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Photo courtesy of Royal Court

His Majesty King Abdullah meets in London on Thursday with senior executives and founders of leading companies operating in the UK to discuss prospects of economic cooperation across various sectors

King meets with heads of leading UK companies in London

- His Majesty emphasises importance of long-standing Jordan-UK partnership
- King says meeting is valuable opportunity to deepen communication, explore areas of mutual interest
- His Majesty underscores importance of leveraging Jordan's investment advantages to expand Jordanian-British partnerships

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah met in London on Thursday with senior executives and founders of leading companies operating in

the United Kingdom, to discuss prospects for expanding economic cooperation across a number of promising sectors. During the meeting, His

Majesty emphasised the importance of the long-standing partnership between Jordan and the UK, and the commitment of both countries to strength-

ening economic and trade relations across multiple industries, according to a Royal Court statement.

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King attends opening session of Jordan-United Kingdom Business Forum

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Thursday attended the opening session of the Jordan-United Kingdom Business Forum in London, which was attended by business leaders and representatives of various sectors from both countries.

The forum, which brings together more than 40 Jordanian and 60 British companies representing a wide range of sectors, aims to explore opportunities for expanding cooperation across various commercial, industrial and service sectors, and to highlight Jordan's investment opportunities and advantages in order to help boost the volume of trade and establish long-term strategic commercial and industrial partnerships between Jordanian and British companies, according to a Royal Court statement.

Addressing the opening session, Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Yarub Qudah positioned Jordan as a reliable destination for investment, highlighting the Jordanian economy's steady growth and resilience despite regional challenges,



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

His Majesty King Abdullah on Thursday attends the opening session of the Jordan-United Kingdom Business Forum in London

crediting the Kingdom's stable fiscal policies and diverse free trade agreements.

Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh showcased Jordan's robust economic indicators and favourable business environment, emphasising the investment incentives offered in development and industrial zones, where cumulative

investments have reached 9.1 billion dollars.

Abu Ghazaleh also highlighted investment opportunities across various sectors including infrastructure and transport, sustainable energy, food processing, fertilisers and chemicals, mining, telecommunications and information technology.

President of the Jordan and Amman Chambers

of Industry Fathi Jaghibir underscored the need to upgrade Jordan-UK economic relations to a comprehensive economic partnership, to develop strategic relations, drive added value and boost the competitiveness of priority sectors in both countries, the statement said.

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Petra photo

HRH Crown Prince Hussein on Thursday, during a meeting with referees Adham Makhadmeh, Mohammad Khalaf and Ahmad Rouaily, expresses pride in their performance at the FIFA World Cup 2026

Crown Prince meets Jordanian referees after World Cup participation

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein on Thursday expressed pride in the performance of Jordanian referees at the FIFA World Cup 2026, expressing pride in their success at the global tournament.

During a meeting with referees Adham Makhadmeh, Mohammad Khalaf and Ahmad Rouaily, the Crown Prince said,

"Jordanians are capable of reaching the highest international standards across various fields through ambition and hard work," the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The Crown Prince, in the presence of HRH Prince Ali, president of the Jordan Football Association, stressed the importance of working

with the association to develop programmes to enhance the performance of Jordanian referees and enable them to benefit from the experience gained during the tournament.

The Crown Prince wished the referees continued success in officiating more international matches at international tournaments.

Bab Al Mandeb Strait: Another key oil shipping route under threat

LONDON (AFP) — Yemen's pro-Iranian Houthi rebels have claimed attacks in the Red Sea on two Saudi oil tankers and say they will blockade the Bab Al Mandeb strait, a crucial passage into the Red Sea.

Gateway to the Red Sea

Known as the "Gate of Tears" in Arabic, the Bab Al Mandeb strait sits at the southern tip of the Red Sea, connecting it with the Gulf of Aden in the Indian Ocean.

About 100 kilometres long and 30 kilometres wide at its narrowest, it

separates Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula from Djibouti and Eritrea on the Horn of Africa.

Strategic trade route

With the Red Sea a key link between Europe and Asia, the strait is one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world.

Oil tankers and cargo ships use it to reach the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean, shortening journeys between Asia and Europe and North America by thousands of kilometres.

Around 26,000 ships

transited through the Suez Canal in 2023, according to a Suez Canal Authority report — but this fell to 12,700 by 2025 after Houthi rebels attacked ships in the Red Sea.

Key oil passage

Even before the Middle East war, Bab Al Mandeb was a key route for oil shipments, with the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) saying 12 per cent of world oil shipments transited the strait in 2023.

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Air defences intercept four Iranian missiles, six drones — JAF

AMMAN (JT) — A military source said on Thursday that the Royal Jordanian Air Force intercepted four Iranian missiles and six drones that targeted the Kingdom over the past 24 hours, with no casualties or material damage reported.

The source at the General command of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) said in a statement that air

defence systems shot down three missiles on Thursday morning, while a fourth landed in a remote, uninhabited area.

The six drones were intercepted and destroyed on Wednesday evening, the source said.

The source said that Royal Engineering Corps teams were dispatched to the debris locations to secure the areas in accordance with established technical and se-



curity procedures.

The source said that the Armed Forces con-

tinue to monitor Jordan's airspace and remain at the highest level of op-

erational readiness to respond to any threat to the Kingdom's security and the safety of its citizens, in line with its rules of engagement.

The source also urged the public to stay away from impact sites, report any missile or drone debris to the authorities immediately, rely on official sources for information and refrain from circulating rumours or unverified reports.

Houthis claim Red Sea tanker strikes as US hits Iran again

DUBAI (AFP) — Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed to have struck two Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea on Wednesday, potentially opening a new front in the US-Iran war engulfing the region.

The claim came as the United States launched a fresh wave of strikes on Iranian military targets, marking the twelfth consecutive night of US attacks on Iran.

The Houthis said they had carried out missile and drone strikes on two Saudi tankers that "violated the blockade", naming the vessels as the Encelia and the Layla.



AFP photo

A Houthi military helicopter flies over the cargo ship 'Galaxy Leader' in the Red Sea, November 20, 2023

British naval security monitor UKMTO said the master of a tanker reported being struck by

an unknown projectile about 70 nautical miles southwest of Al Shuqaiq, causing a fire that the

crew was fighting.

The Red Sea escalation is widening the pressure on key Middle East shipping routes already shaken by fighting over the Strait of Hormuz.

US President Donald Trump had threatened to destroy an Iranian bridge or power plant for every attack on shipping in Hormuz, drawing an "eye for an eye" warning from Tehran as both sides sharpened threats in the escalating war.

Fighting over the vital energy waterway has collapsed a preliminary deal between the United States and Iran,

with Tehran reimposing its blockade and firing on vessels that seek to transit.

"Any time the Islamic Republic of Iran shoots at a ship in the Strait of Hormuz, whether it be by Missile, Rocket, Drone, or any other device or weapon, the United States will bomb and destroy ONE BRIDGE OR POWER PLANT," Trump wrote on social media.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran would respond in kind to any attack on its infrastructure.

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Jordan, seven Arab, Islamic nations condemn Israeli extremists' storming of Al Aqsa Mosque

AMMAN (JT) — The foreign ministers of the of Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Egypt have condemned "in the strongest terms the Israeli escalation at Al Aqsa Mosque/Al Haram Al Sharif".

In a joint statement on Thursday, the foreign ministers condemned "continued mass settlers' incursions, led by extremist Israeli ministers, into Al Aqsa Mosque Compound/Al Haram Al

Sharif, under the protection of the Israeli forces".

They also denounced "provocative acts" within the mosque's courtyards, including raising of the Israeli flag within the mosque's courtyards and the erection by Israeli police of two tents, among others.

"These provocative and unacceptable actions constitute a flagrant violation of international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, and the historical and legal status quo at the holy

sites in occupied East Jerusalem," the statement said.

The ministers also decried "illegal and extremist acts of incitement, incursions' mobilisation calls and violence by Israeli extremist ministers and groups", warning that these provocative actions fuel hatred and extremism, and obstruct efforts to advance a just and lasting peace on the basis of the two-state solution.



AFP Photo

A crow flies near the Dome of the Rock Mosque at the Al Aqsa Mosque Compound in the occupied Jerusalem, Palestine, on June 18, 2023

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Petra photo

The Ministry of Agriculture and Uzbekistan sign a memorandum of understanding in agricultural scientific research and the exchange of plant and animal genetic materials

Jordan, Uzbekistan expand cooperation in agricultural research, genetic resources

AMMAN (JT) —The Ministry of Agriculture and Uzbekistan have signed a memorandum of understanding in agricultural scientific research and the exchange of plant and animal genetic materials. The agreement was signed between the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) and Uzbekistan's Research Institute of Plant Genetic Resources, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported on Thursday. During a meeting with an Uzbek delegation, Minister of Agriculture Saeb Khreisat stressed that the deal aims to boost cooperation between research centres, support the sustainable use of genetic resources, build research capacity, and advance food security and sustainable agricultural development. The cooperation establishes a foundation for joint research to evaluate target plant species, exchange technical knowledge, and organise scientific visits to tackle shared agricultural challenges. During the meeting, the ministry provided the Uzbek delegation with salt-tolerant grain and vegetable seed samples from the National Seed Bank for use in research programmes. In return, the Uzbek side provided Jordan with seed samples to help localise salt-resistant crop varieties, while the ministry supplied Uzbekistan with Awassi sheep to support livestock genetic improvement programmes. The Uzbek delegates expressed appreciation to the ministry and NARC for facilitating agricultural cooperation between the two countries.

Jordanian field hospital teams perform specialised surgeries in Nablus, Gaza

AMMAN (JT) — Medical teams at the Jordanian field hospitals in Nablus and South Gaza on Thursday have successfully carried out several specialised surgeries. At the Jordanian field hospital in Nablus, medical teams removed an underarm mass from a female patient after clinical examinations confirmed the need for surgery, according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army statement. The mass was completely removed and tissue samples were sent for laboratory analysis to determine its nature and guide further treatment. Since beginning operations in 2023, the Jordanian field hospital in Nablus has treated more than 316,395 patients, performed 2,115 major and minor surgeries, and continues to provide emergency, radiology, laboratory and nursing services around the clock. Meanwhile, medical teams at the Jordanian field hospital in South Gaza performed two specialised surgeries. In one case, surgeons removed a 10-centimetre benign fatty tumour from



JAF photo

Medical teams at the Jordanian field hospitals in Nablus and South Gaza on Thursday carry out several specialised surgeries

deep within a patient's muscle through minimally invasive surgery under local anaesthesia after she had suffered from the condition for three years. In another case, general and paediatric surgeons saved the life of a nine-year-old girl admitted in critical condition with shrapnel wounds sustained in an explosion. She underwent emergency surgery to repair a heart injury and control severe bleeding before being transferred to the intensive care unit in stable condition. The families of the patients expressed appreciation to the Jordanian medical teams for the specialised care they received. The Royal Medical Services said that the operations reflect the continued humanitarian role of the Jordanian field hospitals, established under Royal directives, in providing healthcare to Palestinians in Nablus and the Gaza Strip.

