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Jordan, Gulf countries renew condemnation of 'flagrant' Iranian aggressions

AMMAN (JT)— Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait on Wednesday renewed their condemnation in the strongest terms of "flagrant" Iranian aggressions, describing them as a stark violation of state sovereignty and territorial integrity.

whether conducted directly or through Iranian-backed armed factions, constitute a clear breach of international law, the United Nations Charter and relevant conventions, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

getting regional states and vital installations. Such actions, the countries noted, violate UN Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026), which explicitly demands that Tehran immediately and unconditionally cease all aggressions or threats against neighbouring countries, including the use of proxies.

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Safadi says Jordan not party to regional conflict, urges Iran to stop attacks, resort to diplomacy

- Top priority is to protect Jordan and its citizens
- Foreign forces in Kingdom are defensive, sovereignty fully respected
- Iran targeted Jordan, Gulf states two hours after US-Israeli attack, opening new phase in crisis
- Jordan informed Iranians of need to stop targeting its territory
- Around 7,000 people from 60 countries have crossed all Kingdom's border checkpoints over past 26 days

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Wednesday stressed that Jordan is not a party to the ongoing regional conflict, despite being affected by its repercussions.

In remarks to Al Mamlaka TV, Safadi said that no attacks against Iran have been launched from Jordanian territory, noting that Iran has targeted Jordan and other countries in the region.

He said that the government's "top priority" remains the protection of the Kingdom and its citizens. Safadi also said that Jordan has formally communicated to Iranian authorities the need to cease any targeting of the Kingdom's territory.

On the presence of foreign military forces,



the minister noted that while Jordan does not host foreign "bases", allied forces operate in the country under clear defence agreements. "Jordan has never hid-

den the fact that there are friendly and allied forces on its soil. These arrangements have expanded since the regional war on terrorism," Safadi said.

He emphasised that the presence of these forces does not infringe upon Jordan's sovereignty or independent decision-making, noting that the agreements are

strictly defensive in nature, with any military action requiring prior approval from Jordanian authorities.

Safadi also said that Jordan deals with regional issues in a manner that safeguards its national interests, security, stability and the safety of its citizens.

He added that the Iranian embassy in Amman continues to operate with a chargé d'affaires and diplomatic staff, while Jordan has refused to extend the residency of one Iranian diplomat and denied accreditation to another, sending a clear signal regarding the Kingdom's position on Iranian policies.

He also highlighted that relations with embassies are governed by political considerations, reaffirming Jordan's ongoing commitment to regional security.

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UN rights council condemns Iran's aggressions on Jordan, GCC countries

AMMAN (JT) — The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on Wednesday condemned Iranian aggressions against Jordan and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states during an emergency session held in Geneva.

The 47-member council adopted a resolution, submitted by Jordan and the GCC, which also denounces Iranian moves to close the Strait of Hormuz and demands an immediate end to all "unjustified attacks", the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Jordan's permanent representative to the UN in Geneva, Ambassador Akram Harahsheh, underscored that the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) has intercepted and neutralised



The United Nations Human Rights Council assembly room

more than 240 missiles and drones launched by Iran towards the Kingdom since February 28.

Addressing the council, Harahsheh said that the armed forces and security agencies have also dealt with over 414 falling projectiles.

"These incidents have resulted in 24 injuries among "innocent civilians", the ambassador added.

Harahsheh condemned the attacks in the "strongest possible terms", describing them as a "flagrant violation" of international law and state sovereignty.

He reaffirmed Jordan's "absolute" solidarity with Arab and Islamic nations, supporting all measures taken to safeguard their security and stability.

The ambassador pointed out that these attacks and their repercussions pose a direct threat to human rights in the region, specifically the rights to life, health and a decent standard of living.

He also welcomed the UN Security Council's adoption of Resolution 2817, also proposed by Jordan and the GCC.

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Iran launches 5 missiles, drone towards Jordan, all but one intercepted — JAF

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) on Wednesday said Iran had targeted the Kingdom with five missiles and a drone over the past 24 hours.

The Military Media Directorate at the General Command said the

Royal Jordanian Air Force intercepted five of the incoming projectiles, while one missile was not neutralised, according to a JAF statement.

The Public Security Directorate (PSD) said its units had responded to 15 reports of falling debris and

projectiles during the same period, adding that authorities took the necessary measures to handle the remnants, with no injuries reported and damage limited to minor material losses, the statement said.

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A plume of smoke and a fragment of concrete rise from the site of an Israeli air strike on the eastern outskirts of Tyre, in southern Lebanon, on Tuesday

UN chief says Lebanon must not become next Gaza amid fighting

UNITED NATIONS, United States (AFP) — UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Wednesday that fighting between Israel and Hizbollah must not condemn Lebanon to

the same fate as Gaza, the Palestinian territory decimated by years of conflict.

"The Gaza model must not be replicated in Lebanon," Guterres told reporters, also saying the

wider war in the Middle East is "out of control", as the United States, Israel and Iran have carried out strikes for more than three weeks.

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Jordan has 'safe' stockpile of food commodities — minister

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Yarub Qudah said on Wednesday that Jordan has a safe stockpile of food commodities, with supply chains operating normally, urging the public to avoid panic buying and storing.

Qudah said in a statement, carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that wheat reserves in silos stand at around 550,000 tonnes, sufficient to cover six months of consumption, adding that current figures are better than those recorded during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Yarub Qudah says on Wednesday that Jordan has a safe stockpile of food commodities, with supply chains operating normally, urging the public to avoid panic buying and storing

were halted and no new cargo arrived, available quantities within the Kingdom would still suffice for six months.

Qudah noted that barley reserves are sufficient for four-and-a-half

months, while contracted quantities will cover an additional four months, bringing total barley stocks to about nine months.

He said sugar supplies are sufficient for two-

and-a-half months, while rice stocks of all varieties will last for four months. Sunflower and corn oil supplies are sufficient for about two months, while palm and soybean oil stocks will last for four

months. The minister added that field corn, used for poultry, is sufficient for around four months, while lentils and fava beans will last for six months each, and powdered milk for four months. He stressed that no commodity held by traders has stocks of less than two months.

Qudah underlined that supply chains are functioning normally, as evidenced by current stock levels, which are comparable to those recorded at the beginning of the war.

He explained that if the supply had stopped while consumption continued, a shortage would have emerged, but the continuity of imports has maintained stable figures.

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JAF photo

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti on Wednesday visits the King Faisal II/16 Battalion, a unit of the King Hussein Bin Ali Brigade

Army chief visits King Faisal II/16 Battalion

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti on Wednesday visited the King Faisal II/16 Battalion, a unit of the King Hussein Bin Ali Brigade.

During the visit, he listened to a briefing on the progress of operational, training, and logistical matters, the tasks assigned to the unit, and its overall combat readiness, in line with the objectives and directives of the General Command, according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement.

Huneiti reaffirmed that maintaining combat readiness is a top priority amid swiftly changing challenges, emphasising the need to sustain specialised training programmes to stay aligned with field developments and enhance the unit's capability to respond to a range of threats effectively.

He also highlighted the need to uphold military discipline and professionalism, while promoting a spirit of teamwork, noting that these qualities are vital for the effective fulfilment of opera-

tional duties and for boosting the JAF personnel's capacity to perform their missions under all conditions.

At the end of the visit, Huneiti met with the battalion's personnel in the presence of several high-ranking JAF officers, conveying the greetings and pride of His Majesty King Abdullah, the Supreme Commander of JAF.

He also commended the high level of readiness and professionalism demonstrated by the unit in carrying out the duties and tasks assigned to them.

JMD forecasts heavy rain, flash floods nationwide

PSD urges public to exercise caution

AMMAN (JT) — The unstable weather system is expected to deepen on Thursday as a cold and humid air mass moves in, bringing a further drop in temperatures and widespread rainfall across most regions, the Jordan Meteorological Department (JMD) forecast on Wednesday.

Periods of heavy rain are likely, accompanied by thunder and hail, increasing the risk of rising water levels in valleys and low-lying areas, including Aqaba and the Dead Sea, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

There is also a chance of brief light snowfall over the highest southern mountain peaks early Thursday, while strong westerly winds with gusts reaching up to 60 kilometres per hour are expected to add to hazardous conditions, added the JMD.

Conditions are expected to ease gradually on Friday, with a slight rise in temperatures and lingering showers in western regions before rainfall weakens later in the day.

A further modest increase in temperatures is expected on Saturday, with relatively cold



File photo

The Jordan Meteorological Department forecasts periods of heavy rain, accompanied by thunder and hail on Thursday, increasing the risk of rising water levels in valleys and low-lying areas

conditions persisting across most regions and milder weather in low-lying areas.

Also on Wednesday, the Public Security Directorate (PSD) warned of the expected weather conditions over the coming days, urging the public to exercise maximum caution and follow safety guidelines.

The PSD stressed the importance of staying away from flood channels, valleys and low-lying areas, and avoiding any attempt to cross waterlogged roads regardless of water depth, according to Petra.

It also urged people to move immediately to higher and safer ground

if floodwaters rise.

The PSD further warned against approaching water bodies or dams during flash floods, while calling on drivers to be extra careful due to reduced visibility caused by fog over highlands and dust in Badia areas.

The directorate also urged residents to se-

curse loose objects that could be blown away by strong winds and to use heating devices safely while ensuring proper ventilation inside homes.

The PSD stressed its readiness to respond to emergencies and called on citizens to contact the emergency number 911 when needed.

Meeting discusses ways to enhance government data governance

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smeirat on Wednesday inaugurated an expanded government meeting to discuss ways to enhance government data governance, as part of national efforts to better utilise data in decision-making and accelerate the adoption of advanced technologies.

Discussions during the meeting, attended by secretaries-general and directors general from several ministries and public institutions, reviewed developments in the government's data collection programme, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.



Petra photo

Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smeirat on Wednesday inaugurates an expanded government meeting to discuss ways to enhance government data governance

Participants also went over implementing a unified national geospatial database, aimed at building an integrated data system to support planning and enhance the quality of public services.

They reviewed the progress of the government data collec-

tion project, covering the assessment of data maturity, the activation of data management units, and efforts to improve data quality and integration across institutions, along with cataloguing and classifying data and establishing institutional data repositories to

support public policy development.

Smeirat stressed that the government seeks to organise and update data across public institutions to ensure its effective use, particularly in the field of artificial intelligence, noting that 23 ministries have already started using

data in their operations, boosting the ability of decision makers to base their policies on accurate information.

Discussions also went over the national geospatial database project, which aims to link government data to geographic locations within a unified

platform, helping to improve planning and decision-making efficiency, as well as supporting investment and economic development.

The project is planned to be implemented between 2026 and 2028, beginning with the establishment of regulatory frameworks and technical standards, followed by the development of infrastructure and government capacities.

It will culminate in full operation and integration, with a focus on continuous improvement to ensure the system remains effective and sustainable.

