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Tuesday, March 17, 2026 | Ramadan 27, 1447 Hijri



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

His Majesty King Abdullah and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan hold talks on Monday to discuss regional developments

## King meets UAE president to discuss regional developments

Two leaders condemn attacks on Jordan, UAE, call for intensified efforts to reach comprehensive, sustainable calm

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah and United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Monday discussed regional developments and means to de-escalate the ten-

sions. The two leaders, during a meeting in the UAE, condemned attacks on Jordan and the UAE, and infringements on their sovereignty, reiterating that Arab countries have

not been part of the ongoing war and did not start it, but worked to contain the crisis and prevent drawing the region into conflict, according to a Royal Court statement. His Majesty noted

that Jordan continues to take all the necessary measures to ensure the protection of its citizens and maintain its security and stability.

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## Crown Prince inaugurates rehabilitated Jerash Comprehensive Healthcare Centre

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein on Monday inaugurated the rehabilitated Jerash Comprehensive Healthcare Centre.

The rehabilitation project was launched last year under the directives of the Crown Prince to improve the quality of healthcare services provided to citizens in Jerash, and to promote digital transformation in the health sector, according to a Royal Court statement.

The project was implemented by the Ministry of Health in cooperation with the Himmetna Health Association.

His Royal Highness was briefed by Minister of Health Ibrahim Bdour and Himmetna President Fadia Samara on the refurbishment of the healthcare centre, which serves more than 70,000 patients annually from across Jerash Governorate and neighbouring areas.

Health Minister Bdour said the project reflects national efforts to develop primary healthcare centres as the first point



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

HRH Crown Prince Hussein on Monday inaugurates the rehabilitated Jerash Comprehensive Healthcare Centre

of contact for diagnosing and treating patients and for the early detection of diseases, transforming them into modern, comprehensive facilities that provide services seven days a week, thereby helping to strengthen Jordan's healthcare infrastructure.

For her part, Himmetna President Samara explained that the project involved work

to expand the centre, establish new administrative and support facilities, and develop the infrastructure to enable the provision of more efficient and better-organised primary healthcare services.

The project also resulted in the introduction of new clinics, including internal medicine, telemedicine, orthopaedics and mental health, in order to

meet the needs of the community in a broader and more comprehensive manner, she said.

Samara added that the project focused on improving the patient journey by streamlining patient admission and discharge procedures and reducing waiting times, thereby enhancing privacy and improving operational efficiency.



## Foreign minister, Egyptian counterpart discuss regional tensions

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Monday received Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates Badr Abdelatty to discuss regional developments and bilateral coordination.

The meeting, held in implementation of directives from His Majesty King Abdullah and President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, follows a phone call between the two leaders on Sunday.

Both ministers underscored the "deep-rooted, historic brotherly relations" between Jordan and Egypt and the importance of joint coordination to serve mutual interests, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

Safadi and Abdelatty discussed the repercussions of the



Photo courtesy of Foreign Ministry

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Monday receives Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates Badr Abdelatty

dangerous regional escalation, exploring prospects for restoring calm and protecting the region from an expanded conflict. They emphasised activating diplomacy and joint

Arab action to address current crises and challenges

The two ministers renewed their condemnation of Iranian attacks on Jordan and brotherly Gulf Arab

states, rejecting such actions as an "unjustified escalation" and a "flagrant violation of international law and state sovereignty".

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## Jordan condemns Iranian attack on UAE, underlines Kingdom's solidarity

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday condemned the Iranian attack that targeted a civilian vehicle in the Al Bahya area of the UAE, resulting in the death of a civilian.

The ministry issued a statement rejecting and denouncing these "bru-

tal attacks", describing them as a "flagrant violation of the UAE's sovereignty" and a "dangerous escalation" that threatens regional security and stability.

The ministry also underscored Jordan's absolute solidarity with the UAE in the face of Iranian aggression,

affirming the Kingdom's full support for all measures taken by the UAE to protect its sovereignty, security and the safety of its citizens.

The ministry also expressed its deepest condolences and sympathies to the family of the deceased.

## 'Significant' Israeli ground offensive in Lebanon 'must be averted' — Western leaders' statement

Israel army says ground assault against Hizbollah under way in Lebanon

BERLIN (AFP) — The leaders of five Western countries said in a joint statement on Monday that a large-scale Israeli ground operation in Lebanon "must be averted".

"A significant Israeli ground offensive would have devastating humanitarian consequences and could lead to a protracted conflict," said the joint statement from the leaders of Canada, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.

The statement said that the leaders were "gravely concerned by the escalating violence

in Lebanon" and called for "meaningful engagement by Israeli and Lebanese representatives to negotiate a sustainable political solution".

Earlier on Monday Israel's military said it had launched "limited" ground operations against Hizbollah in southern Lebanon.

The leaders' statement said that "the humanitarian situation in Lebanon, including ongoing mass displacement, is already deeply alarming".

"We condemn Hizbollah's decision to join Iran in hostilities," the statement said, adding: "We

stand in solidarity with the Lebanese government and people, who have been unwillingly drawn into conflict."

"Hizbollah's attacks on Israel and the targeting of civilians must cease, and they must disarm," they said.

The Israeli military said on Monday it was carrying out what it described as "limited" ground operations against Hizbollah in southern Lebanon, with its defence minister warning that those displaced would not return home until northern Israel was secure.

Lebanon was drawn

into the Middle East war on March 2 when Tehran-backed Hizbollah attacked Israel in response to the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israeli strikes.

Israel responded with air raids on its northern neighbour and troop incursions into border areas.

Lebanon said on Monday that Israeli attacks have killed 886 people, including 111 children, in the country since the latest war erupted. More than 830,000 people have registered as displaced.

An Israeli military

statement said that in recent days its troops "have begun limited and targeted ground operations against key Hizbollah strongholds in southern Lebanon".

"This activity is part of broader defensive efforts to establish and strengthen a forward defensive posture, which includes the dismantling of terrorist infrastructure and the elimination of terrorists operating in the area, in order to remove threats and create an additional layer of security for residents of northern Israel," it said.

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AFP photo

Smoke plumes rise following Israeli bombardment on the village of Kham in southern Lebanon near the border with Israel, as seen from nearby Marjayoun, on Monday

Western allies push back on Trump call for NATO help to reopen Hormuz

LONDON (AFP) — NATO allies and other Western nations pushed back on Monday on US President Donald Trump's demand that alliance members help reopen the Strait of Hormuz, the critical conduit for crude oil that Iran has effectively closed.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said London was working with allies to craft a "viable" plan to reopen the waterway, but ruled out a NATO mission, while Berlin insisted it was "not NATO's war".

Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski noted the country's president had already "ruled out the participation of the Polish Armed Forces in this operation" as Spanish Defence Minister Margarita Robles said Madrid was "absolutely not" mulling a military contribution.

The lukewarm response from European capitals came after Japan and Australia voiced similar sentiments earlier Monday, with Canberra noting it would not be sending a navy ship to the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump over the weekend called on countries including China, France, Japan, South Korea and Britain to send warships to escort tankers through the strait, warning refusing would be "very bad for the future of NATO".

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# Jordan's Bianca Alassaf sets sights on Asian Games, Olympic dream

By Osama Alkafri

AMMAN — Jordanian rider Bianca Alassaf is aiming to place the Kingdom on the international equestrian map as she prepares to represent Jordan in dressage at the upcoming Asian Games in Japan, a milestone that could also pave the way towards the Olympic Games in the coming years.

If successful, Alassaf would become the first Jordanian woman to compete in dressage at the Asian Games, marking a historic step not only in her personal career but also for the development of the discipline in the Kingdom.

"Preparing to represent Jordan at the Asian Games in Japan is an incredibly special milestone in my career," Alassaf said.

"This historic opportunity would not only be a personal honour, but also a milestone for Jordan, as it would mark the first time a female athlete represents the country in dressage at the Asian Games," she added.

Dressage, often described as the art of harmony between rider and horse, demands exceptional discipline, technical precision and years of specialised training. While Jordan has a long-standing equestrian heritage, dressage remains a developing discipline compared with other equestrian sports.

Alassaf hopes that her participation on the international stage will



Photos by Rahaf Abu Khadijeh

Jordanian rider Bianca Alassaf is aiming to place the Kingdom on the international equestrian map as she prepares to represent Jordan in dressage at the upcoming Asian Games in Japan

help spotlight the sport's potential in the Kingdom while inspiring more women to pursue professional equestrian careers.

"My goal is to contribute to the development of dressage in the country, to empower fellow women in the region, and to bring Jordan to the global stage," she said.

She also expressed appreciation for the encouragement of HRH Princess Alia Bint Al Hussein, president of the Royal Jordanian Equestrian Federation, whose long-standing advocacy for equestrian

sport and animal welfare has played an important role in developing the sector.

"I admire her greatly, not only for her leadership in developing equestrian sport in Jordan, but also because she is such a strong advocate for animal welfare," Alassaf noted.

The journey to elite-level competition, however, has not come without obstacles. As a pioneer in the sport, Alassaf said that she had to overcome scepticism and structural limitations, including ac-

cess to specialised training and international competitions.

"As the first Jordanian woman to compete at this level in dressage, I have faced many challenges, from convincing people to take my ambitions seriously to finding the financial and structural support," she noted.

To access top-level coaching and competition exposure, Alassaf travels weekly between Jordan and The Netherlands, where she trains and competes internationally, a demanding sched-

ule both logistically and financially.

