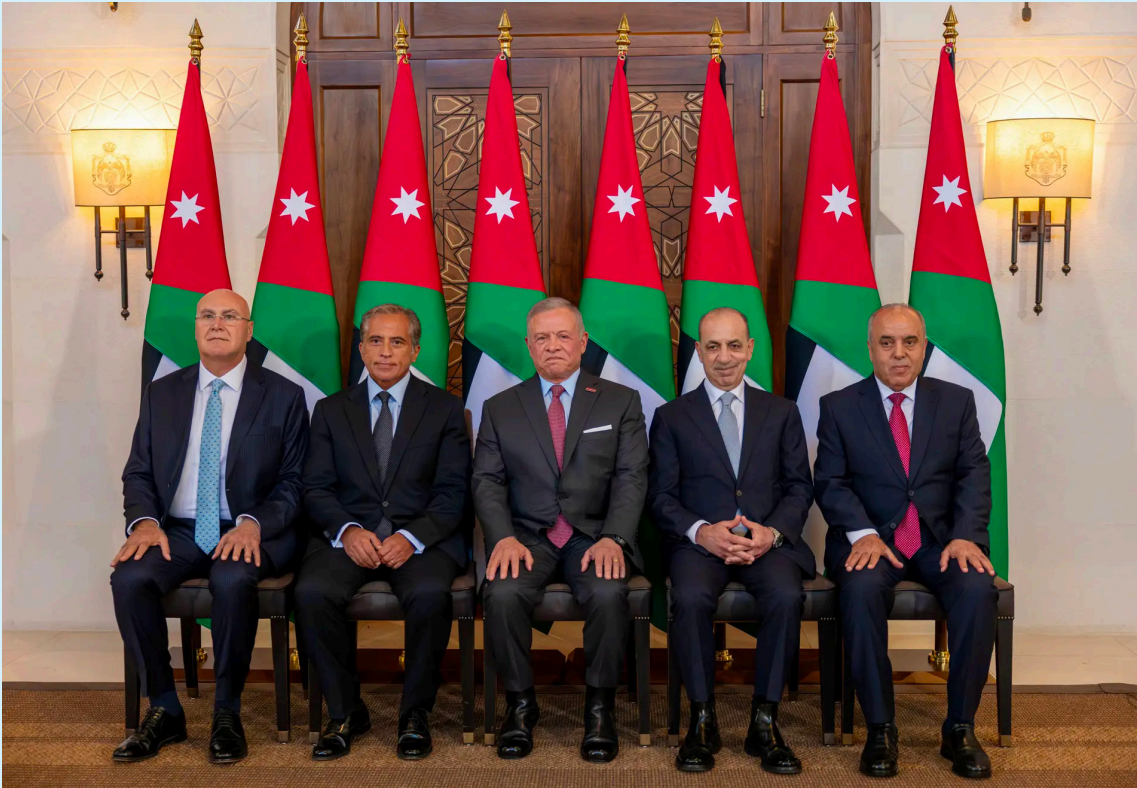




Royal Decree approves reshuffle of PM Hassan's Cabinet

AMMAN (JT) — A Royal Decree was issued on Tuesday, approving a reshuffle of Prime Minister Jafar Hassan's Cabinet.

The Royal Decree approved the appointment of the following:

Walid Masri as deputy

prime minister and minister of local administration.

Muhammad Shehadeh as deputy prime minister and minister of state for economic affairs.

Azmi Mahafzah as minister of education and human resource development.

The ministers were sworn in before His Majesty King Abdullah.

Prime Minister Jafar Hassan and Royal Hashemite Court Chief Yousef Issawi attended the swearing-in.

Another Royal Decree was issued, approving the resignation of Walid Masri as minister of local administration, Muhammad Shehadeh as minister of state for economic affairs, Azmi Mahafzah as minister of education and scientific research, as of 11 August 2026.

King receives US Congress staffers

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Tuesday received a delegation of United States Congress staff, according to a Royal Court statement.

The meeting, held at Al Husseiniya Palace and attended by HRH Crown Prince Hussein, covered the strategic partnership between Jordan and the US and ways of strengthening it in a number of areas, as well as regional developments.

His Majesty emphasised the need to achieve regional comprehensive de-escalation and to ensure the security of Arab states, the statement said.

The King warned of the dangers of Israel's unilateral measures against Palestinians in the West Bank, annexation of land and expansion of settlements, underscoring the need to put an end to Israeli violations of Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, Director of the Office of His Majesty Alaa Batayneh, Jordan's Ambassador to the United States Dina Kawar and United States' Ambassador to Jordan James Holtsnider attended the meeting.



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

His Majesty King Abdullah on Tuesday receives a delegation of United States Congress staff

Jordan hosts regional military meeting on border security

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Armed Forces – Arab Army (JAF) hosted a high-level military meeting on Tuesday with senior commanders from Syria, Iraq and Iraq's Kurdistan Region to discuss regional and border security amid growing security challenges.

The meeting brought together chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, Maj. Gen. Yousef Ahmed Huneiti, chiefs of staff of the Syrian and Iraqi armies and Iraq's Kurdistan regional government minister of Peshmerga affairs, according to a JAF statement.

The participants discussed regional and border security, focusing on ways to strengthen military coordination and cooperation in confronting cross-border threats and other security risks.

They stressed the importance of maintaining communication and exchanging information and expertise to improve their ability to respond effectively to emerging challenges, the statement said.

They also underlined that the region's evolving security situation requires closer coordination and joint, sustained efforts to protect borders, counter security threats and safeguard the countries' security and sovereignty, calling for expanding existing military and security cooperation to enhance preparedness and the ability to address both current and future challenges.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Huneiti met with the commander of US Central Command and discussed military cooperation and coordination, the latest regional developments, current security challenges, and joint efforts to strengthen regional security and stability.

The meeting is part of Jordan's efforts to strengthen ties with the region's armed forces and expand channels of military coordination and communication, particularly in addressing shared security challenges and protecting borders, the statement said.



JAF photo

Jordan Armed Forces – Arab Army (JAF) hosts a high-level military meeting on Tuesday with senior commanders from Syria, Iraq and Iraq's Kurdistan Region to discuss regional and border security



AFP via Getty Images

Israeli tanks take position on the border with Syria near the village of Majdal Shams in the Israel-occupied Golan Heights on December 8, 2024

Jordan condemns Colombia's recognition of Israeli sovereignty over occupied Golan Heights

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan on Tuesday condemned Colombia's announcement recognising Israel's sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, saying the move violates international law and United Nations resolutions.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected the Colombian decision and stressed that the Golan Heights is an integral part of Syrian territory under international law and UN Security Council Resolution 497, adopted in 1981.

The ministry Spokesperson Fouad Majali condemned Israel's continued attacks and incursions into Syrian territory, calling on the international community to uphold its responsibilities under international law and UN resolutions.

He urged the international community to pressure Israel to halt "provocative and unlawful attacks against Syria and to end its occupation of Syrian territory.

Majali also reaffirmed Jordan's long-standing support for Syria's reconstruction in a manner that preserves the country's unity, sovereignty, security, stability and territorial integrity, while safeguarding the rights of all Syrians.

The United States was until now the only country to recognise Israel's annexation of the territory in 1981.

Colombian President Abelardo de la Espriella took power on Friday, following a bombastic campaign during which he promised tight relations with the US and Israel as a way to combat armed groups in his own country, according to AFP.

"The Government of Colombia recognises Israeli sovereignty over this territory, as well as that State's right to protect itself against external threats," read a statement published on X.

"Colombia recognises that maintaining Israel's control and sovereignty over the Golan Heights is an essential component of its national defense," it added.

The United Nations maintains that the plateau is Syrian territory under Israeli military occupation.

Syria sentences Bashar Assad to death in absentia over atrocities

DAMASCUS (AFP) — A Syrian court on Tuesday sentenced former ruler Bashar Assad to death after a trial in absentia, convicting him of atrocities committed during the country's nearly 14-year civil war.

It is the first such ruling under Syria's transitional leaders who ousted Assad in December 2024, vowing to provide justice and accountability for crimes committed under his rule.

Assad fled to Moscow as Islamist-led forces closed in on Damascus after a lightning offensive.

At a court in Damascus on Tuesday, Judge Fakhr Al Din Al Aryan convicted Assad of crimes including "premeditated murder, the intentional killing of more than one person, the intentional killing of children under 15 years... torture, torture leading to death and deprivation of liberty on multiple occasions — classified as crimes against humanity and war crimes".

"He is therefore sentenced to death," the judge said.

Syria in April began proceedings against Assad and other officials accused in person and in absentia of atrocities during the country's civil war, which erupted with brutal repression of pro-democracy protesters by the former authorities.

More than half-a-million people were subsequently killed and millions displaced, while tens of thousands disappeared, many into the country's prison system.

The court also sentenced six former military and security officials in absentia to death, including Assad's brother Maher, who ran the army's elite Fourth Division.

'Warmed our hearts'

Those convicted included former defence minister Fahd Al Freij and Louay Al Ali, who headed military intelligence in Daraa province in 2011.

The court convicted the officials of crimes including murder, incitement to murder, torture leading to death and repeated deprivation of liberty, also considered "crimes against humanity" and "war crimes".

Continued on page 5



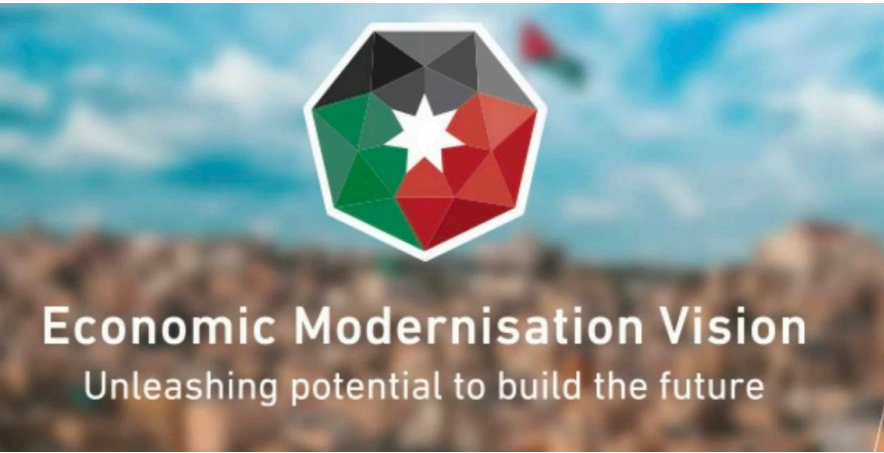
AFP photo

Syrians carry the pictures of their relatives, who were killed during the country's civil war, as they celebrate in front of the Palace of Justice after the court proceedings, in Damascus on Tuesday

The United Nations maintains that the plateau is Syrian territory under Israeli military occupation

Colombia's newly appointed hard-right government on Monday recognised Israel's claim over the Golan Heights, which it captured from Syria in 1967, AFP reported.

