



MARKET
Souk Jara celebrates 20th season with expanded activities
2



CINEMA
Jordan positions itself as cost-effective destination for global film production — RFC
3



REGULATIONS
100% compliance by companies in submitting 2025 sustainability reports
7



BASKETBALL
Jordan concludes Round 1 FIBA World Cup qualifiers on Sunday
8



Sunday, July 5, 2026 | Muharram 20, 1448 Hijri

Jordan reclassified as upper-middle-income economy by World Bank

AMMAN (JT) — The World Bank has reclassified Jordan as an upper-middle-income economy in its Fiscal Year 2027 income classifications, effective from 1 July 2026, following a revision of the Kingdom's national accounts that lifted its Gross National Income (GNI) per capita above the required threshold.

Jordan's GNI per capita, calculated using the World Bank's Atlas method, rose to \$5,260, exceeding the upper-middle-income threshold of \$4,636 by \$624. The figure marks an increase from \$4,430 in the previous classification.

According to the World Bank, the upgrade follows a rebasing exercise carried out by Jordan's Department of Statistics, which broadened the coverage of the national accounts through updated surveys, new data sources and improved statistical methods. The revision also incorporated economic activities that had not previously been captured in the official data.

The World Bank said that the statistical revisions, together with



File photo

economic growth of 2.8 per cent in 2025, enabled Jordan to move into the

upper-middle-income category. For Fiscal Year 2027,

the World Bank defines upper-middle-income economies as those

with a GNI per capita of between \$4,636 and \$14,375, based on 2025 income data calculated using the Atlas methodology.

The bank emphasised that GNI per capita should not be interpreted as the average income earned by individuals. Rather, it is a statistical indicator used for analytical and classification purposes, based on GNI per capita calculated under the Atlas methodology.

Jordan is one of only five economies worldwide to move up an income category in this year's update, alongside the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Micronesia.

The World Bank updates its income classifications annually on 1 July through its Development Data Group, using GNI per capita estimates from the previous calendar year. The latest edition covers 218 economies, classifying them into four income groups: Low, lower-middle, upper-middle and high income.

Continued on page 5



King congratulates US president on 250th independence day

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah has extended best wishes to US President Donald Trump on the 250th independence day of the United States, according to a

Royal Court statement. In a cable, His Majesty expressed congratulations to President Trump on behalf of the people and government of Jordan, stressing the deep-rooted

strategic partnership between Jordan and the United States, and keenness to continue advancing it in service of the shared interests of the Jordanian and American peoples.

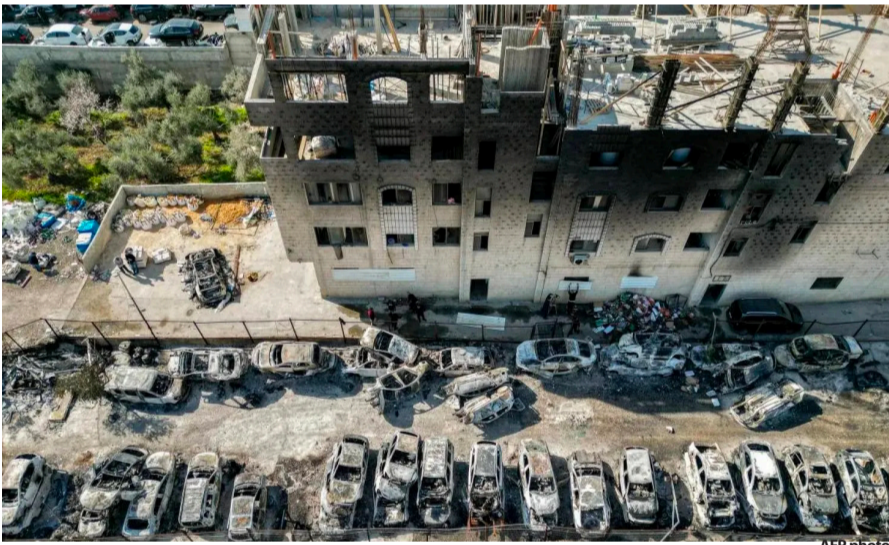
Jordan, Qatar send 2nd aid flight to earthquake-hit Venezuela — JAF

AMMAN (JT) — The second aircraft in the Jordanian-Qatari humanitarian air bridge departed on Friday

for Caracas, Venezuela, carrying 26 tonnes of medical, relief and food supplies for those affected by the earth-

quake that struck several regions of the country.

Continued on page 5



AFP photo

An aerial view of a yard where cars were torched by Israeli settlers, in the Palestinian town of Huwara near Nablus in the occupied West Bank

Israel rules out withdrawal from Lebanon, Syria and Gaza

By Mai Anati

AMMAN — Israel has said that it would keep its forces in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza indefinitely, signalling what analysts describe as a long-term shift in its regional security strategy despite ongoing diplomatic efforts to ease tensions.

Defence minister Israel Katz has recently said that Israeli troops would remain in what Israel calls "security zones" across the three fronts, insisting that the military would not withdraw until Israel's security objectives had been achieved.

His remarks came days after Lebanon and Israel signed a US-sponsored framework agreement designed to launch negotiations and establish new security arrangements between the two sides.

Israeli officials have maintained that any future withdrawal from southern Lebanon remains conditional on the



AFP via Getty Images

Israeli tanks take position on the border with Syria near the village of Majdal Shams in the Israel-annexed Golan Heights on December 8, 2024

disarmament of Hizbollah, despite the diplomatic progress achieved under the US-backed framework.

Katz also warned that Israel would respond

"with full force" to any Iranian attack linked to its military operations in Lebanon.

The policy was reflected elsewhere on Thursday, when Israeli au-

thorities approved plans for 13 new settlements in the occupied West Bank, a move Palestinian officials said would deepen settlement expansion and further isolate oc-

cupied East Jerusalem from its Palestinian surroundings.

Israel continues to maintain military operations across multiple fronts, with forces remaining in much of Gaza while carrying out strikes in Lebanon and preserving a military presence inside Syrian territory.

Political analyst Amer Sabaileh said that the Israeli position reflects a fundamental shift in the country's security doctrine following the October 7 attacks.

"Since October 7, Israel's security doctrine has focused on ending the concept of unified fronts by reshaping the geography surrounding it," he said.

Sabaileh said that Israel is seeking to redraw its security boundaries through buffer zones and a sustained military presence beyond its internationally recognised borders.

Continued on page 5

Palestinian presidency warns of 'dangerous' settler attacks, calls for int'l protection

AMMAN (JT) — Palestinian Authority Spokesperson Nabil Abu Rudeineh has denounced the "organised terrorism" by Israeli extremists against villages and towns in the occupied West Bank.

In a statement, carried by the Palestine News Agency, WAFA, Abu Ru-

deineh said that the "the organised terrorism carried out by colonist gangs against Palestinian villages and towns in Jenin, Nablus, Jerusalem and Hebron in the occupied West Bank is a dangerous escalation of violence".

Abu Rudeineh said the

attacks have included assaults on homes and residents, the burning of agricultural land, the uprooting and destruction of olive trees, damage to private property, and the seizure of water sources.

Continued on page 5

Families demand help with recovering Venezuela's quake victims

CARABALLEDA, Venezuela (AFP) — With little hope of finding loved ones alive, frustrated families of those affected by Venezuela's double earthquakes clamored for help to recover their loved one's bodies on Friday as uncertainty grew over the death toll from the tragedy.

Authorities on Friday reported a total of 2,645 deaths and more than 12,000 wounded from the 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes that struck the country last week, with most fatalities in the coastal town of La Guaira, where scores of residential complexes were flattened. Officials have avoided



AFP photo

Rescuers search for victims of the June 24 twin quakes at the site of a collapsed building in Tanaguarena sector in Caraballeda, La Guaira State, Venezuela on Friday

estimating the number of missing, though the UN has put that figure

at as many as 50,000. Many survivors who were left homeless

meanwhile are sleeping in the streets or in makeshift shelters set

up in parks and public spaces.

Nine days after one of Latin America's worst earthquake disasters, rescue teams were beginning to wind down search operations for survivors, although many relatives still clung desperately to any sound from the rubble as a sign of life.

In front of the Tahiti building in the Caraballeda sector of La Guaira, one rescuer reported hearing shouts from an adult in the early morning hours Friday.

Reports also emerged that a 9-year-old boy had been found alive, but foreign rescuers told AFP there was no trace of any survivors.

Outside the Tahiti, frustrations boiled over as families trying to recover bodies shouted at others wanting to clear the way for a potential rescue.

"Until I recover the bodies, I won't be at peace," said Jose Francisco Liendo, who was trying to dig out the remains of his father and sister.

"Don't let the machines come and take them away like garbage."

Venezuela's interim President Delcy Rodriguez has suggested there is still a possibility of finding survivors, but after nine days, that scenario is remote.

Continued on page 5

Huge crowds throng Tehran for Khamenei funeral ceremonies

TEHRAN (AFP) — Vast crowds of Iranians loyal to the Islamic republic massed in Tehran on Saturday to begin almost a week of funeral ceremonies for slain supreme leader Ali Khamenei, which authorities want to send a message of defiance to the West after the war with the United States and Israel.

Clad in black and waving blood-red flags seen as a call for vengeance and justice under Shia Islam, mourners

thronged the Grand Mosalla religious complex in the Iranian capital, AFP correspondents said.

Khamenei, who had ruled Iran since 1989 and pursued a course of confrontation with the West while crushing dissent at home, was killed aged 86 along with several members of his family and top officials in an Israeli strike on the first day of the war on February 28.

Continued on page 5



Petra photo

Organised by the Ministry of Culture in cooperation with various partners, the Jordan Summer Festival 2026 offers a diverse package of free artistic, cultural and entertainment activities

Second week of Jordan Summer Festival commences nationwide

AMMAN (JT) — The second week of the Jordan Summer Festival 2026 kicked off on Friday across several governorates, as part of government efforts to boost domestic tourism and provide entertainment and cultural outlets for Jordanian families and visitors.

Organised by the Ministry of Culture in cooperation with various partners, the festival offers a diverse package of free artistic, cultural and entertainment activities throughout the summer season across multiple locations, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The event aims to support local communities, highlight the cultural and tourism potential of the governorates, and stimulate economic activity in the host cities.

In Madaba, the festivities resumed at the Imad Al Din Zengi Stadium square in the city

centre.

Madaba Culture Director Mohammed Rawahneh said that the festival dedicates "significant" space to families and youth by presenting cultural, artistic and heritage segments, children's activities, games and cultural competitions, while also supporting local women and young talents.

In Tafleeh, the activities commenced at the Sala Tourist Visitor Centre, attended by local families, official department directors, mayors and community representatives.

Tafleeh Culture Director Salem Faqir said that the festival provides a space that blends entertainment with culture while supporting local talents and productive families to market their goods.

The programme featured children's shows, the "Mai wa Milh" (Wa-

ter and Salt) carnival, a DJ musical performance, a local talent segment, and concluded with a concert by artist Adham Al Salman.

