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Tuesday, June 16, 2026 | Muharram 1, 1448 Hijri

Deputising for King, Prince Feisal attends graduation of 23rd national defence course

AMMAN (JT) — Deputising for His Majesty King Abdullah, the Supreme Commander of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF), HRH Prince Feisal Bin Al Hussein, the Regent, on Monday attended the graduation ceremony of the 23rd National Defence Course at the Royal Jordanian National Defence College, in the presence of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti.

Prince Feisal presented certificates to graduates of the course, which awards a master's degree in Management and Strategic Studies, in addition to a Higher Diploma in National Resources Management,



HRH Prince Feisal Bin Al Hussein, the Regent, on Monday attends the graduation ceremony of the 23rd National Defence Course at the Royal Jordanian National Defence College

the Jordan News Agency, Participants in the course included officers

from the JAF and security agencies, government employees, and officers from several Arab

and friendly countries, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Morocco, Egypt,

Nigeria, Pakistan, Tanzania, Indonesia, the US and Germany.

Prince Feisal also signed the guest book, expressing appreciation for the advanced academic and military standards attained by the participants.

The ceremony was attended by the president of Mu'tah University, the director of the general Intelligence Department, the Public Security Directorate director, the chairman of the Public Sector Modernisation and Civil Service Commission, several JAF officers and security officials, as well as ambassadors and military attaches accredited to the Kingdom.



King greets nation on Hijri New Year

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Monday marked the occasion of the New Hijri Year in a post on the

X platform, extending congratulations to Arab and Islamic nations.

"May Allah bless us and our nation in the New Hi-

jri Year. We ask Allah to protect our homelands and grant them continued security and stability," His Majesty wrote in Arabic.

Jordan welcomes US-Iran deal to end military operations, begin talks

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan on Monday welcomed an agreement reached between the US and Iran to end military operations and launch thorough negotiations aimed at reaching a lasting agree-

ment. In a statement on Monday, the Foreign Ministry described the deal as an "important step towards restoring regional and international security and stability".

The statement also praised the efforts of Pakistan, Qatar and other countries that contributed to reaching the agreement, as well as the positive response from both Washington and Tehran.

The ministry stressed the importance of achieving a permanent agreement that would reinforce security and stability in the region, while taking into account the security interests of re-

gional countries and adhering to the principles of good-neighbourliness, respect for sovereignty, and non-interference in internal affairs.

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Hassan directs 'full' use of field hospitals established during COVID-19 pandemic

AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Monday emphasised the importance of reopening the Amman Field Hospital, located next to Prince Hamzah Hospital, and highlighted the steps taken by the Ministry of Health to reactivate it after a shutdown lasting more than four years.

During a meeting at the ministry attended by the minister of health and other officials, the prime minister noted that restarting the facility will help accommodate the growing number of patients and visitors at Prince Hamzah Hospital, particularly in its emergency, intensive care and kidney dialysis department.

The Premier stressed the need to expedite government projects across various governorates within their designated timeframes, warning against delaying vi-



Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Monday visits the Ministry of Health, where he directs a full use of the field hospitals established during the COVID-19 pandemic

tal projects that serve citizens over minor procedural or technical hitches.

He added that reopening the Amman Field Hospital is a qualitative addition to the Ministry

of Health's healthcare system.

It will support Prince Hamzah Hospital by increasing bed capacity and improving response times for emergency cases, he said, noting

that the hospital has already begun receiving kidney dialysis patients and will become fully operational in the coming days.

The Amman Field Hospital is equipped with 70

beds in the emergency department, 44 intensive care beds, and 40 kidney dialysis units, which will help reduce patient waiting times and improve the efficiency of medical service.

The prime minister directed officials to make full use of the field hospitals established during the COVID-19 pandemic by utilising their infrastructure, equipment and operational capacities to support the public healthcare sector.

Minister of Health Ibrahim Baddour said that the ministry has implemented a package of health projects, including infrastructure upgrades, as well as the construction and expansion of several hospitals and healthcare centres across the Kingdom to boost the public sector's capacity.

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In this photo obtained from Iran's ISNA news agency on May 4, vessels are pictured anchored in the Strait of Hormuz off Bandar Abbas in southern Iran

US-Iran peace deal announced with 'permanent' end to military action

TEHRAN (AFP) — The United States and Iran agreed to a peace deal and an "immediate and permanent" end to military operations on all fronts including Lebanon, signalling the apparent end to more than three months of war in Middle East.

The initial announcement from mediator Pa-

kistan was quickly confirmed by Washington and Tehran, and an official signing ceremony was scheduled for June 19 in Switzerland.

"The Deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran is now complete," US President Donald Trump posted Sunday on social media as he marked his 80th birthday.

"I hereby fully authorise the toll free opening of the Strait of Hormuz, and, simultaneously herewith, authorise the immediate removal of the United States Naval blockade.

Ships of the World, start your engines. Let the oil flow!"

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US-Iran deal met with hope, scepticism in Mideast

By Agence France-Presse teams

PARIS, France — The deal between the United States and Iran to end their war, negotiated in secret and still not revealed in detail, was greeted with scepticism but a measure of relief among ordinary people across the Middle East.

In Lebanon, AFP saw displaced people preparing to return to homes they fled in the south of the country, despite Israeli ministers declaring they did not feel bound by the agreement to halt their own offensive against Hizbollah.

At the Qasmiyeh bridge, gateway to the Tyre area that Israel

has pounded in recent weeks, dozens of cars packed with mattresses and suitcases were passing through a Lebanese army checkpoint, passengers flashing victory signs.

Alaa Merahi, who was driving with his wife and children, told AFP: "We're returning to our south, to the free land."

Many expressed hope this would be a "final return" after hundreds of thousands of residents were repeatedly forced to flee Israeli bombings and evacuation orders.

At a crowded school-turned-shelter in the coastal city of Sidon, displaced people sat in classrooms drinking cof-

fee, waiting for official authorisation to return.

"We'll set up a tent"

"Our joy is greater than the whole world," said Haifa Sherri, who was displaced from the town of Khirbet Selm near the border.

She said, however, she would hold off on returning until the situation became clearer.

Lebanon's army urged displaced residents to delay their return to southern border villages, while several municipalities told people to await instructions.

But in Sidon, Hanaa Jaffal said she planned to return on Monday to

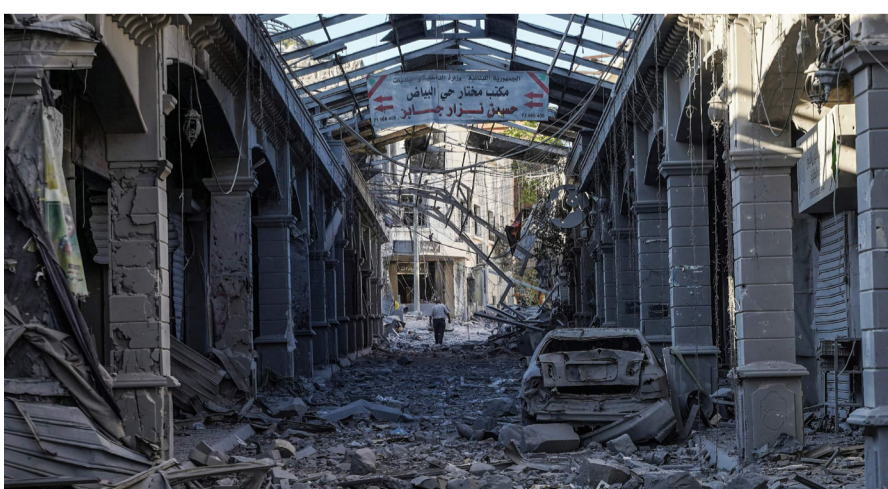
Ansar, close to Nabatieh and the Israeli advance.

"There's nothing like returning to your land, even if the houses are no longer there," she said.

"We'll set up a tent and stay in it," she added, paying tribute to Iran, which backs Hizbollah and insisted Lebanon must be included in any peace deal.

Iran and mediator Pakistan say the agreement provides for an end to the fighting in Lebanon, but Israeli ministers said their forces will not be withdrawn.

On the other side of the border in Israel, reactions were more mixed, but many expressed scepticism that peace



A man makes his way through a heavily damaged building in the centre of Nabatieh on Monday

would ensue.

"I don't expect this ceasefire to last. I don't think that they consid-

ered Israeli needs and I'm personally upset about it," said Naomi Haddar, chief executive

of a medical non-profit. "We are a free country and we have to make our own decisions to protect

our own citizens."

In the northern town of Metula, coffee shop owner Miri Menashe similarly said "I believe we need to detach Israel entirely from this matter".

"Israel is not supposed to be a side to an agreement between the United States and Iran... Lebanon is our problem; Iran is the United States' problem, so let the United States solve its issue with Iran and leave us in peace."

Koby Heller, a 40-year-old Jerusalem resident, told AFP: "The general feeling within Israel... everyone I talk to tells me: 'We lost'."

Continued on page 5



File photo

The Senate Tourism and Heritage Committee is working with the Ministry of Tourism on structural measures to leverage regional stabilisation, shifting focus from crisis management to economic growth

Senate committee plans reforms to revive tourism in Petra, Wadi Rum

AMMAN (JT) — The Senate Tourism and Heritage Committee is working with the Ministry of Tourism on structural measures to leverage regional stabilisation, shifting focus from crisis management to economic growth, Committee Chairman Senator Michael Nazzal said in a Facebook post.

The measures include introducing flexible, seasonal pricing mechanisms for entry tickets to Petra to boost its competitiveness year-round.

The initiative comes as the Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA) Board of Commissioners Chairman Adnan Sawair announced on Thursday that recent tourism declines have impacted 22 hotels and 393 workers in PDTRA, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

Nazzal added that the committee also aims to redefine the tourism product in

Wadi Rum, transforming it into a global platform for high-value major events and conferences.

Jordan's tourism revenue declined by 4.3 per cent in May 2026 to \$602.7 million compared with the same month last year...

He stressed that Jordan possesses the necessary foundations to be among the fastest-recovering and growing countries in the upcoming period, emphasising the importance of cooperation

between public institutions and the private sector to restore Jordan's position on the global tourism and economic map.

Jordan's tourism revenue declined by 4.3 per cent in May 2026 to \$602.7 million compared with the same month last year, according to recent data released by the Central Bank of Jordan.

The figures showed that tourism revenue during the first five months of 2026 fell by 9.2 per cent year-on-year to \$2.78 billion.

The data revealed that tourism revenue during the first five months of 2026 fell by 16 per cent from expatriate Jordanians, by 22.6 per cent from US nationals, by 25.6 per cent from European nationalities, by 2.5 per cent from Asian nationalities, and by 39.1 per cent from other nationalities, while tourism revenue from Arab nationalities remained stable.

