



King returns to Jordan

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah returned to Jordan on Monday, according to a Royal Court statement.

Jordan overhauls water sector amid deepening MENA water crisis — World Bank

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan is stepping up efforts to address one of the world's most severe water shortages through a major overhaul of its water sector, as a World Bank report warned that climate change, population growth and ageing infrastructure are driving the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) deeper into a water crisis.

The report said Jordan, one of the world's most water-scarce countries, has just 84 cubic metres of renewable water available per person each year, well below the international threshold of 500 cubic metres that defines absolute water scarcity.

To tackle the challenge, Jordan has launched the Water Sector Efficiency Project, backed by the World Bank, the Agence Française de Développement and the Global

Concessional Financing Facility.

The initiative aims to reduce water losses, modernise infrastructure and improve water services for an estimated 1.6 million people, the World Bank said in its website.

The World Bank said that the project is expected to save around 10 million cubic metres of water by repairing leaking distribution networks, replacing ageing pipelines and improving monitoring systems that detect water losses.



national security and the safety of its citizens. No casualties or property damage were reported, the JAF source said in a statement.

Air defences shoot down four missiles launched from Iran — JAF

AMMAN (JT) — Air defence systems intercepted and shot down four missiles that entered the country's airspace from Iran early on Monday, according to an official military source.

The source, from the General Command of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF), said that the interceptions were carried out successfully as part of operational measures to safeguard the Kingdom's sovereignty, national security and the safety of its citizens.

The statement said that Royal Engineering Corps teams were dispatched to several locations to secure and remove missile debris in accordance with established technical and security procedures.

The source added that JAF remains on high alert and are closely monitoring developments to respond to any threat to the country's security or airspace.

The statement warned that any violation of Jordan's sovereignty or airspace would be met with a firm response in line with the rules of engagement and the country's national interests, stressing that the armed forces would take all necessary measures to protect the Kingdom's security and stability.

The source also urged the public to rely on official sources for information and to avoid spreading rumours or unverified reports.



JT file

Continued on page 5 A photo of the King Talal Dam in Jerash Governorate, 50 kilometres north of Amman

EU launches 883.6 million euros initiative to support Gaza's early recovery

AMMAN (JT) — The European Commission has launched an 883.6 million euros (\$1 billion) international initiative to support Gaza's early recovery, aiming to coordinate reconstruction efforts, restore essential services and strengthen the Palestinian Authority.

The initiative, known as the Team Gaza Initiative, was announced during the second meeting of the Palestine Donor Group (PDG) in Brussels, which was co-chaired by European Commissioner for the Mediterranean Dubravka Šuica and Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa, the commission said in a report published on its website.

The meeting brought together representatives from 65 delegations, including ministers, senior officials, international organisations and financial institutions, according to the European Commission.



AFP photo

Tents for people displaced by war are pictured in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on Saturday

The Team Gaza Initiative will serve as a platform to coordinate international funding and recovery projects across the Gaza Strip, with a focus on rebuilding critical infrastructure and restoring public services.

Priority areas include water and sanitation systems, waste management, healthcare, energy, agriculture and food security, the commission said.

Funding for the initiative will come from the European Commission, the European Investment Bank, the World Bank and 13 participating countries: Spain, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, Finland, Italy, The Netherlands, France, Japan, Switzerland, Sweden and Belgium.

Australia and Canada have also expressed interest in joining the initiative.

The programme is based on the Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment for Gaza, published in April 2026 by the European Union, the United Nations and the World Bank, which identified urgent priorities for restoring essential services following widespread destruction.

During the meeting, Šuica also announced progress on two infrastructure projects related to waste and water management following recent discussions with Israeli authorities. The projects were reviewed as part of wider efforts to coordinate recovery plans, the commission said.

The Palestinian Authority also presented an update on its Reform Agenda, highlighting measures related to fiscal management, public governance, digital government services, and improvements to water and electricity networks.

The meeting also produced new financial commitments through the European Union's PEGASE funding mechanism, which provides assistance to the Palestinian Authority under financial oversight measures.

During a signing ceremony held alongside the conference, the EU and several European partner countries agreed to provide an additional 41.7 million euros through PEGASE. The contribution comes on top of the European Commission's previous announcement of 310 million euros commitment for 2026 and 2027.

Established in 2008, PEGASE has provided around 3.8 billion euros in assistance to Palestinians, with financial controls designed to promote transparency and accountability.

The European Union said it has provided nearly 30 billion euros in assistance to Palestinians since 1994 and reiterated its support for a negotiated two-state solution. EU officials said an effective Palestinian Authority would be essential for achieving long-term peace and stability in the region.

The Brussels meeting was the second gathering of the Palestine Donor Group, following its first session in November 2025. EU officials said the Team Gaza Initiative is intended to improve coordination among donors, implementing partners and regional stakeholders as recovery efforts continue.

CONFLICT

Trump declares Iran blockade back, says US will charge Hormuz fees

TEHRAN (AFP) — President Donald Trump declared the return of a US naval blockade on Iranian ports on Monday, saying Washington would impose hefty fees on ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz as fighting once again flared over the vital waterway.

Iran's military command, however, insisted it would not allow the US to "interfere" in the key conduit for oil and gas, while also warning its Gulf neighbours — who have borne the brunt of its retaliatory attacks — against cooperating with Washington.

The competing claims came as the two sides traded attacks of a scale unseen since an April ceasefire. The US military said it hit dozens of targets on Monday, while

Iran's Revolutionary Guard announced new strikes in response on Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and Oman.

The Strait of Hormuz was not an issue before the United States and Israel began their war with Iran in February, and passage through it was free, but Tehran subsequently blocked the waterway and now sees it as essential leverage over Washington.

The US has vehemently opposed Tehran's desire to charge tolls in the strait, which international law generally forbids, but on Monday, Trump flipped the script and declared that Washington itself would collect fees.

In a post on his Truth Social site, Trump declared that the US would be "known as 'THE GUARDIAN OF THE

HORMUZ STRAIT'", and "be reimbursed, at the rate of 20 per cent on all cargo shipped, for any and all costs necessary to do the job of providing safety and security to this very volatile section of the World".

While Iran's ports would again be blockaded, he said, "all other countries will have fair and open use of the strait".

The spokesman for Iran's Khatam Al Anbiya military command, however, insisted that Tehran "under no circumstances will allow... the United States to interfere in the management" of the strategic waterway.

'In crisis'

Despite last week declaring the ceasefire with Iran over, Trump

has said negotiations aimed at finding a permanent settlement would continue.

He told Fox News that there were hours of talks on Sunday, but accused Iranian negotiators of going back on what they had agreed.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said earlier on Monday that the June Memorandum of Understanding that formed the basis for the negotiations and lifted the US blockade was "in crisis".

The previous blockade, in place from April to June, cut off Iranian oil exports and threatened a damaging shutdown of the industry.

Baqaei said Iran would ignore its obligations under the deal if the US did the same, but nonetheless added



AFP photo

This picture shows ships sailing near the Strait of Hormuz off the eastern coast of the United Arab Emirates at Khor Fakkan on Monday

that Tehran was continuing talks with mediators from Qatar, Pakistan and Oman in an effort to prevent further escalation.

The past week's hostilities have centred on the critical energy trade route, which Iran's Guards say is "closed".

On Monday, spokesman for the Guard Hossein Mohebi accused the US of endangering global oil and gas supplies by interfering in the strait, saying it

Have been killed in Iran since hostilities resumed on Wednesday, according to an AFP tally based on Iranian announcements.

"must be held accountable" while insisting on Tehran's sovereignty over Hormuz.

Amid the fighting, mediators have been trying to salvage a diplomatic resolution to the war.

Pakistan, a key intermediary in negotiations, expressed "deep concern at escalation in regional tensions", according to its foreign office.

'Heinous attacks'

Iranian state media reported deaths in the latest US strikes, which it said targeted large areas across the south and west.

At least 25 people have been killed in Iran since hostilities resumed on Wednesday, according to an AFP tally based on Iranian announcements.



A regional meeting on combating synthetic drugs on Monday commences in Amman, bringing together officials from Jordan and five Arab countries to enhance efforts against the growing threat of synthetic drug trafficking

Jordan hosts regional meeting on combating synthetic drugs

AMMAN (JT) — A regional meeting on combating synthetic drugs commenced in Amman on Monday, bringing together officials from Jordan and five Arab countries to enhance cooperation, information exchange and joint efforts against the growing threat of synthetic drug trafficking.

The three-day meeting is hosted by the Public Security Directorate (PSD) in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Naif Arab University for Security Sciences (NAUSS), with participation from Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, as well as experts from relevant regional and international organisations.

PSD Director General Maj. Gen. Obaidallah Maaytah attended the opening of the meeting, which aims to enhance regional and international coordination and develop mechanisms for exchanging expertise to improve security and judicial responses to cross-border drug threats, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

In remarks delivered on behalf of the PSD chief, Anti-Narcotics Department Director Brig. Gen. Hassan Qudah said that the meeting provides an “important” platform for enhancing partnerships among law enforcement agencies and relevant authorities, and exchanging the best practices in monitoring the production, trafficking and distribution of synthetic drugs.

He highlighted the need to continue developing early warning systems, enhancing security and intelligence analysis capabilities, and building integrated databases to support efforts to track drug sources and trafficking routes.

Director of International Organisations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ali Bsoul stressed the importance of collective action and unified regional and international efforts to address drugs and transnational organised crime.

He reiterated Jordan’s commitment to supporting and developing international partnerships based on shared responsibility and relevant international agreements.

UNODC Representative Hatem Ali said that the meeting follows the first gathering held in Riyadh last year and aims to continue collecting and analysing data, identifying gaps and challenges, and developing practical recommendations and action plans to support national and regional efforts against synthetic drug trafficking ahead of the launch of a regional research report in October.

Participants in the three-day event will be discussing trends in synthetic drug spread, emerging production, trafficking and distribution methods, security and judicial coordination mechanisms, and the development of monitoring and early warning systems based on risk analysis and field evidence, Petra added.

German-backed project upgrades schools, creates thousands of jobs

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, the German embassy in Jordan, the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), KfW Development Bank and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) on Sunday marked the completion of the “Labour-Intensive Maintenance in Public Schools in Jordan” project.

Implemented over two phases during the past seven years through the strategic partnership between the German and Jordanian governments, and UNOPS, the project responded to the dual challenges of strained service delivery and economic hardship, according to a UNOPS statement.

The project supported livelihoods through creating short term employment opportunities for both vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees, building the workers’ practical skills to enhance their future employability while supporting public schools across Jordan.

Secretary General for Administrative and Financial Affairs at the Ministry of Education Sahar Shakhtrah, on behalf of Minister of Education Azmi Mahfazah, noted: “This project aligns with our national priorities, as it contributed to the implementation of Jordan’s response plan to the Syrian crisis by providing employment opportunities



The project’s cash for work modality has improved livelihoods through generating over 16,000 temporary employment opportunities in cleaning and maintaining over 660 public schools

and supporting host communities.”

