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Monday, July 6, 2026 | Muharram 21, 1448 Hijri

# Prime minister orders 'urgent' bylaw to strengthen ministerial integrity, neutrality

- Bylaw aims to prevent conflicts of interest, ban ministers or their relatives from gaining personal benefits from their positions
- Bylaw will create legal framework for tender boards, oversight bodies to improve transparency in government contracts, bids

AMMAN (JT) — Chairing a Cabinet session on Sunday, Prime Minister Jafar Hassan directed the government to issue an "urgent" bylaw governing ministerial conduct, aimed at preventing conflicts of interest and prohibiting any personal gains for ministers or their relatives, while reinforcing the principle of ministerial neutrality.

According to a Prime Ministry statement, the draft bylaw will establish a legal framework for tender boards and oversight bodies to curb conflicts of interest among ministers. It will also introduce binding provisions governing ministers' interactions with entities dealing with the government in projects, tenders and bids, ensuring transparency and integrity in public dealings.



Prime Minister Jafar Hassan chairs a Cabinet session on Sunday, during which he directs government to draft a bylaw that regulates ministers' conduct and enhances their integrity and neutrality

Under the proposed bylaw, ministers will be prohibited from using privileged information obtained through their positions for personal

benefit or for the advantage of relatives, the statement said.

It will also impose strict constitutional-based restrictions preventing

ministers, during their tenure, from purchasing or leasing state prop-

erty, even through public auctions or from serving on corporate boards, engaging in commercial or financial activities or receiving remuneration from private companies.

The prime minister also instructed the minister of justice, who chairs the ministerial legal committee, to review all legislation and regulations related to functional neutrality across the public sector.

The review aims to strengthen integrity, transparency, and governance standards in public administration, according to the statement.

During Sunday's session, the Cabinet approved the 2026 bylaw governing the use of electronic means in judicial procedures at Sharia courts, as part of efforts to modernise judicial services and advance digital transformation in the public sector.

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Jamal Sellami

## Prince Ali thanks Jamal Sellami following end of Jordan national team tenure

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Prince Ali, president of the Jordan Football Association (JFA), has expressed his appreciation to national football team coach Jamal Sellami following the conclusion of his tenure with "Al Nashama".

In a post on X platform, the Prince commended Sellami's efforts and his role in helping achieve the historic qualification of Jordan for the FIFA

World Cup.

Prince Ali said he met with Sellami on Sunday, voicing his gratitude for the coach's contributions during his time in charge of the national team, and describing his experience with "Al Nashama" as exceptional.

He added that Sellami will remain "a dear son of Jordan", who has demonstrated dedication, professionalism and leadership qualities.

He also wished him continued success in his future endeavours.

Prince Ali also said that Sellami will continue to be a valued source of advice and an experienced figure whose expertise is widely respected and appreciated.

JFA announced the appointment of Moroccan coach Sellami as the head coach of the national football team in June, 2024.



Twenty-one Jordanian citizens arrive on Sunday at Amman Airport after an evacuation flight from Venezuela aboard a C-17 military transport aircraft

## Venezuelan ambassador hails Jordan's humanitarian support after earthquake

AMMAN (JT) — Venezuelan Ambassador to Jordan Omar Vielma Osuna has praised Jordan's swift humanitarian response following the recent double earthquake that struck Venezuela, describing the Kingdom's rescue efforts as a reflection of its solidarity and commitment to

helping countries in times of crisis.

The ambassador also commended Qatar for its support, highlighting the joint Jordanian-Qatari humanitarian effort to assist those affected by the disaster, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Osuna made the remarks while welcoming 21 Jordanian citizens evacuated from Venezuela aboard a C-17 military transport aircraft, which arrived at Amman Airport accompanied by a Jordanian military delegation.

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## National Water Carrier Project construction to begin in late 2026 — official

- Project is scheduled for completion in about 4 years, water pumping to start in late 2030
- It includes de-salination plant, 450 kilometre water transmission network, solar power plant

AMMAN (JT) — Construction on the National Water Carrier Project is expected to begin in the fourth quarter of 2026 after the completion of the final agreements required before financial close, the project's technical director, Ahmed Smadi, said on Sunday.

Speaking to Al Mamlaka TV, Smadi said that the project is in the final stage of preparing the agreements needed to reach financial close, paving the way for construction to start.

The project is expected to take about four years to complete, with water pumping scheduled to begin in the fourth quarter of 2030, he said.

Addressing criticism over the project's increased cost, Smadi said comparisons be-



tween the 2016 estimate and the current price tag are misleading because the project's scope has changed substantially.

The original proposal envisioned only a water conveyance pipeline linking southern and northern Jordan, while the current design includes a de-salination

plant with an annual capacity of 300 million cubic metres, a water transmission network, and a solar power plant, he said.

The de-salination facility is expected to supply about 40 per cent of Jordan's drinking water needs, Samadi said, adding that the project has

expanded in phases, from an initial planned capacity of 100 million cubic metres a year to 150 million cubic metres before reaching its current design capacity of 300 million cubic metres.

He attributed the higher cost to the expansion of the project's components and the

global increase in the prices of raw materials, steel, transportation, energy and other costs driven by inflation.

The addition of a solar power plant was made to meet the environmental requirements of international donors and lenders by reducing carbon emissions, Samadi said. He added that the desalination plant will rely on water from the Red Sea, providing a "more secure and sustainable source than Jordan's existing freshwater resources".

The project's current cost estimate is based on the final engineering design and updated bids from contractors and service providers, reflecting prevailing prices for construction materials, transportation and fuel, he said.

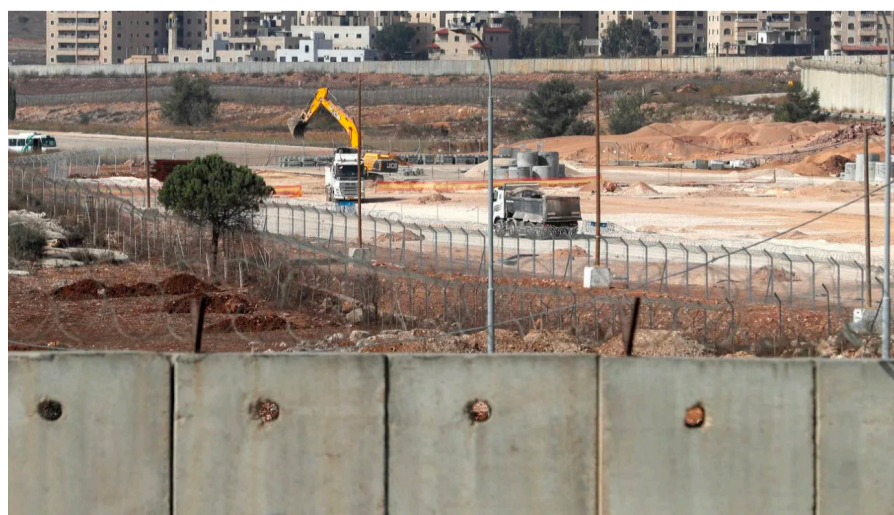
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## Jerusalem Governorate condemns Israeli heritage centre project at former airport

AMMAN (JT) — The Jerusalem Governorate on Sunday condemned Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's laying of the cornerstone for a "heritage centre" at the site of the historic Jerusalem International Airport in Qalandiya, north of occupied Jerusalem.

In a statement, cited by Al Mamlaka, the governorate described the move as a "significant escalation in Israeli settlement activity in the occupied city".

According to Israeli media, Netanyahu and other officials on Sunday participated in the cornerstone-laying ceremony for the herit-



Section of Israel's separation wall and machinery working on the tarmac of the former Atarot airport near the village of Qalandia in occupied East Jerusalem, 25 November 2021

age centre. The Jerusalem Governorate said that the

move constitutes a serious violation of international law, cit-

ing UN Security Council Resolution 2334, which declares Israeli

settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, to be illegal and calls for a halt to settlement expansion.

The governorate said that the project is part of a wider Israeli scheme to create "irreversible" realities on the ground.

It argued that the initiative is part of a broader policy to reshape Jerusalem's geographical and historical identity by taking control of a key symbol of future Palestinian sovereignty and repurposing it to promote the Israeli narrative.

According to the statement, the project

is part of a package of measures approved by the Israeli government on May 17 during what Israel marks as Jerusalem Day. Those measures, it said, are intended to expand settlement activity in the city and alter its political and demographic landscape.

Among these measures is the conversion of the former Jerusalem International Airport building into a cultural and ideological settlement center designed to reinterpret the site's history through the Israeli narrative.

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## Netanyahu says some Lebanese Christian villages 'asked to be annexed' by Israel

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday that some Christian villages in southern Lebanon had asked to be annexed by Israel, in order to be protected from Hizbollah militants.

Lebanon was drawn into the wider Middle East war on March 2 when Hizbollah fired rockets at Israel in retaliation for the killing of Iran's supreme leader in joint US-Israeli strikes.

Israel responded

with massive air strikes and a ground invasion of southern Lebanon, where its troops now occupy swathes of territory near the border.

"Christian villages in Lebanon, some of them have actually asked to be annexed to Israel, because we protect them against the Hizbollah," Netanyahu told Fox News's show, The Sunday Briefing.

Netanyahu did not name the Christian villages he said had made such a request.

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## Princess Ghida opens new KHCC's Early Detection Centre

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Princess Ghida Talal, chairperson of the board of trustees of the King Hussein Cancer Foundation and Centre (KHCC), on Sunday inaugurated the new Early Detection Centre following its relocation to Princess Basma Street in Amman.

The new location aims to improve access to early detection, prevention and diagnostic services and increase chances for detecting cancer in its early stages, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The new centre also aims to provide integrated early detec-

tion, prevention and diagnostic services in one location, raise awareness about the importance of regular screenings and encourage the public to take proactive steps to safeguard their health.

Princess Ghida described the opening as a "new achievement" for the two institutions, noting that the centre represents a "quality addition" to Jordan's efforts to combat cancer.

The centre offers early detection and diagnostic services for several types of cancer, including breast cancer screening through mammograms, ultra-

sound imaging and clinical breast examinations, in addition to breast cancer diagnosis through ultrasound-guided biopsy procedures and cervical cancer screening through Pap smear tests.

Services also include early screening for colorectal and lung cancers, blood testing, smoking cessation services and public health education and awareness programmes, reflecting a "comprehensive approach" to prevention, early detection and community health support.

