



His Majesty King Abdullah and France President Emmanuel Macron hold talks at Les Invalides in Paris covering the deep-rooted ties between the two countries, and witness the signing of a defence cooperation agreement between Jordan and France

King, France president discuss ties, witness signing of defence cooperation agreement in Paris

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah and France President Emmanuel Macron held talks on Thursday, during which they discussed the deep-rooted ties between Jordan and France.

During the talks, held at Les Invalides in Paris, His Majesty emphasised the importance of the partner-

ship between the two countries in vital areas, noting that the signing of a defence cooperation agreement during the visit builds upon ongoing coordination to safeguard their shared security and support efforts to achieve regional stability, according to a Royal Court statement.

The King thanked France and President

Macron for hosting the latest round of Aqaba Process meetings, covering ways to support the Lebanese armed forces, and underscored the importance of maintaining coordination with partner countries and international organisations in this context.

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King, France president, Lebanon president chair new round of Aqaba Process meetings in Paris

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah chaired a new round of the Aqaba Process meetings on Thursday, alongside France President Emmanuel Macron and Lebanon President Gen. Joseph Aoun.

The session, held at Les Invalides in Paris, focused on ways to support the Lebanese Armed Forces, and strengthen its capabilities to maintain Lebanon's security and sovereignty, and ensure that arms remain in the hands of the state, according to a Royal Court statement.

His Majesty reaffirmed Jordan's solidarity with the Lebanese people, and its commitment to supporting efforts to preserve their country's stability and resources.

The session also addressed the priorities of the Lebanese armed forces and internal security forces in Lebanon, as well as operational challenges, and examined mechanisms for international support to the Lebanese armed forces in line with identified needs.

In addition to the participants from Jor-



His Majesty King Abdullah, France President Emmanuel Macron, and Lebanon President Gen. Joseph Aoun chair a new round of Aqaba Process meetings, at Les Invalides in Paris, focusing on ways to support the Lebanese armed forces and enhance its capabilities to safeguard Lebanon's security and sovereignty

dan, France and Lebanon, the meetings were attended by military leaders and experts from Spain, Germany,

the United Arab Emirates, Italy, Pakistan, Turkey, Qatar, Cyprus, Canada, Kuwait, Egypt, Saudi Arabia,

the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, the United States, Greece, the European Union, the United Nations

and the Military Technical Committee for Lebanon.

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Prime minister directs enhanced preparations for 2,000th Baptism anniversary

AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Thursday stressed the need to prepare for the 2,000th anniversary of the Baptism of Jesus Christ in 2030 in a way that reflects Jordan's religious and historical significance and its international standing.

Chairing the second meeting of the High-Level National Committee tasked with preparing for the occasion, Hassan directed executive committees to continue their work according to clear agendas and timelines, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He called for institutionalising the committees' work within the Prime Ministry, providing the necessary support and submitting regular progress reports.



Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Thursday chairs the second meeting of the High-Level National Committee tasked with preparing for the 2,000th anniversary of the Baptism of Jesus Christ in 2030

Hassan also referred to HRH Crown Prince Hussein's recent visit to the Baptism Site, Al Maghtas, and his directives to enhance the

experience of Christian pilgrims and visitors.

The prime minister stressed the need to complete projects signed last month on sched-

ule, ensuring the site is equipped with the necessary facilities to improve its infrastructure and services.

He also highlighted

the importance of international marketing over the next three years, calling for efforts to promote Jordan as a "primary" destination for Christian pilgrimage and religious tourism, particularly in North and South America, Europe and Asia.

Hassan directed officials to explore the establishment of a mobile museum to attract visitors from around the world and develop partnerships with churches and travel agencies internationally.

He also called for a detailed calendar of events covering 2027-2030 and reaffirmed government support for proposals aimed at enhancing the visitor experience.

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His Majesty King Abdullah, France President Emmanuel Macron, and Lebanon President Gen. Joseph Aoun hold a trilateral meeting in Paris to discuss ways to enhance cooperation and coordination in areas of mutual interest

King holds trilateral meeting with France president, Lebanon president

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah held a trilateral meeting with France President Emmanuel Macron and

Lebanon President Gen. Joseph Aoun in Paris on Thursday, during which they discussed ways to enhance coop-

eration and coordination in areas of mutual interest.

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Jordan, France issue joint statement following conclusion of talks between King, France president

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan and France issued a joint statement on Thursday, following talks between His Majesty King Abdullah and President Emmanuel Macron, in Paris.

Following is the full text of the joint statement:

"Joint statement released by the French Republic and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the occasion of His Majesty King Abdullah II's visit to Paris:

1. His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan paid an official visit to France on 17 Septem-

ber 2026 at the invitation of the President of the French Republic Emmanuel Macron. During the visit, the two leaders held expanded talks on ways to strengthen the historic ties of friendship between the two countries, and exchanged views on regional developments and international issues of mutual interest.

2. The two leaders affirmed the depth of relations and strong bonds of friendship, trust, and mutual respect between France and Jordan, and emphasised their commitment to continued coordination and consultation, as well as their convergence of

views on several regional and international issues of mutual interest.

Defence and security sectors

3. The two leaders emphasised the importance of the partnership between France and Jordan in the fields of defence and security, and underscored that coordination between the two countries is essential in supporting efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions in the region. His Excellency President Emmanuel Macron affirmed France's commitment to supporting Jordan's security and stability, as a cornerstone for ensuring security and stability in

the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean.

4. The two leaders regarded the signing of an agreement on defence cooperation during the visit as an important milestone in consolidating the partnership between the two countries in this field. They emphasised that the agreement reflects the two countries' commitment to continuing to deepen their defence partnership, and provides a comprehensive framework for organising various aspects of defence and security cooperation, in a manner that serves their mutual interests and enhances their ability to address changing and emerging challenges and risks, supports ef-



orts to develop Jordan's defence capabilities, and strengthens Jordan and France's joint contribution to consolidating security and stability in

the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean.

The economic sector

5. His Excellency Presi-

dent Emmanuel Macron and His Majesty King Abdullah II reiterated their countries' desire to expand economic cooperation and develop mutually

beneficial economic partnerships. The two leaders highlighted the importance of cooperation on the National Water Conveyance Project, also known as the Aqaba-Amman Water Desalination and Conveyance Project, which is supported by France and represents a vital Strategic Project for Jordan aimed at addressing the challenge of water stress. They also affirmed their desire to cooperate in strengthening and diversifying supply chains between the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean on the one hand, and Europe on the other, with a view to enhancing trade, interdependence, prosperity and regional integration.

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Amman Design Week returns for fourth edition after seven-year hiatus

AMMAN (JT) — Under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania, Amman Design Week (ADW) 2026 will open to the public on October 2, marking the event’s first edition since 2019. Held under the theme, “Accumulations”, the event will feature more than 220 designers, makers and collectives across 204 events in the capital and beyond.

Founded by Queen Rania in 2016, ADW aims to make design accessible to the wider public, while also providing industry professionals with a platform to showcase and develop their work, according to an ADW statement.

This edition’s programmes target both design professionals and the wider public, featuring family and youth workshops, guided exhibitions, tours and talks.

Working with makers, designers, and contractors, ADW 2026 will leave a lasting mark on the city through four permanent public works — three in Ras El Ain and one in Jabal Al Lweibdeh.

Each installation will remain in place after the event, continuing to serve the communities that use these spaces every day.

Beyond its anchor districts, ADW 2026 extends to more than 60 participating spaces across Amman, largely centred around Jabal Amman.



ADW photo

Under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania, Amman Design Week 2026 will open to the public on October 2, marking the event’s first edition since 2019

These include galleries, studios, cafés, cultural institutions and creative businesses, which host exhibitions, workshops, talks, or open houses over the course of the two-week event.

The biennial event returns under new leadership, with Sarah Hejazin and Bisher Tabbaa, co-founders of architecture and design studio FADAA,

serving as co-directors.

According to Hejazin and Tabbaa, ADW’s return was inspired by the local designer community, maker collectives and educators who remained active during the event’s hiatus, continuing to research, exchange and experiment in workshops, classroom spaces, studios, and communities across Jordan.

“Amman Design Week never really left. For seven years, without any public platform, the community just kept going. Designers testing ideas, makers passing down what they know, students showing up to learn,” Hejazin said.

“This edition is about presenting that work publicly, and making the case for how much design shapes every-

day life in Jordan,” said Tabbaa.

ADW 2026 is presented in continued partnership with the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), which has supported the event since its founding.

This partnership takes the form of ongoing strategic support, stemming from a firm conviction among senior GAM leadership that design, culture,

and creativity are not merely aesthetic elements, but rather tools that can be utilised for the city’s development and the building of its future.

Executive Director of the Smart City Initiative at GAM Lubna Huneiti said, “The municipality has a role in supporting designers and creatives of all ages, especially the youth, and in promot-

ing and developing urban design and expanding community engagement. This is as an integral part of its ongoing approach and within its strategic plan for 2022-2026.”

“This ongoing partnership also reflects GAM’s commitment to creating a higher-quality, more inclusive, and sustainable urban environment, which strengthens Amman’s urban standing and preserves the city’s identity and distinctiveness,” Huneiti added.

ADW 2026 will showcase work produced through the Ithra Design Week (IDW) x ADW Residency, which brings together designers from Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

The Student Exhibition, supported by the Sukhtian Foundation, will also return for its third edition, presenting projects by 42 students selected from over 200 applicants across 88 institutions.

Curated by Faysal Tabbarah and Khalid Bashir, this year’s theme “Accumulations” explores how design builds upon itself over time through materials, inherited knowledge, and repeated processes. It also reframes wealth beyond material abundance, focusing instead on human resourcefulness and the layered ecologies that create the conditions for innovation.

Bashir said, “One of the ideas underlying the concept of ‘Accumulations’ is that no subject remains confined to itself. The deeper we delve, the more it extends to other materials, histories, people, systems, and places. And sometimes, a very small detail can lead us to an entire world.”

“This idea also shaped the programmes: with each individual programme conceived as an entry point; a thread we can pick up and continue to follow far beyond the programme itself,” he added.