Continued on page 5



42,078 littering violations registered in H1 2026 — report

AMMAN (JT) — The 2026-2029 Economic Modernisation Vision's (EMV) Executive Programme reported progress during the first half of this year in cutting pollution, managing waste, adapting to climate change and advancing the circular economy.

In the January-June period of 2026, authorities logged 42,078 littering violations, conducted 1,300 cleanup campaigns, and sorted 1,390 tonnes of waste, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The government also rolled out a public cleanliness plan to clear litter from forests, parks, highways, and archaeological sites, supported by educational campaigns on social media.

Recycling operations expanded across several commercial districts in Amman.

In the capital's Sweifieh neighbourhood, outreach campaigns reached 246 commercial establishments alongside tenders to build local recycling banks.

Community engagement campaigns wrapped up across Tlaa Al Ali, Tariq and Ras Al Ain, marked

by the rollout of a pilot waste-sorting collection system in Ras Al Ain.

Meanwhile, equipment manufacturing and site preparation began for the East Amman Transformation Station, and 3,300 waste-sorting bins were distributed to Al Wasatiyah Municipality, according to the EMV report.

In Aqaba, foundation work began on the Creative Circular Economy Centre to reduce carbon footprints and improve resource efficiency, while the newly launched Blue Economy Innovation Centre aims to drive sustainable marine entrepreneurship.

Also, a tender was awarded for a boat pier at the Marine Research Centre and Aquarium project, where master planning is complete and structural design is under way.

To enhance climate resilience, the programme trained 3,722 students across Karak, Tafleh, and Maan on climate adaptation and water management, where 50 agricultural extension agents received training on climate-smart farming alongside 80 digital tablets to streamline field

data collection.

In coastal and rural communities, 200 women underwent climate adaptation training, and 60 officials were trained on weather data and early warning systems.

The Jordan Meteorological Department also partnered with the UK Met Office to train 20 staff members on numerical weather prediction.

Community-level resilience measures included simulation exercises in Ramtha and targeted disaster risk reduction assessments in the Azraq Refugee Camp.

To position domestic industries for low-carbon exports, the programme delivered technical support and training to industrial firms aiming to launch sustainable products.

Ongoing policy initiatives include surveying market demand for green products among small- and medium-sized enterprises, reviewing regulatory frameworks for electric and hybrid vehicle batteries, and drafting legislation to phase out single-use plastics in favour of sustainable alternatives.

Recent attack on Disi pipeline wastes 5,000 cubic metres of water — official

AMMAN (JT) — Attacks on water resources and main conveyance pipelines represent a recurring and exhausting challenge to the water sector, directly impacting the consistency of supply across the Kingdom, an official said on Tuesday.

Speaking to Al Mamla-ka TV, Ministry of Water and Irrigation Spokesperson Omar Salameh noted that the latest violation targeted the Disi water conveyance pipeline in the Jafer area, resulting in the loss of some 5,000 cubic metres of water.

The spokesperson underscored that the attack affected several air release valves used to regulate pressure along the Disi pipeline, spread across distances of up to 25 kilometres, adding that technical crews are working continuously to repair the damage and halt further water loss.

Salameh stressed that the ministry is seeking a technical solution without suspending pumping from the Disi system, as a full shutdown would lead to water supply cuts in Amman and several other areas for several days.

The Disi system conveys water over a distance of 450 kilometres with a daily capacity of nearly 300,000 cubic metres, he highlighted, warning that continued violations might force the ministry to adjust distribution schedules.

A complete shutdown of the system would severely impact vast areas in Amman and Zarqa, Salameh said, reassur-



A recent photo of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation shows the latest violation that targeted the Disi Water Conveyance Pipeline in the Jafer area, resulting in the loss of some 5,000 cubic metres of water

ing that technical teams are currently reducing pressure at specific points until the issue is rectified and scheduled preventive maintenance is conducted at the end of the year.

Regarding broader enforcement efforts, Salameh said that the ministry has uncovered multiple violations against water sources in various areas, seizing

illegal wells and confiscating equipment used in these acts.

Attacks on the Disi system have surged dramatically since its inception, recording 37 violations at the start of operations, rising to 307 in 2015, and reaching 1,853 during 2025, he pointed out.

The financial burden of the wasted water falls directly on the

Treasury, Salameh said, adding that the ministry prepares official violation reports, confiscates equipment, and refers cases to the Public Prosecution for investigation and court proceedings.

Although some perpetrators are serving prison terms and paying fines running into hundreds of thousands of dinars, Salameh said that these penal-

ties "remain insufficiently strict and lack deterrence".

He urged harsher sanctions against violators, arguing that attacks on water infrastructure in Jordan must be treated as a matter of "economic security and national water security", particularly given the Kingdom's acute water scarcity and structural deficit.

Cultural exchange in Jordan flourishes despite war scares

By Kian Moghaddas

AMMAN — Each year, Jordan welcomes millions of international visitors, many of whom come not only to see its ancient sites and natural landscapes, but also to experience the country and its culture through interactions with local communities.

Despite a 3.6 per cent decline in visitor numbers during the first two

months of 2026, according to official data from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, cultural exchange continues to thrive, with visitors and Jordanians alike finding value in meaningful connections despite the region's uncertain circumstances.

Meredith Gallagher, a student at the University of London, chose to come to Amman this summer despite her university

offering an online study option, which the majority of students opted for.

"Something I have really valued about my experience here has been the opportunity to stay with a host family. My Arabic may have improved from home, but I would not have learned anything about Arab culture. I know that when I come back, I will be treated as part of the family."

For locals, the chal-

lenges facing the tourism sector have been evident, but so too has the continued interest of those who make the journey to Jordan.

Speaking to The Jordan Times, Yusef Zalabieh, a tour guide in Wadi Rum, noted the decline in visitor numbers, saying that many camps have remained empty for several nights this summer.

"In the past, this would rarely happen. People would come every night and stay for several nights. There was no such thing as staying for one night only," he said.

Yet, for those who do arrive, the experience remains deeply meaningful.

"The people who come are always amazed. I teach them about the constellations and their significance to Bedouin culture. Visitors are always very curious because there are not many places in the world where

this kind of traditional Bedouin way of life still exists," he added.

Solenn Deuxenne, who regularly comes to Jordan for research, has visited Wadi Rum eight times and is familiar with several guides there.

"The first time I went there were around 30 people staying in the camp, but on the most recent visit our group was the only one. I keep going back to that camp because I've come to know that family, and I am always eager to find out what has happened in their lives since I was last there."

For visitors like Gallagher and Deuxenne, and for communities such as those in Wadi Rum, cultural exchange is about more than tourism. It is built through personal connections, shared experiences and relationships that can continue long after visitors leave Jordan.

Jordanian youth literacy rate reaches 99.3% — DoS

AMMAN (JT) — The literacy rate among Jordanian youth aged 15-24 has risen to 99.3 per cent, where 34.8 per cent hold a secondary education qualification.

According to a statement issued by the Department of Statistics (DoS) on Tuesday, cited by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, ahead of World Youth Day on Wednesday, findings from the 2024 Household Information and Communications Technology Usage and Penetration Survey showed an increase in computer use among the youth.

Among those aged 15-19, 70.1 per cent use computers, including 67.3 per cent of males and 73.3 per cent of females. Among those aged 20-24, the rate stood at 50.1 per cent overall, including 47.1 per cent of males and 54 per cent of females.

The results also showed high levels of Internet use among young people. Among those aged 15-19, Internet use reached 99.7 per cent among males and 99.4 per cent among females.

For those aged 20-24, the rates stood at 99.5 per cent among males and 99.6 per cent among females.

The revised economic participation rate among Jordanians aged 15-24 in 2025 stood at 21 per cent overall, including 30.9 per cent among males and 9.2 per cent among females.

The 2025 Labour Force Survey also showed that 4.1 per cent of Jordanian youth aged 15-24 were married, while 95.7 per cent were single.

The 2024 New Employment Opportunities Survey showed that young Jordanians aged 15-24 accounted for 39.9



The Department of Statistics on Tuesday, ahead of World Youth Day on Wednesday, says that among those aged 15-19, Internet use reached 99.7 per cent among males and 99.4 per cent among females

per cent of newly created jobs, while 15.7 per cent left their jobs.

Net newly created employment opportunities for Jordanian youth accounted for 63.9 per cent of the total, indicating significant entry into the labour market among this age group compared with other age groups.

World Youth Day falls on Wednesday, August 12. The United Nations established the observance in 1991 and defines youth, for statistical purposes, as people aged 15-24.

The day aims to raise global awareness of youth issues and empower young people to play their vital role in society by highlighting their energy, creative ideas and impactful innovations, according to DoS.

The statement said that investing in the potential of Jordanian youth and enabling them to engage actively in various fields of work is a strategic priority given the country's limited natural resources.

Human capital, with young people comprising its largest segment, represents a key pillar

of national development, said the statement, adding that such investment contributes to building an advanced society based on innovation, participation and entrepreneurship as foundations for sustainable growth.

According to the distribution of youth aged 15-24 by governorate and gender in 2025, the geographic distribution of young people was broadly consistent with the overall population distribution.

Amman Governorate accounted for around 41.6 per cent of the total youth population, followed by Irbid at 19.1 per cent and Zarqa at 14.2 per cent.

The proportions in the remaining governorates ranged between 1 per cent and 5.7 per cent. The sex ratio among youth stood at 116 males per 100 females.

Population estimates prepared by DoS indicate that around one-fifth of Jordan's population is aged 15-24, with some 2.3 million young people out of an estimated total population of 11.9 million at the end of 2025.



A tourist camp in Wadi Rum

Photos by Kian Moghaddas

Lebanese president receives Jordanian parliamentary delegation in Beirut

Aoun commends Jordan, King Abdullah for supporting Lebanon, Palestinian cause

AMMAN (JT) — A Jordanian parliamentary delegation headed by Lower House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Haitham Zyadine on Tuesday met with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun to discuss ways to strengthen cooperation across various fields.

During the meeting, Aoun praised Jordan's support for Lebanon under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah, highlighting the deep-rooted and historic ties between the two countries and the broad prospects for further cooperation.

He also commended King Abdullah's efforts in support of the Palestinian cause, stressing their pivotal role in advancing the cause internationally and supporting the Pales-



A Jordanian parliamentary delegation headed by Lower House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Haitham Zyadine on Tuesday meets with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun

tinian people's right to establish an independent state.

