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Sunday, July 12, 2026 | Muharram 27, 1448 Hijri

Jordan's population surpasses 12 million, DoS says



Photo captured from a video posted on HRH Crown Prince Hussein's YouTube channel

HRH Crown Prince Hussein participates in a military survival training exercise with the 101st Special Battalion of the King Abdullah II Royal Special Forces

Video offers glimpse into Crown Prince's service with Special Forces

AMMAN (JT) — The official YouTube channel of HRH Crown Prince Hussein on Saturday published a new video highlighting a military survival training exercise conducted by the 101st Special Battalion, a unit of the King Abdullah II Royal Special Forces.

The Crown Prince took part in the exercise alongside fellow personnel in the battalion, where he serves as assistant battalion commander.

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AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's population has reached 12,045,180, ranking 11th among Arab countries and 85th globally, according to population estimates released by the Department of Statistics (DoS).

In a statement issued on Friday to mark World Population Day, observed annually on July 11, the DoS said Jordan has experienced major demographic changes since the second half of the last century, driving significant population growth.

The population increased from 586,000 in 1952 to 11.937 million at the end of 2025 and is projected to reach 12.144 million by the end of 2026, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The department said that the annual population growth rate currently stands at 1.7 per cent, meaning the population would double in about 40 years if the current rate continues.

According to DoS, population growth has fluctuated over the decades due to changes in fertility, mortality and net migration. The annual growth



GAM photo

A general view of Amman

rate declined from 4.4 per cent between the 1979 and 1994 censuses to 2.6 per cent between 1994 and 2004, before rising

to 5.3 per cent between 2004 and 2015 following regional political developments and the influx of Syrian refugees after

2011.

The department attributed improvements in life expectancy to better healthcare services,

noting that average life expectancy reached 75.3 years in 2023.

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Lower House to debate 6 draft laws in first extraordinary session since election

AMMAN (JT) — A Royal Decree has been issued summoning Parliament to convene for an extraordinary session starting on July 12.

The Lower House will hold the first sitting of its first extraordinary session since its election to deliberate a number of draft laws referred by the government.

As per the Royal Decree, lawmakers will deliberate six draft laws, including the Local Administration Law, amendments to the Jordanian Universities Law and the Real Estate Ownership Law, the repeal of the Civil Consumer Corporation Law, the Regulation of Professional Practice Law, and the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission Law.

The Lower House is expected to prioritise



JT file

A view of the Lower House during a previous parliamentary session

the Local Administration draft law during the extraordinary session.

Approved by the Cabinet on May 24, the bill aims to develop the local administration system and strengthen its developmental role.

The draft law aligns with the recommendations of the Royal Committee to Modernise the Political System, the Economic Modernisation Vision and the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap, the Jordan News Agency, Petra reported.

It also implements Royal directives to review and develop legislation governing local administration, as well as the commitments outlined in the government's policy statement.

The government held extensive consultations before drafting the bill, involving parliamentary blocs, the Senate president and members, representatives of relevant sectors and institutions, former ministers of municipal affairs and experts, according to Petra.

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Photo courtesy of SSC

The Social Security Corporation says that the total number of its subscribers has reached 1,632,941, marking a 1.7 per cent increase compared with the same period in 2025

SSC subscribers increase 1.7% to 1.63 million

AMMAN (JT) — The Social Security Corporation (SSC) announced that the total number of its subscribers has reached 1,632,941, marking a 1.7 per cent increase compared with the same period in 2025.

The number of subscribers rose by 27,286 from 1,605,655 recorded during the corresponding period last year, according to the SSC.

The corporation told Al Mamlaka TV on Fri-

day that the increase reflects the continued expansion of the Kingdom's social protection coverage through the inclusion of new categories of workers.

The SSC attributed the growth to ongoing efforts to improve compliance with social security regulations and raise awareness of the importance of registration.

It also said it has intensified inspection campaigns across its

branch offices under a new field inspection methodology that targets specific sectors based on data provided by relevant public and private entities.

The corporation reaffirmed the importance of expanding its subscriber base to strengthen the sustainability of the social insurance system and extend social protection to all workers in the Kingdom.

Czech-Jordan ties expand across cybersecurity, energy, development — ambassador

By Saeb Rawashdeh



Andrea Kucerova

AMMAN — Diplomatic relations between Jordan and the Czech Republic have entered a period of significant growth, with cooperation expanding across cybersecurity, renewable energy, trade, development assistance and regional security, Czech Ambassador to Jordan Andrea Kucerova said.

Reflecting on her first year in Amman, Kucerova described her experience in Jordan as both professionally rewarding and personally enriching.

"I have been received with exceptional warmth and hospitality by the Jordanian people," she said, adding that she and her fam-

ily have spent weekends travelling across the Kingdom to explore its natural beauty, cultural traditions and historical heritage.

Kucerova said the Czech embassy has made substantial progress in strengthening bilateral

cooperation. "Our bilateral cooperation has experienced a dynamic surge across defence, cybersecurity, energy, development cooperation, bilateral political ties and other fields," she said.

One of the year's major milestones was the inaugural Czech-Jordanian Cybersecurity Forum on Cybercrime Mitigation and Governance, held in November 2025 at the Royal Scientific Society under the patronage of HRH Princess Sumaya Bint El Hassan.

According to the ambassador, the forum significantly enhanced cooperation on cyber threat intelligence sharing and digital security while opening the door

for Czech technology firms, including Cogniware, Aura and Wultra, to explore partnerships with Jordanian institutions.

Kucerova also highlighted growing cooperation with the Public Security Directorate (PSD) describing the relationship as one of the embassy's most promising initiatives.

She noted that the director of the PSD's Special Branch visited Prague in February 2026 as part of efforts to deepen security cooperation.

Economic diplomacy has also become a central focus of the embassy's work.

"Through partnerships with the Amman Chamber of Commerce

and EuroCham Jordan, the embassy has facilitated direct engagement between Czech and Jordanian companies to encourage trade and investment."

In June 2026, Czech companies Solarity, ElkoEP and RSE presented advanced technologies in renewable energy, energy management and smart automation during meetings with senior Jordanian government officials.

The companies also showcased their products at the Czech National Pavilion during the Renewable Energy and Solar Energy Exhibition (SONEX/JIMEX 2026).

"By deploying Czech expertise in sustainable grid optimisation

we aim to support Jordan's green transition," Kucerova said.

The ambassador said the embassy is also working to connect Czech engineering and manufacturing companies with the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority, seeking to integrate Czech technologies into regional industrial and logistics supply chains.

Future plans include Czech participation in the SOFEX 2026 defence exhibition in Aqaba, the EU-Jordan Investment Conference at the Dead Sea and the second Czech-Jordan Cybersecurity Forum, all scheduled for later this year.

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Death toll in Venezuela earthquakes surpasses 4,300

CARACAS (AFP) — The death toll in Venezuela's devastating twin earthquakes last month has topped 4,300, a top lawmaker said on Saturday.

National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez, the brother of interim leader Delcy Rodriguez, put the toll at 4,333, up from 4,118 on Friday, according to AFP.

Continued on page 5

apartment blocks into layers of rubble.

Camps for families left homeless have sprung up in stadiums, plazas and on sidewalks. More than 19,000 people are currently living in those camps, Rodriguez said.

Venezuelan and foreign volunteers are providing medical care in tents set up in open areas and distributing food, AFP said.

Rodriguez did not say how many people were still unaccounted for.



Acting Director-General of the National Agricultural Research Centre Zakaria Musallam says that the National Seed Bank preserves more than 4,400 documented specimens in the National Herbarium

National Seed Bank preserves over 5,000 genetic accessions

AMMAN (JT) — The National Seed Bank holds more than 5,000 genetic accessions representing field crops, vegetables, medicinal and aromatic plants, rangeland and forest species, as well as wild relatives of agricultural crops, said Acting Director-General of the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) Zakaria Musallam.

His Majesty King Abdullah in March, 2025 inaugurated the National Seed Bank, affiliated with NARC, in Ain Al Basa, Balqa.

The seed bank aims to store plants' genetic data to preserve genetic diversity and ensure sustainability of agriculture and food security for future generations.

The National Seed Bank includes state-of-the-art laboratories and old seed samples, the oldest of which dates back to 1927, to serve researchers and academics at universities and scientific research centres specialised in agricultural research and development.

The National Seed Bank has seed storage rooms, drying, processing and testing facilities, and a storage capacity of 50,000 samples. Its cryogenic technology helps extend the viability of seeds from 10 years to 100 years in some plant species, ensuring continued agricultural life for generations to come.

Speaking to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Musallam said that the bank also preserves more than 4,400 documented specimens in the National Herbarium, which serves as the country's scientific reference for documenting and conserving wild

plants.

He added that the herbarium contains a wide range of plant species of environmental and economic importance.

Musallam added that genetic resources are preserved under a "rigorous" scientific system, with seeds stored in specialised cold rooms at 4°C for short-term conservation and minus 18°C for long-term preservation, in accordance with internationally recognised standards.

It is one of the Kingdom's key pillars of food security and sustainable agricultural development, preserving plant biodiversity

This ensures that seeds retain their viability and genetic purity while remaining available to support scientific research and the development of more efficient and productive plant varieties in the future, he noted.

Responding to the needs of researchers and scientific institutions, Musallam said that the bank fulfilled 272 requests during 2025 to provide researchers and scientific organisa-

tions with genetic material from local varieties and wild plant species, supporting applied research aimed at developing the agricultural sector, boosting food security and conserving Jordan's national genetic resources.

He described the National Seed Bank, affiliated with NARC, as a national pillar of sustainable development that reflects Jordan's commitment to protecting its plant genetic resources in line with the best international practices.

Musallam said that the bank serves as the scientific arm of the Ministry of Agriculture and a specialised national infrastructure for conserving and managing plant genetic resources.

