

# THE JORDAN TIMES



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HRH Crown Prince Hussein, during a visit to the Ministry of Interior, emphasises the importance of maintaining interagency coordination during current regional developments

## Crown Prince visits Interior Ministry, stresses importance of interagency coordination

AMMAN (JT) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein Bin Abdullah visited the Ministry of Interior on Thursday, and emphasised the importance of state institutions maintaining coordination amid current regional developments, according to a Royal Court statement.

During a meeting at the ministry, His Royal Highness expressed his pride in Jordan's security agencies, and their round-the-clock efforts to serve citizens and ensure their security and safety, noting the importance of governors and administrative officials engag-

ing with citizens on the ground and inspecting the services provided to them. The Crown Prince also underscored the need to take all necessary measures to ensure public safety and the continuity of services, the statement said.

His Royal Highness expressed condolences over the martyrdom of three Anti-Narcotics Department officers killed in the line of duty last week.

The Crown Prince was briefed by Interior Minister Mazen Farraya on the ministry's mechanisms for carrying out development, administrative

and security tasks, as well as the efforts being made to ensure security, stability and community calm in the current circumstances.

For his part, Public Security Directorate (PSD) Director Maj. Gen. Obaidallah Maaytah underscored the PSD's readiness, given the current circumstances, to ensure the safety and security of citizens, the statement said.

The meeting was attended by Director of the Office of the Crown Prince Zaid Baqain, as well as a number of governors who attended the meeting via teleconference.

## King discusses regional developments with Iraq, Ethiopia PMs

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah received a phone call from Iraq Prime Minister Mohammed S. Al Sudani on Thursday.

His Majesty reiterated the need for an immediate end to the ongoing war and for all parties to respect the sovereignty of states, emphasising that Jordan would continue to take the necessary measures to protect its citizens, security and sovereignty, according to a Royal Court statement.

The King called for stepping up international efforts to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire that restores stability to the region.

The call also touched on the need for coordination between the two governments and the countries' private sectors, in order to overcome obstacles and facilitate trade, in service of mutual interests, the statement said.

His Majesty and Ethiopia Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed discussed current developments in the region



also during a phone call on Thursday.

His Majesty emphasised the importance of stepping up international efforts to de-escalate tensions in the region through dia-

logue and diplomatic channels, reiterating the need to put an end to Iranian aggression against Arab states, according to another Royal Court statement. For his part, the

Ethiopian prime minister condemned Iran's attacks on Jordan and a number of countries in the region.

The King also expressed his condolences

to Prime Minister Ahmed over the victims of the landslides and floods in Ethiopia's Gamo Zone, wishing a speedy recovery to those injured, the statement said.

## Saudi Arabia launches new rail logistics corridor linking Jordan, Gulf ports — SPA

AMMAN (JT) — Saudi Arabia on Thursday announced a new international logistics corridor connecting its northern regions and Gulf ports with Jordan, a move expected to boost regional trade and overland connectivity.

Saudi Arabia Railways (SAR) will operate the corridor via freight trains, linking King Abdulaziz Port in Dammam, King Fahd Industrial Port in Jubail, and Jubail Commercial Port to the Al Haditha border crossing.

The rail service would provide a direct route from Eastern Province ports to Jordan and northern neighbouring countries, facilitating both exports and reexports through a faster and



The rail service would provide a direct route from Eastern Province ports to Jordan and northern neighbouring countries

more reliable logistics network, according to the Saudi Press Agency.

Customers can transport goods in both directions along

the same route, improving efficiency and connectivity.

Each train can carry over 400 containers, cutting the 1,700 kilometre journey time by half, easing road congestion, preserving infrastructure, improving safety and reducing carbon emissions, the statement read.

The initiative aligns with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and the National Transport and Logistics Strategy, which aim to integrate transport modes and enhance logistics efficiency across the Kingdom.

SAR operates a 5,500 kilometre rail network that carried over 14 million passengers and 30 million tonnes of cargo in 2025, linking ports, logistics hubs and production areas nationwide.



## JAF intercepts three missiles launched by Iran, no casualties reported

AMMAN (JT) — Iran launched three missiles targeting Jordan over the past 24 hours, the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) said on Thursday.

In a statement, the JAF's military media directorate said that the Royal Jordanian Air Force successfully intercepted all three missiles.

Meanwhile, the Public Security Directorate (PSD) reported responding to 17 incidents involving falling shrapnel and projectiles during the same period. No injuries were recorded, although some material damage was reported, the PSD spokesperson said.

Authorities renewed warnings to the public

not to approach, gather around, or tamper with any suspicious objects or debris, stressing the potential dangers they pose. Citizens were urged to report any suspicious items immediately by calling 911 and to rely solely on official information, avoiding the spread of rumours or misleading reports.



Headquarters of Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Baghdad

## Iraq: Jordan, Arab States' security 'integral' to national security

AMMAN (JT) — Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has reaffirmed its firm rejection of any attack targeting Jordan, stressing that the security of the Hashemite Kingdom and other Arab states is "an inte-

gral part" of Iraq's national security.

In a statement on Thursday, cited by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, the ministry said that the security of Jordan, the Gulf Arab states and all Arab

countries is inseparable from Iraq's own security, noting that regional stability represents a shared interest for all nations and peoples in the region.

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## Jordan denounces Iran attack on UAE, reaffirms full solidarity

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan has condemned "in the strongest terms" the Iranian attack on the United Arab Emirates as "flagrant violation" of the country's sovereignty and a dangerous escalation threatening regional security and stability.

The attack resulted in the deaths of two individuals of Pakistani and Indian nationality, while a Jordanian citizen, an Emirati national

and an Indian national were injured after debris fell in Abu Dhabi.

In a statement on Thursday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Jordan's firm rejection of the "heinous

attacks", and expressed full solidarity with the UAE.

The ministry said Jordan stands with the UAE in all measures taken to safeguard its sovereignty, security,

and the safety of its citizens and residents.

The ministry also extended its condolences to the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

## Jordan condemns 'terrorist' plot targeting Kuwait's officials

AMMAN (JT) — The Foreign Ministry on Thursday condemned a foiled "terrorist" plot that targeted senior officials in Kuwait as an unacceptable attempt to threaten the country's security, sovereignty and stability.

In a statement, the ministry reaffirmed Jordan's rejection and

denunciation of the plot, expressing the Kingdom's full solidarity with Kuwait and support for all measures it takes to safeguard its sovereignty, security and stability, and to protect its citizens and residents.

It also stressed Jordan's firm rejection of all forms of violence

and terrorism that seek to undermine security and stability.

Kuwait arrested six people linked to Lebanon's Iran-backed Hizbollah group who were planning "assassinations" in the Gulf state, the interior ministry said on Wednesday.

## Trump says taking control of Iran's oil an 'option'

WASHINGTON, TEHRAN (AFP) — US President Donald Trump said on Thursday that taking control of Iran's oil was an "option", comparing it to the deal Washington made with Venezuela after toppling Nicolas Maduro.

"It's an option," Trump told reporters at a Cabinet meeting when asked if he was looking to take

control of Iran's oil, saying that the United States had done "very well" with Venezuela's reserves.

Trump also said that the Iran war was "extremely" ahead of schedule, as he pushed Tehran to make a deal at his first Cabinet meeting since the conflict began nearly a month ago.

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The Ministry of Water and Irrigation on Thursday announces the overflow of four dams in the southern region of the Kingdom after reaching full capacity

## Four dams in southern Kingdom overflow — Water Ministry

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Water and Irrigation / Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) on Thursday announced the overflow of Al Tanour and Shaytham dams in Tafileh Governorate, Al Fidan Dam in Wadi Araba and Al Wuhaydi Dam in Maan, after reaching full capacity.

The ministry urged citizens, farmers and livestock owners, as well as those living near valleys and flood channels, to take necessary precautions and exercise caution, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

It advised residents to coordinate with municipalities and relevant authorities, avoid ap-

proaching valley beds, and monitor the ministry's websites for up-to-date information on dam conditions and potential overflows, amid the ongoing unstable weather conditions across the Kingdom.

Recent low-pressure systems have "significantly" benefitted the Kingdom's plant wealth and agricultural sectors, the Ministry of Agriculture said on Tuesday.

The ministry underscored that surface runoff from recent rainfall has increased water levels in major dams and desert ponds, while also recharging groundwater reserves.

This development has reassured farmers regarding the availabil-

ity of sufficient water shares for the upcoming summer season, added the ministry.

The ministry noted that rain-fed field crops have been revitalised by precipitation levels exceeding those of the previous season.

The rainfall has also led to remarkable growth of herbs and rangeland shrubs in the Badia and eastern regions, easing the financial burden on livestock breeders who are now relying on natural pastures instead of purchasing fodder.

In mid-January, JVA said that around 25 million cubic metres of water were collected in dams, mainly at King Talal and Wala dams.

## Jordan tourism sector hit by 'unprecedented' crisis amid regional tensions

AMMAN (JT) — Spokesperson for the Jordanian Association of Travel and Tourism Offices and Companies Bilal Rubine said that some 70 per cent of international flights have been cancelled by airlines until April 5, with the possibility of extensions if the regional conflict continues.

In remarks to Al Mamlaka TV on Thursday, Rubine said that Jordan's tourism sector is facing an "unprecedented" crisis in recent years due to regional tensions and the Iran war.

He added that these developments coincided with the Eid Al Fitr holiday, with travellers concerned about the possibility of airport closures upon returning from their trips, pointing to a clear decline in regional air traffic, with many flights cancelled or postponed.

Rubine said that tourism booking cancellations in March reached around 90 per cent, with some destinations such as Petra witnessing near-total cancellations, reflecting a sharp drop in demand.

He noted that before the crisis, booking levels had been at their highest compared with the previous year, but cancellations surged after the outbreak of the crisis to around 60 per



The Jordanian Association of Travel and Tourism Offices and Companies on Thursday says that some 70 per cent of international flights have been cancelled by airlines until April 5

cent compared with the earlier period, leading to a significant decline in tourist numbers and revenues.

Rubine expected cancellations to continue in the coming months, reaching around 50 per cent in April and between 40 and 50 per cent in May if regional tensions persist.

He stressed that tourism offices are facing "severe" financial pressure due to obligations including loans, taxes

and operating costs, as well as an inability to repay following a brief recovery between 2023 and early 2025, in addition to the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

He warned that the current situation could lead to the closure of some tourism offices and job losses, describing it as a "real crisis" threatening the continuity of companies.

Rubine said that the association is calling

for loan rescheduling, tax exemptions, direct government support, full exemption from licensing fees and reduced operating costs such as electricity and water.

