

THE JORDAN TIMES



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Prime minister launches consultations on draft local administration law

Law aims to empower municipalities, enhance transparency, boost youth, women representation

AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Wednesday launched a series of consultations on the draft Local Administration Law, with a meeting of the Union of Centrist Parties parliamentary bloc.

During the meeting at the Prime Ministry, Hassan emphasised that the Royal Letter of Designation provides a clear mandate to advance the political modernisation project, with local administration representing the second pillar of this framework.

The prime minister underscored that progress in the democratic approach remains central to these efforts, facilitated through a national dialogue to review legislation governing municipalities and governorate councils ahead of upcoming elections.

He noted that the draft law aims to empower municipal councils to fulfil their responsibilities while introducing mechanisms for oversight, evaluation and accountability, according to a Prime Ministry statement.



Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Wednesday launches a series of consultations on the draft Local Administration Law

"We must be precise in defining responsibilities and duties," Hassan said, stressing that these measures are intended to serve citizens and encourage participation.

Highlighting municipalities as the primary units of local development, the prime minister also reiterated the

government's commitment to reactivating and strengthening their role through revised legislation. He also stressed that effective representation

of youth and women in councils is essential and will be reinforced in the new draft.

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Air defences shot down missile, 2 drones fired from Iran towards Jordan — JAF

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) on Wednesday said that air defences have shot down a missile and two drones launched from Iran towards the Kingdom over the past 24 hours.

JAF said in a joint statement with the

Public Security Directorate (PSD) that the Royal Jordanian Air Force dealt with the threats with high efficiency.

PSD said that it handled six reports of falling debris over the past 24 hours.

The directorate said that no injuries record-

ed as a result of falling shrapnel, except for minor material damages.

It also warned against approaching or handling any suspicious objects or debris and urged the public to follow official instructions and report any sightings via the emergency number 911.

Lower House condemns Israeli law allowing execution of Palestinian prisoners

Lawmakers call for freezing Israeli Knesset's membership in international parliamentary forums

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — The Lower House on Wednesday condemned an Israeli law permitting the execution of Palestinian prisoners as a "flagrant violation" of international law and a dangerous escalation that undermines legal and humanitarian norms.

Lower House Speaker Mazen Qadi said that the law amounts to "a retaliatory measure that entrenches racism", and reflects a "public display of brutality and discrimination" by Israeli authorities.

In a statement he read on behalf of the



The Lower House on Wednesday condemns an Israeli law permitting the execution of Palestinian prisoners

House, Qadi said that the measure constitutes a "fully-fledged

crime" and "blatant violation of international humanitarian

law, the Geneva Conventions and all relevant human rights

instruments".

He warned that the legislation poses a direct threat to thousands of Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons, "turning detention facilities into arenas for executions under a false legal cover".

"The law constitutes a dangerous phase of impunity, placing the international community before a real test of its legal and moral responsibilities."

He called for immediate and effective action to stop the violation and ensure accountability.

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The Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company

Jordan maintains 'strong' fuel reserves, no supply disruptions — JPCO chief

AMMAN (JT) — CEO of the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company (JPCO) Hassan Hiyari has said that the Kingdom is not experiencing any shortage of liquefied petroleum

gas (LPG) or petroleum derivatives, despite regional challenges.

Speaking to Public Security Directorate Radio Hiyari stressed the stability of supplies and the availabil-

ity of a secure stock covering local market needs.

The CEO also noted a "marked" increase in gas consumption.

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Foreign reserves reach \$28 billion, enough to cover 10 months of imports — CBJ governor

AMMAN (JT) — Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) Governor Adel Sharkas on Wednesday said that foreign reserves at the CBJ have approached \$28 billion, covering nearly 10 months of Jordan's imports of goods and services, more than three times the internationally recommended standard.

He also said that surplus liquidity in the banking sector has reached nearly JD5 billion, reflecting the Kingdom's strong monetary and banking stability despite regional and global challenges.

Speaking to the public service broadcaster, Al Mamlaka, Sharkas noted that this level of liquidity provides a



substantial buffer to meet the needs of the national economy and support sustainable growth.

He added that banks' legal liquidity stands at 144 per cent, well

above the required 100 per cent, while the capital adequacy ratio reached 18 per cent, providing a "strong safety margin".

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Iran war reshapes regional security, renewing calls for joint Arab defence

Analysts say shifting US role, rising threats are forcing Arab states to rethink collective security framework

By Mai Anati

AMMAN — Rising regional threats are reviving calls to activate the Joint Arab Defence Council, as the war involving Iran, Israel and the United States reshapes security calculations across the region.

The council, which weakened after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, is returning to the forefront as a framework for coordinated regional security.

Jordan is positioning itself among the countries pushing for stronger coordination, amid concern that the



post-war phase may prove more complex than the conflict itself.

His Majesty King Abdullah has always urged intensified joint

Arab action to address common challenges.

Established under the Treaty of Joint Defence and Economic Co-operation of the

League of Arab States in 1950, the council was designed to coordinate defence policies and respond collectively to external threats.

Despite its strategic importance, the mechanism has remained largely inactive for decades.

Egypt has reiterated calls to activate the agreement and form a unified force, as tensions escalate following the war and Iran's attacks on neighbouring states.

Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty stressed that Arab national security is indivisible, reaffirming Cairo's support for Gulf states and calling for practical steps to strengthen regional security frameworks.

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The Ministry of Agriculture and a FAO delegation on Wednesday discuss progress in implementing the regional food security and nutrition observatory for the Arab Mashreq sub-region

Jordan, FAO review progress in establishing regional food security observatory

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Agriculture and Vice Chairman of the Higher Council for Food Security Saeb Khreisat on Wednesday discussed with a delegation from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) progress in implementing the regional food security and nutrition observatory for the Arab Mashreq sub-region.

The two sides reviewed the developments in the project, which serves as a strategic platform to enhance regional cooperation in monitoring and analysing food security indicators, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. Discussions addressed key challenges facing the project's implementation, where both sides agreed to intensify efforts to identify appropriate solutions, accelerate progress and achieve the project's objectives.

The observatory aims to provide accurate and up-to-date data to support policymakers in adopting effective and proactive policies.

The Ministry of Agriculture and FAO in March 2025 signed an agreement to support the Higher Council for Food Security, Ministry of Agriculture, and Department of Statistics

in establishing the observatory.

The agreement was signed in response to His Majesty King Abdullah's directives and following discussions by ministers of the Mashreq countries during their meeting in Amman in 2022, as well as the decision of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East in 2024.

The Ministry of Agriculture and FAO in March 2025 signed an agreement to support the Higher Council for Food Security...

The observatory aims to enhance food security and nutrition in Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria by providing periodic analyses and reports on food security.

Khreisat called for establishing a timeline for

the project's upcoming phases, with precise allocation of roles and responsibilities among all partners, noting that a "well-defined" roadmap is essential to ensuring efficient delivery and timely implementation.

He added that the project represents a "pivotal" step in supporting countries' efforts to address growing food security challenges, particularly amid climate change and ongoing economic and geopolitical fluctuations in the region.

He said the observatory would enhance early warning capabilities and risk analysis, contributing to the sustainability of food systems across the region.

FAO delegation head Ahmed Mukhtar, a senior expert at the organisation's regional office, said that FAO would continue supporting Jordan in implementing the project, calling for boosting regional cooperation to develop an integrated food security monitoring system.

The meeting was held as part of joint efforts to reinforce Jordan's role as a regional hub for food security and to enhance cooperation among countries in building more efficient and sustainable food systems.

Government cuts flour, wheat prices to stabilise bread costs

AMMAN (JT) — The government has announced a new set of measures to adjust flour and wheat prices for April, aiming to maintain stable prices for Arabic bread despite rising production costs driven largely by higher fuel prices.

According to the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply, the price of unified flour has been reduced by JD7.797 per tonne, bringing it to JD167.475, down from JD175.272 in March.

The move is intended to ease financial pressure on bakeries and ensure continued supply to the local market, said a ministry statement, cited by Al Mamlaka TV.

Wheat prices have also been lowered, with the cost per tonne dropping by JD6.083 to JD136.238, compared with JD142.321 last month.

The ministry said that the reduction will help cut overall production costs across the bread supply chain.

The ministry said that



The government has announced a new set of measures to maintain stable prices for Arabic bread

the decision aligns with a Cabinet policy to keep Arabic bread prices fixed, adding that production costs are reviewed regularly, with adjustments made to reflect market changes while balancing consumer protection and the sustainability of bakery operations.

Despite a recent increase in global oil prices that has driven up operating costs, the government has opted to absorb part of the

impact by adjusting key input prices, particularly flour and wheat, to prevent any rise in bread prices, the ministry said.

It also said that the policy of stabilising bread prices will remain in place, with close monitoring of local and international market developments.

Further measures will be taken if needed to safeguard food security and ease living costs for citizens.

Japanese grant provided to support expanding inclusive early childhood in Amman

AMMAN (JT) — Japanese Ambassador to Jordan Asari Hideki and Project Manager of World Vision Japan Ikenoya Rie signed a grant contract of \$635,656 for the project entitled "Inclusive Beginnings: Expanding Early Childhood and Primary Education for All in East Amman [Year 1]."

The project is part of the framework of the government of Japan's

Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects, according to a Japanese embassy statement on Wednesday.

This project is implemented over a three-year period.

In the first year, it aims to establish a system in Eastern Amman — home to the largest population of refugees and persons with disabilities in Jordan — through which schools, local communities, and education au-

thorities can proactively and sustainably practice and promote inclusive education.

The project will target 13 kindergartens and 20 elementary schools to ensure that children, regardless of disability or nationality, are able to access education and continue learning with support tailored to their individual needs.

The project will be implemented by World Vision Japan, a Japanese

NGO with "extensive" experience in Jordan.

In 2025, the government of Japan also supported World Vision Japan under the same grant scheme to promote inclusive education in kindergartens and elementary schools serving refugees and host communities in Amman.

Under this new project, the schools supported in the previous phase will be further developed as model

schools. Teachers from these model schools will serve as trainers and provide training, guidance, and advisory support to neighbouring schools.

Through this approach, the project aims to efficiently expand its impact to surrounding schools and establish a sustainable system for the continued promotion of inclusive education even after the project's completion.