The meeting concluded with officials emphasising the importance of coordinated efforts among government bodies and working within a unified framework to ensure the successful implementation of the project, while supporting the country's transition towards a data-driven digital government.

Jordan relief campaign distributes tents in Gaza ahead of expected weather

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan relief campaign on Wednesday began distributing shelter tents in the Muwassi area of Khan Younis in southern Gaza, aiming to support displaced families and enhance their resilience ahead of the expected severe weather.



Al Mamlaka TV photo

The Jordan relief campaign on Wednesday begins distributing shelter tents in the Muwassi area of Khan Younis in southern Gaza ahead of the expected severe weather

The campaign said that the distribution targeted the most vulnerable families, particularly those who had lost their homes or were residing in temporary shelters lacking basic protection, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

The initiative forms part of a comprehensive emergency plan aimed at reducing the effects of the incoming weather front.

Stakeholders of the campaign said that the distribution was carried out proactively to secure safe shelter for families ahead of the expected severe weather, while averting further deterioration of humanitarian conditions in displaced

ment areas.

The Jordan relief campaign continues its work in Gaza through a range of emergency programmes, including the distribution of essential supplies and shelter materials, coordinated with local authorities to ensure aid reaches those most in need without delay.

Jordan 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 Novem-

ber 2023 at the peak of the Israeli war of aggression on the coastal enclave that erupted on October 7, 2023.

Besides the field hospitals in Gaza, the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army established the Jordanian field hospital in Nablus in late November 2023.

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

FOOD SECURITY

Kingdom's agricultural self-sufficiency rate reaches 61% — minister

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Agriculture Saeb Khreisat said on Tuesday that there is currently no justification for imposing price ceilings on vegetables, noting that Jordan is largely self-sufficient in vegetable production and does not rely on imports, while only some types of fruit are imported.

Khreisat told Al Mamlaka TV that the ministry is monitoring any price irregularities in coordination with the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply.

He said that the daily demand for tomatoes reaches between 450 and 500 tonnes.

The minister noted that during Ramadan, tomato prices increased, as only 180 to 200 tonnes were enter-



File photo

Minister of Agriculture Saeb Khreisat on Tuesday says that there is currently no justification for imposing price ceilings on vegetables

ing the market due to factors related to agricultural production during that period, adding that current supply fully meets local demand.

He added that the ministry will temporarily halt exports if prices rise, depending on domestic needs, noting that prices are

ultimately determined by supply and demand.

The minister expected vegetable prices to go down in April due to the forecast production quantities.

Khreisat said that the Kingdom's agricultural self-sufficiency rate has reached 61 per cent, stressing that the sector remains se-

cure and capable of meeting local demand.

The minister also expected vegetable prices to decline in April as supply increases in local markets.

He noted that Jordan has sufficient reserves of poultry and table eggs to cover more than 100 days, adding that the current rainy season promises a good agricultural year that will be reflected in various crops.

On Wednesday, the Ministry of Agriculture told Al Mamlaka TV that it decided to suspend exporting tomatoes as of Friday in a bid to provide the product in "fair" prices in the local market and limit recent price hikes, in a way that achieves balance between supply and demand.

Royal Medical Services receives 2025 Operational Capacity Project

AMMAN (JT) — The Royal Medical Services (RMS) on Wednesday received the 2025 Operational Capacity Project, implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) with funding from the Japanese government.

RMS Director General Brig. Gen. Sahil Hammouri said that the Japanese grant reflects the "depth" of international partnership and cooperation in supporting Jordan's healthcare sector, noting that it will "significantly" enhance the performance of RMS hospitals and improve the quality and efficiency of medical services provided, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He reiterated the RMS's continued commitment to its national and humanitarian mis-



Petra photo

The Royal Medical Services on Wednesday receives the 2025 Operational Capacity Project, implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services with funding from the Japanese government

sion of delivering comprehensive and distinguished healthcare.

For his part, Japanese Ambassador Asari Hideki said that the project contributes to boosting the capabilities of the RMS in addressing challenges facing Jordan's healthcare sector, and in im-

proving the quality of medical and treatment services provided to patients.

He expressed his appreciation for the ongoing cooperation.

Suela Krifsa, representative of UNOPS in Amman, said: "Today marks the official handover of new

and vital equipment to the healthcare system, which is essential for enhancing access to medical services for beneficiaries. This comes as part of a long-standing partnership with the Japanese government to support the Royal Medical Services."



An aerial view of the liquefied natural gas terminal in Aqaba

Aqaba Port receives 182 vessels in March despite regional tensions — JLA

AMMAN (JT) — A total of 182 vessels carrying various goods and cargo arrived at Aqaba Port since March 1 through last Saturday, reflecting steady maritime activity despite ongoing regional tensions.

Figures released by the Jordan Logistics Association (JLA) showed that arrivals included 30 vessels at

the Container Port, 19 at the Industrial Port, 6 at the Phosphate Port and 8 at the Oil Port, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

An additional 5 vessels docked at the LPG Port, 24 at the New Aqaba Port and 2 at the Sheikh Subah LNG Terminal, while the Passenger Terminal received 78 vessels and the Cruise Port han-

dled 10.

JLA President Nabil Khatib said port operations have remained unaffected by regional developments, noting that vessels scheduled for March have arrived on time.

He added that 62 more vessels are expected before the end of the month, stressing that shipping traffic to Aqaba remains normal.

Gov't outlines measures to safeguard economy, maintain price stability, protect citizens

AMMAN (JT) — The government on Wednesday held a meeting at the Prime Ministry to discuss measures addressing the repercussions of regional developments, particularly their economic impact.

The session brought together ministers, media leaders, journalists, and economic analysts, with officials presenting the government's efforts to strengthen strategic reserves of energy and essential commodities, ensure price stability, and implement plans to manage different scenarios of the regional crisis, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Government Communications Minister and spokesperson Mohammad Momani said the government is monitoring the regional crisis on a daily basis. "Jordan, like all countries in the region, is affected, but the government has taken serious measures to mitigate economic impacts," he said.

Momani also stressed the importance of verifying information, ignoring rumours, and relying on official sources. He also highlighted the role of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) and security agencies in professionally managing regional challenges to safeguard national security and citizens' safety.

Industry, Trade and Supply Minister Yarub Qudah said the industrial and commercial



The government on Wednesday holds a meeting at the Prime Ministry to discuss measures addressing the repercussions of regional developments

sectors have continued to operate at a normal pace since the onset of the regional crisis.

He noted that the industrial sector currently contributes around 23 per cent to GDP, the highest in a decade, and that national exports increased by 9.9 per cent in 2025, reaching JD9.6 billion, up from JD5 billion in 2020.

Qudah also highlighted the diversity of export markets, with shipments to Arab countries up 10 per cent, non-Arab Asian countries up 15 per cent and the EU up 39 per cent.

He said that this diversity helps sustain exports and reduces

vulnerability to regional tensions. He also reaffirmed that strategic reserves of essential commodities remain safe, including wheat for ten months and barley for nine and that supply chains from Aqaba Port to other governorates are operating normally.

Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Saleh Kharabshah said the electricity and petroleum sectors continue to operate efficiently. "Diversifying energy sources and improving infrastructure has strengthened sector resilience," he said.

He also confirmed that natural gas and petroleum reserves are secure and suffi-

cient for 30-60 days at normal consumption levels. He noted that shipping costs remain a challenge if the crisis prolongs, but major energy projects, including the Risha Gas Line linked to the Arab Gas Pipeline, are ongoing and expected to be operational by 2029.

State Minister for Economic Affairs Muhammad Shehadeh highlighted Jordan's economic resilience amid regional instability. He cited the Central Bank's record foreign currency reserves of \$28.5 billion, controlled inflation at 1.8 per cent, a 3 per cent rise in the financial market during the crisis, and a 9.9 per cent increase

in national exports as indicators of the economy's strength.

He also noted that international credit ratings, including Standard & Poor's recent sovereign rating of Jordan with a stable outlook, reflect the economy's ability to withstand challenges.

Shehadeh emphasised that the government will maintain price control, ensure sufficient energy and commodity reserves, monitor logistics and take necessary measures without disrupting public finances. He warned that strict penalties would be applied against anyone attempting monopolistic practices.

Police nab 23 suspects, seize drugs, weapons in multiple operations

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Anti-Narcotic Department (AND) on Wednesday announced that police have arrested 23 wanted suspects in connection with 13 illicit drug cases in various parts of the Kingdom in the past few days, according to police.

Law-enforcement officers also seized large amounts of illicit drugs and weapons from some of the suspects, according to Police Spokesperson Lt. Col. Amer Sartawi.

One of the major cases, according to Sartawi involved arresting two suspects who possessed 100,000 in Azraq.

"The law-enforcement agency received a tip that two men possessed illicit pills and when they were arrested, they confessed to hiding them in a secluded area in the desert," Sartawi told The Jordan Times.

In another case, AND monitored a suspect who had alleged ties



Police arrest 23 wanted suspects in connection with 13 illicit drug cases in various parts of the Kingdom

with a regional gang in Mafraq and was reportedly "using a farm to store illicit drugs".

"Officers found three kilogrammes of Crystal meth, 3,000 illicit pills and 18 kilogrammes of Hashish," according to Sartawi.

Meanwhile, AND agents arrested three suspects in Mafraq Governorate who were allegedly in possession of 78,000 illicit pills.

In other areas of the Kingdom, police arrested several suspects in drug bust operations in Amman, Balqa and Aqaba

governorates.

The law-enforcement officers seized various quantities of Hashish, Captagon pills and marijuana, according to Sartawi.

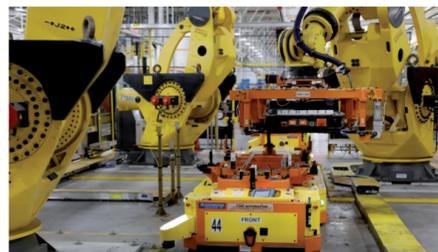
In two cases, the police official maintained, police found weapons in the possession of some of the suspects.

All suspects were referred to the State Security Court prosecution office for further questioning and indictment, according to a statement by the Public Security Directorate.

Industry operating at full capacity, supply chains stable — Jaghbir

AMMAN (JT) — President of the Jordan and Amman Chambers of Industry Fathi Jaghbir said the Kingdom's industrial sector is closely monitoring regional developments and their potential impact, noting ongoing coordination with the government and the economic team to address any challenges affecting production.

Jaghbir commended the government's response to key industry demands, including efforts to stabilise shipping costs and end the exclusivity of container entry through Aqaba



President of the Jordan and Amman Chambers of Industry Fathi Jaghbir says that Jordanian factories are operating at full capacity to meet domestic demand

Port, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Speaking at a meeting held on Wednesday

at the Chamber of Industry headquarters, attended by board members of both chambers, he said Jordanian

factories are operating at full capacity to meet domestic demand.

