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Petra photo

Prime Minister Jafar Hassan speaks during a meeting on Tuesday with media representatives, where he unveils details related to the National Water Carrier and other mega projects

'Despite regional challenges, gov't pressing ahead with long-awaited national projects'

AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Tuesday said that the government has completed the key preparatory stages required to launch two of the Kingdom's largest strategic projects: The National Water Carrier and the Aqaba Port Railway.

Speaking during a meeting with media representatives, Hassan said that despite regional challenges, the government is pressing ahead with long-awaited national projects

that have been under study for decades.

He said that the initiatives constitute the largest volume of foreign investment in Jordan's history, crediting the sustained efforts of His Majesty King Abdullah and HRH Crown Prince Hussein.

Hassan said that the National Water Carrier is a cornerstone of Jordan's drive towards self-reliance, noting that its progress reflects the

Kingdom's strong international standing among donor countries and financial institutions.

He said the government will contribute \$722 million during the implementation phase, the largest budgetary allocation for a single capital project, while a coalition of Jordanian commercial banks is set to provide up to \$1.1 billion in financing.

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Crown Prince directs relaunch of Prince Ali Grassroots Centres

Initiative aims to expand base of football participation, attract, nurture, develop promising talent

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein chaired a meeting at the Jordan Football Association (JFA) on Tuesday, during which he directed the relaunch of the Prince Ali Grassroots Centres under a new vision based on training programmes of the highest standard and broader coverage to include all governorates.

The initiative, which will be a comprehensive national project, aims to expand the base of football participation, attract, nurture and develop promising talent, and build a generation capable of representing Jordan in sports in the future, according to a Royal Court statement.

The Crown Prince highlighted the significant achievements of Jordan's national football team, emphasising that they are the result of considerable national and institutional efforts.

His Royal Highness also praised the efforts of JFA,



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

HRH Crown Prince Hussein chairs a meeting at the Jordan Football Association on Tuesday and directs the relaunch of the Prince Ali Grassroots Centres

under the leadership of HRH Prince Ali, president of the JFA, which have contributed tremendously to the advancement of Jordanian football, the state-

ment said.

The Crown Prince praised the national team's historic achievement in qualifying for the 2026 World Cup finals,

and wished them success. For his part, Prince Ali praised the Crown Prince's support for the sports sector, particularly football, noting the importance of

raising the morale of both the players and the Jordanian public, especially during the World Cup.

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Lebanon president says aiming to end hostilities with Israel talks

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AFP) — Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said on Monday that planned talks with Israel aim to end hostilities and the occupation in southern Lebanon, even as Hezbollah and its supporters rejected the negotiations.

Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah has sharply criticised the Lebanese government's negotiations with Israel, which are set to enter a second round on Thursday.

After the first round of talks last week, US President Donald Trump announced a 10-day truce pausing more than six weeks of war between Hezbollah and Israel, an explosive front in the broader Mideast war.

Hezbollah lawmaker Hassan Fadlallah told AFP it was in Aoun's and Lebanon's "interest" to



AFP photo

French contingent vehicles serving with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon cross the Qasbiyeh Bridge heading toward Sidon and Beirut

withdraw from the talks, however adding that his group also wanted the ceasefire to last.

New talks between Lebanon's and Israel's US ambassadors will take place Thursday in Washington, a US State Department official told

AFP, after the first direct talks between the two countries in decades was held on April 14.

But Lebanon's official National News Agency (NNA) reported an Israeli drone strike in Qaqaiyat Al Jisr in the country's south on Monday, and

Israeli artillery shelling on the border town of Hula.

The Lebanese health ministry said six people were wounded in Qaqaiyat Al Jisr.

Israel's army said in a statement that soldiers "identified terrorists" in

the Bint Jbeil and Litani areas of southern Lebanon "who violated the ceasefire understandings", adding that the air force "eliminated" them.

The NNA also reported Israeli army "detonations... in parallel with extensive demolition" operations in Mais Al Jabal, decrying "the systematic destruction impacting homes and livelihoods, buildings and infrastructure" in the town and several other border villages.

Fadlallah told AFP that "it is in the interest of Lebanon, the president of the republic and the government to move away from the path of direct negotiation and return to a national understanding about the best option for Lebanon".

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AFP Photo

The Dome of the Rock shrine is lit up at dusk at the Al Aqsa Mosque Compound in East Jerusalem, March 21, 2023

Jordan denounces Israeli settler incursions into Al Aqsa Mosque

AMMAN (JT) — The Foreign Ministry on Tuesday condemned continued incursions by "extremist" settlers into Al Aqsa Mosque/Al Haram Al Sharif, describing them as "provocative and unacceptable prac-

tices".

In a statement, the ministry said that settlers raised Israeli flags inside the courtyards of the holy site, alongside what it called "reckless actions" by Israeli police.

The ministry stressed that such acts constitute a "flagrant violation of international law and of the historical and legal status quo in Jerusalem and its holy sites".

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Two-state hopes face pressure as Palestinian crisis deepens

Aid may ease pressure, but cannot restore Palestinian rights without political action — observers

By Mai Anati

AMMAN — International support for the Palestinian Authority and the two-state solution returned to focus on Monday, as officials warned that the ongoing US-Israel-Iran escalation must not overshadow the deepening Palestinian crisis.

Meetings in Brussels brought together European and international officials who said that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains central to Middle East stability despite the war involving Iran, Israel and the

United States.

"We meet in the middle of a storm. But we cannot abandon the compass," Belgian Foreign Minister Maxime Prevet said at the opening of the Global Alliance for the Two-State Solution.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said Israeli measures, including the withholding of Palestinian revenues, have placed the Palestinian economy under severe strain.

He said blocked funds now exceed \$4 billion.

Safadi stressed that economic support can-

not replace a political path based on the two-state solution and the Palestinian people's right to statehood.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said more must be done to protect Palestinians and restore momentum behind a political settlement.

"We can and must do more to protect the Palestinian people and put the two-state solution back on the table," she said.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa said Gaza remains an integral part of the future Palestinian

state and must eventually return to Palestinian governance.

The renewed diplomatic push comes as US President Donald Trump has largely sidelined the Palestinian Authority in proposals for post-war Gaza.

Jordan warned that economic pressure on Palestinians is intensifying.

Political science professor Areej Jabr said that international support can ease the Palestinian crisis, but cannot address its root causes while Israeli measures continue to undermine

daily life and prospects for peace.

She said that pressure on UNRWA, the freezing of clearance revenues and direct Israeli control over key economic levers have weakened Palestinian resilience.

"In this context, international aid becomes almost the only path to reduce collapse," she said.

"But it remains a tool to manage the crisis, not solve it."

Jabr said that restrictions on movement and trade, settlement expansion, internal Palestinian divisions and the absence of sovereignty

over resources all limit the impact of outside support.

On the political track, she said that the two-state solution remains the most widely accepted Arab and international framework.

But she warned that settlement growth, fragmented geography and new realities in Jerusalem and the West Bank have made implementation far more difficult.

"The solution has not completely ended, but it has become highly complex," she said.

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AFP/JT

A man holds a Palestinian flag as he watches displaced Gazans crossing the Netzarim corridor from the southern Gaza Strip into Gaza City, January 27, 2025



Royal Court Chief Yousef Issawi on Tuesday attends a celebration held by Irbid National University marking Jordan Flag Day

Issawi attends Irbid National University's Jordan Flag Day ceremony

AMMAN (JT) — Royal Court Chief Yousef Issawi on Tuesday attended a celebration held by Irbid National University marking Jordan Flag Day.

The ceremony, held at Al Kindi Auditorium, opened with the Jordanian national anthem and a Quran recitation, followed by a video presentation highlighting the history and symbolism of the national flag and its close association with the achievements of His Majesty King Abdullah in advancing Jordan's development and international standing.

University President

Majed Abu Zreig said the occasion reflects deep meanings of loyalty and belonging, describing the flag as a symbol of dignity, sovereignty and national pride, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

He noted that the university, founded in 1994 as the first private university in the northern region, has graduated around 24,500 students who now hold positions across public and private sectors.

On behalf of the students, Hamzeh Abu Khudair delivered a speech presenting a thoughtful vision of

citizenship, highlighting youth's shift from waiting to active engagement and initiative, and underscoring university students' deep commitment to the principles of Hashemite leadership.

He added that true belonging is reflected in tangible achievement, intellectual awareness, and the ability to confront challenges with a high sense of national responsibility.

On the sidelines of the event, Issawi inaugurated an art exhibition showcasing student art works reflecting Jordanian identity, alongside musical performances.

Queen Rania meets with Jordanian entrepreneurs, visits Ezwitti initiative in Amman

AMMAN (JT) — Her Majesty Queen Rania met with a number of local entrepreneurs and representatives of Jordanian companies during a visit to Jabal Al Weibdeh in Amman on Tuesday. She also stopped by Ezwitti initiative, located in downtown Amman.

During the meeting held at Bulbul Eatery, Her Majesty joined a group of Jordanian entrepreneurs and representatives of Endeavour Jordan and Beyond Capital for a discussion about challenges and opportunities that business owners are facing in the local job market, according to a statement from the Office of Her Majesty.

Her Majesty heard from Tamer Al Salah, Managing-Director of Endeavour Jordan, which is part of the global Endeavour network, who explained how his organisation aims to drive sustainable local economic growth and support job creation by accelerating the growth of high-impact entrepreneurial projects in the country.

Established by and for entrepreneurs, Endeavour serves as a global training, mentoring, and investment platform for future



Photo courtesy of the Office of Her Majesty

Her Majesty Queen Rania on Tuesday meets with a number of local entrepreneurs and representatives of Jordanian companies during a visit to Jabal Al Weibdeh in Amman

business founders, with its Jordanian chapter launched in 2009.

During the meeting, the Queen also heard from the team of Beyond Capital, a Jordan-based venture capital platform founded in 2017 through a partnership between Endeavour Jordan and Silicon Badia.

The company in-

vests in venture capital funds and startups that strive to create economic value for Jordan.

Afterward, Queen Rania visited Ezwitti, a social initiative that works on securing food aid for members of the community, where she met with its Founder Mahmoud Nabulsi and a number of volunteers.

Established in 2015, the initiative operates through a voucher-based system that enables its restaurant customers to purchase an additional meal for people in need, without requiring direct handover.

This model allows for the distribution of meals while preserving the dignity of those in need, and promot-

ing a sense of shared responsibility.

To date, Ezwitti has provided over 400,000 meals through its growing network of more than 3,700 volunteers. The initiative, whose model has been adopted in Oman, eventually aims to expand to several governorates in Jordan and other countries across the Arab World.

Jordanian Narrative Project reinforces identity — culture minister

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Culture Mustafa Rawashdeh on Tuesday said that the "Jordanian Narrative: Land and People" project is a key national effort to boost identity and highlight Jordan's deep historical roots.

Speaking at Mutah University in Karak, Rawashdeh said that the initiative reflects Jordan's true identity, links past and present, and helps shape the future, according to a Ministry of Culture statement.