The president also stressed the importance of the Hashemite custodianship over Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, and its role in preserving the city's religious and historical identity

AT A GLANCE

Safadi, US Congress staff delegation discuss cooperation



AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Tuesday received a delegation of US Congress staff. Safadi and the delegation reviewed strategic bilateral ties between Jordan and the United States, and prospects for their further development, according to a Foreign Ministry statement. Talks also covered regional developments and efforts aimed at ending escalation, restoring calm, and bolstering security and stability in the region.

Army thwarts drug smuggling attempts using balloons



AMMAN (JT) — The Eastern Military Region on Tuesday foiled two separate attempts to smuggle large quantities of narcotics using guided balloons along the Kingdom's border, according to the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF). Border Guard units detected and intercepted the balloons and shot them down inside Jordanian territory, seizing their cargo in coordination with military security agencies and the Anti-Narcotics Department, the JAF said. The seized items were handed over to the competent authorities for further legal action. The JAF said the interceptions demonstrate the readiness and capability of Border Guard units to detect and thwart smuggling operations and respond swiftly to evolving tactics used by smuggling networks. The JAF reaffirmed that Jordan's borders remain impenetrable to attempts at infiltration or de-stabilisation, and that it will respond firmly to any threat to the Kingdom's security and territorial integrity.

All Jordanians in Colombia safe following deadly earthquake — FM



AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates on Tuesday said all Jordanians in Colombia are safe following the earthquake that struck the country, urging them to exercise utmost caution and comply with instructions issued by the relevant authorities. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Fouad Majali reaffirmed that the ministry, through its Operations and Consular Affairs Directorate and the Jordanian Embassy in Brazil, is following up on providing the necessary assistance and support to all Jordanians in Colombia. He extended the Kingdom's deepest condolences to the government and people of Colombia and the families of the victims of the earthquake. A magnitude 7.4 earthquake struck western Colombia on Monday, killing at least 111 people, toppling dozens of buildings and reverberating in nearby countries too. Emergency teams rushed to help victims and search for survivors under the rubble after the quake hit the coastal Choco region at 7:34am local time. The earthquake was centred about 100 kilometres beneath the municipality of San José del Palmar, according to AFP.



The MoU was signed at the Ministry of Labour by Minister of Transport and Labour Nidal Qatamin and Libyan Minister of Labour Ali Ridha

Jordan, Libya sign MoU to boost cooperation in labour sector

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan and Libya on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in the labour sector, particularly in vocational training, employment and labour legislation.

The MoU was signed at the Ministry of Labour by Minister of Transport and Labour Nidal Qatamin and Libyan Minister of Labour Ali Ridha, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The signing was attended by Libyan Ambassador to Jordan Mousa Dgali, ministry Secretary-General Abdulhalim Dojan and Director General of the Vocational Training Corporation Raafat Sawafin.

Qatamin highlighted the strong ties between Jordan and Libya, reiterating Jordan's commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation in the labour sector in a way that serves the two countries' mutual interests.

He said that the agreement provides a framework for exchanging expertise in employment and labour legislation and promotes cooperation in vocational training, trainer qualification and career guidance.

Ridha expressed Libya's interest in expanding areas of partnership with Jordan, saying the MoU would open new avenues for cooperation in vocational training, labour inspection, occupational safety and health, and employment.

During the meeting, Qatamin briefed Ridha and the accompanying delegation on the ministry's initiatives to regulate the labour market, including the National Employment Programme, the Productive Branches Initiative and the national employment platform "Sajjil".

Aqaba transit container traffic surges 160.8% in first seven months of 2026 — official

Regional shipping shifts boost Aqaba's role as a transit hub for Iraq

AMMAN (JT) — Transit container traffic through the port of Aqaba surged by 160.8 per cent in the first seven months of 2026, driven by regional developments and shifts in international shipping routes, the Jordan Shipping Association said on Tuesday.

Mohammad Dalabieh, secretary-general of the association, said operational data for the January-July period showed a "significant" shift in regional trade patterns, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

The number of transit containers handled through Aqaba reached 80,235, up from 30,763 during the same period in 2025, an increase of 49,472 containers.

Transit containers bound for Iraq recorded the sharpest increase, soaring by 933.1 per cent to 37,182 containers from 3,599 in the same period last year.

Total container handling at the port also increased by 3.2 per cent to 574,582 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), compared with



The Jordan Shipping Association says on Tuesday that transit container traffic through the port of Aqaba surged by 160.8 per cent in the first seven months of 2026, driven by regional developments and shifts in international shipping routes

556,843 TEUs in the previous year.

Refrigerated transit containers rose by 546.8 per cent, from 936 TEUs to 6,054 TEUs, while total incoming refrigerated containers increased by 20.9 per cent to 22,572 TEUs.

To accommodate the increased demand, the port expanded its power plug-in capacity for refrigerated containers from around 700 to approximately 1,000 plugs.

Bulk commodities also recorded significant growth, particularly food-security items. Corn shipments increased by 89.2 per cent to 778,055 tonnes, barley by 49.4 per cent to 761,167 tonnes, wheat by 12.5 per cent to 616,643 tonnes and soybeans by 80.9 per cent to 331,562 tonnes.

Combined shipments of the four commodities reached 2.49 million tonnes, up 50.6 per cent year-on-year.

The increase in maritime traffic was also reflected in land transport through the Karameh-Treibil border crossing, where truck traffic rose by 131.2 per cent to 229,997 trucks from 99,491 during the same period last year.

Outbound loaded trucks to Iraq increased by 148.9 per cent, while inbound empty trucks rose by 148 per cent.

Dalabieh stressed the importance of maintaining the port's operational capacity and infrastructure to sustain Aqaba's competitiveness as a regional logistics hub amid continued shifts in navigation routes through the Bab Al Mandab Strait and regional transhipment ports.

Lower House passes 2026 amendments to Accreditation and Quality Assurance law

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — The Lower House on Tuesday approved the 2026 draft Accreditation and Quality Assurance Law after debate over the powers of the accreditation commission and safeguards governing its decisions.

During a session chaired by Lower House Speaker Mazen Oadi and attended by members of the Cabinet, the Council approved Articles 7 to 22 of the draft law, following its approval of Articles 1 to 6 on Sunday.

The House approved provisions outlining the



The Lower House on Tuesday approves the 2026 draft Accreditation and Quality Assurance Law

powers of the commission's council, including accrediting educational institutions and programmes, classifying programmes, determining enrolment capacities and forming committees to assist it in carrying out its duties.

Several lawmakers argued that the broad powers assigned to the council should be accompanied by clearer procedures for challenging its decisions.

Proposals were put

forward to establish an independent grievances committee, require the council to issue reasoned decisions and introduce clearer guidelines for evaluation and accreditation committees. The House rejected the proposals.

Commission President Dhafer Sarayreh said that institutions are informed of deficiencies identified by evaluation committees and are given an opportunity to respond before the commission takes action.

He said the commission's existing instructions and regulations also provide institu-

tions with mechanisms to object to decisions, adding that evaluation committees draw on specialised experts from inside and outside Jordan.

The discussion also centred on conflict-of-interest provisions governing the commission's chairman and council members.

The House approved a provision restricting the chairman and council members, as well as their spouses and first-degree relatives, from owning or holding shares in educational and training institutions covered by the legislation.

The debate over the bill also covered the commission's role in accrediting institutions and programmes, ensuring quality standards and dealing with foreign educational institutions and qualifications.

Sarayreh said the commission has, in recent years, expanded its engagement with international accreditation bodies and its role in accrediting institutions in neighbouring countries.

The legislation also requires the commission to prepare and publish a report every two years on the state

of education and training in Jordan after its approval by the council.

The law brings together accreditation and quality assurance functions for education and training under a unified national framework and seeks to strengthen oversight of institutions and programmes and improve the quality of educational outcomes.

It also regulates the commission's role in recognising educational qualifications and institutions, and supports closer alignment between education and training outcomes and labour market needs.

117 inmates pass 2026 Tawjihi exam — PSD

AMMAN (JT) — Public Security Directorate (PSD) Director Maj. Gen. Obeidallah Maaytah has instructed the director of the Correction and Rehabilitation Centres Depart-

ment to honour 117 inmates who successfully passed the 2026 General Secondary Education Certificate Examination (Tawjihi).

Maaytah said that the PSD has adopted

a comprehensive rehabilitation approach for inmates, helping them lead normal lives during their time in correctional centres and after their release.

He noted that the

success of 117 inmates, including one who scored 92.15 per cent, reflects the effectiveness of educational rehabilitation programmes that enable inmates to contin-

ue their studies while serving their sentences and support their reintegration into society after release.

Maaytah commended staff at the Correction and Re-

habilitation Centres Department for their efforts in implementing rehabilitation policies, particularly educational programmes, and stressed the need to find new ways to

help successful inmates pursue further academic and vocational studies in cooperation with relevant institutions.

A total of 231 inmates sat for this

year's Tawjihi examination, with 117 passing, recording a 56 per cent success rate, the highest since the exam was first held at correctional and rehabilitation centres.



The navigation bridge of a sunken vessel is all that is seen at the surface of the water in the Port of Mokha the day after an attack by the Houthis on the city Mokha, held by Yemen’s internationally recognised, Aden-based government on Monday

Casualties reported after ship struck by ‘unknown projectile’ in Red Sea — UK maritime agency

DUBAI (AFP) — A cargo vessel was hit by a projectile near the Bab Al Mandeb Strait off the coast of southern Yemen, causing an unspecified number of casualties, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UK-

MTO) reported on Tuesday. “It has been reported that a cargo vessel in the southern Red Sea has been hit by an unknown projectile resulting in casualties,” said the agency in a statement.

The statement came as a Yemeni coast guard source in the southern city of Mokha said a ship near the strait had been struck by the Houthis, killing three members of the crew. “We managed to rescue the rest of the crew,”

the source added. A second source confirmed the incident, saying the ship had also been struck by a second projectile during the rescue operation, but that source did not provide the number of casualties.

Trump secretly flew out of Turkey on smaller plane — Washington Post

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US President Donald Trump secretly flew out of Turkey last month on a smaller plane than previously known due to an assassination threat from Iran, the Washington Post reported Monday. According to an anonymous US official who spoke to the Post, Trump boarded an Air Force One jet in Ankara on July 8, but then moved into a catering container attached to the plane.

