

THE JORDAN TIMES



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Cold, unsettled weather to persist as temperatures plunge by Thursday



AID
Jordanian field hospital in Nablus begins operation, treats 668 cases on first day



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Tuesday, March 24, 2026 | Shawal 5, 1447 Hijri



King expresses condolences to Qatar emir, Turkey president over helicopter crash deaths

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah sent a cable to Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani expressing condolences over the deaths of a number of Qatari Armed Forces personnel after their helicopter crashed in the line of duty. His Majesty also sent another cable to Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, expressing condolences following the helicopter crash in Qatari territorial waters that resulted in the death of a Turkish soldier in the line of duty and two civilians.

Mideast war reshapes Jordan's energy strategy as renewables gain urgency

Analysts say renewables provide partial buffer but fall short under crisis conditions

By Mai Anati

AMMAN — The war involving Iran, Israel and the United States is accelerating Jordan's shift towards renewable energy. The transition is likely to remain critical beyond the current energy supply crisis.

The escalation has raised concerns over global oil routes, exposing the sensitivity of import-dependent economies. Tensions are rising around key maritime chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly one fifth of global oil flows.

The stability of these routes remains closely tied to US naval presence in the region.

For Jordan, the risks are immediate, as the Kingdom imports most of its energy needs. This leaves it exposed to price uncertainty and supply disruptions driven by regional instability.

Energy security is no longer just an economic issue. It is a strategic concern. Jordan is pushing forward with its re-



An aerial view of the Shams Maan solar plant in Maan Governorate, some 300 kilometres south of Amman

newable energy strategy, aiming to generate 50 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030. The goal is to reduce reliance on external supplies and strengthen resilience.

Progress has been rapid, with renewable

energy accounting for around 27 to 28.5 per cent of electricity generation by the end of 2024. A decade earlier, the figure stood at just 1 per cent.

This expansion is reshaping the country's energy mix. It is also

providing a degree of insulation during periods of regional instability.

Jordan's strategy builds on strong natural advantages. The country benefits from more than 300 days of sunshine annually. Wind conditions are also favourable.

Large-scale projects, including the Shams Maan solar plant and expanding wind farms, have increased domestic generation. They have also strengthened energy resilience.

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Anbar border crossings ready to export up to 200,000bpd via Jordan, Syria — official

AMMAN (JT) — Iraq's north-western governorate of Anbar announced that its border crossings were ready to export around 200,000 barrels of oil per day (bpd) via tankers through the Aqaba route with Jordan and Baniyas line with Syria.



Iraq's Anbar governorate announces that its border crossings were ready to export around 200,000 barrels of oil per day via tankers through the Aqaba and the Syrian coastal port city of Baniyas

The governorate spokesperson Muayad Dleimi said that Anbar's crossings with Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia, are secure and ready to facilitate exports.

He said that these routes would help mitigate potential economic crises in light of the

closure of Strait of Hormuz, adding that the crossings are equipped

to handle land export of 100,000-200,000bpd. Dulaimi highlighted

that these routes would serve to augment the existing Kirkuk-Cey-

han pipeline through Turkey.

The spokesperson said that the Iraqi oil pipeline to Jordan, which extends from Basra through Haditha to Aqaba along with the Kirkuk-Baniyas line to Syria, would play a pivotal role in bolstering the Iraqi economy.

He stressed that activating these lines would provide a strategic alternative to address energy security challenges in the event of maritime disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, Petra reported.



A Palestinian man inspects the remains of his burnt-out family home following a reported attack by Israeli settlers in the village of Fandaqumiya, southwest of Jenin, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank on Sunday

Jordan denounces 'continued' settler attacks against Palestinians

AMMAN (JT) — The Foreign Ministry on Sunday "strongly" condemned ongoing settler attacks

against Palestinians, most recently targeting several villages and towns in the northern West Bank, hold-

ing Israel, as the occupying power, responsible.

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The price per litre of unleaded petrol and diesel fuels are pictured outside a Shell petrol station in Birkenhead, north west England on Monday

Oil prices slide, European stocks rebound on Trump's Iran remarks

LONDON (AFP) — Oil prices tumbled and European stock markets rebounded on Monday in volatile trading as US President Donald Trump suddenly ordered a halt to strikes on Iranian energy infra-

structure after claiming "very good" talks with Tehran.

Crude futures plunged more than 14 per cent after Trump's comments on his Truth Social platform, a sharp contrast to his threat-

ening talk over the weekend.

However they later pulled back to trade down around 9 per cent as Iran denied negotiations had taken place.

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Trump calls off Iran strikes and announces 'very good' talks

TEHRAN (AFP) — President Donald Trump shelved plans on Monday to attack Iran's power plants in a stunning about-turn sparked by what he said were "very good" talks with unidentified Iranian officials to bring an end to the war.

The reversal came ahead of a Monday night ultimatum for the Islamic republic to reopen the Strait of Hormuz shipping lane — or see Trump "obliterate" its power plants.

With observers scrambling to interpret the latest statements from the US leader, oil prices fell and stocks markets jumped, even though Iran denied that any talks were under way.

Trump said his administration was discussing with an unidentified "top person", but not the country's supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei, who is



US President Donald Trump boards Air Force One prior to departure from Palm Beach International Airport in West Palm Beach, Florida on Monday

believed to be injured.

"We've wiped out the leadership phase one, phase two and largely phase three. But we're dealing with the man who I believe is the most respected and the

leader," Trump told reporters in Florida.

He described the individual as "very reasonable", while warning that if the talks failed, "we'll just keep bombing our little hearts out".

Meanwhile, Iran's powerful parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said on Monday that "no negotiations" were held with the United States after US President Don-

ald Trump announced talks were ongoing.

"No negotiations have been held with the US, and fakenews is used to manipulate the financial and oil markets and escape the quagmire in which the US and Israel are trapped," Ghalibaf said in a post on X.

In Iran, media outlets quoted the foreign ministry denying any talks and suggesting Trump was angling to bring down energy prices sent soaring by the war — with no mention of his claim on state television's latest news bulletin.

In a post on his Truth Social site, Trump said he had told the Pentagon to "postpone any and all military strikes against Iranian power plants and energy infrastructure for a five day period, subject to the success of the ongoing meetings".

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RJ photo
Royal Jordanian Airlines stresses that it is taking a set of precautionary measures to ensure the continuity of its operations in accordance with the highest safety standards amidst regional conditions

RJ continues flight operations despite regional developments

Geopolitical conditions pose 'significant' operational, financial challenges for RJ

AMMAN (JT) — Royal Jordanian Airlines (RJ) announced that it continues to operate its flights to various destinations whose airspace remains open and safe, in light of the security developments in the region and the challenges posed by the regional situation on the aviation sector.

The airline stressed that it is taking a set of precautionary measures to ensure the continuity of its operations in accordance with the highest safety standards, in light of the closure or restriction of some airspaces in the region, which requires airlines to adjust certain flight routes to avoid those areas, according to an RJ statement.

RJ Vice Chairman/CEO Samer Majali said that the company is managing its operations with caution and flexibility in light of the current geopolitical developments, noting that these conditions impose "significant" operational and financial challenges on RJ and on the aviation sector in the region in general.

Majali added that the

company is facing rising operational costs, most notably due to the use of longer alternative flight routes to avoid closed airspaces.

Majali added that the company is facing rising operational costs...

He also noted that the increase in global fuel prices, along with higher insurance and operating costs, is placing additional pressure on the company's financial performance.

He indicated that these developments come at a time when

travel demand is declining significantly, with booking rates and passenger numbers on some routes decreasing due to the prevailing uncertainty in the region.

Majali also referred to a rise in ticket refund and booking change requests from passengers affected by the current circumstances, further negatively impacting the company's liquidity amid the exceptional conditions facing the aviation sector.

He stressed that RJ continues, at the same time, to manage these challenges by taking well-considered operational and financial measures aimed at maintaining continuity of operations and mitigating the impact of the current conditions as much as possible.

Majali noted that RJ will remain the national carrier for Jordanians and will continue to perform its role in connecting Jordan with various destinations around the world, while maintaining the highest standards of safety and service despite the challenges facing the aviation sector in the region.

Cold, unsettled weather to persist as temperatures plunge by Thursday

AMMAN (JT) — Relatively cold and unsettled conditions are set to persist across the Kingdom in the coming days, with a chance of rain and a marked drop in temperatures by Thursday, the Jordan Meteorological Department (JMD) forecast on Monday.

On Tuesday, skies will be partly to occasionally cloudy, with relatively cold weather prevailing in most regions, while conditions remain comparatively warm in the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea and Aqaba, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported citing the JMD.

Light, scattered showers are possible around midday, accompanied by moderate south-westerly winds.

Conditions on Wednesday will remain relatively cold across most areas and comparatively warm in low-lying regions, with clouds at various altitudes.

By midday, the Kingdom is expected to come under the influence of atmospheric instability, bringing increased cloud cover and intermittent rainfall in several areas, particularly in the south and east.



File photo
Relatively cold and unsettled conditions are set to persist across the Kingdom in the coming days, with a chance of rain and a marked drop in temperatures by Thursday

Thunderstorms may occur at times, while moderate south-westerly winds are expected to become active at intervals, the JMD forecast.

The department added that a more pronounced shift is expected on Thursday, with a

noticeable drop in temperatures bringing very cold conditions to the high mountain ranges and cold, cloudy and rainy weather to the rest of the country.

Rainfall may be heavy at times, especially in western areas, and

could be accompanied by thunder and hail, raising the risk of flash floods in valleys and low-lying areas, while westerly winds will be active, with strong gusts in some areas exceeding 60 kilometres per hour, the JMD warned.

Temperatures in Amman on Tuesday are expected to range from 6°C to 15°C, while Aqaba will see a range of 14°C to 25°C. By Thursday, Amman's temperatures are forecast to drop, ranging between 6°C and 10°C.

Petra welcomes 2,295 visitors during Eid Al Fitr holiday

AMMAN (JT) — The Petra Archaeological Park recorded "solid" tourist activity during the Eid Al Fitr holiday, welcoming a total of 2,295 visitors of various nationalities.

According to official figures from the Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA), the site received 595 visitors on Friday, including 115 non-Jordanians, 9 non-Jordanian Arabs, 146 Jordanians and 325 residents.

Visitor numbers rose on Saturday to 861, comprising 176 non-Jordanians, 55 non-Jordanian Arabs, 427 Jordanians, 7 visitors under the "Urdunna Jannah" programme, and 203 residents.