He stressed that the sector has the flexibility and experience needed to adapt to evolving conditions, adding that lessons from previous crises have enabled factories to build sufficient strategic reserves of raw and intermediate materials to sustain operations for several months without disruption.

Highlighting the sector's economic weight, Jaghbir noted that industry accounts for more than 24.3 per cent of the national econ-

omy, with production capacity exceeding JD17 billion and covering over 1,500 industrial products across multiple sectors.

He also underlined the domestic market's readiness to withstand potential shocks, recalling that during past crises — from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 to logistical disruptions linked to the closure of the Bab El Mandab Strait — national industry was able to meet more than 60 per cent of local demand for essential goods without major disruptions.

Lower House committee discusses tourism sector challenges amid regional turmoil

MPs urge urgent intervention, citing near-zero occupancy in Petra, mounting financial pressures

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — The Lower House Tourism and Antiquities Committee on Wednesday discussed the challenges facing the tourism sector amid ongoing regional conditions, reviewing their impact on visitor numbers and revenues and exploring measures to mitigate repercussions on the Kingdom's tourism industry.

During the meeting, lawmakers said the sector is experiencing a "sharp downturn" with foreign and Arab tourism nearly absent amid regional instability, rising air travel costs and disruptions to flight routes. They noted that higher insurance costs for airlines and broader mobility constraints have further compounded the decline in tourist inflows.

Committee members also stressed the need to ensure the sustainability of tourism establishments and protect jobs, calling for measures similar to those adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic,

including easing financial burdens on businesses through flexible payment mechanisms, reductions in social security obligations, and support schemes for workers affected by temporary closures or reduced activity.

Discussions also focused on operational costs, particularly electricity bills, with MPs urging the introduction of structured and flexible instalment plans, noting that tourism businesses cannot be expected to meet accumulated financial obligations under current conditions without government intervention.

Lawmakers highlighted the "uneven but widespread" impact across the Kingdom, noting that Petra has been among the hardest hit, with hotel occupancy rates during the Eid Al Fitr holiday dropping to nearly zero. "In Amman, occupancy levels also fell significantly compared with previous years, when hotels typically operated at near full



The Lower House Tourism and Antiquities Committee on Wednesday says that Petra hotel occupancy rates during the Eid Al Fitr holiday dropped to nearly zero

capacity during peak periods.

Similar trends were reported in other tourist destinations, including Madaba, Jerash, the Dead Sea and Aqaba.

Members also pointed out that despite earlier government pledges to introduce intervention measures, no clear framework has yet been implemented, underscoring the need for "swift and coordinated action".

Among the proposals discussed were temporary exemptions or

deferrals of licensing fees imposed by ministries, municipalities and special economic authorities, as well as expanded support for workers in tourism-related transport, including taxi drivers, whose livelihoods are directly tied to visitor activity.

Participants also called for more targeted intervention by the Jordan Tourism Board, emphasising that support should extend beyond promotional campaigns to include direct assistance to tourism businesses facing fi-

financial strain.

MPs also underscored the importance of consulting industry stakeholders, including hotel owners, travel agencies and tour guides, to better assess the scale of losses and develop practical, evidence-based solutions.

Suggestions were also raised to diversify tourism markets by targeting non-traditional sources, including North African countries, and facilitating land travel for visitors from Gulf states, while maintaining the role of the national carrier in sustaining connectivity despite regional challenges.

On taxation, lawmakers raised concerns over existing loss carryforward provisions, noting that the sector has yet to recover from successive crises.

Members also stressed the urgency of intensified consultations in the coming period, warning that prolonged inaction could deepen losses in one of the Kingdom's key economic sectors.

Lower House endorses Audit Bureau report

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — The Lower House on Wednesday approved the Parliamentary Financial Committee's recommendations on the 2024 Audit Bureau report.

During the session, chaired by Speaker Mazen Oadi and attended by Prime Minister Jafar Hassan and the ministerial team, lawmakers approved measures to investigate 13 suspected corruption cases, referring them to the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission.

Additionally, 45 cases involving improper bonuses, incentives, and overtime payments were referred for fund recovery, with 41 outstanding obligations and contracts slated for immediate collection.

MPs voiced concerns over "repeated" financial mismanagement across government institutions, citing procurement violations, irregular allowances and weak internal control mechanisms.

They also highlighted persistent municipal oversight failures, low compliance rates and repeated project delays,



The Lower House on Wednesday approves measures to investigate 13 suspected corruption cases, referring them to the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission

noting that some state-affiliated entities failed to submit audited financial statements.

The lawmakers also called for empowering internal audit units with functional independence and linking them directly to the Audit Bureau rather than ministries or municipalities, to ensure effective monitoring.

They recommended corrective action plans for institutions flagged by the Bureau, complete with clear timelines and follow-up in subsequent reports, warning that persistent violations should trigger administrative and financial accountability.

MPs also said that Audit Bureau findings re-

fect patterns of recurring mismanagement rather than isolated errors, calling for preventive rather than reactive reporting.

Proposed reforms include automating budget approvals, linking capital allocations to completed technical studies, enhancing internal audits and deploying digital monitoring systems.

Legislators also suggested modernising government operations through AI-driven governance to anticipate risks, track performance, and protect public funds. Lawmakers also stressed that combining economic stability, robust governance and accountability is crucial for protecting citizens.

Iran fires missile salvo after Trump signals progress in talks

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran launched a new missile salvo across the Middle East on Wednesday, after US President Donald Trump's signals that he was eager to talk with Tehran steadied global markets.

Oil prices dropped sharply and stocks in Asia rose on broader de-escalation hopes following nearly four weeks of war, as Trump appeared to be ramping up efforts to bring an end to his joint military operation with Israel.

Trump, whose daily statements have swung wildly from threatening to conciliatory, said Washington was "in negotiations right now" with Tehran.

"They did something yesterday that was amazing actually. They gave us a present and the present arrived today. And it was a very big present worth a tremendous amount of money," he told reporters in the Oval Office.

"That meant one thing to me, we're dealing with the right people."

The US leader did not explain further but said it related to the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran has largely blockaded in retaliation for US and Israeli strikes, spiking global energy prices.

Iranian officials have



The Islamic republic has kept up its attacks on Israel and Gulf nations it accuses as serving as launch pads for US strikes

yet to confirm any formal talks.

However, The New York Times, quoting several unnamed officials, reported that Washington has sent a 15-point plan to Iran via Pakistan, which has offered to mediate, in a bid to end the war.

It was not clear if Israel, which has been carrying out strikes on Iran and ally Hezbollah in Lebanon, was aware or on board with the plan.

Trump's cryptic state-

ments on his eagerness to talk with Iran included repeating a claim that Tehran has "agreed they will never have a nuclear weapon".

Iran had agreed in 2015 to broad restraints on its contested nuclear program in a deal that Trump ripped up during his first term as he joined Israel in applying pressure to the cleric-run state.

Despite the US leader's stated hopes for a deal, The Wall Street Journal

reported that Washington is planning to send a further 3,000 soldiers to the Middle East.

Fresh Gulf attacks

While Trump hinted at backchannel diplomacy, Iran's Revolutionary Guard said they had fired a fresh wave of missiles on Wednesday at Israel, as well as bases hosting US forces in Kuwait, Jordan and Bahrain.

The Islamic republic has kept up its retaliato-

ry attacks on Israel and Gulf nations it accuses of serving as launchpads for US strikes.

Drones hit a fuel tank and sparked a fire at Kuwait International Airport, the Gulf state's civil aviation authority said, causing "limited" damage.

In Bahrain, the interior ministry said air raid sirens were activated, while Jordan's public security directorate reported shrapnel fell near the capital Amman, re-

sulting in no casualties or damage.

Saudi Arabia said it had intercepted at least four drones in the kingdom's east.

Israel meanwhile said it was launching new strikes on "infrastructure of the Iranian terror regime" after announcing new Iranian missile launches at the country.

Iran on Tuesday accused Israel of carrying out a second strike on Bushehr nuclear plant, a civilian site.

"The sounds, the explosions, the missiles, they are part of our daily life now," a 35-year-old woman in Tehran told AFP by telephone.

In Lebanon, state media said Israeli strikes killed six people in a town and a Palestinian refugee camp in the southern Sidon area. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

Israel has stepped up its campaign against the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon, saying its military would take control of south Lebanon up to the Litani river, around 30 kilometres from the border.

Trump's envoys were negotiating a nuclear deal with Iran just two days before the Unit-

ed States and Israel launched the massive attack on February 28, killing Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on the first day.

Lebanon was then pulled into the war when Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel on March 2 to avenge Khamenei's killing.

The conflict has also pulled Iraq, which neighbours Iran, deeper into the war.

Baghdad said it would summon the US charge d'affaires and the Iranian ambassador after deadly strikes blamed on their countries, as Iraqi authorities granted targeted former paramilitary groups the "right to respond".

'Non-hostile vessels'

As the trading of strikes carried on, focus remained on the Strait of Hormuz, the key oil route responsible for carrying a fifth of the world's crude oil.

Tehran, in a message circulated by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), assured safe passage through the strait to "non-hostile vessels".

Iran had already said it was not targeting friendly nations.

The IMO said a communique issued by Iran's foreign ministry said any vessels belonging to "the aggressor parties, namely the United States and the Israeli regime" would not be allowed passage.

Trump had earlier threatened to "obliterate" Iran's power plants, which some argue would be a war crime, if it did not open the strait by late Monday Washington time.

Before US markets opened Monday, Trump abruptly extended that deadline by five days, citing diplomatic progress.

But signs of a possible conclusion to the war saw benchmark price of crude oil dropped more than 6 per cent.

Prices at the pump have soared in the US after Trump launched the war with Israel, causing him a political headache.

As the US leader mounted his threats if Iran did not agree to his demands, French President Emmanuel Macron demanded Tehran take any talks seriously.

"I called on Iran to engage in good faith in negotiations," he wrote on X, after a call with his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian.



This image grab taken from Iranian state television broadcast on February 28, shows what it says is the site of deadly US and Israeli strikes that hit a girls' elementary school in Minab, in the southern Iranian province of Hormozgan near the strategic sea route of the Strait of Hormuz

UN rights council set to hold urgent debate Friday on Iran school strike

GENEVA (AFP) — The UN Human Rights Council is ready to hold a second urgent debate this week linked to the Middle East war, focused on a deadly strike on an Iranian school.

Council President Sidharto Reza Suryodipuro told the United Nations' top rights body that a request for an urgent debate on the "protection of children and educational institutions in international armed conflicts" could take place on Friday.

The debate, requested by Iran, China and

Cuba, explicitly refers to the air strike on a school in the southern city of Minab on the first day of the war on February 28 that killed at least 165 people, most of them children.

A US Tomahawk cruise missile hit the school due to a targeting mistake, according to the preliminary findings of a US military investigation reported by The New York Times newspaper.