It is one of the Kingdom's key pillars of food security and sustainable agricultural development, preserving plant biodiversity, supporting scientific research and providing the genetic resources needed to develop more productive plant varieties that are better able to adapt to climate change, in line with Royal directives, the Economic Modernisation Vision and the Sustainable Development Goals.

He noted that the National Seed Bank supports Jordan's commitments under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture by conserving, documenting, characterising, evaluating and making plant genetic resources available for scientific research and plant breeding programmes within internationally recognised legal frameworks.

Gov't regulates AI use involving national symbols, official emblems

AMMAN (JT) — The government has issued a circular regulating the use of artificial intelligence (AI) programmes, tools and applications in relation to national emblems, flags, banners, sovereign symbols, official images and official seals.

The circular was issued in light of concerns that the use of AI technologies could compromise the integrity and authenticity of these symbols or alter their approved form and appearance, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The directive applies to all ministries, government departments, public institutions and authorities, public universities, municipalities, the Greater Amman Municipality, joint services councils and government-owned companies.

It prohibits the use of AI programmes, tools or applications to create, modify, process, enhance or alter national emblems, flags, banners, sovereign symbols, official images or official seals, or to add any visual elements or effects to them if doing so would compromise their authenticity or alter their approved appearance or content.

The circular also prohibits the publication, circulation, adoption or use of any national emblems, flags, banners, sovereign symbols, official images or official seals that have been created, modified or processed using AI technologies if this affects



The government issues a circular regulating the use of artificial intelligence programmes, tools and applications in relation to national emblems, flags, banners, sovereign symbols, official images and official seals

their integrity or official status.

It calls on all entities to use only the original or officially approved

versions of national emblems, flags, banners, sovereign symbols, official images and official seals, particularly in light of the rapid expansion of AI applications in design and content production, which may result in unintended

changes to the appearance, colours or approved details of national symbols.

The circular does not prevent the use of AI technologies for media planning, idea development, content drafting, analysis, review or improving presentation methods, provided that such use does not affect the authenticity, appearance, content or

official specifications of national and sovereign symbols.

The government said that the circular was issued due to the national and sovereign significance of these symbols and in line with the provisions of existing legislation governing their use.

It aims to protect them from any alteration or processing that could

undermine their authenticity, integrity or official status, while ensuring their correct and consistent use across media, official, digital and advertising materials.

The government instructed all entities covered by the circular to take the necessary measures to ensure that their employees and personnel comply with its provisions.

Akeed detects 697 rumours during first half of 2026

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordanian Media Credibility Monitor (Akeed), affiliated with the Jordan Media Institute, recorded 697 rumours circulating among the public during the first half of this year, averaging 116.2 rumours per month.

The monitor's semi-annual report, released on Saturday, showed that half of the recorded rumours were concentrated in two sectors, politics and the economy, with 352 rumours accounting for 50.5 per cent of the total, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Political rumours topped the list with 177 cases, followed by economic rumours with 175, social rumours with 141, security-related



rumours with 95, public affairs with 66 and health-related rumours with 43.

The report found that most of the rumours originated from domestic sources, with 532 cases representing 76.3 per cent of the total, compared with 165 rumours from external sources, accounting for 23.7 per cent.

It noted that the presence of external sources fluctuated over the

six-month period, with 81 externally sourced rumours recorded in March and April alone. Most of these were detected in April, when the number of rumours originating from external sources reached 50.

According to the report, social media platforms were responsible for circulating 525 rumours, representing 75.3 per cent of the total, while 172 rumours, or 24.7 per cent, were pub-

lished by media outlets.

The monitor said that these figures clearly indicate that digital platforms were the primary channel for spreading and re-circulating rumours during the reporting period, particularly in March, when 137 rumours appeared on social media compared with just five cases in the media.

It added that the findings demonstrate that responsibility for limiting the spread of rumours does not rest solely with digital platforms, but also requires stronger verification standards and professional editorial practices within media organisations, particularly when reporting information from external sources or covering sen-

sitive and fast-moving events.

The report also found that 225 rumours, representing 32.3 per cent of the total, were the subject of official denials or clarifications.

April recorded the highest number of officially denied rumours, with 55 cases, while June recorded the highest proportion of denials relative to the total number of rumours recorded that month, at 51.1 per cent.

Akeed Media Content Monitor Souzan Abu Al Sundus told Petra that the highest number of rumours was recorded in March, with 142 cases, followed by April with 157, and May with 121, while June and February recorded 92 and 89 rumours, respectively.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Wadi Ziqlab reveals clues to Epipalaeolithic life

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — The Epipalaeolithic Period in the Levant (approximately 20,000-8,200 BC) is characterised in the archaeological literature by an image of nomadic hunter-gatherers hunting local fauna and harvesting wild cereals and grasses.

The high percentage of microliths in the archaeological record represents a continued trend towards microlithisation that begins in the Upper Palaeolithic and distinguishes this period from the following Neolithic.

"These microliths are variable in form, but have an increasing tendency towards geometric shapes, beginning in the Middle Epipalaeolithic with trapeze-rectangles and reaching an apex with Natufian lunates," said



View of Wadi Ziqlab, looking north Al Basatin is on the oval terrace at lower centre

Danielle Macdonald from the University of Tulsa.

Variability in microlith form is often defined by the perceived differences in assem-

blages between the arid and Mediterranean zones within the Levantine region, Macdonald said.

He noted that there have been numerous

interpretations of microlith variability and most archaeologists have delineated different cultural terms for the variation seen both spatially and tempo-

rally between microlith components of Mediterranean and arid-zone sites.

Traditional studies of the Epipalaeolithic delineate cultures, both temporally and spatially, based on the percentages as well as the presence or absence of different microlith forms.

Heavy reliance on lithic assemblages for the creation of cultural distinctions is the result of preservation; lithics are the most common artefact class in Epipalaeolithic assemblages as they tend to survive post-depositional processes better than other artefacts of the period such as bone and shell.

"Although typological categorisation does obscure the variability inherent to each individual piece, one does gain the advantage of

comparability between assemblages. Thus, current studies based on these typological categories are inherently comparable but they continue to reproduce previous biases used to construct the original typology."

'Within this diverse archaeological landscape fourteen Epipalaeolithic sites...'

"Unfortunately, the continued splitting of lithic variability into new typologies disconnects research-

ers, thereby obscuring general patterns and trends during the Epipalaeolithic," the professor said.

According to Macdonald, authors have been re-evaluating the validity of splitting the Epipalaeolithic into a multitude of distinct cultural groups and more emphasis has been placed on the continuity seen within assemblages then the differences between them.

"Despite the acceptance that the numerous cultural identities may be superfluous, some authors do not reject the notion that at least some of the cultural delineations are valid," Macdonald said.

Wadi Ziqlab, in the Mediterranean zone of the southern Levant, is located in the Al Koura district of Northern Jordan.

The river valley and

its main tributaries have been extensively surveyed and excavated and the results of these archaeological explorations have yielded sites dating from Lower Palaeolithic to modern Islamic contexts.

"Within this diverse archaeological landscape fourteen Epipalaeolithic sites, ranging from the Early to Middle Epipalaeolithic, have been identified. Included in these sites is Uyun Al Hammam and this site is unique in the landscape because of the density and depth of cultural materials and the presence of human burials," Macdonald noted.

The professor added that only seven of the fourteen identified Epipalaeolithic sites within Wadi Ziqlab have been the subject of archaeological excavation.

REPORT



GAM photo

Director General of the Department of Statistics Haidar Fraihat says that the field phase of the General Population and Housing Census 2026 will be conducted from October 1 to 30

DoS to launch population census field phase in October

AMMAN (JT) — Director General of the Department of Statistics (DoS) Haidar Fraihat said the field phase of the General Population and Housing Census 2026 will be conducted from October 1 to 30.

of the census, while the fourth and final phase will be carried out in October.

Fraihat noted that the census is a major national undertaking that will involve around 12,000 field enumerators over the course of a month, most of them school-teachers from across the Kingdom.

"The census will cover everyone residing in the Kingdom, regardless of nationality, to provide an accurate snapshot of Jordan's current population," he said.

He explained that the census will be carried out electronically using AI smart forms capable of identifying inconsistencies in the data, and the information will be verified against Civil Status Department records and databases of non-Jordanian residents, in addition to collecting data on Jordanians living abroad.

He noted that the census will provide updated figures on Jordan's actual population and population growth rate, replacing the current estimates derived from the 2015 census.

'The census will cover everyone residing in the Kingdom, regardless of nationality...'

Speaking to Al Mamlaka TV on Saturday, Fraihat said that census teams will visit every household, with enumerators conducting face-to-face interviews, requesting a national ID card or family book, and collecting the information needed to determine the actual population.

He also added that the DoS has completed the first three phases

Safadi stresses need to implement US-Iran ceasefire, restore regional stability

Foreign minister holds talks with counterparts on ceasefire, Gaza, Syria, regional security

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Saturday reiterated Jordan's support for regional and international efforts to end the current escalation, implement the ceasefire agreement between the US and Iran, and restore security and stability across the region.

During separate phone calls with Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates Badr Abdelatty, UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Safadi discussed the latest regional developments and efforts to contain the crisis, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.



Ayman Safadi

Safadi stressed that Jordan will continue to take all necessary measures to safeguard its citizens, security,

stability and sovereignty, while reaffirming the Kingdom's full solidarity with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in confronting Iranian aggression and protecting their security and

stability. The ministers also condemned the Iranian aggression against Arab countries and any actions that threaten their security, sovereignty, stability and the safety of their peoples.

They also reaffirmed their solidarity against all threats targeting the security of Jordan and the GCC states.