## GAM, EBRD launch environmental cleanup campaign in Amman

AMMAN (JT) — The Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), in cooperation with the European Union (EU) and the Green Climate Fund, on Sunday organised a community cleanup event at the Queen Rania Al Abdullah Park to promote sustainable waste management and community engagement.

GAM Vice President Ziad Rihani, EU Ambassador to Jordan Pierre-Christophe Chatzivas, EBRD Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Gretchen Biery and other officials attended the event, according to a GAM statement.

The campaign saw "widespread" participation from local youth and families.

It featured an open discussion between community members, local authorities and environmental experts to review key waste management challenges and propose potential solutions.

The event also included educational and interactive activities



GAM photo

The Greater Amman Municipality and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development on Sunday organise a community cleanup event at the Queen Rania Al Abdullah Park to promote sustainable waste management

for children and families, aimed at raising environmental awareness and encouraging responsible waste disposal.

Rasha Shawarbeh, director of the park, said that the campaign aims to enhance environmental awareness,

encourage responsible waste management and inspire communities to work together towards cleaner, safer and healthier public spaces, while instilling a culture of volunteering and environmental stewardship.

The EBRD has been

working with GAM since 2015, with support from the EU, to implement projects aimed at improving waste management.

These projects include constructing an additional landfill cell at the Ghabawi landfill and establishing a landfill

gas-to-energy system to generate electricity.

Amman is a member of the EBRD's "Green Cities" programme, which supports municipalities in identifying environmental challenges and developing solutions that enhance urban sustainability.

## JVA launches tourism investment project overlooking Waleh Dam

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) Secretary General Hisham Heisa on Saturday evening inaugurated a new tourism investment project overlooking the Waleh Dam in the Mleihi district.

The venture, which is the first of its kind in the area, was launched in the presence of several MPs, senators and local government officials from Madaba Governorate, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Heisa said that the project follows an investment agreement signed between JVA and the owner to utilise roads and JVA-owned land adjacent to the Waleh Dam, alongside other facilities.

The agreement falls within the authority's policy to combat poverty and unemploy-



Petra photo

Jordan Valley Authority Secretary General Hisham Heisa on Saturday evening inaugurates a new tourism investment project overlooking the Waleh Dam in the Mleihi district of Madaba

ment by facilitating investment projects that bring sustainable development to the region.

JVA operates with a development-oriented approach focused on progress and water resource management,

the secretary general added.

He noted that this project is part of a package of initiatives launched across JVA's jurisdiction to spur development under the government's Economic Modernisation Vi-

sion, while praising the project for creating job opportunities for local youth.

Heisa called on residents in Wadi Waleh, Mujib and the Barta waterfalls area to take advantage of the incentives offered by

the authority to establish tourism-oriented projects.

He said that JVA will continue to support development and tourism ventures that stimulate economic activity and provide recreational spaces for citizens, adding that "streamlined investment procedures remain available to attract further opportunities to the region".

For his part, the project's owner, Hussein Sunid, said that the venture was built on a 26-dunum plot of land boasting a prime view of the dam in Thiban District.

Designed to serve as a recreational outlet for the local community and visitors from across the Kingdom, the first-of-its-kind project has already generated around 15 jobs for local residents, Sunid noted.

## VTC, Agriculture Ministry launch 3rd phase of 'ARDI' project

AMMAN (JT) — The Vocational Training Corporation (VTC), in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, has launched the third phase of the "ARDI" (My Land) project, aimed at improving on-farm and off-farm employment skills.

The initiative falls within a strategic partnership between the two sides to empower young men and women across the Kingdom's governorates, supplying the agricultural sector with a qualified workforce equipped with professional skills that meet labour market demands, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The project aims to develop trainees' capabilities through specialised training programmes that combine theoretical and practical training, with

a strong focus on utilising modern agricultural technologies.

This approach is intended to raise worker efficiency, enhance employment opportunities and productivity, support sustainable agricultural development and contribute to national food security.

The third phase includes 64 training courses implemented across the Kingdom's governorates and districts through VTC institutes, benefitting 1,600 trainees.

The third phase features Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programmes and short courses benefiting 1,500 individuals, bringing the total number of beneficiaries in this phase to 3,100.

The project offers an integrated training environment that combines hands-on and

applied training using the latest agricultural technologies.

Trainees are provided with a transportation allowance throughout the training period, as well as a professional practice licence that qualifies them to enter the labour market or establish their own projects in the agricultural and food industries sectors.

Training programmes in this phase cover a wide range of market-driven specialisations.

The first phase benefited some 2,000 individuals through 40 training courses, achieving an employment rate of 23 per cent.

The second phase benefited 2,208 individuals across 64 training courses, with work currently underway to finalise its employment indicators.

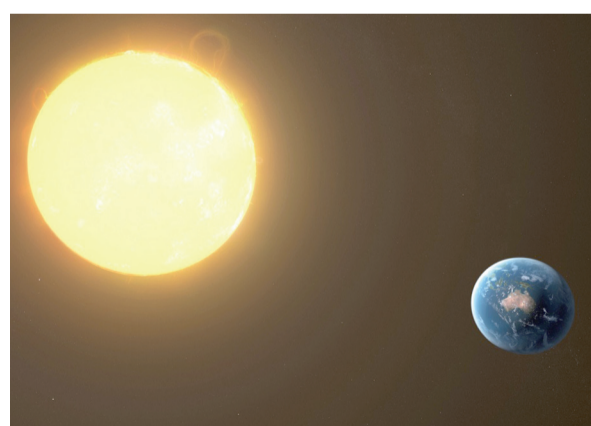
## Earth to reach annual aphelion on Monday — astronomical society

AMMAN (JT) — Earth will reach aphelion, the farthest point in its orbit around the Sun, at 8:30pm on Monday, when the distance between the two will be about 152.1 million kilometres, the Jordan Astronomical Society (JAS) said on Sunday.

JAS President Ammar Sakaji said that the Earth's orbital speed at that point will be some 29.3 kilometres per second, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He said that the Earth will be nearly 5 million kilometres farther from the Sun than it was at perihelion, its closest point to the Sun, which occurred on January 3, noting that the greater distance does not lead to lower temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere.

Sakaji noted that the seasons are determined by the Earth's 23.5-degree axial tilt, which affects the angle of sunlight and the length of daylight, rather than by the var-



Petra photo

The Jordan Astronomical Society says on Sunday that the Earth will reach aphelion at 8:30pm on Monday, when the distance between the two will be about 152.1 million kilometres

ying distance between the Earth and the Sun.

The Earth's orbit is slightly elliptical, causing the distance between the planet and the Sun to change throughout the year, he said, pointing out that the Earth reaches perihelion in early January and aphelion in early July.

Sakaji added that the timing of aphelion and perihelion changes slightly from year to year due to the dy-

namics of the Earth's orbit, the gravitational influence of the Moon and the planets, and gradual changes in the orbit's eccentricity.

He said that the annual aphelion illustrates that seasonal changes and summer and winter temperatures are governed by the tilt and orientation of the Earth's axis during its orbit, rather than by the distance between the Earth and the Sun.

## Bronze Age arms transformed warfare in ancient Jordan

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — Bronze Age weaponry in Jordan (produced around 3,300–1,200 BC) evolved from copper-flint combinations into advanced bronze alloys. Warriors utilised thrusting daggers, crescent axes, long spearheads and copper axes alongside ranged tools like bows, slings and maces.

These objects were discovered in royal hoards like those at Khirbat Barawry, near Zarqa.

The evolution of these weapons in the southern Levant coincides with development of metallurgy and shift in warfare tactics.

"Weapons can be divided in two major groups: mêlée combat weapons and ranged weapons. Among these two major groups six classes were recognised, according to technological features, functions and dimensions," said Daria Montanari from The Sapienza University of Rome.

"Each class may be further articulated in types and sub-types according to specific features, such as: Mace-heads, axes,



Photo courtesy of Ashmolean Museum

Cropped version of an image of the Narmer Mace-head

and daggers, belonging to the mêlée combat weapons group; spearheads, javelins, and arrowheads belonging to the ranged weapons group," Montanari added.

Weapons operate as physical extensions of the user's body and directly impact their target. They have a handle made of wood or horn.

This handle can be either medium-length,

Montanari said.

Mace-heads found at Khirbat Barawry attest to Up to now, only one copper macehead dated to the Early Bronze Age is known of this weapon during the Bronze Period in Levant.

"It shows a pyriform shape and it was made by lost-wax technique, as it happened in Chalcolithic specimens," Montanari noted.

Regarding metal axes, they are attested in the whole Early Bronze Age exhibiting progressive and diachronic changes in manufacture, shape and function, as it is shown by their different contexts of recovery, namely: Foundation deposits, votive offerings, funerary equipment and hoards.

Four main types of axes can be detected, such as: Simple type, crescentic type, fenestrated type, anchor type, the archaeologist said.

"Simple axes are characterised by bi-convex longitudinal section and elongated trapezoidal shape. They were made by casting in open stone or pottery moulds, by ham-

mering and annealing to shape and make them harder; then they were fixed to a wooden haft," Montanari underlined.

Crescentic axes made their appearance during Early Bronze III and they are characterised by the curve shape of the blade and sometimes bear knobs on both faces, while the rear opposite side shows three tangs, the central one wrapped around the curved wooden handle.

"Crescentic axes were generally made of copper using a double mould, specimens of such type were found in tombs," Montanari said.

In the latter phase of Early Bronze IVB a new type of axe appears: The fenestrated axe of the broad earlier type.

"It consists of a crescentic blade with three tangs that joining in a socketed haft leave two rounded holes between the blade and the butt. This type will widely developed in the Middle Bronze Age but with smaller fenestrated holes and a more elongated blade, that is the so-called duckbill type," Montanari added.

# Agricultural exports rise 14% to 281,000 tonnes in H1 2026 — minister

AMMAN (JT) — National agricultural exports rose by 14 per cent in the first half of 2026, reaching 281,000 tonnes compared with 245,000 tonnes during the same period in 2025, Agriculture Minister Saeb Abdel Haleem Khreisat said on Sunday.

Vegetable exports increased by 13.1 per cent to 197,000 tonnes, up from 174,000 tonnes, while fruit exports recorded an 18 per cent rise, reaching 83,000 tonnes compared with 71,000 tonnes in the first half of 2025. Livestock exports also showed positive performance, according to the minister.

