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Wednesday, July 1, 2026 | Muharram 16, 1448 Hijri

GDP rises to 2.9% in Q1 2026, up from 2.7% in 2025 — DoS

- CBJ says growth attributed to gov't economic, fiscal, monetary measures despite regional challenges
- All sectors recorded gains, with agriculture and manufacturing leading
- Economy outperforms international forecasts in first quarter
- Production sectors account for over 55% of growth

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 2.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2026, up from 2.7 per cent in the same period of 2025, according to quarterly estimates issued by the Department of Statistics (DoS) on Tuesday.

The report also showed that all economic activities recorded notable growth during the first quarter of 2026 compared with the same period last year, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

On the sectoral level, agriculture recorded the highest growth rate of 6.8 per cent, followed by manufacturing at 5.3 per cent, mining and quarrying at 4.7 per cent, and electricity supply at 4.3 per cent.

The report noted that the growth reflects Jordan's ability to manage the economic repercussions of the ongoing regional escalation, maintaining stable growth despite exceptional challenges.



Greater Amman Municipality photo

The Department of Statistics says that Jordan's gross domestic product grew by 2.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2026, up from 2.7 per cent in the same period of 2025

dan's ability to manage the economic repercussions of the ongoing regional escalation, maintaining stable growth despite exceptional challenges.

It attributed the improved performance to

government economic, fiscal and monetary measures, implemented through a series of decisions aimed at stimulating economic activity across various sectors, particularly industrial activity.

Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) Governor Adel Sharkas said the government's economic response played a central role in supporting this performance, including a series of fiscal and administrative measures aimed at stimulating activity across key sectors. "These included the settlement of accumulated arrears to private sector companies amounting to more than JD280 million, which helped improve liquidity and support business continuity," he added.

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PSD photo

The Jordanian international search and rescue team operating in Venezuela rescues a three-year-old child from the rubble in Caracas, six days after the earthquake

Jordan research, rescue team in Venezuela saves child from rubble six days after earthquake

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordanian international search and rescue team operating in Venezuela has successfully rescued a three-year-old child from the rubble in Caracas, six days after

the earthquake.

The child was found under the rubble of a house, the Public Security Directorate spokesperson said, adding that his vital signs were good.

The child received first aid treatment and was taken to the nearest hospital, the spokesperson continued, noting that the local authorities were informed of the rescue operation.



AFP photo

Vehicles drive past billboards that read in Arabic, 'Lebanon first', one of which has been set on fire along Beirut's airport road near Tehran-backed Hezbollah's stronghold, amidst tensions following Lebanon's framework agreement with Israel on Sunday

In south Lebanon, Netanyahu says Israel will stay as long as Hizbollah 'threatens us'

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM/TEHRAN (AFP) — Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited troops in southern Lebanon on Tuesday, vowing that his country's forces would stay in the area as long as Iran-backed Hizbollah remained a "threat".

"Our position is clear: We will not leave southern Lebanon until the threat has disappeared. And as long as Hizbollah, armed, is here and threatening us, we will stay here," Netanyahu said according to a statement from his office. He added that "Leba-

non recognises Israel, Israel recognises Lebanon, and we say to Iran and to Hizbollah: Leave this place, you no longer belong here... There are two sovereign states that want to live in peace".

Continued on page 5

Jordan's cities have 'significant' potential to generate more productive jobs — World Bank

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's cities have significant potential to generate more productive jobs, but stronger infrastructure, better connectivity and a more investment-friendly business environment will be essential to unlock that potential, according to a new World Bank report.

The report "Cities that Work: Realising the Jobs Potential of MENA's Cities" examines urban productivity across the Middle East and North Africa and includes eight Jordanian cities in its analysis.

It concludes that well-planned infrastructure, access to international markets and the expansion of larger private firms are among the strongest drivers of urban productivity and employment.

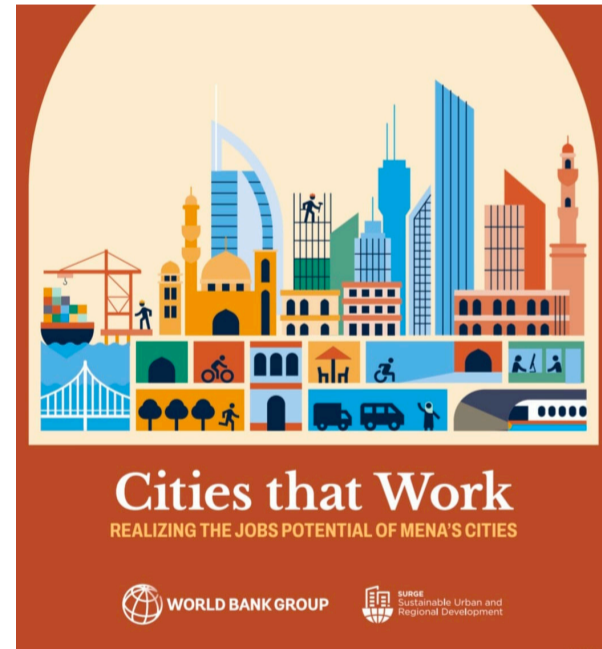
The World Bank found that road density is the single strongest factor

associated with narrowing the productivity gap between MENA cities and the global frontier, while compact urban development also contributes positively to economic performance.

By contrast, higher population density without adequate infrastructure tends to reduce productivity, suggesting that urban expansion must be accompanied by investments in transport networks and planning.

The study covered 160 functional urban areas in Iran, 74 in Egypt, 59 in Morocco, 55 in Iraq, eight in Jordan and one in the West Bank and Gaza.

According to the report, cities located on coastlines or near international borders generally perform closer to the global productivity frontier than inland cities, highlighting the importance of access to ex-



ternal markets.

Shorter travel times to airports and a larger share of export-oriented industries are also associated with stronger productivity, although these relationships are less

statistically significant.

The report also points to the importance of attracting investment, particularly foreign direct investment (FDI), and enabling firms to grow. It found that large

private companies employing more than 100 workers create jobs at significantly faster rates than smaller firms across the MENA region, even after accounting for differences in firm age and sector.

However, only 12.7 per cent of private firms in MENA fall into this category, the second-lowest share among global regions after Sub-Saharan Africa.

The World Bank said the findings suggest that regulatory obstacles and broader business environment challenges may be preventing high-potential small firms from expanding into larger employers.

The report also identified foreign ownership as one of the strongest factors associated with higher labour productivity growth.

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Regent welcomes national team upon its return from World Cup

By Aline Bannayan

AMMAN — The Regent, HRH Prince Feisal, president of Jordan Olympic Committee, welcomed the national football team's players and staff upon their return to the Kingdom on Tuesday, following Jordan's debut participation at the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

During a reception held at Queen Alia International Airport, Prince Feisal expressed appreciation to the players for their outstanding efforts and commendable representation of Jordan on the world stage. A number of senior officials were also present to welcome the national team.



Al Mamlaka photo

The Regent, HRH Prince Feisal, president of the Jordan Olympic Committee, welcomes the national football team's players and staff upon their return to the Kingdom on Tuesday

Jordan's squad to the 2026 World Cup returned home on Tuesday after ending Round 1,

Group J matches at the 26th edition of the elite event currently underway in the US, Canada

and Mexico. Jordan impressed fans in its first World Cup, playing hard fought

matches in a tough group, and scoring in its three matches by Ali Olwan, Nizar Rashdan and Mousa Ta'mari. In their 3-1 defeat to reigning champions Argentina, Jordan was the only team to score in the first round against the 18-time qualifier and 3-time champions led by the iconic Lionel Messi. Earlier, Jordan lost 2-1 to World 28th ranked Algeria after leading 1-0 up to minute 69. They also kicked off with a 3-1 loss to World 24th ranked Austria.

After taking part in qualifiers since 1986, Jordan's decades-long footballing dream came through, giving younger generations an inspira-

tion and despite elimination from the first round, enthusiasts, observers and athletes noted it was a starting point rather than a winless streak. Many concurred tactical mistakes, late substitutions, not enlisting the reserve goalies and overall competitive experience were the reasons for not advancing further, coupled with the absence of key players especially Yazan Nue'imat, considered a leading striker in Asia.

Experts underlined Jordan, ranked 63rd, made history by qualifying to the world stage for the first time after 16 additional nations participated, including first timers Cape Verde, Cura-

cao and Uzbekistan. The expansion of the World Cup from 32 to 48 teams allowed more teams from Asia and Africa to qualify to football's most prestigious competition. Under the new format, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) had eight or nine slots instead of 4.5, while the Confederation of African Football (CAF) is represented by nine teams instead of five.

Previously, four Arab teams participated in the 2018 edition when Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco qualified. At the current edition, a record eight Arab nations took part: 2022 semifinalists Morocco, Egypt, Algeria,

Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq and Jordan. Arab teams advancing to the Round of 32 were Morocco, Algeria and Egypt. Morocco eliminated The Netherlands on penalties early Tuesday to advance to the round of 16.

The Nashama has had a steady upward climb in the past two years, nearly crowned 2024 Asian Cup champs for the first time, but settling for runner-up in their fifth participation. Their previous best past performances was reaching the quarterfinals twice. The team's best ever FIFA ranking was 37th in 2004.

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File photo

Royal Jordanian Airlines says that a collision involving the bus transporting the crew of flight RJ8261 from John F. Kennedy International Airport to their place of accommodation resulted in the death of one crew member

RJ following up on crew bus collision in New York

AMMAN (JT) — Royal Jordanian Airlines (RJ) said that a collision involving the bus transporting the crew of flight RJ8261 occurred in the early hours of Tuesday.

The bus was carrying 15 airline crew members, including two Thai flight attendants, while transporting them from John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK)

to their place of accommodation, according to an RJ statement.

RJ said that the accident resulted in the death of one crew member, while the remaining injured are in stable condition and receiving the necessary medical care.

The airline expressed its profound sorrow over this unfortunate incident, offering its

condolences and sympathies to the family of the deceased, and wishing the injured a speedy recovery.

RJ stressed that it was closely following developments in coordination with the relevant authorities, and would continue to monitor the condition of the injured and provide them with the necessary support.

JRCS hosts diplomats, commends embassies' response to Gaza humanitarian crisis

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Red Crescent Society (JRCS) on Tuesday hosted representatives from several embassies and diplomatic missions accredited to the Kingdom in appreciation for their role in supporting the sustainability of the humanitarian response to the crisis in the Gaza Strip.