He noted that domestic tourism has seen some movement through the "Urdunna Jannah" programme and targeting Jordanians and residents in neighbouring countries via land tourism, adding that these efforts

cannot compensate for the losses in inbound tourism revenues.

The spokesperson added that the most affected sectors include hotels, which are experiencing extremely low occupancy rates with mass cancellations, airlines facing flight cancellations and declining demand, and tourism offices whose programmes have largely stopped while incurring significant operational losses.

## 4.772m subscribers to fixed voice telecommunications services in Q4 2025 — TRC

AMMAN (JT) — The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) on Thursday said that the total number of subscribers to fixed voice telecommunications services stood at around 4.772 million in the fourth quarter of 2025, compared with approximately 4.859 million in the same quarter of 2024, marking a 1.8 per cent decline.

In its statistical report for the telecommunications sector for the fourth quarter of 2025, the TRC said that residential sector accounted for 67 per cent of the total, while the commercial sector made up 33 per cent, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

As for the volume of telephone traffic consumed by subscribers through fixed-line services, the report recorded around 7.9 million minutes of calls during



The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission says that the total number of mobile broadband subscriptions in the fourth quarter of 2025 reaches 8.5 million

the fourth quarter, compared with around 11.3 million minutes in the corresponding period of 2024, representing a 30 per cent decrease.

This includes both domestic landline calls among governorates and international calls, with 82 per cent of total call minutes attributed to

local traffic and 18 per cent to international traffic.

The report also showed that the total number of mobile broadband

subscriptions reached 8.5 million, compared with around 8.04 million subscriptions in the fourth quarter of 2024, reflecting a 5.7 per cent increase. Of these, 63 per cent were prepaid subscriptions and 37 per cent were postpaid.

Subscriptions for voice and data lines accounted for 80 per cent, while data-only lines represented 20 per cent.

Meanwhile, the total volume of mobile voice traffic reached around 6.9 billion minutes, of which 97 per cent was local traffic and 3 per cent international.

The report noted that the number of text messages sent during the fourth quarter of last year totalled around 331 million, compared with approximately 575.9 million in the fourth quarter of 2024, registering a 42.5 per cent decline.

The TRC added that the mobile phone penetration rate stood at 71.5 per cent of the total population by the end of the fourth quarter of 2025, compared with 68.6 per cent during the same period in 2024. The penetration rate reached 110 per cent when measured against the population aged over 15.

The volume of data usage through mobile broadband services reached around 813.9 million gigabytes in the fourth quarter of 2025, compared with approximately 657.9 million gigabytes in the corresponding quarter of 2024, marking a 23.7 per cent increase.

With regard to fixed broadband internet services, the report indicated that the number of subscriptions reached around 828,500, compared with a total of 812,200 subscriptions in the fourth quarter of 2024, posting a 2 per

cent growth rate.

This translated into a 33.3 per cent household penetration rate in the fourth quarter of 2025.

By technology, fixed broadband wireless access (FBWA) accounted for 16 per cent of subscriptions, while xDSL represented 5 per cent, and fibre-optic subscriptions made up 79 per cent by the end of the fourth quarter.

Fibre internet subscriptions alone reached a total of 652,200 during the fourth quarter of 2025.

The report further showed that the volume of fixed broadband data usage reached around 1.6 billion gigabytes in the fourth quarter of 2025, compared with 1.3 billion gigabytes in the same quarter of 2024, recording a 23.1 per cent increase.

The average monthly fixed internet usage per subscription stood at

662 gigabytes, up from 550 gigabytes in the fourth quarter of 2024, reflecting a 20.4 per cent rise.

The report also highlighted that fifth-generation (5G) mobile subscriptions continued to rise significantly during the fourth quarter of 2025, reaching a total of 320,700 subscriptions, compared with around 286,500 in the third quarter of 2025, representing an 11.9 per cent increase.

On an annual basis, this marked a 184 per cent rise from the fourth quarter of 2024, when subscriptions stood at 112,900.

It also pointed out that the number of leased line service subscriptions reached 25,900 by the end of the fourth quarter of 2025, compared with 24,100 in the fourth quarter of 2024, reflecting a 7.5 per cent increase.



Greater Amman Municipality Spokesperson Nasser Rahamneh says that field teams and machinery are deployed across various parts of Amman to ensure a rapid response to any incidents

## GAM receives no major complaints during current weather conditions

AMMAN (JT) — The Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) said that it had received no significant field reports or public complaints since the onset of the weather system affecting the capital, underscoring the readiness of its emergency teams.

GAM Spokesperson Nasser Rahamneh said that the municipality had declared a maximum state of emergency early on as part of its precautionary plans to deal with the weather

conditions, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

He added that field teams and machinery were deployed across various parts of Amman to ensure a rapid response to any incidents.

Rahamneh said that crews have been working around the clock, with efforts focused on drainage monitoring, as well as checking vital locations, tunnels and bridges to safeguard public safety and maintain smooth traffic flow.

He noted that the main emergency operations room and regional operations rooms have remained in constant contact to receive and follow up on reports, stressing that full readiness remains in place to handle any developments.

Rahamneh also commended the public's cooperation and adherence to official safety instructions, saying this helped limit incidents and support overall public safety.

## Tor Fawaz excavation reveals Upper Paleolithic lithic assemblages

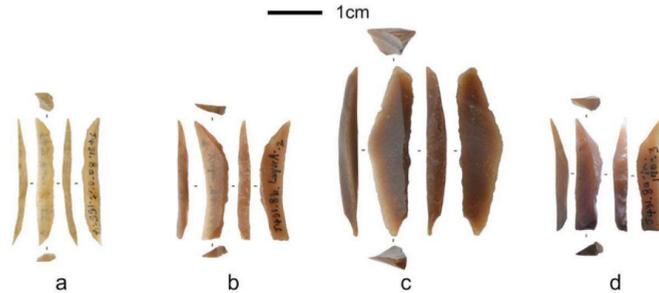
By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — The first excavation at Tor Fawaz in southeastern Jordan took place in 1983/84 where shallow deposits yielded about 4,000 chipped stone artefacts of Upper Paleolithic technology.

A following investigation in 1994 excavated a larger unit (3m x 4m) behind the dipline, where cultural deposits accumulated more, up to 1 m in thickness, said Japanese archaeologist Seiji Kadowaki, adding that the deposits were divided into five stratigraphic layers (A, B1, B2, C, and D from the top).

"Layer A comprises loose, dark grey silt with many twigs, dung, ash, and charcoal. Ash and dung are also included in Layer B, which grades in color from grey [B1] to tan [B2]," Professor Kadowaki from Nagoya University said.

The professor noted that deposits of Layer B become progressively compacted with depth, underlain by Layer C that consists of very compact yellow silt.



Characteristic microlith types in the early and middle Epipaleolithic assemblages from Tor Hamar, southern Jordan

Yellow silt of Layer C is partly underlain by red sand on top of bedrock. Upper Paleolithic artefacts were recovered from Layers A-C in the 1994 season.

The Japanese team of archaeologists renewed fieldwork at Tor Fawaz in 2016 and 2017 to take samples for dating and palaeoenvironmental reconstructions as well as to increase sample size of archaeological remains.

"First, we re-opened the 1994-season trench to examine stratigraphic sections, from which we took sediment samples

for dating and palaeoenvironmental analyses. We also excavated five 1 m x 1 m squares, located to the upslope of the 1983/84-season trenches," Kadowaki underlined.

This area was densely distributed with lithics on the surface. Units 6 and 10 were excavated to the depth of 30-45 cm below the surface. The upper deposits of ca. 30 cm thickness consist of tan silt that resembles Layer B2 in the 1994 trench.

The finds from the deposits are virtually limited to lithic artefacts.

The density of lithics is higher in the upper levels. Five marine shell fragments were collected in total.

Four of them were recovered from upper levels in Unit 10 corresponding to the peak of lithic distribution, Kadowaki said, noting that another one was found on the surface of Unit 9 in association with abundant lithic artefacts.

All of them are generally characterised by production of robust blades from single and opposed platform cores that assume prismatic forms

but also include flat-faced cores. Bladelets are present but constitute only a minor component in the assemblages.

"Retouched tools include typical Upper Paleolithic tool types, such as end scrapers and burins, but are dominated by informal types, such as retouched blades/flakes, truncations, and notches," Professor Kadowaki explained.

Among the variations of the Levantine Initial Upper Paleolithic, the Tor Fawaz assemblage shows more affinities to the later phase.

"The Tor Fawaz lithics are similar to these assemblages in the production of robust blades with large, sometimes faceted butts from prismatic cores. However, Tor Fawaz can be more specifically characterised by the low frequency of convergent blades."

"This may indicate a more detailed chronological position of Tor Fawaz because Leder has pointed out in 2014 a diminishing trend of convergent blades," Kadowaki underscored.

# New traffic bylaw comes into effect, offering incentives for safe driving

AMMAN (JT) — The 2026 Traffic Safety and Driver Incentives By-law came into effect on Thursday following its publication in the Official Gazette.

The Bylaw grants drivers ongoing incentives and discounts for maintaining a clean traffic record or for paying fines early, aiming to encourage compliance with traffic laws, improve road safety, and reduce accidents.

Under the Bylaw, drivers who go a full year without committing any violations from the date of their vehicle's registration will receive a 25 per cent discount on fees and charges related to vehicle registration renewal, as set out in the driving license and vehicle registration fee regulations, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

Drivers who commit traffic violations can receive a 30 per cent discount on fines if paid within 60 days of the offence.

Authorities said the bylaw provides drivers with an opportunity



The Bylaw grants drivers ongoing incentives and discounts for maintaining a clean traffic record or for paying fines early

to simplify the registration process and promotes responsible driving. Serious violations are excluded from the discounts, including reckless driving, running red lights, intentionally causing accidents, fleeing the scene, tampering with license plates, or committing offences that result in death or permanent disability.

## AT A GLANCE

Army thwarts infiltration attempt



AMMAN (JT) — The Northern Military Zone on Thursday thwarted an attempt by two individuals to cross the border illegally from Jordan into Syria. Border Guard forces detected the suspects and applied the rules of engagement, apprehending them without injuries, according to the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army. The suspects were referred to the relevant authorities for further legal action.

PSD urges caution amid snow, low visibility in south



AMMAN (JT) — The Public Security Directorate (PSD) on Thursday renewed its warnings to the public over hazardous road conditions caused by the prevailing weather system, as snow began accumulating in parts of southern Jordan. In a statement, The PSD warned of the dangers posed by slippery roads and low horizontal visibility, urging citizens to follow instructions issued by the relevant authorities. It also stressed the need to avoid travel except in cases of extreme necessity to preserve public safety, calling on the public to exercise caution and refrain from taking unnecessary risks on roads affected by severe weather conditions in order to protect lives and property. Snow began accumulating in the Rashadiya area of Tafleeh Governorate and Shobak in Maan Governorate as the Kingdom continued to be affected by the weather conditions.

