



## FAITH

'Jordan to take all necessary measures to reopen Al Aqsa Mosque'

2



## ENERGY

Gas-connected factories few but critical to industrial production

— JCI

3



## BUSINESS

Government launches 'Amman Bridge', NRW reduction investment projects

7



## FASHION

Under a Baroque fresco, Valentino returns to Rome

8



Friday-Saturday, March 13-14, 2026 | Ramadan 23-24, 1447 Hijri



## King receives call from Netherlands monarch

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah, during a phone call with King Willem-Alexander of The Netherlands on Thursday, emphasised the need to intensify international efforts to halt the danger-

ous escalations in the region.

His Majesty reiterated that Jordan's priority is the protection of its citizens, and that the Kingdom will continue to take all necessary measures to safeguard its security

and stability, according to a Royal Court statement.

The King warned against exploiting current developments in the region as a pretext to violate the freedom of worshippers to access Al Aqsa Mosque,

and to create new facts on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza.

His Majesty also emphasised the importance of supporting Lebanon's efforts to maintain its security, stability and sovereignty.

For his part, King Willem-Alexander expressed the Netherlands' solidarity with Jordan, reaffirming his country's commitment to the two-state solution as the path to achieving peace.

## Crown Prince visits Royal Jordanian Airlines

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein visited the headquarters of Royal Jordanian Airlines (RJ) on Thursday.

His Royal Highness was briefed by RJ Vice Chairman and CEO Samer Majali on the company's operations,

future development plans and its action plan to continue operating flights during the current regional situation, according to a Royal Court statement.

The Crown Prince highlighted the importance of continuing to develop RJ's services,

particularly through investment in technology, to enhance the passenger experience.

RJ Chairman Said Darwazah and Director of the Office of the Crown Prince Zaid Baqain accompanied His Royal Highness on the visit.



HRH Crown Prince Hussein visits the headquarters of Royal Jordanian Airlines on Thursday



## High-level delegation meets Syrian president to discuss cooperation, reconstruction, security

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy prime minister and Minister of foreign affairs, Ayman Safadi, along with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti and General Intelligence Department Director Maj. Gen. Ahmad Husni, met on Thursday with Syrian President Ahmad Al Sharaa, in the presence of Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Al Shaibani.

During the meeting, Safadi conveyed His Majesty King Abdullah's greetings and commitment to advancing relations between Jordan and Syria, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

President Al Sharaa extended his greetings in return, underlining the strong ties between the two countries and stressing the importance of enhancing cooperation across various fields for the benefit of their peoples.

The discussions formed part of broader efforts to strengthen bilateral relations, focusing on expanding



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi meets on Thursday with

cooperation and addressing recent regional developments. Both sides reiterated their commitment to joint efforts in combating terrorism, as well as the smuggling of drugs and weapons, through established bilateral mechanisms.

Safadi and Al Shaibani welcomed the continued progress in ties and emphasised the

importance of sustaining joint initiatives to benefit both Jordan and Syria.

The ministers reviewed practical measures to build on achievements in key sectors, including the economy, trade, transport, water, energy, defence and security.

They tasked liaison officials in the foreign ministries of both

countries with preparing for the second session of the Higher Coordination Council in Amman, following up on the council's inaugural meeting on May 20, 2025.

Safadi reiterated Jordan's full support for Syria's reconstruction and recovery efforts, emphasising principles that preserve Syria's unity, sovereignty, sta-

bility and the safety of its citizens while safeguarding the rights of all Syrians.

The meeting also addressed the repercussions of recent regional escalations and Iranian attacks on Arab countries, discussing ways to restore calm and advance diplomatic efforts to strengthen security and stability. Both sides condemned the recent Iranian attacks on Jordanian territory and the Gulf states.

The ministers also condemned repeated Israeli attacks and interventions in Syria, describing them as violations of international law that threaten Syria's security, stability and citizens, as well as regional stability. They called for Israel's immediate withdrawal to the lines defined in the 1974 Syria-Israel Disengagement Agreement.

They also agreed to maintain ongoing coordination and consultations at all levels on bilateral and regional issues.

## Jordan welcomes UN Security Council resolution condemning Iranian attacks

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan on Thursday welcomed the UN Security Council's adoption of a resolution, submitted by Jordan and Gulf Cooperation Council countries, condemning "unjustified" Iranian attacks targeting the Kingdom and several Gulf states.

The resolution, introduced by Bahrain in its capacity as representative of the Arab Group at the Security Council, received the backing

of 135 co-sponsoring countries, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

The ministry said the adoption of the resolution reflects broad international consensus condemning the Iranian attacks and rejecting violations of the sovereignty, security and stability of Arab states, as well as threats to the safety of their citizens.

It added that the resolution represents an

important step towards strengthening regional security and stability and easing tensions in the region.

The Foreign Ministry stressed the need for Iran to comply with international law and to halt attacks that threaten regional stability, reiterating Jordan's denunciation of the Iranian attacks targeting its territory.

Continued on page 5

## Israel strikes Beirut after threatening to expand Lebanon operations



Smoke rises after an Israeli air strike targeted an area in the southern suburbs of the Lebanese capital Beirut on Thursday

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AFP) — Israel renewed its strikes on Beirut on Thursday, as it threatened to expand operations and seize territory in Lebanon if Hezbollah did not stop its attacks.

The Israeli military issued a call to evacuate ahead of the Beirut attack, after having also widened its evacuation warning for residents in southern Lebanon to include areas below the Zaharani River, around 40 kilometres north of Israel.

After Hezbollah an-

nounced a new operation against Israel on Wednesday night, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said the following day that he had ordered troops to "prepare for expanding" attacks in Lebanon.

"I warned the president of Lebanon that if the Lebanese government does not know how to control the territory and prevent Hezbollah from threatening northern communities and firing towards Israel — we will take the territory and do it ourselves,"

Katz said.

The Israeli military later announced "a wave of strikes targeting Hezbollah infrastructure across Beirut", with AFP TV footage showing dark smoke rising into the sky above Bashoura, in the heart of the Lebanese capital.

Bashoura is generally a busy part of town, adjacent to Beirut's commercial centre, where many large companies and government institutions are based.

Continued on page 5

## Iran threatens prolonged war as Trump says it is near defeat

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran warned it could wage a prolonged war with the United States and Israel that would "destroy" the world economy, even as US President Donald Trump said late Wednesday the Islamic republic was facing imminent defeat.

The defiance from Tehran came as fighting around the strategic Strait of Hormuz — the

waterway carrying a fifth of the world's oil — sent shock waves through energy markets, prompting emergency releases from global reserves and a limited draw on US stockpiles.

Oil prices have surged since February 28, when the United States and Israel launched air strikes on Iran that killed its supreme lead-

er and plunged the Middle East into conflict.

Retaliatory Iranian missile strikes and drone attacks have brought shipping through the strait almost to a halt, forcing governments to scramble to contain the fallout, while Trump said Iran was "pretty much at the end of the line".

Continued on page 5



## CPF opens registration for 'Tawasol' 2026 Forum

AMMAN (JT) — The Crown Prince Foundation (CPF) on Thursday announced the opening of registration to attend the "Tawasol" 2026 Forum, which will be held under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Hussein on May 16 at the King Hussein Bin Talal Convention Centre at the Dead Sea area.

CPF said that registration requests will be accepted through a link to be published on its social media platforms starting at 1pm on Thursday, and will remain open until venue capacity is reached, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The CPF invited those wishing to attend to fill out the registration form via the designated link, noting that participation will later be confirmed on a first-come, first-served basis.

The annual Tawasol Forum is organized as part of the foundation's efforts to promote na-

tional dialogue and strengthen youth participation in discussing key national issues identified throughout the year for each edition.

The forum also aims to involve young people in shaping shared visions for the future.

The upcoming event marks the fourth edition of the forum, following three previous editions that saw expanding participation and a growing diversity of stakeholders engaged in dialogue sessions.

The CPF noted that, as it marks 10 years since its establishment, it reflects with appreciation on a decade of working alongside youth in Jordan, describing the experience as more than programmes and initiatives, but rather a space where young people's ideas, experiences and ambitions meet.

Through this engagement, the foundation said that it has witnessed the diversity and

potential of Jordan's youth, whose talents and capabilities reflect the country's promising future.

It stressed that empowering youth and investing in their ideas represents a genuine investment in the nation's future.

The forum continues to evolve to support this vision by expanding dialogue that brings together young people with decision-makers, sector leaders, experts and influential institutions in open discussions on national priorities and pathways for progress.

The event will feature both in-person participation and live broadcasts, aiming to encourage broader engagement in discussions related to national affairs while highlighting development opportunities across sectors and the role of youth as active partners in shaping Jordan's future.

## 'Jordan to take all necessary measures to reopen Al Aqsa Mosque'

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Khalayleh on Thursday renewed Jordan's condemnation of the unprecedented closure of Al Aqsa Mosque, describing it as a crime against the mosque and Muslims, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan.

In remarks to Al Mamlaka, Khalayleh said that the closure of Al Aqsa Mosque represents a "precedent that has not occurred since the beginning of the occupation".

He stressed that Al Aqsa Mosque is an Islamic symbol and an integral part of Muslim faith, reiterating that the ministry is "the only authority with the right over Al Aqsa Mosque and the body responsible for deciding whether it is opened or closed".

Khalayleh noted that Jordanian diplomacy, led by His Majesty King Abdullah, continues to take the necessary steps to ensure the reopening of Al Aqsa Mosque.

In a statement, the ministry expressed deep concern over the occupation authorities' decision to close Al Aqsa Mosque, citing ongoing events in the region. It said that the unprecedented closure, particularly during the last 10 days of Ramadan, constitutes a crime against the mosque and Muslims



File photo

Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Khalayleh on Thursday says that the closure of Al Aqsa Mosque represents a 'precedent that has not occurred since the beginning of the occupation'

around the world.

The ministry reiterated that the entire Al Aqsa Mosque compound, covering an area of 144 dunums, falls under the Hashemite custodianship of King Abdullah, stressing that is the sole authority responsible for administering the mosque, its facilities and annexes, as well as all Islamic endowments in Jerusalem.

The ministry highlighted the need to halt these violations, reopen the gates of Al Aqsa

Mosque to worshippers, and respect its sanctity and the right of Muslims to perform prayers without restriction or assault.

Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Egypt have condemned Israeli occupation authorities' continued closure of the gates of Al Aqsa Mosque / Al Haram Al Sharif to Muslim worshippers particularly during the holy month of Ramadan.

