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Photo courtesy of Royal Court

HRH Crown Prince Hussein on Wednesday visits the Civil Defence Department

## Crown Prince visits Civil Defence Department, says Jordanians' safety top priority

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein on Wednesday visited the Civil Defence Department (CDD). Upon arrival, the Crown Prince was received by Public Security Directorate Director Maj. Gen. Obeidallah Maaytah and CDD Director Brig. Gen. Nasser Sweilmeen, accord-

ing to a Royal Court statement. His Royal Highness toured the CDD's main operations room and was briefed on its readiness and daily operations. The Crown Prince was also briefed on the CDD's main tasks, systems used and efforts being made in re-

sponse to the current situation. His Royal Highness praised the CDD's efforts and efficiency in responding to and managing emergencies, the statement said. The Crown Prince stressed that the safety of citizens is a priority, highlighting the importance of keeping pace

with the latest developments in civil protection systems and harnessing all capabilities to enhance the abilities of CDD personnel to provide the best services to citizens. His Royal Highness joined CDD personnel in performing the maghreb prayer and for iftar.

## King receives calls from Uzbekistan, Ukrainian presidents, Netherlands PM

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah received a phone call from Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev on Wednesday, during which they discussed the dangerous repercussions of the current escalation on regional stability. His Majesty reaffirmed the need to stop Iranian attacks on Jordan and other countries, and to utilise diplomacy and dialogue to resolve tensions, according to a Royal Court statement. The King also reiterated that Jordan will continue to take all necessary measures to preserve its security, sovereignty and the safety of its citizens.



Also on Wednesday, His Majesty received a phone call from Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, during which they discussed the dangerous escalation in the region. His Majesty reaffirmed that Jordan will continue to take the necessary measures to ensure the safety of its citizens and preserve its security and sovereignty, emphasising that Iran's attacks constitute a violation of international law, another Royal Court statement said.

The call also covered the need to utilise dialogue as a means of resolving crises and to intensify international efforts to restore regional calm. The King received a phone call from The Netherlands Prime

Minister Rob Jetten on Wednesday, during which they discussed the dangerous regional developments. His Majesty emphasised the need to step up international efforts to achieve comprehensive calm in order to restore stability to the region, reiterating that Iran's attacks on Jordan and a number of other

countries constitute a violation of international law, according to a Royal Court statement. The call also covered the ties between the two countries, with the King congratulating Prime Minister Jetten on taking office and expressing Jordan's readiness to strengthen cooperation with The Netherlands.



## No cyberattack on JAF website — military source

AMMAN (JT) — An official military source at the General Command of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) on Wednesday dismissed reports of a cyberattack on the JAF website. The source underscored that news circulating on social media

and certain websites is "incorrect", confirming that the official website is operating normally. The military source added that the platform is secured with the highest cyber protection standards and has not experienced any breach affecting its

operations or information security. The source also emphasised that JAF prioritises cybersecurity and maintains close coordination with relevant authorities to safeguard official websites and government data against potential electronic threats.

## Prime minister reaffirms Kingdom will not be 'battlefield for any party'

- Hassan condemns Iranian missile, drone attacks targeting Jordan, Gulf states
- Food, fuel, energy supplies are secure for coming months — PM

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Wednesday reaffirmed that Jordan's security and sovereignty are "above all considerations", stressing that the Kingdom "will not be a battlefield for any party" amid escalating regional tensions. Addressing the Lower House on Wednesday, the premier said that protecting Jordan's airspace, borders, and citizens remains a non-negotiable priority, guided by the country's national interests.

"Jordan's security, sovereignty and stability are a red line for all," he said, noting that the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF), the Royal Jordanian Air Force



Photo courtesy of Prime Ministry

Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Wednesday reaffirms that Jordan's security and sovereignty are 'above all considerations'

(RJAF) and security agencies are fully capable of safeguarding the

Kingdom.

He strongly condemned Iranian missile

and drone attacks targeting Jordan and several Arab Gulf states,

describing them as a "dangerous escalation" that threatens to widen the conflict and destabilise the region.

Despite the regional turmoil, the Prime Minister stressed that life in Jordan will continue as normal, while state institutions maintain continuous risk assessments and implement precautionary measures to ensure public safety.

On economic security, the premier said that Jordan's reserves of basic food commodities and essential supplies are sufficient for several months. He revealed that an attempted attack targeting wheat storage facilities was thwarted without damage due to efficient safety systems.

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## Israel orders southern Lebanon evacuated as campaign expands

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AFP) — Israel ordered residents of a vast region of southern Lebanon to leave their homes on Wednesday, as the military expanded its campaign of air strikes and reportedly sent ground troops deeper into the country.

Lebanon was drawn into the Middle East war on Monday when the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah attacked Israel in response to the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during US-Israeli strikes over the weekend. Hezbollah carried out a series of strikes



AFP photo

An ambulance is parked near a sweeping blaze following Israeli bombardment on a solar farm and electricity generation facility in Lebanon's southern coastal city of Tyre on Wednesday

against Israel on Tuesday and Wednesday, claiming to have tar-

geted sites including the Haifa naval base and an aerospace and

defence company in central Israel. Israel has hit Leba-

non with air strikes in a number of areas that have killed at least 11 people.

The Israeli military told people living south of Lebanon's Litani River — an area of hundreds of square kilometres — to evacuate, warning that the army was "compelled to take military action" against Hezbollah in the area.

"Residents of southern Lebanon — you must move immediately to areas north of the Litani River," one of the military's Arabic-language spokesmen Avichay Adraee posted on X.

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## Iran claims 'complete control' of key waterway for energy transit

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's Revolutionary Guard said on Wednesday they had total control of the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway for global energy transit, as Israel launched a new wave of strikes on the Iranian capital.

Governments scrambled to evacuate citizens stranded by the war in the Middle East, with Iran expanding a missile and drone barrage on countries around the region on the fifth day of a war that sent global shares sinking. With energy prices



AFP photo

A navy vessel is seen sailing in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway through which much of the world's oil and gas passes on Sunday

already spiking, President Donald Trump had said the US Navy was ready to escort oil tank-

ers through the crucial Gulf shipping route.

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File photo

Local industry representatives say that Jordan's vehicle market is witnessing increased activity driven by competition in pricing, specifications, after-sales services and financing options

## Tax cuts, competition drive Jordan's vehicle market activity

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's vehicle market is witnessing increased activity driven by competition in pricing, specifications, after-sales services and financing options, according to local industry representatives.

The market has entered a more structured phase due to government regulatory measures that have improved vehicle quality, ensured transparency in pricing, and standardised warranties, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The Automobile Dealers and Traders of Automobile Parts said that these measures have bolstered both consumer and investor confidence.

Last June, the Cabinet approved an amendment to the 2025 Special Tax Law, reducing total taxes, including general and special taxes, on vehicles.

The decision was part of broader government efforts to support the economy and ease financial burdens on citizens.

Under the amendments, taxes on gasoline vehicles dropped from 71 per cent to 51 per cent, hybrid vehicle taxes fell from 60 per cent to 39 per cent, and the special tax on electric vehicles was standardised at 27 per cent for all categories, replacing the previous system that could reach 55 per cent.

Secretary of the Automobile Dealers and Traders of Automobile Parts Zaid Abdallat said that competition is in-

creasingly focused on product quality, service levels, after-sales support and genuine manufacturer warranties, rather than prices alone.

He highlighted the wide availability of gasoline, hybrid and electric vehicles meeting European and Gulf standards, providing consumers with diverse choices tailored to their needs and purchasing power.

The decision was part of broader government efforts to support the economy and ease financial burdens on citizens

Jihad Abu Nasser, representing the automotive sector at the Jordanian Free Zones Investors Association, said that free zone dealerships are offering direct discounts and transparent pricing to stimulate sales ahead of Eid Al Fitr.

He stressed that new vehicles come with valid warranties approved by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply, while used cars are certified by centres accredited by the Jordan Standards and Metrology Organi-

sation, ensuring transparency in technical condition.

Abu Nasser added that free zone facilities allow visitors to inspect and compare a wide range of vehicles daily, except Fridays, saving time and enhancing informed purchasing decisions.

He noted that dealerships also offer gasoline, diesel, hybrid, and electric cars, as well as tractors, machinery, and equipment, with some introducing Gulf-specification vehicles to increase competition.

Islam Abu Dawas, business development and training manager at a car dealership, noted that vehicle demand typically surges during Ramadan, driven by financing offers, discounts, and promotional campaigns.

She highlighted growing interest in fuel-efficient and electric vehicles, with consumer sensitivity to prices and financing conditions shaping purchasing decisions.

Abu Dawas noted that demand is expected to remain moderate after Ramadan, influenced by purchasing power, tax policies, and financing availability.

The government's tax amendments and sector reforms aim to reduce ownership costs, diversify consumer options, and improve the overall affordability of vehicles, complementing ongoing measures to ease citizens' financial burdens and enhance quality of life.

## RJ resumes flights following reopening of Kingdom's airspace

AMMAN (JT) — Royal Jordanian Airline (RJ) on Wednesday announced the resumption of its regular flight operations following the lifting of the partial closure and the full reopening of Jordanian airspace, with flights returning to their normal schedules.

The airline said that while operations to and from the Kingdom have resumed as usual, several destinations remain affected by regional airspace closures, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Jordan on Monday partially and temporarily closed its airspace to all arriving, departing and transit flights.

The decision came in response to ongoing regional developments and followed a risk assessment conducted in line with international aviation safety standards.

RJ said that its flights to Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq and Damas-



File photo

Royal Jordanian Airline on Wednesday announces the resumption of its regular flight operations following the lifting of the partial closure and the full reopening of Jordanian airspace

cus will remain suspended until further notice, pending the reopening of their airspace and the safe resumption of operations.

In line with approved operational clearances, RJ said that it will op-

erate a limited number of flights starting on Wednesday, including one daily flight to Dubai.

As of Thursday, it will also operate one daily flight to both Abu Dhabi and Aleppo.

The airline stressed that it continues to monitor regional developments and coordinate with the relevant aviation authorities, underlining that the safety and security of passengers and crew members

remain its top priority. Passengers were advised to check the latest updates and the status of their flights through the airline's website or by contacting RJ's call centre before heading to the airport.

## What protects cultural heritage during wars?

By Sophie Constantin

AMMAN — As war intensifies across parts of the Middle East, the visible threats are clear: Missiles, drones and the militarisation of airspace. Less visible, but equally significant, is another response unfolding behind museum doors.

From Jerusalem to Tehran, institutions have begun securing their collections in reinforced storage and protected facilities. Manuscripts, archaeological artefacts and irreplaceable works of art are being transferred to safe locations, all under a legal framework specifically designed for armed conflict.