“It also reinforced the strategic plan for the education sector by improving the school environment and maintaining public schools, which is also consistent with the preventive maintenance programme implemented by the ministry,” Shakhtrah noted.

The project’s cash for work modality has improved livelihoods through generating over 16,000 temporary employment opportunities in cleaning and maintaining over 660 public schools, contributing to an improved and healthier learning environment that enhanced the educational experience for more than 250,000 students, 42 per cent of whom are girls.

Assistant Secretary-General at the Ministry of Labour Ibrahim Saket said: “The Ministry of Labour has been closely involved with this project since its inception. We are pleased that 37 per cent of the participants were women, which aligns with our national policy to empower women in the workforce.”

Reflecting the project’s commitment to inclusion and equal access to work opportunities, more than one-third of participants were women and 6 per cent were persons with disabilities.

Director of KfW of fice in Amman Mattias Schmidt-Rosen said: “Germany and KfW Development Bank are proud to support Jordan’s efforts to improve public services while expanding economic opportunities for vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees.”

“This project demonstrates that investing in public infrastructure can also strengthen livelihoods, develop skills, and generate lasting social and economic benefits. We are pleased to have supported this successful initiative and look forward to continuing our partnership with Jordan in advancing sustainable and inclusive development,” the director added.

Representative and Director of UNOPS Multi-Country Office in Amman Muhammad Usman Akram said: “I extend my profound appreciation to the government of Germany and the KfW Development Bank for their sustained trust and confidence in UNOPS.”

“By aligning our efforts with Jordan’s national vision, we have transformed infrastructure maintenance into tangible, high-quality results for local communities. This collaboration demonstrates that practical, cash for work interventions can contribute to stability while addressing national priorities,” he added.

Royal Court chief attends opening of cancer conference in Irbid

AMMAN (JT) — Royal Court Chief Yousef Issawi on Monday attended the opening ceremony of the annual medical conference titled “Hope and Optimism for Cancer Patients in the Kingdom.”

The event was organised by the Bayt Al Hikma Association for Supporting Cancer Patients and Underprivileged Families, with the attendance of Irbid Governor Firas Abul Ghanam alongside several official, parliamentary, academic, and local community representatives, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Faiza Zou’bi, head of the conference’s higher committee, said that the event carries a “profound” humanitarian and national message aimed at fostering hope among cancer patients and enhancing social support frameworks.

She noted that hosting the event in Irbid highlights the governorate’s scientific and medical standing, bringing together doctors, researchers, and academics from across the Kingdom to exchange expertise and elevate the quality of oncology care.

Khaldoon Azzam, president of the association, said that since its establishment in 2009, the organisation has consistently delivered programmes to support cancer patients and underprivileged families.

He highlighted efforts in organising scientific conferences, awareness seminars, therapeutic trips, and psychosocial support programmes for sick children and their families.

Azzam added that the association currently cares for dozens of paediatric patients and underprivileged families in close cooperation with the Irbid Directorate of Social Development and local volunteers.

Hussein Obeidat said that rapid scientific advancements in diagnosis and treatment have successfully increased recovery rates, adding that preserving patient dignity and offering psychological support to families remain at the core of medical practice.

Nancy Dughmi, a member of the association’s higher committee, reviewed the comprehensive care framework developed by Bayt Al Hikma, noting that the conference aims to unify medical and community efforts to transition from conventional care to a holistic system that ensures sustainable medical and psychological support for children.



Royal Court Chief Yousef Issawi on Monday attends the opening ceremony of the annual medical conference titled ‘Hope and Optimism for Cancer Patients in the Kingdom’

Zarqa completes 98.5% of 2026 census listing phase — DoS

AMMAN (JT) — The listing phase in Zarqa has reached a 98.5 per cent completion rate, marking a “key” milestone ahead of the actual counting phase for the 2026 General Census of Population and Housing, Director General of the Department of Statistics (DoS) Haidar Fraihat said on Monday.

Speaking during a meeting held in Zarqa with the governorate’s executive council, which was chaired by Acting Zarqa Governor Mohieddin Adwan, Fraihat reviewed the results of the completed phase and the ongoing preparations to launch the actual counting of households and residents, Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He added that census teams in the governorate continued field listing operations at an advanced pace after completing most of the building and block listing, which has provided an accurate spatial database that forms the foundation for the success of the census’s next phase.

Adwan praised the efforts of DoS and its field and administrative staff, adding that the executive council will continue providing all forms of support to ensure the success of the upcoming phases of the census, describing it as a “national project” that provides essential data for developmental planning and decision-making.

The meeting concluded by highlighting continued coordination among all relevant authorities to ensure the 2026 population census is carried out with “high efficiency” to produce modern statistical data that supports the Kingdom’s sustainable development.

Fraihat recently said that the field phase of the census is scheduled to be conducted from October 1 to 30.

He said that census teams would 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.

Fraihat added that DoS has completed the first three phases of the census, while the fourth and final phase will be carried out in October.



Director-General of the Department of Statistics Haidar Fraihat on Monday says the listing phase in Zarqa for the 2026 General Census of Population and Housing reaches a 98.5 per cent



The Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship unveils an official web version of the unified government services platform, Sanad, through its dedicated website www.sanad.gov.jo

Ministry unveils web-based Sanad platform to improve digital services

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship launched an official web version of the unified government services platform, Sanad, through its dedicated website www.sanad.gov.jo.

The website was launched in partnership with Optimiza, a company that specialises in digital transformation solutions and services for institutions across the Middle East and North Africa, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The web version enables citizens to access government services “seamlessly” through desktop computers, laptops and tablets without being constrained by smartphone operating systems or storage capacity.

The company said that the web platform also reduces operational pressure on the mobile application’s servers, helping ensure uninterrupted service during periods of peak demand.

It added that the larger browser interface provides a more efficient workspace for businesses and institutions handling multiple or complex transactions, supporting an improved business environment and broader digital inclusion.

The launch comes as Sanad continues to record “strong” user growth, with the number of activated digital identities surpassing 2.8 million, including more than 800,000 new users added recently.

Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smeirat said that the web version marks another milestone in the development of the digital government system and reflects the ministry’s commitment to delivering integrated government services through multiple digital channels to meet users’ needs and improve access to public services.

Smeirat said that the project also underscores the importance of partnering with Jordanian technology companies to develop national digital solutions that enhance the digital economy, improve government services and support the implementation of the Economic Modernisation Vision.

Optimiza CEO Majed Sifri said that the development of the web version demonstrates the “strength” of public-private sector cooperation in Jordan.

He said that the project represents another step in advancing the Sanad platform as part of an integrated digital government system designed to save time and simplify access to government services for users inside and outside the Kingdom.



The Ministry of Water and Irrigation says that water violations declined by 59 per cent during the first half of 2026 compared with the same period over the previous three years

Water Ministry boosts supplies by 35 million cubic metres in 2025

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Water and Irrigation secured around 35 million cubic metres of additional water in 2025, contributing to improved supply and more equitable distribution among consumers, ministry spokesperson Omar Salameh said on Monday.

Salameh said the ministry continues to intensify inspection campaigns, field visits and awareness efforts in cooperation with relevant authorities to protect water sources and distribution networks, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

He noted that water violations declined by 59 per cent during the first half of 2026 compared with the same period over the previous three years, attributing the decrease to enhanced monitoring and enforcement measures.

Salameh said violations remain a challenge for the water sector, particularly amid Jordan's limited water resources and chronic shortages.

He noted that the

'Jordan continues to face chronic water shortages, while strict judicial penalties are in place against violators'

Most violations involve illegal connections to main water sources, with stolen water often sold through tankers or supplied to farms for financial gain, Salameh said.

"Jordan continues to face chronic water shortages, while strict judicial penalties are in place against viola-

tors," he added.

The ministry recorded 6,616 violations against water networks across the Kingdom during the first half of 2026.

The central region accounted for the largest share, with 5,328 cases, followed by the northern region with 779 violations and the southern region with 509 cases.

A total of 14,219 violations were recorded nationwide in 2025, while the number of water service subscribers exceeded 1.7 million.

As part of efforts to protect water resources, the ministry detected 476 violations along the King Abdullah Canal since the beginning of the year, sealed 24 illegal wells and uncovered 54 violations on Khirbet Al Samra lands and 46 on state-owned land.

The ministry said these measures are part of its broader strategy to strengthen water security, improve supply management and ensure the sustainability of water resources.

Safadi, Germany's Wadephul discuss regional de-escalation efforts

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Monday discussed regional developments and efforts to de-escalate tensions with his German counterpart, Johann Wadephul, during a phone call.

The two ministers reviewed ongoing efforts to end the escalation and restore calm in the region, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

Safadi and Wadephul



Ayman Safadi

stressed the importance of adhering to the ceasefire agreement between



Johann Wadephul

the United States and Iran, underscoring the need for dialogue to

achieve a comprehensive solution that addresses the root causes of regional tensions and promotes lasting security and stability.

They also emphasised the importance of ensuring freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, the statement said.

During the call, Wadephul reaffirmed Germany's condemnation of the Iranian attacks on Jordan and expressed Berlin's full

solidarity with the Kingdom.

The ministers also reaffirmed the strong partnership between Jordan and Germany and their shared commitment to further strengthening cooperation across various sectors.

Safadi expressed Jordan's appreciation for its longstanding friendship with Germany and for Berlin's continued support for the Kingdom's economic development.

Student support fund provides JD687m to 747,430 students since 2004 — ministry

AMMAN (JT) — The University Student Support Fund for public universities said on Monday that it has provided financial assistance to 747,430 students through loans and scholarships between 2004 and 2025, at a total cost of JD687.46 million.

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research Spokesperson Muhannad Khatib said the figures reflect sustained institutional efforts by the ministry's Directorate of Scholarships to expand access to higher education.

He added that the programme aims to provide university opportunities to the largest possible number of Jordanian students, in line with the state's commitment to ensuring equal educational opportunities, the Jor-



Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research Spokesperson Muhannad Khatib says that the programme aims to provide university opportunities to the largest possible number of Jordanian students

dan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Khatib said that 36,356 students received full scholarships during the period, with their university education fully funded,

while 272,121 students benefitted from partial scholarships, making them the largest group of scholarship recipients.

A further 438,953 students received univer-

sity loans, representing the largest category of beneficiaries overall, he said.

He noted that the total cost of full scholarships reached JD110.94 million, while partial

scholarships amounted to JD232.31 million. University loans accounted for JD344.21 million, bringing the government's total expenditure on student support over the 21-year period to JD687.46 million.

