



EU announces 1.6b euros support for National Water Carrier project

AMMAN (JT) — The EU has announced up to 1.6 billion euros in support for the Aqaba-Amman Water Desalination and Conveyance Project, known as the National Water Carrier.

The funding package is provided by the EU, the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and EU member states, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

The EU said that the support aims to

strengthen the resilience of Jordan's economy, accelerate the green transition and create job opportunities.

The project includes a de-salination plant in Aqaba with an annual capacity of 300 million cubic metres, a 438 kilometre water transmission system and a 281-megawatt solar power plant.

The EU said its total financial package for Jordan for the 2025–2027 period is valued at around 3 billion euros,

including 640 million euros in grants, 1.4 billion euros in investments and 1 billion euros in concessional loans.

The EBRD has also provided a 12 million euros loan to establish the Aqaba Digital Hub, while other initiatives include a 12 million euros sustainable economic development programme funded by the EU and Germany, in addition to support for women-led enterprises.

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Safadi meets Iraqi prime minister in Washington

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi met Iraqi Prime Minister Ali Al Zaidi in Washington on Wednesday to discuss expanding bilateral cooperation, advancing key infrastructure projects and reviewing regional developments.

During the meeting, held on the sidelines of their visits to the US capital, a Foreign Ministry statement said.

Safadi conveyed greetings from His Majesty King Abdullah and delivered the King's invitation for the Iraqi prime minister to visit Jordan.

The two sides discussed ways to strengthen Jordanian-Iraqi relations and deepen cooperation across economic and development sectors. They also reviewed progress on the Basra-Aqaba oil pipeline and the electricity interconnection projects between the two countries, emphasising the importance of advancing both ventures in



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi, Iraqi Prime Minister Ali Al Zaidi and US Ambassador to Turkey and Special Envoy for Syria Thomas Barrack during a meeting in Washington

support of their shared economic interests.

Regional and international developments also featured prominently in the talks, the statement said, with the

two sides underscoring the importance of promoting security and stability in the region through dialogue and diplomacy.

US Ambassador to

Turkey and Special Envoy for Syria Thomas Barrack joined part of the meeting.

The three sides discussed opportunities to expand economic coop-

eration among Jordan, Iraq and the United States in areas of mutual interest, with the aim of advancing the shared interests of the three countries.

Jordan dispatches 10th humanitarian aid convoy to Lebanon

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation (JHCO) said on Thursday it had dispatched its 10th humanitarian aid convoy to Lebanon in cooperation with the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAAF), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and international partners.

JHCO said in a statement that the convoy comprised 26 trucks carrying food, medical supplies and other relief assistance as part of Jordan's ongoing humanitarian support for Lebanon.

JHCO Secretary-General Hussein Shibli was quoted in the statement as reiterating Jordan's commitment to supporting



The Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation says on Thursday that it dispatches 26 trucks of humanitarian aid to Lebanon

Lebanon, saying that the assistance also aims to support key sectors in the country.

Shibli said that the organisation continues to coordinate with JAAF, the Foreign Min-

istry and international partners to ensure aid reaches beneficiaries based on needs identi-

fied on the ground.

With the latest shipment, Jordan has sent a total of 197 aid trucks to Lebanon in 10 convoys since the crisis resumed in March. The deliveries have included food, medical and relief supplies, hygiene items, tents and two mobile bakeries.

The organisation also thanked the Syrian authorities for facilitating the transit of the latest convoy and previous humanitarian shipments to Lebanon.

More than 4,000 Lebanese have been killed and more than a million displaced by Israel's war on Lebanon since March, according to Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health.



This photo taken from the southern city of Nabatieh shows smoke rising from the site of an Israeli air strike that targeted the nearby village of Nabatieh Al Faouqa on Thursday

Lebanon-Israel talks resume amid dispute over Israeli withdrawal, Hizbollah disarmament

- Trump sees Israeli redeployment as key to shifting focus to Iran
- Lebanon demands Israeli withdrawal, Israel seeks 'security guarantees'
- Rome talks aim to advance ceasefire framework despite Hizbollah opposition

By Mai Anati

AMMAN — Lebanon and Israel resumed US-sponsored negotiations in Rome on Tuesday as US President Donald Trump backed an Israeli redeployment from southern Lebanon, saying such a move would allow Israel to shift its focus to what he described as the "bigger issue" Iran.

The latest round of talks seeks to advance the framework agreement reached on June 26 after five rounds of negotiations in Washington. The agreement aims to end the fighting between Israel and Iran-backed Hizbollah and pave the way for a broader political settlement.

Lebanon and Israel 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.

Trump said that an Israeli redeployment would enable Israel to focus on Iran

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 Lebanon.

Speaking to Fox News, Trump said that "redeployment" was a more accurate description than withdrawal when asked whether he wanted Israeli ground forces to leave southern Lebanon.

He said that Washington was working well with both Lebanon and Israel, describing the level of coordination as unprecedented in recent years.

Trump said that an Israeli redeployment would enable Israel to focus on Iran. He also said Syrian President Ahmad Al Sharaa would deal with Hizbollah in Lebanon, but "in a different way" from Israel, without elaborating.

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US reports 'wave of strikes' on Iran as war returns

TEHRAN (AFP) — The United States launched a wave of strikes against Iran on Wednesday, after it reimposed a naval blockade in a return to war between the two foes.

Nearly a month after they signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at ending the Middle East war, the two sides resumed fighting with strikes on targets across the region.

US President Donald Trump, meanwhile, threatened to widen strikes next week to hit power plants and bridges unless Tehran returns to the negotiating table.

"Next week it gets really bad for them," he told Fox News.

Despite renewed hostilities, mediated talks between the two sides have not formally ended.



This screen grab taken on Wednesday, from video footage released by Iran's Revolutionary Guards Sepah News website, allegedly shows missiles being launched from an undisclosed location towards US targets in Bahrain and Kuwait

But Iran's top negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf told state tel-

evision on Wednesday that "a Memorandum of Understanding only has

meaning when its clauses are valid and being implemented. If Iran is not to derive any benefit from the Memorandum of Understanding, we have no reason to adhere".

At the heart of the resumption of hostilities has been the dispute over the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway that is crucial for global oil and gas flows.

Agreement 'dismantled'

Iran blockaded Hormuz after the war erupted with US-Israeli strikes on February 28, using the waterway for leverage against its foes for months.

The strait was briefly reopened after the US-Iran deal last month, before Tehran vowed last week it would be closed

again "until the US ends its aggression".

Traffic through the waterway remained low, with maritime tracker Kpler reporting only 21 transits on Tuesday.

The US, in turn, has reimposed its own blockade of Iran's ports.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said the renewed US blockade "has, in a way, dismantled the Islamabad memorandum", referring to the interim deal reached last month.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) said it launched "a wave of strikes... designed to further degrade military capabilities Iranian forces have used to attack commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz".

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Minister of Government Communication Mohammad Momani on Thursday attends a ceremony marking the 57th anniversary of the Jordan News Agency, Petra

Petra unveils new website as it celebrates 57 years of journalism

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Government Communication Mohammad Momani on Thursday underlined the pivotal role of the Jordan News Agency, Petra, in establishing itself as a “reliable” national news reference and a primary source of accurate information over the past 57 years.

Speaking at a ceremony marking the agency’s 57th anniversary, Momani, who is also the government spokesperson, attributed this achievement to Petra’s unwavering commitment to professionalism, credibility and objective reporting.

The ceremony brought together Petra Chairman Nabil Ghishan, Petra Director-General Fairouz Mubaidin, and the president of the Jordan Press Association.

Momani said that Petra has kept pace with the progress of the Jordanian state since its establishment, documenting its political, economic, social and cultural milestones, while preserving the national memory and projecting Jordan’s image locally and internationally.

The minister highlighted the growing significance of the agency’s role in light of the massive influx of information and the

spread of rumours and disinformation.

Official media, he added, does not merely report news but provides depth, explanation, and perspective on how events impact citizens’ daily lives.

Adapting to the ongoing digital shift requires modernising journalistic content, expanding multimedia presence, and leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) to ensure rapid outreach, without compromising professional standards and journalistic ethics, Momani pointed out.

He also stressed the importance of capacity building and honing journalists’ skills, particularly in digital journalism, data analysis and fact-checking, underscoring the need to sustain Petra’s presence across all governorates to shed light on local issues and highlight regional success stories.

Commending the dedication of Petra’s staff and correspondents at home and abroad, the minister expressed confidence that the agency will sustain its momentum as a leading national institution and a trusted platform conveying the Kingdom’s message to the global stage.

Ghishan said that today Petra, established as one of the milestones of the modern

renaissance during the reign of His Majesty the late King Hussein, stands on the threshold of six decades.

“To mark the occasion, we are launching the agency’s new website today, in response to the sweeping technological changes that have transformed the role of news agencies, where citizens are no longer mere consumers of information but active creators, distributors and partners in the media process,” Ghishan added.

The launch of the new website comes as part of Petra’s strategy to keep pace with rapid advancements in the digital sphere, enhancing its ability to deliver real-time local and international coverage to its audience.

In a bid to enrich its digital outputs with high-quality visual content, Petra has introduced aerial drone photography, a move that reflects its commitment to adopting cutting-edge technologies to enhance journalistic quality.

Additionally, the agency launched “Petra’s Memory”, a documentary platform showcasing a vast archive of photographs capturing various historical eras of the Kingdom, alongside vintage equipment used by the agency since its inception.

Issawi checks on Royal initiative projects in Balqa, Irbid

AMMAN (JT) — Royal Court Chief Yousef Issawi on Thursday checked on several Royal initiative projects in Balqa and Irbid governorates to review progress and assess services provided at other fully operational facilities.

Issawi, who also chairs the committee overseeing the implementation of Royal initiatives, said that the visits reflect continued field monitoring in line with His Majesty King Abdullah’s directives to ensure development and service projects are completed and operated in accordance with “high” standards, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

In Balqa, Issawi inspected the rehabilitation and development of Mahis Park, which is 95 per cent complete.

The 3,442-square-metre project houses a renovated library, children’s play areas, a multipurpose sports court, seating, walkways and public facilities.

He also visited the ISO City company project in Fuheis, which is 99 per cent complete, where the 4,000-square-metre facility is expected to create about 220 jobs in software, computer and information services, electronics, and artificial intelligence.



Royal Court Chief Yousef Issawi on Thursday checks on several Royal initiative projects in Balqa and Irbid to review progress and assess services provided at other fully operational facilities

The project is part of the Satellite Branches Initiative, which seeks to create jobs for Jordanians near their places of residence and reduce commuting costs.

Issawi said that it reflects the Royal vision of providing specialised employment opportunities for young people through partnerships with the private sector.

In Salt, Issawi reviewed work to develop the Prince Hussein bin Abdullah II Sports Complex into a sports city.

The project, which is

88 per cent complete, includes upgrades to existing buildings, stands, public spaces, drainage systems, and other facilities to support sports, youth, and community activities.

In Irbid, he visited the Zaha Cultural Centre, which opened on April 27, 2024.