That framework is the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

Drafted in the aftermath of the World War II, when large numbers of Europe's cultural heritage were destroyed or



AFP photo

People walk in front of Gaza City's 17th-century Qasr Al Basha

looted, the convention established a principle that remains radical in its clarity: Cultural heritage does not belong to a single nation alone, but to humanity as a whole.

Under the convention, states are obligated to respect cultural property during armed conflict. Museums,

monuments and archaeological sites must not be deliberately targeted nor may they be used for military purposes that would expose them to attack.

The treaty also introduced a distinctive protective emblem, the Blue Shield, to mark sites under its protection.

In theory, the legal

architecture is robust. Most countries in the region are parties to the convention and its protocols. In practice, however, international law depends on compliance. It offers a framework for restraint, but it cannot enforce it in real time.

Modern warfare complicates this further.

High-speed missiles, precision strikes and digital targeting systems operate at a pace that legal mechanisms cannot match.

The protection of cultural heritage ultimately rests not only on treaties, but on decisions made by military and political actors under pressure.

The precautionary evacuation of museum collections reflects an awareness that cultural heritage remains vulnerable, even under international protection.

It is also a reminder that the erosion of safeguards around cultural property signals something broader: A weakening of the norms that seek to limit destruction during war.

At stake is not only the survival of artefacts, but the credibility of the international legal order itself. In moments of escalating violence, the question is not whether the law exists, but whether it still carries weight.

## Early Islamic mosaics blend classical, emerging artistic traditions

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — Early Islamic mosaics are the mix between Classical antiquity and an emerging Islamic aesthetic. This art form adapted Byzantine and Sasanian techniques to create a unique visual language characterised by intricate geometric patterns, vegetal motifs and early calligraphy.

Some characteristics of the Early Islamic art are aniconism, materiality and symbolism.

Examples of such mosaics can be seen in Jerusalem and Damascus, in the monumental Dome of the Rock (691 AD), Umayyad Mosque (715AD) and Hisham Palace in Jericho (8th century AD).

A methodological question needs to be dealt with. Almost all the surviving mosaics from the pre-Islamic eastern Mediterranean are on floors, made mostly with stone tesserae, said a British art historian.

Floor mosaics were certainly commissioned in the early Islamic period, the examples I will be using here are on walls, and made mostly



Photo courtesy of ACOR

A mosaic floor at Hisham Palace in Jericho

with glass tesserae," said Beatrice Leal from University of Oxford.

"Firstly, the materials were not completely segregated. Many wall mosaics, including those in the Great Mosque of Damascus, use stone tesserae for pink, red and white. Some floor mosaics, both in the Byzantine and early Islamic period, included glass tesserae to highlight certain features," Leal noted.

This suggests that floor and wall mosaics were supplied from the same sources, and probably also that they

were equally skilled in cutting tesserae from the two materials.

"Second, many of the buildings that had floor mosaics also had wall mosaics. The upper walls have gone from most of the churches in which mosaic floors have been excavated, so the decoration of their apses has been lost," Leal continued.

But both from archaeological finds of loose glass tesserae, and from written references, scholars know that apse mosaics were common across the Byzantine world.

Floor and wall mosaics therefore depended on the same patrons for their living, and may also have been on-site at the same time.

"Thirdly, the skills needed for the two media are almost identical: Chipping tesserae into shape, mixing and laying plaster, and composing the designs. Which leads to the fourth point, that there was substantial crossover in motifs between floor and wall mosaics," Leal underlined.

The navefloor of St Stephen's at Umm Al Rasas in Jordan was laid in

718-19 AD about three years after the Great Mosque was completed.

It depicts cities and buildings along a river, as well as trees and acanthus scrolls, as do the wall mosaics in the mosque. The motifs on the church floor are simpler.

But various details — such as roofs depicted as parallelograms sticking out from tower walls, or U-shaped acanthus leaves with lines of black tesserae inset around the curve, or trees with solid areas of dark tesserae surrounding and separating the lighter leaves — are shared.

"In the mid-tenth-century Al Masudi wrote that 'mosaic is a thing made from glass and delightful coloured stones'; the distinction between glass and stone mosaic was not necessarily fixed," Leal underscored.

Late antique and early Islamic mosaics do not differ sharply in appearance, on the contrary, we can notice similarities in styles that emphasise the gradual shift in visual art.



Petra photo

The Greater Amman Municipality launches the initial pilot operational phase of a project to separate organic waste at source at the vegetable market in Ras Al Ain

## GAM launches pilot operational phase of project to separate organic waste

AMMAN (JT) — The Environmental Studies Department at the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) has launched the initial pilot operational phase of a project to separate organic waste at source at the vegetable market in Ras Al Ain.

In a statement, cited by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, GAM said that the initiative is part of the Solid Waste Management in Jordan project, funded by the German government and the European Union and implemented by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).

The initiative is also part of efforts to enhance integrated waste man-

agement and promote resource recovery.

The project aims to sort organic waste generated by market activities and divert it from landfills to treatment and reuse, contributing to reducing the volume of waste sent to dumpsites, lowering environmental impacts and emissions, and converting it into a resource used in the production of organic compost in line with the best environmental practices.

Director of the Environmental Studies Department Basem Hawamdeh said that the pilot phase was preceded by intensive awareness and outreach campaigns targeting traders and workers

at the market to explain the sorting mechanisms, the project's objectives and its environmental and economic impact.

Follow-up campaigns were also conducted to reinforce awareness messages, ensure clarity and secure the required level of compliance in line with approved performance indicators.

He added that the pilot phase will focus on measuring operational efficiency, compliance rates and the quality of outputs, while addressing any field challenges immediately, in preparation for a gradual expansion to other GAM-run markets under the same approved model and design.



**Petra photo**  
The Lower House convenes on Wednesday to discuss the proposed amendments to the 2026 Social Security Law, referring it to the House Labour Committee

## Lower House refers 2026 Social Security Law to labour committee

- Speaker says Social Security Law requires careful study to protect citizens' rights, fund sustainability
- House approves 2025 draft Insurance Contracts Law

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — The Lower House on Wednesday referred the 2026 amendments to the Social Security Law to its Labour Committee for examination.

The House speaker, Mazen Qadi, said that the Chamber would handle the law with the "highest degree of national responsibility and seriousness, free from haste or emotional reactions".

"The law is not merely a legal text. It is legislation directly tied to social security and economic stability, affecting all segments of society. We will place this law under close care and thorough study, objectively, and in a manner that guarantees the achievement of the nation's highest interest."

The speaker said that the House will conduct a broad national dialogue over the law, listening to all perspectives without exception, including labour and professional unions, political parties, civil society institutions, economists, experts, chambers of commerce and industry, and employers.

"We will ensure all opinions are heard, examined in depth and discussed responsibly, producing a project that reflects its impor-

ance," Qadi said.

MPs also stressed that the Social Security Law is not merely financial legislation but a "cornerstone" of national stability and social peace, linking citizens' contributions to their long-term benefits while holding the state accountable for transparent and sustainable fund management.

Several lawmakers voiced objections to the amendments the government had referred to the House, particularly the proposed 4 per cent deduction on contributions, which they said would impose an excessive burden on contributors.

MPs called for a cap of 2 per cent annually, stressing that any changes must preserve existing benefits and retirees' pensions.

Lawmakers also highlighted the need for bonuses, allowances and other payments to fall under the Social Security framework, preventing gaps in coverage and ensuring fair treatment for all contributors, including voluntary participants abroad.

MPs also stressed transparent and accountable management of Social Security funds, warning against high-risk investments or overreliance on government bonds beyond

international norms.

They also reiterated the importance of independent, periodic actuarial studies every three years to guide amendments that ensure equity, sustainability and intergenerational justice.

They also emphasised the need for broad consultation and national consensus, highlighting that any reform must be fair, transparent and sustainable while protecting the rights of all contributors.

Also on Wednesday, the Lower House approved the 2025 Insurance Contracts Draft Law, which consists of 101 articles.

The government said that the law is Jordan's first standalone legislation exclusively dedicated to regulating insurance contracts, adding that it consolidates all civil code provisions related to insurance into a single framework, covering land, marine, fire, life, motor, personal, property, medical and reinsurance contracts.

The government also said the law is expected to boost confidence in Jordan's insurance sector, ensure equitable compensation, prevent abusive clauses and support investment through a modern, transparent legal framework.

## Cabinet approves measures to secure electricity, supply chains amid regional tensions

- Land borders open to container imports for one-month period
- Gov't grants 6-month customs, tax exemptions on sea imports
- JD70m in health sector arrears payments approved
- Traffic incentives regulation endorsed

AMMAN (JT) — The Cabinet, during a session chaired by Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Wednesday, approved measures to mitigate the impact of ongoing regional tensions and their potential repercussions on global fuel prices and supply, aiming to safeguard the Kingdom's energy and electricity security and ensure the continuity of supply chains.

The Cabinet decided to suspend a 1978 decision that limited containerised imports to the port of Aqaba, allowing such shipments to enter through Jordan's land border crossings for one month starting March 5. The measure is intended to facilitate the swift arrival of urgent consignments until regional conditions stabilise, according to a Prime Ministry statement.

The Cabinet also approved exemptions from customs duties and taxes resulting from increased maritime freight costs. All goods imported via sea freight will benefit from the exemptions for six months beginning March 5, including general and special sales tax.

The move aims to maintain price stability and ensure the availability of essential goods amid global market fluctuations, the statement said.

The Council of Ministers also authorised the Jordan Oil Terminals Company to import diesel and fuel oil on behalf of the National Electric Power Company (NEPCO). NEPCO was also permitted to draw on part of the government's strategic diesel reserves to ensure uninterrupted electricity generation in emergency situations, provided the quantities are replenished.

Diesel and fuel oil imports for NEPCO will be exempt from all duties and taxes, including customs fees, appropriate working conditions.

The Cabinet also approved the payment of JD70 million in 2024 dues owed by the Ministry of Health to pharmaceutical warehouses, bringing the total amount recently settled to approximately JD357 million.

According to the final 2025 financial results published earlier this week by the Ministry of Finance, the government settled JD620 million in accumulated arrears during 2024-2025, with the total expected to reach JD920 million by the end of 2026.

To support investment and enhance economic activity in the Aqaba Special Economic Zone (ASEZ), the Cabinet approved a set of incentives aligned with the Economic Modernisation Vision.

The measures include exempting newly registered companies from the JD1,000 first-time registration fee in ASEZ, reducing the registration fee for each economic activity from JD500 to JD300, and granting a 25 per



**Photo courtesy of Prime Ministry**  
The Cabinet on Wednesday approved measures to mitigate the impact of ongoing regional tensions and their potential repercussions on global fuel prices and supply

cent reduction on activity license fees for unregistered establishments, with amounts paid prior to the reduction in 2026 credited accordingly.

