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## Foreign reserves rise to \$27.18b in May — CBJ

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's foreign reserves reached \$27.18 billion at the end of May 2026, compared with \$27.05 billion in April, the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) said.

In a statement, the CBJ said the rise brings the total increase to about \$1.7 billion since the beginning of the year, reflecting sound monetary management, along with strong export performance and

steady inflows of remittances from Jordanians working abroad.

The CBJ also said that foreign reserves are sufficient to cover around 9.5 months of imports of goods and services, well above the internationally recommended minimum of three months, underscoring the Kingdom's strong external stability position.

In local currency terms,

foreign reserves stood at nearly JD19.3 billion at the end of May, up from JD18.1 billion at the close of 2025.

The value of Jordan's gold reserves rose to JD7.8 billion during the first five months of the year, compared with JD7.2 billion at the end of 2025. Gold holdings remained stable at approximately 2.4 million ounces stored in the Central Bank's vaults.

## King affirms national economy's ability to withstand, overcome crises

- King highlights ongoing efforts to implement Economic Modernisation Vision's projects, initiatives to stimulate investment, create jobs
- His Majesty notes importance of promoting local participation in implementation of mega projects

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah, during a meeting with economic figures on Monday, emphasised the national economy's demonstrated ability to withstand and effectively overcome crises.

During the meeting, held at Al Husseinia Palace, His Majesty said that despite the turmoil in the region, Jordan has consolidated its stability and strategic position, adding that the Kingdom's stability is a key factor in attracting investment, according to a Royal Court statement.



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

His Majesty King Abdullah meets with economic figures and affirms that the national economy has proven its ability to withstand and overcome crises effectively

The King highlighted the current phase of development in Jordan, technological advancements, and continuous efforts to implement the Economic Modernisation Vision's projects and initiatives to stimulate investment and create jobs.

His Majesty noted the importance of promoting local participation in the implementation of megaprojects, and adopting a participatory approach based on engaging with experts and leveraging

their expertise.

The meeting also covered developments in the region, with the King stressing the need to capitalise on the opportunities presented by upcoming regional connectivity projects, given their potential to strengthen economic cooperation and inter-

gration with countries in the region and internationally, the statement said.

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## Prime minister orders ministries to submit budgets before year-end to meet constitutional deadline

- Cabinet announces JD30 monthly salary increase for lower-income employees, retirees
- Gov't targets 15% reduction in operational expenditures next year

AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Monday urged ministries and government departments to begin drafting their 2027 budgets, ensuring the government submits the draft general budget within the constitutional timeframe for parliamentary approval before the end of 2026.



Petra photo

Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Monday chairs a Cabinet session, during which he orders that ministries and government agencies begin drafting their 2027 budgets

Chairing a Cabinet session, Hassan emphasised the priority of strategic capital projects, particularly in the water, transport and energy sectors, according to a Prime Ministry statement.

He also stressed continued spending on health, education and digitisation in line with the Economic Modernisation Vision and the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap.

Hassan also ordered

a monthly salary increase of JD30 for civil and military employ-

ees and retirees whose monthly salaries are below JD600.

He also instructed the relevant entities to allocate the required funds

in the 2027 budget.

Hassan also tasked the minister of finance with developing a clear plan to reduce operational expenses across ministries, government entities and independent institutions by 15 per cent next year.

Hassan underscored the need to prioritise the social safety net in the coming year to help low-income citizens cope with economic pressures stemming from regional conditions and their impact on the economy.

He also directed continued allocations to maintain subsidies for wheat, barley, gas cylinders and national aid, amounting to more than JD500 million, in addition to funding for the University Student Support Fund.

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JT file

Al Bashir Public Hospital in Amman

## Cabinet approves \$400 million World Bank financing agreement for health sector reform

AMMAN (JT) — The Cabinet on Monday approved a \$400 million financing agreement with the World Bank's International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) to support Jordan's results-based Health Sector Reform Programme.

The programme is one of the government's key

reform initiatives aimed at improving the efficiency of public health spending and enhancing the quality of healthcare services provided to citizens.

According to a government statement, the programme will focus on strengthening financial and administrative

governance systems in public hospitals, improving primary healthcare services, expanding early detection of non-communicable diseases, and accelerating digital transformation and electronic integration across healthcare services.

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## Jordan marks 27th anniversary of King's Accession to the Throne



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan on Tuesday will mark the 27th anniversary of His Majesty King Abdullah's Accession to the Throne.

Since His Majesty's accession on June 9, 1999, Jordan has witnessed significant developments in building and consolidating the modern state, boosting the rule of law and achieving progress, advancement and accomplishments across various fields, including the economic, social and political sectors.

The period has also seen the launch of strategically important projects and the devel-

opment and restructuring of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) and security agencies.

Developing Jordan, advancing national development, and serving Jordanians remain among His Majesty's top priorities, as he consistently expresses pride in the achievements accomplished by Jordanians.

Since assuming his constitutional powers, His Majesty has launched Royal initiatives across all governorates, districts and Badia regions nationwide to enhance development in the education, health, industrial

and productive sectors, while encouraging community members to contribute to achieving sustainable development.

King Abdullah also places great importance on improving the healthcare sector through constructing new hospitals, enhancing healthcare services throughout the Kingdom, and launching programmes aimed at boosting social protection and improving the conditions of low-income families.

The King is also committed to enriching the democratic process and enhancing the role of the

legislative authority as a cornerstone of the democratic development of the Jordanian state.

His Majesty attaches significant importance to promoting the principles of good governance in order to build a free national economy, sustain economic development, combat poverty and unemployment, create an attractive investment climate, and launch initiatives aimed at achieving economic advancement and positioning Jordan as a regional gateway for information and communications technology.

As Supreme Commander of JAF, His Majesty also places great emphasis on the army and security agencies, ensuring that these institutions remain at the forefront in terms of preparedness, training, and qualification.

The King continues efforts to defend Arab causes, particularly the Palestinian cause, which remains a Jordanian and Hashemite priority in achieving a just and comprehensive peace based on the two-state solution.

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HRH Prince Hassan on Monday visits the Airport Security and Protection Directorate and observes a training session that included light weapons live-fire drills and security operations simulating threats to aircraft and airport security

## Prince Hassan visits Airport Security and Protection Directorate

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Prince Hassan on Monday visited the Airports Security and Protection Directorate, where he was received by the assistant for administration and human resources to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the director of the directorate.

In the presence of high-ranking officers from the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF), Prince Hassan was briefed by the director on the directorate's training programmes, operational and logistical plans, future strategies and assigned duties, according to a JAF statement.

The prince and the attendees observed a training session that included light weapons live-fire drills and security operations simulating threats to aircraft and airport security.

The exercises also covered countering acts of unlawful interference aboard aircraft, securing a safe zone for hostage rescue, ensuring passenger safety and evacuating casualties.

Prince Hassan commended the capabilities of the directorate's personnel in handling security threats that could compromise the safety of passengers and workers within aircraft and airports.

The directorate plays a "pivotal" role in enhancing aviation security and protecting airports and their affiliated facilities.

By implementing inspection and security measures in accordance with the highest approved standards, and in coordination with competent authorities, the directorate contributes to maintaining passenger safety, securing aviation facilities and supporting the national security framework.

## Princess Basma highlights mentoring, English skills as keys to young women's success

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Princess Basma, chairperson of the Jordanian National Forum for Women (JNFW), on Monday stressed the importance of mentoring and English-language programme as pathways to young women's success.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of the programme, implemented by JNFW under the "Encouraging young women and inspiring networks for inclusive and transformational education" project, Princess Basma highlighted such initiatives' role in empowering young women, developing their personal and professional skills, and expanding opportunities to pursue their aspirations.

She also underscored the importance of investing in young women's education and empowerment as a "foundation for a more prosperous and sustainable future", the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The princess praised the project's focus on introducing participants to non-traditional career fields



HRH Princess Basma, chairperson of the Jordanian National Forum for Women, on Monday underscores the importance of investing in young women's education and empowerment

in key sectors, while boosting their English-language proficiency and communication skills to enhance their employment prospects and future career opportunities.

The programme targeted 108 young women from several governorates, providing specialised training in English and non-traditional employment sectors aligned with the evolving demands of

the labour market.

Princess Basma also commended the efforts of organisers, partners, teachers and volunteers, stressing the value of such partnerships in supporting young women's empowerment and broadening their future opportunities.

The programme adopted a vocational mentoring approach, whereby female mentors with expertise in the targeted fields were

selected to guide, train and support the participating young women.

It also included regular sessions, practical learning activities, and field visits to relevant institutions operating in the respective sectors, in partnership with Microsoft Jordan, the Business and Professional Women's Association, and the Irbid Directorate of Tourism.

JNFW seeks to build a "sustainable" women's network focused on intergenerational and cross-sector learning among women from diverse professional backgrounds.

It also aims to raise young women's awareness of their role in public life and highlight "influential" female role models who can inspire others to overcome social challenges and engage more actively in the labour market.

### GENDER EQUALITY

## EU official highlights Jordan's efforts to uphold humanitarian law

During her visit, she met with civil society and women's rights organisations to discuss civic space, freedom of expression, gender equality

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's hosting of the upcoming high-level conference on International Humanitarian Law proves the Kingdom's commitment to ensuring this law remains an active obligation rather than an optional choice, said EU Special Representative for Human Rights Kaja Ollongren.



Kaja Ollongren

The statement followed Ollongren's official visit to Jordan on Wednesday and Thursday, which builds upon the EU-Jordan Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership and follows up on the Subcommittee on Human Rights held in September 2025, Al Mamlak TV reported on Monday.

Ollongren and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi agreed on a shared interest in supporting a rules-based international system

and building human rights-based future across Palestine, Lebanon and Syria.

During her visit, she met with civil society and women's rights organisations to discuss civic space, freedom of expression and gender equality, where representatives expressed concern over regional conflicts impacting human rights and called for their active inclusion in the policy-making process.

The EU official also visited the Jabal Al Hussein camp for refugees and met with UNRWA senior leadership, where she reiterated the EU's support for the agency's essential role in ensuring

a rights-based approach for Palestinian refugees.

She encouraged Jordan to fully implement its Universal Periodic Review commitments...

She visited a UNHCR registration centre and praised Jordan as a regional model for hosting refugees, stressing the EU support for Jordan's commitment to the voluntary and sustainable return of

Syrian refugees, while ensuring vulnerable groups maintain access to protection and basic services.

