

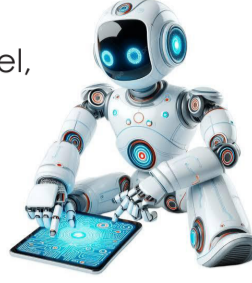





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Thursday, July 2, 2026 | Muharram 17, 1448 Hijri

World Bank approves \$700 million in financing to boost investment, jobs in Jordan

AMMAN (JT) — The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors has approved a \$700 million loan to support Jordan's efforts to translate economic stability into stronger private investment, faster growth and the creation of more and better jobs.

The Jordan Growth and Competitiveness Development Policy Financing II programme will support government reforms aimed at boosting private investment, expanding access to finance, creating employment opportunities and accelerating the Kingdom's green and digital transition, the World Bank said in a statement.

Jordan has maintained macroeconomic stability despite a challenging regional environment, recording real GDP growth of 2.8 per cent in 2025. The country also secured its first sovereign credit rating upgrade in more than two decades in 2024, which was reaffirmed in 2025, according to the statement.

The World Bank said that the next challenge is to convert



The World Bank

this economic stability into higher levels of investment, stronger economic growth and broader employment opportunities.

"Jordan has navigated a difficult regional environment with discipline and determination, preserving macroeconomic stability and sustaining reform momentum," said Jean-Christophe Carret, the

World Bank's division director for the Middle East department.

"This programme will support ongoing efforts to strengthen private sector growth by making it easier and less costly to do business, expanding access to finance, including for women entrepreneurs, and advancing digital, green and energy sector reforms", Carret said in

the statement.

"Together, these measures can help unlock investment and create the conditions for more and better jobs for Jordanians," he added.

The financing supports two complementary reform pillars under the government's Economic Modernisation Vision, the statement said.

According to the World Bank, the reforms are designed to make Jordan a more attractive destination for investment by streamlining sectoral licensing procedures, modernising the legal framework governing electronic and cross-border transactions, extending social protection to workers in flexible and part-time employment, and encouraging private sector investment in electricity transmission, generation and energy storage.

According to the statement, the programme also seeks to expand and diversify access to finance for businesses and entrepreneurs. It supports efforts to modernise capital markets and introduce new financing instruments, including crowdfunding and cash flow-based lending, which could particularly benefit micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), which account for around 99 per cent of businesses in Jordan.

Continued on page 5



Al Hussein Bin Abdullah II Industrial Estate in Karak, some 118km south of Amman

Industrial sector grows 4.8% in Q1 2026, drives 40% of economic growth — JCI

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's industrial sector grew by 4.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2026, accounting for nearly 40 per cent of the Kingdom's overall economic growth, according to the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI).

The JCI said that the sector contributed 1.15

percentage points to Jordan's overall GDP growth of 2.9 per cent during the quarter, while its added value increased to JD2.274 billion from JD2.170 billion in the corresponding period of 2025, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The industrial sector, which comprises

manufacturing, mining, electricity and water supply, accelerated from a growth rate of 3.4 per cent in the first quarter of 2025, reflecting stronger production activity and sustained momentum across the Kingdom's productive sectors.

Continued on page 5



This photo shows a view of the Al Aqsa Mosque Compound and its Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem's Old City on December 20, 2024

US signs agreement to build permanent embassy in Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The United States on Wednesday signed an agreement to build a new embassy compound in Jerusalem, a move that Israel said reflected the "unbreakable alliance"

between the countries.

During his first term, US President Donald Trump recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017 and ordered the relocation of Washington's diplomatic

mission from Tel Aviv.

But the services were spread across several locations in Jerusalem until a single permanent site could be found.

Continued on page 5

JAF sends 5-truck aid convoy to support Nablus field hospital operations

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) on Wednesday dispatched an aid convoy to the Jordanian Field Hospital in Nablus, carrying medical, humanitarian and relief supplies.

The move is part of Jordan's ongoing efforts to support Palestinians in the West Bank and enhance the hospital's capacity to provide healthcare services, according to a JAF statement.

The convoy, comprising five trucks loaded with medical supplies and food items, was prepared by the Royal Supply and Transport Directorate to sustain the hospital's operational readiness and support its continued medical services.

JAF said that the Jordanian Field Hospital in Nablus continues to carry out its humanitarian and medical duties through specialised



The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army on Wednesday dispatches an aid convoy to the Jordanian Field Hospital in Nablus

medical teams, including doctors, nurses and technicians, providing

healthcare services to patients and helping alleviate their suffering.

The dispatch forms part of the JAF's sustained efforts to sup-

port communities in the West Bank, in line with Royal directives aimed at strengthening humanitarian assistance and enhancing the capacity of medical institutions to meet growing health needs.

Jordan also operates two military field hospitals in Gaza: One in the northern part of the Strip, established in 2009 following the 2008 war, and another in Khan Younis in the south, set up in November 2023 during the escalation of the Israeli war on the enclave following October 7, 2023.

Additional humanitarian initiatives include the land bridge for aid delivery, the mobile bakery project, the "Restoring Hope" initiative providing prosthetics for amputees and the evacuation of critical medical cases to Jordanian hospitals.

NEGOTIATION

US, Iran officials hold indirect talks in Doha

DUBAI (AFP) — Indirect talks in Doha between officials from the United States and Iran aimed at ending the Middle East war have started, a diplomat with knowledge of the talks told AFP on Wednesday.

The diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive talks, confirmed negotiations were under way after they earlier said the US and Iran were to hold "indirect technical talks on Wednesday in Doha with Qatari and Pakistani mediators".

The Doha talks are



This handout satellite image courtesy of Vantor shows vehicles at the western entrance of the Pickaxe Mountain tunnel complex adjacent to the Natanz Nuclear Facility near Natanz, Isfahan province, central Iran, on June 21

based "on the memorandum of understanding, building on the

progress made at the Lake Lucerne Summit", the diplomat said, re-

ferring to recent talks in the Swiss resort town and the negoti-

ating framework endorsed by the two sides in June.

US envoys Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff are not taking part in the technical talks, the diplomat added, after they met with Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani on Tuesday.

Both the US and Iran had said they would send officials for meetings in Qatar.

The US-Iran memorandum of understanding, brokered by Qatar and Pakistan, includes a 60-day ceasefire in the war that started with US-Israeli strikes on February 28, the

reopening of the blockaded Strait of Hormuz and a timeframe for a final deal to end the war and reach an agreement on Iran's nuclear programme.

Iranian officials were set to travel to Doha on Wednesday but Tehran denied an earlier claim by US President Donald Trump that there would be direct talks.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei confirmed the Iranian delegation would be led by Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi but said the officials "have no plans for ne-

gotiations with the American side at any level over the coming days".

Kushner and Witkoff instead met with the Qatari prime minister on Tuesday, the Gulf state's foreign ministry said.

The trio discussed "the ongoing talks between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding", the ministry said in a statement, adding that they also discussed developments in Lebanon.



The King Abdullah II Fund for Development announces the names of 20 projects selected for funding under the third edition of the 'Tamkeen' project

KAFD announces support for 20 projects under 3rd 'Tamkeen'

AMMAN (JT) — Within national efforts to support the political modernisation process, the King Abdullah II Fund for Development (KAFD) has announced the names of 20 projects selected for funding under the third edition of the "Tamkeen" project.

The initiative aims to provide financial support to civil society organisations working in political empowerment to implement programmes that enhance political participation, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

KAFD Director Samer Mufleh said that the "Tamkeen" project embodies the fund's role as a national institution backing political modernisation by engaging civil society organisations to raise awareness, foster political participation and build the capacities of political parties and young leaders.

Mufleh added that KAFD is keen on supporting sustainable projects that align with the state's political modernisation priorities, build the capacities of active political figures, and encourage programme-based partisan work across the Kingdom.

The winning projects span various governorates, expanding the beneficiary base by funding 12 organisations for the first time to ensure fair access to support.

The selection process was based on "clear" criteria focusing on project quality and alignment with Jordan's political modernisation priorities.

The supported projects cover several key pillars, most notably enhancing the participation of youth and women in political life, particularly in the governorates

and Badia regions.

They also target the development of student activism in universities through student unions and clubs, promoting a culture of programme-based party work among youth.

The initiatives also include building the capacities of political parties to formulate specialised policies on national issues such as climate change, energy and water, as well as enabling them to design programmes that address local administration needs and boost their developmental role.

Over its three editions, the project has supported a total of 49 institutions through initiatives focused on raising societal political awareness, fostering an enabling environment for partisan work, and enhancing youth and women's political engagement across the Kingdom.

Agriculture reaches record GDP contribution in Kingdom — minister

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Agriculture Saeb Khreisat said on Wednesday that the official statistics for the first quarter of 2026 reflect the vital role of the agricultural sector in supporting the national economy.

The agricultural sector achieved the highest growth rate among all economic activities at 6.8 per cent at constant prices compared to the same period in 2025, as which contribution to the Gross Domestic Product reached a historic high of 6.1 per cent, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Khreisat attributed this "strong" performance to "successful" government policies and ministry programmes implemented alongside farmers and private partners, focusing on boosting productivity, improving natural resource efficiency, and expanding export markets for Jordanian produce.

The official data showed that Jordan's overall economy grew by 2.9 per cent during the first quarter of 2026, up from 2.7 per cent in 2025, as the agricultural sector successfully led all economic pillars in terms of growth speed, the minister noted.

Beyond leading in growth rate, agricul-



The agricultural sector achieves the highest growth rate among all economic activities at 6.8 per cent at constant prices in first quarter of 2026 compared to the same period in 2025

ture directly pushed the national economy forwards, he said, adding that the sector contributed 0.40 percentage points to the total 2.9 per cent growth, ranking second only to the manufacturing industry.

He pointed out that these positive indicators resulted from the

Economic Modernisation Vision and its 2026-2029 execution programme.

The ministry supported this progress through targeted agricultural calendars and subsidised financing to encourage modern technology adoption.

The government also

focused on stimulating local agribusinesses and facilitating crop exports via air and sea freight.

He added that the ministry remains committed to strategic plans that enhance national food security and boost product competitiveness in local and global

markets. Khreisat emphasised that investing in agriculture directly drives economic and social development.

He praised the continuous efforts of Jordanian farmers as essential partners in achieving these milestone national results.