He said that the project was inspired by HRH Crown Prince Hussein's call in Tafleeh to preserve and document Jordan's national story. Rawashdeh said that the initiative aims to produce a comprehensive narrative that reflects the Kingdom's rich civilisational and human heritage across centuries.



Ministry of Culture photo

Speaking at Mutah University in Karak, Minister of Culture Mustafa Rawashdeh on Tuesday says that the 'Jordanian Narrative: Land and People' project is a key national effort to boost identity

He added that the project goes beyond connecting history to geography, seeking instead to examine the civilisations that passed through Jordan and their lasting impact on the state and society.

The minister de-

scribed the programme as a "national roadmap for future generations".

"When we speak about Jordan, we speak about a country with strategic geography and a vast historical legacy," he said.

The minister added

that Jordanians have every reason to take pride in their country and preserve its authentic heritage.

Highlighting Karak's place in the national story, Rawashdeh said that the governorate has long been a centre of

civilisation, resilience and learning.

He said that Karak played an important role in successive eras, from early history to the foundations of the modern Jordanian state.

Mutah University President Salameh Naimat said that the Jordanian narrative reflects a continuous national consciousness shaped over centuries.

Former minister Hussein Majali said that the initiative is about documenting a story Jordanians already know and value.

Former minister Muhammad Mubaidin said that Karak holds a central place in Jordan's historical and cultural journey.

The ministry said that the "Hiwarat" programme will continue in governorates as part of efforts to preserve identity and enhance national belonging.



JAF photo

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Yousef Huneiti and Spanish Chief of the Defence Staff Teodoro Esteban López Calderón on Tuesday attend a field exercise at the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Centre

Huneiti, Spanish chief of defence staff discuss cooperation, attend drill

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Yousef Huneiti on Tuesday held talks with his Spanish Chief of the Defence Staff Teodoro Esteban López Calderón on ways to expand military cooperation and enhance coordination between the two countries' armed forces.

The Spanish delegation was received at the General Command of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) with an official military ceremony, including a guard of honour, according to a JAF statement.

Discussions focused on boosting cooperation across various military

fields and increasing the exchange of expertise to enhance operational efficiency and address evolving regional challenges.

Huneiti said that Jordanian-Spanish relations are built on "solid" foundations and shared strategic visions, stressing the importance of continued coordination and cooperation between the two countries' armies.

For his part, Calderón commended the "strong" ties between the two countries and praised Jordan's role in promoting regional security and stability amid current challenges.

High-ranking Jordanian officers, along with the Spanish ambassador and military attaché in Amman, attended a series of briefings outlining the JAF modernisation efforts and potential areas for future cooperation.

Also, the two sides observed a field exercise at the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Centre, carried out by the King Abdullah II Royal Special Forces.

The drill simulated modern security scenarios, demonstrating advanced planning, execution capabilities and the use of modern technologies.

Jordan records 74,034 marriages, 23,705 divorces in 2025

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan recorded 74,034 marriages and 23,705 divorces in 2025, Civil Status and Passports Department (CSPD) Director-General Ghaith Tayeb said on Monday.

Tayeb added that 179,666 births and 31,015 deaths were registered, noting that

these figures relate to Jordanian citizens holding national numbers, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

He said that the number of Jordanian citizens reached about 8,905,574 by the end of 2025, adding that CSPD also provides services to non-Jordanians, including the documentation

of marriages, births, deaths and divorces to facilitate their procedures in their home countries.

Tayeb noted that CSPD has made "significant" progress in its electronic archiving project, as about 85 million documents have been archived so far,

while nearly 70 million documents remain under processing.

He added that manual registration has been fully discontinued since 2002, with all services now handled electronically, contributing to faster procedures and removing geographical restrictions that

previously required citizens to visit specific locations

The electronic archiving system has also eliminated the need for manual file searches, enabling access to documents within minutes, compared with the long time previously required.

Housing Bank renews support for JRF's child safety, women's empowerment projects

AMMAN (JT) — Housing Bank (HB) has announced the renewal of its strategic partnership with the Jordan River Foundation (JRF), supporting the latter's projects addressing child safety and women's empowerment.

Under the renewed agreement, the bank continues to support JRF's Child Safety Programme, launched by Her Majesty Queen Rania in 1997, which is the first of its kind in Jordan and the Arab

world, and the primary national reference for strengthening the protection of children and families against all forms of abuse.

The programme focuses on awareness, prevention, and intervention, according to a JRF statement.

HB's support is expected to extend the programme's reach to 6,000 children and women through the implementation of educational programmes and events aimed at abuse

prevention, capacity building in child safety, and promoting positive parenting practices.

The agreement also includes support for two of JRF's social enterprises empowering local community women: Jordan River Designs, which offers handcrafted products made by women from rural and Bedouin communities, and Al Karma Kitchen, which provides a variety of home-cooked foods prepared by women from local

communities. Through these two projects, HB will contribute to empowering more than 35 women by developing their capabilities as independent breadwinners through specialised technical and entrepreneurial trainings, empowering more than 160 members of their families.

This partnership, an extension of the ongoing collaboration between both sides, aligns with the objectives of Housing Bank's Corporate

Social Responsibility programme, "Imkan by Iskan", within the social empowerment sector.

Under this sector, the bank focuses on enhancing the role of civil society organisations through continuous support, enabling them to provide various forms of assistance to local communities in accordance with identified needs and in ways that contribute to addressing key challenges.

JRF, founded in 1995 as a non-profit, non-gov-

ernmental organisation, continues to pioneer the socio-economic empow-

ernment of local communities while providing all available means to

protect children, women, and families from abuse, in line with Her Majesty's vision for alleviating poverty, supporting empowered generations, and advancing child welfare throughout the Kingdom.

Over more than three decades, the JRF has grown into a national platform for economic and community development, contributing to empowering hundreds of thousands of community members, both Jordanians and refugees.



JRF photo

Under the renewed agreement, the Housing Bank continues to support the Jordan River Foundation's Child Safety Programme, launched by Her Majesty Queen Rania in 1997

Gov't signs technical, legal agreement for National Water Carrier Project

- Agreement marks key milestone toward financial close of \$5.8b mega water project
- Project to supplying 40% of Kingdom's water needs upon completion
- Scheme includes 300MW solar capacity to cover part of energy demand
- Construction, excavation works expected to begin this summer

AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Tuesday presided over the signing of the final technical and legal agreement for the Aqaba-Amman Water Desalination and Conveyance Project (the National Water Carrier) at the Prime Ministry.

The signing marks a major milestone towards reaching financial close in July, with construction and excavation works scheduled to commence this summer, according to a prime ministry statement.

The project's capital cost is estimated at \$4.3 billion, while the total cost, including financing, is projected to reach approximately \$5.8 billion.

The final agreement follows 16 months of intensive government negotiations with relevant stakeholders aimed at optimising financing terms, securing the best possible pricing, and refining the project's engineering and technical specifications.

The National Water Carrier is a world-first strategic initiative that integrates several pillars: The



Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Tuesday presides over the signing of the final technical and legal agreement for the Aqaba-Amman Water Desalination and Conveyance Project

de-salination of 300 million cubic metres (mcm) of seawater annually, pumping systems capable of lifting water to elevations of 1,100 metres above sea level via a 450 kilometre pipeline network and a heavy reliance on eco-friendly, cutting-edge renewable energy technologies.

Set to provide approximately 40 per cent of the Kingdom's drinking water needs, the project is expected to begin operations in 2030, serving as a vital cornerstone for national water security.

The 300mcm annual output is nearly equal to the total capacity of all dams in the Kingdom and triple the production of the Disi project.

It will increase the Kingdom's water supply by 40 per cent, effectively doubling the annual per capita share from 60 to 110 cubic metres.

Furthermore, it will increase the frequency of water supply from one day to three days per week across all governorates.

Under the final agreement, the price of water was reduced from approximately \$3 per cubic metre in 2024 to an indicative price of \$2.7. Current negotiations are focused on calculating inflation formulas to reach the final close.

The government will continue to bear the cost of water subsidies.

Currently, the Ministry of Water-Water Authority of Jordan's (WAW) debt accounts for roughly 12 per cent of the total public debt, a figure expected to rise in absolute terms due to the high costs associated with water projects, which are deemed essential and irreplaceable.



To mitigate this burden, the government plans to expand high-efficiency water projects, improve wastewater treatment, reduce water loss and rationalise consumption.

The National Water Carrier will alleviate pressure on traditional water sources, improve supply consistency for the industrial, agricultural and economic sectors, and ensure water sufficiency until 2040.

Implemented under a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) model, the project will be fully transferred to government ownership after 26 years of operation. It is supported by 29 donors and international financing institutions, with total grants amounting to \$663 million from the US, EU, Germany, The Netherlands, the UK, France, Italy, Japan and the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

Private sector financing for the developer, Meridiam, totalling \$2.9 billion, is provided by a consortium including the World Bank Group, European Investment Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Islamic Development Bank, Proparco, The Japan International Cooperation Agency, GCF and the OPEC Fund for International Development.

The government is contributing \$722 million to the project, the largest budgetary expenditure for a capital project in Jordan's history, to lower the cost per cubic metre. Additionally, a coalition of Jordanian commercial banks led by the Housing Bank will provide up to \$1.1 billion in financing.

The Social Security Investment Fund will participate through this banking coalition and as an equity partner with Meridiam.

The National Water Carrier is a flagship project of the Economic Modernisation Vision and remains a top national priority for bolstering water security.

The agreement was signed by Minister of Water and Irrigation Raed Abu Saud and Meridiam CEO Thierry Déau, in the presence of several ministers, officials, ambassadors of supporting nations, and representatives of donor and investment institutions.



Minister of Water and Irrigation Raed Abu Saud and Green Climate Fund Middle East and North Africa Regional Director Amjad Al Mahdi on Tuesday discuss cooperation

Jordan, Green Climate Fund discuss cooperation on water, climate projects

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Water and Irrigation Raed Abu Saud and Green Climate Fund (GCF) Middle East and North Africa Regional Director Amjad Al Mahdi on Tuesday discussed ways to expand cooperation on water and climate projects, with a focus on preparing networks for the National Carrier.

Abu Saud said the fund is among the largest contributors to the project, providing \$295 million, including \$75 million in grants, stressing its importance in supporting Jordan's water sector and long-term sustainability, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

He also welcomed the decision to establish the fund's new regional office in Amman, describing it as recognition of the Kingdom's role in advancing climate action and sustainable development.

The discussions also covered cooperation on water supply and wastewater projects aimed at improving services and enhancing resilience.

Mahdi said the move reflects confidence in Jordan's commitment to addressing climate challenges, noting that the Amman office will serve as a hub for coordinating regional efforts, facilitating access to climate finance and strengthening partnerships.

The International Monetary Fund has projected Jordan's growth at 2.7 per cent in 2026, assuming disruptions remain temporary, underscoring the challenge of balancing short-term pressures with long-term stability, the minister said.

Shenhadeh said the project would connect Aqaba Port to the Mediterranean via Syria, strengthening Jordan's position as a regional logistics hub linking the Gulf, the Levant and parts of Africa.