FAO, Jordanian partners advance climate-resilient higher education

AMMAN (JT) — The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), through the Building Resilience to Cope with Climate Change in Jordan (BRCCJ) project, on Monday convened a Stakeholder Technical Consultation and University Curricula Validation Workshop.

The workshop brought together participants, representatives from government institutions, universities, climate experts, and development partners to strengthen the integration of climate change adaptation into higher education curricula across key disciplines, according to a FAO statement.

The workshop formed part of the project's efforts under Component 3: Scaling-up Climate Adaptation, which supports universities in updating academic programmes in agriculture, water engineering, architecture and related disciplines and ensure that future graduates are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and practical competencies needed to address climate-related challenges and contribute to sustainable development.

"Higher education institutions play a critical role in preparing future generations of professionals, researchers, and decision-makers capable of responding to the growing impacts of climate change," said the FAO Representative a.i, Paul Opio, during the workshop's opening session.

Director of the Climate Change Directorate at the Ministry of Environment Belal



FAO photo

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations on Monday convenes a Stakeholder Technical Consultation and University Curricula Validation Workshop

Shqarin emphasised the ministry's assurance in academic institutions and universities, and the importance of working together to facilitate students' access to high-quality academic education in climate change, particularly in marginalised areas that are experiencing the impacts of climate change.

The consultation workshop provided an opportunity to review and validate the findings of a comprehensive curriculum gap analysis conducted across participating universities.

The analysis assessed the extent to which climate change concepts, adaptation measures, and sustainability principles are currently integrated into academic programmes and identified

opportunities for further enhancement.

Stakeholders provided recommendations to boost curricula and align them with national climate priorities, labour market needs and international academic best practices.

The initiative aligns with FAO's Strategic Framework 2022-2031, which promotes the achievement of the Four Betters: Better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life for all, leaving no one behind.

Participating universities included Tafilah Technical University, Mutah University, Al Hussein Bin Talal University and German Jordanian University.

The BRCCJ project is a seven-year initiative implemented by FAO in partnership with the Ministry of

Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and other national stakeholders.

The project aims to enhance Jordan's resilience to climate change through integrated interventions in water resources management, sustainable livelihoods, food security, and institutional capacity development.

The project is implemented across the Dead Sea Basin governorates of Maan, Tafilah, Madaba and Karak.

The workshop resulted in the validation of key findings from the curriculum gap analysis and generated valuable recommendations for updating academic programmes. Participants also

identified priority actions and implementation strategies to support the integration of climate change adaptation, climate-smart agriculture, and adaptive water management concepts into higher education systems.

As a next step, FAO and its partners will incorporate stakeholder feedback into the final curriculum gap analysis report and curriculum framework.

Continued collaboration with universities, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and relevant national institutions will support the endorsement and implementation of proposed curriculum updates, contributing to Jordan's long-term climate resilience, food security, and sustainable resource management goals.

ACT celebrates 'Go Green Week 2026' with environmental, community initiatives

AMMAN (JT) — Aqaba Container Terminal (ACT), the "preferred" gateway for the Levant region and beyond, has recently carried out a series of environmental and community initiatives.

The events were part of ACT's Go Green Week 2026, held from June 1-7 under the theme "Healthy Ecosystems... More Resilient and Sustainable Business", according to an ACT statement.

The week featured a range of initiatives organised by ACT's Environmental Committee, CSR Committee and HSSE Department, highlighting the importance of protecting ecosystems and their role in supporting resilient businesses and communities.

Throughout the week, ACT engaged employees through environmental



ACT photo

Aqaba Container Terminal carries out a series of environmental and community initiatives as part of its Go Green Week 2026 to highlight the importance of protecting ecosystems

awareness sessions across its facilities, focusing on the link between healthy ecosystems and sustainable business operations, while encouraging participation in green initiatives and communities.

Building on this internal engagement, ACT organised a beach and sea-

bed cleanup initiative in cooperation with government entities and environmental stakeholders.

The activity brought together 32 divers, including professionals from the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army's Royal Naval Force, the Jordan Diving Association and select enthusiastic employees of

ACT.

There was active participation of more than 100 ACT employees and volunteers, who collectively removed some 150 kilograms of marine waste from Aqaba's coastline and seabed, contributing to the preservation of the Kingdom's marine ecosystem.

The event featured tree planting and a variety of eco-friendly activities designed to foster environ-

mental awareness among younger generations and encourage sustainable habits within the wider community.

ACT's Go Green Week 2026 forms part of Maersk's global Go Green Week initiative and reflects the company's broader commitment to environmental stewardship.

ACT also continues to advance its decarbonisation roadmap, targeting a 65 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 2022 levels and achieving net-zero emissions by 2040.

Through such initiatives, ACT continues to embed sustainability into its day-to-day operations and community engagement efforts, reinforcing its approach of building a more resilient and sustainable future through an ongoing commitment.

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JPMC, Uzbekistan discuss joint fertiliser investments

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) and Uzbekistan have discussed opportunities to expand economic cooperation through potential joint investments in the phosphate fertiliser industry, as part of efforts to enhance industrial partnerships between the two countries.

The discussions took place during a meeting in Tashkent between JPMC Chairman Mohammad Theibat and Uzbekistan's Minister of Investment Laziz Kudratov, where both sides reviewed prospects for enhancing cooperation in phosphate-based industries and related sectors, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported on Monday.

The two officials stressed the importance of building on existing relations and exploring new avenues for economic and investment

collaboration that serve the mutual interests of both countries.

The talks focused on the possibility of establishing joint phosphate fertiliser projects, with the two sides agreeing to initiate specialised technical discussions and conduct economic and technical feasibility studies.

The proposed studies will assess project viability, identify suitable locations and examine opportunities to leverage the comparative advantages of both nations, particularly in terms of raw material availability and quality. Kudratov expressed Uzbekistan's readiness to support the pro-

posed projects through the provision of ammonia, natural gas and sulphur at preferential prices, a move expected to enhance economic feasibility and improve investment prospects.

They agreed that technical teams from both sides will begin work in Amman during the first half of next month to undertake the necessary studies and review their findings at a follow-up meeting later in the month.

Both sides reiterated their commitment to facilitating the success of the proposed cooperation and maintaining close coordination throughout the technical and planning stages.

During the meeting, Theibat invited the Uzbek minister to visit Jordan and review the phosphate fertiliser industry and production facilities operated by JPMC.

Kudratov welcomed the invitation and expressed his willingness to continue discussions regarding the implementation of potential joint investment projects.

In a separate meeting, Theibat also held talks with OzkimyoSanoat Chairman Temirov Odil on opportunities for cooperation and the establishment of joint ventures in fertiliser production and other phosphate-related industries.

Black Desert site offers clues to earliest agriculture

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — The Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA) Period in the Levant provides the earliest confirmed evidence for plant cultivation anywhere in the world, marking a "significant" revolution in the human management of plants towards fully fledged agricultural food production.

The PPNA took place between 9,600-8,500 BC.

For the time being, the majority of PPNA sites have been documented in the Jordan Valley, the Wadi Araba and farther north along the Upper

Mesopotamia. One of Jordanian PPNA sites is Oa Shubayqa, located in the north-eastern part of the country in the Black Desert.

"Shubayqa 6 is situated on the northern edge of the Oa' Shubayqa, around 130km north-east of the Jordanian capital, Amman. The site is one of several late Pleistocene and early Holocene settlements located in this area, which have been under investigation since 2012," said Patric Pedersen from the University of Copenhagen.

The Late Epipalaeolithic Natufian sites Shubayqa 1 and Shubayqa 3

are situated 0.7km west and 3.1km south-east from Shubayqa 6 respectively, he added.

The concentration of settlements in this area is probably due to the existence of a substantial area of permanent wetland that occupied the present basin during the late Pleistocene and early Holocene, providing a wide and rich range of resources.

Shubayqa 6 rises two to three metres above the surrounding area, and consists entirely of anthropogenic deposits.

Several Byzantine, early Islamic and later structures, as well as

a Bronze Age occupation phase, overlies the Neolithic settlement, Pedersen noted, adding that chipped stone and ground stone artefacts cover the entire 3000m of the mound and the surrounding area.

"Shubayqa 6 was discovered during a pedestrian survey in October 2012. To date, excavations have revealed a complex series of circular or sub-circular buildings, which reflect the multiple phases of occupation and re-use of the settlement," Pedersen said.

The structures uncovered so far range from small buildings, less than

two metres in length, to buildings with a diameter of four metres.

Two larger structures, measuring six and five metres in maximum length have also been uncovered. Although most structures at the site are as yet unexcavated down to floor level, those that have been demonstrate well-made floors and fireplaces, Pedersen underlined.

Art objects are represented by an anthropomorphic chalk figurine and a T-shaped bone plaque with incisions.

"Organic preservation at Shubayqa 6 is excellent. In addition to

a large faunal assemblage, intensive flotation of sediment samples has produced a substantial assemblage of macrobotanical plant remains, which is currently being analysed."

"Shubayqa 6 is the first substantial PPNA settlement identified in the Black Desert. It demonstrates that settlement in this semi-arid to arid zone was more intensive than previously thought," Pedersen noted.

The team plans to continue with its work at Shubayqa 6 to highlight the transition from hunting and gathering to food production in the Levant.

ADC launches designs for JD45m Aqaba oil derivatives pier

AMMAN (JT) — The Aqaba Development Corporation (ADC) said on Monday that it had commenced detailed studies and designs for a new JD45 million oil derivatives pier, scheduled to become operational in early 2029.

ADC said in a statement, cited by Al Mamlaka TV that the project, which aims to enhance the Kingdom's energy security, has entered its second phase of detailed planning in cooperation with international consultant Royal Haskoning DHV, following positive initial feasibility studies.

The Cabinet has recently approved the ADC board's decision to proceed with the designs based on these feasibility indicators, which estimated a projected internal rate of return ranging between 14.7 per cent and 24.1 per cent, compared to an estimated cost of capital of 10.3 per cent.

Implemented under a public-private partnership model, ADC will self-finance the marine infrastructure components at a cost of JD28.2 million, while a specialised operator will invest around JD16.8 million in operational equipment, the statement said.

The new pier will add an annual handling capacity of around 5 million tonnes. This expansion is expected to alleviate pressure on



The Aqaba Development Corporation (ADC) says on Monday that it had commenced detailed studies and designs for a new JD45 million oil derivatives pier

Aqaba's sole existing oil pier, which currently operates at a high occupancy rate of 60 to 90 per cent, causing vessel waiting times of 50 to 70 hours.