RSS concludes Circular Cities Weeks with participation of 17 national, regional partners

AMMAN (JT) — The Royal Scientific Society (RSS), and the Circular Economy Club – Jordan (CEC Jordan), has concluded the "Jordan Circular Cities Weeks – First National and Regional Awareness Campaign."

The campaign aimed to strengthen the role of the circular economy in addressing regional challenges, resource scarcity and supply chain complexities, positioning it as a key driver of sustainable growth, according to a RSS statement.

The campaign, implemented as part of the global Circular Cities Week initiative, brought together 17 national and regional partners, representing government entities, international organisations, academic institutions, industry leaders, entrepreneurs, and specialised experts.

Participants contributed to enriching national and regional dialogue on circular economy concepts, while also showcasing practical solutions and promising sectoral opportunities across priority value chains in Jordan.

RSS Vice President Rafat Assi said that the campaign was implemented between October and December 2025, aiming to connect key stakeholders, address ecosystem gaps and launch a national call to action towards the practical adoption of circular economy solutions in Jordan and the region.

He added that this



The campaign aims to boost the role of the circular economy in addressing regional challenges, resource scarcity, and supply chain complexities

initiative reflects RSS's continued efforts to support national economic development and aligns with the Economic Modernisation Vision, by advancing a more resilient and green economy.

He stressed the role of the circular economy in addressing regional challenges, resource scarcity and supply chain disruptions, as a key driver of sustainable growth, resource efficiency, industrial competitiveness and enhanced supply chain resilience.

The closing ceremony, held at RSS, marked the culmination of these joint efforts, and was attended by Chairman of the Board of the American Chamber of Commerce in Jordan Samer Judeh, President of the Jordan Engineers Association Eng. Abdullah

Ghosheh, and President of the Jordanian Businessmen Association Ayman Al Alawneh, alongside a distinguished group of policymakers, academics, senior executives and international partners.

The ceremony also featured a documentary video highlighting partner perspectives and key achievements

Senior Circular Economy Expert at RSS and

Founder of CEC Jordan Omar Saleh presented the key outcomes and impact of the campaign, including strengthened cross-sector collaboration and increased awareness of circular economy opportunities.

Director of the Water, Environment and Climate Change Centre at RSS Almoayed Assayed presented the society's efforts and national projects related to the circular economy, which served as a key driver behind the campaign.

The ceremony also featured a documentary video highlighting partner perspectives and key achievements, in addition to recognising national and regional partners through symbolic awards in appreciation of their contributions.

In his closing remarks, Assi stressed the importance of moving from awareness to implementation by strengthening enabling policies — particularly in times of crisis and supply chain disruptions — while accelerating private sector adoption, and supporting innovation and investment in circular solutions, as part of a coordinated national call to action.

He further highlighted the importance of activating high-level national and regional dialogues to address shared challenges and opportunities, enhance resource security, and foster cross-border collaboration, with the aim of translating discussions into focused engagement and actionable change.

This initiative represented the first of its kind at the national level in localising a global initiative of this scale, reflecting Jordan's leadership in advancing the circular economy agenda in the region and laying the foundation for a new phase of institutional integration and practical implementation.

The campaign also underscored the importance of shared responsibility across sectors, transitioning from fragmented efforts to a coordinated national approach that delivers tangible economic, environmental and social impact.



Jordan faced an 'intensified' wave of misinformation during regional tensions, with the Jordan Media Credibility Monitor (AKEED) recording 142 rumours in March, averaging five per day

AKEED records 142 rumours amidst war in March

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan faced an "intensified" wave of misinformation during regional tensions, with the Jordan Media Credibility Monitor (AKEED) recording 142 rumours in March, averaging five per day.

According to a report reviewed by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, the number of rumours rose significantly during the 31 days of the US-Israeli-Iranian conflict, with Jordan specifically being targeted by a different pattern of misinformation.

The Kingdom was subjected to one externally sourced rumour per day, totalling 31 rumours, while 19 rumours targeted food stock levels.

The report showed that social media platforms were responsible for generating and

spreading 137 rumours, accounting for 96 per cent of the total recorded in March.

Another 19 per cent addressed food supplies, prices and availability

AKEED noted that the 142 rumours represent the highest monthly figure since the beginning of 2024, exceeding the previous peak average of 92 rumours by 50.

The number of debunked rumours reached 28, up by 12

compared with the previous monthly average of 16.

War-related misinformation accounted for 44 per cent of total rumours, with 26 per cent focusing on developments in the conflict and Jordan's role due to its geographic position.

Another 19 per cent addressed food supplies, prices and availability, while 16 per cent concerned electricity and fuel.

Rumours targeting public figures and their positions on the conflict made up 15 per cent.

In terms of sources, the report indicated that 111 rumours (78 per cent) originated from domestic sources, including social media and news websites, while 31 rumours (22 per cent) came from external sources.

MPs review education funding, industrial policies

Gov't outlines measures to improve grants, teacher staffing, investment

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — The Lower House on Wednesday held an oversight session during which lawmakers listened to the government's response to their questions on a number of issues.

During the session, attended by Prime Minister Jafar Hassan and members of the ministerial team, lawmakers criticised the current student support fund, arguing that it fails to account for population disparities between districts.

Lawmakers said that densely populated areas are disadvantaged under the existing allocation mechanism, which distributes grants and loans evenly across districts regardless of population size.

The prime minister said the government would review the system this year to better reflect population density in aid distribution, calling it "a necessary step".

He also said that, following directives from His Majesty King Abdullah, the Student Support Fund's allocations were increased to JD40 million this year, expected to benefit up to 60,000 students by expanding access to grants and loans.

Education Minister Azmi Mahafzah not-



The Lower House on Wednesday holds an oversight session during which lawmakers discussed parliamentary questions and the government's responses

ed that the ministry would reconsider the grant and loan allocation system to ensure it accounts for population numbers in each governorate, aiming for a "fairer and more equitable" distribution.

Lawmakers also raised concerns about a shortage of teachers and the growing reliance on temporary appointments. MPs questioned which specialisations had been filled through supplementary hiring, why all required positions had not been filled via regular appoint-

ments, and the criteria for sending students abroad for training to prepare them for future teaching roles.

The minister noted that temporary teaching positions reached around 12,000 in 2024 due to rising annual vacancies and additional funding, adding that the ministry is preparing a study to gradually increase annual recruitment to phase out reliance on temporary appointments entirely, ensuring schools are fully staffed and education continues uninterrupted.

MPs also inquired about new investments, measures to reduce energy costs, plans to connect industrial complexes to natural gas and the projected percentage of public-private partnership projects.

Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Yarub Qudah highlighted the creation of the Industrial Support and Development Fund, aimed at stimulating investment in existing industrial facilities, promoting exports and improving the efficiency of raw

materials, energy and water use.

Qudah also said that electricity tariffs for medium and small industries have been reduced by eliminating fuel price differences, while energy costs are being supported in industrial zones such as Karak Industrial City, Tafila Industrial City and the Agricultural Industries Complex.

These measures, he said, aim to encourage investment, facilitate project development, and enable industries to compete locally and internationally.

SECURITY

Cabinet measures ensure stability amid regional, economic challenges — Momani

AMMAN (JT) — National institutions are fully prepared to manage crises, helping minimise their impact on citizens and ensure continuity across key sectors, Government Communication Minister Mohammad Momani said on Wednesday.

Momani, who is also the government spokesperson, said that the readiness of ministries and government agencies aligns with Cabinet decisions aimed at maintaining normal life and safeguarding vital sectors, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

He said the government has adopted a series of measures to address the effects of regional and economic challenges, emphasising that protecting citizens and the national economy remains a top priority.

He added that Jordan's political stance continues to reflect balance and prudence while preserving state sovereignty. "The Kingdom will not serve as a launchpad for attacks against any country, in line with national interests and political constants," Momani said.

Momani highlighted His Majesty King Abdullah's active efforts to reduce regional tensions, particularly through support for Gulf states facing attacks. He noted that the King's diplomatic initiatives have been widely recognised at both Arab and international levels.



Government Communication Minister Mohammad Momani

Momani also stressed the role of professional media as a frontline defence against rumours, highlighting its importance in conveying facts and enhancing public awareness during crises.

Momani also stressed the role of professional media as a frontline defence against rumours...

Momani pointed to positive indicators in

recent investment and growth data, reflecting the resilience of Jordan's economy and its capacity to adapt to challenges.

He said that supply chains for essential goods and energy remain stable, while fuel prices are being adjusted gradually in line with global developments to preserve domestic stability.

He also underscored the government's ongoing support for civil and military service consumer corporations to ensure the availability of goods in local markets, noting that there are currently no plans for distance learning or remote work.

Army thwarts 10 drug smuggling attempts

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) on Wednesday foiled 10 attempts to smuggle large quantities of narcotics across the Kingdom's northern and western borders.

The Eastern Military Zone thwarted nine smuggling attempts along its northern front, involving large quantities of drugs carried by electronically guided balloons launched simultaneously to exploit prevailing weather conditions and distract Border Guard units in an attempt to evade surveillance, according to a JAF statement.

Meanwhile, the Southern Military Zone foiled a smuggling attempt along its western front using a drone carrying around 100 palm-sized sheets of hashish.

Border Guard units in the Eastern



The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army on Wednesday foils 10 attempts to smuggle large quantities of narcotics across the Kingdom's northern and western borders

and Southern zones, through close monitoring and in coordination with military security agencies and the Anti-Narcotics Department, intercepted all attempts, bringing down the payloads within Jordanian territory and referring the seized items to the competent authorities

for legal action.

The JAF reiterated that they will deal firmly with any attempts to undermine the Kingdom's security, stressing their continued commitment to utilising all capabilities to safeguard Jordan's stability amid ongoing regional developments.

Gov't extends land tax, fee exemptions, discounts until end of June

AMMAN (JT) — The government has decided to extend exemptions and discounts on building and land taxes, revenues, compensations, waste fees and rents for payments made before the end of June.

The move aims to ease financial burdens on citizens and businesses while encouraging the timely settlement of obligations owed to municipalities and the Greater Amman Municipality, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Under the decision, a 20 per cent discount would apply to building and land taxes (Musaqafat), Maarif Tax (annual property tax on building rents within municipalities, funding the Ministry of Educa-



The government decides to extend exemptions and discounts on building and land taxes, revenues, compensations, waste fees and rents

tion), and contributions to sewage services for previous years and for 2025, provided payments are made before

the June deadline.