On Sunday, the site welcomed 839 visitors, including 431 non-Jordanians, 28 non-Jordanian Arabs, 253 Jordanians and 127 residents.

The figures indicate a steady flow of visitors throughout the holiday

period, with a notable increase in non-Jordanian tourists by Sunday, reflecting continued recovery in the sector and renewed interest in Jordan's archaeological sites.

Petra recorded clear signs of a gradual recovery in tourism during 2025, with total visitor numbers rising to 582,550, compared with 457,215 in 2024, reflecting renewed confidence in the site as a global tourist destination.

PDTRA figures for

2025 showed that the number of foreign visitors increased by 45 per cent last year, reaching 373,752, accounting for the largest share of total visitors.

Jordanian visitors topped the list by nationality, with 161,490 visitors, while 73,752 visitors arrived through organised trips under the "Urdunna Jannah" programme, implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

Among foreign visi-

tors in 2025, US nationals ranked first with 53,797 visitors, followed by Russians (32,259), Britons (23,047), French (26,792), Italians (26,311), Spanish (19,690), Germans (17,782), Indians (12,793), Polish (12,239), Turkish (9,102), Indonesians (8,476), South Koreans (8,078), Chinese (7,949), Canadians (7,340), Australians (6,698), Romans (6,392), Mexicans (6,368), Dutch (6,062) and Japanese (5,295).

Two young siblings killed in West Bank over weekend — UNICEF

AMMAN (JT) — Violence has again claimed the lives of Palestinian children in the West Bank, UNICEF said.

On March 14, two siblings, aged 5 and 7, were shot and killed by Israeli forces in the town of Tammun in the West Bank alongside their parents inside their car, UNICEF said in a statement to The Jordan Times.

Since January 2025, 65 Palestinian chil-



dren have been killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, roughly one child every week, with more

than 760 injured. Most of these deaths were caused by live ammunition, UNICEF noted. "For the children

who survive these incidents, the consequences are profound. Some are left with permanent disabilities that will shape the rest of their lives. Many children struggle with deep psychological wounds after witnessing the violent killing and injury of friends and family members," according to UNICEF.

"UNICEF calls on the Israeli authorities to take immediate and decisive action to protect

Palestinian children and uphold their right to life in line with international law."

"Authorities must ensure transparent and robust accountability when children are killed or maimed and take effective action to deter further violence. They must further uphold their obligation to ensure humanitarian access and medical attention to the wounded," the UN agency stressed.



Photo courtesy of the Pakistani embassy
The Pakistani embassy in Amman on Monday commemorates 'Pakistan Day' with a flag hoisting ceremony, held at the chancery premises

Pakistani embassy holds flag hoisting ceremony marking Pakistan Day

AMMAN (JT) — The Pakistani embassy in Amman on Monday commemorated "Pakistan Day" with a "dignified" flag hoisting ceremony, held at the chancery premises.

The ceremony commenced with the hoisting of the Pakistan flag by Pakistani Ambassador to Jordan Khurram Sarfraz Khan, in the presence of members of the Pakistani diaspora resident in Jordan, prominent Jordanian personalities representing different walks of life, as well as embassy officers and staff members, according to an embassy statement.

At this occasion, special messages from the president, prime min-

ister, and deputy prime minister/foreign minister of Pakistan, were also read out.

In his remarks, the ambassador underscored the significance of the Pakistan Day for the entire nation.

He highlighted the enduring relevance of the vision of the nation's founding fathers, emphasising the importance of steadfastness, innovation and collective responsibility in navigating contemporary challenges faced by Pakistan.

While emphasising the foreign policy priorities of Pakistan, Khan specifically mentioned the "fraternal" ties between Pakistan and Jordan.

The ambassador highlighted that both "brotherly" countries enjoyed close relations, based on mutual trust and confidence.

He referred to the visit to Pakistan in November 2025 by His Majesty King Abdullah, which has reset the future course of the fraternal ties between Pakistan and Jordan on a formidable strategic continuum.

The ambassador also lauded the contributions of the Pakistani diaspora in Jordan and their role in projecting a positive image of Pakistan in their host country.

The ceremony concluded with prayers for the peace, progress and prosperity of Pakistan.

Aqaba campaign promotes clean environment during Eid holiday

AMMAN (JT) — The Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) on the second consecutive day continued implementing the "Leave It Clean 2026" campaign in Aqaba and the Wadi Rum area during the Eid Al Fitr holiday.

The campaign underscores ongoing efforts to protect the environment and enhance the Kingdom's public image, in line with Royal directives and the designation of 2026 as the Year of Cleanliness, as well as the national plan led by the Ministry of Environment to re-

duce random waste disposal, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Activities included extensive field clean-up operations and the distribution of eco-friendly reusable bags to visitors at tourist sites, aimed at reducing plastic use and promoting sustainable alternatives.

Director of the Environment Directorate at ASEZA Taghrid Maaytah said that the campaign is part of a broader strategy being implemented in 2026 to raise environmental awareness and promote cleanliness at tourist



Photo courtesy of ASEZA
The Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority on the second consecutive day continues implementing the 'Leave It Clean 2026' campaign in Aqaba and Wadi Rum

sites, beaches and public spaces.

She added that

around 2,000 reusable bags were distributed to visitors during the

second and third days of Eid, alongside awareness campaigns encouraging proper waste disposal.

Maaytah said that the initiative aims to enhance community engagement and encourage visitors to help preserve the cleanliness of the city and its natural environment, particularly during peak holiday periods.

The authority also issued guidelines that highlight the importance of reducing plastic use, limiting littering and adhering to regulations, warning of penalties for violations.



President of the Association of Owners of Clearance and Transport Companies Daifallah Abu Aqoula on Monday warns that the ongoing war involving Israel, the US and Iran is exerting mounting pressure on global supply chains

Rising shipping costs from regional tensions may boost Jordan as trade corridor — syndicate

AMMAN (JT) — President of the Association of Owners of Clearance and Transport Companies Daifallah Abu Aqoula on Monday warned that the ongoing war involving Israel, the US and Iran, coupled with the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, is exerting mounting pressure on global supply chains and shipping costs.

He said the developments pose significant challenges to trade flows, while also presenting an opportunity for Jordan to reinforce its role as a regional logistics hub.

In a press statement cited by Al Mamlaka TV, Abu Aqoula noted that operations at the Port of Aqaba remain normal so far, warning that a prolonged crisis could drive up shipping and energy costs, with ripple effects across all sectors, ultimately increasing the prices of goods and services.

He also cautioned that continued disruptions could intensify pressure on land transport networks and clearance companies, stressing the need for preparedness to manage potential delays.

Abu Aqoula emphasised the importance of closer public-private coordination to ensure the smooth flow of goods. He proposed the formation of a joint committee, headed by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply, to monitor

supply chains, assess risks and develop contingency plans. He added that the private sector is already tracking developments through a committee established at the Amman Chamber of Commerce, which includes the Jordan Shipping Association, the Association of Owners of Clearance and Transport Companies, the Logistics Association and the Truck Owners Association, with continuous, around-the-clock coordination.

These include overland routes through Syria and Lebanon to Mediterranean ports...

Abu Aqoula also underscored the need to enhance regional cooperation among Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Gulf Cooperation Council countries by removing logistical bottlenecks,

facilitating container movement via land routes, reducing fees and streamlining customs procedures.

Strengthening such connectivity, he said, could help stabilise trade flows by linking the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, highlighting the strategic geographic position of both Jordan and Syria.

He further warned of potential delays in the arrival of raw materials and essential goods for Jordanian industries, which could increase production costs and push up prices in local markets, particularly if prices rise in exporting countries.

Abu Aqoula cautioned that further disruptions could arise if the Bab el Mandeb Strait were to close, noting that such a scenario would complicate access to key raw materials and increase reliance on alternative routes through Syria and Turkey or via Egyptian ports, despite higher costs and longer transit times.

Despite these risks, he said Jordan is actively working to develop alternative export and import routes to sustain trade flows at the lowest possible cost and shortest transit time. These include overland routes through Syria and Lebanon to Mediterranean ports, expanded maritime links via the Red Sea, and stronger connectivity with Gulf ports.

Jordanian field hospital in Nablus begins operation, treats 668 cases on first day

AMMAN (JT) — The personnel of the Jordanian field hospital in Nablus on Monday began receiving patients, providing comprehensive medical and therapeutic services to residents of the governorate and surrounding areas, in an effort to strengthen the local healthcare sector.

The hospital's commander said the initiative reflects Jordan's commitment to its humanitarian and medical mission towards the Palestinian people, highlighting the dedication of medical teams in delivering advanced treatment amid current circumstances, Petra reported.

He noted that the hospital treated 668 cases on its first day, including minor surgeries, follow-ups for chronic diseases, laboratory tests, and internal emergency cases. These services were delivered through specialised clinics designed to meet patient needs efficiently.

The hospital director said the facility includes specialised clinics in general medicine,



The personnel of the Jordanian field hospital in Nablus on Monday begins receiving patients

gynaecology, internal medicine, surgery, orthopaedics, dermatology, ophthalmology, ENT, and dentistry.

"The hospital also features two major and minor operating theatres, two intensive care units, a radiology and sterilisation laboratory, and a pharmacy," he added.

He also emphasised that all services are provided under the su-

per vision of a qualified team of doctors, nurses, and allied medical professionals, ensuring care meets the highest standards.

Residents of Nablus expressed gratitude to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah, for its continuous support and principled stance toward the Palestinian people. They described

the efforts as a reflection of the "deep-rooted brotherly" ties between the two peoples.

The Jordanian field hospital in Nablus was established in late November 2023.

Jordan also runs two military field hospitals in Gaza, one in the Strip's north and was established in 2009 following the war in 2008, and the second is in Khan Younis in the

south, which was established in November 2023 at the peak of the Israeli war of aggression on the coastal enclave that erupted on October 7, 2023.

Other humanitarian programmes include the land bridge for aid delivery, the Restoring Hope Initiative, which provides prosthetics for amputees, and the evacuation of critical cases to Jordanian hospitals.

Jordan condolences Qatar, Turkey over helicopter crash victims

Doha confirms 4 Qataris, 3 Turks killed in helicopter crash

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan has expressed its condolences and sympathies to Qatar and Turkey over the deaths of six personnel from the Qatari Armed Forces and the joint Qatari-Turkish forces, as well as two Turkish civilian contractors, following a helicopter crash in Qatar's territorial waters.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Jordan's full solidarity with the governments and peoples of Qatar and Turkey, extending its deepest sympathies to the families of the victims.

