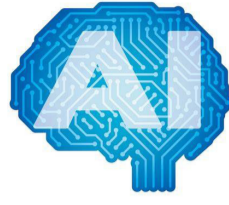




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Friday-Saturday, June 12-13, 2026 | Dhu al-Hajja 26-27, 1447 Hijri



## Army intercepts 20 missiles launched from Iran towards Jordan — JAF source

AMMAN (JT) — The air defence systems and Royal Jordanian Air Force aircraft intercepted and shot down 20 missiles launched from Iran towards Al Azraq in Zarqa early Thursday, a military source said.

The source from the General Command of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF), said that the interception operation resulted

in the fall of missile debris in several locations, with no injuries or property damage reported. Engineering teams were dispatched to secure and inspect the missile remnants, ensuring that no unexploded materials remained, the source added.

The JAF source said that the army is closely

monitoring ongoing regional developments and remains on the highest level of operational readiness to safeguard Jordan's airspace and protect the Kingdom's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The source stressed that Jordan will not tolerate any violation of its airspace by any party under any circumstances.

## Under Royal patronage, Jerash Festival launches 40th edition on July 22

- Festival held under theme 'A legacy that endures... generations unite'
- Exceptional programme reimagining Jordan's cultural, tourism experience, celebrating four decades of creativity

AMMAN (JT) — Under Royal patronage, the 40th edition of the Jerash Festival for Culture and Arts will take place from July 22 to August 2, marking a "major milestone" in the festival's history as it celebrates four decades of continuous "cultural and artistic excellence".

Over the past forty years, the Jerash Festival has established itself as one of the Arab world's leading cultural and artistic platforms, the organising committee said in a statement.

"This year's edition builds on that legacy with a renewed vision aimed at delivering a richer and more diverse experience for visitors."

The programme will feature an outstanding lineup of Jordanian, Arab, and international artists and creators, alongside new initiatives and experiences that further strengthen the festival's position as a premier cultural and



tourism destination. It also features more than 207 events across the ancient city of Jerash and several governorates

throughout Jordan. Activities range from concerts, musical and theatrical performances, poetry readings,

literary evenings, art exhibitions, folklore and heritage showcases, as well as Arab and international participation

that reflects the festival's distinctive cultural diversity.

Continued on page 5

## Energy, investment ministers wrap up US visit with talks on energy, mining cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Saleh Kharabsheh and Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh on Thursday concluded an official working visit to the US, during which he held a series of high-level meetings with US officials and representatives of economic institutions and investment companies

The meeting aimed at strengthening Jordanian-American cooperation and attracting investment to the Kingdom's energy and mining sectors, according to an Energy Ministry statement.

Kharabsheh and his accompanying delegation began their programme at the White House, meeting Executive Director of the National Energy Dominance Council Jarrod Agen.

Discussions focused on prospects for cooperation and invest-



Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Saleh Kharabsheh and Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh hold a series of high-level meetings with US officials and representatives of economic institutions and investment companies

ment opportunities in Jordan, particularly in oil and gas exploration, strategic minerals development and natural gas infrastructure.

Kharabsheh also presented the strategic gas pipeline project linking the Risha gas field to the Arab Gas Pipeline,

as a key initiative to enhance Jordan's energy security and expand natural gas investment.

He emphasised Jordan's commitment to deepening cooperation with the United States and attracting further investment into the energy sector, highlight-

ing the Kingdom's competitive advantages and the opportunities available to American companies.

Agem stressed the importance of strengthening communication with US companies interested in investing in Jordan, announcing

plans to organise a conference for specialised American energy and mining firms to showcase investment opportunities in the Kingdom and encourage strategic partnerships.

As part of the visit, the Jordanian delegation also took part in a roundtable at the US Chamber of Commerce, attended by representatives of several American companies interested in investing in Jordan.

During the session, Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh outlined Jordan's investment climate and opportunities across key sectors, including agriculture, food security, water, healthcare, manufacturing, information technology and urban development, stressing the importance of strengthening partnerships with the US private sector.

Continued on page 5



Upon Royal directives, the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army on Thursday dispatches a mobile bakery to Lebanon through the Jaber Border crossing

## Jordan dispatches mobile bakery to Lebanon

AMMAN (JT) — Upon Royal directives, the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) on Thursday dispatched a mobile bakery to Lebanon through the Jaber Border crossing to help meet daily needs in areas affected by the conflict.

The mobile bakery consists of two trucks equipped with the latest machinery and technical systems, with a production capacity of around 3,500 loaves of bread per hour, according to a JAF statement.

The initiative comes as part of Jordan's humanitarian efforts to stand by the Lebanese people and provide various forms of support and assistance under all circumstances.

Continued on page 5



A Bedouin-style camp in Wadi Rum

## Tourism revenue falls 4.3% in May — official figures

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's tourism revenue declined by 4.3 per cent in May 2026 to \$602.7 million compared with the same month last

year, according to data released by the Central Bank of Jordan.

The figures, cited by Al Mamlaka, showed that tourism revenue during

the first five months of 2026 fell by 9.2 per cent year-on-year to \$2.78 billion.

Continued on page 5

## Meridiam-Suez sole bidder for National Water Carrier Project after withdrawals, exclusions — ministry

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Water and Irrigation said on Thursday that four of the five international consortia shortlisted for the final stage of the National Water Carrier Project either failed to submit final bids or withdrew from the tender process.

In a statement, the ministry said that the Meridiam-Suez consortium was the only bidder to submit a complete proposal for the implementation of the project after successfully meeting all prequalification requirements and completing the mandatory



The Ministry of Water and Irrigation says on Thursday that four of the five international consortia shortlisted for the final stage of the National Water Carrier Project either failed to submit final bids or withdrew from the tender process

technical and financial evaluations.

The ministry noted that the consortium

brings together several leading global companies specialising in investment, infrastruc-

ture and water services, and has earned the trust of major international financing institutions.

It also possesses the capacity to secure concessional financing for Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) projects, the statement said.

According to the ministry, Meridiam manages more than \$23 billion in assets worldwide, while Suez is among the world's largest water and sanitation companies.

The consortium also includes VINCI, a global leader in major engineering projects, and Orascom, a prominent construction and infrastructure company.

Continued on page 5



File photo

The Aqaba ports record a 38 per cent growth in the volume of handled cargo from the beginning of 2026 until the end of the first week of June

## Aqaba ports record 38% growth in handled cargo volume

AMMAN (JT) — The Aqaba ports recorded a 38 per cent growth in the volume of handled cargo from the beginning of 2026 until the end of the first week of June, reaching around 2.8 million tonnes compared to the same period in 2025.

This growth reflects Aqaba's rising role as a regional logistics gateway and its ability to support trade and supply chains, in line with the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) plans to boost the city's competitiveness, according to an ASEZA statement.

During a tour on Wednesday, ASEZA Chief Commissioner Shadi Majali said that the port operational performance indicators highlight the importance of developing logistics services and raising efficiency to support the national economy and regional transit trade.

Majali added that

Aqaba ports continue to boost their position thanks to advanced infrastructure, specialised berths, deep drafts and modern handling equipment that can accommodate larger vessels carrying massive quantities of essential goods.

Transit shipment bound for Iraq was a main driver for this growth and is expected to exceed one million tonnes...

During the tour, Aqaba Company for Ports Operation and Manage-

ment Director General Mahmoud Khleifat said that the multi-purpose port welcomed 164 ships, compared to 150 ships during the same period in 2025, marking a 9.3 per cent increase.

Khleifat noted that the large growth in cargo volume compared to the smaller increase in ship numbers shows the higher efficiency of operations and the reception of larger vessels.

Transit shipment bound for Iraq was a main driver for this growth and is expected to exceed 1 million tonnes by the end of June, he said.

Khleifat added that the port handled around 62,000 heads of live cattle, while sugar shipments made up 55 per cent of the total transit cargo, followed by corn and barley at 33 per cent, which shows the ports' capacity to handle strategic goods linked to food security.

# Princess Basma visits Madaba disability centre, praises services

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Princess Basma praised the services provided by the Beit Al Liqa Centre for persons with disabilities in Madaba and the centre's noble humanitarian mission, stressing that it represents a "shining" example in the Kingdom's process of humanitarian and voluntary work.

Speaking during a ceremony on Wednesday evening marking the centre's 20th anniversary, Princess Basma said that Beit Al Liqa embodies noble values of giving, solidarity and deep faith in human potential through the comprehensive services, educational and rehabilitation programmes, and vocational training it provides to its target groups, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

In the presence of Madaba Governor Hassan Jbour, Italian Ambassador to Amman Luciano Bizzotti and Apostolic Nuncio to Amman Archbishop Giovanni Pietro Dal Toso, Princess Basma said that supporting and empowering persons with disabilities is a shared national and societal responsibility that requires continued efforts to build a more just and cohesive society.

She noted that the centre's experience demonstrates that true inclusion begins with belief in people's abilities and in the role every individual can play in building their community.

The princess also highlighted the centre's



Petra photo

Speaking during a ceremony on Wednesday evening marking Beit Al Liqa Centre's 20th anniversary, HRH Princess Basma says that supporting persons with disabilities is a shared national and societal responsibility

role in promoting a culture based on peace, dialogue, respect and genuine social inclusion, reinforcing the values of coexistence and mutual respect that distinguish Jordan.

Princess Basma expressed appreciation for the centre's management, staff and volunteers, and for the efforts made to ensure the institution remains a model of humanitarian work and a living testament to the values of peace and solidarity.

Patriarchal Vicar in Amman Bishop Iyad Twal said that Beit Al Liqa stands as a living testament to another meaning of success that goes beyond numbers and is rooted in values,

self-confidence and the preservation of human dignity.

He stressed that the centre's mission is based on a profound responsibility inherent in humanity to remain faithful to a childhood deserving of care and a humanity deserving of protection.

The bishop added that persons with disabilities have never been defined by incapacity, but rather represent a true expression of willpower and proof that a person's real value lies in their spirit, resilience and ability to inspire hope despite challenges.

Bishop Twal said that celebrating the centre's 20th anniversary marks the beginning of a new

phase of commitment and dedication to a mission in which it firmly believes and through which it will continue carrying hope for every child while providing an environment worthy of their dignity.

Beit Al Liqa was established by the Italian Fraternity of Hope (SERMIG) and is affiliated with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. In 2022, it obtained a licence as a day centre providing inclusive services.

The centre offers comprehensive rehabilitation services to around 275 children with disabilities under the supervision of a specialised team of therapists, trainers, supervisors

and volunteers from Jordan and other countries, helping to promote dialogue among cultures and religions, according to Petra.

It also seeks to engage the families of children with disabilities through individual and group meetings and a range of programmes that help them overcome feelings of fear, embarrassment and isolation, while contributing to changing societal perceptions of disability and recognising it as part of human diversity.

Princess Basma toured the centre and reviewed the services provided to beneficiaries through its various departments and programmes.

## ILO, Save the Children partner to address child labour challenges in agriculture

AMMAN (JT) — The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Save the Children Jordan on Thursday signed a partnership agreement to address child labour in the agricultural sector, coinciding with World Day Against Child Labour.

The agreement, implemented under the second phase of the Netherlands-funded PROSPECTS programme, aims to enhance protection mechanisms and services for the most vulnerable groups, particularly in governorates with high agricultural activity, according to an ILO statement.

