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Sunday, June 14, 2026 | Dhu al-Hajja 28, 1447 Hijri



AFP photo

In this photo obtained from Iran's ISNA news agency on April 24, an Iranian man rides his motorcycle past a boat at Suru Beach in Bandar Abbas along the Strait of Hormuz

Amid renewed Hormuz tensions, Trump says Iran deal to be signed Sunday

Political analyst says diplomacy is advancing under shadow of sustained US military pressure

By Mai Anati

AMMAN — US President Donald Trump said on Saturday that a deal aimed at ending the Iran war is scheduled to be signed on Sunday, warning Tehran to fully implement the agreement or face consequences.

In a post on his Truth Social platform, Trump wrote that the agree-

ment would be signed on Sunday and said that, once finalised, the Strait of Hormuz would be "open to all".

"The Deal is scheduled to get signed tomorrow, and immediately after it is signed, the Hormuz Strait is OPEN TO ALL," he said.

Trump also suggested the United States would take custody of Iran's stockpile of enriched

uranium and destroy it at a later stage, either in Iran or in the United States.

"At the appropriate time, when all is calm, we will go in and get the Nuclear Dust... and downblend and destroy it," he wrote, adding that this would involve US B-2 bombers and their pilots.

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World Bank projects Jordan's economic growth to reach 3% by 2028

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's economic growth is expected to accelerate gradually, reaching 3 per cent by 2028 despite ongoing global economic challenges and regional geopolitical tensions, according to a World Bank report.

Jordan's economy, according to the World Bank's latest Global Economic Prospects report released on Thursday, is projected to grow by 2.7 per cent this year before rising to 2.9 per cent in 2027.

The World Bank said that Jordan's fertiliser exports are expected to help cushion the impact of regional and global pressures, with strong international fertiliser prices supporting export revenues and helping offset higher import costs facing energy-dependent economies.

The report noted that economies across the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan (MENAP) region are facing growing challenges due to geopolitical instability, increased energy and shipping costs, and uncertainty affecting trade and investment.



JT file

Jordan's economic growth is expected to accelerate gradually, reaching 3 per cent by 2028 according to a World Bank report

MENAP economic growth is forecast to slow to 1.6 per cent in 2026, compared with around 4 per cent in 2025, as regional conflicts and uncertainty weigh on economic activity.

The report expects a gradual recovery across the region in 2027 and 2028 as disruptions ease, inflationary pressures decline, and trade and tourism activity improve, with regional growth pro-

jected to average 4.5 per cent during that period. Globally, the report highlighted continued uncertainty surrounding trade, inflation and commodity prices amid shifting geopolitical con-

ditions. For Jordan, maintaining export momentum, particularly through fertiliser sales, is expected to remain a key factor supporting economic resilience and limiting the effects of external shocks.

Middle East war to drag global growth to lowest rate since COVID-19 pandemic — World Bank

AMMAN (JT) — The war in the Middle East is expected to slow global economic growth to its weakest pace since the COVID-19 pandemic, as surging energy prices fuel inflation and raise borrowing costs worldwide, according to the World Bank Group's latest Global Economic Prospects report.

The report forecasts global growth to slow to 2.5 per cent in 2026 from 2.9 per cent in 2025, with growth projections downgraded for nearly two-thirds of the world's economies since January.

"Although growth is expected to recover slightly to 2.8 per cent in 2027, it will remain 0.4 percentage points below the average recorded during the 2010s," the report said.

The World Bank warned that weak growth in developing countries is undermining efforts to close income gaps with



AFP photo

The World Bank

advanced economies. "Developing countries have faced a series of challenges over the last decade," said Ajay Banga, president of the World Bank Group.

"The impact differs by country, but the basic test is the same: Protect

people and preserve stability today, without giving up on growth and jobs tomorrow," Banga said. "In response to the current shock, we are providing liquidity where it is needed now, and we are ready with additional financing,

guarantees and private-sector solutions if pressures deepen."

According to the report, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz has severely disrupted global energy markets. Brent crude oil prices are projected to average \$94 per

barrel in 2026, a 36 per cent increase over 2025 levels, assuming major disruptions ease by July.

Fertiliser prices are also expected to rise sharply, increasing pressure on global food markets. As a result, global inflation is forecast to climb to 4 per cent this year, up from 3.3 per cent in 2025.

The report cautioned that risks remain heavily tilted to the downside. Should energy supply disruptions worsen and trigger significant financial market stress, global growth could fall to just 1.3 per cent in 2026, while inflation could accelerate to 4.4 per cent.

Growth in developing economies is expected to slow to 3.6 per cent in 2026, marking the lowest level since the pandemic, compared with 4.4 per cent in 2025. The report projects a recovery to 4.2 per cent in 2027.

Continued on page 5



AFP photo

Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli air strike that targeted the southern Lebanese city of Nabatieh on Friday

Lebanon reports strikes on south as Israel issues broad evacuation warnings

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AFP) — Lebanon reported Israeli strikes in the country's south on Saturday, as the Israeli army issued evacuation warnings for the city of Nabatieh and more

than 20 other locations ahead of raids.

The latest strikes came as the US and Iran indicated they were close to reaching a deal on ending the Middle East war that could

also include Lebanon, which was drawn into the conflict when Hizbollah attacked Israel in support of its patron Tehran.

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JFA emphasises legal protection of Nashama logos, kits, player images

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Football Association (JFA) has expressed pride in Jordanian fans across the Kingdom and abroad, praising their strong national spirit in supporting the national team, The Nashama, celebrating its achievements and wearing its jerseys.

The association said in a statement, carried by Al Mamlaka, that the widespread support reflects a sense of unity and belonging among Jordanians from all regions, and welcomed all forms of public engagement with the national team. It also encouraged

fans, institutions, and community groups to continue participating in national celebrations linked to the team's success, provided such activities comply with the law and respect the rights of the association and its commercial partners.

The JFA also said that its name, logo, the national team's identity, visual assets, and official trademarks are legally protected and registered under applicable Jordanian law, adding that the national team's official jersey designs are owned by the association and produced in partnership with "Kelme",

the official kit supplier and a registered trademark.

It also said that all commercial rights related to images of national team players, whether individual or group, still or moving, belong exclusively to the association and may not be used for commercial purposes without prior authorisation.

The association warned that any unauthorised commercial use of its trademarks, logos, official designs or player images, including the production, import, distribution or sale of merchandise bearing such elements,

constitutes a legal violation and may result in civil or criminal liability.

The JFA said that official jerseys and merchandise are available only through approved sales channels, including its headquarters at Al Hussein Youth City, Kelme stores in Sweifieh and Jabal Amman, Abdali Boulevard and the Talabat platform.

It stressed that products sold outside these outlets are not official or authentic.

While emphasising the protection of its intellectual property rights, the association said that these meas-



ures are not intended to limit national expression or fan initiatives. It welcomed community-driven ideas and celebratory products supporting the national team, as

long as they do not infringe on protected trademarks, designs or player images.

To support lawful fan engagement, the JFA announced the launch of a dedicated

"Al Nashama" fan logo, made freely available for public and community use across promotional and celebratory materials.

The association also said it is coordinat-

ing with relevant authorities and law enforcement agencies to address any infringement of its rights, reserving the right to take legal action where necessary.

The association called on fans to support the official product, saying that the revenues contribute to supporting the national team, developing Jordanian football and building a new generation of promising Jordanian talent.

It also emphasised the importance of purchasing official jerseys and merchandise only from approved sales points and channels.



Japanese embassy photo

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Jordan National Red Crescent Society announce the launch of a life-saving health project in Jordan funded by the Japanese government with a contribution of \$2.1 million

IFRC, JNRCS launch Japan-funded healthcare initiative for Gaza children, Jordanians

AMMAN (JT) — The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), in partnership with the Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS), announced the launch of a life-saving health project in Jordan funded by the government of Japan with a contribution of \$2.1 million.

The project is fully aligned with national health priorities and with the Jordanian Medical Corridor initiative led by His Majesty King Abdullah to provide lifesaving treatment for children from Gaza in Jordanian hospitals, according to a Japanese embassy statement.

Under the project, urgent, high-quality surgical and associated medical care for children from Gaza will be provided.

Support will cover lifesaving surgeries, intensive and post-operative care, essential medicines, and basic needs for the children and their caregivers during hospitalisation and recovery.

The procurement of an ICU ambulance and a coaster bus will ensure the safe movement of patients and caregivers between border points, hospitals and rehabilitation services.

Also, JNRCS will establish and oper-

ate a Prosthetic Limb Production Unit at its Hospital in Amman to produce high quality prosthetic limbs, prioritising children evacuated from Gaza, refugees and vulnerable Jordanians.

‘This partnership with the government of Japan and IFRC will enable us to deliver truly lifesaving and life changing services for children from Gaza and for vulnerable communities in Jordan’

Mental health and psychosocial support are also provided to address both the physical and emotional impacts of conflict, trauma and displacement on children and their families.

Commenting on the project, JNRCS President Mohammed Hadid said: “This partnership with the government of Japan and IFRC will

enable us to deliver truly lifesaving and life changing services for children from Gaza and for vulnerable communities in Jordan.”

“It also strengthens our national capacity in advanced rehabilitation and prosthetics, leaving a lasting impact on the health system and on the dignity of people living with limb loss,” Hadid added.

Emphasising Japan’s support to Jordan healthcare system Ambassador of Japan to Jordan Asari Hideki said: “Recognising Jordan’s pivotal role as a pillar of stability in the region, and the importance of this project, which fully aligned with national health priorities and with the Jordanian Medical Corridor initiative, led by His Majesty King Abdullah, we hope our support will contribute to addressing critical gaps in the provision of specialised, life-saving health services to all vulnerable populations in Jordan, particularly children medically evacuated from Gaza.”

The government of Japan is a “long-standing” partner for JNRCS and IFRC in Jordan, supporting efforts to save lives, restore hope and enhance Jordan’s health system at a time of increasing humanitarian needs.

Nashama squad begins official Portland camp ahead of World Cup participation

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan’s national football team has begun its preparations at its official training camp for the FIFA World Cup 2026 in Portland, Oregon, ahead of the Nashama’s historic participation in the tournament, according to Jordan Football Association (JFA) statement.

Jordanian fans warmly welcomed the Nashama delegation upon its arrival in Portland on Thursday, led by HRH Prince Ali, president of the JFA, alongside the national team’s staff and players.

The team held its first training session on Thursday evening under the guidance of head coach Jamal Sellami, with all players taking part.

For his part, Sellami expressed his pride in Jordan’s qualification for the World Cup finals, noting that the participation in the world’s biggest football tournament presents an important opportunity to showcase Jordan’s positive image on the international stage and reflects the progress and



JFA photo

Jordan will compete in Group J alongside Argentina, Algeria and Austria

growing stature of the Nashama.