On curating the exhibitions, Tabbarah said, “Joining as the Exhibitions Curator for Amman Design Week 2026 is an opportunity to work with a remarkable range of place-based designers, craftspeople, and makers across Jordan and the region.”

He added, “Amman Design Week 2026 is an attempt to put out a rooted and layered portrait of what design is and means for the region, one that is drawn from the hands, materials, and memories of the place that has been quietly designed by its people.”

ADW is Jordan’s design platform, bringing together designers, makers, students and communities through exhibitions, public programmes and learning initiatives. It connects Jordan’s design community with audiences across the region and around the world.



File photo

The Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship says that the number of individuals registered for organ donation through the Sanad application reaches 28,821

Nearly 29,000 Jordanians register for organ donation through Sanad

AMMAN (JT) — The number of individuals registered for organ donation through the Sanad application has reached 28,821, according to the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship.

In previous remarks to Al Mamlaka TV, Sanad Director Mohammad Battikhi said that integrating the organ donation service into the app led to a substantial increase in registrants, noting that citizens can access the feature directly via the main homepage after updating the application.

Battikhi noted that upon selecting the service, users can review the official religious ruling (Fatwa) regarding organ donation, confirm their phone number, and display their donation preference within their digital family book accessible to family members.

The current feature al-

lows citizens to register their overall intent to donate without specifying individual organs, with future updates planned to enable donors to designate specific organs upon death, Battikhi added.

The national protocol aims to organise the donation and transplation mechanism...

The General Iftaa Department has permitted post-mortem organ donation to save patients’ lives under established legal and medical con-

trols, stressing that donation aligns with acts of righteousness, solidarity and the preservation of human life.

Minister of Health Ibrahim Badoor had previously said that enabling organ donation registration via Sanad would be followed by the drafting of a comprehensive national protocol to regulate organ donation and transplantation procedures in collaboration with medical, legal, and religious sectors.

The national protocol aims to organise the donation and transplantation mechanism, define the roles of relevant entities, and guarantee adherence to medical, legal and religious standards.

The government had approved adding the service to Sanad to facilitate and encourage participation in organ donation as an embodiment of humanitarian and social solidarity.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Mamluk ceramics shed light on elite culture, power in Jordan

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — Over the past few decades, a small but significant number of rare glazed goblets and chalices — some bearing Arabic inscriptions — have been recovered from urban, rural and military sites in Jordan.

Known in modern scholarship as Egyptian Mamluk Sgra ito or Mamluk Barracks Ware, these ceramics differ from local glazed wares in terms of fabric, decoration and iconography, said Professor Bethany Walker from The University of Bonn.

“Their presence, often in fragmentary condition and in highly selective contexts, raises questions about their origin, function and meaning.”

“This article examines the Southern Levantine finds in light of the ceremonial and symbolic roles these vessels fulfilled within the wider Mamluk state, particularly in the context of Mamluk banquets — formal events central to courtly life and elite culture,” said Walker.

Mamluk ceremonial banqueting culture (13th– 14th centuries) provided a stage on which amirs and members of the ruling military aristocracy asserted status and power via public displays of hierarchy.

These banquets, as well as processions, especially those centred in Cairo, Damascus, Karak and Ajloun were integral to the political



Photo courtesy of Freer Gallery

A Mamluk-Syrian glassware vessel from the 14th century. Mamluk objects were traded in China and other parts of Asia during the heyday of its state of Art

theatre of the regime.

The presence of these chalices and goblets in the Southern Levant is therefore not accidental, and seems to reflect the movement of Mamluk elites and the extension of imperial visual codes far beyond the capital, the professor continued.

Mamluk Barracks Ware can be found at Hisban, near Madaba, and Dusaq, in southern Jordan.

“At Tell Hisban in central Jordan, excavations at the Mamluk-period citadel revealed an administrative centre that served as the residence of low-ranking rural governors and a small garrison during the 14th century.

The site’s brief prom-

inence is attributed to the favour of Sultan Al Nasir Muhammad, whose third accession to the throne was supported by the local Banu Mahdi tribe.

A mid-14th century earthquake preserved the citadel storeroom, resulting in excellent ceramic preservation,” Walker underlined.

Many glazed relief bowls were found in good condition and later restored, along with a few fragments of Egyptian Mamluk glazed sgra ito.

Mamluk Barracks Ware has also been identified farther north, in major urban centres of Syria, including Hama and Damascus, indicating its distribution beyond the

southern provinces, the professor said.

Petrographic and macroscopic analyses of several vessels found in Ramla and Tell Hisban confirm their Egyptian origin. Visual examination of the remaining examples indicates a similar composition.

“The fabric, made of Nile alluvial clay rich in iron and sand with traces of mica, typically fires to a reddish-brown or dark red hue. It is notably heavy and compact, distinguishing it from the lighter fabrics of Syrian and Levantine glazed wares,” Walker explained.

One of the most noticeable aspects of the decoration are the heraldic emblems of

amirs.

These blazons, well documented on Mamluk metalwork, expressed rank and office, the professor said, adding that among the most frequent symbols are a sword or saber, denoting the silahdar, bearer of arms or sword-bearer; a pen box, associated with the dawadar, the officer in charge of official correspondence; polo sticks, signifying the jukandar, master of polo games; a chalice or cup, symbolizing the saqi, the courtly cupbearer.

“These symbols typically appear in prominent medallions or blazons, or within the wide epigraphic bands encircling the vessel,” Walker underscored.

Cabinet approves amended IEC, anti-money laundering laws

AMMAN (JT) — The Cabinet, during a session chaired by Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Wednesday, approved the draft amended law for the Independent Election Commission (IEC) for 2026.

The draft law addresses the need to update statutory provisions in line with legislative developments under the political modernisation track, thereby enhancing the IEC’s capacity to exercise its constitutional and legal mandates efficiently and effectively.

Under the amendments, IEC employees are prohibited from joining political parties throughout their tenure to ensure strict neutrality, as the IEC serves as the regulatory authority supervising party registration and affairs, according to a Prime Ministry statement.

Any IEC employee seeking to be a candidate in elections managed or supervised by the commission must take unpaid leave 90 days prior to the poll, and will be deemed



The Cabinet on Wednesday approves the draft amended law for the Independent Election Commission for 2026

to have resigned by operation of law if victorious.

The amendments also update the commission’s duties to align with the Political Parties Law, incorporate digital campaign tools into the regulatory oversight framework to monitor compliance, and align HR provisions with the public sector human resources management bylaw.

The Cabinet also approved the validating reasons for a draft amended Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Law for 2026.

The draft law aims to further develop the national framework against financial crimes in line with international best practices.

It seeks to keep

pace with evolving international standards regarding anti-money laundering, counterterrorism financing, and countering the financing of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, while targeting organised and cross-border crime, corruption-related offences, drug trafficking, fraud and tax evasion.

As part of measures

to advance the National Water Carrier Project, the Cabinet approved a decision by the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority Board of Commissioners granting the project a package of the necessary facilities and exemptions.

The project, the first of its kind in the Kingdom, aims to desalinate 300 million cubic metres of seawater annually and transport it via a 450 kilometre pipeline network to cover nearly 40 per cent of the Kingdom’s drinking water needs.

The annual supply generated will match the total capacity of all dams across the Kingdom and nearly triple the output of the Disi project, raising the annual per capita water share from 60 to 110 cubic metres and increasing supply days from one to three per week across all governorates.

Within the framework of the strategic partnership between Jordan and the European Union, the Cabinet approved a 110 million euro grant agreement funded by the EU to support economic and social modernisation programmes through the general budget.

The Cabinet also approved the validating reasons for a draft amended bylaw on connecting renewable energy facilities to the electrical grid and exempting renewable energy sources and energy efficiency systems for 2026.

The draft bylaw grants citizens and economic sectors greater flexibility in self-generation, encourages electricity storage and rationalises consumption.

“This comes as the Kingdom targets increasing the share of renewable energy in electricity generation to 40 per cent by 2035 under the 2025–2035 energy strategy, up from its current contribution of 27 per cent,” the statement said.

To rationalise fuel consumption for government vehicles and machinery, the Cabinet approved measures establishing electronic data links to implement Radio-Frequency Identification fueling technology.

This automated procedure links fuel dispensing directly to the official vehicle, logging quantities and transaction data without human intervention to eliminate waste and prevent misuse across all ministries, public departments, municipalities, the Greater Amman Municipality and fully state-owned companies.

To reinforce the strategic reserve of wheat and barley, the Cabinet approved increasing financial allocations for purchasing local grain crops for the 2025/2026 agricultural season from JD45 million to JD59 million. This adjustment raises local purchase quantities from farmers from 110,000 tonnes to 147,000 tonnes.

The Cabinet also endorsed extending the free storage period for national exports at the Aqaba Container Terminal from 7 to 14 days for a six-month period.

It also reduced the destruction fee for goods from JD450 per tonne to JD50 per tonne for a period of three months, subject to specified Ministry of Finance conditions.

These decisions build on earlier measures that reduced container dwell times for transit cargo from 15 days to 12 days, reduced dwell times for local imports to 8 days, and increased daily container output capacity at port gates from 900 to 1,200 containers.

Jordan condemns Houthi attack on Saudi Arabia’s Taif

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has condemned a Houthi drone attack targeting Saudi Arabia’s Taif, which killed one person, injured two others and caused material damage.

The ministry described the attack as a “blatant” violation of Saudi Arabia’s sovereignty and a threat to its security, stability and territorial integrity, as well as a flagrant breach of international law and the UN Charter.

In a statement on Thursday, ministry Spokesperson Fouad Majali reiterated Jordan’s absolute solidarity with Saudi Arabia and full support for all measures it takes to safeguard its security, stability, resources, citizens and residents.



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday condemns a Houthi drone attack targeting Saudi Arabia’s Taif Governorate

Majali also expressed condolences to the victim’s family and wished the injured a speedy recovery.

A Yemeni resident was killed and two people injured on Thursday after debris from a Houthi drone fell in Taif after it was intercepted and destroyed, Saudi Arabia’s civil defence said.

A Saudi citizen and a Pakistani resident were injured, with the Pakistani national in critical condition. The falling debris also caused material damage to several buildings and vehicles, the civil defence said.