A full 100 per cent exemption will also be granted on fines related to building and land

taxes and knowledge taxes for all previous years, including 2025, on the condition that the principal amounts

are fully paid within the specified timeframe, Petra reported.

Taxpayers will also receive a 25 per cent discount on verification fees, revenues and compensations if payments are made before June 30, 2026.

Individuals purchasing waste or land will benefit from a 25 per cent discount if payment is completed before the close of business on June 30.

Tenants of properties and buildings owned by municipalities and the Greater Amman Municipality will be granted a 25 per cent exemption on rents due up to December 31, 2025, provided the remaining balances are fully settled before the end of June.

Interior ministers council condemns Iranian aggression on Jordan, Arab countries

AMMAN (JT) — Interior Minister Mazen Faraya, alongside Arab counterparts, the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences and the Arab Police Sports Federation, participated on Wednesday in the 43rd session of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers, held via video conferencing.

During the session, the council addressed key security issues, including the secretary-general's report on secretariat activities between the 42nd session in 2025 and the current 43rd session in 2026, and a report from the president of Naif Arab University for Security Sciences

on the university's work over the same period.

Ministers also reviewed the second phase of the updated Arab strategy for combating terrorism, recommendations from conferences and meetings held by the secretariat, results from joint meetings with Arab and international bodies, and approved a series of decisions and recommendations related to joint Arab security work and the secretariat's operations.

The council appointed Brig. Gen. Ayman Sarairah as director of the Arab Office for Drugs and Crime for a

three-year term, effective May 1.

In a separate statement, the council condemned Iran's "brutal aggression" against Arab countries, strongly denouncing Iranian attacks on Jordan, Gulf states and Iraq as violations of international law and serious threats to international peace and security. The council also criticised Iran for deliberately targeting civilian infrastructure.

The ministers denounced repeated Iranian provocations aimed at destabilising security in the region, affirmed support for Arab states' legitimate right to self-defence, and condemned

Iran's continued funding and arming of militias in multiple Arab countries.

The council also commended the "heroic performance" of Arab armed forces, security personnel and civil defence agencies in responding to these attacks, expressing deep appreciation for their sacrifices.

It also condemned Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands and its expansionist policies, reaffirming support for the security, stability, and unity of Lebanon and the enforcement of Lebanese sovereignty over all its territories.

Cassation Court upholds 20-year sentence for man who killed stepmother

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld a September 2023 Criminal Court ruling sentencing a man to 20 years in prison after convicting him of murdering his stepmother in Irbid in April 2023.

The court declared the defendant guilty of stabbing his 43-year-old stepmother to death following a heated argument on April 20 and handed him the maximum punishment for the manslaughter charge.

The defendant then threw her body in a water well near their home, the court added.

Court papers said the defendant's father married the victim a few years before the murder,

following the passing of his wife.

Almost a month before the incident, the defendant had problems with his father because he smoked, the court said.

The defendant's father threatened his son that he would not register an apartment in his name "if he continues to cause problems", the court added.

On the day of the incident, the court maintained, the defendant was discussing his father's threats with his stepmother while in the kitchen.

"The argument became heated, and the defendant grabbed a kitchen knife and stabbed the victim repeatedly until he made sure she was

dead," court papers said.

"The young man dragged the victim's body 7 metres outside the house and dumped it in a water well," the court maintained.

"The defendant then headed to his brother's house and informed him that he had murdered his step-mother," court transcripts maintained.

The police were notified and forensic experts were called to the scene, the court added.

"The victim's body was pulled from the well and police seized a knife that was found in the defendant's room," according to court transcripts.

The court said it relied in its ruling on DNA evidence found on the knife "used in the murder,

which matched the defendant among other evidence", the court added.

The defendant contested his verdict at a higher court through his lawyers, claiming that "there were illegal errors in the investigation process".

Meanwhile, the Criminal Court's general attorney asked the Court of Cassation to uphold the ruling.

The higher court ruled that the Criminal Court followed the proper procedure when sentencing and the defendant deserves the verdict he received.

The Court of Cassation judges were Mahmoud Ebtoush, Nayef Samarat, Hammad Ghzawi, Mohammad Shreiri and Mohammad Khashashneh.



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz (right) and Syrian President Ahmed Al Sharaa address a joint press conference after talks at the Chancellery in Berlin on Monday

Germany tries to play down row over Syria refugee returns

BERLIN (AFP) — Germany's government on Wednesday tried to play down a row sparked by Chancellor Friedrich Merz saying he expected 80 per cent of Syrians in Germany to return within three years.

On Monday, Merz welcomed Syrian President Ahmed Al Sharaa to Berlin for his first visit to Germany since ousting his country's longtime strongman Bashar Assad in late 2024.

During a joint news conference, Merz said the two men had discussed the subject of the roughly one million Syrian nationals who live in Germany, most of whom arrived as refugees during Syria's civil war.

"In the longer perspective of the next three years — this is

also the wish of President Sharaa — around 80 per cent of Syrians who are currently in Germany should go back to their homeland," Merz told journalists.

On Tuesday, Merz issued a statement saying that Sharaa had mentioned the number in their conversation.

However, when asked about the figure during an event at the Chatham House think tank in London on Tuesday, Sharaa denied it had come from him.

On Wednesday, Merz's spokesman Stefan Kornelius failed to clarify the issue.

"I am not going to get into textual exegesis about which words were said by the chancellor and which were said by the president," he said.

"The important thing is that Syria has an in-

terest in people returning, because it needs them... to help with reconstruction," Kornelius said.

"Germany cannot be bound by a duty of protection if the reason for this protection is no longer there," he added, referring to the fall of Assad's government.

Merz has made much use of tougher rhetoric on immigration as he tries to stem the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), currently running neck-and-neck in the polls with Merz's centre-right CDU/CSU.

Syria is still struggling to emerge from the shadow of Assad's rule and the country's bloody conflict.

Since Assad's fall the country has faced continued instability and episodes of sectarian violence.

Trump says Iran president requests ceasefire, Tehran says 'false'

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that Iran's president had asked for a ceasefire, but ruled out any truce until the vital Strait of Hormuz was reopened for crucial energy shipments.

But his assertion was flatly denied by Iran, with foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei rejecting it as "false and baseless".

Trump made the remarks ahead of a prime-time speech at 9:00pm (01:00 GMT Thursday) — his first since US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28 ignited a regional war and sparked a global energy crisis.

Tehran has insisted there are no ongoing negotiations to end the war, and launched fresh missile attacks on Israel and US-allied Gulf nations on Wednesday, as AFP journalists reported massive explosions in the Iranian capital.

But ahead of his national address, Trump said that Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian had asked for a truce.

"We will consider when Hormuz Strait is open, free, and clear. Until then, we are blasting Iran into oblivion or, as they say, back to the Stone Ages!!!" Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

Trump's tone has seen-sawed between combative and conciliatory since the war began.

Late on Tuesday, he said that the month-long conflict could be over in "two weeks, maybe three".

Pezeshkian had said Iran had the "necessary will" for a ceasefire, but only if its foes guaranteed that hostilities would not return.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard said on Wednesday that the Hormuz, a narrow strait through which one-fifth of the world's oil normally passes, would remain closed to the country's "enemies".

The Guard also confirmed they hit an oil tanker in the Gulf they said belonged to Israel. A British maritime se-



US President Donald Trump speaks after signing an executive order in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC, on Tuesday

curity agency said the vessel was struck off Qatar, reporting damage but no casualties.

'Every day we hear drones'

An airport in central Iran was damaged in an attack on Wednesday evening, the deputy provincial governor of Isfahan province, told local news agency of Mehr.

Iranian media also said steel complexes in central and southwest Iran were damaged in separate attacks.

An AFP journalist reported huge explosions in Tehran on Wednesday afternoon and earlier strikes near the former US embassy, now a symbol of decades of US-Iranian tensions.

The Israeli military confirmed it struck Tehran, while emergency services in Israel said an Iranian missile attack wounded 14 people, including an 11-year-old girl.

Israel also said its air defences had responded to a missile fired from Yemen — the third attack by the Iran-backed Houthi rebels since they entered the war over the weekend.

In Lebanon, seven people were killed in strikes around south Beirut, the health ministry said on Wednesday, with the Israeli military saying it had

struck a senior Hizbollah commander.

A Lebanese security source and a Hizbollah source both told AFP that the strike had killed Hizbollah's top commander for Iraq military affairs.

AFP correspondents at the scene saw a blackened, debris-strewn street.

"Nobody knows what's happening," resident Hassan Jalwan told AFP, adding that "displaced people have been sleeping in the open" in the area.

Israel launched broad strikes and a ground offensive against Lebanon after attacks on March 2 by the Tehran-backed militant group Hizbollah.

The Lebanese health ministry said on Wednesday that Israeli attacks had killed more than 1,300, among the thousands reported killed across the region since the war began, mostly in Iran.

A Bangladeshi national was killed on Wednesday by falling shrapnel from an intercepted drone in the United Arab Emirates.

Strikes in Kuwait caused a large fire in fuel tanks at its international airport, Bahrain's interior ministry said a fire broke out at a business facility and Saudi Arabia said several drones were

intercepted.

Meanwhile, a drone strike caused a massive fire at the storage facilities of an engine oil firm in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan.

"Every day, we hear the sound of drones," Waad Abdulrazaq, a 31-year-old truck driver, told AFP near Iraq's Erbil international airport.

"We hear them in the morning and we hear them at night. We can no longer sleep or live in peace."

Energy crisis

Optimism sparked by Trump's comments on the timeline for the end of the war pushed oil prices down Wednesday, and stock markets rallied in Europe and Asia.

But Iran's chokehold on Hormuz, through which Gulf oil and gas exports reach global markets, has sent energy prices soaring and unleashed global economic turmoil.

Average US gasoline prices topped \$4 a gallon for the first time in four years this week, while European inflation spiked and governments around the world started to unveil support measures.

"We're a small outfit," driver Nicolas Barthes told AFP at a protest against soaring fuel prices in the

French city of Toulouse. "The additional diesel cost for me this month is 15,000 euros, and we're not managing to pass all of that on."