In a joint statement on Wednesday, the foreign ministers of the seven Arab and Muslim countries noted that the "security restrictions on access to the Old City of Jerusalem and its places of worship, coupled with discriminatory and arbitrary access restrictions to the other places of worship in the old city constitute a flagrant violation to international law, including international humanitarian law, the historical and legal status quo, and

the principle of unrestricted access to places of worship."

The ministers affirmed their "absolute rejection and condemnation of this illegal and unjustified measure, as well as Israel's continued provocative actions at Al Aqsa Mosque / Al Haram Al Sharif and against worshippers."

They also stressed that Israel has no sovereignty over occupied Jerusalem or its Islamic and Christian holy sites.

## Industry minister, traders review food supply chains to ensure stock stability

AMMAN (JT) — Industry, Trade and Supply Minister Yarub Qudah on Thursday discussed food supply chains and measures to ensure sufficient strategic stocks of essential commodities with a number of food traders and importers in the Kingdom.

Qudah stressed the importance of maintaining safe and adequate reserves of basic food items to ensure market stability and meet citizens' needs without disruption amid current regional challenges, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

During the meeting, attended by President of the Jordan Chamber of Commerce Khalil Haj Tawfiq, the minister listened to traders and importers outlining the main challenges facing import operations.

Participants also discussed the situation of certain commodities that could witness price



Petra photo

Industry, Trade and Supply Minister Yarub Qudah on Thursday discusses measures to ensure sufficient strategic stocks of essential commodities with several food traders and importers in the Kingdom

increases in global markets.

They stressed the need to facilitate import procedures and diversify supply sources,

including turning to alternative markets in different countries, to strengthen supply security and provide goods at the lowest possible

cost. Prime Minister Jafer Hassan on Monday chaired a meeting of the Higher Council for Food Security, where

he stressed that the directives of His Majesty King Abdullah over the years have enabled Jordan to build a solid strategic stockpile and achieve significant progress in the agricultural sector.

During the Monday meeting, Qudah noted that the ministry continuously monitors supply chains, trade, and transportation in coordination with government agencies and the commercial and industrial sectors to ensure the smooth flow of goods.

The minister highlighted measures to strengthen supply chain resilience, diversify import sources, and monitor stock levels daily.

Qudah added that the Kingdom's strategic reserves of wheat and barley are secure, with multiple alternatives in place to address any regional developments that may affect trade flows.

## Safaitic inscriptions, rock art documented in northeast Jordan desert

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — Yarmouk University in 2013 conducted research in Wadi Qataffi in north-eastern Jordan. Hundreds of inscriptions in Safaitic and Arabic from the Islamic Period were found by scholars.

The study dealt with 25 stones with 48 Safaitic inscriptions.

"Personal names that occur in the present collections of inscriptions are attested in Safaitic corpus and they occurred for the first time," said Professor Hani Hayajneh, an epigrapher from Yar-

mouk University, adding that lexical elements are not new.

The scholars tried to interpret inscriptions differently than usual given the context of the found material.

Various anthropomorphic and zoomorphic rock drawings were included into study.

"The drawing accompanying one of inscription includes a woman with wavy hair. Her hands are raised upwards and she holds an unidentified object in her left hand, maybe a stringed musical instrument," Hayajneh said,



Photo of Paths of Jordan

Eastern Desert, Jabal Qurma, camels with inscriptions

noting that her legs are sprayed, but her tight does not seem to be separated.

Near a woman is a stick figure, probably a man, the professor continued, adding that it is not clear

what the relation is of a woman and a man.

Another picture depicts a horseman fighting with a camel rider, where a horseman holds a lance in his left hand and lead-rope in his right hand.

The camel rider probably wears a helmet because of rounded shape of his head, Hayajneh underlined, noting that zoomorphic figures are clearly seen on rocks.

A she-camel has a curly tail which is directed linearly while the rider sits directly on the hump and has a weapon kit sword sheath or a quiver.



UNFPA photo

With an estimated 415,000 refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons requiring assistance this year, including 108,000 women of reproductive age and roughly 12,000 expected pregnancies, the need for sustained support is critical

## UNFPA appeals for \$7.2m to support refugee women, girls in Jordan

AMMAN (JT) — The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has launched a humanitarian appeal for \$7.2 million to provide life-saving sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender-based violence (GBV) services to 75,000 vulnerable refugees in Jordan throughout 2026, in line with the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP).

With an estimated 415,000 refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons requiring assistance this year, including 108,000 women of reproductive age and roughly 12,000 expected pregnancies, the need for sustained support is critical, according to a UNFPA statement.

However, as of March 1, only \$2 million (28 per cent) of the required funds have been secured, leaving a significant gap.

Jordan continues to host one of the largest refugee populations per capita globally, with over 400,000 Syrian refugees, the majority liv-

ing in host communities alongside camp settings like Zaatar and Azraq. Mounting regional crises have further heightened socioeconomic pressures and severely strained national systems.

Refugee women and girls are disproportionately affected, facing significant barriers to accessing maternal care, contraceptives, and protection services. Fertility rates remain high, particularly in camps, while GBV prevalence is a major concern, with many survivors facing obstacles to reporting and seeking help.

Periods of instability exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, as economic hardship and limited livelihood opportunities place additional strain on households, potentially increasing risks of GBV and other negative coping mechanisms.

"Without immediate funding, essential services that prevent maternal deaths and protect survivors of violence

face disruption. We urge the international community to sustain their solidarity with Jordan and ensure that no woman is left without access to safe delivery or protection services," said Himyar Abdulmoghni, UNFPA representative in Jordan.

UNFPA's response strategy prioritises the continuity of emergency obstetric care, safe delivery services, and the provision of contraceptives and menstrual health supplies.

On protection, the focus is on survivor-centred case management, psychosocial support, and the maintenance of Women and Girls' Safe Spaces. The programme explicitly targets the most vulnerable, including adolescents, female-headed households, and persons with disabilities.

UNFPA expressed gratitude to the European Union, the governments of France and Japan, and the UNFPA Emergency Fund for their generous support.



## Police caution public against approaching suspicious objects

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Public Security Directorate (PSD) warned the public on Thursday against approaching any foreign objects under legal prosecution.

The warning, which was made by Police Spokesperson Lt. Col. Amer Sartawi, came following the falling of an explosive object in Rusiefeh on Wednesday.

The security services were immediately dispatched to 60 Street to deal with the object, and no one was injured, Sartawi told The Jordan Times.

"Unfortunately, several people came close to the explosive object despite repeated calls to stay away from such dangerous items under any circumstances," the police official said.

"Such an unnecessary and reckless approach, he added, poses an immense threat to people's lives."

In addition, people gathering around this object hindered the authorities' handling of the dangerous object, according to Sartawi.

Several video clips circulated on social media showing dozens of people surrounding a burning object and posing to take photos and videos despite repeated calls by emergency personnel to step back for their own safety.

The PSD also announced that a fragment of shrapnel caused minor damage to a water pipeline in the Hashimiyah region of Zarqa early Thursday.

PSD said authorities received a report of a loud sound in the region at dawn, prompting security and emergency teams to head immediately to the site and search the surrounding area.

During the inspection, personnel found a fragment that had caused limited damage to one of the water pipelines, with no other damage reported, the spokesperson said, stressing that reports circulating about additional damage are inaccurate.

The PSD had instructed the public to adhere to instructions issued by the PSD and relevant authorities and to contact the unified emergency number (911) in the event of any sightings.

## Gas-connected factories few but critical to industrial production — JCI

AMMAN (JT) — Gas supplies to Jordan's industrial sector rely on three main sources, which have not been equally affected by the current regional developments, President of the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI) Fathi Jaghbir said.

Jaghbir said the first source is imported gas delivered through the regional network, whose supplies have recently been disrupted due to regional supply chain disturbances, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The disruption has temporarily halted deliveries to some factories connected to the network, prompting them to switch to alternatives such as diesel, heavy fuel oil, or liquefied petroleum gas to maintain production, he added.

Jaghbir said the second source is locally produced gas from the Risha Gas Field, which continues to supply several factories through direct agreements and has not been affected by current conditions. The field remains an important component of Jordan's energy security for the industrial sector.

The third source is liquefied natural gas (LNG), which remains available and has not been directly affected so far. However, Jaghbir noted that ongoing regional tensions could influence LNG prices or import costs if disruptions extend to global energy markets or shipping routes.

Factories affected by the supply interruption are able to shift to alternatives such as diesel, heavy fuel oil, or liquefied gas to operate boilers and thermal systems, ensuring that production continues without stoppages, he said.

Jaghbir noted that these alternatives are significantly more



Risha gas field in Ruweished in Mafrqa

expensive than natural gas, which could increase operational costs if factories rely on them for prolonged periods, particularly in energy-intensive industries.

He said Jordan's industrial sector has benefited in recent years from the introduction of natural gas as a lower-cost energy source, which helped improve competitiveness and strengthened the ability of Jordanian manufacturers to compete in both domestic and export markets.

Jaghbir warned that a prolonged disruption in gas supplies could renew pressure from rising energy costs, especially since alternatives such as diesel and heavy fuel oil are considerably more expensive.

He added that the sector is now better able to adapt to such challenges than in the past, thanks to more

diversified energy sources in some factories, the gradual expansion of renewable energy use and the operational experience gained in dealing with similar disruptions.

'Natural gas is mainly used in energy-intensive sectors...'

According to Jaghbir, the number of factories connected to the natural gas network remains relatively limited compared with the total number of

industrial establishments in the Kingdom. Gas supply is mainly restricted to factories located within the network's coverage areas or those linked through direct supply contracts, either via the regional network or through gas produced at the Risha field.

Despite their limited number, these factories account for a significant share of industrial production due to their heavy reliance on thermal energy in manufacturing processes.

"Natural gas is mainly used in energy-intensive sectors, including chemical industries, fertiliser production, mining, and certain food industries that rely on boilers and steam in production, in addition to paper, cardboard and some pharmaceutical industries."

Jaghbir said the impact of supply dis-

ruptions varies across sectors depending on their reliance on thermal energy, with heavy industries more affected than lighter industries that depend primarily on electricity or less energy-intensive processes.

Geographically, factories connected to the gas network are concentrated in major industrial zones and clusters located along the network's routes, including large industrial cities that host medium and heavy industries reliant on thermal energy.