Aqaba draws 55,000 visitors during Eid holiday — ASEZA



AMMAN (JT) — Aqaba recorded "robust" tourism activity during the Eid Al Fitr holiday, with higher visitor numbers and hotel occupancy rates reaffirming the city's position as a leading destination during peak seasons and official holidays. Data from the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) showed that 55,458 visitors entered the city through border crossings and customs centres between March 19 and 23, 2026. Of these, 39,814 arrived via customs centres, while 15,644 entered through border crossings. ASEZA Commissioner for Tourism and Youth Affairs Thabet Nabulsi said the Southern Border Crossing received the highest number of arrivals, at 6,573 visitors, followed by the Durra Border Crossing with 4,353. Together, the two crossings accounted for around 70 per cent of total arrivals. Nabulsi added that hotels in Aqaba recorded an average occupancy rate of 46 per cent during the holiday period, peaking at 65 per cent on March 21.



The Lower House Energy and Mineral Resources Committee on Thursday visits the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company

## Parliamentary committee reviews refinery operations, assures stable fuel supply

AMMAN (JT) — The Lower House Energy and Mineral Resources Committee, chaired by MP Ayman Abu Hanieh, on Thursday visited the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company as part of an inspection tour to review operations and assess strategic plans aimed at ensuring the uninterrupted production and stable supply of petroleum derivatives to the local market.

Abu Hanieh said the visit falls within the committee's ongoing oversight of national energy institutions, stressing that the refinery is a cornerstone of Jordan's energy security and market stability, as well as a key contributor to the national economy amid mounting regional and international challenges, the Jordan News Agency, Petra reported.

MPs Rakeen Abu Hanieh and Naseem Al Abadi underscored the refinery's critical operational role, highlighting the need to strengthen the energy sector's readiness and maintain adequate strategic reserves of petroleum derivatives to respond to emergencies and guarantee uninterrupted supply to citizens.

Refinery Director Ibrahim Mashaqbeh said the company is operating under daily operational and strategic plans that ensure continuous, high-efficiency production. He noted

that strategic reserves of fuel and materials are secure and sufficient to handle various scenarios, reassuring the public that there is no cause for concern.

Mashaqbeh added that the refinery continues to upgrade its production lines and enhance safety and operational efficiency standards in line with developments in regional and international markets.

They also urged the public to act responsibly and avoid behaviour that could place unnecessary pressure on supply chains

At the end of the visit, the committee and refinery management stressed that there is no need for panic buying or stockpiling of fuel or gas cylinders, affirming that supplies remain stable and that strategic reserves are sufficient to meet local demand without disruption.

They also urged the public to act responsibly and avoid behaviour that could place unnecessary pressure on supply chains.

## Gov't launches pilot mobile warning system

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, in cooperation with the National Centre for Security and Crisis Management, announced on Thursday the pilot launch of a mobile-based early warning system, marking a major step in strengthening national emergency preparedness and response.

The Petra region has been selected for the pilot, which will operate under current weather conditions to evaluate the system's effectiveness and reliability in real-world scenarios, according to a ministry statement.

The system is designed to deliver immediate alerts directly to mobile phones during emergencies, particularly weather-related incidents, ensuring citizens receive critical information promptly. Alerts would include an audible signal to capture attention and prompt swift action.

Authorities stressed that notifications issued during the pilot are test messages and urged the public not to be alarmed, highlighting that the initiative represents a significant advancement in the Kingdom's early warning and communication infrastructure.



The Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship announces on Thursday the pilot launch of a mobile-based early warning system

## Cassation Court upholds 4-year sentence for drug dealer

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld a January 2022 State Security Court (SSC) ruling sentencing a drug dealer to four years in prison after convicting him of possessing illegal narcotics and forged money in Ramtha in February 2021.

The court declared the defendant guilty of possessing illegal narcotics and forged currency at his home on February 7.

The SSC handed the

defendant a punishment of four years in prison and ordered him to pay JD5,000 in fines.

Court documents said the Anti-Narcotics Department (AND) learnt the defendant was in possession of illegal narcotics and placed him under surveillance. "The AND agents raided his house and found illegal narcotics hidden and forged currency in various places of the house," court documents said.

The law-enforcement agency found 2 kilograms of hashish, Crystal meth and forged currency, including Jordanian, Saudi, US and Iraqi bills.

The defendant contested the SSC's ruling through his lawyer, who argued that the court "did not provide solid evidence to implicate his client in illicit drug trafficking".

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

The higher court maintained that the SSC had followed the

## Justice Ministry expands remote trials for juveniles to all courts, rehabilitation centres

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Justice said on Thursday that it has expanded remote trials for juveniles to cover all juvenile courts and youth rehabilitation centres under the Ministry of Social Development, advancing seven key national objectives, including providing a safer and more humane environment for young defendants.

Justice Minister Basam Talhouni said the initiative reflects Jordan's strong commitment to human rights and the protection of juvenile rights. He noted that the country's modern criminal policy is designed to keep pace with technological developments, ensuring fair trials while safeguarding human rights, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

Talhouni explained that the expansion of the "remote trials" project will now cover all juvenile courts and rehabilitation centres, with support from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation.

He emphasised that the initiative goes beyond procedural improvements, aiming primarily to create a secure, comfortable and humane environment for juveniles, taking into account their psychological and social needs while protecting their rights throughout the judicial process in line with international

standards.

The use of secure audio-visual communication technologies allows juveniles to participate in court sessions from within care facilities, eliminating the need for transport and reducing the psychological stress often associated with traditional court procedures. This approach minimises tension and fear while fostering a sense of safety and respect.

Talhouni said 30 rooms have been equipped with audio-visual systems, 19 in juvenile courts and 11 in rehabilitation centres, including "Dar Karama", which serves victims of human trafficking. Additionally, children's



Justice Minister Basam Talhouni said the initiative reflects Jordan's strong commitment to human rights and the protection of juvenile rights

principles, focusing on rehabilitation and social reintegration rather than punishment alone.

The initiative also reduces burdens associated with transport and security and limits risks juveniles may face during transfers, in line with their right to protection and care.

Talhouni described the project as a transformative step towards a more humane justice system in Jordan, placing the welfare and rights of juveniles at the heart of judicial processes and reflecting the state's commitment to a modern justice system that respects human dignity and follows international best practices.

The minister added that the project speeds up judicial procedures without compromising fair trial guarantees, while preserving juveniles' privacy and rights. It also reinforces restorative justice



AFP photo  
An Iraqi soldier stands looking at the debris as he inspects the site of a destroyed healthcare center in the Habbaniyah military base, which was targeted by an air strike killing seven security personnel and wounding 13 others, in Habbaniyah, west of Baghdad on Thursday

## Caught in the crossfire: Is Iraq able to balance Iran and US?

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq has long walked a tightrope between the competing interests of the United States and its neighbour Iran, but the Middle East war is testing this delicate balancing act.

Since the outbreak of war on February 28, after US-Israeli strikes against Iran, strikes have targeted both US interests and pro-Iranian groups in Iraq.

### Baghdad has hardened its stance

On Tuesday, it granted former paramilitary groups and pro-Iran factions within the formal popular mobilisation forces the "right to respond in self defence" to attacks.

But it also promised to prosecute groups targeting US interests.

Can the balance survive as the conflict escalates?

### Who has struck who?

Bases hosting the Popular Mobilisation Force (PMF), part of the regular army but containing some pro-Iran factions, have been targeted by air strikes. The PMF has blamed these on the United States and Israel.

Some Iraqi pro-Iran factions, which have a presence within the PMF, have claimed daily attacks on US-linked bases and interests in Iraq and across the region.

And Iran has carried out strikes against Kurdish opposition groups in autonomous northern Iraqi Kurdistan.

Is Iraq's delicate balancing act wavering?

On Tuesday, authorities said they would summon the US charge d'affaires after a deadly strike targeting the

PMF killed 15, and the Iranian ambassador over ballistic missile hits that killed six peshmerga fighters in autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan.

"The government is in a precarious moment where it cannot engage in a conflict with the US, nor can it restrain the Iran-backed 'resistance' factions from launching attacks in the country and beyond," said Tamer Badawi, of the security and defence think tank the Royal United Services Institute.

Granting the former paramilitaries the power to respond is a calibrated act, he said.

Baghdad permits the former paramilitaries to respond, knowing they likely lack sufficient equipment, he said, and promises to prosecute those attacking US interests.

"Neither are really achievable," Badawi said.

Chatham House's Hayder Al Shakeri said it was harder for Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al Sudani to sustain a balance between American partnership and Iranian ties.

To do so, he said, "Baghdad needs to reinforce as much as possible the de-escalation."

That could prove difficult when pro-Iran groups are increasingly aggressive, and American strikes are expanding across Iraq.

### What are the American objectives?

Since the start of the Middle East war, strikes against Iraqi pro-Iran groups have intensified.

The PMF has condemned strikes against a western Iraqi base, where it operates alongside regular soldiers. Fifteen PMF

fighters were killed on Tuesday and seven security personnel on Wednesday.

Observers say the objective of the strikes, thought to be carried out by either the United States or Israel, is to hinder drone and rocket attacks against Kurdistan and American and foreign troops in Iraq and the region.

"The US has a target list, and it seems like they are hitting leadership and command nodes," said Shakeri, characterising the strategy as one of "decapitation and network fragmentation".

How do the factions fit in?

Around sixty factions make up the PMF, and a handful have a reputation for acting independently.

Washington classifies some as "terrorist" organisations, part of the "Islamic Resistance in Iraq" which has claimed daily attacks on US interests in Iraq and the region.

While the influential Hizbollah Kataeb has temporarily paused attacks against the US embassy, they have called for the withdrawal of American troops deployed with an international anti-extremist coalition.

The current strikes may weaken the groups, said Shakeri, "but without a proper political strategy and a wider political strategy, it will produce fragmentation and chaos".

Iran has strong military and economic ties with them, Badawi said, and dismantling them required more than air strikes.

The government effort is beyond Iraq's current capabilities, he said, "without risking something that may resemble a civil war".

end is under discussion.

### What does Iran say?

Publicly, no Iranian official has confirmed any negotiations, but the language used is ambiguous.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said messages were "being exchanged through friendly countries or through certain different individuals" but insisted that "this is neither called dialogue nor negotiation".

