

THE JORDAN TIMES



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UNHCR photo

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees says that funding for the operations of the in Jordan reached \$65 million by the end of March 2026, covering 23.2 per cent of the \$280 million required

\$65m secured for refugees' support in Jordan amid \$215m shortfall — UNHCR

AMMAN (JT) — Funding for the operations of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Jordan reached \$65 million by the end of March 2026, covering 23.2 per cent of the \$280 million required, and leaving a funding gap of \$215 million, or 76.8 per cent, according to the agency's

latest report. UNHCR said it provided about \$2 million in cash assistance during the first quarter of 2026 to help meet the basic needs of approximately 13,000 families in host communities. The report showed that between December 8, 2024 and March 31, 2026, around 188,500 reg-

istered refugees returned to Syria, with the figure rising to about 190,000 by mid-April 2026. Return movements remained relatively low during Ramadan, with about 3,900 refugees returning in February and 3,400 in March, compared with 4,500 in January.

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Crown Prince delivers address at graduation of National Military Service's first cohort

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — HRH Crown Prince Hussein on Wednesday patronised the graduation ceremony of the first batch of national service conscripts for 2026.

During the ceremony, held at the National Military Service training centre, His Royal Highness delivered an address emphasising the importance of mobilising and investing in the potential of youth, highlighting the role of the National Military Service programme in building a stronger, self-reliant Jordan that keeps pace with change, according to a Royal Court statement.

The Crown Prince underscored the importance of serving Jordan with honour across all fields of work, investing in technology, and committing to life-long education and development of skills, emphasising that Jordan's strength and the unity of its people are integral to the strength of the wider Arab nation and its causes.

He highlighted that the values instilled during service, including



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

HRH Crown Prince Hussein attends the graduation ceremony of the first cohort of the National Military Service programme for 2026

discipline, cooperation and commitment, form the foundation of Jordanian national identity, noting that "loyalty is not

merely a slogan, but a duty fulfilled in times of adversity".

The Crown Prince stressed that the region

is undergoing a period of heightened tensions and transformation, requiring "awareness, responsibility, preparedness

and a sense of national duty that places Jordan first".

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US-Indian investment to build \$125m pipe plant for Water Carrier project

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Water and Irrigation on Wednesday announced the establishment of a \$125 million US-Indian investment to build a metal pipe manufacturing facility to supply the National Water Carrier Project, alongside other strategic national infrastructure projects.

According to ministry data, the plant will be developed on a 350 dunnum plot in the Quweira Industrial Zone, within the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA).

The facility is expected to produce an average of 500,000 tonnes of metal pipes annually, serving both domestic demand and export markets, in a move aimed at strengthening the Kingdom's GDP and improving its trade balance. It will also manufacture pipes for the Risha gas project, the min-



Al Mamlaka TV photo

The Ministry of Water and Irrigation on Wednesday says that the plant will be developed on a 350 dunnum plot in the Quweira Industrial Zone

istry said. The project is expected to generate around 450 jobs across various engineering and technical fields, with 95 per cent of the workforce to be Jor-

danian nationals trained through an integrated skills development programme.

The National Water Carrier Project, the largest water infrastructure

initiative in Jordan's history, is designed to transport de-salinated water from Aqaba to Amman and other governorates through a 450 kilometre pipeline. Once com-

pleted, it is expected to secure water supplies for around 4 million citizens and provide between 200 and 250 million cubic metres of treated water annually for agricultural use.

The ministry said the desalination component will rely on Reverse Osmosis technology and aims to source 30 per cent of its energy needs from renewable energy by 2030.

It added that the participating companies have experience in constructing more than 260 de-salination plants worldwide.

The project, which falls under the Economic Modernisation Vision, will eventually be fully transferred to the Ministry of Water and Irrigation as a national asset after the end of the concession period.



AFP photo

Iranians as hold Iran's national flags during a rally to show their solidarity and support to new Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei in Tehran, on Wednesday

Trump warns Iran better 'get smart soon' and accept nuclear deal

TEHRAN (AFP) — President Donald Trump warned Tehran on Wednesday that it should "get smart soon" and capitulate to Washington's demands for tight controls on its

nuclear programme, as a US naval blockade turned the screws on Iran's economy.

Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth was due to testify before Congress later in the day, but US

press reports suggested Trump has already decided to reject Iran's latest proposed deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

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Gaza fades from focus as regional war reshapes priorities

Analysts say Gaza has become a secondary file as focus shifts to wider regional conflict

By Mai Anati

AMMAN — Gaza is fading from the centre of international attention as a widening regional war redirects focus to security flashpoints, even as conditions in the enclave continue to deteriorate.

UN Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiri has said that escalating tensions in recent weeks have diverted attention away from the occupied Palestinian territories, where conditions in Gaza and the West Bank continue to worsen. "Escalating tensions

and hostilities have diverted attention away from the occupied Palestinian territories," he said.

He warned that civilians remain the primary victims, while humanitarian needs continue to rise.

The shift comes as the region faces an expanding confrontation involving the US, Israel, Iran and allied actors.

Multiple fronts have opened, including Lebanon, while concerns over maritime security and energy stability have intensified, pushing Gaza down the list of immediate interna-

tional priorities. Meanwhile, conditions inside Gaza continue to worsen.

Amjad Shawa, director of the Palestinian NGOs Network, has said the humanitarian situation is becoming increasingly complex amid continued targeting of civilians and expanding control over large parts of the territory.

He noted that more than 61 per cent of Gaza is now under full control, while around 800 Palestinians have been killed since the announcement of a ceasefire. "More than 61 per

cent of Gaza is under full control, while around 800 Palestinians have been killed since the ceasefire," he said.

Shawa stressed that restrictions on aid remain severe, with the number of trucks entering the enclave falling well below the 600 per day stipulated under humanitarian protocols. He said that the shortfall ranges between 30 and 50 per cent, affecting both commercial goods and humanitarian supplies.

"Nearly 90 per cent of the population now depends on aid, while at least 1.5 million people



AFP photo

A Palestinian child looks at paintings at an open-air art exhibition at the Bureij camp for Palestinian refugees in the central Gaza Strip on Tuesday

have lost their homes," he said. Basic systems are collapsing. Water shortages exceed 80 per cent in

some areas. The health system is largely non-functional, with thousands in urgent need of care. Environmental

conditions are deteriorating, with more than 1 million tonnes of waste accumulating and raising the risk of disease

outbreaks. Political analyst Amer Sabaileh said that the war has expanded beyond Gaza, reducing its centrality in the conflict.

"Gaza was the starting point, but it could not remain the end point," he said. "As the conflict expanded across multiple fronts, each new arena shifted focus away from Gaza."

He argued that escalation towards Iran has effectively turned Gaza into a secondary file within a broader regional confrontation.

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Photo courtesy of the Greater Amman Municipality

The overall unemployment rate in Jordan drops to 16.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2025, marking a decrease of 0.1 percentage points compared with the previous quarter

Unemployment rate in Jordan drops to 16.1% per cent in Q4 2025 — DoS

AMMAN (JT) — The overall unemployment rate in Jordan (Jordanians and non-Jordanians) dropped to 16.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2025, marking a decrease of 0.1 percentage points compared with the previous quarter, the Department of Statistics (DoS) said on Wednesday.

In a statement to mark International Labour Day, observed annually on May 1, the DoS noted that the unemployment rate among males stood at 13.8 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2025, representing a 0.2 percentage point decrease from the 13.6 per cent recorded in the third quarter of 2025.

The female unemployment rate saw a more significant decline of two

percentage points during the same period, reaching 25 per cent in the final quarter of 2025, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Regarding social security coverage, the department highlighted a "substantial" increase in the number of insured workers over the past two decades, where the figure rose from 366,000 in 2000 to 1,599,914 by 2024.

DoS also reviewed the evolution of monthly wages in the Kingdom. The average monthly wage, which stood at JD60 in the mid-1970s and JD211 in the mid-1990s, reached JD551 in 2023 across both the public and private sectors.

In 2023, the average wage for males was JD563, compared with

JD522 for females.

In the public sector, the average monthly wage in 2023 reached JD667 (JD691 for males and JD632 for females), while the average private sector wage was JD499, with males earning an average of JD517.

DoS underscored Jordan's pioneering role in regional labour organisation, noting that the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions was established in 1954.

As a founding member of the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions, the Jordanian labour movement has achieved "significant progress" over the last half-century, driven by national cooperation and a commitment to sustainable development.

Princess Alia visits PSD, honours Rangers personnel

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Princess Alia on Wednesday visited the Public Security Directorate (PSD) and met with its Director Maj. Gen. Obeidallah Maaytah.

The meeting focused on the PSD's efforts across various sectors, particularly the role played by the Royal Department for Environmental Protection (Rangers) in safeguarding the environment, protecting nature, and enhancing sustainability, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Princess Alia commended the PSD's specialised efforts, through Rangers, in environmental monitoring and wildlife protection.

She highlighted the department's work in protecting endangered migratory birds and combating poaching and environmental violations.

Her Royal Highness also praised the PSD's role in promoting environmental culture and raising public awareness on the importance of conservation.

Princess Alia underscored the necessity of



Petra photo

HRH Princess Alia on Wednesday visits the Public Security Directorate and commended its specialised efforts, through Rangers, in environmental monitoring and wildlife protection

integrating national and institutional efforts to address environmental challenges, noting that protecting the environment and wildlife is a national responsibility that requires collective action from both institutions and individuals to preserve natural heritage for future generations.

For his part, Maaitah stressed that the PSD continues to implement its environmental and awareness programmes through a participatory approach with various national institutions.

He added that this strategy aims to boost the protection of natural resources and biodiversity, prevent vio-

lations and enforce environmental laws to achieve national visions for conservation.

The PSD director also referred to additional measures taken by the department to monitor cyberspace for environmental violations and take necessary legal action.

On the sidelines of

the visit, Princess Alia honoured several personnel from Rangers in recognition of their distinguished efforts in protecting the environment, nature and wildlife, as well as their active role in executing environmental awareness and monitoring campaigns across the Kingdom.

