



HRH Crown Prince Hussein on Tuesday extends condolences to Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, at Lusail Palace in Doha, over the passing of his father Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani

Crown Prince extends condolences to Qatar emir over passing of Sheikh Hamad

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein on Tuesday extended condolences to Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani at Lusail Palace in Doha, over the passing of his father Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, according to a Royal Court statement.

101st Special Battalion holds ceremony for Crown Prince

AMMAN (JT) — Members of the 101st Special Battalion, a unit of the King Abdullah II Royal Special Forces, held a ceremony on Monday for HRH Crown Prince Hussein, to mark the conclusion of the Crown Prince's service as deputy commander.

While meeting with the battalion personnel, His Royal Highness expressed deep gratitude for his service with the unit, citing the diverse experience and strong bonds of military camaraderie, according to a Royal Court statement.

For his part, the commander of the King Abdullah II Royal Special Forces commended the Crown Prince's valuable contributions to the battalion, highlighting the importance of His Royal Highness' drive to advance military capabilities by integrating modern technology and the latest innovations, according to the statement.



Members of the 101st Special Battalion, a unit of the King Abdullah II Royal Special Forces, held ceremony on Monday to mark the conclusion of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein's service as the battalion's Deputy Commander

Serving with the 101st Special Battalion, the Crown Prince earned his Special Forces qualification

Royal Decree approves reshuffle of PM Hassan's Cabinet



Nidal Katamine is sworn in before His Majesty King Abdullah as minister of transport and minister of labour. A Royal Decree has been issued approving a reshuffle of Prime Minister Jafar Hassan's Cabinet

Air defences shoot down 4 missiles fired from Iran — JAF source

AMMAN (JT) — Air defence systems intercepted and shot down four missiles that entered the country's airspace from Iran early Tuesday, the Jordanian Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) said.

A military source said that the interceptions were carried out as part of measures to safeguard the Kingdom's sovereignty and protect its citizens. No casualties or property damage were reported, according to the source.

The source added that Royal Engineering Corps teams dealt

with the debris that fell in several locations in accordance with approved technical and security procedures, taking the necessary measures to secure the sites and ensure the safety of citizens and property.



Continued on page 5



Prime Minister Jafar Hassan visits the Qatari embassy in Amman, where he conveys condolences over the passing of His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani

PM visits Qatari embassy to offer condolences over death of Sheikh Hamad

AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Tuesday offered his condolences over the passing of His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani during a visit to the Qatari embassy in Amman, where he met

with Qatari Ambassador to Jordan Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al Thani.

Hassan signed the embassy's condolence book, expressing his deepest sympathies to Qatar's leadership, government and

people, according to a Prime Ministry statement.

Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Abdul Latif Al Najdawi also visited the embassy to offer his condolences, the statement said.

Lebanon and Israel hold talks in Rome amid renewed Mideast fighting

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AFP) — Lebanon and Israel are holding new negotiations under US auspices in Rome on Tuesday, against the backdrop of a regional escalation between Washington and Tehran.

The two countries, officially at war for decades, reached a framework agreement on June 26, after five rounds of negotiations in Washington, aimed at ending the war between Israel and Iran-backed Hizbollah and paving the way for peace.

But Hizbollah rejects the agreement, which calls for the group's disarmament and whose implementation is set to begin with Israeli withdrawal from two "pilot zones" in southern



This photo taken from the southern Lebanese city of Nabatieh shows smoke as it rises from the site of an Israeli-controlled explosion in the village of Kfar Tibnit, with the Beaufort citadel seen in the distance, on Monday

Lebanon. The Lebanese presidency announced on Monday that its delegation to Rome had been instructed "to demand the

immediate start of Israeli forces' withdrawal from the two pilot zones before any further discussion".

Continued on page 5

Jordan condemns Iranian attack on UAE oil tankers

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Tuesday condemned an Iranian attack targeting two oil tankers belonging to the United Arab Emirates as they passed through the Strait of Hormuz, as a flagrant violation of international law and a dangerous escalation that

threatens maritime security.

The ministry reiterated the Kingdom's strong condemnation of the attack and expressed Jordan's unwavering solidarity with the UAE, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

The ministry reiterated Jordan's full sup-

port for all measures taken by the UAE to safeguard its sovereignty, security and the safety of its citizens.

It also expressed its deepest condolences to the government and people of India over the death of one of its nationals in the attack, and wished those injured a speedy recovery.



Jordan condemns Houthi missile attack on Saudi Arabia

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan on Tuesday condemned a ballistic missile attack launched by Yemen's Houthi militia targeting southern Saudi Arabia, describing it as a dangerous escalation and a violation of international law.

The Ministry of For-

eign Affairs said that the attack constituted a flagrant violation of Saudi Arabia's sovereignty and posed a threat to the Kingdom's security, stability and territorial integrity, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

In a statement, the

ministry reaffirmed Jordan's full solidarity with Saudi Arabia and its continued support for all measures the Kingdom takes to safeguard its sovereignty, security and the safety of its citizens and residents.

The ministry also said

the attack represented a blatant violation of the United Nations Charter and underscored Jordan's firm rejection of any actions that threaten regional security and stability.

The UN Security Council held an emergency meeting on Mon-

day to discuss the escalating situation in and around Yemen, with member states condemning Iran's alleged support for the Houthi militia and expressing solidarity with Saudi Arabia following the group's ballistic missile attacks on the Kingdom.



Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti on Tuesday receives Somali Minister of Defence Ahmed Moalim Fiqi over the latest regional and international developments

Huneiti discusses military cooperation with Somali, German officials

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti on Tuesday received Somali Minister of Defence Ahmed Moalim Fiqi and his accompanying delegation over the latest regional and international developments, security challenges, prospects for closer cooperation and ways to expand partnership.

The two sides stressed the importance of continuing coordination across various military fields to strengthen capabilities and enhance security and stability in the region, according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement.

Huneiti and the Somali defence minister also received military briefings on the latest developments within JAF in the defence and training fields, as well as training and qualification programmes and mechanisms for their development through joint exercises and training courses aimed at enhancing operational readiness and exchanging expertise between the two sides.

The army chief reaffirmed the “strong” ties between Jordan and Somalia, noting that military cooperation between the two countries represents

an “important” pillar for strengthening defence capabilities and exchanging expertise, thereby contributing to regional security and stability.

The Somali minister praised the role played by Jordan under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah and commended the advanced capabilities, efficiency and professionalism of JAF...

The Somali minister praised the role played by Jordan under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah and commended the advanced capabilities, efficiency and professionalism of JAF, expressing Somalia's commitment to boosting cooperation with Jordan across various fields.

At the conclusion of the visit, which was attended by the Somali ambassador and

a number of senior JAF officers, the Somali defence minister signed the visitors' book.

Also on Tuesday, Huneiti received a German military delegation led by Deputy Commander of the German Air Force Lieutenant General Lutz Kohlhaus.

During the meeting at the General Command, Huneiti and the visiting delegation discussed aspects of cooperation and coordination between the armed forces of both nations, according to a second JAF statement.

They also went over ways to enhance cooperation and exchange expertise across various military and training fields to develop defence capabilities and serve mutual interests.

Huneiti emphasised the “deep strategic” relations between the two armies, noting the importance of expanding cooperation in light of regional developments to bolster regional security and stability.

For his part, Kohlhaus praised the advanced level and high efficiency of JAF, as well as the “deep-rooted” relations connecting the two countries.

The meeting was attended by several senior JAF officers and the German defence attaché in Amman.

JPA, Jordan Press Foundation agree debt settlement, journalists’ allowance increase

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan Press Association (JPA) President Tariq Momani and Director General of the Jordan Press Foundation, which publishes Al Rai and The Jordan Times dailies, Hassan Jazzazi on Tuesday signed a cooperation and debt settlement agreement.

The settlement outlines a timetable and a mechanism to reschedule Al Rai's outstanding liabilities to the syndicate, committing the newspaper to paying the principal debt in exchange for an exemption from late payment penalties until the end of 2025.

The agreement stipulates Al Rai's continued commitment to paying annual subscription fees and advertising revenues starting from 2026.

It also includes raising the professional allowance for journalists by JD50 to reach JD150, following its endorsement by the foundation's board of directors.

The arrangement also covers training collaboration between both sides, based on an action plan to be agreed upon in the coming phase.

Momani said that the step reflects the association's keenness to support the stability of national media institutions.



Jordan Press Association President Tariq Momani and Director General of the Jordan Press Foundation Hassan Jazzazi on Tuesday sign a cooperation and debt settlement agreement

He stressed that the JPA council, since its election, pursued dialogue with press organisations to reach settlements that safeguard the syndicate's rights while considering the financial conditions of these establishments.

He added that the deal is based on a mandate from the JPA general assembly in April, which

authorised the council to waive late payment penalties on newspapers in return for their commitment to paying the principal debt and future dues, alongside raising the professional allowance, a condition he noted has now been met.

The JPA president pointed out that the agreement paves the way for wider cooperation

between the two sides, noting that the Press Advertising Company, a JPA affiliate, signed a contract with Al Rai about a month ago to manage non-judicial advertisements after winning a tender floated by the foundation.

For his part, Jazzazi said that the settlement enables Al Rai to have significant accumulated

late fees waived, easing the institution's financial burdens through debt rescheduling in accordance with the agreed mechanism.

He added that the cooperation enhances ties, particularly in training and utilising logistical capabilities, including studios and technical equipment, to serve their mutual interests.

Transactions through eFAWATEERcom total JD7.78b in H1 2026

AMMAN (JT) — The number of transactions completed through the "eFAWATEERcom" electronic billing and payment system rose by 2.8 per cent in June 2026, reaching 7.06 million transactions compared to 6.86 million in May.

According to the monthly payment systems report issued by the Jordan Payments and Clearing Company (JoPACC), the total value of these transactions increased by 6 per cent to JD1.26 billion in June, up from JD1.19 billion during the previous month,

Al Mamlaka TV reported.

Since the beginning of 2026, the cumulative number of transactions processed through the system reached 40.99 million, with a total value of JD7.78 billion.

The total number of eFAWATEERcom users grew to 5.29 million in June, marking a 0.8 per cent increase compared to 5.25 million in May and 5.21 million in April.

Active users reached 5.25 million (99.2 per cent) of the total, while new users reached 42,450 (0.8 per cent). Currently, 727 billers are registered

on the system, offering 2,528 services.

In terms of transaction volume, the telecommunications sector recorded the highest activity in June with 2.2 million transactions, followed by the water and electricity sector with 1.99 million, and government services with 1.59 million.

Mobile wallets and payment service providers accounted for 557,000 transactions, followed by finance and financial services (323,000), education (126,000), travel and transport (60,000), gas and energy (38,000),

associations and unions (37,000), and trade and services (33,000).

Digital payments represented the vast majority of transaction channels, accounting for 5.8 million transactions (82.2 per cent), while cash payments accounted for 1.26 million transactions (17.8 per cent).

