



POPULATION Jordan has 221,000 widows, fewer than 3,000 widowers — HPC 2



LEGISLATURE Lower House speaker, Azerbaijani counterpart discuss cooperation 3



EXHIBITION Jordanian pavilion at Food Expo Syria inaugurated 7



FOOTBALL Jordan plays Algeria in 2nd World Cup match 8



Tuesday, June 23, 2026 | Muharram 8, 1448 Hijri



ان 2026

Crown Prince reaffirms support for national team ahead of Algeria match

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein held a video call with members of the national football team (the Nashama) on Sunday, ahead of their anticipated World Cup match against Algeria.

During the call, the Crown Prince conveyed His Majesty King Abdullah's support for the national team, reaffirming his confidence in the players' ability to shoulder their responsibility and represent Jordan in the best possible manner, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The Crown Prince praised the team's strong performance and fighting spirit in their opening match, saying the players had given Jordanians a sense of pride through their level of performance, discipline and high morale.

He urged the players to continue their World Cup campaign with the same determination and spirit, stressing the importance of teamwork, learning from mistakes, and working to address them.

The Crown Prince



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

HRH Crown Prince Hussein holds a video call with members of the national football team (the Nashama) on Sunday, ahead of their anticipated World Cup match against Algeria

also highlighted the key role of the coaching staff and technical team in guiding the national squad during the upcoming stage, while emphasizing that all players should take pride in their contribution to Jordan's participation

in the tournament. The Nashama captain Ihsan Haddad said the players' morale remains high and that they are fully aware of the responsibility placed on their shoulders.

He added that the team will give its utmost effort in the match against Algeria to secure a result that meets the aspirations of Jordanian fans, brings them joy and allows the team to continue representing the country in the best possible way.

Jordan will face Algeria in a Group J encounter at the FIFA World Cup 2026 on Tuesday at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California. Both sides enter the match seeking their first points of the tournament after opening losses.

Arab consultative meeting enabled 'open, candid' talks on regional challenges — Safadi Minister says Arab coordination key to addressing regional crises, strengthening joint action

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi said on Monday that the consultative Arab meeting provided an opportunity for "open and candid" discussions on the wide range of challenges facing Arab countries and joint Arab action.

Speaking at the 165th resumed ministerial session of the Arab League Council, hosted in Amman, Safadi said that

strengthening joint Arab action is essential to addressing regional challenges, starting with efforts to restore security and stability.

He also highlighted the importance of advancing the implementation of the US-Iran Memorandum of Understanding on foundations that address all past sources of tension and safeguard Arab states, particularly in the Gulf region, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

He stressed that the Palestinian cause remains the Arab central issue, warning of ongoing risks, including continued humanitarian suffering in the Gaza Strip, illegal Israeli measures aimed at annexing occupied Palestinian territories, expanding settlements, escalating settler violence, and repeated attacks on Islamic and Christian holy sites.

Continued on page 5

Local revenues total JD3.3b by end of April — Finance Ministry

AMMAN (JT) — The Kingdom's local revenues stood at JD3.308 billion by the end of April, compared with JD3.307 billion during the same period in 2025, maintaining levels recorded last year despite the security challenges facing the region.

Tax revenues amounted to around JD2.456 billion during the same period, including JD930 million in income tax collections and some JD1.399 billion from the general sales tax, according to Ministry of Finance data cited by the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Customs revenues and property sales tax collections reached JD91.5 million and JD35 million, respectively, while non-tax revenues amounted to JD852 million.

Grants received by



Photo courtesy of the Greater Amman Municipality

The Ministry of Finance on Monday says that the Kingdom's local revenues stood at JD3.308 billion by the end of April, compared with JD3.307 billion during the same period in 2025

the Kingdom during the first four months of 2026 totalled JD96 million, compared with

JD21.6 million during the January-April period of 2025.

Total public rev-

enues, including grants, reached around JD3.404 billion, compared with JD3.329 bil-

lion during the same period last year.

The revenue performance reflects the resilience of the tax base and the efficiency of revenue collection despite the challenges facing the region.

Regarding public spending, total government expenditure by the end of April amounted to JD4.09 billion, including JD3.7545 billion in current expenditure and JD336 million in capital expenditure.

Capital expenditure increased by 2 per cent during the first four months of the year compared with the same period in 2025.

The increase reflects the government's continued commitment to spending on capital projects due to their positive impact on economic activity and job creation.



AFP photo

This frame grab from AFPTV video footage on Sunday, shows an explosion at Qatar's Ras Laffan industrial zone, home to the world's largest liquefied natural gas hub, as the result of a 'technical incident'

Jordan voices solidarity with Qatar following gas blast

Qatar gas plant blast kills 13, injures dozens

AMMAN (JT) — The Foreign Ministry has expressed Jordan's solidarity with Qatar following an explosion in the Ras Laffan In-

dustrial City. In a statement on Monday, ministry Spokesperson Fuad Majali reaffirmed the Kingdom's solidarity

with the government and people of Qatar in the wake of the incident.

Continued on page 5



AFP photo

This photo taken from a position in northern Israel, near the border with Lebanon shows a United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon convoy driving past destroyed buildings in southern Lebanon on Monday

Lebanese president discusses Israel truce with senior US, Qatari officials

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AFP) — Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and US Vice President JD Vance discussed a

de-confliction mechanism for Lebanon on Monday, Aoun's office said, as Vance said the move aimed

to prevent spiraling Israel-Hizbollah violence.

Continued on page 5

As Iran, US conclude first round of talks, 'difficult details' could still threaten negotiations — analysts

By Mai Anati

AMMAN — Iran and the United States concluded the first round of talks in Switzerland on Monday, agreeing on a roadmap towards a final deal within 60 days and paving the way for immediate technical negotiations.

The talks, held at the Burgenstock resort in Switzerland, brought together delegations led by US Vice President JD Vance and Iran's Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf under a preliminary Memorandum of Understanding signed last week to end the Middle East war.

Pakistan and Qatar,



AFP photo

Police personnel ride past the national flags of Pakistan and Iran fluttering outside the President House in Islamabad on Monday on the eve of Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to Pakistan amid the US-Iran peace talks

which are mediating the process, said, in a joint statement, that the nego-

tiators had agreed on a framework for reaching a final agreement, and

announced the establishment of a contact mechanism aimed at keeping

the Strait of Hormuz open and ending fighting in Lebanon.

Iran said on Saturday it was closing the Strait of Hormuz again over Israeli attacks in Lebanon.

The Swiss foreign ministry welcomed the "constructive progress" achieved during the negotiations and said that the roadmap created the conditions for the immediate resumption of technical discussions.

"Our aim is that our diplomacy contributes to de-escalation, stability and peace," the ministry said in a statement, cited by AFP.

Continued on page 5



Patriarch Theophilos III of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine and Jordan and Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa on Monday arrive in the Gaza Strip for a pastoral visit

Patriarchs highlight Jordan's support during Gaza visit

AMMAN (JT) — Patriarch Theophilos III of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine and Jordan and Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa on Monday arrived in the Gaza Strip for a pastoral visit.

The patriarchs expressed their "deep" appreciation for the humanitarian role played by Jordan, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah, in supporting the people of the Gaza Strip, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

They praised ongoing Jordanian efforts to deliver relief and medical aid, support hospitals and enhance the capacity of the healthcare

sector despite current challenges.

They stressed that the efforts led by King Abdullah embody a steadfast humanitarian and moral commitment to standing by the Palestinian people, carrying a message of solidarity and hope that enhances the resilience of Gazans and helps alleviate their suffering.

The visit falls within the framework of the pastoral responsibility undertaken by the churches of Jerusalem towards local churches and all residents of the Gaza Strip, amid the ongoing difficult humanitarian conditions faced by families, accompanied by loss, pain and growing anxiety over

the future.

They stressed that their presence in Gaza carries the prayers of Jerusalem and its spiritual message to the people of the Strip, embodying the values of solidarity and Christian witness rooted in the Gospel and Jerusalem's humanitarian message.

During their stay in Gaza, the patriarchs are scheduled to meet with a number of clergymen and families to discuss ways to contribute to mitigating the repercussions of the ongoing humanitarian crisis through prayer, direct meetings and pastoral presence, thereby reinforcing spiritual support and sending a message of hope.

JAF inaugurates second national service training course

AMMAN (JT) — The assistant for administration and human resources on Monday inaugurated the training course for the second cohort of conscripts for National Military Service programme at the National Military Service Training Centre.

The assistant listened to a briefing presented by the director of the mobilisation and popular army department at the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) on the progress of the training, as well as the plans and programmes designed to qualify the conscripts, according to a JAF statement.

HRH Crown Prince Hussein announced the reactivation of the National Military Service Programme, during a meeting with youth from Irbid Governorate in August.

During the meeting, the Crown Prince said that young Jordanians must be prepared to serve and defend their country, adding that citizens who have participated in national military service understand the importance of this experience.

Attending the graduation ceremony of the first cohort of the National Military Service programme for 2026 in



The assistant for administration and human resources on Monday inaugurates the training course for the second cohort of conscripts for National Military Service programme

April, Prince Hussein delivered an address emphasizing the importance of mobilising and investing in the potential of youth.

He also highlighted the role of the National Military Service programme in building a stronger, self-reliant Jordan that keeps pace with change.

The director noted that the training course for the second batch is progressing according to the approved plans, noting that JAF have utilised all necessary resources to ensure the success of the programme.

The commander of the centre said that the training programme

was designed to incorporate physical, military, and educational aspects for the conscripts in line with the highest standards of professionalism and discipline.

He added that the training staff operate in accordance with "strict" JAF criteria to guarantee high-quality

training outcomes.

At the end of the visit, the assistant met with a number of the conscripts enrolled in the course, urged them to maximise their benefit from the expertise gained during national service, highlighting its importance in qualifying them and shaping their character.

Jordan has 221,000 widows, fewer than 3,000 widowers — HPC

AMMAN (JT) — The number of Jordanian widows far exceeds that of widowers, the Higher Population Council (HPC) said on Monday, noting that there are currently around 221,000 widows compared to fewer than 3,000 widowers.

On the occasion of International Widows Day, marked annually on June 23, the council, citing Civil Status and Passports Department data, attributed this significant disparity to nine primary biological, demographic, and socioeconomic factors, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The first factor is a biological one related to life expectancy at birth, where in Jordan, the average life expectancy stands at 73.8

years for males and 77 years for females, according to the latest figures from the Department of Statistics.