JRCS President Mohammed Hadid, Head of Red Crescent Societies Delegation in Jordan Atta Durrani and Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Delegation in Jordan Yann Fridez attended the meeting, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Hadid stressed the importance of adhering to humanitarian principles and International Humanitarian Law at all times.

He noted that the upcoming phase requires reviving the Peace Conference of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, announcing that JRCS is scheduled to organise the conference on May 5, 2027 to launch a new international humanitarian dialogue aimed at bolstering the movement's role in supporting



Petra photo

The Jordan Red Crescent Society on Tuesday hosts representatives from several embassies and diplomatic missions in appreciation for their role in supporting the sustainability of the humanitarian response to the crisis in Gaza

peace.

The president called for dedicating special corridors for the Red Cross and Red Crescent to ensure the safe delivery of relief and humanitarian aid, which would enhance response efficiency and reach those most in need.

He pointed out that a lack of respect for International Humanitarian Law makes accessing victims and delivering aid exceptionally difficult.

Hadid added that the

time has come to consider adopting a fourth additional protocol to the Geneva Conventions in light of technological advancements like artificial intelligence and the deployment of smart weaponry.

He also highlighted the importance of an upcoming conference Jordan is scheduled to host at the Dead Sea on December 7 to support the initiative for enhancing and respecting International Humanitarian Law.

Hadid also reviewed

the role of the JRCS Hospital in providing medical care to the injured, sick and their companions, alongside ongoing efforts to support families through health services and psychosocial support, stressing the importance of utilising modern technologies to develop humanitarian work and enhance community communication.

Fridez provided an overview of the current humanitarian situation in Gaza, describing it as "critically severe".

He also outlined the committee's response, which includes providing direct medical services at the ICRC's field hospital in Rafah, while continuing to support healthcare facilities across the Gaza Strip.

Fridez stressed that Gaza's healthcare system is under immense pressure, making it essential to ensure the continued delivery of medical care and secure sustainable access to life-saving health services for the affected population.

Army chief attends drill by 51st Hashemite Mechanised Brigade

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti on Tuesday attended the Rimah Al Karameh (Spears of Dignity) military exercise, conducted by the 51st Hashemite Mechanised Brigade and its units.

The drill, executed by the brigade, which is a formation within the Central Military Region, took place at designated training fields in the presence of several high-ranking army officers, according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement.

Huneiti listened to briefings presented by the commander of the Central Military Region and the brigade commander, covering the planning, preparation and execution phases, as well as the strategic training objectives.

The drill aimed to enhance operational readiness and the units'



JAF photo

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti on Tuesday attends the Rimah Al Karameh military exercise, conducted by the 51st Hashemite Mechanised Brigade

capability to navigate diverse challenges within an operational environment simulating modern warfare conditions.

The army chief observed the exercise, which featured tactical field operations and live-fire drills using various types of weap-

onry with standard support.

The drill also involved the application of command, control and coordination protocols

among participating units, aligning with the approved training plans of JAF.

Participants demonstrated high levels of efficiency and professionalism, reflecting the advanced combat readiness, high morale and capacity of the brigade's personnel to efficiently execute duties under various circumstances.

At the end of the drill, Huneiti conveyed the greetings and pride of His Majesty King Abdullah, the Supreme Commander of JAF, to the participants, praising their outstanding performance during all stages of the exercise.

He also stressed the importance of sustaining qualitative and realistic training to develop combat capabilities, and enhance the operational readiness of military units and formations, enabling them to defend the homeland and safeguard its achievements.

JHCO, Kuwaiti charity partner to empower small business owners

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation (JHCO) and the International Islamic Charity Organisation-Kuwait signed a cooperation agreement to implement the "Masar" project for the management of small and micro enterprises.

The agreement comes as part of both sides' ongoing partnership to promote economic empowerment and support vulnerable groups in Jordan, according to a JHCO statement.

The project aims to train 2,000 owners of small and micro enterprises and equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to manage their businesses more effectively.

The programme will focus on financial planning, resource management, marketing and business sustainability, helping participants improve their economic opportunities and boost self-reliance.

The Masar project rep-



resents a "new milestone" in Jordanian-Kuwaiti humanitarian and development cooperation, reflecting the "longstanding" ties between the two countries and their shared commitment to solidarity and community empowerment.

JHCO Secretary-General Hussein Shibli said, "The partnership with the International Islamic Charity Organisation represents an effective model of Arab development cooperation."

He noted that the Masar project goes beyond training by investing in people and equipping entrepreneurs with the tools needed to build "more stable and productive future".

Shibli added that the project "marks another achievement in the institutions' cooperation, reflecting their commitment to advancing sustainable development and creating meaningful opportunities for entrepreneurship and productivity, with a tangible impact on beneficiaries and their communities".

JHCO stressed its commitment to building "strategic" partnerships that support economic empowerment programmes and create new opportunities for owners of small and micro enterprises, in line with its vision of transforming assistance into sustainable productive opportunities, according to the statement.

New solar project boosts energy efficiency at Irbid's Princess Rahma Hospital

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Fund (JREEEF) of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources on Tuesday launched a solar water heating system project at the Princess Rahma Educational Paediatric Hospital in Irbid.

The new system provides a storage capacity of 4,000 litres, and adopts a technology that reduces the energy consumption needed to heat hospital water by up to 70 per cent, according to Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The system achieves an estimated annual energy savings of 52,065 kilowatt-hours, as the project cuts carbon emissions by the equivalent of 104 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.

JREEEF Executive Director Rasmi Hamzeh said that the project replaces traditional diesel-based water heating systems with modern solar-powered alternatives, which lowers operational costs and



Photo courtesy of Princess Rahma Educational Paediatric Hospital

The Jordan Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Fund on Tuesday launches a solar water heating system project at the Princess Rahma Educational Paediatric Hospital in Irbid

enhances the sustainability of health services while raising energy efficiency in public hospitals.

Hamzeh added that JREEEF implements this initiative in cooperation with the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security to supply 33 public hospitals with solar water heating systems at a total cost of JD3.3 million.

He noted that this

partnerships aligns with the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources' strategy to enhance energy efficiency, also they actively expands renewable energy source adoption across the healthcare sector.

Princess Rahma Educational Paediatric Hospital serves as a vital healthcare facility in Irbid, as it annually receives some 150,000 patients.

ENERGY

Gov't keeps fuel prices unchanged for July despite global fluctuations

AMMAN (JT) — The Fuel Pricing Committee on Tuesday announced maintaining the prices of the main oil derivatives for July at the same levels approved for June.

The committee, during its monthly meeting, reviewed oil derivative prices during June and compared them with those of May, noting a relative decline in global prices, which was "not sufficient" to return prices to levels that prevailed before the regional crisis, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Under the decision, the price of unleaded 90-octane gasoline will remain at JD1 per litre, unleaded 95-octane gasoline at JD1.310 per litre, diesel at JD0.850 per litre and kerosene at JD0.550 per litre.

The committee also decided to keep the price of the 12.5 kilogramme household gas cylinder



Photo by Merza Noghai

The Fuel Pricing Committee on Tuesday says that total subsidy and price differences borne by the government since the start of the crisis through the end of June amounted to about JD198 million

unchanged at JD7, while continuing support for liquefied petroleum gas

(LPG) supplied to the industrial sector.

It said that the deci-

sion to continue supporting LPG for the industrial sector would result in

government support estimated at around JD3.2 million during July.

The committee stressed that local fuel prices in recent months have not reflected "actual" costs, as the government has followed a gradual approach in passing on global price increases and has absorbed a "significant" portion of the price differences.

It added that total subsidy and price differences borne by the government since the start of the crisis through the end of June amounted to about JD198 million, excluding the cost of supporting household gas cylinders.

Also on Tuesday, the Energy and Minerals Regulatory Commission decided to maintain the "differences in fuel prices" category on monthly electricity bills for July at zero fils per kilowatt-hour, Petra added.



Petra photo

Minister of Public Sector Development Badria Balbisi, in presence of Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smirat and Director of the Jordanian Academy for Public Administration Mustafa Hamarneh, on Tuesday inaugurates the 'Artificial Intelligence for Government Leaders' programme

Ministry launches 'Artificial Intelligence for Government Leaders' programme

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Public Sector Development Badria Balbisi on Tuesday inaugurated the "Artificial Intelligence for Government Leaders" programme.

The inauguration was attended by Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smirat and Director of the Jordanian Academy for Public Administration Mustafa Hamarneh.

The six-month programme targets secretaries-general and directors-general across ministries and government institutions, representing a wide range of sectors, including finance, digital transformation, cybersecurity, public administration, statistics, health, government procurement, integrity, social development, as well as regulatory and oversight bodies.

The programme is implemented by the Jordanian Academy for Public Administration in partnership with the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship and Government Campus and the German Agency for International Cooperation, and co-funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the EU.

Balbisi said that the government, in line with rapid advances in digital transformation and emerging technologies, has introduced a new component in the second executive programme of the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap (2026-2029), focusing on data and artificial intelligence as a key pillar of administrative reform.

She noted that the government has developed a reference framework for the use of AI in the public sector, alongside best-practice models and a competency framework for integrating AI across government institutions, developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Balbisi added that the government is currently preparing a future skills strategy to provide a long-term vision for labour market needs, noting that studies indicate that around 60 per cent of jobs globally are expected to change within the next two to five years.

Smirat said that Jordan places artificial intelligence among its national priorities through the National Council for Future Technology, ensuring coordination of efforts and accelerating the adoption of advanced technologies across sectors.

He noted that the ministry aims to train 15,000 government employees by 2027, following the training of more than 9,000 employees from over 90 government institutions, with

the aim of building capacities capable of leading digital transformation and AI adoption.

Smirat added that Jordan has already expanded the use of AI in key sectors, including education through the "Siraj" AI assistant, which has surpassed 1.3 million users, in addition to applications in health and digital government services.

He stressed that successful AI adoption depends on strong data systems and digital infrastructure, noting that the government is strengthening the national data ecosystem through processing more than 2 million geolocation records and linking over 2.5 million land records to support integration and data-driven decision-making.

Balbisi added that the government is currently preparing a future skills strategy...

Hamarneh said that the Jordanian Academy for Public Administration serves as the government's executive arm in capacity building and institutional readiness, particularly in digitalisation, data, artificial intelligence and the knowledge economy.

He added that the academy aims to broaden the knowledge base of public sector leaders and enhance institutional impact through its programmes, contributing to improved service delivery and better quality of life for citizens.