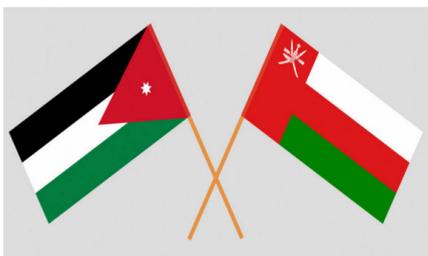
Jaghbir stressed that the current situation highlights the importance of strengthening reliance on local energy sources, particularly gas produced from the Risha field, to enhance energy security, reduce exposure to regional supply disruptions and help stabilise production costs for Jordanian industry.

## Jordan condemns Iranian drone strike on Oman's Salalah Port

AMMAN (JT) — The Foreign Ministry on Thursday condemned an Iranian drone attack targeting Oman's Salalah Port that caused damage to fuel storage tanks at the facility.

A Foreign Ministry statement described the strike as a blatant violation of Oman's sovereignty and a dangerous escalation threatening regional security and stability.

The ministry reaffirmed Jordan's soli-



darity with Oman in confronting the attack and expressed support for all measures taken

to safeguard the country's sovereignty, security and the safety of its citizens.

## Gov't, JSF sign MoU to develop public sector modernisation index

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of State for Public Sector Development Badria Balbisi and Jordan Strategy Forum (JSF) Executive Director Nisreen Barakat on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to design the National Public Sector Modernisation Index.

The agreement, signed at the Prime Ministry, establishes a framework for co-operation between the Public Sector Modernisation Programme Management and Implementation Unit and the JSF, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

The partnership aims to develop an integrated scientific methodology for the index, including primary and secondary indicators aligned with international best practices.

Speaking at the ceremony, Balbisi described the index as a "pivotal step" reflecting the government's commitment to ensuring that modernisation is driven by objective measurement of results and impact, rather than the mere implementation of activities.

The minister noted that the index will serve as a unified na-



The agreement, signed at the Prime Ministry, establishes a framework for cooperation between the Public Sector Modernisation Programme Management and Implementation Unit and the JSF

tional reference tool, enabling the government to monitor performance regularly, evaluate the impact of initiatives, and gauge their actual influence on the civil service based on accurate and reliable data.

Balbisi emphasised that the index is not solely for government use but will serve as a vital resource for decision makers in ex-

ecutive and oversight bodies, including both Houses of Parliament, academic institutions, and civil society organisations.

"This transparency will foster national dialogue regarding the progress and priorities of administrative reform," she added.

"The rapid shifts in public administration and accompanying challenges do not

with the JSF, citing its role as a national "house of expertise", and expressed appreciation for the technical support provided by "Expertise France" through the French Development Agency in developing sub-indicator measurement tools.

For her part, Barakat said the MoU extends national efforts to bolster public sector efficiency and entrench results-based management.

She noted that these objectives align with the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap and the Economic Modernisation Vision, both of which require capable institutions and advanced governance frameworks.

Barakat highlighted the JSF's ongoing role as an active national partner in modernisation, contributing to policy dialogues and the development of the national roadmap.

"Under the MoU, the JSF will collaborate with the modernisation unit to develop a methodological framework for the index that balances international standards with the specific institutional context and reform priorities of Jordan," she added.

Balbisi also underscored the importance of the partnership

## Jordan ranks eighth globally in potash resources — APC

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan ranks eighth globally in potash resources, CEO of the Arab Potash Company (APC) Maen Nsour said on Thursday.

Nsour said the company remains mindful of the "exceptional circumstances" affecting the region, stressing that early strategic planning has helped ensure production continuity and the timely delivery of fertilisers to international clients, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

He added that APC continues to operate according to its production plans, with potash supplies being

transported to the port of Aqaba for export to various importing countries.

Nsour also highlighted Jordan's unique position as one of the few countries that possess both phosphate and potash resources, giving the Kingdom a strategic advantage in global fertiliser markets.

Regarding demand amid the current regional developments, Nsour said existing agreements remain in place, while demand for fertilisers and chemical products continues at a steady pace. He added that the company is operating around the clock

to produce and deliver its products to international markets.

Addressing geopolitical challenges, Nsour said maritime transport, shipping and insurance remain the main concerns, particularly in securing vessels arriving at Aqaba through the Red Sea. However, he noted that the company has not experienced significant disruptions so far.

He added that while APC previously relied on the Strait of Hormuz to export potash to certain fertiliser manufacturers, the company has shifted to overland transport routes for these shipments.

## Growing demand, rising prices strengthen phosphate sector — JPMC

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Board of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC), Mohammad Thneibat, said that demand for phosphate and its derivatives is rising amid current regional developments, noting that selling prices are also increasing positively.

Speaking to Al Mamlaka TV on Thursday, Thneibat said that purchase orders for phos-

phate products are on the rise, reassuring investors and shareholders about the company's performance.

He added that supply chains are operating normally, although some delays in exports have occurred due to the current circumstances. Meanwhile, the company's factories continue to operate around the clock without disruption.

Thneibat noted that

JPMC maintains production input reserves sufficient for 35 to 80 days, while certain inputs, including ammonia and sulphur, have experienced slight price increases in global markets.

He said these increases are expected to be reflected in the selling prices of phosphate and its derivatives, including fertilisers and phosphoric acid.

## Three crew 'believed trapped' aboard Thai ship attacked in Gulf-firm

BANGKOK (AFP) — Three crew members were "believed to be trapped" aboard a Thai bulk carrier that was hit by two projectiles on Wednesday while travelling through the crucial Strait of Hormuz, the vessel's owner said.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard said on Wednesday on they had struck the Thai-registered Mayuree Naree, as well as a Liberia-flagged vessel, in the strait because the ships had ignored "warnings".

The Thai ship was struck on Wednesday morning while transiting through the Gulf waterway, after departing Khalifa Port in the United Arab Emirates.

"The strikes damaged the vessel's engine room and caused a fire," Thai transport company Precious Shipping said in a statement on Wednesday evening.

"Three crew members are reported missing and believed to be trapped in the engine room," it said, adding that authorities



Three crew members were 'believed to be trapped' aboard a Thai bulk carrier that was hit by two projectiles while travelling through the crucial Strait of Hormuz, the vessel's owner said

were working to rescue them.

The Omani navy had rescued 20 sailors and efforts were under way to rescue the remaining three, the Thai navy said on Wednesday.

Thailand's foreign ministry said all 23 crew members were Thai.

Since strikes by the United States and Israel against Iran in late February ignited

the Middle East war, the Islamic republic has launched its own attacks against its oil-exporting neighbours.

The strikes have threatened shipping in the Strait of Hormuz

and plunged the global energy economy into crisis.

The strait is a crucial waterway through which a fifth of global oil supplies usually pass.

## Drone falls near Dubai financial district after Iran threats

DUBAI (AFP) — A drone fell near Dubai's financial district on Thursday, an AFP journalist saw, a day after some companies evacuated the area following threats from Iran against economic targets linked to the US and Israel.

On Wednesday, US banking giant Citi, consultancies Deloitte and PwC, as well as other firms closed their offices or told employees to leave, mainly in Dubai's financial district, sources told AFP.

It followed threats from Tehran in the wake of a reported US-Israeli attack on a bank in Iran.

Dubai is a major financial hub in the Middle East and the United Arab Emirates has borne the brunt of Iran's attacks against its Gulf neighbours since the war erupted on February 28.

Authorities in the city said a drone attack in the Al Bada'a area caused falling debris to hit the facade of a building on Sheikh Zayed Road — a key thoroughfare that runs close to Du-



A stepladder assesses the damage after a building was hit by a reported drone strike in Dubai's Creek Harbour on Thursday

bai's International Financial Centre.

An AFP journalist saw the wreckage of a fallen drone near a building in the area.

Another correspondent heard explosions and saw clouds of smoke rise above Al Bada'a, which dissipated shortly after.

The Dubai government's Media Office said in statements on X that there were no casualties.

Iran has taken aim at US assets but also civilian infrastructure including airports and ports around the Gulf in retaliation

for US-Israeli attacks that decimated its leadership.

Further north in Kuwait, drone strikes caused damage at the international airport, civil aviation authorities said, but there were no casualties.

The facility has come under fire several times since Iran began its bombing campaign.

The Gulf has borne the brunt of Iran's attacks since the Middle East war began, with 24 people killed in the region including seven US service members and 11 civilians.



The presidents of Russia (centre) and Turkey (3rd from right) inaugurated the TurkStream pipeline in 2020

## Kremlin accuses Ukraine of 'reckless' strikes on major gas pipeline

MOSCOW (AFP) — The Kremlin accused Ukraine on Thursday of targeting a major gas pipeline in southern Russia that leads to Turkey with "reckless" drone strikes.

Ukraine has hit Russian energy targets throughout Moscow's four-year offensive, a war that has killed thousands and displaced millions.

"At night, there were renewed attempts to attack the Russkaya compressor station with drones," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry

Peskov said, calling the pipeline an "international facility" that "ensures energy security for Turkey".

"These are absolutely reckless actions by the Kyiv regime," Peskov said.

Russia's defence ministry said it had downed 10 Ukrainian-launched drones in the early hours of Thursday "above the gas compressor station that supplies gas to the TurkStream pipeline".

The station lies in Russia's southern Krasnodar region,

which is regularly targeted by Ukrainian drone strikes.

State-owned Russian gas producer Gazprom earlier said that the Russkaya and Beregovaya stations were targeted.

It called them "critical energy infrastructure facilities ensuring the reliability of gas exports via the TurkStream and Blue Stream gas pipelines".

Russia has decimated much of Ukraine's energy infrastructure in more than four years of war.

## US Senate passes housing bill as lawmakers seek cost-of-living win

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — The US Senate overwhelmingly passed a bipartisan housing bill on Thursday aimed at boosting construction of affordable homes, giving lawmakers a rare legislative victory they hope to tout to voters worried about rising living costs.

With November's midterm elections approaching, Democrats and Republicans have been eager to show voters they are tackling the affordability crisis — although the legislation's path through the House of Representatives looks less certain.

The 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act cleared the upper chamber of Congress by 89 votes to 10, reflecting broad concern over soaring rents and home prices across the United States.

"This landmark, bipartisan bill will help tackle the root cause of this crisis by getting more homes built in every community across the country," said Elizabeth Warren, the top Democrat on the Senate Banking,



The US Capitol building is seen on Monday in Washington, DC

Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee.

As well as incentives to build new homes, the measure includes programmes to convert abandoned buildings into housing developments and grants to renovate existing properties.

But it faces an uncertain future in the House of Representatives, where conservative Republicans have

raised objections and warned the Senate version may need significant changes.

Members of the right-wing House Freedom Caucus have criticised provisions that would curb institutional investors from buying single-family homes and a temporary ban on a central bank digital currency included in the text.