The remaining eight factors involve demographic, social, and legislative dynamics.

HPC noted that men predominantly occupy professions with higher health and safety risks, which increases

mortality rates among males compared to females.

Men are also more likely to consume tobacco and engage in high-risk activities.

Social norms also play a major role, as prevailing customs favour men marrying younger women.

In the majority of annual marriages, the

groom is older than the bride, making it more likely for the husband to predecease his wife. A larger age gap further increases the probability of early and prolonged widowhood among women.

HPC added that remarriage opportunities for widows, particularly those with young children, are substan-

tially lower than those for widowers.

The limited number of single or older widowers further reduces the likelihood of widows transitioning back into marriage.

On the other hand, the council pointed out that maternal mortality risks have dropped significantly due to improved healthcare and lower fertility rates, which has further extended female life expectancy.

HPC said that as young men delay marriage, the age gap between spouses may continue to widen, as grooms often seek younger brides to ensure sufficient child-bearing years, further compounding the issue.



SSC enables online claims for non-Jordanian workers leaving Kingdom

AMMAN (JT) — The Social Security Corporation (SSC) on Monday announced a new mechanism that enables non-Jordanian workers to claim their insurance entitlements, including lump-sum compensation, upon their final departure from the Kingdom.

The move comes in implementation of a Cabinet decision to regularise the status of non-Jordanian workers from June until the end of September, according to a SSC statement.

The SSC said that the new mechanism is designed to streamline procedures for workers leaving the country permanently, allowing them to submit claims online through its e-services platform without the need to visit the Ministry of Labour or obtain prior approvals.



The Social Security Corporation on Monday announces a new mechanism that enables non-Jordanian workers to claim their insurance entitlements upon their final departure from the Kingdom

It added that applications are open to guest workers residing in the Kingdom during the status rectification period.

A new payout category titled "Final departure from the country" has been introduced within the corporation's online services to facilitate the process.

The SSC also said that the relevant form for transferring lump-sum

compensation outside Jordan is available on its website under the "Forms and Applications" section of its electronic library.

It urged applicants to follow instructional text messages sent to their mobile phones to complete the disbursement and transfer of their entitlements abroad after their final departure from the Kingdom.

JVA, agricultural association sign MoU to boost investment, water management

AMMAN (JT) — Secretary-General of the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) Hisham Haisa and President of the Association of Merchants and Producers of Agricultural Materials Saleh Yassin on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at boosting cooperation to support the agricultural sector.

The MoU seeks to enhance the agricultural investment environment and improve water resource management, contributing to sustainable agricultural production and food security, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Haisa said that the agreement falls within the framework of enhancing partnerships with the private sector and supporting agricultural investment.

He referred to the importance of increasing water-use effi-



The MoU covers cooperation in upgrading water resource management services, facilitating agricultural investment procedures, exchanging technical data and expertise, and encouraging the application of modern irrigation techniques

ciency and encouraging the adoption of modern technologies in irrigation and agricultural production to achieve sustainability and serve farmers and investors.

JVA attaches great importance to providing an attractive investment climate in the Jordan Valley regions by developing services, streamlining procedures, and improving water management efficiency to

support qualitative agricultural projects and generate added value for the national economy, Haisa added.

Yassin said that the MoU represents a "major" step towards boosting public-private cooperation and creating a supportive environment for agricultural investment, alongside exchanging expertise and promoting modern technologies to enhance the sector's competitiveness.

GAM prepares free transport for Jordan-Algeria match screenings venues

AMMAN (JT) — The Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) on Monday announced providing free round-trip shuttle buses for fans wishing to attend the public viewing of the national football team's (Al Nashama) match against Algeria at the Roman Amphitheatre and the Hashemite Square.

GAM called on fans to choose their nearest gathering point and adhere to the scheduled departure and return times to facilitate smooth access to the viewing venues, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

The municipality stressed its full readiness to receive crowds, calling for broad participation to support and cheer for the national team under the slogan: "Be on time... let's cheer for the Nashama with one voice."

The national team concluded its technical



The Greater Amman Municipality on Monday announces providing free round-trip shuttle buses for fans wishing to attend the public viewing of the national football team's match against Algeria

and physical preparations ahead of facing its Algerian counterpart at 6:00am (Jordan time) on Tuesday at the San Francisco Bay Area Stadium in the US, as part of the second round of the group stage in the FIFA World Cup 2026.

Al Nashama conducted their final training session on Sunday at San Jose Park under the leadership of coach Jamal Sellami, with the participation of all players amid widespread media coverage.

The Public Security Directorate (PSD) on

Sunday urged Jordanians planning to attend public screenings of the match to comply with organisational and security instructions to ensure public safety and facilitate smooth entry and exit procedures, the Jordan News Agency, Petra,

reported.

PSD called on attendees to remain within designated areas allocated for the general public, families, media representatives and persons with disabilities.

The directorate urged fans to keep entrances, exits and passageways clear, avoid gatherings in undesignated areas and respect venue capacity limits.

Entry will be managed according to an approved organisational plan, with spectators directed to additional viewing areas when necessary in coordination with the relevant authorities.

The PSD urged fans not to bring any items that could endanger the safety of attendees or damage the venues to preserve public safety, protect the historical nature of the sites and maintain their cleanliness.



Jordan Chamber of Commerce President Khalil Hajj Tawfiq on Monday meets with Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad Mohamed Ali Nafti and Tunisian Ambassador to Jordan Moufida Zaribi

Jordan, Tunisia launch initiative to boost trade, investment

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan Chamber of Commerce (JCC) President Khalil Hajj Tawfiq on Monday met with Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad Mohamed Ali Nafti and Tunisian Ambassador to Jordan Moufida Zaribi.

During the meeting, Hajj Tawfiq announced a new Jordanian-Tunisian initiative expected to boost bilateral economic, trade and investment ties by positioning Jordan as a gateway to the Arab Mashreq and Tunisia as a gateway to the Arab Maghreb, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Hajj Tawfiq stressed the need to expand economic and investment cooperation in line with the strong relations between the two countries.

He said that the initiative would position Jordan as a gateway for Tunisian companies to markets in Palestine, Iraq, Syria and the Gulf, while enabling Jordanian businesses to expand into North African and African markets through Tunisia.

Nafti stressed the importance of capitalising on the geographic positions of both countries to access wider regional and African markets, while enhancing connectivity and cooperation across key economic sectors.

He also invited the JCC to participate in an upcoming investment forum in Tunisia, which will bring together business leaders and economic stakeholders from several countries.

Hajj Tawfiq said

the Jordanian-Tunisian Joint Business Council, established in 1996, would soon be reactivated and restructured to support private-sector cooperation and address challenges facing businesses and investors in both countries.

He highlighted the need for enhanced coordination between the two countries' private sectors through regular business meetings, trade delegations and joint economic initiatives.

He also proposed establishing a shared database containing updated information on economic sectors, trade and investment opportunities, and regulatory frameworks to facilitate partnerships and improve access to information for investors.

Hajj Tawfiq stressed the importance of accurate and up-to-date information to support investment decisions, as well as improved air and logistics connectivity to facilitate the movement of businesspeople and trade delegations.

He said Jordan's strategic location, trade agreements and infrastructure position it as a regional hub for business, logistics and reexport activities, creating opportunities for wider regional partnerships.

He added that Tunisia provides Jordanian companies with access to North African and African markets, describing the relationship as an opportunity to strengthen Arab economic integration.

Nafti reaffirmed Tunisia's commitment to strengthening eco-

nomics ties with Jordan and expanding cooperation across multiple sectors, stressing the role of the private sector in translating longstanding political relations into practical partnerships and joint projects.

He noted that Jordanian-Tunisian economic relations are built on a solid foundation developed over decades, with chambers of commerce playing a key role in advancing trade cooperation.

He said bilateral trade remains below the aspirations of both countries despite available opportunities, stressing the importance of reactivating the Joint Business Council and strengthening engagement between business communities.

Zaribi also reaffirmed Tunisia's commitment to expanding economic cooperation with Jordan in line with shared interests, expressing hope for a new phase in bilateral relations that would open further avenues for cooperation.

Participants discussed proposals to expand economic cooperation, including joint investments in industrial zones and free zones, stronger tourism ties, support for Jordanian pharmaceutical exports, cooperation in Syria's reconstruction, and opportunities in the IT, education and health sectors.

They also stressed the need to boost bilateral trade, noting that Jordan exported goods worth JD10 million to Tunisia last year, while imports totalled JD13 million.

Lower House speaker, Azerbaijani counterpart discuss cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Lower House Speaker Mazen Qadi on Monday held official talks with Speaker of the National Assembly of Azerbaijan Sahiba Gafarova to discuss ways to bolster parliamentary cooperation and advance bilateral relations across various fields.

The meeting, which took place ahead of the parliamentary conference of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC), highlighted the "deep-rooted" ties between Jordan and Azerbaijan, which receive the care and attention of His Majesty King Abdullah and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

Both speakers noted that these relations serve as a model of cooperation based on mutual respect and shared interests, according to a Lower House statement.

Qadi and Gafarova emphasised that both nations share converging visions grounded in moderation, dialogue and openness, alongside a firm belief in peaceful conflict resolution to enhance regional and international security and stability.

They also reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining coordination and consultation on various issues of mutual concern to serve the aspirations of both friendly peoples.

Qadi expressed great pride in the distinguished level of relations, describing them as a natural extension of established political ties and common understandings that benefit both nations.

He added that parlia-



Lower House Speaker Mazen Qadi on Monday holds official talks with Speaker of the National Assembly of Azerbaijan Sahiba Gafarova

mentary cooperation must move beyond traditional frameworks towards an effective institutional partnership that supports economic and developmental legislation and strengthens coordination in parliamentary and international forums, positively impacting development and stability efforts.

The speaker called for enhancing joint coordination mechanisms through permanent committees dedicated to economic legislation and the exchange of legislative expertise.

He stressed the importance of activating parliamentary diplomacy as a tool to support foreign policies by coordinating stances within the PUIC and international organi-

sations, thereby championing Islamic nation causes, foremost of which is the Palestinian cause.

Qadi also underlined the significance of boosting cooperation between the economic committees of both parliaments to align visions on legislation that supports investment, facilitates intra-trade and encourages the private sector to launch joint projects, ultimately increasing trade volume and serving mutual developmental goals.