The container then ferried him to a smaller C-32A aircraft that flew him to Britain, while media and some officials were led to believe Trump was still on the bigger jet. The Iranian threat had previously been reported by US media as the reason that Trump did not fly out of Turkey aboard the new Boeing 747-8, gifted to the United States by Qatar, which he had used to fly into the country. Trump, who was in Ankara for a NATO summit, said at the time he would be taking the older Boeing 747 so that members of the US military at an airbase in Britain could tour the new plane. However, several US media outlets, including The New York Times, reported that a threat from



Air Force One sits on the tarmac with an airport catering container adjacent to the body of the aircraft on July 8, in Ankara, Turkey

Iranian proxy forces had prompted the switch. Journalists on the old plane out of Ankara were also told to keep their window blinds down — a step normally reserved for war zones — furthering suspicions of security concerns. The plane swap prompted renewed scrutiny of the Qatar-gifted jet, which the Times reported did not have the same security features as the older jet, including anti-missile defenses. Qatar’s royal family donated the luxury airliner last year after Trump complained about the state of the two aging Boeing 747 jets that had served as Air Force One since 1990. The plane was then rapidly retrofitted and

flew Trump for the first time on July 1, to North Dakota. Just days later, he took it on its first overseas trip to Turkey. When queried by AFP about the Washington Post report, the White House sent a statement defending the new plane’s safety. “The new Air Force One is a state-of-the-art aircraft that has been fitted with high-level security protocols that ensure the safety of the President and his staff,” Communications Director Steven Cheung said in the statement. “As the President has said recently, there are many enemies of America who have their sights on him, and we use every tool at our disposal to address those threats.”

The same statement had been used by the White House last month when questions about the aircraft’s safety first surfaced. Video in The Washington Post’s report shows a catering truck lowering from the older Air Force One jet, minutes after Trump walked up stairs into the plane. The catering vehicle can then be seen transiting in the distance to the smaller C-32A aircraft. After both planes landed in the United Kingdom, Trump was videotaped coming down the steps from the larger jet, before making his way to the new retrofitted Air Force One. It was unclear how he had made the transfer back to the larger plane, the Post said.

‘Nearly 40,000’ displaced following Mali fighting surge

DAKAR (AFP) — Nearly 40,000 people have fled their homes in northern and central Mali due to a surge in clashes and bombardments, AFP learned on Tuesday from humanitarian, local and security sources. Attacks in Mali have intensified following a major April offensive by a coalition of jihadists and separatists, which took the northern city of Kidal and killed the country’s defence minister. Among other fighting, the Tuareg separatist FLA and the Al Qaeda-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and

Muslims (JNIM) briefly captured the town of Anefis in fierce fighting in early July. “Thousands of people have arrived in towns like Gao and Menaka [in the north] following the events of April 25 and the recent clashes in the Anefis area”, the head of a humanitarian NGO, requesting anonymity for security reasons, told AFP. A social development official, also speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP that “nearly 40,000 people” have been displaced, with “around 15,000 finding refuge in the Gao and Menaka regions alone”.

In Gao, the largest city in northern Mali, a local official reported there being “more than 7,000 newly displaced people over the past three months”. According to the sources interviewed by AFP, the influx over such a short period occurred on a scale unprecedented in recent years. Moreover, for the past two weeks, the army has intensified its aerial bombardments in areas such as Tinzwatene in the Kidal region, “often destroying health centres and causing further population displacement”, a security source told AFP on Tuesday.

Car bomb kills Haftar intel chief in eastern Libya

TRIPOLI (AFP) — The head of military intelligence for the Libyan National Army (LNA), which controls the east and parts of southern Libya, has been killed in a car bombing, the army said in a statement on Tuesday. Fawzi Al Mansouri was assassinated on Monday when an explosive stuck to his car detonated as he was leaving a local mosque at night, the statement said. Reports said the killing occurred in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi. Libya has remained divided since being plunged into war during the ousting in 2011 of former leader Muammar Qadhafi. Two governments are currently vying for power: the UN-recognised administration in Tripoli led by Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, and a rival in Benghazi backed by military commander and LNA chief Khalifa Haftar. The bombing was a setback to efforts by the Haftars to paint a picture of stability in the areas they control. “An attack of this sophistication in a LNA stronghold is also a major blow to the group’s security credentials,” Hamish Kinnear, an analyst with UK-based Verisk Maplecroft, told AFP. “The intelligence re-

14 miners killed, several hurt in disused S.Africa mine

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — A rockfall at an illegal mine northwest of Johannesburg killed 14 miners, most of them from Lesotho, with several hurt and others possibly still stuck underground, police said on Tuesday. Thousands of unregistered miners known as “zama zamas” operate in South Africa, scavenging abandoned mines for gold and other minerals in arduous and often perilous conditions. “Fourteen illegal miners, mostly Basothos, died during a rockfall,” police spokeswoman Colonel Adele Myburgh said. “Eight others were hospitalised and an unknown number of illegal miners are currently possibly stuck under the ground. Police are on the scene, and the scene is still active,” she said in a statement.

Officials were at the site of the disaster at Nkaneng, near the town of Rustenburg nearly 100 kilometres northwest of Johannesburg, an area of the North West province where there are several established platinum mines. The incident was reported late Monday, Myburgh said. Unregulated miners working in South Africa come from several countries across the region, driven by poverty and unemployment, and the sector has been linked to organised crime, assassinations, extortion and other illegal activities. “It’s not safe where they work in any way. So it’s one of those situations where they had a rockfall,” Myburgh told AFP.



South African Police Service (SAPS) officers walk on outside a mine shaft in Nkaneng near Marikana on Tuesday

“They go into discarded mine shafts ... it’s so dilapidated, there’s no infrastructure, there’s no safety measures in place,” she said. President Cyril Ramaphosa in February announced the deployment of the army to help police fight illegal mining, with the activity contributing to major infrastructure damage in some areas.

‘Death traps’

Reacting to the incident, the South African Federation of Trade Unions said it had repeatedly warned that the country had allowed its “thousands of abandoned, derelict and

inadequately secured mines to become death traps, environmental hazards and breeding grounds for organised criminal syndicates”. There were around 6,000 derelict and ownerless mines and abandoned mining sites in South Africa, it said in a statement. “The Nkaneng tragedy once again demonstrates the terrible human price of failing to confront the crisis comprehensively,” it said. The area where the rockfall occurred was owned by Sibanye, a global mining and metals processing group, police said.

Around 90 clandestine miners lost their lives nearly two years ago when police blocked a disused gold mine near the town of Stilfontein, west of Johannesburg, for weeks from August 2024 in a bid to drive out the illegal workers. Nearly 2,000 miners resurfaced in the weeks-long operation, many illegal immigrants from neighbouring countries including Lesotho and Mozambique. Police said on July 31 they had arrested 24 undocumented foreign nationals in the Stilfontein area in an operation against suspected illegal gold mining.

2.4 million girls banned from Afghan schools since Taliban return — UNESCO

PARIS, France (AFP) — Around 2.4 million girls in Afghanistan have been denied access to secondary education since the Taliban returned to power in 2021, the United Nations said on Tuesday, urging an end to such “discrimination”. The Taliban administration, recognised solely by Russia, has imposed a series of restrictions on women that the United Nations has characterised as “gender apartheid”. Girls cannot study beyond primary school, a policy the Taliban authorities justify based on their interpretation of Islamic law. The number of girls denied access to second-



An Afghan burqa-clad woman walks along a street in the Dand district of Afghanistan’s Kandahar on Tuesday

ary school has risen by 200,000 since last year and could reach nearly 4 million by 2030 if the ban persists, said the UN’s cultural and educa-

tional agency UNESCO. The UN agency called for the immediate restoration of their right to education and condemned the “discrimi-

nations against women and girls”. The Taliban government — who promised a softer rule after retaking power in August 2021 — have imposed sweeping restrictions on women, banning them from universities, public parks, gyms and beauty salons. Girls were barred from secondary schools in March 2022, with universities closed to young women later that year. “These restrictions are reversing two decades of progress in expanding access to education: While access to schooling for girls was severely limited in 2001, by 2021 nearly one million girls were enrolled in secondary education,” UNESCO said.

PSD launches e-money transfer service for correctional centres

AMMAN (JT) — The Public Security Directorate (PSD) has launched an electronic money transfer service for inmates at correction and rehabilitation centres, allowing their families to send funds remotely without having to visit the centres in person.

The new service, launched in cooperation with Jordan Post Company and Alawneh Exchange Company, is part of the PSD's efforts to expand electronic services, streamline procedures and advance digital transformation, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

Under the service, inmates' families can transfer money electronically securely and conveniently, subject



The Public Security Directorate (PSD) launches an electronic money transfer service for inmates at correction and rehabilitation centres

to a weekly limit of JD100 and the applicable regulations and instructions.

Jordan Post Company and Alawneh Ex-

change Company will receive the transfers on Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays each week and forward them to the relevant correction and rehabilitation centres.

The PSD said that direct deposits at correctional and rehabilitation centres will remain available to inmates' families, as before.

The service is part of a series of measures being implemented by the PSD to simplify procedures, improve service quality and enhance operational efficiency at correction and rehabilitation centres in line with modern practices.

The PSD said that the initiative reflects its continued efforts to develop its policing and rehabilitation services and provide modern electronic solutions that facilitate procedures for citizens and improve the speed and accuracy of transactions, ultimately enhancing services provided to inmates and their families.

Pereira, the ‘zombie city’ devastated by Colombia’s earthquake

By David Salazar
Agence France-Presse

PEREIRA, Colombia — Jorge Gonzalez searches with his bare hands for his aunt under the ruins of a four-story building in Pereira, one of the cities hardest hit by the powerful earthquake in Colombia that has left at least 240 dead.

Like hundreds of volunteers and rescuers, he has spent hours clinging to the faintest hope there may be survivors in the rubble, despite the 7.4 magnitude quake that struck this coffee capital on Monday morning.

The 35-year-old works tirelessly on a small mountain of rubble, but it is increasingly unlikely he will find the woman he considers a mother alive.

Amid slabs of wall and masonry, he

finds the bathroom “full of blood” on the floor where his aunt, 87-year-old Nubia Bonilla, lived.

‘We’ve been left with nothing. We lost everything’

“Since yesterday, I got here and I haven’t left. Until they give me the body, I’m not leaving this place,” Gonzalez tells AFP.

“She was all I had, and she’s gone. Now I’m all alone,” he adds,

tears in his eyes.

All around him, the death toll rises with each passing hour.

By daybreak, residents were returning to their damaged homes to salvage some belongings before they collapsed completely.

Water and some food items were already running short in supermarkets and shops.

Almost all of Pereira was left without electricity, and the cell network is patchy at best.

‘Zombie city’

The streets are littered with glass and chunks of brick.

It is a “zombie city”, says 30-year-old resident Juan David Gaitan.

For Jesus Pineros, this earthquake has left him homeless for the second time.

Three years ago, he arrived in Colombia

by bus, fleeing the crisis in neighbouring Venezuela.

But the house where he lived with his siblings and nephews was reduced to pieces by the quake.

“As migrants, we’ve already been through some tough things back in our own country, and you never imagine something like this would happen on top of that,” said the 28-year-old construction worker.

The family took refuge in a relative’s house that remained standing.

