

King interviewed by China’s Xinhua News Agency

- His Majesty hails deep-rooted Amman-Beijing relations, cooperation across various fields
- King speaks about his visit to China, opportunities to build on Jordan-China strategic partnership
- Kingsays Jordan's strategic location, coupled with China's economic strength create exceptional opportunities to broaden cooperation
- His Majesty underlines China’s efforts to support international peace, security

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah sat for an interview with Xinhua, the official news agency of the People's Republic of China, which was published on Monday, in Chinese, English and Arabic. The interview focused on Jordan-China relations, as the two countries will mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations next year.

During the interview, His Majesty spoke about his visit to China, opportunities to build on the strategic partnership between the two countries, and ways to enhance cooperation in economic, investment, development, tourism, cultural, and other fields. *(See full interview on page 2.)*

The King departed Jordan on Monday for

a state visit to the People's Republic of China, where he will hold meetings with political and economic leaders, with the aim of strengthening cooperation between Jordan and China, according to a Royal Court statement.

The interview with Xinhua touched on China's role in the region, with the King emphasising the importance of Beijing's efforts to support international peace and security and of building on its significant presence on the international stage to help advance the two-state solution.

The King said that the deep-rooted relationship between Jordan and China serves as a strong foundation for advancing shared priorities and fostering innovation and greater prosperity for the peoples of the two

countries.

His Majesty said, "Jordan's strategic location, resources and skilled youth, coupled with China's economic strength, technology expertise, and global reach, create exceptional opportunities to broaden cooperation. And China continues to play a vital role in promoting international peace and stability, as well as in addressing regional and global challenges."

The King emphasised that the Jordan-China relations have achieved "substantial" progress since the establishment of the strategic partnership between the two countries in 2015, saying that "cooperation has expanded beyond traditional diplomatic ties to include trade and investment, infrastructure, education, healthcare and



His Majesty King Abdullah speaks during an interview with Xinhua in Amman, which was published on Monday

cultural exchanges".

"China has also been a key partner in building the capacity of Jordan's public sector. Between 2015 and 2025, thousands of Jordanians in the public and private sectors have benefited from training programmes offered by the Chinese government. Our cooperation now spans the entire education ecosystem, from

teacher and supervisor training and Chinese language education to higher education," His Majesty said.

"Despite regional and global challenges, our nations have remained committed to strengthening this partnership, resulting in steady and mutually beneficial development."

The King also emphasised the importance of

Beijing's efforts to support international peace and security, and of building on its significant presence on the international stage to help advance the two-state solution.

Voicing appreciation for China's pivotal role in safeguarding world's peace and security, His Majesty said Jordan is looking forward to strengthen cooperation

Photo courtesy of the Royal Court

Crown Prince reviews preparations for Jordan-EU Investment Conference

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Crown Prince Hussein chaired a meeting on Monday at Al Husseinia Palace to review preparations for the Jordan-European Union Investment Conference, scheduled to take place on 19 November at the Dead Sea.

During the meeting, attended by Prime Minister Jafar Hassan, the Crown Prince stressed the need to offer targeted investment opportunities focusing on vital sectors of national priority, underscoring the need to accelerate implementation of plans to enhance the investment environment and ensure business readiness, according to a Royal Court statement.

His Royal Highness highlighted the importance of integrated public-private efforts to clear investment roadblocks and boost business collaboration between Jordan and the EU.

The Crown Prince



HRH Crown Prince Hussein chairs a meeting to review preparations for the Jordan-EU Investment Conference, taking place on 19 November 2025 at the Dead Sea

urged government and relevant institutions to act immediately on conference recommendations,

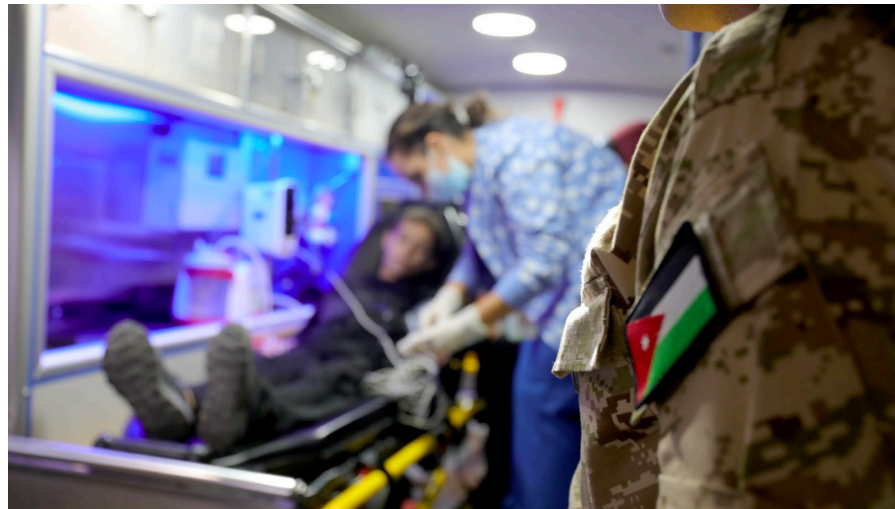
using clear metrics to track conference outcomes and measure their impact on the national economy.

His Royal Highness was briefed by Minister of Investment Tareq

Abu Ghazaleh on preparations for the conference, its agenda, investment opportunities to be showcased during the event and organisational arrangements.

The Jordan-EU Investment Conference marks a major step forward in Jordan-EU economic relations, turning cooperation into action by connecting European investors with Jordan's private sector to drive high-quality investments and practical opportunities and projects.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Muhammad Shehadeh, Minister of Water and Irrigation Raed Abu Soud, Minister of Transport and Minister of Labour Nidal Katamine, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Saleh Kharabsheh, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Zeina Toukan, and Director of the Office of the Crown Prince Zaid Bagain attended the meeting.



The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) on Monday says it evacuates the 31st batch of sick children from the Gaza Strip under the Jordanian Medical Corridor initiative

JAF evacuates 31st batch of Gaza children for medical treatment in Kingdom

AMMAN (JT) — Following Royal directives, the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) on Monday evacuated the 31st batch of sick children from the Gaza Strip under the Jordanian Medical Corridor initiative.

The latest batch comprises seven sick children accompanied by 13 family members, according to a JAF statement.

They were transported to Jordan to receive

treatment and medical care at several hospitals, as part of the Kingdom's ongoing humanitarian and medical efforts to support Palestinians in Gaza.

The evacuations, which began in March 2025, are carried out in cooperation and coordination between the JAF, the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organisation (WHO), in accordance with approved health procedures

and standards to ensure the necessary medical care for the children.

The initiative reflects Jordan's humanitarian and medical efforts to support Palestinians and alleviate their suffering amid the difficult humanitarian conditions in Gaza, while providing healthcare to those most in need, the statement said.

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Yemen risks return to 'full-scale conflict', warns UN rights chief

GENEVA (AFP) — The UN rights chief voiced alarm Monday at the rising civilian toll of escalating hostilities in Yemen, urging efforts to avoid plunging the country back into full-scale war.

Yemen, which has been embroiled in more than a decade of civil conflict, last month became the latest country to be dragged into the Middle East war as the Iran-backed Houthis upended the 2022 truce

with the Saudi-backed government, ramping up attacks on areas it holds.

The latest violence has raised the spectre of a return to war in the Arabian Peninsula's poorest country.

"I call on all parties to de-escalate tensions and spare the Yemeni people from further misery. The Yemeni people have already suffered way too much from the devastating legacy of years of conflict,

displacement and humanitarian crisis," Turk said.

"I urge all parties to halt immediately any actions that risk returning Yemen to full-scale conflict."

Earlier this month, the rebels launched their deadliest attacks in years, killing 58 government troops, according to a military source, mainly in the oil-rich Marib province.

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Iran-US deadline expires as Hormuz dispute blocks deal

By Mai Anati

AMMAN — The 60-day deadline set for Iran and the United States to reach a final agreement expires on Monday without a final deal, as the two sides remain divided over the Strait of Hormuz and the US naval blockade on Iranian ports.

The deadline was set under a 14-point memorandum of understanding signed by Tehran and Washington in Islamabad on June 18. The agreement was intended to end the war and pave

the way for a final agreement within 60 days, with an extension possible only with the consent of both sides.

The MoU also outlined a gradual lifting of the US naval blockade, the resumption of commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, exemptions for Iranian oil exports and the release of frozen Iranian funds.

Iran has accused Washington of failing to lift the naval blockade according to the agreed timetable. The United States, meanwhile, has accused Tehran of fail-



Two F/A-18 Super Hornets launch from the flight deck of Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) in support of Operation Epic Fury, March 3

ing to restore commercial navigation through Hormuz.

The dispute has made

the strategic waterway the central issue between the two sides.

Iran has set six conditions

for reopening the strait, including an end to military operations, the lifting of sanctions and the blockade, the withdrawal of US forces from the area, compensation for war damages and the release of frozen Iranian funds.

Washington has maintained its naval pressure on Iran. US Central Command also announced the entry of the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush into the Arabian Sea, in the latest US military move in the region.

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King hails advanced Jordan-China relations, underlines Beijing’s key international roles

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah, during an interview with China’s Xinhua News Agency, spoke about his visit to China and opportunities to build on the strategic partnership between the two countries.

During the interview, which was published on Monday, His Majesty underlined China’s pivotal role in safeguarding international stability and security and promoting diplomacy and dialogue to resolve regional and global crises.

Below is the full text of the Xinhua interview:

“Xinhua: The year 2025 marked the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Jordan strategic partnership. How do you assess the development of bilateral relations over the past decade? Which key achievements best illustrate the progress made by both sides in terms of political mutual trust, economic and trade cooperation and people-to-people exchanges?”

His Majesty King Abdullah II: First, I would like to thank you and Xinhua News Agency for your keenness on covering Jordan and our partnership with China. I am looking forward to my upcoming visit to your great country and to meeting once again with Chinese President Xi Jinping to discuss ways to take the partnership between our nations to further heights.

The deep-rooted relationship between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the People’s Republic of China serves as a strong foundation for advancing our shared priorities and fostering innovation and greater prosperity for our peoples.

Jordan’s strategic location, resources and skilled youth, coupled with China’s economic strength, technology expertise and global reach, create exceptional opportunities to broaden cooperation. And China continues to play a vital role in promoting international peace and stability, as well as in addressing regional and global challenges.

My upcoming visit straddles two important milestones, namely marking over ten years since the establishment of our strategic partnership in 2015 and the upcoming 50th anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations in 2027.

Since the establish-



His Majesty King Abdullah speaks during an interview with Xinhua in Amman, which was published on Monday

Photo courtesy of the Royal Court

ment of our strategic partnership, our bilateral relations have achieved substantial progress. Cooperation has expanded beyond traditional diplomatic ties to include trade and investment, infrastructure, education, healthcare and cultural exchanges. Despite regional and global challenges, our nations have remained committed to strengthening this partnership, resulting in steady and mutually beneficial development.

China has also been a key partner in building the capacity of Jordan’s public sector. Between 2015 and 2025

China has also been a key partner in building the capacity of Jordan’s public sector. Between 2015 and 2025, thousands of Jordanians in the public and private sectors have benefited from training programmes offered by the Chinese government. Our cooperation now spans the entire education ecosystem, from teacher and supervisor

training and Chinese language education to higher education.