Speaker Mike John-

The White House has backed the Senate legislation, though housing policy has struggled to break through in Washington as the war in Iran and other issues dominate the political agenda.

President Donald Trump has instead focused heavily on his proposed SAVE America Act, a voting bill he has made his top legislative priority.

Trump has insisted he will not sign any new legislation until Congress passes that package, although bills can still become law without a president's signature as long as they are not vetoed.

Still, supporters say the housing measure offers Congress a rare chance to address an affordability issue that resonates across party lines.

"This bill offers real solutions that will unlock new home construction, drive down prices and increase the supply of affordable homes," Senate Republican Majority Leader John Thune said in a floor speech earlier this week.

### CONFLICT

## Sky of fire as war returns to northern Israel

HAIFA, Israel (AFP) — Flashes of fire tore through the night sky over Haifa as a volley of projectiles streaked toward northern Israel from across the Lebanese border.

Caught in the open street, an AFP team witnessed the rocket fire alongside residents, who usually rush for shelter when sirens wail across the city.

It was around 8pm on Wednesday. Darkness had already settled over the sprawling Mediterranean port, whose terraced neighbourhoods climb from the shoreline to the northern slopes of Mount Carmel.

Haifa is known for its mix of Jewish and Arab communities. The

city also hosts sensitive strategic infrastructure, including an oil refinery and a naval base.

Muslim families were finishing Iftar, the meal that breaks the Ramadan fast, while the trendy restaurants in the city were serving their last dinners.

On the 12th day of the Middle East war, night-time activity had noticeably thinned in Haifa.

Located roughly 30 kilometres from the Lebanese border, Haifa has also regularly been targeted by rockets fired by Hizbollah, the Iran-backed Shia movement and a sworn enemy of Israel.

Hizbollah launched attacks on Israel in support of its spon-

sors in Tehran, opening a new front in the conflict after Israel the United States launched a massive campaign against the Islamic republic.

Israel launched strikes on Hizbollah strongholds and targets in Lebanon in retaliation, and ground forces are currently conducting operations in border areas.

Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese have fled their homes, and strikes have expanded beyond the vague confines of Hizbollah's traditional strongholds.

Back in Haifa, several orange flashes ripped through the night sky without warning, immediately sending passersby scrambling for

cover.

Dull explosions echoed overhead, rattling windows and reverberating through the area.

Muslim families were finishing Iftar, the meal that breaks the Ramadan fast...

Their precise origin was impossible to determine, but the patterns suggested that interceptor missiles from Israel's Iron Dome air-defence system were being launched, streaking vertically up-

ward toward incoming projectiles.

Moments later, the piercing wail of air-raid sirens shattered the night-time silence.

### 'Considerable fire'

While Israel's detection systems are highly effective at identifying missiles launched from Iran, they do not always provide advance warning of rockets or drones fired by Hizbollah from nearby Lebanon.

The last diners seated at outdoor terraces hurried indoors and the AFP team took refuge in a vaulted stone cellar dating back to the Mamluk era.

Waiters watched the sky cautiously from the doorway as though

it might offer some protection from falling shrapnel.

From Ben-Gurion Avenue, lined with trees and restaurants, it was difficult to determine the nature of the rocket fire.

Only one thing was clear from the trajectory: The attack had come from the north, from Lebanon.

According to a military estimate cited by defence correspondents from several Israeli media outlets, Hizbollah fired approximately 100 rockets toward northern Israel on Wednesday evening at around 8pm, launching them from multiple locations in Lebanon.

Emergency services reported that two peo-

ple were treated for injuries.

Haifa has frequently been targeted since the start of the war, caught in crossfire from both Lebanon and Iran.

Such scenes illustrate the daily reality of the war — repeated salvos and air-raid alerts, day and night, affecting millions of Israelis in the country's north and around Tel Aviv, areas particularly exposed to attack.

They also highlight the challenges of reporting on the war from within Israel.

While social media is flooded with many manipulated images, the publication of such scenes remains subject to Israel's strict military censorship.

The army notably refuses to release statistics on the geographic distribution of strikes or their exact number.

"Over the past 24 hours, and especially in the last few hours, the rocket fire toward Israel from Iran and from Hizbollah in Lebanon has continued," Israeli army spokesman Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin said late Wednesday.

Urging the public once again to follow safety instructions and move into protected spaces, he acknowledged that in recent days there had been "considerable fire — both from Hizbollah in the north and from Iran".

The majority of the projectiles, he said, had been intercepted.

# Oil tops \$100 as Iran attacks offset IEA stockpile release

HONG KONG (AFP) — Oil soared above \$100 and stocks sank on Thursday as Iran's fresh attempts to hit supplies in the Middle East and threats to bring down the global economy overshadowed a record release of strategic crude by the International Energy Agency (IEA).

The IEA said on Wednesday that its members had agreed to unlock 400 million barrels of oil from their reserves — their largest release ever.

But the move was unable to overcome fears about the choking of energy supplies from the Middle East, with the Strait of Hormuz — through which a fifth of global crude passes — effectively shut down.

As Iran steps up attempts to disrupt supplies across the region, two tankers in Iraqi waters were reported struck on Thursday. Baghdad had already said it was cutting output because of the crisis, with Kuwait and kingpin Saudi Arabia following suit.

Also Thursday, Bahrain reported Iran had



A plume of smoke rises after a reported Iranian strike on fuel tanks in Muharraq on Thursday

carried out an attack on fuel tanks in the country, while Saudi Arabia said it had intercepted drones headed to Shaybah oil field and drones struck fuel tanks at Oman's Salalah port, where operations

were subsequently suspended.

And the UK maritime agency said in an alert Thursday that a container ship near the United Arab Emirates was hit by an "unknown projectile".

Brent jumped to a high of \$101.59 per barrel, while WTI spiked at just short of \$96. The two had rocketed as much as 30 per cent Monday to a peak of nearly \$120.

They both pared the

gains but with hostilities showing no sign of ending, analysts warned \$90-\$100 a barrel could be the new normal for a while.

Iran said it was ready for a long war of attrition that would "de-

stroy" the world economy, threatening any vessels from the United States or its allies.

The Revolutionary Guard threatened on Wednesday to strike "economic centres and banks" linked to US and Israeli interests.

The two "must consider the possibility that they will be engaged in a long-term war of attrition that will destroy the entire American economy and the world economy", Ali Fadavi, an adviser to the Guard's commander-in-chief, told state television.

Iran's Tasnim news agency also published a list of potential tech targets, including the offices of Amazon, Google, Microsoft and Nvidia in Gulf countries and Israel.

## Stocks in retreat

Analysts warn a prolonged disruption to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz — which also carries roughly a third of the fertiliser used in global food production — would deliver a severe economic shock, particularly in Asia and

Europe.

Among those badly hit are airlines, with many having to rethink flights through the Middle East, while the rising cost of fuel hits their bottom line. Air New Zealand said Thursday it would cut 1,100 flights over the next two months.

Wellington also said on Thursday it was considering using decades-old laws restricting vehicle use if fuel supplies dwindled.

And Australian officials announced they will adjust fuel quality standards to allow higher sulfur levels for around two months in a move that will release 100 million litres into the domestic supply.

The surge in oil prices has stoked fears about another spike in inflation and possible interest rate hikes, after central banks had been contemplating cuts just last month.

That has weighed on equities, which resumed their retreat Thursday.

Tokyo, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul, Mumbai, Wellington, Singapore, Tai-

pei, Manila and Jakarta were all deep in the red.

"When the geopolitical fire alarm is still ringing around the Strait of Hormuz, dumping barrels from emergency stockpiles is less a solution than a symbolic gesture," wrote Stephen Innes at SPI Asset Management.

"It might dampen volatility for a few hours but it cannot change the geometry of risk when the world's most important shipping artery is under threat.

"In trading desk language, the IEA release is the equivalent of pointing a garden hose at a refinery blaze."

Still, Trump reiterated his insistence that the strikes had already practically defeated Iran.

"They are pretty much at the end of the line," he told reporters, after delivering a speech to supporters in which he declared: "We've won... we won — in the first hour it was over."

Israel's military, however, signalled the campaign was far from finished and that it still had "a broad bank of targets".

## US military 'not ready' to escort tankers through Hormuz Strait — energy secretary

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — The US military is currently "not ready" to escort tankers through the critical Strait of Hormuz because all its assets are focused on striking Iran, Energy Secretary Chris Wright said on Thursday.

Wright's comments came as an attack on two oil tankers off Iraq killed at least one person and oil prices briefly soared past \$100.

Since launching the

war on Iran, US President Donald Trump has sought to calm the markets by offering US Navy escorts for oil tankers and reinsurance facilities for shipping companies, but no escorts have so far taken place.

"It'll happen relatively soon, but it can't happen now. We're simply not ready," Wright told CNBC. "All of our military assets right now are focused on destroying Iran's offensive

capabilities and the manufacturing industry that supplies their offensive capabilities."

He added that it was "quite likely" such escorts would be taking place by the end of the month.

As Iran launches a new wave of attacks against Gulf energy targets, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said the war "is creating the largest supply disruption in the history of the global oil market".

US and Israeli strikes on Iranian targets, including energy infrastructure, have also disrupted supplies.

IEA member countries on Wednesday agreed to unlock 400 million barrels of oil from their reserves, their largest release ever.

The United States will be releasing 172 million barrels, Wright said, under a swap arrangement that would see 200 million barrels

flow back to its Strategic Petroleum Reserve "within a year".

The move was unable, however, to overcome fears about the choking of energy supplies, with the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of global crude passes, effectively shut down.

Wright said he had meetings at the Pentagon on Thursday to discuss possible US Navy escorts for tankers.

The US energy sec-

retary told CNN on Thursday that he believed markets were "very well supplied with oil right now" and that short-term pricing was "based on psychology more than flows of oil".

The United States has also moved to ease sanctions on some Russian at-sea oil, notably allowing India a temporary waiver to buy that oil in order to address supply issues caused by the war.

## Jordan welcomes UN Security Council resolution condemning Iranian attacks

Continued from page 1

The statement also affirmed that Jordan will take all necessary measures to safeguard citizens, security, stability and sovereignty.

Jordan also stands firmly with Arab states in confronting such attacks and supports all measures taken to protect their security, sovereignty, stability and the safety of citizens and residents, the ministry said.

The ministry ex-

pressed appreciation for the Arab and international support for the resolution and the wide international solidarity shown with Jordan and the Gulf states in response to the Iranian attacks.

The UN Security Council adopted a resolution calling for Iran to halt its attacks on Gulf states, while not mentioning the US and Israeli strikes on Iran.