SSC subscribers exceed 1.65m as coverage, benefits expand

AMMAN (JT) — The Social Security Corporation (SSC) on Wednesday announced that the number of active subscribers exceeded 1.655 million, including around 1.4 million Jordanians and about 255,000 of other nationalities.

The corporation marked International Labour Day, observed annually on May 1, by stressing the need to ensure social protection for all workers and provide a safe working environment, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

SSC said that social security remains a key pillar of protection, offering income security for workers and their families in cases of old age, disability, death, unemployment, maternity and work injuries.

SSC added that the total number of retirees reached 404,000, including more than 274,000 active retirees.

The number of active female retirees stood at around 66,455.

Beneficiaries entitled to active pension



File photo

The Social Security Corporation on Wednesday says that the number of active subscribers exceeded 1.655 million, including around 1.4 million Jordanians

shares reached nearly 175,000, bringing the total number of active retirees and beneficiaries to over 449,000.

The corporation stressed the need for all establishments to register their workers under the Social Security Law for full employment periods and actual wages, regardless of workforce size, to ensure workers receive pension benefit.

On maternity insurance, SSC said that more than 129,000 cases have benefited,

covering around 88,258 insured women.

SSC added that the Riaya (care) programme continues to expand support for childcare, either through nurseries or home care, benefiting about 29,500 insured women.

The data showed that increasing beneficiaries of unemployment insurance exceeded 355,644, with more than 1.207 million disbursements.

SSC added that around 582,345 insured individuals benefited from withdrawals from their savings accounts for education and medical purposes, with more than 858,000 disbursements.

The corporation also stressed the importance of work injury insurance, noting that it provides protection from the first day of employment.

SSC said that it has handled more than 534,000 work injury cases since its establishment, calling on employers to comply with occupational safety and health standards.

SSC urged workers to ensure they are covered under the Social Security Law and to contact the unified call centre 117117 or the national call centre 065008080 for inquiries and complaints.



Al Mamlaka TV photo

More than 150 tonnes of waste are removed from forests, wooded areas, and public sites in Jerash Governorate since the beginning of 2026

150 tonnes of waste removed in Jerash through 75 cleaning campaigns

AMMAN (JT) — More than 150 tonnes of waste have been removed from forests, wooded areas, and public sites in Jerash Governorate since the beginning of 2026, Director of the Jerash Environmental Protection Office Mustafa Zyoud said on Wednesday.

Zyoud noted that over 75 cleaning campaigns were launched during this period in cooperation with the Royal Department for Environmental Protection (Rangers) and stakeholders, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

Zyoud's remarks came during a community-

led cleanup campaign in Al Sabtah area of Al Mirad, organised by the Souf Security Centre in collaboration with the Jerash Environment Office, the local municipality, environmental activists and the Education Directorate.

These efforts led to the distribution of more than 150 large containers (1,110-litre capacity) and 50 trash bins across picnic spots and public areas, the director said.

He added that JD20,000 from the Jerash Governorate Council's budget has been allocated for the purchase of additional

containers. Zyoud said that over 406 fines have been issued for littering under the 2020 Waste Management Framework Law, referring to the forests of Al Mirad District as a high-traffic area for picnickers, which often results in significant waste accumulation.

The director urged visitors to dispose of trash responsibly, noting that despite ongoing cleaning efforts at the King Talal Dam area, the site is not designated for picnicking.

The initiative resulted in the collection of more than 300 bags of waste.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Ayn Abu Nukhayla study reveals prehistoric social organisation

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — Ayn Abu Nukhayla is located in Wadi Rum Desert and it became apparent that the site provided an unusual opportunity for addressing yet additional issues, those having to do with the social and demographic aspects of the people of Ayn Abu Nukhayla.

The discovery of stratified floors within many of the pit-house deposits prompted expansion of the research design to include an effort to trace the demographic, social and economic organisation of the site at household and community scales, noted Professor Emeritus from The University of Tulsa Donald Henry.

"Given the mobile lifestyle of the Abu Nukhaylans, our re-

search also began to investigate the nature of their interactions at a wider, regional scale. Here we were interested in the nature of their contacts with neighbouring peoples and in the question of their traditional ties," Henry said.

Pit-house sites are especially amenable to defining socioeconomic patterns because of their clear spatial delineation of behaviours associated with communal or household units, the basic social and economic elements of a prehistoric group.

"Moreover, the physical and geomorphic contexts of semisubterranean structures create sediment traps that are likely to preserve intact and stratified deposits."

"This, in turn, pro-

vides an opportunity to not only examine synchronous spatial patterns of socioeconomic organisation within a site, but also to explore diachronic changes within these patterns in the context of both the individual household and the community," Henry elaborated.

From a technical aspect, efforts to trace the socio-economic organisation of the site were based upon examining the spatial contexts of behavioural residuals (e.g., chipped stone artefacts, bones, ground stones, shells, phytoliths and so forth) stratigraphically, as well as across the house floors of the structures, the professor explained.

The study was based upon data recovered from proveniences re-

stricted to quarter-meter squares and 10cm levels within each of the pit-houses.

While this procedure provided a detailed understanding of the distributions of the behavioural residuals left on the floors of Ayn Abu Nukhayla, it did not establish the degree to which these behavioural residuals actually reflected the locations of activities conducted on the floors.

Regarding this, archaeologists have come to a surprising conclusion. They have found that the artefacts and other evidence recovered from house floors rarely offer an accurate picture of the behaviours associated with the floors, Henry said.

"This is because of various formation processes that act to distort,



Photo courtesy of Donald Henry

Image of the structures exposed by the excavation in Block I

remove, and replace de facto refuse assemblages. Those assemblages connected to specific domestic activities undertaken on a floor may be compromised and altered to become

secondary refuse assemblages composed of items derived from selective removal or discard," Henry noted.

In studying the contextual relationships of the floor assemblages

faithfully traced the locations of the activities that produced them some 9,500 years ago, the archaeologist underlined.

"The research at Ayn AbuNukhayla provides a glimpse at a relatively brief slice of time within the culturally dynamic interval of the mid-late PPNB."

"A short, moist pulse appears to have triggered a semi-permanent settlement at the site, but perhaps more than anything else, the experiences of the people who lived at Ayn Abu Nukhayla some 9,500 years ago, point to the importance of their having access to alternative economic practices in making opportunistic choices within a challenging and climatically fragile setting," Henry said.



Photo by Ahmad Khleifat

HRH Crown Prince Hussein attends the graduation ceremony of the first cohort of the National Military Service programme for 2026

Hassan congratulates National Service Programme graduates

AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Wednesday congratulated graduates of the National Service Programme, who completed their training during a ceremony held under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Hussein.

In a post on the X platform, Hassan wrote, "From fields of

honour and heroism, a distinguished group of our youth graduated today as part of the National Service Programme, in a solemn ceremony patronised by HRH the Crown Prince."

He commended the graduates for reflecting discipline, commitment and a high

national spirit gained through their service in the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army.

Hassan added that the programme will continue to receive new batches of young participants, stressing that these graduates represent the backbone of the nation and its promising future.

Jordan condemns Israeli violations, calls for two-state solution at UN Security Council session

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan on Wednesday renewed its rejection of illegal Israeli policies in the occupied Palestinian territories, including settlement expansion, discriminatory legislation, obstruction of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and the withholding of Palestinian Authority clearance revenues.

Speaking during a UN Security Council session on Palestine, Jordan's Permanent Representative to the UN Walid Obeidat condemned violations affecting the historic and legal status quo in Jerusalem.

Obeidat called for sustained support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), compliance with Security Council Resolution 2803, and renewed efforts to implement the two-state solution.

The Security Council, under the presidency of Bahrain, con-



Jordan's Permanent Representative to the UN Walid Obeidat

vened to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian issue, and heard briefings from UN Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and former UK prime minister Tony Blair, a member of the Council for Peace.

Khiari said that escalating tensions and hostilities across the region in recent weeks have diverted atten-

tion from developments in the occupied Palestinian territories, where conditions in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continue to deteriorate.

He noted that civilians remain the primary victims of ongoing violence, while humanitarian needs on the ground remain acute.

"It is imperative to

move forward urgently with planning, not only for humanitarian assistance, but also for early recovery and reconstruction," Khiari said.

On the West Bank, the UN official warned that escalating violence, including widespread settler attacks, forced displacement, and the acceleration of settlement activity, are threatening entire

communities and undermining prospects for a viable two-state solution.

He added that between March 14 and April 16, Israeli authorities advanced plans for 1,080 housing units in the West Bank, including 680 units in settlements in Area C, in addition to plans for 400 housing units in East Jerusalem.

Khiari also reported that 21 Palestinians, including six children, were killed by Israeli forces or settlers during the reporting period, while 310 others, including 45 children, were injured.

According to Israeli sources, one Israeli was killed and 11 others were injured in attacks carried out by Palestinians.

He also warned that conditions in refugee camps in the northern West Bank remain concerning, with economic conditions continuing to deteriorate across the territory.

RJ sees 5% passenger growth, 15% revenue rise in Q1 2026

AMMAN (JT) — The Royal Jordanian (RJ) announced on Wednesday its financial results for the first quarter of 2026, reporting improved operational performance indicators despite continued challenges facing the aviation sector and geopolitical conditions in the region.

According to an RJ statement, total operating revenues increased by 15 per cent, reaching JD195.5 million, compared with JD169.8 million during the same period in 2025.

Operating costs increased by 12 per cent, reaching JD176.5 million, compared to JD157.4 million during the comparable period. The company recorded a net loss of JD13.6 million, compared with a



Petra photo

The Royal Jordanian says on Wednesday that total operating revenues increased by 15 per cent, reaching JD195.5 million, compared with JD169.8 million during the same period in 2025

JD6 million loss in the first quarter of 2025.

RJ fleet during the first quarter transported around 992,000 passengers, compared to 944,000 passengers in 2025, marking a 5 per cent increase, while flight hours grew by 19 per cent.

RJ Vice Chairman and CEO Samer Majali underscored that the exceptional conditions witnessed during the first quarter of the year, following the outbreak of war on February 28, negatively impacted the company's financial results.

He attributed this to the continued challenges facing the aviation sector, noting that the airline was forced to reroute a number of its flights through longer alternative air corridors to avoid areas of tension, which increased flight durations and operational costs, particularly fuel consumption and insurance expenses.