The facility provides educational, cultural, sports, and vocational programmes for children and young people, including computer skills, robotics, creative thinking, English, art,

Arabic calligraphy, self-defence and training programmes for local women.

Issawi also checked on the Masharea Comprehensive Centre for Special Education, established under the Royal initiatives following a Royal visit to the area in 2019.

The centre, which can serve about 100 beneficiaries, provides early disability diagnosis, education, rehabilitation, and behavioural services.

Concluding the tour, he inspected maintenance

work at the Dhat Al Nitaqayn Women’s Charitable Society building in Deir Alla, carried out to enhance the society’s social and development role in serving local families.

Issawi said that Royal initiatives represent a “sustainable” development approach aimed at improving services, creating jobs, empowering young people, women, and persons with disabilities and supporting comprehensive development across the Kingdom.

Culture minister, US envoy discuss expanding cultural partnerships

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Culture Mustafa Rawashdeh and US Ambassador to Jordan James Holtsnider on Thursday discussed ways to develop cultural relations and expand partnerships across various creative fields to enhance cultural exchange and cooperation between the two countries’ institutions.

During the meeting, held at the Royal Cultural Centre in Amman, Rawashdeh highlighted Jordan’s global cultural role, particularly through



Minister of Culture Mustafa Rawashdeh and US Ambassador to Jordan James Holtsnider on Thursday discuss ways to develop cultural relations and expand partnerships

the Jerash Festival for Culture and Arts, according to a ministry

statement.

The minister noted that the festival, spanning

four decades in the ancient city of Jerash, serves as an “important” platform for intercultural dialogue, adding that Jordan actively participates in international forums that champion cultural and artistic diversity.

For his part, the US envoy expressed his admiration for the Jordanian culture, the Kingdom’s rich historical and archaeological sites, as well as the hospitality and openness of the Jordanian people towards different cultures.

The discussions also covered prospects for cooperation in creative industries, cultural heritage protection, training and expertise exchange, as well as executing joint programmes and initiatives.

The two sides also explored organising activities to foster cross-cultural communication.

At the end of the meeting, both sides emphasised the importance of continued coordination to serve the mutual interests of the two countries.

Senate committee, French ambassador discuss developments in Palestine

AMMAN (JT) — The Senate’s Palestine Committee and French Ambassador to Jordan Franck Gellat on Thursday discussed political and humanitarian developments in the Palestinian territories, urging international efforts to end the war in Gaza and advance a two-state solution.

During the meeting, committee chair Mazen Darwazeh said that Jordanian-French relations, under His Majesty King Abdullah and French President Emmanuel Macron, reflect a “strong” partnership and shared positions on key regional issues, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

In this context, he mainly referred to opposition to the forced displacement of Palestinians and attempts to undermine



The Senate’s Palestine Committee and French Ambassador to Jordan Franck Gellat on Thursday discuss political and humanitarian developments in the Palestinian territories

the Palestinian cause, praising joint humanitarian efforts to deliver relief and medical aid to Gaza.

Darwazeh said that the situation in Gaza, the West Bank and occupied Jerusalem requires “urgent” international action to halt the war, protect civilians and end Israeli violations, including incursions into

Al Aqsa Mosque, settlement expansion, home demolitions and land confiscation.

The senator also underscored the importance of the Hashemite Custodianship over Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

He urged France to continue using its influence within the EU and

the UN Security Council to help mobilise international support for ending the war in Gaza, stopping settlement activity, and protecting civilians.

Darwazeh called for advancing recognition of a Palestinian state and reviving the political process based on the two-state solution, leading to an independent Palestinian state on the pre-1967 lines with East Jerusalem as its capital.

HE also said that the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, amid continued bombardment, the blockade, famine and the collapse of the health sector, requires an “immediate” ceasefire, sustained humanitarian access and continued support for UNRWA.

Gellat outlined France’s position on regional de-

velopments and the situation in Gaza and the West Bank, stressing the need to intensify efforts to alleviate humanitarian suffering and achieve a just and comprehensive peace.

He reiterated France’s commitment to boosting cooperation with Jordan across various sectors and praised Jordan’s role, under King Abdullah’s leadership, in promoting regional stability and fostering dialogue and understanding among nations.

The envoy highlighted the importance of continued coordination and consultations between Jordan and France on issues of mutual concern, commending the close coordination between King Abdullah and President Macron.

Bronze Age range weapons

By Saeb Rawashdeh

Range weapons could strike a distant target, object or person and they are suitable to be thrown by themselves or with a composite weapon, as like as in the case of arrowheads thrown by the bow.

“Usually, these weapons are made by the employment of two different materials: Wood for the perishable pole and metal for the head. In the case of arrowheads a third different material, probably feathers, was used for the tail,” said Daria Montanari from the Sapienza University of Rome.

Metal spearheads firstly appeared in the Southern Levant at the beginning of the Early Bronze Age; up today no spearheads are known from Chalcolithic contexts, Montanari continued.

“They can be basically divided into two main groups according to the shape of tang and hafting. The first group, characterised by triangular blade, is represented by spearheads with peduncular tang, folded or hooked, inserted in a wooden haft; the second group is characterised by a socketed tang,” Montanari said.

The hooked spearhead is attested during the whole Early Bronze Age. Six weapons of such type are

dated back to Early Bronze I, these are represented by specimens from Byblos, from a cult deposit at Khirbet Iskander and from the Kfar Monash hoard.

‘The socketed tang is obtained by curling a metallic sheet around a wooden pole31 or by casting in a closed mould with an inert object inside it’

has two curled barbettes starting from the base of the blade, covered with silver, and it is long more than 57cm, the scholar said, adding that these big spearheads seem to convey a symbolic meaning and should be considered just like votive weapons.

They exhibit a short hooked tang, a long lanceolate blade with lozenge shaped cross-section with marked dorsal ridge.

All EB IV spearheads with peduncular tang were recovered in funerary contexts (in tombs of warriors).

Some were found in a house at Khirbet Iskander , near Madaba, by the American archaeologist Suzanne Richard.

“The socketed tang is obtained by curling a metallic sheet around a wooden pole31 or by casting in a closed mould with an inert object inside it. Early Bronze IV socketed spearheads probably represent the product of some kind of experimentation of metallurgical techniques, and the attempt to improve the insertion of the pole. These new solutions, together with the process system stressed for archaic fenestrated axes, were then improved and developed during the Middle Bronze Age, when they become common,” Montanari concluded.

Moon, Venus to align on Friday in Jordan’s evening sky

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan’s skies will witness a striking apparent conjunction between the Moon and Venus after sunset on Friday, creating a prominent astronomical display that will be visible to the naked eye in the western sky.

Jordan Astronomical Society (JAS) President Ammar Sakaji said that the best time to observe the phenomenon will be immediately after sunset, when Venus will appear above and to the right of the Moon, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The display will remain visible for around two hours before the two celestial bodies set in succession, Sakaji said, noting that the Moon will be in its waxing crescent phase with some 14 per cent illumination, while Venus will shine brightly.

Sakaji added that the closest apparent separation between the Moon and Venus will be about 2.35 degrees at 4:30pm Jordan time. However, as this occurs before sunset, the conjunction will be easier to observe after sunset, when the two objects will appear close to-



Jordan’s skies will witness a striking apparent conjunction between the Moon and Venus after sunset on Friday

gether in one of the most notable visible astronomical events of the month.

He added that observing the phenomenon does not require any special

equipment, although binoculars or cameras, including smartphone cameras, can help capture better images, particularly for astron-

omy enthusiasts and astrophotographers.

Sakaji stressed that the event is only an apparent conjunction caused by the Moon and Venus appearing along nearly the same line of sight from Earth’s perspective, and does not indicate that the two objects are physically close in space.

He noted that the Moon is about 367,000 kilometres from Earth, while Venus is approximately 137 million kilometres away, making their apparent proximity purely a matter of perspective rather than actual distance.

Prince El Hassan urges digitisation of Arab archives to preserve identity

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Prince El Hassan on Thursday visited the National Library Department, where he was briefed on its efforts to preserve Jordan's documentary and cultural heritage, safeguard the Kingdom's national memory and document the country's history for future generations.

National Library Director General Firas Darabah highlighted the department's efforts to preserve books, manuscripts and official records, while advancing digital archiving and documentation to safeguard Jordan's national heritage, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Prince El Hassan said the National Library is more than a repository of books and documents, describing it as the nation's memory. He stressed that protecting heritage in the age of artificial intelligence requires ensuring Arab heritage is represented in digital databases, rather than leaving the region's history and identity to be shaped by global platforms and algorithms.

He noted that national



HRH Prince El Hassan on Thursday visits the National Library Department

memory encompasses documents, books, maps and the collective memory of cities, villages and local communities, warning that modern conflicts increasingly target history, identity and historical narratives, as well as land and people.

Prince El Hassan also referred to the concept of "memoricide", describing it as the deliberate erasure of history, identity and collective memory through practices such as renaming places, seizing cultural artefacts and documents, or replacing one

historical narrative with another.

"Young people today need the ability to distinguish between information and knowledge and to analyse information critically, alongside access to information," he added.

Prince El Hassan said

that strengthening and digitising Arab data would help ensure artificial intelligence systems draw on reliable regional sources when generating knowledge about the region.

He called for a comprehensive framework to preserve, digitise and

make Arab archives and documents accessible to future generations.

The visit concluded with a tour of the National Library's Centennial Exhibition, which chronicles the establishment and development of the Jordanian state over the past century.

AT A GLANCE

Namrouqa, Arab League chief discuss joint Arab action



AMMAN (JT) — Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Nancy Namrouqa on Thursday met with Arab League Secretary-General Nabil Fahmy. Namrouqa congratulated Fahmy on assuming his duties as secretary-general of the Arab League, wishing him success in his new role, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. During the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to strengthen joint Arab efforts and enhance coordination to serve Arab causes and interests.

Iftaa department issues 6,701 divorce fatwas in June

AMMAN (JT) — The General Iftaa Department issued 6,701 divorce-related fatwas (religious rulings) through its offices across the Kingdom in June 2026. The department also issued 3,852 fatwas through direct consultations during the same month, according to its June achievement report included in the performance report of ministries and government institutions, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. The report showed that the department received 16,536 inquiries by telephone and 3,268 questions through social media platforms. Additionally, the department issued 201 fatwas during radio and television programmes, delivered 36 fatwas during lectures and responded to 138 inquiries through text messages.

Environment Ministry, ASEZA, KEMAPCO sign agreement to reduce industrial nitrous oxide emissions

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Environment, the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) and the Arab Fertilisers and Chemicals Industries (KEMAPCO) on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to cooperate on reducing nitrous oxide (N₂O) emissions at KEMAPCO's Aqaba facility.

The agreement, supported by the German government under the Nitric Acid Climate Action Group, aims to accelerate Jordan's transition towards a low-emission industrial sector, advance climate action, support the Kingdom's climate commitments and enhance industrial competitiveness in line with international environmental standards, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The MoU was signed by Ministry of Environment Secretary-General Omar Arabiyat, ASEZA Commissioner for Environment and Safety Nidal Ouran and KEMAPCO General Manager Bassam Zoumot.