In Aqaba, the Great Arab Revolt Square hosted the second Friday events of the festival, drawing a large crowd of residents and visitors.

Aqaba Culture Director Tariq Bdoor said that the festival aims to enhance cultural activity in the governorates, provide free entertainment for all age groups, stimulate the local economy, and offer a platform for artisans to showcase their crafts.

Bdoor added that the Jordan Summer Festival 2026 events will continue every Friday evening until August 28, featuring a diverse programme that reflects Jordanian cultural heritage and promotes community participation.

Souk Jara celebrates 20th season with expanded activities

By Salma Alzuraqi

AMMAN — Souk Jara is celebrating its 20th season this year in Jabal Amman neighbourhood, welcoming visitors every Friday throughout the summer with an expanded lineup of activities and growing attendance.

The market opened its 2026 season on June 5 and will continue until September 11.

Although this year's edition marks the 20th season, the milestone comes more than 20 years after the market's launch due to a hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Held just off the Rainbow Street in Jabal Amman, Souk Jara is one of the capital's most popular open-air summer markets.

Operating every Friday from 10am to 10pm, it features handmade crafts, streetwear, traditional clothing, local food and products created by Jordanian artisans.

"The market has been receiving an estimated 8,000 to 14,000 visitors every Friday, a number that exceeds previous years," Jabal Amman Residents Association (JARA) Vice President Khader Qawas told The Jordan Times.

Qawas said that this year's edition introduces several new attractions, including the Knowledge Path in partnership with the Abdul Hameed



Shoman Foundation, activities organised by the Zaha Cultural Centre, and a dedicated children's area where young visitors can participate in hands-on activities.

For many vendors, Souk Jara remains one of the country's most important seasonal markets.

Nadia, who has participated in the market for the past eight years,

said that Souk Jara's reputation and strong promotion have made it her only choice for selling her products.

She expressed hope that similar markets would be established elsewhere in Jordan and said that visitor numbers are expected to increase in the coming weeks as more tourists arrive and schools and universities begin their

summer break.

Visitors also highlighted the market's evolving atmosphere.

Astrid, a German expatriate living in Amman, said that each visit offers a different experience.

"Some things are similar, and some things are different, so it's a surprise every time you come," she said.

The Jabal Amman

Residents Association was established in 2004 by residents seeking to preserve the neighbourhood's architectural heritage and prevent the demolition of historic homes.

Souk Jara was launched under the association on August 5, 2005, and has since become one of Amman's best-known cultural and community events.

Jerash festival debuts Hippodrome stage with international, Arab events

AMMAN (JT) — The Jerash Festival for Culture and Arts, in its 40th edition, is set to launch the "Hippodrome" stage for the first time in its history, marking one of the "most significant" additions to the annual event.

The Hippodrome is one of the most prominent archaeological landmarks in the ancient city of Jerash, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Originally built during the Roman era as a track for horse and chariot racing, the site is reclaiming its role as a public gathering space, now serving as a venue for arts, music, and global cultures.

The launch of the Hippodrome is more than just the opening of a new stage. It represents the revival of a major landmark within the archaeological city, transforming it into a vibrant platform that blends historical heritage with contemporary



Photo courtesy of Visit Jordan

The Jerash Festival for Culture and Arts is set to launch the 'Hippodrome' stage for the first time in its history, marking one of the 'most significant' additions to the annual event

creativity.

Spanning 11 dunums within the ancient city, the new open-air venue accommodates nearly 3,000 spectators and will serve as a main platform for international, Arab, and Jordanian performances, providing an open space to absorb the increasing numbers of festival visitors.

Under the theme "The Hippodrome: A Meeting Place for Global Cultures and Integrated Family Entertainment Programmes", the venue is set to host 35 free events, featuring a diverse programme of music, folklore shows, traditional dances and contemporary cultural performances.

International troupes from Italy, Japan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Greece, South Korea, China, the Philippines and Sri Lanka will participate, alongside Arab troupes from Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Iraq, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar, in addition to Jordanian performances.

The Hippodrome experience is integrated with the festival's family programme held at the Sound and Light Theatre and the Oval Plaza's "Gerasha Market".

This segment features 13 free events dedicated to families and children, including children's plays, comedy shows by artist Hussein Tbieshat and the duo "Zaal and Khadra", alongside performances by the Zaha Cultural Centre troupe.

The global cultural scene will be further enriched by the "Embassies' Pavilion", which features 12 pavilions representing several nations.

The pavilion will showcase the cultural heritage, folklore arts and traditional products of these countries, offering visitors an interactive opportunity to explore diverse cultures during the festival's milestone 40th edition.

GAM Deputy City Manager for Environmental and District Affairs Mohammed Fauri reviewed the municipality's key projects in integrated waste management and the environment, highlighting the biogas engine project that converts landfill gases into electrical energy.

GAM Executive Director of Environmental Studies and Projects Suha Shishani noted that

GAM installs fourth biogas engine to increase clean electricity generation

AMMAN (JT) — The Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) on Saturday announced the start of installing a new engine at the Ghabawi Municipal Solid Waste landfill, making it the fourth operational engine at the site under the biogas project.

The launch took place in the presence of GAM Committee Chairman Youssef Shawarbeh, EU Ambassador Pierre-Christophe Chatzivasas and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Managing Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Region Gretchen Biery, according to a GAM statement.

GAM Deputy City Manager for Environmental and District Affairs Mohammed Fauri reviewed the municipality's key projects in integrated waste management and the environment, highlighting the biogas engine project that converts landfill gases into electrical energy.

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GAM photo

The Greater Amman Municipality on Saturday announces the start of installing a new engine at the Ghabawi Municipal Solid Waste landfill

the production capacity of the new engine reaches 1.56 megawatts, raising the landfill's total power generation capacity to 6.28 megawatts.

She stressed that this increase will "directly" contribute to covering a major portion of the municipality's electricity needs, bringing the energy coverage generated by the landfill to 55 per cent of GAM's total electricity bills.

Director of the Environmental Projects Department Manal Khawaldeh said that the project

will undergo future expansions aligned with the landfill's capacity, with two additional engines expected to be installed in the upcoming phases.

Funded and supported by the EBRD, the project underscores international partners' confidence in GAM's environmental and developmental plans, as well as its continuous efforts to turn environmental challenges into economic opportunities and sustainable energy that reduces carbon emissions, GAM said.

UN warns expanding Israeli-controlled areas deepen Gaza humanitarian crisis

By Osama Alkafri

AMMAN — The UN and its humanitarian partners have voiced growing concern over the continued expansion of areas under Israeli control in the Gaza Strip, warning that the developments are placing civilians at greater risk and further constraining humanitarian operations more than eight months after the ceasefire took effect in October 2025.

In a report issued on July 1, the Humanitarian Country Team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory said that the repeated expansion of Israeli-controlled areas has forced Gaza's 2.1



AFP photo

People walk past tents for the displaced outside a residential building that was hit by an Israeli strike the previous day in the Rimal neighbourhood of Gaza City on May 16

million residents into increasingly confined spaces.

Most Palestinians have already been displaced multiple times and are

now living in shrinking areas under severe movement restrictions.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that the expansion of military-controlled zones is blurring the distinction between civilian and military areas, increasing civilians' exposure to violence while restricting access to essential services.

Humanitarian agencies continue to face significant operational challenges, including movement restrictions, bureaucratic delays at border crossings and a shrinking humanitarian operating space.

Aid organisations say

that these obstacles are undermining the delivery of food, medical supplies, clean water and shelter assistance.

"Gaza is being held together by humanitarian workarounds," a senior UN official previously told the Security Council, underscoring the fragility of relief operations.

Funding shortages are further straining humanitarian efforts, particularly water-trucking operations, which currently provide drinking water to more than 70 per cent of Gaza's population.

The UN warned that civilians continue to bear the greatest burden of the crisis. Repeated displacement, overcrowded

shelters and deteriorating sanitation conditions have heightened public health risks, including the spread of pests and the potential outbreak of disease.

Access to healthcare also remains severely constrained, with many patients unable to reach medical facilities or receive specialised treatment.

Children and other vulnerable groups continue to face disruptions to education, limited access to essential services and long-term psychological trauma.

Despite the ceasefire, humanitarian needs across Gaza remain acute. While international

donors have pledged support for reconstruction, recovery efforts have been hindered by ongoing security restrictions and limited humanitarian access.

A previous Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment conducted by the UN, the European Union and the World Bank estimated that Gaza's reconstruction would require tens of billions of dollars. However, current conditions continue to impede large-scale rebuilding efforts.

The Humanitarian Country Team called for immediate action to protect civilians, guarantee safe and unimpeded humanitarian access and

halt further territorial changes that place lives at risk.

It stressed that addressing Gaza's humanitarian crisis requires sustained aid delivery, adherence to international humanitarian law and meaningful progress towards a lasting political solution.

The latest warning underscores the widening gap between the ceasefire agreement and conditions on the ground, as humanitarian agencies continue to urge the international community to address both the immediate needs of civilians and the obstacles preventing Gaza's recovery.



Senate President Faisal Fayeز says on Saturday that emerging technologies and AI are playing an increasingly important role in supporting economic growth and addressing development challenges

Fayeز calls for stronger regulation of AI, emerging technologies

AMMAN (JT) — Senate President Faisal Fayeز said on Saturday that emerging technologies and AI are playing an increasingly important role in supporting economic growth and addressing development challenges, while also strengthening international efforts to combat terrorism and extremism.

Addressing the 10th Summit of Speakers of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean, which opened in Cairo, Fayeز said these technologies have contributed to tracking terrorist networks and identifying individuals involved in extremist activities, according to a Senate statement.

Fayeز warned that the same technologies are being misused by terrorist groups as tools for killing, destruction and spreading chaos, in violation of humanitarian, moral and legal principles.

Fayeز stressed the need for governments and parliaments to

work together to address the risks associated with rapid technological development, noting that legislatures have a key responsibility in ensuring that legal frameworks keep pace with emerging technologies.

He called for clear regulatory frameworks governing the use of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, including strict penalties for their misuse in spreading disinformation, promoting terrorism and extremism, or developing tools of destruction, stressing that such measures are essential to ensure these technologies serve sustainable development and humanity.

On parliamentary diplomacy, Fayeز said it is playing an expanding role in promoting peace and stability by strengthening cooperation between parliaments and encouraging dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution.

He added that Jor-

dan's parliamentary diplomacy complements the Kingdom's foreign policy, led by His Majesty King Abdullah, in advancing national interests and supporting Arab and Islamic causes.

Fayeز also called on international parliamentary organisations to take a more active role in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East through parliamentary diplomacy, stressing the need to support the establishment of an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian state on the 1967 lines.

He described Israeli practices in Gaza and the West Bank as crimes against humanity, warning that they risk fuelling further violence and hatred.

Fayeز further urged support for a Memorandum of Understanding between Iran and the United States, saying it could contribute to ending conflict and restoring stability and security in the region.