Tourism camps will be exempt from 2025 rental fees, provided previous dues are settled either in cash or through instalments with a 25 per cent down payment and the remaining balance paid over a maximum of 24 months.

Camps that obtain the internationally recognised "Green Key" environmental certification, awarded nationally by the Royal Marine Conservation Society of Jordan, will receive a 100 per cent exemption from rent and licensing fees for 2024 and 2025. The incentives will remain in effect until December 31, 2026.

The Cabinet also approved the allocation of two land plots to establish a Civil Defence centre to serve surrounding villages and tourism camps, and a security centre to serve the villages of Wadi Rum and Disi.

The Cabinet also endorsed the 2026 Traffic Safety Enhancement and Driver Incentives Regulation following amendments by the Legislation and Opinion Bureau.

The regulation provides ongoing incentives and discounts for drivers who commit no violations or who settle fines early, to promote compliance with traffic laws and improve road safety.

Drivers who complete a full year without committing any traffic violation from the date of vehicle licensing will receive a 25 per cent discount on vehicle license renewal fees and related charges. Those who commit violations will receive a 30 per cent discount on fines if paid within 60 days.

Serious violations are excluded from discounts, including reckless driving, running red lights, staging traffic accidents, fleeing the scene of an accident, tampering with license plates, and violations resulting in death or permanent disability.

## Fuel supplies secure, electricity system fully prepared — minister

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Saleh Kharabsheh on Wednesday said that Jordan maintains safe levels of natural gas for electricity generation, noting that several contracted shipments are scheduled to arrive in the coming weeks.

Kharabsheh told A Mamlaka that eight contracted gas shipments are programmed to arrive by the end of the month, ensuring a continuous supply for the Kingdom's power sector.



**Photo courtesy of the National Electric Power Company**  
Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Saleh Kharabsheh on Wednesday says that Jordan maintains safe levels of natural gas for electricity generation

"The ministry is also working to diversify fuel sources in terms of type and origin"

He added that daily refining operations by petroleum companies produce sufficient

gas to meet current demand.

Highlighting the flexibility of Jordan's electricity infrastructure, the minister said power plants can switch to heavy fuel oil (diesel) in the event of any interruption in natural gas supplies.

He noted that the ministry has already activated contingency plans, with some plants currently op-

erating on heavy fuel while others continue running on natural gas.

"The ministry is also working to diversify fuel sources in terms of type and origin," Kharabsheh said, stressing that Jordan is fully prepared for emergency situations.

He added that strategic fuel reserves are sufficient to cover extended periods and

these reserves can be immediately deployed if supply disruptions occur.

Regarding the decision to allow imports of diesel and heavy fuel for companies, the minister noted that the move ensures the availability of required fuel at lower costs for the National Electric Power Company (NEPCO) and the national electricity

system as a whole.

Kharabsheh emphasised the government's priority, saying, "The most important thing is the sustainability of the electricity system.

The situation is very secure and there are no challenges."

He also noted that strategic reserves are maintained both by electricity generation companies and at the government level to be used in emergencies.

Jordan's heavy fuel supplies are at safe levels and overall fuel reserves rank among the highest in the world, positioning the Kingdom to respond effectively to any unforeseen events.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Cabinet approved a comprehensive package of measures to address the potential effects of regional tensions on global fuel prices and supply. The decisions aim to safeguard the Kingdom's energy and electricity security while ensuring the continuity of supply chains.

## Safadi receives calls from Australian, Sri Lankan counterparts, ICRC chief on regional escalation

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi on Wednesday received separate phone calls from Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, Sri Lanka's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment and Tourism Vijitha Herath, and President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Mirjana Spoljaric.

During the calls, Safadi discussed the implications of the seri-



**Ayman Safadi**

ous regional escalation, efforts to restore calm and ways to prevent a further widening of the

conflict. The talks also underscored the need to intensify diplomatic efforts as a pathway to reinforcing security and stability across the region, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

The discussions also reviewed ongoing preparations for the high-level conference on humanitarian action in armed conflict, which Jordan is set to host in the final quarter of this year. The foreign ministers reaffirmed their countries' solidarity with Jordan.

## Army chief oversees field exercises, modern warfare training

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yusuf Humeiti on Wednesday visited the King Hussein Bin Ali Brigade to oversee operational readiness and field training.

During the visit, Humeiti was briefed on the brigade's combat preparedness and modernisation plans, stressing that maintaining high readiness is a "top priority" given the region's

accelerating challenges, according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement.

He underscored the importance of specialised training to tackle both conventional and non-conventional threats.

The army chief also observed a field exercise focused on modern warfare technologies, specifically the deployment and neutralisation of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles.

The drill simulated scenarios involving reconnaissance and combat drones, as well as electronic jamming systems to counter hostile aerial threats.

Humeiti conveyed the greetings of His Majesty King Abdullah, the Supreme Commander of the JAF, praising the personnel's high morale and professionalism in safeguarding the Kingdom's security.

# Spain denies US claim of military cooperation on Iran as rift deepens

MADRID (AFP) — Spain on Wednesday doubled down on its opposition to Washington's use of its bases against Iran, after US President Donald Trump's threats of trade reprisals over the spat deepened a rift between the NATO allies.

Spain's Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez defiantly repeated calls of "no to the war" on Wednesday after the weekend US-Israeli strikes on Iran triggered the regional conflict, in his latest policy clash with Trump.

Just hours later, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said Madrid had "agreed to cooperate with the US military", without providing details on what the cooperation would entail.

But Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares told Cadena SER radio shortly afterwards that "our position on the use of the bases, on the war in the Middle East, on the bombardment of Iran, has not changed at all".

Trump had lashed out at Sanchez's government on Tuesday, calling Spain a "terrible" ally and threatening to sever all trade with one of the world's most dynamic developed economies.



This combination of files photos created on Wednesday shows Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez (left) giving a press conference at the Moncloa Palace in Madrid on December 15, 2025 and US President Donald Trump gesturing as he walks to board Marine One as he departs the South Lawn of the White House for Texas in Washington, DC, on February 27

Sanchez defended his position on Wednesday, saying his government's position "can be summed up in four words: No to the war".

"We will not be complicit in something that is harmful to the world and contrary to our values and interests, simply out of fear of

retaliation," he added in a televised address. Spain is part of the European Union, which allows goods to move freely between its 27 countries. This would complicate any bid to impose trade restrictions on a single member state.

"Trump's words don't always become policy.



AFP photo

We will have to see if he follows through, and how," said Angel Saz Carranza, director of the Esade Center for Global Economy and Geopolitics, a Spanish think tank.

## 'Responsible conduct'

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian com-

mended Spain on X for its "responsible conduct in opposing the Zionist-American coalition's flagrant human rights violations and military aggression against countries".

French President Emmanuel Macron, European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen and Eu-

ropean Council chief Antonio Costa were among the allies rallying around Sanchez on Wednesday.

"The EU will always ensure that the interests of its member states are fully protected," Costa wrote on X.

Sanchez had already found himself in US crosshairs for refusing to join NATO allies in a pledge to boost defence spending to five percent of GDP as demanded by Trump.

He has also fiercely criticised Israel's war in Gaza and the US military operation in January that captured Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro.

US forces use the Rota naval base and Moron air base in southern Spain under an agreement signed in 1953 under the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco.

During the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Spain, then led by conservative prime minister Jose Maria Aznar, staunchly backed the United States by sending troops.

Spain's participation in the Iraq war sparked huge street demonstrations and many Spaniards blame it for the March 11, 2004 Madrid train bombings

that killed nearly 200 people.

A branch of Al Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attacks and called for the withdrawal of Spanish forces from Iraq.

## Rally his base

Sanchez, in power since 2018, has emerged as a prominent figure for Europe's disillusioned progressives, who see him as one of the few remaining openly leftist voices in a continent increasingly dominated by right-wing politics.

'We will not be complicit in something that is harmful to the world and contrary to our values and interests, simply out of fear of retaliation'

His opposition to the use of the bases is seen by some analysts

as an attempt to rally his supporters around an issue that unites the Spanish left.

The popularity of his minority government has taken a hit from a string of sexual harassment and graft scandals ahead of the next general election due in 2027.

Many on Spain's right consider Sanchez's opposition to Trump as motivated more by domestic politics than by a moral compass.

The head of the main opposition conservative Popular Party which tops opinion polls, Alberto Nunez Feijoo, accused Sanchez on X of using foreign policy for "partisan" purposes.

In contrast, neighbouring Portugal authorised the United States to "conditionally" use an airbase on the Azores archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean for the Iran strikes, Prime Minister Luis Montenegro told parliament on Wednesday.

The authorisation was granted as long as "these operations are defensive or retaliatory, are necessary and proportionate, and exclusively target military objectives", said the conservative leader.

## Kuwait says girl, 11, killed as Iran targets Gulf

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait's health ministry said on Wednesday that an 11-year-old girl was killed after being hit by falling shrapnel following waves of Iranian attacks across the Gulf.

The Gulf has borne the brunt of much of Tehran's response since the US and Israel launched a massive air campaign against Iran over the weekend with at least 13 people killed in the region in the fallout.

Among them are four US soldiers have also been killed in Kuwait and the US embassy there was targeted by drones, while its energy infrastructure has also been hit in recent days.

"Resuscitation was performed in the ambulance while the girl was being transported to the hospital, and attempts continued for nearly half an hour upon arrival at Al Amiri Hospital. How-



Vehicles drive along the highway leading to and from Kuwait City on Monday

ever, she passed away due to her injuries," said the ministry in a statement posted on X.

Later Wednesday, Kuwait's military said it detected incoming projectiles and was work-

ing to intercept the missiles and drones in their airspace.

The war continued to rattle the Gulf elsewhere with stocks dropping sharply in the United Arab Emirates on the

Dubai and Abu Dhabi exchanges after a two-day trading suspension.

In Saudi Arabia, the defence ministry said two cruise missiles were intercepted over an area south of the capital Riy-

adh, which is also home to the sprawling Prince Sultan air base, and several drones were destroyed after entering its airspace.

Qatar authorities also announced they had dismantled two spy cells linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guards, its official press agency reported.

"Close surveillance made it possible to arrest 10 suspects: seven were tasked with spying and gathering information about vital and military infrastructure in the country, and three were meant to carry out sabotage operations," the agency said.

Iranian missiles and drones have slammed Gulf states' cities and infrastructure, upending relations with Tehran and placing the neighbours on a potential course for greater military confrontation.

## Israel army says struck 'covert underground' nuclear site in Iran

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Israeli military said on Tuesday that it struck an underground nuclear site in Iran where it alleged scientists were "covertly" developing a key component for nuclear weapons.

Following the conflict in June, when Israel struck several Iranian nuclear sites, the military said it tracked Iranian scientists to "their new location at this site in a manner that enabled a precise strike on the covert underground compound".

