

THE JORDAN TIMES



HEALTHCARE

Princess Muna
College of Nursing
lights **candles** for
26th graduating
cohort



TOURISM

Kingdom's visitor
numbers drop **3.6%**
in **first two** months
of 2026 — **ministry**



TIES

Jordanian-Turkish
business **council** to
boost **economic**
cooperation

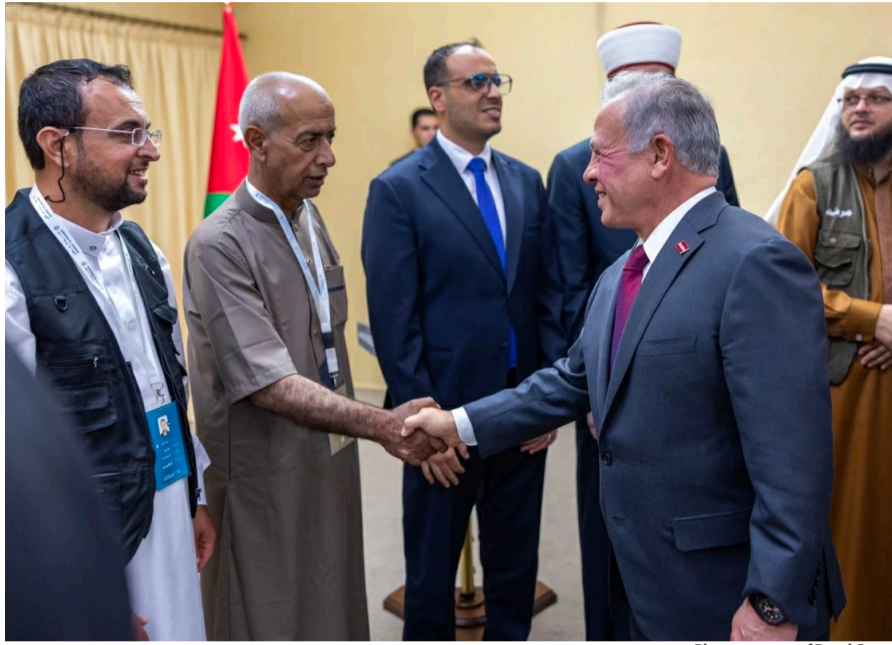


WORLD CUP

JFA unveils official
kit for 2026 **FIFA**
World Cup
debut



Tuesday, May 19, 2026 | Dhu al-Hajja 2, 1447 Hijri



His Majesty King Abdullah bids farewell to a delegation of Hajj pilgrims from families of martyrs who served in the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army and security agencies

King sees off families of martyrs leaving to perform Hajj

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Monday saw off families of martyrs, who served in the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army and security agencies, departing to perform the Hajj pilgrimage.

The Royal Hashemite Court annually sends a group of martyrs' relatives to perform Hajj, in recognition of the martyrs' sacrifices in the line of duty while de-

fending their homeland, according to a Royal Court statement. His Majesty expressed his hopes that the pilgrims would have a blessed and rewarding Hajj. Royal Hashemite Court Chief Yousef Issawi delivered a speech during the departure ceremony, in which he highlighted Jordan's gratitude for the sacrifices of Jordan Armed

Forces-Arab Army and security agencies personnel in safeguarding the Kingdom's security and stability. Royal Hashemite Court Imam Ahmad Khalaleh also spoke about the noble virtues and meaning of Hajj during the ceremony. The families expressed gratitude for the King's efforts in enabling them to perform Hajj.

King inaugurates Baptism Site International Orthodox University

- His Majesty underscores importance of university in reinforcing symbolic significance of Baptism Site, building on Kingdom's role as model of moderation, inter-faith harmony
- Established by the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem as non-profit institution, BIO University has capacity of 40 residents, option for distance learning
- King directs government to adopt, support the initiative to commemorate 2000 years since baptism of Jesus Christ in 2030

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah inaugurated the Baptism Site International Orthodox University (BIO Uni) on Monday, at the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ (Bethany Beyond the Jordan), and directed the government to adopt and support the initiative to commemorate two thousand years since the baptism of Jesus Christ in 2030, which was put forward by the Council of Church Leaders in Jordan.



His Majesty King Abdullah inaugurates the Baptism Site International Orthodox University on Monday, at the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ

During a meeting with Christian religious leaders from Jordan and Palestine at the Baptism Site, attended by HRH Prince Ghazi, His Majesty's chief adviser for religious and cultural affairs and personal envoy, the King highlighted the need for the 2030 initiative's action plan to focus on improving infrastruc-

ture and operational services at the Baptism Site, according to a Royal

Court statement. His Majesty said he will be following up

closely on progress in implementation of the action plan for the 2030

initiative. **Continued on page 5**

Crown Prince meets Ajarma tribe dignitaries

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein on Monday met with dignitaries and representatives of the Ajarma tribes. The meeting, hosted at the home of retired Maj. Gen. Ahmad Efeishat, addressed a range of local community issues, Al Mamlaka TV reported.



HRH Crown Prince Hussein on Monday meets with dignitaries and representatives of the Ajarma tribe

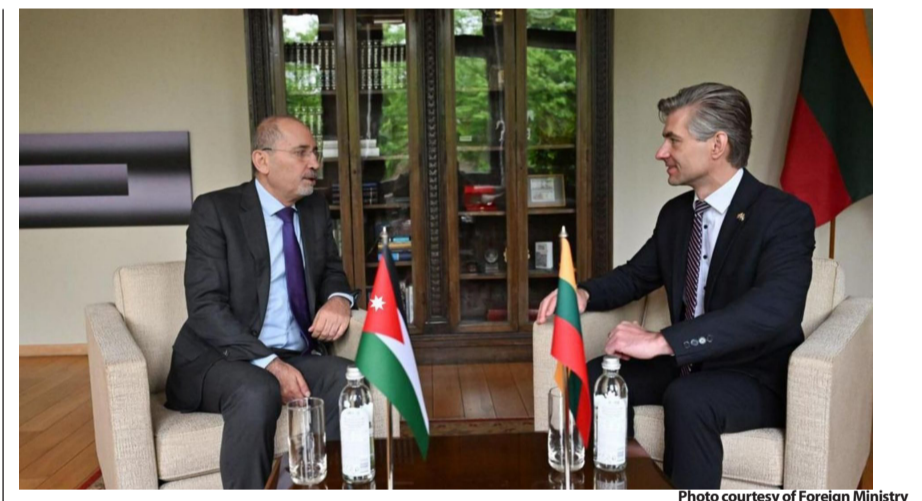
His Royal Highness highlighted the importance of the National Service Programme, noting that the recent graduation of its first batch of recruits reflects key national val-

ues, including self-reliance, productivity and discipline.

The Crown Prince also underscored the importance of vocational and

technical training programmes, and their role in equipping and em-

powering young people for future job markets, with a focus on technology and innovation. Attendees commended the Crown Prince's continued engagement with Jordanians and praised his efforts to support youth empowerment and skills development across various fields. They also expressed appreciation for the reactivation of the National Service Programme, describing it as an important initiative for Jordanian youth.



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi (left) hold talks on Monday with Lithuanian Foreign Minister Kestutis Budrys on ways to enhance bilateral relations and expand cooperation across a range of sectors

Foreign minister, Lithuanian counterpart discuss ties, regional developments

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Monday held talks with Lithuanian Foreign Minister Kestutis Budrys on ways to strengthen bilateral relations and expand cooperation across a range of sectors. The two ministers affirmed the strong ties between Jordan and Lithuania and stressed the importance of enhancing cooperation in

the fields of economy, investment, defence, education, tourism and cybersecurity, among others, according to a Foreign Ministry statement. They also agreed to hold the first round of political consultations between the two countries in the coming months to develop a roadmap outlining priority areas of cooperation and practical steps to deepen bilateral ties. During his visit to

Lithuania, the first by a Jordanian foreign minister, Safadi highlighted the importance of the Jordan-European investment conference, which the Kingdom is set to host later this year, describing it as "an opportunity to strengthen economic cooperation and encourage Lithuanian investors and business leaders to explore opportunities in Jordan". **Continued on page 5**

JAF evacuates new group of sick Gaza children



The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army on Monday evacuated the 28th group of sick children from the Gaza Strip

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) on Monday evacuated the 28th group of sick children from the Gaza Strip, comprising 20 children accompanied by 40 family members, as part of the "Jordanian Medical Corridor" initiative launched under Royal directives. The children will receive treatment at sever-

al Jordanian hospitals, which reflects the Kingdom's ongoing medical and humanitarian commitment to supporting Palestinians in the war-hit Gaza Strip, according to a JAF statement. The medical evacuations, which began in March 2025, are conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organisation

(WHO), as part of coordinated humanitarian efforts in line with international standards. He said that two-thirds of Syrian refugees continue living below the poverty line despite growing returns to Syria, while economic pressures continue increasing vulnerabilities among refugee families and children. According to

UNICEF warns of deepening funding crisis threatening refugee services in Jordan

AMMAN — UNICEF Representative to Jordan Marc Rubin has warned that the organisation is facing "widening" funding gaps that, coupled with growing economic pressures, are impacting life-saving services for refugees in the Kingdom. In an interview with The Jordan Times, Rubin said Jordan hosts 388,000 plus

registered Syrian refugees, including 195,000 plus children as of April 2026. (See full interview on page 2.) He said that two-thirds of Syrian refugees continue living below the poverty line despite growing returns to Syria, while economic pressures continue increasing vulnerabilities among refugee families and children. According to

UNICEF, 83,000 people in refugee camps rely on UNICEF-supported water and sanitation services. The organisation also warned that funding shortages are threatening critical health and nutrition services. According to UNICEF, over 17,000 children risk losing life-saving health interventions if financing gaps persist. Beyond basic services, UNICEF highlight-

ed growing social and psychological challenges facing refugee children. He added that UNICEF faces a 69 per cent funding gap for 2026 and a projected 90 per cent funding gap in refugee camps for 2027 to cover water, sanitation, and hygiene services. "Without financing, vulnerable children risk losing essential services," he warned.



Marc Rubin

Jordan condemns attack on Saudi Arabia with three drones from Iraq

AMMAN (JT) — The Foreign Ministry has condemned the attack targeting Saudi Arabia with three drones coming from Iraqi airspace. The ministry slammed the attack, on a statement on Monday, as a "flagrant violation of Saudi Arabia's sovereignty, a threat to its security, stability and territorial integrity, and a blatant breach of international law and the UN Charter". The statement also reiterated Jordan's solidarity and support for Saudi Arabia in all measures it



takes to protect its sovereignty, security, stability, and the safety of its citizens and residents. Saudi Arabia said Sunday it had intercepted and destroyed three drones that had entered from Iraqi airspace.

Defence Ministry spokesman Turki Al Maliki said the drones had entered on Sunday morning and that the ministry "reserves the right to respond at the appropriate time and place", according to AFF.