Qatar on Sunday confirmed four of its military personnel and three Turkish nationals, including one serviceman, were killed on board a helicopter that crashed in Qatar's territorial waters.



The Gulf state's interior ministry said in a statement, carried by AFP, that rescue operations had been completed and a final seventh individual was confirmed dead. "All those who were on board have been found, numbering seven, and their martyrdom has

been confirmed," it said.

Earlier, Qatar's defence ministry named the victims of the crash as Captain Mubarak Salem Daway Al Marri, Sergeant Fahad Hadi Ghanem Al Khayarin, Corporal Mohammed Maher Mohammed and Captain Saeed Nasser Sameekh from the Qatari

armed forces, according to AFP.

The defence ministry also identified Major Sinan Tastekin from the Qatari-Turkish Joint Forces and two Turkish civilians, Suleiman Cemra Kahraman and Ismail Anas, as having been killed in the crash. They are the first re-

corded fatalities from both countries since the US and Israel unleashed strikes on Iran on February 28 and the Islamic republic launched a retaliatory air campaign against its Gulf neighbours.

The Turkish defence ministry said, "A Qatari armed forces helicopter, which was carrying out a training exercise as part of the Qatari-Turkish Joint Forces Command, crashed into the sea," AFP said.

"A member of the Turkish armed forces and two Aselsan technicians" were killed in the crash, the ministry said, referring to the Turkish defence giant.

The Qatari defence ministry had earlier said that the helicopter crashed due to a "technical malfunction" during a routine flight.

Jordan marks 58th anniversary of Al Karamah Battle

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan has marked the 58th anniversary of Al Karamah Battle, in which Jordanian soldiers repelled an Israeli attack on the town of Karamah, or "dignity" in Arabic, in the Jordan Valley.

Eighty-six Jordanian soldiers lost their lives and 108 were wounded in the battle on March 21, 1968.

The Israeli raid was repelled with heavy losses as the Jordanian army launched an artillery barrage against Israeli tanks.

A total of 250 Israeli

soldiers were killed and 450 were wounded.

The Jordanian army lost 13 tanks and 39

various vehicles, while Israel had 88 vehicles destroyed and seven fighter planes shot

down.

The battle objective as announced by Israel was to destroy the gar-

ison of Arab fighters in Karamah, while the real goal of the attack was to occupy the eastern

highlands of the Jordan Valley in Balqa, 35 kilometres northwest of Amman, as Israel was attempting to close in on the capital to force the surrender of Jordan and to obtain new land.

In addition to occupying more land, Israel aimed to destroy the Jordanian army and affirm its superiority after winning the 1967 war.

In the fifth hour of the battle, Israel requested a ceasefire that was rejected by His Majesty the late King Hussein, who affirmed his rejection "as long as a single Israeli soldier is still on the eastern bank of the Jordan River".

In his speech after the battle ended, King Hussein said that the battle had shown excellent planning and implementation of strategies on the part of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army and intelligence agencies, which deprived the enemy of the element of surprise by predicting the attack.

After the battle, several senior Western military officers and press outlets expressed admiration for Jordan's determination and heroism, which led to victory against a superior army.



Photos by Ahmad Khleifat



Jordan marks the 58th anniversary of Al Karamah Battle



A car is refuelled at a petrol station

Fuel reserves 'very reassuring' amid continuous oil, gas shipments — GSOA

AMMAN (JT) — The Kingdom maintains a secure and sufficient supply of fuel derivatives, with oil and gas shipments arriving regularly, Gas Station Owners Association (GSOA) President Nahar Seidat said on Monday.

Gas reserves are "very reassuring", Seidat said, noting that a tanker was unloaded in Aqaba ten days ago, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

He added that Jordan holds a strategic fuel stockpile sufficient for 70 days, including 40 days maintained by marketing

companies and 30 days by the government, stressing that official reserves remain untouched.

A diesel tanker carrying 55,000 tonnes was unloaded two days ago, while another shipment is en route from India, with no expected delays, he said.

Seidat noted that Jordan imports around 10 million barrels of oil daily from Iraq, with the capacity to increase volumes if needed, adding that the presence of the Jordan Petroleum Refinery enhances the Kingdom's energy security.

Israel launches new strikes on Tehran as Iran takes aim at Gulf sites

TEHRAN (AFP) — Israel launched a fresh wave of strikes on Monday at Iran, which threatened retaliation against vital infrastructure across the Middle East in a war that has plunged the world into its worst energy crisis in decades.

Explosions rang out in Tehran, Iranian media reported, while Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates said they were intercepting missiles and drones.

At least 40 energy assets across the oil- and gas-exporting region have been "severely or very severely damaged" in the conflict, said International Energy Agency chief Fatih Birol, as the war ignited by Israel-US attacks on Iran entered its fourth week.

Tehran has met the assaults by firing missiles and drones at Israel and across the Gulf in the last weeks, hitting energy sites and US embassies alike. It has also throttled traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway through which a fifth of global crude oil transits.

With oil prices hovering above \$100 a barrel over supply fears, US President Donald Trump threatened to "obliterate" Iranian power plants if Tehran failed to reopen the strait within 48 hours.

The deadline, based on the time of his social media posting, would be 23:44 GMT, early morning Tuesday in Iran.

But Iran's response was firm, with its powerful parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf vowing that vital infrastructure across the region would "be con-



Rocket trails are seen in the sky amid a fresh barrage of Iranian missile attacks above the Israeli coastal city of Netanya on Monday

sidered legitimate targets and will be irreversibly destroyed" if Trump carried out his threat.

Laying out the scale of the crisis before the global economy, IEA chief Fatih Birol said 11 million barrels of oil are currently lost a day — more than the daily volume eradicated during two consecutive oil crises in the 1970s.

"No country will be immune to the effects of this crisis if it continues to go in this direction. So there is a need for global efforts," Birol told journalists in Canberra.

Iran eyes Hormuz tax Asian stocks slipped while oil prices rose again early Monday, with US benchmark crude briefly touching the \$100-per-barrel mark.

In recent days, Iran has allowed a handful of vessels from countries

it considers friendly to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, while warning it would block ships from countries it says have joined the "aggression" against it.

Iran's parliament is mulling imposing tolls on shipping through the strait, with Ghalibaf saying maritime traffic would "not return to its pre-war status".

Trump has offered varying timelines and objectives for the war, saying Friday he was considering "winding down" the operation, a day before his threat against power plants, which would mark a significant escalation.

Lengthy operation in Lebanon

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has spoken of a long-

term campaign against Iran's government, a state sponsor of Hamas, which carried out the unprecedented October 7, 2023 attack against Israel, which responded by devastating Gaza.

Israel has also expanded its ground campaign against Iran-allied Hizbollah in Lebanon, warning of a lengthy operation there.

"Citizens of Israel, we face more weeks of fighting against Iran and Hizbollah," Israeli military spokesman Brigadier General Effie Defrin said.

Israeli forces were given orders to destroy bridges they said were used by Hizbollah to cross the key Litani river, 30 kilometres north of the border.

More than 1,000

people have died in Lebanon since Israel launched strikes, according to the health ministry, with more than 1 million people displaced.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun warned that the bridge attacks "represent a dangerous escalation and flagrant violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and are considered a prelude to a ground invasion".

But the country's Prime Minister Nawaf Salam also put blame on Hizbollah, which began firing on Israel over the killing of Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei at the start of the war.

"It was declared that this war was in retaliation for the assassination of Khamenei, so this means this war was imposed upon us,"

Salam told the Al Hadath network.

Israel has prided itself on air defences, and Trump and Netanyahu both claim to have knocked out key Iranian military sites.

But Iranian missiles evaded the defences to land in two southern towns, including Dimona, close to Israel's desert nuclear facility, injuring dozens on Saturday.

"We thought we were safe," Galit Amir, a 50-year-old care provider, told AFP in Dimona. "We didn't expect this."

Netanyahu vowed to pursue senior commanders of Iran's Revolutionary Guards "personally" as he inspected the damage in Arad, the other town struck by an Iranian missile.

According to rescuers, a missile landed about five kilometres from what is widely believed to be the Middle East's only nuclear arsenal, although Israel has never admitted to possessing nuclear weapons, insisting the site is for research.

Iran said the Dimona strike was in response to an earlier attack on its nuclear site at Natanz.

Asked about Natanz, Israel's military said it was "not aware of a strike".

In Iran, at least 3,230 people have died in the war, including 1,406 civilians, according to the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency. AFP is not able to access the sites of strikes nor independently verify tolls in Iran.



An Iran-backed armed group announced on Monday that it would continue its five-day pause on attacking the US embassy in Baghdad

Iraqi pro-Iran group extends pause in US embassy attacks

BAGHDAD (AFP) — An Iran-backed armed group announced on Monday that it would continue its five-day pause on attacking the US embassy in Baghdad.

Since the start of the war in the Middle East, pro-Iran armed groups have claimed responsibility for near-daily attacks on US interests in Iraq and across the region, while strikes have also targeted these groups.

On Thursday, Kataeb Hizbollah, designated a "terrorist organisation" by Washington, said it would stop attacking the Baghdad embassy under certain conditions, including an end to attacks on residential parts of Iraq and the southern suburbs of Beirut.

The latter area is a bastion of Lebanon's Hizbollah, which is also Iran-backed and is at war with Israel.

"The deadline given to the embassy of American evil will be extend-

ed by an additional five days," Kataeb Hizbollah said in a statement on Monday.

It added that it would respond to "any violations by the enemy accordingly" and inform a mediator of its "response mechanism".

Iraq has been unwillingly drawn into the regional conflict triggered by US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28.

Kataeb Hizbollah's announcement comes after a series of overnight strikes targeting a US diplomatic and logistics centre at the Baghdad International Airport.

Late Sunday, three strikes also hit south of Baghdad, with a local emergency crisis cell saying they targeted a stronghold of former paramilitary coalition Hashed Al Shaabi, also known as the Popular Mobilisation Forces.

A Kataeb Hizbollah official said on condition of anonymity that his group had been targeted.



A photograph taken from the southern Lebanese district of Marjeyoun shows smoke as it rises from the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the village of Zawtar on Sunday

Lebanon PM says Iran Guards commanding Hizbollah operations in Lebanon

BEIRUT, Lebanon, (AFP) — Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam said on Sunday that members of Iran's Revolutionary Guards are commanding Hizbollah's operations in the group's ongoing war against Israel.

In an interview with the Al Hadath network, Salam once again lashed out at Hizbollah for dragging Lebanon into the Middle East war by firing rockets on Israel.

"It was declared that

this war was in retaliation for the assassination of Khamenei, so this means this war was imposed upon us," he said.