Majali said that the company continues to operate in a highly complex and rapidly changing environment during the second quarter, amid a sharp increase in fuel prices and a decline in passenger numbers, which may require cancelling or merging a number of flights in line with demand levels.

He stressed that RJ is making every effort to

minimise the impact of these changes on passengers and apologised for any delays or schedule adjustments beyond its control, urging travellers to follow official channels for updates.

Majali added that the company continues to deal with the crisis with flexibility and efficiency to maintain travel operations and support vital sectors in Jordan, while proceeding with its strategic plan.

RJ recently introduced two new aircraft into its fleet to serve medium- and long-haul routes, and launched new destinations to Misrata in Libya, Munich and Hamburg in Germany, and Sharjah in the UAE, in a move aimed at improving financial performance in the coming periods.

TIES

Foreign minister, Somali counterpart discuss cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi on Wednesday discussed with Somali Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Abdisalam Abdi Ali ways to enhance bilateral ties, as well as cooperation within regional and international multilateral frameworks.

During a phone call, Safadi reiterated Jordan's support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Somalia, stressing its firm rejection of any mutual recognition agreement between Israel and



Ayman Safadi



Abdisalam Abdi Ali

Somaliland, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

He also affirmed the Kingdom's support for Somalia's legitimate institutions and its commitment to maintaining

the country's stability and the well-being of its people.

The two sides also discussed the repercussions of regional escalation and efforts to restore security and stability.



Photo courtesy of Foreign Ministry

Spanish ambassador presents credentials

AMMAN (JT) — Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry Daifallah Fayeze on Wednesday

received a copy of the credentials of Jose Luis Pardo Cuervo, as an accredited and

resident ambassador of Spain to the Jordan, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

OPERATION

Army foils drug smuggling attempt using balloons

AMMAN (JT) — The Eastern Military Zone on Wednesday foiled an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of narcotics using electronically guided balloons along its front.

Border Guard Units detected the balloons through surveillance and dealt with them, forcing them to drop their payload inside Jordanian territory, in coordination with security agencies and the Anti-Narcotics Department.

The seized materials were referred to the relevant authorities for legal action, according to a Jordanian Armed Forces-Arab Army statement.



JAF photo

The Eastern Military Zone on Wednesday foils an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of narcotics using electronically guided balloons along its front

Social development minister, Maestral International president discuss cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Social Development Wafa Bani Mustafa on Wednesday met with Philip Goldman, founder and president of Maestral International, to discuss bilateral cooperation across various social programmes.

The meeting was attended by Iman Ismail, Maestral International's regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

During the meeting, Bani Mustafa highlighted the ministry's ongoing efforts to bolster the social protection system through an institutional and integrated approach designed to ensure sustainable, positive impacts for target groups, according to a ministry



Minister of Social Development Wafa Bani Mustafa on Wednesday meets with Philip Goldman, founder and president of Maestral International

statement.

The minister outlined services provided to persons with disabilities, noting an expansion in alternative care services, early intervention programmes, inclusive day services and family reintegration initiatives.

Bani Mustafa also touched upon economic empowerment programmes for underprivileged families.

She emphasised that these initiatives are part of an integrated response to move families from aid dependency to

ward productivity and employment.

Regarding child and juvenile welfare, the minister underscored the ministry's commitment to strengthening child protection and case management systems.

"This includes devel-

oping alternative care policies and enhancing vocational training, extracurricular activities, and psychosocial support within juvenile care centres, alongside capacity-building for social workers."

The minister commended the organisation's contributions and stressed the importance of expanding partnerships in child protection and family empowerment to support national efforts in improving services for vulnerable populations.

For his part, Goldman praised the ministry's diligent efforts in implementing targeted social programmes and expressed his commitment to furthering future cooperation in shared social fields.

Cassation Court upholds over 3-year sentence for drug dealer

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld a September 2023 State Security Court (SSC) ruling, sentencing a drug dealer to over three years in prison after convicting him of possessing illegal narcotics in Amman in March 2022.

The court declared the defendant guilty of obtaining illegal narcotics with the intent of selling the drugs to an undercover agent in Marj Hamam neighbourhood

on March 5.

The SSC handed the defendant five years in prison for the offence of possessing illegal narcotics and ordered him to pay JD5,000 in fines.

However, the court decided to reduce the fine to JD3,500 and the prison term to three years and four months in prison to give the defendant a second chance at life.

Court documents said the Anti-Narcotics Department (AND) learnt the defendant was in possession of illegal nar-

cotics and sent one of its agents to pose as a buyer.

"The AND agent got in touch with the defendant via a mobile application and asked him for a stash of Hashish and Captagon pills in return for JD1,250," court documents said.

When the two met, AND agents immediately arrested the suspect, court papers added.

Upon searching the defendant's home, officers found additional illegal narcotics, including Hashish and over 1,200

Captagon pills, the court added.

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

The lawyer charged that his client denied selling drugs in the local market.

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

The higher court stated that the SSC had followed the proper procedures in issuing the sentence imposed against the defendant.

"It was clear to the court that the defendant confessed willingly to possessing the illegal drugs to sell in the local market," the higher court said.

The Court of Cassation judges were Mahmoud Ebtush, Majid Azab, Fawzi Nahar, Ibrahim Abu Shamma and Mohammad Shreiri.



Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla during a ceremony at the National September 11 Memorial on day three of their State Visit to the United States of America, on Wednesday in New York City

King Charles to visit 9/11 memorial in New York

NEW YORK (AFP) — King Charles III will attend a wreath-laying ceremony at the 9/11 memorial in New York on Wednesday, the third day of a state visit focused on healing strained ties between Britain and the United States.

The four-day US tour, clouded by tensions over the Iran war, began in Washington with President Donald Trump warmly greeting the monarch and his wife Queen Camilla.

The New York leg will see the royals meet first responders and victims' families in Manhattan as they mark nearly 25 years since the terror attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people on September 11, 2001.

"This atrocity was a defining moment for America and your pain and shock were felt around the whole world," Charles told the US Congress on Tuesday.

"We stood with you then. And we stand with you now in solemn remembrance of a day that shall never be forgotten," he added in a speech that called for unity among Western powers.

Charles, who is passionate about garden-

ment, will then visit an urban sustainable farming project providing mentorship to young people and tackling hunger.

Meanwhile, Camilla will celebrate the 100th birthday of fictional teddy bear Winnie the Pooh at the New York Public Library, where she is expected to gift a specially made toy of the character Roo.

Later, Charles will mingle with business leaders, including investors and entrepreneurs, at an event highlighting the transatlantic economic ties.

Trump this month threatened to backtrack on a trade agreement with the UK that limits the impact of US tariffs, as he criticised Britain's lack of support over the Iran war.

Charles's final engagement will celebrate the work of his youth charity, The King's Trust, at a reception that will also spotlight British and American cultural industries.

Security in New York will be tight for the royal visit, which comes just days after an alleged assassination attempt against Trump at a Washington press gala.

The city's leftist Mayor Zohran Mamdani is not expected to meet

Charles privately but will join him for the 9/11 ceremony.

British officials will be pleased so far with the pomp-filled US welcome for Charles and Camilla, which has included a 21-gun salute, military jet flypast and a state banquet at the White House.

Trump, taking a jovial tone, has even joked about his Scottish-born mother having a crush on Charles.

That is in stark contrast to his barbs at Prime Minister Keir Starmer for failing to join the war against Tehran, which had cast a diplomatic shadow ahead of the royal visit.

Charles capitalized on his address to Congress — the first by a British monarch since his mother Queen Elizabeth II in 1991 — to paper over those tensions. "Whatever our differences, whatever disagreements we may have, we stand united in our commitment to uphold democracy," he told lawmakers.

Addressing Congress during celebrations marking 250 years since American independence from Britain, Charles stressed how the two nations' partnership was "born out of dispute, but no less strong for it".

Iran war could push 30 m people into poverty — UN

PARIS, France (AFP) — The US-Israeli war on Iran, which has sent the price of energy and fertiliser soaring, could plunge more than 30 million people into poverty, the head of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) said on Wednesday.

"It's development in reverse," Alexander De Croo told AFP on the sidelines of a G7 development meeting in Paris.

"It took decades to build stable societies, to develop local economies, and it took only several weeks of war to destroy that," he added.

"We did a study after six weeks of war and estimated that even if the conflict ended at that point, 32 million people would be pushed into precarity in 160 countries," said De Croo.

The war has led to closure of the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas flows in peacetime.

Gulf nations are also important for many oil products and feedstocks to make fertiliser.

A shortage of supplies and high prices has led to countries in Africa and Asia imposing a range of meas-



A motorist rides past a banner with illustrations of Iran's slain supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and an Iranian flag installed along the roadside in Tehran on Wednesday

ures that include fuel rationing and shortening the work week to reduce consumption. Other countries have reduced fuel taxes to cushion the impact on consumers.

The UNDP says the war will have a profound impact on Sub-Saharan African countries as well as certain countries in Asia such as Bangladesh and

Cambodia. Developing island nations will also be particularly hard hit.

High "energy costs, a lack of fertiliser, will have an enormous impact in the months to come" on people in these countries, said De Croo, a former prime minister of Belgium.

He also warned of "political instability and a drop in remit-

tances from abroad because a lot of people working in the Gulf countries send money home".

To avoid poverty taking hold, the UNDP estimates that around \$6bn "is needed in subsidies to support those most vulnerable to high food and energy prices", he added.

De Croo said discussions were already un-

der way within the IMF and World Bank.

"You can say that 6 billion dollars is a lot — the war cost 9 billion dollars per week," he added.

The crisis comes as development aid is at a historic low, having dropped by more than 23 per cent last year, primarily due to cuts by major donors led by the United States.

Violence-for-hire taskforce nets nearly 300 arrests — Swedish police

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — An international police taskforce led by Sweden has resulted in the arrest of nearly 300 people linked to organised crime, Swedish police and Europol announced on Wednesday.