Khatib said that the figures demonstrate the government's continued investment in higher education and its commitment to easing the financial burden on students and their families, ensuring uninterrupted access to education at public universities.

He added that the balance between the three forms of support, full scholarships, partial scholarships and student loans, reflects the flexibility of the programme in addressing the varying financial needs of beneficiaries.

JVA inspects rehabilitation works at Al Wuheidi Dam

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) Secretary-General Hisham Heisa on Monday inspected protection and rehabilitation works at Al Wuheidi Dam in Maan Governorate, implemented under the "Protection of Water Dams through Labour-Intensive Activities — Cash for Work" project.

Funded by the German government, the initiative is implemented by the German Agency for International Cooperation in partnership with World Vision and in cooperation with the JVA.

Heisa said that the authority continues to implement strategic projects to protect water facilities, improve their operational efficiency and enhance their preparedness, according to a Ministry of Water and Irrigation statement.

He noted that such projects contribute to strengthening water security, ensuring the sustainability of water resources and supporting local com-



Al Wuheidi Dam in Maan Governorate

munities, describing them as a reflection of the strong Jordanian-German partnership in the water sector.

Heisa stressed that maintaining and upgrading dams remains a top priority for the JVA because of their vital role in safeguarding water infrastructure and improving resilience to climate-related challenges.

He also praised Germany and its partners for supporting projects that enhance the efficiency of water facilities while cre-

ating employment opportunities for local communities.

German Ambassador to Jordan Bertram von Moltke commended the close cooperation with the JVA and reaffirmed Germany's commitment to supporting projects that strengthen water security, improve infrastructure and enhance the resilience of water facilities to climate change.

During the visit, the delegation received a briefing on the project's imple-

mentation phases and the completed works, which included the construction of gabion and concrete retaining walls, concrete stilling basins, improvements to the downstream channel through widening and ground protection, and maintenance of the dam structure.

According to the ministry, the works are designed to improve the dam's capacity to withstand flash floods, safeguard its structural integrity, enhance operational

efficiency and protect downstream communities and property.

The delegation also toured the dam's facilities and received a technical briefing on measures taken to strengthen protection, improve operations, reduce flood risks and promote the sustainable management of water resources.

All rehabilitation works were carried out under the Cash for Work programme, which created around 125 temporary jobs for Jordanians and Syrian refugees from nearby communities. The programme also provided vocational training, benefitting about 12 women among the participants.

Al Wuheidi Dam, which has a storage capacity of approximately 750,000 cubic metres, is one of the key water facilities in Ma'an Governorate. The ongoing rehabilitation and protection works are expected to improve its operational efficiency, reduce flood risks and extend its service life.



Finance Ministry launches EU-funded project to strengthen land administration in Kingdom

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Finance Abdul Hakim Shibli on Monday launched a 1.6 million euros EU-funded twinning project aimed at enhancing the work of the Department of Lands and Survey and strengthening land administration in the Kingdom.

The launch ceremony was attended by EU Ambassador to Jordan Pierre-Christophe Chatzisavas, along with European officials, representatives of international organisations and members of the diplomatic community.

Shibli said the launch of the twinning

project represents a significant milestone in the longstanding strategic partnership between Jordan and the European Union, reflecting their shared commitment to advancing institutional reform, strengthening public sector efficiency and providing better services to citizens, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He added that the EU twinning programme is based on cooperation between public administrations and brings together expertise from EU member states, including Croatia, The Netherlands and Spain, with Jordan's national

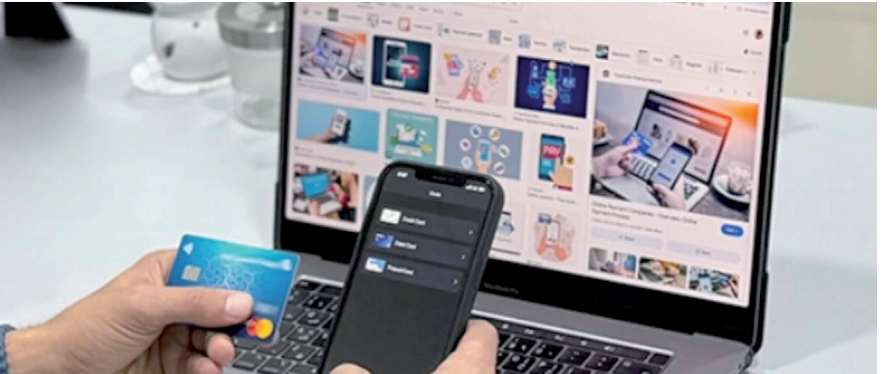
priorities in the field of land administration.

Shibli stressed that developing land administration would help ensure secure and efficient real estate transactions, making them a key driver of investment, entrepreneurship and sustainable economic growth.

He also highlighted the importance of the responsible use of land in supporting housing, agriculture and food security, noting that improved planning and effective land administration would help Jordan better address environmental challenges and climate change.

CRIME

Police foil online mobile instalment scam, arrest suspect



The Cyber Crime Unit on Monday warns the public to be aware of fake Internet pages that claimed to sell mobiles through instalments

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Cyber Crime Unit (CCU) on Monday warned the public to be aware of fake Internet pages that claimed to sell mobiles through instalments.

The CCU, which is affiliated with the Criminal Investigation Department, launched a probe into the incident, which led to the arrest of one suspect,

Police Spokesperson Brig. Gen. Amer Sartawi said.

"The CCU received dozens of complaints from citizens who alleged that they were scammed by the fake pages," Sartawi said.

The victims claimed they were asked to pay the first instalment via an e-wallet in order to complete the mobile purchase process, Sartawi explained.

Once the victims paid

the instalment, the police official maintained, "the person/s responsible for the page would disappear and stop responding to their communication".

An e-wallet is a financial account used via a mobile application to transfer funds, pay bills, manage savings, shop online and conduct other transactions. Users do not need bank accounts to create e-wallets, which are

operated by eight Central Bank of Jordan-approved platforms.

Sartawi added that the CCU used "special technical investigation to trace the money transfer and was able to pinpoint the main suspect in the case".

The CCU warned the public from dealing with "untrusted Internet pages that claim to sell goods via instalments", according to a statement by the Pub-

lic Security Directorate (PSD).

The law-enforcement agency also urged the public to refrain from making any payments before receiving the purchased item to avoid being defrauded, the PSD statement added.

The suspect was referred to the concerned authorities for questioning and indictment, according to the PSD statement.



French President Emmanuel Macron (centre-left) and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (centre) pose for a family photo with heads of states and governments before a summit of the Coalition of the Willing to support Ukraine at the Hotel des Invalides in Paris on Monday

Ukraine allies meet in Paris to boost air defence

PARIS, France (AFP) — Ukraine’s allies gathered in Paris on Monday to ramp up support for Kyiv and develop “purely defensive” anti-ballistic capabilities for Europe.

Representatives of the 37 coalition members, including Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky, arrived at Les Invalides in the French capital for the summit of the Coalition of the Willing, launched by France and the United Kingdom to provide military support to Ukraine after Russia’s full-scale invasion in February 2022.

The coalition is expected to announce the first joint exercises of the Multinational Force for Ukraine, to demonstrate its readiness to deploy once the fighting has ended, military sources said.

Leaders are also expected to focus on co-operation on air and missile defence with Ukraine, whose air defences have come under strain from repeated Russian ballistic missile strikes in recent weeks.

The meeting is “to make sure that the commitment is still there from all nations”, Sweden’s top military commander Michael Claesson told journalists.

Before the summit, nine European countries and Ukraine announced the formation of a coalition to develop “purely defensive” anti-ballistic capabilities for Europe, citing a growing threat from such missiles.

“We do this not against any people, but in defence of our own,” said the joint declaration by Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

“We are stepping up our support for Ukraine. Strengthening its defences, increasing the pressure on Russia and building the security guarantees of tomorrow,” added French President Emmanuel Macron on X with a photo of assembled attendees.

The meetings come the day before France’s national public holiday Bastille Day, which includes a military parade that this year will highlight support for Ukraine.

During the traditional speech delivered to the armed forces before Bastille Day, Macron said Europe was “in the process of becoming a power” ready to “defend itself”.

“The message we send to the world is this: Yes, peace is our goal. Yes, we cherish freedom and the rule of law. And yes, we stand ready to fight to defend them. Always, and at the cost of blood if necessary,” Macron said.

Macron in his speech also called for more European defence industry partnerships, despite France and Germany last month abandoning a joint fighter jet programme.

‘Coalition of warmongers’

Moscow on Monday dismissed the summit as a gathering of leaders who “do not want peace”.

“This is a coalition of warmongers,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

The summit comes at a “powerful moment of renewed transatlantic convergence and unity”, but also of “more favourable developments on the ground” for Kyiv, the Elysee said.

US President Donald Trump, who has sought to maintain relations with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin while periodically criticising both Moscow and Kyiv, signalled his intention to offer greater support to Ukraine at the June G-7 summit in France and the NATO meeting in Turkey this week.

The United States this month gave Ukraine permission to build US-designed Patriot air defence systems capable of downing ballistic missiles, but it may be months before they enter production.

Washington last week also advanced bipartisan legislation targeting countries buying Russian energy — potentially clearing the way for stronger pressure on Moscow.

The United States is not formally part of the Coalition of the Willing and has ruled out any deployment of American ground troops, but would be involved in ceasefire monitoring.

France, Britain and Spain have said they are ready to send troops — something Moscow has warned against, saying any foreign forces would be “legitimate targets”.

Launched in February 2025, the coalition has met more than 15 times and in January, in the presence of American envoys, adopted the Paris Declaration setting out security guarantees to protect Ukraine from a new Russian attack as well as monitoring of an eventual ceasefire.

A ceasefire, however, remains a distant prospect as fighting rages, with Zelensky in recent days repeating his plea for allies to send more military aid to help Ukraine.

UN chief warns over US strikes on Iran, Tehran targeting shipping

- Iran says latest US strikes have ‘rendered futile’ recent diplomacy
- UK unveils plan to ban Iran Revolutionary Guards — ministry

UNITED NATIONS, United States (AFP) — United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres raised the alarm Monday over US strikes on Iran as well as Tehran’s attacks on shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and its neighbors.

Guterres expressed “deep concern at the serious escalation of renewed military confrontation in the Gulf region, including Iranian attacks on ships on the Strait of Hormuz, attacks by the United States on the Islamic Republic of Iran, and attacks by Iran on targets in neighboring countries”, his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Iran has condemned the latest wave of US attacks on its territory, saying they had “rendered futile” all the diplomatic efforts of the last few months.

Their statement came soon after the US military announced a fresh wave of strikes against Iran on Sunday, saying it aimed to “continue degrading” Tehran’s ability to attack commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

“These barbaric attacks are not only a gross violation of the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter... but also a serious threat to international peace and security,” said an Iranian foreign ministry statement.