Jordan positions itself as cost-effective destination for global film production — RFC

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — Jordan is strengthening its position as a regional film production hub, as the sector generates an estimated JD18.9 million annually, driven by investment incentives, diverse filming locations and a developing creative ecosystem aligned with national economic strategy.

In remarks to The Jordan Times, the Royal Film Commission (RFC) said that the sector contributes directly and indirectly to the national economy by creating employment opportunities for local crews, technicians, actors and service providers, while also stimulating spending across hospitality, transport, catering, construction and other supporting industries.

RFC also said that international productions further strengthen the wider economy by supporting skills development, encouraging private-sector participation and expanding Jordan's creative industries ecosystem.

"Beyond production activity, the sector has contributed to tourism growth through film-induced tourism, with global audiences increasingly discovering Jordan through on-screen locations," the commission said, adding that sites such as Petra and Wadi Rum have seen increased international visibility as a result.

The RFC also said that Jordan's competitiveness as a filming destination is reinforced by a combination of political and social stability, exper-



'The Martian', one of several Hollywood productions filmed in Jordan, used Wadi Rum to portray Mars

rienced production crews, diverse landscapes and strong government support, including a cash rebate programme offering up to 45 per cent on eligible production expenditures.

"This positions the Kingdom among the region's most cost-effective filming destinations, enhancing its ability to attract major international film and television projects."

The commission also said that Jordan's geographical diversity further strengthens its appeal, allowing film makers to access deserts, mountains, ancient cities and urban settings within one destination, reducing both production costs and logistical complexity.

"Among the most prominent filming lo-

cations are Wadi Rum, Petra, the Dead Sea, Aqaba and Amman. Wadi Rum is internationally recognised for its dramatic desert landscapes often used to depict extraterrestrial environments, while Petra offers a unique historical and architectural backdrop. Coastal and urban environments in Aqaba and Amman, alongside the Dead Sea, expand the country's cinematic versatility."

The RFC said that the Kingdom is also steadily developing its education and training ecosystem to meet rising industry demand, noting that it has expanded year-round training programmes and specialised workshops to prepare emerging film makers and technicians for

the local and regional market.

"Around two-and-a-half-years-ago, the Jordan Media Institute-Cinema Academy was established in partnership with the German Jordanian University, offering structured academic and practical training in film making," the commission said, adding that several universities across the Kingdom have also introduced cinema-related courses, with some moving towards dedicated degree programmes in film and media studies.

The RFC highlighted that the commission plays a central operational role in facilitating productions by coordinating filming permits, providing location support, assisting with customs pro-

cedures for equipment, connecting producers with local professionals and administering incentive programmes designed to support industry growth.

The global creative economy, valued at more than \$3.5 trillion and growing at an estimated 6-8 per cent annually, provides a wider context for Jordan's ambitions as countries increasingly compete to attract high-value audiovisual production.

Established in 2003 under the chairmanship of HRH Prince Ali, the Royal Film Commission plays a central role in developing the sector through production support, talent development and investment incentives aimed at attracting international film makers.

ACI exports rise 9.5% to JD3.8 billion in H1 2026

AMMAN (JT) — Exports by the Amman Chamber of Industry (ACI) rose by 9.5 per cent during the first half of 2026 to JD3.801 billion, reflecting the resilience of Jordan's industrial sector despite regional challenges.

According to the chamber's statistical report released on Saturday, exports increased from JD3.472 billion during the corresponding period last year.

The report said the growth underscores continued confidence in Jordanian products, supported by product diversification and expanding access to non-traditional markets, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The data showed that Jordanian industrial products reached new destinations in Africa, Europe and non-Arab Asian countries, broadening the Kingdom's export footprint.

The chamber noted that the industrial sector remained among the main contributors



The Amman Chamber of Industry says that exports rose by 9.5 per cent during the first half of 2026 to JD3.801 billion

to Jordan's economic growth during the first quarter of 2026.

Almost all industrial sectors recorded export growth during the first half of the year, except for the leather and garments sector, which declined by 0.4 per cent, and the engineering and IT sector, whose exports fell by 10.8 per cent.

The packaging, pa-

per, cardboard and office supplies sector recorded the strongest export growth at 44.2 per cent, while mining industries posted the lowest increase among expanding sectors at 4.8 per cent.

India, the United States, Saudi Arabia and Iraq remained the largest importers of ACI exports, with combined purchases worth

JD1.935 billion during the reporting period.

Exports to India remained stable at about JD532 million, while shipments to Saudi Arabia increased by 1.9 per cent to around JD426 million, compared with JD417 million in the first half of 2025.

Exports to Syria recorded one of the strongest increases,

surging by 27.1 per cent to approximately JD203 million from JD159 million a year earlier.

By destination, Arab countries accounted for the largest share of ACI exports at JD1.935 billion, followed by non-Arab Asian countries at JD896 million and North American markets at JD470 million.

Exports to European Union countries totalled about JD255 million, while non-EU European countries imported JD131 million worth of Jordanian industrial products.

Shipments to Africa reached approximately JD37 million, South America accounted for JD36 million, and other markets totalled around JD41 million.

By sector, mining industries remained the largest contributor to ACI exports, generating approximately JD853 million, followed by chemical and cosmetics industries at JD808 million and food, agricultural and livestock industries at around JD536 million.

Jordanian, Libyan forces wrap up joint military drill on urban warfare

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordanian-Libyan joint military exercise "Al Tarabut" concluded on Saturday, carried out by the King Abdullah II Royal Special Forces in cooperation with the Special Forces of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces, Assistant for Operations and Training Brig. Gen. Naji Manasir and Libyan Armed Forces Chief of General Staff Lt. Gen. Khaled Haftar.

Manasir stressed the importance of joint military exercises in strengthening coordination and cooperation between armed forces, and in exchanging operational expertise and knowledge, contributing to the development of defence capabilities and enhancing combat readiness in both countries.

The exercise was conducted in an operational environment simulating urban warfare and complex combat conditions. It included a series of tactical missions reflecting realistic field scenarios, such as building storming operations, hostage rescue, counterterrorism



The Jordanian-Libyan joint military exercise 'Al Tarabut' concludes on Saturday

responses and emergency situation management, according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement.

Participating forces demonstrated a high level of professionalism, precision and cohesion in executing joint operational tasks.

The exercise aimed to enhance military cooperation and exchange training and operational expertise between the two countries' armed forces, while improving combat readiness and efficiency to address a range of security threats in line with modern military concepts

and practices.

The drill also reflects the JAF's efforts to expand military cooperation with Arab and friendly countries, strengthen strategic partnerships, and reinforce its role in transferring specialised expertise in special operations and counterterrorism, contributing to regional and international security and stability, JAF said.

Haftar praised the high level of readiness, efficiency and professionalism demonstrated by the participants, as well as their ability to execute assigned tasks with precision and competence.



CRIME

Prosecutor questions three over fatal brawl in Amman

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Criminal Court prosecutor on Saturday began questioning three men who allegedly murdered a 23-year-old man in a brawl in Amman earlier in the day, official sources said.

The victim was re-

portedly struck in the head during a brawl with a group of men around midnight in Swefieh, a senior official source said.

"The victim was rushed to a nearby hospital but died shortly as a result of the injury he received to his head," the senior

official source added.

Meanwhile, a special team was tasked with investigating the incident and arrested three suspects, according to a senior official source.

"There might be more arrests following questioning the three arrested suspects," the senior official source

added.

The source added that the victim died "from an injury to the head that was caused by a blunt object".

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

said.

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

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



US President Donald Trump waves towards the crowd after speaking at a rally at Mount Rushmore National Memorial on Friday in Keystone, South Dakota

Trump says American identity under 'renewed attack' as US turns 250

MOUNT RUSHMORE, United States (AFP) — US President Donald Trump lashed out on Friday at what he called a fresh threat against the country's identity, taking aim at domestic "radicals and extremists" on the eve of America's 250th birthday.

In a speech dripping with patriotism, Trump lauded American exceptionalism and praised its past leaders, speaking at Mount Rushmore with its giant carved heads of four of his legendary predecessors.

But he added at the foot of the iconic monument: "As we approach this magnificent anniversary, we see our American identity under a renewed attack."

He charged that there was "a resurgence of the communist menace in our land".

It is a theme that Trump has repeatedly hammered home in recent weeks, as the anti-establishment left of the Democratic Party carried a surge of US primary victories.

The president has cast the rise of the left ahead of November's midterm elections that "communists" are on the rampage, posing a major "threat" to the country.

'Undeniable attempt'

Trump said Friday: "In recent years there's been an undeniable attempt to change this exceptional character, to beat the American spirit out of us, alienate us from our history."

While his language fell short of the more violent anti-immigrant rhetoric he has regularly wielded in past speeches, the underlying message was clear enough.

"You do not have to be born here, but you do have to love what we have built," he said.

The location of Trump's speech — a

landmark upon which many suspect he would like to see his own face carved into rock — strikes a fitting image for a president who views himself as being one of the greats.

Trump's supporters have even introduced legislation to have his likeness chiseled beside those of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt.

At every stage, the 80-year-old Republican has sought to turn the United States' big anniversary into a celebration of himself.

On July Fourth, Trump will hold a campaign-style political rally on the National Mall in Washington, along with flyovers by military jets and what he has billed as the world's biggest fireworks display.

'The Fourth of July really is a moment of freedom, but I have to be honest, in these political times, it hasn't been as exciting to me'

For Trump — the billionaire former reality TV star who became the consummate political showman — taking centre stage is in his blood.

'Really long speech'

But America under Trump is deeply divided at what should be a time of national unity.

Trump's approval ratings are near historic lows, fuelled largely by the war in Iran and the skyrocketing cost of living. His Democratic opponents have castigated him over his immigration policies, family's growing

wealth and attempts to expand presidential power.

Trump's attempts to stamp his political brand on America's 250th anniversary have, meanwhile, not always gone to plan.

A Trump-linked organisation called Freedom 250 has taken control of many of the festivities from the bipartisan America250 group, leading many people to stay away from key events.

A "Great American State Fair" in the capital designed as a celebration of the country's birthday has drawn sparse crowds and widespread mockery for its empty booths.

A record-breaking heat wave also kept many visitors away, although Trump declared himself under-terred by the heat.

"On July 4 it's going to be approximately 107 degrees [41°C] out, and I'm going to go and I'm going to make a really long speech — just to show that I can do anything," he said on Wednesday.

As the United States marks two-and-a-half centuries of triumphs and tragedies, slavery and freedom, civil war and world wars, surveys show the nation is pessimistic about the chances of realising the "American Dream".

A recent Quinnipiac University Poll showed 61 per cent of Americans thought the US was not living up to the ideals stated in the Declaration of Independence — though opinion on that was divided, with most Republicans thinking it did, and most Democrats thinking it did not.

"The Fourth of July really is a moment of freedom, but I have to be honest, in these political times, it hasn't been as exciting to me," Amy Kimaara, a 49-year-old special education teacher, told AFP in Los Angeles.

