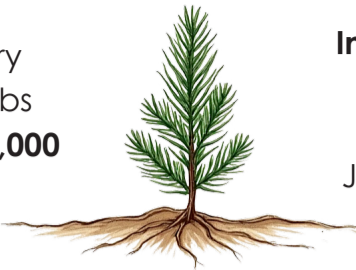




ENVIRONMENT

Agriculture Ministry launches green jobs project to plant 300,000 forest seedlings



CONFERENCE

Industry minister invites British companies to participate in Jordan-EU Investment Conference



JOINT VENTURE

Jordanian, Saudi firms launch pharmaceutical investment partnership



WORLD CUP

FIFA lashes 'unfounded allegations' after Argentina-Egypt clash



Friday-Saturday, July 10-11, 2026 | Muharram 25-26, 1448 Hijri

King participates in Sun Valley economic forum



HRH Crown Prince Hussein, the Regent, visits the Public Security Directorate's Forensic Laboratories Department on Thursday

Regent visits PSD Forensic Laboratories Department

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein, the Regent, visited the Public Security Directorate's Forensic Laboratories Department on Thursday. His Royal Highness was briefed on the department's operations, including its use of state-of-the-art equipment and technologies to examine and analyse forensic evidence, as well as its vital role in supporting investigations and bolstering the criminal justice system, according to a Royal Court statement.

Continued on page 5

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah participated in the annual Sun Valley economic forum in Idaho, United States.

The forum, which addresses key global political developments and the resulting economic challenges, is being held with the participation of leading international and US political, economic and media figures, according to a Royal Court statement.

His Majesty on Wednesday held several meetings on the sidelines of the forum with senior executives and representatives of major international companies operating in various sectors, including engineering and technology, artificial intelligence, investment, entrepreneurship, healthcare, chemicals and mining. The meetings focused on investment opportunities in priority sectors, and the potential for establishing strategic partnerships and cooperation opportunities between Jordan and these institutions.



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

His Majesty King Abdullah participates in the annual Sun Valley economic forum in Idaho, United States, and holds meetings with senior executives and representatives of major international companies to discuss potential cooperation opportunities with Jordan

Director of the Office of His Majesty Alaa Batayneh also attended the meetings.

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Air defences shoot down 8 Iranian missiles — JAF

AMMAN (JT) — Air-defence systems intercepted and shot down eight missiles launched from Iran towards Jordanian territory on Thursday, according to a military source at the General Command of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF).

The source said, in a JAF statement, that the interceptions resulted in the fall of missile debris in several areas but caused no casualties or property damage.

The military source said that JAF is closely monitoring ongoing regional developments and remains at the highest level of operational readiness to protect the Kingdom's airspace, defend its sovereignty and ensure the safety of its territory. The statement stressed that the armed forces will not allow any violation of Jordanian airspace by any party. Minister of Government Communication and Government



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Spokesperson Mohammad Momani said that air raid sirens were activated after missiles launched from Iran entered the Kingdom's airspace, adding that the projectiles were all intercepted.

Momani also said that the Public Security Directorate sounded the sirens shortly after the airspace breach, adding that the missiles were successfully intercepted and neutralised.

He also said that the army remains on high alert and are prepared to respond to any threat facing the Kingdom, with efforts focused on protecting national security and ensuring the safety of citizens and residents.

Continued on page 5

Jordan, Germany sign 684 million euros development cooperation package to support economic priorities

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan and Germany have signed the official minutes of their bilateral development cooperation talks, allocating a 684 million euros package to support priority development projects aligned with the Kingdom's economic and public sector reform agendas.

The meetings were chaired by Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Zeina Toukan and Annette Chammas, head of the Middle East division at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, with German Ambassador to Jordan Bertram von Moltke also in attendance.

Representatives from Jordanian ministries, the German Agency for International Cooperation, the German Development Bank, and the German Federal Institute for Geosciences

and Natural Resources reviewed ongoing programmes and discussed future priorities for bilateral cooperation, according to a Planning Ministry statement.

The latest talks reflect an evolution in Jordanian-German cooperation...

The funding will support projects under Jordan's Economic Modernisation Vision (2026-2029) and the public sector modernisation roadmap. Separ-

rate agreements will be signed and announced once individual projects are finalised, according to the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.

The assistance package will finance sector development programmes through the state budget, in addition to projects in water and sanitation, education, vocational and technical training, and private sector development. It will also support initiatives addressing the needs of Syrian refugees hosted by Jordan, particularly in the education sector.

The latest talks reflect an evolution in Jordanian-German cooperation, moving beyond traditional project-based financing towards broader support for economic priorities and sector policies.

Continued on page 5

Trump orders new strikes on Iran over attacks on shipping in Hormuz

TEHRAN (AFP) — US President Donald Trump ordered new strikes on Iran on Wednesday and warned of "much worse" if Tehran continues to attack vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, the vital oil shipping channel.

Iran state media reported explosions in multiple locations along the southern Iranian coast after US Central Command announced a new wave of strikes.

Warplanes were heard over Kish Island and explosions rocked the port cities of Bandar Abbas, Konarak and Chabahar, part of which lost electricity, Iran's official news agency IRNA reported.

"This is in retribution for yesterday's bombing of ships by Iran," Trump said in a post on Truth Social. "If it happens again, it will get much worse!"

While ordering retaliation against Tehran, the US president said earlier on Wednesday that he expected the latest military flare-up to end quickly and left the door open to more talks.

Continued on page 5

One injured in latest Iran attack on Kuwait — ministry

KUWAIT CITY, Kuwait (AFP) — At least one person was injured on Tuesday, Kuwait's defence ministry said, following the latest Iranian attack on the country. "The injured individual is receiving the necessary medical care and is in stable condition," Defence Ministry spokesman Staff Col. Saud Abdulaziz Al Atwan said, adding that four missiles and 10 drones had been "successfully intercepted and neutralised" at dawn.

Explosions were heard over the Bahraini capital of Manama on Thursday morning and air raid sirens sounded for a third time after Iran's military said it



AFP photo

Vehicles drive along a highway on the outskirts of Kuwait City on Wednesday. Kuwait condemned on Wednesday Iranian attacks on its soil, which it said undermined efforts to de-escalate tensions in the region

had targeted sites in the Gulf kingdom as well as in Kuwait and Qatar. AFP journalists heard

blasts in Bahrain's capital on Thursday morning and Kuwait said it was responding to hos-

tile missile and drone attacks.

Continued on page 5

Palestinian legislative vote set for November 28 — presidential decree

RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas issued a decree on Thursday setting legislative elections for November 28, which if they take place, would mark the first such vote in two decades.

The last legislative elections in the Palestinian territories were held in 2006, when Hamas won, defeating Abbas's Fateh Party, which had previously dominated Palestinian politics.

As a result, the Pal-

estian Legislative Council, which is the parliament of Abbas's Palestinian Authority, has not met since 2007.

"The presidential decree calls on the Palestinian people in Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to participate in free and direct legislative elections to elect members of the Palestinian Legislative Council on the date specified," the official Wafa news agency reported, citing the decree.

Continued on page 5



Director-General of the Department of Statistics Haider Frieht co-chairs the closing conference of the Euro-Mediterranean Statistical Cooperation Programme in Vienna with the European Union, which concluded on Thursday

## Jordan, EU review progress in Euro-Mediterranean statistical cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Director-General of the Department of Statistics Haider Frieht co-chaired the closing conference of the Euro-Mediterranean Statistical Cooperation Programme (MEDSTAT V) in Vienna with the European Union, which concluded on Thursday.

The three-day conference brought together heads of national statistical offices and coordinators from the EU's southern countries, along with representatives from Eurostat and international partners, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The conference aimed to assess national and regional statistical achievements since the launch of MEDSTAT V, as participants fo-

cus on methodologies to improve data quality, standardisation and international comparability.

Frieht participated in discussions on integrating artificial intelligence into statistical production to increase data accuracy.

He also addressed ways to enhance the readiness of southern Mediterranean statistical systems for modern digital technology, stressing the upgrade of administrative records to replace costly traditional surveys.

On the sidelines of the event, Frieht met with Eurostat directors and heads of statistical agencies to exchange expertise.

During a session with

Director of Standards Dissemination and Cooperation at Eurostat Jean-Pierre Poncelet, participants discussed the Mediterranean Charter and its action plan.

Frieht stressed the key role of official statistics in supporting and monitoring regional initiatives.

The meetings concluded with a review of future cooperation initiatives with southern Mediterranean countries, which include the European Statistics Code of Practice and the Euro-Mediterranean Statistical Cooperation Strategy for 2028-2034, highlighting the importance of continued partnership to build a sustainable statistical system.

## Agriculture Ministry launches green jobs project to plant 300,000 forest seedlings

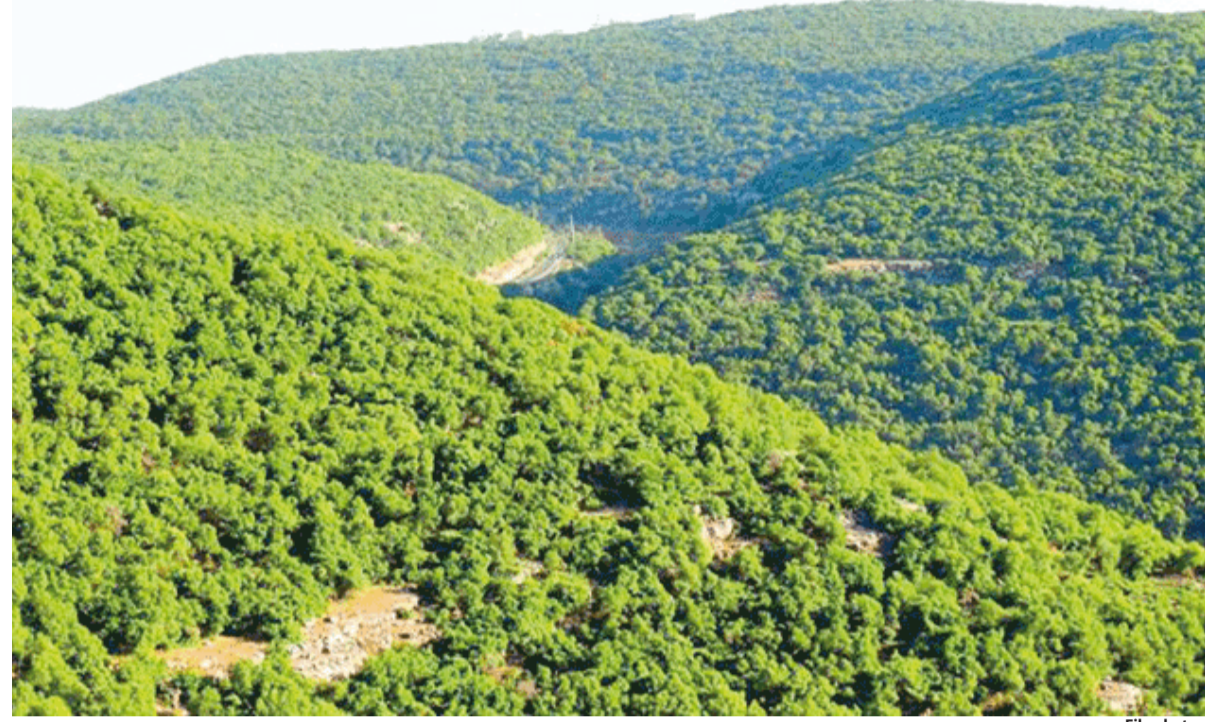
AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Agriculture on Thursday launched the Green Jobs Project to plant 300,000 forest seedlings over four years and create 4,300 direct job opportunities.