Attending the Petra National Trust awards, hosted by HH Princess Dana Firas and Tourism Minister Imad Hijazin, Ollongren highlighted cultural rights in preserving identity, noting that international law obligates conflicting parties to protect cultural and religious sites.

She encouraged Jordan to fully implement its Universal Periodic Review commitments and involve civil society and UN agencies in creating its National Comprehensive Plan for Human Rights.



The Zaha Cultural Centre and the Arab Union for International Exhibitions and Conferences on Monday sign a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance cooperation in organising local and regional events and exhibitions

## Zaha Centre, Arab union for exhibitions sign MoU to enhance cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — The Zaha Cultural Centre and the Arab Union for International Exhibitions and Conferences on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation in organising local and regional economic and cultural events and exhibitions.

The agreement aims to support environmental and community initiatives, foremost of which is the "Green Wheelz" project, and promote the Arab International Plastics Exhibition and the "Beauty Jo" exhibition, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The MoU also seeks to facilitate the exchange of expertise and knowledge in exhibition management, marketing, and corporate communication, while encouraging the participation of youth and volunteers in events to develop their practical skills and open future avenues of cooperation serving mutual goals.

The Memorandum was signed by the centre's Executive Director Rania Sbeih and the union's Secretary-General Mahmoud Jarrah.

Under the cooperation, the third edition of the Interna-

tional Exhibition for Plastics, Cosmetics and Packaging will be held at the Jordan International Exhibition Centre at Mecca Mall between October 18 and 20, with a wide participation from local, Arab, and international companies.

Sheih underlined the importance of the partnership in expanding cooperation with institutions specialising in exhibition management, noting its positive impact on youth and the local community through providing qualitative training and practical opportunities.

For his part, Jarrah commended the Zaha Cultural Centre's role in community service and empowering children and youth.

He stressed that the MoU represents a "significant" step towards boosting synergy between cultural and economic institutions, while supporting projects that merge community development, sustainability and innovation.

The MoU entails collaboration in executing joint events, allocating dedicated spaces for recycling project activities and displays, and organising specialised training programmes in the exhibition and conference industry.

### ASTRONOMY

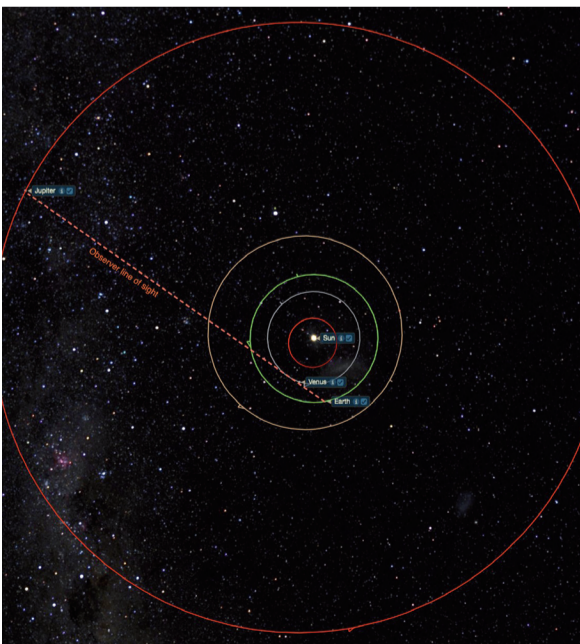
## Jupiter, Venus conjunction visible across Jordan Tuesday

AMMAN (JT) — The sky over Jordan and the Arab region will witness a "distinctive" astronomical phenomenon on Tuesday evening, as the planets Jupiter and Venus appear in conjunction on the western horizon, President of the Jordanian Astronomical Society (JAS) Ammar Sakaji said on Monday.

Sakaji added that the phenomenon can be observed with the naked eye immediately after sunset, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He noted that the two planets will appear as the brightest objects in the sky after the Sun and the Moon.

Their apparent proximity will gradually increase, reaching its peak on Tuesday evening when they will be separated by an angular distance of about 1.6 degrees, making the phenomenon clearly visible to observers across Jordan and the



The sky over Jordan and the Arab region will witness a 'distinctive' astronomical phenomenon on Tuesday evening, as the planets Jupiter and Venus appear in conjunction on the western horizon

Arab region, the JAS president noted.

He added that Jupiter, the largest planet in the Solar System, will appear close to Venus, historically known

as the planet of love and beauty, creating a "remarkable" celestial display that can be observed until around 10:20pm Jordan time.

Sakaji noted that the

conjunction is only an apparent one, resulting from a geometric alignment as seen from Earth, despite the actual distance between the two planets being hundreds of millions of kilometres, where Jupiter is approximately 904 million kilometres from Earth, and Venus is about 179 million kilometres away.

He pointed out that the conjunction of Jupiter and Venus has been associated throughout history with various cultural and civilisational meanings.

Ancient civilisations regarded Venus as a symbol of love, beauty and fertility, while Jupiter was associated with prestige, authority and cosmic order, giving the phenomenon a special place in humanity's cultural heritage across the ages, he added.

Sakaji said that the event presents an opportunity for astronomy enthusiasts and

astrophotographers to observe and document a celestial scene that combines beauty with scientific precision.

He noted that Jupiter-Venus conjunctions occur at varying intervals, although some are particularly notable because of the planets' apparent closeness and exceptional brightness.

He added that observers will also be able to view the stars Pollux and Castor in the constellation Gemini to the right of the conjunction, while Mercury will appear low above the western horizon.

Sakaji said that JAS, in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities, will conduct observations and photography of the conjunction from the Amman Citadel site, with the aim of promoting Jordan's archaeological and tourist attractions and highlighting their cultural and historical significance.



Photo courtesy of Lower House

Lower House National Guidance, Media and Culture Committee holds meeting on the state of print journalism and the challenges facing the sector

## Press plays key role in reflecting national issues — Lower House speaker

AMMAN (JT) — Lower House Speaker Mazen Qadi said on Monday that Jordanian journalism has been, and remains, a key partner in the national development process.

His remarks came during a meeting held by the Lower House National Guidance, Media and Culture Committee to discuss the state of print journalism and the challenges it faces.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Government Communication Mohammad Momani, and the general managers of the Jordan Press Foundation (JPF), Ad-Dustour and Al Ghad dailies.

Qadi said print journalism has, over decades, contributed to conveying the Kingdom's positions and issues to public opinion with professionalism and responsibility, while reflecting citizens' concerns, aspirations, and daily realities, according to a Lower House statement.

He reiterated that His Majesty King Abdullah attaches great importance to national media and has consistently stressed the need to support and empower it, noting that the monitoring role of the press is a cornerstone of modern statehood.

He added that all public work must be subject to accountability and evaluation to enhance transparency and safeguard the national interest.

Committee chair MP Hussein Amoush said the meeting was held to review the reality of daily newspapers and listen to the main challenges they face.

He reiterated that His Majesty King Abdullah attaches great importance to national media...

Amoush also pointed to financial and administrative pressures and the need for practical solutions to ensure sustainability.

He added that journalists constitute the first line of defence in conveying citizens' concerns to decision-makers, calling for a long-term strategic approach to address challenges facing the media sector amid rapid global changes.

Momani, who is also the government spokesperson, said that the press represents a responsible watchdog authority and a key partner in shaping public opinion and analysing events.

He added that journalists are partners in protecting the home front and defending the nation, stressing the government's commitment to safeguarding media independence and providing an enabling environment for national media.

He said the ministry is ready to consider proposals that could help newspapers overcome current challenges.

Director-General of JPF, publisher of Al Rai and The Jordan Times, Hassan Jazazi said that the institution is pursuing a digital transformation strategy alongside its print operations.

He said that it now operates 14 social media platforms and advanced production studios, producing content in both Arabic and English.

He added that efforts are under way to convert written content into audio material, noting that government and municipal advertising remains a key challenge facing the sector.

# Gov't extends tourism support to specialised transport companies

AMMAN (JT) — The Cabinet, during a session chaired by Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Monday, decided to extend tourism support programmes and facilities to specialised tourist transport companies affected by recent regional tensions that have impacted tourism activity.

Under the decision, the companies will be eligible for financial facilities previously approved for the tourism sector, including financing to cover operational expenses, with the government covering the associated interest costs until the end of 2026, according to a Prime Ministry statement.

The Cabinet said that the measure aims to ensure the continuity of these companies, preserve investment and jobs in the sector, and maintain the readiness of the tourist transport fleet in line with expected recovery in tourism activity.

According to government figures, 26 licensed specialised tourist transport companies operate in the Kingdom, with a fleet of around 1,100 buses and tourist vehicles and about 2,500 employees.

The Cabinet also approved the draft Quality Assurance and Accreditation Commission Law of 2026 and referred it to the Lower House in accordance with the Constitution.

The government said that the draft law aims to establish an integrated national framework for accreditation and quality assurance across general and higher education, as well as vocational and technical training.

It expands the commission's mandate to include accreditation and quality assurance for kindergartens and public and private



Photo courtesy of Prime Ministry

The Cabinet on Monday decides to extend tourism support programmes and facilities to specialised tourist transport companies affected by recent regional tensions

schools, and transfers responsibilities related to recognition of non-Jordanian educational institutions, degree equivalency, and verification and certification of academic credentials to the commission.

The draft law also strengthens the commission's role in accrediting higher education institutions and vocational and technical training programmes, as well as managing the National Qualifications Framework to better align education outcomes with labour market needs, the statement said.

The government said that the measure is aimed at improving education quality, enhancing the competitiveness of Jordanian educational institutions, and supporting investment in human capital.

The Cabinet also ap-

proved the draft Professional Work Regulation Law of 2026, aimed at regulating professional and technical occupations and curbing unregulated practices in the labour market.

The Cabinet also approved the draft Quality Assurance and Accreditation Commission Law of 2026 and referred it to the Lower House in accordance with the Constitution

The legislation assigns the Ministry of Labour responsibility

for professional and technical examinations, issuing professional licences, and licensing vocational and technical training providers.

The Cabinet also approved the justifications for a draft amendment to the Arbitration Law of 2026, aimed at establishing a specialised international arbitration centre and strengthening Jordan's position as a regional hub for dispute resolution and investment.

