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Jordan condemns Israeli approval of 2,126 new settlements in West Bank

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan has condemned Israel's approval of 2,126 new settler units in the occupied West Bank, describing the move as a "blatant violation of international law and a setback to efforts aimed at realising the two-state solution".

In a statement on Wednesday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs slammed the Israeli authorities' decision as undermining the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state along the June 4, 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The ministry Spokesperson Fouad Majali reiterated Jordan's condemnation and "absolute" rejection of the far-right Israeli government's continued settlement expansion in the occupied Palestinian territories. He said the settlement projects entrench the occupation, fuel further expansion, and run counter to international efforts to achieve a lasting peace



based on the two-state solution.

Majali stressed that the settlement plans violate international law and international legitimacy resolutions, particularly United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334, which condemns measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and

status of the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem. He also referred to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which renders Israel's presence in the occupied Palestinian Territory and the settlement construction and annexation measures in the

occupied West Bank as unlawful and in violation of international law.

The ministry called on the international community to fulfill its legal and moral responsibilities by pressuring Israel to halt the dangerous escalation and illegal unilateral actions in the occupied West Bank.

Majali said that realising the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among them the establishment of an independent state on their national territory, remains the only path towards achieving a just and comprehensive peace that ensures security and stability across the region.



King receives call from Albania PM

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah received a phone call from Albania Prime Minister Edi Rama on Wednesday, during which they discussed recent regional developments.

His Majesty called for stepping up international efforts to achieve comprehensive calm, in order to restore stability in the region, according to a Royal Court statement.

The call also touched on ways to enhance cooperation between Jordan and Albania across various sectors.

Jordan condemns Iran's attacks on Kuwait, Bahrain

Iran attack on Kuwait airport kills one, injures 63

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan on Wednesday condemned the Iranian attacks that targeted civilian and vital facilities in Bahrain and Kuwait, including Kuwait International Airport, calling them a "flagrant" violation of the two nations' sovereignty.

The Foreign Ministry issued a statement describing the strikes as a threat to the security, stability and territorial integrity of Bahrain and Kuwait, as well as a stark breach of international law and the UN Charter.

The ministry affirmed Jordan's absolute solidarity with Bahrain and Kuwait, reiterating the Kingdom's full support for all measures taken by the two nations to protect their sovereignty, security, citizens and residents.

The ministry also expressed its deepest con-



The Kuwait City skyline is pictured from across the waterfront along the Gulf in Salimiyah on Tuesday

dolences and sympathy to the government and people of Kuwait following the death of one person resulting from the attacks, wishing a speedy recovery to those injured.

Kuwait on Wednesday said Iranian attacks on its territory killed one person and wounded

several others, as well as forcing its airport to close and damaging unnamed diplomatic missions, according to AFP.

Kuwait said Iran hit a passenger terminal at its international airport on Wednesday, wounding several people and forcing air traffic to be sus-

pending, while Bahrain and the United States said they had intercepted an Iranian attack on Bahrain.

An Iranian attack killed one person and injured 63 others at Kuwait's international airport, forcing it close temporarily, killing one person and

injuring dozens more, in the first deadly strike on the Gulf since an April 8 ceasefire came into place, according to AFP.

Health ministry spokesman Abdullah Al Sanad said 25 ambulances were dispatched at Kuwait International Airport, adding that "63 injured individuals were received and distributed among hospitals... This includes serious injuries... including head wounds, cerebral haemorrhages, amputations and injuries resulting from explosions".

Those included "civilians, and people working at the airport and travellers," it added.

Kuwait's foreign ministry said Iranian attacks on its territory killed one person and damaged unnamed diplomatic missions.

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This photo taken from the southern Lebanese area of Marjayoun shows smoke rising from the site of an Israeli strike that targeted the village of Kfar Tibnit on Wednesday

Netanyahu says he and Trump share goal to disarm Hizbollah, de-militarise Lebanon

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Wednesday that he and US President Donald Trump are aligned on the goal of disarming Hizbollah in order to achieve peace between Israel and Lebanon. Hizbollah "is an Iranian proxy that puts all the citizens of Lebanon at gunpoint and uses Lebanon as a platform to launch terror missiles into our cities, to launch

killer drones against our civilians", Netanyahu said in an interview with US television channel CNBC.

"And so if we want to save Lebanon, if we want to get a Lebanese-Israeli peace, as I do, we have to disarm Hizbollah and we have to de-militarise Lebanon. And I know that this is a goal that the president and I share, and that's what we have to do".

Lebanon's army said two personnel were

wounded when an Israeli strike hit a military vehicle in the country's south on Wednesday, as Israel pounds the region in its ongoing war against Hizbollah.

"An Israeli enemy drone targeted an army vehicle on the Deir Zahrani-Nabatieh road, wounding an officer and a soldier," an army statement said, decrying "the deliberate targeting of army personnel, vehicles and positions".

Early kick-offs to reshape work, sleep, productivity as Al Nashama begin World Cup debut

Fans urged to maintain disciplined sleep schedules as deprivation may disrupt circadian rhythm, cause jet lag-like fatigue



By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — As Jordanians prepare for the national team's historic FIFA World Cup debut, early-morning kick-offs are expected to reshape daily routines, sleep patterns and work schedules across the Kingdom, as millions plan to follow Al Nashama's first appearance on football's biggest stage.

Jordan will open its World Cup journey against Austria on June 17 at 7:00am Jordan time before facing Algeria on June 23 at

6:00am. The Kingdom's final group-stage match against reigning world champions Argentina is scheduled for June 28 at 5:00am, with all matches taking place in the US.

Prime Minister Jafar Hassan has directed public institutions to begin official working hours at 10:00am on the days Jordan plays its World Cup matches, allowing citizens to follow the national team during its historic debut. The decision applies to June 17, June 23 and June 28.

While the measure is

expected to ease pressure on public-sector employees, a sleep specialist warns that repeated early-morning awakenings may still disrupt the body's biological clock and affect productivity and overall well-being.

Mohammad Tarawneh, a consultant in pulmonary medicine and sleep disorders, said that sleep is a vital biological process, with adults requiring around eight hours per night across 90-120-minute cycles that are essential for physical and mental

restoration.

He said that sleep is regulated by the circadian rhythm, which depends mainly on light and darkness, adding that disruptions, including waking at unusually early hours, can suppress melatonin production, as blue light from screens confuses the brain into delaying sleep signals.

"Sleep is not only about rest, but about regulating hormones, body temperature, blood pressure and digestion," Tarawneh said, noting that repeated disrupt-

tion can create effects similar to jet lag without travel.

He noted that sleep deprivation follows a clear pattern, stressing that even one night can increase emotional sensitivity and reaction times, while two to three nights may significantly impair memory, concentration and physical energy, alongside headaches and increased cravings for sugar and fat due to hormonal imbalance affecting ghrelin and leptin.

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Jordan opens its World Cup campaign against Austria on June 17 (7:00am Jordan time), faces Algeria on June 23 (6:00am) and meets reigning champions Argentina on June 28 (5:00am)



HRH Princess Basma, president of the Jordanian Association for Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, on Wednesday attends the Ministry of Education's celebration marking Jordan's 80th Independence Day in Dibbeen

Princess Basma attends Education Ministry's celebration of Kingdom's 80th Independence Day

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Princess Basma, president of the Jordanian Association for Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, on Wednesday attended the Ministry of Education's celebration marking Jordan's 80th Independence Day in Dibbeen.

Speaking at the event, Princess Basma said, "Independence is a responsibility and a renewed commitment to remain loyal to the homeland, safeguard its values and contribute to building its future."

She stressed that independence is an "on-going responsibility" and national project rather than a milestone confined to May 25 each year, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Addressing the ceremony, which was held at the Princess Basma Scout Camp, the princess said, "Jordan has transformed challenges into opportunities and become a model of moderation, security and stability through the awareness of its people and their belief

in the nation's enduring mission." She highlighted the role of the scouting movement in fostering national belonging, community engagement, perseverance and volunteerism among young people, noting that it represents a living extension of the values embodied by independence.

'Independence is a responsibility and a renewed commitment to remain loyal to the homeland'

Education Minister Azmi Mahafzah said "every school built, every student who succeeds and every teacher who excels repre-

sents a true expression of independence and the Jordanian state's commitment to placing people at the centre of development".

He said that Jordan, under the Hashemite leadership, has invested in education since the founding of the modern state, expanding schools across the Kingdom, improving educational standards and establishing universities and colleges that have helped position the country as a model in education.

Mahafzah noted that the ministry continues its efforts to modernise education, improve learning outcomes and equip students with the skills needed to meet the demands of the "digital age" and support the development of a knowledge-based economy.

He also underscored the role of the scouting and guiding movement in promoting national awareness, responsibility, teamwork, volunteerism and community service alongside the educational process.

Queen Rania calls for building strength to meet global challenges at SXSW London conference

AMMAN (JT) — Her Majesty Queen Rania called for building the strength and resilience required to shoulder humanity's shared challenges, warning that avoiding difficult tasks will erode our capacity to meet them.

"Today, we find ourselves in a moment that demands clear communication and determination — but just like anyone who has gone too long without breaking a sweat, we are discovering that our muscles have gone soft," Queen Rania said, according to a statement from Office of Her Majesty.

"The worst part is, atrophy is self-reinforcing," she added. "When we believe we cannot lift something, we do not try; and the less we try, the less we can lift."

Speaking from the South by Southwest London (SXSW London) conference stage on Wednesday, Queen Rania reflected on the prevailing sense of heaviness felt across the Middle East over the past few years.

"It's the weight of Israel's genocide in Gaza, where tens of thousands of Palestinians have been killed and the entire population is still denied adequate health-care, nutrition, or shelter," she said.

"It's the weight of the on-again-off-again war in Iran and the air raid sirens echoing across the Arab World. Of fragile ceasefires. Of hundreds of thousands displaced in Lebanon. Of weaponised famine in Sudan."

Her Majesty also noted the weight of shared global hardships such as climate change, wealth inequality, AI's upheaval of job markets, and the normalisation of racism and bigotry.