Suryodipuro made his announcement at the start of another rare urgent debate at the council focused on the Middle East war.

Iran has accused Israel and the United States of conducting a strike on an elementary school in the southern city of Minab, which it said killed more than 150 people.

US President Donald Trump has blamed Iran, while the Pentagon has said it is investigating the incident.

The New York Times has authenticated video uploaded by Iran's semi-official Mehr News showing a US Tomahawk cruise missile striking a structure described as a clinic inside a Revolutionary Guards' base next to the school.

According to The Times, in this war, the only military using Tomahawks is the United States.

The footage showed dust and smoke rising from the direction of the school, indicating at least one earlier explosion.

Aid boat arrives in Cuba as US oil blockade bites

HAVANA (AFP) — The first boat of a flotilla carrying medical supplies, food and solar panels reached Cuba on Tuesday to aid the island as a US fuel blockade deepens its energy crisis.

The Maguro shrimp fishing boat docked in Havana three days later than hoped after battling strong winds, currents and a pesky battery during its journey from Mexico.

As they approached Havana's colonial-era fortification, the international activists stood on the cabin roof of the boat, symbolically renamed "Granma 2.0" as a tribute to the yacht used by Fidel Castro's guerrilla fighters to launch their revolution in 1956.

They held a sign reading "Let Cuba live" while others waiting for them on the dock chanted "Cuba yes! Blockade no!"

"I wish everyone would unite, even Cubans abroad and come and do the same because it is the people who are suffering," said Amado Rodriguez, a 59-year-old driver walking near Havana Bay.

The first shipments arrived by plane from Europe, Latin America and the United States last week as part of an air and



Brazilian activist Thiago Avila holds a Cuban flag on board the vessel Maguro, symbolically renamed 'Granma 2.0' docking at the port of Havana on Tuesday

sea mission, dubbed Our America Convoy, to bring some 50 tonnes of aid to Cuba.

Two more ships will follow

Activists say the mission, which had the support of the government, aims to bring relief to Cubans amid a de facto US oil blockade that President Donald Trump launched in January.

Critics have slammed the effort as benefitting the communist government more than ordinary people.

Convoy organiser David Adler, a US citizen, told AFP the mission brought urgently needed aid directly to Cubans and

showed the world "the human costs of Trump's siege on Cuba".

"It demonstrated that international solidarity can triumph over forced isolation," said Adler, coordinator of global left-wing group Progressive International.

Cuba has suffered seven nationwide blackouts since 2024, two of them this past week, due to aging thermolectric plants and oil shortages.

The situation has deteriorated since Cuba's chief regional ally, Venezuelan socialist leader Nicolas Maduro, was captured by US forces in January and Trump threatened tariffs against countries that ship oil to the island.

The Sea Horse, a Hong

Kong-flagged tanker that was previously reported to be taking Russian diesel to Cuba, ended up in Venezuelan waters, data from maritime tracker Kpler showed Tuesday.

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel, who met members of the convoy last week, said on social media platform X that the country welcomed the Granma 2.0 "with profound gratitude".

Trump's 'greed'

The Maguro left from Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula on Friday carrying 32 people, including activists from Australia, Brazil, Ecuador, Italy, Mexico and the United States, as well as AFP journalists.

As the boat motored across the sea, Brazilian activist Thiago Avila said other nations should come to Cuba's aid.

"We cannot allow the world and international law to be buried under the greed of Donald Trump," Avila told AFP.

Avila was among the organisers of a flotilla that had tried to bring aid to Gaza last year despite a naval blockade. That effort was intercepted by Israeli forces.

The 15-nation Carib-

bean Community grouping said on Tuesday that it would send to Cuba, via Mexico, baby formula, food, medical supplies and solar panels.

Mexico has already shipped 3,000 tonnes of aid to Cuba last month and more is on the way.

'Political sideshow'

In addition to daily outages, fuel prices have soared, public transport has become rare and trash is piling up as garbage trucks are no longer running.

Cuba has blamed Washington for the country's hardship, pointing to the fuel blockade and a decades-old trade embargo.

Cuban exiles and other critics, who say the communist government is to blame for the economic crisis, said the convoy is giving political support to Havana.

"All of this is nothing more than a political sideshow," Luis Zuniga, a former Cuban political prisoner now based in Miami, told AFP.

"The electricity crisis in Cuba does not stem from the oil embargo imposed by [Trump]. It dates back to long before that," Zuniga said.

Germany unveils new climate action plan, but green groups cry foul

BERLIN (AFP) — Germany unveiled a new climate action plan Wednesday aimed at sharply cutting emissions in coming years, but environmental groups quickly criticised the measures as inadequate and vowed legal action.

The policy framework, presented by Environment Minister Carsten Schneider in Berlin, includes new electric car subsidies and a boost for the wind energy sector. Europe's biggest econ-

omy has set a legally binding 2030 target to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 65 per cent compared to 1990 levels, and a 2045 deadline to achieve climate neutrality.

But expert projections have shown Germany — long a green energy champion — falling behind on those targets.

Schneider acknowledged it would require a "tremendous effort" to hit the 2030 target, but expressed confidence that Germany could still achieve it.

Greenpeace slammed the plan as insufficient, saying it relies mostly on "optimistic" projections, and Greens Party MP Katharina Droege dismissed it as "a blatant deception".

The government, Droege said, had so far "opted for wishful thinking and dependence on oil and gas" — disastrous choices, she said, given skyrocketing fossil fuel prices.

The plan includes an additional 8 billion euros

(\$9 billion) for climate measures over the next four years, including help for heavy industry to reduce their "reliance on costly and unpredictable oil and gas imports", Schneider said.

The new measures are expected to save more than 25 million tonnes of CO2 emissions by 2030, through support for low-emission technologies and several programmes for the construction of more energy-efficient buildings.

Among the measures, 2,000 additional wind turbines will be built, and a new income-based subsidy programme for households purchasing electric vehicles is expected to cover approximately 800,000 cars.

Conservative Chancellor Friedrich Merz's government has, however, looked to scale back climate policies in some areas in an attempt to boost growth in the EU's largest economy, which has stagnated in recent years.

Merz has backed a loosening of EU-wide car emission rules while his energy minister, Katharina Reiche, has looked to dial back solar expansion while pushing for a fleet of new gas-fired power plants.

Germany's pace of reducing CO2 emissions has slowed, dropping by only 0.9 million tonnes year-on-year in 2025.

To still hit the 2030 target, emissions would need to fall by an average of 42 million tonnes per year.

'Climate policy arson'

Schneider — of the centre-left Social Democrats, the junior partner in Merz's coalition — said he hoped the framework could give climate action "a new boost" while reducing some of the bitter political polarisation around the issue and stimulating the economy, which he said "is suffering from expensive oil and gas".

The German Renewable Energy Federation wel-

comed the programme's emphasis on expanding wind power as "essential" for hitting climate goals in comments to the Rheinische Post newspaper.

Other climate advocacy groups were quick to denounce Wednesday's action plan as insufficient.

Environmental Action Germany (DUH) — which successfully sued the previous government over a climate plan that courts determined was inadequate — vowed to challenge the new plan in court.

DUH's Barbara Metz called the plans "climate policy arson" and blasted the government in particular for scaling back ambitious — though controversial — tough heating regulations passed by ex-chancellor Olaf Scholz's government.

"Global crises and wars are drastically demonstrating the madness of further cementing our dependence on fossil fuels in our boiler rooms," Metz said.

(تمديد اطلاق عطاء)
عطاء شراء التجهيزات الطبية لمستشفى معان
والتمويل من منحة صندوق أبو ظبي للتنمية

١- تعلن القيادة العامة للقوات المسلحة الأردنية - الجيش العربي / مديرية الخدمات الطبية الملكية عن تمديد طرح عطاء رقم (ش/٥٠٠/٢٠٢٥/٦٠) لشراء التجهيزات الطبية لمستشفى معان) **والتمويل من منحة صندوق أبو ظبي للتنمية** فعلى المتقدمين الراغبين بالاشتراك في هذا العطاء مراجعة مديرية الخدمات الطبية الملكية / شعبة إدامة اللوازم لشراء نسخة العطاء مقابل دفع مبلغ (٢٣٠٠) ألفاً وثلاثمائة دينار أردني غير مستردة مصطحبين معهم السجل التجاري ورخصة المهن سارية المفعول أو صور عنها وأن يكون المتعهد مسجل في نظام الفوترة الوطني الإلكتروني .

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Lebanon gov;t stuck between Israel and Hizbollah in war it didn't want

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AFP) — Lebanon's government has been wedged into a war not of its choosing between Hizbollah and Israel, as the Iran-backed militants harden their stance and Israel demands the group's elimination.

Beirut has been struggling to pull the country back from the brink after Hizbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war on March 2, firing rockets into Israel to avenge the killing of Iran's supreme leader.



Smoke rises after an Israeli airstrike targeting the village of Arnoun in the southern Lebanese area of Marjeyoun on Wednesday

With more than 1,000 dead in Lebanon and more than 1 million others displaced, what are the government and Hizbollah's positions, and what are the chances for negotiations?

What measures has Beirut taken?

Paysal Itani, senior fellow at the Washington-based Middle East Policy Council, said Lebanese authorities face "a brutal choice: confront Hizbollah or watch Israel do it

for them".

A Lebanese official source told AFP that "the Israelis have made it known", through the mediation of United Nations special coordinator for Lebanon, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, who visited Israel this month, that "they want Hizbollah wiped out".

But "Hizbollah can't be disarmed overnight", the source added, request-

ing anonymity.

Created after Israel invaded in 1982, Hizbollah is the only group to have kept its weapons since the country's 1975-1990 civil war, doing so in the name of "resistance" against Israel.

Since the latest war erupted, Lebanon's government has taken unprecedented steps to try to rein in Hizbollah and its patron Iran.

Beirut has banned Hizbollah's military and security activities, and all activities of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, whom Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam has accused of commanding Hizbollah's operations.

Lebanese authorities have also decided to expel Iran's ambassador, a move that has incensed Hizbollah.

A source from the group told AFP on condition of anonymity that Hizbollah has requested the ambassador disregard the measure.

Avoiding confrontation?

The government has taken no steps to implement the ban on Hizbollah's military activities, and the group has kept attacking northern Israel and Israeli troops in south Lebanon.

Authorities fear any domestic confrontation with Hizbollah, which has a strong popular support base among the Shiite Muslim community.

They also want to shield the army, an under-funded and under-equipped institution seen as a rare source of unity in a country riven by sectarian and political divisions.

Itani said that, if the military confronts the Iran-backed group, "there is a risk of a sectarian split in the armed forces, though this de-

pends in part on Hizbollah's response".

The army once split along sectarian lines in 1976 during Lebanon's devastating civil war.

State hamstrung in south?