The vote was 13-0, with veto-wielding China and Russia both abstaining.

## Israel strikes Beirut after threatening to expand Lebanon operations

Continued from page 1

The strike there was the fourth in central Beirut since the beginning of the latest round of fighting on March 2.

Both Israel and Iran said Hezbollah on Wednesday launched a coordinated attack with the Iranian military. Hezbollah had declared it was staging a new operation.

The Israeli military said the attack saw the Iran-backed group launch around 200 rockets and about 20 drones in its biggest barrage since the start of the war.

An Israeli strike hours later in Ramlet Al Bayda, on Beirut's seaside, killed 12 people and wounded 28, according to Lebanon's health ministry.

An AFP correspondent at the scene saw a damaged motorcycle and two damaged cars, with the area, usually bustling with crowds, now sealed off by security forces.

Blood stains were on the pavement, and there was a small hole in the ground.

### 'We won't leave'

"We saw dead people on the ground," said Aseel Habbaj, a displaced woman who had been sheltering in a nearby tent after fleeing Israeli bombings in other areas of Lebanon.

"We were all asleep in my tent, when suddenly we heard a noise," Habbaj told AFP. "We jumped up and went to see what was happening," before a second strike wounded her husband.

'We won't leave, we will stay here even if we die'

Her 40-year-old neighbour Dalal Al Sayed said she had opted to pitch her tent at the seaside after fleeing attacks in southern Lebanon "because the last thing we expected was Israel to hit Beirut".

Her family could not afford to rent apartments, she said.

"We won't leave, we will stay here even if

we die," she added.

The seaside attack was the third in the heart of the capital since the Middle East war began.

Displaced people have been sleeping rough or in tents on the streets of Beirut, including in Ramlet Al Bayda, where some shelters were hit by shrapnel from Thursday's strike, according to an AFP correspondent.

Israel has also repeatedly hit the southern suburbs of Beirut, a Hezbollah stronghold.

A strike on a nearby branch of Lebanese University branch, the country's only public institution of higher learning, killed the head of the faculty of sciences and another professor, according to Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA).

Strikes on Aramoun, a residential area south of Beirut, also killed five people and wounded a child, according to the health ministry.

The NNA reported several Israeli strikes on the south of the country, where Hezbollah has long held sway.

### Hezbollah operation

Hezbollah said on Thursday that it targeted Israel's air defence systems near the town of Caesarea in the country's centre, home

to prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's private residence.

It announced earlier in separate statements that it had fired missiles at an Israeli military intelligence base in the suburbs of Tel Aviv and another base south of Haifa, among other attacks.

Lebanon was drawn into the Middle East war last week when Hezbollah attacked Israel in retaliation for the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israeli strikes.

Israel, which had kept up its strikes in Lebanon even before the war despite a 2024 ceasefire, has since launched air raids and sent ground troops into border areas.

The violence has killed more than 687 people, according to Lebanese authorities, while more than 800,000 people have registered as displaced.

After Iran's Revolutionary Guard announced their joint missile operation with Hezbollah, the Israeli military said it had launched "a wide-scale wave of strikes" targeting Hezbollah infrastructure across Lebanon.

It also said it hit "dozens of launchers" as well as Hezbollah intelligence and command sites in south Beirut.

## Iran threatens prolonged war as Trump says it is near defeat

Continued from page 1

"Doesn't mean we're going to end it immediately, but they are," Trump told reporters.

He said Iran's navy and air force had been destroyed, that it was close to running out of missiles and that US forces could knock out the electricity supply "within one hour" — leaving the country with a reconstruction that could take a generation.

But the US leader indicated that he would rather show restraint than take actions that would make it "almost impossible for them to rebuild their country".

The president had earlier said the United States must "finish the job" in Iran, adding that US forces had struck 28 Iranian mine-laying vessels.

He said Washington would tap US strategic reserves "a little" to help stabilise markets roiled by the war, and his administration later announced that he had authorised the release of 172 million barrels, beginning next week.

The International Energy Agency agreed to release a record 400 million barrels.

Israel's military, however, signalled the campaign was far from finished and that it still had "a broad bank of targets".

### Economic shock

With the conflict in its 12th day, Iran's Revolutionary Guard (IRGC) warned on Wednesday

they would strike "economic centres and banks" linked to US and Israeli interests, prompting more international firms to evacuate staff from Dubai.

The United States and Israel "must consider the possibility that they will be engaged in a long-term war of attrition that will destroy the entire American economy and the world economy", Ali Fadavi, an adviser to the Guard's commander-in-chief, told state television.

Iran said it targeted two commercial vessels in the Gulf after they entered the Strait of Hormuz "after ignoring the warnings" of its navy.

Analysts warn that a prolonged disruption to shipping through the strait — which also carries roughly a third of the fertiliser used in global food production — would deliver a severe economic shock, particularly in Asia and Europe.

The UN Security Council passed a resolution demanding Iran halt attacks on Gulf states, prompting the Islamic republic's ambassador to the United Nations to accuse it of a "blatant misuse" of its mandate.

The conflict has already disrupted two pillars of the Gulf economy — energy production and commercial aviation.

On Wednesday, drones fell near Dubai airport, injuring four people, authorities said. Others struck fuel tanks at Oman's Salalah port, according to the Oman News Agency.

### 'Wave of strikes'

In an apparent first since the war began, Israeli drones also struck targets in Tehran on Wednesday evening, killing members of the security forces, Iran's Fars news agency reported.

The Israeli military later said it was carrying out a "wide-scale wave of strikes" after the IRGC announced just after midnight on Thursday it had carried out a joint missile operation with Hezbollah against targets in Israel.

Pentagon officials have meanwhile briefed US lawmakers that the cost of the war exceeded \$11.3 billion in its first six days, The New York Times reported, citing people familiar with the classified briefing.

The conflict has continued to spill across the region.

One crew member was killed and 38 rescued in an attack on oil tankers near Iraq, Iraqi state television reported — without specifying their nationalities or providing details on who was behind the attack.

And an Iranian drone struck a tower in Dubai, Iranian state media reported on Thursday.

Lebanon said the death toll from ten days of fighting between Israel and Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah had reached more than 630, while more than 800,000 people have registered as displaced.

Lebanon was pulled into the war last week when Hezbollah attacked Israel following the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Israel later launched strikes in response to Hezbollah rocket fire. Lebanon's health ministry said eight people were killed in an Israeli strike in the country's east.

### 'Satan himself'

The US-Israeli assault began only weeks after Iranian authorities crushed mass protests, though the allies insist regime change is not necessarily their goal.

Iran's new supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, has yet to appear in public and officials said on Wednesday he had been wounded but was "safe".

Iran's health ministry said on March 8 that more than 1,200 people had been killed in US and Israeli strikes. AFP could not independently verify the figure.

Thousands of mourners gathered in Tehran to commemorate commanders killed in the attacks, the largest public gathering since the war began, held under a heavy security presence.

Yahya Rahim Safavi, a senior adviser to the new supreme leader, also struck a defiant tone, calling Trump the "most corrupt and stupid American president" and "Satan himself".

## THE JORDAN TIMES

An independent Arab political daily, established in 1975

Chairman of the Board  
**Samih Maaitah**

Director General  
**Hasan Jazzazi**

Editor-in-Chief  
**Raed Omari**

Editorial and advertising offices  
Jordan Press Foundation

The Jordan Times is published daily except Saturdays

Published by the Jordan Press Foundation  
Queen Rania Al Abdullah Street  
P.O. Box 6710  
Amman 11118

E mail: [editor@jordantimes.com](mailto:editor@jordantimes.com)  
[jotimes@jordantimes.com](mailto:jotimes@jordantimes.com)  
Website: [jordantimes.com](http://jordantimes.com)

Follow us on X Platform: [@jordantimes.com](https://twitter.com/jordantimes)  
Like our facebook page: [thejordantimes](https://www.facebook.com/jordantimes)  
Youtube: [thejordantimes](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjD19982062)

National Library registration number:  
**D/1998/2062**

Telephone: **5600800 ext. 2392**

Facsimile: **5696183**

Advertising facsimile: **5696183**

Circulation Department:  
**5600800 ext: 2383**

# Iran bets on long war to wear down Trump's US

Agence France-Presse

PARIS, France — Outgunned by the United States, Iran's rulers have been lashing out on multiple fronts, but experts say what looks like a chaotic reaction is actually a time-tested strategy to outlast a stronger enemy in a fight to survive.

To some, Iran's response since US and Israeli strikes killed supreme leader Ali Khamenei on the war's first day look like those of a decapitated and directionless power.

Why is Iran targeting Gulf countries, Turkey and Azerbaijan with air strikes? Why not seek those countries' support, or at least keep them neutral?

But various analysts see a well-honed strategy of asymmetric warfare in Iran's retaliatory offensive: resist the onslaught, and make the enemy pay a price so heavy they have to give up.

"Iran's strategy is to create pressure on Washington, DC by angering the Gulf and by creating upward trends in the price of oil, gas and other commodities," said Burcu Ozcelik, a Middle East security expert at Britain's Royal United Services Institute.

Although Iran's leadership was badly shaken by the strikes that killed Khamenei, now replaced by his son Mojtaba as supreme leader, and other top figures, the system is holding so far.

And the Islamic Republic is digging in for an all-or-nothing fight, against a United States that has less at stake.

## 'Exit ramp'

Tehran has little chance of defeating the US military.

But it can hope to outlast the current campaign, which is limited to air strikes. US President Donald Trump will meanwhile have to think hard about the potential political costs before sending in ground troops.

"Tehran is trying to raise the cost of escalation until Washington starts looking for an exit ramp," said Ali Vaez, an Iran expert at the International Crisis Group.

It is a page straight out of the textbook on asymmetric warfare.

In a classic 1975 paper, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars", the late professor Andrew Mack unpacked the reasons for outcomes such as the US defeat in Vietnam.

He underlined how weaker powers can exploit the gradual diminishing of a stronger adversary's political capacity to wage war.

Since the Iranians "don't have unlimited supplies of missiles and drones, we see them trying to use their firepower carefully, to make the conflict last long enough that Trump eventually says, 'That's enough'", said Agnes Levallois, head of the Middle East-focused think tank iReMMo.

"The longer the conflict lasts, the more Tehran believes the strategic balance, psychologically and politically, begins to shift" in its favour, said Danny Citrinowicz, of Israel's Institute for National Security Studies.

And the Iranian toolkit goes deeper.