By transaction value, government services claimed the largest share in June at JD816 million, followed by mobile wallets and payment service providers at JD166 million, water and electricity at JD79 million, finance

and financial services at JD69 million, and telecommunications at JD37 million.

Education services recorded JD33 million, banks JD17 million, trade and services JD16 million, gas and energy JD13 million, and associations and unions JD10 million.

Digital channels processed JD1.1 billion of the total transaction value (88 per cent), while cash payments made up JD151.9 million (12 per cent), and the average value per transaction rose to JD179 in June, up from JD174 in May.

Jordan hosts international nuclear medicine conference with experts from 14 countries

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Health Ibrahim Bdour on Tuesday opened the fifth annual conference of the Jordanian Society of Nuclear Medicine, with the participation of more than 250 physicians, specialists, medical physicists, pharmacists and technicians from 14 countries.

The conference, organised by the society under the umbrella of the Jordan Medical Association, highlights Jordan's progress in nuclear medicine and its growing role as a regional centre for training, research, and capacity building, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The three-day conference features more than 30 speakers and experts from Jordan, the region, Europe and the United States, as well as representatives of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Jordan Atomic Energy Commission (JAEC).

Its scientific programme covers the latest developments in molecular imaging, radionuclide therapy, radiopharmaceuticals, nuclear medical physics and research.

Bdour said that nuclear medicine has become a pillar of precision medicine by combining molecular imaging with



Minister of Health Ibrahim Bdour on Tuesday inaugurates the fifth annual conference of the Jordanian Society of Nuclear Medicine

targeted radionuclide therapy, enabling more accurate and effective diagnosis and treatment and improving patient outcomes and quality of life.

He said that Jordan has made qualitative progress in nuclear medicine services through cooperation among the King Hussein Cancer Centre (KHCC), the Ministry of Health, Royal Medical Services (RMS), and other national institutions.

He noted that introducing modern PET/CT and SPECT/CT scanners at Al Bashir Hospital, with support from the IAEA and the JAEC, represents an “important” step towards expanding advanced diagnos-

tic services across the Kingdom.

Bdour said that the Ministry of Health continues to support the development of nuclear medicine services, enhance training and invest in modern technology, commending the launch of unified national cancer treatment protocols, in which nuclear medicine plays a key role, particularly in treating thyroid cancer, prostate cancer and neuroendocrine tumours.

President of the Jordan Medical Association Issa Khashashneh said that the conference addresses one of the most precise and advanced medical specialties.

He noted that the association supports such

conferences for their pioneering role in continuing medical education, promoting scientific research and keeping up with the latest developments in the nuclear field, which contributes to improving medical practice and enhancing the quality of healthcare provided.

Jordanian Society of Nuclear Medicine President Akram Ibrahim said that Jordan has become one of the region's leading centres for molecular imaging and radionuclide therapy, supported by close partnerships among national institutions and continued support from the IAEA.

He said that the nuclear medicine department at KHCC has be-

come a regional and international centre of excellence in training, research, and radionuclide therapy.

Over recent years, it has received more than 300 physicians, specialists, medical physicists and technicians from across the region through specialised training programmes, and has helped graduate generations of nuclear medicine specialists now working in several Arab countries, he noted.

Ibrahim said that Jordan was among the first countries to introduce modern nuclear medicine applications, helped establish the Arab Society of Nuclear Medicine, and hosted the first Asia Oceania Federation of Nuclear Medicine and Biology conference in West Asia.

He also highlighted Jordan's growing role in research through hundreds of published studies and participation in drafting and leading several international recommendations.

The conference follows the conclusion of the IAEA's ARASIA regional training course, hosted by KHCC, reaffirming Jordan's growing role as a regional centre for training and capacity building in nuclear medicine.



Newly introduced destinations in Urdunna Jannah programme, such as Iraq Al Amir, Umm Al Rasas and Rihab, witness notable turnout

Urdunna Jannah draws 135,000 participants nationwide

AMMAN (JT) — The "Urdunna Jannah" domestic tourism programme has attracted high turnout since its launch, recording nearly 135,000 participants who travelled on over 4,000 tourist trips to various destinations across the Kingdom.

A total of 4,089 tour guides and buses, 135 tourism and travel agencies, 97 restaurants and 92 hotels and tourist camps have participated in the programme since its inception, according to Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Also, 1,064 participants utilised the direct booking service using their private vehicles.

Overnight stay programmes experienced high demand during the same period, drawing over 47,000 participants, reflecting a growing interest in overnight tourism experiences.

The northern governorates and the Golden Triangle (Petra, Wadi Rum, and Aqaba) saw the highest demand from visitors.

Newly introduced destinations, such as Iraq Al Amir, Umm Al Rasas and Rihab, also witnessed notable turnout, while other visitors distributed across various tourist sites throughout the Kingdom, underscoring the diversity of Jordan's tourism products and their appeal to different visitor segments.

Urdunna Jannah targets 220,000 beneficiaries during 2026, focusing on less visited destinations and areas heavily impacted by regional events, especially Petra.

The programme plans to involve over 400 local projects and offer 60 diverse tourist trails across Jordan.

The expanded programme now includes Arab and foreign students studying in Jordan, Gazan residents, and the children and spouses of Jordanian women.

Implemented alongside local travel agencies, hotels and transport sectors, the Ministry of Tourism subsidises trip costs by up to 60 per cent.

The ministry provides free bus transportation, guides and meals, while organising monthly cultural festivals and bazaars in all governorates to stimulate local economies.

In April, the Cabinet extended fee exemptions for archaeological sites under the Urdunna Jannah programme and continued subsidies for trips until December 31.

The programme aims to stimulate domestic tourism and support local communities.



The Lower House on Tuesday approves six articles out of 12 of the draft amended Jordan Universities Law for 2026

Lower House approves six articles of amended 2026 Universities Law

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — The Lower House on Tuesday approved six articles out of 12 of the draft amended Jordan Universities Law for 2026.

The session was chaired by Lower House Speaker Mazen Qadi and attended by Prime Minister Jafar Hassan and members of the government team.

The government said that the proposed amendments are part of wider efforts to modernise higher education governance following recent institutional reforms, including the creation of the Education and Human Resources Development Council.

It also said that the amendments seek to improve decision-making, strengthen university performance and ensure academic programmes better respond to labour market needs.

Lawmakers amended the proposed structure of university boards of trustees after discussions in the House, agreeing to maintain a 10-member board instead of the eight members initially suggested by the government.

Under the revised framework, university boards of trustees would include figures with expertise in academic, business and technology fields, alongside the university president.

The government said the new composition aims to ensure the boards include

members who can effectively support strategic planning and contribute to the advancement and development of higher education institutions.

MPs also discussed the need to clearly define the responsibilities of boards of trustees, university councils and other academic bodies to avoid overlapping roles and preserve universities’ academic independence.

The bill also introduces new requirements for university presidents, including Jordanian nationality...

Minister of Political and Parliamentary Affairs Abdulmunim Al Oudat said the amendments would give university boards of trustees a greater role in selecting university presidents, a responsibility that was not included in the previous legislation.

He said that the appointment of presidents of public uni-

versities would begin with a recommendation from the university’s board of trustees, which would then be submitted through the Education and Human Resources Development Council and the Cabinet for approval.

The bill also introduces new requirements for university presidents, including Jordanian nationality, holding the rank of professor for at least five years and having the administrative experience required to manage the institution. Presidents would serve four-year terms renewable once.

Other amendments approved by the House allow public universities to provide incentives for academic and administrative staff from revenues collected through parallel and international undergraduate programmes, based on percentages approved by the relevant council upon the recommendation of university boards of trustees.

The legislation also enables universities to allocate 1 per cent of their annual budgets for international marketing activities aimed at attracting foreign students through campaigns, visits and exhibitions.

In addition, the amendments expand universities’ ability to establish investment, savings and other funds, while extending the regulatory framework to include university colleges, community colleges and similar institutions.

Aqaba Port imports surge 43.7% in first half of 2026 — shipping association

AMMAN (JT) — National imports through Aqaba Port increased by 43.7 per cent during the first half of 2026, reaching 7.095 million tonnes compared with 4.936 million tonnes during the same period last year, according to the Jordan Shipping Association.

Association Secretary-General Mohammad Dalabih said that the volume of exports through Aqaba Port declined by 7.8 per cent during the same period, reaching 4.953 million tonnes compared with 5.374 million tonnes in the first half of 2025.

The association’s statistical report showed positive performance in maritime transport and trade activity through Aqaba Port, driven by growth in imports, general cargo, vehicle traffic and transit container movement, despite regional challenges and changes affecting global supply chains, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

Passenger traffic through Arab Bridge Maritime vessels increased by 18 per cent, with the number of passengers rising to 195,325 from 165,520. Vehicle imports also recorded strong growth, reaching 67,499 vehicles compared with 36,912 during the same period last year, an increase of 82.9 per cent.

Dalabih also said the container sector recorded positive results during the first half of 2026, particularly in transit activity, reflect-



The Jordan Shipping Association says that national imports through Aqaba Port increased by 43.7 per cent during the first half of 2026, reaching 7.095 million tonnes compared with 4.936 million tonnes during the same period last year

ing Aqaba Port’s growing role as a regional logistics hub.

Aqaba Port received 285 container vessels during the first six months of the year, compared with 295 during the same period in 2025, a decline of 3.4 per cent.

Dalabih attributed the decrease to shipping lines increasingly using larger and more efficient vessels capable of carrying greater container volumes per voyage.

Incoming containers increased by 4.2 per cent to 245,461 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), while outgoing containers declined by 5.1 per cent to 49,573 TEUs.

Transit container movement recorded the strongest growth, surging by 155.1 per cent to 60,178 TEUs from

23,593 TEUs during the first half of 2025.

Dalabih attributed the rise to growing confidence in Aqaba Port’s logistics capabilities, noting that congestion at Jeddah Islamic Port contributed to the re-routing of some shipping lines, strengthening Aqaba’s position as a regional logistics alternative.

The largest increase in transit traffic was recorded in shipments heading to Iraq, which jumped to 24,664 TEUs from 2,901 TEUs during the same period last year. Growth was also recorded in transit shipments bound for Syria, Palestine, some Gulf countries and free zones.

Refrigerated transit containers recorded exceptional growth of 499 per cent, increasing to 4,485 TEUs from 749

TEUs, reflecting rising demand for refrigerated cargo services.

Total container handling at Aqaba Port reached 472,679 TEUs during the first half of 2026, compared with 468,063 TEUs during the same period last year, an increase of 1 per cent.

Among key commodities, iron imports declined by 13.1 per cent to 281,507 tonnes from 323,869 tonnes, while sulphur imports fell by 21.9 per cent to 387,684 tonnes from 496,148 tonnes.

Meanwhile, fuel and mineral oil imports rose by 32.8 per cent to 2.859 million tonnes from 2.153 million tonnes. Ammonia imports increased by 18 per cent to 123,964 tonnes.