Dubbed "Grimm" and launched in April 2025, the taskforce is a collaboration between Sweden, Europol and 10 European countries aimed at countering the surge of "violence as a service", Swedish police said in a statement, referring

to the online recruitment of individuals — often minors — to carry out violent acts.

The phenomenon is a top concern in Sweden, where gangs have increasingly recruited children under the age of criminal responsibility.

Under Swedish law, children under the age of 15 cannot be prosecuted and fall under the responsibility of social services, making them valuable assets to the gangs.

"During the first year

of the police operation, 280 individuals were arrested around the world while cooperation with tech companies deepened," Swedish police said in a statement.

Public broadcaster SVT reported that more than half of those arrested were connected to Swedish criminal networks.

A handful of children aged 10 to 12 were among those detained, it added.

Criminal gangs in Sweden rely on a

loosely structured system of recruitment on social media and encrypted apps to entice children to join.

'More needs to happen'

Police have held meetings with Google, Meta, TikTok and Snapchat in an effort to curb recruitment.

"It's a positive development. At the same time, there are platforms that still won't come to the table. More needs to happen," Smedius said.

In a separate statement, Europol said that its EU Most Wanted website played a central role in tracking down fugitives and noted that there were three suspects linked to violence-as-a-service crime featured on the platform — two from Sweden and one from Germany.

Besides Sweden, the Grimm taskforce brings together Belgium, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Iceland, The Netherlands, Norway and Spain.

HEALTHCARE

Germany's Merz hails health reform deal as coalition under pressure

BERLIN (AFP) — German Chancellor Friedrich Merz on Wednesday touted planned reforms of the health insurance system as proof that his fractious and increasingly unpopular coalition government can still deliver results.



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz speaks during the German National Maritime Conference in Emden, northern Germany, on Wednesday

The Cabinet also on Wednesday signed off a framework for Germany's 2027 government budget...

Merz called the health reforms — which were approved by the Cabinet in Berlin after months of debate — "one of the

most significant social welfare reforms of recent decades".

The conservative chancellor has come under growing pressure as he has struggled to deliver on his promises of sweeping reforms and a revival of Germany's stagnant economy.

Wednesday's deal "demonstrates that this coalition is willing and able to make deci-

sions", Merz told reporters in Berlin after the cabinet meeting.

"We can compromise and we negotiate, even if things get a little shaky at times," Merz added. "That is simply part of the process."

The conservative chancellor rode to power on widespread public discontent with the squabbling three-way coalition of his predecessor, Olaf Scholz.

But Merz's own popularity has collapsed as he approaches the one-year mark in office, with a poll released on Tuesday showing 83 per cent of Germans are dissatisfied with Merz's performance.

Tensions have reportedly ratcheted up in recent weeks between Merz and his junior coalition partners, the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD),

as Merz's conservatives have pressed for tough cuts to social programmes.

Health insurance expenses have risen steadily in Germany as the country ages and costs for care rise.

"We had to stop this trend to keep the system affordable overall," Merz said on Wednesday, saying that a 15-billion-euro (\$18 billion) deficit looms by 2027 without the reforms.

The Cabinet also on Wednesday signed off a framework for Germany's 2027 government budget, and Merz said reforms of the pension system would be next.

"I am now looking confidently towards the further reforms we are planning, the ones we have set out to implement," Merz declared.

But the chancellor, asked if he could guarantee that his government would hold together for its full four-year term in office, struck a far more cautious note.

"Well, nobody can guarantee anything," Merz responded.

Departing US still owes money, says WHO chief

GENEVA (AFP) — The United States has still not paid off its membership fee arrears at the World Health Organisation, the WHO chief said on Wednesday, with Washington's intention to leave conditional on paying up.

The UN health agency's Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he hoped the United States would come up with the money they owe — a self-imposed condition for quitting the organisation.

US President Donald Trump, on his first day back in office in January 2025, handed the WHO his country's one-year withdrawal notice.

"In terms of the arrears from the US, the US withdrawal is conditioned with two things," Tedros told a press conference with the UN correspondents' association ACANU.

"One is notification one year in advance, which is actually met. And the second is paying the arrears, so we hope they will do that but we haven't received anything yet."

The United States was the biggest contributor to the WHO budget.

Tedros said there were "no signals" indicating that Washington would come up with the cash.

But he added: "To be honest, it's not about the money."

"The issue is health security needs universality and the US, by withdrawing, makes itself unsafe and makes the rest of the world unsafe. So it's lose-lose."

"So our focus is not on the money. The focus is on helping the US to understand and reconsider."

"Where there is a vacuum, the virus wins. It's as simple as that."

"It's global cooperation and solidarity which is the best response."

Though the US flag no longer flies outside the WHO headquarters in Geneva, the WHO's decision-making body — the annual assembly of member states — will decide upon the US withdrawal when it meets from May 18-23.

withdrawal clause.

But the United States reserved the right to withdraw when it joined the WHO in 1948 — on condition of giving one year's notice and meeting its financial obligations in full for that fiscal year.

The notice period has now expired but Washington has still not paid its 2024 or 2025 dues, owing around \$260 million.

The United States was traditionally the biggest donor to the WHO.

In January, as the notice expired, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and US Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. attacked the WHO, claiming it had "tarnished and trashed everything that America has done for it", with "the insults to America" continuing to the end.

"The reverse is true," the WHO responded.

Despite the parting shot from Kennedy, the US health secretary still speaks with Tedros on a regular basis.

"We keep in touch every now and then," the WHO chief told reporters.

Crown Prince delivers address at graduation of National Military Service's first cohort

Continued from page 1

Addressing graduates, the Crown Prince urged them to carry forward the discipline and values they acquired during service and apply them in all fields of life.

Following is the full text of His Royal Highness's speech:

"In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, Prayers and peace be upon our Prophet Mohammad,

My dear brothers,
Peace, God's mercy and blessings be upon you.

I stand among you today, filled with a deep sense of pride — the pride of a soldier who is the son of a soldier of this nation, and of a young man raised in a home that deeply respects the military and holds the honour of service in the highest regard.

I grew up witnessing love for the military in the eyes of His Majesty; whenever he speaks of his days in the army, meets those with whom he shared the honour of service, or stands amongst his brothers-in-arms; those from whom we have learnt that the military is not merely a rank.

It is a spirit of belonging to something greater than the self, and a legacy of pride passed down through deeds, not words. A legacy built by men who believed that this nation deserves to be served and defended with their lives, and who safeguarded it with utmost valour and devotion — "Men who are true to the covenant they made with God."

We now stand in a line of glory fifty years in the making, dating back to that moment when my grandfather King Hussein, may God bless his soul, stood before the first regiment of those who came before you, saying: "National Military Service is a declaration of the utmost loyalty to the homeland," emphasising that the spirit of military service is the foundation upon which nations are built and endure.

You will come to re-

alise later that these three months were neither a passing phase nor simply a training period culminating in a graduation. They were an experience that refined the soul, reordering its priorities and reminding it of what truly matters.

In military service, we learn that loyalty is not merely a slogan to be chanted, but a duty to be fulfilled in times of adversity. And in the army's battlefields, we learn that Jordan is the land of freedom, whose people are compassionate and share a sense of sincere brotherhood that stands firm when the going gets tough, and knows no retreat when the task becomes arduous.

In military service, we learn respect and cooperation; we eat together, train together, and if one of us falls, we help each other up.

'Yes, our values are firm and unwavering'

It is in these values that the foundations of our nation and the essence of the authentic and enduring Jordanian character lie.

My dear brothers,

We live today in a turbulent world and regional environment; the balance of power and alliances are shifting, and the rules and values that have governed our global order for decades are fading away. We live in a world defined by technological transformations, which will propel us towards an unfamiliar future.

In our region, we are witnessing a period of escalation that requires us all to demonstrate awareness, responsibility, preparedness, and a sense of national duty. A sense of national duty that puts Jordan first; for when everyone rallies around a single goal, the national interest, and the determination to move forward is combined with ac-

tion, our flag continues to fly high, our unity is preserved, and our institutions remain strong. Jordan's might and the solidarity of its people are a source of strength for our wider nation and its causes.

This is why it is more important than ever to harness the energy of youth; for this is what truly shapes the character of Jordanians, capitalises on their potential and mobilises their national spirit.

This is how we serve Jordan with honour, so that every workplace becomes a stronghold, every institution a frontline of achievement, and every citizen a soldier on the battlefields of progress and prosperity.

Today, in an era of rapid change, serving our nation requires us to adopt a perspective that keeps pace with this change.

Yes, our values are firm and unwavering, but clinging to the ways of the past is no longer an option. We must not fear change, for the real danger lies in stagnation, and fear has never been a trait of the Jordanian people.

Having confidence in ourselves is not arrogance, but a right earned through the trials this nation has endured. Jordan has stood firm and overcome difficult times, emerging resolute and united.

My dear brothers,

Our judgement of our own reality is based not merely on facts, but also on our perspective of them. Many people view our turbulent situation and our limited resources as a heavy burden. But I see them as a driving force that has shaped our national character; a motivation that has made people the core of our strength, innovation our choice, and education our most feasible investment.

We are determined to achieve much with little, and to build a nation that has gone beyond mere resilience, to grow and advance.

We also have the ability to realise our full potential. Our goal is a stronger Jordan; a Jordan that is self-reliant, that capitalises on the opportunities offered by technology, and renews

its commitment to education and upskilling, in order to meet the demands and surprises of the future.

The values and discipline you have learnt over the past period must form the basis of all our work in every field.

We must do what needs to be done with honesty and integrity. And we must make excellence our standard; there is no room today for cutting corners or half-measures.

This is how we achieve our objectives. We may stumble, but there is no room for retreat, backtracking, or straying from our goal. For nations are not safeguarded by intentions nor built on wishful thinking; but through action and achievement.

Yes, we will succeed. Not because it is easy, but because it is necessary, and because it is our irreversible decision. We are the ones who shape our present and future. We do not wait for ready-made solutions, nor for shortcuts. We do not need a saviour; the saviour is you, and those to your right and left, those in front of you and behind you. Hand in hand, we are shaping our future together.

My brothers,

Glory belongs to those who make challenge their path, patience their weapon, and determination their unquenchable fuel.