The discussions focused on ensuring the implementation of the ceasefire agreement reached between the US and Iran on June 15, 2026, with the ministers stressing that dialogue and negotiations remain the only path to a comprehensive and lasting resolution of the crisis.

They also underscored the importance of guaranteeing freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz in accordance with international law and maintaining regional security and stability.

The ministers also warned against the consequences of Israel's continued illegal

measures in the occupied Palestinian territories, saying they deepen the occupation, violate the Palestinian people's right to freedom, statehood and a dignified life on their national soil, and undermine prospects for achieving a just and lasting peace.

The ministers also stressed continued coordination in support of Syria's unity, security and stability, as well as reconstruction efforts, while condemning Israeli attacks on Syria, interference in its internal affairs and attempts to undermine its stability.

Fidan also briefed Safadi on the outcomes of the NATO Summit hosted by Turkey last week and Safadi congratulated his counterpart on the successful organization of the summit.

Industrial sector played key role in maintaining price stability amid global inflation — JCI

AMMAN (JT) — The industrial sector has played a key role in limiting the impact of the global inflation wave on the local market, helping maintain price stability and protect citizens' purchasing power despite sharp increases in energy prices, raw material costs and global supply chain disruptions, according to a study by the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI).

The chamber said on Saturday that the study was conducted following official data showing that Jordan recorded lower inflation rates than global averages over the past



Photo courtesy of Jordan Industrial Estate Cooperation

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

five years, Al Rai daily reported.

The study analysed the relationship between

the Industrial Producer Price Index and consumer inflation during the 2015-

2026 period, while examining the industrial sector's contribution to reducing the trans-

mission of global price shocks to the local market.

JCI Chairman Fathi Jaghbir said the findings show that national industry was not a major source of inflationary pressures in recent years, but rather an important component of economic stability.

He noted that the sector helped strengthen the resilience of the national economy and protected consumers from the full impact of global inflation, despite manufacturers facing unprecedented increases in production costs, including energy, raw materials,

shipping and supply chain expenses.

"Jordanian factories absorbed part of these cost increases to maintain stability in the local market and safeguard citizens' purchasing power," Jaghbir said.

He added that the role of national industry extends beyond production, employment and exports, contributing to economic stability and enhancing the economy's ability to withstand external shocks.

Jaghbir stressed that a strong and diversified industrial base is one of the key pillars of economic resilience.

Army foils drone smuggling attempts in southern region

AMMAN (JT) — The Southern Military Region on Saturday thwarted an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of narcotics using a drone along one of Jordan's border fronts.

According to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement, border guard units detected the drone, applied the approved rules of engagement and brought it down inside Jordanian territory.

The operation was carried out in coordination with relevant military and security agencies and the Anti-Narcotics Department, which seized the illegal shipment. The confiscated items were referred to the relevant authorities for legal action.



JAF photo

The Southern Military Region on Saturday thwarts an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of narcotics using two

Also on Friday, the Southern Military Region thwarted an

attempt to smuggle a large quantity of narcotics using two

drones along one of its border fronts. Border guard units

detected the drones, applied the rules of engagement and downed them along with their cargo inside Jordanian territory.

The operation was carried out in coordination with military and security agencies and the Anti-Narcotics Department. The seized items were referred to the competent authorities for legal action.

JAF reiterated that border guard forces continue to carry out their duties with a high level of efficiency and readiness, stressing that troops remain prepared to prevent infiltration and smuggling attempts and respond firmly to any threats targeting the Kingdom's security and stability.

'Bank-approved credit facilities rise to JD6.2b in first five months of 2026'

AMMAN (JT) — The value of new credit facilities approved by banks operating in Jordan increased during the first five months of 2026, reaching JD6.236 billion compared with JD4.105 billion during the same period in 2025, according to Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) data.

The CBJ figures showed that the total value of new credit facility applications submitted by the end of May 2026 rose by 14.6 per cent year-on-year to JD6.724 billion, through around 186,000 applications, compared with JD5.882 billion across 170,000 applications during the same period last year.

Of the total applications submitted this year, around 130,000 were approved by the



Al Mamlaka TV photo

The Central Bank of Jordan says that the value of new credit facilities approved by banks operating in Jordan increased during the first five months of 2026, reaching JD6.236 billion compared with JD4.105 billion during the same period in 2025

banking system, while more than 55,000 applications valued at JD488 million were rejected.

The value of rejected applications declined

compared with the same period in 2025, when banks turned down around 42,000 applications worth JD628 million.

CRIME

Cassation Court upholds eight-year sentences for father, two sons over attempted murder

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld a January 2022 Criminal Court ruling, sentencing a father and his two sons to eight years in prison each after convicting them of attempting to murder a barber in Rusiefeh in June 2020.

The Criminal Court

declared the defendants guilty of attempting to murder the barber following a heated argument and handed each defendant 12 years in prison.

Court papers said the defendants engaged in a heated argument with the victim on June 14.

"One of the defendants, the father, pinned the victim to the ground

to allow his sons to stab the victim and kill him," court documents said.

The victim received multiple stab wounds to different parts of his body and was rushed to a nearby hospital, according to court papers.

The victim underwent several surgeries and survived the stabbing incident, the court

papers added. The defendants contested their rulings via their lawyer, arguing that there were "legal errors in the investigation procedures".

Meanwhile, the Criminal Court's attorney general asked the higher court to uphold the eight-year sentence against the three defendants.

The higher court ruled that the Criminal Court proceedings were accurate and that the defendants were given the appropriate punishment.

The Cassation Court bench comprised judges Mohammad Ibrahim, Yassin Abdulat, Nayef Samarat, Hammad Ghzawi and Oassem Dughmi.





AFP photo

Fishing boats are moored as fishermen refrain from fishing in preparation for Typhoon Bavi, which is predicted to hit the region this weekend, in Lianyungang, China's eastern Jiangsu province on Friday

Typhoon makes landfall in China after forcing nearly two million to flee

BEIJING (AFP) — Typhoon Bavi made landfall late Saturday in eastern China, packing strong winds as it roared ashore after authorities evacuated nearly 2 million people, state media said.

Before reaching China, the storm lashed northern Taiwan and Japan's remote south-western islands, toppling trees and leaving tens of thousands without power.

Extreme weather has already wreaked havoc on southern and central China this week, with storms leaving at least 39 dead and causing dozens of rivers to overflow and a reservoir dam to burst.

Typhoon Bavi made landfall at around 11:20pm Saturday (15:20 GMT) in Zhejiang province, the state Xinhua news agency said, quoting the provincial meteorological observatory.

The typhoon — which first came ashore in Yuhuan city — packed winds swirling at up to 144 kilometres an hour, the agency said.

Bavi was expected to keep moving to the northwest while weakening, Xinhua said, without mentioning any damage or casualties.

As of Saturday morning, authorities had evacuated 1.72 million people to safe places, Xinhua said.

Ahead of the storm's arrival, classes, work, transport and outdoor activities were suspended, and more than 400 flights and dozens of train services cancelled in the province.

"The proactive, all-out mobilisation, which is sparing no effort or cost, is undertaken entirely to guard against the [worst-case] scenario," the government in Wenzhou, a metropolis of nearly 10 million peo-

ple in Zhejiang, said in a statement.

Residents used wood to reinforce metal shutters protecting shops and taped windows, with Bavi forecast to bring "exceptionally heavy rains" to eastern Zhejiang and northeastern Fujian province, CCTV footage showed.

Torrential rain further north prompted the evacuation of more than 100,000 people from their homes in Beijing, the government said, as water discharge flows from the capital's Miyun Reservoir were ramped up to capture potential floodwaters.

More than 130,000 people have fled their homes in Fujian and around 34,000 people from Shanghai's coastal areas and high-risk areas, state media reported.

Streets were largely deserted in northern Taiwan, where most businesses were shut for a second day as wind and rain buffeted the region.

More than 14,000 people have been evacuated from their homes, hundreds of flights cancelled and more than 170,000 households across the island hit with power outages because of the storm.

Taiwan's Central Weather Administration (CWA) warned of "extremely torrential rain" across northern Taiwan and "dangerous waves" of up to 10 metres along the coast as Bavi skirted the island's north.

Bavi was downgraded to a typhoon as it moved across the Pacific Ocean after slamming into Guam and the Northern Marianas on Monday as a super typhoon.

In the Philippines, the death toll from landslides and other incidents triggered by heavy rains driven by Bavi rose to 18, most on

the southern island of Mindanao.

Nearly 11,000 people across the archipelago fled their homes and dozens of ports remain closed, with 313 vessels taking shelter.

Thousands of households and facilities across Okinawa lost power as the typhoon pounded Japan's remote southwestern islands, with the Miyako region hardest hit.

Japanese airlines cancelled dozens of flights, affecting more than 26,000 passengers. Oceans experienced their hottest June on record and could set fresh highs in the months ahead, the European Union's Copernicus Marine Service said last week.

Warmer oceans help tropical storms to intensify and add more moisture, which can fall as heavy rain.

Adding to the mix is the return this year of El Nino, a natural climate phenomenon that warms Pacific Ocean surface temperatures and typically occurs every two to seven years.

Bavi had been on track on Friday to be the largest typhoon to hit Taiwan in more than 30 years, but its strong-wind radius has since shrunk to 350 kilometres, CWA forecaster Jason Cheng said.

Some Taiwanese expressed frustration at the government's warnings, which caused most businesses to shut on Friday and people to shelter indoors.

"Look at how it has caused people to scramble for groceries and clear out the shelves. Honestly, there hasn't even been much wind or rain these past two days," said a breakfast shop owner in Keelung surnamed Li.

Iran FM visits Oman for talks on Strait of Hormuz — state media

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was scheduled to travel to Oman on Saturday for talks on the Strait of Hormuz, state media said.