They had “rendered futile all efforts of the past few months to reduce tension and establish peace in the West Asian region”, the statement added.



This screen grab taken from video footage shared by the US Central Command on social media platform X and made available via AFP TV on Monday purportedly shows US strikes against Iranian military installations

“The US regime has also caused the return of insecurity in the Strait of Hormuz and disruption of international commercial shipping by openly interfering in the process of Iran implementing the necessary arrangements in the Strait of Hormuz,” said Tehran.

The latest US salvo began at 21:00 GMT on Sunday, US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on X, adding that President Donald Trump “has directed the strikes to hold Iranian forces accountable”.

The UK government announced plans on Monday to ban Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a threat to national security, alongside an Iran-linked group accused of a series of attacks against the Jewish community.

“Anyone found supporting or assisting these groups will now face up to 14 years in prison,” Prime Minister Keir Starmer said of a proposed law to be presented to parliament this week.

The banned groups would also include proxies and volunteers of Russia’s GRU military intelligence agency, and the Islamic Movement of Companions of the Right (IMCR), an Iran-linked group which has claimed attacks on Jewish properties in London.

The new legislation gives the British government “proscription-like” powers to designate foreign state proxies deemed a threat to Britain’s national security.

“The move will step up the government’s ability to counter state threats linked to foreign powers including espionage, foreign interference in our democracy, sabotage and physical attacks,” the Home Office said in a statement.

The new legislation will mean that prosecutors do not need to establish a foreign power connection in cases involving designated groups.

“The United Kingdom has identified activity linked to the IRGC involving threats to life and intimidation on UK soil,” Home Office minister Angela Eagle said in a written statement.

The announcement comes after several antisemitic attacks struck the British capital earlier this year, including a spate of arson attacks on synagogues, community ambulances and other Jewish sites.

“The government fast-tracked legislation to bring in new powers after the abhorrent antisemitic attacks in north London,” the Home Office said in a statement.

Last month, 22 countries including the UK, US and European nations blamed the IRGC and its foreign operations branch, the Quds Force, for plotting against Iranian dissidents, journalist and Jewish communities.

The IMCR, also known as Harakat Ashab Al Yamin Al Islamiyah, have claimed multiple attacks, including an arson attack against four ambulances of the Hatzola Jewish charity.

Yemen leader says will not expand confrontation after airport attack

DUBAI (AFP) — The leader of Yemen’s internationally recognised governing council said on Monday that he would not expand his confrontation with the Houthis after his forces hit Sanaa airport to prevent an Iranian plane carrying a rebel delegation from landing.

“I have also ordered that the scope of the confrontation not be expanded in a manner that would achieve Iran’s objective of dragging Yemen and its people into wars,” said Rashad Al Alimi, who heads the eight-member Presidential Leadership Council,



This screen grab taken from a video footage released by the Al Masirah TV and made available via AFP TV on Monday shows smoke rising from the airport in Sanaa

adding he had called an emergency meeting of the PLC following the flare-up.

The United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen on Monday urged

on Sanaa’s airport.

“I am actively engaging with all actors and my Office has contacted military representatives from all sides. We are urging them to de-escalate and refrain from any actions that would risk a new cycle of violence in Yemen,” said Hans Grundberg in a post on his office’s X account.

Yemen’s internationally-recognised government said it struck Sanaa airport on Monday in the biggest escalation in years between authorities and the Iran-backed rebels.

The government said it wanted to prevent an Iranian plane from landing in the Yemeni capital, after they failed to convince the Houthi delegation that went to Tehran for the late supreme leader’s funeral to board a Yemenia flight instead.

“The terrorist Houthi militias — backed by the Iranian regime — prevented Yemeni national aircraft from landing at the airport in the capital, Sanaa, while insisting on allowing an Iranian plane to violate Yemeni territory; consequently, the airport runway was targeted,” the Yemeni defence ministry said.

Israeli guards injure Palestinian leader Barghouti with rubber bullet — family

RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — Israeli prison guards shot jailed Palestinian leader Marwan Barghouti in the leg with a rubber bullet last week, his family said on Monday, an incident denied by Israeli prison authorities.

A senior Fateh official arrested by Israel in 2002 and sometimes called the “Mandela of Palestine” by his supporters, Barghouti, 67, is serving five life sentences for murder and his role in attacks against Israelis during the Second Intifada.

“One of the prison guards fired a rubber bullet at Marwan’s leg, causing him to bleed and inflicting a painful injury,” his wife, Fadwa Barghouti, wrote on Facebook.

“It was a yet another episode in the ongoing assaults against him.”

His son, Arab Barghouti, said the incident happened “some



Marwan Barghout is led to a police vehicle 29 September 2003 on his way back to jail, after appearing before a Tel Aviv court

time last week” at Ganot prison in Israel’s Negev Desert.

He said the family learned about the incident from his father’s lawyer and that Barghouti had not received medical treatment for the injury.

In a letter to the prison service, Barghouti’s law-

yer, prominent Israeli civil rights attorney Avigdor Feldman, said his client had “complained that he had been shot in the leg” when the two spoke during his last visit.

AFP reviewed a copy of the letter.

Israel Prison Service dismissed the allegation.

verely beaten his father during a prison transfer the previous month, leaving him with four broken ribs and head injuries.

In August, a video shared on social media showed Israel’s far-right national security minister, Itamar Ben Gvir, threatening a physically weak Barghouti inside a jail.

On Sunday, the Arab League called for an international commission of inquiry into what it said were “repeated assaults” on Barghouti.

Barghouti was one of the leaders of the Second Intifada, the Palestinian uprising in the early 2000s, and is widely seen as a possible successor to Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas.

Despite being in prison, Barghouti won reelection to Fateh’s Central Committee this year, receiving the highest number of votes.

Drone strikes kill 3, wound 5 in Moscow region — governor

MOSCOW (AFP) — Drone attacks killed three people and wounded five in the Moscow region, the governor said on Monday, as Ukraine intensifies its strikes in response to Russia’s barrages.

Ukraine has been striking Russia, particularly energy targets, which Kyiv says is fair retribution for Moscow’s more than four-year barrages against its territory.

“In the settlement of Pionersky in Istra, three people were killed and three more wounded as a result of a drone falling,” Governor Andrey Vorobyov posted on Telegram on Monday.

Two more people had been wounded in another part of the region, he added.

Air defences shot down 81 drones over the region, Vorobyov said.

Drones also attacked southern Stavropol,



People walk past the Russian Foreign Ministry headquarters in Moscow on Thursday

sparking a fire at an industrial zone, the region’s governor said on Monday.

“The attack has caused a fire in the industrial zone in... Vyazniki, Shpakovsky district,” Governor Vladimir Vladimirov posted on Telegram.

He said emergency and firefighting services were at the scene, and there were no reports of casualties.

“The drone threat continues to be in effect across the entire region. Be vigilant and careful,” he added.

Ukraine’s allies are set to meet in Paris on Monday for talks on putting pressure on Russia to end the war.

US-led diplomatic efforts to end the fighting have stalled in recent months, as Washington has shifted focus to its conflict with Iran.

Planes fight fire in Fontainebleau forest near Paris

ARBONNE-LA-FORÊT, France (AFP) — France on Monday battled to contain a fire that scorched almost 1,000 hectares in a forest south of Paris on Monday, with aircraft in the skies and firefighters on the ground trying to douse the flames.

The fire erupted Sunday in the sprawling Fontainebleau forest, about 60 kilometres southeast of the capital, a former royal hunting preserve that today is dotted with quiet villages.

As the region sweltered through its latest heatwave, the wildfire — rare in the north of the country — quickly spread across the UNESCO biosphere reserve, disrupting rail and road traffic during a busy holiday travel weekend.

By Monday afternoon it had raced across almost 1,000 hectares — an area larger than Gibraltar — forcing some residents from their homes in the normally quiet, bucolic forest.

The air was almost unbreathable in the forest on Monday morning, as fire trucks drove in one after the other seeking to bring the blaze under control.

Wisps of smoke rose above the scorched vegetation and a warm wind carried ash near the village of Arbonne-la-Forêt.



Local residents take photos with their phones as a Canadair CL-415 of the French civil security performs watter-scooping maneuvers by skimming across the Seine river in Chartrettes, in the Paris' Ile-de-France region on Monday, following the forest fire in Fontainebleau Forest

Clement Boher, a 37-year-old resident, said he and his family had been on alert since he saw plumes of smoke rise about the forest on Sunday night.

"Like everyone else, we're on standby, vehicles ready and a back-pack packed. All we can do is wait," he said.

Farmers help

President Emmanuel Macron said on X that all

available resources had been deployed to fight what he described as "an exceptionally large wildfire".

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said authorities were investigating if the fire was started intentionally.

"There were about 10 fire ignition points within a perimeter of 1,000 metres, which suggests that it could have been deliberately set," he said. France is weathering

a third heatwave in less than three months, with fires raging in several parts of the country over the past week.

It is the latest such deadly episode of extreme weather, the increasing frequency of which in recent decades scientists have linked to man-made climate change.

On Sunday night, residents chipped in to help.

Farmers in tractors tugged water cisterns

and aimed hoses at the blaze.

Cindy Fuyard, a 45-year-old nurse, fled her home in the village of Le Vaudoue then returned to give firefighters access to the water in her swimming pool.

"With global warming, it was to be expected," she said referring to the forest fire so far north.

Authorities rushed firefighting planes to help fight the flames, the first time such air-

craft have been used in the Paris region.

Two Canadair planes joined the battle on Monday, scooping up water from the River Seine to douse the flames.

Trains resume

The fire shut the A6 motorway that leads out of Paris to the southeast and parts of the highway remained closed on Monday, according to Google Maps.

But the national railway service said it had repaired cables burnt by the fire on Sunday, allowing it to resume normal services for fast trains connecting the capital to the southeastern city of Lyon.

The country recorded more than 2,000 excess deaths during the June heatwave, and 300 during the high temperatures in late May, according to official figures.

Since the start of the year, wildfires have scorched some 25,000 hectares of land in France — an area nearly as big as Edinburgh and twice as much as during the same period last year, Director General of Civil Security Julien Marion said on Friday.

Temperatures were expected to remain high through France's Bastille Day national holiday on Tuesday, according to the Météo-France weather service.

Ex-South Korea leader Yoon jailed 2 years over illegal polling

SEOUL (AFP) — A South Korean court sentenced former president Yoon Suk-yeol on Monday to two years in prison for illegally receiving free opinion polls in exchange for political support, adding to his growing legal woes.

Yoon, 65, is already in detention while appealing against a separate life sentence for leading an insurrection through his declaration of martial law in 2024.

In a separate case, a court handed Yoon a 30-year prison sentence for sending drones into North Korea to "manufacture" a crisis ahead of his martial law bid.

Monday's ruling was unrelated to the martial law decree.