"Tehran, cognizant of its inability to win a conventional war against the US, relies on irregular tactics to drag out the war, primarily through economic coercion and cost asymmetry," said a briefing by the US research centre Soufan.

That includes sowing chaos in the Middle East, bombing neighbouring countries and sending global oil and gas prices skywards by effectively shutting the crucial Strait of Hormuz.

## War of attrition

If Trump comes under enough pressure from Gulf allies and energy inflation, he may have to fold.

"Market impacts, Hormuz disruptions and oil prices are all variables that will weigh heavily on Washington's thinking," said analyst Emily Stromquist of US advisory firm Teneo.

The strategy relies on the assumption that Gulf countries will have more pull-on Trump than key US ally Israel, which is gunning for regime change in Iran.

If the Islamic Republic survives, it may pay a heavy price.

"The regime in Iran will have to make some deep concessions" in any end-game, said Ozcelik.

The Gulf states "will want to have some influence" in any ceasefire agreement, and Iran's relations with the rest of the region will be badly damaged, she said.

But none of that likely matters to Tehran, said Citrinowicz.

"From Iran's perspective, the goal of this war is to maximise its gains and 'imprint' in the minds of its adversaries the costs of fighting Iran in the future," he said.

# When a strategic sector struggles: Can Jordan's financial system save tourism

By Lubna Hanna Ammari

Tourism has long been one of Jordan's most vital economic pillars, not merely as a source of foreign currency but as a sector that sustains thousands of families and supports a wide network of businesses across the Kingdom. From hotels and tour operators to transport companies, restaurants and tour guides, tourism is deeply embedded in the national economic structure. Yet, today, this strategic sector finds itself confronting one of its most difficult periods in recent years, as regional instability and geopolitical tensions ripple across travel markets and investor confidence alike.

The importance of tourism to Jordan's economy cannot be overstated. According to official figures and economic assessments, tourism contributes roughly 15-18 per cent of Jordan's gross domestic product and supports hundreds of thousands of jobs directly and indirectly across the country. Tourism revenues alone reached nearly \$7.8 billion in 2025, reflecting its central role in generating foreign currency and stimulating economic activity across multiple sectors. In addition, the sector directly employs more than 60,000 workers across thousands of tourism establishments, ranging from hotels and restaurants to travel agencies and car rental services. These figures illustrate that tourism is not simply an economic activity; it is a national livelihood ecosystem.

However, the tourism sector is uniquely sensitive to regional developments. Unlike other industries that may adapt gradually to political or security shocks, tourism reacts almost instantly to changes in perceptions of stability and safety. The ongoing tensions and conflicts in the broader region have inevitably affected travel patterns, even when Jordan itself remains stable and secure. International tourists often view the Middle East as a single geopolitical landscape, meaning that disturbances anywhere in the region can translate into sudden cancellations and declining bookings in destinations that are otherwise unaffected.

For many tourism businesses in Jordan, the impact has been

severe. Hotels, particularly those in destinations heavily dependent on international visitors such as Petra and Wadi Rum, have reported sharp declines in occupancy rates during periods that are traditionally considered peak tourism seasons. Tour guides who rely on daily groups of international visitors have seen their schedules disappear almost overnight. Travel agencies face the difficult reality of cancelled itineraries, suspended contracts and unpredictable future demand. What makes the situation more difficult is that while revenues may collapse quickly, the financial obligations of tourism businesses remain unchanged.

The current moment represents a test of economic partnership. The responsibility of protecting tourism does not rest solely on business owners who have invested in the sector

Tourism enterprises continue to face fixed costs that cannot be easily reduced. Electricity bills, staff salaries, maintenance expenses and loan repayments must still be paid even when visitor numbers decline dramatically. Many tourism establishments expanded or modernised their facilities in recent years to meet growing demand, often relying on bank financing to support these investments. While such investments were rational during periods of growth, they now represent a financial burden during times of crisis.

This reality raises an urgent question about the role of financial institutions in supporting strategic economic sectors during exceptional circumstances. Traditionally, banks operate as lenders that provide credit under clearly defined repayment schedules. Yet, in times

of economic shock affecting entire sectors, the relationship between banks and businesses often evolves beyond conventional lending. Financial institutions become essential partners in ensuring the survival of industries that are crucial to national economic stability.

In this context, restructuring existing loans for tourism businesses is not merely a financial option but an economic necessity. When revenues collapse due to external shocks such as regional conflict or global crises, insisting on rigid repayment schedules can accelerate the failure of otherwise viable businesses. Temporary grace periods, extended repayment terms and flexible restructuring mechanisms can provide companies with the breathing space needed to survive until market conditions recover.

The logic behind such measures is not purely humanitarian; it is fundamentally economic. Allowing large numbers of tourism businesses to fail would trigger broader consequences across the national economy. Job losses would increase, local communities that depend heavily on tourism income would suffer, and the country's ability to quickly recover its tourism momentum once regional stability improves would be severely weakened. In contrast, policies designed to preserve existing tourism infrastructure can ensure that Jordan remains ready to welcome visitors when conditions stabilise.

Governments around the world have adopted similar approaches during periods of economic disruption. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, many countries introduced emergency financial programmes, loan guarantees and deferred payments specifically targeted at tourism and hospitality businesses. These interventions were designed not to stimulate immediate growth but to preserve economic capacity until normal conditions returned. The same principle applies today in the context of regional uncertainty.

For Jordan, the stakes are particularly high. Tourism is not only a source of economic growth but also a strategic sector that enhances the country's global image, cultural exchange and regional economic integra-

tion. Jordan's unique historical and natural assets from Petra and Jerash to the Dead Sea and Wadi Rum continue to attract visitors from across the world. The challenge therefore is not whether tourism will return, but whether the sector will remain strong enough to benefit when it does.

The current moment represents a test of economic partnership. The responsibility of protecting tourism does not rest solely on business owners who have invested in the sector. It is also shared by financial institutions and policymakers whose decisions can determine whether the industry weathers the storm or faces a wave of closures. By adopting flexible financial policies, supporting restructuring initiatives and prioritising economic resilience over short-term profitability, banks and policymakers can help safeguard one of Jordan's most valuable national assets.

Tourism enterprises continue to face fixed costs that cannot be easily reduced

As Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Imad Hijazin stated tourism may at times fall ill under the pressure of crises and global disruptions, yet it rarely dies. Recovery is not automatic. It requires timely decisions, collective responsibility and a clear recognition that the survival of strategic sectors ultimately serves the stability and prosperity of the entire national economy. In times of uncertainty, preserving tourism is not simply about saving an industry; it is about protecting livelihoods, communities and Jordan's place on the global tourism map.

The author is a specialist in educational technology

# How is Trump's 'freedom' war seen by those it aimed to help?

Agence France Presse

PARIS, France — Shirin, a Tehran resident, was one of many who celebrated the death of Iranian supreme leader Ali Khamenei. She drank wine and danced with friends. But as the war drags on, she's begun to question its logic.

A woman in her thirties, whose identity AFP is protecting for her safety, Shirin agreed to share her feelings about the 11-day conflict as part of an attempt to gauge the feelings of critics of the Islamic republic.

Before the war, huge crowds of protesters took to the streets in January for some of the biggest anti-government demonstrations in recent history. Thousands were killed in the subsequent crackdown by the country's Islamic authorities, rights groups say.

US President Donald Trump and Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu have advanced various justifications for their war on Iran, which they launched on February 28.

One of them was that it would help Iranians realise their dream of a different nation, with Trump telling them the "hour of your freedom is at hand".

"At the beginning I was in favour of the war," Shirin explained. "After the death of Khamenei [on February 28], I celebrated that with my friends."

But when air strikes struck fuel storage facilities in Tehran on Sunday, causing thick, oil-filled smoke that blotted out the sun, Shirin felt her sympathies shift.

"This isn't what we wanted.

We didn't want them to bomb our national assets to make us even poorer than we already are," she explained.

Others fret about the country descending into civil war, which could spur support for the status quo.

"A lot of people are worried about the post-Islamic period. Like my father, he thinks it might get worse after they are gone," a shopkeeper in the southern city of Shiraz told AFP, referring to the current clerical leadership.

"You get happy at their destruction. But the fact that it is so costly, that so many innocent people are dying, it makes me feel horrible," a young pro-opposition woman in her twenties in Tehran told AFP.

## Still 'hopeful'

In his message to an AFP journalist in recent days, the shopkeeper in Shiraz said he remained optimistic, convinced that the short-term pain and cost of the war would be worth it.

"The majority of people I know are hopeful things are going to get better and we will have freedom finally," he explained.

Others have said they have not fled so they can celebrate the end of the Islamic republic, if it comes.

Thousands of US and Israeli air strikes have pummelled military targets, but also domestic security infrastructure such as police and paramilitary buildings.

"They don't hit normal buildings. They hit police stations, mosques, military locations and the airport. But the noise of

the bombing scares us a lot. A lot," another woman in Tehran told AFP.

"If a police station is hit at the end of your street, all your windows shatter. That's what many have experienced," she added.

Iran's health ministry said on Monday that more than 1,200 civilians had been killed, figures that align with estimates from an overseas human rights group, and more than 10,000 have been injured.

Tens of thousands of people turned out for a pro-government rally for him in Tehran on his first day in power on Monday, while other similar demonstrations around the country have been reported by state media

AFP has not been able to access the sites of the many airstrikes in order to verify incidents as described by Iran's authorities nor obtain independent confirmation of the tolls.

## 'Depth of hatred'

While sustaining huge material

damage, the Islamic republic system has sought to project an image of solidity and continuity.

Officials named Khamenei's 56-year-old son, Mojtaba Khamenei, as their new supreme leader on Sunday. He is a hardliner believed to have been involved in suppressing waves of protests going back to the 2009 pro-democracy Green movement.

Tens of thousands of people turned out for a pro-government rally for him in Tehran on his first day in power on Monday, while other similar demonstrations around the country have been reported by state media.

Ali Ansari, a professor of Iranian history at the University of St Andrews in Scotland, told AFP it was extremely difficult to assess the consequences of the war on Iranian public opinion.

He said he was sceptical about any idea of a "bounce" for the government or a nationalist "rally round the flag" outpouring.

After a 12-day war with Israel in June last year, thousands of Iranian protesters demanding the end of the Islamic republic were back on the streets by the end of the year.

"I don't think that bombing a fuel depot was a good idea, but I would be surprised if the depth of the hatred for the regime is dissipated for very long," Ansari explained.

"Once the bombing stops, that's when we've got to keep an eye out and see what happens," he continued.

"I think if the regime survives, it will be so badly crippled it won't be able to do much."