Referring to the incident in which an Iranian-made drone hit a British base in Cyprus earlier this month, Salam said "that was the Revolutionary Guard, which is present and, unfortunately, is managing the military operation in Lebanon".

"These people have forged passports and

entered the country illegally," he added.

An Iranian-made drone hit a British base in Cyprus earlier this month, with Nicosia saying the drone was probably fired by Tehran-backed Hizbollah in Lebanon, and not from Iran itself.

Salam referred to the IRGC announcing joint operations with Hizbollah against Israel as proof of their commanding of the war in Lebanon.

The Lebanese government decided this month to ban any activity by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards in the country.

Beirut also took the unprecedented step of imposing a ban on Hizbollah military activities and called on the group to hand over its weapons to the state.

"We are committed to the decisions we have made and we are working to implement them," Salam said.

'Point of no return' looming in Middle East war — Red Cross

'Deliberate attacks on essential services and civilian infrastructure can amount to war crimes'

GENEVA (AFP) — The International Committee of the Red Cross demanded on Monday a halt to the "war on essential infrastructure" in the Middle East, warning of potential "irreversible consequences" including harm to nuclear facilities.

"What we have seen in recent days in the Middle East risks reaching a point of no return," ICRC president Mirjana Spoljaric warned in a statement.

"Most alarming is the potential harm to nuclear facilities, whether deliberate or incidental," she said.

Energy infrastructure has been repeatedly hit since the start of the war on February 28, when the United States and Israel began their attacks on Iran. Tehran has responded by striking targets in



Ripped curtains hang in the windows of a destroyed residential building in northern Tehran on Monday

Israel and Gulf states.

Over the weekend, an Iranian strike hit the southern Israeli town of Dimona, home to a nuclear facility, in what Tehran said was in response to an earlier attack on its nuclear site at Natanz.

"Damage to these sites could trigger irrevers-

ible consequences, which is why they are afforded heightened protections under the rules of war," Spoljaric said.

She cautioned that "war on essential infrastructure is war on civilians".

"Deliberate attacks on essential services and civilian infrastructure can

amount to war crimes."

Her comments came as US President Donald Trump suddenly backtracked on a threat to "obliterate" Iran's power infrastructure if it did not reopen the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

In response to Trump's initial threat, Iran had

threatened to deploy naval mines in the Gulf and target power plants across the region.

On Monday, Trump said he was putting his ultimatum on hold after "very good" talks with unidentified Iranian officials, while Iranian media outlets quoted the foreign ministry in Tehran denying any negotiations and suggesting Trump was angling to bring down energy prices.

"Attacks on essential infrastructure have already punished millions of civilians both near and far from the front lines," Spoljaric said in her statement.

"This pattern, combined with an escalatory rhetoric that disregards the limits imposed by international humanitarian law, normalises a style of warfare that strips away our shared humanity."

World gave Israel 'licence to torture Palestinians' — UN expert

GENEVA (AFP) — The world has given Israel "a licence to torture Palestinians", a UN expert said on Monday, with life in the occupied territories "a continuum of physical and mental suffering".

Francesca Albanese, the UN's special rapporteur on the rights situation in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, said "torture has effectively become state policy" in Israel.

"Israel has effectively been given a licence to torture Palestinians, because most of your governments, your min-

isters, have allowed it," she said, as she presented her latest report to the UN Human Rights Council.

Albanese has faced harsh criticism, allegations of anti-Semitism and demands for her removal, from Israel and some of its allies, over her relentless criticism and long-standing accusations of "genocide".

"Francesca Albanese is not a promoter of human rights; she is an agent of chaos... and any document she produces is nothing but a politically-charged, activist rant," Israel's mis-

sion in Geneva said in a statement on Monday.

Albanese "advocates dangerous extremist narratives to undermine the very existence of the State of Israel", it said.

Albanese's report claimed Israel was systematically torturing Palestinians on a scale "that suggests collective vengeance and destructive intent".

"My report also shows that torture extends far beyond prison walls, in what can only be described as a torturous environment imposed by Israel across the entire occupied Pal-

estinian territory," she told the Human Rights Council.

She said torture destroys the conditions that make life meaningful, stripping away human dignity, leaving empty shells behind.

"The testimonies that I and many others are documenting are not only tragic stories of suffering; they are evidence of atrocity crimes targeting the totality of the Palestinian people, across the totality of the occupied land, through a totality of criminal conduct," she said.

Albanese warned

that the international response would be a test of countries' collective legal and moral responsibility.

"Disregard for international law will not stop in Palestine. It is already unfolding from Lebanon to Iran, across the Gulf countries, and in Venezuela. And if left unchecked, it will spread far beyond," she said.

Though appointed by the UN Human Rights Council, special rapporteurs are independent experts and do not speak on behalf of the United Nations itself.

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Iraqi PM confirms anti-extremist coalition's withdrawal plans

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi leader Mohammed Shia Al Sudani confirmed the timeline of the planned dismantling of a US-led international anti-extremist coalition, in an interview with an Italian newspaper published on Monday.

The prime minister's comments come as the country finds itself drawn into the conflict in the Middle East, which began with Israeli and US strikes on Iran on February 28.

Pro-Iran armed groups have claimed responsibility for near-daily attacks on US interests in Iraq and across the region, while strikes have also targeted these groups.

The end of the international anti-extremist coalition's mission is planned for September 2026 in Iraq, with the drawdown launching in 2024.

The end of the mission is intended to pave the way for bilateral security partnerships with member countries of the alliance, formed in 2014 to fight the extremist Daesh terror group.

"We and our allies have now decided to confirm the end of the international coalition, which will take place in September 2026," Sudani told Italian newspaper Corriere Della Sera.

In an earlier version of the story published by the outlet, Sudani said the withdrawal



This handout photograph taken and released by the Iraqi Prime Minister's Press Office on Sunday shows Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al Sudani (left) inspecting the damage after a drone attack at an intelligence services building, in Baghdad

would be accelerated. The online version was later updated.

"Once there are no more foreign military contingents on Iraqi soil, it will be easier to break up the armed factions," he said, referring to pro-Iran groups in the country.

The presence of foreign troops — particularly American advisers — is a long-running

point of contention between the government and the pro-Iran armed factions.

Baghdad has demanded a monopoly on weapons and called for the dismantling of the groups' arsenals, which the factions justify by pointing to the presence of foreign soldiers.

Both the government and the coalition insist

the coalition deploys military advisers — who provide expertise and support, aiming to prevent a resurgence of Daesh — to Iraq at the invitation of the authorities.

These advisers are currently only deployed in northern Iraqi Kurdistan and are scheduled to remain there until September 2026.

In January, the first phase of the coalition withdrawal agreement was completed, with personnel leaving the Iraqi military bases.

The coalition is also in the process of withdrawing from neighbouring Syria, where it also deployed, having recently handed over its bases to Syrian government forces.

Mideast war reshapes Jordan's energy strategy as renewables gain urgency

Continued from page 1

In times of crisis, this capacity offers a limited but critical buffer. Renewable energy provides a locally generated source of electricity.

At the same time, the government is relying on contingency planning.

Energy Minister Saleh Kharabsheh said Jordan maintains fuel reserves covering around 30 days. Additional gas supplies are also secured.

He said power plants can switch between gas, diesel and heavy fuel oil. "This provides flexibility during supply disruptions."

However, this flexibility comes at a cost. Additional daily expenses are estimated at around JD2.5 million. Costs could rise further if global prices

continue to increase.

The government has also prepared contingency scenarios for potential supply disruptions or escalation. These plans are ready for immediate implementation if needed.

While such measures provide short-term stability, the broader challenge remains structural.

Economic expert Musa Saket said global conflicts quickly translate into economic pressure on Jordan.

"Any disruption, whether in Ukraine, Gaza or the Gulf, is reflected almost immediately in Jordan's energy bill and the cost of electricity and transport," he said.

"Renewable energy contributes around 27 per cent of electricity generation. Its share of total energy consumption remains below 14

per cent. This means the current level of protection is still limited."

Energy expert Amer Shobaki said the challenge is also technical.

"Renewables can support electricity generation during the day, but they cannot be relied on in emergencies," he said.

He noted that solar and wind power depend on stable weather conditions. Jordan also lacks large-scale storage systems.

He added that solar energy can provide partial support. However, it remains intermittent and cannot yet serve as a fully reliable source of power.

"Jordan is accelerating its transition, but gaps in reliability remain. Closing these gaps will be key to ensuring long-term energy readiness beyond the current crisis."

Jordan denounces 'continued' settler attacks against Palestinians

Continued from page 1

In a statement, the ministry spokesperson, Fuad Majali, reiterated Jordan's rejection of the attacks and the escalating violence by extremist settlers against the Palestinian people, warning that continued violations and restrictions in the occupied territory risk further escalation and threaten regional security and stability.

He urged the international community to assume its legal and moral responsibilities and compel Israel to halt the dangerous escalation and settler violence.

He also stressed the need to fulfil the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, primarily their right to and independent, sovereign state of their own on the June 4, 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The spokesperson also said that the two-state solution remains the only path to achieving a just and comprehensive peace.

Palestinian residents said on Sunday that Israeli settlers torched buildings and cars in attacks on several villages in the occupied West Bank, with Israel's army condemning

"violence of any kind" after the fact.

The reported arson late Saturday came in the midst of a spate of killings of Palestinians by Israeli settlers in the West Bank since the start of the Middle East war, according to AFP.

AFP journalists saw the charred remains of a house and several vehicles in the village of Fandaqumiya, southwest of Jenin. In the village of Jalud, a medical centre had been torched and Hebrew graffiti daubed on the mosque.

Hassan Al Zoubi, whose home in Fandaqumiya was destroyed, told AFP that some 200 assailants had come from the nearby settlement of Homesh.

"They set the house on fire right before our eyes using Molotov cocktails, throwing them through the windows," Zoubi said.

The Palestinian news agency WAFA said several Palestinians were injured in the attacks.

'Settler terror'

Since the start of the US-Israeli war with Iran, six Palestinians have been shot dead in settler attacks in the West Bank, according to a tally of data from the Ramallah-

based health ministry.

The Palestinian presidency condemned the recent "terrorist attacks carried out by Israeli colonist gangs" in the West Bank.

"These assaults constitute a serious escalation for which the Israeli occupation government bears full responsibility," it said.

Diplomats from 13 European nations and Canada on Saturday decried "increasing settler terror", and said the violent attempts to seize Palestinian land "must end".