JNC, WHO discuss cooperation on developing nursing specialties

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordanian Nursing Council (JNC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) on Wednesday discussed cooperation on developing nursing specialties, supporting mental health programmes and improving healthcare quality in the Kingdom.

JNC Secretary General Hani Nawafleh and WHO Representative to Jordan Iman Shankiti discussed ways to enhance the competency of the nursing workforce and developing continuing education and training programmes in line with the best international practices, as part of efforts to expand their strategic partnership in nursing and midwifery.

The two sides reviewed current and future cooperation as-



Jordanian Nursing Council Secretary General Hani Nawafleh and World Health Organisation Representative to Jordan Iman Shankiti on Wednesday discuss ways to enhance the competency of the nursing workforce

pects, including joint initiatives aimed at improving healthcare outcomes and advancing national health sector priorities, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

During a visit, Shankiti toured JNC's Nursing Simulation Centre and reviewed its high-fidelity equipment and training capabilities.

Tahani Khalil, the centre's supervisor, out-

lined its role in developing nurses' clinical and practical skills through realistic learning environments that enhance professional competency and patient safety. Nawafleh said that

the centre supports simulation-based education and training to prepare qualified nursing personnel capable of meeting the health sector's needs in accordance with international standards.

He also stressed JNC's commitment to expanding partnerships with WHO and national and international institutions in training and capacity-building.

Shankiti commended JNC's efforts to advance nursing and midwifery, reiterating WHO's commitment to providing technical support and enhancing cooperation to improve healthcare quality in Jordan.

The two sides agreed to continue coordination on health sector priorities, professional development, and the quality of healthcare services.



During a ceremony to sign an agreement for the second phase of the Regular Transport Project, Minister of Transport Nidal Qatamin says that the government places high priority on the public transport sector

Gov't launches 2nd phase of regular public transport project

AMMAN (JT) — The government places high priority on the public transport sector, supporting qualitative projects that enhance service quality for citizens in alignment with the goals of the Economic Modernisation Vision, Minister of Transport Nidal Qatamin said on Wednesday.

Qatamin's remarks came during a ceremony to sign an agreement for the second phase of the Regular Transport Project, an initiative aimed at boosting connectivity among governorates and transitioning towards smart transport, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

The agreement was signed by Land Transport Regulatory Commission Director General Riyadh Kharabsheh, Integrated Transport Company Chairman Salah Lozi, and Amman Vision Transport CEO Mohammad Allimon.

The minister noted that the agreement marks a "significant" step forwards in developing the Kingdom's public transport infrastructure.

He added that the second phase represents an "advanced" organisational step towards building a regular, integrated public transport network powered by modern technologies.

"The network is designed to provide safe, reliable, and high-quality

services, which will save time and effort for commuters, ease traffic congestion, encourage mass transit adoption, and improve operational efficiency and safety," Qatamin said.

The new phase aims to transform the passenger experience by deploying smart transport technologies, including electronic bus tracking, e-payment systems...

Under the agreement, LTRC will hold full oversight of the project, including contract management and performance monitoring, while the Integrated Transport Company will manage daily operations and oversee service implementation. Amman Vision Transport will be responsible for operating Intelligent Transport Systems and the electronic payment

infrastructure. Services for the second phase are scheduled to launch by the end of July, aiming to expand regular transport links across the Kingdom, particularly connecting Amman with the southern governorates, alongside integrating northern and central regions.

The phase includes the operation of nine routes, featuring seven main lines: Amman-Maan, Amman-Tafleh, Amman-Ajloun, Irbid-Zarqa, Zarqa-Mafraq, Jerash-Irbid and Jerash-Mafraq. Also, the Karak-Zarqa and Karak-Aqaba routes have been approved by Cabinet decisions, bringing the project's total fleet to 210 buses, with an expected daily capacity of some 13,500 passengers.

The new phase aims to transform the passenger experience by deploying smart transport technologies, including electronic bus tracking, e-payment systems, and on-board CCTV monitoring to improve service standards, boost operational efficiency and provide passengers with accurate information.

Beyond upgrading transit, the project supports socio-economic development and geographical connectivity across Jordan, reinforcing the public-private partnership model in executing major national projects.

ASEZA, QRF cooperate to implement early childhood reading programme

AMMAN (JT) — The Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) and the Queen Rania Foundation (QRF) on Wednesday signed a new cooperation agreement to launch Iqrali (Read to Me) programme in Aqaba to inspire early childhood reading.

The programme aims to empower local families so that they can help their kids develop vital language and learning skills from a very young age, as this initiative is a direct investment in the community's future through better education, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Vice President of ASEZA Karim Dabet and QRF CEO Bassem Saad signed the agreement in the presence



The Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority and the Queen Rania Foundation on Wednesday sign a new cooperation agreement to launch Iqrali programme in Aqaba to inspire early childhood reading

of Director of ASEZA's Local Community Development Directorate Wassim Jarabaa.

Dabet said that investing in early childhood is one of the most important steps to-

wards long term development, as fostering a love for books early on helps shape a bright

generation ready for tomorrow's world.

She added that ASEZA is keen to partnering with leading national organisations to uplift the local community, as these efforts create a supportive and stimulating learning environment for children right at home.

Saad said that the programme focuses on helping parents and caregivers read with their children every single day starting from birth, as this simple daily habit has an impact on a child's social and cognitive growth.

He noted that partnering with ASEZA is an important step forward to reach as many families in Aqaba as possible, which sets children up perfectly for a "successful, lifelong" journey of learning.



Petra photo

Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smirat on Wednesday says that skills development is no longer optional but a necessity to keep pace with rapid transformations in the labour market

Skills development essential to keep pace with labour market changes — Smirat

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smirat on Wednesday stressed the importance of investing in skills and capacity building as a key pillar to enhance youth readiness and national human capital for labour market demands.

He made the remarks during a graduation ceremony for participants in the "Workplace Training" programme, implemented by the Digital Skills Association as part of the Youth, Technology and Jobs Project, in partnership with the Microfund for Women, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Smirat said that skills development is no longer optional but a necessity to keep pace with rapid transformations in the labour market. He added that the ministry continues to support

programmes that enable young people and professionals to gain practical experience and strengthen their capabilities, expanding their career prospects while advancing the objectives of the Economic Modernisation Vision.

He highlighted that effective partnerships between the public and private sectors, along with civil society organisations, represent a successful model for designing and implementing programmes that respond to labour market needs and invest in human capital.

Digital Skills Association Chairman Alaa Nshewat said the programme reflects the importance of aligning training with labour market requirements, helping participants acquire in-demand skills and improve their

professional readiness and employment opportunities.

Microfund for Women CEO Maha Al Said said digital and leadership empowerment of youth and employees is a key driver of sustainability, improved service delivery and community development.

A total of 124 participants graduated from the programme, including 74 in the digital empowerment and employment track and 50 employees in the career advancement track.

Participants completed a three-month intensive training programme combining theoretical and practical components through hands-on projects, career guidance sessions and continuous evaluations aimed at enhancing their professional, technical and leadership skills.

Israeli settlement expansion 'tool of colonial cleansing, elimination' — Royal committee

AMMAN (JT) — Secretary General of the Royal Committee for Jerusalem Affairs Abdullah Kanaan said on Wednesday that Israeli settlement expansion represents a "tool of colonial cleansing and elimination" against the Palestinian people.

Kanaan said that statements by the Israeli right-wing government led by prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirm that it is a government of "colonisation, Israelisation, Judaisation and Hebraisation", the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Kanaan also referred to remarks made by Israeli finance minister Bezalel Smotrich in August 2025 following approval of the E1 settlement plan, in which he said that "this is an important step that effectively erases the illusion of a two-state solution".

He noted that statistics, including Israeli figures, indicate that the current government has established or legalised around 103 settlements across the West Bank, a figure close to the total number of settlements established from the 1967 occupation until the formation of the current government, which stands at 127.

He added that international and Palestin-



AFP photo

View of Israeli settlement of Har Homa in the Israel-annexed East Jerusalem, with the West Bank city of Bethlehem in the background on right

ian monitoring reports show that the number of settlements and outposts in the West Bank is significantly higher, with data from the Palestinian Colonisation and Wall Resistance Commission indicating the presence of 542 Israeli settlements and outposts across the West Bank.

Kanaan said that these developments reflect a broader political approach in which

settlement expansion has become an official policy, warning that continued expansion undermines prospects for stability and peace, and stands in the way of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent state on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

He stressed that Israel's disregard for international law and

legitimacy, including the Geneva Conventions, the Hague Conventions and relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly UN Security Council Resolution 2334, has drawn increasing international concern.

Kanaan said that Jordan has consistently called on the international community to pressure Israel to implement these resolutions, stressing that

they represent the only viable path to achieving lasting peace and international security.

He added that Jordan, under the Hashemite Custodianship of Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, will continue to support the Palestinian people, while Jordanian diplomacy will maintain efforts with Arab and international partners to promote peace and stability in the region.

GAM launches second VLR of Amman under smart, sustainable city framework

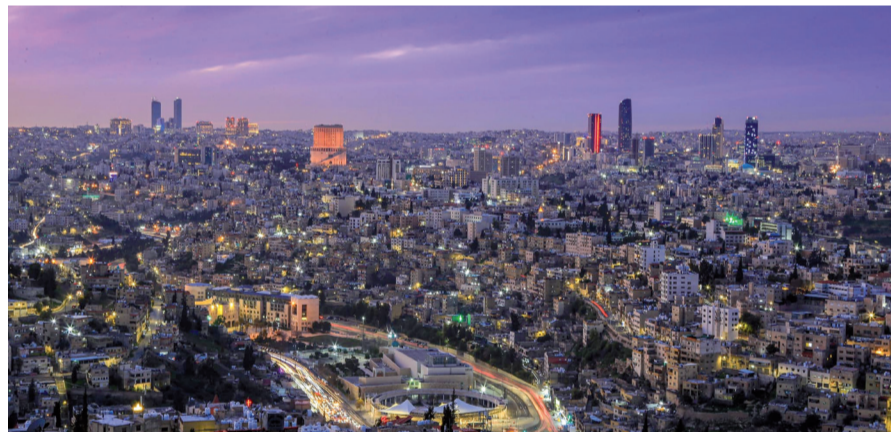
Review outlines integrated approach linking planning, digital transformation, resource management to support SDGs

AMMAN (JT) — The Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), in partnership with UN-Habitat and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on Wednesday launched the second Voluntary Local Review (VLR) of Amman under the theme "Towards a Smart, Resilient and Livable City".