Chinese embassy marks People's Liberation Army anniversary, highlights ties with Jordan

AMMAN (JT) — The Chinese embassy in Amman on Wednesday hosted a reception to mark the 99th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), attended by military and civil officials, diplomats, journalists, and guests. Military Attaché at the Chinese embassy Col. Li Pengfei praised Jordan's role under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah as a pillar of stability in the Middle East, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. He commended the Kingdom's positive and constructive efforts in addressing regional issues, particularly the Palestinian cause. Li highlighted China's readiness to enhance communication and coordination with Jordan to serve peace, stability, and development in the



Petra photo

The Chinese embassy in Amman on Wednesday hosts a reception to mark the 99th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army

region. He stressed that the two-state solution is the only just and internationally recognised framework for resolving the Palestinian issue, adding that any new arrangements or mechanisms must bolster this framework rather than undermine it. The military attaché reiterated China's support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and international efforts aimed at achieving justice for Palestine. Addressing broader regional and international

developments, Li noted that the world is witnessing rapid changes and turbulent international conditions, expressing his country's concern over persistent tensions in the Middle East. He reiterated China's opposition to any violation of state sovereignty, security, or territorial integrity, emphasising that military conflicts cannot resolve disputes and that regional escalation serves no party's interests. Li outlined Beijing's vision based on promoting peaceful development, enhancing international solidarity, rejecting the logic of force and working towards building a community with a shared future for humanity, adding that China will remain a dedicated force for global peace, stability and progress.

Education Ministry, British Council expand English teacher training programme

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Education and the British Council on Thursday signed a second amended annex to their agreement on implementing the Education for Success programme, which trains English-language teachers in public schools. Minister of Education Azmi Mahafzah and British Council Country Director in Jordan Alex Lambert signed the agreement, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. The signing ceremony was attended by British Ambassador to Jordan Philip Hall, the ministry's Director of Legal Affairs Department Mustafa Rousan and British Council's Head of English Programmes Nisreen Saleh. During the signing ceremony, Mahafzah said that the ministry would work "closely" with the British Council to improve in-service teacher skills, expressing satisfaction with the collaboration between



Petra photo

The Ministry of Education and the British Council on Thursday sign a second amended annex to their agreement on implementing the Education for Success programme

Jordanian and British expertise to enhance learning outcomes. Under the agreement, which boost joint cooperation, the scope of the Education for Success programme will be expanded to train English-language teachers and supervisors in public schools, targeting 4,000 English teachers annually through the end of March 2029, for a total of 4,000 teachers and educational supervisors across all education directorates. Training activities will be blended and will begin according to an implementation plan approved by both sides. The two sides also agreed that the British Council would complete training for all educational supervisors, who had not finished their training classes under the first amended annex, in coordination with the ministry.



Jordan Biogas Company earns three international ISO certifications

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Biogas Company, fully owned by the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), has earned three international ISO certifications, including ISO 9001 for Quality Management System, ISO 14001 for Environmental Management System, and ISO 45001 for Occupational Health and Safety and Management System. The certifications follow completed audits, reflecting the company's commitment to international standards, environmental protection, workplace safety and continuous improvement, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. Deputy City Manager for Environmental Affairs and Vice Chairman of the Jordan Biogas Company Mohammad Faouri said that the achievement highlights ongoing efforts to boost operational performance and enhance the company's role as a leading national operator in biogas investment and sustainable services. Established in 1998 as a joint venture between GAM and the Central Electricity Generating Company, the entity came under 100 per cent GAM ownership in

Research reveals evolving hunting practices, faunal economies in Black Desert

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — Following the first appearance of desert kites and domestic caprines in the badia, scholars followed development of faunal economies in the Black Desert. There is evidence to suggest that at least some kites were still being used in the 7th millennium BC, although the extent to which this involved the construction of new kites or reuse of old ones remains unknown. "That widespread Neolithic kite construction faded out at the end of the 8th millennium BC with the demise of the so-called mega-sites and subsequent intensification of herding in the desert remains a distinct possibility," said Alexander Wasse from Yeditepe University, Istanbul. The fate of desert hunting was bound up with that of desert kites, as all the way through the 7th and into the 6th millennia BC it continued to adapt, evolve and, at some sites, increased. According to Wasse, an emerging regional emphasis on equid predation was a key aspect of this process. "More than two decades ago, von den Driesch and Wodtke reported a sharp jump in the proportion of hunted equids in the 'Ain Ghazal faunal assemblage during the Late Neolithic, dated there to between 6,400 and -5,900 BC." "Three years later, Helmer described an even more pronounced increase in the frequency of hunted



Photo courtesy of ACOR

Black Desert landscape in eastern Jordan

equids at exactly the same time," Wasse underlined. Equid bones at Burqu serves as evidence to such claims and the possibility that these early Late Neolithic data from the badia and its southern Levantine margins might represent the first flickering of what was to become a much wider phenomenon has not yet received the attention it deserves. "Equid hunting is more commonly associated with later 7th- and 6th-millennia BC faunal economies in upper Mesopotamia proper. Faunal assemblages from Proto-Hassunan, pre-Halaf and Halaf sites in eastern Jordan all contain substantial proportions of equid bone, in some cases to the extent of it being the most common taxon represented," Wasse said. The key point here is that the observed focus on equid hunting at some

sites is interpreted in the context of diversification, which is itself acknowledged as a "buffering mechanism" aimed at mitigating the impact of scarcity, the archaeologist explained. What can be said is that the concurrent intensification of equid hunting at Ain Ghazal and El Kowm 2 during the later 7th millennium BC reinforces the case for considering northern and southern parts of the desert as a single unit of analysis. Also, this evolution of hunting strategies in the desert and in its southern margins was part of a much wider regional phenomenon, perhaps linked to diversification, that took in upper Mesopotamia and parts of the northern Levant. The generally step-pic habitat preferences of both onager and wild ass hints that the orientation of the Ain Ghazal faunal economy may have shifted away from the Levantine corridor and towards the Black Desert and its resources during the Late Neolithic, Wasse underlined.

AT A GLANCE

Safadi, Saudi counterpart talk regional developments



AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi held a phone call on Wednesday evening with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal Bin Farhan to discuss regional developments. The two ministers reviewed efforts to de-escalate tensions and ensure freedom of maritime navigation in the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea, according to a ministry statement. They also discussed diplomatic coordination and consultation aimed at enhancing regional security and stability.

Army thwarts infiltration attempt along southern front

AMMAN (JT) — The Southern Military Region on Thursday dawn thwarted an infiltration attempt by four individuals who tried to cross the border illegally within its area of responsibility. Border Guard units detected the infiltrators, applied the rules of engagement and arrested them before referring them to the relevant authorities for further legal action, according to A Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement. JAF said that it continues to act with full force and firmness against all forms of infiltration and smuggling to protect the Kingdom's security, stability and borders from any threat.

Jordan condemns Israeli far-right minister's storming of Al Aqsa Mosque

AMMAN (JT) — The Foreign Ministry on Thursday strongly condemned the storming of the Al Aqsa Mosque/Al Haram Al Sharif by Israeli far-right national security minister Itamar Ben Gvir, alongside members of the Knesset and groups of extremist settlers under the protection of Israeli occupation forces.

The ministry denounced accompanying assaults on worshippers, provocative behaviour by extremists and Israeli forces, the raising of Israeli flags and inciting calls by radical groups, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

It characterised these actions as a flagrant violation of the historic and legal status quo at Al Aqsa Mosque, a desecration of the holy site, an unacceptable provocation and a condemned escalation.

Ministry Spokesperson Fouad Majali emphasised Jordan's absolute rejection and condemnation of the ongoing incursions by Israeli ministers, Knesset members and extremist settlers, facilitated by occupation forces.

He noted that these systematic incursions represent a blatant



The Foreign Ministry on Thursday strongly condemns the storming of the Al Aqsa Mosque/Al Haram Al Sharif by Israeli far-right national security minister

breach of international law, a clear violation of Islamic and Christian holy sites in occupied Jerusalem, and a reckless attempt to alter the status quo by imposing a temporal and spatial division of the site.

Majali warned against

the consequences of continued incursions and violations targeting Jerusalem's holy sites and its historic and legal status quo, stressing that Israel holds no sovereignty over occupied East Jerusalem and its Islamic and Christian holy sites.

The spokesperson called on the international community to adopt a firm stance obligating Israel, as the occupying power, to cease its ongoing violations against holy sites in Jerusalem and put an end to provocative actions by Israeli

officials and extremists, which reflect the Israeli government's policy of escalating tensions in the occupied West Bank.

Majali reiterated that the entire 144 dunnum Al Aqsa Mosque/Al Haram Al Sharif complex is an exclusive place of wor-

ship for Muslims, emphasising that the Jerusalem Waqf and Al Aqsa Mosque Affairs Department, affiliated the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, is the sole legal authority managing all affairs of the mosque and regulating entry to it.



The London Stock Exchange welcomes a Jordanian delegation led by Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh during a visit to the United Kingdom for the Jordan-UK Business Forum

London Stock Exchange welcomes Jordanian business delegation

AMMAN (JT) — The London Stock Exchange on Thursday welcomed a Jordanian delegation led by Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh during a visit to the United Kingdom for the Jordan-UK Business Forum.

According to a statement from the London Stock Exchange, the forum brings together Jordanian and British companies across multi sectors including healthcare and pharmaceuticals, information and communications technology, engineering and electronics, film and entertainment, tourism, medical tourism, infrastructure and textiles and apparel to explore opportunities for strategic partnerships, trade, investment and long-term economic cooperation.

Addressing participants, Abu Ghazaleh said Jordan should be viewed not simply as a domestic market but as a strategic gateway to the wider

Middle East.

"Jordan is not a small market — it is the region's gateway. When you invest in Jordan, you are not investing in one economy; you are connecting to the wider Middle East," he said. "Our strategic location provides investors with a stable, secure base, which is beneficial for investors weighing regional exposure against regional risk."

Jordan's strategic location at the crossroads of the Gulf, Iraq, Syria and North Africa enables businesses to access markets representing hundreds of millions of consumers. Officials said the Kingdom offers investors preferential trade agreements, established logistics corridors and industrial zones that extend beyond its borders, positioning Jordan as a regional hub for trade and investment, a statement from the London Stock Exchange said.

About Jordan

According to the statement, Jordan's economy is showing its resiliency in real time. Even amid regional headwinds, FDI grew 25 per cent in 2025, exports were up 11 per cent and average daily trading on the Amman Stock Exchange was up 176 per cent.

"These results are the product of a conscious, forward-looking investment agenda built on openness, transparency, predictability, competitiveness and long-term economic stability. The Kingdom has pursued significant policy reforms, established a clear investment roadmap and introduced lucrative incentive packages. Continuing to widen opportunities for the private sector, strengthen regulatory framework, and building the conditions for sustainable, diversified investment across priority sectors," the statement said.