Minister of Agriculture Saeb Khraisat, in the presence of representatives of the German Development Bank (KfW) and the company implementing the project, said that 30 per cent of the jobs will be allocated to women and 6 per cent to persons with disabilities, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He said that the project aims to support sustainable development and create economic and social impact in local communities.

The first phase will begin with afforestation work in Irbid's Koura and Bani Kinanah districts, specifically in Rahmeh and Yarmouk, as well as the Deir Alla and Iqaba nurseries, before expanding to other locations in later stages.

Khraisat said that afforestation projects are a key pillar of water security, helping protect soil, reduce



The Ministry of Agriculture on Thursday launches the Green Jobs Project to plant 300,000 forest seedlings over four years and create 4,300 direct job opportunities

erosion and improve land capacity to retain rainwater.

He added that expanding forest areas is an important tool for addressing climate change by increasing carbon absorption, improving biodiversity, reducing desertification and strengthening ecosystem resilience.

The minister said

that the project goes beyond tree planting by empowering local communities, especially in rural areas, through decent employment opportunities, specialised vocational training and career paths that support long-term job sustainability and improve national expertise in for-

est management and afforestation.

He said that the ministry is working with donors and implementing partners to develop integrated plans to ensure the sustainability of afforested sites through maintenance, monitoring, protection programmes and "stronger" local community participation.

Khraisat highlighted the ministry's commitment to providing all necessary support for the project, mobilising the resources outlined in the project agreement and addressing any obstacles to implementation to achieve its environmental, water security, climate adaptation and rural development goals.

## Labour Ministry, ILO sign agreement to support decent work in garments

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Labour and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on Thursday signed a letter of intent to activate immediate transitional technical cooperation and launch an 18-month development cooperation programme aimed at supporting decent work in the garment and textiles sector.

The agreement follows a request by the government for technical assistance from ILO to enhance labour governance, worker protection and sustainable compliance within the garment industry, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

The government has allocated financial resources for the initiative and coordinated its framework with employers, workers' organisations and relevant national institutions.

The immediate three-month programme begins this month, running in parallel with



The agreement follows a request by the government for technical assistance from the International Labour Organisation to enhance labour governance, worker protection and sustainable compliance within the garment industry

the longer-term programme scheduled to span from August 2026 to January 2028.

The initiative will support workplace compliance and labour inspection, the prevention and addressing of forced labour, fair recruitment practices, the protection of non-Jordanian workers,

access to remedy, and social dialogue within the garment sector.

Under the immediate intervention, the ILO will support national efforts to enhance worker grievance mechanisms, assist a worker welfare and support centre and build the capacity of workers'

organisations.

It will also bolster a labour inspection initiative focused on identifying high-risk areas and assist the Ministry of Labour in establishing a national coordination mechanism.

Measures include supporting the ministry's "Himaya" (Protection) e-complaint platform, engaging with stakeholders including development partners and civil society organisations reviewing recruitment and labour mobility practices, disseminating knowledge products on forced labour prevention, conducting structured dialogues with international buyers, and assessing forced labour risks to design an early warning mechanism for the sector.

Under this transitional technical cooperation, special attention will be given to supporting the government's response regarding manufacturers affected by recent Withhold Release Or-

ders issued by the US Customs and Border Protection.

Minister of Transport and Acting Minister of Labour Nidal Qatamin said that the signing of the letter of intent reflects the government's commitment to moving "swiftly, transparently, and in partnership with all stakeholders to safeguard workers' rights and maintain trust in Jordan's garment sector".

Qatamin noted that Jordan has a "strong" track record of cooperation with ILO and its social partners, stressing that the Ministry of Labour is determined to address current challenges in the garment sector with the required seriousness and responsibility.

ILO Regional Director for Arab States Ruba Jaradat welcomed the government's initiative, reaffirming the organisation's commitment to supporting national institutions and social partners.

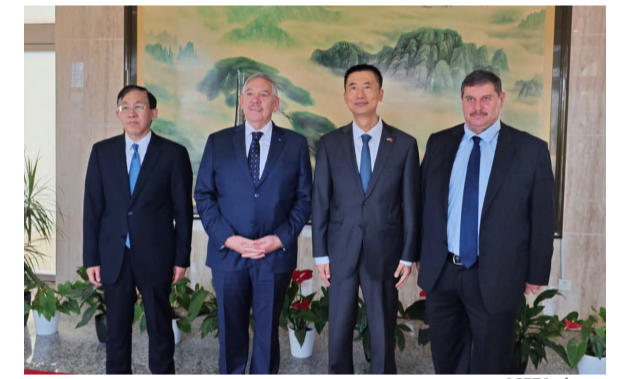
## ASEZA, Chinese officials discuss economic, smart cities cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Chief Commissioner of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) Shadi Majali on Thursday met with Chinese Ambassador to Jordan Chen Chuandong to discuss expanding economic and investment cooperation in smart cities, digital transformation, and logistics and tourism.

During the meeting, aimed to enhance Jordanian-Chinese ties and open new avenues for cooperation, Majali said that Aqaba's competitive investment environment, modern infrastructure and strategic location have helped position it as a regional hub for investment and strategic partnerships, according to an ASEZA statement.

He also stressed ASEZA's commitment to expanding cooperation with China in priority sectors, particularly logistics, industry, tourism and digital transformation.

Chuandong highlighted Aqaba's impor-



Chief Commissioner of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority Shadi Majali and Chinese Ambassador to Jordan Chen Chuandong on Thursday discuss expanding economic and investment cooperation

ance as Jordan's only seaport and a key logistics hub in the region.

He also voiced China's commitment to expanding cooperation in tourism, logistics, industry, education and environmental protection.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Majali met with a delegation from the Beijing Municipal People's Government, headed by Deputy Secretary-General Shen Binhua, to discuss ASEZA's 2024-2028 strategic plan, Aqaba's master plan and the city's

experience in urban planning, data management and digital services.

Binhua commended Aqaba's development experience and expressed Beijing's interest in exchanging expertise and visits to explore cooperation in smart cities and digital transformation.

ASEZA Commissioner for Infrastructure and Urban Affairs Mutasem Hindawi along with officials from both sides attended the meetings.

## KAFD launches new Tariqi project to boost youth employability

AMMAN (JT) — The King Abdullah II Fund for Development (KAFD) has launched a new edition of its "Tariqi" (My Path) project, aimed at enhancing Jordanian youth's competitiveness and employability through skills development, practical training and access to job opportunities in promising sectors.

The project's training tracks this year begin with one of the fast-growing digital sectors: Artificial intelligence-powered user experience and user interface design (UX/UI Design powered by AI), providing participants with technical and professional skills needed to enter the labour market, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

During the launching ceremony, KAFD Director-General Samer Mufleh said that the fund continues to invest in Jordanian

youth through specialised projects that address current and future labour market needs, improve their professional and technical skills and enhance their competitiveness, enabling them to secure quality jobs in high-growth sectors.

He added that the efforts align with the Economic Modernisation Vision, which focuses on investing in human capital and preparing national talent capable of keeping pace with rapid labour market transformations.

Mufleh said that the "Tariqi" project will implement four training tracks this year across diverse "promising" sectors, based on labour market demands and future job requirements.

On its scope, the current track targets graduates in graphic design, visual communication and design, computer sci-

ence and software engineering, aged 21-27 from across Jordan.

Participants will receive integrated training sessions on life skills development, specialised technical training in AI-powered UX/UI design, and on-the-job training at host companies to enhance their readiness and expand employment opportunities in the sector.

Since 2015, "Tariqi" is among the strategic projects implemented by KAFD in partnership with The King's Trust International and through Business Development Centre.

Since its launch, the project has trained 1,124 young men and women, with 596 securing employment opportunities, reflecting its role in linking training programmes with labour market needs and improving youth employment prospects across sectors.

## JCD, private sector discuss trade facilitation, economic competitiveness

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Customs Department (JCD) and private sector representatives on Thursday discussed ways to strengthen their partnership, enhance trade facilitation and boost the competitiveness of the national economy during a Partnership Council meeting hosted by the Irbid Chamber of Commerce.

The meeting brought together Jordan Chamber of Commerce President Khalil Haj Tawfiq, JCD Director-General Brig. Gen. Ahmad Akalik, Irbid Chamber of Commerce President Mohammad Shouha, as well as representatives of chambers of commerce and industry, the Jordan Free Zones Investors Commission, the Syndicate of Owners of Clearance and Cargo Transport Compa-



The Jordan Customs Department and private sector representatives on Thursday discuss ways to strengthen their partnership, enhance trade facilitation and boost the competitiveness of the national economy

nies and other relevant institutions.

The meeting was held as part of JCD's ongoing efforts to enhance institutional communication and build effective partnerships with the private sector, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Shouha highlighted

the importance of continued cooperation and coordination between JCD and the private sector to address challenges and support trade and investment.

Discussions focused on key priorities for the business community, including strengthening

strategic partnerships, enhancing economic competitiveness, advancing digital transformation and innovation in customs operations, developing risk management and compliance systems, expanding the Authorised Economic Operator Programme, known locally as the Golden List, supporting investment and promoting green trade and sustainability.

During the meeting, JCD also presented its institutional culture framework, which aims to promote organisational excellence and improve service delivery.

The framework is based on principles of integrity, transparency, teamwork, innovation, customer focus and partnership with the private sector.

It seeks to enhance operational efficiency, streamline customs procedures, drive continuous improvement and deliver higher-quality services that support the business environment and the national economy.

Private sector representatives praised the JCD's facilitation measures, efficient service delivery and responsiveness to the needs of various sectors.

They also stressed the importance of continuing Partnership Council meetings and strengthening dialogue between JCD and the private sector to address challenges, improve services and procedures, and align with international best practices to support economic growth and competitiveness.

# Industry minister invites British companies to participate in Jordan-EU Investment Conference

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Yaroub Qudah on Thursday called on British companies to participate in the Jordan-EU Investment Conference, scheduled to be held in the Kingdom this November.

Qudah said that the conference serves as a key platform to showcase investment opportunities in Jordan and build strategic partnerships between the Jordanian private sector and its European counterparts, according to Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The minister made the remarks during meetings in London with Chief Executive of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Karim Fatehi and officials from British Expertise International.

The meetings aim to strengthen economic



Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Yaroub Qudah meets in London with Chief Executive of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Karim Fatehi

cooperation, trade, and investment between Jordan and the UK, and to expand private sector

partnerships. Qudah said that Jordan, under the leadership of His Majesty King

Abdullah, continues to implement the Economic Modernisation Vision (EMV) by improving the

investment environment, updating legislation and simplifying procedures to enhance competitiveness.

The minister noted that the Kingdom offers promising opportunities in industry, energy, mining, pharmaceuticals, food industries, IT and logistics.

He added that these opportunities are supported by political and economic stability, a strategic location, qualified human resources, and free trade agreements that grant access to regional and global markets.