The signing ceremony was attended by Minister of Environment Ayman Suleiman, ASEZA Chief Commissioner Shadi Majali and KEMAPCO Chairman Shehadeh Abu Hudaib, along with representatives from the German Agency for International Co-operation and partner organisations.

Suleiman said that the agreement represents a model of effective public-private partnership in implementing national climate commitments...

Contributions and strengthening the Kingdom's ability to meet international climate commitments.

For his part, Majali said ASEZA conducts regular field visits and inspections of industrial facilities in Aqaba, including KEMAPCO.

He added that ASEZA will provide technical support to ensure environmental compliance, coordinate with the Ministry of Environment on verification results and possible improvements, and contribute to raising public awareness about climate action in Aqaba.

Suleiman said that the agreement represents a model of effective public-private partnership in implementing national climate commitments...

KEMAPCO Chairman Abu Hudaib said that while the company's current nitrous oxide emissions comply with international standards, it continues to pursue a green transition and reduce its carbon footprint through several projects, with this initiative representing a key component.

He stressed KEMAPCO's commitment to the sustainable operation and maintenance of N₂O reduction and monitoring technologies, continuous tracking of emissions and reductions achieved, and the submission of annual reports to the Ministry of Environment in line with approved guidelines.

Ksasbeh to fill vacant Aqaba parliamentary seat after Riyati's membership revoked — IEC

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — The Independent Election Commission (IEC) on Wednesday said that Baker Ksasbeh is the next eligible candidate to fill the vacant Lower House seat representing Aqaba after former MP Hassan Riyati lost his parliamentary membership following a final court ruling sentencing him to two years in prison.

The IEC said it had responded to a letter sent by the Lower House speaker on July 14, informing the commission that the seat representing the Aqaba local electoral district had become vacant after Riyati's membership



The Lower House informs the Independent Election Commission on Wednesday that the Aqaba electoral district seat had become vacant following Riyati's membership termination under Article 75 of the Constitution

ship was terminated under Article 75 of the Constitution.

"Article 10 of the

Election Law provides for the vacancy of the seat in such cases," the IEC said.

The commission also said that Ksasbeh, who ran on the Islamic Action Front: list in the

Aqaba local electoral district for the Islamic Action Front Party, now known as the Ummah

Women's empowerment key to Jordan's political modernisation efforts — Lower House speaker

AMMAN (JT) — Lower House Speaker Mazen Qadi on Thursday launched the National Conference "Women as Partners in Political Modernisation: Towards More Inclusive and Equitable Local Governance", held under the project "Towards Inclusive Local Governance: Amending the Draft Local Administration Law for 2026 to Enhance Women's Participation".

The conference was organised by the Rural Ambassadors for Development and Advancement Foundation in partnership with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation's Amman office, with the participation of lawmakers, civil society organisations, and women and local community leaders.

Qadi said that Jordan,

under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah, has steadily advanced a comprehensive national project for political, economic and administrative modernisation, based on a vision that views modernisation as an ongoing process, with women's empowerment as a key component.

He said amendments to the Election Law and the Political Parties Law have translated this vision into practical steps by creating broader opportunities for women's participation in political life and enhancing their representation in the Lower House.

Qadi said that local administration is among the most important areas for public participation, as it is closest to

citizens' needs and best positioned to identify development priorities in governorates, districts and municipalities.

He added that the Lower House appreciates national initiatives that enrich legislative dialogue and provide insights and proposals based on expertise and practical experience, stressing that effective legislation requires listening to diverse perspectives and strengthening dialogue between Parliament, civil society organisations, experts and relevant stakeholders.

The conference comes as part of national efforts to develop the local administration system and enhance women's participation in public life, leadership positions and decision-making, in



Lower House Speaker Mazen Qadi on Thursday launches the National Conference 'Women as Partners in Political Modernisation: Towards More Inclusive and Equitable Local Governance'

line with political modernisation efforts.

It also seeks to reinforce the principles of justice, equality and equal opportunities and improve the ability of lo-

cal councils to respond to the needs of citizens across the Kingdom's governorates.

For his part, Suhaib Rababaa, gender, learning and development

Party, was the next eligible candidate on the same list based on the number of votes received.

The IEC also noted that the decision was made in accordance with Article 57(a) of the 2022 Election Law for the Lower House and its amendments.

Riyati lost his parliamentary membership after the Court of Appeal upheld a final two-year prison sentence against him following a criminal complaint filed by former MP Shadi Freij, who accused Riyati of physically assaulting him.

The sentence became final under the provisions of the Penal Code.

adviser at the Rural Ambassadors for Development and Advancement Foundation, said that the conference represents a new step in a long-standing women's rights and advocacy effort aimed at highlighting women's issues and developing responses to their needs.

Meanwhile, Fatmeh Qudah, representative of the Rural Women Forum, Equal Movement in Rural Areas, said that the forum has evolved beyond being a programme or a series of activities, becoming a space for solidarity, learning and collective action.

She added that the forum serves as a platform for transforming women's individual experiences into collective demands and broader advocacy efforts.

Court upholds four-year prison terms for two men convicted of molesting man

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation upheld a January 2023 Criminal Court ruling, sentencing two men to four years in prison each after convicting them of molesting a man in August 2020.

The court declared the defendants guilty of molestation charges for

filming a man naked in mid-August.

The defendants were handed a five-year prison term each for the charge.

However, the court reduced the sentences to four years in prison each because the victim dropped charges against them.

Court papers said the defendants learnt that the victim was allegedly

engaged in a relationship with their female relative.

The two men lured the victim to a farm where they questioned him about the alleged affair, court papers said.

"The victim denied any wrongdoing, so the two defendants beat him and forced him to undress and filmed him with their mobiles," the court

added.

The victim returned home and informed his family, and they filed a complaint against the defendants, the court maintained.

The defendants contested their verdict, claiming that the court relied on contradictory testimonies and ambiguous evidence.

Meanwhile, the Crimi-

nal Court's attorney general asked the higher court to uphold the sentence against the two defendants.

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

"The defendants confessed willingly to the sexual assault incident

when they were arrested," the higher court ruled.

Therefore, they deserved the punishment they received, the higher court added.

The Court of Cassation was headed by Judge Mahmoud Ebtoush and included judges Mjid Azab, Fawzi Nahar, Ibrahim Abu Shamma and Mohammad Shreiri.

Syria says seized weapons bound for Hizbollah at Iraqi border

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria said on Thursday it had foiled an attempt to smuggle weapons to Hizbollah in Lebanon by seizing a shipment that included missiles at its border with Iraq.

“Specialised units thwarted an attempt to bring in a shipment of sophisticated weapons and missiles through the Syrian-Iraqi border,” a source from the interior ministry was quoted as saying by Syria’s official Sana news agency.

“Initial investigations established that the shipment was intended to transit through Syria for the benefit of the terrorist militia Hizbollah,” the source added.

Syrian authorities are hostile to Hizbollah, which was an ally of former president Bashar Assad before he was ousted in 2024.

They have previously announced several other seizures of weapons they say were bound for the Iran-backed group, but Thursday’s announcement is the first involving the border with Iraq.

Iraqi Prime Minister



Syrian interior ministry personnel observing the seized weapons cache on Thursday

Ali Al Zaidi ordered the formation of an inquiry commission and Iraqi authorities will “coordinate” with Syria on the matter, the Iraqi government’s security media cell said in a statement.

The statement said Iraqi authorities would “hold those responsible for any negligence accountable, in order to ensure the safety and security of the shared border and prevent any attempt to undermine national security”.

Since an Islamist coalition took power in Syria in 2024, the authorities say they have dismantled several Hizbollah-linked cells preparing attacks in Syria, but Hizbollah has denied the accusation.

The group has been weakened by the war it has waged against Israel since March in support of Iran.

US President Donald Trump has recently floated the idea of Syria intervening in Lebanon against Hizbollah.

But Syrian President Ahmed Al Sharaa has said he has no interest in taking military action, despite Trump’s suggestions.

Germany and France seek to ‘bounce back’ from fighter jet failure

COLOGNE, Germany (AFP) — France and Germany will seek to move on from the failure of a tortured fighter jet project and bolster other joint defence plans — including nuclear deterrence — at a joint government meeting on Friday.

After one-on-one discussions over dinner on Thursday evening at Bensberg Castle in the town of Bergisch Gladbach, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz will chair Friday’s annual meeting, held this time near Cologne.



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz (right) and France's President Emmanuel Macron address journalists prior to their meeting at the Grandhotel Schloss Bensberg in Bruehl, western Germany, on Thursday

There will also be a Franco-German Defence and Security Council at the Noervenich Luftwaffe air base, symbolically underlining the need for European rearmament to ward off the threat from Russia and compensate for waning US commitment.

Two French Rafale jets — which can carry nuclear weapons — were deployed on Thursday to the same airbase, with a German Eurofighter plane being refuelled mid-air by a French aircraft, a Luftwaffe spokesman told AFP.

The French presidency says it wants Friday’s talks to advance “concrete” projects in order to “bounce back” from last month’s implosion of the joint Future Combat Air System (FCAS) fighter jet project.

Macron said on Monday he “deeply regretted” the failure of FCAS, which fell victim to bickering between Airbus, which represented Germany and Spain, and France’s Dassault.

MGCS has also been buffeted by internal tensions since Germany’s Rheinmetall entered the project, with disagreements over the concept for the vehicle.

Air defence has been another bone of contention with Germany pushing its European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI), which relies heavily on the American Patriot and the Israeli-American Arrow-3 systems.

France has refused to take part in this project, arguing that it would increase Europe’s dependence on the US and that the continent should instead seek to boost its own defence industry.

Uganda discharges last Ebola patient — minister

NAIROBI (AFP) — Uganda discharged its last Ebola patient on Thursday, the health ministry said, marking a successful containment of the outbreak that had spread from neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Uganda must now pass 42 days without a new case to be declared officially Ebola-free under World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines, representing two full incubation periods of the virus.

There have been more than 2,000 confirmed cases, including 754 deaths, in DRC since the outbreak was declared in mid-May, and the WHO warns the real numbers may be two to four times larger.



A hygiene worker cleans the boots of healthcare workers at the Rwampara Ebola Treatment Centre in Bunia, Ituri, in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on Monday

Despite a porous border with the affected regions, Uganda has reported only 20 cases and two deaths — mostly Congolese citizens who crossed the border.

“We recorded a total of 20 cases. Two people died, and the rest recovered,” said Health Minister Chris Baryomunsi in a statement.

“Hundreds of contacts were isolated for 21 days and have since been released... We remain vigilant and will strengthen interventions along the border to minimise or properly avoid cross-border transmission,” he

added.

Uganda’s efforts against the virus, described by African health officials as the fastest-growing Ebola outbreak on record, have been praised.

“The contact-tracing was very efficient, and the follow-up of those that were in care,” said Serawit Bruck-Landais, regional global health counsellor for the French embassy.

“It’s an example that actually an Ebola outbreak can be managed,” she told AFP.