Grain imports also recorded growth, with

soybean imports rising by 18.7 per cent to 217,878 tonnes and wheat imports increasing by 16 per cent to 578,396 tonnes.

General cargo movement rose by 51.9 per cent to 2.092 million tonnes from 1.377 million tonnes, while livestock movement declined by 18.4 per cent to 483,360 heads from 592,512.

National exports of phosphate declined by 14.8 per cent to 2.681 million tonnes from 3.145 million tonnes, while potash exports increased by 13.9 per cent to 1.318 million tonnes from 1.157 million tonnes.

Dalabih said the figures highlight the resilience of Jordan’s maritime transport sector and its ability to adapt to regional and international developments.

Lower House receives MP Riyati sentencing ruling, refers it to IEC

AMMAN (JT) — The General Secretariat of the Lower House said on Tuesday that it has received the final judicial ruling sentencing MP Hassan Riyati to two years in prison.

In line with legal procedures, the secretariat referred the ruling to the Independent Election Commission (IEC) to take the necessary measures regarding the vacancy in the parliamentary

seat and to identify the candidate who will fill it in accordance with the Election Law.

IEC Director of Operations Nasser Habashneh said that the Speaker of the Lower House had sent an official letter to the IEC Board of Commissioners notifying it of the vacancy of Riyati’s seat, based on Article 57 of the Election Law, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

Al Habashneh said

that the letter will be presented to the Board of Commissioners to take the required legal action.

He added that the procedures are constitutionally stipulated, requiring the IEC to inform the Lower House of the name of the MP who will replace Riyati from the same electoral list within a maximum period of 60 days.

The 20th Lower House

held its first extraordinary session on Sunday, marking the first such session since the chamber’s election, following a Royal Decree calling the Parliament to convene to discuss several draft laws on the session’s agenda.

The Royal Decree, issued on June 28, 2026, called the Parliament to convene in an extraordinary session starting on Sunday, July 12, 2026.

The session’s agenda includes six draft laws: the 2026 Local Administration Law, the 2026 amended Jordanian Universities Law, the 2026 amended Real Estate Ownership Law, the 2026 Law abolishing the Civil Consumer Corporation Law, the 2026 Professional Work Regulation Law and the 2026 Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority Law.

Audit Bureau, World Bank hold workshop on auditing loans, grants

AMMAN (JT) — Audit Bureau President Radhi Hamadeen on Tuesday inaugurated a workshop on auditing and verifying indicators related to World Bank loans and grants.

The three-day workshop brings together officials from Iraq’s Federal Board of Supreme Audit, the Kurdistan Region Board of Supreme Audit and the Iraqi Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as part of the Social Safety Net Project in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Hamadeen stressed that the Jordanian Audit Bureau is committed to sharing its expertise and experience with its Iraqi counterparts to help develop audit practices and enhance institutional performance for the benefit of



Audit Bureau President Radhi Hamadeen on Tuesday inaugurates a workshop on auditing and verifying indicators related to World Bank loans and grants

both countries.

Hamadeen reviewed the bureau’s development since its establishment in 1921, highlighting key legislative milestones, including the adoption of the 1952 Constitution and subsequent amendments to the Audit Bureau Law to ensure alignment with international auditing standards.

He also outlined the bureau’s constitutional role and its relationship with Parliament and the government.

Hamadeen said the workshop covers the bureau’s experience in preparing audit reports and mechanisms for discussing them with Parliament, in addition to efforts to enhance public engagement

through its annual press conference following the submission of its annual report.

“The bureau also follows up on feedback from citizens and specialists regarding the annual report, with greater attention given to issues of relative significance,” he said.

He highlighted the bureau’s mechanisms for following up on audit observations with government entities, including the AB-MRT electronic system, which was developed to accelerate the implementation of audit recommendations and improve coordination with audited entities.

Hamadeen said that the Audit Bureau has achieved around 92 per cent of the targets set under its 2024-2027 strategic plan, noting

progress in capacity building and professional certification.

He added that the bureau remains committed to supporting public sector development by strengthening internal control and audit units in line with the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap.

Senior Financial Management Specialist at the World Bank in Iraq Hawazen Douri praised the Jordanian Audit Bureau for hosting the workshop and sharing its expertise in auditing World Bank-funded loans and grants with Iraqi participants.

Douri said the workshop would contribute to strengthening the capabilities of Iraqi auditors through the exchange of expertise between the two sides.

Labour minister, Lebanese counterpart discuss cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Transport and Minister of Labour Nidal Qatamin and Lebanese Minister of Labour Mohammad Haidar on Tuesday discussed ways to strengthen cooperation in labour-related fields to benefit from the expertise of both sides, in line with labour market needs and the shared interests of the two brotherly countries.

The discussions took place during a meeting at the Ministry of Labour, where Qatamin received Haidar and Lebanese Deputy Ambassador to Jordan Joelle Anton, in the presence of Labour Ministry Secretary-General Abdul Halim Dojan, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.



Minister of Transport and Minister of Labour Nidal Qatamin and Lebanese Minister of Labour Mohammad Haidar on Tuesday discuss ways to strengthen cooperation in labour-related fields

in the field of labour during the eighth session of the Jordanian-Lebanese Joint Higher Committee, held earlier this year in Beirut.

They also discussed bilateral cooperation in vocational training, labour inspection, occupational safety and health, mechanisms to support self-employment programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises, and the integration of persons with disabilities into the labour market.

Qatamin stressed the deep ties between Jordan and Lebanon, adding that the

Ministry of Labour is committed to keeping communication channels open with its Lebanese counterpart to ensure the continuity of joint cooperation in labour-related fields.

For his part, Haidar expressed appreciation for the Jordanian government’s efforts to strengthen cooperation between the two countries through the memorandum of understanding, saying it would contribute to the exchange of expertise and the further development of bilateral partnership in the labour sector.

Suspect questioned after alleged killing of two men in Jerash

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Criminal Court prosecutor on Tuesday began questioning a man who allegedly murdered one man and another in Jerash Governorate a day earlier, official

sources said.

On Monday, a brawl between a group of people resulted in the death of one person and the injury of another in Ghaza Camp in Jerash, Police Spokesperson Brig. Gen. Amer Sartawi said.

“The suspect claimed that a brawl occurred following a heated argument and that the victim attacked him first,” Sartawi told The Jordan Times.

“The suspect claimed that he drew a bayonet and stabbed two men

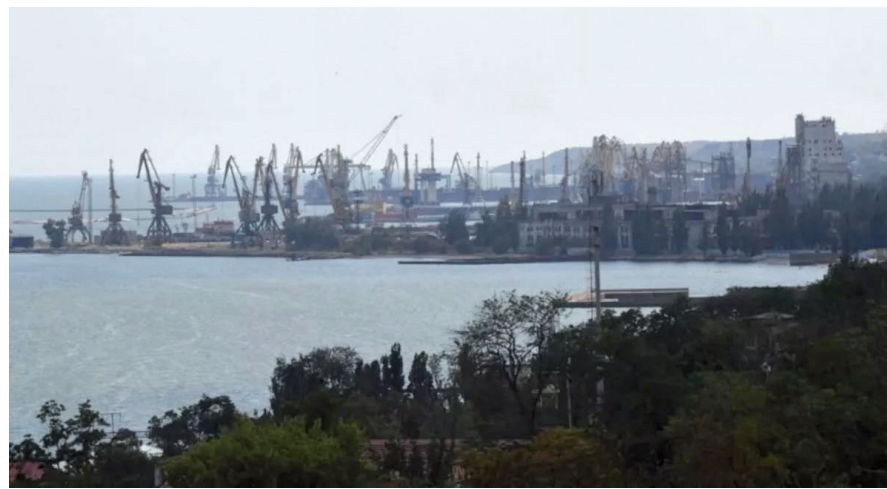
with it,” according to the police official.

Sartawi added that a search is ongoing for a second suspect who was allegedly involved in the stabbing incident.

The Criminal Court prosecutor will summon additional individuals

who were present during the brawl for questioning, according to a statement by the Public Security Directorate.

The suspect was ordered detained by the Criminal Court prosecutor for 15 days pending further investigation.



A view of the Azov Sea port city of Mariupol in southeastern Ukraine on July 16, 2025

Russia to redirect ships from Azov Sea over Ukraine strikes

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia said on Tuesday it was looking for ‘alternative shipping routes’ and could limit traffic in the Azov Sea due to intensifying strikes by Ukraine which claims to have hit over 110 vessels there in nine days.

The Azov Sea lies between Russia, the southern stretch of Ukraine that has been occupied by Moscow’s army and Russia-annexed Crimea.

It is an important export route for agricultural products — including grain from occupied Ukraine that Kyiv says is “stolen” — and for supplies to Crimea.

The sea strikes come as Ukraine has massively intensified drone attacks deep into Russia, causing nationwide fuel shortages.

“Alternative shipping

routes are currently being worked out in collaboration with relevant agencies and the business community,” Russia’s agriculture ministry said in a statement.

It insisted that exports will carry on. “The situation in the Azov Sea will not affect the domestic market’s food supply or our country’s export capabilities,” the ministry said.

The Russian transport ministry said it was “taking all necessary measures to ensure the smooth operation of freight logistics” as attacks rise.

It added that “if necessary”, some “cargo will be redirected to other modes of transport.”

The commander of Ukraine’s drone forces said Tuesday that Ukraine had hit “116 vessels over the past nine days”, including several tankers

and cargo ships, in the Azov Sea.

He said the aim was to damage Russia’s “shadow fleet” and to limit Russia’s petrol supplies to Moscow-controlled Crimea.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the Kremlin was working to stop the attacks and — during a Moscow press conference with his counterpart from Chad — said Russia will continue food shipments to African countries.

Asked about the Azov Sea attacks, Lavrov said: “The president [Vladimir Putin] is working for this to stop.”

“In any case, we will continue to fulfil all our obligations to supply food to our African friends — both under commercial contracts and as part of humanitarian aid,” he added.

GENEVA (AFP) — The World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Tuesday that a deadly Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) could be four times bigger than official figures suggest.

According to the DR Congo’s latest official figures, the haemorrhagic fever has infected more than 1,960 people and killed over 700 since it was detected two months ago.

But WHO emergencies director Chikwe Ihekweazu told reporters in Geneva that its modelling indicated “the scale of the outbreak is at least two to four times the number of cases that we have found”.

According to official numbers, this is already one of the largest Ebola outbreaks recorded, with the virus spreading faster than ever seen before.

“This is now the third-largest Ebola outbreak ever, and we’ve seen the fastest growth in a single month since the outbreak started, and of all the Ebola outbreaks that we’ve managed,” Ihekweazu said.

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



AFP photo

A hygienist wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) begins cleaning and disinfection operations at the Rwampara Ebola Treatment Centre (ETC) in Bunia, Ituri, in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo on Monday

armed groups.