Several children sleep on mattresses along the sidewalk in front of the home.

They tried to spend the night inside, but the roof groaned and terrified them.

Hundreds of homes collapsed or are cracked.

On the streets there

are cars crushed by fallen walls and hanging power lines. Pineros sees the tragedy as a challenge for the family to rebuild their lives for the second time.

“We’re starting from the bottom. We have to get back up again just like everyone else,” he says.

Death and destruction

Stella Galvis recalls the moments of panic and the dust and how she ran with her child and husband seconds before her four-story building collapsed.

“We’ve been left with nothing. We lost everything,” says the accountant, who lived on the ground floor, in tears.

“We were saved by a miracle,” she adds.

Street vendor Maribel Verano, 46, is desperately searching for her missing mother and sister.

Both were in a small hotel that was reduced to rubble in a commercial area of the city.

Her mother, 72-year-old Luz Marina, recently suffered a thrombosis, and her sister Sandra, 38, ended up in a wheelchair because of meningitis.

“I hope to find them in good health,” the woman says, unable to hide her sadness.

She is overwhelmed by memories of other nightmare disasters, such as the massive earthquake that shook the same region in 1999 and left nearly 1,200 dead.

And another that she lived through as a child: the 1985 eruption of the Nevado del Ruiz volcano, which wiped out an entire town called Armero and left 25,000 dead.



This aerial view shows rescuers searching for survivors amid the rubble of a collapsed building after an earthquake in Cali, Colombia, on Tuesday

Syria sentences Bashar Assad to death in absentia over atrocities

Continued from page 1

Former security official Atif Najib — the only one in the dock — was sentenced to death for “crimes against humanity” committed when he was head of political security in Daraa province, the cradle of Syria’s uprising.

A cousin of Assad who was arrested in January last year, Najib was convicted of crimes including “the intentional killing of children under 15”, and “torture leading to death”.

Aryan said Najib had

denied the charges and showed “no remorse”.

An AFP correspondent saw dozens of people gathered at the courthouse for the ruling, many from Daraa province and some holding pictures of loved ones they said had disappeared or were imprisoned under those on trial.

Ramzi Abu Naboud was carrying a picture of his brother Ahmed, who was killed when Assad’s authorities broke up a sit-in at Daraa’s Al Omari mosque in 2011.

“Thank God and thanks

to the judiciary, today we have obtained a judgement that has warmed our hearts,” even if it will not bring back those who were killed, he said.

‘A test’

Syrian Justice Minister Mazhar Al Wais told state television that the rulings would be referred to Syria’s court of cassation for a final decision, adding that defendants had the right to appeal within 30 days.

In a series of trial sessions held since late April, the court heard from wit-

nesses and was presented with documents, images and at times classified information, while the judge’s statements were sometimes televised.

Syria’s national commission for transitional justice called the ruling against Najib “an important milestone in the process of accountability for grave crimes”.

Syria’s uprising against Assad began in Daraa in March 2011, after 15 students were arrested for allegedly writing anti-government slogans on the city’s walls.

Residents said the

students were tortured, leading to a protest demanding their release that ended in bloodshed.

Security personnel suppressed peaceful demonstrations with force and fired live ammunition to disperse sit-ins at several locations.

Najib was dismissed after the crackdown, as the protests spread to other provinces.

The Assad family ruled Syria for more than five decades, with Bashar taking the presidency in 2000 after the death of his father Hafez.

Ethiopia’s Tigray rebel authorities condemn army drone strikes

ADDIS ABABA (AFP) — Rebel authorities in Ethiopia’s Tigray region on Tuesday accused the federal government of carrying out deadly drone strikes in the northern region, denouncing “a serious escalation” amid fears of a new war.

Tensions have been growing for months, with federal and Tigrayan forces gathering on either side of the border of Ethiopia’s northernmost regional state.

Each side has accused the other of seeking to trigger a new conflict, less than four years after the end of a bloody war that killed hundreds of thousands of people.

“There was a drone strike carried out by the Ethiopian government yesterday (Monday) in Merewa” in southern Tigray, near the border with the Amhara region, Amanuel Assefa, vice chairman of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) told AFP.

A medical source at a hospital in Alimata told AFP that four Tigrayan fighters — a woman and three men — had been wounded in the strikes.

“Two of them have already undergone surgery,” the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

In a statement sent to AFP on Tuesday, the TPLF said the strikes targeted Tigrayan troops “causing human casualties”, without providing further details.

A spokesperson for the federal army has not yet responded to AFP’s request for comment regarding the accusation.

Amanuel also said that the strikes hit a

high school, which AFP was unable to independently verify.

On August 1, fighting broke out between federal forces and TPLF troops in northwestern Tigray, near the border with Sudan, according to the TPLF.

The federal government has not commented on the incident.

Tigray, home to around 6 million people, emerged in 2022 from a two-year war between TPLF forces and the federal army, supported by local militias and the Eritrean army.

The conflict claimed at least 600,000 lives, according to an African Union (AU) estimate.

A peace agreement signed in November 2022 put an end to the fighting, but several key points, such as the return of displaced people or the disarmament of the TPLF, have never been implemented.

Direct clashes between Tigrayan forces and the federal army broke out again in late 2025, for the first time since the signing of the peace deal.

Contacted by AFP about the TPLF drone strike claim, the AU, which mediated the peace deal and is based in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, had yet to comment.

Minister Abiy Ahmed initially sought rapprochement with Eritrea when he came to power, and the two governments cooperated against the Tigrayan rebels in the 2020-2022 conflict.

However, they fell out over the peace accord, from which Eritrea was excluded, and which stipulated the withdrawal of foreign soldiers.

Eritrea accuses landlocked Ethiopia of coveting its Red Sea port of Assab after years of Abiy insisting his country must have access to the sea through peaceful means.

Amanuel told AFP that he wants to form alliances with anyone fighting the Ethiopian federal government, but gave no further details.

According to statements gathered by Human Rights Watch and by AFP, rebel authorities in Tigray have for several months been carrying out a forced recruitment campaign.

World Health Organisation chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who comes from the Tigray region, on Sunday on X urged “the federal government and all regional leaders to choose dialogue over guns, and to pursue real political solutions”.

The TPLF effectively ruled the whole of Ethiopia for nearly 30 years until Abiy rose to power in 2018.

His government barred the TPLF from political activity last year, but it remains all-powerful in Tigray, with its own military.

At the end of April, the group said it had reinstated a regional parliament, which had been deemed illegitimate.

Rapprochement

For months, the federal authorities have accused the TPLF of growing closer to neighbouring Eritrea.

Relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea have long been fraught, and the two Horn of Africa countries fought a 1998-2000 border war in which tens of thousands died.

Ethiopian Prime

Israel, Venezuela renew consular ties after years of no diplomacy

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel and Venezuela announced on Tuesday that they had renewed consular relations 17 years after diplomatic ties were severed between the two countries.

The move comes after Israel sent an aid and disaster response delegation to Venezuela in June following devastating twin earthquakes that left thousands dead.

It also follows the United States’ toppling of Venezuela’s former leader Nicolas Maduro in a January military raid, with interim President Delcy Rodriguez now running the country under strong pressure from US President Donald Trump.

“Following talks held in recent weeks and days between Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar and Venezuelan Foreign Minister Felix Plasencia, Israel and Venezuela have agreed to renew consular relations,” a statement from Israel’s

foreign ministry said.

“The talks resulted in an agreement to establish a coordination mechanism that will enable the provision of consular services to citizens of both countries,” it added, noting the two nations “have not maintained diplomatic relations since 2009”.

Venezuela, together with Bolivia, broke diplomatic ties with Israel in January 2009 a few days after the start of an Israeli military offensive in the Gaza Strip

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a few days after the start of an Israeli military offensive in the Gaza Strip.

A joint statement by the governments of Israel and Venezuela on Tuesday said both recognised “the importance of the relationship between the State of Israel and the Jewish community residing in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which serves as an important bridge of historic friendship between the two countries”.

It added that the two countries agreed to “continue their bilateral technical co-operation stemming from the emergency response and reconstruction efforts following the double earthquake”.

On Monday, Venezuela updated the toll from the quakes, putting the number of dead at 6,301 as rescue teams and family members continued to sift through the rubble in search of more victims.

Jordan condemns Colombia’s recognition of Israeli sovereignty over occupied Golan Heights

Continued from page 1

Israel’s foreign minister Gideon Saar thanked his “good friend” De la Esperiella for the recognition.

Last month, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres reiterated that the Golan Heights

were part of Syria, describing Israeli occupation as “totally unacceptable.”

De la Esperiella’s leftist predecessor Gustavo Petro had ardently criticised Israel’s offensive in the Gaza Strip, severing diplomatic relations

and halting Israeli arms imports into Colombia.

Last month, he said he planned to open a Colombian embassy in Jerusalem — which Israel regards as its capital, including the occupied Palestinian part.

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Does criticism of Netanyahu fuel anti-Semitism

Does criticising actions of the Israeli government or its prime minister fuel anti-semitism? Despite this argument's stretch of logic and the danger its bizarre conflation presents to American Jews, some US pro-Israel organisations are working overtime to establish the case that criticising Israel puts American Jews at risk. Benjamin Netanyahu echoed this view in a recent interview with an American TV network, leveling this very charge against New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani.



WASHINGTON WATCH

James J. Zogby

Tensions between Mamdani and pro-Israel groups, brewing since his 2025 election campaign, were reignited by Netanyahu's recent US visit. Mamdani was asked by a reporter whether he would fulfill a campaign pledge to arrest the Israeli prime minister as a war criminal, as per the indictment issued by the International Criminal Court.

In response, the mayor convened legal experts who concluded that the city, on its own, didn't have the authority to make an arrest, only the federal government could do that. Mamdani released a short video acknowledging that he lacked the power to order an arrest, but calling out Netanyahu as a war criminal and stating that he would not welcome him in New York City. Mamdani didn't mention Israel, nor the Jewish people or citizens of Israel. This was, he observed, simply about Netanyahu's crimes cited in the ICC arrest warrant.

Some pro-Israel groups immediately denounced Mamdani's video. They accused him of "repeatedly singling out the world's only Jewish state...leaving many Jewish New Yorkers feeling targeted and unwelcome"; characterised the video as "blood libel and outrageous lies"; and charged Mamdani with "fomenting antisemitism".

A few days later, a Hispanic man, reportedly with mental health issues, allegedly stabbed two people, one Asian and another Jewish. Observers said they heard the attacker shouting "Allahu Akbar".

The same pro-Israel groups conflating Israel with American Jews and relentlessly condemning Mamdani leapt into the fray, blaming the mayor for making New York unsafe for Jews by "using his platform to viciously attack Israel".