GAM said that the launch underscores the city's commitment to accelerating progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and strengthening evidence-based urban planning, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

It comes in parallel with Jordan's preparation of its third Voluntary National Review (VNR), reflecting closer integration between local and national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and align with the Economic Modernisation Vision and the National Urban Policy.

Chairman of the GAM Committee Yousef Shawarbeh said that the second VLR represents a new milestone in advancing sustainable urban development, strengthening governance, and improv-



GAM photo

The Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) on Wednesday launches the second Voluntary Local Review (VLR) of Amman under the theme 'Towards a Smart, Resilient and Livable City'

ing quality of life for residents.

He said Amman's participation in global urban benchmarking platforms, including the Quality of Life Index, and its receipt of the BSI Kitemark certification under ISO 37106 for smart cities and communities, reflect its growing international standing.

Shawarbeh added that the review builds on these achievements by linking outcomes to development priorities, supporting evidence-based decision-making, and directing investments towards projects with the greatest impact on quality of life and urban resilience.

He noted that Amman was the first Arab city to issue a Voluntary Local Review in 2022.

He added that the second edition confirms that localising the SDGs has become an institutional process that reinforces alignment between local priorities, Royal directives, the Economic Modernisation Vision 2023-2033, the National Urban Policy, and the national VNR process led by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.

He said the review was developed through a broad participatory process involving government institutions, the private sector,

academia, civil society organisations and international partners.

UN-Habitat Jordan Head Dima Abu Diab said that Amman's experience in linking local and national reporting represents a leading model in SDG localisation, highlighting the role of cities in strengthening national planning through local data and community priorities.

ESCWA Sustainable Urban Development Officer Sukaina Nasrawi said that the second VLR adopts an integrated approach that combines urban resilience and smart city development across the SDGs, while enhancing coher-

ence between local and national priorities.

She added that Amman's approach reinforces its leadership in SDG localisation and presents a model for multi-level cooperation to support resilient and sustainable urban transformation in the region.

The VLR aims to assess progress in implementing the SDGs in Amman, identify gaps and challenges, and provide practical recommendations to support inclusive urban planning and strengthen resilience and sustainability.

It focuses on eight priority goals covering health and well-being, gender equality, clean energy, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, peace and justice, and partnerships for the goals.

The report adopts an integrated methodology that applies urban resilience and smart city concepts across the SDGs, using a systems-based approach that combines innovation, digital transformation, adaptability and foresight planning to address complex urban



GAM photo

The Information and Communications Technology Association of Jordan (int@j) on Wednesday celebrates the graduation of participants in the 'Tech Forward' initiative

201 students complete 60 applied projects under 'Tech Forward' initiative

AMMAN (JT) — The Information and Communications Technology Association of Jordan (int@j) on Wednesday celebrated the graduation of participants in the "Tech Forward" initiative, one of the national programmes aimed at linking university education with labour market needs.

The initiative is implemented in cooperation with the "Innovative Ways to Support Employment through Private Sector Development" project, the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply and German International Cooperation (GIZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

int@j presented the results of the programme's first edition, which saw the participation of 67 companies that proposed 96 real-world challenges for students, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Seventeen universities selected 35 of these challenges for implementation as graduation projects, including 25 from IT companies and 10 from other economic sectors.

The programme resulted in the implementation of 60 projects across 15 universities, involving 201 students, 132 males and 69 females, under the supervision of 55 faculty members.

The "Tech Forward" initiative aims to transform graduation projects into practical solutions that address real challenges faced by companies through

direct partnerships between universities and the private sector. It seeks to bridge the gap between education and labour market needs, enhance students' practical skills before graduation, and increase their employability and entrepreneurship prospects.

Chairman of the int@j Board of Directors Fadi Outaishat said the initiative reflects the association's belief that the gap between education and the labour market cannot be addressed through slogans or theory, but through practical partnerships that bring together universities, the private sector and students within a unified framework.

He added that linking academic projects to real business challenges enables students to gain hands-on experience, better understand the work environment before graduation, and develop applicable solutions that can be further refined and scaled.

Outaishat called on universities to continue developing their academic programmes and strengthening their engagement with the private sector by linking graduation projects to real challenges faced by companies, and by focusing on practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge, to enhance graduates' readiness for the labour market.

He also urged the private sector to expand its presence within universities, not limiting its role to post-graduation employment, but actively participating in guiding projects, supporting

ideas, providing training opportunities and transforming business challenges into learning opportunities that help prepare future talent.

GIZ Jordan's Team Leader for Employment, Education and Technical and Vocational Training Coordination Tobias Müller said that the initiative represents a successful model for linking education with the world of work, and contributes to strengthening cooperation between universities and the private sector to develop innovative solutions that serve companies and the economy.

int@j CEO Nidal Bitar said that the initiative represents an advanced model of cooperation between higher education institutions and the private sector, reflecting int@j's vision to build an integrated ecosystem for preparing digital talent capable of leading the digital economy.

He added that "Tech Forward" is not limited to graduation projects, but aims to establish a new culture in which companies become partners in the educational process from early stages, ensuring graduates gain practical experience and a direct understanding of labour market needs.

The ceremony was attended by Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Azmi Mahafzah, and Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smirat, as well as university students, university presidents, and representatives from the public and private sectors.

Hashemite University, GIZ sign MoU to enhance women's participation in green jobs

AMMAN (JT) — The Hashemite University signed a memorandum of understanding with the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ) to enhance women's participation in green jobs and align higher education outcomes with labour market needs.

The agreement, signed under GIZ's regional programmes "Women's Increased Participation in Political and Economic Life in the Middle East and North Africa" and "Green Jobs for Inclusive

Economic Growth", aims to reinforce partnerships between academia, industry and development stakeholders, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The MoU seeks to establish a "Women in Green Jobs Summit" platform at the university to connect academic institutions, the private sector, entrepreneurs, students and development partners to highlight career and entrepreneurial opportunities in the green economy and expand

women's participation in future-oriented sectors.

It outlines cooperation on developing the platform's technical framework, forming a joint organising committee, and establishing implementation plans and performance indicators, in addition to ensuring the initiative's sustainability through future programmes that support women's empowerment and better alignment between education outcomes and green economy requirements.

Hashemite University President Khaled Hiari said that the agreement aligns with the university's vision of boosting its role in sustainable development and expanding strategic partnerships with international institutions to equip graduates with skills required by modern labour markets.

GIZ regional programme head Anette Funk said that the initiative seeks to expand women's economic opportunities and enhance their readiness for green

and industrial sectors through networking, mentorship and capacity-building platforms, contributing to more inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

The university's Centre for Women's Studies Director Sahar Odwan said that the platform would enable students and graduates to directly engage with employers and experts, enhance skills development and boost innovation and entrepreneurship in emerging sectors.



The number of migrants who arrived in the UK on small boats fell steeply in the first half of 2026

Migrant crossings to UK down sharply in first half of 2026

LONDON (AFP) — The number of migrants who arrived in Britain on small boats fell steeply in the first half of this year compared with the same period in 2025, figures showed on Wednesday.

Migrant arrivals after crossing the English Channel were 41 per cent lower for the first six months of 2026, according to the latest data published by the UK interior ministry.

The figures are welcome news for the centre-left Labour government as it tries to stem support for the anti-immigrant Reform UK Party, which has led national opinion polls for months.

They come as Prime Minister Keir Starmer enters his final weeks in office, with veteran politician Andy Burnham expected to succeed him later this month.

Some 11,884 migrants arrived between January and June, down from the 19,982 who had reached the UK by this point last year, the Home Office data showed.

The numbers were down 12 per cent on the 13,489 who arrived in the first six months of 2024, when the main opposition Conservative Party was in power.

The Labour government has signed several deals with other countries designed to reduce the number of irregular migrants arriving on its shores in rudimentary vessels.

In April, it agreed a three-year deal with French authorities to pay £662 million (\$879 million) to support beach patrols as part of efforts to drive down arrivals.

In July 2025, Britain signed an agreement with Germany in which Berlin committed to cracking down on storage facilities used by migrant smugglers to conceal small boat parts.

The following month it struck a deal with Iraq that aimed to speed up the return of migrants with no legal right to live in the UK.

Interior minister Shabana Mahmood is also trying to overhaul the asylum system to

deter crossings, including by making refugee status temporary, which has been criticised by charities.

Weather can influence attempted crossings as well.

Reform's lead in national surveys has narrowed in recent months as it struggles to maintain momentum while facing greater scrutiny, with leader Nigel Farage under pressure over a £5 million gift.

A YouGov poll published on Tuesday indicated that Labour had enjoyed a bounce amid the likelihood of Burnham becoming prime minister, with Reform's lead falling to just four percentage points.

Starmer announced his resignation on June 22 after losing the support of members of parliament for his ruling party.

Burnham will become Labour's new leader, and therefore prime minister, in mid-July if he faces no challengers for the job, as is currently expected.

The next general election is not due until 2029.

Syria president names last members to finalise first post-Assad parliament

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syrian President Ahmed Al Sharaa on Wednesday finalised the formation of the country's first post-Assad-era parliament, which is set to hold its first session next week in a step seen as a test for the country's transition.

After toppling long-time ruler Bashar Assad in December 2024 after more than 13 years of civil war, the new authorities dissolved Syria's rubber-stamp legislature and adopted a temporary constitutional declaration to cover a five-year transition period.

In a process that began in October 2025 and has been criticised as undemocratic, local committees appointed by the electoral commission, which was appointed by Sharaa, began selecting two-thirds of the 210 members of a new parliament, with the president to appoint the remaining third.

Mohammad Taha Al Ahmad, head of the electoral committee, read out the names of the 70 members appointed by presidential decree, which he said included relatives of civil war "martyrs, and survivors of imprisonment and of chemical attacks".

They also include "academics and dignitaries", he said, adding that the aim was to "represent the various segments of Syrian society and embody the unity of the nation".

The parliament's first session will be held next Monday, he said, adding that the body, which has a renewable two-and-a-half-year mandate, will form a committee to draft a constitution that must "meet the aspira-



Mohammad Taha Al Ahmad (left), head of the higher electoral committee, speaks during a press conference announcing newly appointed lawmakers at the parliament in Damascus on Wednesday

tions of Syrian society".