Cases of Ebola, which spreads through close contact and infected bodily fluids, have so far been found in five DRC provinces, as well as in neighbouring Uganda.

But more than 90 per cent of cases are still being detected in Ituri, Ihekweazu said.

Just back from a week-long trip to the region, the doctor said the crisis remained “deeply

concerning”.

The outbreak, which is caused by the rare Bundibugyo species of Ebola, for which there is no approved vaccine or treatment, “continues to outpace the response efforts by the national authorities, international partners, including WHO, and the communities most affected”, he said.

“Perhaps the most alarming finding is that many newly reported

cases are individuals who died in their communities, without ever reaching a health facility and receiving care.”

Ihekweazu nonetheless said he was encouraged to see a ramping up of the response.

“Treatment capacity now exceeds 700 beds and continues to increase each week; laboratory capacity has expanded dramatically... and contact follow-up rates are approaching

80 percent,” he pointed out.

He noted that “over the last few days, we’ve seen some of the highest numbers of new infections in a single day”.

“A few days ago, we saw over 80 cases confirmed in a single day,” he said, adding though that this is actually “good news”, as it shows that fewer cases are escaping detection. “It’s a sign of a maturing response”.

EU opens second membership negotiation area with Ukraine

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AFP) — The European Union on Tuesday opened up a second area of membership negotiations with Ukraine, as Kyiv pushes for faster progress in its bid to join.

The move comes after the 27-nation bloc formally kicked off a first phase of membership talks with Ukraine last month after a long delay caused by opposition from Hungary.

Joining the EU involves candidate countries negotiating their way through six “clusters” of subjects to align with the bloc’s laws on everything from the environment and agriculture to justice.

On Tuesday, EU Europe ministers meeting in Brussels with their Ukrainian counterpart



AFP photo

France’s President Emmanuel Macron (centre-right) shakes hands with Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky next to President of the French National Assembly Yael Braun-Pivet (centre) on the Place de la Concorde during the annual Bastille Day military parade in Paris on Tuesday

opened the talks on security, defence and foreign policy.

Despite the momentum forward, the move falls short of hopes in

Ukraine and Brussels to launch negotiations on all six “clusters” by the

start of Europe’s summer holiday break.

War-torn Ukraine — which applied to join in the wake of Russia’s 2022 invasion — still faces a long and arduous journey to gain full EU membership.

But Kyiv was not the only would-be EU member making progress.

“Today is a super Tuesday for EU enlargement,” said EU commissioner Marta Kos.

“Today’s momentum must now be turned into delivery on the ground.”

Moldova — which asked for membership at the same time as Ukraine — was also opening its second area of talks.

Montenegro, frontrunner to be the bloc’s next month, was meanwhile wrapping up some more negotiation topics, along with Albania.

Fire ravages historic forest outside Paris

PARIS, France (AFP) — Hundreds of French firefighters aided by water bombers on Tuesday battled wildfires that have ravaged a hugely popular forest outside Paris as another scorching heatwave keeps the capital in its grip.

The sprawling Fontainebleau forest some 60 kilometres southeast of the capital, is a former royal hunting ground now hugely popular with hikers and a magnet for climbers who come from around the world to tackle its famous boulders.

The fires that erupted Sunday have now scorched some 2,050 hectares — an area roughly three times the size of Gibraltar, firefighters said on Tuesday.

With some 850 firefighters battling the flames with the help of specialised Canadair aircraft, authorities are hoping to control the flames during the day, said Paul-Edouard Laurain, spokesman for the regional firefighters.

“With the help of the Canadair aircraft, in particular, that should be a



AFP photo

A firefighter operates during a fire in the Fontainebleau Forest, in Noisy-sur-Ecole, in the Paris’ Ile-de-France region on Tuesday

goal we hope is achievable,” Laurain said.

“We expect temperatures to remain the same, even though the wind will be lighter than yesterday [Monday],” he said, noting weather conditions — characterised by heat, wind, and dry air — have so far hampered firefighting efforts.

France is sweltering in the third major heatwave in less than two months, with Paris expected to see temperatures of 35C Tuesday and a slight respite only awaited later in the week.

Risky environment

There are two main fires being fought, including one in the la Faisanderie area, usually thronged with visitors in summer, not far from the town of Fontainebleau.

A fire that broke out on Sunday has burned through approximately 1,600 hectares while the second, which started on Monday afternoon, “covered a significant area overnight” and now spans 450 hectares, according to Pierre Ory, the region’s Paris-appointed prefect.

He nevertheless expressed hope both fires will be “contained” during the day.

France on Tuesday celebrated its national day, which is usually accompanied by evening fireworks.

With the new heatwave, many towns throughout France have cancelled their firework displays, but many are usually set off illegally.

This year’s celebrations coincide with a World Cup semifinal in which France take on Spain in the evening local time and which will likely see fans spilling onto the streets to either celebrate or mourn once the final whistle blows.

The fires have forced some 1,000 people in and around Fontainebleau to flee their homes.

Two held

Authorities are probing whether the fires were started deliberately and two people have been arrested on suspicion of arson. One of the suspects is an 18-year-old man with no prior police

record.

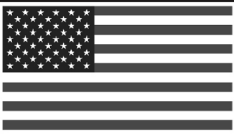
The forest sees 15 million visitors each year, making it vulnerable to fires — quite apart from its sandy soil and vegetation consisting of ferns and highly flammable conifers.

The scale of the fire led to the deployment of four Canadair water-bombing aircraft for the first time in the greater Paris region — as well as two Dash planes and three helicopters.

A total of 187 water drops were carried out on Monday, said the commander of the rescue operations, Jean-Marc Sicard.

According to Interior Minister Laurent Nunez, 32,000 hectares across France have been hit by fires since the beginning of the year — more than during the entire 2025 fire season.

As well as the warmer south, fires have also hit cooler regions such as Brittany in the west where a fire that swept across 38 hectares of heathland on Cap Frehel has now been brought under control.



HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

Water Authority of Jordan

National Conveyance Project (NCP) Readiness

SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Invitation for Prequalification

Construction of the National Conveyer Project Readiness

Infrastructure - Bulks 1, 2 and 6

Tender No. 2/SW/2026

The Ministry of Water and Irrigation/ Water Authority of Jordan (WAJ), hereinafter referred to as “the Client”, has signed a FARA (Fixed Amount Reimbursement Agreement) with the United States Government (USG), hereinafter referred to as “the Funding Agency”, in which the USG will provide funds towards the cost of the **Construction of Bulk 1, Bulk 2, and Bulk 6 of the National Conveyer Project Readiness Infrastructure**, hereinafter referred to as “the Bulk 1 Project”, “the Bulk 2 Project”, and “the Bulk 6 Project”.

The Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation is in the final stage of signing the National Conveyer Project (NCP) contract to desalinate 300 million Cubic Meters per year (MCM/year) of seawater at the Gulf of Aqaba of which 250 MCM/year will be supplied to the two Delivery Points in Amman (Abu Alanda exiting reservoir and Al Muntazah new reservoir).

The NCP Readiness Infrastructure Program comprises set of priority bulk water, transmission, storage, and associated infrastructure investments required to ensure that the NCP is fully operational and capable of delivering desalinated water to end users. The NCP Readiness Infrastructure Program includes the construction of the essential backbone facilities including main transmission pipelines, pump stations, and terminal reservoirs in Amman, Aqaba and other governorates, thereby establishing the infrastructure necessary to receive the desalinated water and convey it to the customers throughout the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The NCP Readiness Infrastructure Program includes several construction Bulks (Packages). This notice is related specifically to the highest priority packages, namely Bulk1 and Bulk 2 in Amman and Bulk 6 in Aqaba.

Bulk 1: Abu Alanda – Tareq Water Transmission System

Bulk 2: Muntazah – Dabouq Water Transmission System

Bulk 6 – Aqaba Water Transmission System

The Employer intends to prequalify contractors and/or firms for the “**Construction of NCP Readiness Bulk 1, Bulk 2 and Bulk 6 Projects**”. **These three projects will be issued for bid as three separate construction contracts.** Prequalified contractors will be invited to bid on one, two, or all bulks based on the results of the prequalification process. However, each bidder cannot be awarded more than two Bulks based on the capacity of each applicant. Awards will be made using the “Best Combination Selection” method that offers the best overall value of money for the Employer

The employer invites interested international and Jordanian Contractors that meets the eligibility criteria of USG code 937 and satisfy the prequalification criteria set in the prequalification document to submit Prequalification Application to the subject construction contracts. Factors considered for the evaluation of applicants include: (i) financial capabilities; (ii) general and specific construction experience of the Contractors and their Key Subcontractors; (iii) organization and personnel capacity and experience; and (iv) construction equipment. Jordanian Contractors and Jordanian Specialized Subcontractors must meet Grade 1 classification in the field of water and wastewater according to the Government Tenders Department (GTD) of the Jordanian Ministry of Public Works and Housing.

Interested eligible Applicants can download the prequalification document that includes description of the components of each bulk free of charge from the WAJ website starting 15/7/2026 from the link: <http://www.mwi.gov.jo/AR/Modules/tenders>

Prequalification will be conducted in accordance with WAJ procurement procedure and in line with USG source and nationality requirements.

One (1) original and two (2) hard and soft copies of the Application must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked from outside as below. In case of any discrepancy between the original hard submission and the hard or soft copies, the original will prevail.

Construction of NCP Readiness Infrastructure - Bulk 1, Bulk 2 and Bulk 6 Projects
Jordan Contract No. 2/SW/2026
Application to Pre-Qualify for the Construction Contracts
Applicant Name and Address

Application for prequalification must be delivered to the below address no later than 12:00 Noon, local Jordan time on 26/8/2026. Applications will be opened publicly in the same day at 13:00 hours, Jordan local time in the address below.

Water Authority of Jordan
P.O. Box 2412, Amman 11183
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
Tender Box First Floor
Attention: Eng. Rua Alsoub

A Pre Application Meeting will be held on 22/7/2026 at 10 AM at the fifth floor/WAJ, including a session for questions and clarifications.. Online participation will be provided if requested by prospective applicants.

Any questions concerning the above invitation shall be addressed and delivered to the below emails no later than 14:00 hours, local Jordan time on 12/8/2026. The email subject shall include the Tender Number and Tender Name (Tender No. 2/SW/2026, Application for NCP Readiness Infrastructure Project- Bulk 1, 2 & 6). Only questions received by email to the email address below will be accepted.

rua_alsoub@mwi.gov.jo
Eman_shalan@mwi.gov.jo

Faxes or electronic forms of the application will not be acceptable. If the application is delivered by courier or other method, the Applicant is responsible for its timely delivery. Applications delivered after the time stated will not be accepted. There have been several instances where the courier failed to deliver an application in a timely manner and all applicants are warned that there will be no relaxation of this requirement, regardless of the cause.

Once pre-qualified, no changes will be permitted in the structure of the Applicant, except with the express consent, in writing, of WAJ and USG.