For her part, Gafarova affirmed Azerbaijan's keenness to develop relations with Jordan across all sectors, praising the advanced level of bilateral ties and the role of both parliaments in support-

ing governmental steps to enhance joint cooperation.

She said that the Azerbaijani parliament views Jordan as an important regional partner, stressing the importance of expanding parliamentary cooperation and exchanging visits and expertise, particularly in economic legislation, digital transformation and sustainable development.

Gafarova expressed appreciation for Jordan's stances supporting dialogue and regional cooperation, highlighting the need for continuous coordination in international and Islamic forums to defend shared causes and promote security, stability and development.

She also welcomed

the Jordanian proposals to establish permanent institutional mechanisms for parliamentary cooperation, affirming the readiness of the National Assembly of Azerbaijan to work jointly to transform parliamentary ties into an advanced model of strategic partnership.

The meeting was attended by Jordanian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Omar Nahar, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Jordan Shahin Shakir Abdullayev, and MPs Nimr Sulihat, Mahmoud Naimat, Hussein Krishan, Adnan Mashooqah, Attallah Hneiti, Mohammad Shbaylah and Mohammad Bani Melhem, as well as Secretary-General of the Lower House Awad Al Ghoweiri.

Army chief, Pakistani military delegation discuss cooperation in UAVs, defence technology



Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti on Monday receives Pakistan Air Commodore Brig. Gen. Faisal Khan

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti on Monday received Pakistan Air Commodore Brig. Gen. Faisal Khan and an accompanying delegation at the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) General Command.

During the meeting, Huneiti and Khan discussed ways to enhance bilateral military cooperation, particularly in the fields of unmanned aerial vehicle systems and advanced defence

technologies, according to a JAF statement.

The two sides also explored opportunities to expand technical and training cooperation to further develop the operational capabilities of the armed forces of both countries.

Huneiti underscored the deep-rooted ties between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, reiterating the JAF's commitment to broadening military cooperation and strength-

ening the exchange of expertise in line with advances in modern defence technologies.

For his part, Khan commended the JAF's high level of professionalism, efficiency and operational readiness, expressing his country's interest in further expanding military cooperation and expertise-sharing.

The meeting was attended by several senior JAF officers and the Pakistani military attaché in Amman.

Jordan field hospital in Gaza receives delegation from Khan Younis

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Field Hospital South Gaza on Monday received a delegation of tribal leaders and dignitaries from Khan Younis and the southern Gaza Strip, along with members of the Khan Yunis Families Forum.

The hospital's force commander welcomed the visiting delegation, saying that the medical and therapeutic services

provided by the hospital are implemented in accordance with the Royal directives, and stem from Jordan's national and humanitarian duty towards the people of Gaza.

He emphasised that the hospital's staff will continue to provide top-tier healthcare services to patients, according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement.

The delegation com-

mended the hospital's humanitarian efforts and role in supporting the Palestinian people, particularly following the arrival of a medical supply convoy last week.

They also hailed the Royal initiatives, foremost of which is the initiative to treat 2,000 Gazan children in Jordan and the "Restoring Hope" initiative for amputees, which recently included supporting the

hospital with 1,000 prosthetic limbs.

They stressed that these humanitarian efforts embody Jordan's unwavering stance towards the Palestinian people, helping alleviate the suffering of the injured and restoring hope to thousands of families in the Strip.

Jordan runs two military field hospitals in Gaza, one in the Strip's north and was estab-

lished in 2009 following the war in 2008, and the second is in Khan Younis in the south, which was established in November 2023 at the peak of the Israeli war of aggression on the coastal enclave that erupted on October 7, 2023.

Besides the field hospitals in Gaza, the JAF established the Jordanian field hospital in Nablus in late November 2023.

court papers added.

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".

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

The higher court stated that the SSC had

followed the proper procedures in issuing the sentence imposed 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 Mahmoud Ebtoush, Majid Azab, Fawzi Nahar, Ibrahim Abu Shamma and Mohammad Shreiri.

Cassation Court upholds over 3-year sentence for drug dealer

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld a September 2024 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 April 2023.

The court declared the defendant guilty of obtaining illegal narcotics with the intent of selling the drugs to an un-

dercover agent in downtown Amman on April 3.

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 De-

partment (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 in return for JD45," court documents said.

When the two met, AND agents immediately arrested the suspect,

'The move aims to support local farmers, incentivise them to expand the cultivation of strategic crops...'

"This growth reflects the success of national policies designed to support the field crops sector and encourage farmers to expand cultivation," he added.

Regarding recent fires in certain agricultural areas, the minister stressed that they did not impact overall production volumes, as the damage did not exceed approximately 0.2 per cent (two per thousand) of the total harvest.

He pointed out that the ministry, in cooperation with competent authorities, investigated the causes of the fires and took all necessary measures to address them. Khreisat emphasised that the ministry is proceeding with its programmes to support the field crops sector, including providing various forms of assistance to farmers, honouring their efforts, and encouraging them to further expand wheat and barley cultivation, given the strategic importance of these crops in enhancing national food security.



Nabil Fahmy, when Egypt's Foreign Minister, speaks in Kuwait City on January 15, 2014

Arab League confirms Egyptian diplomat Nabil Fahmy as secretary-general

CAIRO (AFP) — The Arab League on Monday confirmed Egyptian veteran diplomat Nabil Fahmy as its new chief during a meeting of foreign ministers in Amman, a statement said.

Fahmy's five-year term as secretary-general is to begin at the start of July, succeeding Ahmed Aboul Gheit who served two consecutive terms as head of the regional body.

The former top diplomat, who led Egypt's foreign ministry from June 2013 to July 2014, will become the eighth Egyptian head of the Cairo-based regional bloc. He was unanimously nominated for the post in March.

The 22-member bloc has only had one non-Egyptian secretary-general — Tunisian Chedli Klibi in the 1980s — when Egypt

was suspended for signing a peace deal with Israel, at the time breaking a regional consensus.

Fahmy, 75, said in March that the role was a "great responsibility" to bear, given "the blatant violations of international law perpetrated by aggressors who have treacherously attacked our countries and our security, and by others whose prolonged occupation of our lands have obstructed our brothers from exercising their legitimate rights".

He did not explicitly name Iran or Israel, but his statement echoed his predecessor's line on both.

The Arab League, founded in 1945, is a mostly political forum for Arab countries to discuss and communicate points of consensus.

Gaza's surfers seek solace in the sea

GAZA CITY, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — Carrying their boards past tents and bombed-out buildings, a group of Gazan surfers headed for the sea, seeking solace in the waves despite the risk of Israeli attacks.

On the beach in Gaza City, the trio laid out their boards on the sand while they warmed up their limbs and readied their gear.

A few children splashed in the shallows as the surfers paddled out to sea, fighting the crashing waves.

"This sport is indescribable. When you catch a wave, ride it, glide along it, that feeling can't be put into words," said 23-year-old Tahseen Abu Assi, who learned how to surf from his father.

"I used to see him practicing it at the beach with his father, and I watched and learned from them," he told AFP.

"We learned little by little, and even with the war, the shelling and the destruction, we're still continuing with this sport, because it lets us breathe and makes us feel safe."

A ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas came into effect in Gaza in October after two years of devastating war.

But the tiny coastal territory remains gripped by bloodshed, with each side accusing the other of near-



Palestinian surfer Tahseen Abu Assi, 23, takes his surfboard out into the Mediterranean sea off a beach in Gaza City on Sunday

daily violations. Even out at sea, the violence persists.

In mid-May, Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis reported receiving two fishermen who had been injured by Israeli naval gunfire near the beach in the southern Gaza Strip.

A few days later, a Gazan security source reported that three fishermen were wounded by Israeli fire near the coast off Gaza City.

"The situation is still unstable," Abu Assi explained.

"At any moment,

shells or explosives could land near you."

Candle wax

Out at sea, the surfers glide effortlessly across the crests of waves, momentarily free from the hardships of daily life in Gaza.

But the severe shortages caused by the war and ongoing Israeli import restrictions have posed obstacles for the sport.

"One of the biggest challenges and difficulties we face as surfers in the Gaza Strip

is the lack of tools and equipment specific to this sport," Abdel Rahim Al Ustadh, 19, told AFP.

"Surf wax, which we put on the boards, is not available at all in Gaza, so we resort to candle wax so we can keep this sport going," he added.

Ustadh said preserving old equipment was also essential, clutching a battered red and blue surfboard that was nearly two decades old.

"As surfers, we treat these boards like great

treasures to us, because losing any board or having it confiscated threatens our ability to continue in this sport," he said.

The war in Gaza flattened swathes of the territory, displaced most of the population at least once, and left hundreds of thousands of people living in tents and temporary shelters.

Khalil Abu Jiyab, 18, said that before the war there had been a team of 17 surfers in Gaza.

Now, he said, there

were just the three of them, pointing to shortages and a lack of boards.

"I've been surfing for 13 years now, and my hopes have almost been shattered," Abu Jiyab told AFP, but said he still dreamed of one day being able to surf in competitions outside the Gaza Strip.

"There's nothing in Gaza you can really look forward to except the sea," he added.

"The only outlet in Gaza is the sea; without it, life would have vanished long ago."

Europe scorched by latest heatwave

PARIS, France (AFP) — Thirteen people died by drowning in searing temperatures in France over the weekend, with the heatwave set to intensify from Monday across much of Europe, forcing warnings and special measures.

The latest hot spell that has left the continent sweltering has seen outdoor events cancelled, transport disrupted, schools shut and office workers told to work from home, as the authorities issued health alerts to protect the elderly and vulnerable.

Britain's Met Office on Monday issued a rare red warning for extreme heat, the national weather agency's highest alert level, indicating risk to life and the possibility of major infrastructure such as roads and railways being closed.

The warning runs from 9:00am on Wednesday to 9:00pm on Thursday and covers a large area of central and southern England, including London and Birmingham, the UK's two largest cities.

Shade temperatures could rise as high as 38°C to 40°C in the affected area, the Met Office warned. Akshay Deoras, a senior researcher at the University of Reading's National Centre for Atmospheric Science, in England, said it was clear what was behind the rash of heat records.

"Human-driven climate change has provided the springboard



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer makes a statement on his future outside 10 Downing Street on the morning of Monday, in London

for this event, loading the atmosphere with extra heat and making extreme temperatures far more intense than they would have been in the past," he said.

