



# THE JORDAN TIMES



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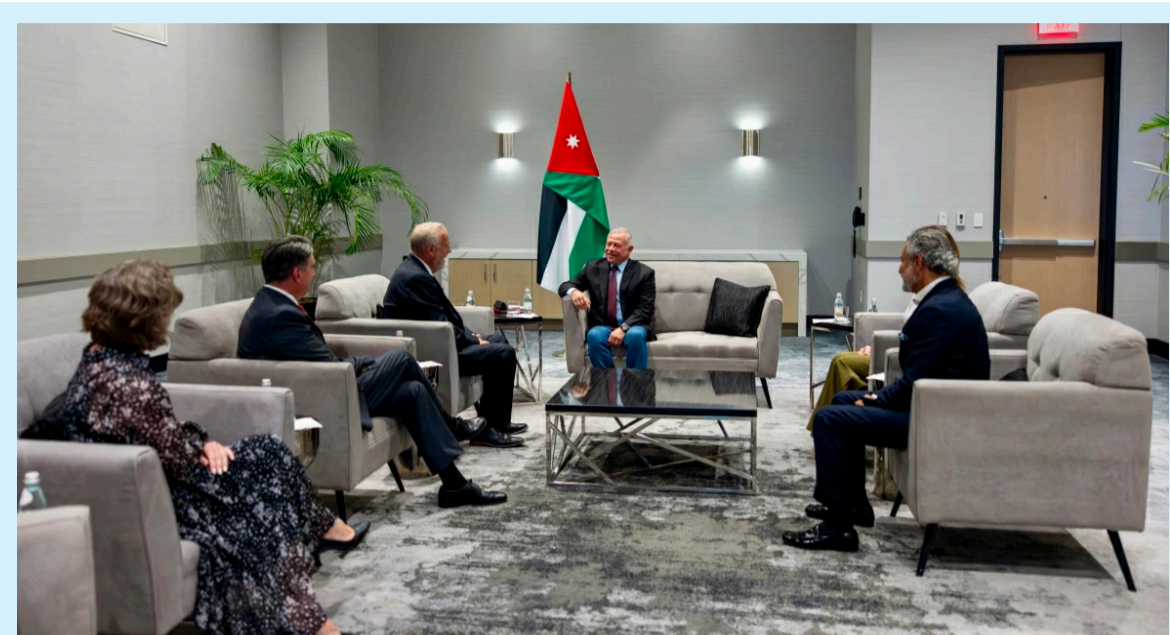


Photo courtesy of Royal Court

His Majesty King Abdullah meets on Saturday with Arlington Mayor Jim Ross, in Texas

## King meets with Arlington mayor in Texas

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah met on Saturday with Arlington Mayor Jim Ross, in Texas. The meeting covered the strategic partnership between Jordan and the United States, as well as the importance of expanding cooperation across various sectors, according to a Royal Court statement.

## Crown Prince marks 32nd birthday

AMMAN (JT) — The Kingdom on Sunday celebrates the 32nd birthday of HRH Crown Prince Hussein, the eldest son of His Majesty King Abdullah and Queen Rania Al Abdullah, and the 42nd direct descendant of Prophet Mohammad. Over the years, the Crown Prince has assumed his duties alongside His Majesty King Abdullah, placing Jordan and its youth at the forefront of his priorities while guiding efforts across various sectors to embrace global technological advancements.



Crown Prince Al Hussein has led numerous initiatives dedicated to national development, oversaw the modernisation of comprehensive government services, supported athletes across various fields and promoted a culture of volunteerism throughout the Kingdom. His Royal Highness was born in Amman on June 28, 1994, and was named as Crown Prince in a Royal Decree, issued on July 2, 2009.

from which his father, King Abdullah and his grandfather, His Majesty the late King Hussein, had graduated. In 2016, the Crown Prince graduated from Georgetown University in Washington, DC, where he majored in international history. He also graduated in 2012 from King's Academy in Madaba. His Royal Highness married Her Royal Highness Princess Rajwa on June 1, 2023, and they were blessed with a daughter, Princess Iman. The Crown Prince holds the rank of Major in the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army.

The Crown Prince actively participates in field exercises and specialised courses alongside his fellow soldiers, including parachuting, special operations, naval forces and aviation, while regularly connecting with retired military personnel. As part of his support for the King's efforts to strengthen Jordan's relations with Arab and friendly international nations, the Crown Prince has conducted official working visits to numerous countries and accompanied His Majesty in receiving foreign dignitaries.

His Royal Highness's close follow-up on national projects has driven digital transformation in the Kingdom through initiatives such as the Digital Health Centre, the smart educational assistant "Siraj", digital signature implementation, and the development of the "Sanad" application. The Crown Prince has represented Jordan at multiple international forums, including the World Economic Forum in Davos and the Climate Conference in Baku.

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## Jordan condemns Iranian drone attacks on Bahrain, reaffirms full support for Manama

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan on Saturday strongly condemned what it described as Iranian drone attacks targeting the Kingdom of Bahrain, calling them a blatant violation of Bahraini sovereignty and a threat to its security, stability and territorial integrity. In a statement, Jordan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates said the attacks represent a dangerous escalation, and a clear breach of international law and the United Nations Charter. The ministry reiterated Jordan's full solidarity with Bahrain, affirming its support for all measures taken by Manama to protect its sovereignty, security, and the safety of its citizens and residents.

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## Jordan welcomes Lebanon-Israel framework agreement, calls for full Israeli withdrawal

Lebanon, Israel, US sign trilateral framework agreement in Washington

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan has welcomed the framework agreement between Lebanon and Israel that was signed on Friday, under US mediation. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi hailed the agreement as an "important step towards strengthening Lebanon's security, stability and sovereignty over its entire territory". Safadi's remarks came during a phone call on Saturday with his Lebanese counterpart Youssef Raggi, during which he stressed the importance of building on the agreement to achieve a complete Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Lebanese territory and the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701.



AFP photo

A potted plant flowers outside a damaged building hit in earlier Israeli military strikes on a neighbourhood in the southern Lebanese coastal city of Tyre on Tuesday

According to a Foreign Ministry statement, Safadi reaffirmed Jordan's "absolute support" for Lebanon's security, stability, sovereignty, territorial integrity and the safety of its citizens. He also expressed Jordan's backing for Lebanon's efforts to assert state authority across its territory, reactivate national institutions and restrict possession of arms to the state. He also commended the United States for its role in facilitating the agreement. Lebanon, Israel and the United States on Friday signed a trilateral framework agreement aimed at paving the way for a peace deal between the two long-time Middle East adversaries. The agreement, which officials said includes a pilot effort in which Lebanese soldiers will take control of two areas occupied by Israel, as well as a process aimed at disarming Hizbollah, is the result of five rounds of talks in the US capital, AFP reported.

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AFP via Getty Images

Vessels are seen anchored in Bandar Abbas, Iran, along the Strait of Hormuz on June 18

## US and Iran trade strikes putting new strain on Mideast ceasefire

WASHINGTON, United States (JT) — The United States and Iran traded military strikes after Washington on Friday accused Tehran of attacking a cargo ship, jeopardising a fragile ceasefire as diplomats struggle to contain the Middle East war. US Central Command said the American strikes, against Iranian missile and drone storage sites and coastal radar positions, were a response to "unwarranted aggression against commercial shipping by Iranian forces" that "clearly violated the ceasefire". It described the operation as "a powerful response to yesterday's attack on a commercial ship that was transiting the Strait of Hormuz".

Iranian state television, citing a reporter in Sirik, said an explosion was heard late Friday at Taherouyeh pier in the southern port city. It quoted an informed military source as saying the blast was caused by a projectile impact in the area.

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## Jordan sends rescue teams, medical staff to Venezuela following devastating earthquakes

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan dispatched search, rescue, and medical teams to Venezuela on Friday, to help support international relief efforts following the twin earthquakes that struck Venezuela. The Jordan International Search and Rescue Team, which is part of the Civil Defence, comprises 100 specialist personnel qualified in search and rescue operations and field support in affected areas, equipped with the latest equipment and technologies required to deal with natural disasters in accordance with the highest international standards, in order to contribute to search and rescue operations and field support in affected areas, according to a Royal Court statement. The Jordanian relief team also includes a number of specialist medical staff from the Royal Medical Services, who will be providing treatment and medical care to those injured and affected by the earthquake. This contribution is made upon Royal directives to support countries and peoples affected by disasters and humanitarian crises, mitigating their impact and supporting urgent international response efforts. Jordan is also due to send a field hospital in the coming days to help treat those injured and affected by the earthquake, as well as various forms of aid and medical and therapeutic supplies.

## Jordanian citizen killed in Venezuela earthquake — ministry

AMMAN (JT) — The Foreign Ministry said on Saturday it was closely monitoring the conditions of Jordanian citizens in Venezuela following two earthquakes that recently struck the country. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Fouad Majali said in a statement that a Jordanian national residing in Venezuela died as a result of the earthquake, while his wife remains missing. Majali noted that the ministry, through the Jordanian embassy in Brazil, is coordinating with Venezuelan authorities in the search operations and continues to provide necessary support to the victim's family. The spokesperson confirmed that all other Jordanian residents in Venezuela are safe, urging citizens in the country to contact the ministry or the embassy in Brazil for around-the-clock assistance via the embassy's hotline at 005561996987070, the ministry's operations centre at 00962799562903, 00962799562471 and 00962799562193, or via e-mail at op.ctr@fm.gov.jo.

standards, in order to contribute to search and rescue operations and field support in affected areas, according to a Royal Court statement. The Jordanian relief team also includes a number of specialist medical staff from the Royal Medical Services, who will be providing treatment and medical care to those injured and affected by the earthquake. This contribution is made upon Royal directives to support countries and peoples affected by disasters and humanitarian crises, mitigating their impact and supporting urgent international response efforts. Jordan is also due to send a field hospital in the coming days to help treat those injured and affected by the earthquake, as well as various forms of aid and medical and therapeutic supplies.



AFP photo

Volunteers search for possible victims in a collapsed building following twin earthquakes in Caraballeda, La Guaira state, some 40km northeast of Caracas, on Thursday

# Jordan accelerates digital future under Crown Prince-led tech push

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein is spearheading an ambitious national vision to position Jordan as a regional technology and innovation hub, driving the Kingdom's digital transformation through artificial intelligence, digital government services and investment in future technologies.

The initiative forms part of a broader national strategy aimed at strengthening Jordan's knowledge-based economy while equipping young Jordanians with the skills needed to compete in an increasingly digital global marketplace.

Jordan has accelerated its digital transformation agenda under the guidance of His Majesty King Abdullah and the close oversight of the Crown Prince, with efforts focused on improving public services, enhancing economic competitiveness and fostering innovation.

Central to this effort is the National Council for Future Technology, established in early 2025 under Royal directives and chaired by Prime Minister Jafar Hassan under the Crown Prince's supervision.