Sellami added that Jordan’s group is among the strongest in the tournament, featuring defending champions Argentina, as well

as Algeria, who possess an experienced squad, and an ambitious Austria side that returned strongly during the qualifiers.

Jordan will compete in Group J alongside

Argentina, Algeria and Austria.

The Nashama will open their World Cup campaign against Austria at 7:00 am (Amman time) on Wednesday at Santa Clara Stadium

in San Francisco. They will then face Algeria at 6:00 am on June 23 at the same venue, before concluding the group stage against Argentina at 5:00 am on June 28 at Dallas Stadium.

GAM to install surveillance cameras in public parks

AMMAN (JT) — Security cameras are scheduled to be installed in phases across various public parks in the capital, Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) Executive Director for Agriculture and Forestry Muin Zureikat said on Friday.

Zureikat added that high-specification cameras will be set up in parks as part of the “Amman Smart City” project to preserve public facilities, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

In May, GAM announced that it had been awarded the British Standards Institution (BSI) Kitemark for Smart Cities and Communities, making Amman the first capital city globally to



File photo

Greater Amman Municipality Executive Director for Agriculture and Forestry Muin Zureikat on Friday says that high-specification cameras will be set up in parks to preserve public facilities

achieve this independent certification.

The milestone followed GAM’s compliance with the international standard for sustainable cities and communities (ISO 37106), which sup-

ports a citizen-centric approach to designing and developing smart cities.

Zureikat said that GAM updated its regulations and guidelines by mid-2025 to protect parks, adding that the

municipality is currently training personnel to enforce penalties and fines against individuals who damage public facilities.

Despite existing monitoring and follow-up, some groups still

tamper with public properties, which costs a high amount to maintain, Zureikat said.

He urged park visitors to protect these facilities, noting that public property belongs to all citizens.

Zureikat stressed that surveillance without public cooperation and a culture of respecting public property will not achieve the desired results.

He added that GAM conducts awareness campaigns and lectures for school students and also involves local communities in designing parks to enhance social responsibility, in coordination with GAM’s Directorate of Community Centres and Programmes.

Run Jordan concludes 5th Bromine Women’s Race

AMMAN (JT) — Run Jordan on Friday celebrated the conclusion of the 5th edition of the Bromine Women’s Race, held under the slogan “Run for You” at Al Hussein Public Parks, in a “vibrant” sporting and community atmosphere with broad participation from women and girls of various age groups.

The race was held under the patronage of HH Princess Safaa Bint Firas, and the attendance of HH Princess Haya Bint Firas, according to a Run Jordan statement.

Princess Haya gave the start of the race and rewarded the winners during the closing ceremony, reaffirming her support for women’s sports and encouraging women to adopt healthy and active lifestyles.

The event was organised by Run Jordan and the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), in cooperation with the Jordan Athletics Federation, and sponsored by Bromine Jordan as the main sponsor and Arab Bank as the gold sponsor, alongside several partners and supporters from both the public and private sectors.

The race attracted a wide participation of 1,500 women and girls competing in the 2.6km and 5.2km categories,



Run Jordan photo

Run Jordan on Friday celebrates the conclusion of the 5th edition of the Bromine Women’s Race, held under the slogan ‘Run for You’ at Al Hussein Public Parks

in an atmosphere filled with enthusiasm, positive energy, and community spirit.

The Women’s Police, Women’s Gendarmerie, the Women’s Stadium Security Unit, paramedics, and volunteers also played a “key” role in ensuring a safe and successful experience for all participants.

Hanan Aljaarat won first place in the 2.6km race of the 8-14 age group with 0:11:32, followed by Yara Aljaarat in second place with 0:11:37 and third place by Bisan Dbeisi with 0:12:16.

In the 2.6km race of the 15-25 age group, Wala Alqwasmii secured first place with 0:10:37, Maryam Shaban won second place with 0:11:22, and Malak Mutashisheell came third with 0:11:41.

In the 2.6km race of

the 26 and above age group, Leen Abu Jubara secured first place with 0:10:55, Amal Sabah won second place with 0:11:32, and Emy Gonzaga came third with 0:11:59.

As for the 5.2km race’s 15-25 age group, Heba Hammoud secured first place with 20:30.71, Shujoun Mufleh won second place with 24:18.43, and Sadeel Qassem came third with 27:58.72.

As for the 5.2km race’s 26-39 age group, Sabryeh Maradati secured first place with 22:09.04, Hanoia Hasab Allah won second place with 23:18.86, and Nahedah Al Bawat came third with 23:25.43.

As for the 5.2km race’s age group of 40 and above, Alaa Baydoun secured first place with 26:19.42, Ashwak Badran won second place with 27:15.12, and

Jennifer Boyle finished third with 29:47.21.

The 5.2km race’s visually impaired category saw Nour Mosleh securing first place with 45:18.04, Taghreed Rasheed winning second place with 57:39.08, and Dima Alahmad finishing third with 1:04:48.55.

The event also featured an entertaining and artistic programme, highlighted by a performance from artist Violet Youssef during the closing ceremony, along with a dabkeh show by GAM troupe and a performance by the Jordanian Armed Forces band.

The celebration was attended by participants, their families, and members of the community, adding a festive atmosphere to the occasion.

This year’s edition

also carried a humanitarian dimension, with Run Jordan allocating 20 per cent of registration fees to support families in Gaza through the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation, reflecting the association’s commitment to promoting solidarity and social responsibility alongside its sporting mission.

General Manager of Run Jordan Lina Kurd expressed her pride in the success of the fifth edition of the Bromine Women’s Race, stressing that the strong turnout reflects growing awareness of the importance of sports and their role in enhancing women’s health, confidence and community engagement.

Kurd added that the race has become an annual platform celebrating women and their achievements while promoting physical activity among women and girls of all ages.

She also praised the contributions of partners, sponsors, and volunteers in making the event a success.

At the conclusion of the event, winners across all race categories were honoured in a celebratory atmosphere that reflected the spirit of achievement, determination, and empowerment that the Women’s Race embodies year after year.

JVA, Crown Prince Foundation, Agriculture Ministry launch afforestation, volunteer initiative

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) on Saturday launched a national afforestation and volunteer initiative in cooperation with the Crown Prince Foundation’s Nahno Platform and the Ministry of Agriculture.

The initiative marks the 80th anniversary of the Kingdom’s Independence Day, the Accession to the Throne Day, Army Day and the anniversary of the Great Arab Revolt, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

JVA Secretary-General Hisham Haisa said that the initiative reflects the Royal vision of empowering young people and enhancing their contribution to national development, noting that cooperation among national institutions represents a “model” of integrated action in serving local communities, preserving natural resources and advancing sustainable development.

Haisa added that commemorating these national occasions serves as an opportunity to reflect on Jordan’s achievements over the years, reaffirm loyalty and belonging to the homeland and the Hashemite leadership, and draw inspiration from the values of work and dedication that have shaped the Kingdom’s modern



File photo

The Jordan Valley Authority, in cooperation with the Crown Prince Foundation’s Nahno Platform and the Ministry of Agriculture, on Saturday launches a national afforestation and volunteer initiative

renaissance. Secretary-General of the Agriculture Ministry Mohammed Hiari stressed the importance of national initiatives that combine environmental and volunteer dimensions.

He noted that the ministry, in cooperation with various institutions, is implementing programmes aimed at expanding green spaces and raising environmental awareness and volunteer programmes focusing on the importance of protecting the environment and promoting social

responsibility, as well as youth activities aimed at reinforcing the values of teamwork and community service.

The event also included field activities organised by the Jordanian Riders Group in cooperation with the Jordanian Traffic Institute to promote road safety awareness and public discipline.

Participants reiterated their commitment to contributing to the Kingdom’s development and preserving its achievements, expressing pride in the national occasions.

The initiative concluded with a tree-planting campaign involving attendees, volunteers and young people to expand green cover, promote environmental awareness and support national sustainability efforts.



The customs clearance and freight forwarding sector process around 395,000 customs declarations during the first five months of the year

395,000 customs declarations processed in first five months of 2026

AMMAN (JT) — The customs clearance and freight forwarding sector processed around 395,000 customs declarations during the first five months of the year, reflecting, according to stakeholders, continued growth in trade and logistics activity across the Kingdom.

According to figures released by the Association of Owners of Clearance and Transport Companies (AOCTC), Jordan Customs Clearance and Freight Forwarding Companies Association, Omari Customs Centre, Jordan's main land crossing with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, handled 86,876 declarations during the period, while Aqaba Customs Centre processed 76,111 declarations.

Jaber Customs Centre, which links Jordan with Syria, recorded 27,769 declarations, while Al Karama Customs Centre on the Iraqi border handled 6,577 declarations. A further 65,645 declarations were processed through the Air Cargo Customs Centre, 37,147 through Amman Customs Centre and 17,287 through the E-Commerce Centre.

The association's

data showed a significant increase in cargo volumes at Aqaba's main port, where total throughput reached 5.271 million tonnes during the first five months of the year, compared with 3.809 million tonnes in the corresponding period last year. The cargo was handled by 728 vessels.

Container traffic also rose, with the Aqaba Container Terminal handling 198,638 incoming containers, up from 194,859 containers during the same period last year. Outbound container traffic reached 40,694 containers, while total import and export throughput amounted to 386,303 twenty-foot equivalent units.

Cross-border truck movement recorded notable growth. A total of 178,340 Jordanian and foreign trucks crossed through Jaber Customs Centre in both directions, compared with 118,580 during the same period last year.

Omari Customs Centre handled 207,507 trucks, up from 188,580, while traffic through Al Karama Customs Centre increased to 115,385 trucks from 74,869 a year earlier.

The number of vessels arriving at Aqaba's ports also increased. During the reporting period, 152 ships called at the main port, 72 at the oil port and 504 at the passenger terminal, bringing the total to 728 vessels compared with 711 during the corresponding period last year.

AOCTC President Deifallah Abu Aqouleh said that the flow of goods through Jordan's customs centres and Aqaba ports was proceeding normally, supported by close co-operation between customs authorities, security agencies and freight forwarding companies.

He praised the efforts of Aqaba Port institutions, Jordan Customs and security agencies in expediting procedures for imports, exports and transit cargo, helping to ensure the smooth movement of goods.

He also said that the increase in truck traffic reflects Jordan's strategic geographical position and points to a growing shift from maritime to overland transport routes, further enhancing the Kingdom's role in regional supply chains.

Foreign minister, Qatari PM discuss ties, regional developments

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi on Friday received a phone call from Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

The two officials discussed ways to further strengthen bilateral cooperation across various sectors and

reviewed regional developments of mutual concern, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

Safadi and Al Thani also discussed ongoing mediation efforts between the US and Iran, expressing satisfaction with the progress achieved in the negotiations.

