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Thursday, June 25, 2026 | Muharram 10, 1448 Hijri

## Crown Prince meets with CEOs of leading technology companies in Silicon Valley

- Crown Prince discusses opportunities for expertise exchange, cooperation
- Meetings explore ways of strengthening cooperation in productive solutions, creative artificial intelligence

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein met on Tuesday with leaders of pioneering organisations in advanced technology fields, during a visit to Silicon Valley, California.

During a meeting with Sam Chaudhary, founder and CEO of ClassDojo, a leading platform in educational technology and school communication, the Crown Prince discussed opportunities for the exchange of expertise and cooperation between ClassDojo and the "Siraj" project — an educational support platform in Jordan — as well as the potential for developing the platform's tools for vocational and technical education and training programmes, according to a Royal Court statement.

His Royal Highness also held a meeting, organised by Rainmaker CEO Augustus Doricko, with the founders and CEOs of several technology companies specialising in a range of fields.



HRH Crown Prince Hussein meets on Tuesday with leaders of pioneering organisations in advanced technology fields, during a visit to Silicon Valley, California

The meeting explored ways of strengthening cooperation in the areas of productive solutions and creative artificial intelligence, the development of autonomous logistics cargo aircraft, robotics technology for drilling and mining, and unmanned aerial vehicle systems.

The meetings were attended by Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smeirat, Jordan's Ambassador to the United States Dina Kawar and Director of the Office of the Crown Prince Zaid Baqain, the statement said.

The Crown Prince also

held a meeting with Jordanian-American technology investor Isam Qubain, during which His Royal Highness commended Qubain's achievements in Silicon Valley, as well as his initiatives to advance sustainable development in Jordan's humanitarian and scientific fields.



His Majesty King Abdullah on Tuesday meets Jordanian expatriate Manal Daher in California and invited her to visit the Kingdom at his own expense

## King invites Jordanian expat in California to visit Kingdom at his own expense

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Tuesday met Jordanian expatriate Manal Daher in California and invited her

to visit the Kingdom at his own expense after her comments about missing Jordan after 25 years abroad attracted widespread

attention on social media. Daher expressed her appreciation for the invitation and the opportunity to meet

His Majesty, commending his continued outreach to Jordanians abroad, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

## National exports rise 7.3%, trade deficit narrows 13.4% in first four months of 2026 — DoS

DoS data shows improved export performance driven by potash, fertilisers, pharmaceuticals

AMMAN (JT) — National exports rose by 7.3 per cent in the first four months of 2026, reaching JD2.956 billion compared with the same period in 2025, according to the Department of Statistics (DoS) monthly report on foreign trade.

Reexports increased by 15.1 per cent to JD909 million, bringing total exports to JD3.865 billion, up 9 per cent year-on-year, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Imports declined by 1.5 per cent to JD6.559 billion over the same period, narrowing the trade deficit by 13.4 per cent to JD2.694 billion, a reduction of JD416 million compared with the first four months of 2025.

The export-to-import coverage ratio improved to 59 per cent, up from 53 per cent a year earlier, reflecting a 6 percentage-point increase.



The Muwaqqar Industrial Estate, located approximately 35 kilometres southeast of Amman, is one of the Kingdom's key industrial zones

According to the report, the growth in national exports was driven by higher shipments of garments and clothing accessories

(up 4.9 per cent), nitrogenous and chemical fertilisers (9.6 per cent), crude potash (44.7 per cent), pharmaceutical products

(8.9 per cent) and crude phosphate (9 per cent). Exports of jewellery and precious metals fell by 17.1 per cent.

On the import side, purchases of crude oil and its derivatives rose by 30.6 per cent, while imports of plastics increased by 10.3 per cent. However, imports of jewellery and precious metals declined by 37.6 per cent, mechanical machinery by 30.5 per cent, vehicles by 10.8 per cent, and electrical machinery and equipment by 4.2 per cent.

The report attributed the increase in national exports to stronger trade with Syria, non-Arab Asian countries, including India and European Union markets, particularly The Netherlands. Import growth was mainly recorded from Greater Arab Free Trade Area countries, led by Saudi Arabia, as well as non-Arab Asian markets, including India.

Continued on page 5



## Gov't settles outstanding debts totalling JD1.25b in 5 months

AMMAN (JT) — The government borrowed JD2.075 billion through the issuance of Treasury bonds and bills during the first five months of this year.

According to Ministry of Finance data, the government also settled outstanding debts totalling JD1.250 billion during the same five-month period, Al

Mamlaka TV reported. The data also showed that the value of interest accrued on these newly issued Treasury bonds and bills amounted to JD427 million during the first five months of 2026.

Treasury bonds are long-term financing instruments with maturities ranging from two to 20 years, includ-

ing both government Treasury bonds and corporate bonds.

Treasury bills are short-term government debt instruments issued for periods ranging between three and 12 months, they are low-risk financial tools traded through buying and selling in financial markets.

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## Police foil cocaine, 150,000 narcotic pills in smuggling attempts

AMMAN (JT) — The Anti-Narcotics Department (AND) on Wednesday said it foiled an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of cocaine into the Kingdom, arrested an armed and highly dangerous suspect linked to regional drug trafficking networks, and handled several other major drug-related cases in recent days.

Police Spokesperson Lt. Col. Amer Sartawi said that AND units had dealt with five major cases, resulting in the arrest of nine suspects involved in traf-



The Anti-Narcotics Department on Wednesday says it foiled an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of narcotic pills into the Kingdom

ficking and smuggling operations, the Jordan News Agency, Petra,

reported.

Continued on page 5

## Mining sector expected to generate over 30,000 jobs by 2033 — ministry

Growth driven by expanded exploration, mining activities and downstream processing industries

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — Jordan's mining sector currently employs more than 9,000 workers, but is expected to generate over 30,000 jobs over the next decade as the industry expands its operations and related value chains, according to the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources.

According to official figures, the mining and quarrying sector contributes about 2.2 per cent of GDP, valued at around JD700 million, and is expected to reach JD2.1 billion within the next decade. Exports currently stand at around JD1



Production sites of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company in Al Shediye

billion, with expectations of increasing to JD3.4 billion over the same period,

in line with the Economic Modernisation Vision (EMV).

In remarks to The Jordan Times, the ministry said that Jordan's criti-

cal and strategic minerals include rare earth elements, copper, gold, lithium, rock phosphate, potash and other minerals linked to industrial applications and modern technologies.

"These resources have been identified through geological surveys and exploration programmes across different regions of the Kingdom," the ministry said, stressing that no confirmed economic reserves are currently available, as most projects remain in early exploration and evaluation stages.

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HRH Crown Prince Hussein visits on Monday the headquarters of Zipline, a global leader in autonomous aerial logistics technology, based in California

## Crown Prince visits leading US company in autonomous aviation logistics technology

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein on Monday visited the headquarters of Zipline, a global leader in autonomous aerial logistics technology, based in California.

During the visit, the Crown Prince was briefed on the compa-

ny's experience in designing, building, and operating the world's largest parcel delivery network using autonomous drones, according to a Royal Court statement.

Zipline delivers medical supplies, food, and retail goods using zero-

carbon electric aircraft. His Royal Highness was accompanied by Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smeirat, Jordan's Ambassador to the United States Dina Kawar and Director of the Office of the Crown Prince Zaid Baqain.

## Crown Prince meets with entrepreneurs, executives of US technology companies

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein on Monday met with entrepreneurs and executives of American technology companies in Silicon Valley, California.

During a working dinner hosted by Amjad Masad, the Jordanian entrepreneur and founder and CEO of Replit, the Crown Prince highlighted the initiatives of the National Council for Future Technology, which aim to improve the efficiency of government work in the areas of public services, education, and innovation, according to a Royal Court statement.

His Royal Highness noted that Jordan has become a regional hub for global technology companies such as Microsoft, Amazon, Oracle, and Samsung, thanks to the Jordanian talent working in the technology sector. Discussions also



Crown Prince meets with entrepreneurs, executives of US technology companies

covered the potential of opening new avenues of cooperation with Jordan, given the Kingdom's attractive investment incentives, well-developed digital infrastructure and large

pool of young local talent, which have led to its successful penetration of global markets. The attendees included representatives from companies operating in key sectors

such as artificial intelligence, fintech, advanced software-as-a-service, intelligent engineering simulation systems, and digital learning platforms. Minister of Digital

Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smeirat, Jordan's Ambassador to the United States Dina Kawar, and Director of the Office of the Crown Prince Zaid Baqain attended the meeting.

## Princess Muna highlights role of nursing in healthcare quality

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Princess Muna, president of the Jordanian Nursing Council (JNC) and patron for nursing and midwifery in the eastern Mediterranean region, on Tuesday chaired a council meeting dedicated to discussing a package of strategic national portfolios for the Kingdom's nursing and midwifery sector.

The meeting aimed to enhance the quality of education and develop a legislative environment that keeps pace with local and global health transformations, thereby maintaining Jordan's leading regional position in the sector, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Her Royal Highness stressed that the Jordanian nursing sector is at a critical juncture requiring integrated, forward-looking national efforts, noting



that preserving the profession's outstanding reputation demands continuous investment in educational quality, enhancing competence and building sustainable national solutions to ensure Jordan's international leadership.