Jordan, GCC condemn Iranian attacks, reaffirm right to self-defence

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states on Thursday condemned "Iran's continued aggression and proxy attacks against their territories," warning that the assaults threaten regional and international security.

In a joint statement, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman said that the attacks had continued since February 28, 2026, in violation of resolutions adopted by the GCC Ministerial Council, the Arab League Council of Foreign Ministers, international-



al law and UN Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026).

The seven countries said that the attacks had intensified following the June 17 signing of the US-Iran Memorandum of Understanding, particularly against Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan. They said that energy facilities, desalination plants, ports, airports and other civilian infrastructure had been

targeted.

The ministers described the attacks as acts of aggression that violate the UN Charter, international law, international humanitarian law, Security Council Resolution 2817 and Iran's commitments under the Memorandum of Understanding.

The statement reaffirmed the countries' right to self-defence, individually and collectively, under Article 51 of the UN Charter. It said that they would take all lawful measures necessary to protect their September 30, 2026, expressing support for Baghdad's efforts

to prevent armed groups from launching attacks against countries' sovereignty, territories, citizens, commercial shipping and critical infrastructure.

The seven countries also welcomed Iraqi prime minister's decision to place all weapons under state control by September 30, 2026, expressing support for Baghdad's efforts to prevent armed groups from launching attacks against countries in the region.

They also reiterated their commitment to safeguarding freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab Al

Mandab Strait, as well as to maintaining regional security and stability.

The statement expressed full solidarity with Saudi Arabia, backing measures taken to protect its sovereignty and security. It also commended the diplomatic efforts of Saudi Arabia and Oman to achieve a comprehensive political settlement to the conflict in Yemen.

The statement came amid continued regional and international reactions to the Houthis' announcement that they had targeted two Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea.

CPF, Deloitte sign agreement to advance youth employability, future readiness

AMMAN (JT) — The Crown Prince Foundation (CPF) and Deloitte Middle East on Thursday signed an agreement aimed at advancing youth employability and future readiness in Jordan.

The partnership entails combining CPF's nationwide presence, operational capacity and leadership in youth empowerment through its diverse portfolio of programmes, with Deloitte's global expertise, professional capabilities and commitment to developing future-ready talent, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The MoU was signed on behalf of CPF by its CEO Tamam Mango, and on behalf of Deloitte by its Managing Partner in the Middle East-Jordan Karim Nabulsi.

Deloitte will provide internship opportunities for qualified youth within its professional work environment and deliver structured mentorship and career exposure programmes



The Crown Prince Foundation and Deloitte Middle East on Thursday sign an agreement aimed at advancing youth employability and future readiness in Jordan

designed to enhance their readiness for the labour market.

These programmes will include career-readiness support and training on key employability skills and understanding workplace requirements.

As part of its Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability (CR&S) programmes, Deloitte will also deliver capacity-building sessions for youth across a range of areas, including future skills such as green

skills and cybersecurity.

The firm will provide pro bono advisory and organisational support drawing on its specialised expertise and contribute to initiatives aimed at further developing youth spaces.

The partnership aims to bring together Deloitte's professional expertise, the impact of its CR&S programmes, and its human capital and resources, with the extensive nationwide reach of CPF's programmes and opportunities across

all governorates of Jordan, as well as CPF's role in advancing youth leadership and empowerment.

The partnership also coincides with the opening of Deloitte's new office in Amman, further reinforcing the firm's long-term commitment to Jordan and its continued investment in the country's people, talent and future growth.

CPF said that its partnership with Deloitte aligns with its ongoing efforts to expand quality opportunities available to youth by providing specialised training and practical pathways that enable them to develop their professional skills and align them with labour market demands.

The agreement also seeks to benefit from global expertise provided by partners with specialised expertise and knowledge, enriching their practical experience and enhancing their economic participation.

Nabulsi said, "At

Deloitte, we believe that investing in young people is one of the most meaningful ways to create long-term societal impact."

"Through this partnership with the CPF, we are combining our expertise, talent and resources with Jordan's leading platform for youth empowerment to help equip young people with the skills, experiences and opportunities they need to succeed in the future workforce," Nabulsi added.

Deloitte and Touche Middle East-Jordan is part of the Deloitte Middle East Network.

Deloitte Middle East is a professional services firm established in the Middle East region since 1926 and is present across 26 offices in 14 countries with more than 7,000 partners, directors and staff, providing audit and assurance, tax and legal and consulting and related services to public and private clients spanning multiple industries.

Cassation Court upholds over 3-year sentence for drug dealer

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld a June 2023 State Security Court (SSC) ruling, sentencing a drug dealer to over three years in prison after convicting him of possessing illegal narcotics in Amman in December 2021.

The court declared the defendant guilty of obtaining illegal narcotics with the intent of selling the drugs to an undercover agent in Marka area on December 11.

The SSC handed the defendant five years in prison for the offence of possessing illegal narcotics and ordered him to

pay JD5,000 in fines.

However, the court decided to reduce the prison term to three years and four months and the fine to JD3,500 to give the defendant a second chance in life.

Court documents said that the Anti-Narcotics Department (AND) learnt the defendant was in

possession of illegal narcotics and sent one of its agents to pose as a buyer.

"The AND agent got in touch with the defendant via a mobile application and asked him for 100 grammes of Hashish and 200 Captagon pills in return for JD570," court documents said.

When the two met,

AND agents immediately arrested the suspect, court papers added.

Upon searching the defendant, officers found an additional 10 Captagon pills in his possession, the court added.

The defendant contested the SSC's ruling through his lawyer, who argued that the

court "did not provide solid evidence to implicate his client for drug trafficking".

The lawyer also charged that his client "was subjected to duress to make a false confession".

Meanwhile, the SSC prosecution office asked the higher court to up-

hold the sentence and the fine imposed on the defendant.

The higher court maintained that the SSC had followed the proper procedures in issuing the sentence against the defendant.

"The court found that the defendant confessed willingly to possessing

the illegal drugs to sell in the local market without being subjected to any form of duress during the investigation," the higher court said.

The Court of Cassation judges were Mahmoud Ebtoush, Majid Azab, Hayel Amr, Fawzi Nahar and Mohammad Khashashneh.



AFP photo
A resident looks at smoke rising behind a residential area during a wildfire near Lege-Cap-Ferret, south-western France, on Wednesday

Deadly wildfires in Europe force thousands to flee

LE PORGE, France (AFP) — Wildfires sweeping through parts of Italy, France and Spain on Thursday forced thousands of people to flee blazes fanned by scorching temperatures and strong winds. Three firefighters have been killed as southern Europe endures another spell of severe heat, with temperatures topping 40°C in some areas.

The total area of land burnt this year in European Union countries is the second largest on record, according to satellite data from the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS). Tourists and locals have told of desperate escapes from flames.

"The gendarmes came and knocked on every door, the fire was about 500 metres away — we grabbed some things and left," said Patrick Martineau, a 69-year-old resident of Le Porge, south of the French city of Bordeaux.

In Sicily, around 6,000 firefighters, forest guards and civil protection officers battled dozens of fires raging for days across the Italian island. One firefighter died after falling ill while battling the flames, the interior minister said.

A spokesperson for Italy's Civil Protection Agency told AFP that the fires were "being fuelled by very high temperatures and very dry soil".

More than 160 fires have also been recorded in Calabria region, with the local civil protection chief saying arsonists had tied rags soaked in flammable liquid to the tails of stray cats to spread the flames.

Around Bordeaux, more than 20,000 people — mostly tourists in campsites and holiday lets — have been evacuated since Wednesday, as a fire ravaged a sea-

side pine forest. "We're dealing with a very dense stand of closely packed pines," firefighter captain Wilfried Schneider told AFP, describing a fire of "rare" intensity.

No casualties have been reported — and authorities said the inferno had been contained on one flank — but two firefighters died on Tuesday tackling another blaze near Bordeaux airport.

‘Climate change is what kills, what destroys our villages and our natural and cultural heritage’

'No chance'

"We were on the beach and they told us to go back to the campsite to collect our things," said Belgian tourist Elke Urbain, 50. "We're not afraid because everyone is taking care of us, but we're sad for the people here."

Le Porge Mayor Martial Zaninetti said the fire appeared to have been sparked by a brush-clearing machine, though police were investigating the cause.

Skies over Le Porge turned orange as smoke rose from charred and crackling pine trees, while helicopters made repeated runs over evacuated neighbourhoods.

Fires in 2022 damaged 30,000 hectares of the same forest, forcing some 50,000 people to be evacuated.

Fires are breaking out faster because of climate change caused by the burning of oil, coal and gas. European droughts are now more severe, climatologists from the World Weather Attribution group said in a study published on Thursday.

Across the border in Spain, progress against a major wildfire south of Madrid allowed most residents to return on Thursday, emergency services said.

The blaze, which broke out near the city of Toledo, prompted authorities to evacuate several districts as flames advanced towards homes. Firefighters battled through the night and several roads remained closed on Thursday.

Hundreds of firefighters were still battling a much larger wildfire in Guadalajara province, north of Madrid, which has burnt about 32,000 hectares since it started last Thursday.

"Climate change is what kills, what destroys our villages and our natural and cultural heritage," civil protection chief Virginia Barcones told Spanish radio, warning some fires become so intense that, despite the deployment of aircraft and ground crews, firefighters stand "no chance".

Barcones said conditions at the Guadalajara blaze were improving but that strong winds and extreme heat remained a danger.

Madrid emergency services also warned of an "extreme" wildfire risk as Spain endured the final day of a heatwave. Spain's weather agency AEMET said temperatures were expected to ease this weekend before likely rising again.

Russia warns US against Ukraine arms sales as top diplomats meet in Manila

MANILA (AFP) — Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned Washington against making "unacceptable" arms deliveries to Ukraine during a Thursday meeting with US counterpart Marco Rubio in Manila, Moscow said.

Lavrov told the US secretary of state "it was unacceptable to continue supplying weapons to the Kyiv regime", the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement.

In their meeting held on the sidelines of a summit of Southeast Asian foreign ministers, Moscow's top diplomat also condemned what he called "a destabilising policy by European countries, which are still seeking to inflict a 'strategic defeat' on Russia".

The first sit-down between Lavrov and Rubio since September 2025 comes as Washington's focus has switched from mediating in Ukraine to dealing with war in the Middle East.

The US State Department said in a brief statement that the Rubio and Lavrov — who made no statements to the press ahead of their meeting — had discussed the "US-Russia relationship and the need to end the Russia-Ukraine war".

Lavrov, according to Moscow's statement, reiterated that the Russian side was ready for a "political-diplomatic resolution to the conflict".

Both top diplomats are in the Philippines for



AFP photo
Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (right) attends a meeting with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (left) on the sidelines of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers Meeting in Pasay, Metro Manila on Thursday

meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

They were also expected to discuss the conflict in the Middle East, which has seen Moscow condemn Washington's strikes on its ally Iran.