Khreisat said the overall growth reflects the high quality and competitiveness of Jordanian agricultural products in regional



Agriculture Minister Saeb Khreisat says on Sunday that national agricultural exports rose by 14 per cent in the first half of 2026, reaching 281,000 tonnes compared with 245,000 tonnes during the same period in 2025

and international markets, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. He said the results underscore the success of ongoing government efforts to support the agricultural sector and

expand its export capacity, in line with the Economic Modernisation Vision and its executive programme.

The minister attributed the gains to joint efforts between the Ministry of Agriculture, the private sector and local farmers to develop the production ecosystem, improve product quality and meet international market standards.

He added that the agricultural sector continues to play a key role in supporting the national economy, improving the trade balance and generating employment, stressing the ministry's commitment to programmes aimed at increasing production, enhancing value-added output and strengthening global competitiveness.

## AT A GLANCE

### Safadi, Qatari prime minister discuss regional developments

AMMAN (JT)

— Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi on Sunday held a telephone call with Qatari

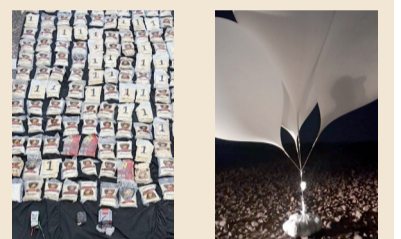


Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Bin Jassim Al Thani. Safadi and Sheikh Mohammed discussed ways to enhance and bolster bilateral relations between the two countries, according to a Foreign Ministry statement. They also reviewed several issues of mutual concern and regional developments, particularly diplomatic efforts to enhance security and stability in the region following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Iran.

### Army foils drug smuggling attempts using balloons

AMMAN (JT)

— The Eastern Military Region command on Sunday foiled two separate attempts to smuggle a large quantity of narcotics utilising electronically-guided balloons on its front.



Border guard units, in coordination with security agencies and the Anti-Narcotics Department, detected and intercepted the devices, downing them along with their cargo inside Jordanian territory, according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army statement. The seized items were referred to the relevant authorities for necessary legal action.

### Ministry checks Zarqa factory for labour law compliance

AMMAN (JT)

— Ministry of Labour Secretary-General Abdul Halim Dujan led an inspection visit to Hirfat Al Ibra



Garmets Factory in Zarqa's Dhuleil district, accompanied by Director of the Labour Inspection Directorate Haitham Najdawi and a team of ministry inspectors. The visit was carried out to verify that no forced labour practices were taking place at the factory and to assess its compliance with the provisions of Jordan's Labour Law, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. During the visit, Dujan and the inspection team met directly with workers to assess working conditions and ensure their labour rights were protected. The delegation also briefed employees on the mechanisms for submitting complaints to the ministry, explaining the procedures for investigating reported violations and taking the necessary legal action where required.

## AID

# Hikma donates \$1m in emergency medicines for Venezuela earthquake relief

AMMAN (JT) — Hikma Pharmaceuticals said on Sunday that it has donated a \$1 million shipment of emergency medicines to support the Venezuelan people affected by the recent twin earthquakes, which caused severe damage and significant casualties.

The shipment was transported aboard two Jordanian medical and relief aid planes in coordination with the Foreign Ministry and the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation (JHCO), the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The company said that the donation included a variety of pharmaceuticals, such as anti-infectives, analgesics, critical care

treatments, respiratory medications and hospital care drugs.

The company said that the donation included a variety of pharmaceuticals...

The contribution aims to address the acute shortage of medicines and medical supplies facing Ven-

ezuela in the wake of the disaster.

The initiative embodies Hikma's ongoing role in supporting both Jordanian and international response efforts to assist disaster-stricken communities worldwide, reflecting the company's mission to provide "better health, within reach, every day".

Venezuelan 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 avoid-



Hikma Pharmaceuticals says on Sunday that it has donated a \$1 million shipment of emergency medicines to support the Venezuelan people affected by the recent twin earthquakes

ed estimating the number of missing, though the UN has put that figure at as many as 50,000, according to AFP.

## Army chief, Libyan counterpart discuss cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti on Sunday received Chief of the General Staff of the Libyan Armed Forces Field Marshal Khaled Haftar and his accompanying delegation at the General Command.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed military cooperation between the armed forces of Jordan and Libya and discussed ways to further strengthen collaboration across various defence fields in light of current security challenges, according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement.

They also explored mechanisms to expand cooperation in training, military qualification, the exchange of expertise and capacity building, to enhance the efficiency, readiness and operational capabilities of both



Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti on Sunday receives Chief of the General Staff of the Libyan Armed Forces Field Marshal Khaled Haftar

armed forces. Huneiti highlighted the strong brotherly ties between Jordan and Libya, reaffirming the JAF's commitment to deepening military coordination and cooperation in support of regional security and stability and in pursuit of shared interests.

Haftar, for his part, praised the JAF's advanced capabilities and extensive exper-

tise in military training and qualification. He stressed the importance of continuing cooperation and exchanging expertise to further strengthen bilateral military relations and advance the common interests of both countries.

The meeting was attended by a number of senior JAF officers and the Libyan military attaché in Amman.

## TRANSPORT

# ATCO serves 'record' 911,000 passengers in H1 of 2026

AMMAN (JT) — The Aqaba Transport and Logistics Company (ATCO) served a "record" 911,000 passengers during the first half of 2026, up from about 634,000 in the corresponding period of 2025, marking its "strongest first-half performance" since the company was established.

Passenger numbers increased by 277,000 year-on-year, representing growth of 43.6 per cent, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Investment Affairs Commissioner at the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) and Chairman of ATCO Mohammad Abu Omar said that the milestone reflects the success of ASEZA's strategy to develop a modern public transport system capable of keeping pace with Aqaba's urban expan-



The Aqaba Transport and Logistics Company says that it served a 'record' 911,000 passengers during the first half of 2026

sion and economic growth.

He said the sustained increase in ridership demonstrates the effectiveness of the authority's policies in enhancing transport infrastructure and creating an integrated investment environment.

Abu Omar added that ASEZA would continue to support strategic projects aimed at improving the efficiency and sustainability of the public transport sector, given its key role in serving residents, workers and visitors while supporting Aqaba's

efforts to improve operational efficiency, respond to passenger needs and manage the sharp increase in demand for public transport services.

He said maintaining service quality while accommodating rising passenger numbers had been the company's main challenge during the period.

Abu Abdullah added that the strong results indicate growing public confidence in Aqaba's transport system and reflect the effectiveness of the company's operational plans.

He said the next phase would focus on enhancing the passenger experience, improving service reliability and operational efficiency, and expanding the use of modern technologies in line with international best practices in public transport management.

## Cassation Court upholds 7-year sentence in sexual assault case

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation upheld an April 2023 Criminal Court ruling, sentencing a man to over seven years in prison after convicting him of sexually assaulting a teenage boy in Amman in

July 2022.

The court declared the defendant guilty of molesting a 17-year-old boy in Wadi Sir area in mid-July.

The defendant was handed seven years and six months in prison by the court.

Court papers said the victim went for a ride with the defendant and two other men who did not appeal their verdicts.

"The three men decided to sexually assault the victim in a deserted area," the court added.

The victim returned

to his family's home and informed them about the sexual assault with the defendants, court papers added.

The victim's family took their son to the Family Protection Department, where they filed a complaint against the three

men, the court stated.

The defendant contested his verdict through his lawyer, claiming he was innocent.

The defendant claimed that the court relied on contradictory investigation procedures.

The defendant further

claimed that the sentence "is too harsh since he is the only supporter of his family".

Meanwhile, the Criminal Court's attorney general asked the higher court to uphold the sentence.

The higher court ruled

that the Criminal Court proceedings were accurate and that the defendant was given the appropriate punishment.

"The defendant confessed to the sexual assault incident," the higher court ruled.

Therefore, he deserves

the punishment he received, the higher court added.

The Court of Cassation was headed by Judge Mohammad Ibrahim and included judges Yassin Abdullah, Nayef Samarat, Hammad Ghzawi and Qassem Dughmi.



US President Donald Trump speaks during 'Salute to America 250' Fourth of July celebrations on the National Mall on Saturday in Washington, DC

## Trump hails US, blasts 'communists' in 250th anniversary speech

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US President Donald Trump hailed America on its 250th birthday Saturday as the "crowning achievement" of human history, even as he used the event to renew his attack on domestic opponents he branded communists.

In a speech delayed by several hours when storms forced the temporary evacuation of crowds in Washington, Trump claimed that under his presidency the United States was "prouder than ever before".

While Trump had promised a huge political rally to stamp his brand on the national celebrations, the 80-year-old Republican largely stuck to a more traditionally patriotic script.

"For two-and-a-half centuries, our American republic has stood as the crowning achievement of human history," Trump told tens of thousands of people on the National Mall.

On stage, he hailed also veterans from World War II and the Korean and Vietnam wars.

But he then hailed the latter two as examples of the battle against "communists" — reprising his message from his speech on Friday night at the iconic Mount Rushmore monument.

"Our warriors did not fight communism on battlefields across the world, only to have that menace rear its ugly head right back here in America. We're not going to let it happen," he said.

### 'Proud to be American'

Trump has repeatedly hammered home the theme recently ahead of November's US midterm elections, after the anti-establishment left of the Democratic Party won a string of US primary victories.

"It's like a cancer, you've got to cut it out,"

he added. The US leader also used the speech to boast of the recent military campaigns against Iran and Venezuela, saying Washington had "wiped out" Tehran's military.

But the speech was short by Trump's standards, at around 45 minutes long.

"We love Trump, we loved his speech," said Richard Sullivan, 70, who came from Virginia with his wife Nancy and was wearing a Freedom 250 T-shirt.

"He went through our great history and had a word for the veterans that were here. He makes us proud to be American."

For Americans, the 250th anniversary offers a moment for reflection as well as celebration

A huge fireworks display began after the speech. Trump has said it will set a record as the world's largest.

Americans braved a scorching heatwave in cities across the east of the country to celebrate the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence from Britain in 1776.

Temperatures soared to a record 39.4°C in the capital — an all-time high for July 4 — with 160 million Americans under extreme weather warnings, according to the National Weather Service.