He urged British companies to use Jordan as a regional hub for production and export to benefit from Jordan's free trade agreements with the US and Canada.

Qudah also invited them to attend the Jordan-UK Business Forum in London at the end of

this month.

For his part, Fatehi expressed the chamber's commitment to boosting economic cooperation with Jordan and expanding communication channels between the two business communities.

He noted that the British market offers promising opportunities for Jordanian products, especially agricultural goods, due to their quality and competitiveness.

Fatehi stressed the importance of increasing their presence in the UK and encouraging British firms to explore partnerships in Jordan and participate in the November conference.

The two sides also discussed utilising British expertise in priority sectors to support the implementation of Jordan's EMV and enhance investment partnerships between Jordan and the UK.

## AT A GLANCE

King Hussein Bridge crossings reduced amid strike on Israeli side — Interior Ministry



AMMAN (JT) — A strike on the Israeli side disrupted passenger movement across the King Hussein Bridge on Thursday, with only 25 of 50 buses bound for the Palestinian territories able to complete their journeys, according to Interior Ministry Spokesperson Abdul Karim Abu Dalu. Abu Dalu added that the strike, which ran from 10am to 1pm, severely impacted passenger flow. Before the walkout, 12 buses managed to cross into the Palestinian territories, while only 13 crossed after the strike ended, according to an Interior Ministry statement. The spokesperson also noted that the strike left many Palestinian travellers unable to reach their destinations, forcing them to turn back at the bridge. This disruption is expected to impact travel movement over the coming days, the statement said.

Army thwarts drug smuggling attempt using balloons



AMMAN (JT) — The Eastern Military Region command on Thursday morning thwarted an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of narcotics loaded on guided balloons within its area of responsibility. Border guard units detected and intercepted the balloons, bringing them and their cargo down inside Jordanian territory in coordination with military and security agencies and the Anti-Narcotics Department, according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement. The seized items were transferred to the relevant authorities to take the necessary measures. JAF said that it continues to utilise all its capabilities to prevent all forms of infiltration and smuggling to maintain the Kingdom's security and stability.

# Jordan, Germany sign 22.7m euro debt swap agreement to support National Water Carrier Project

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan and Germany on Thursday signed a 22.7 million euros debt swap agreement to support the readiness programme of the National Water Carrier Project, a strategic initiative aimed at enhancing the Kingdom's long-term water security.

The agreement was signed by Minister of Finance Abdelhakim Shibli and Director of the German Development Bank (KfW) office in Jordan Matthias Schmidt-Rosen, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

The signing ceremo-

ny was attended by Deputy Director of the KfW office in Amman Sawsan Aruri, Head of the Jordan Division at the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) Annette Chammas, and Nicolas von Kalm from the German ministry.

Under the agreement, part of Jordan's debt to Germany will be converted into funding for the National Water Carrier Project, bringing Germany's total contribution to the project to 127 million euros and making it one of the initiative's largest international

donors. The funding will support the implementation of the project's readiness programme, which aims to ensure the efficient transport, storage and distribution of de-salinated water.

The National Water Carrier Project, implemented under a public-private partnership framework, is expected to de-salinate 300 million cubic metres of seawater annually through a de-salination plant in Aqaba and transport water to northern governorates through a more than 450 kilometre pipeline



The agreement was signed by Minister of Finance Abdelhakim Shibli and Director of the German Development Bank office in Jordan Matthias Schmidt-Rosen

network. The project also includes pumping stations and renewable

energy facilities, supporting Jordan's water, climate and energy objectives.

The government signed in April the final technical and legal agreement for the Aqaba-Amman Water Desalination and Conveyance Project, which is expected to begin operations in 2030.

The strategic project is set to provide around 40 per cent of the Kingdom's drinking water needs and increase Jordan's annual per capita water share from 60 to 110 cubic metres.

The project will also improve the frequency of water supply across governorates, increasing availability from one day to three days per week.

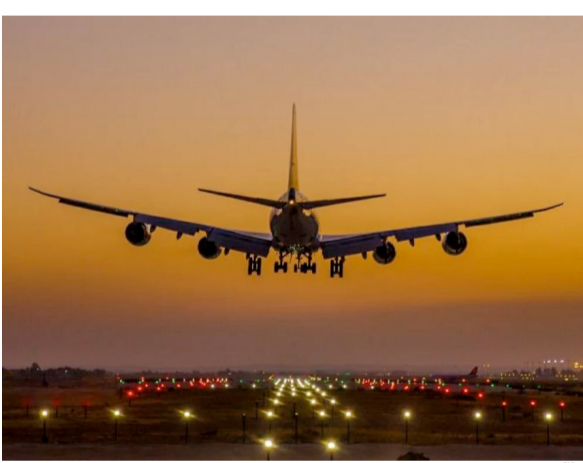
# Kingdom's airspace fully open, operating normally — CARC

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's airspace remains fully open and air traffic is operating normally, Jordan Civil Aviation Regulatory Commission (CARC) Chairman of the Board of Commissioners Captain Daifallah Farajat said on Thursday.

Al Farajat said that the Kingdom's airspace has not been closed, highlighting the continued efficiency of operations and high level of readiness across all civil aviation facilities in the Kingdom.

He added that air traffic over Jordan, as well as flights operating through Queen Alia International Airport, is proceeding smoothly, with close coordination in place to address developments in the region.

Farajat also reaffirmed the commission's commitment to protecting passengers' rights and ensuring they receive the nec-



Jordan Civil Aviation Regulatory Commission Chairman of the Board of Commissioners Captain Daifallah Farajat says that the Kingdom's airspace has not been closed and that air traffic over Jordan is proceeding smoothly

essary assistance and solutions in case of disruptions.

He urged passengers affected by flight delays to contact their airlines directly to request alternative arrangements, stressing that this is "an established right guaranteed under the applicable regulations" published

on the commission's official website.

The CARC chief said the commission continues to closely monitor air traffic and regional developments in coordination with relevant authorities to ensure the highest standards of security and safety for civil aviation in the Kingdom.

# EU, UNICEF launches 37m euros package to support vulnerable children's education in Jordan

AMMAN (JT) — The EU and UNICEF on Thursday launched three initiatives worth 37 million euros to improve learning outcomes, strengthen education services and expand opportunities for vulnerable children and young people across Jordan.

The EU said that the initiatives build on its longstanding partnership with UNICEF and are aimed at reinforcing national social protection systems, enhancing learning outcomes and creating greater opportunities for children to learn and develop, Al Mamlaka TV, reported.

As part of the package, the EU has allocated 4 million euros to the Strengthening National Inclusive Social Protection Systems for the Most Vulnerable Children in Jordan programme, which seeks to build more resilient and sustainable national systems that improve children's learning, social skills and psychoso-



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cial well-being.

The programme is expected to directly benefit 13,736 vulnerable people while supporting evidence-based planning through a budgeting and investment study for UNICEF's Makani programme to help ensure its long-term sustainability.

The EU is also contributing 13 million

euros to the Education and Makani Programme, which aims to expand access to education, learning support and skills development for the most vulnerable children and young people.

The programme will support nearly 30,000 primary and secondary school students during the 2025/2026 academic

year, building on assistance provided to more than 33,500 students in 2024/2025.

It will expand foundational literacy recovery programmes and classroom reading initiatives, provide age-appropriate learning opportunities, early childhood development programmes, life skills training and child protection services benefiting around 9,000 children.

The initiative also aims to help 80 per cent of participating young people improve their digital and financial literacy, supporting their transition into adulthood and the workforce.

It will also enhance access to education by providing transportation services for children, including those with disabilities, strengthening violence prevention initiatives in schools and engaging Syrian volunteers to support educational services.

To help address learning loss, the EU is invest-

ing 20 million euros in the Schools: Teaching for Learning Recovery programme, which aims to improve learning outcomes in Jordan's most disadvantaged schools.

The programme is expected to reach 20,000 children through reading recovery programmes and 40,000 through mathematics interventions, while helping at least 80 per cent of participating students achieve measurable improvements in foundational literacy and numeracy.

It will also train 1,800 teachers in inclusive education, remedial teaching, positive discipline and child protection, while strengthening partnerships between schools, parents and local communities across 300 schools. In addition, the programme will introduce early warning systems to identify students at risk of dropping out and provide timely support to help them remain in education.

# Jordan advances 23 places in global environmental performance index

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan has advanced 23 places in the 2026 Environmental Performance Index (EPI), issued by Yale University, ranking 54th globally out of 177 countries, compared with 77th in the 2024 report, reflecting the Kingdom's continued progress in environmental protection and sustainability.

The achievement is the result of national efforts led by the Ministry of Environment, in partnership

with various ministries, national institutions and international partners, to implement the targets of the Economic Modernisation Vision, particularly the Sustainable Environment driver, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

The Sustainable Environment driver focuses on improving environmental quality, ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources, strengthening climate action and accelerating

the transition towards a green economy, contributing to improved quality of life and enhancing Jordan's competitiveness regionally and internationally.

The EPI is based on three main components: Ecosystem vitality, climate change performance and environmental health, including air quality. It is among the most prominent international indicators measuring countries' progress

towards sustainability goals and the effectiveness of environmental policies.

According to the report, Jordan ranked 108th globally in the ecosystem vitality category and 54th in the climate change performance category, advancing 20 places compared with the previous report.

The Kingdom achieved its best result in the environmental health category, including air

quality, ranking 49th globally after improving by 29 places.

Minister of Environment Ayman Suleiman said that the progress reflects the effectiveness of the environmental policies and reforms implemented by the government, as well as advances in national programmes related to climate action, sustainable resource management, air quality improvement and environmental governance.

He added that these efforts are aligned with the objectives of the Economic Modernisation Vision and Jordan's national and international commitments.

Suleiman said that the EPI is among the priority international indicators monitored by the ministry within the framework of the Economic Modernisation Vision, describing it as a global benchmark for assessing environmental performance and

measuring the impact of national policies on sustainable development.

He stressed that the achievement reflects Jordan's commitment to implementing the Economic Modernisation Vision and strengthening the role of the environment as a key driver of sustainable development.

"Investment in the environment has become a fundamental pillar for supporting economic growth, attracting invest-

ment, improving quality of life and enhancing the Kingdom's ability to address environmental and climate challenges," Suleiman said.

The minister also expressed appreciation to national and international partners, including government institutions, international organisations and supporting entities, for their cooperation and efforts that contributed to the achievement.



Labour MP and challenger for leader of the Labour party, Andy Burnham, laughs as he delivers a speech in Manchester, northern England, on June 29

## Labour leadership contest takes Burnham closer to UK PM's office

LONDON (AFP) — Veteran politician Andy Burnham took another step towards becoming the UK's next prime minister on Thursday as nominations to replace Keir Starmer as Labour leader formally opened.

The 56-year-old is the only Labour member of parliament to have publicly said they are a candidate to succeed Starmer, who announced he was quitting last month.

A steady trickle of MPs entered Labour's parliamentary office on Thursday morning to nominate the person they want to lead Britain's ruling party.

In the absence of a contest, Burnham is expected to be crowned Labour's new leader — and prime minister in waiting — at a special conference on July 17.

Burnham, nicknamed the "King of the North" for winning three consecutive Greater Manchester mayoral elections, would then replace Starmer at 10 Downing Street three days later.