The council brings together leading technology experts from the private sector to coordinate national digital initiatives and align government policies with projects that have a direct impact on the economy and society.

The council has overseen the rollout of several flagship initiatives, including the AI-powered educational assistant Siraj, the Jordan Digital Health Centre, digital signature services and continued development of the government's unified digital platform, Sanad.

The Crown Prince has also inaugurat-



HRH Crown Prince Hussein speaks to participants at the Tawasol 2026 on May 16

ed several integrated government service centres across the Kingdom.

Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smeirat, who serves as vice chairman of the National Council for Future Technology, said that the council has become the country's primary platform for advancing AI and emerging technologies while strengthening collaboration between the public and private sectors.

In remarks to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, the minister said that the council has launched a range of initiatives in AI, data and advanced technologies, accelerated digital transformation projects, improved government services and created employment opportunities for young Jordanians.

According to Smeirat, more than 83 per cent of government services eligible for digitisa-



HRH Crown Prince Hussein, during a visit to the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, meets with the Sanad application developers, and notes the importance of building on Sanad's success by expanding the government services it offers, thereby simplifying procedures for citizens

tion has already been digitalised, with the government aiming to

reach full digitalisation by the end of 2026. The programme, he

added, is intended to simplify administrative procedures, im-

prove service quality and enhance the efficiency of public

institutions.

The Sanad platform continues to expand as Jordan's unified gateway for digital government services.

More than 2.77 million people have activated their digital identities, while the application now records over 400,000 daily users, according to official figures.

Over 500,000 official documents and transactions have been processed using digital signatures, while expanded electronic notary services have enabled citizens to complete many legal procedures online without visiting courts.

Smeirat said that the ministry is continuing efforts on several strategic projects, including the government's electronic portal programme, the electronic passport initiative and the Jordan Digital Health Centre, besides the expansion and enhancement of existing digital public services.

Government service centres now operate through 15 locations across Jordan, providing citizens with access to multiple government services under one roof in an effort to improve accessibility, service quality and overall public sector performance.

AI remains a key priority under the government's digital agenda, he said.

"The ministry is expanding the AI-powered Siraj educational platform. As of May, the platform had attracted some 1.33 million users, supporting modern teaching methods and providing students with advanced digital learning tools," the minister said.

The next phase of Jordan's digital transformation will focus on implementing the National Digital Transformation Strategy for 2026-2028.

Key priorities include expanding the use of AI, boosting digital infrastructure, enhancing cybersecurity, increasing adoption of digital government services and supporting entrepreneurship, investment and technological innovation, the minister said.

Recent updates to the Sanad application have introduced self-service digital identity activation, online personal data updates, password recovery, mobile number changes and improved access to digital documents, including offline access secured through fingerprint authentication, he said.

Jordanians living abroad can now activate their digital identities remotely and access government services through the application.

The government has also launched Sanad Lite, a lighter version designed for users with limited device storage or older mobile devices.

The Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship is also advancing several supporting initiatives, including the digitalisation of school activity books, awareness workshops for the Crown Prince Award for Best Government Services Application, and the second phase of the "Grow Jordan" programme.

As part of the Economic Modernisation Vision, the "Grow Jordan, Business Development" programme is a key workforce and economic initiative driving local job creation and salary support for new employees across the Kingdom.

That programme has generated 200 employment opportunities, trained 120 beneficiaries through digital platforms and supported 15 startups and small businesses.

# Crown Prince's support inspires new era for Jordanian sport

By Enad Abbadi

AMMAN — As Jordanian sport continues to enhance its presence on regional and international stages, recent years have witnessed a series of historic achievements across multiple disciplines, underscoring a period of "unprecedented" progress for national teams and athletes.

Observers and officials across the sporting sector attribute much of this momentum to "consistent support" from the Hashemite leadership, and the close follow-up of HRH Crown Prince Hussein, whose engagement with youth and sport has become a "defining feature" of Jordan's modern sporting development.

As the Kingdom marks Prince Hussein's 32nd birthday, sports officials, coaches and athletes alike emphasise that this sustained backing has played a "central role" in advancing Jordan's sporting ambitions, providing an enabling environment that has helped athletes compete at higher levels and raise the country's profile internationally.

In recent years, Jordanian sport has recorded a string of landmark achievements.



HRH Crown Prince Hussein on June 10, 2025 attends the Jordan national football team's match against Oman at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex as part of the Asian Qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup 2026. His Royal Highness was accompanied by a number of Royal family members

Most notably, the national football team reached the AFC Asian Cup final in Qatar 2023 for the first time in its history, followed by a place in the Arab Cup final in 2025, before securing qualification for the FIFA World Cup 2026, another historic milestone for Jordanian football.

Beyond football, Jordanian athletes across various disciplines have continued to achieve notable success at continental and global levels, reflecting broader efforts to boost sports governance, develop

talent pathways, and empower youth in line with national modernisation priorities.

This progress has been reinforced not only through institutional development, but also through the Crown Prince's visible presence at sporting events and his continued engagement with national teams.

His attendance at key matches, including World Cup qualifiers, has been widely viewed as a "strong" motivational factor for players and supporters alike.

Vice President of the

Jordan Football Association (JFA) Marwan Juma told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the Crown Prince's continued support has been one of the "key drivers" behind the development of Jordanian football in recent years.

He noted that "sustained attention" to the national team and emphasis on professional working conditions have helped overcome challenges and opened new pathways for progress on the international stage.

Similarly, Secretary-General of the Jor-



HRH Crown Prince Hussein on June 9 visits the Jordan national football team's base camp in San Diego, USA during their final training sessions ahead of the World Cup 2026

dan Olympic Committee (JOC) Rana Saeed said that "the Crown Prince's engagement with athletes and consistent recognition of sporting achievements have provided strong encouragement and contributed to improved performance across disciplines".

She added that "such support has strength-

ened athletes' confidence and ambition, while reinforcing Jordan's growing reputation within the international sporting community".

National team goalkeeper Yazid Abu Layla also highlighted the "motivational impact" of this engagement, saying that "the presence and encourage-

ment of the Crown Prince represent a significant source of inspiration for players representing the Kingdom".

Coach Ahmed Hayel stressed that "sustained support for athletes and technical staff has helped build a generation of players with greater confidence, ambition, and

competitive readiness on the international stage".

As Jordan continues to invest in youth and sport under its broader development vision, the Kingdom's sporting trajectory is expected to remain on an upward path, with further milestones anticipated in the years ahead.

# Jordan's exports to EU rise 49.3% in four months, reaching JD218m — chamber

AMMAN (JT) — The significant rise in the Kingdom's exports to EU countries underscores the growing competitiveness of Jordanian products in international markets, European Chamber of Commerce in Jordan President Mohammad Smadi said on Saturday.

According to official statistics, Jordanian exports to the EU increased by 49.3 per cent during the first four months of 2026, reaching JD218 million, up from JD146 million during the same period last year.

Smadi told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the strong export growth reflects the success of Jordan's productive sectors in expanding their presence and capitalising on opportunities in European markets.



European Chamber of Commerce in Jordan President Mohammad Smadi says on Saturday that the significant rise in the Kingdom's exports to EU countries underscores the growing competitiveness of Jordanian products in international markets

He attributed the increase to the joint efforts of government institutions and the private sector to strengthen the

presence of Jordanian products across Europe. "The growth also reflects the high quality of Jordanian products and

their compliance with stringent European standards," Smadi said, noting that the industrial, food, pharmaceutical and

chemical sectors offer particularly strong potential for further expansion. He described the EU as one of Jordan's most important trading partners and one of the world's largest economic blocs, stressing that strengthening bilateral trade ties remains a strategic priority to diversify export destinations and reduce reliance on traditional markets.

Smadi said that European markets continue to offer significant opportunities for Jordanian exporters, given the positive reputation of the Kingdom's products for quality and compliance with EU technical and environmental standards.

He added that the next phase should focus on expanding trade promotion efforts and capital-

ising on shifts in global supply chains to increase Jordan's market share in Europe.

Smadi also called for stronger public-private partnerships to support exporters by streamlining trade procedures, improving logistics infrastructure, and lowering production and export costs to enhance competitiveness.

He said that stronger exports to the EU would boost the national economy by improving the trade balance, attracting investment, increasing production and creating more employment opportunities for Jordanians.

"The Kingdom possesses numerous competitive advantages that position it for further export growth in European markets," Smadi added.

## AT A GLANCE

### Prince Feisal sworn in as Regent

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Prince Feisal Bin Hussein was sworn in as Regent in the presence of the Cabinet members, according to a Royal Court statement.



### Foreign minister, Saudi counterpart discuss regional developments

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi held a phone call with Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal Bin Farhan.



During the call, the two ministers discussed the latest developments in the region, according to a Foreign Ministry statement. They also emphasised the importance of continuous coordination and consultation regarding these regional matters.

## 'Jordanian House' attracts thousands of visitors in Texas

AMMAN (JT) — A Jordanian cultural pavilion in Arlington, Texas, has attracted thousands of expatriates and international visitors on the sidelines of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities said on Saturday.

The "Jordanian House" initiative, organised by the ministry in cooperation with the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB), showcases a wide range of cultural, artistic and heritage activities designed to highlight Jordan's national identity.

In a statement, the ministry said that Friday's programme featured traditional dabke performances, live Arabic music, and interactive demonstrations of Arabic calligraphy and mosaic-making, alongside a performance by the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army band.

The pavilion also screens live World Cup



The Jordanian House attracts thousands of expatriates and international visitors on the sidelines of the 2026 FIFA World Cup

matches and includes promotional draws and giveaways sponsored by Royal Jordanian Airlines.

The cultural programme continued on Saturday ahead of a major public screening of the highly anticipated match between Jordan's national football team (Al-Nashama)

and Argentina on a giant outdoor screen.

The ministry said that the initiative aims to leverage the global sporting event to raise Jordan's international profile and showcase its tourism and cultural assets to a diverse global audience attending the tournament.

## Tourism Ministry promotes Kingdom's Christian heritage in Texas

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Jordan Tourism Board, in partnership with the First Baptist Church of Arlington, Texas, organised a promotional event titled "Christian Faith in Jordan: Land of Revelation, Baptism and Pilgrimage".

Held alongside Jordan's participation in the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the event aimed to promote the Kingdom's historical and religious significance as one of the world's leading destinations for Christian pilgrimage.

The event was attended by Tourism Minister Emad Hijazeen, Arlington Mayor Jim Ross, Jordanian Ambassador to the US Dina Kawar, and Chairman of the Lower House Tourism Committee Salem Omari, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The programme opened with a photo exhibition showcasing



The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Jordan Tourism Board, in partnership with the First Baptist Church of Arlington, Texas, organise a promotional event titled 'Christian Faith in Jordan: Land of Revelation, Baptism and Pilgrimage'

Jordan's biblical heritage, followed by the Jordanian national anthem, musical performances, and welcoming remarks by First Baptist Church Pastor Dennis Wiles and Hijazeen.