Areas of cooperation

Rubio spoke briefly with Lavrov at a gala dinner on Tuesday, and the two participated in an ASEAN meeting on Thursday.

"The war in Ukraine,

I think, has in many ways impeded the ability of Russia and the United States to find areas of agreement on other topics," Rubio told reporters on Wednesday.

"That doesn't mean we won't seek to find other areas of potential cooperation.

"But by the same token... we'd like to see that war come to an end," he said.

On Thursday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he had spoken with US envoys

in a bid to revive stalled talks aimed at ending the years-long war.

"I just spoke with President Trump's envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. It was a good, important conversation on how to reinvigorate diplomacy and bring peace closer," Zelensky said in a post on X.

US President Donald Trump has voiced support for Ukraine's campaign of long-range drone strikes targeting Russian energy infrastructure, saying it

could "help bring about an end" to the conflict.

In recent months, Kyiv has appeared to stall Moscow's grinding offensive and has substantially expanded its drone strikes against Russia, disrupting ordinary life there in the war's fifth year.

Moscow has meanwhile escalated its deadly missile strikes against Kyiv, launching dozens of hard-to-intercept rounds as Ukraine struggles with depleted air defence stocks.

Modi vows punishment for exam leaks fuelling India protests

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi vowed "stringent punishment" on Thursday for anyone involved in leaking exam papers, a scandal that has sparked protests challenging his administration.

A series of irregularities has stoked public anger, including a medical entrance paper being leaked — forcing millions to retake the exam — and a failure in an online marking system.

The protest movement has evolved to include concerns over unemployment, opportunities for young people and what critics brand as Modi's increasingly authoritarian style of governance.

In a social media post on Thursday, Modi said that "nothing is more important than the welfare and future of our youth", promising to set up fast-track courts to punish those involved in the leaks.

"Those who try to harm

the future of our youth will not be spared," he said.

His post did not mention Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, whose resignation has been one of the protesters' main demands.

Modi's promise comes as thousands of protesters, led by the social media-driven Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) movement, rallied in New Delhi this week.

The protests have become one of the biggest challenges for the Hindu-nationalist leader since his 2024 reelection for a third term.

The CJP, which has millions of followers on social media, said on Thursday they would press ahead with their fight "to fix the system and set accountability".

"This country has seen many announcements of fast-track courts, but this is not the solution to the systemic issues in the education system," CJP spokes-

man Ashutosh Ranka said on X.

"Modi should fix the system, remove Dharmendra Pradhan and bring accountability."

Aarohi Singh, a 23-year-old protester, said her sister was one of those forced to retake the medical entrance exam but did not pass.

"After the paper leaked she was demoralised and broken," she said.

To Singh, "there's the people of the country on one side and the [education] minister on the other".

"Why can't the prime minister just sack him?"

'Future of our youth'

The Jantar Mantar protest site in New Delhi has seen bouts of unrest and violence during the week.

Crowds spilled out on streets outside Jantar Mantar on Wednesday, triggering late-night clashes with police.

On Monday, protests

snowballed after police fired tear gas and baton-charged demonstrators as they tried to march to parliament.

Human Rights Watch in a statement on Thursday urged the government to investigate "unnecessary and excessive use of force, allow peaceful protests, and stop suspending mobile internet services, which put people at added risk".

At Jantar Mantar, content creator Kaushal Malik said he had joined the demonstrations despite his family's concerns.

"My parents support the cause but don't want me to be here because they are afraid for my safety," Malik, 22 said.

"They've asked me to be careful and not go too close to police. They've been calling and checking on me, and are scared just like any other Indian family."

The protest movement has been backed by opposition parties who have been

disrupting parliament proceedings and demanding an apology from Modi over Monday's police action.

"You are the one who has harmed the future of our youth the most," Rahul Gandhi of the Congress party said on X on Thursday, referring to Modi.

"You allowed and encouraged the total capture and destruction of our education system — and protected every person responsible for it."

Engineering student Kunal Suryavanshi, who travelled to the New Delhi protest from his town in Madhya Pradesh state, said he had "come to be part of something that will hopefully lead to change".

"All I have brought with me is hope," the 17-year-old told AFP.

In neighbouring Bangladesh, students gave a call for a "torch rally" on Thursday to express their solidarity.

Surrounded by militias, Sudanese fear endless cycle of war

By Bahira Amin
Agence France-Presse

KHARTOUM — In Sudan's capital, young militiamen, some no older than 15, ride around in pickup trucks mounted with missiles: A familiar sight to civilians who remember how the current war began.

Three years ago, a powerful militia that had come under the auspices of the state — the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) — turned against the army, sparking a conflict that has killed more than 200,000 people by some estimates.

Now, with Sudan's army relying on a new coalition of militias to fight its battles, many fear it is repeating the same cycle.

"We've seen this scenario over and over. It's



AFP photo
Members of Sudan's armed forces stand guard in the eastern city of Gedaref, Sudan

the same old mistakes, and it's only a matter of time before they turn on each other," said a 30-year-

old Sudanese writer who, like others AFP spoke to, requested anonymity for security reasons.

Of the dozens of armed groups in army-controlled territory, technically under army chief Abdel Fattah Al

Burhan, three are the most powerful:

- The Joint Forces, a coalition of former Darfuri rebel militias

- The Sudan Shield Forces, which defected from the RSF

- And the Baraa ibn Malek Brigade, an Iran-linked Islamist force

All have inflated their ranks since the war broke out in April 2023, and possess their own artillery, anti-aircraft missiles and killer drones.

And all are "allies for now", wary civilians whispered to AFP in the army-controlled cities of Port Sudan, Khartoum and Wad Madani.

"The government's technically banned them from carrying weapons,

but in the markets, on the streets, you still see them

everywhere. It's frightening," said a 50-year-old father in Khartoum.

In the capital, Joint Forces fighters wearing Darfuri headwraps wield assault rifles at a restaurant, one table over from unarmed soldiers.

On the city's fringes, AFP journalists encountered Baraa ibn Malek fighters, including one stopping cars in civilian clothes with an AK-47 slung across his back.

The Sudan Shield Forces, meanwhile, hold dominion in Al Jazira state southeast of Khartoum — establishing checkpoints and harassing civilians in areas where they once committed atrocities for the RSF.

"They act like Al Jazira is theirs," said an activist in her twenties.

"I would never trust any of them. You don't know where their loyalties lie."

'Next Hemeti'

The Sudanese army has for decades outsourced its wars in Sudan's far reaches to militias — most disastrously, the RSF itself.

In the 2000s, then-president Omar Al Bashir armed militias known as the Janjaweed to quell an ethnic rebellion in Darfur. More than 300,000 were killed by fighters he formalised into the RSF in 2013, partly to protect his regime.

During a 2018-19 uprising, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo — whom Bashir had affectionately called by his nickname "Hemeti" — turned on him, helping

overthrow his decades-long dictatorship and becoming army chief Burhan's right-hand man.

Burhan said it was "impossible, utterly impossible" the pair would ever fight, a year before a power struggle erupted into what the UN has called a "war of atrocities".

The army leader appears to understand he is in the same danger today.

After retaking Khartoum from the RSF last year, Burhan directed all armed groups to leave, but they still roam freely.

He has also tried to control the US-sanctioned Baraa Ibn Malek, considered the armed wing of Bashir-era Islamists that the US and Saudi Arabia have pressured him to turn away from.

Who are the six candidates vying to lead the UN?

By Amélie Bottollier-Depois
Agence France-Presse

UNITED NATIONS, United States — Four women and two men are in the running to succeed Antonio Guterres as leader of the United Nations, which faces unprecedented global instability, wars and its own crushing budget crisis. Observers say it is difficult to pick a favourite, given that the world's major powers are divided on the outcome, but Argentina's Rafael Grossi — the current head of the UN nuclear watchdog — has been repeatedly mentioned. Grossi is a candidate along with Chile's Michelle Bachelet, Ecuador's Maria Fernanda Espinosa, Costa Rica's Rebeca Grynspan, Guyana's Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett and Senegal's Macky Sall.

Even if one candidate gets the required nine votes on the 15-member Security Council — which chooses the future UN chief before submitting the name for approval by the General Assembly — that candidate must also avoid a veto.

The United States, Britain, China, France and Russia thus have the future of the world

body in their hands.

Here is a look at the contenders:

Michelle Bachelet

A Chilean socialist brutally tortured by the regime of Augusto Pinochet, Bachelet became her country's first woman president in 2006.

'The UN is judged through the peace and security lens'

She went on to be the UN rights chief, a sensitive role in which she alienated some countries, especially China, which mauled her for reporting on Beijing's alleged abuses of the country's Uyghur minority group. Bachelet, 74, has said the UN secretary general should have the "moral voice" to lead, even under pressure from

major powers.

She is backed by Mexico and Brazil — but Chile withdrew its support after far-right President Jose Antonio Kast took office. The United States has criticised her, especially on her support for abortion rights.

Maria Fernanda Espinosa

Espinosa, a former foreign minister of Ecuador, has called the United Nations the only universal platform for handling humanity's common challenges, but also wants deeper reform of the world body.

The 61-year-old, a previous president of the UN General Assembly, has suggested creating an "early warning" system to detect and flag signs of impending conflict.

Espinosa's candidacy has been backed by Antigua and Barbuda, but not her own country.

Rafael Grossi

The 65-year-old Grossi, an Argentine career diplomat, has led the International Atomic Energy Agency since 2019, propelling him into the middle of the battle over Iran's nuclear pro-

gramme as well as the Russian occupation of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant.

He did not step down from his current post to campaign for secretary-general, saying it would be a "dereliction of duty".

Some observers say he's been more strident in pushing for UN reform, and believes the UN secretary-general should take a more hands-on approach.

Rebeca Grynspan

Grynspan — Costa Rica's former vice president — leads the UN trade and development body UNCTAD, but took leave from her duties to campaign for the top UN post.

In 2022, she pulled off a diplomatic feat by brokering the Black Sea Grain Initiative between Moscow and Kyiv to allow grain exports following Russia's invasion.

The 70-year-old plays up her personal story as the daughter of Jewish parents who she says "barely survived" the Holocaust before emigrating to Costa Rica.

She has lamented that the UN has become what she calls a "risk-conservative organisation".

Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett

Rodrigues-Birkett, the 52-year-old former foreign minister of Guyana, is currently her country's ambassador to the UN.

She has said the United Nations needs to restore its "credibility" on the global stage.

"The UN is judged through the peace and security lens. But the UN is much wider than that and it's delivering in many, many areas — in development, in human rights," she said.

Macky Sall

Macky Sall, 64, is the only candidate not from Latin America, from where the next UN boss should come, according to convention.

The former Senegalese president has stressed the link between peace and development.

Proposed by Burundi, the current chair of the African Union, Sall finally got the backing of his own country this week.

Senegalese authorities accuse him of bloodily repressing violent political demonstrations that left dozens dead between 2021 and 2024.



