



A flydubai Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft prepares for landing at Israel's Ben Gurion Airport in Lod on Wednesday

UAE probes possible 'terror' incident on flight to Israel

DUBAI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates announced on Thursday it was probing a possible "terrorist" link to an apparent attack by a pilot on board a flight to Israel that saw passengers reroute the plane to stop it from crashing.

Passengers described rushing the cockpit after the plane suddenly plummeted, losing around 17,000 feet of altitude in the span of a minute, according to the Flightradar24 website.

The UAE's chief pros-

ecutor said an investigation had been launched into the incident, including the possibility of "terrorist activity or intent".

Airline flydubai has said all the passengers — of whom 166 out of 174 were Israeli, according to media reports — were safe, adding that the reasons for the altercation were unknown.

"During the flight, as they approached the country, one of the pilots stabbed the other pilot, and appar-

ently tried to crash the plane with everyone on board," Netanyahu said in a video message.

"I salute these heroes," he said of the passengers, adding "they prevented a major disaster".

He later hailed the wounded pilot, Machchhar, "for his extraordinary bravery", saying he fought off his copilot, preventing a "catastrophic mid-air disaster".

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Population, housing census begins nationwide

AMMAN (JT) — The Department of Statistics (DoS) launched the 2026 Population and Housing Census across the Kingdom on Thursday, under the theme "Our Census for a Better Future," with field operations set to continue through the end of October.

The seventh national census aims to collect and update data on about 2.5 million households and their housing characteristics across Jordan, Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

DoS Director General and National Census Director Haider Freihat said field operations will cover about 24,000 statistical blocks and nearly 1 million buildings across the Kingdom.

About 12,000 field researchers are taking part in the data collection, including 10,000 Ministry of Education teachers and 2,000 DoS staff members and trained temporary researchers, Freihat said.

He added that researchers will conduct visits according to flex-



ible schedules to accommodate households' availability, with follow-up visits planned when residents are absent dur-

ing initial attempts to ensure comprehensive coverage.

Freihat stressed that all information collected

during the census will remain strictly confidential under General Statistics Law No. 8 of 2025, which requires a population

and housing census to be conducted at least once every 10 years.

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Iraqi PM sets June 30 deadline for pro-Iran factions to disarm

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi Prime Minister Ali Al Zaidi on Thursday announced June 30 as a new deadline for armed factions to turn over their weapons to the state, following the end of the US-led coalition's mission in the country.

"October 1 is considered a serious beginning to address the issue of weapons outside state control... according to a clear roadmap and agreed timelines extending no later than June 30, 2027," Zaidi said in a statement, having backed away from an original September 30 deadline.

The Iraqi government believes the withdrawal of coalition forces will deprive the armed factions, many of which are backed by Iran, of the excuse they have used to retain their arsenal.

But many fear the pull-out might boost the factions instead, and draw the country deeper into the Middle East war.

"Based on the constitu-



Members of the Iraqi security forces, participate in a military parade marking the withdrawal of the US-led coalition from Iraq, in Baghdad on Wednesday

tional principle, the decision of war and peace should be left to the constitutional authorities, banning all military action to the contrary," Zaidi said on Thursday.

The US-led, anti-extremist coalition officially ended its mission in Iraq a day earlier, more than a

decade after it deployed to the country to help fight the Daesh terror group.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards welcomed on Thursday the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq as a "historic victory" and called for American troops to leave the Middle

East.

The Guards "congratulate the proud nation of Iraq, the united front of the Islamic Resistance, and the revolutionary fighters of the Islamic world on this historic victory", they said in a statement carried by official media.

'Not bound by any timeline'

Zaidi had originally set September 30 as the deadline for factions to disarm, but later withdrew it as talks to "regulate" weapons continued.

While some factions have already handed over their weapons to the state, others have refused to disarm.

Iraqi armed factions backed by Tehran said Wednesday that they were "not bound by any timeline or agreement" to surrender their weapons to the state.

A military spokesman for Kataeb Hizbollah, Jaafar Al Hussein, said at an event to celebrate the withdrawal of US-led coalition forces that the factions had been in talks on "regulating" their weapons but "have not yet received a response from the Iraqi government".

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A Palestinian youth inspects one of several destroyed vehicles following an attack by Israeli settlers, in the Palestinian village of Al Mughayyir, near Ramallah in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on Tuesday

Palestinian man killed in West Bank settler attack

RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — Israeli settlers shot dead a Palestinian man and injured another during a raid on a village in the northern occupied West Bank on Thursday, according to the mayor and the Palestinian health ministry.