It concerned allegations that he received free opinion polls between 2021 and 2022 in exchange for supporting a candidate seeking his party's nomination in a parliamentary by-election.

"The court today found him guilty of violating the political funds act and sentenced him to two years," a representative of the Seoul Central District Court told AFP.

In its ruling, the court found that Yoon — in collusion with his wife Kim Keon-hee — received 14 free

opinion polls from the power broker Myung Tae-kyun in return for supporting a candidate whom Myung backed.

"Yoon's conduct significantly intensified public distrust in politics and undermined the people's expectations for the sound development of democratic governance," the court said in a statement shared with AFP. "The defendant's culpability is therefore exceptionally serious," it added.

The court also convicted Myung and sentenced him to 18 months in prison.

The latest ruling comes as former first lady Kim awaits a supreme court ruling over the same case on Thursday.

She was acquitted in two previous rulings.

Kim is already serving a seven-year prison term in a bribery case involving jobs allegedly provided in exchange for gifts.

She is also serving a four-year sentence in a separate case involving stock manipulation and graft.

Yoon plunged South Korea into a political crisis when he declared martial law in December 2024. The decree was swiftly voted down by opposition MPs, and he was later impeached and removed from office.

Pupils were beaten, teachers chained, Nigerian kidnap survivor says

LAGOS (AFP) — Some of the more than 40 Nigerian schoolchildren who were kidnapped in May were blindfolded and beaten by their captors, a principal of one of the schools said on Monday.

Male staff were blindfolded and chained, the headteacher added as details of the ordeal that shook the country finally emerged.

The students, whose rescue was announced on Friday, had been seized from three schools in southwestern Oyo state and held captive for nearly two months, in an attack blamed on jihadists.

Such mass kidnappings have rocked Nigeria before but the Oyo attack marked a rare assault in the country's typically safer southwest.

Rachael Alamu, head of one of the schools, gave a moving account of the abductees' experience during 56 days in captivity, during which they were shunted from one section of the forest to another, with little food.

"Some of the children were beaten," Alamu told reporters at the Oyo government offices, where the military formally handed over the children and their teachers on Monday.

She said the youngest children had their mouths bound with pieces of "cloth, and [the captors] beat them very well".

"The men had it worse, more than us. They were blindfolded, handcuffed and chained" around the legs, Alamu added.

Trekking through forest hideouts

The group was moved around the forest to avoid detection from security forces.

"We had to move from one point to another, that was the major problem we had. When the place is discovered, we had to move" — forced to walk for up to four hours, she said.

Two male teachers were killed, one during the initial attack and a second one while in captivity, according to

the head teacher and the governor of Oyo State, Seyi Makinde.

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

Five security personnel, including vigilante members, were killed during the operation, Makinde said.

Nigeria has been fighting a 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.

The kidnapping, in Oyo's Oriire local government area, was blamed by President Bola Tinubu on militants from Ansaru, a Boko Haram splinter group known to operate in central Nigeria, extending into the southwest.

US vows campaign to end ICC 'threat' to Americans

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — The United States on Monday announced a sweeping campaign against the International Criminal Court (ICC) that could include further sanctions and other measures, accusing it of posing "an intolerable threat to US sovereignty".

The Trump administration said it would pressure other countries to withdraw from the court, marking a sharp escalation in the US effort to isolate the Hague-based institution and starve it of political and financial support.

"The ICC and its friends are waging a war against our country, not with bullets or missiles, but with statutes, compacts and the force of so-called international law," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a video statement.

The State Department said in a statement that the campaign will "systematically disable the ICC's ability to operate, target American servicemen or officials, or otherwise threaten American sovereignty".

The US has previously targeted individual court



The International Criminal Court building is seen in The Hague on April 26

officials it deems a threat to US interests, but the new "whole of government" campaign will pressure other nations "to withdraw from the ICC and cut off any financial support to the court", a State Department official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

'Threat to America'

In February 2025, shortly after President Donald Trump returned to office, Washington slapped asset freezes and travel

bans on several ICC officials over an arrest warrant issued for Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the war in Gaza.

But on Monday, the State Department focused on what it called the ICC's "intolerable threat to US sovereignty", saying the court "claims the authority to prosecute and even imprison American servicemen and officials operating on behalf of America's national interest".

"Americans never

signed up for this, and all American presidents since the ICC's ratification have maintained that the ICC does not have jurisdiction over Americans," the department's statement said.

Rubio added that the ICC "threatens every aspect of our political and legal system", and that it has moved from being a "narrow backstop" charged with prosecuting "only the gravest offenses... when a nation's courts were unable".

In addition to levying

further travel and financial restrictions on people associated with the court, the State Department official said: "We will watch with interest which nations join ranks with us against this threat to Americans who are willing to risk their lives to protect others."

"While the calls are intended to highlight the ICC's abuses and the risks posed to Americans and other nations, nations that refuse to reject the ICC's false authority while relying on US assistance are likely to come under increased scrutiny," the official said.

US reservations about the court predate the Trump. The US, like Israel, has not ratified the international treaty that established the ICC and it has rejected the court's jurisdiction in cases involving the US or Israel.

Judges' lawsuit

Three ICC judges sanctioned by the Trump administration filed a lawsuit in June against the president and other senior US officials, arguing that the measures imposed on them were unlawful.

Jordan overhauls water sector amid deepening MENA water crisis — World Bank

Continued from page 1

Jordan's water shortages have become increasingly acute as demand continues to outstrip supply. In Amman, many households receive running water for only 12 to 24 hours each week, while some communities in northern Jordan receive water only once every two or three weeks under strict rationing schedules.

Climate change is expected to place further pressure on the country's limited water resources, with available supplies projected to decline by as much as 30 per cent by 2040.

In addition to repair-

ing water networks, the project will modernise pumping stations by introducing solar power to reduce energy costs and improve operational efficiency. The upgraded system is also being designed to accommodate future supplies from the planned Aqaba-Amman desalination project, helping to prevent costly losses of de-salinated water once the facility becomes operational.

The project also includes improvements to reservoirs and water storage facilities that support the reuse of treated wastewater, allowing more of Jordan's scarce freshwater resources to be re-

served for drinking and municipal use.

National Water Carrier

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

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

The National Water

Carrier is a world-first strategic initiative that integrates several pillars: The de-salination of 300 million cubic metres (mcm) of seawater annually, pumping systems capable of lifting water to elevations of 1,100 metres above sea level via a 450 kilometre pipeline network and a heavy reliance on eco-friendly, cutting-edge renewable energy technologies.

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

The 300 mcm annual output is nearly equal to the total capacity of all dams in the Kingdom and triple the production of the Disi project.

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

The project, according to officials, will increase the frequency of water supply from one day to three days per week across all governorates.

Broader MENA drive

Jordan's efforts come amid a broader regional

drive to strengthen water security across the Middle East and North Africa.

According to the World Bank, the region is the most water-scarce in the world, with average annual water availability of just 480 cubic metres per person, less than one-tenth of the global average of 5,500 cubic metres.

The World Bank warned that rapid population growth and rising temperatures could significantly worsen the situation. MENA's population is expected to increase from more than 500 million people today to over 700 million by 2050, while water scarcity could re-

duce economic output by between 6 and 14 per cent in some countries by the middle of the century.

Water losses from ageing infrastructure remain a major challenge across the region, with some distribution systems losing up to half of their water before it reaches consumers.

In response, governments are investing in technologies such as smart water metering, desalination, improved irrigation systems and data-driven water management, while strengthening governance and modernising ageing infrastructure, the World Bank said.

The World Bank said that its regional water portfolio totals \$2.57 billion, supporting projects that improve irrigation, expand access to safe drinking water, reduce water losses, protect fragile ecosystems and improve wastewater treatment.

While the report noted that significant challenges remain, it says investments in efficiency, climate resilience and modern infrastructure are laying the foundations for a more secure water future across the region, with Jordan among the countries leading efforts to make every drop count.

THE JORDAN TIMES

An independent Arab political daily, established in 1975

Published by the Jordan Press Foundation

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National Library registration number: **D/1998/2062**
Telephone: **5600800 ext. 2392**
Facsimile: **5696183**
Advertising facsimile: **5696183**

Circulation Department:
5600800 ext: 2383

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Jordan Press Foundation

The Jordan Times is published daily except Saturdays

How is Jordan’s export landscape changing?

By Raad Mahmoud Al Tal

When discussing the Jordanian economy, attention often focuses on limited natural resources, the trade deficit, and the country’s reliance on imports. A closer look at developments in the external sector over recent years, however, reveals the early signs of an important transformation. Although gradual, Jordan has begun reshaping the structure of its exports, moving from dependence on a limited number of traditional commodities towards a more diversified and competitive production and export base.

This transformation does not imply that Jordan has overcome all of its economic challenges. Rather, it reflects the economy’s growing ability to adapt to global economic changes and demonstrates that building a more open economy depends not only on increasing export volumes, but also on diversifying exports and raising their value added, thereby strengthening the economy’s resilience to external shocks.

For many years, Jordanian exports were closely associated with phosphate, potash and fertilisers. These sectors have long been major sources of foreign exchange earnings and have played an important role in supporting the country’s trade balance. At the same time, this concentration exposed export performance to fluctuations in international commodity prices, with declines in global prices directly affecting export revenues.

In recent years, however, the picture has begun to change. According to recent data, exports increased from 20.2 per cent of GDP in 2021 to 26.2 per cent in 2022 before stabilising at 24.9 per cent in 2024, despite ongoing geopolitical tensions and disruptions in global trade. This performance reflects the ability of Jordan’s export sector to maintain its momentum in a challenging international environment, supported by the expansion of industrial exports and access to new markets.

At the same time, the composition of exports has gradually shifted toward higher value-added products. Non-traditional exports increased from 2.2 per cent of GDP in 2016 to 5.2 per cent in 2022 before settling at 2.7 per cent in 2024. Meanwhile, traditional exports, led by phosphate and potash, continued to account for 15.8 per cent of GDP. These figures suggest that Jordan has not abandoned its traditional export strengths but has instead succeeded in building a broader and more diversified export base that is less dependent on a single commodity or sector.

This transformation is particularly evident in the expansion of manufacturing exports. Pharmaceuticals, chemicals, food products, engineering products, and garments now account for an increasing share of Jordan’s exports. These industries generate higher export earnings while creating skilled employment opportunities, encouraging investment in technology and innovation, and strengthening the integration of the domestic economy into global value chains.

From an economic perspective, a more diversified export base enhances an economy’s ability to withstand external shocks, whether arising from commodity price fluctuations, shifts in global demand, or geopolitical instability. Export diversification therefore represents far more than a commercial achievement; it is a fundamental pillar of long-term economic stability.