Susannah Streeter, chief investment strategist at Wealth Club, said prices were still about 50 per cent above pre-war levels, showing "scepticism still remains about Trump's claims of progress".

Trump has criticised allies for not helping in the war, and President Emmanuel Macron repeated on Wednesday that France would not take part.

Britain said Wednesday that it would host a meeting of about 35 countries this week to discuss how to reopen the strait.

Washington has not said who it is speaking with in Iran, which has denied it is in talks.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told Al Jazeera he still receives messages from US Envoy Steve Witkoff, "directly, as before, and this does not mean that we are in negotiations".

Trump threatened earlier this week to "obliterate" Iran's oil wells, its main Kharg Island export terminal and possibly water desalination plants if the Islamic republic didn't make a deal.

TRAGEDY

19 migrants found dead by Italian coast guard

ROME (AFP) — The bodies of 19 migrants were recovered from an inflatable boat south of the island of Lampedusa on Wednesday by the Italian coast guard, a spokesman told AFP.

Fifty-eight other people, including five children, were found alive during the rescue in the early hours of Wednesday and transported to Lampedusa, according to coast guard spokesman Roberto D'Arrigo.

Lampedusa Mayor Filippo Mannino said seven people, including two children, were being treated in hospital for "hypothermia and intoxication from hydrocarbon fumes".

The coast guard rescue was staged some 135 kilometres off the Italian island inside Libyan search-and-rescue waters.

The boat was spotted drifting by an Italian reconnaissance plane on Tuesday but there were no Libyan coast guard or civilian ships in the area to assist, D'Arrigo said.

A decision was taken to send an Italian

coast guard vessel from Lampedusa.

D'Arrigo said some of the migrants may have died while being transported back to Lampedusa in particularly rough weather conditions with waves up to seven metres high.

"We are deeply saddened by yet another tragic incident in the Mediterranean"

Images released by ANSA news agency showed what looked like body bags being taken off a coast guard vessel on a quay.

Lampedusa is a key landing point for migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea

from North Africa, with many dying trying the dangerous journey.

"We are deeply saddened by yet another tragic incident in the Mediterranean," the UN refugee agency said on X, adding that its representatives were "providing immediate support to the survivors".

So far this year, 624 migrants have died or gone missing in the central Mediterranean, according to the UN's International Organization for Migration.

Lampedusa's last migrant disaster occurred in August last year, when 27 people died in two shipwrecks off the coast.

According to the interior ministry, 6,117 migrants have landed on Italy's shores so far this year.

In a separate incident on Wednesday, 19 Afghan migrants, including a baby, died when an inflatable dinghy sank in the Aegean Sea off southwestern Turkey after it was challenged by a Turkish coast guard vessel.

Starmer says UK to host multination meeting on Hormuz shipping

LONDON (AFP) — Britain will this week hold a meeting of about 35 countries to discuss how to reopen the strategic Strait of Hormuz which has been crippled by the Middle East war, Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced on Wednesday.

UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper will host the discussions, Starmer told reporters during a Downing Street press conference, without specifying the day of the talks.

The meeting will "assess all viable diplomatic and political measures



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer (centre) sits, flanked by BP CEO appointee Meg O'Neill (left) and Maj. Gen. Richard Cantrill, Commander Operations (right), at a meeting to discuss the US-Israeli conflict with Iran and the impact on the Strait of Hormuz, inside 10 Downing Street in London on Monday

that we can take to restore freedom of navigation, guarantee the safety of trapped ships and seafarers and resume the movement of vital commodities", Starmer said.

"Following that meeting, we will also convene our military planners to look at how we can marshal our capabilities and make the strait accessible and safe after the fighting has stopped," he

added.

The discussions will include countries who recently signed a statement saying they were ready "to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz", Starmer said.

Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and The Netherlands are among those to have signed it.

Iran has virtually

closed the vital strait since the US-Israeli strikes that started the war on February 28, causing global oil and gas prices to soar.

A fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas passes through the strait in peacetime.

"I do have to level with people on this. This [reopening] will not be easy," Starmer said.

The UK leader also

backed NATO following renewed criticism of the eight-decade-old alliance by US President Donald Trump.

"NATO is the single most effective military alliance the world has ever seen, and it has kept us safe for many decades, and we are fully committed to NATO," Starmer said.

Trump told Britain's Telegraph newspaper in an article published Wednesday that NATO was a "paper tiger".

Asked whether he would reconsider US membership, he replied: "Oh yes, I would say [it's] beyond reconsideration," the paper reported.

Last month, Trump told The Financial Times that it would be "very bad for the future of NATO" if members fail to help reopen the vital waterway.

On Tuesday, he said that countries which have not joined the war but are struggling with fuel shortages should "go get your own oil" in the Strait of Hormuz, adding that the US would not help them.

Tender Invitation

The General Headquarters of the Jordan Armed Forces/Royal Medical Services hereby announces Tender
P500/2025/18

لشراء أجهزة مكثفات الأكسجين سعة (3 لتر، 5 لتر، 10 لتر) لتعزيز رصيد قيادة المستودعات الطبية

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

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

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Tender Invitation

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P15/2026/4

لشراء (تعزيز مستهلكات معقمات البلازما)

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Closing date sharp 1:00 P.M., WED 22nd of APR 2026. Non conditional bid bond equal to (3%) of the total value of quotation must be submitted along with the quotations.

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

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

For more details please contact us at www.jrms.jaf.mil.jo

'Dozens' killed in Burundi after arsenal fire — security sources

NAIROBI (AFP) — Explosions that ripped through the city of Bujumbura after a fire in a military arsenal have killed several dozen people in the Burundian economic capital, security sources told AFP on Wednesday.

The explosions erupted late on Tuesday at the main ammunition depot of the Burundi National Defence Force in Musaga, a southern suburb of Bujumbura.

An army spokesman said the cause was an "electrical accident".

In videos seen by AFP, clouds of smoke loomed over the neighbourhood during the blast, sending panic through the city of more than a million people.

"It is impossible to establish a toll for the moment, but dozens and dozens of people have been killed, and there are hundreds or even thousands of injured," a high-ranking army officer told AFP on Wednesday.

A senior police officer present at the site said the detonation broke out "where heavy weapons and ammunitions are stored, which is why we

immediately heard large explosions".

"There are dozens of dead, but the toll may be higher," the senior police officer said.

The arsenal in Musaga is located in a densely populated area and adjoins the Higher Institute for Military Cadres, where aspiring army officers are trained and housed.

It also houses numerous army logistics depots and is next to another military base, Muha camp, and the central Mpimba prison.

A source at Mpimba prison told AFP that eight inmates were killed and several others injured, who were taken to hospital by the Red Cross early Wednesday.

Authorities have yet to provide casualty figures, and a Western diplomat speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity expressed doubt that "there will be transparent communication".

"The regime here is very reluctant to communicate about deaths, especially military ones," he said.

Burundi, ranked by the World Bank as the

world's poorest country by GDP per capita in 2023, has faced years of deep economic crises. The most recent saw a severe fuel shortage that has paralysed the nation for the past three years.

'Reduced to ashes'

Spageon Ngabo, director of the online bloggers' platform Yaga Burundi, said around 10 deaths had been reported by citizens to his organisation.

"We haven't finished counting yet," Ngabo said.

The senior police officer, who joined the fire-fighting team late Tuesday, said efforts were immediately slowed by a water shortage.

He said property had been destroyed by the "massive inferno" and that the "base camp was reduced to ashes".

On Wednesday afternoon, fire and smoke could still be seen, according to the police officer.

Residents in surrounding neighbourhoods fled their homes at night, the officer said, as fire-triggered projectiles landed nearby.

Drone attack targets Kuwait airport, fuel tanks on fire — aviation agency

Qatar says Iran missile struck tanker in its waters

KUWAIT CITY, DOHA (AFP) — Kuwait's civil aviation authority said the Gulf state's international airport was under an Iranian drone attack on Wednesday that led to "a large fire" at fuel tanks.

"Kuwait International Airport has been subjected to blatant attacks by drones launched by Iran and the armed factions it supports," the official Kuwait News Agency quoted the spokesman of the General Directorate of Civil Aviation as saying.

The spokesman, Abdullah Al Rajhi, said "fuel storage tanks... were targeted, resulting in a large fire at the site", reporting no casualties.

Qatar said on Wednesday that a tanker leased to its state-owned energy company was struck by an Iranian missile in the Gulf country's territorial waters.

"Qatar was targeted... by three cruise missiles launched from Iran," the Gulf state's defence ministry said in a statement. The military "inter-



AFP photo

Gulf countries have faced repeated drone and missile salvos from Iran over the past month

cepted two of the cruise missiles, while the third missile struck an oil tanker leased to QatarEnergy in Qatar's territorial waters," it said.

"Coordination was established with relevant authorities to evacuate the tanker, which had 21 crew members on board, without any human casualties," the defence ministry added.

Iran's Revolutionary

Guards later confirmed they had hit the tanker, the Aqua 1, claiming in a statement cited by state television the vessel was targeted because it belonged to Israel.

Gulf countries have faced repeated drone and missile salvos from Iran over the past month.

Iran has targeted hydrocarbon infrastructure in the oil-rich Gulf

nations as well as shipping, effectively closing the strategic Strait of Hormuz, through which one-fifth of global oil usually passes.

QatarEnergy said in a statement the Aqua 1, a fuel oil tanker, had been "the subject of a missile attack in the northern territorial waters of the State of Qatar in the early morning hours of Wednesday".

It confirmed no crew members had been injured and there was "no impact on the environment as a result of this incident".

According to the British marine security agency UK Maritime Trade Operations (UK-MTO), the incident occurred 17 nautical miles north of Doha.

The agency later said "the vessel was struck by two projectiles" north of Ras Laffan, the world's largest liquefied natural gas hub.

"One projectile caused a fire, which was extinguished, and another "remains unexploded within the vessel's engine room", UKMTO said.

Private security firms Ambrey and Vanguard also reported unexploded ordnance within the tanker's engine room, adding that authorities were investigating.

Earlier, UKMTO said the tanker had been "hit by unknown projectile on the port side causing damage to the hull above water line".

Prime minister launches consultations on draft local administration law

Continued from page 1

Hassan said that the government would implement measures to govern the local administration sector, enhance staff efficiency, and automate services to improve service delivery, in line with commitments made in the government's response to the Royal Letter of Designation.

