







Women and children sit at a camp for displaced Palestinians in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, on September 29, 2025

# Families in Gaza confront grief, seek stability amid slow recovery efforts

By Rahaf Abu Khadijeh

AMMAN — More than two years after the outbreak of Gaza war, thousands of Palestinian families in Gaza continue to grapple with the devastating human toll of the conflict, as efforts to recover the remains of victims and rebuild shattered communities remain hampered by widespread destruction and limited resources.

According to reports published by the United Nations on July 10 and 11, search teams are still combing through the rubble of destroyed neighbourhoods in an effort to recover the bodies of those believed to remain buried beneath collapsed buildings, while displaced families are struggling to rebuild their lives in temporary housing.

In one neighbourhood of Gaza City, heavy machinery continues clearing debris from a residential building destroyed during the war.

Civil defence personnel and local recovery teams say the work has become increasingly difficult as time passes, with shortages of heavy equipment and fuel slowing operations.

Local recovery team member Asaad Shreim said that the building was believed to contain the remains of 44 victims.

"So far, we have only been able to recover 13 of them," he said, noting that residents and civil defence teams had retrieved most of the bodies during the immediate aftermath of the attack.

The UN said that the removal of millions of tonnes of rubble is being hindered by Israeli restrictions on the entry

of heavy machinery, as well as the danger posed by unexploded ordnance scattered beneath the debris.

Among those waiting for answers is Ramez Nabhan, who lost his wife, three children and several relatives during the early days of the war.

Standing beside the ruins where his family once sought shelter, Nabhan said that rescue workers had initially recovered only a handful of victims.

"There was no equipment to extract bodies, no fuel or necessary resources were available, and the conditions were not safe for rescue teams to operate," he said. "We waited a long time, and today we face a new ordeal: recovering the remains and then burying them."

Recovery teams have since located the remains of several of his relatives, but the process of identification and burial remains emotionally overwhelming.

"It is extremely difficult for the wound to reopen," Nabhan said. "These are my children, and there are no words that can describe what I feel inside."

The UN warned that identifying remains has become increasingly complicated due to natural decomposition and the limited availability of forensic and DNA testing capabilities, prolonging the anguish of families still searching for missing loved ones.

According to the latest joint Damage and Needs Assessment issued by the UN and its partners in April 2026, the war has claimed more than 71,000 Palestinian lives and injured more than 171,000 people.

Thousands remain

missing, with many believed to still be trapped beneath collapsed buildings.

Alongside the search for the missing, humanitarian agencies are supporting efforts to help displaced families begin rebuilding their lives.

Mayyada, originally from Jabalia refugee camp, said that she has lost count of how many times her family has been displaced since the conflict began in October 2023.

"From our home to another home, from school to school, from tent to tent," she said. "Every time we faced many struggles."

Before the war, Mayyada worked as a portrait artist. Since then, she said, survival has replaced creativity as the family's daily priority.

The family is among those receiving assistance through the Gaza Neighbourhood Approach project, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme in coordination with the Palestinian Authority, UN agencies and other partners.

The initiative provides temporary housing alongside debris removal, rehabilitation of essential services, emergency employment opportunities and restoration of basic infrastructure.

Although the temporary shelter has restored a measure of privacy and stability, Mayyada said that her family's greatest hope remains returning to a permanent home.

"More than anything," she said, "I still wish to have my own home, to have peace in my mind and to have peace around me."

## INTERVIEW

# Jordan calls for humanitarian corridors, new Geneva protocol for AI warfare — JRC president

- Red Crescent president calls for dedicated humanitarian corridors to Gaza
- Jordan proposes fourth Geneva protocol to regulate AI, drone warfare
- Jordan to host regional Red Cross, Red Crescent peace conference in 2027

By Mai Anati

AMMAN — Jordan has called for dedicated humanitarian corridors to Gaza and proposed a new protocol to the Geneva Conventions to address the growing use of artificial intelligence, drones and autonomous weapons in armed conflicts, as the humanitarian crisis in the war-torn enclave continues to deepen.

In an interview with The Jordan Times, Jordan Red Crescent Society President Mohammad Al Hadid said humanitarian organisations must be granted unrestricted access to civilians in Gaza, stressing that the worsening humanitarian emergency demands a stronger international response.

"The question is no longer what Gaza needs," Al Hadid said. "The question is what Gaza does not need. There is a shortage of hospitals, medicines, healthcare workers and almost every basic necessity."

He called for dedicated humanitarian corridors for Red Cross and Red Crescent operations, saying relief organisations should be allowed to deliver assistance under internationally agreed monitoring mechanisms to ensure aid reaches those most in need.

Al Hadid stressed that neutrality should never be interpreted as remaining silent in the face of humanitarian suffering.

"Our responsibility is to stand with the victims, alleviate suffering and advocate for those affected by war," he said, adding that humanitarian organisations should remain focused on protecting civilians rather than political disputes.

The Jordan Red Crescent Society has also proposed adopting a fourth additional protocol to the Geneva



Jordan Red Crescent Society President Mohammad Al Hadid speaks to The Jordan Times, during an interview conducted by journalist Mai Anati

Conventions to address the growing use of artificial intelligence, drones and other advanced military technologies in modern conflicts, he said.

'Our responsibility is to stand with the victims, alleviate suffering and advocate for those affected by war'

Al Hadid said that the proposal was presented during a recent meeting of the Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Organisation in Mauritania and seeks to strengthen interna-

tional humanitarian law without reopening the existing Geneva Conventions.

He also announced plans to host a regional Red Cross and Red Crescent peace conference in Amman in May 2027, bringing together humanitarian organisations to discuss food security, climate change and other humanitarian challenges affecting vulnerable communities worldwide.

Highlighting Jordan's humanitarian response, Al Hadid praised the initiatives led by His Majesty King Abdullah, including humanitarian aid drops, the establishment of relief corridors and medical evacuations for children from Gaza.

He said the Jordan Red Crescent Society is currently hosting 122 Gazan patients and their accompanying family members, many

of whom remain in Jordan while receiving specialised treatment unavailable inside the besieged enclave.

Among them are children suffering from complex medical conditions, including severe scoliosis, who underwent specialised surgery in Jordan after treatment became impossible in Gaza because of the collapse of the healthcare system.

Medical referrals are reviewed by Jordanian specialists before patients are transferred to Jordan, where they receive treatment, rehabilitation and comprehensive care.

Al Hadid said many patients remain in Jordan for months after completing treatment because Israeli authorities delay permits allowing them to return to Gaza, creating pressure on hospital capacity and slowing the admission of new cases.

"We need a faster

process so patients can return once treatment is completed," he said.

Beyond medical care, the Jordan Red Crescent Society provides psychological support and recreational programmes for children during their stay, including educational activities, birthday celebrations and family events designed to ease the trauma associated with prolonged hospitalisation.

The president renewed his appeal for the international community to increase humanitarian assistance to Gaza and uphold international humanitarian law, stressing that humanitarian aid alone cannot resolve the crisis.

"Humanitarian aid saves lives, but governments make peace," he said. "The international community must act to end the suffering of innocent civilians, especially children."

# Revived Roman canal brings new life to Iraq Al Amir farms

By Ola Shami

AMMAN — The canal that runs through Iraq Al Amir is as ancient as the Romans came. The Roman Empire fell. The canal survived. It was built in clay, maintained by generations of farmers who knew that without it, nothing on these slopes would grow.

For years, the canal delivered meagerly. Blockages and deterioration meant that up to 30 per cent of the water was lost before it reached the orchards. Farmers at the tail end of the system irrigated half their land and waited two weeks before they could return to the other half.

One casualty was the difour, an early fig once common on these slopes. It depended on steady water from the canal. When the canal failed, the difour stopped appearing too.

Khaled Al Mahameed has farmed figs and olives in Iraq Al Amir, in Wadi Al Seer, for most of his life. He describes what the canal means to the community in simple terms.

"The canal in Iraq Al Amir feeds around 15,000 residents of the area. Before, water losses from the first 200 metres alone were running at 30



Photo by Ola Shami

The canal that runs through Iraq Al Amir is as ancient as the Romans came. The Roman Empire fell. The canal survived

per cent, flowing away into the wadi towards the Kafrein Dam. Now, after the Al Murunah project rehabilitated the canal, losses are close to zero," he said.

The rehabilitation covered 650 metres of the canal under Al Murunah, a project funded by the UK's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and implemented by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

"Al Murunah demonstrates how nature-based solutions can help address Jordan's water

and climate challenges by working with both natural systems and communities," said Regional Programme Manager for Water and Climate Change at the IUCN Regional Office for West Asia Ali Hayajneh.

"By combining investments in water infrastructure, ecosystem stewardship and meaningful community engagement," Hayajneh added.

"The project builds resilience that goes beyond immediate water management gains and offers practical lessons for strengthening water security, supporting livelihoods and enhancing

climate resilience in Jordan," he added.

The physical work was the beginning. What followed was a shift in how the canal is governed.

Farmers now contribute to maintenance based on their water allocation. Each minute of water use is priced, and every farmer pays according to their share.