In France, 49°C of the country's 96 mainland departments were on the highest heat alert, with temperatures forecast to climb up to 43°C in the south-western city of Bordeaux and 39°C in the capital Paris, weather service Meteo-France said. The government's emergency response cell warned people not to try to cool off in unsupervised areas such as lakes and rivers, after the drowning deaths at the weekend, which included a 13-year-old girl.

Some 845 schools were shut on Monday because of the heat, with another 1,800 set to allow students to leave

earlier than usual.

"Last week, it was 32°C in the classroom for the children. It's only going to get worse, while the supermarket across the street is cool and air-conditioned," one primary school teacher in the Bordeaux region told AFP.

"Everyone thinks it's normal but one day we're going to end up teaching in the aisles of the supermarket," she added, asking to remain anonymous to speak freely.

French forecasters say the current heatwave, which has already been blamed for the deaths of several elderly people, could end up being as serious as the one in August 2003 that claimed the lives of nearly 15,000 in France.

"With this intense heat at the moment, it's

tricky. You really have to protect yourself from the sun. You need to stay hydrated, otherwise you don't feel well," nurse Mamone Outhaithany, 31, told AFP in the southern city of Marseille.

'Intense and early'

The high temperatures have already seen the cancellation in several towns of France's annual street music festival, while an outdoor screening of Spain's World Cup football match against Saudi Arabia was scrapped in Madrid.

French and Belgian authorities also cancelled or cut back rail services because of fears about breakdowns causing logjams and delays.

Elsewhere in Europe:

Temperatures in Bel-

gium are expected to be "the hottest ever recorded" in the coming week, warned David Dehenauw, head of forecasting at the IRM meteorological institute.

Spain's weather service Aemet warned of "extremely high" temperatures for the season, day and night, until Wednesday, with temperatures forecast to hit 44°C in some areas. Aemet spokesperson Ruben del Campo said the extremely high temperatures were "between five and 10 degrees above what is typical for this period in general".

Portugal's IPMA weather agency said temperatures were above average in general but in some northern and central inland regions were "close to previously recorded maximums".

Liz Bentley, the chief executive of Britain's Royal Meteorological Society, predicted that existing UK heat records for June would be "annihilated" — as had already happened in May.

The current heatwave is the second in consecutive months, after an unusually hot spell in May broke new ground.

Scientists have shown that recurring heatwaves are a clear marker of global warming and warn they are set to become more frequent, longer and more intense. Meteo-France says that of the 51 heatwaves recorded nationwide since 1947, 34 have taken place since 2000 and 26 since 2011.



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer makes a statement on his future outside 10 Downing Street on the morning of Monday, in London

EU says 'reassessing' summit plan with UK after Starmer resignation

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AFP) — The European Union said on Monday it was "reassessing" with Britain plans for a July 22 summit on post-Brexit ties, after UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer's resignation.

European Commission spokeswoman Paula Pinho said Brussels and London were looking into "the opportunity of still holding the summit... and we will take it from here".

The two sides had announced plans last week for the Brussels summit, which was meant to be between Starmer and EU top officials Ursula von der Leyen and Antonio Costa.

But Starmer's decision to kickstart the handover to a successor has thrown that timetable into doubt.

Former Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham is favourite

to be the next prime minister and could take office just ahead of July 22 if he faces no opponents.

The two sides had been hoping to present several deals at the summit, namely on food and animal safety standards, a youth mobility scheme and the linking of their emissions trading systems.

But discussions have been difficult on some of the issues.

EU-friendly Burnham has recently played down calls for Britain to rejoin the bloc, insisting that while Brexit has been damaging he does not want to "re-run" the bitter domestic arguments of the past decade.

In a new poll from the European Council on Foreign Relations, 57 per cent of Britons surveyed said they believed it was "wrong" for the UK to leave the EU.

The poll said three-quarters of Britons now back having closer ties to the European Union. Since coming to power in 2024, Starmer has looked to turn the page on the bad blood caused by Britain's 2016 vote to quit the EU, in a referendum held exactly 10 years ago on Tuesday.

SECURITY

US targets alleged Daesh funding networks with new sanctions

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — The United States on Monday issued sanctions against three individuals and six companies spread across Europe, the Middle East and

West Africa for allegedly facilitating financial transactions by the Daesh militant group.

"This action targets key facilitators who enable ISIS to move funds among its re-

gional affiliates," the US Treasury said, using an alternative acronym for Daesh.

The men being sanctioned included France-based Miloud Abderrahmane, Syr-

ia-based Abdelhakim Boukich and Nigeria-based Mukhtar Adamu Muhammad.

Boukich is a former Dutch national who controls Bitcoin Xchange, the US Treas-

ury said, which was also sanctioned.

The Treasury said Bitcoin Xchange had transferred money on behalf of Daesh associates from Norway, Belgium, The Netherlands,

South Africa and the United States.

In addition to Bitcoin Xchange, Monday's action also designated Turkey-based financial firms Spider and Alkaram as being subject to

sanctions.

Abderrahmane is said to be a French national who the US Treasury said had conducted transactions with Daesh affiliates and provided explo-

sives training to Daesh supporters.

In West Africa, the sanctions targeted Muhammad in Nigeria and three foreign exchange companies he is alleged to control.

Key points from the first round of Iran-US talks

BURGENSTOCK, Switzerland (AFP) — Iran and the United States wrapped up the first round of talks to end the Middle East war at the Burgenstock resort in Switzerland on Monday, with technical talks to continue.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi hailed the "major progress" achieved with the help of mediators Pakistan and Qatar, while the United States government has yet to issue a statement.

Here are the main points from the joint Qatar-Pakistan statement at the conclusion of first-round talks:

Roadmap to final deal agreed

The High Level Committee set up by Tehran and Washington to oversee the talks has "agreed upon a roadmap towards reaching a final deal within 60 days, laying the foundation for the immediate commencement of further technical talks", according to the statement.

"Technical talks will continue for the remainder of the week at the Burgenstock resort on all issues."

Lebanon 'de-confliction cell'

The United States and Iran "agreed on the creation of a de-confliction cell, between the parties, the Lebanese Republic and facilitated by the Mediators, to ensure the adherence of the termination of military operations in Lebanon",



Flags of Switzerland, United States, Qatar, Pakistan and local Swiss canton of Nidwalden are photographed at the Burgenstock luxury hotel complex overlooking Lake Lucerne, Switzerland, on Sunday, ahead of high-level talks

the joint statement read. Lebanon was dragged into the Middle East war in early March when the Iran-backed Hizbollah fired rockets at Israel in retaliation for the killing of Iran's supreme leader in US-Israeli strikes.

Fighting in Lebanon in recent days has threatened to derail the peace deal. Iran's Araghchi wrote in an X post on Monday that the Lebanon de-confliction cell will be the "1st real test".

Hormuz 'communication line'

Tehran and Washington have set up a "communication line" to "avoid incidents and miscom-

munication with the aim of safe passage for commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz", according to the statement.

The communication line is applicable for the 60-day period outlined in the memorandum of understanding signed earlier by both sides, in which Iran vowed "best efforts" to ensure safe passage of commercial ships.

Iran said on Saturday it was closing the Strait of Hormuz again over Israeli attacks in Lebanon.

Some assets unfrozen

Araghchi wrote on Monday on X "oil and

petrochem exports are waived, blockade lifted, some frozen assets released, and major reconstruction & development plan launched for Iran".

The Pakistan-Qatar joint statement does not mention any unfreezing of Iranian assets.

In the memorandum of understanding, the United States undertakes to "terminate all types of sanctions against" Iran, and to "make fully available for use the frozen or restricted funds and assets" of Iran.

The White House did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment on Araghchi's statement.

Pakistan, Qatar in key roles

Pakistan and Qatar have gained international prominence as mediators in the Iran-US deal, with the two nations issuing a joint statement to mark the conclusion of the first round of talks.

"The mediating parties will continue to do their utmost to ensure that the negotiations continue to be conducted in a constructive atmosphere with the aim of reaching a final deal," the statement said.

Araghchi in his X post gave credit to "tireless Pakistani and Qatari mediation".

14 killed in northern India building fire

LUCKNOW, India (AFP) — A fire at a building housing a library and coaching centre for college students in India killed at least 14 people on Monday, officials said.

The fire in Lucknow, the capital city of northern Uttar Pradesh state, started from the middle floor of the three-storey commercial building located in a residential area and soon spread to other levels.

"Fourteen children from happy families were killed in the incident," the state's deputy chief minister, Brajesh Pathak, told reporters, adding four others were injured in the blaze.

It was not clear whether all of the dead were students.

Multiple students jumped from the upper level of the building on to the street below to escape the flames, witnesses told an AFP reporter.

Indian TV showed images of the flames leaping out from the

front facade of the building as firefighters struggled to put out the fire.

to a lack of firefighting equipment and routine disregard for safety regulations.

Electrical short circuits, often caused by poorly maintained wiring, remain the leading cause of fire incidents in India.

"Stern action will be taken against those found responsible," Pathak said.

'Fourteen children from happy families were killed in the incident'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was "angushed by the loss of lives" and announced over \$2,100 in relief money for each family, his office said in a social media post.

The cause of the latest fire — which came about two weeks after a blaze at hotel left 21 dead in capital New Delhi — was not immediately known.

In March, a fire at a government-run hospital in eastern India killed 10 critically ill patients.

In 2019, a major fire incident in Delhi killed 43 factory workers sleeping in a building in the city's old quarter.

The building housed a coaching centre for college students, a library and a computer graphics section. Building fires are common in India due

Arab consultative meeting enabled 'open, candid' talks on regional challenges — Safadi

Continued from page 1

Safadi said that these issues require coordinated Arab action to confront them and protect the right of regional peoples to live in security and peace.

He reiterated that lasting peace can only be achieved through the establishment of an independent, sover-

eign Palestinian state along the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

He also reiterated Jordan's full solidarity with Lebanon in the face of ongoing Israeli aggression on its territory, stressing the need to uphold the ceasefire

and support the Lebanese government in extending its sovereignty over all its territory.

Safadi also said, "We support Syria in its reconstruction process on foundations that preserve its unity and sovereignty and secure the Syrian people's right to live in safety and peace within a fully sovereign state."

Man charged in Scotland with anti-Muslim attacks in court

LONDON (AFP) — A 36-year-old Scottish man appeared in court on Tuesday charged with five counts of attempted murder with a racist and terror motive after an attack left five people injured last Friday.

Lewis Hawkes, who was further charged with assault and robbery, breach of the peace and culpable and reckless conduct, did

not enter a plea at Edinburgh Sheriff Court but was remanded in custody and is due back in court next week.