The programme consists of six interconnected modules covering: fundamentals of AI for decision-makers, responsible AI governance, institutional readiness, AI-enabled government services, innovation ecosystems and public-private partnerships, and the broader economic implications of artificial intelligence.

It is designed to equip government leaders with strategic understanding and practical tools for immediate application within their institutions, with the aim of accelerating AI adoption, improving public services, strengthening data-driven decision-making, and enhancing the efficiency and innovation of the public sector.

Safadi, Bahraini counterpart discuss regional developments

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi on Tuesday held a phone call with his Bahraini counterpart Abdullatif Bin Rashid Al Zayani to discuss regional developments.

Safadi reiterated Jordan's condemnation of the recent Iranian attacks on Bahrain, stressing the Kingdom's full solidarity with Bahrain and support for all measures to protect its sovereignty, security and the safety of its citizens and residents, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

Al Zayani commended Jordan's support for Bahrain and the Kingdom's continued commitment to promoting



Ayman Safadi



Abdullatif Bin Rashid Al Zayani

regional security and stability, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

Safadi and Al Zayani discussed the deep-rooted relations between Jordan and Bahrain and

ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in a manner that serves the interests of both countries, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

The two ministers also reviewed regional

developments and a number of issues of mutual concern, affirming the need to step up efforts to de-escalate tensions, enhance security and stability, and ensure freedom of navigation.

468 individuals banned from using King Hussein Bridge crossings — Interior Ministry

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Interior on Tuesday banned 468 individuals from entering or travelling through the King Hussein Bridge, with the decision taking effect on Tuesday morning.

An official source at the ministry told Al Mamlaka that the measure targets individuals who frequently cross the bridge for commercial purposes, exploiting price differences at the duty-free shop through repeated trips.

The source said the decision is intended to ensure fair access for travellers crossing for non-commercial purposes and to improve traffic management at the bridge, particularly amid restrictions imposed by



JT file

The Ministry of Interior on Tuesday bans 468 individuals from entering or travelling through the King Hussein Bridge

the Israeli side on the number of departing passengers.

According to the source, the ban applies to 468 individuals who made at least five repeated book-

ings for July through the Jordan Express Tourist Transport electronic booking platform.

Minister of Interior Mazen Farayeh has recently said that Jordan, under the directives of His Majesty King Abdullah, will continue taking all necessary measures to facilitate the movement of Palestinians through the King Hussein Bridge.

Farayeh also said that the ministry's priority is to facilitate Palestinians' entry into Jordan, stressing that advance booking through the electronic platform is essential for organising passenger movement because the number of daily crossings is capped by the Israeli side.

He added that the electronic booking platform is not used at the Al Karameh crossing, where no limit is imposed on the number of Palestinians permitted to cross.

AT A GLANCE

RJAF training aircraft lands safely after technical malfunction



AMMAN (JT) — Royal Jordanian Air Force (RJAF) Air Tractor made an emergency landing on Tuesday in the Balama-Zaytouna area of Mafraq Governorate after experiencing a technical malfunction during a training mission, a responsible military source at the General Command of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF). The source said the flight crew handled the situation with a high degree of professionalism, following standard operating procedures that ensured the aircraft landed safely without incident. Specialised technical teams from the RJAF have launched an inspection and investigation to determine the cause of the malfunction and take the necessary measures in accordance with established protocols, the source added.

JAF foils drug smuggling attempt using balloons



AMMAN (JT) — The Eastern Military Region on Tuesday thwarted an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of narcotics using electronically guided balloons to carry the illegal substances. Border Guard units detected the balloons and intercepted them, according to the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF). The military units Jordanian territory, in coordination with security agencies and the Anti-Narcotics Department. They transferred the seized items to the relevant authorities for the necessary legal action.

Most air quality indicators within limits across industrial estates — study

AMMAN (JT) — A Ministry of Environment study on air quality in Jordan's industrial estates for 2025 has found that continuous environmental monitoring programmes have become a key pillar in shaping modern, data-driven environmental policies.

The study said that the programmes enhance the state's capacity to manage environmental challenges while maintaining a balance between economic development requirements and the protection of the environment and public health, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

Director of the Environmental Monitoring and Evaluation Department Ali Mashni said that the findings reflect tangible progress in Jordan's environmental management system, noting that modern monitoring networks and continuous data analysis have provided a reliable evidence base to support decision-making on emissions

reduction and air quality improvement.

He said that statistical analysis showed overall stability in air quality indicators across industrial estates, with most readings remaining within permissible limits under Jordanian air quality standard No. 1140/2024.

At the King Abdullah II Industrial City in Sahab, monitoring data recorded 15 exceedances of the daily permissible limit for fine particulate matter (PM2.5), representing 4.48 per cent of total monitoring days.

Mashni attributed this, in part, to the scale of industrial activity in the area, as well as to seasonal dust and desert conditions.

The station also recorded six exceedances of nitrogen dioxide (NO2), equivalent to 2.21 per cent of monitoring days, with officials saying levels remained within acceptable limits throughout most of the year, reflecting the effectiveness



Photo courtesy of Jordan Industrial States Company

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

of mitigation measures targeting industrial and transport emissions.

In Karak Industrial Estate, monitoring results showed greater stability, with only three exceedances recorded during the year, or 0.85 per cent of total monitoring days, while PM2.5 exceedances were limited to a single case, or 0.28 per cent.

Mashni said that the relatively low exceedance rates indicate that the main environmental challenge lies

not in structural air quality issues, but in managing specific pollution sources through targeted, preventive measures and real-time monitoring.

He added that the findings also carry economic and investment implications, as environmental performance and air quality indicators are increasingly key factors in investment decisions by international companies.

He said that this gives Jordan's indus-

with international best practices.

He added that ongoing efforts to expand monitoring networks and integrate digital technologies are improving the collection and analysis of environmental data, enabling more timely and effective policy responses.

The ministry, he said, is also working with relevant institutions and the industrial sector to strengthen environmental compliance, promote clean technologies and build capacity in support of sustainable industrial development.

Mashni also said that the 2025 study reflects not only the status of air quality in industrial estates, but also a broader model for balancing economic growth with environmental protection, underscoring the role of environmental monitoring and governance in strengthening Jordan's investment competitiveness and environmental security.

CRIME

Criminal Court prosecutor begins questioning suspects in Irbid homicide case

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Criminal Court prosecutor on Tuesday began questioning two men who allegedly shot and killed a man in Irbid governorate earlier in the day, official sources said.

The victim was shot once in the head, allegedly following an altercation with the two suspects, a senior official source said.

"The victim was rushed to a nearby hospital but died shortly afterwards after succumbing to his wounds," the senior official source added.

Meanwhile, a special investigation team was tasked with locating and arresting the suspects, according to a senior official source.

In their initial testimony to the authorities, the suspects claimed that

"the shooting incident occurred over old feuds", the senior official source added.

Investigators also seized a weapon, "which is believed to have been used in the homicide", according to the senior official.

The weapon was sent

to the Forensic and Laboratories department for a ballistic match, the senior official source added.

The Criminal Court prosecutor will summon the victim and the suspects' family members for questioning, a senior judicial source said.

The suspects were ordered detained by the Criminal Court prosecutor for 15 days pending further investigation.

Investigations into the incident are ongoing, according to a statement by the Public Security Directorate.



AFP photo

A Sudanese woman cooks inside a makeshift shelter at the Al Rahmaniya camp for displaced people, near the city of El Obeid in the South Kordofan region, on Monday

Sudan army says retakes key town near Chad

KHARTOUM (AFP) — The Sudanese army said it had retaken Kulbus, a strategic town near the Chadian border, in what appeared to be its biggest battlefield gain in western Darfur since the fall of El Fasher last year.

The Rapid Support Forces (RSF), at war with the army since April 2023, consolidated control over most of Darfur after capturing El Fasher, the military's final stronghold in the region.

The military and its allied Joint Forces, a coalition of armed groups, meanwhile retained pockets of control along the Chadian border.

Kulbus lies on a vital corridor near the border, roughly halfway between the army-held border town of Al Tina in North Darfur and El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur, which remains under RSF control.

In a statement late Monday, the Joint Forces said their fighters had taken "full control" of the town in West Darfur after what

they described as "decisive battles", claiming to have inflicted heavy losses on RSF units and seized vehicles and weapons.

The claims could not be independently verified and the RSF has not commented.

Al Tina, already at risk of famine according to the UN, has come under repeated RSF attacks this year

In a separate statement, a pro-army popular resistance group accused the RSF of using Kulbus as a staging ground for "thousands of fighters crossing the border" and as a key supply hub linked to El Geneina.

Video footage circulated by local me-

dia appeared to show men wearing Sudanese army uniforms celebrating in front of a sign reading "West Darfur State — Kulbus Locality".

Fighting has intensified in recent months along the frontier between North and West Darfur as the army seeks to secure a strategic corridor along the border with Chad, which it accuses of being aligned with the RSF.

Al Tina, already at risk of famine according to the UN, has come under repeated RSF attacks this year.

In recent days, the UN, several governments and aid organisations have warned of a possible RSF offensive on El Obeid, a key city in the neighbouring Kordofan region, raising fears of a repeat of the assault that led to the fall of El Fasher.

Now in its fourth year, the conflict has killed tens of thousands of people, displaced millions and created the world's largest hunger crisis.

UN calls for food, shelter to help Venezuela quake survivors

LA GUAIRA, Venezuela (AFP) — Tens of thousands of people urgently need food and shelter in Venezuela due to the devastation from two huge earthquakes that killed more than 1,700 and injured 5,000, the UN said on Tuesday, as doctors warned of potential outbreaks of disease.

Last week's 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude quakes — the strongest to hit the country in more than a century — have left tens of thousands unaccounted for and prompted a frantic search and rescue operation for survivors trapped in the rubble of flattened buildings.

The UN refugee agency said "food shortages are widespread, basic services have broken down and connectivity has been largely severed" in the port city of La Guaira, north of the capital, Caracas.

"Community tensions are rising as access to assistance remains constrained," UNHCR spokesperson Carlotta Wolf said.

The agency said it needed some \$14.85 million to scale up protection, core relief items and temporary shelter for 30,000 earthquake-affected people over six months.

The quakes likely damaged or destroyed 58,870 buildings, according to a preliminary assessment of satellite data published by NASA.

World Health Organisation spokesman Christian Lindmeier said health services in Venezuela were overstretched and under "extreme pressure" due to demand.