The agenda also featured a lecture by Executive Director of the Centre for Judeo-Chris-

tian Studies Sarah Winner, highlighting Jordan's spiritual and biblical significance.

Hijazeen said that Jordan is home to some of Christianity's holiest sites, foremost among them the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

He added that, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah, Jordan continues to serve as a global model of religious coexistence, moderation, and interfaith dialogue while safeguarding both Islamic and Christian holy sites.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Kawar wrote on X that the event successfully highlighted Jordan as an integral part of the Holy Land and home to one of the world's oldest continuous Christian communities.

The promotional campaign coincides with Royal Jordanian Airlines' launch of direct flights between Amman and Dallas, a move expected to improve access for American tourists and Christian pilgrims.

Hijazeen also noted that Jordan will present a mosaic football sculpture celebrating the Kingdom's rich history to the City of Dallas.

The event concluded with remarks by Pastor Wiles, who praised Jordan's message of peace and coexistence. The gathering brought together church leaders, academics, tourism officials, and members of the Jordanian expatriate community.

## JRS festival highlights cultural diversity, social cohesion in Jordan

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Jordan held its 2026 Festival of Encounter on Friday, bringing together refugee and local communities in a two-day celebration of cultural diversity, artistic expression and social cohesion.

Held at Collège de La Salle Frères in Jabal Al Hussein, the event attracted more than 2,000 visitors over two days and featured more than 200 performers and around 150 volunteers, according to JRS Jordan.

The annual festival, which coincides with World Refugee Day, has evolved since its launch in 2022 into a major community platform that highlights the cultural richness of refugees, migrants and Jordanians through mu-

sic, dance, storytelling, traditional dress and handicrafts.

The 2026 edition featured participants from Yemen, Sudan, Syria, Somalia, Palestine, Eritrea and Iraq, offering a wide range of performances and exhibitions designed to foster intercultural dialogue and create meaningful encounters between displaced communities and the Jordanian public.

Speaking to The Jordan Times, JRS Jordan Communications and Advocacy Manager Silvia Mazzocchin said that the festival has become a unique space where communities can meet beyond labels and stereotypes and engage with one another through shared cultural experiences.

"The Festival of Encounter celebrates the richness and diversity of refugee, migrant and

host communities living in Jordan, while creating opportunities for meaningful interaction and mutual understanding," she said.

Mazzocchin also said that the participatory nature of the festival ensures that refugee and local communities are not only performers but also active contributors to the planning and organisation of the event, strengthening a sense of ownership, dignity and self-expression.

"It allows participants to shape how they represent their cultures and tell their stories, making the festival a truly shared space," she said.

The programme included traditional dance performances, live music concerts, a fashion show showcasing traditional clothing from participants' countries of origin, cultural exhibitions representing

different communities, a handicrafts bazaar featuring products made by refugee and local artisans, theatre performances and dedicated activities for children.

A key highlight of this year's edition was the fashion show, where participants presented traditional attire reflecting their cultural heritage, offering visitors an opportunity to engage with the stories, craftsmanship and identity embedded in the garments.

JRS said the festival also serves as a platform of appreciation to Jordan and its people for their long-standing hospitality and role in hosting refugee communities and fostering coexistence.

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) was established in November 1980 by Fr Pedro Arrupe SJ, then superior general of the

Society of Jesus, to respond to the plight of Vietnamese refugees who fled war-torn Vietnam.

The JRS's mission has been to advocate, serve, accompany and assist refugees and other displaced populations. Operating in Amman since 2008, JRS supports vulnerable populations including asylum seekers, refugees and members of the host communities.

The organisation works in close coordination with a broad network of local and international partners engaged in refugee support and cultural initiatives, including UNHCR, the American Friends Service Committee, UNESCO, Terra Santa, Liwan, Al Balad Dabkeh School, Al Funun Palestinian Dance Troupe, Majdal Popular Dance Troupe, the Collateral Repair Project, Yaroub and others.

## NCFA approves 2026 plan, boosts efforts to enhance family protection frameworks

AMMAN (JT) — The National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) on Saturday approved its 2026 work plan and project budget, outlining a range of initiatives aimed at strengthening family protection systems and advancing national social policy frameworks.

The decisions were taken during a Board of Trustees meeting chaired by Deputy Chairman Rajai Muasher, which reviewed the council's key achievements, ongoing projects, and future priorities, according to an NCFA statement.

Board members underscored the council's role in developing national policies related to families, older persons, and early childhood, as well as

strengthening the national framework for protection from violence. They also emphasised the importance of further advancing social policies, noting the council's analytical reports in highlighting key social challenges and supporting efforts to improve the quality of life for Jordanian families.

NCFA Secretary-General Mohammad Miqdadi reviewed the council's main achievements and plans, including the expansion of the "Aman" system to automate procedures for handling violence cases across the Kingdom.

He also highlighted the development of procedural and training manuals for partner institutions, as well

as the upcoming launch of the 2026-2030 multi-sectoral national action plan for the prevention of and response to child protection cases, domestic violence and violence against women and girls.

Miqdadi also pointed to ongoing work on a national childcare policy, a study on elder abuse, the preparation of a child rights indicators report and efforts to strengthen national media engagement on family-related issues.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Board reaffirmed the importance of continued institutional development and regular updates to national legislation to enhance services delivered in partnership with relevant stakeholders.

## Cassation Court upholds 4-year sentence for drug dealer

By Rana Hussein

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

The court declared the

defendant guilty of possessing a stash of illegal narcotics at his home in Hashmi Shamali on March 8.

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 JD4,000 and the prison term to four years in prison to give the defendant a second chance at life.

Court documents said the Anti-Narcotics Department (AND) learnt the defendant owned illegal narcotics and placed him under surveillance.

On the day of the drug

bust, the court maintained, "the defendant saw the law enforcement officers approaching his home, so he threw a bag from his balcony".

"The officers stormed his house and arrested him without any major incident," the court maintained.

Upon searching his

home, the court maintained, AND agents found a small stash of Crystal meth.

"Officers also seized the bag that the defendant threw from the balcony of his house and found Hashish and Captagon pills," according to court papers.

Crystal meth is the common name for crys-

tal methamphetamine, a strong and highly addictive drug that affects the central nervous system, according to WebMD.

The defendant contested the SSC's ruling through his lawyer, who argued that the court "did not provide solid evidence to implicate his client".

Meanwhile, the SSC

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

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

"It was clear to the court that the defend-

ant confessed willingly to possessing the illegal drugs with the intent to sell them in the local market," the higher court said.

The Court of Cassation judges were Yassin Abdullah, Nayef Samarat, Hammad Ghazawi, Mohammad Khashshneh and Qassem Dughmi.



A man walks in a cracked street following a twin earthquake, in Los Corales, La Guaira state, about 38km northwest of Caracas, on Thursday

## Venezuela quakes kill almost 1,500, with millions more in need

LA GUAIRA, Venezuela (AFP) — The death toll in Venezuela's twin earthquake disaster reached 1,430 Saturday, and millions more were feared to lack sanitation and other basic needs as the first US aid flights trickled into Caracas.

Facing public outrage at the response by local officials, US-backed interim Venezuelan leader Delcy Rodriguez said the country was "not alone".

The United States said one runway at Simon Bolivar International Airport was now functioning and that C-17 US military planes were landing there, while a naval ship had arrived off the coast.

The UN humanitarian agency OCHA said search-and-rescue teams from at least 17 countries were being mobilised to help find survivors.

But the search for survivors saw desperate attempts by local residents to claw away rubble from apartment buildings that collapsed in Wednesday's double-quakes. Experts say the first 72 hours after natural disasters are the key, narrow window for finding the living.

There was joy in the hardest-hit coastal area of La Guaira, north of Caracas, when locals pulled an infant alive out of the wreckage on Friday, some 32 hours after the magnitude 7.2 and 7.5 tremors.

In one social media video, a man wailed in tears as he held the baby in his arms.

The United Nations' migration agency said it had examined available population and damage data, and had determined that "up to 6.76 million people could be affected",

and would "require emergency shelter, safe water, sanitation and hygiene services, healthcare, protection support and essential relief items".

National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez reported on Saturday 1,430 dead and 3,238 people injured, while the UN estimated \$6.7 billion in physical damage — equivalent to 6 per cent of Venezuela's GDP.

UN aid chief Tom Fletcher on Friday told AFP the death toll could continue to soar, adding that more than 50,000 people were missing.

Venezuelans — already battered by years of a failing economy and the turbulence of the US intervention to topple leader Nicolas Maduro in January — were furious at the government.

Jessica Mendoza was forced to transport her own daughter to a morgue in Caracas after 25-year-old Yesimar Rodriguez and her husband Jhomel Anaya, 26, did not survive the tumbling debris of their home in La Guaira on Wednesday.

"We were the ones who pulled them out ourselves. No help ever came," the bereaved mother, 43, told AFP, adding that the couple would be cremated without a wake due to the rapidly advancing decomposition of their bodies.

Some Caracas residents jeered Rodriguez as she visited a destroyed neighbourhood on Friday.

"The government isn't doing anything for the people," residents yelled from behind cordons next to a pulverised building.

The government restricted access to La Guaira state on Friday, also announcing a military deployment to the

disaster zone.

Rodriguez said she had spoken with US President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who "reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the response efforts".

The US said earlier it was sending a disaster response team of more than 250 personnel, including three special search-and-rescue units with dogs trained to locate people trapped beneath the rubble.

Venezuela's worst earthquake in more than a century has come after the oil-rich country endured more than a decade of economic collapse.

The crisis has hollowed out hospitals and public services, driving millions to leave the country.

And the country is still in a fragile political transition six months after the US ouster of Maduro.

"Even before the earthquakes, millions of people across Venezuela were facing food insecurity, collapsing health services, protection risks and limited access to basic services," the UN and other aid agencies said in a statement Friday.

Earthquakes of similar magnitude claimed more than 200,000 lives in Haiti in January 2010 and 73,000 lives in Kashmir in October 2005.

Those killed in Venezuela included 28 Portuguese nationals, five Spaniards, two Brazilians, seven Chinese nationals, one Chilean and one Italian-Venezuelan.

Venezuela's northern coast sits on a boundary between the Caribbean and South American tectonic plates, but had not experienced a major quake since 1997.

# What challenges lie ahead for the US-Israel-Lebanon agreement?

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AFP) — Lebanon and Israel, under US sponsorship, signed an agreement on Friday hoping to end hostilities between them, but experts say it does not guarantee Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and its implementation depends on Hezbollah and its backer Iran.

Lebanon took the historic step of negotiating directly with Israel despite them having no diplomatic relations, as a reaction to Tehran-backed Hezbollah drawing the country into the Middle East war on March 2.