It also approved the justifications for a draft bylaw amending the administrative structure of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply, including the establishment of a Competition Protection Department to enhance implementation of the Competition Law and improve institutional efficiency.

The Cabinet also approved the Coop-

erative Development Institute Bylaw and the Cooperative Fund Bylaw, aimed at supporting cooperatives through capacity-building, training and financing programmes to enhance their developmental role and create job opportunities.

It also approved a draft law repealing the Civil Consumer Corporation Law, paving the way for the completion of its merger with the Military Consumer Corporation, in a move aimed at improving service efficiency and strengthening food security while preserving employees' rights.

The Cabinet also approved JD3.25 million in government support under the Housing Finance Support Programme for eligible households, aimed at helping low- and middle-income families access home ownership through concessional loans.

## Jordan field hospital in northern Gaza commences operation

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordanian field hospital in northern Gaza on Monday started receiving patients and providing medical services following the arrival of specialised doctors and technical staff.

The hospital director said that specialist clinics, emergency rooms, paediatrics and surgical departments are fully prepared to operate to deliver high-quality healthcare services to all patients, according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement.

The deployment of medical and technical personnel forms part of Jordan's ongoing humanitarian efforts to alleviate the suffer-



JAF photo

The Jordanian field hospital in northern Gaza on Monday commences receiving patients and providing medical services

ing of people in Gaza by ensuring the continued provision of essential medical services under difficult conditions.

The move is part of Jordan's continued efforts, under the directives of His Majesty King Abdullah, to support Palestinians

by delivering medical and humanitarian assistance.

Jordan runs two military field hospitals in Gaza, one in the Strip's

north and was established in 2009 following the war in 2008, and the second is in Khan Younis in the south, which was established in November 2023 at the peak of the Israeli war of aggression on the coastal enclave that erupted on October 7, 2023.

Besides the field hospitals in Gaza, the JAF established the Jordanian field hospital in Nablu in late November 2023.

Other humanitarian programmes include the land bridge for aid delivery, the mobile bakery, the Restoring Hope Initiative, which provides prosthetics for amputees, and the evacuation of critical cases to Jordanian hospitals.

## Jordanian airspace continues normal operations amid regional escalation — CARC

AMMAN (JT) — Air traffic across Jordanian airspace and airports remains normal despite ongoing regional developments, Civil Aviation Regulatory Commission (CARC) Chief Commissioner Daifallah Farajat said on Monday.

Farajat said the commission is closely monitoring regional developments and maintaining continuous coordination with relevant authorities to ensure the safety of air navigation and the smooth operation of airports, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

He urged travellers to contact their airlines before heading to the airport to verify flight schedules and departure times, noting that regional developments may affect



JT file

Civil Aviation Regulatory Commission (CARC) Chief Commissioner Daifallah Farajat says on Monday air traffic across Jordanian airspace and airports remains normal despite ongoing regional developments

some flights.

Farajat stressed that the commission has implemented all necessary precautionary measures to safeguard passengers and aircraft, reaffirming that Jordanian airspace is operating in line with the highest

international safety standards.

The statement comes amid renewed regional tensions after several missiles breached Jordanian airspace following an Iranian missile launch towards Israel on Sunday evening.

## Summer sees rise in viral infections affecting eyes, respiratory tract — specialist

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — Summer is associated with increased viral activity, including infections that may affect both the upper respiratory tract and the eyes, according to Chest and Respiratory Diseases and Allergy Consultant Mohammad Tarawneh.

Tarawneh told The Jordan Times that this period of the year typically

sees increased activity of adenoviruses, which are the main cause of a clinical syndrome known as "pharyngoconjunctival fever".

He said that the condition is characterised by fever, sore throat, eye redness, increased tearing and swelling of lymph nodes around the ear and jaw as part of the body's immune response.

Tarawneh noted that summer activities such

as visiting swimming pools and water resorts contribute to the spread of these viruses through respiratory droplets or direct contact, particularly in crowded settings.

He also highlighted the role of air conditioning in enclosed spaces, adding that the sudden transition from hot outdoor environments to cooled indoor areas may strain the mucous membranes lining the respiratory tract.

He also said that continuous use of air conditioning without proper ventilation may allow viral particles to remain suspended in the air for longer periods.

On treatment, the consultant stressed that these infections are self-limiting viral illnesses and that antibiotics have no role in their management.

He said treatment should focus on support-

ive care, including fever reducers, increased fluid intake and lubricating eye drops under medical advice.

He urged the public to adopt simple preventive measures to reduce infection risk, including regular handwashing, avoiding touching the face and eyes, ensuring ventilation in closed spaces, and staying at home when infected to prevent transmission.



JT file

The Jordan University Hospital



Responders conduct a rescue operation at a collapsed building after a 7.8 magnitude earthquake in General Santos City on Monday

## Major quake off Philippines kills at least 31, dozen still missing

GENERAL SANTOS, Philippines (AFP) — A 7.8-magnitude earthquake in the southern Philippines on Monday killed at least 31 people, according to provincial authorities, after toppling buildings and sparking tsunami warnings across the region.

National disaster authorities said at least a dozen people were still missing, while 134 had sustained injuries.

Philippine authorities urged people in affected coastal regions to move to higher ground after the offshore quake hit south of General Santos, a city of about 720,000, where at least nine were killed.

A series of powerful aftershocks rocked the area from about two hours after the first quake, according to the United States Geological Survey, with the largest measuring 6.5 magnitude.

In General Santos, an AFP journalist watched on Monday afternoon as rescue workers dug through the rubble of a popular grocery store chain in a desperate bid to reach the bodies of two employees buried beneath.

Rene Punzalan, disaster chief for hard-hit Sarangani province, told AFP 14 people had died in Glan municipality alone when a landslide buried their homes at the foot of a mountain.

"The landslide happened immediately after the earthquake, so many lives were lost," he said, adding that some areas had yet to report if they had sustained casualties.

"The greatest challenge is communication. The power was

cut, so it's hard to get updates," Punzalan said.

"We're worried about aftershocks," he added. "We can feel the fear of the residents."

Videos posted to social media and verified by AFP showed a shopping centre with a Jollibee fast food restaurant reduced to rubble in General Santos City, while a school building that officials said was unoccupied crumpled in another.

"Lord, it has really collapsed!... The building has really collapsed!" someone can be heard shouting as the abandoned school structure topples.

In another video verified by AFP, young schoolchildren could be seen screaming in the arms of their teachers as the quake violently swayed them back and forth on the ground.

A flimsy metal structure in the background collapsed as the video uploaded to the school's official Facebook page came to an end. An accompanying caption said no one was under the structure when it fell.

Punzalan, the Sarangani disaster chief, told AFP that more than 2,000 people evacuated due to a morning tsunami warning were now awaiting a green light to return to their homes.

"[Authorities] are still assessing the situation now if it will be OK to send them home," he said.

A notice from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre had said tsunami waves were possible along the coasts of the Philippines, Indonesia, Palau, Taiwan and Papua New

Guinea.

But by mid-afternoon, the Philippines and other countries had cancelled their warnings.

Waves that did reach the Pacific coast of Japan, where authorities had issued a tsunami advisory, were reported to be no higher than 20 centimetres.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, who suspended classes across Mindanao island on what was to have been the first day of school, had called on residents in coastal areas to evacuate immediately.

"Move to higher ground now. Do not wait," he said. "Your life is more important than anything left behind."

The airport in General Santos, meanwhile, has been closed until further notice, officials said.

A video verified by AFP showed what appeared to be chunks of ceiling that had collapsed onto the baggage claim area.

Earthquakes are a near-daily occurrence in the Philippines, which is situated on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic activity stretching from Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin.

Eastern Mindanao was rocked by a pair of earthquakes of 7.4 and 6.7 magnitude in October that killed at least eight people.

These followed a magnitude 6.9 quake days earlier that killed 76 people and destroyed or damaged 72,000 buildings in Cebu province in central Philippines, according to government figures.

## Lebanon heritage site damaged by Israeli bombardment — official to AFP

TYRE, Lebanon (AFP) — Israeli bombardment has damaged a World Heritage site in Lebanon's southern city of Tyre, a culture ministry official told AFP on Monday, as correspondents there saw debris and damage.

One of the oldest cities on the Mediterranean coast, Tyre lies around 20 kilometres from the Israeli border, and its UNESCO World Heritage listed ruins are located in two main areas of the city.

Israel's military has heavily bombed Tyre since the latest war erupted with Hizbollah and on Sunday it issued a further evacuation warning that covered districts including one of the archaeological areas, known as the city site, which is home to Roman ruins.

AFP correspondents on Monday saw dust and debris close to ancient columns after the previous day's bombardment, as well as twisted metal and broken tree branches near several stone artefacts.

Concrete and metal debris also appeared to have been strewn onto a stone stairway.

Ali Badawi, regional director of archaeological sites for south Lebanon in the culture



A man stands amid debris following Israeli airstrikes that hit the previous day, near the archaeological site of the Roman hippodrome in the southern Lebanese city of Tyre on Monday

ministry, said on Sunday's bombardment had had "the worst impact" on Tyre's ancient areas since the war began.

"The amount of debris and damage at the site is high," he said, noting both the direct impact, with the site's administrative office struck and the indirect impact of debris strewn from nearby bombardment.

"Some archaeological artefacts were damaged when rubble fell

on them, as debris fell over a large area, impacting a large number of elements at the site — columns, capitals, column bases, mosaics," he said.

He said a preliminary damage assessment was under way but noted experts were not at the site due to the danger, adding that UNESCO had been notified.

Since a previous round of hostilities between Israel and Hizbollah which erupted

in 2023, UNESCO has granted more than 70 heritage sites in Lebanon, including Tyre, "provisional enhanced protection", the organisation's highest level of legal protection.

"This is a civilian site, a World Heritage site, it's not a military site at all, and there are no military activities there," Badawi said.

He noted the other part of the site in Tyre, Al Bass, had been damaged earlier in the conflict.

Neither Israel nor Hizbollah have respected a ceasefire in the war, which erupted when the Iran-backed group entered the Middle East conflict on March 2 with rocket fire at Israel to avenge the US-Israeli killing of Iran's supreme leader.

Late last month, Lebanon's Culture Minister Ghassan Salame told AFP that Israeli strikes on the country's south were putting heritage sites in "serious danger".