The prime minister also said that the draft law focuses on three

main pillars: Governing municipal operations and management through a clear legislative framework; achieving financial and administrative discipline; and improving service quality, particularly in the governorates.

Hassan also noted that many municipal issues are administrative in nature. He stressed that the legislation must curb nepotism and favouritism, which have

historically undermined municipal sustainability and contributed to rising debt, waste and bloated administrations. He added that digital transformation is essential to deliver services efficiently, fairly, and transparently.

The dialogue on the draft law would continue with other parliamentary blocs, civil society organisations, and stakeholders across the governorates to reach a broad consensus before

the bill is submitted to the Lower House later in 2026.

Minister of Local Administration Walid Masri outlined the draft law's key pillars, developed through months of discussions, noting that the government remains open to further suggestions to refine the legislation.

MP Zuhair Khashman, head of the Union of Centrist Parties bloc, and bloc members presented

proposals aimed at improving local administration and municipal work.

The meeting was also attended by Minister of Public Works and Housing Maher Abu Samen, Minister of Government Communication Mohammad Momani, Minister of Political and Parliamentary Affairs Abdul Moneim Oudat, and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Abdulfatih Najdawi.

Jordan maintains 'strong' fuel reserves, no supply disruptions — JPCO chief

Continued from page 1

"Demand rose by approximately 1.7 million cylinders in March compared with the same period last year, alongside an additional increase of around 700,000 cylinders in January 2026 year-on-year."

He said Jordan's energy strategy focuses on expanding storage capacity and ensuring uninterrupted supply, adding that current reserves of petroleum products are at "comfortable" levels.

"LPG stocks are sufficient to cover national demand for two months, in line with international standards."

Hiyari added that part of the Kingdom's domestic gas needs is met through local refining of crude oil, while the remainder is imported from Saudi Aramco via the Red Sea port of Yanbu. "Supply chains have remained unaffected during the recent period of conflict, as imports do not depend on the Strait of

Hormuz."

He also said that monthly gas imports range between four and six shipments, depending on demand. A vessel carrying around 12,000 tonnes of gas recently arrived at the port of Aqaba.

'LPG stocks are sufficient to cover national demand for two months, in line with international standards'

covering various fuel types including 90-octane petrol, diesel, 95-octane petrol and kerosene."

He said that further storage capacity is held by the company's logistics arm, including 135,000 tonnes of 90-octane petrol, 160,000 tonnes of diesel, 40,000 tonnes of 95-octane petrol, 24,000 tonnes of kerosene and 21,000 tonnes of household gas.

Hiyari said that no shortages were recorded during the winter season and that the government did not need to draw on its strategic reserves, owing to steady supply flows.

He added that Jordan's storage capacity meets international requirements, which call for reserves sufficient to cover at least 60 days of demand.

"Current supplies of petrol, diesel and gas remain adequate, with no need so far to utilise the government's strategic reserves."

Lower House condemns Israeli law allowing execution of Palestinian prisoners

Continued from page 1

He also expressed support for all legal efforts to challenge the law and expose its implications, urging parliaments worldwide to take urgent steps, including freezing the Israeli Knesset's membership in international parliamentary forums, particularly the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Speaking on behalf of the Palestine Committee, MP Suleiman Saud said the law reflects "a moral collapse" and an

attempt to transform "extrajudicial killing into official policy under a legal pretext".

He urged the United Nations and its tribunals to "move beyond statements of concern and take firm and decisive action to stop violations and ensure accountability.

Lawmakers also stressed that the legislation constitutes a clear breach of international humanitarian law, calling for coordinated Arab and international efforts to con-

front its implications.

They also reiterated Jordan's longstanding support for the Palestinian cause, highlighting the Kingdom's continued diplomatic engagement under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah.

MPs also commended the King's stance on regional developments, describing it as consistent with Jordan's historic role in defending Jerusalem and safeguarding Islamic and Christian holy sites.

They also called for

enhanced parliamentary diplomacy, urging broader engagement with regional and international legislative bodies to pressure Israel to reverse the decision and uphold prisoners' rights.

Under the new law, passed in parliament late Monday, Palestinians in the West Bank convicted by military courts of carrying out deadly attacks classified as "terrorism" will face the death penalty as a default sentence, according to AFP.

Because Palestinians in the territory are automatically tried in Israeli military courts, the measure effectively creates a separate and harsher legal track.

In Israeli civilian courts, the law allows for either death or life imprisonment for those convicted of killing with intent to harm the state.

While the law does not provide for retroactive application, critics say the distinction underscores a system of unequal justice, AFP reported.

Foreign reserves reach \$28 billion, enough to cover 10 months of imports — CBJ governor

Continued from page 1

Sharkas also said that foreign reserves at the CBJ have approached \$28 billion, covering nearly 10 months of Jordan's imports of goods and services, more than three times the internationally recommended standard.

The governor also noted that the balance of payments posted a \$2 billion surplus in 2025, a 25 per cent increase and the highest since 2017.

"Preliminary data showed foreign direct investment [FDI] inflows reached \$2.024 billion last year, up

from \$1.618 billion in 2024, the highest level since 2017, reflecting investor confidence in Jordan's economy and policies."

Investments from Arab countries totaled \$1.241 billion, or 61.3 per cent of total FDI inflows.

"These indicators demonstrate that Jordan's economy remains on a solid recovery path, supported by ongoing fiscal and structural reforms that strengthen macroeconomic fundamentals and enhance the business environment," he said.

He also said that inflation in the first two

months of 2026 was recorded at 1.10 per cent.

Jordan's economy continues to recover steadily despite ongoing geopolitical tensions, Sharkas said, adding "GDP grew 3 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2025, reflecting the quality and breadth of growth across all economic sectors".

The manufacturing sector contributed 55 per cent of this growth, up from 30 per cent in previous periods, underlining its increasing role in driving expansion.

Preliminary Department of Statistics (DoS) figures showed sectoral growth across all

activities, with agriculture leading at 7 per cent, followed by mining and quarrying at 6.9 per cent, manufacturing at 5.2 per cent, and electricity supply at 4.5 per cent.

Manufacturing contributed most to overall growth, with 0.87 percentage points, followed by agriculture at 0.46 points and mining and quarrying at 0.24 points.

On exports, Sharkas said that "strong performance" reflects Jordan's diverse network of regional and international trading partners. "Our export structure benefits from stable external

demand, particularly in pharmaceuticals, clothing, phosphate, and potash," he said.

He also noted that Jordan relies on multiple sources of foreign income, including remittances, tourism revenues, and foreign investment, which further strengthens economic stability.

Sharkas highlighted government measures to address regional challenges, including securing energy supplies, strengthening supply chains, building strategic stockpiles, and gradually passing changes in oil prices onto the local market to contain inflation.

Continued from page 1

Palestinian officials have also voiced support for activating the agreement, describing it as a framework for reinforcing Arab solidarity and protecting regional stability.

The renewed calls come amid a shifting regional security landscape.

Political science professor Areej Jabr said the war has exposed structural vulnerabilities across the region.

She said that the conflict has highlighted the limits of relying on traditional alliances, warning that the Arab region risks bearing the greatest cost of prolonged instability.

Jabr stressed that the absence of a unified Arab position has weakened the regional response.

"The only viable path forward is to build a more cohesive Arab front," she said, calling for coordinated defence mechanisms to

address future threats.

US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that the war with Iran could end within two to three weeks, signalling a possible transition in the conflict.

He said the United States would "leave Iran very soon", linking the move to preventing Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons, according to AFP.

At the same time, military activity continues across the region, raising concerns over a widening conflict and its impact on global energy flows.

Iran has closed the Strait of Hormuz, a key route for global oil supplies. An Israeli strike in the Jnah area of Beirut early on Wednesday killed Hezbollah's top commander for Iraq military affairs, Yousef Hashem, according to AFP.

The escalation highlights the growing link between military developments and energy security.

Trump also signalled a shift in the US role in the region, suggesting that other countries should take responsibility for securing energy flows.

This shift raises concerns over a potential security vacuum and increases pressure on regional states to reassess collective defence mechanisms.

Political analyst Amer Sabaleh said that Trump's remarks reflect political pressure rather than a clear withdrawal strategy.

"Trump's talk about withdrawal could have serious global consequences," he said.

"By linking it to who secures oil routes, he is effectively shifting responsibility to other states."

He added that the move may push countries to reconsider their positions.

"The cost of leaving the war unresolved could become higher than the cost of ending it."

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Myanmar's rebuild stutters year after deadly quake

By Lynn Myat

Agence France-Presse

MANDALAY, Myanmar — The gaping holes torn in a road to Mandalay by last year's devastating earthquake have been filled in, and the route in northern Myanmar partly resurfaced.

But only a few of the broken spans of the historic Ava Bridge have been removed, while the others still droop into the Irrawaddy river where hundreds of newly homeless people bathed in the aftermath of the disaster.

More than 3,800 people in Myanmar — and around 90 more in neighbouring Thailand — were killed when the 7.7-magnitude tremor struck on March 28, 2025.

AFP was the only international news agency on the ground in Myanmar's capital Naypyidaw when the quake hit, with its team the first international journalists to reach the city of Mandalay.

A year on, reporters returning to the affected areas found a mixed picture of reconstruction work.

In Naypyidaw the collapsed concrete awning of the main hospital's emergency department — which crushed a car when it came down — has been replaced with a new, lighter structure, with a plastic roof.

A rare unguarded photo of junta chief Min Aung Hlaing, looking flustered as he sought to direct rescue efforts at the hospital, was one of many by AFP that captured the destruction after the quake, which came during a years-long civil war.

Mandalay, an ancient royal capital hemmed by jungle-clad mountains and the snaking Irrawaddy River, bore the brunt of the damage.

At a pagoda in the suburb of Amarapura, a statue of a reclining Buddha emerges from a carefully arranged pile of brick rubble, its face respectfully cleaned.

"Some are rebuilding their houses, while others are just now getting the support they need to work and live," said board secretary Hsan Tun, 70.

Four people died at the pagoda, he added, including a girl who was meditating. "It's only by the Buddha's protection that we survived."

Almost all of Mandalay's flattened or toppled residential buildings have been cleared away, some of them already rebuilt and others remaining as fenced-off empty lots dotting the city.