But he added that "if it is necessary for a position to be taken, it will certainly be decided".

Pakistani and Egyptian officials have confirmed they are serving as diplomatic backchannels.

### What are Iran's demands?

According to an unidentified Iranian official cited by Iran's Press TV on Wednesday, Tehran has

# Trump says Iran 'better get serious soon' in US talks

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US President Donald Trump on Thursday warned Iran to "get serious soon" in talks to end the Middle East war, as he once again criticised NATO allies for not joining in the conflict.

Trump insisted Iran was actively talking with the United States on a deal to end the nearly four-week exchange of strikes, despite public denials from Iranian officials.

"The Iranian negotiators are very different and 'strange'," he wrote in early morning post on Truth Social.

"They are 'begging' us to make a deal, which they should be doing since they have been militarily obliterated, with zero chance of a comeback and yet they publicly state that they are only 'looking at our proposal'. WRONG!!!"

Iran "better get se-



AFP photo  
US President Donald Trump speaks during the National Republican Congressional Committee's annual fundraising dinner at Union Station on Wednesday in Washington, DC. President Trump was this year's keynote speaker at the dinner

rious soon, before it is too late", he urged, "because once that

happens, there is NO TURNING BACK, and it won't be pretty!"

Pakistan has confirmed that it delivered a 15-point US plan

## At least 28 civilians killed in Sudan drone strikes — health workers

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Two drone strikes in Sudan, one at a market in Darfur and the other along a road in Kordofan, killed at least 28 civilians, adding to a toll from drone attacks that has already surpassed 500 victims this year.

Health workers in two cities 800 kilometres apart reported the latest deaths to AFP on Thursday via satellite internet connection to get around a communications blackout.

Repeated pleas from the United Nations to curtail drone attacks and protect civilians have fallen on deaf ears, as Sudan's warring sides, the regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), launch near-daily strikes, killing dozens at a time.

On Wednesday, one such strike hit a market in North Darfur state's Saraf Omra town, killing "22 people, including an infant, and injuring 17 more", one health worker at the local clinic told AFP.

"The drone hit a parked oil truck, which caught fire along with part of the market," said Hamid Suleiman, a vendor at the market, which serves Saraf Omra and



AFP photo  
One strike hit a market in North Darfur state's Saraf Omra town on Wednesday, killing '22 people, including an infant, and injuring 17 more', one health worker at the local clinic told AFP

the surrounding towns in the remote Darfur area.

Hundreds of kilometres to the east, far from the RSF's strongholds in Darfur, another drone strike set fire to a truck travelling on a North Kordofan road in army territory.

"Six bodies arrived at the hospital yesterday, three of them charred, in addition to 10 wounded," a medical source at the local hospital in El-Rahad told AFP, blaming the RSF for the attack.

The civilians were travelling between the army-controlled towns of El Rahad and Um Rawaba.

Drones from both sides have repeatedly attacked Sudan's central east-west highway, which runs through North Kordofan state capital El Obeid and connects Darfur to the army-controlled east.

### Hundreds killed

Since April 2023, the war between the

former allies has killed tens of thousands and uprooted some 11 million, creating the world's largest hunger and displacement crisis.

The UN says more than 500 civilians were killed in drone strikes between January and mid-March alone, particularly in the Kordofan region, currently the war's fiercest battlefield.

The marked increase in drone warfare shows "the devastating

to Iranian officials, with Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday saying that "indirect talks" were taking place with Islamabad as intermediary.

Trump on Thursday also took aim again at NATO allies, after describing them last week as "cowards" for not joining the United States and Israel in attacking Iran.

"NATO NATIONS HAVE DONE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO HELP WITH THE LUNATIC NATION, NOW MILITARILY DECIMATED, OF IRAN," he wrote in a separate Truth Social post, while also once again casting doubt on US support for the alliance going forward.

"THE U.S.A. NEEDS NOTHING FROM NATO, BUT NEVER FORGET THIS VERY IMPORTANT POINT IN TIME!"

impact of high-tech and relatively cheap weapons in populated areas", the UN rights office said.

Last week, on the first day of the Eid Al Fitr holiday, a strike blamed on the army on the El Daein Teaching Hospital in Darfur killed 70 people and injured 146.

Days before, another drone strike blamed on paramilitary forces killed 24 people on the Chadian town of Tine, as fears mount of spiralling regional spillover.

In an interview with France24, Chad's Information Minister Gassim Cherif Mahamat said the army had been deployed along the entire 1,300 kilometre desert border, and that N'Djamena was planning a "proportionate response" in the event of a new attack.

The UN's new special envoy for Sudan, Pekka Haavisto, began his first visit to the country this week "in support of peace", he said.

The UN has repeatedly advocated for a truce and called on member states to refrain from foreign interference, to little result.

## What's happening with Iran-US 'talks'?

PARIS, France (AFP) — Diplomatic efforts to end the war in Iran are gathering pace, even though Tehran continues to insist talks with the United States are not happening.

Here is what we know about the behind-the-scenes mediation efforts:

### What is on the table?

After announcing "very good" talks with an unnamed "top person" in Iran on Monday, Trump said Tuesday that he had sent a plan and that it "all starts with, they cannot have a nuclear weapon".

A 15-point proposal to stop the fighting has been conveyed to Iran via Pakistan, Pakistani officials have confirmed.

But the exact contents remain unknown and the identity of Trump's "top person" is a mystery, if he exists at all.

The New York Times and Al Jazeera have reported

that Trump is proposing a one-month ceasefire during which the two sides would restart talks about the same issues they were discussing before the war.

These include a US demand that Iran hand over its enriched uranium stockpile, stop any further enrichment and agree to limits on its missile programme, as well as cease support for militant groups in the region.

If Iran met US conditions and opened up the strategic Strait of Hormuz for shipping, which it has effectively closed, Trump is offering relief from all sanctions, the reports suggest.

After saying that Iran wanted to make a deal "so badly", the US president warned Thursday that they "better get serious soon".

The head of the UN nuclear watchdog Rafael Grossi has said a meeting in Islamabad at the week-

end is under discussion.

These include ending "aggression and assassinations", setting up a mechanism guaranteeing that neither Israel nor the United States would resume the war, as well as financial compensation.

They also include a cessation of hostilities on all fronts, meaning Israel would stop bombarding Tehran-backed Hizbollah in Lebanon and possibly Hamas in Gaza.

The official also said Tehran wanted international recognition of its sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz.

On March 11, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian laid out Iranian terms as "recognising Iran's legitimate rights, payment of reparations, and firm international guarantees against future aggression".

The Wall Street Journal reported that Tehran was

also demanding the closure of US military bases in the Gulf.

### Can compromises be found?

Analysts say the conflict has strengthened hardliners in Tehran where the rhetoric is defiant and increasingly confident.

Trump has bombed the country twice amid negotiations, first in June last year and again on February 28.

As for US demands, Tehran has insisted since 2003 it is not seeking a nuclear weapon but has a right to enrich for civilian nuclear energy purposes.

It has also refused curbs on its ballistic missile programme or discussions about its support for militant groups such as Hizbollah or the Houthis in Yemen.

Tehran's demand for reparations is likely a non-starter, as is any sug-

gestion of the US closing Gulf military bases.

It is not clear how its sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz would work, or how meaningful security guarantees could be formulated, unless they involved outside powers such as Russia or China.

### So is there no hope?

The outcome may come down to how badly Trump wants to end the war, and whether Iran's leaders view their interests as being best served by a ceasefire.

Trump would walk away claiming victory, saying he has destroyed Iran's military and nuclear capabilities.

The Islamic republic could also claim victory, pointing to how its forces resisted four weeks of US and Israeli onslaught while also landing blows on US interests in the region and in Israel.

## NATO says defence spending rose 20 per cent last year

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AFP) — A NATO report on Thursday said military spending by member states rose by a fifth year-on-year in 2025 to \$574 billion.

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly sought higher defence spending by the 32 member states and said Europe should be primarily responsible for its own security.

The NATO report said all members are now above the target of allocating at least 2 per cent of Gross Domestic Product to military spending, a goal set in 2014 for 2024.

Since then, under pressure from Trump, NATO set a new target last year, 5 per cent by 2035.

"I expect Allies at

the next NATO Summit in Ankara to show they are on a clear and credible path towards the 5 per cent," NATO Secretary-General and former Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte said.

Only three countries met the 3.5 per cent target last year, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania.

All NATO countries increased their military spending last year, but three of them saw a slight drop in the share of spending relative to their GDP.

The United States went from 3.30 per cent in 2024 to 3.19 per cent, the Czech Republic from 2.07 per cent to 2.01 per cent and Hungary from 2.21 per cent to 2.07 per cent.

# Hizbollah says negotiating with Israel would be surrender, amid strikes on Lebanon

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Hizbollah chief Naim Qassem said on Wednesday that negotiating with Israel under fire would amount to “surrender” for Lebanon, as Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu said his forces were “expanding” a “buffer zone” in Lebanon.

Netanyahu said the Israeli military had “created a genuine security zone” inside Lebanon and was “expanding this zone”, as its ground forces tried to push deeper into Lebanon, on a day when Hizbollah issued dozens of statements claiming attacks on Israeli forces.

Israel, which occupied southern Lebanon for around two decades until 2000, has once again sent ground troops into Lebanon, saying it is attempting to take control of the area up to the Litani River, around 30 kilometres from the border.

As the two sides fought in the south, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned that “the Gaza model must not be replicated in Lebanon”, a comparison previously drawn by Israeli officials talking about their goals in Lebanon.



An Israeli self-propelled howitzer artillery gun fires rounds towards southern Lebanon from a position in the upper Galilee in northern Israel near the border on Thursday

“Hizbollah must stop launching attacks into Israel. And Israel must stop its military operations and strikes in Lebanon, which are hitting civilians the hardest,” Guterres told reporters at the United Nations.

By late on Wednesday, Hizbollah said it had

launched more than 80 attacks against Israel, the largest number the Iran-backed group has claimed since the start of the latest war.

It also said it had attacked Israeli forces in nine border towns.

Israel’s military said that one of its soldiers was severely wounded

by rocket fire in southern Lebanon, having earlier reported an officer being lightly injured in combat.

It also reported several rockets fired towards the Haifa area in northern Israel, but no injuries.

Lebanon was pulled into the Middle East

war when Hizbollah began firing rockets into Israel on March 2 to avenge the killing of Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

In an attempt to put an end to the fighting, Lebanon’s president is calling for unprecedented direct negotiations with Israel, which

has so far rebuffed his proposal.

Hizbollah chief Qassem said Wednesday his group would have none of it: “When negotiations with the Israeli enemy are proposed under fire, this is an imposition of surrender.”