Jordan marks 'Change Day 13' to promote patient safety

AMMAN (JT) — Under the patronage of HRH Princess Muna, patron of nursing and midwifery in the World Health Organisation’s Eastern Mediterranean Region and global ambassador of the International Council of Nurses, Jordan on Thursday marked “Change Day 13”, a national initiative launched by the Health Care Accreditation Council (HCAC).

The initiative coincides with World Patient Safety Day, observed annually on September 17, and is held this year under the theme “Act Today for Safe Care and a Better Life”, according to an HCAC statement.

The theme aligns with World Patient Safety Day 2026, which focuses on safe care for people living with non-communicable diseases and the importance of prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment, follow-up and continuity of care.

The HCAC said that “Change Day 13” brings together institutions and organisations from various sectors, alongside healthcare institutions, to implement initiatives, activities and pledges aimed at raising health awareness, supporting the prevention of non-communicable diseases, and promoting safer and more continuous care.

The HCAC said that the focus on non-communicable diseases reflects the need for an integrated approach that goes beyond treatment to include prevention, healthy lifestyles, early detection, safe medication use, continuity of care and enabling patients to

take an active role in managing their health.

The programme includes awareness and educational activities targeting healthcare workers

The council said that participation in the initiative reflects shared responsibility for community health, with institutions, sectors and individuals contributing to safer care, and reducing preventable risks as part of national efforts to improve health and quality of life.

This year’s activities focus on turning pledges made by institutions and individuals during the preparation period into practical measures and encouraging participants to maintain these practices beyond the event.

The programme includes awareness and educational activities targeting healthcare workers and members of the public, alongside initiatives launched by participating organisations to promote prevention and safe care for non-communicable diseases.

Several buildings and major landmarks across the Kingdom are also being illuminated in orange to mark World Patient Safety Day and highlight the importance of patient safety and the safe management of non-communicable diseases.

The HCAC praised the support of its partners and sponsors, saying their cooperation helps strengthen the initiative and expand its reach across society.

The council said “Change Day” has continued for 13 consecutive years as a national platform bringing institutions and individuals together to promote a culture of quality and patient safety and turn awareness into commitment and practical action.

It called on participants to continue implementing their pledges and initiatives after September 17 to extend the impact of “Change Day 13” beyond the event and promote safer and more sustainable health practices in the community.

TIES ACC calls for activating Jordan-Syria economic agreements

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Chamber of Commerce (ACC) President Khalil Haj Tawfiq and Syrian Chargé d’Affaires in Jordan Ihsan Rumman on Thursday discussed measures to boost economic and trade cooperation, and facilitate transport and transit movement between Jordan and Syria.

Haj Tawfiq stressed the need for joint efforts to strengthen economic ties, address existing obstacles and translate mutual understandings into concrete projects and programmes, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He said economic relations with Syria



Amman Chamber of Commerce (ACC) President Khalil Haj Tawfiq and Syrian Chargé d’Affaires in Jordan Ihsan Rumman on Thursday discuss measures to boost economic and trade cooperation and between Jordan and Syria

should maintain their “exceptional” nature, given the two countries’ historical ties and shared interests, and called for activating signed bilateral agreements in key sectors, including food security, information technology, agriculture, contracting, consultancy, transport and infrastructure.

Haj Tawfiq also said the ACC is ready to provide training and qualification services requested by the Syrian side.

Rumman, for his part, expressed the Syrian embassy’s readiness to cooperate

with the ACC and support initiatives aimed at strengthening economic ties.

He said that Syria is open to broad economic cooperation with Jordan and commended His Majesty King Abdullah’s efforts to support Syria in international forums.

Rumman also highlighted Jordan’s efforts to provide training and human resources development for Syrian personnel, saying Syria seeks to benefit from Jordan’s administrative expertise and economic regulatory frameworks while strengthening ties between the two countries’ business communities.

Tourism revenues rise 17.2% in August to \$1.14b — CBI

AMMAN (JT) — Tourism revenues rose by 17.2 per cent in August 2026, reaching \$1,139.4 million, compared with the same month last year, according to preliminary data released by the Central Bank of Jordan (CBI).

Tourism receipts also increased by 2.9 per cent to \$5,557.6 million.

During the first eight months of 2026, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The data showed that tourism revenues from Arab visitors rose by 16.3 per cent and those from Asian visitors by 9.5 per cent during the eight-month period.

Revenues from expatriate Jordanians de-



Tourists are seen in this undated photo at the Amman Citadel

clined by 5.9 per cent, while receipts from American visitors fell by 17.1 per cent, European visitors by 23.7 per cent and other nationalities by 39.9 per cent.

Meanwhile, tourism expenditure by Jordanians and residents abroad increased by 4.1 per cent in August, reaching \$204.8 million.

During the first eight months of the year, outbound tourism spending fell by 5.9 per cent to \$1,359 million.



Law-enforcement officers seizes 19,000 illicit pills and 7.3 kilograms of Hashish that were allegedly found with the suspects

19 suspects arrested, 19,000 pills seized in drug raids — police

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Anti-Narcotic Department (AND) on Thursday announced the arrest of three local gangs in Amman and Irbid who were allegedly possessing and trafficking illegal narcotics inside the country, according to police.

The three security campaigns targeting

the gangs resulted in the arrest of 11 suspects in Amman in two separate incidents and eight men in Irbid, Police Spokesperson Lt. Col. Amer Sartawi said.

Law-enforcement officers also seized 19,000 illicit pills and 7.3 kilograms of Hashish that were allegedly found with the suspects, Sartawi told

The Jordan Times.

“The law-enforcement agencies in Jordan have recently expanded their operations and monitoring of suspects who are involved with drug trafficking,” according to the police official.

In a simultaneous operation in the capital, Sartawi said “a specialised investigative team monitored 10

suspects and arrested them without any major incident.”

“Arresting officers seized 3.2 kilogrammes of Hashish during the simultaneous operation,” Sartawi said.

In another drug bust operation in Amman, Sartawi said a suspected drug dealer was arrested by police following a tip that he was allegedly in possession of illicit drugs to provide to other drug dealers in his area.

Upon searching his house, the police official maintained, “Officers found 4.1 kilogrammes of Hashish, 14,000 illicit pills and two firearms.”

Meanwhile, a special team was tasked with monitoring eight suspects in Irbid. Sartawi



AFP photo
This photo shows the Ro-Ro cargo ship named ‘Lider Bordo Mavi’ at the port of Trabzon, north-eastern Turkey on Tuesday

Turkey proposes Russia-Ukraine deal to end Black Sea attacks

ANKARA (AFP) — Exasperated by the on-going Black Sea attacks, Turkey has sent a proposal to Russia and Ukraine to end strikes on civilian ships, a Turkish diplomat told AFP on Thursday.

The move follows a sharp increase in attacks on commercial ships in the Black Sea in recent months, often using drones, among them many Turkish vessels.

In August alone, “almost 90 ships” were attacked, a Turkish defence source said this month.

And at least 22 Turkish-owned ships were attacked in the two months to August 27, Turkey’s IMEAK chamber of shipping said.

Four more have been hit since, including one early on Thursday.

Over the same period, at least three Turkish nationals have been killed and several others injured.

“We have shared a text of a memorandum, a draft text, with the Russians and the Ukrainians to come up with a solution,” the diplomat said.

Last month, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan demanded a “moratorium” on such attacks, which have intensified as the war rages for a fifth year.

But Russia’s top diplomat Sergei Lavrov dismissed it as “unrealistic” and “impossible to monitor”.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiga said a halt to Black Sea attacks could emerge from President Volodymyr Zelensky’s talks with US President Donald Trump at the UN General Assembly.

The aim is “achieving

a ceasefire. There could be at the same time an energy ceasefire and a ceasefire in the Black Sea”, he told reporters, saying Kyiv had “proposals from other countries to make this real”.

Soaring Black Sea attacks

Figures from IMEAK show 226 civilian and commercial vessels have been hit since the war began in February 2022.

Seventy per cent — or 163 attacks — took place in first eight months of this year.

NATO-member Turkey maintains relations with Kyiv and Moscow and has declined to join Western sanctions against Russia.

Its ships are very active in the Black Sea, sailing under various countries’ flags, with several hit by drones believed launched by Ukraine.

Last month, Ankara summoned Ukraine’s envoy following an attack on the Lider Bordo Mavi container ship and a subsequent attack on the Lider Kocatepe which was sent to tow it away.

Anchored in the north-eastern port of Trabzon, the Lider Bordo Mavi appeared to have sustained major fire damage to its bridge and the two decks below, AFP correspondents said.

Grain-corridor mechanism?

Turkey has repeatedly raised the idea of reviving the grain corridor format to safeguard shipping with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan discussing the matter with Russia’s Vladimir Putin in

November.

The Turkish diplomat said the proposal was “inspired by” a 2022 deal brokered by Turkey and the UN to grant safe passage for Ukrainian grain to be exported via the Black Sea without risk of attack.

Although Russia pulled out a year later, Ukraine set up an alternative shipping route that hugs the coast of Romania and Bulgaria.

“In that mechanism, there is maybe a 4 or 5-mile gap where the Ukrainian ship has to leave the national territorial waters and travel in international waters, which is the risky part,” the diplomat explained.

The official also suggested another route along the eastern and southern Black Sea shores.

“We want to use the territorial waters of the adjacent states, including Turkey — and Georgia, if they are willing,” the diplomat said.

But experts said it would be difficult to get both sides to agree.

“The justification for the original deal was that it would be for the common good of the global south. In this case, without a comparable beneficiary, it will be very difficult to convince parties to agree on such a safe corridor,” said Serhat Guvenc, a professor of international relations at Istanbul’s Kadir Has University.

“A safe corridor will be in the interests of countries operating merchant vessels in the Black Sea but Russia and Ukraine are... doing their best to force the other side to surrender,” he told AFP.

Canada’s Carney pushes ‘new alliance’ with EU despite Trump threats

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AFP) — Canada’s Prime Minister Mark Carney shrugged off a threat of US retaliation on Thursday as he pitched a “new alliance” with Europe as a bulwark against outside pressures, in a closely watched speech to the European Parliament.

His speech came after EU chief Ursula von der Leyen suggested Canada could become the 27-nation bloc’s first “associate member” in her annual “State of the European Union” address on Wednesday.