# BUSINESS

Friday-Saturday, March 13-14, 2026



The Amman Stock Exchange records a notable increase in liquidity this week, with the average daily trading value rising by 10.3 per cent to JD9.5 million

## ASE liquidity rises as investors remain cautious amid uneven sector performance

AMMAN (JT) — The Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) recorded a notable increase in liquidity this week, with the average daily trading value rising by 10.3 per cent to JD9.5 million, indicating a partial return of market activity, while investors remain cautious and selective.

The financial sector benefited the most from the inflow of liquidity, accounting for 39 per cent of total trading value, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

It also posted the highest rise in its price index at 1.31 per cent, reflecting investor confidence in leading banking and

insurance stocks, particularly amid current conditions that favour relatively safer assets.

In contrast, the industrial sector showed weaker performance. Despite contributing 28.6 per cent of total trading value, it was the only sector to close lower, with its price index declining by 0.8 per cent, indicating possible selling pressure or a shift by investors toward other sectors.

The ASE general index edged up 0.86 per cent to close at 3,629 points.

However, the gains were not broad-based, as 52 companies ended the week lower com-

pared with 41 that recorded increases, suggesting that the market's rise was driven by limited gains in certain stocks rather than a widespread upward trend.

Individual stock performance varied widely. Shares of Jordan Insurance Company jumped 19 per cent, while other companies, including Al Amal Holding and National Insurance, declined between 6 and 9 per cent which requires investors to carefully select individual stocks rather than relying solely on overall market performance as an indicator, Petra reported.

## Government launches 'Amman Bridge', NRW reduction investment projects

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Investment launches on Thursday two "major" investment opportunities in the Amman Bridge project, and Non-Revenue Water (NRW) reduction project in the southern and southeastern areas of Amman.

The Ministry called on qualified companies and consortiums specialised in the design, construction, financing, operation and maintenance of major road and bridge projects to participate in the pre-qualification process of the project according to the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

The Amman Bridge project is one of the "leading" strategic projects in the transport and infrastructure sector, as it includes the construction of Jordan's first 15.8-kilometre suspension highway connecting the north and south of the capital, Amman.

The project will contribute to improving traffic efficiency on one of the busiest axes in the Kingdom, enhancing urban connectivity and supporting economic activity, according to a statement from the Ministry of Investment.

The Amman Bridge also aims to develop an advanced urban transport infrastructure, including: the construc-



The Ministry of Investment launches on Thursday two 'major' investment opportunities in the Amman Bridge project, and Non-Revenue Water reduction project in the southern and southeastern areas of Amman

tion of a two-lane road in each direction, a track for high-frequency buses, the use of intelligent transportation systems, modern propulsion solutions and energy-efficient lighting, enhancing mobility efficiency and reducing the environmental impact.

The project also provides traffic capacity, reduces travel time and improves the quality of life, in addition to being a "promising" investment opportunity within the PPPs projects

in the infrastructure sector.

The announcement issued by the Public-Private Partnership Unit at the Ministry of Investment noted that the project will be implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Works and Housing.

The project will operate on a transit system for a fee, while maintaining King Abdullah II Street as a free alternative road available to users, according to the

statement. The Ministry of Investment also launched another new investment project through its platforms and media, inviting qualified companies or consortiums to participate in the pre-qualification process of the NRW reduction project in the southern and southeastern areas of Amman.

The project is aligned with the National Water Strategy and aims to reduce non-revenue water and improve the

efficiency of water services and operation of distribution networks in the southern and south-eastern areas of Amman.

The announcement issued by the Public-Private Partnership Unit at the Ministry of Investment noted that the project will be implemented in cooperation with the Water Authority of Jordan and Miyahuna Company for implementation of the Project, according to the Ministry statement.

## Jordan, Bulgaria explore stronger trade ties ahead of investment conference

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Jordan Chamber of Commerce (JCC) Khalil Haj Tawfiq discussed with Bulgarian Ambassador to Jordan Metin Kazak on Thursday ways to strengthen trade and economic relations between the two countries and expand cooperation between their business communities.

According to a JCC statement, Haj Tawfiq stressed the importance of the participation of the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) and Bulgarian companies in the upcoming Jordan-European Union Investment Conference scheduled for April, noting that the event would help build sustainable partnerships and enhance direct communication between businesses in both countries.

He affirmed the chamber's commitment to deepening economic cooperation with Bulgaria by organising meetings on the sidelines of the conference and holding virtual sectoral meetings, particularly in information technology, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, machinery and textiles.

He also highlighted



Photo Courtesy of Jordan Chamber of Commerce

Chairman of the Jordan Chamber of Commerce Khalil Haj Tawfiq discusses with Bulgarian Ambassador to Jordan Metin Kazak ways to strengthen trade and economic relations between the two countries

the importance of exchanging trade delegations and organising joint exhibitions.

Haj Tawfiq noted that economic relations between the two countries date back several decades, with several cooperation agreements signed with the BCCI, reflecting strong institutional ties and providing a solid foundation for further economic cooperation.

He added that trade exchange and investment levels between the two countries remain below expectations, despite promising opportunities for cooperation in sectors including information and communications technology, logistics, tourism, agri-

culture, renewable energy and food industries.

He also underlined the importance of enhancing cooperation in the tourism sector, calling for meetings between travel and tourism agencies in both countries to explore opportunities for collaboration and boost tourism flows, which would contribute to increasing tourist numbers and strengthening economic ties.

For his part, Kazak affirmed Bulgaria's interest, as well as that of Bulgarian companies, in participating in the Jordan-EU Investment Conference.

He said the embassy would coordinate with economic institutions

and the BCCI to encourage an economic delegation to take part in the event.

During the meeting, Kazak stressed the importance of developing economic ties between the two countries, particularly in food industries, information technology, and pharmaceutical and chemical industries.

He also highlighted the significance of the direct flight route launched late last year in supporting tourism and business travel. He noted the potential benefit of Bulgaria's experience in the public transport sector despite the relatively modest trade exchange between the two sides.

## China tightens export curbs on refined oil, report says

BEIJING (AFP) — China has tightened export curbs on refined oil products, Bloomberg News reported on Thursday, as Beijing seeks to shield its economy from the war in the Middle East.

The world's second-largest economy is the top importer of crude oil, with its refining operations mainly serving the country's massive domestic market.

It also exports various refined oil products including gasoline, diesel and jet fuel that totalled 58 million tonnes last year, according to official customs statistics.

However, because of the war, "Chinese oil refiners have begun cancelling agreed refined fuel export cargoes", Bloomberg News said, citing unidentified people familiar with the matter.

The latest instructions are "a step up" from last week's guidance to suspend shipments, which "had been understood as non-mandatory", according to the story.

Beijing authorised a release from its massive oil reserves in 2021 in response to spiking factory gate inflation

Asked about the report at a regular news conference on Thursday, foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said he was not famil-

iar with the situation.

Global energy markets have been shocked since the start of the US-Israel war on Iran, with oil soaring above \$100 a barrel on Thursday as Tehran's attacks on Gulf states overshadowed a record release of strategic crude by the International Energy Agency.

China is not a full member of the IEA and is therefore not obligated to participate in coordinated release.

The IEA's announcement did not allay concerns over the choking of energy supplies from the Middle East. The Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly a fifth of global crude passes, is effectively closed.

More than half of China's total seaborne crude imports last year came from the Middle East, according to analytics firm Kpler.

However, analysts say years of strategic stockpiling will allow it to withstand disruptions, at least in the near term.

China holds about 1.2 billion barrels in onshore crude inventories, equivalent to about 115 days of what it imports by sea, Kpler says.

Beijing authorised a release from its massive oil reserves in 2021 in response to spiking factory gate inflation.

The body that announced that decision — the National Food and Strategic Reserves Administration — has so far not issued similar measures in response to the current market turmoil.

Foreign ministry spokesman Guo said this week that "China will do what is necessary to protect its energy security".

## US stocks open lower as oil prices weigh on investors

NEW YORK (AFP) — Wall Street stocks tumbled early Thursday, with spiking oil prices in the wake of the US-Israel war on Iran making investors uneasy.

Shortly after trading started, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 1.1 per cent at 46,879.09.

The broad-based S&P 500 was down 1 per cent to 6,706.10, while the tech-rich Nasdaq Com-

posite Index was down 1.3 per cent to 22,426.80.

Oil prices breached the psychological barrier of \$100 per barrel briefly on Thursday, and were once again approaching it as US markets opened. Brent had risen 7.9 per cent at \$99.23, while WTI rose 8.1 per cent at \$94.33.

"Oil prices and also the uncertainty with respect to when the war will end" is weighing on

markets, Adam Sarhan of 50 Park Investments told AFP.

"The reality is that right now based on the facts that we know so far, there's no end in sight and that's the problem for investors," he added.

Since the United States and Israel launched their war on Iran on February 28, global oil supplies have been choked as the key Strait of Hormuz remains almost completely

blocked.

The waterway sees about a fifth of world energy supplies flow through it, and since the start of the war Iran has threatened any ships attempting to make the transit.

The conflict has seen Iran hit oil infrastructure in major Middle East producers, while US and Israeli strikes target Iranian energy infrastructure.

## AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

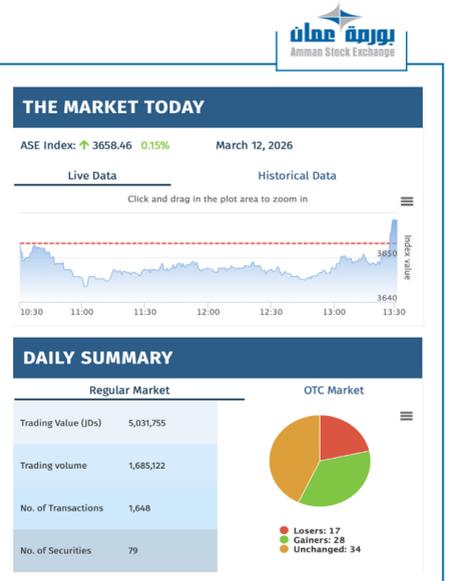
AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Thursday amounted to JD5 million spread over 1.7 million shares that traded through 1,648 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.15 per cent, closing at 3658.46 points.

Out of 79 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 28 companies rose while the share price of another 17 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Union Tobacco and Cigarette Industries by 10 per cent, Arab International for Education and Investment by 6.56 per cent, National Steel Industry by 3.61 per cent, Salam International Transport and Trading by 3.39 per cent, and Northern Cement Company by 3.16 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Injaz for Development and Projects by 4.35 per cent, Amwaj Properties by 4.35 per cent, First Jordan Investment Company Plc. by 3.33 per cent, Afaq Holding for Investment and Real Estate Development Company Plc. by 2.78 per cent, and Jordan Decapolis Properties by 2.38 per cent.