The military also displayed a map showing the facility on the eastern outskirts of Tehran.

"At the site, a group of nuclear scientists operated covertly to develop a key component

for nuclear weapons," it said, naming the underground location as "Minzadehei".

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced Saturday the launch of a joint military offensive with the United States against Iran to remove what he described as the "existential threat" posed by Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

Israeli officials say Tehran has stepped up efforts to acquire an atomic weapon since the end of the 12-day war in June, which was launched by Israel and included US bombings of three nuclear facilities, including an enrichment plant.

US President Donald Trump said a few days

later that the United States had "obliterated" Iran's nuclear programme.

The Islamic republic, which has consistently denied seeking to obtain an atomic weapon, defends what it describes as its "right to enrich" uranium for peaceful purposes.

However, Tehran's enrichment of uranium to 60 per cent, a level exceeding civilian requirements, has heightened concerns.

These are shared not only by Israel and the United States, but also by European nations and Gulf Arab countries aligned with Washington, which have been targeted by Iran in recent days in response to the joint Israeli-US offensive.

## 'Narrative war': Disinformation surges as conflict roils Middle East

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — Recycled images, video game footage passed off as missile strikes, and AI-generated combat visuals: the US-Israeli assault on Iran has unleashed a torrent of on-line disinformation that analysts are calling a war of narratives.

Since US and Israeli strikes over the weekend ignited a regional conflict, a parallel information war has erupted, with supporters on both sides flooding social media with falsehoods that often spread faster than the facts on the ground.

AFP's fact-checkers have debunked a series of claims by pro-Iranian accounts posting old videos to exaggerate the damage from Tehran's missile strikes on Israel and Gulf states including the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

"There is definitely a narrative war unfold-

ing online," Moustafa Ayad, from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), told AFP.

"Whether it was to rationalise the strikes across the Gulf, or to trumpet Iranian military might in the face of the Israeli and US strikes, the goals seem to be wear down 'enemies.'"

'As we witness yet another immensely impactful global conflict unfolding in Iran...'

On the other end of the divide, Iranian opposition outlets have pushed false narratives on X and Telegram

blaming a missile strike on an Iranian girls' school on the Iranian government itself, researchers said.

ISD also cautioned that fake social media accounts have sprung up impersonating senior Iranian leadership.

Meanwhile, video game clips repurposed as Iranian missile strikes and AI-generated images of US warships being sunk, including the USS Abraham Lincoln, have garnered millions of views across major platforms.

Similar disinformation tactics have also been reported in other global wars including Ukraine and Gaza.

Such fabricated

visuals — portraying Iran as more menacing than evidence from the ground suggests — have collectively garnered more than 21.9 million views on the Elon Musk-owned X alone, according to the disinformation watchdog NewsGuard.

## 'Fog of war'

X on Tuesday announced it would suspend creators from its revenue sharing program for 90 days if they post AI-generated videos of armed conflicts without disclosing they were artificially made.

The policy change targets what the company described as a threat to information authenticity amid the ongoing war against Iran.

"During times of war, it is critical that people have access to authentic information on the ground," X's head of product Nikita Bier



People walk past the illuminated Abdulla Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Centre, also known as the Fanar Mosque with the spiral-shaped minaret, in Doha on Wednesday

said, adding that current AI technologies make it "trivial to create content that can mislead people".

The new AI disclosure policy represents a notable pivot for a platform whose approach to content moderation has been heavily criticised since Musk completed his \$44 billion

acquisition of the site in October 2022.

"The fog of war is quickly becoming the sloop of war as AI synthetic content creates infinite noise in information ecosystems," said Ari Abelson, co-founder of OpenOrigins, a media authenticity company that fights deepfakes.

"As we witness yet another immensely impactful global conflict unfolding in Iran, it's important for us to all understand how our media ecosystem is shifting."

In what could further stoke online chaos, a NewsGuard study showed that Google's reverse-image tool has

produced inaccurate AI-generated summaries of fabricated and misleading visuals tied to the Middle East conflict.

This exposes a "significant weakness in a widely used system for verifying the authenticity of images", the watchdog said.

There was no immediate comment from Google.

The United States and Israel launched the attack on Saturday and quickly killed Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, two days after US envoys had been speaking to Iran in Geneva on a nuclear accord.

Since then, Iran has expanded its retaliatory missile and drone barrage across the Middle East, hitting on Tuesday a US consulate and base as the United States and Israel said they had pummeled key sites inside Tehran.

## Cassation Court upholds 10-year sentence in Captagon smuggling case

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld a September 2023 State Security Court (SSC) ruling sentencing a man to 10 years in prison after convicting him of exporting illegal narcotics from Jordan to Saudi Arabia in September 2022.

The court declared the defendant guilty of transporting illegal narcotics from Jordan to Saudi Arabia using a trailer on September 1.

The SSC handed the defendant a 15-year prison term for the charges and ordered him to pay JD10,000 in fines.

However, the court decided to reduce the sentence to 10 years in prison while maintaining the JD10,000 "to give the defendant a second chance in life".

Court documents said the defendant and three other defendants, who did not appeal their verdicts,

decided to earn quick cash by exporting illegal drugs from Jordan to Saudi Arabia.

"The defendants hid 80,000 Captagon pills in a trailer that was destined to cross the Jordanian borders to Saudi Arabia," court papers said.

However, the Anti-Narcotic Department (AND) was already monitoring their movements after receiving special intel about their plans, court papers added.

The group was arrested by the law enforcement agency while heading to the Jordanian border crossing, the court transcripts stated.

Upon searching the trailer, court papers said, AND personnel found the Captagon pills stashed in plastic pipes and hidden in secret compartments.

The defendant contested the SSC's ruling through his lawyer, who argued that his

client does not have a criminal record.

The lawyer also argued that his client "did not get the chance to defend himself properly as stipulated in the Constitution and international conventions".

Meanwhile, the SSC prosecution office asked the higher court to uphold the sentence and the fine imposed on the defendant.

The higher court maintained that the SSC had followed the proper procedures in issuing the sentences against the defendant.

"It was clear to the court that the defendant confessed willingly to plotting with the three other defendants to export the illegal drugs to Saudi Arabia," the higher court said.

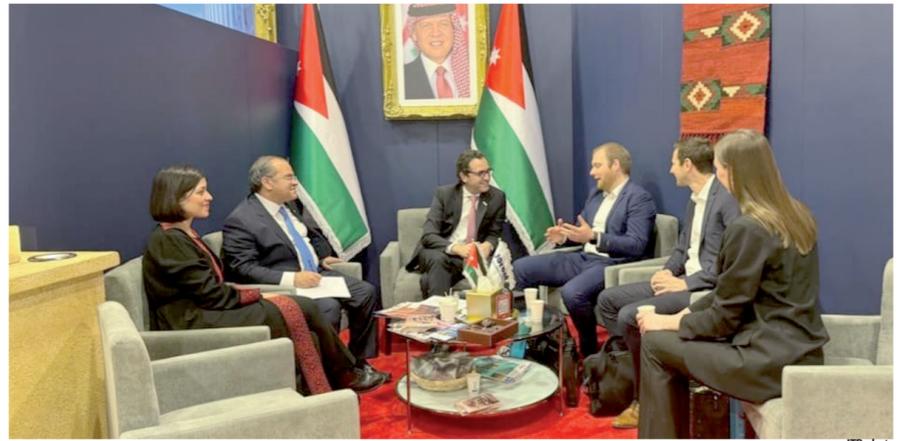
The Cassation Court bench comprised judges Yassin Abdullat, Nayef Samarat, Hamad Ghzawi, Qassem Dughmi and Mohammad Khashashneh.

## Jordan joins ITB Berlin 2026, secures two charter agreements

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) is showcasing the Kingdom at ITB Berlin 2026, the world's leading travel trade exhibition, taking place between March 3 and 5 in the German capital.

The Jordanian pavilion features a delegation of travel and tourism agencies, hotel representatives, and Royal Jordanian Airlines, reflecting a coordinated effort to elevate Jordan's profile in key global markets and highlight the diversity of its tourism offerings, according to a JTB statement.

Amid ongoing regional volatility, this year's participation carries heightened strategic significance. The JTB is leveraging the platform to clearly signal that Jordan remains a secure and stable destination, with tourism operations continuing uninterrupted.



The Jordan Tourism Board is showcasing the Kingdom at ITB Berlin 2026, the world's leading travel trade exhibition, taking place between March 3 and 5

The messaging is aimed at reassuring international partners, safeguarding the Kingdom's market share in vital European source markets, and sustain-

ing confidence in the destination.

A schedule of bilateral meetings is planned with tour operators, airlines and specialised media, targeting expansion into

new markets and increased tourist inflows for the upcoming season.

On the sidelines of the exhibition, the JTB signed two charter flight agreements designed

to expand seat capacity and boost air connectivity with target markets — translating industry engagement into measurable growth in visitor arrivals.

## Prime minister reaffirms Kingdom will not be battlefield amid regional escalation

Continued from page 1

He added that petroleum derivatives and domestic gas stocks are secure and available in sufficient quantities, while supply chains continue to operate normally.

Regarding electricity generation, the prime minister said Jordan's energy system is built on diversified sources, including natural gas imports through the floating storage and regasification unit in Aqaba, as well as the readiness of power plants to operate on alternative fuels if necessary.

Although challenges remain, including disruptions to regional gas supplies and rising global oil and gas prices, he said Jordan is better positioned today than in previous crises due to strategic diversification

projects implemented over the past decade.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi told lawmakers that Jordan had summoned the Iranian ambassador and delivered a firm message that the Kingdom's security is a "red line".

He also revealed that Jordan had begun evacuating its diplomatic staff from its embassy in Iran after the security situation deteriorated, noting that the move was taken as a precautionary measure and that the personnel had returned safely to the Kingdom.

The minister rejected claims by some lawmakers that the government had remained silent on Israeli actions, stressing that Jordan's position on Israeli violations "has not changed and will not change". He said Jordan

continues to condemn Israeli aggression in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, including attempts to alter the historical and legal status quo at Islamic and Christian holy sites, particularly Al Aqsa Mosque.

"Our position is clear, firm and consistent. We reject occupation, reject aggression and reject attempts to undermine Palestinian rights," he said.

He also noted that no Israeli diplomats are currently present in Jordan, adding that the embassy has been without diplomatic staff since the outbreak of the Gaza war. He stressed that Jordan responds firmly to any official Israeli statements that undermine the Kingdom's sovereignty.

The minister stressed the need to distinguish between Jordan's

long-standing position against Israeli occupation and the immediate security threat posed by Iranian attacks targeting the Kingdom and Gulf states.

"We are currently confronting direct attacks on Jordan and our Arab brothers," he said, reaffirming that any attack on Gulf security is considered an attack on Jordan.