"This heaviness is am-



Speaking from the South by Southwest London conference stage on Wednesday, Queen Rania reflects on the prevailing sense of heaviness felt across the Middle East over the past few years

plified, in no small part, by the technology in our pockets," she said, explaining that prolonged phone use can result in a physical condition known as "tech neck".

"I can't help but see the spiritual equivalent of tech neck; the built-up heaviness from constantly looking down," the Queen said. "And yet, we're expected to put one foot in front of the other and keep going."

Stressing that strength is built through practice, Her Majesty cautioned against overreliance on technology, which has been shown to weaken brain pathways and decrease tolerance for delayed gratification, and has contributed to a 28 per cent decline in average words spoken each day.

Queen Rania also outlined the challenge posed by the rise of absolute thinking, whereby opposing groups have become increasingly convinced of the exclusive righteousness of

their own beliefs.

"Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. famously spoke of the need to bend the arc of our moral universe," Her Majesty said.

"But what if that arc is unyielding not because of its weight, or our inability to hold it, but because people are pushing in opposite directions — and in the process, cancelling each other out?"

In order to lift this collective weight, Her Majesty called for a greater focus on community, citing the example of volunteer-run community kitchens in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, "where the hungry feed the hungry, and the displaced care for the displaced".

She also highlighted the need to cultivate discipline and humility, by intentionally incorporating friction into our lives, avoiding shortcuts, and embracing flexibility over cynicism.

"At the risk of sounding biased — though I

am — I believe Jordanians consistently demonstrate the value of community, discipline and humility," she asserted.

Noting that Jordan hosts one of the world's highest shares of refugees per capita, Her Majesty stressed that the nation's compassion for the displaced has not wavered despite regional challenges and limited natural resources.

"Jordanians, many themselves no strangers to scarcity, have also supported aid efforts to Gaza in droves," she said, commending medical staff volunteering at Jordanian field hospitals and local charities organising donation drives, among others.

Queen Rania concluded by emphasising the importance of persevering in moments of frustration and exhaustion, and trusting that efforts will ultimately yield

results. "Some call it optimism; I call it faith — a particular type that in Islam, we refer to as tawakkul," she said. "Tawakkul is not a call for passivity or surrender. Rather, it means you do everything within your capacity, and trust in the outcome."

"You lift in community, with humility, again and again and again — and then, you let go," Her Majesty said.

SXSW London 2026 is a platform for the convergence of technology and the creative industries, held from June 1-6 in the East London neighbourhood of Shoreditch.

Launched in 2025, SXSW London serves as the European edition of the globally renowned SXSW event established in Austin, Texas in 1987. In addition to a conference featuring over 800 speakers, its wide-ranging programme includes musical performances, a screen festival, and an art exhibition.

Issawi attends Queen Noor college, RJAA Independence Day ceremony

AMMAN (JT) — Royal Court Chief Yousef Issawi on Wednesday attended a ceremony hosted by the Queen Noor Aviation University College and the Royal Jordanian Air Academy (RJAA), marking the 80th Independence Day.

The national event reflected "deep-seated" values of loyalty and belonging to the homeland and its Hashemite leadership, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

In his remarks during the ceremony, College Director-General Farhan Mashaqbeh stressed that the Independence Day marks the launch of an eight-decade journey of development and achievement, laid down by the founding fathers under the wise Hashemite leadership.



Royal Court Chief Yousef Issawi on Wednesday attends a ceremony hosted by the Queen Noor Aviation University College and the Royal Jordanian Air Academy, marking the 80th Independence Day

Mashaqbeh highlighted the college's pioneering role since its establishment in 1973 as a "prestigious" academic institution, noting that its historical transformation into a specialised aviation university opens a new

chapter of excellence.

He stressed the college's commitment to developing academic programmes and enhancing scientific research and innovation to prepare national cadres capable of leading the future of avia-

tion in Jordan and the region.

For his part, RJAA Director-General Mohamad Faqir underlined that celebrating the 80th Independence Day carries special symbolism as it coincides with the 60th

anniversary of the academy's establishment in 1966 by a Royal Decree from His Majesty the late King Hussein.

He said that the academy takes pride in supplying the sector with "elite" pilots and technicians who currently hold top-tier positions in global institutions and companies, pledging to continue efforts to serve Jordan with integrity and devotion.

The celebration featured a documentary film highlighting key milestones in the Kingdom's independence journey and the comprehensive developmental achievements witnessed by the aviation sector.

At the end of the ceremony, the college and academy presented Issawi with honorary plaques.

Princess Alia opens regional workshop on wildlife protection, bird conservation

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Princess Alia on Wednesday inaugurated a regional workshop on promoting positive community behaviours to reduce demand for wildlife and birds in the Middle East.

The event brought together representatives of governments, national, regional and international environmental organisations, as well as experts in nature conservation from across the region, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

In her opening remarks, Princess Alia stressed the importance of fostering positive public attitudes towards protecting nature and wildlife, noting that appreciation for nature is "deeply rooted" in Arab culture and traditions.

The princess highlighted the role of awareness and education programmes, particularly among children and young people, in building a society that understands the consequences of biodiversity loss and the importance of preserving natural resources for future generations.

Princess Alia also underscored the value of regional workshops that enable participants from different Arab countries to exchange expertise, discuss common challenges and share solutions to support wildlife conservation and safeguard migratory bird routes.

The workshop, organised by BirdLife International-Middle East and the International Fund for Animal



Inaugurating a regional workshop on promoting positive community behaviours to reduce demand for wildlife and birds in the Middle East, Princess Alia stresses the importance of fostering positive public attitudes towards protecting nature and wildlife

Welfare (IFAW) in cooperation with the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, the Princess Alia Foundation and the Ministry of Environment, aims to address illegal bird hunting trade across the region and promote behaviour-change approaches grounded in social science.

Participants reviewed the social, economic, cultural and behavioural factors associated with illegal hunting and wildlife trafficking, with the goal of developing evidence-based solutions and enhancing regional cooperation to protect migratory birds and biodiversity.

Regional Director of BirdLife International-Middle East Ibrahim Khader said that the organisation and its partners have played a "key role" in placing illegal bird killing on the agenda of international agreements and forums, while supporting independent monitor-

ing and providing scientific evidence to help governments develop effective policies.

The workshop builds on the outcomes of a similar regional meeting held in Jordan in 2024, which highlighted the need for greater cooperation and new tools to address the root causes of illegal bird hunting, capture and trade.

According to the latest estimates, cited by Petra, around 25 million birds are illegally killed, captured or poisoned each year across the Mediterranean region.

The independent assessment "The Killing 3.0" found that levels of illegal bird killing have declined by around 20 per cent compared with previous assessments, although progress remains uneven among countries, underscoring the need for sustained regional cooperation and long-term political commitment, Petra added.

PDTRA promotes global partnerships at Beijing tourism summit

AMMAN (JT) — The Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA) has participated in the World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF) Beijing Fragrant Hills Tourism Summit 2026, in China.

The high-level summit brought together municipal leaders, destination management executives, and international tourism organisations from across the globe, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

PDTRA Chief Commissioner Adnan Sawair stressed the significance of this participation in boosting Petra's status on the global tourism map and unlocking new avenues of cooperation with international industry partners.

A total of 155,855 tourists visited Petra in the first four months of 2026, with most of them being



Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority Chief Commissioner Adnan Sawair stresses the significance of participation in the 2026 World Tourism Cities Federation Summit in boosting Petra's status on the global tourism map

non-Arabs, according to recent official figures.

During the same period of 2025, Petra welcomed 161,006 visitors, including 122,821 non-Arabs, 27,480 Jordanians, and 10,705 non-Jordanian Arabs.

Comparing the two periods shows that the total number of visitors dropped by 3.2 per cent,

which is a decrease of 5,151 tourists, where this decline is mainly attributed to regional instability.

The summit provides an opportunity to examine the latest global tourism trends and forge strategic partnerships with leading tourism cities and organisations, he said.

The chief commissioner said that these collabora-

tive efforts are essential to upgrading the visitor experience in Petra and advancing the long-term sustainability of the local tourism sector.

He added that PDTRA's membership in the WTCF acts as a "vital" platform to project Petra's international presence as a world-class heritage destination, offering valuable opportunities to exchange expertise in tourism innovation, destination management, and cultural heritage preservation.

Sawair also highlighted that the official induction of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) into the federation during this summit, making it the second Jordanian city to secure membership, marks a "qualitative" addition that will significantly bolster joint marketing initiatives for Jordan's "Golden Tri-

angle" tourist circuit on the global stage.

Previous statistics from PDTRA showed that Petra had 582,550 total visitors in 2025, which marked a 27 per cent increase compared to 2024, which recorded 457,215 visitors.

The Nabataeans, a "powerful" Arab people with wide regional influence, established the city and lived there from the fourth century BC until the second century AD.

WTCF comprises 263 member cities and 136 tourism-related institutions worldwide.

Petra has been an active member of the federation since 2017, marking a strategic relationship that has expanded its institutional network with prominent international destinations and enabled the adoption of the best global practices in sustainable tourism.



Minister of Interior Mazen Farrayeh on Wednesday meets with Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al Sabah

Interior minister, Kuwaiti counterpart discuss bilateral ties

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Interior Mazen Farrayeh on Wednesday met with Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al Sabah and the accompanying delegation to discuss ways of enhancing security cooperation and developing joint training initiatives.

During the meeting, attended by Public Security Directorate Director Maj. Gen.

Obeidallah Maaytah, Farrayeh highlighted the strong relations between Jordan and Kuwait, and commended the high level of security cooperation between the two countries in various fields.

He also stressed the importance of continued coordination and consultation on issues of mutual interest between the Jordanian and Kuwaiti interior ministries and the security agencies of both

countries, according to an Interior Ministry statement.

Sheikh Fahad expressed his commitment to expanding security cooperation and enhancing the exchange of expertise, noting that such efforts would open new avenues for collaboration between the two countries.

He also commended the strong bilateral ties between Jordan and Kuwait across various sectors.