Another challenge has been confronting stereotypes about women in elite sport. "In some contexts, people may not expect to see a Jordanian woman competing at the highest international level," she said. "Rather than seeing that as a barrier, I've used it as motivation to keep pushing forward and proving what is possible."

Corporate support has also played a key role in sustaining her ambitions. Alassaf is backed by ma-



roy sponsors including Royal Jordanian Airlines and GWM Motors, whose support helps cover the substantial costs associated with equestrian sport.

Unlike many other disciplines, equestrian competition involves ongoing expenses ranging from horse care and specialised equipment to international travel and training.

"Corporate backing plays a crucial role in

sustaining an elite equestrian career in Jordan," Alassaf said. "Having the support of major sponsors allows me to focus fully on performance and development."

Beyond financial assistance, she added, corporate partnerships also help increase visibility for the sport in Jordan and across the region.

"When respected companies invest in athletes, it shows confidence in their

potential and encourages a broader culture of support for sports," she said.

Alassaf has also launched an initiative titled "The Empowering Girls and Women Project through Equestrian Excellence", designed to provide Jordanian girls and women with greater access to equestrian sport while helping them build confidence and life skills.

"I hope that my participation shows young girls in Jordan that it is possible to dream big and pursue sport at a professional level," she said. "If my journey can help young girls believe that they can follow their passion, then that would be incredibly meaningful to me."

Looking ahead, Alassaf sees the Olympics as a long-term goal but emphasises that building Jordan's presence in international dressage will require sustained collaboration.

"Strengthening the sport will require continued support from the federation and sponsors, greater access to high-level training, and more opportunities for riders to compete internationally," she said.

Ultimately, her ambition extends beyond individual success. "My hope is not only to compete internationally as an individual rider," Alassaf said, "but eventually to see Jordan represented by a full team, especially a team of Jordanian women, competing together on the international stage."

## ARCHAEOLOGY

# Qasr Hallabat reveals advanced Byzantine water-harvesting system

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — Qasr Hallabat was an integral part of the Limes Arabicus, located in the north-eastern part of Jordan, built during the Severan Dynasty (193 AD -235 AD).

During the Byzantine Period (5th -6th centuries AD) it was rebuilt, expanded and probably served as a monastic complex in Ghassanid time.

After the demise of Roman rule and the Muslim conquest of the Levant, it was occupied and refurbished into an Umayyad Qasr in the 7th-8th century AD before being abandoned after the catastrophic earthquake of 749 AD which ravished the region and its major urban centres.

"The limestone wellhead was found, broken into six fragments, at the bottom of a cistern located in the main courtyard of Qasr Hallabat during the excavation and restoration campaigns directed by me between 2002 and 2012," Professor Ignacio Arce said.

He added that this cistern is located in the northern area of the main courtyard and has a rounded but irregular shape in plan, no more than three metres in depth and two metres in diameter, approximately.

Its walls were plastered with an impervious lime mortar rendering. A square pillar was built in the centre, on which rested a series of stone beams (most of them of basalt) arranged radially.

These beams supported the limestone



Photo courtesy of ACOR

The Umayyad wellhead from Qasr Hallabat

flagstones of the courtyard pavement and the wellhead on top of them. The earthquake that destroyed the building in 749 AD fractured some of these radial beams, causing the roof of the cistern to collapse and the wellhead to shatter into pieces, the professor underlined.

"Qasr Hallabat stands in an area close to the 200mm precipitation isojet that defines the boundary between the desert and the sown."

"This means that this is an area that gets very scarce annual precipitation, and where an adequate rainwater harvesting system that does not waste a drop of water is essential for survival and to ensure the sustainability of a permanently inhabited settlement," Arce underlined.

The wellhead is just the most visible component of this system, and the one that bears artistic and symbolic

values linked to the decoration carved on its walls.

"These elements have two lateral continuous protrusions that help channeling down the water along these plaster gutters"

However, other relevant intangible values related to its cultural and technical background (not so obvious) are embodied in the water collection system itself, which predates the wellhead, and in its constituent features, which we will briefly analyse below. The water collected from the building rooftops is channelled

and lime-water (water in which quicklime is slaked to produce lime putty).

These ingredients and the related production processes ensure a deep carbonisation, providing this lime plaster with a unique hardness, resistance and durability, he elaborated, noting that various decorative features (including some animal figures) made with this sort of plaster are also applied onto the basalt-built walls.

"Some of these features applied with this lime-mortar plaster were found beneath the remains of the plaster and stucco revetments from the Umayyad period, demonstrating stratigraphically their chronological framework of production, dated the 6th century AD," Arce said.

This type of gutter and the related decorative features applied using this same type of mortar plaster of South Arabian origin would be part of the Ghassanid Period refurbishments of the complex, dated to the 6th century AD.

"As part of this refurbishment, basalt blocks reused for the construction of the walls were brought from afar [some of which bear fragments of the Anastasius Edict] in order to intentionally achieve a black background for the walls, against which these gutters looked like white plaster bands, and the other decorative elements, would offer a sharp chromatic contrast," Arce underscored.



Photo courtesy of the Digital Economy Ministry

The Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship introduces a service enabling users to pay Zakat Al Fitr through the government's Sanad App

## Paying Zakat Al Fitr now available through Sanad — ministry

AMMAN (JT) —The Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship has introduced a service enabling users to pay Zakat Al Fitr through the government's Sanad App.

To use the service, users are required to update the application, after which a dedicated icon will appear allowing them to complete the payment electronically, Al Mamlaka TV reported on Monday.

The service allows users to pay on behalf of one or more individuals based on the

amount previously set by the General Iftaa Department.

The application allows users to add an optional additional charity amount, displaying the total amount before completing the process.

Users then press "Pay Zakat Al Fitr", after which they can choose a payment method from a bank account, a card, or Apple Pay before confirming the payment.

Earlier, the Iftaa Council of Research and Islamic Studies estimated the value of Zakat Al Fitr for 2026 at

JD1.8 per person.

It also set the minimum amount for the (Fidyat Taam Al Miskeen), paid by those unable to fast due to old age or illness, at JD1 per day.

Zakat Al Fitr is paid in Ramadan by each Muslim until the sunrise of Eid Al Fitr, on the first day of the lunar month of Shawwal.

This zakat was originally paid in wheat, dates and other kinds of food, but modern Islamic jurisprudence authorities have agreed that it can be paid in cash.

# Safadi holds calls with Kuwaiti, Saudi counterparts on regional escalation

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi held a phone call on Monday with his Kuwaiti counterpart Jarrah Jaber Al Ahmad Al Subah, during which the two ministers renewed their condemnation of Iranian attacks targeting Jordan, Kuwait and other Arab Gulf countries.

During the call, the ministers also discussed the dangerous escalation in the region

and prospects for de-escalation through diplomacy in a way that guarantees regional security and stability while respecting the sovereignty of states, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

Also on Saturday, Safadi held a phone call with Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal Bin Farhan Al Saud to discuss the dangerous escalation in the region and its implications for regional and international security and

stability.

During the call, the two ministers also discussed prospects for restoring calm through diplomatic efforts in a way that ensures regional security and stability and respects the sovereignty of states, according to a foreign ministry statement.

They reiterated their condemnation of the "unjustified" Iranian attacks targeting Jordan and Gulf countries' territories.



Ayman Safadi



Jarrah Jaber Al Ahmad Al Subah



Faisal Bin Farhan Al Saud

## AT A GLANCE

### Prince Mired visits military retirees in Ajloun

AMMAN (JT) — Prince Mired, chief chamberlain and chairman of the Board of Directors of the Hashemite Commission for Disabled Military Personnel (HCDMP), on Monday continued his visits to several military retirees in the Ajloun Governorate as part of the commission's annual Ramadan campaign. During the visits, Prince Mired was briefed on the health conditions and needs of the veterans, according to a commission statement. His Highness underlined the HCDMP's commitment, under Royal directives, to maintain direct communication with military retirees and provide them with the highest standards of care and rehabilitation services. Concluding this year's Ramadan visitation programme, the Prince stressed that the commission will continue to support disabled military personnel and enhance the care provided to them, ensuring a dignified life for the veterans and their families.

### Momani pays tribute to journalist Jamal Rayyan

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Government Communication Mohammad Momani on Monday paid tribute to veteran journalist Jamal Rayyan, who passed away after a long career in the media field. In a post on X, Momani reflected on Rayyan's professional journey, which began at the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation before he went on to contribute to the development of several major media institutions. Momani said Rayyan's career mirrors that of many graduates of Jordan's national media institutions who carried the responsibility of the profession after learning its foundations in the Kingdom.



### Education Ministry sets school hours after Ramadan



AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Education has circulated new official working hours for schools to education directorates, to take effect after the end of Ramadan, starting on the morning of March 24. Ministry Spokesperson Mahmoud Hyasat said on Monday that working hours at education directorates will run from 8:00am to 3:00pm following the Eid Al Fitr holiday, Al Mamlaka TV reported. He added that the first class period in single-shift schools will begin at 8:00am, with each period lasting 45 minutes. In double-shift schools, the morning session will start at 7:00am, with each class lasting 40 minutes, while the afternoon shift will begin at 12:30pm, Hyasat said.