The princess underscored that the nursing constitutes a "strategic pillar" and a national necessity, noting that studies have proven its role in improving service quality, upgrading patient safety and boosting the efficiency

of healthcare systems. Ruwaida Maaitah, advisor to HRH Princess Muna for health and community development, reviewed progress in preparing the National Strategy for Nursing and Midwifery as a roadmap for the upcoming phase.

Maaitah stressed that the strategy stems from an advanced vision that views nursing as a strategic investment in human capital and a cornerstone of national and health security, rather than just

a caregiving profession, praising Princess Muna's historical vision, which anticipated global trends in this field.

Regarding technical aspects, she said that JNC was keen to include the nursing specialisation in the strategy to build specialised nurses equipped with modern skills.

On the national specialised training centre project, Maaitah noted that it represents a "strategic" response to address educational and practical gaps among graduates and enhance their competitiveness.

JNC Secretary-General Hani Nawafleh said that the council has approved the annual report of the accreditation unit, noting that more than 17,000 certificates of compliance for continuous professional development have been issued.

Nawafleh reviewed updates on the new professional specialisation bylaw, which had been sent to the Legislation and Opinion Bureau to complete its endorsement procedures, aiming to restructure the career path of personnel according to the highest international standards.

For his part, President of the Private Hospitals Association Fawzi Hammouri stressed that dealing with the rapid increase in graduate numbers requires well-thought-out solutions to ensure their optimal utilisation.

Hammouri emphasised the necessity of retaining qualified talents within the Kingdom and preventing the draining of Jordan's qualified human resources, as healthcare personnel represent a fundamental pillar of health security and institutional stability.

## Jerash festival announces new visual identity for 40th edition

AMMAN (JT) — The management of the Jerash Festival of Culture and Art on Wednesday announced the launch of its new visual identity for its 40th edition, marking a historic milestone that crowns over four decades of cultural heritage and artistic evolution.

The new logo blends historical authenticity with modernity, drawing inspiration from the architectural heritage of the ancient city of Jerash and reimagining it for the digital age, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The updated identity incorporates the iconic arches of Jerash using a modern approach to space and depth, while giving the name "Jerash" a stronger visual presence as the central element of the logo.

The simplified design ensures clarity and readability across various digital platforms, print materials and advertising spaces.

Executive Director of the Jerash Festival Yazan Khader said that the 40th edition represents a turning point in the festival's journey, celebrating four decades of success and offering the most diverse and expansive cultural and artistic experience in its history.

"This year, we have focused on developing cultural content and spaces, and enhancing Arab and international cultural exchange programmes," Khader said.

He noted that the launch of the Hippodrome stage and the "Gerasa Market", along with accompanying activities, would enrich the visitor experience and provide local crea-



مهرجان جرش للثقافة والفنون  
Jerash Festival Of Culture & Art

tors and craftsmen with broader opportunities for interaction.

Khader added that the festival continues to serve as a window into Jordan's cultural and civilisational identity, fostering communication between cultures through art and creativity.

The festival features a "qualitative" programme this year, encompassing 212 cultural, art, and entertainment events.

These include 117 events within the ancient city of Jerash and 95 events held across various governorates of the Kingdom.

The programme features musical, folklore, theatrical and dance performances by top Jordanian, Arab and international artists, alongside cultural exchange initiatives and a pavilion for embassies representing participating countries, with Qatar as the guest of honour. Fam-

ily and children's activities will also be held.

The main plaza will host the "Gerasa Market", showcasing handicrafts, traditional items, creative industries and local artwork to support home-grown producers.

The festival is held in partnership with several national institutions, including the ministries of culture, interior, tourism and antiquities, and planning and international cooperation, alongside the Greater Amman Municipality, the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army, the Public Security Directorate, the Jordan Tourism Board, Royal Jordanian, and the Greater Jerash Municipality.

Media coverage is led by the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation as the exclusive media sponsor, alongside a network of local, Arab and international media outlets.

## Huneiti opens Black Iris Aviation headquarters at RJAF

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti on Wednesday inaugurated the Black Iris Aviation company building at the Royal Jordanian Air Force (RJAF) Command.

Upon his arrival, Huneiti was received by the RJAF commander and the company's director general, according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement.

In the presence of several high-ranking JAF officers, Huneiti was briefed by the company's Director-General Daniel Janakat on the tasks, duties and services provided by the company in the field of private aviation.

The briefing also outlined future plans aimed at developing its operational and technical capabilities in accordance with the highest approved standards in the

aviation sector.

The army chief also listened to a briefing, attended by Royal Jordanian CEO Samer Majali, regarding cooperation mechanisms in private aviation and prospects for future partnerships to expand the company's operations.

Huneiti stressed the importance of continuously developing the military and auxiliary civil aviation systems to enhance operational

efficiency and boost readiness.

He noted that JAF is moving forward with modernisation and development plans to keep pace with rapid advancements and changes across various fields.

Huneiti toured the facility, inspecting the technical and administrative equipment as well as the standard of services offered to ensure the delivery of high-quality and safe aviation

services in accordance with the highest professional standards.

He commended the efforts of the company's personnel, stressing that the inauguration of the building represents a qualitative addition that supports the aviation sector and enhances its capabilities, thereby serving the national interest and reflecting the advanced level achieved by JAF in modernisation and development.

### SKILLS

## UNHCR discusses vocational training for Jordanian youth, refugees

AMMAN (JT) — United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on Wednesday held a discussion session on ways to develop practical and vocational training programmes for Jordanian and refugee youth.

The event was held under auspices of the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship and the Youth, Technology and Jobs Project, in cooperation with the DiGiSkills Association, the Higher Education Alliance, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and

Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The session brought together representatives from the public and private sectors, higher education institutions, international organisations and development partners.

The activities aimed to explore ways to enhance alignment between educational outcomes and labour market needs and improve youth readiness to engage in various economic sectors by expanding opportunities for work-based learn-

ing and practical and vocational training.

Participants discussed mechanisms to enhance learning-through-work opportunities and expand practical training and vocational development opportunities to enable youth to acquire the necessary skills to join the labour market and improve their employment prospects across various sectors.

Attendees also called for developing "effective" partnerships among the private sector, higher education institutions and development agencies.

The session also aimed to support the design of training programmes that link education with practical application, empowering youth to gain skills and experience through direct work experience.

The session also called for refugee empowerment to acquire practical skills and experience that fosters self-reliance and supports this group's access to employment and livelihood opportunities in their home countries after their return voluntarily, safely and with dignity.

## 6th Jordan Summer Festival to kick off Friday

AMMAN (JT) — The first activities of the sixth Jordan Summer Festival are scheduled to kick off on Friday evening across seven governorates: Amman, Balqa, Zarqa, Irbid, Mafrq, Jerash and Ajloun, with free admission to all events.

The festival's activities will continue sequentially across the remaining governorates of the Kingdom according to the approved schedule, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

The festival features a diverse lineup of artistic, cultural, and entertainment activities tailored to various age groups.

On the artistic front, the festival will host national concerts performed by



several Jordanian artists, in addition to folklore and traditional performances that reflect the richness and diversity of Jordanian heritage, alongside Dabke shows, traditional arts, and open-air musical evenings.

Cultural activities will include traditional exhibitions and introductory programmes on Jorda-

nian folklore. Creative segments for youth and children will be held under the "Talents from My Country" initiative, which aims to highlight and nurture young Jordanian talent in singing and music.

The festival sites will also host markets and bazaars for handicrafts, local produce, and traditional

crafts, with the participation of productive societies and families from various governorates.

This initiative aims to support cultural and creative industries while stimulating the local economy.

Running every Friday until August 28, the sixth edition of the festival builds on the success of previous years, reinforcing the Ministry of Culture's approach to transforming culture into an active community activity linked to development, tourism and family entertainment.

The event seeks to enhance the presence of culture in public life as a pillar for awareness, creativity and social cohesion.



The Jordan Red Crescent Society on Wednesday says that the programme includes surgical procedures for patients evacuated from the Gaza Strip, rehabilitation services and prosthetic limb fitting

## Gaza child patients receive full medical, social support — JRCS

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Red Crescent Society (JRCS) on Wednesday said that injured children from Gaza receiving treatment and prosthetic limb services at the Jordan Red Crescent Hospital are being provided with comprehensive medical care in line with the highest healthcare standards.

In a statement, the JRCS said that the children and their companions are residing in Jordan under an integrated care programme that ensures access to all necessary services and support throughout their treatment and rehabilitation.

The society also said the programme includes surgical procedures for patients evacuated from the Gaza Strip, rehabilitation services and prosthetic limb fitting, in addition to psychological and social support for the children and their families.

The JRCS also or-

ganises recreational activities and outings for the children and their relatives, while marking special occasions and celebrating the children's birthdays to help improve their well-being during recovery.

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

Patients and their companions are provided with personal necessities and hygiene supplies, the statement said. Each patient and

accompanying family member also receives a JD50 shopping card to purchase clothing and other essential items, while three daily meals are provided throughout their stay in the Kingdom, according to the society.

Jordan also runs two military field hospitals in Gaza, one in the Strip's north and was established in 2009 following the war in 2008, and the second is in Khan Younis in the south, which was established in November 2023 at the peak of the Israeli war of aggression on the coastal enclave that erupted on October 7, 2023.

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

Other humanitarian programmes include the land bridge for aid delivery, the mobile bakery, the Restoring Hope Initiative, and the evacuation of critical cases to Jordanian hospitals.

## Foreign minister urges continued support for UNRWA operations

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi on Wednesday stressed the importance of supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), underscoring the need to ensure the agency can continue fulfilling its UN mandate.