“Europe and Canada are stronger together,” Carney said, in a speech that drew a standing ovation, saying his country welcomed the EU proposal and wanted deeper cooperation on issues from artificial intelligence to defence and energy.

The Canadian leader pushed back afterwards at US President Donald Trump’s threat to cut trade ties with the EU should the plan go ahead — telling reporters: “No one is going to dictate our culture or with whom we can strike agreements internationally.”

Carney has been pursuing closer ties with the Europe, as his country gets drawn ever deeper into a trade war with the US.

EU-US relations have also been strained by tariffs and territorial threats.

Von der Leyen’s proposal drew an irritated rebuke from Trump, who slammed it as “laughable” and told reporters he could impose “very serious tariffs” or “stop trading with Europe” should it go ahead.



AFP photo
Canada’s Prime Minister Mark Carney acknowledges MEPs as European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen applauds after delivering a speech in the hemicycle at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France, on Thursday

‘Create a beacon’

The contours of the “associate member” pitch were not immediately clear as EU treaties do not envisage such a possibility — but Carney said Canada “welcomes this ambition”.

Von der Leyen had emphasised the partnership was “not against anyone else, but for our common strength”, and Carney likewise sought to reassure Washington the alliance would not be antagonistic but a “positive” initiative.

“We do not seek power to dominate others,” he said — while suggesting the alliance could “create a beacon for other democracies”.

“We are pursuing resilience so no one, no one can control our open markets, impair our sovereignty, threaten our territorial integrity or undermine our freedoms, our democ-

racies, our rule of law,” he said.

Carney’s visit to Strasbourg was meant to act as a catalyst ahead of an EU-Canada summit in Montreal next month.

Canada could help Europe secure supplies of critical raw materials and contribute towards its energy needs with liquified natural gas and hydrogen “at large scale”, Carney said, offering deeper cooperation on “the full range of strategic capabilities” including AI, compute, space and payments.

The two parties should move towards “seamless digital trade” and allow their young people to work and study on either side of the Atlantic, he said.

In her own speech on Wednesday, von der Leyen similarly talked about forming a “tech alliance”, integrating defence industrial

bases and making the Arctic “a flagship joint project”.

What’s in a name?

The idea of creating a new “associate” status short of full membership was first floated by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz this year for Ukraine.

Under that plan Kyiv would have benefitted from parts of the EU budget, attended the bloc’s summits and had a representative in the European Commission — but no full voting rights.

Terminology aside, Carney told reporters: “What matters is the substance — what are we actually building together?”

EU rules demand that member states approve any form of partnership with a non-EU country, and it was unclear how much support von der Leyen’s

proposal would receive from capitals.

The EU and Canada already have the CETA free-trade agreement, which abolished almost all tariffs. Trade in goods and services have jumped more than 80 per cent since 2016.

And this year Canada became the first non-EU country to join a flagship defence loan programme.

One EU official said the bloc needed to be “realistic and pragmatic” about what more it could achieve.

But a European diplomat speaking on condition of anonymity said EU countries were keen to keep strengthening ties with Canada, regardless of terminology.

“Carney came here to strengthen his cards vis a vis the US. Ursula helped him,” the diplomat said. “Trump’s reaction shows they already won.”

Three Syrian security forces killed in operation against Daesh in south

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syrian security forces on Thursday announced the death of three members as they attempted to arrest a fugitive and dismantle a Daesh group cell in the south.

A clash broke out in Daraa province, in Al Sanamein, where security forces said they had imposed a curfew and were searching for others involved in the incident.

“Three members of

the internal security forces were killed and several others wounded during an operation aimed at arresting a wanted individual in the town of Al Sanamein,” the forces said.

The statement said an “armed outlaw group led by the suspect targeted the patrol”.

A local government official told AFP that the wanted man is part of Daesh, which has been territorially defeated in Syria but maintains sleeper cells.

Interior Ministry spokesman Nouredine Al Baba later said that the security operation “has so far succeeded in dismantling criminal cells and others linked to Daesh that were coordinating with each other”.

“Five wanted individuals have been arrested and will be brought to justice,” Baba added, saying

that the security cordon imposed on the area was lifted.

Daesh used to control vast swaths of Syria and neighbouring Iraq before being defeated in the two countries in 2019 and 2017, respectively.

However, in Syria it continues to periodically claim attacks against government forces, particularly in the vast Syrian desert, as well as in the north and northeast of the

country.

It had also been established in the past in the Daraa province, in the south, where its leader Abu Hassan Al Hashimi Al Ourashi was killed in October 2022 in clashes with local gunmen.

Last year the new Syrian authorities, who overthrew President Bashar Assad in 2024, joined the international coalition led by the United States against Daesh.

Hashim Thaci: From ‘George Washington of Kosovo’ to Hague convict

PRISTINA (AFP) — Kosovo’s former president Hashim Thaci, sentenced to 25 years in prison on Wednesday for war crimes, has long been seen within the Balkan country as a guerilla hero and symbol of its bloody independence struggle.

Thaci, who was found guilty by a special court in The Hague of war crimes committed by guerilla fighters including murder, arbitrary arrest and detention, cruel treatment and torture, led the pro-independence Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) during the 1998-1999 war with Serbia.

The 58-year-old — who also served more than seven years as prime minister — saw his popularity soar when he helped oversee Kosovo’s declaration of independence in 2008.

But his image was



AFP photo
People protest after the Kosovo Specialist Chambers in The Hague convicted former Kosovo president Hashim Thaci and three former guerrilla commanders of war crimes in Pristina, on Wednesday

tarnished by a 2010 Council of Europe report alleging links to organised crime and serious abuses committed during and immediately after the war.

Critics also accused the former leader and his party of corruption and concentrating power among political allies.

But it was the war-time allegations that

abruptly ended his presidency and left him detained in The Hague.

He was indicted in 2020 on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, ac-

cused of bearing responsibility for murder, torture, illegal detention and enforced disappearances during and after the conflict.

“These are not easy moments for me and my family, and for those who have supported and believed in me in the past three decades of our struggle for freedom, independence and nation-building,” he said in 2020, when he announced his resignation and surrender to the court.

Many watched the verdict live Wednesday on a screen in a square in the capital, Pristina, where a countdown clock had been ticking down to the ruling for days.

On Saturday, tens of thousands of people had rallied in Pristina to demand the acquittal of Thaci and other former guerrilla leaders.

‘Snake’

Born in 1968 in the Drenica region of western Kosovo — a hotbed of ethnic Albanian resistance to Serbian rule — Thaci became involved in passive resistance efforts against Belgrade’s rule as a student in the 1990s.

While studying history in Switzerland, home to a large Albanian diaspora, he became frustrated with the policy of peaceful resistance espoused by the late Kosovo president Ibrahim Rugova.

On his return to Kosovo, he earned the nom de guerre “Snake” as he helped build an underground guerrilla army, the KLA, to fight for independence from the forces of Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic.

The conflict left some 13,000 people dead, mainly ethnic Al-

banians, and ended after NATO intervened in 1999, pushing Serbian forces out.

International courts later convicted several senior Serbian army and police officials for crimes committed during the conflict.

‘Political mistakes in peace I could have made, but war crimes, never’

As Kosovo continued to push for statehood, Thaci became one of its most prominent political figures.

During a visit to the White House, Joe Biden, then US vice president, hailed him as the “George Washington

of Kosovo”.

‘War crimes, never’

After the death of Rugova, who was widely regarded as the father of the nation, Thaci became prime minister following elections in 2007.

Three months later, he read the declaration of independence in parliament, announcing Kosovo’s unilateral split from Serbia — a move Belgrade still does not recognise.

Despite allegations of corruption, he remained at the heart of politics and was elected president in 2016.

He has always denied any wrongdoing during the war, describing it as a “just” rebellion against Serbian repression.

“Political mistakes in peace I could have made, but war crimes, never,” he said in 2020.

In Mali drone campaigns, civilians often victims

DAKAR (AFP) — Drone strikes by Mali’s armed forces have frequently occurred in civilian areas and have resulted in civilian deaths, according to a report by the investigative collective Bellingcat and French-language magazine Jeune Afrique.

Human rights organisations have repeatedly accused the Malian army and its Africa Corps paramilitary allies of killing civilians during operations in the west African country.

Mali has been wracked since 2012 by a serious security crisis, notably fuelled by violence from terrorists allied to Al Qaeda or the Daesh group, along with criminal gangs and armed separatists.

According to the report released on Wednesday, the drone strikes have most often occurred in northern Mali against “vehicles or commer-



A soldier from the National Front for the Liberation of Azawad (FLA) inspects a crater in Kidal on May 14 caused by aerial bombardment from Malian Armed Forces

cial activity”, with local news reports afterwards describing precision attacks on combatants.

But Bellingcat noted multiple civilian deaths and injuries across more than a dozen drone

strikes that it was able to geolocate, with Jeune Afrique placing the civilian death toll across

those attacks at 146.

Over a three-year period, the toll stood at 731 civilian casualties from

199 strikes by the Malian military and its allies, Jeune Afrique said.

The report comes amid

an uptick in violence since late April when the Al Qaeda-linked Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) and its Tuareg separatist allies began a series of attacks aimed at weakening the country’s junta rulers.

Several experts who spoke to Bellingcat said that civilians easily become targets because of their location or involvement in activities such as transporting fuel or mining.

It described several cases, including one in which the Malian army carried out a drone strike in the town of Zouera in the Timbuktu region in July 2025.

The army called the operation successful and said it was conducted against a supply vehicle for terrorists.

However, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) reported that four people, including three

young girls, were killed in the strike. It said five others were treated for injuries.

In another instance in the town of Amasarakad in March 2024, two drone strikes killed 13 civilians, according to Jeune Afrique and Amnesty International.

Eyewitnesses said that a vehicle was first struck, and then a nearby compound where residents had fled for shelter.

Afterwards, the Malian armed forces said they had “neutralised several terrorists and destroyed a significant quantity of military equipment and vehicles”.

Mali’s ruling junta, which came to power in two successive coups in 2020 and 2021, has turned its back on Western partners and moved closer to Russia, whose Africa Corps paramilitaries are assisting the country in its fight.