## WHO chief praises Uganda's Ebola effort

KAMPALA (AFP) — The head of the World Health Organisation (WHO) visited Uganda on Monday and praised its efforts to limit the spread of an Ebola outbreak from neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The WHO has declared an international health emergency over the outbreak which has caused 515 confirmed infections in the DRC, including 91 deaths, since it was announced on May 15 in north-eastern DRC.

Uganda has recorded 19 cases and two deaths. All but five have been Congolese nationals who crossed the border.

"The success rate in managing Ebola in Uganda has been good," said WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus during a visit to the Mulago National Referral Hospital in the capital, Kampala.

"Because of the experience gained in manag-



Volunteers of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Red Cross wearing personal protective equipment carry the body of an Ebola virus disease victim from the morgue of the Rwampara health centre

ing public health emergencies, there is a case fatality rate of less than 1 per cent," he said, adding that the WHO had supported the training of 148 health workers for the Ebola response.

He singled out the decision by the government to cancel annual Martyrs Day celebrations on June 3 that normally attract huge

crowds from across the region.

"It was a wise decision because Ebola spreads fast with such gatherings. We're now counting 19 cases and if the Martyrs Day celebration had happened, it would be in three digits now," Tedros said.

The WHO head met Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and said

they discussed "cross-border collaboration".

"There is no need for restrictions since they affect the economy," said Tedros. "Restrictions don't really help... Addressing the epicentre is the solution."

One of the confirmed cases in Uganda was a Congolese citizen who had travelled to the United Arab Emirates before entering Uganda.

Two days later, the UAE announced it was banning entry to travellers arriving from the DRC, Uganda and South Sudan.

In Mauritius, L'Express newspaper reported on Monday that the island nation was also barring foreign travellers from the three countries.

This is the 17th Ebola outbreak to hit the DRC, a vast and unstable central African country of more than 100 million people.

There is no specific vaccine or treatment for

the Bundibugyo Ebola strain behind the latest outbreak.

Tedros said the WHO was supporting Uganda together with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and other partners across the region.

"With continued collaboration, I am confident this outbreak can be brought under control," he added.

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

The WHO and Africa CDC launched a \$518 million plan on Friday to battle the outbreak over the next six months.

The epicentre of the current outbreak is the DRC's north-eastern Ituri province, a region that is difficult to access region due to poor roads and is plagued by insecurity because of armed groups.

## S.African anti-migrant protesters march after Ramaphosa warns vigilantes

KWATHEMA, South Africa (AFP) — Hundreds of anti-migrant protesters marched through a township outside Johannesburg on Monday, a day after South African President Cyril Ramaphosa pledged action against groups accused of fuelling xenophobic violence.

South Africa has seen recurring bouts of anti-migrant violence, with protests intensifying this year after vigilante groups ordered undocumented foreigners to

leave by June 30.

Chanting and singing as they moved through Kwa-Thema, a township about 40 kilometres southeast of Johannesburg, protesters called for tougher government action against illegal immigration.

"We want the government to implement the laws and go and build a wall on the border. Stop these people from flocking into the country. That is simple," said lead campaigner Nkosikhona Phakel'umthakathi

Ndabandaba.

The march was peaceful even though some participants carrying sticks and others waved placards reading "Go home".

Similar marches involving dozens of people were reported elsewhere, including in the Western Cape and Limpopo provinces, in what appears to be a spreading push against undocumented migrants that is being spearheaded by several xenophobic groups.

At least two Mozambican citizens have been killed in the latest wave of unrest and several countries, including Mozambique and Ghana, have organised the return of some of their citizens.

Ramaphosa acknowledged public concerns over illegal immigration but warned that the authorities would not tolerate anyone taking the law into their own hands.

"We will and must not allow groups to use

the legitimate concerns of South Africans to destabilise our country through inciting lawlessness and violence," he said in a national address late on Sunday.

No-one, he said "is allowed, for example, to confront someone in the street to demand proof of nationality".

"There is no space for xenophobia, racism, sexism, Afrophobia or any other forms of intolerance in South Africa."

"We will act against forces who are exploiting the concerns of our people about illegal immigration to further their own political, personal or criminal agendas," the president said.

Organisers of the protests responded swiftly, saying they were encouraged that Ramaphosa had put the issue on the national agenda but vowed to press ahead with their campaign.

"We respect him as a leader and we hope



Nkosikhona 'Phakel'umthakathi' Ndabandaba (third right) gestures as he gives instructions to the crowd during a protest march against undocumented migrants in Springs, Ekurhuleni, on Monday

he will deliver another speech that is directed to the problems that we have," said Ndabandaba.

South Africa, one of Africa's leading economies, is home to more than three million foreigners, just over 5 per cent of the population.

In the worst violence against immigrants in the last two decades, 62 people were killed

in 2008. Violent clashes also erupted in 2015, 2016 and 2019.

Last month, hundreds of foreign nationals, including citizens of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Somalia, sought protection in the eastern port city of Durban, saying locals had gone door-to-door ordering them to

leave by the end of the month.

On April 24, the ministry of police issued a statement saying it "strongly condemns the recent xenophobic acts of violence and intimidation directed at Ghanaian nationals and other foreign nationals".

"These actions are not only unlawful but they stand in direct

opposition to the values of dignity, equality and human rights upon which our democracy is founded.

South Africa is a constitutional state governed by the rule of law. No individual or group has the authority to take the law into their own hands, irrespective of grievances or frustrations."

Ghana has arranged repatriation flights for hundreds of nationals, while Malawi and Mozambique organised buses to bring people home.

More than 600 Ghanaians were processed for departure over the weekend, South Africa's border authority said on Monday, taking the tally of those who have left to 995.

The first group of Nigerians is due to leave on Wednesday.

Kenya, Lesotho and Zimbabwe are among several countries that have urged their citizens in South Africa to exercise caution.

**Extension of Tender Invitation**

The General Headquarters of the Jordan Armed Forces/Royal Medical Services hereby announces extension Tender **P45/2026/A/4** (مستهلكات الايطة والضمادات العامة)

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# UN warns of 'deepening crisis' in oceans, urges action

PARIS, France (AFP) — Oceans are in a "deepening crisis" that demands urgent global action, a major UN report warned on Monday, with seas warming and rising faster, ice cover shrinking and marine ecosystems under mounting strain.

The culmination of five years of work by 600 international scientists, the 1,352-page tome details the growing toll of climate change, pollution and overfishing in our oceans, which cover more than 70 per cent of the planet.

"The ocean is the foundation of life on Earth. But its health is at grave risk as ecosystems and habitats approach or surpass critical tipping points," the United Nations' third World Ocean Assessment (WOA) said.

Oceans play a critical role for the planet, regulating the climate and feeding billions of people. But the WOA warned of "a deepening crisis, as climate change, pollution, overfishing and biodiversity loss put ocean systems under severe strain."

The findings "demand urgent action, through stronger multilateral cooperation, greater ambition and decisions grounded in the best available science".

The WOA welcomed the entry into force in January of a UN treaty to protect and sustainably use marine life in international waters, saying it "marks a historic milestone for ocean stewardship and multilateral cooperation".

"We cannot keep treat-



Each year, 52.1 million tonnes of plastic waste spills into the ocean, contributing to an estimated 24.4 trillion microplastic particles

ing the ocean as limitless," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a statement.

"We must build a new relationship with the ocean: Grounded in science. Framed by international law. And built on shared responsibility," he said.

## Warming and rising faster

The report, which mostly covers the period between 2018-2023, paints a stark picture of the state of the oceans.

Around 16 per cent of the total increase in ocean heat content recorded since 1955 has occurred since 2018 alone, the assessment found.

The oceans have absorbed more than 90 per cent of the excess heat and 30 per cent of the CO<sub>2</sub> released into the atmosphere by the burning of fossil fuels.

As waters warm, they expand, helping drive sea-level rise alongside meltwater from glaciers and ice sheets.

"The sea level continues to rise at increasing

rates," the report said, more than doubling from less than 2 millimetres per year before 2015 to 4.3 mm in 2023.

While millimetres might seem small, they "multiply up really quickly", Ian Butler, an Australia-based marine ecologist and joint coordinator of the WOA's group of experts, told AFP.

## Melting ice

The Arctic Ocean could become ice-free in September by the middle

of the century, with the earliest such conditions possible in the 2030s under all emissions scenarios, the report said.

"We're seriously looking at an ice-free Arctic Ocean for parts of the year within 10 or 20 years," Butler said.

The ice melt in the northern pole is also reshaping geopolitics, opening previously inaccessible shipping routes and heightening competition among major powers including the United States, Russia and China.

# Cyprus signs deal to host French soldiers on island

NICOSIA (AFP) — France and Cyprus on Monday signed an agreement allowing for the presence of French forces on Cypriot territory, the island nation's President Nikos Christodoulides said.

"I am pleased that today the defence ministers of Cyprus and France signed this agreement in Nicosia, further strengthening the strategic relationship and cooperation between Cyprus and France," Christodoulides posted on X.

He said the accord would deepen bilateral defence ties and contribute to the European Union's pursuit of greater strategic autonomy.

The agreement was signed in Nicosia on the sidelines of an informal meeting of European defence ministers held

under Cyprus's presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Christodoulides and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron had announced during his visit to the Mediterranean island in April that the two countries were seeking to build the necessary framework for hosting French forces "for humanitarian operations in the wider Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East".

The agreement is the latest indicator of burgeoning Franco-Cypriot defence cooperation, coming amid heightened security concerns as conflicts rage across the wider region.

Macron had also visited Cyprus in March, shortly after the Mediterranean island was targeted by Iranian drones, mainly aimed

at British sovereign bases.

Cyprus hosts two major British facilities on its southern coasts, known as Sovereign Base Areas.

Paris was one of the first European countries to deploy defensive military capabilities to Cyprus following the drone attacks.

Christodoulides linked Monday's accord to wider European defence ambitions, saying Nicosia and Paris were "contributing decisively to the achievement of our common European objective of the strategic autonomy of the European Union".

France has frequently used Cyprus as a staging and support point during regional crises, including evacuation and humanitarian missions linked to conflicts in the Middle East.

# King affirms national economy's ability to withstand, overcome crises

Continued from page 1

For their part, the attendees discussed economic opportunities and challenges locally

and regionally, the role of fiscal and monetary policies in promoting economic stability, and the importance of harnessing technology to

empower young people for the future.