Mamdani responded by condemning the stabblings as "hateful and despicable attacks that have no place in our city" and noted that his administration had dramatically increased investment in hate crime prevention "to address the root causes of this bigotry and hatred, as we look to root out the scourge of antisemitism".

The mayor added: "When it comes to my comments about prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, they are critiques based not on my personal analysis, but rather on objective facts. They are critiques of a political leader, not of people of a specific faith or religion or background. And my responsibility as mayor of the city is to keep every New Yorker safe..."

The mayor was not without defenders in the Jewish community. Brad Lander, who identifies as a liberal Zionist and recently defeated a pro-Israel congressman, described the attacks as "almost certainly an antisemitic hate crime and quite likely an anti-Asian hate crime, but they are not the fault of the mayor for calling Netanyahu a war criminal". Lander added, "The effort to connect the mayor to that...is a political effort to shut down criticism of Israel," and called it "weaponising antisemitism."

Peter Beinart, one of America's most thoughtful progressive Jewish thinkers, directly took on the pro-Israel Jewish establishment, noting that it was they, not the mayor, who are conflating Israel with the Jewish community. Beinart wrote: "Zohran Mamdani keeps saying again and again that his critique of Israel... has nothing to do with his feelings towards Jews in New York, because he separates Israel, as a state, from Jewish New Yorkers. The people who are making this conflation...are the very establishment Jewish leaders who are now attacking Mamdani."

The problem is two-fold. Antisemitism is real, and conflating American Jews with Israel is wrong and dangerous whether it's done by pro-Israel advocates identifying all Jews with Israel for political purposes, or by haters of Jews holding all Jewish people responsible for Israel's crimes. The former are attempting, as Lander notes, to silence criticism of Israel claiming this puts all Jews at risk. The latter are fuelling the preexisting bigotry of some by holding all Jews responsible for crimes committed by others.

The bottom line is Mamdani, Lander and Beinart are right, and the pro-Israel establishment is wrong.

The writer is president of the Washington-based Arab American Institute

Solidarity is not enough: Why the world must force accountability on Gaza now

By Ramzy Baroud

It is now official: Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has flatly rejected the core conditions of the Board of Peace framework, explicitly stating that Israel will neither adhere to a ceasefire nor withdraw its forces from Gaza.

During a cabinet meeting on Sunday, Netanyahu stated with unambiguous language: "Israel rejects the 15-point document published by the Board of Peace for Gaza".

In a previous conversation with lead envoy Nickolay Mladenov, Netanyahu set conditions, such as demanding unilateral operational freedom for the Israeli military to strike inside Gaza at will, that render a genuine peace agreement structurally impossible.

The Israeli army leadership, under Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir, reinforced this posture by outlining three uncompromising "red lines" to the political establishment: complete operational freedom to eliminate perceived threats anywhere in the Strip, strict control over all weapons entering or exiting Gaza, and zero military withdrawal unless Hamas is completely disarmed.

One can fault Netanyahu for many things, including ongoing genocide. But in recent years, he has been remarkably straightforward about his intentions; therefore, no one can claim that Netanyahu has fooled anyone.

Earlier this year, while speaking at a conference in an occupied West Bank settlement, Netanyahu explicitly boasted that he had instructed the Israeli military to expand its physical footprint and permanently occupy at least 70 per cent of the Gaza Strip, a massive expansion far beyond the temporary administrative demarcation lines established in previous truce outlines.

Meanwhile, his far-right ministers have pushed the government's rejectionist stance even further. Finance minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Missions Minister Orit Strock issued a joint demand for an emergency cabinet meeting to roll back au-

thorisation for the deployment of the International Stabilisation Force (ISF).

The ISF, designed under the Board of Peace framework as a transitional peacekeeping body, was meant to oversee humanitarian security, starting with pilot recovery zones in Rafah.

Yet Smotrich and Strock claimed the security cabinet was "misled" into approving the force, arguing that allowing international personnel into Gaza endangers Israeli operational freedom and directly contradicts their explicit war aims.

Israel wants to normalise genocide, just as it normalised the illegal siege on Gaza before that...

These latest moves, along with the military's strict "red lines", confirm what recent months of relentless bombardment have made clear: The Israeli government has no intention of ending its genocide in Gaza or relinquishing control over the besieged and devastated territory.

But highlighting such positions will make no difference, aside from once more accentuating Israel's total lack of desire for peace and its intention to perpetuate conflict.

While true, such realisation on its own is worthless considering that what is taking place in Gaza and the West Bank is be-

yond horrific, and that the daily killing of Palestinians makes the term "ceasefire" a cruel joke.

While diplomats debate frameworks, Israeli strikes continue to claim civilian lives daily, bringing the post-truce death toll to over 1,250 and the total killed since October 2023 to more than 73,000.

Therefore, action is needed, and urgently so. Indeed, Israel's official position leaves the international community with no choice but to take direct, coordinated action across five key fronts: First, Arab, Muslim, and allied governments must leverage every available international platform, starting with the UN General Assembly and Security Council, to formally condemn Israel's violation of the Gaza peace framework and expose its bad-faith negotiations.

States must move beyond symbolic statements and invoke mechanisms like the "Uniting for Peace" resolution to bypass Western vetoes, push for binding sanctions, and implement a universal arms embargo against Israel.

Second, a renewed global campaign must recenter Gaza and the West Bank, exposing Israel's broader territorial objectives, specifically the systematic ethnic cleansing of Gaza and the quiet, administrative annexation of the West Bank.

Civil society, trade unions, and grassroots organisations worldwide must pressure their respective national governments to sever diplomatic, economic and military ties with Israel until it complies with international law.

Third, International legal bodies must accelerate their proceedings. Pressure must be renewed on the International Criminal Court (ICC) to execute arrest warrants for senior Israeli leadership, while the International Court of Justice (ICJ) must enforce provisional measures and issue definitive rulings regarding Israel's violations of the Genocide Convention.

Legal compliance must be treated as a non-negotiable prerequisite for international relations.

Fourth, a unified international

media push is necessary to counter state-sponsored propaganda, keeping public focus fixed on Israel's long-term strategic plans: the permanent displacement of Gaza's population and the formal takeover of Palestinian land.

Independent media outlets, journalists, and cultural institutions must challenge official narratives that frame Israeli aggression as self-defence, centring the lived realities and testimonies of Palestinians under siege instead.

Fifth, the international community must bypass Israeli obstruction to ensure massive quantities of food, medical supplies and shelter materials enter Gaza immediately to prevent widespread starvation and winter exposure.

International aid agencies must establish protected humanitarian corridors by global mandate, refusing to allow Israel to use manufactured famine and humanitarian denial as weapons of war.

With Israel's intentions fully unmasked, the global community must shift from passive mediation to active enforcement.

Israel wants to normalise genocide, just as it normalised the illegal siege on Gaza before that, the military occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza before that, and the ongoing displacement of Palestinians since 1948.

We must resolutely reject the premise that the slaughter of the innocent can ever become an accepted routine.

Knowledge of the atrocity is not enough. Expressing solidarity in words alone is not enough. Concrete, decisive action is required today, and holding the perpetrators accountable remains entirely within our power if the world finds the political courage to act.

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

Can generative AI become Jordan's equaliser in closing youth skills gap

By Lubna Hanna Ammari

For decades, access to knowledge, education quality and professional opportunities have been among the main factors shaping people's ability to compete in the labour market. Today, a new question is emerging worldwide: could artificial intelligence become a tool that reduces these differences rather than creating new forms of inequality? For Jordan, a country with a young and highly educated population facing persistent challenges related to employment and skills alignment, generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) presents a significant opportunity to rethink how young people acquire knowledge, develop capabilities, and participate in the digital economy.

The global conversation around artificial intelligence has often focused on job displacement and automation. However, a growing body of research suggests that the impact of AI will depend largely on how societies adopt and integrate these technologies. A recent experimental study examining the relationship between generative AI and productivity differences found that AI assistance improved performance across participants, with larger gains among individuals with lower levels of education. The findings suggest that GenAI has the potential to narrow productivity gaps by providing individuals with access to guidance, problem-solving support, and knowledge resources that were previously available mainly to those with greater educational advantages.

This does not mean that AI can replace education or human expertise. Rather, it indicates that AI can act as an amplifier of human potential when combined with critical thinking, digital literacy, and effective learning strategies. The real opportunity

lies not in giving people access to AI tools alone, but in ensuring that they know how to use these tools responsibly and effectively.

For Jordan, this discussion is particularly relevant. The Kingdom has recognised artificial intelligence as a strategic priority through the Jordanian Artificial Intelligence Strategy and Implementation Plan 2023-2027, which aims to strengthen national capabilities, develop skills, support research and integrate AI into key sectors including education, employment, and economic development. The challenge now is moving from strategy to meaningful impact: ensuring that AI reaches students, graduates, entrepreneurs, and workers across different regions and backgrounds.

Jordan's youth represent both a challenge and an opportunity. With a large proportion of the population under the age of 30, the country has a valuable human resource that can drive innovation and economic growth. However, many young graduates continue to face difficulties transitioning from education to employment, partly because the skills demanded by employers are changing rapidly. The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025 highlights that technological change, including advances in generative AI, is accelerating the transformation of workplace skills and increasing the importance of digital, analytical and adaptive capabilities.

In this context, generative AI could become a powerful equaliser for Jordanian youth. A university student in a smaller city, a recent graduate seeking career guidance, or an entrepreneur starting a small business can use AI tools to access explanations, develop ideas, improve communication, analyse information, and learn new skills. The technology has the potential to reduce barriers created by differences in access to expensive

training programmes, specialised expertise, or professional networks.

Generative AI should not be viewed as a shortcut that replaces learning, nor as a technology that automatically solves economic challenges

However, access alone will not guarantee equal benefits. A new divide may emerge between those who can effectively interact with AI and those who cannot. Recent research suggests that the value individuals gain from generative AI depends not only on having access to the technology, but also on their ability to ask effective questions, evaluate AI-generated information, and combine AI assistance with their own knowledge and judgement. Therefore, AI literacy should become an essential component of education and workforce development in Jordan.

Universities, vocational institutions and training providers have a critical role to play in this transformation. Instead of treating AI only as a technological subject limited to computer science disciplines, institutions should integrate AI literacy

across fields such as business, tourism, healthcare, engineering and the humanities. Future graduates will not only need technical skills but also the ability to collaborate with intelligent systems, verify information, solve complex problems and use technology ethically.

At the policy level, Jordan should focus on building an inclusive AI ecosystem. This requires expanding digital skills programs, supporting educators and trainers, encouraging responsible AI adoption in workplaces, and ensuring that young people outside major urban centers have equal opportunities to benefit from these technologies. The World Bank has recently highlighted that developing economies may gain significantly from AI adoption if they address key foundations such as skills development, digital infrastructure and access to technology.