"There's an increased risk now of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases" such as measles and diphtheria, due to low pre-earthquake vaccination coverage.

Higher risks were also



AFP photo

A US Marines helicopter overflies a quake-hit area in Caraballeda, La Guaira State, Venezuela on Sunday, following twin earthquakes

possible of yellow fever, malaria, dengue, chikungunya and Zika, he told reporters in Geneva.

Bare hands

AFP on Monday saw black body bags containing victims of the quake lined up near a makeshift morgue at the dock in La Guaira, where many people had come for news of their loved ones or to identify their remains.

Darvin Silva, 37, described how he battled to reach his mother, who died under a pillar in a collapsed building.

"The effort it took me to get her out of there with my bare hands, with sledgehammers, with pickaxes... you can't even begin to imagine," he said.

"I hope that I can now offer her the rest she deserves... I can't sleep peacefully as long as my mother is here," he said

of the morgue.

Rayza Leon said her mother, brother, his wife and six children — three boys and three girls — were all trapped, and only five of the nine survived.

"The three boys were rescued, as well as him and his wife. My mother is still under the rubble with my five-year-old niece and we brought the twin girls here, they're seven years old," she added.

The critical 72-hour window during which survivors were still likely to be found closed on Saturday evening.

But rescuers in hard hats and high-visibility vests were still picking through the twisted metal and shattered concrete.

"We've rescued 38 people so far — 16 alive and 22 dead," said one volunteer, Moises Faranilla Perez.

"But we're still on the

ground, trying to find one more person alive. That's where we are now."

Around 50,000 people are still listed as missing, according to the UN.

Body bags

Some seven million people in Venezuela would be affected by the disaster, the UN has said, with the quakes knocking a \$6.7-billion hole in the economy — or 6 per cent of Venezuela's GDP.

Residents are not hiding their anger over the government's slow and limited aid in a country mired in a deep crisis that has driven millions to emigrate in recent years.

A total of 27 countries have mobilised nearly 40 search and rescue teams. They include more than 2,000 troops and personnel, along with more than 160 dogs, according to

Gianluca Rampolla, the UN coordinator in Venezuela.

The world body is providing 10,000 body bags, though it hopes the final toll will be lower.

At the only public cemetery in Caracas, the two crematory ovens have been working at full capacity.

Between Friday and Sunday, 60 to 70 burials were held each day.

Back at the makeshift morgue, many are still waiting for the remains of their loved ones who are presumed dead.

"My family is there — I'm told my sister and her children are there, as well as the children of my brother," Wilker Molalla told AFP as he waited to identify the remains.

"There were 11 people in my household; only two of us survived because we were at work," he said, referring to his brother.

Over 1 million migrants apply for Spain's mass regularisation

MADRID (AFP) — More than 1 million undocumented migrants in Spain have sought legal status under a scheme that has defied a European crackdown on irregular immigration, the government said on Tuesday, the final day for submissions.

The vast scheme was predicted to benefit around 500,000 people, most from Latin America, when the left-wing government launched it in April.

"The more than 1 million applications submitted... show how necessary this recognition of rights and responsibilities was," Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez told an event in Madrid.

Sanchez has become a standard bearer of more open immigration policies as his European neighbours — including some Socialist peers — toughen measures in response to pressure from ascendant far-right parties.

He has long argued that immigrants are needed to sustain the economy, the welfare state and pensions as Spain's population ages and people leave rural regions.

"When we condemn a person to invisibility, I think we make our country a worse country. We all lose," Sanchez said.

"We want the world to view Spain as a



AFP photo

A long line of immigrants wait to obtain official documentation to regularise their legal status in Spain

country that respects, protects and upholds human rights."

The number of applications submitted does not necessarily indicate how many migrants will secure their legal status.

Applicants must prove they have a clean criminal record and spent at least five consecutive months in Spain before January 1.

The authorities have three months to process their paperwork and decide whether to issue a work and residence permit only valid in Spain.

'Huge opportunity'

Juana Hernandez, a 59-year-old Cuban who

has lived in Spain for two-and-a-half years and whose application was recently approved, told AFP the process "is a huge opportunity".

Although she was "a little worried" at the start, the English degree holder now aims to work at Madrid airport.

A land of emigrants for centuries, Spain, alongside Greece and Italy, is a key entry point into the European Union for tens of thousands of undocumented migrants fleeing violence, poverty and persecution.

Many come via a long and perilous Atlantic route from West Africa to the Canary Islands, although numbers dropped last

year after peaking in 2024.

Although fears arose of a saturation of the services handling the scheme, Mohamed, a Moroccan who lives in the northern region of Cantabria, felt the administrative journey was "relatively easy".

The 23-year-old job-seeker, who declined to give his surname, has been in Spain irregularly for about four years and hopes "to be able to work legally, to pay contributions".

Gaining legal status will also spare him from unscrupulous employers who "take advantage" of irregular migrants "by paying low salaries, without any rights or... don't pay at all", he told AFP.

Economic boost

Sanchez, who has presided over one of the world's fastest-growing developed economies in the last few years, has touted the benefits of immigration for sectors such as construction that need to boost their workforce.

Spanish business leaders have welcomed the regularisation, but the conservative and far-right opposition are furious about a policy they say will encourage more irregular immigration.

While accepting "tensions" and "challenges" linked to immigration and integration, Sanchez on Tuesday accused the right of "fuelling fear [and] stirring up xenophobic discourse that does not solve any problem".

He announced 505 million euros (\$575 million) of investment to facilitate integration and ordered migration, including programmes for professional training and language learning.

Some regions governed by the right have filed appeals seeking precautionary measures that would suspend the process.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said the parties had five days to set out their arguments about certain aspects of the decree that may justify seeking an opinion from the EU courts.



AFP photo

Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer looks at drones after delivering a speech in Berkshire, west of London, on Tuesday, following the publication of Defence Investment Plan

UK to spend 'record' £300 b on defence over next four years — PM

LONDON (AFP) — Outgoing UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced on Tuesday that Britain would spend almost £300 billion (\$397 billion) over the next four years to modernise its armed forces amid rising threats.

Starmer, expected to leave office next month after losing the support of Labour MPs, announced that the overall defence budget would increase by £15 billion over the next four years to almost £300 billion, as he launched his long-awaited 10-year Defence Investment Plan.

"Last year I made the decision in the national interest to reprioritise

aid spending towards defence and achieved the biggest uplift in defence spending since the end of the Cold War," Starmer said in a speech.

"That was the right choice because the world has changed. National security is economic security."

"Today we uplift defence spending further. An additional £15 billion worth of funding by... reprioritising spending across government."

The plan includes more than £5 billion for drones and autonomous systems over the next four years, the Ministry of Defence said earlier in a press release.

The announcement follows months of wrangling within Starmer's Labour government over the resources required to modernise the UK's armed forces in the face of rising threats, including from Russia.

Two defence ministers quit earlier this month in a row over spending proposals, including defence secretary John Healey who said the plans risked making Britain "less safe".

The UK's pledge came as US President Donald Trump has repeatedly urged NATO allies to spend more on defence and become less reliant on Washington for security.



A cargo ship is pictured off coast of the Khor Fakkan Container Terminal, the only natural deep-sea port in the region and one of the major container ports in Sharjah Emirate, along the Gulf of Oman on Sunday

Iran says held first meeting with Oman on managing Hormuz

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's foreign ministry said it had held on Monday the first meeting with Oman on managing the Strait of Hormuz since Tehran and Washington signed their preliminary deal to end the Middle East war.

Both Iran and Oman say they hold sovereignty over the waterway, a vital route for Gulf energy exports that Tehran blockaded during the war.

"During a trip to Muscat, the first meeting of the Joint Hormuz Committee was held," said Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi on X. "While reviewing the current issues related to the strait, we exchanged views on the future management," he added.

Hormuz is a narrow stretch of water separating Iran and Oman that is only about 30 kilometres wide.

The future of the strait has been a key sticking point during

talks between Tehran and Washington to end their conflict.

Iran is considering imposing "services fees" that did not exist before the war, while the United States opposes any charges, arguing Hormuz is an international waterway.

Iran responded by saying the only authorised passage was a corridor skirting its own coastline

Gharibabadi later said in a phone interview with state television that during the meeting on Monday, Tehran and Muscat had reached "a common understanding" on the

administration of the waterway.

He said Oman "also supports being involved in these arrangements as a coastal state with sovereign rights, and... believes that fees should be collected in return for the services that are provided".

Gharib abadi added that they "decided that technical committees would be established between the two countries".

"Beginning in seven or eight days, our experts will start their specialised discussions, in accordance with the understanding we reached today, so that we can discuss these arrangements, prepare a text, and also hold technical negotiations regarding the shipping routes," he continued.

In recent days, Oman has indicated an ambiguous stance on the issue.

Last Tuesday, following a visit by Iranian officials, Oman and Iran announced in a joint

statement that they were examining the costs associated with the future management of the strait.

But later in the week Oman indicated that no "passage fees" were planned and announced the opening of a "temporary maritime corridor" close to its coast that it said was coordinated with the UN.

Iran responded by saying the only authorised passage was a corridor skirting its own coastline.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned on Sunday that any attempt to use alternative routes risked "escalating tensions" in the region.

It followed a flare-up in hostilities in which Iran struck a commercial ship in the strait and the United States responded with strikes on Iranian coastal targets.

The text says passage through the strait was to be toll-free "for 60 days only" after the

signing of the deal. It remains unclear what will happen after that period.

Gharib abadi on Monday said that "under Article 5 of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, the Islamic Republic of Iran determines the shipping routes under these temporary conditions, and we cannot accept any other route.

"It is our commitment to provide safe conditions for passage. That is why, if vessels transit through other routes, we will oppose it, we will seek to prevent it, and if any incident occurs involving those vessels, the responsibility will rest with them," he said.

"Over the past few days, the Americans have understood this message: if they seek to establish parallel routes... The Islamic Republic of Iran will use the various means at its disposal to provide an appropriate response to that violation."

Pakistan tutoring centre roof collapses, killing 14 children

LAHORE, Pakistan (AFP) — A roof collapse at a tutoring centre in the eastern Pakistani city of Lahore killed at least 14 children and injured five on Tuesday, officials said.

Workers had been repairing tiles on the decrepit building when the roof gave way and crushed the youngsters, a witness told AFP.

Grieving relatives wept as they gathered around the bodies of the young victims, shrouded in white sheets, AFP observed.