The minister reiterated that Jordan is not a party to the war and has worked to avoid escalation but will not allow its territory to be used as a battleground.

He also condemned Iranian attacks against Gulf countries and expressed full solidarity with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman, reaffirming continued coordination to safeguard regional security.

While addressing the regional escalation, the minister stressed that international focus on the Iran crisis must not overshadow the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza or developments in the occupied West Bank, warning against measures that undermine prospects for peace. He added that Jordan is closely following developments in Lebanon and Syria, reaffirming support for the stability and sovereignty of both countries.

He also emphasised that Jordan will continue taking all necessary measures to protect its national security and maintain stability. Parliament also expressed full support for the JAF and His Majesty King Abdullah's leadership, reaffirming national unity in confronting threats to the Kingdom.

## UK to stop issuing study visas for Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan

LONDON (AFP) — The British government announced on Tuesday that it would stop issuing education visas to nationals from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan, and work visas for Afghans as part of its broader clampdown on asylum seekers.

The Home Office said there had been a surge in asylum applications by students from those countries and almost 135,000 asylum seekers in total had entered the UK using legal routes since 2021.

"Britain will always provide refuge to people fleeing war and persecution, but our visa system must not be abused," said Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood in a statement. "That is why I am taking the unprecedented decision to refuse visas for those nationals seeking to exploit our generosity."

The Home Office said the number of asylum applications by students



British Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood speaks in the No. 9 Downing Street Media Briefing Room, in Westminster, London

from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan had "rocketed" by more than 470 per cent between 2021 and 2025.

Migration has become a major issue in British politics with the hard-right Reform UK surging in opinion polls with its anti-migration stance.

Successive governments have struggled to contain small boats crossing the Channel from France, which bring

large numbers of undocumented migrants. But the authorities also face pressure to reduce numbers of asylum seekers entering on other routes.

The Home Office said the government has "reduced student asylum claims by 20 per cent over the course of 2025, further action is needed as those arriving on study visas still make up 13 per cent of all claims in the system".

## Israel orders southern Lebanon evacuated as campaign expands

Continued from page 1

Lebanese state media also reported that the Israeli army had entered the southern Lebanese town of Khiam, about 6 kilometres from the border, marking its deepest entry since the fighting broke out.

The report comes a day after Israel's military said it was creating a buffer zone inside Lebanon to protect Israeli residents.

When asked by AFP, the Israeli military said it cannot disclose the locations of its troops.

Also on Wednesday, an air strike hit a hotel in Hazmieh, the first reported Israeli attack on the predominantly Christian area in Beirut's suburbs, near the presidential palace and several foreign embassies.

Some rooms were gutted in the strike, while wounded people received treatment in the lobby, AFP images showed.

People fled through debris carrying suitcases past the Comfort Hotel's sign, which had fallen broken to the ground. It was not possible to determine who was targeted in the attack.

The upscale district overlooks the capital's southern suburbs, which Hazmieh resident Lena had initially thought was

the target of the strikes.

"I was wrong," the 59-year-old woman told AFP. "Just a stone's throw from my home, a hotel was targeted."

Several people told AFP they had received recorded phone messages telling them to evacuate, a security official told AFP.

A series of strikes on Wednesday continued to target Beirut's southern suburbs, where Hizbollah holds sway, following an evacuation order from Israel's military.

One of the strikes targeted a building near a major hospital, according to an AFP photographer. AFP footage showed thick plumes of smoke rising above buildings in the densely populated suburb, where some residents fled when the violence erupted on Monday.

In Aramoun and Saadiyat south of Beirut — two towns outside of Hizbollah's traditional sphere of influence — the health ministry said Israeli strikes killed six people and wounded eight others. It cautioned that this was a "preliminary toll".

AFP footage from Aramoun showed damaged cars and rescue workers carrying a wounded person on a stretcher.

Strikes also targeted a four-storey building

in the city of Baalbek, in Lebanon's east, far from the border where Hizbollah also has a strong presence.

Five people were killed, 15 were wounded and three remain missing, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported.

AFP correspondents saw rescue workers searching through the rubble for survivors.

Since Monday, Israeli strikes have killed at least 50 people and wounded 335 in Lebanon, the health ministry said before the overnight strikes, which killed at least 11 more people.

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said three paramedics were killed and six injured "while recovering people injured by explosions" in Lebanon's southern Tyre district.

"Warring parties must abide by international humanitarian law and protect health workers, facilities and patients," he said on X.

Lebanese authorities on Monday recorded the displacement of more than 58,000 people from areas targeted by strikes.

The Israeli military has said it will continue to strike Hizbollah until the Lebanese group disarms.

## Iran claims 'complete control' of key waterway for energy transit

Continued from page 1

Earlier in the war, the Revolutionary Guard warned ships against entering the strait, and major shipping firms have already suspended transit through the waterway with maritime agencies reporting several ships attacked.

In Lebanon, which Hizbollah dragged into the war, Israel expanded its air strikes, targeting the area around the presidential palace and the militant group's south Beirut bastion, killing 11 people according to Lebanese authorities.

An AFP journalist reported a fresh explosion in the northeast of the Iranian capital, as Iranian state media prepared to hold a state funeral for supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, killed on the first day of US-Israeli strikes.

Israel's defence minister Israel Katz vowed that any successor to Khamenei would be killed, "no matter his name or where he hides", as the military said it has begun "broad scale strikes" in Tehran on Wednesday.

Trump said the US had "knocked out" Iran's navy, along with its air force and radar systems, while the US military said it has hit

nearly 2,000 targets since first launching strikes on Saturday.

He walked back a statement from Secretary of State Marco Rubio the day before, who said the timing of the US attack was determined by Israel's plans to strike.

"If anything, I might have forced Israel's hand," Trump said as he met German Chancellor Friedrich Merz at the White House.

Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have urged Iranians to rise up but the US leader also said regime change was not the goal.

The assault came weeks after Iranian authorities clamped down on mass protests, killing thousands.

### Cruise missiles

Saudi Arabia said it intercepted two cruise missiles, while drones struck near the US consulate in Dubai, starting a fire and against the US military base at Al Udeid in Qatar.

Kuwait has also been hit, with the health ministry announcing the death of an 11-year-old girl killed after she was hit by falling shrapnel.

The Pentagon identified four of six US troops killed in the war

so far, saying they were hit by a drone attack in Kuwait.

The United States encouraged all Americans to leave the region if they could find commercial flights, though air travel has been severely disrupted, while governments including Britain and France sent chartered flights to get their citizens out.

The war was taking a growing toll on Lebanon, from where Iran-backed militant group Hizbollah launched drones and rockets at Israel in retaliation for Khamenei's killing.

An air strike hit a hotel in Hazmieh near Beirut on Wednesday, the first reported Israeli attack on the predominantly Christian area in Beirut's suburbs, near the presidential palace and several embassies.

The southern suburbs of Beirut, a Hizbollah stronghold, were targeted again on Wednesday morning, following an evacuation order from Israel's military.

### Bigger than 'shock and awe'

The US military targeted ballistic missiles and "all the things that can shoot at us" in its attacks on Iran since Saturday, said Admiral Brad Cooper, com-

mander of US Central Command.

"These forces bring a massive amount of firepower, representing the largest buildup by the US in the Middle East in a generation," he said in a video message, describing the first day's barrage as bigger than the so-called "shock and awe" against Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 2003.

"We will not be complicit in something that is harmful to the world and contrary to our values and interests, simply out of fear of retaliation"

According to the Iranian Red Crescent, the US and Israeli attacks have killed 787 people in Iran, a toll that could not be independently confirmed by AFP.

Iran repeatedly vowed to inflict a heavy price in retaliation, with the judiciary saying that those who aid the country's enemies "will be dealt with decisively and severely".

In Tehran, residents who have not fled remained shut away in their homes, fearing the US-Israeli bombardment.

The Iranian capital is normally home to around 10 million people, but in recent days "there are so few people that you'd think no one ever lived here", said Samireh, a 33-year-old nurse.

Authorities had previously urged people to leave the city, and police officers, armed security forces and armoured vehicles have been stationed at main junctions, carrying out random checks on vehicles.

The war has sparked a divided response in Europe. On Wednesday, the European Commission said it was "ready" to defend EU interests after President Donald Trump threatened to sever trade with Spain for refusing to allow the US use of its bases to attack Iran.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who has refused to allow the US to use its bases to attack Iran, hit back against Trump's criticism, saying: "We will not be complicit in something that is harmful to the world and contrary to our values and interests, simply out of fear of retaliation."

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## Why educational decisions in times of crisis require mental system update

By Lubna Ammari

In the midst of a global environment marked by escalating geopolitical tensions, including conflict and uncertainty in the Middle East, discussions about the continuity of education have taken on a new urgency. Policymakers, educators, parents and students in Jordan and around the world face a dilemma that transcends simple operational choices: Should education remain primarily face-to-face in the physical classroom or should institutions swiftly pivot back to online learning as crisis conditions evolve? This debate is not merely about modality it is about the way we think, the assumptions we hold, and whether our educational system is governed by updated decision-making frameworks or by outdated mental models that were shaped before the extraordinary disruptions of the past decade.

The global shock to education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was unprecedented. School closures affected more than 1.6 billion learners worldwide according to organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, requiring rapid transitions to distance learning and digital modalities. In some cases, this shift maintained instructional continuity; in others it revealed deep systemic weaknesses in infrastructure, teacher preparedness and equitable access to learning opportunities.

Many educational systems around the world were simply not prepared for the digital transformation that crises demanded. Research has shown that emergency remote teaching during COVID-19 produced significant learning losses, especially in mathematics and science, across multiple countries, underscoring the lasting impact of school closures on achievement outcomes. Moreover, an analysis of the global shift to online learning reported that reliance on technology exacerbated educational inequalities, benefitting students with ready access while leaving behind those without stable connectivity and devices. These findings illuminate a crucial lesson: Crisis response in education cannot be reactionary or simplistic. Schools and universities that responded quickly with online solutions did so out of necessity, but without a comprehensive strategy grounded in evidence-based planning, robust infrastructure and preparedness for future disruptions.

The conclusion is unavoidable: The challenge in educational decision-making is not simply face-to-face or online, but whether the cognitive frameworks guiding those decisions have been updated to reflect the realities of a volatile world. Crises like pandemics and regional instability remind us that education systems must possess resilience, agility and foresight. Instead of defaulting to the same modes of operation that existed prior to COVID-19, educators and policymakers should treat crises as opportunities for systemic learning and transformation rather than temporary interruptions to business as usual.

A wise education policy must integrate risk-informed planning, evidence-based interventions, and scalable models that can flexibly combine in-person and remote approaches. This means investing in digital infrastructure, but also expanding teacher training, supporting student psychosocial needs and ensuring that no learner is left behind due to socioeconomic barriers. Reports by international organisations have underscored the need for such multi-modal strategies, emphasising that continuity in education during crises must be backed by systems capable of adapting and learning from past experience.