Authorities say the war has scuttled the army's plans to disarm Hizbollah — which it had been doing in south Lebanon following a November 2024 ceasefire that sought to end the previous war between Israel and the militants.

The army in January said it had finished dismantling Hizbollah infrastructure between the Israeli border and the Litani River, around 30 kilometres to the north, where Hizbollah says fighting is under way with advancing Israeli troops, and where Israel wants to establish a "security zone".

For Israel, Lebanon's army "lost total credibility to the degree that it is now ignored altogether", Itani said.

The military has even withdrawn from border areas to avoid being caught up in the conflict, despite pleas from villagers still defying Israeli army orders to evacuate.

Hizbollah's position?

Hizbollah chief Naim Qassem on Wednesday urged the government to reverse its ban on the group's military activities.

Mahmud Qamati, an official from the group, has called the government's decision illegal, even comparing it to France's Nazi collaborationist Vichy regime in World War II.

A Lebanese security source told AFP on condition of anonymity that Iranian advisers and liaison officers have been assisting Hizbollah and helping it regroup since the 2024 ceasefire with Israel.

Hizbollah and the Revolutionary Guards, the ideological arm of Iran's military, have announced joint operations against Israel since the start of the war. A Western diplomat

told AFP on condition of anonymity that Hizbollah had hardened its position since coming under the Guards' supervision.

Negotiations?

In a bid to break the political impasse, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun has proposed direct negotiations with Israel and a full truce.

But for now, prospects for a ceasefire or talks between the two countries, who have officially been at war since 1948 and have no formal diplomatic relations, seem remote.

Hizbollah's Qassem said negotiating under fire would amount to "surrender".

According to the Lebanese official source, "Israel wants negotiations under fire" and won't accept a truce as proposed by Aoun.

For now, the source said, the government can do little more than try, "through diplomatic contacts, to spare Lebanon from strikes on [vital] infrastructure".

Jordan has 'safe' stockpile of food commodities — minister

Continued from page 1

He said that 47 container ships have arrived or are expected to arrive in Jordan from the beginning of March until its end.

The number of containers handled in March is expected to reach around 72,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs).

According to Qudah, 49 container ships were unloaded at Aqaba Port in March 2025, indicating that current figures are close to last year's levels and reflect the continued efficiency of supply chains.

He noted that the most critical phase of

any military escalation is usually the first 10 days, adding that the Kingdom has passed this period without notable price increases, despite its coinciding with Ramadan. This, he said, was achieved through daily market monitoring and round-the-clock efforts by relevant teams.

Qudah said shipping companies significantly raised shipping and transportation costs significantly at the onset of the crisis, with the cost of a 20-foot container rising from around \$2,000 to between \$3,500 and \$4,000.

However, he noted that the impact re-

mains limited, as the value of goods in a single container can reach about JD400,000, meaning the increase in retail prices does not exceed 7-10 per cent.

He added that prices of many commodities are now lower than during Ramadan, while others have seen only slight increases.

The minister said the ministry has intensified market oversight, conducting inspections of wholesalers and retailers by comparing current prices with those of three weeks ago to detect any unjustified increases, in addition to monitoring cases of refusal to sell.

Safadi says Jordan not party to regional conflict, urges Iran to stop attacks, resort to diplomacy

Continued from page 1

He also noted that Jordan was open to dialogue with Iran before the war, provided Tehran halted actions that threaten the security and stability of Jordan and other Arab states.

"The question of if and when to engage with the Iranian embassy in Amman is guided by political considerations, and we take the necessary steps at the appropriate time, when we deem it necessary," Safadi said.

Safadi also revealed that Jordan has been subjected to strikes targeting the Kingdom's territory by factions based in Iraq during recent regional tensions.

Safadi said that the government has contacted its Iraqi counterpart on several occasions to stress the necessity of stopping these aggressions and preventing their recurrence.

The minister affirmed that Jordan is handling these developments with "wisdom" and does not seek escalation, while underscoring the Kingdom's unwavering commitment to its security and stability.

Safadi added that Jordan "highly values" its relations with Iraq, highlighting the deep-rooted brotherly ties that the Kingdom is keen to respect, strengthen and sustain.

The foreign minister emphasised that the Iraqi government must take the necessary measures to prevent these factions from targeting Jordan and other countries in the region.

Safadi also revealed that Jordan has previously provided the Iranian side with docu-

mented evidence, facts, and information regarding practices and targets undermining the Kingdom's security.

Safadi also said that "Iranian hands" and entities affiliated with Iran are behind ongoing attempts to smuggle drugs and weapons across the Syrian border.

He noted that Jordan has, for years, faced continuous attempts directly targeting its national security.

The minister said that the Jordanian government and security agencies have repeatedly engaged with their Iranian counterparts on the necessity of halting these practices, which pose a threat to national security, calling for them to be addressed "at the root".

Safadi noted that Jordan has informed Iran on several occasions of the importance of resolving these issues and disputes, while working to remove any obstacles preventing the establishment of sound bilateral relations.

Safadi reiterated that Jordan's ties with Syria are at their strongest in political, security, military and economic sectors.

He also cited the meeting with Syrian President Ahmad Al Shara, accompanied by the Chief of the Joint Staff and the Director of General Intelligence, to discuss measures against cross-border drug and arms smuggling, and the threat posed by ISIS and other terrorist groups.

Safadi said the talks also focused on boosting economic ties, noting that Jordan fully supports Syria during its critical reconstruction phase, in line with His Majesty the King's directives.

He emphasised that Syria's stability is

key to the security of Jordan and the region, condemning Israeli attacks on Syrian territory.

Safadi also noted that preparations are underway for the second ministerial meeting of the Higher Coordination Council, with both sides committed to strengthening bilateral partnerships.

'The Kingdom has successfully managed numerous crises in the past'

self-defence.

The minister affirmed that Jordan has documented the violations it faced, asserting its right to respond in accordance with international law and to demand reparations for any current or future damages.

Safadi noted that the Iranian response to the Jordanian complaint contained "politically incorrect" allegations and presented legal justifications he described as "null and void", particularly concerning Jordan's right to defend its territory.

Safadi also confirmed that Jordan's border crossings remain open, highlighting the Kingdom's role amid regional tensions.

During March, Jordan handled a significant movement of travellers from some 60 countries, totalling around 7,000 people by air and land, including 45 evacuation flights carrying European, African, and Asian nationals.

Safadi emphasised Jordan's commitment to facilitating transit and returns in accordance with international agreements, noting that the country's stability and strategic location make it a safe hub for evacuations.

On the matter of Jordanians abroad, he noted that some 7,000 citizens in the Gulf states have made their way to Saudi Arabia, with about 3,000 already back in the Kingdom.

Safadi stressed that Jordan is committed to containing the conflict and working to end it on a basis that safeguards against future threats in the region.

He highlighted that Jordan's right to respond is guaranteed under Article 51 of the UN Charter, with the timing of any measures

guided by the level of threat and coordinated with other countries.

Safadi added that the greatest challenge will lie in the post-conflict period, emphasising that Jordan will tackle these challenges to protect national and Arab security while working towards a stable and hopeful future.

"The Kingdom has successfully managed numerous crises in the past," he said.

Safadi stressed that Jordan is committed to upholding its legitimate right to defend its sovereignty, highlighting that the Kingdom has consistently refrained from initiating hostilities, even as it has faced attacks linked to regional tensions.

He noted that the JAF efficiently intercepted around 240 missiles and drones, limiting the damage, adding that Jordan is continuing its efforts to restore security and stability in the region.

Safadi also said that Jordan is engaging politically with various international parties to stop the Israeli aggression on Lebanon and support the Lebanese government's efforts to exert full sovereignty over its territory.

Safadi added that the Kingdom is providing extensive humanitarian aid to Lebanon, where approximately one million internally displaced persons are placing a "significant burden" on the state.

Under Royal directives, Jordan has dispatched assistance to help address these urgent needs and will continue to provide support in coordination with the international community, while calling on global powers to play an active role in helping Lebanon overcome these challenges.

Iran launches 5 missiles, drone towards Jordan, all but one intercepted — JAF

Continued from page 1

The PSD also said the relevant authorities handled the remnants of an explosive device found on the Desert Highway near

Rashedia.

The PSD renewed warnings against approaching or tampering with suspicious objects or debris, urging the public to follow official safety instructions.

It also called on public to report any such items via the emergency number 911 and to rely on official sources of information, warning against rumours and misinformation.

UN rights council condemns Iran's aggressions on Jordan, GGC countries

Continued from page 1

He described the move as a "significant" step reflecting international consensus against Iranian aggressions and the rejection of any infringement on Arab sovereignty.

Stressing the need for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a return

to calm, the diplomat highlighted the importance of diplomacy and dialogue in consolidating regional security.

For his part, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk urged the international community to end the conflict in the Middle East, which he described as "extremely

dangerous".

Turk noted that the conflict is characterised by an "unprecedented power to entangle countries across borders and from across the globe", warning of unpredictable consequences. He called on world powers to exert every possible effort to bring the escalation to a halt.

UN chief says Lebanon must not become next Gaza amid fighting

Continued from page 1

"Across the region, and far beyond, civilians are enduring serious harm and living under profound insecurity. I witnessed some of these consequences firsthand during my recent visit to Lebanon," he said.

"There, too, the war must stop. Hizbollah must stop launching attacks into Israel. And Israel must stop its military operations and strikes in Lebanon, which are hitting

civilians the hardest." In early March, Israeli finance minister Bezalel Smotrich threatened Beirut's southern suburbs — a stronghold of Iran-backed Hizbollah — with the same devastation that Israel has inflicted on Gaza in its war against militant group Hamas.

Beyond Lebanon, Guterres voiced alarm at the wider regional war triggered by US-Israeli strikes on Iran in late February that killed the country's supreme

leader Ali Khamenei. "The conflict has broken past the limits even leaders thought imaginable," he said. "The world is staring down the barrel of a wider war, a rising tide of human suffering, and a deeper global economic shock. This has gone too far."

The UN chief also announced the appointment of French diplomat Jean Arnault as his special envoy to lead UN efforts regarding the conflict and its consequences.

Jordan, Gulf countries renew condemnation of 'flagrant' Iranian aggressions

Continued from page 1

While underscoring their "deep-rooted brotherly" ties with Iraq, these nations called on the Iraqi government to take "immediate meas-

ures" to halt the activities of armed factions and militias to prevent further escalation.

The statement also highlighted the countries' "full and inherent right to self-defence" in

accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter, which guarantees the right to individual or collective self-defence in the event of an armed attack.

The statement condemned destabilising

activities planned by "sleeper cells" loyal to Iran and terrorist organisations linked to Hizbollah. The states commended the vigilance of their security agencies and the bravery of their

armed forces in intercepting these attacks, dismantling operative cells, and uncovering "malicious plots" aimed at undermining regional security and public safety.