Under the patronage of HRH Princess Rym Ali, photographer Priscilla E. J. Philippi on Sunday launches her exhibition 'Jordan's Royal Desert Patrol Photo Series' at Jasmine House

Photo exhibition highlights Jordan's Royal Desert Patrol, Bedouin heritage

By Zena Hyasat

AMMAN — Under the patronage of HRH Princess Rym Ali, photographer Priscilla E. J. Philippi on Sunday launched her exhibition "Jordan's Royal Desert Patrol Photo Series" at Jasmine House, offering a visual exploration of Jordan's Al Hajanah brigade and the country's enduring Bedouin heritage.

The exhibition, which will remain on display for two months, documents the lives, traditions and presence of Jordan's Royal Desert Patrol through a collection of photographs captured across desert landscapes including Aqaba and

Wadi Rum.

Speaking about the project, Philippi said that the experience evolved into a deeply personal journey.

"When I am with Al Hajanah brigade, I feel right at home. They have become family to me and I am proud that they consider me one of them and their sister," she said.

Philippi noted that her fascination with Al Hajanah began in childhood, long before the project itself took shape.

"Since childhood, I always loved seeing Al Hajanah on their camels in Aqaba and in Wadi Rum. Photographing them was an absolute dream at the time," she

said.

She added that the brigade represents an essential component of Jordan's cultural identity.

"I am truly honoured that I have gotten to spend all this time with them and firmly believe that they are an intrinsic part of Jordan's rich culture that everyone should learn about. They are an awe-inspiring embodiment of Bedouin heritage and traditions," Philippi said.

The exhibition seeks to preserve and highlight the visual and cultural legacy of the Al Hajanah brigade, whose presence remains closely tied to Jordan's desert history and Bedouin traditions.

Princess Muna College of Nursing lights candles for 26th graduating cohort

AMMAN (JT) — Deputising for HRH Princess Muna, president of the Jordanian Nursing Council and patron for nursing and midwifery in the eastern Mediterranean region, Director General of the Royal Medical Services Brig. Gen. Sahil Hammouri on Monday attended the graduation ceremony of the 26th cohort of cadets of the Princess Muna College of Nursing.

In her address, the dean of the college, a subsidiary of the military wing at Mutah University, said that "minds within this prestigious institution are armed with various medical and nursing sciences, as well as the arts of healthcare, to deliver top-tier services built on scientific skills", according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army statement.

She noted that the college is guided by a Royal vision that places the quality of citizen life and health as the ultimate priority, positioning Jordan as a regional model in healthcare and education.

The dean added that the 26th batch represents a qualitative



Deputising for HRH Princess Muna, Director General of the Royal Medical Services Brig. Gen. Sahil Hammouri on Monday attends the graduation ceremony of the 26th cohort of cadets of the Princess Muna College of Nursing

addition to the journey of this prominent institution. She praised the new

graduates for their passion for knowledge, academic excellence, and discipline, standing shoulder-to-shoulder

with their peers to carry forward the mission of humanitarian compassion alongside the prestige of the Jordanian

army. At the end of the ceremony, Hammouri distributed awards to top achievers.

Funding gaps threaten critical services for refugee children in Jordan — UNICEF representative

- UNICEF warns water scarcity, economic pressure, regional instability are deepening vulnerabilities across refugee communities
- 83,000 people in refugee camps rely on UNICEF-supported water, sanitation services
- 17,000+ children risk losing life-saving health interventions if financing gaps persist

By Mai Anati

AMMAN — Marc Rubin, UNICEF representative to Jordan, has warned that widening funding gaps and growing economic pressures are threatening critical services for refugee children in Jordan, as the Kingdom continues hosting one of the world's highest refugee-to-population ratios.

In an interview with The Jordan Times, Rubin said Jordan hosts 388,000 plus registered Syrian refugees, including 195,000 plus children as of April 2026.

He noted that two-thirds of Syrian refugees continue living below the poverty line despite growing returns to Syria, while economic pressures continue increasing vulnerabilities among refugee families and children.

Jordan also remains one of the world's most water-scarce countries, with thousands of refugees relying on humanitarian support for basic services.

According to UNICEF, 83,000 people in refugee camps rely on UNICEF-supported water and sanitation services.

Rubin said UNICEF continues supporting climate-resilient water systems in cooperation with the Government of Jordan amid growing environmental and resource pressures.

The organisation also



UNICEF Representative to Jordan Marc Rubin during an interview with journalist Mai Anati of The Jordan Times

warned that funding shortages are threatening critical health and nutrition services.

According to UNICEF, 17,000 plus children risk losing life-saving health interventions if financing gaps persist.

Beyond basic services, UNICEF highlighted growing social and psychological challenges facing refugee children.

"Nearly 3 in 4 children experience violent discipline at home," Rubin said, noting that refugee children continue facing high psychological stress linked to displacement and poverty.

Through 114 Makani centres across Jordan, UNICEF reached 87,000 plus children with learning, protection

and life skills services. Youth unemployment also remains a major challenge among refugee communities.

'Nearly 3 in 4 children experience violent discipline at home'

According to UNICEF, youth unemployment among Syrian refugees reached 36 per cent

in Q4 2024, compared with 17 per cent for Jordanians.

The agency said that it reached 90,000 plus young people in 2025 through empowerment programmes, while over 34,000 young people received market-driven skills training.

Despite the scale of needs, UNICEF warned that humanitarian financing remains under severe strain.

Rubin said that UNICEF urgently needs flexible funding to sustain water, health, nutrition, learning and protection services.

He added that UNICEF faces a 69 per cent funding gap for 2026 and a projected 90 per cent WASH funding gap in refugee camps for 2027.

"Without financing, vulnerable children risk losing essential services," he warned.

UNICEF said the Kingdom continues playing a central humanitarian role in supporting regional relief operations.

Since November 2023, UNICEF has facilitated more than 1,600 humanitarian trucks and five airlifts through the Jordan Corridor, delivering essential supplies worth more than \$54 million to support urgent response efforts in the State of Palestine.

Rubin also said UNICEF continues strengthening Jordan's social protection systems and emergency preparedness amid ongoing regional uncertainty.

In 2025, UNICEF advanced Jordan's National Social Protection Strategy and strengthened linkages between cash assistance and essential services to help build resilience amid regional instability.

The organisation also maintains a strategic stockpile of supplies worth \$3.7 million in Jordan to ensure readiness for emergency response operations across the region.

UNICEF described Jordan as a vital regional humanitarian hub, stressing that it continues working closely with the Government and partners to monitor risks and respond rapidly to emerging crises.



From left to right: Tala Ghosheh, Zeina Barhoum and Daria Kosorukova at the event held on Sunday at the French Mansion in Salt titled 'The Voices of Spring, a Special Opera Evening'

Amman Opera Festival highlights women empowerment through soprano performances

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — The Amman Opera Festival (AOF) Jordan was launched in 2017 by prominent Jordanian soprano Zeina Barhoum.

In the 2026 edition of AOF, the main theme: "woman empowerment", highlighted by three sopranos Talia Ghosheh, Daria Kosorukova and Zeina Barhoum, accompanied by the Lebanese pianist Grace Abu Daher.

The idea came from The Three Tenors: Placido Domingo, Jose Carreras and Luciano Pavarotti, who were at the peak of the international popularity in the late 1980s and 1990s.

"The Voices of Spring, a Special Opera Evening" took place at the French Mansion in the city of Salt. The concert attracted local and foreign opera lovers and prominent members of the Jordanian society.

The repertoire was a combination of well-known opera arias and popular Arabic and international songs from classical films like "The Sound of Music".

Barhoum is a Grand Prix award winning Opera singer who performed on some of most prestigious venues like the Kensington Palace, The Hofburg Palace, Cadogan Hall, The UNESCO Paris, The Rimini Opera and Campidoglio in Italy, Austria, the UK, France, Ukraine, China, Jordan, UAE and Lebanon with renowned artists, including Italian baritone and tutor Walter Alberti, Roberto Alagna, who is the acclaimed successor of Pavarotti and

Andrea Bocelli.

"I represented Jordan amongst six continents in World Opera Day on October 25, 2020 in collaboration with Opera for Peace and UNESCO, and represented Jordan as well in the classical music and pop genres in the Sound of the Xity Festival with over 30 countries organised by the government of the People's Republic of China," Barhoum said.

She added that she launched the Alcantara album series with the message of bridging cultures through music in a variety of languages with pop and classic originals of her own.

"In 2024, I was invited by representatives of the Vatican to represent Palestine and Jordan in Rome amongst various artists from different countries, opening the concert with an aria in Italian and Arabic titled 'Lascia Ch'io Pianga' that I translated for the album Alcantara, later followed by performances in Italy, Austria and the UAE," Barhoum said.

"In 2025, I was invited to perform for the opening of The Palestine Museum in Edinburgh, Scotland, and later showcased my show 'A Love Story Through Time', as the first artist to perform live in concert in front of the Treasury in Petra.

Although raised up in the US, Ghosheh planned to return to the Middle East. She graduated at the New York University, where she earned her bachelor's degree in music and gave her final student performance in May 2024 at the Black Box Theatre.

Ghosheh, who collaborates closely with Barhoum, is also working passionately with Gaza and Lebanese refugees who are affected by the ongoing Israeli aggression.

For Ghosheh, opera has "a universal language that promotes unity and hope". The third soprano, Kosorukova came from Ukraine and is based in Amman. Kosorukova graduated at the Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine in Kyiv.

She has extensive experience performing on major opera stages and collaborating with full symphony orchestras throughout her career.

Kosorukova featured roles include The Queen of the Night (The Magic Flute by W.A. Mozart), Marfa (The Tsar's Bride by N. Rimsky-Korsakov) and Violetta (La Traviata by G. Verdi).

Kosorukova performed solo concert in Spain with performances in Valencia, Alicante, Benidorm and Finestrat.

She currently performs in concerts across Europe and in the Middle East, and she is also a professional vocal coach with extensive years of pedagogical or teaching experience.

A pianist who participated in the event, Abu Daher is based in the Middle East, particularly known for her work in Jordan and Lebanon.

Abu Daher often accompanies Barhoum during her performances.

She also played the piano for the Sacred Heart Choir, which is the oldest choir in Jordan.

Quick Reaction Force, UK army unit conduct military drill

AMMAN (JT) — The 61st Quick Reaction Force Battalion of the Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Quick Reaction Force Brigade on Monday conducted a joint military drill with a British force.

The drill was attended by the brigade commander and the deputy

commander of the British joint task force in the Middle East, according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement.

The exercise, held at designated training grounds, included advanced field applications in urban warfare under operational scenarios

simulating various combat environments.

It also featured live-fire drills with various light and medium weapons, alongside the deployment of drones for reconnaissance, support, and field command and control tasks.

The training aimed to

develop combat readiness, enhance efficiency in joint planning and execution, and boost capabilities to handle emergency operational situations in line with modern warfare requirements, while exchanging military and field expertise between the two armies.