During a meeting with Acting UNRWA Commissioner General Christian Saunders, Safadi discussed efforts to secure the support needed for the agency to maintain its vital services for Palestinian refugees across its five fields of operation.

Safadi reiterated that UNRWA plays an indispensable role in providing essential services to Palestinian refugees, stressing that its work cannot be replaced, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi and Acting UNRWA Commissioner General Christian Saunders on Wednesday discuss efforts to secure the support needed for the agency to maintain its vital services for Palestinian refugees

## Lower House speaker stresses diplomacy, non-interference as pillars of stability

AMMAN (JT) — Lower House Speaker Mazen Qadi on Wednesday stressed that respect for state sovereignty, adherence to good neighbourliness, non-interference in internal affairs, and reliance on dialogue and diplomacy are essential pillars for building a more stable and secure regional order.

Qadi made the remarks while participating in the 20th Parliamentary Conference of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Member States, currently held in Azerbaijan, according to a Lower House statement.

He underlined that

regional development, justice and lasting peace cannot be achieved without addressing the Palestinian cause, which he described as the central issue for the Islamic world.

Qadi said that the continued occupation and the denial of the Palestinian people's legitimate rights, foremost among them the establishment of an independent state on their national territory, remain a key obstacle to peace and development across the region.

He also highlighted the pivotal role of the Hashemite Custodianship over Islamic and

Christian holy sites in Jerusalem in safeguarding the holy city against attempts to alter its identity and sanctities through illegal measures.

The Speaker said the challenges facing Islamic countries are interconnected parts of a broader global crisis that no single state can address alone. He emphasised the need to move from traditional cooperation to genuine integration, and from goodwill to effective and productive partnerships.

Qadi noted that enhanced collaboration among OIC member states has become a

strategic necessity amid global transformations, including the rise of economic blocs, rapid technological change and increasing pressures on food, water and energy security.

He added that, given their abundant natural and human resources and strategic geographic position, Islamic countries are capable of becoming a significant economic force in the global system if they unify their efforts.

"Our region is grappling with intertwined crises that have exhausted its peoples, drained state resources, and hin-

dered development and stability for decades," Qadi said, warning that ongoing armed conflicts and foreign interference pose a direct threat to regional and international peace and security, while undermining sustainable development goals.

He also called on parliaments to act as bridges for development and active partners in shaping the future, urging them to translate aspirations into practical policies that deliver dignity, prosperity, and stability by turning diversity into strength and joint action into comprehensive renewal.

## Jordan-Ireland relations witnessing steady growth in education, economy — ambassador

AMMAN (JT) — Ireland's Ambassador to Jordan Marian Bolger said on Wednesday that Jordanian-Irish relations have witnessed steady growth in recent years, grounded in shared interests and values, and expanding across education, the economy, innovation and humanitarian cooperation.

Speaking at a reception hosted by the Irish embassy in Amman on the occasion of Ireland's National Day, Bolger said that her four years in the Kingdom allowed her to closely follow, and contribute to, the continued development of bilateral relations, praising Jordan's role as a force for stability, moderation and constructive engagement in the region.

She said that educational cooperation between the two countries has gone beyond increasing the number of Jordanian students studying in Ireland, extending to support for initiatives in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, green and climate skills,



Ireland's Ambassador to Jordan Marian Bolger says that Jordanian-Irish relations have witnessed steady growth in recent years, grounded in shared interests and values

peacebuilding and filmmaking, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Bolger noted that the embassy has launched the "Jordanian Young Scientists" programme, inspired by the Irish experience, aimed at investing in the capabilities of Jordanian youth.

She said that the programme's exhibition will be held next Saturday at the Hussein Tech-

nical University, with more than 700 students from across the Kingdom set to present their scientific projects.

She also said that economic relations between the two countries have continued to expand through trade missions, business exchanges, and stronger commercial and innovation linkages, adding that dialogue between Jordanian and Irish

companies has helped build partnerships, investments, contracts and mutually beneficial economic opportunities.

Bolger pointed out that these achievements have been made in cooperation with non-governmental organisations, civil society institutions, and local and international partners, and with support for women and persons with disabilities across various sectors, despite regional and global challenges.

She said the region continues to face major challenges, including conflicts, displacement, humanitarian crises and economic pressures, calling for stronger efforts to achieve stability, security and opportunities for the region's people.

Bolger also commended Jordan's role as a force for stability, moderation and constructive engagement in the region, as well as the humanitarian leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah at the international level.

She said that Jordan and Ireland have

worked closely on several regional issues, particularly those related to peace in the region, based on their shared commitment to a just and lasting peace founded on the two-state solution.

She noted that Ireland's recognition of the State of Palestine in 2024 reaffirmed its support for the two-state solution and described the decision as a historic milestone.

Bolger commended Jordan's efforts in supporting refugees and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza and other parts of the region, stressing that humanitarian needs in Gaza remain urgent and require safe, sustained and unhindered access for aid delivery.

On European affairs, she said peace and stability remain a key priority for Ireland as it prepares to assume the presidency of the Council of the European Union for six months starting July 1, noting that its priorities will focus on values, economic prosperity and security.



The Jordan Electric Power Company says that renewable energy systems connected to the grid surpassed 40,329 systems by the end of 2025

## Renewable energy installations on JEPSCO grid exceed 40,000 systems — official data

AMMAN (JT) — Renewable energy systems connected to the Jordan Electric Power Company (JEPSCO) grid surpassed 40,329 systems by the end of 2025, with total installed capacity exceeding 716 megawatts, according to company data.

JEPSCO said around 2,202 new systems were connected to the grid during 2025, according to figures reported by Al Mamlaka

TV. Monthly data showed that January recorded the highest new capacity additions at 7.33MW, followed by November with 5.53MW, while December recorded the lowest at 1.57MW.

Installed renewable energy capacity has grown significantly over the past decade, rising from just 0.003MW in 2012 to 716.605MW

in 2025. Capacity increased gradually in earlier years, reaching 67.54MW in 2016 before accelerating in subsequent years.

JEPSCO said that it continues to approve and connect renewable energy projects in line with sector regulations, aiming to expand the use of clean energy and increase the share of renewables in the national electricity grid.

## Cassation Court upholds over 3-year sentence for drug dealer

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld a November 2023 State Security Court (SSC) ruling sentencing two men to eight years in prison each after convicting them of possessing a large

quantity of illegal narcotics in Amman in May 2023.

The court declared the defendants guilty of possessing illegal narcotics with the intent of selling the drugs to undercover agents in the Zuhour neighbourhood on May 20.

The SSC handed the defendants a punishment of eight years in prison each and ordered them to pay JD6,000 each in fines.

Court documents said the Anti-Narcotics Department (AND) learnt the defendants were in possession of a

large quantity of illegal narcotics and sent two of its agents to pose as buyers.

"The AND agents visited the defendants at one of their homes and, following a brief interaction, arrested them," court documents said.

The law-enforcement

officers found 6.9 kilograms of hashish and 2,950 Captagon pills, according to the court papers.

The defendant contested the SSC's ruling through their lawyers, arguing that the court "did not provide solid evidence to implicate

their clients of illicit drug trafficking".

Meanwhile, the SSC prosecution office asked the higher court to uphold the sentences and the fines imposed on the defendants.

The higher court maintained that the SSC had followed the

proper procedures in issuing the sentences against the defendants.

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

Therefore, the higher

court maintained that the defendants deserve the punishment they received.

The Cassation Court bench comprised judges Yassin Abdulat, Hammad Ghzawi, Qassem Dughmi, Mhammad Khashashneh and Nayef Samarat.



A man walks between damaged headstones, destroyed in Israeli military strikes, at the cemetery in the southern Lebanese village of Sriba on Wednesday

## Israel says 'no US demand' to withdraw from Lebanon

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli defence minister said on Wednesday that the United States has not demanded that Israel withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon, a condition set by Lebanon in ongoing ceasefire negotiations.

"We have announced that in any case we are not withdrawing and, as of this moment — and this is a diplomatic achievement — there is no American demand for Israel to withdraw from Lebanon," the minister said.

When asked if the army would adhere to such a US request if it was made, the minister said he told US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth and Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu told US President Donald Trump that "we are there to protect the residents of the north" of Israel.

In a speech at the same conference,

Netanyahu reiterated that the Israeli military is not expected to withdraw.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun rejected Israel's occupation of the south and foreign interference in his country's affairs — an allusion to Hizbollah's backer Iran — as a fifth round of Israel-Lebanon talks began in Washington on Tuesday.

Tehran has also reiterated that peace in Lebanon was a fundamental pillar of reaching a definitive agreement with Washington for an overall end to the Middle East war.

Washington and Tehran signed a Memorandum of Understanding last week aimed at reaching a permanent settlement between the two countries, following the war launched by the US and Israel on Iran on February 28.

Hizbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle

East war on March 2 with rocket fire at Israel to avenge the killing of Iran's supreme leader in US-Israeli strikes.

Israel responded with air strikes and a ground offensive that Lebanon says have killed more than 4,100 people, which led to the occupation of a 10 kilometre security zone in southern Lebanon along the border with Israel.

Israeli officials have insisted that the country will retain control of that zone.

On Monday, Netanyahu said Israeli forces in Lebanon retained "full freedom of action to thwart any direct or developing threat".