He also highlighted the National Water Carrier project, financed at around \$6 billion and supported by 26 international donors, noting that it is expected to increase potable water supply by 40 per cent, or around 300 million cubic metres annually.

"We are seeking to capitalise on opportunities rather than focus solely on the repercussions of war," he said.

Addressing regional tensions, including energy market volatility, Shenhadeh said energy shocks remain the main concern given Jordan's reliance on imported oil.

He noted that Jordan has accumulated significant experience in managing external shocks over the past two decades, including regional conflicts, refugee inflows and the COVID-19 pandemic, which has strengthened its economic resilience and adaptability.



Muhannad Shehadeh

Shenhadeh said the government is pursuing a gradual approach to inflation by absorbing part of rising energy costs to ease pressure on citizens, adding that a full and immediate pass-through of price increases would be "too painful" for households.

He also pointed to strong financial buffers, including central bank foreign reserves of around \$28 billion and banking sector capital adequacy of about 18 per cent, noting that recent monetary easing, including a reduction in the reserve requirement ratio, injected roughly \$500 million into the economy.

IMF Director of the Middle East and Central Asia Department Jihad Azour said the conflict has exposed weaknesses in regional infrastructure and trade networks.

He stressed that stronger economic ties between Jordan and Gulf countries will be central to building a more integrated and resilient regional economy capable of withstanding future shocks.

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Ministry, HTU sign MoU to develop AI solutions for public sector challenges

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of State for Public Sector Development Badria Balbisi and President of Al Hussein Technical University (HTU) Ismael Hinti on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to develop AI-driven solutions addressing priority challenges within the government sector.

The agreement, part of the National Council for Future Technology initiatives, establishes an institutional framework for cooperation between the government and HTU, an initiative of the Crown Prince Foundation, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The partnership aims to apply the 9xai applied innovation methodology, engaging young talent to identify real-world public sector challenges and develop conceptual AI



The agreement, part of the National Council for Future Technology initiatives, establishes an institutional framework for cooperation between the government and HTU

prototypes designed to enhance efficiency and service delivery.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Balbisi said the MoU aligns with government efforts to foster innovation and leverage emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, to improve public services.

She highlighted the importance of the partnership with HTU as a model for integrating government expertise with youth capabilities to support data-driven solutions.

Balbisi noted that the second executive programme for public sector modernisation (2026-2029) includes a dedicated component on data and emerging technologies.

For his part, Hinti said the partnership reflects the university's role as a national enabler of applied innovation. He described the 9xai programme as a practical platform linking young talent with real public sector challenges.

He added that collaboration with the government enables students and graduates to apply their skills in developing high-impact AI solutions, strengthening their professional readiness and supporting Jordan's digital transformation.

Assistant to the University President for Innovation Rami Karmi briefed participants on the project, which focuses on five national priority use cases. These include enabling citizens to receive immediate, reliable answers about government services through intelligent agents and improving the efficiency of the judicial system through speech-to-text technology in courts.

Cassation Court upholds 10-year sentences in fatal brawl case

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld an October 2023 Criminal Court ruling sentencing five men to 10 years in prison each after convicting them of murdering a man during a brawl in Amman in December 2020.

The court first declared the defendants guilty of beating and killing the 44-year-old victim on December 19 and handed them a 20-year prison term each.

However, the court decided to immediately reduce the sentence to 10 years in prison each because the victim's family dropped charges against the defendants.

Court papers said one of the defendants was operating an excavator to demolish a house next to the victim.

The victim became annoyed by the noises and went outside to ask him to stop operating the excavator, court papers said.

"The two argued, and the four other defendants who were part of the excavation team joined in defending their colleague," according to court documents.

The argument became heated and the five defendants attacked the victim with wooden sticks, "beating him on different parts of his body", court transcripts said.

"The victim was rushed to a nearby hospital suffering from a brain haemorrhage among other injuries," the court maintained.

The victim died a few days later after succumbing to his wounds, the court added.

The defendants contested the Criminal Court's ruling through their lawyer, who argued that "there were legal errors in the investigation process".

Meanwhile, the Criminal Court's general attorney asked the Court of Cassation to uphold the rulings against the defendants.

However, the higher court ruled that the Criminal Court followed the proper procedure when sentencing the defendants and the punishment was appropriate.

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



US President Donald Trump speaks after signing an executive order in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC on April 18

Trump says US in 'very, very strong' position for Iran talks

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — President Donald Trump said on Tuesday the United States is in a strong position for talks with Iran as his envoys prepared to hold a second round of negotiations in Pakistan.

"We're going to end up with a great deal. I think they have no choice... We're in a very, very strong negotiating position," Trump told broadcaster CNBC.

A US delegation led by Vice President JD Vance was expected to leave shortly from Washington for Islamabad, which earlier this month hosted a first round of talks, ending without progress.

However, there was no confirmation of Vance's departure.

Trump is demanding Iran give up its uranium stockpile and end attempts to control the strategic Hormuz waterway used to transport Middle East oil and other commodities.

Despite being hit by weeks of US and Israeli bombing before a temporary ceasefire was declared, Iran has so far refused those conditions.

The ceasefire, in place since April 8, was due to expire late Wednesday in Washington, according to the White House.

In a social media post, Trump told Iran it could boost the chances of success in peace talks with the United States by freeing eight women that he said face execution.

"I would greatly appreciate the release of these women," Trump posted on Truth Social. "Would be a great start to our negotiations!"

Trump's statement accompanied a re-posting of a claim on X by a pro-Israel youth activist in the United States, Eyal Yakoby, that eight women faced death by hanging.

Yakoby posted photographs of eight women but no names.

AFP could not verify the claim about most of the women. However, the picture of one of the women in the post was identical to an image published April 13 by the Norway-based Hengaw human rights group of Bitu Hemmati, who has been condemned to death in Iran.

Iran has already carried out multiple executions of people connected to January anti-government protests which activists say were put down in a brutal crackdown that left

thousands dead and tens of thousands arrested.

Trump was unclear in the interview with CNBC about whether he would extend the ceasefire if there is no progress in Pakistan.

"Iran can get themselves on a very good footing if they make a deal," he said.

Asked if he would carry out his previous threats to bomb Iran's bridges and power plants — something many analysts say could constitute war crimes — Trump said "it's not my choice but it will also hurt them."

He said the United States had intercepted a ship carrying a "gift" to Iran from China as Tehran tries to restock its military during the ceasefire.

The ship had "a gift from China" which "wasn't very nice," Trump told CNBC. "I was a little surprised," he added, saying he thought he had an "understanding" with China's President Xi Jinping.

A week ago, Trump announced that Xi had assured him there would be no Chinese weapons deliveries to Iran, a close partner with Beijing for years.

Rats, fleas plague Gaza's displaced as temperatures rise

KHAN YUNIS, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — As springtime temperatures rise in Gaza, a surge in rats, fleas and other pests has compounded the misery of hundreds of thousands of displaced people still living in tents after more than two years of war.

With meagre shelter and almost no sanitation, Palestinians told AFP the vermin are invading their makeshift homes, biting children and contaminating food, in what aid agencies warned was a growing public health threat.

"My children have been bitten. One of my sons was even bitten on the nose," said Muhammad Al Raqab, a displaced Palestinian man living in a tent near the southern city of Khan Yunis.

"I am unable to sleep through the night because I must constantly watch over the children," the 32-year-old construction worker, originally from Bani Shueila, told AFP.

With shelters erected directly on soft sand by the Mediterranean Sea, rodents can easily burrow under tent walls and wreck havoc inside, where people have established makeshift pantries and kitchens.

"The rodents have eaten through my tent," Raqab said.

Nearly all of Gaza's population was displaced by Israeli evacuation orders and airstrikes during the war with Hamas that began after the Islamist group's attack on Israel in October 2023.

According to the UN, 1.7 million of Gaza's 2.2 million inhabitants still live in displacement camps, unable to



Garbage litters the ground next to makeshift shelters housing displaced Palestinians in Gaza City on Monday

return home or to areas that remain under Israeli military control despite a ceasefire that began in October 2025.

In these camps, "living conditions are characterised by vermin and parasite infestations", the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Action (OCHA) said after field visits in March.

Hani Al Flait, head of pediatrics at Al-Aqsa Hospital in central Gaza, told AFP his team encounters skin infections such as scabies daily.

'Flooded with sewage'

"The severity of these skin infections has been exacerbated by the fact that these children and their families are living in harsh conditions that lack basic public sanitation, as

well as a complete absence of safe water," he told AFP.

'I have taken him to doctors and hospitals, but they are not helping with anything. As you see, the rash remains'

Sabreen Abu Taybeh, whose son has been suffering from a rash, blamed the conditions in the camp.

"We are living in tents and schools flooded with sewage," she told AFP, showing the rash covering her

son's upper body. "I have taken him to doctors and hospitals, but they are not helping with anything. As you see, the rash remains."

"The summer season has brought us rodents and fleas," Ghalia Abu Selmi told AFP after discovering mice had gnawed through clothes she had prepared for her daughter's upcoming wedding.

"Fleas have caused skin allergies not only for children but for adults as well," she said, sorting through garments riddled with holes inside the tent she now calls home in Khan Yunis.

The 53-year-old said her family has been displaced 20 times since October 2023 and has yet to return to their home in the town of Abasan Al Kabira

near the Israeli border. Despite the ceasefire, Israel continues to control all access points into Gaza, with tight inspections and frequent rejections of aid deliveries, according to NGOs and the UN.

This has caused shortages in everything from medicine and fuel, to clothing and food.

Air strikes and fire-fights between Israel's military and what it says are Hamas fighters still occur near-daily.

According to the territory's health ministry, which operates under Hamas authority, at least 777 people have been killed by Israel's military since the start of the ceasefire.

The military says five of its soldiers have also been killed in Gaza over the same period.

Virginia votes in high-stakes US House map fight

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — Virginia voted on Tuesday in a referendum that could hand Democrats four extra seats in the US House of Representatives, turning President Donald Trump's redistricting push into a potential liability for Republicans in upcoming midterm elections.

The battle over "gerrymandering" — the long-established but widely criticised US practice of drawing electoral boundaries to benefit one party — has become one of the defining fights of the campaign for November's congressional contests.

The ballot measure would temporarily let Virginia redraw its congressional map before the next scheduled nationwide redistricting in 2030, giving Democrats a strong advantage in 10 of the state's 11 House districts, up from their current 6-5 edge.

With control of the House on a knife edge, the vote could help determine whether Trump finishes his term with a compliant Republican Congress or a Democratic chamber empowered to block his agenda and investigate

his administration.

Trump, who lost Virginia in all three of his presidential campaigns, joined a telephone rally on Monday night with House Speaker Mike Johnson to urge a "no" vote, warning Virginians: "The whole country is watching."

After polls opened at 6:00 am, the president followed up Tuesday with an all-caps social media post urging the state to vote no to "save your country".

Redistricting usually follows the national census every 10 years, but Trump last year urged

Republican-led states to redraw maps mid-decade to protect the party's fragile House majority.

That triggered a tit-for-tat contest as both parties raced to squeeze out extra seats before November.

Texas moved first, adopting a map that could add up to five Republican seats. California answered with a ballot measure designed to give Democrats five of their own.