Jordan's educational leaders face unique pressures as regional instability elevates concerns about safety and continuity. In this context, decision-making must adopt a balanced, evidence-aligned perspective one that does not romanticise traditional classroom instruction out of nostalgia, nor embraces online learning as a panacea. Rather, it should recognise that both models have strengths and limitations, and that preparation for crisis must be built on updated, flexible frameworks that prioritise equity, learning outcomes and resilience.

Ultimately, as with software that prompts us to update our operating systems to improve performance and security, education systems require analogous updates of mindset and methodology. Sticking to outdated mental models risks replicating past failures, widening learning gaps and undermining the very purpose of education. Crises remind us that the core of educational decision-making must evolve, guided by evidence, innovation and a commitment to equitable, resilient learning for all.

The author is a specialist in educational technology

# Instead of defeating China, Trump is accelerating its rise on the global stage

By Ramzy Baroud

If you are not paying attention to the dramatic developments between China and the United States, you must understand that something consequential has just taken place.

The US government is backtracking, if not altogether retreating, from the trade war and broader escalation it launched against China. Unlike the hyped language and repeated threats by President Donald Trump to impose massive "reciprocal tariffs", to "de-Occuple" the US economy from China, and to correct "the greatest theft of wealth in the history of the world", the retreat is happening in hushed tones and coded diplomatic language.

"I think both countries concluded that having an all-out global trade war between the United States and China would be deeply damaging to both sides and to the world," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on February 25.

He called this new phase one of "strategic stability".

Rubio's words are misleading. It was not China, nor any other country, that instigated the trade war. It began under the Trump administration's "America First" doctrine. On March 22, 2018, Trump signed a presidential memorandum imposing tariffs on \$50 billion worth of Chinese goods under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974. By July 6, 25 per cent tariff were in effect on \$34 billion in Chinese imports.

The escalation continued. In September 2018, the United States imposed tariffs on an additional \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods — initially at 10 per cent, later raised to 25 per cent in May 2019. The logic was simple: Apply sufficient economic pressure to force Beijing into structural concessions on trade practices, intellectual property and industrial policy.

China responded in kind.

Though China, due to the massive and remarkable growth of its economy, managed to absorb and counter much of Trump's economic punishment, the rest of the world struggled to cope with disrupted supply chains

and growing uncertainty. Trump remained defiant. Even after leaving office, the tariff architecture remained largely intact.

Not only did the Biden administration refuse to dismantle the tariff regime, it intensified it. Beginning in October 2022, Washington imposed sweeping export controls targeting advanced semiconductors and chip-making equipment destined for China. In May 2024, it followed with additional tariff hikes on Chinese electric vehicles, batteries, and solar products.

'I think both countries concluded that having an all-out global trade war between the United States and China would be deeply damaging to both sides and to the world'

When Trump returned to office in January 2025, he revived even harsher rhetoric, proposing tariffs of up to 60 per cent on all Chinese imports. Despite the lack of clear evidence that such measures were effective, tariffs continued to serve as a central instrument of policy.

Trump's strategy backfired. A 2019 Federal Reserve analysis found that most tariff costs were borne by US firms and consumers, and a 2026 Federal Reserve Bank of New York study confirmed that roughly 90 per cent of the latest tariff burden fell on American businesses and households, effectively functioning as a domestic tax.

Rubio's "strategic stability" is, of course, code for an admission that the trade war achieved little and that future prospects of de-

cisive success remain dim. This realisation is particularly significant ahead of the November 2026 midterm elections. Once again, the economy will prove decisive for US voters.

But it would be unfair to suggest that this fiasco is Trump's alone. As in many issues — political polarisation, immigration, unstable job markets and Middle East policy — the attempt to contain or coerce China has become a common denominator across administrations.

As the Obama Administration began recognising the limits — and strategic costs — of its militarised Middle East policies, it introduced the "Pivot to Asia", a shift designed to rebalance US diplomatic, military and economic focus toward the Indo-Pacific. The broader strategy aimed to contain China's rise and reassert American influence in the region.

Yet despite years of framing China as the primary strategic challenge, in fact threat, the United States now finds itself expanding its military footprint in the Middle East once again, amid tensions involving Iran and the Israeli war in Gaza. Reports suggest the current buildup is the largest since 2003.

This leaves little doubt that the original attempt to pressure China into concessions has fallen short. China remains the largest trading partner for most Asian economies, including close US allies. It has also become a leading economic and energy partner for key Middle Eastern states.

Throughout his campaigns, Trump made defeating China central to his political message. Yet after years of angry language, lofty promises, threats, and tariffs, the moment we have reached is described as "strategic stability".

Unable to fundamentally alter China's trajectory, Washington appears once more drawn into Middle Eastern theaters; unlike the 1990-91 and 2003 wars in Iraq, however, without a clear and widely supported strategic vision.

Meanwhile, Beijing has pursued a disciplined, long-term expansion of its geopolitical reach. For example, in January

2026, China led the "Will for Peace" BRICS Plus naval exercises off South Africa, signaling its growing role in security domains traditionally dominated by Western powers. At the same time, it has strengthened its economic networks across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

Aside from his unique personal style, Trump's policies reflect a broader paradox shared by multiple US administrations: an inability to define the true center of gravity of American foreign policy, a disproportionate reliance on economic sanctions and military pressure and a recurring failure to produce lasting stability.

The main hurdle remains Washington's refusal to acknowledge that the massive shifts reshaping the global geopolitical map are irreversible. No number of aircraft carriers zigzagging between oceans, and no escalation in tariffs, can undo the structural transformation already under way in Asia, the Middle East and beyond.

This leaves little doubt that the original attempt to pressure China into concessions has fallen short. China remains the largest trading partner for most Asian economies, including close US allies

Ramzy Baroud is a journalist, author and the editor of The Palestine Chronicle. He is the author of six books. His latest, "Before the Flood", was published by Seven Stories Press. His other books include "Our Vision for Liberation", "My Father was a Freedom Fighter" and "The Last Earth". Baroud is a non-resident Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Islam and Global Affairs

## Preparing for AI-enabled bioweapons

By Sania Nishtar

GENEVA — We don't know when the next epidemic or pandemic will hit, or where the next infectious threat will emerge. But we do know that the nature of the threat is constantly evolving. One of the most sobering takeaways from this year's Munich Security Conference was that AI-enabled gene editing has radically lowered the barrier to developing genetically engineered bioweapons. We must prepare to live with even deeper uncertainty about whether emerging infectious threats are natural or man-made, and whether they have been accidentally or deliberately released.

These functions are global public goods. They are central to our defences against emerging infectious threats

At a conference typically dominated by geopolitics and the threat of armed conflict, the prospect of bioweapons developed by non-state actors steered the conversation toward the neglected topic of global health security. Policymakers are now focusing on what capacities we have, and what additional capacities we will need, to detect and respond to this threat — as well they should.

Of course, from a public-health perspective, it may ultimately be irrelevant whether an infectious pathogen is man-made or deliberately released. What matters most for those of us concerned

with saving lives and protecting health is that we are ready and able to detect and respond to infectious threats wherever — and however — they emerge.

Fortunately, there has been some progress since the COVID-19 pandemic toward strengthening our collective defenses against infectious threats. Just under a year ago, World Health Organisation (WHO) member states voted to adopt the WHO Pandemic Agreement, and although negotiations on the finer details continue, we at least know that there is still demand — if not a consensus — for multilateral cooperation on this critical issue.

Moreover, Gavi (the organisation I lead) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations have both evolved since COVID-19. Our organisations now work hand-in-hand to help protect the world from infectious threats. CEPI's experts scan the horizon for potential risks and provide the right mix of incentives to translate ideas and research into safe and effective new vaccines and therapeutics. And at Gavi, we help make vaccines accessible to everyone who needs them, acting as a custodian of emergency stockpiles, a provider of surge financing, and a catalytic investor for regional vaccine manufacturing.

These functions are global public goods. They are central to our defences against emerging infectious threats. Yet at a time when those threats have never been greater, the funding model that sustains these critical functions is collapsing as donors slash spending on official development assistance (ODA) in favour of investments in traditional defense capabilities.

These cuts put us all at risk. If anything, we need significantly more funding to tackle emergent and reemerging infections and bioterrorism threats, including through interventions that can, and should, be taken now to

strengthen our preparedness.

For example, there is an urgent need for closer coordination across preparedness and response structures. I know this because one of my first experiences as CEO of Gavi was tackling the Mpox emergency in 2024 and because I served as a cabinet member in Pakistan during the COVID-19 response. In both cases, it was clear that only an extensive multistakeholder response would be effective.

But such responses can be mobilised in a timely manner only if the relevant stakeholders have been fully prepared through periodic simulation exercises. Readiness is a muscle that requires regular exercise at all levels — national, regional, and international. Our preparations must encompass everything from emergency supply chains, logistics and stockpile management to international borders and trade.

The question of how we fund these capabilities is part of a larger debate about the role of ODA in a changing world.

A second immediate need is for a formal, regularly tested joint-planning mechanism for researchers, funders, regulators and manufacturers. We must ensure not only that medical countermeasures are developed rapidly, but that they are tested, approved, accessible and scalable on short notice. All this work requires specific financing mechanisms. Without the right incentives, investments in medical countermeasures against

low-risk, high-consequence infectious threats will not reach the necessary scale.

Third, we urgently need to add new competencies to the global health system to cultivate AI bio-resilience. By using AI for detection and prediction, we can harness the technology's potential to counteract the threat it will pose in the hands of malign actors. Given the current trend toward downsizing global health institutions, this additional dimension must not be forgotten.

Likewise, we must remain focused on ensuring the availability of surge financing for large-scale epidemics and pandemics. To that end, Gavi recently established a new instrument — the First Response Fund — to provide rapid financing in the event of an outbreak or emergency. This instrument already played a key role in the rapid deployment of vaccines against Mpox in Africa.

But we still need a predictable mechanism to provide further liquidity for the type of large-scale deployment of medical countermeasures that would be required in response to an engineered infectious threat with pandemic potential. Multilateral development banks could play a key role.

The question of how we fund these capabilities is part of a larger debate about the role of ODA in a changing world. We will need to start thinking about ODA in two ways: as a tool for poverty reduction and economic development, and as a means of financing public goods and building global resilience. Collective health defense calls for collective responsibility. That means improving our coordination and establishing a model for predictable, sustainable and reliable funding. Anything less invites disaster.