But with Israel saying it will not leave occupied Lebanese territory unless the militant group is disarmed, what traps and challenges lie ahead for the agreement?

### Will Israel withdraw?

Although the framework agreement officially mentions Israeli "redeployment" from Lebanon, where its troops occupy swathes of the south, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu immediately set the tone on Friday, saying his soldiers will remain in the self-declared "security zone" stretching 10 kilometres from the border, "as long as Hezbollah has not disarmed".

Imad Salamey, head of the Political and International Studies Department at the Lebanese American University, told AFP that one of the agreement's shortcomings was that it made "no guarantee that Israel will fully withdraw from occupied areas or significantly restrict its military operations in southern Lebanon".

"Without firm Israeli commitments, many residents of the south may continue to face



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

insecurity, delayed reconstruction."

Netanyahu said on Friday that displaced Lebanese civilians will not be allowed to return home to occupied areas.

The agreement merely mentions "pilot zones", where the Lebanese military will take control after an Israeli "redeployment". An initial two zones have been agreed to by the two sides, and future pilot zones are supposed to be determined by mutual consent.

However, the Lebanese army would only assume full security responsibility for these zones upon external "confirmation" that non-state armed groups, most notably Hezbollah, are disarmed there.

### Where does Hezbollah stand?

From the moment Lebanese authorities announced direct talks with Israel in April,

Hezbollah branded the move a "sin".

The group's leader Naim Qassem on Saturday called the framework agreement a "grave blunder" that is "legitimising" Israeli occupation, urging the government to withdraw from it.

Hezbollah lawmaker Hassan Fadlallah said that the government will not be able to implement it "unless they go, with American support, to civil war" inside Lebanon.

Supporters of the group took to the streets of Beirut on Friday night to protest the framework.

Lebanese Parliament Speaker and Hezbollah ally Nabih Berri warned on Saturday against internal "strife".

In the capital's Hamra street, Ahmad Shamas, a 48-year-old taxi driver, told AFP the agreement was "an agreement of humiliation and shame".

"Never in the history of the Lebanese Repub-

lic has anyone made an agreement like this one."

Husamam-Beirut, 43, was "neutral".

"What is the other solution? Is there any solution? Give us a solution we can follow."

Salamey said that while Hezbollah's rejection of the agreement was expected, "the real question is whether opposition remains political or evolves into direct confrontation with the Lebanese army, particularly if the state receives expanded military and financial support from the United States and its partners".

In the agreement, Lebanon requested international and Arab support to achieve "the complete and verified disarmament of all non-state armed groups", hinting at Hezbollah.

### What about Iran?

According to experts, the implementation of the agreement will

depend in large part on Hezbollah's backer, Iran.

Iran has used Lebanon as a key bargaining chip in its negotiations with the US, sometimes closing the Strait of Hormuz and threatening to walk away from talks over continued Israeli attacks on the country.

Heiko Wimmen, researcher at the International Crisis Group told AFP that while the government may be able to "take control of the process" after the latest agreement, "Iranian influences in Lebanon is still alive and kicking".

According to Salamey, the implementation "will depend primarily on Iran's strategic calculations".

"Tehran must decide whether the benefits of continued engagement with Washington and sanctions relief outweigh the costs of preserving its military leverage in Lebanon, which has become increasingly expensive."

## Magnitude 6.1 quake hits Afghanistan — AFP, USGS

KABUL (AFP) — A 6.1-magnitude earthquake hit Afghanistan on Saturday, the United States Geological Survey said, with AFP journalists in the capital Kabul and elsewhere reporting strong shaking.

The quake was widely felt by AFP journalists across multiple Afghan provinces, as well as in the Pakistani capital Islamabad.

The USGS recorded the epicentre in north-

eastern Afghanistan at a depth of 208.3 kilometres.

Buildings rattled in Kabul, with one AFP journalist reporting a large crack stretching across an internal wall.

Journalists also felt the quake in Balkh and Badakhshan provinces, which border multiple countries including Tajikistan and Pakistan.

To the east, it was felt in provinces including Nangarhar and Khost.

Details on casualties and damage were not immediately available.

Earthquakes are common in Afghanistan, particularly along the Hindu Kush mountain range, near where the Eurasian and Indian tectonic plates meet.

In April, a 5.8-magnitude quake in Badakhshan province killed 12 people and shook many parts of the country.

In August 2025, a

shallow 6.0-magnitude quake in the country's east wiped out mountainside villages and killed more than 2,200 people.

Weeks later, a 6.3-magnitude quake in northern Afghanistan killed at least 27 people.

Large tremors in western Herat, near the Iranian border, in 2023 and in eastern Nangarhar province in 2022 killed hundreds and destroyed thousands of

homes.

Many homes in the predominantly rural country — devastated by decades of war — are shoddily built.

Poor communication networks and infrastructure in mountainous Afghanistan have hampered disaster responses in the past, preventing authorities for hours or even days from reaching far-flung villages to assess the extent of the damage.

## Records tumble as European heatwave moves east

BERLIN (AFP) — Tens of millions face a weekend of extreme temperatures in Europe as a deadly heat wave moves eastwards, with German forecasters warning that more records could be broken and eastern countries issuing a slew of red alerts for the coming days.

AFP analysis suggested almost 200 million would face temperatures of more than 35°C on Saturday as an unprecedented hot spell that has already seen records tumble in Britain, France and Switzerland drags on.

Scores of people have died either through heat-related illness or drowning accidents and emergency services in several countries have said their facilities are saturated.



A man rides his bicycle through a fountain outside the banking district in central Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, on Friday with air temperature reaching 39°C

Street parties and music festivals were cancelled in France, Germany and The Netherlands — though Pride Marches were set to go ahead in Budapest and Munich despite the ex-

treme heat warnings. And both Switzerland and France had switched off nuclear reactors as the water used for cooling was in danger of overheating nearby rivers.

The German Weather Service issued a red alert for most of the country on Saturday. "It can't be ruled out that temperatures could approach 42°C," the service said, which

would mean another all-time heat record just a day after the previous one.

Scientists have shown that recurring heat waves are a clear marker of global warming driven by humans burning fossil fuels — and are set to become more frequent, longer and more intense.

Experts said a "heat dome" of trapped air from North Africa was causing the intense weather, and although the phenomenon was not unprecedented, the temperatures were.

### 'Everything is hot'

Romania was the latest country to issue a red alert, putting out a warning that almost the entire country would face extreme heat from Monday to

Wednesday.

Slovakia had issued a similar warning and confirmed that Friday night had been the warmest on record with temperatures not dropping below 26.3°C.

Denis Ovdienko, a courier, told AFP in Bratislava on Friday he was struggling to keep cool and had to rely on public fountains.

"I feel like everything is warm. The road is warm, my phone is warm, my head is warm, everything is hot," said the 26-year-old.

"After four o'clock, the fatigue starts to kick in."

### 'Exceptional, extreme'

At least 193 million people in Europe were expected to experience temperatures above 35°C on Saturday, according to AFP calculations based on forecasts, with Germany the hardest hit.

Although a slew of events were cancelled, many in Germany were soldiering on.

The Berlin Philharmonic said it would continue with its traditional end-of-season outdoor concert in Berlin despite temperatures of up to 41°C, but the dress code would be relaxed.

"The gentlemen will perform without jackets, but with a black shirt on top," a spokeswoman for the orchestra said.

They would be allowed to roll up their

sleeves, and the ladies' tops only need to cover the elbow and do not necessarily have to be long-sleeved.

The authorities in Paris, however, forced the abandonment of several events, including the city's annual Pride March.

Deputy mayor in charge of health, Antoine Alibert, said hospitals in the French capital were saturated — echoing comments by several other city leaders.

He told local media stretchers were "piling up in the corridors", emergency calls had skyrocketed and hospital visits were on the rise.

"We are in the midst of a health crisis. This is an exceptional and extreme heat wave event," he said.

# S.Africa processes over 15,000 Malawians for repatriation ahead of protests

DURBAN, South Africa (AFP) — Thousands of Malawians were awaiting clearance in makeshift encampments in South Africa on Friday as tension mounted before an unofficial June 30 ultimatum for undocumented migrants to leave the country.

Citizen-led groups have rallied behind the unauthorised Tuesday deadline after weeks of protests, attacks on businesses and threats against illegal migrants in which two Mozambican nationals and a Malawian have been killed.

Malawians were gathered in centres in grim conditions in the south-eastern cities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg awaiting buses for 2,000 kilometre journey to their country, AFP reporters said.

Conditions at these makeshift camps had become "untenable", Justice Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi said.

"To date, a total of 15,162 Malawian nationals have been processed for deportation and repatriation, and more are still undergoing the verifica-



Hundreds of Zimbabwean migrants gather with their belongings outside the Zimbabwean Consulate in Cape Town, on Saturday

tion process," she told reporters.

A home affairs official said more than 90 per cent of the Malawians who had been processed were undocumented or had expired passports.

By late Friday, more than 2,000 people were

queuing outside a camp in Durban to be processed, an AFP reporter said.

There were thousands more inside but the numbers were difficult to verify as journalists were refused access.

"I don't know what

life will be like back home because there are no jobs," said 22-year-old Mike Rabson, a construction worker. He had to leave behind his pregnant girlfriend.

About 50 volunteers worked with a catering company distribut-

ing hot meals, bottled water, juices and even toys for children.

Six kilometres away, another group of immi-

grants — mainly from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Rwanda — were stranded outside a government office where

they had been camped for weeks.

## 'We feel abandoned'

"We feel abandoned," said 38-year-old Burundian Rwakayero Omari, who said he had been chased from work and told by his landlord to leave his home.

In Pietermaritzburg, around 1,500 Malawians, mostly men, gathered among filth and litter behind a fence with a few bags and suitcases.

"The situation now is not right, it's too bad," one man said.

"You can see there's a lot of people, people are stuck... Some of us are not getting food," the 37-year-old said. "The water we drink is not clean but... we have no choice."

A Malawian national died in the city after being attacked following a march a week ago. Police said they were investigating a case of murder.

Late last month, two Mozambicans were killed "during activities associated with anti-foreigner demonstrations" in the southern town of Mossel

Bay, police said.

The growing security fears have led several countries including Malawi, Ghana, Nigeria, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to organise voluntary repatriations that have seen thousands of people leave.

'You can see there's a lot of people, people are stuck... Some of us are not getting food'

South African authorities have vowed to crush any attempts to de-stabilise the nation during planned anti-migrant marches on Tuesday to coincide with the deadline set by fringe anti-migrant groups.

They have also warned mobs that have been going from house

to house to tell migrants to leave, or demanding to check their documentation.

The police have announced tightened security while government officials have stepped up efforts to ensure calm, including meeting the influential Zulu Royal House.