Lebanon’s state-run

National News Agency (NNA) reported Israeli strikes and artillery shelling in several locations in the south on Wednesday.

It also said that “enemy warplanes... launched a strike” on Beirut’s southern suburbs, after a renewed Israeli army evacuation warning.

An AFP correspondent saw a street covered in debris, including shattered cement and warped metal, after the early morning strike, while an apartment building’s upper floors appeared damaged.

The area has been targeted multiple times during the conflict and is largely empty of residents, who have fled.

Late on Wednesday, the Lebanese health ministry reported three people killed by an Israeli airstrike in the Bint Jbeil region of southern Lebanon.

Israel’s military said it struck Hizbollah targets across Lebanon overnight “including a command centre” in Beirut’s southern suburbs.

It also said it attacked petrol stations belonging to the Al Amana fuel company, which it says is controlled by Hizbol-

lah and finances the group.

## Paramedics killed

According to the ministry, 42 health workers are among more than 1,000 people killed in Lebanon in more than three weeks of Israeli strikes.

Lebanese authorities say upwards of one million people have been displaced.

Hizbollah said its fighters on Wednesday targeted Israeli troops “massed in the border towns of Naqura and Qawzah” and in sites across the border “with more than 100 rockets”.

The statement came as the group claimed a series of attacks on Israeli troops in south Lebanon, northern Israel, and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

In an earlier statement, Israel’s military said ground troops in southern Lebanon had “dismantled a weapons storage facility”, and the air force killed “several terrorists”.

It also said troops had “dismantled Hizbollah command centres in which numerous weapons were located”, without specifying where.

# France bids farewell to ex-PM Jospin who ‘modernised’ nation

PARIS, France (AFP) — France on Thursday bid farewell to former prime minister Lionel Jospin, with President Emmanuel Macron leading a national tribute to the influential left-wing statesman credited with major welfare reforms.

Jospin, who introduced the 35-hour work week when he was head of government from 1997 to 2002, died on Sunday aged 88.

The ceremony took place at the historic Les Invalides national monument, the resting place of Napoleon Bonaparte, in the presence of Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu, top left-wing politicians, and other high-profile guests.

Jospin’s widow, the philosopher Sylviane Agacinsky, 80, was in attendance.

Members of the Republican Guard carried the casket draped in a French flag into the courtyard to the beat of a drum before Macron read a eulogy, saying Jospin fought for justice and freedom.

“He helped bring France into the new century,” Macron said.

“Lionel Jospin modernised the nation’s economic, social and democratic life in an unprecedented manner.”

Afterwards the Republican Guard Band performed a post-war French classic, “Les Feuilles Mortes” (“The Dead Leaves”), which Jospin himself had sung on television in 1984.

Jospin was buried at the Montparnasse



People gather to attend the funeral of former French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin at the Montparnasse Cemetery in Paris on Thursday

cemetery in the south of Paris.

“With his passing, a part of us is leaving,” said former Socialist president Francois Hollande.

## Romantic comedy cameo

A unifying figure on the left, Jospin led a coalition government of Socialists, Greens and Communists in a cohabitation arrangement with centre-right President Jacques Chirac.

As prime minister, he charted a pragmatic economic course and sought to stamp out corruption. He brought down unemployment and revived growth, but it was his social reforms that defined his tenure.

Apart from chopping four hours off

the working week, he extended free health-care and introduced civil unions, laying the ground for a gay marriage bill that was adopted over a decade later, despite mass protests.

Jospin announced he would leave politics.

In later years, he made a cameo appearance playing himself during the 2002 elections in romantic comedy “Le Nom des gens” (“The Names of Love”).

The film, released in 2010, tells the story of a young left-wing activist who sleeps with people in an effort to try to convert them to her political views.

The film’s director Michel Leclerc told AFP in 2010 that Jospin had written his own lines and did not want to be paid.

eliminated in the first round after finishing behind Chirac and Jean-Marie Le Pen, the father of current far-right presidential hopeful Marine Le Pen, in one of the biggest political upsets in post-war France.

Jospin announced he would leave politics.

In an editorial, French daily Le Monde said the country’s modern-day left-wingers appeared to forget the lessons of the Jospin era.

His broad leftist coalition government “lasted five years and brought about significant reforms”, Le Monde said. “That era is now over.”

With the far-right eyeing the Elysee, “ideas are being relegated to the background, with everyone preferring to hurl invectives at one another or claim moral high ground”.

## ‘Era now over’

Jospin’s death drew fresh attention to the divisions tearing apart France’s left-wing politicians, as the country prepares to elect a successor to Macron, who is constitutionally barred from running again.

In an editorial, French daily Le Monde said the country’s modern-day left-wingers appeared to forget the lessons of the Jospin era.

His broad leftist coalition government “lasted five years and brought about significant reforms”, Le Monde said. “That era is now over.”

With the far-right eyeing the Elysee, “ideas are being relegated to the background, with everyone preferring to hurl invectives at one another or claim moral high ground”.

# Jordan condemns ‘terrorist’ plot targeting Kuwait’s officials

Continued from page 1

Those arrested were planning “assassina-

tions targeting symbols and leaders of the state and recruited people to carry

out these missions,” the ministry said in a statement, cited by AFP.

# Iraq: Jordan, Arab States’ security ‘integral’ to national security

Continued from page 1

The ministry also renewed Iraq’s commitment to a balanced foreign policy based on cooperation and mutual respect with countries in the region and beyond, emphasising the need for joint efforts to enhance security and stability, reduce tensions and prevent

further escalation.

It added that Iraqi security agencies continue to coordinate closely with their counterparts in “brotherly and friendly” countries, expressing full readiness to receive any information or evidence related to attacks launched from Iraqi territory against neighbouring states, and to

address them swiftly and responsibly.

“Iraq remains in contact with regional partners to support initiatives aimed at ending the war and returning to diplomatic solutions and political dialogue, in a way that reduces harm to civilians and regional economies while promoting security and stability for all.”

# Trump says taking control of Iran’s oil an ‘option’

Continued from page 1

As Tehran publicly rebuffed negotiations, Trump again cited the original timeframe of four to six weeks that he gave early on in the joint US-Israeli military offensive.

“They’re lousy fighters, but they’re great negotiators, and they are begging to work out a deal,” Trump said at the White House alongside top officials including Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth.

“We estimated it would take approximately four to six weeks to achieve our mission. Twenty-six days in we’re extremely, really, a lot ahead of schedule,” added Trump.

“The Iranian regime is now admitting to itself that they have been decisively defeated.”

Trump has been saying for days that Iran wants to make a deal, amid growing signs he is seeking a quick end to the conflict. Iran, however, says there are no direct negotiations.

“I’ll say it publicly. We’re

very disappointed with NATO, because NATO has done absolutely nothing,” Trump said.

He particularly lambasted Britain, saying it had offered to send aircraft carriers too late and describing the UK ships as “toys” compared to their US equivalents.

During the meeting, roving US envoy Steve Witkoff confirmed for the first time from the US side that Washington had sent a 15-point “action list” to Iran via mediator Pakistan.

Businessman Witkoff, who led failed negotiations with Iran in the weeks before the US-Israeli strikes began, said there were indications Tehran was ready to make a deal.

“We will see where things lead, and if we can convince Iran that this is the inflection point with no good alternatives for them, other than more death and destruction,” Witkoff said.

“We have strong signs that this is a possibility.”

In his usual style for his lengthy cabinet meetings, Trump let officials around the table have their say.

Noting that Easter is approaching, Catholic convert Vance said US forces were “fighting at a time... that celebrates the return of Jesus Christ to Jerusalem”.

Top US diplomat Rubio appeared to quote rappers Public Enemy as he praised Pentagon chief Hegseth, saying that “every day, the Department of War lets the drummer get wicked over every portion of Iran”.

Hegseth launched an attack on the media for failing to support Trump’s war, before hailing for “doing the work of the free world”.

“We pray for a deal, and we welcome a deal,” Hegseth said. “But in the meantime... the Department of War will continue negotiating with bombs.”

Iran has responded through unnamed intermediaries to a 15-point US plan to end the war, news agency Tasnim reported on Thursday, and is now waiting for Washington’s reply.

The exact contents of the US plan, conveyed to Iran via Pakistan according to Pakistani officials, are not officially known.

“Iran’s response to the 15 points proposed by the US was officially sent last night through intermediaries, and Iran is awaiting the other side’s response,” Tasnim reported, citing an informed source.

# Houthi leader warns of ‘military response’ if Mideast war requires it

SANAA (AFP) — Abdul Malik Al Houthi, leader of Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthi movement, warned on Thursday of a “military response” should the Middle East war require it.

The Houthis, a key part of Iran’s so-called “axis of resistance”, have so far refrained from joining the war sparked

by US-Israeli strikes on Iran, and which has engulfed much of the region.

“As the people of Yemen, we repay loyalty with loyalty,” the Houthi leader said. “Any development in the battle that requires a military response, we will promptly undertake it... just as we did in previous rounds.”



Supporters of Yemen’s Houthi movement attend an event commemorating the ninth anniversary of the Saudi-led intervention in their country, in the capital Sanaa on Thursday

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## Gen Z Italians helped reject PM Meloni's referendum reform

Agence France-Presse

MILAN, Italy — Young Italians voted overwhelmingly against the judicial reform proposed by Giorgia Meloni's government, playing a major role in its defeat in Monday's constitutional referendum.

Generation Z, the youngest voters, voted against the reform more than any other age group, at 61.1 per cent, according to a Consorzio Opinio exit poll for public broadcaster Rai based on 40,000 voters.

"It was wonderful to see how many Italians felt the need to defend the Constitution by going out to vote," said Valentina Alberti, a 24-year-old psychologist in Turin.

"I thought Meloni had a stronger influence. Turnout among people my age was very high. Many people around me stayed informed."

The constitutional reform sought to separate the role of judges and prosecutors and reform their oversight, in measures that Meloni's hard-right government said were essential for judicial impartiality.

The referendum mobilised Italians in large numbers, with a 55.7 per cent turnout. But young people participated the most, at 67 per cent, according to an Ipsos poll.

That was all the more surprising given that many students remain registered in their hometowns and are not eligible to vote by proxy or by mail when away from home.

Voters over 61 and those in southern Italy also tipped the referendum in favor of a "no" vote.

The reform, which was presented by the opposition as a vote on Meloni's leadership ahead of the 2027 general election.

### Making a difference

Vittorio Gioda, a 24-year-old software developer in Turin, had planned to abstain but ultimately voted "No".