One of the key drivers behind this gradual but significant transformation has been Jordan’s effective use of its extensive network of free trade agreements with the United States, the European Union, Arab countries, and other international partners. These agreements have provided Jordanian products with preferential access to markets comprising hundreds of millions of consumers, creating significant opportunities for export expansion.

The figures clearly illustrate the scale of this transformation. Jordan’s exports to Arab countries increased from US\$123.5 million before the Greater Arab Free Trade Area entered into force to approximately US\$5.03 billion in 2024. Exports to the United States rose from US\$232 million before the bilateral free trade agreement to more than US\$3.11 billion, while exports to the European Union increased from US\$63 million to approximately US\$689 million over the same period. These figures demonstrate that trade agreements have evolved beyond legal frameworks into effective instruments for expanding market access for Jordanian products.

The importance of these agreements lies in the competitive advantages they provide through tariff exemptions and trade facilitation measures. However, maximising their benefits requires more than simply having agreements in place. It depends on improving product quality, raising productivity, complying with international standards, and investing in innovation and advanced technologies.

Another positive development has been the diversification of export destinations. Rather than relying on only a few markets, Jordanian exports are now distributed across Arab, European, American, and Asian markets. This geographical diversification reduces the risks associated with political or economic crises affecting individual markets and provides Jordanian exporters with greater flexibility to sustain export growth.

Such diversification has become increasingly important amid growing uncertainty in the global economy. Flexible and diversified export markets are now essential for maintaining stable external revenues and supporting sustainable economic growth.

The improvement in exports has also contributed to broader macroeconomic stability. Jordan’s current account deficit stood at 5.9 per cent of GDP in 2024, while the cyclically adjusted deficit reached 4.3 per cent, close to the International Monetary Fund’s estimated equilibrium benchmark of around 4 per cent. Consequently, the IMF concluded that Jordan’s external position is broadly consistent with economic fundamentals, reflecting the increasingly important role that exports play in strengthening the country’s external stability.

Jordan’s experience over recent years demonstrates that building a strong export sector is not simply about increasing export volumes. It requires diversifying products and markets while moving towards higher value-added production. If current policies continue and investment in manufacturing, innovation, and technology is sustained, non-traditional exports could become the primary engine of external sector growth, supporting stronger economic expansion, creating quality employment opportunities and enhancing Jordan’s competitiveness in global markets.

Russia and China: 30 years of strong partnership and still counting

By Gleb Desyatnikov and Guo Wei

On April 25, 1996, Russia and China declared their intention to develop a relationship of equal and trusting partnership aimed at strategic cooperation in the twenty-first century. Five years later, in 2001, the Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation was signed, enshrining the principles of mutual respect, sovereign equality, consideration of each other’s core interests and mutually beneficial co-operation. It is precisely these foundations that have enabled Russia-China relations to withstand the test of time and numerous international upheavals.

An important dimension of Russia-China cooperation is their close coordination within multilateral frameworks. Russia and China actively work together within the United Nations, BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the Group of Twenty, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum and other international platforms. A significant contribution to the development of a common Eurasian space was made by the Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union and the People’s Republic of China, which entered into force in 2019 and created additional opportunities for the development of trade, investment, transport connectivity and industrial co-operation across Eurasia. At the same time, Russia and China consistently emphasise that the mechanisms of cooperation they have established are neither exclusive nor bloc-based in nature. On the contrary, they are founded on the principles of openness, mutual respect, and consideration of the interests of all participants, remaining accessible to states that share a commitment to equal dialogue, mutually beneficial development, and the joint search for solutions to contemporary challenges.

As President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation recently reiterated, “Moscow and Beijing are friends not against anyone, but in pursuit of their own interests.” And President Xi Jinping of the People’s Republic of China, during the joint press conference with President Vladimir Putin in Beijing last month, also reaffirmed that the two countries have always adhered to the treaty’s established principle of non-alliance, non-confrontation and not targeting any third party.

A key pillar of Russia-China cooperation is the convergence of their approaches to international security and state sovereignty. Moscow and Beijing consistently advocate the establishment of a just and sustainable system of international relations based on the Charter of the United Nations, international law, and the sovereign equality of states. Both countries maintain that interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, the imposition of unilateral sanctions circumventing the UN Security Council, and attempts to ensure one’s own security at the expense of the security of others are unacceptable. In their joint statements, Russia and China consistently reaffirm their mutual support on issues concerning sovereignty, territorial integrity and the right of every nation to determine its own path of development.

This approach is particularly significant in the context of persistent instability in various regions of the world and reflects the shared commitment of Moscow and Beijing to strengthening international security through dialogue, mutual respect and consideration of the legitimate interests of all states. The principle of indivisible security and the aspiration to ensure conditions for peaceful economic development are reflected in the complementary initiatives advanced by Russia

and China in this sphere. In particular, Moscow and Beijing consistently support an open and non-discriminatory global trading system based on the rules of the World Trade Organisation, oppose unilateral restrictive measures and emphasise the importance of preserving the resilience of global trade and production chains.

The similarity of Russian and Chinese approaches to key issues on the Middle Eastern agenda is equally noteworthy. Moscow and Beijing consistently advocate the settlement of conflicts through political and diplomatic means, strict adherence to international law, and the prevention of further escalation in the region. Both countries underscore the importance of dialogue and negotiations as the only sustainable path towards reducing tensions and ensuring regional stability. With regard to the Palestinian question, Russia and China call for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, unhindered humanitarian access for the population, and the achievement of a comprehensive, just, and lasting settlement on the basis of universally recognised principles of international law, including the establishment of an independent Palestinian state founded on the principle of peaceful coexistence.

Intensive contacts at the highest and top levels consolidate the foundation of the Russia-China partnership. In recent years, meetings between President Vladimir Putin and President Xi Jinping have become a regular feature of both the bilateral and international agenda. In 2024–2025 alone, the two leaders met repeatedly in Beijing, Astana, Kazan and Moscow, setting the principal directions for the further development of cooperation. Equally important are the mechanisms of regular meetings between heads of government, intergovernmental commissions, and interagency consultations covering trade, energy, transport, education, science and culture. Such a high degree of political dialogue is clear evidence of the profound mutual trust between the two countries and enables the effective advancement of large-scale joint projects both bilaterally and within international platforms.

Today, international relations are undergoing a period of profound transformation. The balance of power in global politics and economics is shifting, new challenges and opportunities are emerging, and the mechanisms of global governance are evolving. Under these circumstances, relationships founded on mutual trust, strategic vision and the ability to respond jointly to the challenges of the times call for values compatible with the needs of the new era. The Russia-China partnership, tested over decades and resilient amid a rapidly changing world, stands as a vivid example of a new type of major-country relationship.

It is no coincidence that the renowned Tang Dynasty Chinese poet Li Bai wrote, “The mountains and streams separate us far, but two minds made one will not drift apart.” These words aptly capture the contemporary character of Russia-China relations. Despite geographical distances, differences in historical experience, and a complex international environment, Russia and China are united by shared aspirations for peace, development, justice, and mutually beneficial cooperation. It is therefore fair to state with confidence that the partnership between our two countries will continue to serve as an important factor of stability, security, and prosperity not only for our peoples, but also for the international community as a whole.

Gleb Desyatnikov is Russian ambassador to Jordan. Guo Wei is Chinese ambassador to Jordan. This article was contributed to The Jordan Times

Jordan does not need a larger economy, it needs a smarter one

Whenever Jordan’s economy faces a new challenge, we tend to ask the same questions: How can we reduce the budget deficit? How can we lower public debt? How do we attract more investment? How do we accelerate economic growth?

These are legitimate questions, but they are no longer sufficient. Perhaps the question that should come before all of them is this: How can we ensure that every project, every investment, and every economic policy generates the greatest possible value for the Jordanian economy?

Jordan stands today at an exceptional moment. The country is moving forward with several strategic national projects, led by the National Water Carrier Project, alongside major investments in infrastructure, transport, urban development and other initiatives that form key pillars of the Economic Modernisation Vision. These projects represent far more than capital investment; they offer a historic opportunity to reshape Jordan’s economy for decades to come.

Yet, their success should not be measured solely by the size of their budgets, the speed of execution, or the quality of engineering delivery. Those indicators remain important, but they are no longer enough.

The real questions are: Will these projects generate sustainable jobs? Will they help Jordanian companies become more competitive? Will they expand local procurement and strengthen domestic supply chains? Will they transfer knowledge and technology? Will they attract new investment and increase exports?

Above all, what lasting economic value will they create for Jordan?

These are the questions that distinguish an economy that merely spends on projects from one that uses projects to build its future.



Khaled Neimat

International experience offers valuable lessons. Countries such as Singapore and South Korea — and more recently Saudi Arabia through its Local Content programmes — have demonstrated that a successful project is not one that ends with its inauguration, but one whose economic impact begins after construction is complete. In these economies, major projects are viewed not simply as physical assets, but as platforms for industrial development, stronger supply chains, higher productivity, technological advancement and long-term investment.

Why shouldn’t this become Jordan’s ambition as well?

It is equally important to emphasise that the ideas presented here are not intended to replace Jordan’s Economic Modernisation Vision or the government’s ongoing reform programmes. On the contrary, they are based on the conviction that these initiatives provide a historic opportunity for Jordan, and that their impact can be significantly enhanced by introducing one additional dimension: Maximising the economic value created by every project and measuring success through jobs, productivity, investment, local value creation, competitiveness and sustainable growth.

This is why I believe Jordan’s economic debate should embrace a new concept:

National economic return

Before approving any major strategic project, policymakers should ask one simple question: What measurable economic value will this project generate for Jordan over its lifetime?

This question should stand

alongside the traditional measures of cost, schedule, and technical performance. In time, National Economic Return could become one of the principal indicators used to evaluate strategic public investments — not replacing existing measures but complementing them, by ensuring that every public dinar delivers the greatest possible economic value.

Consider a simple illustration. If strategic national projects worth 1 billion Jordanian dinars allocate approximately half of their value to procurement, then increasing local procurement by only ten per centage points could retain tens of millions of additional dinars within the Jordanian economy. Those resources would support domestic manufacturers, create new jobs, strengthen local suppliers, stimulate investment and expand industrial capabilities.

The difference between a good economy and a smart economy is not the size of its resources, but its ability to transform every resource into value, every opportunity into productivity...

In this case, public projects become far more than capital expenditures. They become engines of long-term economic transformation.

This, in essence, is what I mean by a Smarter Economy.

A smarter economy does not necessarily spend more. It creates greater value from every Dinar invested. It measures success not only by what is built today, but by the economic impact that remains years later.

It also depends on efficiency, transparency, and accountability, because waste is not merely a governance issue — it is an economic cost that reduces productivity, discourages investment, and limits a nation’s capacity to build future prosperity.

It is time to move beyond asking: “How much did we spend?” and begin asking: “What lasting value did we create?”