"A roof collapse in Basti Eid Gah, Kahna Nau, has claimed the lives of 14 children, while five others were injured," an Edhi ambulance service spokesperson said, referring to an area to the south of Pakistan's second-largest city, in Punjab province.

The city's top civilian official, Commissioner Marrayam Khan, confirmed the death toll and said a teacher had also been injured.

Broadcaster Geo News aired images of uniformed rescuers and civilians using spades and their hands to dig through dirt and rubble in the partially collapsed building.

A 45-year-old man named Zaheer told AFP his niece was among the victims.

"The roof was in poor shape," he said, adding that repair work was being carried out on tiles while the children studied.

"Suddenly the roof collapsed on top of quite a few children," he said. "They put a lot of weight on the roof and that's why this has happened."

Authorities promised an investigation and provincial police said on X that two people had been taken into custody



Relatives mourn beside the body of a deceased child, after a tutoring centre's roof collapsed, on the outskirts of Lahore on Tuesday

over the disaster. Medical sources said the children killed in the collapse were aged between around four and 12.

Investigation under way

Police said they were collecting evidence at the scene and posted video of officers speaking with rescuers wearing hardhats at the building, which was in a tightly packed residential area.

Khan, Lahore's commissioner, said in a statement that "those responsible for the incident will be found through a transparent, unbiased and immediate investigation".

According to a statement from the Punjab education minister, the tutoring centre was in a private house that

belonged to a teacher educating children from a disadvantaged neighbourhood.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed grief and said he "prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured and directed the authorities to provide them with every possible medical assistance", according to a statement released by his office.

Roof and building collapses are common across Pakistan, mainly because of poor safety standards and shoddy construction materials in the South Asian country of more than 240 million people.

Last July, 27 people were killed and 10 injured when a five-storey building collapsed in the impoverished area of Lyari in the southern city of Karachi.

Regent welcomes national team upon its return from World Cup

Continued from page 1

For other Arab teams, most had previous significant cumulative competitive experience: Morocco, making their 8th appearance at the event, was semifinalists at the 2022 World Cup, becoming the first Arab or African team to reach the final four in World

Cup history. They previously played in 1970, 1986, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2018 and 2022.

Egypt, the first Arab nation ever to qualify for a World Cup in 1934, returned to the global stage after an eight-year absence, led by Mohamed Salah, aiming to put back the nation among football's elite. This is

its fourth time after it previously took part in 1990 and 2018.

After missing the last two editions, Algeria returned to the World Cup for the fifth time, after earlier participations in 1982, 1986, 2010, 2014 and reaching the round of 16 in 2014.

Teams eliminated were Tunisia playing

its seventh World Cup, (1978, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2018, 2022 and 2026) and continuing its record of regular participation since 1998; Saudi Arabia, also made its seventh appearance as well (1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2018, 2022 and 2026) making it to the Round of 16 in 1994; Iraq which

advanced after beating Bolivia in an intercontinental playoff joined for the second time after 1986; and Qatar earlier played as the 2022 hosts.

At earlier editions, Kuwait was the first Arab Asian team to take part in 1982 and the UAE played in 1990.

GDP rises to 2.9% in Q1 2026, up from 2.7% in 2025 — DoS

Continued from page 1

Sharkas also said that the World Bank had forecast Jordan's economy to grow by around 2.6 per cent in 2026, while first-quarter performance has already exceeded that level, reflecting the resilience of the national economy and the effectiveness of ongoing reforms.

He also said that economic growth was

broadly based, with production sectors contributing more than 55 per cent of total growth during the first quarter of 2026, compared with an average of 33.8 per cent between 2015 and 2021, indicating a gradual structural shift towards more productive and value-added activities.

The governor also pointed to continued strength in key indicators, noting that foreign

currency reserves stood at around \$27.4 billion, sufficient to cover approximately 9.5 months of imports of goods and services, while inflation remained moderate at 1.88 per cent during the first five months of 2026.

He further highlighted improvements in foreign exchange inflows, including a 13.3 per cent increase in remittances from Jordanians abroad to about \$1.6 billion dur-

ing the first four months of the year, alongside a 1.6 per cent rise in national exports to around \$3 billion in the first quarter, and tourism revenues of approximately \$2.8 billion in the first five months.

Sharkas also said these indicators collectively demonstrate the economy's growing ability to diversify its sources of income and strengthen external stability, con-

tributing to overall macroeconomic resilience.

He added that the performance in the first quarter of 2026 reflects the cumulative impact of the Economic Modernisation Vision and its 2026-2029 executive programme, alongside government measures aimed at enhancing competitiveness, improving the investment climate, and supporting key productive sectors.

Jordan's cities have 'significant' potential to generate more productive jobs — World Bank

Continued from page 1

Yet, foreign-owned firms account for just 2.6 per cent of private businesses across MENA, indicating that the region has yet to fully benefit

from international investment and technology transfer.

The World Bank said creating conditions that allow productive firms to scale up, while attracting greater inward invest-

ment and strengthening urban infrastructure, would enable cities across the region, including Jordan, to generate more productive jobs and achieve stronger long-term economic growth.

In south Lebanon, Netanyahu says Israel will stay as long as Hizbollah 'threatens us'

Continued from page 1

Iran will respond to any US violation of the memorandum of understanding aimed at ending the war in the Middle

East, its foreign ministry spokesperson said Tuesday, as delegations from both sides were expected in Qatar for indirect talks on the deal.

"We will not leave any

action unanswered. As Iran's powerful armed forces have demonstrated, any act of aggression against the objectives of the Islamic Republic of Iran will be

met with an immediate and decisive response," Esmaeil Baqaei told reporters at a weekly press conference.

"Such actions would constitute a violation of

Article 1 of the memorandum of understanding. Naturally, if such violations are repeated and continue, the continuation of this process will encounter difficulties."

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Gabon government cracks down on criticism

Agence France-Presse

LIBREVILLE, Gabon — A repressive climate in Gabon is shattering hopes that the rise to power of Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema would lead to democratic change.

Opposition figures have been imprisoned, critical voices threatened and social media suspended.

One of the first to bear the brunt was Nelly Ngabima, a TikTok star with some 250,000 followers known as Princesse de Souba.

Ngabima, who never pulls punches when it comes to Gabon's elite, told AFP that people close to the president threatened her, so much so that France granted her refugee status.

A close associate of Oligui Nguema also sent her father a threatening voice message.

"Mr Oligui doesn't want to hear from activists or opponents. He doesn't want to have any," she said.

In November, several of Ngabima's social media accounts were suspended after she posted a video of the Bongo family, including former president Ali Bongo Ondimba's wife Sylvia and son, Nouredin, who claimed to have been tortured by the new president's men.

A few days later, the Facebook page of the party of former prime minister and main opposition figure Alain-Claude Bilie-By-Nze also disappeared.

It only came back online six months later.

About-face

The August 2023 coup led by military general Oligui Nguema ended 55 years of rule by the Bongo family and sparked scenes of jubilation on the streets of the capital, Libreville.

Many Gabonese, tired of the waste and corruption of the country's elite, wanted to believe in change.

Gabon, in central Africa, is home to nearly two million people, is rich in hydrocarbons and minerals, but most of the country lives in poverty.

Soon after coming to power, Oligui Nguema promised "more democratic" institutions.

He won presidential elections in April last year with nearly 95 per cent of the vote.

Press freedom in Gabon has undoubtedly improved in recent years, jumping from 121st in Reporters Without Borders' annual index in 2020 to 41st in 2025.

But the opening up has been short-lived.

"During the transition, President Oligui was preparing for an election, so he needed to show himself in the best possible light," said Jean-Valentin Leyama, a former opposition lawmaker under former president Omar Bongo and during the military transition.

"Once he was elected, we've all been astonished by this repressive about-face," he told AFP.

The most recent example was the imprisonment of Bilie-By-Nze in mid-April in a case linked to a debt from 2008, when he was in an official position.

For his lawyer, Thierry Nguia, "this affair is nothing more than a pretext to lock up a political opponent and to prevent him from running" in the 2032 presidential election.

"Every Gabonese has to understand that what is happening to Mr Bilie-By-Nze could happen to any of us," added Theophile Makita Niembo, vice president of the politician's Together for Gabon Party.

In a television interview earlier this month, Oligui Nguema denied any intervention by the executive in the case and defended the independence of the judiciary.

Climate of fear

Few people in Gabon now dare to voice their opinions publicly.

In a viral video, one man asked for his opinion on a teachers' strike refuses to answer, saying he feared reprisals.

Some even believe that there was more freedom of expression under the Bongos.

"There's no more freedom of expression," one journalist told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Three journalists from the independent online media were arrested and detained for several days in August, October and January, after publishing content deemed critical of the government.

"When journalists describe things as they are, they run the risk of being arrested at any moment," the journalist added.

The presidency did not respond when contacted by AFP.

During a teachers' strike in January that the government tried to put down, two trade unionists were arrested and held for a week after appearing on videos mostly posted on TikTok.

A month later, the authorities suspended Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and TikTok on the grounds that they were "susceptible to stoke social conflict" and "de-stabilise institutions".

The suspensions are still in place but many get round it by using virtual private network software.

The government has proposed outlawing online anonymity, forcing every Gabonese to be clearly identifiable on social networks.

For Leyama, "President Oligui does not like contradiction" and the crackdowns are an attempt to "neutralise critical voices", he added.

The erosion of global security: When nuclear deterrence becomes the last line of survival

By Hasan Dajah

The international system is currently witnessing one of its most perilous moments since the end of World War II. What was viewed for decades as an integrated framework for maintaining international peace and security is now suffering from a gradual erosion affecting its legal foundations, political institutions and enforcement mechanisms. International crises are no longer managed according to the rules of international law; instead, the balance of power and the interests of major powers increasingly dictate them. This has plunged the world into a phase where confidence in the international system is waning, while the likelihood of chaos and armed conflict rises.

The collective security system established after 1945 was built on the premise that the United Nations and the Security Council could prevent major wars and contain conflicts before they escalated into all-out confrontations. However, practical experience over recent decades has revealed a vast gap between theoretical principles and political reality. Many international resolutions have remained mere ink on paper, while the Security Council has failed to take decisive action in numerous crises due to the use of the veto. Often, the veto has shifted from a tool for preserving the international balance of power to a means of obstructing international justice and paralysing the collective will of the international community.