All information shall be in the English language. Any information submitted in other language will not be considered unless accompanied by an official legal translation.

The awarded Bidder shall bear the costs of the advertisement in the gazette for one time.

Secretary General of MWI
Dr. Jihad S. AL Mahamid



In this photo obtained from Iran's ISNA news agency on June 18, vessels are seen anchored in Bandar Abbas along the Strait of Hormuz

US strikes Iran for third day, will reimpose blockade

TEHRAN (AFP) — The United States launched a third night of strikes on Iran on Tuesday as President Donald Trump reimposed a blockade on Iranian ports and floated a 20 per cent fee on cargo in the vital Strait of Hormuz.

Trump said a deal with the Islamic republic was still possible even as attacks were carried out, with Iran striking two ships in the strategic waterway and killing one crew member, according to the United Arab Emirates.

The US military said its five-hour mission hit targets across Iran including coastal Bush-ehr and Bandar Abbas to "degrade Iran's ability to attack commercial shipping".

"We're going to hit them very hard tonight and we're going to hit them hard tomorrow," Trump said at the White House on Monday.

Trump's declaration on the Hormuz blockade followed US and Iranian attacks of a scale unseen since an April ceasefire in the Middle East conflict, adding to doubts

about efforts to bring a permanent end to the war.

Iran started blocking the strait after US-Israel attacks in February, which prompted Washington's blockade on Tehran's ports — but restrictions eased after the sides agreed a preliminary deal in June.

Trump said on Monday that the United States was "taking over" the strait and would slap a levy of 20 per cent on all cargo shipped through it, in an announcement that drew mockery from Iran and accusations of "piracy".

US Central Command (CENTCOM) said Iran's ports on the waterway would be blockaded from 20:00 GMT on Tuesday.

Tehran launched attacks on other US allies in the region, including Jordan, which said it had shot down four missiles from Iran.

Resumed conflict

Trump formally notified Congress last week that the United States had resumed military conflict

against Iran, the White House confirmed to AFP, giving the Pentagon an additional 60 days to operate in the region without congressional approval.

In addition to the moves in Hormuz, the US president also threatened to destroy Pickaxe Mountain, a deeply buried nuclear site near Natanz where Western intelligence suspects Iran is building an undeclared enrichment facility.

"Tell the Iranians to be ready. Let them know we're coming [and] there's not a damn thing they can do about it," he told conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt.

Trump declared on Truth Social that the United States would be "known as 'THE GUARDIAN OF THE HORMUZ STRAIT'" and levy a 20 per cent fee on all cargo shipped through the waterway.

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

Trump hails new Iraq PM amid pressure over Iran

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US President Donald Trump praised new Iraqi Prime Minister Ali Al Zaidi as a "champion" in a meeting at the White House on Tuesday, even as Washington presses Baghdad to curb Iranian influence.

Trump hinted at making major oil deals with Iraq as he hosted Zaidi, a businessman who came to power this year with US blessing after Trump vetoed another candidate.

"We have a fantastic champion, a new champion," Trump said as he welcomed the Iraqi premier to the Oval Office. "He's been a great fighter and a great fan of America."

Trump said he had even decided to hold an unscheduled lunch with Al Zaidi because of their "tremendous chemistry".

The Iraqi's visit comes against the backdrop of renewed military escalation between the United States and Iran. Washington and Tehran are Iraq's main allies but have long fought a proxy war over the country.

Zaidi has vowed to boost Iraq's fragile economy and disarm pro-Iran armed groups that have targeted US facilities.

He said he would not accept any armed groups outside state control once US forces leave Iraq on September 30, when the US-led anti-extemist coalition's mission ends.

"On September 30th, American forces will leave and American companies will enter," Zaidi said. "After 30 September, we will not allow any entity to bear arms outside the state."



US President Donald Trump shakes hands with Prime Minister of Iraq Ali Al Zaidi (left) in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC, on Tuesday

Zaidi arrived in Washington on Monday for his first international visit since assuming office — a week-long trip during which he will also meet US officials and representatives of oil companies.

Trump hinted at likely oil deals with Iraq — a long-time obsession for a leader who earlier this year asserted control over Venezuela's vast reserves after toppling its leader Nicolas Maduro.

"We're going to be doing a lot of deals," Trump said. "We're going to create a lot of jobs for both countries, and we're going to be taking out a lot of oil."

Delicate balance

Zaidi will however have to continue Iraq's deli-

cate balance between Washington and Tehran.

A senior Iraqi politician told AFP on condition of anonymity that even if the current government adopts a more US-friendly path, prioritising the economy, "it doesn't mean that Iraq is turning against Iran".

Last week, Iraq's holy cities, home to Shia Islam's most sacred shrines, hosted a massive funeral procession for Iran's late supreme leader Ali Khamenei, who was killed in a US-Israeli strike on Tehran as the war began in late February.

While some armed groups said they will cooperate with Zaidi, others remain firm in their refusal to disarm.

Iraq's pro-Iran armed groups have seen their

political and financial clout increase over the years, and have long called for the withdrawal of American troops deployed as part of the anti-extremist coalition.

During the Middle East war, they have intervened in support of Tehran, targeting US facilities in Iraq more than 600 times.

Oil-rich Iraq has been trying to move past decades of war and unrest, but it still suffers from poor infrastructure, failing public services, mismanagement and endemic corruption.

Trump, a long-term opponent of the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, said that Washington had "attacked the wrong country", implying that it should have

invaded Iran instead.

In recent months, Iraq has signed several deals with US companies in the oil and gas sector.

In the United States, Zaidi is expected to sign more agreements, including one to establish a fund into which Iraq will deposit half-a-million barrels of oil per day in exchange for help to boost the country's electricity supply.

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

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

North Korea urges 'maximum vigilance' as Typhoon Bavi approaches

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korea warned of heavy rain and strong winds on Tuesday as Typhoon Bavi drew near, with leader Kim Jong-un urging "maximum vigilance" to prevent damage.

Natural disasters tend to have an out-sized impact on isolated North Korea due to its weak infrastructure and economy.

The typhoon is expected to weaken into a low-pressure system before crossing the country's central region via the Yellow Sea between Tuesday and Wednesday, according to Pyongyang's state-run Rodong Sinmun newspaper.

The country's weather agency issued warnings for heavy rainfall and strong winds, the paper said.

All officials and



Solar panels damaged by winds from Typhoon Bavi are seen in Wenling, in China's eastern Zhejiang province, on Sunday

workers are "urged to remain on maximum vigilance and take steps to minimise damage", Kim was quoted as saying.

Rodong said rainfall of 80-120 millimetres, with downpours of 30-60 millimetres per hour, is forecast on Tuesday across parts of the country's

northern and central regions.

The southern regions, among others, are set for 150-200 millimetres of rain, as well as winds of 10-15 metres per second along the west coast and in some inland areas.

North Korea has stepped up disaster prevention efforts,

the Korean Central News Agency reported last week.

Heavy rain also battered South Korea recently, dumping up to 200 millimetres in some areas.

Hundreds of residents in the central Chungcheong province evacuated the area or were stranded by flooding.

A man in his 70s was reported missing after being swept away by a swollen river in the southern region of Gyeongsang, according to broadcaster KBS.

Seoul's weather agency forecast rain across the country from Tuesday through Wednesday, with heavy downpours expected in central regions and the southern province of Jeolla.

Scientists say human-driven climate

change is making extreme weather more frequent, prolonged and intense.

Last summer was South Korea's hottest on record and both Koreas recorded their warmest June.

This year's return of El Nino, a natural Pacific warming pattern linked to heat, drought and heavy rain across parts of Asia, has added to the risks.

North Korea also suffers chronic power shortages and experts say most residents lack air conditioning.

The impoverished country was hit by severe flooding in its northern regions in 2024, with South Korean media reporting that as many as 1,500 people could be dead or missing — estimates Pyongyang dismissed at the time.

Trump speech to focus on 'free and fair elections'

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US President Donald Trump said he would discuss "free and fair" voting in an address to the nation on Thursday, apparently doubling down on his false claims to have won the 2020 election.

US media reported that his speech would address newly de-classified intelligence reports that the White House claims reveal plans by foreign nations to interfere in the vote won six years ago by Joe Biden.

Asked whether his address would involve "election machines and integrity", Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on Tuesday: "It will concern that subject, and we'll have a couple of other things to say also. But I'd rather save it."

"It's really, really big news. Our country has to shape up," he added.

"What we're going to be talking about Thursday is — it doesn't get bigger because without free and fair elections, you don't have a country. We'll be discussing other things

too, but it's going to be a very big announcement."

Republican Trump, in office for the second time after previously serving as US president from 2017 to 2021, has long pushed false allegations that he won the 2020 election.

'It's really, really big news. Our country has to shape up'

Pro-Trump supporters violently stormed the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 in a bid to stop the certification of Democrat Biden's victory.

Obsessed with the defeat, Trump has in recent months stepped up unproven accusations

of alleged attempts by Democrats to rig November's crucial midterm elections.

The Democrats have fired back at Trump, saying he has been taking steps to seize control of the midterms via gerrymandering election districts, as well as last week's sacking of the final two Democrats on a federal agency that oversees fair polls.

Republicans fear they could lose their grip on the House of Representatives and possibly even the Senate, with Trump's approval nearing record lows in opinion polls.

The president could face a third impeachment trial if Democrats do seize control of the House. He was impeached twice in his first term — once over Ukraine and a second for alleged incitement of the January 6 riots.

Trump's primetime address to the nation at 9:00pm Thursday (1:00 GMT Friday) also comes amid mounting hostilities with Iran, as a fragile ceasefire appears to have collapsed.

Lebanon and Israel hold talks in Rome amid renewed Mideast fighting

Continued from page 1

According to a Lebanese diplomatic source familiar with the content of the talks, "the Lebanese army is ready to gradually take control of the localities from which the Israeli army would withdraw".

"Israel is willing to withdraw gradually", analyst Orna Mizrahi of the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv

told AFP's Jerusalem bureau, but on the condition "that there will be no presence of Hizbollah in the areas that Israel is withdrawing from".

She added that Israel also seeks to ensure "that the Lebanese army will have the ability... to keep it as a neutralised zone and a neutralised place that Hizbollah cannot come in again".

A US military delegation began discussions

with the Lebanese army in Beirut on Saturday on the process for Israeli withdrawal from one of these "pilot zones".

Limited prospects

The framework agreement was concluded after a fragile ceasefire came into effect in the war between Hizbollah and Israel.

The Israeli army has nonetheless continued

limited strikes in the south and has been carrying out demolitions in villages it occupies, according to official Lebanese media.

Israel's strikes and ground invasion have killed more than 4,300 people since the war started in early March, according to Lebanese authorities.

Bitar, for his part, said that the risk of major fighting returning

to Lebanon as a result of the regional escalation "is, of course, not negligible".