### SSC postpones loan installment deductions for retirees in March

AMMAN (JT) — The Social Security Corporation (SSC) said on Monday that it has decided to postpone the deduction of personal loan installments for retirees for March. SSC Assistant Director General for Insurance Shaman Majali said the decision was approved by the corporation's board of directors and applies to personal loans granted to Social Security retirees, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. Majali said March pension payments will be deposited in retirees' bank accounts on Wednesday, earlier than the usual schedule. He noted that the decision to advance pension payments and defer loan installment deductions aims to ease financial commitments for retirees ahead of the Eid Al Fitr holiday. Majali also confirmed that no additional interest will be applied as a result of postponing the loan installments.



## EMERGENCY



# PSD handles over 350 reports of falling debris across Kingdom

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN —The Public Security Directorate (PSD) said on Monday that emergency service personnel dealt with over 350 reports of incidents caused by falling objects and debris across most governorates of the Kingdom since February 28, with no new injuries recorded.

The Civil Defence Department and police personnel inspected 356 scenes of debris and falling objects, Police Spokesperson Lt. Col. Amer Sartawi said. "There was only one reported minor injury of a child in Irbid," Sartawi told The Jordan Times.

Sartawi urged citizens 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.

The police official reiterated previous calls by the PSD to refrain from approaching any suspicious object under any circumstances due to the extreme danger it may pose to the public.

# Committee commends Kingdom's resilience, JAF professionalism

AMMAN (JT) — The Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee on Monday expressed pride in the heroism and pivotal role of the Jordan Armed Forces—the Arab Army (JAF) in defending the Kingdom and safeguarding its stability.

In a press release, the committee praised the efficiency and vigilance of the Kingdom's defenders in countering external threats, reiterating that Jordan's security and sovereignty are a red line.

It also emphasised that the Kingdom remains resilient thanks to its Hashemite leadership and the professionalism and strength of its military.

The statement highlighted that under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah, Jordan continues to address regional challenges with wisdom and competence.

"The exceptional efforts of our brave soldiers in protecting the



The Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee on Monday stressed that the Kingdom remains resilient thanks to its Hashemite leadership and the professionalism and strength of its military

Kingdom's skies and land provide reassurance to all and reflect the high readiness of our military and security institutions amid the delicate regional circumstances," the committee said.

The committee also reiterated its condemnation of Israeli occupation authorities' violations at the Al Aqsa Mosque, including barring worshippers from the holy site.

It warned of the consequences of these provocative measures, which

aim to alter the historical and legal status quo in Jerusalem. It urged international parliaments to take immediate action to halt practices that undermine prospects for peace.

The committee said it is coordinating with the Ministry of Foreign and Expatriate Affairs to monitor the situation of Jordanians abroad, reaffirming its commitment to ensuring their safety and providing all necessary assistance.

# Customs clearance sector records 1.14m declarations in 2025 — AOCTC

AMMAN (JT) — Companies operating in the Kingdom's customs clearance sector recorded a "historic high" of 1.144 million customs declarations in 2025, up from 952,000 declarations in 2024, across various customs and border centres, the Association of Owners of Clearance and Transport Companies (AOCTC) said on Monday.

During the annual general assembly meeting, AOCTC President Dhaifallah Abu Aqouleh said that the assembly approved the association's administrative and financial reports for 2025, reaffirming its com-



The Association of Owners of Clearance and Transport Companies on Monday stresses the association's continued efforts to strengthen the operational and administrative capacities of companies in the sector

mitment to transparency and improving institutional performance. Members also appointed a certified auditor for the coming

period. The assembly stressed the associa-

tion's continued efforts to strengthen the operational and administrative capacities of companies in the sector, while addressing challenges affecting the industry in ways that serve members' interests and support the development of Jordan's economic and transport sectors, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

During the meeting, Abu Aqouleh said companies in the sector remain committed to providing high-quality services to various economic sectors, helping ensure the smooth flow of goods in the local market, particularly amid current regional

developments.

He added that customs clearance procedures at border crossings and customs centres are continuing normally.

Jordan currently has 467 licensed customs clearance companies, operating through around 2,000 branches at customs and border centres nationwide, providing approximately 10,000 jobs for Jordanians.

Established in 1982 and registered with the Ministry of Labour, the association aims to support the sector, address challenges facing its workers, and enhance professional standards and workforce efficiency.

## DEVELOPMENT

# PDTRA holds consultative meeting to address tourism challenges in Petra

AMMAN (JT) — The Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA) on Monday held an expanded consultative meeting to discuss the impact of current regional developments on tourism in Petra.

The meeting, chaired by PDTRA Board Chairman Adnan Al Swaer and attended by board members and tourism sector representatives, addressed challenges arising from a recent decline in visitor numbers and discussed measures

to support workers and tourism establishments.

The group will continue its work beyond the current crisis

Participants agreed to establish a joint working group comprising the Petra Authority and tourism sector representatives to monitor

developments in real time and implement urgent measures to support the sector's sustainability. The group will continue its work beyond the current crisis, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

Officials also discussed the sector's and Petra's readiness for the first day after the crisis, as well as recovery strategies. These include enhancing coordination between relevant entities, revitalising tourism and promotional programmes, and

liaising with international tour operators to ensure the swift return of organised tours to the "Rose City".

Swaer emphasised the importance of regular consultative meetings with tourism sector representatives to ensure direct feedback on challenges and to develop practical solutions to support the sector's resilience.

He stressed that the Petra Authority places the interests of both the tourism sector and local communities at the

forefront and will continue coordinating with government agencies to mitigate the impact of declining tourism and support workers.

Tourism sector representatives outlined the main challenges facing establishments and staff, proposing a support package covering social security, electricity, water, and taxes, in addition to direct financial assistance to help businesses sustain operations and retain their workforce during this period.



The Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority on Monday holds an expanded consultative meeting to discuss the impact of current regional developments on tourism in Petra

## South Lebanon's Christian towns insist they are not part of Israel-Hizbollah war

AIN EBEL, Lebanon (AFP) — In southern Lebanon's Ain Ebel, close to the border with Israel, Suad Jallad holds a poster of her son, killed by Israel last week, saying she would rather be buried next to him than leave.

Ain Ebel, a village filled with red-tiled roofs and surrounded by olive groves, is one of few Christian villages in the Bint Jbeil district whose residents refuse to evacuate, insisting they are not a party to the war between Israel and Hizbollah.

"We live in fear and terror," the 56-year-old said, indicating the positions from which she says Hizbollah and Israel fire at one another, insisting that "despite this, we stayed in the village".

Shadi Ammar, Jallad's 22-year-old son, was killed with two other residents by an Israeli drone strike last week, as they were trying to repair the Internet connection on a roof, according to Lebanon's state-run National News Agency.

"He did not want to leave the town. He stayed, but is now in the cemetery," she told AFP, sobbing in the church hall.

Lebanon was drawn into the Middle East war on March 2 when Tehran-backed Hizbollah attacked Israel in response to the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israeli strikes.

Israel, which never stopped bombing Lebanon despite a 2024 ceasefire, responded with air raids on its northern neighbour and troop incursions into border areas.

"I used to tell him to travel and get his life in order... He'd say, 'I won't leave Ain Ebel,'" Jallad said.

The town finds itself surrounded by Israeli strikes respond to rocket fires from Hizbollah in



Suad Jallad, whose son Shadi was killed earlier this week by an Israeli air strike in the southern Lebanese border village of Ain Ebel, receives condolences from the Apostolic Nuncio to Lebanon during his visit to the village on Monday

nearby areas. "We were living in poverty and scarcity, and we used to say, 'Thank God,'" Jallad said. "But to betray our children like this and kill them? Why? They had nothing to fight them with... It is a shame that their blood was shed in vain."

### 'Bury me next to my son'

After participating in a prayer service attended by the Papal Nuncio to Lebanon, Paolo Borgia, who is touring Christian towns near the border, Jallad wept for her young son, holding a photograph of him.

His death reminded her of her mother's anguish when Jallad's brother was killed decades earlier.

"I lived through the same experience. I was 14 when my brother died," she said, adding that "he was in the South Lebanon Army at the time... He died at the age of 21".

The South Lebanon Army started operating during the 1980s in the border region of southern Lebanon, under Is-

raeli occupation until 2000.

The Christian-majority force consisted of defected Lebanese army officers and soldiers, as well as recruits from the area, and was loyal to Israel.

Israel has fought three major wars with Hizbollah since its occupation ended.

"We did not choose this war, nor do we want it, but we chose to stay," Ain Ebel Mayor Ayoub Khreich said in front of a Papal delegation.

Maroun Nassif, a municipal council member in neighbouring Debl, told AFP "we are paying the price for policies we did not choose".

"We are forced to sacrifice and risk our very existence in this area so that we do not lose our land, our homes, our villages and become refugees with nowhere to go."

"We are forced to stay in our villages so that we can still have a village," he added, reflecting fears that their homes will be used for Hizbollah's military operations, making them targets for Israeli raids.

In Rmeish, another town that overlooks Israel, women gathered around an aid convoy from a Catholic organisation. "Since I was little, the town has been bombed... there has always been war," Elvira Al Amil, a mother of three, said. "We grew up with war and said it would end... but now my children are still living through war."

Residents of the Christian border towns refuse to leave, believing they will remain safe from Israeli fire.

However, residents of Alma Al Shaab, a town in the Tyre district, were forced to evacuate last week under Israeli orders, the reason for which remains unclear.

In Ain Ebel's cemetery, Jallad caresses her son's tombstone, surrounded by women trying to comfort her. "I won't leave... let them bury me next to my son," she said.

"Why would we leave? We are not fighting anyone. We are not fighting it [Israel] nor are we fighting them [Hizbollah]. They are the ones fighting us."