There is currently no approved vaccine or treatment for the Bundibugyo strain behind the outbreak, but the WHO said the first clinical trial of an antiviral drug began on Tuesday.

Mediator Pakistan says encouraging US, Iran to resume talks

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AFP) — Pakistan said on Thursday it would encourage the United States and Iran to stop violence and resume talks under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) it helped mediate last month.

“While the implementation of the MoU is facing challenges, Pakistan will continue to encourage all sides to end violence and resume technical-level talks in accordance with the MoU,” Tahir Andrabi, Pakistan’s foreign office spokesman, told reporters in Islamabad.

“We express the hope for an early normalisation of the situation in



A woman crosses Tehran's Enghelab Square on July 15, 2026, past a giant anti-US billboard featuring US president Donald Trump in a coffin with text in Persian reading 'We Kill Trump'

Strait of Hormuz and underscore the importance of ensuring the continued safety, security and freedom of maritime navigation,” he added.

The United States has this week been striking Iran, drawing retaliatory Iranian attacks on US interest in the Gulf

as they battle over the strategic Hormuz shipping route.

That sent global oil prices soaring and led to concerns of spikes in inflation even in nations far from the conflict.

The key oil and gas artery, which Iran insists it controls, is central to the rekindled fighting that has entered its sixth day despite a preliminary deal in June aiming to end the war.

“Pakistan recognises the urgent need to address the impact of the current situation on global energy supplies and other economic commodities including trade and food security,” Andrabi said.

US says will not obstruct Venezuela opposition leader’s return

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — The United States will not block Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado’s return to her home country, a US diplomat said Wednesday, though he cautioned that the right conditions must be in place.

“The policy in the State Department is clear: We’re not going to obstruct Maria Co-

rina to return,” Deputy Assistant Secretary for South America Luis Mendez told Congress during a hearing.

Machado left Venezuela last December to receive her Nobel Peace Prize in Norway and has not returned since then.

“Now, I do think that there’s some work we need to do in the context of Venezuela, so that way, when she re-

turns, she doesn’t get arrested,” Mendez said.

Since the devastating double earthquakes on June 24, Machado has tried to return to Caracas on multiple occasions, but she was blocked by diplomatic pressure from Venezuela.

When asked whether the US government has sought to convince interim president Delcy Rodriguez to allow

Machado to return, Mendez said: “Yes, we made it very clear to the interim authorities.”

Rodriguez has been in power since the US overthrow of then-president Nicolas Maduro in January, both part of the ruling party. She announced Tuesday that her government has a plan to meet with opposition party members starting next month.

Protests erupt across Ukraine against removal of defence minister

KYIV, Ukraine (AFP) — Large protests erupted in several Ukrainian cities on Thursday morning against the removal of popular Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov.

AFP reporters in Kyiv saw more than a thousand people gathered on a central square, singing the Ukrainian national anthem, waving Ukrainian and EU flags and chanting “shame” and “bring Fedorov back”.



Protesters hold placards and chant slogans during a demonstration against Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky's decision to dismiss Ukraine's Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov, in Kyiv on Thursday

Only appointed six months ago, Fedorov carved a reputation as a moderniser who tried to reform the Ukrainian military, worn down by more than four years of the Russian invasion.

His removal risks throwing uncertainty into the army at a time when Ukraine in one of its best positions in the war for months, having halted the pace of the Russian advance and pounding Russian oil and military sites with long-range drones.

Fedorov announced late Wednesday he was stepping down, saying it was a “great honour to serve the Ukrainian

people”, amid a sweeping government reshuffle ordered by President Volodymyr Zelensky.

No official reason was given for the decision, which protesters saw as part of infighting inside Ukraine’s military establishment between Fedorov and commander-in-chief Oleksandr Syrsky.

“I believe that his dismissal is a slap in the face of the Ukrainian people,” Vlada Roman,

a 30-year-old business owner told AFP.

She said she hoped Zelensky would row back on the decision, saying he was “afraid of effective people.”

“After today’s rally he’ll change his mind, I hope so.”

Local media reported protests in several other cities, including Lviv, Odesa and Dnipro.

Zelensky has not named a successor in a host of changes

that have also seen the prime minister removed.

The deputy commander of Ukraine’s air force Pavlo Yelizarov also resigned in protest at Fedorov’s removal.

“It is a great honor for me to work with Mykhailo Fedorov. In 2022, I joined the defence forces to win, not to pretend to be doing something,” he said in his resignation statement.

Gov’t issues 3,100 grain certificates to boost local crop deliveries

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Agriculture has issued 3,100 origin (production) certificates to wheat and barley farmers to facilitate delivery of their crops to storage facilities in the northern and central regions and collection centres operated by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply in southern Jordan.

Secretary General of the Ministry of Agriculture and head of the Central Committee for Local Grain Procurement Mohammad Hiyari said that the certificates allow farmers to supply their production to grain silos and designated collection centres, including Al Rabba and Al Msheirfeh centres in Karak, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Hiyari said that the operations to collect and supply grain are managed by the Jordan Silos and Supply General Company and the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply.



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He praised the ministry's efforts in establishing the Al Msheirfeh centre in Karak to receive grain shipments from farmers and conducting a local transporter to transport quantities collected from southern governorates to silos in Amman. He urged farmers in southern governorates to deliver their wheat and barley crops to the Al Msheirfeh centre to ease pressure on the Al Rabba centre and speed up receiving procedures.

Hiyari announced that the quantities of wheat and barley received so far have exceeded 100,000 tonnes, adding that the government continues to support field crops by purchasing locally produced wheat and barley at subsidised prices.

On its goals, he said that the policy aims to encourage farmers to expand cultivation of strategic crops, enhance national food security and increase reliance on local production.

In June, Minister of Agriculture Saeb Khreisat said that the government has allocated JD45 million to purchase the local harvest from Jordanian farmers, compared to JD19 million last year.

Khreisat said that this year's field crop season is "highly promising", yielding positive results that have "significantly" boosted production volumes, particularly for wheat and barley.

The minister noted that the government is purchasing wheat and barley from local farmers at more than double the global market price.

Doctors rally in France demanding release of detained Gaza hospital chief

PARIS, France (AFP) — About 50 people, including doctors, trade unionists and pro-Palestinian activists, gathered outside France's foreign ministry in Paris on Thursday to call for the release of a Gaza hospital director who has been held since December 2024.

"Free Dr Abu Safiya", chanted the demonstrators at the protest organised by hospital unions, among them Patrick Pelloux, the high-profile head France's emergency doctor association.

It is the latest call for the release of Husam Abu Safiya, a paediatrician and director of Gaza's Kamal Adwan hospital, who has reportedly suffered torture and life-threatening injuries in detention.

United Nations experts, the World Health Organisation and Amnesty International have urged Israel to set him free.

Israel has said his detention is "lawful" and rejected reports that he suffered a life-threatening condition.

Abu Safiya rose to prominence in 2024 by posting about the dire conditions in his besieged hospital in Beit Lahia during a major Israeli offensive.

On December 27 that year, Israeli forces assaulted the facility, labelling the only functioning hospital in northern Gaza at the time a Hamas "terrorist centre", and arresting dozens of medical staff including Abu Safiya.

The demonstrators want a non-political medical delegation to be sent to assess Abu Safiya's "state of health" and prevent "his arbitrary detention from becoming a death sentence", said Cyrille Venet, former general-secretary of the SNMH-FO union.

In October, a ceasefire was reached in Gaza between Israel and Hamas following two years of war, which was sparked by the Palestinian fighters unprecedented attack on Israel on October 7, 2023.

Trump speech to focus on election ‘integrity’

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — President Donald Trump will deliver a primetime address on Thursday focusing on the "integrity" of US elections, the White House said, as he doubles down on his false claims that he won the 2020 vote.

Trump use of a televised speech to harp on a favorite theme is likely to deepen Republican concerns that he is failing to speak to voter worries about the Iran war and the cost of living.

Democrats allege that the 80-year-old, second-term president himself is trying to tilt the scale ahead of crucial midterm elections in November, by making unproven claims of voter fraud.

But the White House insisted Trump would address valid concerns in the speech at 9:00 pm (1:00 GMT Friday).

"President Trump will deliver a major address to the nation on protecting the integrity of our elections, and we encourage every American to tune in," spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt told reporters.

Trump's speech will "shock" viewers and will be "backed by facts and evidence that he will present", she said.

Leavitt however added that it was "very possible" Trump would mention Iran and the economy at the start of his speech.

Trump announced the speech on Monday without saying what it would cover. A day later, he said he would unveil "really big news" about "free and fair elections" but still gave few details.

CBS News reported that part of Trump's speech would touch on previously unreported allegations of Chinese meddling in US elections, including that it had compromised US voter data.

It said he would also raise claims that the Central Intelligence Agency knew about the Chinese actions and failed to share the information with Trump during his first term as president.

The heads of the CIA, FBI, Office of the Director of National Intelligence and Department of Homeland Security have been invited to be present while Trump gives the speech, CBS said.

The billionaire president has been pushing Congress to pass a major package of fresh voting restrictions called the SAVE America Act, but there is little appetite even in his own party.

The act would require proof of citizenship to register to vote — which is already required by law in federal and state elections — and photo identification at polling places, while imposing new limits on mail-in ballots.

Trump has never accepted his election loss to Democrat Joe Biden six years ago. Months later, he whipped up supporters who stormed the US Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Trump could face a third impeachment trial if Democrats seize control of the House of Representatives in the midterms. He was impeached twice in his first term — including for alleged incitement of the January 6 riots.

His last major televised address to the nation was on April 1, when he gave his first full public justification of the Iran war more than a month after the US-Israeli military campaign began.

WASHINGTON, United States — The collapse of a landmark Amazon soy pact will drive at least 1.4 million hectares of extra deforestation in Brazil over the next decade, releasing carbon emissions equal to Canada's annual output, according to an analysis published on Thursday.

The paper, published in Science, examined the rise and fall of the Amazon Soy Moratorium — one of the world's most successful voluntary deforestation commitments — under which soy traders agreed not to source or finance soy grown on land deforested after July 2008.

When the Moratorium began in 2006, nearly a third of annual soy expansion came from deforestation. After it took effect, deforestation linked to new soy fields fell to nearly zero.

"It generated very positive effects and results," not only environmentally but also by opening new markets, co-author Tiago Reis of World Wildlife Fund-Brazil, told AFP.

"It gave the assurance that soy was not causing more Amazon deforestation."

But the agreement came under attack starting three years ago, driven by lobbying from soy farmers, who filed a \$200 million lawsuit against the traders.

Brazilian antitrust authorities also investigated the Moratorium's signatories over allegations they were behaving like a cartel.

Finally, laws passed by Mato Grosso and other soy-producing states stripped tax breaks from companies that adopted eco-friendly sourcing commitments beyond what the law required.

Though those laws are being challenged in Brazil's Federal Supreme Court, they have effectively dealt the agreement a death blow, with the moratorium abandoned in January.

The forecast is grim, according to the authors, who included researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, DePaul University and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

They project 1.4 million hectares of additional deforestation by 2036 — roughly 2 million soccer pitches — equivalent to 745 million metric tonnes of carbon dioxide, which is comparable to Canada's annual greenhouse gas emissions.