Safadi denounces attacks on Bahrain, Kuwait

Foreign minister, Arab counterparts discuss regional developments, de-escalation efforts

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi on Wednesday condemned the Iranian attacks against Bahrain and Kuwait.

During separate phone calls with Bahraini Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulatif Bin Rashid Al Zayani and Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, Safadi affirmed Jordan's full solidarity with both countries in confronting the attacks, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

Safadi stressed that Jordan stands firmly with Bahrain and Kuwait in all measures they take to safeguard their security, stability, sovereignty and the safety of their citizens.

In a call with the Kuwaiti foreign minister, Safadi expressed Jordan's deepest condolences over the victims of the attacks, which targeted several civilian facilities and vital installations, in-



Ayman Safadi

cluding Kuwait International Airport, and resulted in one fatality. He also wished the injured a speedy recovery.

Also on Wednesday,

Safadi held separate phone calls with Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal Bin Farhan, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign

Affairs Fuad Hussein, and Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Asaad Al Shaibani.

During the call with the Saudi foreign minister, held within the framework of ongoing coordination between the two kingdoms, Safadi and Prince Faisal discussed regional developments and efforts to de-escalate tensions and restore security and stability on foundations that ensure their sustainability.

The two ministers condemned the Iranian attacks targeting Bahrain and Kuwait as a violation of sovereignty and a setback to de-escalation efforts, according to the Foreign Ministry statement.

They also discussed ways to enhance cooperation between Jordan and Saudi Arabia across various fields, reaffirming the strong historical ties between the two countries.

Safadi and his Iraqi counterpart discussed bilateral relations and reviewed the latest re-

gional developments. The two ministers stressed the importance of continued efforts to end regional escalation and restore calm, underscoring the need for a comprehensive solution based on international law, respect for sovereignty and principles of good neighbourliness.

Safadi also congratulated Hussein on his reappointment as deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs in Iraq's new government.

In his call with the Syrian foreign minister, the two sides stressed the importance of continued progress in Jordanian-Syrian relations across various fields, reflecting the depth of ties between the two countries and their mutual commitment to strengthening them.

They also discussed efforts to contain the dangerous escalation in the region and restore calm, as part of broader efforts to achieve lasting security and stability.

Huneiti, Kuwaiti Army chief discuss cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti on Wednesday received Kuwaiti Army Chief of the General Staff Lt. Gen. Khaled Daraj Al Shuraian and an accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to enhance military and defence cooperation between the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) and the Kuwaiti Armed Forces, as well as mechanisms to further develop their strategic partnership in the service of the

mutual interests of both countries, according to a JAF statement.

Huneiti underscored the deep-rooted ties between Jordan and Kuwait, highlighting their importance in promoting regional security and stability.

For his part, Al Shuraian reaffirmed the Kuwaiti Armed Forces' commitment to expanding military cooperation and exchanging expertise with the JAF.

The meeting was attended by the Kuwaiti military attaché in Amman and a number of senior JAF officers.



Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti on Wednesday receives Kuwaiti Army Chief of the General Staff Lt. Gen. Khaled Daraj Al Shuraian

Police arrest 18 suspects in 8 drug cases across Kingdom

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Anti-Narcotics Department (AND) on Wednesday said police arrested 18 suspects, including three who were classified as extremely dangerous, in connection with eight illicit drug cases in various parts of the Kingdom in the past few days, according to police.

Law-enforcement officers also seized large amounts of illicit drugs and weapons with some of the suspects, according to Police Spokesperson Lt. Col. Amer Sartawi. One of the cases, ac-

ording to Sartawi, involved monitoring a wanted, extremely dangerous suspect with 21 criminal records in Balqa Governorate.

"A special investigation team managed to pinpoint his whereabouts following weeks of trailing his trace and arrested him without any major incident," Sartawi said.

Officers allegedly found marijuana in his possession, he added.

Meanwhile, police arrested two alleged drug dealers in the capital and "found over 8 kilogrammes of hashish and 10,000 Captagon pills in their

possession", according to the police official.

In other areas of the Kingdom, police arrested 10 suspects in several drug bust operations in Amman, Ajloun, Maan and Ramtha.

The law-enforcement officers seized various quantities of Hashish, Crystal meth and Captagon pills, according to Sartawi.

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



The Eastern Military Region command on Tuesday thwarts an attempt to smuggle narcotics

Army foils drug smuggling attempt using drones

AMMAN (JT) — The Southern Military Region command on Wednesday foiled an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of narcotics using three drones along its western frontier.

Border Guard forces, in coordination with the military security agencies and the Anti-

Narcotics Department, detected the drones and applied the rules of engagement, bringing them down within Jordanian territory, according to the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army.

The seized narcotics were handed over to the relevant authorities for the necessary legal procedures.

Senate committee members participate in IPU women parliamentarians conference

AMMAN (JT) — Senate Women Committee members Khawla Armouti and Reem Abu Dalbough participated in the Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), under the theme "Achieving Equality: Eliminating Gender-Based Stereotypes and Negative Social Norms".

During the conference held in Belgrade, Serbia, Armouti said that addressing gender-based stereotypes is essential to building more just and equitable societies, stressing the need for genuine partnership and coordination among institutional and community stakeholders.

She highlighted the importance of strengthening legisla-



Senate Women Committee members Khawla Armouti and Reem Abu Dalbough participate in the Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Union

tive and legal frame-

works, promoting

more balanced media discourse, and encour-

aging media platforms and content creators to

move away from gender stereotyping. Armouti also stressed the need to enhance women's economic and social empowerment through safe and supportive work environments that ensure equal opportunities.

"The Jordanian Parliament plays an important role in oversight and legislation by reviewing laws and introducing amendments that support women's participation across various sectors," she said.

She also underlined the importance of engaging local and community leaders to strengthen support for women's empowerment.

Armouti said that the political will of His Majesty King Ab-

MEETING

GFJTU head calls for stronger protections for platform economy workers at ILO conference

AMMAN (JT) — President of the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU) Khaled Fanatseh on Wednesday participated in the 114th session of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conference.

Fanatseh called for

stronger protections for workers in the digital platform economy, urging the development of an international standards framework that recognises the rights of platform-based workers and ensures comprehensive social protection.

He also stressed the need for greater transparency in the use of algorithms and digital monitoring systems, warning against precarious forms of employment and labour exploitation, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

"Workers engaged in platform-based services, including delivery, transport and digital work, should have access to fundamental labour rights and protections," he said.

Fanatseh noted that while the platform economy has created

new opportunities for employment and innovation, it has also exposed regulatory and rights-related gaps, particularly in social protection, wages, occupational safety and health, and freedom of association and collective bargaining.

He added that digital transformation presents an opportunity to expand labour protections, advance decent work and strengthen compliance with international labour standards.

Fanatseh also highlighted the importance

of gender equality in the workplace, saying that promoting decent work in the digital platform economy and advancing gender equality are complementary goals toward building a more just and inclusive future of work.

Despite progress, he said, women continue to face persistent challenges, including wage gaps, occupational discrimination, underrepresentation in decision-making roles and a disproportionate share of unpaid care work.



This screen grab made on Wednesday, from a handout video released by US Central Command on Tuesday, shows what the US military says is a missile strike by US forces on the Botswana-flagged M/T Lexie, an unladen oil tanker attempting to sail to an Iranian port in violation of an American blockade, disabling the vessel

US says it fired on, disabled ship violating Iran port blockade

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US forces on Tuesday fired a missile at a ship that was attempting to sail toward an Iranian port in violation of an American blockade, disabling the vessel, the US military said.

Washington has now forcibly halted six ships it said were attempting to violate the blockade, which has been in place since April 13.

The Botswana-flagged M/T Lexie, an unladen oil tanker, "ignored repeated warnings" over a 24-hour period, and an American warplane "ultimately disabled the vessel by firing a Hellfire missile into the ship's

engine room," the US military's Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement.

The statement did not mention if the attack caused any casualties aboard the Lexie.

On Friday, the US military similarly disabled a Gambia-flagged cargo vessel after it too failed to comply, CENTCOM said.

On May 8, US forces fired munitions down the smokestacks of two Iranian-flagged tankers to halt them, while a warplane disabled another Iranian-flagged ship on May 6 by firing its 20mm cannon at the vessel's rudder.

And on April 19, an Iranian-flagged vessel

attempted to violate the blockade and ignored multiple warnings from a US destroyer, CENTCOM said at the time.

The American warship eventually directed the ship's crew to evacuate its engine room, which it then hit with multiple rounds from its five-inch gun.

Tehran's forces effectively closed the vital Strait of Hormuz waterway, a key route for oil and gas shipments, after the start of the US-Israeli war against Iran on February 28.

The United States announced its blockade of Iranian ports after peace talks in Pakistan failed to achieve a breakthrough in April.

Ukraine drones hit Saint Petersburg as 'Russian Davos' opens

SAINT PETERSBURG (AFP) — Ukrainian drones hit energy and military sites in Saint Petersburg early on Wednesday morning as officials gathered for a flagship economic forum in the city, Russian and Ukrainian authorities said.

Some 20,000 guests from 130 countries are set to attend the three-day annual Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) — an event once dubbed "Russia's Davos" — which started on Wednesday.

The Kremlin vowed to respond to the strikes, which came a day after a barrage of Russian missiles and drones killed 23 people across Ukraine.

Saint Petersburg Governor Alexander Beglov said "several" infrastructure facilities were damaged but no one was killed in the attack.

Separate Russian strikes on frontline regions of Ukraine killed four, local officials said, as NATO chief Mark Rutte arrived in Kyiv.

The Ukrainian drones hit the Saint Petersburg Oil Terminal and the Kronstadt military base in the city, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said — the latest in a series of retaliatory attacks that Kyiv calls "long-range sanctions".

"Ukraine's plan for long-range sanctions is being implemented exactly as needed to bring peace closer," he said on social media, posting a video of an oil depot ablaze.

The commander of Ukraine's drone forces said a Russian warship was hit at the Kronstadt naval base, posting black-and-white footage from onboard the drone of what he said was the attack.