Alongside roughly three million Palestinians, more than 500,000 Israelis live in settlements and outposts in the West Bank, which are illegal under international law.

Violence in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, has risen sharply since the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel triggered the Gaza war.

According to an AFP tally based on Palestinian health ministry figures, Israeli troops or settlers have killed at least 1,050 Palestinians in the West Bank since the start of the Gaza war.

Official Israeli figures say 45 Israelis have also been killed in Palestinian attacks or during Israeli military operations.

Pakistan PM says held talks with Iranian president

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AFP) — Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said he spoke with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, and promised Islamabad's help in bringing peace to the region.

The pair have spoken several times in the last month, notably to exchange Ramadan and Eid greetings but also to reaffirm Pakistan's hope for an end to the conflict with the United States and Israel.

Sharif said he extended greetings to Pezeshkian for the Persian new year and they also discussed "the grave situation in the Gulf region and agreed on the urgent need for de-escalation, dialogue and diplomacy".

In a post on X, he said Pakistan was also committed to playing "a constructive role in advancing peace in the region".

In Tehran, Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei suggested messages had been received from "some friendly countries indicating a US request for negotiations at ending the war", according to the official IRNA news agency.

Pakistan is one country mooted as a possible go-between, along with Egypt and Qatar.

Soon after Sharif's post, Pakistan said Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar separately talked to his Iranian counterpart, Abbas Araghchi, to discuss "recent regional

developments".

"[They] emphasised the importance of dialogue & diplomacy to promote peace, security, and stability in the region and beyond," the foreign ministry wrote on X.

"Both sides agreed to remain in close contact on the evolving situation."

Fine line

Pakistan, currently embroiled in its own conflict with neighbouring Afghanistan, shares a border with Iran in its southwest, and has been treading a fine diplomatic line since the start of the war.

The country, which fears a cut in vital supplies of oil and gas from the Gulf, has had a mu-

tual defence pact with Saudi Arabia since last year, cementing long-standing defence ties.

The agreement states that "any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both".

Sharif and army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir were both in Riyadh earlier this month and met de facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

According to the Pakistani Institute of Development Economics, there are about six million Pakistanis working in the Middle East, most of them in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

They account for just over half [54 per cent] of

the country's overseas remittances, it added.

At the same time, the government in Islamabad has kept its other long-standing ally close, condemning the killing of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and sending congratulations to his son and successor, Mojtaba

Shia Muslims make up about 10-15 per cent of Pakistan's population. Ali Khamenei's death sparked deadly riots at US diplomatic missions across the country.

Iran was the first country to recognise Pakistan soon after its independence in 1947.

Likewise, Pakistan was one of the first to recognise the Islamic republic after the 1979 revolution.

Trump calls off Iran strikes and announces 'very good' talks

Continued from page 1

Trump's threat to bomb Iran's power infrastructure had raised fears of a major escalation that could have seen the conflict expand again, with huge consequences for Gulf countries that host US forces.

In response, Iran had threatened to deploy naval mines in the Gulf and target power plants across the region — ramping up its rhetoric after warnings the world faced an energy crisis of historic proportions if the US-Israeli war with Iran drags on.

Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday that he spoke with Donald Trump, saying that the US president believed US-Israeli military gains in Iran could be converted into a negotiated agreement that protected Israel's interests.

"President Trump be-

lieves there is a chance to leverage the tremendous achievements of the IDF and the US military in order to realise the war's objectives in an agreement — an agreement that will safeguard our vital interests," Netanyahu said in a video statement.

"We will protect our vital interests under any circumstances," he said, adding: "At the same time, we continue to strike both in Iran and in Lebanon."

Tehran has retaliated against US-Israeli attacks by throttling traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, conduit for a fifth of global crude, hitting energy sites and US embassies across the Gulf as well as targets in Israel.

The head of the International Energy Agency Fatih Birol warned overnight that, in the event of a protracted war, daily oil losses put the world on track for a crisis worse

than the combined impact of both 1970s oil shocks and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Oil prices have been driven above \$100 a barrel by the conflict — and they tumbled sharply after Trump's announcements, while European stocks rebounded.

International benchmark Brent North Sea crude plunged around 10 per cent to \$101.00 per barrel, while the main US oil contract West Texas Intermediate shed around 9 per cent to \$89.35 per barrel.

"I welcome the talks reported between the US and Iran," British Prime Minister Keir Starmer told a parliamentary committee, adding the UK was "aware" discussions were happening.

Since the start of the war on February 28, Trump has repeatedly stated his desire for regime change and openly raised the idea of

installing a pro-Western figure from inside Iran's government.

Tulsi Gabbard, director of US national intelligence, told Congress last week that she assessed "the regime in Iran to be intact but largely degraded due to attacks on its leadership and military capabilities".

Lebanon ground campaign

The US president has offered varying timelines and objectives for the war, saying Friday he was considering "winding down" the operation — only to later threaten Iran's power plants, of which it has more than 90.

Netanyahu has spoken of a long-term campaign against Iran's government.

In Lebanon, Israel has also expanded its ground campaign against Iran-backed Hizbollah, warning of "weeks of fighting" there.

The Lebanon violence has killed more than 1,000 people and displaced more than a million, according to the health ministry.

On Monday Israel's military said it was working to intercept a new salvo of missiles from Iran — while confirming its own artillery fire had killed an Israeli civilian a day earlier near the Lebanese border.

In Iran, at least 3,230 people have died in the war, including 1,406 civilians, according to the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency. AFP is not able to access the sites of strikes nor independently verify tolls in Iran.

In a sign of the conflict's tentacular impact, the world's second economy China had said earlier Monday it was capping domestic fuel cost increases to mitigate the effect of surging oil prices.

Continued from page 1

"We need to wait for more clarity," UBS commodities analyst Giovanni Staunovo told AFP, as European gas prices declined four per cent.

Asian and European stock markets had kicked off the new week with sharp losses. However following Asia's close and Trump's update, European equities rallied.

The rebound lost some steam after Iranian media said there had been no talks between Tehran and Washington.

"It's incredibly difficult to trade these markets when Trump is swinging between massive escalation and declaring peace/victory... but the market is happy for now that we do not enter a new phase of danger," said Saxo UK investor strategist, Neil Wilson.

Ahead of Trump's update, the International Energy Agency warned of the worst global en-

ergy crisis in decades.

Trump on Saturday gave Iran 48 hours to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to shipping or face the destruction of its energy infrastructure.

The ultimatum came as the waterway — through which a fifth of global oil and gas flows — remained effectively closed.

Iran warned Hormuz "will be completely closed" should Trump act on his threat.

Observers have raised the prospect of surging inflation as oil prices remain far above pre-war levels despite Monday's plunge.

This in turn could see central banks hike interest rates, potentially triggering a fresh cost-of-living crisis.

Disruption to fertiliser shipments has fanned concerns about global food security.

The prospect of higher borrowing costs has hammered the price of non-yielding gold but the pre-

cious metal recovered some of its losses after Trump's latest comments, which also reversed the direction of the dollar.

Ahead of Wall Street's reopening, the greenback dropped against the euro, British pound and yen, having earlier risen.

Yields on 10-year government bonds, which have been surging, pulled back slightly.

"As government bonds... see yields rise, it makes gold less attractive given that gold pays no interest," said Susannah Streeter, chief investment strategist at Wealth Club.

"Investors who have made losses elsewhere in volatile markets are selling to cover positions."

Israel has said the Middle East war could last several more weeks, with its military expanding ground operations in Lebanon against Iran-backed militant group Hizbollah.

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From Paris outskirts to city hall: Emmanuel Gregoire steps into the sun

By Erin Flanagan and Juliette Collen

Agence France-Presse

PARIS, France — Socialist Emmanuel Gregoire, who pollsters projected was elected mayor of the French capital on Sunday, is a discreet politician who has worked behind the scenes both in government and at the Paris city hall.

With greying hair and a quiet demeanour, the 48-year-old is stepping into the spotlight after previously serving as deputy to outgoing mayor Anne Hidalgo.

Gregoire secured a fifth consecutive victory for the Socialist Party at the helm of one of the world's most visited cities, with an estimated 51 to 53 per cent of the vote, pollsters said.

He beat 60-year-old right-winger Rachida Dati — one of France's highest-profile politicians — to take the reins of the capital, which is home to around 2 million residents.

His win comes as France gears up for a presidential election next year, with the far-right eyeing its best chance yet to claim the country's top office.

During his bid for City Hall, Gregoire promised that Paris would stand as a "city of refuge" and a "bastion against the right and the far-right".

"I've been preparing for this for years and years," he said last month.

Gregoire was born in the working-class Parisian suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis into a family with roots in the Communist Party.

The son of teacher and civil servant who separated when he was young, he grew up in western France before returning to Paris after his studies.

He was a consultant in the medical sector before turning to politics.

'Hard worker'

Known for his diligent approach, he was chief of staff to Bertrand Delanoë, the Socialist mayor who seized the capital from the right in 2001.

He then became chief of staff to former prime minister Jean-Marc Ayrault during the presidency of fellow Socialist Francois Hollande.

He later served as Hidalgo's deputy, though relations soured after she accused him of failing to back her unsuccessful 2022 presidential bid.

Gregoire resigned from his post in 2024 to serve as a member of parliament for Paris.

He led a left-wing coalition to victory on Sunday but refused to ally with the hard-left France Unbowed — even under pressure — following the killing of a far-right activist last month blamed on fringe leftists.

"He's not a showman or an orator, but out in the field he comes across well because he's approachable and you can tell he's a real hard worker," a Greens activist told AFP on condition of anonymity.

A veteran member of the Socialist Party, also asking not to be named, said Gregoire was first and foremost a party man.

"He's friendly, but he's an apparatchik," he said.

Gregoire has said he felt he was sometimes portrayed as dull, insisting he is "super cheerful, always laughing and really down-to-earth".

In an interview last month, he discussed living in a blended household, having brought three children from a previous marriage into his union with a mother of two — a family unit he refers to as his "tribe".

He also opened up about his younger brother's death by suicide in November despite his and his sisters' best efforts to help him.

"People have told me 1,000 times not to feel guilty but I do," he said.

'Inner wound'

In a city where skyrocketing costs are displacing the middle and working classes, Gregoire has made housing a key focus.

Promising a leadership style "closely connected to the people", he has sought at times to distance himself from Hidalgo's sometimes unpopular style of governance.

But he has also pledged to carry on certain elements of her legacy, including increasing the number of bike lanes and green spaces and improving public housing in the densely populated city.

Gregoire has promised to improve the recruitment and training of school monitors in Paris, after allegations that several have physically or sexually abused kindergarten pupils.