They also welcomed Pakistan's announcement that a final

peace agreement text had been reached and voiced hope that the US and Iranian sides would sign the agreement soon.

They also reiterated their full support for continued efforts to resolve disputes through dialogue and peaceful means, stressing the importance of such efforts in promoting regional and international security and stability.



Ayman Safadi



Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani

AID

JHCO distributes tents to Gaza journalists affected by war

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordanian Campaign, a strategic partner of the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation (JHCO), in coordination with the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate, on Saturday distributed tents to several journalists affected by the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip.

In a statement, JHCO said that the initiative comes amid the difficult humanitarian conditions faced by Palestinian journalists, who continue to carry out their professional duties and report on the suffering of civilians despite losing their homes and enduring repeated displacement as a result of the war on Gaza.

It also said that the initiative falls within the humanitarian and relief programmes implemented by the Jordanian Campaign and JHCO, aimed at providing affected families with the minimum requirements for a dignified life, including media workers who face exceptional challenges while carrying out their professional and humanitarian



JHCO photo

The Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation on Saturday distributes tents to journalists affected by the Israeli war on Gaza

responsibilities.

The Palestinian Journalists Syndicate commended the initiative, stressing the importance of supporting affected journalists and enabling them to continue covering events, and conveying the truth despite the complex humanitarian and field

conditions in the Gaza Strip.

Jordan runs two military field hospitals in Gaza, one in the Strip's north and was established in 2009 following the war in 2008, and the second is in Khan Younis in the south, which was established in November 2023 at

the peak of the Israeli war of aggression on the coastal enclave that erupted on October 7, 2023.

Other humanitarian programmes include the land bridge for aid delivery, the mobile bakery, the Restoring Hope Initiative, which provides prosthetics for

amputees and the evacuation of critical cases to Jordanian hospitals.

JHCO also said it continue to implement a series of humanitarian and relief projects across various areas of the Gaza Strip to help alleviate the suffering of families affected and displaced by the war.

EVENT

Jordan to take part in IsDB annual meetings in Azerbaijan on June 16–19

Jordan will be represented by a high-level delegation headed by minister of planning and international cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan will participate in the 2026 annual meetings of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) Group, to be held in Azerbaijan from June 16 to 19 under the theme "Regional Integration for Sustainable Prosperity", alongside delegations from the Group's 57 member states.

Jordan will be represented by a high-level delegation headed by Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Zina Toukan, alongside active participation from the Jordanian private sector, as well as representatives of academic institutions and civil society organisations.

The Jordanian participation reflects the Kingdom's commitment to strengthening its development role within the framework of joint Islamic cooperation, Al Rai daily reported.

The event will bring together ministers of finance, economy, planning and interna-



tional development, alongside development partners and private sector leaders, to discuss shared development priorities and explore practical solutions to the economic and social challenges facing member states.

The annual meetings will include Board of Governors sessions, a

main dialogue session with the IsDB Group president, an open governors' dialogue, as well as the IsDB Group Private Sector Forum, the Business Opportunities Forum for Multilateral Development Banks, and the Arab Coordination Group Private Sector Session.

The programme will also feature high-level roundtables, bilateral meetings, specialised exhibitions and knowledge-sharing events.

Discussions will focus on key development priorities, including Islamic finance mechanisms, trade development and

regional connectivity among member states, youth employment, climate resilience, digital transformation and artificial intelligence applications, sukuk markets and innovation, as well as strengthening health security and developing comprehensive social protection systems.

SAFETY



JT file

The Bergesh forest in Irbid

Civil Defence responds to 3,844 fires as PSD warns of grass, forest fires

AMMAN (JT) — The Public Security Directorate (PSD) has urged the public to follow fire prevention measures as temperatures rise across the Kingdom, warning of an increased risk of grass and forest fires during the summer months.

Civil Defence teams responded to 3,844 fires involving grasslands, forest trees, and agricultural crops between May 1 and June 10, resulting in damage to approximately 10,402 dun-

nums of land, according to the PSD.

Head of the Civil Defence Operations Division Abdulbasit Jabali said on Saturday that since March 1, firefighters have dealt with 3,844 incidents that affected around 10,400 dunnums, destroying 2,744 forest trees and 16,177 fruit-bearing trees.

Jabali told Al Mamlaka TV that the PSD's preparations for the summer fire season are based on a comprehensive opera-

tional plan developed ahead of the warmer months.

The plan is reviewed and activated at the start of each summer season and is circulated to field directorates, he said.

Jabali added that the PSD has launched extensive awareness campaigns through traditional and social media platforms to encourage safe practices, and educate the public about fire risks and prevention measures.



AFP photo

Armed bandits take cover in Nigeria's dense forests and carry out raids on nearby cattle farmers to stoke fear and replenish their supplies

Gunmen kill 17 farmers in northern Nigeria- official

KANO, Nigeria (AFP) — Gunmen killed 17 farmers in northwestern Nigeria on Friday in the latest violence against agriculturalists since the start of the farming season, a local official and residents told AFP.

"Bandit" gangs specialising in kidnapping for ransom and cattle-rustling terrorise communities in northern and central Nigeria, where they launch deadly raids and impose levies on farmers wishing to access their own fields.

Sources said the bandits on motorbikes, posing as visitors, opened fire on farmers while they were working on their fields in remote Goron Namaye village in Maradun district of Zamfara state, killing 17 and injuring five others.

"I received a report of the killing of 17 people in Goron Namaye community this morning,"

Sanusi Dosara, the political administrator of Maradun district, said.

Dosara described the repeated attacks on farmers across Zamfara State as "filthy operations aimed at disrupting 2026 farming activities".

"We buried 17 people who were killed in the attack," said Abubakar Jarra, a community leader in the village, adding that five others were injured, three of them critically.

"We call on authorities to deploy security personnel to provide protection for our farmers."

Mansir Muhammad, a Goron Namaye resident who gave the same toll, said the attackers disguised themselves as visitors and concealed their weapons, which they brought out when they approached the farmers.

The attack could have been a reprisal

for the killing of 13 bandits by vigilantes when the gangs attacked the village a few weeks ago, according to Nura Musa, another resident.

Weeks into Nigeria's crucial annual rainy season, farmers across the north are abandoning their lands due to attacks by armed groups, threatening the food supply of Africa's most populous country.

Thirty-nine elders from a village in the same Maradun district were kidnapped on Sunday when they visited the camp of a gang kingpin to arrange a peace deal to allow the community to cultivate their farms.

The International Monetary Fund warned on Tuesday that the widespread insecurity from armed groups could "impact fiscal and export revenues, and aggravate poverty and food insecurity".

Thousands gather in Thai capital to mourn late princess

BANGKOK (AFP) — The body of the Thai king's eldest daughter was brought to the royal palace in Bangkok on Saturday, as thousands of black-clad mourners lined the procession route.

Princess Bajrakitiyabha, known as Princess Bha, died aged 47 on Thursday following an abdominal infection.

She had already spent more than three years in a coma due to a cardiac condition.

"When it comes to saying goodbye, it's not easy for us," mourner Donnapha Kladbupha, a 54-year-old English teacher and self-described royalist, told AFP.

The monarchy represented "unity" for Thai people during times of distress, she said.

Nearby, others queued for their turn to perform a Buddhist ritual of pouring holy water into a ceremonial bowl placed before a portrait of the princess.

"I'm sad that she passed away, especially when I saw her pictures as a child," another mourner, Nitikan Tephakham, 79, from the northeastern province of Roi Et, told AFP.

"When she was sick, I prayed for sacred beings to protect her and hoped for a miracle," she added.

Strict protocol

Thousands of mostly older mourners sat in sweltering temperatures along the 10-kilometre route from



AFP photo

A hearse arrives at the Grand Palace carrying the body of Thai Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol as mourners line the motorcade route, where funeral rites will begin for the late princess, in Bangkok on Saturday

Chulalongkorn Hospital, where the princess had been treated, to the Grand Palace.

Her body arrived at the palace at around 5:00 pm in a solemn and orderly procession.

Police closed roads and traffic in parts of Bangkok's commercial centre ground to a halt as the royal motorcade passed, led by King Maha Vajiralongkorn and Queen Suthida.

Thailand's public broadcaster Thai PBS reported that the princess' body was carried in the same vehicle that had transported the body of her grandfather, King Bhumibol, following his death in

October 2016.

"I feel sad, very sad, because Her Royal Highness was so beloved by the Thai people, well-known for what she had done and contributed," Pongsanguan Paran, 63, told AFP.

The Thai government has yet to announce details of the funeral, but it has instructed state officials to wear black and ordered that flags be flown at half-mast for 15 days.

The proceedings were carried out under tight security and strict protocol, with attendants wearing formal attire, media access restricted and dozens of police officers

standing guard.

Tourists at the palace grounds, one of Bangkok's most popular attractions, had to find workarounds.

"It's something quite unique that someone can be this much loved," Maria Marçais, a 22-year-old visitor from Canada, told AFP.

"It's profound," she said.

Second death in months

It is the second bereavement for the royal family in months, after Queen Sirikit, the king's mother, died in October at the age of 93.

Bajrakitiyabha was the only child of Va-

jiralongkorn's marriage to Princess Soamsawali.

A trained prosecutor and diplomat, she was educated in Britain, Thailand and the United States, and served for a time as ambassador to Austria.

The 73-year-old king, who has seven children from four marriages, has not announced his chosen heir, although succession rules favour men.

Strict rules govern what can and cannot be said about the Thai royal family, who are protected from criticism by lese-majeste laws that carry prison sentences of up to 15 years per charge.

VIOLENCE

'They razed everything': Ivorians lose homes in murky operation

ABIDJAN (AFP) — Souleymane Zebe is on the verge of tears as he tells the story of how the bulldozers arrived at dawn and razed his entire neighbourhood in Ivory Coast's economic capital, Abidjan.

For years, the Ivorian authorities have been waging an urban clean-up campaign in sprawling Abidjan, razing illegal settlements in the name of public safety.

But they say this demolition was ordered by an individual who had no legal authority, not the government.

Zebe, one of thou-

sands of people left homeless by the destruction of the Campement (Camp) neighbourhood, near the city centre, says his family had built their home legally and paid for it with years of hard work and sacrifice.

The 46-year-old construction worker and his former neighbours are outraged by the murky, lawless circumstances that led to the demolition of their homes on June 3.

According to the authorities, Koumassi Camp was not in fact slated to be razed.

They say the order was given by a private

individual who used a fake court document to arrange the demolition and then disappeared.

Since the demolition, some residents have been living in the ruins of the neighbourhood, sleeping in tents or makeshift shelters and braving the rain and raw sewage trickling across the ground.

Others have taken shelter in a nearby school.

"It hurts. We've been left homeless," said Zebe, his eyes red and his voice strained.