"There's no one else," one Labour MP told AFP on condition of anonymity after casting their vote.

If a contest does take place, then the victor would be announced on August 29 following a ballot of Labour members and affiliated unions.

Burnham's path to Downing Street looked increasingly assured after former armed forces minister Al Carns ruled himself out of the running late Wednesday.

Carns had said he had hoped a leadership contest would give the party the "opportunity for a proper debate".

"But months of internal Labour politics isn't what the country needs right now. We've got to get on with the job," he said, throwing his support behind Burnham.

Burnham needs the support of 81 of Labour's 402 MPs to become a formal candidate, a tally that he will surpass easily.

He vowed in a keynote speech in June to "bring about the biggest rebalancing of power our country has seen".

He pledged to put power "in the hands of the people and places who can use it best".

"We need a new determination to raise living standards of every single person in this land," he added.

"And we must accept that to do that, to fix the economy and the country, we need to change politics and we need to do it now."

Starmer, under pressure for months over policy U-turns and questions about his judgement, announced on June 22 that he was resigning after losing the support of Labour MPs.

His move came after Burnham won a by-election that allowed him to return to parliament to launch a widely expected leadership challenge.

On the day Starmer announced his resignation, Burnham was sworn into parliament, becoming an MP again following his stint between 2001 and 2017.

Afterwards, some 200 Labour MPs feted Burnham during a group photo in Westminster, in a clear sign

that they expect him to take over.

Former health minister Wes Streeting announced he was dropping his intention to run and backing Burnham.

Burnham — seen as slightly to the left of the more centrist Starmer — is Labour's most popular politician, surveys show.

Many MPs feel he is the party's best chance of clawing back support from Nigel Farage's anti-immigrant Reform UK party before the next general election, expected in 2029.

Reform has led Labour in national opinion polls for well over a year, although the gap has narrowed in recent weeks amid questions over Farage's finances.

Burnham has pledged fiscal discipline and to reduce the country's ballooning welfare bill, having already sought to calm markets by committing to the government's current borrowing limits.

And he has also proposed the creation of a "No. 10 North" to coordinate a devolution — a reference to the UK prime minister's address at 10 Downing Street.

One Labour MP, who asked not to be named, said the party was right to "roll the dice" on Burnham, saying "he couldn't be worse than Starmer".

"I hope he's a breath of fresh air," the lawmaker told AFP.

Another, also speaking on condition of anonymity, said he backed Burnham but was concerned that Burnham will only have a few weeks to prepare for government.

# UN launches appeal for nearly \$300 mn in Venezuela quake relief

VENEZUELA (AFP) — The United Nations launched an urgent appeal on Wednesday for nearly \$300 million towards Venezuela earthquake relief operations after the death toll from the disaster rose to more than 3,600 people.

There is huge humanitarian need after one of Latin America's worst earthquake disasters left thousands of people homeless and thousands more still missing. In badly damaged La Guaira, families are still digging for the bodies of loved ones in the rubble.

"Donors are already stepping up, and I pay tribute to them, and I thank them," UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher said during a meeting on the disaster.

Officials were appealing for \$296 million to provide urgently needed aid for 1.3 million people over six months, he said.

Caracas also called Wednesday for the release of frozen assets to help raise funds for the country's recovery.

"We call upon all countries currently holding blocked funds belonging to Venezuela to initiate a plan to release these funds so that they can be used for recovery efforts," Foreign Minister Yvan Gil told the UN meeting.

"There are accounts belonging to the Venezuelan state in various parts of the world that have been frozen as a result of illegal sanctions."

Gil referenced gold held by Britain and finances frozen by the



Men walk along the ruins of collapsed buildings in Caraballeda, La Guaira state, Venezuela, on Wednesday, following powerful earthquakes that struck the region

United States.

The US government has already lifted a number of economic sanctions against Venezuela for four months to facilitate relief operations.

Washington had imposed sweeping economic sanctions on Venezuela, particularly from 2019 onward, in an effort to squeeze the leftist government of president Nicolas Maduro, whom the United States considered illegitimate.

Since US forces toppled Maduro in January, ties with Caracas have improved.

The Trump administration has supported interim president Delcy Rodriguez and has gradually eased sanctions, particularly to facilitate the devel-

opment of Venezuela's huge oil reserves.

Even before the June 24 tragedy, Venezuela struggled with decades of economic turmoil that left infrastructure and health services depleted.

The UN estimates the quakes caused \$6.7 billion in damage — equivalent to 6 per cent Venezuela's GDP.

The international airport serving Caracas was also damaged and is still closed to commercial flights.

Two weeks after the 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes, international rescue teams have mostly ended attempts to find survivors though families continue to scour ruins for bodies.

The government updated the death toll

on Tuesday to 3,685 and said nearly 17,000 were injured.

Nearly 18,000 people have been left homeless by the quakes which flattened scores of residential buildings in La Guaira.

In the Caraballeda sector of La Guaira, three families sat on Wednesday at a corner waiting for donations after searching the area for food, water and other supplies.

They managed to find diapers, bottles of water, toilet paper and some food.

"I don't know how long we will be like this," said Stefani Garate, 26, who used to sell coconut candies on the beach.

"At least today they gave us some rice, spaghetti and sardines."

Genesis Ramirez, 34, a hairdresser, was looking for her nieces in the wreckage of one building.

"How can I not have hope when a baby was pulled alive from this same building? How can I lose faith?" she said. "Until you see the body, you don't lose hope."

Nearly a dozen excavators removed rubble from the OPP housing complex where several towers completely collapsed.

A few people there maintained a vigil, hoping to recover their loved ones' bodies.

The stench of decomposition permeated the air, as a woman wept over a black body bag.

"Now all that's left is body recovery," one soldier said.

## US resumed cash shipments to Baghdad — Iraq gov't spokesperson

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The United States has resumed cash shipments to Iraq after a delay, signalling its support for Prime Minister Ali Al Zaidi's administration, with the premier expected in Washington later this month, a government spokesperson said on Thursday.

Iraq's revenues from oil exports are largely held at the Federal Reserve Bank in New York, under an arrangement reached after the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled former ruler Saddam Hussein.

Under the system,

payments for oil are made into dollar-denominated accounts in the US which are then either used to pay for imports or flow to Iraq as cash.

Earlier this year, Washington suspended the cash transfers to Iraq as it piled pressure on Baghdad to disarm Iran-backed armed groups, which launched hundreds of attacks on US facilities in Iraq during the Middle East war.

Iraqi officials downplayed the issues, saying the dollar shipments had ceased due to the closure of airspace and

the security situation.

Government spokesperson Haidar Al Aboudi told AFP that cash "shipments have resumed some time ago".

"The resumption is a positive indicator" ahead of Zaidi's visit to Washington, Aboudi said, adding "We look at it through the lens of cooperation, coordination, and partnership."

Aboudi said that Zaidi's top priority in Washington would be "the economic partnership with the United States".

In May, a senior US State Department of-

ficial, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the US was looking for "concrete actions" from Zaidi to distance the state from pro-Iran armed groups before resuming cash shipments and security aid to the country.

Zaidi, who only recently took office with the blessing of the United States, has vowed to ensure a state monopoly on weapons and urged armed groups to hand over their weapons to the state.

During his visit to Washington, the first since he took office in

April, Zaidi 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.

Like other Gulf oil producers, Iraq, a founding member of OPEC, was greatly affected by the war.

It is hugely dependent on oil exports, which make up about 90 per cent of its budget revenues, while the vast majority of its crude travels via the Strait of Hormuz.

# Ebola outbreak is 'fastest growing ever' as 600 die

NAIROBI (AFP) — The Ebola outbreak in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is the "fastest growing" ever, African health authorities said on Thursday, as the World Health Organisation (WHO) said it had killed 600 people.

Updated numbers issued by the UN health agency showed there have been 1,759 confirmed cases in DR Congo since the outbreak was declared in mid-May, including 600 confirmed deaths.

"This is the fastest growing Ebola outbreak ever, not only among the previous Bundibugyo outbreaks, but all the different viruses that are causing Ebola," Wessam Mankoula, head of emergency preparedness and response for the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) told reporters.



The deadliest Ebola outbreak — in 2013-16 in West Africa — had 994 cases in the first six weeks, compared with 1,596 in the current one

The deadliest Ebola outbreak — in 2013-16 in West Africa — had 994 cases in the first six weeks, compared with 1,596 in the current one, he said.

"Unfortunately the virus is still ahead of our response. It's mov-

ing faster than deploying the resources to control the situation," Mankoula said, adding that the number of cases was estimated to be doubling every 28 days.

He said \$1.4 billion was needed in total for the disease and human-

itarian response.

"We need to surge our response, and surging our response means financial resources, human resources," Wessam said. "We are urging all partners, donors... to fast-track the disbursement of those

resources."

### One in three patients dying

Ebola spreads through close contact and infected bodily fluids. The current outbreak is caused by Bundibugyo, a rare species that has no approved vaccine or treatment and is believed to have spread for some time before it was detected.

The WHO's figures for the DRC, which come from the health authorities in the vast country, show that the outbreak there has a case fatality rate of 34 per cent.

A total of 285 patients in the DRC have recovered, while 304 suspected cases of the viral haemorrhagic fever are under investigation.

The outbreak in northeastern DRC has hit four provinces but is focused on Ituri

province.

The trial of two potential treatments for Bundibugyo began in the DRC on July 2, and is evaluating the effectiveness of the monoclonal antibody MBP134 and the antiviral drug remdesivir, alone and in combination.

### Cuts have hit response

The DRC's 17th Ebola outbreak was declared on May 15 after several deaths in Ituri, a mineral-rich province plagued by armed groups.

"Population movements, persistent insecurity, and the fragility of the health system continue to complicate efforts to bring the outbreak under control," Anne Anicia, the WHO's representative in the DRC, said on Tuesday.

She said there were now around 700 beds

across 22 treatment centres and 300 more beds in the pipeline, with centres operating at around 90 per cent capacity.

'Population movements, persistent insecurity, and the fragility of the health system continue to complicate efforts to bring the outbreak under control'

More than 10,000 contacts of infected people are being monitored, at a follow-up rate of 82 per cent. The WHO believes a rate

of 95 per cent is needed to get on top of the outbreak.

Laboratory capacity has increased from 30 tests per day in the capital Kinshasa to more than 2,000 in decentralised labs in the affected provinces.

One of the affected provinces is South Kivu, which has seen clashes between the Congolese armed forces and the Rwanda-backed M23 armed group.

"Before Ebola struck, millions were already facing conflict, hunger, displacement, weak basic services and limited healthcare," Tom Fletcher, head of the UN's humanitarian operations, said in a communique.

"DRC is one of the world's most complex humanitarian crises. Recent cuts in humanitarian funding have made the response even harder," he said.

# Top South Korea court to decide ex-president's martial law case

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea's highest court is set to issue a verdict on Thursday in a case against former president Yoon Suk-yeol over alleged crimes related to his failed martial law declaration and its chaotic aftermath.

The case covers accusations that Yoon had obstructed Cabinet deliberations and used forged signatures of the prime minister in the lead-up to the 2024 declaration, as well as using presidential security agents to block his own arrest after lawmakers had nullified it.