He has spoken publicly about being a victim of sexual abuse in an after-school swimming programme for several months when he was in primary.

"I have long carried in me an inner wound," he said in November. He has said he hoped telling his story might encourage children to speak out.

Is honesty the best policy for the international order?

By Sophie Eisentraut

BERLIN — With his recent speech describing the rules-based international order as a "fiction", Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney made a mainstay of debates across the Global South fashionable in the West. Developing and emerging economies have long criticised the inconsistent implementation of international rules and double standards at the heart of the international order. Now, a Western leader has acknowledged the hypocrisy, too.

Until recently, the Carneys of the world had invested considerable political capital in defending the rules-based order against such accusations. At the Munich Security Conference in February, the Saudi minister of foreign affairs remarked, with relief, that "finally, we are, all of us, being honest with each other" about the broken nature of the old system.

But should we really be rejoicing at this move towards greater honesty? What will come of Western leaders acknowledging how "imperfect" the old order was "even at the best of times", as German Chancellor Friedrich Merz recently put it?

I ask as someone who has called for a more honest conversation about that order's inconsistencies and the legitimate concerns they raised. I hoped that acknowledging the double standards would help reduce them, leading to a more constructive debate about how

to strengthen international rules and norms. Yet, now I worry that the honesty on display today is not serving either objective.

Instead of ensuring greater consistency or inspiring reforms to make the prevailing system more just and emancipatory, this newfound frankness often seems aimed at opposite ends. It is being used to justify blatant discrepancies and to depict any work toward more consistent global rules as futile.

Most of those who highlight the old order's shortcomings are not promising to alter their own behaviour. They may acknowledge the hypocrisies enshrined in that order, but their reactions to the Trump administration's intervention in Venezuela and the US-Israeli strikes against Iran confirm that nothing much has changed. They remain willing to condone or look past their allies' rule violations.

Aside from Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, few Western leaders have called out the illegality of the US-Israeli attack on Iran. Not even the European Union — a longtime champion of international law — has issued an official condemnation.

In fact, judging by recent official statements, some in the West seem to regard dishonesty about the old order's double standards and moralising by Europeans and others as two sides of the same problematic coin. For them, being more honest about the old order means no longer chiding other governments for their violations of in-

ternational rules.

Thus, Merz recently made clear that Germany would not be "lecturing our partners on their military strikes against Iran". But in that case, nothing has changed: The partners Germany is sparing from moralising lectures are the same partners that Germany has almost always spared from moralising lectures.

Few who have finally acknowledged the old order's deficits are taking the next step of trying to build something better. Instead, the more common argument is that the old order is basically dead and not to be mourned. The implication is that Western countries should now focus on the far more limited goal of defending their own strategic interests in a world where power politics dominate and where international rules no longer command respect.

This was the subtext of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's recent speech at the EU Ambassadors Conference, where she argued that "Europe can no longer be a custodian for the old-world order, for a world that has gone and will not return". Likewise, Merz believes that the rules-based order "no longer exists". Even Carney, who suggested that "something bigger, better, stronger, more just" could be built on the ruins of the old order, has provided little detail on what this could look like. (He also initially endorsed the US-Israeli strikes on Iran, albeit

"with regret".)

Those declaring the old order dead — which is conveniently happening just as its double standards have come to haunt the West — might want to be seen as refreshingly honest brokers. But one can just as easily interpret their statements as abandoning all ambition to shape global rules and principles for the better.

Western leaders now speak in the same "transactional" terms that they once criticised the Global South for using. They, too, have settled on a foreign-policy approach based on national interests, rather than on principles that serve the interests of all. Their goal is not to advance a more just global order, but rather to promote a "realist" stance that frees them from any commitment to defending or strengthening international rules.

Of course, it is reasonable to ask whether "middle powers" can uphold international rules, let alone establish new ones, without the buy-in of a hegemon. But if they completely drop the ambition to do so, the very notion of a rules-based order will indeed be dead. The honesty we have been waiting for will be used to justify inconsistencies or an abdication of leadership. If that is our future, we may miss the "fictional" world we have lost.

Sophie Eisentraut is head of research and publications at the Munich Security Conference.

Blow to Italy's Meloni as she suffers referendum defeat

By Alexandria Sage and Alice Ritchie

Agence France-Presse

ROME — Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni conceded defeat on Monday in a referendum on justice reform, but despite the major blow to her far-right leadership, she insisted she was going nowhere.

With almost all ballots counted from the Sunday-Monday vote, the "No" camp was at almost 54 per cent, compared to just over 46 per cent for "Yes", according to official figures.

During the campaign, Meloni had insisted the referendum, which concerned the role and oversight of judges and prosecutors, was not about her own leadership of the government.

And she repeated this Monday, saying "the Italians have decided", but adding that "this does not change our commitment to continue".

Yet, she had forcefully campaigned for the proposals, alongside her coalition partners in the hard-right government, while the opposition parties had fought for a "No".

Daniele Albertazzi, a professor of politics at the UK's University of Surrey told AFP it was a "bad, bad result" for Meloni.

"It means she has lost the Italian electorate on a major issue in her manifesto and one of the key proposals of the right... for the past 30 years," he said.

It is the first such setback for Meloni, who has led an uncharacteristically stable coalition government since October 2022 and faces parliamentary elections next year.

"If the centre-left gets its act together, this is going to help them. Because it means that her image as unbeatable is not there anymore," Albertazzi said.

Turnout was relatively high for a referendum, at almost 59 per cent.

'Eviction notice'

The referendum, voted on Sunday and Monday, sought to separate the role of judges and prosecutors and change their oversight body in what the government cast as necessary measures to ensure impartiality in the courts.

But critics said it was an attempt to exert more control over independent judges, whose decisions Meloni's ministers have often attacked in public.

They also argued the reform failed to address the real chal-

lenges facing Italy's dysfunctional justice system, from years-long trials and huge case backlogs to prison overcrowding.

Political analysts said the reform's complexity, not easily understood by many Italians, and the rhetoric surrounding it meant the vote ultimately became a referendum on the Italian leader herself.

"Meloni is certainly weakened," Lorenzo Castellani, professor of politics at Rome's Luiss university, told AFP.

Former prime minister Giuseppe Conte, the leader of the Five Star Movement, who had campaigned against the referendum, said it was time for a new government.

"It's an eviction notice for this government after four years," he told a press conference.

Rallying cry

Italy's right has championed the issue of judicial reform since it became a key rallying cry of late conservative prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, who accused the magistrates bringing a slew of trials against him of left-wing bias.

Members of Meloni's government have similarly attacked the

judiciary, with Justice Minister Carlo Nordio saying last month the reform would correct a "para-Mafia mechanism" operating within the body.

The referendum would have prevented judges and public prosecutors from switching roles, although only a tiny minority currently do so, addressing concerns that too-cosy relations between the two groups harm defendants.

The reform's most divisive part involved changes to the Superior Council of the Judiciary (CSM), an oversight and disciplinary body whose members are elected by their peers and parliament.

The changes would have divided the CSM into two separate councils, one for judges and one for prosecutors and created a new 15-member disciplinary court.

Members would have been drawn by lots, no longer voted by their peers, while a fraction of the judges chosen randomly for the court will come from lists compiled by parliament.

Dividing the powerful CSM would make its members more susceptible to political pressure, argued the "No" camp, which also said that using a lottery system to choose those to sit on the court undermined the concept of merit.

How can Hormuz shipping blockage be solved?

LONDON (AFP) — Here are five ways that experts say commodities could begin moving again through the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial trade route currently blocked by Iranian forces in the Middle East war.

US-led military action

The most-talked-about option is for the US and willing allies to secure the 167 kilometre long passage militarily.

There are currently two US carrier strike groups — naval formations built around an aircraft carrier — in the region, the "bare minimum number of warships" required for an escort mission, Nick Childs, senior fellow at the IISS, told a seminar convened by the London-based defence think tank.

Britain, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Japan on Thursday said they were ready "to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the strait".

But it remains a daunting mission.

"This is not just a maritime issue and escort ships will not solve the problem alone... it would need a whole wrap around

it, of air capability, maritime capability, crewed, uncrewed, long-range strike, short-strike, et cetera," a UK defence official said in a briefing on Wednesday.

"It's a significant military challenge... This must be a multinational solution," the official added. "We're not anywhere near that at the moment."

Diplomatic off-ramp

A purely diplomatic solution remains on the table and is the preferred route for many global leaders.

Several governments are in bilateral talks with Tehran over an "emerging IRGC registration and vetting system", said Richard Meade, editor-in-chief of maritime intelligence journal Lloyd's List — a reference to Iran's Revolutionary Guard.

The proposed system would create an Iranian-approved "safe corridor" for ships to use, Meade told an online briefing on Thursday.

"We know that several governments — including China, but [also] India, Pakistan, Iraq, Malaysia — they're all in direct talks with Tehran, coordinating

vessel transits," he said.

At least nine ships have already used this corridor, which routes ships close to Iran's Larak Island for visual checks by Iranian authorities, he added.

While this offers some movement, Meade warned that "negotiated safe passage... is unlikely to dramatically increase the trickle of tonnage".

Take the chance

Another option is for shipowners to risk crossing the strait without dealing with Iran.

"Greek owners and operators have, typically, a higher risk appetite" and continue to move tankers through the route, Bridget Dyken, an analyst at analysis group Lloyd's List Intelligence, told the briefing.

Her colleague Cichen Shen added there was evidence of a potential Chinese exit plan where tankers pay a "7.5 per cent of hull value" insurance rate for 72 hours of coverage to transit the strait.

Muddle through

Iran could continue to main-

tain a partial opening of the strait in the medium term, with opaque rules for transiting, Richard Luckyn-Malone of intelligence consultancy Herminius told the Marine Insurance London industry conference on Friday.

"Strategic ambiguity is absolutely fundamental to what they do, and it would very much serve Iran's purposes if this was where we sat," he said.

But he questioned whether "the world is actually going to sit still and accept the idea of the straits being ambiguously open for months and months".

Wait it out

Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf warned on Tuesday that "the Strait of Hormuz won't return to its pre-war status".

"Even in the best-case scenario, going back to a fully reopened status is several months away," Luckyn-Malone said.

"There's unexploded ordnance floating around. There may be minefields... and there's going to be nervous security forces on either side."