Virginia is now one of Democrats' last major chances to gain ground through redistricting be-

fore voters decide control of Congress.

Democratic groups have poured money into the state, making the referendum one of the most expensive redistricting fights in US history.

The main campaigns on both sides have raised nearly \$100 million, much of it from "dark money" groups — non-profit organizations that can spend heavily on politics without publicly disclosing their donors.

The pro-redistricting campaign, Virginians for Fair Elections, has raised the lion's share — nearly \$65 million, according to The Hill.

Former president Barack Obama, still one of the Democratic Party's most influential campaign voices, has urged Virginians to vote yes.

"By voting yes, you can push back against the Republicans trying to give themselves an unfair advantage in the midterms... And we're counting on you," he said in a video message.

Democrats argue that the Virginia map is a necessary counterweight to Trump's pressure campaign. Republicans call it a naked power grab in a politically mixed state where Trump took 46 per cent of the vote in 2024.

US Congresswoman Jen Kiggans, a Virginia Republican whose district could be affected, told ABC News that forcing the measure through would "come back to bite" Democrats.

Nearly 1.4 million Virginians already had their say before Tuesday, with early and absentee voting data cited by The Hill giving Democrats a sizable advantage.

But recent polling suggests supporters hold only a narrow edge, and University of Virginia political scientist Larry Sabato cautioned that the outcome was not guaranteed.

"To get 10 out of 11 seats is not easy, even with Virginia leaning more Democratic," he told AFP. "And of late... it hasn't been as Democratic as it had been previously."

Victory in the referendum, which closes at 7:00 pm, would boost House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries, who has spearheaded efforts to neutralise Trump-backed maps in Republican states.

Defeat would be damaging, particularly for Virginia Governor Abigail Spanberger, whose approval ratings have dipped as she champions the plan.

'7,900 people died, disappeared on migration routes in 2025'

GENEVA (AFP) — Around 7,900 people died or disappeared on migration routes in 2025, taking the total dead and missing since 2014 beyond 80,000, the United Nations' mi-

gration agency said on Tuesday.

The UN's International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said people were being forced into dangerous, irregular journeys when safe

pathways were out of reach, and urged countries to find the political will to save more lives on migration routes.

"The deaths or disappearance of nearly 7,900 people were documented on global migration routes worldwide in 2025," the IOM said.

The IOM's Missing Migrants Project "has documented more than 80,000 deaths and disappearances during migration since 2014," the agency said.

"While these figures represent only the lower boundary of the true number of affected people, they nonetheless underscore the need for urgent action to end migrant deaths and address the complex

needs of families left behind," said the IOM.

The IOM said the 7,904 deaths and disappearances documented in 2025 "mark a continuation and escalation of a global failure to end these preventable deaths".

"2025 was marked by an unprecedented level of aid cuts and restriction of information on dangerous irregular routes, rendering more and more missing migrants invisible," it said.

Meanwhile, "an even more hidden population" of at least around 340,000 family members were estimated to be directly affected by the "ongoing crisis of missing migrants".

Tender Invitation

The General Headquarters of the Jordan Armed Forces/Royal Medical Services hereby announces Tender P37/2026/34

(MULTIPLATE REAGENTS AND CONSUMABLES FOR PLATELET FUNCTION)

Bidders who desire to participate therein can obtain a copy of the tender documentation against a fee of 25JD non-refundable, provided that they bring along a valid trade licence.

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

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

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

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

Tender Invitation

The General Headquarters of the Jordan Armed Forces/Royal Medical Services hereby announces Tender P17/2026/1

(UROLOGICAL CATHETERS/القسطرات العامة)

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Closing date sharp 1:00 P.M., WED 20th of MAY 2026. Non conditional bid bond equal to (3%) of the total value of quotation must be submitted along with the quotations.

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Tender Invitation

The General Headquarters of the Jordan Armed Forces/Royal Medical Services hereby announces Tender P17/2026/4

(UROLOGICAL CATHETERS/2 القسطرات العامة)

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Closing date sharp 1:00 P.M., WED 20th of MAY 2026. Non conditional bid bond equal to (3%) of the total value of quotation must be submitted along with the quotations.

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

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Tender Invitation

The General Headquarters of the Jordan Armed Forces/Royal Medical Services hereby announces Tender P45/2026/A/4

(مستهلكات الأربطة والضمامات العامة)

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

Closing date sharp 1:00 P.M., TUE 19th of MAY 2026. Non conditional bid bond equal to (3%) of the total value of quotation must be submitted along with the quotations.

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

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

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

Tender Invitation

The General Headquarters of the Jordan Armed Forces/Royal Medical Services hereby announces Tender P500/2025/87

(PURE TONE AUDIOMETER)

Bidders who desire to participate therein can obtain a copy of the tender documentation against a fee of 25JD non-refundable, provided that they bring along a valid trade licence.

Closing date sharp 1:00 P.M., WED 20th of MAY 2026. Non conditional bid bond equal to (3%) of the total value of quotation must be submitted along with the quotations.

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

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

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

Japan overhauls decades-old weapons export rules

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan will ease decades-old arms export curbs, the government said on Tuesday, in a major policy shift that paves the way for the sale of lethal weapons overseas as Tokyo ramps up its defence ambitions.

The new rules end Japan's self-imposed curb on sales of lethal arms as Tokyo seeks to enter the international arms market, hoping to bolster national defence as well as boost economic growth.

The move, which provoked an angry reaction from China, comes as anxiety increases over Beijing's escalating military activity in the region, as well as persistent security threats from North Korea and Russia.

"These decisions have been made at a time when changes in the security environment surrounding our country are occurring at an accelerating pace, and they serve to ensure Japan's security while contributing even more to peace and stability in the region and the international

community," the government's top spokesman Minoru Kihara told a news conference.

"Today, no nation can safeguard its own peace and security by itself alone."

China was "seriously concerned" by the changes and would "firmly resist Japan's reckless new-style militarisation", foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told a news briefing.

Exports had previously been limited to equipment classified under five categories: search and rescue, transportation, warning, surveillance and minesweeping.

However, Prime Minister Sanae Takachi posted on X that "with this amendment, transfers of all defence equipment will in principle be possible".

Proponents of the policy shift argue the change should further integrate Tokyo in the international defence supply chain, deepening defence, diplomatic and economic ties with partner nations as regional instability

grows.

But the decision has caused unease among some members of the Japanese public, with critics accusing Takaichi of eroding the proud history of the nation's staunch pacifism.

'People do not want Japanese-made products to be used to kill people in foreign countries'

"As a Hiroshima native, I grew up being taught the importance of peace, and I believe that the horror and devastation of the atomic bomb remain relevant today," 56-year-old Junichi Kikuta told AFP, explaining that he was against the move.

"I still hope Japan, as the only country ever hit by a nuclear

weapon, will continue to uphold its stance of relinquishing weapons and opposing wars."

The policy change has been approved by the Cabinet and the National Security Council, Kihara said.

Heigo Sato, an expert on defence issues and arms control at Takushoku University, said Japan must use this time of peace to ensure combat readiness by establishing "a system that ensures the smooth exchange of weapons and ammunition" between allies.

He told AFP that exports require routine maintenance, providing defence contractors with steady business while also strengthening ties with buyer nations.

By making the arms trade a two-way exchange, Japan might improve the chances of receiving help from allies in the event of an unexpected, prolonged conflict, he said.

'Turning point'

The new rules are part of an incremental eas-

ing of the blanket export ban on weapons that was first introduced in 1976.

Takaichi said export "recipients will be limited to countries that pledge to use the equipment in a manner consistent with the United Nations Charter".

However, the Japanese public appears uneasy about the prospect of exporting lethal arms.

A March survey by national broadcaster NHK showed that 53 per cent of participants opposed the step, while only 32 per cent supported it.

Peace activists have staged rallies across the nation over concerns that Takaichi's hawkish world views and open support for US President Donald Trump could drag Japan into conflicts. Some appeared to be protesting against the easing of arms export rules.

Veteran activist Koji Sugihara warned that the change was "a historic turning point", arguing that Japan's pacifist reputation has

historically aided its diplomatic and business relations.

"People do not want Japanese-made products to be used to kill people in foreign countries," Sugihara told AFP.

Japan previously exported bullets and military supplies to boost its economy, particularly during the Korean War in the 1950s, but adopted a conditional weapons export ban in 1967 before a total bar came in a decade later.

Tokyo has made exceptions to the rules in recent decades, especially when joining international weapons development projects, before it opened the door to exports in 2014 in the five non-lethal military product categories.

Five Japanese firms — Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, NEC, Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Mitsubishi Electric and Fujitsu are among the world's top 100 arms companies, according to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Djibouti president re-election confirmed with 97% of vote

ADDIS ABABA (AFP) — Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guelleh was officially confirmed as winner of a sixth straight election with a final tally of 97.01 percent of the vote, the Constitutional Council said on Tuesday.

Guelleh, 78, has ruled the small, strategically important country in the Horn of Africa unchallenged since 1999.

The outcome of the election was never in doubt. Initial results a few hours after the April 10 vote showed he had taken 97.81 per cent, against just one largely unknown opponent.

"In this election, President Guelleh obtained 97.01 per cent of the vote, for a total of 204,874 votes cast. His main opponent, Mohamed Farah Samatar, received 6,318 votes, or 2.99 per cent of the total," said Djibouti's official press agency, citing the Constitutional Council.

The former French colony borders the Bab-el Mandeb Strait, which provides access to the Red Sea from the Gulf

of Aden, through which passes a large portion of trade between Asia and the West.

Guelleh had vowed his fifth term would be his last...

Djibouti has just over a million inhabitants, but has leveraged its location to turn it into an international military and maritime hub, hosting military bases and contingents from France, the United States, China, Japan and Italy.

Guelleh had vowed his fifth term would be his last, but he ultimately had the constitution altered to allow him to run past the age of 75.

Mideast war lights fire under energy transition plans

PARIS, France (AFP) — Painful surges in oil prices are spurring countries to quickly rethink how to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, as shortage risks from war in the Middle East grow greater by the day.

Britain's government on Tuesday was the latest to unveil its plans, vowing to "massively expand renewables" as a way of bolstering energy security while denting the impact of higher electricity and petrol costs.

Around 60 governments worldwide have announced strategic responses or reviews since US and Israeli forces began striking Iran on February 28,

according to Carbon Brief, a specialised news site.

Using data from the International Energy Agency, Carbon Brief found many countries promising short-term relief such as cuts on fuel taxes or warning of rationing of fossil fuels.

But others have responded with plans to accelerate their green energy transitions toward low-carbon sources.

France

France announced on April 10 a range of measures to speed up the electrification of construction, transport and other industries,

to reduce the share of fossil fuels in the country's energy mix to just 29 per cent by 2035 from 60 per cent today.

Electric vehicles should make up two out of every three new car sales by 2030, Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu said.

The government is also providing aid to spur the installation of one million heat pumps a year, reducing reliance on imported natural gas.

EU

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has promised to propel the continent's electrification with announcements planned for

April 22.