King, France president, Lebanon president chair new round of Aqaba Process meetings in Paris

Continued from page 1

His Majesty launched the Aqaba Process initiative in 2015 with the aim of enhancing coordination, cooperation, and exchange of exper-

tise between various regional and international parties. Previous rounds have been held in Jordan, and other countries and organisations in partnership with Jordan, includ-

ing Spain, Albania, Indonesia, Italy, Brazil, Bulgaria, the United Kingdom, Rwanda, Singapore, Norway, Nigeria, the Netherlands, the United States, and the United Nations.

Prime minister directs enhanced preparations for 2,000th Baptism anniversary

Continued from page 1

During the meeting, participants reviewed progress on various projects and discussed proposals to develop the Baptism Site.

Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Imad Hijazin briefed the committee on the executive bodies overseeing infrastructure, church relations, narrative and communications,

marketing, visitor experience, digital transformation and event calendar management.

Chaired by the prime minister, the National Committee includes the ministers of government communication, interior, digital economy and entrepreneurship, and tourism and antiquities.

It also includes Archbishop Christophoros Atallah, Latin Patriar-

chal Vicar for Jordan Bishop Iyad Twal, Archbishop Hosam Naoum, Bishop Emeritus Munib Younan, the chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Baptism Site Adjacent Area Development Foundation, the director general of the Baptism Site Commission, the director general of the Jordan Tourism Board, and Nadim Muasher, Osama Imseeh and Basem Farraj.

King, France president discuss ties, witness signing of defence cooperation agreement in Paris

Continued from page 1

Speaking about recent regional developments, His Majesty called for stepping up international efforts to restore calm, stressing the importance of respecting the sovereign-

ty of Arab states and working to ensure their security.

For his part, President Macron reaffirmed his country’s support for the measures Jordan is taking to safeguard its security and the safety of its citizens, and com-

mended the Kingdom’s efforts to achieve peace in the region.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the two leaders witnessed the signing of a defence cooperation agreement between the Governments of Jordan and

France, which reflects the two countries’ commitment to continuing to deepen their defence partnership, and provides a comprehensive framework for organising various aspects of cooperation in this field, in service of mu-

tual interests and to strengthen Jordan and France’s joint contribution to consolidating security and stability in the region.

Upon arrival at Les Invalides, an official welcoming ceremony was held for the King.

King holds trilateral meeting with France president, Lebanon president

Continued from page 1

Emphasising the significance of France hosting the latest round of Aqaba Process meetings, the leaders underscored the importance of these meetings, which will explore ways to support the Lebanese

Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces to enable them to carry out their duties in safeguarding the security and safety of the Lebanese people, according to a Royal Court statement.

Discussions also touched on the overall situation in Gaza,

the West Bank, and Jerusalem, as well as recent regional escalations, with the three leaders emphasising the need to step up international efforts to achieve comprehensive and sustainable de-escalation that restores stability to the region.

Jordan, France issue joint statement following conclusion of talks between King, France president

Continued from page 1

Regional and International Developments

6. His Excellency President Emmanuel Macron and His Majesty King Abdullah II discussed the situation in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean, expressing their concern at the continuing tensions and emphasising the need for all parties to join forces to end the escalation and to adopt diplomacy and dialogue as the means to achieve this.

7. France condemned in the strongest terms the Iranian attacks targeting Jordan, expressed its solidarity with the Kingdom, and reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring the security of all its partners in the Middle

East. The two countries reaffirmed their support for all efforts aimed at reaching a diplomatic solution that would end the crisis, address its causes, and achieve sustainable security and stability.

8. The two countries reaffirmed the need to ensure freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz in accordance with international law, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. They also emphasised the need to establish maritime security and freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and the Strait of Bab Al Mandeb.

9. The two leaders, alongside the President of the Lebanese Republic Gen. Joseph Aoun, chaired a meeting held as part of the Aqaba Process meet-

ings to mobilise support for the Lebanese Armed Forces, identify their needs and strengthen coordination amongst all supporting parties. The two leaders reaffirmed France and Jordan’s support for Lebanon’s efforts to ensure its security, strengthen its sovereignty over all its territory and ensure that arms remain exclusively in the hands of the state, as well as the need for all parties to comply with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701.

10. The two leaders reaffirmed the need to take practical steps, in accordance with a clear timetable, toward the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state on the lines of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, to live in se-

curity and peace alongside Israel, on the basis of the two-state solution, which constitutes the only path to achieving just and lasting peace. The two leaders also emphasised the need for the full implementation of the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, issued on 29 July 2025.

11. The two leaders emphasised their rejection of any attempt by Israel to annex the West Bank and any attempts to displace the Palestinian people, and reiterated their condemnation of the illegal “E1” settlement project. The two leaders also reaffirmed the need to preserve the existing historical and legal status quo of Muslim and Christian

holy sites in Jerusalem. His Excellency President Emmanuel Macron stressed the importance of the historical Hashemite Custodianship over these holy sites.

12. The two leaders emphasised the need to implement United States President Donald Trump’s plan to bring stability to Gaza and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2803 (2025), and to ensure the protection of civilians and the adequate and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to the Strip.

13. The two leaders affirmed their countries’ support for Syria’s unity, security, stability and sovereignty, and for the Syrian Government’s efforts to rebuild the country on foundations that

meet the aspirations of the Syrian people and uphold the rights of all its constituent groups. They emphasised the need to implement the roadmap to end the crisis in the Syrian city of Suwayda and stabilise southern Syria, which was adopted by Jordan, Syria, and the United States of America on 16 September 2025.

14. Both sides emphasised the need to put an end to Israel’s attacks on Syria, and warned of the consequences of continued attacks on Syria’s security and stability, as well as for regional security and stability, at a time when the Syrian Government is focusing on reconstruction and ensuring Syria’s security and stability, and is pursuing a diplomatic path to resolve outstanding issues and reach a se-

curity agreement that could form the basis for a more comprehensive future agreement. They called on Israel to withdraw from the occupied Syrian territories, and to respect the 1974 Disengagement Agreement.

15. His Excellency President Emmanuel Macron and His Majesty King Abdullah II stressed their shared commitment to promoting respect for international humanitarian law and ensuring its implementation, and emphasised the need to restore respect for the rules of war to the forefront of international political priorities in light of the unprecedented challenges facing the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. In this context, the two leaders noted the progress made under the Global Initiative to Galvanise

Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law, launched in September 2024 by Jordan, France, Brazil, China, Kazakhstan and South Africa, in partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross, to which 118 states have so far acceded. They welcomed the convening of the High-Level Conference on Humanity in War, to be hosted by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on 7 December 2026, as a key milestone in translating the political momentum generated by the initiative into a renewed commitment and concrete action to strengthen respect for international humanitarian law. The two leaders called on states to participate in the conference at the highest possible level and to contribute actively to its success.”

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Hungary faces long fight against suspected Orbán-era graft

Agence France Presse

BUDAPEST — From overpriced toy motorcycles to a controversial train deal with Egypt, Hungary's new government is seeking to review alleged corruption under ex-premier Viktor Orbán.

But even the country's new top anti-graft official warns that getting convictions will take many years after pro-EU conservative Peter Magyar's April win.

Anna Unger at her parliamentary confirmation hearing said it would be “foolish to think” there would be final verdicts in major corruption cases within her six-year mandate.

This sparked backlash on social media, even among supporters of Magyar, whose party won the parliamentary elections on promises to fight graft, ending 16 years of nationalist Orbán's rule.

“Sixteen years of Orbánism have left voters so frustrated that they expect immediate solutions even when there are none under the rule of law,” political consultant Gergo Papp told AFP.

Online ‘graft case’ list

Since taking power in May, Magyar's government has launched a flurry of internal reviews in ministries and state companies, resulting in several criminal complaints.

A government website lists 24 cases referred to investigators, involving around 6 billion euros (\$7 billion) in taxpayers’ money, with fresh cases added regularly.

Police have already launched several probes, including into the purchase of 12,000 toy motorcycles for around 40 euros each, roughly three times their retail price, as part of a government communications campaign.

They are also looking into a roughly 1.5-billion-euro Eximbank loan to Egypt's state rail operator for carriages produced through a Hungarian-Russian partnership.

The deal was signed in 2020 but deliveries are still incomplete with the contractual deadline already passed.

Separately, prosecutors are investigating alleged embezzlement within the National Cultural Fund (NKA), having seized the servers of Orbán's party in July.

“Before the election, such developments were unthinkable,” said lawyer Adrienn Laczo, who resigned as a judge in 2024 in protest at government interference in the judiciary.

But Laczo also pointed out that “we still have not seen a top politician questioned as a suspect”.

While Magyar has pledged to enact reforms to speed up criminal proceedings, he has also pursued institutional reforms to boost his anti-graft drive.

He has brought Hungary into the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), strengthened rules around politicians’ asset declarations and empowered investigative committees to demand witness testimonies.

Magyar has also created the National Asset Recovery and Protection Office (NVVH), the anti-graft body with sweeping powers, headed by Unger, a political scientist who researched democratic backsliding under Orbán.

Public impatience

After taking office, Unger has sought to reassure the public that the NVVH will produce results and has pressed ahead with recruiting investigators, prosecutors and financial specialists.

In interviews since her appointment, Unger signalled that she would not refrain from scrutinising the current government either.

“I will focus on one thing only: ensuring that a fair and lawful accountability process takes place swiftly and effectively, and that as much of the wealth as possible — which has passed from this country into private hands — is secured in the meantime” she told private TV channel RTL.

But pollster Euröpiön found that 55 percent of the population wants results sooner than Unger predicted they would come.

Under Orbán's last 16-year stint in power, Hungary fell from 50th to 84th place in Transparency International's latest Corruption Perceptions Index, ranking last together with Bulgaria among EU members.

Members of the nationalist leader's inner circle amassed vast fortunes, often through businesses benefiting from public contracts.

Orbán has denied any wrongdoing, and his party seeks to portray the anti-corruption campaign as political retribution.

Magyar ran on an anti-corruption platform, pledging to recover “stolen” public wealth and bring crooked politicians to justice, winning a two-thirds majority in parliament that has cleared the way for comprehensive reforms.