The supreme court is due to announce its ruling at 2:00 pm (5:00 GMT), following appeals against a lower court's decision.

The disgraced former president is already in detention while he appeals a separate life sentence for leading an insurrection with his martial law declaration, which he insists was motivated by the public interest.

The shock late-night national televised address in December 2024 that suspended civilian rule plunged South Korea into an unprecedented political crisis.

Martial law lasted only about six hours as lawmakers raced to vote it down in an emergency session.

However, Yoon's move



Former South Korean president Yoon Suk-yeol arrives at court to attend a hearing to review his arrest warrant requested by special prosecutors in Seoul on Thursday

triggered protests, sent the stock market plunging and caught key allies like the United States off-guard.

In the case brought before the supreme court, Yoon is accused of obstructing deliberations by convening only a select group of ministers for a meeting shortly before he declared martial law.

Other charges include allegedly creating and destroying a false mar-

tial law decree bearing forged signatures from the prime minister, ordering officials to distribute a misleading press release to foreign media, and directing an army commander to delete records from secure military phones.

In January, a lower court had sentenced Yoon to five years in prison after convicting him on most charges.

In April, an appeals court upheld the rul-

ing, added a guilty verdict over the misleading press release, and raised the sentence to seven years.

Both prosecutors and Yoon's legal team had appealed to the supreme court, whose rulings are final.

The court said it would livestream Thursday's hearing after granting prosecutors' request.

In a separate case, a court handed Yoon a

30-year prison sentence for sending drones into North Korea to "manufacture" a crisis ahead of his martial law bid.

The former president has insisted his martial law declaration was "solely for the sake of the nation".

In 2024, he also defended it as necessary to root out "anti-state forces" and quash what he claimed were threats from North Korea.

Yoon was ousted over

the martial law bid in April 2025, triggering elections that gave the presidency to Lee Jae Myung of the centre-left Democratic Party.

Several senior officials in Yoon's administration are also awaiting supreme court rulings in separate cases related to the martial law, including former prime minister Han Duck-soo and his interior minister Lee Sang-min.

## Myanmar FM to meet ASEAN ministers in Bangkok on Sunday — Hanoi

HANOI, Vietnam (AFP) — Myanmar's foreign minister will meet his regional ASEAN counterparts in Bangkok on Sunday, Vietnam's foreign ministry said on Thursday.

Myanmar has been largely frozen out of the 11-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) since a military coup ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021, triggering a civil war.

But junta chief Min Aung Hlaing was installed as civilian president in April following highly restricted elections, and neighbouring Thailand has been leading the charge to begin normalising relations.

While informal, Myanmar Foreign Minister Tin Maung Swe's attendance at the talks on Sunday represents "another crack in the ASEAN position", said Richard Horsey, senior Asia adviser at the International Crisis Group.

"It's diplomatic choreography towards an end which is Min Aung Hlaing standing with ASEAN leaders in Manila in November," he told AFP, referring to the bloc's summit.

But he noted that as ASEAN chair, the Philippines would make the final decision on whether to invite Min Aung Hlaing — and was "by no means guaranteed" to do so.

The Bangkok talks follow a state visit by Min Aung Hlaing to Laos at

the weekend — a trip Horsey described as the "beginning of the end of ASEAN's principled position" of refusing to normalise relations with Myanmar.

Vietnam Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Pham Thu Hang said there would be two rounds of talks in Bangkok — one with the Myanmar minister and the other without.

They would provide "an opportunity for the foreign ministers to engage in direct exchanges, strengthen co-operation, and promote dialogue and reconciliation in Myanmar".

Thailand's foreign ministry said there would be an informal meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers, including Myanmar, but did not specify the date or location.

A diplomatic source from another ASEAN member state separately confirmed to AFP that the Myanmar foreign minister would attend the talks in person.

Min Aung Hlaing plunged Myanmar into civil war with his 2021 coup, which ended a decade-long experiment with democracy.

He ruled directly as military chief for five years before becoming civilian president in April after staging elections that excluded Suu Kyi's party and others, and were blocked from rebel-held territory.

His new administration is making a push for international legitimacy, analysts say.

## Regent visits PSD Forensic Laboratories Department

Continued from page 1

The partnership underscores Germany's continued confidence in Jordan's development efforts and aims to strengthen national institutions' ability to achieve sustainable growth, the statement

said. Toukan was quoted in the statement as saying that the periodic meetings demonstrate the strength of the strategic partnership between Jordan and Germany.

"The discussions offer an important opportunity to evaluate achieve-

ments and outline future cooperation to meet the Kingdom's developmental priorities," she said.

The minister highlighted the seven-decade-long relationship between the two countries and expressed appreciation for Germany's continued support of

Jordan's economic and sustainable development efforts.

Chammas reaffirmed Germany's commitment to its partnership with Jordan, saying Berlin would continue supporting the Kingdom's economic and administrative priorities.

She described Jordan as a reliable partner for Germany in the region, adding that bilateral cooperation would continue to advance shared development goals, including efforts to address the challenges posed by the Syrian refugee crisis.

## Air defences shoot down 8 Iranian missiles — JAF

Continued from page 1

He urged the public to follow instruc-

tions issued by the relevant authorities, rely on official sources for in-

formation, and refrain from sharing false or misleading reports.

## One injured in latest Iran attack on Kuwait — ministry

Continued from page 1

In Qatar, which has played a key role medi-

ating between the US and Iran in recent weeks, residents received an alert warning of an el-

evated threat level, the first since the start of an April ceasefire between the US and Iran.

## Jordan, Germany sign 684 million euros development cooperation package to support economic priorities

Continued from page 1

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## Trump orders new strikes on Iran over attacks on shipping in Hormuz

Continued from page 1

CENTCOM said the strikes were carried out to degrade the ability of Iranian forces "to threaten freedom of navigation" in the strait, through which a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas normally flows.

"The United States is holding Iran accountable for recent unjustified aggression against commercial shipping," CENTCOM said on X.

Before ordering the latest strikes, Trump said the ceasefire with Iran was over, prompting mediators Pakistan and Qatar and the United Nations to call for de-escalation.

The Strait of Hormuz remains a flashpoint in the Middle East conflict, which began February 28 with US-Israeli strikes that killed Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, who is to



This screen grab taken from video footage shared by the US Military Central Command on social media platform X and made available via AFPTV on Thursday shows a fresh round of strikes against Iran

be buried in his hometown of Mashhad on Thursday.

Since the attacks, Tehran has insisted on controlling the strait, saying it will charge fees for passage and threatening to hit vessels that deviate from its authorised route.

Its military struck at least three ships in recent days, prompting extensive US strikes against Iranian targets on Tuesday, followed by retaliatory attacks from Iran on Gulf countries.

"We're gonna hit 'em hard tonight," Trump said at a NATO summit

in Ankara. "They violate the agreement every day."

He added later, however, that "anything that happens is going to be over very quickly".

Oil prices jumped 8 per cent after Trump's earlier comments that the ceasefire was "over."

UN chief Antonio Guterres called meanwhile "on all parties to exercise maximum restraint" — as did Pakistan, a key mediator in the US-Iran talks.

Iran said Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Qatar's prime minister had spoken over the phone on Wednesday and "underscored the importance of using diplomatic means to resolve regional issues".

Both the United States and Iran said they had hit dozens of targets in the initial wave of attacks, which Iranian state television said had killed eight Iranian military personnel.

CENTCOM said its forces struck more than 80 targets on Tuesday, including Iranian air-defence systems, coastal radar sites and 60 Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps small boats.



A woman walks past the rubble of a Palestinian home demolished by Israeli forces in the village of al-Rifayia, south of Hebron in the occupied West Bank, on Thursday

## Palestinian legislative vote set for November 28 — presidential decree

Continued from page 1

Holding elections is part of the reforms demanded by the international community, which supports the Palestinian Authority financially.

In 2021, Abbas announced legislative and presidential elections to be held in May and July of that year respectively. They were then post-

poned indefinitely due to the absence of guarantees that voting could take place in east Jerusalem, which Israel has occupied since 1967.

In April, Palestinians went to the polls to elect municipal council heads in the occupied West Bank, in the first vote since the outbreak of the Gaza war in October 2023.

The PA has faced widespread criticism over corruption, stagnation and declining legitimacy, with donors increasingly tying their financial and diplomatic support to reform, particularly of local governance.

In June, Abbas announced that presidential elections would be held in early 2027, without saying if he would run.

## THE JORDAN TIMES

An independent Arab political daily, established in 1975

Published by the Jordan Press Foundation

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**Samih Maaitah**

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P.O. Box 6710  
Amman 11118

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**Raed Omari**

National Library registration number:  
**D/1998/2062**

Editorial and advertising offices  
Jordan Press Foundation

Telephone: **5600800 ext. 2392**  
Facsimile: **5696183**

The Jordan Times is published daily except Saturdays

Advertising facsimile: **5696183**  
Circulation Department:  
**5600800 ext: 2383**

## US crackdown on top AI fuels open-source surge

By **Thomas Urbain**

Agence France-Presse

NEW YORK — The US government's shock moves to restrict access to top artificial intelligence systems from Anthropic and OpenAI have sparked growing interest in open-source models, especially ones from China.

The de facto bans from an anti-regulation White House blindsided the tech world, which had grown accustomed to AI labs releasing ever more powerful models with nary a worry of government intervention.

The episode has thrust a long-simmering debate to the fore: Open versus closed AI.

Most of the best-known AI models, like OpenAI's ChatGPT or Anthropic's Claude, are "closed", meaning the company keeps the underlying code and data locked away.

Users can access the AI via an app or website, mainly through a subscription, but the company controls who gets in and can shut down access at any time.

"Open-source" or "open-weight" models work differently: The developers release the model's core files for anyone to download, modify and run on their own computers. Once released, no one, not the company, not a government, can take them back.

In early June, the Trump administration ordered Anthropic to block non-Americans from using its most powerful, and closed, models, Mythos 5 and Fable 5.

Faced with the complexity of screening users, the startup simply pulled the models offline entirely.

Shortly after, OpenAI agreed to let the government approve every customer for its newest model, GPT-5.6.

"If everything you need to do has to be on a specific frontier model, that makes whatever you're building a whole lot less reliable" when it is suddenly unavailable, said Oren Michels, co-founder and CEO of BarnDoor AI.

Haitham Mengad, co-founder of Stems Labs, a startup focused on AI-powered music creation, felt the disruption firsthand.

"Fable has been a game-changing model for me. Honestly, when they took it off, it was the first time that I realised... it's almost like a drug," he recalled.

The Mythos episode "was a powerful moment" for seeing open source as an alternative, Mengad said.

### 'Being flexible'

Open models were already gaining fans because using closed AI keeps getting more expensive.

Around the same time, China's Zhipu AI (also known as Z.ai) released GLM-5.2, an open model that performed nearly as well as top offerings from Anthropic and OpenAI on several benchmarks.

"GLM-5.2 is free to download, fine-tune, and run on an enterprise's own servers, putting pricing pressure on frontier labs at the same time that access looks shaky," AI analyst Andrew Curran noted.

On OpenRouter, a platform that routes requests across different AI models, Google, Anthropic and OpenAI's combined share of usage dropped from 55 per cent to 33 per cent between January and June.

China's open DeepSeek now leads by a clear margin.