"But I think that Iran today will think twice before asking Hizbollah to launch new strikes against Israel", he said.

Tehran "wants to maintain Hizbollah as a long-term deterrent tool and does not want to use it immediately to open a new front", he said.

Air defences shoot down 4 missiles fired from Iran — JAF source

Continued from page 1

The source, quoted in a JAF statement, stressed that the army remains on the highest level of alert and are closely monitoring regional developments, ready to respond to any threat targeting

Jordan's security or airspace.

The statement warned that any attempt to violate Jordan's sovereignty or airspace would be met with a decisive response in accordance with the country's rules of engagement and national interests.

It added that JAF will take all necessary measures to protect the kingdom's security and stability.

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

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Behavioural science as a tool for government

By Zaid K.Maaytah

A recent initiative by Dubai Municipality offers an interesting glimpse into the future of government, instead of announcing a new digital service, stricter regulations, or a larger inspection campaign to address the improper disposal of agricultural waste, the municipality first sought to understand why the behaviour existed, then designed solutions around that understanding, rather than beginning with enforcement, it began by understanding people, a simple shift in thinking, yet one that reflects a broader change in the way governments are beginning to solve public challenges.

For decades, governments have relied on legislation, inspections, financial incentives, and awareness campaigns to encourage people to make better decisions, these tools remain essential, but they often begin by asking how people can be persuaded to change, behavioural science starts one step earlier, instead of asking how to change behaviour, it first asks why people make certain decisions in the first place, it recognises that our choices are shaped not only by information or regulations, but also by habits, convenience, timing, social expectations and the way services are designed, understanding these factors allows governments to address the causes of a problem rather than simply responding to its consequences, every public policy ultimately seeks to influence human behavior, and understanding behaviour is therefore the starting point for designing policies that are more likely to succeed.

This represents more than another policy tool, it reflects a different understanding of government, governments exist to serve people, and every interaction between citizens and government is expressed through behaviour, understanding the factors that shape people's decisions therefore becomes essential to designing services and policies that influence those decisions, a government service achieves its purpose only when people choose to use it, a regulation succeeds only when citizens choose to comply with it, understanding behaviour is therefore becoming an essential part of effective government, because policies succeed when they work with people rather than expecting people to adapt to them.

This way of thinking has gradually become part of public administration in many parts of the world, governments have used it to increase the use of digital services, improve tax compliance, encourage preventive healthcare, strengthen environmental practices and promote more responsible use of water and energy, many of these improvements were achieved without major legislative reforms or significant public spending, but through redesigning services, simplifying procedures, improving communication and removing unnecessary barriers that discouraged people from making the preferred choice, for Jordan, the lesson is not to replicate these initiatives, but to adopt the same way of thinking, as the Kingdom continues its digital transformation and works to improve public services, understanding why citizens use some services, avoid others, or abandon them before completion may become just as important as developing the services themselves.

Perhaps this is the broader lesson behind the Dubai Municipality initiative, governments have always designed policies for people, today they are increasingly designing policies around people, technology will continue to reshape government, digital services will continue to expand, and artificial intelligence will undoubtedly play a growing role in public administration, yet none of these developments can achieve their full potential without a better understanding of the people they are intended to serve, because the true measure of good government is not only the services it provides, but how naturally people choose to use them.

The author is researcher in Economics and Public Policy

The not-so-Secret Israeli strategy: This is the real Gaza plan

By Ramzy Baroud

Here is the bottom line: Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has no intention of leaving Gaza, either before Israel's general elections — likely to be held in October — or after. Conceding an inch from the roughly 70 per cent of the territory his army currently occupies in Gaza will be considered a weakness by the majority of Israeli voters and would result in an open revolt within his extremist coalition.

He has made his intentions clear time and again. Recent statements by Israel's political leadership have only reinforced that reality, with officials insisting that Israel must maintain indefinite military dominance over the Strip and explicitly rejecting any framework that requires a full withdrawal of troops. To Netanyahu, the military footprint in Gaza is a permanent fixture, not a temporary bargaining chip.

Some may argue that Netanyahu's statements are merely political fodder aimed at prolonging his career and avoiding the disastrous outcomes awaiting him — in terms of state investigations and court trials — should he be ejected from power. However, his extremist policies throughout his entire career at the helm of Israeli politics say otherwise. There has never been a period in Netanyahu's history in which he showed a genuine willingness to compromise or engage in an authentic political process with the Palestinians.

This reduces the point of the Washington-led Board of Peace and its subsequent administrative bodies to near irrelevance. These entities — including the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza and a multinational International Stabilisation Force — were supposedly assembled with the sole aim of managing a transitional phase, delivering humanitarian aid, and deploying a peacekeeping buffer to facilitate a gradual Israeli military withdrawal.

It seems that two separate, irreconcilable tracks are taking shape. One is the Israeli track of continued war, entrenched military occupation, and prolonged genocide. The other is

an international track, controlled firmly by Washington, aimed largely at finding alternative ways to manage Gaza on behalf of Israel.

Yet, even with its obvious limitations, the Gaza plan's first phase theoretically promises a phased Israeli military repositioning, a sustainable ceasefire, a massive influx of reconstruction aid, and the gradual handover of civil administration to a non-factional Palestinian authority.

The only way out is a stronger, independent international will that wrestles the future of Gaza from the grip of Netanyahu, translating political agreements into immediate humanitarian outcomes and a definitive end to the Israeli occupation

Little of that has actually been delivered. While the United States and international envoys claim the ceasefire hinges on disarmament, Israel has used the diplomatic deadlock to advance its troops further into the Strip rather than withdrawing them. Aid remains choked at the borders, and the promised reconstruction has not even begun.

Indirect talks are ongoing in Cairo, though it seems that only Palestinians are being held accountable or expected to carry out heavy concessions. Moreover, after 19 years of Hamas governing Gaza, the movement announced on July 6 that it has officially dissolved the Emergency Committee that has been administering the Strip. The movement declared its full readiness to transfer governance to the National Committee, intended to administer Gaza under the framework of

the US-brokered plan.

On paper, this suggests that a political transition is finally underway. In reality, no such transition is taking place.

Israel is actively preventing this technocratic government from assuming any real duties. Rather than facilitating a civil handover, the Israeli political security Cabinet has completely dismissed the transition. Israeli foreign minister Gideon Sa'ar openly labeled the move a "trick", arguing that a technocratic administration would merely be responsible for municipal tasks like garbage collection while allowing resistance networks to persist.

Instead, Israel's military strategy continues to fuel conditions that undermine any possibility of stabilising the devastated Strip. Its objective is not merely to reject an alternative Palestinian administration, but to ensure that no functioning Palestinian governing authority can emerge at all. By doing so, Tel Aviv wants to create a permanent governance vacuum, sowing further chaos and fragmentation.

If no alternative Palestinian political body is permitted to stabilise Gaza, the default collapse will inevitably force local factions to reassert control over daily survival, thus giving Israel yet more pretenses to exact more punishment on a helpless population.

Following the Hamas political move, Israel simply responded with its standard currency: Immediate violence. This was starkly illustrated on July 9, when Israeli forces carried out a targeted airstrike on a vehicle in Gaza City in a failed attempt to assassinate Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem. Though the assassination attempt failed, the strike sent a clear message that Israel has no intention of respecting political transformations or ceasefires.

While no houses are being built, no schools are being constructed, and no hospitals are being revived, the only numbers that keep growing are those of the dead and wounded. The human cost has reached unfathomable proportions: the Palestinian death toll in Gaza has surpassed 73,000, with the number of wounded exceeding 173,200. Tragically, these num-

bers continue to climb daily: Over 1,098 Palestinians have been killed since the so-called ceasefire framework was initially agreed upon, proving that the truce exists only in media rhetoric, not on the ground.

This leaves us with a single, inescapable conclusion: The political track aimed at reconstructing Gaza and ending the Israeli military presence has little bearing on the grim realities unfolding on the ground.

Indirect talks are ongoing in Cairo, though it seems that only Palestinians are being held accountable or expected to carry out heavy concessions. Moreover, after 19 years of Hamas governing Gaza...

The only way out is a stronger, independent international will that wrestles the future of Gaza from the grip of Netanyahu, translating political agreements into immediate humanitarian outcomes and a definitive end to the Israeli occupation.

Until Israel is compelled to relinquish its military control over Gaza, every new committee, reconstruction mechanism, or diplomatic initiative risks becoming little more than political theater.

Ramzy Baroud is a journalist, author and the editor of The Palestine Chronicle. He is the author of eight books. His latest book, "Before the Flood", was published by Seven Stories Press. His other books include "Our Vision for Liberation", "My Father was a Freedom Fighter" and "The Last Earth". Baroud is a non-resident senior research fellow at the Centre for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA). His website is www.ramzybaroud.net

From nuclear to Hormuz

By Mohammad Abu Rumman

The latest military escalation between the United States and Iran is not simply a return to confrontation after weeks of relative calm. Rather, it exposes the structural flaw embedded in the ceasefire agreement from the very beginning. The fundamental question that every war ultimately raises — who won and who lost — was never truly resolved.

Against this backdrop, the prospects for an early diplomatic breakthrough appear increasingly limited. Limited military escalation is likely to continue, not because either side necessarily seeks a full-scale war...

Instead of producing a durable political settlement, the memorandum of understanding merely froze the battlefield while postponing the most contentious issues, including the future of the Strait of Hormuz, the Israeli withdrawal

and Iran's frozen assets. Those unresolved questions have now become the new centre of the conflict.

The key question today is not only whether the war will resume, but whether the memorandum itself is effectively dead, as President Donald Trump has declared. The more plausible reading is that the agreement has entered a state of suspension. Negotiators in both Washington and Tehran have stepped back, leaving room for hardliners on both sides to create new facts on the ground and accumulate leverage before negotiations eventually resume.

The difficulty is that the issues now at stake do not lend themselves to easy compromise. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Strait of Hormuz, which, from the perspective of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), has evolved from a strategic waterway into perhaps a more valuable instrument of leverage than Iran's nuclear programme itself. Recent statements by senior Iranian officials leave little doubt that this is now how Tehran increasingly views the Strait.

Although predicting the next phase of the conflict remains difficult, one major transformation is already evident: The centre of gravity has shifted. At the outset of the war, Iran's nuclear and missile programmes dominated the agenda, while some voices in Washington and Tel Aviv openly discussed weakening — or even transforming — the Iranian regime. Today, however, the strategic focus has moved decisively toward the Strait of Hormuz.

This is more than a change in priorities. It reflects a shift from competing over Iran's military capabilities to com-

peting over strategic geography. Hormuz is no longer simply an Iranian or American issue; it has become a question of global energy security, international trade, and the stability of one of the world's most vital maritime chokepoints. Consequently, the conflict now directly affects a much broader range of regional and international actors.

