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Wednesday, June 10, 2026 | Dhu al-Hajja 24, 1447 Hijri

Crown Prince visits national football team's training base camp ahead of World Cup

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein visited the national football team at their training base camp in San Diego on Monday, where they are undertaking their final training sessions ahead of the 2026 World Cup.

Speaking with the players, the Crown Prince praised their tactical discipline which has played a pivotal role in establishing the national team as star players on the world stage, according to a Royal Court statement.

His Royal Highness emphasised the importance of following the coach and technical staff's instructions, keeping in mind the heavy weight of responsibility, which requires high levels of concentration and mental preparation.

The Crown Prince said that all Jordanians stand behind the national football team and are cheering them on, noting the importance of putting on an outstanding performance in their upcoming



HRH Crown Prince Hussein visits the Jordan national football team's base camp in San Diego, USA during their final training sessions ahead of the 2026 World Cup

matches regardless of the result.

The players expressed their immense pride in

representing Jordan for the first time at the World Cup, voicing their determination to give

their very best in the upcoming matches.

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Border Guards foil 231 smuggling, infiltration attempts in H1 2026 — JAF

- Army tightens border security as smuggling networks adopt sophisticated tactics
- Border Guard forces down 56 drones, seize 11 million Captagon pills

AMMAN (JT) — Director of Land Operations for the Jordan Armed Forces- Arab Army (JAF) Gen. Yaseen Qudah said on Tuesday that Border Guard Forces dealt with 231 smuggling and infiltration attempts during the first half of 2026.

Speaking to Al Mamlakah TV, Qudah added the Border Guards seized 11 million Captagon pills, 14 kilograms of narcotic substances, including hydro and crystal methamphetamine, as well as 1,670 hashish slabs during the same period.

He said that Border Guard Forces also downed 56 drones, seized 125 GPS devices and confiscated a number of weapons.

Qudah also noted that Jordan's borders continue to face evolving security challenges, particularly the growing



The Eastern Military Region command on Tuesday foils four attempts to smuggle large quantities of narcotics using electronically guided balloons

number of smuggling attempts and the use of simultaneous operations to traffic drugs and weapons.

He added that organised smuggling networks are employing sophisticated and varied methods in their at-

tempts to infiltrate the Kingdom's borders.

Qudah reaffirmed that the JAF, in cooperation with other security agencies, continue to safeguard the Kingdom's borders and protect its security and stability.

"Infiltration and

smuggling remain among the most significant security challenges facing the Kingdom," he said.

He added that Border Guard Forces maintain round-the-clock surveillance along Jordan's 1,744-kilometre border,

monitoring suspicious activities and attempted crossings through an integrated security and military system designed to ensure a swift and effective response to potential threats.

Qudah highlighted the increasingly sophisticated methods employed by smuggling networks in recent years, which have prompted enhanced operational measures and greater coordination among relevant agencies.

He stressed that the Jordan Armed Forces have thwarted several smuggling attempts through accurate intelligence and the professionalism of their personnel, contributing to stronger border security and efforts to combat organised criminal networks.

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Displaced Palestinians gather to receive donated food portions at a charity kitchen in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on December 17, 2025

UN agencies warn of deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza

By Osama Alkafri

AMMAN — The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains volatile and insecure despite the ceasefire, according to the latest Humanitarian Situation Report issued

by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on Saturday.

The report said that daily strikes continue to result in civilian casualties, while nearly the

entire population of approximately 2.1 million people remains displaced in increasingly overcrowded areas with overstretched essential services.

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Gov't to roll out 100 electronic transport services, expand intercity buses to 1,000 — LTRC



Land Transport Regulatory Commission (LTRC) Director-General Riyad Kharabsheh says that passenger transport network includes 5,202 public transport vehicles, 683 large buses, 3,529 medium buses, 990 shared fixed-route cars, and 90 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) buses

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — The government is preparing a major digital and regulatory overhaul of the land transport sector, including the rollout of 100 electronic services and plans to expand regulated intercity buses to 1,000 by 2027, Land Transport Regulatory Commission (LTRC) Director-General Riyad Kharabsheh said on Tuesday.

Speaking during the Government Communication Forum, Kharabsheh said that the reforms form part of wider efforts to modernise transport operations,

strengthen regulation, and expand reliance on organised public mobility systems across the Kingdom.

Kharabsheh also said the sector transformation is aligned with the Economic Modernisation Vision, with a focus on improving service efficiency, increasing compliance, and enhancing passenger experience through structured planning and digital systems.

He said the commission is working on introducing around 100 electronic services, equally divided between passenger and freight transport, as part of a broader shift

towards full digitisation of licensing, monitoring, and operational procedures.

Kharabsheh added that a series of draft regulations are currently under review at the Legislation and Opinion Bureau, covering key areas such as passenger transport operations, smart transport applications, rental services, taxi office licensing, ticketing systems, international transport and the proposed Passenger Transport Support Fund, in addition to frameworks linked to the national railway project.

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Trump says US 'must' respond after Iran downs Apache helicopter

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that a US military helicopter was shot down by Iran and that the United States "must" respond.

The Apache helicopter is the second crewed aircraft that Washington has confirmed was shot down by Iran during the Middle East war, fol-

lowing the loss of an F-15 fighter plane in April.

The downing and the prospect of a US response pose the latest of a series of threats to a shaky ceasefire that has been in place since April 8, as the United States and Iran struggle to negotiate an end to the war.

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Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Yarub Qudah inaugurates the 2026 Franchise and Trade Agencies Exhibition

'Jordan-Iraq economic ties model of Arab integration'

AMMAN (JT) — Economic relations between Jordan and Iraq represent an advanced model of Arab economic integration, Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Yarub Qudah said on Tuesday.

Inaugurating the 2026 Franchise and Trade Agencies Exhibition on behalf of the prime minister, Qudah said that such integration is no longer an option but a strategic necessity driven by economic shifts, regional challenges and the requirements of sustainable development in both countries.

The two-day exhibition is organised by Bana Events and the Iraqi Business Council in Jordan at the Amman International Exhibition Centre on Airport Road, with official participation from Jordan and Iraq, alongside business owners and companies.

Qudah said Jordanian-Iraqi economic relations are not recent, but an extension of decades of cooperation between the public and private sectors, noting that Jordanian businesses have maintained a strong and longstanding presence in the Iraqi market.

He said trade volume between the two countries reached its highest level in 15 years in 2025, adding that genuine economic integration serves the strategic interests of both nations and supports their economic stability and growth.

The minister said re-

cent regional challenges have highlighted the importance of deepening economic integration, with Jordan and Iraq serving as mutual economic and logistical support for one another.

He noted that the Jordanian economy posted strong performance in 2025, with exports rising by more than 10 per cent compared with 2024, and foreign direct investment increasing by over 30 per cent, alongside the launch of major projects worth an estimated \$9 billion scheduled for 2027 and 2028.

Qudah also said that indicators for the first quarter of 2026 reflect the resilience of the national economy and its ability to adapt to regional developments, noting continued export growth despite logistical challenges, supported by market diversification and the competitiveness of Jordanian products.

He added that exports to EU markets recorded notable growth last year and in early 2026, while the Port of Aqaba continued to serve as a key regional logistics hub, with handling volumes rising in the first quarter of this year compared with the same period last year.

Qudah also said that commercial agencies and franchises remain a key driver for expanding private sector activity, pointing out that the Iraqi market, with a popu-

lation of around 45 million, offers strong purchasing power and significant opportunities for goods, services and investment partnerships.

Jordan and Amman Chambers of Industry Chairman Fathi Jaghbir said that the exhibition provides an important platform bringing together business owners, investors and brand representatives from Jordan, Iraq and other Arab countries to foster partnerships and open new investment opportunities.

Malik Al Dirai, director general of the private sector department at the Iraqi Ministry of Trade, said in a speech on behalf of the Iraqi Minister of Trade that the event marks a step towards shifting bilateral economic relations from traditional trade exchange to sustainable strategic partnerships and joint ventures with added value.

He added that Iraq and Jordan aim to raise their bilateral trade volume to around \$1.5 billion annually, a goal that requires a flexible and modern business environment to strengthen investor confidence.

Iraqi Ambassador to Jordan Omar Al Barzanji stressed the role of the Iraqi Business Council in Jordan in enhancing economic and investment ties and strengthening cooperation between private sector institutions in both countries.

RJ launches aircraft campaign celebrating Al Nashama's World Cup qualification

AMMAN (JT) — Royal Jordanian Airlines (RJ) has launched a campaign featuring images of Jordan's national football team players, Al Nashama, on several aircraft following the team's historic qualification for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

In a statement, RJ said that the initiative reflects the national carrier's pride in and support for this historic achievement.

RJ Vice Chairman and CEO Samer Majali said the move aligns with the airline's national role in promoting Jordanian accomplishments on the global stage.

"Aircraft carrying images of Al Nashama players will serve as flying ambassadors of Jordanian pride, delivering a message of achievement and national unity to destinations across our international network," Majali said.

He added that RJ has launched a unified visual identity for the campaign, which has



Royal Jordanian Airlines (RJ) launches a campaign featuring images of Jordan's national football team players, Al Nashama, on several aircraft

been incorporated into fan scarves, boarding passes, airport shuttle buses and onboard travel amenity kits, further strengthening Al Nashama's presence

across the passenger journey.

Majali also noted that the airline would utilise its global network to highlight Jordan's participation in the

World Cup, particularly through its five destinations in the United States, including the recently launched Amman-Dallas route, which now operates six

weekly flights. "This will help share Al Nashama's success story and showcase Jordan to millions of travellers around the world," he said.

FAO trains 200 women in Dead Sea Basin on climate adaptation

AMMAN (JT) — The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) in Jordan has launched a specialised training programme, in cooperation with Advanced Haloes for Project Management, on climate change adaptation targeting 200 women from local communities in the governorates of Madaba, Karak, Tafleeh and Ma'an.

The programme was implemented under the project Building Resilience to Cope with Climate Change in Jordan through Improving Water Use Efficiency in the Agriculture Sector (BRC-CJ), according to a FAO statement.

The programme aims to prepare participants to become part of a cadre of Women Leaders in Climate Change Adaptation. A total of 50 women from each governorate have been selected to participate in the training, which will run for two months and include 30



The programme was implemented under the project Building Resilience to Cope with Climate Change in Jordan through Improving Water Use Efficiency in the Agriculture Sector

specialised training sessions, the statement said.

The training programme is being delivered under the supervision of eight women leaders, who received advanced training last year through project activities, contributing to strengthening women's role in disseminating knowledge and awareness on climate change

adaptation at the community level.

This activity is part of the Building Resilience to Cope with Climate Change in Jordan through Improving Water Use Efficiency in the Agriculture Sector project, funded by the Green Climate Fund and implemented by FAO in Jordan in collaboration with the Ministries

of Water and Irrigation, Agriculture, and Environment, and in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme.

The participants expressed their pride in joining the training programme and emphasised their commitment to benefiting from the knowledge and skills provided.

They also highlighted their aspiration to play an active role in raising community awareness of climate change issues and adaptation measures, while transferring the knowledge gained to their local communities.

The project, valued at \$33.25 million, targets four governorates within the Dead Sea Basin, Karak, Madaba, Tafleeh and Maan, which are among the areas most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and climate-induced water stress.

