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King, UAE president discuss regional de-escalation

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah and United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, during a phone call on Thursday, discussed ways to de-escalate tensions in the region. His Majesty emphasised the need to mobilise Arab and international efforts to bring about an immediate halt to Iranian aggression against Jordan, the UAE and Arab states, noting the importance of strengthening joint Arab action to address the economic consequences of the war, according to a Royal Court statement.

Crown Prince visits German Jordanian University

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein visited the German Jordanian University (GJU) on Thursday.

During a meeting with a number of GJU students, the Crown Prince emphasised the importance of empowering young people and developing their skills to enhance their readiness to enter the labour market, according to a Royal Court statement.

His Royal Highness highlighted efforts to keep pace with rapid developments in the fields of modern science and digital transformation, in order to build a young generation capable of innovation.

The Crown Prince also underscored the importance of practical training within university programs to enhance students' ability to adapt to the demands of the future.

His Royal Highness expressed confidence in youth and their pivotal role in driving development forward and addressing challenges responsibly.

The Crown Prince



HRH Crown Prince Hussein visits the German Jordanian University on Thursday

Photo courtesy of Royal Court

also engaged in a wide-ranging discussion with the students on issues of concern to them across various fields. The students also presented

their projects and shared their ideas, which aim to provide practical solutions to challenges in key sectors.

His Royal Highness

also visited the Dean-ship of Innovation, Technology Transfer and Entrepreneurship (DI-TECH) the first of its kind in Jordan and

GJU's Technology, Research and Innovation Park (TRIP) complex, the statement said

Continued on page 5

Air defences intercept Iranian-fired missile — JAF



AMMAN (JT) — The Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) said on Thursday that Iran had targeted the Kingdom's territory within the past 24 hours.

JAF's Media Directorate said that the Royal Jordanian Air Force has successfully intercepted and destroyed a missile that had been heading towards a site

inside of the Kingdom.

The Public Security Directorate (PSD) said that its units responded to four incidents involving falling shrapnel and projectiles during the same period.

PSD said that no injuries were recorded as a result of the incidents, with only some material damage reported.

He warned against approaching any suspicious objects or debris, stressing the need to follow instructions through official sites.

He also urged the public to report any suspicious objects via the emergency number 911, and to rely on official sources while avoiding rumours and misleading news.



Central Bank issues JD200 million in long-term bonds

AMMAN (JT) — The Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ), acting on behalf of the government, on Thursday issued its 14th Treasury bond offering for 2026, with a total value of JD200 million.

Data, cited by Al Mamlaka, showed that the bonds will mature

on April 5, 2031, while the settlement date has been set for April 5, 2026.

Treasury bonds are long-term financing instruments, typically maturing within a period ranging from two to 20 years.

They include both government-issued se-

curities and corporate bonds.

In contrast, Treasury bills are short-term government debt instruments with maturities ranging between three and 12 months. They are considered low-risk financial tools and are widely traded in financial markets.

Unemployment rate falls to 16.1% in Q4 2025 — DoS

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's unemployment rate declined to 16.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2025, down from 16.9 per cent in the same period of 2024, according to figures released on Thursday by the Department of Statistics (DoS).

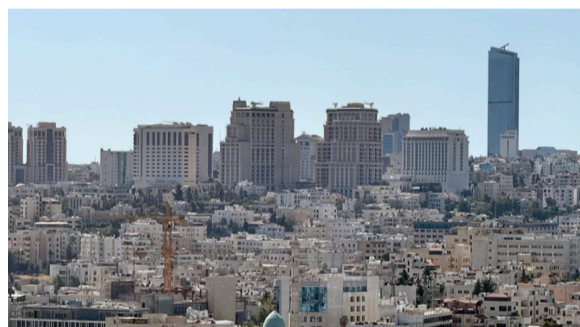
The rate also edged slightly lower by 0.1

percentage point compared with the third quarter of 2025, reflecting a modest but continued improvement in the labour market.

Unemployment among Jordanian males stood at 17.2 per cent during the reporting period, marking a decrease of 1 percent-

age point year-on-year and 0.8 percentage point from the previous quarter.

The data showed a broader downward trend over recent years, with overall unemployment among Jordanians falling by 1.7 percentage points compared with the fourth quarter of 2022.



Male unemployment has dropped by 4.2 percentage points

since 2021.

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Jordan, Arab, Islamic countries condemn Israeli law allowing death penalty for Palestinians

AMMAN (JT) — The foreign ministers of Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Egypt have "strongly" condemned the Israeli occupying power's enactment of a law in its parliament (Knesset) that allows the imposition of the death penalty in the occupied West Bank and its de facto application against Palestinians.

In a joint statement, the foreign ministers warned against the "increasingly discriminatory, escalating Israeli practices that entrench a system of apartheid and a rejectionist discourse that denies the inalienable rights and the very existence of



the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian Territory".

They also underscored that this legislation constitutes a dangerous escalation, "particularly given its discriminatory application against Palestinian prisoners", stressing that such measures risk further exacerbating tensions and undermining regional stability.

The ministers also expressed deep concern over the conditions of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention, warning of mounting risks amid credible reports of ongoing abuses, including torture, inhumane and degrading treatment, starvation and the denial of basic rights.

Continued on page 5

Jordan-EU Investment Conference postponed until end of 2026

AMMAN (JT) — The government has announced that the Jordan-European Investment Conference will be postponed until the end of 2026.

The decision, made in coordination with the European Union, comes amid logistical challenges arising from regional developments, according to Al Mamlaka.

The high-level conference was slated for April 21.

It could also prevent several key partners and participants from travelling and fully engaging in the conference.



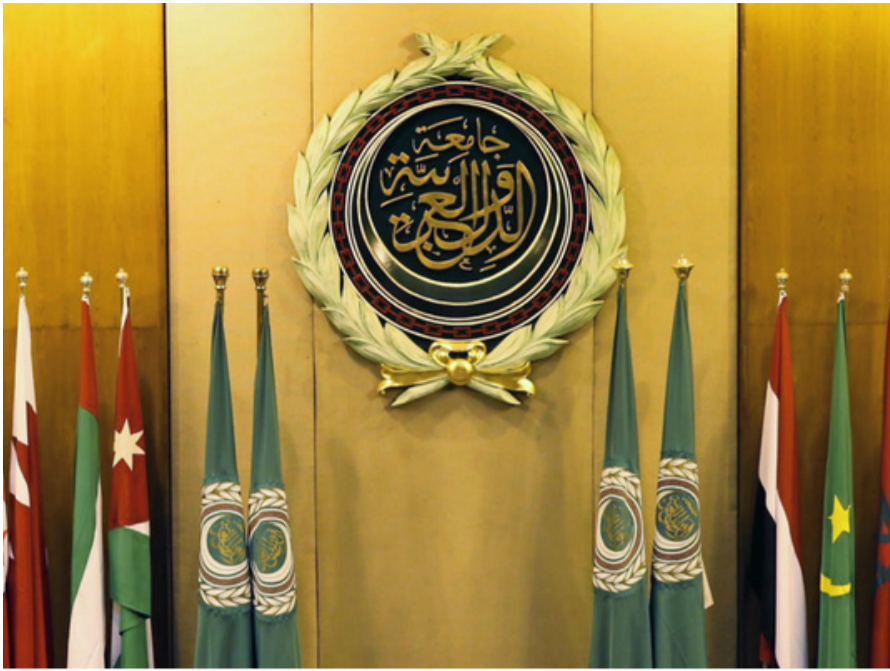
Jordan and the European Union reaffirmed the depth of

their longstanding partnership and their shared commitment

to continue strengthening economic and trade cooperation.

Both sides also reiterated their commitment to strengthening ties between business communities and promoting European investments in Jordan, underlining the country's position as a stable and open investment hub strategically situated at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa.

Jordanian ministerial promotional tours in Europe have created positive momentum, prompting both sides to step up coordination with relevant stakeholders to hold the conference before the end of 2026.



Jordan condemns Israeli violations in West Bank at Arab League emergency meeting

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's Permanent Representative to the Arab League Amjad Adailleh on Thursday headed the Jordanian delegation participating in an extraordinary session of the Council of the Arab League at the permanent representatives' level.

The emergency meeting was convened to address Israeli violations in Jerusalem and the Knesset's approval of a law permitting the execution of Palestinian prisoners, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

During the meeting, Adailleh underscored Jordan's condemnation of the "illegal, unjustified, and provocative" Israeli violations in occupied Jerusalem, which target the city's identity and its holy sites.

He reiterated the Kingdom's absolute rejection of all measures taken by Israel, the occupying power, which constitute a flagrant breach of the historical and legal status quo and the right to unrestricted access to places of worship.

Adailleh also stressed that Israel holds no sovereignty over occupied Jerusalem or its Islamic and Christian sanctities.

The Kingdom also ex-

pressed its total rejection of the Israeli Knesset's ratification of the law to execute Palestinian prisoners, describing it as a "racist, discriminatory, and illegal" piece of legislation.

The emergency meeting was convened to address Israeli violations in Jerusalem and the Knesset's approval of a law permitting the execution of Palestinian prisoners...

Adailleh noted that the bill violates international law and international humanitarian law, reflecting systematic Israeli policies aimed at undermining the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent state on their national soil based on the two-state solution.

Adailleh highlighted the efforts led by His Majesty King Abdullah, in coordination with international partners, to counter Israeli attempts to exploit current regional circumstances to impose a new reality in the West Bank.

He noted that Arab efforts through the Arab League are part of a comprehensive action to broaden international opposition to Israeli policies.

He called on the international community to uphold its legal and moral responsibilities by taking immediate and effective action to prevent Israel from continuing its "null and void" legislation and unilateral illegal practices.

The meeting, chaired by Bahrain's Permanent Representative Fawzia Zainal, current president of the council's 165th session, included statements from Palestine's Permanent Representative Mohammad Aklouk and Assistant Secretary-General for Palestine and Occupied Arab Territories Affairs Faed Mustafa.

The officials collectively urged for urgent Arab, Islamic, and international intervention to expose and stop Israeli violations against Jerusalem and its sanctuaries.

UNHCR provides \$38m for 214,000 vulnerable refugees in Jordan in 2025

AMMAN (JT) — The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Jordan said that it provided cash assistance to more than 214,000 vulnerable refugees in 2025, with a total value of \$38 million.

The agency's annual assessment showed that over 90 per cent of beneficiaries reported improved living conditions, greater financial stability, and lower levels of stress and life pressures, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

UNHCR said that it will continue supporting refugees who choose to voluntarily return to Syria, noting that most refugees do not have a plan to return in the near future.

It added that more than 74,000 refugees received legal aid and counselling services during 2025.

From December 8, 2024 to December 31, 2025, over 177,000 refugees returned from Jordan to Syria, including around 173,000 in 2025, while total returns exceeded 186,000 until March 7.