The attacks forced Saint Petersburg's main airport to close for hours overnight.

Ukrainian officials said the attack was aimed at disrupting the three-day gathering, which President Vladimir Putin will attend and make a keynote address at on



A panoramic view of St. Petersburg waterfront where the three-day annual Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum is taking place

Friday.

"The Petersburg forum is opening with a nice plume of black smoke in the background after Ukrainian strikes," said Sergiy Sternenko, an adviser to the Ukrainian defence minister.

An AFP reporter saw the smoke visible from the conference venue as delegates gathered for the first sessions.

Several flights from Moscow to Saint Petersburg were delayed, an AFP reporter at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport said.

Russia's Davos

Since Russia launched its full-scale assault on Ukraine in February 2022, SPIEF — previously Moscow's premier economic event for courting Western investment — has been seen as a snapshot of Russia's isolation on the world stage.

In the 2010s, French President Emmanuel Macron, then-German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and the late Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe were among those who addressed the forum alongside Putin.

Now Russia can only

rely on leaders of its closest allies to attend — this year, the presidents of Uzbekistan and Tanzania, alongside ministers from the likes of Cuba, Belarus, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

Global South are building up their economic strength, actively moving toward partnership with Russia and will be strongly represented," he said.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres — who on Tuesday condemned Russian strikes on Ukraine — will speak at a panel on the environment on Friday.

The United States is sending Rodney Mims Cook Jr, the head of the US Commission of Fine Arts who is overseeing President Donald Trump's new White House ballroom, to the event, where he will speak on a panel titled "Russia-US: A Cultural Dialogue".

Several fringe figures from Western countries have also been invited — including right-wing commentator Candace Owens, Putin-backing US actor Steven Seagal and representatives of the far-right Alternative for Germany party.

Andrew Tate, the British-American self-described misogynist charged in Romania with human trafficking and accused of rape, landed in Moscow on Tuesday, triggering

speculation he would also attend the forum.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov vowed to respond to the attack.

"Our responses will be systemic in nature," he told reporters, including AFP.

Ukraine has escalated its strikes on Russian energy and military sites in recent months, calling them fair retribution for Russia's nightly barrages against its cities.

Russian-installed officials in occupied eastern Ukraine said seven people were killed when a Ukrainian drone hit a bus travelling between Moscow and the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

Overnight into Wednesday, Russia said its air defences intercepted 354 Ukrainian drones across multiple regions, including areas bordering Ukraine and annexed Crimea.

Meanwhile, Russian strikes killed two people in the southern frontline city of Kherson and two in the north-eastern Kharkiv region, Ukrainian officials there said.

Trump to attend upcoming NATO summit in Turkey — Rubio

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US President Donald Trump will attend the NATO summit in Turkey in July, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Wednesday, amid lingering questions about Washington's commitment to the security alliance.

"The President himself will be attending the next NATO meeting of heads of state, where all these points will be made clear," Rubio told the House Foreign Affairs Committee, referring to the

July 7-8 conference in Ankara. "We're still in NATO, but NATO needs significant changes."

Rubio described the summit, which will bring together 32 member states, as "probably the most important meeting in NATO's history, because there's some things that need to be cleared up and fixed."

Relations with the military alliance have remained strained since European governments declined to join the United States

and Israel in their war against Iran. Washington has withdrawn some troops from Europe.

In separate testimony to Congress on Tuesday, Rubio vented frustration over Spain's refusal to let US forces use its bases for strikes against Iran.

"We have members of that alliance that are basically denying the use of those bases in a contingency," Rubio said, adding that was cause "to question the entire thing".

Denmark PM presents new government, with majority of women

COPENHAGEN (AFP) — Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen on Wednesday presented her new cabinet, which for the first time in Danish history included more women than men.

Following months of talks after inconclusive elections in March, incumbent Frederiksen said on Monday she had managed to form a minority government between her Social Democrats, the Socialist People's Party, the centre-left Radikale Venstre and the centrist Moderates.

On Wednesday, Frederiksen announced the names of the new ministers.

"It is a government with 21 ministers, and for the first time in Denmark's history there are now more female ministers than male ones," Frederiksen announced outside Denmark's parliament.

Eleven out of the 21 ministers were women and the list also included familiar names from Frederiksen's former



Denmark's acting Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen (right) shares a smile with designated Minister of Employment and Minister for Gender Equality Ane Halsboe-Joergensen (left), and designated Minister of Economy and Interior Pia Olsen Dyhr (centre) as designated members of the Frederiksen III Cabinet meet at the Prime Minister's Office before they go to Amalienborg Castle in Copenhagen, Denmark, on Wednesday

government.

Moderates leader Lars Lokke Rasmussen, who emerged kingmaker after the March 24 election, retained his position as foreign

minister.

Commentators also noted that Frederiksen opted to make party colleague Peter Hummelgaard finance minister instead of Nicolai

Wammen, who would take up Hummelgaard's old post as justice minister.

Both are seen as contenders to succeed Frederiksen as party

leader of the Social Democrats.

"With Hummelgaard's promotion, it becomes clear that he is Mette Frederiksen's candidate," Christine Cordsen, political correspondent for public broadcaster DR, said in a comment.

On Tuesday, Frederiksen presented a political platform that pledged support for families struggling with rising prices, while vowing to maintain a restrictive immigration policy.

In the March election, Frederiksen's Social Democrats registered their weakest score since 1903 but remained the biggest party by far, with 38 seats.

Neither the left nor the right bloc won a majority in the March 24 election, which left parliament splintered.

As the four parties in the new coalition hold just 82 of the 179 seats in parliament between them, the government will need to rely on the support of other parties to pass legislation.

New Delhi hotel blaze kills 21, including foreigners

NEW DELHI (AFP) — A fire ripped through a hotel in New Delhi on Wednesday, killing at least 21 people, many of them foreign nationals, police and local media said.

Building fires are common in India due to a lack of firefighting equipment and routine disregard for safety regulations.

The fire broke out in the morning at Flourish Stay, a bed-and-breakfast in a congested neighbourhood in the south of the city, Delhi Police said in a statement.

"It is with profound sorrow that 21 persons have been declared dead in this tragic incident," police said.

Several of those killed were foreigners, mainly from Central Asia and Africa, the Press Trust of India news agency reported, quoting unnamed officials.

Many of them had come to the city for medical treatment, according to local media reports.

Authorities said more than 40 people were taken to hospitals for treatment.

Eight were in a critical condition, according to a statement by a nearby hospital.

Indian television channels showed flames leaping from the building and thick plumes of black smoke rising into the sky.

Some 47 guests were in the hotel when the fire broke out, local lawmaker Satish Upadhyay told reporters.

Locals rushed to the site, as firefighters worked to douse the blaze and ambulances arrived to transport the injured.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the deaths "tragic".

"My condolences to those who have lost their loved ones," his office said in a statement.

Some reports suggested the hotel had just one door for entry and exit and lacked proper ventilation.

"An inquiry will be conducted, and anyone who has broken norms and is responsible will be immediately arrested," Upadhyay said.

Some people trapped on the upper floors of

the building jumped onto mattresses laid out by on the street outside, said eyewitnesses.

"We got mattresses from a nearby bedding shop because people needed to be rescued," Mohammad Anees, a local resident, told AFP.

"Once the mattresses were laid out, five women jumped from the building and landed safely on them."

The blaze was eventually brought under control with the help of eight fire engines, police said.

The cause of the fire, one of the deadliest blazes in the Indian capital in recent years, was not immediately clear.

Electrical short circuits, often caused by poorly maintained wiring, remain the leading cause of fire incidents in India.

In March, a fire at a government-run hospital in eastern India killed 10 critically ill patients.

The last major fire incident in Delhi killed 43 factory workers sleeping in a building in the city's old quarter in 2019.



Doctors Without Borders doctors wearing personal protective equipment move through the isolated red zone to monitor patients, provide medical care, and ensure sanitation of the facility at the Ebola Treatment Centre in Munigi on Tuesday

Ebola had 'big head-start' but response catching up — WHO

GENEVA (AFP) — The Ebola outbreak raging in central Africa had a "big head-start", the World Health Organisation (WHO) chief acknowledged on Wednesday, but insisted efforts to rein in the deadly virus were making progress.

The outbreak, which was declared on May 15 in the northeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), has so far been confirmed to have infected 359 people, including 61 who have died.

But the actual numbers could be far higher, with the virus believed to have been spreading under the radar for some time before it was detected.

"The outbreak had a big head-start and we're still behind," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters at the UN health agency's headquarters in Geneva, but insisted that "we're catching up".

Tedros, who had just returned from a trip to the DRC, where he travelled to the outbreak's epicentre in Ituri province, said he had been "very encouraged by the level of commitment I saw everywhere I went".

But challenges remain, he said, warning that "the virus is ahead of us... we need to move faster".

It has been clear from the start that the difficulties would be daunting, with the outbreak concentrated in Ituri, where decades of armed conflicts have forced millions of people from their homes and into crowded camps.

Ebola patient visited UAE

The region's insecurity, limited testing capacity, lagging contact tracing and mistrust

among some of the population are among the challenges facing the response, Tedros said.

On top of that, no vaccine or approved treatment exists for Bundibugyo, the rare strain of Ebola behind the current outbreak.

Ebola, which is passed on through close contact and bodily fluids, has killed more than 15,000 people in Africa over the past 50 years.

'Blanket travel restrictions imposed by some countries are disrupting supply chains and hindering the response'

The current outbreak — the 17th to hit the DRC — has to date seen 344 confirmed Ebola cases across three of the country's provinces, including 60 deaths, said the WHO.

The UN health agency also tallied 116 suspected cases of the disease.

Fifteen cases, including one death, have also been reported in neighbouring Uganda, including a Congolese resident who had arrived there after first travelling to the United Arab Emirates, Tedros said.

"WHO is working with public health authorities in Uganda and the UAE to gather

additional information, assess the risk of exposure during travel, and to facilitate contact tracing," he said.

Speed up contact tracing

The agency has said the risk from the outbreak is "very high" at the national level, "high" at the regional level, and "low" at the global level.