The project places particular emphasis on women's empowerment and on strengthening their role as key partners in climate change adaptation efforts by improving their access to information and resources needed to address climate challenges, protect livelihoods and enhance the social and economic well-being of families and local communities.

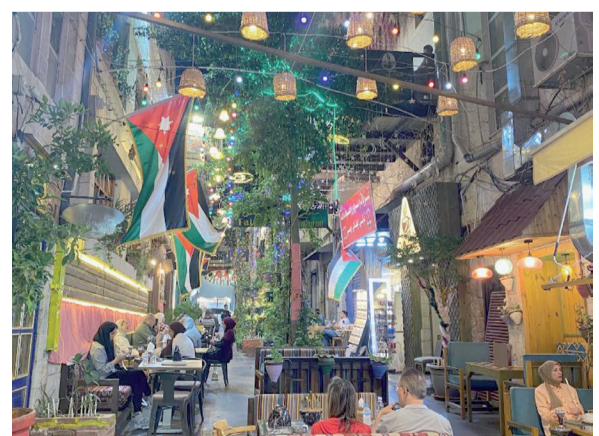
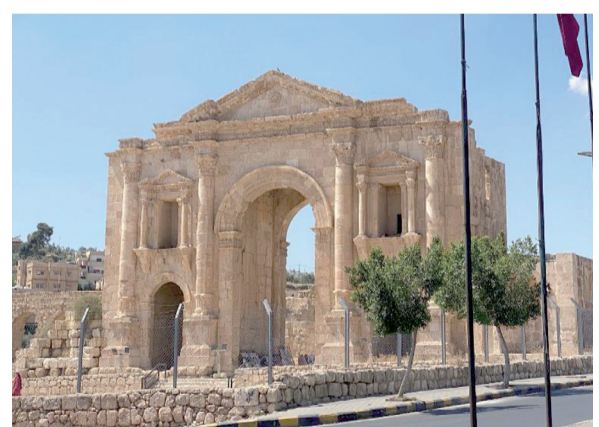
Saudi traveller says Jordan's greatest treasure is its people

AMMAN (JT) — A Saudi traveller who spent 10 days exploring Jordan's archaeological landmarks and natural attractions has said the country's most lasting impression came not from its ancient monuments, but from the warmth and generosity of its people.

Ghaith Alshaia, a researcher and heritage enthusiast from Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, recently completed a journey across Jordan that took him from the rose-red city of Petra to the Roman ruins of Jerash, the castles of Karak, the mosaics of Madaba and the shores of the Dead Sea.

"Before visiting Jordan, I expected to be impressed by Petra, Jerash, Amman, Karak, Madaba, Umm Qais, Ajloun, the Dead Sea and Aqaba. I was not disappointed. I encountered magnificent archaeological sites, breathtaking landscapes, and traces of civilisations that have shaped the region for thousands of years," Alshaia wrote in an article for The Jordan Times.

While the trip fulfilled his expectations of discovering some of the Middle East's most celebrated historical sites, Alshaia said



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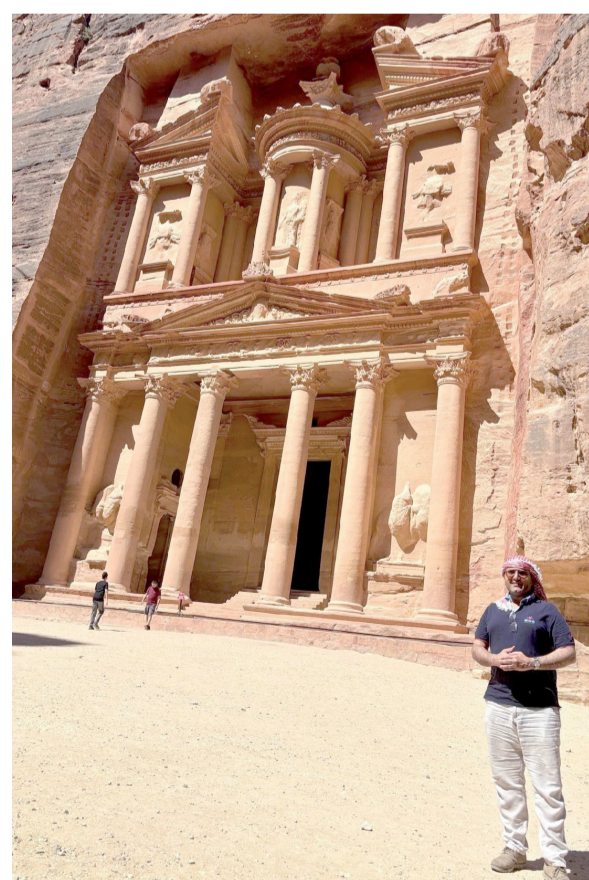
it was the hospitality and character of ordinary Jordanians that ultimately defined his experience.

He noted that hospitality appeared to be a natural part of daily life rather than a practice reserved for visitors. Throughout his jour-

ney, he received invitations for coffee, meals and conversation, often accompanied by the familiar Jordanian expression "Jirat Allah".

"In cities, villages, markets, restaurants, hotels and roadside cafes, I repeatedly encountered a level of gen-

erosity that felt genuine and unforced. Hospitality was not presented as a performance for visitors. It appeared to be a natural part of everyday life. Time and again, I heard Jordanians use the expression "Jirat Allah," extending invitations for coffee, meals,



Photos by Ghaith Alshaia

conversation, or simple companionship."

During his travels, Alshaia visited cities, villages, markets and tourist destinations across the Kingdom, observing what he described as a remarkable diversity of landscapes and cultures packed

into a relatively small geographic area.

"Jordan's diversity is remarkable. Within a relatively small country, one can move between deserts, mountains, forests, fertile valleys, ancient cities, Roman ruins, Islamic landmarks and biblical

sites," he wrote, adding, "Few countries offer such a concentration of history and culture within such short distances. Yet, despite the richness of Jordan's historical and natural treasures, I found myself increasingly drawn to something else: The character of the Jordanian people."

Yet, beyond the country's renowned attractions, Alshaia repeatedly encountered gestures of kindness that left a lasting impression.

"What impressed me most was the balance between hospitality and dignity. The Jordanians I met were welcoming without being intrusive, friendly without being overwhelming, and proud of their country without feeling the need to promote it constantly. There was a quiet confidence in the way people carried themselves."

One encounter during the Eid holiday particularly stood out.

While driving through a local market, Alshaia noticed several children selling sweets. Expecting one of them to offer him something for sale, he instead witnessed a simple act of generosity. "A young boy approached my car, smiled, tossed a handful of holiday sweets



HRH Princess Basma on Tuesday launches the renovated Knowledge Station at the Umm Al Hussein Orphanage

Princess Basma inaugurates renovated knowledge station at Umm Al Hussein Orphanage

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Princess Basma bint Talal on Tuesday inaugurated the renovated Knowledge Station at the Umm Al Hussein Orphanage, upgraded with support from Talal Abu Ghazaleh Global (TAG.Global) in cooperation with the South African Embassy in Jordan.

The project, implemented under the group's National Knowledge Centres initiative, included expanding the facility and installing modern digital technologies to enhance training and learning opportunities for orphanage residents and members of the local community.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Deputy Chairperson of the orphanage's Administrative Board and Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development Executive Director Farah Daghistani, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

During the ceremony, Princess Basma stressed the importance of partnerships between national institutions, diplomatic missions and the private sector in advancing development goals

and promoting shared humanitarian values. "The station is a valuable addition to the orphanage, providing a modern learning environment that supports innovation, skills development and lifelong learning," she said.

'The station is a valuable addition to the orphanage, providing a modern learning environment that supports innovation...'

Princess Basma also highlighted the importance of strengthening digital skills and supporting the orphanage's role in education and empowerment.

TAG.Global Chairman and CEO Talal Abu-Ghazaleh said that the project forms part of the group's efforts to support digital transformation and expand access to education and training opportunities across the Kingdom.

He added that the initiative aims to promote equal access to knowledge and equip young people with the skills needed to keep pace with technological developments and contribute to sustainable development.

South African Ambassador to Jordan Tselane Mokuena commended the partnership between the embassy and TAG.Global, as a reflection of their shared commitment to education and youth empowerment.

She said that the Knowledge Station would help enhance educational opportunities and develop students' skills at the orphanage.

Founded in 1958 by the late Queen Zein Al Sharaf, the Umm Al Hussein Orphanage provides care, shelter and educational opportunities for orphaned and vulnerable children.

Higher tender preference raised to 20% to boost competitiveness of local industry — Qudah

AMMAN (JT) — The Cabinet's decision to raise the price preference for locally manufactured industrial products reflects the government's commitment to supporting the industrial sector as a key driver of economic growth, Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Yarub Qudah said on Tuesday.

Under the decision, the price preference for Jordanian products in government tenders was increased from 15 per cent to 20 per cent, giving local industries priority even when their prices are up to 20 per cent higher than imported alternatives, provided they meet approved technical and engineering standards.

Qudah said the move represents a "qualitative leap" in empowering national industries and enhancing their competitiveness in the domestic market, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He said the decision aligns with state efforts to boost self-reliance,



Al Hussein Bin Abdullah II Industrial Estate (HUIE) was inaugurated in 2000 in Karak Governorate, some 118 km to the south of the capital Amman

promote local production and maximise value added within the national economy, adding that Jordanian factories have the capacity and expertise to meet the technical requirements of various government entities.

Qudah said that the

higher price preference would expand demand for local products, enabling factories to scale up production and increase investment.

He also highlighted the industrial sector's key role in job creation, stressing that greater

demand for local output would translate into higher employment opportunities across factories, related industries, services and supply chains.

"Every increase in the national product's share of government

spending represents a direct investment in the Jordanian economy," Qudah said, adding that it supports production, strengthens local companies, improves business sustainability and encourages further industrial expansion.

Tourism minister opens MENA travel market forum

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Imad Hijazin on Tuesday opened the MENA Travel Market Forum 2026, bringing together tourism industry leaders, investors and travel professionals from across the region and beyond.

The forum attracted broad participation from tourism boards, airlines, hotels and travel agencies, with representatives from 22 countries and more than 2,500 visitors and industry specialists in attendance, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra. Considered one



Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Imad Hijazin on Tuesday opens the MENA Travel Market Forum 2026

of the region's leading specialised tourism events, the forum serves as a platform

for decision-makers, experts and industry stakeholders to exchange expertise, forge

partnerships and explore the latest trends and investment opportunities in travel, tour-

ism and aviation.

The event featured panel discussions and business-to-business meetings focusing on the future of the tourism sector, including the growing role of technology, artificial intelligence and sustainability in shaping industry development.

The forum forms part of ongoing efforts to strengthen Jordan's position as a regional hub for tourism, conferences and exhibitions, while supporting the continued growth and competitiveness of the tourism sector at the regional and international levels.

Arab Thought Forum publishes double issue of Al Muntada

AMMAN (JT) — The Arab Thought Forum has recently published the double issue (291-292) of its quarterly intellectual and cultural journal, Al Muntada.

The issue opens with a keynote address delivered by HRH Prince El Hassan Bin Talal, Chairman and Patron of the Forum, at the 51st Session of the Royal Academy of Morocco, titled "Artificial Intelligence and Major Transformations: The Role of the Humanities", according to a statement by the forum.