Inclement weather meanwhile forced fireworks in New York to be pushed earlier, and resulted in evacuations at a concert in Philadelphia

and a celebration on the Charles River in Boston.

### 'Awesome country'

The elements also threatened to wreak havoc with Trump's speech as tens of thousands were ordered to clear the National Mall several hours before his address due to approaching thunderstorms.

While many streamed toward exits, chaos broke out as other attendees refused to leave or tried to surge back in, where AFP reporters witnessed shouts of "charge!" and "Trump! Trump!"

Trump however insisted he was pushing ahead with the speech, telling Fox News that if D-Day veterans in World War II could brave bad weather then so could he.

"Experiencing a little heat is a lot less than what a lot of people sacrifice to give us this freedom in this awesome country," said Randy Cole, 62, a retired civil servant attending festivities in Washington.

Yet Trump's determination to put himself and his political brand front and centre of the 250th anniversary celebration had highlighted the deep divisions caused by his second term in office.

Those divisions were on full display Saturday near Washington's Capitol Hill, where masked men — some of them carrying Confederate flags and others sporting logos of the white supremacist Patriot Front — gathered to shout, "Reclaim America!"

For Americans, the 250th anniversary offers a moment for reflection as well as celebration.

A 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.

# Iranians pray for slain Khamenei but son and successor absent

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian leaders joined prayers Sunday over the casket of late supreme leader Ali Khamenei during a second day of funeral ceremonies, but his son and successor Mojtaba Khamenei was conspicuously absent.

The elder Khamenei ruled the Islamic republic from 1989 until he was killed aged 86 in an air strike on the first day of the US-Israeli war with Iran on February 28.

Officials including President Masoud Pezeshkian and Revolutionary Guard chief Ahmad Vahidi joined Sunday's ceremonies, along with huge crowds paying their final respects in Tehran.

But Mojtaba has not appeared in public since his appointment in early March. He is said to have been wounded in the attack that killed his father.

The late supreme leader's other three sons, Masoud, Mostafa and Meysam, all attended the service.

It was held at Tehran's Grand Mosalla religious complex and led by prominent Shia cleric Ja'far Sobhani, a 97-year-old scholar who teaches at seminaries in the holy city of Qom.

Sunday was declared a public holiday across Iran. Later in the day, Khamenei's body will be moved out of the Grand Mosalla, where it is lying in state, as part of preparations for processions through the capital on Monday.

The vast complex and surrounding streets were packed with mourners on Sunday morning, AFP journalists saw.

With temperatures forecast to exceed 35°C, many were handed refreshments as they



This handout photo provided by the Iranian supreme leader office shows Iranian officials praying next to the coffins of Iran's slain supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and his family members at the Grand Mosalla during the second day of his funeral ceremonies in Tehran on Sunday

made their way to the Grand Mosalla, some carrying Iranian flags or portraits of the late Khamenei.

Authorities have said they expect more than 10 million people to take part in the ceremonies in the capital.

Strict security measures have been imposed and official media have warned of a risk of crowd crushes.

"More than 4,000 people visited medical centres located in and near Tehran's Mosalla," Iran's official IRNA news agency reported on Sunday, but no deaths had been recorded.

Footage from state television showed Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Iran's parliament speaker and its chief negotiator in talks with the United States, at-

tending the prayers. Also seen was Esmail Qaani, head of the Quds Force, the foreign arm of the Revolutionary Guard.

Khamenei's coffin, draped in the Iranian flag and topped with his black turban, was placed alongside those of four relatives also killed in the February strikes, including an infant granddaughter.

### 'Killers must face punishment'

After five weeks of intense fighting, the Middle East war is on hold following a ceasefire and an initial accord struck with the US. But both Washington and Tehran have warned they are ready to resume military action.

"The killers [of Khamenei] must face punishment," a 38-year-

old man surnamed Miremadi told AFP as he attended the prayers.

"If our leaders are about to proceed with negotiations in this manner, our people will not agree with it," he said.

People were seeking revenge, not peace and negotiations, he added.

Khamenei's funeral is being viewed outside Iran as a test of support for the government following mass protests in January that rights groups say were quelled by a crackdown that left thousands dead.

"We're here to show the world that we back our revolution and our leader, and we demand revenge for the blood of our loved ones," said one woman surnamed Bakand, a 39-year-old home maker attending Sunday's prayers.

Khamenei long pursued a course of confrontation with the West, and Tehran for years has provided support to anti-US and anti-Israel armed groups around the Middle East, including Palestinian Hamas and Lebanon's Hizbollah.

Delegations from both those groups met with Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Saturday, Iranian state media reported, while representatives of Yemen's Houthi rebels and Hamas ally Palestinian Islamic Jihad also attended the funeral ceremonies.

After the processions through Tehran on Monday, Khamenei's coffin will be moved on Tuesday to Qom, then on Wednesday to neighbouring Iraq, before the burial on Thursday in his north-eastern hometown of Mashhad.

## Attack by Yemen's Houthis kills 14 government troops — official

ADEN (AFP) — Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels killed 14 troops in an attack south of the port city of Hodeidah, a military official aligned with the country's internationally-recognised government told AFP on Sunday.

The official said pro-government forces had repelled the attack in Hays district, south of Hodeidah, in "clashes lasting for several hours at dawn on Saturday".

He added "fighting resulted in dead and wounded among [Houthi] ranks", without specifying the number killed in the opposing force.

The Houthis have been at war with the government since 2015 in a conflict that has killed hundreds of thousands of people and triggered a major humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

The rebels control Yemen's capital Sanaa and much of the north, including Hodeidah on Yemen's western Red Sea coast, while the internationally-recognised government holds

much of the south.

The fighting between the two sides has largely been frozen since a UN-negotiated truce in 2022.

But on Friday the Houthis threatened airports and vital assets belonging to Saudi Arabia, a key backer of Yemen's Aden-based government.

The rebel group, part of Iran's "axis of resistance" against Israel and the United States, accused the kingdom of trying to stop an Iranian plane from landing.



Armed Yemenis brandish their weapons as they rally in solidarity with Lebanon and Iran on the outskirts of the Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa on Thursday

## 'I'm going with him': Families fear for bodies of Venezuela's quake dead

By Leticia Pineda  
Agence France-Presse

CARABALLEDA, Venezuela — For Victor Colivert, only one thing matters now.

He must stay with the body of his nephew Oswald, which was pulled out of the rubble of his residence that collapsed in Venezuela's twin earthquakes.

After fighting to recover his remains, Colivert fears the body will be lost in the chaos following the disaster.

"Even if I have to go to China, to wherever, but I'm not leaving him alone," said Colivert.

Ten days after one of Latin America's worst earthquake disasters, attention is turning increasingly away from possible rescues of survivors to recovery of the bodies of loved ones.

Where Oswald's body was recovered, hundreds of volunteers



Members of the Strategic Operations Group patrol a quake-hit area in Playa Grande neighbourhood, state of La Guaira, on Friday

worked in mountains of rubble from a complex built as part of former president Hugo Chávez's flagship housing programme in La Guaira, the epicentre of the June 24

earthquakes that left nearly 3,000 dead.

Colivert lost his sister, Grecia, her husband, and her two children, Oswald and Greidy. They were among the hundreds

of low-income families living in the 12-story towers, known as OPP (Works of People's Power) 26 and 27.

Using drills and pliers, Mexican soldiers struggled Friday night

to extract the body of 16-year-old Greidy, trapped under a beam.

The body of 13-year-old Oswald had been taken out earlier and remained for hours in a black bag next to his family. They stopped forensic experts from removing it for fear they would never find it again.

"I'm going with him," Colivert, 36, told AFP.

Grecia's body, located Thursday, was taken by her father to be cremated in Caracas, while Victor awaited the remains of his nephews and brother-in-law.

Venezuela's interim president Delcy Rodríguez has given assurances that all bodies would be identified.

"No one is going to a mass grave," she said on Thursday.

She said forensic experts would take fingerprints and photographs of the deceased and create a file for

each body brought to the morgue.

But some are losing faith.

"I had a lot of hope for my family; I'm a Christian," says Miguel Angel Colivert, Victor's uncle.

But he admits he lost faith when his niece's body was found.

"My soul aches!" With a Bible in his hand, a Mexican priest offers prayers where the bodies lie.

Activity is intense at the ruins of this complex, built about 13 years ago as part of the Housing Mission program, promoted by the late former president Chávez.

A group of volunteers passes buckets of rubble from hand to hand in long lines. Drills can be heard piercing the cement until someone shouts "Silence!" with a raised fist.

Everything stops for a few minutes.

"This is a horror movie. We didn't have to survive a war, but we could not against nature," says Celida Sequera, a 43-year-old volunteer with her face and clothes covered in dirt.

The rescue team pulled on a rope to haul a volunteer out of the hole where they plan to extract the bodies of the woman and her children.

Volunteers and relatives of the victims rest under blankets tied to four poles driven into the rubble, which reeks of death.

A mud-stained Venezuelan flag, tied to a pole, flutters in the Caribbean breeze.

A blackened mattress, a twisted bicycle, a crushed sofa and toys protrude between two stacked concrete slabs.

Seeing all this, a woman kneels and cries out between sobs. "My soul aches!"

# Audit Bureau launches int'l training programme for auditors with IDI partnership

AMMAN (JT) — The Audit Bureau launched an international professional training programme for its auditors in partnership with the INTOSAI Development Initiative as part of efforts to strengthen institutional capacity and enhance professional standards.

A total of 52 auditors and 13 trainers from the Bureau are participating in the Professional Education for SAI Auditors (PESA 2026) programme, which will run for one year in Arabic and English.

Audit Bureau President Radhi Al Hamadeen said the initiative reflects the Bureau's commitment to developing specialised audit capabilities and strengthening the application of the International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions to improve oversight quality and safeguard public funds, according to an Audit Bureau statement.

He said the programme should enhance audit quality, reinforce transparency and accountability, and support the Bureau's role in producing more effective audit reports.

Al Hamadeen said a key objective of the programme focuses on qualifying auditors to conduct performance audits in line with international standards and best practices. He added



Photo Courtesy of Audit Bureau

The Audit Bureau has launched an international professional training programme in partnership with the INTOSAI Development Initiative to strengthen institutional capacity and professional standards

that the initiative aligns with the Bureau's strategic plan and Jordan's Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap, which runs until 2029.