"Each hour is divided at JD5, which works out to roughly eight or nine fils per minute. I have 10 minutes of water, so I pay about 90 fils. Everyone pays according to their minutes. This has raised their sense of responsibility, when you pay for something, you look after

it," Mahameed said.

The results are visible in the orchards. When a tree receives its full irrigation, the branches grow longer, the fruit is larger and the yield higher. Mahameed puts the income increase at around 30 per cent.

"A single branch that used to produce around JD300 a year, with full care and water, can now give you between JD1,000 and JD1,200. With the extra water, we went from irrigating every 14 days to every week. Income has gone up by JD200 to JD300 a year, which is around 30 per cent more."

And this season, for the first time in years, the difour has returned. It is a breba variety, fruiting weeks ahead of the main harvest, and it needs consistent moisture to set its early fruit, exactly what the canal, restored, can now provide.

"This season, thank God, was a rainy one, and the figs have the difour on them. The difour means the fig comes down before its natural time. Regular figs fruit from mid-July, but the difour we expect from mid-June."

"The fruit is bigger and sweeter, even if the total quantity is less. Right now it sells for JD10 a

kilo, sold fresh directly to the consumer."

The canal has always required maintenance. Mahameed was supervising a cleaning run just last week, paid for by the farmers themselves.

"We have annual maintenance. Before we open the water at the start of the season, we cut the canal from the spring and clean it from beginning to end. Last week I was supervising the maintenance and we paid around JD500 from our own pockets," Mahameed said.

The community has also built a system for emergencies. When a collapse or flood damage occurs, farmers pool resources on the spot.

"Al Murunah supported us and we thank them. But sustainability is on us. They gave us the support and it is up to us to maintain it."

The canal is one part of a larger effort in Iraq Al Amir.

Alongside the infrastructure work, a separate programme called Al Murunah+ is running in the same farming communities. Where Al Murunah fixes the water system, Al Murunah+ works inside the home.

Jordan is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world. When

rainfall is low and the canal runs dry, it is rarely the whole family that absorbs the loss equally.

Women in rural farming households are often the last to have a say in how water is allocated, how income is spent, or whether the family takes out a loan to survive a bad season.

They carry much of the agricultural labour and most of the domestic work, but decisions about land, water and money have traditionally sat with men.

Al Murunah+ starts from the premise that this is not just a fairness problem. It is a resilience problem.

A household where both partners plan together, save together, and make decisions together is better equipped to handle a drought, a price collapse, or a failed harvest than one where half the household has no voice, according to Saw-san Gharaibeh, Project Lead and Regional Researcher, Gender and Social Inclusion.

The programme brings couples together in weekly group sessions to work through exactly these questions: How to build a household budget, how to set priorities when money is tight, how to plan for the sea-

son ahead rather than react to what comes.

Alongside the sessions, women receive direct economic support such as tools, equipment, and access to income-generating activities that put resources in their hands.

"When both partners have a voice in how water is managed and how income is spent, the household becomes more resilient. That is what Al Murunah+ is designed to do, work alongside water infrastructure investments to build the social conditions that make them last," Gharaibeh said.

It is this promise that will achieve integrated resilience, according to project officials.

"Al Murunah+ reflects the UK's commitment to gender transformative climate action. It builds on our long standing partnership with the government of Jordan and offers a model to scale and replicate across Jordan and the region. The programme supports locally led adaptation that tackles environmental and social inequalities, delivering more inclusive and resilient outcomes for communities most affected by climate change," a UK government spokesperson said.





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

# Industrial exports reach 'record' JD8.9b in 2025 — JCI

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's industrial exports have nearly doubled over the past six years to reach a record JD8.9 billion in 2025, driven by a more diversified production base and expanded access to international markets, Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI) Chairman Fathi Jaghbir said on Saturday.

The industrial sector's exports increased from JD4.6 billion in 2019 to more than JD8.9 billion last year, accounting for over 92 per cent of Jordan's total national exports, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Jaghbir said that the growth reflects a structural shift in Jordanian industry, with exports no longer reliant on a limited number of products or traditional markets.

"The growth of industrial exports is no longer dependent on a limited number of products or traditional markets, but is driven by a broader and more diversified production base," he said.

Jordanian industry currently exports around 2,500 products to 150 countries through more than 18,000 industrial establishments employing some 271,000 workers.

The number of products generating annual exports exceeding JD1 million rose from 455 in 2019 to 754 in 2025, while products with exports surpassing JD10 million increased from 66 to 121 over the same period.

Jordan has also expanded its export footprint, with the number of markets importing more than JD100 million worth of Jordanian industrial goods increasing from nine in 2019 to 13 last year.

Jaghbir attributed the sector's performance to measures aimed at boosting industrial competitiveness, increasing participation in international exhibitions and trade missions, and helping companies comply with international standards and enter new markets.

He highlighted strong export growth

in pharmaceuticals, chemicals, fertilisers, food processing, engineering and electrical industries, as well as medical supplies. Exports of lubricants, organic chemicals, copper products and cement also recorded notable increases.

The sector maintained its momentum in 2026, with industrial exports rising by 9.1 per cent during the first four months of the year to JD2.8 billion, compared with JD2.5 billion during the same period in 2025.

Jaghbir said Jordan still has untapped export opportunities estimated at more than \$7.7 billion, particularly in the chemicals, engineering, mining, leather and pharmaceutical industries.

He added that future growth will focus on high-value industries, technology-driven manufacturing, increasing domestic value added, and further diversifying export products and destinations in line with the Economic Modernisation Vision.

# Jordan urges global action to preserve Jerusalem's status quo

Conference highlights efforts to safeguard Jerusalem from displacement, annexation

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan on Saturday participated in the Jerusalem Conference 2026, held in Cairo under the theme "Jerusalem: The Frontline Against Displacement and Annexation, and the Key to Achieving a Just and Lasting Peace".

Jordan was represented at the conference by Executive Director of the Hashemite Fund for the Reconstruction of Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock Wafeeq Kilani, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The conference was organised by the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, with the participation of officials, diplomats, representatives of regional and international organisations and experts in Palestinian affairs.

Kilani said that the conference was held at a critical time amid mounting challenges facing the Palestinian cause, particularly in Jerusalem, due to escalating Israeli violations, which require a unified position and more effective international action.

He stressed that Jerusalem and its Islamic and Christian holy sites remain among the top priorities of His Maj-



Al Aqsa Mosque Compound and its Dome of the Rock in the Old City in occupied East Jerusalem, October 22, 2024

esty King Abdullah, who continues to lead diplomatic and political efforts to defend the city and its holy sites at regional and international forums, based on the Hashemite custodianship over Jerusalem's holy sites.

Kilani said that the Israeli occupation cannot establish any legal rights or grant legitimacy to unilateral measures aimed at altering the historical and legal status quo in Jerusalem.

He called on the in-

ternational community to take concrete steps and establish effective mechanisms to implement relevant international resolutions, and hold Israel accountable for continued violations against Islamic and Christian holy sites and residents of Jerusalem.

Such measures, he said, are essential to providing international protection and preserving the Arab identity of the holy city.

The conference featured an opening session and two main

discussions. The first session, titled "Saving the Holy City and Preserving the Historical Status Quo of Holy Sites", focused on protecting Islamic and Christian holy sites and maintaining the established historical and legal status quo in Jerusalem.

The second session, titled "Preserving Palestinian Presence, Rights and Sovereignty in Jerusalem and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the Face of Displacement Policies

and Illegal Settlement Expansion", addressed efforts to safeguard Palestinian rights and counter displacement and settlement expansion policies.

At the closing session, participants underscored the importance of continuing regional and international efforts to protect Jerusalem, preserve its historical and legal identity, and support the rights of the Palestinian people in line with international legitimacy resolutions.

# JAF delegation visits Jordanian helicopter unit serving in Congo UN mission

AMMAN (JT) — A Jordan Armed Forces -Arab Army (JAF) delegation, headed by the commander of King Abdullah II Air Base, on Saturday visited the Congo/2 Helicopter Unit serving with the UN peacekeeping mission in Congo.

During the visit, the delegation was briefed by the unit's commander on its operational duties, technical and operational readiness, and the functioning of its various facilities.

The briefing also highlighted the unit's humanitarian efforts in support of the United Nations' mission to maintain security and



Jordan Armed Forces -Arab Army delegation visits the Congo/2 Helicopter Unit serving with the UN peacekeeping mission in the Congo

stability, according to a JAF statement.

The delegation also met with the Force Commander of the United Nations Organisa-

tion Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

, Lt. Gen. Ulisses de Mesquita Gomes, where they discussed issues of mutual interest, developments in operational missions and the role of the Jordanian unit in supporting the UN mission.

The delegation praised the "distinguished" performance of the unit's personnel in carrying out their duties, stressing that the participation of the JAF in international peacekeeping operations reflects their "high level" of "competence and professionalism" and contributes to enhancing Jordan's standing on the international stage.



A delegation from the Jordanian Field Hospital Nablus on Saturday visits the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army Cemetery in Nablus

# Jordanian field hospital delegation visits JAF Martyrs Cemetery in Nablus

AMMAN (JT) — A delegation from the Jordanian Field Hospital Nablus on Saturday visited the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) Cemetery in Nablus, where JAF personnel who were killed while performing their military duties during the 1967 battles were buried.