The difference between a good economy and a smart economy is not the size of its resources, but its ability to transform every resource into value, every opportunity into productivity and every project into a catalyst for long-term national competitiveness.

The next step

If we truly believe that Jordan possesses the foundations for a stronger and more competitive economy, then the first step is not necessarily launching more projects — it is improving the way we evaluate the success of the projects already underway.

I therefore propose launching a national dialogue involving government, the private sector, universities, professional associations and policy research institutions to develop a practical framework for incorporating National Economic Return into the evaluation of strategic public projects.

Economic impact should become part of project design from the very beginning — not merely a hoped-for outcome after completion.

Jordan does not necessarily need more resources. It needs a smarter way of using the resources it already has.

Nor does it necessarily need more projects. It needs projects that generate lasting economic value for future generations.

Nations do not become prosperous because they spend more. They become prosperous because they create more value from every resource they possess.

Jordan, Sudan explore investment, reconstruction opportunities

AMMAN (JT) — The Amman Chamber of Commerce (ACC) on Monday held talks with Sudanese Ambassador to Jordan Hassan Dahab on expanding economic cooperation and strengthening business ties between the two countries.

ACC President Khalil Haj Tawfiq said the private sector aims to increase trade and investment with Sudan by drawing on Jordan's expertise in commerce, services, logistics and transport.

He outlined plans to strengthen institutional cooperation, including a proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the ACC and its Sudanese counterpart, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Haj Tawfiq also called for reactivating the Jordanian-Sudanese Business Council to connect business leaders, identify investment opportunities, and support Sudan's reconstruction and economic recovery.

He urged Sudan to provide an updated database on its economy and investment climate, adding that the



The Amman Chamber of Commerce on Monday hold talks with Sudanese Ambassador to Jordan Hassan Dahab on expanding economic cooperation between the two countries

ACC stands ready to host Sudanese business delegations to explore joint ventures.

Dahab briefed the meeting on the latest developments in Su-

dan and reaffirmed his country's commitment to expanding economic cooperation with Jordan. He said Sudan aims to benefit from Jordan's expertise in

reconstruction, logistics, digital transformation, urban planning and medical tourism.

ACC board members proposed identifying priority sectors, fa-

cilitating business-to-business meetings and exchanging market intelligence to convert opportunities into concrete economic partnerships, Petra reported.

Jordan, Egypt discuss prospects of cooperation in phosphate, mining sectors

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) Chief Executive Officer Abdel Wahab Rawad and Egyptian Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Karim Badawi discussed ways to strengthen cooperation and exchange expertise in phosphate fertiliser production and the mining sector.

The talks focused on expanding partnerships by building on the two countries' phosphate resources, technical expertise and mining capabilities to boost economic cooperation and maximise the value of available resources.

Rawad highlighted the longstanding ties between Jordan and Egypt and reaffirmed JPMC's commitment to expanding cooperation in the phosphate and mining industries, according to an Amman Chamber of Commerce (ACC) statement.

He said the company continues to broaden partnerships with Arab and friendly countries and strengthen cooperation in the mining sector to support Jordan's economy and reinforce the phosphate industry's contribution to national development.



Jordan Phosphate Mines Company Chief Executive Officer Abdel Wahab Rawad and Egyptian Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Karim Badawi discuss ways to strengthen cooperation in phosphate fertiliser production and mining sector

The minister also reviewed the progress of Jordan's phosphate industry, highlighting JPMC's production and sales performance despite regional challenges. He commended Egypt's efforts to develop its mining sector and promote cooperation among Arab countries in the industry.

Badawi outlined Egypt's strategy to maximise returns from its phosphate resources by expanding downstream industries, particularly phosphate fertiliser and phosphoric acid production. He said the strategy aims to increase the mining sector's contribution

to the economy and attract more investment.

He added that reforms, including regulatory changes and measures to improve the investment climate, will support integrated industrial projects and promote more efficient use of mineral resources.

The two sides agreed to maintain coordination between their technical teams to identify areas of cooperation, develop practical mechanisms and pursue joint projects that serve mutual interests and strengthen collaboration in the mining sector, according to an ACC statement.

US stocks mostly fall as Iran tensions lift oil prices

NEW YORK (AFP) — Wall Street stocks mostly fell early on Monday as markets weighed higher oil prices and a pullback in semiconductor shares while looking ahead to earnings and economic data.

Crude prices rose more than 3 per cent as surging tensions between the United States and Iran revived questions about oil infrastructure in the Strait of Hormuz.

US semiconductor

stocks fell early following a bad day on South Korea's Kospi with a big fall in SK hynix.

About 10 minutes into trading, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 0.1 per cent at 52,676.53.

The broad-based S&P 500 declined 0.4 per cent to 7,547.53, while the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index dropped 0.9 per cent to 26,039.50.

"The tensions with Iran heating up are

driving up oil prices and that's driving up yields on treasuries, while a sell-off in SK hynix is dragging down memory names and that's dragging down the Nasdaq and the S&P," said Art Hogan of B. Riley Wealth Management.

This week's calendar includes earnings from large US banks, congressional testimony from Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh and the latest consumer price index data.

Nigeria oil output hits six-year high, above OPEC target

ABUJA (AFP) — Nigeria's crude production reached a 74-month high last month, authorities said over the weekend, hitting an average of 1.56 million barrels per day, or 104 per cent of its OPEC quota.

Africa's largest oil producer has increased production in recent years in part by cracking down on theft while also hiring former militants who sabotaged pipelines to act as security.

As foreign oil majors

— dogged by pollution scandals in the Niger Delta — have left many onshore projects to focus on offshore extraction, local firms have stepped in.

"The improved performance was primarily driven by stable production operations across most producing assets and the absence of any major pipeline outages during the period under review," the Nigeria Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) said late Sunday.

Including condensates, oil production averaged 1.74 million barrels per day in June, the NUPRC said.

The government maintains a goal of two million barrels per day.

Though the west African country's oil production has historically been hampered by pipeline theft and allegations of state corruption and mismanagement, the June numbers mark the highest recorded crude production since April 2020.



The Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas plant at Bonny Island in Rivers State

From ketchup to car parts, Cuba gets private sector makeover

By Lisandra Cots
Agence France-Presse

HAVANA — From grocery stores to restaurants and fuel, Cuba's burgeoning private sector is filling the vacuum left by a collapsing communist-run state.

The days when Cubans used ration books to buy all their essentials in state-run "bodegas" are nearing an end, expedited by the worst economic crisis in recent memory and a crippling US fuel blockade.

Sitting on the porch of a state-run grocery store in the Vedado neighbourhood of Havana, Joaquin Velazquez watches the comings and goings at the private mini-market next door.

The two stores tell a tale of two Cubas, one, fast disappearing, in which the state provides for all, and another, newer, in which people are increasingly forced to fend for themselves.

The shelves of the bodega are glaringly nearly empty, the state having run out of the hard currency it needs to import goods and resell them at heavily subsidised prices, as it



Taxis queue to refuel at a petrol station in Havana

has done for decades.

The adjacent "mipyme" — Cuba's acronym for small business which is used as shorthand for any private enterprise — is a picture of plenty, offering everything from rice, Cuba's staple starch, to rum and ketchup.

The abundance, which is set to increase under major free-market reforms adopted in June, comes at a price, however: \$3 for a liter of cooking oil, a strat- ospheric sum for people on minuscule state salaries paid in pesos.

The oil alone represents half of Velazquez's monthly pension.

"For me, it's as if 'mipymes' don't exist," the retired security guard said.

Across Havana, private enterprise is transforming the land-

scape, with new businesses offering cold beer, domestic appliances or car parts popping up at a bewildering rate.

With no commercial premises authorised in Cuba — one of multiple restrictions on business set to be removed under the reforms — these ventures are run out of homes, garages or, as in the case of the "mipyme" in the Havana's Vedado, in space leased from an ailing bodega.

It's a radical makeover for a Soviet-style state completely devoid of advertising, where for over half-a-century the state dominated nearly every sphere of activity, from industry to agriculture to the restaurant trade.

The first major step towards a market economy came in 2021 when

small businesses of up to 100 employees — the famous "mipymes" — were authorised.

Five years later, they account for over half of all retail sales, according to official figures, and are eyeing new opportunities, in property development, banking and agriculture, among other areas.

The rise of the "mipymero", as entrepreneurs are known, has deepened inequality in what was once a classless society.

The new rich zip past crumbling neoclassical townhouses on Havana's famous seaside Malecon Boulevard in SUVs.

Meanwhile people without family abroad to send them dollars or order food for them online live an increasingly precarious existence, like Maritza Gomez, a 62-year-old chemist.

"At some point we have to find a more viable solution for ordinary Cubans," she said.

Washington, which imposed a fuel blockade on Cuba in January and piled sanctions on the state — on top of a six-decade-old trade embargo — has made a show of supporting the private sector.

Imports from the United States by private companies have jumped five-fold in five years.

But the fuel blockade is hurting business, strangled by power cuts of up to 30 hours at a time, and fuel prices of up to \$8 a liter.

Juan Carlos Blain, the 41-year-old manager of several private

groceries and fast food outlets in western Havana, said his company was treading water.

While the reforms allow for the creation of larger companies, he said: "We're not thinking about expanding, only about surviving."

Camila Arrieta, the 32-year-old owner of a screen printing business in Havana that

used to turn out 2,000 T-shirts and other items of merchandise a day, blamed the power cuts and wider collapse in purchasing power for a major decline in her business.

Arrieta said she was "inoculated" to the obstacles she kept encountering as a businesswoman but was nonetheless consider-

ing closing shop.

Carlos Enrique Gonzalez, an economist at Havana University, urged the government to quickly implement reforms to restore lost credibility.

"If people see that what was proposed is being done, and that there is a gradual recovery, then they will begin to trust again."

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

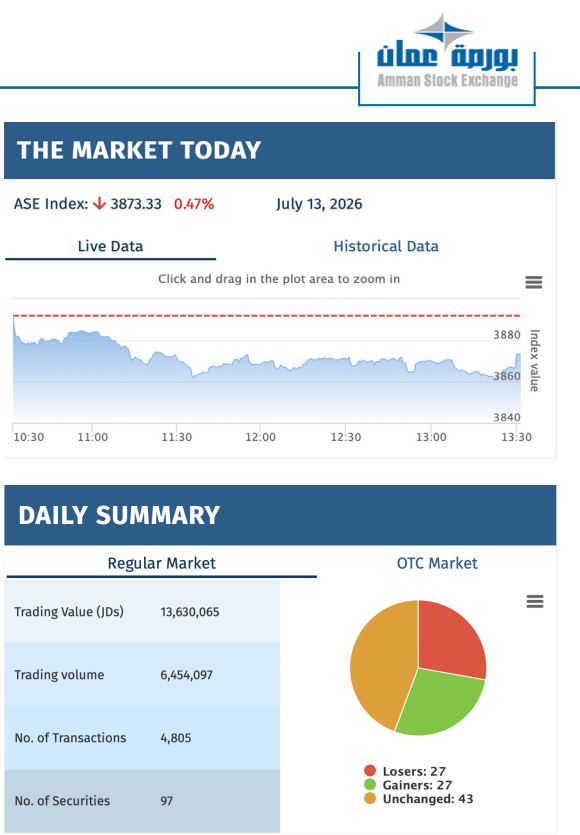
AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Monday amounted to JD13.6 million spread over 6.5 million shares that traded through 4,805 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.47 per cent, closing at 3873.33 points.