South Africa's Border Management Authority has said it processed 8,200 foreign nationals — mostly Malawians but also Zimbabweans — for repatriation between June 12 and 24 at the border post with Zimbabwe.

Among Africa's largest and most industrialised economies, South Africa has long been a prime destination for people seeking work even though its own unemployment rate hovers around 32 per cent.

Competition for scarce work has fuelled resentment, and some South Africans blame migrants for poverty and crime.

Past flare-ups of violence targeting undocumented foreign nationals have been deadly, with 62 people killed in riots in 2008.

## Crown Prince marks 32nd birthday

Continued from page 1

Following His Royal Highness' efforts, Jordan hosted the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security in May 2015, leading to the Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security.

In September 2017, the Crown Prince, deputising for His Majesty, delivered Jordan's address at the 72nd Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

In September 2020,

His Royal Highness delivered a keynote address at the third Global Manufacturing and Industrialisation Summit, which aims to reduce poverty and achieve comprehensive globalisation and environmental sustainability, through industrial development.

Recently, in May, His Royal Highness patronised the "Tawasol" forum, attending sessions on artificial intelligence, entrepreneurship and future employment opportu-

nities, which hosted high-level experts and a large gathering of young Jordanians focusing on creating a positive social impact.

The Crown Prince also oversees the "Fellows in Arms" programme, established under Royal directives to support military retirees and veterans.

His Royal Highness has given young Jordanians his utmost attention, with the Crown Prince Foundation, launched in 2015, aiming to equip

young men and women across all governorates with high-competency skills, benefitting over 2.5 million youth by 2022.

As part of his interest in tourism, technical education and vocational training sectors, the Crown Prince Foundation established Al Hussein Technical University in 2016, which received its first cohort in 2017.

His Royal Highness has received several medals, including the Order of Independence

(First Class), the Order of King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein for Excellence (First Class), the First State Centennial Medal, the Royal Order of the Polar Star from Sweden, the Royal Norwegian Order of Saint Olav (First Class), the Order of King Hamad (Collar of the Excellent Class) from Bahrain, and the Great Arab Revolt Centennial Badge.

The Crown Prince's interests include football, diving, adventure, shooting and cycling.



Vehicles move on a road in Bahrain capital, Manama on March 11

## Jordan condemns Iranian drone attacks on Bahrain, reaffirms full support for Manama

Continued from page 1

Bahrain said it was targeted by several Iranian drones early on Saturday and accused Tehran of "sabotaging peace efforts".

Bahrain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has condemned the Iranian drone attack targeting the Gulf kingdom's territory on Saturday as a "flagrant violation of the Kingdom's sovereignty, a blatant threat to the security of citizens and residents, and a serious breach of international norms and conventions prohibiting attacks on civilian objects and acts of terror against civilians".

Bahrain News Agency published a statement by the foreign ministry, stressing

that Iran's "continued attacks, at a time when regional and international efforts are focused on de-escalation, place sole responsibility on Tehran for undermining peace efforts".

The ministry said that the attacks reflect a "continued policy of destabilising security, exporting chaos and eroding regional stability".

## Trump blasts 'godless' Democrats in incendiary speech to evangelicals

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US President Donald Trump accused the Democratic left of being "hardcore, godless communists" in a divisive, politicised speech on Friday full of falsehoods about his perceived foes as he addressed evangelicals at a right-wing Christian conference.

Speaking in Washington after the success of three progressive candidates in New York's Democratic primary elections this week, Trump called left-wing ideology an "uncontrollable form of cancer" that will ensure America is "taken down".

"These are not social democrats. These are hardcore, godless communists," Trump said. "This is the most serious threat to our country since its existence."

At his 10th appearance at Road to Majority, an annual gathering of some 3,000 evangelicals from the Faith and Freedom Coalition in Washington, Trump attacked the "evil" and "incompetent" administration of his predecessor Joe Biden.

He made the bizarre and false claim that Biden — a devout, churchgoing Catholic — had jailed Christians for praying and again reprised his baseless claims that his defeat to the veteran Democrat in 2020 was the result of a "rigged" election.

Despite a career mired in legal and ethical scandals — from alleged affairs to felony business fraud convictions and accusations that he abused his office in a bid to subvert the 2020 election — the twice-divorced Trump

remains popular with the evangelical right.

To many conservative Christians, the 80-year-old Republican leader is less a model of private virtue than a vehicle for political power.

Trump boasted of making it "official policy" that there are only two genders, touted the creation of a White House faith office and took credit for "saving Christians throughout the world" through military action in Nigeria and elsewhere.

He reprised a familiar false claim from his rallies about US elections being beset by fraud, pushed for the passage of a bill to introduce onerous new voting restrictions and railed against Republicans opposing the measure — calling out Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski by name.

## US and Iran trade strikes putting new strain on Mideast ceasefire

Continued from page 1

US President Donald Trump had earlier denounced what he described as an Iranian drone strike on the vessel, saying: "Obviously, this is a foolish violation of our ceasefire agreement."

Vice President JD Vance issued a direct warning, posting on X that "violence will be met with violence" if Iran carries out any further attacks.

Minutes later, on Saturday morning Iran time, state television reported that the Revolutionary Guard said they targeted US sites in the

Gulf region in retaliation for the American strikes.

"If the aggression is repeated, our response will be broader than this," the Guard said, according to a post by state TV on Telegram.

The exchanges raised fresh questions about efforts to keep the Strait of Hormuz open while Washington and Tehran negotiate a final settlement to a war that began February 28 with US and Israeli strikes on Iran.

Iran has warned vessels not to enter or leave the Gulf through the strait without permission, but ships have

continued to move, some using a route not authorised by Tehran.

Around half of the 42 vessels that made the passage Thursday used a non-approved southern route along Oman's coast, according to tracking platform Kpler.

The UN maritime agency said an evacuation operation had freed 115 vessels and 2,500 seafarers trapped by the dispute before the attack forced its suspension.

Oil prices nevertheless fell sharply, reflecting hopes that traffic through Hormuz — a strategic waterway which normally sees

around a fifth of the world's oil and gas exports — would keep recovering despite the latest flare-up.

## Nuclear safeguards

Meanwhile the UN nuclear watchdog's chief warned that any final US-Iran settlement would need strong safeguards to ensure Tehran does not build a nuclear weapon.

Iran's nuclear programme remains a central sticking point, with Tehran and Washington giving conflicting accounts of whether inspectors will regain access to the Islamic re-

public's facilities.

"The government of Iran has declared quite clearly that this is not their intention," International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi said of developing nuclear weapons.

"But of course intentions are not enough. We have to have a very strong verification system in place... as soon as is practicable".

The interim agreement says Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium — estimated pre-war at 440 kilograms, enriched to 60 per cent — should be "downblended" under IAEA supervision.

## Jordan welcomes Lebanon-Israel framework agreement, calls for full Israeli withdrawal

Continued from page 1

The deal "begins to put in place a framework for lasting peace and security", US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said at the signing ceremony, while noting, "It's the beginning of the beginning. There's a lot of work ahead."

Lebanon's ambassador to Washington, Nada Hamadeh Moawad, said that the accord "is a first step on the road to restoring Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity, securing a permanent and final cessation of hostilities [and] enabling our people to go back to their land",

according to AFP.

Hizbollah leader Naim Qassem condemned the US-Israel-Lebanon framework agreement on Saturday, saying it is a major mistake by the government and that his group deems it null and void.

The agreement, which includes a pilot effort

in which Lebanese soldiers take control of two areas currently occupied by Israel, as well as a process aimed at disarming Hizbollah, was signed in Washington on Friday after five rounds of talks.

"The framework agreement in Washington is humiliating, shameful and a sur-

render of sovereignty. This agreement is null and void, and the provisions of the Iranian-American Memorandum of Understanding must be implemented," Qassem said in a statement, referring to the deal to end the broader Middle East war, which includes a ceasefire in Lebanon.

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## The new economics of food security

By Raad Mahmoud Al Tal

The latest World Bank data reveal that the world is no longer facing a crisis of food production as much as it is confronting a growing crisis of access to food. While global agricultural production remains relatively stable, rising prices, ongoing conflicts, climate change, and weakening household incomes have transformed food from an accessible commodity into one that is increasingly out of reach for millions of families around the world.

According to the World Bank's latest Food and Nutrition Security Update, global agricultural commodity prices have increased by 3 per cent since the previous update, while cereal prices have risen by 4 per cent, signaling the return of inflationary pressures in global food markets after a period of relative stability. This increase has not been driven by a collapse in global food production, but rather by disruptions in supply chains, higher transportation, energy and fertiliser costs, as well as the persistence of geopolitical conflicts. Food price inflation also remains elevated across many low- and middle-income countries, placing additional pressure on household purchasing power. The evidence suggests that food affordability has become the defining challenge of global food security. Import-dependent countries are facing larger food import bills, while low-income households are experiencing a continuous decline in their ability to purchase sufficient and nutritious food.

Africa remains the world's most vulnerable region. In Eastern and Southern Africa, approximately 67 million people require food assistance. Sudan faces the most critical situation, with 14 areas at risk of famine. Meanwhile, an estimated 52.9 million people in West and Central Africa are expected to experience acute food insecurity during the June-August 2026 lean season, highlighting the continued expansion rather than the easing of the crisis.

The report also confirms that armed conflicts have become the primary driver of global food insecurity. Ongoing conflicts in Sudan, Gaza, and other parts of the Middle East have disrupted agricultural production, increased transportation costs, interrupted trade flows and displaced millions of people. Together, these factors have contributed to higher food prices and reduced local food availability. Alongside conflict, extreme weather events including droughts, floods, and rising temperatures continue to undermine agricultural production, particularly in low-income countries that rely heavily on traditional farming systems.

One of the report's most striking findings is that food price pressures are no longer confined to low-income countries. Food inflation remains elevated across many middle-income economies as well, indicating that food inflation has become a truly global phenomenon. As food prices continue to rise, the quality of household diets deteriorates, and malnutrition becomes more widespread, even in countries that do not suffer from physical shortages of food supplies.

The report further emphasizes that food security has become increasingly linked to broader macroeconomic policies. Exchange rate stability, low inflation, efficient trade systems and sustained investment in agriculture have become essential pillars of food security. Rising fertilizer and energy prices directly increase agricultural production costs, which are ultimately passed on to consumers through higher food prices.

The importance of agricultural investment becomes even more evident when considering future challenges. Continued population growth, rising global food demand and the accelerating impacts of climate change mean that countries investing in agricultural technology, water management, and resilient supply chains will be better positioned to mitigate price volatility and strengthen their food security.

These findings send a clear message to policymakers: Addressing the global food crisis requires far more than increasing agricultural production. It demands strengthening household purchasing power, expanding social protection systems, maintaining open and efficient international trade, investing in sustainable agriculture, and improving the efficiency of food supply chains.