In his address, Prince El Hassan said humanity has entered a new historical phase extending beyond the Fourth Industrial Revolution, with AI emerging as a defining force reshaping knowledge, production systems and daily life, what he described as the Fifth Industrial Revolution.

He stressed that this transformation should not be viewed as a purely technical shift, but as a profound change in human cognition itself, redefining the relationship between humanity, knowledge and machines, calling for critical awareness and a commitment to adapting to change without compro-



The issue opens with HRH Prince El Hassan Bin Talal's keynote address at the 51st Session of the Royal Academy of Morocco, titled 'Artificial Intelligence and Major Transformations: The Role of the Humanities'

missing ethical and human values.

Prince El Hassan also noted that, despite its complexity, AI remains a neutral tool whose impact depends on human use.

The real challenge, he

said, lies not in the technology itself but in ensuring its ethical application in ways that promote justice, protect privacy, preserve human dignity, and safeguard cultural diversity.

He also highlighted the

need to address emerging challenges linked to AI development, particularly algorithmic bias and intellectual property rights.

He called for international ethical and legislative frameworks and for stronger engagement by the humanities and social sciences in shaping the future of artificial intelligence to ensure balance between technological progress and cultural and civilisational considerations.

Prince El Hassan emphasised the importance of moving beyond theoretical debate toward practical action, including support for scientific research and the development of linguistic and knowledge systems that reflect cultural diversity.

He also called for enhanced international cooperation to ensure AI serves as a tool for empowerment rather than exclusion, and as a partner to human intelligence rather than a replacement for it.

In the issue's editorial, El Sadig El Faqih, former secretary-general of the Arab Thought Forum, addressed Arab thought and the identity crisis, describing identity as one of the most complex and pressing challenges fac-

ing contemporary Arab intellectual discourse.

He noted that many Arab societies still lack a clear and renewed vision of their unity and enduring civilisational identity.

El Faqih stressed that drawing on Arab civilisational heritage and reviving original, innovative ideas are essential to overcoming the intellectual and ideological fragmentation that hinders progress in the modern world.

He added that science and technology are among the most effective tools for strengthening civilisational identity.

"Historically, they have been a source of cultural depth and pride for the Arab world, and today they can help revive intellectual heritage and reapply it in contemporary contexts that address current challenges, reinforcing a sense of belonging and identity," he added.

The issue's special section, "Arab Thought and the Identity Crisis", brings together a group of Arab intellectuals and researchers who examine the challenges facing Arab identity from philosophical, cultural, social, and political perspectives.

DIPLOMACY

Jordan expresses condolences to Philippines over earthquake victims

AMMAN (JT) — The Foreign Ministry on Tuesday expressed its deepest condolences and sympathy to the government and people of the Philippines over the victims of the earthquake that struck the south of the country.

Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Fouad Majali stressed the Kingdom's full solidarity and standing with the government and people of the Philippines during this painful ordeal, according to a ministry statement.

Majali extended sincere condolences to the families of the victims, wishing the injured a speedy recovery.

A magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck off the southern Philippine island of Mindanao on Monday, triggering widespread destruction, building collapses, landslides and tsunami warnings that were later lifted, according to AFP.

The disaster has left at least 41 people dead and more than 450 in-



The Foreign Ministry on Tuesday expresses its deepest condolences and sympathy to the government and people of the Philippines over the victims of the earthquake

jured, while thousands remain displaced, with rescue operations continuing amid ongoing aftershocks.

In hardest-hit Sarangani province, some areas remain accessible only by helicopter and fears of aftershocks were slowing rescue efforts, local officials told reporters at a Tuesday briefing.

"There are still aftershocks, so the rescuers are very cautious in their approach. That's a challenge," said regional civil de-

fence chief Rodrigo Sosmena.

Infrastructure damage, meanwhile, means some communities will be cut off for at least a week because of the damage to roads and the collapse of a bridge, AFP reported.

In Glan municipality, where at least 13 people were buried in their homes by a landslide, staff at another hospital told AFP more than 60 patients were on beds outside the facility due to fears for the building's structural integrity.

Cassation Court upholds 5-year sentence for drug dealer

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld an October 2023 State Security Court (SSC) ruling, sentencing a drug dealer to five years in prison after convicting him of possessing a large quantity

of illegal narcotics in March 2023.

The court declared the defendant guilty of obtaining illegal narcotics (hashish) with the intent of selling the drugs to an undercover agent on March 16.

The SSC handed the defendant five years in

prison for the offence of possessing illegal narcotics and ordered him to pay JD5,000 in fines.

Court documents said the Anti-Narcotics Department (AND) learnt the defendant was in possession of illegal narcotics and sent one of its agents to pose

as a buyer.

"The AND agent got in touch with the defendant and asked him for three kilogrammes of Hashish and 1,000 Captagon pills in return for JD4,450," court documents said.

When the two met, AND agents immediate-

ly arrested the suspect, court papers added.

Upon searching the defendant, court papers said, AND personnel found a mobile that was "used in the drug deal between the defendant and the AND officers".

The defendant contested the SSC's rul-

ing through his lawyer, who argued that the court had "irregularities in the investigation procedures".

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

The higher court maintained that the SSC had followed the proper procedures in issuing the sentences against the defendant.

"It was clear to the court that the defendant confessed willingly to possessing the illegitimate drugs with the

intent of selling the illegal narcotics in the local market," the higher court said.

The Court of Cassation judges were Yassin Abdullat, Nayef Samarat, Hammad Ghazawi, Mohammad Khashshneh and Qassem Dughmi.



Smoke and debris rise following an Israeli air strike in Tyre on Tuesday

Residents of Lebanon's Tyre flee after Israel evacuation warning

TYRE, Lebanon (AFP) — Residents of south Lebanon's Tyre including the Christian quarter fled on Tuesday, an AFP correspondent said, after Israel's army for the first time warned the entire city to evacuate ahead of strikes.

The warning came a day after Iran, which insists a halt to the wider Middle East conflict must include a ceasefire in Lebanon, warned it would resume attacks on Israel if it kept striking its neighbour.

Israel has repeatedly struck the coastal city of Tyre since the latest war erupted with Hizbollah, following the Iran-backed group's rocket fire on March 2 to avenge the killing of Iran's supreme leader.

Hizbollah, which is backed by Iran, is the only group in Lebanon that has refused to surrender its arsenal to the state since a civil war ended in 1990.

Until Tuesday, Tyre's Christian quarter in the Old City, a small,

picturesque area where many displaced people have sought refuge, had been spared Israeli evacuation warnings and strikes targeting the rest of the city in the ongoing war.

"Urgent warning to the residents of the city of Tyre, including the Christian quarter, and the camps and surrounding neighbourhoods," read a message posted on X by the Israeli military's Arabic-language spokesman Avichay Adrae.

"For your safety, we ask you to immediately evacuate your homes... and move north of the Zahrani River." The Zahrani river is around 30 kilometres north of Tyre. The Israeli army last month declared all areas south of the river "combat zones".

Several Palestinian refugee camps are also located near Tyre.

The AFP correspondent saw people fleeing the Christian quarter,

which was soon largely empty of residents, and heavy traffic on the road heading north out of the city.

The state-run National News Agency reported an Israeli strike on Tyre's outskirts before the evacuation warning was issued.

Last week, Israel's military alleged that Hizbollah members were operating in the Christian quarter and said it would warn people to leave if the group remained there.

An AFP correspondent had said that some people who had been sleeping in cars or tents at the edge of the quarter left for other parts of the city after that warning.

On Monday, Lebanon's health ministry said Israeli strikes on south Lebanon killed at least 14 people, including five in a strike near a Red Cross centre in Tyre.

Hizbollah has kept up its attacks on Israeli troops who have invaded south Lebanon.

UK urges British firms to stop activities in illegal Israeli settlements

LONDON (AFP) — The UK government on Tuesday urged British businesses and citizens to refrain from conducting financial activities in Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank deemed illegal under international law.

"I have strengthened our business risk guidance to make it clear and unambiguous: if you are a British citizen or business, you should not conduct any economic and financial activities in illegal Israeli settlements," Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper told parliament.

"We believe that violent settler groups should not be profiting from the land that they have seized from Palestinians," Cooper added, saying the Israeli "government has condemned some settler violence, but that rings hollow when there is scant accountability".

France on Tuesday banned Israel's far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich from entering the country, the French foreign minister said, in the latest sanction slamming Israeli officials over policies towards Palestinian territories and pro-Palestinian activists.

Smotrich is the second member of the Israeli government to be forbidden from entering France in recent months, after national security minister Itamar Ben Gvir was barred on May 23 for mocking activists detained by Israeli



A man attempts to extinguish a fire in a field in the Palestinian town of Huwara in the occupied West Bank on Saturday, after an arson attack by Israeli settlers according to local officials

soldiers from a Gaza-bound flotilla carrying aid for the Palestinian territory.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said Smotrich "actively promotes the annexation of the West Bank, which he openly claims, the creation of new settlements in the West Bank, the re-colonisation of Gaza, the economic collapse of the Palestinian Authority and its harmful consequences for the Palestinian population".

"This is a policy that the overwhelming majority of the international community, firmly committed to the two-state solution, cannot accept," Barrot wrote on X.

He added that four leaders of settler organisations and 21 vio-

lent settlers were also banned from French territory.

Israel's foreign ministry quickly condemned the sanctions as "disgraceful".

"The real essence of these steps is the attempt to impose a political stance regarding the right of Jews to settle in the Land of Israel and concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — camouflaged as measures against violence," ministry spokesman Oren Marmorstein said.

Barrot said the announcement "imposing new sanctions on those responsible for the intensification of settlement-building and violence in the West Bank" was in tandem with Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and

Norway.

The five countries announced in June last year that they were banning Ben Gvir and Smotrich from their territories, accusing them of inciting violence against Palestinians, particularly in the occupied West Bank.

The Israeli government at the time condemned the sanctions as "scandalous".

Other countries have also banned the ministers, including Spain, Slovenia and most recently Ireland.

Firebrand Ben Gvir became a minister in 2022, after an alliance with the far-right Religious Zionist Party of Smotrich came third in legislative elections.

Together, Ben Gvir and Smotrich form a cornerstone of Israel's

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing coalition government.

Since the war in Gaza broke out in October 2023 with Palestinian militant group Hamas's attack on Israel, near-daily violence has also rocked the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967.

Israeli soldiers or settlers have killed at least 1,080 Palestinians since then, including both militants and civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Palestinian health ministry data.

Official Israeli figures show that at least 46 Israelis, both civilians and soldiers, have been killed in Palestinian attacks or during Israeli military operations in the same period.



Invitation to International and Local Firms for Investment Opportunity: Bulk Terminal rehabilitation (Cement terminal and Mut'ah jetty) Tender No (27/A/2026)

The Aqaba Development Corporation (ADC) is pleased to invite qualified international and local firms to participate in a strategic investment opportunity for the rehabilitation, modernization, financing, operation, and transfer of the existing Cement Terminal facilities and the Mut'ah Floating Berth at the Port of Aqaba under a Design, Finance, Build, Operate, and Transfer (DFBOT) concession agreement.