The agency said that it



File photo

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Jordan says that more than 74,000 refugees received legal aid and counselling services during 2025

received about \$115 million in funding in 2025, covering 31 per cent of its needs, leaving a funding gap of around \$258.8 million, equivalent to 69 per cent of the total funding required.

UNHCR noted that the funding requirements for 2026 stands at some \$280 million to maintain the services provided in

Jordan and support voluntarily return to Syria.

The number of registered refugees and asylum seekers in Jordan fell to approximately 427,000 by February 2026, down from around 437,000 at the end of January, marking a 2.3 per cent decrease, according to UNHCR recent figures.

The data said that Syrian refugees remain the largest group, numbering 403,548, or 94.5 per cent of the total.

They are followed by Iraqis at 12,309 (2.9 per cent), Yemenis at 6,089 (1.4 per cent) and Sudanese at 4,270 (1 per cent). Refugees from Somalia number 322, while 393 individuals come from

other nationalities.

Most refugees live in urban areas, with 343,703 individuals (80.5 per cent) residing across Jordanian cities and towns, compared with 83,228 (19.5 per cent) living in camps. Of the camp population, 49,596 are in Zaatar Camp, and 33,475 are in Azraq Camp.

Jordan, NATO discuss cooperation amid regional tensions

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's Ambassador to Belgium and Head of Mission to the European Union Yousef Bataineh on Wednesday held talks with NATO Deputy Secretary-General Radmila Shekerinska on cooperation and regional developments.

In a post on X, cited by Al Mamlaka TV, Bataineh said that discussions covered the existing partnership and cooperation programmes, as well as ongoing military developments in the region and their implications for



Al Mamlaka TV photo

Jordan's Ambassador to Belgium Yousef Bataineh on Wednesday holds talks with NATO Deputy Secretary-General Radmila Shekerinska on cooperation and regional developments

Jordan.

He added that both sides discussed enhancing support programmes

and accelerating their implementation in light of escalating tensions, with the aim of boosting

Jordan's resilience and stability in the face of emerging challenges.

Bataineh noted that

Shekerinska highlighted NATO's full solidarity with Jordan and its support in confronting attacks launched by Iran.

For her part, Shekerinska described Jordan as a "close and highly valued partner" for the alliance.

In a separate post on X, she said that the meeting addressed developments in the Middle East, stressing that NATO stands in "full solidarity" with Jordan and condemns the ongoing and indiscriminate attacks carried out by Iran.

House speaker, Iraqi ambassador discuss ties, coordination on regional security

AMMAN (JT) — Lower House Speaker Mazen Qadi on Thursday received Iraqi Ambassador to Jordan Omar Barzanji to discuss means of bolstering ties, particularly in parliamentary fields.

Qadi underscored that Jordan, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah, remains committed to enhancing cooperation with Iraq across various sectors, stressing the importance of joint parliamentary coordination to serve the interests of both nations and key regional causes, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He also noted the significance of the recent telephone call between His Majesty and Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al Sudani, during which they reaffirmed the urgency of intensive efforts to end the



Petra photo

Lower House Speaker Mazen Qadi and Iraqi Ambassador to Jordan Omar Barzanji on Thursday discuss means of bolstering ties and enhancing cooperation across various sectors

ongoing war and increase coordination to mitigate its regional and international repercussions.

Regarding recent security developments, Qadi addressed attacks targeting Jordan and Arab Gulf states, noting that the Kingdom has been sub-

jected to strikes by armed factions.

He said that the Foreign Ministry has repeatedly engaged with the Iraqi government to underscore the necessity of stopping such aggressions and preventing their recurrence.

Qadi stressed that Jordan handles these developments with wisdom, noting that the relations between the two countries necessitate a rational approach that resists any attempts to undermine them.

The ambassador said

that his visit to the Lower House serves to reaffirm Iraq's position, as expressed by the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, which rejects any aggression or targeting of Jordan and Gulf states.

He underlined that the security of Arab nations is an integral part of Iraq's national security, adding that regional stability is a mutual interest for all peoples in the region.

The diplomat added that Iraq remains committed to a balanced foreign policy based on mutual respect and cooperation to reduce tensions.

Barzanji reiterated that Iraq rejects the use of its territory to attack other countries and is committed to maintaining its sovereignty and preventing any actions that could harm regional security.



Petra photo

Interior Minister Mazen Farayah on Thursday conducts a field visit to Aqaba Governorate, where he inspects several administrative and service facilities

Interior minister inspects Aqaba services, border crossing upgrades

AMMAN (JT) — Interior Minister Mazen Farayah on Thursday conducted a field visit to Aqaba Governorate, where he inspected several administrative and service facilities, including the governorate headquarters, the specialised civil defence centre in the Southern Industrial Zone and the Durra Border Crossing.

The minister commenced his tour at the governorate's headquarters, holding a meeting with Aqaba Governor Ayman Away-

sheh in the presence of local administrative officials, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

During the session, Farayah discussed several operational issues and institutional developments.

He was briefed on the measures implemented to ensure the safety and security of citizens and residents, alongside a comprehensive review of the governorate's public safety protocols. Farayah also visited the specialised civil defence centre in the

Southern Industrial Zone, where he was updated on the unit's readiness and the strategic plans in place to respond to potential industrial incidents.

Concluding his tour, the minister inspected the Durra Border Crossing and the progress of the new border facility project, where he received briefings from officials regarding planned upgrades to the existing crossing aimed at enhancing service delivery and improving the operational environment.

No shortage of household gas quantity in Jordan — JPRC

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company (JPRC) spokesperson Haidar Bashaiah on Thursday said that there is no shortage of the household gas quantity in Jordan.

During a field visit in Abu Alanda station, Bashaiah told Al Mamlaka TV that the company has plenty of household gas to meet

the rising demand.

He stressed that the increase in demand has not affected the quantity of gas, noting that the gas is available across all of the company's stations in Abu Alanda, Zarqa and Irbid, in addition to its warehouse in Aqaba.

Bashaiah said that a ship carrying around 12,000 tonnes of gas arrived on Wednesday at

Aqaba Port, adding that four similar shipments of 16,000 tonnes each have been contracted to arrive in April.

He urged the public to avoid rumours on social media and rely on statements from official sources, adding that the gas storage is stable and there is no need for concern.

Bashaiah noted that the imports come from

Saudi Aramco through Yanbu Port, not the Strait of Hormuz to avoid any geopolitical situations.

He said that part of the supply is supported by local production, adding that filling operations are carried out efficiently through eight production lines across stations in Irbid and Zarqa.

The JPRC spokesper-

son said that all cylinders received at filling stations are processed on the same day without delay.

Bashaiah stressed that the JPRC operates under "clear" plans to ensure continuous supply, with shipments arriving as scheduled across the Kingdom to meet the demand of people and maintain the market stability.



NEPCO photo
Director General of the National Electric Power Company (NEPCO) Sufian Bataineh says on Thursday that fuel supply chains for electricity generation are functioning normally, with all power plants operating as usual

NEPCO: Power supply stable, no plans for outages, load shedding

AMMAN (JT) — The Electricity system is operating efficiently, safely and sustainably, with no cause for concern over the continuity of power supply, Director General of the National Electric Power Company (NEPCO) Sufian Bataineh said on Thursday.

Bataineh said that fuel supply chains for electricity generation are functioning normally, with all power plants operating as usual, alongside the full readiness of transmission lines and substations across the Kingdom, the Jordan News Agency, Petra,

reported.

He added that there are currently no plans for load shedding or scheduled outages, noting that the power system remains stable and is supported by a diversified fuel mix, including liquefied natural gas (LNG) and conventional fuels such as diesel.

On gas supplies, Bataineh said deliveries are continuing uninterrupted, supported by the regasification vessel at Aqaba Port and scheduled LNG shipments in line with operational plans, ensuring sustained electricity generation.

He also highlighted ongoing coordination with Egypt and Iraq to secure gas and fuel supplies, as part of broader efforts to strengthen energy security.

Bataineh also reiterated the company's commitment to implementing the prime minister's directives on expenditure rationalisation, noting that vehicle use is restricted to official duties and that measures are in place to reduce energy consumption across company facilities, in line with Cabinet decisions aimed at enhancing efficiency and sustainability.

Foreign minister calls for diplomacy, unified international response on Hormuz tensions

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Thursday participated in a ministerial meeting on developments in the Strait of Hormuz, held at the invitation of British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper.

The virtual meeting brought together foreign ministers and representatives from 40 countries to discuss regional tensions and maritime security, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

During his remarks, Safadi stressed the need to stop "unjustified Iranian aggressions" targeting Jordan and other Arab Gulf states. He also called for an end to the dangerous regional escalation, emphasising diplomacy as the primary means to ensure security and stability.

The foreign minister highlighted the urgency of forging a unified international response to the ongoing escalation, the Strait of Hormuz closure, and the resulting threats to freedom of navigation.



Photo courtesy of Foreign Ministry
Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Thursday participates in a ministerial meeting on developments in the Strait of Hormuz

Safadi also expressed support for a draft UN Security Council resolution on maritime security in the strait, submitted by Bahrain, noting that it reflects a collective international will to safeguard navigation in line with international law.

He also underlined the importance of coordinated efforts to mitigate the economic repercussions of the strait's closure, calling for practical measures to address these impacts effectively.

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Ministry launches third environment report, outlines key sustainability challenges

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Environment, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), on Thursday launched the third State of the Environment Report in Jordan.

Minister of Environment Ayman Suleiman said the report documents rapid environmental changes in Jordan in recent years, driven by population growth, urban expansion, regional challenges and the growing impacts of climate change.

It addresses major issues, including water scarcity, air quality, waste management, biodiversity protection, and the sustainability of natural resources, according to a ministry statement.

Suleiman said that the report was based on a comprehensive scientific methodology that analyses the links between driving forces, pressures, environmental conditions, im-



Petra photo
The Ministry of Environment on Thursday launches the third State of the Environment Report in Jordan

pacts and responses.

"This approach provides a thorough understanding of environmental challenges and supports the identification of future priorities," he added.

The minister also said that the report serves as an important national reference and a specialised analytical

tool for decision-making, adding that it provides a reliable knowledge base for government agencies, the private sector, and civil society, supporting the development of environmental policies and the achievement of sustainable development goals.

Suleiman also noted

that the launch marks a key milestone in national environmental assessment efforts and paves the way for the fourth report. He also commended the contribution of international partners, national working teams, and all entities involved in preparing the report.

UNDP Resident Representative Randa Aboul Hosn stressed the programme's commitment to supporting Jordan's environmental sectors through projects and initiatives aligned with the Economic Modernisation Vision (2023-2033) under the theme "Sustainable Environment".

She described the report as a successful model of knowledge-based collaboration, aimed at developing more effective environmental policies and advancing sustainable development in the Kingdom.

UNEP Regional Coordinator Abdul Majeid Haddad said that preparing the report was a collective effort involving broad participation from government agencies.