Designed to accommodate vessels with a deadweight tonnage (DWT) of up to 160,000

tonnes, the new facility will handle a wide range of materials, including green ammonia, bitumen, petroleum products, crude oil, chemicals, oils and heavy fuel.

ADC emphasised that the project will safeguard Jordan's energy

supply chains by reducing reliance on a single terminal, diversifying import routes and supporting an export corridor for Iraqi oil.

According to the project timeline, construction is slated to begin between the sec-

ond and third quarters of 2027 following the floating of two parallel tenders: an Engineering, Procurement and Construction contract for the marine pier, and a lease-operate-transfer investment opportunity for the port's operation.

The project aligns with the objectives of the Economic Modernisation Vision to upgrade port infrastructure, boost public-private integration and eliminate vessel delay fees by accelerating handling operations, the statement said.

AT A GLANCE

Foreign minister, Saudi counterpart discuss regional developments

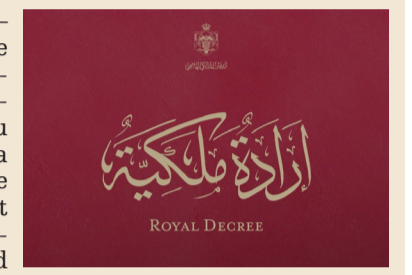
AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi on Monday held a phone call with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal Bin Farhan Al Saud.



During the call, the two ministers discussed the latest developments in the region and other issues of mutual interest, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

Royal Decree appoints Abu Shahout as IEC board member

AMMAN (JT) — A Royal Decree has been issued, appointing Bushra Abu Shahout as a member of the Independent Election Commission's board of commissioners, as of 11 June 2026, according to a Royal Court statement.



Army thwarts drug smuggling attempt using guided balloons

AMMAN (JT) — The Eastern Military Region command on Monday thwarted an attempt to smuggle a quantity of narcotics into Jordan using electronically guided balloons.



In a statement, the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army said that Border Guard units detected the balloons along the zone's area of responsibility and engaged them, successfully bringing down both the balloons and their payloads inside Jordanian territory in coordination with security agencies and the Anti-Narcotics Department. The seized materials were handed over to the relevant authorities for further legal procedures, the statement said.

CliQ transfers reach nearly JD9.7b in 2026 — JoPACC

AMMAN (JT) — The value of transactions processed through Jordan's instant payment platform CliQ reached nearly JD9.7 billion during the first five months of 2026, reflecting continued growth in the country's digital payments sector.



The Jordan Payments and Clearing Company (JoPACC) says that the value of transactions processed through Jordan's instant payment platform CliQ reached nearly JD9.7 billion during the first five months of 2026

According to data released by the Jordan Payments and Clearing Company (JoPACC), the value of electronic payment transactions conducted through CliQ rose to JD2.13 billion in May, marking a 13 per cent increase from JD1.89 billion recorded in April.

The number of transactions also increased, reaching 21.43 million in May, up 10.9 per cent from 19.33 million transactions the previous month.

Since the beginning of the year, CliQ has processed 94.05 million transactions with a cumulative value of JD9.73 billion.

The platform's user base expanded to 2.28 million users in May, representing monthly growth of 1.3 per cent.

Jordanian nationals accounted for 95.1 per cent

of all users, or approximately 2.19 million people, while users of other nationalities totalled about 92,700.

Men represented 60.8 per cent of CliQ users, compared with 36.3 per cent for women. Users aged 18 to 30 remained the platform's most active demographic.

Money transfers continued to dominate activity on the platform, accounting for 80.4 per cent of total transactions, while purchases represented 19.6 per cent. The

value of money transfers reached JD1.56 billion in May, compared with JD572.5 million in purchase transactions.

The average transaction value stood at JD99 in May, slightly higher than the JD98 average recorded in April.

Launched by JoPACC in 2020, CliQ is Jordan's instant payment system, enabling users to send and receive funds in real time between participating bank accounts and electronic wallets across the Kingdom.

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Saleh Kharabsheh on Monday inaugurated a fogging system project at the Rehab Power Plant, aimed at enhancing the efficiency of gas turbines and improving operational performance during peak summer demand.

Kharabsheh stressed the importance of investing in modern technologies to boost the efficiency of power generation facilities and strengthen their operational readiness, commending efforts to complete the project in line with international technical standards, according to a ministry statement.

He said that the Rehab Power Plant, the Kingdom's first combined-cycle power station, is a key component of the national electricity system, accounting for about 37 per cent of Jordan's total installed generation capacity. He added that the plant is among the most efficient power stations in

Rehab power plant launches fogging system to boost efficiency during summer



Rehab gas turbine power station is located in Mafraq, approximately 70 km north of the capital Amman

the Kingdom.

The minister said the energy sector remains a source of national pride, noting Jordan's continued role in supporting regional energy needs by supplying part of Iraq's electricity requirements through existing infrastructure, as well as providing elec-

tricity to Palestine and natural gas to Syria.

He added that the sector has been built by Jordanian expertise over decades and continues to serve as a key driver of economic development.

Samra Electric Power Generation Company Director General Sami

regional disruptions affecting supply chains, at a cost of around JD1.3 million, financed by the National Electric Power Company (NEPCO).

Zawati added that the plant is fully prepared to meet rising electricity demand during the summer months, stressing the company's continued commitment to implementing qualitative projects that support the sustainability of the energy sector.

The fogging system works by lowering the temperature of air entering gas turbines, thereby reducing the impact of high ambient temperatures on generation efficiency.

It helps recover part of the capacity typically lost during hot weather and enhances output during peak-load periods, contributing to the stability of the national grid and energy security.

The Rehab Power Plant, operated by Samra Electric Power Generation Company, has a total capacity of 297 megawatts.

Ajyal educational platform records more than 16m Logins since launch in 2025 — ministry

AMMAN (JT) — More than 137,000 teachers have used the Ajyal educational platform, recording over 11 million logins, while the number of student users reached 212,150, generating more than 826,000 login sessions, according to figures released by the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship on Monday.

The ministry said that 139,500 parents have also used the

platform, registering more than 4.4 million logins, bringing the total number of logins across the platform to over 16.3 million.

The figures underscore the growing role of Ajyal in supporting digital transformation in the education sector and facilitating access to educational services and information for students, parents and teachers, the ministry said.

Developed by the

Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship for the Ministry of Education, the platform serves as a unified national system for educational information management and e-learning.

The ministry noted that Ajyal's services are now accessible through the Sanad application, allowing parents to easily access their children's academic records through a single dig-

ital gateway.

Available services include semester grades, school certificates, attendance records and student information inquiries, the ministry said.

Launched in 2025, Ajyal is among Jordan's flagship digital transformation projects in education, providing a range of digital services to support students, parents and educators nationwide.

CRIME

Cassation Court upholds 8-year sentence in attempted murder case

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld a June 2023 Criminal Court ruling, sentencing a man to eight years in prison after convicting him of attempting to murder a carpenter over a JD104 feud in 2020.

The Criminal Court declared the defendant guilty of attempted murder in Zarqa Governorate on February 11 and

handed him a 12-year prison term.

However, the court decided to reduce the sentence to eight years because the victim dropped charges against the defendant.

Court papers said the defendant went to the victim's shop, a carpentry, to discuss a JD104 payment.

"The argument became heated, which resulted in the defendant drawing

a gun and firing at the victim," court documents said.

The victim was struck in the thigh and was rushed to hospital, where he survived the shooting incident, the court added.

The defendant contested his ruling via his lawyer, arguing that the court relied on weak evidence to implicate my client.

The Criminal Court's attorney general asked

the higher court to uphold the 12-year sentence.

The higher court ruled that the Criminal Court proceedings were accurate and that the defendant was given the appropriate punishment.

The Cassation Court bench comprised judges Mahmoud Ebtoush, Nayef Samarat, Hamad Ghzawi, Oassem Dughmi and Mohammad Khashashneh.



AFP photo

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas

Palestinian leader Abbas announces presidential election in early 2027

RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas has issued a decree calling for presidential elections in early 2027 and for legislative elections to be held in November of this year, official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported, without saying if he would run.

Abbas, 90, won the last Palestinian presidential election in 2005 with a mandate of four years, meaning his term should have expired in 2009.

However his term was extended and no presidential election has been held since, with Abbas ruling by presidential decrees, courting criticism at home and abroad.

“President Mahmoud Abbas announced that presidential elections will be held in early 2027,” Wafa said, citing a statement from the presidency.

The nonagenarian leader’s decree also calls for legislative elections to take place in November of this year, it added.

In his decree, Abbas emphasised he was “fully prepared to organise the Palestinian National Council elections scheduled for November, which

include the general legislative elections in the homeland and elections abroad”.

The Palestinian National Council is the parliament of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, which has over 700 members from the Palestinian territories and abroad.

The last legislative

Holding elections is part of the reforms demanded by the international community...

elections in the Palestinian territories were held in 2006, when Hamas won, defeating Abbas’ Fateh Party, which had previously dominated Palestinian politics.

As a result, the Palestinian Legislative Council, which is the parliament of Abbas’ Palestinian Author-

ity, has not met since 2007.

Holding elections is part of the reforms demanded by the international community, which supports the Palestinian Authority financially.

Palestinian legal researcher Mahmud Al Afranji said there was both political will and international pressure on the Palestinian Authority to hold the elections.

But he told AFP that a lack of guarantees that elections would be held in occupied east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip remained “an obstacle to holding the legislative elections”.

In 2021, Abbas announced legislative and presidential elections to be held in May and July of that year respectively.

They were then postponed indefinitely due to the absence of guarantees that voting could take place in east Jerusalem, which Israel has occupied since 1967.

In April, Palestinians went to the polls to elect municipal council heads in the occupied West Bank, in the first vote since the outbreak of the Gaza war in October 2023.

Sudan drone strikes killed over 1,000 in first five months of 2026 — UN

GENEVA (AFP) — The UN rights chief on Monday condemned a “sharp increase” in the use of drone warfare in conflict-torn Sudan where more than 1,000 civilians were killed in such strikes in the first five months of this year.

Drone warfare has become an increasingly prominent feature of Sudan’s conflict since it erupted in April 2023 between the regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

“In Sudan, the horrific conflict has expanded and escalated, marked by a sharp increase in the use of drone warfare,” said UN rights chief Volker Turk.

“Between January and May 2026, our office documented more than 1,000 civilians killed by drone strikes,” he said in an opening address to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

He also said that “rape and sexual violence are rampant”.

Now in its fourth year, the conflict in Sudan has killed tens of thousands of people and forced more than



AFP photo

A man walks by a house damaged by fighting in Khartoum, Sudan

11 million from their homes, creating what the United Nations describes as the world’s largest displacement and hunger crises.