This landmark project aims to develop a modern bulk cargo handling terminal primarily dedicated to silica export operations, while maintaining the flexibility to accommodate future multi-purpose cargo activities. The initiative forms part of ADC's ongoing commitment to strengthening the Port of Aqaba's position as a leading regional logistics, trade, and industrial gateway within the Aqaba Special Economic Zone (ASEZ).

The scope of works includes, but is not limited to:

- Rehabilitation and integration of existing marine and terminal infrastructure.
- Construction of new operational and supporting facilities.
- Upgrading utilities and transportation networks.
- Installation of advanced cargo handling systems, including modern ship-loading equipment.

The concession period shall be twenty (20) years, with the possibility of an extension for an additional five (5) years, subject to ADC's approval and the terms of the concession agreement.

Obtaining Tender Documents

Interested firms wishing to participate in this tender are required to submit an expression of interest via email to tenders@adc.jo in order to obtain the tender documents, requests will be accepted until Sunday, 28 June 2026.

Important Notes :

- 1- **Site Visit:** a mandatory site visit will be conducted on **Wednesday & Thursday (8 & 9 July 2026, at 11:00 am (Jordan Local Time))** at the offices of ADC, participants are required to submit copies of their passports or personal identification documents in advance not later than **Wednesday, 1 July 2026**.
- 2- **Clarifications & Inquiries:** the deadline for submitting questions and requests for clarification is Monday, 20 July 2026, via email: tenders@adc.jo OR Fax: +962 3 203 9114
- 3- **Submission of Proposals:** Proposals must be submitted electronically Via email to tenders@adc.jo before/ on **Monday, 17 August 2026, at 2:00 pm (Jordan Local Time)**.
- 4- **Bid Bond:** each proposal must be accompanied by a bid bond in the amount of (100,000 JOD) in the form of either a certified bank cheque; OR an unconditional bank guarantee issued by a **licensed bank operating in Jordan**, the bid bond must remain valid for a minimum period of (180) days from the bid submission deadline. Any bid submitted without a compliant bid bond shall be rejected.
- 5- **Stamp Import Duty:** as per Stamp and Imports Duty Law No 20-year 2001, fees are required for the tender.
- 6- **ADC Rights:** ADC reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to cancel, amend, postpone, or reissue the tender without providing justification and without incurring any financial, legal, or contractual liability toward any bidder.
- 7- **Technical and Financial Proposals:** Bidders shall submit their technical proposal and financial proposal in two separate emails, duly signed by the authorized representative of the bidder, any proposal containing conditions, reservations, or deviations that conflict with the tender requirements and conditions may be rejected and shall not be considered (According to clause 10.2 of the RFP).

Address:

Aqaba Development Corporation (ADC), Al-Sharif Al-Hussein Bin Ali Street
P.O. Box 2680 Aqaba 77110, Jordan

Fax: 032039114 Tel:032039100 Email: tenders@adc.jo

Kenyan police fire tear gas, make arrests at US Ebola centre protest

NANYUKI, Kenya (AFP) — Kenyan protesters and police clashed on Tuesday as officers fired tear gas at hundreds of people demonstrating against an Ebola quarantine centre being built for US citizens in a tourist town and made several arrests, AFP journalists saw.

The centre at Laikipia Air Base in the town of Nanyuki, under the shadow of Mount Kenya, is set to quarantine Americans arriving from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which is battling a major Ebola outbreak.

Kenya has never recorded a case of Ebola and many oppose the idea of bringing potential carriers of the highly contagious disease into the country.

Dozens gathered near the air base, some wearing protective equipment and carrying a coffin with "Ebola" written on it.

AFP journalists saw several people arrested by police, who also fired tear gas to disperse the growing crowds.

"We don't have that disease in this country... they are bringing a virus into our country," said Zipporah Wachira,



Protesters chant slogans as they march during a demonstration against a controversial US-built Ebola quarantine centre slated to begin operations at Laikipia Air Base in Nanyuki on Tuesday

30.

"I'd like to know the reason why they thought our country is a dumping site," said Priscilla Waimani, 47, wrapped in a Kenyan flag.

The centre is due to have 50 isolation beds and be managed by US staff and was nearing completion late last week.

It had already sparked protests on June 1. Rights groups said two people died, though the circumstances of their deaths remain unclear.

Construction of

the facility is under a temporary pause order from Kenya's High Court — although work has continued at the site — and it has been opposed by local politicians in Laikipia.

But the government of President William Ruto has vowed to press ahead, saying it owes Washington for years of aid support.

"The American people and government have been partners with us on matters of health for close to 25-30 years," Ruto said last week.

"It would be most unfortunate if on one request by the Americans to set up a facility at their cost, we would refuse. We would look very inhuman."

Kenya's health minister has insisted the facility will be for Kenyans as well as Americans, and Washington has pledged \$13.5 million to Kenya's Ebola preparedness efforts.

But protesters insist the US must deal with problems on their own soil.

"We are saying the Americans [are] going to take their Ebola and go back to their country," Mwangi Wangai, 30, told AFP at the demonstration, dressed in PPE.

On Tuesday, the US embassy in Kenya issued a warning for its citizens in Nanyuki over the protests.

Construction of the facility follows a controversial health deal between the two countries last year, in which Kenya agreed to hand over vast amounts of health data to the US in exchange for billions of dollars in aid.

The World Health Organisation has declared an international health emergency over the outbreak in the DRC, which has seen 515 confirmed infections, including 91 deaths.

Despite fears of spread to neighbouring countries, only Uganda has recorded cases. It has confirmed 19 so far, almost all Congolese nationals who crossed the border.

Extension of Tender Invitation

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

Bidders 75JD non-refundable, provided that they bring along a valid trade licence.

Closing date sharp 1:00 P.M., SUN 21st of JUNE 2026. Non conditional bid bond equal to (3%) of the total value of quotation must be submitted along with the quotations.

Any quotations/offers will not be accepted after above mentioned closing date and sharp time.
(The winning bidder is responsible for paying advertisement fees, regardless how often the bid is announced.)

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

Rival Palestinian factions discuss Gaza disarmament

CAIRO (AFP) — Members of Palestinian factions including Hamas agreed in principle for Gaza's armed groups to hand over parts of their arsenals to a yet-to-be-created, ad hoc Palestinian entity during talks in Cairo, Palestinian sources told AFP on Tuesday.

Such a proposal has almost no chance of being accepted by Israel, which demands a complete demilitarisation of the Gaza Strip, starting with Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas.

Several of those who attended the Cairo talks that began on Saturday expressed hope the proposal would break a months-long deadlock on negotiations over Gaza's future.

The talks are being attended by most major factions, including Hamas and its ally Islamic Jihad, but not the Fateh Party that dominates the Palestinian Authority.

On Tuesday, the factions discussed the details of the weapons handover to a new entity with representation from various Palestinian political currents, according to a source close to negotiations.

They rejected the idea of a full disarmament, as demanded by Israel, several sources who asked for anonymity said.

"Egypt and the mediators are working to formulate a new, acceptable formula that takes into account the factions' agreement," one of the participants told AFP.

Hamas accuses Israel of failing to honour its commitments...

Another Palestinian taking part in the talks told AFP that Egyptian and Qatari mediators welcomed this approach.

"Hamas is linking the weapons question to a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, and to Gaza's reconstruction," one Palestinian political official said.

Senior Hamas official Taher Al Nunu told AFP that recent days had brought "significant progress", adding that the factions aimed to implement US President Donald Trump's peace plan for Gaza.

Israeli strikes have continued at an almost daily pace despite the ceasefire announced in October 2025 after two years of war, under Trump's phased peace plan.

Hamas and Israel blame each other for the current impasse, each accusing the other almost daily of violating the ceasefire.

Hamas accuses Israel of failing to honour its commitments, particularly on allowing humanitarian aid into Gaza, while Israel insists on the complete disarmament of the Islamist movement before any further implementation of the plan.

Hamas has repeatedly stated that it is not opposed to handing over some of its arsenal, but only as part of a Palestinian political process.

Former Hamas chief Khaled Meshaal also suggested a weapons "freeze" or "storage", which Israel rejected.

Crown Prince visits national football team's training base camp ahead of World Cup

Continued from page 1

On the sidelines of the training camp visit, His Royal Highness gave a televised interview to beIN Sports, during which he said that the achievements of the national team in recent years provided the impetus to continue developing Jordan's sporting

system.

During the interview, conducted by beIN Sports correspondent Wafa Soukar, the Crown Prince explained that the confidence and determination demonstrated by the national football team has filled Jordanians with pride, noting the importance of building on the team's

achievements on the international stage, and showcasing Jordanian and Arab cultural identity to a global audience.

In response to a question about the expected performance of Jordan's football team in upcoming matches, His Royal Highness underscored that the team's task is not an easy one, but that

there is great confidence they will put in a worthy performance, given their high-level physical and mental preparations.

The Crown Prince highlighted the important role of the Prince Ali Grassroots Centres in shaping the current national team, stressing the need to leverage the experience of the

current generation and pass it on to the next generation of promising players in order to strengthen Jordan's footballing culture.

His Royal Highness also expressed his pride in the level of Arab representation at this year's World Cup, wishing the participating Arab teams every success.

Border Guards foil 231 smuggling, infiltration attempts in H1 2026 — JAF

Continued from page 1

Oudah said the JAF continue to adapt their plans and operational procedures to evolving smuggling methods, supported by intelligence capabilities and modern technologies that strengthen monitoring and response efforts.

He highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen JAF's operational and technological capabilities, aimed at enhancing the readiness of Border Guard Forces and supporting their role in pro-

tecting the Kingdom's security and stability.

"Border Guard Forces use advanced surveillance technologies, including thermal cameras, radars and drones, to monitor border areas and detect suspicious movements," he added.

He explained that threats vary across Jordan's border fronts, with military regions facing different smuggling and infiltration challenges.

Oudah highlighted the role of advanced surveillance and monitoring systems in detecting

and foiling attempts by organised smuggling networks.

The Eastern Military Region command on Tuesday foiled four attempts to smuggle large quantities of narcotics using electronically guided balloons within its area of responsibility.

Border Guard units detected the balloons and, in coordination with security agencies and the Anti-Narcotics Department, intercepted and downed them inside Jordanian territory, according to a Jordan

Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement.

'Border Guard Forces use advanced surveillance technologies...'

The seized narcotics and equipment were handed over to the rele-

vant authorities for legal action.

Also on Tuesday, the Southern Military Region detected a drone carrying a large quantity of drugs along the western border.

Border Guard forces, supported by military security and the Anti-Narcotics Department, applied the rules of engagement and shot the drone down inside Jordanian territory.

The drone and its cargo were also handed over to the relevant authorities for legal proceedings.

UN agencies warn of deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza

Continued from page 1

Public health concerns are also mounting, with OCHA warning of growing threats posed by pests and rodents.

The accumulation of solid waste in residential areas, driven by restricted access to landfills and limited imports of essential equipment, has contributed to contamination of food supplies and living spaces, increasing the risk of illness, particularly among children.

According to the report, infectious diseases accounted for around 20 per cent of health consultations recorded through the World Health Organisation's Early Warning System between late April and late May.

Acute respiratory infections represented the largest share of reported cases, followed by a rise in skin diseases and acute watery diarrhoea.

In response, humanitarian partners have launched a pest-control campaign target-

ing more than 1,180 priority locations, including hospitals, shelters and waste disposal sites.