That's also roughly 17 per cent of the total area deforested across the Brazilian Amazon over the past decade.

Such outcomes would seriously undermine progress since leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva returned to power in 2023, with deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon falling to its lowest level in a decade in the first half of the year, according to figures released last week.

Beyond legal deforestation, the report's authors estimate tens of millions more hectares of "undesignated" public forest — land that is neither protected nor privately or Indigenous held — could come under pressure from land grabs, given its suitability for soy.

Reis explained that while cattle farming is often the initial method of claiming ownership of such land, soy is actually the strongest indirect driver of Amazon deforestation "because it's the most valuable commodity that can be produced".

The authors recommend a combination of stronger deforestation enforcement in Brazil and more ethical sourcing by soy importers, including the EU and China. Companies, banks and financial institutions, they say, also need to demand deforestation-free soy more forcefully.

"It's outrageous if we consider that we are living in a climate crisis with heat waves, super El Nino coming up," said Reis.

The weather pattern, compounded by climate change, is set to bring severe drought and wildfire risks to northern South America, imperiling the rainforest further.

Collapse of Amazon soy pact to unleash new deforestation — study

By Issam Ahmed
Agence France-Presse



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EU announces 1.6b euros support for National Water Carrier project

Continued from page 1

Since 2019, the EU has invested more than 202 million euros in education and vocational training programmes to enhance human capital development in Jordan.

The initiatives include 30 million euros for human capital development, 20 million euros to improve education quality in underprivileged schools, 26 million euros to digitise social services for persons with disabilities, 10 million euros for vocational training and 6.4 million euros to promote youth participation in democratic life.

To support refugees, the EU has allocated 240 million euros over three years to assist Syrian refugees, in addition to 80 million euros for cash assistance and social services.

The support also includes a 24.8 million euros solid waste management project at Zaatari refugee camp. Meanwhile, the EDU-SYRIA programme has provided more than 37.6 million euros in scholarships since 2015, with an additional 9 million euros currently under implementation.

In the security and border management sectors, the EU is providing 25 million euros to strengthen integrated border management and counter cyber threats, as well as an additional 10 million euros to enhance Jordan's capabilities along its northern and eastern borders.

Israel has maintained that any withdrawal will depend on guarantees that Hizbollah will not return to areas vacated by Israeli forces and that the Lebanese army will be able to maintain control.

The negotiations are taking place against the backdrop of renewed regional tensions, with the United States carrying out fresh strikes on Iran ahead of the planned reimposition of its naval blockade on Iranian ports.

Israeli forces have continued limited strikes and demolition operations in southern Lebanon, according to Lebanese official media.

Political analyst Amer Sabailah said that the negotiations reflect the complex reality facing all parties, but argued that Israel is unlikely to relinquish what it considers "essential security gains".

He said that Israel does not want any other party filling the vacuum in southern Lebanon unless it is convinced that Hizbollah can no longer use the area as a future military threat.

"An Israeli withdrawal is unlikely without changes that ensure the geography can no longer be used as a future source of threat and that the link between Iran and Hizbollah is effectively severed," Sabailah said.

He added that reshaping the security geography along Israel's northern border has become part of Israel's security doctrine, making any redeployment dependent on long-term security considerations rather than political pressure alone.

US reports ‘wave of strikes’ on Iran as war returns

Continued from page 1

Iranian state media reported explosions near the port city of Bandar Abbas, on the island of Oeshm and on Bandar Imam Khomeini. It later said fresh US strikes hit the southern port city of Bushehr, home to the country's only civilian nuclear plant.

Since the war began, Iran has asserted its control over the Strait of Hormuz and opened fire on ships for taking routes it says are unauthorised.

"The retaliatory operations of the fighters will continue," the Guards said.

A Norwegian tanker was hit by an explosion caused by an unidentified device off the Omani coast early Tuesday, the crisis response company MTI Network said.

And Kuwait said one of its naval vessels was struck during an Iranian missile and drone barrage, wounding four crew members.

Trump meanwhile said he was scrapping a planned 20-per cent levy on ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz that he announced on Monday, replacing the fee with trade deals with Gulf allies.

Since last week, renewed US attacks have killed at least 30 people in Iran, government spokesman Fatemeh Mohajerani said.

Separately, the military announced that seven of its personnel were killed in Wednesday's strikes on the southeast.

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose country has so far not rejoined the war, warned Iranian leaders on Tuesday that Israel would deal a heavy blow if they launched an attack on his country.

Speaking from Dimona, a southern town widely believed to house Israel's undeclared nuclear arsenal, he said: "Do not count on things remaining quiet if you attack us."

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Lebanon-Israel talks resume amid dispute over Israeli withdrawal, Hizbollah disarmament

Continued from page 1

The Lebanese presidency said that its delegation to Rome had been instructed to demand the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from two pilot zones in southern Lebanon before any further discussions.

A Lebanese diplomatic source familiar with the negotiations was quoted in AFP as saying that the Lebanese army was prepared to gradually assume control of the areas from which Israeli forces would withdraw.

The US embassy in Beirut said that Lebanon and Israel had agreed to complete the framework governing the two pilot zones in southern Lebanon, signalling that implementation of the US-sponsored agreement continues despite unresolved political differences.

A US military delegation also began discussions with the Lebanese army on the process for an Israeli withdrawal from one of the pilot zones, reflecting ongoing coordination between Washington and Beirut, AFP said.

Israel has maintained that any withdrawal will depend on guarantees that Hizbollah will not return to areas vacated by Israeli forces and that the Lebanese army will be able to maintain control.

The negotiations are taking place against the backdrop of renewed regional tensions, with the United States carrying out fresh strikes on Iran ahead of the planned reimposition of its naval blockade on Iranian ports.

Israeli forces have continued limited strikes and demolition operations in southern Lebanon, according to Lebanese official media.

Political analyst Amer Sabailah said that the negotiations reflect the complex reality facing all parties, but argued that Israel is unlikely to relinquish what it considers "essential security gains".

He said that Israel does not want any other party filling the vacuum in southern Lebanon unless it is convinced that Hizbollah can no longer use the area as a future military threat.

"An Israeli withdrawal is unlikely without changes that ensure the geography can no longer be used as a future source of threat and that the link between Iran and Hizbollah is effectively severed," Sabailah said.

He added that reshaping the security geography along Israel's northern border has become part of Israel's security doctrine, making any redeployment dependent on long-term security considerations rather than political pressure alone.

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Queen Rania Al Abdullah Street
P.O. Box 6710
Amman 11118

E mail: editor@jordantimes.com
jotimes@jordantimes.com
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Director General
Hasan Jazzazi

Editor-in-Chief
Raed Omari

Editorial and advertising offices
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From initiatives to institutional culture: Building a culture of fast, effective delivery in Jordan

By Lubna Hanna Ammari

Across the world, governments and institutions are increasingly recognising that success is no longer measured only by the number of initiatives launched, strategies announced or projects completed. The real measure of institutional maturity is the ability to consistently transform plans into tangible outcomes that improve people’s lives. For Jordan, as it continues to advance its economic modernisation and public sector development agendas, the next challenge is not simply creating more initiatives, but embedding a culture where effective delivery becomes a permanent institutional capability.

Jordan has demonstrated significant commitment to reform through national frameworks such as the Economic Modernisation Vision and the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap, both of which emphasise improving government performance, enhancing service delivery, digital transformation and building more agile institutions. However, the long-term impact of these efforts depends on moving beyond individual projects and ensuring that achievement becomes part of the daily behaviour, mindset and operating model of institutions.

Many organisations around the world face a similar challenge: They can successfully launch programmers, create strategies and achieve short-term improvements, but sustaining momentum over time remains difficult. This happens when achievement is treated as an exceptional event rather than as a culture. A strong institution is not one that occasionally produces outstanding results; it is one that has systems, leadership practices and organisational values that make high performance repeatable.

Building a culture of fast and effective delivery does not mean rushing decisions or compromising quality. Speed without effectiveness can create inefficiency, while quality without timely execution can limit impact. The real objective is achieving the right balance: Making informed decisions quickly, reducing unnecessary bureaucracy, empowering employees, using data effectively and continuously improving processes.

International experiences show that high-performing organisations focus on creating environments where employees understand the purpose behind their work and feel responsible for outcomes, not only for completing procedures. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), effective public institutions depend on factors such as strategic leadership, organisational capacity, innovation and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. These principles are increasingly important in an era where technology and artificial intelligence are reshaping how institutions operate.

For Jordanian institutions, developing such a culture requires a shift from measuring activity to measuring impact. Completing a task, issuing a decision, or launching a service is important steps, but they should not be the final indicators of success. The more important question is: What difference did this action create for citizens, employees, students, businesses or communities? Moving towards outcome-based performance can help institutions focus their energy on meaningful results rather than administrative processes alone.

Leadership plays a central role in this transformation. Institutional culture is not created through policies alone; it is shaped by daily leadership behaviours. Leaders who encourage innovation, support accountability, recognise achievement and remove barriers create an environment where people are motivated to deliver. Conversely, institutions where decision-making is slow, risk-taking is discouraged and accountability is unclear often struggle to convert ambition into results.

Technology, particularly artificial intelligence, also provides a significant opportunity to accelerate this cultural transformation. AI can support faster analysis, smarter decision-making, improved public services and more efficient administrative processes. However, technology itself cannot create an achievement culture. It must be accompanied by capable people, ethical governance, clear processes, and a willingness to redesign traditional ways of working.

The future of institutional excellence in Jordan will depend not only on what organisations achieve today, but on their ability to build systems that enable achievement tomorrow. Sustainable progress requires transforming successful initiatives into institutional habits, where innovation, speed, quality and accountability become part of everyday practice.

The journey from initiatives to institutional culture is ultimately a journey from dependence on exceptional individuals to the strength of collective capability. When institutions are designed to consistently deliver, achievement is no longer an occasional success story; it becomes the natural outcome of how the organisation thinks, works and serves.

For Jordan, building this culture represents an opportunity to strengthen the impact of ongoing reforms and create institutions that are not only responsive to current challenges but also prepared for the future. The goal is not simply to achieve more, but to create institutions where achievement becomes the standard.

Lubna Hanna Ammari, is assistant dean of Ammon Applied University College

The Strait of Hormuz: Between geopolitics and the law of the sea

By Hasan Dajah

Since the outbreak of the recent military confrontation between the United States and Israel on one side, and Iran on the other, the Strait of Hormuz has returned to the forefront of the geopolitical scene as one of the most dangerous maritime chokepoints and one of the most influential on the global economy. The main question is no longer Iran’s military capability to disrupt navigation, but rather the ability of the international economic system to absorb the political and economic repercussions of any prolonged disruption in this vital waterway. The strait is no longer merely a regional waterway, but has become a strategic artery where the interests of major powers intersect and any crisis there directly impacts energy markets, supply chains, international trade and global financial stability, making it one of the most important determinants of international economic security in an international environment characterised by increasing geopolitical competition.

The strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz stems from its being one of the most prominent energy and trade arteries in the world; Approximately one-fifth of the world’s oil trade passes through the Strait of Hormuz, along with vast quantities of liquefied natural gas, particularly exports from the Gulf states to Asian and European markets. Large numbers of energy tankers and commercial vessels carrying raw materials, industrial goods and food also transit the strait. Therefore, any disruption to navigation not only leads to higher oil and gas prices but also increases transportation and marine insurance costs, delays in shipments, and disruptions to production and supply chains. This translates into higher inflation rates, reduced purchasing power and slower growth, especially in energy-importing economies reliant on maritime trade.

In this context, the Law of the Sea is no longer merely a legal framework for regulating navigation, but has become a cornerstone of geopolitical stability and the protection of the global economy, given its direct link to the security of international waterways.

The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, particularly Articles 37–44, established a system of transit passage that guarantees the continuity of navigation in international straits, granting coastal states limited regulatory powers related to navigational safety, environmental protection and maritime security, without extending to disrupting transit or imposing restrictions that infringe upon the essence of freedom of navigation. Furthermore, while the law of maritime armed conflict grants belligerent states the authority to intercept enemy warships and impose naval blockades under specific regulations, it does not permit the complete closure of international straits or the infringement upon the rights of neutral states.

This has been confirmed by international precedents in the Corfu Strait, the tanker war in the Gulf and the Black Sea crises, which have demonstrated that protecting the free flow of navigation remains an international priority even in the con-

text of armed conflicts. Strategically, the problem lies not in the military capability to close the Strait, but rather in the resulting political and economic costs. Disrupting navigation would lead to higher energy prices, increased marine insurance premiums, financial market turmoil and higher commodity prices due to increased transportation costs.

The strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz stems from its being one of the most prominent energy and trade arteries in the world; Approximately one-fifth of the world’s oil trade passes through the Strait of Hormuz...

In turn, it would push major economies to accelerate their search for strategic alternatives, whether through expanding pipelines, developing alternative ports or speeding up the transition to alternative energy sources, which could gradually diminish the strait’s geopolitical importance.

For this reason, the threat of closing the Strait of Hormuz is seen more as a deterrent and a political bargaining chip than a viable strategic option. All parties, including the Gulf states, Iran and major economic pow-

ers, have vested interests in the continued flow of trade and energy through this waterway. Furthermore, global markets typically react more to the possibility of closure than to its actual occurrence. A heightened level of risk is enough to drive up oil prices, increase shipping and insurance costs, and consequently impact food prices, industrial output and global trade. The Gulf states also understand that any prolonged disruption to navigation would directly impact their exports, revenues, and investor confidence. Iran, for its part, recognises that a complete closure would restrict its exports, increase economic and diplomatic pressure on it and potentially justify an expanded international military presence to protect freedom of navigation.

Therefore, the future of the Strait of Hormuz will not be determined by military force alone, but by a complex equation combining deterrence, economic interests, legal norms and international balances. The most likely scenario is not a complete closure, but rather continued management of tensions within the Strait, allowing it to remain a strategic pressure tool without leading to a total disruption of maritime traffic.

History has shown that international straits have always been arenas of competition among major powers, but they have rarely become completely closed waterways, as the cost of such an action far outweighs any temporary military gains. In a world dependent on interconnected supply chains and global energy markets, freedom of navigation has become a strategic imperative for the stability of the international economy. This makes maintaining the free flow of traffic through the Strait of Hormuz a shared interest that transcends regional conflict calculations and is central to global economic security.

Hasan Dajah is professor of Strategic Studies at Al Hussein Bin Talal University

Israel’s accelerating annexation of West Bank

In its deliberate strategy to reshape the geography and demographics of the occupied Palestinian Territories, entrenching annexation and deepening its unlawful occupation, Israel’s security Cabinet has approved the construction of 13 new settlements in the occupied West Bank, a move that will further fragment the territory and isolate East Jerusalem from its surrounding Palestinian communities.

Israel’s Security Cabinet, approved on 2 July a plan to establish the new settlements in so-called Binyamin regional area, one of the largest settlement blocs in the central occupied West Bank.

It is situated along Route 60, the central north-south artery running through the West Bank that links Palestinian cities, while also connecting major Israeli settlements.

The first phase is expected to begin in the coming months and will include the establishment of four to six new settlements, backed by investments worth millions of shekels, Palestine’s Jerusalem governorate said.

Several existing pastoral outposts are also slated for formal legalisation, enabling them to receive government funding and infrastructure, it added.

The scheme is designed to link settlement blocs, tighten Israeli control over strategic hilltops and restrict Palestinian territorial continuity.

“The plan seeks to create new geographical realities on the ground,” the governorate added in a statement.

While the world’s attention has been focused on the horrors of the Gaza war, the past two years have seen record numbers of new settlement units, illegal outposts, home demolitions, expansion on state land and violent settler attacks in the West Bank.

Prime minister Netanyahu and his extremist coalition have been advancing their messianic Greater Israel agenda in unprecedented ways, threatening any viable future Palestinian state.

At an unprecedented pace the Israeli government has accelerated its de facto annexation of the West Bank, utilising the distraction of major regional conflicts to fundamentally reshape the territory’s legal, administrative and geographic reality.

In a new report, released recently, the non-profit organisations Peace Now and Kerem Navot said the Israeli government had annexed large swathes of the occupied West Bank at an “unprecedented pace” between 2023 and 2025, with settlers playing a central role.

The surge in land seizures, settlement approvals and settler activity has been driven by the transfer of governing powers from the military to a civilian administration headed by far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich, who has repeatedly called for the full annexation of the occupied territory.

The changes the report said will “enable rapid and systematic advancement of annexation objectives while bypassing the limited checks previously in place within the military and legal systems”.

According to the report, the administrative overhaul has paved the way for plans to build 40,064 settlement housing units, enough to accommodate between 160,000 and 200,000 additional settlers.

There are currently an estimated 700,000 Israeli settlers living across the occupied West Bank in settlements considered illegal under international law.

“The pace of establishment increased from year to year, indicating an increasingly professionalised mechanism of land takeover that exploits the war [in Gaza] and the fact that, in



Najla M. Shahwan

practice, there is no enforcement against Israeli construction, in order to create new facts on the ground,” the report said.

Nearly 1 million dunnums of land, equivalent to around 1,000 square kilometres, is now under the control of settler farm outposts.

The report found that settlers now control around 18 percent of the occupied West Bank, with approximately 300,000 dunnums coming under their control in 2025 alone. Around 40 per cent of that land is classified by Israel as “state land”.

Peace Now said the expansion has forced 118 Palestinian shepherding communities from their land between 2023 and 2025, with a further nine communities displaced during the first two months of 2026.

Alongside the expansion of settlements and the transfer of powers to civilian authorities, the report said Israel has increasingly restricted the Palestinian Authority’s ability to govern in Areas A and B, undermining the framework established under the 1994 Oslo Accords.

“In practice, the government is working to dismantle this framework,” the report said.

On its part, Amnesty International accused the Israeli government of conducting a “stateled annexation” and “ethnic cleansing” in the West Bank. The organisation alleged that coordinated state policies and support for violent settler groups are driving the forced displacement of Palestinian communities to expand Israeli control.

As Gaza faces genocide, Israel continues Its “Silent Annexation” of the West Bank and the rapid acceleration in mid-2026 is fuelled heavily by internal political pressures.

Israeli forces and settlers have intensified coordinated attacks across the occupied West Bank recently injuring Palestinians, raiding homes, carrying out arrests and expanding settlement activity in several governorates.

With mandatory national elections scheduled for October 2026 at the latest, radical settler elements in the ruling coalition are rushing to lock in gains and establish an irreversible “revolution in settlement” before a potential change in leadership.

This push continues despite warnings from the United Nations Security Council that these measures permanently undermine any prospect of a viable, contiguous independent Palestinian state.

Israel has become an apartheid state, has violated the core international norm against acquiring territory by force and is dispelling what remains of hopes for a two-state solution.

Owing to the energies of Smotrich and his settler allies now ensconced in the bureaucracy, the creeping annexation of the West Bank has advanced to the point that declaring Israeli sovereignty over the territory, or at least significant parts of it, would be a matter of form more than substance.

The question is what world powers that still see a two-state solution as integral to regional peace making, which presumably include those countries calling for recognition of a Palestinian state, will do about it?

Are they prepared to invest the political capital required to halt and reverse a reality that Israel has been creating on the ground for decades — and with greater industry and ambition since Smotrich received his current mandate?

The record to date does not inspire hope. Until very recently, external actors have given Israel virtual carte blanche in its creeping annexation of the occupied West Bank. The US, the country with most influence over Israel, has given Israel its full backing, notwithstanding whatever personal animosity might have existed between Netanyahu and the US president of the time.

The Trump administration has not been and will not be different.



This image shows the logo of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Investment in critical minerals falls in 2025 — IEA

PARIS, France (AFP) — Investment in critical minerals fell last year, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Thursday, even after Western nations vowed to boost domestic production for national security reasons.

Furthermore the geographic concentration of supply chains for elements critical to the high-tech, aerospace and clean energy industries has narrowed further, particularly for refining, the IEA said in a report.

The Paris-based agency, which advises energy consuming nations, said that top refining nations China and Indonesia accounted for over three-quarters of total growth in refined supply in the

past two years.

Despite the push to diversify supply chains the IEA found that geopolitical tensions and price volatility caused investment in the mining and refining of minerals to fall globally by nine percent in 2025.

"Over the last year in particular, concerns about high supply concentration have moved from being a sort of theoretical vulnerability into an immediate economic security challenge," said Tim Gould, the IEA's chief economist.

The IEA pointed in particular to the proliferation of export controls as creating economic and security challenges.

"Rare earth export

controls introduced by China in April 2025 forced some automakers to reduce production or temporarily suspend operations," it said in its annual Global Critical Minerals Outlook report.

If Beijing follows through on plans to expand export controls, an estimated \$6.5 trillion in annual downstream production outside China could be jeopardised, it said.

The IEA noted areas of improvement, however, such public financing commitments more than quadrupling between 2023 and 2025.

The United States and Malaysia are already reducing China's dominance in refining rare earths, it said.

Amman Chamber calls for Jordan-China Business Council to boost investment ties

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Chamber of Commerce (ACC) Chairperson Khalil Haj Tawfiq on Thursday called for establishing a Jordan-China business council as a platform to develop economic and investment ties between the two countries.

He also proposed creating an Entrepreneurs Council to enhance communication between startups and entrepreneurs in Jordan and China, facilitate the exchange of expertise, and support future partnerships, particularly in the information technology sector.

Haj Tawfiq made the remarks during a meeting between the ACC board and Chinese Ambassador to Jordan Guo Wei to discuss expanding bilateral trade, investment and private-sector cooperation, according to an ACC statement.

He said Jordanian-Chinese relations have advanced significantly since the two countries established a strategic partnership in 2015, adding that future co-operation should move beyond trade toward investment, joint production and technology transfer.