Director of the Office of His Majesty Alaa Batayneh attended the meeting.

# Prime minister urges ministries to submit budgets before year-end to meet constitutional deadline

Continued from page 1

The Cabinet also approved increasing the price preference granted to locally manufactured industrial products in government tenders to 20 per cent from 15 per cent, in a move aimed at supporting the industrial sector, enhancing its competitiveness and increasing its contri-

bution to economic growth.

Under the decision, Jordanian industrial products will be given priority in government tenders even when they are priced up to 20 per cent higher than imported alternatives, provided they meet approved technical and engineering standards.

The government said

the measure is intended to boost demand for locally manufactured products, support the expansion of domestic industries, and encourage industrial investment. It is also expected to increase production capacity, create new job opportunities, and contribute to the goals of the Economic Modernisation Vision.

# Jordan marks 27th anniversary of King's Accession to the Throne

Continued from page 1

Since His Majesty assumed his constitutional powers, Her Majesty Queen Rania has continued efforts to support initiatives that complement His Majesty's vision across various sectors, particularly education and development.

Through her continuous engagement with citizens across the Kingdom, Her Majesty supports projects and entrepreneurial ideas

led by members of local communities, enhancing the empowerment of women and youth while supporting productive, creative and cultural sectors.

Her Majesty advances local development priorities through an institutional framework that includes a number of initiatives and organisations under her patronage.

These include the Queen Rania Foundation for Education and Development, the

Jordan River Foundation, the Al Aman Fund for the Future of Orphans, the Royal Health Awareness Society, the Children's Museum Jordan, the Madrasati Initiative, the Queen Rania Teacher Academy, and the National Council for Family Affairs.

Through her international activities, Queen Rania also helps convey Jordan's humanitarian voice and position, while boosting cooperation between Jordanian institutions

and their international counterparts in a manner that complements His Majesty's efforts and reflects the principles of the Jordanian state.

This approach is evident in Her Majesty's positions and speeches at international forums through her continued calls to protect the rights of children and women to life and protection, and her warnings about the consequences of declining confidence in

international humanitarian law due to double standards towards minorities and vulnerable groups, and the resulting expansion of instability and disorder worldwide.

As part of her ongoing efforts to project Jordan's positive image, Queen Rania continues to promote the Kingdom's tourism assets and encourage people to visit Jordan and discover its rich historical and cultural heritage.

# Iran, Israel say hostilities on hold after first attacks since truce

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran and Israel said on Monday that hostilities between them had halted, after the two countries exchanged strikes that threatened to reignite the Middle East war.

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that the "fire on that front is contained" hours after Tehran said it had stopped its military action against Israel.

Tehran launched missiles at Israel on Sunday over its ongoing war against Hizbollah in Lebanon, which prompted Israel to strike back, despite efforts by US President Donald Trump to dissuade Netanyahu from doing so.

That triggered another round of Iranian missiles, before Tehran announced it would cease fire.

Iran has sought for weeks to link the wider Middle East truce, in place since April 8, to Israel's war against Hizbollah, warning that attacks on Lebanon would force it to act.

It said on Monday it would attack again if Israel persisted with

its strikes in Lebanon. Netanyahu warned in turn that should Iran "make the mistake of resuming attacks against us, we will respond with full force".

Earlier, Israeli defence minister Israel Katz insisted that the campaign in Lebanon would carry on regardless and said Israel would strike the Hizbollah-dominated southern suburbs of Beirut in retaliation for each attack on northern Israel by the militant group.

Trump, who has reportedly grown increasingly exasperated with Netanyahu, had earlier urged both sides to stop "shooting" and said that "final negotiations" towards peace would proceed "subject to ignorance or stupidity getting in its way."

The Israeli premier, though, said in a televised statement he had told Trump that "Israel has a full right to self-defence, and we are exercising it as required".

In a sign that both sides expected the ceasefire to hold, Israel's education ministry announced that schools would reopen

on Tuesday, having closed because of the missile threat, while Iran's Civil Aviation Organisation said it was reopening the country's airspace.

## 'Much more severe'

Iran fired nearly 30 missiles at Israel overnight, according to the Israeli military, and Israel responded by targeting military sites in the Islamic republic.

No casualties have been reported in either Israel or Iran after the exchange of fire.

Announcing the end of its attacks, Iran's military command said, "should acts of hostility continue, including in southern Lebanon, much more severe and crushing measures than before will follow".

But Katz said Israel's armed forces "will continue to operate in Lebanon against the terrorist organisation Hizbollah".

"We categorically reject Iran's threats. Any Iranian attempt to link Lebanon and Iran and attack Israel will be met with great force, as happened yesterday," Katz said.

In a new attack on Monday, an Israeli strike hit a vehicle in the city of Tyre, in southern Lebanon, on Monday, Lebanese state media reported.

The Red Cross said the strike hit near their centre in the city, wounding four rescuers.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military said it had intercepted three projectiles fired from Lebanon, with an AFP journalist near the border seeing three explosions in the air.

## Calm in Tehran

On Monday in Tehran, there was little sign of any return to war, with cafe terraces packed.

Traffic seemed lighter than usual for a weekday, suggesting that some people had stayed home and there were also many more people queuing at petrol stations.

Maryam, 41, an accountant in Tehran, described "a sense of uncertainty and confusion." "You don't know if there's going to be a war, nor do you know if the peace agreement will last. Nothing is



This photo taken from a position in the Upper Galilee region shows an Israeli Iron Dome missile streaking across the sky to intercept incoming projectiles on Monday

clear. People are frustrated," she said. Residents of Tel Aviv meanwhile went to shelters as sirens went off.

"I hope it will be short, but you can

never know. Last time we thought it will be short and then it was a month, so I don't know," said Jonathan Ariel, 30.

Oil prices surged more than five per-

cent on worries that the war would resume, with hopes now punctured of a rapid end to the standoff that has seen shipments of the Gulf's oil and gas all but halted through the

Strait of Hormuz.

## 'Still at the negotiating table'

The strikes also came at a critical moment for diplomatic efforts to end the conflict involving mediator Pakistan.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei warned at a press conference in Tehran on Monday morning that diplomacy was continuing but could be affected by the fighting.

As he was speaking at the foreign ministry, a huge explosion shook the building, followed by repeated explosions believed to be from air defence systems, the AFP reporter said.

Pakistan Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited Tehran to deliver what he said was a "special letter" to Iran's supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei, according to Iranian state television.

He has since travelled back to Pakistan, an official Pakistani source said on Monday. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian posted on X that Tehran was still "at the negotiating table".

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## First-quarter financial performance

By **Salama Al Darawi**

Governments invariably find themselves caught between two difficult choices: Protecting Treasury revenues or protecting the citizen. Every dinar the state absorbs to ease the burden on people adds further pressure to public finances, whilst every measure aimed at reining in the deficit may directly push up the cost of living. The real challenge is not choosing one path or the other, but finding a way to walk both simultaneously.

Through to the end of April 2026, the government was operating in an exceptionally complex regional environment. The wider region has been living with the consequences of a war that has disrupted supply chains, trade flows, energy supplies and freight, whilst Jordan has faced additional pressures tied to rising import costs and intermittent interruptions to gas supplies.

And yet, the financial data shows that economic management has maintained a degree of fiscal discipline that merits closer attention.

Reading the financial performance through to the end of April 2026, one can see a clear attempt to strike this balance. On one hand, the government continued to absorb additional costs imposed by the regional situation — the war and its knock-on effects on energy, transport and trade. On the other, it maintained a relatively disciplined financial trajectory, as the official figures bear out.

By the end of April 2026, domestic revenues reached JD3,308.2 million, compared with JD3,307.5 million during the same period in 2025. Total public revenues rose to JD3,404.1 million, up from JD3,329.1 million, an increase of JD75.1 million. Tax revenues reached JD2,456 million, compared with JD2,451.4 million over the same period last year. These figures reflect the capac-

ity of public finances to maintain revenue stability despite the surrounding pressures.

By the end of April 2026, domestic revenues reached JD3,308.2 million, compared with JD3,307.5 million during the same period in 2025

What matters here, however, is not the figures themselves but the circumstances in which they were achieved. The government did not pass the full cost of the crisis on to the citizen. It continued to subsidise domestic gas cylinders despite rising costs, absorbed additional burdens arising from energy supply disruptions, and held gas prices for the industrial sector steady to prevent cost increases feeding through into the prices of goods and services.

At the same time, measures were taken to safeguard food security and prevent market shortages, including the provision of a financing facility for the import and stockpiling of essential commodities. Soft financing programmes for economic, productive, and tourism sectors were

also expanded, with the aim of preventing the regional crisis from reaching the pockets of ordinary Jordanians.

This policy came at a clear financial cost. Current expenditure rose to JD3,761.6 million by the end of April 2026, compared with JD3,468.8 million over the same period in 2025, an increase of JD292.8 million. Total spending climbed to JD4,097.3 million, up from JD3,798.3 million, a rise of JD 299 million.

Even so, the figures show no sign of fiscal abandon. Non-tax revenues reached JD852.2 million, and external grants rose sharply to JD95.9 million compared with just JD21.6 million during the same period last year, a jump of 344.2 per cent. Customs revenues grew by 14.2 per cent to reach JD91.5 million, whilst property transfer tax rose by 5 per cent to JD34.8 million.

The most significant indicator, however, is the primary deficit. Despite rising expenditure, higher interest costs, and ongoing regional turbulence, the primary deficit improved markedly to JD107.7 million, compared with JD318.1 million over the same period last year, an improvement of more than JD210 million. This suggests that financial management has been largely successful in maintaining a balance between necessary spending commitments and the long-term sustainability of public finances.

These figures do not suggest that the challenges are over, nor that pressure on the Treasury has eased, quite the contrary. The pressures remain considerable, and the costs of the war and energy disruptions have not gone away. But the numbers do indicate that an effort is being made to move in two directions at once: protecting the Treasury from deterioration whilst shielding the citizen from bearing the full weight of the crisis.

None of this constitutes a defence of any government or an attempt to excuse shortcomings that may well exist. Government

performance must remain subject to constant scrutiny and accountability. But fair assessment begins with facts, not impressions. Journalism is not a platform for repeating rumours or chasing populism, it is a tool for delivering accurate information to the public and to policy-makers alike.