Sweden

Sweden's environment minister announced on April 7 that "electrification is the future" to protect citizens from surging oil and natural gas prices.

The two key measures were increased aid for using renewable energies by government employees and household subsidies for EV purchases.

China

President Xi Jinping promised this month that "A greener, more diversified and resilient new energy system will provide a strong guar-

antee for China's energy security and economic development," state-controlled CCTV said.

Philippines

Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said in late March that "amid the Middle East conflict, accelerating the development of renewable energy and storage is both a strategic necessity and a national imperative".

The archipelago nation relies on coal for about 60 per cent of its electricity generation, and President Ferdinand Marcos has declared a "national energy emergency" due to risks to the domestic fuel supply.

Japan

Even as it authorised more burning of coal for power plants in response to soaring oil prices, Japan's government reiterated plans to "maximise the use of both renewable energy and nuclear power" to ensure its economic growth.

It announced on March 20 a \$40 billion project with Washington to build next-generation small nuclear power plants in Tennessee and Alabama, which could expand Japan's own network of nuclear plants.

India

After cutting fuel taxes in

late March to soften the blow at petrol stations, the Indian government said it would speed up permit grants for wind turbine and battery electricity storage projects.

Cambodia

Cambodia, which imports all its consumer fuel, announced in late March it was cutting import tariffs from 35 per cent to zero on electric vehicles, electric kitchen stoves, and solar energy.

It also cut tariffs on rechargeable hybrid vehicles to just seven per cent from 35 per cent.

Barbados

The Caribbean island's

government unveiled in early March a \$81 million plan to shift away from fossil fuels with heavy investments in renewable sources, in particular wind farms.

The goal is also to reinforce energy stockpile capacities.

Kenya

President William Ruto announced in late March a plan to triple electricity production in the next five to seven years, with nuclear energy accounting for just under a third of the country's needs.

"We have made a deliberate and strategic decision to significantly expand our energy capacity," Ruto said.

'Despite regional challenges, gov't pressing ahead with long-awaited national projects'

Continued from page 1

The Social Security Investment Fund will also contribute 15 per cent of the capital as a partner with Meridiam.

The project will be accompanied by measures to enhance water security, including reducing water loss, rationalising consumption and adopting new technologies to preserve resources.

Hassan said the initiative is expected to

drive growth across multiple sectors while strengthening Jordan's water independence and national security.

On the Aqaba Port Railway, Hassan outlined the executive agreement signed last week with the UAE, stemming from a \$5.5 billion investment agreement concluded in late 2023 following efforts led by His Majesty King Abdullah and UAE President Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed.

He said the project, part of the Economic Modernisation Vision, is expected to be implemented over five years, with construction set to begin in early 2027 following financial closure.

The railway will connect Shidiya to Maan and include the development of a Maan-Aqaba land port, envisioned as a major logistics, customs and industrial hub.

Hassan highlighted

the project's long-term regional potential, noting plans to link Aqaba with Mediterranean ports through Syria and Turkey, as well as with Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries.

He added that discussions have already taken place to connect the Omari and Jaber border crossings, reinforcing Jordan's position as a regional logistics centre.

The prime minister stressed that Jordan

remains committed to advancing its national projects and strengthening economic resilience despite regional instability.

He also pointed to growth indicators, export performance and financial market stability as evidence of a resilient economy, supported by prudent fiscal and monetary policies and affirmed by recent IMF and international credit rating reports.

Crown Prince directs relaunch of Prince Ali Grassroots Centres

Continued from page 1

The Crown Prince was briefed by officials and JFA representatives on the national team's preparations for the World Cup finals, as well as efforts to develop the football infra-

structure in Jordan.

His Royal Highness also inspected the Nashama Training Centre, which was recently established at Al Hussein Youth City and comprises a medical clinic, recovery room, fitness centre, and facilities

for athletes.

Minister of Youth Raed Adwan, Amman Mayor Yousef Shawarbeh, Director of the Office of the Crown Prince Zaid Baqain, and officials from the JFA attended the meeting.

Lebanon president says aiming to end hostilities with Israel talks

Continued from page 1

"Perhaps through indirect negotiations, even via the United States of America, we can achieve" Lebanon's goals, Fadlallah said.

Aoun said the aim of negotiations was to "stop hostilities, end the Israeli occupation of southern regions and deploy the [Lebanese] army all the way to the internationally recognised southern borders".

Fadlallah said regional powers including Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have worked to build a US-Iran diplomatic track, creating "a regional umbrella that can provide a kind of guarantee for Lebanon."

lateral negotiations, alone, amid deep Lebanese divisions and internal disagreements, constitutes a threat to internal consensus."

Aoun on Friday had said that "we negotiate for ourselves... we are no longer a pawn in anyone's game, nor an arena for anyone's wars, and we never will be again".

Tehran had insisted that a Lebanon truce was among its conditions for a ceasefire with Washington in the Middle East war.

On the road to Beirut airport, in the southern suburbs where Hizbollah holds sway, AFP images showed fresh graffiti attacking Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam following

their endorsement of negotiations.

"Joseph is a traitor, Nawaf is a turncoat," said one spray-painted sign.

"Dealing with Israel is forbidden... no to normalisation," another read.

Hizbollah supporters also heaped scorn on Aoun on social media.

"After all our sacrifices this guy wants to speak for us?" another user posted on X, with their profile picture showing a photo of Aoun and Salam with the words "they do not represent me".

Lebanon on Tuesday raised the toll from six weeks of war between Israel and Hizbollah to 2,454 dead as a fragile

10-day ceasefire holds.

The government's disaster risk management unit in a statement also said 7,658 people had been wounded in the conflict, which began on March 2, days after the broader Middle East war erupted.

Authorities and rescuers in Lebanon have been continuing to recover and identify bodies in areas that were subjected to heavy Israeli strikes.

"Any outcome of direct negotiations cannot be imposed on the people who made these sacrifices," Fadlallah told AFP.

Aoun on Monday named former Lebanese ambassador to Washington Simon Karam to

head the negotiations with Israel.

Lebanon has no diplomatic relations with its southern neighbour.

In December, Karam became the first Lebanese civilian representative to directly speak with Israeli representatives in decades, as part of a committee to monitor a 2024 ceasefire between Israel and Hizbollah.

Aoun said Monday that Lebanon faced two options: ongoing conflict "or negotiations to put an end to this war and achieve lasting stability".

"I have chosen negotiations, and I am full of hope that we will be able to save Lebanon," he said.

Jordan denounces Israeli settler incursions into Al Aqsa Mosque

Continued from page 1

Ministry spokesperson Fouad Majali reiterated the Kingdom's firm rejection and condemnation of the repeated incursions and accompanying provocations,

describing them as "unacceptable incitement aimed at imposing new realities" at the site, including attempts to divide it temporally and spatially.

Majali stressed that Israel has no sover-

eignty over occupied Jerusalem, warning of the consequences of continued violations and provocations.

He also called on the international community to adopt a firm stance that compels Israel, as the occupying power, to stop all irresponsible practices and ongoing violations against Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, and to cease unilateral measures in the occu-

pied West Bank.

Majali also reiterated that Al Aqsa Mosque, with its full area of 144 dunums, is a place of worship exclusively for Muslims, and that the Jerusalem Awqaf Department, affiliated with the Jordanian Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Holy Places, is the sole legal authority responsible for administering the mosque and regulating access to it.

Two-state hopes face pressure as Palestinian crisis deepens

Continued from page 1

measures. The Brussels meetings also reflected growing unease within parts of Europe over Israel's actions in Lebanon and the occupied West Bank.

The renewed debate suggests the Palestinian issue remains central to regional stability, but without decisive political action, support may remain symbolic.

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Engineering financial stability in the age of algorithms

By **Hamza Alakalik**

At the very moment you read these lines, algorithms are reshaping the contours of wealth and stability across global financial markets. Artificial intelligence is no longer a technical add-on for banks; it has become a decisive force that determines who remains competitive and who is pushed out by rising operational costs or unmanaged cyber risks. In this evolving landscape, Jordan is positioning itself at the forefront of regional transformation, guided by the Central Bank's vision to not only keep pace with technological change but to engineer a resilient financial system that blends innovation with stability.

Jordan's economic performance in 2025 reflects this direction. The economy recorded real growth of 2.7 per cent in the first quarter, signalling resilience in a challenging global environment. This progress was not accidental; it was the result of prudent monetary policy that preserved price stability and strengthened confidence. Foreign reserves reached a record \$28.5 billion by the end of January 2026, reinforcing financial security. Meanwhile, digital transformation accelerated significantly, with 84 per cent of banking transactions conducted electronically. This shift enhanced efficiency, reduced reliance on foreign currencies, and brought dollarisation down to 17.6 per cent, reflecting growing trust in the Jordanian dinar and its supporting digital ecosystem.

These indicators point to a banking sector that is not only stable but increasingly driven by digital ambition. However, as payment system transactions exceed JD42 billion, an important question emerges: How can artificial intelligence protect such a vast financial system from fraud and algorithmic shocks?

The answer lies in understanding the dual nature of AI. On one side, it offers remarkable opportunities. Banks can improve operational efficiency by up to 15 per cent, boost productivity by 30 per cent through generative AI and increase revenues by around 6 per cent. AI enables more accurate risk assessments, real-time monitoring and smarter decision-making processes. These advantages position financial institutions to operate faster, cheaper and more effectively than ever before.

Yet, the risks are equally significant. Over-dependence on algorithms can produce flawed outcomes if the underlying data is biased or incomplete. Even more concerning is the speed at which shocks can spread through interconnected systems. A small disruption, when amplified by algorithmic reactions, can quickly escalate into a broader financial disturbance. This makes it essential to introduce specialised stress-testing frameworks tailored specifically to AI-driven systems.

Jordan's approach reflects a clear awareness of these challenges. The country is not operating in isolation but is actively learning from global best practices. Leading institutions such as the European Central Bank and the US Federal Reserve have prioritised stress testing for AI models, while Singapore's Monetary Authority has advanced real-time monitoring of algorithmic systems. In the United Kingdom, regulators emphasise strong data governance and executive accountability for AI outcomes.

Building on these lessons, Jordan introduced its regulatory framework for AI in the banking sector in 2025. This framework is forward-looking, aiming to guide institutions toward responsible and secure adoption. It does more than regulate; it encourages innovation by providing clarity and legal certainty. Importantly, Jordan has avoided overly restrictive policies, instead promoting algorithmic transparency and ensuring customers have the right to challenge automated decisions.

Ultimately, financial stability in Jordan will depend on achieving a careful balance between innovation and protection. Institutions must embed ethical governance frameworks, invest in digital sovereignty, adopt advanced stress-testing tools and promote a strong culture of digital awareness. Jordan is steadily moving toward a future where responsible artificial intelligence supports sustainable economic growth.

Securing Jordan's water future



Hana Namrouqa

Concern and pressure have long dominated the narrative of Jordan's water sector. In a file where we have grown accustomed to reporting more on challenges than solutions, the National Water Carrier now stands as a long-awaited moment of reassurance.

For the first time, Jordan's path towards water security is no longer a concept under discussion, but one the country has begun to pursue.