He is suspected of carrying out attacks motivated by anti-Muslim sentiment.

Outgoing Prime Minister Keir Starmer said on Saturday the suspect "appears to be motivated by anti-Muslim hatred".

Footage of the attacks

posted online showed a bare-chested man, believed to be the suspect, roaming Edinburgh's streets with a large weapon.

Police Scotland said they received multiple emergency calls late Friday from people reporting "violent attacks including threats, robbery and vandalism across Edinburgh, with five men injured".

The victims, two aged

22, and others aged 24, 27 and 39, sustained various injuries, police said, with three taken hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

Both the Scottish Association of Mosques and the anti-Islamophobia non-profit Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) said several of the victims were Muslims.

MEND noted the alleged footage of the ar-

rested man circulating online also showed him shouting about "protecting the country" from Muslims, accompanied by expletive-filled language.

The organisation urged police to "treat this as what the evidence indicates: Islamophobic, far-right terror".

The attacks came amid rising tension in the United Kingdom over immigration.

As Iran, US conclude first round of talks, 'difficult details' could still threaten negotiations — analysts

Continued from page 1

Among the key outcomes of the first round was the creation of a de-confliction mechanism involving the United States, Iran and Lebanon to ensure adherence to the cessation of military operations in Lebanon.

The parties also agreed to establish a communication line aimed at preventing incidents in the Strait of Hormuz and ensuring the safe passage of commercial vessels during the 60-day negoti-

ating period. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi described the Lebanon mechanism as the "first real test" of the agreement.

Iran and the United States have agreed to set up a "de-confliction cell" with Lebanon to stop military operations, mediators Pakistan and Qatar said in a joint statement on Monday.

"The parties agreed on the creation of a de-confliction cell, between the parties, the Lebanese

Republic and facilitated by the Mediators, to ensure the adherence of the termination of military operations in Lebanon," the joint statement read.

Political analyst Amer Sabaileh said that reaching the negotiation stage was significant but warned that the process would likely face repeated setbacks.

"Every stage of these talks will have its ups and downs. Iran needs a political and media victory to strengthen its position at home, while

Israel remains firmly committed to its own vision," he said.

Sabaileh said that even issues that appear open to compromise are likely to be complicated by difficult details.

"Israel will continue to use all its security cards and may even open new fronts, whether in Gaza, the West Bank or Syria," he said.

He added that Washington is likely to push for separate framework agreements on Lebanon, but that such efforts ul-

timately revolve around the issue of Hizbollah's weapons.

"Iran may use this file as leverage, but it is essentially trying to buy time and gain advantages elsewhere by reshuffling priorities," he said.

Observers have cautioned that the negotiations remain fragile and that developments in Lebanon and the Strait of Hormuz could determine whether the new roadmap leads to a final deal or another round of regional tensions.

Lebanese president discusses Israel truce with senior US, Qatari officials

Continued from page 1

After a first round of US-Iran talks in Switzerland on ending the Middle East war, mediators Pakistan and Qatar said on Monday that Tehran and Washington had agreed to set up a "de-confliction cell" with Lebanon "to ensure the adherence of the termination of military operations" there.

Fighting between Israel and Hizbollah, which drew Lebanon

into the Middle East war on March 2 with rocket fire at Israel in support of its backer Iran, has repeatedly threatened to derail regional peace efforts.

Aoun received a telephone call from Vance, US senior adviser Jared Kushner and Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, a statement from the Lebanese presidency said.

They discussed "the issue of consolidat-

ing the ceasefire in Lebanon, stopping the Israeli military escalation and steps that should be taken in this regard, including the possibility of forming a cell for this purpose", the statement added.

Vance later told a press conference in Switzerland that the "de-confliction mechanism" was being set up to ensure "that when things happen, they don't spiral into a broader escalation".

"We do believe... that

we can get to a place where Lebanon's territorial integrity and sovereignty is protected, Israel's security is protected," he said.

"That's going to require some coordination with the Lebanese armed forces, and also it's going to require the Iranians to rein in Hizbollah," Vance added.

"We negotiate for ourselves" After the talks in Switzerland, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi wrote on X:

"1st real test: Lebanon deconfliction cell."

The negotiations came after Washington and Tehran last week signed a memorandum of understanding to end the broader Middle East war that includes Lebanon.

Israeli strikes and clashes with Hizbollah late last week threatened to derail the deal, but fighting in Lebanon has been paused since Saturday evening, after Iran said it had closed the stra-

Continued from page 1

Majali also expressed wishes for a speedy recovery for the injured and for a safe return of those reported missing.

A huge blast at a Qatar gas hub killed 13 people and injured 66 others, the state's energy minister said on Monday, providing an update on one of the deadliest ever accidents at a Gulf energy facility.

Authorities are investigating the cause of the explosion, which Saad Al Kaabi said was "an accident and not sabotage or hostile in nature," AFP reported.

He announced "the tragic loss of 13 lives of our people who hold Indian and Pakistani nationalities. 66 people have been reported injured and are receiving medical treat-

ment, none of whom are in life-threatening condition".

'An accident and not sabotage or hostile in nature'

'An accident and not sabotage or hostile in nature'

capital Doha.

"It will not affect anything regarding export. It will not affect anything regarding our local requirements," Kaabi said, adding that the explosion had "no environmental impact".

Qatar's state-owned energy company said the blast erupted "during the start-up of operations at Ras Laffan Industrial City, which resulted in an explosion and fire at Barzan local gas supply facility".

Late Sunday, QatarEnergy said the fire had been brought under control after emergency response teams were deployed.

Earlier, Qatar's interior ministry had described Sunday's incident as an "internal explosion" and a "technical malfunction".

The interior ministry had said a "technical incident" caused the explosion late on Sunday in the Gulf emirate's Ras Laffan industrial zone.

The blast took place at a unit supplying gas to local firms and reverberated across the

tegic Strait of Hormuz again in response to Israel's attacks.

Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday that Israeli forces would remain in southern Lebanon "as long as necessary", while Hizbollah chief Naim Qassem rejected any Israeli "security zone" inside Lebanon.

Israel nonetheless said all war-related restrictions in its northern border areas were lifted from Monday morning.

Under US pressure, Lebanese officials began direct talks with Israel in April in Washington, and a fifth round of negotiations is scheduled to begin on Tuesday.

Lebanese authorities are seeking the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the country and to separate the negotiations from the US-Iran deal.

"We negotiate for ourselves, and we do not accept any other party doing so for

us," Aoun said later Monday.

"We welcome any assistance that comes from any country to end the war, particularly as the situation in the region is interconnected," he added.

"But there is a big difference between trying to help us and interfering in our internal affairs," he said, alluding to Iran, which through Hizbollah has long wielded significant political influence in Lebanon.

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](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

Mega projects and their impact beyond direct economic returns

By **Zaid K. Maaytah**

Every generation remembers a handful of projects that changed the way people viewed their country's future, these projects are rarely remembered because of their technical specifications or financing arrangements, instead, they become milestones because they demonstrate that something once considered difficult, distant, or even impossible can become reality, as Jordan advances with projects such as the recently launched National Water Carrier project and explores other strategic investments in infrastructure, transport and connectivity, an important question emerges, why do some projects leave an impact that extends far beyond the services they provide?

Part of the answer lies in economics, throughout history, major leaps in development have often been linked to projects that expanded a country's possibilities rather than simply improving existing conditions, whether through water, energy, transport, or logistics, their importance came not from the infrastructure itself, but from the economic activity it made possible, this idea is particularly relevant for countries facing structural constraints, in Jordan, challenges related to water, energy and logistics influence the pace at which the entire economy can grow, and when a strategic project removes one of these constraints, it creates space for new investment, business activity and economic expansion that may not have been possible otherwise.

The economic impact of these projects extends across both the short and long term, during implementation, they generate employment, stimulate demand for local goods and services, and contribute directly to economic activity, over time, however, their more significant contribution emerges through higher productivity, lower operating costs, improved competitiveness, and greater investment opportunities, these effects continue to support economic growth and expand gross domestic product long after construction is completed.

Yet, infrastructure alone does not determine economic outcomes, growth is also influenced by expectations, investors commit capital because they believe future opportunities will exist, entrepreneurs launch businesses because they expect markets to expand and families make long-term decisions based on their confidence in what lies ahead, in this sense, expectations are not merely a reflection of economic conditions, they are one of the forces that shape them.

This is where strategic projects acquire an importance that is often overlooked, when people see a major project move from years of discussion into actual implementation, they receive a visible signal about a country's ability to execute long-term plans, the project itself creates value, but so does the message it sends, it reinforces confidence that ambitious objectives can move beyond planning and into action, a confidence that is further strengthened when governments, investors, and development partners succeed in finding innovative financing models that transform strategic ambitions into achievable projects.

Perhaps the most enduring contribution of strategic projects extends beyond the infrastructure they create, successful projects demonstrate a country's ability to turn long-term ambitions into reality, and in doing so they strengthen confidence among citizens, investors, and businesses alike, this confidence matters because expectations influence economic decisions, from investment and entrepreneurship to long-term planning, and for that reason, building confidence in the future can be just as important as building the project itself.

The writer is a researcher in economics and behavioural policy

How sports fandom becomes a billion-dollar betting engine

By **Hamza Alakalik**

What if the roar of a stadium, the tension of a penalty kick, and the emotional surge of a last-minute goal were not just moments of entertainment, but inputs in a global financial system designed to convert human excitement into predictable revenue? This is no longer a theoretical question. It is the operational logic behind the modern sports betting industry.

Behind the vibrant interfaces of betting applications such as 1xBet and similar platforms lies a highly engineered digital infrastructure. It is built not merely to host predictions, but to continuously transform emotional engagement into measurable financial activity. At its core, this system combines artificial intelligence, behavioural science, and high-frequency data processing to optimise one outcome: Sustained profitability.

The global betting industry experiences its most intense expansion during major sporting events, particularly the FIFA World Cup. These events attract billions of viewers and create unprecedented levels of collective emotional investment. For betting operators, this is not just an audience. It is a data-rich environment where attention, anticipation, and uncertainty become monetisable assets.

Modern betting platforms operate through advanced technological ecosystems connected to global sports data providers via application programming interfaces. These systems stream real-time information on injuries, formations, referee decisions, performance metrics and environmental conditions. Each

data point is instantly processed to adjust probabilities and reshape betting markets within milliseconds.