AFP photo

Earlier this month, Ghana postponed a planned visit by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to Accra on concerns the unrest could overshadow the meeting's agenda

Ghana renews call for AU debate on S.Africa anti-migrant unrest

ACCRA (AFP) — Ghana's President John Mahama on Thursday doubled down on his call for the African Union (AU) to address "escalating" anti-immigrant violence in South Africa, which he said risked undermining African solidarity.

Two Ghanaians have petitioned the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate "repeated xenophobic attacks" in South Africa, a move Pretoria has dismissed as "opportunistic". South Africa, which has long drawn documented and undocumented African workers, has been rocked by weeks of protests and unrest targeting immigrants, who are accused of taking jobs and resources.

More than 160,000 foreign nationals have left the country and several have died over the past two months as local groups increased violent hostility against undocumented migrants, putting Pretoria's relations with other African governments under strain.

Ghana first pushed for the AU to debate the violence in May, with Mahama noting that AU Commission chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf had acknowledged the "urgent need" to table it for discussion at the bloc's next summit due next year.

"Placing this on the AU agenda gives South Africa a formal, construc-

tive platform to share its perspective, and together, as a continent, work toward a lasting solution," Mahama said in a social media post on Thursday.

On Wednesday, Mahama met the AU chief in Accra where he said "it doesn't appear that the South African authorities are responding to the magnitude that one would expect them to." "The persons who are funding these xenophobic attacks are known and they have been left free to continue to do what they want to do," he said in remarks broadcast by Ghana media.

He said the AU should take an "interest" in the matter which "has the potential to wreck everything that we have worked for, African solidarity, African integration".

South Africa's Foreign Minister Ronald Lamola, was in Ghana earlier this week to meet Mahama told reporters back home that the trip to Accra was to address "continuous deluge of criticism from Ghana".

He said both sides agreed that even when there is irregular migration, it should be dealt with "in a human way and not through people taking the law into their own hands, which is what we've seen now in the isolated incidences in our country".

Ghanaian media reported Youssouf as saying that violence was a "big source of concern" for the commission.

'South Africa 'not an island'

Ghana and Nigeria have been the most vocal in condemning the anti-immigrant violence.

A summit of the west African regional bloc, ECOWAS, at the weekend backed Ghana's push for an AU debate "to seek a permanent solution", noting "particularly the despicable treatment of west African citizens" in South Africa.

In a petition submitted to the ICC on July 15, Palgrave Boakye-Danquah, a former Ghanaian government spokesperson, and a counterterrorism analyst Emmanuel Kotin alleged that South African authorities had "failed" to protect foreign nationals from "unlawful killings" and "hate speech".

A South African government spokesman Chrispin Phiri said the petition did not meet the threshold for an ICC investigation, adding that the country had laws to punish "hate crimes and hate speech".

But Kotin, one of the petitioners, said South Africa "cannot be a judge in its own court".

"ICC has investigated similar claims elsewhere. It cannot be the case that South Africa is an island," Kotin told AFP.

King meets with heads of leading UK companies in London

Continued from page 1

The King noted that the meeting served as a valuable opportunity to deepen communication, share insights, and explore areas of mutual interest to support the development of stronger, more impactful partnerships.

His Majesty underscored the importance of leveraging Jordan's investment advantages to expand Jordanian-British partnerships, pointing to Jordan's solid industrial foundation, efficient logistical networks, and access to major regional and global markets, the statement

said.

The meeting brought together representatives from companies operating in the automotive, mining, energy, engineering, chemical, and pharmaceutical sectors, as well as the apparel and textile industries, the design and development of theme parks,

and film and television production industries, alongside heads of chambers of commerce and industry in both countries.

The attendees voiced their commitment to broadening bilateral cooperation and pursuing joint ventures across both countries' public and private sectors.

Director of the Office of His Majesty Alaa Batayneh, Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Yarub Qudah, Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh and Jordan's Ambassador to the UK Manar Dabbas attended the meeting.

King attends opening session of Jordan-United Kingdom Business Forum

Continued from page 1

For his part, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Michael Mainelli acknowledged the strong competitiveness of Jordanian industries, noting

that the forum serves as an important platform for UK and Jordanian private sector representatives to pursue new trade collaborations and build partnerships that maximise the advantages of Jordan's industrial sector.

Minister of State in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Stephen Doughty said in his remarks that the governments of both countries are committed to eliminating hurdles facing Jordanian and British

private-sector companies and organisations to enable them to build successful, multisector partnerships, emphasising the importance of strengthening UK-Jordan cooperation.

The opening session

was attended by Director of the Office of His Majesty Alaa Batayneh, Jordan's Ambassador to the UK Manar Dabbas, and representatives of Jordanian and British companies operating in a variety of sectors.

Bab Al Mandeb Strait: Another key oil shipping route under threat

Continued from page 1

Attacks by the Houthis linked to the Gaza war caused shipping to drop dramatically, but Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz ramped up its importance once again.

Saudi exports via the Red Sea port of Yanbu approximately tripled to a record high of around four million barrels a day in the spring, according to analysts, before falling back slightly.

That would represent around 4 per cent of pre-

war global demand.

John Evans, an analyst at PVM, said exports from Yanbu had now reached 75 per cent of Saudi Arabia's peacetime exports.

Andreas Krieg, a security expert at King's College London, said: "A simultaneous crisis at Hormuz and Bab Al Mandeb would produce a much larger shock than either blockade alone."

Much Saudi oil was exported to Asia, he said, meaning that, with Bab Al Mandeb closed, "those vessels would have to

sail north through Suez, cross the Mediterranean, pass Gibraltar and travel around Africa before reaching Asia".

Such a journey would take 50 days, said Evans, instead of around 20 on the usual route.

Threat to shipping

The latest Middle East war erupted on February 28 when the United States and Israel launched attacks on Iran, prompting Tehran to retaliate with strikes across the region.

Until now, the Houthis had stayed on the sidelines of the conflict, despite Iranian threats to shut down Bab Al Mandeb.

The Houthis previously attacked shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden during the Gaza war, saying they were attacking ships linked to Israel in solidarity with the Palestinians.

They did so with relatively basic means, such as drones, thanks to the proximity of the shipping lanes to shore.

The attacks prompted the United States and Brit-

ain to bomb Yemen and the European Union to launch Operation Aspidos to protect shipping.

Traffic through the strait has not returned to its 2023 levels but since January 2025 major shipping companies had begun "testing the waters and sending vessels through" said Bridget Diakun of Lloyd's List Intelligence during a recent videoconference.

She predicted that, while the closure of Hormuz had driven traffic to Bab Al Mandeb, this would now stop.

Houthis claim Red Sea tanker strikes as US hits Iran again

Continued from page 1

"Our defence doctrine is clear: Eye for an eye," Araghchi wrote on X. "Any aggression against Iran, including our infrastructure, will compel a powerful and decisive response."

Iran's state broadcaster quoted the military as saying that US threats "will have no result other than the expansion of the war".

Trump has faced intense political pressure

to end the conflict, which Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said on Tuesday had cost the United States \$37.5 billion, up from nearly \$29 billion in mid-May.

But Trump rejected polls showing the war was unpopular as he headed to an airbase for the return of the remains of four US service personnel.

Three were killed in an Iranian attack on a military base in Jordan, and one died during a controlled detonation of an unex-

ploded Iranian drone in Iraq.

"Americans don't want high gasoline prices but they're not against the war," Trump said.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, briefly topped \$95 a barrel for the first time in nearly six weeks on Wednesday. Crude futures later shed some gains but were still up about three percent.

US strikes

US Central Command re-

ported the latest strikes began at 21:30 GMT on Wednesday against Iranian military targets, saying it aimed to "further degrade Iran's ability to threaten civilian mariners and commercial vessels transiting regional waters".

Kuwait's army said early Thursday local time its air defences were intercepting hostile drones, following several days of Iranian strikes on the country.

"Kuwaiti air defences

are currently responding to hostile drone threats," the army said on X. "Any explosions that may be heard are the result of air defence systems intercepting hostile targets."

The Iranian military and its powerful Revolutionary Guard confirmed targeting US assets in all three countries.

Red Sea threat

Trump said he would "take care of" the Houthis if they followed

through on their blockade threat against Saudi ports.

It remains unclear how fully the Houthis could enforce such a blockade, but the threat could compound the shock of the Hormuz closure, endangering Riyadh's ability to bypass the strait for some oil exports.

The Houthis had been broadcasting radio warnings to vessels, the International Chamber of Shipping told AFP.

The message warned that "in case of non-compliance of Yemeni armed forces decision, those ships will be in our target, over".

During the Gaza war that began in October 2023, the Iran-backed Yemeni rebels attacked shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, forcing vessels to make a long detour around Africa and prompting a US bombing campaign.

The latest threats appear to have been enough

to encourage several vessels to reverse course before entering waters off Yemen, according to shipping tracker Kpler, though nearly 30 ships still crossed the Bab al-Mandab on Tuesday.

Maritime data analysed by AFP showed that at least nine ships had turned back from crossing the strait after the Houthi blockade announcement, including three that had taken on oil at Saudi Arabia's Red Sea Yanbu terminal.

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Employment first... the key to reforming Jordan’s labour market

By Raad Mahmoud Al Tal

The success of modern economies is measured by their ability to create employment opportunities rather than simply by the number of unemployed individuals. Employment is more than providing jobs; it reflects the strength of investment, the level of productivity, the efficiency of the business environment and an economy’s capacity to transform its human capital into value-added production. From this perspective, Jordan’s greatest labour market challenge is not unemployment itself, but the economy’s limited ability to generate sustainable employment.

Over the past decade, economic policies have focused primarily on addressing the symptoms of the problem rather than its root causes. Numerous employment initiatives, training programmes, and temporary job schemes have been introduced, yet, their impact has remained limited because they failed to tackle the underlying issue: Weak labour demand. Jobs are not created through administrative decisions; they emerge when investment expands, productivity improves and competitive sectors grow.

Jordan possesses a significant demographic advantage. The working-age population increased from approximately 3.5 million people in 2010 to nearly 5.8 million in 2025, representing a substantial expansion in the country’s labour supply. This demographic growth could become a powerful engine for economic development if accompanied by sufficient job creation. Otherwise, it risks becoming an economic burden as increasing numbers of people enter a labour market that lacks adequate employment opportunities.

The challenge lies in the imbalance between labour supply and labour demand. While the working-age population has grown rapidly, labour force participation has remained almost unchanged, declining slightly from 39 per cent in 2016 to 38 per cent in 2025. At the same time, only around 30 per cent of the working age population is actually employed. These figures demonstrate that Jordan’s labour market problem is not the availability of workers, but the economy’s limited capacity to absorb them into productive employment.

One of the clearest indicators of this structural weakness is the declining participation of highly educated women. Despite significant improvements in educational attainment, the labour force participation rate of Jordanian women with university degrees fell from 63 per cent in 2010 to 39 per cent in 2025. From an economic perspective, this represents a considerable loss of productive capacity. Human capital requires substantial public and private investment, and when highly qualified individuals remain outside the labour market, the economy loses potential productivity, innovation, and long-term growth.