Former opposition figures

Sharaa's appointees include 15 women, and 13 people who were imprisoned under the former authorities.

The new lawmakers include actress Rozina Lazkani and activist Aisha Al Dibs, who heads the new authorities' women's affairs office and who has sparked uproar with controversial statements on the role of women.

They also include Hassan Soufan, the former head of the headline Ahrar Al Sham Islamist movement who spent years in the notorious Saydnaya prison, as well as Anas Al Abdah, former head of the opposition in exile.

Also appointed was Gabriel Mushi Gowriyeh, a well known former opposition figure from Syria's Assyrian Christian community.

The electoral commission announced the names of 119 of the 140 lawmakers chosen by local committees in October.

But the selection process in formerly Kurdish-run areas of the north and northeast could only be held earlier this year after the Damascus authorities assumed control there and signed a deal on integrating Kurdish institutions into the state.

Prominent Syrian Kurdish parties and forces rejected the outcome and said the individuals selected "represent themselves alone".

Druse-majority Sweida province in the country's south has still not designated its members, after sectarian bloodshed in July last year that an official investigative body said left 1,760 people dead.

'Real test'

The electoral committee's Ahmad said the selection process would be held in Sweida when conditions were "appropriate".

From Sweida, Sharaa has appointed Laith Al Balous, who commanded an armed Druze faction before Assad's fall.

Balous is close to the new authorities but is not recognised by Sweida's de facto local authorities, armed groups opposed to Sharaa. Rights groups had previously criticised the

selection process, saying it concentrated power in Sharaa's hands and lacked representation for the country's ethnic and religious minorities.

Sharaa has said the selection process is a temporary step until all Syrians can take part in direct elections.

Writer and political researcher Maher Tamran told AFP that finalising the parliament "means Syria has begun moving gradually from a crisis-management stage to the stage of rebuilding institutions".

He said it was "not the end of the transitional stage, but the start of its real test".

"Will it be able to hold the government accountable? Will it truly participate in lawmaking? Will it reflect the diversity of Syrian society?"

120 dead in latest Sudan cholera outbreak — WHO

CAIRO (AFP) — A cholera outbreak in Sudan has killed 120 people, with another 1,102 suspected cases since May in isolated war zones, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Wednesday.

More than three years of war between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have decimated the country's healthcare system.

This is Sudan's third wave of cholera in as many years, and began only two months after the last outbreak was declared over in March.

Between July 2024 and March 2026, over 124,400 people were infected and 3,500 killed during the last wave, according to government figures.

Endemic to the northeast African country, cholera used to come "in a cyclic manner every three years", the WHO's Sudan chief Dr Shible Sabhani told reporters.

But now the country



A man disinfects a rural isolation center where patients are being treated for cholera in Wad Al Hilu in Kassala state in eastern Sudan, on August 17, 2024

faces near-continuous outbreaks "due to the conflict, constraints in access and limited supplies", he said.

Sudan's rainy season is set to surge in the coming weeks, during which cholera cases balloon as millions lack access to clean water and

the rains further impede access.

The Sudanese government declared the latest outbreak this week in the flashpoint West Kordofan state, the dividing line between army and paramilitary zones of control.

Constant deadly drone

strikes launched by both sides have made commercial and aid access to the Kordofan region increasingly dangerous, and brought hundreds of thousands to the brink of starvation.

The WHO said the outbreak appears to be spreading, following re-

ports of close to 300 suspected cases and three deaths in neighbouring North Kordofan, where the United Nations has warned the RSF is preparing to mount a deadly ground assault on state capital El Obeid.

Drone strikes on the city's power stations are already "disrupting access to lifesaving drinking water and electricity", UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher said on Tuesday, warning of the risk of mass atrocities.

Three years into the war, which aid groups estimate may have killed more than 200,000 people, nearly all of the country's hospitals have been forced entirely or partially out of service.

"Forty percent of health facilities are non-functional at all, and the remaining almost 60 per cent are only partially functioning, meaning they are providing only a few services or not enough to patients in the area," Sabhani said.



More than 100,000 people have been killed across all sides in Myanmar since a military coup five years ago triggered civil war, a conflict monitor said Wednesday

100,000 killed in Myanmar post-coup conflict — monitor

YANGON, Myanmar (AFP) — More than 100,000 people have been killed across all sides in Myanmar since a military coup five years ago triggered civil war, a conflict monitor said on Wednesday.

Since the February 2021 putsch there have been 100,114 "conflict-related fatalities" according to Sun Mon Thant,

a senior analyst from Amnored Conflict Location & Event Data, which tallies media reports of violence.

There is no official toll and estimates vary widely, but analysts regard the half-decade civil war as the deadliest active conflict in Asia.

The military ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in Feb-

ruary 2021, detaining the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and ending Myanmar's decade-long experiment with democracy.

Security forces put down anti-putsch protests but activists quit the cities to form pro-democracy guerrilla groups, fighting alongside ethnic minority armies which have long resisted central rule.

Storms following heatwave kill two in Romania, Austria

BUCHAREST (AFP) — Storms that followed an intense European heatwave killed one person in Romania and another in Austria, authorities said on Wednesday.

Storms lashed parts of Romania including the capital Bucharest, during the night from Tuesday to Wednesday, flooding some basements and homes and tearing down trees.

Footage released by the emergency services showed them clearing tree branches from

cars and people wading through waist-high water.

In Ganeasa, just outside of Bucharest, a person was found dead inside a car struck by a falling tree, they said.

Storms have also lashed Austria, causing landslides in Tyrol province and elsewhere since Sunday.

A man died on Tuesday after being hit by a falling branch in Perg district in Upper Austria province, police said.

The 26-year-old was

driving his quad, together with his partner, when a roadside tree branch, battered by a storm, broke off and hit him, police said.

Storms have followed a severe heatwave that lasted more than a week and broke temperature records across Europe.

Experts say climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions generated by human activities is increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.

Attackers target homes of Greek ruling party figures, killing one

THESSALONIKI, Greece (AFP) — Attackers targeted the homes of three politicians from Greece's ruling party with homemade explosives on Wednesday, leaving one person dead and four wounded, police told AFP.

The attacks at dawn in the northern city of Thessaloniki targeted figures from the New Democracy Party with devices made from gas bottles.

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the New Democracy leader, expressed "outrage

and anger" at what he termed a "cowardly, terrorist and murderous attack".

The Kathimerini news website reported that the parents of former party candidate Afroditi Nestora were injured and taken to hospital.

It identified the other two targets as the party's executive committee president Zisis Ioakimovic and former MP Savvas Anastasiades.

Nestora's mother died on Wednesday evening, according to the Thessaloniki hospital where

she had been taken for treatment.

The death "confirms the murderous and inhuman nature of the blind violence that exists in public life", Mitsotakis said in a statement.

Four vehicles in the garage of Nestora's home were burnt, police said.

Police did not say who might have carried out the attacks or suggest a motive. The anti-terrorist division was investigating.

Leftist and anarchist groups often use im-

provised explosives to target political figures, banks and companies in Greece — causing damage but rarely any casualties.

The improvised explosives were made from small butane canisters, police said and the attacks appear to have been carried out by the same people.

Government spokesman Pavlos Marinakis said on the radio that the attacks took place within 15 minutes.

The officers said they were gathering video footage to help them

hunt the perpetrators.

Mitsotakis said he would visit Thessaloniki with ministers on Wednesday evening to support party members.

The visit would "send a perfectly clear and explicit message: Zero tolerance for any new form of terrorism that might appear in our country", he said.

Left-wing opposition parties also condemned the attacks.

"All forms of political violence are absolutely to be condemned," far-left party Syriza said in a statement.

World's oceans break June heat record: EU monitor

PARIS, France (AFP) — The world's oceans just experienced their hottest June on record and could set fresh highs in the months ahead as El Nino and climate change drive temperatures even higher, scientists said on Wednesday.

Global average sea surface temperatures in June were 20.98°C, beating the previous records of 2023 and 2024, according to the European Union's Copernicus Marine Service.

The record capped six months of near unprecedented ocean warmth in 2026, with prolonged marine heatwaves, the service said. Average sea temperatures in the first half of the year were 20.04°C, slightly below the high set in the same period in 2024.

And scientists said the onset of a potentially powerful El Nino weather pattern could boost global heat in the oceans and atmosphere even further in 2026 and into next year.

"Current conditions could indicate the beginning of a new phase, leading, once more, to uncharted territory," said Carlo Buontempo, director of Copernicus Climate Change Service, the EU's climate monitor.

"With ocean temperatures at these levels and El Nino on the horizon, we are likely to



An aerial view of the Temple of Diana nearly void of people during a heatwave in Evora where temperatures were nearing 40°C on Wednesday

see more temperature records fall in the coming months," Buontempo said in a statement.

El Nino is marked by unusually warm waters in parts of the

Pacific Ocean, releasing more heat into the atmosphere and influencing wind, cloud and weather patterns around the globe.

This can raise the risk

of weather extremes ranging from floods in Peru to droughts in parts of Africa and wildfires in Australia.

But it can also cause a temporary spike in

global temperatures, compounding the long-term warming caused by humanity's burning of fossil fuels.

Land and sea temperatures reached an

all-time high in 2024 at the tail end of the last El Nino.

"With the arrival and the onset of an El Nino year ... we can expect that 2026 will

be amongst the warmest [ever] recorded," Simon Van Gennip, lead Oceanographer for the Copernicus Marine Service, said in a news briefing.

"This is due to El Nino ... but also from the warming due to the greenhouse gas emissions we continue to provide for the atmosphere," Van Gennip said.

affected around 82 per cent of the world's oceans, the second-largest extent after 2024, according to Copernicus Marine Service.

Marine heatwaves — prolonged periods of unusually high sea temperatures — can affect weather, trigger coral bleaching and prove fatal for marine wildlife.

Global heat

'Deepening crisis'

The report follows a warning issued in a major UN scientific assessment last month which declared that the world's oceans were in a "deepening crisis" as seas were warming and rising faster.

Oceans are a key regulator of Earth's climate because they absorb some 90 per cent of the excess heat caused by humanity's release of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide.

Warmer oceans increase moisture in the atmosphere, providing fuel for tropical cyclones and destructive rainfall.