Moreover, Chinese energy investments in Jordan have contributed significantly to our self-sufficiency and diversification strategy. In the mining sector, a key investment partnership has culminated in the 502 million-US-dollar acquisition by China’s State Development and Investment Group (SDIC Group) of a 28 per cent stake in the Arab Potash Company.

We look forward to expanding cooperation into areas such as green energy, scientific innovation, tourism and civil aviation, while further deepening our strategic partnership.

Xinhua: Jordan is advancing its economic modernisation and green development agenda. What are the current priorities for the Kingdom’s reform and development? How does Jordan seek to deepen practical cooperation with China in areas such as renewable energy, the digital economy and talent development to further support its national transformation?

King Abdullah II: Despite decades of regional instability, Jordan is advancing its Economic Modernisation Vision, a roadmap to 2033 that focuses on prosperity, improved quality of life and inclusive long-term growth through strategic partnerships.

Jordan’s economic modernisation agenda recognises that an effi-

cient, digitally enabled public sector is fundamental to economic competitiveness and investment attraction. Jordan has made substantial progress in digitising government services, and a key priority is integrating AI into public administration to streamline processes. These efforts are driving the digital transformation of Jordan’s public sector.

Jordan is also well positioned to serve as a regional manufacturing and export hub. Chinese manufacturing investments could leverage this position, benefitting from our natural resources, skilled workforce, stable business environment, strategic location and extensive network of trade agreements.

In addition, sustainability is one of the three pillars of the Economic Modernisation Vision. The energy sector best illustrates this progress: Renewable energy has grown from less than 1 per cent of electricity generation a decade ago to approximately 27 per cent today, with a target of 40 per cent by 2035. To sustain this momentum, Jordan is investing in the supporting infrastructure for renewable energy, including a pipeline of nearly one gigawatt of new renewable generation and energy storage projects representing more than 1 billion dollars in investment opportunities.

Another key priority is promoting high-

er-value, sustainable and resilient tourism growth. The objective is not simply to maximise visitor numbers, but to diversify source markets, encourage longer stays, improve connectivity and ensure greater benefits for local communities. Tourism cooperation should also support Jordanian employment, facilitate knowledge transfer and protect Jordan’s cultural and natural heritage. We look to strengthen air connectivity with China as one of our top global partners and main targeted markets for inbound and outbound tourism.

We also see strong potential for deeper cooperation with China by positioning Jordan as a preferred filming destination for the Chinese film industry, building on our superior production capabilities and unique filming locations.

Xinhua: Amid a complex and evolving regional landscape, Jordan plays a vital role in helping maintain stability in the Middle East. Could you elaborate on Jordan’s efforts to promote regional stability, particularly regarding the Palestinian issue? How can Jordan and China further strengthen coordination and cooperation to contribute to peace and stability in the region?

King Abdullah II: Despite the regional situation, we have consistently striven to be proactive, encouraging cooperation in the in-

terest of peace while always staying true to our principles. Our diplomatic engagements have focused on this approach. I have always said and believed that the Palestinian issue remains the core issue in our region; what we have seen in recent years underscores this reality. Unless addressed, the region will remain vulnerable to recurring cycles of violence that will become more severe and broader in scope, with reverberations extending far beyond its borders.

Jordan is also well positioned to serve as a regional manufacturing and export hub. Chinese manufacturing investments could leverage this position...

Palestinians are facing unprecedented measures, with intensified settler attacks, fast-paced and massive illegal settlement expansion, land grabs and confiscations, house demolitions and violations, as well as harassment and incitement at Jerusalem’s

Muslim and Christian holy sites. These measures cannot go unnoticed or unaddressed. It is a responsibility upon us all to ensure respect for international law, UN resolutions and human rights.

In Jordan, our efforts have been and will continue to be focused on establishing regional calm, undertaking our duties under the Hashemite Custodianship over Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, working to end unilateral measures that obstruct peace, and pushing for a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue that results in the establishment of a viable, independent and sovereign state of Palestine based on the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side-by-side with Israel in peace and security.

But we also look to coordinate with China as a key global player and partner to use its considerable influence and voice on the international stage to help push for the realisation of the two-state solution.

Our humanitarian efforts in Gaza continue, and we are grateful for China’s contributions to ongoing relief efforts.

Xinhua: As the international landscape undergoes profound changes, the role of Global South countries is becoming increasingly significant. How does Your Majesty view the role of China and Arab countries in global governance? How can Jordan serve as a bridge to enhance cooperation between Arab states, China, and other international partners?

King Abdullah II: Global South countries are playing an increasingly important role in the international arena, becoming more and more central to the global economy, security and to advancing sustainable development. This further reinforces the importance of strengthening a global system that remains firmly anchored in international law.

We appreciate China’s calls for a fair international order, and we look to strengthen our cooperation to foster stronger international cooperation and respect for international law. The crises we are facing today serve as a reminder that we are all interconnected, and highlight the necessity of fostering collective action and dialogue. It is time for our regions to work together to es-

tablish better resilience and advance joint efforts to respond to various disruptions and crises.

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China plays an important role in safeguarding international peace and security. We have seen relations between China and Arab countries grow in recent years, reflecting shared interests in development and mutually beneficial cooperation.

For our part, Jordan has always been relentless in our efforts to foster regional interconnectivity, closer cooperation and deeper ties. Jordan has consistently pursued a foreign policy based on dialogue and constructive engagement. Our commitment to international law and the peaceful resolution of disputes has enabled us to build trusted partnerships and dialogue across different regions.

Xinhua: This year marks the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Arab countries. How does Your Majesty evaluate the cooperation model based on mutual respect and win-win outcomes between China and Arab states?

King Abdullah II: This milestone is a testament to a relationship that has endured regional crises and shifts. Its durability comes from ongoing practical engagement and a dedication to seeking common ground and advancement of mutual interests. The win-win outcomes approach is the key recipe behind the sustainable Arab-China cooperation model, enabling both sides to see tangible deliverables and fostering trust and strategic partnerships. There is also great untapped potential that we can further explore and build on to establish regional and global synergies; China is, after all, a global economic and political powerhouse, and it has become a global model and inspiration for development and economic progress. We hope to see closer international collaboration in the days and years ahead. Arab countries stand to benefit greatly from China’s experience.

We also look forward to further fostering closer people-to-people ties, building lasting friendships and mutual understanding between our nations.

Xinhua: Thank you, Your Majesty.
King Abdullah II: Thank you.”

Jordan-China trade hits \$6.7 billion amid push to deepen economic ties

AMMAN (JT) — Trade between Jordan and China reached nearly \$6.7 billion last year, as economic ties between the two countries enter a new phase with King Abdullah’s state visit to China and meetings with senior Chinese officials and representatives of major companies.

According to figures, cited by Al Mamlaka and released by the Jordan Strategy Forum, Chinese exports to Jordan totalled about \$6.29 billion, equivalent to JD4.46 billion, while Jordan’s exports to China stood at only \$430 million, or around JD305 million.

The figures point to a trade deficit of approximately \$5.86 billion in China’s favour.

Commercial Attaché at the Chinese Embassy Cheng Yongru told Al Mamlaka on Monday that diversity and competitiveness of Chinese products, particularly in terms of quality and price, have expanded the range of goods available in the Jordanian market and provided consumers with stable and reliable options.

Chinese exports of high-quality, competitively priced raw materials, production equipment, components and spare parts, particular-

ly for machinery manufacturing, also support Jordan’s industrial development while creating new opportunities for Jordanian products to reach international markets, he said.

He stressed that China remains committed to expanding high-level opening-up and does not deliberately seek to maintain a trade surplus.

“China is keen to achieving more balanced and sustainable bilateral trade,” he said, adding that Beijing welcomes more distinctive, high-quality Jordanian products into the Chinese market.

Data from the Amman Chamber of Commerce (ACC) show that Jordan’s exports to China are heavily concentrated in products from the chemical and related industries.

The Jordan Strategy Forum similarly noted that Jordanian exports to China remain concentrated in a relatively narrow range of commodities, including phosphate, potash, fertilizers, chemicals and copper.

By contrast, Jordan’s imports from China are considerably more diverse.

According to ACC, major Chinese imports into Jordan in 2025 in-

cluded machinery and equipment, electrical equipment, smartphones, transport equipment, passenger cars and other vehicles primarily designed to carry people.

Other major imports included textiles and textile products, as well as base metals and articles made from them, the chamber said.

Jordan’s main exports to China include chemical and related industrial products, fertilizers, mineral products such as natural calcium phosphate, and base metals and articles made from them.



The Aqaba Container Terminal

JT/file

Princess Alia attends One Health, Veterinary Innovations conference

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Princess Alia on Monday attended the 3rd International Conference on One Health and Veterinary Innovations in Amman.

Organised by the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST), the three-day conference addresses key One Health issues, including zoonotic and emerging diseases, antimicrobial resistance, food safety, climate change, and advances in diagnostics and therapeutics.

The event brings together researchers, experts and academics from Jordan, the UK, Portugal, Malaysia, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Syria, Sudan and Lebanon, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

During the opening ceremony, JUST President Khaled Salem stressed the importance of the conference amid growing health and environmental challenges.

Salem said the One



HRH Princess Alia on Monday attends the 3rd International Conference on One Health and Veterinary Innovations in Amman

Health approach has become a necessity given the interconnectedness of human, animal and environmental health.

He noted that zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, food safety and climate change directly affect public health, food security and social stability, requiring

greater interdisciplinary cooperation.

Salem added that the conference aligns with national priorities and the Economic Modernisation Vision, particularly in the areas of quality of life, food security, innovation and sustainability.

He highlighted JUST's diverse academic disciplines as an ideal environment for cross-sector collaboration, noting that the university's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, the only such faculty in Jordan, operates one of the region's leading veterinary hospitals.

Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Mayas Okush said the conference aims to translate the One Health concept into collaborative action by integrating veterinary medicine, public health and environmental sciences.

She noted that the programme includes scientific sessions, practical workshops and an exhibition showcasing

pharmaceutical, diagnostic and technological innovations.

Following the opening ceremony, Princess Alia inaugurated the veterinary exhibition and received a commemorative medallion from Salem in recognition of her support for animal health and welfare.

Public holiday announced for Prophet Mohammad's birthday



AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Monday issued an official circular declaring Tuesday, August 25, a public holiday to mark the Prophet Mohammad's Birthday (peace be upon him). Under the circular, all ministries, government departments, public institutions and bodies, public universities, municipalities, joint service councils, the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) and fully government-owned companies will suspend operations on the designated day. The decision excludes entities whose nature of work requires otherwise, according to a Prime Ministry statement. To mark the occasion, the Prime Minister urged all public entities to highlight its significance in a fitting manner.

Army thwarts drug smuggling attempt using guided balloons



AMMAN (JT) — The Southern Military Region command on Monday thwarted a major drug smuggling attempt by using guided balloons to transport large quantities of narcotics toward Jordan. Border Guard units in Jordan intercepted and downed balloons within their territory, coordinating with security agencies and the Anti-Narcotics Department, according to the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF). The seized items were handed over to the relevant authorities to complete the necessary legal and investigative procedures. JAF stressed that all smuggling and infiltration attempts, regardless of the methods used, will be met with firmness using all available operational and intelligence capabilities. JAF highlighted the readiness of Border Guard units to counter any attempt targeting the Kingdom's security and stability. The Armed Forces continue intensive operations to protect the borders and prevent their exploitation for drug smuggling or any activities that threaten national security and citizen safety.