The move seeks to reduce child labour under



an integrated approach aligned with the programme's objective of improving refugees' and host communities' access to protection services.

Talking at the signing ceremony, Regional Chief Technical Adviser for PROSPECTS and Durable Solutions at ILO Regional Office for Arab States Maha Kattaa said that child labour remains

a major challenge, especially in agriculture, requiring action to address root causes linked to poverty and limited income opportunities.

She said that the ILO seeks to connect social protection with education and families' economic empowerment to boost resilience, adding that the agreement reflects a "shared com-

mitment" to supporting national efforts to combat child labour through stronger referral and case-management mechanisms, expanded access to education, and economic empowerment for caregivers.

Save the Children Jordan CEO Dana Erekat said that ending child labour is a key priority for the organisation, citing integrated programmes that include cash assistance, mental health services, case management, and referrals to specialised services to reduce poverty and school dropout rates.

Under the agreement, referral mechanisms will

be strengthened, children's access to education improved and school dropout reduced.

Terms also provide psychosocial support services, capacity building for caregivers and awareness campaigns on the risks of child labour in agriculture.

The agreement also covers entrepreneurship and financial literacy programmes for caregivers, including the ILO's Start and Improve Your Business programme, to support the establishment and improvement of businesses and provide grants to eligible beneficiaries to help empower them economically.



JRF photo

The Jordan River Foundation and Fajr for Natural Gas sign a cooperation agreement aimed at supporting the Queen Rania Al Abdullah Community Empowerment Centre in Aqaba

## JRF, Fajr for Natural Gas cooperate to support community empowerment in Aqaba

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan River Foundation (JRF) and Fajr for Natural Gas have signed a cooperation agreement aimed at supporting the Queen Rania Al Abdullah Community Empowerment Centre in Aqaba.

The partnership seeks to align the capacities of youth, women and local associations with the region's development needs and economic and environmental opportunities, advancing programmes in family protection, economic empowerment and sustainable development, according to a JRF statement.

JRF Director General Enaam Barrishi and Fajr for Natural Gas CEO Yasser Salah El Din signed the agreement.

Under the deal, Fajr for Natural Gas will contribute to upholding the centre's operations, extending its reach to 2,800 beneficiaries through specialised activities that integrate family protection with economic empowerment.

The initiative ensures a "comprehensive and lasting" impact by transforming social challenges and unemployment

into entrepreneurial opportunities that foster sustainable community development.

The partnership advances JRF's efforts to expand its programmes and enhance their development impact in Aqaba ...

Barrishi praised the partnership with Fajr for Natural Gas, emphasising the importance of sustainable cross-sector cooperation in boosting development institutions' capacity to create innovative solutions and implement programmes addressing pressing socioeconomic challenges, particularly child safety and women's economic empowerment.

Salah El Din said that the partnership reflects

the company's commitment to its development role and corporate social responsibility, as well as its belief in the importance of investing in people and empowering local communities.

He added, "We are proud to collaborate with Jordan River Foundation in supporting initiatives that champion youth, women and children and contribute to creating sustainable development opportunities in Aqaba and the southern governorates."

"We believe that effective partnerships between the private sector and civil society organisations represent a key pillar in achieving real and enduring development impact that positively reflects on society and the national economy," he said.

The partnership advances JRF's efforts to expand its programmes and enhance their development impact in Aqaba and the southern governorates, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, deepening private sector cooperation and extending the reach of its community-based programmes.

## Archaeologists trace human settlement patterns in Wadi Shuaib

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — The eastern area of the Jordan Valley is dissected by numerous wadis, which flow from the Transjordanian highlands into the valley, one of which is the Wadi Shuaib.

The Wadi Shuaib constitutes one of the major routes connecting the southern part of the Jordan Valley with the central Jordanian highlands in the region of as-Salt, and continuing towards Amman in the southeast and the Baqah Valley in the northeast.

While the upper reaches of the Wadi Shuaib, including adjacent tributary wadis such as the Wadi Al Kafra and Wadi Al Azraq, features fertile soils watered by the perennial waters of the wadi and abundant annual rainfalls, the southern part of the wadi's course consists of arid lands until it finally merges and

junctions with the Jordan River.

"The wadi carries large amounts of water, being fed by several natural springs in the vicinity of as-Salt in the north as well as the annual rainfall from the Transjordanian highlands, and provides enough water throughout the year," said Alexander Ahrens, a German archaeologist.

In several parts of the wadi, flat areas next to the wadi bed therefore allow for intensive cultivation, Ahrens added.

The wadi encompasses three natural environmental zones: The Mediterranean woodlands in the north, the foothill steppe, and the riparian forest associated with the wadi bed and springs.

"Based on current evidence, agricultural practices in these areas did not include large-scale terracing, but were rather focused on the exploitation of moderate topo-



Photo courtesy of A. Ahrens

Tell Bleibil, bastion or tower within the fortification system, with yellow chaff-tempered plaster still partially preserved in situ

graphic niches as well as soil pockets between lapis [deeply grooved, jagged, and rugged rock surfaces formed by water erosion]," Ahrens said.

He noted that the alluvial fan of the Wadi Shuaib in the southern part of the eastern Jordan Valley represents the end of the wadi.

The Jordan Valley receives rain only during the months from October to May, while the north receives ca. 380 millimetres of rainfall a year, the southern part receives

only half of this and thus must be considered a semi-arid desert environment, the archaeologist said.

"It is surprising that hitherto only few archaeological investigations were conducted in the region, which almost totally focused on the regions near as-Salt or the Jordan Valley, but never on the Wadi Shuaib itself."

"Albright collected material of archaeological sites on various visits to the Jordan Valley, including the region immedi-

ately north of the Dead Sea," Ahrens said.

A famous US archaeologist Nelson Glueck surveyed several sites at the southernmost point of the Wadi Shuaib, i.e. at the juncture of the wadi with the Jordan Valley, during his extensive surveys in the years 1939-1947, the wadi here referred to as "Wadi Nimrin".

The site of Tell Nimrin, located within the town of South Shuna, was excavated in the years 1989-1995, located at the southern end of the wadi's alluvial fan, within the limits of the modern town South Shuna.

"In the years 1998 and 2000, Ji and Lee surveyed parts of the wadi at its juncture with the Jordan Valley as part of their survey of the region of Iraq Al Amir and the Wadi Kafrayn again. The area immediately south of as-Salt was preliminarily surveyed by de Vaux in 1937," Ahrens said.

# Prime Ministry holds consultative session on AI competency framework for public sector

AMMAN (JT) — The Prime Ministry on Thursday held a consultative session on the competency framework for integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into the public sector.

The session, held in partnership with the Jordan Strategy Forum (JSF) the participation of government institutions, private sector companies, academics, experts and international partners specialising in public sector modernisation, digital transformation and emerging technologies.

It aimed to present the framework and gather feedback from relevant stakeholders ahead of its official launch, as part of the data and emerging technologies component of the second executive programme of the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap (2026-2029), according to a Prime Ministry statement.

Minister of State for Public Sector Development Badria Balbisi said that the govern-



Minister of State for Public Sector Development Badria Balbisi says that the adoption of AI in government administration would shift the role of government from administrative execution to enabling data-driven decision-making

ment was keen to hold the session to review feedback from various entities on the AI com-

petency framework for the public sector. She stressed that the second phase of the

public sector modernisation programme aims to transform government administration

into an integrated system based on efficiency, productivity and future readiness through

the use of emerging technologies.

Balbisi added that the programme intro-

duces a new component focused on data and emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, with a range of initiatives and projects to be implemented over its duration.

She noted that the adoption of AI in government administration would shift the role of government from administrative execution to enabling data-driven decision-making, supporting policies aligned with citizens' needs through advanced technological tools.

Balbisi said that the framework is intended to build capacity within the public sector, empower employees to use AI responsibly and position Jordan as a regional leader in the field.

JSF Executive Director Nisreen Barakat highlighted the importance of the partnership with the Public Sector Modernisation Programme Management and Implementation Unit, noting that it contributes to host-

ing dialogue sessions, projects and initiatives that support public sector reform.

She added that the forum plans to continue holding discussions with stakeholders on topics related to administrative modernisation and the Economic Modernisation Vision.

Secretary-General of the Civil Service and Public Administration Commission Yasser Nsour presented a visual overview of the AI competency framework, including its objectives, target groups and implementation timeline, highlighting its expected impact on accelerating government procedures and improving public services.

Participants emphasised the importance of implementing the framework to enhance public sector efficiency and improve service delivery, describing the government's move towards AI adoption as a strategic response to rapid global advances in digital transformation.

## ASEZA lays foundation stone for circular economy centre in Aqaba

AMMAN (JT) — The Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) on Thursday laid the foundation stone for the Creative Circular Economy Centre, the first facility of its kind in the Kingdom.

The ceremony was held under the patronage of ASEZA Board of Commissioners Chairman Shadi Majali, with the participation of Aqaba Governor Ayman Amaysheh, EU Representative Anna Pires, and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative in Jordan Randa Aboul-Hosn.

The project is part of a broader initiative aimed at advancing the circular economy in Aqaba. It is being implemented by ASEZA in cooperation with UNDP and funded by the EU, according to the Jordan News Agen-



The Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority on Thursday lays the foundation stone for the Creative Circular Economy Centre

cy, Petra.

Majali said the project reflects ASEZA's vision of establishing a balanced development model that links economic growth with environmental sustainability while cre-

ating quality employment opportunities. He added that Aqaba is well positioned to become a leading national and regional hub for the circular and blue economies.

Pires said the project

demonstrates the EU's commitment to supporting Jordan's transition towards a more sustainable and inclusive economy.

Aboul-Hosn said the centre would serve as an integrated platform

for innovation, training and support for environmental entrepreneurship, providing a model that can be replicated across the Kingdom.

The centre will be built on an area of more than 5,000 square metres, with an investment exceeding JD1.2 million. It will include specialised facilities for sorting, processing, repairing and manufacturing, in addition to training spaces, environmental business incubators and renewable energy systems.

Aqaba currently faces growing challenges in solid waste management due to rapid population and economic growth, with around 90,000 tonnes of waste buried annually. The centre is expected to improve recovery and reuse rates and help develop a local market for recycled materials.

## Ministry holds symbolic campaign to combat child labour

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Labour on Thursday staged a symbolic red card campaign against child labour to mark the World Day Against Child Labour.

Labour Minister Khalid Bakkar said that combating child labour is a humanitarian and developmental priority aimed at building a future worthy of children, one free from exploitation and labour and enriched by education, justice and opportunity, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He stressed the ministry's commitment to enforcing all relevant legislation that safeguards children's right to education, removes them from the labour market and rehabilitates them so they can return to their natural place in classrooms.

The minister noted that Jordan joins the international community in marking the World Day Against Child Labour, observed annually on June 12,



The Ministry of Labour on Thursday stages a symbolic red card campaign against child labour to mark the World Day Against Child Labour

which coincides with the global "Red Card" campaign to end child labour.

He added that, through the National Working Group to Reduce Child Labour, Jordan has launched this year's national slogan, "Childhood Without Labour... A Future Without Limits", in addition to adopting a national logo for the occasion.

Bakkar said the Labour Law aligns with the two relevant international labour conventions and provides

a legal framework to protect children from exploitation in the workplace.