OCHA noted that sustained progress will depend on the regular entry of pesticides and other critical supplies.

Water shortages continue to place additional pressure on families across Gaza. UNICEF warned that many households are being forced to choose between drinking water, hygiene needs and disease prevention measures.

Overall water production in the enclave declined by approximately 20 per cent in May compared with previous months, largely due to shortages of treatment chemicals and spare parts. Damage to water infrastructure caused by ongoing strikes has further complicated repair efforts.

Humanitarian access has also become more restricted. Since May 24, the Zikim crossing has remained closed, leaving Kerem Shalom as the only operational

cargo crossing for humanitarian aid.

The report noted that a new checkpoint introduced on June 1 has led to significant delays, congestion and reduced fuel deliveries, further hampering relief operations.

In May, the UN and its partners offloaded approximately 51,900 pallets of humanitarian assistance, a slight increase from April levels but still below those recorded in earlier months.

Commercial imports also remained below pre-escalation averages, with a considerable share consisting of non-essential goods.

Meanwhile, funding shortages are forcing humanitarian organisations to scale back critical services. OCHA warned that the gradual suspension of water trucking operations could leave more than 330,000 people without reliable access to drinking water.

Food assistance has also declined sharply, with daily meal distributions falling from approximately 1.5

million meals in mid-March to 678,000 by the end of May.

Commercial imports also remained below pre-escalation averages, with a considerable share consisting of non-essential goods

Humanitarian partners have additionally reduced or suspended support for agriculture, site management, education, child protection programmes and safe spaces for

women.

The report highlighted the continuing insecurity across the territory. Between May 20 and June 3, Gaza's Ministry of Health reported 45 fatalities and 254 injuries.

The UN Human Rights Office also documented at least 26 Palestinian deaths since late May, including women and children.

Strikes during the reporting period damaged humanitarian facilities, schools and infrastructure located near hospitals, according to the report.

OCHA said the situation reflects a fragile post-ceasefire environment marked by operational constraints, funding gaps and ongoing violence.

Humanitarian agencies warned that without improved access, sustained supply flows and adequate financial support, conditions could deteriorate further, increasing the risk of disease outbreaks and deepening the suffering of Gaza's displaced population.

Gov't to roll out 100 electronic transport services, expand intercity buses to 1,000 — LTRC

Continued from page 1

He also said the Passenger Transport Support Fund aims to institutionalise government support for public transport within a legal framework, replacing previous policy-based approaches with a more structured and sustainable system.

According to LTRC figures, Jordan's transport sector, including freight and passenger services, comprises around 100,000 transport units.

Freight transport alone consists of 31,975 trucks, with individual ownership accounting for the majority of the fleet. Tractor units make up 60.7 per cent of freight vehicles, while cargo trucks represent 39.3 per cent, LTRC said.

In passenger transport, the network includes 5,202 public transport vehicles, 683 large buses, 3,529 medium buses, 990 shared fixed-route cars, and 90 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) buses, operating across 1,950 routes, including 1,378 internal and 572 intercity lines. School transport services are operated by 27 companies using 2,413 vehicles.

Kharabsheh also said that five smart trans-

port companies are currently operating in the Kingdom with around 15,000 registered drivers, while two additional companies are expected to receive licences after completing regulatory requirements. He added that approximately 4,000 drivers have joined the sector since the introduction of smart transport regulations.

He noted that the growing shift towards regulated digital platforms reflects increasing public demand for safer, more reliable transport services, supported by stronger enforcement and electronic integration between systems.

On freight transport, Kharabsheh said that only around 6,000 trucks reached external markets last year, highlighting the need for fleet modernisation and digital tracking systems to improve efficiency and expand access to regional trade routes. He added that tangible improvements are expected by the first half of 2027.

In infrastructure development, he announced a JD12 million transport hub project in Zarqa designed to integrate around 1,300 buses and serve up to 130,000

passengers daily by linking bus services with the BRT network.

He also referred to ongoing plans for transport hubs in Salt and initiatives to prioritise public transport at traffic signals through redesigned systems that give buses priority at intersections.

Intercity transport reforms have already introduced regulated services between Amman and several governorates, including Irbid, Karak, Jerash and Salt, operated by around 150 buses using fixed schedules, electronic ticketing, and monitoring systems.

The government has also approved an additional 180 buses, with plans to expand the network to 1,000 buses by 2027.

Kharabsheh also said the transition to digital fare collection systems will be gradual, noting that installing electronic payment devices costs around JD3,000 per bus.

The Commission is also testing community-based transport models in underserved areas of Amman, including Abu Nseir, Shafa Badran, and Marj Al Hamam, to improve last-mile connectivity where commercial services are limited.

Trump says US 'must' respond after Iran downs Apache helicopter

Continued from page 1

In a statement, Trump said he had been informed "that last night the Iranians shot down one of our highly sophisticated Apache Helicopters while patrolling over the Strait of Hormuz".

While the crew members were uninjured, "the United States must, of necessity, respond to this attack".

The Apache is an attack helicopter with a crew of two that is armed with a 30mm chain gun and can carry various other weapons including Hellfire missiles.

US Central Command (CENTCOM), which is responsible for US forces in the Middle East, said earlier that two Apache crew members "were rescued by American forces after their helicopter went down near the coast of Oman".

"The soldiers were safely rescued within two hours and are in stable condition," CENTCOM said in a post on X.

The command also said a naval surface drone helped rescue the downed helicopter's crew.

Trump on Tuesday said negotiations over a peace deal to end the Middle East war were in their final stages, after Iran and Israel halted attacks that threatened to reignite the months-long conflict.

Iran fired missiles at Israel on Sunday in response to strikes against Lebanon's Hizbollah in the southern suburbs of Beirut, before Israel struck back despite Trump's efforts to dissuade Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu from doing so.

The Israeli leader said of Iran that the "fire on

that front is contained" hours after Tehran said it had stopped its military action, while both sides warned they could resume hostilities despite diplomatic efforts gathering pace.

Iran and Israel "were going back and forth and now they both agreed through me to stop and we're in the final throes of what will be a very, very good deal", the US leader told reporters on his return from an NBA Finals game.

When asked whether a deal would be a matter of days or weeks, he said it would take "two or three days".

The flare-up came after weeks of negotiations seeking to bring about a definitive end to the regional war sparked by US and Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28, with Tehran insisting a halt to the conflict must include a truce in

Lebanon.

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".

US Vice President JD Vance told Fox News on Monday that while the United States and Israel shared interests, their positions did not always align.

"The Israelis and the United States, we have a lot of shared interests," Vance said. "But we also have some situations where our interests diverge."

Lebanon city evacuates

In the recent escalation of attacks, Iran fired nearly 30 missiles at Israel, according to the

Israeli military, while Israel struck military sites in the Islamic republic.

Iranian state media reported on Tuesday that two members of the "Army Air Defence Force" were killed in Israeli strikes a day earlier. No casualties were reported in Israel following the exchange.

And despite Iranian demands, Israel has kept up its attacks on Lebanon, where it is fighting the Iran-backed group Hizbollah.

On Tuesday, Lebanese state media reported an Israeli strike on the southern city of Tyre after the Israeli military urged residents to evacuate, the first time it had done so for the entire city and its surrounding areas.

"Enemy warplanes launched a heavy strike on Tyre," the state-run National News Agency said.

The news sent residents of Tyre including its Christian quarter fleeing for safety, an AFP correspondent said, reporting heavy traffic heading north.

"For your safety, we ask you to immediately evacuate your homes... and move north of the Zahrani River," the Israeli military's Arabic-language spokesman Avichay Adraee said on X.

Last week, Israel's military alleged that Hizbollah members were operating in the Christian quarter and said it would warn people to leave if the group remained there.

Lebanon was drawn into the war when Hizbollah militants fired rockets at Israel on March 2 to avenge the US-Israeli killing of Iran's supreme leader.

Israel responded with an extensive campaign of air strikes and a ground

invasion that have killed nearly 3,600 people. Exchanges of fire with Hizbollah have not stopped despite an ongoing truce.

The heads of the Pakistani and Lebanese armed forces meanwhile agreed to boost cooperation on Tuesday as they met in Pakistan with peace talks over the Middle East war dragging on.

On another front of the war, Israel's military said early Tuesday it had intercepted an aerial target from Yemen, but there were no injuries.

Oil eases

Fears had grown that the recent flare-up would put at risk a fragile Middle East truce — in place since April 8 — and ruin efforts for talks to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, through which about a fifth of global oil usually passes.

It was not immediately clear whether the Apache helicopter was shot down, experienced mechanical failure or encountered some other problem, the New York Times reported, citing two people briefed on the incident.

In better news for Iranians, local media reported early Tuesday that Tehran's international airport — closed during the missile exchanges — had reopened, allowing flights carrying Hajj pilgrims from Saudi Arabia to land.

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Thirty dinars: Social policy or economic stimulus package



ECONOMIC REVIEW

Yusuf Mansur

The government's recent decision to increase the salaries and pensions of employees and retirees earning less than JD600 per month by JD30, effective from the beginning of next year, is likely to spark considerable debate regarding its fiscal cost. Yet, an equally important aspect of the discussion concerns its potential impact on economic activity, growth, and domestic demand.

The economic effects of any income increase depend largely on the group receiving it. When additional income accrues to higher-income households, a significant portion is often saved, invested, or even spent outside the local economy. By contrast, when income gains are directed towards lower-income households, most — if not all — of the increase is spent immediately on food, medicine, transportation, utilities and other essential goods and services. For this reason, economists have long regarded targeted cash transfers to lower-income groups as one of the most effective short-term economic stimulus tools.

One particularly positive feature of the government's decision is that the increase takes the form of a fixed amount rather than a percentage of income. As a result, the relative benefit rises as income falls. For an individual earning JD600 per month, the increase represents a 5 per cent rise in income. For someone earning JD300 per month, it amounts to a 10 per cent increase. In this sense, the design of the policy is progressive and redistributive, directing proportionally greater support to those with the lowest incomes. Such an approach is widely regarded as a best practice in the design of income-support programs.

Let's do some simple back-of-the-envelope calculations. If we assume, as some estimates suggest, that approximately 700,000 individuals will benefit from the measure, the monthly increase of JD30 translates into an additional JD 21 million injected into the economy each month, or roughly JD 252

million annually. If the median household income in Jordan is around JD 750 per month, then the JD 600 eligibility threshold indicates that the policy is aimed at households below or near the median income level — the segment most likely to spend additional income. Consequently, a beneficiary count approaching 700,000 does not appear unreasonable if the policy covers both public-sector employees and civilian and military retirees. When the family members of beneficiaries are considered, the number of people positively affected becomes substantially larger.

The economic impact, however, extends well beyond the value of the transfer itself. Every dinar spent by a beneficiary becomes income for a retailer, pharmacy, transportation provider, or local producer, who in turn spends part of that income again. This process gives rise to what economists refer to as the economic multiplier. Using a conservative multiplier ranging from 1.2 to 1.5, the additional economic activity generated by the measure could reach between JD 300 million and JD 380 million annually.

Relative to Jordan's nominal GDP, this would amount to approximately 0.7 per cent to 0.9 per cent of total economic output. However, these figures represent a gross impact on nominal economic activity, not necessarily on real economic growth. A portion of the additional spending will leak into imports, some will substitute for expenditures that would have occurred anyway, and part may be offset by reductions in other government spending if the measure is financed through budgetary reallocations.