Senate president, Qatari ambassador discuss cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Senate President Faisal Fayez on Monday commended the deep-rooted ties between Jordan and Qatar during a meeting with Qatari Ambassador to Jordan Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al Thani.

The meeting, attended by Head of the Jordanian-Qatari Parliamentary Fraternity Committee Senator Khawla Armouti, focused on enhancing bilateral cooperation and discussing regional developments, the Jor-

dan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Fayez said that the relations, founded on mutual respect, continue to grow under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah and Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, serving the two countries' shared interests and Arab causes.

He stressed the need for Arab countries to unite in addressing pressing regional crises, reiterating that the se-



Senate President Faisal Fayez on Monday meets Qatari Ambassador to Jordan Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al Thani

Lower House approves 12 articles of 2026 Local Administration Law

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — The Lower House on Monday continued deliberations on the 2026 Local Administration Law, approving the first 12 of its 70 articles amid debate over municipal powers, local governance and the role of elected councils.

Article 1, which names the legislation the Local Administration Law of 2026 and provides for its entry into force 60 days after publication in the Official Gazette, was approved.

During discussion of Article 2, MPs examined several definitions, including "resident", "voter" and "liable person". Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Local Administration Walid Masri said municipal services are available to everyone living within municipal boundaries, regardless of nationality.

He said that non-Jordanians may benefit



The Lower House on Monday continues deliberations on the 2026 Local Administration Law

from municipal services and could be subject to certain fees or taxes, but this does not give them the right to vote. Under the law, the term "voter" refers specifically to a Jordanian who is legally entitled to participate in elections.

The House endorsed Article 3, which provides for municipal councils, governorate councils, executive councils and joint services councils.

Article 4, approved as submitted by the government, defines municipalities as public-benefit entities with legal personality and financial and administrative independence.

It also allows municipalities to own property,

enter into contracts and undertake legal proceedings. Municipal councils are to be formed through direct elections.

During Article 5, MPs approved provisions expanding the municipal council's role in urban planning, including consideration and approval of plans covering land use, infrastructure, transport, public facilities, waste management, water and sewage services and development and investment priorities.

The House approved Articles 6 and 7, rejecting several proposed amendments concerning municipal elections, council structures, public consultations, committees and the powers of elected councils.

Article 8, concerning the mayor's powers, was also approved. It assigns the mayor responsibility for supervising the municipal executive apparatus and following up on the implementation of approved service, development and strategic plans.

MPs objected to a provision requiring the mayor and municipal council members to obtain prior ministerial approval before travelling abroad on official missions or participating in training programmes and workshops. Under the provision, requests must be submitted at least 10 days before departure.

Masri said that the requirement is a governance measure rather than a restriction on elected councils, saying authorities need to be informed of official travel to ensure continuity of work and appropriate representation and coordination.

The House also approved Articles 9 and 10, including provisions concerning municipal responsibilities and the delegation of functions.

Cassation Court upholds over 3-year sentence for drug dealer

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld a May 2023 State Security Court (SSC) ruling, sentencing a drug dealer to over three years in prison after convicting him of possessing illegal narcotics in Amman in December 2022.

The court declared the defendant guilty of obtaining illegal narcotics with the intent of selling the drugs to an undercover agent on December 5.

The SSC handed the defendant five years in prison for the offence of possessing illegal narcotics and ordered him to pay JD5,000 in fines.

However, the court decided to reduce the fine to JD3,500 and the prison term to three years and four months in prison to give the

defendant a second chance in life.

Court documents said the Anti-Narcotics Department (AND) learnt the defendant was in possession of illegal narcotics and sent one of its agents to pose as a buyer.

"The AND agent got in touch with the defendant via a mobile application and asked him for a stash of Hashish in return for JD50," court documents said.

When the two met, AND agents immediately arrested the suspect, court papers added.

Upon searching the defendant's home, officers found additional illegal narcotics, including Hashish and Captagon pills, the court added.

The defendant contested the SSC's ruling through his lawyer, who argued that the court "did not provide solid evidence to implicate his client for drug trafficking".

Meanwhile, the SSC prosecution office asked the higher court to uphold the sentence and the fine imposed on the defendant.

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

"It was clear to the court that the defendant confessed willingly to possessing the illegal drugs to sell in the local market," the higher court said.

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

Economic pressures drive delays in marriage, financial independence — analyst

By Hanan Abuzaid

AMMAN — For decades, reaching adulthood in Jordan followed a clear path. Young adults finished university, found a steady job, bought or rented a home and started a family.

Today, that path is under growing pressure, leaving many young Jordanians dependent on their families for longer and delaying major life milestones.

Data from the Department of Statistics (DoS) highlights the economic pressures facing young people. Youth unemployment stands at around 47 per cent among those

aged 15-24, while the average age at first marriage has risen to 31.2 years for men and 27.5 years for women. These trends reflect mounting financial constraints rather than simply changing personal preferences.

Sociologist and cultural analyst Kamal Mirza said that young people should not be blamed for changing their choices.

Mirza said that it is unfair to portray young people as deliberately choosing to delay marriage or financial independence, arguing that such a view places the blame on those affected by wider economic pressures.

He said that young people today are influenced more by education and media than by traditional social institutions, while economic and political pressures continue to shape their choices in employment and family life.

He added that policymakers should bear greater responsibility for addressing these challenges rather than placing the burden on young people.

Mirza also rejected the notion that delaying marriage allows young people to mature and build their careers, stressing that the argument does not accurately reflect the social context.

"In sociology, social completeness and social respect rest on two main pillars: marriage and formal work," Mirza said.

He said that the financial burden of marriage, combined with delayed employment due to limited job opportunities, postpones young people's transition into adulthood.

Traditional sayings about marriage helping young men "settle down", he added, reflect a broader social reality in which maturity is associated with stable income and family formation.

Mirza said that this delayed transition can also create wider social pressures, including frustration, social exclusion and behavioural strain among young people who work hard but remain unable to achieve expected life goals.

He stressed that economic indicators show that young people are not necessarily choosing prolonged financial dependency. Rather, structural economic factors continue to constrain their choices and force them to postpone major life milestones.

Further DoS figures highlight the financial challenges associated with establishing independent households. "More than 60 per cent of



Photo courtesy of Unsplash

young adults earning below the national average income reportedly remain in the family home beyond the age of 25 to reduce basic living costs," the report said.

Recent housing and

population data also indicate that housing costs account for more than 35 per cent of an average young worker's monthly income, leaving limited room for savings or long-term financial planning.

To address these pressures, local institutions have stressed the need for targeted economic support and expanded employment opportunities. According to government progress reports on economic modernisation, national initiatives have focused on strengthening technical and vocational training programmes and supporting youth-led enterprises.

Merza says that combining these efforts with affordable housing solutions is essential to easing financial pressures and enabling young adults to achieve key life milestones.



A motorbike stops next to a collapsed building following a 7.7-magnitude earthquake in Borong, East Manggarai, East Nusa Tenggara on Sunday

Nearly 13,000 displaced by deadly Indonesian quake await aid

MBAY, Indonesia (AFP) — Thousands of people displaced by a powerful earthquake in eastern Indonesia awaited aid on Monday as they camped out at schools, police stations and government offices.

The 7.7-magnitude quake early on Saturday killed 68 people, according to an updated toll, and injured more than 100. Rescue officials have said there were no reports of people missing.

The number of people unable to return to their homes had risen to 12,800 by Monday, dispersed among several towns on Flores island, Berton Suar Pelita Panjaitan, spokesman for Indonesia's BNPB national disaster agency, told AFP.

Many Flores inhabitants were preparing to sleep outside for a third night, afraid to go home as more than 1,600 aftershocks have rumbled through the area, according to the BMKG geological agency.

AFP saw several residents of the small town of Mbay, in Nagekeo regency nearest the epicentre, camped out in makeshift tents they had erected using tarpaulins and poles.

"Our houses are no longer liveable, because many have collapsed and are full of cracks, so we can't go inside anymore," Mbay resident Junaidin, 32, said outside a self-made tent that was sleeping about 30 people.

"We only go back home to get water, clothes, pillows, and then we... spend the nights here."

Many Flores residents have traumatic memories of another 7.7-magnitude quake that hit the island in 1992, triggering a tsunami and killing about 2,500 people.

"We're on our own here," said Junaidin, who, like many Indonesians, has one name.

He expressed frustration with a perceived lag in the arrival of aid while the nation celebrated Independence Day with pomp and ceremony in the capital Jakarta.

"As for help from the government, there hasn't been any — no tents, no medicine, no food, no drinking water, nothing," said Junaidin.

"Please open your eyes, government. We are your people, we are part of you. So please look after us."

'We fled with nothing'

The Indonesian Air Force said it was bringing 13 tonnes of emergency aid in two Hercules planes and a Boeing.

It was also deploying helicopters to bring emergency supplies directly to survivors in isolated communities, the Antara state news agency quoted the commander of El Tari Air Base in Kupang as saying.

The aid included food, clothes, clean water and emergency medical equipment.

The health ministry has sent two field hospitals and emergency medical teams to the stricken region, and the government said more than 1,400 police, soldiers and other personnel have been deployed to assist.

However, the provisions cannot come soon enough for locals.

"We fled with nothing. Just the clothes on our backs. We're victims; we're going through a disaster," said Mbay resident Siti Saudah Daso, a 31-year-old mother of three.

"They said they

would give us something, but there's no proof. So honestly, we're a bit upset, disappointed."

Rescuers were still combing the stricken area for victims, search and rescue official Fathur Rahman told AFP.

"We conduct land and air operations from helicopters. There haven't been any reports on missing persons, but we are still scouring the area just to be sure."

The epicentre of the shallow quake was located just off the north coast of Flores, geological authorities said.

The affected areas have few high-rise buildings.

Berton, the disaster agency spokesman, said at least 914 houses on the island were severely damaged and hundreds of others to a lesser degree.

Dozens of public buildings, including educational and health facilities as well as government offices, were also affected.

The NGO Save the Children said more than 8,000 children faced "safety risks and disruptions to their education" following the quake.

Indonesia experiences frequent earthquakes due to its location in the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic activity stretching from Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin.

A devastating 9.1-magnitude tremor in 2004 struck off the coast of Sumatra and triggered a tsunami that killed 220,000 throughout the region, about 170,000 of them in Indonesia.

It was one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history.

Netanyahu presses role for US general in Hamas disarmament

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US envoy Jared Kushner agreed on Monday that an American general would verify Hamas' disarmament, an Israeli official said, as the premier insisted there would be no pull-out from Gaza until then.

The understanding marks a new attempt by President Donald Trump's administration to satisfy Israel after Netanyahu, facing a tough reelection fight, publicly rejected the latest part of a US plan aimed at ending the devastating Gaza war.

Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and a longtime family friend of Netanyahu, met the Israeli leader in Jerusalem a day after holding rare direct talks in Egypt with Hamas, which has publicly committed itself to the plan.

The two sides "agreed that no redeployment or reconstruction would take place in the Gaza Strip before Hamas is disarmed throughout Gaza", a senior Israeli official told AFP.

"It was also agreed that the first step toward the demilitarisation of the Strip would be to require Hamas to hand over its weapons for decommissioning under the supervision of an American general," the official said.

A roadmap agreed by Hamas on July 30 said that the decommissioning of weapons would be supervised by the International Stabilisation Force, the nascent unit that aims to deploy to Gaza if the situation calms. It is led by US



Displaced Palestinians inspect the damage at the site of an alleged Israeli strike on a tent in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip, on Sunday

Major General Jasper Jeffers.