He noted that the process included specialised training on integrated environmental assessment methodology, enabling national teams to produce report chapters in accordance with best scientific practices.



JT file
Lower House National Guidance and Media Committee underscores the critical role of responsible national media in safeguarding the country and its citizens from rumours

Committee stresses unity, credible media to confront rumours, misinformation

AMMAN (JT) — Lower House National Guidance and Media Committee Chairman Hussein Omoush on Thursday underscored the critical role of responsible national media in safeguarding the country and its citizens from rumours, stressing the need for professionalism and objectivity, particularly amid current challenges.

His remarks came during a committee meeting on crisis media coverage, attended by Lower House Assistant Speaker Hala Jarrah, Minister of Government Communication and Official spokesperson Mohammad Momani.

Momani said the current phase requires clear, professional media that presents information in its proper context, away from sensationalism and irresponsible rhetoric, emphasising that the media serves as a key pillar of national stability.

He warned that the

spread of rumours and inaccurate information erodes public trust, describing misinformation as a direct threat to social cohesion and security. He stressed the importance of promptly correcting false reports and relying on credible, official sources.

Momani also said the law will be strictly enforced against those who promote false or misleading information, warning of systematic attempts to destabilise Jordan.

He added that Jordan's strength lies in its Hashemite leadership, the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF), security agencies, public awareness, and the national economy, noting that these elements together form a comprehensive defence system.

Omoush called for coordinated media efforts to counter rumours, particularly those that directly affect citizens, stressing the importance of sup-

porting national stability and recognising the role of the JAF and security agencies in maintaining security.

For her part, Jarrah said Jordanian media is known for its professionalism and competence, calling for reinforcing the concept of "state media" rather than "government media". She also stressed the need to hold unqualified practitioners accountable and promote specialised journalism.

Lawmakers stressed that official media serves as a national compass and a shield against rumours, highlighting the importance of accuracy, objectivity, and unity behind the Hashemite leadership and national institutions, especially under current circumstances.

They also commended the role of the JAF and security agencies in protecting the Kingdom, noting the significant influence of the media in shaping public opinion.

Three suspects caught manufacturing Crystal meth — police

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Anti-Narcotic Department (AND) on Thursday announced the arrest of three suspects who were allegedly manufacturing Crystal meth in a three-month sting operation, according to police.

The law-enforcement agency received a tip that the three suspects were manufacturing illicit drugs to sell them in the local market and placed them under surveillance, according to

Police Spokesperson Lt. Col. Amer Sartawi.

AND investigators were able to locate three premises where the suspects used to store extremely dangerous and poisonous chemical substances that are used in manufacturing Crystal meth, Sartawi told The Jordan Times.

"The three premises were raided by law enforcement officers simultaneously, and the three suspects were arrested," the police official added.



Sartawi added that "the suspects were monitored for three months during the manufacturing process and were arrested before being able to sell any of the illicit drugs in the local market".

Crystal meth is the common name for crystal methamphetamine, a strong and highly addictive drug that affects the central nervous system, according to WebMD.

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



JAF photo
The Jordan Armed Forces -Arab Army (JAF) on Wednesday foils drug smuggling attempts

SECURITY

Army foils drug smuggling, infiltration attempts

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Armed Forces -Arab Army (JAF) on Wednesday foiled two infiltration and smuggling attempts along its western and northern fronts, as part of ongoing efforts to safeguard the Kingdom's security and stability.

The Southern Military Zone, in coordination with military security agencies and the Anti-Narcotics Department, intercepted an attempt to smuggle drugs using a drone along its western front, JAF said.

Border Guard forces

tracked the drone and engaged it in line with rules of engagement, bringing it down in Jordanian territory, with the seized materials handed over to the relevant authorities.

Meanwhile, the Northern Military Zone

thwarted an infiltration attempt by an individual trying to illegally cross into Jordan from Syria, JAF added.

The suspect was detected by Border Guards, apprehended after rules engagement were applied, and referred to the

competent authorities.

The JAF reiterated their commitment to deploying all capabilities to firmly confront smuggling and infiltration attempts in order to protect national security and ensure the safety of citizens.



Britain's Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper speaks during a virtual summit at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in London on Thursday

UK foreign minister stresses 'urgent need' to reopen Hormuz strait

LONDON (AFP) — British Foreign Minister Yvette Cooper stressed Thursday the "urgent need" to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and slammed Iran's "recklessness" as she convened a meeting of some 40 countries on the vital shipping route.

Cooper said Iran's blockading of the waterway was "hitting our global economic security" as she kicked off the virtual meeting of international allies.

The strait has been virtually closed since the US-Israeli war against Iran started on February 28, impacting global supplies of important commodities including oil, liquid natural gas and fertiliser.

That has led to a sharp rise in energy prices.

Cooper said foreign ministers and representatives from more than 40 countries had joined the call to discuss "the urgent need to restore freedom of navigation for international shipping, and the strength of our international determination to see the Strait reopen once more".

A total of 37 countries have signed a statement, first published last month, expressing "readiness to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through" the shipping lane.

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

The United States, China and most Middle Eastern countries have not, according to a list provided by the UK government.

"We have seen Iran hijack an international shipping route to hold the global economy hostage," Cooper added in her opening remarks, broadcast before the rest of the meeting took place behind closed doors.

Cooper said the discussions would focus on the "collective mobilisation of our full range of diplomatic and economic tools and pressures" to "enable a safe and sustained opening of the Strait".

A spokesperson for the French foreign ministry said securing the Strait of Hormuz could "only take place once the intense phase of the bombing is over".

French President Emmanuel Macron, speaking on a visit to South Korea, meanwhile, said a military operation to liberate the Strait of Hormuz was "unrealistic", while lamenting Trump's differing daily statements on the Iran war and NATO.

"There are those who advocate for the liberation of the Strait of Hormuz by force through a military operation, a position sometimes expressed by the United States," Macron said.

"I say sometimes because it has varied, it is never the option we have chosen and we consider it unrealistic," he said.

The virtual meeting came after Trump urged oil-importing nations to show "courage" and seize the narrow strait.

"The countries of the world that... receive oil through the Hormuz Strait must take care of that passage," Trump said in a prime-time address at the White House late Wednesday.

"Just take it, protect it, use it for yourselves," he added.

Trump has said he would consider a ceasefire only when Hormuz is "free and clear".

Western officials have insisted any operation to protect seafarers using the strait could only come after a ceasefire.

"We are also convening military planners to look at how we marshal our collective defensive military capabilities, including looking at issues such as de-mining or re-assurance once the conflict eases," Cooper told Thursday's meeting.

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

The channel normally sees around 120 daily transits, according to shipping industry intelligence site Lloyd's List.

But since March 1, commodities carriers have made just 225 crossings, according to maritime intelligence firm Kpler, a 94 per cent decrease on peacetime.

Back to Israeli occupation of south Lebanon?

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AFP) — A month into Israel's war against Hezbollah, invading Israeli troops are gradually advancing in south Lebanon, raising fears for the area's fate following the last Israeli occupation that lasted nearly two decades.

Since war erupted last month, Israeli officials have said Israel intends to establish a "security zone" inside Lebanon.

More recently, Defence Minister Israel Katz said the military "will establish itself in a security zone inside Lebanon... and will maintain security control over the entire area up to the Litani" river, around 30 kilometres from the border.

What is happening on the ground and how far could Israel go?

What's happening in south Lebanon?

The Israeli military previously issued unprecedented evacuation orders for swathes of the country's south, where Iran-backed Hezbollah holds sway.

An Israeli military source told AFP that four army divisions are currently deployed across the country's northern border.

A Western military source in south Lebanon said "the Israelis are advancing one axis at a time" and destroying border villages as they go.

The source told AFP on condition of anonymity that Israeli forces had taken the strategic town of Khiam, located along the eastern stretch of the shared border.

Hezbollah, which drew Lebanon into the Middle East war last month with rocket fire towards Israel, has been claiming repeated attacks on Israeli troops in south Lebanon, where Israel's military says 10 soldiers have been killed in combat.

The Iran-backed group is not halting Israeli troops' advance



First responders search for survivors at the site of an overnight Israeli air strike that targeted a house in the southern Lebanese village of Zibdine

"but is seeking symbolic victories such as the destruction of Merkava tanks", the Western military source said.

David Wood, senior Lebanon analyst at the International Crisis Group, told AFP that as Israel pushes further inside Lebanon, "it is entering a style of warfare that might actually suit Hezbollah better, in this sort of guerrilla hit-and-run style of fighting".

Lebanon's army has announced troop "repositioning and redeployment" in parts of the south where Israel is advancing.

A Lebanese military source said Israeli soldiers have advanced up to 10 kilometres in some places and Lebanon's army, which has limited means, fears it will be targeted or encircled.

Israeli fire has killed one on-duty Lebanese soldier.

United Nations peacekeepers deployed in south Lebanon have been powerless to stop the fighting, with three of their troops also killed.

What does Israel want?

Katz has said Israel would control south Lebanon up to the Litani, and vowed that hundreds of thousands of south Lebanon residents will not return until northern Israel's security is guaranteed.

Lebanese Defence Minister Michel Me'nassa this week denounced "a clear intention to impose a new occupation of Lebanese territory".

UN aid chief Tom Fletcher has warned that south Lebanon could become another occupied territory in the Middle East.

But Eyal Zisser, a Lebanon expert at Tel Aviv University, cautioned against taking Katz's announcements at face value.

"He's good at making statements, but you always have to check first of all if it is in full agreement" with what Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says, he told AFP's Jerusalem bureau.

Netanyahu has ordered troops to "further expand" a so-

called security zone in south Lebanon "to definitively neutralise the threat of invasion [by Hezbollah militants] and to keep anti-tank missile fire away from the border".

Military analyst and retired Lebanese army general Khalil Helou told AFP that Hezbollah has "recruited people from southern towns" for decades, giving the group "local power" that Israel fears could be further exploited if southerners return.

New occupation?

Israel has previously tried to create a buffer zone in southern Lebanon.

Following a first invasion in 1978, Israeli troops returned four years later, entering Lebanon all the way to Beirut to drive out Palestinian fighters.

Hezbollah was born in response to the 1982 invasion.

Israel withdrew gradually but kept an area up to 20 kilometres deep inside Lebanese territory until 2000, when it pulled out un-

der persistent pressure from Hezbollah.

Lebanese are increasingly concerned about a return to a similar scenario.

In its last war with Hezbollah and even after a November 2024 ceasefire, Israeli troops damaged or destroyed swathes of border villages and towns through strikes, controlled demolitions and the wrecking of agricultural areas.

Zisser said Israel maintaining control of the area south of the Litani was technically feasible.

"But you need to make a decision and you need to decide how to do it, [whether] to occupy the entire territory and establish yourself there" or not, he said.