Consequently, the most likely net effect on nominal GDP

growth may be around half a percentage point. While this may initially appear modest, it is significant in an economy where nominal GDP growth typically averages around 5 per cent per year. In effect, the measure could raise expected nominal growth by roughly 10 per cent relative to its baseline level.

from South Korea to Brazil and Spain — suggests that directing support towards lower-income groups produces greater economic and social returns than distributing the same amount of money uniformly across all income categories. The reason is straightforward: Lower-income households spend most of what they receive, whereas higher-income households tend to save a larger share of additional income.

The importance of this measure extends beyond macroeconomic indicators. The beneficiaries are, in most cases, among the households most affected by rising living costs. As a result, the social impact of the policy may exceed its purely financial effects. By strengthening purchasing power, improving living standards and providing greater economic security, the measure can contribute to social stability and economic resilience.

Of course, such an increase should not be viewed as a substitute for investment, structural reforms, or large-scale development projects that raise productivity and generate employment over the long term. Current spending stimulates demand, but it does not necessarily expand the productive capacity of the economy. Successful economies require a balanced mix of policies — those that support long-term growth through investment and those that preserve purchasing power and social cohesion.

From this perspective, the thirty-dinar increase can be viewed not merely as a social policy aimed at assisting lower-income households, but also as a targeted economic stimulus package directed towards those most likely to spend every additional dinar within the Jordanian economy. Under current economic conditions, such a measure may prove to be one of the most efficient ways to stimulate local markets while simultaneously strengthening social stability and improving the well-being of a broad segment of society.

The writer is a former Jordanian minister of State for Economic Affairs.

The importance of this measure extends beyond macroeconomic indicators. The beneficiaries are, in most cases, among the households most affected by rising living costs

Moreover, part of the additional spending will return to the government through sales taxes, fees, and other indirect taxes. If the government captures, on average, approximately 29 per cent of economic spending in the form of public revenues, nearly JD 73 million could flow back to the Treasury from the policy's total annual cost. This would reduce the net fiscal burden on the state budget.

International experience —

Jordan's water debt and the path to water security

Jordan is facing a massive water problem that is hurting both our wallets and our environment. Right now, the Water Authority of Jordan is drowning in about JD5 billion of debt. This happens simply because making clean water costs way more than what citizens pay for it.



Ahmad Tarawneh

To put it in numbers, pumping, cleaning, and delivering just one single cubic metre of water costs around JD 1.80. But the government sells it to us for an average of only 80 piasters. This means the government has to pay the remaining JD 1.00 out of its own pocket for every cubic metre to keep bills affordable.

A huge part of this high cost comes from electricity, because pushing water over long distances and up our high mountains make about 14 per cent of Jordan's entire electricity supply.

This financial headache gets much worse because of regional troubles and crazy weather. Over the years, our country welcomed millions of refugees fleeing conflict, especially from Syria. This sudden population growth pushed water demand up by more than 40 per cent in northern Jordan, putting a massive strain on our old pipes.

At the same time, climate change is hitting us hard with brutal waves of droughts. Rain is disappearing, dams are sitting empty, and the yearly share of water for each person has crashed to just 61 cubic metres. That is one of the lowest amounts anywhere on the planet.

On top of that, we are losing a lot of water before it even reaches our taps. Even though the government is trying hard to fix things, about 41 per cent of our water is still lost.

This loss comes in two ways: physical losses, which means precious water leaking out of cracked, rusty pipes underground, and commercial losses, which happen because of broken meters, paperwork mistakes, and people stealing water illegally. Together, these physical and commercial losses waste millions of gallons of water and burn a giant hole in the country's budget every single year.

To clear this heavy debt and secure our future, Jordan needs real, everyday solutions. First, we must finish the big National Conveyance Project, which will take seawater from Aqaba, clean it, and send 300 million cubic metres of fresh water up to Amman and other cities every year to protect us from droughts.

Second, we need to power our water pumps with solar and wind energy to completely get rid of those massive electricity bills. Third, we have to keep replacing old leaky pipes and use strict laws to stop water theft.

Globally, Jordan must fight to get its fair share of international climate finance. This climate finance is money meant to help countries deal with global warming. It is our right to receive this aid because Jordan is paying a heavy price for global climate shifts and refugee crises that we did not cause.

By using clean energy, stopping leaks, and getting this global support, we can finally fix our water debt and keep the taps running for everyone.

A major Israel settlement push across occupied West Bank

As a part of its broader policy push to increase Israeli settlement presence in the occupied West Bank, Israel has approved recently the construction of more than 2,000 new housing units distributed across several strategic locations.

Pushing to annex more and more of the Palestinian territory far-right Israeli finance minister Bezalel Smotrich has announced a major expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Smotrich, who holds authority over parts of Israel's civilian administration in the West Bank, said on 3 June that a planning committee had approved the construction of 2,162 new Jewish homes, of which 1,006 units will be in a new illegal settlement near Jerusalem, 922 near the city of Nablus and 234 near Hebron.

"We are continuing to build the Land of Israel in practice," Smotrich said in a statement.

The new homes would "strengthen our hold on the land, reinforce Israel's security, and establish clear facts on the ground that prevent the creation of an Arab terror state in the heart of the country", he added.

Smotrich has been sanctioned by the United Kingdom, France, and other states, which accuse him of inciting violence against Palestinians.

The minister has denounced the sanctions and said they would not change Israeli policy.

Besides, on June 4, Israeli forces had delivered demolition notices to a number of shops at the intersection of the town of Bazariya, northwest of Nablus, to make way for a colonial road.

Meanwhile, some settlers stormed the village of Deir Sudan, northwest of Ramallah, accompanied by bulldozers, to seize it.

The developments come months after the Israeli govern-

ment approved a land registration process in February that allowed Israel to take territory as "state property" if Palestinians could not prove ownership.

Palestinians seek the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Gaza, as part of a future independent state.

Israel, meanwhile, maintains military and administrative control over large parts of the territory, while expanding illegal settlements in several areas.

The settlement expansion comes amid ongoing debate within Israel's political leadership over the future of the occupied territories.

The approval of thousands of new settlement homes further entrenches Israeli presence in the West Bank and complicates already fragile prospects for a negotiated political settlement

The Israeli Knesset gave on June 4 final approval to legislation granting tax exemptions to dozens of illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank.

In a statement, the Knesset said lawmakers approved the bill on its final reading, granting tax benefits to illegal settlements located in what it called the "eastern confrontation line zone."

The legislation was sponsored by Knesset members Zvi Sukkot,



Najla M. Shahwan

from the Religious Zionism party led by finance minister

Bezalel Smotrich, and Limor Son Har-Melech, from the far-right

Jewish Power party led by national

security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, along with other lawmakers.

The bill passed by 32-23 votes. Under the law, occupants will be entitled to tax exemptions throughout the tax year and may choose among available tax benefits if they qualify for more than one exemption.

The legislation is set to take effect in January 2027 and remain in force through December 31, 2027. It also authorises the finance minister, with approval from the Knesset Finance Committee, to extend its validity for additional periods of up to two years each.

In a report published at the end of May, the Israeli anti-settlement group Peace Now said the law would classify dozens of illegal settlements as areas whose residents are eligible for substantial tax benefits.

The group noted that the original bill sought to extend tax benefits to all settlements but was narrowed due to its high cost and professional objections, ultimately applying to 58 illegal settlements.

According to Peace Now, the updated version primarily includes illegal settlements where support for the Religious Zionism Party is particularly strong.

The international community considers settlements built in the occupied Palestinian territory illegal under international law and a major obstacle to a

two-state solution.

Netanyahu's government has openly championed a significant expansion of illegal settlement activity since taking office at the end of 2022. According to Peace Now estimates, more than 750,000 Israeli occupiers live in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem.

While some international actors have warned against further annexation or expansion, enforcement measures remain limited.

The United States has historically expressed opposition to settlement expansion, although its positions have varied in intensity depending on administration policy.

On its part US President Donald Trump's administration has been far less critical of the fast-expanding Israeli settlements.

The approval of thousands of new settlement homes further entrenches Israeli presence in the West Bank and complicates already fragile prospects for a negotiated political settlement.

Additionally, settlement expansion changes demographic and geographic realities on the ground, making territorial compromise increasingly difficult and it reinforces perceptions that a viable independent state is becoming harder to achieve.

For Israel, supporters of settlement growth argue it strengthens security and consolidates control over strategically important areas while critics, say it increases friction with Palestinian communities and fuels long term instability.

However, with diplomatic efforts largely stalled, continued expansion is likely to remain a central flashpoint in the conflict and a key issue in deepening regional tensions.

Najla M. Shahwan is a Palestinian author, researcher and freelance journalist

BUSINESS

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Trust, security, innovation key to Jordan's digital payments future, says Visa executive

By The Jordan Times Staff

AMMAN — As Jordan accelerates its digital transformation and strengthens its position as a regional fintech hub, building consumer trust in online payments remains one of the most important challenges facing the sector, according to Mario Makary, Vice President and Levant Country Manager at Visa.

In an interview with The Jordan Times, Makary highlighted the critical role of cybersecurity, seamless payment experiences and mobile-first innovation in supporting the growth of Jordan's digital economy.

"Trust is the foundation of commerce, particularly for digital payments," Makary said. "If consumers perceive a website as unsafe, they won't proceed — indeed, 85 per cent of online shoppers in Jordan have avoided a site because they didn't trust it with their card details."

He noted that strengthening cybersecurity and building confidence in Jordan's digital payments ecosystem remains a top priority for Visa.

"We bring global scale to this challenge — connecting 175 million merchants worldwide (including 2.7 million in the North Africa, Levant and Pakistan region, which includes Jordan) — and pair that reach with robust security measures. Our systems analyse over nine billion security events each day to detect and neutralise threats in real time, ensuring every transaction on our network remains secure."

According to Makary, security alone is not enough to drive greater adoption of online commerce.

"According to Visa's Checkout Friction Report, strong security must go hand-in-hand with a seamless user experience to accelerate ecommerce growth," he said. "More than half of surveyed consumers said they would shop online more frequently if a universal streamlined checkout option were available."

Visa has sought to address these challenges through products such as Click to Pay, which simplifies online purchases while maintaining high security standards.

"Click to Pay securely stores card information and protects each transaction with Visa's advanced security measures, offering convenience and peace of mind," Makary said.

The full interview follows:

1- Consumer trust remains a major challenge, with many respondents avoiding websites they perceived as unsafe and others reporting fraud or phishing attempts. How is Visa working to strengthen cybersecurity and build greater confidence in Jordan's digital payments ecosystem?

Trust is the foundation of commerce, particularly for digital payments. If consumers perceive a website as unsafe, they won't proceed — indeed, 85 per cent of on-



Vice President and Levant Country Manager at Visa Mario Makary

line shoppers in Jordan have avoided a site because they didn't trust it with their card details. Strengthening cybersecurity and building confidence in Jordan's digital payments ecosystem is a top priority for Visa. We bring global scale to this challenge — connecting 175 million merchants worldwide (including 2.7 million in the North Africa, Levant and Pakistan region, which includes Jordan) — and pair that reach with robust security measures. Our systems analyse over 9 billion security events each day to detect and neutralise threats in real time, ensuring every transaction on our network remains secure.