He highlighted the ministry's commitment to strengthening cooperation among the three production partners, government, employers and workers, to curb child labour, stressing that the issue requires concerted efforts from all relevant governmental and non-governmental entities, as well as civil society organisations, local communities, families and employers.

### ARREST

## Army thwarts infiltration attempt

AMMAN (JT) — The Northern Military Region command on Thursday thwarted an attempt by a person to illegally cross the border.

Border Guard units spotted the individual as he was attempting to cross, according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army statement.

The forces applied the rules of engagement, arrested him and handed him over to the relevant authorities for necessary legal action.



The Northern Military Region command on Thursday thwarts an attempt by a person to illegally cross the border

## JCD increases personnel at Omari crossing ahead of summer travel season

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Customs Department (JCD) has reinforced staffing levels at the Omari border crossing in preparation for the summer travel season and the return of expatriates.

JCD Director General Ahmad Akalik said that the move aims to facilitate and accelerate procedures, ensuring the smooth movement of passengers and cargo through the border post, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

The decision comes



The Northern Military Region command on Wednesday thwarts an attempt by two people to illegally cross the border

amid a noticeable increase in traffic at the crossing. Official figures

for May showed a rise in passenger, vehicle and freight movement, ac-

ording to JCD.

During the month, customs, security and regulatory authorities processed more than 350,000 passengers, over 120,000 vehicles and upwards of 50,000 cargo trucks.

Akalik also said the additional staffing forms part of a comprehensive plan to enhance operational readiness and improve services provided to travellers, investors and the transport sector, while maintaining high standards of customs and security control.

He noted that the department continuously monitors traffic indicators at border crossings and takes proactive measures to accommodate anticipated increases in passenger and cargo volumes, particularly during the peak summer. He also commended the efforts of security and regulatory agencies operating at the Omari crossing, stressing that close coordination among all stakeholders contributes to greater efficiency and smoother border operations.

## Man sentenced to 20 years for killing sister in Amman

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Criminal Court sentenced a man to 20 years after convicting him of murdering his sister, who was a lawyer, in Amman

in January.

The court declared the defendant guilty of stabbing the victim while at their home on January 25.

The victim's family refused to drop charges

against the defendant. Therefore, the defendant was given the maximum punishment of 20 years by the court.

Court papers said that the defendant "stabbed his sister fol-

lowing a dispute at home".

"The victim was rushed to a nearby hospital but died shortly after being admitted due to the severe injuries she sustained,"

court papers said.

Meanwhile, the suspect turned himself in to police, the court added.

The court decided to amend the premeditated murder charges that

were originally pressed against the defendant by the prosecutor to manslaughter.

The Criminal Court's verdict, which was issued earlier this week, will automatically be

reviewed by the Court of Cassation within the next 30 days.

Dozens of social media users posted condemnations following the murder in January and pointed out that

the victim was a lawyer named Zeina Majali who was in her mid-30s.

Friends and social media users mourned Majali and described her as a "pleasant, loving and caring person".



France's President Emmanuel Macron (centre right) chairs a video conference meeting dubbed 'Global Convergence for Growth Summit' at the Elysee Presidential Palace in Paris on Thursday

## G7 allies seek to bridge divide with Trump at France summit

PARIS, France (AFP) — Europe's leading nations and their G7 allies will seek to narrow differences with Donald Trump at a summit from Monday in France chaired by French President Emmanuel Macron but expected to be dominated by the US leader's presence.

Participants on the shores of Lake Geneva will be looking to put the sparkle and fizz back into relations with the United States, in the French spa resort of Evian-les-Bains famed as the home of Evian mineral water.

The G7 summit will be one of the first major international gatherings since the United States and its ally Israel began a war against Iran in late February, upending the Middle East and widening transatlantic tensions.

Aside from promoting efforts to end the conflict and reopen the key Strait of Hormuz shipping bottleneck, the leaders will have a packed agenda of potentially explosive issues over three days of talks.

With Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in attendance, they will look to find a united front on bringing Russia to the negotiating table to end over four years of war sparked by Moscow's full-scale invasion of its neighbour.

Zelensky's participation "is very important for us because we need to rebuild consensus within the G7", including the need for "negotiations", Macron said on Wednesday, in a nod to differences with Trump over Ukraine over the past year.

But the other members of the G7 will also be looking to press Trump to accept concessions on global trade imbalances in the face of Trump's protectionist trade policies. There is also pressure

for greater regulation of big tech firms to protect minors, despite US reluctance.

### Fresh from birthday

France has been keen to expand the appeal of the Group of Seven (G7) leading economies — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and United States — beyond its core membership. Macron has invited the leaders of Brazil, Egypt, India, Kenya and South Korea to the meeting.

Sam Altman, the head of artificial intelligence giant OpenAI and Arthur Mensch of its European rival Mistral AI, will attend a lunch Wednesday on protecting minors in the digital sphere. Macron on Tuesday also spoke by telephone to Apple chief executive Tim Cook.

And in a bid to find regional consensus on Iran, Macron has invited the leaders of Arab states Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to a special session on Tuesday.

But China, as so often at G7 meetings, will be conspicuous by its absence. There is growing concern in the West over Beijing's dominance and control in the market for rare earth minerals used in everyday electronic appliances.

Seeking to reach out to Beijing, Macron on Thursday hosted a video conference with the G7 members, emerging markets and China, represented by Vice Premier Zhang Guoqing, on addressing global economic imbalances. "There is a urgency to act," Macron said.

Trump, always a mercurial presence, will be arriving at the G7 summit fresh from celebrating his 80th birthday on June 14 where

he is to watch a mixed martial arts cage fight on the White House lawn.

French officials want to ensure that there is no repeat of the last G7 in Canada, when Trump left early. They hope the US leader could be tempted to extend his stay in France with a bilateral summit with Macron in Paris or elsewhere.

### 'Aggressive behaviour'

An immense security operation involving thousands of police and troops is under way, spreading to neighbouring Switzerland on the other side of the lake, where the airport in Geneva will receive arrivals and shops have already boarded up their windows.

For Macron, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the G7, the summit will be one of the final chances to make an impact on the international stage. With less than a year of his final mandate remaining, he wants to press home his cherished idea of increasing European sovereignty.

The talks will lead up to a summit of the wider G20 group that includes China — to be hosted in December by Trump at a golf resort he owns in Miami.

Ahead of the summit, the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) published a poll of citizens from over a dozen European countries showing that confidence in the United States was falling and only 11 per cent viewed the Trump administration as an "ally".

In the face of US "criticism and aggressive behaviour", European leaders have a window "to go further and faster" in building common systems of security, said ECFR senior policy fellow Pawel Zerka.

# 'Racist thuggery' slammed after second N.Ireland night of disorder

BELFAST (AFP) — Police arrested 16 people during a second night of disorder in Northern Ireland sparked by a brutal Belfast stabbing, a senior minister said on Thursday, condemning rioters for "racist thuggery".

The latest clashes with police came hours after a Sudanese man appeared in court charged with attempted murder over Monday night's knife attack.

The incident was caught on video and went viral as it ricocheted across social media platforms, triggering anger.

Twelve officers were also injured in Wednesday's unrest, the UK government's Northern Ireland minister Hilary Benn told Sky News.

Dozens of masked protesters clashed with riot police into the night, with rioters setting fire to a car and boarded-up property, AFP journalists saw. Projectiles, including petrol bombs and bricks, were hurled as riot police used water cannon to push back dozens of rioters trying to reach a hotel which had been used to house asylum seekers.

Benn said the scale of unrest on Wednesday evening was "a lot less than the terrible events that we witnessed on Tuesday night".

But he told Sky News it was "really important to convey the sense of fear that has been created, above all for those who were intimidated, burned out of their houses by masked thugs on the basis of the colour of their skin".

A nurse was "chased and intimidated" as she travelled to work at Ulster Hospital near Belfast on Wednesday,



A man takes photos of a burnt-out building, following violence by masked protesters the night before, in Glengormley, north of Belfast, Northern Ireland, on Thursday

the body that runs the hospital said.

She "bravely insisted" on doing her shift "in stark contrast to the behaviour of the people who terrified her as she tried to do her job", it added in a statement.

The biggest and main mosque in Northern Ireland also had to be shut for the first time in its history on Tuesday, Chairman Mohammed Arshed said.

### Social media

Two people were charged in connection with the unrest and will appear in court later Thursday, the Police Service of Northern Ireland said.

The justice system stood "ready to give long sentences to those bringing disorder to our streets", said Ryan Henderson, the force's assistant chief

constable.

UK authorities blamed far-right activists for stoking anger on social media following Monday's knife attack.

Sudanese national Hadi Alodid, 30, was remanded in custody by Belfast magistrates, charged with the attempted murder of Stephen Ogilvie. The case was adjourned to July 8.

The images of the attack spread within the hour on social networks after being posted on X by far-right activist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon — also known as Tommy Robinson — and then amplified by X-owner and US tech billionaire Elon Musk.

In the first night of violence in Belfast on Tuesday, masked rioters torched vehicles and buildings and forced families to flee their homes.

Ogilvie's family appealed for calm and warned against using the "terrible tragedy" to "divide people or fuel hostility".

He remains in hospital in a stable condition despite losing an eye.

Tensions were already high across the UK. There were skirmishes in southern England last week over the police handling of the murder of a white student by a British Sikh man.

### 'Influx of migrants'

Tuesday's unrest mainly flared in Protestant pro-UK unionist areas. Brendan, a 50-year-old plumber who joined the protests, said "nobody agrees with the violence" as there had been enough during the decades of sectarian fighting over British rule of Northern Ireland, which

ended in a 1998 peace deal.

But he supported the protests as "there's nothing going to unite people more than crimes of inhumane acts like butchering people".

And John, who also only gave his first name, said: "There's now a united Ireland... united because the ordinary people have realised that, actually, we have been played like puppets."

He said the protesters were "genuinely concerned... we have an influx across Europe of migrants".

Immigration is a hot-button issue in both the UK and Ireland, and has helped fuel the rise of the hard-right Reform UK Party, led by Nigel Farage.

Both countries have seen frequent anti-immigration protests in recent years, some turning violent.

## US imposes sanctions on Cuban state-owned oil company

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — The United States on Thursday announced sanctions against Cuba's key state-owned oil company, intensifying pressure on the island nation's energy sector that has crippled the country.

"Today, I am designating Cuba's state-owned oil and gas company Union Cuba-Petroleo (CUPET), key assets of which were unlawfully expropriated from Amer-

ican owners years ago," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement.

The move bars companies and individuals associated with the United States from engaging in any financial transactions with CUPET, which controls extraction at Cuban crude oil fields as well as refining and distribution.

Cuba's government said on Wednesday the US oil blockade that has

crippled the island is preventing the United Nations from distributing 170 containers of humanitarian aid.

US President Donald Trump in January cut off oil supplies to Cuba from its main supplier Venezuela, after Washington deposed the Venezuela's then president Nicolas Maduro in a military operation.

Trump says he wants to end more than six decades of communist rule

in Cuba, and has threatened other countries with sanctions if they come to the country's aid. Since January, only one oil tanker — from Russia — has made it through.

The blockade, coupled with expanded US sanctions that punish companies doing business with the Cuban state, has intensified the worst economic and energy crisis on the island in over a generation.

Parts of Havana have been without power for up to 30 hours at a time in recent days, and food, running water and medicine are in increasingly short supply.