The raid came as in-

ternational criticism mounts over surging levels of settler violence against Palestinians in the territory, which Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu downplayed last week.

The Palestinian health ministry said Thursday that 51-year-old Mash-hour Yassin was killed

"by settler gunfire" in Yasuf, north of Ramallah.

Earlier on Thursday, the Palestinian Red Crescent said its teams had tended to two men wounded by live fire during the attack, including a man in his fifties shot in the abdomen.

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Algeria adopts law imposing death penalty on forest arsonists

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algerian lawmakers on Thursday adopted a law imposing the death penalty on convicted forest arsonists, after deadly wildfires ripped through swathes of the country in recent weeks.

The official death toll from the blazes, which swept through the country's northeast during the summer, was 12 people, but witnesses have reported the deaths of dozens.

Algeria had upheld a moratorium on the death penalty since 1993, but in August, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune ordered the justice minister to amend the penal code



The European Union and Dutch flags flutter outside the Netherlands Representative Office in Ramallah, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on Monday

to broaden the list of crimes for which capital punishment is allowed.

Lawmakers on Thursday also voted to extend

capital punishment to child kidnappings involving torture, sexual assault or mutilation.

Continued on page 5

European boycott of Israeli settlement goods gains momentum

By Najla M. Shahwan

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM — The Netherlands has banned trade in goods produced in Israeli settlements, while 11 other countries, including Britain and France, have announced plans for similar measures. Cultural and sporting boycotts and protests are also increasing, reflecting mounting European opposition to Israeli policies toward Palestinians in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

The measures have prompted strong reactions from Israel's far-right government, which has taken retaliatory steps against some European countries.

Israeli media has reported that a kosher supermarket in Amsterdam



The European Union and Dutch flags flutter outside the Netherlands Representative Office in Ramallah, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on Monday

had informed customers earlier in September that a long list of products originating in Israeli settlements would no

longer be available on its shelves.

"We're working hard to find suitable replacements, so we can main-

tain our full range of products as much as possible," the supermarket said in a notice to customers. "If you notice empty

shelves, understand what it stems from."

The supermarket's announcement followed The Netherlands' decision to prohibit imports and trade in settlement goods, effective September 22.

Dutch officials said the measures were intended to bring the country's trade policy into line with international law, under which Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank are considered illegal.

The Dutch measures go beyond imports. They also prohibit the sale and purchase of settlement goods, the provision of services that facilitate trade in those products and attempts to circumvent the restrictions.

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Masanat Hiyari

UNDP calls for wider use of digital finance among women

By Ilham Drawazeh

DEAD SEA — The UN Development Programme (UNDP), as part of its participation in the Jordan FinTech Festival 2026, highlighted the need to move beyond access to digital financial services towards their sustained use by women and small businesses.

Speaking to The Jordan Times on the sidelines of the festival, Director of the Security and Risk Management Project and the FinTech and Digital Financial Technology Project in Jordan Masnat Al Hiyari said a UNDP workshop held in cooperation with the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) focused on identifying barriers facing women in the Jordan Valley and developing financial solutions tailored to their needs.

The Jordan FinTech Festival 2026 was held at the Dead Sea area on September 23 and 24.

The workshop brought together women entrepreneurs, business leaders, home-based businesses, community representatives and financial sector stakeholders to discuss barriers to accessing and using financial services in rural and remote areas.

Hiyari said the first session focused on listening to women's experiences and identifying the challenges they face, while the second explored possible solutions.

The aim was to develop a "human-centred" financial product based on women's actual needs rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, she said.

From access to active use

Hiyari said UNDP has been working in the Jordan Valley for around three years, initially focusing on raising awareness of digital financial services before sup-

porting the use of e-wallets and exploring financial products that could better serve local communities.

The work has since expanded to examining how products such as light business accounts can be tailored to women running small and home-based businesses.

"What we learned from today's workshop is that Jordan is building a strong digital infrastructure," Hiyari said. "The challenge is that we don't just want access, we want sustainable and active use."

'The challenge is that we don't just want access, we want sustainable and active use'

According to CBJ data cited by Hiyari, 88 per cent of banking transactions in Jordan are conducted through electronic channels, compared with 12 per cent through traditional channels.

Growing digital payments

CBJ indicators cited by Hiyari also showed the expanding reach of Jordan's payment infrastructure.