Generative AI should not be viewed as a shortcut that replaces learning, nor as a technology that automatically solves economic challenges. Its value depends on human choices: How we design education systems, prepare our workforce, and ensure that technological progress benefits society as a whole.

For Jordan, the question is no longer whether artificial intelligence will influence the future of work and education; it already is. The more important question is whether Jordan can use AI strategically to empower its young generation. If implemented with a focus on skills, inclusion, and responsible use, generative AI could become more than a productivity tool. It could become an equaliser that helps transform the country's greatest asset "its people" into a more competitive and innovative workforce.

The author is a specialist in educational technology

Wednesday, August 12, 2026

New 'Institutional Seal' launched to promote women’s empowerment in Jordan’s public, private sectors

By Ilham Darwazah

AMMAN — The Ministerial Committee for Women’s Empowerment, in partnership with the Jordanian National Commission for Women and the King Abdullah II Centre for Excellence (KACE) launched on Tuesday the “Institutional Seal for Supporting and Empowering Women”.

The “Institutional Seal” aims at promoting women’s empowerment and equal opportunities across Jordan’s public and private sectors, as part of efforts to embed gender equality into institutional policies, workplace practices and decision-making.

Minister of Social Development and Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee for Women’s Empowerment Wafaa Bani Mustafa, who presided over the launch, said the initiative represents a new phase in efforts to translate the goals of the Economic Modernisation Vision into institutional practices.

She said empowering women should be viewed as an investment in development, productivity and the competitiveness of the national economy, stressing that the committee is working to coordinate national efforts and ensure wom-



The Ministerial Committee for Women's Empowerment, in partnership with the Jordanian National Commission for Women and the King Abdullah II Centre for Excellence launch on Tuesday the 'Institutional Seal for Supporting and Empowering Women'



Photo Courtesy of the Jordanian National Commission for Women

en’s empowerment becomes an integral part of government policies and institutional practices.

The seal provides institutions with a national framework to review their policies, procedures and workplace culture against clear standards, including supportive leadership and safe working environments, Bani Mustafa said.

She called on public and private sector institutions to use the seal as an opportunity for institutional development and continuous improvement, rather than simply as a recognition mechanism.

Minister of State for Public Sector Development Badriya Balbisi said the initiative supports efforts to establish institutional environments based on

fairness, equal opportunities and the effective use of available skills and competencies.

She said the seal would help government institutions systematically examine their policies and practices, identify gaps and forms of discrimination, and address them using evidence and data.

“Women’s participation in the public sector is not measured

only by the number of women working in public institutions, but by the fairness of opportunities available to them throughout their careers, from recruitment and professional development to promotion, leadership positions and participation in decision-making,” Balbisi said.

She added that ensuring equal opportunities is closely linked

to public sector modernisation, particularly efforts to establish human resources systems based on competence, merit and equal opportunity.

Executive Director of KACE Wedad Qteishat said the seal should not be viewed merely as an award or certification, but as a comprehensive institutional journey through which organisations can assess

their policies, systems and practices, measure their level of maturity and identify areas for improvement.

She said institutions that provide fair working environments, equal opportunities and professional and leadership development for women are better positioned to improve efficiency, attract talent and strengthen their capacity for

innovation.

The launch included a presentation on the initiative and a panel discussion on applying the seal’s principles in the public and private sectors.

The discussion addressed the seal’s development, assessment and certification process, its alignment with the Women’s Empowerment Principles, women’s empowerment in the public sector and the private sector’s role in adopting the standards.

Participants included representatives from the Ministerial Committee for Women’s Empowerment, the Jordanian National Commission for Women, KACE, UN Women Jordan, the Public Sector Modernisation Programme and the private sector.

The discussion stressed the need to move women’s empowerment from individual initiatives towards sustainable, measurable institutional practices that can be continuously assessed and improved.

The launch was attended by MP Fliha Khdeir, chairperson of the Lower House Women and Family Affairs Committee, along with representatives of the public and private sectors and civil society organisations.

Oil prices rise further as hopes for Hormuz deal fade

HONG KONG (AFP) — Oil prices extended hefty gains on Tuesday as hopes for a reopening of the Strait of Hormuz fade, fanning fresh inflation fears and ramping up bets on at least one US interest rate hike this year.

Crude has surged around 10 per cent over the past week, with the United States and Iran appearing no closer to a deal on the crucial waterway despite upbeat comments from the White House earlier in the month.

In the latest blow, Donald Trump said on Monday he would seek conflict compensation from Iran as part of any peace negotiations, citing attacks and killings stretching back decades allegedly backed or perpetrated by Tehran.

The US president’s



AFP photo

Vessels are seen in the Strait of Hormuz, off the port city of Bandar Abbas in southern Iran on Monday. The US President signalled on Sunday that he was prepared to let economic pressure mount against Iran, apparently backing away from more military strikes after Tehran issued a list of demands for opening the Strait of Hormuz

announcement was a direct response to Tehran’s demand for US war reparations as a precondition to any resolution of the crisis.

Trump’s remarks

came a day after he said he was “low-keying” his approach to the conflict, suggesting he was prepared to let economic pressure mount in place of fur-

ther military strikes.

However, the latest back and forth risks putting a quick agreement further out of reach, and on Monday both main crude con-

tracts jumped around 5 per cent. They extended the gains on Tuesday.

“In the absence of any positive headlines on negotiations to reopen the strait, pressure on oil prices has been upward,” wrote Jason Wong at BNZ.

And Stephen Innes, global strategist at Quintex Intel, said: “In effect, both sides are trying to weaponise the oil barrel without firing another shot. Washington is trying to choke Iran’s ability to get its crude out, while Tehran is squeezing the artery through which everybody else’s crude gets through.

It is quite the game of chicken.”

The prospect of oil prices remaining elevated for the time being has revived concerns over inflation and boosted the chances of interest rate increases.

While a surprise loss of more than 20,000 jobs in the US economy last month eased fears of a Federal Reserve (Fed) hike, a spike in price pressures could force the bank’s hand.

Cleveland Fed boss Beth Hammack told Yahoo Finance on Monday: “I would say in general, one 25-basis-point move probably doesn’t do a whole lot for the economy.

So it’s probably some number of [movements]. But I don’t want to prejudice what that number is going to be.”

The US-Iran deadlock and rising crude costs comes as traders await the release of consumer price data on Wednesday, which could play a key role in guiding the Fed on its next move.

Asian equities were mixed following a tepid day on Wall Street.

GROWTH Wholesale, retail trade GDP reaches JD818 in Q1 2026

AMMAN (JT) — Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the wholesale and retail trade sector reached JD818 million during the first quarter of 2026, according to a report on the executive programme of the Economic Modernisation Vision (EMV) (2026–2029).

The report on the first-half achievements of 2026 highlighted progress across several indicators and projects, noting that the market control quality index reached 95.2 per cent by the end of June, Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Major milestones in the sector included laying the groundwork for an integrated e-commerce ecosystem, alongside completing

the gap assessment and recommendations report for the National E-Commerce Strategy (2026–2029).

As part of these efforts, a workshop was held to discuss gap evaluation findings and future priorities, leading to the preparation of the final draft of the strategy.

The sector also launched the “Click Business” programme to support e-commerce and digital marketing, signing agreements to assist 18 projects in these fields.

These measures align with the EMV’s objectives to modernise the trade sector, drive digital transformation and support enterprises operating in e-commerce and digital marketing.

DECLINE

US existing home sales drop in July as mortgage rates rise

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — Sales of previously owned homes in the United States dropped in July, industry data released on Tuesday showed, as high mortgage rates — and fears of further rate hikes — weighed on activity.

Existing home sales dropped 1.7 per cent on a month-on-month basis to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.06 million in July, the National Association of Realtors (NAR) data showed.

The average rates of 30-year mortgages ticked up steadily in July, coming in at 6.66 per cent by the end of the month — their highest level since a year ago.

“Home sales have been remarkably stable, even amid the rising mortgage rate environment of the past few months,” said NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun.

“Year-to-date sales are up 2.4 per cent and there’s no doubt that the housing

market would be thriving if average mortgage rates were to return near 6 per cent,” Yun said.

Heather Long, chief economist at Navy Federal Credit Union, agreed that sales were “stalling” due to the level of mortgage rates.

“The 30-year mortgage is back at 6.7 per cent and buyers just aren’t interested in locking in such a high rate,” she said.

“Sellers are having to slash prices and offer incentives. The falloff is especially noticeable for single-family homes where the median price is now \$440,300 and inventory is at the highest level in over a year,” Long said.

The data was in line

with market expectations, with economists polled by Dow Jones Newswires and the Wall Street Journal expecting the annualised rate to come in at 4 million in July.

The median sales price across all housing types was \$434,100 in July, the NAR data showed.

That was a two-percent increase from a year ago, marking more than three years of continuous year-on-year price increases.

NAR’s Yun said there was “notable” variation across US regions in July’s data.

Month-on-month sales rose in the Northeast, were steady in the West and declined in the Midwest and South.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

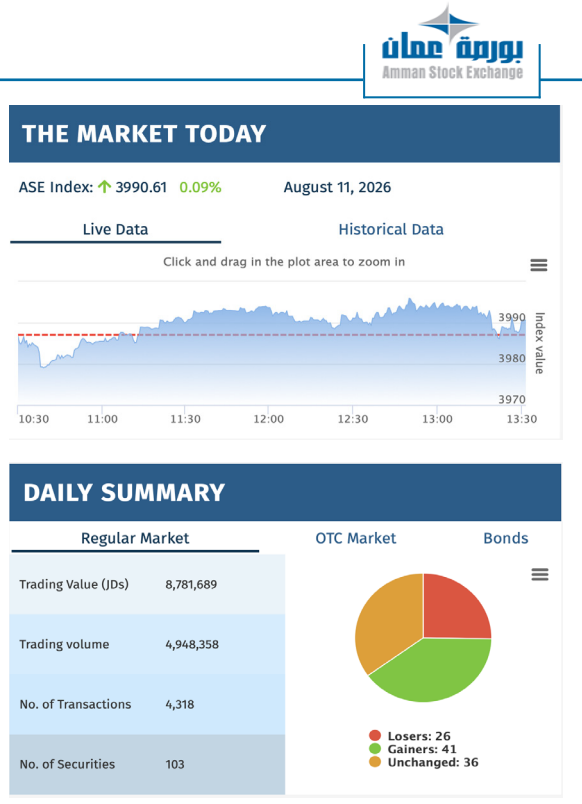
AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Tuesday amounted to JD8.8 million spread over 4.9 million shares that traded through 4,318 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.09 per cent, closing at 3990.61 points.