Israel and Lebanon are currently involved in a US-mediated round of talks in Washington to seek a diplomatic solution to the conflict and the disarmament of Hizbollah and the withdrawal of Israeli troops.

# Trump says assured by Iran no tolls to be charged at Hormuz

Iran says deal to end Mideast war 'declaration of US defeat'

WASHINGTON, TEHRAN (AFP) — US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday he has been assured by Iran that no fees will be collected from ships in the Strait of Hormuz, as negotiations continue to secure a lasting end to the war in the Middle East.

"Iran has informed the U.S. that... there are NO TOLLS, NO INSURANCE COSTS, & NO OTHER CHARGES OF ANY KIND BEING SOUGHT OR RECEIVED BY IRAN ON SHIPS TRAVELING THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform, without specifying whether those assurances would remain in place after the 60-day negotiating period.

Tehran has repeatedly said it plans to charge what it calls maritime service fees for crossing the strait, as opposed to tolls, a plan fiercely opposed by the United States.

Iran and Oman said on Tuesday they will study the costs to be charged for services provided in administering the Strait of Hormuz, insisting they held sovereignty over the waterway.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the head of the Iranian negotiating team, said on Wednesday that the



The motorcade of Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian makes its way upon his arrival in Islamabad on Tuesday amid US-Iran peace talks

deal between Iran and the United States to end the Middle East war is "America's declaration of defeat".

"The Islamabad understanding was not the result of pressure and coercion, but rather the result of the resistance and authority of the brave Iranian nation," Ghalibaf said, referring to the text finalised through Pakistani mediation.

"That is why, the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding be-

came a declaration of America's defeat," he said, adding that security in the Middle East must be ensured by the countries of the region.

"We consider the withdrawal of foreign military forces from the region a strategic goal" because, "not only do they not create sustainable security but they are also a source of instability", said Ghalibaf, who also serves as his country's parliament speaker.

He was addressing a

conference in Azerbaijan's capital Baku on Wednesday, which was broadcast on Iranian television.

The United States maintains military bases in the Middle East and the host countries were targeted by Iranian attacks during the war in retaliation for the bombing of Iran by US and Israeli forces.

"We see the future of the region not in confrontation but in interaction and not in elimination but in coexistence,"

Ghalibaf said, in what appeared to be an overture to Gulf states targeted by Iranian strikes.

Iran's chief negotiator also reiterated that peace in Lebanon was a fundamental pillar of reaching a definitive agreement with Washington.

"For us, the ceasefire in Lebanon has been and is as important as the ceasefire in Iran, and the end of the war in Lebanon has been as important as the end of the war in Iran."

## 'Inhumane': Gaza flotilla activists recount Israeli detention ordeal

PARIS, France (AFP) — Cracked bones, humiliation, sexual assault: Pro-Palestinian activists recounted the abuse they say they suffered from Israeli authorities for taking part in a Gaza-bound aid flotilla last month, which has sparked multiple investigations and international outcry.

France, Italy and Australia have launched probes into the allegations of abuse — which Israeli authorities deny — after more than 430 activists from around the world were detained during the latest attempt by an aid flotilla to break the blockade of the war-battered Gaza Strip.

French nationals Meriem Hadjal, Noe Tissot and Malika Baouya were on the boat Peluxo carrying school supplies, infant formula and medicines when Israeli speedboats intercepted them in international waters.

The activists said they



French activists detained and deported by Israel following the interception of their Gaza-bound flotilla arrive at Roissy Charles de Gaulle airport near Paris on May 22

were taken from the boat and violently herded together at sea onto what some called the "torture prison ship".

"I was dragged by the arm and lifted up with my hands tied behind my back. I screamed in pain, I thought my arm had been torn off," said nurse Baouya.

"We walked with our heads down, hands behind our necks. We were made to lie on the floor, in stagnant seawater. Men were tased," she added.

Stripped to little clothing and fitted with numbered wristbands, the activists — backs bent and limbs shackled

— say they were led one by one towards a dark container.

**'Afraid they would kill me'**

"When the door opened, I saw a fellow prisoner lying on the floor with his trousers down," said Hadjal, 38.

"A soldier started groping my breasts... I was slapped hard. Then again. Some soldiers tried to push me towards the back of the container. I was afraid they would kill me."

Baouya said she saw an activist on the ground being beaten before three men grabbed her.

One soldier "lifted me up by my hair", while another "tried to rip off my underwear", she said.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) told AFP it "rejects allegations of abuse by IDF soldiers during the operations to protect the legal naval security blockade", saying it requires "respectful and appropriate treatment of flotilla participants on the intercepted vessels".

Speaking to AFP in Melbourne, Australia, activist Violet Coco said soldiers had laughed as they "bashed" her, hitting her in the head and kicking her repeatedly.

Her hand was injured as she tried to protect herself from their blows, she said.

"They were groping into my private parts, I ended up with bruises on my breasts and other places."

The activists were confined for several days to a part of the ship's deck surrounded by containers topped with barbed wire, visible in a highly criticised video released by Israel's far-right national security minister Itamar Ben Gvir.

There, Baouya — who says she suffered a cervical spine fracture after the ordeal — was with "around a hundred others with dishevelled hair and bloodied faces".

Hadjal, who says her foot was injured, said she saw another detainee "come out of the torture container with a swollen face, in a state of shock".

The activists said they slept on the freezing metal and wood floors

of the containers, lacking water, hygiene and food, as seawater seeped everywhere.

They accused soldiers of aiming stun grenades and rubber bullets at them.

**'Speaking out'**

The activists were taken ashore in Israel and detained in Ktziot prison, where they said they met further abuse — allegations the Israeli prison service has denied.

Security personnel "were insulting us, making animal noises and hitting us with their rifle butts" as we arrived near the port, 32-year-old Tissot told officers of France's crimes against humanity unit.

Inside a tent, "a soldier landed a massive punch on my head and ribs", cracking one, he said in his official statement.

Back in Germany after his release, 29-year-old social worker Johannes Happel told

AFP his head had been "slammed against a tent pole" and he "saw a friend being punched and repeatedly thrown to the ground".

"Cruel, sadistic and inhumane are the adjectives that spring to mind for everything I saw," he added.

Another Australian activist, Neve O'Connor, described being forcefully taken off the boat and thrown onto a concrete floor.

"All you can hear is the Israeli national anthem as they're playing it on repeat," she said. "It's so loud and you can hear your friends screaming."

"What we experienced, protected by our passports, is just a taste of what Palestinian prisoners go through," said Hadjal, who sees her testimony as "a weapon".

Baouya, who will give evidence in the French investigation, said she and others were "speaking out not for ourselves, but for the Palestinians".

## North Korea's Kim unveils plans for 10,000 tonne warships, nuclear navy

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korea will equip its navy with nuclear weapons and build larger warships, leader Kim Jong-un said according to state media on Wednesday, as Pyongyang pushes ahead with a military expansion.

The hermetic nation is under multiple sets of sanctions over a nuclear programme its leaders have vowed to pursue as an essential deterrent to the United States and South Korea.

Kim made his remarks at the commissioning of the Choe Hyon, one of two 5,000 tonne class warships launched last year, in the port city of Nampo on Tuesday, the official Korean Central News Agency reported.

"The programme of equipping the Navy with

nuclear weapons is following its planned course unerringly," Kim reportedly told the ceremony.

"This is a strategic course of crucial importance as it will make it possible to keep the nuclear force of our state ready for multifaceted and efficient operation," he said.

North Korea previously said the Choe Hyon is equipped with the "most powerful weapons", and Kim oversaw a cruise missile test from the vessel in April.

"Following the Choe Hyon, we will soon commission Kang Kon for operations. After that we will launch 10,000 tonne strategic warships one after another," Kim said according to a KCNA report released in English.

He added the North aimed to "build every year two surface ships, whose class is higher than the Choe Hyon" including one 10,000 tonne cruiser.

A 10,000 tonne class naval ship such as the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer of which the US Navy has dozens or South Korea's Sejong the Great-class at full load, is typically 150-170 metres long, roughly the size of 1.5 football pitches and weighs as much as several thousand cars.

The South Korean navy runs more than 10 ships over 5,000 tonnes compared to the North's two.

"The 10,000 tonne mark will carry symbolism for the North," said military studies professor Choi Gi-il at Sangji University.

"A ship of that size will indicate Pyongyang's determination not to fall further behind the maritime power of Seoul," he told AFP.

Pyongyang has repeatedly declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear state since a 2019 summit between Kim and US counterpart Donald Trump in Hanoi collapsed over the scope of de-nuclearisation and sanctions relief.

North Korea remains technically at war with the South because the neighbours' 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice rather than a peace treaty.

**Deterrence**

Photos released by KCNA showed Kim saluting the Choe Hyon flanked by



This photo taken on Tuesday and released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency on Wednesday shows the new-type multimission destroyer Choe Hyon departing after its commissioning ceremony at Nampo port in North Korea

senior officials and delivering a speech aboard the newly commissioned vessel.

Lim Eul-chul, a North Korea expert at Kyungnam University, said the move was primarily

aimed at sending a message to the United States, South Korea's main security ally.

the United States of pushing the Korean Peninsula "to the brink of a nuclear war".

# Jerash Festival opens 40th edition on July 22, celebrating culture, creativity, arts

Arab superstars on South Theatre, diverse musical experiences on North Theatre, heritage, family activities

AMMAN (JT) — Under Royal Patronage, the Jerash Festival for Culture and Arts will ignite the torch of its 40th edition on July 22, under the slogan "A Legacy That Endures... Generations Unite".