Sania Nishtar is CEO of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2025. [www.project-syndicate.org](http://www.project-syndicate.org)

# BUSINESS

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According to foreign trade data issued by the Department of Statistics, national exports to Arab countries grew by 10.2 per cent in 2025, reaching JD3.952 billion

## National exports to GAFTA countries grew by 10.2% in 2025 — DoS

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan recorded on Wednesday a trade surplus with 11 member states of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) in 2025, as the Kingdom continues efforts to strengthen its footprint in Arab markets.

The positive performance aligns with the objectives of the Economic Modernisation Vision (EMV) and reflects growing national exports and enhanced competitiveness in regional markets, alongside an expanding base of trade partners.

According to foreign trade data issued by the Department of Statistics (DoS), national exports to GAFTA countries grew by 10.2 per cent in 2025, reaching JD3.952 billion, compared with JD3.585 billion in 2024.

Imports from GAFTA member states rose by 7.3 per cent to JD5.444 billion last year, up from JD5.073 billion in 2024, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

GAFTA countries ranked first among Jordan's trading partners in 2025, accounting for 41 per cent of total national exports.

Despite the surplus

with several countries, Jordan's overall trade deficit with GAFTA states stood at JD1.492 billion in 2025, compared with JD1.488 billion in 2024.

Total trade volume between Jordan and GAFTA countries reached JD9.396 billion in 2025, up from JD8.658 billion the previous year.

Jordan recorded trade surpluses with Lebanon, Yemen, Libya, Qatar, Morocco, Kuwait, Syria, Palestine, Algeria, Iraq and Bahrain, while trade deficits were registered with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Oman, Tunisia and Sudan.

Saudi Arabia accounted for the largest share of Jordan's exports to GAFTA countries in 2025, valued at JD1.230 billion, marking a 9 per cent increase.

Iraq followed at JD990 million, up 8.6 per cent. Exports to Syria saw significant growth, surging by 358.2 per cent to reach JD252 million.

Saudi Arabia also topped the list of countries from which Jordan imports, with imports totalling JD2.95 billion in 2025. Consequently, Jordan's trade

deficit with Saudi Arabia reached approximately JD1.72 billion.

Jordan's exports to GAFTA countries are concentrated in fertilisers, pharmaceuticals, agricultural produce, including fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, salts and skincare products, as well as food preparations, furniture, textiles and garments, and paints.

Imports from GAFTA states include crude oil and its derivatives, jewellery, food products, plastic sheets and panels, titanium oxide, polyethylene, polystyrene, iron and related products, among other goods.

Overall, national exports increased by 9.9 per cent in 2025 to JD9.624 billion, while re-exports rose by 12.3 per cent to JD959 million, bringing total exports to JD10.583 billion, up 10.1 per cent compared with 2024.

The Greater Arab Free Trade Area is an economic bloc aimed at promoting economic integration and low-tariff trade among Arab states. The agreement entered into force in January 2005 and comprises 18 member countries, Petra reported.

## Prime minister chairs review of strategic reserves, energy security amid regional tensions

AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting to evaluate the sustainability of Jordan's strategic reserves, supply chains, and energy security in light of ongoing regional developments.

According to a Prime Ministry statement, ministers and senior officials reviewed contingency plans and precautionary measures implemented by their ministries to mitigate the impact of regional instability and ensure national readiness.

Officials confirmed that strategic stocks of food, essential commodities and energy remain secure, diversified and sufficient to meet domestic demand. Alternative supply routes and logistical options are being explored in coordina-



Prime minister reviews strategic reserves and energy security measures during high-level meeting amid regional developments

tion with the private sector to address any potential disruptions, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The meeting included the ministers of water and irrigation,

transport, government communication, energy and mineral resources, industry, trade and supply, education and higher education and scientific research, interior, planning and

international cooperation, labour, finance and investment.

As part of broader consultations, the prime minister also met with Fathi Jaghbir, president of the Jordan

and Amman Chambers of Industry, to review measures aimed at reinforcing the sustainability of strategic stockpiles and supply chains, Petra reported.

Discussions highlighted the role of the national industry in supporting food security and ensuring the steady availability of goods. Prime Minister Hassan reaffirmed government support for the industrial sector and efforts to enhance its contribution to the national economy.

Jaghbir emphasised the sector's commitment to maintaining current price levels and ensuring a continuous supply of commodities, noting that factories will operate at full capacity under normal conditions to meet domestic demand.

## ACI exports rise by 3.1% during two-month period

AMMAN (JT) — Exports by the Amman Chamber of Industry (ACI) rose by 3.1 per cent during the first two months of 2026 compared with the same period of 2025.

According to statistical data monitored on Wednesday by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, exports reached JD1.137 billion during the two-month period, up from JD1.103 billion in the corresponding period last year.

Seven industrial sectors recorded export growth, with the exception of engineering industries, which declined by 34.3 per cent, garments by 3.1 per cent and plastics by 0.5 per cent. Therapeutic industries posted the highest increase, surging by 54.7 per cent.



Four Arab and foreign markets, India, the United States, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, accounted for the bulk of the chamber's exports during the period, with a combined value of JD565 million.

Exports to Saudi Arabia increased by 1.6 per cent to approximately JD137 million, compared with JD134 million in the same period of 2025. Ship-

ments to Iraq rose by 2.3 per cent to JD153 million, up from JD148 million a year earlier.

In contrast, exports to India fell by 18.7 per cent to JD128 million, down from JD157 million in the same period last year. Exports to the United States declined by 26.4 per cent to JD147 million, compared with JD199 million.

Exports to Syria

grew by 12 per cent to JD49 million, up from JD44 million in the corresponding period of 2025, while exports to Palestine surged by 85 per cent to JD54 million, compared with JD29 million last year.

Geographically, Arab countries topped the list of destinations at JD598 million, followed by non-Arab Asian countries at JD246 million and African countries at around JD8 million.

Exports to North America reached JD155 million, South America JD3 million, European Union countries JD70 million and non-EU European countries JD37 million, while other destinations accounted for approximately JD21 million.

By sector, mining

industries led with JD242 million, followed by chemicals and cosmetics at JD227 million, and food, agricultural and livestock industries at JD189 million.

Engineering, electrical and information technology industries recorded JD125 million in exports, while therapeutic industries and medical supplies reached JD111 million.

Other exports included plastics and rubber at JD53 million, construction industries JD48 million, packaging, paper and stationery JD46 million and wood and furniture industries around JD4 million, Petra reported.

## Non-Jordanian companies listed on ASE reaches 46.4%

AMMAN (JT) — ASE revealed that the value of shares bought by non-Jordanian investors at the ASE in February 2026 was JD28.8 million, representing 13.1 per cent of the overall trading value, while the value of shares sold by them amounted to JD31 million.

The value of shares bought by non-Jordanian investors since the beginning of the year until the end of February 2026 was JD57.4 million, representing 14.1 per cent of the overall trading value, while the value of shares sold by them amounted to JD59.7 million.

Arab investors' purchases during February 2026 were JD26.6 mil-



Non-Jordanian companies listed on Amman Stock Exchange as of end of February 2026 represent 46.4 per cent of the total market value

lion, or 92.1 per cent of the overall purchases by non-Jordanians, while Arab investors' sales amounted to JD27.7 million, or 89.4 per cent of non-Jordanians total sales, according to an

ASE statement.

The value of non-Arab purchases amounted to JD2.2 million, constituting 7.9 per cent of the overall purchases by non-Jordanians, while the value of non-

Arab sales amounted to JD3.3 million, representing 10.6 per cent of the total sales by non-Jordanians.

Hence, non-Jordanian investors' ownership in companies listed on ASE as of end of February 2026 represented 46.4 per cent of the total market value, of which 32.9 per cent for institutional investors including companies, institutions and funds.

Arab investors own 29.9 per cent and non-Arab investors own 16.5 per cent. At the sectoral level, the non-Jordanian ownership in the financial sector was 48.2 per cent, in the services sector was 22.1 per cent and 51.1 per cent in the industrial sector.

### GROWTH

## Industrial exports up 10.2% in 2025 to JD8.89b — JCI

AMMAN (JT) — The industrial exports grew significantly in 2025, rising by 10.2 per cent due to increased demand for its products in international markets.

According to an analytical report by the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI) monitored on Wednesday by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, industrial exports reached JD 8.89 billion in 2025, up from JD 8.07 billion in 2024.

The JCI said in a report prepared by its

Studies and Policies Department that the growth reflects the continued momentum of the industrial sector in supporting national exports and enhancing the presence of Jordanian products in global markets, despite regional challenges.

The JCI noted that the increase also reflects the expanding reach of Jordanian industrial products in international markets, with exports reaching nearly 150 countries worldwide, and

recording notable growth in both traditional and non-traditional markets.

A number of "key" markets played a central role in driving industrial export growth in 2025, with Syria topping the list of countries showing the largest increase.

Exports to Syria rose by JD197 million, reaching JD252 million compared with JD55 million in 2024, a growth rate of 355 per cent, reflecting the recovery of trade ac-

tivity and the renewed demand for several Jordanian industrial products.

The chamber emphasised that the geographic expansion of industrial exports reflects the success of efforts to diversify export markets and reduce reliance on a limited number of destinations, with export growth now driven by a mix of traditional regional markets as well as European, Asian and African markets, Petra, reported.

## Oil tanker traffic through Strait of Hormuz down 90% — Kpler

PARIS, France (AFP) — Oil tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has plunged, but not completely halted following the outbreak of the war in the Middle East, the energy market intelligence firm Kpler said on Wednesday.

"Analysis of vessel activity indicates tanker transits are now around 90 per cent lower than last week" through the vital waterway through which a fifth of the world's crude oil supplies transit, the company said on X.

Iranian military officials have claimed to control the waterway that a fifth of the world's crude oil supplies transit and have claimed attacks on ships, but Kpler said some are risking the trip.

"Unlike several other vessel segments where movements have largely ceased, some tankers are still travelling east and west through the strait, with a number of voyages occurring under AIS blackouts," said Kpler Principal Freight Analyst Matt Wright,

referring to the marine traffic tracking system.

Crude oil and natural gas prices have spiked higher since the United States began a massive campaign of strikes on Iran in concert with Israeli forces on Saturday.

Tehran has responded with waves of missiles and drones targeting countries in the region that host US military personnel or bases, as well as attacks on several ships.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said on Wednesday they con-

trol the Strait of Hormuz and warned any vessels seeking to pass through the waterway risk damage from missiles or stray drones.

US President Donald Trump said Tuesday the US Navy was ready to escort oil tankers through the crucial shipping route, as well as offer insurance.

The world's top shipping companies have announced they will not send their vessels through the Strait of Hormuz and major insurers have pulled war risk coverage.

## AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Wednesday amounted to JD8.0 million spread over 2.1 million shares that traded through 2,163 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.79 per cent, closing at 3600.75 points.