Kyiv coming from the north of the country, which borders Russia. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 sparked the bloodiest war in Europe since World War II, forcing the displacement of millions and killing hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians on both sides.

on Kyiv continues," Mayor Vitaliy Klitschko wrote on social media, as more explosions echoed over the city.

AFP journalists saw flashes and clouds of smoke, as residents of the capital sought cover during rush hour. The Ukrainian air force meanwhile warned of a "high-speed target" aimed at

## Blasts rock Kyiv in rare daytime Russian attack — AFP

KYIV, Ukraine (AFP) — Explosions rang out over the Ukrainian capital on Monday and AFP journalists witnessed air defence batteries fending off a barrage of Russian projectiles during a rare daytime attack on Kyiv.

Russian forces have stepped up long-range drone and missile attacks over recent

months, mainly targeting energy facilities.

The barrage comes as US-led efforts to bring Kyiv and Moscow to the negotiating table appear to have been derailed by the US-Israeli war with Iran.

"Drone debris has fallen in the very centre of the capital city. There are no fires or casualties. The enemy attack

on Kyiv continues," Mayor Vitaliy Klitschko wrote on social media, as more explosions echoed over the city.

AFP journalists saw flashes and clouds of smoke, as residents of the capital sought cover during rush hour.

The Ukrainian air force meanwhile warned of a "high-speed target" aimed at

months, mainly targeting energy facilities.

The barrage comes as US-led efforts to bring Kyiv and Moscow to the negotiating table appear to have been derailed by the US-Israeli war with Iran.

"Drone debris has fallen in the very centre of the capital city. There are no fires or casualties. The enemy attack

## Iran, at UN, insists will not submit to 'lawless aggression'

GENEVA (AFP) — Iran vowed at the United Nations on Monday that it would not submit to "lawless aggression", saying its citizens were in "grave danger" from US and Israeli strikes.

At the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, where countries were discussing the rights situation in Iran — notably following its deadly crackdown on protesters in recent months — Tehran said the focus instead should be on the Middle East war.

"The most urgent and fundamental human rights issue concerning Iran is the imminent threat to the lives of 90 million people whose

lives are in immediate and grave danger under the shadow of reckless military aggression," said Ali Bahreini, Iran's ambassador to the UN in Geneva.

"An aggression that is carried out by some of the most lawless and unscrupulous actors on the international stage."

Bahreini said that if such "reckless militarism" was met with indifference, "Iran will most certainly not be the last country to suffer such treatment."

On February 28, the US and Israel launched the first wave of attacks in a war that has seen Iran strike targets in multi-

ple countries around the

Gulf in response. During a session on Iran's record, Bahreini urged the UN's top rights body to instead discuss the Iranian cultural heritage under "indiscriminate" attack and "the innocent children massacred at their school desks".

Iran has accused the United States and Israel of conducting a deadly missile attack on a school in the southern city of Minab. Washington has said it is investigating the incident. AFP does not have access to the site.

The ambassador said more than 1,300 people had been killed in Iran and more than 7,000 injured since the US-Israeli

strikes began.

"Under such circumstances, what exactly is Iran expected to do?" he asked, insisting: "Iran is not a nation that submits to coercion, intimidation or lawless aggression."

The six Gulf Cooperation Council countries, plus Jordan, condemned Iran's attacks on their territories, saying they endangered regional security and civilian lives, and "cannot be justified under any pretext".

The Human Rights Council was holding an interactive dialogue between nations and the council's special rapporteur on rights in Iran and its fact-finding mission on the country.

## Iran defiant as strikes hit Gulf transport, energy hubs

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Iran said it was ready to take the Middle East war "as far as necessary" as it launched strikes across the region on Monday, while Donald Trump piled pressure on world powers to help reopen a shipping lane choked off by the Islamic republic.

Global oil prices have surged by 40 to 50 per cent as Iran has attacked shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and launched waves of strikes in the Gulf, in retaliation for the war launched against it by the United States and Israel.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard said on Monday they had targeted Tel Aviv and Ben Gurion Airport in Israel, as well as military bases used by US forces in the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

"By now they have learned a good lesson and understood what kind of nation they are dealing with, one that does not hesitate to defend itself and is ready to continue the war wherever it may lead, and take it as far as necessary," Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told reporters in Tehran.

A drone sparked a fuel tank fire near Dubai airport, disrupting travel, while a missile killed a civilian in their car in Abu Dhabi and another drone sparked a blaze in an area housing oil infrastructure in the eastern emirate of Fujairah.

"It has been a difficult few weeks hearing explosions regularly, but the Iranian attacks followed me in my last hours before I could fly back home," a witness at Dubai airport told AFP, adding that passengers had been evacuated to a lower floor after the attack.

Explosions hit the Iranian capital on Monday as air defence systems were activated, an AFP journalist said and Israel said it had also targeted the cities of Shiraz and Tabriz.

More than two weeks into the Middle East war, Israeli military spokesman Brigadier General Effie Defrin said they still had "thousands of targets



An Emirates Boeing 777 aircraft prepares for landing as a smoke plume rises from an ongoing fire near Dubai International Airport in Dubai on Monday

in Iran, and we are identifying new targets every day".

### 'Very bad'

EU foreign ministers were gathering Monday to discuss extending the bloc's Red Sea naval mission, the bloc's top diplomat Kaja Kallas said.

US President Trump called this weekend for countries including China, France, Japan, South Korea and Britain to send warships to escort tankers through the Strait of Hormuz that normally carries one fifth of global crude.

Trump told the Financial Times it would be "very bad for the future of NATO" if they refused, and he has threatened to delay a planned summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

In Britain, Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he was working with allies on a "viable" plan to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, but he said any effort would not be a NATO mission.

Japan and Australia have said they are not planning deployments.

### Lebanon ground assault

On another key front in the wider war, Israel announced the launch of "limited ground operations" against Iran-backed Hizbollah in southern Lebanon "aimed at enhancing

the forward defence area".

Lebanon was drawn into the Middle East war on March 2 when Hizbollah attacked Israel in response to the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"We have identified Hizbollah is intending to expand their operations... and firing hundreds of rockets a day" toward Israel, military spokesman Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani said in a briefing.

The army's announcement echoed statements issued in 2024, when Israel and Hizbollah fought a major war in Lebanon, and during the start of operations in Gaza in 2023.

There were fresh Israeli strikes on Sunday on the southern suburbs of Beirut, a Hizbollah bastion usually home to hundreds of thousands of people.

Israel has ordered evacuations on an unprecedented scale across vast areas of Lebanon since the war began, sparking a major displacement crisis.

### Saudi, UAE call

The war has engulfed much of the region, with Iran responding to Israeli and US strikes with attacks against at least 10 countries that host US forces.

Saudi Arabia intercepted more than 60 drones overnight, its defence ministry said on Monday, and Iraqi

authorities said rockets wounded five people at Baghdad's airport, which houses a US diplomatic facility.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman and Emirati President Mohamed Bin Zayed expressed solidarity against "the continued and blatant Iranian attacks" in a call on Monday, according to a statement published by Emirati media.

The statement did not make explicit reference to US and Israeli strikes in Iran.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard said some 700 missiles and 3,600 drones had been fired at US and Israeli targets so far.

Despite the violence and 17 days of Internet blackout, some Iranians have sought to restore some normalcy in recent days.

Traffic was busier over the weekend, AFP journalists saw, with some cafes and restaurants reopening and more than a third of stalls in the Tajrish bazaar, a popular shopping hub, open ahead of the upcoming Persian new year.

More than 1,200 Iranians have been killed by US and Israeli strikes, according to the last toll from Iran's health ministry on March 8, which could not be independently verified.

The UN refugee agency says up to 3.2 million people have been displaced in Iran.

## Sudan paramilitary launches two-pronged attack on Kordofan

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) launched coordinated attacks on Monday in the Kordofan region in a bid to isolate a strategic city, while also carrying out assaults on towns along the border with Chad, RSF and army sources said.

Paramilitary fighters simultaneously hit the North Kordofan city of Bara, according to a paramilitary source, as well as the South Kordofan city of Dilling, according to another from the army, striking two stepping stones on the way to the major hub of El Obeid.

Both sources requested anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media.

Kordofan is currently the fiercest battlefield in the three-year war between the army and the RSF that has killed tens of thousands and created the world's largest hunger and displacement crises.

Near-daily drone strikes kill dozens at a time across the region, where hundreds of thousands are threatened by mass starvation.

The RSF source said "our forces have recaptured Bara", which lies on a key highway linking the army-held capital

Khartoum with El Obeid, Kordofan's biggest city.

Bara, a key staging post for attacks on El Obeid, has repeatedly changed hands, most recently falling to the army earlier this month.

Some 200 kilometres south, the RSF and their local allies attacked the South Kordofan city of Dilling "from three axes", an army source told AFP.

The army broke a years-long paramilitary siege on Dilling in January, and the RSF has launched artillery and drone strikes on it since.

"Our forces repelled the attack launched by the RSF and Abdelaziz Al Hilu's forces," the army source said, referring to a faction of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North.

Halfway between Bara and Dilling lies El Obeid, which the RSF has been trying to encircle again ever since the army broke a siege there last year.

Its capture would secure Sudan's central east-west axis, linking RSF strongholds in the Darfur region to the army-controlled east and bringing the paramilitary

closer to Khartoum.

Last year, the RSF consolidated its hold on the west by seizing North Darfur state capital El-Fasher, going on to commit what a UN probe determined were "acts of genocide" there.