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This shift also explains the changing position of the Gulf states. At the beginning of the war, they largely managed to distance themselves from the confrontation. Today, however, the crisis directly threatens their national security and

economic stability. Maintaining strategic neutrality has become far more difficult, even if Gulf capitals continue to differ in the degree and form of their engagement. The growing role of the Houthis further reinforces this trend by raising concerns that the confrontation could expand from Hormuz to the Bab El Mandeb Strait, placing maritime security at the center of the regional agenda.

At the same time, Iran itself appears to be reassessing the foundations of its regional strategy. For two decades, Tehran relied primarily on a network of non-state allies and proxies to project influence across the region. The recent war, however, has highlighted the renewed strategic value of geography itself. For the IRGC, Hormuz is no longer merely a bargaining chip; it is central to both an internal struggle over influence within what some describe as Iran's emerging "Third Republic" and a broader regional effort to redefine Iran's post-war role.

Against this backdrop, the prospects for an early diplomatic breakthrough appear increasingly limited. Limited military escalation is likely to continue, not because either side necessarily seeks a full-scale war, but because both are attempting to strengthen their negotiating positions before returning to diplomacy.

This recalls Carl von Clausewitz's famous observation that war is "the continuation of politics by other means". What we are witnessing today is precisely that. The conflict has not abandoned politics; it has simply shifted its battlefield — from uranium enrichment to the Strait of Hormuz, and from the nuclear file to the geopolitics of strategic waterways.



The consumer price index in February rises 6 per cent below January figure but still well above 2 per cent goal

US consumer inflation cools in June on lower energy costs

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US consumer inflation cooled more than expected in June, government data showed on Tuesday, as energy prices fell on a temporary cooling of the US-Iran war.

With the recent renewal of hostilities between Washington and Tehran and US President Donald Trump ordering the restart of a blockade of Iranian ports, the progress could be fleeting.

The consumer price index (CPI) rose by 3.5 per cent on a year-on-year basis in June, down from a 4.2 per cent increase in May, said the Labour Department.

The figure marked a pullback from a three-year high, as a drop in energy costs more than offset upticks in housing and food.

Analysts had anticipated a larger 3.8 per cent CPI uptick, according to economists surveyed by Dow Jones Newswires and The Wall Street Journal.

Yet, the cooldown is unlikely to fully ease worries over costs.

A return of fighting this month, and

Trump's declaration that a ceasefire was over in the Middle East, have been pushing oil prices upwards again.

All eyes will turn to Federal Reserve Chairman Kevin Warsh at 10:00 am (14:00 GMT), when he is due to appear before the House Financial Services Committee following his first interest rate meeting at the helm of the central bank.

US lawmakers are expected to grill him over progress on lowering inflation in the world's biggest economy, among other issues.

While the central bank has a longer run inflation target of 2 per cent, cost hikes have been higher than that level for around five years.

Warsh, in prepared remarks released Tuesday, is set to vow that the central bank will rid the United States of the years-long "inflation surge".

"The Fed's number one objective is to get monetary policy right — or as near to it as we possibly can," he says in his prepared remarks.

"If we get policy right — and we will — the inflation surge of the last five years will be a thing of the past," he adds.

For now, US gasoline costs plunged by 9.7 per cent in June on a month-on-month basis — though they still remain higher than a year ago.

CPI fell by 0.4 per cent between May and June too, in the first month-on-month decline since 2020.

Energy prices rocketed this year after US-Israeli strikes targeting Iran from late February triggered Tehran's retaliation in virtually blocking off the Strait of Hormuz. The strait is a key waterway for global energy transit.

While energy costs slumped in June, the cost of food climbed by 0.2 per cent on a monthly basis.

Excluding the volatile food and energy sectors, overall CPI was up by 2.6 per cent year-on-year.

The Fed's preferred inflation gauge, the Personal Consumption Expenditures price index, is due to be released July 30.

Ministers conclude Prague tour to expand Jordan-Czech trade, investment ties

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smeirat and Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh have concluded an intensive economic tour in the Czech capital, Prague.

The tour aimed at expanding bilateral trade and investment ties, and preparing for the upcoming "Jordan-Europe" Investment Conference, according to a Ministry of Investment statement issued on Tuesday.

In the presence of Jordan's Ambassador to the Czech Republic Mohammad Hindawi, the ministerial delegation discussed ongoing arrangements for the conference, which the Kingdom is scheduled to host this November.

The ministers began their visit by meeting Czech First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry and Trade Karel Havlíček, stressed the importance of elevating economic cooperation, expanding public-private partnerships (PPPs), and increasing the presence of Czech firms in the Jordanian market to tap into the Kingdom's promising opportunities.

Discussions focused on the upcoming conference, with the ministers inviting the Czech government and business community to participate in the event.

The conference serves as a key platform bringing together government officials, investors and financial institutions to showcase projects and engage directly with decision-makers.

The two sides also explored joint ventures in the digital economy, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence (AI), advanced industries, renewable energy, water, medical technol-



Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smeirat and Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh have concluded an economic tour in the Czech capital, Prague

ogy, smart transport and PPP projects.

To engage directly with the Czech private sector, the ministers as well attended a Jordanian-Czech business forum hosted by the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade.

The event was attended by Czech Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Jan Sichter, Vice President of the Czech Chamber of Commerce Radek Jakubský and representatives of 30 Czech companies.

The forum featured discussions on a proposal to establish a Jordanian-Czech business council and designate direct focal points to provide investors with information on potential ventures, facilitating seamless communication between business entities in both nations.

The ministers briefed the Czech representatives on the latest de-

velopments in Jordan's regulatory climate and digital economy.

They highlighted prospects in manufacturing, energy, water, technology, cybersecurity, smart transport, medical technology, 3D printing and the green economy, underlining the Kingdom's stable business environment, legislative reforms and competitive advantages that bolster its appeal for high-value investments.

An interactive discussion took place with the Czech business representatives regarding Jordan's economic ecosystem, market entry requirements, partnership mechanisms with local firms and the specific projects to be floated at the November conference.

Smeirat stressed that Jordan continues to bolster its digital economy and entrepreneurship ecosys-

tem through advanced technological infrastructure, a highly qualified workforce and a growing innovation landscape, boosting prospects for cooperation with Czech firms in high-tech and digital transformation.

For his part, Abu Ghazaleh affirmed that the Kingdom is actively upgrading its investment climate by modernising legislation, streamlining procedures, and enhancing investor services.

He noted that the Jordan-Europe Investment Conference will serve as a strategic platform to forge sustainable partnerships, leveraging Jordan's political stability and strategic location as a regional gateway.

Ambassador Hindawi noted that Jordan remains a cornerstone of regional stability and security, providing a solid foundation to strengthen eco-

omic cooperation and scale up existing ties between Amman and Prague.

He urged building on these relations to unlock broader trade horizons.

The ministers concluded their tour by meeting executives from Czech cybersecurity firm WULTRA to discuss partnership prospects in cybersecurity, digital transformation and digital identity, in light of global advancements in quantum computing.

The firm, which specialises in secure digital services and identity protection, was invited to invest in Jordan and leverage its competitive advantages.

WULTRA executives expressed strong interest in exploring local opportunities, citing the Kingdom's robust technological framework and skilled talent pool, according to the statement.

Dollar slides as rate hike prospects ease, oil gains moderate

LONDON (AFP) — The dollar slid on Tuesday after a drop in US inflation dented expectations of an interest rate hike later this month.

Oil prices had jumped sharply on fresh Iran-US strikes, with two ships struck overnight near the Strait of Hormuz.

But those gains faded during the day, with US President Donald Trump reversing course on plans to impose a 20-per cent levy on ships transiting the key waterway.

The spike in oil prices over recent days had renewed concerns about rising inflation and the need for the US Federal Reserve to hike interest rates.

But the latest data showed US consumer inflation dipped in June thanks to a drop in energy prices, which sent the dollar lower as traders saw less likelihood of a hike by the Fed later this month.

The second quarter earnings season also got under way, with JPMorgan Chase reporting a surge in net profit to \$21.2 billion, which, according to Yahoo Finance, was the largest quarterly profit in US banking history.

While the inflation and earnings news were positive for



Dollar increase against EGP leads to increase in food prices

stocks, the Dow shed 0.3 per cent at the opening bell, pulled down by a 23-per cent plunge in IBM shares after it warned second-quarter earnings would disappoint.

IBM released at the start of the quarter a new mainframe processor for AI applications that was well-received by clients, but CEO Arvind Krishna said that in June companies shifted spending towards servers and storage in anticipation of supply constraints and price hikes, leading the company to fall short of its targets.

While IBM suffered from the shift in spending, it was positive for the sector as a whole, with the PHLX semiconductor index rising more than 3 per cent.

The Dow later pushed into positive territory, buoyed by reduced expectations of an interest rate hike following the release of US consumer price index (CPI) data.

The Labour Department said that the CPI rose by 3.5 per cent on a year-on-year basis in June, down from a 4.2 per cent increase in May.

"This was the largest moderation in US price growth for six years and it drastically reduces the chance of a rate cut at this month's [Federal Reserve's monetary policy committee] meeting," said Kathleen Brooks, research director at XTB trading platform.

The drop in the inflation rate (excluding food and energy) of price growth to 2.6 per cent from 2.9 per

cent in May "is adding to market confidence that price pressures in the world's largest economy could be temporary", she added.

Earlier Tuesday, the market saw a roughly 40 per cent probability of a US interest rate hike this month, but that fell to 13 per cent after the CPI data was published.

The market still narrowly sees the Fed as to hike rates at its next meeting in September.

The dollar slid against rival currencies after the inflation data was published.

International benchmark Brent North Sea crude rose as much as five per cent to trade around \$87 a barrel following the fresh attacks in the Strait of Hormuz.

Oil prices later pared gains as Trump backpedalled on his proposed levy on ships in the waterway. He maintained his threat to reimpose a naval blockade on Iranian ports.

Rising oil prices hit European equities early in the day, but they recovered as crude's gains faded.

Asian stocks mostly climbed after tech firms enjoyed some reprieve from the latest bout of selling.

Spain tourism revenue rises as visitors spend moreprivate sector makeover

MADRID (AFP) — Tourism revenue rose in Spain in the second quarter of 2026, with the country benefiting from its reputation as a safe destination as Middle East tensions persisted and an increase in spending per person, tourism industry group Exceltur said on Tuesday.

Tourism-related gross domestic product is expected to grow

by 2.7 per cent over the full year, after rising 3.4 per cent in the second quarter as foreign arrivals increased.

Spain benefited from a reorientation of tourist flows linked to the conflict in the Middle East, as visitors were drawn by the country's reputation as a safe destination, the group said.

"We expect this effect to continue, at least this

year," Exceltur's Vice-President Oscar Perelli told a news conference, saying the uncertainty has "intensified again" in the wake of renewed strikes by the US and Iran.

Tourist revenues were boosted by the rise in arrivals and higher spending per visitor.

Foreign tourist spending rose 8.2 per cent in the second quarter compared with the

same period last year, while Spanish residents increased their domestic tourism spending by 8.3 per cent.