The World Bank's latest figures make it clear that the world has entered a new phase of food security challenges. The central question is no longer whether enough food is produced globally, but rather who can afford to buy it. Stable global production alone is no longer sufficient if food prices continue to rise, conflicts persist, and household incomes continue to erode. The future of global food security will therefore depend less on producing more food and more on implementing economic policies that ensure people can afford access to it.

## The noble Hijra: Reviving Jerusalem in our conscience

With the dawn of a new Hijri year, Muslims do not merely commemorate a historical event of the past. Rather, they draw inspiration from the philosophy of the Hijra as a foundation for deepening awareness and strengthening the values of steadfastness, dignity, justice, the championing of truth, solidarity, and responsibility. These meanings are embodied today in our consciousness as we turn our gaze towards the blessed Al Aqsa Mosque, the first qibla, which has remained firmly embedded in the Ummah's consciousness, in obedience to the words of the Prophet, peace be upon him: "No journey should be undertaken except to three mosques: the Sacred Mosque, my mosque here and Al Aqsa Mosque."

This prophetic connection among the three mosques is not merely a geographical arrangement; it is a unity of destiny that Muslims have long affirmed, making Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem a single spiritual space where distances dissolve and worship merges with responsibility. Today, as millions of hearts turn towards Mecca during the season of Hajj, we recognize that these multitudes are not merely numbers in a census but rather an immense civilisational force and a single living body. They remind us that the Ummah possesses tremendous latent potential. When transformed into conscious presence and collective action, this power ensures that Al Aqsa — the first of the two qiblas and the third holiest sanctuary in Islam — remains present in our movement just as it is firmly rooted in our hearts.

It is also worth remembering that Islamic civilisation was sustained through caravans of knowledge, trade, and pilgrimage. The caravan was never merely a means of transportation; it was a civilisational institution that connected the farthest reaches of the Islamic East with the depths of Africa, carrying people, ideas, knowledge, and expertise. Along its routes emerged rest houses, lodges, zawiyas, libraries, hospitality facilities and relief stations that served travellers and helped them reach their destinations.

As time evolved, the means changed, and caravan routes gave way to modern forms of transportation that compressed distances. Yet, the mission remained unchanged: Connecting humanity to the sacred and binding communities to one another.

## Who is raising the digital generation

By Hamza Alakalik

Protecting children and teenagers from the risks of social media has become far beyond a family concern. It is now a matter of public policy, digital governance and national resilience. Social media platforms are no longer simple communication tools. They are powerful digital ecosystems that shape young people's behaviour, influence their emotions, and collect vast amounts of personal data. This reality demands comprehensive regulatory policies that balance legal accountability, technological innovation and privacy protection while safeguarding children's healthy development in an increasingly connected world.

Australia's recent experience provides an important lesson for policymakers worldwide. In 2026, the Australian eSafety Commissioner published a compliance report three months after introducing legislation restricting social media access for users under sixteen. The findings challenged many assumptions. Nearly 70 per cent of children who previously held accounts on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat continued accessing those platforms despite the legal restrictions. Many bypassed the rules by using VPNs, entering false birth dates, relying on existing accounts, or using their parents' identities. At the same time, several platforms continued applying weak age verification processes that failed to identify underage users effectively.



HRH Prince El Hassan Bin Talal

by all who can make their way there." Historically, the notion of being able to undertake the journey was closely linked to perseverance and endurance in overcoming the hardships of travel. Today, although many of those physical difficulties have diminished, the value of striving remains unchanged. While technology has eased access to many destinations, Jerusalem reminds us that some forms of hardship no longer lie in the journey itself but in the obstacles and restrictions encountered along the way, and in the determination to reach and remain present despite the barriers that visitors and Jerusalemites alike continue to face.

As we welcome a new Hijri year, we ask God to make it a year of goodness and blessing, to make us among those who serve the interests of the Ummah and its human mission, and to guide us toward what is best for humanity and its dignity

Jerusalem is not merely a geographical location. It is also a spiritual extension of the Night Journey and Ascension and a true test of the Ummah's conscience. It faces persistent attempts to distort its identity and impose a singular narrative upon its history, despite having remained throughout the centuries a human space where religious and civilisational memo-

ries converged into a shared tapestry. In its alleyways, the calls to prayer of mosques blend with the bells of churches, preserving its character as a symbol of coexistence and shared human heritage.

For this reason, the defence of Jerusalem is not limited to protecting stone. It encompasses defending the human right to life, dignity, and belonging to one's land, as well as the right of future generations to inherit a city alive with its people, heritage, and civilisational diversity. There is no Jerusalem without Jerusalemites, both Muslim and Christian. Supporting Jerusalem is not confined to preserving sacred sites or restoring historical landmarks; it also extends to supporting the schools, hospitals, libraries and community institutions that sustain life in the city and strengthen its ability to endure, allowing body, spirit and mind to flourish together.

Building bridges of connection with Jerusalem is among the most meaningful expressions of solidarity with its people. It breaks the barrier of estrangement and provides a practical embodiment of an enduring Islamic principle: strengthening bonds of fellowship and standing with the vulnerable. Among the meanings conveyed by the Almighty's words, "You are the best nation brought forth for mankind: you enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in God," is the imperative to translate values into action. The excellence of the Ummah is not measured solely by the size of its population but by its ability to transform that number into ethical action and into a moral and human presence that inspires hope and solidarity.

For this reason, Islam did not leave solidarity as a mere abstract value; it established practical mechanisms and enduring institutions to embody it. Zakat is a social system that directs a portion of wealth towards those in need, while the waqf has historically represented a pioneering model for institutionalising generosity and supporting education, social welfare, the preservation of sacred sites, and the continuity of public good.

Among the honours of belonging to a house entrusted with the custodianship of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem — as a trust and responsibility rather than a privilege — is the recognition that this responsibility has never been a substitute for the Ummah's own

responsibility but rather an expression of it. Jerusalem is the trust of the entire Ummah and its shared responsibility.

The Hijra carried within it the meanings of resolve, sacrifice, and rising to meet one's duty. The caravans of Hajj carried the meanings of unity, solidarity, and connection to the sacred. Jerusalem deserves today to reclaim its place in this unbroken procession. Sacred places transcend politics and outlast its shifting tides, for they are bound to truth, dignity, and shared human memory. Just as truth ultimately prevails, Jerusalem remains a sacred trust for all who believe in the values of justice, dignity and fidelity, and a true test of our ability to transform our convictions into action worthy of its place in both the Ummah's consciousness and the broader human conscience.

'You are the best nation brought forth for mankind: You enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in God'

As we welcome a new Hijri year, we ask God to make it a year of goodness and blessing, to make us among those who serve the interests of the Ummah and its human mission, and to guide us toward what is best for humanity and its dignity.

We likewise ask the Almighty to protect Jerusalem and to bless its people, Muslim and Christian alike, who each day safeguard the identity and mission of this blessed city. Jerusalem is blessed not only by its sacred sites but also by its people and their steadfastness, and it will remain a sacred trust in our hearts and consciences, in every age and at every moment.

Technical implementation remains challenging. Students often bypass restrictions through fake profiles, shared devices, or previously created accounts. Automated age verification systems may incorrectly estimate users' ages, creating both false approvals and unnecessary exclusions.

Technology companies must therefore move beyond symbolic compliance towards genuine safety by design

Fairness is equally important because some individuals face greater difficulties proving their age due to documentation limitations or personal circumstances. Consequently, age verification should be transparent, proportionate, reviewable, privacy-preserving and non-discriminatory instead of relying solely on rigid technological controls.

Effective policy should never pursue the unrealistic goal of eliminating every violation. In-

stead, it should reduce unauthorised access, increase the cost of circumvention and strengthen digital awareness among families, schools, and communities. Australian evidence also revealed that nearly 80 per cent of children who created social media accounts received assistance during registration, often from their parents. This finding demonstrates that families are not merely observers but active participants whose engagement is essential to successful child protection.

Technology companies must therefore move beyond symbolic compliance towards genuine safety by design. They should conduct independent risk assessments, strengthen default privacy settings, establish efficient complaint mechanisms, support responsible research through privacy-preserving data sharing, and continuously evaluate the health impacts of their platforms. Protecting young users must become a core business responsibility rather than a regulatory obligation fulfilled only after enforcement begins.

Ultimately, protecting children in the digital space cannot be achieved through slogans or blanket bans. It requires an integrated framework built on graduated age verification, privacy by design, legal accountability for platforms, informed parental involvement and continuous national coordination. Most importantly, delaying digital harm today may preserve a child's confidence, emotional well-being and healthy development for years to come.

# BUSINESS

Sunday, June 28, 2026



The Department of Statistics has released the latest foreign trade data for the first third of 2026, showing notable shifts in Jordan's export and import performance compared with the same period in 2025

## Strong export growth to EU, Syria, Asia in first third of 2026 — DoS

AMMAN (JT) — The Department of Statistics (DoS) has released the latest foreign trade data for the first third of 2026, showing notable shifts in Jordan's export and import performance compared with the same period in 2025.

Jordanian exports to Syria rose by 37 per cent to JD100 million, while imports from Syria declined by 42 per cent to JD123 million, according to data reported by Al Mamlaka TV.

Exports to Palestine increased by 17 per cent to JD67 million, whereas imports from Palestine fell by 19 per cent to JD70 million.

Trade with the Greater Arab Free Trade Area recorded modest growth, with exports rising by 1.2 per cent to JD1.2 billion. Imports from the bloc increased by 8.2 per cent to JD1.8 billion.

Exports to the European Union surged by 49.3 per cent to JD218 million, while imports

declined by 16.5 per cent to JD898 million, helping to narrow the trade deficit.

Exports to non-Arab Asian countries rose by 30 per cent to JD714 million, while imports from these markets increased by 4.2 per cent to JD2.45 billion.

By contrast, exports to North American Free Trade Agreement countries fell by 14 per cent to JD625 million, while imports from the region dropped by 26 per cent to JD434 million.

## 23 Jordanian food firms to showcase products at 'Fancy Food Show 2026' in US

AMMAN (JT) — Twenty-three Jordanian food companies will take part from Sunday in the summer edition of the "Fancy Food Show 2026" in the United States, a three-day trade event aimed at expanding the reach of local products in global markets.

Chairman of the Jordan Exporters Association (JEA), Ahmad Khudari, said the association organised the Jordanian pavilion, noting that the US market represents a strategic destination for national exports, driven by strong consumer demand, high purchasing power, and the preferential terms offered under the Jordan-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

In a statement issued on Saturday, Khudari said Jordan produces high-quality food and industrial goods that are competitive on global markets.

Chairman stressed the importance of "sustained" efforts to maximise the benefits of the FTA, increase the presence of Jordanian

companies at international trade fairs, and build long-term partnerships with US importers and distribution networks, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Chairman stressed the importance of 'sustained' efforts to maximise the benefits of the FTA...