It has since pushed west to the Chadian border, through enclaves controlled by the Joint Forces, a group of pro-army militias.

RSF fighters again attacked the border town of Al Tina and nearby Kermoi on Monday, the RSF source and another from the Joint Forces said.

Tens of thousands have already fled across the border, and the UN's famine experts have warned thresholds for acute malnutrition have been surpassed in Kermoi and surrounding areas.

The two militias have repeatedly wrestled for control of Al Tina, the twin town of Tine in Chad, which closed the border last month.

In successive border clashes, 15 Chadian soldiers and eight civilians have been killed since December, according to an AFP count.

**Tender Invitation**

The General Headquarters of the Jordan Armed Forces/Royal Medical Services hereby announces Tender P11/2026/2

**(DEEP BRAIN STIMULATOR)**

Bidders who desire to participate therein can obtain a copy of the tender documentation against a fee of 75JD non-refundable, provided that they bring along a valid trade licence.

Closing date sharp 1:00 P.M., WED 15th of APR 2026. Non conditional bid bond equal to (3%) of the total value of quotation must be submitted along with the quotations.

Any quotations/offers will not be accepted after above mentioned closing date and sharp time.

**(The winning bidder is responsible for paying advertisement fees, regardless how often the bid is announced.)**

For more details please contact us at [www.jrms.jaf.mil.jo](http://www.jrms.jaf.mil.jo)

**Tender Invitation**

The General Headquarters of the Jordan Armed Forces/Royal Medical Services hereby announces Tender P37/2026/34

**(Multiplate Reagents & Consumables for Platelet Function) لشراء مواد العطاء**

Bidders who desire to participate therein can obtain a copy of the tender documentation against a fee of 25JD non-refundable, provided that they bring along a valid trade licence.

Closing date sharp 1:00 P.M., WED 15th of APR 2026. Non conditional bid bond equal to (3%) of the total value of quotation must be submitted along with the quotations.

Any quotations/offers will not be accepted after above mentioned closing date and sharp time.

**(The winning bidder is responsible for paying advertisement fees, regardless how often the bid is announced.)**

For more details please contact us at [www.jrms.jaf.mil.jo](http://www.jrms.jaf.mil.jo)

**Tender Reinvitation**

The General Headquarters of the Jordan Armed Forces/Royal Medical Services hereby announces Tender P17/2026/A/1

**(NEONATAL SENSORS) لشراء**

Bidders who desire to participate therein can obtain a copy of the tender documentation against a fee of 75JD non-refundable, provided that they bring along a valid trade licence.

Closing date sharp 1:00 P.M., SUN 29th of MAR 2026. Non conditional bid bond equal to (3%) of the total value of quotation must be submitted along with the quotations.

Any quotations/offers will not be accepted after above mentioned closing date and sharp time.

**(The winning bidder is responsible for paying advertisement fees, regardless how often the bid is announced.)**

For more details please contact us at [www.jrms.jaf.mil.jo](http://www.jrms.jaf.mil.jo)

## Top court to hear Trump bid to end protections for Haitians, Syrians

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — The US Supreme Court agreed on Monday to consider the Trump administration's bid to strip Haitians and Syrians of temporary deportation protections.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has announced plans to end so-called Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for some 350,000 Haitians and 6,000 Syrians.

TPS protects its holders from deportation and allows them to work. It is granted to people deemed to be in danger if they return to their home countries because of war, natural disaster or other extraordinary circumstances.

President Donald Trump campaigned for the White House on a pledge to expel millions of undocumented migrants and his administration has pushed to dismantle the TPS programme as part of its broader immigration crackdown.

TPS status has been revoked for Afghans, Ethiopians, Hondurans, Nicaraguans, Somalis, Venezuelans and others in addition to Haitians and Syrians since Trump took office.

The conservative-dominated Supreme Court left the depor-

tation protections for Haitians and Syrians in place until it hears the case.

It set oral arguments for late April. A decision is expected in late June or early July.

Haitians first became eligible for TPS in 2010 following a devastating earthquake and the country continues to suffer from severe poverty, rampant violence from heavily armed gangs and chronic political instability.

TPS was granted to Venezuelans under US president Joe Biden...

TPS was extended to Syrians in 2012.

The Supreme Court ruled in October that the Trump administration can strip 350,000 Venezuelans of their TPS status.

TPS was granted to Venezuelans under US president Joe Biden, whose government considered that of then president Nicolas Maduro to be a repressive leftist regime.

# Race for Paris mayor on knife's edge after first round

PARIS, France (AFP) — The Paris mayoral race narrowed on Monday as a former minister hoping to wrest control of the French capital from the left sealed a deal to join forces with a fellow right-winger for the second-round run-off.

Rachida Dati, until recently France's culture minister, is aiming to become the capital's second woman mayor in a row, and bring Paris under the control of the right for the first time in 25 years.

Her main rival is Socialist former deputy mayor Emmanuel Gregoire, who came out well ahead of her in the first round of voting on Sunday.

But Dati's new deal, which will see her merge lists with centre-right hopeful Pierre-Yves Bournazel, could put her head-to-head with Gregoire.

Gregoire has promised to carry on the legacy of outgoing Socialist Mayor Anne Hidalgo, including increasing the number of bike lanes and green spaces and improving public housing in the densely populated city of 2 million people.

Dati — soon to go on trial for graft charg-



La France Insoumise - Nouveau Front Populaire's MP Manuel Bompard poses prior to an interview on the evening news broadcast of French television channel France2, in Paris on Monday

es she denies — has vowed to make the city cleaner and safer, pledging to improve rubbish collection, give weapons to municipal police officers and increase video surveillance.

Gregoire scored 37.98 per cent of the vote, with Dati taking 25.46 per cent. Three other candidates also made it through to the second round next Sunday.

The hard left's Sophia Chikirou came third with 11.72 per cent followed by Bournazel

with 11.34 per cent and far-right contender Sarah Knafo with 10.40 per cent.

### Conditions

With the second round just six days away, the race is on for leading candidates to form alliances.

Dati, 60, announced on X that she had teamed up with her centre-right opponent.

"We're going to work with Bournazel on a project for political change," she announced. "The lives of

Parisians over the next six years are at stake."

Bournazel later confirmed the deal, which will see him stand aside for Dati in the run-off.

"I have the pleasure to tell you tonight that we have decided to join our lists. Why? Because the majority of Parisians are waiting for change," he said in televised remarks.

The candidate had previously said his conditions included Dati rejecting any alliance with the far-right's Knafo, who has

offered to back her.

President Emmanuel Macron has approved Dati and Bournazel joining forces, according to a source at the Elysee Palace.

Bournazel also urged Dati to promise to overhaul the city's recruitment of school monitors, after uproar in recent months over allegations that several have physically or sexually abused kindergarten pupils.

### 'Waiting for a call'

Chikirou, who came third, has said she would remain in the race if Gregoire refused an alliance, which would split the left.

"I'm waiting for a call from Gregoire to block Dati's path in Paris," she wrote earlier on X. Several politicians on the left have refused to ally with the hard left after the killing last month of a far-right activist blamed on fringe leftists.

Dati is due to appear in court in September, charged with corruption between 2010 and 2012 when she was a member of the European Parliament. She has denied the charges. Hidalgo, the outgoing

mayor who beat Dati in the last election, has called on the left to rally around Gregoire.

She urged voters for Gregoire to stave off "the danger of populism, corruption, backsliding, policies that destroy environmental and social protections, and the dismantling of public services".

'I'm waiting for a call from Gregoire to block Dati's path in Paris'

Supporters credit Hidalgo and her Green allies with boosting bike lanes and pushing out traffic from the city centre, and making the Seine swimmable for the first time in a century for the 2024 Summer Olympics.

But critics accuse her of merely shifting traffic elsewhere, while also allowing security, cleanliness and public transport to deteriorate.

## Talks towards international panel to tackle 'inequality emergency' begin at UN

GENEVA (AFP) — Talks towards creating a new international panel to address extreme wealth disparities, modelled on the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), opened in Geneva on Monday.

The founding committee of the new International Panel on Inequality (IPI), made up of country representatives and inequality experts including Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, was holding its first meeting at the UN's European headquarters.

The meeting marked the first step towards creating a scientific and policy platform dedicated to understanding and

addressing inequality worldwide.

The new body, inspired by the IPCC, was recommended in a G-20 report authored by Stiglitz, demanding action to address a global "inequality emergency", which it warned was undermining both democracy and economic progress.

"We have an inequality crisis. I think everybody recognises that," Stiglitz told AFP, adding that the problem was "clearly" getting worse.

He pointed out that the world's richest one percent captured 41 per cent of all new wealth between 2000 and 2024.

By contrast, "the bottom 50 per cent has gotten something like 1 per cent", he said. "It's

just glaring."

"Inequality is a betrayal of people's dignity, an impediment to inclusive growth and a threat to democracy itself," South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said when Stiglitz's report was launched late last year under his country's G-20 presidency.

"Addressing inequality is our inescapable generational challenge."

Ramaphosa, whose country has been ranked by the World Bank as the most unequal on the planet, has said he will bring forward a motion on the IPI at the UN General Assembly.

The founding committee, made up of representatives of Brazil, Norway, South Africa

and Spain, alongside UN agencies, civil society and academic experts, has been tasked with defining the IPI's mission, governance and operational framework.

Observers said the aim was to create the panel by the end of the year.

Stiglitz's report called out the current situation of "poverty amidst plenty; unbridled wealth at the top amidst hunger at the bottom".