This suggests that financial management has been largely successful in maintaining a balance between necessary spending commitments and the long-term sustainability of public finances

People may disagree about policies, and opinions on priorities will naturally differ. But figures remain the most objective point of reference. When we examine the results of the first four months of the year, we find a government that faced a complex regional environment, absorbed significant additional costs to protect both the market and the citizen, and, at the same time, maintained a reasonably coherent fiscal trajectory. That is not an opinion. It is published data that anyone can read, scrutinise and judge for themselves.

## Jordan marks a reign of resolve and renewal

Jordan marks the anniversary of His Majesty King Abdullah's Accession to the Throne with deep pride in a reign that has strengthened the Kingdom, advanced reform and reinforced Jordan's standing as a voice of wisdom, moderation and stability.

This national occasion is a moment to reflect on the journey of a nation that has continued to move forward with confidence under Hashemite leadership, guided by a clear vision of progress, dignity and service to its people.

Since assuming his constitutional powers on June 9, 1999, His Majesty has led Jordan through a period of profound transformation. The Kingdom has expanded its reform agenda, modernised institutions, strengthened the rule of law and worked to build a more dynamic political life. The path of political modernisation, with its emphasis on parties, parliamentary participation, youth and women, reflects the King's firm belief that Jordan's future is built by the active contribution of all its citizens.

This vision is matched by an ambitious economic and administrative modernisation effort. Under His Majesty's leadership, Jordan has worked to enhance its competitiveness, improve the investment climate, support entrepreneurship, develop key sectors and create opportunities across the governorates. The Economic Modernisation Vision stands as a roadmap for growth and job creation, and as a practical expression of the royal commitment to a stronger, more productive and opportunity-driven economy.

At the heart of this national project is the Jordanian citizen. His Majesty has consistently placed human development at the centre of progress, with special attention to education, youth empowerment, innovation, digital transformation, health services and local development.

Jordan's achievements during His Majesty's reign are also visible in the strength and resilience of its institutions. The country has preserved its security, stability and unity while continuing to reform and modernise. This balance has become one of Jordan's defining strengths: A Kingdom rooted in its national identity, confident in its institutions and open to renewal.

The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army and the security agencies remain central pillars of this stability. Under His Majesty, the Supreme Commander, they have continued to advance in professionalism, readiness and modern capability. Their service reflects the highest values of loyalty, sacrifice and discipline, and their role in protecting the homeland remains a source of pride for every Jordanian.

Internationally, His Majesty has elevated Jordan's presence and influence. Through active diplomacy, balanced relations and principled positions, the Kingdom has become a respected partner in regional and global efforts to promote peace, security and dialogue. Jordan's voice is heard because it is responsible, consistent and credible.

Nowhere is this role more evident than in Jordan's defence of the Palestinian cause and Jerusalem. His Majesty has carried this responsibility with clarity and determination, reaffirming at every opportunity that peace must be just, comprehensive and based on the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. The Hashemite Custodianship over Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem remains a sacred trust and a historic responsibility that Jordan continues to uphold with honour.

This anniversary comes as Jordanians also recall the values of the Great Arab Revolt and the sacrifices of the Arab Army. Together, these occasions form a national narrative of dignity, duty and continuity. They remind us that Jordan was built on principles, protected by sacrifice and advanced through loyalty to the homeland.

On Accession Day, Jordanians celebrate a reign of achievement and a leadership that has placed the country's interests, its people and its future at the centre of every effort. They celebrate a nation that has grown stronger in its institutions, more respected in the world and more determined to continue its march towards progress.

This occasion is also a renewal of the bond between the Hashemite leadership and the Jordanian people; a bond built on trust, loyalty and shared responsibility. Under His Majesty King Abdullah's leadership, Jordan continues to stand tall: Secure in its identity, proud of its achievements and confident in the path ahead.

As the Kingdom marks this cherished national anniversary, it does so with gratitude for what has been achieved and with faith in what is yet to come. Jordan's journey of modernisation, service and achievement continues under the Hashemite banner, guided by a leadership devoted to the dignity of its people and the strength of the state.

## Behind the screen, Netanyahu is annexing Gaza 'step-by-step'

By **Ramzy Baroud**

Gaza requires urgent international attention.

What is happening in the besieged and devastated Strip at the moment by far exceeds an unfolding humanitarian disaster; it is a calculated geopolitical reshaping. Israel is actively executing a plan to permanently occupy the vast majority of Gaza, with consequences that require little elaboration considering what we already know about the ongoing genocide.

Currently, much of the international debate centres on a single official: Bulgarian diplomat Nickolay Mladenov. The former United Nations Special Coordinator has been designated by the United States as the Executive Director of the Trump administration's newly established 'Board of Peace' — an international council founded to oversee the implementation of Washington's 20-point Gaza roadmap.

The issue, however, is much bigger than a single Washington-backed bureaucrat. A growing number of Palestinians and political analysts accuse Mladenov of manufacturing the very conditions that continue to obstruct progress on the agreement's transition to its second phase.

Under the framework, the official transition to this second phase — which Trump and the Board of Peace declared to have begun in January 2026 — demands sweeping, one-sided Palestinian concessions, most notably the total disarmament of armed factions.

This demand is a recipe for the failure of the entire project, especially given that Israel has completely failed to implement the most basic requirements of the agreement's first phase. It has refused to halt its routine military incursions, has failed to withdraw its forces to the originally mandated "Yellow Line" demarcation, and continues to deny entry permits to the technocratic committee slated to assume civil governance of the Strip.

Mladenov's insistence on Palestinian disarmament before the agreement can advance — without a single guarantee of Israeli compliance — conveniently flips the narrative. It cynically reframes systematic starvation and the blockade of medical and construction supplies as a Palestinian failure to honour commitments.

In reality, Mladenov holds no real cards; he is merely a cog in a larger machinery controlled by Benjamin Netanyahu. The Israeli prime minister has made it explicitly clear that he has no intention of following any peace roadmap, planning instead for the permanent, incremental takeover of Gaza.

Speaking at a conference in an occupied West Bank settlement on May 28, Netanyahu explained his strategy with total clarity, abandoning all diplomatic doublespeak: "We are currently squeezing Hamas; we now control 60 per cent of the territory of the Strip — you know this. We were at 50, we moved to 60. My directive is to move to..." he said, pausing as an audience member shouted "100!"

Netanyahu smiled and responded: "Let's go step by step. First of all, 70. Let's start with that. We're pressing them from all sides, we'll deal with the remnants."

This is the actual blueprint of the Israeli government, declared openly to domestic audiences. The admission was so brazen that even US Secretary of State Marco Rubio expressed frustration at Netanyahu's candor. Testifying before Congress on June 2, Rubio remarked, "We have a plan — it doesn't call for that," referring to further Israeli territorial expansion.

Yet, Rubio quickly reverted to Washington's standard line: "And at the end of the day, we understand that what we want, and I think what the Israelis would ultimately want, is a Gaza that is governed by a non-Hamas entity."

While the immediate priority for Palestinians is not governance but life-saving food, clean water, medicine, and basic sur-

vival, Netanyahu and Rubio view the entire crisis through a political lens. The US-Israeli plan is predicated on achieving, through diplomatic strangulation and engineered famine, what they failed to fully achieve through military might.

This is the actual blueprint of the Israeli government, declared openly to domestic audiences. The admission was so brazen that even US Secretary of State Marco Rubio expressed frustration at Netanyahu's candor

A rare, decisive answer came from United Nations spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric, who summed up the UN position plainly: "One hundred per cent of Gaza should be for the Palestinian people." The problem, however, is that the UN's rhetoric is backed by no real enforcement mechanisms.

The international community has walked directly into a trap, outsourcing the future of the Gaza Strip to the Trump administration and its Board of Peace. Even the designated technocratic committee has been rendered entirely irrelevant, excluded from a decision-making process left solely to diplomats beholden to the White House.

The situation on the ground remains catastrophic. Since the fragile, heavily compromised

ceasefire took effect on October 10, regular Israeli violations and airstrikes have killed nearly 1,000 Palestinians and wounded thousands more — the vast majority women and children. When added to the horrific toll of the initial two years of war, the official number of Palestinians killed has surpassed 73,000, with over 173,000 injured.

Furthermore, credible epidemiological studies and medical journals have concluded that the true death toll is vastly higher.

With nearly the entire population of Gaza living in sub-standard tents and surviving on the meager rations permitted through Israeli checkpoints, it is the highest form of immorality to demand political concessions in exchange for basic sustenance.

Netanyahu's "step-by-step" annexation does not hinge on what Palestinian factions decide to do; his expansionist timeline is shaped independently of Palestinian compliance. Arab, Muslim, and allied nations must fundamentally shift their diplomatic strategy. They must firmly insist on completely delinking humanitarian aid from the future governance or demilitarisation of the Gaza Strip.

Starvation cannot be tolerated as political leverage for war criminals. Netanyahu is emboldened by a history of international impunity, speaking openly of expanding his military footprint regardless of the consequences of such action.

The international community must remind Israel's government that the survival of millions of Palestinians cannot be held hostage to the political ambitions of an extremist coalition.

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

# BUSINESS

Tuesday, June 9, 2026



Senae President Faisal Faye and Iraqi Parliament Speaker Haibat Al Halbousi on Monday stress the importance of advancing the Iraqi oil pipeline project through Jordan

## Jordan, Iraq discuss advancing oil pipeline, energy cooperation projects

AMMAN (JT) — Senate President Faisal Faye and Iraqi Parliament Speaker Haibat Al Halbousi on Monday stressed the importance of advancing the Iraqi oil pipeline project through Jordan, as well as the electricity interconnection project, given their economic and strategic benefits for both countries.

The remarks came during talks held at Parliament, which focused on bilateral relations and ways to enhance cooperation, particularly in the economic, energy and investment fields, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Faye underlined the importance of the Iraqi oil pipeline project through Jordan, which has been approved, noting that it would provide Iraq with a new export route to

international markets and serve the interests of both countries, particularly in light of regional developments affecting maritime shipping routes.

Halbousi stressed Iraq's need to diversify its oil export outlets, particularly amid challenges facing key regional shipping lanes, reiterating the importance of the Basra-Aqaba oil pipeline project as a strategic option serving both countries.

He also underlined the importance of the electricity interconnection project between Jordan and Iraq, noting Iraq's need to increase electricity imports from the Kingdom and benefit from Jordan's electricity surplus.