Drone strikes on the strategic city of El Obeid killed 23 people, a rights group and witnesses said last week, in one of the deadliest aerial attacks the city has seen since the war

began.

“The roofs of houses collapsed on their occupants,” a resident of the Al Matar neighbourhood in the city’s east said.

El Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan, has been partially encircled for months by paramilitary forces and sits along a key route linking RSF-held areas in

the western Darfur region to army-controlled regions in the east.

Fighting has intensified in recent months in the Kordofan region and Blue Nile state near the Ethiopian border, particularly after the RSF captured El Fasher in October, the army’s last major stronghold in western Darfur.

Kordofan — home

to oil deposits, arable land and the RSF’s most powerful paramilitary allies — remains a key and fiercely contested battleground.

The war in Sudan, where two rival generals are competing for power, was described as one of the world’s most neglected crises this month by the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Iran’s foreign ministry says ‘deep mistrust’ in US remains despite deal

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran’s foreign ministry said on Monday that Tehran still holds “deep mistrust” of the United States despite an agreed framework aimed at ending the war.

“Unfortunately, it must be acknowledged that Iran’s deep mistrust of the United States stems from long history of wrongdoing by American leaders,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said during a press briefing.

“The United States still has a long way to go before it can earn the trust of the Iranian people,” he said, adding that the framework was “merely a step towards reducing tensions”.

The United States and Iran announced a deal to end the Middle East war on all fronts and reopen the vital Strait of Hormuz, sparking relief on Monday after months of deadly violence and global economic chaos.

The conflict had erupted in late February, with US-Israeli strikes on Iran, which retaliated with attacks on Israel and US allies in the region.

Baqaei said Washington had committed to releasing Iran’s frozen funds abroad and compensating it for damages during the war under the framework deal.

“The release of the frozen Iranian assets as well as the reparations

for damages are two essential points. The American side has committed to taking measures in both areas,” he said.

Under the deal, Iran will manage the Strait of Hormuz — a key conduit for global oil supplies that Iran has blocked since the start of the war — and charge maritime service fees on ships transiting the waterway, rather than imposing tolls.

“We have always maintained that we do not seek to collect transit tolls, but fees for navigation services, environmental protection, ship insurance and other necessary services will be charged,” Baqaei said.

He also said the US must ensure that Israel commits to stopping the war in Lebanon under the framework deal.

Lebanon was dragged into the Middle East war in early March when Iran-backed militant group Hizbollah launched rocket attacks on Israel in retaliation for the killing of Iran’s supreme leader, prompting Israeli strikes and a ground invasion.

Baqaei said “the United States must honour its commitments. It must ensure that the Zionist regime also respects its own regarding Lebanon”.

He added that Tehran “neither trusts Israel nor the United States”.

The framework paves the way for 60-day negotiations for a final agreement covering Iran’s contentious nuclear programme and relief of longstanding sanctions against it.

“The final agreement is expected to be endorsed by a United Nations Security Council resolution after a period of 60 days,” Baqaei said, adding that Tehran “will learn from past experience”.

“The adoption of a resolution will be essential... but the most effective guarantee of the implementation of any commitment lies in the leverage and power we have identified over the past three months,” he said.

OUTBREAK

MSF warns of ‘dangerous gaps’ in Ebola response in DRC

GENEVA (AFP) — “Dangerous gaps” remain in efforts to rein in an Ebola outbreak that has killed more than 180 people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Doctors Without Borders (MSF) warned on Monday.

Despite a massive scale-up in the response to the deadly outbreak declared in the vast central African country on May 15, the medical charity, which goes by its French acronym MSF, said the true scale of the crisis remained unclear.

“One month on, the Ebola disease outbreak is outpacing the response effort,” Kate White, MSF’s emergency medical coordinator in the DRC, said in a statement.

“No-one knows the true scale or exactly where the disease is spreading,” she said.

“What we do know is that most treatment centres in Ituri province are overwhelmed; many of our patients arrive at a late stage of the disease, and the majority were never identified or monitored as contacts before seeking care.”

So far, 782 Ebola cases, including 181 deaths, have been confirmed in the DRC, according to the latest



AFP photo

So far, 782 Ebola cases, including 181 deaths, have been confirmed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

figures from the World Health Organisation. Another 19 cases, including two deaths, have been confirmed in neighbouring Uganda.

MSF warned the true numbers were likely significantly higher. No approved vaccines or treatments exist for the Bundibugyo strain of the virus responsible for the current outbreak, which is centred on the DRC’s

north-eastern Ituri province, with cases also detected in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces.

The virus, which spreads through close contact and bodily fluids and can cause a fatal haemorrhagic fever, is believed to have been spreading under the radar for weeks before the outbreak was declared.

Insecurity in the area

as where the disease is spreading has made it difficult to reach some of the affected communities, MSF said, adding that “even in more stable areas, efforts to detect cases, test patients, identify contacts, and monitor transmission are insufficient”.

White warned that “testing remains one of the most significant weaknesses in the

response”.

Even though laboratory capacity had been ramped up and mobile test kits designed specifically for the Bundibugyo virus had begun arriving in the eastern DRC, “many communities... still have limited access to those kits”, she said.

At the same time, treatment centres were continuing to face “significant delays” in receiving laboratory results.

In North Kivu, meanwhile, there is only one laboratory able to test blood samples, MSF said.

“Without faster and more widely available testing, we will struggle to detect cases early enough to contain the outbreak,” White warned.

Ebola has killed more than 15,000 people in Africa over the past 50 years.

The deadliest outbreak in the DRC claimed nearly 2,300 lives out of 3,500 cases between 2018 and 2020.

Experts have cautioned that without urgent action, the current outbreak could eventually risk rivaling the scale of the 2014 west Africa epidemic, which saw over 28,000 cases and more than 11,000 deaths.



AFP photo

This photo posted on social media on January 10 shows clashes in Mashhad in north-eastern Iran

Iran executed 18 protesters in 2026 — UN

GENEVA (AFP) — Iran has executed at least 40 people, including 18 protesters, on “national security grounds” since the start of 2026, the United Nations said on Monday.

UN rights chief Volker Turk said he felt “deeply for the people in Iran, caught between war and cruel repression”.

Since the start of the year, the Iranian authorities “have executed at least 40 people on national security grounds... including 18 protesters”, he told the UN Human Rights Council.

Iran executes more people annually than any other nation besides China, according to rights groups.

Turk lamented that Tehran had ramped

up repression since a deadly crackdown on protests in January, on top of the Middle East war, sparked in February by US and Israeli attacks on Iran.

He welcomed the announcement on Sunday that the United States and Iran had agreed a peace deal, stressing that “it is clear all sides need to exercise maximum restraint and work to implement the agreement reached, quickly and in good faith”.

The conflict, he said, “has had a devastating impact on human rights across the region and around the world”.

Repression in Iran was dire even before the war.

In late December, a protest movement sparked by econom-

ic pains quickly expanded into mass anti-government rallies, which were met by a crackdown that rights groups say killed thousands.

Iranian authorities portrayed the protests as riots backed by the United States and Israel and said the violence killed around 3,000 people.

Rights groups abroad put the toll higher and accused the security forces of firing at demonstrators.

“Since killing thousands of people during the egregious crushing of protests in January, the authorities have intensified their brutal crackdown, arresting thousands and imposing even more severe restrictions on civic space,” Turk said.



Hungarian Prime Minister Peter Magyar (left), and Parliamentary State Secretary at the Foreign Ministry Gyorgy Velkey in the main hall of the Parliament building in Budapest, on Monday

Hungary moves to limit PMs' terms in office, blocking Orbán's return

BUDAPEST (AFP) — Hungarian lawmakers on Monday voted overwhelmingly to limit prime ministers' terms in office to a maximum of eight years, a constitutional change that blocks nationalist Viktor Orbán's return.

The amendment was a key campaign promise of pro-EU conservative Peter Magyar, who in April elections ousted Orbán from office, promising sweeping reforms as part of a "regime change".

Magyar argued the possibility of limitless tenure can lead to power concentration, pointing to his predecessor as an example, whom critics accused of constantly tweaking Hungary's political system to keep a tight grip on power.

Orbán's party opposed term limits, arguing that it could possibly restrict popular will.

The amendment

passed parliament with 135 votes for, 50 against and six abstentions. Under Hungarian law, such a measure can be passed by a two-thirds supermajority without needing a referendum.

Some countries around the globe impose term-limits on their top leaders, with such restrictions usually placed on presidents.

The tenure of Hungary's president, whose role is largely ceremonial, is already limited: He can be reelected only once to a second five-year term.

The adopted term limit does not completely rule out Orbán's return to power, however, as it could be revoked in the future by another constitutional change.

This is the 16th time Hungary's Basic Law has been changed since its adoption in 2011.

The approved amend-

ment also removed a provision stipulating the need for independent body to "safeguard" the country's "constitutional identity".

This was done to prepare the ground for disbanding the Sovereignty Protection Office.

The controversial agency, established under the previous government in 2024, was entrusted with broad investigative powers ostensibly to curb "foreign influence".

But it mainly targeted Orbán's critics, accusing independent media and NGOs like Transparency International of serving foreign interests for its scrutiny of the government.

The agency has not released any official reports since Magyar won the election.

Hungary's parliament is set to vote on a bill for the agency's dissolution at the end of June.

UK court upholds terrorism ban on pro-Palestinian group

LONDON (AFP) — London's Appeals Court on Monday upheld a UK government ban on activist group Palestine Action that has seen thousands of people — from students to an 83-year-old retired vicar — arrested and carried away from protests by police.

The ban, which came into force on July 5, 2025, was imposed under the country's Terrorism Act.

It made membership of or support for the pro-Palestinian group a criminal offence punishable by up to 14 years in prison under the counter-terrorism legislation.

Palestine Action's co-founder Huda Ammori had challenged the ban, but the Court of Appeal ruled "the proscription decision was not unlawful", saying it was "justified and proportionate".

Palestine Action "is not, as it claims, a direct action civil disobedience protest group like the suffragettes operating transparently in the open", said judge Sue Carr, one of a panel of five judges, reading their decision.

Describing the group as "a covert organisation operating with secret cells", she added it was "a fundamental mistake to overlook the fact that Palestine Action overtly promotes unlawful violence amounting to terrorism".

The ban, which has led to more than 3,000 arrests, puts the group on a government blacklist that also includes Palestinian militants Hamas and the Lebanese Iran-backed armed group Hizbollah.



Protesters wave a Palestinian flag outside the Royal Courts of Justice in central London as the High Court rules on a legal challenge involving the government and activist group Palestine Action

'Acts of terrorism'

Ammori vowed on X to appeal to the Supreme Court and "take it up to the European Court of Human Rights, if needs be".