Young people face similar obstacles. The challenge is not merely securing a first job but navigating an increasingly difficult transition from education to employment. This highlights the need for stronger partnerships between universities and the private sector, expanded apprenticeship programmes and work-based learning opportunities that equip graduates with practical experience demanded by employers. Such initiatives should not be viewed solely as social policies, but as investments that improve labour productivity and strengthen economic competitiveness.

Improving employment outcomes ultimately requires a shift in economic policy. Sustainable job creation begins with a stronger investment climate, lower business costs, regulatory reforms and greater support for high-value-added sectors such as manufacturing, technology, digital services, and export-oriented industries. Every productive investment generates new demand for labour, while every increase in exports stimulates further production and employment.

Jordan also has an opportunity to benefit from the transformation of the global economy. Digitalisation, remote work, and the knowledge economy are creating new employment models that reduce geographical barriers and connect skilled workers with international markets. By investing in digital infrastructure, modernising labour regulations, and encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation, Jordan can expand employment opportunities for both young people and women.

Reforming Jordan’s labour market should begin with employment, not merely unemployment. Employment is the clearest indicator of a healthy economy because it reflects productive investment, rising competitiveness, and sustainable economic growth. As investment increases and productivity improves, job creation becomes a natural outcome of economic expansion rather than a temporary objective pursued through short-term government programmes. An economy that consistently generates productive employment will also be one that delivers higher incomes, stronger growth and a better quality of life for its citizens.

Why Jordan’s 27 kilometres of coastline matter to the world

By Bety Al Saqarat

The Blue Economy is no longer viewed simply as an economic model based on marine activities such as shipping, fisheries and coastal tourism. It represents a broader vision that connects economic development with the protection of marine ecosystems, recognising that healthy oceans and coastal environments are essential foundations for long-term prosperity, climate resilience and sustainable growth.

When people think of the Blue Economy, they often imagine countries with vast coastlines and extensive marine resources. Jordan, with only 27 kilometres of coastline along the Gulf of Aqaba, may seem an unlikely contender. Yet, these 27 kilometres hold global significance, serving as the country’s sole maritime gateway, a hub for international trade and tourism, and home to one of the world’s most scientifically valuable coral reef ecosystems.

Jordan may appear to have limited opportunities in the Blue Economy, with only 27 kilometres of coastline along the Gulf of Aqaba. Yet, these 27 kilometres represent far more than a narrow coastal strip. They are Jordan’s only maritime gateway, a centre for international trade, a destination for global tourism, and a unique natural laboratory for scientific research and climate adaptation.

Aqaba’s significance lies in the exceptional relationship between its natural resources and economic potential. The Gulf of Aqaba hosts one of the most distinctive marine ecosystems in the northern Red Sea, with approximately 157 species of reef-building corals and around 500 fish species. The Aqaba Marine Reserve represents an important effort to protect this biodiversity and maintain the ecological value of this unique environment.

The coral reefs of Aqaba have attracted global scientific attention due to their remarkable thermal resilience. At a time when many coral ecosystems around the world are experiencing increasing stress from rising sea temperatures and repeated bleaching events, Aqaba’s coral communities have demonstrated an unusual capacity to tolerate thermal stress.

This does not mean that they are immune to climate change, but it highlights their scientific importance as a natural laboratory for understanding coral adaptation and future conservation strategies. The value of Aqaba extends beyond its living marine ecosystems. Its underwater landscapes and marine sediments provide valuable records of past environmental and climatic changes. Sediments act as natural archives, preserving information about environmental conditions, coastal evolution and interactions between natural processes and human activities. Understanding these records is essential for improving predictions of future coastal changes and strengthening climate resilience.

Jordan’s experience demonstrates that the success of a Blue Economy is not determined by the length of a nation’s coastline, but by how effectively it values, protects, and manages its marine resources.

This combination of biodiversity, geology and scientific value provides Aqaba with a unique opportunity to develop sustainable and knowledge-based tourism. The attraction of Aqaba is not limited to its coral reefs and diving sites; its geological heritage and underwater landscapes provide additional opportunities for scientific tourism, environmental education and responsible marine

recreation. Aqaba is also becoming increasingly important in Jordan’s broader sustainability and resilience strategies. The planned Aqaba–Amman Water Desalination and Conveyance Project represents one of the country’s major infrastructure initiatives, designed to provide approximately 300 million cubic metres of desalinated water annually, including 250 million cubic metres for Amman and 50 million cubic metres for Aqaba, through a pipeline extending approximately 438 kilometres. Such initiatives demonstrate the strategic role of Aqaba in supporting Jordan’s water security, climate resilience and sustainable development goals.

However, the future of Aqaba’s Blue Economy depends on achieving a careful balance. Within only 27 kilometres of coastline, multiple activities must coexist: ports, tourism, urban development, conservation areas, scientific research and major infrastructure projects. This requires integrated coastal management based on scientific evidence, environmental possibility and long-term planning.

One of Aqaba’s greatest assets is the availability of long-term environmental datasets and continuous monitoring efforts. Observations of coral reef health, seawater quality, marine sediments, biodiversity changes, and coastal dynamics provide essential information for understanding environmental trends and ecosystem responses to climate change. Transforming these data into practical management tools will be critical for ensuring that economic development strengthens rather than threatens the natural resources on which the Blue Economy depends.

Jordan’s vision for a future Blue Economy

Jordan’s Blue Economy vision reflects a broader commitment to sustainable development, innovation, and responsible investment. It is closely aligned with the national direction for economic modernisation led by His Majesty King Abdullah II, which places sustainability, competitiveness, and high-value economic sectors at the center of Jordan’s future development pathway.

Within this vision, Aqaba represents a strategic platform where marine resources, tourism, logistics, scientific research, renewable energy and environmental protection can be integrated to create new economic opportunities. Developing a resilient Blue Economy is not only about utilising marine resources; it is about managing them wisely to ensure that future generations benefit from both economic growth and a healthy marine environment.

Universities and research institutions have a central role in transforming Aqaba into a regional model for climate-resilient Blue Economy development. Research on coral ecosystems, marine sediments, biodiversity, water quality and coastal evolution provides the scientific foundation needed for informed decision-making. Collaboration between government institutions, academia, and the private sector can support innovation in marine conservation, sustainable tourism, geospatial technologies and climate adaptation.

Jordan’s experience demonstrates that the success of a Blue Economy is not determined by the length of a nation’s coastline, but by how effectively it values, protects, and manages its marine resources. Through science-based governance, sustainable investment, and continued collaboration among government institutions, academia, and the private sector, Aqaba’s 27 kilometres can become a global model for climate-resilient coastal development and responsible Blue Economy growth.

With its climate-resilient coral ecosystems, unique marine geological heritage, strategic infrastructure, scientific capacity and commitment to sustainability, Aqaba has the potential to transform a limited coastline into a resource of global significance. The message is clear: In the Blue Economy, success is measured not by the number of kilometres along the coast, but by the vision, knowledge and responsibility with which those kilometers are managed.

The author is a professor of Sedimentology, Paleoclimatology and Environmental Change from The University of Jordan

What the new UK chancellor means for the UK economy

By Mohamed El Erian

NEW YORK—The United Kingdom’s new prime minister, Andy Burnham, is already sending shockwaves through Westminster. Defying almost every political forecast and market expectation, he has named John Healey, a former defence secretary, as the new chancellor of the exchequer.

Healey steps into this role — one of the most powerful in the UK government — at a challenging moment for the British economy. Growth has been too low for too long; fiscal flexibility is limited; borrowing costs are the most burdensome among the G-7 economies; and taxes are already high, though public services often disappoint. External pressures compound the challenge, and the economy’s resilience has already been eroded by the COVID-19 pandemic and two energy shocks.

But the British economy’s potential remains considerable. Realising that potential will not be easy, but it is doable, as long as Healey draws the right lessons from his predecessor’s experience — the good, the bad, and the ugly — and tackles the early challenges he faces effectively. Much will depend on how Healey leverages three features of his background.

The first feature is the most immediate: The shock of his selection. As late as the morning of the announcement, prediction markets put the chances that Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood would be selected for the role at around 90 per cent. Burnham’s pivot to Healey points to a deliberate, tightly held strategy, which depends on the installation of a very specific type of operator in the Treasury. The question now is how the government will build on this surprise move.

Second, unlike Mahmood, Healey has experienced the Treasury from the inside, having served as a junior minister in the “New

Labour” era, under prime minister Tony Blair. Healey will not need a manual to lead him to the department’s levers of power; he already understands its complex machinery. This institutional memory should enable him to move quickly in shaping a much-needed revitalisation of the UK’s “growth mission”.

Third, Healey has fiercely advocated for higher defence spending — to the point that he resigned as defence secretary last month over the previous government’s unwillingness to increase funding for the military. His resignation letter lambasted his and Burnham’s predecessors — Rachel Reeves and Keir Starmer, respectively — for failing to “commit the resources that the nation needs to defend the country at this time of rising threats”.

The Treasury is traditionally the department that refuses expensive requests. Giving a vocal defence hawk control over it is a bold — and risky — move. The extent to which it pays off will depend significantly on how Healey accommodates his desire for higher military spending. Can he find the funds to fill funding gaps without hiking taxes to politically toxic levels or slashing other essential services? His openness to innovative financing approaches — such as “war bonds” coordinated with European allies and other multilateral defence funding mechanisms — could make a difference, though these would come with their own challenges.

This is just one part of a broader fiscal balancing act. Burnham, who has worried that the previous administration may have locked the Treasury into too tight a fiscal framework, has already said that he will use “flexibility” within the fiscal rules to increase investments. It is now up to Healey to find this fiscal room to manoeuvre, especially to fund pro-growth infrastructure, without upsetting

the bond vigilantes. It might be a good sign that the bond market has not pushed back against the new government’s first fiscal measure — cutting value-added tax on electricity — but the situation remains fluid.

Expectations are high for Burnham’s new government. Whether they can be met will depend significantly on whether Healey’s unexpected appointment as chancellor translates into the strategic agility the UK needs to navigate a narrow and rocky path to economic renewal

Ultimately, Healey is responsible for ensuring that economic growth — essential to long-term prosperity and fiscal sustainability — is not sidelined again by too narrow a focus on budget arithmetic. As he has recognised, “Treasury orthodoxy” has often

kept the institution so obsessed with balancing the books that it has lost sight of broader policy strategy. To succeed, Healey will have to coordinate very closely with Burnham’s office on a comprehensive policy approach that delivers sustained inclusive prosperity through higher productivity, scaling up of home-grown innovations, regionalising growth engines and reinvigorating trade links, starting with Europe.