Mass protests in Germany as far-right AfD meets

ERFURT, Germany (AFP) — Thousands of demonstrators flooded a German city on Saturday, blocking major roads and disrupting public transport, in a bid to shut down the annual congress of the far-right AfD Party.

About 20,000 people flocked to Erfurt, in Thuringia state, according to police, to protest against the Alternative for Germany (AfD) Party that tops national opinion polls.

The protesters, led by an alliance dubbed "Resistance", blocked routes into the city, with some abseiling from a motorway bridge. Several groups staged sit-in blockades around the city centre, according to AFP journalists.

But most AfD delegates managed to reach the conference centre where the congress began on time.

"It's important to send a signal against the shift to the right," demonstrator Lene Krug, 19, from Gera, east of Erfurt, told AFP.

"The AfD is an anti-democratic party that spreads hate."

Calls for a ban

Another protester, Ella, was among a group who stuck themselves to tram tracks in a city square.

"1933 to 1945 must never happen again," said the 44-year-old, who only gave one name, referring to the period when the Nazis were in power.

"The democratic parties need to understand that they must impose a ban [on the AfD]."

The early protests were largely peace-



Police officers touch demonstrators sitting on a street near the Gothaer Square in Erfurt to block a way to the Messe Erfurt fairground in Erfurt, eastern Germany, on Saturday, where the party congress of far-right Alternative for Germany is held

ful. Minor scuffles were reported between protesters and the thousands of police deployed for the congress.

News weekly Der Spiegel quoted internal police documents as saying that up to 2,500 protesters were expected to come prepared for violence.

The AfD's rapid rise has unnerved many Germans, who feel they have a special duty to fight far-right politics given Germany's dark Nazi past.

Some have seen a deliberate provocation in the AfD holding its Erfurt conference on the 100th anniversary of a Nazi conference

in nearby Weimar, a charge the AfD denies.

But Tino Chrupalla, one of the AfD's co-leaders, lashed out at the protesters, saying they had been "carted in here from all over the country by the establishment parties in trucks".

"They are protesting against democratic decision-making. They believe they alone possess democracy," he said in an opening speech at the congress.

Topping polls

Chancellor Friedrich Merz has made it his mission to reverse the rise of the AfD, which has been locked out of

power as all other parties have refused to cooperate with it.

The AfD says it is a conservative force occupying the space once held by Merz's Christian Democrats before former chancellor Angela Merkel a decade ago allowed millions of refugees and asylum seekers into Germany.

But critics point to AfD politicians downplaying Nazi crimes and links to banned right-wing extremist groups.

This year the AfD is eyeing power for the first time as state elections loom in Germany's ex-communist east, its electoral heartland.

Polls indicate it could win an absolute majority in September polls in Saxony-Anhalt state.

Nationwide, the party has been at or near the top of polls since after elections held last year, when the AfD came second with 20 per cent of the vote.

"I would never have thought that a radical right party could be the strongest in Germany within my lifetime," said Manfred Guellner, head of polling firm Forsa.

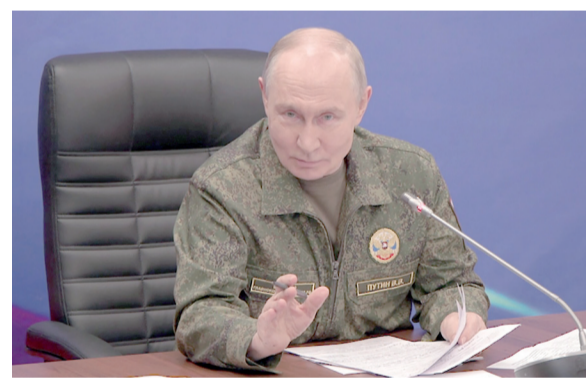
"Lots of people, not necessarily part of the radical right, have gone over to the AfD because of dissatisfaction with the current government," he told AFP.

Russia says seized eastern Ukrainian stronghold of Kostyantynivka

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia on Friday said it had captured the eastern Ukrainian city of Kostyantynivka, a key post on the road leading to the last major cities in the Donbas region under Kyiv's control.

The battle for this city, which had around 78,000 inhabitants before the war, has been taking place since late 2025 and now constitutes the main Russian effort on a front more than 1,000 kilometres long.

"Kostyantynivka has been completely taken. The city is now entirely under our control," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, including those from AFP, announcing that Presi-



In this grab taken from a handout footage posted of the official website of the Russian presidential press office on Friday, Russia's President Vladimir Putin visits a command post for the joint force grouping, amid the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict

dent Vladimir Putin had spoken with the military about it.

Appearing on television in uniform in front

of his general staff, Putin thanked Russian soldiers, stating that the capture of Kostyantynivka is of "major strategic

importance".

"The Russian armed forces continue to firmly maintain the strategic initiative" at the front, Putin added.

A Russian commander, Anton Grunis, said the army was engaged in "search and elimination operations against isolated soldiers of the Ukrainian armed forces who are trying to hide in buildings, cellars and ruins".

Kostyantynivka is one of the last Ukrainian strongholds on the way to the key cities of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, whose capture is the Kremlin's ultimate objective in the Donbas.

Peskov said Putin went to a Russian army command post, where he lis-

tened to a report from his general staff and thanked the Russian soldiers.

Russian forces now control the entire Lugansk region in eastern Ukraine, one of the two regions that make up the Donbas, Peskov added.

Chief of the general staff, Valery Gerasimov, meanwhile said Russian forces were now 9 kilometres from Zaporizhzhia, a major city in southern Ukraine that had more than 700,000 inhabitants before the war.

Another commander reported that his troops were 10 kilometres from the regional capital of Sumy in the north, which had around 250,000 inhabitants before the war.

Pope defends migrants at Mediterranean island frontier

LAMPEDUSA, Italy (AFP) — Pope Leo XIV on Saturday visited Italy's Lampedusa island, a major port of call for migrants risking the perilous crossing from Africa, in a stark message to US and EU leaders.

The Catholic Church's first US Pope, who has clashed with the administration of President Donald Trump over its treatment of migrants, is marking July 4, the United States' 250th anniversary of independence, on a migration frontline.

Leo's visit also comes just two weeks after the European Union's approval of new migrant rules allowing much broader detention powers and the creation of deportation centres



Pope Leo XIV walks through the arch of the monument Door of Europe - Porta d'Europa made by the Italian artist Mimmo Paladino, during a one day visit to Lampedusa island, south of Sicily, on Saturday

outside the bloc.

After praying at the unmarked graves of shipwreck victims, the 70-year-old stood alone on the island's rocky shoreline, buffeted by

the wind as he looked out to sea, where countless migrant boats have been lost to the waves.

He spoke to a migrant family, before taking the children by the hand

and standing along with their pregnant mother at the "Door of Europe", a monument dedicated to people who risk everything in search of a better life.

The Chicago-born Pontiff has made the defence of migrants a pillar of his Papacy, like his predecessor, Francis, praising those who help the needy and decrying mass deportations in the United States.

He was expected to use the half-day trip to the Mediterranean island, a frontier between Africa and Europe, to call for safe and legal pathways for immigration.

Leo's presence "sends a clear message at a time when the global political debate on mi-

gration is often framed around borders and deterrence rather than protection and shared responsibility", Filippo Ungaro, spokesman for the UN's refugee agency, UNHCR, told AFP.

Lampedusa sits 145 kilometres off the coast of Tunisia, and is famous for showing compassion to thousands of migrants — and taking in their dead.

In 2013, more than 360 people died in the island's worst shipwreck, and dozens more have drowned in the years since.

Leo has previously praised the generosity of the islanders, a fishing and tourism community of 6,000.

He was later due to go to the pier where people rescued at sea by

the coastguard or charity ships are brought to safety.

There, he will bless a plaque dedicated to Pope Francis — who chose Lampedusa for his very first trip following his election in 2013 — before celebrating mass in a sports field.

Lampedusa "is a place of particular significance... We are here to testify to its commitment to welcome those seeking a better place [to live]", said Vanda Mainardi, 65, who had travelled from northern Italy to see the pope.

Known for its white-sand beaches, the semi-arid island of 20 square kilometres is the second of Europe's migration hotspots to be visited by Leo, who used a trip

to the Canary Islands last month to criticise human traffickers.

He has previously spoken out against measures to clamp down on undocumented migration and called the US administration's treatment of immigrants "inhuman".

In a speech on Friday to mark America's 250th birthday, Leo called for "moderation" in US public discourse, and spoke of how "successive waves of immigrants" had shaped the future of the country.

The Central Mediterranean crossing from north Africa is the deadliest migration route in the world, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Around 1,330 people

died or went missing while attempting it last year, the IOM says.

The route is patrolled by a handful of rescue ships operated by charities that have repeatedly accused EU authorities of not doing enough to help prevent deaths.

More than 14,000 people landed in Italy during the first six months of the year, most of whom set off from Libya, according to UNHCR.

Nearly 60 per cent of them arrived in Lampedusa, it said.

The numbers are far from the peaks reached in 2011, when tens of thousands arrived in months as maritime border controls disintegrated during the Arab Spring revolts.

Mali hit by new wave of coordinated rebel attacks

BAMAKO (AFP) — Extremists and their separatist Tuareg allies hit Mali with fresh coordinated attacks on Saturday, striking multiple towns and a prison just months after hobbling the country's military junta with a similar wave of assaults.

The fighting, which started around 5:00 am (5:00 GMT), comes after the Al Qaeda-linked JNIM extremists and Tuareg FLA separatists in late April captured the strategic northern town of Kidal and killed Mali's defence minister.

On Saturday, they carried out their latest offensive in the northern towns of Gao, Anefis and Aguelhok, plus the central town of Sevare and at a prison in Kenieroba near the west African nation's capital.



A general view shows traffic moving along a main road in Bamako on Saturday

Since coups in 2020 and 2021, Mali has been led by the military, which promised to restore calm in the vast desert nation

that has been grappling with a security crisis since 2012.

The Mali military, backed by Africa Corps,

the Moscow-controlled paramilitary group, has intensified operations following the large-scale April 25-26 attacks.

The Tuareg FLA (Azawad Liberation Front) teamed up with JNIM (the Group for the Support of Islam and Mus-

lims) approximately a year ago, stepping up pressure on their joint nemesis, the country's military leaders.

"All these operations, which are intermediate steps pending a more spectacular assault, contribute to weakening and isolating the regime", Bakary Sambe, director of the Dakar-based Timbuktu Institute, told AFP. The Malian army confirmed the rebel assaults on the four towns and Kenieroba on Facebook Saturday morning, asserting that "these attacks were vigorously repelled" and that "the situation is completely under control".

However, sources consulted by AFP indicated that fighting was still ongoing midday.

FLA spokesman Mohamed Elmaouloud Ramadan told AFP that "several positions have fallen" in Anefis but that there was still fighting happening mid-Saturday

morning. An Anefis resident told AFP that "armed groups are in the town, but the army is still putting up resistance. The camp (there) has not yet fallen".