THE JORDAN TIMES

An independent Arab political daily,
established in 1975

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Editorial and advertising offices
Jordan Press Foundation

The Jordan Times is published daily
except Saturdays

Published by the Jordan Press
Foundation

Queen Rania Al Abdullah Street
P.O. Box 6710
Amman 11118

E mail: editor@jordantimes.com
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National Library registration number:
D/1998/2062

Telephone: 5600800 ext. 2392
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Advertising facsimile: 5696183
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5600800 ext: 2383

Assassinations as a tool to dismantle Iran's security state

With the shift toward systematic assassinations, the Israeli-American effort is gradually entering a new phase: operating inside Iran in a qualitative and unconventional manner. Repeated assassinations are not merely the result of intelligence work, surveillance and long-term penetration, but of a structural and continuous breach sustained by active intelligence operations around the clock.

Their core effect lies in transferring doubt and mutual suspicion into the regime's own corridors and institutions, creating a hesitant operational reality, increasing exposure, and striking directly at the regime's decision-making mechanism. In parallel, Israel and the United States are moving toward complex strikes targeting the Iranian regime's internal infrastructure, most notably its military capabilities and military-industrial facilities.

At the same time, they are also striking the regime's internal pillars, namely its internal security capabilities and personnel. This means that the Basij, as a central instrument of internal control, has effectively become a primary target at this stage, alongside the Revolutionary Guard. This points to a practical translation of what President Trump had previously said about creating internal conditions for change from within.

At the same time, the intensive targeting of the regime's military assets along the western and southern coastal areas appears to be preparation for something larger. The targeting of military infrastructure, bases, headquarters, as well as Iranian ports and naval craft, points to one objective: Preparing the ground for qualitative operations ahead. This is likely what the American administration needs in order to demonstrate a tangible achievement on the ground and move toward a strategy of controlling strategic Iranian areas.

Such a move could be carried out through special forces operations with clearly defined missions: Abduction, liquidation, or seizure of strategic areas after ensuring full security and containing any threat to an American presence, particularly on the Iranian islands, most importantly Kharg Island.

This qualitative shift may reflect the evolutionary path of gradual American operations built in stages, beginning with striking the head of the regime, then its infrastructure, and eventually reaching the assassination of its leaders and the targeting of its internal bases. This may represent the most important step in translating this strategy, especially with the parallel suggestion of activating internal components in the border regions, whether Kurdish, Azerbaijani, or Arab in Ahvaz.

From the Iranian side, Tehran has demonstrated an ability to sustain attacks using missiles and drones, and to diversify its strikes in a way that preserves the impression that it remains capable of targeting the Israeli interior on the one hand, and threatening the Gulf states and energy centers on the other, especially in light of the notable evolution in the targeting of energy sites in Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Iran's strategy of maximizing the war's global impact has pushed it toward a propaganda discourse built around threat. This includes threatening places linked to financial stability and the energy market, such as the UAE, while trying to display the capability to strike these states and simultaneously directing internal messaging calling for distancing from ports and installations. This reflects the Iranian need to preserve the image of a regime still capable of threatening, acting and disrupting regional stability whenever it chooses.

The Iranian approach, based on linking the war to dangerous international repercussions, begins with threatening the Gulf states and magnifying the danger to energy markets and international navigation. It also extends to nuclear leak scenarios and to highlighting Iran's ability to launch long-range missiles, such as those fired toward Diego Garcia.

After the third week of the war, the United States appears to be deepening its strikes inside Iran, targeting the regime's structure, instruments, and military facilities in their entirety. The acceleration of this process suggests a desire to move into a phase in which these strikes are translated into steps on the ground, preserving acceptance of the American settlement as the only option left for any internal Iranian actor. At the same time, a new Iranian reality is being created, one in which it becomes difficult for any future regime to return to the form in which the current one ends.

Neutralizing Iran, ending its threat, eliminating its military capabilities, and confining any Iranian future to reconstruction and internal recovery detached from regional policies now appears to be the clearest objective of this phase.



Amer Al Sabaileh

If Robinson and Mazzucato assessed Jordan's economy



ECONOMIC REVIEW

Yusuf Mansur

Aside from the current crises and turmoil in the region, which are likely to subside soon without causing significant harm to Jordan, this article presents a hypothetical scenario of a visit by two prominent economists to the Kingdom. I am invoking some of their most famous quotes here to highlight a different perspective on the Jordanian economy.

Imagine that two of the most prominent economic minds, Joan Robinson (born 1903) and Mariana Mazzucato (born 1968), arrived in Amman and met at a coffee shop to assess the Jordanian economy. The late Joan Robinson was a prominent economist from Cambridge University and a sharp critic of uncompetitive markets. She believed that the economy should be understood as it is, not as models assume it to be. The second, Mazzucato, is one of the most prominent contemporary economists, who redefined the state's role as a creator of value, not merely a regulator or corrector, and is considered one of the most important figures to have reshaped the state's role in the economy.

The discussion wouldn't be limited to numbers. It would delve into how the economy actually functions, how added value is created, and how the state and the market can work together to build a more productive and sustainable economy.

What would they say? Robinson would begin, in her characteristically critical tone, with her famous line: "The goal of studying economics is not to find ready-made answers, but to learn how not to be fooled by economists." She would then examine Jordan's economic indicators and ask a simple yet sharp question: "Does this

economy reflect what the models say... or do the models ignore its reality?"

Joan Robinson would pose her favorite question: "Is this truly a competitive economy, or is it one shaped by invisible

monopolistic forces?" and "Are the markets competitive... or is competition merely a theoretical construct?" She would look at certain sectors and observe that the number of players is limited, that prices don't fall easily after rising — meaning they are sticky — and that production isn't expanding at the desired pace. She would say, "If markets aren't competitive, don't expect strong investment or high growth." And, "The problem isn't the market itself... It's how the market works."

Robinson would quickly turn to the labour market. She would not only be concerned by the unemployment rate but also by its persistence. For her, high unemployment over many years doesn't signify a cyclical fluctuation but a deeper flaw in the structure of the economy. She would say, "If unemployment persists, the problem isn't wages... It's demand that isn't generating production." She wouldn't stop there, but would add, "And if demand isn't translated into domestic production, you're not just suffering from a lack of demand... but from its leakage." She thus puts her finger on one of the most important issues in the Jordanian economy:

That a large portion of spending doesn't remain within the economy.

Here, Mariana Mazzucato would enter the discussion, shifting the focus and asking, "You're talking about the market... but where is the state in all of this?" In her view, the problem in many countries isn't whether the state is large or small, but rather that the state is "not oriented towards value creation". She would examine economic policies and ask: "Is there a clear production vision?... Is investment directed toward future sectors?... Is the state leading innovation... or waiting for the market?... The state is not just a corrector of market failures, but a partner in creating markets."

Mazzucato would note that Jordan possesses important elements, including relative stability for more than half a century, a strategic geographic location, and an educated human capital base. She would further point out that these elements have not yet been translated into a well-defined economic project, since "The economy does not grow only through stability, but through direction."

They would both agree on a central point: not all spending is created equal. Robinson would say: "If spending does not generate local production, it has little impact... It is real growth that changes the economy's capacity to produce, not just its size." Mazzucato would add, "Value is not created in consumption, but in innovation and production... and if it is not directed toward creating future value, it is wasted spending."

The dialogue would lead to the concept of the economic multiplier and the crucial question: Will a spent dinar re-

main within the economy, circulating to drive demand and then supply? Or will it quickly flow out through imports? Robinson would argue, "If the dinar isn't circulating within the economy, don't expect a significant impact." Mazzucato would add, "And if it's not directed towards creating future value, it's aimless spending."

After a lengthy discussion, they agreed on a three-pronged diagnosis: First, there is high economic leakage, with a large portion of demand flowing abroad, thus weakening the impact of spending on growth. Second, the market structure lacks competition, as some sectors discourage expansion and investment. Third, the state's role needs to be geared towards creating productive value.

Robinson suggested fostering genuine competition, breaking up inefficient monopolies, and linking prices and production to reality, not just models. Mazzucato, on the other hand, emphasised directing investment towards strategic sectors, building national priorities around areas such as water, energy, and industry, and making the state an innovation partner, not merely a regulator.

And they both agreed on one thing: "The problem isn't the size of the economy... It's its quality." They might leave behind a recommendation — simple yet profound: "Don't just ask: How much is the GDP growing? Ask instead: What are we producing, how are we producing it, and for whom?"

While this is an imaginary visit, it raises a real question: Do we want an economy that simply grows, or one that produces, innovates, and is sustainable?

The writer is a former Minister of State for Economic Affairs in Jordan

Will oil reach \$160?

By Raad Mahmud Al-Tal

Oil prices are once again in focus because of rising tensions in the Middle East. One of the main reasons for concern is the Strait of Hormuz, a very important route for global energy trade. Around 20 per cent of the world's oil passes through this narrow waterway. Any disruption there can quickly affect global prices.

Because of these risks, some discussions in markets and media have moved beyond normal price levels like \$80 or \$100. Now, extreme scenarios such as \$160 per barrel are being mentioned. However, it is important to understand that this is not the base case. It is a worst-case scenario that would only happen under very severe conditions.

In the most likely scenario, oil prices are expected to stay between \$80 and \$90 per barrel. This assumes that global supply continues normally without major interruptions. In

this case, the market remains relatively balanced. There may still be political tension, but it does not lead to serious supply shortages.

If tensions rise further but oil supply is not directly hit, prices could move higher, to around \$110 to \$120 per barrel. This increase would not be because of an actual shortage, but because of fear in the market. Traders usually add a "risk premium" when there is uncertainty. This means prices rise simply because the chance of disruption is higher, even if nothing has happened yet.

A more serious scenario is when there are real supply disruptions. This could happen if oil production facilities are damaged, or if exports from some countries are reduced. In this case, the global market would feel an actual shortage of supply. Prices could then rise to between \$120 and \$150 per barrel. At this level, the issue is not fear anymore, but a real imbalance between supply and

demand.

The most extreme scenario is oil reaching \$160 per barrel or even higher. For this to happen, the world would need to lose a very large amount of oil supply at the same time. This could mean several million barrels per day being taken out of the market. It would also require major disruption to shipping routes, especially through the Strait of Hormuz. If this happens, global oil markets would likely enter a state of panic. Prices would rise very quickly because buyers would compete for limited supply, and concerns about shortages would increase sharply.

Even though this scenario is discussed, it remains the least likely. There are several reasons for this. First, major oil-producing countries often have spare capacity that they can use to increase supply if needed. Second, many countries hold strategic oil reserves that can be released to calm the market during emergencies. Third, there are alternative export

routes that can reduce reliance on one specific passage.

In addition, global economic pressure also plays a role. A major spike in oil prices would harm both producing and consuming countries. Because of this, there is often strong international effort to prevent full-scale disruptions in energy flows.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that the oil market is more sensitive today than in the past. Global demand remains strong, especially in emerging economies. However, investment in new oil production has slowed in recent years. This means the market has less flexibility to respond quickly if supply is suddenly reduced.