In a statement read outside the court, Palestine Action vowed: "We will not stop fighting to overturn one of the most extreme attacks on free speech and the right to protest in modern British history."

Amnesty International UK's Legal Programme Director Tom Southerden said the ruling "represents another step in the ongoing crackdown on the right to protest in this country".

Protesters holding signs supporting Palestine Action gathered outside the court, with London's Met police saying later Monday it made 117 arrests for "expressing support for a proscribed organisation".

Ex-interior minister Yvette Cooper, who is now foreign secretary, had defended her proscription decision, arguing the group's supporters were unaware of its "full nature".

"This is not a non-violent organisation," she said last year.

Set up in 2020, Palestine Action's stated goal on its website — blocked to UK internet users — was to end "global participation in Israel's genocidal and apartheid regime".

It gained visibility following the war in Gaza triggered by the deadly October 7, 2023 Hamas surprise attack on southern Israel.

Current interior minister Shabana Mahmood welcomed the decision, insisting it did not "affect lawful protest in support of the Palestinian cause,

which remains a fundamental democratic right".

She said the court "found that Palestine Action has carried out acts of terrorism... and promoted the use of violence".

'Disproportionate'

Palestine Action has mainly targeted weapons factories in the UK, especially those belonging to the Israel-based defence group Elbit.

Since the ban came into force, protesters have held a string of rallies holding up signs saying: "I oppose genocide, I support Palestine Action".

Hundreds have been charged and are awaiting court hearings.

"The decision is terrible," protester Chris, 65, a retired IT consultant, told AFP on Monday.

"I don't know what hap-

pened to British democracy, to the right to protest. I just feel very sad, that's all."

The group challenged the ban in the UK courts on the basis that it was "disproportionate" and had a "very significant" impact on human rights.

The High Court in London in February agreed, ruling in its favour, but the government then appealed.

However, Monday's appeals court ruling reverses the High Court judgement, finding in favour of the interior ministry.

It follows a judge on Friday jailing four activists for between four years and eight months to seven years and eight months for raiding an Elbit site near Bristol in western England, causing over a million pounds in damage.

Jordan welcomes US-Iran deal to end military operations, begin talks

Continued from page 1

It also highlighted the importance of restoring security and freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz to the situation that existed before February 28, 2026 (when the war began).

The ministry reaffirmed Jordan's longstanding position in

support of resolving disputes through diplomatic channels in line with international law and the United Nations Charter, as well as backing regional and international efforts aimed at achieving security, stability, and prosperity for the peoples of the region and the world.



Hassan directs 'full' use of field hospitals established during COVID-19 pandemic

Continued from page 1

Baddour reviewed the ministry's future plans, which focus on upgrading service quality, accelerating digital transformation, and enhancing the readiness of the public healthcare system to meet current and future challenge.

He added that adopting a unified national treatment protocol for cancer, implementing a protocol for acute myocardial infarction catheterisation, and reorganising outpatient clinic schedules at major hospitals are significant steps toward unifying medical procedures and improving

service efficiency.

The minister also pointed out that the plan to extend working hours and activate evening shifts at several comprehensive health-care centres will ease the burden on emergency departments and improve citizens' access to healthcare.

The past two years,

the ministry has added 577 new beds, representing a nearly 10 per cent increase in the total number of beds across the Kingdom's hospitals, Baddour said.

The ministry has established 14 new healthcare centres, refurbished 49 others, and digitalised 153 fa-

cilities, which account for over 30 per cent of all digitalised health institutions.

It has also set up 13 new medical warehouses, comprising roughly 40 per cent of the total number of warehouses, and automated 77 out of 147 services scheduled over the next two years.

US-Iran deal met with hope, scepticism in Mideast

Continued from page 1

"President Trump went to war, with Israel, to achieve goals. The goals were — as he stated — to dismantle the missiles and to remove the uranium stockpile from Iran. Neither was achieved," he said.

'May not be pleasant'

In Iran, where the government brutally suppressed anti-government protests a month before

the war began, most optimism was economic rather than political.

Tehran salesman Efran, 18, told AFP he hoped an end to sanctions would put the Iranian economy back in gear.

"Of course, if the Americans keep their word and do not break their promises, as usual," he added.

Nastaran, a 29-year-old software engineer, said she would be very happy "once the war is

over and the sanctions we had are lifted".

And Sadegh, a 52-year-old government worker, said Washington should be ready to make concessions.

"It may not be pleasant for both sides but nations need peace and tranquillity, and I hope that the other side will adhere to this agreement," he said.

But others like Arya, an English teacher, appeared more pessimistic.

"This agreement was

nothing but a loss for the people of Iran," the 38-year-old told AFP journalists based outside of Iran.

"Our people will not return to normal; we have only lost time. The greatest outcome of this war was that they came to understand that Trump is not their ally."

In the monarchies of the Gulf, whose economies were battered by Iranian strikes and a shipping blockade, there was also cautious

optimism.

"I'm relieved," said 40-year-old Bahraini Hessa Mahmoud. "No one wants to live through war again."

In Kuwait, 37-year-old Jordanian engineer Iyad Joumma spoke for many.

While the agreement may allow the region to catch its breath, he said, its success "will depend on the ability of the parties involved to address the root causes of the tensions".

US-Iran peace deal announced with 'permanent' end to military action

Continued from page 1

Soon after, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said in televised comments that the deal put an "immediate end" to the countries' war and that they would hold talks within two months to seek a "final agreement".

Just hours earlier, Tehran had vowed to retaliate against a strike by Israel against Iranian ally Hizbollah in the suburbs of Beirut which threatened to push back an agreement.

But later in the day, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif made the announcement: "Both sides have declared the immediate and permanent termination of military operations on all fronts, including in Lebanon."

He added thanks to leaders of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey for their support in the mediation effort.

The content of the agreement, which follows weeks of fraught negotiations and periodic threats from Trump of fresh hostilities unless Iran reached a deal, remained unclear.

Iran's Mehr news agency reported that the US will release \$12 billion in frozen assets to Iran before the start of negotiations.

It quoted a 14-point "Memorandum of Understanding [MoU]" between the two nations, which it said stipulated "the release of 24 billion dollars in frozen Iranian assets during the 60 day negotiation period" that begins after the MoU is signed.

The Trump administration did immediately comment on the details of the agreement, which may prove contentious as the US presses its

effort to end Tehran's nuclear ambitions and deal with its stockpile of highly enriched uranium — believed to have been buried by US strikes last year.

The announcement of the deal was greeted with international relief and hope for an enduring end to the conflict.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said it was a "critical step" toward resolving the war in the Middle East.

The United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy said they were prepared to lift sanctions imposed on Iran and will work "with the US, Iran and regional partners to seize this moment, maintain momentum and achieve a long-term diplomatic settlement".

The announcement also brought relief at market opening on Monday. Oil prices plunged more than 4 per cent in Tokyo and Japan's Nikkei stock index jumped 3 per cent.

The blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has had a worldwide economic impact, from inflated gas prices that have fueled inflation in the US and many other countries and congested supply chains for goods like fertiliser key to food production in areas far beyond the Middle East.

"What we're going to be able to do is drive down the cost of energy, not just now but for the long term, and create a real engine of prosperity in the Middle East," US Vice President JD Vance told Fox News.

He said that he planned to attend the signing of the peace deal, which was slated to take place in Geneva and that it was possible Trump could also go.

It was a rollercoaster

Sunday, with Trump in the morning angrily blaming Israel for delaying its signing with the airstrike on Beirut, which he said had delayed the agreement.

In an explosive-laden phone interview with US news outlet Axios, Trump had fumed about Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, saying: "I was so pissed off. I let him know."

The last time Israel hit the Beirut suburbs, it sparked one of the strongest jolts yet to a ceasefire that has largely held since April, with Iran firing off a retaliatory missile barrage and Israel responding with strikes.

Tehran has long demanded that any agreement to halt the war must include the parallel conflict in Lebanon, where Israel has been pursuing a campaign against Iran-backed Hizbollah.

The war began in late February, with US-Israeli strikes on Iran, which retaliated with attacks on Israel and US allies in the region, and by virtually blocking ship traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital route for global oil and natural gas supplies.

The US retaliated by blocking ship traffic to Iranian ports.

During negotiations, the warring parties have released conflicting information about the contents of the deal, as each seeks to show it emerged from the war with the upper hand.

Tehran had insisted it will maintain control over the vital strait, but the US repeatedly said this would be unacceptable.

Trump said Sunday the sea passage would open after the ceremony in Switzerland.

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The economics of smoking: A behavioural perspective on the price of today

By Zaid K. Maaytah

Recent national statistics indicate that Jordan continues to rank among the countries with the highest smoking rates in the world. While smoking is often discussed as a public health challenge, its economic consequences deserve equal attention. Beyond its impact on health, smoking places a substantial financial burden on both households and the national economy.

Recent survey data show that the average smoker spends approximately JD78 per month on cigarettes, amounting to nearly JD936 annually. In a country where GDP per capita is estimated at around JD4,000 per year, this means that the average smoker spends almost a quarter of annual per capita income on tobacco products alone. Over ten years, this expenditure approaches JD10,000 — an amount that could contribute to higher education, housing, savings, or other investments that strengthen long-term financial security.

The financial burden does not end there. Studies estimate that smoking-related illnesses, healthcare expenditure, lost productivity, and premature mortality cost Jordan approximately JD1.5 billion annually, equivalent to nearly 5 per cent of national GDP. In effect, smoking generates two separate costs: the money spent purchasing tobacco today, and the much larger bill paid collectively tomorrow.

These figures raise an important question: if smoking carries such significant financial consequences, why does it remain so widespread? The answer may lie not in what people know, but in how people make decisions. Behavioural economics offers an explanation through a concept known as present bias — the tendency to place greater value on immediate rewards than future consequences.

A smoker does not experience smoking as an annual expense approaching JD1,000, or a decade-long expense approaching JD10,000. Instead, cigarettes are purchased one pack at a time, making the cost appear small and manageable. The financial burden accumulates gradually, while the health and economic consequences often remain distant and abstract, causing both costs to be consistently underestimated.

Looking at smoking through this behavioural lens changes the way we think about solutions. If awareness alone were enough, decades of health warnings would have produced far greater reductions in smoking rates. International experience increasingly suggests that successful interventions are those that make future benefits visible in the present. In countries such as the United States and the Philippines, smoking cessation programmes that incorporated financial incentives and commitment-based savings mechanisms achieved higher success rates than traditional awareness campaigns alone. Rather than asking people to sacrifice today for rewards they may experience years later, these programmes created immediate and tangible benefits for quitting.

The lesson for Jordan is not necessarily to replicate these programmes exactly, but to rethink how smoking is addressed. In a society where household budgets face increasing pressure, highlighting the financial gains of quitting may prove as important as emphasising the health risks. Helping smokers visualise how much money they save, linking cessation efforts to personal financial goals, and incorporating simple behavioural tools into smoking cessation programmes could make the benefits of quitting more immediate, more visible, and ultimately more effective.

Smoking is often viewed as a health issue, but it is equally an economic and behavioural challenge. The latest statistics remind us that smoking generates two bills: one paid directly by smokers when purchasing tobacco products, and another paid collectively through healthcare costs and lost economic productivity. Understanding the behavioural forces behind these decisions offers a different way of approaching the problem — one that focuses not only on informing people about the dangers of smoking, but also on designing solutions that help them make better choices for themselves, their families and society as a whole.

The writer is a researcher in economics and behavioural policy.

Social security sustainability: Where is the real battle?



ECONOMIC REVIEW

Yusuf Mansur

The proposed amendments to Jordan's Social Security Law have sparked extensive debate between supporters, who view them as necessary to safeguard the long-term sustainability of the Social Security Corporation, and opponents, who fear they may come at the expense of contributors and retirees. Yet, amid this debate, a more fundamental question is often overlooked: How can we ensure that the social security system remains capable of fulfilling its obligations not only today, but also twenty, thirty and forty years from now?

This question is not unique to Jordan. It confronts most countries around the world. Across Europe, Japan, Canada and the United States, pension systems are facing increasing pressure as a result of population ageing, rising life expectancy and declining birth rates. People today live much longer than was anticipated when most pension systems were originally designed decades ago, while the number of new entrants into the labour market is growing more slowly than the number of retirees.

As a result, most advanced economies have spent the past several decades increasing retirement ages, tightening early retirement provisions and extending the number of contribution years required to qualify for a pension. The objective of these reforms has not been to reduce citizens' rights, but rather to preserve the long-term viability of pension systems.

Jordan's situation, however, differs somewhat from that of advanced economies. While population ageing represents the principal challenge in Europe and Japan, Jordan's most pressing challenge remains low labour force participation, high unemployment, limited female participation in the workforce, and the persistence of a large informal economy.

To understand the nature of the challenge, it is important to distinguish between two key concepts in pension finance: The two break-even points and the core financial position.

The first break-even point occurs when contribution revenues equal pension benefit payments. Beyond this stage, the institution begins relying on investment returns to cover the gap between revenues and expenditures. The second break-even point occurs when contribution revenues plus investment income equal pension obligations. Beyond this stage, the fund begins drawing down its accumulated reserves.

The most important indicator, however, is the core financial position, defined as the difference between contribution revenues and

pension expenditures. When pension payments exceed contributions, the core financial position becomes negative, even if the institution continues to generate substantial investment profits. For this reason, actuaries regard the core financial position as the most meaningful measure of a pension system's long-term health.

Jordan's Social Security Corporation currently enjoys substantial assets and investments that constitute one of the pillars of economic and financial stability in the Kingdom. Nevertheless, actuarial studies indicate that current trends will gradually weaken the core financial position and increase pressure on the system due to early retirement, rising life expectancy and growing numbers of retirees.

This is the context behind the government's proposed amendments to the Social Security Law. The most significant proposals include gradually increasing the retirement age for men from 60 to 65 years and for women from 55 to 60 years, with implementation phased in over an extended period. The amendments also seek to increase the minimum contribution period required to qualify for an old-age pension from 180 contributions to 240 contributions, effectively raising the minimum qualifying period from 15 years to 20 years.

The proposals also include reforms to early retirement, one of the largest sources of long-term financial pressure on the system. These reforms involve increasing the number of contributions required for early retirement, extending the required years of service, and strengthening the actuarial reductions applied to those who leave the labour force before reaching the statutory retirement age.

In addition, the amendments propose revising the pension calculation formula by relying on average earnings over a longer period prior to retirement rather than focusing primarily on the final years of employment. This aims to limit practices whereby wages are artificially increased shortly before retirement in order to secure pension benefits that exceed what lifetime contributions would justify. The proposals also seek to expand social security coverage to groups that remain outside the system and to create more

flexible arrangements for workers in emerging forms of employment.

From an actuarial perspective, the overall direction of these reforms is both justified and appropriate. Increasing retirement ages reflects improvements in life expectancy, tightening early retirement provisions addresses one of the main sources of future financial imbalance, and revising pension calculations enhances both fairness and sustainability.

Yet, the problem is that much of the public debate has focused almost exclusively on reducing expenditures and delaying retirement, while insufficient attention has been paid to the revenue side of the equation, despite the fact that it may prove to be the most important determinant of Jordan's social security sustainability in the decades ahead.

The reality is that social security systems do not thrive primarily by reducing benefits; they thrive by increasing the number of contributors. Every new worker entering formal employment generates additional revenues for the institution today and strengthens its sustainability tomorrow.

This brings us to the most important issue in Jordan's case. While European countries worry about rising numbers of elderly citizens, Jordan should be more concerned about declining numbers of workers. The greatest threat to the sustainability of Jordan's social security system over the next two decades is not population ageing but low labour force participation.

Population ageing increases the number of beneficiaries. Low labour force participation reduces the number of contributors. If each retiree is supported by three or four active contributors, the system remains stable. However, when the number of workers and contributors declines, financial pressures emerge even in a society that remains demographically young.

A pension system financed by one million workers will always be more sustainable than one financed by half-a-million workers, even if the number of retirees is identical. Consequently, the real battle for social security sustainability begins not with retirement policy but with labour market policy.

For this reason, any comprehensive reform strategy must include a package of revenue-enhancing measures that are just as important as expenditure reforms.

First, labour force participation must be increased. Every additional percentage point of participation translates into thousands of new contributors and millions of dinars in additional annual contributions.

Second, female labour force par-

ticipation must be strengthened. Bringing women's participation rates closer to international norms would add tens of thousands of contributors to the social security system and generate sustainable revenues for decades to come.

Third, youth employment must become a national economic priority. Every young person who enters formal employment today becomes a contributor to the pension system for potentially forty years.

Fourth, the informal economy must be integrated into the social security framework. Large numbers of self-employed workers, small-business operators, and digital-economy participants remain outside the formal system, depriving both themselves and the social security system of long-term protection and resources.

Fifth, part of the country's investment and tax incentive framework should be linked directly to the creation of formal jobs covered by social security, making formal employment a central objective of economic and investment policy.

Sixth, more flexible contribution schemes should be developed for self-employed workers, digital platform workers and Jordanians working abroad to broaden the contributor base and increase revenues.

Seventh, incentives for small and medium-sized enterprises should encourage the transition from informal to formal economic activity. Every business that enters the formal economy creates new contributors and additional revenues for the social security system.

Improving productivity is also an essential part of the solution. As Jordanian workers become more productive and real wages increase, social security contributions rise, and the core financial position improves. Consequently, policies related to investment, education, training, and technology are not separate from the future of social security; they are fundamental to its sustainability.

International experience clearly demonstrates that the most sustainable pension systems are not necessarily those that rely solely on raising retirement ages or reducing benefits. Rather, they are those that successfully expand their contributor base, improve productivity, and sustain economic growth. True reform occurs when we create opportunities for more people to work in the first place. Ultimately, the future of Jordan's social security system will be determined less by the number of retirees than by the number of workers.

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

Palestinians at extreme risk of forced displacement

In the context of Israel's unlawful occupation and its imposition of a system of apartheid against all Palestinians, and against the backdrop of its ongoing genocide in Gaza, Israeli authorities have been recently accelerating its violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in pursuing its policy of ethnic cleansing in the occupied West Bank.

This policy has been implemented through the forcible displacement of Palestinians in refugee camps, Bedouin and herding communities in the West Bank, as well as the creation and expansion of settlements, acts that amount to the war crime of unlawful deportation and transfer.

Palestine's Permanent Mission to the UN on June 12 sounded the alarm over the newest largest wave of forced displacement of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

During a briefing held by the Palestine's Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva, Palestine's Permanent Representative, Ambassador Ibrahim Khraishi, warned of the unprecedented deterioration of conditions in the occupied West Bank amid the upsurge of colonist attacks, colonial settlement expansion, and the ongoing military offensive on the refugee camps of Jenin, Tulkarm and Nur Shams, which has triggered the largest wave of forced displacement in the West Bank since 1967, alongside widespread destruction of infrastructure, homes and civilian facilities.

He stressed that the West Bank was witnessing a dangerous escalation at the political, economic and humanitarian levels due to Israel's unbridled annexation and settler-colonialism policies, arrests, extrajudicial killings, colo-

nist violence and the continued withholding of Palestinian clearance revenues.

On his part, UNRWA representatives outlined the latest developments in the northern West Bank, pointing to escalating destruction and the forced displacement of more than 45,000 Palestinians, attacks on infrastructure and medical facilities, and Israeli measures aimed at demolishing the Agency's premises in occupied Jerusalem.

Israeli authorities have been accelerating annexation through a state-driven campaign of ethnic cleansing targeting Palestinian Bedouin and herding communities in Area C of the occupied West Bank, while committing the crime against humanity of forcible transfer.

The Israeli government has made formal annexation an explicit policy objective.

It has accelerated settlement expansion and land grabs, increased financial and logistical support to settlements, and has armed settlers, thereby enabling a brutal state-sanctioned campaign of settler violence and of forced displacement of Palestinians from Area C.

This area constitutes over 60 per cent of the occupied West Bank and has long been central to Israel's efforts to control land and demographics, given its natural resources, vital grazing and agricultural land.

Communities in Area C have been facing growing risks of displacement and settlement expansion.

The Jordan Valley and South Hebron Hills have been areas under particular pressure where residents have faced repeated raids, demolitions and damage to infrastructure. Restrictions on access to land and essential services



Najla M. Shahwan

have also increased pressure on these communities and state-backed settler violence and home demolitions have forcibly displaced thousands of Palestinians in, emptying out over 100 vil-

lages entirely.

In the Gaza Strip, Israel's ongoing military operations and evacuation orders despite the ceasefire have displaced roughly 90 per cent of the population (approximately 1.9 million people), with much of the civilian infrastructure destroyed to create long-term buffer zones.

Families have been displaced from their neighbourhoods many times — and the last time they were uprooted, they were homeless for more than six months.

Israel's "voluntary emigration" plan from Gaza is its latest attempt to ethnically cleanse Palestinians from the Strip.

Israel's defense minister has advanced plans to remove Palestinians from the Gaza Strip through "voluntary emigration".