The JAF said that the visit reflects the Armed Forces' commitment to honouring its martyrs and preserving their military and national legacy.

The delegation recited Al Fatiha for the souls of the martyrs and laid a wreath at their graves in recognition of their sacrifices

and bravery in defending Palestine, according to a JAF statement.

gished legacy, which remains a source of pride.

He added that the JAF remains committed to upholding the values of loyalty to its martyrs, preserving their military history and commemorating their sacrifices as an integral part of Jordan's national heritage.

The JAF took part in several battles in Palestine, during which many soldiers were killed while carrying out their duties. The Arab Army martyrs' cemeteries across Palestine continue to stand as a testament to their sacrifices and dedication.

The JAF took part in several battles in Palestine...

# JSMO conducts 82,000 product tests in 2026 to ensure compliance

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Standards and Metrology Organisation (JSMO) said on Saturday it has conducted around 82,000 laboratory tests on a wide range of products since the beginning of 2026 to verify compliance with Jordanian standards and technical regulations.

JSMO Acting Director General Wafaa Momani said that the organisation carries out its technical and regulatory responsibilities in line with international best

practices to ensure product safety, enhance consumer confidence and support the competitiveness of national industries, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

She said that JSMO laboratories conducted around 28,000 tests on food products, detergents, lighting fixtures and mineral oils, in addition to inspecting 41,500 measuring instruments and pre-packaged products.

The organisation also tested petroleum prod-

ucts at fuel stations across the Kingdom and carried out 12,500 examinations of gold and silver jewellery samples to ensure compliance with technical requirements and protect consumer rights.

Momani said JSMO has issued 283 Jordanian standards and technical regulations since the start of the year as part of efforts to modernise the national quality infrastructure and keep pace with technological and industrial

developments.

The newly issued standards cover key sectors, including lubricating oils, secondary cells and batteries, electric vehicle batteries, electrical cables, electric road vehicles and charging systems, construction and insulation materials, energy management and sustainability systems, adventure tourism, cosmetics and food labelling.

She stressed that the organisation continues to update national

standards in line with international references in cooperation with government institutions, the private sector, universities and other stakeholders.

Momani said these efforts are aimed at strengthening Jordan's quality infrastructure, protecting consumers, improving the business environment, enhancing the competitiveness of local products and expanding their access to regional and international markets.

## CRIME

# Court upholds death sentence, 20-year term for man, son in premeditated murder case

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld a December 2022 Criminal Court ruling sentencing a father and his son to prison terms ranging from death to 20 years after convicting them of

murdering a man in the Jordan Valley in July 2021.

The court declared the defendants guilty of premeditated murder and complicity in premeditated murder of a man over an old feud on July 17 in Northern Shouneh.

The father was handed the death penalty by the court while his son received a 20-year prison term.

Court papers said the defendants had an old feud with the victim and his family for several months before the incident.

The victim's family decided to leave the area to move to Amman as a result, the court transcripts added.

The defendant and his sons heard about their intended move, so they decided to take action, according

to court papers.

"The defendant grabbed a machinegun and headed with his son towards a vehicle that the victim and his family were riding in," court papers added.

The defendant "opened fire from his

machinegun, striking the victim in the chest and killing him instantly", the court added.

The defendants contested their verdicts through their lawyers at a high court, arguing that the Criminal Court did not

follow proper legal procedures.

Meanwhile, the Criminal Court's general attorney asked the Court of Cassation to uphold the verdicts.

The higher court ruled that the Criminal Court followed the

proper procedure and the defendants deserve the verdict they received.

The Court of Cassation judges were Mahmoud Ebtoush, Nayef Samarat, Hammad Ghzawi, Mohammad Khashashneh and Qassem Dughmi.





AFP photo  
Rescuers desperately attempted on Sunday to find survivors in eastern Turkey in the rubble of collapsed buildings after a powerful earthquake claimed at least 38 lives

## Magnitude 5.0 earthquake hits southeastern Turkey — disaster agency

ANKARA (AFP) — A 5 magnitude earthquake struck several south-eastern provinces in Turkey on Saturday morning without causing casualties or damage, the country’s disaster management agency said.

"No adverse situation has been reported following the magnitude 5 earthquake that occurred at 6:20 am in the Battalgazi district, in Malatya province, and was felt in the provinces of Malatya, Elazig, Adiyaman, Tunceli and

Sanliurfa. Our teams continue to work in the field," the disaster agency AFAD said. Turkey is criss-crossed by several geological fault lines that have previously caused catastrophes in the country.

# Lebanon’s president departs for Washington to meet Trump

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AFP) — Lebanese President Joseph Aoun on Saturday left Beirut for Washington, where he is expected to meet Donald Trump, the Lebanese presidency said, after talks between Lebanon and Israel wrapped up in Italy. It will be the first trip to Washington by a Lebanese head of state since Michel Sleiman was received by Barack Obama in 2009.

Aoun will hold discussions “with several American officials on the situation in Lebanon and ways to strengthen the ceasefire”, particularly in Lebanon’s south, as well as on “the withdrawal of Israel from the Lebanese regions it occupies”, the presidency said. Israel and Lebanon began US-sponsored negotiations in April aimed at reaching a peace deal and permanently ending the Israel-Hizbollah war.

On June 26, they reached a framework agreement in Washington under which the Israeli military is to withdraw from southern Lebanon and the Lebanese army is to deploy, starting with two “pilot zones”. The agreement is



AFP photo  
A billboard carries a portrait of Lebanese President Joseph Aoun along the highway of Sidon on Wednesday

contingent on the disarmament of Iran-backed militant group Hizbollah, which has flatly rejected the deal and the Israel-Lebanon negotiations. Following the latest round of talks this week in Rome, Israel and Lebanon “agreed on the structure and guidelines” to implement the pilot zones, a US official

said. A Lebanese military source meanwhile told AFP that the Lebanese army has begun intensifying patrols in several villages adjacent to areas occupied by Israeli forces, including Froun in the Bint Jbeil district, in preparation for implementing the pilot zones provision. Hizbollah pulled Leb-

anon into the Middle East war on March 2, when it began striking Israel in support of its backer Tehran. Israel responded with airstrikes and a ground invasion, and despite a ceasefire continues sporadic attacks and holds territory in south Lebanon in what it describes as a “security zone”. On Saturday, Leba-

non’s state-run National News Agency reported fresh air strikes against two towns located on the edge of the so-called security zone, in the Tyre and Nabatieh regions. The US embassy meanwhile warned Americans not to travel to Lebanon, citing “high tensions in the Middle East”.

## Egypt's 'Garbage City' recyclers reap gains from Iran war plastic squeeze

CAIRO (AFP) — In the labyrinthine alleyways of Cairo’s Garbage City, recycling specialist Peter Romany finds himself fielding calls from factories scrambling for plastic to plug supply shortfalls caused by the Iran war.

The 25-year-old is among the hundreds of recyclers and manufacturers across Egypt benefiting from a war-driven surge in demand ever since the United States and Iran choked off the Strait of Hormuz, a major shipping lane for the raw materials from which plastic is made.

At the heart of the boom is the sprawling eastern Cairo settlement of Manshiyet Nasser, where generations of garbage collectors have built one of the world’s most sophisticated informal recycling systems.

"Before the war, we were the ones calling factories, trying to sell our material," Romany told AFP, standing beside towering bales of



AFP photo  
An Egyptian worker loads bales of plastic for recycling on a truck at the garbage city in the Manshiyet Nasser neighbourhood in Cairo on July 6

compressed plastic. "But after the war broke out, the factories started calling us. They'd ask: How much do you have? Can you deliver today? That never used to happen."

**Built on trash**  
Home to more than

115,000 residents, Manshiyet Nasser is a predominantly Coptic Christian neighbourhood nestled beneath the Mokattam hill and facing Cairo's historic Citadel. The settlement handles more than a third of the capital's waste, according to govern-

ment figures. Families live and work under the same roof, often separated from mountains of waste by little more than a staircase or curtain, exposing them to foul odours, plastic fumes and other health risks. Downstairs, men sort

plastics, cardboard, paper, metals and glass into neat piles destined for workshops and factories. Upstairs, children pore over schoolbooks, mothers prepare lunch and television sets flicker in cramped living rooms, all against the constant background noise of shredders whining and baling presses pounding below. The smell of rubbish hangs heavy in the air as pickup trucks and handcarts crawl through narrow alleyways, unloading the day's collections while children weave between them chasing footballs. It's a well-oiled machine, kicked into overdrive by a war more than a thousand kilometres away.

**Cash upfront**  
Romany specialises in recycled polyethylene, one of the world's most widely used plastics

and a key ingredient in packaging. According to the pricing agency Independent Commodity Intelligence Services (ICIS), the Middle East is a major global supplier of polyethylene, with around 85 percent of its exports passing through the strait. Egypt imports around 40 percent of its raw plastic materials, mainly from Gulf countries, Europe, China and South Korea, according to the Chamber of Chemical Industries. Packaging and plastic prices have more than doubled for some products, three industry sources told AFP, pushing manufacturers towards locally recycled alternatives. Factories that would normally delay payment started putting down cash upfront "because they were so eager to secure material", said Rizq Yousif, who mainly recycles PET, the plastic widely used in beverage and food packaging.