The towns of Anefis and Aguelhok are the last remaining locations where Mali's army maintains a presence in the northern Kidal region, following the April attacks.

In the northern town of Gao, a strategic town key to controlling the region, residents told AFP of gunfire and "loud blasts" heard near an army camp.

"For now, the objective appears to be seizing and securing the north before moving further south", an associate at the Strategic Research Institute of the International Academy for the Fight Against Terrorism told AFP.

Jordan reclassified as upper-middle-income economy by World Bank

Continued from page 1

The classifications remain in effect until the end of June 2027.

The income classifications are widely

used by governments, researchers and international organisations to monitor economic development, compare economic performance across countries and

determine eligibility for certain forms of concessional finance and development assistance.

GNI per capita is measured in US dollars using the Atlas

methodology, which smooths the effects of short-term exchange rate fluctuations. The income thresholds are adjusted annually to reflect inflation, while

economic and population growth, revisions to national accounts and improvements in statistical data can also affect a country's classification.

Jordan, Qatar send 2nd aid flight to earthquake-hit Venezuela — JAF

Continued from page 1

The mission was part of ongoing joint humanitarian efforts by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Qatar to deliver urgent assistance to disaster-hit communities in Venezuela, according to a statement from the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army.

The first aid flight had already arrived in Caracas, delivering medical, relief and food supplies sent in coordination with Qatar in line with Royal directives, aimed at supporting affected populations and mitigating the impact of the disaster, JAF said.

The latest shipment included specialised medical supplies, food and relief items, as well as equipment and gear designated to support search and rescue teams from the Public Security Directorate, enhancing emergency response op-

erations in affected areas.

The air bridge highlights the strong cooperation and coordination between Jordan and Qatar in international humanitarian relief efforts, and their shared commitment to supporting countries affected by natural disasters and crises, according to the statement.

It also underscores the readiness and efficiency of Jordanian institutions in responding swiftly to humanitarian obligations abroad, in line with the Kingdom's broader regional and international humanitarian role under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.

Tens of thousands of people urgently need food and shelter in Venezuela due to the devastation from two huge earthquakes that killed more than 1,700 and injured 5,000, the UN said on Tuesday, as doctors

warned of potential outbreaks of disease.

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

The UN refugee agency said "food shortages are widespread, basic services have broken down, and connectivity has been largely severed" in the port city of La Guaira, north of the capital, Caracas. "Community tensions are rising as access to assistance remains constrained," UNHCR spokesperson Carlotta Wolf said.

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

Palestinian presidency warns of 'dangerous' settler attacks, calls for int'l protection

Continued from page 1

He said that the escalation, carried out with the direct protection and support of the Israeli army, "which continues its daily policy of killing in the Gaza Strip, requires immediate international intervention to provide international protection for the Palestinian people before the situation spirals out of control".

"We call upon the international community, particularly the US administration, to take concrete steps to compel the occupying power to abide by international law and UN resolutions, and to cease its ongoing crimes, whether committed by the occupation army or by terrorist colonists."

Abu Rudeineh held the Israeli government responsible for the de-

teriorating situation, saying that the "settler attacks are inseparable from what he described as the ongoing war of genocide and forced displacement in Gaza, aimed at undermining the Palestinian national project and imposing a colonial reality in violation of international law and UN Security Council Resolution 2334".

He also warned against worsening re-

gional situation as a result of the "continuation of wars and chaos resulting from the occupation's policies and its failure to adhere to Arab, international, and legal legitimacy, will remain on the brink of disaster".

A United Nations inquiry has reported that Israeli settler attacks on Palestinian villages and agricultural land had surged since 2023 by

130 per cent.

Violence in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, has risen sharply since the October 7, 2023 attack.

According to an AFP tally based on Palestinian health ministry figures, Israeli troops or settlers have killed at least 1,050 Palestinians in the West Bank since the start of the Gaza war.

Israel rules out withdrawal from Lebanon, Syria and Gaza

Continued from page 1

"Security considerations have become the main driver behind changing border realities, establishing new buffer zones and redesigning adjacent areas so they cannot be used against Israel in the future," he said.

He added that the strategy also serves domestic political objectives, with security policies increasingly intertwined with Israel's internal political agenda.

"The result is a new reality that Israel ap-

pears determined to consolidate on the ground, regardless of whether negotiations continue on other regional files," he said.

The latest Israeli announcements suggest the government is seeking to translate its wartime gains into a long-term security reality, making military presence and buffer zones central pillars of its post-war strategy, Sabaileh said.

According to Lebanon's health ministry, nearly 4,300 people have been killed in Is-

raeli attacks since the war erupted.

The Israeli military says it has lost 38 soldiers and one civilian contractor in Lebanon since fighting began in early March.

Israel has also carried out repeated incursions and bombings in Syria since the overthrow of longtime ruler Bashar Assad, saying it seeks to establish a demilitarised zone in the country's south.

In Gaza, Israeli forces occupy nearly 70 per cent of the territory.

Families demand help with recovering Venezuela's quake victims

Continued from page 1

The critical window for rescues in such disasters usually closes after 72 hours, though a few people have miraculously been found alive this week.

Rodriguez assumed interim power after the capture of Nicolas Maduro in a US military operation six months ago.

The government's response to the tragedy has been the target of harsh criticism from many in La Guaira, who denounced the absence of rescuers until the arrival of international brigades.

Many residents in La Guaira said neighbors, family members, and volunteers were the

first to remove rubble and search for people by hand.

AFP witnessed one volunteer urging soldiers to put down their rifles and help with the rubble removal.

Rodriguez has defended the official response and denounced the backlash as media manipulation.

"Anyone who wants to audit the reality is welcome," she said in her first formal press conference as president on Thursday.

The interim president currently has the support of US President Donald Trump's administration. The United States is helping coordinate international rescue

efforts in Venezuela.

But exiled opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Corina Machado, who wants to return to the country, criticized the government response.

"The total absence of the state has become evident; the country needs figures it can trust," she told correspondents in Venezuela via Zoom, arguing she would be a stabilizing presence there.

Rodriguez has ruled out the possibility of the dead ending up in mass graves and ordered their proper identification.

A makeshift morgue is operating outdoors in the port of La Guaira, where long lines formed to receive the bodies of loved

ones and their death certificates.

La Guaira State Governor Jose Alejandro Teran told AFP that more than 170 buildings had been completely destroyed and more than 700 damaged by the earthquakes.

Authorities were supplying between 40 to 50 tons of humanitarian aid a day to those staying in temporary camps, he said.

But many families are denouncing a lack of support and heavy machinery needed in the recovery of bodies from collapsed buildings.

"They tell us no, that they're looking for the living, but what about the dead? Aren't they human beings too?" said Dalimer

Diaz, 43.

"Nobody wants to remove the dead; we have to retrieve the bodies ourselves. We need machinery to help us."

Soldiers later arrived at the Tahiti building where residents had been arguing. A Spanish brigade also came with a crane to begin removing rubble.

Aloa Gonzalez was waiting for her sister's body, buried under blocks and concrete.

"I just came from burying my father and mother, and I came here to rescue my sister," she said.

"How do I feel? Dead inside," she said. "I can't believe it. I don't want to stop because I don't want to face the reality of what's happening."

Huge crowds throng Tehran for Khamenei funeral ceremonies

Continued from page 1

There was still no sign of Khamenei's son and successor Mojtaba Khamenei, who has been unseen in public since being named. Other top Iranian officials who survived the war welcomed foreign dignitaries who paid their respects at the coffin on Friday before the complex opened to the public.

Sprayed with mists of water to keep cool in temperatures that may nudge 40°C in Tehran over the next days, thousands of women and men — strictly segregated by gender — filled the vast complex.

They beat their chests in a sign of grief, overlooked by a giant portrait of the former leader.

The coffins of Khamenei, with his black turban on top, and four other



The coffins of Iran's slain supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and his family members are pictured at the Grand Mosalla at the start of the funeral ceremonies in Tehran on Saturday

family members were placed at the front on a raised dais, AFP photographs showed.

Chants of "death to

America" and "revenge, revenge" echoed at the venue.

"The leader was a father to us all. With his

passing, we have all been left orphaned... There was no one like him. He was truly unique and peerless," said Mohammad

Mirsalehi, 38, a cleric.

Hamidreza Shabani, a student, 18, added: "We must rise up and, God willing, avenge the blood of our leader."

Authorities believe the ceremonies will mobilise more than 10 million people in the capital alone.

But before they began, Tehran was quieter than usual, with many normally busy streets free of the capital's notorious traffic and some residents telling AFP in Paris that they had decided to leave the city for the duration of the ceremonies.

Marathon funerals

After five weeks of war, the conflict is on hold after a ceasefire and an initial accord with the US. But both the US and Iran have warned they are ready to resume fighting at any time.

The killing of Khamenei after over three-and-a-half decades in power created a new era in the Islamic republic shadowed by uncertainty.

His funeral is being viewed outside Iran as a test of support for the government, with authorities already shaken by mass protests in January that rights groups say were put down in a crackdown that left thousands dead.

The funeral ceremonies will see the coffin remain three days in Tehran, before moving on Tuesday to the clerical city of Qom, then Wednesday to neighbouring Iraq, before burial on Thursday in Khamenei's northeastern home city of Mashhad.

He will be buried with his infant granddaughter, son-in-law, daughter and Mojtaba Khamenei's wife Zahra Haddad Adel, who

were all killed in the February 28 strikes.

The tiny coffin of his granddaughter Zahra Mohammadi Golpaygani, who according to state media was just 14 months old, was prominently displayed.

'Call for vengeance'

Surviving officials showed their grief and displayed a united front on Friday.

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Iran's parliament speaker and top negotiator in peace talks with the US, appeared tearful while Ahmad Vahidi, named chief of the powerful Revolutionary Guards after his predecessor was killed in the strikes, made his first public appearance in that post.

"The nation's call for vengeance must ring in the ears of the whole world,"

said Ghalibaf, who urged Iranians to turn out en masse.

The coming days will be closely watched for signs of Mojtaba Khamenei, who has communicated only by written statements and is said to have been wounded in the same strikes, though the extent of his injuries was never made clear.

Significant security measures have been imposed, with roads blocked and people forced sometimes to walk several kilometres to attend the largest-scale public event in Iran since the burial of Khamenei's predecessor Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989.

Authorities will also want the event to go smoothly, deeply aware of the risk of crowd crushes that have marred similar events in the past, with TV broadcasting guidelines on how to stay safe.

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Jordan's labour market: The problem is not unemployment alone

By Raad Mahmoud Al Tal

Public discussion of Jordan's labour market has traditionally focused on a single indicator: The unemployment rate. It is often assumed that a rise or decline in this indicator alone is sufficient to assess the performance of the economy. Modern economies, however, no longer rely on unemployment as the primary measure of labour market performance. Instead, they place increasing emphasis on broader indicators such as labour force participation, the availability of decent work, skills, productivity and the ability of the workforce to adapt to structural economic transformations. This broader perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of labour market dynamics than simply monitoring quarterly unemployment figures.