Wood meanwhile cautioned that an occupation would create "new security threats" for Israel.

"If Israel denies people the right to return to their ancestral homes, then armed resistance groups will emerge or will continue to take up this struggle," he said.

Macron says military operation to 'liberate' Strait of Hormuz 'unrealistic'

SEOUL, South Korea (AFP) — French President Emmanuel Macron said on Thursday that a military operation to liberate the Strait of Hormuz is "unrealistic", expressing frustration at US President Donald Trump's alternating statements on the Iran war.

"There are those who advocate for the liberation of the Strait of Hormuz by force through a military operation, a position sometimes expressed by the United States," Macron said in South Korea.

"I say sometimes because it has varied, it is never the option we have chosen and we consider it unrealistic," he said.

"It is unrealistic because it would take an inordinate amount of time and would expose anyone crossing the strait to coastal threats from the [Iranian] Revolutionary Guards, who possess significant resources, as well as ballistic missiles, [and] a host of other risks."

He added: "This can only be done in concert with Iran. So, first and foremost, there must be a ceasefire and a resumption of negotiations."

The Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping route for oil, has been virtually paralysed for

weeks by the Middle East war.

Macron also accused Trump of constantly contradicting himself on the conflict.

"You have to be serious. When you want to be serious, you don't say the opposite every day of what you said the day before. And perhaps you shouldn't talk every day," Macron said.

meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron arrived in South Korea on Thursday after visiting fellow US ally Japan, where he praised Europe's "predictability" in an apparent swipe at Donald Trump over the Iran war.

Macron's two-day itinerary includes a summit with President Lee Jae-myung and a visit to a war memorial to pay tribute to French soldiers who fought in the Korean War, as well as an economic forum and dinner with K-pop stars and South Korean film makers.

In Japan, the French leader signed a roadmap on critical minerals and defence cooperation and held more talks on Thursday with Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, as well as meeting the imperial couple with his wife Brigitte Macron.

US President Trump called France "very un-

helpful" over the Iran war on Tuesday and then made fun of Macron, saying a day later his wife "treats him extremely badly" while mimicking his accent.

Macron praised Europe's "predictability" on Wednesday while in Japan, contrasting it with those that "could hurt you without even informing you" in an apparent reference to the United States.

Trump also criticised South Korea the same day as he urged countries dependent on the Strait of Hormuz to help reopen the key oil route.

"Let the European countries do it. Let South Korea, who was not helpful to us, by the way. You know, we only have 45,000 soldiers in harm's way over there, right next to a nuclear force. Let South Korea do it," Trump said, referring to North Korea.

"Let Japan do it. They get 90 per cent of their oil from the Strait. Let China do it. Let them all do it. What the hell are we doing it for?"

The United States has around 28,500 troops in South Korea.

In an opinion piece published Thursday in Le Figaro, South Korean President Lee called for stronger cooperation with France, particularly in key areas such as artificial intel-

ligence, nuclear energy, hydrogen technologies and space.

"In an increasingly fragmented and uncertain international environment, partnerships between democratic nations that share common values are no longer merely desirable but are becoming strategically essential," Lee wrote.

Like other Asian economies, South Korea relies heavily on energy imports, including through the Strait of Hormuz, the effective closure of which has driven up energy prices and rattled the global economy.

The war has already prompted Seoul to impose a fuel price cap to ease pressure on its energy supply, the first such measure since 1997.

While the United States and Israel have said that their attacks on Iran are to stop it developing nuclear weapons, an aim Tehran denies, North Korea is thought to be light years ahead by comparison.

Despite years of sanctions and diplomatic isolation, Pyongyang is thought to have dozens of nuclear warheads and fissile material for many more, and has unveiled increasingly sophisticated delivery systems.

US embassy in Baghdad warns of attacks in city

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The US embassy in Baghdad warned on Thursday that pro-Iran armed groups in Iraq may attack the city in the coming one or two days.

Iraq has been dragged into the war between the United States, Israel and Iran, with strikes targeting both US interests and pro-Iran groups in the country.

The US embassy in Baghdad, located in the centre of the city, has been repeatedly targeted and on Thursday it warned of more attacks in central parts of the capital.

"Iraqi terrorist militia groups aligned with Iran may intend to conduct attacks in central Baghdad in the next 24-48 hours," the embassy said in a statement on X.

It repeated earlier advice for Americans in Iraq to leave.

The frequency of attacks in Iraq has decreased in recent days after the influential pro-Iran group Kataeb Hezbollah declared a pause on March 19, which was twice extended. But the group did not announce a further extension on Wednesday night after its latest pause expired.

Last month Washington and Baghdad said they would "intensify cooperation" to prevent attacks and ensure Ira-



Smoke billows from an oil warehouse in the Kani Qirzhal area on the outskirts of Erbil, the capital of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region, following a suspected drone strike, on Wednesday

qi territory is not used to launch assaults against US facilities.

But the US embassy statement Thursday said "the Iraqi government has not prevented terrorist attacks in or from Iraqi territory".

"Iran-aligned terrorist militia groups may claim to be associated with the Iraqi government," it added.

Former Iraqi paramilitary alliance Hashed Al Shaabi, also known as the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) is a sprawling coalition of armed groups that are now part of Iraq's regular army, but they contain pro-Iran factions who have a reputation for acting independently.

These factions and the PMF have been targeted by strikes since the outbreak of war and have blamed the US and Israel.

The Pentagon has said helicopters have carried out strikes against pro-Iran armed groups in Iraq during the war. Washington has strongly denied claims it has targeted Iraqi security forces.

A strike on Wednesday against a PMF position in northwestern Iraq, which the PMF blamed on the US and Israel, killed three fighters.

The US embassy in its statement urged US citizens in Iraq to leave immediately, warning that "terrorist militias

have targeted Americans for kidnapping".

On Tuesday evening an American journalist, named by her employer and media advocacy groups as Shelly Kittle-son, was abducted in Baghdad.

A suspect has been detained in connection with the kidnapping, and an Iraqi security official told AFP the man had links to Kataeb Hezbollah.

Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region in the north has also not been spared the violence.

Security sources told AFP that at least 30 drones targeted the Erbil and Duhok governorates overnight, but there were no casualties reported.

French mayor denounces 'increasingly racist society'

SAINT-DENIS, France (AFP) — Bally Bagayoko, the newly elected black mayor of the French capital's largest suburb, says racism is growing in the former colonial power, and the authorities need to keep discrimination in check.

"We are living in an increasingly racist society," Bagayoko told AFP in an interview in his home city of Saint-Denis. "I mean a form of racism that is more overt and almost completely unchecked."

The 52-year-old hard-left politician was elected in the first round of municipal elections on March 15, his supporters hoisting him above their shoulders to celebrate their victory.

But almost immediately, the Frenchman born to Malian parents and brought up in the neighbourhood was targeted by racist disinformation or remarks, some aired on television.

"Whereas a few years ago some supporters of racist movements might still hide, today that's no longer the case," he said during Wednesday's interview.

"They're out in the open and they stand by their racist positions,



A rally against the far-right, organised by French leftist party La France Insoumise and Green parties in Paris on April 6, 2025

including on television talk shows."

Bagayoko has filed a legal complaint against the CNews television channel, often

described as France's Fox News, after a guest on one of its talk shows used racist imagery to comment on his election.

"The justice system needs to be much more forthright and come down hard on these acts, which are, of course, repeated of-

fences," said the mayor from the hard-left France Unbowed Party (LFI).

Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu this

week called out what he described as the "normalisation of evil and racism" following the comments against the new Saint-Denis

mayor.

LFI on Thursday urged further action, reporting that several of its black lawmakers, including a deputy parliament speaker, had received a racist letter.

Bagayoko called for the closure of CNews, arguing that the French media regulator "must be much stricter".

"Do we have to have a media landscape with racist channels like CNews and others? I say we don't," he said.

More community policing

Bagayoko, a retired semi-professional basketball player, has worked for the Paris region transport authority and has been in local politics since 2001, including as deputy mayor.

He has said he grew up in a large, happy family in social housing, but also experienced discrimination and sometimes poor policing during his younger years.

Now he is in charge, he says he wants to improve life for the working-class suburb's some 150,000 inhabitants, many of whom hail from waves of immigration to France, including from former

colonies.

Over a third of the population in Saint-Denis live in poverty — more than twice the national average, according to national statistics.

"The kind of policing I want is community policing, a police force that of course is capable of intervening when needed," he said, adding there would be "no cuts or reductions in frontline numbers, nor indeed any removal of cameras".

"We have 135 municipal officers, they're staying," he added, referring to the law enforcement officers under the city hall's authority.

Asked whether he wanted to disarm the municipal police, he said that he just wanted to prevent them from using any more rubber ball grenades — sometimes used in France against protesters, and which can cause severe injuries.

He has previously said it was up to national police — under the interior ministry — to fight any crime linked to drug dealing in the city.

Bagayoko has replaced Mathieu Hanotin, a Socialist, who served as mayor from 2020.

UK police set up national hub to cut illegal knife sales

LONDON (AFP) — British police on Thursday launched a new national hub aimed at cracking down on the sale of banned knives and machetes, often to children, on an online "grey market".

In the year ending September 2025 there were about 50,000 knife crimes in England and Wales, according to the Office for National Statistics, with the highest rates in London.

The capital's Metropolitan Police released statistics for 2025 showing a quarter of stabbing victims were under 18.

The National Police Chiefs' Council has now set up a National Knife Crime Centre, with £1.7 billion (\$2.2 billion) of government funding per year for the next three years.

It will have a "specific

focus on tackling the supply of those knives... that will often fall into the hands of the vulnerable or violent, including children", said its leader, police commander Stephen Clayman.

'There are people who are just selling over social media channels, just dismissively ignoring the law...'

Police linked the prevalence of stabbings to easy access to large, impressive "status weapons" such as machetes online.

More than half of the websites they have identified as selling such illegal weapons are based outside Britain, some in the United States or China, Clayman said.

The government has set a "very ambitious" goal of cutting knife crime by half within a decade, said the minister for policing, Sarah Jones, calling the centre "a really pivotal point".

It "will coordinate investigations into illegal sellers" and tackle a "grey market, in which large quantities of knives and weapons are purchased online", she said.

Currently there is no compulsory regulation of knife sellers in Britain and while sales to children are illegal, age checks are easily bypassed, Clayman warned.

"There are people who

are just selling over social media channels, just dismissively ignoring the law, and that's what we're trying to stop," he told AFP.

Some of the sellers are children themselves, who may "think it's an entrepreneurial thing to do", he said.

"Then you've got people who know it's illegal, they're doing it to facilitate violence," he said.

At the event, a table displayed a gleaming array of knives used to train police including ninja swords and machetes — which are only banned if they have a serrated blade.

In recent years, Britain banned ownership, even at home, of "ninja swords" with blades up to 61 centimetres long, and "zombie" type knives, offering surrender schemes in which

thousands of weapons were handed in.