Yousif told AFP demand had tripled, while prices for some recycled plastics increased by up to 60 per cent. **A temporary boom?** The disruption has been good for local business all along the value chain. "We have been in this business for 16 years," said Payrouz El Sayed, chief executive of Sadat City Chemical Fibre Factory, which produces polyester fibres from used plastic bottles. But only since the latest crisis have they managed to crack new markets as far away as Brazil, she said. Nesma El Areef, senior marketing and sales manager at Uflex Egypt, which converts plastic waste into new packaging materials, said demand for the company's recycled products rose by up to 40 per cent. "We saw a significant increase in orders, particularly from food and beverage manufacturers,

because we offered a more readily available alternative to imported materials," she told AFP. Despite the gains, industry figures believe the boom could fade once supply routes stabilise. Yousif said prices and demand began easing shortly after US President Donald Trump announced last month that negotiations with Iran were progressing. "Just one post dropped the market. After the war, I am not sure this will last," he said. But this week, Trump said the US was reinstating its blockade of Iranian ports and "taking over" the Strait of Hormuz as fresh fighting between the two countries flared. Orders have already picked back up, according to both Romany and Yousif. "We're used to it by now," Yousif said. "Whenever there's trouble there, the customers start calling us."

## India successfully launches first private orbital rocket

SRIHARIKOTA, India (AFP) — India's first privately built orbital rocket took its maiden flight on Saturday, its company said, marking a significant step for the South Asian giant as it eyes a bigger slice of the global space economy. The Vikram-1 rocket, built by Skyroot Aerospace and designed to carry small satellites into low-Earth orbit, took off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota amid loud cheers. "Hello space, we have arrived!" Skyroot Aerospace said in a post on X. "Vikram-1's Test Flight-1 has completed its mission. The first ever Indian private sector launch has been successfully completed."

man of the government's Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre, said the achievement went "way beyond expectation for the very first orbital launch ever taken by an Indian private company". Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the endeavour as "a defining moment in India's space journey". "The growing participation of our private sector is opening new frontiers and accelerating innovation," Modi said. "This achievement will encourage countless youngsters to dream bigger and innovate fearlessly." The rocket is carrying a diverse range of payloads, including a lab-grown diamond and robotic arms capable of removing space debris. A miniature 18-karat gold rocket that has mini sculptures of Indian physicists Vikram



AFP photo  
India's Skyroot Aerospace orbital rocket Vikram-1 blasts off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Andhra Pradesh's Sriharikota on Saturday

Sarabhai, CV Raman and former Indian president and noted aerospace engineer APJ Abdul Kalam is also aboard the vehicle. India's space ambitions, built on decades of investment by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), have gathered pace in recent years. The country's space economy — valued at

around \$8.4 billion — has rapidly expanded since the sector opened up to private players in 2020, and is now home to more than 400 space startups. **'New heights'** "India's space ambitions soar to new heights!" Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar said after the successful launch.

## Thousands of Ethiopians rally against Tigray recruitment drive

ADDIS ABABA (AFP) — Thousands gathered in the Ethiopian capital on Saturday for a pro-government rally against an alleged forced recruitment campaign by authorities in the northern Tigray region. AFP reported in June on the recruitment drive in Tigray — which fought a brutal civil war against the central government in 2020-2022 — citing youths who said they had escaped training camps or fled their homes to avoid roundups. Human Rights Watch said earlier this month that security forces aligned with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which has ruled the region for decades, were forcibly recruiting young men, including boys as young as 15. "The Ethiopian government must fulfil its duty to protect the people of

Tigray," read one banner carried by demonstrators in Addis Ababa. Another read: "Stop trafficking combatants to Sudan!" The Ethiopian government and some local media have accused the TPLF of forcibly sending Tigrayans to Sudan, though no evidence has been provided to support the claim. Relations between Ethiopia and Sudan have become increasingly

strained, as have those between Addis Ababa and the TPLF despite a 2022 peace deal that ended the devastating two-year war in Tigray that claimed at least 600,000 lives, according to African Union estimates. The ceasefire has never been fully implemented, and now both sides accuse the other of preparing a new offensive, with troops massing on the region's border, according to security sources. The TPLF "is forcibly rounding up the youth of Tigray, selling them to neighbouring Sudan through Eritrea, and exposing them to war", protester Bahlibi Tsegaye, 42, told AFP. Former Tigrayan rebel leader Getachew Reda, who has since switched sides to join Ethiopia's federal government as east African affairs minister, was also at the rally.

The ceasefire has never been fully implemented...



# Iran’s Guard say tankers exploded from Hormuz mines as US strikes continue

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran’s Revolutionary Guard said on Saturday that two oil tankers exploded after hitting mines in the Strait of Hormuz, as the United States and Tehran continued to trade drone and missile strikes.

“An hour ago, two oil tankers, which were trying to pass through the minefield south of the Strait of Hormuz by deceptive American intelligence agencies, exploded and caught fire,” the Guard said in a statement published by state news agency IRNA, without identifying the tankers.

The Revolutionary Guard also said on state television they “stopped” four ships trying to transit the critical waterway.

US forces, meanwhile, reported striking Iran for the seventh consecutive night with attacks designed to “continue degrading Iranian military capabilities”, according to a statement by US Central Command



This screen grab made on Saturday from handout video footage released by the US Central Command on Friday shows what the US military says is the latest wave of precision strikes on strategic Iranian military sites

shared on X.

In the biggest escalation since the foes resumed hostilities, Iran accused US forces of targeting civilian infra-

structure, including an airport, a railway station and two bridges, and said it had struck US assets across the region. US President Donald

Trump has previously threatened to hit Iranian infrastructure, but there was no confirmation from the US side on Friday that US forces have

begun to do so.

Maj. Gen. Mohsen Rezaei, a senior military adviser to Iran’s supreme leader, said Tehran will resume “full-scale of-

fensive operations” if US strikes against it continue for another two or three days.

“Iran will no longer limit itself to retaliatory,

like-for-like responses... and no political border will be safe,” Rezaei said, according to the Iranian news agency IRIB.

The war began on February 28 with deadly US-Israeli strikes on Iran, which retaliated by effectively closing the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping channel for much of the world’s oil, and launching attacks on Israel and American interests across the Gulf.

Iranian Revolutionary Guard aerospace force commander Majid Mousavi said “targeted strikes from across Iran against the enemy will continue” until the US ends operations against Iran’s coastal facilities in the south and around the strait.

Iran’s energy ministry urged citizens to reduce their electricity use and switch off air conditioners in peak hours — even as temperatures in some areas soared — after the power grid came

under strain from what it said were US strikes on energy facilities.

Iran’s military had threatened infrastructure across the region in the event of any attacks on its own, and on Friday launched widespread strikes.

Iran’s health ministry said at least 38 people have been killed and more than 400 wounded in the country since fighting resumed.

Mediators have attempted to bring both sides back to the negotiating table and China and Pakistan called for the US and Iran to stop fighting and resume talks.

As part of the wider escalation, the US has also reimposed its blockade of Iran’s ports, and attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz have continued with the UK Maritime Trade Operations agency on Friday saying a tanker was struck by a projectile off the coast of Oman overnight.

## Brazil high court says Argentina’s Milei cannot visit Bolsonaro

BRASÍLIA (AFP) — Brazil’s top court on Saturday denied a request by Argentine President Javier Milei to visit former Brazilian leader Jair Bolsonaro, who is under house arrest, a ruling obtained by AFP showed.

Milei is expected to attend the convention of Bolsonaro’s Liberal Party on July 25 in Sao Paulo, at which Bolsonaro’s son Flavio, a senator, is expected to be named the conservative movement’s candidate for the upcoming October polls.

Bolsonaro’s attorneys had asked that Milei be able to see Bolsonaro at that time, but Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes banned all visits to the ex-president for 30 days late Friday, as punishment for publication of a letter transmitted by his son.

That violated a ban on his use of social media, including via third parties.

Moraes said on Sat-



This combination of photos created on Saturday shows Argentina’s President Javier Milei looking on during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos on January 21 and former Brazilian president (2019-2022) Jair Bolsonaro leaving the DF Star hospital in Brasilia on September 14, 2025

urday that Milei’s request was moot due to the overall ban. Doctors, physical therapists and Bolsonaro’s attorneys are exempt and can still visit him.

Bolsonaro, 71, is serving a 27-year sentence for

plotting a coup to overturn the results of the 2022 election, in which he was defeated by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. He is banned from public office, though he is appealing.

He was moved to house

arrest in March for health reasons.

Moraes said that additionally Bolsonaro cannot have any visits for “political or electoral purposes” until after the elections, nor can he disseminate any political messages.

Flavio Bolsonaro — who was specifically barred earlier this month from seeing his father for 90 days, or until after the election’s first round — has hit out at Moraes over his decisions, calling them politically motivated.

The visit request had also included Argentine Foreign Minister Pablo Quimo, Milei’s sister Karina, who serves in his government, and a translator.