In this context, a recent research paper published by the Economic Research Forum, in collaboration with Jordan's Department of Statistics and supported by several international organisations, offers valuable insights into Jordan's labour market. The significance of this study lies in its reliance on a longitudinal panel survey that has followed Jordanian households and individuals from 2010 through 2025, allowing researchers to analyse changes in labour market behaviour over time rather than capturing only a single point in time.

One of the study's most important findings is the continued decline in labour force participation alongside persistently high unemployment among Jordanians. This trend deserves careful attention because the real economic challenge extends beyond the existence of unemployed individuals. It also includes the growing number of people who have exited the labour force altogether despite being capable of working. Such a development weakens one of the economy's most important factors of production — human capital — reduces the number of economically active individuals and ultimately limits the economy's capacity for sustainable growth.

From an economic perspective, it is important to distinguish between the unemployment rate and the labour force participation rate, as each measures a different aspect of labour market performance. The unemployment rate measures the proportion of individuals who are willing, able and actively seeking employment but cannot find a job. In contrast, the labour force participation rate measures the proportion of the working-age population that is either employed or actively seeking work. Consequently, unemployment may sometimes decline without reflecting a genuine improvement in labour market conditions if discouraged workers stop searching for jobs and leave the labour force. By contrast, a higher labour force participation rate generally reflects stronger confidence in the economy and a broader productive base, making it a more comprehensive indicator of economic vitality and long-term growth potential.

It is equally important to recognise one of the major transformations taking place in Jordan's labour market: The changing nature of employment itself. Labour market performance can no longer be assessed solely by employment and unemployment statistics. Today's labour market increasingly revolves around skills development, vocational training, digital platform work, green jobs, financial technology and evolving social attitudes toward women's participation in the workforce. These developments demonstrate that the future of employment will not be determined solely by the availability of traditional jobs, but by the economy's ability to develop new skills that align with digital transformation and the transition toward a green economy.

Accordingly, the success of economic policies should not be measured simply by the number of jobs created. Rather, it should be evaluated by their ability to increase labour force participation, improve worker productivity, better align education outcomes with labour market needs and encourage investment in sectors capable of generating high-value-added employment. An economy that creates only low-productivity jobs will struggle to achieve sustainable growth, even if unemployment declines temporarily.

Perhaps the study's most important message is that labour market reform does not begin with employment fairs or recruitment offices. Instead, it starts with rebuilding the relationship between education, training and productivity. When reliable data become the foundation for policymaking and for evaluating economic and social outcomes, public policies become more effective and statistical indicators evolve from being mere numbers into practical tools for building a more resilient economy capable of generating sustainable growth and meaningful employment opportunities.

The real challenge facing Jordan's economy is therefore not simply to provide jobs for those seeking employment, but to bring a larger share of its citizens back into productive economic activity. Prosperous societies are built not merely by increasing the number of jobs, but by increasing the number of people who actively contribute to economic production, innovation and sustainable development.

Mining Jordan's future

By Fares Braizat

Jordan's economic story should not be defined only by what it lacks, but by how effectively it develops what it has. Scarce water, limited energy resources and a difficult regional environment are real constraints. Yet Jordan also possesses strategic assets that can be transformed into engines of growth when they are managed with ambition, discipline and professional competence. Mining is one of them.

The Arab Potash Company provides one of the clearest examples of what happens when a national resource is treated not simply as a source of revenue, but as a platform for exports, industrial growth, foreign-currency generation and long-term national value.

For years, Arab Potash was a successful company by Jordanian standards, but it was operating below the full potential of the resource available to it. Its strategy concentrated largely on selected markets and cost control rather than a more ambitious model built around growth, operational efficiency, market diversification and global competitiveness.

That began to change decisively around 2019 and 2020. The Company's transformation was not merely the result of favourable international potash prices. Commodity prices rise and fall. The more important achievement was structural: Increased production, new products, stronger product quality, new markets, improved efficiency and investment in future capacity.

Before this shift, Arab Potash produced approximately 2.3 to 2.4 million tonnes of potash annually. By 2025, according to the Company's published data, production had risen to nearly 2.9 million tonnes, an increase of around 23 per cent.

This matters because it represents real additional output for Jordan's economy. Around half a million tonnes of extra potash production have been added annually. That is not simply a financial gain on paper. It is a

Jordanian resource, processed through Jordanian industry, exported through Jordanian infrastructure and converted into national income.

The benefits extend beyond Company profits. Additional production contributes to exports, foreign-currency inflows, government revenues, shareholder returns and employment across the value chain. The Treasury benefits through income tax, mining royalties, concession fees port charges, loading charges and dividends generated through public-sector shareholding.

Together with efficiency projects and other planned investments, Arab Potash is working towards production of around 4 million tonnes annually in the years ahead

Between 2020 and 2025, Arab Potash's payments to the Jordanian Treasury reached around JD1.3 billion. During the same period, the Company and its subsidiaries and affiliates contributed more than \$9 billion in foreign currency to the Kingdom. At a time when Jordan must continue strengthening exports and its balance-of-payments position, this underlines why mining should be treated as a strategic economic sector rather than a legacy industry.

Arab Potash has also transformed its market presence. Historically, the Company's sales were concentrated in regional markets and parts of East and Southeast Asia. Since 2019, it has expanded into Europe, Brazil, Australia, Thailand and other demanding markets.

This is important not only be-

cause of geography, but because these are highly competitive markets. European and Brazilian buyers require consistent quality, reliable supply, technical compliance and confidence in long-term delivery. Winning business there requires more than access to a resource. It requires operational credibility, innovative logistical arrangements and consistent visionary leadership.

Arab Potash's sales in Europe rose from less than 75,000 tonnes in 2019 to approximately 580,000 tonnes in 2025. Its entry into Brazil is equally important. Brazil is one of the world's largest potash-importing markets and Arab Potash established sales there in the range of 220,000 to 300,000 tonnes annually in recent years. This reflects a company that has moved beyond simply selling a product, it is becoming a strategic supplier to global agricultural markets and a major player in global food security.

The next phase may be even more consequential. The Eastern Expansion Project is expected to add approximately 120,000 tonnes of annual production capacity. More significantly, the Southern Expansion Project, the largest in the Company's history, is expected to add around 740,000 tonnes once completed around 2030.

Together with efficiency projects and other planned investments, Arab Potash is working towards production of around 4 million tonnes annually in the years ahead. That would represent nearly double the Company's average annual production during the 2015-2019 period. Such growth would not simply enlarge one company. It would enlarge Jordan's productive economy.

The Company is also addressing two of Jordan's most difficult industrial constraints: Energy and water. It has invested in projects intended to secure future energy requirements, reduce production costs and improve international competitiveness. It has also worked to secure the substantial water

needs required to support expansion.

Its ambitions extend beyond raw potash. Investments in Jordan Bromine Company, specialised derivatives, downstream fertiliser products and possible international mining opportunities point towards a more sophisticated model: One in which Jordan does not merely extract resources, but develops higher-value industrial ecosystems around them.

This is the broader lesson. Mining is not simply about extracting minerals from the ground or the sea. It is about geology, but also strategic planning, vertical and horizontal integrations, infrastructure, energy, water management, scientific research, skilled labour, capital investment, export logistics, international partnerships and corporate governance.

Arab Potash's transformation is therefore not only a corporate success story. It is a case study in how Jordan can turn a finite natural resource into a long-term productive national asset.

Its most important achievement may be in uplifting work culture. Professional management aligned workers, engineers, unions, technical teams and executives behind a shared strategy and common values. It created a stronger sense of responsibility for performance, productivity, and competitiveness. Arab Potash increasingly thinks and operates like an international industrial company rather than a locally bounded enterprise.

Jordan needs more examples of this kind of transformation. Tourism, technology, logistics, agriculture, renewable energy, manufacturing and financial services all have important roles in the country's future. But mining deserves greater attention as a pillar of economic resilience and export growth.

Arab Potash demonstrates that Jordan can create more value from what it already possesses. The task now is to apply the same seriousness, ambition and professional discipline to other promising sectors.

Gaza faces deepening uncertainty and a severe humanitarian crisis

The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip continues to deteriorate, compounded by expanding access restrictions, infrastructure collapse and severe funding shortfalls.

Over 30 billion in damages has affected housing and civilian infrastructure, and most of the Strip is now designated as restricted or off-limits, limiting both residents and aid organisations.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians remain heavily concentrated into increasingly restricted and demarcated zones where lethal force has been used to enforce access lines.

The collapse of sewage and waste networks has led to widespread outbreaks of infectious diseases. Overcrowding at displacement sites, compounded by a lack of disinfectants, threatens to suspend hundreds of critical surgical procedures.

A steep reduction in fuel inflows and severe access limitations have stalled life-saving activities.

The blockage of border crossings prevents the medical evacuation of tens of thousands of Palestinians, including cancer patients and children, who urgently require specialised treatment abroad.

Tracking by the UN highlights that the humanitarian appeals remain significantly underfunded, severely hampering the delivery of water, shelter and medical supplies.

The continued expansion of areas under Israeli control in Gaza since October's ceasefire agreement is placing civilians at greater risk and severely constraining humanitarian operations, the UN and humanitarian partners warned recently.

The alert came on the 1st of July amid continued displacement and mounting humanitarian pressures across the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT).

In a statement, the combined Humanitarian Country Team in the OPT said the expansion of the area under Israeli control, together with movement restrictions, are limiting access for aid workers and reducing the space



Najla M. Shahwan

available for civilians already displaced by the conflict.

According to the statement, Israeli forces have used lethal force to enforce access restrictions in areas they control since the start of the stuttering ceasefire agreement.

Between 10 October 2025 and early April, the UN verified the killing of 196 Palestinians in Israeli attacks reported near areas where Israeli forces are deployed. Those killed include 18 women and 43 children.

Many of those killed were reportedly moving through areas that lacked clear demarcation on the ground, while many others were injured.

The statement also highlighted the impact on humanitarian operations, saying restrictions on movement continue to cause delays and interruptions to life-saving assistance.

Some humanitarian partners have had to reduce or temporarily suspend critical activities, affecting thousands of families, particularly following the killing of service providers working in those areas.

The UN and its humanitarian partners also warned that expanding control measures are shrinking the areas available to civilians.

Most Palestinians in Gaza have already been displaced multiple times and are now concentrated in increasingly limited areas.

According to the UN, access-restricted areas now cover about 65 per cent of Gaza's land, with most areas off limits to residents and all requiring humanitarian organisations to coordinate access. Access by sea remains prohibited too.

The UN and humanitarian non-governmental organisations reiterated their call for an immediate end to the targeting of Palestinians who are deemed to be straying too close to Israeli

forces.

Civilians must always be protected in line with international humanitarian and human rights law, they urged.

