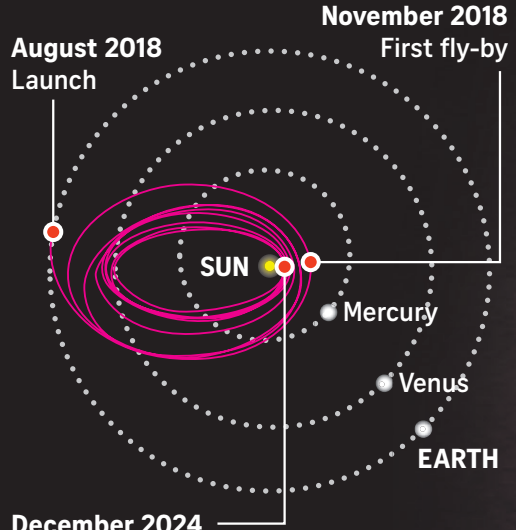
Nasa's mission to kiss the Sun

24 PASSES THROUGH THE SUN'S CORONA OVER A 7-YEAR PERIOD



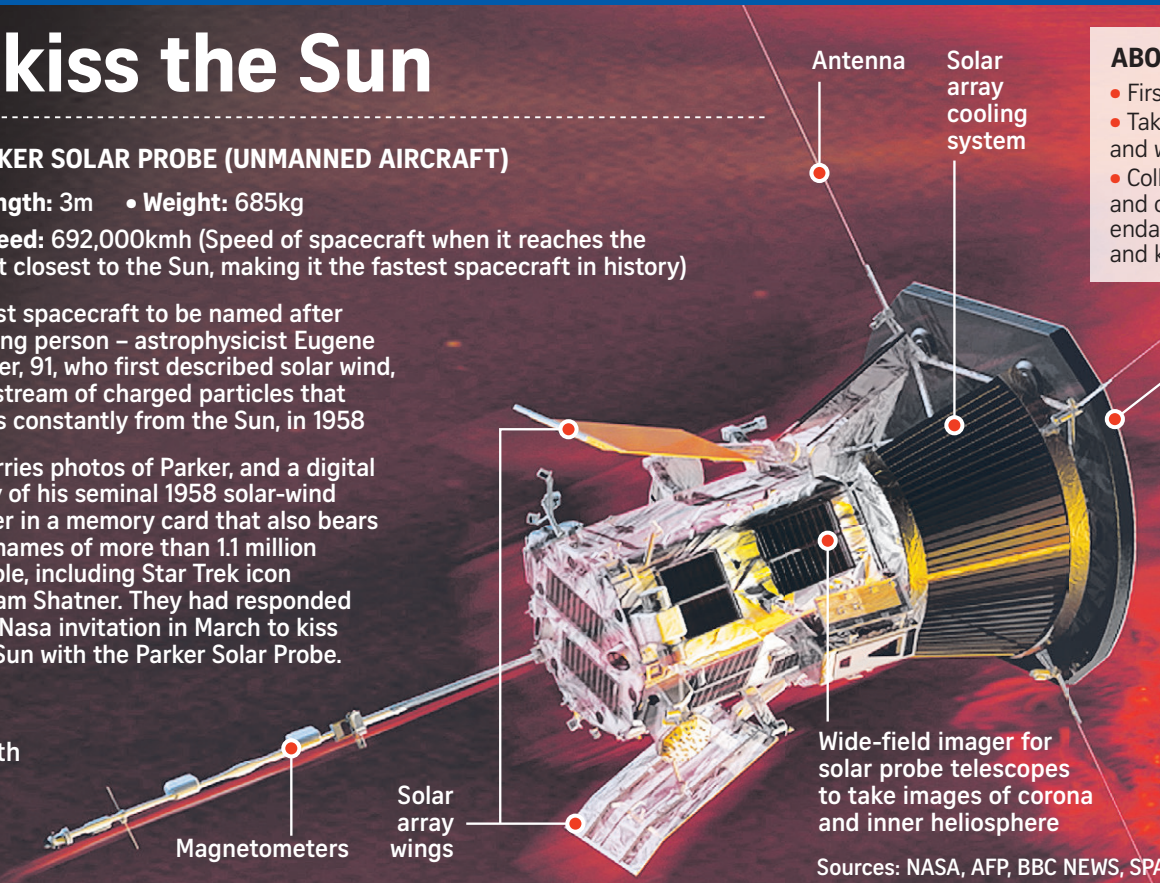
- 149.6 million km: Distance between the Sun and Earth
- 6.16 million km: The closest the Parker Solar Probe will get to the Sun, seven times closer than any previous spacecraft

PARKER SOLAR PROBE (UNMANNED AIRCRAFT)

- **Length:** 3m
- **Weight:** 685kg
- **Speed:** 692,000kmh (Speed of spacecraft when it reaches the point closest to the Sun, making it the fastest spacecraft in history)

- First spacecraft to be named after a living person – astrophysicist Eugene Parker, 91, who first described solar wind, the stream of charged particles that flows constantly from the Sun, in 1958

- Carries photos of Parker, and a digital copy of his seminal 1958 solar-wind paper in a memory card that also bears the names of more than 1.1 million people, including Star Trek icon William Shatner. They had responded to a Nasa invitation in March to kiss the Sun with the Parker Solar Probe.



ABOUT THE MISSION

- First to fly direct into the Sun's atmosphere, known as the corona
- Take measurements of the Sun's electric and magnetic fields and waves
- Collect information to feed models for predicting solar flare-ups and outbreaks of space weather that can scramble satellites, endanger astronauts aboard the International Space Station, and knock out power grids back on Earth

Sources: NASA, AFP, BBC NEWS, SPACE.COM ARTIST'S IMPRESSION: NASA STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS