



AGREEMENT
Water Ministry, KfW sign agreement to implement National Water Carrier grant



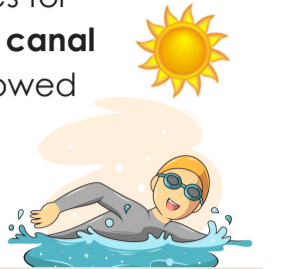
DIPLOMACY
Safadi, Slovenian counterpart discuss cooperation, regional developments



OIL
Oil prices sink further as Trump signs deal to reopen Hormuz



WEATHER
France braces for heatwave with canal swimming allowed in Paris



Friday-Saturday, June 19-20, 2026 | Muharram 4-5, 1448 Hijri



CBJ keeps key interest rate unchanged at 5.75% amid stable economic indicators

AMMAN (JT) — The Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) has kept its key interest rate unchanged at 5.75 per cent, following the fourth meeting of its Open Market Operations Committee in 2026, while also maintaining rates on other monetary policy instruments at their current levels.

The decision reflects the committee's assessment of domestic and global economic and monetary developments, as well as its mandate to preserve monetary stability and ensure that local interest rates remain aligned with regional and international financial conditions, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The committee reaffirmed its commitment to closely monitoring economic and monetary trends both locally and abroad, stating that it will take necessary measures to safeguard monetary stability as needed. It also highlighted a set of proactive measures implemented by the CBJ in April 2026, valued at JD760 million, which it said helped strengthen the resilience of the national economy.

Continued on page 5

Jordan, Arab, Islamic countries condemn escalating Israeli settler violence in occupied West Bank

AMMAN (JT) — The foreign ministers of Jordan, the UAE, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Egypt on Thursday condemned the ongoing and escalating settler violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. In a joint statement, the ministers highlighted recent attacks on the Great Mosque in Jiljilya village and Al Farouq Mosque in Mazari an Nubani village, north of Ramallah. They stressed that these attacks constitute a clear violation of the sanctity of places of worship and religious sites, international law, international humanitarian law and relevant United Nations resolutions. The foreign ministers expressed their absolute rejection of these unacceptable acts committed by Israeli settlers, as well as the continuation of unilateral and illegal Israeli measures in the occupied Palestinian territory. They warned that such actions fuel instability, violence and extremism, while un-



A Palestinian man inspects the damage inside a mosque reportedly burnt by Israeli settlers over night, in the Israeli occupied West Bank village of Jiljilya, just north of the West Bank city of Ramallah on Wednesday

dermining international efforts to achieve peace. The ministers also held Israel, the occupying power, fully responsible for these

attacks. The statement renewed calls for the international community to assume its legal and moral responsibilities

to compel Israel to halt its dangerous escalation in the occupied West Bank, end its illegal practices, stop settler violence,

hold the perpetrators accountable and ensure they do not escape punishment.

Continued on page 5

JHCO says new aid convoy dispatched to war-torn Lebanon

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation (JHCO) on Thursday dispatched a new humanitarian aid convoy to Lebanon, in cooperation with the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army and the Foreign Ministry. The convoy, the eighth sent to support the Lebanese people, consisted of 19 trucks loaded with relief items, essential supplies, and a shipment of medicines intended for the Lebanese health sector and hospitals. The aid was coordinated in cooperation with relevant authorities and the Civil-Military Cooperation Centre, according to a JHCO statement. The shipment was prepared in coordination with the Lebanese



Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation says on Thursday it dispatched a new humanitarian aid convoy to Lebanon

High Relief Commission, based on lists of immediate needs and the field situation on

the ground, to ensure that assistance reaches the sectors and groups most in need.

"These continuous Jordanian convoys aim to support critical sectors and ease the

impact of difficult humanitarian conditions in Lebanon, reflecting the Kingdom's ongoing humanitarian role in standing by fraternal countries during crises," the statement said. The JHCO expressed its appreciation and thanks to the Syrian authorities for their extensive efforts in facilitating the smooth transit of the humanitarian convoys through Syrian territory to Lebanon. The organisation reaffirmed its commitment to continuing the coordination of humanitarian and relief efforts with local and international partners to boost the resilience of affected communities and support vital sectors, mostly health and living security.

Pezeshkian publishes Iran's copy of reported US agreement

AMMAN (JT) — Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has released Tehran's copy of a framework agreement he said was separately signed with US President Donald Trump earlier this week. Posting on X, Pezeshkian described the document as "a historical document and a message from a powerful Iran", adding that it signalled "peace will be realised in the shadow of mutual respect". He said the Islamic Republic of Iran has "always been committed and steadfast to global peace while preserving its dignity and independence, as well as to progress and regional cooperation."



facsimile of the agreement on X platform, identifying it as the "Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding Between

the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America".

Continued on page 5

UN demands halt to RSF 'imminent offensive' in Sudan

GENEVA (AFP) — The United Nations said Thursday an "imminent offensive" on the strategic Sudanese city of El-Obeid by the RSF paramilitary forces must be halted, warning of catastrophic consequences for civilians. "Stop this madness," said UN rights chief Volker Turk, following reports of a significant troop build-up by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and allied forces around El Obeid, as well as intensified drone strikes and artillery shelling. He said an imminent offensive risked serious international crimes being committed again, as well as deepening the catastrophic impact on the civilian population. For months, El Obeid,

the capital of North Kordofan state, has been partially encircled by paramilitary forces, in what the UN has described as siege-like conditions. "Civilians are at grave risk in Kordofan..." "We have seen this playbook before," Turk said in a statement. The world cannot "allow a repeat of the preventable atrocities we documented in El Fasher and Zamzam IDP [internally displaced persons] camp in North Darfur last year" he said. "Civilians are at grave

risk in Kordofan, particularly in El Obeid, in the absence of action to halt the imminent offensive and further military escalation. "Let this be a stark warning to the world of an impending human rights disaster and worsening humanitarian situation. "The states with influence have the duty to exercise it now to stop this madness in its tracks." The conflict in Sudan has killed tens of thousands of people and forced more than 11 million from their homes, creating what the United Nations describes as the world's largest displacement and hunger crises. It is now in its fourth year.

Continued on page 5

Trump defends Iran deal from critics he calls 'fools'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — US President Donald Trump lashed out at critics of his agreement with Iran on Thursday, calling those who accused him of offering concessions to end the war "fools", ahead of negotiations in Switzerland on implementing the deal. Oil prices tumbled after Trump and his Iranian counterpart separately signed their accord to end the Middle East war, with the Strait of Hormuz to reopen but two months of negotiations lying ahead. In a sudden development after uncertainty over when the deal agreed earlier this week would be formally signed, Trump put his name to it in thick black ink at a candlelit dinner with French President Emmanuel Macron at the Palace of Versailles outside Paris on Wednesday. Macron, for whom the signing at the palace, which hosted the signing of the treaty that ended World War I, was an immense coup following his hosting of the G7 summit, shouted "bravo" as



US President Donald Trump addresses the media on the tarmac after arriving at Paris Orly Airport enroute to a dinner to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the independence of the United States, at Orly Airport, south of Paris, on Wednesday

Trump signed. "These fools, who think I haven't been tough enough on Iran, when the Stock Market Just Hit A RECORD HIGH, and Oil prices are 'tumbling' down, are either jealous, bad people, or stupid," Trump posted on social

media hours after signing the deal. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian also signed the agreement, Iranian foreign minister spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said, adding that "now it is time to test the implementation of the

agreement". Crude fell more than 3 per cent Thursday, extending the losses sustained since news of the deal broke at the weekend. "Allows for peace" The deal should bring an end to the current US-Israeli conflict with the Islamic republic, which saw five weeks of all-out war until a ceasefire early April and led to shipping being greatly restricted in the Strait of Hormuz, causing a spike in energy prices. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of Pakistan, which helped mediate the agreement, said it "shall enter into force with immediate effect" and Iran "will instantly reopen the Strait of Hormuz". He also signed the accord.

Continued on page 5



Water and Irrigation Minister Raed Abu Saud and KfW Development Bank Office Country Director Matthias Schmidt-Rosen on Thursday sign an agreement linked to previously approved grant and project agreements for the National Water Carrier Project

Water Ministry, KfW sign agreement to implement National Water Carrier grant

AMMAN (JT) — Water and Irrigation Minister Raed Abu Saud and KfW Development Bank Office Country Director Matthias Schmidt-Rosen on Thursday signed an agreement linked to previously approved grant and project agreements for the National Water Carrier Project.

The agreement aims to launch implementation of the grant and reflects "continued" cooperation over many years and German support for the water sector to improve water security, according to a ministry statement.

Germany's contribution to the National Water Carrier Project includes a 102-million-euro grant from the German government through KfW, in addition to 25 million euros through a debt swap agreement, bringing the total contribution to 127 million euros.

The ministry said that the contribution is one of the grants allocated to the project and reflects "continued" German support for Jordan's water

sector amid increasing demand and challenges linked to climate change.

The National Water Carrier Project, which will be implemented through a public-private partnership model, aims to provide Jordan with around 300 million cubic metres of additional drinking water annually starting in 2030.

The project includes the construction of a "large" desalination plant on the Red Sea and around 450 kilometres of transmission pipelines to deliver desalinated water to Amman and other areas, in addition to the installation of solar photovoltaic systems to cover part of the project's energy needs through renewable energy sources.

Through integrating renewable energy, the project seeks to reduce its carbon footprint and contribute to Jordan's goals in climate action and the transition to clean energy.

The National Water Carrier Project is considered one of the "main

pillars of Jordan's long-term water strategy" and is expected to "significantly" enhance the reliability and resilience of water supplies for households and the industrial and agricultural sectors.

The ministry said that the project, through mobilising financing from donor institutions alongside "broad" international support, represents a "model for innovative infrastructure financing and international cooperation in climate-resilient water management".

The project is expected to ease pressure on "depleted" groundwater resources, support the recovery of aquifers and enhance the resilience of the water sector in the face of climate change and population growth.

It is classified as a national priority due to its importance in providing a reliable, long-term and sustainable water solution, addressing shortages for domestic use and supporting economic development.

DPA urges continued support for UNRWA amid regional crises

AMMAN (JT) — UNRWA has proven its ability to operate and respond under the most challenging circumstances, remaining a lifeline for millions of Palestinian refugees who depend on its educational, health, relief and social services, Director General of the Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA) Rafiq Khirfan said on Thursday.

Speaking during an UNRWA Advisory Commission meeting in Amman, attended by donor country representatives, commission members and international partners, Khirfan expressed the government's appreciation for the delegations' participation and their continuous commitment to supporting Palestinian refugees and the international relief agency.

In a speech delivered on behalf of the Arab League, Khirfan stressed the critical importance of sustained political and financial backing for the agency amid the region's exceptional circumstances, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He stressed that UNRWA is not merely a service provider, but a symbol of the international community's ongoing commitment to the Palestinian refugee issue until a just and lasting solution is reached in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions.

The DPA director-general praised the efforts of UNRWA's management and staff across



Speaking during an UNRWA Advisory Commission meeting in Amman, Director General of the Department of Palestinian Affairs Rafiq Khirfan says that UNRWA has proven its ability to operate and respond under the most challenging circumstances

its fields of operations, particularly in the Gaza Strip, commending their humanitarian and relief services under extremely difficult conditions.

He also voiced his appreciation to donor countries and organisations whose contributions enable the agency to fulfil its UN mandate. Khirfan noted that the meeting convened amid highly complex regional conditions marked by escalating conflicts and military tensions, which have brought broad humanitarian, security and economic repercussions.

This is in addition to the catastrophic impact of the recent war on the Gaza Strip, which has

resulted in severe human loss, widespread destruction of infrastructure and basic necessities, further exacerbating the suffering of refugees and driving humanitarian needs to unprecedented levels, he added.

The DPA director-general noted that Arab host nations view UNRWA's role as a "cornerstone" for regional stability, reinforcing the host countries' capacity to cope with growing socio-economic challenges at a time when the agency itself faces mounting financial and operational hurdles that threaten its efficiency.

On behalf of the host

nations and the Arab League, Khirfan welcomed UNRWA's acting commissioner-general, wishing him success in leading the agency, while expressing appreciation for the former commissioner-general's efforts during his tenure under complex challenges.

Furthermore, Khirfan reviewed the Kingdom's efforts, led by His Majesty King Abdullah, to support UNRWA and mobilise international backing through global conferences and meetings organised in cooperation with other nations.

He added that these efforts have helped maintain the agency's

continuity according to its UN mandate until a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian refugee issue is achieved based on UN Resolution 194 of 1948.

For their part, host countries expressed concern over the exceptional financial measures the agency was forced to adopt due to the ongoing funding crisis, including a 20 per cent reduction in working hours and subsequent staff salary cuts.

They cautioned that the continuation of such measures could negatively affect staff stability, institutional efficiency and the quality of services provided to Palestinian refugees.

Hani Hayajneh nominated as vice-chair International Advisory Committee of the UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — Jordanian Professor Hani Hayajneh is nominated as a member of the International Advisory Board of the UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme.

The International Advisory Board is the highest advisory body of the UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme and is responsible for the direction of the programme and the maintenance of the International Register of Documentary Heritage.

The Memory of the World Programme is a UNESCO initiative dedicated to preserving and promoting access to documentary heritage of global significance, including



Jordanian Professor Hani Hayajneh

manuscripts, archives, historical records, rare books, photographs, maps and audiovisual collections.

Through its International Register, the pro-

gramme recognises documentary heritage that holds exceptional value for humanity and encourages international cooperation for its preservation

and accessibility.

"I am deeply honoured by this appointment, which was made by the Director-General of UNESCO in my personal capacity. I see it not only as professional recognition but also as an opportunity to contribute to international efforts to protect documentary heritage and ensure its accessibility for future generations," Hayajneh said.

Documentary heritage represents the collective memory of humanity and plays a crucial role in preserving knowledge, identity and cultural diversity, he added.

The International Advisory Committee is the highest advisory body of the UNESCO's Memory

of the World Programme, Hayajneh continued, adding that it provides "strategic" guidance for the programme, oversees the international Memory of the World Register, and advises UNESCO on matters concerning the preservation, accessibility and promotion of documentary heritage.

"The committee also reviews nominations submitted for inclusion in the international register and contributes to the development of policies and priorities for safeguarding documentary heritage worldwide."

"I hope that my participation will help highlight the rich documentary heritage of Jordan and the Arab region and strength-

en their commitment to the UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme," Hayajneh underlined.

"Unfortunately, wars, military interventions and crisis mark the period in which we live."

To overcome challenges of fragmentations, Hayajneh expressed hope that the rich Arab heritage will transcend modern political boundaries, languages, ethnicities, and religious traditions.

"For millennia, the region has been home to numerous languages and writing systems that have passed down the history, memories, beliefs, knowledge, and experiences of its peoples through generations," the professor said. Manuscripts, epigraphi-

cal corpora, archives, historical records, photographs, collections of oral traditions, and audiovisual materials from across the Arab world bear witness to a long history of cultural diversity and intellectual exchange, he added.

This documentary heritage represents not only the history of individual nations but also a shared civilisational space shaped by diverse linguistic, ethnic and religious communities, Hayajneh continued.

"Strengthening collaboration among archives, libraries, universities, museums, and other institutions dedicated to preserving memory can play a crucial role in safeguard-

ing this shared heritage," Hayajneh noted.

The professor added that joint documentation initiatives, collaborative digitisation projects, capacity-building programmes and multinational nominations for the UNESCO's Memory of the World Register can help boost cultural ties, promote knowledge exchange, and give a "deep" understanding of the region's shared historical heritage.

"In times of increasing fragmentation, documentary heritage can serve as a powerful reminder of the diverse historical, cultural and intellectual connections that continue to unite the peoples of the region," Hayajneh said.

Tkiyet Um Ali launches campaign to combat nutritional poverty among children

AMMAN (JT) — Tkiyet Um Ali (TUA) on Thursday launched a new awareness campaign titled "Nutritional Poverty Holds Back Their Growth", highlighting the impact of nutritional poverty on children's health, development, and ability to learn.

Through launching the campaign, TUA calls for greater efforts to ensure children have access to healthy and balanced diets that support their physical and cognitive growth, according to a TUA statement.

Many children living in vulnerable households face challenges in accessing sufficient and diverse food, affecting their health, concentration and academic performance.

Deficiencies in essential nutrients, particularly iron, are among the most significant consequences of nutri-

tional poverty, increasing the risk of anaemia and negatively affecting children's growth and cognitive development, TUA said.

According to the 2023 Jordan Population and Family Health Survey, nearly one third of children in Jordan, 32 per cent, suffer from anaemia, while 8 per cent experience stunting or wasting, both key indicators of malnutrition and inadequate intake of essential nutrients needed for healthy growth.

The campaign builds on TUA's 2014 "Bread and Tea" campaign, which shed light on the reality faced by children whose diets lack the diversity and nutritional value required for healthy development.

The new campaign emphasises that nutritional poverty extends beyond hunger, affecting children's

health, growth, learning outcomes and future potential.

As part of its efforts to reduce nutritional poverty and enhance sustainable food security, TUA continues to support some 20,000 vulnerable families across Jordan through monthly food assistance programmes, food parcels and meal distributions.

The organisation also launched its School Feeding Programme in November 2025.

The School Feeding Programme targets students in underserved public schools in the governorates of Balqa, Jerash, and Karak by providing daily natural date bars to children attending schools that are not covered by regular food support programmes.

Rich in fibre and natural energy, the date bars help support students'

health and improve their ability to focus throughout the school day.

Commenting on the campaign, TUA Director-General Samer Balkar said that nutritional poverty has a direct impact on children's health, learning and development.

"When children do not receive the essential nutrients their bodies need, they become more vulnerable to health conditions such as anaemia, which can affect their energy levels, concentration and academic performance," Balkar added.

He added that investing in school feeding programmes is one practical solution that helps children learn, grow and build a better future.

"At Tkiyet Um Ali, we believe that access to nutritious food is not a luxury but a fundamental necessity for



Nutritional Poverty Holds Back Their Growth

every child's growth and development."

"Through this campaign, we aim to raise awareness of this issue

and mobilise greater support to ensure that the most vulnerable children have access to food that supports both

their health and educational outcomes," he noted.

Alongside the campaign launch, TUA has

introduced a community giving initiative that enables individuals to donate one date bar for every participating date bar product purchased.

Based on a "Buy One, Donate One" model, each purchase automatically provides an additional date bar to a child enrolled in the School Feeding Programme.

The initiative will help expand the programme's reach to more children while encouraging community participation in addressing nutritional poverty and its impact on children's health and education.

TUA called on individuals, companies, and institutions to support the School Feeding Programme and participate in the campaign through its official donation channels, helping provide nutritious food to children who need it most.



GAM photo

The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation says on Thursday that it signed six financing and grant agreements in May worth approximately 158.9 million euros to support key development projects across Jordan

Planning Ministry signs 158.9m euros in financing, grants to advance development projects

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation said on Thursday that it signed six financing and grant agreements in May worth approximately 158.9 million euros to support key development projects across Jordan.

Three grant agreements, valued at 135 million euros, were signed with the European Commission under the Jordan-EU Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership.

The funding includes 30 million euros for human capital development, 25 million euros to strengthen integrated border management and 80 million euros to support Syrian refugees, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The ministry also signed a 14 million euros grant agree-

ment with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) for the "Innovative Approaches for Financial Inclusion in MSMEs" project.

The project will be implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and UN Women...

Financed by Germany (10 million euros) and The Netherlands (4 million euros), the initiative will be implemented in partnership with the Central Bank of Jordan to

improve micro, small and medium-sized enterprises' access to an inclusive and green financial system.

In the water sector, the ministry signed an amendment to a German-funded grant agreement with GIZ worth 8.23 million euros to improve energy efficiency across the sector.

To promote women's economic empowerment, the ministry also finalised an agreement for the "Women's Economic Participation in the Floriculture Sector in Jordan" project, which aims to remove barriers to women's employment while expanding opportunities in the sector.

The project will be implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and UN Women with \$1.9 million in funding from the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility.

Safadi, Slovenian counterpart discuss cooperation, regional developments

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi on Thursday discussed bilateral relations and regional developments with Slovenian Foreign Minister Tone Kajzer.

During a telephone call, Safadi congratulated Kajzer on assuming his new responsibilities as Slovenia's min-

ister of foreign affairs and discussed ways to bolster bilateral relations, build on progress achieved and open wider horizons for cooperation in various fields of mutual interest, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

The two ministers also reviewed efforts to end the escalation in the region and restore security and stability,

in light of the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the US and Iran.

Safadi and Kajzer agreed to maintain coordination and consultation to follow up on efforts to enhance cooperation between the two friendly countries, as well as on regional and international issues of common concern.



Ayman Safadi



Tone Kajzer

ASEZA, JGA sign land lease deal for green ammonia facility in Aqaba

AMMAN (JT) — The Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) and Jordan Green Ammonia (JGA) on Thursday signed a land lease agreement to establish a green ammonia production facility in southern Aqaba.

The agreement was signed in the presence of ASEZA Chief Commissioner Shadi Majali, Senator Sharhabeel Madi and members of the Board of Commissioners, according to an ASEZA statement.

ASEZA Commissioner for Economic Affairs and Investment Mohammad Abu Omar and JGA Chief Executive Officer Wael Suleiman signed the agreement.

Abu Omar described the project as a landmark investment that reflects ASEZA's strategy to attract sustainable, environmentally



Photo courtesy of ASEZA

The Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority and Jordan Green Ammonia on Thursday sign a land lease agreement to establish a green ammonia production facility in southern Aqaba

friendly industries.

He said the project would strengthen Aqaba's position as a regional hub for clean energy and green fuel production and exports, while supporting Jordan's transition to a green economy and enhancing the city's international competitiveness.

He added that the

project marks a significant step toward transforming Aqaba into a sustainable green city through the adoption of advanced low-emission technologies.

It is also expected to generate direct and indirect employment opportunities during both the construction and operational phases, contributing to lo-

cal development and the national economy, the statement said.

Suleiman said that the project is the Kingdom's first commercial green ammonia production facility and will be located in a strategic industrial zone adjacent to the Port of Aqaba. The complex is designed to produce up to 100,000

tonnes of green ammonia annually.

He added that the facility will operate entirely on renewable energy generated by a 550 megawatt solar power plant, supported by advanced energy storage systems, eliminating the need for fossil fuels.

According to Suleiman, the project is currently undergoing Front-End Engineering Design and an Environmental Impact Assessment, with financial close targeted for 2027.

He noted that Aqaba's strategic location, advanced infrastructure and world-class port facilities position the city as an ideal gateway for exporting green ammonia to European and Asian markets, reinforcing Jordan's role in global clean energy supply chains.

Maqta Ayla begins operations to enhance Aqaba's logistics efficiency

AMMAN (JT) — The Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA), the Aqaba Development Corporation (ADC) and Abu Dhabi Ports Group (AD Ports Group) on Thursday launched the operations of Maqta Ayla Digital Solutions.

The initiative is aimed at enhancing operational efficiency and strengthening Aqaba's competitiveness as a regional trade and logistics hub on the Red Sea, marking a major step in the digital transformation of Aqaba's port and logistics sector, according to an ASEZA statement.

The launch was announced during a ceremony in Aqaba held in the presence of ASEZA Chief Commissioner Shadi Majali, Aqaba Governor Ayman Awaysha, Noatum Ports Chief Executive Officer Mohamed Tamimi and ADC Chief Executive Officer Hussein Safadi.

Maqta Ayla is a Jordanian company established through a strategic partnership between ADC and AD Ports Group, via its international port operations arm, Noatum Ports.

The company will manage, operate and further develop Aqaba's



ASEZA photo

The initiative aims at enhancing operational efficiency and strengthening Aqaba's competitiveness as a regional trade and logistics hub on the Red Sea

truck control and monitoring system through an integrated digital platform designed to improve logistics efficiency.

ASEZA Commissioner for Economic Affairs and Investment Mohammad Abu Omar said that Aqaba has been a regional pioneer in organized port logistics since the truck control project was introduced in 2005.

He noted that the system, which initially handled around 2,000 trucks per day, now processes between 3,500 and 4,000 trucks daily in coordination with Maqta Ayla, with traffic exceeding 4,500 trucks on peak days.

He described Maqta Ayla as a strategic partner in advancing ASEZA's vision of deploying cutting-edge technology and innovation to improve the investment environment and attract high-value investments.

Abu Omar also commended the Land Transport Regulatory Commission, Jordan Customs, security agencies, port and logistics companies, the project's previous operator and other stakeholders for their contributions to the initiative's success.

Safadi said the launch marks a significant milestone in strengthening Aqaba's digital in-

frastructure and reflects the success of strategic partnerships with leading global operators such as AD Ports Group.

Tamimi described the launch as another milestone in the group's growing partnership with Jordan.

He said Maqta Ayla has already completed the first phase of the truck movement management project, which uses advanced digital technologies and artificial intelligence to streamline cargo movements, reduce waiting times and improve the overall efficiency of logistics operations in Aqaba.

DEVELOPMENT

Ajloun National Park reaches 60% completion — JFDZG

AMMAN (JT) — The completion rate of the first phase of the Ajloun National Park project has reached 60 per cent since construction began late 2025, Chairman of the Jordan Free and Development Zones Group (JFDZG) Sakher Ajlouni said on Thursday.

Ajlouni stressed that the project serves as a "cornerstone" for sustainable development in Ajloun, some 70 kilometres northwest of Amman, and surrounding areas, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The project is expected to stimulate local and foreign investment, offering diverse opportunities in tourism, eco-tourism, restaurants and recreational services, Ajlouni noted.

The venue features a four-star hotel, a boutique hotel, an eco-lodge, a dedicated camping area for university and school students, a family park with children's rides, an adventure zone, an outdoor cinema and multipurpose halls.

These components open the door for the



Petra photo

The Ajloun National Park project is expected to stimulate local and foreign investment, offering diverse opportunities in tourism, eco-tourism, restaurants and recreational services

private sector to enter into development partnerships that serve the region, the JFDZG chairman added.

JFDZG Director General Reem Sahawneh said that completed works so far include infrastructure development, excavation, parking lots, administrative buildings and access roads leading to the park site, which spans a total area of nearly 700 dunnums.

Sahawneh noted that the project is being implemented in

two phases. The first phase covers 140 dunnums and the second spans 150 dunnums within the initial development section, with the remaining area to be completed in later stages.

She pointed out that the park is located in one of the Kingdom's most scenic natural areas, characterised by dense forests and panoramic highlands, making it an "ideal" year-round destination for eco-tourism and recreation.

The project will complement the Ajloun Cable Car and other local tourist facilities, boosting the governorate's appeal as an integrated tourism destination, Sahawneh added.

The venture is projected to generate over 200 direct jobs for residents of Ajloun Governorate, alongside hundreds of indirect employment opportunities during both the construction and operational phases.

Cassation Court upholds over 3-year sentence for drug dealer

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld a September 2023 State Security Court (SSC) ruling, sentencing a drug dealer to over three years in prison after convicting him of possessing illegal narcotics in Amman in May 2023.

The court declared

the defendant guilty of obtaining illegal narcotics with the intent of selling the drugs to an undercover agent in Nasser Neighbourhood on May 18.

The SSC handed the defendant five years in prison for the offence of possessing illegal narcotics and ordered him to pay JD5,000 in fines.

However, the court decided to reduce the fine to JD3,500 and the prison term to three years and four months in prison to give the defendant a second chance in life.

Court documents said the Anti-Narcotics Department (AND) learnt the defendant was in possession of illegal narcotics and

sent one of its agents to pose as a buyer.

"The AND agent got in touch with the defendant via a mobile application and asked him for a small stash of Hashish and six Captagon pills in return for JD15," court documents said.

When the two met, AND agents immediately arrested the

suspect, court papers added.

Upon searching the defendant, officers found additional narcotics on him, including Crystal meth, Hashish and 104 Captagon pills.

The defendant contested the SSC's ruling through his lawyer, who argued that the court "did not provide

solid evidence to implicate his client for drug trafficking".

"My client confessed to using illegal narcotics but never confessed to being a drug dealer," the lawyer argued.

In addition, the lawyer charged the court with "depending on weak evidence and contradictory state-

ments by the prosecution witnesses".

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

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

"It was clear to the court that the defendant confessed willingly to possessing the illegal drugs to sell in the local market," the higher court said.

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



A video grab from footage made available on Thursday, showing US President Donald Trump during the signing of a deal with Iran to end the Middle East war, inside the Chateau de Versailles, in Versailles, southwest of Paris on Wednesday

US media slam Trump's 'spin job' over Iran war deal

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — Pre-war objectives abandoned, Iran's power bolstered, tens of billions of dollars guzzled away: US media appear unanimous in condemning Donald Trump's concessions to Iran in a deal meant to end the war.

The US president put his signature to a Memorandum of Understanding on Wednesday at a candlelit dinner outside Paris, aiming to draw a line under the war which has engulfed the Middle East and rocked the global economy.

But Trump's return to the United States on Thursday is set to bring him back to reality, with a barrage of criticism expected from both opponents and supporters of the conflict.

Even Fox News, the usually Trump-friendly news channel, cited critics who said the agreement gave Iran "huge financial benefits" without requiring the dismantlement of its nuclear programme.

The deal is only a temporary arrangement meant to give time for starting detailed negotiations on the far more complex issue of long-term control over the nuclear power ambitions of Iran, which Washington has long suspected of harbouring a secret bomb-making programme.

Once a final agreement is reached on the Islamic republic's nuclear programme, the United States will facilitate the release of a \$300 billion reconstruction fund supported by regional nations, according to the deal.

Messaging from Trump's inner circle looks unlikely to sway Fox News in giving sig-

nificant airtime to criticism of the deal.

"Despite the administration portraying the agreement as a breakthrough, critics have argued that the concessions offered to Iran far outweigh the commitments secured in return," Fox said.

Left-leaning US TV network MS NOW put it this way: "The White House agreed to this ceasefire extension that met none of its prewar objectives while providing enormous financial concessions to Tehran."

'For more than two decades Iran walked right up to the edge of building a nuclear bomb, but never stepped over the line'

"Now, the administration is desperately trying to argue otherwise. Quite simply, Trump got played by the Iranians and no one is buying his spin job."

'Nothing like a surrender'

The agreement is "widely seen as the biggest foreign-policy bet of the president's second term", according to the Wall Street Journal, which noted Trump "will face resistance from Iran policy hawks who say the president is giving up far more than he is getting".

Even the signing of the deal appeared to fall into disarray, with the

business daily reporting that Trump inked the agreement for a second time on Wednesday night, surprising some of his aides and derailing plans for a signing ceremony later this week.

The New York Times, meanwhile, said Iran could emerge from the conflict with "much to celebrate", noting that the agreement "read nothing like a surrender document".

The Islamic republic "proved they can use economic chaos as a weapon", The Times said.

At the start of the conflict, which began with US-Israeli strikes on Tehran on February 28, Trump spoke of the possibility that the Iranian regime could collapse.

"If anything, Mr. Trump has propped up the new leadership," the newspaper said.

Worse still, Tehran could be closer than ever before to pushing for a nuclear weapon, it added.

"For more than two decades Iran walked right up to the edge of building a nuclear bomb, but never stepped over the line," the Times said.

"When Iran's leaders begin to clear the rubble left by 40 days of bombing, and think about how to spend the billions in oil revenue that will soon resume, they may well question whether they had the right nuclear strategy."

National Public Radio (NPR), whose funding Trump tried to cut before a judge blocked his order, stressed the human toll of the war, which "pitted the world's most powerful military against a far weaker, yet strategically adept, adversary."

Israel military says will keep operating in south Lebanon

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Israeli military said on Thursday it will continue operating in southern Lebanon and "remove threats" beyond its so-called security zone, after the US and Iran signed an agreement to end the Middle East war, including in Lebanon.

The military published a map of its declared "security zone", which runs some 10 kilometres inside Lebanese territory.

It said troops would continue to be deployed there "to remove threats and strengthen the defence of Israel's northern residents".

In a later statement, an Israeli military official said the army "will continue to remove threats to IDF soldiers and the civilians of the State of Israel that are identified beyond the security zone".

The announcement came after the United States and Iran signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Wednesday meant to end the Middle East war, with fighting supposed to be halted on all fronts, including in Lebanon.

Hours after the agreement was signed, Lebanese state media reported one person killed in an Israeli



This photo taken from a position in the Upper Galilee in northern Israel, shows an Israeli construction truck passing an Israeli flag covering part of a destroyed building in the southern Lebanese village of Taybeh near the border on Thursday

drone strike in southern Lebanon.

Israel's military meanwhile announced the death of one of its soldiers the night before during an incident in south Lebanon that also left seven other troops wounded.

The military official on Thursday called on the Lebanese Armed Forces to operate in coordination with Israeli forces and urged Leba-

nese civilians to avoid entering the security zone.

Since Iran and the US announced they had reached an agreement on Monday, there has been a sharp decrease in the level of violence in Lebanon.

Hizbollah, an Iran-backed militant group, drew Lebanon into the Middle East war in March by attacking Israel to avenge the

killings of the Islamic republic's supreme leader at the start of the US-Israeli campaign.

Israel retaliated with broad strikes across Lebanon and by launching a ground invasion into the south, which borders Israel and has long been under Hizbollah's sway.

Lebanon and Israel have been holding direct talks in Washington since April, seeking

to end the hostilities between Israel and Hizbollah and separate their conflict from the wider regional war.

"Further steps are still being discussed within the framework of direct negotiations between Israel and Lebanon," the Israeli military official said on Thursday, adding that "the representatives will reconvene next week".

Hegseth tells NATO US will review force presence in Europe

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AFP) — US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth told NATO on Thursday the Pentagon will conduct a review of its force presence in Europe within the next six months, as Washington pressures allies to step up their defences.

"This will be a real review. It will be designed to ensure that NATO is moving fast and irreversibly toward Europe leading, stepping up to take primary responsibility for the defence of Europe," Hegseth told a meeting of NATO defence ministers in Brussels.

The Pentagon chief said the move was also aimed at assuring that US "access, basing and overflight are clearly delineated and assured" after some



From left to right: Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, Germany's Defence Minister Boris Pistorius and Britain's Defence Secretary Dan Jarvis pose before a meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group during a NATO Defence Ministers meeting at the NATO headquarters, in Brussels, on Thursday

European imposed restrictions on US forces during the Iran war.

"It was shameful. These allies, they put America's sons and daughters, our sons

and daughters, at risk," he said. "There's no excuse for that."

The US is piling on the pressure ahead of a NATO summit next month as it seeks to

make sure that allies make good on a pledge made last year to massively ramp up defence spending.

Hegseth said going forward Washington paying its dues to cover NATO organisational running costs, roughly some \$790 million in 2026, would be "contingent" on allies reaching spending targets.

"Where other allies do not spend with urgency, our dues contributions will go down," he said.

The broadside from the US defence chief, who had initially signalled a conciliatory tone, will send a jolt through NATO allies concerned over US commitment to defending Europe.

US President Donald Trump had lashed out against European al-

lies over their response to his war in Iran.

But there was hope the US peace deal with Tehran could help NATO put the bad blood behind it by the time alliance leaders meet in Turkey.

"As President Trump put it, and rightfully so, he gave our allies a test to support America when we asked for their help and too many failed it," Hegseth said.

Despite the tough language, Hegseth did acknowledge strides by many members of NATO to ramp up their defences and said progress was being made.

"Some of our allies have gotten the message and stepped up. You know who you are, and we very much appreciate it," he said.

Suspected militants stage deadly new attack on Niger airport

ABIDJAN (AFP) — An attack on the international airport in Niger's capital on Thursday killed at least 11 soldiers and two civilians, officials said, months after militants staged a large assault on the sensitive site.

Twenty-two attackers were also killed as security forces repelled the raid on the Diiori Hamani International Airport in Niamey, Niger's defence ministry said.

Gunfire erupted early in the morning and rang out for hours near the airport, where a large military presence was later deployed, residents said.

Niger has been ruled for three years by a military junta, which has struggled to contain extremist violence that has rocked the west African country for around a decade.

"I heard the first shots around 6 o'clock [5:00 GMT]. The shoot-



Daesh militants set off explosions and roamed among passenger planes during an attack at Niger's main international airport, according to footage released by the group's Amaq news agency

ing was coming from the airport entrance," where there is a security checkpoint, a resident told AFP by telephone.

An airport source said the gunmen had arrived at the checkpoint "by taxi", then encountered "fierce resistance" from security forces.

The attackers —

some of whom wore explosive belts, according to the defence ministry — were "dispersed in the surrounding neighbourhoods, where the security forces are carrying out vast sweeps", the airport source said.

The checkpoint is a few hundred metres from the airport entrance, where armed police check vehicles

and people's identity papers.

"The military went down into certain neighbourhoods around the airport to sweep the area; they are receiving help from residents who are hunting down bandits with sticks and machetes," said another resident, a motorbike-taxi driver.

In a statement read out on TV, the defence ministry said four people had been wounded in the attack and "about 20 suspects" arrested.

It said a large-scale army operation was under way and the "international airport, which is fully secure, remains open to air traffic".

But tracking site Flightradar24 said multiple flights bound for Niamey had been rerouted or delayed.

'Flaw in the system'

In January, the airport and an adjoining military drone base were targeted in an attack claimed by the Islamic State in the Sahel (EIS).

Nigerien armed forces and their Russian allies repelled the strike.

Twenty assailants were killed and four soldiers wounded in the January 29 assault,

authorities said.

The site is sensitive; between December and January, a large cargo of concentrated uranium from the key producer was blocked at the airport while waiting for export.

No movement of that cargo has since been identified.

The head of Niger's ruling junta, Abdourahamane Tiani, who seized power in a 2023 coup, said on state television "a flaw in the system" had enabled the January attack, whose aim, he said, was to "destroy" the army's air capabilities.

In recent weeks, the authorities have started tearing down thousands of illegally built homes near the airport in what they said were efforts to counter a "terrorist" risk.

They alleged the shantytowns had been infiltrated by extremists.

The airport perim-

eter fence has been extended and more than 350 security cameras installed inside and outside the perimeter.

'The ease with which these attacks are carried out also suggests that the assailants are able to obtain information from the inside'

Decade of violence

"The fact that the attack once again started in the morning and lasted a long time indicates that the measures taken have not been effective so far," Hasret Kargin, of intelligence firm Mintel World, told AFP.

"The ease with which these attacks are carried out also suggests that the assailants are able to obtain information from the inside," he said.

Kargin also said that the EIS had carried out new attacks in Niger on Wednesday and Thursday.

It "is the first group that comes to mind for this attack as well", he added.

Niger and its fellow junta-ruled allies in west Africa — Burkina Faso and Mali — have faced a decade of violence attributed to militants.

Tiani's government has struggled to stop deadly attacks by groups affiliated with the Daesh and Al Qaeda.

Under his rule, Niger has moved away from former colonial power France and sought support from other partners, such as Iran, Turkey and Russia.

Libya's main governing bodies agree to hold elections

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Libya's top governing bodies agreed on Thursday on a roadmap for holding long-awaited presidential and parliamentary elections within eight months.

The heads of the parliament, Presidential Council and High Council of State said in a joint statement that the roadmap sought to end Libya's long-running transitional period and "unify the country's institutions".

The oil-rich North African country has struggled to recover from the chaos that followed the 2011 NATO-backed uprising that toppled longtime ruler Muammar Qadhafi.

It remains divided between a UN-recognised government headquartered in the capital Tripoli and an eastern rival administration operating from Benghazi and Tobruk.

Benghazi-based par-

liament speaker Aguila Salah, along with Presidential Council chief Mohamed El Menfi and High Council of State leader Mohammed Takala — both based in Tripoli — said the elections would be held simultaneously by February 17, 2027.

The oil-rich North African country has struggled to recover from the chaos that followed the 2011 NATO-backed uprising...

The roadmap would also implement "economic and financial reforms guaranteeing the protection of public funds", the statement read.

The statement announced the establishment of a committee including representatives from the country's east and the west to oversee the elections.

Presidential elections aiming to unify the fractured country were scheduled for late 2021, but were postponed indefinitely.

The joint statement came hours before the head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, Hanna Tetteh, was to address the UN Security Council on the country's recent developments.

Several reports have recently pointed that the United States — through President Donald Trump's senior adviser on Arab and African affairs Masad Boulos — has been pushing for a rapprochement between Libya's eastern and western authorities.

Swiss heading towards referendum on new nuclear plants

GENEVA (AFP) — Switzerland's parliament on Thursday approved a divisive government plan to build new nuclear power stations, overturning a 2018 ban and putting the country on course for a referendum.

The lower house of parliament joined the upper chamber in backing a government proposal to reverse the ban put in place following a referendum won by anti-nuclear campaigners in 2017.

During the debates in parliament, energy minister Albert Rosti stressed the need to keep the nuclear power option open to guarantee the country's long-term energy supply.

Both houses say authorisation for new nuclear plants can only be granted if the financing is secured.

Swiss voters are meanwhile set to have the final say.

A broad coalition of groups "will launch a referendum", the Green Party said in a statement.

Greens president Lisa Mazzoni said the parliament vote "sabotages the rapid development of renewable energies, climate protection and our energy sovereignty".

The collection of signatures for a referendum would begin this month,



Switzerland's Beznau plant, near the northern border with Germany, is Europe's oldest functioning nuclear reactor

the party said.

To trigger a referendum under Switzerland's direct democracy system, 50,000 valid signatures must be collected within 100 days of publication of a new law — a hurdle the coalition is expected to clear.

'Insurance policy'

The Swiss government has been pushing since 2024 to reverse the ban, citing the growing need for domestic low-carbon

electricity to achieve its goal of net-zero emissions by 2050.

Fears of shortages linked to world events, such as the US-Israeli war on Iran and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and Switzerland's dependence on electricity imports in winter were also cited.

The government project argues that allowing new nuclear power plants to be built would "create an insurance policy for electric-

ity supply" in case renewable energies are insufficient or if there are no other "climate-friendly solutions to guarantee electricity production".

The Swiss approved the gradual phase-out of nuclear power in the 2017 referendum, banning the construction of new power plants.

That law was the result of a long process initiated after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident in Japan, which was

triggered by a tsunami.

Switzerland continues to operate four nuclear reactors whose construction dates back to the 20th century.

Beznau 1, commissioned in 1969, is the oldest functioning nuclear reactor in Europe. It will cease operations in 2033, while Beznau 2, connected to the grid since 1971, will close a year earlier, in 2032.

Gosgen and Leibstadt began operating in 1979 and 1984, respectively.

Jordan, Arab, Islamic countries condemn escalating Israeli settler violence in occupied West Bank

Continued from page 1

The ministers also reiterated their unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people and their steadfast support for the fulfilment of their legitimate and inalienable national

rights of self-determination and the realisation of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state along the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

They also reiterated their support for all efforts aimed at ending

the Israeli occupation and achieving a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace based on the two-state solution, in accordance with international law, relevant UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Trump defends Iran deal from critics he calls 'fools'

Continued from page 1

A two-month negotiating period now begins with all eyes on the reopening of Hormuz and if progress can be made in talks over Iran's nuclear programme, which Washington has long suspected of concealing secret bomb-making ambitions.

Macron hailed the deal "which allows for peace, the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz without tolls, and 60 days to conclude an agreement on nuclear, ballistic, and regional activities".

There remained confusion over the next steps, with the accord originally supposed to have been signed at an exclusive MoU resort in Switzerland on Friday by Iran's chief negotiator and parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher

Ghalibaf and US Vice President JD Vance.

Baqaei said an in-person ceremony was no longer needed. But Sharif said an official ceremony will take place on Friday in Switzerland and technical talks will commence.

Under the text, Washington commits to immediately waive oil sanctions crippling Iran's economy.

And, once a final agreement is reached on Iran's nuclear programme, the United States will also facilitate the release of a \$300 billion reconstruction fund supported by regional nations, the deal says.

UN atomic agency chief Rafael Grossi told reporters in Geneva it was ready to begin defining the "concrete steps" that will need to be taken to implement a US-Iran deal.

US officials also said

Iran will dilute its enriched uranium stocks, possibly by "down-blending on site" under the supervision of the UN watchdog.

Iran's ballistic missile programme was not mentioned in the agreement, despite Israel's longstanding push for its dismantling.

"Iranian missiles are only for firing, not for negotiations. Iran's defence capability will not be discussed in any way, in any process or with any party," Baqaei said.

'Foreign policy blunder'

There has been some criticism from hardliners within Iran, where the conflict was described as an "imposed war" and compared to the 1980-1988 conflict with Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

But Ghalibaf insisted the deal represented a US "failure", while Pezeshkian called it "historic".

And Trump's decision to end the war, in which 13 US service members were killed and a vast proportion of US ammunition stockpiles was used, has unsettled some of his allies at home.

Apparently anticipating such criticism, Trump said at the G-7 that he was prepared to "bomb the hell" out of Iran if they violated the agreement.

But US Senator Bill Cassidy from Trump's Republican Party described it as the "worst foreign policy blunder in decades".

"Iran's nuclear ambitions were not curbed, and they have learned that threatening the Strait of Hormuz works," he said.

Even Fox News, the

usually Trump-friendly news channel, cited critics who said the agreement gave Iran "huge financial benefits" without requiring the dismantlement of its nuclear programme.

And while the deal specifies that Lebanon should be part of the equation, it is unclear whether the war on that front will be discussed in the next 60 days.

Lebanon was drawn into the conflict when Hizbollah fired rockets at Israel on March 2 in support of Iran. Israel responded by launching a massive campaign of strikes and a ground invasion.

While violence has declined in Lebanon following the announcement of the deal, an Israeli drone strike in south Lebanon killed one person on Thursday, according to Lebanese state media.

CBJ keeps key interest rate unchanged at 5.75% amid stable economic indicators

Continued from page 1

Recent data, the bank noted, point to continued strength in Jordan's monetary indicators. Foreign currency reserves stood at \$27.2 billion at the end of May 2026, an increase of \$1.7 billion compared with the end of 2025. This level of reserves is sufficient to cover 9.5 months of imports of goods and

services.

Inflation remained moderate at 1.88 per cent during the first five months of 2026, slightly lower than 1.97 per cent recorded in the same period last year. The banking sector also continues to maintain strong liquidity, profitability, and capital adequacy levels.

Remittances from Jordanians working abroad rose by 13.3 per

cent in the first four months of 2026, reaching \$1.6 billion.

Meanwhile, national exports increased by 1.6 per cent to \$3 billion in the first quarter of 2026. Tourism revenues, however, declined by 9.2 per cent to approximately \$2.8 billion in the first five months of the year, which officials attributed to the impact of the war in Iran.

UN demands halt to RSF 'imminent offensive' in Sudan

Continued from page 1

El Obeid 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 ma-

ajor 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.

Pezeshkian publishes Iran's copy of reported US agreement

Continued from page 1

Here is the full text of the agreement as shared by Pezeshkian

1 — The United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran and their allies in the current war are signing this MoU to declare the immediate and permanent termination of military operations on all fronts, including in Lebanon, and undertake from now on not to initiate any war or any military operation against each other, and to refrain from the threat or use of force against each other, and ensuring the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lebanon. The final deal will confirm the permanent termination of the war on all fronts, including in Lebanon and other provisions of this paragraph.

2 — The United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran undertake to respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and to refrain

from interfering in each other's internal affairs.

3 — The United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran commit to negotiating and achieving the final deal in maximum 60 days, extendable with mutual consent.

4 — Immediately upon the signing of this MoU, the United States of America will begin the removal of its naval blockade and any disturbances or impediments against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and will fully end the naval blockade within 30 days. During this period, the traffic of vessels will be in proportion to the numbers of pre-war traffic being restored by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The United States of America further undertakes to remove its forces from the proximity of the Islamic Republic of Iran within 30 days after the final deal.

5 — Upon the signing of this MoU, the Islamic Republic of Iran will make arrangements

using its best efforts for the safe passage of commercial vessels with no charge, for 60 days only, from the Persian Gulf to the Sea of Oman and vice versa.

The traffic of commercial vessels will immediately start, and considering the need for removing the technical and military obstacles, and demining by the Islamic Republic of Iran will be in-stated within 30 days. The Islamic Republic of Iran will conduct dialogue with the Sultanate of Oman to define the future administration and maritime services in the Strait of Hormuz in discussion with other Persian Gulf littoral states in line with the applicable international law and the sovereign rights of coastal states of the Strait of Hormuz.

6 — The United States of America undertakes with regional partners to develop a definitive, mutually agreed plan with at least US\$ 300 billion for the reconstruction and eco-

nom development of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The mechanism for the implementation of this plan will be finalised as part of a final deal within 60 days. All required licenses, waivers and permissions needed for the relevant financial transactions will be granted by the United States of America.

7 — The United States of America undertakes to terminate all types of sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran, including the United Nations Security Council resolutions, IAEA Board of Governors resolutions, and all unilateral US sanctions, primary and secondary, in an agreed upon schedule as part of the final deal. The Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America acknowledge the critical importance of the sanctions termination issue above mentioned, and expressed their intentions to immediately address these issues in the negotiations in or-

der to achieve mutual agreement on them.

8 — The Islamic Republic of Iran reaffirms that it shall not procure or develop nuclear weapons. The United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran have agreed to resolve the disposition of stockpiled enriched material pursuant to a mechanism that will be mutually agreed upon in accordance with the schedule mentioned in paragraph seven, with the minimum methodology to be down blended on site under the supervision of the IAEA. The two parties also agreed to discuss the issue of enrichment and other mutually agreed matters related to the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear needs, based on a satisfactory framework being agreed upon in the final deal. The final deal will confirm the provisions of this paragraph. The United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran acknowledge the critical importance

of the nuclear issues above mentioned. They express their intention to immediately address these issues in the negotiations in order to achieve mutual agreement on them.

The final deal will be endorsed by a binding UNSC resolution

9 — Pending the final deal, the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran agree to maintain the status quo. The Islamic Republic of Iran will maintain the current status quo of its nuclear program, and the United States of America will not impose any

new sanctions and will not deploy additional forces in the region.

10 — The United States of America undertakes that immediately upon the signing of this MoU and until the termination of sanctions, US Department of Treasury will issue waivers for the export of Iranian crude oil, petroleum products and derivatives, and all associated services, including banking transactions, insurances, transportation, etc.

11 — The United States of America undertakes to make fully available for use the frozen or restricted funds and assets of the Islamic Republic of Iran upon the implementation of this MoU. The United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran will mutually agree on the procedures related to the release of these funds during negotiations. Such funds, whether retained in the original account or transferred, shall be made fully usable for

payment to any ultimate beneficiary designated by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The United States of America undertakes to issue all necessary licenses and authorizations accordingly.

12 — The United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran agree that an executive mechanism will be established to monitor the successful implementation of this MoU and the future compliance of the final deal.

13 — After signing this MoU, and subject to the beginning of the implementation of paragraphs 1, 4, 5, 10 and 11 of this MoU, and the continuing implementation of these measures, the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran will start negotiations regarding the final deal exclusively on the other paragraphs.

14 — The final deal will be endorsed by a binding UNSC resolution.

THE JORDAN TIMES

An independent Arab political daily, established in 1975

Chairman of the Board
Samih Maaitah

Director General
Hasan Jazzazi

Editor-in-Chief
Raed Omari

Editorial and advertising offices
Jordan Press Foundation

The Jordan Times is published daily except Saturdays

Published by the Jordan Press Foundation
Queen Rania Al Abdullah Street
P.O. Box 6710
Amman 11118

E mail: editor@jordantimes.com
jotimes@jordantimes.com
Website: jordantimes.com

Follow us on X Platform: [@jordantimes.com](https://twitter.com/jordantimes)
Like our facebook page: [thejordantimes](https://www.facebook.com/thejordantimes)
Youtube: [thejordantimes](https://www.youtube.com/thejordantimes)

National Library registration number:
D/1998/2062

Telephone: **5600800 ext. 2392**

Facsimile: **5696183**

Advertising facsimile: **5696183**

Circulation Department:
5600800 ext: 2383

Iran war leaves Islamic republic intact and opponents divided

By **Susannah Walden**

Agence France-Presse

PARIS, France — The Iran war was cast as a catalyst for the Islamic republic's collapse, but months of fighting failed to dislodge the clerical leadership and left its opponents out in the cold.

US President Donald Trump said in launching the war with Israel on February 28 that it would pave the way for Iranians to rise up, having pledged support to anti-government protests that peaked in January and were the most serious challenge to the Islamic republic in years.

The fractured opposition movements outside Iran clambered to position themselves as successors to the ruling system when the war began with the killing of the supreme leader in US-Israeli strikes.

But the Islamic republic exited the war intact, with opposition groups outside the country more divided than ever and dissidents in Iran facing a new wave of repression, experts and rights groups say.

Reza Pahlavi, the exiled son of the last shah, failed to emerge as a unifying figure, while prominent dissidents inside Iran, including Nobel laureate Narges Mohammadi, are still under pressure from the authorities.

"There could have been an extra motivation for the various factions in opposition to really try to seize the moment... but that has simply not been the result," said University of Ottawa professor Thomas Juneau.

"If anything, infighting among the opposition in exile has intensified," he added, while domestic opposition "has been severely weakened" after decades of repression.

Some inside Iran voiced hope in foreign intervention after the nationwide protests that were spurred by severe economic pains and ended in a violent crackdown that rights groups said killed thousands of people.

But hope dimmed as the Islamic republic not only endured, but imposed fresh security crackdowns and an Internet blackout that along with the war's death and destruction only deepened economic suffering.

'Peace with my executioner'

"This war was never about the human rights of the Iranian people," said Mahmood Amiry Moghaddam, director of Norway-based NGO Iran Human Rights, as authorities instead "used the war as a pretext to intensify domestic repression".

"Democratic change must come through the Iranian people, not through foreign military intervention," he said.

US Vice President JD Vance this week insisted the war was about ending Iran's nuclear programme and that Trump's stance had always been that if the "Iranian people want to rise up, great. That's their business".

Still, Iranians inside the country and opposition leaders have voiced a sense of betrayal at the US-Iran deal to end the war.

"However hard they try to decorate the deal in pretty bows, it will only empower them [the Islamic republic] to oppress us more," said Tehran resident Sima, 34, who did not give her full name for fear of reprisal.

"Any form of peace with the Islamic republic would feel like making peace with my executioner."

The deal's reception from prominent opposition figures was chilly.

"Dealing with this regime will fail and we will all face the consequences," Pahlavi wrote on X, warning that negotiating with the Islamic republic after the protest crackdown "is morally wrong and strategically misguided".

Pahlavi saw the biggest boost in media attention from the January demonstrations after protesters shouted the name of the family dynasty.

But he failed to win the backing of Trump, who has not thrown his weight behind any Iranian opposition figure.

Political prisoners

The protests and their fallout also did not spur new efforts to build an opposition coalition, Juneau said, with different factions organising their own solidarity rallies abroad.

Maryam Rajavi, leader of the People's Mujahedin opposition group, hit out at both the Islamic republic and monarchists in a reaction to the US-Iran deal, saying only that they had "wished for war".

She welcomed "any agreement aimed at ending the war and the suffering of the Iranian people", and called for it to include ending executions of political prisoners.

This was not mentioned in the Memorandum of Understanding signed on Wednesday, according to texts released by both sides.

Rights groups and the United Nations have sounded the alarm over a surge in Iran in executions, more than 40 since the war started — and arrests in recent months, including many in connection with the protests the authorities called "terrorist riots".

Among opposition figures imprisoned in the country, Mohammadi nearly died during the war from a heart condition, according to her supporters.

Amnesty International's Agnes Callamard warned against a deal that ignores the risks to Iranians opposing the Islamic republic.

"Protesters, dissidents and others advocating for fundamental political change remain at grave risk of further atrocity crimes by the Iranian authorities," she said.

Birthright citizenship helps spark US World Cup run

By **Anita Chang Beattie**

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON, United States — President Donald Trump's bid to end birthright citizenship has gone all the way to the US Supreme Court but the issue's impact is already being felt on a giant stage: The World Cup.

Historically, anyone born on US soil automatically has the right to citizenship. Trump wants to end that as part of wider restrictions on immigration.

As Supreme Court justices prepare their ruling, Americans got a vivid illustration of the policy at work in the form of star US striker Folarin Balogun, who scored twice in the 4-1 rout over Paraguay.

Balogun may have shone in the US jersey, but if not for an accident of fate he wouldn't even be American.

"[My mother] came to the US to visit her sister, and she had her return ticket but then they said that she was too pregnant. So I was born in New York," Balogun said in an Instagram video posted by the US team this week.

Even though Balogun grew up in London from the age of one month, he qualified for birthright citizenship.

Still so British that he prefers English tea over coffee, Balogun ultimately chose to play for the

United States over England or his family's native Nigeria.

"The way I was eligible to represent America... I'm not going to be the person to stand in the way of this story," he said in his distinct London accent.

The three co-hosts of the World Cup, United States, Mexico and Canada, are among the few countries in the world, mostly in the Americas, that grant automatic citizenship to those born there.

Trump wants to restrict citizenship for babies born in the US to those with at least one parent who is an American citizen or lawful permanent resident, none of which applied to Balogun.

Football's Silicon Valley

Experts interviewed by AFP said Balogun's citizenship story is an outlier in the world of football, but that it nevertheless is an example of how migration is increasingly interwoven into the sport.

Nearly one-quarter of players at this World Cup were born in countries other than the one they are representing, said Marissa Kiss of George Mason University's Institute for Immigration Research.

"As with the World Baseball Classic, the Olympics, and the World Cup, countries are com-

peting for talent and immigration policy is a competitive tool," she said.

"Countries that make citizenship easier to obtain have an advantage in recruiting talent."

Diaspora communities are increasingly playing a role in widening player pools, said Gijbert Oonk, a professor at Erasmus University Rotterdam who studies the intersection of migration and sports.

This World Cup features 75 European-born players on African teams, according to data compiled by Oonk.

"France has become the world's most important exporter of football talent. During the 2026 World Cup, close to 100 participating players were born in France. Yet only a minority of them represent the French national team," he wrote in a recent blog post.

French-born players of African heritage are representing countries like Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Mali and Haiti, a reflection of France's colonial history.

"The banlieues surrounding Paris have become football's equivalent of Silicon Valley," he said of the suburbs home to many immigrant families.

Brothers and refugees

According to the US team, half of

its 26 players have at least dual nationality.

They include Tim Weah, the son of football legend George Weah, the only African player to win the Ballon d'Or and who later became president of Liberia.

The younger Weah choose to play for the Americans but had been eligible to represent Liberia, Jamaica and France.

Meanwhile, tiny Curacao has only one player born in the Caribbean island nation, according to David Storey, honorary professor of human geography at the University of Worcester.

The team's other 25 members were born in the Netherlands, which counts Curacao as a constituent country.

"Although they have a small population [of 158,000], they have used their diaspora to expand the player pool," he told AFP.

This World Cup also features four sets of brothers where each pair is playing for a different team.

For their next match on Friday, the Americans will play Australia, whose roster includes three players with refugee backgrounds.

They are joined by Canada's captain Alphonso Davies, who was born in a refugee camp in Ghana to Liberian parents.

Faith, hope and Iran: Vance gambles on centre stage

By **Danny Kemp**

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON, United States — While the boss is away, the vice president will play.

JD Vance has been all over the US airwaves promoting his new book about his Christian faith this week while President Donald Trump has been at the G7 in France.

"Let's talk about the book, I'm here to sell books!" Republican Vance joked as he made a rare foray onto "The View", a liberal-leaning daytime talk show on the ABC network.

But Vance is selling more than just books, he's also become the face of Trump's Iran peace deal.

In interview after interview, Vance has repeatedly defended the fragile agreement, despite the fact that the former US marine was reportedly against the conflict in the first place.

The ambitious 41-year-old Vance has played a key role in negotiations with Iran, but that comes with big risks.

Trump himself has joked about blaming his "veep" if the deal fails.

"If it works out, I'm going to take the credit. If it doesn't work out, I'm blaming JD,"

Trump said in his closing G7 press conference.

'Arrogant desire'

The political stakes for Vance may be even greater, given that he is widely assumed to be eyeing a run for US president in 2028, and both the book and a successful Iran deal could play a key role in that.

No self-respecting US presidential candidate enters the race without a memoir, and Vance's new book is his second published work, following his bestselling "Hillbilly Elegy" in 2016.

"Communion: Finding My Way Back to Faith" is far more reflective, and appears to be a deliberate attempt to set himself apart from Trump.

The book recounts Vance's conversion to Catholicism, a long road from the vaguely defined Christianity of his beloved, gunpacking grandmother who cared for him for most of his childhood.

Vance speaks of an "arrogant desire to rise above others" sparked by being a "poor kid" who was "desperate to make it".

"Well, now I have. I am the Vice President of the United

States, among the youngest in history to hold the office," he writes. But he adds: "I had lost something important that had, for all my outward advantages, enriched me as a kid."

The man once dubbed Trump's attack dog takes a softer tone in the book than he does on social media, devoting much of it to praising his Hindu-raised wife Usha, with whom he is expecting a fourth child this summer.

Meanwhile, Vance is also a convert to Trumpism.

"Hillbilly Elegy" depicts a hollowed-out, opioid-hooked US rust belt, and its accounts have been called prophetic of Trump's rise when it was published in 2016.

Yet that same year Vance compared Trump to Hitler.

The vice president insists in "Communion" that his subsequent shift to becoming a Trump true believer was not a "cynical maneuver".

'Next apprentice'

But the unspoken message behind Vance's positioning of himself as a Christian moralist is that brash billionaire Trump, with his long tail of scandals, is anything but that.

In US, Trump's Iran deal receives mixed reception

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON, United States — Donald Trump can claim a diplomatic victory after reaching an agreement with Iran to end the war in the Middle East, but numerous pitfalls remain and the US president has lost political capital.

The cautious reception to the Sunday announcement of the Memorandum of Understanding with Iran, scheduled to be signed in Geneva on Friday, reflects prevailing skepticism at a time when the war is unpopular due to the soaring oil prices and inflation it has caused.

The deal ends nearly four months of conflict, paving the way for negotiations on Iran's nuclear program and the lifting of sanctions.

It effectively extends the current ceasefire by 60 days and provides for the opening of the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic artery for oil and gas shipments, before the start of what promise to be extremely sensitive negotiations.

Launched on February 28 by the United States and Israel, the war has set the Middle East on fire and caused thousands of deaths, mainly in Iran and

Lebanon, and de-stabilised global trade.

Thirteen US troops were also killed during the conflict.

Trump, who initially said the war would last four to six weeks, has faced mounting pressure at home to extricate the United States from the conflict ahead of midterm elections in November.

While close allies immediately hailed him as the "president of peace", reactions have been mixed, even within his Republican party.

"I am somewhat concerned that Iran's view of the agreement seems different than what the American negotiating team is claiming," said Republican Senator Lindsay Graham, a staunch opponent of Tehran, adding: "Any nuclear deal with Iran will be sent to Congress for review and a vote."

Senator John Cornyn, another Republican, reposted a message on X from conservative commentator Pastor John Hagee that said: "No deal is better than a bad deal."

Senator Chris Murphy, a member of the opposition Democrats, questioned whether a final agreement will be reached. "But if there is, two things

will be true at the same time: A) It's essentially surrender to Iran. B) We should be glad about it, because every day this insane, illegal war continues, we get weaker," he said.

'Not the final word'

Senior Trump administration officials have sought to defend the deal, which Washington ostensibly launched with the aim of preventing Iran from eventually acquiring a nuclear weapon.

US Vice President JD Vance said on Monday on ABC's "Good Morning America" that once the text is released, "everybody will see... that Iran doesn't get a dime of money unless they perform their obligations".

Larry Sabato, a political scientist and University of Virginia professor, said that "this is not the final word, they have loads of details to argue over, maybe even for years".

"This was a completely unnecessary war that has accomplished very little and cost a lot," Sabato told AFP.

He pointed out that Trump, whose approval ratings are at an all-time low, has lost political capital, including within

Vance has been coy on whether he will run to succeed Trump in 2028.

"Does it really sound like the president of the United States to run a televised programme for who would be his next apprentice?" Vance told Fox News, a joking nod to Trump, who once hosted the reality TV competition show "The Apprentice".

But a sign of Vance's thinking is that he also said this week that he would make a decision after the crucial US midterm elections in November.

If Republicans lose control of Congress, as many in the party fear, Vance will have little choice but to start to distance himself from a lame-duck Trump.

Yet Trump may still have the last word on what is shaping up to be a battle between Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio to inherit the MAGA mantle.

During a dinner with Rupert Murdoch last year, Trump asked the media baron, in front of Vance and Rubio, which of them he preferred, according to the upcoming book "Regime Change" by two New York Times journalists.

Murdoch replied that Vance had the "potential to be great", while Rubio was "brilliant".

In US, Trump's Iran deal receives mixed reception

the Republican-controlled Congress and among supporters.

As for whether a new deal would effectively amount to a return to the original 2015 agreement that president Barack Obama negotiated and Trump tore up during his first term, that question remains unanswered.

Obama, a Democrat, said on ABC's "This Week" that "it is doubtful that any agreement that arises is going to be significantly different or a significant improvement from the deal that we had in the first place".

The agreement "worked for a long stretch of time before" Trump pulled out, he said.