Since 2023, Milei and Bolsonaro have presented themselves as ideological allies in Latin America’s new political right. Lula’s relations with Milei are not as friendly.

Bolsonaro’s attorney Joao Henrique de Freitas questioned the “motivation and proportionality” of the rulings on X, saying: “Brazil deserves transparency, not convenient coincidences.”

In October’s election, Flavio Bolsonaro is expected to face Lula, who is seeking reelection.

## Uganda school bus crash toll rises to 24 — police

KAMPALA (AFP) — The death toll from a school bus crash in Uganda has risen to 23 children and one adult, and all school field trips have been cancelled, police said on Friday night.

The east African country has a notorious road safety record, frequently recording bus or truck accidents along poorly maintained highways.

The bus was returning to Kampala from a school trip to Sipi Falls in eastern Uganda on Thursday when it veered off the road, killing 20 junior school children and one adult.

Since then, “three more pupils succumbed to injuries sustained in the crash while receiving medical treatment”, the police said.

Six of the dead have yet to be identified.

The driver, who is thought to have sus-

tained critical injuries, reportedly lost control of the vehicle, which veered off the road, struck a large stone and overturned, police said.

On Friday the education ministry convened an emergency meeting and announced the temporary suspension of all school trips nationwide.

The pause is to permit a “comprehensive investigation into the circumstances surrounding recent crashes involving school children”, improve safety guidelines and give road safety training to schools and transport companies, police said.

All school groups currently on field trips have been told to report immediately to the nearest police station.

“Where necessary, police officers will provide escorts to ensure the safe return of learn-

ers to their respective schools,” the police added.

The tragedy occurred near Kaserem, more than 250 kilometres from Kamapala, between Kapchorwa, where the spectacular Sipi Falls are located, and the city of Mbale.

Police shared an image of a badly mangled and overturned bus, and said an investigation was under way.

Twenty three of the injured are still in Kapchorwa hospital.

Three other vehicles involved in the same trip for the children of King David Junior School in Kampala returned home safely, police said.

Fatal bus accidents are relatively common in Uganda.

In October, two buses collided on a major highway, killing at least 46 people.

## ACT reports ‘strong’ first-half performance as transit cargo surges 177%

Continued from page 1

Truck gate movements also increased to 188,927, up from 182,490, reflecting continued efficiency across the supply chain, according to a statement by the ACT.

ACT attributed the performance to investments made over the past year, including the refurbishment of quayside infrastructure and the deployment of new ship-to-shore cranes, which have enhanced vessel handling capacity and operational productivity despite geopolitical challenges affecting regional shipping schedules and changes in vessel sizes.

The terminal also strengthened its position as a regional logistics hub by handling eight vessels carrying more than 5,000 TEUs, including one vessel that recorded a throughput of 10,884 TEUs, the highest container throughput handled at the terminal, according to the statement.

During the reporting period, ACT also wel-

‘Our performance in the first half of 2026 reflects the strength of our operational capabilities...’

Commercially, ACT reported continued customer confidence, reflected in a high Net Promoter Score.

The company also advanced the rollout of APM Terminals’ global Contract Lifecycle Management system, aimed at improving contract management, transparency, compliance, customer collaboration and operational efficiency.

Health, safety, security and environmental performance remained a key focus throughout the reporting period.

ACT conducted several emergency preparedness exercises, including oil spill and bromine release response drills in co-operation with key stakeholders.

The exercises received positive evaluations from the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA).

The company also completed multiple external safety and security audits, including assessments by ASEZA-appointed auditors, the Social Security Corporation and a comprehensive security audit conducted under Maersk’s global standards, it said.

On the sustainability front, ACT reported a 29 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared with its 2022 baseline, including a 75 per cent reduction in electricity-related emissions.

The progress was supported by ongoing work toward ISO 50001 Energy Manage-

ment System certification, development of a 6-megawatt solar power project, deployment of reefer electricity monitoring system, and the expansion of electric-powered equipment to reduce diesel consumption.

The company said that these initiatives support its targets of reducing emissions by 65 per cent by 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2040.

“Our performance in the first half of 2026 reflects the strength of our operational capabilities, the trust of our customers and the dedication of our people,” said Jose Rueda, chief executive officer of Aqaba Container Terminal.

He said that the company remains focused on delivering reliable and efficient services while advancing safety, sustainability, and community impact, adding that ACT will continue strengthening Aqaba’s position as a strategic gateway for Jordan and the wider region as regional trade dynamics evolve.

## SSIF says assets rose to JD19.7b in first half of 2026

Continued from page 1

Malhas added that the fund’s recent strategic partnerships would broaden its investment opportunities, support national projects aligned with Jordan’s Economic Modernisation Vision and strengthen its role as a long-term institutional investor.

Chief Executive Officer Izzeddin Kanakrieh also said that maintaining strong investment performance required disciplined portfolio management, prudent risk management and timely investment decisions.

He added that the fund continued to strengthen its portfolios through active investment management, ongoing assessment of new opportunities and disciplined execution of investment decisions to support sustainable long-term returns.

During the first half of 2026, the fund said it had launched several strategic investment initiatives aimed at expanding its re-

gional partnerships and strengthening its long-term investment platform.

Among the key developments was the establishment of the Jordanian-Omani Investment Company in partnership with the Oman Investment Authority, with initial capital of \$100 million. The company will pursue joint investments in sectors including information and communications technology, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, energy, mining, tourism, logistics and infrastructure in both Jordan and Oman.

The fund also completed procedures to acquire a 7 per cent stake in the Aqaba Railway Project Company, marking its first investment in the railway transport sector through a Jordanian-Emirati partnership, according to the statement.

“The investment is expected to support the development of a major national infrastructure project while enhancing the value of

the fund’s investments in Jordan Phosphate Mines Company and Arab Potash Company through lower transport costs, improved logistics and greater competitiveness for Jordan’s mining sector.”

‘The investment is expected to support the development of a major national infrastructure project...’

The SSIF also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Arab Mining Company to assess the feasibility of establishing a strategic partnership to develop a phosphate fertiliser manufactur-

ing project, supporting efforts to increase value added from Jordan’s natural resources, it said.

Another Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Saudi Jordanian Investment Fund to identify, evaluate and develop investment opportunities across key sectors of the Jordanian economy.

Since the beginning of the year, the fund said it has continued to increase its investments in several companies listed on the Amman Stock Exchange, particularly in the banking and mining sectors, focusing on companies with strong financial performance, sound governance and sustainable dividend records.

By the end of June, the fund’s holdings represented approximately 13.5 per cent of the Amman Stock Exchange’s total market capitalisation, reinforcing its position as one of Jordan’s largest institutional investors, according to the statement.



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How the University of Jordan turns knowledge into economic growth

By Raad Mahmoud Al-Tal

Universities are no longer institutions whose primary mission is limited to teaching and conducting academic research. In modern economies, they have become key drivers of innovation, productivity and economic growth, playing a central role in building knowledge-based economies and enhancing national competitiveness. Recognising this transformation, Jordan's Economic Modernisation Vision places innovation, applied research, and technology transfer at the core of the country's long-term economic transformation strategy.

Against this backdrop, the University of Jordan has demonstrated a clear commitment to advancing the objectives of the Economic Modernisation Vision. The Third Honorary Professors Forum, held under the patronage of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein and themed "The Role of Universities in Leading the National Innovation System", reflected this commitment by bringing together distinguished academics and experts from around the world to explore how universities can strengthen partnerships with industry, promote entrepreneurship and transform scientific knowledge into tangible economic value. These priorities closely align with one of the Vision's fundamental objectives: Building a more productive economy driven by innovation rather than traditional growth models.

Perhaps the forum's greatest achievement was its ability to translate these ambitions into concrete action. During the event, the University of Jordan signed a series of cooperation agreements and Memoranda of Understanding with leading Jordanian and regional companies specialising in research, innovation, industrial development and technology transfer. These partnerships represent far more than conventional academic collaboration. They establish a framework for converting scientific research into commercially viable products, technologies, and services capable of generating real economic value and supporting sustainable development.

The agreements focus on strategic sectors including water technologies, chemical industries, fertilisers and medical technologies areas that offer significant value-added potential for the Jordanian economy. By linking scientific research directly to productive industries, the University is helping address national development priorities while supporting industrial competitiveness. Collaborative projects in water harvesting technologies, soil improvement and advanced medical devices are expected not only to generate scientific breakthroughs but also to improve industrial efficiency, reduce reliance on imported technologies, strengthen domestic innovation capabilities, and create high-value products that can compete in regional and international markets.

An equally significant milestone was the inauguration the Science Venture Foundry (SVF) by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince. The SVF represents a vital bridge between scientific discovery and commercial application by providing an integrated ecosystem that supports entrepreneurship, incubates innovative ideas, and enables researchers to transform their discoveries into competitive start-up companies capable of attracting investment and expanding into new markets. International experience has consistently shown that university spin-offs have become major engines of innovation, employment creation and economic diversification in many of the world's most advanced economies.