Legislation currently going through parliament would introduce stronger age verification checks for online sales and a requirement to report buyers making bulk orders.

These are part of a raft of measures called Roman's Law, named after a teenager, Roman Kanda, killed with a 22-inch sword in 2022 by two other teenagers in a case of mistaken identity.

Roman's elder sister, Nikita, said one of the killers bought the murder weapon online on a site that "openly sold dangerous weapons with minimal checks and easy access for anyone".

"These weapons are not harmless objects. They are being used to enable, inflict and escalate violence."

Trump announces destruction of Iran's tallest bridge

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US President Donald Trump said on Thursday the tallest bridge in Iran had been destroyed, hours after threatening to bomb the country "back to the Stone Ages".

Ghodratollah Seif, the deputy governor of Alborz province, where the B1 bridge is located, said the strike had killed eight people and wounded 95 others, according to state TV and Fars news agency.

Due to reporting restrictions, AFP is not able to access the sites of strikes nor to independently verify tolls in Iran.

Trump posted footage on social media of smoke rising from the B1

bridge in Karaj, around 35 kilometres southwest of Tehran — and warned that there would be further destruction unless Iran comes to the table to end the five-week war.

"The biggest bridge in Iran comes tumbling down, never to be used again — Much more to follow! IT IS TIME FOR IRAN TO MAKE A DEAL BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE, AND THERE IS NOTHING LEFT OF WHAT STILL COULD BECOME A GREAT COUNTRY!" Trump said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a post on X: "Striking civilian structures, including unfinished bridges, will not compel Iranians to surrender. "It only conveys the

defeat and moral collapse of an enemy in disarray."

Iranian state television had earlier reported two US-Israeli strikes on the bridge.

"A few minutes ago, the American-Zionist enemy once again targeted the B1 bridge in Karaj," state TV said, adding that an initial strike had caused two civilian casualties.

It said the later attack took place as emergency teams were deployed to the site to help victims of the first strike.

The B1 bridge, which was still under construction, is the Middle East's tallest according to Fars/Iranian media, with a 136 metre column.

Civilians killed as Sudan's civil war spills into Chad — MSF

LIBREVILLE, Gabon (AFP) — Drone strikes by the parties to Sudan's civil war were killing and wounding civilians in the border region with neighbouring Chad, Medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said on Thursday.

The attacks "are endangering both aid workers and civilians, including many refugees fleeing the war in Sudan", MSF (Doctors Without Borders) said.

Chad closed its border with Sudan in February after cross-border incursions into its territory by paramilitaries from Sudan's Rapid

Support Forces (RSF). It has been hit by at least two drone attacks since then.

The RSF and the Sudanese army have blamed each other for the strikes.

The civil war in Sudan between the army and the RSF has killed tens of thousands of people since April 2023 and displaced more than 12 million people, nearly one million of whom have fled to Chad, according to the United Nations.

"The current insecurity makes it unsustainable for MSF to provide even a minimum of medical support to peo-

ple seeking protection in Chad," said Rita Magano, MSF medical project coordinator in the border town of Tine.

She said MSF had responded to 13 mass casualty incidents in the past two months, treating 457 people. Thirty eight people died as a result of their wounds after attacks at the border.

Most Sudanese refugees in Chad are black Africans from the Darfur region across the border, which has been almost entirely under the control of the RSF and allied Arab militias since they captured its main city, El Fasher, in October.

Crown Prince visits German Jordanian University

Continued from page 1

The Crown Prince was briefed by GJU President Ala'aldien Halhouli and a number of academic staff and students on DI-TECH's role in supporting the entrepreneurship and

innovation ecosystem, and equipping students with practical skills relevant to labour market needs.

Halhouli said DI-TECH operates a business incubator to support start-ups, offers training programmes

and services for career guidance and capacity building, and works to strengthen industrial partnerships between Jordan and Germany, thereby opening up broader prospects for graduates.

He added that TRIP

aligns GJU's educational outcomes with the needs of the industrial sector, in line with the challenge-based innovation model, thus promoting research and development, knowledge transfer, and the commercialisation of its

outputs. Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Azmi Mahfazah, and Director of the Office of the Crown Prince Zaid Baqain accompanied His Royal Highness on the visit.

Unemployment rate falls to 16.1% in Q4 2025 — DoS

Continued from page 1

Among Jordanians aged 24 and above, the unemployment rate reached 17.7 per cent, including 13.6 per cent for males and 31.3 per cent for females. In comparison, unemployment

among non-Jordanians in the same age group stood at 5.6 per cent, with 6.2 per cent for males and 2.7 per cent for females.

Overall unemployment among males, both Jordanian and non-Jordanian, declined to 13.8

per cent in the fourth quarter of 2025, down by 1.4 percentage points compared with the same quarter of 2024 and 0.2 percentage point from the previous quarter.

Meanwhile, unemployment among Jordanians aged 15 and above

reached 21.2 per cent, slightly down from 21.3 per cent a year earlier and 21.4 per cent in the third quarter of 2025.

However, the report highlighted a rise in unemployment among Jordanian females, which climbed to 34.8 per cent

in the fourth quarter of 2025, up by 2.6 percentage points year-on-year and 0.9 percentage point from the previous quarter.

Unemployment among non-Jordanians stood at 9.2 per cent during the same period.

Trump tells Americans that Iran war ending as popularity dips

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday made his case for attacking Iran in his first nationwide address more than a month into the war, insisting the United States was close to victory as his approval rating sinks.

In an evening speech from the White House, Trump broke little new

ground on how the war would end and vowed two to three weeks further of "extremely hard" strikes against Iran.

"We are going to finish the job, and we're going to finish it very fast. We're getting very close," he said in remarks that largely reshaped his daily streams of social-media postings and rapid media interviews.

But with his approval rating hitting new lows and Americans feeling a pinch from soaring oil prices, Trump offered a retroactive explanation on why he joined Israel in the attack launched on February 28.

Trump said that the United States was aiming to crush Iran's military, end the clerical state's support for regional

armed groups and prevent it from obtaining a nuclear bomb—a prospect that the UN nuclear watchdog and many observers say was not imminent.

"I'm pleased to say that these core strategic objectives are nearing completion," Trump said in a 19-minute televised speech before flags in the White House's Cross Hall. "In these past four

weeks, our armed forces have delivered swift, decisive, overwhelming victories on the battlefield — victories like few people have ever seen before," Trump said.

Israel on the first day of the conflict killed Iran's longtime supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and Trump boasted how "their leaders — most of them" in Iran are dead.

Jordan, Arab, Islamic countries condemn Israeli law allowing death penalty for Palestinians

Continued from page 1

They also emphasised that these practices reflect a broader pattern of violations against the Palestinian people.

The ministers reaffirmed their opposition

to Israel's racially discriminatory, oppressive and aggressive policies targeting Palestinians.

The top diplomats also emphasised the urgent need to refrain from measures imposed by the occupying power that risk further in-

flaming tensions on the ground.

They also stressed the importance of ensuring accountability and called for strengthened international efforts to uphold stability and prevent further deterioration.

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Why good ideas die: A lesson from Petra

During my time as a Member of Parliament representing Petra, I carried a simple but deeply held belief: that well-designed, evidence-based projects — especially those aimed at improving livelihoods and restoring dignity — would find institutional support and eventually be implemented.



Sami Al Hasanat

This belief was not based on idealism alone. It was grounded in the assumption that when development initiatives align with national priorities, demonstrate economic feasibility and receive encouragement at the highest levels of leadership, they would be given a fair opportunity to succeed.

My experience, however, led me to a different and more difficult conclusion.

Over several years, I worked on a number of development initiatives for the Petra region. These projects were designed to address structural challenges in the local economy, including unemployment, seasonality in tourism and limited opportunities for women. Among them was a Medicinal and Aromatic Plants initiative, supported by feasibility studies and initial private-sector interest, with the potential to generate sustainable income and position the region within a growing global market.

I pursued these initiatives through formal channels, engaging relevant ministries, national institutions and development bodies. I complied with procedural requirements, adapted proposals based on feedback, and remained committed to a collaborative approach.

At various stages, the projects received positive signals of support. Yet, despite this, they did not progress to implementation.

What occurred was not a clear or transparent rejection. Instead, the process was characterised by delays, shifting positions and, ultimately, inaction. Communication became inconsistent. Commitments appeared to change without explanation. Technical assessments were, at times, disregarded or contradicted without clear justification.

This experience points to a broader issue that deserves attention.

There appears to be a persistent gap between policy endorsement and institutional execution. While strategic visions and reform agendas are articulated at the national level, their translation into actionable programs often encounters obstacles within the administrative system. These may include risk-averse decision-making, fragmented responsibilities across entities and limited accountability mechanisms.

The result is not only the loss of individual projects, but also missed opportunities for communities that stand to benefit from them.

In the case of Petra, the implications are significant. The region faces ongoing economic pressures, particularly in light of fluctuating tourism demand. There is a clear need for diversified, resilient, and locally grounded development models. Projects that combine cultural heritage, sustainable production, and community participation are not merely desirable — they are necessary.

The question, therefore, is not whether such ideas exist. They do.

The more pressing question is how to ensure that viable initiatives are not stalled within the system.

Addressing this challenge requires strengthening coordination between institutions, enhancing transparency in decision-making and establishing clearer pathways from proposal to implementation. It also requires fostering a culture that balances due diligence with a willingness to support innovation and calculated risk.

Jordan has no shortage of capable individuals, thoughtful ideas, or genuine commitment to public service. What is needed is a framework that enables these elements to converge effectively.

Reflecting on my experience, I do not view it solely as a personal setback, but as an opportunity to contribute to a necessary conversation about how development processes can be improved.

If we are serious about inclusive and sustainable growth, we must ensure that good ideas are given not only encouragement — but a real chance to succeed.

An end game only both sides can sell

Nearly a month into the war between Iran, the United States and Israel, the conflict is entering a more dangerous and uncertain phase. What initially appeared as a contained escalation is now shifting, with the possibility of a ground operation increasingly on the table. At the same time, indirect talks between Iranian and US officials suggest that diplomacy remains active behind the scenes, as regional actors such as Pakistan, Turkey and Egypt intensify their calls for de-escalation and renewed negotiations. Yet, this dual reality exposes a deeper contradiction: While Washington prepares for peace, it is simultaneously preparing for war. That paradox is an alarming signal, one that suggests that even as diplomacy feels within reach, it may in fact be slipping further away.

In an effort to reopen a diplomatic track, a reported 15-point ceasefire proposal backed by the Trump administration, with support from Pakistan, has been put forward, outlining what Washington views as the terms for ending the war. While no official version has been published, reporting suggests a clear framework: Iran would be required to dismantle key elements of its nuclear program, halt uranium enrichment and transfer enriched material to the IAEA, alongside the decommissioning of major sites such as Natanz, Isfahan and Fordow.