The visit "will be focused on the Strait of Hormuz and shipping safety" and is "a continuation of the consultations that we started with Oman over the past one or two months", Iran's official IRNA news agency quoted foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei as saying.

The strait is a major source of contention between Washington and Tehran, which effectively closed the strategic waterway in response to the war launched by the United States and Israel in late February.

The conflict was subsequently halted by a ceasefire agreement on April 8, but there have been sporadic outbursts of violence ever



AFP photo

A ship sails off the coast of Ajman on Friday

since, most sparked by disagreements over the strait.

Tehran insists it must control the wa-

terway, a conduit for a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas, and has expressed a desire to charge fees

for ships that transit it.

It did not have such powers before the war, and while the strait comprises Omani and

Iranian territorial waters, under international law the two cannot generally block passage or charge tolls.

Germany probes suspected rail sabotage

BERLIN (AFP) — German police are investigating a new suspected act of sabotage on a major railway line which disrupted traffic and has been claimed by a far-left group.

On Friday morning, technicians no-

ticed a fire in a cable duct near a station in Leverkusen, a city close to Cologne, the police said in a statement published on Saturday afternoon.

The material damage led to disruptions to Deutsche Bahn (DB)

traffic on this heavily used route in North Rhine-Westphalia, the most populous region in the country.

"Investigators currently assume that the fire was started deliberately," the police added, as they appealed for

witnesses.

In a letter published Saturday morning on the far-left online platform Indymedia, a group calling itself "Kommando Angry Birds" said it was "responsible for the sabotage of the railway line

north of Leverkusen". Already strained after decades of underinvestment, Germany's rail network has seen acts of sabotage against it multiply in recent months, the vast majority of which remain unsolved.

Iraqis protest over powercuts in sweltering summer heat

KUT, Iraq (AFP) — Hundreds of residents of an eastern Iraqi city protested on Saturday against power cuts during extreme summer heat, an AFP correspondent said.

Temperatures in the city of Kut have peaked at 44°C, with residents organising protests to urge authorities to boost electricity supply.

Decades of war have left Iraq's infrastructure in a pitiful state, with power failures worsening blistering summers.

On Friday night, hundreds of protesters took to the streets with dozens hurling stones at security forces, who responded by firing



AFP photo

Boys splash in portable water being distributed by a mobile tanker, as summer temperatures soar in Iraq

tear gas and detaining more than 30 people, according to an AFP correspondent.

The clashes lasted until early morning.

Two local health officials told AFP on condition of anonymity that more than 50 police officers were injured. It is unclear how

many protesters were wounded, with one source estimating the number at around 30.

Protesters have likely avoided reporting

themselves to hospital for fear of arrest, a health official said.

Demonstrations against power cuts are frequent in Iraq, especially during the scorching summer months, when temperatures often reach 50°C.

In the oil-rich country, many households have just a few hours of state electricity per day, and those who can afford it use private generators to keep fridges and air conditioners running.

Iraq is the second-largest oil producer in the OPEC cartel, but despite its immense oil and gas reserves, it remains dependent on imports to meet its electricity needs.

VIOLENCE

Nigerian forces suffered casualties in Oyo kidnap rescue — army

IBADAN, Nigeria (AFP) — Nigerian security forces suffered "casualties" during the rescue of over 40 kidnapped schoolchildren and teachers, the army said on Saturday, in an operation that put an end to a major security crisis in the country's relatively safe southwest.

The pupils, whose rescue was announced Friday, had been seized from three schools in Nigeria's Oyo state and held captive for nearly two months.

The army said the children and staff were rescued following "carefully planned and executed" operations alongside intelligence agencies, police and local vigilante groups.

"However, there were some casualties on the part of the security forces," it said, without elaborating.

The shock kidnapping, in Oyo's Oriire local government area,



AFP photo

Protesters have repeatedly called on the Nigerian government to end a kidnapping crisis that experts say has netted millions of dollars in ransom payments

was blamed on militants from Ansaru, a Boko Haram splinter group known to operate in central Nigeria, extending into the southwest.

"I was almost shedding tears yesterday when I saw them. It

was mental torture," Abdulfatai Buhari, a senator from Oyo state, told AFP, noting there were two and three-year-olds among those kidnapped.

"They were so frail," he added. Nigeria has been

fighting a extremist conflict that over the years has seen armed Islamist groups spread and fracture outside their strongholds in the northeast.

But the attack in Oyo state sent shockwaves through a country

where many had long written off such violence as a problem confined to the north.

There, mass kidnappings have become an increasingly regular tactic of both jihadists and armed gangs known as "bandits".

The Oyo abduction prompted protests across the country, a state-wide teachers' strike and high-profile condemnation — all just months before the January 2027 presidential elections.

A spokesman for President Bola Tinubu on Saturday accused opposition candidate Atiku Abubakar of having "weaponised the kidnap as a campaign issue".

Southwest Nigeria — home to economic capital Lagos — has long been considered one of the safest regions in a country struggling with multiple security crises.

Oyo is one of Ni-

geria's most populous states, and its capital, Ibadan, is a major education hub.

Students taken as 'leverage'

Defence Minister Christopher Musa said last week the kidnapers had tried to use the students as "leverage" with the Nigerian government, which is holding some of their commanders.

He added the kidnapers threatened to kill their hostages if security forces moved in.

But the army said its operations, which lasted more than a month, targeted the kidnapers' wider networks and dismantled several hideouts in the forests of Old Oyo National Park.

Arrests across the country, meanwhile, "completely disorganised the group, exerted overwhelming pressure on them and ulti-

mately led the terrorist group to 'unconditionally release' the pupils and teachers", said the military statement.

'I was almost shedding tears yesterday when I saw them. It was mental torture'

Addressing media outside the military clinic where the pupils are being treated, Oyo Governor Seyi Makinde said family visits were being organised — including for "a small girl in there that has been asking for her mother".

"We have to do a bit of medical intervention," he said, add-

ing there were "post-traumatic issues to be addressed".

Armed groups have long used mass school kidnappings in an attempt to extract ransoms and press other demands — most infamously in April 2014 when Boko Haram extremists abducted 276 schoolgirls from a secondary school in Chibok.

A string of mass abductions in late 2025, including the kidnapping of two dozen schoolgirls in Kebbi state and the abduction of some 300 students and teachers in Niger state, drew renewed international attention to Nigeria's insecurity.

Around 40 other schoolchildren were taken by gunmen in Borno state, in the northeast, on the same day as the Oyo kidnapping.

They remain in captivity.



Palestinians and solidarity activists fly kites towards the Israeli settlement of Har Bracha from the village of Burin, south of Nablus in the occupied West Bank on Friday

Iran supreme leader vows revenge for father's killing

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's supreme leader on Saturday vowed revenge for the US-Israeli killing of his father and predecessor, hours after President Donald Trump threatened severe reprisals in the event of any attempt on his own life.

Both sides dialled up the rhetoric after exchanges of fire this week rocked an interim agreement aimed at ending the Middle East war, which broke out in late February with massive US-Israeli strikes that killed former supreme leader Ali Khamenei.

Trump has declared their ceasefire over while leaving the door open for talks, and mediators have been trying to salvage a diplomatic solution, with Iranian media reporting that a delegation from Qatar travelled to Iran on Friday.

"Vengeance is the will of our nation and must inevitably be carried out," new supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei said in a written message.

"This matter depends neither on my personal existence nor on that of other officials. Whether we are present or not, it will come to pass," he wrote in his first message since his father's funeral this week.

He said Iran had compiled a list of individuals to be targeted.

Khamenei has not been seen in public since before the war, and was reportedly wounded in the strikes that killed his father.

Hours earlier, Trump had posted on his Truth Social platform that any attempt to assassinate him would lead the United States to "completely decimate" Iran.

"1000 Missiles are Locked and Loaded and aimed at the Islamic Republic of Iran, with thousands of more to immediately follow, should the Iranian Government act on its threat, pro-



This file US Navy handout photo released by US Central Command public affairs shows Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116) firing a Tomahawk land attack missile in support of Operation Epic Fury, from an undisclosed location on March 1

'Our land, our sky:' West Bank Palestinians fly kites in defiance of Israeli settlers

BURIN, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — As brightly coloured kites climb above Burin, a Palestinian village in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, children race across a sun-baked hillside, watching their creations soar into the sky.

Behind them, the red-roofed houses of Har Bracha, an Israeli settlement, overlook the village below.

Established in 1983, the settlement, illegal under international law, is one of several that encircle Burin, a village of a few thousand people.

Every summer since 2009, residents have gathered on this hill for a kite festival, held on land they say has been partly lost after being confiscated by settlers.

"We want to tell the settlers that this is our land, this is our sky. If we can't reach those lands anymore, our kites can," Ghassan Najjar, one of the festival's organisers, told AFP.

While the festival is primarily for children, it also carries a "political message", he says.

In Burin, conversations rarely drift far from settler attacks or the steady spread of Israeli settlements across

the Palestinian territory. As early as 2008, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) had warned of settler attacks in the area, citing shootings targeting Burin residents and the uprooting of their olive trees.

Since the start of the war in Gaza in October 2023, the United Nations has reported a sharp increase in violence attributed to Israeli settlers in the West Bank, while several Israeli ministers have continued to call for the annexation of all or part of the territory.

'Our roots'

For a few hours, however, the hillside takes on the air of a village fair.

A clown paints children's faces, music fills the air, as families spread picnic carpets across the grass.

Kites in the black, white, green and red of the Palestinian flag soar overhead, joined by another in the colours of Egypt, flown in tribute to the Egyptian national football team.

"Our children have the right to play and to have a real and a good life," says Najjar.

Yet, even this celebra-

tion unfolds under the shadow of the conflict. Before gathering, residents say they first checked that no groups of Israeli settlers were nearby.