Oil reaching \$160 is possible only in a severe crisis scenario. It is not the expected outcome based on current conditions. The more likely path for prices will depend on how geopolitical tensions develop, whether they are contained or escalate further.

Oil rises as a haven amid Hormuz disruptions

By Ahmad Al-Naimi

For decades, gold has been regarded as a safeguard during political and economic turmoil. Recent moves in financial and commodity markets, however, show that gold's relationship with crises is no longer automatic: The metal rose in past crises but has experienced sharp volatility amid the current Middle East conflict, calling into question its status as a safe haven.

At the outset of the US-Israeli military action against Iran, gold prices climbed, but the rally was short-lived. After touching record levels above \$5,500 per ounce last year, gold fell by roughly 13 per cent and settled near \$4,400. The chief explanation for this decline lies in the strength of the US dollar and monetary policy decisions, particularly the Federal Reserve's recent hold on

interest rates, which bolstered dollar-denominated assets and reduced demand for gold, which yields no fixed income.

Liquidity dynamics have also played a part. As other markets underperformed and some investors were forced to meet margin calls, portions of gold holdings were sold to raise quick cash. As a result, gold has at times shifted from a long-term store of value to a short-term liquidity source, accelerating its declines during periods of market stress.

By contrast, oil has benefited directly from the tensions especially after attacks on energy infrastructure and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly 20 per cent of global oil trade passes. Rising oil prices stoked inflation fears and prompted market participants to rebalance portfolios. Oil has become a vehicle for speculative, quick returns, while gold

remains a store of value — albeit one that requires supportive economic conditions, such as a weaker dollar or lower interest rates, to regain momentum. Investors are now allocating positions across oil, the dollar, and tangible assets like real estate or core sectors according to their risk tolerance and investment objectives.

Signs of political intervention affecting energy prices have also emerged. The US president gave Iran an ultimatum to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and threatened strikes on energy facilities, which pushed oil higher. Yet large trades placed before a presidential announcement about "productive talks" triggered a sharp sell-off, renewing debate over whether political information and threats are being exploited for speculative purposes.

A recurring pattern, deliberate escalation followed by abrupt

de-escalation, creates buy-the-dip, sell-the-rally opportunities for those with privileged market insight. This strategy is no longer confined to energy; it has appeared in inconsistent trade policies and erratic tariff decisions, at times turning public policy instruments into speculative tools for actors capable of moving markets.

Gold will likely resume its ascent only if the dollar weakens, interest rates fall, or a financial crisis undermines confidence in the banking system. Until then, gold remains part of a broader investment mix that demands deliberate diversification between value preservation, liquidity, and opportunistic positions in a world where crises have become arenas for both safety-seekers and quick-profit seekers.

Ahmad Al-Naimi is an associate professor in finance and risk

BUSINESS

Thursday, March 26, 2026



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

Oil prices tumble, stocks rally on Mideast peace hopes

LONDON (AFP) — Oil prices tumbled and stock markets rallied on Wednesday on reports that the United States had sent a peace plan to Iran.

After nearly four weeks of conflict, investors jumped on signs that hostilities could be winding down, with the safe-haven dollar losing support.

However, analysts pointed out that the arrival of more US troops in the Middle East and fresh missile strikes exchanged between Iran and Israel suggested chances of escalation remained.

"Oil prices have moved lower... offering some relief to equities that had been weighed down by worries over inflation," noted Matt Britzman, senior equity analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown.

"It's still a highly fluid situation. Trying to call how the rest of the week plays out would be unwise."

The economic impact of the crisis has begun to bite around the world, with governments looking to cut energy consumption.

Helping to ease the situation, Tehran announced it will let "non-hostile" oil vessels through the crucial Strait of Hormuz.

Crude oil futures plunged more than 6 per cent on Wednesday — with Brent back below \$100 — after US President Donald Trump voiced optimism at ending the war

and said officials were "in negotiations right now".

The head of the International Energy Agency, Fatih Birol, meanwhile said he was "ready to move forward" with an additional release of oil reserves "if and when necessary".

In stock markets trading, European indices jumped around 1.5 per cent approaching the half-way stage on Wednesday.

Asian markets earlier closed with strong gains, led by Tokyo which won nearly 3 per cent.

"European markets are following the wider global theme of optimism as rumours swirl around the apparent negotiations that could lead us out of the conflict in Iran," said Joshua Mahony, chief market analyst at Scope Markets.

"Dip buyers have started to grab what they can, while oil prices shift lower as the perceived length of time associated with the disruption shortens."

European Central Bank (ECB) chief Christine Lagarde said the ECB has several options for dealing with the energy shock, vowing policymakers would not be "paralysed by hesitation".

At its most recent meeting last week, the ECB kept interest rates on hold, while warning of higher inflation and lower growth in the

eurozone owing to the war.

However, analysts have raised bets on the central bank hiking borrowing costs as soon as next month to try and keep the lid on an expected surge in consumer prices.

Hopes of an end to the Middle East conflict surfaced after The New York Times quoted unnamed officials saying that Washington had sent a 15-point peace proposal via Pakistan.

Israel's Channel 12 said that Trump was suggesting a one-month ceasefire during which they would discuss handing over Iran's enriched uranium and banning further enrichment.

The Israeli report added that Tehran would ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz, while Iran would see an end to all sanctions and receive assistance in developing civil nuclear energy. The strait, through which one fifth of global oil and gas normally flows, has largely been blockaded by Iran.

Away from the war and in a boost to the aviation sector hit by higher jet fuel costs, European plane maker Airbus has struck a \$15.8 billion deal to provide China Eastern Airlines with 101 single-aisle passenger planes.

Airbus shares rose 1.5 per cent in Paris midday deals.

JPRC ensures stable energy supply amid regional tensions

CEO confirms sufficient reserves for domestic demand

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company (JPRC) on Wednesday underscored that its strategic stock of crude oil and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) is secure and sufficient to meet domestic market demand without interruption, according to JPRC CEO Hassan Hiyari.

In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Hiyari noted that the refinery continues to operate at full capacity to supply various economic sectors, including transport, industry, power generation and aviation.

He added that the company maintains a steady supply to local marketing firms and domestic gas cylinder distributors to ensure market stability.

Hiyari said that since the beginning of the month, the refinery has imported two crude oil tankers carrying around 2 million barrels.

Additional shipments are expected in the coming period, bolstering the Kingdom's strategic reserves to "comfortable levels" that cover roughly two months of consumption.

He emphasised that this strengthens Jordan's capacity to navigate regional develop-



The Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company on Wednesday underscores that its strategic stock of crude oil and liquefied petroleum gas is secure and sufficient to meet domestic market demand

ments that may impact supply chains.

The CEO pointed out that the JPRC relies on an advanced storage system with a total capacity exceeding 900,000 tonnes, distributed between Zarqa and Aqaba.

"This infrastructure allows for high flexibility in inventory management and ensures a regular supply to all local sectors," he added.

Regarding domestic gas, Hiyari said that

LPG shipments arrive at the refinery around every five days, guaranteeing that demand for gas cylinders is met without shortages.

He underlined that the company closely monitors supply movements to maintain market equilibrium.

"The refinery played a 'crucial role' during a recent period when natural gas supplies to the National Electric Power Company [NEPCO] were interrupted,"

Hiyari noted.

"The JPRC provided NEPCO with immediate supplies of diesel and fuel oil, ensuring the continuous operation of power plants without service disruptions," he added.

Furthermore, Hiyari stressed that the JPRC remains in constant communication with major global oil and derivative suppliers to secure the Kingdom's energy needs under all circumstances, add-

ing that the refinery continues to fulfil its obligations regarding aviation fuel and the requirements of local marketing companies.

The JPRC plays a pivotal role in ensuring the Kingdom's energy security, operating in full coordination with the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and the Energy and Minerals Regulatory Commission, particularly amidst current regional conditions.

China shipping giant Cosco says resumes bookings to some Gulf countries

BELJING (AFP) — Chinese shipping giant Cosco said on Wednesday that it was resuming new bookings for container shipments to some Gulf countries, after a three-week suspension in response to the Middle East war.

The state-owned, Shanghai-based firm was among several major shipping groups to pause operations in the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway through which one-fifth of the world's oil and gas passes normally.

Tehran has said



A cargo ship operated by Cosco Shipping is docked at the foreign trade container terminal of Qingdao Port, operated by Shandong Port Group, in China's eastern Shandong province on Wednesday

several times it was not targeting friendly nations, but transits

through the Strait had nevertheless largely ground to a halt.

Iran said in a statement circulated by the International Maritime Organisation on Tuesday that "non-hostile vessels" would be granted safe passage through the waterway.

Cosco "resumed new bookings for general cargo containers for shipments" from the "Far East" to the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Iraq "with immediate effect", according to a company statement.

It did not mention shipments travelling in the opposite direc-

tion, from the Gulf. "New booking arrangements and the actual carriage are subject to change due to the volatile situation in the Middle East region," it added.

Cosco, which operates one of the world's largest oil tanker fleets, announced on March 4 that it would suspend new bookings for services for routes through the Strait of Hormuz owing to the "escalating conflicts in the Middle East region and resultant restrictions on maritime traffic".

Iran Hormuz 'toll booth' — legally risky route for shippers

LONDON (AFP) — Here are the latest facts about Iran's control of the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial trade waterway virtually closed off by its forces in the Middle East war.

A fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas passed through the strait in peacetime, before the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran on February 28, prompting it to retaliate across the region.

How are ships crossing?

Maritime trackers indicate that a handful of vessels are still crossing daily through the strait, which is guarded by Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), most of them leaving the Gulf.

Some have taken a new Iranian-approved route through its waters, dubbed the "Tehran Toll Booth" by leading shipping journal Lloyd's List.

At least one vetted vessel paid \$2 million to use the corridor around Larak Island just off Iran's coast, it reported.

Lloyd's List cited sources as saying that governments from countries including India, Pakistan and China discussed vessel transits directly with Tehran, with the IRGC establishing a registration system of "approved ships".

On Tuesday, IRGC naval commander Alireza Tangsiri said on X the force had "turned back" a container ship "due to failure to comply with legal protocols and lack of permission to pass through".

Ship tracker Marine-Traffic showed that the vessel, the Selen, was bound for Pakistan.

What vessels have used the corridor?

Lloyd's List reported on Monday that it had tracked more than 20 ships using the emerging route, most of them Greek-owned but others Indian, Pakistani-owned or linked to China.

In a sign that commodity vessels were gaining approval to use the route, since the start of last week four

that crossed the Strait of Hormuz kept their AIS transponders on while using the corridor, while at least five more that crossed sent signals in close proximity to the passage, an AFP analysis of Kpler data showed.