Hamas had pledged to hand over its weapons to a new Palestinian governing body, an arrangement that brought scepticism from Netanyahu but which Trump hailed as a breakthrough.

An official with Trump's "Board of Peace" implementing the deal said that "every weapon collected will be fully decommissioned so it cannot be used again" and said that Israel "retains its full right of self-defence".

"If Hamas resorts to terror, violence or attempts to rearm, Israel will retain the right to act accordingly," the official said.

Other Board of Peace members joining Kushner in the talks included former British prime minister Tony Blair.

Kushner in the talks in Egypt had demanded that Hamas prove it is giving up its weapons and that the group — whose unprecedented October 7, 2023 attack against Israel launched the Gaza war — renounce any future role in governing the Palestinian territory, according to sources in the negotiation.

A Hamas official said the group, represented by its new leader Khalil Al Hayya, told Kushner it was committed to the Gaza plan and wanted pressure on Netanyahu.

Hardline rhetoric

Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime

minister whose job is on the line in October 27 elections, has increasingly been willing to defy Trump, whose support he once highlighted in his campaign.

The prime minister has also made clear his unhappiness with Trump's decision to halt the US-Israeli war on Iran launched in late February and instead pursue a settlement with Tehran's clerical leaders.

In an interview that generated wide attention in the Arab world, Itamar Ben Gvir, the far-right national security minister in Netanyahu's cabinet, said that Israel should kill 30 to 40 people every night in Gaza.

"Not only those who endanger you right

now. These are people who shouldn't be alive," he told a podcast of a former Gaza hostage. "I'm paying them a compliment by calling them humans."

President Isaac Herzog, who plays a largely ceremonial role, offered more upbeat words as he met Kushner, praising the Board of Peace's "efforts to ensure a brighter and more secure future" for Israel, Gaza and the region.

Israeli operations have killed at least 1,265 Palestinians since the ceasefire came into effect on October 10, according to figures by Gaza's health ministry, which is under Hamas. Its figures are considered reliable by the United Nations.

Aid cuts hitting people with disabilities hard — survey

GENEVA (AFP) — Sharp cuts to international development and aid funding are having "direct and severe consequences" on the lives of people with disabilities, Handicap International (HI) said on Monday.

The charity warned in a report that people with disabilities risked being particularly hard-hit amid "the sharpest aid contraction in modern history".

The dramatic cuts have left people with disabilities facing "growing exclusion, restricted access to essential services, and threats to their survival", it said.

The report highlighted numbers from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development showing that official development assistance fell 23 per cent last year — the biggest drop ever recorded.

The United States has led the charge on cuts since President Donald Trump returned to power last year, but other major donors like Britain, Germany and France have also slashed aid and development budgets.

"Every budget cut has human consequences: it can deprive people

of access to rehabilitation, education, health-care, or the support services essential to their independence," HI Switzerland chief Daniel Suda-Lang said in a statement.

"The international community must act and reverse this trend before its effects become irreversible."

The report was based on a survey of 177 organisations that support people with disabilities across more than 35 countries. It found that 79 percent of them had experienced "severe or very severe" funding cuts since early 2025.

The consequences have been immediate, it warned.

A full 72 per cent of the organisations said they had cancelled or suspended at least one programme or activity and 43 per cent reported weak or very weak capacity to sustain their mission.

Fourteen per cent said they risked permanent closure if current trends continued.

HI cautioned that the aid cuts were "disproportionately affecting persons with disabilities who already face multiple forms of exclusion".

Among the organisations surveyed, around 85 per cent said children, women and the elderly with disabilities were particularly affected.

The report highlighted that women and girls with disabilities especially face reduced access to specialised support services and increased exposure to gender-based violence.

And children are experiencing disruptions to rehabilitation, nutrition, and education services, increasing the risk of school dropout and irreversible developmental setbacks.

Europe wildfires — latest developments

PARIS, France (AFP) — Firefighters in Belgium battled to contain the country's worst wildfire in a century on Monday, while Greece said a deadly blaze near Athens had been controlled.

But anger over the official response to Europe's summer of fires boiled over in France when that country's prime minister was jeered as he visited a village devastated by a forest inferno.

Here are the latest developments across Europe:

Spain 'optimistic' about blaze

Authorities in Spain's northeastern Aragon region said they were "optimistic" in the fight against a huge fire that has razed more than 17,000 hectares over the past week.

Officials directing the battle against the blaze said the "major part" of the fire had been stabi-



This handout photograph taken on Saturday and released on Monday by VHP shows firefighters looking at wildfire in the Hautes Fagnes (High Fens) nature reserve

lised, and two historic monasteries threatened by the flames are now not thought to be in danger.

Belgium blaze stops short of German border

Belgium's biggest wild-

fire in a century, which has devastated some 3,000 hectares of the High Fens nature reserve, halted short of the German border.

But officials warned the blaze was not yet contained and could

still spread further.

French PM jeered

French Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu announced help for regions in his country hit by wildfires, including 12 million

euros in aid for two of the worst-affected areas.

Earlier, around 200 people dressed in black heckled Lecornu as he visited a village in the Gironde region, where 183 homes burned down.

Some residents allege authorities prioritised fighting fires in the upscale Cap-Ferret peninsula — where many affluent Parisians take holidays — over protecting the homes of locals.

Rain boosts Belgium's fight

Rain fell in Belgium, bringing much-needed respite to the 500 firefighters and emergency crews tackling the blaze, but officials warned conditions could change fast.

Germany's defence ministry said that two military water-bombing helicopters would be sent to Belgium.

The German town of Monschau, close to the border, ordered nearly 30 people living in two streets near the frontier to evacuate.

Greece controls deadly blaze

Two fires on the Greek island of Salamis near Athens that claimed two lives and led to the evacuation of nearly 600 people on boats have been largely extinguished, the fire service said Monday.

The fires broke out Sunday near packed beaches on the island just west of Athens that is popular with day-trippers. Though the civil protection agency issued evacuation orders, the fire department said the fires spread in just seven minutes owing to strong winds, trapping an elderly couple near their home.

Somalia clashes with regional forces over control of key city

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Somali national forces clashed with troops loyal to an ousted regional leader on Monday over control of a key city, the government said, accusing him of allying with Islamist insurgents.

Several states in the deeply fragmented country are opposed to control by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who also faces a long-running insurgency by the Islamist Al Shabaab group that controls vast swathes of central Somalia.

In March, the government sent in troops to oust the head of South West State, Abdiiaz Hassan Mohamed Laftagareen. He launched a failed attempt to retake the state in May.

Troops loyal to Laftagareen again attacked Somali army positions in the state capital, Baid-

oa, around 5:00 am on Monday, this time with the help of Al Shabaab militants, according to a statement by the federal government.

The assault involved "vehicles laden with explosives", the statement said, adding that government troops killed nearly 30 militants in their response.

A spokesperson for the Laftagareen administration claimed their fighters held parts of Baidoa, but witnesses told AFP they were soon forced out.

Resident Adan Nurey told AFP of "heavy fighting in several areas".

"We saw both sides exchanging fire on some streets, and the fighting continued for several hours," he said by phone, adding that Laftagareen's forces later withdrew and federal troops regained full control of the city.



File photo

International Media Forum ‘Islamic Civilisation: New perspective, new discoveries’ to take place in Tashkent on August 24–29

AMMAN (JT) — On August 24–29, the capital of Uzbekistan will host the International Media Forum on the topic “Islamic Civilisation: New perspective, new discoveries”.

The main part of the event will take place at the Islamic Civilisation Center in Uzbekistan, bringing together representatives of international media outlets, global experts and media professionals, according to a statement from Uzbekistan embassy in Amman.

Forum programme will include an official opening ceremony, plenary sessions, thematic media exhibitions, press briefings, and bilateral meetings. The sessions will address documentary filmmaking and historical memory, publishing projects, modern technologies, as well

as the development of international media projects, the statement said.

The main part of the event will take place at the Islamic Civilisation Center in Uzbekistan

In addition, master classes will be organised for students from Uzbekistan with the participation of

leading professionals from the global media industry. Participants will exchange experience in modern journalism, media production and effective engagement in the international information space.

On August 27, forum participants will travel to Samarkand. As part of the programme, guests will visit the Imam Al Bukhari Complex and explore the city’s rich historical and cultural heritage. A special media tour for international media representatives is also planned in Tashkent.

On August 28, the forum will conclude with a final plenary session and an official closing ceremony. International guests will also take part in events dedicated to the 35th Anniversary of the State Independence of Uzbekistan.

10m euro project launched to reduce sedimentation in King Talal Dam

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Valley Authority (JVA), in partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Netherlands, on Monday launched a four-year project to reduce sedimentation in the King Talal Dam basin and enhance water security.

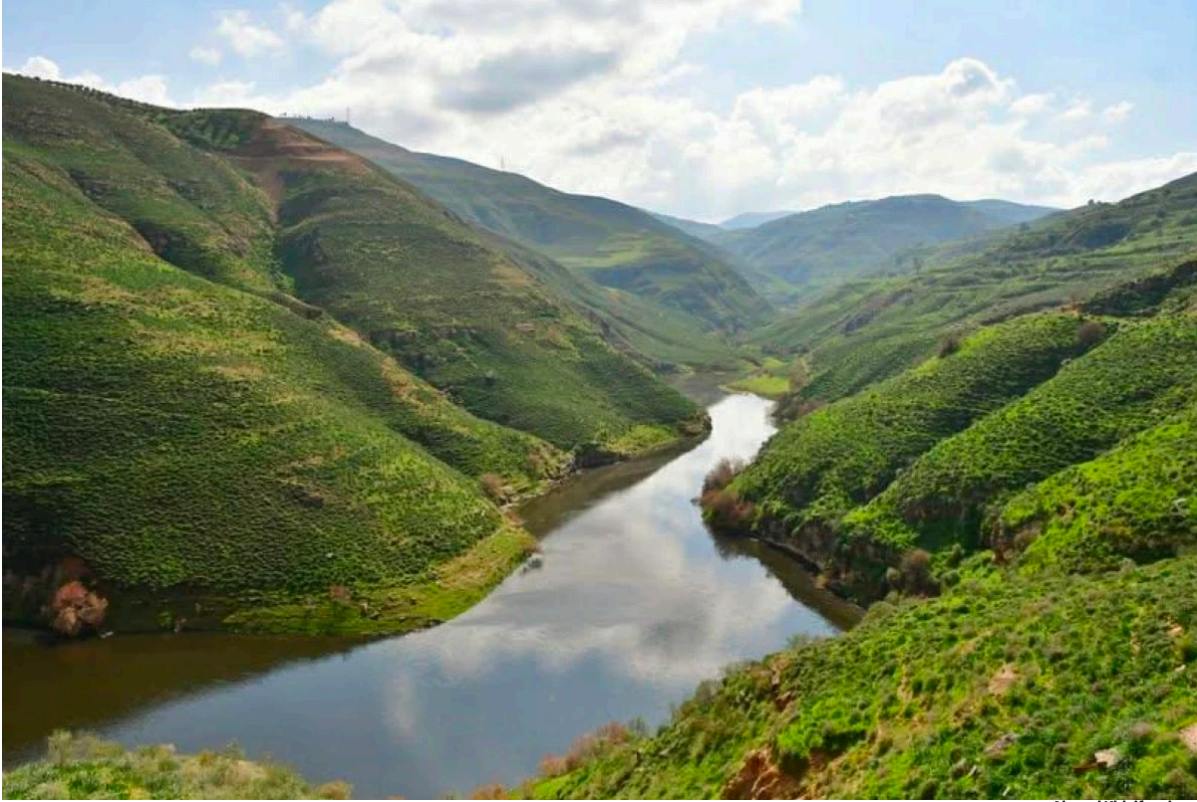
The project, funded by the Dutch government for 10 million euros, was launched in the presence of Dutch Ambassador to Jordan Stella Kloth, IUCN Regional Director for West Asia Hani Al Shaer, heads of committees of concerned municipalities, officials, representatives of national and international organisations and local communities.