The exercise comes as part of joint training programmes and plans conducted by JAF with other armed forces to upgrade efficiency, enhance field readiness and consolidate military partnerships in accordance with the highest professional standards.



The Baptism Site of Jesus Christ (Al Maghtas)

Church leaders commend King's support for 2030 baptism anniversary initiative

AMMAN (JT) — Council of Church Leaders President Archbishop Christoforos Atallah on Sunday commended His Majesty King Abdullah's support for an initiative to commemorate the 2,000th anniversary of Jesus Christ's baptism in 2030.

Atallah stressed the importance of developing strategic plans and programmes in coordination with the Council of Church Leaders in Jordan to ensure the initiative's success and to highlight Jordan's religious and historical significance, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa said the 2,000th anniversary of the baptism of Jesus Christ in 2030 is both a historic occasion and an opportunity to reaffirm the values of unity, harmony and mutual understanding.

He expressed appreciation for His Majesty King Abdullah's support for the initiative and for promoting the values of dialogue and peace, noting its link to the Hashemite Custodianship of Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

Head of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East Archbishop Hosam Naoum said the 2030 initiative is based on local preparations, including upgrading sites, developing infrastructure and services, and

preparing personnel to receive pilgrims and visitors from Jordan and abroad.

He added that the initiative will also involve cooperation with churches and Christian institutions worldwide, particularly in the West, to encourage participation in commemorating this spiritually and historically significant occasion at its original site.

He described Jordan as a beacon for Christians in the Middle East...

The initiative marking the 2,000th anniversary of the baptism of Jesus Christ in 2030 is centred on several strategic goals, including developing the narrative and religious events related to the occasion and enhancing Christian pilgrimage tourism.

It also aims to promote the Baptism Site and other religious tourism destinations at regional and international levels, in addition to upgrading infrastructure and operational services at the Baptism Site and other religious and tourist sites across the Kingdom.

During His Majesty

King Abdullah's inauguration on Monday of the Baptism Site International Orthodox University (BIO Uni) at Bethany Beyond the Jordan, Patriarch Theophilus III of Jerusalem and All Palestine and Jordan highlighted the importance of establishing the university and its role in attracting students from Jordan, the region and around the world.

He described Jordan as a beacon for Christians in the Middle East and emphasised the importance of the Hashemite Custodianship in safeguarding the region's cultural, civilisational and religious heritage.

David Alexi, grandson of the university's donor Mark Voloshin, said the institution was a vision that had become a reality with the support of His Majesty King Abdullah, describing it as a beacon of faith, learning and harmony for future generations.

The inauguration was attended by HRH Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad, Princess Maryam Ghazi, Prime Minister Jafar Hassan, Director of the Office of His Majesty Alaa Batayneh, Planning and International Cooperation Minister Zeina Toukan, Tourism and Antiquities Minister Emad Hijazin, heads of churches in Jordan and Palestine, and a number of senior civilian and military officials, as well as representatives of the private sector.

King accepts credentials of new ambassadors

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Monday accepted the credentials of a number of new ambassadors to Jordan.

His Majesty accepted the credentials of Ambassadors Khurram Sarfraz Khan of Pakistan, José Luis Pardo Cuerdo of Spain, Jiraporn Jirampaikool of Thailand, and Giangiaco-mo Serena di Lapigio of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, according to a Royal Court statement.

The King also accepted the credentials of non-resident Ambassadors Taleb Al Mukhtar Al Sheikh Mohamed Al Mujtaba of Mauritania, Oumar Teguen Idibei Berde of Chad, Greg Lewis of New Zealand, Arsen Arakelyan of Armenia, and Oleg Serebriyan of Moldova.

Royal Hashemite Court Chief Yousef Issawi and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Nancy Namrouga attended the ceremony, which was held at Basman Palace.



His Majesty King Abdullah on Monday accepts the credentials of Spanish Ambassador to the Kingdom Luis Pardo Cuerdo and several other newly appointed ambassadors at Basman Palace

Kingdom's visitor numbers drop 3.6% in first two months of 2026 — ministry

AMMAN (JT) — The total number of overnight tourists and one-day visitors in Jordan during January and February reached 1,094,670, of whom 592,206 were Arab nationals, accounting for 54 per cent of the total.

According to Tourism Ministry data, visitor numbers fell by 3.6 per cent compared with the same period in 2025, which recorded 1,136,084 arrivals.

Arab visitor statistics indicate that overnight Arab tourists reached 448,973, while one-day Arab visitors stood at 143,233 during January and February of the current year. This marks a 5.9 per cent decline compared to the same period in 2025, when overnight



Tourism Ministry says that the total number of overnight tourists and one-day visitors in Jordan during January and February reached 1,094,670, of whom 592,206 were Arab nationals, accounting for 54 per cent of the total

Arab tourists totalled 477,882 and one-day visitors reached 151,244.

The Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) reported a 27.2 per cent decline

in tourism revenues in April 2026, which fell to \$517.1 million, driven by lower receipts from all nationalities.

Tourism revenues dur-

ing the first four months of 2026 also decreased by 10.4 per cent to \$2.17 billion, compared with a 15.3 per cent increase in the same period of 2025,

when revenues reached \$2.43 billion.

Breakdown data showed declines in tourism revenues from expatriate Jordanians by 19.5 per cent, US citizens by 17.1 per cent, Europeans by 13.1 per cent, Arab nationals by 3.3 per cent, and other nationalities by 13.2 per cent.

Outbound tourism spending by Jordanians and residents abroad also fell by 12.9 per cent during the first four months of 2026, reaching \$562.6 million. In April alone, spending dropped by 33.7 per cent to \$103.0 million.

As a result, net tourism revenues declined by 9.5 per cent during the first four months of 2026, standing at \$1.61 billion.

JPMC funds JD750,000 social services centre project in Al Jafr

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Social Development Wafaa Bani Mustafa and Chairman of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) Mohammad Thneibat on Monday signed a cooperation agreement to finance the construction and equipping of the Al Jafr Integrated Social Services Centre in Maan Governorate.



Under the agreement, JPMC will provide JD750,000 to fund the project in the Al Jafr district

day-care centre and an early intervention unit, ensuring specialised services for children and persons with disabilities within a safe and inclusive environment.

"It will also house a social development services office, a National Aid Fund branch, and a local community development centre aimed at training and empowering local

women and youth in productive work and handicrafts," she added.

Bani Mustafa emphasised that the national partnership with JPMC reflects an exemplary model of corporate social responsibility (CSR) focused on development and empowerment.

She praised the company's continuous support for the ministry's initia-

tives and programmes.

She added that the agreement aligns with the Economic Modernisation Vision and the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap, which focus on improving service efficiency and enhancing private sector partnerships.

The minister noted that the Al Jafr project serves as a model that could be replicated in other governorates across the Kingdom.

For his part, Thneibat expressed JPMC's commitment to supporting the ministry's developmental and humanitarian plans, as part of the company's national and social responsibility to foster sustainable development and benefit local communities.

He noted that funding the JD750,000 development centre aligns with

the company's national role in supporting government efforts to improve services and development tracks across the Kingdom, particularly in Badia areas.

Thneibat commended the ministry's role in strengthening social protection and empowering target groups, stressing that public-private partnerships are fundamental to sustaining development, overcoming challenges and reinforcing shared national values.

The signing ceremony was attended by JPMC CEO Abdel Wahab Al Rowad, Secretary General of the Ministry of Social Development Barq Dmour, President of the General Trade Union of Workers in Mines and Mining Khaled Fanatseh, alongside several officials from both entities.

He noted that funding the JD750,000 development centre aligns with

Cassation Court upholds 3-year sentence for drug dealer

By Rana Hussein

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

The court declared the defendant guilty of obtaining illegal narcotics with the intent of selling the drugs to an under-

cover agent in Marka on April 17.

The SSC handed the defendant three years in prison for the offence of possessing illegal narcotics and ordered him to pay JD2,500 in fines.

Court documents said the Anti-Narcotics Department (AND) learnt the defendant was in possession of illegal narcotics 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 48 Captagon pills in return for JD65," court documents said.

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

Officers also found a mobile on the defendant, which "included messages related to drug trafficking", according to court papers.

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".

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

The higher court maintained that the SSC had followed the proper pro-

cedures in issuing the sentence 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 Yassin Abdullat, Nayef Samarat, Mohammad Khashashneh, Qassem Dughmi and Hammad Ghzawi.



Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti on Monday receives Mauritanian Ambassador to Jordan Al Taleb Al Mokhtar Sheikh Mohamed Al Mujtaba

Army chief, Mauritanian ambassador discuss cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti on Monday received Mauritanian Ambassador to Jordan Al Taleb Al Mokhtar Sheikh Mohamed Al Mujtaba at the General Command headquarters.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed prospects for enhancing cooperation and coordination between the two brotherly countries, particularly in the military and defence fields, the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) said

in a statement.

They stressed that the talks reflect the strength of bilateral ties and the shared commitment of both countries to expanding partnership opportunities between their armed forces.

Huneiti underscored the importance of building on the long-standing relations between Jordan and Mauritania.

He also highlighted the need to broaden cooperation and exchange expertise in ways that serve mu-

tual interests and support joint Arab action across various sectors.

For his part, the Mauritanian ambassador commended the advanced capabilities and professionalism of the JAF.

He also praised the Kingdom's pivotal role, under the leadership of King Abdullah, the Supreme Commander of the JAF, in supporting regional security and stability and promoting Arab cooperation.

The meeting was attended by a number of senior JAF officers.



Iran's team were given a send off last week in Tehran, but doubts still hang over their World Cup participation

Iran's World Cup football team leaves for Turkey-media

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's national football team was headed to Turkey on Monday to play a final friendly match and apply for visas to fly to the United States for the 2026 World Cup, Iranian media reported.

The team plan to participate in the tournament despite co-host Washington having launched a war against Iran with a massive wave of attacks alongside ally Israel on February 28.

The fighting has been on hold for weeks thanks to a ceasefire, but peace talks have failed to make a breakthrough and new drone attacks against Gulf countries at the weekend combined with threats from US President Donald Trump raising fears of a return to fighting.

The team "departed this morning for Antalya, Turkey to play its final friendly match before flying to the United States for the 2026 World Cup", the Tasnim news agency reported.

It said the squad consisted of 22 domestic-based players alongside their coaching staff.

On Saturday, head coach Amir Ghalenoei said they would also be completing visa applications for the US while in Turkey.

'Let 'em play'

Iran secured their spot

at the World Cup in March 2025, but since then the United States has twice launched attacks on the country.

US officials have insisted that Iran is welcome at the tournament, while organiser FIFA has said it will go ahead as planned and rejected Iranian suggestions that their games be moved to co-hosts Mexico or Canada.

'The Iranian football team hope to play two friendlies in Antalya'

"I think let 'em play," Trump said in late April.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said any problem would not be with Iranian players but "some of the other people [they] would want to bring with them", suggesting they may have ties to the Revolutionary Guards,

which Washington has branded a terrorist organisation.