Fellow resident Assana Traore, a pregnant 29-year-old, roamed aimlessly around the

debris of her former home.

"You're born and raised here. Then one day they come and destroy everything with no warning," she said, staring blankly into space.

She described being woken early that day by the rumble of bulldozers and the stench of tear gas fired by law enforcement to force residents from their homes.

Murky document

Many say they lost everything, despite holding legal title to their land.

"It was brutal. They razed the whole thing in a day," said truck driver Issa.

"I have nothing left. Even the clothes on my back are donations."

Surrounded by a wasteland of rubble and mangled roofing, Zebe fumed.

"Who could destroy our houses and separate us from our families like this?" he railed.

Abidjan's population has roughly doubled since the late 1990s, to an estimated six to seven million people today.

The authorities say their "urban order" operation, launched in

2023, aims to protect people from deadly floods and landslides in disaster-prone areas swept up in the city's chaotic construction boom.

But officials deny involvement in the destruction of Koumassi Camp.

After the neighbourhood was destroyed, a man named Jacques Allou Brou emerged in a video posted on Facebook to say he was behind the demolitions and possessed a court ruling ordering them.

However, Abidjan public prosecutor Oumar Braman Kone said the document

brandished by Brou "did not authorise the demolition of any building".

Kone launched an investigation and issued an order for Brou's arrest.

But the mysterious man has gone missing.

Some residents are sceptical about the version of events given by the authorities, who face accusations of brutality in some of their demolition operations.

"I don't believe this one guy acting alone could have mobilised vehicles full of law enforcement officers and heavy machinery to

tear down our houses," said Zebe.

The National Human Rights Council issued a statement on Wednesday expressing "deep concern" over the impact of the demolition operations.

The episode has raised thorny questions for President Alassane Ouattara's government.

"Who sent in law enforcement? Who gave the orders?" said Charles Ble Goude, head of opposition party Cojep.

The party said it would sue for damages for the neighbourhood's residents.

Amendment to the Bid Invitation

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
Water Authority of Jordan
Request for Proposal (RFP)

For

Khan Al-Zabib Wells Water Treatment and Supply Project
Build Operate Transfer Contract (BOT)
WAJ Tender No. 28/2026

The Water Authority of Jordan (WAJ) is seeking Request for Proposals (RFP) from international or local Jordanian firms for pilot testing, financing, design, construction, operation and transfer of Khan Al-Zabib Wells Water Treatment and Supply Project under a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) basis.

The Project aims to develop a treatment solution for high-radioactivity groundwater extracted from Khan Al-Zabib wellfield, with the objective of supplying treated potable water to the central Governorates.

The selected Applicants will be required to conduct a pilot test at their own cost and risk prior to full scale implementation. Following successful completion of the Pilot Stage and the Employer's approval, the selected Contractor shall be fully responsible for arranging and securing all financing required for the BOT implementation stage of the Project.

During the operational phase, the purchaser of the treated water shall pay for the water quantities supplied in accordance with the relevant Water Purchase Agreement (WPA) to be executed at a later stage. Payments shall be based on the tariff proposed by the Contractor in its Financial Proposal and accepted by the Employer, and on the actual quantities of water purchased and delivered.

The contractor classification requirements are amended as follows:

Local Jordanian contractors shall be classified as:

1. Grade (1) in Water and Wastewater
2. Grade (1) in Environment as per the GTD classification.
3. Grade (1) Drilling and Well Works
4. Grade (1) Electromechanical Works.

International contractors shall demonstrate at least equivalent qualifications. Contractors which demonstrate adequate experience may qualify for the above-mentioned works. To qualify, contractors must demonstrate adequate design capacity, either in-house or through a nominated subcontractor.

The remaining invitation content remains unchanged.

Secretary General / WAJ
Eng. Sufyan T. Bataineh

Japan flagship rocket lifts off after earlier failure

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's space agency successfully launched its flagship H3 rocket on Friday, months after a previous mission to put a geolocation satellite into orbit ended in failure.

The H3 was developed to boost the international competitiveness of the country's rocket industry, with the lift-off an important sign of progress as the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) aims to improve its launch success rate.

The agency is targeting up to eight H3 launches a year — still far below privately owned SpaceX, which dominates the global satellite launch market with 165 Falcon 9 orbital flights in 2025, compared to just two for H3.



AFP photo

The H3 rocket No 6 is launched at Tanegashima Space Centre in Kagoshima Prefecture, Japan, on Friday

JAXA said the rocket carrying six small satellites blasted off at 9:53 am (00:53 GMT) from Tanegashima Space Centre in southern Japan.

"The rocket flew according to plan and successfully placed the second stage into its

intended orbit," JAXA president Hiroshi Yamakawa told reporters, adding that it released the six satellites.

JAXA's live YouTube broadcast showed scientists clapping and hugging each other in celebration.

One of the satellites

is testing technology to capture space debris.

"We took last year's failure of the H3 rocket launch very seriously," Yamakawa said.

"We have devoted our full efforts to thoroughly investigating the cause and devising countermeasures."

Designed for "high flexibility, high reliability, and high cost performance", JAXA had toasted five previous successful launches of the H3, but there have also been two failures including the latest one in December.

Japan hopes to capitalise on the H3's success to meet soaring global demand for satellite launches in the face of a rocket shortage.

Private companies are also racing to offer cheaper and more fre-

quent space exploration opportunities than governments.

Space One, founded in 2018 by major businesses such as Canon Electronics and IHI Aerospace, made its third attempt to become the first private Japanese firm to put a satellite in space in March, but the mission failed.

Amid the intensifying space race, JAXA landed in 2024 an unmanned probe on the Moon — albeit at a crooked angle — making it just the fifth country to achieve what is known as a "soft landing".

But Tokyo-based firm ispace last year failed in its attempt to become the third private firm — and the first outside the United States — to achieve a controlled arrival on the Moon.

World's first gig economy treaty adopted at the ILO

GENEVA (AFP) — The first-ever international agreement on safeguarding digital platform workers in the gig economy was adopted on Friday at the UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention is aimed at extending labour protections to hundreds of millions of people worldwide who work through digital platforms, in areas like food delivery and car services.

The convention applies to "all digital labour platforms" and "all digital platform workers... whether they are in the formal or informal economy", according to the text adopted by ILO members.

Until now, labour practices have struggled to keep pace with the dramatic shifts in the way people work.

The World Bank estimated in 2023 there were up to 435 million online gig workers around the globe who had largely fallen outside regular labour protections.

Companies behind the apps control the gig work via algorithms that assign tasks, set pay, evaluate performance and even fire workers.

Despite largely controlling the tasks and pay, the platforms typically classify workers as independent contractors rather than employees.

This allows them in many cases to ignore things like minimum wage requirements, workplace safety and access to social security.

"The ILO now has the



International Labour Organization

first convention that focuses on the impact of digitalisation in the world of work," said the UN labour agency's chief Gilbert Houngbo.

'Major step forward'

"This convention seeks to bring about tangible improvements in the lives of millions of workers around the world," Brazil's representative said at the adoption.

In Brazil, "around two million workers will see their opportunities, dignity and autonomy strengthened by this convention," she added.

Other countries, such as India, Bangladesh and the United States, said that the convention should be applied flexibly, depending on national contexts.

"We continue to urge extreme caution with respect to prescriptive binding regulations in fast-evolving areas of the economy," said the US representative Lorenzo Riboni.

Independent contractors control their own work and "lean into an entrepreneurial spirit that makes America great", he said.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) said the

convention would help ensure that millions of platform workers can enjoy the rights, protections and dignity that all workers merit.

"This convention represents a major step forward," the ITUC's Political Director Jeroen Beirnaert told AFP.

He underlined, however, that the convention allows countries "to provide for certain limited exclusions from its scope".

Therefore, "there is a risk that certain categories of workers will be excluded," he said, but countries that choose to apply such exclusions would have to justify them.

The ITUC urged governments to ratify the convention quickly, saying the future of work had to be built on rights rather than precariousness.

The convention comes into force in member states 12 months after they ratify it, provided that at least two countries have ratified the text.

Pay and social security

Among other things, the convention calls on countries to ensure that gig workers are guaranteed fair pay and ac-

cess to social security protections "on terms no less favourable than those applicable to other workers with the same classification of status in employment".

Countries should also ensure that digital labour platforms provide workers with "timely, verifiable and easily understandable information on the terms and conditions of their employment or engagement".

"Platform companies have built a business model that sidesteps labour protections and shifts risks and costs onto the workers," said Human Rights Watch's Senior Economic Justice Adviser Lena Simet.

The convention marks "a turning point for platform workers", setting "the first global standard to protect their rights and hold digital labour platforms accountable", she said.

The convention was adopted at the 114th annual International Labour Conference in Geneva.

The ILO is unique in the United Nations system in that its 187 member states are equally represented by governments, employers and workers.

Removal of Trump's name from Kennedy Centre begins after court ruling

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — Workers in the US capital began removing President Donald Trump's name from the facade of the John F. Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts on Saturday, after a federal judge ruled that its renaming was unlawful.

A white awning obscured much of the signage on the building's exterior with loud noise echoing from underneath, as morning joggers stopped briefly in front of the venue to watch the work.

The effort came after a judge rejected a last-minute bid by the centre's board to halt the removal of Trump's name, marking a setback for the president's broader push since returning to the White House to place his name and image in official spaces — an abrupt break with American political tradition.

An eager crowd had gathered outside the arts centre on Friday night, cheering occasionally as workers erected scaffolding to take down the signage. Thousands monitored from afar via livestream, too, awaiting the moment when Trump's name would be torn from the wall.

The work was delayed by "thunderstorms which presented safety concerns to workers" and was expected to be completed "in the early hours of the morning", Kennedy Centre Executive Director Matt Floca said in a statement.

US District Judge Christopher Cooper, in a ruling last month, had ordered Trump's name taken off the iconic building in Washington by Friday.

Cooper said in his May 29 ruling that the



A tarp covers the facade of the John F. Kennedy Memorial Centre for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, on Saturday

John F. Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts had been illegally renamed after Trump and only Congress has the right to change its name.

He gave the administration 14 days to remove Trump's name from the marble facade and any materials linked to the venue.

The Kennedy Centre dropped Trump's name from the website of the institution earlier this week.

'Unlawful government action'

On Friday, Cooper rejected a last-minute appeal by the centre's board to stay his ruling, prompting the centre to request a 12-hour extension of the deadline to remove the signage.

The judge turned down the request, saying the public interest "is rarely served by the 'perpetuation' of 'un-

lawful' governmental action".

Cooper has also issued a temporary block on Trump's demand to close the Kennedy Centre for two years of renovations, which was due to start in July.