The PESA programme offers an internationally recognised qualification for auditors of Supreme Audit Institutions. It combines learning, assessment and practical application to strengthen technical and professional competencies.

The programme enables participants to apply international auditing standards in practice, enhances professional judgement and produces high-quality audit outputs based on recognised

methodologies.

Each participant completes seven learning modules, including two core modules on the role of SAIs in public accountability and auditors' professional ethics, in addition to five specialised modules in financial, compliance or performance auditing.

The Bureau selected participants based on their responsibilities, experience and qualifications to ensure alignment between programme content and operational needs.

The programme helps translate acquired knowledge into improved audit performance and quality, the Bu-

reau said.

The availability of the programme in Arabic alongside English broadens access to professional training and strengthens Arab participation in internationally accredited capacity-building initiatives.

The participation of 13 trainers reflects an institutional approach to knowledge transfer, with trainers supporting participants, monitoring progress and extending the programme's impact across the Bureau.

Senior management monitors implementation through regular progress reports on performance, completion rates and engagement.

The Bureau noted that 65 per cent of participants enrolled in the performance audit stream, reflecting its strategic focus on strengthening expertise in this area.

The initiative aligns with the Bureau's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, which prioritises transparency, accountability and compliance while reinforcing value for money in public auditing.

The PESA qualification forms part of the Bureau's professional development framework, which aims to enhance auditors' readiness and improve audit quality through competency-based training and assessment.

The Bureau said the programme underscores its commitment to investing in human capital as the basis for strengthening public oversight.

It added that it will contribute to more professional audit reports, improved institutional performance, better safeguarding of public funds and greater public benefit.

The programme also supports the objectives of Jordan's Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap, which seeks to improve government efficiency, enhance service delivery and embed value for money across the public sector, according to the Bureau statement.

# Prime minister orders 'urgent' bylaw to strengthen ministerial integrity, neutrality

Continued from page 1

The bylaw seeks to enhance efficiency and streamline procedures by enabling the use of electronic tools in judicial processes, thereby reducing time, effort, and costs for citizens while improving service delivery and governance.

It also defines the scope of electronic judicial procedures across Sharia courts, the Sharia Public Prosecution, and family reconciliation and mediation offices, including the filing of lawsuits and applications, submission of memoranda and statements, notification procedures, correspondence, and witness testimony.

It also recognises remote video hearings as equivalent to in-person attendance, while maintaining confidentiality and data protection standards.

Electronic notification methods will include the government "Sanad" application, SMS messages, e-mail, and registered digital addresses.

The Cabinet also approved the validating reasons for draft amendments to the

Jordanian Judicial Institute Law for 2026 and referred them to the Legislative and Opinion Bureau for further action.

The amendments will introduce post-graduate programmes at the Judicial Institute, including a master's degree in judicial and legal studies, in cooperation with accredited Jordanian and international universities.

The amendment aims to strengthen the economic environment

The Cabinet also approved an amended bylaw to governing the licensing renewal system for health professionals for the year 2026.

The amendment is intended to enable beneficiaries to complete the renewal procedures for their pro-

fessional licenses in cases where they previously did not meet the required conditions, allowing them to continue practicing their professions in accordance with applicable legislation, according to the statement.

Based on the provisions of the Public Health Law, the bylaw aims to enhance stability in the healthcare sector and facilitate the completion of licensing requirements for health practitioners. It also seeks to ensure the sustainability of healthcare services and improve their efficiency without interruption, while enabling medical personnel to regularise their status and complete renewal procedures within timeframes that serve the public interest.

The Cabinet also approved an amended Building and Zoning Bylaw for the City of Amman for the year 2026. The amendment aims to strengthen the economic environment supporting the construction sector in Amman, stimulate this vital industry, and facilitate procedures for investors and workers in the field.

# Venezuelan ambassador hails Jordan's humanitarian support after earthquake

Continued from page 1

The evacuation was carried out under Royal directives to ensure the safe return of Jordanians following the earthquake.

Meanwhile, the second aircraft in the Jordanian-Qatari humanitarian air bridge departed on Friday for Caracas carrying 26 tonnes of medical, relief and food supplies for earthquake-affected communities.

The first aid flight had previously arrived in the Venezuelan capital with humanitarian assistance coordinated with Qatar, in line with Royal directives aimed at supporting affected populations and easing the impact of the disaster, the Jordan Armed Forces (JAF) said.

Osuna said Jordan was among the first countries to dispatch rescue and relief teams to Venezuela. He noted that around 100 Jordanian rescuers began search-and-rescue operations immediately upon arrival, making what he described as a "heroic" contribution to the emergency response.

Among the team's most significant achievements was the rescue of a three-year-old child from beneath the rubble, he said, adding that the operation became a symbol of hope for the Venezuelan people during a difficult period.

The ambassador said Venezuelans witnessed Jordan's spirit of brotherhood through its rapid response, adding that such humanitarian gestures remain deeply rooted in the memory of nations and demonstrate the value of standing by friends during times of adversity.

Osuna said Jordan was among the first countries to dispatch rescue and relief teams to Venezuela

Reaffirming Jordan's support as an expression of brotherhood, Osuna also expressed appreciation for Qatar's assistance, saying the solidarity shown by both countries was highly valued by the Venezuelan leadership and people.

On behalf of the Venezuelan government and people, the ambassador extended his gratitude to Jordan for its humanitarian assistance and

the efforts of its rescue teams, saying their actions would always be remembered with appreciation and pride in Venezuela.

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," UN-HCR 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.

# National Water Carrier Project construction to begin in late 2026 — official

Continued from page 1

The final cost could still rise or fall depending on inflation, geopolitical developments, energy prices and global shipping costs.

With an estimated capital cost of around \$5.8 billion, the National Water Carrier Project is the largest water infrastructure project in Jordan's history. It is financed by 29 international financial institutions, with the Jordanian Treas-

ury contributing \$722 million, local banks providing nearly \$1.1 billion, and the Social Security Investment Fund financing 15 per cent of the project to reduce financing costs and spread the financial burden over time.

The government signed in April the final technical and legal agreement for the Aqaba-Amman Water Desalination and Conveyance Project (the National Water Carrier). The final agreement

follows 16 months of intensive government negotiations with relevant stakeholders aimed at optimising financing terms, securing the best possible pricing, and refining the project's engineering and technical specifications.

The National Water Carrier is a world-first strategic initiative that integrates several pillars: The desalination of 300 million cubic metres (mcm) of seawater annually, pumping

systems capable of lifting water to elevations of 1,100 metres above sea level via a 450-kilometre pipeline network, and a heavy reliance on eco-friendly, cutting-edge renewable energy technologies.

Set to provide approximately 40 per cent of the Kingdom's drinking water needs, the project is expected to begin operations in 2030, serving as a vital cornerstone for national water security. The 300 mcm annual

output is nearly equal to the total capacity of all dams in the Kingdom and triple the production of the Disi project.

It will increase the Kingdom's water supply by 40 per cent, effectively doubling the annual per capita share from 60 to 110 cubic metres.

Furthermore, it will increase the frequency of water supply from one day to three days per week across all governorates.

# Jerusalem Governorate condemns Israeli heritage centre project at former airport

Continued from page 1

The governorate said that the plan extends beyond repurposing the airport building to rewriting the site's historical identity by highlighting the "history of settlement" and associating the location with Israeli military and political figures through commemorative exhibits.

It said the project is intended to replace the

Palestinian and Arab historical memory attached to the site.

The statement said that the project coincides with a broader expansion of settlement-related projects in northern Jerusalem, including plans for a waste treatment facility on land in Qalandiya that it said could result in the confiscation of hundreds of dunams and the displacement or isolation of dozens

of Palestinian families.

It also cited the proposed Atarat settlement neighborhood, which would add thousands of settler units and rank among the largest settlement expansion projects within Jerusalem.

The governorate said that the projects are part of an integrated strategy to create territorial continuity between Israeli settlement blocs while

fragmenting Palestinian geographic continuity, particularly in northern Jerusalem, and preventing connected Palestinian urban development.

It also argued that the policies seek to undermine Palestinian symbols of sovereignty, including Jerusalem International Airport, which is an "important symbol of a future Palestinian state" and replace them with in-

frastructure that reinforces Israeli control as part of a broader vision of "Greater Jerusalem."

The governorate also said that the measures are also intended to alter the city's demographic balance through settlement expansion, land confiscation, home demolitions and population redistribution, reducing the Palestinian presence while strengthening the settler population.

# Netanyahu says some Lebanese Christian villages 'asked to be annexed' by Israel

Continued from page 1

Christian villages in the Marjeyoun area of southern Lebanon on Friday denied some media reports suggesting they had sought annexation, saying in a statement they had "no power nor the legal right" to make decisions of such magnitude.

The villages reaffirmed their determination to stay on their land, stressing their "loyalty to their national identity" and their "attachment to their Lebanese flag".

Since the war began, some Christian villages in southern Lebanon have endured Israeli shelling, air strikes, displacement, and infra-

structure damage.

Most have remained inhabited despite Israeli evacuation orders, with residents choosing to stay to protect their homes, churches and farmland, though some villages were partially or fully evacuated.

During the war, the Israeli military has warned several Christian-majority villages — through phone calls to mayors and local officials — not to allow "strangers" in, referring to Hizbollah fighters.

Israel's military chief visited forces deployed around Beaufort Castle in southern Lebanon on Sunday, vowing to push ahead with the campaign against Hizbollah.

"The IDF will continue to operate decisively to remove threats from Lebanese territory and is prepared to transition rapidly to offensive operations should the ceasefire be violated," Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir told soldiers during the visit, according to a statement issued by the military.

Israeli forces seized the crusader-era castle and the area around it recently, giving the military a strategic foothold it previously occupied for nearly two decades.

Israel says it uncovered a tunnel network beneath the castle, saying it was built to give fighters of Lebanese militant group Hizbollah a fortified strike hub

just kilometres from Israeli territory.

Israel previously overran the fortress during its 1982 invasion of Lebanon, after a prolonged battle with the Palestinian fighters hidden in the castle's maze of historic underground tunnels.

The castle was damaged by violent bombardment in the process. Israel then used it as one of its main observation posts until its troops withdrew from the country in 2000.