The tilted-over towers overlooking the palace moat have all been brought back upright, and workers are building new brick castellations for their supporting ramparts.

After the quake, thousands of people whose homes had been made uninhabitable or who feared aftershocks slept out for weeks by the moat, but it is once again the preserve of morning joggers and sightseers.

'When the sky falls'

Some of the buildings at the Thahtay Kyaung monastery, where saffron-clad monks cleared rubble from the wreckage by hand in the days after the quake, have been razed.

"People are facing many economic hardships," said the abbot, U Thudassa. "Like the saying, 'When the sky falls, it falls on everyone.'"

"We build as much as we can with what we have," added the 70-year-old. "We cannot just stand still; natural disasters will always be a part of life."

At Amarapura's Nagayon Pagoda, a Buddha statue reduced to just two legs and hands on a pedestal has been fully restored, looking out with a serene gaze.

In nearby Bon Oe village, the quake caused a mosque to collapse onto worshippers gathered for the noon prayer on the last Friday of Ramadan, killing many.

A permanent replacement has yet to be erected — government approval is needed for religious buildings, and it has not yet been granted.

Instead, men gather for evening prayers in a temporary structure covered in green tarpaulins and with palm leaves for a roof.

"Yesterday marked one year" since disaster struck, said mosque leader Khin Maung Naing, counting by the Islamic calendar.

"Everyone still trembles at any loud noise," he added.

"Even after a year, the tremor, the scenes and the feelings from that earthquake feel as if they happened only yesterday or the day before. To this day, it remains in my heart."

What if the war drags on?



ECONOMIC REVIEW

Yusuf Mansur

Amid regional tensions, there is much talk about war and its effects. Still, the most important economic question for Jordan is not military, but purely financial: How much can the budget sustain if the crisis drags on?

So far, Jordan is not facing an energy supply crisis. Electricity is available, and supplies have not been interrupted. But the real challenge lies in the cost of this energy. Official estimates indicate that the government is incurring additional costs in the energy sector, ranging between JOD 2.5 million and JOD 3 million daily, due to rising fuel prices and the need to switch to more expensive alternatives for electricity generation.

The number of JOD 3 million, despite its apparent simplicity, means (based on current oil and gas prices) that every additional day of the war places a direct burden on Jordan's public finances. If translated over time, just one month would mean approximately 90 million dinars, and this figure could reach JOD 270 million within three months, exceeding half a billion dinars if the crisis lasts for six months and energy costs do not rise further than their current level.

But these figures cannot be interpreted in isolation. Jordan enters this crisis already operating within a limited fiscal space (fiscal inflexibility), with a budget deficit approaching 5 per cent of GDP and a public debt hovering around 88 per cent of GDP (excluding the amount borrowed from the Social Security Fund). The current

figures are manageable under normal circumstances, but they become more vulnerable in the face of external shocks.

To understand the situation more accurately, it is necessary

to consider the potential scenarios for the war's sustainability, adhering to the principle of "if you want to predict, predict a lot". The most likely assessment at present is that the war will not be very short, nor fully all-out, but rather will take the form of a limited, prolonged escalation. This scenario, which could last between two and four months, carries a probability, according to research institutes, of approximately 50 per cent to 60 per cent, and is the basis for most international economic analyses.

In this scenario, the cost of additional energy could rise to around JOD 270 million within three months, potentially pushing the deficit to 5.5 per cent or more and gradually increasing the debt ratio. Economic growth is also expected to slow to between 1.8 per cent and 2.1 per cent, due to rising costs and a decline in some sectors, particularly tourism.

If the crisis is short (for example, one month), the impact remains relatively limited. The deficit will rise slightly, and

growth will slow down slightly, but the economy can absorb the shock. This scenario has a lower probability, around 25 per cent to 30 per cent.

Conversely, there remains a more negative scenario: a regional expansion of the war and its continuation for a longer period. This scenario, although less likely (15 per cent to 25 per cent), has a much greater impact. The deficit could rise to 6 per cent or more, and debt could approach 90 per cent of GDP, with growth slowing to 1 per cent or less.

There is a final scenario, less likely but would be the costliest: a long and comprehensive war. In this case, the deficit could exceed 7 per cent, and debt could approach 91 per cent or more, with very weak or near-zero growth. However, this scenario is still far from the baseline forecasts at present.

What do these scenarios mean in practical terms? They mean that the real danger lies not in the daily figure (JOD 3 million), but in the accumulation of this amount over time. One month means manageable financial pressure, three months means clear economic pressure, but six months or more could mean a shift in the course of public finances.

In this context, the government's decision not to pass on the price increases directly to citizens is understandable. This decision protects domestic demand, prevents inflation from spreading rapidly through the economy, and maintains social stability. However, it also means that the state is effectively postponing the cost rather than

eliminating it. Herein lies the paradox: the government's success today in protecting citizens from price hikes is offset by increasing pressure on the budget in the future.

Is this decision correct? In crises, it is often correct. Immediately passing on the shock could lead to sharp inflation and a greater economic slowdown (stagflation). But this option cannot be sustained indefinitely without a cost. It requires economic flexibility: a change not only in the types of energy we consume, but also in how, where, and by whom goods are produced.

Therefore, the real challenge is not in paying the cost, but in managing it — that is, how to distribute it over time, mitigate its impact, and reduce its recurrence in the future. Ultimately, Jordan is not facing an energy crisis, but a price crisis, and this is a crucial distinction. The first crisis (energy) means an economic standstill, while the second (prices) means financial pressure that can be managed, but cautiously. Wars aren't fought only on battlefields; they're financed in budgets and felt in prices.

The most important message today is this: The situation is under control in terms of energy availability, but it's financially costly. The shorter the crisis, the more limited its impact will be. If it lasts longer, the question will shift from: How much are we losing daily? To: How much can we endure before we change our policies?

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

Jordan's Q4 2025 Growth: What lies behind the 3% expansion?

Dr. Raad Mahmoud Al-Tal

The latest data show that Jordan's economy grew by 3 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2025, compared with 2.6 per cent in the same period of 2024. Although the increase is small, it still reflects a slight improvement in economic performance. Growth during the first three quarters of 2025 also remained relatively stable, ranging between 2.7 per cent and 2.8 per cent. This means the economy is growing at a steady pace, even under challenging regional and global conditions.

What matters more than the growth rate itself is where this growth is coming from. The fourth quarter shows that growth was spread across most sectors of the economy, rather

than relying on one area. More importantly, a large part of this growth came from productive sectors. Manufacturing contributed the largest share, followed by agriculture, mining, and electricity. Together, these sectors accounted for more than half of total growth, which is a positive sign because it means the economy is becoming more based on real production.

Manufacturing is the most important driver of growth. It makes up a significant share of the economy and grew by 5.2 per cent. This sector is important because it creates value, supports supply chains, increases exports, and provides jobs. Its continued growth shows that it plays a central role in supporting overall economic activity.

Agriculture recorded the high-

est growth rate at 7 per cent, followed by mining at 6.9 per cent. These sectors are performing well, but their output can change due to factors outside the economy, such as weather conditions in agriculture or global price changes in mining. This makes their contribution useful but less stable compared to manufacturing.

Some large sectors of the economy grew more slowly. Real estate, which represents a significant share of GDP, grew by only 0.7 per cent, while public administration grew by 1.7 per cent. This slow growth in important sectors limits the overall pace of the economy and shows that not all parts of the economy are expanding at the same speed.

Other service sectors such

as trade, transport and financial services showed moderate performance. They supported growth but were not the main drivers during this period. At the same time, the data suggest a gradual shift towards more reliance on productive sectors, which is a positive development if it continues in the future.

The Jordanian economy showed resilience despite regional challenges, including geopolitical tensions in 2025. However, maintaining and improving this growth will require policies that focus on strengthening productive sectors. Supporting investment, improving infrastructure, enhancing energy efficiency, and building workforce skills are key steps that can help sustain growth and increase its rate in the future.

Wars fought for fun cannot be won

By Timothy Snyder

TORONTO — Setting aside the moral, legal, and political arguments against the United States attacking Iran, US President Donald Trump's latest war cannot be won for a more fundamental reason: It is based on whim.

War planning follows a certain logic. A vital interest, such as protecting citizens' safety or national security, impels leaders to devise a policy for achieving that goal in a particular part of the world. As Carl von Clausewitz famously put it: "War is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means." Policy often leads to strategy, an overall plan for victory that accounts for the tactics to be used. An operation is a specific act in a specific setting, whose success depends on having the necessary capabilities, including human resources and weapons.

The logic flows forward and backward, as a design and as a verification.

In design, each item determines the next: Interest determines policy, policy determines strategy, strategy determines tactics, tactics determine operations and operations determine capabilities. Verification reverses the flow: Do we have the capabilities to carry out that operation? Does the operation serve the tactic? Does the

tactic fit the strategy? Does the strategy implement the policy? Does the policy correspond to the national interest?

Of course, war is a bloody, unpredictable mess. Conflicts can spiral out of control, and the enemy often reacts in ways that are hard to foresee. Even leaders sometimes fail to understand what is happening. Trump, for example, is shown two-minute sizzle reels of "stuff blowing up" in Iran rather than being briefed.

While military planning is not sufficient to win a war, it is certainly necessary. If leaders fail to identify a national interest, a war cannot be won, because victory demands an objective. In its war with Iran, the US has none. Instead, capabilities determined everything. It was possible to kill Iranian leaders, so the Trump administration did just that.

The military analyst B.A. Friedman has argued that US leaders reversed the logic chain when deciding whether to attack Iran, with the idea being that capabilities would create successful operations, enough operations would coalesce into a tactic, and so on. But just because the US government can bomb anything it wants does not mean that doing so is in the national interest.

Trump has yet to provide a credible explanation for striking Iran. The only consistent

message is one of enjoyment. Kidnapping Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela was exhilarating, and Trump called into the TV show "Fox & Friends" to talk about how nice it would be to repeat the experience.

He now says that the war in Iran is "fun." US Secretary of "War" [Defence] Pete Hegseth uses similar terms.

Call it the pleasure principle: Trump and Hegseth take satisfaction in killing or dominating other people. Despite commentators' best efforts to divine a policy justification, it is whimsy all the way down.