He added that boosting Jordanian exports to the US is a "key" pillar of the national economy, as it helps increase foreign currency inflows, improve the trade balance, attract investment, expand production capacity and create additional jobs for Jordanians.

Khudari noted that export performance in recent years demonstrates that investment

in international promotion and the development of global trade links yields tangible, long-term economic returns, in line with efforts to position Jordan as a "reliable" exporter of quality goods.

JEA Director General Halim Abu Rahmeh said the participation forms part of ongoing efforts to open new export opportunities for national companies in one of the world's largest consumer markets.

Marking Jordan's 17th participation in the exhibition, Abu Rahmeh said the event reflects the JEA's long-term strategy to promote national exports sustainably and strengthen trade relations with global distributors.

He added that Jordan's food industry has proven its competitiveness in international markets through adherence to high safety and quality standards, as well as product diversification, making the US a "promising" market for further expansion, Petra reported.

## Audit Bureau, IMA host AWj 2026 Conference on modernising public financial management

AMMAN (JT) — The Audit Bureau and the Institute of Management Accountants (IMA), Amman Chapter, on Saturday organised the "AWj 2026" conference.

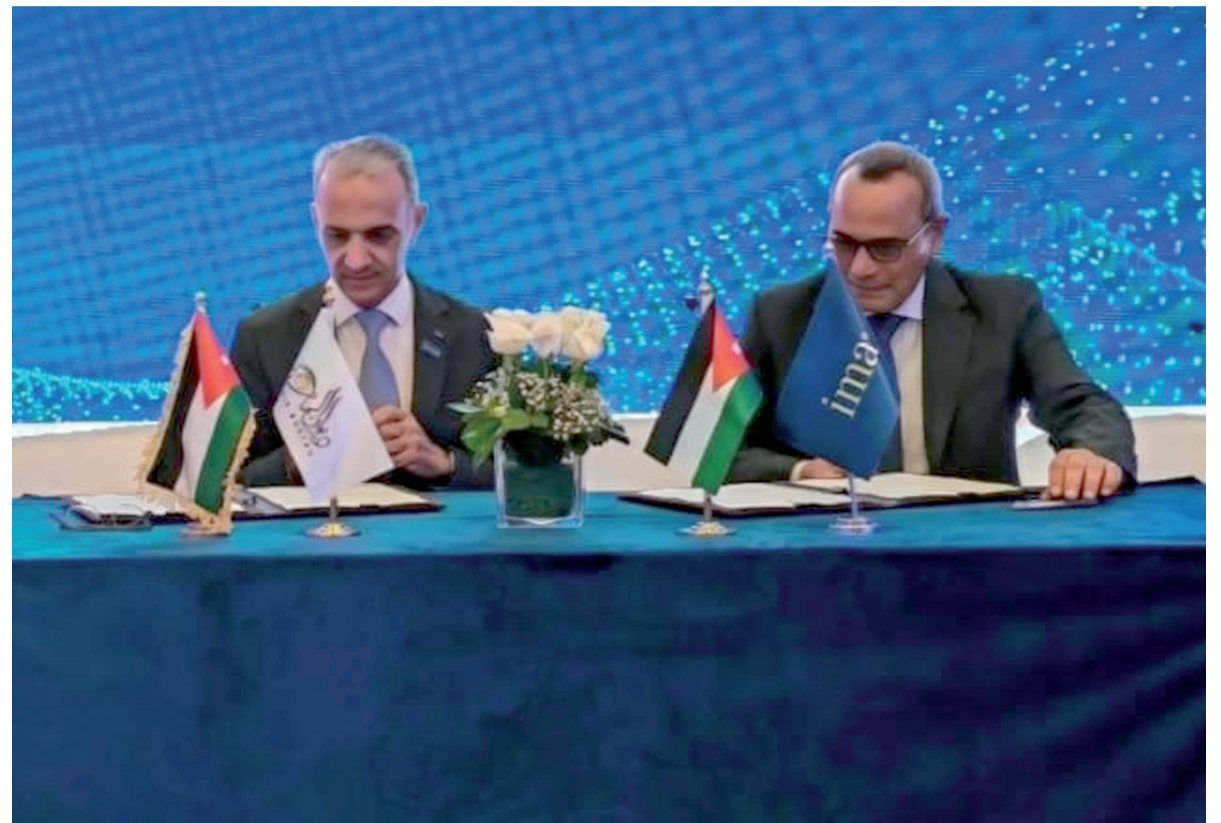
The event brought together a group of leaders, experts and professionals in the fields of finance, accounting and auditing.

In the opening remarks, Audit Bureau President Radhi Hamadeen said the world is witnessing a fundamental shift in public administration, moving institutions from a focus on procedures to one centred on results.

He added that this shift moves the emphasis from reading figures in isolation to analysing their meaning and impact, and from measuring expenditure to assessing efficiency and value for money, according to an Audit Bureau statement.

President noted that this transformation represents more than a technical development in financial management and auditing tools; rather, it redefines the state's role in managing resources, setting priorities, measuring institutional performance and strengthening public trust.

Referring to the conference slogan, "Awareness, Horizon, Competence", Hamadeen said it reflects a strategic framework in which awareness refers to understanding reality and analysing risks, horizon denotes long-term policy formula-



The Institute of Management Accountants, Amman Chapter, on Saturday organises the 'AWj 2026' conference in partnership with the Audit Bureau

tion and competence represents institutions' ability to translate plans into measurable outcomes that directly serve citizens.

He stressed that the IMA is a leading global professional body in management accounting, providing expertise and frameworks that connect financial data, planning, performance measurement and decision-making.

President added that the institute's professional certifications, including FMAA, CMA and CSCA, offer internationally recognised pathways for building expertise in cost analysis, strategic plan-

ning and performance evaluation.

Hamadeen announced that, in line with efforts to invest in human capital as a cornerstone of sustainable institutional transformation, the Audit Bureau has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the IMA.

The MoU aims to strengthen the capacities of national cadres in finance, accounting and auditing by developing skills in cost analysis and performance measurement, and by introducing modern management accounting tools into auditing practices.

It also seeks to im-

prove resource efficiency, support data-driven decision-making, implement joint training programmes, and facilitate the exchange of expertise and consultancy.

Senior director for Middle East and India operations at the IMA, Ahmad Mkhallati, said the partnership reflects the institute's commitment to advancing the accounting and finance profession in Jordan and working with national institutions to develop globally competitive professionals.

President of the IMA Amman chapter, Nadine Haddad, expressed appreciation

to the Audit Bureau and its president, Radhi Hamadeen, for sponsoring the conference, noting that his patronage underscores the bureau's continued support for advancing the profession.

She added that the conference serves as a platform for professionals, decision makers and experts to exchange knowledge and build networks. It also provides an opportunity to review best practices, discuss shared challenges and enhance cooperation between the public, private, professional and academic sectors, according to the Audit Bureau statement.

## EU worries jet fuel supply situation to worsen

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AFP) — Commercial supplies of jet fuel may worsen this summer despite the improving situation in the Strait of Hormuz, EU Energy Commissioner Dan Jorgensen said on Friday.

Since June 15, traffic has been steadily increasing through the strait, which normally sees around a fifth of the world's oil and gas exports.

It has also increased since Iran and the US signed a preliminary deal last week to end the conflict, with the UN's International Maritime Organisation launching a plan to help ships and their sailors stranded by the conflict exit the Gulf.

Jorgensen said that



A technician prepares to refuel a Delta Airlines aircraft at the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport on April 10 in Austin, Texas

even with the pickup in maritime traffic through the strait it would take

time for energy markets to recover.

"It will still take some

months to get back to normal for oil and some years to get back to nor-

mal on gas because of the destruction of infrastructure in the region," he said.

The halt in crude and oil products exports from the Gulf quickly caused shortages of jet fuel in Asia and there have been concerns about supplies in Europe during the peak summer travel season.

Jorgensen said that in "the short term, there will most likely be a more serious situation with regard to the commercial stocks when we reach the end of the summer".

He said EU nations may need to release jet fuel supplies to avert shortages and that officials would monitor the situation.

## Iran's stats agency says year-on-year inflation hits 88.6%

TEHRAN (AFP) — Inflation in Iran rose sharply in June, driven by the Middle East war, reaching a peak of 88.6 per cent year-on-year, according to official figures released on Saturday.

According to the Statistical Centre of Iran, during the Persian month of Khordad (May 22-June 21), food prices

more than doubled compared with a year earlier, in a country already long plagued by hyperinflation due to sanctions.

Bread and grain prices rose by 138.8 per cent, milk, cheese and eggs by 151.9 per cent, while the prices of red meat and poultry skyrocketed by 178.2 per cent.

By comparison, year-

on-year inflation stood at 68 per cent in February, prior to the outbreak of the war launched by the United States and Israel against the Islamic Republic.

In December 2025, when protests against the high cost of living erupted — later expanding to include political demands — inflation

had risen by 52.6 per cent year-on-year.

Iranian statistics are reported monthly based on the Persian calendar, with each year beginning in March.

For years, the Iranian economy has been hampered by chronic hyperinflation and a sharp depreciation of the national currency, the rial,

largely as a result of international sanctions imposed on the country.

This phenomenon, which has eroded Iranians' purchasing power, has intensified in recent months and has triggered widespread protests in December.

The Middle East war has further exacerbated the economic crisis.

## JBA, Mexican envoy talk economic ties

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA) Ayman Alawneh and Mexican Ambassador Jacob Prado González discussed prospects of expanding economic, trade and investment relations.

Alawneh stressed enhanced economic relations between Jordan and Mexico, and a need to translate the close ties into effective economic and investment partnerships and launch joint ventures by the private sector in both countries.

He pointed to Jordan's investor-friendly environment and competitive advantages as a gateway to regional markets, the Jordan

News Agency, Petra, reported.

The Mexican envoy said his country is committed to forging closer economic relations with Jordan...

The JBA head also noted an interest to enhance communication with the Mexican business community and explore available

opportunities in various sectors.

The Mexican envoy said his country is committed to forging closer economic relations with Jordan and cementing cooperation between private sector institutions, calling for exploring new areas of partnership in sectors of mutual interest.

The volume of trade between Jordan and Mexico stood at about \$97 million in 2024, compared with \$130 million in 2023, with untapped Jordanian export opportunities in the Mexican market, including fertilisers, chemical products, jewelry, and non-ferrous and non-precious metal products.

## US stocks fall as report of OpenAI IPO delay causes jitters

NEW YORK (AFP) — Wall Street stocks fell recently, capping a roller-coaster week for tech stocks as traders fretted that valuations may be entering bubble territory.

Analysts were further spooked by a re-

port in The New York Times that OpenAI, the maker of ChatGPT, was leaning toward delaying its highly anticipated IPO until next year.