"The idea of the Constitution in the hands of people whom I consider inadequate or dangerous, like those currently in power, really scares me.

"This time, I felt like I could really make a difference by saying no."

In the week before the election, Meloni even appeared on a podcast hosted by rapper Fedez to try to convince young voters, a strategy that backfired, according to Gioda: "The intense pressure exerted by Meloni to push us to vote had the opposite effect."

Moreover, he said, given the tense geopolitical situation, many people, including his parents, saw a "No" vote as a way to show opposition to the government's policies beyond the justice system, specifically its closeness to US President Donald Trump.

Roman Federico Giorgetti, 25, said for young people his age it was "very difficult to get to the heart of the matter".

Giorgetti, a political science student who voted "Yes", cited the reform's technical aspects that made it confusing to many.

"The information circulating on Instagram is inherently polarising; it tends to oversimplify and the political class didn't make things any easier for us," he said.

Surveys show that priorities for most Italians involve stagnant purchasing power and low wages, rather than justice reform.

### Ideology

In the last parliamentary elections in late 2022, more young people stayed away from the polls.

Those who did vote tended to support the left, whether the Democratic Party, the Five Star Movement or smaller parties.

About a quarter supported the hard-right parties that won the elections.

For Lorenzo de Sio, a professor of political science at Rome's Luiss university, the referendum results highlight the effect the economic crisis of the 2010s has had on Generation Z, "as it has made life very precarious from a job perspective".

As a consequence, people under 30 have more clearly defined ideological affiliations than their parents, he explained during a press conference Tuesday in Rome.

On the other hand, millennials, who are aged 29 to 44, are more flexible, holding "left-wing views on some issues and right-wing views on others", while switching from party to party, de Sio said.

Millennials also mostly voted "No" but abstained at a much higher rate, according to Ipsos, at 47.5 per cent, compared to nearly 33 per cent for Generation Z.

# From Gaza to Minab, the same story — children paying the price of war

By Ramzy Baroud

Those who had the misfortune of growing up in a war zone require no explanation. War is hell, it is true, but for children, it is something else entirely: A confusing, disorienting fate that defies comprehension.

There are children who live only briefly, experiencing whatever life manages to offer them: The love of parents, the camaraderie of siblings, the fragile joys and inevitable hardships of existence.

There are over 20,000 children in this category who have been killed in Gaza over the span of roughly two years, according to figures released by the Gaza Health Ministry and repeatedly cited by United Nations agencies. Some were born and killed within the same short timeframe.

Others remain buried beneath the rubble of the destroyed Strip. According to humanitarian and forensic experts cited by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, thousands of bodies are still missing under collapsed buildings, with recovery efforts hindered by the scale of destruction and lack of equipment. In some cases, extreme heat, fire and the use of heavy explosive weaponry have rendered identification nearly impossible, meaning that many of these children may never be properly accounted for, let alone mourned at a grave.

These children will not have graves to be visited. And if they do, many will have no living parents left to pray for them. But we will always do.

And then, there are those who are wounded and maimed —

tens of thousands of them. Visiting Amro, the wounded son of a relative who perished along with his entire family in Gaza, I witnessed one of the most heartbreaking sights one could possibly endure: The wounded and maimed children of Gaza in a Turkish hospital.

There were a few teenagers, many without limbs. Hospital staff had adorned them with the beloved Palestinian keffiyeh. Those who could flashed the victory sign, and those who had no arms raised what remained of their limbs, as if to tell every wandering visitor that they stand for something deep and unyielding, that their losses were not in vain.

But then there were the little ones, who experienced trauma without fully comprehending even the magnitude of their tragedy. They stared in confusion at everyone — the unfamiliar faces, the incomprehensible languages spoken around them, the empty walls.

My nephew kept speaking of his parents, who were meant to visit him any day. They were both gone, along with his only brother.

I was in kindergarten in a refugee camp in Gaza when I witnessed my first military raid. The target was our school. I still recall our teachers pushing back against soldiers as they forced their way into the building. I remember them being physically assaulted, screaming at us to run toward the orchard.

We began running while holding hands with one another. We were all wearing matching red outfits with stickers on our faces — none of us had any understanding of who these men were or why they were hurting

the people who cared for us.

If the killing of children in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Iran and across the Middle East is normalised, then it will become just another accepted feature of war. And since "war is hell", we will all move on, accepting that our children — anywhere in the world — now stand on the front lines of victimhood whenever it suits the calculations of war.

I have thought about this often in recent years — during the devastation in Gaza, the wars across the region, and the killing of students at a school in the Iranian city of Minab.

Minab is not just an Iranian tragedy; it is our collective loss. Evidence from international investigations indicates that the strike on the Shajareh Tayyebeh school was not an accident, but the result of deliberate targeting within a broader military campaign.

Amnesty International concluded that the school building was directly struck with guided weapons. Investigations by major outlets, alongside US military sources, suggest the site had been placed on a target list despite being a functioning school. The result was devastating: Children killed, families shattered and yet another atrocity absorbed into the relentless rhythm of war.

The US administration may deny intent as often as it wishes. But we know that the killing of children is not incidental. It is evidenced in Gaza, where the scale alone defies any claim of accident. As UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell stated, "Gaza has become a graveyard for thousands of children." That reality alone should end any debate.

I could pause here to tell

you that all children are precious, that all lives are sacred, and that international law is unequivocal on this matter. I could invoke the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states that "protected persons... shall at all times be humanely treated", and that violence against civilians is strictly prohibited.

Yes, I could do all of that. But I fear it would make little difference.

Everything we have said and done has failed Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and much of our region. International law, once seen as a shield, has become little more than a point of departure for conversations about its ineffectiveness and hypocrisy.

Speaking to Palestinians about international law often generates not reassurance, but frustration and anger. So I will spare you that, too.

Instead, I want to make a call to the world.

A call on behalf of Amro, and the many others from our family who were killed, and the thousands more who perished; a call on behalf of the frightened children of the Flowers Kindergarten in my old refugee camp in Gaza: Please, do not allow them to normalise the killing of children.

Do not settle for indifference, or mere concern, or even moral outrage that is never followed by action.

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

## Jordan between the engineering of balance and the logic of storms

By Safwan Al-Mbaidin

In my view, major wars are not merely confrontations between opposing sides; they are defining moments that reshape states, test their strategic depth and measure their ability to resist the pull of impulsive alignment. What we are witnessing today in the escalating tensions between Iran and Israel, within a framework largely shaped by the calculations of the United States, cannot be understood as a passing conflict. Rather, it represents a structural reconfiguration of power dynamics across the region.

Within this context, I do not see Jordan as a cautious bystander, but as a quiet actor carefully managing its position within a complex equation — where decisions are not measured by their intensity, but by their capacity to shield the state from the costs of entan-

glement in open-ended conflicts that exceed control and reproduce instability in more intricate forms.

What distinguishes the Jordanian approach, as I read it, is not merely its restraint, but its ability to redefine "role" beyond the traditional binary of alignment or neutrality. Jordan neither withdraws nor rushes forward; instead, it practices what may be described as the "engineering of balance", where positions are calibrated through a precise equation: Safeguarding internal stability, preserving national security and engaging rationally in international efforts to contain escalation.

This mode of thinking may not produce loud positions, but it produces a state capable of endurance in a region that often rewards impulsiveness and penalises restraint. Herein lies, in my judgment, the value of accumulated political experience — transforming decision-mak-

ing into a calculated act rather than a reactive impulse.

Yet, the real challenge lies not only in managing the external environment, but in fortifying the internal front. Modern conflicts are not fought solely with weapons, but through narratives — and through the capacity to fragment societies from within. Thus, the most serious threat any state may face in such moments is not external pressure, but the erosion of internal trust, and the rise of hasty interpretations and emotional alignments.

In this light, rallying around the Hashemite leadership is not merely a political stance, but a strategic necessity. A state surrounded by turbulence requires a stable centre of decision-making and a collective awareness that unity is not a luxury, but a condition for survival.

The Jordanian experience has repeatedly demonstrated that stability is not a given, but a

daily achievement; that balance is not a static condition, but a continuous process of recalibration in response to ever-changing realities.

At a time when events accelerate and interests intertwine, the real wager is on states that can read the moment without losing their historical continuity — and manage crises without becoming part of them.

Jordan, at this moment, is not seeking a heroic role in a conflict that is not its own. Rather, it is performing a far more complex role: To remain a stable state in a time when the very definition of stability is collapsing.

It is precisely here that the true strength of states is revealed — not in the noise of their positions, but in the resilience of their cohesion.

States do not endure because they avoid storms, but because they know how to pass through them without losing themselves.

## Africa sets out stall for cotton at the WTO

By Agnès Pedrero

Agence France-Presse

YAOUNDE, Cameroon — African countries are taking a stand at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to bolster their cotton sector, launching a platform tasked with mobilising investment to transform the cotton, textile and clothing value chain.

"The cotton sector represents one of the most promising drivers of industrialisation in Africa, particularly in West and Central Africa," said Cameroon's Trade Minister Luc Magloire Mbarga Atangana, at a meeting on cotton ahead of the WTO's ministerial conference, which opened on Thursday in the Cameroonian capital Yaounde.

WTO chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala explained: "Currently, 98 per cent of the region's cotton is exported as raw fibre; the goal is to change that."

Cotton has been discussed at the WTO for more than 20 years, at the request of the so-called Cotton Four (C-4) group: Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali.

These countries, later joined by Ivory Coast to form the C-4+, want to see an end to US, Chinese and European subsidies in their cotton sectors, arguing

that they create unfair competition.

"This request has never been met," WTO Deputy Director-General Jean-Marie Paugam told AFP.

"No partner country in Africa or the C-4 has been willing to negotiate solely on one sector.

"These countries maintain this demand as a priority, but while waiting for progress in these negotiations, they are focusing their efforts on developing the cotton sector by promoting the processing of cotton products," he added.

"The goal is to increase added value."

### Vital role

According to 2024 WTO data, these countries, the largest cotton producers in Africa, generate more than 1 million tonnes of cotton per year, representing 50 per cent of Africa's total production and four percent of global production.

West Africa is the fourth-biggest cotton exporter, behind Brazil, the United States and Australia, figures from the International Cotton Advisory Committee show.

Benin, the leading producer

in West Africa, exported \$505 million worth of raw cotton in 2024, ranking fifth globally among raw cotton exporters.

That year, raw cotton was Benin's most exported product, according to the Observatory of Economic Complexity.

In Burkina Faso, around four million of the country's 23 million inhabitants depend directly or indirectly on the cotton sector.

According to the Burkinabe trade ministry, cotton represents 4 per cent of GDP and about 14 per cent of the country's export earnings.