The veto is no longer merely a procedural mechanism within the Security Council; it has become a reflection of the divisions and geopolitical rivalries among major powers. Every major international crisis reveals that the interests of permanent members take precedence over the principles of international law, and that protecting allies or securing strategic gains often outweighs the imperative of safeguarding international peace and security. As this scenario

repeats itself, confidence in the United Nations and its various institutions to fulfill the role for which they were established has waned.

Simultaneously, the world is witnessing an unprecedented escalation in conventional arms races and a clear return to "hard power" politics. Military spending has soared to record levels, and concepts of military deterrence and security alliances have returned to the forefront of international relations — amid a proliferation of conflict zones, the widening scope of proxy war and escalating tensions between major powers across several strategic regions.

The world today stands on the precipice of a highly sensitive era, one where the principles of collective security are receding in favour of nuclear deterrence dynamics and where stability is shifting from a product of international institutions to a direct result of mutual fear among major powers

Amidst this turbulent environment, a fundamental question arises: What prevents the outbreak of a direct global war between nuclear powers?

The answer lies in the fact that nuclear deterrence remains, to this day, the most influential factor in preventing

all-out military confrontation among nuclear-armed states. Since the end of World War II, no direct confrontation has occurred between major nuclear powers — not solely due to the effectiveness of the international system, but because the cost of nuclear war has come to outweigh any potential political or military gains.

This deterrence rests on the principle of "Mutually Assured Destruction", grounded in the conviction among all parties that the use of nuclear weapons would result in catastrophic losses for all belligerents, rendering victory itself meaningless. Consequently, despite their inherent danger, nuclear arsenals simultaneously serve as a crucial factor in preventing major wars between great powers.

However, this reality should not be viewed as a permanent guarantee of stability; the growing reliance on nuclear deterrence fundamentally reflects the international system's failure to generate more effective political and legal alternatives. When the nuclear bomb becomes the ultimate guarantor of global security, it implies that the tools of diplomacy, international law, mediation and multilateral institutions have lost a significant portion of their crisis-management capacity.

This scenario is further compounded by the expanding circle of nuclear-armed states and the development of hypersonic missile technologies, military AI systems and cyber weapons. These advancements risk triggering miscalculations or strategic errors, thereby heightening the likelihood of unintended escalation. The world now faces not only the danger of a deliberate political decision to use nuclear weapons but also the risks posed by technical malfunctions, cyberattacks or the misinterpretation of military alerts.

Conversely, collective security institutions appear less capable than ever of keeping pace with these shifts. Proposed reforms within the United Nations remain stalled, while the

gap widens between the post-World War II international order and the power dynamics of the twenty-first century. Furthermore, the persistence of the permanent members' privileges in their current form raises growing questions regarding the fairness and effectiveness of the international system in addressing emerging challenges.

The world today stands on the precipice of a highly sensitive era, one where the principles of collective security are receding in favour of nuclear deterrence dynamics and where stability is shifting from a product of international institutions to a direct result of mutual fear among major powers. While this equation may temporarily avert all-out war, it fails to secure lasting peace, as it rests more on a "balance of terror" than on the cultivation of trust.

Preserving global security in the future cannot rely solely on nuclear deterrence, regardless of its effectiveness in preventing direct confrontation. Instead, it requires revitalising the international cooperation system, upholding international law, developing more effective conflict-resolution mechanisms and implementing institutional reforms that restore the United Nations' role as the overarching framework for managing collective security. As institutions weaken, the primacy of raw power grows; as the rule of law erodes, the likelihood of chaos rises.

The greatest challenge facing the international community remains the transition from an era of "managing fear" to one of "building trust". The world cannot indefinitely gamble that nuclear deterrence will avert catastrophe; a single miscalculation or error in judgment could transform deterrence from a means of preventing war into the very spark that ignites it. In such an event, the loser would not be a single party, but humanity as a whole.

Hasan Dajah is professor of strategic studies at Al Hussein Bin Talal University

Monsters playing victims: Danny Danon's twisted war on the truth

By Ramzy Baroud

Whether Israelis will ever comprehend the irreparable damage inflicted upon their country's reputation by their UN ambassador, Danny Danon, is a moot point. The damage Israel has done to itself through its barbaric practices in occupied Palestine is simply impossible to overcome.

Danon, however, utilises a peculiar approach to defending Israel within international institutions: He relies on bullying, intimidation and an overt attempt to silence anyone who dares to challenge the official Israeli narrative, particularly women leaders. Yet, what makes his behaviour most outrageous is his deployment of these abrasive tactics to suppress an issue that demands the utmost sensitivity: The systemic use of sexual violence and human rights abuses against Palestinians.

The confrontation took place during a UN General Assembly session convened to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. Senior UN officials were presenting harrowing findings documenting sexual violence against Palestinian detainees.

True to form, Danon refused to engage with the substance of the reports. For Israeli diplomacy, the enemy is never merely the armed adversary; it is the judge, the independent human rights observer and the UN investigator whose sole mandate is to document violations of international law.

The immediate target of Danon's wrath was Pramila Patten, the UN secretary-general's special representative on sexual violence in conflict. Instead of reflecting on the grim findings, Danon demanded Patten's resignation. He accused her and the broader international com-

munity of harbouring an "obSESSION" with targeting Israel.

When Vanessa Frazier, the secretary-general's special representative for children and armed conflict, attempted to intervene on a point of order per established protocol, Danon unleashed a vitriolic verbal assault. Refusing to yield, he shouted over her, ordering her to "be quiet" and drowning out the chamber with his outbursts. "Shame on you. You are part of this obsession," Danon bellowed.

While such unruly behaviour should have resulted in Danon's immediate removal from the chamber, the diplomatic asymmetry of the UN prevailed. It was Frazier who found herself trying to de-escalate, politely clarifying that her procedural request was "not personal". Danon shot back with typical defiance: "You will not be allowed to bully us."

Herein lies the supreme irony of Israel's diplomatic relationship with the UN and international law. Israel stands as one of the most egregious, serial violators of international law in modern history — a decades-long pattern of behaviour left unpunished by Western vetoes, which ultimately emboldened it to carry out an ongoing genocide in Gaza. Yet, Israeli officials persistently claim the mantle of the ultimate victim, alleging they are the targets of antisemitism, unfair bias, and now, "bullying" by the very institutions they defy.

But the mountain of evidence cannot be shouted away. According to an extensive report issued by Patten's office, there are verified patterns of systemic abuse, sexual degradation and psychological torture weaponised against Palestinian men, women and children in Israeli detention camps like Sde Teiman.

The weight of this evidence reached such an undeniable

threshold that the UN secretary-general's office formally added Israel to the global "List of Shame", the blacklist of states committing grave violations against children in armed conflict.

None of this exposure is enough to convince Danon or the broader Israeli political establishment that Israel does not possess a sovereign right to violate international law. In their view, merely pointing out these crimes constitutes an act of aggression.

This systemic denial extends to every facet of the conflict. A comprehensive UN investigation recently concluded that Israel has deliberately targeted Palestinian children in Gaza as a core component of its military campaign. The numbers are staggering: Between October 7, 2023, and October 7, 2025, an estimated 20,179 Palestinian children were killed, about 30 per cent of all Palestinian deaths.

"The evidence shows that Palestinian children have been deliberately targeted and killed by the Israeli security forces," stated commission chair Srinivasan Muralidhar, noting that Israeli authorities have systematically continued to commit the crime of genocide.

While these findings provide another layer of ironclad legal proof regarding genocidal intent, the true significance of the report lies in its exposure of the rationale behind targeting youth. Typically, the disproportionate slaughter of children and women is dismissed by Western apologists as "collateral damage". The UN inquiry shattered this defense, offering a far more consequential conclusion: The targeting of Gaza's children is part of a calculated strategy to destroy the biological continuity and future existence of the Palestinian people in Gaza.

As Muralidhar bluntly sum-

marised: "By targeting children, Israel is attacking the very capacity of the Palestinian people to exist."

It remains a profound disappointment that the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice, often swift to indict war crimes committed elsewhere, continue to move at a glacial pace regarding Israel. Tragically, the catastrophe continues unabated because there is still no meaningful international mechanism willing to enforce sanctions or employ genuine pressure to halt it.

This is precisely why Danny Danon wants the world to be quiet. His outbursts are not merely directed at UN diplomats; they are directed at global civil society, ordinary citizens and anyone refusing to look away. Israel demands absolute silence while Palestinians are starved, raped and murdered. According to its twisted logic, committing these atrocities is an inherent right and objecting to them is an act of malice.

If this logic is allowed to prevail, it becomes the blueprint for every future aggressor who wishes to kill, rape and starve a population for geopolitical gain. Palestinians and Lebanese are already forced to inhabit this dystopian reality. Our collective responsibility is clear: We must refuse to be quiet. We must speak out, ensuring our voices drown out the shouts of Danon and his peers, so that murder and systemic violence are never normalised as tools of military necessity.

Ramzy Baroud is a journalist, author and the editor of The Palestine Chronicle. He is the author of eight books. His latest book, "Before the Flood", was published by Seven Stories Press. His other books include "Our Vision for Liberation", "My Father was a Freedom Fighter" and "The Last Earth". Baroud is a non-resident senior research fellow at the Centre for Islam and Global Affairs

BUSINESS

Wednesday, July 1, 2026

Jordan, Brazil seek to deepen trade ties ahead of São Paulo economic forum

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of Jordan Chamber of Commerce (JCC) Khalil Haj Tawfiq on Tuesday met a delegation from the Arab-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce (CCAB) to discuss ways to expand trade and investment ties between Jordan and Brazil.

During the meeting, the CCAB invited Haj Tawfiq to deliver a keynote address at the Brazil and Arab Countries Economic Forum 2026, which is scheduled to be held in São Paulo on August 25, according to a JCC statement.

The discussions highlighted the forum's role as a strategic platform bringing together public and private sector leaders to explore opportunities in logistics, energy, the digital economy and cross-sector investment.

The two sides also reviewed preparations for a Brazilian products exhibition to be held in Amman in October 2026, featuring companies from the food processing, construction, furniture, pharmaceutical, apparel and coffee sectors.

Building on the



Chairman of Jordan Chamber of Commerce Khalil Haj Tawfiq on Tuesday meets a delegation from the Arab-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce to discuss ways to expand trade and investment ties

success of the 2025 Jordanian-Brazilian Economic Forum, the exhibition aims to strengthen Brazil's presence in the Jordanian market and create opportunities for trade and investment.