Faye said that Jordanian-Iraqi relations are historic, deeply rooted and based on

mutual respect and shared interests, serving the interests of the two countries and their peoples as well as Arab causes.

He added that the two countries are bound by strong historical, cultural and social ties, calling for strengthening joint investments in vital sectors and moving forward with the implementation of major strategic projects.

Halbousi expressed appreciation for Jordan and its leadership, praising the Kingdom's supportive stand toward Iraq and its stability and security.

He said his visit to Jordan, heading a parliamentary delegation that included heads of Iraqi political blocs, reflects the depth of bilateral relations and the keenness to further enhance cooperation, Petra reported.

## Amman Vision launches 9th investment package

AMMAN (JT) — The Amman Vision for Investment and Development (AVID) has unveiled its ninth package of investment opportunities, introducing a new set of land plots designated for commercial, recreational, tourism, sports and industrial projects across the capital.

The company, which serves as the investment and development arm of Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), continues to play a central role in transforming municipal land assets into development opportunities through partnerships with the private sector.

Since its establishment, Amman Vision has delivered 68 projects with a total investment value of around JD470 million, covering around 700,000 square metres of developed land, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Its active portfolio spans healthcare, commercial and entertainment sectors.

Among its flagship developments is the "Kingdom for Healthcare and Medical Education" project, implemented in partnership with the Saudi Jordanian Investment Fund currently under construction on a 180,000 square-metre site with an investment value of JD280 million.

Another key project is the "Jah Medical Centre" in the Yasmeen area, a multispecialty healthcare facility covering 29,000 square metres with investments exceeding JD15 million.

The company is also advancing several lifestyle-focused developments, including family entertainment destinations, adventure



The Amman Vision for Investment and Development has unveiled its ninth package of investment opportunities, introducing a new set of land plots

tourism projects and sports academies in various locations across Amman.

In parallel, it is supporting the transition toward sustainable mobility through the rollout of electric vehicle charging stations as part of the "Amman Smart City" initiative under the municipality's 2022-2026 strategic plan.

Amman Vision is additionally managing major infrastructure tenders, including a new Amman slaughterhouse project and a smart parking system, both structured under public-private partnership models aimed at improving service efficiency.

The company has signed agreements and Memoranda of Under-

standing with Saudi Arabia's Sumou Holding to develop real estate and urban projects in Amman valued at around JD35 million, supporting efforts to attract quality investment and drive urban growth, Petra reported.

The company invited investors to learn more through its official website: [www.ammanvision.jo](http://www.ammanvision.jo).

## German car makers weigh China, defence tie-ups for idle plants

By Sam Reeves and Paul Cassedanne  
Agency France-Press

FRANKFURT, Germany — Germany's beleaguered car makers are desperately seeking solutions for their underused factories, with speculation swirling that Chinese manufacturers or weapons makers could move in.

Across Europe, car makers are in trouble due to growing Chinese competition, weak demand and a choppy transition to electric vehicles (EVs), leaving many plants operating way below capacity.

One solution is to open up factories for Chinese manufacturers to produce cars in Europe as they seek to get around EU tariffs on EVs, a step recently taken by Stellantis which owns Jeep and Fiat.

Chinese brands, including BYD, MG and Chery, are gaining ground in Europe fast and now make up around 9 per cent of the region's overall sales, according to consulting firm Dataforce.

Germany's Volkswagen (VW) — Europe's biggest auto maker — said in April it is also open to the idea of "partnering" with Chinese manufacturers at its plants.

VW, in the process of slashing thousands of jobs as profits and sales suffer, is seeking to reduce global production capacities by around one million vehicles — half in China and half elsewhere, particularly Europe.

Officials in regions hosting Vw plants have



A new Volkswagen ID.7 Tourer GTX electric car and a SUVW model T-Roc are seen from above at the tower storage facility of German car maker Volkswagen at the company's headquarters plant in Wolfsburg, central Germany, on November 21, 2025

welcomed the idea of bringing VW's joint venture partners from China onto the production lines of German factories.

Dirk Panter — economy minister of the state of Saxony, whose VW plant in Zwickau faces an uncertain future — notes that other Chinese manufacturers are starting to produce cars around Europe, including through such tie-ups.

"To secure the future of the automotive industry in Saxony and in Germany, it is essential not to ignore this reality," he told AFP.

The Handelsblatt financial daily has reported that VW — a 10-brand manufacturer, whose models range from Audi to Seat and Skoda — already held talks in 2024 with Chinese car makers but they ended with no result.

VW has more recently sought to dampen talk of imminent deals, with a spokesman telling AFP that "there are currently no plans or discussions regarding the production of Chinese vehicles

in the German plants of the VW Group".

While some analysts believe there could be a reluctance to give Chinese car makers easier access to Europe, others think it is the Chinese firms themselves that are hesitant due to high costs in Germany.

"I think that the hesitation on the part of the Chinese manufacturers is very great," Frank Schwoppe, an auto industry consultant and lecturer at the FHM Berlin University, told AFP.

"The offer would have to be very attractive."

Stellantis's announcements so far have mainly focused on Spain and France, where costs are lower.

German manufacturers are also said to be considering opening up or even selling plants to defence companies, which are expanding rapidly as Germany and other European countries rearm.

Der Spiegel recently reported that French-German tank and weapons maker KNDS is in talks to take over a Mercedes-Benz plant

at Ludwigsfelde south of Berlin that produces vans and convert it to make armoured personnel carriers.

A KNDS spokesman would not confirm the report, telling AFP only that it was "seeking suitable partner companies for the planned ramp-up in the defence sector".

Mercedes told AFP that "our goal is to develop a future-ready solution for Ludwigsfelde".

Vw has confirmed it is in talks with defence companies about taking over one of its smaller plants in the city of Osnabrueck, where production is due to end as part of its cost-cutting drive.

Reports say the group has held talks with Israel's Rafael Advanced Defence Systems about making components there for the Iron Dome air defence system, including heavy-duty trucks and electricity generators but not the projectiles themselves.

Discussions have also reportedly taken place with KNDS about the factory.

Still, entering the defence sector could prove controversial for Vw.

The group was founded when the Nazis were in power, produced military equipment for Germany during World War II and used forced labour.

"In historical terms, it's not an easy issue for Volkswagen to share locations with defence companies," Stefan Bratzel, an auto industry expert at the Centre of Automotive Management in Germany, told AFP.

## Oil surges on Mideast war escalation, tech stocks rebound

LONDON (AFP) — Oil prices surged on Monday after Iran and Israel resumed strikes against one another despite a purported ceasefire, while tech stocks again drove equities markets after heavy US selling last week.

The world's main crude contracts, Brent North Sea and West Texas Intermediate, both gained more than five per cent in Asian trading hours and again neared \$100 a barrel before easing.

The Israeli-Iran strikes were the first against one another since a shaky ceasefire put five weeks of war on hold, sparking fears the escalation could spark a new full-scale Middle East conflict.

In Asia, technology stocks slumped following heavy pre-weekend

losses on Wall Street.

Seoul's Kospi index dived more than 8 per cent to lead a rout across the region after Friday's strong US jobs data fuelled bets on a Federal Reserve interest rate hike, hammering the technology industry.

Shares in the chip-maker Samsung dived more than 10 per cent and its rival SK hynix shed 7.7 per cent.

Tokyo's stock market lost almost 4 per cent Monday and Hong Kong closed down 1.2 per cent.

Wall Street had tumbled Friday, led by a 4 per cent drop for the tech-heavy Nasdaq.

"Rising borrowing costs reduce the present value of future earnings and can also weigh on investment spending," noted Ipek Ozkardeskaya, senior analyst at trading group

Swissquote.

"Both tend to hurt technology stocks more than other sectors because a larger share of their valuation depends on future growth," she said.

She added that "the bloodbath across tech is not only due to strong jobs data", noting "that investors who rode the chip wave would be tempted to take their profits and free up cash to jump on the SpaceX IPO" this week.

The rockets-to-AI behemoth led by Elon Musk aims to raise \$75 billion in the biggest initial public offering ever, as the world's richest person pursues data centres in space and a trip to Mars.

But a recovery in US tech stocks helped Wall Street open with gains, with the Nasdaq Com-

posite climbing 1.4 per cent as trading got underway.

"This is a buy-the-dip trade," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare.

"Some of this is purely reflexive, with traders betting Friday's sell-off was nothing more than an overdue drawdown for an extremely overbought market," he said.

Europe's main markets were mostly lower in afternoon trading. Elsewhere, bitcoin hovered around \$63,700 after sinking below \$60,000 on Friday to its lowest level since October 2024.

Following Donald Trump's presidential election win in November of that year, the world's biggest cryptocurrency had soared to record highs thanks to his vocal support for the sector.

## AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Monday amounted to JD 13.2 million spread over 4.1 million shares that traded through 4,289 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.39 per cent, closing at 3991.41 points.

Out of 103 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 25 companies rose while the share price of another 38 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Al Isra for Education and Investment Plc. by 7.41 per cent, Arab International for Education and Investment by 7.30 per cent, International Arabian Development and Investment Trading Company by 5.26 per cent, Jordan Poultry Processing and Marketing by 5 per cent, and Jordanian Expatriates Investment Holding by 4.84 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were General Investment by 7.39 per cent, First Insurance by 7.20 per cent, Arabia Insurance Company in Jordan by 4.67 per cent, Comprehensive Land Development and Investment by 4.41 per cent, and Housing Bank for Trade and Finance by 3.21 per cent.



# THE JORDAN TIMES SPORTS AT A GLANCE

## FOOTBALL

### Italy's World Cup winner Grosso appointed Fiorentina coach

ROME (AFP) — Former Italy international Fabio Grosso, who resigned as coach of Sassuolo last week, has signed a two-year contract with Fiorentina, the Serie A club announced on Monday. Grosso is an Italian football hero for his exploits during the Azzurri's triumph at the 2006 World Cup, scoring against Germany in the semifinals and the decisive penalty in the final shoot-out victory over France. "Fabio is not only a world champion, he's a coach who has built his path through hard work, ideas and results," club president Giuseppe Comisso said in a statement. "After a difficult season, we want to open a new chapter. We believe Fabio has the personality, the method, and the enthusiasm to help us build a stronger, more competitive Fiorentina." Under Stefano Pioli and then Paolo Vanoli, Fiorentina flirted with relegation last season before finishing 15th. Grosso, 48, had been in charge of Sassuolo since July 2024 when the club were playing in Serie B, the Italian second division.