Last month, officials from Iran's football federation abandoned a trip to the FIFA congress in Canada, saying they had been "insulted" by Canadian immigration officers.

One of their delegation, Mehdi Taj, is a former member of the Revolutionary Guards, which Canada has also designated a terror group.

The Iranian football team hope to play two friendlies in Antalya.

They have already confirmed one match, against The Gambia, on May 29, said Sam Mehdizadeh, an Iranian-Canadian who heads a company that sets up friendlies for the team.

"No visas have been issued yet," Taj, the head of Iran's football federation, told Iranian media on Thursday.

On Saturday, FIFA secretary general Mattias Grafstrom held a meeting in Turkey with the federation, describing it as constructive, as did Taj.

When the squad reaches the United States, Iran will set up their base camp in Tucson, Arizona.

The team, who are in Group G, are due to kick off their campaign against New Zealand in Los Angeles on 15 June, before facing Belgium in the same city and then Egypt in Seattle.

Gaza-bound flotilla says Israeli forces intercepting fleet near Cyprus

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli forces were intercepting a Gaza-bound aid flotilla on Monday after it set sail from Turkey last week, with organisers saying one of the vessels was stopped west of Cyprus.

"Military vessels are currently intercepting our fleet and IDF [Israeli army] forces are currently boarding the first of our boats in broad daylight," the Global Sumud Flotilla posted on X.

"We demand safe passage for our legal, non-violent humanitarian mission. Governments must act now to stop these illegal acts or piracy meant to maintain Israel's genocidal siege on Gaza.

"Normalisation of the occupation's violence is a threat to us all."

Around 50 ships had departed from southwestern Turkey on Thursday as part of the flotilla.

On Monday, Israel had vowed to block the vessels.

"Israel will not allow any breach of the law-



A boat from the Global Sumud Flotilla intercepted by Israeli forces

ful naval blockade on Gaza," the foreign ministry posted on X.

"Israel calls on all participants in this provocation to change course and turn back immediately."

The ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment on whether Israeli forces were intercepting

the boats.

The Global Sumud Flotilla is the third initiative in a year aimed at breaking an Israeli blockade of Gaza, which has suffered severe shortages of food, water, medicine and fuel since the Israel-Hamas war broke out in October 2023.

Israeli authorities

reject claims of aid shortages, saying the Palestinian territory is "flooded" with supplies.

Israeli forces intercepted the second flotilla in international waters off Greece on April 30, expelling most of the activists to Europe.

But they arrested two of them, who were held

for several days in Israel before they were deported.

Rights groups said the arrests were illegal and that the men suffered abuse while in Israeli detention.

Israeli authorities have rejected the abuse allegations but filed no charges against the pair.

Lebanon says Israeli strikes kill 7 as Hizbollah condemns talks

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AFP) — Israeli strikes killed seven people in Lebanon on Sunday, including an Islamic Jihad commander, Lebanese authorities and state media said, despite a fragile ceasefire as Hizbollah called US-brokered talks between the two countries a "dead end".

The health ministry published a "preliminary toll" for Israel's strikes on Sunday, with three people killed in the town of Tayr Felsay, including a child, and two killed in the town of Tayr Debba, including another child.

It said 11 people were wounded in those strikes and four more were wounded in strikes in two other southern towns.

Later Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) said an Israeli missile strike around midnight on an apartment on the outskirts of the city of Baalbek in the country's east had killed Islamic Jihad commander Wael Abdel Halim and his 17-year-old daughter.



Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli air strike that targeted an area in the suburbs of the southern Lebanon coastal city of Tyre on Saturday

Despite the ceasefire, Israel continues to strike widely in southern Lebanon and issues frequent evacuation warnings to towns and villages across the south.

Two Israeli strikes also hit the town of Sohmor in eastern Lebanon's Bekaa valley on Sunday, the state-run NNA said.

The Israeli army later issued an evacuation warning to four villages near the southern coastal city of Sidon, dozens of kilometres from

the border area, which were also subject to an evacuation warning on Saturday.

Israeli airstrikes hit three of the four villages following the warning, the NNA said.

Washington talks

Speaking at the start of a Cabinet meeting on Sunday, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel was "holding territory, clearing territory, protecting Israel's communities, but also fighting

an enemy that is trying to outsmart us".

"We are facing the challenge of neutralising FPV [First-Person View] drones," he said, as Hizbollah has increasingly made use of the drones to strike Israeli forces.

The latest exchanges of fire came after envoys from Israel and Lebanon held a third round of negotiations in Washington and agreed to extend the ceasefire, talks that Iran-backed Hizbollah has repeatedly denounced.

"The direct negotiations that the authorities in Lebanon have conducted with the Israeli enemy have... led them down a dead-end path that will result in nothing but one concession after another," Hizbollah lawmaker Hussein Hajj Hassan said on Sunday.

"Neither they nor anyone else will be able to carry out what the enemy wants, especially when it comes to the issue of disarming the resistance," he said, adding that authorities were creating "very big predicaments" for the country.

In a statement on Saturday, the group called the proposed establishment of a US-facilitated security track a fresh addition "to the series of free concessions" the Lebanese government "offers the enemy".

On Saturday the group also said it had struck a military target in northern Israel, having earlier announced several operations against Israeli forces in southern Lebanon.

WHO kicks off annual assembly amid hantavirus, Ebola crises

GENEVA (AFP) — World Health Organisation (WHO) member states gather for their annual meeting in Geneva Monday amid concern over deadly hantavirus and Ebola outbreaks and uncertainty over announced US and Argentinian withdrawals.

While the rare hantavirus outbreak on a cruise ship that has gripped global attention is not officially on the agenda, it is expected to feature prominently in the discussions, as is the fresh Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

A diplomatic source, who asked not to be identified, said it would be interesting to see how such outbreaks are used by WHO "to promote other things", including "to pressure (the United States and Argentina) not to go".

The meeting of the WHO's annual decision-making assembly, which runs through Saturday, comes after a difficult year for the organisation. It has been weakened by the announced US withdrawal and by funding cuts that have forced it to slash its budget and staff

numbers.

"We are stable now and moving forward," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus insisted at the end of April.

Diplomats and observers agreed.

The situation is "still fragile, but they've been successful in mobilising most of the funds" required for the next two years, Surie Moon, co-director of the Global Health Centre at the Geneva Graduate Institute, told AFP.

And the hantavirus crisis provided "a clear illustration of why the world needs an effective, trusted, impartial, reliably-funded WHO", she added.

UN, Argentina withdrawals

But significant divisions persist.

Continued disagreement between wealthy and developing nations has for instance blocked progress on the key missing piece of the WHO's landmark 2025 pandemic

treaty, with negotiations now expected to be extended for another year.

It also remains unclear what, if anything, would be decided on the US and Argentinian announced withdrawals.

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

The WHO, whose constitution does not include a withdrawal clause, has not confirmed either withdrawal.

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.

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

When WHO's executive board met in January, Israel submitted a resolution to approve Argentina's withdrawal,



A staff member of the CBCA Virunga Hospital checks a visitor's temperature using a contactless infrared thermometer, before allowing her access to the hospital in Goma on Sunday

something countries are expected to discuss during the assembly, but not a word was said about the US leaving.

Diplomats and observers indicated there was broad agreement that it would be better to maintain a grey zone around whether the US was effectively out.

"We hope that it will go past quietly on the US," a European diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

Election campaign

The assembly will take place as the process towards next year's election of a new WHO chief

heats up.

No one has yet declared their candidacy, but announcements are possible this week ahead of the nomination deadline of September 24.

A number of sensitive resolutions are also on the table, including on Ukraine, the Palestinian territories and Iran,

which could spark heated debate.

Much of this week's discussions will centre on whether to launch a formal reform process for the so-called "global health architecture", a mishmash of organisations that do not always work together and often overlap.

"Among the issues to be explored are what is best done at the global and regional levels... and what is a national responsibility?" Helen Clark, co-chair of The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response and a former New Zealand prime minister, told AFP.

Canadian Health Minister Marjorie Michel told AFP that "this current crisis, with the departure of key players, also allows ... the WHO to re-examine its strategy with its members".

"The objective is to ensure better coordination among health actors, so that no activities or populations are left behind," said a diplomatic source, who asked not to be named.

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The General Headquarters of the Jordan Armed Forces/Royal Medical Services hereby announces Tender
P500/2025/97
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Bidders who desire to participate therein can obtain a copy of the tender documentation against a fee of 25JD non-refundable, provided that they bring along a valid trade licence.

Closing date sharp 1:00 P.M., MON 15th of JUNE 2026. Non conditional bid bond equal to (3%) of the total value of quotation must be submitted along with the quotations.

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JOHUD launches green transition project to support participatory local development

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD), in partnership with the Greater Tafleeh Municipality, on Monday launched the Just and Green Transition through Participatory Governance (JADEITE) project at the Rumana Campsite in the Dana Biosphere Reserve.

The project aims to promote participatory governance approaches in local development and boost cooperation among stakeholders to support a fair green transition and address the needs of local communities within a framework of inclusive and sustainable governance, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Speaking during the launch event, JOHUD representative Ahmad Qatameen described the project as a "strategic" step towards empowering local communities, stressing that a successful green transition requires



The Jordan Hashemite Fund for Human Development and Greater Tafleeh Municipality on Monday launch the Just and Green Transition through Participatory Governance project at the Rumana Campsite

active public participation in development decision-making processes.

Head of the Greater

Tafleeh Municipality committee Mohammad Kurameen highlighted the project's role in supporting sustainable

development efforts in the governorate and enhancing cooperation between the municipality, local communi-

ties and international partners.

JADEITE project seeks to support a just green transition in the

Mediterranean region through the development of a unified and adaptable participatory governance model

that takes into account the social and institutional characteristics of each partner country.

The initiative is being implemented under the Interreg NEXT MED programme, managed by the Sardinia region in Italy, with partners from Jordan, Italy, Lebanon, Palestine and Tunisia.

The launch event included presentations outlining the project's objectives and implementation phases, in addition to a dialogue session with participants and a field tour of the Dana Biosphere Reserve highlighting its role in supporting the transition towards a green economy.

The project aligns with JOHUD's vision of promoting sustainable local development and community empowerment through participatory decision-making, good governance and stronger local and international partnerships.

Princess Sarvath honours students at Al Bunayyat Centre

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Princess Sarvath El Hassan, honorary president of Al Bunayyat Centre for Special Education, on Monday presented bronze-level certificates of the Al Hassan Youth Award to eight students from the centre.

During the centre's exhibition activities, the participation reflected the award's vision of inclusivity and outreach to all youth groups through challenges adapted to suit the creativity and abilities of persons with disabilities, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The initiative enabled participants to engage successfully in volunteer work, sports activities, skills development and exploratory trips. The cooperation between the Al Hassan Youth Award and Al Bunayyat Centre aims to empower persons with disabilities and equip them with life and leadership skills that enhance their self-confidence and support their active role in society as productive and influential individuals.