Debt, interest rates and supply shocks: One economic battle

By Raad Mahmoud Al-Tal

What struck me about IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva's recent speech was not simply her warnings about inflation and interest rates. More importantly, she offered a different perspective on the challenges facing the global economy. The world is no longer dealing with isolated shocks that can be addressed through a single policy instrument. Supply disruptions, rising public debt and higher borrowing costs are increasingly becoming part of the same economic problem. This is making the task of governments and central banks more difficult and leaving policymakers with less room to respond.

The figures highlighted by Georgieva deserve particular attention. Despite the war and continuing disruptions to trade and energy markets, the IMF still expects global economic growth of around 3 per cent in 2026. Yet, this growth is taking place in a highly uncertain environment. Shipping activity through the Strait of Hormuz has fallen to around 10 per cent of its pre-war level, while oil prices have nevertheless remained below \$150 a barrel. This demonstrates the global economy's ability to adjust to major disruptions, but it also shows how exposed the world remains to risks involving energy, supply chains and international trade.

The distinction between a supply shock and a demand shock is crucial. When inflation is driven by strong demand, a central bank can raise interest rates to restrain spending and ease price pressures. But when inflation is caused by higher energy prices, rising transportation costs or disruptions to supply chains, higher interest rates cannot increase oil supplies, restore trade flows or reduce transportation costs. They can, however, weaken investment, consumption and credit, ultimately putting pressure on economic growth.

The challenge becomes even greater when public debt is already high. Higher interest rates do not affect the private sector alone. They eventually feed into government finances

as well. As governments refinance maturing debt at higher rates, debt-servicing costs increase. This places greater pressure on revenues or creates a need for additional borrowing, leaving less fiscal room for education, healthcare, investment and infrastructure.

This is what makes Georgieva's message particularly relevant to Jordan. Global public debt is now at its highest level since the Second World War and is expected to exceed 100 per cent of global GDP during this decade. At the same time, long-term government bond yields in major economies have risen to levels not seen for many years. The 10-year US Treasury yield has reached its highest level since 2007, while the equivalent yields in France and Japan are at their highest levels since 2008 and 1996 respectively.

What is needed is greater consistency between fiscal and monetary policy

The implications extend well beyond the major economies. Global interest rates influence financing conditions elsewhere, particularly in countries that depend heavily on borrowing or need to refinance significant

amounts of debt on a regular basis. As global borrowing costs rise, the cost of servicing debt can rise as well.

This matters even more for Jordan because ours is a small and open economy, highly exposed to developments in energy, trade, transportation and the wider region. Higher oil prices, for example, do not simply increase the energy bill. They can raise transportation and production costs, feed into domestic prices, and affect the current account and economic activity. If such a shock occurs while interest rates are high and public debt remains substantial, the room available to policymakers becomes considerably narrower.

This is why every economic shock cannot simply be met with higher government spending. Fiscal support may be necessary under certain circumstances, but difficulties arise when temporary spending becomes a permanent commitment financed through borrowing. What may ease the pressure today can create a larger burden for tomorrow's budget. At the same time, monetary policy cannot be expected to carry the full burden of dealing with shocks that originate primarily on the supply side.

What is needed is greater consistency between fiscal and monetary policy. Fiscal policy should control deficits and rebuild fiscal buffers. Monetary policy should preserve price stability. Debt management should focus not only on the size of debt, but also on its cost, maturity and refinancing risks. At the same time, economic policies should aim to raise productivity, strengthen investment and support sustainable real economic growth.

This is where growth becomes critical. Debt reduction cannot depend solely on cutting expenditure or increasing revenues. A faster-growing economy expands the revenue base, strengthens the government's capacity to service its debt and makes it easier to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio. For Jordan, therefore, the debt challenge is also fundamentally a challenge of growth, productivity and investment.

The message I take from the

IMF's analysis is clear. The world is entering a period in which economic shocks may become more frequent, debt levels are higher and interest rates have a greater impact on public finances. Fiscal space therefore needs to be built during periods of stability, not after a crisis has already arrived.

For Jordan, the objective should not simply be to reduce the debt ratio in any particular year. The more important goal is to ensure that debt is less costly...

For Jordan, the objective should not simply be to reduce the debt ratio in any particular year. The more important goal is to ensure that debt is less costly, has longer maturities and carries lower refinancing risks, while keeping the primary deficit under control and raising real economic growth sufficiently to create a broader economic base for debt servicing.

A country that enters the next crisis with lower debt, a controlled deficit, longer maturities, manageable borrowing costs and an economy capable of generating growth will have more options available to it. Waiting for the crisis and then looking for fiscal space is usually the most expensive way to respond.

Kids and social media: What would change under new EU law

Dubbed the “EU KIDS Act”, Brussels is now “reversing the burden of proof”, von der Leyen said. “Now they have to prove to us that they are safe.”

The EU has been pushed to act after evidence has shown children's physical and mental wellbeing is damaged by social media, predators, scammers as well as bullies targeting minors, who have little protection from such risks.

So, what is in the draft law, and what does it mean for children and parents?

What is the EU proposing?

There are multiple strands of the proposal. The first is a tiered approach on minors accessing social media.

Children aged 15 and over will be able to set up social media accounts, while 13- and 14-year-olds can have “mini accounts” that they can access through a parent or guardian's account, according to the proposal.

This type of account would have strict safeguards, including screen time limited to one hour a day, so that parents can ensure the “safe” use of social media.

The EU stressed it wanted to put parents in the “driving seat”, by, for example, allowing minors to use video-sharing apps through accounts managed by parents — who could then limit access to other services and time spent online.

The second pillar is about ensuring social media, video sharing apps, online video games, AI companions and chatbots are safe before children use them.

This means banning profiling-

based recommender feeds that lead to children seeing harmful content, as well as on reward-type mechanisms, and unsolicited contact from strangers.

The EU can also launch investigations into platforms that must be concluded within 90 days

the EU's digital watchdog, called for its swift adoption “considering the clear demand for urgent and comprehensive action”.

How will it work?

Platforms will have to submit a “compliance plan” to the commission and to an independent auditor that will assess any new service or feature, the EU said.

If the auditor is not happy with what a company proposes, the commission can ask for “corrective measures”.

The EU can also launch investigations into platforms that must be concluded within 90 days, it added, with violations potentially leading to fines of up to 6 per cent of annual turnover — as is the case with the bloc's existing Digital Services Act on online content.

Once adopted the new “EU KIDS Act” would be “fully applicable all over Europe” and would supersede any national laws with different age limits or rules, an EU official explained.

The EU has been simultaneously preparing to roll out an age-check app that would ensure children below the age thresholds cannot access social media.

Privacy defenders have raised concerns but Brussels insists the app would not share any data with digital platforms, and would only provide a “yes” or “no” answer in a cryptographic way without providing any personal data.

Platforms do not have to use the app, but they must use an age assurance tool that checks how old new users are.

Shehadeh highlights economic reforms, investment opportunities in London Conference

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Muhanad Shehadeh, alongside Jordan Securities Commission Chairman of the Board of Commissioners Emad Abu Haltam, participated in the J.P. Morgan Emerging and Frontier Markets Opportunities Conference in London from September 15 to 17.

Attended by Jordanian Ambassador to the UK Manar Dabbas, the conference brought together international investors, representatives of global financial institutions and business leaders to discuss investment prospects in emerging and frontier markets, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Shehadeh's participation formed part of national efforts to deepen engagement with international investors, showcase the fundamentals of the national economy and highlight investment opportunities in the Kingdom.

Discussions focused on major economic and development projects being implemented under the Economic Modernisation Vision, the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap and the government's digital transformation programme.

Speaking at the conference and during meetings with global invest-



Photo Courtesy of Petra

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Muhanad Shehadeh participates in the J.P. Morgan Emerging and Frontier Markets Opportunities Conference in London

ment representatives, Shehadeh highlighted Jordan's position as an investment destination.

He outlined the resilience of the national economy in navigating regional turbulence, pointing to investment prospects in infrastructure, water, energy, transport and logistics, as well as other productive sectors.

Shehadeh underscored the strength of Jordan's banking sector, citing its robust legislative framework, sound regulatory structures and solid reserves, which he said reinforce financial stability.

He also noted the expansion of Jordanian banks into several

neighbouring markets, including Syria.

The minister highlighted the growth of the textile and garment industry, particularly the increase in exports to the US market under the Jordan-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which he said demonstrates the capacity of local manufacturing and export sectors to access global markets.

Addressing trade indicators, Shehadeh highlighted increased shipping, handling and loading activity at the port of Aqaba, reflecting expanding commercial and logistical operations and reinforcing Jordan's role as a regional trade hub.

He stressed that Jordan continues to implement structural economic reforms and improve the business environment while addressing regional challenges.

The minister said these efforts are aimed at enhancing competitiveness, broadening the investment base and enabling the Kingdom to capitalise on regional and international opportunities.

Shehadeh outlined several major strategic projects under way, including the National Water Carrier Project, development of the Risha gas field and the Amra City project, as well as initiatives in high-value sectors such

as phosphates and potash, railways and transport, infrastructure, energy and logistics.

He said the projects serve as regional connection points and service hubs for neighbouring states.

Shehadeh also pointed to the role of these initiatives in driving economic growth, improving supply chain efficiency, boosting national competitiveness, supporting productive sectors and creating employment opportunities.

The minister stressed the importance of expanding public-private partnerships and cooperation with international financial institutions to secure the necessary

funding and expertise.

On the sidelines of the visit, Shehadeh attended several economic meetings organised by the Jordanian Embassy in London, including a seminar hosted by Morgan Stanley and attended by leading global asset managers, including BlackRock, J.P. Morgan, Amundi, PineBridge, In-sight and Finisterre.

He also participated in a seminar organised by British Expertise International, which brought together UK companies operating in transport, infrastructure, financial services, consultancy, technology and risk management, including Maersk, KPMG, Crown Agents Bank and Adam Smith International.

The meetings also included a session with Innovate Finance, which represents the UK fintech sector. The session was attended by Chief Executive Janine Hirt and Director of International Partnerships Peter Cunnane, and focused on exploring areas of collaboration and leveraging British expertise in fintech development.