Trump claims that Cuba, which lies 150 kilometres off Florida's coast, poses a major threat to US national security and has suggested Washington could launch a "takeover" of the island of 9.6 million people.

## Nigerians fleeing xenophobic attacks in South Africa return home

By Leslie Fauvel

Agence France Presse

LAGOS — A first group of more than 260 Nigerians repatriated from South Africa following escalating anti-immigrant attacks landed in Lagos on Thursday.

Anti-foreigner violence has convulsed South Africa for weeks as gangs armed with sticks, whips and shields have marched through parts of the "rainbow nation", demanding that people with no residency papers leave by June 30.

Foreign nationals have reported being intimidated and beaten by mobs going door to door, families have been forced from their homes, and many have left in the face of the threats.



A young Nigerian passenger, who was repatriated from South Africa, holds her teddy bear as she disembarks from a chartered plane after landing at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport Lagos, Nigeria, on Thursday

Ghana, Mozambique and Malawi have already repatriated hundreds of their citizens in recent weeks.

South Africa is one of Africa's largest economies and hosts more than three million foreigners, just over five

percent of its population, according to the country's statistics agency.

But unemployment exceeds 30 per cent, fuelling anger towards migrant workers.

A chartered Air Peace plane carrying 262

Nigerian nationals — most of them women and children — landed at Lagos's Murtala Mohammed International Airport mid-morning on Thursday, said Nigeria's foreign ministry.

A South African government statement put the number flown out at 268.

Many wearing sweaters and thick coats, a reminder of the southern hemisphere winter from where they were coming, walked off the plane into the scorching Nigerian sun.

"South Africa is a wicked country," said one of the returnees, 45-year-old Emilia Godwin, who has lived in South Africa for 11 years, cooking and selling Nigerian food.

"They like eating our food, but they don't like

us," she said.

Godwin said she had left all her possessions, coming back home with just a 23 kilogramme bag.

"Even when you apply to have your residence permit, they will use the opportunity to arrest you," she said.

Nigerian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sola Enikanolaiye welcomed the first batch.

A second group is due to be flown out on June 15.

There are around 1,000 in total who have said they want to leave South Africa, the ministry has said.

South African authorities said they had so far processed 586 Nigerian nationals for repatriation, all who were in South Africa "illegally", with police on Wednes-

day night having cited expired passports and visas.

"All affected individuals have been declared undesirable persons and are consequently prohibited from reentering South Africa for a period of five years," the South African government said in a statement on Thursday.

That was the case for Millie, 28, a mother of three who went with her father to South Africa at age six, and had never returned until now.

She said school teachers "are very biased towards" children who are not South African.

"But now, I feel like I am free but at the same time, I don't know what to expect," she told AFP. But Justin Chukwu,

56, said he had been living fully legally in South Africa for nearly 30 years.

He had already left his home when he was informed of the shooting that killed 12 people early this week at an informal settlement in Johannesburg's Cleveland, where he lived.

"These guys... are unstoppable. You cannot stop them, police cannot go to them," said Chukwu, who sells second-hand clothes. He left behind his children, born to a South African mother.

"I have to save my life first," he said. A Nigerian foreign ministry statement said the evacuation underscored the government's "proactive and decisive response to protect Nigerian lives and dignity

in the face of violence and intolerance".

"No Nigerian should live in fear simply because of their nationality. The evacuation does not signal defeat," the statement added.

The Nigerian government has promised one million naira (\$730) to each repatriated citizen.

South Africa has long been a destination for both legal and undocumented African workers. It has faced waves of xenophobic violence since 2008, when dozens of migrants were killed and thousands forced to flee their homes.

The latest unrest comes as political parties gear up for local government elections in November in South Africa.

# Trump says cancelling Iran strikes, flags possible deal

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US President Donald Trump said he was calling off strikes on Iran on Thursday and flagged the signing of a possible deal with Tehran after top-level talks.

“Based on the fact that discussions with the Islamic Republic of Iran have been brought to the highest level of Iranian leadership and approved, I have... cancelled the scheduled strikes and bombings against Iran this evening,” Trump said on his Truth Social network.

“Time and place of the signing to be announced shortly,” added Trump.

Earlier on Thursday, Trump vowed fresh attacks against Iran on Thursday, saying American forces would also soon seize the country’s key oil infrastructure after the two sides exchanged strikes overnight.



A ship is seen off the coast of Ras Al Khaimah, UAE on April 13

His threat came after Iran warned the shaky ceasefire in their three-month war was “practically meaningless” following the latest strikes by the United States, which saw Tehran re-

spond with attacks around the region. The war, which began on February 28 with

a wave of US-Israeli strikes on Iran, was paused by the April truce, but efforts to

hammer out a permanent end to the fighting have stalled and sporadic exchanges of fire have put the ceasefire under repeated strain. Mediators Pakistan and Qatar suggested backchannel efforts to negotiate an end to the war were ongoing in spite of the flare-up, though Islamabad cautioned it was “hard to be an optimist” in light of the escalation.

The strikes took place while a Qatari delegation was in Tehran for talks, with a diplomatic source saying the discussions lasted into the early hours of the morning and were “conducted in coordination with the United States”.

Trump, who has repeatedly maintained negotiations with Tehran were close to a deal, had said on Wednesday that Iran keeps “playing us for suckers” and will now “have to pay the price”.

## WHAT’S ON

**Jordan Cultural Agenda: 11–17 June 2026**

**ONGOING THROUGHOUT JUNE**

**Music Month | Various governorates**  
The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities’ flagship programme continues through the end of June, bringing outdoor concerts to public spaces and heritage sites across multiple governorates. Artists including Tareq Al Nasser, Alaa Al-Maaytah, Moataz Abdo and Sameh Sobhi have performed at the Roman Theatre, Paris Circle, Faisal Square, and Rainbow Street — check local listings for this week’s schedule.

**Cinema 3ayn | Amman, Jerash, Karak, Umm Al Jimal & Qatraneh**  
Jordan’s first independent mobile cinema brings open-air film screenings to public spaces across the country as part of Music Month. A lovely way to experience cinema under the stars.

**Image Festival Amman 2026: Mexican Photography | Various venues, Jabal Amman & Jabal Lweibdeh**  
Still open throughout June, this exceptional programme showcases three prominent Mexican photographers exploring themes of culture and daily life.

**Art and Beauty Forum(closing) | Petra**  
The five-day cultural gathering combining arts, exhibitions, and cultural activities closes on Monday 15 June. Last chance to catch it.

**THURSDAY 11 JUNE**

**Saliah in Concert | El Masnaa, Jabal Amman**  
British-Lebanese producer Saliah headlines alongside Keena and Rish at one of Amman’s most vibrant venues. Tickets approximately 35 JOD.

**THURSDAY & FRIDAY — 12 & 13 JUNE**

**Fada’t Amman Music Festival | Greater Amman Municipality parks**  
The summer series continues its weekly rhythm with dabke folk dance, puppet shows, and local bands in parks across the city. Free and family-friendly.

**Looking ahead: the week of 19 June** picks up significantly, with the Jordan Cultural Festival (19–20 June) at King Hussein Business Park and the Fête de la Musique returning to Amman on 19 June.

## El Nino is back, but its effects vary widely

PARIS, France (AFP) — The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced on Thursday the return of El Nino: The warm phase of a natural climate cycle linked to higher global temperatures and wild weather.

The seesawing shift in ocean temperatures and winds forms across the tropical Pacific Ocean but can influence drought, floods and other extremes thousands of miles away.

Scientists caution that every El Nino is different and strong events like that forecast this year do not guarantee certain impacts — but tilt the odds in their favour.

### Asia Pacific

During El Nino, trade winds weaken and atmospheric patterns shift across the tropical Pacific, allowing warm waters around Indonesia to spread eastward toward South America.

Evaporation, cloud and rainfall patterns shift eastward as well, and many parts of Asia experience drier-than-average conditions and drought during El Nino years.

El Nino can also suppress the monsoon over South Asia, depriving India and other parts of the subcontinent of vital rain that supports hundreds of millions of people.

El Nino also raises the likelihood of drought, heatwaves and wildfires

in Australia as warmer-than average conditions grip the continent.

This particularly deprives eastern parts of the country of rainfall and sees a later start to the northern wet season — though less chance of tropical cyclones.

Some of the worst droughts in Australia’s modern history have been linked to El Nino years, but scientists caution that even strong events do not always bring below-average rainfall.

El Nino is often associated with increased rainfall in parts of the Horn Africa.

But swathes of southern, west, central and eastern Africa usually see drier-than-normal conditions, raising the risk of droughts.

The WMO said last month that there was a high likelihood of below-normal rainfall during the critical June-September rainy season in South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Djibouti, much of Eritrea,

Sudan and western and coastal Kenya.

The last El Nino cycle in 2023-2024 brought southern Africa’s worst drought in more than a century, leaving 61 million people in need of assistance, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

Parts of western South America, including coastal Peru and Ecuador, often see above-average rainfall during strong events, raising the risk of flooding and landslides.

## Under Royal patronage, Jerash Festival launches 40th edition on July 22

**Continued from page 1**

Held under the theme “A Legacy That Endures... Generations That Unite,” this year’s festival celebrates a cultural and artistic journey spanning four decades.

Throughout the years, the Jerash Festival has preserved its rich heritage while bringing together successive generations of artists and audiences, remaining a vibrant platform that celebrates cultural legacy while creating space for new voices and emerging talent, the statement said.

Minister of Culture and Chairman of the Festival’s Higher Committee Mustafa Rawashdeh described the 40th edition as a defining moment in the journey of one of Jordan’s most significant national cultural projects and one of the Arab region’s most prominent initiatives.

He noted that the Jerash Festival has evolved far beyond a seasonal arts event, becoming a cultural and civilisational platform that reflects modern Jordan and demonstrates its ability to foster dialogue and build bridges between peoples and cultures through creativity

and the arts.

Rawashdeh also said that this historic milestone represents the culmination of decades of sustained cultural work and embodies a renewed vision that balances preserving the festival’s rich heritage with embracing contemporary forms of cultural and artistic expression.

He emphasised that this year’s programme has been designed to engage audiences of all ages and backgrounds, while providing greater opportunities for Jordanian artists and performing groups to present their work to local, regional, and international audiences alongside distinguished Arab and international guests.

He also stressed the festival’s continued developmental role alongside its cultural mission.

“Through supporting local communities, artisans, and small businesses, and strengthening tourism in Jerash Governorate, the festival contributes to national efforts to position culture as a driver of economic and social development, a source of national pride, and a vehicle for cultural exchange,” he said.

Festival Executive Director Yazan Al Khadir

described the 40th edition as a transformative step in the evolution of the Jerash Festival.

He said that extensive efforts have been made to redesign the visitor journey in line with international best practices for major festivals.

**Qatar’s participation will enrich the programme**

that this historic edition reflects Jerash Festival’s growing stature on both the regional and international stage.

“This is evident through the scale of artistic and cultural participation, expanded international and diplomatic engagement, and strengthened efforts to promote Jerash as a year-round cultural and tourism destination rather than one visited only during the festival period,” he said.

Qatar will participate as the Festival’s Guest of Honour, reflecting the strong fraternal ties and deep-rooted relations between the two countries, the statement said.