According to Visa's Checkout Friction Report, strong security must go hand-in-hand with a seamless user experience to accelerate ecommerce growth. More than half of surveyed consumers said they would shop online more frequently if a universal streamlined checkout option were available. Visa tackles this friction with innovations like Click to Pay, which simplifies checkout by eliminating the need to re-enter card details on every site. Click to Pay securely stores card information and protects each transaction with Visa's advanced security measures, offering convenience and peace of mind.

In fact, 93 per cent of respondents said they would have greater confidence in online payments if they were secured by biometrics. Visa Payment Passkey addresses this need by enabling seamless, password-free biometric verification for online transactions — delivering exactly that enhanced protection. Security remains paramount for Jordan's online shoppers: 39 per cent cite it as the primary factor when choosing a payment method. By reducing checkout friction and embedding stronger security, Jordan's merchants, issuers

and payment providers can unlock more ecommerce growth. In a mobile-first environment, trusted and seamless experiences improve conversion, reduce cart abandonment, and contribute to a more inclusive digital economy.

2- More than half of respondents said they would shop online more frequently if a universal one-click checkout option were available. How transformative could technologies such as Click to Pay be for Jordan's ecommerce and retail sectors?

Jordan's ecommerce sector is gaining momentum, with revenues reaching \$229 million in 2025, and consumer appetite for online shopping continuing to grow. However, as highlighted in the Checkout Friction Report, growth is still constrained by friction in the checkout experience, which contributes to drop-off and abandoned purchases across the ecosystem.

The data clearly illustrates the challenge. Three-quarters (76 per cent) of shoppers have abandoned an online purchase due to security concerns, not having their card details readily available, or system errors. Re-entering card information remains a significant pain point, with 47 per cent of consumers describing it as a major hassle. Crucially, more than half of respondents said they would shop online more frequently if a universal, streamlined checkout option were available. This shows that the issue is not demand, but experience.

Technologies such as Click to Pay can be highly transformative for Jordan's ecommerce and retail sectors because they directly address these barriers. Click to Pay removes unnecessary complexity by offering a streamlined and secure guest checkout experience, eliminating the need for consumers to repeatedly enter their

card details across different websites. At the same time, card information is stored safely and protected by Visa's advanced security measures, rather than with individual merchants.

By simplifying checkout while strengthening security, Click to Pay helps build the trust consumers need to engage more confidently in digital commerce. When shoppers feel protected and the experience is effortless, they are far more likely to complete transactions and shop online more frequently. For Jordan, this represents a meaningful opportunity to unlock the full potential of ecommerce, improve conversion rates for retailers, and support the continued evolution of a more trusted and resilient digital economy.

3. Jordanian consumers are increasingly mobile-first, with the vast majority preferring to shop via smartphones. How is this trend shaping Visa's strategy, partnerships, and investments in Jordan?

In Jordan, digital commerce is clearly mobile-first. Visa's Checkout Friction Report found that 79 per cent of Jordanians (nearly eight in ten) shop for groceries and beverages online each week, and an overwhelming 91 per cent prefer to make purchases via their smartphones. This mobile-led reality is directly shaping Visa's strategy, partnerships, and investments in Jordan. We've oriented our approach around delivering secure, seamless mobile payment experiences — recognising that every transaction must be easy and trustworthy.

Ensuring digitally secure interactions is foundational. We also harness data-driven insights to anticipate market trends and tailor solutions for Jordanian consumers. Importantly, our focus aligns with national priorities: Jordan's government is

committed to inclusive digital growth, ensuring all segments of society benefit from digital services, infrastructure, and opportunities to develop digital skills without discrimination. A recent survey by the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship¹ showed that 97.5 per cent of Jordanian households now own at least one smartphone (up from 95.7 per cent in 2023), with near-universal ownership in Amman at 99 per cent. With virtually every household connected, the focus now is to turn that connectivity into safe, convenient commerce — a goal we advance by working closely with local partners across the ecosystem.

Visa's role in Jordan is underpinned by our heritage as a technology company that powers modern commerce. We helped pioneer many of the industry's foundational innovations — such as chip and tap cards, tokenisation, and contactless payments — which are now standard worldwide. Today, as technologies like AI-driven commerce, real-time money movement, tokenisation, and stablecoins converge to reshape the future of payments, we continue to focus on innovation and product development.

This positions Visa to lead the next wave of transformation, ensuring Jordan's mobile-first consumers have secure, cutting-edge ways to transact.

4- Despite the growth of digital payments, cash-on-delivery continues to play a significant role in Jordan's ecommerce market. What are the key barriers still preventing wider adoption of cashless transactions in the Kingdom?

Although cash-on-delivery still features prominently in Jordan's ecommerce market, it isn't because consumers prefer cash per se — it's due to lingering issues of trust and convenience in digital payments. Visa's Checkout Friction Report confirms that concerns about security and friction in the online checkout process are the main barriers preventing wider cashless adoption. In fact, Jordan's digital economy is highly active: 79 per cent of surveyed consumers shop online every week and 91 per cent prefer to do so from their smartphones. This indicates strong latent demand for digital payments.

However, many shoppers encounter obstacles that can push them back toward cash-on-delivery. According to the report, 85 per cent of consumers have avoided certain websites because they didn't trust them with their card details, and 47 per cent find it a significant hassle to manually re-enter card information during checkout. This kind of friction has contributed to 76 per cent of online shoppers in Jordan abandoning a purchase at some point. Essentially, people aren't clinging to cash; they're pausing because of security worries or cumbersome processes in the digital journey.

Rather than truly pre-

ferring cash, Jordanian consumers are clearly signaling a demand for more secure and seamless digital payment solutions. Security is now a major deciding factor: 39 per cent of shoppers say protection is the primary driver for choosing a payment method, and a resounding 93 per cent would feel more confident using digital payments if they were secured by biometrics. These findings underscore a strong readiness in Jordan for trustworthy, frictionless cashless experiences. By addressing security concerns and simplifying checkout — as Click to Pay does — as businesses and payment providers can empower more Jordanians to confidently embrace digital payments over cash.

5. Small and medium-sized enterprises are a key pillar of Jordan's economy. How can emerging payment technologies help SMEs and startups reduce cart abandonment, improve customer experience, and compete more effectively in the digital marketplace?

Small and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of economies around the world, driving innovation, job creation, and inclusive growth. In Jordan, their role is especially critical, and enabling SMEs to succeed in the digital marketplace is closely aligned with national priorities. The government is focused on expanding digital infrastructure and connectivity, supporting startups and innovation ecosystems, promoting digital skills and entrepreneurship, and enhancing government digital services — all of which create strong momentum for SMEs to scale through digital commerce.

Yet, one of the biggest challenges holding local businesses back is cart abandonment. Visa's Checkout Friction Report reveals that 76 per cent of Jordanian shoppers have abandoned an online purchase. This drop-off is largely driven by friction and security concerns at checkout: 47 per cent of consumers cite re-entering card details as a significant pain point, while 85 per cent have avoided websites they do not trust with their payment information. For SMEs, these barriers directly impact revenue, customer retention and their ability to compete effectively online.

Emerging payment technologies are designed to address these exact challenges. Solutions such as Click to Pay and biometric Visa Payment Passkeys streamline the mobile-first checkout experience — an essential advantage given that 91 per cent of shoppers in Jordan prefer to shop via their smartphones. By reducing manual steps and embedding strong security into the payment journey, these technologies help SMEs convert more shoppers while strengthening trust.

Beyond improving conversion rates, digital payments also bring operational benefits for SMEs. They provide bet-

ter visibility over transactions, easier tracking and reconciliation, and stronger security than cash-based models. This translates into less manual handling, fewer risks associated with cash collection and delivery, and better records to support planning, inventory management and growth. By making payments more seamless and secure, emerging payment technologies help SMEs reduce cart abandonment, enhance customer experience and compete more effectively alongside larger players in Jordan's digital economy.

6. Jordan has been positioning itself as a regional hub for fintech and digital innovation. In your view, how important is improving digital payment infrastructure to supporting economic growth, financial inclusion and entrepreneurship in the Kingdom?

Jordan has already established itself as a regional hub for fintech and digital innovation, and sustaining this leadership depends on continuously strengthening the digital payment infrastructure that underpins the economy. Much like a modern high-rise, a successful digital economy relies on strong foundations, resilient frameworks, and well-designed systems that allow every level to function efficiently and securely.

That foundation is firmly in place. With 96.5 per cent of Jordanian households connected to the Internet, the country is highly prepared for digital commerce at scale. Building upward from this base, the Jordanian Digital Transformation Strategy and Implementation Plan (2026-2028) sets out a clear blueprint, identifying the modernisation of digital infrastructure as a national priority to support long-term economic growth and innovation.

A robust digital payment infrastructure acts as the core framework of this structure, directly empowering entrepreneurs and startups. It lowers barriers to entry, enables SMEs to reach a wider consumer base instantly, reduces transaction costs, and improves cash flow. Just as efficient elevators and utilities allow a building to operate smoothly, modern payment rails allow businesses to scale faster and operate more competitively.

Trust and security are the safety systems that give people confidence to enter and transact within this digital environment. Secure, seamless checkout experiences are essential in a market where Visa's Checkout Friction Report shows that 85 per cent of shoppers avoid websites they do not trust. By embedding strong security into the payment journey, digital infrastructure helps reinforce confidence and supports sustained adoption of cashless commerce.

Finally, mobile-first payment solutions serve as accessible entry points that ensure the entire structure is inclusive. By integrating unbanked segments

into the formal financial ecosystem, these solutions enable broader participation in the digital economy, unlocking more equitable economic growth and fostering grassroots innovation. In this way, continued investment in digital payment infrastructure is not just about efficiency — it is fundamental to maintaining Jordan's leadership in fintech, supporting entrepreneurship, and ensuring inclusive, sustainable growth.

7. Looking ahead, what role does Visa see Jordan playing in the future of ecommerce and digital payments in the Middle East, particularly as competition and innovation in the regional fintech sector continue to accelerate?

Jordan already stands as a regional hub for ecommerce and digital payments — a prominent presence on the Middle East's fintech landscape. Its influence far exceeds its size: About 27 per cent of tech entrepreneurs in the MENA are Jordanian, even though Jordan accounts for only 3 per cent of the region's population. Combined with a deeply digital-native, mobile-first society — where 91 per cent of consumers prefer shopping via mobile phones — this gives Jordan strong foundations and a flexible framework to test, refine and scale next-generation payment solutions across the region.

Visa has helped build on this structure through targeted initiatives and partnerships. We brought the Visa Everywhere Initiative (VEI) to the Levant in partnership with the Central Bank of Jordan, and the response underscored Jordan's leadership: 61 of the 100 applications in the inaugural cohort came from Jordan. A standout success was GamerG, which won the Levant finals, the CEMEA finals, and the People's Favorite Award at the global finals — proof that Jordanian innovation can scale globally. Beyond VEI, Visa continues strengthening the framework through deep local partnerships, including an MoU with JOPACC to mentor startups in the JOIN Fincubator, sponsorship of Fintech Academy Jordan, and collaboration with the Institute of Banking Studies to support emerging entrepreneurs.