The festival will welcome visitors from July 23, unveiling a renewed experience that celebrates four decades of culture, creativity and artistic excellence, according to a statement to The Jordan Times.

The 40th edition reflects a vision that honours the festival's "rich legacy" while embracing new generations of artists, creators and audiences.

This year's programme features more than 212 artistic, cultural, heritage and family-oriented events, alongside broad Arab and international participation, reflecting the festival's evolution into a "comprehensive cultural platform" that celebrates creativity, knowledge and heritage while engaging audiences of all ages and interests, the statement said.

Moving beyond the traditional concept of a music festival, the 40th edition presents an integrated programme that embraces culture, heritage, intellectual dialogue and family entertainment.

Activities will take place across the archaeological city of Jerash, in addition to cultural venues and platforms in Amman and the governorates of Ajloun, Balqa, Karak and Aqaba.

These governorates will host a range of cultural activities, including the "Aesthetics of Place in Jordanian Literature Fo-

rum" and the "Memory of Place in Jordanian Literature Forum", offering historical, architectural and oral heritage perspectives that connect younger generations with their cultural roots, the statement said.

Complementing this programme, the Jordanian Writers and Literati Union will enrich the festival's cultural evenings through discussions exploring official, military, civilisational and heritage narratives, alongside poetry readings, literary sessions and critical discussions addressing contemporary issues.

The 40th edition also dedicates significant space to its cultural and intellectual programme, developed through close strategic partnerships with the Jordanian Writers Association, the Jordanian Writers and Literati Union, and Darat Al Shu'ara.

The programme features a rich series of intellectual forums, narrative discussions and poetry evenings in both classical and Nabati Arabic, bringing together leading poets, writers, critics and intellectuals from Jordan and across the Arab world.

As part of this programme, the festival will launch the third edition of the Arab Narrative Forum, organised in partnership with the Jordanian Writers Association.

This year's edition honours renowned Jordanian novelist Hashem Gharaybeh and is held under the theme "Narrative Transformations in the Third Millennium".

The city of Jerash itself will also take centre stage through a special panel ti-

led "The Jordanian Narrative: The City of Jerash as a Model", featuring prominent academics and researchers exploring the city's history and civilisational heritage.

South Theatre: Eleven nights of music, performance, and spectacle

As the festival's flagship venue for major performances, the South Theatre will host eleven nights of music, theatre and large-scale productions.

The programme opens on 23 July with celebrated Lebanese artist Majida El Roumi, whose performance recalls her first appearance at Jerash Festival in 1986.

On July 24, the internationally acclaimed Caracalla Dance Theatre returns with its spectacular production One Thousand and One Nights, following its first Jerash appearance in 1987.

The South Theatre programme continues with performances by George Wassouf (July 25), Ahmed Saad (July 26), and the grand musical production "Umm Kulthum" by Medhat El Adl (July 27), which reimagines the golden era of Arabic music through a contemporary theatrical lens.

Additional performances include a heritage evening by the Sons of the Mountains Ensemble from the International Circassian Culture Academy (July 28), followed by concerts featuring Abadi Al Johar (July 29), Elissa (July 30), Al Shami and Lynn Al Hayek (July 31), and a special musical evening with Abeer Nehme and Marwan Khoury (August 1).

The South Theatre programme concludes on August 2 with a highly



Jerash Festival opens 40th edition on July 22, under the slogan 'A Legacy That Endures... Generations Unite'

anticipated concert by Egyptian superstar Tamer Hosny.

The North Theatre will present a rich programme of music, culture and artistic innovation through twelve performances that showcase Jordanian, Arab and international talent.

Following the official opening ceremony on 22 July, the North Theatre programme begins on July 23 with a dedicated Jordanian Night celebrating the richness of local music and artistic traditions, the statement said.

On July 24, audiences will experience a vibrant fusion of contemporary music and Levantine heritage through performances by 47SOUL, Octave and the Sha'rawiyeh Dabkeh Group. This will be followed on July 25 by a symphonic reinterpretation of Autostrad's music performed alongside the

National Music Conservatory Orchestra, conducted by Maestro Haitham Sukkarieh.

The programme continues with performances by composer Talal Abu Al Ragheb and Mosaica Choir (July 26), El Morabba3 and El Far3i (July 27), and internationally renowned trumpeter Ibrahim Maalouf (July 28).

Moroccan conductor Hicham Boudchar will present his acclaimed interactive musical experience "You Are the Choir" on July 29, followed by a performance by Tunisian vocalist Dorsaf Hamdani on July 30.

On July 31 and August 1, audiences will be treated to the internationally acclaimed Phoenix Fire and Light Show, before the North Theatre concludes its programme on August 2 with a celebratory Jordanian evening dedicated to local music and heritage.

As part of the festival's parallel programme within the archaeological city, the Artemis Theatre will host 31 cultural, folkloric and poetry events, highlighting Jordanian creativity and showcasing local artistic and literary talent throughout the festival.

The newly launched Hippodrome Theatre will host 35 local, Arab and international performances, including 13 international productions from Italy, Japan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Greece, South Korea, China, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, 15 Arab performances from Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Iraq, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar, and seven Jordanian performances.

The festival will also offer a dedicated family programme at the Sound and Light Theatre and the Oval Plaza

(Gerasa Market), featuring 13 family-oriented entertainment events, including children's theatre productions, comedy performances by Hussein Tabishat and the popular duo Za'al and Khadra, as well as performances by the Zaha Ensemble.

This international dimension is further enriched through the Embassies Pavilion, featuring twelve country pavilions showcasing the heritage and cultures of participating nations.

As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting Jordan's artistic movement, the festival extends its programme to Amman in partnership with the Jordanian Artists Association.

Both the Roman Theatre and the Odeon Theatre will host eleven Jordanian artistic and cultural performances daily from July 23 to August 2.

Reflecting the festival's commitment to theatre as a cornerstone of cultural expression, the 40th edition will host the fourth edition of the Monodrama Festival.

The festival aims to promote dialogue between self and society, stimulate cultural engagement and support monodrama theatre across Jordan and the Arab world while strengthening creative exchange with international artistic communities, the statement said.

Continuing Jerash Festival's longstanding tradition of honouring creative pioneers, this year's edition recognises acclaimed Jordanian actress Oamar Al Safadi as the Jordanian Personality of the Festival.

The festival will also honour distinguished Arab artists who have left a lasting mark on the Arab cultural landscape, including renowned Syrian actor Abdel Moneim Amayri and celebrated Lebanese actress Julia Kassab.

The festival administration announced that tickets for all performances and activities taking place on the South and North Theatres are available for purchase starting, June 24, through eTathkara, the festival's official ticketing partner.

The platform offers audiences a seamless, secure and user-friendly digital ticketing experience.

Festival organisers also encouraged the public to follow the festival's official digital platforms and social media channels for the latest updates, programme announcements and event details.

## Mamdani-backed leftist candidates win New York Democratic primaries

NEW YORK (AFP) — Three candidates backed by New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani won Democratic primary elections for Congress on Tuesday, underlining the surge of the left in US politics as Democrats grow disillusioned with the party establishment.

While the results position Mamdani, 34, as something of a kingmaker in the solidly Democratic Big Apple, it remains to be seen to what extent his star power will translate outside of the city.

Mamdani's improbable rise highlights the Democratic Party's debate over a centrist or a leftist future, a flashpoint ahead of November's midterm elections.

"This is a battle between the establishment and this insurgency," political analyst and former Obama administration official Van Jones told CNN.

"And the roof is collapsing on the Democratic Party establishment," he said. "This is no longer a movement — this is a movement and a machine at the same time."

Mamdani told the media on Wednesday it was "essential" for the future to go beyond mere opposition to US President Donald Trump's "cruelty".

Highlighting the party's disunity, Dem-



Democratic Congressional Candidate Brad Lander takes the stage with New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani after winning the 10th District Democratic primary in Brooklyn on Tuesday, in New York City

ocratic Pennsylvania Senator John Fetterman called the results "a banner night, you know, for the dirtbag left in New York".

### Democratic Socialists

Brad Lander, who served as the controller for the previous mayor, defeated two-term incumbent Daniel Goldman in New York's 10th Congressional District, following a campaign focused on the Middle East war.

Lander called for an end to US military aid to Israel, while Goldman was backed by pro-Israel groups, including the American Israel Public Affairs

Committee (AIPAC). Adriano Espillat lost his bid for reelection to Darialza Avila Chevalier, a member of Mamdani's Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) Party, in the 13th Congressional District.

Avila Chevalier, who once helped organise pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia University, has never held public office.

Another Mamdani-backed candidate, Claire Valdez, defeated Antonio Reynoso for outgoing Nydia Velazquez's seat.

Former president John F. Kennedy's grandson Jack Schlossberg lost his bid to replace long-

time representative Jerry Nadler, who is retiring.

'For a long time, they were told that candidates too far to the left could not be elected because they wouldn't be able to win'

Schlossberg, 32, is seen as a progressive on the left of the Democratic Party and has vocally called for it to change.

He lost to Micah Lasher, a state assemblyman endorsed by Nadler. Mamdani had not backed any candidates in that race.

In reaction to the results, Trump posted on social media that the United States would "never be a communist country!"

Trump repeatedly labeled Mamdani a communist during the mayoral race.