From an economic perspective, these initiatives reflect one of the most effective mechanisms for converting knowledge into productive capital. Every patent that reaches commercialisation, every research project that evolves into a marketable technology and every university-based startup that succeeds in the marketplace contributes directly to gross domestic product, creates high-quality employment opportunities, strengthens exports and raises overall productivity. These outcomes lie at the heart of Jordan's Economic Modernisation Vision, whose ultimate objective is to achieve sustainable economic growth while expanding employment opportunities for Jordanians.

This is precisely the development model adopted by leading knowledge economies around the world, where universities have evolved beyond their traditional educational role to become engines of innovation, investment, entrepreneurship and technological advancement. Their success is measured not only by the quality of their graduates or the number of published research papers, but by their ability to generate patents, establish successful startups, attract investment, and produce technologies that improve people's lives and strengthen national competitiveness.

The success of Jordan's Economic Modernisation Vision therefore depends not only on effective public policies but also on institutions capable of generating knowledge, collaborating closely with the private sector, and transforming research into investment opportunities, commercial products and competitive industries. Through its growing network of strategic partnerships, advanced research infrastructure and commitment to innovation, the University of Jordan is demonstrating that it is far more than an academic institution. It is emerging as a strategic partner in Jordan's economic transformation helping build a more productive, innovation-driven, and globally competitive economy by turning knowledge into wealth, research into industry and innovation into sustainable economic growth.

Advancing Jordan's economic complexity



ECONOMIC REVIEW

Yusuf Mansur

Export growth alone is not enough to judge the success of an economy. A country may export more while remaining locked into simple, low-value or primary products. This is why the Economic Complexity Index (ECI), developed by Harvard's Growth Lab, has emerged as a more comprehensive measure of long-term economic development.

The index assesses not only the diversity of a country's exports but also the sophistication and rarity of those products relative to the rest of the world. It reflects the amount of knowledge, technology, skills and institutional capability embedded in production. Countries that export a wide range of technologically advanced products score highly, while those dependent on raw materials or basic commodities receive lower rankings.

Jordan ranked 26th globally in 2001, but by 2023 its position had fallen to 45th, representing a decline of 19 places over 22 years, despite improvements in several other economic indicators. The real concern is not merely Jordan's current ranking, but the fact that it once occupied a much stronger position. This suggests that Jordan's productive capabilities have not evolved as rapidly as those of competing economies, causing its relative standing to decline even as exports continued to grow. More broadly, Jordan remains positioned around the middle of the global rankings, performing below what its educational achievements and human capital would suggest.

Perhaps even more significant is the long-term trend. Jordanian studies indicate that the economy has become less complex over the past decade. The decline in its relative ranking reflects the fact that many other countries have upgraded their industrial capabilities and diversified their export baskets at a much faster pace.

Why has this happened? The first reason lies in the structure of Jordan's exports. The country's export basket continues to rely heavily on phosphates,

potash, fertilisers, garments, food products and certain chemical industries. These sectors are undoubtedly important — they generate foreign exchange earnings and create employment — but they are not sufficient on their own to propel Jordan into the ranks of the world's more complex economies. The Economic Complexity Index rewards countries that export machinery, precision equipment, electronics, industrial components, specialised chemicals, medical devices and other products that only a limited number of countries can manufacture competitively.

Second, Jordan has not yet succeeded in transforming its strong educational base into an equally strong productive base. Every year, the country graduates large numbers of engineers, pharmacists and information technology specialists. However, many of these highly skilled professionals either work abroad or are employed in service industries whose value is not fully reflected in export-based measures of complexity. This creates a clear paradox: Jordan possesses substantial human capital, yet its institutions have not converted enough of that knowledge into sophisticated, exportable industrial products.

Third, investment in research, development and innovation has remained relatively modest. At the same time, collaboration between universities and industry has been weak. In highly complex economies, universities do not operate in isolation; they play a central role in developing new products, advanced materials and innovative production processes. In Jordan, however,

much academic research remains disconnected from the practical needs of businesses and international markets.

Fourth, Jordanian manufacturing faces structural challenges arising from the country's relatively small domestic market and the high cost of production, particularly energy, financing and transportation. Regional instability and border closures over the past decade have further constrained firms' ability to expand into new markets. Since the 1990s, Jordan's strategic vision has emphasised greater integration with advanced economies, which generally offer larger and more stable markets than many neighbouring countries. Yet this objective has only been partially realised. In addition, Jordan's participation in global value chains remains relatively limited, reducing opportunities for technology transfer, industrial learning and productivity growth.

Fifth, industrial policy has not always been sufficiently focused or consistent. Economic complexity cannot be increased simply by supporting every sector equally. Instead, governments must identify industries that build upon existing capabilities while enabling movement into higher-value products. Jordan does not need to start from scratch. It already possesses competitive foundations in pharmaceuticals, fertilisers, chemicals, information technology and renewable energy. The challenge is to move these sectors beyond traditional production toward more specialised and technologically sophisticated products.

In the phosphate sector, for example, the objective should not be merely to increase exports of raw materials, but to expand production of specialised fertilisers, industrial chemicals and battery materials. In pharmaceuticals, Jordan can move beyond generic medicines into biotechnology, clinical research, medical devices and active pharmaceutical ingredients. In the energy

sector, opportunities exist to manufacture components for solar energy systems, energy storage technologies, green hydrogen and associated engineering services.

Jordan should also recognise digital exports and knowledge-based services as integral components of economic complexity, even if they are not fully captured by traditional merchandise trade indicators. Software development, cybersecurity, digital financial services, engineering design, and creative industries all have the potential to become significant sources of value creation and export earnings.

The objective, therefore, is not simply to increase exports but to transform their composition. This requires a coherent industrial policy, a dedicated innovation and advanced manufacturing fund, incentives linked to technology transfer and workforce development, government procurement policies that encourage advanced domestic production, and stronger partnerships between universities and the private sector.

Jordan's declining position in economic complexity should not be viewed as a final verdict but rather as an early warning. The country possesses the educational and industrial foundations needed to reverse the trend, but it must accelerate its transition from exporting what is readily available to producing goods and services that embody greater knowledge, technological sophistication and value added.

Ultimately, the question that should guide Jordan's economic policy is not simply: How can we increase the value of our exports? Rather, it should be: How can we ensure that every dinar of exports contains more knowledge, technology and value added? Only then will economic growth represent not merely an increase in quantities produced, but a genuine enhancement of the nation's productive capabilities.

The writer is a former Jordanian minister of state for economic affairs.

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 en-

ergy-importing economies reliant on maritime trade.

Despite escalating threats to close the strait, historical experience shows that international straits have rarely been completely closed, even during the most intense wars. The Iran-Iraq War witnessed what became known as the "Tanker War", during which hundreds of ships were targeted, yet navigation continued. Similarly, the Turkish straits remained relatively open during the Russian-Ukrainian War, while the international community focused on establishing safe passages to protect trade. These precedents confirm that disrupting vital straits harms the entire global economy, not just the parties to the conflict.

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 navigation 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 cri-

ses, which have demonstrated that protecting the free flow of navigation remains an international priority even in the context 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...

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





The Jordanian Businessmen Association holds the Ninth Conference of Jordanian Businessmen and Investors Abroad on Saturday under the theme of 'Investment Opportunities with a Global Vision'

# Worker remittances to Kingdom rises 13% during first four months, totalling around \$1.6 billion — JBA

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA) held the Ninth Conference of Jordanian Businessmen and Investors Abroad on Saturday under the theme of "Investment Opportunities with a Global Vision".

Major structural revisions to the national investment framework designed to fast-track the entry of expatriate capital led the opening proceedings of the conference, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The convention focused on expanding private sector participation, diversifying long-term commercial investments and mitigating regional supply chain vulnerabilities.

The primary policy focus cantered on the 2026 amendments to the investment environment bylaws.

The updated regulations introduce a "key" structural shift for companies registered outside Jordan can now secure full domestic investment incentives, fast-tracked licensing and "preferred" regulatory treatment, provided that Jordanian nationals hold at least a 50 per cent equity stake or maintain documented operational control.

This legal modification aims to remove historical cross-border corporate registration barriers and draw direct equity investments from citizens residing abroad.

Delivering the opening address on behalf of the prime minister, Investment Minister Tareq Abu Ghazaleh said that the current global economic climate demands institutional agility to turn macroeconomic pres-

sures into industrial opportunities.

Abu Ghazaleh noted that the executive priorities under the state's economic roadmap focus on boosting manufacturing productivity and digitising public sector procedures to lower overhead costs for incoming investors.

The regulatory changes follow an upward trend in cross-border capital inflows.

The conference framework is organised across four specialised panel sessions. The first session evaluated the executive performance metrics of the Economic Modernisation Vision for 2026–2029...

JBA President Ayman Alawneh said that worker remittances to the Kingdom rose 13 per cent during the first four months of 2026, totalling around \$1.6 billion.

The JBA, which organised the assembly alongside the ministries of investment and foreign affairs, is working to establish institutional channels to guide these capital flows away from passive real estate holdings and into active

corporate equities and public-private partnership (PPP) infrastructure projects.

Addressing the regional trade environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretary General Dhaifallah Faye said that international economic diplomacy is currently opening new trade corridors to counter elevated shipping fees, high regional financing costs and broader logistical challenges.