The Kingdom has 109,301 payment points, with 74 per cent equipped with QR-code technology.

CliQ transactions reached JD26.3 billion in one year, reflecting the growing use of instant payments between individuals.

Addressing barriers Despite the expansion of digital financial services, Hiyari said women in rural and remote areas continue to face barriers to their effective use.

The UNDP-CBJ dialogue identified challenges, including gaps in digital connectivity and infrastructure, difficulties accessing cash, high fees charged by service points, and concerns over the costs and requirements associated with formalising businesses.

Participants also highlighted limited awareness of financial products, including light business accounts, as well as concerns over personal accounts being frozen when they are repeatedly used for commercial activities.

Hiyari said such challenges underline the need for financial products that reflect the realities of women operating small and home-based businesses.

Measuring financial inclusion

Hiyari said Jordan's progress in digital finance should ultimately be measured by how effectively people use digital services in their everyday economic activities.

"People understand this service and they have started to trust it, but they are hesitating to use it daily in their small and medium-sized projects," she said.

"The true success story of digital finance in Jordan will be written when we measure success not by the number of accounts opened, but by the number of women and young people who use these digital financial services with confidence," Hiyari said.

Petra welcomes 362,215 visitors in first nine months of 2026

AMMAN (JT) — Tourism movement to Petra improved "remarkably" during the second half of September, recording 43,901 visitors during the month, with nearly half being foreign tourists.

Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA) Chief Commissioner Adnan Sawaeer said that the visitor surge coincided with the resumption and stabilisation of regular flight operations, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

September visitor numbers dropped by 8 per cent compared with 47,658 visitors in September 2025.

Foreign tourists reached 21,995 in September compared with 25,931 in September 2025, while Arab tourists totalled 3,560, Jordanian visitors reached 17,136, and residents accounted for 1,057, averaging 1,463 daily visitors.

Foreign tourists comprised 50 per cent of total visitors, led by the United States with 3,803, Russia with 3,004, Spain with 1,653, the United Kingdom with 1,437 and Germany with 1,178.

Total visitors for the first nine months reached 362,215, marking a 2.8 per cent decrease from 372,779 visitors during the parallel period of 2025.

Jordanian visitors went up by 26.6 per cent to 144,536 compared with 114,187 in



File photo

Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority Chief Commissioner Adnan Sawaeer said that the visitor surge coincides with the resumption and stabilisation of regular flight operations

the first nine months of 2025, while Arab visitors rose 3.3 per cent from 20,389 to 21,065.

Foreign visitors over the nine-month period dropped 17.8 per cent

to 184,387 compared with 224,296 during the same period of 2025.

Founded by the Nabataeans, Petra is renowned for its ancient rock-cut architecture,

royal tombs, and iconic Al Khazneh (The Treasury).

Petra, which was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1985 and named one of

the New Seven Wonders of the World in 2007, remains a national symbol and a world-renowned destination attracting visitors from across the globe.

Malaysian embassy highlights Jordanian market in Visit Malaysia campaign

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — The Malaysian embassy in Amman on Thursday hosted the Malaysia Tourism Networking Luncheon, organised in collaboration with the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) to enhance bilateral cooperation, boost destination visibility and promote the Visit Malaysia 2026-2027 campaign.

JTB Director General Ramzi Maaytah was the guest of honour in the event that was attended by key Jordanian travel trade leaders, tour operators, hospitality and media representatives.

The event served as a collaborative platform to strengthen industry linkages and boost two-way travel between the two nations, organisers said.

Ambassador of Malaysia to Jordan Mohamad



Photo courtesy of the Malaysian embassy

Ambassador of Malaysia to Jordan Mohamad Abdul Rahman addresses gathered Jordanian travel trade leaders, tour operators, hospitality and media representatives on Thursday

Abdul Rahman emphasised the vital role of the Jordanian market for Malaysian tourism. In 2025, Malaysia received 8,957 visitors from Jordan, while 8,033 Malaysians travelled to

Jordan, reflecting the existing two-way tourism movement between both countries.

"For Malaysia, Visit Malaysia is more than a tourism campaign. It is an opportunity

to share our culture, natural beauty and the warmth of our people," said Ambassador Abdul Rahman.

"We offer a unique combination of safety, value-for-money, world-class shopping, and a naturally Muslim-friendly environment with accessible Halal dining and prayer facilities that resonate strongly with Jordanian families and leisure travellers," the ambassador noted.