The proposal also extends beyond the nuclear file, calling on Iran to scale back its regional footprint by cutting support to proxy groups including Hizbollah, Hamas the Houthis, and armed factions in Iraq, while placing limits on its missile program. In return, Iran would receive sweeping sanctions relief, including the lifting of snapback provisions, as well as support for a civilian nuclear program. Yet, taken together, these terms amount to a far-reaching restructuring of Iran's security doctrine, raising questions not about what is being offered, but whether such conditions are realistically negotiable at all.

If Washington is setting the terms for ending the war, Iran is refusing to accept them. Tehran has rejected the US proposal outright, making it clear the war will end only on its own terms and timeline. Its



Farrah Al Abdallat

demands, which entail ending what it calls aggression, preventing future conflict and securing reparations, do not leave much room for negotiation. More importantly, Iran has made talks themselves conditional, refusing to engage unless these demands are met first. This suggests Iran is prepared to continue the war rather than compromise on what it sees as core interests, leaving little space for any immediate breakthrough. With both sides holding firm, the question is no longer just about diplomacy, but how the conflict evolves on the ground.

If Washington is setting the terms for ending the war, Iran is refusing to accept them. Tehran has rejected the U.S. proposal outright...

Beyond diplomacy, the trajectory of the war has already revealed a critical shift on the battlefield. Iran's ballistic missile program, while not directed at the US mainland, has demonstrated its effectiveness in targeting Israel and US assets across the region, particularly in the Gulf. This reflects a broader strategy of asymmetric warfare, where Iran leverages range, volume, and regional positioning to impose costs without engaging in direct confrontation. In this context, deterrence is not defined by conventional parity, but by the ability to sustain pressure across multiple fronts and complicate escalation for its adversaries.

This raises a more conse-

quential question—whether a ground operation is a realistic next step. Recent US military movements suggest escalation is at least being prepared for. The deployment of approximately 3,500 additional troops under CENTCOM, including the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit aboard the USS Tripoli, alongside transport aircraft, strike fighters and amphibious assault assets, signals a clear expansion of operational readiness in the region. Yet, in practice, a ground invasion of Iran remains highly complex and risky. Iran's geography, size and population make it fundamentally different from previous theaters of US intervention, turning any ground campaign into a prolonged and resource-intensive undertaking rather than a decisive strike. More importantly, Iran's military doctrine is built around layered defense and attrition, meaning any advancing force would face sustained resistance. A ground operation would also risk triggering a wider regional escalation, drawing in proxy groups across Iraq and the Gulf. For these reasons, while the option is increasingly discussed, its feasibility remains limited—not because it is impossible, but because the costs and consequences are likely to outweigh any short-term gains.

The financial burden further complicates any escalation. The Centre for Strategic and International Studies estimated costs had already reached \$16.5 billion by day 12 of the conflict, a figure that is likely far higher as the war continues. At the same time, the White House is seeking at least \$200 billion in additional military spending from Congress to sustain operations and replenish stockpiles. Reports have also raised the possibility of Gulf burden-sharing, echoing the 1990 model. Yet such an approach carries risks: financial involvement would not shield Arab states, but could reinforce their position as targets, while also underscoring a broader reality—that even for Washington, the cost of sustaining the war is becoming increasingly difficult to absorb.

Iran's strategy is increasingly defined by the use of non-kinetic leverage. Rather than relying solely on direct confrontation, Tehran is expanding the

conflict by targeting critical economic chokepoints. The disruption of the Strait of Hormuz signals its ability to pressure global energy markets, while the Houthis' entry into the conflict extends that leverage to the Bab Al Mandab, threatening one of the world's most vital shipping routes. This is not conventional escalation—it is strategic pressure. By applying pressure across two maritime chokepoints that carry a significant share of global trade and energy flows, Iran is widening the cost of the war far beyond the battlefield. In doing so, it is not just engaging its adversaries, but drawing in a broader set of actors whose interests are directly affected by disruption to global supply chains.

In this context, the idea of a decisive military victory becomes increasingly unrealistic. The proposed 15-point plan itself echoes earlier attempts to impose structured endgames, most notably the 20-point framework put forward during the war in Gaza—ambitious, but detached from realities on the ground. More fundamentally, any diplomatic pathway is constrained by deep-rooted mistrust between Iran and the United States, a dynamic reinforced by the fact that escalation continued even as negotiations were under way.

At the same time, the reliance on military pressure as a tool to force concessions overlooks its limits. Iran's defense posture—built on dispersion, underground infrastructure, and a layered mix of missiles, proxies, and unconventional capabilities—has proven resilient under sustained pressure. Any further escalation, particularly a ground operation, risks turning the conflict into a prolonged and costly war with no clear endpoint. This asymmetry is key: while the United States would need to achieve defined strategic objectives, for Iran, endurance alone can amount to success.

The result is a conflict in which neither side is positioned to secure a clear outcome, yet both need to claim one. The only viable endgame, then, is not a battlefield victory, but a settlement each side can present as one. In the end, the war is unlikely to be won—only managed into something both sides can call victory.

Will Kharg Island decide the future of US alliances?

By Carla Norrlöf

TORONTO — The key question about Iran's energy-export terminal on Kharg Island is not whether the United States can seize or disable it. Of course it can. The real issue is what happens afterward, when the conditional logic that the US has applied to its alliances begins to shape allied behaviour in turn. When allies' behaviour can no longer be assumed, American power becomes more constrained. The key variable is no longer what the US can do, but what costs others will be willing to bear. American primacy rested on a simple bargain — pay more, decide more and allies follow. That bargain is broken.

Such is the problem now confronting President Donald Trump's administration. Kharg Island looks like the kind of target the world's strongest military should be able to turn into leverage with relative ease. But difficult trade-offs would soon follow. Seizing and holding it would impose a sustained burden that allies would be expected to help carry, whereas destroying it would deliver a sharper, escalatory blow whose costs would be immediate, unevenly distributed and concentrated among the partners most vulnerable to energy shocks. Both options rely on allied participation in different forms, and neither can be taken for granted.

Obviously, any serious disruption would cascade through global energy markets, tightening supply, driving up prices, and increasing shipping and insurance risks. But much of that sensitivity reflects the vulnerability of the Strait of Hormuz, a chokepoint for a significant share of global oil flows, where even limited disruption can af-

fect supply expectations far beyond any single facility.

Kharg Island, by contrast, handles roughly 90 per cent of Iran's own oil exports (more than 1 million barrels per day), concentrating a significant share of supply at a single, exposed point. That concentration makes the island immediately visible to markets, which have already responded to the risk of escalation despite the continued flow of exports. War-risk premiums are increasing for tankers moving through the Gulf, raising the cost of transit even without sustained physical damage. Insurers are restricting or withdrawing coverage, and some shipments are being delayed or diverted, tightening effective supply at the margin and adding upward pressure on prices even before any sustained supply loss.

In the event of a disruption at Kharg Island, these effects would not be confined to Iran. They would be felt acutely in economies that depend on imported energy, most of which are already struggling to manage inflation and weak growth, with limited political room to absorb further shocks. Recent tanker data show how quickly these pressures fragment, with rates splitting sharply across allied routes by early March, revealing a fundamental asymmetry in how the shock is transmitted. For governments in Europe and across Asia, higher energy costs translate directly into domestic pressure, because they affect industrial competitiveness, household budgets and political stability.

In earlier periods, those costs might have been willingly absorbed within the US alliance network. Though they would not have been evenly distributed, they would have been accepted as part of a shared strategic

effort. Not anymore. What has changed is not simply the distribution of costs, but expectations about who will bear them and uncertainty about whether they will be shared at all.

For years now, the US has treated alliances less as durable commitments than as arrangements to be publicly questioned and renegotiated. There have been repeated disputes over burden sharing within NATO, with US officials openly questioning Article 5 (mutual-defence) commitments and publicly disparaging allied governments. As a result, security guarantees have become contingent commitments.

This change has prompted allies to hedge their bets by not automatically aligning themselves with the US during crises

This change has prompted allies to hedge their bets by not automatically aligning themselves with the US during crises. The cumulative effect has been a shift in how allies think about what they can rely on in crises. Arrangements that were once organised around standing commitments are increasingly taking the form of situational coalitions. While selective autonomy on the part of US allies can work in some cases, if it becomes the default, coordination will splinter, producing uneven

responses from one crisis to the next.

That is what we are now seeing. The shift to greater conditionality is shaping how all governments respond to geopolitical developments, with some US allies already limiting their involvement as the risks of escalation grow. In reducing their exposure, they weaken the expectation of coordinated allied action.

By concentrating both the potential benefits and the costs of action, Kharg Island brings this dynamic into sharper focus. Seizing it would increase pressure on Iran, but it would also redistribute strain across the coalition needed to sustain that pressure. The same move that generates leverage introduces risk, and that risk is distributed across the partners expected to bear it.

More broadly, moving from a system of assumed alignment to one that must be negotiated raises the political cost of collective action and weakens its strategic effect. Conditional alliances will not end all cooperation, but they make it more difficult to translate alignment into power on a predictable basis.

That is why Kharg Island — the "forbidden island" — matters. It is important not because it lies beyond American reach, but because it is tempting the US to pursue a course of action with consequences others may not be willing to shoulder. The US military can seize the island, but it cannot compel others to share in whatever outcome follows. The old message was clear: contribute more or the security guarantee weakens. The new one is just as stark: Without agreement on the mission, allied support weakens.

Carla Norrlöf is professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto.

BUSINESS

Friday-Saturday, April 3-4, 2026

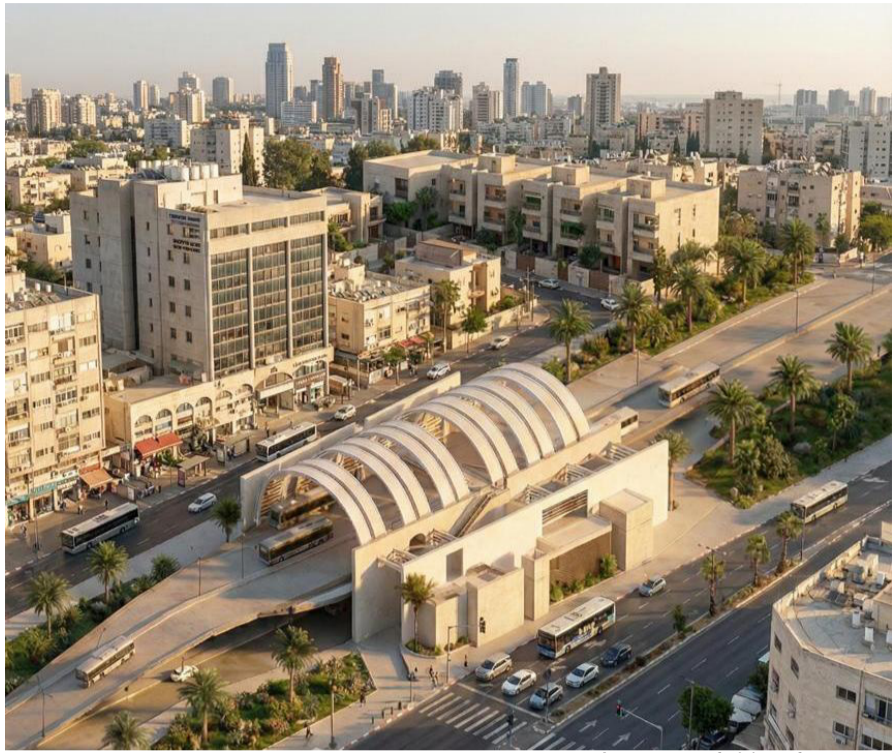


Photo Courtesy of Ministry of Investment

The Ministry of Investment has announced the holding next Monday of a public introductory session for the Amman Bridge project

Ministry of Investment announces holding of introduction for 'Amman Bridge project'

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Investment (MoI) has announced the holding of a public introductory session for the Amman Bridge project, which will be implemented under a public-private partnership system.