The UN said families fled an area of Beit Lahia in Gaza after Israeli forces advanced, reportedly setting three tents ablaze by dropping incendiary munitions from the air and placing yellow cement blocks marking a further expansion of the "Yellow Line".

Israeli forces continue to expand the scope of their territorial control in the Strip...

Humanitarian agencies also warned that skin diseases and acute watery diarrhea continue to spread, driven by overcrowding and poor water and sanitation conditions.

The aid response remains constrained by severe access restrictions and funding shortages, with less than a quarter of this year's humanitarian appeal funded so far.

Amid these challenges, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) said recently that it had cleared half of the solid waste mountain which has accumulated through the conflict at Firas Market in Gaza, describing it as a significant step towards restoring the historic commercial hub.

Some 250,000 cubic metres of waste have been removed, clearing 75 per cent of the market area.

On his part, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that UNRWA's situation was increasingly precarious due to the large funding shortfall and sweeping restrictions by Israel on the agency's work

throughout the occupied Palestinian territory.

"As we meet here today, the safety and welfare of millions of Palestine refugees hangs in the balance," Guterres told a donor conference on the UN agency.

"[UNRWA] faces sweeping restrictions throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. And a cash shortfall that imperils its work across the region," he said, rejecting what he called continued efforts to undermine the agency through "disinformation, smear campaigns, legislative actions, operational restrictions, diplomatic roadblocks and more".

Such actions threatened the wellbeing of millions of Palestinians as well as the agency's staff, Guterres said, noting that 390 UNRWA personnel had been killed by Israel in Gaza since October 2023.

Earlier on 29 June, Ramiz Alakbarov, UN deputy special coordinator told the Security Council that uncertainty and immense human suffering in Gaza are prevailing rapidly.

Israeli air strikes and military operations have continued across Gaza, resulting in further fatalities and bringing the total killed since the ceasefire to over 1,000, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health.

Israeli forces continue to expand the scope of their territorial control in the Strip and the extension of areas requiring coordination for humanitarian operations.

This encroachment of areas under Israeli control has reduced the space available to civilians which are now concentrated in increasingly limited areas, living amid insecurity and violence.

Palestinians in Gaza face daily survival challenges amid a severe humanitarian crisis.

Every human deserves to live with dignity and respect. The severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza has prompted global leaders and international organisations to stress that survival alone is not enough, the fundamental rights, safety, and wellbeing of the Palestinian people must be fully protected

BUSINESS

Sunday, July 5, 2026



A vendor cuts bacon during of the holy month of Ramadan near Eminonu Square in Istanbul on March 15, 2024

Turkey annual inflation dips slightly to 32.1%

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Turkey's annual inflation eased to 32.1 per cent in June from 32.6 per cent in May, though sharp increases in housing and education costs drove consumer prices higher, official data showed on Friday.

Consumer prices rose 0.99 per cent month-on-month in June, slowing from 1.7 per cent in May, according to the TÜIK statistics agency.

On an annual basis,

education prices rose 46.1 per cent, while housing costs, including energy bills, increased 45.1 per cent. Food prices were up 35.4 per cent and healthcare costs rose 33.6 per cent.

However, these official figures are disputed by independent economists from the Inflation Research Group, who estimate that the year-on-year rise in consumer prices reached 51.4 per cent in

June.

The annual inflation, which has remained above 30 per cent since December 2021, exceeded 75 per cent in May 2024 before beginning to slow down.

In mid-May, the Turkish central bank raised its inflation forecasts, projecting annual inflation of 26 per cent at the end of 2026, 15 per cent at the end of 2027 and 9 per cent at the end of 2028.

100% compliance by companies in submitting 2025 sustainability reports

AMMAN (JT) — Chief Executive Officer of the Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) Mazen Wathaifi has announced that all listed companies required to submit annual sustainability reports for 2025 have complied with the reporting requirements.

A total of 22 companies submitted their sustainability reports within the deadline stipulated under the ASE's Sustainability Reporting Rules through the XBRL electronic disclosure system, according to an ASE statement.

Wathaifi said the 100 per cent compliance rate reflects the companies' commitment to applicable laws and regulations, as well as their growing focus on environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues.

Under the Sustainability Reporting Rules, companies included in the ASE20 Index, as well as companies that were previously part of the index, are required to prepare sustainability reports in accordance with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards. Companies issuing a standalone sustainability report



must submit it within six months of the end of their financial year, while those incorporating sustainability disclosures into their annual report must do so within three months of the end of the financial year.

Wathaifi also noted that Gulf Insurance Group, Jordan and First Insurance Companies, voluntarily published their 2025 sustainability reports for the first time in accordance with

the GRI Standards, despite not being included in the ASE20 Index.

He said the move reflects the growing culture of sustainability and non-financial disclosure in Jordan's capital market and demonstrates companies' increasing awareness of the importance of reporting their ESG performance.

The ASE publishes sustainability reports on its website under the "Circulars and Dis-

closures" section in the Sustainability Reports window, Wathaifi said.

He added that the decision to require companies in the ASE20 Index to issue sustainability reports, introduced in 2022, aims to enhance the attractiveness of listed companies and strengthen transparency and disclosure in the national capital market, particularly with regard to compliance with sustainability standards.

Sustainability reporting also provides stakeholders with a broader understanding of companies' performance and achievements while demonstrating their commitment to environmental, social responsibility and governance issues, Wathaifi said, noting that such information has become increasingly important to both local and international investors in making investment decisions.

Microsoft, AWS deploy engineers to help make AI profitable

SAN FRANCISCO, United States (AFP) — Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Microsoft want to embed thousands of their own engineers at client companies to help them capitalise on artificial intelligence, which has yet to turn a profit in the business world.

Microsoft announced last week the creation of a unit called Microsoft Frontier Company, which is backed by a \$2.5 billion investment and brings together 6,000 experts and engineers.

The new Microsoft entity comes as rival AWS, the world's leading cloud provider, announced last week a similar \$1 billion investment in an organisation called Forward Deployed Engineering, also tasked with dispatching thousands of engineers to help clients. The two cloud giants are responding to the same challenge: companies are buying more AI tools, but those investments are not yet paying off in obvious ways.

As of the end of 2025, almost nine out of 10 companies had deployed AI in at least one business function, but



AFP file photo

94 per cent reported no significant benefit from those expenditures, according to consultancy McKinsey.

Its study, published in late April, argued that handing out AI tools to employees is not enough — companies need to rethink the very way they work.

Microsoft and AWS, both of which supply servers and software to myriad businesses worldwide, are betting that their engineers will deliver results faster and better than

clients' in-house teams. "The currency that the customers are always talking about right now is speed," said Francesca Vasquez, vice president of Frontier AI Engineering and Services at AWS.

Sri Elaprolu, Director of AWS's GenAI Innovation Center, said the key is resisting the temptation to lead with the technology.

"Just because someone is excited about agentic AI doesn't mean agentic AI is the right

answer," he told AFP at the AWS Summit conference in Washington.

"The wrong way of going about it is forcing a technology into a problem versus working backwards to define what's the right steps to get there."

With these initiatives, Microsoft and AWS are following the lead of San Francisco's major AI labs.

OpenAI, the creator of ChatGPT, and its rival Anthropic, maker of Claude, dispatched their own teams of en-

gineers among client sites this spring, partnering with major investment funds.

In doing so, the AI labs revived an idea pioneered more than a decade ago by Palantir, the US data analytics specialist.

Judson Althoff, CEO of Microsoft Commercial Business, said the new unit draws from existing industry experts, product engineers and consulting teams, as well as outside hires.

"We're also hiring a lot of world-class AI talent — people that have developed large language models and fine-tuned large language models at the face of the customer," he said.

The push comes as tech giants seek to recoup record investments to develop AI and build massive data centres.

Despite strong growth in its cloud business, Microsoft has disappointed markets and its shares have shed nearly a quarter of their value since January.

The company cut roughly 15,000 jobs in 2025 and a further wave of cuts is expected.



AFP photo

People visit a beach of the southern Athenian suburb of Glyfada on June 26, as a 200-metre-tall, 50-story skyscraper towers which is the tallest building ever constructed in Athens is seen in the background

Surging real estate development divides opinion on Athens' Riviera

GLYFADA, Greece (AFP) — In the southern Athens seaside suburb of Glyfada, a pensioner struggles to cross an avenue with her shopping trolley, zigzagging between cars stuck in traffic.

"I've had enough of these traffic jams," says Vassiliki Karvela as she finally reaches the local weekly market in her town of 90,000 inhabitants. "It was perfect and much calmer 20 years ago."

Some 15 kilometres south of the capital, Glyfada has seen its population grow and property prices rise in recent years, along with other parts of the urban sprawl along the Saronic Gulf.

And that is likely to continue.

Nearby, a new town of 6.2 square kilometres is under construction, "three times the size of Monaco", according to the site's owners, Lamda Development.

Situated on the outskirts of neighbouring Ellinikon, it promises to hold hotels, shopping centres, parks, marinas and 8,000 homes.

A luxury skyscraper some 200 metres high — the tallest building ever constructed in Athens — has already been built and is visible from the city centre.

Along the edge of the site, huge advertising hoardings promote the "shopping, entertainment and business destination of the future".

"This development is good for the economy," says Yorgos Christophoridis, owner of a construction company in Glyfada. "But Greeks, because of their low wages, can no longer rent or buy property here."

According to Stavros Giakoumakis, Glyfada's deputy mayor responsible for the environment, nationals from Gulf states, China and Israel have settled or invested in this area.

But he cites numerous problems created by the project, ranging from damaged water and sewerage infrastructure, to a lack of parking spaces.

"Blocks of flats are being built where there used to be one- or two-storey houses," he laments.

Abandoned for years, the Ellinikon site was sold by the Greek government to the private sector during the financial crisis.

Following Greece's economic recovery, demand in the area soared rapidly, driving prices to "historic" levels, according to Premier Realty, a

consultancy specialising in luxury and investment property in Greece.

A recent study by the Bank of Greece confirms that the metropolitan area south of Athens is the most expensive in the region, with purchase prices reaching up to 7,300 euros (\$8,400) per square metre.

"At first I was quite positive about the skyscraper," says Karvela, the pensioner. "But now access to the sea is restricted, and prices have been driven up. They think we're rich!"

Georgia Gemenetzi, an associate professor of urban planning at the University of Thessaly in central Greece says "there are positive and negative aspects" to this project, "which aims to boost economic growth".

But in an overcrowded capital, where the lack of green spaces is particularly acute, the project further intensifies population concentration, she explains.

Furthermore, it may "exacerbate inequalities by excluding certain social groups" who are pushed towards cheaper outlying areas.

With 4 million people — more than a third of the country's total population — Athens is suffering from surging property prices.

Stocks mostly rise as beaten-down tech stocks enjoy bounce

LONDON (AFP) — Major stock markets mostly rose Friday as tech firms rebounded, while a sizeable miss on US jobs creation soothed worries over a Federal Reserve interest-rate hike.