Having started with the pleasure principle, Trump is trapped, like an amateur gambler, in a cycle of highs and lows. It felt good to decapitate the Islamic Republic, but then it felt bad when Iran, instead of surrendering, expanded the war and blocked the Strait of Hormuz. And now, the US must "double down" (notice the gambling jargon) to provide Trump with another short-term hit of pleasure. Each high will be more elusive than the last.

Applying legal limits, ethical standards and democratic principles to the Trump administration's lack of war planning highlights how one man's pleasure has superseded all other considerations. For starters, the US is clearly fighting an illegal war of aggression.

Moreover, no moral reason has been given for undermining the international order, let alone killing Iranian civilians. And Trump did not seek authorisation from Congress, which represents the American people and has the sole power to declare war under the Constitution.

While the US can weaken the Islamic Republic, it cannot win the war, because it is not fighting for anything. Its capabilities have become a trap. And others have started to benefit from Trump's pleasure principle. People around him are making money, while his patron Russian President Vladimir Putin is doing very well indeed. Trump may even try to use the conflict with Iran as a pretext for interfering in the midterm elections.

Moral, legal and democratic reasoning could have thwarted this typical form of tyranny, in which a leader uses his unchecked power to attack an adversary for his own enjoyment. For Americans, the only victory in this war would be to vindicate the principles and restore the institutions that would have prevented it.

Timothy Snyder, the inaugural chair in Modern European History at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto and a permanent fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, is the author or editor of 20 books.

BUSINESS

Thursday, April 2, 2026



Amman Stock Exchange has conducted the periodic quarterly review of the ASE indices constituents to ensure that these indices reflect the market performance

ASE indices quarterly review

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) has conducted the periodic quarterly review of the ASE indices constituents in purpose of ensuring that these indices reflect the market performance and the trading activity of the listed companies.

By this rebalancing, the activity of listed companies in regard to trading during the last quarter has been reviewed, according to ASE statement.

After that, the ASE has conducted its screening process for all listed companies based on the criteria used by the ASE represented by full market capitalisation of the companies and the number of trading days during the last quarter.

As a result of this review, 7 companies have been excluded from the general index sample ASEGI, and another 3 companies have been added.

The companies that

have been excluded from the index sample were; Arabia Insurance Company, Jordan, Mediterranean Tourism Investment, Arab Phoenix Holdings, Comprehensive Multiple Transportations Company, Ibn Al Haytham Hospital Company, Jordan Dairy and Universal Modern Industries.

The companies that have been added to the index sample were; Salam International Transport and Trading, Nutri Dar and Jordan Vegetable Oil Industries.

As part of the process, the ASE calculated the free float for all listed companies on the ASE based on the data received from the Securities Depository Centre.

Noting that the ASE is setting a 10 per cent cap for the company's weight in the index to prevent the index from being dominated by individual companies; adjustments were made to the company's weights listed in

the ASEGI, ASE20 and ASETR indices.

Regarding the general index ASEGI, the full market capitalisation of the index constituents represents 95.0 per cent of the total market capitalisation of the companies listed on the ASE.

The free float market capitalisation of the index constitutes represents 96.8 per cent of the total free float market capitalisation of the listed companies on the ASE.

As for the ASE20 index and ASETR index sample the full market capitalisation of the index constituents represents 89.0 per cent of the total market capitalisation of the companies listed on the ASE.

The free float market capitalisation of these companies represents 90.5 per cent of the total free float market capitalisation of the ASE listed companies, according to ASE statement.

Jordan-Syria bilateral trade rebounds to JD 334m — ACC

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Chamber of Commerce (ACC) data on Wednesday announced that total bilateral trade surged to JD 334 million last year, a nearly three-fold increase over the JD 116 million recorded in 2024.

This significant growth trajectory aligns with recent Standard & Poor's (S&P) assessments, which credit the reopening of the Syrian market as a primary catalyst for Jordan's projected 3 per cent GDP growth in the current fiscal year, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The statistical shift marks a significant departure from the stagnant performance observed between 2019 and 2024, a period where Jordanian exports were largely constrained below the JD70 million threshold.

By the end of 2025, however, Jordanian exports spiked to JD252 million, driven primarily by high-demand industrial outputs including cement, iron, marble and specialised chemical products.

Jordanian imports from the Syrian market climbed to JD82 million, with a strategic focus on agricultural commodities and



Amman Chamber of Commerce data on Wednesday announces that total bilateral trade surged to JD 334 million last year

raw materials such as anise, cumin and fresh produce.

Chairman of ACC, Khalil Haj Tawfiq, identified the stabilisation of the Jaber-Nassib border crossing as the operational backbone of this recovery.

Beyond direct sales, the Syrian market has reclaimed its status as a vital logistical corridor for Jordanian goods entering broader regional and European supply chains.

This integration is further evidenced by the 3,857 Syrian partners currently registered with the Chamber, representing a combined investment capital of JD181 million across the Kingdom's service and commercial sectors.

Chairman of the Jordanian and Amman Chambers of Industry (ACI) characterised the 355 per cent year-on-year growth rate as a reflection of unprecedented dynamism fuelled by regional reconstruction efforts.

He noted that Jordanian manufacturers have demonstrated significant agility in pivoting toward Syrian infrastructure needs, particularly in the fields of photovoltaic cells and industrial conductors.

As both nations transition toward the activation of the Higher Coordination Council in 2026, the bilateral relationship is moving beyond basic commodity exchange into a more sophisticated phase of industrial and energy integration, Petra reported.

Germany growth forecasts slashed as Mideast war hits economy

BERLIN (AFP) — Leading economic institutes more than halved their growth forecasts for Germany on Wednesday, warning that the energy shock caused by the Middle East war would hit Europe's top economy hard.

A group of leading institutes slashed their joint growth forecast for 2026 to 0.6 per cent, down from a September prediction of 1.3 per cent.

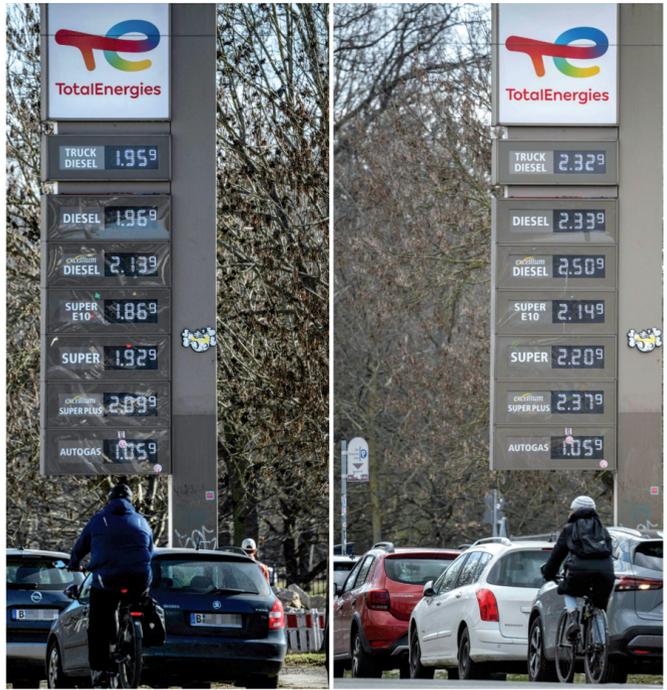
Inflation is now forecast to rise to 2.8 per cent, up from 2 per cent, "weighing on household purchasing power".

"The energy price shock triggered by the Iran war is hitting the recovery hard," said economist Timo Wollmershaeuser of the Ifo institute, adding that increased government spending was nevertheless "preventing a stronger slide".

Oil and natural gas prices have surged since the end of February, when the United States and Israel attacked Iran, killed its supreme leader and plunged the Middle East into war.

Iran has since closed the Strait of Hormuz to ships of countries it considers allied with the US and Israel, effectively blocking a sea lane that normally transports about a fifth of the world's oil and gas trade.

Higher inflation in Germany would hit consumer spending, the institutes said, weighing on an already weak economy that has barely grown since a burst of pent-up demand after the Covid pandemic in 2022.



This combination of two pictures created on Wednesday and taken on March 4, and on Wednesday showing a person cycling past digital displays with the price of petrol at a Total petrol station in Berlin, with a rise of almost 0.40 euros within roughly one month

Chinese competition in sectors from cars to chemicals, was in the doldrums even before US President Donald Trump last year imposed sweeping new tariffs before starting the Mideast war in late February.

Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who took office last May, vowed to borrow and spend hundreds of billions for a special infrastructure fund over coming years in what was dubbed a spending "bazooka" aimed at getting Europe's top economy back on its feet.

But the economists said that much of the money was simply

paying for day-to-day spending.

"Government expenditure on consumption is rising much more sharply than investment," economist Oliver Holtmoeller of the Halle Institute for Economic Research said. "That was not the idea behind changing the financing rules."

The outlook for the longer term was also dire.

Citing low productivity, industrial decline and an ageing population, the institutes warned that Germany's economy would soon be unable to grow sustainably.

"We have also reassessed the structural

changes in the German economy and, in particular, revised our forecast for industrial growth downwards," Wollmershaeuser said.

In an era when "demographic change is hitting with full force", he said, "potential growth will come to a standstill by the end of the decade, and we will have to get used to average GDP growth rates of zero per cent".

In this phase of "multiple transformations," the institutes recommend the German government "increase incentives for employment" and ease regulations to "improve conditions for investment and innovation".

Minister of Investment holds meeting with Jordanian-Swedish business network

AMMAN (JT) — The Minister of Investment, Tariq Abu Ghazaleh, held a meeting recently, in the presence of the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Jordan Maria Sargren with the Jordanian-Swedish Business Network, which consists of representatives of a number of Swedish companies operating in Jordan.

During the meeting, Abu Ghazaleh pointed to the strength of Jordanian-Swedish relations, pointing to the importance to enhance investment cooperation strategically and qualitatively, in a way that contributes to achieving the common interests of the two friendly countries.

He stressed that Jordan is moving steadily towards developing a more competitive investment environment, supported by qualitative legislative and regulatory measures that facilitate doing business and enhance investor



The Minister of Investment, Tariq Abu-Ghazaleh, meets recently with Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Jordan, Maria Sargren and the Jordanian-Swedish Business Network

confidence

Abu Ghazaleh pointed to the advantages that the Kingdom enjoys, most notably stability, distinctive geographical location, free trade agreements, in addition to the availability of qualified human competencies.