This sense of reassurance stems from the fact that Jordan, after overcoming years of complex challenges, has finally moved this strategic project from planning into execution. Today, the picture is different: Jordan is advancing a clear national water project, backed by a sovereign decision and a defined implementation path.

What is changing with the advancement of the project is the nature of the Kingdom's relationship with water itself. For decades, the approach was based on adapting to scarcity. Today, that approach is shifting towards building real capacity for stability. The Kingdom is now moving closer to that "long-term solution to water scarcity" aspiration that I have written many times about in my reporting on the water file.

The National Water Carrier reflects a determined transformation in policy thinking, where water security is no longer tied to uncertain regional solutions, but treated as a national priority that cannot be delayed. The experience of the proposed and ultimately abandoned Red Sea-Dead Sea project clearly demonstrated how political and technical complexities can stall even the most urgent initiatives.

Moving forward with a fully national alternative was not an easy choice, but it was a necessary one. The National Water Carrier ranks among the largest de-salination projects regionally and globally, both in terms of the advanced seawater intake system and the scale of the conveyance network, which stretches roughly 450 kilometres across challenging terrain and significant elevation differences.

Reaching this stage after years of careful planning and development reflects the impact of sus-

tained Royal attention. The personal follow-up by His Majesty King Abdullah has been a defining factor, with a clear insistence on seeing the project through to implementation and maintaining it as a national priority despite the unstable regional environment.

This dimension helps explain how a project of such scale, with a total estimated cost of around \$5.8 billion, has moved from concept to implementation.

The path to today's National Water Carrier shows one clear lesson: Jordan's water security could not depend on factors beyond its control, but required a solution led and implemented nationally

In a complex regional context, assembling this level of financing and building a broad partnership of international and local stakeholders would not have been possible without the confidence Jor-

dan commands globally and the credibility of its leadership.

The project itself will deliver approximately 300 million cubic metres of water annually and is expected to meet around 40 per cent of the Kingdom's drinking water needs. In one of the most water-scarce countries in the world, this represents more than an increase in supply, it is a shift that addresses a long-standing imbalance between demand and available resources.

Today's milestone reflects a shift that has been building over years, from relying on complex regional frameworks to a national approach that puts control firmly in Jordan's hands. The path to today's National Water Carrier shows one clear lesson: Jordan's water security could not depend on factors beyond its control, but required a solution led and implemented nationally.

Seen in this light, the National Water Carrier is more than a project. It marks the turning of that "long-term solution" into reality. After years of following this file, what stands out is not only the scale of what has been set in motion, but the clarity of direction; a move away from managing scarcity towards actively securing Jordan's water future.

Israel's war obsession and the urgency of Palestinian leverage

By **Ramzy Baroud**

It is tempting to argue that Israel's new military doctrine is predicated on perpetual war, but the reality is more complex.

Not that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would object to such an arrangement. On the contrary, his relentless drive for military escalation suggests precisely that. After all, his openly declared quest for a "greater Israel" would require exactly this kind of permanent militarism, endless expansion and sustained regional destruction.

However, Israel cannot sustain an open-ended fight on multiple fronts indefinitely.

Israeli officials boast about fighting on "seven fronts", but many of these are, in military terms, largely imaginary rather than sustained battlefields.

The real wars, however, are entirely of Israel's making: From the genocide in Gaza to its unprovoked regional wars.

Still, that fact should not blind us to another reality: In the lead-up to the war on Iran, and in the escalation against Lebanon, there was near-total consensus among Jewish Israelis. An Israel Democracy Institute survey conducted on March 2-3 found that 93 per cent of Jewish Israelis supported the joint US-Israeli attack on Iran. Support cut across all political camps.

The same enthusiasm for war accompanied the Gaza genocide, and the various wars and escalations in Lebanon.

Even Yair Lapid, so often and so falsely marketed abroad as a "dove", fully backed these wars, admitting after the Iran ceasefire that Israel had entered them with "rare consensus" and that he supported them "from the very first moment".

His repeated criticisms, like

those of other Israeli politicians, are not of the war but of Netanyahu's failure to deliver a strategic outcome.

And this is the crucial distinction. Israelis mostly support the wars, but many no longer trust Netanyahu to translate destruction into strategic victory. By mid-April, 92 per cent of Jewish Israelis gave the army high marks for its management of the Iran war, but only 38 per cent gave high ratings to the government.

In other words, the public still believes in war but increasingly doubts the leadership waging it.

That distinction may not matter much to us, since the outcome remains mass death, devastation and colonial violence. But in Israel's own military and strategic calculations, it matters enormously. Its wars have historically followed a familiar model: Crush resistance, impose military and political domination and trans-late battlefield violence into colonial expansion.

Netanyahu delivered none of that.

This is why the uproar in Israel over the April 16 Lebanon ceasefire has been so fierce, and why the fears surrounding a possible stalemate with Iran run even deeper.

The Lebanon ceasefire clearly did not secure one of Israel's central declared aims: The disarmament of Hizbollah. Israel kept troops in southern Lebanon, but the agreement halted offensive operations and fell far short of the promised "total victory".

For many in Israel, any outcome that falls short of total victory is immediately read as defeat. One northern Israeli regional leader, Eyal Shtern, captured that mood with brutal clarity when he reacted to the Lebanon ceasefire by asking how Israel had gone "from absolute victory to total surren-

der", in remarks reported by CNN.

That is the real crisis now confronting Israel: Not that it has discovered the limits of permanent war, but that it has once again discovered that exterminatory violence does not automatically produce political victory.

While Iran possesses political leverage that could allow for a long-term or even permanent, truce, Lebanon and Syria remain in a far more vulnerable position. However, no one is in a more precarious condition than the Palestinians, particularly those in Gaza.

Unlike others who retain some political margin and space to maneuver, Palestinians live under Israeli occupation, apartheid and siege. Gaza, in particular, has been reduced to a sealed enclave of devastation.

Its hermetic siege has produced one of the most horrific humanitarian catastrophes in modern history: An entire population surviving on polluted water, with infrastructure destroyed, food critically scarce and thousands still buried beneath the rubble.

Aside from their legendary steadfastness — *sumud* — Palestinians operate under severe constraints in their ability to impose conditions on Israel, particularly as it continues to receive unconditional support from the United States and its Western allies. Yet their resilience, collective action and enduring presence remain powerful forms of leverage that cannot be easily contained.

Netanyahu, and those who will come after him, will always find in Palestine a space in which war can be waged continuously and at relatively low cost to Israel itself. Unlike other battlefields, where war becomes politically, militarily and economically unsustainable, Israel has turned its occupation of Palestine into a permanent bat-

tlefield.

Even if Netanyahu, now politically diminished and aging, exits the political scene, the underlying paradigm will remain intact. Future Israeli leaders will continue to wage war on Palestine, not despite its costs, but because of its perceived benefits: It is financially subsidised, colonially advantageous and politically sustainable within Israel's current structure.

To break this paradigm, Palestinians must generate leverage, real leverage. This cannot come from futile negotiations or appeals to long-ignored international law. It can only emerge from sustained collective resistance to colonialism, reinforced by meaningful support from Arab and Muslim states and genuine international allies, and amplified by global solidarity capable of exerting real pressure on Israel and, crucially, on its principal benefactors.

For now, Netanyahu continues his wars because he has no answer to his own strategic failures. Here, escalation is not a strength; it is the last refuge of a leadership that cannot deliver victory.

This, however, also reveals something else: Israel is entering a moment of unprecedented vulnerability.

That vulnerability must be exposed — clearly, consistently and urgently — by all those who seek an end to these senseless wars, an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and a path toward justice that has been denied for far too long.

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

Iran entrepreneurs angered by months-long Internet blackout

Agence France-Presse

PARIS, France — Mahla, an interior designer in Tehran, says she has been forced to sell her valuables and gold to pay employees as Iran's Internet shutdown, imposed at the start of the Middle East war, tanks her business.

The Internet blackout, which was put in place soon after the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, was already the longest nationwide shutdown on record as of April 5, according to NetBlocks, which says it has now lasted more than 50 days.

Iran's highly restricted local intranet has been working throughout the war, allowing people to connect to domestic websites, but it's insufficient for normal businesses in a country already crippled by international sanctions.

Entrepreneurs like Mahla, 55, have been deprived of "proper access to artificial intelligence tools, Google or even e-mails", she said.

During the war and since anti-government protests in January, during which the internet was also shut down, "the situation has remained unstable", said the woman, who now only has one employee.

The restrictions are taking a toll

on business owners' morale.

"Many people can no longer work. They feel exhausted, overwhelmed and hopeless," she said, angry at those "taking advantage of the situation to sell fake VPNs and scam people".

Even before the blackout, access in Iran was heavily filtered, with many social media platforms blocked, requiring the use of VPN software to bypass restrictions.

'We are losing the equivalent of two medium-sized power plants per day and it's our fault'

Mahdi, a 49-year-old accountant in Tehran, said the job situation that was already bad had only gotten worse.

"To find work, you need internet access, but it's not working. And the job postings on websites aren't being updated," he said.

Key economic indicators are

not always available in a country where all communication is tightly controlled.

But the Internet shutdown has clearly "inflicted considerable damage on the digital economy", the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency said this week on X.

Telecommunications Minister Sattar Hashemi estimated the losses at \$35 million per day.

These figures were backed up by fact-checking website Fact Nameh, which published excerpts from an April 13 speech by Afshin Kolahi, head of IT and energy company Rahnama.

The chief executive estimated a direct impact of \$30 to \$40 million per day from the blackout.

"We are losing the equivalent of two medium-sized power plants per day and it's our fault," he said.

Entrepreneurs abroad who have staff in Iran are also feeling the impact.

Maryam, 38, owner of a Paris-based online company that employs three people in Tehran, said her orders have fallen.

"In the last two months, we've only received 10 orders, just four of which came after the ceasefire," she said, adding the business would usually get three or four or-

ders a day.

"We have a .com website as well as Telegram, WhatsApp and Instagram, and none of these services are easily accessible," she added.

"I can't even communicate with my employees because I don't want to use Iranian internal applications for security reasons. I've practically lost contact with the people I work with since the first week of the war."

From time to time, rumours circulate about a partial or even complete, return of the Internet.

But even after the wave of protests in January, it was only partially restored before being completely cut off again with the outbreak of the war.

Hope is fading that the internet will be restored, even as diplomatic efforts between Washington and Tehran carry on.

Amir, 40, said he didn't believe the Internet would ever return to the country, his anger at the Islamic republic's leaders growing by the day.

"Even today, they announced that conditions were not favourable for restoring the connection," he told AFP on Friday.

But "they never say it's our right, only that [the outage] is bad for the economy!"

BUSINESS

Wednesday, April 22, 2026

JPMC raises capital to JD500m, approves 170% dividends

AMMAN (JT) — The General Assembly of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) has approved the board of directors' report on the company's 2025 operations and its future action plan during its 72nd ordinary meeting.