Out of 83 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 34 companies rose while the share price of another 25 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Union Investment Corporation by 12.50 per cent, Jordan Insurance by 7.46 per cent, United Insurance by 6.86 per cent, Middle East Holding by 3.90 per cent, and Ready Mix Concrete and Construction Supplies by 3.88 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Jordan International Insurance by 5.00 per cent, Premier Business and Projects Company Ltd. by 4.72 per cent, Jordan Masaken for Land and Industrial Development Projects by 4.23 per cent, First Finance by 3.23 per cent, and Shareco Brokerage Company by 3.03 per cent.



**Rasem Badran:** Heritage Reinterpreted

# The Architect Who Listened to Place

By Khaled Bashir

**R**asem Badran's architecture is not a repetition of heritage, but a living reinterpretation of it — one that speaks a contemporary language responsive to context and place.\*

Though he draws liberally from the historical Arab-Islamic architectural tradition, Jordanian architect Rasem Badran's design sensibility goes well beyond quotation or imitation of heritage. His position has always been one of development and reinterpretation, seeking constantly to reconcile that heritage with the modernist architecture he studied in the West, whose principles he absorbed and made his own. For Badran, engaging with tradition is a living interaction with all its material forms and conceptual substance — a dialogue that reframes past and present into a unified architectural fabric. His abiding principle is that a building must be in harmony with its surrounding context, an extension of its values, principles, and elements, encompassing cultural, environmental, and geographical conditions, as well as psychological, sensory, and visual experience.

Rasem Badran was born in Jerusalem in 1945 and grew up in an artistic household. His father, Jamal Badran (1909-1999), was one of Palestine's most celebrated craftsmen, holding a Master's degree in Islamic Art from Britain and later entrusted with the restoration of the Saladin Minbar following the fire at Al Aqsa Mosque in 1969. As a child, Rasem frequented his father's atelier in an old Ottoman house in the Batn Al Hawa quarter of Ramallah, where his artistic consciousness first took shape. He later travelled to Germany to study architecture, earning a commission to design facilities for the Munich Olympic Games in 1972. On his return to Jordan that same year, he introduced a new direction in architectural design — merging the traditional with the contemporary, combining modernist elegance with the preservation of social and cultural particularities.

## Amman Mall: Reconciling consumption and identity

At the turn of the millennium, Amman opened its first shopping mall, part of a broader impulse towards modernisation and the adoption of Western consumer models. Amman Mall was Jordan's first such venture, making its design a challenge in terms of the identity and character it might convey. Badran's task was to reconcile the globalised consumer model with the affirmation of local identity that characterises most of his work. On the exterior facades, he employed gently curved arches in an abstract evocation of one of the most distinctive features of Islamic and mediaeval architecture, where arches combined structural function with aesthetic impact. His intention was a contemporary interpretation rather than a literal revival — light enough not to overwhelm the facade, and proportionate to the building's function as a modern retail centre, without suggesting a religious or historical monument. He sought to anchor identity to place, proceeding from the understanding of Amman as a city with an Arab-Islamic character, coinciding with its designation as Arab Capital of Culture in 2002.

Inside, Badran introduced elements drawn from Islamic architecture: wooden mashrabiyya screens decorated with arabesque patterns in abstracted flat form, and columns with simplified capital compositions reminiscent of those in the Great Mosque of Córdoba. The roof employed a glazed gable section to provide natural light and reduce the need for internal columns. Stone clad the interior facades of the atrium and corridors, blending with modern glass and metal — stone being one of the foundational traditional materials in the vernacular architecture of the Levant. The suspended flying arches within the building evoke those of the Mosque of Córdoba, with a yellow-and-white alternation in the stone echoing the main exterior facade and creating continuity between interior and exterior.

## City hall: Bridging two sides

By the mid-1990s, thinking had crystallised around forging Amman's 'lost' identity, and Mayor Mamdouh Al Abbadi (1993-1998) envisioned a public space as a 'new centre'

for the city. He chose the City Square, at the head of Amman's historic Seil watercourse on the edge of the old city — a site that symbolically represented the divide between east and west Amman, the wealthier and poorer halves. He believed the cultural space would serve as a functional and symbolic centre bridging the two.

In 1995, architects Jafar Tukan and Rasem Badran were commissioned to design the City Hall building, completed in 1997 for art exhibitions and related photography, with the upper floors housing the Mayor's office and reception hall. The building was designed as an imposing cube set within a wide plaza, with a cylindrical central courtyard reminiscent of Andrea Palladio's Villa La Rotonda. The courtyard opens onto gateways on all four sides, with particular emphasis on the east-west axis — a symbolic gesture towards the city's two halves. Badran introduced a sundial (miz'wala), an instrument found in mosques to determine prayer times, to reinforce the historical and cultural identity of the place.

## Yarmouk university library: Opening the closed box

In Irbid, Badran designed the Husseinyya Library — the central library of Yarmouk University, completed in 2002. He transformed the conventional library typology into a tactile urban model echoing the historic city form, designing the central courtyard in the spirit of the Registan Square in Samarkand, with four iwans. The courtyard leads to corridors around which the remaining spaces are distributed, in the manner of historic Islamic schools such as the Sultan Hassan Madrasa in Cairo. Badran converted the library from a closed box into massed spaces resembling the Islamic city, surrounding the book-storage block with an internal garden strip separating the stacks from reading areas around the perimeter — evoking the clustered pattern of the historic city composed of interlocking, contiguous blocks.

## Cement workers' housing and Mövenpick petra

The housing complex for cement company employees in Fuheis (1983) is amongst Badran's most celebrated works. Unusually, he used concrete rather than stone as the primary material. With its white colouring and stacked massing, the complex evokes the Greek vernacular — that emblematic Mediterranean model of white volumes harmonising with sea and sky. The sloping site is registered clearly through stepped levels, with lighting, views, and balconies provided to all units, reflecting Badran's consistent use of topography to enrich the urban spatial experience.

The Mövenpick Hotel in Wadi Musa near Petra (1997), known as the 'Nabataean Citadel', similarly exploits its terrain. The seven-storey hotel overlooks the valley where Petra lies, with slopes and varied levels providing windows and balconies with exceptional views. Inside, a large central courtyard surrounded by corridors, dining areas, and guest rooms provides natural light and ventilation. Badran's signature gently curved arches, mashrabiyya screens, and a central pool animate the interior, with stone and timber chosen over glass and metal to reinforce warmth and authenticity.

## Conclusion

Badran's architectural character reflects the modernist influences he encountered in the West, synthesised into his own distinctive style. He cannot be described as a traditionalist, nor can his works be characterised as repetitions of the classical Arab-Islamic heritage. In all his designs, he has affirmed that the architect's task is to enter into dialogue with a site — its conditions and particularities — in order to put down roots and engage with its environment. His works are distinguished by meticulous attention to spatial experience, precise handling of visual aesthetics, and a mastery of combining traditional materials such as stone and timber with concrete and contemporary technology, creating an architectural model simultaneously rooted in heritage and shaped by the post-industrial age.

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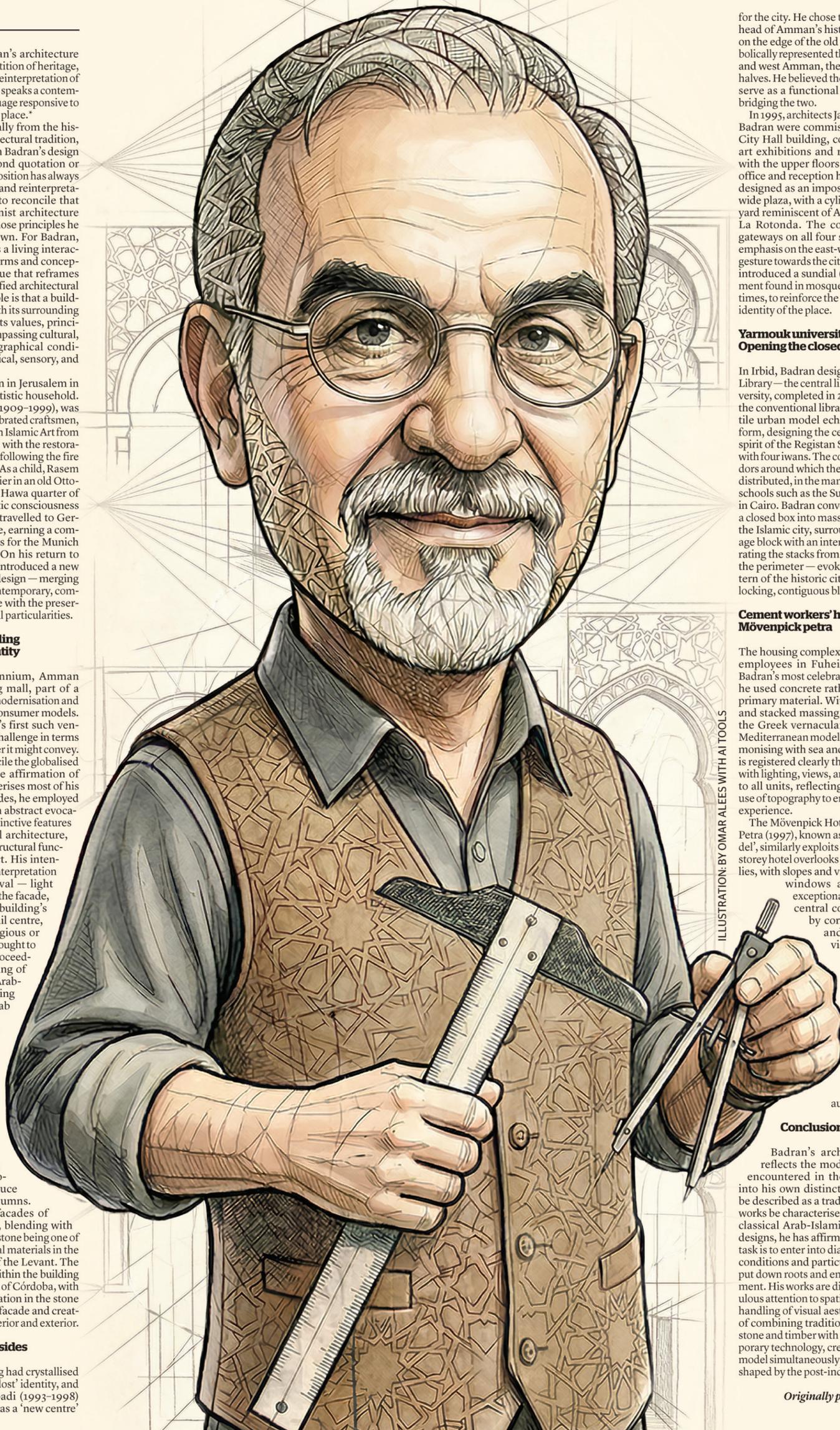


ILLUSTRATION BY OMAR ALEES WITH AI TOOLS