He gave the administration 14 days to remove Trump's name from the marble facade and any materials linked to the venue

A furious Trump reacted by saying he was giving up control of the venue, which he seized

at the start of his second term last year by naming himself chairman.

The centre's governing board, which Trump stacked with loyalists, voted to rename the venue the "Trump Kennedy Centre" in December and the Republican president's full name was added to the facade in large, all-capital letters above that of Kennedy.

A number of artists cancelled scheduled performances following the move.

The now-defunct US Institute of Peace was renamed after Trump, and his face stares down from huge banners outside the Department of Justice and Department of Agriculture.

The Trump administration is also seeking to have his image on a \$250 bill to celebrate the country's 250th anniversary of the declaration of independence from Britain.

Middle East war to drag global growth to lowest rate since COVID-19 pandemic — World Bank

Continued from page 1

Among the hardest-hit regions are Gulf economies directly affected by the conflict. Their growth is expected to fall from 3.9 per cent in 2025 to nearly zero in 2026 before rebounding to around 5 per cent in 2027 and 2028 as trade resumes and reconstruction efforts gain momentum.

To help countries manage the crisis, the World Bank Group announced that it is making up to \$60 billion available through existing financing instruments, including \$25 billion in pre-arranged funding. The support is

intended to strengthen social safety nets, boost fiscal capacity and provide liquidity for businesses and farms.

'The conflict has taken a toll on global activity...'

More than 30 countries are already working with the World Bank Group to enhance preparedness and enable rapid responses

under the initiative. The institution said support could be expanded to between \$80 billion and \$100 billion over 15 months if the conflict and its economic consequences persist.

Despite remaining the world's fastest-growing region, South Asia is also expected to experience a slowdown, with growth easing from 7 per cent in 2025 to 6.3 per cent in 2026. Sub-Saharan Africa is similarly expected to face mounting pressures from inflation and rising food costs linked to fertiliser shortages and higher prices.

"The conflict has taken a toll on global

activity, but every crisis also brings an opportunity," said Ayhan Kose, the World Bank Group's deputy chief economist and director of the Prospects Group.

"This moment should be used to strengthen policy frameworks, invest in infrastructure, accelerate business-enabling reforms and mobilise private capital to support job creation at scale," he said.

The report also highlighted persistent fiscal challenges facing commodity-exporting developing economies. "Nearly two-thirds of developing countries and almost 90 per cent of low-income coun-

tries depend heavily on commodity exports, making them particularly vulnerable to price volatility."

While commodity booms can generate substantial revenue windfalls, the report noted that much of the additional income is often spent rather than saved.

The World Bank urged policymakers to strengthen fiscal frameworks through well-designed fiscal rules, sovereign wealth funds, improved domestic revenue mobilisation and greater economic diversification to better manage future shocks.

Amid renewed Hormuz tensions, Trump says Iran deal to be signed Sunday

Continued from page 1

"Hopefully, this process will all work out quickly, easily and smoothly," Trump wrote. "If it doesn't, we have the ultimate alternative, hopefully never to be used again."

The United States said on Saturday it had intercepted multiple Iranian drones targeting commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, even as Washington and Tehran signalled they were closer than ever to an agreement aimed at ending the Middle East war.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) has said that Iran launched several one-way attack drones in an attempt to strike commercial ships transiting the strategic waterway.

US forces intercepted all of the drones, CENTCOM said, adding that shipping traffic through the Strait of Hormuz remained uninterrupted.

The command stressed that the strait, a vital artery for global oil and gas supplies, remained open to international trade despite tensions in the region.

The incident highlighted the fragile nature of diplomacy after weeks of stop-start negotiations mediated by Pakistan and marked by military exchanges despite a truce reached in April.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the so-called Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding had "never been closer", while cautioning that no final understanding

could be declared until all outstanding issues were resolved.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, whose country has been a key mediator since the initial talks, confirmed that "a final, agreed-upon text of the peace deal has been reached".

"Peace has never been as close as it is now," Sharif said, while acknowledging "incessant misinformation" surrounding the deal.

"American military power remains present and influential"

Switzerland, meanwhile, said it had proposed hosting a possible signing ceremony and remained in close contact with both Washington and Tehran in support of de-escalation efforts.

Iranian media said that Tehran seeks the release of frozen assets and recognition of its right to enrich uranium, while US officials insist that sanctions relief and access to Iranian funds would depend on Iran dismantling its nuclear programme and fulfilling its commitments.

US officials also expressed concern that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu could still complicate efforts to secure a final agreement, according to Axios.

Political analyst Amer Sabilleh said that the prospect of an agreement itself reflected the impact of sustained military pressure.

"The possibility of ending the war through an agreement reflects the effectiveness of continued pressure and the sustained targeting of Iran to push it towards signing," he said.

"American military power remains present and influential. At the same time, the factors that could prolong the conflict, particularly those linked to Israel and Iran's regional policies, are still in place."

"That is why it may be premature to speak about the end of the war. What we are seeing is an attempt to manage the conflict through negotiations backed by force."

Lebanon reports strikes on south as Israel issues broad evacuation warnings

Continued from page 1

The state-run National News Agency (NNA) said Israeli air strikes hit several areas covered by the latest warnings, including the villages of Rihan and Sujud not far from Nabatieh, as well as other areas that were not mentioned.

An AFP photojournalist in the Nabatieh area heard blasts around Kfar Remman, which has been repeatedly targeted and saw a plume of smoke rising from Kfar Tebnit, which was not included in the evacuation warnings.

NNA also said an Israeli strike killed a local official in Rihan, located in the southern region of

Jezzine.

An AFP correspondent in Nabatieh said the city was almost deserted, reporting artillery shelling there and in nearby areas overnight and on Saturday.

The Israeli military had issued two warnings to residents of 24 locations — both in and around Nabatieh, and nearer to the coast — to "evacuate your homes immediately and move to the north of the Zahrani River", around 45 kilometres from the southern border with Israel.

Last month Israel declared all areas south of the river "combat zones", and has since been heavily striking the area.

Hizbollah, which has

kept up attacks on invading Israeli troops, said its fighters launched drone attacks on Israeli military vehicles in the south.

'Fateful test'

Iran insists that Lebanon must be part of any agreement to end the wider Middle East war, and a senior US official said on Friday that a draft peace deal "includes Lebanon".

Neither Israel nor Hizbollah have respected a ceasefire meant to take effect in April and a conditional truce deal announced this month after Lebanese-Israeli negotiations in Washington has also failed to halt the fighting.

Hizbollah rejected both the direct talks and the conditional agreement, which requires it to cease attacks but makes no mention of Israel doing so or withdrawing troops from Lebanon.

Lebanon says Israel's massive campaign of air strikes and ground invasion have so far killed 3,756 people.

Lebanon's leaders, meanwhile, have accused Tehran of treating their country as a "bar-gaining chip".

Hizbollah lawmaker Ali Fayyad said on Saturday Lebanon should make do with any US-Iran deal that included the country.

"We want the Leba-

THE JORDAN TIMES

An independent Arab political daily, established in 1975

Published by the Jordan Press Foundation

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Editorial and advertising offices
Jordan Press Foundation

National Library registration number:
D/1998/2062
Telephone: **5600800 ext. 2392**
Facsimile: **5696183**

The Jordan Times is published daily except Saturdays

Advertising facsimile: **5696183**
Circulation Department:
5600800 ext: 2383

The Bureau of Legislation and Opinion: Why economic impact assessment matters too

By Raad Mahmoud Al-Tal

Whenever a draft law, regulation, or policy is introduced, attention is typically directed toward its constitutional validity, legal consistency and legislative drafting quality. These are undoubtedly essential considerations, as the credibility of any piece of legislation begins with its legal soundness. In Jordan, proposed legislation is subject to a comprehensive review by the Bureau of Legislation and Opinion, covering legal, economic, financial, social and political dimensions.

Yet an important question remains: To what extent do economic impact assessments provide policymakers with an accurate and comprehensive understanding of a proposed law's likely consequences?

History offers many examples of laws and regulations that were introduced with the best intentions but later produced unintended economic outcomes. Some increased production costs, discouraged investment, raised consumer prices, or imposed additional burdens on businesses and public finances. Others, however, delivered positive economic results because their potential impacts had been carefully assessed and understood before implementation.

A crucial distinction must be made between financial impact and economic impact. Financial impact focuses on revenues, expenditures, cash flows and their implications for public finances. Economic impact, by contrast, is much broader. It examines how a decision influences economic growth, employment, investment, productivity, exports, competitiveness and household incomes.

For this reason, economic impact assessment has become a cornerstone of policymaking in many advanced economies. Governments no longer ask only whether a proposed law is legally valid. They also ask whether it is economically justified, who will bear its costs, who will benefit from it and whether alternative approaches could achieve the same objectives more efficiently.

In the United Kingdom, major legislative and regulatory proposals undergo rigorous Regulatory Impact Assessments that evaluate expected costs and benefits for businesses, consumers and government before implementation. Similar practices exist in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and many member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, where impact assessments have become an integral part of the policy cycle. These countries recognise a simple reality: Legislation is not merely a legal instrument; it is also an economic one that shapes the behaviour of individuals, firms and markets. Consequently, evaluating economic consequences is as important as ensuring legal compliance.

In Jordan, the Bureau of Legislation and Opinion has played a vital role in strengthening the legislative framework and ensuring legal coherence across laws and regulations. Its contribution to improving legislative quality has been significant. However, the demands of the current phase, particularly under the Economic Modernisation Vision, call for strengthening the economic dimension of legislative review through specialised expertise alongside legal, financial and social analysis.

This raises the need to consider amending the Bureau's governing framework to require government entities to conduct comprehensive economic and financial impact assessments before submitting draft legislation, regulations, or major policy decisions for review, particularly when they carry significant economic implications. Another option would be to establish a specialised economic assessment unit within the Bureau itself, responsible for reviewing such studies and providing an independent economic opinion before proposals are elevated to decision makers.

Just as legislation today cannot proceed without legal scrutiny, it should not move forward without a thorough economic evaluation. Policymakers need clear assessments of how proposed measures will affect investment, employment, competitiveness, productivity, public revenues and consumer prices. If legal opinions determine whether a proposal is legally sound, economic impact assessments should determine whether it is economically beneficial, cost-effective and aligned with national development objectives.

The benefits of such an approach extend far beyond improving legislative quality. It can reduce the need for frequent amendments, minimise unintended consequences, strengthen policy predictability and enhance investor confidence. Investors seek stable and transparent regulatory environments, and legislation grounded in rigorous economic analysis is generally more durable and effective in achieving its intended goals.

Moreover, integrating specialised economic expertise into the legislative process would help institutionalise evidence-based policymaking. Modern economies can no longer afford to discover the consequences of policy decisions only after they have been implemented. Effective governance requires anticipating impacts, quantifying costs and benefits, and evaluating alternatives before decisions are made.