During the meeting, held via video conference and led by JPMC chairman of the board of directors, Mohammad Thneibat, the General Assembly approved the board's recommendation to distribute cash dividends to shareholders at a rate of 170 per cent of the share's nominal value, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

In an extraordinary meeting, the General Assembly agreed to increase the company's capital by capitalising JD200 million from the retained earnings, which stand at JD1.471 billion, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

This increase represents 66.7 per cent of the authorised, subscribed and paid-up capital. Free shares will be distributed to shareholders, bringing the total authorised and paid-up capital to



The General Assembly of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company has approved the board of directors' report on the company's 2025 operations and its future action plan during its 72nd ordinary meeting

JD500 million. Thneibat highlighted that the company's progress is anchored in development programmes involving expanded capital expenditure, sustainable maintenance for production units and job replacement policies, alongside continuous investment in staff training and qualification. "Despite global market challenges, in-

cluding falling prices and rising production costs, JPMC achieved distinguished financial results in 2025, Net profit after tax reached approximately JD603 million, reflecting the company's financial stability and operational efficiency," he said.

The chairman added that the Equity grew by more than JD194 million in 2025, an 11 per cent increase com-

pared to 2024. Total assets reached JD2.367 billion by the end of 2025, up from JD2.133 billion the previous year a growth of roughly 11 per cent.

On national economic support, Thneibat noted that the group's consolidated export sales reached around \$2.214 billion, significantly contributing to narrowing the trade deficit and balance of payments while sta-

bilising the national currency. Local sales to the domestic market and affiliates totalled \$467 million.

According to the chairman, The company's direct contribution to state treasury revenues in 2025 amounted to JD227 million, covering income tax, mining royalties, customs and land rentals.

Indirect contributions reached JD251 million through the

profit shares of the Government Investments Management Company and the Social Security Corporation, bringing total direct and indirect support to the Treasury to around JD478 million.

Regarding investment projects, the chairman underscored that feasibility studies for two phosphoric acid projects, with an estimated cost of JD1 billion and a production capacity of 700,000 tonnes, have been completed.

He said that the Design work for a joint phosphoric acid plant with Turkey's Transpet has also been finalised by the US-based JESA Company. The JD350 million project is expected to go to tender in early May 2026, with production slated for 2030.

Additionally, a feasibility study for a JD400 million joint venture with the Arab Potash Company (APC) to produce phosphoric acid and specialised fertilisers has been completed. The tender will be launched pending APC's approval.

The chairman highlighted that construc-

tion began last August on a JD25 million phosphate feed additives plant in Aqaba, in partnership with the Sinokrot Poultry Group and the Saudi Poultry and Dairy Technology Company. The plant, expected to start production in the first quarter of 2027, will provide 100 jobs.

Thneibat added that studies to increase the capacity of the Aqaba Industrial Complex are set for completion in early 2027. The JD85 million upgrade aims to boost phosphoric acid production by 140,000 tonnes, potentially increasing annual sales by \$100 million.

Further developments include a tender for a 500,000 tonne fertiliser unit and a proposed JD70 million fertiliser warehouse, expected to be operational by 2029. Construction also commenced last July on a JD33.1 million ammonia tank in Aqaba, with a 40,000 tonne capacity, scheduled for use in 2027.

In February, a \$192 million expansion contract for the Indo-Jordan Chemicals Company was awarded to

China's ECEC.

Expected to start production in late 2029, it will increase annual sales by roughly \$160 million. Meanwhile, the phosphate washing and flotation plant in Shidiya has begun production, targeting an annual sales increase of at least \$200 million.

A feasibility study is also under way for a \$500 million joint venture with Oman National Energy to establish phosphoric acid plants in Jordan and a fertiliser plant in Salalah, Oman.

Thneibat emphasised that these projects represent a "qualitative shift" for JPMC, expected to increase sales by nearly \$1 billion and profits by approximately JD200 million upon completion. These initiatives are also projected to create 1000 new jobs and provide a minimum \$1 billion boost to the trade balance.

Underscoring its corporate social responsibility, Thneibat noted that the company has allocated JD62 million for national and community support initiatives, Petra reported.



Amman accounted for the largest share of total credit facilities extended by the banking sector in the fourth quarter of 2025 according to Central Bank of Jordan

Capital's credit facilities share reaches 82%, values JD29.552b in Q4 2025

AMMAN (JT) — Amman accounted for the largest share of total credit facilities extended by the banking sector in the fourth quarter of 2025, at nearly 82 per cent, with a value of JD29.552 billion.

Irbid ranked second in terms of facilities based on geographic distribution, with around JD1.891 billion, followed by Zarqa at JD1.262 billion. Tafilah recorded the lowest share, at JD150 million, out of a total JD36.068 billion in facilities, according to Central Bank of Jordan data.

A similar pattern

was observed in deposits, with total deposits reaching about JD42.303 billion in the last three months of 2025, representing 84.6 per cent of the total deposits, which valued at around JD50 billion.

Irbid and Zarqa also ranked second and third in terms of geographic distribution of deposits during the same period, recording JD2.559 billion and JD1.896 billion, respectively, while Tafilah remained at the bottom with deposits of JD83 million, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Mideast war lights fire under energy transition plans

PARIS, France (AFP) — Painful surges in oil prices are spurring countries to quickly rethink how to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, as shortage risks from war in the Middle East grow greater by the day.

Britain's government on Tuesday was the latest to unveil its plans, vowing to "massively expand renewables" as a way of bolstering energy security while denting the impact of higher electricity and petrol costs.

Around 60 governments worldwide have announced strategic responses or reviews since US and Israeli forces began striking Iran on February 28, according to Carbon Brief, a specialised news site. Using data from the International Energy Agency, Carbon Brief found many countries promising short-term relief such as cuts on fuel taxes or warning of rationing of fossil fuels.

But others have responded with plans to accelerate their green energy transitions toward low-carbon sources.

France

France announced on



This aerial photo shows the newly built floating solar power plant that can generate 192 megawatts of peak electricity in cooperation between the Indonesian government and Masdar from the UAE, at Cirata Reservoir, West Java, Indonesia, November 9, 2023

April 10 a range of measures to speed up the electrification of construction, transport and other industries, to reduce the share of fossil fuels in the country's energy mix to just 29 per cent by 2035 from 60 per cent today.

Electric vehicles should make up two out of every three new car sales by 2030, Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu said.

The government is also providing aid to spur the installation of one million heat pumps a year, reducing reliance on imported natural gas.

EU

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has promised to propel the continent's electrification with announcements planned for April 22.

Sweden

Sweden's environment minister announced on April 7 that "electrification is the future" to protect citizens from surging oil and natural gas prices.

The two key measures were increased aid for using renewable energies by government employees and house-

hold subsidies for EV purchases.

China

President Xi Jinping promised this month that "A greener, more diversified and resilient new energy system will provide a strong guarantee for China's energy security and economic development", state-controlled CCTV said.

Philippines

Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said in late March that "amid the Middle East conflict, accelerating the devel-

opment of renewable energy and storage is both a strategic necessity and a national imperative".

The archipelago nation relies on coal for about 60 per cent of its electricity generation and President Ferdinand Marcos has declared a "national energy emergency" due to risks to the domestic fuel supply.

Japan

Even as it authorised more burning of coal for power plants in response to soaring oil prices, Japan's government reiterated plans to "maximise the use of both renewable energy and nuclear power" to ensure its economic growth.

It announced on March 20 a \$40 billion project with Washington to build next-generation small nuclear power plants in Tennessee and Alabama, which could expand Japan's own network of nuclear plants.

India

After cutting fuel taxes in late March to soften the blow at petrol stations, the Indian government said it would speed up permit grants for wind turbine and

battery electricity storage projects.

Cambodia

Cambodia, which imports all its consumer fuel, announced in late March it was cutting import tariffs from 35 per cent to zero on electric vehicles, electric kitchen stoves and solar energy.

It also cut tariffs on rechargeable hybrid vehicles to just 7 per cent from 35 per cent.

Barbados

The Caribbean island's government unveiled in early March a \$81 million plan to shift away from fossil fuels with heavy investments in renewable sources, in particular wind farms.

The goal is also to reinforce energy stockage capacities.

Kenya

President William Ruto announced in late March a plan to triple electricity production in the next five to seven years, with nuclear energy accounting for just under a third of the country's needs.

"We have made a deliberate and strategic decision to significantly expand our energy capacity," Ruto said.

Stocks slip, oil climbs as US-Iran truce expiry looms

LONDON (AFP) — Oil prices climbed and stocks slid on Tuesday as uncertainty reigned over US-Iranian peace talks resuming and the expiration of the two-week ceasefire in the Middle East loomed.

Investors had been hoping that despite hostile rhetoric there was scope for a deal to end the Middle East war and reopen the vital Strait of Hormuz to oil and gas shipments.

But Iran has not yet sent a delegation to neighbouring Pakistan for a new round of peace talks with the United States, even as the two-week ceasefire was set to expire by Wednesday.

A US delegation led by Vice President JD Vance was expected to leave shortly from Washington for Islamabad, which earlier this month hosted a first round of talks, which ended without a deal. However, there was no confirmation of Vance's departure.

Brent North Sea crude, the international benchmark, was up 1.6 per cent at around \$97 per barrel, having surged the previous day after Iran reclosed the Strait of Hormuz.

Wall Street's main stock indices rose as trading got under way in New York but then dipped lower.

Europe's main equity

markets finished the day down, with both London and Paris shedding more than 1 per cent. Asian markets closed higher.

"Investor sentiment remained cautious due to uncertainty around the Iran ceasefire," said market analyst Axel Rudolph at investing and trading platform IG.

Despite the uncertainty, investors aren't anticipating the worst either. "Oil prices remained below \$100 a barrel which suggests cautious optimism that the Middle East conflict won't intensify," said Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

"However, the longer oil remains in the

90s [dollar per barrel] range... the higher the chance of an inflationary shock and a wobble to global economic activity," he said.

Sentiment on Wall Street had been bolstered earlier in the day by data showing better-than-expected March retail sales even as energy prices began to hit consumers.

While the spike in fuel prices has raised concerns it will weigh on consumer spending, a key component of US economic growth, data showed that March retail sales still rose 0.6 per cent month-on-month when excluding gasoline sales.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

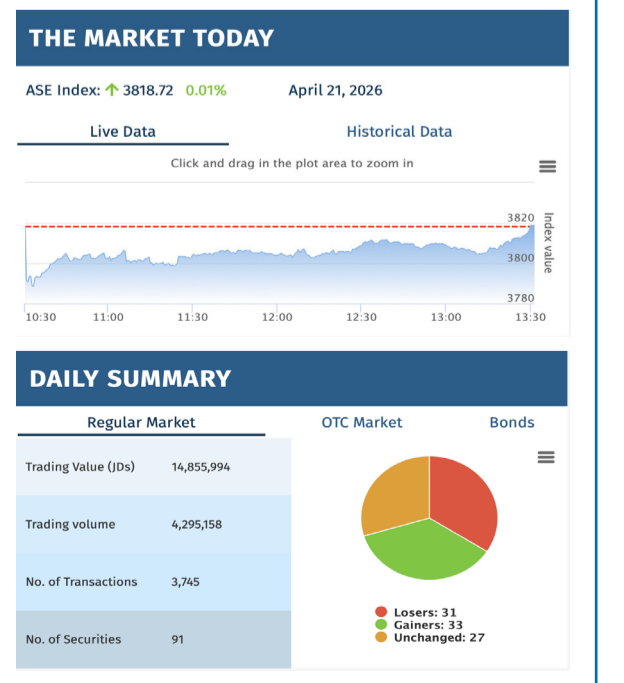
AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Tuesday amounted to JD14.9 million spread over 4.3 million shares that traded through 3,745 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.01 per cent, closing at 3818.72 points.