Iran says responded to latest US peace proposal

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran said on Monday it had responded to a new US proposal aimed at ending the war, adding that diplomatic exchanges continue despite Iranian media reports describing Washington's demands as excessive.

Washington and Tehran have been swapping proposals in an effort to end the conflict which the US and Israel launched on February 28, but they have held only a single round of talks despite a fragile ceasefire.

"As we announced yesterday, our concerns were conveyed to the American side," Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei told a news briefing, adding that exchanges were "continuing through the Pakistani mediator".

Baqaei defended Iran's demands, including the release of Iranian assets frozen abroad and the lifting of long-standing sanctions.

"The points raised are Iranian demands that have been firmly defended by the Iranian negotiating team in every round of negotiations," he said.

He also defended an Iranian stipulation that

the US pay war reparations, describing the conflict as "illegal and baseless".

On the possibility of another military confrontation, Baqaei said Iran was "fully prepared for any eventuality".

On Sunday, Iran's Fars news agency said Washington had presented a five-point list, which included a demand for Iran to keep only one nuclear site in operation and transfer its stockpile of highly enriched uranium to the United States.

The US had refused to release "even 25 per cent" of Iran's frozen assets or pay any reparations for war damage, Fars said.

The report said the US had also made clear it would only cease hostilities when Tehran engages in formal peace negotiations.

Iran's Mehr news agency said "the United States, offering no tangible concessions, wants to obtain concessions that it failed to obtain during the war, which will lead to an impasse in the negotiations".

In an earlier proposal, which was sent last week, Iran had called for an end to the war on all fronts, including Israel's

campaign in Lebanon, as well as a halt to a US naval blockade on Iranian ports in place since April 13.

It also called for the lifting of all US sanctions on Iran and the release of its assets frozen abroad.

On Monday, Iran's Tasnim news agency, citing an unnamed source close to the Iranian negotiating team, said "contrary to previous texts, the Americans agreed in a new text to waive oil sanctions during the negotiation period".

Fars said that the Iranian proposal had emphasised that Tehran would continue to manage the strategic Strait of Hormuz, a vital energy conduit which Iran has largely kept closed since the start of the war.

On Monday, Iran's Supreme National Security Council announced the formation of a new body to manage the strait.

On its official X account, the Supreme National Security Council shared a post from the Persian Gulf Strait Authority saying it would provide "real-time updates" on operations and developments in the strait.

NCHR, UNDP launch national dialogue on business, human rights framework

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — The National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR), in partnership with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and with support from the Government of The Netherlands, on Monday convened a national consultative dialogue on business and human rights.

The dialogue provided a platform to discuss national and international frameworks governing business and human rights, including the role of government in enforcing legislation, the responsibility of the private sector to apply human rights due diligence and the shared duty of both sectors to ensure access to effective remedies in line with international standards and best practices.

NCHR Board of Trustees Chairperson Samar Al-Hajj Hassan said Jordan is entering a new phase in implementing the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, moving from awareness to systematic implementation.

She said Jordan's economic modernisation drive requires placing human rights at the centre of economic governance, stressing that sustainable development depends on an investment environment that respects human



The National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR), in partnership with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and with support from the Government of The Netherlands, on Monday convenes a national consultative dialogue on business and human rights

dignity and rights.

She added that Jordan aims to position itself as a regional hub for responsible investment, ensuring the inclusion of women, youth and persons with disabilities in economic activity.

She also highlighted Jordan's participation in the inaugural Business and Human Rights dialogue in Doha in 2024 as a key starting point for national efforts in this field.

Al-Hajj Hassan also highlighted the launch of a National Baseline Assessment on business and human rights in Jordan, based on the three pillars of the UN Guiding Principles: The State duty to protect, the corporate responsibility to respect through due diligence and access to effective remedy.

She said the assessment would serve as an analytical tool to identify legislative and practical gaps, paving the way for the development of Jordan's first comprehensive National Action Plan on business and human rights.

The chairperson also said that the initiative aligns with the NCHR's 2026-2030 strategic plan, which reinforces its mandate to ensure compliance with national and international human rights standards.

UNDP Resident Representative in Jordan Randa Aboul-Hosn reiterated the organisation's longstanding partnership with Jordan in strengthening human rights frameworks within economic and development policies.

She commended the NCHR's "A status" accreditation from the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, describing it as a reflection of its independence and professionalism.

Aboul-Hosn also said that the joint project aims to develop a national baseline assessment and roadmap for business and human rights in Jordan, aligned with the UN Guiding Principles.

She also noted that Jordan will host the third regional dialogue on business and human rights in Arab countries on June 17-18, providing a platform for exchanging expertise and best practices across the region.

She added that UNDP, which has worked in Jordan for over five decades, remains committed to supporting sustainable development, decent work, social justice and

strengthening transparency and accountability in the business environment.

Speakers reiterated that the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are built on three pillars: the State duty to protect, corporate responsibility to respect human rights, and access to remedy for affected individuals.

They stressed the importance of aligning economic and regulatory frameworks with human rights standards, particularly as international momentum grows towards mandatory disclosure and stronger corporate accountability in global supply chains.

Participants also explored ways to strengthen national legislative and institutional frameworks to promote responsible business conduct and support the development of Jordan's first National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights.

They also stressed the importance of enhancing dialogue between government institutions, businesses and civil society to improve governance, address economic opportunities, and align economic policies and practices with international human rights standards, particularly amid growing global trends towards stricter requirements on transparency and supply chains.

King inaugurates Baptism Site International Orthodox University

Continued from page 1

The Royal directive is in line with the King's efforts to safeguard holy sites and preserve the Christian presence in the region, while serving to reaffirm Jordan's status as home to some of the most important Christian sites and holy places in the region and the world, the statement said.

For his part, Greek Orthodox Archbishop and Head of the Council of Church Leaders Archbishop Christophoros Atallah praised His Majesty's support for the 2030 initiative, highlighting the importance of developing programmes and strategic plans in coordination with the Council of Church Leaders in Jordan.

The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, noted that the 2,000th anniversary of the baptism of Jesus Christ in 2030 is not merely a historical oc-

casional, but an opportunity to reaffirm the values of unity, harmony and mutual understanding.

He also expressed his gratitude to the King for his support for the initiative and his commitment to promoting the values of dialogue and peace, noting that these efforts are aligned with the Hashemite Custodianship over Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, the statement said.

For his part, the Anglican Archbishop of Jerusalem and Primate of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East Hosam Naoum said the 2030 initiative focuses on local preparations by preparing the site, developing infrastructure and services, and training staff to welcome pilgrims and visitors from within the Kingdom and abroad.

He added that the initiative would also involve working with churches and Christian organisa-

tions around the world, particularly in the West, to encourage participation in the commemoration of the baptism at its place of origin, which has both spiritual and global historical significance.

The 2030 initiative to commemorate two thousand years since the baptism of Jesus Christ focuses on a number of strategic objectives, which include the narrative and religious events associated with the occasion, the development of Christian pilgrimage tourism products, the promotion of the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ (Bethany Beyond the Jordan) and other religious tourism sites at regional and global levels, and the development of infrastructure and the upgrading of operational services at the Baptism Site and other religious and tourist sites in Jordan.

During BIO University's inauguration, His Majesty underscored the

importance of this university in reinforcing the symbolic significance of the site where Jesus was baptised, and in building on the Kingdom's role as a model of moderation and inter-faith harmony.

The King toured the facilities at BIO University, which is a non-profit institution established by the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and has a capacity of 40 residents, as well as an option for distance learning, and is scheduled to begin admitting students in September.

During the inauguration, Theophilus III, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine and Jordan, spoke of the significance of establishing this university, and its aspiration to welcome students from Jordan, the region, and the world.

He also noted that Jordan stands as a beacon of hope for Christians in the Middle East, high-

lighting the importance of the Hashemite Custodianship's role in preserving the region's cultural, civilisational and religious fabric, according to the statement.

David Alexei, grandson of Mark Voloshin, the donor who funded the university's establishment, said the vision for this university has become a reality thanks to His Majesty's support, noting that it is a beacon of faith, learning, and harmony for future generations.

Their Royal Highnesses Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad and Princess Miriam Ghazi, Prime Minister Jafar Hassan, Director of the Office of His Majesty Alaa Batayneh, Planning Minister Zeina Toukan, Tourism Minister Imad Hijazin, heads of churches in Jordan and Palestine, and a number of senior officials and officers, as well as representatives from the private sector attended the university's inauguration.

Foreign minister, Lithuanian counterpart discuss ties, regional developments

Continued from page 1

The ministers also reviewed regional developments and ongoing efforts aimed at de-escalation and restoring security and stability in the region.

Safadi briefed his Lithuanian counterpart on the serious deterioration in the occupied West Bank resulting from illegal Israeli measures that undermine the two-state solution, which Lithuania

supports as the path towards achieving peace.

He stressed the need for coordinated international efforts to halt these measures to preserve prospects for a just peace and uphold international law.

The talks also covered the situation in the Gaza Strip and the importance of ensuring stability and removing Israeli obstacles hindering the immediate and unrestricted entry of humanitarian

aid. Safadi also expressed appreciation for Lithuania's support for the two-state solution and efforts aimed at promoting regional stability.

Also on Monday, Safadi met with Deputy Speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament Viktorija milyt-Nielsen, with discussions focusing on enhancing cooperation in several key sectors of mutual interest, as well as regional and international issues.

JAF evacuates new group of sick Gaza children

Continued from page 1

Jordan also operates two military field hospitals in Gaza: One in the northern part of the Strip, established in 2009 following the 2008 war, and another

in Khan Younis in the south, established in November 2023 during the ongoing Israeli war on the enclave that erupted on October 7, 2023.

In addition to its Gaza-based facilities, the JAF established a

Jordanian field hospital in Nablus in late November 2023. Other humanitarian initiatives include a mobile bakery and the "Restoring Hope" programme, which provides prosthetic limbs for amputees.

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Jordan's latest field hospital

The start of operations by the Jordanian Field Hospital South Gaza/10 is a reaffirmation of Jordan's long-standing position that support for Palestinians is not limited to political statements, diplomatic advocacy or humanitarian appeals. It is also carried out on the ground, through institutions, discipline, expertise and direct service to people enduring one of the gravest humanitarian crises in recent memory.

At a time when Gaza's health system remains under unbearable pressure, the arrival and activation of a fully prepared Jordanian medical team carries both practical and moral significance. The hospital's doctors, nurses, technicians and administrative staff are not entering an ordinary field operation. They are stepping into an environment where medical needs exceed available capacity, where patients require urgent care around the clock, and where every functioning clinic, operating room, laboratory and pharmacy becomes part of a wider struggle to preserve life and dignity.