# THE JORDAN TIMES

# SPORTS

## AT A GLANCE

### RUGBY

#### Sheehan and van der Flier recalled for Triple Crown decider with Scots

DUBLIN (AFP) — Ireland coach Andy Farrell has recalled stalwarts Dan Sheehan and Josh van der Flier to the starting XV for the Six Nations Triple Crown decider with Scotland on Saturday. Both sides also entertain hopes of winning the title, with Ireland trailing the Scots and table-topping France, who host out-of-form England, by two points going into the final round of matches. Hooker Sheehan sat out last Friday's 27-17 win over Wales, whilst van der Flier came on as a replacement — he will form an all Leinster back row with captain Caelan Doris and Jack Conan, who was man-of-the-match last weekend. There is also a return for wing Tommy O'Brien, who was rested for the Wales game after an impressive turn in the 42-21 humbling of England. He replaces Jacob Stockdale, despite the latter scoring a try and creating another against the Welsh. However, O'Brien combined brilliantly with the other wing Robert Baloucoune against England.

### CRICKET

#### Last S. Africa, West Indies players leave India after flight delays

MUMBAI, India (AFP) — The final batch of players from South Africa and the West Indies have left India after being stranded for more than a week following the T20 World Cup, cricket's governing body said on Thursday. International air travel was thrown into chaos after airlines cancelled or rerouted flights because of the war in the Middle East. The International Cricket Council (ICC) said that in the last 24 hours "South Africa's remaining 29 members and the West Indies' final 16 members have departed on flights to their respective homelands". It added the departures brought to a close "a complex operation that has taken place under exceptionally challenging global travel conditions". Cricket West Indies had called the uncertainty surrounding their return "increasingly distressing" and pointed to "continued delays with charter flight arrangements organised by the ICC". The two-time champions exited the competition on March 1.

SYDNEY (AFP) — Iranian women footballers claiming asylum in Australia evacuated from their safe house on Wednesday after one team member changed her mind and revealed their location to the Iranian embassy, Canberra said.

Seven members of Iran's visiting women's football delegation had sought sanctuary in Australia after they were branded "traitors" at home for refusing to sing the national anthem.

But one member of the group had second thoughts after speaking to other players who had turned down asylum in favour of returning to Iran, Australian Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke said.

The woman exposed the location of the other asylum seekers when she contacted Iran's embassy in Australia.

Iranian media, including the Shargh newspaper and Mehr news agency, has identified the player who withdrew her asylum request as Mohaddeseh Zolfi. Official sources are yet to identify her.

"As a result of that it meant the Iranian embassy now knew the location of where everybody was," Burke said. "I immediately gave them instructions for people to be moved and that has been dealt with immediately."

Australian officials had "made sure this was her decision", Burke said.

There were fears male minders travelling with



An undated photo released by Australia's Department of Home Affairs on Wednesday shows six Iranian football players and a team official with two unidentified local officials (2nd and 3rd right) in

the team might try to prevent them seeking asylum.

Rights groups have repeatedly accused Iranian authorities of pressuring athletes abroad by threatening relatives or with the seizure of property if they defect or make statements against the Islamic republic.

#### Change of heart

Burke said each player

was separated from the squad at Sydney Airport and given time to mull the offer in private.

The last-minute change of heart could inflame an already tense situation between Iran and Australia.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has lauded the bravery of the women, vowing they would be welcomed with open arms.

But Iran's governing

football body has accused Australia of kidnapping the players and forcing them to forsake their home nation against their will.

Iranian players fell silent as the national anthem played ahead of a tournament match in Australia last week, an act seen as a symbol of defiance against the Islamic republic.

A presenter on Iranian state TV branded the play-

ers "wartime traitors", fuelling fears they faced persecution, or worse, if they returned home.

Five players, including captain Zahra Ghanbari, slipped away from the team hotel under the cover of darkness to claim asylum in Australia.

Two more team members, a player and a support staffer, were granted asylum before the team flew out of Sydney on Tuesday evening.

The Asian Football Confederation said the rest of the Iranian squad were at an unnamed hotel in Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur while awaiting the next leg of their long journey home.

The governing body said it would "provide all necessary support to the team during their stay until their onward travel arrangements are confirmed".

#### 'Strict surveillance'

Iranian-Australian migration agent Naghmeh Danai spoke to five players earlier this week to discuss their options to stay in Australia.

"They were under lots of pressure here. They did not have permission to talk to anyone," she told AFP on Wednesday.

"Under strict surveillance from the Iranian government officials within the team as team leaders or internal security," she said.

Although the side sang Iran's anthem, an ode to the glory of the Islamic republic, in later matches, human rights activists warned the damage was done.

"The members of the Iranian Women's National Football Team are under significant pressure and ongoing threat from the Islamic Republic," said Reza Pahlavi, the son of the late shah of Iran.

"I call on the Australian government to ensure their safety and give them any and all needed support," he said on social media.

## LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES



A view of the first the exhibit staged at PM23, 'Orizzonti/Rosso [Horizons/Red]' which hinges on the color closely associated with Valentino's designs over five decades

## Under a Baroque fresco, Valentino returns to Rome

ROME (AFP) — Italian fashion house Valentino returns to its roots on Thursday with a catwalk show in one of Rome's most spectacular venues, two months after the death of founder Valentino Garavani.

Around 800 people have been invited to the Palazzo Barberini, a lavish Baroque palace housing paintings by Italian masters Caravaggio and Raphael among others.

Valentino, known for dressing some of the world's most glamorous women, normally shows in Paris, despite having been established in the Italian capital in 1960.

But creative director Alessandro Michele has chosen to return to the Eternal City to showcase his fall/winter 2026-27 collection, the first for ready-to-wear since Valentino's death aged 93 on January 19.

Entitled "Interferenze" (interferences or disturbances), the early evening show will be held beneath Pietro da Cortona's spectacular fresco, "The Triumph of Divine Providence",

which covers the large ceiling of the palazzo's grand salon.

As a teaser, Valentino posted online a video mixing some of the venue's most iconic images, including the ceiling fresco, Antonio Corradini's "La Velata" sculpture and Francesco Borromini's helical staircase.

Another hint at the show's theme was in the invitation, which arrived with a brass button covered in marble-like enamel.

Alongside was a fictitious expert attribution report naming it as the button missing from a bust of Cardinal Pietro Valier by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, currently on show at the palazzo.

"In Baroque portraiture, the detail is loaded with meaning: the button holds the fabric together, serving as a point of closure and control," the report said.

"Its absence, or lack of visibility, in Bernini's work introduces a minimal yet eloquent void, almost a reminder: Vulnerability spares no image, not even that of power."

Strictly invitation only,

and with a black-tie dress code, the show will nevertheless be broadcast live on Valentino's social media channels and also on big screens around Rome, Milan and Naples.

Valentino had long been retired — Michele is the fourth creative designer since the founder left in 2008 — and the label is now majority-owned by Qatar investment fund Mayhoola.

French luxury group Kering also has a 30 per cent stake.

But the designer's death prompted tributes from across the industry and Hollywood for a man who became synonymous with glamour and beauty.

Valentino trained and worked in Paris before opening his fashion house in Rome.

Over the following decades, he dressed A-listers from Jackie Kennedy and Elizabeth Taylor to Princess Diana and Julia Roberts.

He was best known for his gowns in deep rich "Valentino red", and many of his looks entered fashion history.

## Engraved tombs help keep memories alive in Pakistan

By Maaz Khan  
Agence France-Presse

QUETTA, Pakistan — Men and women sit on the graves of their loved ones at a Shia Muslim cemetery in Quetta, south western Pakistan, reciting verses from the Quran.

Many of the lines of polished marble tombstones are engraved with the image of the person beneath as a permanent reminder of their life.

Mohammad Arif's father was killed with four other family members when their taxi was attacked during sectarian violence in 2014.

"I feel mental peace as well as in my heart when I visit my father's grave... and feel that he is seeing me with his eyes from the portrait," Arif, 28, told AFP.

Another mourner, Mukhtiar Ali, 42, had his late brother's image engraved on his headstone at their mother's request.

"Even with weak eyesight, she recognises the grave due to his portrait, and she gets happy and satisfied," he said.

Engraving portraits of the departed onto tombstones has become increasingly popular, particularly among the Hazara community in Quetta, the capital and largest city in Balochistan province.

Previously, people used to place portraits and photographs in frames on the grave, with Quranic verses inscribed by professional calligraphers on black and green flags.



This photograph taken on February 17 shows tombstones with engraved portraits of deceased people from the Hazara community at a graveyard in Quetta

But that left the images open to the ravages of heat, dust and time.

#### 'Serving the people'

Artist Sadiq Poya, 35, is responsible for many of the engravings, even providing them free of charge for those without the necessary means.

He said he was inspired to take up the craft while visiting a graveyard in the Afghan capital, Kabul, after studying art and calligraphy in his home country.

In Quetta, the mostly Shia Hazara make up about 40 per cent of the 1.2 million population, and have endured years

of religious, ethnic and sectarian persecution from militant Sunni groups.

Pakistan is majority Sunni Muslim and strict adherents do not allow portraits to be displayed on graves. But in the two Shiite graveyards, it is a different story.

Most of the graves belong to those caught up in waves of extremist violence and targeted killings and are decorated with images.

"In Islam, there is a bar on the display of portraits or photographs on the graves," said Shiite cleric Hashim Mossavi.

"The portraits on the headstones are a new

fashion but, in my opinion, if they are not displayed it is better."

Whatever the religious arguments, it seems clear that the living derive comfort from it.

"Compared to photographs on paper which fade away, the portrait engraved on marble is long-lasting and looks beautiful," said Talib Hussain, 32, at his father's grave.

Poya, who returned to Pakistan after 12 years in Afghanistan and difficulties pursuing his craft under the Taliban government, said technology has helped speed up the process.

Previously, he had to

sketch on the marble itself with markers before starting the engraving, making it a painstaking, lengthy process.

Now, thanks to a diamond-tipped cutting machine, it takes seven to 10 days to complete an engraved headstone.

"It is much easier," he said, describing his work as "a source of serving the people".

Depending on the size, engraved tombstones can cost from 20,000 to 30,000 Pakistani rupees (\$70 to \$105).

"Affluent people prefer to get the portraits of their loved ones on granite, otherwise marble is popular among common people," he added.