"Wealth can undermine democracy because those with great wealth may have disproportionate influence on the economy and politics," it warned.

Speaking to AFP, Stiglitz highlighted the situation in the United States, where you have

"unlimited campaign contributions", providing the very wealthy with huge sway.

"We moved to a system of not one person, one vote, but one dollar, one vote," he warned.

He highlighted the important role that the IPCC has played in providing a scientific basis and "enhancing understanding of why we're seeing climate change", insisting something similar was needed to address the inequality crisis.

With the climate crisis, "the world rightly recognised that if you're going to solve the problem, you have to have scientific evidence, an understanding theory of what's going on", he said.

## King meets UAE president to discuss regional developments

Continued from page 1

The two leaders called for stepping up joint Arab action and coordination with active partners to reach comprehensive and sustainable calm that re-

stores stability to the region, stressing the need to utilise dialogue and diplomacy to end the conflict.

His Majesty warned of the danger of the current developments being exploited to restrict

worshippers' access to Al Aqsa Mosque and create new facts on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza.

Sheikh Mohamed hosted an iftar in honour of His Majesty.

## Western allies push back on Trump call for NATO help to reopen Hormuz

Continued from page 1

Oil prices have jumped after the strait was closed and Monday remained above \$100 as the Iran war moved into a third week. The volatility further underlined the importance of ensuring safe passage for tankers through the vital transport route.

Starmer, who has faced stinging criticism from Trump over Britain's refusal to join the US and Israel in offensive attacks on Iran, told reporters he had discussed the waterway with the US leader Sunday.

"We're working with all of our allies, including our European partners, to bring together a viable collective plan that can restore freedom of navigation in the region as quickly as possible and ease the economic impacts," he said in Downing Street.

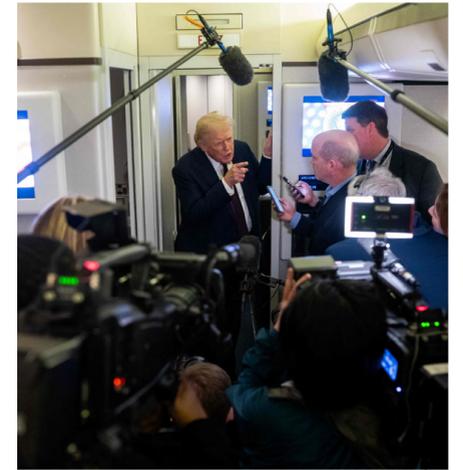
"Let me be clear: That won't be, and it's never been envisioned to be, a NATO mission," Starmer said, while also stressing Britain "will not be drawn into the wider war".

"That'll have to be an alliance of partners," he added of any Strait of Hormuz mission.

### De-escalation calls

In Berlin, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's spokesman said the conflict has "nothing to do with NATO".

"NATO is an alliance for the defence of territory" and "the mandate to deploy NATO is lacking" in the current situation, Stefan Kornelius



US President Donald Trump speaks to members of the media onboard Air Force One on Sunday while en route to Joint Base Andrews, Maryland from West Palm Beach Florida

told reporters.

Meanwhile German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said there would be "no military participation" from his country, but added the country was prepared to support diplomatic efforts "to ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz".

Following Trump's demand for military support, some other European countries sought to appear open-minded while remaining non-committal.

"We did not want this war. From day one, we have called for de-escalation," Denmark's Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen told Danish media in Brussels before an EU foreign ministers' meeting.

"That said, I believe we need to keep an open

mind and look at how we can contribute," he said, describing the situation as "very, very serious".

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Kestutis Budrys told reporters in Brussels "NATO countries should consider" a US request for help but cautioned "we need to see the entire operational environment and the capabilities with which we could contribute".

His Estonian counterpart struck a similar tone, saying Tallinn was "always ready for discussions with the US, including now regarding the situation in the Strait of Hormuz".

"However, this primarily means we need to understand the US' objectives and plans in the ongoing conflict," Markus Tsahkna added.

## Foreign minister, Egyptian counterpart discuss regional tensions

Continued from page 1

Safadi stressed that Jordan will take all necessary and available steps to protect its citizens, security, stability, and sovereignty. For his part, Abdelaty reaffirmed Egypt's full solidarity and support for Jordan in the face of Iranian aggression against its territory.

Both ministers expressed full solidar-

ity with other Arab countries, supporting any measures taken by sisterly states to counter Iranian attacks and safeguard their security. Safadi expressed his appreciation for Egypt's unwavering stance alongside the Kingdom.

The top diplomats cautioned that the focus on the conflict with Iran and its repercussions must not over-

shadow the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

They stressed the necessity of implementing US President Donald Trump's plan in its entirety and halting illegal Israeli measures in the West Bank that undermine the prospects for a just peace.

The ministers also condemned Israel's continued restrictions on freedom of worship

and the closure of Al Aqsa Mosque/Al Haram Al Sharif to worshippers. They described these actions as a "blatant violation of international law" and the historical and legal status quo, warning of the grave consequences of such policies.

Regarding Lebanon, the ministers affirmed their support for the Lebanese government's efforts to activate na-

## 'Significant' Israeli ground offensive in Lebanon 'must be averted' - Western leaders' statement

Continued from page 1

The ground operations were preceded by air and artillery strikes, it added.

The announcement echoes similar statements issued in 2024, when Israel and Hizbollah fought a major war in Lebanon, and in 2023, when the military launched a ground assault in Gaza in response to Hamas's October 7 attacks.

### 'New locations'

Turkey condemned the Israeli ground operation,

saying it was "worsening instability in the region" and warning of "another humanitarian catastrophe" in the Middle East.

In a briefing to journalists, Israeli military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani said Hizbollah was "intending to expand their operations... and firing hundreds of rockets a day" towards Israel.

In recent days, Hizbollah has reported targeting Israeli forces on the border with Lebanon and in a number of frontier towns, including "direct clashes" in Khiam.

No north Israel

evacuations

The town, located across the border from the Israeli town of Metula, was the first point into which Israeli forces advanced after the start of the war.

Hizbollah has repeatedly announced targeting Israeli forces and vehicles at positions inside Khiam.

Israel preceded its ground operations with strikes on a number of bridges and roads that connect southern Lebanon to the rest of the country.

Since the beginning of the war, the Israeli mili-

tary has issued evacuation warnings for wide areas in southern Lebanon, extending more than 40 kilometres from its border.

Defence minister Israel Katz warned on Monday that those displaced in Lebanon would not be allowed to return home "south of the Litani area until the safety of residents in the north [of Israel] is guaranteed".

The Israeli military has repeatedly said it would not evacuate people from the north, as it had done in the previous 2024 war.

During that conflict,

Israel evacuated tens of thousands of residents from northern communities until a ceasefire was struck in November 2024.

Despite that ceasefire, Israel had conducted near-daily air strikes on Hizbollah targets inside Lebanon.

In recent days, the militant group and Iran have launched coordinated rocket and missile attacks against Israel.

Israel, meanwhile, said no direct talks were planned with Lebanon to end the fighting, which has been raging for two weeks.



# BUSINESS

Tuesday, March 17, 2026



Photo Courtesy of Jordan Industrial Estates Company

The Worker Centre Association has announced the official reopening of its facility within the Al Hassan Industrial Estate in Irbid

## Worker welfare centre reopens at HIE to boost employee support

AMMAN (JT) — The Worker Centre Association has announced on Monday the official reopening of its facility within the Al Hassan Industrial Estate (HIE) in Irbid, marking a "strategic" return to full social and recreational programming dedicated to the Kingdom's garment sector workforce.

The centre serves as a critical social platform designed to bolster the well-being of thousands of employees, fostering community engagement and promoting responsible industrial practices, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The association's board of directors extended its commendations to the Ministry of Labour, the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment and Clothing Industries, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and the Jordan Garments, Accessories and Textiles Exporters' Association alongside the Jordan Chamber of Industry.

These partnerships are viewed as instrumental in sustaining initiatives that anchor worker welfare as a cornerstone of the national garment industry's competitive edge. The renovation and full operational fund-

ing for the centre were provided entirely by the factories operating within the industrial estate.

This localised investment reflects a significant commitment by the private sector to maintain social infrastructure and improve the quality of life for the labour force.

The centre now offers a comprehensive suite of amenities...

Chairwoman of the Worker Centre Association, Ahlam Al Tayrawi, said "The reopening of the Worker Centre is a milestone in our efforts to create a supportive and inclusive environment for the workforce in Al Hassan Industrial Estate."

She added "It embodies the strength of the partnership between government

entities, international organisations, and the garment industry in enhancing labour stability and social cohesion."

Established in 2012 by the ILO, the centre occupies a 4,081 square-metre plot and services nine major industrial plants. Following the 2024 refurbishment of its athletic facilities

The centre now offers a comprehensive suite of amenities, including a football pitch, a modernised gymnasium, and specialised training halls for computer literacy and English language instruction.

These facilities are designed to merge recreational opportunities with professional development, creating a holistic support system for the industrial workforce.

The facility provides an essential "third space" for workers to decompress, attend awareness sessions and access counseling services.

By facilitating social interaction and providing a welcoming environment outside of the factory floor, the centre plays a pivotal role in Jordan's broader strategy to institutionalise sustainable and responsible manufacturing standards.

## Phosphate ranked 51st on Forbes' list of 'Most Powerful Companies in MENA'

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) ranked 51st in the list of the 100 most powerful companies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region for 2026, up from 71st place, according to the annual ranking of "Forbes Middle East" magazine.