### 'Build a movement'

Political analyst Lincoln Mitchell said, "Mamdani and his allies are trying to build a movement."

"For a long time, they were told that candidates too far to the left could not be elected because they wouldn't be able to win," Mitchell wrote. "But if they succeed now, that argument will no longer hold. That's what is really at stake right now."

Mamdani, who took office in January, campaigned on lowering the cost of living. Since then, he has made progress on initiatives including free early childhood care and the opening of low-cost municipal supermarkets.

A decision on freezing certain regulated rents is expected soon, though the issue of free bus travel — a major Mamdani campaign promise — has stalled.

## National exports rise 7.3%, trade deficit narrows 13.4% in first four months of 2026 — DoS

Continued from page 1

For April alone, total exports stood at JD1.175 billion, including JD827 million in national exports and JD348 million in re-

ports. Imports reached JD1.962 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of JD787 million.

Compared with April 2025, total exports surged by 38.7 per cent, driven by a 25.1 per cent

rise in national exports and an 87.1 per cent jump in re-exports. Imports increased by 2.1 per cent, leading to a 26.7 per cent decline in the monthly trade deficit.

## Gov't settles outstanding debts totalling JD1.25b in 5 months

Continued from page 1

The Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ), on behalf of the government,

on June 10 issued the 25th Treasury bonds issue for 2026, valued at JD150 million.

According to CBJ

data, the maturity date for this issue is set for June 11, 2041, while the settlement date was on June 11.

## Mining sector expected to generate over 30,000 jobs by 2033 — ministry

Continued from page 1

A mining sector strategy prepared by Wood Mackenzie in cooperation with the ministry estimates that the sector could generate around 30,000 direct and indirect job opportunities by 2033.

The ministry said that the expected increase is linked to expanded exploration activities, mining operations and the development of downstream processing industries, which would broaden

the sector's employment base beyond extraction activities.

"Jordan produces qualified graduates in mining-related fields, but that sector expansion will require additional specialised training and practical experience aligned with international standards," the ministry said.

It stressed that strengthening vocational and technical training programmes will be necessary to meet future labour market needs as projects

scale up.

The ministry also said that the government is pursuing policies aimed at maximising the value of critical and strategic minerals through local value addition rather than exporting them in raw form, including legislation to restrict raw exports and encourage the establishment of local processing and manufacturing industries. It also plans to establish a national geological information database.

## Police foil cocaine, 150,000 narcotic pills in smuggling attempts

Continued from page 1

In the first case, Sartawi said an AND special investigative team, in coordination with Jordan Customs and other security agencies, acted on intelligence indicating an attempt to smug-

gle a large quantity of cocaine into Jordan.

Following weeks of surveillance, officers identified an Arab national and arrested him upon arrival at Queen Alia International Airport. A search of his luggage uncovered contain-

ers holding six litres of liquid cocaine.

In a separate case, AND officers intercepted a truck at the Jaber border crossing after intelligence indicated that narcotic pills were being smuggled into the Kingdom with the involve-

ment of individuals inside Jordan.

The vehicle was stopped in coordination with Customs and security agencies, and a search revealed 150,000 narcotic pills concealed inside a spare tyre. Subsequent investigations

led to the arrest of three suspects linked to the shipment.

In Mafraq Governorate, AND units arrested a wanted suspect classified as armed and dangerous and linked to regional drug trafficking networks. Sartawi said

a quantity of narcotic pills was seized during the raid.

In another operation in central Amman, officers arrested a suspect who had been using his home to cultivate marijuana seedlings. A total of 2,300 seedlings plant-

ed in pots were seized during the operation.

In the final case, AND officers in Balqa Governorate arrested two drug dealers involved in supplying narcotics to distributors. Authorities also seized 9,000 narcotic pills in their

possession.

Sartawi said the recent operations reflect intensified efforts by the Anti-Narcotics Department to combat drug trafficking and dismantle the criminal networks operating across the Kingdom.



# BUSINESS

Thursday, June 25, 2026



Petra photo

The Jordan Loan Guarantee Corporation on Wednesday launches two new programmes, 'Guarantee for Employment' and 'Green Finance Guarantee,' to expand access to finance and supporting job creation and green investment

## JLGC launches employment, green finance guarantee programmes

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Loan Guarantee Corporation (JLGC) on Wednesday launched two new programmes, "Guarantee for Employment" and "Green Finance Guarantee", aimed at expanding access to finance and supporting job creation and green investment in the Kingdom.

Central Bank of Jordan Governor (CBJ) Adel Sharkas and German Ambassador to Jordan Bertram von Moltke attended a ceremony that brought together representatives from the financial, banking and private sectors, as well as local and international development partners.

The "Guarantee for Employment" programme is funded by the German government through the German Development Bank (KfW), which has allocated 25 million euros to support the initiative, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

It aims to help growth-oriented Jordanian enterprises secure financing to expand operations, enhance capacity and create sustainable jobs, with the programme expected to benefit around 230 companies through loan guarantees.

The second programme, "Green Finance Guarantee", is funded by the Central Bank of Jordan with additional support from the German Agency for International Cooperation.

It aims to promote green investment by facilitating access to credit for projects related to energy efficiency, renewable energy and environmental sustainability, while reducing associated financial risks.

CBJ Governor Adel Sharkas said enhancing access to credit for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is a "key" pillar for sustainable economic growth, adding that expanding green

and sustainable finance has become a global necessity for long-term financial stability.

Ambassador von Moltke said that Germany remains committed to supporting the long-term development of the Jordanian economy, noting that the programme's outcomes represent real businesses and families benefitting from improved economic opportunities.

JLGC Director General Adnan Naji said that the programmes represent a strategic milestone in expanding the corporation's developmental role, highlighting cooperation between national institutions and international partners.

He added that the initiatives support the Economic Modernisation Vision by strengthening private-sector competitiveness, creating jobs, and advancing Jordan's transition toward a more sustainable and green economy.

## Investment minister meets CCPIT head, Chinese companies to expand cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh met Chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), Ren Hongbin, on the sidelines of Jordan's participation in the China International Supply Chain Expo in Beijing.

The meeting was held as part of Abu Ghazaleh's visit to China, which aims to attract high-quality Chinese investment to Jordan and showcase opportunities within the Kingdom's investment environment.

The council, which organises the China International Supply Chain Expo, is one of China's leading institutions for the promotion of international trade and outbound investment, according to a Ministry of Investment statement.

It plays a key role in facilitating Chinese investment flows into global markets and brings together some of the country's largest enterprises and globally active companies.

The minister also met representatives of several leading Chinese companies, including Cainiao Smart Logistics Network, which specialises in smart logistics, supply chain solutions and e-commerce, as well as Sinofert and Sinochem Holdings, two leading firms in fertiliser and agricultural technology.

Talks highlighted investment opportunities in the Kingdom and explored avenues for cooperation in regional distribution, food security, phosphate and potash-based indus-

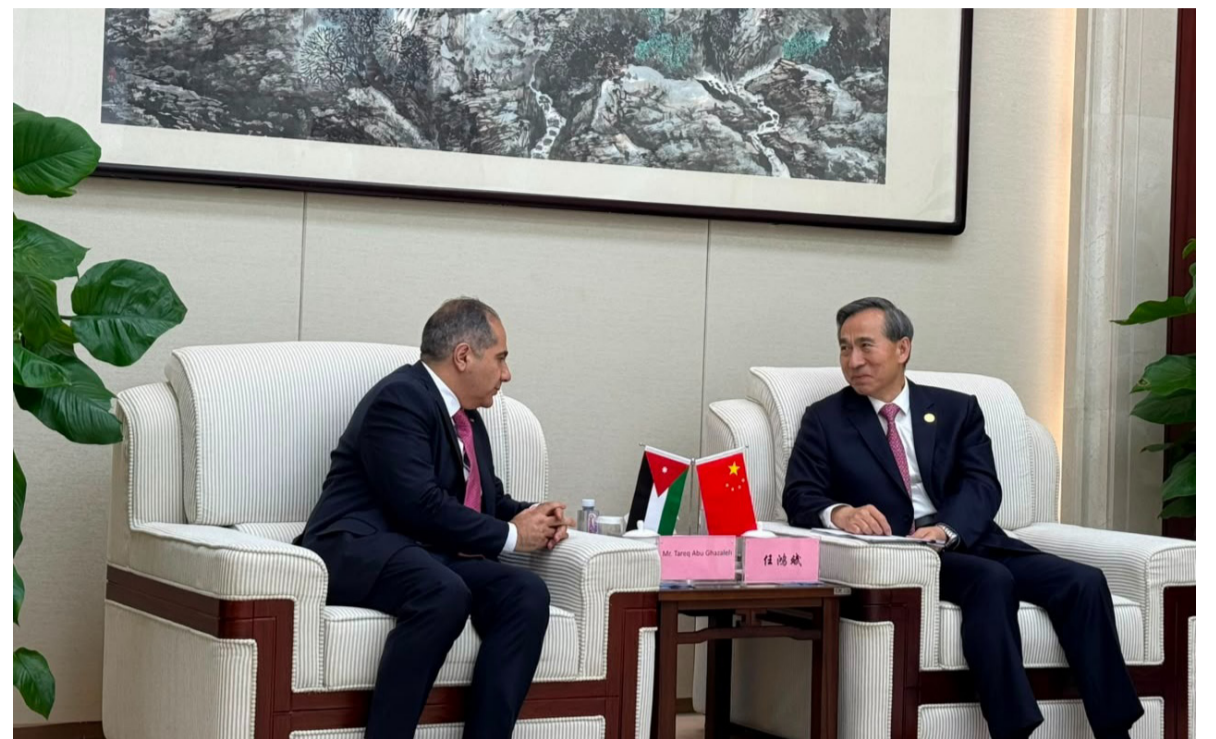


Photo Courtesy of Ministry of Investment

Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh meets Chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, Ren Hongbin in Beijing

tries, and other priority sectors.