During high-profile matches, algorithmic pricing engines simulate outcomes thousands of times before kickoff and continue recalibrating probabilities throughout live play. This creates a constantly shifting environment where odds are never stable but dynamically engineered to sustain engagement and encourage continuous participation under time pressure.

At the structural level, betting platforms are not designed to be neutral marketplaces. They are mathematically structured to ensure long-term profitability regardless of individual match outcomes. This is achieved through a built-in margin embedded within all odds, commonly known as the bookmaker's advantage or "vig". While users may experience short-term gains, the system is calibrated to ensure aggregate profitability over time.

However, the true sophistication of this industry extends beyond mathematics. Behavioural design plays an equally critical role. Betting applications are carefully constructed to influence decision-making patterns through visual stimulation, instant feedback loops, and reward mechanisms. Every notification, animation, and interface element is optimised to reduce hesitation and increase participation frequency.

The rise of mobile technology has amplified this effect significantly. Smartphones have transformed betting into an always-accessible activity, embedded within daily digital routines. Operators respond by prioritising frictionless user experiences: Instant reg-

istration, rapid deposits, personalised alerts and gamified reward systems designed to sustain user attention.

ies restrict access to primary platforms, digital infrastructure allows rapid replication of services across alternative web addresses. This ensures continuity of access while complicating enforcement efforts.

Taken together, these elements reveal a system that is far more complex than conventional entertainment platforms. Online betting now functions as a converged ecosystem where technology, psychology, and financial engineering intersect to capture and monetise human attention at scale.

Addressing this reality requires more than regulatory reaction. It demands proactive digital governance, enhanced financial monitoring systems, and the integration of artificial intelligence tools capable of detecting abnormal transactional behaviour. Hence, Jordan, through its Central Bank, (CBJ) maintains a highly advanced digital financial infrastructure represented by a real-time payment and clearing system as well as electronic wallet transfer services. The CBJ enforces strict security measures to monitor wallet limits and financial thresholds. These controls include setting a maximum total wallet balance of 25,000 JD, along with clear daily and monthly limits on deposits and withdrawals, ensuring strong oversight, financial stability, and robust regulatory supervision of digital transactions.

In essence, modern sports fandom has evolved beyond passive viewership. It has become an active input in a global engine where emotion is quantified, behaviour is predicted, and engagement is continuously converted into economic value.

The rise of mobile technology has amplified this effect significantly. Smartphones have transformed betting into an always-accessible activity, embedded within daily digital routines...

Has Jordan become more economically resilient

By **Raad Mahmoud Al-Tal**

In an era marked by unprecedented economic and geopolitical uncertainty, the question facing nations is no longer simply how to achieve growth, but how to preserve stability in an increasingly volatile world. From the global financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic to regional conflicts and geopolitical tensions, recent events have underscored the growing fragility of the global economy and the difficulty of predicting its future trajectory. Against this backdrop, Jordan's experience offers an important case study — not because it has recorded extraordinary growth rates, but because it has maintained economic and financial stability despite being exposed to a prolonged series of external and domestic shocks.

Over the past two decades, Jordan has navigated an exceptional sequence of challenges. The Iraq War in 2003 disrupted regional trade and energy markets, while the global financial crisis of 2008 weakened economic activity worldwide. The aftermath of the Arab Spring led to the closure of key export routes and traditional markets, while the influx of refugees placed significant pressure on public services and infrastructure. Before the country could fully recover from these challenges, it faced the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the Russia-Ukraine war, which triggered sharp increases in global food and energy prices. Most recently, the war in Gaza has added another layer of regional uncertainty, affecting trade flows, tourism activity and investor sentiment.

Despite these successive shocks, Jordan has succeeded in maintaining a remarkable degree of monetary and financial stability. The country has avoided exchange-rate crises, preserved confidence in its banking system, and continued to meet its domestic and external financial obligations with-

out disruption. This achievement becomes even more notable when compared with several countries that possess larger economies and greater natural resources, but experienced severe currency, banking, or sovereign debt crises under similar circumstances.

Jordan's continued access to international capital markets and the improvement in sovereign borrowing conditions over recent years reflect growing investor confidence in the country's economic management

One of the key factors behind Jordan's resilience has been its ability to develop what may be described as an economic safety shield — a framework built upon strong institutions, prudent policymaking and gradual reforms implemented over many years. Jordan's experience demonstrates that in an uncertain global environment, institutional strength often matters more than resource abundance when it comes to withstanding economic shocks.

At the heart of this resilience lies monetary stability. The Jordanian dinar's peg to the US dollar has provided a

credible and reliable monetary anchor, strengthening confidence in the national currency and reducing the risks associated with exchange-rate volatility and imported inflation. Equally important, the Central Bank of Jordan has consistently maintained substantial foreign exchange reserves, enhancing the country's ability to absorb external pressures and safeguard monetary stability during periods of heightened uncertainty.

The banking sector has also served as a critical pillar of economic resilience. Throughout successive global and regional crises, Jordanian banks have demonstrated a strong capacity to maintain financial stability. High capitalisation levels, prudent regulatory oversight, and sound risk-management practices have enabled the sector to withstand external shocks while preserving depositor confidence and ensuring the continued flow of credit to households and businesses. As a result, the banking system has acted as a stabilising force, preventing financial turbulence from spilling over into the broader economy.

In parallel, Jordan's long-standing commitment to economic reform has strengthened the economy's ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Although reform programmes often generate debate and may involve short-term costs, they have contributed to greater fiscal discipline, improved institutional efficiency, and a more attractive investment environment. More recently, the Economic Modernisation Vision has expanded the reform agenda beyond macroeconomic stability, placing greater emphasis on productivity, investment, innovation and job creation as drivers of sustainable growth.

International financial markets have recognized these efforts. Jordan's continued access to international capital markets and the improvement in sovereign borrowing conditions over recent years reflect

growing investor confidence in the country's economic management. Financial markets assess countries not through political narratives but through their ability to meet obligations and maintain sound economic fundamentals. Lower risk premiums and favourable financing conditions therefore signal confidence in Jordan's capacity to manage challenges and preserve stability.

Yet, stability alone is not enough. While Jordan has demonstrated an impressive ability to withstand crises, the country continues to face structural challenges, particularly in relation to unemployment, investment and economic growth. The next phase of development requires moving beyond crisis management towards opportunity creation. This means leveraging stability to attract investment, enhance productivity, promote innovation and strengthen competitiveness across key sectors of the economy.

Jordan's economic story over the past two decades is one of resilience rather than abundance. Through prudent monetary management, a sound banking system, institutional reforms and disciplined policymaking, the country has built a protective framework that has helped it navigate an increasingly uncertain global landscape. Although this framework has not eliminated the impact of external shocks, it has significantly reduced their consequences and prevented them from escalating into systemic crises.

As global uncertainty continues to shape the economic environment, Jordan's challenge is no longer merely to survive future shocks, but to transform its hard-earned stability into a platform for stronger growth, greater prosperity, and more inclusive development. After all, the true measure of economic success is not simply the ability to endure crises, but the ability to convert stability into sustainable progress and long-term opportunity.

BUSINESS

Tuesday, June 23, 2026



Chairman of the Jordan and Amman Chamber of Industry Fathi Jaghbir meets on Monday with Pakistan's Ambassador to Jordan, Khurram Sarfraz Khan to discuss strengthening economic ties

ACI urges 'stronger' economic ties, direct air link with Pakistan

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Amman Chamber of Industry (ACI), Fathi Jaghbir, on Monday called for strengthening economic relations with Pakistan as a "promising" market for Jordanian industrial exports.

During a meeting with Pakistan's ambassador to Jordan, Khurram Sarfraz Khan, Jaghbir said Jordan offers an "attractive" investment environment, citing its strategic geographic location and its role as a gateway to Iraq, Syria and the Gulf markets.

In an ACI statement, said Jaghbir highlighted Jordan's network of free trade agreements,

which provide Jordanian products with access to a wide range of international markets.

He welcomed a proposal to organise a visit by a Jordanian economic delegation to Pakistan to explore opportunities for cooperation and partnership.

Jaghbir said Pakistan produces a wide range of goods, particularly agricultural products that serve as key inputs for Jordan's food manufacturing sector.

He also called for the launch of a direct air route between Jordan and Pakistan to facilitate trade, investment and people-to-people exchanges.

Trade data cited dur-

ing the meeting showed that Jordan's exports to Pakistan totalled \$19 million last year, while imports from Pakistan stood at \$53 million.

For his part, Khan called for expanding partnerships between the private sectors of both countries and increasing trade and investment flows.

He also urged enhanced communication, the exchange of business delegations, and the organisation of specialised economic forums and business meetings to identify investment opportunities and build sustainable partnerships serving the interests of both countries.

Jordanian pavilion at Food Expo Syria inaugurated

AMMAN (JT) — President of the Jordan Chamber of Commerce (JCC), Khalil Haj Tawfiq, on Sunday evening inaugurated the Jordanian pavilion at the 21st Arab International Food and Packaging Exhibition, "Food Expo 2026", held at the Fairgrounds in the Syrian capital, Damascus.

The five-day exhibition brings together 300 Syrian, Arab and international companies, which aims to promote food products, explore trade and investment opportunities and strengthen commercial partnerships among participating firms, according to a JCC statement.

The exhibition covers a wide range of sectors, including; oils, bakery products, grains, baby food, canned goods, dairy products, sweets, meat products, water, juices, poultry and fish, in addition to raw materials for the food industry and packaging machinery and materials.

The Jordanian pavilion features 20 companies specialising in the food industry and packaging sector, with the aim of enhancing the presence of Jordanian products in Syrian and regional markets,



President of the Jordan Chamber of Commerce Khalil Haj Tawfiq on Sunday inaugurates the Jordanian pavilion at the 21st Arab International Food and Packaging Exhibition 'Food Expo 2026' in Syria

and opening new channels for commercial cooperation with importers and distributors.

According to a JCC statement issued on Monday, Haj Tawfiq emphasised that Jordan's participation, organised by the International Promoters for Marketing and Exhibi-

tions, represents a significant step towards strengthening economic and trade relations between Jordan, Syria and other countries.

He said the Syrian market constitutes a natural extension for Jordanian products, adding that the resumption of specialised

exhibitions in Damascus enables the private sector in both countries to rebuild its role in fostering trade and investment partnerships that serve mutual interests.