Cotton thus plays a vital role in the C-4+ economies, but these countries primarily export raw cotton because they lack processing facilities.

As a result, the gains made by women and young people, who make up most of the workforce in this sector, remain marginal, according to the WTO.

### Open for business

It is in this spirit that the WTO and football's world governing body FIFA launched a cotton partnership at the last WTO Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi in 2024.

# BUSINESS

Friday-Saturday, March 27-28, 2026



Cargo ships and tankers are seen off coast city of Fujairah, in the Strait of Hormuz in the northern Emirate on February 25

## Iran letting Malaysian oil tankers through Hormuz strait — PM

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Iran is letting Malaysian tankers pass through the Strait of Hormuz after talks with Iranian, Turkish and other regional leaders, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said on Thursday.

Speaking on national television, Anwar said he spoke with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, as well as Egyptian and Turkish counterparts and other leaders in the Gulf region.

"We're now in the

process of releasing the Malaysian oil tankers and the workers involved so that they can continue their journey home," Anwar said, thanking Pezeshkian.

Anwar added that, thanks to production by Malaysian petroleum giant Petronas, "We are in a far better position."

Petronas last year produced around two million barrels of oil a day, according to the latest company figures.

But Anwar warned

that food supplies will be disrupted and that "prices will certainly rise".

"The same goes for fertiliser, and of course oil and gas," Anwar said.

He also announced a range of measures, including a reduction in the quota of subsidised fuel for Malaysian citizens and new diesel purchase limits in the eastern states of Sabah and Sarawak, as part of tighter controls to curb hoarding and smuggling of subsidised fuel.

## Vehicle prices in local market remain 'stable' — JADA

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan Automotive Dealers Association (JADA) confirmed the current vehicle prices offered by automotive dealerships remain "unchanged and stable" at their previous levels, without any spikes.

In a statement issued Thursday, the association said the current stockpile of newly imported vehicles, which has already cleared customs, is "sufficient to cover all categories and models and meet local demand for a period until the end of the second quarter of this year".

Ruling out the need to import vehicles, given the current inventories, the JADA noted any increases in supply costs will not affect vehicles that are currently available in the Kingdom's warehouses and showrooms.

The JADA added that these hikes in shipping and insurance costs will only apply to new imports that have not yet reached the Jordanian market, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.



Jordan Automotive Dealers Association confirms the current vehicle prices offered by automotive dealerships remain 'unchanged and stable'

## WTO mulls future of global trading under cloud of Mideast war

YAOUNDE (AFP) — The World Trade Organisation's (WTO) ministerial conference opened on Thursday against a backdrop of heightened trade tensions and global economic turmoil linked to the Middle East war.

Over four days in Cameroon's capital Yaounde, trade ministers from around the world will try to revitalise an institution weakened by geopolitical strains, stalled negotiations and rising protectionism.

The global trading system is experiencing the "worst disruptions in the past 80 years", WTO chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala warned at the opening ceremony.

"The world order and the multilateral system we used to know has irrevocably changed," she said, adding: "We cannot deny the scale of the problems confronting the world today."

"These disruptions are a symptom of the wider disruptions shaking the international order created after the Second World War to prevent a repeat of the horrors of the first half of the 20th century," she added.

Okonjo-Iweala wants

the Yaounde meeting to open the next chapter in multilateral trading, decrying growing unilateralism and the collective failure of WTO's 166 members to reinvigorate the institution.

### 'Pivotal moment'

The WTO ministerial conference, its supreme decision-making body, is usually held every other year.

"We need a rules-based system, not a power-based system"

Two years after the last ministerial conference in Abu Dhabi failed to make meaningful progress on key issues like fisheries and agriculture, member states face even stancher challenges this time.

Their main task will be to develop a plan towards reforming a WTO that has proven to be powerless in the face of rising protectionism and largely incapable of negotiating new agreements.

European Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic called on Monday for "serious" reform of the organisation, insisting that "the level playing field, overcapacity and market policies must be better tackled than in the past".

Britain also said in a recent submission that it believes "the WTO is at a pivotal moment", warning that "without reform it will slide into irrelevance".

"Reform must lead to a WTO... capable of meeting today's challenges and restoring confidence in the multilateral trading system," said Cameroon's Trade Minister Luc Magloire Mbarga Atangana.

Several members are calling for modifying the organisation's decision-making procedures, which have long been limited by a rule requiring consensus among all members.

There are also calls to

overhaul rules related to special treatment of developing countries and achieving a level playing field for trade, as well as a push to restore the organisation's crippled dispute settlement system.

But national interests diverge sharply, making any diplomatic breakthrough in Yaounde uncertain.

### Trump's return

Yaounde marks the WTO's first ministerial conference since US President Donald Trump returned to the White House last year, unleashing a barrage of attacks on multilateralism and WTO rules with sweeping tariffs and bilateral trade deals.

"US trade policy measures are a corrective response to a trading system, embodied by the WTO, that has overseen and contributed to severe and sustained imbalances," US Trade Representative Jamie Green said in a video statement.

No significant agreement on reform is expected. Preparatory discussions in Geneva, where the WTO is based, revealed that the United

States and India especially were not satisfied with the proposed roadmap.

Washington is particularly critical of the WTO's "most-favoured nation" (MFN) principle, which aims to extend any trade advantage granted to one trading partner to all others, seeking to avoid discrimination.

But China, like other developing countries, has said it wants this rule to "remain the bedrock of the WTO".

"We need a rules-based system, not a power-based system," a Chinese diplomatic source told AFP.

Ministers must reach an agreement in Yaounde on extending the moratorium on tariffs on e-commerce.

The ministers also hope India will agree to incorporate a plurilateral agreement on investment facilitation for development, signed by nearly 130 countries, into the organisation's rules.

That agreement is highly sought after by developing countries, but India has so far balked, on principle, to plurilateral agreements within the WTO.

## OECD cuts 2026 eurozone growth forecast on Mideast war

PARIS, France (AFP) — The OECD said Thursday it was cutting its eurozone growth outlook and forecasting higher inflation for 2026 after the Middle East war caused energy prices to skyrocket.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development lowered its growth forecast for the currency union by 0.4 percentage points to 0.8 per cent, with the continent's top two economies, Germany and France, both down 0.2 points to 0.8 per cent each.

The organisation also raised its inflation forecast for the eurozone by 0.7 points to 2.6 per cent, while the global growth forecast remains at 2.9 per cent for this year.

"The energy price surge and the unpredictable nature of the evolving conflict in the Middle East will raise costs and lower demand, offsetting the tailwinds from strong technology-related investment and production, lower effective tariff rates and the momentum carried over



France's Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Noel Barrot shakes hands with Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Faisal Bin Farhan before a G7 Foreign Ministers' meeting with Partner Countries at the Vaux-de-Cernay Abbey in Cernay-la-Ville outside Paris, on Thursday

from 2025," it said in the report.

The OECD noted that global growth had been holding up "well" before the war and that it could have been 0.3 percentage points higher had the conflict not escalated.

The report assumes that energy disruptions will ease starting in mid-2026, though it warned of the uncertainties surrounding the war.

"The breadth and duration of the conflict

are very uncertain, but a prolonged period of higher energy prices will add markedly to business costs and raise consumer price inflation, with adverse consequences for growth," it said.

The organisation cites, in particular, the price of urea (one of the main nitrogen-based fertilisers), which has risen by more than 40 per cent since mid-February, which could reduce crop yields in 2027.

## Oil jumps, stocks drop on uncertainty over US-Iran talks

LONDON (AFP) — Oil prices jumped and equities slid on Thursday as hopes for a peace deal between the US and Iran wavered after Tehran rejected Washington's bid to wind down the nearly four-week war.

Markets had been buoyed this week by US President Donald Trump's announcement that strikes targeting Iran's energy infrastructure would be postponed, adding that the two sides were in peace talks.

But uncertainty over the talks and the virtual closure of the Strait of Hormuz — through which around 20 per cent of oil and liquefied natural gas normally passes

— have cast a shadow over market sentiment.

"The market rollercoaster continues," said Joshua Mahony, chief market analyst at Scope Markets.

Crude prices rallied more than nearly four per cent on Thursday, with Brent crude above \$101 per barrel and WTI around \$94.

The dollar rose against its main rivals.

Wall Street opened lower, with Europe's main markets down in afternoon trading, while there were losses across Asia.

"When the oil price surges, the market play-book stays the same: Stocks and bonds sell

off," said Kathleen Brooks, research director at XTB.

The yield on government bonds rose across the board.

Conflicting messages from the US and Iran are "raising questions about whether there is really an off-ramp to the conflict in the days ahead", said Deutsche Bank's Jim Reid.

Washington was said to have presented a 15-point plan to end the war, while Tehran's state-run TV reported officials had put forward their own five conditions for hostilities to end.

Trump on Wednesday threatened to "unleash hell" if Iran did not strike

a deal, but Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said his country does not intend to negotiate with the administration in Washington.

"This is quite the shift in rhetoric from the president, and highlights how complex it will be" to reach a peace deal, said XTB's Brooks.

She added that "the prospect of troops on the ground suggest a prolonged war and not one final blow at Iran."

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar confirmed on Thursday that indirect negotiations between the US and Iran were being held, using Islamabad as an intermediary.

## AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

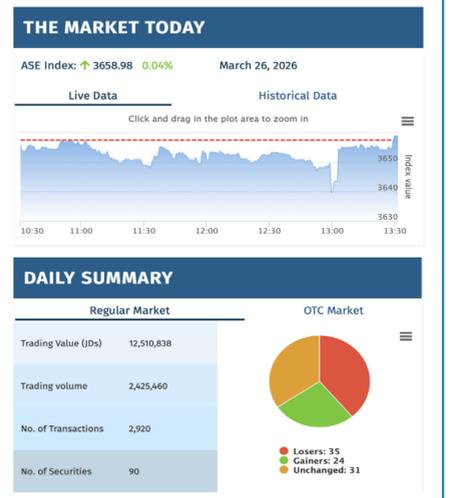
AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Thursday amounted to JD12.5 million spread over 2.4 million shares that traded through 2,920 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.04 per cent, closing at 3658.98 points.

Out of 90 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 24 companies rose while the share price of another 35 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were United Insurance by 7.14 per cent, Jordanian Duty Free Shops by 4.31 per cent, Ibn Alhaytham Hospital Company by 3.95 per cent, First Jordan Investment Company Plc. by 3.57 per cent, and Babelon Investments Company Plc. by 3.23 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Union Investment Corporation by 11.11 per cent, Union Tobacco and Cigarette Industries by 9.09 per cent, First Insurance by 5.31 per cent, Century Investment Group by 4.55 per cent, and Injaz for Development and Projects by 4.17 per cent.