This nation was not built in comfort, nor preserved through hesitation. It was carried on the shoulders of strong men, alongside women who believed in their role in progress and dedication.

You are the strength and the foundation of this nation. Because of you, it stands firm and it moves forward.

Rest assured that today you are setting a precedent that will be passed on to future generations.

May Jordan remain above all else, steadfast and proud, with its army and its people, defying all adversity.

I am proud of you. May God give you strength and determination.

Peace, God's mercy and blessings be upon you."

Upon arrival at the venue, the Crown Prince was received by a number of members of the Royal Family, heads of the three authorities, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Hu-neiti, Royal Hashemite Court Chief Yousef Issawi and senior officers and officials.

The ceremony included a parade of the graduates marching in formation, a silent drill and hand-to-hand combat demonstrations, reflecting the high level of physical fitness, discipline, and combat skills achieved during training.

His Royal Highness presented awards to the top-performing graduates in infantry and combat readiness during the ceremony.

The three-month National Service Programme provided conscripts with intensive, well-rounded training, combining a field-based military track focused on discipline, physical fitness and the use of light weapons, with a theoretical component covering active citizenship, national awareness, financial literacy and labour market readiness.

Each year, 6,000 young men would be selected, divided into three phases of 2,000 conscripts each, according to the Military Media Directorate.

The initiative builds on HRH Crown Prince Hussein's August announcement to reactivate the National Service Programme, describing the effort as a national step to prepare and qualify young people through military training and a structured theoretical curriculum within the National Service and Reserve Service framework.

During the same period, 191 refugees departed Jordan for resettlement in third countries.

UNHCR also facilitated the transfer of more than 1,500 refugees from Zaatar and Azraq camps in February and March for urgent medical care, including dialysis, emergency obstetric and neonatal services, and other life-saving treatments in public hospitals outside the camps.

In addition, the agency conducted around 45,000 interviews with refugees, both in person and remotely, to update documentation and ensure continued access to essential services such as educa-

tion and healthcare. It stressed that registration and documentation remain critical for effective planning and aid delivery.

During the reporting period, UNHCR and its partners provided protection counselling to more than 500 refugees facing heightened risks and delivered emergency cash assistance to over 200 vulnerable families unable to meet basic needs.

The data also showed a decline in the number of registered refugees and asylum seekers in Jordan, which fell to 419,950 by the end of March, compared with 426,931 in February — a decrease of around 1.64 per cent.



Kosovo's parliament during the session on March 5th

Kosovo MPs fail to pick president, new election looms

PRISTINA (AFP) — Kosovo's deeply divided MPs failed to elect a president on Tuesday, putting the country on course for a third election in just over a year.

"This session marked the end of this legislature. The elections will be called within the constitutional deadline" of 45 days, parliamentary speaker Albulena Haxhiu told the lawmakers.

Despite topping both of last year's general elections, Prime Minister Albin Kurti's centre-left Vetevendosje Party has struggled with a deadlocked parliament to appoint candidates to top posts.

It left the Balkan nation without a functioning parliament for most of 2025.

Still, after eventually clearing that hurdle, a fierce disagreement among lawmakers has left it without a president for weeks after Vjosa Osmani's five-year term formally expired in early April, prompting her to temporarily hand over her duties to Haxhiu.

The assembly, which has been in permanent

session for the past few days, ended its meeting shortly before midnight on Tuesday, when the deadline to elect the new president expired leading the country to snap polls.

press conferences, urging the opposition "to end the blockade" and attend the session.

"With blockades we do not help the institutions and the state," he stressed.

A general election a little over a year ago left Kurti without the majority needed to form a government, leading to months of parliamentary blockade.

Polarised lawmakers eventually forced a December snap poll, which Kurti's party won with over 51 per cent of the vote. It secured 57 seats in the 120-seat assembly, insufficient to govern alone.

With support from ethnic minority parties, Kurti looked set for his third term as prime minister earlier this year, but is now eyeing fresh election campaign.

A time-consuming process will also postpone negotiations with Serbia — which has never recognised Kosovo's independence proclaimed in 2008 — a key criteria for both countries' ambitions to join the European Union.

Earlier Tuesday, Kurti held two extraordinary

\$65m secured for refugees' support in Jordan amid \$215m shortfall — UNHCR

Continued from page 1

UNHCR attributed the decline to seasonal patterns, noting that many refugees tend to postpone return plans until after Ramadan or during the summer period, once the school year concludes.

The agency added that support for voluntary return, including cash assistance and transport services, continued throughout the reporting period.

However, demand for transport assistance declined in February and March, reflecting reduced return movements due to winter conditions and Ramadan.

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Gaza fades from focus as regional war reshapes priorities

Continued from page 1

Political analyst Areej Jabr said the shift in attention reflects deliberate political dynamics.

"The United States and its allies have re-directed attention towards other conflict arenas, allowing developments in Gaza to continue with limited scrutiny," she said.

continues away from global attention," she warned.

She added that competing international approaches, including divisions over frameworks such as the two-state solution, have weakened the ability to generate effective pressure.

At the diplomatic level, Jordan reiterated its rejection of Israeli measures in the occupied territories, including settlement expansion and restrictions

on aid to Gaza, while calling for support to UNRWA and renewed efforts towards a two-state solution.

The developments highlight a widening gap between the scale of the crisis in Gaza and the level of international attention it is receiving.

Without renewed political urgency, the situation risks slipping further, with a deepening humanitarian crisis and no clear path to resolution, Jaber said.

Trump warns Iran better 'get smart soon' and accept nuclear deal

Continued from page 1

The news sent oil prices higher once again. At around 13:35 GMT, a barrel of Brent crude for June delivery was up 5.16 per cent at \$117, its highest level since the fragile ceasefire between the United States and Iran came into effect on April 8.

According to the Wall Street Journal, Trump intends to pursue the blockade of Iranian ports until Tehran is forced to dismantle its nuclear programme.

"Iran can't get their act together... They better get smart soon," Trump posted on his social media platform, above a mocked-up picture of himself totting a rifle in front of explosions wrecking a desert fortress and the slogan: "No more Mr Nice Guy."

Iran has blockaded the strait — a vital conduit for oil and gas shipments from the Gulf — since the US and Israel launched the war two months ago, sending shockwaves through the glo-

bal economy. But its own economy is also suffering.

On Wednesday, the Iranian rial fell to historic lows against the dollar, while Tehran residents speaking to AFP journalists in Paris reported a sense of despair.

"Every time in recent years that negotiations have taken place, the economic situation of the people has only gotten worse. Sanctions have either started or intensified," a 52-year-old architect told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"They go to negotiate and come back with even more sanctions, and the issue is always nuclear. There's no talk about people, the economy, or freedom. People have the right to not even want to hear the word 'negotiation'," he said.

'No trust'

During a White House state dinner Tuesday, Trump told Britain's King Charles III and oth-

er guests that Iran has been "militarily defeated", and added: "Charles agrees with me even more than I do — we're never going to let that opponent have a nuclear weapon."

But an Iranian army spokesman told state TV on Tuesday that "we do not consider the war to be over", saying Tehran had "no trust in America".

"We have many cards that we have not yet used... new tools and methods of fighting based on the experiences of the past two wars, which will definitely allow us to respond to the enemy more decisively" should the fighting resume, Amir Akraminia said in an interview.

Efforts to end the war have stalled in recent days. The latest Iranian proposal, passed along by Pakistan and studied by Trump administration officials in a meeting Monday, laid out red lines including on nuclear issues and Hormuz, according to Iran's Fars news agency.

The plan would reportedly see Tehran ease its chokehold on the strait and Washington lift its retaliatory blockade while broader negotiations continue, including over the nuclear programme.

Iranian defence ministry spokesman Reza Taleai-Nik said Washington "must abandon its illegal and irrational demands".

"The United States is no longer in a position to dictate its policy to independent nations," he said, according to state TV.

Qatar — a US ally that was hit by Iranian strikes despite its role as a mediator — warned of the possibility of a "frozen conflict" if a definitive resolution is not found.

'Attacks cannot continue'

Violence has continued on the war's Lebanese front, despite a recently extended ceasefire between Israel and Hizbollah, the Iran-backed armed group that drew Lebanon into the war by

firing rockets at Israel. Israel responded with strikes and a ground invasion.

For the first time since the ceasefire began, the Lebanese army said on Tuesday that an Israeli strike had targeted its troops, wounding two soldiers in the south. Another strike on Wednesday killed a Lebanese soldier, it said.

"Israel must finally realise that the only path to security is through negotiations, but it must first fully implement the ceasefire in order to move on to negotiations," Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said, in a statement from the presidency.

"Israeli attacks cannot continue as they are," he said. "We are now waiting for the United States to set a date to begin direct negotiations."

A UN-backed report said Wednesday that more than 1.2 million people in Lebanon were expected to face acute hunger due to the latest war.

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Tropical forest loss eases after record year — researchers

By **Delphine Paysant**

Agence France-Presse

PARIS, France — The pace of tropical forest destruction slowed in 2025 after record losses the year before but remained at worrying levels equivalent to 11 football fields per minute, researchers said on Wednesday.

The world lost 4.3 million hectares of tropical primary rainforest last year, down 36 per cent from 2024, said researchers from the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the University of Maryland.

“A drop of this scale in a single year is encouraging — it shows what decisive government action can achieve,” said Elizabeth Goldman, co-director of WRI’s Global Forest Watch platform.

“But part of the decline reflects a lull after an extreme fire year,” Goldman said.

The researchers also warned that fires fuelled by climate change have become a “dangerous new normal” which threatens to reverse the recent gains made by government efforts to tackle de-forestation.

The warming El Nino weather phenomenon is expected to return in the middle of the year, which could push global temperatures even higher, raising the threat of heatwaves, droughts and wildfires.

The researchers, who used satellite data for their report, noted that last year’s forest loss was still significant, about the size of Denmark and 46 per cent higher than a decade ago.

Despite last year’s progress, global forest loss remains 70 per cent above the level required to meet the 2030 goal of halting and reversing forest loss, the researchers said.

“A good year is a good year, but you need good years forever if you’re going to conserve, for example, the tropical rainforest,” Matthew Hansen, director of the GLAD Lab at the University of Maryland, said in a media briefing.