The market capitalisation of Phosphate reaches \$10.1 billion, which is Jordan's largest phosphate producer, according to a Forbes report, which highlights the "largest" companies in terms of market capitalisation and profitability.

The report noted that the company's revenues grew by 19.4 per cent last year to reach about \$2 billion in January 2026, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Forbes has adopted a methodology for selecting the list of information and financial statements among the lists of companies and major capital markets in the region.

Forbes ranked pub-



JT file

Jordan Phosphate Mines Company ranked 51st in the list of the 100 most powerful companies in the Middle East and North Africa region for 2026, according to 'Forbes Middle East' magazine

lic companies according to criteria based on equal relative weights, including sales, total assets, and net profit for 2025, in addition to market capitalisation calculated based on market closures on April 25, 2025.

Companies that were equal in total scores received the same ranking, while Forbes excluded companies that did not disclose their consolidated

and audited financial statements for 2025.

The consolidated data of the JPMC indicated a net profit after tax of JD601.286 million, an increase of 31.3 per cent compared with the group's profits for 2024.

The Group's net sales during the year 2025 amounted to JD1.448 billion, an increase of JD235 million, compared with sales in 2024, an in-

crease of 19.3 per cent.

The data also cited that the group achieved "attractive" returns on nominal capital by 200 per cent, while the net profit per share reached JD2.004 compared with JD1.85 for the year 2024.

This progress of Jordan Phosphate Mines Company in the Forbes list reflects the company's efforts during 2025, and its success in achieving records

at the level of production, export and operational efficiency.

Thanks to the adoption of the latest smart mining technologies and automation, the company was able to increase production capacity and reduce operational costs, which enhanced the competitiveness of the Jordanian product in international markets, despite the global economic fluctuations.

### ENERGY

## Iraq to start oil exports via Turkey's Port of Ceyhan after Strait of Hormuz closure

AMMAN (JT) — Iraqi Oil Minister Hayyan Abdul Ghani said on Monday that the country will begin pumping crude oil directly from the Kirkuk oil fields to Türkiye's port of Ceyhan, bypassing the Kurdistan Region.

He said in a state-

ment that Iraq previously exported around 3.4 million barrels per day through its southern ports and via the Strait of Hormuz before exports came to a halt due to the strait's closure as a result of the ongoing war.

Current production is between 1.5 and 1.6 million barrels per day, he added, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Ghani said the Ministry of Oil has several alternatives for exporting oil following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, including us-

ing the Jordanian and Syrian pipelines via tankers, given insufficient pipeline capacity for these two routes.

He said efforts are under way to rehabilitate the pipeline linking the Kirkuk oil fields to the Iraqi-Turkish pipeline, con-

firming that pipeline inspection and completion of work will be finalised in a week.

This will enable Iraq to pump crude oil through it without passing through the Kurdistan Region, added the minister, Petra reported.

### RISE

## AI to drive growth despite geopolitics, Taiwan's Foxconn says

TAIPEI (AFP) — Taiwanese tech giant Foxconn on Monday said it expected the booming market for artificial intelligence servers to drive growth this year, despite volatility caused by global conflict.

Strong demand for AI hardware fuelled a 24 per cent annual net profit jump last year for Foxconn, the world's largest contract electronics manufacturer.

Energy markets have been roiled by the war in the Middle East, raising concerns for big tech manufacturers, but company chairman Young Liu struck an upbeat tone at an earnings call with analysts.

"Over the past few months, there have been significant changes in tariffs, geopolitics and global monetary policy," he said.

"However, driven by the strong growth of AI servers, I believe 2026 will still be a very good year, and we expect to see robust growth."

Foxconn — also known by its official name Hon Hai Precision Industry — has gone beyond assembling low-margin Apple iPhones to making AI servers for Nvidia along with electric vehicles and robotics.

It's a move that is paying off as tech firms worldwide race to spend big on training

and deploying rapidly evolving AI systems.

In 2025, Foxconn's net profit came to NT\$189.4 billion (\$5.9 billion), up from NT\$152.7 billion in 2024.

Revenue jumped 18 per cent on-year to NT\$8.1 trillion, the firm said, just beating the estimates of a Bloomberg survey of economists.

### AI ambitions

Sky-high tech share results and valuations worldwide have led to concerns of an AI market

bubble that could eventually burst.

But Foxconn on Monday forecast "strong AI server demand" with "high double-digit quarter-on-quarter growth" expected for AI rack shipments in the first quarter of 2026.

Liu said the company wanted to become "the most trusted industrial platform of the AI era".

Cloud and networking services accounted for 40 per cent of Foxconn's business portfolio in 2025, up from 30 per cent in 2024.

Meanwhile, smart

consumer electronics declined from 46 per cent to 38 per cent.

Huge global demand for memory chips to use in AI data centres has caused a shortage that is threatening higher prices for everyday gadgets.

"Everyone is concerned about memory shortages and related price hikes" for smart consumer products, Liu said on Monday.

But "since our product portfolio is mainly composed of higher-priced models, the impact we've observed so far has been relatively

limited" while demand has not changed, he added.

Ahead of Monday's earnings release, Bloomberg Intelligence analyst Steven Tseng told AFP that for Foxconn, "so far the impact from the Middle East conflict appears largely manageable".

"As the region is not a major market for either AI hardware or smartphones, the main risk is more on costs than demand, driven by higher oil prices and some logistic disruptions," he said.

## Oil eases, equities rise as market focuses on Strait of Hormuz

LONDON (AFP) — Oil prices pulled back and equities rose on Monday as investors focused on the crucial Strait of Hormuz and the head of the IEA said more crude could be released on the market if necessary.

As the Middle East war entered its third week, Wall Street and most European stock markets climbed after Asian stocks mainly dipped.

International benchmark Brent North Sea crude dropped back 1.3 per cent to \$101.84, while the main US contract West Texas Intermediate fell 3.5 per cent to \$95.27.

The price falls came after a Pakistani oil tanker became the first non-Iranian tanker to transit the Strait of Hormuz with its automatic transponder system activated, according to monitor Marine Traffic.

"The impact of geopolitical events on markets, and the macro outlook, hinges more on when transits through the Strait of Hormuz begin to normalise than it does on when hostilities come to an end," wrote Michael Brown at Pepperstone.

Meanwhile, the head of the International Energy Agency (IEA), Fatih Birol, said member coun-

tries could unlock more oil from strategic stocks "if needed".

IEA member countries already agreed last week their biggest-ever release, of 400 million barrels.

"When you get a bit of a reprieve in the energy price, it's not surprising to see a bounce in equity markets," Art Hogan, from B. Riley Wealth Management, told AFP.

US President Donald Trump piled pressure on allied powers over the weekend to help reopen the vital shipping lane choked off by Iranian attacks, although the call has not found an enthusiastic response.

"The market, again, appears to be leaning on the notion that the war will come to an end relatively soon without much lasting damage to the global economy," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare.

"Therefore, a buy-the-dip trade has taken root," he added.

In Asia, Tokyo and Shanghai closed lower, while Hong Kong rose. During Asian trading hours, crude had climbed further above \$100 a barrel after attacks on oil infrastructure on the UAE's east coast and strikes on

Iran's Kharg Island.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told CBS his country was not interested in talks with Washington, but was ready to speak to countries about safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz.

More strikes occurred Monday, with Saudi Arabia saying it had intercepted more than 60 drones since midnight, while flights were temporarily suspended at Dubai's airport after a "drone-related incident" sparked a fire nearby.

Traders' attention will turn this week to policy meetings of major central banks including the US Federal Reserve, Bank of England, the European Central Bank and the Bank of Japan.

While they are expected to keep interest rates unchanged, any remarks on the impact of the war and rising energy prices on their respective economies will be closely followed.

"Investors want to hear what the world's central bankers think about a potential inflation shock and a prolonged energy crisis and how this feeds into their future decision making," said Kathleen Brooks, research director at trading group XTB.

### AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Monday amounted to JD8.1 million spread over 3.1 million shares that traded through 2,362 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.23 per cent, closing at 3650.33 points.

Out of 91 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 28 companies rose while the share price of another 34 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Jordanian Duty Free Shops by 4.76 per cent, Century Investment Group by 4.44 per cent, Rumm Financial Brokerage by 3.28 per cent, Afaq Holding for Investment and Real Estate Development Company Plc. by 2.86 per cent, and Kafaa for Financial and Economical Investments Plc. by 2.78 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Bank of Jordan by 6.45 per cent, National Steel Industry by 4.65 per cent, Darat Jordan Holdings by 4.17 per cent, Jordan International Investment Company by 4.17 per cent and Jordan International Trading Centre by 3.92 per cent.



# Sinner tops Medvedev to win first Indian Wells title

## FOOTBALL

### Iranian women's team set to leave for Oman

SEPANG, Malaysia (AFP) — The Iranian women's football team will depart from Malaysia on Monday on a flight bound for Oman, a top Asian football official confirmed, after more team members withdrew their asylum bid in Australia. The team arrived at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport shortly before 5.00 pm (9:00 GMT), AFP correspondents saw. Dressed in their national colours, players disembarked from a tour bus before heading towards the check-in at the airport. Earlier in the day, the team slipped past reporters when leaving their hotel in the Malaysian capital, where they have been avoiding media since Wednesday. Most team members declined to speak to reporters, but one member told AFP "I am missing my family." Windsor John, general secretary of the Asian Football Confederation, told AFP the Iranian team "informed us that they will be flying to Oman, but that's not their final destination".