"Our troops' activities at the Beaufort Ridge and throughout southern Lebanon are being carried out in accordance with the framework of the agreement and the mechanisms



AFP photo

This photograph taken on Thursday, from the southern Lebanese area of Tyre shows the crater created by the Israeli detonation of the an alleged underground Hizbollah tunnel in the village of Majdelzoun

established under it," Zamir said on Sunday, referring to the recent US-brokered agree-

ment between Israel and Lebanon intended to permanently halt hostilities.

But Zamir said that "any threat directed at our troops or the Israeli civilians will be

struck immediately and eliminated".

"The Lebanese Armed Forces are required to fulfil their commitments under the historic agreement that was signed and act to clear the area of Hizbollah terrorists and terrorist infrastructure," he added.

Hizbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war on March 2 with rocket fire at Israel to avenge the killing of Iran's supreme leader in US-Israeli strikes days earlier.

Israel responded with massive airstrikes and a ground invasion of southern Lebanon, where its troops now occupy swathes of territory near the border.

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## The absent supreme leader and Iran's next phase

The funeral of Supreme leader Ali Khamenei is no longer merely a delayed commemorative ceremony that took nearly three months to take place. It has instead become a political signal marking Iran's entry into a forced transitional phase. The question is no longer limited to who will succeed the supreme leader, but rather what kind of system will emerge after him.



Amer Al Sabaileh

This is particularly evident in the continued reliance on the notion of the "absent supreme leader". The representative of the Hidden Imam has himself become absent from the scene, yet this absence does not negate the need to preserve his symbolic presence as a source of legitimacy that accompanies the political transition and prepares the ground for the next phase, from negotiations to political accommodations.

In parallel, President Trump appears to be betting on this phase as the beginning of Iran's shift from confrontation to pragmatism. The decision to grant the regime a period to conduct the funeral, along with references to a more rational leadership in Tehran, reflects an approach aimed at pushing Iran to focus on its internal crises rather than its regional project.

From this perspective, the issue of frozen Iranian assets, mechanisms for supervising their use, and the gradual easing of sanctions become tools for reshaping the regime's priorities, so that the economic equation turns into the foundation of political survival in the post-war phase.

Inside Iran, pragmatism also appears to define this transitional phase. The maintenance of the Supreme leader in "political absence", combined with limited messaging that balances revolutionary constants with signals of openness to negotiations, reflects an attempt to preserve legitimacy while redistributing power.

The absence of a clear succession mechanism and the limited public visibility suggest that Iran is gradually moving away from a rigid hierarchical religious system centred on the supreme leader towards a more horizontal security-political structure, where institutions share centres of decision-making, while the office of the Supreme leader remains a symbolic umbrella that grants legitimacy to this transformation.

This shift adds a political and security dimension to Iran's existing economic and social crises. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which for decades built its influence through a combination of domestic control and a regional network stretching from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen to the Red Sea and Sudan, is now facing an unprecedented test. Its spheres of influence are contracting, its proxies are under sustained pressure, and internal crises are forcing a reordering of priorities in which preserving the state's structure and survival is becoming more urgent than continuing regional expansion.

However, the IRGC's ability to maintain its domestic position remains tied to its capacity to preserve parts of its external leverage, which will be essential in any future negotiations. For this reason, Iraq appears to be the most critical arena in the coming phase, not only because of geography and shared borders, but also because of its ability to provide pressure tools that are difficult to replicate elsewhere, as Iranian influence declines in Lebanon and Syria.

Against this backdrop, Iran's regional networks are likely to shift their methods more than their objectives. This would involve a form of apparent integration within state institutions, reducing the visibility of militia structures and uncontrolled weaponry, in a strategy resembling "bending in the face of the storm", while retaining organisational depth and operational capacity.

The emerging equation is not about abandoning instruments of influence, but rather reshaping them into more flexible and complex forms that preserve leverage and maintain the ability to generate instability, when necessary, without openly claiming responsibility.

Ultimately, many actors aligned with the Iranian project appear to be betting on weathering the storm at the lowest possible cost, while assuming that Washington will settle for political and media victories that can be domestically marketed, rather than pursuing a structural transformation of the system.

From the Muslim Brotherhood, to the future of militias, to the question of irregular armed groups, a similar strategy is emerging. Gradual adaptation, tactical repositioning, and waiting for shifting conditions, in the hope that what appears today as temporary concessions will later become the foundation for restoring influence in a new regional cycle.

# Jordan and Iran: Time to rethink

**Mohammad Abu Rumman**

The funeral of Iran's former supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, served as much more than a ceremonial farewell. For the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Iran's conservative establishment, it became an opportunity to project a carefully crafted set of political and symbolic messages. These messages were reflected in the composition of the foreign delegations that attended, while simultaneously signaling Iran's intentions to both domestic and international audiences. Particularly striking was the broad Arab and Islamic participation — especially from the Gulf states — at a time when reports continue to point to the emergence of multiple political, economic, and backchannel contacts between Tehran and its regional neighbors following the recent US-Iran memorandum of understanding.

Despite this difficult history, successive Jordanian leaderships — from the late King Hussein to King Abdullah — have periodically sought opportunities to improve relations

No Jordanian delegation participated in the funeral ceremonies, underscoring the prolonged diplomatic coldness between Amman and Tehran. Relations have deteriorated further following the recent war involving the United States and Israel, during which Iran launched missiles towards military facilities in Jordan, claiming they hosted American forces. This came on top of decades of political and media

campaigns by Tehran portraying Jordan as an adversary — a pattern that has persisted since the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

From Jordan's perspective, scepticism towards Iran's system of Wilayat Al Faqih has remained remarkably consistent since the revolution. Mutual distrust has become deeply institutionalised. In virtually every official and unofficial dialogue held over the years, Jordanian officials have confronted their Iranian counterparts with evidence of Iranian activities perceived as threatening Jordan's national security, including what Amman viewed as direct targeting of Jordanian interests.

Despite this difficult history, successive Jordanian leaderships — from the late King Hussein to King Abdullah — have periodically sought opportunities to improve relations. One of the latest serious attempts took place in Baghdad, where Jordanian and Iranian officials held multiple rounds of discussions alongside the Saudi-Iranian dialogue that eventually paved the way for a significant rapprochement between Riyadh and Tehran. Yet, while Saudi-Iranian relations improved substantially, Jordanian-Iranian relations remained trapped in a cycle of ambiguity, mistrust and recurring tensions.

However, a difficult history should not automatically condemn future relations. International politics is ultimately driven by strategic interests rather than emotions, resentment or historical grievances. The Gulf states offer a compelling example. Immediately after the US-Iran understanding, Gulf governments began reassessing their relationship with Tehran. Senior delegations attended the funeral, while media reports suggested discussions over major economic and financial agreements between Iran and several Gulf countries.

Ironically, the Gulf countries have arguably suffered far greater economic, political, military and security costs from Iranian

regional policies than Jordan has. Yet, strategic calculations have encouraged them to move beyond past confrontations and explore a new framework for engagement. The recent war itself demonstrated that the Iranian political system is neither fragile nor easily destabilised. On the contrary, it displayed a considerable degree of institutional resilience. Even the Trump administration eventually moderated its initial ambitions, scaling back broader objectives in favour of more limited and pragmatic goals. Similar reassessments are increasingly visible within Israel, where military analysts have begun reevaluating both Iran's capabilities and the assumptions that shaped previous strategic planning.

Whenever Iran is discussed in conversations with Jordanian officials and policymakers, memories of previous unproductive negotiations often dominate the discussion. Questions quickly arise about the usefulness of renewed dialogue or the existence of meaningful common interests. Such arguments often contrast Jordan's position with that of the Gulf, suggesting that geography leaves the Gulf with little choice but to engage Iran.

A carefully designed Track Two dialogue would not eliminate the profound differences between the two countries

This reasoning, however, oversimplifies today's interconnected regional landscape. Strategic interests extend well beyond immediate bilateral disputes. Opening channels of communi-

cation with Tehran could contribute to developing shared understandings on political, economic and security issues. Even if such engagement yielded nothing more than facilitating stronger coordination with Iraq through broader regional frameworks, the strategic dividends for Jordan would still be significant.

Ideally, a broader regional dialogue should be led by the Middle East's emerging middle powers — Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Pakistan and Egypt — whose growing diplomatic influence positions them to shape a more balanced regional order. Yet, engagement with Iran continues to occur largely through separate bilateral tracks, even among the Gulf states themselves, each pursuing its own distinct relationship with Tehran.

Jordan therefore needs to formulate a clearer and more proactive strategy for engaging Iran during the coming period. If Jordanian decision-makers remain concerned that official diplomatic exchanges may simply repeat previous unproductive experiences, there is another option worth exploring: Track Two diplomacy. Academic institutions, think tanks and research centers could open structured channels of communication with their Iranian counterparts. Such an approach is particularly relevant in Iran, where policy experts and research institutions play an influential role in informing decision-making, with many maintaining close links to the Foreign Ministry, the presidency and even the Office of the Supreme leader.

A carefully designed Track Two dialogue would not eliminate the profound differences between the two countries. It could, however, reduce misunderstandings, identify limited areas of common interest and prepare the ground for a more pragmatic relationship should regional conditions continue to evolve.

## Jordan's move to upper-middle-income status: More than a statistical milestone

**By Mohammad Alhadab**

Jordan's recent reclassification by the World Bank as an upper-middle-income economy has generated considerable public interest. While the announcement has understandably been welcomed as positive news, its significance extends far beyond a change in statistical categories. More importantly, it sends a strong signal about the resilience of Jordan's economy, the credibility of its reform agenda and the confidence international institutions continue to place in the Kingdom.

At the same time, it is important to clarify a common misconception. The World Bank's classification does not mean that the average Jordanian now earns \$5,260 annually. Rather, the figure represents Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, calculated using the World Bank's Atlas Method — a statistical measure designed for international comparisons that smooths exchange-rate fluctuations and reflects the overall size and performance of an economy rather than individuals' actual incomes.

Jordan's advancement to the upper-middle-income category was driven by a combination of factors. Most notably, the Department of Statistics completed a comprehensive rebase of the national accounts, incorporating updated surveys, broader economic coverage and improved methodologies. As a result, the size of Jordan's economy was revised upward by approximately 10 per cent, reflecting economic activities that had previously been underrepresented, particularly in modern services and the digital economy.