The figures also reflected an upmarket shift in tourism, with Spaniards increasingly choosing higher-end accommodation.

Overnight stays at four- and five-star hotels rose 3.6 per cent, according to Exceltur data.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Tuesday amounted to JD 14.6 million spread over 5 million shares that traded through 4,481 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 1.02 per cent, closing at 3912.68 points.

Out of 95 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 48 companies rose while the share price of another 13 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Specialised Trading and Investment by 4.96 per cent, National Steel Industry by 4.82 per cent, Islamic Insurance by 4.67 per cent, Al Rakaez Investment Company by 4.55 per cent, and Specialised Jordanian Investment by 4.5 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Jordan Vegetable Oil Industries by 4.93 per cent, United Financial Investments by 4.62 per cent, Noor Capital Markets for Diversified Investments by 3.92 per cent, Jordanian Company for Developing and Financial Investment by 3.51 per cent, and Arab International for Education and Investment by 3.17 per cent.



FOOTBALL

World Cup final ball, halftime show outfits to be auctioned

NEW YORK (AFP) — A sale of World Cup memorabilia, including a ball used in the final and outfits worn by performers at the halftime show, was announced on Tuesday by New York auction house Christie's. The week-long online auction begins on July 22 and raises funds for the FIFA Global Citizen Education Fund, an initiative working to generate \$100 million for children worldwide during the World Cup. Top items include a yellow crop top and trousers worn by Colombian pop singer Shakira in her music video for Dai Dai, the official song of the 2026 soccer tournament. The outfit she will wear during her performance at the first-ever World Cup final halftime show — an 11-minute musical extravaganza also featuring Madonna, Justin Bieber and BTS — will also be auctioned. Several soccer balls will go on sale including one from the July 19 final at the MetLife Stadium in New Jersey and another from the opening match in Mexico last month. A 2022 Argentina jersey signed by star player Lionel Messi is being auctioned too, as well as a US jersey signed by the United States' men's team.

CYCLING

Pogacar inspired by Djokovic amid Tour de France jeers

LE LIORAN, France (AFP) — Tour de France leader Tadej Pogacar said on Tuesday that he took inspiration from tennis star Novak Djokovic when he faced jeers on French roads. Pogacar stormed to another dominant stage victory on France's Bastille Day national holiday to extend his overall lead to more than three-and-a-half minutes. It was his 24th stage win since his debut Tour in 2020 and leaves the four-time winner with his largest ever lead at this stage of the three-week race. But he faced some boos on the mountainous roads around the central Cantal region. "Haters gonna hate, it's always like this, even though [in] cycling [there] is not as much as... in tennis or football there is much more booing and going against one team or one player," said the 27-year-old Slovenian. "If they boo me on the road, they actually boo the whole bunch because you don't know who it is, because we pass all together. I always think about tennis, Novak Djokovic, how great a mentality he has."

Argentina, England renew iconic World Cup rivalry in semifinal showdown

By Osama Alkafri

AMMAN — Argentina and England will renew one of football's most storied rivalries when they meet in the FIFA World Cup semi-finals at Atlanta Stadium on Wednesday.

The clash marks the first time the two nations have faced each other in a World Cup semi-final, with defending champions Argentina, led by Lionel Messi, taking on an England side revitalised under head coach Thomas Tuchel.

Their latest encounter adds another chapter to a rivalry shaped by memorable matches, controversial moments and historical significance.

The two sides have previously met five times at the World Cup. England hold a slight advantage, having won three matches, while Argentina has one victory and one knockout triumph on penalties.

Their first World Cup meeting came during the group stage in Chile in 1962, when England secured a 3-1 victory.

Four years later, England edged Argentina 1-0 in the quarter-finals on home soil in a fiercely contested encounter remembered for the dismissal of Argentina captain Antonio Rattin, a decision that remained a source of controversy in Argentina for decades.

The rivalry reached its defining moment at the 1986 World Cup in Mexico. Just four years after the Falklands War, Diego Maradona



Argentina players celebrate after the 3-1 victory during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Quarter Final match between Argentina and Switzerland at Kansas City Stadium on July 11 in Kansas City, Missouri

inspired Argentina to a 2-1 quarter-final victory with two of the most famous goals in football history.

The first, later dubbed the "Hand of God", saw Maradona punch the ball past England goalkeeper Peter Shilton. Minutes later, he produced what FIFA later described as the "Goal of the Century", weaving past several England players before scoring.

Reflecting on that match, Maradona said: "Each one who jumped on the pitch thought about the kids who died in the Malvinas... We played the game with boots and rifles."

He also famously described the opening goal as being scored "a little with the head of Maradona and a little with the hand of God."

The rivalry continued to produce dramatic encounters.

Argentina defeated England on penalties after a 2-2 draw in the Round of 16 at the 1998 World Cup in France, a match remembered for Michael Owen's outstanding solo goal and David Beckham's sending-off following an incident involving Diego Simeone.

While the Falklands conflict gave the rivalry additional emotional significance, football has increasingly taken centre stage in recent decades. Ahead of Wednesday's match, the BBC described the fixture as "iconic, generational, classic", reflecting its enduring place in World Cup history.

Argentina arrives in the semi-finals as reigning world champions, with Messi continuing to lead a squad that also features Julian Alvarez and Lautaro Martinez,

who played key roles in the Albiceleste's extra-time quarter-final victory over Switzerland.

England, meanwhile, are seeking their first World Cup title since 1966. Tuchel's side have impressed throughout the tournament, with Jude Bellingham scoring twice in the quarter-final victory over Norway, while captain Harry Kane remains their focal point in attack.

Speaking to ESPN, Messi described England as a "powerhouse" and said the semi-final would be "special".

With a place in the World Cup final at stake, Wednesday's encounter promises another compelling chapter in one of international football's greatest rivalries, combining tactical intrigue, world-class talent and the weight of history.

Norway receive heroes' welcome in Oslo after World Cup exit

OSLO (AFP) — Around 90,000 people welcomed back Norway's players to Oslo on Monday after they returned home from making a historic run to the World Cup quarter-finals.

Erling Haaland's side were knocked out of the tournament on Saturday after losing 2-1 to England in extra-time in the last eight in Miami, their best result in the competition.

The crowd packed the square in front of the royal palace in Norway's capital city as the squad arrived around and performed the now famous "Viking Row",

Haakon, Crown Prince of Norway, the heir apparent to the country of 5.6 million's throne, led the celebra-

tion with a drum — he was also present at the defeat in Miami.

"It's simply incredible to see all the support we receive and to see how much the country is behind us," captain Martin Odegaard told public broadcasters NRK.

"It's really fantastic," the Arsenal playmaker added.

Haaland landed in Norway earlier in the day and was pictured on his social media walking from the plane holding a stuffed racoon with a glass bottle of alcohol in its claws.

Broadcaster NRK said the Manchester City striker, who scored seven goals at the World Cup, was unable to attend as he had a plane to catch.



Supporters wave for Norway's national football team at Slottsplassen in Oslo after their return to Norway from the USA on Monday. Norway were knocked out in the quarter-final match against England

After Mythos saga, Google AI boss wants US-led global watchdog

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — The head of Google's artificial intelligence (AI) lab called on Tuesday for the United States to create an organisation that would test the most powerful AI systems before they can be released to the public.

Demis Hassabis, who runs Google DeepMind and won a Nobel Prize for his work on protein science, said in an essay that AI capable of matching the full range of human thinking, known as artificial general intelligence, is likely just a few years away.

Hassabis leads the division behind Google's Gemini family of AI models, which compete directly with offerings from OpenAI and Anthropic in the fast-moving race to build more powerful systems.

The proposal lands amid growing calls from rival AI executives for binding government oversight of the technology — and weeks after a bruising stand-off between the Trump administration and Anthropic that laid bare the absence of clear rules for the

sector.

In June, the Commerce Department ordered Anthropic to suspend all foreign access to its Claude Fable 5 and Mythos 5 models, citing national security concerns linked to a reported jailbreak — users successfully blowing past guardrails designed to contain them.

The company was forced to take both models offline entirely for more than two weeks before access was gradually restored.

Hassabis proposed a new regulatory body modelled on the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, the private watchdog that polices Wall Street brokerage houses under federal oversight.

He said it would be staffed by leading technical experts, funded primarily by the AI industry, and tasked with developing safety benchmarks that frontier models must clear before entering the market.

Under his plan, AI developers would initially submit their most powerful models for review on a voluntary basis up to 30



The proposal lands amid growing calls from rival AI executives for binding government oversight of the technology

days before release. Once the testing regime proves reliable, compliance would become mandatory.

"Nobody in the world knows for sure what is going to happen from here, and even the experts disagree," Hassabis wrote.

"When there is a large degree of uncertainty and the stakes are this high, proceeding with cautious optimism is the sensible

and correct strategy."

The rules enforced by the new US agency would apply to any model deemed powerful enough to qualify as "frontier-class" — whether built in the US or abroad, with Hassabis hoping that international players would buy into the system once it was up and running.

In an interview with Axios published alongside his manifesto,

Hassabis described the Mythos episode as "a bit of a wake-up call" that showed Washington needs a more structured approach.

Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei has issued his own call for regulation days before the government crackdown, publishing an essay in early June that advocated for a federal agency with the power to vet powerful AI models before deployment.

Turn off addictive features on social media for children, say EU lawmakers

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AFP) — There should be a "youth mode" for children on social media platforms in which addictive features and targeted advertising are turned off, EU lawmakers demanded on Tuesday.

The calls are growing louder for the European Union to ensure that social media platforms and others are designed to be safe before children use them.

An expert report on Monday also recommended a "safety-by-design" approach in which platforms protect minors from possible harms posed by the apps.

"The responsibility for the safety of children and adolescents must first and foremost lie with those who design and manage digital platforms," EU lawmaker Sandro Ruotolo said in a statement.

The addictive features that the EU has concerns over include infinite scroll, autoplay, push notifications and highly personalised recommender systems.

The parliament's culture committee also called for an "EU code of conduct" to regulate influencers and a common definition of "influencer marketing".



The calls are growing louder for the European Union to ensure that social media platforms and others are designed to be safe before children use them

It also stressed the need for greater transparency around how social media works as "opaque algorithms and content moderation hampers the ability of young users to understand why certain content is recommended, suppressed or removed".

Monday's expert report also recommended restricting social media for children under the age of 13, with access only allowed under adult supervision.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen made it clear on Monday that she supports limits on children under the age of 13 accessing digital platforms like social media.

There will be a legal proposal after the summer break, she said.

Once it is unveiled, EU negotiators from the parliament and European capitals will thrash it out to agree on a final law.

The EU has already increased the pressure on social media platforms to change in recent months, telling Facebook and Instagram last week to dismantle their "addictive" features, after a similar warning to TikTok in February.

The European Commission, which acts as the bloc's digital watchdog, says new rules are on the way to push for changes to platforms' addictive designs.

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