Tedros stressed Wednesday that while the WHO recommends exit screening at airports, ports and border crossings in affected countries to prevent the spread of the virus, broader limits were unhelpful.

"Blanket travel restrictions imposed by some countries are disrupting supply chains and hindering the response," he warned.

"We ask countries that have imposed blanket travel restrictions to lift them."

Reining in the outbreak would instead centre on significantly bolstering and speeding up the response on the ground, including by de-centralising laboratory testing in Ebola hotspots, Tedros said.

At present, only around 45 per cent of known contacts of Ebola cases have been followed up, the WHO chief said.

"To get ahead of the outbreak, we need to get that number up to above 90 per cent."

Abdi Rahman Mahamud, the WHO's emergency alert and response director, told reporters that so far, more than 1,400 tests had been conducted.

But decentralisation across five priority locations — Mongbwalu, Beni, Aru, Nyakunde and Tchomia — should soon make it possible "to do 1,000 tests a day".

Zscaler launches first cloud presence in Jordan through Aqaba Digital Hub

AMMAN (JT) — Zscaler announced the launch of its first cloud presence in Jordan through 35D, the ICT arm of Aqaba Digital Hub, marking a significant milestone in expanding Jordan's digital infrastructure and cybersecurity capabilities.

The announcement was made during a meeting held at Aqaba Digital Hub in the presence of President of the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) Mohammad Smadi, alongside representatives from the NCSC, Zscaler and Aqaba Digital Hub, according to a NCSC statement.

The launch introduces the first Zero Trust cloud infrastructure of its kind in Jordan, further boosting the Kingdom's position as a regional hub for digital infrastructure and cybersecurity services, supported by Aqaba's strategic location and international connectivity, and in line with the growing demand for cloud and AI-enabled technologies.

The deployment, hosted at Aqaba Digital Hub's carrier-neutral data centre facilities in Aqaba, will provide organisations in Jordan and the region with access to Zscaler's cloud-based cybersecurity services, while enhancing service performance for customers across the Levant and Iraq.

Commenting on the announcement, Smadi said, "The adoption of advanced cybersecurity technologies and modern security archi-



The launch introduces the first Zero Trust cloud infrastructure of its kind in Jordan, further boosting the Kingdom's position as a regional hub for digital infrastructure and cybersecurity services

tectures, including Zero Trust principles, represents a strategic step towards strengthening the resilience of Jordan's national cyberspace and digital ecosystem and supporting the Kingdom's ongoing digital transformation and digital economy ambitions in line with national priorities and future aspirations."

It also contributes to fostering a secure and trusted cyberspace for government entities, the private sector and individuals alike, he added.

"These efforts reinforce Jordan's position as a leading regional

hub for digital infrastructure and advanced technology services. The National Cyber Security Centre is pleased to support this milestone and remains committed to advancing Jordan's standing as a regional and international destination for cybersecurity investment, innovation and excellence," Smadi said.

Area Vice President for Emerging Markets – Middle East & Africa at Zscaler Saeed Agha said, "Launching Jordan's first of its kind Zero Trust cloud infrastructure is a milestone for Zscaler."

"Through our collaboration with Aqaba Digital Hub, we enable local organisations, including those in the Levant, Egypt and Iraq, to securely adopt AI and cloud technologies while meeting data residency requirements and improving cyber resilience," Agha added.

In turn, Founder and CEO of Aqaba Digital Hub Eyad Abu Khorma said, "We are pleased to welcome Zscaler's cloud presence to Jordan through Aqaba Digital Hub."

"This deployment highlights the ability of Jordan's digital in-

frastructure to support global technology platforms locally and reinforces Aqaba's growing role as a regional connectivity and digital services hub. We look forward to enabling more international technology providers to serve the region from Jordan," Abu Khorma added.

The launch reflects the increasing confidence of global technology providers in Jordan's digital infrastructure and highlights the country's growing importance as a regional hub for connectivity, cloud and cybersecurity services.

Somalia ex-PM says attacked by govt forces in Mogadishu

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Heavy gunfire broke out in central Mogadishu on Wednesday as Somalia's former prime minister Hassan Ali Khairi said he was attacked by government forces ahead of planned protests.

Somalia has fallen into a new political crisis after President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud announced that his term, due to expire on May 15, had been extended for a year.

The opposition and regional leaders have rejected the move and demonstrations were due to take place on Thursday.

The former prime minister relocated from his base in the heavily fortified green zone around the airport to his residence in the city, in order to take part in the protests.

"An attack was launched against us by forces commanded by

the president whose term has expired," Khairi said in a social media post, adding they had been preparing for a "peaceful demonstration" the following day.

An AFP journalist filmed panicked residents in the Howl Wadaag district near his home, with loud gunshots heard in the background.

Witnesses told AFP they saw armed opposition forces clashing with Somali police.

"The shooting lasted for about 15 minutes before it subsided. They even used RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades] and the sound of the explosions could be heard across the surrounding neighbourhoods," said one witness, Saleban Mahad.

The government condemned the "unfortunate incident", blaming the violence on "armed op-

position group militias" organised by Khairi, who had "directly targeted a police facility".

The statement, posted on X, said an investigation had been launched, and reiterated the government "will not tolerate any attempt to undermine the security of the capital city".

Gunfire was also reported near the residence of former president Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, close to the popular Lido Beach area, according to witnesses.

"We are staying inside our homes, and there is very little movement on the roads, even though the fighting has stopped," resident Mohamed Ali told AFP. Details on the cause of the clash were unclear.

Election plan

The president has been

attempting to move Somalia towards democratic elections, replacing a system based around clan elders.

Mohamud argues he was given an extra year in the presidency when a new constitution was passed by parliament in March that set the framework for polls.

But with the country deeply divided between rival clans, and much of it under the control of Al Shabaab, an Islamist insurgent group, there has been little progress on organising elections beyond a few localised pockets.

Opposition and regional leaders have strongly opposed Mohamud's plan, seeing it as an attempt to centralise power.

Foreign powers, primarily the United States and Britain, have attempted to broker talks

between the government and opposition to little avail.

Ex-president Ahmed has also moved into central Mogadishu for Thursday's protest.

He criticised the attack on Khairi, saying the president "seeks to cause further bloodshed despite not having a legitimate official mandate".

"This attack will not stop the demonstrations by residents of the capital who are protesting against injustice, displacement, and the abuse of government power," he said on X.

Previous presidents have also stayed in office beyond their mandates.

The last president, Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo, stayed more than a year in office after the official end of his mandate in 2021, triggering violence and international condemnation.

Jordan condemns Iran's attacks on Kuwait, Bahrain

Continued from page 1

The Indian foreign ministry said one of its citizens was killed at the airport and condemned the strike. "We again call on all parties to cease such attacks" on civilian targets, it said in a

statement.

An airport source told AFP the deceased was a traveller.

Kuwait's ministry of defence spokesman Saud Abdulaziz Al Atwan said 30 ballistic missiles and drones were launched as part

of the "heinous Iranian aggression" that caused "significant material damage to the building", AFP said.

Kuwait's state news agency said civil aviation authorities had suspended traffic and transferred arriving

flights to alternative airports after "Terminal One came under Iranian attacks causing casualties and damage".

Air traffic partially resumed later in the day, with all Kuwait Airways flights operating again.

Kuwait's international

airport was targeted several times during the war and had only fully resumed operations on June 1.

Bahrain authorities said they had intercepted three missiles and a number of drones launched by Iran.

Early kick-offs to reshape work, sleep, productivity as Al Nashama begin World Cup debut

Continued from page 1

Tarawneh also warned that lack of sleep affects the frontal lobe of the brain, reducing attention span, decision-making ability and risk assessment, while increasing irritability and anxiety.

He also highlighted the risk of "microsleep" episodes, brief involuntary sleep lapses that can occur during work, study or driving.

To mitigate the impact of early matches, Tarawneh advised fans to plan sleep schedules

in advance, take short naps (20-30 minutes or a full 90-minute cycle when possible), and maintain regular sleep patterns on non-match days to repay accumulated sleep debt.

He also recommended avoiding heavy meals

and limiting caffeine in the evening, noting that both can interfere with post-match recovery sleep, while discouraging prolonged screen use after matches to help the brain transition into rest.

As excitement builds

for Jordan's World Cup debut, Tarawneh said that balancing national enthusiasm with disciplined sleep habits will be key to ensuring fans can enjoy the tournament without compromising health, safety or productivity.

Hungary announces deal with Ukraine on minority rights

BUDAPEST (AFP) — Hungarian Prime Minister Peter Magyar said on Wednesday a "historic agreement" had been reached with Ukraine on the rights of the Hungarian ethnic minority, an issue that has long strained relations between the neighbours.

Since Magyar took office last month, he has sought to mend ties with Ukraine that were tense during the 16 years in office of Kremlin-friendly nationalist Viktor Orban.

The status of the Hungarian-speaking minority in western Ukraine has long been Budapest's central concern. Tens of thousands of ethnic Hungarians live in Ukraine's western Transcarpathia region.

"We have reached a

comprehensive agreement with Ukraine on expanding the linguistic, educational, cultural and political rights of the Hungarian minority" in Ukraine, Magyar said in a post on Facebook.

There were no public statements from the Ukrainian government on the matter and Ukrainian officials did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment.

Magyar said the Ukrainian government would incorporate the agreed measures into its legal system "in the near future".

Hungary also wants Ukraine to amend its minority action plan.

"Should this take place, the Hungarian government will consent to the opening of the first acces-

sion cluster in Ukraine's EU membership negotiations," Magyar said.

He reiterated that Hungary does not support a fast-track procedure for Ukraine to join the European Union.

It also will hold a referendum on Ukraine's membership should the country "succeed in closing all 33 accession chapters within the next 10 to 15 years", Magyar added.

Last month, the foreign ministers of the neighbouring countries held online talks to reset ties, while Magyar has offered to meet President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Orban infuriated Ukraine by consistently opposing its EU membership and obstructing EU aid packages for the war-torn country.