Over half of those crossing since Sunday specified the nationality of their owner, crew or cargo using their AIS signals, it showed.

By comparison, from March 1 to 21 only about 10 per cent of ships navigating the strait did so.

"Vessels are using AIS messages to signal political neutrality or distance from Western, Israeli or otherwise sensitive affiliations," Kpler trade risk analyst Ana Subasic told AFP.

But she noted they are "self-declared, easily altered, and do not change a vessel's legal identity" and therefore should not be considered "a reliable security solution".

What has Iran said publicly?

In a statement dated Sunday and released late

Tuesday via the International Maritime Organisation, Tehran reiterated its stance that the strait was open, but only to some.

It said "non-hostile vessels" and those not "belonging to or associated with" Israel, the US and other "aggressors" could cross "subject to compliance with... the realities arising from the ongoing conflict".

The foreign ministry statement added that ships linked to qualifying countries could "benefit from safe passage" but "in coordination with the competent Iranian authorities".

What does international law say?

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which was adopted in 1982 and came into force in 1994, guarantees a right to navigate through straits such as Hormuz.

"All ships and aircraft enjoy the right of transit passage... for the purpose of continuous and expeditious transit of the strait," it states.

Although Iran has never ratified the convention, "the transit passage regime is widely regarded as part of customary international law", Marco Roscini, international law professor at Westminster Law School, told AFP.

Is Iran acting illegally?

Charging fees to cross the strait would "lack a valid legal basis", Roscini said. Shipowners risk violating the law and Western sanctions if they pay a toll.

Transit passage

rights through straits remain applicable during armed conflicts, and suspending commercial navigation through Hormuz "cannot be lawful", he added.

In exceptional circumstances, including the right of self-

defence, states can "impose temporary restrictions on navigation if this is necessary and proportionate".

In this case, Roscini said, "I am not clear whether Iran has explicitly invoked self-defence."

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Wednesday amounted to JD15 million spread over 3.7 million shares that traded through 2,989 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.4 per cent, closing at 3657.54 points.

Out of 92 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 22 companies rose while the share price of another 33 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Union Tobacco and Cigarette Industries by 10 per cent, International Arabian Development and Investment Trading Company by 4.76 per cent, First Finance by 3.39 per cent, Comprehensive Land Development and Investment by 2.99 per cent, and Al Manara Islamic Insurance Company by 2.94 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Jordan Commercial Bank by 7.09 per cent, Shira Real Estate Development and Investments by 5 per cent, Siniora Food Industries Plc. by 4.94 per cent, Arab East Investment by 4.55 per cent and Nobar Trading Investment Company by 4.04 per cent.



Why Does Amman Flood Every Winter?

Amman's winter flooding is not a weather problem – it's an urban planning one



During a single low-pressure weather system this past winter, dozens of residents contacted the Greater Amman Municipality's (GAM) operations centre to report rising water levels in their neighbourhoods. Floodwaters inundated several road tunnels, public streets, commercial premises, and even private homes in certain areas.

These incidents have become a recurring feature of Amman's winters in recent years. The most prominent was the 2019 flooding of the city centre, when hundreds of shops in downtown Amman were submerged. Multiple investigative committees were subsequently formed — by the Amman Chamber of Commerce, GAM, and the National Centre for Security and Crisis Management — while the prime minister himself monitored the fallout.

Whether through long-term planning or immediate operational response, GAM works continuously to counter rising water levels and the threat of flash flooding across the city. Its strategic plan for 2022–2026 identified floods and the unpredictability of seasonal rainfall as the foremost climate challenge it faces. During active weather systems GAM deploys thousands of personnel and pieces of equipment, declares states of emergency in advance, and issues public guidance on how to cope with severe conditions.

Yet despite all these measures, water levels continue to rise across large parts of Amman each winter — including in recently constructed infrastructure such as Bus Rapid Transit lanes — and rainwater still floods homes in certain areas. Why does this keep happening, and are there lasting solutions?

How does flooding occur?

Several factors contribute to rising water levels and urban flooding in Amman. These include climatic variables such as rainfall volume and duration, soil type, and evaporation rates, as well as man-made factors such as surface permeability, gradient and drainage capacity.

As natural areas convert to built-up urban zones and impermeable surfaces expand through road paving and construction, the ground's capacity to absorb rainwater diminishes and surface run-off increases. Water that once percolated into the soil now flows across streets, between buildings, and down slopes — making urban areas significantly more susceptible to flooding.

Climate change has compounded the problem by concentrating rainfall into shorter, more intense bursts — a phenomenon known as flash rainfall — placing acute pressure on drainage infrastructure. However, a recently published study concluded that urban sprawl, rather than climate change, is the primary driver of flooding risk in Amman.

The city's built-up area expanded dramatically in recent decades, growing from roughly 147 square kilometres in 1987 to 238 square kilometres in 2017, substantially increas-

ing the proportion of impermeable surfaces — particularly in areas that were never intended for development.

Amman has been the subject of numerous urban plans over the decades, from the 1955 Amman Development Plan and the 1968 City Centre Development Plan through to the comprehensive 2008 Amman Plan. Several of these sought to curb unplanned expansion, establish clear growth boundaries, encourage vertical construction, and prohibit building in the valleys that the 1955 plan designated as "green fingers" through the city.

Dr. Murad Al Akalada, an architectural and urban design consultant, explains that successive waves of displacement — following the 1967 war and the 1991 Gulf War — combined with the incorporation of surrounding areas such as Sahab, Naour, Wadi Al Seer and Jiza into greater Amman, resulted in the incomplete implementation of these plans. Building spread into agricultural land and valley floors that were never designated for development.

Akalada also attributes much of the recent sprawl to what he calls a "market policy" approach over the past two decades, in which land brokers subdivided large agricul-

tural plots on the city's periphery and converted them into buildable parcels — a process that received tacit political and economic approval on the grounds that land transactions stimulate the economy and increase state revenues. "There was a turning of the blind eye towards urban expansion — what we call urban unravelling," he says.

Unplanned growth demands commensurate infrastructure. Drainage networks must be capable of handling the increased run-off that new construction generates. In Amman, uncontrolled expansion has consistently outpaced infrastructure capacity. "When you exceed the planned boundaries that your infrastructure was designed and sized to serve, that is the urban unravelling that has increased the pressure," Akalada says.

Each winter, when water levels rise, GAM typically attributes the problem in part to residents connecting roof drainage pipes directly to sewage manholes or dumping waste and construction debris into drainage channels, causing blockages. Akalada acknowledges that such behaviour exists, but contends it is not the primary cause. He points instead to the age and deterioration of the networks, the

proximity of sewage and stormwater lines in certain areas causing them to merge, and the absence of a single unified authority responsible for managing all infrastructure systems centrally.

Geographically, modern Amman was built around the Wadi Amman watercourse — a low-lying basin surrounded by hills from which rainwater flows in winter, channelled through valleys towards the main stream. The stream was covered over in the 1960s, with a large culvert constructed beneath what is now Quraysh Street, in front of the Roman Amphitheatre. This area — downtown Amman — lies within the Wadi Abdoun basin, which spans approximately 105 square kilometres, stretching from Sweileh and the University of Jordan in the north to Wadi al-Seer and Marj Al Hamam in the west, and Rawdah to the south. All water from across this catchment ultimately converges on the city centre.

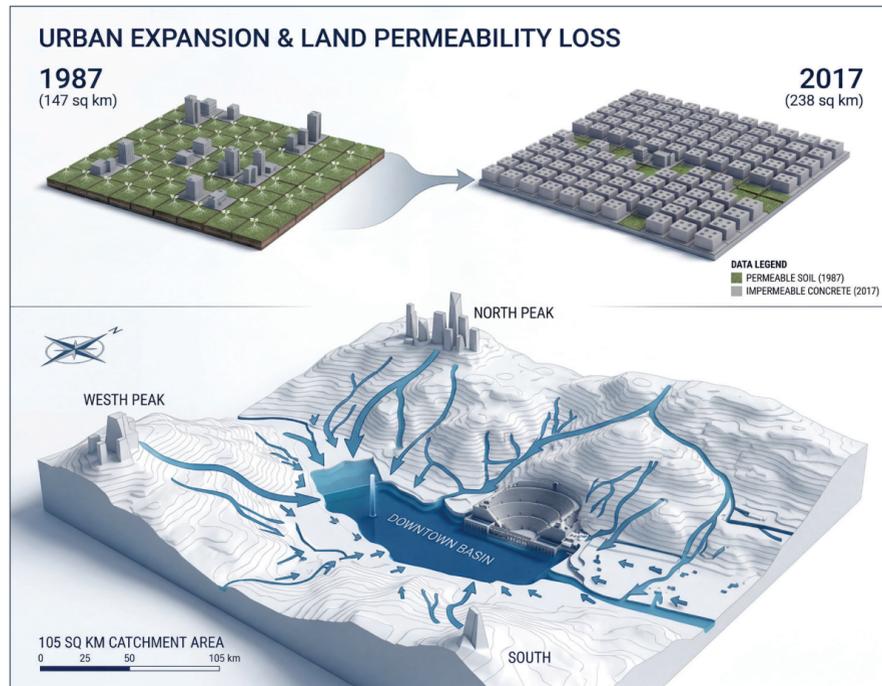
Dr. Ridwan Al Washah of the Civil Engineering Department at the University of Jordan argues that addressing the flow of water from the upper catchment requires a comprehensive plan — one that manages run-off at higher elevations before it reaches the low-lying basin. He advocates a storage-based solution using retention ponds around buildings to slow surface run-off. He notes that GAM has recently begun implementing similar approaches through nature-based solutions projects in areas such as the Flowers Triangle roundabout, but insists this must be scaled across all Amman neighbourhoods.

Dr. Nirmin Dalqamouni, head of the Architecture Department at the Jordan University of Science and Technology, whose recent research examined flood management policy in Amman, found that institutional attention is concentrated heavily on emergency response after flooding occurs, with comparatively little investment in proactive planning, long-term mitigation, and resilience-building — particularly in older urban areas such as the city centre.

Dalqamouni argues that GAM possesses the human and financial resources, as well as the policy frameworks, to address flooding risk, but that a significant gap exists between written plans and actual implementation. She is particularly critical of reliance on engineering fixes without a comprehensive governing strategy. "It is as though we are improvising," she says. "Holistic thinking can actually produce simpler and less costly solutions."

In summary, Amman's recurring winter floods cannot be explained simply by blocked drains or intensifying rainfall. The deeper causes lie in decades of unplanned urban growth, weak enforcement of spatial planning, the conversion of agricultural land and valley floors into residential areas, ageing infrastructure unable to cope with present-day run-off volumes, and fragmented institutional coordination. As Akalada concludes, sharing a video clip of a doormat blocking a manhole as the principal explanation will not solve a problem this structural. Only a genuinely comprehensive approach will.

First published in Arabic by 7iber.com



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