Countries that have built efficient legislative systems understand that the quality of legislation is not measured solely by the legal precision of its wording. It is measured equally by its ability to generate positive economic and social outcomes at the lowest possible cost.

An effective and efficient decision is not simply one that can be implemented legally; it is one that creates value for the economy and society. Likewise, successful legislation is not merely a well-written legal text. It is a practical instrument that encourages investment, supports growth, enhances competitiveness and improves the lives of citizens. For that reason, incorporating specialised economic impact assessment into the legislative process is no longer an institutional luxury. It is an essential requirement for sustainable development and successful economic modernisation.

Leadership beyond the office



Kamel Mahadin

Citizens do not judge governments by the eloquence of their speeches, the number of meetings they hold or the volume of plans they announce. They judge them by what they see and experience in their daily lives: A project completed, a service improved, an opportunity created, or a problem resolved. In the end, the true measure of any government is not what is written in reports, but what is accomplished in the field.

Throughout Jordan's modern history, governments have come and gone carrying different priorities, visions and promises. Some were ambitious in their plans but struggled in implementation. Others became consumed by bureaucracy and routine, distancing themselves from the realities facing citizens. Over time, public confidence in government institutions has often risen or fallen according to one simple criterion: the ability to turn words into action and aspirations into tangible results.

Experience teaches us that good intentions alone are never enough. Vision is important, but vision without execution remains merely an idea. Strategies matter, but strategies without follow-through become little more than documents placed on shelves. Real success requires leadership that is present, engaged and willing to leave the comfort of offices to confront challenges where they actually exist.

At the heart of Jordan's development journey stands the vision of His Majesty King Abdullah. Through his direct engagement, continuous follow-up and unwavering

commitment to reform, modernisation and national development, His Majesty has provided the strategic compass that continues to guide the nation forward. Much of the progress Jordan has achieved over the past decades reflects this long-term vision, which has consistently emphasised economic resilience, institutional excellence, investment, innovation and improving the quality of life for all Jordanians. The achievements realised across various sectors today are, in large measure, the result of this leadership and sustained Royal oversight of national priorities and strategic projects.

Within this framework, successive governments have been entrusted with translating this vision into policies, programmes, and measurable outcomes. Their success has depended not only on the quality of their plans, but on their ability to implement them effectively and ensure that citizens experience the benefits in their everyday lives.

What has distinguished the government of prime minister Jaafar Hassan during the past period is its emphasis on direct engagement with the field. The prime minister and members of his team have consistently visited governorates, monitored projects firsthand, met with citizens and

followed up on implementation rather than relying solely on administrative reports. This approach reflects an understanding that realities on the ground often tell a different story than what appears in official briefings.

The value of such engagement extends beyond symbolism. It creates accountability. When officials stand before unfinished projects, listen directly to citizens and witness challenges firsthand, decisions become more informed and implementation becomes more urgent. The field exposes weaknesses, identifies opportunities and provides a clearer picture of priorities than any report can offer.

At the same time, Jordan continues to move forward with ambitious national programmes and strategic projects. The implementation of the Economic Modernisation Vision, efforts to improve the investment climate, public-sector modernisation initiatives, and major infrastructure projects — including the National Water Carrier Project and railway development plans — reflect a long-term commitment to strengthening the country's economic resilience and competitiveness.

These efforts take place against a backdrop of significant regional and international uncertainty. Economic pressures, geopolitical instability and global challenges continue to test governments across the region. In such circumstances, effective governance requires not only sound planning but also constant adaptation, close monitoring and the ability to respond quickly to changing

realities.

No government can solve every challenge overnight, nor should citizens expect miracles. What people reasonably expect is honesty about challenges, clarity of direction, fairness in priorities and a visible commitment to delivering results. They want to see leaders who are present, accountable and willing to engage directly with the issues that affect their lives.

History does not remember governments for the promises they made. It remembers them for the difference they created. It remembers the roads that were built, the opportunities that were generated, the institutions that were strengthened and the lives that were improved. Most importantly, it remembers those leaders who remained close to the people, understood their concerns and transformed those concerns into action.

The field has always been — and will remain — the ultimate test of government performance. It is where policies meet reality, where promises are measured against results, and where trust between citizens and institutions is either strengthened or lost. Governments may begin with vision, but they earn their legacy through implementation.

For that reason, the continued emphasis on field engagement, accountability, and practical achievement deserves recognition and encouragement. Nations are not built through rhetoric alone. They are built through persistence, hard work and leadership that understands a simple truth: The field comes first.

Jordan at the World Cup: A turning point beyond sport

By Lubna Hanna Ammari

Jordan's qualification for the FIFA World Cup represents far more than a sporting achievement. It marks a national moment of transition in which sport becomes a strategic gateway to economic visibility, cultural storytelling and global positioning. In today's interconnected world, participation in an event of this magnitude places countries not only on the sporting map but also within the global imagination, where narratives are shaped, identities are recognised and opportunities are created far beyond the pitch.

From an economic perspective, World Cup participation has consistently demonstrated measurable impacts on national economies, particularly through tourism inflows, media exposure and foreign interest. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, global sporting events significantly enhance destination visibility and can increase international visitor demand long after the tournament concludes. FIFA itself has repeatedly highlighted how World Cup exposure amplifies host and participating countries' branding value, creating what is often described as "destination branding spillover". For Jordan, a country already rich in heritage sites such as Petra, Wadi Rum and the Dead Sea, this global visibility can translate into renewed curiosity and increased tourism demand, particularly from markets that may not have previously considered Jordan as a primary destination.

This moment also intersects

with Jordan's long-standing challenge of economic diversification. Tourism remains one of the country's most important sectors, and international sporting visibility can function as a low-cost, high-impact marketing channel. When a national team competes on a global stage, millions of viewers are indirectly exposed to its national identity, flag, culture and symbolic references. This soft visibility often translates into what economists describe as "soft power tourism", where emotional connection and curiosity drive travel decisions more than traditional advertising campaigns. In this sense, Jordan's presence at the World Cup becomes an extension of its national branding strategy, whether formally structured or organically generated.

Beyond economics, the deeper transformation lies in identity formation and narrative construction. Nations are not only defined by their political or economic structures but also by the stories they project to the world. Sport has increasingly become one of the most powerful narrative platforms of the 21st century. For Jordan, this milestone allows the country to articulate a renewed narrative centred on resilience, ambition and global integration. It also strengthens internal cohesion by offering citizens a shared moment of pride that transcends regional, social, and generational divisions. Sociological research published through platforms such as UNESCO and academic journals on sport and society consistently shows that international sporting participation enhances

national cohesion and collective identity formation, particularly in smaller nations seeking stronger global presence.

At the same time, Jordan's World Cup presence contributes to reshaping its global image. Instead of being perceived only through traditional geopolitical or economic lenses, the country gains a parallel identity as a competitive sporting nation. This dual identity is increasingly important in global affairs, where perception often influences investment, diplomacy and cultural exchange. Countries that successfully integrate sport into their national branding strategies tend to experience stronger engagement across multiple sectors, including education partnerships, cultural diplomacy and innovation collaboration.

In this evolving landscape, artificial intelligence introduces a new layer of strategic opportunity. AI can be used to amplify Jordan's global presence by transforming how stories are told, how audiences are engaged, and how national branding is managed. For instance, AI-driven analytics can identify global audience sentiment during World Cup matches, enabling real-time adaptation of digital campaigns that promote Jordan's tourism and cultural assets. Generative AI tools can produce multilingual content that showcases Jordan's heritage in personalised formats, reaching audiences in Asia, Europe and the Americas simultaneously. Furthermore, AI-powered recommendation systems can connect global sports audiences with cu-

rated travel experiences in Jordan, effectively linking emotional sporting engagement with tourism conversion pathways.

On a broader level, AI also strengthens sports performance analysis, helping national teams optimise training, strategy and player development. According to research from organisations such as McKinsey & Company, AI adoption in sports is rapidly transforming competitive dynamics through predictive analytics, injury prevention systems and tactical modelling. For Jordan, integrating such technologies into its sports ecosystem could enhance long-term competitiveness while simultaneously strengthening its reputation as a forward-looking, innovation-driven nation.

Ultimately, Jordan's participation in the World Cup should be understood not as an isolated sporting milestone but as a multidimensional national turning point. It intersects with economic opportunity, cultural storytelling, technological transformation and global identity formation. In a world where visibility is power and narrative shapes opportunity, this moment offers Jordan a rare convergence of both symbolic and strategic capital. If leveraged thoughtfully, it can extend far beyond the duration of the tournament, embedding itself into tourism growth, national branding and the evolving global perception of Jordan as a country of ambition, capability and presence on the world stage.

The author is a specialist in educational technology

Trump faces G7 after year of trade wrath, diplomatic bluster

By Aurélie End

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON, United States — Little is known about what President Donald Trump's intentions are for the G7 summit in Evian, France next week, except maybe the obvious: The American president will impose his schedule and his mood.

The latter may depend largely on the peace agreement discussions with Iran, which were gathering steam on Friday.

"It is not possible to 'manage Trump' the way it has been possible during his first term," Liana Fix, associate fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, told AFP ahead of the summit that will bring the US face-to-face with France, Germany, Canada, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom.

All these countries' leaders have been on the receiving end of Trump's trade wrath or diplomat-

ic intimidation, with the exception of Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, who he is very fond of.

Every other leader expected on the shores of Lake Geneva has been the target of attacks, criticism or mockery from the Republican billionaire.

Neither growing unpopularity that could cost Trump control of Congress in November, nor the Supreme Court's annulment of his across-the-board tariffs is likely to soften his bruising stance toward global partners.

European leaders in particular have learned, through the Greenland episode, trade conflicts, and the Iran war, "to hope for the best but to expect the worst", Fix said.

Moreover, the US has informed Europeans of their intentions to significantly reduce the number of planes and warships made available to NATO in Europe, The New York Times reported.

"I don't think you're going to see

a weakened president," Jackson James, senior fellow at German Marshall Fund of the US, told AFP.

"I think he's going to go over there and do what he always does, which is just try to bully his way through these very, very complicated issues and try to get the American agenda, as he sees it, fulfilled."

Trump "says he doesn't like these multilateral meetings", but "cannot bear for an assembly of world leaders to meet and he not being there", Victor Cha, an expert for the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, said during a press conference.

"So he shows it up at these things and he leaves early," Cha said, as he did during the last G7.

Still, French president Emmanuel Macron hopes to persuade the impatient American president to stay for a dinner at Versailles on Wednesday evening, playing to the 79-year-old's fas-

ination with monarchy and ornate trappings of luxury.

France has already tried to cater to the American president by changing the dates of the summit so it would not coincide with his 80th birthday and the celebratory mixed martial arts tournament Trump will host at the White House on Sunday.