Haj Tawfiq highlighted opportunities to increase Jordanian exports and attract Chinese investment in potash, phosphate,



Amman Chamber of Commerce Chairperson Khalil Haj Tawfiq on Thursday calls for establishing a Jordan-China business council as a platform to develop economic and investment ties

fertilisers, pharmaceuticals, food industries and other competitive sectors.

The chairperson also called for a meeting between Jordanian investors and importers and the Chinese embassy's economic and commercial representatives to discuss trade barriers and investment opportunities.

For his part, Guo affirmed that Jordanian-Chinese relations continue to develop within the framework of the strategic partnership between the two countries, which he said

enjoys the support of their leaderships.

The ambassador highlighted China's progress in economic development, technology, innovation and investment, noting that the experience of its industrial cities and economic zones offers opportunities for exchanging expertise and building sustainable partnerships with Jordan.

Guo said that the Chinese Embassy and its Economic and Commercial Section are ready to enhance cooperation with the

Amman Chamber of Commerce, facilitate communication between business communities and encourage greater imports of Jordanian products to China.

He also emphasised the importance of attracting high-quality Chinese investments to Jordan, particularly in value-added sectors, to support joint production projects, technology transfer, skills development, and the expansion of Jordan's manufacturing and export capabilities.

The ambassador not-

ed China's interest in expanding cooperation with Jordan in industrial, energy, infrastructure, water and digital economy sectors, citing Jordan's stability, strategic location and trade agreements as key factors that make it an important partner and gateway to regional markets.

According to official figures, Jordan imported JD4.18 billion worth of goods from China last year, compared with Jordanian exports valued at JD268 million, according to the statement.

Taiwan chipmaker TSMC to invest another \$100b in Arizona fabs

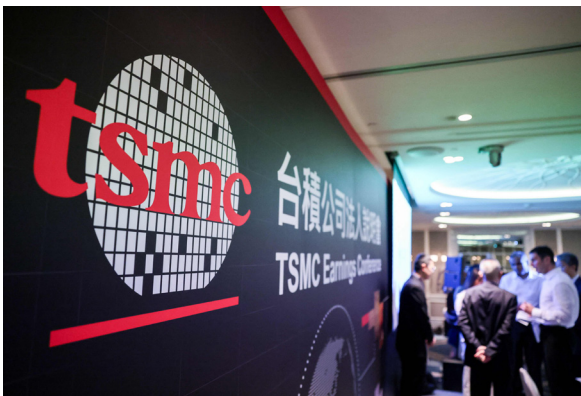
TAIPEI (AFP) — Taiwanese chipmaker TSMC will invest an additional \$100 billion in the US state of Arizona, the company said on Thursday, as it reported a record quarterly net profit on the back of massive demand for AI hardware.

TSMC, the biggest contract maker of microchips used in everything from Apple phones to Nvidia processors, has been a major beneficiary of the global AI race.

Governments and tech giants are pouring huge sums into building data centres that can train and run AI tools such as chatbots, image generators and agents that can execute tasks.

This has turbocharged business for chipmakers such as TSMC, creating shortages and sending prices soaring.

"The AI megatrend continues to drive the need



The logo of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company seen during its 2026 second quarter earnings conference, in Taipei on Wednesday

for more and more computation," Chairman CC Wei told an earnings call.

"We now expect our full-year 2026 revenue growth to be slightly above 40 per cent year-over-year in US dollar terms."

TSMC's net profit for April to June surged 77.4 per cent year-on-

year to NT\$706.6 billion (US\$22 billion), smashing analyst estimates of NT\$624.4 billion.

The result also beat its previous quarterly record of NT\$572.48 billion in the first three months of 2026.

Quarterly revenue rose 36 per cent to NT\$1.3 trillion.

TSMC will spend an additional \$100 billion building "four or more" fabs in Arizona, taking the company's total investment plans in the United States to \$265 billion.

"This is to build several or more semiconductor logic wafer fabs for 2-nanometer and below technologies as well as advanced packaging fabs," Wei said.

Chief financial officer Wendell Huang said TSMC will increase its 2026 capital expenditure budget to between \$60 and \$64 billion "as we continue to invest heavily to support our customers' growth".

Ahead of the results, Counterpoint Research senior analyst William Li said TSMC's surge in revenue showed "AI infrastructure investment remains exceptionally strong despite macro

uncertainty."

"Demand for AI GPUs, AI ASICs and advanced packaging continues to exceed expectations," Li told AFP.

Li said: "EUV [extreme ultra-violet lithography tools] supply constraints and overseas fab investments may limit capacity expansion and weigh on margins in the near term."

Concerns about overstretched valuations in the tech sector have fuelled fears of a market bubble, along with questions over when the eye-watering sums being spent on AI will reap returns.

But Omdia principal analyst Simon Chen said those fears were "overstated".

"The demand we see is structural, backed by massive, tangible capital expenditures from hyperscalers," Chen said.

US still world's biggest air transport market, but growth slows — IATA

PARIS, France (AFP) — The United States remained the world's largest air passenger market in 2025, but it recorded the slowest growth among the world's top 10 markets, new industry data showed on Thursday.

A total 890.1 million passengers took off or landed in the US last year, a rise of just 1.6 per cent over 2024, industry body IATA calculated in a statement.

By contrast, China — the second-biggest market — notched up growth of 4.8 per cent to 776.1 million passengers, the data showed.

According to a range of different forecasts, China is projected to become the world's biggest air passenger market in the 2030s.

Aircraft maker Airbus, for example, estimates that the market for domestic flights in China



A Delta Airlines jet is seen after takeoff in Paris, France

will dwarf the US market by around one third by 2045.

The UK was the world's third-biggest air passenger market in 2025 with 269.7 million domestic take-offs and landings, IATA calculated.

It was followed by Spain with 252.7 million passengers and Japan with 223.5 million.

The four busiest domestic air routes last year were Jeju-Seoul with 13.3 million passengers; Sapporo-Tokyo with 9.6 million; Fukuoka-Tokyo with 9.5 million; and

Hanoi-Ho Chi Minh with 8.9 million, the industry association said.

By comparison, the busiest route in the US was New York-Los Angeles with just 2.2 million passengers. And in Europe, the route Barcelona-Palma de Majorca carried 2.1 million.

IATA compiles its data from 1,315 airlines.

The most used aircraft in the world last year was the Boeing 737 with 10.8 million flights, followed by Airbus A320 with 8.7 million and A321 with 4.2 million, IATA said.

Stocks drop on tech sell-off, oil rises on Mideast unrest

LONDON (AFP) — Major stock markets mostly retreated as technology shares extended falls, while oil prices climbed after the United States and Iran exchanged fresh strikes.

After Asian and European equity indices failed to build on Wall Street's gains on Wednesday, Wall Street also opened lower with the tech-heavy Nasdaq shedding 0.4 per cent.

"Fragile sentiment is leading to a continued pullback in memory chip stocks after their gravity-defying run as investors fret about elevated valuations," noted Dan Coatsworth, head of markets at AJ Bell trading group.

Seoul's Kospi fell more than six per cent as chip

titan SK hynix tumbled more than 11 per cent amid growing anxiety that the AI rally — which had pushed both firms to record highs this year — has run its course.

Traders are questioning whether the vast sums pumped into the artificial intelligence sector in recent years will eventually pay off and justify the eye-watering valuations for some firms.

Taiwanese chipmaker TSMC fell more than two per cent in New York as trading got under way, even as it issued positive forward guidance and announced that net profit soared more than 77 per cent to a record high in the second quarter thanks to massive demand for AI hardware.

It said it would invest an additional \$100 billion in the US state of Arizona.

Shares in Dutch firm ASML, which manufactures chip-making machines that underpin the tech industry, also fell after releasing blockbuster earnings on Wednesday.

"This all makes one wonder what US tech corporations will have to come up with to get investors genuinely excited again," said market analyst David Morrison at Trade Nation.

"This is important, as the earnings season picks up several gears over the next fortnight," he added.

Netflix reports after New York markets close on Thursday.

Next week, Google's

parent company Alphabet as well as Tesla release results.

Amazon, Apple, Meta and Microsoft are among the companies that publish results the week after.

Nvidia chief Jensen Huang gave a confident projection of sustained demand for artificial intelligence on Thursday.

"Most technology cycles last anywhere from 10 to 15 years before it kind of plateaus. We are at the beginning of this one," the US chip giant's CEO told reporters in Tokyo.

Growth in US retail sales lost steam in June, data from the Commerce Department showed, rising by 0.2 per cent month-on-month after a 1 per cent jump in May.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Thursday amounted to JD 12.6 million spread over 6.2 million shares that traded through 4,328 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.45 per cent, closing at 3920.03 points.

Out of 95 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 34 companies rose while the share price of another 17 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were United Cable Industries by 5.75 per cent, Philadelphia Pharmaceuticals by 5.32 per cent, Arab Phoenix Holdings by 5 per cent, Transport and Investment Barter Company by 4.88 per cent, and United Financial Investments by 4.84 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Jordan Poultry Processing and Marketing by 5 per cent, Al Rakaez Investment Company by 4.35 per cent, Jordan Dairy by 1.87 per cent, Specialised Jordanian Investment by 1.8 per cent, and Specialised Investment Compounds by 1.79 per cent.



RUGBY

McDowell to lead much-changed Scotland against Fiji

LONDON (AFP) — Stafford McDowell will captain a Scotland side showing a mammoth 14 changes in Saturday's Nations Championship international against Fiji at Murrayfield. Only Gregor Brown has retained his starting place following last weekend's 42-28 defeat by world champions South Africa in Pretoria and he has been switched by coach Gregor Townsend from the second row to No 8.Back-row Freddy Douglas and hooker Gregor Hiddleston are both set to make their first Test starts for what is technically a Fiji 'home' game', with the Pacific Islanders playing all their three fixtures in the July leg of the inaugural Nations Championship in Britain for financial reasons. Fiji suffered a humiliating 73-8 loss to England in Liverpool last week and they could face another tough afternoon in Edinburgh, with Scotland recalling Darcy Graham and Duhan van der Merwe, their two all-time leading try-scorers, on the wings. Seb Stephen is poised for a Scotland debut off a bench featuring several seasoned campaigners, including regular captain Sione Tuipulotu and Pierre Schoeman.

No room in All Blacks for Beauden Barrett against Ireland

AUCKLAND (AFP) — Decorated fly-half Beauden Barrett was once again omitted as New Zealand announced four starting changes on Thursday for the Nations Championship Test against Ireland in Auckland. Coach Dave Rennie said it was "tempting" to select 144-Test veteran Barrett for the first time this year but instead preferred the inexperienced Ruben Love in the number 10 jersey for Saturday's match at Eden Park. The 35-year-old Barrett, one of the team's most high-profile performers for more than a decade, is among just three players from the 34-strong New Zealand squad who has yet to be selected this year. As with the Test wins over France and Italy, Love and fullback Damian McKenzie — who has played numerous Tests at fly-half — will be employed as twin playmakers."We're keen to keep those combinations going," Rennie told reporters on Thursday."We're not saying that's the way it's going to be for the rest of the year, Beauden's certainly going to get his opportunity. While it was tempting to throw him in, we're keen to give the young fella another crack."