Qatar’s participation will enrich the programme through a variety of activities and events showcasing Qatari cultural heritage.

This festival also benefits from extensive collaboration between the public and private sectors as part of a shared effort to enhance its cultural, tourism, and economic impact.

Memoranda of understanding have been signed with the Friends of Jordan Association and the Jordan Agency for Events and PR to strengthen national promotional efforts, en-

courage community engagement, and support accompanying activities and events, the statement said.

“These partnerships represent a successful model of national collaboration in support of culture, tourism, and sustainable development.”

Beyond its cultural and artistic programme, the festival aims to strengthen Jerash Governorate’s position as a year-round tourism destination, including highlighting new hospitality projects and tourism facilities, while encouraging Jordanian, Arab and international visitors to discover the governorate’s rich blend of archaeological, natural, and cultural attractions.

This year’s programme also features several major additions being introduced for the first time to enhance visitor engagement and interaction with the archaeological site.

Highlights include 3D projection mapping on historic landmarks, curated marketplaces, dedicated dining and relaxation areas, entertainment experiences for families and children, and a variety of interactive activities that enrich the overall visitor experience.

## Energy, investment ministers wrap up US visit with talks on energy, mining cooperation

**Continued from page 1**

Kharabsheh also presented key energy projects, including the Risha-Arab Gas Pipeline, the natural gas distribution network in Amman and Zarqa, exploration projects in northern Risha, the Mujib Dam hydropower project, energy storage systems, wind energy projects, development of the Sirhan field, and ongoing green hydrogen initiatives.

The meeting also featured remarks from an American investor operating in Jordan, who commended government support and efforts to facilitate project implementation and improve the business environment, highlighting the Jordan Investment Platform as a unified

gateway for investment opportunities and procedures.

The delegation also held talks at the US Department of Energy with Deputy Secretary of Energy James Danly on avenues for cooperation and investment.

Kharabsheh highlighted opportunities in oil, gas, strategic minerals and renewable energy, noting Jordan’s continued efforts to enhance energy security and increase reliance on domestic resources.

He also outlined the Risha gas field development programme, which includes drilling up to 80 wells, as well as the pipeline project linking the field to the Arab Gas Pipeline, with the tender expected to be issued in the third quarter of 2026.

Discussions also cov-

ered exploration prospects, the application of modern technologies in gas production, and Jordan’s efforts to strengthen regional energy integration through electricity interconnections and potential natural gas supply arrangements with Syria.

The US deputy secretary of energy expressed Washington’s interest in encouraging American companies to participate in Jordan’s energy projects and benefit from available opportunities.

The delegation included Jordan’s Ambassador to the US Dina Kaware, Director of the Geology and Mining Directorate Hisham Al Zyoude, Laith Mazaherah from the Oil and Natural Gas Directorate, and members of the commercial section at the Jordanian embassy in Washington.

## Jordan dispatches mobile bakery to Lebanon

**Continued from page 1**

Jordan has implemented a number of humanitarian and relief initiatives for Lebanon. The Jordan Hashemite

Charity Organisation has dispatched six land aid convoys comprising 130 trucks loaded with food supplies, medical aid and relief assistance.

Jordan also expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Syrian authorities in facilitating the passage of humanitarian convoys into Lebanon

## Tourism revenue falls 4.3% in May — official figures

**Continued from page 1**

The data show that tourism revenue during the first five months of 2026 fell by 16 per cent from expatriate Jordanians, by 22.6 per cent from US nationals, by 25.6 per cent from Eu-

ropean nationalities, by 2.5 per cent from Asian nationalities, and by 39.1 per cent from other nationalities, while tourism revenue from Arab nationalities remained stable.

The data also showed that tourism spending

by Jordanians and residents increased by 1.7 per cent in May 2026, reaching \$160.9 million.

In contrast, tourism spending by Jordanians and residents during the first five months of 2026 decreased by 10 per cent, totaling \$723.6 million.

## Meridiam-Suez sole bidder for National Water Carrier Project after withdrawals, exclusions — ministry

**Continued from page 1**

Other members include Arab Contractors, one of the region’s leading construction firms, and Greece-based

Archirodon, a major Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) company, reflecting the consortium’s extensive technical expertise and financial strength.

The ministry stressed that the National Water Carrier Project is being implemented under a rigorous framework of transparency and governance throughout

all stages of preparation, evaluation and tendering.

It added that this approach has strengthened the confidence of international financiers

and investors, securing broad support for the project alongside government backing and the project’s strong technical and economic viability.

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## 6-7, Bad Bunny, AI: Pope targets the young

By **Dario Thuburn**

*Agence France-Presse*

BARCELONA — Six-sevending crowds and joking about Bad Bunny, AI and football rivalries, 70-year-old Pope Leo XIV has appealed to a younger crowd during his visit to Spain as part of his efforts to revive the Catholic Church.

On Popemobile rides, the leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics has frequently been seen doing the 6-7 hand gesture, a reference to a meme that has spread widely on social media and is popular with teens.

Along with the masses and institutional events, there have also been multiple meetings with young people where the Pope has used more down-to-earth language and spoken about topical issues like mental health.

The Pontiff, fluent in Spanish, also held a private meeting with Puerto Rican music superstar Bad Bunny, just after addressing a crowd of 80,000 people at Real Madrid's famed Bernabeu stadium.

On the plane to Madrid, the Pope had joked about facing competition from Bad Bunny who was giving concerts in the Spanish capital at the same time.

"If they are confronted with the question 'Do you want to go see Bad Bunny or do you want to go to see the Pope?' I think many will see Bad Bunny.

But I think there will also be a few here to see the Pope. And that says something," he told reporters.

### 'Spontaneous moments'

"He's clearly making an effort to reach out to young people," said US Vatican expert Elise Ann Allen, who has written a biography of the Pope.

But she said there were also many "spontaneous moments", like when the football-mad Pope confessed to reporters that he was a supporter of Real Madrid, not Barcelona.

"I think these are just the Pope being himself," she said.

On the flight from Madrid to Barcelona, the pope rode part of the way in the cockpit, visibly enjoying himself and waving out of the window to a fighter jet accompanying the plane.

He joked with the pilots, according to video released by the Spanish carrier, Iberia.

When one of the pilots told him he was a fan of Real Madrid, whose players wear white shirts, the Pope responded: "I'm all in white. In Barcelona you have to be careful."

The Pope has spoken about the challenges and opportunities of the digital age for the young and devoted his first encyclical, a sort of papal manifesto, to artificial intelligence.

He joked about AI's limitations with an anecdote at a lunch in Madrid, where he told guests that he had asked AI before his visit what he should say to Spanish bishops.

"The artificial intelligence told him that 'Pope Francis would say'... so he stopped it and said: 'I think there's another Pope'," Yago de la Cierva, coordinator of the papal visit, told reporters.

"Then the artificial intelligence said, 'Ah, that's right, it's now Pope Leo.'"

In his speech to Spanish bishops, he urged them to "build a new reality through respectful dialogue and the use of new languages" to evangelise, urging them to recognise young people's "search for meaning".

### 'Listens to young people'

"I think this Pope listens a lot to young people," said Alejandra Landae, a 28-year-old Mexican student in Barcelona, as she waited on Wednesday near the Sagrada Familia basilica to see Pope Leo XIV.

Jose Maria Romero, a 20-year-old student from Seville who was also waiting nearby, agreed, saying the Pope "is trying to unite young people".

Allen said more and more young people were taking an interest in the Catholic Church.

"There's something stirring in the waters, and he sees that and he wants to take advantage of it," she said.

Rafael Ruiz, professor of sociology at the Complutense University of Madrid, told El Pais daily that recent surveys showed a rise of Catholicism among younger Spaniards.

"We do not know whether this is a Catholic resurgence or simply a stabilisation of the secularisation process," he said.

"What we are seeing more clearly is an increase in the visibility of Catholicism and in the normalisation of Catholicism among young people," he said.

Around 56 per cent of Spaniards identify as Catholic compared to 90 per cent in the 1970s, according to a survey last month by the Centre for Sociological Research, an autonomous government body.

An opinion piece in Spanish daily La Vanguardia said the Pope was "making God fashionable".

## G7 summit under tight security on both sides of Lake Geneva

*Agence France-Presse*

GENEVA — France and Switzerland are imposing tight security for a looming G7 summit in Evian-les-Bains, with a demonstration to be held on Sunday in Geneva serving as their first test.

Memories endure of a 2003 summit in the well-heeled spa town on the French side of Lake Geneva, which saw violence and extensive damage in the nearby Swiss cities of Geneva and Lausanne. Both countries are determined to avoid a repeat of the fiasco when world leaders start their meeting on Monday.

Evian, wedged between Lake Geneva and the Alps, poses particular security challenges.

Geneva Airport is the main arrival point for incoming leaders, while some delegations are basing themselves in Switzerland.

French authorities are handling the immediate protection layer around the summit, with reinforced security zones covering Evian, nearby Thonon-les-Bains and the main transport routes.

Nearly French 16,000 police, gendarmes, troops, firefighters and border guards will be deployed, using boats, motorcycles and drones, alongside mounted police and dog-handling units,

the Haute-Savoie regional prefecture said.

According to government prefect Emmanuelle Dubee, the deployment aims to address "the risk linked to the extremely tense international context", the "terror threat, which remains high in France", the "risk of sabotage and cyber-attacks", and "public order disturbances".

### Swiss deploying troops

At the end of the lake, Geneva is about 40 kilometres southwest of Evian.

Switzerland has approved the deployment of 2,000-5,000 military personnel to "support" the cantonal police.

Around 4,000 Swiss troops will be deployed on land, Lake Geneva and in the air, coordinating with the French military.

Amid the swarm of uniforms, for French and Swiss residents alike the summit will mean traffic restrictions, border crossing closures, increased security checks and tight restrictions on the right to protest.

The aim is to stop a recurrence of 2003, when tens of thousands of anti-globalisation protesters gathered in the region to demonstrate against the G8 summit held

in Evian.

Groups rioted, looted and clashed with police in Lausanne and Geneva, causing millions of dollars of damage.

Since then, cross-border police and intelligence cooperation has been strengthened, but the trauma still haunts minds in Geneva where a demonstration will be held on Sunday.

### Protest route 'absurd'

"Geneva must not become the capital of rioters," said Francois Baertschi, president of the Geneva Citizens' Movement political party and a member of the cantonal parliament.

Geneva authorities are permitting a demonstration by the "No-G7" coalition, the day before the three-day Evian summit begins.

The approved route was initially deemed "very problematic" by the coalition, which brings together more than 60 organisations.

The route set out by authorities keeps protesters on the north side of the lake, away from the city centre and though now revised, still takes them through a major roadworks zone in front of the United Nations.

"The new route is still absurd,

since it goes through streets with shops and cars, whereas we wanted to march along the lakefront, but it is acceptable," said No-G7 member Francoise Nyffeler.

Nyffeler told AFP she had "given in a lot to the authorities" to reach an agreement on the route.

Though the anti-globalisation movement has lost momentum in recent years, and the protest organisers are insisting on peaceful action, the authorities are wary of infiltration by radical groups.

Many Geneva retailers have already begun boarding up their shop fronts, even those well off the demonstration route.

"We are doing everything we can to ensure it goes as smoothly as possible," Swiss President Guy Parmelin told the Geneva Press Club in May.