Some experts also consider it a concession to Washington that South Africa, which was being considered for participation in the G7 summit, will not be participating.

Paris insists, however, that there was no pressure to withdraw the invitation to South Africa, a nation Trump accuses, without evidence, of broad persecution of its white population.

Several analysts say at least one issue that France has put on the table for discussion may bait Trump's interest: Trade relations with China.

BUSINESS

Sunday, June 14, 2026

INVESTMENT

ISSF says it invests \$7m in Endeavour Catalyst Fund V, launching 2nd investment cycle

AMMAN (JT) — The Innovative Start-ups and SMEs Fund (ISSF) has announced a \$7 million investment in Endeavour Catalyst Fund V, marking the launch of its second investment cycle (Fund II) and reinforcing efforts to attract global venture capital to Jordan's start-up ecosystem.

The announcement was made at an event attended by Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smeirat, along with founders, investors and entrepreneurs from across the Kingdom, according to a statement from ISSF.

According to ISSF, the investment establishes a strategic partnership with Endeavour Catalyst, a global venture capital fund with more than \$300 million under management that invests in high-impact entrepreneurs across more than 60 countries.

The partnership aims to strengthen the integration of Jordanian start-ups into international investment networks and expand their access to global sources of funding.

The investment represents ISSF's first commitment under Fund II, following the completion of Fund I, which operated from 2017 to 2025 and received the highest performance rating from the World Bank, the fund's lead contributor, the statement said.

The partnership



Photo courtesy of ISSF

The Innovative Start-ups and SMEs Fund has announced a \$7 million investment in Endeavour Catalyst Fund V to attract global venture capital to Jordan's start-up ecosystem

agreement was signed in Amman by ISSF Chief Executive Officer Mohammed Al Muhtaseb and Endeavour Catalyst Managing Partner Allen Taylor. Both sides described the agreement as a strategic step toward connecting Jordanian start-ups with international venture capital markets and addressing funding gaps that often emerge during growth and expansion stages.

Endeavour Catalyst Fund V is a sector-agnostic fund focused on high-growth opportunities across emerging

markets. The fund has built a global portfolio that includes investments in some of the world's leading technology companies.

Among its most recent investments is Replit, the artificial intelligence and software Development Company founded by Jordanian entrepreneurs Amjad Masad and Haya Odeh, which is currently valued at approximately \$9 billion.

Endeavour Catalyst Fund V is a sector-agnostic fund focused on high-growth opportunities across emerging

markets. The fund has built a global portfolio that includes investments in some of the world's leading technology companies.

entrepreneurs and has backed 74 unicorn companies worldwide.

The World Bank said that Jordan's fertiliser exports are expected to help cushion the impact of regional and global pressures...

Muhtaseb said the partnership marks the

beginning of ISSF's Fund II operations in Jordan and reflects the fund's commitment to building on the achievements of Fund I.

"ISSF is committed to strengthening Jordan's entrepreneurship ecosystem and venture capital landscape by building on the tangible economic returns generated through Fund I," he said. "We will continue working with international and local partners to enhance Jordan's position as a regional hub for innovation and entrepreneurship."

He added that ISSF expects the partnership

to contribute directly to the local start-up ecosystem, noting that Endeavour Catalyst Fund V will allocate part of its investments to support Jordanian ventures.

"The collaboration will help Jordanian start-ups and innovators accelerate growth, expand into international markets and compete globally," Muhtaseb said.

Taylor welcomed ISSF's participation in the fund, describing it as a reflection of both organisations' shared commitment to supporting high-impact companies.

"ISSF's investment in Endeavour Catalyst Fund V is a true reflection of our shared vision to empower high-impact companies in Jordan," Taylor said. "Long-term commitment to markets where you have conviction matters more than timing market cycles."

Since Endeavour entered Jordan in 2009, the first MENA market in which we operated, we have remained committed through multiple cycles, reinforcing our belief that enduring presence creates the strongest investment insights and opportunities.

Endeavour Catalyst has previously invested in several Jordanian startups, including Tamatem Games, Altibbi, EON Dental, Tarjama and ZenHR, underscoring its continued focus on supporting fast-growing companies in Jordan and helping them scale internationally.



Anna Bjerde

World Bank managing director's Visit to Jordan to spotlight growth, job creation

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's economic growth is expected to accelerate gradually, reaching 3 per cent by 2028 despite ongoing global economic challenges and regional geopolitical tensions, according to a World Bank report.

Jordan's economy, according to the World Bank's latest Global Economic Prospects report released on Thursday, is projected to grow by 2.7 per cent this year before rising to 2.9 per cent in 2027.

The World Bank said that Jordan's fertiliser exports are expected to help cushion the impact of regional and global pressures, with strong international fertiliser prices supporting export revenues and helping offset higher import costs facing energy-dependent economies.

The report noted that economies across the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan (MENAP) region are facing growing challenges due to geopolitical instability, increased

energy and shipping costs, and uncertainty affecting trade and investment.

MENAP economic growth is forecast to slow to 1.6 per cent in 2026, compared with around 4 per cent in 2025, as regional conflicts and uncertainty weigh on economic activity.

The report expects a gradual recovery across the region in 2027 and 2028 as disruptions ease, inflationary pressures decline and trade and tourism activity improve, with regional growth projected to average 4.5 per cent during that period.

Globally, the report highlighted continued uncertainty surrounding trade, inflation and commodity prices amid shifting geopolitical conditions. For Jordan, maintaining export momentum, particularly through fertiliser sales, is expected to remain a key factor supporting economic resilience and limiting the effects of external shocks.

Musk becomes world's first trillionaire as SpaceX shares jump

NEW YORK (AFP) — Shares in Elon Musk's SpaceX jumped 11 per cent to \$150 on their first day of trading on Friday after the biggest initial public offering in history, making the polarising entrepreneur the world's first trillionaire as he vowed to take humanity to Mars.

The blockbuster operation, which raised more than \$75 billion, is expected to kick off a series of major IPOs by AI companies in the coming months.

The debut on the Nasdaq exchange in New York capped weeks of investor frenzy over the rocket company turned AI and satellite conglomerate.

"SpaceX wants to be able to take you to the moon, take you to Mars, and ultimately beyond," Musk said at a launch event in Starbase, Texas, surrounded by staff.

"I'm confident at this point that with the incredible team that we have here at SpaceX, that we will do that for you," Musk added.

About 100 people assembled outside the Nasdaq exchange's home in New York, where SpaceX also marked the occasion with a neon sign in Times Square reading "Building the infrastructure to the future."

Musk "sets very futuristic goals that no



SpaceX employees celebrate the market close of the SpaceX initial public offering (IPO) at the Nasdaq Marketsite on Friday, in New York City

one else is doing, and I think that has got a lot of people excited", said Sarin Sio, of financial company Dovetail, who had come to the Nasdaq headquarters.

The company priced more than 555 million shares at \$135 each in a filing with the US markets regulator on Thursday, valuing SpaceX at just under \$1.8 trillion.

Friday's gain lifted its market value to around \$2 trillion, placing it among the 10 most valuable US companies — ahead of Tesla, Facebook-owner

Meta and Walmart.

'SpaceX wants to be able to take you to the moon, take you to Mars, and ultimately beyond'

Options for nearly 83 million additional shares could push the total raised above \$86 billion.

Co-founded by Musk in 2002, the rocket startup has since expanded into a major satellite operator and has also folded in Musk's artificial intelligence company — xAI — which includes the social media platform X (formerly Twitter).

Trading under the ticker symbol "SPCX", the conglomerate is being closely watched for how Wall Street absorbs the offering.

SpaceX is the first out of the gates among leading AI giants eyeing public markets, with OpenAI and An-

thropic both recently filing initial documents with regulators.

The IPO comes just over a year after Musk left President Donald Trump's administration, following a months-long stint leading the highly contentious "DOGE" effort to slash government spending — while simultaneously juggling his CEO roles at Tesla and SpaceX.

Musk's backing of Trump and right-wing populists in Europe — and a long list of incendiary comments on X — has seen the entrepreneur go from a broadly admired prodigy to a deeply polarising figure.

The record IPO is nonetheless a testament to Musk's continued support among investors, with Bloomberg reporting that the offering was more than four times oversubscribed.

Demand among retail investors — for whom 20 per cent of shares were reserved — was also reported to be high.

New millionaires

The IPO is expected to mint thousands of new millionaires and several billionaires, with former and current employees — and a long list of investors — from the company's near quarter-century history looking to cash in.



An old car drives past debris from a demolished house occupying part of the seaside promenade in the Centro Habana neighborhood, in Havana on Tuesday

Cuba opens more sectors to private business

HAVANA (AFP) — Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel has announced greater freedoms for small businesses across the country, as the communist government takes steps to liberalise the island's economy in the face of a crippling US blockade.

In a speech broadcast on national television, Diaz-Canel said Cuba would open more sectors to private businesses and streamline the approval process for new ventures.

"For non-state forms of management, the list of prohibited activities will be limited so that their scope of operations is as broad as possible," the president said. "A process is underway... to approve all pending applications in the shortest time possible."

Under pressure from the oil blockade imposed by Washington in January, the Cuban government has unveiled a series of reforms aimed at opening up the economy.

Private businesses — which can employ up to 100 people — were authorised in 2021 and have become an increasingly important part of Cuba's economy. Since February, they have been permitted to import fuel, a sector previously controlled exclusively by the state.

As part of the new measures, the government will enable private businesses to invest in the economy on equal terms with foreign investors, after some of them recently left the country amid concerns over US sanctions.

Diaz-Canel said the government was also considering scrapping state intermediaries in import and export operations.

The president reiterated his commitment to decentralising the economy and granting greater autonomy to state-owned enterprises, which account for roughly 80 per cent of economic activity.

reocracy that would reduce the number of ministries and trim the state workforce, a plan that requires parliamentary approval in July.

Diaz-Canel assured that the new reforms "will soon be discussed and approved very swiftly."

He also sought to project confidence despite the country's mounting economic difficulties.

"The country is not paralysed; the country is facing this situation intelligently," the president said, denouncing what he described as a "maximum pressure" policy from Washington.

In addition to the oil blockade, the United States has imposed a range of sanctions on Cuba.

The measures have further aggravated the economic, social and energy crises that have gripped the island for years despite its decades-long struggle against a US embargo dating back to 1962.