Active participation from key stakeholders, including the Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association, the hotel sector and outbound travel agencies, underscored the event's importance.

The engagement is viewed as "essential" to converting interest into actual travel demand

through tailored Malaysian travel packages and expanded promotion across the Jordanian market, Abdul Rahman said.

Visit Malaysia 2026 officially began on January 1, with events at 55 major entry points and locations across all 13 states and the government initially set an ambitious target of 47 million international tourist arrivals and around \$80 billion in tourism receipts for the campaign.

The campaign underlines culture, food, ecotourism, shopping, islands, cities, festivals, MICE/business travel and Muslim-friendly tourism.

The campaign has subsequently been extended into 2027, with Malaysia maintaining the 47-million-visitor objective, the organisers said.

Amman hosts UITP workshop on future of bus transport in MENA

By Ahmad Alkhawaldeh

AMMAN — The International Association of Public Transport (UITP) and the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) brought together transport authorities, operators and industry representatives from across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region on Tuesday and Wednesday for a workshop on the future of bus transport.

The two-day UITP MENA Bus Workshop, held under the theme "Transforming Bus Transport in MENA: Leadership, Innovation and Operations", covered leadership, Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), service quality, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and emerging technologies.

The workshop was opened by Saudi Vice Minister of Transport and Logistic Services Rumaih Al



UITP photo

The International Association of Public Transport and the Greater Amman Municipality on Tuesday and Wednesday organise a workshop on the future of bus transport in the Middle East and North Africa

Rumaih, who is also chairman of the UITP MENA Division and Chairman of the Greater Amman Municipality Committee Ahmad Malkawi.

"The transformation of bus transport does not begin with technology or vehicles alone. It begins with leadership," Rumaih said.

He said that success

should be measured not only by the scale of investment or the number of new vehicles, but by the improvement passengers experience in their daily journeys.

UITP Senior Director of Membership and Global Operations Jaspal Singh said that the association's role was "to help cities learn from one another

and turn ambition into practical progress".

The first day included a leadership dialogue on policy priorities, investment and governance, a hybrid session on BRT operations and integration, and a plenary on ITS, digital transformation and data-driven operations, according to organisers.

Speakers from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Chile and the United Kingdom attended the workshop.

On the second day, delegates rode Amman's BRT Line 99 on an electric bus and visited several stations, on a tour led by GAM Head of Public Transportation Operations Department Mohammad Sryheen and Executive Director of Public Transport and Transport Infrastructure Development Ola Kafawin.

During the tour, a rep-

resentative of Amman Vision noted that the line is 17 kilometres long with 24 stops between its two terminals.

Delegates also visited the Sports City Circle Station, where seven bus lines pass through. The representative described it as a hub linking the BRT with other bus and transport services in the area.

Across the sessions, a consistent message emerged: the next stage of bus development in the region will depend on turning shared experience and innovation into practical improvements in planning, operations and service delivery, UITP said in a statement.

Continued collaboration between cities, authorities, operators and industry will be essential to translate the discussions into measurable benefits for passengers, it added.

German embassy to host first 'Innovation Day' Saturday

AMMAN (JT) — The German embassy on Saturday, marking 36 years of German unification, is scheduled to celebrate its first Innovation Day.

From 10am to 3pm schools and universities are invited to take part, according to an embassy statement.

By creating a dedicated space where young Jordanian makers, visionary researchers and German-Jordanian partners converge, the embassy aims to turn imagination into reality, showcasing the technologies and initiatives that actively shape Jordan's future.

The event mirrors the diversity of Jordan's innovation ecosystem and the depth of German-Jordanian cooperation. Leading organisations such as GIZ, KfW Development Bank and BGR will present pioneering

work in digitalisation, water management and vocational training.

The Future Skills Fund (FSF) will also highlight its efforts to equip young people with skills for a rapidly changing labour market, and the Crown Prince Foundation (CPF) will participate through three of its programmes: Al Hussein Technical University (HTU) through its (9xAI) programme, which engages young talent in developing AI-powered solutions to real-world challenges using an applied innovation approach.

The College of Advanced Vocational Training (CAVT), which provides vocational training aligned with labour-market needs, and the Maker-space programme, CPF's digital fabrication laboratory, featuring young innovators and their hands-on work in tech-

nology and fabrication.

The programme is rounded off with interactive workshops and tech activities designed to inspire the next generation of innovators.