Haj Tawfiq said Jordan's strategic location, network of free trade agreements and logistics infra-

structure position the Kingdom as a regional gateway and re-export hub for neighbouring markets.

He added that the Economic Modernisation Vision (EMV) has helped create an attractive investment environment, opening up opportunities in the food industries, pharmaceuticals and

energy, trade, tourism and information technology sectors.

JCC chairman also proposed including tourism operators in future Brazilian business delegations to promote Jordan's religious, medical and cultural tourism, alongside its role as a regional economic and logistics hub.

The CCAB reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening cooperation with the JCC, noting that both the economic forum in São Paulo and the exhibition in Amman would provide valuable platforms for fostering business partnerships and attracting investment, according to JCC statement.

Informality among women ranges from 40% to 71% of total employment

AMMAN (JT) — "The economic consequences of crises are never experienced equally. Women across the Arab States are already navigating some of the world's lowest rates of labour force participation, high levels of informal work and limited access to social protection," UN Women Regional Director for the Arab States Moez Doraid said.

He added, "Without deliberate measures to protect women's livelihoods and access to decent work, this crisis risks deepening inequalities and reversing important progress on women's economic empowerment across the region."

Doraid noted that women in the Arab region have historically been concentrated in the public sector, particularly in health, education and public administration, according to an UN Women Arab States office's statement.

"As countries face tighter fiscal conditions in response to the crisis, the risk is not dramatic layoffs, as is often the case in the private sector, but a gradual erosion of employment through hiring freezes, wage compression and salary arrears," Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Acting Deputy Executive Secretary



Mehrinaz El Awady said. "A crisis that pushes women out of the labour force is not just a social setback; it is a macroeconomic one."

The policy brief also warns that women working in the informal economy remain particularly vulnerable because of their limited access to employment contracts, social protection, unemployment benefits and income security.

It adds that women-led enterprises face heightened risks during periods of economic stress, as tighter credit conditions and structural barriers to finance limit their ability to sustain operations and retain employees.

The brief calls for urgent and targeted measures to protect women's livelihoods and prevent long-term economic and

social setbacks.

Its recommendations include expanding income protection and emergency support for women employed in the informal and private sectors, safeguarding education and health budgets, protecting women-led enterprises from tighter credit conditions, preventing public sector hiring freezes from disproportionately affecting young women, and strengthening sex-disaggregated labour market monitoring.

The brief stresses that protecting women's employment is essential not only for advancing gender equality, but also for supporting economic recovery, social stability and long-term development across the region, according to a statement of the UN Women regional office.

Why is the yen so weak and what can Japan do about it?

TOKYO (AFP) — The yen has tumbled past a 40-year low against the US dollar, prompting the Japanese government to vow "appropriate action at any time".

The currency has now fallen to around 161.96 yen per dollar, the weakest since 1986, compared to a high of around 75 yen in 2011.

AFP looks at the causes and consequences and how Japan might halt the slide, which mirrors drops in other Asian currencies in the wake of the Middle East war.

Interest rates

Part of the reason is the gap between Japanese interest rates and those of other central banks, especially the US Federal Reserve.

While the Bank of Japan (BoJ) began hiking rates above zero in 2024, and raised interest rates to a 31-year high on June 16, they remain low compared to other major economies.

This gap means that investors borrow yen at cheap rates and invest in other assets outside Japan with better returns. This results in capital outflows and pressure on the yen.

The BoJ is expected to hike rates further this year, but expectations are growing that the Fed will also tighten, meaning that the interest-rate differential is likely to remain wide.

"The prospect of higher US interest rates has widened the expected policy gap between the United States and many of its major trading partners, increasing demand for dollar-denominated assets," said IG's Axel Rudolph.

Further hikes by the BoJ could also meet resistance from Prime Minister Sanae Takai-chi's government, which is anxious not to snuff



Electronic boards display the foreign exchange rate of the Japanese yen against the US dollar at a foreign exchange brokerage in Tokyo on Tuesday

out growth with higher borrowing costs.

Oil

Japan, the world's fourth-largest economy, is resource-poor and some 95 per cent of its oil imports came from the Middle East before the most recent conflict.

Oil is traded in US dollars, meaning that the higher the price, the more yen Japan has to pay for each barrel of crude, further weakening demand for the Japanese currency.

The situation worsened for Japan when oil prices spiked after attacks by the United States and Israeli on Iran from February 28 and Tehran's throttling of the Strait of Hormuz, a key supply route for oil and LNG gas.

Exports and imports

One bright spot for Japan is that a weaker yen makes its exports cheaper internationally, which US President Donald Trump has complained about.

Another has been a boom in foreign tourists, lured by cheaper

shopping, although not all Japanese are happy with the overcrowding and bad behaviour in some places.

Higher oil prices mean not just higher petrol and energy prices, something that Takaichi's administration has sought to shield consumers from with subsidies.

It also fuels inflation for other items as companies pass on higher costs to consumers, and as the bill for other imports besides oil and gas rise because of the weak yen.

Anger about inflation contributed to the demise of Takaichi's two predecessors as prime minister, particularly after rice prices soared.

Intervention

Japan has intervened in the market in the past to support the yen, drawing on its huge reserves of cash or US Treasury holdings to either buy yen or sell US dollars.

Japan spent 11.7 trillion yen (\$73 billion) between late April and late May, and data due later on Tuesday was expected to reveal whether it has intervened since.

The Japanese government regularly signals that it is ready to intervene in an attempt to discourage currency speculators off betting on further falls in the yen.

Other options

However, intervention or threats of intervention can only achieve so much.

Michael Wan at MUFG Bank said Tokyo could encourage its pension funds and life insurance companies to repatriate funds back to Japan, given its status as a large net creditor to the world.

"But what would be key is continued commitment to fiscal discipline, coupled with providing the market with confidence the government will not intervene excessively in the Bank of Japan's conduct of monetary policy to manage inflation," Wan told AFP.

"The bottom line is that real interest rates in Japan are too low relative to the rest of the world, at a time of robust nominal GDP growth."

Jordan to host second Fintech Festival in September

AMMAN (JT) — The Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) has announced the second edition of the Jordan Fintech Festival 2026, which will be held on September 23-24 at the King Hussein Bin Talal Convention Centre at the Dead Sea.

The event is being organised in partnership with the Association of Banks in Jordan and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) as part of the CBJ's ongoing efforts to strengthen the Kingdom's fintech ecosystem and advance its digital financial sector, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

CBJ Governor Adel Sharkas said the festival serves as a national strategic platform reflecting the significant transformation taking place in Jordan's financial sector and the bank's vision of building an integrated digital financial ecosystem that supports

sustainable development and enhances the Kingdom's regional and international competitiveness.

He said the CBJ continues to develop regulatory policies that encourage innovation while ensuring consumer protection.

Sharkas added that the festival underscores the central bank's commitment to positioning Jordan as a regional hub for financial technology by fostering an innovative digital financial environment that supports digital transformation, promotes financial inclusion and strengthens integration across the Kingdom's financial sector.

He noted that the event also aims to strengthen cooperation among financial institutions, fintech start-ups and regulators to discuss the latest global developments in financial services and showcase emerging

technologies.

The festival programme will cover a broad range of strategic topics shaping the future of financial technology, including digital payments, digital transformation in the banking and financial sectors, open finance, digital assets and blockchain innovation, embedded finance, banking-as-a-service, entrepreneurship, investment and the broader start-up ecosystem.

Discussions will also address sustainable finance, environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices, user experience in fintech platforms, as well as developments related to virtual assets and asset tokenisation.

The festival will feature a series of interactive events, including panel discussions, specialised workshops led by local and international experts, an exhibition showcasing

the latest digital financial products and solutions, pitch sessions for fintech start-ups, networking opportunities connecting innovators with investors and industry leaders, and a Fintech Hackathon designed to encourage the development of innovative digital solutions.

The CBJ also announced that registration is now open to professionals, experts, investors, representatives of financial institutions and fintech start-ups interested in attending the event. Participation is free of charge.

For registration and the latest updates, participants are invited to visit the festival's official website, www.jofintechfestival.com, or contact the organisers via jofin.festival@cbj.gov.jo for general enquiries or information on media, technology and academic partnerships, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

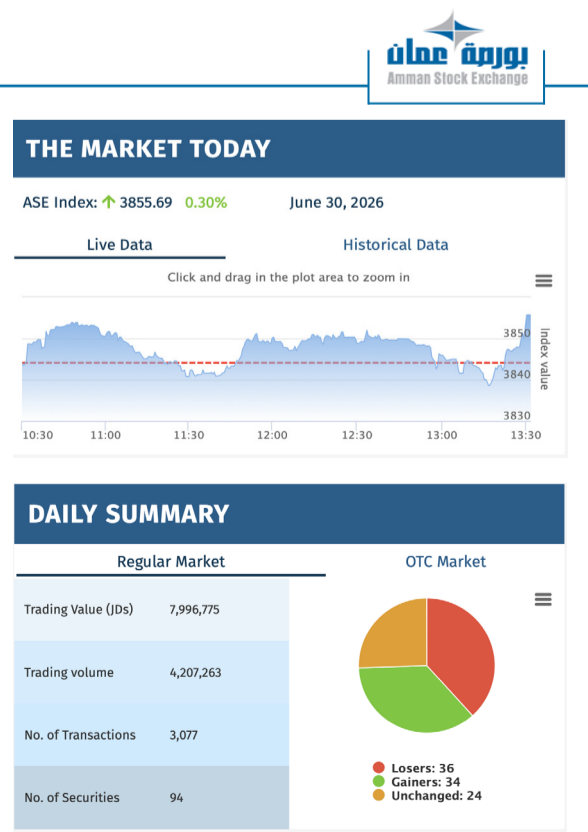
AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Tuesday reached JD 8 million while 4.2 million shares were traded through 3,077 transactions.

The ASE shares price index closed at 3855.69 point, an increase of 0.3 per cent.

The shares of 94 companies were traded, the shares prices of 34 companies rose, and the shares prices of 36 declined.

The top five gainers were the National Insurance by 6.71 per cent, Jordan Poultry Processing & Marketing by 5.26 per cent, Jordan Express Tourist Transport by 4.85 per cent, Premier Business and Projects Co.ltd by 4.76 per cent and Nutri Dar by 4.04 per cent.

The top five losers were, Specialised Trading & Investment by 4.96 per cent, Ubour Logistic Services Plc by 4.88 per cent, Ihdathiat Co-ordinates by 4.76 per cent, Amoun International For Investments by 4.44 per cent and Jordan Industrial Resources by 3.92 per cent.