Faye outlined immediate project pipelines available for commercial investment, including utility-scale renewable energy grid integration, industrial mining, information technology, tourism infrastructure and logistics hubs.

These sectors are supported by preferential trade agreements designed to establish the country as a regional re-export and industrial storage centre.

The conference framework is organised across four specialised panel sessions. The first session evaluated the executive performance metrics of the Economic Modernisation Vision for 2026–2029, focusing on building macroeconomic resilience.

Subsequent panels analysed private-sector project delivery, foreign economic diplomacy strategies in emerging markets, and specific financing mechanisms to localise expatriate capital through joint ventures.

The assembly will conclude with a comprehensive policy roadmap listing specific operational steps to improve ease-of-doing-business indicators across key sectors, according to Petra.

# Aqaba truck traffic rises 23% under new management system — ASEZA

AMMAN (JT) — Truck movement to and from the Aqaba Special Economic Zone increased by 23 per cent during the first four months of a new truck entry and exit management system, the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) said on Saturday.

The system, operated by Maqta Ayla, recorded nearly 445,000 truck trips between March 1 and June 30, averaging around 3,700 trips per day, according to an ASEZA statement carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

June recorded the highest level of activity during the four-month period, with about 125,000 completed permits, a 20 per cent increase from the 105,000 permits issued in May.

March and April recorded about 106,000 and 108,000 completed permits, respectively.

Daily truck traffic in June averaged about 4,200 trips, with the



The ASEZA says that truck movement in the port city has increased by 23 per cent during the first four months of a new truck entry and exit management system

highest single-day volume reaching 4,920 trips, the statement said.

ASEZA said that the current daily average compares with around 3,000 truck trips per

day in 2025, reflecting a 23 per cent increase in freight movement to and from the zone.

The authority attributed the rise to growing logistics and shipping activity through

Aqaba despite ongoing regional developments, saying that the trend reinforces the port city's role in supporting trade, transportation and regional supply chains.

ASEZA added that the figures highlight the need for continued investment in infrastructure and operational efficiency to ensure the smooth movement of freight traffic.

# Jordan renews citizenship-by-investment scheme to attract higher-value investments — minister

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh said that recent amendments to the country's citizenship- and residency-by-investment programme mark a "significant" shift towards attracting higher-quality investments that generate tangible economic benefits, create jobs, and support balanced development across the Kingdom.

In an interview with Jordan TV, Abu Ghazaleh noted that the revised regulations strengthen the economic impact of the programme by raising investment requirements for applicants seeking citizenship through the Amman Stock Exchange (ASE), while introducing stronger incentives to direct investment towards the governorates and priority national sectors.

He stressed that the success of the programme should be measured not by the number of citizenships or residencies granted, but by its ability to attract "productive" investments, generate employment, and stimulate sustainable economic growth throughout Jordan, according to a Ministry of Investment statement.

Since its launch in 2018, the citizenship-by-investment programme



Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh says that the revised regulations strengthen the economic impact of the programme by raising investment requirements for applicants seeking citizenship

has attracted more than JD1.15 billion in investments, benefitting 685 investors and creating over 21,000 jobs for Jordanians by the end of the first half of 2026, he said.

Abu Ghazaleh noted that the programme's economic impact accelerated during the first half of 2026, with investment linked to the initiative exceeding JD72 million, compared to around JD37 million during the same period in 2025 nearly doubling year-on-year.

Employment generated by projects under the programme also increased significantly, rising from 230 jobs in the first half of 2025 to

820 jobs during the same period in 2026, more than tripling, underscoring the growing contribution of these investments to job creation and economic activity.

He said that the latest amendments are designed to build on these achievements by attracting investments with greater added value, creating more sustainable employment opportunities, and promoting balanced development across all governorates.

Addressing the regional development component of the reforms, Abu Ghazaleh said that balanced development is a key objective of the amendments, which seek to channel a larger

share of investments outside the capital.

Under the previous regulations, residency through real estate investment required the purchase of property worth at least JD200,000 from a property developer, regardless of location.

Under the new rules, investors can obtain residency by purchasing property valued at a minimum of JD150,000 if it is located outside Amman.

He said that the measure aims not only to stimulate the real estate sector but also to boost local economies, increase demand for related services, create employment opportunities,

and enhance the ability of governorates to attract new investments, thereby promoting more balanced economic development nationwide.

Regarding investments through ASE, Abu Ghazaleh said that the amendments raise the minimum investment threshold from JD1 million to JD1.5 million to maximise the economic value of investments and strengthen the contribution of this investment track to the national economy and capital market.

The revised framework also introduces new safeguards to reduce market concentration and speculative trading while encouraging long-term investment.

In addition, investors are now allowed to purchase shares through any duly licensed brokerage firm, broadening investment channels while preserving market stability and integrity.

Abu Ghazaleh said that the overarching objective of the amendments is to maximise the economic value of the citizenship-by-investment programme by linking investment incentives to measurable economic outcomes and attracting high-quality investments that add lasting value to Jordan's economy.

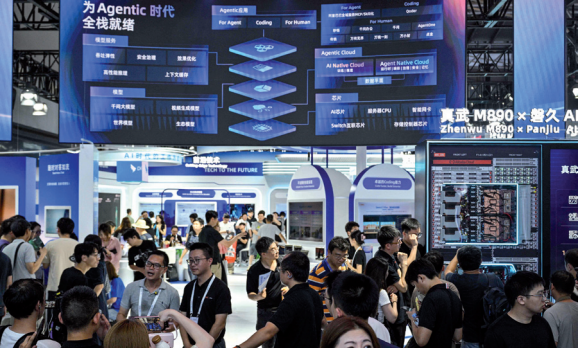
# Tech share selloff rolls on, oil prices jump on Mideast clashes

NEWYORK (AFP) — Wall Street stocks fell decisively last week, joining most global markets in retreating on continued weakness in artificial intelligence shares and rebounding oil prices.

Tech shares have been under pressure in recent days on questions about their lofty valuations following Nasdaq's surge in the second quarter.

With semiconductor companies the worst hit in the selloff, Nvidia briefly lost its crown to Apple as the world's most valuable publicly traded company.

In recent weeks, some



People visit the Alibaba booth during the World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai on Friday

doubts have cracked the AI bonanza narrative, with analysts wondering if huge investments can be recovered through the adoption

of the new AI products being released to the public.

Adding to worries about tech, Chinese startup Moonshot AI on

Friday released a model that experts said could rival some of the more advanced offerings from US labs.

"Tech weakness is driving the risk off sentiment," said Angelo Kourkafas from Edward Jones. "We have seen more volatility in the space as investors question both the pace and the payoff of the investments made."

All three major US indices retreated, led by the tech-focused Nasdaq which lost 1.4 per cent.

Kourkafas also cited the latest jump in oil prices as a factor in

stock market weakness. Oil prices jumped more than four per cent on renewed fighting between the United States and Iran, intensifying a clash over control of the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway in petroleum transport.

International benchmark Brent North Sea crude closed at \$88.10 a barrel.

"The technology sell-off is not the only reason markets are in a sour mood," noted Ipek Ozkardeskaya, senior analyst at Swissquote bank.

"Developments in the Middle East are getting worse by the hour."

Trade Nation analyst David Morrison said: "The ongoing conflict, combined with threats to major shipping routes such as the Strait of Hormuz and potentially the Red Sea, has increased uncertainty across global financial markets."

Earlier on, Asian and European stock markets also took their cue from Wall Street's finish on Thursday, where sharp falls in Nvidia and Amazon helped drag down the Nasdaq by more than one per cent.

The Nasdaq's slide intensified on Friday, with Netflix shares tumbling more than 7 per cent

as the streaming giant warned of slowing sales growth.

With South Korea enjoying a holiday on Friday, Tokyo and Taipei — also heavily weighted toward tech — were at the forefront of Asia's latest selling heading into the weekend.

Japan's Nikkei ended the day down four per cent with shares in semiconductor tester Advantest, Tokyo Electron and tech investment titan SoftBank each sliding more than seven per cent.

Chipmaker Kioxia collapsed 16 per cent, meaning it has lost

around half its value since briefly becoming Japan's biggest firm by market capitalisation last month.

Taiwan's Taiex index had shed 6.5 per cent by the close Friday, as chipmaker TSMC retreated more than 7 per cent — a day after announcing record second-quarter profits and that it would invest a further \$100 billion in the US state of Arizona.

Europe's main stock markets closed mostly lower. London rose thanks to its share listings of energy giants, which climbed on rising oil prices.



CRICKET

Brook urges England to follow ever-green Root’s example

LONDON (AFP) — England white-ball captain Harry Brook has urged his side to learn from Joe Root as they seek to complete a one-day international series win against top-ranked India. Root followed his unbeaten 76 in England’s defeat in the first One-Day-International (ODI) with a superbly-paced 99 not out as they won in Cardiff on Thursday to level the three-match series ahead of Sunday’s finale at Lord’s. England’s victory in Cardiff followed a run of 16 defeats in their previous 20 ODIs. That dismal sequence has raised questions about how competitive a team seemingly wedded to aggressive batting will be at next year’s 50-over World Cup in southern Africa. The 35-year-old Root — who has scored 7,752 runs in 191 ODIs with 20 hundreds — said he sympathised with younger players coming into the England side as changes to the domestic schedule meant they do not have “the wealth of experience and understanding of 50-over cricket”. But Brook, a Yorkshire team-mate of Root, insisted even the very best players are always looking to improve. “I personally think you’re always learning,” Brook told reporters at Lord’s on Saturday.