JVA Secretary General Hisham Haisa said that the project represents an important step towards protecting water resources and improving the efficiency and sustainability of water storage facilities, according to a JVA statement.

He said efforts to address sedimentation will begin at its sources in the upper basin by reducing soil erosion and limiting the flow of sediments into the dam.

Haisa noted that King Talal Dam is one of the Kingdom’s key surface water storage facilities and plays an important role in providing irrigation water to farmers in the Jordan Valley.

He stressed that the JVA attaches great importance to protecting dams and preserving their storage capacity as



Ahmed Khleifat photo

A general view of King Talal Dam in Jerash, some 40 kilometres north of Amman

part of national water security efforts.

The project adopts an integrated approach combining engineering and nature-based solutions, alongside strengthening the technical and institutional capacities of relevant stakeholders, he said.

The project aims to reduce soil erosion, restore vegetation cover and address the causes of sediment accumulation at their source, with the goal of reducing the flow of sediment into King Talal Dam by at least 10 per cent by the end of the fourth year.

Haisa stressed that achieving the project’s

objectives requires effective cooperation among national and local institutions, local communities, farmers and international partners.

For her part, Kloth underscored the importance of Jordanian-Dutch cooperation in supporting the water sector and addressing challenges related to water scarcity and climate change.

She said the project reflects the ongoing cooperation between the two countries to enhance the sustainability of water resources and protect water infrastructure, expressing hope that it would deliver tangible and sustainable

results.

Shaer said that addressing sedimentation requires an integrated approach that begins at the basin and the sources of sediment.

He stressed the importance of combining engineering and nature-based solutions to protect King Talal Dam and enhance its sustainability, reaffirming the IUCN’s commitment to working with the JVA and other partners to achieve the project’s objectives and develop models that can be applied in other basins.

The project is aligned with the National Water Strategy 2023–2040 and national water and

climate change policies, and contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to water, climate action and ecosystem protection.

The launch event included a presentation on the project’s objectives, phases and implementation mechanisms, as well as a discussion session with relevant stakeholders.

The project is expected to provide a model that can be expanded to other dam basins, contributing to the protection of water infrastructure, preservation of storage capacity and enhancement of Jordan’s water security.

As machinery removes rubble, hopes for survivors from Colombian quake dwindle

GALI, Colombia (AFP) — The noise of backhoes, cranes and bulldozers echoed across Colombia’s quake-hit cities on Sunday as workers labored to remove rubble, though the chance of finding survivors was slim a week after the disaster.

Last Monday’s 7.4 magnitude earthquake

killed nearly 300 people and destroyed thousands of buildings. At least 140 people are still missing, authorities said.

In the hard-hit western city of Pereira, Andres Cano, a 30-year-old nursing student, acknowledged that the hope of locating survivors “is much lower

now.”

“You feel exhausted, it’s mostly mental fatigue,” he said while standing next to a group of friends wearing orange vests and helmets.

The earthquake represents the first major test for the government of right-wing President Abelardo de la Espri-

ella, who was sworn in just three days before the disaster struck.

On Saturday, he asked his US ally, President Donald Trump, for a temporary suspension of tariffs to help his country.

Nearly 27,000 homes were destroyed, and many survivors have nowhere to go. Many

slept on mattresses or makeshift beds outside. Shelters displayed QR codes so that those affected can report missing relatives or damage to their homes.

In the hardest-hit cities, several buildings were marked with a red “X” to warn of the risk of collapse and prohibit pedestrian access.

UN laments ‘unacceptable’ toll of 350 aid workers killed in 2025

UNITED NATIONS, United States (AFP) — The number of aid workers killed worldwide in 2025 reached 350, with the most fatalities in Gaza and Sudan, the United Nations said on Monday, calling attacks on humanitarianians “unacceptable”.

The death toll, however, was slightly lower than that of 2024, when 377 aid workers were killed.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) cited the figures from the research and advisory group Humanitarian Outcomes in a statement marking World Humanitarian Day.

Some 186 humanitarianians were killed in Gaza — the deadliest place for aid workers for the third year running — followed by Sudan with 71 killed.

“More than 1,000 aid workers have been killed in just three years and that is utterly unacceptable,” Tom Fletcher, undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs, said in the statement.

“But just calling it out will not protect the next aid worker. States must uphold international humanitarian law and use every tool to protect civilians and our colleagues,” he said. “And for those



AFP photo

Sudanese army solders take part in a military parade on Monday, in the city of Gedaref in eastern Sudan during celebrations to mark the 72nd anniversary of the Sudanese Armed Forces

who break the rules, there must be real consequences.”

Since the start of 2026, 82 more aid workers have been killed, 97 injured and 39 abducted worldwide.

OCHA voiced particular concern over the proliferation of armed drones “that are putting lethal power into ever more hands and sending more explosive weapons into towns and cities”.

In Sudan, armed drones caused 80 per cent of civilian deaths in the first four months of 2026, hitting markets and health facilities, the statement said, also noting casualties from drone attacks in the Russia-Ukraine war.

“Weaponised drones have become the new face of an old danger: the deliberate or reckless destruction of civilian life,” Fletcher said.

JAF evacuates 31st batch of Gaza children for medical treatment in Kingdom

Continued from page 1

Jordan continues to reaffirm its commitment to supporting Palestinians and strengthening the humanitarian and medical response, under the leadership of

His Majesty King Abdullah, helping alleviate the suffering of patients and the wounded and ensuring they receive treatment and care.

Jordan also runs two military field hospitals in Gaza, one in the Strip’s

north, which was established in 2009 following the war in 2008. The second is in Khan Younis in the south, which was established in November 2023 at the peak of the Israeli war of aggression on the coastal enclave

that erupted on October 7, 2023.

Besides the field hospitals in Gaza, the JAF established the Jordanian field hospital in Nablus in late November 2023.

Other humanitarian

programmes include the land bridge for aid delivery, the mobile bakery, the Restoring Hope Initiative, which provides prosthetics for amputees, and the evacuation of critical cases to Jordanian hospitals.

Yemen risks return to ‘full-scale conflict’, warns UN rights chief

Continued from page 1

Two civilians were killed in Houthi shelling on residential areas and displacement camps in Marib that same day.

The UN rights office said at least seven civilians had been killed

and 10 others wounded in Houthi attacks on government-controlled areas since August 6, while two civilians had been reported injured in Houthi-held areas in late July.

Houthi missile and drone attacks on the port of Mokha on the

Red Sea on August 9 had killed three port workers and injured four others, it said.

Another attack by the group on a cargo ship in the Bab Al Mandeb Strait on August 11 had reportedly killed four crew members — three Pakistanis and

one Indonesian — and injured several others, it added.

The rights office highlighted that multiple civilian sites had also been hit in the attacks, including fuel storage facilities and a residential compound at the Saudi Field Hos-

pital in Mokha.

“Attacks on civilian infrastructure risk further deepening civilian suffering at a time when at least 18 million Yemenis are already food insecure,” Turk said.

“These attacks must end immediately.”

Iran-US deadline expires as Hormuz dispute blocks deal

Continued from page 1

Hormuz remains a major source of leverage for Tehran because of its importance to global energy supplies. Before the war, around one-fifth of global energy supplies passed through the waterway.

Iran has meanwhile maintained a hard military position.

On Sunday, Iranian army chief Amir Hatami announced a reward equivalent to \$30,000 for killing or capturing US military personnel and handing them over to Iranian authorities.

He said the reward would be doubled if the action were carried out by an Iranian woman.

Hatami also repeated Iran’s demand for US forces to leave the region, saying they no longer had permission to enter the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman

or the Strait of Hormuz.

The conflict was previously paused by an April ceasefire after nearly 40 days of fighting. A June framework for peace talks followed, but later collapsed, leaving the two sides trading fire sporadically, mainly around

southern Iran and the Strait of Hormuz.

Political analyst Amer Sabaileh said the absence of an agreement was expected given the course of the conflict.

“It was natural because an agreement was not expected. Even during the 60-day pe-

riod, Trump attacked Iran within two weeks,” Sabaileh said. “I believe the current environment is about moving the crisis inside Iran, tightening the siege, imposing unprecedented economic sanctions and working to strike what remains of Iran’s

capabilities in the region.”

“The escalation against Hizbollah, the direction towards Iraq and the Houthis all fit into this approach,” he added. “The next step, I believe, is to work from inside Iran.”

The expiry of the

deadline leaves the original framework without a final settlement, while the blockade, freedom of navigation through Hormuz and wider military pressure remain the main unresolved issues shaping the next phase of the confrontation.

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From trade with China to production with China

By Raad Mahmoud Al-Tal

His Majesty King Abdullah’s visit to the People’s Republic of China, particularly at this time, carries significant economic importance. The economic relationship between Jordan and China is no longer simply a trade relationship between two countries. It has reached a critical stage concerning the role this relationship can play in the Jordanian economy. The key question is not how much Jordan imports from China, nor the value of Chinese investments in Jordan, but rather how this relationship can be transformed into a tool for increasing production and exports, transferring technology, and raising domestic value added.

According to the available data, China’s exports to Jordan reached \$6.29 billion in 2025, while Jordan’s exports to China amounted to only around \$430 million. This resulted in a Chinese trade surplus with Jordan of \$5.86 billion. In other words, for every dollar Jordan exports to China, China exports approximately \$14.6 to Jordan. This ratio reflects the significant gap in Jordan’s ability to access the Chinese market.

However, looking at the relationship from a trade perspective alone may not be sufficient. China has become a major economic partner for Arab countries. In 2025, China’s exports to Arab economies reached \$293.5 billion, compared with approximately \$201 billion in Chinese imports from Arab countries, bringing total trade to nearly \$495 billion, according to a report by the Jordan Strategy Forum. Therefore, the Arab market has become an important component of China’s trade activity, and the question for Jordan is how it can secure a larger share of this huge market.

Investment provides the second dimension. Chinese foreign direct investment accumulated in Jordan during the period 2010 to 2025 reached approximately \$3.56 billion through 71 projects, according to the Jordan Strategy Forum. These investments were distributed across different sectors. The energy sector accounted for approximately \$3.17 billion, or around 89 per cent of total Chinese investment in Jordan. In comparison, investment in consumer products and services amounted to approximately \$360 million, while investment in automobile manufacturing reached \$19.71 million, financial and business services \$6.4 million, and information and communications technology only \$4.27 million.

These figures tell us something important. Jordan has succeeded in attracting Chinese capital, but it has not yet succeeded in diversifying this investment in a way that makes it a broad driver of productive transformation. When around 89 per cent of investment is concentrated in one sector, its impact on other sectors and domestic value chains remains relatively limited. The priority in the coming period should not simply be larger Chinese investments, but more diversified investments that are more closely linked to production, exports, and technology.