This was in part caused by Elon Musk's rocket company SpaceX seeing its valuation

drop from its IPO-day highs this week, pointing to a rockier landing zone for blockbuster public offerings on Wall Street.

About 10 minutes into trading, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 0.44 per

cent at 51,690.51, and the broad-based S&P 500 slid 0.63 per cent to 7,311.26.

The tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index dropped 1 per cent to 25,092.01, reflecting those AI jitters.

Reports of an OpenAI

IPO delay are "without question" a catalyst for the downturn, Christopher Low of FHN Financial told AFP.

"Maybe they're hesitant to bring the stock to market at a time when investors are sceptical," he added.

THE JORDAN TIMES  
**SPORTS**  
AT A GLANCE

# Jordan takes on Argentina in last World Cup match

**TENNIS**

**Wimbledon 'towel thief' Swiatek back on the trophy hunt**

LONDON (AFP) — Wimbledon champion Iga Swiatek is ready to embrace her role as the tournament's 'towel thief' as she looks to swipe the All England Club trophy again. Swiatek is back at Wimbledon 12 months after lifting the Venus Rosewater Dish for the first time after a brilliant demolition of Amanda Anisimova in the final. The 25-year-old Pole's 6-0, 6-0 masterclass was the heaviest women's final defeat at the All England Club in more than a century. But Swiatek took home more than just her sixth Grand Slam crown from Wimbledon last year. The World No.3 was just as ruthless in her pursuit of the tournament's famous towels as she was the trophy. Retailing at £40 (\$52) each in the official Wimbledon shop this year, the towels are a must-have item for many fans attending the tournament. Towels are given to players for use during matches and most find themselves inundated with requested for the souvenir for friends and family. Swiatek seems to have been assailed by more of those requests than most, judging by her determination to shove as many as possible into her bag on route to her first Wimbledon title last year.

**Sinner ready for Wimbledon defence despite lack of time on grass**

LONDON (AFP) — Jannik Sinner insists he is ready to defend his Wimbledon title despite going into the tournament with a lack of action on grass courts. Sinner hasn't played since suffering a shock defeat against Juan Manuel Cerundolo in the second round of the French Open in May. The World No.1 blew a two-set lead as he wilted in stifling heat on the clay courts of Roland Garros. Instead of maximising his time on grass ahead of Wimbledon, which starts on Monday, the Italian has opted to rest before stepping up his practice schedule after arriving in London. It is the first time he has stayed away from the Wimbledon warm-up events prior to playing in the grass-court Grand Slam. "I feel good. I think grass is very different surface obviously. If you play a tournament before here, maybe it's not going the way you would like to, you come here with some doubts. If you don't play any tournament, you don't have these doubts, you just go and play," Sinner told reporters at Wimbledon on Saturday. Sinner opens his bid for a second successive Wimbledon crown against Serbian World No. 51 Miomir Kecmanovic on Centre Court on Monday.

By Aline Bannayan |

AMMAN — Jordan plays FIFA top ranked reigning World Cup champs Argentina at 5:00 am Amman local time on Sunday in their third and last match at the 26th edition of the World Cup currently under way in the US, Canada and Mexico.

The encounter in Dallas, Texas, concludes Group J matches in which the squad dubbed "Al Nashama" come head-to-head against 18 time qualifier and three time champions Argentina led by the iconic Lionel Messi.

Jordan has been praised for their hard fought matches. They lost 2-1 to world 28th ranked Algeria after leading 1-0 up to minute 69. They also kicked off with a fighting spirit despite their 3-1 loss to World 24th ranked Austria, while Algeria lost 3-0 to Argentina in its opener. Eight best third placed teams from the 12 competing groups will advance to the knockout Round 2.

During his visit to the Jordanian training camp in Dallas, FIFA President Gianni Infantino expressed his admiration for the team's relentless fighting spirit on the pitch noting "the squad's remarkable performances bring great honour to both Jordanian and Arab football on the global stage".

At a press conference, Jordan's Moroccan head



Jordan's Mousa Ta'mari (in black) during the training session ahead of the match with Argentina

JFA photo

coach Jamal Sellami was quoted by FIFA.com saying his side "played well but it was experience at such high level competition that was the determining factor".

Argentina is expected to rest leading players including Messi, while Jordanian fans hope the coach will give most players a chance to participate. "Regardless if Messi plays or not, we

will be playing against a very strong, solid team," Sellami added.

There have been varied sentiments to Jordan's participation. Most observers note Jordan, ranked 63rd, made history by merely qualifying to the world stage for the first time after 16 additional nations participated including many first timers as well as 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 participation has united the nation around the squad, and created a vibe that will inspire new generations and elevate the game in general. His Majesty

King Abdullah, HRH Crown Prince Hussein and HRH Princess Rajwa Al Hussein, HRH Prince Ali, President of the Jordan Football Association, and HRH Prince Hashem attended the matches.

Observers underline the fact that Jordan played among the best in the world and didn't lose easily was to be appreciated despite the absence

of key players especially Yazan Nue'imat, considered a leading striker in Asia. In addition, striker Ibrahim Sabra, one of the key stars of Jordan's U-23 lineup, Adam Smeiri, who had excelled in the Arab Cup in Nue'imat's absence were also sidelined.

Fans in Amman have spared no effort in supporting their team and players have become household names and icons for a new generation of football enthusiasts. The two goals scored by Jordan will go down in history. Nizar Rashdan gave Jordan the lead against 6-time world Cup qualifier Algeria and Ali Olwan scored Jordan's first goal in the World Cup and was chosen player of the match despite his team's defeat in the match against 8-time qualifier Austria.

Lead star striker Mousa Ta'mari, who plays in the French League is yet to score and fans are calling on coach Sellami to give younger players like striker Ali Azaizeh, Mohammad Abu Zreiq 'Sharara' as well as Odeh Fakhoury, 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 Columbia after an earlier 4-1 defeat to 12-time qualifier World 19th ranked Switzerland.

**LIFE**

THE JORDAN TIMES

## Master key' vaccine technique may 'prevent next pandemic' — researchers

CAMBRIDGE, United Kingdom (AFP) — Known by acronyms that need no explanation, viruses like Covid, Sars and Ebola conjure up images of medics in protective suits and spark fear in populations worldwide.

Vaccines for individual viruses have provided some relief, but new strains pose a constant challenge.

Now, new AI-aided vaccine technology developed by scientists at Cambridge University offer potential immunity against whole families of viruses and could even prevent the next pandemic, according to researchers.

Professor Jonathan Heeney of Cambridge University likened the new technique to having the "master key" for an apartment block.

The main problem with vaccines, he said, was that they were "all historic" so the strain you are vaccinated with might not be the one you end up being exposed to in six months time.

Vaccines were "always chasing the virus", the project lead researcher told AFP in an interview.

"So we're getting rid of that variability by making something that's across the board



AFP photo

Vaccines were 'always chasing the virus', the project lead researcher told AFP

recognisable by your immune system that should cover you from all these eventualities ... a real big paradigm change," he said.

Canadian Heeney, of the lab of viral zoonotics at Cambridge University's Department of Veterinary Medicine, began work on the project after the 2013-16 Ebola outbreak in west Africa where he was then based.

**'Horse bolted'**

Ebola had previously

been seen in the central African Democratic Republic of Congo, not in west Africa and it was initially misidentified as lassa fever, gastroenteritis or cholera.

The west African outbreak eventually claimed around 11,300 lives, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

But Heeney said three or four months were spent trying to discover what it was before work could even begin on a vaccine.

"In that time, it spread

from Guinea, to Sierra Leone to Liberia, three different countries quickly. The horse had bolted, the fire was raging," he said, adding many health workers were among the victims.

Returning to Cambridge after the west African outbreak, Heeney said there was a determination that "we've got to change the way this works, we can't go through it again".

Harnessing early AI, he said, his team used all the information they could get about various

viruses and brought it together.

This allowed them to look for the "similarities and the differences in the important parts of the virus that the immune system responds to", recognising not just one variant but all of them.

The new technology was all the more vital given the frequency with which viruses are now emerging due to population growth, greater movement across borders and human encroachment on animal habitats, he said.

Viruses that had previously existed harmlessly, residing in animals that had grown resistant, were coming into contact with a new species, humans, and "wow, there's no immunity, no natural defences... and the virus goes crazy", he said.

**'Change the future'**

A trial involving 39 volunteers — sponsored by the University Hospital Southampton and published in the Journal of Infection — found "no significant safety concerns" with the universal Sarbeco coronavirus vaccine made using the AI-aided technology.

The vaccine developed by the Cambridge scientists and biotechnology firm DIOSynVax will now move to larger tests.

Plagues have existed throughout history, said Heeney, from the Black Death of the Middle Ages ages to the 1918-20 influenza pandemic which killed an estimated 25-50 million globally.

Heeney's most pressing concern was a potential influenza outbreak, he said, describing it as one of the "trickier" viruses.

But he was hopeful the new technology could help prevent another deadly pandemic.

"Now, there's a whole different layer of AI, and we have a team using the latest AI technology ... to build a real powerful platform so we can work even faster with more data," he said.

"This, I hope is the start of a whole new era of vaccine manufacturing ... From my point of view it's about proving this technology to the world that it's safe, that it's more effective and actually jump on board.

"I think this opens the door to a whole new kind of technology. Hopefully that can change the future," he said.

## Will Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce wed in New York? Clues abound

NEW YORK (AFP) — Will Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce's "Love Story" culminate in a Big Apple wedding? Increasing signs point to a mega-bash for the A-list celebrity couple at Madison Square Garden next week.

Rumours have run rampant for weeks that the 36-year-old pop superstar and the three-time NFL Super Bowl winner, both 36, could wed at the storied sports arena, home to the New York Knicks, the newly crowned NBA champions.

The couple, who announced their engagement in August last year, have been seen in various spots around New York of late, and clues have multiplied that the Garden could be their venue of choice.

The New York Times reported Thursday — citing an entertainment industry executive and another person with knowledge of the matter — that Swift had booked the arena for an "intimate" gathering of around 100 people on July 2, and for a larger event the following day with around 1,000 guests.

The Times, along with other outlets including CNN, reported that a company specialising in wedding planning had obtained a permit to close the streets around the venue between July 2 and July 4, and erect a tent.

The permit application said the event would host from 500 to 999 people.

The Garden boasts both the arena space and a smaller theater traditionally used for concerts and meetings.

It is perhaps not a traditional wedding venue, but Swift would not be the first musician to marry there.

Sly Stone, who died last year, was married there in June 1974 to actress Kathy Silva during a concert by his band, Sly and the Family Stone.

Swift, a 14-time Grammy winner, is coming off a huge year with the success of her album "The Life of a Showgirl", induction into the Songwriters Hall of Fame and a new song on the "Toy Story 5" soundtrack.

Kelce, a tight end for the Kansas City Chiefs, has signed to play for a 14th season in the National Football League.

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