The meeting witnessed the participation of representatives of the Embassy of Sweden, a number of officials of the Ministry of Investment, concerned ministries and institution, as well as representatives of the private sector and Swedish companies operating in the Kingdom.

The discussions handled a direct discussion was held on opportunities for expansion in the energy, industry, technology and services sectors, according to the Ministry of Investment statement.

'Zero growth'
Germany's economy, struggling with fierce

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Wednesday amounted to JD23.1 million spread over 3.7 million shares that traded through 3,434 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.06 per cent, closing at 3643.40 points.

Out of 96 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 24 companies rose while the share price of another 38 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Contempro for Housing Projects by 4.49 per cent, Al-Faris National Company for Investment and Export by 4.17 per cent, Amad Investment and Real Estate Development by 4.07 per cent, Al-Tajamout for Catering and Housing Company Plc. by 3.7 per cent and Shareco Brokerage Company by 3.23 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were General Investment by 7.42 per cent, Jordanian Duty Free Shops by 7.41 per cent, Petra Education Company by 7.13 per cent, Salam International Transport and Trading by 6.67 per cent and National Insurance by 5.41 per cent.

THE MARKET TODAY

ASE Index: ↑ 3643.40 0.06% April 01, 2026

Live Data Historical Data

Click and drag in the plot area to zoom in

DAILY SUMMARY

Regular Market		OTC Market
Trading Value (JDs)	23,327,697	
Trading volume	3,693,907	
No. of Transactions	3,434	
No. of Securities	96	

Teams zoom in on CFI Basketball League title

NBA

Doncic returns with 42 as Lakers down Cavs

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — Luka Doncic returned from suspension to score 42 points as the Los Angeles Lakers defeated the Cleveland Cavaliers 127-113 to extend their impressive form with a fourth straight victory on Tuesday. The Lakers, who have emerged as genuine title contenders after winning 15 of 17 games in March to climb up the Western Conference standings, took control with big quarters either side of half-time to cruise to victory. The Lakers outscored Cleveland 33-19 in the second quarter and then erupted for 45 points in the third to put the game away. Doncic finished with 42 points, 12 assists and five rebounds, shooting 6-of-13 from three-point range. Doncic's latest virtuoso performance also saw him break Kobe Bryant's record for the most points scored by a Lakers player in a calendar month, which had stood at 578 set in 2006. Doncic said extending the Lakers' winning run meant more than setting personal records. "If you don't win, it doesn't really mean anything," Doncic told reporters. "So the run that we've been on it really means a lot. We've got to keep playing like that."

FOOTBALL

World Cup winner Goetze extends contract at Frankfurt

FRANKFURT, Germany (AFP) — Mario Goetze, who scored Germany's winning goal in the 2014 World Cup final against Argentina, has extended his contract with Eintracht Frankfurt by two years until 2028, the club announced on Wednesday. The 33-year-old midfielder joined Frankfurt in 2022, having spent the bulk of his career with Borussia Dortmund and Bayern Munich. "Eintracht Frankfurt means a lot to me," Goetze said in a statement, adding: "I know a football career is finite. The joy I get from football and from this club convinced me to extend my contract." Against Argentina in the 2014 World Cup final, Goetze came off the bench two minutes before the end of regular time with the match goalless. With 113 minutes played, he chested an Andre Schuerle pass and blasted a shot across the face of goal to secure Germany's fourth World Cup. A winner of the 2011 Golden Boy as the best young player in Europe, the middle part of Goetze's career was derailed by injuries, illness and poor form. He has spoken openly of the pressure of living up to his early promise and his high-profile goal. Goetze scored 17 times in his 66 Germany appearances, with his last cap coming in 2023.

By Aline Bannayan

AMMAN — The CFI Basketball League starts the semifinal play-offs Thursday with teams contesting the best-of-three play-offs to advance to the final.

Amman United face Jubeiha and Inqlizia BC play Faisali in the week-long play-offs ahead of the best-of-five finals.

In the preliminary Round 1, Amman United, Faisali, Jubeiha and Wihdat were the top four. However, during the past week, the knockout play-offs saw Inqlizia upset Wihdat in the most closely contested matchup, with the former upsetting the team with a big fan base 89-88 in Game 3 to advance. In other matches, Amman United ousted Shabab Bushra, Jubeiha overcame Jalil and Faisali advanced over Ashrafieh.

Amman United who won the 2024/25 League in their inaugural season are seeking to retain their title as two new athletic powerhouses have entered the competition. Former champs Wihdat are back to the fold after being suspended by the JBF in 2022 over regulations and age-division requirements, after they won their first title in 2019, and again



Teams get into high gear as the semifinals play-offs tip off

in 2021/22. They are joined by Faisali were impressive in their unbeaten run and beat Wihdat to take home

the Jordan Cup in their first season.

Three teams from Irbid — Ashrafieh, Jalil and Shabab Bushra

were the newcomers to the League, while two former champs missed the competition this season over

disagreements with the JBF: Veterans and 2022 champs Ahli and Orthodoxi who last won their 23rd title

was in 2014-15 and were runner-up in 2022/2023 and Jordan Cup champs in 2022.

The Basketball League which started in 1952 has had eight teams crowned champion. It was not played in four seasons and discontinued once. Ahli have won 25 times, Orthodoxi 23, Zain (Fastlink) 6, ASU 4, Wihdat, Riyadi and Jazira-Aramex twice, while Amman Untied, Urdun, Watany and the Electricity Co. won once each. Teams like former League and Cup champs Applied Science University, Ittihad and Zain have pulled out of the competition.

The League stopped during Round 1 to allow the national team's Window 2 Asian Group C qualifiers for the 2027 FIBA World Cup. Jordan got off to a good start beating Iran 73-60 while Syria beat Iraq 78-70. However, the Jordan-Iraq match was postponed with heightened security concerns amid Israel's bombing of several areas in the Lebanese capital hosting Window 2 matches.

Jordan was 2023 Asian Games silver medalist and a three-time qualifier to the World Cup, 2010, 2019 and 2023. The squad also played at the FIBA Asia Cup 17th times, with their best position runner-up in 2011.

THE JORDAN TIMES **LIFE**

Far cry from 16-pixel start, Mario makes it 'so big' on screen — creator Miyamoto

KYOTO, Japan (AFP) — Super Mario's creator Shigeru Miyamoto told AFP he had never imagined that the "little character I drew would become so big", bouncing through the decades from pixelated New York sewers to a silver-screen space epic.

There were more technical constraints when the red-capped plumber made his 1980s debut, the design mastermind of Japan's Nintendo said in an interview ahead of the release of "The Super Mario Galaxy Movie" on Wednesday.

In the earliest Mario arcade games, the character was only 16-pixel tall, a far cry from the rich visuals of the new film, a sequel to 2023 smash hit "The Super Mario Bros. Movie".

The simple original format forced the young Miyamoto to use his imagination — resulting in some of Mario's most distinctive features, from his moustache to his dungarees, which were easy to render and stood out on screen.

But the near-infinite possibilities granted by modern technology come with their own challenges, Miyamoto told AFP in Kyoto, where the video game giant is based.

"If there are no longer any limits, anyone can do it. And Nintendo has always wanted to make



A shopper (centre) walks past a Super Mario display at an electronics store in the popular shopping area of Akihabara in central Tokyo on September 8, 2025

things that only we are able to."

The first feature-length Mario animation was that year's second-highest-grossing title after "Barbie", bringing in \$1.3 billion despite a mixed reception from critics.

It was co-produced by Miyamoto and Chris Meledandri of Illumina- tion, the US studio be-

hind the "Despicable Me" franchise, and the pair teamed up again for the sequel.

The aim was to "build something incredible, so we could include elements that are typically Nintendo", the 73-year-old Miyamoto said.

Zero gravity

Burned by the first-ever

Mario film — a 1993 live-action flop that was one of the earliest game-to-movie adaptations, now relegated to kitsch curiosity — Nintendo has sought tighter control of its intellectual property.

The new film takes place in the universe of "Super Mario Galaxy", a 2007 platform game made for the Wii

console.

Transposing the game's distinctive floating-in-space dynamics to the big screen was not easy, Miyamoto said.

"There were lots of discussions about the difference between a gravity experience that's fun to play and one that's fun to watch."

Meledandri told AFP that "we didn't set out

to try to create the same sensations, because it just wouldn't be possible".

For example, one scene unfolds in a zero-gravity space casino.

"And as we were making that sequence, [Miyamoto] would also point to opportunities within the sequence to even more fully evoke the feeling of the game",

Meledandri said.

Meledandri's animation studio is based in Paris, and he said he likes to encourage a "French sensibility, whether it's through visual expression or character performance" in the films.

While the 2023 feature cashed in on its stream of cheeky insider references, the mission this time around was to develop the sense of story.

"With the first film, we wanted above all to translate the experience of game play into the movie," Miyamoto said.

This time, the team wanted to give more depth to characters whose background had deliberately been left sparse in the video games.

"We had plenty of back-and-forth [with the screenwriters] until we were happy that the scenarios and plot did not contradict what's in the games," Miyamoto said.

'Too many' characters

"The Super Mario Galaxy Movie" introduces green dinosaur Yoshi and the mercenary Fox McCloud, while exploring the mysterious origin story of Princess Peach — long portrayed as a damsel in distress, kidnapped by the evil turtle-like Bowser.

Nintendo's voluminous line-up of characters forced some difficult choices.

"There were too many, we had to drop some," said Miyamoto.

The game designer is legendary among Nintendo teams for "upending the tea table", a Japanese phrase referring to his tendency to want everything redone at a very late stage.

But he said he has changed his ways for the movie project.

"In a game, we have the ability to complete the individual pieces and then change the structure. But for a film, that's impossible."

Meledandri said Miyamoto "is never shy about challenging a decision".

"But out of that challenging, we actually may find an unexpected path," he added.

For Miyamoto, as Mario's creator, "I try to provide as much information, context and ideas as possible on my vision of these characters and this world."

But "it's Chris and his team who make the film", Miyamoto said.

"This balance works well," he added, and Nintendo is trying to use the approach for separate projects like the live-action film based on the "Legend of Zelda" franchise, due for release in May 2027.

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