# THE JORDAN TIMES SPORTS AT A GLANCE

## NBA

### Embiid, George make triumphant returns in Sixers win

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — Philadelphia 76ers stars Joel Embiid and Paul George made triumphant returns Wednesday, combining for 63 points in the Sixers' 157-137 NBA victory over the Chicago Bulls. Former NBA Most Valuable Player Embiid showed no sign of rust after missing 13 games with an oblique strain, scoring 35 points — including 15 of the Sixers' first 19 as they seized control with a 38-point first quarter. George, returning from a 25-game suspension for taking a medication that violated the league's anti-drug programme, took longer to warm up, scoring 23 of his 28 in the second half. George finished with six three-pointers and Embiid made all three of his from beyond the arc on an efficient 12-of-17 shooting performance. Embiid added six rebounds and seven assists and the duo showed just how big a play-off threat the Sixers could be if both stay healthy. They're seventh in the East, a fraction behind the Atlanta Hawks for sixth and the last direct entry spot to the play-offs. The Hawks, with 27 points apiece from CJ McCollum and Jalen Johnson, downed Eastern Conference leaders Detroit 130-129 in overtime.

## CRICKET

### Kohli, Suryavanshi to light up IPL as stampede dead remembered

NEW DELHI (AFP) — The IPL roars back into action on Saturday super-charged by India's home T20 World Cup triumph, but with sombre memories of the 11 fans who died in a stampede celebrating Virat Kohli and Royal Challengers Bengaluru's title last season. The richest league in cricket launches with RCB hosting Sunrisers Hyderabad at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, where June's title party turned to tragedy a day after Bengaluru's first IPL crown. Eleven supporters aged between 14 and 29 died outside the stadium in a crush. The club, sold on Tuesday for nearly \$1.8 billion to an Indian-US consortium, will leave 11 seats permanently empty at the stadium while players will wear black armbands. Kohli, who has retired from Tests and T20 internationals, guided RCB to their maiden title on the 18th attempt and shows no sign of slowing down aged 37. "He will be hungrier than ever, especially after lifting the IPL trophy last season," former India pace bowler Irfan Pathan told host broadcaster Jio Hotsta.

By Aline Bannayan

AMMAN — Jordan is ready to face Costa Rica on Friday in the first of the last four friendlies ahead of the 2026 World Cup this summer.

Team stars Mousa Ta'mari, Yazan Al Arab and others have joined the squad ranked 64th to face World No. 51 Costa Rica and 26th ranked Nigeria on March 31 as coach Jamal Sellami tries to finalise his lineup with key players doubtful for the World Cup including Yazan Nue'imat and Adham Qurashi, who both underwent surgery for torn ACL. Also absent for now are Ali Alwan who suffered a heel injury, team captain Ehsan Haddad, who has been out for the season, as well as Tamer Bani Odeh and Husam Smeiri, who excelled in the Arab Cup.

The squad has regrouped in Turkey after the Jordan Football Association had to relocate the four-nation tourney they planned to host Costa Rica, Nigeria and Iran. However, with regional tensions escalating, the senior squad will try to assess the lineup after the current matches, before playing Switzerland on May 31 and Columbia on June 7 just ahead of the World Cup Group J matches against soccer greats Argentina, Algeria and Austria.



Photo courtesy of the JFA

Yazan Al Arab joins the national team squad for the upcoming two matches

In the past few months, Jordan's World Cup preparations agenda included a series of friendlies in which it held Russia

0-0, beat the Dominican Republic 3-0, lost 1-0 to Bolivia and 4-2 to Albania, held Mali 0-0, and lost to 7-time World Cup qualifiers

Tunisia 3-2.

By finishing runner-up at the 2023 Asian Cup, followed by a historic first-time qualification to the 2026 edi-

tion of the World Cup in their 7th time in the qualifiers since 1986, Jordan booked their spot in the next edition of the 2027 Asian Cup a

well.

The Kingdom also finished runner-up to eventual champions Morocco at the 2025 FIFA Arab Cup in Qatar, despite missing many key players on the injury list or club duty including key striker Mousa Ta'mari (Stade Rennais FC - France), Yazan Al Arab (FC Seoul-Korea), Mohammed Abu Al Nadi and Noor Rawabdeh (Selangor FC - Malaysia), Tamer Bani Odeh (West Bromwich Albion FC - England) and Ibrahim Sabra who is on loan from Goztepe -Turkey to NL Lokomotiva Zagreb, Croatia.

Also joining the senior squad in Turkey was the U-23 squad who will play two friendlies against Kyrgyzstan and Russia as well as the U-15 youth squad who lost to Russia 2-1 and will play them again during the camp.

The 23 team last exited the 2026 AFC U23 Asian Cup quarters after losing to eventual and reigning champs Japan.

The U-20 squad stayed home for a local training camp after the West Asian Football Federation (WAFF) postponed the 4th WAFF U-20 Championship. The team has the U-20 Arab Cup and the August qualifiers for the 2027 U-20 Asian Cup on their agenda while the West Asian event remains postponed.

# LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

## 'Perfect Japan' posts spark Gen Z social media backlash

TOKYO (AFP) — Take an everyday video on any suburban transport network, add anime-style music and a rosy filter, and it's suddenly a scene from the Japanese holiday of your dreams. That's the "Japan effect": A Gen Z social media trend satirising the often-romanticised image of the Asian country, which welcomed a record number of visitors last year.



AFP photo

People take photographs with Mount Fuji at Lake Yamanaka in Yamanakako, Yamanashi Prefecture, in December 2025

Residents of Kyoto and other tourist hotspots have expressed exasperation with selfie-taking crowds, and now an online backlash against Japan fever is growing. The short video posts on platforms like TikTok show how even just the words "Tokyo, Japan" with a cherry blossom emoji can make an otherwise banal street scene more appealing for some users.

anime and game franchises such as Pokemon is drawing tourists to the nation. But some people take their love of Japan too far, said Louzemi, who goes by the handle rockylevrai. To describe the phenomenon, he used the slang word "glazing" — to excessively praise something. A "Japan glazer" is "someone who puts everything that comes from Japan on a pedestal, while disparaging things that come from their own country", Louzemi said.

"The point is to make fun of Japan's 'cute' image online, with all its cliches and stereotypes," 25-year-old French YouTuber Rocky Louzemi, who analyses Internet culture, told AFP.

Along with the chronically weak yen, the booming popularity of Japan logged a record

42.7 million tourist arrivals in 2025, despite a steep fall in Chinese visitors in December due to a diplomatic row. Many visitors post online about their trip — making pilgrimages to real-life locations from cartoons or joking about spending \$1,000 on flights just so they can eat a \$1 convenience store rice ball.

"The 'Japan' portrayed in an anime world is often quite different from how Japanese society is", said Marika Sato, a 29-year-old who works in marketing in Tokyo. For instance, many women have experienced groping, said Sato, a contributor to

"Blossom The Project", an Instagram account focused on Japanese social issues.

Graphic designer and fellow Blossom contributor Maya Kubota, 28, said that she appreciates people liking Japan and wanting to visit.

But over-the-top comments such as "Japanese people are next level" give her an "icky vibe", Kubota told AFP. Some of the online Gen Z pushback focuses on the exaggerated idea that Japan's streets are so spotless people don't even have to wear shoes.

"Japan is clean but not THAT clean," joked a US couple who post social media content about the country under the name The Hito-bito — showing off their dirty white socks after a real-life experiment.

### Viral effect

Japan's tourist boom has forced some authorities to take action.

A cherry blossom festival boasting a highly Instagrammable view of Mount Fuji was cancelled this year after residents complained of overtourism.

"People associate Ja-

pan with carefully composed visuals," said Seio Nakajima, a professor in the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies at Waseda University.

That could be because of the detailed, beautiful backgrounds in anime, or because of a deeper "cultural tradition of emphasising form".

"If people focus on form rather than meaning, it becomes easier to go viral. Because you don't need to think," Nakajima told AFP.

Japan's formalities — from the complexity of polite language to extreme attention to detail in packaging or wrapping — may surprise visitors, he said.

But "Japan is not always clean and aesthetic. That's only part of the reality."

Despite the backlash, tourists in Tokyo's busy Tsukiji market told AFP that the country had lived up to their expectations.

"In Russia, it's very popular to hype Japan," said Tatiana Mokeeva, 25.

When asked if posts about Japan could be unrealistic, she said: "To tell the truth, no... I love all about Japan."

## Internet providers not liable for music piracy by users — top US court

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — The US Supreme Court ruled on Wednesday in a landmark copyright case that internet service providers (ISPs) are not liable for online pirating of music by their users.

Cox Communications, a major broadband ISP, had asked the top court to throw out a jury verdict awarding \$1 billion in damages to Sony Music Entertainment and other record labels.

Cox was accused in the case of failing to take action against customers accused of illegally downloading copyrighted music.

In a unanimous 9-0 ruling, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of Cox and said an ISP was liable "only if it intended that the provided service be used for infringement."

"A company is not liable as a copyright infringer for merely providing a service to the general public with knowledge that it will be used by some to infringe copyrights," the court said in an opinion written by Justice Clarence Thomas.

"Cox repeatedly discouraged copyright infringement by sending warnings, suspending services, and terminating accounts," the court

said. "A provider induces infringement if it actively encourages infringement through specific acts," it said. "Cox neither induced its users' infringement nor provided a service tailored to infringement."

'To be effective, copyright law must protect creators and markets from harmful infringement'

Cox Communications welcomed the court's decision, calling it a "decisive victory for the broadband industry and for the American people who depend on reliable internet service."

"This opinion affirms that internet service providers are not copyright police and should not be held liable for the actions of their customers," the company said in a statement.

The ruling was also welcomed by the Ameri-

can Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which called it a "win for freedom of expression online."

"If defined too broadly, secondary copyright liability for internet service providers can pose a serious threat to free speech online," Evelyn Danforth-Scott, an ACLU attorney, said in a statement.

The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) meanwhile expressed disappointment.

"To be effective, copyright law must protect creators and markets from harmful infringement," RIAA Chairman and CEO Mitch Glazier said.

During oral arguments before the Supreme Court in December, Joshua Rosenkranz, an attorney representing Cox, had warned of "cataclysmic" consequences if the court did not limit the company's copyright liability.

The only way for an ISP to avoid liability is to "cut off the Internet, not just for the accused infringer, but for anyone else who happens to use the same connection", Rosenkranz said.

"That could be entire towns, universities or hospitals, turning Internet providers into Internet police," he said.



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