"Sometimes we are scared... Last year we didn't come because settlers had attacked the village," says 15-year-old Sanaa Bashar Najjar. "We stay only half an hour or an hour, just to get a bit of fresh air. With the war and the economic hardship, we're simply trying to breathe."

Another resident, Dalia Zaban, says her parents' home was attacked, its windows smashed and cars vandalised.

"Today, we just hope they don't come down here," she said.

As the afternoon wears on, the wind begins to fade and the kites slowly drift back to earth.

The villagers, however, say they will return next summer, determined to reclaim at least a patch of sky.

Wearing sunglasses and dressed with care, Burin resident Qusai Walid Eid summarises the feeling, saying he attends the festival every year to strengthen "our roots in this land".

Jordan's population surpasses 12 million, DoS says

Continued from page 1

Children under the age of 15 accounted for 34.2 per cent of the population, while people aged 15 to 64 represented 62.1 per cent and those aged 65 and above made up 3.7 per cent.

The demographic dependency ratio stood

at 61.4 in 2025, while the average household size declined from 5.4 people in 2004 to 4.8 in 2015.

The infant mortality rate fell from 122 deaths per 1,000 live births during the 1952-1955 period to 14 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2023. Over the same period, the total

fertility rate declined from 5.6 children per woman in 1990 to 2.6 in 2023. The DoS attributed the decline in part to the increase in the average age at first marriage for women, which reached 27.5 years in 2024.

The department also linked lower fertility rates to higher female

enrolment in higher education and economic factors. The refined economic participation rate for women reached 14.8 per cent in 2025.

In education, the illiteracy rate among Jordanians dropped from 16.7 per cent in 1991 to 4.5 per cent in 2025, while the proportion of Jordanians

with a high school education or higher increased to 43.8 per cent.

Globally, the United Nations projects the world's population will reach 8.5 billion by 2030, 9.7 billion by 2050 and more than 10.4 billion by 2100 under its medium-growth scenario.

Video offers glimpse into Crown Prince's service with Special Forces

Continued from page 1

According to Al Mamlaka TV, the training is designed to enhance the operational readiness and individual capabilities

of battalion personnel by strengthening their ability to adapt to different combat environments using available and alternative resources.

The video is the lat-

est in a series documenting the Crown Prince's military service with the 101st Special Battalion, offering a glimpse into the unit's training and operational activities.

Lower House to debate 6 draft laws in first extraordinary session since election

Continued from page 1

The draft law focuses on strengthening governance in the local administration sector and linking it to sustainable development, while expanding public participation, enhancing accountability and improving service delivery.

It also aims to transform municipalities from service providers into development and investment partners through strategic and urban planning that responds to local needs and stimulates economic activity in the governorates.

The draft law also redefines the relationship between municipal councils and the executive administration, assigning policy-making, decision-making and oversight to elected councils, while entrusting the executive administration with preparing and implementing plans.

The measure is intended to strengthen accountability and avoid overlapping responsibilities.

The bill preserves the direct election of municipal council chairpersons and members through separate ballots, while introducing measures to strengthen electoral integrity, Petra said.

The bill proposes restructuring them to include elected representatives...

It also retains the post of executive director to lead the municipality's administrative and executive operations, with a view to improving efficiency, expanding automation and digital

transformation, and enhancing service delivery.

The draft law also broadens the mayor's responsibilities to include overseeing service quality, following up on stalled projects and enhancing coordination with government entities, service providers and local communities, while preserving the powers of municipal councils and the executive administration.

On governorate councils, the bill proposes restructuring them to include elected representatives from professional associations, chambers of commerce and industry, women's unions, farmers' associations and other elected bodies.

It also envisions a greater role for the councils in development and investment planning, while requiring the deputy chairperson of each governorate council to be a woman.

Czech-Jordan ties expand across cybersecurity, energy, development — ambassador

Continued from page 1

Beyond trade and security, the Czech Republic continues to expand its development cooperation in Jordan.

In June, the embassy signed agreements to finance a rooftop solar energy system for the Zarqa Life Centre and upgrade a pottery workshop at the Lutheran World Federation Centre in Zarqa to strengthen sustainable livelihoods. The Czech Republic also supported vocational training programmes in Maan through Terre des Hommes, with a particular focus on people with

disabilities.

Kucerova said that the embassy also organised the first Czech Charity Bazaar in May, bringing together local non-governmental organisations to promote their products and generate income under the slogan "Shop, Eat and Support".

Healthcare cooperation remains another important pillar of bilateral relations.

The ambassador announced plans for a specialised Czech MEDEVAC ophthalmology mission in cooperation with Al Khalidi Hospital later this year. Since 2013, Czech medical teams

have carried out hundreds of free operations in Jordan, providing ophthalmology, trauma and plastic surgery services to Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians.

The Czech Republic has also maintained long-term support for refugee communities.

The embassy recently financed the establishment of a pottery workshop in Azraq Refugee Camp in partnership with CARE International, while previous Czech assistance included construction of the solar electricity network in Zaatari Refugee Camp.

Kucerova also noted

that the Czech military operated a special cargo flight through Amman last year to deliver urgently needed medical supplies to field hospitals in Gaza.

The envoy also said that the embassy plans additional development projects in Zarqa and Maan governorates, focusing on vocational training, equipment donations and support for vulnerable communities.

On regional affairs, Kucerova praised Jordan's role as a stabilising force in the Middle East.

"We view the Hashemite Kingdom of

Jordan as an indispensable peacemaker," she said. "Jordan stands out as a critical anchor of stability and peace in a rather volatile region."

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, she reaffirmed the Czech Republic's support for a negotiated two-state solution as the most viable path towards lasting peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

"The intensity of Czech-Jordanian bilateral talks and the level of consultations clearly demonstrate the mutual trust between our countries," Kucerova said.

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How geopolitics is reshaping the global economy

By Raad Mahmoud Al-Tal

For decades, economists relied on traditional indicators such as inflation, interest rates, unemployment, and productivity to explain and forecast economic growth. Today, however, a new force has fundamentally altered this equation. Geopolitics has evolved from being a background consideration into a central determinant of global economic performance. Wars, regional conflicts and strategic tensions are no longer viewed solely through a political or security lens; they have become key economic variables that influence investment decisions, trade flows, energy markets and growth prospects worldwide.

The latest update of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) World Economic Outlook provides compelling evidence of this transformation. The IMF lowered its forecast for global economic growth in 2026 to 3 per cent, down from 3.1 per cent in its previous projection, while expecting growth to recover to 3.4 per cent in 2027. At the same time, it revised global inflation upward to 4.7 per cent, reflecting the continued impact of energy market disruptions and the resulting constraints on central banks' ability to accelerate monetary easing. These revisions illustrate how geopolitical instability is increasingly shaping macroeconomic outcomes across the globe.

The Middle East and North Africa recorded the sharpest downward revision among all regions. According to the IMF, regional growth is expected to fall from 3.7 per cent in 2025 to just 0.7 per cent in 2026, representing a 1.2 percentage-point downgrade from its earlier forecast. Growth is then projected to rebound strongly to 6.5 per cent in 2027, an upward revision of 1.9 percentage points. These figures should not be interpreted as evidence of structural economic weakness. Rather, they highlight the substantial economic cost imposed by geopolitical uncertainty and regional instability.

A key factor behind these revisions is the prolonged disruption of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most strategic energy corridors. The IMF's baseline scenario assumes a longer period of disruption and an average oil price of \$89 per barrel during 2026. This assumption underscores the critical role of secure maritime routes in maintaining global economic stability. Any interruption in the flow of oil and gas through Hormuz immediately increases transportation and insurance costs, disrupts global supply chains, fuels inflation and weakens economic growth far beyond the Middle East.

These developments demonstrate that the global economy is entering a new phase in which geopolitical risk has become a permanent component of economic forecasting. In the past, international institutions based their projections primarily on economic variables. Today, they must also incorporate political scenarios, regional conflicts and strategic risks into their analytical frameworks. Economic forecasts can now change not only because inflation accelerates or interest rates rise, but also because a major shipping route is disrupted or a regional conflict intensifies.

The implications differ across the Middle East. Energy-importing economies face higher import bills, greater pressure on public finances, widening balance-of-payments challenges and rising production costs that ultimately translate into higher consumer prices. Energy-exporting countries may temporarily benefit from higher oil revenues, yet they remain vulnerable to export disruptions, market volatility and uncertainty surrounding global demand. Consequently, no economy in the region is immune from the economic consequences of geopolitical instability.

These realities reinforce an important lesson: Resilience has become as important as growth itself. Countries that rely heavily on a single commodity or one source of income remain highly exposed to external shocks. By contrast, economies that have diversified their productive base, strengthened institutions, invested in renewable energy, expanded manufacturing and enhanced logistics capabilities are significantly better positioned to absorb global volatility.

Looking ahead, the policy response should extend beyond managing the current crisis. Governments need to accelerate economic diversification, improve the efficiency of public spending, strengthen food and energy security, invest in resilient infrastructure, expand non-oil exports, and deepen regional and international economic cooperation. Such reforms are no longer optional development strategies; they are essential components of long-term economic security.

The IMF's latest assessment sends a broader message that extends well beyond revised growth forecasts. It confirms that economic security can no longer be separated from geopolitical stability. Energy security, resilient supply chains, secure maritime routes and political stability have become integral pillars of sustainable economic development. In an increasingly interconnected world, economic performance is shaped not only by domestic policies but also by the international strategic environment.

The global economy has entered a new era in which geopolitics is no longer a peripheral influence; it has become one of the principal drivers of economic outcomes. The countries that will succeed in the years ahead will not necessarily be those achieving the highest growth during periods of stability, but those capable of sustaining growth during periods of uncertainty. Building diversified, resilient and adaptable economies is therefore no longer merely a development objective; it is a strategic imperative for ensuring long-term prosperity in an increasingly unpredictable world.