For Wendy Sherman, one of the main negotiators of the 2015 deal, "this probably will turn out somewhat similar".

But "we're in a very different place, however, because we did not have virtually 1,000 pounds of 60 per cent highly enriched uranium, which is quite concerning, nor all of the other problems," she told ABC's Martha Raddatz.

"I can assure you, they will not get all of this done in 60 days," Sherman added.

BUSINESS

Friday-Saturday, June 19-20, 2026



US Federal Reserve Chairman Kevin Warsh holds a press conference at the Federal Reserve Board Building in Washington, DC, on Wednesday

US Fed chair Warsh vows reforms as central bank signals rate hikes on horizon

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh recently vowed wide-ranging reforms at the central bank, as its rate-setting committee held rates steady but projected a rate hike by year-end to counter surging inflation.

The Fed decided to hold rates steady at 3.50 to 3.75 per cent for the fourth consecutive meeting, with the vote unanimous for the first time in a year.

Speaking to reporters after his first meeting in charge, Warsh vowed to "deliver price stability" to Americans, with inflation currently at a three-year high.

"Persistently high prices are a burden for the American people, but the recent past need not be prologue," he said, acknowledging that inflation has been well above the Fed's two-per cent target for years.

In their Summary of Economic Projections (SEP), policymakers raised their forecast for the year-end interest rate, signalling that they expected one rate hike by the end of 2026.

Policymakers said inflation remained "elevated," partly due to supply shocks caused by skyrocketing energy prices triggered by US President Donald Trump's war on Iran.

Trump has launched an unprecedented assault on the Fed's independence, opening a criminal probe into Warsh's predecessor and attempting to unseat another governor in his

quest for lower interest rates.

Shortly after Wednesday's meeting, the Republican said he found it "hard to believe" the Fed would raise rates, but said he backed Warsh, who he nominated to the position.

The Fed has a dual mandate to keep inflation to its long-term two-per cent target while also maintaining maximum employment.

On Wednesday, the signals were clear that the central bank considered the labour market to be healthy and was fully focused on bringing down inflation.

In the SEP, Fed policy makers raised their year-end projection for Personal Consumption Expenditures price index inflation from 2.7 per cent to 3.6 per cent.

"The Fed's ready to raise rates, it's clear," Diane Swonk, chief economist at KPMG, told AFP. "The committee is really moving towards the issue of price stability being the number one issue."

The SEP was based on input from 18 of 19 policymakers, with Warsh withholding his forecast.

The new Fed chair has said he wants to reduce the amount the central bank communicates about its decisions.

During his briefing with reporters, Warsh presented a polite, controlled demeanour, determined not to say more than he intended, and to shift expectations on how much markets should expect to hear from the Fed chair.

"What we've given

markets is a new chapter for the central bank — some fresh thinking," he said, indicating he wanted financial markets to stop trying to interpret the Fed's reaction to data and to parse that data on their own.

Warsh announced plans Wednesday to review five areas of Fed operations as he seeks to put his stamp on the US central bank.

He said he would name task forces to formulate reforms on Fed communications, its balance sheet, its use of data sources, productivity and employment, and the Fed's inflation frameworks.

The task forces were expected to deliver findings by the end of the year, he said.

Swonk said Warsh's tone indicated that he realised that he needed "buy-in" from other Fed leaders to implement the changes he wants.

"This is not an edict, it's a collaborative process," she said.

Wednesday's statement was shorter than normal, and removed forward guidance on the direction of the interest rate, which has been a constant in recent years.

Pao-Lin Tien, an economics professor at George Washington University, said that moving towards more opaque monetary policymaking could mean inflation expectations are less anchored.

"Our fear would be that without the forward guidance, inflation expectations might become a little bit more volatile," she said.

Oil prices sink further as Trump signs deal to reopen Hormuz

HONG KONG (AFP) — Oil prices tumbled again on Thursday after US President Donald Trump and his Iranian counterpart signed off on a deal to end their war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

The news boosted optimism for a lasting peace between the two nations after more than three months of war that has rattled energy markets and fuelling a fresh spike in inflation.

However, the upbeat mood on trading floors was tempered by expectations the US Federal Reserve will hike interest rates before the end of the year, after its new chairman held his first policy meeting and acknowledged "persistently high prices are a burden for the American people".

Trump put his signature to the memorandum of understanding in Versailles after a G-7 summit, telling reporters: "Just signed it."

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei, quoted by state news agency IRNA, said the document "was finalised with the signatures of the presidents".

All eyes are now on the strait, through which a fifth of world oil normally passes and which Tehran effectively closed after the United States and Israel launched their war on Iran on February 28.

"As a first step, Islamic Republic of Iran will instantly reopen the Strait of Hormuz and the United States of America will immediately lift the naval blockade," Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, whose officials mediated the agreement, said on X.

The deal will see Washington commit to immediately waive oil sanctions and facilitate the release of a \$300 billion recon-



Valero gas prices are displayed on June 16, 2026 in Austin, Texas

struction fund, while Tehran agrees to dilute its enriched uranium as talks on a longer-term agreement are held.

Crude fell more than three per cent Thursday, extending the losses sustained since news broke at the weekend. Both main contracts have plummeted more than 15 per cent since last week, when talk of an agreement began swirling.

"A signed MOU and a faster path towards reopening the Strait of Hormuz should pull some of the panic premium out of crude," wrote Stephen Innes at SPI Asset Management.

"That matters because oil was not just trading war risk. It was trading the possibility that reserve drawdowns and blocked Gulf flows would create an energy cliff."

Equities were mixed as they struggled to maintain the positive momentum seen this week.

Seoul was again at the forefront of the gains, ploughing past 9,000 points for the first time thanks to another surge in chip titans Samsung and SK hynix as the AI boom continues apace.

'Persistently high prices are a burden for the American people, but the recent past need not be prologue'

"South Korea supplies around 80 per cent of the world's memory chips, and artificial intelligence is expected to continue growing for at least another decade," Kim Dae-jong, a professor at Sejong University,

told AFP. "Semiconductors account for roughly half of South Korea's industrial output, and this is seen as the biggest reason why Kopsi broke through the 9,000-point mark."

Tokyo, Singapore, Taipei, Mumbai and Manila also rose but Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Wellington, Bangkok and Jakarta fell along with London. Paris was flat while Frankfurt rose.

The mixed performance followed the Fed's latest policy meeting that saw it hold rates as expected but indicate it could hike in the next six months.

The gathering was the first for new boss Kevin Warsh, who flagged the fact that inflation has been well above the bank's two per cent target for years but vowed to "deliver price stability".

"Persistently high prices are a burden for the American people, but the recent past need not be prologue," he said after the meet-

ing at which he also wanted wide-ranging reforms at the bank.

Warsh was appointed by Trump, who has launched an unprecedented assault on the Fed's independence and called previous boss Jerome Powell incompetent for not cutting rates enough.

Analysts pointed out that the Fed's post-meeting statement did not make mention of an easing bias, as it had done previously.

The fact there was more emphasis on prices rather than jobs was also noted.

Data this month has shown inflation at a three-year high, while the labour market remains healthy.

"While there is no suggestion the Fed's dual mandate has shifted away from unemployment as well as price stability, markets have been left with a view (that) the emphasis appears to have shifted to the latter for now," wrote National Australia Bank's Gavin Friend.

German chemical company to cut 3,200 jobs as crisis worsens

FRANKFURT, Germany (AFP) — German chemical company Evonik said Thursday that it would cut 3,200 jobs, or around 10 per cent of its workforce, by 2029 as a crisis battering the energy-intensive industry

accelerates. The chemicals industry is one of the most important sectors in Europe's biggest economy, but it has been struggling with high costs, exacerbated recently by the energy price shock

from the Iran war. Evonik, which is headquartered in the western city of Essen and makes a range of specialised chemicals, said the cuts were aimed at advancing the company's transformation.

"The global political situation remains uncertain, and economic growth is persistently weak," CEO Christian Kullmann said.

"At the same time, international competition is becoming increasing-

ly fierce," he added. The job losses will be across all business and administrative departments worldwide, Evonik said.

A total of 2,150 of the positions being axed are in Germany, with talks

to be held with staff representatives in the coming weeks.

The company also said it would close its polyester business entirely next year, with production sites in Germany and China

affected.

The cuts announced on Thursday follow a previous round of job losses at Evonik in recent years. Evonik currently has around 31,000 employees worldwide.

The government and

industry groups announced a plan in March a plan to help the chemical sector, which includes subsidising power prices and seeking changes to the European Union's flagship carbon market scheme.

French tanker passes Hormuz Strait after war deal — tracker

PARIS, France (AFP) — A French-flagged LNG tanker left the Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz on Thursday, a tracking platform said, as an agreement to end the US-Iran war paved the way for the key passage's reopening.

The liquefied natural gas (LNG) vessel Mraikh, owned by the Nantes-based subsidiary of Norwegian company Knutsen OAS Shipping, was the first such French vessel to make the transit since the start of the Iran-US conflict on February 28.

It was carrying 76,535 tons of LNG, which it loaded in Ras Laffan, Qatar, and was bound for Port Qasim, Pakistan, according to the MarineTraffic, a platform operated by data firm Kpler, which tracks cargo ships.



In this photo obtained from Iran's ISNA news agency on Thursday, vessels are seen anchored in Bandar Abbas along the Strait of Hormuz

The carrier began moving on Wednesday around 20:00 GMT (early Thursday morning, local time), according to the ship's AIS transponder data published on MarineTraffic.

That was roughly at the time when it US President Donald Trump had signed

a memorandum of understanding in which Tehran committed to immediately reopening the strait.

Only 15 LNG carriers, including the Mraikh, have left the Gulf with a cargo since the start of the conflict, according to Kpler.

They were all carrying

either Qatari LNG, like the Mraikh, or Emirati LNG.

"LNG operators have remained highly cautious about transiting the strait given the high value of the vessels and the relatively limited size of the global LNG fleet," Laura Page, an analyst at Kpler, told AFP in early May.

Traffic in the strait appeared to have accelerated on Thursday, with numerous ships seemingly transiting the waterway in both directions, according to AIS signals published on MarineTraffic.

At 10:30 GMT (early afternoon local time), Kpler had already confirmed six transits by commodity transport vessels, roughly equal to the daily average over the previous seven days.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Thursday amounted to JD15.6 million spread over 5.4 million shares that traded through 5,165 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.15 per cent, closing at 3963.06 points.

Out of 94 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 28 companies rose while the share price of another 32 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Jordanian Company for Developing and Financial Investment by 4.00 per cent, Arab International for Education and Investment by 3.79 per cent, National Steel Industry by 3.61 per cent, Nobar Trading Investment Company by 3.45 per cent, and Al-Manara Islamic Insurance Company by 3.13 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Rumm Financial Brokerage by 4.69 per cent, Arab Aluminium Industry/Aral by 4.55 per cent, Arab International Hotels by 3.8 per cent, Jordan International Trading Centre by 3 per cent, and Al Entkaeya for Investment and Real Estate Development Company Plc. by 2.78 per cent.