Jordan's field hospitals in Gaza have long represented one of the clearest expressions of the Kingdom's humanitarian role. They combine the professionalism of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army with a national ethic rooted in solidarity with the Palestinian people. The latest deployment continues this tradition under His Majesty King Abdullah's directives, translating Jordan's commitment into medical care, emergency response and specialised treatment.

The hospital's significance lies in its scope. Beyond basic consultations, it provides intensive care, surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatric and neonatal care, diagnostics and pharmacy services, in addition to a mobile prosthetics support unit for amputees; a critical service amid Gaza's growing need for long-term injury care.

This range of services matters because Gaza's crisis is not only about emergency cases. It is also about chronic illness, maternal health, newborn care, surgical follow-up, infection control, trauma rehabilitation and the daily medical needs of civilians whose access to treatment has been severely disrupted. A field hospital that can receive hundreds of patients, manage clinical and critical cases and operate through integrated protocols offers more than temporary relief. It restores a measure of order in a deeply strained medical environment.

Jordan's role should also be understood within its wider national position on Gaza. The Kingdom has consistently called for protecting civilians, ensuring the sustained delivery of humanitarian assistance and ending the suffering of Palestinians. Yet, Jordan has also understood that diplomacy must be matched by direct action. Medical teams, relief convoys, airdrops, field hospitals and diplomatic mobilisation are all parts of the same national approach: To stand with Palestinians through tangible support.

The Jordanian medical mission also carries a deeper message about the meaning of professionalism in humanitarian work. The fact that the administrative and medical teams completed their technical and logistical preparations immediately upon arrival reflects the seriousness of this mission and the institutional experience behind it.

This is where Jordan's armed forces have repeatedly demonstrated their value beyond traditional defence roles. The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army have long been associated with peacekeeping, disaster response, medical missions and humanitarian operations. In Gaza, this role is especially important because it reflects a national understanding that security and humanity are not separate concepts. Supporting life, dignity and stability in times of crisis is also part of Jordan's responsibility and regional role.

The hospital's work will not end Gaza's suffering. No field hospital, however advanced or dedicated, can substitute for a fully functioning health system, secure humanitarian access, adequate supplies and an end to the conditions producing mass suffering. But it can ease pain, save lives, support exhausted medical capacity and remind Palestinians that they are not forgotten.

This is the importance of Jordan's latest field hospital. It responds to the crisis with seriousness, competence and compassion. It places Jordanian expertise where it is most needed and gives practical meaning to the bond between Jordanians and Palestinians.

By sending doctors, nurses, technicians and specialised services into Gaza, Jordan is again showing that its commitment to Palestinians is a duty guided by leadership, carried by institutions and expressed through action.

Amra City and water-wise urban planning



Hana Namrouqa

In Jordan, water is never a side issue, but the starting point upon which any project must stand. This is what makes Amra City an important planning test on Jordan's ability to design new urban spaces and new cities that understand the country's water reality from the beginning of the planning process.

The growing population, changing climate and increasing industrial and commercial demand have made water management one of the Kingdom's defining challenges. Any new city must therefore be designed around efficiency from the beginning.

Amra City offers a rare chance to plan water management in all its components. If planned carefully, Amra City can become a model for integrated water management: A city where supply, recycling, wastewater treatment, rainwater harvesting, efficient networks and modern loss reduction techniques become one coherent system.

The discussion of possible water sources feeding the city, including the National Water Carrier, Disi water, supplementary sources, groundwater, rainwater harvesting and nearby dams, points to an important principle of diversification. In a dry country, water security comes from com-

binning sources, protecting them and using every cubic metre wisely.

The expected additional water from the National Water Carrier gives Amra City an advantage

that older urban centres did not have when they expanded. But this advantage should not be misunderstood as permission to consume without limits and this does not only apply to Amra City but across the country.

The fact that Jordan embarked on a historical water project should raise our water planning standard. If the carrier is Jordan's major answer to comfortable supply, Amra City should become part of Jordan's answer to demand management.

This requires a fresh mindset: Water distribution to Amra City, or to any other new urban centre for that matter, should be judged not only by how much water can be secured, but by how little can be wasted. The city should set clear targets for recycling, safe reuse and efficient allocation. Potable water should not be used

where treated or recycled water can do the job and this principle should be embedded in long-term planning.

Water distribution to Amra City... should be judged not only by how much water can be secured, but by how little can be wasted

Greywater and blackwater management must also be part of the design from day one. Wastewater should not be viewed only as something to remove. In a water-scarce country, it is a resource to recover. In Jordan, this approach has already been applied in many spaces and projects, but for a city of the scale of Amra City, this requires regulation, re-

liable treatment standards and infrastructure that makes water reuse safe, controlled and acceptable to build public trust.

The same logic applies to water and wastewater networks. Jordan has allocated fat budgets over the years to rehabilitate ageing systems and reduce water loss. Amra City should not inherit the weaknesses of older water networks

Urban planning must also follow wise water use. Green spaces and public landscaping should rely on native and drought-tolerant plants, not imported aesthetics from wetter climates. Rainwater harvesting should be built into streets, rooftops and public facilities. Buildings should meet water-efficiency standards and adhere to green building codes to minimise energy consumption and preserve water.

The recent meeting between experts, the private sector and local communities to discuss the water component of the Amra city is a step in the right direction to water planning.

If Amra City places efficiency, recycling and loss reduction at the heart of its design, it can offer Jordan an urban growth model that does not deepen the water crisis, but helps manage it.

Hana Namrouqa is the deputy chief editor of The Jordan Times

Jordan's water future: A test of governance, not just resources

Water in Jordan has moved beyond being a technical or service delivery issue. It has become a governance issue that reflects the broader relationship between citizens and institutions and between national planning and implementation on the ground. The effectiveness of water governance now directly influences public trust, social stability, and economic confidence.

Jordan has demonstrated strong resilience in managing regional instability, refugee inflows, economic pressures and climate change. Despite severe resource constraints, the Kingdom has maintained relative stability and continued investing in infrastructure and essential services. This resilience is an important national achievement. However, resilience alone is no longer sufficient. The next stage requires a shift from crisis management toward structural governance reform.

A key distinction must be made between management and governance. Management focuses on operational efficiency, infrastructure and service delivery. Governance, however, relates to accountability, institutional coordination, regulatory oversight, transparency and fairness in resource allocation. Even when technical capacity is strong, weak governance structures can prevent strategies from being effectively implemented. This gap is evident in Jordan's water sector today.

Citizens across the country have adapted to chronic water scarcity as part of everyday life. Many households rely on intermittent supply schedules and invest in storage tanks, pumps, filtration systems and private water delivery services. Over time, informal coping mechanisms have developed to compensate for institutional limitations. While this reflects social resilience, it also highlights a deeper governance concern: The cost of system inefficiency is increasingly shifted from institutions to citizens. As households take on greater responsibility for securing water access, public confidence in service institutions gradually weakens.

The issue is not a lack of professional expertise. Jordan has highly capable engineers, policy specialists and water resource experts. The challenge lies in the institutional structure governing the sector. Fragmentation, overlapping mandates, and administrative complexity often slow decision-making and weaken accountability. In some cases, procedures become more influential than outcomes, delaying responses to urgent operational needs.

At the same time, non-revenue water losses, illegal extraction, and inefficiencies in distribution continue to place heavy pressure on already limited water resources. These challenges are not purely technical; they are governance-related failures that require institutional rather than

engineering solutions alone.

In this context, management contracts and public-private partnerships are increasingly relevant tools for reform. When properly designed, such arrangements should not be viewed as privatisation of national resources, but rather as governance instruments aimed at improving performance while maintaining full public ownership and regulatory control.

International experience has shown that management contracts can improve operational efficiency, reduce water losses, enhance customer service, and introduce performance-based monitoring systems. More importantly, they help establish a results-oriented governance culture based on accountability, transparency and measurable outcomes.

A key advantage of these models is the clear separation between the state's regulatory role and the operator's executive function. This separation is fundamental to modern governance as it reduces conflicts of interest and strengthens oversight mechanisms.

The central question for the coming decade is no longer whether Jordan can secure additional water resources. The more pressing question is whether governance can evolve faster than the increasing pressures of scarcity

For Jordan, such arrangements provide a gradual pathway toward institutional modernisation. They can support the transfer of international expertise, improve operational flexibility, accelerate digital transformation, and strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems, all while preserving national ownership of strategic water assets.

Modern governance does not imply a reduced role for the state. On the contrary, it requires a stronger state presence in regulation, policymaking and oversight, alongside more efficient service delivery mechanisms. The success of these reforms should not be judged solely by financial outcomes, but by their ability to build a sustainable institutional culture based on professionalism, accountability and long-term planning.

At the same time, water governance reform must remain socially sensitive. Water is not merely an



Mohammad Najeeb

economic commodity; it is closely linked to public health, social stability, and national security. Reform efforts must therefore ensure that improvements

in efficiency are not perceived as increasing inequality or placing additional burdens on vulnerable groups.

Weak governance rarely fails suddenly. It deteriorates gradually through declining public trust and the normalisation of inefficiency. Societies can endure hardship when sacrifices are perceived as fairly distributed, but dissatisfaction grows when inequality in burden-sharing becomes apparent.

In Jordan, perceptions of fairness are as important as policy design. If certain regions or communities believe they are disproportionately affected while others enjoy more reliable access, the issue extends beyond water management into broader questions of social equity and political legitimacy. This is why water governance is inseparable from wider public-sector reform.

Internationally, Jordan has built strong credibility in managing environmental challenges and regional pressures. It has successfully mobilised international support for major water infrastructure projects, strengthening its position as a reliable development partner. This credibility is an important national asset.

However, external financing alone cannot resolve structural governance weaknesses. Large infrastructure investments may provide temporary relief, but long-term water security depends on institutional reform, transparent procurement systems, consistent regulation, digital modernisation and stable long-term planning.

Infrastructure without governance may delay crises, but it cannot resolve them.

Jordan now stands at a critical juncture. Climate change, population growth, and economic pressures are intensifying. In this context, water governance will play a decisive role not only in environmental sustainability, but also in economic resilience, investment confidence and social cohesion.

Meaningful reform requires political will. It cannot be achieved through planning documents alone. It requires addressing inefficiencies, strengthening oversight, resisting institutional inertia and embedding accountability as a permanent governance principle rather than a temporary initiative.

Jordan retains strong foundations for success. It has technical expertise, institutional experience, international credibility, and a resilient society that has

repeatedly adapted to difficult conditions.

However, the central question for the coming decade is no longer whether Jordan can secure additional water resources. The more pressing question is whether governance can evolve faster than the increasing pressures of scarcity.

A recent example of this evolving governance approach is the management contract for the Yarmouk Water Company. This agreement reflects a broader strategy by the Ministry of Water and Irrigation to improve service delivery in northern Jordan through structured partnerships with the private sector. It is designed to enhance operational efficiency while maintaining full public ownership and oversight.