Israel Katz said late last May that the plans would take place "at the proper time and in the proper manner".

Israel's security Cabinet approved a proposal by Katz in March to establish a directorate within his ministry to facilitate "migration" from the enclave.

Despite the Israeli genocide in Gaza, which has killed more than 73,000 Palestinians and wrought utter destruction on the coastal enclave, the vast majority of Palestinians there say they will never aban-

don their home.

Proposals for the removal of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip have been repeatedly raised during the course of the Israeli genocide.

Though some ministers have framed the move to remove Palestinians as a voluntary option, other Israeli officials have been explicitly calling for forced expulsion, which is a war crime.

Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying power from forcibly transferring, deporting or displacing occupied people from an occupied territory while the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court names deportation by "expulsion or other coercive acts" a crime against humanity.

Ninety-two per cent of Gaza's homes have been destroyed or damaged. None of its 37 hospitals is fully functional. Aid trucks cut from 4,200 a week to 590 when Israel sealed the crossings in February, families burning trash to cook whatever arrives, children frozen to death last winter for lack of shelter materials Israel would not allow in.

The Yellow Line, the boundary of Israeli control drawn by the ceasefire, keeps moving west, swallowing water points and clinics, with Palestinians killed for approaching a line that approaches them. More than 986 Palestinians have been killed since the "ceasefire" was signed in October 2025.

Amid the expanding Israeli military incursions record levels of settler violence, and impending annexations, the overwhelming majority of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are fiercely resisting displacement, viewing it as a permanent severing from their homeland.

The writer Palestinian author, researcher and freelance journalist

BUSINESS

Tuesday, June 16, 2026



A declining working-age population is yet another challenge for the German economy

German working-age population to shrink dramatically — study

FRANKFURT, Germany (AFP) — Germany's working-age population will shrink by 4.3 million by 2036 as people retire, the birth rate drops and tougher migration policies deter foreign workers, a study warned on Monday.

Falling numbers of workers spell yet another challenge for Europe's struggling top economy, already battling onerous red tape, high energy costs and fierce competition in its traditional industries.

"Germany is not on the brink of demographic change — it is already in the middle of it," said Holger Schaefer from the IW economic institute in Cologne, which published the report.

"In just a few years, the economy will lack the workers needed to generate prosperity

and sustain the welfare state in its current form."

The study said that the labour market is set to be hit especially hard by the retirement of "baby boomers", usually defined as those born in the two decades after the end of World War II.

With not enough people entering the labour market to replace them, the working-age population will drop by 4.3 million by 2036, to 51 million, a fall of some seven per cent, it said.

The rate of decline is worse than previously anticipated, because the population has started shrinking earlier than expected.

In 2025, Germany's population fell for the first time in many years, by about 100,000 people, and now stands at some 83.5 million. By 2040, it will drop to below 82 million, the

IW institute forecast.

As well as a declining birth rate, the fall is being driven by a sharp decrease in the number of people moving to Germany, it said.

Migration to the EU's most populous country was set to remain subdued due to "the clouded economic outlook and the federal government's shift in migration policy", the report said.

Conservative Chancellor Friedrich Merz's coalition has made tougher immigration policies a priority as he seeks to diminish the appeal of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) Party.

The IW institute said the government could arrest the decline in the working-age population by encouraging people to work more, and making it easier to attract skilled workers from abroad.

Industry study highlights JD9b in potential manufacturing investment opportunities

AMMAN (JT) — The industrial sector could unlock new investment opportunities by substituting imports with locally manufactured products, according to a new study by the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI), which identified nearly JD9 billion worth of imports with no domestic production alternatives.

The study, titled "Production Gaps and Import Substitution Alternatives: Potential Investment Opportunities", highlights significant scope for expanding local manufacturing across a range of sectors, identifying opportunities to strengthen the industrial base, create jobs and increase the sector's contribution to economic growth.

Based on an analysis of Jordan's foreign trade data, the study seeks to identify industrial activities that can be localised to reduce import dependency and boost value-added production within the national economy.

It showed that a substantial share of imports consists of goods not currently manufactured domestically, despite demand levels that could support viable industrial investment, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The analysis covered 10 industrial sectors, including food industries, engineering industries, pharmaceuticals, chemicals,



The Jordan Chamber of Industry releases a new study titled 'Production Gaps and Import Substitution Alternatives: Potential Investment Opportunities'

plastics, leather and garments, mining, construction materials, wood industries, and packaging, paper and cardboard products.

The chamber said the strongest investment prospects lie in products with high import values and persistent trade deficits, where conditions are favourable for local production and industrial expansion.

It added that investors entering these sectors could benefit from established domestic demand, as well as opportunities to expand into regional and international export markets.

The study forms part

of broader efforts to promote data-driven investment planning, providing a practical guide to sectors where production gaps remain significant.

The chamber stressed that Jordan's industrial sector has the expertise, infrastructure and capabilities required to attract new investment and develop competitive manufacturing industries.

Building on the findings, it announced plans to launch a second phase of the study, which will provide detailed investment profiles for each identified opportunity.

The next phase will

include assessments of market size, export potential, supply chains and preliminary feasibility, offering investors a more comprehensive guide to potential projects.

The JCI also pledged to work with government institutions and private-sector stakeholders to promote the identified opportunities and convert them into productive industrial ventures that support job creation, expand exports and advance the

Economic Modernisation Vision.

It said addressing industrial production gaps represents a strategic opportunity to

strengthen economic resilience and reduce dependence on external markets.

According to the study, partial localisation of current imports could generate positive impacts on economic growth, improve the trade balance and enhance the sustainability of industrial development.

The chamber called for integrating the identified opportunities into the national investment map to help direct capital towards priority sectors and maximise the industrial sector's contribution to the national economy, Petra reported.

Murdochs' Fox to acquire US streaming giant Roku

NEW YORK (AFP) — Fox Corporation will acquire streaming platform provider Roku in a cash and stock deal worth \$22 billion, the companies announced on Monday.

Fox executives said the transaction would give it "first-party data" and insight on Roku's more than 100 million global subscribers, an attribute Roku has parlayed into advertising revenue growth.

The deal deepens Fox's exposure to the hardware of the streaming business, diversifying away from the legacy cable broadcast universe where the media giant's mix of politically conservative news telecasts and blockbuster sports games have made it a dominant player.

"This is a defining moment for Fox, and a natural extension of the deliberate and focused strategy we have been executing for nearly a decade," said Fox Chief Executive Lachlan Murdoch.

"Today, we take the next step: bringing together the most valuable live content portfolio in video consumption with the preeminent streaming platform through which America watches it."

But shares of Fox sank more than 15 per cent near midday Monday, a drop analysts said reflected concerns about the deal's dilutive impact on existing equity as well as strategic questions about the deal.

Roku shareholders would receive cash and Fox stock under the deal



Fox CEO Lachlan Murdoch, shown here in 2017 with father Rupert Murdoch, described the Roku transaction as a winning means to expand in the streaming era

valued at \$160 per share, a joint press release said, with the transaction expected to close in the first half of 2027.

Roku shares have traded between about \$90 and \$130 since late April.

Operating system

California-based Roku rose to prominence in the early days of streaming with its plug-in devices and is now a major player in smart TV operating systems, earning the vast majority of its revenue from advertising-supported streaming channel, a competitor to Fox's Tubi.

Roku generated \$4.7 billion in revenue in 2025, with approximately \$88 million in profit.

Murdoch — who was handed control of his fa-

ther Rupert Murdoch's media empire in 2023 — told analysts on a conference call that the current expectation is to keep Tubi and Roku as separate platforms.

While there is about a one-third overlap in the audience of Roku and Tubi, "they serve consumers in different ways", Murdoch said.

Streaming media analyst Dan Rayburn said the Roku infrastructure will bring Fox valuable intelligence on a large portion of viewers in terms of what people are watching, how they are watching and "what are they wanting to pay for?" he said.

Beyond that, Fox will also benefit from Roku's distribution system. Rayburn noted that Fox has not disclosed viewership figures at Fox One, suggesting limited reach thus far.

Emarketer analyst Ross Benes also saw logic in the deal.

"It remains to be seen how well the combination of a digitally innovating streaming company will mesh with a media conglomerate rooted in legacy assets," Benes said. "But the strategy makes sense and it jibes with the continual consolidation that's occurring in streaming."

A note from Briefing.com alluded to Roku's 100 million subscribers as a selling point, but said the weakness in Fox shares Monday shows "investors are also focused on dilution, leverage, integration risk, and whether Fox can preserve Roku's partner-friendly neutrality while owning a gatekeeper platform."

Shares of Fox slumped 15.1 per cent while Roku dipped 0.9 per cent.

Oil plunges, stocks jump on US-Iran peace deal

LONDON (AFP) — Oil prices dropped towards \$80 a barrel and stocks rallied on Monday after Washington and Iran reached a framework deal to end the Middle East war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, sending a wave of relief through global markets.

The strait, through which roughly 20 per cent of the world's crude oil supply normally transits, was effectively closed by Tehran after US and Israeli strikes on Iran in late February, sending energy prices soaring.

The peace deal — in fact a "memorandum of understanding" — is due to be sealed at a signing ceremony in Switzerland on Friday, ending three months of conflict that has revived fears of a prolonged inflation spike.

Crude prices shed

about 5 per cent, having surged above \$110 soon after the conflict began.

Wall Street indexes jumped, led by the tech-heavy Nasdaq, where SpaceX climbed a further 8 per cent after the blockbuster \$75 billion IPO for Elon Musk's rockets-to-AI firm.

That followed gains across European and Asian equity markets, while the dollar, traditionally a safe-haven investment in times of turmoil, fell.

The Tokyo and Seoul stock markets soared around 5 per cent each, largely on new flows into tech firms.

Paris and Frankfurt rose, while London's FTSE 100 slipped, pulled down by heavyweight oil firms as energy prices sank.

Asian and European

markets enjoyed a bounce on the news, but the scale of the advance wasn't as large as one might have expected," said Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

"That's partly down to markets having already bounced back in recent weeks, but it is also because inflation fears won't suddenly disappear," he added.

Iran's deputy foreign minister, Kazem Gharibabadi, said that the deal put an "immediate end" to the war and that talks on a "final agreement" would be held within two months.

But the content of the preliminary agreement, which follows weeks of fraught negotiations and periodic threats from US President Donald Trump of new attacks despite a ceasefire agreed in April,

remains unclear.

"The deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran is now complete," Trump said on Sunday. "Ships of the world, start your engines. Let the oil flow!"

Elsewhere, the US Federal Reserve and the Bank of England are expected to leave their main interest rates unchanged this week, preferring to wait and see if inflation risks will quickly subside.