By appointing Healey, Burnham has taken a smart, calculated risk. If Healey can leverage his insider knowledge of the Treasury, pursue a bold, pro-growth agenda, and responsibly manage his own defense-spending instincts, he may well be able to deliver the structural shake-up the British economy desperately needs. But if he falls victim to the Treasury orthodoxy he has criticised, or if his commitment to raising defence spending spooks the bond market, he could quickly become a headache for the new government, especially given today’s fluid, uncertain and shock-prone global economy.

Expectations are high for Burnham’s new government. Whether they can be met will depend significantly on whether Healey’s unexpected appointment as chancellor translates into the strategic agility the UK needs to navigate a narrow and rocky path to economic renewal.

Mohamed A. El Erian, a former president of Queens’ College at the University of Cambridge, is practice professor at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, where he is also senior global fellow at the Lauder Institute. He is chief economic adviser at Allianz, chair of Gramercy Funds, the author of “The Only Game in Town: Central Banks, Instability, and Avoiding the Next Collapse” (Random House, 2016) and a co-author (with Gordon Brown, Michael Spence, and Reid Liddow) of “Permacrisis: A Plan to Fix a Fractured World” (Simon & Schuster, 2023).

Total exports rise 11.6% in five months to reach JD5.183b — DoS

AMMAN (JT) — National exports rose by 5.8 per cent in the first five months of 2026 to reach JD3.796 billion compared with the same period in 2025, according to a monthly foreign trade report issued on Thursday by the Department of Statistics (DoS).

Re-exports also increased significantly by 31.3 per cent, standing at JD1.387 billion, bringing total exports to JD5.183 billion, an overall surge of 11.6 per cent.

Meanwhile, imports dipped by 1 per cent to reach JD8.194 billion during the same January-May period, DoS figures showed, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

As a result, Jordan's trade deficit narrowed by 17.1 per cent (or JD621 million), dropping to JD3.011 billion down from JD3.632 billion recorded in the corresponding period of 2025.

The coverage ratio of total exports to imports improved to 63 per cent during the first five months of 2026, marking a 7 percentage point increase compared with 56 per cent recorded in the same period last year.

The rise in national exports was driven primarily by garments and clothing accessories, which increased by 1.2 per cent, nitrogenous



Total exports rises to JD5.183 billion, an overall surge of 11.6 per cent according to the Department of Statistics

or chemical fertilizers (up 15.3 per cent), and crude potash (up 38.4 per cent).

On the import side, crude oil and petroleum products witnessed a 41.9 per cent increase, while plastics and articles thereof rose by 8.5

per cent.

The growth in national exports was bolstered by higher shipments to Syria, non-Arab Asian countries (including China), and European Union countries (including The Netherlands).

Conversely, major ori-

gin markets driving the rise in imports included Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) member states, led by Saudi Arabia, and non-Arab Asian nations, notably India.

In May 2026, total exports reached JD1.319 billion, com-

prising JD841 million in national exports and JD478 million in re-exports. Imports stood at JD1.635 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of JD316 million for the month.

Compared with May 2025, total exports in-

creased by 20.3 per cent, with national exports up 1.3 per cent and re-exports surging by 79.7 per cent. Imports rose slightly by 1 per cent, causing the monthly trade deficit to drop by 39.6 per cent, Petra reported.



Damascus Chamber of Commerce welcomes Jordan's expanded investor facilities

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Damascus Chamber of Commerce Issam Ghreiwati has expressed his appreciation to Jordan and the Ministry of Interior following the decision to grant new facilities to Syrian investors and businesspeople.

Ghreiwati noted the decision is "pivotal," noting that it reflects the Kingdom's commitment to supporting Syrian investors and business leaders while strengthening economic and trade ties between the two nations, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The Chairman highlighted the positive step of allowing families of Syrian investors and business leaders, who hold premium and first-class membership cards from Syrian chambers of commerce, to enter the Kingdom without prior approval.

He noted that the move will facilitate business operations, promote economic dialogue, and open new avenues for

joint cooperation.

Ghreiwati added that these facilities will help streamline the movement of business leaders, encourage the exchange of goods and services and foster trade and investment partnerships between Syria and Jordan to benefit both nations.

Ghreiwati expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply, the Jordan and Amman Chambers of Commerce, and the Jordanian Ambassador to Damascus for their ongoing efforts to support economic relations and address challenges facing the business community.

Under the Interior Ministry's decision, family members of Syrian investors and business leaders holding premium and first-class membership cards issued by Syrian chambers of commerce, specifically spouses and children under the age of 18, are permitted to enter the Kingdom without prior approval.

Oil soars to \$100 on fresh Mideast attacks

LONDON (AFP) — Oil prices surged to \$100 a barrel on Thursday as Tehran-backed Houthi rebels targeted Red Sea shipping and US President Donald Trump threatened to strike them in return.

International benchmark oil contract Brent North Sea soared more than 6 per cent to hit the symbolic \$100 level, as the attacks potentially opened a new front in the Middle East war and Trump threatened the Houthis with "major military punishment".

Iran, meanwhile, vowed to continue striking the Gulf region so long as it remains under attack from US strikes.

Saudi Arabia had been using the Red Sea to export millions of barrels of oil that normally flowed through the Strait of Hormuz, so the closure of that shipping channel would remove more oil from the market.

There are "no signs of a peace deal emerging as the US and Iran start to dig in and fears rise about choke points for certain fuel supplies", noted Neil Wilson, UK investor strategist at Saxo.

"Investors are in a wary mood... as fresh jitters of worry about the ongoing energy crunch hit sentiment," said Susannah Streeter, chief investment strategist at Wealth Club.

"With both the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea now under increasing pressure, markets are bracing for the possibility that the conflict could disrupt key energy routes [and] keep oil prices elevated," she added.

The prospect of higher oil prices also raises the



Signs reading 'out of stock' are displayed at a gas station amid rising petrol prices in Manila, as the price of the main US benchmark for oil surged more than 30 per cent on March 9, over concerns that the Middle East war could create prolonged supply disruptions

prospect of higher inflation and interest-rate hikes, adding to weak sentiment, analysts said.

European Central Bank head Christine Lagarde said some of its policymakers had considered raising rates at their meeting on Thursday, although all eventually voted to hold rates.

Wall Street's main stock indices all fell more than one per cent at the start of trading. "That isn't surprising given what is going on with Alphabet, Tesla and the mega-cap stocks, oil prices and bond yields," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare.

The tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite fell 1.8 per cent. "The scope of losses at the index level, though, doesn't seem proportional to the gravity of the primary headlines,"

he added, pointing to other companies receiving a boost after reporting earnings as well as reassuring US unemployment claims data.

All of the so-called Magnificent Seven tech stocks were lower. Shares in Alphabet fell 6 per cent, with some investors taking fright that it raised its AI capital expenditure estimate for the full year to as much as \$205 billion, far more than expected.

Shares in Tesla slumped 9.6 per cent after the firm reported weaker-than-expected profits and a doubling of capital expenditures from the same quarter in 2025.

Investors' appetite for all things AI has been tested in recent months on concern about elevated valuations and as they question when

the trillions pumped into the sector will see returns.

Next week's results from Microsoft, Meta and Amazon will be pored over for their capital spending plans.

Most Asian stock markets were buoyed by a much-needed bounce for regional tech firms. European markets were weaker in afternoon trading.

The dollar firmed against its main rivals.

Eyes are on Tokyo after the yen hit a fresh four-decade low against the dollar amid concerns over the gap between the Bank of Japan's low interest rates and those in the United States and other big economies.

Rising oil prices and concerns over Japan's economy have added to pressure on the currency.

Coal-fired power generation rising globally on Mideast war — IEA

PARIS, France (AFP) — Coal-fired power generation is set to increase in 2026, driven by supply difficulties and soaring natural gas prices linked to the war in the Middle East, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said Thursday.

The conflict in the Middle East, pitting the United States against Iran, has led since March 2026 to regular blockages of the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20 per cent of liquefied natural gas (LNG) transits, pushing some economies back toward coal.

As a result, "global coal-fired generation is expected to increase by 1.4 per cent in 2026, after remaining roughly constant in 2025", the IEA wrote in a new report.

The increased use of coal-fired power plants is also explained by a surge in energy prices in 2026.

Up 30 per cent compared with the first half of 2025, they are "at their highest level since the energy crisis of 2022 and 2023", which was triggered by the war in Ukraine, the IEA said.

Consequently, global carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from electricity generation are expected to rise by one per cent in 2026, with large regional disparities, the agency wrote.

Southeast Asia is expected to see its emissions grow by six per cent, while the European Union should record a five-per cent decline.

CO₂ emissions should,

however, stabilise in 2027, thanks to the growth of renewable electricity generation, which is "overtaking coal as the world's largest source of electricity generation, after reaching near parity in 2025", the report said.

Renewable supply is expected to increase by eight per cent in 2026, and its share in global electricity supply should rise from 33 per cent in 2025 to 37 per cent in 2027.

The sector is being driven by solar power, whose generation is expected to surpass that of wind in 2026 and thus "become the world's second-largest source of renewable electricity generation after hydropower", the IEA wrote.

Overall, demand for electricity "forecast to stay on a solid upward trajectory", driven in particular by industry, electric vehicles and data centres, the IEA said.

It forecast demand growth of 3.6 per cent in 2026 and 3.8 per cent in 2027, compared with a three-per cent increase in 2025.

Finally, the El Nino event, a natural climate fluctuation that warms temperatures and leads to changes in wind patterns, is proving stronger than expected this year.

This weather phenomenon "could affect electricity demand" by increasing cooling needs and limiting hydropower and wind power generation, the IEA said.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Thursday amounted to JD11.7 million spread over 3.7 million shares that traded through 3,658 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.03 per cent, closing at 3932.39 points.

Out of 94 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 38 companies rose while the share price of another 28 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Al Nisr Al Arabi Insurance by 6.02 per cent, Al-Shamekha for Real Estate and Financial Investments by 5 per cent, Injaz for Development and Projects by 5 per cent, Contempro for Housing Projects by 4.94 per cent, and Jordanian Company for Developing and Financial Investment by 4.92 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Jordanian Management And Consulting Company by 4.9 per cent, Jordan Investment and Transport Company by 4.39 per cent, Arab International for Education and Investment by 4.29 per cent, National Aluminium Industrial by 4.11 per cent, and Middle East Holding by 2.15 per cent.