The session aimed to review the most prominent features of the project, which includes the construc-

tion of a 15.8 kilometre overpass along the King Abdullah road axis, which contributes to reducing traffic congestion and travel time, and enhancing the integration of various modes of transportation.

According to the Ministry statement, the session will also address the project's objectives and strate-

gic importance, technical and operational aspects, the partnership structure and investment model, in addition to the roadmap and next steps.

The Ministry invited all concerned parties, investors and interested parties to participate in the session, which will be held on Monday via video conferencing technology.

Iraq begins oil exports on tankers through Syria — ministry

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq has begun exporting crude using tanker trucks through Syria, its oil ministry said, more than a month into a war that has wrought havoc on energy markets.

A founding member of the OPEC oil cartel, Iraq is hugely dependent on its oil exports, accounting for some 90 per cent of its budget revenues.

Until Iranian attacks and threats all but shut the Strait of Hormuz in revenge for US-Israeli strikes, Iraq exported the majority of its oil through the strategic waterway.

Like other oil exporters in the oil-rich region, Iraq has been left scrambling for alternative routes, and in a statement late Wednesday, the oil ministry said it "has begun exporting oil by tanker truck through neighbouring Syria".

Syria, it said, would "ensure the safe passage" of the oil, and added exports will "gradually" increase.

The statement gave no further details.

A source in the Iraqi



AFP photo

A vendor pumps petrol from Iranian fuel oil tankers for resale near the Bashmogh border crossing on March 11

oil sector told AFP that out of a projected 299 trucks, "178 tankers loaded with fuel oil" had arrived at the Baniyas port refinery on the Mediterranean Sea as part of the "initial phase for exports".

"This shipment, the first of its kind, entered through the Al Tanf border crossing from neighbouring Iraq," Safwan Sheikh Ahmad, spokesperson at the state Syrian Petroleum Company, told AFP.

He said the oil trucks would be unloaded at the Baniyas terminal, and transferred to tankers for further export.

"The initial shipment, consisting of 299 tankers, will enter Syria in

batches, with the second batch expected soon," he said.

Last month, Iraq announced it had resumed limited oil exports of 250,000 barrels per day through the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

How high can oil prices go after fresh surge?

By Lucie Lequier and Ali Bekhtaoui

Agency France-Press

LONDON — Having once more soared beyond \$110 per barrel on Thursday, could oil prices reach new records beyond \$150 as some analysts believe?

President Donald Trump's latest belligerent tone over the Middle East war has reignited concerns about persistently high crude costs and the limited measures available to tackle the fallout.

\$200 oil?

Since the start of the US-Israeli conflict with Iran on February 28, benchmark oil prices have soared more than 50 per cent largely owing to the Strait of Hormuz — through which normally one-fifth of the world's crude passes — shutting to most tankers.

French bank Societe Generale said \$150 is a "credible" outcome on a prolonged war, while most analysts estimate crude hitting \$130-\$140.

Australian bank Macquarie forecast \$200 crude should the war still occur in June.

And this does not take into account closure of the Strait of

Hormuz combined with an attack on Kharg Island — through which the bulk of Iran's crude production travels — or disruption to another key trading route, the Strait of Bab Al Mandeb.

International benchmark Brent North Sea crude and the main US contract, West Texas Intermediate, each soared to record highs above \$147 in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis before collapsing during the COVID pandemic.

At around \$110, consumers are already facing heavy financial pain, as prices of gasoline and diesel soar around the world.

'Insufficient' oil reserves

In an unprecedented decision in response to the Mideast war, the 32 nations belonging to the International Energy Agency (IEA) pledged to unlock 426 million barrels equivalent to more than one third of their combined reserves.

The United States, itself a major oil producer, is to release 172 million barrels or 40 per cent of its strategic reserves.

These emergency releases "are not sufficient", UBS commodities analyst Giovanni

Staunovo told AFP, noting that the maximum pace of release is around 3 million barrels per day (mpd) compared with 15 mpd failing to reach the market because of the war.

The conflict has already triggered a crisis more severe than the oil shocks of the 1970s and the one that followed Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, IEA head Fatih Birol said on a podcast published on Wednesday, adding that "April will be much worse than March".

The agency has identified about 40 key energy infrastructures damaged since the start of the Mideast war, which will each take time to repair.

Solutions?

For countries dependent on oil and gas transiting through the Strait of Hormuz — in particular those spread across Asia and Europe — the situation appeared bleak.

Three-quarters of the world's population lives in countries dependent on fossil fuels, according to energy think tank Ember.

Governments have less budgetary leeway to help businesses and households, with pub-

lic debt potentially reaching 100 per cent of gross domestic product by 2029, a high since the end of the Second World War according to recent projections by the International Monetary Fund.

Meanwhile among political leaders and economic groups, many want the phasing out of fossil fuels to be accelerated.

A recent University of Oxford study claimed that a fully de-carbonised energy system in the UK would save an average household £441 (\$509) in annual bills compared with up to £82 if all North Sea oil and gas wells were exploited.

In the short term, calls for energy-use moderation are multiplying, such as the European Commission's request to member states to reduce their oil demand, or Bangladesh's call for its civil servants to turn off lights and lower air conditioning.

Several countries, including Malaysia and Sri Lanka, are encouraging people to work from home if they are able to do so.

"The reality is, the economic shocks caused by this war will be with us for months," Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese warned on Wednesday.

Oil rallies, stocks drop as Trump dashes hopes fighting will soon end

LONDON (AFP) — Oil surged and stocks fell on Thursday after Donald Trump threatened more heavy strikes on Iran and offered no solution to reopening the key Strait of Hormuz.

Investors found little solace in the US president's address to the nation, in which he again urged countries dependent on the waterway for energy supplies to reopen it themselves.

"Trump's comments injected fresh volatility into financial markets," said Patrick Munnely, a market strategist at Tickmill Group. "Although Trump assured that the waterway would reopen 'naturally' once tensions eased, he provided no timeline or details."

Signs of de-escalation had buoyed markets in recent sessions, but Trump's late Wednesday televised speech dashed those hopes.

International oil benchmark, Brent North Sea crude, which had fallen below \$100 a barrel ahead of Trump's speech, went



AFP photo

This photograph shows signs on petrol pumps indicating that oil is out of stock at a gas station in Paris on Thursday

on to rally around eight percent to above \$109 per barrel.

The three major New York equity indexes opened more than 1 per cent lower.

In mid-afternoon trading in Europe, Frankfurt's stock market shed more than 2 per cent. Paris dropped over 1 per cent, even as oil giant TotalEnergies was up three percent on reports it made a \$1 billion profit in March trading petroleum products.

London dipped about half-a-per cent,

helped by gains of over 3 per cent for the share prices of energy heavyweights BP and Shell.

"Market sentiment has deteriorated overnight after Trump's much anticipated address delivered little to nothing new on potential timelines or conditions for ending hostilities against Iran," said Deutsche Bank Managing Director Jim Reid.

"There was no signal of the US seeking an imminent off-ramp out of the war."

The dollar, seen as a

safe haven investment, rose strongly against major rivals.

Earlier in the day, Tokyo closed down more than 2 per cent and Hong Kong and Shanghai also fell.

Trump's claims that Washington and Tehran were in peace talks have been denied by the Islamic republic, which insists the Strait of Hormuz will remain closed to the country's "enemies".

Britain was hosting talks featuring some 40 nations on Thursday to discuss how to reopen the waterway, through which a fifth of global oil normally travels.

World Bank Managing Director Paschal Donohoe said he was fearful about the global economic impact of the crisis.

"We are extremely concerned regarding the effect that this will have on inflation, on jobs and on food security," he told AFP as the Bank partners with the International Monetary Fund and International Energy Agency to coordinate aid responses.

Czech gov't limits fuel firm profits as prices soar

PRAGUE (AFP) — The Czech government said on Thursday it would stop energy companies from making excess profits on fuel, as prices soar because of the Middle East war.

Global fuel prices have been rising since the conflict started more than a month ago when the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran.

Czechs were paying 41.36 koruna (\$1.94) per litre for petrol last weekend, up by 3.66 koruna from two weeks earlier, and 48.08 koruna for diesel, up by 6.29 koruna in

the same period, according to monitoring firm CCS.

The government said from April 8 companies would not be allowed to make a profit of more than 2.5 koruna per litre. Officials also cut the excise tax on diesel by 2.35 koruna per litre from the current 9.95 koruna.

"We are starting next Wednesday... to give the market some room to get ready," Prime Minister Andrej Babis told reporters.

He said the government would also set

maximum prices to be paid by both individuals and companies daily at 12:00 GMT, with weekend prices to be set on Friday and valid until Monday.

Babis, a billionaire in office since last December, leads a three-party nationalist government comprising his catch-all ANO Party, the far-right SPD and the eurosceptic Motorists.

On Thursday, he criticised countries in the region for a lack of coordination on curbing fuel prices.

"We perceive what is

happening in neighbouring countries, and each country is more or less doing whatever they want," he said.

Slovakia has set two fuel prices, one for locals and one for vehicles with foreign licence plates, to stop people driving across the border to get cheaper petrol.

And Poland slashed VAT on fuel from 23 per cent to eight per cent, which no other country in the region has done.

"Instead of coordinating prices within the region... we have total chaos," Babis said.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Thursday amounted to JD12.7 million spread over 3.2 million shares that traded through 2,980 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.16 per cent, closing at 3637.48 points.