"You want to be as flexible as you can be. Maybe a year-and-a-half ago some large company might say we bought Anthropic or we bought OpenAI and now no one, no one buys only one," said Michels.

Among Western companies, France's Mistral stands largely alone in championing open models. US tech giant Meta, once a vocal open-source advocate, has stepped back from that.

Meanwhile, early suspicions about Chinese AI models as a security threat are fading, at least somewhat.

"I don't think there's any risk, to be honest," said Mengad. The fears are more "psychological, emotional than rational".

Once you download an open model and run it on your own hardware, the company that made it, Chinese or otherwise, has no access to your data or control over how you use it.

Still, some experts think the government crackdown could also end up coming for open models as they become more powerful.

"If Mythos-level models are considered risky, China will also not want them to be open," said Ethan Mollick, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and a leading voice on AI — meaning governments everywhere, not just Washington, may want to keep top-tier AI locked down.

## The global investment map

Dr **Haider Al-Majali**

In a world full of surprises and tensions, the global investment map is witnessing noticeable changes in its priorities, presence and areas of interest as a result of various economic, political, and technological factors that expose it to many challenges and obstacles. However, the dynamism of the global economy enables it to keep pace with all new trends, understand them and absorb them in order to achieve effective investment strategies. For example, we observed that investments are usually attracted by different factors. Some are directed toward countries that offer high growth opportunities, such as India, Indonesia and Turkey. Others are directed toward advantages in technological transformation, such as artificial intelligence, big data and financial technologies, including countries in Europe and North America. Others focus on the raw materials and abundant low-cost labour, such as countries in Africa and Latin America. These factors have significantly affected the type and quality of investments at times. On the other hand, changes in supply chains and reducing dependence on certain countries have affected investment priorities after COVID-19, and matters have come to be managed through different processes.

With regard to geopolitical tensions, they have affected investment flows and directions. Investments in the education and healthcare sectors have increased due to their importance, in addition to the significant growth in investment in the digital economy, e-commerce and digital services. As for regional transforma-

tions resulting from economic reforms and development trends, some regions, such as the Middle East and Africa, have witnessed distinguished global interest as new investment destinations generating good returns compared to traditional markets. All these circumstances and others have redrawn the global investment map in a remarkable way, making the map confusing due to the uncertainty affecting the global economy.

Goldman Sachs indicated in a report published in 2025 that, as a result of severe fluctuations in the global economy, changes have occurred in the relative shares of global investable assets such as equities, bonds and gold over the past seventy years. The world has come to fluctuate between eras of confidence in equities and eras of seeking refuge in bonds and gold. Hence, we witnessed the rise of equities as the dominant asset from the 1950s until today, with equities becoming the primary reflection of global growth. Equities continued to represent the largest portion of investable assets in a world filled with surprises and crises until painful economic disasters occurred, and the proportion of investment directed toward equities declined from around 80 per cent in the 1950s to less than 40 per cent in the 1970s, before rising again during the wave of globalisation and financial innovation after 1980 to around 55 per cent, due to lower inflation, higher productivity and confidence in free markets.

Equally, at the height of the oil crisis and inflation in the 1970s, and with the decline in the attractiveness of equities, the shares and bonds emerged to constitute around 60 per cent of global as-

sets. The 1970s came to be known as the era of bonds, as bonds became the balancing instrument in investment portfolios, particularly after the collapse of inflation and the stabilisation of interest rates. Bonds, especially sovereign ones, became the attractive refuge for global investments.

Further, during the past two decades, with zero interest rates, declining bond yields and their gradual loss of attractiveness, the search for a new direction and a primary investment priority became certain. Gold emerged as a safe haven during times of instability and was relied upon remarkably by countries and individuals. Gold's share in global investment increased to become the backbone of the global economy. However, gold's share in investment rose twice. The first was in the 1970s following the collapse of the Bretton Woods system and the dollar's link to gold. The second was during the major financial crises (2008 and 2020), when investors turned to gold as a hedge against inflation and uncertainty. Now, with the return of geopolitical and monetary inflation, gold has gradually begun to regain its role as a fundamental component of global investment portfolios. On the other hand, over the past ten years, modern sectors have achieved high investment returns and have become major attractions for global investment, e technology, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and automation, traditional and renewable energy, including smart grids, storage, hydrogen/ammonia, infrastructure, transportation and supply chains, industry, healthcare and biotechnology; health data systems, data centres, finance and financial services.

Regionally, dynamic markets which achieved greater attractiveness include Asia, because of industrial and commercial growth and high demand for technology and energy, North America, because of the strength of technology, finance and advanced manufacturing, Europe, because of the shift toward the energy transition and regulatory compliance, and finally the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), where growth is driven by energy projects, infrastructure, and urban expansion.

In conclusion, we have recently witnessed a shift in the mindset of the global investor, swinging from confidence in growth and focusing on financial returns through investment in equities, to seeking safety and guaranteed returns by relying on bonds, then to hedging against the financial system itself by focusing on gold. Today, after COVID-19, the return of inflation, rising interest rates, disruptions in supply methods, the use of financial technology, and its positive impact on the global economy and international food security, together with the growing sovereign debt crisis and its negative effects, we now stand before a new era of balance between traditional assets and the financial security they provide, and advanced assets with the high returns they offer. Recently, we have begun to feel that the paper-based financial system is losing some of its dominance in favor of a new financial system based on a balance between real or digital assets and a heavy reliance on technology. Thus, are we on the edge of a dramatic change in the global investment map?

The author is a finance and investment expert

## Teaching in the age of AI: Why Jordanian universities need new learning strategies and an AI pedagogy approach

By **Lubna Hanna Ammari**

The rapid development of generative artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping the way knowledge is created, accessed, and applied. Universities worldwide are facing a fundamental question: Should artificial intelligence be considered a threat to traditional education or an opportunity to redesign learning for a new era? For Jordanian universities, the answer lies not in resisting AI technologies, but in developing responsible strategies that ensure AI enhances human learning rather than replacing the role of students and educators.

Generative AI tools, such as large language models, have introduced new possibilities for university education. These technologies can support students in brainstorming ideas, explaining complex concepts, receiving personalised feedback, and improving their writing and problem-solving skills. However, the educational value of AI does not come from allowing students to obtain instant answers; it comes from teaching them how to question, evaluate and improve AI-generated outputs. The goal should be to transform AI from a shortcut for completing assignments into a learning partner that encourages deeper understanding, creativity and critical thinking.

For Jordanian higher education institutions, integrating AI re-

quires a clear educational vision. Universities need to establish policies that guide the ethical and effective use of AI tools by students and faculty members. Such policies should not focus only on preventing misuse or academic misconduct, but should define acceptable and productive uses of AI in learning environments. Students should understand issues related to transparency, academic integrity, data privacy and responsible use of AI-generated content. Similarly, faculty members need institutional support to redesign courses and assessments in ways that recognise the presence of AI while maintaining academic standards.

One of the most important changes required is the transformation of assessment strategies. Traditional assessment methods that mainly depend on memorisation and reproducing information are becoming less effective in an environment where AI can generate answers within seconds. Universities need to move towards assessments that measure higher-order thinking skills, including problem-solving, analysis, creativity and the ability to evaluate information. Instead of asking students only to provide answers, assessments should ask them to explain their reasoning, critique AI-generated responses, identify errors or biases in AI outputs, and develop innovative solutions using AI as a supporting tool.

For example, a student in engi-

neering, business, tourism, education or computer science could be asked to use AI tools during a project, but the evaluation should focus on how effectively the student defines the problem, selects appropriate AI applications, verifies the accuracy of results and makes informed decisions. This approach ensures that AI becomes a tool for developing human capabilities rather than replacing them.

Another essential step is investing in faculty development. Training educators on AI should go beyond teaching them how to operate specific tools. Universities need to introduce the concept of "AI Pedagogy", which focuses on how artificial intelligence can be integrated into teaching methods, curriculum design and assessment practices. Faculty members need to understand how AI changes the learning process, how to design meaningful activities involving AI and how to guide students in becoming responsible users of these technologies.

International organisations have highlighted the importance of this transformation. UNESCO has emphasised that the use of generative AI in education requires a human-centered approach that protects human agency, promotes inclusion, and supports teachers rather than replacing them. Similarly, research in higher education indicates that AI can improve learning outcomes when it is integrated with

appropriate pedagogical strategies, active learning approaches and strong academic guidance.

Jordan has a significant opportunity to position its higher education sector as a regional leader in responsible AI adoption. With its strong academic institutions, young population and growing technology ecosystem, Jordan can develop innovative models for AI-enhanced education. This requires collaboration between universities, accreditation bodies, policymakers and technology experts to create national guidelines, support research, and encourage experimentation with new teaching and assessment approaches.

The future of university education will not be defined by whether students use artificial intelligence, but by how intelligently they use it. The role of universities is therefore evolving from delivering information to developing the skills that machines cannot easily replace: Critical thinking, ethical judgement, creativity, collaboration and lifelong learning. By adopting responsible AI policies, redesigning assessment methods and preparing faculty members through AI-focused pedagogical training, Jordanian universities can ensure that artificial intelligence becomes a catalyst for better education rather than a challenge to academic values.

Lubna Hanna Ammari, Assistant Dean of Ammon Applied University College

## US Senate candidate's implosion forces Democratic reckoning

By **Frankie Taggart**

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON, United States — The collapse of Graham Platner's US Senate campaign has forced Democrats into a painful reckoning over how a scandal-plagued political novice became the standard-bearer in one of the party's most important races of the midterm elections.

Platner, a Marine veteran whose blunt anti-establishment message thrilled the progressive grassroots, quit the Maine race after a rape allegation he denies drove major Democratic backers to abandon him.

The scandal hit a party already split between voters demanding insurgent populism and leaders warning that, even in the era of Donald Trump, outsider movements still need professional vetting — especially in races that could decide control of Congress.

Platner's exit leaves Democrats a narrow window to field a replacement against Republican Senator Susan Collins, one of their top targets in the November fight for the Senate.

But the deeper question reaches beyond Maine: How to find candidates who can channel anger at Washington without buckling under the scrutiny that high office demands.

Analysts say Platner's rise spoke to a real hunger for fighters who sound less polished, less cautious and less beholden to donors than the candidates national leaders tend to favour.

The hard-charging oysterman beat the party establishment by casting himself as a working-class outsider, attacking corporate power and vowing to break a system he said served billionaires over ordinary people.

To supporters, his appeal was obvious: Democrats had spent too long elevating safe, familiar candidates who couldn't inspire voters furious over inequality, rising costs and party leaders in Washington too timid to fight Trump.

That argument now cuts to the heart of Democratic anxiety about 2028, when the party must again find a presidential nominee who can excite voters without collapsing under pressure.

The anti-establishment left

sees the Maine disaster as proof the party must keep faith with the voters who backed Platner, not let Washington impose another cautious nominee.

The party establishment sees a different lesson: That opposition research, debate scrutiny and general-election campaigning exist for a reason.

Adam Jentleson, who quit as a senior aide to Democrat John Fetterman in 2024 over concerns about the Pennsylvania senator's mental health, posted on X that Platner's story had always demanded "several leaps of faith".

"Shading a narrative towards the positive is standard — lying is not," he said. "As an aide you have to ask yourself when you veer from the former into the latter."