Looking ahead, Jordan is poised to be both a regional standard-setter and a launchpad for innovation across the Middle East. The Kingdom's regulatory progress — most notably the 2025 framework placing stablecoin activities under Central Bank oversight — creates room for programmable money to evolve responsibly, balancing innovation with trust and stability. As advanced technologies such as Click to Pay and Visa Payment Passkey are adopted, and as home-grown talent continues to be nurtured through ecosystem collaboration, Jordan is not just keeping pace with regional fintech momentum — it is helping design the blueprint for secure, inclusive digital commerce across the Middle East.

THE JORDAN TIMES SPORTS AT A GLANCE

NBA

Wembanyama sparks Spurs past Knicks

NEW YORK (AFP) — Victor Wembanyama scored 32 points to spark the San Antonio Spurs over New York 115-111 in the NBA Finals on Monday, snapping the Knicks' 13-game win streak with President Donald Trump booted as he watched. Frenchman Wembanyama added eight rebounds, six assists, three blocks and two steals at Madison Square Garden as the Spurs cut the Knicks' lead to 2-1 in the best-of-seven championship series. "We've done what we were supposed to do but the job is absolutely not done," the 22-year-old Wembanyama said. "We're not even halfway. The hardest is yet to come." A raucous crowd created an electric atmosphere for the first NBA Finals game at Madison Square Garden since 1999. That included boos for Trump, the first sitting president to attend an NBA Finals game, when he was shown on the arena videodisplay. "At home it really feels like playing six against five," said Wembanyama. "In here it feels like playing five against six, but ... it really shows what teams are made of." Expanded security measures for Trump's attendance led to fans being asked to arrive two hours before the tip-off and cancellation of a watch party outside the arena. The Spurs knew no team had ever won an NBA play-off series after losing the first three games, helping push them after late-game blunders cost them in a game-two home loss.

CRICKET

Lord's pitch rated 'unsatisfactory' by ICC

LONDON (AFP) — The Lord's pitch for the first Test between New Zealand and England has been rated as "unsatisfactory" by the International Cricket Council (ICC). Match referee Andy Pycroft deemed there was "excessive seam movement" and the "bounce was variable" throughout the match, the 150th Test staged at Lord's — the most at any ground. As a result, the London venue has been handed one demerit point. "There was plenty of excessive seam movement throughout the Test, and the ball also kept extremely low on several occasions," said Pycroft. "The bounce was variable throughout as 16 wickets fell on the first day and 17 on the second. There was simply an over-balance in favour of ball against bat caused by the pitch." The match, which England won by 115 runs to 1-0 up in a three-match series, was the second shortest completed Test, in terms of balls bowled, at Lord's.

Somali referee is dropped from World Cup after turned back at US border

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — A Somali referee was on Monday dropped from the World Cup after he was denied entry to the United States, reigniting concerns about how Donald Trump's immigration crackdown could disrupt the tournament.

Omar Artan was set to be the first match official from Somalia to referee at a World Cup final, but he was turned back when he arrived at Miami International Airport on Saturday.

The United States Customs and Border Protection said Artan was denied entry due to "vetting concerns".

World football's governing body FIFA said it was powerless to influence the decision, which it maintained was the sole preserve of tournament co-hosts the United States, and confirmed that Artan would play no part in the World Cup.

"FIFA can confirm that match official Omar Abdulkadir Artan will be unable to train and officiate at the FIFA World Cup 2026 after he was denied entry into the United States," a FIFA spokesperson told AFP.

Somalia is one of several countries on a travel ban list introduced by US President Trump's administration as part of a broader immigration crackdown.

Iran's team were spending their first full day at their base camp in Tijuana, Mexico after arriving in the eye of a diplomatic storm after the US — embroiled in a military conflict with the Islamic republic — refused to issue visas to 15 of their support staff.



Somalian referee Omar Abdulkadir Artan gestures during the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2024 group D football match between Mauritania and Algeria at Stade de la Paix in Bouake on January 23, 2024

Iran coach Amir Ghalenoei complained on Sunday that the process of obtaining visas had delayed his team's arrival by a week.

He added: "Usually in these tournaments, before technical matters, ethical and human considerations must be respected — which I think for us it

was not the case."

'Peace and tranquility'

With the big kickoff in Mexico City on Thursday, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum vowed to ensure that threatened demonstrations by a teachers' union over demands for salary raises do not disrupt the opening game between her country and South Africa.

"We are going to guarantee... that the celebration of the World Cup is well-executed, in peace and tranquility," Sheinbaum said.

On June 1, police dispersed protesters with tear gas and rubber bullets near the historic Zocalo Square in Mexico City where authorities have erected a massive viewing screen for a World Cup fan zone.

Streets surrounding the square are closed off with metal barricades, which Sheinbaum has said are meant to guard against "provocations."

As the days ticked down to the start of this expanded World Cup, the 48 teams settled into their base camps.

Five-time World Cup winners Brazil were among the squads getting familiar with their homes for a tournament that will stretch for five and half weeks until the final on July 19.

Brazil star Bruno Guimaraes insisted his team should get "the respect they deserve" as they prepare to kick off their bid to win a record-extending sixth World Cup.

The Selecao won the last of their five titles in 2002 and have exited at the quarter-final stage four times in five editions since then.

"Nobody else has five stars on their chest. We have great players who play for top teams, like Vini [Vinicius Junior] and Raphinha. We need to give our players the respect they deserve," Guimaraes told reporters in New Jersey.

The team also said Neymar, Brazil's leading international scorer who was only recalled to the national team after a two-year absence for the World Cup, was "recovering well" from a calf injury.

The 34-year-old remains a doubt for Brazil's first game against Morocco on Saturday.

France, beaten finalists in 2022 and tipped to make a deep run this year, rounded off their preparations in style as Michael Olise struck a hat-trick in a 3-1 defeat of Northern Ireland in Lille.

Olise's triple helped to dispel doubts that crept in after France lost their previous warm-up game to Ivory Coast.

Didier Deschamps' side will head to the US and their training base near Boston on Wednesday before taking on Senegal in their opener next Tuesday.

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LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

In New York, waiting in line becomes a social scene

By Raphaëlle Peltier
Agence France-Press

NEW YORK — In front of L'Industrie Pizzeria, as at many other New York restaurants and shops, customers line up behind barriers — in this case, all to grab a prized pizza slice.

Not everyone in America's biggest city finds standing in line to be a chore. The power of social media trends means that for some, waiting for hours is an attraction in itself.

"It's gotten pretty crazy in the city recently," food influencer Ali Chilton, who has 168,000 followers on Instagram, told AFP.

"Some would blame me for the lines at some of those places," the 31-year-old said, citing a craze for hot chocolates at dessert shop Glace after a video she posted in 2023 racked up tens of millions of views.

People can queue overnight in New York if needed, as happened last year when punters sought to bag free tickets for a play starring Lupita Nyong'o and Peter Dinklage in Central Park.

Isabella Downes, who lately waited 40 minutes outside a Manhattan



People wait in line outside Katz's Delicatessen in New York City

deli, said she was drawn to the idea of "participating in something trendy and fun".

She was queuing to try out Dot Cakes, small frosted cakes with multicolored sprinkles that went viral and sell for \$11 apiece.

In a "polarising" world, she said, "being collectively together over one thing, and it's usually a pretty happy and excited environment, that can be really nice too".

Line sitters

For the impatient, a new tool has recently become available: The website "Damn Lines" estimates waiting times in real time using cameras installed in nearby homes, in exchange for payment.

Or you can hire a line sitter to wait in your place.

One firm, Same Ole Line Dudes, says its workers are in at least two separate queues on any given day.

They charge clients \$25 an hour for the privilege of sparing them the boredom of waiting. At courts, where media outlets often use line sitters to get a seat for high-profile cases, the rate rises to \$50 an hour.

Robert Samuel, the company's founder, said that customers include businesses who may hire sitters to create a queue — enticing others to join it.

"I can't say the name, but we've had a few com-

panies that have hired my line sitters as posers to wait outside their establishments," he told AFP.

'Social ritual'

Roberto Casati, a French-Italian philosopher, pointed to a deeper sense of meaning for people who join long queues like those in New York.

"A social ritual is being created around the line," Casati, a research director at the French National Centre for Scientific Research, told AFP.

These moments become "shareable", "Instagrammable" experiences — and therefore more "acceptable" than waiting at the supermarket, he added.

Samuel Abrams, a professor at Sarah Lawrence College in New York state, said that queuing was about "status".

"To wait at the right place signals taste, knowledge, and stamina," he wrote in a piece for specialist website New-Geography.com.

The phenomenon can, however, create tensions.

In 2024, the hugely popular bagel chain Apollo ended up in court with the owner of a building over its long lines blocking neighbouring tenants' entrances.

Woolly mammoth among trove of ancient DNA found in squirrel poo

PARIS, France (AFP) — A huge treasure trove of ancient DNA from animals including extinct woolly mammoths has been discovered in frozen squirrel faeces in Canada's remote Yukon territory, scientists said on Tuesday.

The DNA found deep inside sealed-off burrows is between 3,000 and 700,000 years old, offering a rare window into how life has changed over the millennia.

As well as DNA from woolly mammoths — which the US company Colossal claims it is trying to "de-extinct" — genetic material was also found from wolves, bison, horses, a cheetah and hundreds of plants.

Tyler Murchie, a paleogenomics researcher at Canada's McMaster University and lead author of a new study, admitted that digging through squirrel poop might sound "less appealing" than discovering, say, a mammoth tusk.

However the "spectacular" amount of information they uncovered suggests that faeces is an overlooked way to see into our planet's distant past, he added.

The scientists had just been expecting to study the squirrel's microbiome before coming across the "really sur-

prising biodiversity of organisms", Murchie said.

It turned out that arctic ground squirrels were ideal subjects for this research because of their "natural archivist behaviour", he explained.

The squirrels are only conscious for around four months a year, spending the rest of their life in hibernation.

So when they are awake, "they've got to get out there and eat as much as they can of everything", Murchie said.

The squirrels pack their burrows with nuts, seeds, leaves, bones, fur and anything else they can find.

But over time, rising permafrost permanently sealed off some of the burrows in the Yukon, creating a perfectly preserved time capsule.

Murchie said they even found a "super cute little guy" frozen in time.

"He just went to sleep one season, then he never woke up... it wasn't until some palaeontologist came by investigating that they found him in there."

Back from the dead?

The scientists used the DNA to reconstruct 18 mitochondrial genomes, including for six woolly mammoths that lived in different eras.

This involves using computers to stitch together DNA fragments, like puzzle pieces, Murchie explained.

Colossal has declared its intention to resurrect the woolly mammoth, which went extinct around 4,000 years ago.

However experts have expressed scepticism about the claim, saying the resulting animal would be more like an Asian elephant with some genetic tweaks to make it resemble a mammoth.


Murchie, who does not work for Colossal, said the genetic data they found would be made publicly available, so the company could use it.

"But they already have so much DNA to go off of — whole genomes from different organisms — so I'm sure ours is a drop in the bucket," he added.


The team behind the latest research, which was published in the journal Nature Communications, is working on another study describing what the DNA reveals about the woolly mammoth's evolution.


Murchie could not speak about that future research, other than to say it was "super cool".

"I can't believe that we were able to get these insights from squirrel faeces," he added.



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