The comparison presented by the Jordan Strategy Forum with other Arab countries also reveals the scale of the opportunity. Cumulative Chinese investment reached \$12.19 billion in Iraq, \$9.72 billion in the UAE, \$8.29 billion in Egypt, \$7.02 billion in Saudi Arabia, and \$3.93 billion in Morocco, compared with \$3.56 billion in Jordan. The number of Chinese projects implemented during the same period reached 1,227 in the UAE, 540 in Saudi Arabia, 375 in Egypt, and 177 in Morocco, compared with only 71 projects in Jordan.

However, Jordan’s objective should not simply be to compete with these countries in terms of the number of projects or the volume of capital. Jordan’s real advantage could lie in building a production and export base serving multiple markets, benefiting from its geographical location, trade agreements, industrial zones and skilled workforce. The objective should be to attract Chinese investment to Jordan for production and exports, rather than solely for access to the domestic market.

The real opportunity, therefore, does not lie simply in increasing the volume of trade, but in changing the nature of the relationship. Part of Chinese capital should be directed toward factories, manufacturing industries, technological projects and logistics. Technology should be transformed into production, production into exports, and exports into employment and value added. The success of the Jordanian-Chinese relationship should ultimately be measured by four key indicators: The value of productive investment, the volume of Jordanian exports, the number of quality jobs created and the amount of technology and value added retained within the Jordanian economy.

Only then can the relationship move from trade with China to production with China, and from a relationship dominated by a trade deficit to a partnership capable of contributing to rebuilding Jordan’s productive capacity and generating attractive economic returns for both sides.

Cognitive warfare in the Jordanian security environment: Building trust and strengthening state power



Muhammad Muhaidat

In modern warfare, the battle does not necessarily begin with the first shot. It may have started long before that, preceded by confrontations in the information and cognitive domains, where narratives and perceptions compete before the details of an event are fully established. On phone screens, social media platforms and in the media, perceptions of the enemy and ally are shaped, responsibility is assigned, and interpretations of events are formed.

War, therefore, is no longer merely a struggle over territory; it has become a struggle over perception. Whoever can influence how people understand events possesses a degree of power to influence the course of the conflict.

Narratives are no longer merely reflections of battles; they have become tools of warfare themselves. In the digital environment, an image may precede an event, a narrative may spread before information is complete, and an impression may become firmly established before the truth reaches the public.

This is where cognitive warfare emerges. It goes beyond traditional propaganda and psychological warfare to influence how individuals, groups and decision-makers think, as well as their level of trust in institutions and sources. Such warfare does not necessarily rely on fabricated information. Some of its most effective tools may involve presenting accurate information within a misleading context, taking part of the truth out of context, reposting an old image, or using emotionally charged content that reaches recipients before they have the ability to verify and analyse it.

The danger of this form of conflict is increasing in the Middle East, where security, political and media crises overlap and the effects of regional events rapidly spill over into neighbouring societies. With the widespread use of smartphones and social media platforms, citizens are now exposed to multiple narratives simultaneously. Some originate from official institutions and media outlets, others from individuals and influencers, while some come from unknown sources.

The problem, therefore, is not always a lack of information, but rather an abundance of information. The challenge becomes distinguishing

between information and claims, news and interpretation, and authentic images and images placed within a false context.

In this environment, Jordan finds itself operating within a cognitive landscape directly connected to its regional surroundings. The Kingdom’s geopolitical position makes it highly susceptible to developments around it, while the rapid flow of information has made digital borders less significant than ever before.

An influence campaign may not need physical access to Jordanian territory; it may only need to reach a citizen’s phone. Consequently, any regional crisis can turn into a domestic information crisis if reliable and rapid channels for presenting and explaining facts are not available.

Unverified news, manipulated videos, old photographs and misleading headlines can influence public sentiment, fuel anxiety and polarisation, and test the level of trust between society and its institutions.

In this context, the role of military media extends beyond simply reporting events to managing the information environment surrounding them. Accurate, clear and timely official information does not merely serve a news function; it is also a tool for crisis management, safeguarding public trust and limiting the space available for rumours and disinformation.

Conversely, the absence or delay of such information creates room for alternative narratives capable of exploiting fear and uncertainty. Speed and credibility consequently become components of national power, within a delicate balance between the public’s right to know and the requirements of security and operational considerations.

This responsibility is becoming even more significant with the rise of artificial intelligence, which has redefined the concept of verifica-

tion by producing highly convincing synthetic content. It is no longer sufficient to ask whether content is genuine; it has become essential to examine its source, timing, context and independent verification evidence.

At the same time, artificial intelligence provides institutions with advanced tools for monitoring, analysis and early warning, strengthening their ability to anticipate cognitive threats, provided that its applications are subject to professional and ethical safeguards and that sensitive decisions remain within the scope of human judgement and oversight.

The most dangerous aspect of cognitive warfare, however, is that it targets trust as much as it targets information. A state may be able to confront a specific rumour, but it may face greater difficulty dealing with the cumulative effects of an environment that drives the public to doubt everything.

When the standard of verification collapses, the problem becomes deeper than any single piece of false information. The objective, therefore, should not be to convince citizens of a single narrative, but rather to equip them with critical-thinking and verification tools, making them less vulnerable to manipulation and polarisation.

This highlights the need for a national framework for cognitive security in Jordan that moves from reaction to anticipation. Such a framework could be built around five interconnected functions:

1. Early monitoring of narratives and information trends.
2. Contextual analysis of why they spread and which audiences they target.
3. Proactive communication to provide reliable information before an information vacuum develops.
4. Rapid and consistent response when crises occur.
5. Performance evaluation and lessons learned.

This also requires strengthening media and digital literacy, developing institutional media, supporting professional journalism and building partnerships among government institutions, universities, research centres and experts.

Cognitive security is not about controlling what citizens think. Rather, it is about protecting the

environment in which thinking and decision-making take place.

A cognitively resilient society is one that can deal with conflicting information, examine its sources, understand its context and adjust its positions when new facts emerge, while retaining its ability to make decisions under pressure.

At the heart of this system is the role of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, the Supreme Commander of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army, in consolidating trust in the state and its institutions and strengthening their ability to withstand evolving threats.

His Majesty recognised early on that the strength of a modern state is not measured solely by its military capabilities, but also by its ability to protect its security, preserve social cohesion, manage crises, and build trust between its institutions and citizens.

This has been reflected in His Majesty’s continued attention to developing the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army, enhancing its readiness, efficiency and ability to address various threats, including unconventional and hybrid threats.

Conclusion

The battlefield is no longer confined to land, air, sea and cyberspace; it has extended to the individual himself — to his perceptions, trust and ability to interpret events.

In the Jordanian context, the importance of cognitive security is heightened by the Kingdom’s geographical location and its exposure to multiple regional crises. It should therefore be regarded as an integral part of the national security and national resilience system.

If the armed forces protect the state’s borders, then an aware and cohesive society represents a fundamental pillar of national protection.

In today’s conflicts, the decisive battle may not be fought solely on the ground. It may instead be a battle over who possesses the most credible information, the most trusted institutions and the society with the greatest capacity to think, verify and endure.

Brigadier General Muhammad Muhaidat
director of Military Media

This picture is further enhanced by the presence of Chinese artistic troupes at the Jerash Festival, the activities of the Chinese Cultural Center in Amman, university scholarship programmes, and inter-university cooperation. The journey of tourism cooperation between Jordan and the People’s Republic of China began with the signing of a bilateral cooperation agreement in 2003 and has since developed through recent twinning agreements — most notably the one between Petra and the Great Wall of China in May 2026 — to boost tourism to Petra, Wadi Rum, the Dead Sea and Jerash, and to attract Chinese tourists.

The future holds far greater potential than what has been achieved so far. Artificial intelligence, the digital economy, advanced manufacturing, water desalination and management, smart agriculture, renewable energy, electric transportation, technical education and medical tourism are all sectors capable of generating a new wave of partnerships. Jordan can offer China a stable environment, a strategic location, a young and skilled workforce, and access to multiple markets, while China offers a vast industrial, technological, and financial base, along with exceptional expertise in translating plans into productive infrastructure. This complementary equation is the essence of the upcoming opportunity.

The strength of Jordanian-Chinese relations is not merely a diplomatic slogan, but a reality underscored by 49 years of communication, a decade of strategic partnership, \$5.37 billion in annual trade, industrial, mining, and energy investments, road projects, hundreds of students and trainees, and converging political stances. As we approach the 50th anniversary in 2027, the two countries have an opportunity to transform the occasion from a celebration of the past into a platform for launching a new decade of investment, innovation, and people-to-people exchanges. As long as mutual respect and common benefit are the compass, Jordanian-Chinese relations are poised to become deeper, broader, and more influential, and to present a bright model of international partnership that creates stability and development and opens the doors to a better future for both peoples.

Hasan Dajah is professor of strategic studies at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University

Jordan–China: A partnership for the next half-century

Hasan Dajah

The strength of relations between countries is not measured solely by the number of agreements signed, but rather by their ability to withstand international transformations, translate political trust into shared interests, and deliver the fruits of cooperation to people’s lives. By this standard, Jordanian-Chinese relations appear to be among the most firmly established and balanced bilateral relationships in the region. They have maintained an upward trajectory since the establishment of diplomatic relations on April 7, 1977, transcending differences in geography, size and economic systems to establish a model based on mutual respect, non-interference in internal affairs, and measurable, practical cooperation. Forty-nine years later, the two countries are approaching the golden jubilee of their relations, possessing a political, economic, and human capital that inspires great confidence in the future.

This path began with an early vision by the Hashemite leadership regarding the importance of China and its future standing. In the 1980s, His Majesty the late King Hussein bin Talal visited China on several occasions, accompanied on some of those visits by His Majesty King Abdullah II. Since assuming his constitutional powers in 1999, His Majesty King Abdullah II has visited China eight times, reflecting the continued royal interest in this relationship. The September 2015 visit marked a historic milestone when His Majesty and Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the establishment of a strategic partnership between the two countries. This partnership celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2025, during which both sides demonstrated that the term “strategic” is not merely a protocol expression, but rather a growing framework encompassing politics, trade, investment, energy, infrastructure, education and culture.

The strength of this relationship stems from political trust. Amman and Beijing view stability, sovereignty, and respect for international law as essential pillars for a more secure and just world. Their positions also converge in supporting the Palestinian cause, adhering to the two-state solution and the necessity of protecting civilians and delivering humanitarian aid. This convergence

gives bilateral relations a dimension that transcends direct economic interests. Jordan, with its moderation, credibility and pivotal role in regional affairs, represents a reliable partner for China in the Middle East, while China represents a major international power and a steadfast friend for Jordan, supporting security, stability, and development. Therefore, political coordination between the two countries has remained calm and deep, even during the most turbulent regional periods.

The figures clearly demonstrate the breadth of shared interests. Bilateral trade reached approximately \$3.6 billion in 2020, then exceeded \$4.4 billion in 2021, representing an annual increase of 22 per cent. In 2024, trade reached \$5.37 billion, an increase of nearly 49 per cent compared to 2020. This momentum did not stop there; trade between the two countries grew by approximately 21 per cent year-on-year during the first four months of 2025. China has become Jordan’s second-largest trading partner and its primary source of imports, a position that reflects the presence of Chinese products, technology and supply chains across broad sectors of the Jordanian economy.