Jeff Robbins, a former senior federal prosecutor and counsel for Senate Democrats, called it "a vivid illustration" of a left that too often bends "inconvenient facts" for political expediency.

Even before the rape allegation, Platner's campaign had been dogged by incendiary old posts, sexually explicit messages

to women early in his marriage, a Nazi-linked tattoo he later covered up and claims that he had mistreated women. Platner has acknowledged past struggles with undiagnosed PTSD and alcohol abuse, but has denied physically harming former partners.

His supporters cast those flaws as a redemption story; his critics say the left confused charisma with viability and dismissed questions about character as establishment sabotage.

Maine Democrats now face a more immediate problem: Naming a nominee by late July through a compressed state party process.

But any nominee will have to unite Platner's wounded supporters with moderates, independents and women voters wary of a party that just watched its chosen candidate implode.

Cheyenne Hunt, whose group Reckoning Action works to confront misogyny in public life, said Platner's rise required "far too many people to ignore glaring red flags" because he looked like a "golden boy progressive candidate".

# BUSINESS

Friday-Saturday, July 10-11, 2026



Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh on Thursday says recent amendments to the Investment Environment Regulation Bylaw have streamlined licensing procedures in development and free zones

## New investment rules cut licensing procedures to 72 hours in development zones

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh on Thursday said recent amendments to the Investment Environment Regulation Bylaw have streamlined licensing procedures in development and free zones

The new licensing procedures allow complete applications for construction licences and occupancy permits to be processed within 72 hours, according to the Ministry of Investment statement.

The minister made the remarks during the Ministry of Investment's second-quarter 2026 coordination meeting with development zone developers, which reviewed operational updates, regulatory amendments, developer performance evaluations and investment success stories.

Abu Ghazaleh noted the amendments as a "major" step towards improving the business environment by simplifying procedures, re-engineering workflows and reducing the time required to obtain ap-

provals and permits.

He said the amendments introduced, for the first time, a fast-track mechanism for issuing construction licences and occupancy permits in development and free zones, enabling fully compliant applications to be completed within 72 hours.

Abu Ghazaleh said the measure was made possible by restructuring procedures and reducing the number of committees and approval stages, helping to cut bureaucracy, improve regulatory efficiency and accelerate the implementation of investment projects.

He added that the amended bylaw also introduced a compliance-based licensing system, allowing investors to begin operations based on self-compliance, subject to post-licensing inspections.

Abu Ghazaleh reviewed the second-quarter performance evaluation results for development and free zone developers as part of its institutional

framework for performance measurement, transparency and continuous improvement.

During the meeting, King Hussein Business Park presented its "Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Development" initiative as a model for integrating environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles into the planning and management of development zones.

The initiative includes corporate social responsibility programmes focused on youth, support for sustainable development and strengthening the economic and developmental role of development zones in local communities.

The ministry said the coordination meetings are held regularly to monitor the performance of development and free zones, address challenges and opportunities, and use stakeholder feedback to improve the investment environment and services provided to investors, according to the Ministry of Investment statement.

## Jordanian, Saudi firms launch pharmaceutical investment partnership

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's Ram Pharmaceutical Industries and Saudi Arabia's Cigalah Healthcare on Thursday launched an investment partnership aimed at boosting value-added investment in Jordan and expanding Jordanian-Saudi economic cooperation.

Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh said Jordanian-Saudi relations are a model of deep-rooted ties, adding that the partnership reflects the strength of economic relations between the two countries and the confidence shared by private-sector institutions.

He noted the partnership as an important step towards greater Arab economic integration and cooperation in one of the region's most strategic sectors, according to a Ministry of Investment statement.

"Investment in pharmaceuticals and healthcare is an investment in people, quality of life and the ability of societies to withstand challenges and crises," Abu Ghazaleh said, noting that an advanced pharmaceutical industry has become a strategic necessity for health se-



Jordan's Ram Pharmaceutical Industries and Saudi Arabia's Cigalah Healthcare on Thursday launch an investment partnership aimed at boosting value-added investment in Jordan

curity and national and economic resilience.

He said Jordan has built a "solid" pharmaceutical manufacturing sector over several decades, with locally produced medicines reaching dozens of regional and international markets.

The government places particular emphasis on value-added industries, especially pharmaceuticals, as key

drivers of sustainable economic growth and quality employment for the Economic Modernisation Vision, he added.

Abu Ghazaleh said the partnership demonstrates confidence in Jordan's investment environment, citing the Kingdom's modern legislative framework, competitive advantages, skilled workforce and advanced infrastructure and access to regional

and global markets.

The Minister expressed that this partnership would serve as a model for further Arab investment partnerships and deeper regional economic integration.

The initiative comes amid growing regional and international interest in the pharmaceutical industry as a strategic sector that supports health security, strengthens sup-

ply chains, facilitates knowledge and technology transfer and promotes exports and job creation.

The partnership brings together two leading companies in the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors, both of which have established a strong presence in Arab and international markets, according to the Ministry of Investment statement.

## 'JO-Ecolabel' programme showcases at industry workshop

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI) has held a specialised workshop to showcase the Jordan Eco-Label (JO-Ecolabel) Programme, a national initiative led by the Jordan Standards and Metrology Organisation (JSMO) with support of the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).

The programme aims to promote environmentally responsible production, enhance the competitiveness of Jordanian products and provide manufacturers with a certification that adds market value, strengthens consumer confidence and expands export opportunities, according to a JCI statement.

Ahmad Al Bas, representative of the chemicals and cosmetics industries sector at the JCI, said the JO-Ecolabel offers a strategic opportunity for local manufacturers to demonstrate their commitment to environmental responsibility while meeting growing demand for sustainable



The Jordan Chamber of Industry has held a specialised workshop to showcase 'Jordan Eco-Label' programme, a national initiative led by the Jordan Standards and Metrology Organisation with support of the German Agency for International Cooperation

products in domestic and international markets.

He said the label would signal that Jordanian products comply with recognised environmental standards and reflect international best practices in sustainable production.

Addressing representatives of personal care and cosmetics companies, Manager of the Conformity Cer-

consumption.

Hiyari said JSMO is developing the JO-Ecolabel as the region's first environmental certification scheme designed in line with leading international standards.

She noted that the certification process will be based on scientifically developed environmental criteria and comprehensive life cycle assessments, evaluating products from raw material sourcing and manufacturing through use, recycling and final disposal.

GIZ Policy Adviser David Musleh highlighted the progress made in implementing the JO-Ecolabel project through the Green Action in Enterprises (GAIN) programme, which provides technical support for the initiative.

The workshop aimed to prepare Jordan's industrial sector for future market requirements by promoting sustainable production practices and highlighting the grow-

ing importance of environmental performance alongside product quality and price as a "key" driver of global competitiveness.

Participants received an overview of the programme's phased rollout, which will initially cover tissue paper products and laundry detergents, followed by personal care and cosmetics products in the second phase and cement products in the third.

The session also outlined certification requirements, application fees and the role of universities in preparing product life cycle assessment studies.

The JO-Ecolabel Programme is a voluntary national certification scheme awarded to products and services that demonstrate strong environmental performance. Applicants must meet established environmental criteria, comply with national regulations and satisfy the programme's certification requirements, according to the statement.

## German exports rise despite Iran war headwinds

BERLIN (AFP) — German exports unexpectedly rose in May, their fourth straight monthly increase, official data showed on Thursday, as Europe's biggest economy defied headwinds from the Iran war.

Exports rose 0.9 per cent from the previous month to 137.9 billion euros (\$158 billion), according to preliminary data from statistics agency Destatis, driven by a rise in demand from the United States and China.

Analysts surveyed by financial data firm FactSet had expected a decline of one per cent.

It was the latest evidence that Germany's

long-struggling economy is coping with the turmoil unleashed by the US-Israeli war against Iran better than some had feared.

Figures released earlier this week showed German industrial output and orders also increased in May.

"These are encouraging signals for the German economy, even if certain sectors are still facing a deep crisis," Chancellor Friedrich Merz told parliament on Thursday.

The trade data released on Thursday showed that the primary destination for German exports remained the United States, to the tune of 14.1 billion

euros, a rise of 23.1 per cent month-on-month.

Exports to China were also up 7.1 per cent to reach 6.2 billion euros.

However, exports to other EU states fell by 1.1 per cent, with imports from the rest of the bloc also down 2.5 per cent.

Imports in May fell by 2.5 per cent to 118.8 billion euros, meaning that the country's trade surplus rose to 19.1 billion euros.

The Iran war has dimmed prospects for a strong rebound in Germany's economy this year, with the government now expecting growth of just 0.5 per cent.

### SWEETS

## Cocoa lynxpin sees chocolate lovers make hesitant return

ZURICH (AFP) — Barry Callebaut, one of the world's biggest chocolate makers, signalled on Thursday that chocoholics are starting to replenish their stocks after being stung by inflation.

The group, which says it runs the world's biggest chocolate factory in Belgium and provides cocoa products to nearly all major makers, warned however that any improvement would be "gradual".

Barry Callebaut said sales volumes increased for the first time in two years in the quarter from March to May this year, as it revealed its latest results.

It said that sales volume fell 2.8 per cent to

1.5 million tonnes over the first nine months of its financial year up, but had increased 5.7 per cent in the third quarter.

Asia, the Middle East and Africa boosted sales over the nine months, while Western Europe was down 2.5 per cent and North America 7.6 per cent.

It predicted that for the whole financial year up to the end of August, sales volumes would be down about one per cent.

The group attributed the belated increase to increased demand for cocoa powder and some customers "replenishing their stocks".

Its turnover over the nine months fell 12.7 per

cent against the previous year to 9.5 billion Swiss francs (\$11.75 billion), below analysts' forecasts.

The group's performance reflects the roller coaster ride by cocoa prices over the past five years when it has been buffeted by wars, poor harvests and economic worries in key markets.

Barry Callebaut's turnover exploded when prices took off in 2024. But orders started falling when customers lost their sweet tooth as the price of a bar of chocolate rose by up to 50 per cent.

The group does not sell direct to consumers but provides cocoa and chocolate preparations

to major firms around the world, including Hershey, Mondelez and Nestlé as well as cake, cookie and ice cream makers.

The cocoa price hit a record high of 12,931 dollars a tonne in New York in December 2024. But then gradually fell to 2,846 dollars a tonne through 2025 and early 2026.

Fears that the Middle East war could cut off fertiliser supplies through the strategic Strait of Hormuz and that the new El Nino weather phenomenon could hit the harvest have pushed the price back up again to 4,613 dollars a tonne in recent days.

## AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

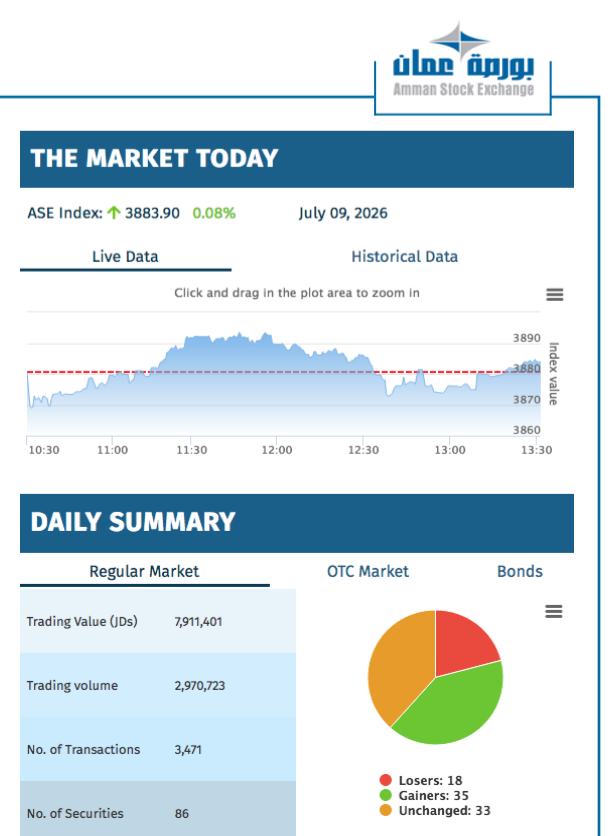
AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Thursday amounted to JD7.9 million spread over 3 million shares that traded through 3,471 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.08 per cent, closing at 3883.90 points.

Out of 86 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 35 companies rose while the share price of another 18 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were United Cable Industries by 3.82 per cent, Afaq Holding for Investment and Real Estate Development Company Plc. by 3.57 per cent, Jordanian Company for Development and Financial Investment by 3.51 per cent, Northern Cement Company by 3.31 per cent, and Ihdathiat Co-ordinates by 3.28 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Jordan Poultry Processing and Marketing by 5 per cent, Al Shamekha for Real Estate and Financial Investments by 4.76 per cent, Specialised Jordanian Investment by 4.67 per cent, Arab Investors Union Company for Real Estates Developing by 3.51 per cent, and High Performance Real Estate Investments by 2.78 per cent.



# THE JORDAN TIMES

# SPORTS

## AT A GLANCE

### RUGBY

#### England recalls Slade for crunch Fiji clash

LONDON (AFP) — England has recalled Henry Slade for their must-win Nations Championship rugby clash against Fiji in Liverpool on Saturday as coach Steve Borthwick bids to avoid a sixth straight defeat. Slade did not feature at all during England's woeful Six Nations, where they lost four out of their five games. But the 33-year-old centre had a strong finish to the domestic season, leading Exeter to the Prem final. Slade's return means Northampton's Tommy Freeman is deployed in his more familiar wing role following a year-long effort to convert him into an outside centre. Guy Pepper replaces Tom Curry at open-side flanker in the other change to the starting XV beaten 45-21 by world champions South Africa in their Nations Championship opener in Johannesburg last week. Meanwhile, the uncapped trio of South Africa-born Benhard Janse van Rensburg, Noah Caluori and George Kloska could all make their Test debuts off the bench.

#### Fly-half Meredith to make Australia debut against France

BRISBANE, Australia (AFP) — Rookie Declan Meredith was named as the Australia starting fly-half Thursday to face France in Brisbane after Carter Gordon and Ben Donaldson were both ruled out with injuries. The 27-year-old ACT Brumbies play maker was called into the Australia squad for the first time before the Nations Championship opener against Ireland last week. He failed to make the Wallabies bench, but now finds himself as the leading No.10 for Saturday's encounter, with Gordon and Donaldson, who both played last week, sidelined by calf strains. Gordon will also miss the July 18 clash with Italy. The long-term prognosis for Donaldson, who fluffed two crucial late penalties in their demoralising 33-31 defeat to the Irish in Sydney, remains unclear. "The group has reset this week in Brisbane after what was a tough ending to the first game of the Nations Championship," said Australia coach Joe Schmidt. "We have worked hard on continuing to improve after missing some vital opportunities last weekend. We know we can be better on Saturday, and we know that we will need to be against the back-to-back Six Nations Champions."

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — FIFA referees chief Pierluigi Collina has hit out at "unfounded allegations" against World Cup match officials in the wake of Argentina's controversial last 16 victory over Egypt.

In comments posted on FIFA's official website, Collina defended officials who oversaw Argentina's 3-2 win in Atlanta and were accused of malpractice by Egypt coach Hossam Hassan.

Hassan speculated that the officiating team for the game, headed by French referee Francois Letexier may have been subjected to "external pressure" to favour Argentina.

The claims came after a string of decisions went against the Egyptians, including a goal chalked off by VAR for a foul committed much earlier in the move at the other end of the field.

Collina though rejected any suggestion of wrongdoing or a conspiracy to assist Argentina's World Cup campaign.

"Of course, constructive discussion about decisions will always be part of football, but unfounded allegations have no place in our sport," Collina said.

"Nobody can question the integrity of the FIFA World Cup match officials. When this happens, it may provoke reactions that lead to



Egypt's head coach Hossam Hassan gestures during the 2026 World Cup round of 16 football match between Argentina and Egypt at Atlanta Stadium in Atlanta on Tuesday

threats against them and their families. This is not right.

"Equally, nobody can claim that FIFA Refereeing can be influenced by anyone, not even by the FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

"Match officials make honest decisions and, just like players and coaches, they always try

to do their best."

Egypt coach Hassan said his team had been the victims of "injustice" by officials.

"We have been cheated today, we have suffered injustice," Hassan said after his team's loss, suggesting that FIFA "wanted to keep the world champions in the competition. Per-

haps they wanted Messi to stay in the running".

"In football, there are sometimes external factors that go beyond the technical aspects. The world champions received support at every level," Hassan told BeIn Sports.

But on the specific case of the decision to disallow Mostafa Zico's

superb breakaway goal which would have given Egypt a 2-0 lead, Collina said referees had acted correctly after VAR spotted a foul in the build-up.

"If a foul is identified in the build-up and is deemed to have had an impact on the goal, the VAR will recommend an on-field review," the

Italian said. "There is no defined limit regarding either the distance from goal or the amount of time between the incident and the goal.

We believe that a foul is a foul. Regardless of whether the foul appears 'obvious', if the referee did not see it on the field of play, the VAR can intervene."

## LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

## In Mauritania, Imraguen people's desert-ocean paradise under threat

By Eléonore Sens  
Agence France-Presse

BANC D'ARGUIN NATIONAL RESERVE, Mauritania — Since he was old enough to climb into a boat, Samata Mahmoud has been fishing the vast, dune-lined waters of Mauritania's Banc d'Arguin Bay, living a centuries-old lifestyle threatened by climate change and overfishing.

Mahmoud is a member of the Imraguen fishing-based community, a desert people who have spent centuries developing practices in harmony with nature, living in the area where the Sahara meets the Atlantic.

At the first light of dawn the village of Iwik stirs to life, white sails unfurling across the bay's calm waters.

With motors banned, the only vessels gliding about are "lanches", small sailboats said to have originated from ancient ties with the Spanish Canary Islands.

Banc d'Arguin National Park, which was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1989 and is located on Mauritania's northern coast, is home to some 4,000 Imraguen people, the only population permitted to live within the reserve.

The area attracts an



Samata Mahmoud recovers a fishing net at Banc D'Arguin National Park off the coast of Iwik, on April 25

abundance of migratory birds, marine mammals and diverse fish species, nourished by cold, nutrient-rich deep-water upwellings and abundant seagrass beds.

The Imraguen have developed a unique method of wading-based fishing, practised only in the summer.

At low tide, two fishermen stretch a long, slender net measuring dozens of metres across a mudflat, while a third uses a pole to strike the water, driving fish into the trap.

#### Increasing scarcity

His face protected from the scorching sun by a white turban, Mahmoud lifts several sea bream and a grouper into the boat.

"The fish aren't the same as before," said the boat's captain, a man in his 60s, who noted a decline in certain species like yellow mullet.

Fishing activity within the park is strictly regulated, but the combined effects of climate change and overfishing

outside the zone pose a direct threat.

"Fish quantity in the Imraguen people's zones have fallen to less than 30 per cent of what they were 10 years ago. There is real pressure on the fish," Abderrahmane Chevif Bouhobeiny, president of the Association for the Safeguarding and Preservation of Imraguen Culture, told AFP.

Mohamed Ahmed Jeyid, a researcher at the Mauritanian Institute of Oceanographic

and Fisheries Research, described a "disruption" in the Banc d'Arguin ecosystem, from warming waters to acidification and changes in upwelling patterns.

He has also witnessed a collapse in the stock of certain species such as mullet, whose catch has dropped by two-thirds since 2017.

"Climate change and overfishing directly threaten the food security, income and cultural practices of the Imraguen people," he said.

#### Pivot in practices

But it is also a "decline in the transmission of traditional knowledge" and new economic forces that are contributing to the loss of a way of life, said Nami Salihy, director of the Banc d'Arguin National Park.

Many young Imraguen are turning from ancestral practices as they move to cities or adopt new, more profitable fishing techniques.

Mohamed Lemine Jedou mends a net in front of his small shack in the Banc d'Arguin village of Tin Aloué.

In the past, the Imraguen made nets and fishing tools out of tree fibres, the 76-year-old told AFP, reflecting nostalgically on the "simple life" his people once led.

But "fishing has changed" and the population has grown, the sun-weathered fisherman said. As for the Imraguen women, they continue to handle the processing: Drying the fish, extracting oil and making jewellery with the bones.

Drying was a way to preserve the fish before the arrival of ice and rapid transportation.

Under a small tent surrounded by children, Mariam Bilal cuts open and guts small fish before hanging them to dry.

## Deep-sea mining menaces molluscs, conservationists warn

GENEVA (AFP) — Deep-sea mining threatens more than half of the molluscs reliant on hydrothermal vents on the seabed, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said on Thursday.

IUCN said 62 per cent of endemic hydrothermal vent molluscs — 125 out of 201 species known worldwide — "are at risk of extinction due to deep-sea mining for valuable minerals", in an update to its Red List of Threatened Species.

The Red List — which assigns threat levels ranging from "least concern" to "extinct" — includes 175,909 species, up from 172,620 in the previous edition.

It has 49,505 listed as threatened with extinction, up from 48,646 last time.

Found only at depths down to 5,000 metres below sea level, around vents spewing water that can exceed 450°C, the threatened molluscs include snails, limpets, mussels, clams and chitons.

Many of them have only been discovered in the past 10 years, "and already face extinction due to human disturbance of their habitat", said IUCN.

The Swiss-based organisation said exploration of the seabed created sediment plumes that smothered the animals,

affected their ability to absorb nutrients.

These molluscs "are one of the most highly threatened of all animal groups, at a critical moment for their future", said Julia Sigwart from the IUCN mollusc specialist group.

She underlined that IUCN voted in 2021 for a moratorium on deep-sea mining unless the marine environment is effectively protected.

"Life on Earth has adapted to survive in the most hostile and unusual habitats, such as deep-sea molluscs that live around extremely hot vents," warned IUCN chief Gretel Aguilar.

"Now as pressures on biodiversity mount across the planet, even the creatures with the most ingenious survival strategies are under threat."

The organisation also shone a light on the desert rain frog, a species popular on social media, which burrows itself into the sand.

It has been moved from the "near threatened" to "vulnerable" — one step worse on the scale — owing to diamond mining and energy infrastructure developments along the west coast of South Africa and Namibia.

Without conservation action, the population is expected to decline by 20 per cent in the next decade, it added.



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