Haj Tawfiq added that Jordanian food industries enjoy a strong reputation, high quality and competitiveness in

Arab markets, noting that participation in the exhibition reflects the Jordanian private sector's commitment to major economic events and its efforts to explore opportunities for export, distribution and cooperation with Syrian and Arab companies.

Oil falls as US waives Iranian crude sanctions

LONDON (AFP) — Crude prices fell on Monday after the US said it is temporarily lifting sanctions on Iran to allow it to export oil and optimism on talks towards a final peace deal.

The British pound and the London stock market firmed, and the UK's benchmark 10-year bond dipped, after Britain's embattled Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced his widely expected resignation.

Internationally, the main focus remained firmly on the Middle East and the prospects for a reopening of the Strait of Hormuz to tanker and cargo traffic.

Iran's senior envoys left talks in Switzerland on Monday after a marathon negotiating session with the United States, state media reported.

Vice US President JD Vance declared that a "very good foundation" had been laid for negotiations towards a final deal with Iran, with mediators also claiming progress.

The US Treasury said later on Monday it was temporarily lifting sanctions on Iran to allow the Islamic Republic to produce, sell and deliver crude oil and related products through August 21.

Meanwhile maritime traffic in the Strait of Hor-



A car is refuelled at a petrol station with a 600-baht \$18.5 maximum purchase in Bangkok on Tuesday

muz continued to flow at a faster pace than before the agreement between Iran and the United States on talks to end their war, according to tracking firms, despite Tehran's weekend announcement of a renewed closure.

"The latest developments out of the Middle East have turned more constructive," said Deutsche Bank analyst Jim Reid, adding that a pickup in oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz was "helping to calm markets".

Last week, Tehran and Washington signed a Memorandum of Understanding laying the groundwork for the negotiations, after a 40-day war that was followed by weeks of an inconclusive and oft-breached ceasefire.

The negotiators aim to tackle some of the most intractable issues that

have dogged US-Iranian relations for decades, including Tehran's nuclear programme and enriched uranium.

"This is looking to be a day-by-day headline ordeal, and true to form, the equity market will take a foot when given an inch on what sounds like progress toward a final deal that will hopefully turn a ceasefire into a lasting peace," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare.

Wall Street's main stock indices traded mostly lower after a three-day holiday weekend.

In Europe, both London and Frankfurt ended the day higher, but Paris fell.

In Britain, Starmer's departure could mean a change of finance minister and increased public spending, a prospect that has alarmed investors concerned about the

country's debt levels.

Veteran Labour politician Andy Burnham, who secured a return to parliament just last week, appeared poised to succeed Starmer after a would-be rival, Wes Streeting, offered him his support.

Starmer will remain prime minister until late this year when Labour elects a new leader, who would become the country's seventh prime minister in a decade.

"The pound has taken the news in stride, although Burnham's preference for fiscal expansion, higher taxes and greater gilt issuance is a concern," said Enrique Diaz-Alvarez, chief economist at the financial services firm Ebury.

"The critical question is who becomes chancellor" of the exchequer, he said.

Rachel Reeves has been finance minister since Labour returned to power nearly two years ago, having overseen some controversial choices regarding state spending and taxes that contributed to Starmer's demise.

"Continuity with Reeves would be the market's preferred outcome, but any indication that a new chancellor intends to loosen or abandon the existing fiscal rules could trigger fresh selling in UK assets," Diaz-Alvarez said.

IMF director says Iran war fallout creating 'difficult moment' for Africa

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — The International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) Africa director on Monday warned that the economic fallout of the Iran war was creating a "difficult moment" for the region, and that it would take months for Gulf energy production to ramp back up.

"We are now in a difficult moment for the region, in particular after the war in the Middle East," Zeine Zeidane told reporters at the IMF's headquarters in Washington.

"Even though there is a ceasefire today, we know that the disruption will take time to be resolved," he said.

The Fund has in recent weeks ramped up its programmes for African countries hit by

high energy and fertilizer prices caused by the war.

'Most of them will tell you that you'll take six, seven months to return to full resumption of production and export'

Zeidane, who previously served as the IMF's deputy director for the Middle East and Central Asia department, warned that it would take Gulf

countries time to ramp their energy production back to normal levels, after months of conflict.

"Most of them will tell you that you'll take six, seven months to return to full resumption of production and export," he said.

Speaking of Sub-Saharan Africa, Zeidane lauded government reform programmes undertaken in recent years as giving regional economies more resilience to the current energy supply shock.

Nevertheless, several African countries have approached the IMF for technical advice or financial assistance in the wake of the conflict.

Earlier this month, IMF Spokesperson Julie Kozack said the multilateral lender would

provide increased or accelerated access to funds to Ethiopia, The Gambia and Burkina Faso.

The Fund was also in "accelerated" talks with Malawi on a new IMF financial assistance programme.

On Monday, the IMF said it had reached a staff-level agreement with Sao Tome and Principe on the third review of the island nation's ongoing \$25 million programme.

The latest agreement, once approved by the IMF's board, will clear the way for disbursement of around \$6.1 million.

Zeidane said the IMF could not rule out that there would be further requests for augmentation or new programmes in Africa by the end of the year.

China and EU trade chiefs to meet next week

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AFP) — EU trade chief Maros Sefcovic will hold talks with Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao in Brussels on June 29, a spokesman told AFP on Monday, as the bloc seeks to address trade frictions through dialogue.

"I can confirm that Commissioner Sefcovic will welcome Minister Wang in Brussels for meetings on Monday 29

June," EU trade spokesman Olof Gill said.

The European Union has in recent weeks ramped up the rhetoric on the need to address the 27-country bloc's trade imbalances with China.

The EU's trade deficit in goods hit around 360 billion euros (\$412 billion) last year, meaning the bloc imported far more from China than it exported there.

EU leaders last week agreed Brussels should take on a two-pronged approach.

They told the European Commission in charge of trade policy, to engage Beijing in dialogue while also developing beefed-up tools to tackle the surge of Chinese exports.

The Commission's Chief spokeswoman, Paula Pinho, said the EU was working on an instrument whose "aim

would be to provide solidarity within the EU member states to counter trade imbalances and fair practices", but would not give more details.

A European diplomat told AFP that all EU leaders with the notable exception of Spain's Pedro Sanchez accepted the need for a tougher stance.

"Are we going to solve everything by talking to them?" the diplomat asked.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

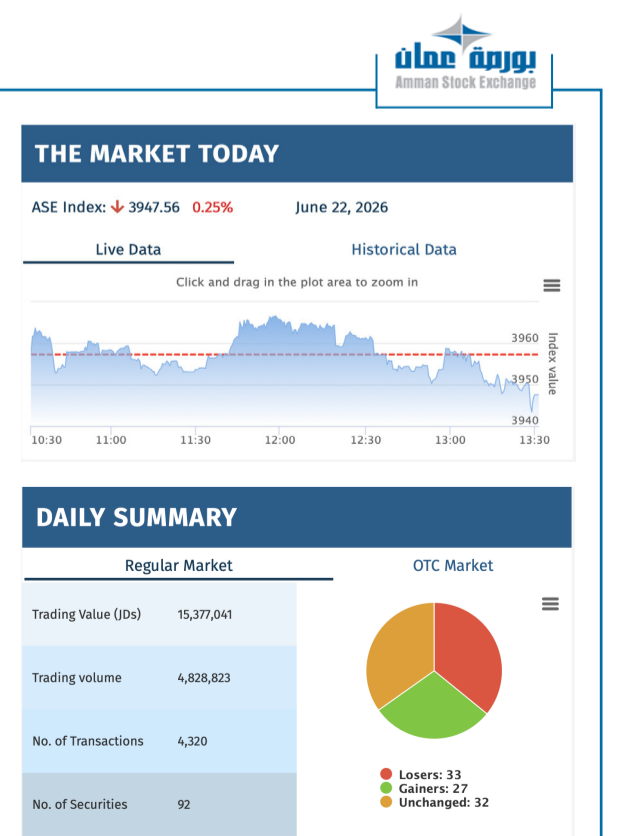
AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Monday amounted to JD15.4 million spread over 4.8 million shares that traded through 4,320 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.25 per cent, closing at 3947.56 points.

Out of 92 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 27 companies rose while the share price of another 33 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Al Shamekha for Real Estate and Financial Investments by 5 per cent, Injaz for Development and Projects by 5 per cent, Al Rakeez Investment Company by 4.55 per cent, Arab Investors Union Company for Real Estates Developing by 4.35 per cent, and Jordanian Company for Developing and Financial Investment by 3.70 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were United Insurance by 7.30 per cent, Jordan Investment and Transport Company by 5 per cent, Jordan Dairy by 4.67 per cent, Jordan Masaken for Land and Industrial Development Projects by 4.62 per cent, and Real Estate and Investment Portfolio Company by 4.50 per cent.



THE JORDAN TIMES SPORTS AT A GLANCE

Jordan plays Algeria in 2nd World Cup match

Draper makes winning return at Eastbourne with Murray on his side

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's Jack Draper made a winning start to his comeback from injury in front of new coach Andy Murray at the Eastbourne Open on Monday. Murray watched from a courtside box as former World No.4 Draper beat Marcos Giron 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) in the first round on the sun-baked English south coast. He showed no obvious fitness concerns during a solid display to set up all-British encounter with Jack Pinnington Jones in the last 16 of the Wimbledon warm-up event. "It's been an incredibly difficult year for me with certain physical bits but to be here is really special," Draper said. "If you haven't competed in a while you never know what to expect. But I'm really happy with the way I came through in the end. I've given myself another opportunity in the second round to play better and keep on hopefully building momentum in my tennis and in my body." Draper has enlisted the support of former Wimbledon champion Murray for the grass-court campaign after being plagued by chronic arm and knee injuries over the past year, in addition to a recent shoulder problem.

Ex-Wimbledon champion Vondrousova banned four years for refusing drugs test

LONDON (AFP) — Former Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova was handed a four-year suspension on Monday for refusing an anti-doping test. Vondrousova did not submit a sample when notified by a doping control officer during an out-of-competition test attempt at her home in December 2025. The 26-year-old Czech, who won Wimbledon in 2023, said stress and poor mental health had affected her decision making, in addition to concerns for her safety. An independent tribunal considered Vondrousova's claims, as well as testimony from the Doping Control Officer who attempted to conduct the test. The tribunal concluded that the evidence offered "no compelling justification" for the World No. 122 to refuse the test. International Tennis Integrity Agency CEO, Karen Moorhouse said: "We understand that the testing process is uncomfortable, and acknowledge that it is an additional burden for players whose jobs already come with a high level of pressure and scrutiny, but it is essential to protect fair competition. Safety and welfare of players and our testers is really important to us. Our testers are well-trained, professional, and the gender of our testing witness always matches the player. They carry ID at all times, and players are able to verify their identity in other ways if they are ever unsure."