Hotter seas also directly contribute to sea level rise — water expands when it warms up — and create unbearable conditions for tropical reefs, whose corals can bleach and die during prolonged marine heatwaves.

The first six months of the year were marked by widespread marine heatwaves that

Global sea surface temperatures varied in the first half of the year, according to the service, which is run by Mercator Ocean International, an EU-backed non-profit organisation.

The Mediterranean broke its June record at 24.3°C, surpassing the previous highs set in 2023 and 2025. Marine heatwaves hit 98 per cent of the basin during the first six months of the year.

A marine heatwave affecting the northwestern Mediterranean broke a record intensity measurement on Monday after a week that saw temperature records tumble in Europe, a Spanish climate institute said.

The tropical Pacific also had its hottest June ever at 27.26°C.

The region matched its 2016 record for the January-to-June period, with the strongest and most persistent warming in the western equatorial Pacific and off the coasts of Peru and California.

World Bank approves \$700 million in financing to boost investment, jobs in Jordan

Continued from page 1

In addition, the reforms aim to expand access to business accounts for unbanked micro-entrepreneurs, promote green finance through the operationalisation of Jordan's National Green Taxonomy, modernise the legal framework for insurance products and advance the transition to fully digital government payments, it said.

The World Bank said that these measures are expected to reduce transaction costs, improve efficiency and promote greater digital inclusion.

The World Bank said that, with macroeconomic stability firmly established, the reforms represent an important step towards building a more inclusive economy driven by

private investment and supported by green and digital transformation.

'The World Bank remains committed to supporting this agenda, turning stability into real opportunity for businesses and entrepreneurs'

"The World Bank remains committed to supporting this agenda, turning stability into real opportunity for businesses and entrepreneurs," it said.

Trump defends earning more than \$1b on crypto

JOINT BASE ANDREWS, United States (AFP) — US President Donald Trump on Wednesday defended earning around \$1.2 billion from his family's cryptocurrency activities last year, saying "everybody's profiting" from his time in power.

"You know why I'm profiting, because the stock market's going up, everybody's profiting," Trump told reporters as he prepared to take his first flight on a new Air Force One plane gifted by Qatar.

Asked about criticisms that he was using his position to enrich himself, the billionaire president said his earnings were placed in blind trusts to ensure that he could not do so.

"I don't get involved in my personal [finances], we have funds that run my money," Trump said. "I've made a lot of money before I became president, and they in-

vest my money, and I don't talk to them."

'You know why I'm profiting, because the stock market's going up, everybody's profiting'

Trump also insisted that his wealth was due to his prior career, despite the fact that the earnings were related to crypto ventures launched during his first year back in the White House.

"I don't know if I've had a better career in



President Donald Trump boards Air Force One Wednesday at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland

politics or business, but I had a great career in business, and you know, you saw the cash, and you report the different things," he said.

"So we're all profiting, I'm profiting because I have a lot of money and a lot of cash."

According to financial disclosures re-

leased by the US Office of Government Ethics on Tuesday, Trump received nearly \$550 million from his ties to the startup World Liberty Financial in 2025.

While in power, Trump has enacted measures to deregulate the sector, causing asset prices to soar.

The White House said he had "proudly made the United States the crypto capital of the world."

World Liberty Financial was co-founded in September 2024 by Trump's sons and the son of Trump's Middle East special envoy Steve Witkoff.

The 927-page filings also mention \$635 million in royalties received under a licensing agreement related to the \$TRUMP cryptocurrency, launched just hours before the president's inauguration in January 2025.

The president's crypto activities are the main reason for the near tripling of his personal fortune, which rose from \$2.3 billion to \$6.5 billion between 2024 and 2026, according to Forbes.

While in power, Trump has enacted measures to deregulate the sector, causing asset prices to soar.

The White House said he had "proudly made the United States the crypto capital of the world."

DIPLOMACY

US signs agreement to build permanent embassy in Jerusalem

Continued from page 1

US ambassador Mike Huckabee said during a signing ceremony at Israel's foreign ministry that Washington "recognises Jerusalem as the eternal, indigenous, and forever capital of the Jewish people".

"We are going to plant our flag, our American flag, on the soil of Jerusalem for a permanent and a brand new embassy compound that will serve as our mother-ship of diplomatic activities here in Israel," he added.

The embassy will be built at the Allenby compound in southern Jerusalem.

Trump's 2017 deci-

sion broke with decades of US policy, under which Jerusalem's final status was expected to be determined through negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

After Israel captured East Jerusalem during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, it declared the city its undivided capital, a claim that has not been widely recognised internationally.

'Historical injustice'

Palestinians seek East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

Because of these competing claims, most countries established their embassies in Tel Aviv, maintaining

that Jerusalem's status should be resolved through peace negotiations in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

'And today, with the agreement to begin building a permanent embassy complex...'

Israel's foreign minister Gideon Saar said the agreement to build

Washington's permanent embassy in Jerusalem underscored the "unbreakable alliance" between the two countries.

The Israeli rights group Adalah, however, denounced the construction of the embassy at the allocated site, saying it "enshrines a profound, historical injustice".

The site "is located on land confiscated by Israel from Palestinian landowners under the discriminatory 1950 Absentees' Property Law", it said in a statement, adding that it had previously filed an objection on behalf of the descendants of the original Palestinian owners, some of whom are US and Jordanian

citizens.

By proceeding with its plans, "the US government directly endorses Israel's unlawful mechanisms of dispossession and displacement, violating the fundamental property rights of the original Palestinian owners and their descendants, in direct defiance of international law", the group said.

The embassy agreement comes after the United States and Israel fought alongside each other in their military campaign against Iran, and also follows reports of tensions between Trump and Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu over efforts to end the war.

Industrial sector grows 4.8% in Q1 2026, drives 40% of economic growth — JCI

Continued from page 1

Manufacturing remained the main engine of growth, expanding by 5.3 per cent and contributing 0.86 percentage points to the national economy, while accounting for 16.6 per cent of Jordan's GDP. Mining grew by 4.7 per cent, while the electricity and water sectors recorded growth of 4.3 per cent and 4.5 per cent, respectively.

According to the chamber, manufacturing has maintained a steady upward trajectory over the past three years, with growth accelerating from 4.1 per cent in the first quarter of 2024 to 5.1 per cent in 2025 before reaching 5.3 per cent this year.

The chamber attributed the performance

to the growing competitiveness of Jordanian industry and its ability to expand in both domestic and export markets despite regional challenges.

JCI Chairman Fathi Jaghbeer said that the results reaffirm the industrial sector's role as the "locomotive" of the national economy, noting that contributing nearly 40 per cent of Jordan's economic growth underscores its importance in generating added value, attracting investment, boosting exports and creating employment opportunities.

"The industrial sector continues to prove that it is the main engine of economic growth and one of the strongest pillars of the national economy," Jaghbeer said.

He added that the sustained growth reflects the resilience of the Jordanian economy despite regional turbulence, supported by the Kingdom's stability and government measures to improve the business environment and advance the Economic Modernisation Vision in partnership with the private sector.

According to the chamber, the industrial sector accounts for 23.1 per cent of Jordan's gross domestic product, making it one of the country's largest productive sectors. Manufacturing represents the largest share at 16.6 per cent of GDP, followed by mining at 3.9 per cent, electricity and gas at 2.1 per cent, and water supply and waste management at 0.8 per cent.

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Growth is more than just a number

By Raad Mahmoud Al-Tal

When the Department of Statistics announced that the national economy grew by 2.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2026, compared with 2.7 per cent during the same period in 2025, the initial impression might be that the improvement is merely two-tenths of a percentage point. However, a deeper economic analysis reveals that the significance of these results lies not in the figure itself, but in the quality and sources of growth. That message may be even more important than the growth rate itself.

For the first time in quite some time, the country's productive sectors are clearly leading the growth story. Agriculture expanded by 6.8 per cent, manufacturing by 5.3 per cent, mining and quarrying by 4.7 per cent and electricity by 4.3 per cent. These are not simply sectors posting higher growth rates; they generate real value added, strengthen exports, improve productivity and enhance the economy's resilience against external shocks.

An important economic insight emerges from these figures: the fastest-growing sector is not necessarily the one with the greatest impact on the economy. Although agriculture recorded the highest growth rate, manufacturing made the largest contribution to overall economic growth, adding 0.86 percentage points out of the total 2.9 per cent growth. This represents nearly one-third of total economic growth, reflecting manufacturing's substantial weight in the economy, where it accounts for 16.6 per cent of Jordan's GDP. This finding highlights a fundamental economic principle: a sector's size within the economy is just as important as its growth rate.

These figures also send an important message to policymakers. Investment in productive sectors generates strong multiplier effects throughout the economy. Growth in manufacturing stimulates not only industrial output but also transportation, logistics, trade, employment, exports and, ultimately, government revenues. This is the essence of the economic multiplier effect.

Furthermore, the data show that all economic sectors recorded positive growth during the first quarter. This is a healthy sign of a more balanced economic expansion rather than growth driven by a single sector. Such diversification enhances the economy's resilience and reduces its vulnerability to regional and global uncertainties.

Nevertheless, Jordan continues to face a major challenge: transforming economic growth into inclusive growth that is felt by citizens. A growth rate of 2.9 per cent remains below the level required to generate sufficient employment opportunities and absorb new entrants into the labour market. Sustaining this upward trajectory therefore requires policies that encourage private investment, raise productivity, enhance export competitiveness and promote industrial innovation.

From another perspective, the data reveal the continued prominence of certain non-productive sectors. Real estate activities, for example, account for 13.1 per cent of GDP but contributed only 0.11 percentage points to overall growth. This underscores the need to redirect investment towards sectors with higher value added and stronger employment-generating capacity.

What occurred during the first quarter of 2026 is therefore more than a modest increase in the growth rate. It may represent the early stages of a structural transformation in the Jordanian economy towards a model driven more by production, manufacturing and agriculture, rather than excessive reliance on consumption and service-based activities. If this momentum is sustained through sound economic reforms and strategic investments, Jordan could gradually move from economic recovery towards sustainable long-term growth.

Economies should not be judged solely by the strength of their numbers, but by the quality of the growth they achieve and their ability to transform every percentage point of growth into new jobs, productive investment, higher incomes and a more resilient economy. That is the real challenge that should define Jordan's economic agenda in the years ahead.