By Andy Scott
Agence France-Presse

ATLANTA — Lionel Messi has already won the World Cup, but the Argentina captain added another chapter to his astonishing career on Wednesday, inspiring his team to victory in their semifinal against England.

The defending champions were up against it, trailing to Anthony Gordon's goal until the 85th minute in Atlanta before Messi worked his magic.

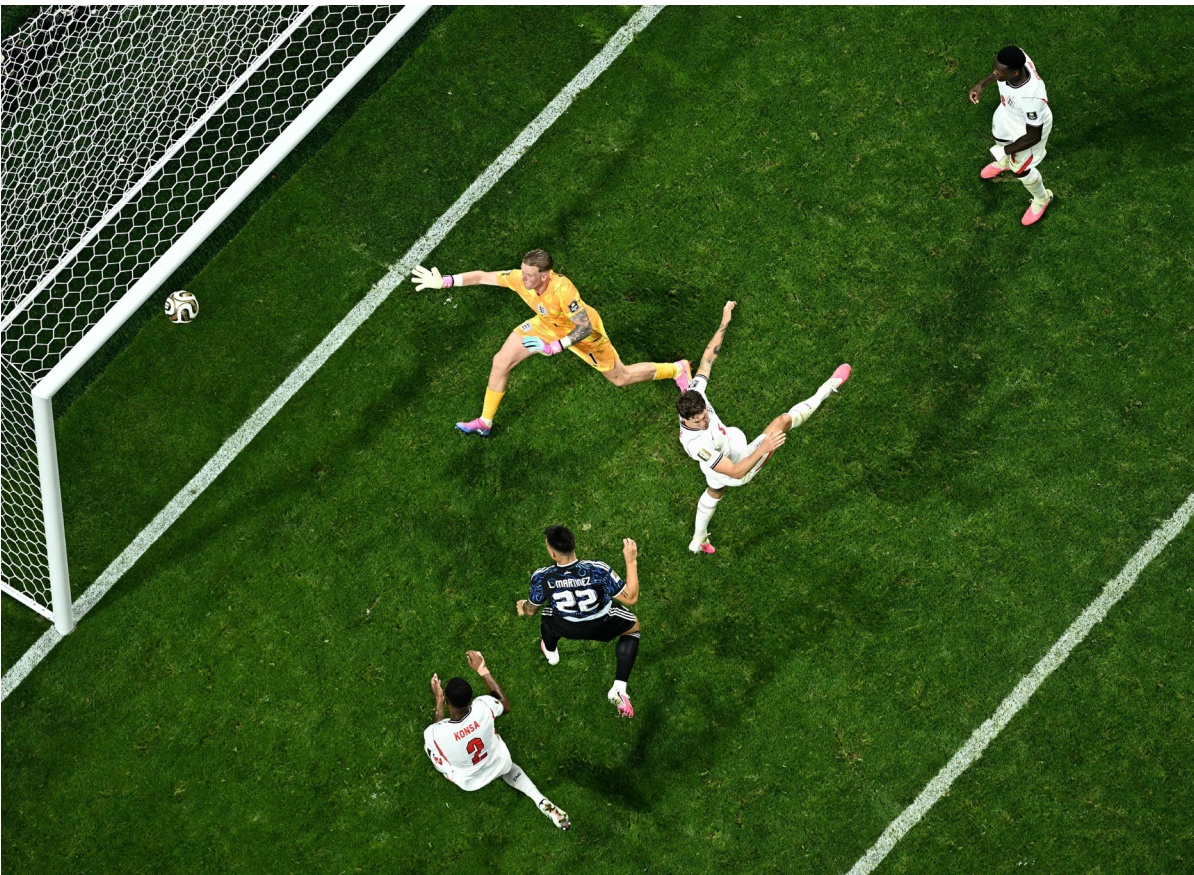
This time the tournament's all-time leading marksman did not score. But he teed up Enzo Fernandez for the equaliser and delivered the cross for Lautaro Martinez to head in the winner, sealing a 2-1 victory.

"These are special feelings. I think the squad could feel it and this was a game the Argentine people really wanted to win, and so did we," Messi, 39, said after facing England for the first time in his career.

"This is still a special fixture."

He was not quite able to emulate Diego Maradona, who scored two iconic goals in Argentina's 1986 World Cup quarter-final win over England.

But he will settle for the two assists, and he has already emulated his legendary predecessor by winning the trophy four years ago in Qatar.



Argentina's forward #22 Lautaro Martinez scores his team's second goal past England's goalkeeper

Now, after Argentina maintained its incredible record of never having lost a World Cup semifinal, Messi will appear in a second straight final and a third overall.

The South Americans are aiming to become the first team to retain the World Cup since Brazil in 1962, and Messi, the sole survivor from the side that lost to Germany in 2014, will become just the second player after Brazilian great Cafu to appear in three finals.

"It is crazy to be playing in back-to-back finals," he said.

Argentina had already staged a stunning late comeback to beat Egypt 3-2 in the same Atlanta stadium in the last 16, and it smelled blood as England sat deeper and deeper after going ahead.

"Once again we managed to do the job when things were looking bad. We never stopped believing," said Messi, who has now played a record 33 World Cup games across six different tournaments.

For long spells on Wednesday his influence was limited, but that has often been the way with Messi and he was still able to drag his team to victory.

"I felt like for large parts of the game, we dealt with him really well. But as always with the most dangerous players in the world, when they have the ball in the final third, they can create something," said England captain Harry Kane.

"He's done that again

today. He's obviously one of the best players ever for a reason."

Spanish reunion

Messi is arguably the greatest of all, and there may no longer be an argument if Argentina successfully defend its title in Sunday's final against Spain.

Pele and Maradona only played in two World Cup finals while Maradona won the trophy just once.

Messi is also the all-time top scorer in World

Cup history with 21 goals, although Kylian Mbappe is just one behind and plays Saturday against England in the third-place play-off.

He could easily have bowed out of international football after 2022, when Argentina defeated France in the final.

But he appears to have been saving himself for this World Cup in recent years, removing himself from the intensity of European football and acclimatising to American conditions with Inter Miami.

While Cristiano Ronaldo's ongoing presence in the Portugal team may have held them back, Messi remains almost as influential as ever.

"He is just the leader and key player in any team in which he plays," said England coach Thomas Tuchel.

Now he gets his chance to play Spain in a competitive game for the first time, and the identity of the opposition makes the occasion even more special.

Messi moved to Barcelona with his family at the age of 13 and stayed for two decades, before leaving in 2021 for Paris Saint-Germain.

He has a Spanish passport and may one day settle down again in Castelldefels, just down the coast from Barcelona.

But before Messi thinks about that, he wants to douse Spain's dreams.

THE JORDAN TIMES

LIFE

Algae fed by farm waste carpet Italy's warm River Po

By Taimaz Szirnicks
Agence France-Presse

TURIN, Italy — Rowers on the River Po in Turin are battling vast blooms of algae, as high temperatures in north-west Italy and runoff from farms create ideal conditions for rampant plant growth.

"Look at these [plants], if you put your oar in, they wouldn't let it go," rowing coach Roberto Romanini told AFP, as four rowers struggled in their boat through a patch of green slime.

Sitting between the Alpine chain on one side and hills on the other, heavily urbanised Turin has suffered soaring temperatures this summer, as heat waves rendered more intense by man-made climate change have gripped Italy.

And the Po, Italy's longest river, is struggling.

It has experienced a significant decline in flow, down 50 per cent on its yearly average, due to low rainfall and persistently high temperatures in June and July.

Despite that, dozens of plant species have been blooming since May.



The photo shows algae covering the surface of the Po River near Vittorio Emanuele I Bridge in Turin, north-western Italy, on Tuesday

"It looks like a meadow," 60-year-old Romanini said, adding he had "never seen anything like it".

Tearing tangled plants off his motor boat's propeller, he noted, "The river is changing, the climate is changing".

'Exceptional'

At the dyke that has controlled the river's level since the 19th century, a thick layer of algae trapped various bottles and a shoe.

Local species such Spirogyra, known as mermaid's tresses, and the blanket weed Cladophora, mingle with the invasive Blitum nuttallianum — or

"Agricultural nutrients from livestock farms are also dumped throughout the basin, which means that plants find an ideal environment here to thrive," he said.

Alice de Marco, the local head of environmental organisation Legambiente, said the algae blooms were encouraged "above all by excess nutrients" from farms.

She said a large part of the solution would be "limiting, reducing, or even eliminating the use of pesticides in agriculture".

This mass of vegetation "has an impact on the food chain — it reduces the oxygen level underwater, affecting other plants and animals," she said.

'More respect'

Algae have also invaded Lake Iseo in neighbouring Lombardy this summer, as well as further afield, from canals in France to the Ebro River in Zaragoza, Spain.

Turin wants to make the Po one of its star attractions: Two river shuttles are scheduled to resume service in 2027 and the city council has renovated a large park next to the river.

But first it needs to get rid of the green weeds.

Near Turin's mock medieval village, an excavator perched on a barge pulls up clumps of dripping algae.

A truck comes every morning to collect the plants, which are then turned into compost. More than 150 tonnes have been removed in three weeks, at a cost of approximately 100,000 euros (\$115,000).

Secondo Barbero, director of the Piedmont Environmental Protection Agency, noted that there is a correct way to remove it.

"The plant shouldn't be cut but uprooted; otherwise, the cut parts can generate new plants," while also contaminating downstream riverbanks, he said.

The growth should slow with the drop in temperatures in autumn, but the city should prepare for a fresh round in spring, Barbero said.

Rower Romanini said that, for now, locals will just have to learn to live with it — "and show more respect for the river".



SpaceX Starship Flight 8 stationed near Orbital Launch Pad A at Boca Chica beach, Texas, on March 3, 2025

SpaceX eyeing first Starship test flight since going public

NEW YORK (AFP) — SpaceX is set for a test launch of its powerful Starship rocket on Thursday, the first since the company went public.

The mammoth rocket is scheduled for blast off during a 90-minute window that opens at 5:45 pm local time (22:45 GMT). It will be Starship's 13th flight overall.

As with all launches, unfavorable weather or technical issues could cause delays.

The flight's aims will be similar to those of a mostly successful voyage carried out in May, which debuted the latest edition of the powerful Starship, its third generation model.

The goals of that test were essentially to demonstrate the new designs in flight.

It was not without a few glitches, however, including engine issues with the Super Heavy booster that necessitated a crash into the Gulf of Mexico rather than a precision return.

The company said "There have been several modifications to hardware and software to address issues seen on the previous flight."

SpaceX will aspire this time around to execute a launch, ascent, stage separation, boostback burn and landing burn of the booster offshore without hiccups.

The upper stage will deploy 20 Starlink V3 satellites, and the company will test out a re-light of a Raptor engine in space, SpaceX said.

It will also test upgrades to Starship's heat shield.

The latest flight comes one month after Elon Musk's SpaceX went public on Wall Street with a record IPO.

The rocket company has rapidly expanded its satellite internet service and voiced lofty ambitions for AI data centers in space.

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