Germany questions footballing identity after fresh World Cup failure

TENNIS

Fourth seed Shelton knocked out of Wimbledon in first round

LONDON (AFP) — American fourth seed Ben Shelton was dumped out in the first round of Wimbledon by Finland's Otto Virtanen, missing a match point before losing in a fifth-set tie-break. The 23-year-old Shelton, an All England Club quarter-finalist last year, suffered his first opening-round defeat at a Grand Slam since the 2023 French Open. World No. 140 Virtanen will face British wildcard Arthur Fery in the second round after a 6-4, 3-6, 6-7 (8/10), 6-2, 7-6 (11/9) victory that lasted four hours and 21 minutes. "I had a great month before this one, played a lot of grass matches," said Virtanen. "I missed last year, had a few injuries... It feels so good to be back here."

Defending champ Swiatek survives scare to reach Wimbledon second round

LONDON (AFP) — Iga Swiatek survived a scare to start her Wimbledon title defence with a 6-1, 2-6, 6-3 win over American world number 79 Taylor Townsend on Tuesday. Swiatek suffered a second-set wobble that left her in danger of becoming only the third reigning female Wimbledon champion to lose in the first round in the Open era. But World No.3 Swiatek, a six-time Grand Slam champion, steadied her nerves in the deciding set, surviving a 21-minute first game before securing the breaks of serve that edged her into the second round. The visibly emotional Swiatek buried her head in a towel after converting match point. The 25-year-old Pole hasn't reached the semi-finals of a Grand Slam in her last three attempts since winning Wimbledon. Townsend's power-hitting pushed Swiatek to the brink of another disappointment at the majors. But the 30-year-old has never been past the Wimbledon second round and Swiatek did just enough to set up a last-64 clash against 2021 Wimbledon runner-up Karolina Pliskova. "It was a tough couple of weeks. A season when not everything went how I wanted. I don't think I won any three-set matches this year, so I'm happy I could do it," Swiatek said. "Obviously it means a lot to be the defending champion here. In the end I kept my composure. I knew I needed to be solid."

By Daniel Wighton
Agence France-Presse

BERLIN — Yet, another World Cup failure has Germany questioning its footballing identity, with some calling for radical changes at all levels in the football-mad nation.

Germany's shock capitulation to Paraguay in the last 32 on Monday, their first ever World Cup penalty shootout defeat, continues the four-time champions' sheer drop from the game's elite.

Germany has now been eliminated early in the past three World Cups.

Since beating Argentina 1-0 to win the World Cup in 2014, Germany has not only been unable to win an elimination match at the tournament, but they have also failed to keep a clean sheet.

Calls to sack coach Julian Nagelsmann have grown, particularly with former Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp seemingly waiting in the wings.

Others, including Klopp himself, have demanded far more fundamental changes to the game in Germany.

'Drifting away from the elite'

Even with diminished expectations after a lean decade, the German press slammed Nagelsmann's side after they fell to 41st-ranked Paraguay, a team who lost 4-1 to hosts USA in their tournament opener.

Respected Munich daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung



Jonathan Tah of Germany controls the ball against Gustavo Velazquez #2 of Paraguay during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Round Of 32 match between Germany and Paraguay at Boston Stadium on Tuesday

called the result "a new humiliation", adding the Germans were "heading home with a thoroughly deserved return ticket".

German football magazine Kicker lamented a "damning indictment and proof that Germany is drifting further and further away from the world's elite".

Once boasting club-made talents the envy of Europe, Germany's ability to produce quality players has fallen behind European rivals France, Spain and England over the past decade.

Despite being Europe's most populous nation, where football is by far

the dominant sport, Germany lack depth.

While injuries to teenage forward Lennart Karl, veteran striker Serge Gnabry and first-choice centre-back Nico Schlotterbeck have hurt the Germans, other major European nations can afford to leave star players at home.

Kicker cited France's Eduardo Camavinga, Christopher Nkunku and Randal Kolo Muani, England's Phil Foden, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Cole Palmer and Spain defender Dean Huijsen as examples.

Germany's shallow talent pool ups the pressure

on their few remaining world-class players to perform.

Kai Havertz, Florian Wirtz and Jamal Musiala all entered the tournament after challenging seasons and have been unable to reproduce their best form in North America, despite showing glimpses of their quality.

'Become Germany again'

Nagelsmann has copped much of the ire.

Having taken over as coach despite reportedly being courted by Europe's top clubs, Nagelsmann's appointment was considered a coup for the

German FA (DFB).

But with the 38-year-old's high point a last-eight defeat to Spain on home soil at Euro 2024, calls are growing to avoid hanging onto a manager too long after a World Cup setback, as with predecessors Joachim Loew and Hansi Flick.

Lothar Matthaeus, a World Cup winner in 1990, wrote in his Bild column that Nagelsmann lacked "imagination", adding Germany "have to move forward with a new coach".

Nagelsmann admitted "big changes" were needed but pledged to stay on, saying: "I'm not one

to run away. I'm ready to continue if the DFB wants me to."

The DFB reportedly cancelled a press conference planned for Tuesday, instead promising to release a statement later in the day.

Engaged as a sideline pundit, Klopp has cast a dark shadow over Nagelsmann and the German dugout since the tournament began.

Before Germany's opening game, Klopp attracted criticism for joking the young coach was only in charge of the team "for now", implying Nagelsmann was only keeping the seat warm.

But on Monday, Klopp cut a far more serious figure, dismissing suggestions he should take the wheel, while calling for more fundamental changes to the game, starting at the under-10 level.

"Look at Paraguay," Klopp said over images of the South American nation's celebrations. "They're all in tears; that's how much the Round of 16 means to them."

Klopp said the Germans were too content to dine out on their golden past.

"We are Germany? No, we were Germany. To be football Germany again, we need to really change things."

"It's of course not about names. Not about mine, not about Julian's," Klopp said, adding: "Julian is right. The team wanted it, but they were unable to do it in some areas."

"And now we need to ask why is that?"

LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

Thousands expected as Vespa celebrates 80 years in Rome

By Juliette Rabat
Agence France-Presse

ROME — An icon for the Italian way of life, the Vespa is celebrating its 80th birthday with thousands of drivers expected to zip around Rome in the legendary scooters.

Featuring in cinema classics like "Roman Holiday" and "La Dolce Vita", the Vespa has a long association with the Eternal City.

"The history of the Vespa, which accompanies the birth and rise of Italy after the Second World War, is in a way an iconic symbol of our history, of our culture," said Roberto Gualtieri, the Italian capital's mayor.

The Vespa, which means "wasp" in Italian — a reference to the sound of its engine — was born on 23 April 1946, when the first patent for its manufacture was filed in Italy by Piaggio. It is still produced at the Pontedera site in Tuscany.

It was "the symbol of an Italy emerging from the war and getting back on its feet", Gualtieri said, adding that he was "proud" that Piaggio had decided to organise the anniversary in the city.

"Telling the story of 80 years of the Vespa is, in part, telling the story of how Rome has



Vespa enthusiasts from around the world ride during the parade of the Vespa World Days marking the 80th anniversary of the iconic Italian brand of scooters in Rome

managed to capture the world's imagination," particularly through cinema, he said.

'Vespa is special'

The four days of celebrations began on Thursday with the inauguration of a "Vespa Village" at the Foro Italicco, a sports complex in the north of the capital, and will culminate on Saturday with a grand parade through the streets of Rome.

More than 10,000 "Vespisti" from all over the globe are expected

to turn up in the scooters, which are instantly recognisable because of their rounded lines, their brightly coloured metal bodywork and their round headlight mounted on the handlebars.

Andrew Ward, 57, and his sister Julie Stover, 63, came from the United States and rented a Vespa in Rome to take part in the parade.

"We had scooters and motorcycles our whole lives. But I always wanted a Vespa and eventually we got Vespas. Now

I have two!" Ward, a regular at "Vespisti" gatherings in his country, told AFP.

"It's a high-quality scooter. And it comes with a certain status. It's classy, you know. It's not like the cheap scooters that you see on the road all the time. Vespa is special," Stover added.

Social significance

Designed to be a popular and affordable means of transport, the Vespa — which benefit-

ed from all sorts of innovations derived from aviation, Piaggio's core business — also has social significance.

Its history is intertwined with "the history of a country emerging from the post-war period, that wants to move, that wants to get back up", Matteo Colaninno, executive chairman of the Piaggio group, said at the presentation of the celebrations.

"And this desire to move is not just physical mobility," it is also

"a kind of drive towards economic mobility and above all social mobility," he said.

"Today, the Vespa has become a global phenomenon; we are on the verge of 20 million vehicles produced" since 1946, Colaninno said.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, photographed on Thursday sitting on a white Vespa in the reception rooms of Palazzo Chigi, the main government building, praised the famous scooter as representing not only "industrial excellence" but also "one of the most cherished Italian icons in the world, a symbol of Italian creativity and style".

"It's a legend," said Franco Gaudino, 52, speaking to AFP as he took part in the Roman event with his club from La Louviere, in Belgium.

Illac Diaz, originally from the Philippines, said that "the nice thing about the Vespa is you bring friendship".

"There's no place where you park without people becoming friends. So Vespa is like a family," said the 52-year-old, who has just bought a house in Trieste, in northern Italy, where he plans to acquire another Vespa as soon as possible.



The Statue of Liberty in New York Harbour was given to the United States by France in 1886

France to illuminate Statue of Liberty for US 250th birthday

NEW YORK (AFP) — France will stage an elaborate light show at the Statue of Liberty to mark the 250th anniversary of the United States, the French consulate said on Monday.

Described as a "monumental artistic creation," the show will be recorded in advance and broadcast by the ABC network at the start of its 25 hours of programming for Independence Day, July 4.

"The Statue of Liberty will be revealed to the public as it has never been seen before, in a staging designed to magnify its symbolic and emotional power," the consulate said.

"Our friendship goes back 250 years, it is still very strong,

it runs deep, and that is why we wanted to do something significant," France's consul to New York Cedrik Foursicot told AFP.

The Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor was given to the United States by France in 1886, and is one of the country's most famous monuments.

France also dispatched its air force acrobatics team to the United States this month to mark the 250th anniversary.

On June 9, eight Alpha jets of the Patrouille de France filled the skies above Manhattan with the colours of the French tricolour — soaring above the iconic statue.

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