Government policies

Much of last year’s slowdown was due to sharp declines in Brazil, home to the biggest rainforest in the world.

Brazil’s forest loss, excluding fires, was 41 per cent lower than in 2024, its lowest rate on record.

“Brazil’s declines are associated with stronger environmental policies and enforcement since President Lula took office in 2023,” Goldman said in a news briefing, referring to Brazilian leader Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Lula relaunched an anti-de-forestation action plan and increased penalties for environmental crimes, she said.

But the country’s forests are still threatened by agriculture, which remains the largest driver of forest loss to make room for soy fields and cattle ranches.

Some states in the Amazon have passed legislation to weaken environmental protections, the researchers said.

“Several countries showed that strong policy action can reduce forest loss quickly,” Goldman said.

Forest loss in neighbouring Colombia fell 17 per cent, the second lowest year on record since 2016, thanks to government policies and agreements limiting forest clearing.

Government policies also helped to limit forest loss in Indonesia, where it increased by 14 per cent but was well below the highs seen a decade ago.

In Malaysia, government efforts have helped to stabilise forest loss in the country.

Tropical forest loss remained high in other parts of the world, including in Bolivia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon and Madagascar, the researchers said.

‘Near-permanent state of emergency’

Global tree cover loss fell by 14 per cent last year.

While agricultural expansion is still the leading driver of tree cover loss across the tropics, fires played a major role worldwide, accounting for 42 per cent of the destruction.

“For the past three years, fires burned more than twice as much tree cover as they did two decades ago,” Goldman said.

While humans cause most fires in the tropics, climate change is intensifying natural fire cycles in northern and temperate regions, the researchers said.

Canada had its second-worst fire year on record last year as wildfires tore through 5.3 million hectares of forest.

“Climate change and land clearing have shortened the fuse on global forest fires,” Hansen said. “They are turning seasonal disturbances into a near-permanent state of emergency.”

Jordanian television: The nation’s memory and narrative

By **Hasan Dajah**

On the fifty-eighth anniversary of the launch of Jordanian Television, discussing it is not merely a recollection of the journey of a long-established media institution, but rather a revisiting of the memory of an entire nation. Its details and transformations have been distilled into images and sounds that have accompanied Jordanians generation after generation, forming an integral part of their collective consciousness.

Culturally, Jordanian television served as a platform for creativity, embracing artists and innovators, and providing them with a space to express their national identity through drama and cultural and artistic programmes...

Since its launch in 1968, Jordanian Television has not been simply a means of transmitting news or broadcasting programmes, but has become a mirror reflecting the nation’s progress and a living record of its political, social, cultural and scientific history, truly making it the “Nation’s Archive” and its visual memory. For decades, it has contributed to documenting major transformations and pivotal moments, conveying both the pulse of the street and the voice of the state, and establishing a cumulative national consciousness that strengthens belonging and preserves identity.

Jordanian television has played a pivotal role in documenting key moments in the Kingdom’s history, from major political transformations to reform and modernisation initiatives, as well as regional events in which Jordan had a stance and a role. Through its continuous coverage, it contributed to shaping a collective national consciousness, not merely reporting events but presenting them within a context that fosters understanding, deepens belonging and brings citizens close

er to decision-making circles. Herein lies its importance as an active participant in constructing the national narrative, not simply as a conduit for it, but as a partner in its formulation and consolidation.

On a social level, Jordanian television was present in the details of Jordanians’ daily lives, uniting them around a single screen and reflecting their cultural and geographical diversity within a comprehensive framework that strengthens the spirit of belonging. It embraced family programmes, local dramas, and community dialogues that discussed people’s issues and concerns realistically and in depth, contributing to the consolidation of values of solidarity and mutual support. Therefore, it was no surprise that it was described as “family television”, as it formed a shared space where different generations met and passed on values and traditions, strengthening social bonds among the various segments of society.

Culturally, Jordanian television served as a platform for creativity, embracing artists and innovators, and providing them with a space to express their national identity through drama and cultural and artistic programmes, thus enhancing the presence of Jordanian culture both locally and regionally. It contributed to showcasing Jordanian heritage by documenting customs and traditions and highlighting folklore in its various forms, helping to preserve this legacy from extinction and transmitting it to new generations in a modern and engaging way that balances authenticity with innovation.

Its role was not limited to this, however, but extended to the scientific and educational fields, where it presented awareness and educational programs that contributed to raising public awareness and disseminating knowledge in various disciplines, from health and the environment to technology and scientific research. It also played a significant role in simplifying scientific concepts and presenting them in a way that resonated with the public, thus promoting a culture of lifelong learning. In earlier times, television was a primary source of information and a complementary educational tool, especially given the limited availability of other communication methods. This

reinforced its role as a distinguished institution of enlightenment, contributing to the development of an informed citizenry.

The true value of Jordanian television lies in its ability to construct a cohesive national narrative, grounded in facts and presented in accessible language. This has firmly established it in the collective consciousness and influenced public awareness. It has documented the nation’s journey in a balanced manner, combining professionalism and responsibility, while preserving national identity and the unique Jordanian experience in addressing regional and international challenges. Through this continuous documentation, it has not only preserved events but also contributed to their interpretation and contextualisation within their historical framework, thus strengthening the resilience of national memory and protecting it from distortion or oblivion.

Jordanian television remains more than just a media institution; It is the nation’s living memory, its unifying narrative, and the platform through which it has expressed itself, preserved its identity, and recounted its story to the world with honesty and responsibility

In light of the rapid digital transformation, Jordanian television has demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt to changing content consumption patterns, particularly among younger generations, by developing its media tools and expanding its presence on digital and interactive platforms. It has succeeded in combining the authenticity of its message with the modernity of its medium, offering high-quality content that resonates with the interests of a new audience without abandoning its established professional identity. This conscious adapta-

tion reflects a flexible institutional vision, affirming that Jordanian television not only keeps pace with transformations but also contributes to shaping them and enhancing its presence and influence in the contemporary media landscape.

Maintaining the Jordanian television’s standing is not limited to developing its technical tools; it is embodied in the renewal of its media discourse to meet the aspirations of new generations while simultaneously reflecting the constants of national identity.

In this context, the television’s management, represented by the chairman of the board of trustees and the director general, along with the administrative and media staff, has successfully kept abreast of modern developments in the media industry by adopting flexible visions and modern tools that enhance its presence and influence. Thus, the true equation is achieved in combining authenticity and modernity, and historical documentation with a future vision.

Jordanian television remains more than just a media institution; It is the nation’s living memory, its unifying narrative, and the platform through which it has expressed itself, preserved its identity, and recounted its story to the world with honesty and responsibility.

For decades, it has formed a cornerstone in consolidating national consciousness and strengthening belonging. It has also clearly contributed to solidifying loyalty to the Hashemite leadership and deepening the connection to the fundamental principles of the Jordanian state. It has kept pace with major transformations with steadfastness and professionalism, maintaining a delicate balance between conveying the truth and safeguarding the national interest.

Furthermore, it has contributed to building bridges of trust between the state and society, and has witnessed both achievements and challenges. On this anniversary, we not only celebrate a rich past, but also renew our confidence in its future role as a guardian of memory, a shaper of awareness and an influential actor in forming a modern national media that keeps pace with challenges, anticipates opportunities, and remains close to the pulse of the people and their aspirations.

The real food crisis: Energy, not emissions

By **Bjorn Lomborg**

For years, climate campaigners have claimed that our food supply is under grave threat from climate change caused by excessive fossil fuel use. Ironically, the war in the Middle East is highlighting that the much bigger food challenge for the world is not having enough access to fossil fuels.

Today, half of all the calories we consume are only possible because they are produced with artificial fertilisers, overwhelmingly from natural gas. Without fossil fuels, half the global population would suffer a severe lack of food.

The conflict in the Middle East and blocking of the Hormuz Strait is not just driving up global energy prices. Crucially, a quarter of the world’s fertiliser normally passes through the Strait, and the blockade is holding back much of the fertiliser that will help grow the food that will feed the world in the coming year. The UN estimates that this could drive up fertiliser prices 15-20 per cent and push at least another 45 million people into acute hunger.

And yet for the last decades, we’ve been told ad nauseam that fossil fuel use driving global warming was the big challenge to the world’s food supply. That claim is almost entirely wrong.

This climate-apocalyptic argument was only ever given any attention because we lost sight of the marvel of one of humanity’s greatest achievements in the modern age: Our ability to tackle food security.

Over the past 125 years, food has become dramatically cheaper and more abundant, thanks to soaring productivity and in-

novation. Far from a looming apocalypse, the data reveals a story of remarkable progress, with climate change posing only a relatively minor hurdle. Radical emission cuts risk making food scarcer and more expensive for the world’s most vulnerable.

Consider the arc of history. In 1928, the League of Nations estimated that more than two-thirds of humanity endured constant hunger. Today, fewer than one in ten people worldwide go hungry — a rate that dipped below 7 per cent before disruptions like COVID-19 and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Climate activists

paint a dire picture of rising temperatures devastating crops and fuelling famine, but they are mostly wrong

This isn’t luck; it’s the result of humanity quintupling cereal production since 1926 while more than halving global food prices in real terms. Incomes have surged, lifting billions out of extreme poverty and enabling families to afford more nutritious meals. This has avoided more than four billion people starving, a testament to agricultural ingenuity and economic growth.

Even now, positives abound. The UN’s April forecast points

to another record-breaking global harvest for 2025/26 because crops were already planted before the crisis.

Still, there are concerns for next season, and roughly 670 million people continue to suffer from food insecurity today. In regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, where crop yields lag far behind global averages, the barriers are clear and should be surmountable: Poor yields, subsistence farming and most importantly, lack of fertiliser, pesticides and mechanised handling.

Yet, Western NGOs and campaigners, well-fed but overly-worried about climate change, have railed against artificial fertilisers because they are fossil fuel based. Backed by rich donors and foundations, they blithely suggest that Africa should go organic, despite evidence showing this reduces harvests and food security. When Sri Lanka went organic in 2021, rice yields, the country’s staple food, plunged by more than 30 per cent with other crops showing massive declines.