Additionally, Shehadeh participated in a high-level seminar held in partnership with the Chartered Institute for Securities & Investment to strengthen engagement with UK and international financial institutions and explore avenues for cooperation.



JT file

The Department of Statistics says that the total area of licensed buildings in Jordan reached 5.84 million square metres during the first seven months of 2026

Licensed building areas rise 4.7% in first seven months — DoS

AMMAN (JT) — The total area of licensed buildings in Jordan reached 5.84 million square metres during the first seven months of 2026, up 4.7 per cent from 5.58 million square metres during the same period of 2025, according to the Department of Statistics (DoS).

A total of 14,361 building permits were issued during the seven-month period, up 1.7 per cent from 14,124 permits in the corresponding period of 2025, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Residential licensed areas rose by 10.7 per cent to 4.77 million square metres, compared with 4.31 million square metres in 2025, accounting for 81.6 per cent of the total.

Meanwhile, non-residential licensed areas fell by 15.7 per cent to 1.07 million square metres from 1.27 million square metres, accounting for 18.4 per cent of the total.

Licensed building areas increased in every month of 2026 except May.

The Central Region maintained the largest share of licensed building areas at 73 per cent, unchanged from 2025.

The Northern Re-

gion's share rose by 1.9 percentage points to 21 per cent, while the Southern Region's share declined by the same margin to 6 per cent.

At the governorate level, Amman recorded the highest per capita residential licensed area at 0.573 square metres per person, accounting for 15.2 per cent of the total. Zarqa recorded the lowest at 0.095 square metres per person, accounting for 2.5 per cent.

Licensed areas for new buildings and additions to existing structures accounted for 58.4 per cent of the total, at 3.4 million square metres, compared with 3.5 million square metres in 2025, a 2.9 per cent decline.

Existing buildings licensed during the data collection period accounted for the remaining 41.6 per cent.

The DoS monthly census monitors building permits and their uses across the Kingdom's governorates and provides indicators on construction activity for decision makers.

The department noted that building permits are a reliable indicator of actual construction activity compared with preliminary engineering design contracts.



JT file

Queen Alia International Airport welcomes 1,041,415 passengers during August according to Airport International Group

QAIA welcomed over 1,000,000 passengers in August 2026

AMMAN (JT) — Airport International Group (AIG), the Jordanian company operating Queen Alia International Airport (QAIA), reported on Thursday the airport's traffic statistics for August 2026, reflecting a strong month-on-month increase as summer travel activity gained momentum.

During August 2026, QAIA welcomed 1,041,415 passengers, marking a 7.6 per cent

increase compared to July 2026 and a slight 3.7 per cent decrease compared to August 2025.

The airport also recorded 7,868 aircraft movements, reflecting a 6.3 per cent increase month-on-month and a 6.1 per cent decrease year-on-year, according to a QAIA statement.

Meanwhile, QAIA handled 7,925 tonnes of cargo during the month, representing a 4.4 per

cent increase compared to July 2026 and a 3.7 per cent increase compared to the same month last year.

While the situation in the region remains difficult and unstable, the August results point to a notable strengthening in activity following the fluctuations witnessed earlier in the year, with the significant month-on-month increases across passenger, aircraft and cargo traffic

highlighting the airport's ability to accommodate rising demand during the peak summer period.

Commenting on the results, chief executive officer of AIG, Nicolas Deviller said, "August's performance reflects QAIA's continued role in supporting Jordan's tourism and economic activity, with passenger traffic exceeding one million during the month."

Most stocks rise as Fed hikes and indicate drive to curb inflation

HONG KONG (AFP) — Most equities rose on Thursday after the Federal Reserve (Fed) hiked interest rates for the first time in three years and boss Kevin Warsh sounded a hawkish note that ramped up bets on another increase as officials fight surging inflation.

Investor sentiment was also given a lift by hopes for a pick-up in oil supplies from Saudi Arabia after the country moved to restore some capacity from a pipeline it closed at the weekend following drone attacks.

In a unanimous decision, the Fed lifted borrowing costs for the first time since 2023, defying President Donald Trump's demand for cuts, as Warsh stressed the need to combat inflation that has been "too high" for "too long".

"We removed a dose of accommodation so that financial and credit conditions would be more consistent with our ultimate objectives," Warsh said after the announcement.

"Today's action starts to show we're serious about this, and we will deliver on the price stability objective."

The decision was an-

nounced along with a graph showing the vast majority of Fed policymakers saw at least one more was likely necessary before the end of the year.

Traders now see an October hike as being a 50:50.

While Wall Street's three main indexes ended on Wednesday in the red, Asian traders took the 25-basis-point lift more positively, with analysts saying it shored up credibility in the central bank and provided some reassurance over officials' determination to beat inflation.

Long-term government bond yields — which this week touched two-decade highs — fell as investors pared back their inflation expectations, which at 3.4 per cent is currently well above the bank's 2 per cent target.

"Removing a dose of accommodation is not the language of a central bank that believes it has completed the job," said Stephen Innes at Quintex Intel.

"It suggests policy was still providing support before Wednesday and may not yet be restrictive after it.

The hike removed the immediate credibility question. The

explanation created a new argument about how much tightening remains."

And Christian Schermmann at DWS added: "Overall, we believe the main motivation this time was credibility, given bond market pricing and recent developments in oil markets."

Still, he added: "Despite his hawkish stance, Fed Chair Warsh's optimistic outlook on the economy may be music to many ears."

Equity markets across Asia were mostly higher in early trade.

Tokyo, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei, Wellington and Jakarta all advanced, though Hong Kong and Shanghai dipped.

However, Tai Hui, of JP Morgan Asset Management, warned: "We think the chance of US policy rates returning to above five per cent is still limited.

Nonetheless, a catalyst to extend the equity bull market [lower interest rates] is looking unlikely in the foreseeable future."

The news angered Trump, who called Warsh a "good man" who had "a hostile board".

"They're raising the rates to make Trump

do as bad as they can possibly do... So they're raising that only for political reasons and that's a raise against Trump," he complained.

While the Middle East crisis continues to weigh heavily on sentiment and oil prices above \$100 a barrel, investors took some cheer from reports that Saudi Arabia is looking to return about half the capacity of its cross-country oil pipeline within days.

The East-West conduit was shut last week after Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis targeted it.

State-run Saudi Aramco said it was looking to get back up to full capacity in about six weeks, Bloomberg cited sources as saying.

The news sent crude prices tumbling around 3 per cent Wednesday, and they extended the losses on Thursday.

The Fed hike and Warsh's remarks also pushed the dollar higher against its peers and held the gains in early trade.

Eyes are now on decisions by the central banks of Britain and Japan, with the latter also expected to hike as it looks to fend off a rise in inflation and a weaker yen.

Expatriate remittances rise 14.1% to \$2.97b by end-July

AMMAN (JT) — Expatriate remittances to the Kingdom rose by 14.1 per cent during the first seven months of 2026, reaching around \$2.97 billion, according to preliminary data released by the Central Bank of Jordan.

The figures showed that incoming remittances in July grew by 13.1 per cent, amounting to \$470.2 million.

Remittances from the UAE accounted for the largest share during the

seven-month period at 20.9 per cent, followed by the US at 19.3 per cent, Saudi Arabia at 17.7 per cent, Qatar at 10.5 per cent and Kuwait at 5.5 per cent.

Remittances from other countries accounted for the remaining 26.1 per cent.

On the other hand, outgoing remittances from non-Jordanian workers in the Kingdom increased by 14.4 per cent during the first seven months of



JT file

Expatriate remittances to the Kingdom rises by 14.1 per cent during the first seven months of 2026

2026, totalling \$1.14 billion, following an 8.5 per

cent increase in July to reach \$167.9 million.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

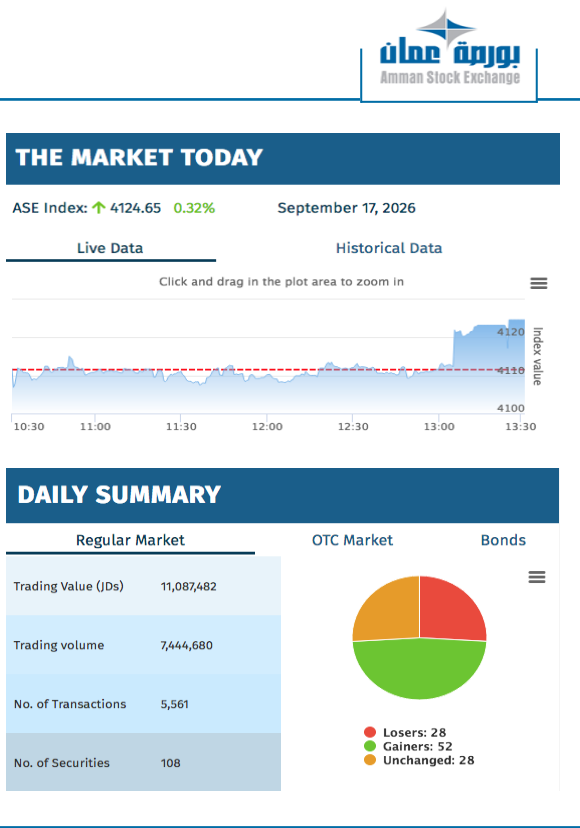
AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Thursday amounted to JD11.1 million spread over 7.4 million shares that traded through 5,561 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.32 per cent, closing at 4124.65 points.

Out of 108 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 52 companies rose while the share price of another 28 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were First Insurance by 6.94 per cent, Amwaj Properties by 5 per cent, Deera Investment and Real Estate Development Compant by 4.76 per cent, Specialised Investment Compounds by 4.76 per cent, and International Arabian Development and Investment Trading Company by 4.76 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Arab Pesticides and Veterinary Drugs Manufacturing Company by 5.15 per cent, Premier Business and Projects Co. Ltd. by 4.68 per cent, Jordanian Duty Free Shops by 4.49 per cent, Arab Aluminium Industry/Araral by 4.43 per cent, and Al Dawliyah for Hotels and Malls by 4.17 per cent.