Abu Ghazaleh also visited a bus manufacturing plant, whose buses are set to be deployed under the Southern Badia school transport project. He toured production lines and reviewed technologies used in the manufacturing process.

The visit also included discussions on investment opportunities in Jordan's bus manufacturing sector and ways to leverage advanced industrial technologies in order to enhance national industrial capabilities and support economic growth.

The minister briefed company representatives on recent developments in Jordan's investment environment

and the reforms undertaken to create a more competitive and business-friendly climate.

The meeting was attended by Jordan's Ambassador to China Husam Husseini, senior officials from CCPIT, the China Chamber of International Commerce, and representatives of Chinese economic and commercial institutions.

During the meeting, Abu Ghazaleh stressed Jordan's commitment to expanding cooperation with Chinese companies and institutions to attract more high-value investment to the Kingdom.

Discussions also covered a number of strategic projects being implemented through public-private partner-

ships, and explored opportunities for Chinese companies to participate in infrastructure, transport, logistics, energy and industrial projects in Jordan.

Abu Ghazaleh highlighted Jordan's strategic location as a regional hub for business, investment and logistics, noting that the Kingdom is advancing strategic projects aimed at strengthening supply chains and trade connectivity, while creating new opportunities for investors seeking to expand in the region.

Ren stressed CCPIT's commitment to strengthening cooperation with Jordan and fostering closer ties between the two countries' business communities, highlighting the

importance of leveraging available investment opportunities and promoting partnerships between Chinese and Jordanian companies in areas of mutual interest.

The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to deepening economic and investment cooperation and enhancing engagement between their respective business communities.

The minister is expected to continue his programme in China with a series of meetings and economic engagements aimed at strengthening direct communication with Chinese investors and exploring opportunities for deeper economic and industrial cooperation, according to the ministry statement.

## Oasis500, SM Capital sign MoU to boost venture investment links between MENA, Europe, Mediterranean

AMMAN (JT) — Oasis500 and SM Capital, a venture capital and investment advisory firm specialising in fintech, artificial intelligence and strategic infrastructure, have signed a strategic memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at strengthening investment linkages between the Mediterranean, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Europe, and global technology ecosystems.

Titled "Building the Digital Capital Bridge Between the Mediterranean and MENA", the MoU sets out a framework for cooperation in co-investment, deal-flow generation, engagement with limited partners and institutional investors, and the development of innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The agreement seeks to establish more effective institutional connections between capital providers, founders, and innovation hubs operating across both regions.

Oasis500 Chairwoman Suhair Al Ali said that, as a pioneering venture capital and entrepreneurship platform in the MENA region, Oasis500 has spent more than 15 years empowering entrepreneurs by linking founders with the capital, networks, and market access needed



Petra photo

The agreement seeks to establish more effective institutional connections between capital providers, founders and innovation hubs operating across regions

to scale high-growth companies.

Al Ali noted that SM Capital brings an extensive network of European institutional relationships, alongside deep expertise in technology investment and strong global market ties.

She said that the collaboration represents an opportunity to build stronger pathways connecting the MENA region with Europe, the Mediterranean and Silicon Valley.

She added that the importance of such strategic partnerships is increasing as the regional innovation economy matures, playing a key role in attracting investment,

accelerating startup growth and strengthening the region's position in the global technology landscape.

Founder and CEO of SM Capital Steven Muccioli said that innovation ecosystems today compete less through geography and more through the strength of their interconnectedness.

He stressed that the next phase of venture capital in the Mediterranean and MENA region will depend on building stronger institutional relationships linking investors, founders and innovation platforms across diverse markets.

Muccioli said the goal is to help create

a more integrated investment corridor connecting Europe, the Mediterranean and MENA, while expanding access to global capital and expertise.

The signing took place on the sidelines of the fourth Marrakesh Economic Parliamentary Forum for the Euro-Mediterranean and Gulf Regions, held in Marrakesh, Morocco.

Oasis500 is a development project under the King Abdullah II Fund for Development. Since its establishment, it has played a key role in supporting Jordan's entrepreneurship and venture capital ecosystem, as well as the wider region.

## Traffic flows through Hormuz continue to improve as IMO evacuation begins

LONDON (AFP) — Traffic through the Strait of Hormuz continues to improve compared to levels before US and Iran agreement, with some ships crossing through a new International Maritime Organisation (IMO) evacuation route, tracking data showed.

As of 15:00 GMT on Wednesday, maritime tracking firm Kpler recorded 25 transits by commodity ships on Tuesday, and 17 so far on Wednesday.

Total figures are likely to rise, as crossings are identified retrospectively, notably through satellite imagery.

Tuesday's crossings

fall short of the 38 commodity transits detected on Monday, the highest level since the Strait of Hormuz was closed by Iran on March 1 at the start of the Middle East war.

However, Tuesday's crossings continue to suggest an improvement in traffic compared with figures before the US and Iran agreed to a memorandum of understanding on June 14.

Since June 15, on average 22 ships have crossed every day according to Kpler, compared with less than 10 daily transits between March 1 and June 14.

In peacetime, around

120 commodity ships normally pass through the Strait of Hormuz each day, carrying about a fifth of global oil and LNG gas exports, making it one of the world's most important waterways.

MarineTraffic, a Kpler-owned website, showed multiple vessels passing through new IMO-approved routes, which the UN body announced on Tuesday to help evacuate the 11,000 seafarers still stuck in the Gulf.

These routes include a passage hugging the Omani shore for ships exiting the Gulf, and a route in Iranian waters for traffic going in both directions.

IMO chief Arsenio Dominguez told AFP on Wednesday that the UN agency hopes to soon see around 50 vessels evacuated through these routes each day.

Very large crude carriers (VLCC), super tankers capable of carrying over around 2 million barrels of oil, have been crossing the strait more since the US-Iran agreement.

Three VLCCs — including an empty one — crossed on Wednesday, collectively transporting 4.1 million barrels of crude oil from the Gulf, according to Kpler data.

On Tuesday, five VLCCs crossed the strait, three of them laden.

## AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

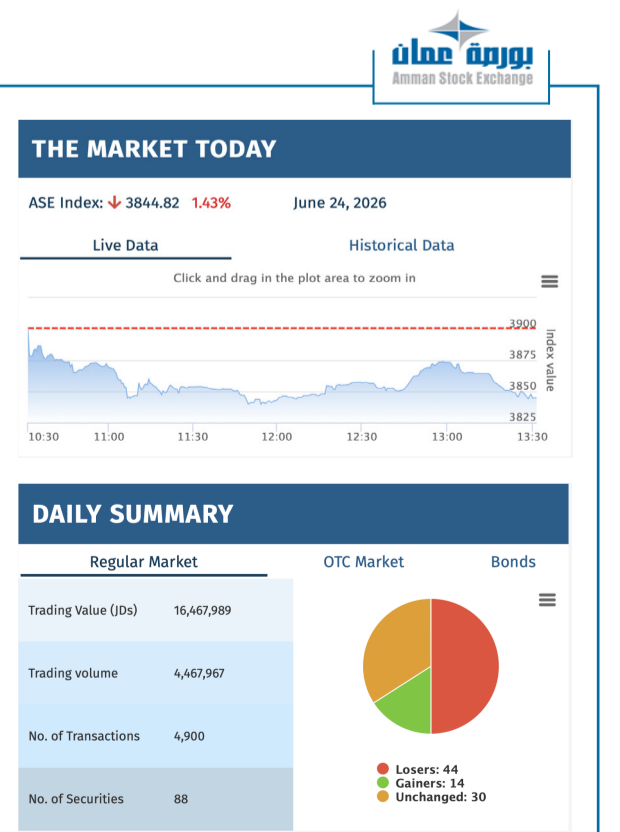
AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Wednesday amounted to JD16.5 million spread over 4.5 million shares that traded through 4,900 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 1.43 per cent, closing at 3844.82 points.

Out of 88 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 14 companies rose while the share price of another 44 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were National Insurance by 4.58 per cent, Al Dawliyah for Hotels and Malls by 4.44 per cent, Jordanian Company for Developing and Financial Investment by 3.45 per cent, Industrial Commercial and Agricultural by 2.44 per cent and Amoun International for Investments by 2.27 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were International Arabian Development and Investment Trading Company by 5.26 per cent, Injaz for Development and Projects by 4.88 per cent, Contempro for Housing Projects by 4.71 per cent, Amwaj Properties by 4.55 per cent, and Jordan Petroleum Refinery by 4.32 per cent.



# Tuchel insists England remains on course at World Cup despite Ghana draw

By Andy Scott  
Agence France-Presse



Caleb Yirenkyi #3 of Ghana and Elliot Anderson #8 of England during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Group L match between England and Ghana at Boston Stadium on Wednesday in Foxborough, Massachusetts

AFP photo

FOXBOROUGH, United States — England coach Thomas Tuchel admitted his team had lacked a cutting edge in a frustrating 0-0 draw with Ghana on Wednesday, but insisted there were plenty of positive signs going forward in their quest to win the World Cup.