Out of 97 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 32 companies rose while the share price of another 30 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Union Tobacco and Cigarette Industries by 11.11 per cent, Al Dawliyah for Hotels and Malls by 4.65 per cent, Jordanian Real Estate Company for Development by 4.62 per cent, Contempro for Housing Projects by 4.30 per cent, and Deera Investment and Real Estate Development Company by 4.26 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Salam International Transport and Trading by 6.25 per cent, Jordan Poultry Processing and Marketing by 5.26 per cent, International Arabian Development and Investment Trading Company by 4.76 per cent, Ubour Logistic Services Plc. by 4.55 per cent, and Zara Investment Holding by 4.08 per cent.



Wihdat vs Faisali as League resumes; national team camp ends

FOOTBALL

UEFA chief Ceferin warns Italy could lose Euro

ROME (AFP) — UEFA chief Aleksander Ceferin warned that Italy risks not being able to co-host Euro 2032 with Turkey due to the condition of the country's stadiums, which he called "some of the worst in Europe". Italy last hosted a major international football tournament in 1990 and many of its top stadiums were either built or refurbished for that World Cup. Most of those are now in a sorry state. "Euro 2032 is scheduled and will take place, of that there is no doubt. I just hope that the infrastructure [in Italy] will be ready. If that's not the case, the tournament will not be held in Italy," Ceferin said in an interview with the Gazzetta Delo Sport published on Thursday. "Maybe Italy's politicians should ask themselves why the football infrastructure is among the worst in Europe." Ceferin added that Italian football's biggest problem was "the relationship between the football authorities and politics". In October, Italy has to name the five stadiums that will host matches at Euro 2032, with 11 cities currently candidates: Rome, Florence, Bologna, Verona, Milan, Genoa, Bari, Naples, Turin, Cagliari and Palermo. Italy can present new stadiums or ones which need to be redeveloped as long as works begin by March 2027.

Nielsen leaves as Japan coach weeks after winning Women's Asian Cup

TOKYO (AFP) — Nils Nielsen is leaving as Japan coach less than two weeks after taking them to Women's Asian Cup glory, the football association said on Thursday. Greenlander Nielsen led Japan to their third Asian title in four tournaments, beating hosts Australia 1-0 in the final in Sydney on March 21. The 54-year-old had been in the job since December 2024. "Japan women's manager Nils Nielsen is stepping down following the expiry of his contract," the JFA said in a statement. Japan won plaudits for their performances at the Asian Cup, where they scored 29 goals and conceded just one. Nielsen described his team as "inspirational" and said he was "very lucky to be working with players that are that good". There was no indication at the time that he would soon depart. Nielsen previously coached Denmark and Switzerland's women's teams and served as the technical director of Manchester City's women's side.

By Aline Bannayan

AMMAN — Football switches to local competitions over the weekend after the national team completed their training camp in Turkey.

World 64th ranked Jordan held 26th ranked Nigeria and No. 51 Costa Rica 2-2 in two of the last four friendlies ahead of the 2026 World Cup this summer.

Team stars Mousa Ta'mari, Yazan Al Arab and others joined the squad as coach Jamal Selami enlisted many new faces in an attempt to finalise his lineup, faced with the absence of key players doubtful for the World Cup including Yazan Nue'imat and Adham Qurashi, both recuperating from ACL surgery, Ali Alwan, out with a heel injury, team captain Ehsan Haddad who has been out for the season, as well as Tamer Bani Odeh and Husam Smeiri, who excelled in the Arab Cup.

Ta'mari led the lineup scoring and assisting teammates to score, while Baha'a Faisal made a return to the squad after over four years of absence and scored against Costa Rica. Jordan will next face Switzerland on May 31 and Columbia on June 7 just ahead of the World Cup Group J matches against soccer greats Argentina, Algeria and Austria.

The Kingdom lately finished runner-up to eventual champions Morocco at the 2025 FIFA Arab Cup in Qatar, despite missing many key players on the



Striker Mousa Ta'mari (#10) led Jordan in two friendlies as teams start the countdown to the World Cup

injury list or club duty. By finishing runner-up at the 2023 Asian Cup, followed by a historic first-time qualification to the 2026 edition of the World Cup in their 7th time in the qualifiers since 1986, Jordan booked its spot in the next edition of the

2027 Asian Cup as well. Meanwhile, players head back to club duty as of Thursday with Hussein and Faisali atop the CFI Jordan Pro League standings. Wihdat play Faisali while Hussein play Salt this week. Hussein, who are in Asian

Champions League Two quarterfinals, hope to maintain a solid lead with two postponed matches ahead. Ramtha, champions three seasons ago, are now fourth after 7 draws were followed by three defeats that could have otherwise given

them a comfortable lead at the top following earlier impressive results including defeating Wihdat 1-0, holding Hussein 0-0, as well as 1-1 draws with Wihdat and Faisali. Teams are scrambling for points at both ends of the table where Ahli seem

to be the team most likely to join Sarhan in relegation. Ten clubs are playing the 73rd edition of the Pro League in the new format of three stages. Baqa'a and Sama Sarhan are the newcomers from the First Division after Ma'an, Sarih, Aqaba, and Mughayer Sarhan were relegated last season.

So far in the season, League champs Hussein won the 42nd Jordan Super Cup beating Wihdat on aggregate; Faisali won their 10th Jordan Football Association (JFA) Shield title with Salt runner-up. The Jordan Cup has reached the quarterfinals with Ramtha defeating Ahli 1-0 and Faisali beating Shabab Urdun 5-4 on penalties to advance to the semis. Hussein vs Jazira and Wihdat vs Salt are yet to be played.

Last season, Hussein combined the Pro League as well as Jordan Super Cup titles, while Wihdat won the Jordan Cup for the 13th time, and Salt won their first ever major title — the Jordan Football Association Shield. Hussein were crowned League champions for the past two seasons joining the elite group of Pro League champs as the 9th club to win the title since 1944. Together with neighbours Ramtha, they have changed the usual Faisali-Wihdat title dominance. Ramtha won the 2021/22 League crown for the third time in their history after 39 years, while Hussein won the 2023/24 and 2024/25 seasons.

LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

Stolen Romanian golden helmet found: Dutch art sleuth to AFP

THE HAGUE (AFP) — A priceless gold 2,500-year-old helmet from Romania that was stolen last year in The Netherlands has been recovered, Dutch art detective Arthur Brand told AFP on Thursday. "It's amazing. It's the best news we could have got," said Brand, confirming that the lost Helmet of Cotofenesti had been found.

Prosecutors are expected to make an official announcement later on Thursday.

A gang of robbers used firework bombs to break into the Drechts Museum in the northern Netherlands in January 2025, and smashed display cases once inside. They made off with the 5th-century BC golden Helmet of Cotofenesti and three gold bracelets.

Three men are on trial for the theft but have largely remained silent in court.

Brand said he and police have been working their contacts to persuade the alleged robbers to hand over the helmet in exchange for a more lenient punishment.

"We were pretty sure it had not been melted down because there



The recovered golden helmet of Cotofenesti and two gold bracelets that were stolen from the Drechts Museum are displayed in a glass box in Assen on Thursday

were only four days between the robbery and the arrests," said Brand. "It's a fantastic job by the Dutch police."

Under huge pressure from Romania, Dutch authorities have made multiple attempts to convince the suspects to tell them where the treasures are stashed.

Police offered to halve the sentence of one suspect if he revealed the location of the helmet.

An undercover officer posing as a criminal mastermind reportedly

offered another suspect 400,000 euros (\$420,000) to tell him where the booty was hidden. Police have also offered a reward of 100,000 euros for information leading to the helmet's recovery.

'People are devastated'

The theft and the search for the Dacian artefacts regularly make headline news in the Netherlands and sparked outrage in Romania, where the items are consid-

ered national treasures. The then Romanian prime minister Marcel Ciolacu voiced "outrage that priceless objects" that had been stolen and was considering claiming "unprecedented damages".

"You have no idea what the impact of this is on the Romanian community," Romanian cultural journalist Claudia Marcu, who has lived in The Netherlands since 2003, told public broadcaster NOS.

"When I heard about the theft I thought: for the Dutch this would be like [Rembrandt's] 'The Night Watch' being stolen. People are devastated."

The Dutch government had set aside 5.7 million euros (\$6.5 million) for a likely payout following the brazen theft.

The pieces were on loan from a Bucharest museum, whose head was promptly sacked for lending the works out in the first place.

Body camera video released from Woods arrest

MIAMI (AFP) — Authorities in Florida released the body camera video of Tiger Woods being arrested on Thursday following a rollover car crash last week that led to him stepping away from golf to seek treatment.

In the footage released by the Martin County Sheriff's Office, Woods tells authorities he was looking at his phone when he struck the trailer of another vehicle.

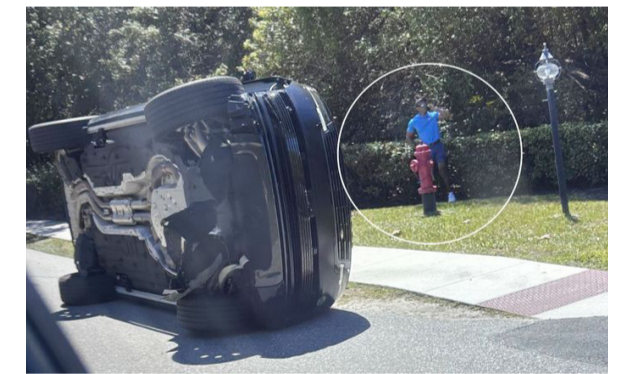
"I looked down at my phone and all of a sudden, boom," Woods said.

The 50-year-old winner of 15 major titles and a PGA Tour record-tying 82 events is shown taking a sobriety test and being handcuffed after that.

"At this time, I do believe your normal faculties are impaired," a deputy told Woods. "And you're under an unknown substance, so at this time you are under arrest for DUI."

Police found two hydrocodone painkiller pills on Woods when he was arrested.

Woods told deputies he had taken "a few" prescription medications earlier in the day and told authorities he had undergone seven back operations and more than 20 surgeries on his right leg, according to the arrest



Tiger Woods arrested for driving under the influence in Florida

report. Woods has pleaded not guilty to driving under the influence. He was also charged with refusing to take a urinalysis test.

Woods, who had been hoping to play in next week's Masters, said he planned to step away from golf and was granted permission to leave the United States in order to undergo treatment.

"I know and understand the seriousness of the situation I find myself in," Woods said in a statement.

"I am stepping away for a period of time to seek treatment on focus on my health. This is necessary in order for me to prioritize my well-being and work toward lasting recovery. "I'm committed to tak-

ing the time needed to return in a healthier, stronger and more focused place, both personally and professionally."

The PGA of America has announced Woods will not serve as captain of the 2027 US Ryder Cup team.

The Masters, PGA of America and PGA Tour all issued statements supporting Woods and his decision to seek treatment.

Woods suffered severe injuries in a 2021 car crash in California but returned to competition at the 2022 Masters and finished 47th despite struggling to walk 72 holes at Augusta National.

He has not competed in a PGA Tour-level event since missing the cut at the 2024 British Open.

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