Climate activists paint a dire picture of rising temperatures devastating crops and fuelling famine, but they are mostly wrong. Climate change will alter farming conditions, benefiting some areas, challenging others, with a net negative but negligible impact. One peer-reviewed study equates the effect on agriculture to shaving less than 0.06 per cent from global GDP by century’s end. CO is also a natural fertiliser. Elevated CO levels have greened the planet, adding leaves with the equivalent area larger than the continent of Australia since 2000 alone.

Without climate change, glo-

bal food calories are expected to rise 51 per cent by 2050 from 2010 levels. Even under an extreme warming scenario, global food calories would still rise, just slightly less at 49 per cent.

Drastic emission cuts are a bad policy if we want to boost food security. Climate policy is a blunt, expensive tool: Even aggressive action takes decades or centuries to measurably affect weather, costing hundreds of trillions while boosting calorie availability by under 0.1 per cent. Prioritising economic growth, by contrast, is over 100-times more effective, increasing food access by more than 10 per cent in years, not centuries.

And emission reductions harm food production more than climate change. They inflate costs for fertilisers, tractor fuel, and land, pricing out small farmers. Naïve models often overlook that, but careful research clearly shows that a low-emission future with high carbon prices overall means 50 million more people hungry by mid-century.

The lesson from today’s geopolitical shocks is clear: Food security depends less on distant climate projections than on reliable access to energy and agricultural inputs. If the goal is to reduce hunger, especially in poorer regions, the priority should be making fertiliser more accessible, not restricting the very resources that make large-scale food production possible.

Bjorn Lomborg is president of the Copenhagen Consensus and visiting fellow at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution. His new book is “Best Things First”, which The Economist named one of the best books of Project Syndicate 2023.

BUSINESS

Thursday, April 30, 2026

Promising opportunities for Jordanian ICT firms in Syrian market — JCC

AMMAN (JT) — Jordanian information and communications technology companies are well positioned to expand their footprint in the Syrian market, as the sector undergoes "rapid" transformation and modernisation, according to Haihtham Rawajbeh, representative of the ICT sector at the Jordan Chamber of Commerce (JCC).

Speaking on the sidelines of the 12th edition of the International Exhibition for Information and Communication Technology, "Syria HiTech 2026" in Damascus, Rawajbeh said Jordanian firms are increasingly entering the Syrian market through partnerships with local companies, reflecting growing momentum for cross-border cooperation in the technology sector.

He described Syria as a promising market for Jordanian ICT expertise, particularly as



Jordan Chamber of Commerce participates in 12th edition of the International Exhibition for Information and Communication Technology 'Syria HiTech 2026' in Damascus

it moves forward with plans to expand digital services and enhance e-government systems, an area in which Jordan has accumulated strong regional experience, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Rawajbeh noted that the exhibition provides an important platform for Jordanian companies to present their advanced technological solutions to both public and private sector stakeholders in Syria, at a time when

demand for digital transformation tools is rising.

He also pointed to clear interest from the Syrian side in leveraging Jordan's capabilities in software development, cybersecurity and integrated digital

solutions, highlighting the complementarity between the two markets.

Emphasising the broader regional context, he said Jordan's ICT sector has grown into a key provider of digital solutions across multiple industries, supported by its geographic proximity to Syria and strong business-to-business ties.

The exhibition, which features participation from several countries, showcases emerging technologies in areas such as smart cities, e-government platforms, Internet services and digital payments.

He added that Syria's ICT sector is currently evolving within a wider reform agenda, creating new opportunities for cooperation and knowledge exchange with Jordanian companies, Petra reported.

Australia minister urges keeping 'fuel flowing' on China visit

BEIJING (AFP) — Australia's foreign minister urged on Wednesday on a visit to Beijing the need to keep fuel and goods moving despite the bottlenecks caused by war in the Middle East.

The war and closure of the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's crude oil transits, has caused fuel prices to soar and left many Asia-Pacific nations facing an energy crisis.

China, a major exporter of jet fuel and diesel to Australia among others, has avoided the worst of the war's energy impacts thanks to its vast oil stocks, but paused exports at the start of the conflict to protect its domestic supplies.

Asian refineries in the Indo-Pacific region have been disproportionately affected, Foreign Minister Penny Wong told Chinese Vice President Han



Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong addresses journalists during a press conference in Beijing on Wednesday

Zheng, according to an Australian foreign ministry readout.

"It is more important than ever that we continue to engage and find ways to work together, to keep fuel and goods flowing," Wong told Han, according to an Australian foreign ministry readout.

China is set to resume exports from May with major state-

owned companies applying for licenses to do so, The Financial Times reported Tuesday, citing industry sources.

Chinese authorities have not commented publicly on the matter.

Wong added that "with China, Australia will continue to cooperate where we can, disagree where we must and engage in the national interest".

Mercedes warns longer Mideast war could cause shortages

FRANKFURT, Germany (AFP) — German premium auto maker Mercedes-Benz warned on Wednesday that a drawn-out conflict in the Middle East could cause shortages of key inputs as it reported tumbling quarterly profits due to fierce Chinese competition.

Traffic in the Strait of Hormuz has slowed to a trickle as Iran and the United States maintain competing blockades, restricting global supplies of energy and raising the cost of smelting industrial metals like aluminium.

Oil is also a key input for plastics and other petrochemical products.

"We're continuously monitoring [the war] and analysing the implications for the supply chain," Mercedes Finance Chief Harald Wilhelm told reporters on a call.

"If it were to last longer, you could not rule out the possibility of shortages in certain areas, whether of energy or certain commodities that are heavily sourced from the region."

Mercedes said net profit for January to March fell 17 per cent from the previous year to 1.43 billion euros (\$1.67 billion), hit by difficulties in China.

Stiffer competition in the country, long a steady source of profits



A giant logo of German automotive brand Mercedes-Benz is seen atop a Mercedes dealership in Offenbach, western Germany, on Wednesday

for German car makers, has hurt Mercedes and fellow German auto makers.

"We take Chinese competition very, very seriously," Wilhelm said.

"The vehicles, the technology, the packaging — and of course the price. To be clear, you get an incredible amount of value for very little money."

Mercedes said its car sales fell 27 per cent by volume in the first quarter in China, even as they grew in Europe and North America.

The firm's China sales were last year already at their lowest level since 2016, as it faces competition from local brands like BYD and Geely, particularly for sales of EVs.

Speaking to reporters after the results were released, Wilhelm said Mercedes was bracing for Chinese competitors

to try and export their way out of tough conditions in their home market.

Chinese brands including Chery, Geely and Xpeng had a nine per cent share of Europe's car market in March according to automotive intelligence firm Dataforce, up from virtually nothing just three years ago.

"If the infrastructure is there, the economics are there for an increasing number of logistics routes and requirements," he said.

Adoption of alternatives to diesel trucks in the world's second-largest economy has noticeably accelerated in recent years.

New-energy models accounted for 29 per cent of all domestic truck sales in China last year, up from 14 per cent in 2024, according to data from

Cheaper, cleaner electric trucks overhaul China's logistics

By Peter Catterall
Agence France-Presse

BEIJING — At a dusty lot an hour outside Beijing, a steady stream of vehicles come and go for a quick battery charge — just one node in China's rapidly expanding network of electric trucks.

While the country's prowess in electric passenger vehicles has long been known globally, electric trucks have only recently gained traction.

Now powered by extensive charging and battery-swapping infrastructure, the cost structures clearly favour electric models, experts say, in a potentially fatal blow for conventional diesel rigs.

"Last year was the breakthrough for heavy electrified vehicles in China," Lauri Myllyvirta, co-founder of the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air and expert on China's energy consumption, told AFP.

"If the infrastructure is there, the economics are there for an increasing number of logistics routes and requirements," he said.

Adoption of alternatives to diesel trucks in the world's second-largest economy has noticeably accelerated in recent years.

New-energy models accounted for 29 per cent of all domestic truck sales in China last year, up from 14 per cent in 2024, according to data from



This photo taken on April 23, shows an electric truck at a charging station in Beijing

Beijing-based market intelligence provider Commercial Vehicle World.

The penetration rate was less than 1 per cent as recently as 2021, according to the firm.

Manufacturers say they expect that share to continue swelling, potentially reaching a majority of sales in just a few years.

At the bustling charging station in Beijing's Miyun District, 43-year-old truck driver Wang told AFP how his job had changed since he started driving an electric model last year.

"It's such a breeze!" he said after plugging in the charging cables.

"My old vehicle had over 10 gears, and its operation was so cumbersome. But with this one, you don't have to do a thing — it's all automatic."

Asked why he thought logistics firms like his were increasingly switching to electric trucks, Wang said it was a combination of national policies and simple market logic.

"It's just survival of the fittest. Now, with freight expenses and everything, people are trying to earn a bit more and this one has lower operating costs."

Another driver at the charging station, surnamed Zhang, told AFP that he has been driving an electric truck for around two months after switching from one powered by natural gas.

His job mainly involves hauling sand and stone on short journeys around Beijing, Zhang told AFP, noting that the truck is not suited for longer shipments.

The new sky-blue model Zhang drives —

made by the Howo brand of state-owned firm Sino-truk — has a maximum range of 240-250 kilometres, he said.

"The power is pretty strong, the acceleration is fast. It's all about speed, but the range is a bit lacking," he said.

As domestic adoption of electric trucks picks up pace, Chinese firms are thinking more about overseas markets.

"Similar to passenger vehicles, China's heavy truck manufacturers are beginning to view export markets as an inevitable strategy due to rising competition and the eventual saturation in the Chinese market," said Christopher Doleman, an analyst at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

Recent disruption in global energy markets as a result of the Middle

East war is a "potential accelerator" for this trend, Doleman told AFP.

"There is likely to be higher demand for electric heavy-duty vehicles as fleet owners try to minimise their vulnerability to volatile diesel costs," he said.

According to Han Wen, founder of electric truck start-up Windrose Technology, the war "already has" boosted demand.

Founded in 2022, Belgium-based Windrose is seeking to leverage China's advanced EV supply chains to position itself in the emerging global long-haul electric truck market — competing with Tesla's electric "Semi".