THE JORDAN TIMES
SPORTS
AT A GLANCE

RUGBY

NSW Waratahs centre O'Donnell suspended for doping violation

SYDNEY (AFP) — Rising NSW Waratahs centre Henry O'Donnell is serving an 18-month suspension for violating anti-doping rules, the club revealed on Saturday. The 23-year-old played 12 games for the Super Rugby side in 2025 after moving from Western Force. He has also featured for the Junior Wallabies. But he was absent this season, with the Waratahs saying his period of ineligibility began in July last year. O'Donnell was sanctioned after testing positive for D-amphetamine and Ritalinic Acid. The substances are associated with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder medication and he did not have an exemption at the time. The Waratahs and Rugby Australia are standing by O'Donnell, noting that Sport Integrity Australia found that the violation was not intentional and not related to sport performance. "Henry made an error of judgement and has paid a heavy price for that misstep," Waratahs director of performance Barrie-Jon Mather said. "The club has supported Henry throughout the process and we look forward to his return."

TENNIS

Serena Williams teams up with Muchova in Berlin doubles

MUNICH, Germany (AFP) — US tennis great Serena Williams, on the comeback trail nearly four years after retiring, will partner Czech Karolina Muchova in the doubles at next week's Berlin Open grass court tournament. "We're going to play doubles. I'm pretty excited about it, it doesn't happen every day that such an amazing athlete, not only in tennis but overall in sport asks you to play tennis with her. I hope it's going to be fun," Muchova told a press conference in Berlin on Saturday. Williams, a 23-time Grand Slam singles champion, had retired after the 2022 US Open. On Tuesday, the 44-year-old won her first doubles match at the Queen's Club in London alongside Canadian Victoria Mboko. Mboko then injured her left knee, forcing her to retire from the singles and the doubles. The 29-year-old Muchova, ranked 10th in the world, was runner-up at the 2023 French Open singles tournament. The Berlin Open serves as a warm-up for Wimbledon from July 1-14.

What World Cup? New York gripped by Knicks frenzy

NEW YORK (AFP) — It will be Knicks vs the World Cup in New York on Saturday, and only one winner.

The city is at a fever pitch as the hometown basketball team sits on the brink of a NBA Championship win — pushing the Brazil vs Morocco game deep into the shadows.

The World Cup "is going to be fun... but right now, I'm a New Yorker, so we're going for the Knicks, basketball! Let's take this win. And after that, we can think about the World Cup", said actor Robert Chen, 32, next to the Brooklyn Bridge FIFA fan zone.

The MetLife Stadium, located in neighbouring New Jersey but serving Big Apple-based World Cup fans, will face a major test of its rail link to Manhattan which has come under fire for its steep \$98 price tag for a round-trip ticket.

But New York was a sea of Knicks orange as the team closed in on what will be their first title in 53 years if they win the clash with the San Antonio Spurs being played away in Texas.

"Everyone is kind of craving this victory, and it's excitement in the air... it's contagious," said Knicks fan and Queens-based street cart vendor Angel Diaz, 42.

"We're gonna have to take one thing at a



New York Knicks fans climb on a truck as they celebrate outside Madison Square Garden after their team's Game 4 victory over the San Antonio Spurs in the NBA Finals in New York on Wednesday

time, and we're gonna do the Knicks first, and then we go back to the World Cup," added Diaz who said the city would be "out of control" if the Knicks sealed the deal.

Hundreds of thousands of fans are expected to descend on central New York for remote viewing of the fifth game of the NBA Finals series with the Knicks leading the San Antonio Spurs 3-1.

"For those travelling throughout Manhattan, prepare for grid-

lock in Midtown," Mayor Zohran Mamdani warned on Saturday, telling MetLife-bound fans to allow four to five hours for the journey.

Police turned out in force for the first four games, both home and away, and officers are expected to flood Manhattan to deter the vandalism that marred earlier fixtures.

Soaring temperatures and the threat of thunderstorms could also put a dampener on festivities.

Knicks 'over-shining'

In an industrial section of Brooklyn, the manager of a Socceroo indoor five-a-side soccer arena, Lucas Matuszewski, said that "obviously the Knicks, as they should, are over-shining" the World Cup.

"It's tough to compete with such a deep-rooted kind of organization like the Knicks," said Matuszewski, 24, as children kicked soccer balls on neat astro-turf pitches.

"Basketball is so beloved in the city of New York."

Scotland fan Graeme Buckingham, 53, a fisherman from Banff, described the level of football fever as "poor" in New York, while nearby a hawkker sold Knicks championship T-shirts outside the Wall Street stock exchange.

"I'd expected probably a bit more, a bit more fans. But as you see, it's basketball. They're not really into their soccer, are they?" he said as he prepared

to travel to Boston with the Tartan Army for Scotland's inaugural match against Haiti.

Buckingham said that high-profile efforts by Lionel Messi, who plays for Inter Miami, and David Beckham, who played for the LA Galaxy, had failed to win over US hearts.

"Looking at New York, there was a sign there outside a pub today, Mexico vs South Africa — Champions' League. They didn't even know the tournament.

But there were signs that businesses were bracing for a delayed onset of football mania.

Vanessa Whalen, the owner of the Black Bull pub in Brooklyn, said "I do think it's going to get hectic and crazy without a doubt, and especially at this pub, because we're a football pub."

The convergence of hundreds of thousands of Knicks fans with football fans risks transport chaos.

While Madison Square Garden is not hosting Saturday's clash, there will be a viewing party for 3,000 fans outside the storied venue that sits directly above Penn Station, the terminus for football fans returning to the city from MetLife.

The two fixtures also clash with festivities around the Puerto Rican Day parade on Sunday, and a gig at MSG.

LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

David Beckham gets Hollywood star as World Cup begins in US

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — Football idol David Beckham joined the ranks of entertainment royalty on Friday when he was honoured with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, hours before the United States hosts its first game of the 2026 World Cup.

Film legend Tom Cruise was on hand to pay tribute to Beckham, who he said had changed the face of football in the United States.

Former Manchester United and England captain Beckham, 51, told a throng of fans on the sun-kissed boulevard it was a "truly incredible moment."

"I've always been a dreamer, but I could never have imagined that an honor like this would come to a working-class English football player like me," he said.

"How fitting then that I am here today as we prepare to celebrate the opening here in the US of the 2026 World Cup.

"It's a powerful moment to recognise how the sport I love so much has grown in this country over the past three decades."

Beckham, who spent six seasons with LA Galaxy from 2007, said he was deeply honoured to be feted by a Hollywood



Tom Cruise and David Beckham photographed during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Group D match between USA and Paraguay at Los Angeles Stadium on Friday in Los Angeles, California

film megastar. "To stand here in front of my friend Tom Cruise, the greatest movie star of our time, is quite frankly mind-blowing," he said.

"You welcomed us to LA 20 years ago, and you have been a loyal friend and an inspiration to me ever since," he told the actor.

The "Mission: Impossible" star said Beckham's tenure in Los Angeles had been a huge part of the growth of football on this side of the Atlantic.

Beckham's arrival "changed this sport in this country. People who had never watched football or soccer suddenly had a reason to."

"When David arrived, Major League Soccer had 13 teams. Today, it has 30. That's the impact

we're celebrating today: not just an extraordinary career, but a legacy that changed the trajectory of a sport."

Beckham's wife, Victoria, a former member of the Spice Girls and now a fashion designer and businesswoman, said football was booming in the United States.

"Soccer in America is entering one of the most exciting chapters in its history, which makes this incredible honour feel all the more timely," she said.

The United States, which hosted the World Cup for the first time in 1994, is co-hosting this year's tournament alongside Mexico and Canada.

The US national team makes its debut in Los Angeles later Friday against Paraguay.

Contemporary art giant David Hockney dies aged 88

LONDON (AFP) — British artist David Hockney, one of the most influential and defining figures in contemporary art whose paintings captured the world in brilliant colour, has died aged 88, his publicist announced on Friday.

Tributes poured in for the 1960s pop art pioneer who established himself as a globally renowned painter and master draughtsman and kept painting, experimenting and exhibiting right up until his death.

"I think I've something to say to people — that's why," he told the Daily Telegraph in October in his last major interview.

Lauding him as "one of the most important figures in contemporary art in both the 20th and 21st centuries", his publicist Erica Bolton said he died "peacefully at home" in London on Thursday, a month before his 89th birthday.

"His seven-decade career and prolific oeuvre was characterised by his multi-media approach in image making, an intellectual inquiry into the nature of depiction and perspective, and a sustained commitment to celebrating and portraying the world around him," her statement added.

Acclaimed worldwide, Britain made him a Companion of Honour in 1997. Earlier this year, Hockney became one of the few non-French citizens to



British artist David Hockney poses in front of his painting 'Fred and Marcia Weisman' during a photo session at the Pompidou Centre in Paris, on June 16, 2017

be awarded the highest level of France's main civilian honour, the legion d'honneur.

"His huge achievement was to make serious painting look effortless," art historian Richard Morris said on X. "He carried forward one of the most sustained investigations into vision, space and representation by any post-war artist. British art has lost a giant."

The Pompidou Centre in Paris — which held landmark Hockney exhibitions in 1999 and 2017 — said he was "creative to the end of his life by constantly renewing his ideas".

The works he leaves behind remain "dazzling, alive and eternal", it

added.

'Bold'

Born the fourth of five children in 1937 in Bradford, northern England, Hockney defied the conventions of post-war Britain, realising young that he was gay and wanted to be an artist.

A conscientious objector who did military service as a hospital orderly, he trained at the Bradford School of Art and then at London's Royal College.

"His early work demonstrated a bold stylistic range, and even then, he was recognised as a master draughtsman and a rising star in British art," the college said in a tribute on Instagram.

He remained "a defining voice in art across his lifetime," it added, praising his "boundless curiosity" and "mastery of colour".

Hockney captured everything from carefree 1960s California — where he moved to in 1964 — to the bucolic landscapes of his native Yorkshire, telling The Telegraph he was "happiest when I'm painting".

In 2018, his iconic swimming pool picture, "Portrait of an Artist [Pool with Two Figures]" sold for \$90.3 million in New York, setting a new auction record for a living artist. He was unseated by Jeff Koons' "Rabbit" a year later.

His portraits, in particular, were beloved.

"I try to get a likeness," he told the Telegraph. "But in the end, I don't care what the other person thinks of it, it's what I think of it that counts."

A spokeswoman for Prime Minister Keir Starmer called Hockney "one of Britain's most celebrated artists".

"His vivid, instantly recognisable work influenced generations of artists," she added.

Defiant smoker

Known for experimentation — with printmaking, photography and stage design alongside painting and drawing — Hockney adopted modern technology as it emerged.

He utilised iPads and even worked with developers to create custom-made apps, according to a National Portrait Gallery profile.

He also kept showcasing. London's Serpentine Gallery is currently holding his first exhibition there, conceived in close collaboration with the artist and featuring new paintings by him.

Future exhibitions at London's Tate and Oslo's Munch Museum were in development.

Tate Britain director Alex Farquharson said it would work with the artist's team to realise two projects planned for next year — pointing out its 2017 Hockney exhibition was the most visited in the institution's history.

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