Oil prices steadied as markets tracked developments in the US-Iran talks and traffic flows through the Strait of Hormuz.

The dollar dropped against main rivals on receding prospects of tighter US borrowing costs.

Earlier in the week, the yen struck a 40-year low versus the dollar on

talk of US rate hikes.

"A mixture of relief post the payrolls data, a reversal of the sell-off in the chip stocks and more volatility in the yen are the main narratives," noted Kathleen Brooks, research director at XTB trading group.

Investors welcomed key data Thursday showing the US economy added fewer than half the jobs forecast in June, while figures for the previous two months were revised down.

The readings suggested the labour market was not as strong

as thought, and hands the Fed some breathing room to hold off from hiking rates, boosting global markets.

Speculation had grown since the central bank's June policy meeting that it would announce a rate increase this year because of elevated inflation and after new Fed boss Kevin Warsh said price stability was his key goal.

Against such a backdrop, the likelihood of a US rate hike before the end of the year remains, according to some analysts.

"The US labour mar-

ket today is not strong enough to instigate rate hikes but importantly is no longer a handbrake or impediment to hikes," said Rodrigo Catril, analyst at National Australia Bank.

Concerns about surging valuations for technology companies amid a race for all things AI continued to dominate sentiment.

Seoul's Kospi stocks index closed up 5.8 per cent on Friday — having tanked by about 20 per cent from its June 19 record high — boosted by strong rallies in technology firms SK Hynix

and Samsung.

Tokyo climbed more than one per cent, along with Hong Kong, Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta.

European indices largely rose, though London dipped as a stronger sterling makes UK exports more expensive.

The gains for global equities followed Thursday's mixed session on Wall Street, where the tech-heavy Nasdaq sank 0.8 per cent.

The Dow jumped more than one per cent, however, ahead of the American Independence Day holiday.

THE JORDAN TIMES
SPORTS
AT A GLANCE

Jordan concludes Round 1 FIBA World Cup qualifiers on Sunday

TENNIS

Swiatek dumped out of Wimbledon by Eala, Serena withdraws from doubles

LONDON (AFP) — Iga Swiatek's Wimbledon title defence was ended by the Philippines' Alexandra Eala in a third-round shock on Saturday, while "heartbroken" Serena Williams was forced to withdraw from the doubles tournament. Kazakh second seed Elena Rybakina also crashed out, leaving the bottom half of the women's singles draw wide open. Swiatek slipped to a 7-6 (11/9), 6-2 defeat on Centre Court as 29th seed Eala reached the last 16 of a Grand Slam tournament for the first time. It is six-time Grand Slam champion Swiatek's earliest exit from a major tournament since another third-round defeat, by Yulia Putintseva, at Wimbledon two years ago. Eala had already made history for the Philippines by becoming the first player from the Southeast Asian nation to reach the third round of a Grand Slam in the Open era. "I'm really emotional and maybe for someone like Iga who has won so many Slams, or someone like Serena or Venus [Williams], this achievement might seem small," Eala said. "But for someone who grew up in the Philippines... I trained with my mother and my grandfather every day after school with ruffled socks and chubby cheeks... so this is everything."

CRICKET

Maiden ton for Udara as Sri Lanka pile on the runs in 2nd Test

NORTH SOUND, Antigua and Barbuda (AFP) — Lahiru Udara made the most of an unexpected opportunity, stroking a magnificent 188 in leading Sri Lanka to 338 for five at the close of the first day of the second and final Test against the West Indies at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Friday. West Indies hit back with the wickets of Udara and captain Dhananjaya de Silva in the final half-hour, Jayden Seales claiming his 100th Test wicket when he removed captain de Silva to a catch at second slip off the second new ball. Getting his chance at the top of the order only because of a wrist injury sustained by Pathum Nissanka, Udara launched into the Caribbean bowlers from the outset and sustained the assault for most of the day in an entertaining innings which occupied 248 balls highlighted by five sixes and 21 fours.

By Aline Bannayan

AMMAN — Jordan plays Iraq and Syria takes on Iran on Sunday in its last Window 3, Round 1 Asian Group C qualifiers hosted in Amman for the 2027 FIBA World Cup.

The Kingdom's squad is expected to repeat its win over Iraq which has yet to win a match. Jordan's winning streak ended ahead of the weekend when it lost 67-49 to Iran in a match dominated by the guest team from the start, leading 29-22 at halftime and further widening the gap in quarter 3 in which Iran led 23-8.

With three teams from each group advancing to Round 2, Jordan joined Iran and Syria for the next round where 12 teams will be divided into two groups, with the top three in each group advancing to the World Cup alongside the best fourth-placed team.

A total of 80 national squads from the four FIBA regions are playing World Cup qualifiers in six windows from November 2025 to March 2027 following which five teams from Africa, seven from the Americas, seven from Asia and 12 from Europe will advance to the 2027 World Cup in Doha, Qatar which is a direct qualifier for seven 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, lead with South Korea, Chinese Taipei and China tied in standings, Group D: Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Qatar have advanced with India out.

Jordan's national squad regrouped very late with former coach Wisam Sous recalled to oversee the team for the upcoming matches. So far, Jordan beat Iraq 108-59, Iran 73-60 and Syria twice 100-48 and 74-59. Iran beat Syria 72-68 and overcame Iraq twice 86-71 and 94-68. Syria beat Iraq 78-70 and 91-81.

At 41st in FIBA rankings and 8th in Asia, Jordan hopes to make it to its third consecutive and fourth overall World Cup after first qualifying in 2010. Led by naturalized pro Jalen Harris and veteran Ahmad Duweiri, the team lacks a solid bench relying on Abdullah Olajuwon, Freddie Ibrahim, Ahmad Hamarshah and Amin Abu Hawas. After powering Jordan into its second U19 World Cup since 1995, Saif Al-Deen Saleh made a promising debut. Jordan hopes younger additions to the squad might be the key turning point for a future competitive team, including players who excelled in the league like Adham Dajani, who did not make it on the lineup this round.

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 compet-



Abdullah Olajuwon, one of key players on Jordan's lineup as Round 1 ends on Sunday

ing 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.

Group C

Team	P	W	L	SF	SA	PTS
Iran	5	4	1	379	329	9
Jordan	5	4	1	404	293	9
Syria	5	2	3	344	397	7
Iraq	5	0	5	349	457	4

LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

One stitch at a time: Artist's mission to recreate the Bayeux Tapestry

WISBECH, United Kingdom (AFP) — Ten years ago England-based artist Mia Hansson embarked on a painstaking project that continues to this day: Creating a replica of the 70-metre long Bayeux Tapestry.

At her home in Wisbech, in the eastern county of Cambridgeshire, the Swedish-born Hansson carefully embroiders each intricate scene from the 11th century artwork that depicts the 1066 Norman conquest of England.

The textile artist recalled how she started the elaborate storytelling cloth on 13 July 2016 knowing that she could stop any time, which meant the endeavour did not feel daunting.

"Then when you get, you know, that far, but you can't stop because I would be stupid. And then when you get even further, I thought actually now I really can't stop," she told AFP.

Sitting on the floor of a community hall, her legs crossed, Hansson explains how first she draws the instantly recognisable images, and then stitches over them, matching the colours to the original as best she can.

The cloth is made of 100 per cent linen while the embroidery comprises



Mia Hansson stands over a large replica of the Bayeux Tapestry, which has been recreated step by step by the former teacher, at a hall in Wisbech, eastern England, on Wednesday

100 per cent wool. "I still only do one bit at a time," Hansson said of her methodical process.

Hansson insists that she embarked on the challenge for its craftsmanship, not because she had any special interest in William the Conqueror or the Battle of Hastings.

"I hate history with a passion," she told AFP.

"So I did this only from the handicraft point of view. I've learned the history against my will, because you work with these

images so intimately that you kind of have to learn. But I soak it up, I haven't read anything."

Hansson has seen the original tapestry and hopes to view it again when it goes on show in the UK for the first time later this year after a delicate process of transporting it from France.

For Hansson, her lengthy labour of love has become a form of therapy that helps her to relax and stay in the present.

"If I feel stressed or any-

thing, if I get this out, I'll just sit down and I'm in the zone, basically," she explained.

The former teacher's initial aim was to complete the work in a decade.

"I did some calculations and I thought if I work five hours every single day, I will come in dead on 10 years," she said.

Life got in the way, however.

"But then we got a puppy and then we remodelled the house. And then we travelled and now

we have another puppy. So everything has taken longer," said Hansson.

But she is not far off track and aims to finish it on July 13, 2027 — which would be exactly 11 years since she started.

"That would be perfect," said Hansson, adding she was "proud" of her achievements so far.

"I can still stop if I want to. But then I would be known as the woman who didn't finish the Bayeux Tapestry. That would kill me."

Japan deploys bear cameras in mountains as attacks surge

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan has begun installing hundreds of cameras in its northern mountains as part of a nationwide survey of the bear population following a surge in maulings, an official told AFP on Thursday.

Bears have killed at least five people since April 1, all in the northern region of Tohoku, after a record 13 fatal attacks across the country in the last fiscal year, according to the environment ministry.

The animals have grown in numbers in recent years, a trend scientists attribute in part to a declining number of people living in rural areas.

Residents in Tohoku live in constant fear, with national media providing daily coverage of bear sightings at shopping arcades, parks and schools.

To draw up an effective response, authorities plan to use more than 800 cameras to monitor the animals, initially targeting six major bear populations in Tohoku before expanding the survey across the country over the next four years, environment ministry official Yu Takahashi told AFP.

Jars of honey mixed with wine placed at about human-head height are meant to attract the bears. The cameras will then capture each animal's unique white chest marks as it stands on



City officials and a police officer carry a bear dummy during an emergency response drill for bear and other wildlife intrusions, in Isehara, Kanagawa Prefecture on Friday

its hind legs to sniff the sweet tonic. "Until now, local governments surveyed bear populations in their jurisdictions at various times and using various methods," Takahashi said.

"Our plan is to conduct a more accurate survey by focusing on population groups," he said. Meanwhile, a man was arrested on Thursday for obstruction of business, police spokesman Kenji Goto told AFP, after he had accidentally set off anti-bear spray in a post office in Nagoya city.

Five people needed hospital treatment after the incident on Wednesday, reports and officials said.

The 22-year-old Vietnamese national, identified by police as Huynh Nhat Duy, apologised and told officers he had discharged the repellent unintentionally, according to media reports.

In recent months there has been a jump in sightings after the bears emerged from hibernation and more bears have been straying into urban areas.

This week, authorities said they were investigating a possible sixth fatality after a man's body with bite marks was found in a mountainous area in Tohoku. Authorities recommend people avoid going alone into the mountains — which make up some 80 per cent of Japan — and to attach a bell to their bags and carry bear sprays.

These aerosols, sold in outdoor activity stores, contain capsaicin — the chemical component in spicy chili peppers — and cause a burning and irritating sensation.

Bears are also encroaching increasingly into towns and cities in Japan.

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