BUSINESS

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

TIES



The minister of investment, Tariq Abu Ghazaleh and Spanish Ambassador to the Kingdom Miguel de Lucas discuss ways to enhance economic and investment cooperation

Minister of Investment, Spanish Ambassador discuss economic, investment cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — The minister of investment, Tariq Abu Ghazaleh has recently met the Spanish Ambassador to the Kingdom Miguel de Lucas, to discuss ways to enhance economic and investment cooperation between both countries.

During the meeting, Abu Ghazaleh stressed the importance of the distinguished relations between the two friendly countries, and to enhance investment cooperation and expanding the horizons of partnership

between Jordan and Spain, ahead of the Jordanian-European Investment Conference 2026.

He added that Jordan is able to overcome "various" challenges, and continue to provide a safe and attractive investment environment that enhances investor confidence and supports business sustainability, according to the Ministry of Investment statement.

Abu Ghazaleh also pointed to the most "prominent" investment opportunities

available in the Kingdom, especially in the sectors of energy, infrastructure, technology and industry.

For his part, the Spanish ambassador stressed the depth of relations between the two countries, praising the efforts made to enhance the investment and business environment in Jordan, and stressing his country's keenness to consolidate economic and investment cooperation and develop partnerships between the two friendly countries.

Industrial sector sees 'strong' growth in 2025 — JCI

Construction industries led with 17.4%, followed by pharmaceuticals at 7.6%, food industries at 3.3%

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's industrial sector maintained a positive trajectory in 2025, recording "solid" growth across production, exports and financial market indicators, alongside an expanding workforce.

According to a report by the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI), employment in the sector reached 261,000 workers in 2025, marking a 3 per cent increase compared with 2024.

The sector also grew by 5.2 per cent in the third quarter of 2025, up from 3.3 per cent in the same period a year earlier, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Industry contributed 45 per cent to the overall GDP growth in 2025, while accounting for 24.3 per cent of the Kingdom's GDP, underlining its "central" role in supporting the national economy and boosting productive capacity.

The report noted a 1.29 per cent annual increase in the industrial production quantity index, with six sub-sectors posting varying growth rates.

Construction industries led with 17.4 per cent, followed by pharmaceuticals at 7.6 per cent and food industries at 3.3 per cent.

Mining industries grew by 2.04 per cent, packaging by 1.5 per cent and engineering indus-



According to a report by the Jordan Chamber of Industry, employment in the sector reaches 261,000 workers in 2025, marking a 3 per cent increase compared with 2024

tries by 1.41 per cent, the report showed.

On exports, Jordan's industrial exports rose by 10.2 per cent in 2025 to reach JD8.893 billion, while manufacturing exports increased by 9.4 per cent.

Industrial exports covered 43 per cent of imports and accounted for around 92 per cent of total national exports, highlighting the sector's competitiveness in external markets.

Eight out of ten indus-

trial sectors recorded export growth, led by construction industries with a sharp 830 per cent increase, followed by mining at 16 per cent, engineering and electrical industries at 15 per cent, and plastics and rubber at 14 per cent.

Exports of food industries rose by 13 per cent, while packaging, paper, chemicals and cosmetics each grew by 6 per cent, as well as pharmaceuticals and medical supplies by 5 per cent.

On the other hand, leather and garments saw a "slight" decline of 0.1 per cent, while wood and furniture dropped by 2 per cent.

On the financial side, the industrial index on the Amman Stock Exchange surged by 60.4 per cent last year.

Industry accounted for 41 per cent of the market's capitalisation and 25.8 per cent of total trading volume, according to the report.

Credit facilities ex-

tended to the industrial sector reached JD4.2 billion, representing 11.8 per cent of total lending by banks.

The report concluded that the sector's 2025 performance reaffirms the competitiveness of Jordanian industry, its role in driving economic growth, attracting investment and generating employment, as well as the "effectiveness" of industrial policies and credit support in sustaining expansion, Petra reported.

China limits fuel price hikes as oil costs surge — Gov't

BELJING (AFP) — China has limited the amount by which the country's fuel costs can rise, the government announced on Monday, to mitigate surging oil prices due to the Middle East war.

Global oil prices have soared as the war between the United States, Israel and Iran has centred around the Strait of Hormuz, through which around 20 per cent of the world's oil and gas shipments normally transit.

"To mitigate the impact of abnormal increases in international oil prices, ease the burden on downstream users, and ensure stable economic operations and public



A cargo ship is moved to a berth at the container terminal at the port in Qingdao, in China's eastern Shandong province on Monday

welfare, temporary regulatory measures have been adopted," China's state planner

said in a statement. The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC)

said it will hike the maximum retail prices for gasoline and diesel by 1,160 yuan (\$168)

and 1,115 yuan per metric tonne respectively, starting from midnight.

The increase is around half of what it would have been under the government's pricing mechanism, which would have seen gasoline and diesel prices raised by 2,205 yuan and 2,120 yuan per metric tonne respectively, it added.

The NDRC routinely reviews gasoline and diesel prices and makes adjustments based on factors such as global crude prices.

In its last hike in March, the NDRC raised maximum retail prices for gasoline and diesel by 695 yuan and 670 yuan per metric tonne respectively.

US energy chief calls oil market disruptions 'temporary'

HOUSTON (AFP) — US Energy Secretary Chris Wright said on Monday that oil market disruptions are "temporary", as costs surge on the back of war in the Middle East, squeezing consumers.

Asked how markets have been reacting to supply disruptions, Wright said "markets do what markets do", adding that prices have surged to "send signals to everyone that can produce more — please produce more".

Wright told the annual CERAWEEK conference in Houston that "prices have not risen high enough yet to drive meaningful demand destruction".

He stressed that Washington has taken "pragmatic solutions

to ease sanctions on oil that is already being shipped, allowing them to enter the market.

"But these are mitigants of a situation that's temporary," he stressed.

Wright added that the United States started releasing oil from its strategic reserves on Friday.

He added that the release, which was earlier announced, would reach around 1.5 million barrels a day out of US stocks, getting potentially close to three million barrels total.

More than 10,000 attendees are expected at the high-level energy gathering, which is this year dominated by oil and gas supply disruptions sparked by war.

US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28 triggered Tehran's retaliation that brought commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz to a virtual halt. Around a fifth of global crude oil and liquefied natural gas passes through the critical waterway during peacetime, and US consumers are now facing average gasoline prices of nearly \$4 per gallon. Attacks on critical energy facilities in Iran, Qatar and other Gulf countries have exacerbated global oil and gas supply problems. Oil prices tumbled Monday as President Donald Trump suddenly ordered a halt on strikes targeting Iranian infrastructure after "very good" talks — although Tehran denied that negotiations had taken place.

Long war may undercut global economy, analysts warn

By Martine Pauwels
Agency France-Press

PARIS, France — Over three weeks into the Middle East war, analysts fear that a long-drawn out conflict and the associated disruption to oil trade may undermine the global economy.

Economists are contemplating a gloomy combination of prices rising across the board and growth stalling.

The conflict, which started late February with US and Israeli strikes on Iran, has seen oil traffic through the vital Strait of Hormuz chokepoint — through which a fifth of global crude and liquified nat-

ural gas normally transits — come to a virtual standstill.

As a result, oil prices have spiked from around \$60 prior to hostilities to current levels of around \$100 — after briefly touching around \$120.

Iran has responded to US and Israeli strikes by attacking strategic energy infrastructure across region, leading major economies to begin dipping into their strategic oil reserves.

"The longer this conflict drags on, the more it begins to look like a classic energy shock feeding directly into inflation," said Stephen Innes, managing partner for SPI Asset

Management.

"Oil is the macro transmission channel that touches everything from freight to food to household utility bills. So the first impact is inflation, but the second order effect is on growth because higher energy prices act like a tax on consumers and businesses," Innes added.

Stagflation

"Before the war broke out, we expected steady growth and rather less inflation," Helene Baudchon, deputy chief economist for BNP Paribas, told AFP.

Baudchon says the hostilities have flipped that benign scenar-

io to concerns about so-called stagflation, where lower growth is accompanied by higher inflation.

"But how high? At this stage there is no certainty, it will depend on the length and scope of the conflict," she said.

For now, BNP Paribas is sticking with its growth forecast of 2.9 per cent for this year for the United States, 4.7 per cent for China and 1.6 per cent for the eurozone.

For Baudchon, two stagflationary paths loom.

In the first scenario, the intensity of the conflict drops off and hydrocarbon prices gradually decline — while

remaining above pre-conflict levels — which "would appear manageable for the global economy", which has so far remained relatively resilient, even to increases in US tariffs.

However, a surge in oil prices lasting several weeks or months would be "more negative" and could force central banks to raise interest rates to curb rising consumer prices.

"The longer the [Hormuz] blockade lasts, the more products and raw materials it will affect, the more supply chains will be disrupted and the more inflationary effects will be felt. They would not be limited to oil and gas prices," says

Baudchon.

Like post-COVID?

According to Fitch Ratings, oil prices holding at \$100 per barrel would reduce global GDP by 0.4 per cent after four quarters and add "between 1.2 and 1.5 percentage points to inflation in Europe and the United States".

Such an outlook is liable to reignite fears of another inflationary shock after the one caused by the post-COVID recovery and the start of the war in Ukraine in 2022, even if today's context is very different.

At that time, demand was strong, supply was constrained by sup-

ply chain disruptions and fiscal policies were accommodative.

Several key central bank meetings are on the agenda this week, with the US Federal Reserve on Wednesday, and the European Central Bank and the Bank of England on Thursday, expected to keep their rates steady.

But their comments on the current situation will be closely scrutinised.

Australia has already raised its key interest rate by a quarter-point on Tuesday to address a "sharp rise in fuel prices", becoming one of the first major central banks to respond to the conflict with a hike.

"Markets are starting to take that [higher rate] risk seriously," says Innes.

Philippe Dauba-Pantance, senior economist at Standard Chartered Bank, recalls that authorities initially underestimated the inflationary impact of the COVID recovery.

"Traditionally, such external shocks are considered 'temporary' shocks but many Central Bankers will have the COVID recovery period in mind as something that was deemed 'transitory' but ended up being more inflationary than anticipated, including on how it led to a gradual dis-anchoring of inflation expectations."

THE JORDAN TIMES
SPORTS
AT A GLANCE

CRICKET

World Cup smashed viewing figures — ICC

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Viewer figures of the T20 Cricket World Cup final smashed digital streaming records with 72.5 million peak users at the same time in India alone, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Monday. Cricket commands an unrivalled following in the world's most populous country with 1.4 billion people. "The event was a showcase of just how much the sport is loved in cricket's most passionate market," ICC Chief Executive Officer Sanjog Gupta said, in a commentary published in WPP Media's Sporting Nation. More viewers watched the game on traditional broadcasters, as well as around the world. India, co-hosts and pretournament favourites, lifted the T20 World Cup for a record third time in the March 8 match, sweeping aside New Zealand by 96 runs. "The final... hit 72.5 million digital concurrent users, breaking the global streaming record," Gupta added, according to figures from Indian streaming partner JioHotstar.