"It's not quite the same situation as in 2003," he added, highlighting the extra security deployment.

"Things should turn out differently, although we can never rule out the unexpected," he said.

Due to conditions imposed by authorities in France, the No-G7 coalition there has meanwhile abandoned plans for a counter-summit and demonstration in the border town of Annemasse on Sunday.

## AI robot cleaners leave the lab for China's living rooms

*Agence France-Presse*

BEIJING — Beijing cleaner Lin Meiqiong found her work a little easier the day she was paired with an unlikely new colleague, a tall, wheeled robot with AI-powered tidying skills.

The 56-year-old and her white-and-silver partner, fitted with cameras and two mechanical claws, are part of a new human-robot cleaning service offered by Chinese household help platform 58.com.

It's a baby step towards a future espoused by tech evangelists in which robots increasingly take over manual labour from humans, though at the moment, such services are largely a data-gathering exercise for companies and a novelty for curious customers.

"It's definitely different," Lin told AFP in between cleaning the kitchen and wiping down windows.

"I used to have to do everything myself," she said. "It's reduced the workload a bit."

The cleaning service, a collaboration between 58.com and Chinese robotics company X Square, costs \$22 for three hours and is available in Beijing and tech hub Shenzhen.

Helped into the apartment by an X Square engineer, the AI-operated Quanta X1 Pro robot uses its cameras to identify areas it could spruce up.

As Lin scrubbed the floor on

her knees, it picked up rubbish and folded clothes strewn across a sofa.

Grasping a pair of dark grey trousers, it raised its upper body to stretch the fabric taut, before laying it flat and arranging it into neat halves.

The process took several minutes and resembled a child learning to fold clothes for the first time.

Future iterations of the robot will respond to voice commands and even be able to chat, said the engineer, Hu Bowen.

### 'Better than a lab'

Around 200 households have booked the service since it was rolled out in March.

Tan Pei, who works in advertising and booked the robot to clean her Beijing flat, said she had chosen the service because she was interested to "see what it could do".

"Even though it's not that perfect, there are still parts of it that surprised me," such as folding a pair of trousers "quite well", she said.

China's robots have wowed audiences with fluid dancing and set-piece martial arts displays onstage, but their application and performance in real-life settings remains limited.

For companies like X Square, the logic of launching an imperfect service lies in data collection for so-called embodied artificial

intelligence.

Unlike large language models trained on vast quantities of Internet content, robots lack comparable real-world datasets.

"We don't have a robot Internet yet," Christoforos Mavrogiannis from the University of Michigan told AFP.

"It is much more informative to put the robot out there and study what happens than staying forever in the lab."

X Square engineer Hu said he sends his robots to work in a "completely unfamiliar environment".

"That is very challenging, but this unfamiliar data is also very helpful for the robot's growth."

As investment into embodied AI booms, similar trials in China include robots directing traffic in cities like Hangzhou or working on factory floors.

On the domestic help front, firm GigaAI also plans to deploy 100 humanoid robots into households in central Wuhan this autumn for free home-service trials.

Investors have poured more than \$8.5 billion into China's embodied AI industry so far this year, already soaring past the total for last year as a whole, according to business database ITJuzi.

### 'Very elementary stage'

But a myriad of hurdles stand in the way of widespread deployment.

## Even DJs don't escape junta's 'revolution' in Burkina Faso

*Agence France-Presse*

ABIDJAN — A DJ mixing tracks at a lively bar in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso's economic capital, found himself suddenly confronted by the military-led country's culture minister.

"All the music you've played is imported music," Pingdwende Gilbert Ouedraogo declared disapprovingly, while the DJ stood silent.

"We haven't come tonight to punish you... We're here to raise your awareness. Consuming Burkinabe products also means promoting our artists," the minister told him.

The surprise encounter, which the culture ministry showed on its social media account last month, was part of an information campaign, in line with the nationalist rhetoric of the west African country's rulers.

Junta chief Ibrahim Traore has pushed an agenda of domestically driven policies with the proclaimed aim of reclaiming national sovereignty, since seizing power in a September 2022 coup.

The 38-year-old captain, who recently told Burkinabes to "forget" about democracy, says he is leading a "popular progressive revolution".

That now includes a stipulation that 50 to 70 per cent of music played at leisure venues be from Burkina Faso.

Despite the popularity of Afrobeats from Nigeria or Ivorian dance music, bars and other

public places will be required to stick to homegrown talent on their sound systems with stars such as Floby, who sings in French and the local Moore language, or rapper Smarty.

### 'An opportunity'

Styling himself on former leader Thomas Sankara, a charismatic anti-colonial icon of African rebellion who was killed in a 1987 coup, Traore openly defends an anti-imperialist programme.

"He has successfully channelled a widespread pan-Africanist and anti-French sentiment, positioning himself as the one who will complete the unfulfilled revolution" of Sankara, Folahanmi Aina, an analyst on conflicts in the Sahel region, said in a study published last month.

Under Traore, Burkina Faso has nationalised several gold mines.

The traditional Faso Danfani handwoven fabric, popular during Sankara's short tenure, is again widely worn in the civil service and schools.

"With the calls to consume, produce, process and eat Burkinabe products, sovereignty comes right down onto the plate, into everyday habits, into objects [and] into the domestic economy," analyst Julien Hoffmann, also a Sahel expert, wrote in an article.

A local musician welcomed the new music rule as "an opportunity" for the Burkinabe scene.

"The breakthrough will come,"

the artist enthused.

But, local products are often more expensive, especially when purchasing power has been dented by three years of political upheaval on top of a decade of violence.

"Whether it's rice, Faso Danfani or other local products, what is made here and should be accessible to everyone is turning into a luxury item," a resident in the second city grumbled.

### 'Order and discipline'

Popular mobilisation around the homeland and the nation is the common thread running through Traore's "revolution", which mostly shapes military issues.

Soldiers and police officers have taken to releasing their own music, military songs about glory and courage to motivate the rank and file.

Traore has also ordered a band be set up to play at official ceremonies to boost morale and help rally the troops.

The captain has recruited thousands of civilian volunteers to fight alongside the army.

Together, they have been accused by Human Rights Watch of killing at least 1,255 civilians in 2023, twice as many victims as a militant extremist group.

Burkinabe authorities denied the accusation.

The military leadership has also introduced a mandatory one-month "patriotic immersion" scheme for high school gradu-

ates. As the Quanta X1 Pro's clothes folding demonstrated, robots still can't match human dexterity.

"Even though many companies are working on building better hands and building autonomy for hands, we don't have that yet," the University of Michigan's Mavrogiannis said.

There are multiple regulatory issues even once the physical capability is there.

Privacy will become a big issue, as robots would have access to huge amounts of personal data.

"We don't know where that data is going, where it's located... who is looking at that information," said Valeria Alessandra Macalupu Chira from Queensland University of Technology.

The safety of clients and their homes is another unresolved issue.

"I think we are still at a very elementary stage," said Yang Jianfei from Singapore's Nanyang Technological University.

Robots currently require supervision by humans who can activate emergency stop functions, he noted, and there are not yet recognised industry-wide safety standards.

Experts agree broad adoption seems a long way off.

Asked whether she thought robots would revolutionise her industry, cleaner Lin did not seem too concerned.

"Compared with people, it's obviously still not quite there," she said. "After all, it's a robot."

## Even DJs don't escape junta's 'revolution' in Burkina Faso

ates.

The programme is presented as a way to train engaged citizens who are ready to defend their country against extremists.

Similarly, ministry staff and other public servants are also sent, several hundred at a time, for "patriotic immersion".

Two years ago, the junta set up a Patriotic Support Fund to equip the army, financed by public contributions that raised around \$880 million, 756 million euros.

### 'Neither saviour nor dictator'

Traore stresses that the country's leaders will not hesitate to "enforce order and discipline" among the population.

"You don't make a revolution in chaos," he warned last year.

Critics are silenced by being shipped off to the front line to fight extremist groups affiliated with Al Qaeda and Daesh, which have waged violence for more than a decade, causing thousands of deaths.

France's TV5 Monde last week became the latest international media outlet to be banned.

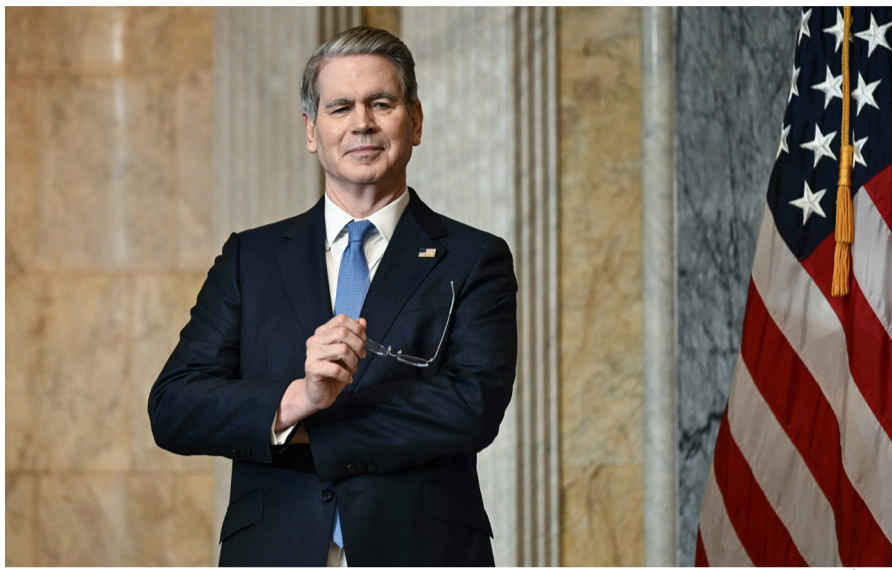
Numerous journalists have been arrested or abducted and also forced to the front line.

Aina, the researcher, said Traore was "neither simply a saviour nor merely a dictator".

Rather, he is "an ambivalent figure whose authority is rooted in anti-imperialist promise and consolidated through authoritarian practice", he said.

# BUSINESS

Friday-Saturday, June 12-13, 2026



AFP photo

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent looks on as First Lady Melania Trump speaks during an event to launch 'Fostering the Future Accounts,' a new financial vehicle for youth in foster care, at the Treasury Building in Washington, DC, on Thursday

## US Treasury chief says to use Iranian funds to cover damage caused to Gulf allies

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent vowed on Thursday to use Iranian funds to pay for damages that the country causes on Gulf allies, warning of sharp economic consequences from Tehran's attacks.

"Any damage it inflicts on our allies in the Gulf will be paid for with funds extracted from Iranian accounts," Bessent wrote on X.

His comments came as Washington issued fresh threats in the war with the Islamic republic, and President Donald Trump said Thursday morning that

he would launch new strikes on the country and eventually target its key oil infrastructure.

The United States and Israel launched strikes targeting Iran from late February, sparking a war that has engulfed the Middle East and snarled key energy supply chains — sending energy costs soaring.

Bessent said Thursday that Tehran's attacks "will only deepen the economic and financial consequences it faces".

He also added that "any tolls collected by the Persian Gulf Strait Authority will be offset by funds extracted from their accounts".

The authority is Iran's newly established agency responsible for collecting transit fees in the Strait of Hormuz, a critical waterway for energy transit which Tehran has effectively closed since the early stages of the war.

On Thursday, the agency said Hormuz would be completely closed until further notice.