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‘Senegal’s new government strengthens president against rival’

By Malick Rokhy Ba

Agence France-Presse

DAKAR — The new government formed by Senegal’s President Bassirou Diomaye Faye in defiance of his powerful sacked prime minister can overcome potential efforts by his estranged ally to block its reforms, analysts say.

The dispute between Faye and his former mentor Ousmane Sonko has sparked a political crisis in the west African country, which is struggling with high debt.

Faye announced his new 30-member cabinet on Monday less than two weeks after he fired Sonko and dismissed the government following disagreements over issues including the troubled economy.

Sonko’s allies promptly appointed him speaker of parliament and he remains the undisputed leader of Pastef, the party he founded in 2014, to which Faye also belongs, and which controls 130 of the 165 seats in Senegal’s single legislative chamber.

Elected to lead the national assembly on May 26, Sonko promised he would not use his new role “to orchestrate institutional chaos”, but was quick to clarify that the institution would also not become a “rubber-stamp body”.

Retired senior civil servant Youssou Diallo told AFP he believed “will not be able to block government action... At most, he could slow it down”.

Meanwhile, the president is “the keystone of the institution”, leading the armed forces and having the power to dissolve the Assembly, Diallo said.

“The nature of our system is presidential. It grants greater powers to the president,” he said.

Now without Sonko’s mentorship, Faye “has surrounded himself with people who enable him to fully exercise his functions”, said Ousmane Sene, director of the Dakar-based research centre WARC.

While Pastef’s majority in the national assembly can censure the government, in the event of a deadlock the president can resort to “exceptional powers” to govern by decree for three months, noted Diallo.

From November, after two years in office, Faye will also be authorised to dissolve the national assembly in an attempt to secure a new majority.

‘Implosion’

Hours before the new government was announced on Monday, Sonko declared that Pastef “will not take part and will not be represented by any ministers”.

But about 10 of its allies and party members appeared on Faye’s cabinet list.

“If some within Pastef are unconditional supporters of Sonko, others do not fully share in Sonko’s actions,” said Sene.

Diallo said that “most of Ousmane Sonko’s allies have left him, as have several prominent activists. Pastef appears to be going through a phase of implosion”, the analyst judged.

“On the other hand, President Diomaye Faye seems to have come out stronger from this confrontation.”

Pastef will hold a party congress at the weekend to confirm Sonko as its leader.

Prevented from running in the last presidential election due to a defamation conviction, Sonko had designated his right-hand man, Faye, to replace him in the race.

Tensions emerged in July 2025, when the then-prime minister sharply attacked Faye, alleging a “problem of authority” in the country.

Local elections are scheduled for 2027, ahead of a presidential election in 2029.

Why Jordan needs a national institute for AI and advanced technologies

By Mwaffaq Otoom

Jordan has a strategic opportunity to establish a national platform dedicated to artificial intelligence and advanced technologies. A national institute for AI and advanced technologies should not be set up like a conventional university, nor should it become an extension or duplication of currently established universities. Rather, such an institute should be vision-driven, and link together industries, universities, research, entrepreneurs, investors and solutions to national challenges.

Jordan’s geographical location, regional relationships, bi-lingual talent pool and established reputation as a leader in human capital development all further enhances Jordan’s advantages

Artificial Intelligence used to be considered only of importance to computer scientists but now it has become an essential element for many different types of government operations in addition to being a significant product category in use globally (such as technology). Also, new technological advancements (like semi-conductors, embedded system technologies, drones and robotics, Internet of Things devices, cloud computing systems, data analytics, etc.) are going to affect the manner with which organizations conduct business and countries will compete economically. For Jordan, this is not a question of whether these technologies matter — it is a matter of how quickly and effectively can they grow the human resources, physical infrastructures and research environments (collectively the “human capital”) necessary to take advantage of new technology.

There are many examples across the globe where specialized institutions are becoming an increasingly important component of fulfilling these commitments. In the UAE, the Mohamed Bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence pro-

vides a unique focus on graduate education, research and innovation in the area of AI. New AI Graduate schools are being created in South Korea through linked to major universities and national priorities. France’s aivancity is an exciting example of an institution that is combining AI, data, business, ethics, and vocational training. Another significant example is the 42 Network that offers an alternative project-based teaching style and peer-to-peer learning for developing digital skill sets within a campus-based environment (e.g., 42 Amman and 42 Irbid). These institutions share a common theme that countries that wish to compete in the digital world are creating specialised, flexible, and industry-responsive institutions.

Jordan can draw lessons from these experiences when creating its own system. The institute must not be built purely around formal qualifications (i.e., degrees), but rather have its power lie in providing a range of flexible learning pathways that are responsive to a changing marketplace (i.e., micro-credentials, graduate certificate programmes, diplomas in professional studies, executive education and specialist training). These pathways will allow for the ability to stack credentials so an individual can attain new skills progressively. These programmes will also serve potential or newly graduated students, professional engineers, teachers, doctors, public sector employees, entrepreneurs, management and those needing rapid reskilling or upskilling.

Connecting directly with companies will be central to the work of the institute. Banks, telecommunications organisations, hospitals, ICT companies, manufacturers, energy companies, logistics providers, drone operators and all levels of government will play a critical role in helping to create problems, designing programmes, sponsoring labs, providing internships and supporting applied projects. Additionally, industry experts will also be used to teach and train. In fact, trainers may not necessarily be university faculty; rather they will typically consist of individuals who are practitioners, engineers, entrepreneurs, product developers, data scientists, cyber security professionals and technology professionals with real-world experience and who understand how users deploy these types of tools in their own industries.

The institute is to focus on priorities that are essential to Jordan as well as the larger region such as the use of AI in public services and health, education, water, agriculture, energy, Arabic Language technologies, fintech, cybersecurity, semiconductors, drones, robot-

ics, the Internet of Things (IoT), smart infrastructure, and digital government. Therefore, when developing programme content, students and trainees should not just learn algorithms or tools, but also be working on real-world problems such as improving hospital efficiencies, monitoring water systems, assisting farmers, creating Arabic AI applications, improving public services, securing digital infrastructure, and developing intelligent systems for manufacturing or service businesses.

The institute’s governance model must differ from traditional academic bureaucracy in order for it to succeed. It must provide flexibility in designing programmes, forming partnerships with other institutions, recruiting staff funding operations, evaluating the performance of staff, and receiving advice from international advisory boards; and it must provide opportunity for industry representation, performance-based funding, and recruitment of researchers, trainers and practitioners through processes that match technological change.

Jordan’s choice is not whether to be part of the AI revolution, but whether to help define it as well

The platform should also allow for entrepreneurship, technology transfers and innovations to take place at the institute as a part of what an institute represents; entrepreneurs can utilise the business incubators and accelerators, the proof-of-concept funding, the intellectual property support, the regulatory sandboxes and the challenge-based innovation programmes here. Challenge-based innovation will be developed using real challenges presented by ministries, municipalities, universities, hospitals, companies and national institutions where teams of learners, researchers and entrepreneurs will create solutions that can be turned into products, services,

start-ups and tools for the public sector.

The institute can be viewed as much as a place for learning as an opportunity to invest. A funding strategy that includes government assistance along with funding from domestic industry, local investors and international technology-based corporations, funds from development entities, and funds through venture capital or other strategic partners outside of Jordan should be developed to promote this model. This will provide the institute the means to recruit talent, develop state-of-the-art laboratories, assist startup businesses, and to link Jordan with other regional and international networks of innovation.

Jordan is in an excellent position to successfully implement this model. It has high social commitment to higher education — it has long history in the development and management of universities, and it has a well-respected cadre of highly qualified academy, engineering, information and communication technology (ICT), entrepreneurial and youth talent. Moreover, Jordan’s fast growing digital economy, relatively attractive investment environment, and strong capability in areas that will benefit effectively from AI and advanced technologies (banking, telecommunication, healthcare, education, ICT services, logistics and digital transformation of the public sector) provide Jordan with further advantages. Jordan’s geographical location, regional relationships, bi-lingual talent pool and established reputation as a leader in human capital development all further enhances Jordan’s advantages. With sound governance, partnership and investment models, Jordan should be able to leverage these strengths into the establishment of a specialist national institute catering not only for the domestic market but wider region.

The proposed national institute of AI and advanced technology is much more than a centre for training. Rather, it will serve as a national economic driver for building capacity, conducting applied research, transferring technology, supporting entrepreneurship, and promoting investment. If it has the necessary design flexibility, autonomy, good governance, and genuine industry engagement then it offers an opportunity for Jordan to transform from consuming advanced technologies to producing talent, solutions, companies, and innovation throughout the region. Therefore, Jordan’s choice is not whether to be part of the AI revolution, but whether to help define it as well.

Mwaffaq Otoom, former vice president at Yarmouk University (Jordan)

Before SpaceX goes public, a scramble to get on bandwagon

By Thomas Urbain

Agence France-Presse

NEW YORK – As SpaceX prepares its long-awaited stock market debut, investors everywhere are scrambling to get a piece of the action, through investment funds, related company stocks, and even online prediction markets.

“\$14 billion has poured into SpaceX linked funds since Musk confirmed the IPO...The hype is unlike anything I’ve seen,” said an X post from Gagola Value Capital, run by two British amateur investor brothers.

But not everyone can get in yet.

Until the IPO, which is expected on June 12, the only people who can buy SpaceX shares directly are large financial players such as banks and pension funds, or very wealthy individuals.

Everyone else has to find workarounds.

One option is the so-called secondary market, where employees and early investors who already own shares in SpaceX can sell them to others privately, at whatever price the two sides agree on.

Another option is exchange-traded funds, or ETFs, investment vehicles that anyone can

buy on the stock market.

Some of these funds have found ways to invest in SpaceX. By buying into the fund, an ordinary investor gets indirect exposure to SpaceX’s performance.

“We’ve increased assets under management by five times, and I’m fairly certain we have the largest percentage weight in SpaceX now of any ETF,” said Joel Shulman, founder of ER-Shares, whose XVOR fund has roughly 15 per cent of its holdings in SpaceX.