Listening to the Gulf

Mohammad Abu-Rumman

Since the signing of the US-Iran Memorandum of Understanding, a far more consequential debate has been unfolding across the Gulf than the agreement itself. The central question is no longer whether the war has ended or who emerged victorious. Instead, it concerns whether the conflict has fundamentally altered one of the most deeply embedded assumptions in Gulf politics over the past four decades: the credibility of the American security umbrella.

This is precisely why the study conducted by digital research specialist Rand Fatian, published in the fifth issue of The Jordanian Politics and Society Journal, deserves close attention. Rather than advancing another political argument, the study listens carefully to what Gulf citizens themselves were saying at the height of the US-Israeli war against Iran, and how they reassessed their security relationship with the United States.

The study stands out for its use of Digital Listening, a methodology designed to monitor spontaneous online conversations rather than responses to structured opinion polls. Covering the period between February 27 and April 30 2026, it analysed 55,600 original digital discussions generated by 29,800 Gulf-based users, producing more than 531,600 interactions and an estimated potential reach exceeding 4.5 billion impressions. The resulting dataset provides one of the most comprehensive snapshots available of Gulf public sentiment during a major strategic crisis.

The findings are striking. Seventy-six point six percent of all discussions expressed skepticism or negative attitudes toward American security protection, while 22.5 per cent consisted of neutral or news-oriented content. Explicitly supportive views accounted for less than one percent of the overall conversation.

Yet, the numbers tell only part of the story. More revealing is the nature of the debate itself. Gulf audiences were not primarily evaluating America's military performance during the war; they were questioning the security architecture on which the region has relied for decades. A fundamental question gradually emerged: Can the security model that has underpinned Gulf stability for generations still deliver security today?

Another equally important question gained prominence throughout the digital conversation: Have American military bases remained a source of deterrence, or have they become, under certain circumstances, a source of vulnerability? According to the study, the phrase "American military bases" dominated Gulf digital discourse, while terms traditionally associated with strategic partnerships—such as "ally", "security guarantees", and "partnership"—were notably absent. Political change often reveals itself first through language, and the evolving vocabulary suggests that Gulf discourse has begun moving from accepting the American umbrella as a strategic certainty to questioning its very foundations.

The geographical distribution

of the discussions is equally revealing. Saudi Arabia accounted for 72.1 per cent of all recorded Gulf conversations, followed by the United Arab Emirates with 10.8 per cent. The study also found that 87.4 per cent of all discussions took place on X, while 87.8 per cent were conducted in Arabic.

It is true that the military and institutional architecture built over decades cannot simply be replaced overnight, and no other global power currently possesses the capacity to assume America's role in the region in the foreseeable future

Perhaps the most significant finding is that the conversation has moved beyond criticism toward the exploration of alternatives. Participants increasingly discussed diversifying security partnerships, strengthening indigenous Gulf defense capabilities, expanding strategic

relations with countries such as China, India and Turkey, and drawing lessons from Oman's long-standing model of regional balance and strategic neutrality.

This does not necessarily suggest that the Gulf is preparing to abandon its alliance with the United States, nor does it imply that Washington has lost its position as the region's principal security partner. What it does suggest is that strategic reassessment is no longer confined to policymakers or security elites. It has become part of a much broader public conversation, shaped in no small measure by the economic, social and psychological consequences of the war and the Iranian strikes that reached Gulf territory.

It is true that the military and institutional architecture built over decades cannot simply be replaced overnight and no other global power currently possesses the capacity to assume America's role in the region in the foreseeable future. There is, however, a profound difference between relying on one strategic partner as the only conceivable option and treating that partner as one among several possible pillars of a broader and more diversified security strategy.

Perhaps this is the conflict's most enduring legacy. The US-Iran war did more than reshape regional military calculations. For the first time in decades, it prompted Gulf societies to reconsider the meaning of security itself—and to reassess the political, economic, and strategic costs of relying on any external security umbrella, regardless of how powerful it may appear.

Landscape architecture and public parks in Jordan: Shaping a sustainable urban future

Over the past four decades, landscape architecture in Jordan has undergone a remarkable transformation. Once viewed primarily as a discipline concerned with beautification and ornamental planting, it has evolved into an essential component of urban planning, environmental stewardship, and sustainable development. Today, landscape architecture is increasingly recognised as a strategic profession that contributes to the quality, identity, and resilience of cities.

This evolution reflects a broader shift in planning philosophy. Contemporary landscape architecture extends far beyond aesthetics, seeking to create meaningful relationships between people, nature and the built environment. Public parks, urban forests, plazas, and open spaces are now regarded as critical elements of urban infrastructure that support public health, social interaction, environmental sustainability, and community well-being. A lot of this credit goes to the current ministerial Cabinet.

Landscape architecture as urban infrastructure

Modern cities are defined not only by their buildings, roads and utilities but also by the quality of their public spaces and environmental systems. As Jordan's urban centers have expanded, landscape architecture has assumed an increasingly important role in shaping livable and sustainable communities.

Well-designed parks and public spaces provide opportunities for recreation, physical activity and social engagement while fostering a stronger sense of place and cultural identity. These spaces serve as gathering points for communities and contribute significantly to the overall quality of urban life. In rapidly growing cities, they also offer environmental benefits by mitigating heat, improving air quality, and enhancing urban resilience.

One of the most visible manifestations of landscape architecture's growing importance has been the expansion of urban greening initiatives throughout Jordan. Tree-planting programs, streetscape improvements, and the development of public parks have gradually transformed the urban landscape.

Trees play a particularly significant role in improving environmental conditions within cities. Beyond their aesthetic value, urban trees provide shade, reduce



Kamel Mahadin

surface temperatures, improve air quality, absorb carbon dioxide, and contribute to biodiversity. As climate change continues to affect urban environments worldwide, urban forestry has become an indispensable component of sustainable city planning.

The integration of green infrastructure into urban development strategies demonstrates an increasing awareness that environmental quality is fundamental to long-term urban prosperity and public health.

Institutional leadership and public initiatives

The advancement of landscape architecture in Jordan has been supported by both governmental and institutional initiatives. The Greater Amman Municipality has made substantial contributions through streetscape enhancement projects, landscape development programs, public park creation, and urban beautification efforts. These initiatives have strengthened the integration of natural systems within the urban fabric and reinforced the vision of a greener and more livable capital city.

At the national level, the Royal Initiative of Parks has played an important role in expanding access to public green spaces throughout the Kingdom. These projects reflect a growing recognition that parks are not luxury amenities but essential public services that contribute to environmental quality, social cohesion and public well-being.

Furthermore, the government emphasises sustainability, quality of life and environmental responsibility as integral components of national development and urban planning.

Jordan's progress in landscape architecture is exemplified through a number of landmark projects that demonstrate the integration of environmental considerations within urban development.

The development of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone represents a notable example of how urban growth can be harmonized with coastal and natural landscapes. By incorporating environmental assets into planning and development strate-

gies, Aqaba has successfully leveraged its unique geographic setting to support tourism, economic growth, and public-space enhancement.

Similarly, projects such as Greater Irbid Park, the Greater Aqaba Park currently under development, Al Nashama Parks, and the enhancement of public open spaces surrounding the Dead Sea waterfront illustrate a new generation of landscape projects. These initiatives contribute to environmental improvement, recreational opportunities, and the strengthening of local identity while enhancing the attractiveness and functionality of urban areas.

Collectively, these projects demonstrate an evolving national vision that places public landscapes at the center of urban development.

Despite these achievements, landscape architecture in Jordan operates within a challenging environmental context. Water scarcity remains one of the country's most pressing concerns and has become a defining factor in landscape planning and management.

Consequently, sustainability has emerged as a fundamental principle of contemporary landscape practice. The use of native and drought-tolerant plant species, efficient irrigation technologies, water-sensitive urban design, and low-maintenance planting strategies has become increasingly important in ensuring the long-term viability of public green spaces.

These approaches not only reduce water consumption but also enhance ecological resilience and support more sustainable urban environments. As climate variability increases, resource-efficient landscape design will continue to play a critical role in the future development of Jordan's cities.

The success of sustainable urban development is closely linked to the protection of natural ecosystems. In this regard, the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature has made significant contributions to safeguarding Jordan's environmental heritage through protected-area management, ecological restoration programs, biodiversity conservation, environmental education and ecotourism initiatives.

The protection of natural landscapes outside cities and the creation of green spaces within them should not be viewed as separate endeavors. Rather, they form complementary components of an integrated

environmental framework that supports ecological balance, cultural identity and human well-being.

Healthy ecosystems provide essential environmental services, while urban parks and green spaces connect residents to nature and improve quality of life. Together, they contribute to a more sustainable and resilient national landscape.

Looking Toward the Future

As Jordan continues to urbanize, the importance of landscape architecture is expected to increase significantly. Population growth, urban expansion, climate change, and resource constraints will require innovative approaches that integrate environmental sustainability with social and economic development.

Future cities will depend increasingly on interconnected networks of parks, urban forests, green corridors and public spaces that enhance resilience and improve living conditions. Investment in landscape architecture should therefore be viewed not merely as an aesthetic undertaking but as a strategic investment in public health, environmental quality, and economic vitality.

The experience of Jordan over the past four decades demonstrates that landscape architecture is far more than a design profession. It is a powerful instrument for shaping sustainable communities, strengthening environmental responsibility, and creating cities where nature and urban life can thrive together.

Jordan's achievements in landscape architecture and public park development represent a significant and evolving success story. Through urban greening initiatives, public park investments, conservation programs, and sustainable design practices, the Kingdom has progressively integrated environmental values into its urban development agenda.

As cities continue to confront the challenges of climate change, water scarcity, and population growth, landscape architecture will remain essential to building healthier, more resilient, and more sustainable urban environments. The tree, the park and the public square have become integral elements of Jordan's urban identity and collective memory, symbolising a commitment to a future in which development and environmental stewardship advance hand in hand.

BUSINESS

Thursday, July 2, 2026

ICI issues 1,587 certificates of origin in April

AMMAN (JT) — The value of certificates of origin issued by the Irbid Chamber of Industry (ICI) in April reached \$129.2 million, marking a 28.5 per cent increase from \$100.5 million in the same month last year.

According to chamber figures, the number of certificates of origin issued in April reached 1,587, compared with 1,146 in April 2025.

The textile and leather sector remained the largest contributor to exports, with shipments valued at \$114.6 million, followed by the food, agricultural and supply industries sector at \$4.85 million.