RUGBY

Reds defence paves way for historic Super Rugby win in Fiji

LAUTOKA, Fiji (AFP) — Queensland Reds coach Les Kiss is calling for more of the same "unbelievable" defence that kept Fijian Drua try-less and propelled the Australian team to a fourth straight Super Rugby win. The Drua failed to score a try on home soil for the first time since entering the competition in 2022 as the Reds powered to a 21-6 victory in humid Lautoka on Saturday. It was also the first time Queensland had won in four matches against the Drua in Fiji, leaving Kiss thrilled with the grit shown in a three-try display. "The huge respect we had for the Drua I think was represented by the way that we approached our defence," Kiss said. "To keep them try-less I think is an unbelievable effort by the boys. They're pretty lethal when they attack so I think that laid the foundation for a great defensive effort." Kiss was pleased the way the Reds defended their line during a 10-minute period in the second half while Jock Campbell was off the field, the fullback having been shown a yellow card in his 100th match.

World No.1 Alcaraz beaten by Korda in Miami Open third round

MIAMI (AFP) — World No.1 Carlos Alcaraz crashed out of the third round of the Miami Open on Sunday, beaten 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 by 36th-ranked American Sebastian Korda.

Korda notched his first victory over a World No.1, sending Alcaraz to his second straight early exit in Miami — where Alcaraz lifted the trophy in 2022 but lost his second-round opener to 55th-ranked Belgian David Goffin last year.

It looked like Korda had missed his chance when he served for the match at 5-4 in the second set and was broken at love.

Alcaraz won the next two games to force a third set. The Spaniard stepped up his intensity, but Korda didn't buckle and it was Korda who seized a break for 4-3 in the third when Alcaraz sailed a forehand wide.

He held his next service game with confidence, slamming down an overhead winner on game point and after Alcaraz held serve to force Korda to serve for the match again, the American made no mistake, sealing victory on his second match point as Alcaraz sent a service return long.

"It feels great," said Korda, who has been ranked as high as 15th in the world but has endured two seasons disrupted by injury.

"I took the scenic route, that's for sure —



Sebastian Korda of the United States celebrates his win against Carlos Alcaraz of Spain on Day 6 of the Miami Open Presented by Itaú at Hard Rock Stadium on Monday in Miami Gardens, Florida

a little more stress than I would want but happy with how I played, happy with how I stayed with it.

"He's unbelievable in every aspect of his game, movement, volleys, forehand, backhand, there's nothing he can't do,"

Korda said of Alcaraz, who won the Australian Open in January to become the youngest man to complete the career Grand Slam.

The 22-year-old Spaniard had followed that up with a title in Doha and had pushed his un-

beaten 2026 record to 16-0 before falling in the semifinals at Indian Wells this month.

Korda will face either Spanish qualifier Martin Landaluce or 14th-seeded Karen Khachanov for a place in the quarter-finals.

Medvedev ousted by Cerundolo

Daniil Medvedev crashed out of the Miami Open on Monday, losing a rollercoaster three-set third round battle against Argentine Francisco Cerundolo 6-0, 4-6, 7-5.

Medvedev, who reached the final at Indian Wells earlier this month, looked to be heading for a brisk exit after 18th seed Cerundolo raced through the first set in just over 20 minutes.

But Medvedev rallied in the second set to level the match, and there was little to choose between the two in the deciding set.

Cerundolo held to take a 6-5 lead and then scored the decisive break to clinch victory when Medvedev double-faulted on match point.

Medvedev is just the latest highly-ranked seed to fall in Miami's early rounds following the exits of world number one Carlos Alcaraz, Australian fifth seed Alex De Minaur and eighth seed Ben Shelton.

Canadian seventh seed Felix Auger-Aliassime also bit the dust on Monday, losing in three sets to unseeded Frenchman Terence Atmane.

Atmane, ranked 53rd in the world, powered into the last 16 with a 6-3, 1-6, 6-3 victory in 1hr 53mins.

Another French player also progressed in the men's draw on Monday, with 31st seed Ugo Humbert beating Kazakhstan's Alexander Shevchenko 6-4, 7-6 (7/2).

In the women's draw, Czech 13th seed Karolina Muchova strolled into the quarter-finals with a 6-0, 6-2 rout of Alexandra Eala of the Philippines, advancing to the last eight in just one hour.

K-pop kings BTS stun Seoul in '2.0' comeback concert

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korean megastars BTS performed their first show in nearly four years on Saturday in front of enormous crowds in Seoul for a K-pop extravaganza livestreamed to millions more worldwide.

Widely lauded as the biggest boy band in the world, BTS went on hiatus in 2022 so the seven members could serve compulsory military service, some near the heavily fortified border with North Korea.

The comeback concert had as its backdrop the historic Gyeongbokgung royal palace — fitting for the "Kings of K-pop" — with thousands of fans from South Korea and abroad singing along.

"It's been a long journey but now we are finally here!" said BTS's leader RM — whose injured ankle meant he had to perch on a stool at times — as the group performed songs from their new album, as well as old hits "Dynamite" and "Mikrokosmos".

"We are finally here and seeing you again... all seven of us standing on the stage together makes me so happy," said fellow member Jimin to cheers.

"BTS 2.0 is just getting started," said J-Hope.

Fans — 260,000 were predicted earlier — descended on Seoul from morning onwards in colourful costumes, taking selfies with their tickets and clutching BTS "ARMY" glowsticks.

Before they came on stage the crowd chanted "BTS! BTS!" with the main boulevard leading up to Gwanghwamun Square ram-packed with people as far as the eye could see.

Gwanghwamun Gate was lit in rainbow colours before the show started, as a massive stage installation featuring three circular features — symbolising BTS's new album "Arirang" — glowed beneath towering lighting rigs.

The megastars admitted to some nerves, with member J-Hope telling fans "there were moments when we wondered whether we might be somewhat forgotten, or whether you would remember us".

Jimin said: "We are not such special people. We are afraid every time, but we believed that if we showed you our sincerity, it would reach you."

Fans responded with

a sea of glowsticks, singing along the songs while holding their phones high up to film their stars.

"It's great that the show was held in Gwanghwamun, but it would have been just as good anywhere — even in a much smaller venue," Park Young-mi, 34, a South Korean fan, told AFP.

"Fans have been waiting unwaveringly, and I hope they felt that today."

"Seeing them on stage just felt as if I was being welcomed into a family... it felt very expressive and beautiful and you could just see it from the people who were here too," gushed Gabriel Miranda, 34, from the United States.

"It's a bit different from BTS's usual flavour, but seeing this new side of them at this historic place is deeply moving," said Jo Jung-hee, 60, her phone featuring a photo of BTS member V.

Millions more people across the world were able to watch the show broadcast live on Netflix.

The latest album, "ARIRANG", which was released on Friday, is billed as a reflection of

the maturing boy band's Korean identity.

It sold almost 4 million copies in the first day, BTS's record label said.

Spotify said 5 million fans pre-saved it, the highest ever for a K-pop act, and that it was the most-streamed album in a single day so far this year.

"ARIRANG" takes its name from a folk song about longing and separation that is often dubbed South Korea's unofficial national anthem.

Featuring collaborations with multiple Western artists and producers, the 14 tracks on the album mix rap, heavy beats and experimentation.

"Compared to their earlier work, there's a wider range of genres, which gives it a more mature and expansive feel," Lee Ji-young, a university professor, told AFP.

Taylor who?

Saturday's show preceded a world tour set to be a major money-spinner for BTS, potentially outdoing Taylor Swift's recent Eras Tour.

South Korea too —

whose music, films, books, food and cosmetics are all the rage — will benefit thanks to tourism and sales of merchandise from BTS dolls to toothbrushes and cans of tuna.

Starting in Goyang, South Korea on April 9 and ending in Manila 11 months later, BTS's tour encompasses 82 shows in 34 cities in 23 countries.

Security was heavy for Saturday's concert, with some 15,000 police and security guards, barricades lining the roads and local venues shut.

Wedding guests had to be transported by police. BTS — short for Bulletproof Boy Scouts in Korean — have championed UNICEF campaigns, the Black Lives Matter movement and efforts to combat anti-Asian racism.

Members have also spoken candidly about the pressures of the music industry.

"Honestly, I became a fan simply because I love their music," Seo Ra-jung, 40, told AFP after the concert.

"I first became a fan during a really difficult period in my life, and their lyrics gave me a lot of strength."

'Project Hail Mary' rockets to top of N. America box office

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — Amazon MGM's sci-fi adventure flick "Project Hail Mary" debuted at the top of the North American box office this week with an astronomical \$80.5 million, industry estimates showed Sunday.

Ryan Gosling stars in the film as a teacher-turned-astronaut who awakes on a spaceship with a mission to save Earth from a sun-dimming phenomenon.

It is adapted from a novel by Andy Weir, the author behind 2015 hit "The Martian" starring Matt Damon.

"Weir wrote the story as a standalone, but the weekend figure is more than double the average for a series launch — that's how strong this is," analyst David A. Gross of Research Entertainment Finance said.

Directed by filmmaking duo Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, the movie marks "Amazon MGM's first big hit" since the retail giant acquired the storied studio in 2021, Gross noted.

Falling to second place after two weeks on top was animated hit "Hoppers", with \$18 million, according to Exhibitor Relations. Released just three

months after the original film from Disney's Pixar tells the story of a young animal lover who uses technology to transfer her consciousness into a robotic beaver so she can better communicate and protect wildlife.

Considered political propaganda by some of India's neighbors, it has been notably banned in Pakistan.

With \$9.1 million, fourth place went to Searchlight's "Ready or Not 2", a follow-up to the 2019 original comedy horror in which a bride must survive a deadly game of hide-and-seek with her new in-laws.

Australia's Samara Weaving reprises her starring role in the sequel, which sees her forced once again to run a gauntlet, this time against multiple families.

"This is a solid opening for the 2nd episode of a low-budget horror comedy series"

It has now taken in \$242 million globally, according to Exhibitor Relations.

Third place went to Hindi-language spy thriller "Dhurandhar: The Revenge" with \$9.6 million.

"Depending on where the final figure comes in on Monday, this is a record-breaking opening for a Bollywood film in the US," said Gross, potentially besting 2022 hit "RRR".

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