How CBJ redefines financial cybersecurity in the Arab world

By Hamza Alakalik

Cybersecurity is no longer merely a technical issue confined to information technology departments. It has become a strategic pillar of economic security, financial stability and institutional resilience. In an increasingly interconnected world, the institutions that stand out are those that anticipate future risks rather than simply react to them.

Against this backdrop, the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) has demonstrated a forward-looking approach by pioneering an unprecedented Arab framework for regional cybersecurity cooperation. Its selection among the top five global projects at the World Summit on the Information Society Prizes 2026 is more than an international accolade. It reflects an institutional philosophy that recognises cybersecurity begins not with technology alone, but with innovation, knowledge sharing and regional cooperation. By treating expertise as a strategic asset rather than a competitive advantage, the initiative offers a model for strengthening both financial resilience and long-term economic security.

The preeminence of this project lies in its cross-border collective defense mechanism, which adopts the concept of Information Sharing and Analysis Centres (ISACs). This mechanism operates through a highly efficient, cyclical security sequence.

The process begins by monitoring cyber threats targeting central banks or commercial financial institutions across the Arab region. As soon as a central bank detects these indicators of compromise (IoCs), threat intelligence and emerging attack methodologies, the data is immediately uploaded to the regional platform for instantaneous analysis.

This methodology establishes what can be termed an institutional cyber memory. Every incident translates into reusable intelligence that accumulates over time to form a strategic database

Consequently, partner Arab central banks receive these alerts and disseminate them to the commercial banks under their regulatory supervision. This fluid, dynamic flow builds a comprehensive defensive security database across all banking sectors, directly enhancing

proactive defence capabilities, elevating protection levels and establishing a unified security umbrella that shields the stability of the financial system while preventing catastrophic losses.

Through this framework, every cyber incident is transformed into an opportunity to fortify the readiness of other institutions before they fall victim to the same threat. Each central bank accumulates a progressive repository of knowledge comprising compromise indicators, attacker patterns, tactics and effective defensive countermeasures. This drastically reduces incident response times, lowers the probability of successful breaches and elevates the overall cybersecurity maturity across the entire financial sector.

In recent years, the nature of cyber threats has fundamentally shifted. Attackers no longer target isolated entities; instead, they exploit digital supply chains, payment networks, and critical national infrastructure, leveraging rapid malware propagation and automated tools.

In this reality, the question is no longer How do we protect our institution? but rather How do we safeguard the entire financial ecosystem? Consequently, ISACs have emerged globally as one of the most successful frameworks for building collective defense through the structured and secure exchange of threat intelligence among institutions with shared strategic interests.

Herein lies the strategic value

of the Jordan Financial Cyber Services Centre (Jo-FinCERT). Rather than merely developing national capabilities, Jo-FinCERT spearheaded a regional project connecting Arab central banks and monetary authorities into a unified ecosystem. Instead of each nation confronting threats in isolation, intelligence is swiftly transferred among partners, accelerating threat detection and minimising response times.

This methodology establishes what can be termed an institutional cyber memory. Every incident translates into reusable intelligence that accumulates over time to form a strategic database. This repository supports corporate decision-making, informs protection policies, and guides security investments toward the most probable and impactful risks.

In conclusion, this achievement demonstrates that investing in human capital and specialised leadership can yield initiatives that transcend national borders. Institutional innovation thrives within an environment that empowers professional talents to innovate, building on accumulated expertise and institutional continuity. This is the vital message delivered by the CBJ: Sustainable excellence is rooted in institutional capacity, not individuals and in embedding a culture of continuous development that sustains achievements across successive executive leaderships.

From digital government to intelligent government

By Zaid K.Maaytah

Over the past decade, Jordan has made remarkable progress in digitising government services. Procedures that once required paperwork, multiple office visits and long waiting times can now be completed online in a matter of minutes. This transformation has fundamentally changed how citizens access public services, and represents one of the country's most significant public sector achievements.

Yet digitisation was never meant to be the final destination. It moved government services from paper to screens, but it did not always simplify the citizen's journey. People still spend time searching for the right service, understanding complex requirements, collecting documents or discovering only after submitting an application, that something is missing. In many cases, the process became digital, but not necessarily easier.

The next phase of public sector modernisation is therefore not about offering more digital services, but about making

those services intelligent. Artificial intelligence provides governments with an opportunity to redesign public services around citizens' needs rather than administrative procedures. The question is no longer whether government services should be digital, but how they can become simpler, more intuitive and more responsive.

International experience is beginning to demonstrate what this transformation can look like. Some governments are using artificial intelligence to review applications before they are submitted, identifying missing documents or incomplete information, allowing applicants to correct mistakes before their requests are processed. Others are enabling citizens to describe what they want to accomplish in plain language, after which intelligent systems guide them directly to the appropriate service, explain the required documents and outline each step of the process. Elsewhere, artificial intelligence analyses thousands of complaints and service requests, identifying recurring patterns that help governments

improve procedures instead of simply responding to individual cases.

These examples share a common objective, making government services easier to use, not simply more digital. Citizens rarely judge public services by the sophistication of the technology behind them, they judge them by the effort required to complete a task, the clarity of the process and the confidence that they are doing the right thing. Every unnecessary form, repeated document, confusing instruction or avoidable delay creates friction, making services feel more complicated than they need to be. Over time, that friction discourages people from using digital services and weakens their confidence in public institutions. Artificial Intelligence offers governments an opportunity to remove much of this friction, making services simpler, clearer, more intuitive and ultimately more centred on the citizen.

For Jordan, this represents the natural next step in its digital transformation journey. The country has already invested in the digital infrastruc-

ture needed to deliver services electronically. The opportunity now lies in embedding artificial intelligence into existing government platforms, helping citizens navigate services more easily, reducing administrative complexity, supporting public employees with faster access to information and continuously improving the quality of service delivery. Rather than replacing people, artificial intelligence should enable public servants to spend less time on repetitive administrative tasks and more time addressing the issues that require human judgment, empathy and experience.

The success of the last decade was measured by how many government services became digital. The success of the next decade will be measured by how effortless those services become. When citizens spend less time navigating procedures and more time benefiting from public services, Jordan will have truly completed the journey from digital government to intelligent government.

Zaid K.Maaytah — researcher in economics and behavioural policy

Trump sparks US midterm fears with election body firings

By Danny Kemp

Agence France-Press

WASHINGTON, United States — US President Donald Trump stood accused on Friday of trying to seize control of November's crucial midterm elections after he fired the last two Democrats on a federal agency that oversees fair polls.

Trump's brazen removal of the officials from the bipartisan Election Assistance Commission comes as he pushes for voting restrictions ahead of the midterms, in which Republicans could lose their grip on Congress.

The two commissioners nominated by Democrats received an e-mail from the Trump administration dismissing them on Thursday, US media reported.

The remaining Republican-chosen commissioner on the four-person panel resigned Thursday, after another resigned in April.

The White House defended Trump's move, saying a Supreme Court ruling last month gave the 80-year-old president

expanded powers to fire members of independent government agencies.

"The president, and head of the Executive Branch, reserves the right to remove individuals that may not be totally aligned with the important task of securing America's elections and ensuring every legal vote is counted," a White House official said in a statement to AFP. The official added that the Trump administration was "working across all agencies and local partners to safeguard elections from fraud and abuse" before November.

Top Democrats vowed to fight what Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer called Trump's "power grab" over the election commission, which certifies voting equipment while administering hundreds of millions of dollars in federal support for elections.

"Firing every remaining member of the bipartisan Election Assistance Commission months before the midterms is a brazen attempt to seize control of our elections before a single vote is

cast," Schumer said on X.

US Senator Mark Warner of Virginia said it was an "extraordinary step that demands an immediate explanation from the administration".

Baseless claims

Trump has stepped up baseless claims of election fraud, echoing his false claims that fraud contributed to his 2020 election loss to Joe Biden.

But Republicans fear Trump's near-record unpopularity, and the high cost of living sparked by his Iran war, could cost them control of the House of Representatives in November.

Trump had previously clashed with the commission over an executive order directing the agency to add a requirement for proof of citizenship to voter registration forms, a demand that was largely blocked in court, CNN reported.

To approve any actions, the commission requires agreement from three of the four commissioners, but it could take months to fill the vacan-

cies, USA Today reported.

Trump's gutting of the commission comes as he shows mounting frustration over Congress's refusal to pass a package of fresh voting restrictions.

His so-called SAVE America Act would require proof of citizenship to register to vote and photo identification at polling places, while imposing new limits on mail-in ballots.

Trump said Friday he would refuse to sign a landmark housing bill in protest, although the bipartisan measure, which aims to tackle the cost of living, is set to become law automatically on Saturday if he fails to sign or veto it.

While Republicans could lose the House in November, losing the Senate appears less likely, especially after the implosion of Democratic candidate Graham Platner's campaign in a key race in Maine.

Platner, a Marine veteran whose blunt anti-establishment message thrilled the progressive grassroots, quit the race after a rape allegation he denies.

BUSINESS

Sunday, July 12, 2026

Partnership between ISSF, STV opens investment horizons in Jordan's AI sector

AMMAN — The Innovative Start-ups and SMEs Fund (ISSF) has entered into a strategic partnership with Saudi Technology Ventures (STV) capital firm to strengthen the artificial intelligence (AI) start-up ecosystem in Jordan and support the growth of AI companies across the Middle East and beyond.

The partnership comes amid rapid global advances in AI and is expected to provide Jordanian entrepreneurs and start-ups with access to STV's expertise, investment network and regional platform, according to an ISSF statement.

STV, one of the region's largest independent venture capital firms, recently launched a Google-backed \$100 million AI fund focused on generative and applied AI. The fund will invest in companies developing innovative software and practical AI solutions for businesses and institutions across multiple sectors.