FOOTBALL

Boehly and Walter sell Chelsea stake to Clearlake Capital

LONDON (AFP) — Chelsea chairman Todd Boehly and director Mark Walter have sold their stakes in the Premier League side to majority owner Clearlake Capital, which has assumed full control, the club announced. American billionaires Boehly and Walter were two of the investors who partnered with Clearlake to buy Chelsea from Roman Abramovich for £2.5 billion (\$3.3 billion) in May 2022. “Chelsea Football Club today announced affiliates of Clearlake Capital Group, L.P. [‘Clearlake’] will acquire the ownership interest of Todd Boehly,” said a club statement. “As part of the transition, Clearlake will also acquire Mark Walter’s ownership interest and therefore acquire full control of the Club,” it added. Prior to Wednesday night’s announcement, private equity company Clearlake held 62 percent of Chelsea, with Boehly and Walter holding the remaining shares with fellow investor Hansjorg Wyss. Wyss “will remain an important stakeholder and partner in the ownership group”, said the club statement. No financial terms for the deal were disclosed. Boehly and Walter were reported to have valued the club at £5 billion.

RUGBY

China out of Asian Games women’s cricket without a ball being bowled

NAGOYA, Japan (AFP) — China’s women returned to Asian Games cricket for the first time in 12 years on Thursday — only to be knocked out without a ball being bowled two days before the opening ceremony. On a seemingly perfect day for T20 cricket under blue skies and sunshine at the Korogi Athletic Park in Nagoya, a sodden outfield caused by days of rain prevented any play from taking place in China’s morning quarter-final against Bangladesh. Bangladesh went through to the semi-finals by virtue of being the higher ranked side under Asian Games competition rules. There they will meet Pakistan, whose last-eight match against Thailand later in the day was reduced to 11 overs per side after the start was delayed by 90 minutes as groundstaff worked to dry the outfield. Thailand, anchored by wicketkeeper Nannapat Koncharoenkai’s 49, posted a competitive 91-4 in their 11 overs. Pakistan lost wickets at regular intervals before avoiding an upset by reaching 92-7 with two balls to go.

Messi heads Inter Miami to Campeones Cup triumph

MIAMI(AFP) — Lionel Messi headed a goal and provided an assist as Inter Miami won the Campeones Cup on Wednesday, beating Cruz Azul 2-0 in the annual clash between Major League Soccer and Mexican Liga MX champions.

It was Inter Miami’s first Campeones Cup triumph and came thanks to the Argentine superstar’s 100th goal for the reigning MLS Cup winners. A late Messi corner was headed home by Casemiro to seal the win.

Victory gave 39-year-old Messi his first trophy of the year, two months after the heart-break of losing the 2026 World Cup final to Spain with Argentina.

After the game, Casemiro paid tribute to his illustrious teammate Messi.

“We have to enjoy this because we don’t know how long we’ll have it,” the former Real Madrid midfielder said.

“What he has done and continues to do for football is incredible... he remains the best. He proved it at the World Cup and continues to prove it in MLS.”

Inter Miami co-owner David Beckham said Messi deserved to win a record-extending ninth Ballon d’Or.

“When you see him do things like this tonight, when you see him have the World Cup that he’s had... there is no one at 39 that’s doing that,



(Photo courtesy of the Jordanian Pro League (CPI

Inter Miami’s Argentine forward #10 Lionel Messi shoots a corner kick that assisted Inter Miami’s Brazilian defender #05 Casemiro to score on a header during the Campeones Cup final football match between Inter Miami CF and Mexico’s Cruz Azul at Nu Stadium in Miami, Florida, on Thursday

and doing it at that level,” said Beckham.

“So he deserves to be considered for the Ballon d’Or. In my opinion, he should win it.”

Cruz Azul had the game’s first big chance, Jose Paradelas’ shot saved at the near post

by Miami goalkeeper Dayne St Clair.

Miami’s opener came in the 24th minute.

Though the goalscorer was no surprise, it was a rare Messi header that broke the deadlock.

Luis Suarez crossed from the byline, and

the 5-foot-7 Messi out-jumped Willer Ditta with a diving header to give Miami the lead.

Suarez nearly turned provider again in the 32nd minute. He received a sumptuous cross-field ball from Messi and scooped it

up for German Berterame, whose dinked effort was cleared off the line.

Early in the second half Messi appeared to have scored his 101st Miami goal, racing through one-on-one from a Suarez through

ball and placing his shot in off the post, but was ruled offside.

Cruz Azul should have equalised in the 67th minute, but substitute Gabriel Fernandez’s glancing header hit the post, and Casemiro blocked the follow-up shot.

A Messi corner gave Miami the two-goal cushion, finding Casemiro, who nodded the ball low to the far post in the 81st minute.

St Clair denied Cruz Azul a late consolation, saving well from a Paradela free kick.

New coach

The trophy came in new Inter Miami head coach Cristian “Kily” Gonzalez’s first game in charge.

Argentine manager Gonzalez was appointed last month, but due to visa delays only took his first training sessions this week.

The annual Campeones Cup pits the previous year’s MLS Cup winner against the winner of Mexico’s Campeón de Campeones.

It was the eighth edition of the cup, which is always hosted by the MLS participant.

Mexican teams had won the three most recent editions before Miami’s victory on Wednesday.

Mexican giants Cruz Azul have still never won the Campeones Cup. They lost the 2021 final.

Artists exit Sheeran tour in solidarity with Macklemore pro-Palestinian comments

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — The artist Finneas and three other supporting acts announced they had quit British superstar Ed Sheeran’s tour on Tuesday, after rapper Macklemore was dropped for making pro-Palestinian comments while performing.

Sheeran has denied being behind the decision to remove Macklemore, saying his tour’s promoter was responsible.

But Finneas — a performer also famous for work with his superstar sister Billie Eilish — Irish acts Aaron Rowe and Beoga, and Lukas Graham of Denmark all posted they were quitting Sheeran’s “Loop Tour”.

While opening for Sheeran earlier this month at New Jersey’s MetLife Stadium, Macklemore shouted “Free Palestine!” and told Palestinians they were “not forgotten”.

“Macklemore coming off tour was the promoter’s decision, it was not mine,” Sheeran wrote in a lengthy Instagram post, adding that the rapper’s contract was ended by the promoter, Messina Touring Group.

According to Sheer-



AFP photo

Ed Sheeran attends the Disney+ World Premiere of ‘Ed Sheeran: The Sum of It All’ at The Times Centre on May 2, 2023 in New York City, US

an, venues on the tour “communicated that they would pull the shows if he was still supporting”.

The artist said he held prolonged discussions with venue managers, including Robert Kraft, owner of Boston’s Gillette Stadium and the Patriots NFL team. But he was unable to resolve the issue, he added.

Finneas has publicly advocated for Palestinians in the past. He posted Tuesday that “artists must not be silenced when they speak up for the oppressed”.

“I stand with Palestine and its people.”

Sheeran’s touring

band Beoga said they were dropping out “following the silencing of Macklemore by Zionist lobbies.”

“We are a traditional Irish band who never saw ourselves playing in stadiums of that size and that opportunity is not lost on us,” the group said, adding they had been friends with Sheeran for a decade and would stay so.

But “we are Irish people who understand colonialism,” Beoga said on Instagram.

“As founding members of the Irish Artists for Palestine movement, we are committed activists for justice and will continue to be.”

Irish artist Rowe similarly cited his country’s history in explaining the decision to drop out.

“As Irish people we know all too well about genocide, forced famine and violent occupation,” he wrote, also noting that Sheeran was a friend who “has changed my life”.

Yet, “I cannot stand by and allow billionaires to use their position of power to silence the rightful voices of those who speak up against Israeli genocide,” Rowe said.

‘Strength of purpose’

In his post Tuesday, Sheeran had touched on

his decision not to comment publicly about political subjects, notably the war in Gaza.

“I am not complicit. I have my personal views on this devastating conflict. Just because I choose not to speak publicly, it doesn’t mean I don’t care,” he said.

“Those who come to my shows do not expect a political forum. I respect Macklemore’s strength of purpose.”

On Monday, Macklemore posted that Sheeran and his team were not behind his departure from the tour.

He said that Kraft had contacted Sheeran to tell him the rapper would not be allowed on stage and alleged that Kraft had rallied other venues to demand his exclusion.

In a statement, Kraft said that Gillette Stadium would “not provide a platform for hate speech.”

Macklemore, known for hits including “Thrift Shop” and “Can’t Hold Us,” has long vocally supported Palestinians.

In 2024 he released “Hind’s Hall”, which pays tribute to Hind Rajab, a five-year-old Palestinian girl whose death sparked a wave of international outrage.



AFP photo

Helen Mirren attends the premiere of ‘A Talent for Murder’ during the 2026 Toronto International Film Festival at Roy Thomson Hall on Monday in Toronto, Ontario

Helen Mirren delves into Patricia Highsmith’s mind in ‘A Talent for Murder’

TORONTO, Canada (AFP) — Helen Mirren makes no secret of her admiration for writers, something reflected in her portrayal of American author Patricia Highsmith in “A Talent for Murder”, the thriller that premiered at the Toronto Film Festival.

“It was a fascinating journey to go into her psychology,” the 81-year-old British Oscar winner commented this week at a roundtable with journalists.

In “A Talent for Murder”, Mirren embodies Highsmith, the author of the Tom Ripley novels, who moved in the 1980s to a small town in Switzerland, where she led an increasingly

secluded life.

Directed by Anton Corbijn, the film presents a psychological duel between the renowned writer and her agent, Edward Ridgeway (Alden Ehrenreich), who tries to convince her to write a new Tom Ripley novel.

“Playing Highsmith was intense,” Mirren told AFP.

Although there wasn’t much audiovisual material available, the actor found clues to portray the reclusive writer in interviews and videos.

In that process, Mirren discovered she had nothing in common with her character.

“I’ve gone in the opposite direction in my attitude to life. She became

very embittered, very private, isolated,” Mirren said of Highsmith. “She was not a very nice person at the end of her life at all.”

Likewise, the idea that anyone is capable of committing a crime is inconceivable to Mirren.

“I’ve never thought of killing a person. I don’t think Patricia Highsmith is right about that,” she said.

And the film doesn’t hide that side of her personality.

“One wants to pay respect to her genius and her brilliance,” Mirren said. “But I think it would do her a disservice to try and smooth over the edges that she very much had.”

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