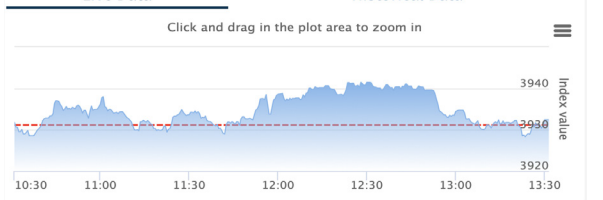


THE MARKET TODAY

ASE Index: ↑ 3932.39 0.03% July 23, 2026

Live Data

Historical Data



DAILY SUMMARY

Regular Market

Trading Value (JDs)

Trading volume

No. of Transactions

No. of Securities

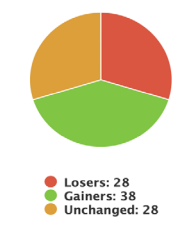
OTC Market

11,718,770

3,688,005

3,658

94



FOOTBALL

Premier League champions Arsenal sign Greece winger Tzolis from Brugge

LONDON (AFP) — Arsenal have signed Greece winger Christos Tzolis on "a long-term contract", the Premier League champions announced on Thursday. No fee was disclosed but British media reports said the 24-year-old had arrived from Club Brugge for £34 million (\$45 million), with Tzolis effectively a replacement for Leandro Trossard following his move to Besiktas. Arsenal's third permanent transfer of the current window arrives 48 hours after the Gunners missed out on Morgan Rogers to city rivals Chelsea for a reported £117 million (\$157 million) — a record for a British player. England midfielder Rogers called Chelsea the "biggest club in London". Tzolis scored 43 goals in 108 appearances for Brugge and featured in the Belgian side's 3-0 Champions League loss to Arsenal last season. He already has experience of English football's top flight, having joined then Premier League side Norwich after helping PAOK Thessaloniki, the club where he started his career, win the Greek Cup in May 2021. Tzolis then had loan spells in The Netherlands and Germany at FC Twente and Fortuna Duesseldorf respectively before he joined Brugge in 2024 and went on to win the Belgian title with the club last season.

Klopp expected to be named new Germany coach on Friday

BERLIN (AFP) — Jurgen Klopp is widely expected to formally take over as the new head coach of the German men's national football team, with the German Football Association (DFB) calling a press conference for Friday. Klopp, famed for his success during stints as coach at Borussia Dortmund and especially Liverpool, has been in talks with the DFB about trying to lead Germany — long a football powerhouse — back to prominence. On Thursday, the DFB invited the media to a press conference on Friday morning at 11am (9:00 GMT) at its Frankfurt headquarters, without specifying the topic. That is because the DFB's governing bodies have not yet met to formally approve the deal with Klopp, according to reports from AFP's sports subsidiary SID. Klopp, 59, is among the most decorated football coaches of his generation and is expected to sign a contract with Germany that runs until 2030, the date of the next World Cup. Since 2025, Klopp has been under contract with Austrian energy drink maker Red Bull as "Head of Global Soccer", where he oversees the football clubs affiliated with the company such as RB Leipzig, Red Bull Salzburg and the New York Red Bulls.



India's Tilak Varma shakes hands with Zimbabwe players after victory during the first match in the One Day International cricket series played between Zimbabwe and India at Harare Sports Club on Thursday in Harare

Sooryavanshi hits maiden 50 as India thump Zimbabwe in T20

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AFP) — India wonderkid Vaibhav Sooryavanshi scored a maiden Twenty20 international half-century in a seven-wicket victory over Zimbabwe in Harare on Thursday. Put in to bat after losing the toss in the first of three matches, Zimbabwe made a meagre 125-7 in 20 overs with all-rounder Wessly Madhevere (39) top scoring. Led by 15-year-old prodigy Sooryavanshi, who struck four sixes and four fours in an 18-

ball 50, India cruised to 126-3 with 40 balls to spare. Sooryavanshi became the youngest cricketer to represent India by debuting in a 4-0 T20I drubbing by England this month. He scored 42 runs in three innings. After his whirlwind 50 in Harare, Sooryavanshi was out when he got a thick outside edge to a Richard Ngarava delivery and was caught at deep third man by Ben Curran. He departed with the tourists 68-2. Then, wicketkeeper Ishan Kishan (35) and unbeaten captain Shreyas Iyer (28 not out) ensured India ended a dismal recent T20I run. Before four losses in England, one by an Indian record 125 runs, the reigning T20I world champions lost another series 2-0 in Ireland. Victory at Harare Sports Club was a welcome relief for Iyer — it ended a seven-match winless run since he inherited the captaincy. "I think the boys were

tremendous. Could not have been happier with my first win," the skipper told reporters. "There was bounce from a good length and it was also variable. I felt it was there in both innings. We are going to play two more matches here, so this performance gives everyone some confidence." Madhevere was run out after a 58-run sixth-wicket stand with Tadiwanashe Marumani (27 not out). An unwise attempt to secure a second run led to his downfall.

Croatia arrests Olympic official as graft scandal widens

ZAGREB (AFP) — A Croatian Olympic Committee official was arrested on Thursday over alleged corruption, local media reported, the latest development in a graft scandal at the country's ski federation. The arrest comes as investigators seek the extradition of former alpine ski director Vedran Pavlek, who is currently in Kazakhstan, over allegations that he led a scheme that siphoned off nearly 30 million euros (\$35 million) from the national ski federation — a case that has shocked the country. 'It is in our absolute interest that everything be thoroughly investigated and any individuals found responsible be sanctioned' Police arrested the director of the committee's Olympic programme Damir Segota and his wife, according to state-run HINA news agency, as local media photographed him being escorted by investigators. His Olympic Committee office was also searched along with the office of committee secretary general Sinisa Krajac, HINA reported. The anti-corruption prosecutors' office confirmed in a statement that searches and arrests had been made, without revealing the identities of those involved. After questioning, the prosecutors will decide on further proceedings, the statement said without elaborating. According to local media, Segota is suspected of taking bribes to release Olympic funds to the national ski federation illegally. In March, prosecutors launched an investigation into six people, including Pavlek, who has remained in Kazakhstan since. The scandal triggered the resignation of long-time Olympic Committee head Zlatko Matesa to allow for a "transparent clarification" of all issues around the distribution and use of public funds distributed by the committee. Pavlek's tenure marked Croatia's most successful era in the sport when siblings Janica and Ivica Kostelic won 10 Olympic medals. Thursday's operation came after reports that the former ski federation secretary general, who is also a suspect in the case, had provided details on the alleged crimes to prosecutors. Sports Minister Tonci Glavina on Thursday condemned any illegal conduct that may have taken place. "It is in our absolute interest that everything be thoroughly investigated and any individuals found responsible be sanctioned," he told reporters. Tackling graft was a key condition for Croatia joining the European Union in 2013, but corruption remains endemic.

AI catches up with humans to score 100% at top maths contest

SHANGHAI (AFP) — A perfect result at the world's most prestigious mathematics contest used to be the preserve of a handful of bright young minds each year, but for the first time, artificial intelligence has also scored full marks. Two Chinese tech companies, Huawei and Xiaohongshu, said their AI models each achieved 100 per cent on the questions given to human hopefuls at this month's International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO). They were the first AI labs to announce their scores, but others from around the world may follow suit in the coming days. "We are delighted with this result, because achieving a perfect score at the IMO is extremely challenging," Xiaohongshu said in a statement this week. "Previously, no large language model had ever achieved a perfect score under the IMO's official judging process," the firm added, referring to the tech that underpins AI tools like chatbots. In 2025, models made by the likes of Google and OpenAI reached gold-level scores for the first time — but could not match the abilities of five human contestants who got 100 per cent.

'Frontier of AI'

This year, 666 contestants from different countries took part in Shanghai. Just seven of them achieved full marks, according to the official IMO scoreboard. Participants at the IMO, held in different locations each year, must be aged under 20. Huawei said Wednesday that its AI system "Celia" had shown "comprehensive problem-solving capabilities" across several mathematical fields. Xiaohongshu, known as RedNote in English, said its model "dots-note-3.0" had entered the IMO for the first time this year. Tech firms were only provided with the IMO problems after human contestants had taken the exam, with their submissions required within a specified time limit. "During testing, any form of human intervention was strictly prohibited," and the AI solutions were submitted to IMO organisers for grading, Xiaohongshu said.

From bath to fish market: DJs play to revive Japan neighbourhoods

By Mathias Cena
Agence France-Presse

TOKYO — In a century-old Japanese public bath, a DJ works the decks while naked men bathe behind him and students film the scene. The Tokyo bathhouse is one of many traditional businesses in Japan threatened by urban development and demographic decline, but the students want to showcase its value by transforming it into a pop-up club. Their collective, Login.jp, moves from shoot to shoot across the archipelago: From a dye workshop and a tofu store to a rice field and a rural train. They have so far posted around thirty YouTube videos, "digitally archiving" small businesses by transforming everyday scenes through the ambient tracks of a DJ. The two founders of the collective say they developed a special sensitivity to this heritage because of their backgrounds: Jun Kim is of Korean origin and Rihito Mizoguchi lived in the United States for many years. "Sometimes when you're too close to something, it becomes normalised to you, and your appreciation for that thing tends to



DJ Zendo performs a set as part of the Login.jp project as people bathe at the Electric Water Heater sauna in Sumida, Tokyo on April 12

dwindle," 21-year-old Kim told AFP. "We kind of wanted to re-highlight and bring those experiences to people who are living amongst these businesses and cultures on a day-to-day basis." Through their project called The Shoten ("small shop"), they also hope to use music to reconnect young people with the local community. Rihito, 20, explained that being teenagers during the COVID pandemic — when most nightclubs were closed — shaped their musical culture. Once everything opened up again, he and his friends were looking for experiences purely focused on music, he said, and were not drawn to club culture which he sees "as more of a party base". Beyond Mount Fuji The collective posted their first video on YouTube in early 2025, shot in a fish market in Tokyo's Akabane district, known for its retro shopping arcades. To find a business willing to let them film, they had to bang on the doors of around 30 or 40 shops, said Kim. "Each neighbourhood has its own distinct community, and how they do things in that area, [so you have to] take time to speak with the owners, and learn about... the culture around what they do," he added. Kim said the project was

about getting "underneath that superficial layer of Japan" and going beyond "Tokyo Tower, Mount Fuji". Headphones on, 28-year-old DJ Zendo nods his head to the music at the bath — or sento — in Tokyo's Sumida ward, home to a number of traditional old downtown neighbourhoods. Bathers relax in the water and soak up the sounds. "In a typical club, you drink alcohol and chat with your friends, but here taking a bath puts you in a state where you really focus on the music," he said after his set. "It's a completely new approach." Disappearing buildings Bathhouse owner Katsuhiko Okubo admits he was wary at first. "A lot of people just want to hold events here," but "as we talked, I felt they were really trying to understand our living space". Okubo, 32, took over the Denki-yu bath, which has been in his family for four generations, after learning it was under threat of demolition. "Many buildings disappear almost overnight and become vacant lots, and then we neighbours find ourselves asking each other: 'What used to be here again?'" He believes the sento is one of the few spaces where people learn "kyozai", the act of "coexisting and tolerating one another's presence" without necessarily exchanging a word. "There are customers who have been coming here forever. It's a generation that lived without social media, these elderly people teach us the art of being together." The Login.jp collective says it wants to help the public discover the stories of small businesses like Okubo's — and it seems they're making an impact. One clip filmed in a neighbourhood stationery shop has been viewed more than 2 million times. Afterwards, the owner said they'd "had a bunch of new customers come in... just to look around and hear his stories", Kim said. "For sure, we are making some sort of impact... that's maybe not direct sales, but just kind of gathering people to appreciate these spaces a little bit more."