West Indies legend Garry Sobers dies aged 89 — who said what

LONDON (AFP) — Tributes from across the cricket world poured in after the death of legendary West Indies all-rounder Garry Sobers on Friday at the age of 89. Sobers is regarded as one of the greatest players in cricket history. AFP Sport looks at the lavish praise bestowed on Sobers: “Anyone who saw him in his pomp will have wonderful memories of a great batsman, the greatest all-rounder, an icon, a once-in-your-lifetime, exceptional cricketer. And, even more important, a lovely man,” former England batsman Geoffrey Boycott said. “A son of Barbados whose extraordinary journey became part of the story of our region and whose brilliance carried the name of the West Indies with distinction across the world,” noted Kishore Shallow, president of Cricket West Indies. “A true giant of the game whose extraordinary skill, grace and sportsmanship inspired generations of cricketers around the world. His legacy will forever remain a part of cricket’s rich history,” mentioned former India batsman VVS Laxman.

By Rob Woollard  
Agence France-Presse

EAST RUTHERFORD, United States — When Lionel Messi and Lamine Yamal line-up against each other in the World Cup final on Sunday it will mark the closing of an incredible full circle moment that has been two decades in the making.

In 2007, a 20-year-old Messi and Yamal, born in July of that year, posed together in a photo organised by UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund), the global agency which provides humanitarian and development to children and mothers worldwide.

Yamal’s family had entered and won a raffle to pose with a Barcelona player for a 2008 UNICEF calendar.

In one photo from the shoot, Messi is seen helping Yamal’s mother, Sheila Ebana, give the smiling five-month-old boy a bath in a blue plastic tub.

“The photographer, Joan Monfort, has said that Lamine Yamal stole Messi’s heart because he was always smiling,” UNICEF Catalan’s Laia Ruich said on the organisation’s website.

Fast forward nearly 20 years, and now Messi and Yamal are sharing football’s greatest stage.

Spain star Yamal, the teenage prodigy who has followed in Messi’s footsteps at Barcelona, has only just turned 19.

Argentina captain Messi, 39, will be play-



AFP photo

This combination of file photos created on Thursday, shows Spain’s forward #19 Lamine Yamal in Arlington on Tuesday (left); and Argentina’s forward #10 Lionel Messi in Atlanta on Wednesday

ing in his third World Cup final in what is almost certainly likely to be his last appearance in the tournament.

“That photo is incredible,” Messi said at a fan event in Manhattan on Friday.

“I took a picture with him when he was a baby ... the fact that we’re both playing in the World Cup now is crazy,” Messi said while he

has a soft spot for Yamal given his association with his former club Barcelona, it will not detract him from the task in hand on Sunday — beating Spain.

“I wish him luck because his success will be Barcelona’s success, (but) we’ll try to keep him from playing at his best.

“He’s 19 years old and has his whole career ahead of him. I wish him

the best, but we’ll give it our all to ensure he doesn’t become champion this time.”

Photographer Monfort describes Messi and Yamal’s first meeting and subsequent World Cup final date as “a true miracle of destiny.”

“If you wrote this in a film it would not seem possible,” Monfort told the BBC.

Even Yamal’s Spain teammate, Mikel Me-

rino, said Friday he initially believed the photo was an AI-generated hoax when he first saw it.

“The first time I saw it, I thought it was AI and that it wasn’t even real,” Merino said.

“It’s unbelievable that two of the best players to have played the game — and hopefully Lamine, in the future, will be one of those — share a picture like that.”

Messi and Yamal now both serve as UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors.

“Growing up, all I had was a family, a ball, a park and a dream,” Yamal said in June.

“Playing football gave me structure, a sense of belonging, and hope for the future.

“I know how important it is for children to have a safe place to play, so that they can simply enjoy being children.”

THE JORDAN TIMES

LIFE

Horror film ‘Obsession’ is exploding cinema profit records

By Adam Plowright  
Agence France-Presse

PARIS, France — Low-cost horror movie “Obsession” from first-time director Curry Barker is on track to become one of the most profitable films of all time, with the cinema sensation piling up global revenues of more than \$400 million.

After premiering at the Toronto Film Festival last year and releasing at the beginning of May, it has become a word-of-mouth phenomenon over the last two months with fright-loving Gen Z audiences in particular.

Its success has catapulted 26-year-old Barker from a YouTube video creator into Hollywood’s A-league with a first feature-length film that cost just \$750,000 to \$1 million to make.

“In terms of the ratio between the worldwide box office and the production budget, ‘Obsession’ is going to be the biggest success of all time, which is extraordinary,” Bruce Nash, founder of industry-tracking website The Numbers, told AFP.

With ticket sales of around \$430 million



Photo courtesy of Focus Features

Obsession

worldwide, it has already overtaken the 1999 supernatural thriller “The Blair Witch Project”, which made around \$250 million on a full budget of \$600,000, according to Nash.

In absolute terms, Hollywood mega-hits such as the “Avatar” films, “Frozen” or “Titanic” made more money but with blockbuster budgets several hundred times the one available to Barker.

Burgers to big screen

The Alabama-born director’s success at the box office has surpassed that of the other remarkable horror hit of the year — “Backrooms” by 20-year-old Kane Parsons, which has earned \$360 million with a budget of around \$10 million.

Both films are in the top 10 highest-grossing movies of 2026, underlining the appetite for

horror among young audiences and starting what is set to be a new trend — young social media creators moving into cinema.

“They’re very encouraging for the future of cinema,” Oscar-winning director Christopher Nolan told AFP and other entertainment journalists last week in Paris. Barker moved from his home town of Mobile to Los Angeles after finishing high school, ini-

tially studying film and hoping to make it as an actor.

A few years ago, he was flipping burgers in L.A., working at Starbucks, and taking whatever jobs he could find in the film or TV industry to make ends meet.

The blonde-haired sunglasses collector scored a minor role in the series “It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia” and took a position overseeing Covid safety protocols during the pandemic on another production. All the while, he and creative partner Cooper Tomlinson were trialling content online, mixing comedy sketches on TikTok and Instagram with horror shorts such as “The Chair” on their YouTube channel “That’s a Bad Idea”. “In that journey, you figure out timing, you figure out tricks like how to get someone’s attention in the first three seconds,” Barker told The Big Picture podcast recently.

Next projects

The “Obsession” plot is a simple but original idea from Barker:

a young man uses a lucky charm known as the “One Wish Willow” to wish that his longtime friend and crush falls madly in love with him.

The violent and unsettling consequences deliver enough scares to thrill even a hardened horror fan, while raising questions around toxic relationships, dating culture and consent.

It was turned into a cash bonanza for Focus Features, part of Hollywood studio Universal, which bought the distribution rights for \$15 million at the Toronto Film Festival last year.

Barker has several new projects already in the pipeline: A second feature, “Anything But Ghosts”, in which he acts alongside Tomlinson, while he has also been tapped to direct a new version of the 1974 slasher classic “The Texas Chain Saw Massacre”.

“I have a lot to weigh and that’s where the stress really comes from. I don’t know what to do next,” he told The Hollywood Reporter.

Madonna, Cruise lead A-list stars at World Cup final

EAST RUTHERFORD, United States (AFP) — The World Cup tournament was bigger than ever before this year, and so is the list of stars expected at MetLife Stadium for Sunday’s final, from Tom Cruise in the closing ceremony to Madonna and Shakira on the halftime stage.

After five weeks of more than 100 matches in three countries, Spain and Argentina will vie for the title, but before the 80,000 fans on hand and billions of viewers at home find out who the victor will be, the venue will glisten with celebrities.

And US President Donald Trump, the reality show star-turned-world leader, will be in attendance as it all unfolds.

At 1:30 pm (17:30 GMT), Cruise is expected for the pre-game closing ceremony, along with British pop star Robbie Williams, Pussycat Dolls singer Nicole Scherzinger and Oscar winner Jennifer Hudson, who will sing the US national anthem.

After Cruise’s show-stopping stunt at the Olympic closing ceremony at the Stade de France in 2024, when he abseiled from the roof to the stadium

floor, pundits are hoping he spreads a bit more Hollywood stardust with his “special appearance”.

American rapper-singer Post Malone and streamer IShowSpeed will also be there.

High-wattage halftime

But the 11-minute halftime show — the first in World Cup history — will be the main entertainment event. FIFA president Gianni Infantino has said it will be the “biggest in the world”.

Madonna, who just dropped a new album at 67, will share the stage with Justin Bieber, K-pop megagroup BTS and Shakira, whose song “Dai Dai” with Burna Boy is the official song of the tournament.

Other performers include Venezuelan conductor Gustavo Dudamel and a New York chorus accompanied by Coldplay, whose frontman Chris Martin curated the entire show.

The halftime event will raise money for an education initiative led by FIFA and the non-governmental organisation Global Citizen.

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