"For trucks, range is by far the constraining factor," Han told AFP, noting that Windrose trucks can currently drive about 700 kilometres on a full charge, with plans to extend that to 1,000 kilometres in 2030.

Having secured road approval across Europe, China, the United States and South America, Windrose is now looking to ramp up production.

"We're going to build about 1,000 trucks this year," Han said, followed by goals of 10,000 next year and 100,000 in 2030.

"Economically, there is no more question at all that electric is superior," he added.

"I think we're right on the cusp of a total obliteration of diesel trucks as a product category."

Oil spikes while stocks slide ahead of US Fed rate decision

LONDON (AFP) — Oil prices shot higher Wednesday on concerns of an extended blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, while stocks slid as investors adopted a cautious stance ahead of a US Fed rate decision and a slew of tech firm earnings.

Both main oil contracts jumped around five per cent following a Wall Street Journal report that the United States was preparing for a prolonged blockade of Iranian ports.

Analysts warned that such a move would prompt Iran to maintain its own blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, leaving the vital oil shipping route at a near standstill.

The US Federal Reserve (Fed) is widely expected to keep interest rates un-

changed later in the day, with markets closely watching its guidance on inflation as energy costs soar.

"The longer the conflict persists and the Strait of Hormuz remains disrupted, the more pronounced the inflationary pressures are likely to become," said Anna Macdonald, investment strategy director at Hargreaves Lansdown.

International benchmark oil contract Brent crude for June delivery rose to \$117 a barrel, its highest level since the fragile ceasefire between the US and Iran came into effect.

The dollar drifted higher against its main peers.

"The market is increasingly shifting towards a view that no longer ex-

pects a quick and lasting peace, nor an immediate reopening of the Strait of Hormuz," said Arne Lohmann Rasmussen, chief analyst at Global Risk Management.

With talks to end the Middle East war appearing to be at a standstill, investors' attention turned to earnings updates.

Wall Street's main stock indices dipped at the start of trading in New York.

"As with other financial markets, investors appear to be happy to sit on their hands ahead of tonight's monetary policy announcement from the Federal Reserve's FOMC, and as four constituents of the 'Magnificent Seven' prepare to release their latest earnings updates

after the close," said David Morrison, senior market analyst at Trade Nation.

Investors will be paying particular attention to spending on artificial intelligence by Amazon, Google, Meta and Microsoft — and whether it is translating into revenue.

"Given the outsized weighting of these companies in the index, and the enormous capital expenditure they have announced to build AI capabilities, these results will be closely watched by investors," Hargreaves Lansdown's Macdonald added.

Tech stocks took a hit on Tuesday following a report in the Wall Street Journal that ChatGPT maker OpenAI had missed targets on user numbers and revenue.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

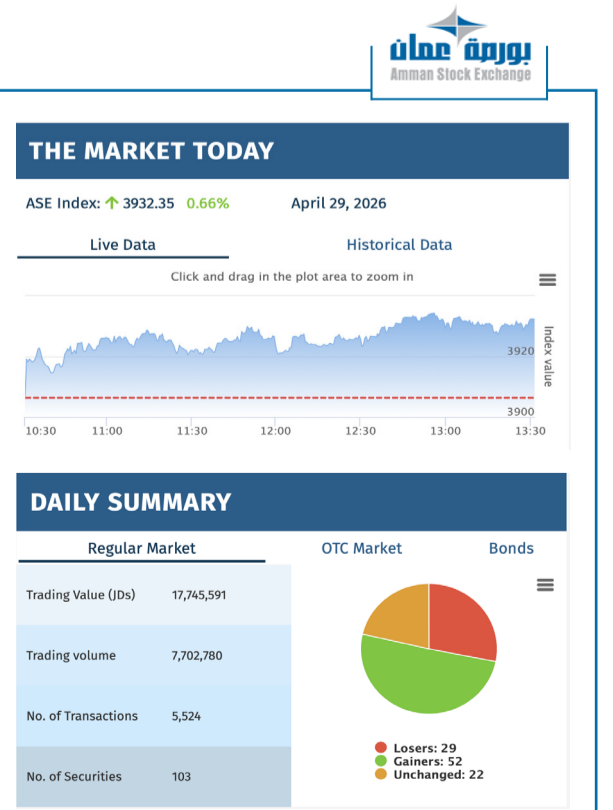
AMMAM (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Wednesday amounted to JD17.7 million spread over 7.7 million shares that traded through 5,524 transactions.

The ASE share price index closed at 3932.35 points, with an increase of 0.66 per cent

Out of 103 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 52 companies rose while the share price of another 29 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Union Investment Corporation by 12.50 per cent, Union Tobacco and Cigarette Industries by 10 per cent, Jordan Insurance by 7.30 per cent, Safwa Islamic Bank by 6.28 per cent, and Amwaj Properties by 5.56 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Future Arab Investment Company by 4.69 per cent, Al Tajamouat for Touristic Projects Company Plc. by 4 per cent, Tuhama for Financial Investments by 3.13 per cent, Al Manara Islamic Insurance Company by 2.94 per cent, and Comprehensive Land Development and Investment by 2.90 per cent.



ENERGY DRINKS IN SCHOOLS: A HEALTH RISK TOO LONG IGNORED

By Hadeel El Bis

As energy drinks proliferate across local markets, health experts are raising the alarm over the growing number of children and teenagers consuming them without any awareness of the risks involved — particularly given their high concentrations of caffeine and stimulants.

Amid repeated medical warnings about the negative effects of these drinks on the nervous and cardiovascular systems of those under 18, the Food and Drug Authority is moving to tighten oversight and ban their circulation within schools. The measure aims to protect students and curb consumption, accompanied by calls to raise health awareness among families and pupils about safer alternatives.

The World Health Organisation estimates that caffeine consumption among children and adolescents should be strictly limited, warning that exceeding safe thresholds can lead to disturbances in heart rhythm, sleep patterns and behaviour. The European Food Safety Authority similarly recommends that daily caffeine intake not exceed 3mg per kilogram of body weight — a limit that can easily be surpassed by a single can of certain energy drinks.

A number of parents have pointed out that the ready availability of these drinks near or inside schools encourages students to consume them, and have called for stricter oversight and intensified awareness campaigns — particularly given the widespread belief among some teenagers that energy drinks enhance alertness and concentration.

A necessary step, long overdue

Paediatric consultant Dr Manar Al Shawabkeh welcomed the decision, describing it as a necessary measure that had been delayed far too long. She argued that the presence of energy drinks within the school environment is entirely illogical, especially in spaces that are supposed to promote healthy behaviours.

Dr Shawabkeh noted that a number of countries treat this issue with considerable strictness, imposing restrictions on selling these drinks to those under 16 or 18. In Canada, for instance, children are not permitted to purchase them individually.

Not all drinks are equal

She also addressed a common source of confusion regarding different types of beverages. Fizzy drinks, despite their drawbacks, are generally consumed for recreational purposes and carry comparatively lower risks when consumed in moderation. Sports drinks are designed to replenish fluids and salts for those engaged in intense physical activity and can be used sparingly when necessary.

Energy drinks, however, are an entirely different matter. Dr Shawabkeh explained that they rely primarily on caffeine, which can cause health harm even in adults when consumed excessively. The safe daily caffeine limit stands at around 100mg, yet some energy drink

cans contain up to 300mg per unit — several times the permissible amount for children.

The danger is not limited to caffeine alone. These drinks also contain other additives, including guarana — a plant with a very high caffeine content. Some products fail to clearly indicate either the quantity of caffeine or the presence of guarana on their nutritional labels. Guarana can contain up to four times the caffeine found in coffee, meaning a child could unknowingly consume the equivalent of six times the safe dosage.

The Jordanian Food and Drug Authority has stressed the importance of compliance with nutritional labelling requirements and greater consumer awareness of caffeine content in these products, particularly given the presence of ingredients such as guarana that can significantly increase total caffeine intake without the consumer realising it.

Serious symptoms

Dr Shawabkeh warned that excessive consumption of these drinks can produce symptoms including a rapid heartbeat, elevated blood pressure, tremors and irregular heart rhythms, alongside psychological effects such as anxiety, tension and sleep disturbances — all of which negatively impact concentration and academic performance.

She also highlighted that the high sugar content in these drinks — reaching approximately 25 grammes per can — causes a rapid spike in energy levels followed by a sudden crash, and increases the long-term risks of obesity and insulin resistance.

The widely held belief among some students that these drinks enhance focus or energy is, she said, entirely misleading. They can in fact produce the opposite effect, particularly with repeated consumption and insufficient sleep.

Real solutions lie in healthy habits

On the question of alternatives, Dr Al-Shawabkeh stressed that genuine solutions lie in adopting a healthy lifestyle — one that includes adequate sleep, a balanced diet, regular physical activity and reduced screen time, along with monitoring one's health and addressing any vitamin deficiencies where needed.

She emphasised that dealing with teenagers requires a careful balance between awareness and oversight, with both schools and families playing a central role in guiding healthy behaviours. Banning energy drinks from schools is an essential step, she said, but it must be sustained by ongoing education and follow-up to ensure it achieves its intended effect.

Official measures

Sources at the Ministry of Education confirmed that steps are under way to strengthen oversight of school canteens in line with health guidelines issued by the relevant authorities, and to prohibit the circulation of products that could adversely affect students' health — with energy drinks topping that list.



These measures include monitoring schools' compliance with the relevant instructions and taking appropriate action against those in violation, all within the framework of a learning environment that promotes healthy behaviour.

ENERGY DRINK ALERT

1. THE HIDDEN DOSE

 **300mg Caffeine**  **25g Sugar** High levels of stimulants & sugar

3. THE MARKETING MYTH

 **FAKE ENERGY BOOST** Temporary Rush, Fatigue Crash  **TRUE SUSTAINED VITALITY** Misleading Promises



2. INSIDE THE BODY

 **INCREASED HEART RATE** Arrhythmias, Palpitations  **IMPAIRED COGNITION** Anxiety, Jitters, Jitters, Poor Focus

4. REAL POWER

 **OPTIMAL SLEEP** Restorative Rest  **HEALTHY DIET** Nutrition  **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY** Natural Energy



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