“This is by far the most exciting IPO that we’ve seen,” he said.

But the investment in SpaceX itself is through a legal structure that holds the actual shares, a complicated mechanism that puts some investors off.

Private so long

The approaching initial public offering is meeting a lot of pent-up demand for a company that founder and CEO Elon Musk has kept in the headlines, and out of the public markets, for 20 years.

“What is unusual about SpaceX is the scale of the enthusiasm and the fact that such

a large and influential company has remained private for so long,” said Ludovic Phalippou, a professor at the University of Oxford’s Said Business School.

“Today, investors are competing intensely to buy access to a company after much of the growth has already occurred,” he added.

By the time the public gets a chance to buy in, many of the biggest gains, the kind that made early Google or Amazon investors rich, may already be history.

“The irony is that many investors appear willing to pay a premium simply for the privilege of gaining access,” he added.

For Phalippou, this wave, which is driving prices through the roof, raises questions about the valuation of SpaceX, which is targeting \$1.75 trillion.

That valuation is widely seen as far from the reality of SpaceX’s current business, but based on the faith that Musk will deliver on science fiction-like promises that the company will get to Mars and put data centers into space.

“A great company doesn’t necessarily mean a great investment,” said Jay Ritter, an IPO specialist at the University of Florida.

“A company can be a great company, but if the valuation is too high, eventually it’s going to come down to Earth. And this is where I’ve got a concern about SpaceX,” he added.

Some are managing to get into SpaceX’s orbit by buying shares in other aerospace companies.

Launch company Rocket Lab has seen its market capitalisation nearly triple in two months, while satellite Internet specialist AST SpaceMobile has gained 78 per cent in two weeks.

Others are betting on Virgin Galactic, whose space tourism business model raises questions but which has the advantage of a stock ticker (SPCE) very close to SpaceX’s (SPCX).

Some traders are counting on a mix-up by certain investors between the two companies, which would benefit Virgin Galactic.

The last and smallest entry point is prediction platforms, through which investors can place money on a hypothesis.

The largest such platform, Kalshi, told AFP that \$29 million have been wagered on SpaceX-related questions, from Musk’s net worth at end-2026 to the possibility of a Mars landing before 2030.

BUSINESS

Thursday, June 4, 2026

TABADUL cross-regional trading platform to connect exchanges and borders

By Ilham Darwazah

AMMAN — The Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX) and the Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) activated a new cross-border trading link through the Tabadul Connectivity Platform, to make it easier for investors in Jordan and the UAE to access each other's markets using local brokers and local currencies.

Speaking at the launch event, ADX Chief Operating Officer Saker Asllan noted the activation as a milestone in regional market integration.

ADX Group CEO Abdullah Salem Al Nuaimi said the platform removes many of the barriers that individual investors traditionally face when seeking to invest in foreign markets.

"We facilitated the process of the investor's entry into the other market, especially the individual, through the local intermediary and through the local currency," Al Nuaimi



The Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange and the Amman Stock Exchange activate a new trading link through Tabadul Connectivity Platform

said.

He added "The investor in the UAE, through the local broker, can see opportunities that exist in the Jordanian market directly through their application, with transactions executed in the local currency and vice versa."

Nuaimi noted that the launch as the beginning of a broader effort to connect regional capital markets.

Asllan said the platform would allow investors to trade in the partner market without opening new accounts abroad or dealing with additional

compliance and funding procedures.

"If you are an investor sitting in Jordan and you have an active account with an existing local broker, you don't want to go through the hassle of finding an international broker, opening accounts elsewhere, complet-

ing requirements and transferring funds," he said. "All the operational aspects are managed by the platform."

According to Asllan, local brokers participating in Tabadul and connected to ADX will be able to offer their clients direct access to partner exchanges.

He stressed that the initiative would enhance the international visibility of companies listed on the ASE.

"It enhances the accessibility of the ASE to international communities," he said. "It acts as a gateway that enables the flow of information about local listed firms and assets internationally, while also enabling easier market access in both directions."

Asllan pointed to the experience of the Muscat Stock Exchange as evidence of the platform's potential impact. Since joining Tabadul two years ago, trading activity from international investors through the platform has grown significantly, accounting for around 12 per cent of total traded value on the exchange during the first quarter, he said.

"We hope we will have a similar success story with Amman and we will see trading flows and foreign investments coming through this platform,"

he added.

Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Jordan Securities Commission Imad Abu Haltam said the new connection builds on longstanding economic and investment ties between Jordan and the UAE.

"Tabadul Connectivity Platform is an opportunity for both countries, UAE and Jordan, to connect investors and traders among both countries to invest and trade smoothly, with the least cost and greater accessibility for both markets," Abu Haltam said.

He highlighted the performance of Jordan's listed companies, noting that firms traded on the ASE generated more than \$3 billion in net profits after tax in 2025 and continued to post strong results in the first quarter of 2026.

"The market capitalisation of listed companies exceeds JD30 billion, equivalent to around \$45 billion to \$50 billion," he said.

"This proves that Jordan is an investment hub for investors seeking security, profitability and liquidity."

Abu Haltam said investor interest was evident immediately after the platform's launch.

"Once we announced the connectivity, we had orders flowing from both exchanges," he said.

"This proves that everyone was waiting for this moment to open capital market borders between the two countries."

He expressed optimism that the platform would encourage greater capital flows in both directions and provide investors with more opportunities to diversify their portfolios and manage risk while seeking attractive returns.

The ADX-ASE connection marks the latest expansion of the Tabadul platform, which aims to deepen integration among Arab capital markets and facilitate cross-border investment across the region.

US sanctions Iran's largest crypto currency exchange Nobitex

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — The US Treasury on Tuesday issued sanctions against Nobitex, Iran's largest crypto currency platform, hitting a sector that has seen increased activity since the start of the war in the Middle East in February.

Experts say digital asset platforms have been used to circumvent sanctions placed on Iran's Revolutionary Guard and as a financial safe haven for civilians hit by soaring inflation.

Nobitex handled roughly \$5 billion in transactions from 2025 to March 2026, according to TRM Labs. Bloomberg estimated the entire country's crypto market to total around \$7.8 billion in March.

The United States and Israel launched the war on Iran in late February,



This illustration photo taken on July 19, 2021, in Istanbul shows a physical banknote and coin imitations of the Bitcoin crypto currency

engulfing the Middle East in violence as Tehran's retaliatory strikes hit Washington's regional allies.

The US Treasury alleged that Nobitex had processed "more than 50 percent of all Iranian digital asset inflows in 2025".

It said the exchange had facilitated payments

to government activities, sanctions evasion efforts, and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-linked transactions.

The Treasury also issued sanctions against two other Iranian digital asset exchanges, Wallax and Bitpin.

It additionally sanctioned Nobitex's three

co-founders and current CEO.

Iran has largely been cut off from the global financial system due to US and European sanctions in place for years before the war. Crypto currency has offered a path for citizens and businesses to transact with the rest of the world.

Oil rises, stocks slip on fragile Mideast peace hopes

LONDON (AFP) — Oil prices rose on Wednesday, edging closer to \$100 a barrel while stocks fell as further attacks between the United States and Iran dented hopes of an imminent peace deal.

Wall Street indexes retreated and European stocks were mostly in the red, following a mixed showing in Asia.

The dollar firmed as oil prices flared amid the Middle East escalations despite a supposed ceasefire, with a drone strike on a passenger terminal in Kuwait's international airport killing one person and wounding dozens of others.

"Oil prices continue to make headway after the overnight strikes on Kuwait and once more it is hitting most markets save for technology," said IG chief market analyst Chris Beauchamp.

He said the situation was shifting from a delicate ceasefire towards something more like a low-intensity conflict.

"This simply leaves the

vital issue of oil supplies unresolved, and the clock continues to tick down towards doomsday for oil inventories and the global economy," Beauchamp added.

The war has hit economic growth prospects worldwide, with a more severe shock likely should no effective ceasefire be agreed before 2027, the OECD warned on Wednesday.

Global economic growth is forecast to slip to 2.8 per cent this year even if Gulf energy exports return to pre-conflict levels in the third quarter, the group of 38 industrialised countries said in its quarterly update.

"The longer the disruptions last, the larger the economic and social costs become," said OECD Chief Economist Stefano Scarpetta.

Many countries would risk falling into recession, he noted, and a drop in investment spending — "including in energy-intensive AI" — would likely

push up unemployment.

AI enthusiasm has in general sustained investor sentiment, helping drive Wall Street indexes to repeated record highs in recent months.

Tuesday was no exception, with US chipmaker Marvell Technology soaring 32 per cent Tuesday after Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang hailed it as the next trillion-dollar firm.

However there was a bit of profit-taking on Wednesday.

"We had a huge rally, tech has been leading the way up. It's perfectly normal and healthy to see the market consolidate after a big move up," said Adam Sarhan of 50 Park Investments.

US equity markets remained in a "very bullish environment, specifically for tech and AI", he added.

Two pieces of data helped keep risk sentiment from souring: Activity in the US services sector expanded in May and private sector employment grew by more

than expected.

The data comes ahead of US employment data Friday that could determine if the Federal Reserve will keep its benchmark rate stable or potentially hike borrowing costs to fight inflation.

In Asia, the yen briefly strengthened amid speculation the Japanese authorities could step in to support the currency following last month's intervention, before giving up its gains against the dollar.

That came as the Japanese cabinet approved a \$19 billion supplementary budget to support households struggling with soaring everyday costs driven by the Iran war.

Tokyo's index closed up more than 2 per cent, helped by a surge in the share price of chipmaker Tokyo Electron.

Taipei was up two per cent thanks to Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company's strong advance.

EU eases spending rules to help member states tackle energy shock

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AFP) — The EU said on Wednesday that it would loosen its spending rules to help member states manage soaring energy prices sparked by the Middle East war.

EU Economy Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis said Brussels would allow more leeway for measures that help countries move away from dependency on fossil fuels.

"We see that the energy crisis is more protracted than initially envisaged. The Strait of Hormuz is still closed," Dombrovskis said, referring to the channel through which about a fifth of global oil passes.