## NBA

### Gilgeous-Alexander keeps streak alive as Thunder down Wolves

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander kept his record-breaking 20-point scoring streak alive as the Oklahoma City Thunder rolled to an eighth straight win with a 116-103 defeat of the Minnesota Timberwolves on Sunday. Gilgeous-Alexander, who on Thursday eclipsed Wilt Chamberlain's 63-year-old record for consecutive games of scoring 20 points or more, finished with 20 points, 10 assists and three rebounds. Yet, the reigning NBA Most Valuable Player left it late before reaching 20 points for the 128th game in a row, with 10 of his points coming in the fourth quarter after he spent long periods struggling for shooting accuracy. Gilgeous-Alexander shot only 7-of-22 from the field but was given scoring support from the Thunder bench, who contributed 61 of Oklahoma City's points, including 20 from Isaiah Joe and 17 from Alex Caruso. "At the end of the day it's basketball," Gilgeous-Alexander said of his lackluster shooting display. "I went out there with the same aggression I do every night. More shots didn't fall tonight than do, and usually that's not the case."

INDIAN WELLS, United States (AFP) — World No.2 Jannik Sinner surged home to beat Daniil Medvedev 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/4) on Sunday to capture his first Indian Wells ATP Masters 1000 crown.

Four-time Grand Slam champion Sinner won his first title of 2026, rallying from 0-4 down in the second-set tiebreaker to seal the win against a resurgent Medvedev, winner of the title in Dubai last month who was riding a nine-match ATP winning streak.

That included an upset semi-final triumph over Carlos Alcaraz that ended the top-ranked Spaniard's 16-match winning streak to start the season.

But Sinner, who didn't drop a set in the tournament, proved just that bit better in a match where both sets went to the tiebreakers without a break of serve.

"I kept believing and kept pushing," Sinner said of his closing burst. "I went for my shots a little more. A third set, we would have started even, so I tried my best to close it out and I am very happy."

"It was an incredible ending," added Sinner, who said he wasn't troubled by the hot afternoon temperatures thanks to the lack of humidity and some extra days of pre-tournament preparation.

Sinner didn't face a



Jannik Sinner of Italy and team pose with the championship trophy after Sinner defeated Daniil Medvedev during their Men's Singles Finals match on Day 12 of the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells Tennis Garden on Monday in Indian Wells, California

break point in the one-hour 55-minute contest, winning 43 of the 47 points on which he put his first serve in play.

Medvedev saved the only two break points he faced in the seventh game of the opening set, but Sinner's tie-breaker prowess proved too much.

Medvedev was up

5-4 in the first-set tie-breaker when he let a ball sail by him and it landed in.

He'd go on to save one set point, but Sinner gave himself another with a blistering forehand that the Russian couldn't handle and pocketed the set with a thundering service winner.

Medvedev looked on track to level the match when he raced to a 4-0 lead in the second-set decider — aided by Sinner's second double-fault of the match.

But Sinner roared home to join Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer as the only players to win all six of the ATP's hardcourt Mas-

ters 1000 tournaments.

"It feels amazing, great achievement," said Sinner, who was already turning his gaze to the Miami Open, the second leg of the "Sunshine Double" where men's first-round play begins on Wednesday.

"I have couple of days to relax [but] there is not so much time in

between here and Miami ... we try to play the best tennis possible there, too."

### Bittersweet feeling

Medvedev said the outcome was "bittersweet" after a semifinal victory over Alcaraz — who beat him in the Indian Wells finals in 2023 and 2024 — that felt like winning the tournament.

"But that's not the reality," he said. "There is a final to play. I had my opportunity, small opportunity in the first set. A bit bigger opportunity in the tiebreak in the second."

"But at the same time, I was hanging by not big margins in the whole set."

"It's a bittersweet feeling where it feels good to do what I did this week. But, of course, I wanted to try to push him even more. He was serving phenomenal. [It] was super tough to be on the return position today."

While Medvedev missed a chance to become just the second player to beat both Alcaraz and Sinner in the same tournament, the former World No.1 underscored his return to form after a disappointing 2025 campaign and will return to the top 10 on Monday.

"It's great to see Daniil back playing this level," Sinner said. "I do believe that tennis needs him."

## LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

# Jessie Buckley: From reality TV hopeful to Oscar winner

DUBLIN (AFP) — Irish actress Jessie Buckley capped her spectacular rise to Hollywood stardom on Sunday, winning a best actress Oscar for her searing portrait of motherhood and love undone by loss in "Hamnet".

The 36-year-old actress from a small town in Ireland's remote southwest received the award for her work as William Shakespeare's wife Agnes, devastated by the death of their son, the eponymous child in director Chloe Zhao's acclaimed film.

Her expressive intensity as the grieving heart of the story — an adaptation of Maggie O'Farrell's 2020 bestselling novel of the same name — captivated audiences, moving many moviegoers to tears.

"This is really something," an emotional Buckley said, hailing her fellow nominees and saying she wanted to work with all of them.

The bewitching Agnes has "a strong, wide open heart and a mother with an epic landscape inside her", Buckley told The Irish Times, underscoring the emotional depth of the role.

In February, on becoming the first Irish woman to win a BAFTA best actress award for her performance, she dedicated it to "the women past, present and future that have taught me and continue to teach me how to



AFP photo

### A new study suggests ravens use navigation and spatial memory techniques to scavenge with sophistication

do it differently". "You brought the mother out of the shadows, and you stood her in absolution beside the giant that is Shakespeare", she said to O'Farrell in the audience.

Buckley was the closest thing to a shoo-in this awards season, sweeping the precursor prizes including the Golden Globe and Critics Choice Awards.

On Sunday, she bested Rose Byrne ("If I Had Legs I'd Kick You"), Renate Reinsve ("Sentimental Value"), Emma Stone ("Bugonia") and Kate Hudson ("Song Sung Blue").

Buckley didn't have a child when she took on the role of Agnes.

But she became pregnant "a week" after finishing "Hamnet", she told The New York Times, and gave birth to a baby girl in autumn 2025.

### 'Nurtured and respected'

Born on December 28, 1989 to a poet, Tim Buckley, and Marina, a former opera singer and vocal coach, the actress was encouraged to join school theatre productions from a young age.

Growing up in Kil-

larney, County Kerry with four siblings, she credits her upbringing for shaping her artistic instincts.

At home, "music, writing and expressing yourself was really nurtured and respected", she told The Irish Times.

Buckley first made waves as a reality TV hopeful in 2008's "I'd Do Anything", a BBC talent show scouting for a production of "Oliver" in London's West End.

Although she lost in the final, judges urged her to pursue formal dramatic training.

She graduated from

London's prestigious Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in 2013 and immersed herself in the works of The Bard.

That same year, she secured roles in adaptations of "Henry V" and "The Winter's Tale" in London.

Television roles followed including in a BBC dramatisation of "War and Peace" (2016), and the HBO hit mini-series "Chernobyl" (2019).

Buckley made her film debut in "Beast" (2017), a psychological thriller set on Jersey in the Channel Islands, and earned a BAFTA nomination for her

lead role in the 2018 film "Wild Rose" about an aspiring country singer and ex-convict from Glasgow.

She has often returned to her Shakespearean theatrical roots, playing Juliet at the National Theatre in 2021 with another rising star, Josh O'Connor.

She earned her first Oscar nomination in 2022 for best supporting actress for her portrayal of a tormented mother in Maggie Gyllenhaal's tense psychological drama "The Lost Daughter".

An accomplished singer, she won an Olivier Award in 2022 for best actress in a musical for her portrayal of Sally Bowles in the West End revival of "Cabaret".

That same year, she released a folk album with Bernard Butler, former guitarist of the band Suede.

Buckley lives in the English countryside in Norfolk with her husband, a mental health worker, who she married in 2023.

She has spoken openly about previous struggles with anxiety and panic attacks, and said therapy helped her learn to feel rather than repress her emotions.

Her current project, in theatres now, is Gyllenhaal's "The Bride!" — a genre-hopping take on the bride of Frankenstein's monster in which she co-stars opposite fellow Oscar winner Christian Bale.



AFP photo

Visitors look at rock guitars during a press preview of The Jim Irsay Collection at Christie's Los Angeles in Beverly Hills, California, on February 5

# Pink Floyd guitar 'Black Strat' sells at auction for record \$14.6 m

NEW YORK (AFP) — A guitar used by Pink Floyd's David Gilmour on some of the British progressive rock band's best-loved albums has sold for a record \$14.6 million, auction house Christie's said.

The price of the Fender Stratocaster nicknamed "Black Strat" far surpassed that of the previous record holder, a guitar owned by Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain that sold for \$6 million in 2020.

Gilmour played Black Strat on every Pink Floyd album between 1970 and 1983, including "Dark Side of the Moon", "Wish You Were Here", "Animals" and "The Wall".

Christie's did not provide the name of

the buyer, who prevailed after 21 minutes of bidding.

The auction on Thursday in New York featured rock memorabilia from the collection of Jim Irsay, the former owner of the Indianapolis Colts NFL team, who died in 2025.

Other guitars sold at the auction included a custom-made instrument that belonged to Jerry Garcia, co-founder of psychedelic rockers the Grateful Dead, which sold for \$11.6 million, Christie's said.

A blue Fender Mustang belonging to Cobain that featured in the music video of Nirvana's 1990s grunge anthem "Smells Like Teen Spirit" sold for \$6.9 million.