This statistical revision coincided with continued macroeconomic stability. Jordan recorded 2.8 per cent real GDP growth in 2025, while GNI per capita increased to \$5,260, comfortably above the World Bank's upper-middle-income threshold of \$4,636 by a margin of \$624. The Kingdom joined countries such as Vietnam, the Philip-

pires and Sri Lanka, which also moved into the same income category in this year's update.

More importantly, the reclassification reinforces a broader narrative that has emerged over the past two years. Despite persistent regional geopolitical tensions, Jordan has maintained macroeconomic stability, moderate inflation, a stable exchange rate, and prudent fiscal and monetary management. These achievements have also been recognised by international credit rating agencies, which upgraded Jordan's sovereign credit rating for the first time in more than two decades and reaffirmed that upgrade subsequently.

The next phase requires translating macroeconomic stability into stronger private-sector activity, higher productivity, increased exports and better-quality jobs...

From an investment perspective, this matters. International investors rarely base decisions on a single economic indicator. Instead, they assess a country's overall risk profile through a combination of GDP growth, inflation, fiscal discipline, sovereign ratings, institutional quality and assessments by organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. When these indicators move in the same positive direction, investor confidence improves and perceived investment risks decline.

The benefits also extend to international capital markets. Jordan periodically issues sov-

ereign Eurobonds to finance part of its borrowing requirements. Stronger confidence in the economy can contribute to reducing the country's risk premium, allowing future borrowing at more favourable interest rates. Lower financing costs ultimately ease pressure on public finances while improving access to capital for both government and private-sector borrowers.

Nevertheless, the new classification should also be viewed with realism. As countries move into higher income groups, they may gradually lose eligibility for certain concessional loans and development assistance designed for lower-income economies. However, this is a natural consequence of economic progress. In return, countries are generally expected to rely more on private investment, capital markets and commercial financing supported by stronger economic fundamentals.

The more important question therefore is not how Jordan achieved this classification, but how it capitalises on it.

International recognition creates opportunities, but it does not automatically generate investment or employment. The next phase requires translating macroeconomic stability into stronger private-sector activity, higher productivity, increased exports and better-quality jobs. This transition is precisely what Jordan's Economic Modernisation Vision seeks to achieve by positioning the private sector as the primary engine of economic growth while aiming to create 1 million jobs by 2033.

The country's priorities are therefore becoming increasingly clear. Continued structural reforms, improved competitiveness, digital transformation, investment in high-value industries, technology, renewable energy, logistics and human capital will determine whether Jordan can sustain this momentum and continue moving up the global economic ladder.

King Abdullah has consistently emphasised that sustainable

economic progress depends not on temporary measures but on long-term structural reforms that strengthen productivity, improve the investment climate and empower the private sector. The latest World Bank classification reflects the cumulative impact of these ongoing efforts rather than a single year's economic performance.

Ultimately, Jordan's transition to the upper-middle-income category should be viewed as a beginning rather than a destination. The classification is an international vote of confidence in the country's economic trajectory, but its real value will be measured by Jordan's ability to convert that confidence into productive investment, sustainable growth, higher incomes and better living standards for its citizens.

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Economic classifications do not transform economies on their own. They simply recognise progress already achieved. The real challenge — and opportunity — lies in ensuring that this international recognition becomes a catalyst for the next stage of Jordan's economic development.

The writer is professor of Financial Accounting, Al al-Bayt University, and Member of the Jordan Economic and Social Council

# BUSINESS

Monday, July 6, 2026



The logo of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries is seen at its headquarters in Vienna on June 3, 2023

## OPEC+ raises quotas again as Middle East calms

BERLIN (AFP) — Seven OPEC+ members decided on Sunday to again raise oil production quotas as Gulf countries reel from the Middle East war.

Ministers from key OPEC+ countries Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Algeria, and Oman met virtually on Sunday and "decided to implement a production adjustment of 188 thousand barrels per day", a statement from the organisation said, adding that "this adjustment will be implemented in August 2026".

Gulf countries had to cut output after the near-paralysis of the Strait of Hormuz orchestrated by Iran during the war in the Middle East, which blocked their oil exports for several months.

Between the first quarter of 2026 and May, combined production by Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait — three of the seven countries raising their quotas — fell by some six million barrels per day, OPEC data have shown.

But on June 17, Tehran and Washington signed a Memorandum of Understanding, committing to removing obstacles to maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz for the duration of talks following the signing of the Memorandum.

Giovanni Staunovo, a commodity analyst at the Swiss bank UBS, told AFP that "for now, production is probably still below" OPEC+'s targets.

Since the Memorandum

dum of Understanding was signed, ship transport in the region has slowly recovered, with oil prices dropping sharply to levels comparable to those seen before the war in anticipation of a gradual return to normal.

Oil shipments through this shipping lane may already have exceeded ten million barrels a day, according to a US official quoted by the Bloomberg agency.

'Assuming shipping continues to normalise, July will show an improvement with August probably being the month where the pickup accelerates'

But the oil currently leaving the strait has up to now been sitting in tankers or storage facilities, said Saxo Bank analyst Ole Hansen, adding that "shut-in production takes time to restart".

"Assuming shipping continues to normalise, July will show an improvement with August probably being the month where the pickup accelerates," he told AFP.

### Cohesion at stake

"For next year, everybody is anticipating a surplus," Jorge Leon, an analyst at Rystad Energy, told AFP.

Rebuilding inventories that countries drew down during the conflict should help absorb the additional supply initially, but producers may face a strong downward pressure on prices later on.

And OPEC+, already weakened by the departure of the United Arab Emirates from the group in May, will have to manage sliding prices while members will push for production increases.

Iraq, in particular, has asked the cartel to raise production quotas to make up for the shortfall it incurred during the war in the Middle East, the Iraqi Oil Ministry said in late June.

But Hansen said the need for a higher quota "is not imminent" as production volumes are still far from their pre-conflict levels.

"Iraq's request may become part of the 2027 capacity review, where production baselines will be examined," he added.

At the end of the year, OPEC+ is indeed due to reassess members' quotas based on their ability to produce more, which could become a thorny issue.

## ACC export value hits JD768m in H1 2026

Value of exports covered by certificates of origin rises by 25.2% in H1 2026

AMMAN (JT) — The value of exports covered by certificates of origin issued by the Amman Chamber of Commerce (ACC) increased by 25.2 per cent in the first half of 2026 compared with the same period last year.

According to chamber data, exports documented through these certificates reached around JD768 million, compared with JD613 million in the first half of 2025.

The number of certificates issued also rose by 12 per cent, reaching 20,548 certificates, compared with 18,354 during the same period last year, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The data showed that Iraq ranked first among destination markets by value, with around JD323 million across 1,343 certificates. Switzerland followed with JD92 million and 23 certificates, while the United Arab Emirates recorded about JD57 million across 4,917 certificates.

Saudi Arabia followed with JD43 million, and



Photo by Ilham Darwazah

The value of exports covered by certificates of origin issued by the Amman Chamber of Commerce increases by 25.2 per cent in the first half of 2026

Egypt with JD40 million.

Exports included several categories, led by foreign-origin goods valued at around JD361 million, followed by agricultural products at JD103 million, industrial products at JD99 million, Arab-origin goods

at around JD79 million, and other items.

A certificate of origin is a document used in international trade to verify the country in which goods are produced, manufactured or processed. It is used by customs authorities to

determine tariff treatment and confirm product origin.

The ACC issues certificates of origin for Jordanian agricultural, animal and natural resource products, as well as for reexported foreign goods and imported

goods traded locally under specific conditions.

It also issues certificates for Jordanian industrial products based on certified documentation confirming origin, in accordance with applicable regulations, Petra reported.

## Iran envoy says friendly nations to get 'special' Hormuz fee treatment

BELJING (AFP) — Iran's ambassador to China has said that new fees will be charged to ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz, an idea rejected by Washington, while adding that "friendly" nations would receive special treatment.

The initial agreement between Iran and the United States to end the recent conflict reportedly stipulated that commercial vessels would transit the strait free of charge for 60 days, although arrangements beyond that period remain unclear.

Iranian Ambassador Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli told the World Peace Forum in Beijing that Tehran was working in "collaboration and cooperation" with Oman on "new arrangements" for the strategic waterway.



AFP photo

Desh Garima, an Indian-flagged tanker carrying crude oil that transited through the Strait of Hormuz, is seen docked at an offloading terminal along the coast in Mumbai on April 30

"As a country where the Hormuz is part of its territorial waters, we will definitely charge service fees,"

Rahmani Fazli said in translated remarks, stressing that such payments would not constitute a "toll".

He said the proposed framework would focus on "guaranteeing the security of passage through the Strait of

Hormuz, supervision of the passage of vessels and also addressing environmental consequences arising from the large number of ships".

"We will definitely consider special treatment for the countries that were friendly to us and stood by us during difficult times," he added.

The Strait of Hormuz typically carries around one-fifth of the world's crude oil and liquefied natural gas. It was partially disrupted during the recent Middle East conflict, contributing to a spike in global energy prices.

Iran later lifted its blockade of the strait following the initial agreement with the US to end the conflict. Negotiations on a longer-term settlement remain ongoing.

## Iraq signs deal with oil services giant Halliburton

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq's government and US oil services giant Halliburton signed a deal on Sunday to manage two oil fields in the country's south, as Baghdad looks to boost production.

The state-owned "Basra Oil Company has signed a joint management contract with the American company Halliburton for the Bin Omar and Sinbad oil fields" in Basra province, said the Iraqi oil ministry's media office.

Iraqi Oil Minister Bassem Khodeir said the deal with Halliburton aligns with the government's plans to "boost oil and gas production capacity".

He added that Iraq aims to increase oil out-



AFP file photo

Gas flares burn atop processing towers at an oil field facility in Basra, Iraq

put at the Bin Omar field by 150,000 barrels per day (bpd) within five years and produce 300 million cubic feet of associated gas per day.

Production at the Sinbad oil field should increase by 80,000 to

100,000bpd.

Baghdad's new government led by Prime Minister Ali Al Zaidi has urged the OPEC oil cartel to increase Iraq's oil production quota, taking into account the damage done to its industry from

past conflicts and the recent Middle East war.

Like other oil producers, Iraq, a founding member of OPEC, was greatly affected by the US-Iran conflict, as it is hugely dependent on oil exports, which make up about 90 per cent of its budget revenues.

