our fundamental constitutional rights through a judiciary under its control,” said 262 writers, including prominent authors Asli Erdogan and Buket Uzuner, in a joint declaration released late Saturday.

“As writers in Turkey, we object to these systematic violations of the law that disregard the will of the people and the right to vote and be elected,” the statement said. “We say ‘no’ to undemocratic practices targeting our free will, our

hope and our sense of justice, and aiming to create a Turkey without elections,” it added.

The ruling has deepened divisions within the CHP, leaving the party in disarray.

On Saturday, Kilicdaroglu visited the party headquarters in Ankara, which had been stormed by police following the court decision.

Meanwhile, ousted party leader Ozgur Ozel addressed thousands at a rally in the city, calling for an immediate party congress.



LAOS CAVE

Rescuers seek new route to two missing

AFP, Vientiane

Rescuers searching for two men missing in a partially flooded cave in Laos for about two weeks said they were scouring for a new entry point yesterday as heavy rain slowed divers' efforts inside.

Rescue divers found five other men alive around 300 metres (984 feet) from the mouth of the cave in Xaysomboun province last week after they had been stranded inside by flash floods for a week.

Foreign divers extracted one of the men on Friday, and four more found their own way out on Saturday. Rescue teams had delivered food and medicine for them and had pumped water from the cave for days, giving them an easier exit.

One of the five survivors, identified as Laen, said the men had gone into the cave to hunt bats for food and then figured they could extract some gold from old mining areas.



Community workers stand at the site of an apartment building and houses damaged by a Russian drone strike in Odesa, Ukraine, yesterday. Russia fired a record number of long-range drones at Ukraine in May, an AFP analysis of Ukrainian air force data showed, as Kyiv appealed to allies for air defence support.

PHOTO: REUTERS