Out of 103 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 41 companies rose while the share price of another 26 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Masafat for Specialised Transport by 7.06 per cent, Al Quds Ready Mix by 6.90 per cent, Arab Pesticides and Veterinary Drugs Manufacturing Company by 6.52 per cent, Rumm Financial Brokerage by 4.92 per cent and Nobar Trading Investment Company by 4.88 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Salam International Transport and Trading by 7.48 per cent, Amwaj Properties by 5 per cent, Nutri Dar by 4.85 per cent, Real Estate Development by 4.11 per cent and Jordan Insurance by 3.95 per cent.



FOOTBALL

Trump says would be ‘terrible mistake’ to replace FIFA’s Infantino

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US President Donald Trump backed FIFA president Gianni Infantino, who is in hot water over allegations of a workplace affair and criticism of a failed private investment scheme. “FIFA would be making a terrible mistake if, for any reason, they even considered replacing President Gianni Infantino,” Trump said in a Truth Social post, calling the Italian-Swiss lawyer “fantastic” and saying he “presided over the most successful World Cup, by four times, ever presented. If he is gone, it will never be as successful or profitable again!” Trump’s backing of Infantino contrasts with the response of US Soccer, which issued a statement critiquing the FIFA leader alongside Canada Soccer and football organisations in Central America and the Caribbean. Infantino, who faces reelection next March, has denied allegations of wrongdoing, and FIFA for their part has backed its besieged president, calling the backlash “a concerted and ongoing effort by some to undermine” the organisation.

TENNIS

Swiatek dominates Shnaider to set up Toronto semi with Svitolina

TORONTO, Canada (AFP) — Former World No.1. Iga Swiatek cruised into the Toronto Masters semifinals on Monday to set up a clash with Elina Svitolina who fought back from a set down to reach the last four: Poland’s Swiatek, a six-time Grand Slam champion, took just 64 minutes to sweep past Russia’s Diana Shnaider 6-2, 6-1. Ukraine’s Svitolina, the ninth seed, beat Russia’s Ekaterina Alexandrova 3-6, 6-0, 6-3. Swiatek reached just her second WTA semi-final this year after Rome and is seeking her first final appearance since winning the Korea Open almost a year ago in Seoul. “From the beginning I went for it. I felt like I could dominate,” Swiatek said after dropping just three points on her first serve. “I was quite happy with the way I played. It was a tricky match with the wind. I thought I needed to adjust to that. I just wanted to be more solid,” added the 25-year-old World No.8. Svitolina won eight consecutive games after losing the first set on the way to dispatching Alexandrova in 93 minutes. Swiatek leads Svitolina 4-3 in their WTA career rivalry, but lost both their meetings this year.

What next for beleaguered FIFA president Infantino?

By Pirate Irwin
Agence France-Presse

PARIS, France — Embattled FIFA President Gianni Infantino’s hope that a combative statement condemning “a concerted and ongoing effort” to undermine him would spark a period of reflection were dashed on Monday. It is over a week since Infantino withdrew his plan to raise private investment for a new commercial subsidiary, called the FIFA Forward Enterprise, which it proposed would run the commercial side of World Cups. Three confederations — Europe’s UEFA, North and Central America CONCACAF and Asia’s AFC — did not hold back in targeting Infantino and his style of leadership in an open letter on Monday. Despite all sides calling for unity, their idea of how that can be achieved diverges markedly. AFP Sport looks at who stands with whom and what the next steps in the saga could be:

Infantino’s supporters

The 56-year-old Swiss’s 10 years in power have not gone to waste as increased funding to the 211 member associations has paid off. The Confederation of African Football — one of its members Morocco is co-host of the 2030 World Cup — remains firmly behind him. “The CAF EXCO [executive committee] also unanimously reconfirmed its support for FIFA President Gianni Infantino and



Handout photo released by the Colombian Presidency showing FIFA’s President Gianni Infantino waving on arrival at president-elect Abelardo de la Espirella’s swearing-in ceremony in Cali, Colombia, on Friday

thanked him for his support for African football, over the years,” read their statement last week. South American governing body CONMEBOL remain largely supportive — although they did criticise the manner in which the plan had been conceived and handled — and said Infantino’s future should only be decided in the presidential election in Rabat next March. Individual member associations have broken ranks with their respective confederations — among them one of this year’s World Cup co-hosts Mexico, from CONCACAF,

and Kuwait and Qatar from the AFC, who have all voiced support for Infantino. Opponents UEFA, CONCACAF and AFC doubled down on their scathing criticism of Infantino in the letter over the plan dismissed by UEFA as a “shabby, opaque, backroom deal”. UEFA’s threat to boycott all FIFA competitions, including the men’s and women’s World Cups, is widely credited with forcing Infantino into his humiliating climbdown.

They reiterated that threat last week — the day after Infantino had received the “full support” of senior FIFA directors — and for a while it seemed they were on their own as both CONCACAF and AFC did not follow suit with statements. Monday, though, showed UEFA was far from alone. “When trust is broken through deception, when an individual places himself above the collective that entrusted him with authority, that duty has been abandoned,” the

three confederations wrote. UEFA’s boycott threat will face its first test in September when Poland hosts the Women’s Under-20 World Cup. One of Infantino’s bitterest opponents, the Norwegian Football Federation and their forthright president Lise Klaveness, called for Infantino to resign last Friday. Several other member associations have publicly withdrawn their support for his reelection, including Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Serbia and Wales.

Possible next steps

The presidential election, in which Infantino is seeking a fourth and final four year term, is to be held in Rabat at the FIFA Congress on March 18 next year. The deadline for a candidate to oppose Infantino is November 18. History shows it is nigh on impossible to unseat an incumbent — Brazilian strongman Joao Havelange is the last one to succeed, defeating Englishman Stanley Rous in 1974. However, if his opponents want Infantino removed earlier there are other possibilities. The most likely to be triggered would be a vote of no-confidence in Infantino. This requires 20 per cent of the member associations — 43 — to declare they have lost confidence to set in motion an emergency FIFA Congress. Each association would have a vote — with the vote of Gabon, for example, having the same weight as Germany — and it is not clear if a simple majority would suffice.

Potential rivals

Despite the refreshing candour of Klaveness, she is unlikely to stand and anyway FIFA’s electorate would prefer a non-European. Hopes that the two most powerful positions in sport could be held by women, with Kirsty Coventry elected president of the International Olympic Committee last year, therefore seem remote.

LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

Self-taught Turkish ‘linguist’ keeps dead language alive

By Anne Chaon
Agence France-Presse

CAVUSTEPE, Van Province, Turkey — Mehmet Kusman did not spend very long at school, but he traced the ancient inscriptions chiselled into the black basalt rock and read: “Before me there was nothing. But by the power of the god Haldi I founded this city.” Kusman, 86, has dedicated his life to the fortress of Cavustepe in eastern Turkey, and to learning the language of the vanished kingdom of Urartu, to honour its forgotten gods and rulers. Brisk of step and sharp of mind despite his years and the hot winds that whip the castle, he stood at the foundations of a temple dedicated to Haldi, the warrior god of gods. Kusman wore a cap bought in Los Angeles on which he has written “USA 2009” in the cuneiform script typical of the region’s ancient civilisations. Kusman was hired as a labourer on the Cavustepe excavations after his military service in the 1960s and there encountered his first stele. “The inscription was very beautiful,” he told AFP. But the head of the dig discouraged him from



An archaeologist works on a stone engraved with Urartu language at the fortress of Ayanis near Van, in eastern Turkey, on August 4

learning this “very difficult” script, which borrowed its cuneiform alphabet from Assyrian. “His telling me ‘No’ hurt me,” he said. “I became relentless, thinking: ‘In my lifetime, I will learn it.’” Despite a lack of formal education, Kusman began copying the inscriptions found during excavations carried out in eastern Turkey, Iran and Armenia, over which Urartu once stretched. In three years, he said, he mastered the alphabet, but “it took me 22 years

to master 650 words” of vocabulary. One of the last Academics contacted by AFP praised Kusman’s enthusiasm and devotion. He has become something of a local curiosity, calling himself “one of the last seven people in Turkey to speak the Urartian language”. Erkan Konyar, professor of ancient history at Istanbul University, describes the kingdom as “one of the most powerful states

of the ancient Near East, between the 9th and 7th centuries BC”. Urartu — more recent than the great Mesopotamian kingdoms of Assyria, Sumeria and Babylon — brought the tribal mountain communities together under a centralised state, building cities, fortresses, irrigation networks and vast food storage facilities, Konyar said. Despite retiring in 2005, Kusman continues to watch over Cavustepe, said Konyar, a specialist on Tuspa, the kingdom’s

founding capital. “For 60 years, he has lived amid the excavations and introduced thousands of visitors to the history of Urartu.” But Konyar is careful to qualify Kusman’s claims to speak the language. In fact, historians do not really know how it was pronounced, he said. “The available inscriptions allow us to understand it up to a certain point, but we lack vocabulary and texts,” he said. “Only the meaning of certain words is known with certainty. So no one can claim to speak Urartian.” “Even in the time of Urartu, people did not speak this language; it was only written,” said Mehmet Isikli, director of the Department of Near Eastern Archaeology at Ataturk University in Erzurum. ‘Grandson of the Urartians’ Kusman’s passion for the language has made him a local celebrity. His lectures have taken him “to America, five times, to Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium”, he said, reeling off the list with a touch of showmanship. “Now, I’m thinking of going to Japan,” he added.



The Google logo is seen outside a building housing Google offices in Beijing, China, February 4, 2025

French newspapers target Google over AI summaries

PARIS, France (AFP) — A federation of nearly 300 French dailies said Tuesday that it filed a complaint with the country’s competition authority over Google’s new AI-generated summaries of their articles and other content as they grapple with ad revenue declines. Google launched its AI Overviews in France in late July, which appear above regular links to search results and compile information from a wide array of sources. But the APiG association of newspapers wants the country’s competition regulator to ensure

“Google’s respect of commitments made in 2022” as part of a compensation deal with French media groups. Information “has considerable value”, APiG President Marc Feuillee, also managing director of the centre-right Le Figaro newspaper, said in a statement. “The editors are not seeking to halt innovation. They are asking for this value to be shared, and for compensation of the use of their content,” the association said in its statement. It said Google had sprung the new artificial intelligence summaries without their consent, an alleged violation of the 2022 deal. The competition authority had already fined

Google 250 million euros (\$290 million) in 2024 for not respecting parts of the agreement. Many media groups have seen their revenue dwindle over the past two decades as advertising moved increasingly online, where tech firms take a big share of the profits. Critics say AI summaries cause further harm by leading to a drop in internet traffic to newspapers’ articles — with many users no longer clicking through to read the original source of the information. Google contends they let people ask more complex questions and discover new content, and says it provides controls to help publishers manage their content.

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