Bessent previously said that Washington would not tolerate efforts to impose a tolling system in Hormuz, threatening further economic sanctions against parties involved in its implementation.

## Agreement signed to establish business council between Jordan, Kurdistan Region

AMMAN (JT) — The Amman Chamber of Commerce (ACC) board of directors met on Thursday with President of the Erbil Chamber of Commerce and Industry Kilan Haji Said, and head of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, to discuss boosting economic, trade and investment cooperation.

During the meeting, held at the ACC headquarters and attended by Jordan's Consul General to Erbil Ambassador Ziad Batarseh, an initial agreement was signed to establish a joint business council between the Jordan Chamber of Commerce and the Kurdistan Region's Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, according to an ACC statement.

The council will serve as an institutional platform to advance bilateral economic and trade relations.

According to an ACC statement issued on Thursday, the council will comprise business owners, economists and representatives from various economic sectors from both sides.

This initiative aims to foster direct communication between the two business communities.



Petra photo

An agreement is signed to establish a joint business council between the Jordan Chamber of Commerce and the Kurdistan Region's Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, according to Amman Chamber of Commerce

Both parties agreed to launch a joint online platform to serve as an integrated economic information bank. The platform will feature a database of goods, products, companies, trade and investment opportunities and incentives, alongside relevant legislation and economic indicators, to facilitate B2B communication.

The two sides also agreed to twin the Amman and Erbil chambers of commerce by signing a memorandum of understanding for joint cooperation.

The agreement aims to enhance the exchange of expertise, information and services between the two business communities.

The platform will also include information on tourism destinations in Jordan and the Kurdistan Region, highlighting investment opportunities in tourism, medical tourism and higher education to promote mutual economic opportunities.

The two delegations also agreed to explore the establishment of permanent trade centres and exhibitions in Amman and Erbil to showcase and market goods, products and services, providing a

window for investment promotion. Chairman of the Jordan and Amman chambers of commerce Khalil Haj Tawfiq, stressed that the growing relations and mutual understanding between the two sides have created a positive environment to bolster economic cooperation, enabling the private sector to play a greater role in building partnerships, according to ACC statement.

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## 'I love the inflation' — Trump comment on latest price jump sparks backlash

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US President Donald Trump recently brushed off concerns about consumer inflation surging to a fresh three-year high in May, amid soaring energy prices caused by his war in Iran.

"The numbers were great... I love the inflation," Trump told reporters, a comment seized upon by Democrats who have made rising prices a cornerstone of their campaign to take control of Congress in November's midterm elections.

The consumer price index (CPI) rose 4.2 per cent year-on-year, up from the previous month's 3.8 per cent figure and the highest reading since April 2023. The Republican Speaker of the House Mike Johnson later argued that the president's remarks had been taken out of context, but Senate Democratic Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said they demonstrated Trump's disdain for the financial struggles faced by American families.

"Trump really said, 'I love the inflation.' On camera. For all of America to hear: His contempt for you knows no bounds," Schumer posted on X.

And the Democratic Party posted a new campaign ad on its social media account featuring a video of Trump's comments.

"Trump said the quiet part out loud — he loves inflation. Every American should see this," the post said.

The US-Israel war against Iran, launched in late February, has sent energy prices skyrocketing after Tehran retaliated by virtually closing the vital Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly a fifth of global oil and gas normally pass.

Trump also repeated his prediction that inflation would "come down like a rock" after the conflict ends.

Economists have disputed that claim, with oil prices expected to take months to return to pre-war levels, depending on when hostilities end.

### Possible peak

May's consumer inflation data showed energy prices had risen 23.5 per cent over the same time last year, with gasoline rising by 40.5 per cent.

Grocery prices also rose significantly for the second month in a row, up 2.7 per cent over a year ago.

Other prices to increase over the month included

medical care, personal care, airline fares and recreation.

Americans have been dealing with years of higher prices, with inflation remaining elevated long after the Covid pandemic.

Prices have been fuelled by repeated shocks, including the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Trump's tariffs and now the war on Iran.

Analysts, however, said that gasoline prices at the pump have recently stabilised, potentially indicating a favourable outlook for overall inflation.

"Higher energy prices again pushed up inflation last month, but we estimate that inflation has peaked and will trend lower in the second half of the year," said Kathy Bostjancic, chief economist at Nationwide.

She added that this was assuming there was a "near-term resolution with Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz".

Core CPI inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy prices, came in at 2.9 per cent in May, up from 2.8 per cent the month before.

"For now, there appears to be little pass-through of higher energy cost onto core inflation, outside of airfare," said Gregory

Daco, chief economist at EY-Parthenon.

### 'No position to cut rates'

The US Federal Reserve has a long-term two-per cent target for inflation, and the central bank's key interest rate-setting committee will meet next week.

It will be new chairman Kevin Warsh's first meeting since taking office last month, and he will be under pressure from Trump to reduce interest rates.

Markets, however, expect the Fed to keep rates steady at this meeting, and are now pricing in rate hikes for later in the year, spooking equity investors.

Before the war, markets had priced in rate cuts for later in the year, with expectations that inflation fuelled by Trump's tariff policy would begin to fade.

The war, however, has complicated the outlook, with more Fed policymakers saying they were concerned about rising inflation, which the central bank would typically address by raising rates.

"The Fed will be in no position to cut rates if this continues," said Chris Zaccarelli, chief investment officer for Northlight Asset Management.

## US wholesale prices jump 6.5%, highest since late 2022

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — Wholesale prices in the United States rose sharply in May, registering their highest 12-month increase in more than three years, as surging energy prices due to the war on Iran course through the world's largest economy.

The Producer Price Index (PPI) rose 6.5 per cent for the 12 months ending in May, the Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS) said on Thursday, the highest level since November 2022.

Month-on-month prices rose by 1.1 per cent, which was higher than market expectations.

The United States has been battling stubbornly high inflation since the COVID-19 pandemic, with President Donald Trump's signature tariffs and the US-Israel war on Iran piling pressure on prices.

Tehran has retaliated by virtually closing the vital Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly a fifth of the world's oil and gas supplies normally

pass.

Analysts have warned that the longer the crisis continues, the more likely it is that energy price increases will begin to bleed through into other goods.

On Thursday, the BLS also revised previous PPI data for this year, with April's year-on-year reading moved downwards to 5.7 per cent from 6 per cent. The reading in March was revised up to 4.3 per cent.

The BLS said nearly 80 per cent of the advance in

May was attributable to an increase in the goods index, with the services index rising only modestly in the month.

The numbers were released a day after US consumer inflation also came in at a three-year high, rising 4.2 per cent year-on-year in May.

Trump has brushed off inflation as temporary and insisted that the economy will bounce back quickly after the war is over — an assertion that economists say is unlikely to occur.

## Stocks drop, oil rises as Iran and rate worries

HONG KONG (AFP) — Fresh worries about the Middle East ceasefire and the prospect of a US interest rate hike hit most stocks and lifted oil prices on Thursday, following a rollercoaster week for markets that has sent shivers through trading floors.

Investors took a little heart from closely watched data on Wednesday that showed May US inflation had come in around expectations but still hit a more than three-year high as fuel costs surged owing to the Iran war.

The reading came days after figures showing a forecast-busting jump in jobs creation last month ramped up bets on the Federal Reserve hiking interest rates for the first time since 2023.

Attention will now turn to the Fed's next policy meeting in a week's time, and while the new chief Kevin Warsh is unlikely to make a hike his first act, observers said futures markets suggest a move up could come before the end of the year.

"Overall [the inflation report] was not as bad



AFP photo

Stock market numbers are displayed on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange during afternoon trading on Wednesday in New York City

as it could have been and core was a little lighter than expected so the market is seeing this as a positive," Neil Wilson, Saxo investor strategist, said.

"This could re-anchor expectations a touch for a bit but I still think that the Fed is swinging more quickly behind a hike than it might have done or markets might think.

"Time is growing short and even if it could have been a hotter read, headline CPI above four per cent against a really strong labour market clearly deserves attention from the Fed."

The prospect of higher borrowing costs once again hurt tech firms, which tumbled on Wall Street, where the Nasdaq sank two per cent and the

S&P 500 shed almost as much.

Asia mostly fell but stabilised after the previous three days of whipsawing.

Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Wellington, Taipei, Manila and Jakarta were all in the red.

But Seoul — at the forefront of the region's tech-led rally to record highs — edged up, having seen wild swings over the previous two days.

Tokyo, Singapore, Mumbai and Bangkok also crept up.

London and Paris opened with gains, while Frankfurt was flat.

A series of fresh US military strikes on sites in Iran, on top of those carried out Tuesday for the downing of a helicopter,

added to the sense of unease among investors.

They led Tehran to hit back at US targets in the Middle East, with Iranian officials saying they would target any ship passing through the Strait of Hormuz.

And while US Central Command said it had completed its strikes, the latest increase in attacks fuelled concerns about their shaky truce and attempts to reach a peace deal to reopen the strait and allow crude ships to pass again.

The second day of US strikes followed President Donald Trump's complaint that Tehran's negotiators were taking too long and "playing us for suckers". Earlier this week he had suggested a peace accord was just days away.

"We hit them hard yesterday. We're going to hit them again hard today," the US president told reporters Wednesday morning. "We were really close to a deal, but they keep stringing us along."

Oil prices jumped as much as 2 per cent on Thursday, extending similar gains the day before.

## AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Thursday amounted to JD 32.1 million spread over 6.6 million shares that traded through 6,399 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.68 per cent, closing at 3954.47 points.

Out of 106 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 37 companies rose while the share price of another 25 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Arab International for Education and Investment by 5.81 per cent, Jordan Phosphate Mines by 5.75 per cent, Jordan Insurance by 4.44 per cent, Arab Company for Investment Projects by 4.27 per cent, and National Aluminum Industrial by 4.23 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Sura Development and Investment Plc by 4.76 per cent, Jordan Masaken for Land and Industrial Development Projects by 4.55 per cent, Al Dawliyah for Hotels and Malls by 4.26 per cent, Universal Modern Industries by 3.72 per cent, and Afaq Holding for Investment and Real Estate Development Company Plc. by 3.33 per cent.

### THE MARKET TODAY

ASE Index: ↑ 3954.47 0.68% June 11, 2026

**Live Data**

Click and drag in the plot area to zoom in

**Historical Data**

### DAILY SUMMARY

Regular Market		OTC Market	
Trading Value (JDs)	32,098,146		
Trading volume	6,562,206		
No. of Transactions	6,399		
No. of Securities	106		

THE JORDAN TIMES  
SPORTS  
AT A GLANCE

CRICKET

**Bangladesh clinches first-ever ODI series win over Australia**

DHAKA (AFP) — Towhid Hridoy hit an unbeaten 40 as Bangladesh won the second One-Day International (ODI) by five wickets on Thursday to clinch their first-ever series win against Australia in the 50-over format. Chasing a DLS revised victory target of 192 in 41 overs in a rain-hit match, Bangladesh eased home with 36 balls to spare in Dhaka to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. Australia posted 187-8 in 42 overs with their innings cut short and ended by rain after Marnus Labuschagne, who made an unbeaten 55, and Xavier Bartlett, who hit 52, rescued the visitors from 0-3. Opening bowlers Mustafizur Rahman and Taskin Ahmed took three wickets each. The victory extended Bangladesh's winning streak to five consecutive home ODI series, following triumphs over Sri Lanka, West Indies, Pakistan and New Zealand. Reigning ODI world champions Australia, who are missing many of their top players, lost their second successive ODI series after going down 2-1 to Pakistan earlier this month.