## CRICKET

### 'Rusty' Afghanistan need more Tests, says coach Pybus

INDIA (AFP) — Coach Richard Pybus said Afghanistan's Test team were "rusty" in their heavy defeat to India on Monday and needed more Test fixtures to help them improve. Afghanistan have played only 13 matches since gaining Test status almost nine years ago, winning four, losing eight and one draw. Monday's defeat by an innings and 300 runs inside three days in New Chandigarh was their second against India. "We were rusty, we showed our naivety, and there's plenty of work to be done," Pybus told reporters. "I think... in the same way that the white ball side has developed, you only develop through fixtures." Afghanistan had a bruising introduction to Test cricket in 2018 when India hammered them by an innings and 262 runs inside two days in Bengaluru. England-born Pybus replaced Jonathan Trott as coach early this year and the one-off Test in India was his first assignment in the longer format. "I was with Pakistan when we played Bangladesh... the game was over in two-and-a-half days and that was part of Bangladesh's learning curve," Pybus said. "Now we see that Bangladesh is beating Pakistan."

By Osama Alkafri

AMMAN — Jordan concluded their training camp in the United States with a 2-0 defeat to Colombia in an international friendly at Snapdragon Stadium in San Diego on Monday, as the Nashama continued preparations for their historic FIFA World Cup 2026 campaign.

HRH Prince Ali, president of the Jordan Football Association (JFA), attended the match.

Jordan made an energetic start and nearly took an early lead in the fifth minute when Muhammad Abu Taha unleashed a long-range effort that struck the crossbar.

Colombia responded with a well-worked attack shortly afterwards, but Jordan defender Salib Obaid intervened to block the effort and divert it behind for a corner.

Both sides exchanged attacks throughout the first half before Colombia broke the deadlock in the 41st minute.

Jhon Arias found himself through on goal following a precise pass from James Rodriguez and calmly finished to give the South Americans a 1-0 lead at the break.

Jordan head coach Jamal Sellami made a number of changes after the interval as he continued to assess his squad options ahead of the World Cup.

The substitutions affected Jordan's rhythm



AFP photo

Players of Jordan enter the pitch prior to the international friendly match between Jordan and Colombia at Snapdragon Stadium on June 07, 2026 in San Diego, California

and allowed Colombia to enjoy greater control of possession and territory.

Arias doubled Colombia's advantage in the 55th minute, heading home to complete his brace and make it 2-0.

Jordan attempted to reduce the deficit but struggled to create clear-cut opportunities as Colombia slowed the tempo and managed the game

effectively.

The Nashama's best chance of the second half fell to substitute Mohammad Dawoud in the 85th minute, but he was unable to convert after finding himself one-on-one with the goalkeeper.

The match ended on a disappointing note for Jordan as Amer Jamous was shown a red card in stoppage time before the

final whistle confirmed Colombia's 2-0 victory.

Following the match, Sellami expressed satisfaction with the technical benefits gained from the encounter, noting that Jordan had faced a strong opponent and used the occasion to test various tactical and technical aspects of the team's play.

According to the JFA,

Sellami said the coaching staff would work on correcting mistakes and building on the lessons learned as preparations continue for the World Cup.

The coach added that the national team remains focused on reaching the highest possible level of readiness ahead of the tournament and expressed relief that

none of the players suffered injuries during the match.

Jordan will begin their World Cup Group J campaign in San Francisco against Austria on June 17. The Nashama will then face Algeria on June 23 before travelling to Dallas to meet reigning world champions Argentina on June 28 in their final group-stage match.

# LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

## Chef Khaliqdad's crusade for Greenland's first Michelin star

By Florent Vergnes  
Agence France-Press

ILULISSAT, Denmark — Piano notes tinkle in the background and the aroma of brown butter wafts through the air as Habi Khaliqdad delicately garnishes a slice of soy-glazed narwhal with puffed bacon.

For seven years, the 33-year-old chef has been living north of the Arctic Circle with one obsession, tattooed on his right arm: to earn Greenland's first Michelin star.

The prestigious restaurant guide will hand out its accolades to restaurants in the Nordic region on Monday.

Through the bay window of the Ulo restaurant in Ilulissat, the view fades into the snow and the ice fjord beyond, its giant icebergs drifting out to sea.

Khaliqdad stands out with his angular, smiling face, arms covered in tattoos, and a steady stream of swear words always being used. He often questions why anyone would take on his challenge.

Just getting supplies is one mountain to climb.

In late March, when the winds have shifted, the pack ice closes up, forcing fishermen to leave. Khaliqdad cannot



AFP photo

Chef Habi Khaliqdad removes dishes from a fridge as members of his brigade cook in the background, in Ilulissat, Greenland

get his hands on redfish, a large fish with tender flesh.

The menu includes "Qaqortoq lamb sweetbreads with Italian white truffle and onion jus". None of these ingredients can be found in Ilulissat however.

On this harsh land almost devoid of agriculture, the lamb travels nearly 1,000 kilometres from southern Greenland to reach Ilulissat by boat or plane.

"If there's a storm... you have to wait," Khaliqdad said.

Airplanes are at the mercy of blizzards, cargo ships of the pack ice which cuts Ilulissat off for most of the winter.

Khaliqdad, who has to import nearly everything, embodies the juxtaposition of modern-

day Greenland: a land of opportunities, but with many constraints.

### Finding himself

But Khaliqdad stands out behind the high-gloss walls of the restaurant in the Hotel Arctic.

After a life marked by loss, hardship and addiction, the Dane of Afghan origin found salvation in the kitchen.

As a teenager, he started out as a dishwasher.

"It was French food that gave me this energy in the beginning," he recalled.

He devoured the books of famed French chef Paul Bocuse, and started working as a kitchen hand before moving up through Copenhagen's most prestigious establishments, where he was

a finalist for the 2017 Chef of the Year award.

Of the 263 restaurants in the Nordic Michelin Guide, 37 in Denmark have stars.

The small country, long known for its heavy fare, has become a temple of European gastronomy. But that wave has yet to cross the Labrador Sea.

"My boss told me, 'Go to Greenland, man. It's cold and you'll find yourself,'" Khaliqdad said.

In debt, he exiled himself in the Danish autonomous territory to rebuild his life.

### 'Think local'

On the Italian-made kitchen island, his Japanese knife finely slices narwhal, reindeer and ptarmigan.

When he first arrived, he dived into botany books, searching for new flavours to lighten up the rustic Greenlandic, meat-heavy cuisine.

In the end, it was Stella, a hotel cleaning lady, who told him where to gather mushrooms and angelica plants.

In summer, during the few snowless weeks, he and his team roam the rocky hills.

"I learned to not think about Nordic, European, Michelin cuisine. I have to think about this country's cuisine," he said.

### Gastronomy capital

In the restaurant, tourists, in stylish apres-ski gear, finished off their desserts, their glassware and cutlery clinking.

Nearly 50,000 tourists visit this town of 5,000 inhabitants every year to gaze at the icebergs.

Ilulissat, Greenland's tourism capital, now aims to become a good food haven as well, with a culinary school project recently launched.

In October, the opening of a new international airport is expected to lead to a doubling of the number of visitors.

"Maybe they can help me with this small dream I have in my body, you know?" he said, touching the star tattooed on his arm.

For now, travel to Greenland is costly and tricky, even for Michelin inspectors.

Khaliqdad also struggles to hire local staff, as few Greenlanders have the proper training.

The winters are difficult, too. A few years ago, one young kitchen hand committed suicide, a stark reminder of the social woes on the Arctic island.

"It's hard. It's fun. It's sadness too, man... It's odd."

He carries on, thinking of his guiding star.

## Millions of Chinese students sit for gruelling 'gaokao'

BEIJING (AFP) — Hundreds of young Chinese students clutching pens and their IDs shuffled into a testing centre in blue-skied Beijing on Sunday, swarmed by parents, joining millions sitting for the national high-stakes university entrance exam.

Around 12.9 million students nationwide registered for this year's "gaokao", according to the ministry of education, which for most is the sole determining factor in admission to a Chinese university.

The multi-day exam, which began on Sunday, drills test-takers on subjects including Chinese, mathematics, English, science and the humanities — with the tallied scores to be released later this month.

"It's my first time, so I'm a bit anxious," said student Zhang Xinnan moments before entering the exam hall.

The spectacled Beijinger admitted he was nervous for the essay portion of the Chinese test, as he said he thought the prompts had become harder to respond to.

But, wearing his school uniform, the 18-year-old told AFP that despite the jitters he thought he would do well, having spent the last year drilling prac-

tice questions. "The things we needed to master have been mastered," said Zhang, who hopes to work with new energy vehicles.

"Just go in with self-confidence; you'll be solid."

Some mothers and fathers clustered outside the exam halls dressed in red, a symbol of good fortune in Chinese culture.

Dozens of police and security guards milled about as parents stood beside the line of students waiting to enter the exam hall, hoping to film their children walking inside.

### Shifting attitudes

High-level education has expanded rapidly in China in recent decades as an economic boom pushed up living standards — as well as parental expectations for their children's careers.

Yet, the job market that fresh graduates enter is no longer as rosy as it once was, with high youth unemployment a significant concern.

Roughly one in six Chinese between the ages of 16 and 24, excluding students, are jobless, according to official data.

Attitudes towards the test are changing, with

students and parents more and more unwilling to trade physical and mental health for high test scores.

"I'm pretty free range," said mother Deng Ju, standing across from the exam hall holding a stack of practice books for her daughter, revising last minute with her friend nearby.

"Just perform normally; that's enough," said Deng, 53. "I care more about physical health; the test is just a formality."

For Deng, whose daughter isn't aiming for a "name school" such as the elite Tsinghua or Peking University in the capital, doing away with the gaokao would be ideal.


"No more gaokao. Let's not gaokao anymore," she told AFP. "But that's impossible," she said, smiling.

For many Beijing students, the gaokao was still a step towards achieving their dream.


"I hope I can go to my ideal university," said student Zhang.

His friends also cared about the exam, he said.

"But if we can calm down, we should be able to get to a stable mentality," said Zhang. "Mentality is the most important when it comes to the gaokao."



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