Shipping through the key Gulf strait has been heavily restricted since the outbreak of war, following US-Israeli strikes on Iran in late February.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni last month asked the EU to relax its fiscal rules, seeking an exemption



EU countries have been debating a broad range of responses to a looming energy crunch

for energy spending in line with the one granted by Brussels for defence expenditure.

While the commission heeded Meloni's call, it also delivered a rebuke of specific measures Italy has taken so far to address the price spike.

Dombrovskis said moves such as Italy's

oil and gas to heat pumps, domestic solar installations, electricity storage and batteries, Dombrovskis told reporters before the announcement.

It would apply only to measures taken since February and member states must formally trigger the budget exemption clause.

But he offered further reassurances to EU states that Brussels was "monitoring the situation very closely and stand ready to propose measures as necessary".

The announcement came as the European Commission issued reports on the fiscal health of each member state including Italy.

The EU executive told Italy to ensure any steps it takes to "mitigate the impact of the hike in energy prices are temporary, targeted at protecting vulnerable households or at addressing the needs of energy-intensive firms".

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Wednesday amounted to JD22.5 million spread over 5.6 million shares that traded through 4,960 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.21 per cent, closing at 4056.08 points.

Out of 95 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 40 companies rose while the share price of another 29 declined.

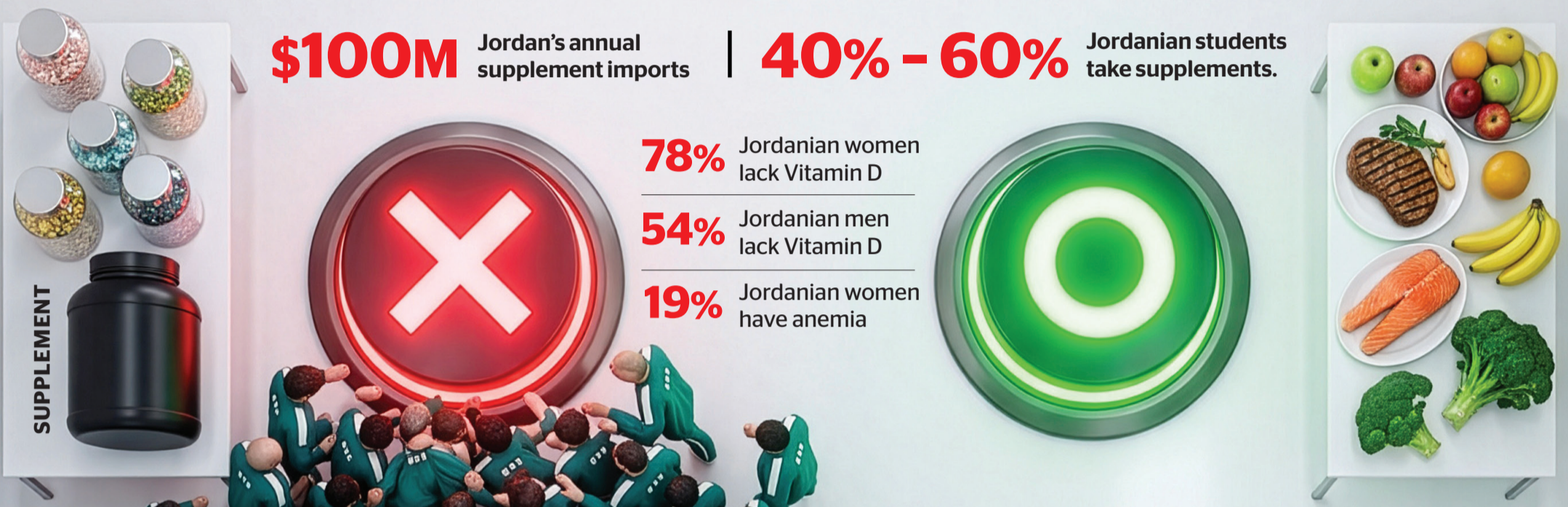
Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were General Investment by 5.73 per cent, National Aluminum Industrial by 4.29 per cent, Sura Development and Investment Plc. by 3.90 per cent, Arab East Investment by 3.54 per cent, and Arab Phoenix Holdings by 3.39 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Arab International for Education and Investment by 7.29 per cent, Jordan International Investment Company by 4.35 per cent, Salam International Transport and Trading by 4.17 per cent, The Arab Pesticides and Veterinary Drugs Manufacturing Company by 3.61 per cent, and Comprehensive Multiple Transportations Company by 3.03 per cent.



The Supplement Obsession: Between Medical Necessity and Blind Consumption

In an age where nutritional abundance is supposedly at its peak, many people are turning to supplements as though food has lost its power and can no longer provide our bodies with the essential nutrients they need.



By Manal Al Omari

In many pharmacies across Amman, shelves are packed with colourful bottles and packages of dietary supplements. Though their contents, names, and formulations may differ, they share the same promises: stronger immunity, better concentration, deeper sleep, and a healthier appearance. In an age where nutritional abundance is supposedly at its peak, many people are turning to supplements as though food has lost its power and can no longer provide the body with essential nutrients.

For some, these bottles shift from a temporary fix to a fixed daily routine. Asma, 36, suddenly experienced digestive disorders, stomach pain, weight gain, and persistent exhaustion in the summer of 2019. She initially turned to doctors but received conflicting opinions — one diagnosed her with leaky gut, another treated her for gallbladder inflammation — without reaching a clear diagnosis or effective solution.

The turning point came months later when she stumbled upon a YouTube video in which an influencer described symptoms identical to hers, linking them to gluten and insulin resistance. With no other option, she decided to try his advice, gradually eliminating gluten, sugars, and starches from her diet — and it worked. Her symptoms disappeared, the excess weight came off,

and her energy returned.

This experience led her to follow similar content, and after a video recommended routine blood tests to check for nutritional deficiencies, she discovered low levels of iron and vitamin D. She began taking supplements without medical consultation. "I used to go to doctors — one would say I had early rheumatism. Nobody thought to check my vitamin D," she says.

Blood tests became part of her health monitoring routine, and social media and AI tools became her sources for everything new about supplements. When iron supplements caused severe constipation, she researched alternatives. She continued adding supplements until she was taking four to five daily, adjusting types according to season and symptoms. She calls it a "supplement obsession", but sees it as a solution that spares her the inconsistency of medical diagnoses.

This obsession appears to be far from an individual phenomenon. Local supplement imports are estimated at roughly 100 million dollars annually, and studies suggest that 40-60 per cent of Jordanian university students use supplements regularly — most often without medical consultation.

The local health landscape partly explains this uptake. National surveys show that 78 per cent of women and 54 per cent of men suffer from vitamin D deficiency, whilst around 19 per cent of women of childbearing age have anaemia. Yet, this reality may not fully account for the scale

of consumption occurring outside any medical supervision.

From deficiency to lifestyle

Historically, supplements emerged from medical attempts to explain mysterious illnesses later attributed to nutritional deficiencies — what became known as "vitamins". Early discoveries came in the late nineteenth century, and scientists isolated and synthesised them during the first half of the twentieth century, leading to food fortification programmes that helped eradicate diseases such as rickets, pellagra and goitre.

This shifted in the second half of the twentieth century, when vitamins moved beyond treating deficiencies into the realm of disease prevention — particularly after American chemist Linus Pauling claimed that high doses of vitamin C could prevent or reduce the severity of colds. The idea spread widely despite scientific controversy, and supplements came to be seen as tools for improving health rather than correcting deficiencies.

The COVID-19 pandemic illustrated this shift most starkly. When early studies noted a correlation between vitamin D deficiency and severe coronavirus cases, social media transformed the finding from "an association worth studying" into "vitamin D prevents COVID". Demand for immunity-boosting supplements surged, causing local shortages and prompting Jordan's Food and Drug Administration to authorise additional imports.

Growing risks

Dania, 27, reflects a different dimension of this trend. After months of exercise and dieting without the desired results, she consulted a pharmacist friend who was also a body-builder and personal trainer. He recommended a package of supplements specifying types and timing. Her daily routine now comprises nine tablets distributed throughout the day to avoid stomach discomfort, costing over 100 dinars every two to three months — an investment she considers worthwhile given her improved sleep, energy, body composition and skin.

Dr Zaid Abdul Rahman, a consultant in haematology and blood oncology, finds this pattern concerning. Taking multiple supplements simultaneously risks exceeding safe doses or causing interactions between

ingredients. "People get used to taking things they don't need, telling themselves: if it doesn't help, it won't harm," he says.

Supplements cause around 23,000 emergency cases annually in the United States alone. Fat-soluble vitamins such as D, E, and A can accumulate in body tissues, potentially causing toxicity with symptoms ranging from dizziness and nausea to serious complications including liver damage. Excessive zinc intake over extended periods can cause copper deficiency, leading to blood disorders.

Abdul Rahman notes that the body may tolerate these substances for months or years, but health effects will eventually surface through accumulation and overdosing. His deeper concern is the widespread belief that the body always needs additional support to function optimally: "The problem is when people start believing supplements replace a healthy lifestyle, or that taking them makes illness impossible."

Regulation and reality

Jordan's Food and Drug Administration requires official approval before supplements can circulate, restricts their sale to licensed pharmacies, and classifies products exceeding daily recommended doses as medicines subject to drug registration procedures. However, laboratory testing is limited to verifying that ingredients match the label — not proving efficacy.

Pharmacist Shaheera Yaghmour believes Jordan's regulatory framework is stricter than many countries, making locally available products more reliable. She argues the key safeguard lies in activating the pharmacist's role in guidance and oversight rather than simply fulfilling demand.

Abdul Rahman calls for a more fundamental solution: prohibiting the promotion of supplements as preventive or therapeutic alternatives, restricting their use to specific medical cases supported by laboratory evidence of deficiency, and requiring robust scientific proof for any product claims — whilst acknowledging the difficulty of achieving this against the backdrop of a global market worth over 200 billion dollars and continuing to expand.

The article was first published in Arabic by 7iber.com.

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