Trade exchange should not be viewed solely in terms of volume, but also in terms of integration. Jordan exports potash, fertilisers, and phosphates to the Chinese market, along with value-added food and agricultural products such as dates and olive oil, while importing machinery, equipment, electrical and electronic devices, production inputs, and goods that support trade, industry, and consumption. While the trade balance is currently in China’s favor, this reality also presents significant growth potential for Jordanian exports. A market of over 1.4 billion people can absorb a larger share of Jordanian products, particularly fertilisers, pharmaceuticals, high-quality food, and Dead Sea products. The key is to build on existing trust to expedite technical approvals, enhance promotion, and connect Jordanian producers with e-commerce platforms and major Chinese trade fairs.

The partnership in the potash sector provides a striking example of what long-term investment can achieve. The Chinese company SDIC acquired a 28 per cent stake in the Arab Potash Company for approximately \$502 million, becoming its

largest shareholder. Under this investment and trade cooperation, the Arab Potash Company recorded its highest annual production in its history in 2024, reaching approximately 2.84 million tons, a 17 per cent increase compared to 2018 levels. Sales reached nearly 2.78 million tons, contributing approximately \$1.28 billion in foreign currency to the Jordanian economy. These figures make Jordanian-Chinese cooperation in potash a success story, integrating Jordan’s natural resources with Chinese capital, expertise, and market access, while simultaneously serving the Jordanian economy and global food security.

In the energy and infrastructure sectors, the partnership has moved from plans to tangible assets. The Atarat Power Plant, which generates electricity from oil shale and was jointly invested in, financed, engineered, and operated by China, has a net capacity of 470 megawatts and an investment cost exceeding \$2 billion. Its significance lies in utilising a local Jordanian resource and diversifying energy sources, in parallel with the presence of Chinese companies in solar and wind energy projects that support the green transition. Also noteworthy is the expansion and rehabilitation of the Salt-Arda road, funded by a \$31.5 million grant from China. The 12.5-kilometre road has been widened to four lanes with a total width of 18.8 metres, serving agricultural and tourism traffic and connecting the Jordan Valley to Salt and the outskirts of Amman more efficiently and safely.

In education and culture, a solid social foundation for the relationship is being built. Amman hosted the first Arab-Chinese Conference on Civilizational Dialogue in 1986, an early indication of Jordan’s role in building bridges of understanding between the two civilizations. Today, more than 600 Jordanian students are learning Chinese at Jordanian universities, while more than 500 Chinese students are studying Arabic in Jordan. In 2024, over 600 Jordanians from government, education, economic, and social sectors were sent to China for training and study. In addition, the Jordanian community in China numbers over 1,500, including students and businesspeople, creating a daily network of people exchanging knowledge, experience, and culture in both directions.

BUSINESS



AFP file photo

Japanese economy ekes out modest growth

Country's GDP grows 0.3% between April and June

TOKYO (AFP) — The Japanese economy eked out modest growth in the second quarter despite the impact of the Iran war, official data showed on Monday, but the reading fell short of market expectations. Higher oil prices have swollen Japan's import bill and led to higher prices for consumers, a situation worsened by the weak yen and eroding Prime Minister Sanae Takai-chi's popularity.

Gross domestic product (GDP) grew 0.3 per cent between April and June, according to seasonally adjusted preliminary data released by the Japanese Cabinet office.

Economists had expected stronger growth of 0.5 per cent, according to a Bloomberg News survey, after expanding by the same amount in the first quarter.

On an annualised basis, GDP expanded 1.1 per cent, against market expectations of 2 per cent and weaker than a revised 1.9 per cent in the previous three months.

Before the data was released the Bank of Japan (BoJ) was expected to hike interest rates soon as inflation accelerates in the world number four economy.

A BoJ rate hike could also lift the yen.

The yen has lost ground since the his-

toric recent joint market intervention by the United States and Japan to support the Japanese currency.

The joint operation to buy yen on the open market came after the currency slipped to a four-decade low of almost 164 per dollar.

In late July, the government also said it would slash consumption tax on food products, lowering it from 8 per cent to 1 per cent starting next April

This action initially boosted the yen to almost 155 against the greenback but it has since slid back, and on Monday was trading around 159.11.

The weak yen is a boon to big Japanese exporters like Toyota, which on Au-

gust 4 raised its profit forecasts.

But since many imports are priced in US dollars, in particular oil, Japan needs to shell out more yen for every barrel.

The weaker-than-expected GDP came after capital expenditure fell and missed market expectations, and flat private consumption against forecasts that it would grow.

Prime Minister Takaichi, whose two predecessors were undone by anger over inflation, has widened government support for voters.

Following a massive stimulus package adopted in late 2025 and extensive energy tax rebates, her government approved further aid earlier this year.

In late July, the government also said it would slash consumption tax on food products, lowering it from 8 per cent to 1 per cent starting next April.

"The [GDP] figures are worse than expected. Both consumption and capital investment are weak," NLI Research Institute economist Taro Saito told AFP.

"The growth is not due to robust economy but due to a decline in imports, because oil imports are difficult" because of the problems transiting the Strait of Hormuz, Saito said.

King's China visit offers opportunity for new level of economic partnership — JCC

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan Chamber of Commerce (JCC) President Khalil Haj Tawfiq described His Majesty King Abdullah's visit to China as a "historic" opportunity to transform Jordanian-Chinese economic ties from a trade-based relationship into a strategic partnership focused on investment, joint production and the exchange of expertise.

In an interview with Al Mamlaka TV on Monday, Haj Tawfiq said Jordan was not seeking to replace existing economic partners, but to broaden its options while maintaining ties with the US, Europe and other markets.

He noted that China exports around \$6.3 billion in goods to Jordan annually, compared with Jordanian exports to China of about \$430 million. Studies estimate Jordan has \$400 million-\$500 million in untapped export opportunities, he said, with further potential in the services sector.

The private sector has "great hope" for the royal visit to lead to new agreements and the implementation of existing ones, with the focus shifting from trade to joint investment and production.

"Let us manufacture together in Jordan, and export together



File photo

from Jordan to the world," Haj Tawfiq said, outlining the approach Jordan should take with Chinese investors.

'Let us manufacture together in Jordan, and export together from Jordan to the world,...'

He called for a partnership combining Chinese capital and expertise, Jordanian skills and work-

ing capital, and the Kingdom's strategic location.

Following the visit, the government and private sector should work as "one team" to turn opportunities into concrete projects, while Jordanian business delegations should visit China, organised according to sectors and areas of specialisation.

Jordanian-Chinese Business Council

Haj Tawfiq called for establishing a Jordanian-Chinese business council, with the model potentially expanded to sector-specific councils or partnerships with Chinese cities specialising in particular indus-

tries.

He identified information technology, automotive industries, agriculture and fertilisers as areas with potential for cooperation, particularly given Jordan's expertise in IT and China's technological capabilities.

President also proposed a council bringing together young entrepreneurs from both countries to promote knowledge exchange, innovation and job creation.

Royal visits play an important role in presenting Jordan's investment environment and opportunities to foreign investors, he noted, adding that direct engagement by His Majesty pro-

vides reassurance and credibility.

Free trade agreements

Chinese companies can use Jordan's strategic location and its free trade agreements with markets including Canada, the European Union, the US, Singapore and the UK as a gateway to regional and global markets.

Haj Tawfiq stressed that diversifying economic partnerships was increasingly important amid changes in the global economy, adding that the scale of China's economy and the potential for complementary interests made the royal visit particularly significant, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

Brazil's Petrobras detects signs of oil off Amazon coast

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil (AFP) — Brazilian oil giant Petrobras announced recently it had detected signs of oil off the coast of the country's Amazon region, in an exploration project fiercely opposed by environmentalists.

It was a significant milestone for the project backed by leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who believes his country needs fossil fuel revenue to fund its energy transition.

"Petrobras has identified the presence of hydrocarbons in an exploratory well currently being drilled" about 175 kilometres off the coast of northern Brazil's Amapa state, the company said.

Specifically, it has detected an organic compound indicating the presence of oil, gas, or both.

Petrobras began the deepwater drilling operation in October 2025, following a five-year process to obtain an en-



AFP photo

This image shows state-owned Petrobras' Gabriel Passos refinery in Betim, Minas Gerais state, Brazil, on March 20

vironmental permit.

The site is located in a maritime region known as the Equatorial Margin, where neighbouring Guyana has discovered massive oil reserves.

Environmental groups have warned of possible threats to the bio diverse area just off the coast of the world's largest rainforest.

"Our optimism regarding the Brazilian Equatorial Margin is being confirmed today," Petrobras CEO Magda Chambriard said in a statement, adding that the company is committed to "ensuring the country's energy security".

Lula supports the gradual phasing out of fossil fuels to curb cli-

mate change. However, he believes Brazil needs revenue to fund the transition to clean energy.

Lula, 80, will seek reelection in October, running against 45-year-old Flavio Bolsonaro, the eldest son of far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro.

Petrobras, known for its expertise in deepwater drilling, more than

doubled its net profit year-on-year in the second quarter, reaching \$10.4 billion.

The growth was driven by record production and high oil prices due to the Middle East conflict.

Brazil is the world's ninth biggest oil producer, almost 95 per cent of which comes from offshore reserves.

The Brazilian Petroleum, Gas and Biofuels Institute (IBP) industry group described Friday's news as "extremely important".

It points to "the possibility of exploration and production in a new frontier," IBP noted, "strengthening national energy security in the medium and long term".

Last November, Lula hosted the COP30 UN climate conference where he urged world leaders to present "roadmaps" for the transition away from fossil fuels.

However, his own government has yet to deliver its plan.

Stocks lower as Hormuz concerns and high oil prices persist

LONDON (AFP) — Global stocks mostly slipped on Monday as lack of progress on opening the Straits of Hormuz outweighed expectations that the Federal Reserve will not raise US interest rates anytime soon.

Oil prices edged higher as the United States and Iran showed no signs of reaching a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to shipping traffic after nearly six months of war, even though Monday is in theory the day a US-Iran ceasefire expires.

"Traders continue to keep an eye on the US-Iran standoff," said David Morrison, analyst at Trade Nation.

"The ongoing diplomatic gridlock between Washington and Tehran

over transit through the Strait of Hormuz has kept crude prices elevated," he said.

In early trading in New York, the Dow and the wider S&P 500 — which hit an all-time high last Thursday — were marginally lower while the tech-heavy Nasdaq, whose members are spending heavily on AI and are sensitive to interest rates, was slightly higher.

In midafternoon European trading London, Paris and Frankfurt were all lower.

Still, fading expectations that the Federal Reserve will raise rates and confidence that the United States and Iran will step back from the brink have kept a floor under

equity prices, which have largely risen so far this August.

"The market has been able to maintain some hope in the notion that diplomacy will prevail and that oil prices won't be a trigger for a global recession," said Patrick J. O'Hare, an analyst at Briefing.com.

Tehran fired back on Saturday at US President Donald Trump's claim that he would soon declare the Hormuz strait part of US territory, saying the crucial energy waterway "will remain Iranian".

On Monday, Trump threatened to bomb Oman if it got in the way of a US-Iran deal.

On the corporate front, attention now turns to the release of earnings this

week from retail titans Walmart, Home Depot and Target, which could give a clearer view of sentiment among American consumers.

Recent statistics have pointed to a weakening US labour market and slower US consumer spending, but even poor results from the top retailers could help the US stock market, said Ipek Ozkardeskaya, analyst at Swissquote.