Under the agreement, signed in Amman last week, ISSF will invest \$5 million in STV's AI fund, while STV has



The Innovative Start-ups and SMEs Fund signs a partnership with Saudi Technology Ventures capital firm to strengthen AI start-up ecosystem in Jordan and support growth of AI companies across Middle East

committed to investing in Jordanian start-ups. The partnership aims to establish an AI corridor between Jordan and Saudi Arabia by leveraging STV's expertise, network and operational support.

ISSF Chief Executive Officer Mohammed Al Muhtaseb signed the

agreement on behalf of the fund, while STV Founder and Chief Executive Officer Abdulrahman Tarabzouni signed on behalf of the Saudi firm.

The signing ceremony was attended by STV's executive management, entrepreneurs and representatives of invest-

ment funds operating in Jordan's entrepreneurship and technology sector.

The investment builds on the longstanding economic relationship between Jordan and Saudi Arabia while creating new opportunities to strengthen the regional technology

and entrepreneurship ecosystem, particularly in AI.

It also reflects STV's confidence in Jordanian talent and expertise, which has played an important role in the development of the Arab technology sector.

The investment marks ISSF's second

commitment under its second fund, following the completion of the first phase of operations through 2025, which received the World Bank's highest performance rating. The World Bank is ISSF's principal contributor.

Muhtaseb said the partnership marks the

beginning of a new phase for ISSF as it expands its role through regional partnerships focused on emerging technologies.

"Amid the structural transformations underway in global venture capital markets, the Innovative Start-ups and SMEs Fund is keen to redefine its role as an engine for the innovation economy through high-value regional partnerships," he said.

ISSF CEO added, "Our partnership today with STV, backed by Google, strengthens the integration of the business environment between Amman and Riyadh."

"This collaboration will contribute directly to localising AI technology and represents real added value for our entrepreneurial ecosystem, giving our promising companies access to an international network of relationships and advanced incubators that will propel them towards new horizons of growth," he noted.

Tarabzouni said AI represents the foundation of the future economy rather than a passing technological trend.

"ISSF's investment alongside us reflects a shared vision to combine the exceptional energies and talents of our two sister countries. Together, we will transform entrepreneurial ideas from Saudi Arabia and Jordan into technology companies capable of competing regionally and globally," he added.

The partnership is expected to create new opportunities for Jordanian start-ups by providing access to STV's technical expertise in developing and deploying AI technologies.

According to the statement, STV's investment strategy is based on the view that long-term value in AI lies not in developing foundational language models but in building applications that use proprietary enterprise data to solve business challenges and improve operational performance.

The strategy seeks to capitalise on the continued growth of the AI applications market as businesses increasingly adopt intelligent technologies to boost productivity and improve efficiency.

Volkswagen sales slide further as carmaker weighs mass job cuts

FRANKFURT, Germany (AFP) — Volkswagen on Friday said that a slide in sales accelerated in the second quarter, as the crisis-hit German auto group reportedly considers cutting up to 100,000 jobs worldwide.

Overall vehicle deliveries fell almost nine percent in the April-June period from a year earlier thanks to plunging demand in China, VW said.

Sales had fallen just four percent in the first quarter.

"The situation in China remains challenging, and we were unable to escape a clearly declining overall market," said VW executive Marco Schubert in a statement.

This was "despite initial positive momentum from our newly introduced, locally developed electric vehicles there," he added.

Europe's largest carmaker has come under intense pressure from US tariffs, slimmer profit margins from electric cars and above all intense competition in China, the world's largest auto market.

The 10-brand group,



Cars are parked in front of the Zwickau Volkswagen Plant on Thursday at the Zwickau, eastern Germany

which apart from its namesake also includes marques such as Audi and Porsche, is planning to lay off at least 50,000 in Germany by 2030.

But recent media reports have suggested the firm is targeting cuts of up to 100,000 worldwide as well as the closure of four plants in Germany.

Germany's powerful IG Metall union on Thursday organised protests at VW sites across the country,

as management presented their cost-cutting plans to the supervisory board.

There was no major announcement Thursday, with VW simply reiterating previous plans to cut capacity and its model line-up, and analysts said talks would likely take time.

"For now, people are sharpening their swords and firming up their positions," auto analyst Ste-

fan Bratzel of the Centre of Automotive Management told AFP.

"This is going to drag on for months and months."

Volkswagen executives have repeatedly stressed the need for the company to slim down as collapsing sales in China have started to look less like a blip and more like a new normal.

It is a crisis hitting the whole German car industry — BMW said Friday

its second-quarter car sales had fallen almost five percent worldwide, dragged down by a 30.2-per cent plunge in China.

Chinese brands are also threatening Volkswagen on its home turf.

The likes of Geely, Xpeng and BYD took a nine per cent share of the European market in March, according to automotive intelligence firm Dataforce, up from virtually zero three years ago.

"The Chinese are coming to Europe, also building factories which are highly efficient," Volkswagen CEO Oliver Blume warned in April. "We cannot compete with underutilised plants."

But labour representatives and the German state of Lower Saxony — both of whom take a dim view of possible plant closures — together hold more than half the seats on VW's supervisory board.

This means any major restructuring is uncertain and will be hard fought.

"Fundamentally, Volkswagen is too big, too complex, too expensive and too slow," auto analyst Bratzel said.

IEA says global oil demand picks up despite war fears

PARIS, France (AFP) — The International Energy Agency (IEA) said recently that "a recovery" in global oil demand had started as supplies tentatively start moving through the strategic Strait of Hormuz again and prices ease.

"A recovery in world oil demand is underway, with consumption set to rise from its May nadir," the IEA's monthly report said.

The agency had in June predicted a fall in demand of 1.1 million barrels a day (mbd) through 2026 because of the Middle East war, which strangled traffic through the strait. It now expects a one million barrel a day fall.

"Global oil supply rebounded by a sharp 4.1 mbd to 98.8 mbd in June, as a resumption of flows through the Strait of Hormuz underpinned a partial recovery in Gulf production. World output was nevertheless some 9.4 mbd below pre-war levels," it said.

"Total Gulf oil exports, including vol-



AFP file photo

umes bypassing the Strait, surged by 6.5 mbd in June, to 16.1 mbd — a big jump but still well below the 24 mbd average before the war started."

According to the IEA, world supply improved to 102.6 mbd in June and would continue to get better if there was "a swift de-escalation of renewed hostilities".

"If transit volumes improve, oil supply will expand by 7.5 mbd next year," the agency added.

The agency said world oil reserves increased for the first time since the US-Israeli attacks on Iran

on February 28 set off the war.

It added that stocks in the richest nations had fallen as their oil imports remained low despite the rise in volumes being transported by sea.

While oil prices fell dramatically in June, fresh fighting between US and Iranian forces this week "clouds the outlook", the IEA said.

"Renewed exchanges of fire in the Gulf this week highlight the risks of not reaching a lasting peace agreement, which is a must for the normalisation in oil markets," it commented.

STOCK

Wall Street gets small boost from SK hynix debut



AFP Photo via Getty Images North America

People walk along Wall Street outside of the New York Stock Exchange on Thursday, in New York City

NEW YORK (AFP) — Global stock markets rose slightly on Friday as investors digested a wave of corporate announcements, while the Nasdaq failed to get a major boost from the solid debut of South Korean chip titan SK hynix on Wall Street.

The supplier of advanced memory chips used for AI technology raised \$26.5 billion for its mega US listing Friday, in one of the world's biggest-ever stock sales.

The chipmaker set a price of \$149 for each

American depositary share — slightly more than its Seoul closing price on Thursday — ahead of its debut on the Nasdaq.

That meant it had raised \$26.5 billion, the most for a US listing by a foreign firm.

The US listing surged nearly 13 per cent in its first day of trading, closing at \$168.

SK hynix, along with Samsung and Micron, is a heavyweight in the global market for the high-bandwidth memory used in AI

servers alongside other data-crunching semiconductors.

The South Korean company "got a warm reception, lessening some of the concerns around artificial intelligence and the questions that investors are having about the cyclicity of the semiconductor business and the return on investment", Angelo Kourkafas, from Edward Jones, told AFP.

The Nasdaq's composite index dipped at the start of trading and spent most of the morn-

ing in the red, and was flat as SK hynix shares began to trade, before heading into the green.

South Korea led gains in Asia, while European markets ended the day mixed.

Shares in Meta shot up six per cent after the Facebook and Instagram parent launched Muse Spark 1.1, an AI model for computer coders, putting it in more direct competition with leaders OpenAI and Anthropic.

British mobile phone giant Vodafone saw its

share price surge 12.6 per cent, topping London's FTSE 100 index, after French tycoon Xavier Niel was set to pay 5.1 billion euros (\$5.8 billion) to become the group's largest shareholder.

On the second-tier FTSE 250, EasyJet shares soared 14.1 per cent after US investor Apollo swooped in with a \$7.7-billion takeover offer for the British no-frills airline.

Oil prices retreated after spiking earlier in the week as the United

States and Iran exchanged fire again.

"As we move to the end of the week, volatility has retreated and fears about an escalation in tensions between the US and Iran appear overdone," said Kathleen Brooks, research director at trading group XTB.

"If we do not return to a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, the impact from the war in the Middle East should not leave a lasting scar on the global economy," she added.

THE JORDAN TIMES
SPORTS
AT A GLANCE

RUGBY

Pollock a hat-trick hero as England hammer Fiji to end losing streak

LIVERPOOL (AFP) — Henry Pollock scored a hat-trick of tries as England ended their five-match losing streak with a 73-8 Nations Championship rout of Fiji in Liverpool on Saturday. England ran in 11 tries as they bounced back from last week's tournament-opening 45-21 loss away to world champions South Africa, with Test debutants Bernhard Janse van Rensburg and Noah Caluori among the try-scorers. Fiji had to play more than half the match down to 14 men after Simone Kuruvoli was sent off for kicking Ellis Genge shortly before the interval at the home of Premier League football club Everton. Fiji trailed 35-3 when Kuruvoli departed, with South African-born Van Rensburg among the try scorers just 218 seconds after coming on as a head injury assessment replacement for Henry Slade, and three days after qualifying for England on residency grounds. England coach Steve Borthwick, under pressure coming into this game, was able to empty his bench in the second half and 19-year-old novice replacement Caluori scored a try in the 65th minute.