Out of 97 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 27 companies rose while the share price of another 27 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Specialised Jordanian Investment by 4.72 per cent, Real Estate Development by 4.69 per cent, Specialised Trading and Investment by 4.31 per cent, Arabia Insurance Company in Jordan by 4.20 per cent and Noor Capital Markets for Diversified Investments by 3.38 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Jordan Phosphate Mines by 3.93 per cent, Arab Banking Corporation in Jordan by 3.49 per cent, Afaq Holding for Investment and Real Estate Development Company Plc. by 3.45 per cent, Northern Cement Company by 3.21 per cent, and Al Entkaeya for Investment and Real Estate Development Company Plc. by 3.13 per cent.



FOOTBALL

Slaven Bilic returns as Croatia coach

ZAGREB (AFP) — Slaven Bilic will return as head coach of Croatia, the national football federation announced on Monday, replacing Zlatko Dalic who resigned after the country’s World Cup exit. Dalic stepped down last week after a tenure that included a runner-up finish at the 2018 World Cup. Croatia failed to move into the last 16 of this year’s World Cup, losing 2-1 to Cristiano Ronaldo’s Portugal. Former Croatian international defender Bilic previously coached Croatia between 2006 and 2012. The 57-year-old, who also coached English clubs West Ham, West Bromwich Albion and Watford, was “unanimously appointed” as head coach, the Croatian Football Federation said. Bilic recorded a higher winning percentage than Dalic during his last tenure, with 42 wins, 15 draws and eight defeats in 65 matches. But his side’s best result was reaching the quarter-finals of the 2008 European Championships, which it lost on penalties to Turkey. With 44 caps for Croatia, Bilic’s club career was mostly spent at Hajduk Split with stints in England at West Ham and Everton in the mid-1990s. Bilic’s last coaching position was at Saudi Arabia’s Al-Fateh, during the 2023-2024 season.

CRICKET

‘Outstanding’ India thrash England in historic first women’s Test at Lord’s

LONDON (AFP) — Sneha Rana and Deepti Sharma shared the last four wickets as India completed a 270-run thrashing of England to win the first women’s Test at Lord’s on Monday. England, set a record-breaking target of 457 for victory, were dismissed for 186 shortly before lunch on the final day of four. Rana took 4-42, removing Amy Jones for 54 and finishing the landmark match when she bowled Sophie Ecclestone for 50. Fellow spinner Sharma chipped in with the wickets of Issy Wong and Lauren Bell as England crumbled. India was dominant in all aspects of a game being played 142 years, and 150 matches, after Lord’s staged its first men’s Test and decades on from the first women’s game of any kind at the London ground — a 1976 One-Day International between England and Australia. Victory meant India finished their tour with joyous memories of Lord’s, having been knocked out of the T20 World Cup in the group phase at the ‘Home of Cricket’ by eventual champions Australia.

Spain ex-PM draws criticism with ‘xenophobic’ remark on French team

MADRID (AFP) — Spain’s conservative ex-prime minister Mariano Rajoy faced criticism at home and in France on Sunday after saying the neighbouring country’s national football team had “no French players”.

The comment, published in an opinion piece in Spanish online news site El Debate, came as Spain prepares to face France on Tuesday in a blockbuster World Cup semifinal.

Spain’s current Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez condemned the remark as “xenophobic”.

“There are those who still measure belonging by surname, place of birth, or skin colour. Others measure it by our roots in a country and our will to contribute to it,” the Socialist leader wrote on X.

“Spain belongs to those who love it and work for it. Not to those who shame it with xenophobic statements.”

Transport Minister Oscar Puente dismissed Rajoy as a “post-Franco idiot”.

French politicians have also lashed out at Rajoy’s comment.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez told French channel BFMTV that Rajoy’s comment was “absolutely unacceptable”.

Communist Party leader Fabien Roussel compared Rajoy’s comment to widely criticised remarks by Paraguayan Senator Celeste Amarilla, who said after Paraguay’s elimination



Posters show the FIFA three-step procedure against racism and discriminatory behaviour at the locker rooms of the Dallas Stadium in Arlington on Sunday, ahead of the 2026 World Cup football tournament semi-final match between France and Spain on Tuesday

tion by France in the round of 16 that star player Kylian Mbappe was a “colonised Cameroonian who has really pretended to be French”.

“They just can’t stop themselves from slinging this disgusting racism,” said Roussel.

Aurore Berge, minister

against discrimination, also denounced the “repeated racist outbursts”.

She added: “It’s time they stopped and that sport becomes again: a place where you are judged on your talent and by no other criteria.”

‘Racist obsessions’

Naima Moutchou, France’s minister for overseas territories, called the comments evidence of “systematic and widespread hatred of France and what the nation is”.

“Every time Les Bleus win, the same racist ob-

sessions and insults re-emerge,” she said.

France “has no skin colour or religion”, said French Socialist party leader Olivier Faure on X.

France’s embassy in Madrid also responded in a post to social media.

“All the players of the

French team are French. Of 26 players, 23 were born in France. The three who were born abroad are also French.”

And Philippe Diallo, president of the French Football Federation said Rajoy’s comments carried an “intolerable undertone of racism”, in a post on social media.

Mongolian wrestlers train ‘bodies, minds’ for annual showdown

By Mungunsor Purevsuren
Agence France-Presse

ULAANBAATAR—The whistle blows, sending dozens of hulking wrestlers chasing a football in the Mongolian grasslands — a World Cup twist in their gruelling training for one of the country’s oldest sporting traditions.

“The World Cup is happening now, so we wanted to do something creative,” said four-time national champion Bat-suuri “Basu” Namsraijav, who has founded his own training camp where wrestlers spend weeks preparing for the annual Naadam competition.

The brief change of pace in the otherwise demanding programme “is still an intense workout”, Basu told AFP.

The cohort training at his newly built Basu Sports Complex are among more than 1,000 wrestlers from across the East Asian country hoping to emerge victorious from the two-day Naadam tournament in mid-July, known colloquially as the “Three Manly Games” — traditional wrestling, horse racing and archery.

The wrestlers “have to prepare every part of themselves — their bodies, their food, their



Fourteen-year-old jockey Zolboo Gantomor (right) and his little brother six-years-old Hurts Gantumur practise horse riding ahead of the Naadam festival on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar on June 23

minds”, Basu said.

Access to the camp, located on the Mongolian steppe around 100 kilometres from the capital Ulaanbaatar, is heavily restricted, with few visitors allowed.

Training begins at dawn, followed by two sparring sessions, and a calorie-rich lunch of beef or mutton, vegetables and bowls of milk tea.

Wrestlers spend around a month living in traditional gers and wooden cabins, and training at the camp’s

indoor arena and gym or outdoor practice field.

As Naadam competitions take place outdoors, Basu believes training in the grasslands helps wrestlers prepare.

“It used to be much simpler,” said 39-year-old Basu.

“Now we have a place where athletes can train properly while still staying close to nature.”

Young champions

Naadam is “our national Olympics”, Basu

said, and victory brings honour to the winner’s family and province.

Unlike Olympic wrestling, Mongolia’s traditional style has no weight classes or time limits, and sometimes a single bout can last close to an hour. A wrestler loses only when any body part other than the soles of his feet touches the ground.

It is not uncommon for lightweight or young competitors — such as last year’s

champion Batmagnai Enkhtuvshin, born in 2001 — to defeat much larger opponents.

The training camps, where older athletes pass on techniques to younger generations, remain one of the sport’s defining features.

They still draw many men — women are not allowed to wrestle — to the grasslands even as the country is rapidly urbanising.

Sumiyabazar Naranbaatar, a 22-year-old training at Basu’s camp, said he had decided to take up wrestling after Naadam was suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“It felt very odd,” he told AFP. “It has such a long history, and suddenly, there was no wrestling.”

“That was when I decided to pursue wrestling. I had always wanted to become a wrestler, so I thought, why not give it a shot?”

As the evening sun dipped behind the hills, Sumiyabazar and the other wrestlers drifted back to their lodgings.

In the final days before Naadam, training will keep on intensifying — and there will be no more football.

Twelve US states sue to block Paramount’s Warner Bros. takeover

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — California and 11 other US states on Monday sued to block Paramount Skydance’s \$110 billion takeover of Warner Bros. Discovery, calling the largest merger in Hollywood history a threat to competition in film and television.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in northern California, marks a dramatic turn in the regulatory battle over the deal — and a direct challenge to the Trump administration’s Justice Department, which approved the merger last month without requiring any divestitures or concessions.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta, who is leading the coalition, said the combination of two of Hollywood’s five major film distributors would lead to “higher prices, lower quality, and less content” for audiences.

“In this country, no one is above the law,” Bonta said. “California and our sister states are fighting for free and fair markets, not rigged markets. America has no kings in government or our economy.”

The states allege the deal violates the Clayton Act, the federal law that bars mergers likely to substantially reduce

competition.

The democratic led states joining California in the suit are Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon and Washington.

Hundreds of actors and directors have signed a letter opposing the merger

According to the complaint, the combined company would control roughly 27 per cent of wide-release theatrical film distribution and about 27 per cent of basic cable channel licensing.

The coalition has asked the companies not to close the transaction until the legal challenge is resolved, and warned it would seek a temporary restraining order if they refuse.

Paramount last month secured the green light of federal antitrust authorities, handing a major win to a media empire financed by one of President Donald

Trump’s closest billionaire allies.

The approval was a coup for Paramount chief executive David Ellison, whose father, Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison, largely financed the takeover.

The elder Ellison, one of the world’s richest men, is a close ally of Trump.

The combined company would control a sprawling roster of assets, including CNN, Warner Bros. Pictures and the HBO Max streaming service.

Hundreds of actors and directors have signed a letter opposing the merger, warning it would choke production in an industry already battered by years of consolidation and cost-cutting.

The takeover saga began last year, when streaming giant Netflix and Paramount went to war over Warner Bros. and its prized back catalog.

A wary Tinseltown reluctantly lined up behind Netflix as the lesser of two evils, only to watch Paramount keep raising its bid until the streamer walked away.

The European Commission, the European Union’s antitrust watchdog, has given itself until July 22 to decide on the acquisition.

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