Out of 91 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 33 companies rose while the share price of another 31 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Jordan Vegetable Oil Industries by 4.94 per cent, Arab Phoenix Holdings by 4.44 per cent, Premier Business and Projects Company Ltd. by 4.35 per cent, Transport and Investment Barter Company by 4.08 per cent, and Arab International Hotels by 3.95 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Union Investment Corporation by 12.50 per cent, Arab Company for Investment Projects by 4.69 per cent, Jordanian Management and Consulting Company by 4.55 per cent, Injaz for Development and Projects by 4.35 per cent, and Jordan Kuwait Bank by 4.22 per cent.



THE JORDAN TIMES
SPORTS
AT A GLANCE

FOOTBALL

Ex-Spurs star Davids condemns 'lack of quality, lack of management'

HONG KONG (AFP) — Former Tottenham star Edgar Davids on Tuesday told AFP that the fallen London giants will find it hard to avoid relegation and condemned "a lack of quality and a lack of management". Tottenham are on their third manager of a disastrous season and sit in the Premier League relegation zone, two points adrift of safety with five matches left. Former Netherlands international midfielder Davids said the appointment of Italian coach Roberto De Zerbi three weeks ago was a good move, but fears for Spurs' Premier League future. Asked by AFP how Tottenham had ended up in such a predicament, Davids said: "It's very obvious, if you pay peanuts, you get...It's a lack of quality and a lack of management. Everything." Davids, who played for Spurs in 2005-2006 after starring for Ajax, AC Milan, Juventus, Barcelona and Inter Milan, said Spurs should have strengthened an injury-hit squad in the winter transfer window. "I hope they stay up, I think it's a very good thing they got in De Zerbi," said the 53-year-old, speaking at the announcement of the "Hong Kong Football Festival" featuring Manchester City, Chelsea, Inter Milan and Juventus in August.

TENNIS

Sinner wants to use Madrid to boost career Grand Slam chances

MADRID (AFP) — World No.1 Jannik Sinner said Tuesday his principal aim as he prepares for the Madrid Open is to be in the "best possible shape" for Roland Garros next month as he seeks to complete a career Grand Slam. The 24-year-old won his first major title on clay earlier this month as he downed rival Carlos Alcaraz in straight sets in the Monte Carlo Masters final. Next he turns his attentions to the 1000-level event in Madrid as the clay-court season ramps up towards the only Grand Slam tournament Sinner has not yet won — Roland Garros, which will run from May 24 to June 7. "I never played very well here, so let's see how it goes this year," Sinner, who has never got past the quarter-final stage in the Spanish capital, told reporters the day before the Madrid Open begins. "I'm trying to improve as a player and here might be one of the most challenging ones because of certain things [altitude and wind]."

Osama Alkafri

AMMAN — Football fans planning to attend the 2026 FIFA World Cup are facing mounting costs on multiple fronts, with both ticket prices and match-day transportation expenses drawing widespread criticism and raising concerns over accessibility.

Supporters have voiced growing frustration as the overall cost of attending matches continues to climb, with critics warning that the tournament risks becoming unaffordable for ordinary fans, AFP reported.

While ticket prices have surged sharply in recent months, reports indicate that travel costs to stadiums in host cities across the US are also expected to rise significantly.

US media reports say that match-day transport fares could far exceed normal rates. The Athletic, quoted by AFP, reported that New Jersey Transit is considering charging around \$150 for a return journey between Manhattan's Penn Station and MetLife Stadium in New Jersey, a route that typically costs just \$12.90.

In Boston, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority confirmed that return fares to Gillette Stadium will increase to \$80 during the tournament, compared with the usual \$20 charged on event days, AFP said.

Supporters' groups ar-



Supporters' groups argue that such increases undermine efforts to make the World Cup accessible

gue that such increases undermine efforts to make the World Cup accessible. Guillaume Aupretre, spokesman for France's main supporters' association, said the pricing trend marked a departure from previous tournaments, where transport was often included in ticket prices or offered at discounted rates for match ticket holders, according to AFP.

"They keep piling on the extra costs without giving any thought to the fans," he said, accusing football's world governing body of favouring wealthier spectators at the expense of loyal supporters.

Broader reaction on social media has reflected similar concerns, with some supporters warning that fans are being "priced out" of the tournament, while others described the rising expenses as transforming the World Cup into a "luxury event rather than a global celebration".

The issue has also attracted political attention in the US. New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill blamed FIFA for the anticipated fare increases, noting that the state faces a \$48 million bill to ensure security for eight matches at MetLife Stadium, AFP reported.

"I won't stick New

Jersey commuters for that tab for years to come, that's not fair," she said, arguing that FIFA, which is expected to generate billions in revenue, should instead cover transport-related costs.

Her position was echoed by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, who also called on FIFA to bear the cost of transporting fans to match venues, AFP said.

FIFA responded by criticising the reported increases, stressing that initial agreements with host cities had included provisions for free transportation for ticket holders, according to AFP. However, the

governing body said that subsequent negotiations resulted in transport being provided "at cost" on match days.

"We are quite surprised by the approach on fan transportation," FIFA said in a statement, adding that the tournament would bring significant economic benefits to host regions.

Meanwhile, New York Governor Kathy Hochul questioned the reported fare levels, describing a potential \$100 train journey as excessively high, AFP said.

The controversy over transport costs comes alongside growing scrutiny of ticket pricing. Opening match tickets

start at nearly \$900, while seats for the final initially ranged from over \$2,000 to \$8,680, AFP reported. Prices have since risen further, with top-category final tickets reaching close to \$11,000 by early April 2026.

Resale markets have seen even steeper increases, with some tickets listed at many times their original value. Matches involving leading teams are now typically priced at \$200 or more, far exceeding expectations set during the original bid process.

FIFA has defended its pricing strategy for the 2026 World Cup, citing exceptionally high demand, with more than 150 million ticket requests submitted.

Speaking at the Se-mafor World Economy Summit in April, FIFA President Gianni Infantino described the US market as "very special", comparing it to major sporting events such as the NFL and large-scale concerts.

He added that FIFA, as a non-profit organisation, generates the bulk of its revenue during the one-month tournament to support global football development over the following four years.

Nevertheless, critics have accused organisers of price gouging and excessive reliance on dynamic pricing, arguing that the combination of high ticket and transport costs risks alienating traditional fans, AFP reported.

LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

Singer D4vd charged with murder after teen's body found in Tesla

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — Singer D4vd was charged on Monday with the murder and dismemberment of his young teenage girlfriend, whose decomposing corpse was found in a Tesla that had been abandoned in the Hollywood Hills.

The 21-year-old, whose real name is David Anthony Burke, was expected to appear in court Monday to face multiple charges over the horrifying death of Celeste Rivas Hernandez, whose body was discovered in September, within days of what would have been her 15th birthday.

"Celeste was just a child, under 14 years old, when David Burke allegedly engaged in repeated lewd and lascivious sexual relations with her," Los Angeles District Attorney Nathan Hochman said.

"When she threatened to expose his criminal conduct and devastate his musical career, Burke allegedly murdered her, cut up her body and stuffed her body in two bags that were placed in the front trunk of his car."



US singer D4vd is seen during his arraignment at Clara Shorridge Foltz Criminal Justice Centre in Los Angeles, on Monday

Hochman said Celeste's mutilated corpse sat rotting for four months until it was discovered. "This horrific and gruesome murder committed by the charged sexual predator is shocking and appalling. To Celeste's loved ones: We will get the justice you seek and deserve."

If convicted Burke could face a death sentence or life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Burke shot to internet fame in 2022 when his

song "Romantic Homicide" became a breakout hit on TikTok.

He was on a national tour when detectives were called to a Hollywood tow yard after neighbors complained of a terrible smell coming from an impounded vehicle.

The Tesla, which was registered to Burke in Texas, had been parked on the street in the upscale Hollywood Hills for around a month before it was towed.

But investigators believe Celeste's remains may have been in the

front trunk for much longer.

"The condition of her remains delayed the medical examiner's ability to be able to determine cause of death," Los Angeles police chief Jim McDonnell told the press conference.

"The substantial amount of time that passed between her death and the discovery meant that crucial evidence had degraded or disappeared."

Burke faces one count each of murder, continuous sexual abuse of a child under the

age of 14, and unlawful mutilation of human remains.

The artist's lawyers last week denied their client had killed the youngster.

"Let us be clear, the actual evidence in this case will show that David Burke did not murder Celeste Rivas Hernandez, and he was not the cause of her death," a statement from lawyers Blair Berk, Marilyn Bednarski, and Regina Peter said.

"We will vigorously defend David's innocence."

Celeste, who lived in Lake Elsinore, east of Los Angeles, had been reported missing by her mother in 2024, at the age of 13.

Her mother told reporters that her daughter had a boyfriend named David.

Videos show Burke has a tattoo on one of his fingers matching the one reading "Shhh" that the Los Angeles County medical examiner previously revealed was on Celeste's index finger.

The pair were also seen on streaming websites together.



Argentinian actor Luis Brandoni poses during a photocall of the film 'La odisea de los Gilets' (Heroic losers) at the 67th San Sebastian Film Festival, in the northern Spanish Basque city of San Sebastian on September 23, 2019

Argentine film and theater great Luis Brandoni dies at 86

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AFP) — Argentine cinema, theatre and television legend Luis Brandoni has died at the age of 86, his friend and producer Carlos Rottemberg announced on Monday on X.

"Luis Brandoni has died. In 'Beto' we are losing the last leading actor of an unforgettable generation, a driving force for national theatre," Rottemberg wrote, calling it a "very sad day for our culture".

Brandoni's body will be taken to the Buenos Aires legislature to lie in state on Monday afternoon.

He was admitted to hospital on April 11 after a fall at home that caused a brain-bleed.

He starred in dozens of films over the course of a prolific career, including "Waiting for the Hearse" (1985) and "The Weasel's Tale" (2019).

He also lit up the stage with hugely successful plays such as "Conversations with My Mother" and "Parque Lezama".

A familiar face for decades on Argentine television, Brandoni starred alongside Robert de Niro in the 2023 Disney+ miniseries "Nada". In the series, he

played a curmudgeonly Buenos Aires food critic whose life falls apart after his housekeeper dies, while De Niro played his friend.

Brandoni was active from a young age in the centre-left Radical Civic Union (UCR), one of Argentina's oldest political parties.

During Argentina's 1976-1983 dictatorship, when the party was banned, he briefly went into exile in Mexico.

He served two terms as an MP with the UCR in the 1990s and also served as cultural advisor to former UCR president Raul Alfonsín.

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