THE MARKET TODAY

ASE Index: ↓ 3963.06 0.15% June 18, 2026

Live Data

Click and drag in the plot area to zoom in

Historical Data

DAILY SUMMARY

Regular Market		OTC Market	
Trading Value (JDs)	15,558,253		
Trading volume	5,370,633		
No. of Transactions	5,165		
No. of Securities	94		

FOOTBALL

Prince Ali meets FIFA, AFC officials on sidelines of World Cup

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein, President of the Jordan Football Association met on Thursday with Senior Vice President of the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) and President of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa. Prince Ali also met with President of the Austrian Football Association Klaus Mitterdorfer on the sidelines of the national team's match against Austria. The match took place on Wednesday in the US as part of the 2026 World Cup tournament. The Jordanian national football team is participating in the 2026 World Cup for the first time in its history. The team delivered a standout performance against Austria despite the loss. The national team will face Algeria in its next match on June 23.

CRICKET

Sana will become first Pakistani woman to play in The Hundred

LONDON (AFP) — Fatima Sana will become the first Pakistani woman to play in The Hundred after being selected by the Birmingham Phoenix. Pakistan captain Sana was overlooked in the original tournament auction in March. But the all-rounder was drafted in on Thursday as a replacement for fellow overseas player Lucy Hamilton, who has been withdrawn after receiving a central contract by Australia. The 24-year-old is currently playing for Pakistan in the Women's T20 World Cup in England. The Hundred, which starts in England on July 21, had been embroiled in controversy after reports that Indian investment into the 100-balls per side competition would lead to a silent ban on Pakistan players being selected. The England and Wales Cricket Board and the eight franchises in The Hundred eventually released a joint statement saying "players must not be excluded on the grounds of nationality". Those fears proved unfounded after Abrar Ahmed and Usman Tariq were snapped up in the men's auction. Sana's addition to the women's event is a further boost for Pakistan cricket. "Fatima Sana is a real statement of intent. She is Pakistan's captain, an international-class pace performance, director James Thomas said.

Mexico, Korea eye World Cup knockout berths

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — Mexico and South Korea will aim to punch their ticket to the World Cup knockout rounds on Thursday when they meet in Guadalajara knowing that a win would guarantee a last 32 berth.

The Group A rivals head into the fixture at the Estadio Akron fresh from respective victories over South Africa and the Czech Republic in their opening games last week.

The expanded 48-team format for this year's World Cup — and the fact that the eight best-ranked third-placed teams will advance from the group stage — means that a win for either Mexico or South Korea would see them advance.

Co-hosts Mexico is bracing for a significantly tougher test against South Korea than South Africa provided.

"We have to be very wary of the opponents' attacking transitions," Mexico coach Javier Aguirre said.

"When we are attacking, we can't let our guard down; if there are two Koreans up front, there need to be three Mexicans."

The build-up to Thursday's game has seen shrouded with intrigue, with a mystery drone spotted over South Korea's training ground on Tuesday.

Yonhap news agency reported that a South Korea team security officer spotted the device, and a Mexican military drone-interdiction specialist stationed at the training camp brought it down by emitting radio signals.

Two men who were suspected to be the drone operators retrieved the



AFP photo

Cesar Montes of Mexico (right) in action against South Africa's Khuliso Mudau

crashed device and fled the scene in an incident which South Korea coach Hong Myung-bo described as "unfortunate" but insisted "did not impact us significantly".

In other games on Thursday, Switzerland will look to bounce back from their disappointing opening Group B draw with Qatar when they take on Bosnia-Herzegovina, while co-hosts Canada face the Qataris in Vancouver.

Bosnia coach Sergej Barbarez is eyeing another upset — Switzerland is ranked 44 places above them by FIFA — urging his team to summon the spirit of their qualifying campaign, when they knocked out Italy during the play-offs.

"When we were playing against Italy in the playoffs, we had a similar sort of sentiment publicly, but we stayed focused on ourselves," Barbarez said.

Thursday's games kick off the second round of group fixtures.

Ivorian Wahi denied Canadian visa

Ivory Coast forward Elye Wahi will miss his country's second match against Germany on Saturday after he was denied a visa to enter Canada.

The Ivorian federation (FIF) said that Wahi could not travel because "the administrative authorisations necessary for his entry into Cana-

dian territory have not been obtained at this stage".

The FIF gave no reason for his visa refusal but several media reported that Wahi had been questioned by French police over suspicions of spot-fixing after picking up a yellow card in a Ligue 1 match while he was playing for Nice mid-May.

The public prosecutor's office in Marseille confirmed to AFP that "a 23-year-old professional footballer, playing in the Ligue 1 championship, was arrested on May 29, 2026 in relation to an on-going investigation".

Wahi is the second World Cup player to be denied entry into Canada after Ghana's Thomas

Partey, who is facing rape charges in Britain.

On Wednesday, England lit up the tournament with a roller coaster 4-2 win over Croatia in Group L which included two goals from captain Harry Kane and one from Real Madrid star Jude Bellingham.

But while England got off the mark in style, there was disappointment for Portugal, who were held to a surprise 1-1 draw by the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The result once again renewed scrutiny of Portugal coach Roberto Martinez's support for Cristiano Ronaldo, the 41-year-old icon who is playing in his sixth World Cup.

The veteran striker gave an ineffective performance, managing just 25 touches in the whole match, but Martinez defended the decision not to replace him.

"It makes no sense to take off the best goalscorer in world football in a game that you need goals," Martinez said.

Ronaldo has now failed to score in 10 consecutive matches in major tournaments and his country's press turned against him on Thursday.

Sports newspaper A Bola said that Ronaldo appeared "crushed by the pressure" and had become "himself a problem", while Publico said the team "remains hostage to its faith in Ronaldo".

LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

France braces for heatwave with canal swimming allowed in Paris

PARIS, France (AFP) — France braced for another heat wave on Wednesday, with Paris allowing swimming in one of its canals so residents could cope with the heat.

It will be the second spell of hot temperatures this year, after an unusually scorching week in May smashed records in half of the country.

"A heatwave episode will gradually set in across the country this week," said Christelle Robert, of national weather service Météo-France.

Temperatures were set to reach 36°C or 37°C in some areas on Wednesday, then peak at 40°C in some regions on Sunday as the country celebrates summer solstice with its annual nationwide music festival, "La Fete de la Musique".

In Paris, swimming would be allowed from Wednesday evening under lifeguard supervision in one part of the Canal Saint-Martin in the east of the city, mayor Emmanuel Gregoire said on Tuesday evening.

Youth plunged into the canal during the scorching week last month.

"Spending an enormous amount of en-



AFP photo

Young people dived into the Canal Saint-Martin in Paris to beat the heat

ergy, municipal police, and national police to stop young people from swimming when it was 40 degrees... struck us as slightly absurd," Gregoire said, however reminding youth that jumping from the bridges was dangerous and remained forbidden.

Alexandra Cordebar, the mayor of the capital's 10th district, said allowing swimming in the canal earlier than scheduled in July was "a new way of fighting climate change and adapting the city".

Later in the summer, swimmers will also be able to cool off at designated points along the Seine River, after it reopened to swimmers last summer for the first

time in a century.

Paris had poured more than a billion euros (\$1.15 billion) into making the waters clean enough to use during the 2024 Olympics.

Studies and scientific bodies agree that heatwaves in Europe are becoming more frequent as a consequence of climate change.

Météo France says that of the 51 heatwaves recorded nationwide since 1947, 34 have occurred since 2000 and 26 since 2011.

Global average temperatures are likely to continue at or near record levels this year and for the next four years afterwards, the United Nations has warned.

Five things to know about the blockbuster GTA games

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — Pre-orders for "Grand Theft Auto VI", one of the most anticipated entertainment releases in years, will open on June 25, developer Rockstar Games said on Thursday, the latest milestone in the rollout of a title widely expected to be the biggest game of the decade.

The announcement, which came alongside the reveal of the game's official cover art, follows years of feverish anticipation and speculation among fans.

GTA VI is set to launch November 19 after two delays, capping a wait of more than 13 years since the previous installment.

Here are five things to know about GTA:

Trailblazer

The first two games in the series, which debuted in 1997, offered a top-down view of the action as players took on the role of a criminal on missions around cities. But GTA III set the standard in 2001 for what games could be like, offering a combination of a three-dimensional open world, advanced graphics and gameplay that won widespread critical acclaim and legions of fans.

Each new GTA title since then has been hailed by both industry analysts and gamers for pushing the boundaries of what is possible in the medium.



AFP photo

Grand Theft Auto 5 Key Art - H 2013

Cash cow

And they have all been bestsellers, bringing in billions of dollars for Take-Two Interactive, Rockstar's parent company.

Despite not releasing a flagship GTA game for more than a decade, the series has remained a cash cow, especially thanks to its multiplayer online version, where users can spend money on in-game items.

The last game in the franchise, GTA V, was released in 2013 and reached \$1 billion in retail sales "faster than any entertainment release in history", Take-Two has said.

GTA V has sold around 230 million copies, according to the company's most recent figures, making it the second best-selling game of all time,

behind Minecraft.

The entire GTA franchise has sold a mammoth 470 million units, according to Take-Two.

Magnet for controversy

With the wild success came a wave of controversies. Critics have from the start accused the series of glorifying violence and encouraging players to engage in criminal behaviour — allegations Take-Two executives have denied.

GTA games have also faced strong criticism for misogynistic portrayals of women, caricatures of ethnic minorities and depictions of torture.

Despite being praised for their often biting cultural satire, the level of violence in the games has at times led to bans and restrictions in some

countries. Target Australia stopped selling GTA V in 2014, citing customer concerns. GTA games also carry a content rating for mature audiences only. Take-Two executives have said customers should be free to choose what games they buy.

A cultural institution

GTA has become a cultural institution despite the criticism, with its content spawning countless online memes and fans around the world referencing its scenes and dialogue. Its growing influence has attracted some of the biggest names in entertainment to its cast. Tommy Vercetti, the main character in 2002's GTA: Vice City, was voiced by Hollywood star Ray Liotta. Other cameos in the series include Samuel L.

Jackson, Burt Reynolds, musician Phil Collins and comedian Ricky Gervais. A 2021 expansion for GTA V was centered on hip-hop superstar Dr Dre.

The next chapter

Fans have been growing restless for years following the unprecedented success of GTA V as they wait for the next chapter.

Rockstar confirmed the game was in development in 2022, and that September hackers stole and leaked gameplay footage in one of the biggest breaches in gaming history. The studio formally revealed GTA VI in December 2023.

The new game is set in Leonida, a fictionalized version of Florida that includes a return to the Miami-inspired Vice City. It follows a criminal couple, Jason Duval and Lucia Caminos — with Lucia becoming the first female protagonist in the series' main line.

Originally targeted for late 2025, GTA VI was pushed back twice before settling on its November 19 release date on PlayStation 5 and Xbox Series X and S.

Rockstar has not disclosed pricing, which it said would come with pre-orders. Take-Two predicts that the release will deliver record sales and analysts have described it as potentially the biggest entertainment release ever.



DOWNLOAD OUR APP NOW