The pharmaceuticals and medical supplies sector recorded the highest growth rate, rising by 87.8 per cent.

The remaining exports were distributed across the chemical and cosmetics sector, which totalled \$4.04 million, as well as the engineering and electrical, plastics and rubber, construction, packaging, paper and stationery, and mining sectors, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Exports to the United States totalled around \$85.9 million, followed by the Netherlands at \$6.4 million, Germany at \$4.1 million, Canada at \$4.1 million and Saudi Arabia at \$4.1 million.

Al Hassan Industrial



The value of certificates of origin issued by the Irbid Chamber of Industry in April reaches \$129.2 million, marking a 28.5 per cent increase

Estate accounted for the largest share of exports during April, with shipments valued at \$124.3 million, followed by Cyber City at \$4.39 million and the chamber's main office at \$569,000.

ICI President Hani Abu Hassan said the increase in exports during April reflected the industrial sector's continued positive momentum and its ability to maintain a strong pres-

ence in international markets despite shifts in global trade.

He added that the industrial sector in the northern region continues to demonstrate resilience despite regional challenges, maintaining its production and export capacity.

Abu Hassan said the results reflected the sector's strength and the efforts of industrial companies to enhance

the competitiveness of their products expand into new markets and adapt to regional and international challenges.

He stressed the importance of building on the growth achieved in key sectors and export markets, particularly the food industry and European markets, to further strengthen the competitiveness of Jordanian industry.

Abu Hassan added that the chamber is working with government agencies and partner institutions to open new markets and diversify exports, while highlighting the Kingdom's efforts to provide a supportive investment environment through measures aimed at preserving the competitiveness of Jordanian products, Petra reported.

IFC appoints Imad Fakhoury as MCA regional vice president

DUBAI, UAE — International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private sector arm of the World Bank Group, announced on Wednesday the appointment of Imad Fakhoury as the new regional vice president for the Middle East and Central Asia (MCA) region.

Based in Dubai, UAE, Fakhoury will lead IFC's efforts to drive job creation and mobilise private capital at scale across a region that is home to nearly 700 million people.

The MCA region spans a diverse set of economies at varying stages of development, where IFC works to build business-enabling environments, foster emerging market investments, and promote a vibrant private sector that can create jobs and opportunities for people.

As MCA Vice President, Fakhoury will oversee partnerships across 21 countries and manage an active portfolio exceeding \$11 billion.

"I am privileged to serve the region at this critical time by bringing the World Bank Group's global expertise in private sector development to mobilise private capital, drive growth, support countries transitioning out of fragility, and deliver real solutions to some of the region's most urgent challenges," said Fakhoury.

"Unlocking the tremendous opportunities across the region, creating quality jobs, diversifying economies, supporting reconstruction in conflict-affected settings, building resilience to global and regional shocks,



and helping countries tackle food, water, energy, and financial challenges will be at the heart of our work moving forward," he added.

Fakhoury also emphasised the importance of scaling up investments in manufacturing and services, sustainable infrastructure, and innovative, inclusive finance.

"Our goal is to help economies attract the capital and expertise they need to strengthen competitiveness and ensure that growth benefits all, especially women, young people and underserved communities," he said.

A Jordanian national, Fakhoury brings extensive public and private sector expertise across private investment, public private partnerships (PPPs) and special economic zones, capital mobilisation, policy reform to enable private sector solutions, infrastructure and international development and resilience-based refugee response plans.

He most recently served as IFC's division director for South Asia.

Fakhoury joined the World Bank Group in

2019 and was previously the Global Director of the Infrastructure Finance, Public Private Partnerships and Guarantees Group at the World Bank.

Before joining the World Bank Group, Fakhoury served in successive Jordanian governments as Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Minister of Public Sector Development, and Minister of State for Mega-projects.

He also served as Chief of Staff to His Majesty King Abdullah and as a senator in Jordan's parliament. He played a key role in the development of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone, pioneered mega PPP transactions, and co-founded and served on the boards of several strategic national PPP companies.

Fakhoury has a bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering, a master's degree in engineering management from Case Western Reserve University, a master's in public policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University.

Eurozone inflation slows in June as energy prices cool

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AFP) — Eurozone inflation slowed in June after spiking as the Iran war sent energy prices sky-high, new data showed Wednesday, boosting chances the European Central Bank (ECB) will keep interest rates on hold.

Consumer prices in the 21-nation single currency area rose 2.8 per cent compared with the same month a year earlier, down from 3.2 per cent in May, said EU statistics agency Eurostat.

Cooling fuel prices following the US-Iran deal on ending the war were mostly to thank for the headline figure dropping back down towards the ECB's inflation target of two per cent.

Energy prices rose 8.7 per cent across the single-currency area in June, down from 10.8 per cent in May.

'The improving inflation outlook means we don't expect any further rate hikes'...

Inflation in food and services also slowed — respectively down 0.3 points to 1.6 per cent and 0.3 point to 3.2 per cent, with inflation in industrial goods holding

steady at 0.9 per cent.

Coming a day after national data showed inflation slowing in all three of the eurozone's largest economies — France, Germany and Italy — the June fall was more marked than the 3 per cent predicted by analysts polled by Bloomberg.

Of particular importance for the ECB, core inflation — which strips out volatile energy and food prices — came back down to 2.4 per cent — after ticking up to 2.6 a month earlier.

The tame inflation data raised hopes that the ECB — which raised rates last month for the first time since 2023 — will not need to do so again when it next meets on July 23.

"This makes us more confident in our view that the ECB will not raise interest rates any further," wrote Jack Allen-Reynolds at Capital Economics, which predicted eurozone inflation would keep dropping to about 2.5 per cent in July.

"The improving inflation outlook means we don't expect any further rate hikes," echoed Tomas Dvorak of Oxford Economics.

The central bank's president Christine Lagarde already told European lawmakers last week there was no need for "forceful" action, citing falling energy prices and the lack of knock-on effects like higher wage demands that could further stoke inflation.

China imposes 'national security' rules on overseas investments

BELJING (AFP) — China is intensifying its scrutiny of investments overseas with broad "national security" regulations taking effect from Wednesday, at a time of rising tech competition with Washington.

The new rules, originally announced on June 1, provide authorities with a sweeping legal framework to influence flows of capital and personnel across China's borders.

Beijing sees fields such as artificial intelligence, computer chips and green technology as economically and strategically vital and has vowed to promote their domestic development.

The new measures are intended to "enhance the quality and level of

outward investment", according to the provisions laid out by the State Council, China's Cabinet.

However, some investors worry they will restrict the ability of China's bustling and sprawling tech ecosystem to access global markets.

Outbound investment should adhere to the "overall national security concept", the regulations state, while aiming to "balance domestic and international considerations".

The new framework also authorises the government to conduct reviews of investments or transfers that could impact national security.

Beijing often views cross-border transactions with suspicion, with its top economic planning body striking down in

April an attempt by Facebook owner Meta to acquire AI startup Manus, which was created by a company founded in China but now based in Singapore.

Under the new rules, existing curbs on cross-border transfers will extend beyond goods and data to include the export of services through sending technical experts abroad or carrying out training overseas.

The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission said on social media this week that the move reinforces a trend it has tracked for months.

The bipartisan commission warned in May that, "as is often the case for China's national security-related laws, enforce-

ment authorities have immense discretion to determine what constitutes a violation, creating further risk for foreign firms".

Beijing is looking to protect domestic AI progress in its competition with Washington, but the new rules risk cutting off other parts of the world from Chinese investments, Alicia Garcia-Herrero, Asia-Pacific chief economist at Natixis, told AFP.

"This is terrible for Europe, because if anybody were to believe that we would rely on China's open-weight [AI] models, this is wrong — we can't," she said, adding that the continent also cannot depend on Chinese talent to develop its own models due to Beijing's stringent cross-border curbs.

Japan plans sovereign AI model, 10m AI robots

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan plans to develop a homegrown artificial intelligence model and have 10 million AI-equipped robots operating in more than a dozen sectors by 2040, the government said.

The country will reportedly invest around \$6 billion in the home-made AI model, which will be developed by Noetra, a consortium of firms including SoftBank and Sony.

Countries around the world are seeking to develop sovereign AI models to reduce a potentially dangerous over-reliance on technology from the United States and China.

Media reports said that the government



A man repairs a humanoid robot at the International Robot Exhibition in Tokyo on December 3, 2025

would provide up to one trillion yen (\$6.1 billion) over the next five years, depending on the results of the initiative.

The number of companies investing in Noetra is expected to increase to 44 including those in the automotive, electronics and other manufacturing

sectors as well as finance and logistics, the Nikkei business daily reported.

Noetra will focus in particular on physical AI, with the government also announcing on Tuesday a revised version of its AI robotics strategy.

Instead of just interacting with users via

software on a screen, physical AI is about the deployment of artificial intelligence in real-world settings — such as self-driving cars, factory robots or even android butlers.

Despite massive investments and big plans for AI robots, their application and performance in real-life settings remain limited.

"This strategy sets a target of approximately 10 million robots to be deployed by 2040 and, with the addition of the restaurant, food manufacturing and medical sectors, will vigorously promote social implementation across a total of 18 fields," Industry Minister Ryosei Akazawa told reporters.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Wednesday amounted to JD11.0 million spread over 4.2 million shares that traded through 4,428 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.04 per cent, closing at 3854.16 points.

Out of 99 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 37 companies rose while the share price of another 30 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Premier Business and Projects Company Ltd. by 4.92 per cent, Specialised Jordanian Investment by 4.88 per cent, Arab Investors Union Company for Real Estates Developing by 4.17 per cent, Nobar Trading Investment Company by 3.49 per cent, and First Finance by 3.39 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Northern Cement Company by 4.43 per cent, Amad Investment and Real Estate Development by 3.93 per cent, Zara Investment Holding by 3.92 per cent, Ubour Logistic Services Plc. by 3.85 per cent and Jordan Insurance by 3.53 per cent.