The new contract with Halliburton was signed ahead of Zaidi's visit to Washington later this month.

Zaidi, who only recently took office with the blessing of the United States, hopes to attract more US investment to Iraq, which urgently needs to revive its economy, especially after revenue losses caused by the halt of oil exports during the Middle East war.

## AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Sunday amounted to JD9.3 million spread over 4.8 million shares that traded through 3,724 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 1.18 per cent, closing at 3851.98 points.

Out of 96 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 44 companies rose while the share price of another 25 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Jordan Phosphate Mines by 5.18 per cent, Jordanian Company for Developing and Financial Investment by 5 per cent, Jordan Vegetable Oil Industries by 4.96 per cent, Arab Potash by 4.87 per cent, and Al Tajamout for Catering and Housing Company Plc. by 4.55 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Sheba Renewable Energy by 4.98 per cent, Amwaj Properties by 4.55 per cent, Real Estate and Investment Portfolio Company by 4.50 per cent, Al Dawliyah for Hotels and Malls by 4.26 per cent, and First Finance by 3.17 per cent.

بورصة عمان  
Amman Stock Exchange

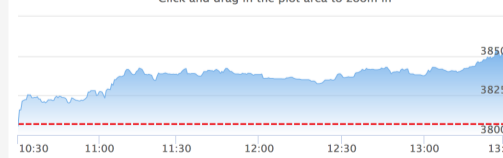
### THE MARKET TODAY

ASE Index: ↑ 3851.98 1.18% July 05, 2026

Live Data

Historical Data

Click and drag in the plot area to zoom in

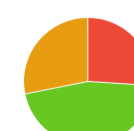


### DAILY SUMMARY

Regular Market

OTC Market

Trading Value (JDs)	9,269,974
Trading volume	4,776,810
No. of Transactions	3,724
No. of Securities	96



# France shows it can ditch flair and win a different way in World Cup quest

By Andy Scott  
Agence France-Presse



France's forward #10 Kylian Mbappe celebrates with teammates after winning the 2026 World Cup round of 16 football match between Paraguay and France at the Philadelphia Stadium in Philadelphia on Sunday

as up to now they have played only one opponent in the top 30 in the FIFA rankings. That was Senegal, who is 15th.

Now they must take on seventh-ranked Morocco, who represent a different level of opposition altogether.

It will be a fascinating remake of the 2022 semifinal in Qatar which France won 2-0. The presence in the Moroccan ranks of gifted French-born midfielder Ayyoub Bouaddi, who captained the France Under-21 team as recently as March before switching allegiance, adds to the intrigue.

But France has nothing to fear. They have now reached the quarter-finals in four straight World Cups under Deschamps.

In his first major tournament, they lost to eventual winners Germany in the last eight in Brazil in 2014, before they won the trophy in Russia in 2018 and reached another final four years later.

Saturday's hard-earned victory at Lincoln Financial Field was the 19th at a World Cup for Deschamps.

He has already overtaken West Germany's Helmut Schoen as the coach with the most wins at the tournament overall, and intends to keep the run going all the way to the final on July 19.

After all, the main thing France has been good at under Deschamps is winning.

PHILADELPHIA — Tournament favourites France will go into their World Cup quarter-final against Morocco with their confidence further bolstered by the manner in which they saw off Paraguay on Saturday, as Didier Deschamps' team showed they are happy to "get their hands dirty" as well as play brilliant football.

This World Cup so far has been lit up by the return of French flair, with Les Bleus possibly performing better than they have at any major tournament since Zinedine Zidane inspired them to glory at Euro 2000.

Deschamps has had a richly successful 14-year reign in charge, but he is usually a pragmatic coach who prioritises substance over style.

That has changed over the last few weeks in the United States, as he appears to have decided he can hand the keys to his many brilliant attacking players in his last tournament before stepping down.

But after scoring 13 goals across first four matches, they had to ditch the flair and win in a different way in their 1-0 last-16 victory against Paraguay on Saturday.

It took a Kylian Mbappe penalty in the 70th minute in Philadelphia to settle a niggly contest in which

Paraguay set out to put everyone behind the ball and wind up their opponents.

Somehow the South Americans escaped without a single booking from a game described by French sports daily L'Equipe as "a fight that you shouldn't show to your children".

"If we have to get our hands dirty, we'll get our hands dirty. We've no problem with that," Mbappe said after the game, which was also

played in sweltering conditions with late afternoon temperatures of 38°C.

The lesson for their future opponents is that you can try to frustrate France and get under their skin, but it might not work as a strategy.

"Their main quality is fighting, but we showed that the France team is not only about playing nice football. Anyone who wants to go to war with us, now they know what to expect," said

Rayan Cherki, the Manchester City forward who came on as a late substitute.

### Morocco challenge

Bradley Barcola said he had "never played in a game like that, getting kicked and pushed in the back that often".

France has won all five games at this World Cup, led by captain Mbappe who is level with Lionel Messi as the tournament's top scorer with seven

goals.

Their attacking firepower is extraordinary, but their defence is also formidable, with the pace and power of William Saliba and Dayot Upamecano in front of a top-class goalkeeper in Mike Maignan.

Les Bleus have conceded just two goals, one a late consolation in their opening match against Senegal and one against Norway.

Nobody in the French camp can be getting carried away, however,

### CRICKET

#### Australia holds England to 150-4 in Women's T20 World Cup final

LONDON (AFP) — England captain Nat-Sciver Brunt and Freya Kemp shared an unbroken stand of 80 as the hosts were held to 150-4 by Australia in the Women's T20 World Cup final at Lord's on Sunday. Sciver-Brunt finished on 58 not out, following her match-winning 75 in Thursday's 40-run semi-final win over South Africa, with Kemp unbeaten on 44. The pair came together with England faltering at 70-4, with Sciver-Brunt completing a 45-ball fifty and Kemp facing just 28 balls. England's total looked at least 20 runs shy of a truly challenging target given Australia had chased down 171 to knock India out in a group-stage game at Lord's last weekend. But England, bidding for a first major global trophy since winning the 2017 50-over World Cup final at Lord's, were still in the game, with six-time champions Australia having to chase on a sluggish pitch where strokeplay was difficult. Australia soon had a breakthrough after captain Sophie Molineux won the toss on a hot and sunny day in northwest London. Hamilton had Amy Jones edging to gully with just her second ball — the left-arm quick's first wicket of the tournament. Moments later Sciver-Brunt, who had taken son Theo onto the outfield with her for the pre-match anthem, stylishly covered her first ball, from Hamilton, for four.

### RUGBY

#### Australia's Schmidt rues missed opportunities as Wilson defends Donaldson

SYDNEY (AFP) — Coach Joe Schmidt says Australia must be better at taking their opportunities as players rallied around Ben Donaldson after he missed a crucial late penalty against Ireland. The Wallabies suffered a gut-wrenching 33-31 defeat to Andy Farrell's men in Sydney on Saturday after a rollicking 10-try Nations Championship Test that saw the lead change hands seven times. "We had two chances to close it out in the end, sometimes they don't come off, but I was really pleased with how we started the game," Schmidt said. "Right from the very start, getting that early try was important, but we know that they convert very well from any position they get inside the 22. So what we couldn't do is what we did in the second half and give them so many opportunities to come into our 22. We have to get better at taking those opportunities because you've got to work so hard to get them."

### FAMILY FLAVOURS MAGAZINE

THE JORDAN TIMES

**LIFE**

# The spirit of swicy

## Natural delights

By Sheela Sheth

Culinary Herb Enthusiast/Family Flavours magazine

Jordan was a feast for the senses. From its cinematic landscapes and rich cultural heritage to the warmth of its people, every moment celebrated flavour, tradition and hospitality during my many years living here.

It was the perfect setting to inspire The Spirit of Swicy, my monthly column for Family Flavours magazine, where I explore the latest trends shaping the world of food and beverages.

This month, the spot-

light is on date-based drinks infused with herbs; a trend driven by growing health consciousness, global flavour fusion



and continuous innovation in the beverage industry.

As consumers seek more natural alternatives to refined sugar, dates are taking centre stage.



Brands are increasingly replacing sugar syrups with date syrup, prized for its rich caramel

notes, natural sweetness and nutritional benefits, including antioxidants, minerals and gut-friendly properties that support overall well-being.

### A powerhouse of health

Dates have a low glycaemic index, are naturally rich in fibre and make an excellent alternative when cravings for something sweet strike.

They also contain natural sugars and prebiotic compounds that help nourish beneficial gut bacteria.

There is also renewed interest in traditional beverages made from fresh date palm sap.

Naturally rich in essential minerals, they provide potassium to support heart and muscle function, magnesium and calcium for healthy nerves and bones, and phosphorus for cell repair.

They also contain Vitamin B6, traces of Vitamins A and K and antioxidants that help combat oxidative stress and support overall well-being.

### Beauty burst

Spices such as thyme, sumac and sesame, all rich in bioactive plant compounds, are blended with dates to create gentle exfoliants and nourishing face masks.

Date seed oil and date fruit extracts have also become valued ingredients in a wide range of skincare products.

Research suggests that date extracts may help improve skin hydration, elasticity and overall appearance.

They are increasingly incorporated into face creams, serums and sun-care formulations for their antioxidant and skin-conditioning properties.

Did you know that discarded date seeds are also being upcy-

clad into sustainable cosmetic ingredients, giving new life to what was once considered agricultural waste?



### Why not enhance

the rich flavour of dates with fizzy ginger ale, a pinch of salt, black pepper and cumin to create a refreshing summer swicy cooler, finished with a sprig of fresh mint?

Here's my recipe: Lime date delight Serves 2 persons and it takes just 5 minutes to prepare!

### Ingredients

- 4 tbs date syrup
- 1 can ginger ale
- ½ tsp pepper powder
- ½ tsp cumin powder
- ½ tsp salt
- A sprig of mint

### Directions

Mix all the ingredients in a shaker with ice cubes and serve.

### Did you know?

Dates get their name from the Greek word Daktylos which means finger. And date pits are used to make soap and eyeliners.

The date palm tree is the national symbol of Saudi Arabia.

Egypt is the largest producer of dates in the world followed by Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Tunisia, Pakistan, Sudan and Oman.

You can contact Sheela Sheth at reply2sheela@yahoo.com

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