It will be the first meeting chaired by Kevin Warsh and comes after Trump's repeated demands for rate cuts to boost the world's biggest economy.

"What he says about interest rates, given that inflation is still twice the Fed's two per cent target, should be interesting," said David Morrison, senior market analyst at Trade Nation.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Monday amounted to JD18.8 million spread over 6.3 million shares that traded through 5,137 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.1 per cent, closing at 4019.76 points.

Out of 102 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 36 companies rose while the share price of another 33 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Philadelphia International Educational Investment Company by 6.25 per cent, Ready Mix Concrete and Construction Supplies by 5.43 per cent, Ihdathiat Co-ordinates by 4.92 per cent, Arab Phoenix Holdings by 4.84 per cent, and Arab Investors Union Company for Real Estates Developing by 4.65 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Sura Development and Investment Plc. by 5 per cent, Jordan International Investment Company by 4.84 per cent, Arab Company for Investment Projects by 4.47 per cent, Jerusalem Insurance by 3.95 per cent, and Arab International for Education and Investment by 3.94 per cent.



Spain held by tiny Cape Verde at World Cup as Iran make bow

FOOTBALL

Atalanta hire veteran Sarri after sacking Palladino

MILAN, Italy (AFP) — Maurizio Sarri was confirmed as new Atalanta boss on Monday as the Serie A club make another attempt to rebuild following the sacking of Raffaele Palladino. Sarri, 67, has signed a three-year contract with Atalanta with an annual net salary of 3.5 million euros (\$4.06 million) for the Serie A winner with Juventus in 2020. Sarri arrives at Atalanta after leaving Lazio last month following a disastrous season in which the Rome-based club finished ninth and lost in the Italian Cup final. He replaces Palladino who failed to convince a club trying to reset following the departure of Gian Piero Gasperini for Roma last summer and was sacked last week after less than a season in charge. Palladino was hired in November following the sacking of Gasperini's replacement Ivan Juric in the hope of pushing for a top-four finish. However he could only lead Atalanta to seventh in Serie A, some 12 points away from the Champions League places, and the Italian Cup semifinals.

CRICKET

England to give debuts to Cox and Baker against New Zealand

LONDON (AFP) — England has handed debuts to Jordan Cox and Sonny Baker for Wednesday's second Test against New Zealand, while James Rew could also make his first appearance in the Oval clash. Despite winning the first Test at Lord's, England selectors have been forced to make a host of changes just over a week later. Captain Ben Stokes and fast bowler Gus Atkinson were left out of the England squad after breaching the team's midnight curfew while celebrate the Lord's victory. Pace bowler Ollie Robinson, who took seven wickets at Lord's, has pulled out due to a knee injury, while Rew is ready to step in if wicket-keeper Jamie Smith's partner gives birth in the next couple of days. Fresh from scoring 204 for Essex in his first County Championship outing for 11 months, Cox has been drafted in for Stokes. Baker bolsters the pace attack alongside Jofra Archer, who missed the first Test due to his Indian Premier League commitments with Rajasthan Royals. Fast bowler Matthew Fisher was also included for his second Test appearance — his first in more than four years — as spinner Shoab Bashir dropped out.

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — European champions Spain was held to a shock 0-0 draw by tiny World Cup debutants Cape Verde on Monday as Iran prepared to make its long-awaited entrance at the tournament after a build-up engulfed by uncertainty.

Spain, regarded as one of the strong pre-tournament favourites, had been expected to cruise past Cape Verde in its Group H opener in Atlanta.

But despite enjoying 74 per cent possession and laying siege to the Cape Verde goal, the 2010 world champions were unable to find a breakthrough against the underdogs from the volcanic archipelago of just 525,000 people, who are ranked as 2000-1 outsiders to win the World Cup by several betting websites.

Not even the introduction off the bench of Barcelona superstar Lamine Yamal could engineer a goal for Luis de la Fuente's men.

Cape Verde's players and supporters meanwhile celebrated wildly after securing an improbable point in what was its first ever World Cup match.

The underdogs, nicknamed the Blue Sharks, had never qualified for the World Cup, but were boosted in their bid to qualify for the finals after FIFA's expansion of the tournament to 48 teams.



Cape Verde's goalkeeper #01 Vozinha makes a save during the 2026 World Cup Group H football match between Spain and Cape Verde at the Atlanta Stadium in Atlanta on Monday

In other games on Monday, Saudi Arabia faces Uruguay in Group H in Miami, while Belgium faces Mohamed Salah's Egypt in a Group G game in Seattle.

Iran protests planned

In Los Angeles all eyes will turn to Iran's opening game of the tournament, where they take on New Zealand in Group G at the SoFi Stadium.

The match follows a

chaotic period of preparations for Iran following the US-Israeli led military strikes on their country earlier this year.

Iran were initially to be based in Tucson, Arizona for the tournament, but switched their training base to Tijuana in Mexico at the 11th hour as a result of ongoing tensions with World Cup co-hosts the United States over visa issues.

US authorities have refused to grant visas

for several members of the Iranian delegation.

Protests are planned outside the stadium by members of the Iranian diaspora opposed to the nation's hardline regime, and there have been threats that the Iran team could walk off the pitch if anti-government banners are displayed during the game.

Speaking to reporters at a press conference on Sunday, Iran coach Amir Ghalenoei said he hoped

his team's performances at the World Cup could unite all Iranians at home and overseas.

"We are here to perform a good match, a high-quality match. We don't pay attention to any of the hype and anything that goes on around us," Ghalenoei said in response to a question from AFP.

"Naturally, all teams have their own problems, and in many countries, many things happen that have nothing to

do with football."

The coach said his team are at the World Cup to "represent the respectful people of Iran, be it the Iranians inside Iran or the Iranian diaspora."

"We are not political people... football is separate from politics," said Ghalenoei.

Iran's World Cup debut comes just a day after Washington and Tehran announced a permanent deal to end their conflict.

Taylor Swift becomes youngest woman in Songwriters Hall of Fame

NEW YORK (AFP) — Taylor Swift became the youngest woman ever inducted into the prestigious Songwriters Hall of Fame, another milestone in the 36-year-old US pop star's record-breaking career.

The female record was previously held by Carole Bayer Sager, who was 43 when she joined in 1987. Stevie Wonder remains the youngest person ever admitted, at age 32 in 1983.

Artists become eligible for the Hall of Fame 20 years after the release of their first commercial track. For Swift, that was "Tim McGraw", released in June 2006.

Her success since is undeniable: the American artist has recorded 12 albums spanning country, pop, and folk, earning her 14 Grammy Awards in the United States, including four Album of the Year trophies — a record.

"Swift's ability to shapeshift as a songwriter, to inhabit different sonic landscapes and write as credibly in the world of one genre as she does another is part



Taylor Swift takes a selfie with a fan during halftime of Game Four of the 2026 NBA Finals between the San Antonio Spurs and the New York Knicks at Madison Square Garden on June 10

of her superpower as a songwriter," reads her bio on the Hall of Fame website.

"It also represents the boldness and bravery of her artistry: To explore new frontiers when the most practical next step would be to keep mining the material that has gotten you the success in the first place."

Swift appeared on the red carpet in New

York on Thursday wearing a strapless black dress with floral motifs ahead of the naming ceremony.

'Great honour'

Also inducted on Thursday were Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley of KISS, the band behind hits such as "Rock and Roll All Nite" and "Detroit Rock City".

"It doesn't suck," Stanley told AFP when asked how it felt to join the prestigious song-writing ranks.

"It's really hard to digest the idea. I certainly don't consider myself in that rarified air of some of the writers, but if you wanna be in that club, I'm there."

Kenny Loggins, the hitmaker behind movie soundtrack classics

like "Footloose" and "Danger Zone" from "Top Gun", was inducted into the Hall of Fame as well.

"It's a great honour and I appreciate it," Loggins told AFP. "It's the culmination of a lifetime writing, and that's exciting for me."

Canadian singer Alanis Morissette, inescapable in the 1990s, and American record producer Walter Afanasieff were also among the total of nine songwriters joining the Hall of Fame this year.

Estimates put Taylor Swift's worldwide sales at over 250 million album-equivalents. Her most recent tour in 2023 and 2024, titled "The Eras Tour", brought in a record sum of around two billion dollars.

She is also the female artist with the most songs ever to reach the top 10 list compiled by Billboard, the leading US music magazine.

Swift is omnipresent in the media. After unveiling a country track for the soundtrack of the film "Toy Story 5", she was at Madison Square Garden on Wednesday for a game of the NBA Finals.

Austronesian boat sets sail on epic voyage from Taiwan to Philippines

ORCHID ISLAND, Tainan County, Taiwan (AFP) — Battling huge waves, twenty Austronesian men in orange life-jackets set off on a hand-carved longboat into the western Pacific Ocean, destined for the home of their ancestral kin for the first time in 300 years.

The indigenous Tao people, native to the tiny Orchid Island 90 kilometres off Taiwan's southeast coast, have close cultural, linguistic and historic ties with the Philippines' Batanes islands and its Ivatan communities.

AFP journalists saw Tao crew members tying oars onto the "Golden Friendship" narrow watercraft and doing a test row on Sunday ahead of its about 185-kilometre voyage to the neighbouring Philippine archipelago.

Setting sail on Monday, participants said the odyssey across the Bashi Channel will trace an ancestral sea route to strengthen longstanding traditional ties between the two communities.

"I've always wanted to visit the place where my ancestors once went and see what it's like there," oarsman Wu Hsi-lung told AFP.

"I feel that I carry the blood of this place and want to do something

for my community," the 26-year-old stand-up paddleboarding coach said.

The tatala — an intricately carved and hand-painted seafaring boat made from living trees — was traditionally built to catch flying fish to feed families and communities on the 45-square-kilometre Orchid Island.

But it still carries deep spiritual significance for the Tao, he said, adding the red-and-white-painted vessel was "like a member of the family".

Families and onlookers gathered on Monday to see off the seafarers, who expect to row through the night and arrive at their destination on Tuesday afternoon.

The voyage is the "first such journey in 300 years", Hsiao noted, adding that many descendants of early Tao seafarers "wanted to take part in this meaningful event".

Syaman Maraos, the trip's organiser and chairman of the Indigenous Peoples Cultural Foundation, said that the boat would be put on display upon arriving at its destination.

The 54-year-old, who was also joining the trip, hoped the endeavour would "help foster more exchanges with other peoples and countries across the Pacific, allowing us to continue and strengthen this cultural journey".

He hoped Ivatan islanders living on Batanes would be able to row the Golden Friendship back to Orchid Island next year.

"It would be a major boost for maritime culture," he said.

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