"Results pointing to weaker domestic consumption could further tame inflation worries, help ease Fed hike bets and hence put downward pressure on US yields. That would be a positive development for the major US indices, heavy in technology," she said.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Monday amounted to JD10.0 million spread over 4.9 million shares that traded through 3,856 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.22 per cent, closing at 3978.05 points.

Out of 107 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 30 companies rose while the share price of another 42 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Assas for Concrete Products Company Ltd by 6.58 per cent, Ready Mix Concrete and Construction Supplies by 5.8 per cent, Masafat for Specialised Transport by 5.62 per cent, Jordanian Duty Free Shops by 5.34 per cent, and Noor Capital Markets for Diversified Investments by 4.73 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Rumm Financial Brokerage by 4.48 per cent, Future Arab Investment Company by 4.17 per cent, Arab Bank by 3.6 per cent, Jordan Express Tourist Transport by 3.52 per cent, and Middle East Holding by 3.14 per cent.



THE MARKET TODAY

ASE Index: 3978.05 0.22% August 17, 2026

Live Data

Historical Data

Click and drag in the plot area to zoom in



DAILY SUMMARY

Regular Market

OTC Market

Trading Value (JDs)	10,002,772
Trading volume	4,895,589
No. of Transactions	3,856
No. of Securities	107



Losers: 42
Gainers: 30
Unchanged: 35

CRICKET

India takes control of Galle Test as Sri Lanka slump to 99-5

GALLE, Sri Lanka (AFP) — India's bowlers took five wickets in the first session on day three of the opening Test to reduce Sri Lanka to 99-5 at lunch in Galle on Monday. Sri Lanka trail by 363 runs with five wickets in hand, with Sonal Dinusha on 14 and Niroshan Dickwella eight. After posting 462 all out, India's attack rammed home the advantage with some disciplined bowling on a pitch offering plenty of assistance to the spin bowlers. Mohammed Siraj struck early, in the second ball of the innings, when he had Nishan Fernando caught at slips before the spin bowlers came into the equation. Left-arm orthodox spinner Manav Suthar, playing just his second Test match, struck in his first ball by claiming the wicket of Sri Lanka's most experienced batter Dinesh Chandimal. There was turn and bounce for Suthar and Chandimal, trying to defend, edged one to wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant for four. Bounce again from Suthar proved to be the undoing of Lahiru Udara, who hit the ball straight to backward point. He made 27. Sri Lanka slumped to 59-4 when Kamindu Mendis was superbly caught at covers by a diving Shubman Gill as left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav struck. With five minutes to go before lunch, Ravindra Jadeja removed captain Dhananjaya de Silva, caught at slip by K.L. Rahul for 21. India was earlier bowled out after adding just two to their overnight score of 460-9.

Bangladesh Test cricket reboot delivers in style with historic win

DHAKA (AFP) — Bangladesh's stunning Test win in Australia was years in the making, tracing its roots to reforms introduced after a crisis period in 2019. The country's first-ever Test win on Australian soil on Sunday came after years of efforts to make red-ball cricket a priority, both financially and structurally, former players said. Following a players' strike and the suspension of star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan in 2019, Bangladesh endured a difficult tour of India, prompting a rethink at the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).One of the board's key decisions was to overhaul player contracts and significantly increase financial incentives for Test cricket, former captain Akram Khan told AFP. Before 2019, Bangladesh players operated under a single central contract covering all three formats. The BCB introduced separate contracts for Tests, ODIs and Twenty20 internationals, while doubling the Test match fee to 800,000 taka (\$6,500).

Sabalenka squeezes out a win on sixth match point in Cincinnati

CINCINNATI (AFP) — Top seed Aryna Sabalenka fought through 6-2, 7-6 (7/2) against Talia Gibson on Monday to join two other elites in the third round of the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Masters.

The world number one needed six match points, Australia's Gibson saving five in the 12th game of the second set before Sabalenka managed a final winner to get the job done in just under two hours on a windswept Grandstand Court.

"I'm super tired, this is crazy weather," the Belarusian said. "'Talia played great tennis and was more aggressive in the second set.

"She put more pressure on my service games. I'm glad I stayed calm and pulled it out in straight sets."

Sabalenka, who won the Cincinnati trophy in 2024, is looking for a solid build-up to the US Open, where she'll be seeking her first Grand Slam title of the year.

She's won three titles in 2026, but none since Miami in March.

She joined a pair of reigning Grand Slam champions in advancing, with Australian Open winner Elena Rybakina and Roland Garros titleholder Mirra Andreeva also reaching the third round.

Second seed Rybakina, coming off a runner-up finish to Iga Swiatek in Toronto, defeated Taylor Townsend 6-3, 6-4.

Andreeva crushed Oleksandra Oliynykova with



AFP photo

Joao Fonseca of Brazil celebrates while playing Botic Van De Zandschulp of The Netherlands during day six of the Cincinnati Open at the Lindner Family Tennis Centre on Monday in Mason, Ohio

the loss of just one game, breaking five times and saving all seven break points against her own serve in a 65-minute 6-1, 6-0 rout.

Rybakina said that she is concentrating on recovery after a tough Toronto run and was glad to get off to a low-stress start.

"Today I'm happy with the serve," she said. "Definitely it helped me a lot. Last week in Toronto was very difficult. A lot of three set matches."

Seventh seed Swiatek,

the defending champion who bagged her first title of a rocky season in Toronto, hammered Emiliana Arango of Colombia 6-3, 6-0.

Swiatek went down an early break but recovered quickly to prevail in 71 minutes over the player who ousted Venus Williams in the first round.

Sara Bejlek continued her rampage against fellow Czechs as she defeated Barbora Krejcikova 7-6 (7/5), 6-4. She had beaten compatriot and

former champion Karolina Pliskova in the first round.

FAA back in action

In men's action, second seed Felix Auger-Aliassime began his injury-delayed US Open preparation with a 6-3, 7-5 victory over 2022 Cincy finalist Stefanos Tsitsipas.

Auger-Aliassime was playing for the first time since losing a five-set Wimbledon quarterfinal to Novak Djokovic

nearly six weeks ago.

The Canadian withdrew at the last second from his home Montreal Masters this month with back pain but looked fully recovered as he throttled Tsitsipas in 88 minutes.

The 49th-ranked Greek was broken three times in the second set, with Auger-Aliassime sending down his seventh ace on match point.

Auger-Aliassime said that a late break of his serve could be blamed partly on conditions.

China's viral 'spicy strips' take a bite of global snack market

By Sam Davies
Agence France-Presse

PINGJIANG, China — At a gleaming new factory in China's central hinterland, masked workers in white uniform season and sift through mounds of latiao, a longtime popular snack that has found hungry fans overseas.

Spicy, sweet and curiously chewy, Chinese latiao — literally "spicy strips" — are made by cooking wheat flour dough at a high temperature and pressure.

Despite their reputation as junk food, the snacks originally developed as emergency supplies have grown into an industry worth more than 60 billion yuan (\$8.9 billion).

The factory that AFP visited in Huanan province's Pingjiang turns out nearly 700 tonnes per day of the spongy, red-coloured strips, which look like squashed French fries covered in oil.

The plant's operator Mala Wangzi currently sells all of that domestically, but latiao have acquired new legions of foreign fans spurred by online enthusiasm for Chinese culture, or "Chinamaxxing".

"Latiao are now exported to more than 160



AFP photo

This photo taken on June 17 shows people tasting spicy strips at a shop in Changsha, in China's central Hunan province

countries worldwide, showing that the market is moving increasingly towards internationalisation," Li Manliang, Mala Wangzi's vice president, told AFP.

Some brands have expanded into East and Southeast Asia, where they are growing rapidly, while consumers from the United States to Australia are snapping up the snacks in specialist grocery stores, e-commerce platforms and via TikTok.

The country's largest latiao producer, Hong Kong-listed Weilong, made 117 million yuan from overseas sales last year, up nearly 50 per

cent from 2024.

TikTok and Instagram are awash with videos of foreigners trying the fiery snacks.

One influencer gained 1.5 million views by chowing down on a model house made entirely of the glutinous strips.

In another TikTok video with 2.6 million views, an Australian reviewer tucked into a giant latiao.

"If you can handle your spice, I think you would enjoy this," she said. "Highly, highly recommend."

'Quite addictive'

Latiao were created in Pingjiang in 1998 as an

emergency staple food, after devastating floods wiped out the local soybean crop.

They became ubiquitous in supermarkets across China.

"When I was young, my parents believed they contained too many additives," 22-year-old Beijing resident Wang Jingfei told AFP.

"But as the industry has developed and more brands have emerged, food safety has drawn a lot of attention... so I don't think it's a big problem to eat it now and then."

At the Mala Wangzi facility, an employee livestreamed the factory floor

to showcase its hygienic conditions.

Li, the company's vice president, claimed these were based on standards used in the pharmaceutical industry.

And the recipe has changed to make the snack healthier, he said. "We're reducing the use of oil, salt, sugar and additives, and using more natural raw ingredients.

The company has made other concerted efforts to appeal to younger buyers, its main consumer base.

Mala Wangzi has opened pop-up museums around the country, held more than 4,000 latiao-themed weddings for superfan couples, and sponsored e-sport events, music festivals and animation conventions.

"I find latiao is quite addictive and also stress-relieving," said 24-year-old Yang Xuhao.

"When I don't feel like having a proper meal, I'll just eat latiao instead. I also like to snack on them while watching TV shows."

But not everyone is sold on the snack's rehabilitation.

Li Peng, 22, said he had kicked the latiao habit he developed in his school days.



AFP photo

Fans flocked to the D23 Disney event in California

Disney reveals 'X-Men' cast, slate of sequels at D23 fan event

ANAHEIM, United States (AFP) — Adam Driver, Inde Navarrette and Sadie Sink will be among those joining the cast of Marvel's next "X-Men" movie, Disney announced at its biennial D23 fan gathering in California on Friday.

Marvel Studios chief Kevin Feige took to the stage at Honda Centre on the first night of the three-day convention to give more than 10,000 fans a sneak peek of the so-far untitled film, which is slated for a May 2028 release.

Sink will reprise her role in "Spider-Man: Brand New Day" as Jean Grey, while Navarrette will play Rogue. The cast also includes Kit Connor (Cyclops), Samara Weaving (Emma Frost), Christopher Abbott (Professor

Xavier) and Maya Boyd (Storm).

Driver, who joined the event via video, will play the villain Nathaniel Milbury.

"Kevin and I have been talking for years about maybe joining the Marvel Cinematic Universe. And I think we finally found the perfect film at the perfect time," Driver said.

Feige also showed footage from "Avengers: Doomsday", set to be released in December, which will bring together the Avengers, the Fantastic Four, X-Men and Wakandan warriors in an epic clash against the evil Doctor Doom, played by Robert Downey Jr.

Another highlight was the first look at Ryan Gosling in Lucasfilm's "Star Wars: Starfighter," which

will hit the big screen in 2027 to coincide with the 50th anniversary of "Star Wars".

Sequels announced

Disney CEO Josh D'Amaro, who took over in March, kickstarted this year's D23 event, which has become a platform for studios to showcase their latest projects alongside stars, creatives and directors.

Pixar offered previews of its Italian fable "Gatto" and supernatural tale "Ghost Market," as well as "The Incredibles 3" and "Coco 2".

Other sequels unveiled include "Lilo & Stitch 2", "Ice Age: Boiling Point" and "Frozen 3", promoted by stars Kristen Bell, Idina Menzel and Josh Gad.



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