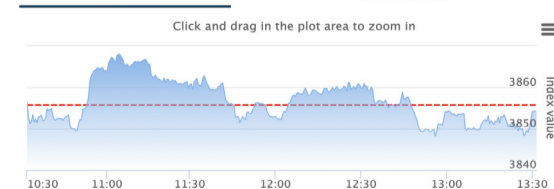
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THE MARKET TODAY

ASE Index: ↓ 3854.16 0.04% July 01, 2026

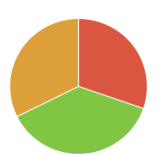
Live Data

Historical Data



DAILY SUMMARY

Regular Market	OTC Market	Bonds
Trading Value (JDs)	10,964,692	
Trading volume	4,394,063	
No. of Transactions	4,428	
No. of Securities	99	



SPORTS AT A GLANCE

RUGBY

Bordeaux-Begles handed favourable draw in Champions Cup defence

PARIS, France (AFP) — Holders Bordeaux-Begles will face former winners Munster in next season's Champions Cup rugby pool stage, after the draw was made on Wednesday. The French club will also play the Stormers as well as Bristol and Gloucester in Pool 3, with fellow Top 14 outfit Racing 92 also in the group but they will not face each other as they are from the same domestic league. One hurdle for the 2025 and 2026 winners could be a tough trip to South Africa, with exact fixture locations to be announced in due course. Last season's runners up Leinster are in Pool 1 alongside Pau, Sale, Leicester, Clermont and fellow United Rugby Championship side Glasgow. Record six-time champions Toulouse will play winners on three occasions Saracens and English Prem runners up Exeter in Pool 3. English Prem champions Northampton will meet Montpellier, who lifted the second-tier Challenge Cup in May and lost in last weekend's Top 14 final, in Pool 4. Next season's competitions will also introduce three major changes including the teams qualifying for the last 16.

CRICKET

England skipper Sciver-Brunt 'threw everything' at World Cup semi-final return

LONDON (AFP) — England captain Nat Sciver-Brunt says she "threw everything" at being able to make her comeback in a Women's T20 World Cup semi-final against South Africa on Thursday. A minor tear to her left calf on April 29 sidelined the all-rounder for the early part of the season and a recurrence of the injury a fortnight ago meant Sciver-Brunt missed World Cup hosts England's last three group-stage matches. Her absence made little difference as England topped their group with five wins out of five but that did not prevent Sciver-Brunt from pulling out all the stops in a bid to be fit for the knockout stages, including placing her left leg in a portable machine which uses electromagnetic energy to alter cell behaviour. The 33-year-old batted for half an hour in the Oval nets on Wednesday but did not take part in any fielding drills, raising questions over whether she is indeed fully fit to lead England against the Proteas at Surrey's headquarters on Thursday. But Sciver-Brunt told reporters: "We used various. We tested it [the injury] enough to be comfortable. What will happen out on the pitch will happen. I'm really happy with where I am at, physically. We're confident that I'm fully fit."

Jordan faces Iran in FIBA World Cup qualifiers

By Aline Bannayan

AMMAN — Jordan plays Iran on Thursday in as Window 3 Round 1 Asian Group C qualifiers for the 2027 FIBA World Cup tip off in Amman.

The national team will face Iraq on July 5, ending Round 1 following which the top three teams from each group will advance to Round 2 of the qualifiers where the 12 teams will be divided into two groups with group leaders advancing to the World Cup alongside the fourth best team. So far, Jordan lead Group C after an unbeaten run. In postponed Window 2 matches this week, Jordan beat Iraq 108-59 while Iran beat Syria 72-68. Earlier, Jordan beat Iran 73-60 while Syria beat Iraq 78-70. In Window 1, Jordan beat Syria 100-48 and 74-59, Iran overcame Iraq twice 86-71 and 94-68.

There had been concerns over Jordan's national squad which regrouped only three weeks ago after the game's governing body, the Jordan basketball Federation, faced admin issues and mass resignations. With coach Roy Rana's contract ending, former coach Wisam Sous was recalled to oversee the team for the upcoming matches.

The Jordanian squad is led by naturalised pro Jalen Harris who scored 23 points and had 8 re-

bounds combining with young star Saif Al Deen Saleh who excelled against Iraq with 20 points and 11 rebounds as young teammates like Rawhi Kilani, who had powered Jordan into their second U19 World Cup since 1995, also made a promising debut.

"We have a lot of good players. I coached most of them in the U18 when we made it to the World Cup, so I know them well," coach Sous was quoted by FIBA.

"The idea at the moment is to get good results, but at the same time to give the chance to the young players so that we won't have gaps in generations for the future," Sous noted, adding, "we have a responsibility — we cannot make that change in a sudden manner, we need to have that balance," he added.

Veteran Ahmad Duweiri, joined Abdullah Olajuwon, Freddie Ibrahim, Ahmad Hamarshah and Amin Abu Hawas to continue their squad's unbeaten run and secure a place in Round 2 with the aim to qualify to the World Cup for the third consecutive and fourth overall time after first qualifying in 2010. The team, now 41st in FIBA rankings and 8th in Asia, still lacks a solid bench. However, the younger additions to the squad might be the key turning point, as many

others who excelled in the league, including Adham Dajani, did not make it on the team this round.

A total of 80 national squads from the four FIBA regions are playing FIBA World Cup qualifiers in six windows from November 2025 to March 2027 following which 5 teams from Africa, 7 from the Americas, 7 from Asia and 12 from Europe will advance to the 2027 World Cup in Doha, Qatar which is a direct qualifier for 7 national teams to the 2028 Olympic Games. So far in Asian qualifiers, Group A: Australia, New Zealand, Philippines have advanced with Guam out; Group B: Japan, South Korea and China have advanced with Chinese Taipei out; Group D: Lebanon, Qatar Saudi Arabia have advanced with India out. At the 31st FIBA Asia Cup 2025, Jordan's squad failed to keep up the nation's impressive record and the squad ended up 11th among 16 competing nations after previously reaching the medals podium twice. So far, the squad has played at the FIBA Asia Cup 17th times, with their best position runner-up in 2011, 3rd in 2009 and 4th in 2022.

In 2023, Jordan was Asian Games silver medalist, after qualifying to the FIBA World Cup in 2010, 2019 and 2023.



Jordan's Saif Al-Deen Saleh, a promising star in Jordan's national team, highlighted by FIBA as 'born ready'

Group C

Team	P	W	L	SF	SA	PTS
Jordan	4	4	0	355	226	8
Iran	4	3	1	312	280	7
Syria	4	1	3	253	316	5
Iraq	4	0	4	268	366	4

Australia boosts shark-spotting drone coverage at Sydney beaches

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australia will expand shark-spotting drone coverage year-round at beaches across Sydney and beyond from July 1, authorities said on Sunday, following a rise in attacks and sightings.

The New South Wales (NSW) state government said it would invest an additional Aus\$34 million (\$23 million) in drones, harnessing artificial intelligence and emerging technologies in a "major scale-up" of coverage.

The decision will boost investment in "shark mitigation" in the state to Aus\$120 million over the next two years, the government said in a statement.

"While no one can ever promise no shark interactions, this investment is about putting more eyes in the sky so we can spot sharks earlier and give people a clear heads-up when they're in the water," said the state's premier, Chris Minns.

"More drones in the air means we're getting a better picture of what's happening offshore and it means we'll get better at seeing them."

The enlarged drone monitoring deployment comes after a string of incidents in the state.



The New South Wales state government said it would invest an additional 20.57 million euros in drones, harnessing artificial intelligence and emerging technologies in a 'major scale-up' of coverage

A local teacher swimming at Sydney's popular Coojee beach was mauled by a shark on June 13.

She was left in intensive care in hospital where her family says she has faced multiple surgeries including the amputation of her arm.

In the past week, sightings of a great white shark at Bondi Beach

led to beach closures for three days in a row.

A 12-year-old boy died after he was bitten by a shark while playing in Sydney Harbour in January and a bull shark killed a woman swimming at a remote beach north of Sydney in November.

Shark siren

In other parts of the

country, three divers were fatally mauled in separate incidents between May and June this year — two in Western Australia and the third in Queensland.

Under the expanded drone watch run by the state's lifeguards, about 70 beaches in New South Wales — including 38 in Sydney — will be monitored every day.

"Surf Life Saving NSW will prioritise beaches with high numbers of swimmers, surfers and paddlers including in Sydney and the North Coast, where shark incidents have become more frequent," the state government said.

Drone flight hours will be extended from dawn to dusk and coverage will include popular beaches

that are not patrolled by lifeguards.

Australian scientists believe rising ocean temperatures are shifting sharks' migratory patterns, which may be contributing to an uptick in attacks.

There have been nearly 1,300 shark incidents around Australia since 1791, of which more than 260 resulted in death, according to a database of shark encounters with humans.

Australia has a multi-layered approach to protection against sharks, including old-fashioned nets which have come under criticism for trapping other marine species and their questionable effectiveness.

Lifeguards and drones can also spot the marine predators and alert beachgoers to the danger, often with a siren.

In New South Wales, sharks are lured by bait to "SMART drumlines" where they are then tagged with devices that can be detected when they swim past one of dozens of listening stations along the coast.

That sets off an alarm on a SharkSmart app, giving beachgoers an instant notification on their mobiles and smart watches.

End of the line for Finland's analogue phone network

HELSINKI (AFP) — Finland on Tuesday pulled the plug on analogue landline phone calls after almost 150 years, the latest country to push forward in a global transition towards digital infrastructure.

After Tuesday the only providers of landline plans in Finland will be local operators...

Estonia, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain have already made the jump, as countries across the world roll out fibre optic cable that can handle both Internet services and voice calls.

Finland's fixed-line network began operating in the 1880s, but like everywhere else the digital revolution has swallowed up the old technology based on copper wires.

And the Nordic country, home of mobile phone pioneer Nokia, has seen the use of landline phones gobbled up by


mobile technology.

Elisa, the country's last major telecom operator with a fixed-line copper-wire network, marked the end of its service with a call between the firm's CEO Topi Manner and Jarkko Saarimäki, head of the country's communication and transport agency.

The two chatted about their memories of landline phones, with Manner recalling his time as a teenager in London in the 1980s when he would call home once a week at an agreed time to make sure the family were all there.

They also discussed the future of mobile technologies, before ending the call with a casual "kuulemiin", meaning "speak later" in Finnish.

When announcing its decision to retire the network in January — a move its competitors had already made earlier — Elisa said its customers had just a "few thousand" landline-only plans, with no new ones being sold in years. After Tuesday, the only providers of landline plans in Finland will be local operators, currently covering a few thousand plans for local calls, public broadcaster Yle said.



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