"It's a long tournament and I think the boys tried everything. They played with the right energy," said Tuchel after the stalemate at the Gillette Stadium near Boston.

"We always try to entertain our fans. It was difficult today but I hope the fans don't lose belief. There is a long way to go. I just feel I was right that we were in a very difficult group."

England had 79 per cent of the possession but could not break down a determined Ghanaian defence in the Group L contest.

They also lacked the cutting edge which made the difference in their opening 4-2 win against Croatia in Dallas, having 19 attempts on goal but managing only three on target.

Manchester City's Nico O'Reilly hit the bar late on after coming off the bench, and Harry Kane blazed the rebound over to sum up a frustrating day for England.

"It fell to him and 99 times out of 100 he takes that chance. If he con-

verts his chance maybe we are talking now about the patience and discipline and performance," added Tuchel.

"But now it is 0-0 and maybe the headlines are a little different. We had enough set-pieces to decide the match but we were not clinical

enough." The German said that it was "just natural" to rely on Kane, who was unable to add to his two goals against Croatia and move ahead of Gary Lineker as his country's all-time top scorer at World Cups.

Tuchel also admit-

ted that the match could serve as a "reality check", even if the outcome is hardly too problematic for England — they have four points from two games and a win against Panama at the MetLife Stadium on Saturday will clinch progress to the last 32

as group winners.

**'VAR went for a coffee'**

"This is a difficult, difficult team to play against. None of us thought there was an easy match ahead of us, but there were a lot of things that were much better than

against Croatia. "It is just not the same result or excitement but it takes two to tango," he added in a nod to Ghana's defensive approach.

England remains unbeaten against African opponents at World Cups but the Black Stars were clearly delighted with the point which keeps them on course to make the knockout phase for the first time since they got to the quarter-finals in 2010.

"Football is not only about possession. It is also about having the right attitude," Ghana coach Carlos Queiroz said as his team built on their opening 1-0 victory against Panama.

"We celebrated because we got a draw against a team which is one of the favourites to win the World Cup."

His team also has four points before heading to Philadelphia next to take on Croatia.

"You have to pay a high price to get points. Probably because we are in the United States where everything is expensive," he joked.

However, the former Real Madrid and Portugal boss also felt his team should have had a penalty for a late challenge on Prince Adu by Ezri Konsa.

Nothing was given by the Honduran referee and he was not summoned to check the VAR monitor.

"The VAR went for a coffee which is natural but it is a clear penalty and a red card," insisted Queiroz.

## TENNIS

### Swiatek, Andreeva exit Bad Homburg grass tournament

BERLIN (AFP) — Defending Wimbledon champion Iga Swiatek and freshly minted French Open winner Mirra Andreeva are out of the grass court tournament at Bad Homburg, Germany, after upset defeats on Wednesday. Swiatek, the World No.3, fell to American Emma Navarro 7-5, 2-6, 6-3 just days out from Wimbledon, while Andreeva lost in straight sets to Russian compatriot Ekaterina Alexandrova in the key Wimbledon warm-up tournament. Playing her first match since she was eliminated from the French Open, a tournament she has won four times, Swiatek struggled early, with Navarro winning the first three games. Swiatek forced her way back but a series of double faults, including on the final point of the set, allowed the American to claim the opener. The 25-year-old found her feet to claim the second set, dropping just two games, but Navarro fought back and broke Swiatek to claim the third set and the match in two hours and five minutes. "It was hot out there and I didn't have a ton of rhythm, I think both of us felt that throughout the match. So it came down to a lot of serving," Navarro said.

## CRICKET

### England captain Stokes 'man enough' to apologise after curfew breach

LONDON (AFP) — Returning captain Ben Stokes insisted he had been "man enough" to apologise to his England team-mates after missing the last Test for breaching a curfew Stokes and fast bowler Gus Atkinson were dropped from the second Test against New Zealand after breaking a midnight curfew in an incident at a London nightclub celebrating England's first win in the series opener at Lord's. In their absence, an England team led by stand-in captain Joe Root and showing five changes — including three debutants — suffered a 253-run thrashing at the Oval as New Zealand levelled the series at 1-1 heading into the Nottingham finale at Trent Bridge starting on Thursday. The curfew breach came when it seemed England were moving on from the drinking controversies that marred their 4-1 Ashes defeat in Australia. But English cricket chiefs have now decided no further action is needed against Stokes and Atkinson, both of whom are back in the side.

# LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

# No price shock for 'GTA VI' as gamers gear up for preorders

PARIS, France (AFP) — Gamers impatient for "Grand Theft Auto VI" to hit consoles in November learned on Wednesday they will not face a widely-anticipated price shock, as developer Rockstar Games announced details of preorders set to open at midnight on Thursday.

Predicted to be the biggest-selling cultural product of the year — and of all time — speculation had been rife that "GTA VI" would cost players far more than a typical high-end title.

In the end, Rockstar and parent company Take Two Interactive announced a price tag around \$10 higher than the average for the base version, at \$79.99 in the US, and \$99.99 for an "Ultimate" edition with additional content like weapons and vehicles.

Six years of development for "GTAVI" are estimated to have cost up to \$2 billion, which had prompted fears it could cost as much as \$100.

"If there is one game that can price at \$80 without garnering significant player pushback, 'Grand Theft Auto VI' is that game given its massive scale and anticipation," said Andrew Marok of special-



AFP photo

This illustration photo created in Los Angeles, California, on December 5, 2023, shows Rockstar Games' Grand Theft Auto 6 trailer played on computer screens

ist consultancy Raymond James.

Rockstar has not said how much the game will cost outside the US.

Players who preorder from midnight local time on Thursday will be able to download "GTA VI" a week before its official publication — but will not be able to run the game on their console until the release date.

### Disk disappointment

Fans of the "GTA" series, with roots in 1997, have been waiting 13 years for a new instalment since 2013's "GTA V", whose 230 million copies moved made it the second-best-

selling game in history after "Minecraft".

Finally getting his hands on the game "doesn't exactly feel like a real thing that would ever happen", said Red Young, a 26-year-old Scotsman who helps run fan site GTABase.

"Knowing that we've got here... and I'm actually going to be able to play it, is borderline a miracle," he added.

Anticipation was only stoked by successive delays: first from autumn 2025 to May this year, and next to November.

Some players were nevertheless shocked to learn that physical copies sold at retailers would contain a redeemable download

code — likely meaning there will be no disc containing the game data.

There were grumbles on social media that the lack of a physical disk would eliminate any second-hand market for the title.

But these days around 80 per cent of game sales on PlayStation and 90 per cent on Xbox are digital versions delivered over the Internet, according to specialist firm Niko Partners.

"The full launch including pre-orders will be the biggest entertainment launch ever... bigger than any movie, TV series, music concert or album," said Piers Harding-Rolls of the UK-based data firm Ampere Analysis.

Analysts at the investment bank Piper Sandler expect around 45 million copies to move before the game is even released.

### Courting controversy

That should put "GTA VI" on track to top the record for the fastest cultural product to make a billion dollars in sales, set by its predecessor, "GTA V", in barely three days.

Although millions of fans have been kept busy with the multiplayer version "GTA Online", the anticipation for a true successor has been fierce.

The "GTA" saga's action-adventure titles set in a sprawling open world have immersed players in high-definition imaginary cities heavily inspired by American metropolises.

This instalment's Bonnie and Clyde-style protagonists will roam Vice City, a fictional version of Miami.

Each game offers players a huge degree of freedom to either carry out missions that advance the plot, or simply to explore the world on foot or at the controls of a fleet of vehicles — with the option to explode into guns-blazing criminal mayhem at any time.



AFP photo

People jump in the Trocadero Fountain near the Eiffel Tower during a heatwave in Paris on June 22, 2026

# 'Paris in this heat is awful': Tourists change plans as sites close early

By Ambre Depres  
Agence France-Presse

PARIS, France — The severe heatwave sweeping France on Tuesday forced the early closures of top Paris tourist hotspots the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre, and left disappointed visitors sweltering with little respite.

Spanish nurse Maite Blazques said she had spent months saving up to bring her six-year-old son to Paris, but the record heat forced her to reorganise the whole holiday without going inside key landmarks.

"We had to change our whole trip," said the 35-year-old from Madrid, as France on Tuesday experienced its hottest day

since measurements began in 1947.

"We won't be taking a guided tour of the historic Marais district, or a river boat cruise, and we won't be going up to the top of the Eiffel Tower," she said quietly, head bowed and holding her son's hand.

The operator of the Eiffel Tower said the latticed-steel monument would "exceptionally close" early on Tuesday at 4 pm (14:00 GMT), and it was "very likely" it would have shortened opening hours again on Wednesday.

The 324-metre tower, which attracts 7 million tourists a year, usually stays open past midnight during the high season.

Below the landmark site, American tourist

Tamara Dancer said her guided tour was cancelled on Tuesday afternoon.

"It hurt our vacation," she said.

Elsewhere in the capital, tourists armed themselves with umbrellas, hat and fans to brave pavements radiating heat.

John Beeler, a 45-year-old American engineer, said he and his wife were disappointed.

"Visiting Paris in this heat is awful," he told AFP, wearing a fisherman's hat and holding a small fan.

"We're suffocating in the streets, we're suffocating in the subway and we're even suffocating in our rental," he said, adding they would be moving to an air-conditioned hotel room.

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