CRICKET

Australia's Big Bash League to open season in India

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Australia's Twenty20 Big Bash League will open its season this year in Chennai — the first foreign cricket league to play in the huge Indian market. The landmark announcement was made on Friday during a visit to Melbourne by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as part of a broader strategy to strengthen cooperation between the two countries. Melbourne Renegades will take on defending champions Perth Scorchers on December 12 at MA Chidambaram Stadium before one of global cricket's most passionate audiences. "Australia and India are united by our love and passion for sport," said Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. "I am excited to expand cooperation with India on sport, which not only brings joy to Australians but boosts trade, tourism and investment. The match will be the cornerstone of a week-long festival called 'G'day Namaste' to be held across India in December, featuring Australian cultural, business and sports events."

Los Angeles, United States (AFP) — Spain beat Belgium 2-1 on Friday to move into a blockbuster World Cup semifinal against France after a hectic game decided by a goalkeeping error from Senne Lammens.

The unfancied Belgians had fought back from going a goal down to Fabian Ruiz's strike on the half-hour mark at a boiling SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles, with Charles De Ketelaere bringing them level on 41 minutes.

It was the first goal that Spain have conceded at this tournament.

As an increasingly tense quarter-final seemed to be heading for extra time, Pau Cubarsi unleashed a shot from 25 yards out that Manchester United 'stopper Lammens couldn't keep hold of.

Mikel Merino was perfectly positioned to poke in the rebound in the 88th minute.

It was a heartbreaking moment for Lammens but Merino, who had also delivered the killer blow to Portugal in the last 16, turned to the massed ranks of Spanish fans in the 70,492 crowd and celebrated.

"It seems like a coincidence, and if you go in prepared, it can happen again. I'm thrilled. I doubt it will happen again, we'll see," Merino said of his second winning goal in a row, which came just two minutes after he came on in the 86th minute. Merino said Spain

would relish facing France in the semi-final.



Spain's forward #19 Lamine Yamal fights for the ball with Belgium's midfielder #23 Nicolas Raskin, defender #18 Joaquin Seys and forward #11 Jeremy Doku during the 2026 World Cup football tournament quarter-final match between Spain and Belgium at the Los Angeles Stadium in Inglewood on Friday

Spain had needed that touch of fortune after being denied by the Belgian defence. Lamine Yamal twisted and turned down the Belgian right side and gradually had a growing influence after an underwhelming tournament so far — he was named the player of the match for his efforts.

France, who comfortably beat Morocco 2-0 on Thursday to move into the last four, will have taken note of how rattled the Spanish defence seemed at times as they contemplate their meeting with Spain in Arlington, Texas, on Tuesday.

Red-letter Saturday

On Saturday, the remaining two quarter-finals will take place on

On Thursday, France made a good Morocco team look decidedly average in Foxborough, Massachusetts.

Kylian Mbappe scored his eighth goal of this World Cup and 20th World Cup goal overall before Ousmane Dembele completed the job. France captain Mbappe was substituted and applied an ice pack to his foot but was quick to reassure fans that it was nothing serious.

Norway face England in Miami, and Norway coach Stale Solbakken said the showdown between strikers Erling Haaland and Harry Kane will go a long way to deciding the outcome.

Haaland has struck seven times in his first four appearances at a major tournament to fire Norway to the last eight

for the first time on their return to the World Cup after a 28-year absence.

Kane is just one goal behind the Manchester City striker for the tournament after taking his World Cup tally to 14 as he has helped England reach a third consecutive quarter-final.

"I think it's Norway versus England, but I don't think it is a secret that Kane is the match winner number one for England and Haaland is the match winner number one for us," Solbakken said at his pre-match press conference.

England's bid to return to the semi-finals after a last-eight exit four years ago hit another bump as centre-half Marc Guehi is now a doubt because of a hamstring strain.

Guehi will be assessed Friday, but with Jarell Quansah suspended for the quarter-final clash after being sent off against Mexico in the previous round, coach Thomas Tuchel finds himself with unwanted defensive headaches as he plots how to stop the marauding Haaland.

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LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

Protecting the protectors: Racing to save Philippine mangroves

By Pam Castro
Agence France-Presse

MASBATE, Philippines — Standing knee-deep in coastal waters, environmentalist Andrea Pimentel guides workers as they drive bamboo poles into the seabed to block sediment from choking the tidal channel sustaining a mangrove forest.

Mangroves are a key natural defence against storm surges and coastal erosion in the Philippines, which is hit by around 20 typhoons each year.

But the country has lost over 60 per cent of its mangrove cover since 1918, government data shows and increasingly powerful storms are threatening what remains by stirring up sediment that clogs water channels and suffocates mangroves at the roots.

"Our typhoons are becoming frequent and getting stronger," said Andrea Pimentel, project manager for environmental organization WWF-Philippines.

"Even [if] mangroves are resilient, they can also be affected, and eventually they could die," she added, shortly before heading by boat to a mangrove site in Masbate province's Batuan town.

Pimentel works with local communities to reha-



Margiela's motivations for selling his personal items range from clearing out his storage to personally overseeing the dispersal of the items of fashion history to collectors and institutions

bilitate mangroves across 245 hectares, including a two-hectare stretch where repeated typhoons have left bare patches in a once-dense forest.

Park ranger Bernard Almogera, who fished at the site with his father decades ago, has witnessed the mangroves deteriorate over the years.

"Some of them were snapped off, others like this one were uprooted," the 58-year-old told AFP, pointing to a tree with branches broken by previous storms.

Sweating under the morning sun, men hauled bamboo across the exposed mudflat while

Almogera knelt nearby, cutting the stalks into 1.5-metre poles before driving them deep into the seabed with a heavier bamboo pole.

The fence they are building is intended to slow incoming waves so suspended sediment settles before reaching the tidal channel carrying seawater through the mangrove forest.

If the channel becomes clogged, water stagnates and the mangrove's roots are deprived of oxygen, eventually suffocating and killing them.

"We're really scared, because if the mangroves disappear and a strong

typhoon comes, our houses will surely be knocked down," Almogera said. "There'll be nothing left to protect us."

Scientists warn that while bamboo fences are a cheap way to protect mangroves, they can rot within three years, unlike more expensive permeable concrete designs, leaving debris that may affect the trees they are meant to shield.

But they remain a quick, affordable way to protect mangroves in one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries.

And the urgency is growing. Warming waters

caused by climate change can produce stronger tropical storms.

The world's oceans experienced their hottest June on record, and could reach new highs in coming months as a strong El Nino weather pattern takes hold.

Pimentel said mangroves need immediate protection and rehabilitation, even if bamboo fences must be replaced before they deteriorate.

"If we don't act now, our mangroves will be vulnerable to climate change," she said.

The urgency extends beyond Masbate province.

A 2024 study by the International Union for Conservation of Nature found that half the world's mangrove ecosystems are at risk of collapse due to climate change, rising sea levels and human activity, with about a quarter potentially submerged by 2050 without proper conservation.

The Philippines suffered the second-highest mangrove losses, according to a 2023 survey of 10 Southeast Asian countries led by Filipino scientist Severino Salmo, with climate change impacts and the conversion of mangrove sites to seafood ponds largely to blame.

Fashion's mystery man Margiela sells off his archives

By Adam Plowright
Agence France-Presse

PARIS, France — After spending his entire career guarding his privacy, star Belgian fashion designer Martin Margiela opened up his personal archives for an auction on Thursday that raised more than a million euros.

Fans of the 69-year-old trailblazer, who retired in 2009, were able to snap up memorabilia ranging from sketches to one of his white work coats at the auction in Paris that Margiela personally supervised.

The sale of nearly 200 items raised 1.39 million euros (1.59 million dollars), fees included, with buyers from Japan, South Korea and China heavily represented, auction houses Maurice Auction and Kerry Taylor Auctions said in a statement.

The highest value item was a 1991 pair of Margiela's signature Tabi boots, covered in graffiti, which sold for 364,000 euros.

The sale lifted the veil only slightly on one of the most enigmatic characters in fashion

"This sale is a creative act, and also a manifestation of his concept, his philosophy," auctioneer Salome Pirson from Maurice Auction told AFP during a tour of the



Margiela's motivations for selling his personal items range from clearing out his storage to personally overseeing the dispersal of the items of fashion history to collectors and institutions

items. "He's giving the public the opportunity to discover his inner world, to touch his objects, to own his personal coat, but at the same time, he is the one who is most conspicuously absent," she added.

More than 3,000 people visited to see the collection this week, which also featuring a prototype of one of the face masks he obliged models to wear to avoid distracting from his clothes.

Margiela's motivations for selling his personal items range from clearing out his storage to personally overseeing the dispersal of his possessions to collectors and institutions.

He is 69 years old, he has no heirs, and in one way, by organising this

sale, he is arranging his own legacy by putting all the potential buyers who might be interested in competition with one another," Pirson said.

Margiela was barely ever photographed, never gave media interviews, and shunned the industry convention adopted by most of his peers of taking a bow in public at the end of a catwalk show.

In a rare effort to engage with fans, he collaborated on a retrospective of his work held at the Palais Galliera Museum in Paris in 2018.

The auction also included Hermes items designed by Margiela while he worked as creative director at the French label from 1997-2003.

The items were all gifted to his late mother.

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