Water governance will play a decisive role not only in environmental sustainability, but also in economic resilience, investment confidence, and social cohesion

Under this framework, international operators such as Veolia are expected to introduce modern management systems based on performance indicators, monitoring tools, and accountability mechanisms, contributing to reduced water losses, improved service delivery and accelerated digital transformation. This will be reinforced by continued financial and technical support from international development partners, particularly US agencies, which are directing investments toward infrastructure rehabilitation and capacity building in northern Jordan's water sector.

Together, these efforts represent an emerging model of integrated water governance that combines state regulation, private sector expertise and international support within a unified framework that preserves public ownership while enhancing long-term efficiency and sustainability.

If Jordan succeeds in advancing this governance transformation, it can become a regional and global model for water management under extreme scarcity conditions. If reform falls behind, however, water scarcity may evolve into a more complex challenge: a crisis of public trust.

History repeatedly shows that rebuilding trust is far more difficult than rebuilding infrastructure.

BUSINESS

Tuesday, May 19, 2026



Petra photo

The Jordanian Farmers Union and the Syrian Farmers General Union sign a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at exchanging expertise in agriculture and joint food security

Jordan, Syria farmers unions sign MoU to boost agriculture, food security

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordanian Farmers Union and the Syrian Farmers General Union signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at exchanging expertise in agriculture and joint food security, as well as expanding agricultural and trade exchange between the two countries.

The agreement was signed during a visit by Jordan Farmers Union President Odeh Rawashdeh, and several board members to Damascus, where the delegation met Syrian Agriculture Minister Basel Suwaydan in the presence of Syrian Farmers General Union president, Ghazwan Wazir.

Secretary-General of

the Jordan Farmers Union Mahmoud Ouran told Petra that enhancing integration in food security between Jordan and Syria is important, noting that both countries possess extensive expertise in the agricultural sector, the Jordan News Agency, Petra reported.

He added that Jordan represents an important market for Syrian horticultural products, while the Syrian market imports Jordanian vegetables available year-round, highlighting the potential to benefit from the comparative advantage of the Jordan Valley in this field.

For his part, Suwaydan praised the deep historical ties between the two

countries and recalled the supportive positions of His Majesty King Abdullah towards the Syrian people during difficult times.

He welcomed the signing of the MoU and any agricultural cooperation with Jordan, stressing that Syria seeks to benefit from Jordanian expertise in smart agriculture, family-based projects and rural women's products.

The cooperation will also cover renewable energy, smart systems and precision agriculture, in addition to supporting product marketing and opening new channels for trade exchange between the two countries, Petra reported.

Jordanian-Turkish business council to boost economic cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordanian-Turkish Business Council at the Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA) has discussed plans to activate its operations and enhance its programmes in the coming period.

During the meeting, council members also explored holding a business session in the third quarter of this year, aimed at strengthening economic cooperation between the private sectors of both countries, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

JBA Chairman Ayman Alawneh said the Jordanian-Turkish Business Council is one of the most active bodies due to its role in developing economic, trade, and investment ties between Jordan and Turkey, as well as opening new avenues of collaboration between the two business communities.

Alawneh highlighted the importance of building on existing economic relations, increasing trade volume and attracting high-quality investments, in line with opportunities in the Jordanian and Turkish markets.

He noted that ex-



Petra photo

The Jordanian-Turkish Business Council at the Jordanian Businessmen Association has discussed plans to activate its operations and enhance its programmes in the coming period

panding joint economic cooperation is particularly crucial in light of regional developments and emerging opportunities, including potential access to Syrian markets under suitable economic and trade conditions.

He also identified promising sectors in Jordan for joint cooperation, including minerals and gold, garments, tourism, chemical industries and food

processing, stressing that these areas possess competitive advantages to attract investments and strengthen production partnerships.

Vice chairman of the Jordanian-Turkish Business Council from Turkey, Turker Karahasan, underscored the importance of continuing to develop bilateral economic relations and enhancing communication channels between the private sectors of

boost trade and joint investments.

Karahasan added that capitalising on available opportunities, overcoming challenges to trade and investment, and fostering long-term strategic partnerships are essential for mutual growth.

Council members reaffirmed the body's vital role in promoting economic relations between Jordan and Turkey. They emphasised

the need to activate its programmes, expand cooperation, increase trade exchanges and explore new investment prospects.

The members also called for continuous coordination and the formulation of an executive action plan to strengthen the Jordanian-Turkish economic partnership and open broader horizons for future collaboration, Petra reported.

G7 finance chiefs meet to seek common stance on unstable ground

PARIS, France (AFP) — Finance chiefs from the G7 industrialised nations gather in Paris on Monday for two days of talks aimed at forging a united front as the Middle East war roils economic prospects worldwide.

France, which currently chairs the rotating presidency of the Group of Seven, faces the tricky task of keeping dialogue open as trade feuds spurred by US President Donald Trump's tariff blitz compound geopolitical tensions.

Reducing reliance on China's vast holdings of rare earths — crucial for the AI boom that has underpinned economic growth in recent years — is also at the top of the agenda.



AFP photo

(From left) Governors of the Bank of Canada, England, US vice chair of the Federal Reserve, governor of the Bank of France, European Central Bank president, governors of the Bank of Italy, Japan and Germany pose for a photo after as they meet at the French Ministry of Economy and Finance in Paris on Monday

the United States about ending the Iran war.

"This war is massively damaging economic development. That is why everything must be done to bring the war to a permanent end, to stabilise the region again, and to ensure free shipping lanes through the Strait of Hormuz," he said in a statement.

'Economic security'

Even a shared recognition of the challenges would be considered a victory for the French government, which is hoping to issue two joint statements after the discussions.

Finance ministers from Kenya, Brazil, India and South Korea have also been invited for talks on Tuesday to lay the groundwork for the G7 summit meeting in Evian, France, on June 15-17.

The talks come days after Trump's trip to Beijing for talks with President Xi Jinping failed to provide a clear breakthrough on easing tariffs or ending the war in the Middle East.

China has been making inroads in much of the G7 nations' backyards, and is increasingly willing to play hardball on trade as a key supplier of both raw materials and inexpensive finished goods.

"Up to now, the problem of macroeconomic imbalances was addressed... with regards to global financial stability," said Pierre Jalliet, a researcher at France's Institute for International and Strategic Affairs (IRIS).

But now officials are looking "through the optic of economic security: Trade surpluses or deficits can reflect vulnerabilities or dependencies, in particular with critical minerals or energy", and the risk of supply chain disruptions, Jalliet told AFP.

The G7 goal is to "ensure that we don't depend on any one country — China, without naming names — for our rare earth supplies", Lescure said.

And oil and gas security has become even more crucial with the Middle East war.

"We must do for criti-

cal materials what we did with energy in the 1970s," and find common cause for dealing with any crisis.

'Common toolbox'

France is hoping to create a "common toolbox" to combat market disruptions to key raw materials, Lescure said, via strategic trade deals or interventionist measures such as price floors, quotas or tariffs.

It also wants to promote "multilateral projects" among countries to develop their own extraction and refining capabilities, such as a French-Japanese factory to produce and recycle rare earths and magnets and other minerals under construction in southwest France.

The French state has invested 106 million euros (\$124 million) in the project, which aims to provide all of France's needs by 2030.

Using financial aid to strike deals in developing countries that encourage private investments is also a way forward, Lescure said.

TECH

AI-related demand boosts Singapore exports in April

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Singapore's exports rose nearly 25 per cent in April compared to the same month the previous year as strong demand for AI-related products outweighed the effects of the Middle East crisis, official data showed on Monday.

Non-oil domestic exports posted forecast-beating 24.5 per cent growth that extended the 15.3 per cent rise recorded in March, said Enterprise Singapore, a government body helping local firms expand globally.

As an export-oriented economy with a small domestic market, Singapore is usually seen as a bellwether for international trade.

"Electronics [exports] continued to expand, supported by robust AI-related demand," Enterprise Singapore said.

The rise highlights an insatiable global appetite for advanced artificial intelligence chips, key components in a diverse range of hardware, from laptops and smart phones to next-generation digital storage devices.

Exports to the United States surged 59.6 per cent, reversing a fall of 2.8 per cent in March.

Shipments to China climbed 37.8 per cent from 20.3 per cent the previous month and those to the European Union rose 33.4 per cent after shrinking 12.2 per cent in March.

On May 1, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong warned that economic growth for the city-state will likely slow this year as the Middle East crisis keeps the Strait of Hormuz closed.

Shipping through the strait, though

which around a fifth of global oil and gas transits, has been largely blocked by Tehran since the United States and Israel carried out the strikes on Iran that began the regional war on February 28.

'Electronics [exports] continued to expand, supported by robust AI-related demand'

The closure and a rival US blockade on

maritime traffic to Iranian ports has jolted global energy markets and raised fears of a dampening in international economic growth as consumers grapple with rising prices.

Wong did not provide specific figures, but the trade ministry in February said it expected the economy to expand 2-4 per cent this year, a bump from its previous forecast of 1-3 per cent.

Wong urged Singaporeans to "be prepared for a more difficult period ahead", but also added that government policies implemented in the past to build energy resilience, including turning the small nation into a major oil refining hub and energy trading centre, would help the country deal with the crisis from a position of strength.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Monday amounted to JD23.9 million spread over 6.7 million shares that traded through 5,642 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 1.22 per cent, closing at 3983.77 points.

Out of 106 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 41 companies rose while the share price of another 27 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Amad Investment and Real Estate Development by 6.59 per cent, Arab Bank by 5.39 per cent, Euro Arab Insurance Group by 4.27 per cent, Arab East Investment by 4.24 per cent and Nutri Dar by 3.92 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Arab International for Education and Investment by 5.42 per cent, Jordan French Insurance by 4.92 per cent, Rumm Financial Brokerage by 4.46 per cent, Amwaj Properties by 4.35 per cent, and Jordan Masaken for Land and Industrial Development Projects by 4.17 per cent.

THE MARKET TODAY

ASE Index: ↑ 3983.77 1.22% May 18, 2026

Live Data Historical Data

Click and drag in the plot area to zoom in

DAILY SUMMARY

Regular Market	OTC Market	Bonds
Trading Value (JDs)	23,891,541	
Trading volume	6,706,515	
No. of Transactions	5,642	
No. of Securities	106	

Losers: 27

Gainers: 41

Unchanged: 38

THE JORDAN TIMES SPORTS AT A GLANCE

NBA

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander wins second straight MVP award

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — Oklahoma City Thunder star Shai Gilgeous-Alexander was named the NBA's Most Valuable Player for a second straight season on Sunday, the NBA confirmed. Gilgeous-Alexander was officially named as the winner of the award in a televised announcement, hours after news of his victory leaked out by broadcaster ESPN. Gilgeous-Alexander, who is also the reigning NBA Finals MVP after leading the Thunder to the title last year, credited his Oklahoma City team-mates for helping lift him to the accolade ahead of San Antonio Spurs star Victor Wembanyama and Denver's Nikola Jokic. "Hard work obviously, not being satisfied, but the other guys in the room really having my back, night-in, night-out," Gilgeous-Alexander told Amazon Prime when asked for the secret to his repeat success. "It's a long season, full of ups and downs, injuries, things like that. So those guys, just tying their boots up and going to war every night for me and with me — I wouldn't have won 64 games without them."