By Aline Bannayan

AMMAN — Jordan plays Algeria at 6:00am Amman local time on Tuesday in their second match at the 2026 World Cup currently under way in the US, Canada and Mexico.

Home fans are anticipating a hard fought Group J encounter against world 28th-ranked Algeria which lost 3-0 to Argentina in their opener while Jordan kicked off with a fighting spirit despite their 3-1 loss to World 24th-ranked Austria.

The squad dubbed "Al-Nashama" will leave for Dallas to play their third match against World #1 ranked reigning champions Argentina on June 28 with the top three teams from the group advancing to the next round.

The Monday evening match, at 8:00pm Pacific time in San Francisco, is again expected to be attended by a sizable Jordanian crowd who adorned the streets and stadium with the flag, songs, and traditional Jordanian headdress colours.

Fans back home will also have an early start to the day hoping their World #63 ranked team can score a positive result against Algeria and fight for 3rd position in the group to keep their chances alive.

The match against Austria saw Ali Olwan scoring Jordan's first goal in the World Cup and chosen player of the match despite his team's defeat. Nour Rawabdeh and Abdulla Nasib also



Fans of Jordan spread the big national flag during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Group J match between Austria and Jordan at San Francisco Bay Area Stadium on June 16 in Santa Clara, California

excelled in performance percentages.

Lead star striker Mousa Tamari, who plays in the French League is yet to score and fans are calling on coach Jamal Sellami to give younger players like striker Ali Azaizeh, Mohammad Abu Zreiq "Sharara" as well as Odeh Fakhoury, now on the lineup of Egyptian champions Pyramids, who scored the sole goal in the Switzerland friendly as well as the reserve goalies a chance to play.

In the leadup to the World Cup, Jordan lost 2-0 to 7-time World Cup qualifier, 13th ranked Colombia after an earlier 4-1 defeat to 12-time quali-

fier World 19th ranked Switzerland.

The matches clearly demonstrated that the lineup needed to adapt to players available to amend any gaps with the absence of one of the leading strikers in Asia, Yazan Nueimat in addition to striker Ibrahim Sabra, one of the key stars of Jordan's U-23 lineup, Adham Ourashi and Isam Smeiri, who had excelled in the Arab Cup in Nueimat's absence.

The history making "Al-Nashama" squad have become household names, as the team made it to the world stage for the first time at the 26th edition of the tournament which

has brought together many first timers with an additional 16 nations participating including a record 8 Arab nations: 2022 semifinalists Morocco are joined by Egypt, the first Arab nation ever to qualify to a World Cup in 1934, Algeria, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq Jordan.

Regardless of results, Jordan's first even participation is hailed as a cornerstone which has united the nation around the team, and created a vibe that will inspire new generations and elevate the game in general.

HRH Crown Prince Hussein and HRH Princess Rajwa, HRH Prince

Ali, president of the Jordan Football Association, and HRH Prince Hashem attended the first match with team captain Ehsan Haddad underlining it was "pride rather than pressure" that underscores the historic participation which has had immense support and follow up by and the Royal family.

Fans hope Jordan will continue the positive results of most Arab and Asian teams. So far it has been Morocco vs Brazil 1-1, Morocco vs Scotland 1-0, Egypt vs New Zealand 3-1, Egypt vs Belgium 1-1, Saudi Arabia vs Uruguay 1-1, Qatar vs Switzerland 1-1.

In defeats, Tunisia vs Sweden 5-1 and vs Japan 4-0 to; Saudi Arabia vs former champs Spain 4-0; Canada vs Qatar 6-0, Norway vs Iraq 4-1, Argentina vs Algeria 3-0.

Among Asian teams, it was Iran vs Belgium 0-0, Japan vs Netherlands 2-2, South Korea vs Czech Republic 2-1, Australia vs Turkey 2-0, Iran vs New Zealand 2-2.

Since 1986, when Jordan first participated in World Cup qualifiers, their earlier best performance was in 2014 World Cup when they played then FIFA 6th ranked Uruguay in an intercontinental qualifying tie before exiting. Round 3 was the furthest they reached in qualifiers in earlier editions.

At look back at the Kingdom's past achievements saw Jordan at the best ever FIFA ranking of 37 thin 2004 after advancing to the Asian Cup quarterfinals and losing to eventual champs Japan. Jordan's World Cup qualification started with the 2023 Asian Cup, when the team reached the final before losing to host Qatar.

In December 2025, Jordan finished runner-up to eventual champions Morocco at the 2025 FIFA Arab Cup, despite missing many key players on the injury list or club duty.

By finishing runner-up at the 2023 Asian Cup, followed by a historic first-time qualification to the World Cup, Jordan booked its spot in the next edition of the 2027 Asian Cup a well.

LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

Greek fishermen struggle to keep up with pufferfish invaders

By Will Vassilopoulos and Angelos Tzortzinis
Agence France-Presse

IERAPETRA, Greece — On his fishing boat moored in the Greek port of Ierapetra in southwestern Crete, Alexis Charlambakis pries open the mouth of a freshly-caught pufferfish to reveal two massive teeth on each jaw.

"If one of these bites you, it will take your finger clean off," the 43-year-old said. "They are the destruction of the sea. They leave nothing behind."

Proof of the damage is visible on a neighbouring boat deck: A ray, a common seabream and another fish netted that day lie half shredded.

Pufferfish, a warm-water invasive species, were first spotted in Greek waters some 20 years ago and are wreaking havoc with the country's fishing industry, a pillar of the nation's agricultural exports.

Off the coast of Crete, Greece's largest island, fishermen are seeing their catch dwindle because of the silver-cheeked Lagocephalus menaces, which typically measures between 40 and 60 cm long.

"It's an omnivorous fish that eats everything



Fishermen Kostis Zevelekakis (left) and Michalis Zevelekakis fish on their boat near the port of Ierapetra, on the island of Crete, on June 3

it encounters," said 65-year-old fisherman Giannis Giannakakis.

"Nothing seems to bother it, because it has no natural predators among other fish," he added.

Southern invaders

The pufferfish explosion in Greek waters is the latest example of how warming oceans are changing ecosystems and upturning their reliant economies.

Of the nearly 200 species of pufferfish living in the world's warm waters, three are currently found in the eastern

Mediterranean Sea.

Scientists recorded them for the first time in Greece in June 2005, said Nota Peristeraki of the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR).

Present in the Red Sea and in the Indian and Pacific oceans, the silver-cheeked pufferfish entered the Mediterranean via the Suez Canal, according to French Cote d'Azur University, which records non-native Mediterranean species.

Originally located near Crete and the Dodecanese islands, it has since spread to other areas, Peristeraki said.

'We cannot survive'

In addition to their powerful toxin that makes them deadly to eat, these members of the Tetraodontidae family have a beak-like mouth strong enough to bite through wood and metal. They not only ravage the fishermen's daily catch, but leave their nets in tatters too.

"If this wasn't my boat, I'd quit this profession for good," Charlambakis said.

"The situation is dire... we cannot survive," he told AFP.

After five days at sea, Charlambakis said his nets become useless and

difficult to repair.

"It took me two days to fix these nets. I took them out this morning, another 20 holes," he said.

Feasting on other fish, crustaceans and squid, pufferfish cause around 8,500 euros (\$9,800) worth of damage and lost income per year per fishing boat, said Peristeraki, the HCMR marine biologist.

The predator also contains tetrodotoxin, "an extremely dangerous toxin if ingested", warns HCMR marine biologist Thekla Anastasiou. "It causes heart failure and stops the lungs from functioning," Anastasiou said.

'Worse every year'

"It is imperative to reduce their population," Peristeraki said.

"That's easier said than done, fishermen say.

"The job gets worse every year," said 53-year-old fisherman Kostis Zevelekakis.

"The state isn't doing enough to help us deal with these fish... We can control their numbers if we're given the right framework to hunt them," he added.

The World Wildlife Fund in April released a responsible seafood guide (www.fishguide.wwf.gr) with over a hun-

dred species found on the Greek market.

Among them are 13 invasive species which were not on the previous guide in 2015.

The newcomers include the Atlantic shrimp (Penaeus aztecus) and blue crab (Callinectes sapidus) in the northern Aegean Sea, and the lionfish (Pterois miles) in waters further south.

The fishermen want the state to subsidise them to hunt pufferfish, a programme already running in neighbouring Cyprus.

"They should give us an incentive to round them up," said 25-year-old Babis Doriakis.

"I have taken on my father's fishing boat, but I won't be able to continue without assistance," he said.

Then deputy agriculture minister Christos Kellas in February told parliament that authorities were examining a support programme for fishermen.

Waste not

Scientists in the meantime are trying to find ways to neutralise the fish's deadly toxin — which can cause paralysis, respiratory failure and death — in order to make it marketable.



The fights were held in a local club that organises this kind of armoured combat

Heavy metal: French town hosts mediaeval combat cage fights

ONET-LE-CHATEAU, France (AFP) — A French town on Saturday hosted a special event inside a hexagonal cage normally used for mixed martial arts: Duels between fully armoured warriors wielding mediaeval weapons.

Fighters used swords and axes to battle it out in 20 combats at Onet-le-Chateau in the Aveyron region of southern France.

The local council described the fights as the modern-day equivalent of "what was effectively the mixed martial arts of the Middle Ages".

While most of the action involved men from France, Poland and Britain, some women fighters were also on the bill.

The fights were held in a local club that organises this kind of armoured combat, known as behourd.

Organisers say it includes not just weapons combat but wrestling, ground work and strikes with the fists, feet, elbows, knees, the head and the shield.

"The word 'behourd' comes from Old French," said Clement Carsac, president of the local club.

"It was a recreational activity practised by men in the Middle Ages, it's where history and combat sports meet."

The fights were preceded by weighing-in sessions, because behourd is divided into weight classes, like boxing or judo.

The combatants then put on their armour and helmet, which can weigh up to six kilograms.

It is a rather expensive activity: "A full kit costs between 3,000 and 4,000 euros," said to Carsac — \$3,450 to \$4,600.

DOWNLOAD OUR APP NOW

Available on the App Store

ANDROID APP ON Google Play