**New Zealand's Conway jets home between Tests to attend birth of child**

LONDON (AFP) — New Zealand expect Devon Conway to be available for next week's second Test against England at the Oval despite a 37,000 kilometre round trip to Wellington to attend the birth of his second child. The 34-year-old opening batsman was out for one and 41 during New Zealand's 115-run defeat in a low-scoring first Test at Lord's last week that left the tourists 1-0 down in a three-match series. He has since made the long journey home to be with his wife for the birth of their second child, but is expected back in time when the series resumes at the Oval. "Black Caps batter Devon Conway has briefly returned home to New Zealand to welcome the birth of his second child," said a New Zealand Cricket statement on Thursday. "Conway will spend some time at home with family before flying back to London ahead of the second Test against England at The Oval, starting June 17." New Zealand captain Tom Latham, speaking after the first Test, was hopeful of having "a full bowling attack to pick from" at the Oval after Matt Henry suffered back spasms on the opening day of the series, with the paceman sending down just 15 overs at Lord's. "I think it's a day-by-day case with Hennessey," Latham said.

SAN ANTONIO (AFP) — Still hurting after the worst collapse in NBA Finals history, the San Antonio Spurs vow the New York Knicks will not win their first title in 53 years without a fight.

The Knicks rallied from 29 points down to edge the Spurs 107-106 on Thursday and seize a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven series with game five on Saturday in San Antonio.

"I feel like we're going to go out next game with a sense of fire," Spurs guard Dylan Harper said.

"If we're going to lose, we're not going out like that. We're going to put up a fight. We're going to keep swinging."

After allowing the greatest comeback in NBA Finals history, losing on an OG Anunoby tip-in with 1.2 seconds remaining, the Spurs must regroup quickly.

"It's a tough loss. It's going to take us a minute to get over it," Spurs guard Stephon Castle said.

"But we still have belief in each other and confidence we're going to win the next game."

Spurs forward Keldon Johnson still hurts but has confidence his team can win three in a row to swipe the crown.

"I think it hurts everybody," he said.

"We put a lot into it. As much as it hurts, we're still playing. I

feel like we have a special group. We're back at it and we believe we can get it done."

The Spurs rallied from 3-2 down to oust 2025 champion Oklahoma City in the Western Conference final.

"Backs against the wall. We've answered the call every time. This is no different for us,"



Jalen Brunson #11 of the New York Knicks shoots the ball against Victor Wembanyama #1 of the San Antonio Spurs during the fourth quarter in Game Four of the 2026 NBA Finals at Madison Square Garden on Thursday in New York City

Harper said. "We're all going to bounce back. We're going to show the world what we're made of."

"It's no time to complain, no time to point fingers. It's time for us to step up. If we believe we're who we think we are, then it's going to show."

Knicks scoring leader

"We have a lot to learn from and a lot to get better in order to do the things we said we want to do."

Spurs' 2.24m Frenchman Victor Wembanyama faces a one-game suspension if he is whistled for another flagrant foul.

"Of course, I'm going to be more careful,"

Castle has some ideas about that.

"Finishing games and trying to maintain our leads has been tough for us," he said. "It's trying to stay out of foul trouble. It's trying to make the right passes, staying disciplined."

Wembanyama said. "But it's not going to change much."

The 22-year-old NBA Defensive Player of the Year says the team has a clear path to deliver their best effort to the finish.

"Holding each other accountable. Communicating. Not pointing fingers. And after that, we either got it or we don't," Wembanyama said.

"We've proven we can surpass these difficulties. Even though we haven't been there before, I'm convinced we're built that way and we're going to use the better of this. It's going to tighten us up."

**'Staying disciplined'**

Spurs veteran De'Aaron Fox says the Spurs remain confident.

"We feel like we have a team to be able to come back from this," he said. "It looks like a steep hill, but this is something that has happened before."

"We've been in a position to win all these games. We have to figure out what we need to do to be able to put some of these games away."

Castle has some ideas about that.

"Finishing games and trying to maintain our leads has been tough for us," he said. "It's trying to stay out of foul trouble. It's trying to make the right passes, staying disciplined."

LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

World's largest whale graveyard discovered by Chinese sub

By Daniel Lawler  
Agence France-Presse

PARIS, France — The world's largest whale graveyard has been discovered at the bottom of the Indian Ocean by Chinese scientists, who found that the vast expanse of both new and ancient carcasses supports huge communities of deep-sea life.

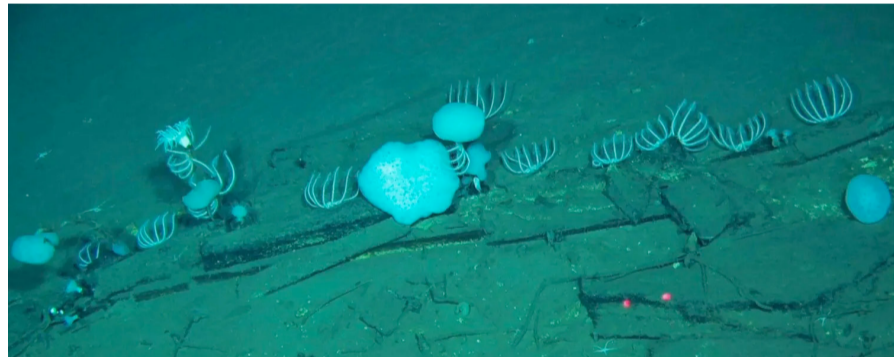
It is also the deepest and oldest known whale graveyard on Earth, according to research published in the journal Nature on Wednesday, with some fossils dating back 5.3 million years.

From inside a small submersible, the Chinese researchers saw many strange animals — many believed to be new to science — living off the whale carcasses.

A new, though extinct, species of whale was also identified among the nearly 500 skeletons found up to 7,000 metres deep along a 1,200 kilometre corridor of bones in the Indian Ocean west of Australia.

Lead study author Xiaotong Peng of the Chinese Academy of Sciences told AFP that the researchers were "astonished" when the scale of their discovery became clear.

It was known that when whales die and drop to the seafloor, their



This handout photograph taken by Global TREnd, IDSSE, seven kilometers under the sea on the deep seafloor of the Diamantina Zone in the Indian Ocean in 2023 and released on Wednesday

sunken bodies — called "whale falls" — provide a source of food to deep-sea creatures.

"But discovering a necropolis of this scale was completely unexpected: The size of distribution, the depth and the age range were far beyond anything we had imagined," Xiaotong Peng said.

The whales were believed to have died in such numbers in this particular area because it is a popular foraging habitat — and has a V-shaped trench that funnels carcasses to the seafloor.

**'Truly incredible experience'**

For the discovery, the Fendouzhe submersible carried out 32 dives in 2023 — though what it found was only revealed in Nature on Wednesday.

day.

The sub took up to three people on the dives, collecting the fossil samples using robotic arms.

Study co-author Peng Zhou said witnessing the whale graveyard "was a truly incredible experience".

"The vibrant ecosystems we saw offered a completely different perspective on this otherwise dark and cold ocean floor."

Among the animals they discovered living off the carcasses were jellyfish, brittle stars, bone-boring worms and molluscs called bivalves.

Most of the 485 fossils the scientists catalogued were from different species of beaked whales.

Extrapolating from the number of bones they found, the scientists es-

timated there could be more than 10 million carcasses across the area, which is called the Diamantina Zone.

The soft tissue and lipids inside that many carcasses "translates to roughly 6.7 million tonnes of sequestered carbon", Xiaotong Peng said.

This provides an immense source of sustenance for animals, similar to how hydrothermal vents create their own ecosystems on the ocean floor.

Some of the animals seen by the scientists also live in hydrothermal vents and cold seeps, suggesting whale carcasses could help connect these deep-sea communities.

While this is by far the largest whale graveyard yet found, fossils found during trawling suggest

there could be others off South Africa, the Iberian Peninsula and the Crozet Islands, said the study.

**'More blockbusters to come?'**

University of Hawaii oceanographer Craig Smith, who discovered the first whale fall in 1987 but was not involved in the new research, told AFP it was "extremely exciting".

"The vast number of fossil whale falls documented, including a new species of beaked whale, is truly amazing and is of major importance to understanding whale evolution and whale distributions over geologic time," he said.

Whale fall researcher Amy Baco-Taylor at Florida State University told AFP the "remarkable discovery" would "likely provide many new insights".

This includes for the animals living in these "chemosynthetic" communities, whose numbers had been thought to have been drastically reduced by human whaling, she added.

US palaeontologist Stephen Godfrey compared the "truly unique discovery" to past major underwater finds, such as when scientists first identified hydrothermal vents teeming with life on the ocean floor in 1977.

By Raphael Hermano and Raphaëlle Peltier  
Agence France-Presse

NEWYORK — The World Cup isn't only about soccer: FIFA is drawing on music stars to elevate the competition into a global cultural event, broadening its reach beyond sports fans.

From world-famous artists performing at the opening ceremonies to an unprecedented Super Bowl-style halftime show during the final, here is what to expect.

**A musical opening**

The festivities begin on Wednesday, on the eve of the tournament, with concerts in Mexico City, Toronto, and Los Angeles that combine international superstars and major regional figures.

Big names include American pop singer Katy Perry, Canadian artist Alanis Morissette, US rapper Future, Brazilian urban pop figure Anitta, Thai K-pop icon Lisa and Nigerian afrobeats star Rema.

They will perform alongside artists with strong home country followings, such as Mexican institution Los Angeles Azules Bollywood singer Nora Fatehi, and French rapper VegeDream.

"There's a concerted effort around the FIFA World Cup and their marketing team to leverage music as a through line to connect different audiences from around the world," said Clayton Durant, a music industry entrepreneur and New York University professor.

This initiative is not new: In 2021, the organisation launched its FIFA Sound programme, describing it as "a strategy to connect with audiences worldwide through shared passions of football and music".

**Grand finale**

The most striking event will be the halftime of the final, on July 19 at the MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

For the first time, the show will feature a concert with three global headliners: American singer Madonna, Colombian star Shakira and South Korean group BTS.

That lineup was conceived in the "spirit of trying to unite the whole world", said Hugh Evans, head of the NGO Global Citizen, which is producing the show.

Imagined by Chris Martin, the frontman of Coldplay, the halftime

performance is designed to highlight "the best of humanity" and "all the things that unite us", Evans told AFP.

He said the amount spent on producing the event is comparable to the Super Bowl halftime show — the final of the American football championship. That is somewhere between \$10 and \$20 million, according to sources.

The artists themselves will be performing for free.

The show is intended to support an education fund that FIFA — regularly accused of putting financial profits first — has set up with Global Citizen.

**Hit single?**

For the official World Cup song, FIFA turned to a safe bet: Shakira. She was behind "Waka Waka", the 2010 World Cup anthem that became a global sensation.

Her new track "Dai Dai", performed with Nigerian singer Burna Boy, blends Latin pop and afrobeats.

It appears on an official 18-track album that includes the electro group Major Lazer, reggaeton artist Daddy Yankee, and the Rolling Stones — once again heavily mixing genres.

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