FOOTBALL

Croatia names Modric-led World Cup squad

ZAGREB (AFP) — Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic announced on Monday a preliminary 26-man squad for the upcoming World Cup, to be led by veteran Luka Modric, the key architect of the country's historic success in recent years. The 40-year-old AC Milan midfielder led the nation of 3.8 million people to the second-place finish at the 2018 World Cup. The former Real Madrid star was also key for Croatia third place at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. In 2023 the Balkan nation lost to Spain in the Nations League final. But Modric sustained a cheekbone fracture after clashing heads with Juventus midfielder Manuel Locatelli at the San Siro in late April, and underwent a surgery. The former Ballon d'Or winner was expected to be out of action for between six to eight weeks but should be free to play in the upcoming World Cup, a source told AFP at the time. "He's training with a [facial] mask and doing well. Maybe this break helped him," Dalic told reporters in Zagreb. "We'll see his condition, but I don't doubt him, he'll be in good form".

Mitchell leads Cavs past top-seeded Detroit into NBA East finals

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — The Cleveland Cavaliers eliminated top-seeded Detroit from the NBA play-offs Sunday, dominating a decisive game seven 125-94, and will face the New York Knicks in the Eastern Conference finals.

Led by Donovan Mitchell's 26 points, Cleveland's victory makes them the last team to book their spot in this post-season's final four, with the Oklahoma City Thunder and San Antonio Spurs waiting in the West.

Mitchell was among four Cavs players who scored 20-plus points, along with Jarrett Allen, Evan Mobley and Sam Merrill from the bench.

The resounding win on the road in Detroit, after missing a chance to end the series at home Friday, extends an impressive play-off run for the Cavaliers, who had a mediocre regular season in which they finished fourth in the East.

"We responded with force for 48 minutes tonight," said Mitchell.

"Especially in a hostile environment... that was that was the biggest thing, is just how do you respond? And not letting the moment become too big."

But it was heartbreak for Detroit, who comfortably topped their conference's regular season at 60-22, yet underwhelmed throughout their stuttering play-off run, and finally fizzled out in front of their home fans.



Donovan Mitchell #45 of the Cleveland Cavaliers shoots the ball against Tobias Harris #12 of the Detroit Pistons during the first half in Game Seven of the Second Round of the NBA Eastern Conference Play-offs at Little Caesars Arena on Monday in Detroit, Michigan

"That game sucked," said Pistons star Cade Cunningham.

"Being back home, definitely wanted to get this win in front of the fans. Reminded me of last year, losing on home court. It's not a great feeling."

The Cavaliers raced into a 20-point lead during the first half, their accurate shooting aided by some unusually poor and passive Pistons defence.

Shellshocked crowd

Detroit repeatedly missed out on rebounds and allowed uncontested three-pointer attempts, while failing to find their attacking flow.

The Pistons trailed 64-47 at the break. That meant yet another mountain to climb for a team who had already

been on the brink of elimination four times this postseason.

Detroit had battled back from 3-1 down to scrape past Orlando in their first-round series and at 3-2 down against Cleveland had shown resilience to pull back one elimination game on Friday.

But Cleveland would not let the Pistons back into this one, playing with an aggression Detroit could not match and led by an outstanding Mitchell, who suddenly seemed to be everywhere.

"He started out the game not trying to take it over, not trying to score every single basket," said Allen.

"He started the game trying to distribute the ball. I think that's huge for a leader like him, trying to get everybody else going and then

getting himself going second."

The Cavs led by 26 points at the end of the third quarter, as a shellshocked home crowd began to lose hope and filter out of Little Caesars Arena.

With four minutes remaining, and the win secured, Cleveland withdrew their stars including Mitchell.

Victory sets up Cleveland's first conference finals appearance since 2018. Their series begins on Tuesday against the Knicks, who won their semi-finals against Philadelphia 4-0.

"I'm not coming out to be in New York just happy that we got here," said Mitchell.

"They're going to be rested. We got to come in and continue the momentum, go from there."



JFA unveils official kit for 2026 FIFA World Cup debut

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Football Association (JFA) on Monday unveiled the official kit of the national football team for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, marking Jordan's historic first appearance at the tournament.

The new kit reflects Jordan's national identity through a visual concept inspired by key symbols of Jordanian culture, reinforcing the Kingdom's presence on the global football stage, according to a JFA statement.

The home and away kits feature the red-and-white Jordanian she-magh, one of the country's most recognisable national symbols, representing pride, resilience and the spirit of Al Nashama.

The third kit draws inspiration from the black iris, Jordan's national flower, combining shades of purple and black in a design that reflects Jordanians' connection to nature and national heritage.

The design extends to jersey numbers and lettering, which are inspired by Nabataean heritage, highlighting its

contributions to writing and culture, as well as the enduring legacy of the Petra civilisation carved into Jordan's rock.

Blending heritage with modernity, the kit incorporates Nabataean stair motifs carved into Jordan's mountains and stone as symbols of ambition and ascent, alongside contemporary visual elements inspired by pixels and digital geometry, reflecting a fusion of authenticity and technology.

The jersey was designed by Jordanian creatives, with designer Dania Louzi and typographic artist Hussein Ezzat integrating national and cultural motifs into a modern visual identity that reflects belonging and sporting ambition.

The jerseys will be available in several editions, with the fan version priced at JD27, the player edition at JD60, and the special black edition at JD40.

They will be available for online ordering and at authorised outlets within a week, with international shipping also offered.

LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador MIYAVI, urges continued international support for refugees

AMMAN (JT) — Prominent Japanese musician MIYAVI has concluded last week a two-day visit to Jordan in his capacity as a Goodwill Ambassador for UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, during which he met with refugees and witnessed firsthand their ongoing needs, as well as the impact of support from the international community and Jordan as a host country.

Appointed as a UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador in 2017, MIYAVI has visited UNHCR operations around the world, including Lebanon, Bangladesh, Kenya and Colombia, using his platform to amplify the voices of forcibly displaced people and advocate for solidarity, protection and hope, according to a UNHCR statement.

"In Jordan, I met parents trying to find work to provide for their children, young people who love music and have formed their own bands, and women working tirelessly to rebuild their lives in a foreign land. But the reality is that their lives also depend on support from the international community," said MIYAVI.

He added "They cannot do it alone. And now, humanitarian support is



Prominent Japanese musician MIYAVI has concluded last week a two-day visit to Jordan in his capacity as a Goodwill Ambassador for UNHCR

decreasing globally. Even if it takes time to find a solution, we cannot turn our backs on them. Until everyone can live in safety, sleep in peace and feel secure, we must keep supporting them."

MIYAVI stressed that "Continued international support is critical, not only for refugees, but also for countries like Jordan, which continue to show extraordinary generosity and compassion".

During his visit, MIYAVI met with refugee

families in Amman and Zaatar camp.

He observed the impact of life-saving cash assistance that helps the most vulnerable meet basic needs, including rent, food and healthcare.

He also learned about community engagement activities that strengthen refugees' resilience and self-reliance, as well as health services provided to refugees in the camps. These interventions are made possible in part through the generous

support from Japan.

His visit comes at a time when the refugee situation in Jordan remains complex, amid declining humanitarian funding and evolving dynamics, including the return of refugees to Syria.

MIYAVI also met with refugee and Jordanian musicians in Amman and took part in a music event at the Jesuit Refugee Service.

The engagement highlighted how music can serve as a powerful tool

to connect people, share experiences and showcase the resilience of displaced communities.

Maria Stavropoulou, UNHCR representative in Jordan said "MIYAVI's visit reflects the strong solidarity and continued support of the people of Japan for refugees in Jordan."

She added "His commitment to the refugee cause and unique ability to connect with people from diverse backgrounds are a powerful source of inspiration for humanitarian efforts."

Throughout the visit, MIYAVI emphasised the importance of continued global support in sustaining essential services for refugees, according to UNHCR statement.

Japan remains a key partner in the refugee response in Jordan, supporting programmes that assist both refugees and host communities and contribute to social and economic stability.

Jordan hosts one of the largest refugee populations in the world, including hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees.

While some are considering returning to Syria, many continue to rely on humanitarian assistance amid ongoing uncertainty

By Adam Plowright
Agence France-Presse

CANNES, France — Acclaimed director Na Hong-jin has unveiled South Korea's biggest budget film ever: A blood-splattered sci-fi thriller featuring killer extraterrestrials played by real-life couple Michael Fassbender and Alicia Vikander.

"Hope" by Na, whose low-budget horror movie "The Wailing" became a huge hit in his home country, was able to give free rein to his dark imagination in this gory tale of alien invasion.

"It's the most expensive film in the history of Korean cinema," Na told AFP in an interview at the Cannes Film Festival where the film premiered on Sunday night.

"It's a film that really required a very, very large budget because of the special effects, the design, the actors."

Despite having a genre-defying concept that was hard to sell initially — it skips between thriller, sci-fi, horror and comedy — he received backing from Korea's Plus M Entertainment and a budget of around 30 million euros (\$35 million).

Blockbuster 'Hope' shows S.Korea's growing movie muscle

The cost of "Hope" underlines the increasing resources available to South Korean directors whose hit films such as the quadruple Oscar-winning "Parasite", as well as TV series like "Squid Game" have turned the home of KPop music into a global entertainment centre.

Reviews for "Hope" were broadly positive, with Screen magazine calling it "a thunderously entertaining genre mash-up" while The Hollywood Reporter said it had "instant cult classic written all over it".

But others such as IndieWire slammed the quality of the special effects — suggesting the budget was "not enough" for Na's grand ambitions — while its run-time of 160 minutes was described as "over long" by Variety.

Although married acting couple Fassbender and Vikander, stars of films from "12 Years a Slave" to "Ex Machina", are listed on the film's cast, many fans might struggle to recognise them.

Their acting has been transformed by special effects, with all the recognisable lead roles performed by bankable

Korean stars including Hwang Jung-min, as well as Hyeon from "Squid Game".

Korean wave


The all-action film, full of bodily fluids and gunfire, revolves around a clash between the residents of a remote town close to the frontier between South and North Korea and terrifying visitors from another planet.

With its themes of conflict and the incompetence of local officials, Na said he had "the wars that we know at the moment and the political situation that we had" at the time in his mind as he was writing the screenplay.


"Hope", intended as the first film in a series, is one of 22 films competing for the prestigious Palme d'Or prize for best film in Cannes.


It is the first by Na in 10 years since "The Wailing", which also focused on a remote location struggling with a mystery arrival.

The Cannes jury this year is headed by a South Korean director for the first time, Park Chan-wook, the maker of arthouse classics such as "Oldboy" and "The Handmaiden".



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