This day is a "milestone" in a partnership spanning over seven decades. From the first water management projects in 1959 to the landmark 684 million-euro development package agreed upon in July 2026 — besides 127 million euros in total to support the National Water Carrier — the bond between Germany and Jordan continues to evolve and strengthen.

In the afternoon, the public is invited to join.

Entry is limited and only possible upon registration via <https://ticketberry.com/events/german-innovation-day>, according to the statement.

Over 50 academics, specialists working to document Jordanian narrative — culture minister

AMMAN (JT) — More than 50 academics and specialists are working to document Jordan's history, heritage, values, customs and traditions as part of a project aimed at preserving the country's narrative and passing it on to future generations, Culture Minister Mustafa Rawashdeh said on Thursday.

Speaking on Al Mamlaka TV, Rawashdeh said the project began about a year ago following the Crown Prince's visit to Tafilah and his directive to document the Jordanian narrative, pass it on to future generations and introduce it to people around the world.

He said the committees include specialists in history, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, Arabic and other fields, covering different periods from prehistoric times to the modern era.

The project goes beyond the history of the establishment of the Jordanian state to include customs, values, traditions, songs, folk tales and other aspects of Jordanian life, Rawashdeh said.

He noted that Jordan was not merely a transit area but a settled home to successive civilisations.

To broaden public participation, the ministry is working



Culture Minister Mustafa Rawashdeh says on Thursday that more than 50 academics and specialists are working to document Jordan's history, heritage, values, customs and traditions

to establish platforms allowing citizens to upload stories, documents and accounts in their possession using mobile phones or other means.

The initiative has also extended to universities, with the ministry holding discussions with students in all 12 governorates. The discussions concluded three days ago with a ceremony in Amman, while similar meetings with civil society organisations are being prepared.

For children and young people, the min-

istry has established a directorate concerned with children and launched programmes using technology and artificial intelligence. It also organises creative camps and discussions at youth centres to make the Jordanian narrative part of the daily lives of younger generations.

In coordination with the Ministry of Education, the ministry is working to activate historical content in school curricula through school broadcasts, theatre, drama and songs, so the narrative is not

confined to textbooks.

The ministry has also produced six films addressing the Jordanian narrative and around 100 murals across the Kingdom documenting the history of places and people. It has also produced sculptures reflecting the identity of places and figures associated with them.

Some of the films have used artificial intelligence technology, while ministry festivals and events also feature themes related to the Jordanian narrative, including the Jordanian Song Festival and the Children's Songs Festival.

To bring cultural activities to remote areas, the ministry is working on a cultural bus or truck expected to be ready within one or two months.

Rawashdeh said the vehicle would include a mobile theatre, virtual reality technology, virtual historical and tourism content, games, books and theatrical performances. It aims to take cultural, museum and theatre activities to different parts of the Kingdom.

New schools could

AT A GLANCE

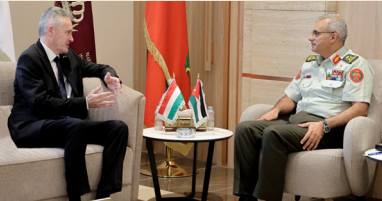
Jordan condemns Houthi drone attack on Saudi electricity station

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday condemned the Houthi militia's targeting of an electricity distribution station in Saudi Arabia's Madinah with a drone, calling the attack a blatant violation of the Kingdom's sovereignty and a threat to its security, stability and territorial integrity. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Fouad Majali voiced Jordan's full solidarity with Saudi Arabia and support for any measures it takes to protect its security and stability, as well as the safety of its citizens and residents. The ministry condemned the attack as a violation of international law and the United Nations Charter.



Army chief, Hungarian ambassador discuss cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Majdi Harasis on Thursday received Hungarian



Ambassador to Jordan P ter Jakab at the General Command headquarters. Harasis and the Hungarian ambassador discussed ways to bolster bilateral relations and cooperation in various fields, as well as the latest regional and international developments serving the interests of both friendly nations, according to a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement. Harasis highlighted the importance of strengthening military ties, particularly in exchanging expertise and enhancing skills through joint training exercises and courses. For his part, Jakab expressed appreciation for Jordan's key role, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah, in promoting regional peace and stability, and praised the JAF's humanitarian efforts.

Over 152,000 non-Jordanian workers obtain work permits during legalisation period — ministry

AMMAN (JT) — More than 152,000 non-Jordanian workers obtained work permits during a government period for legalising and regularising their status, which ran from June until September 30, the Ministry of Labour said on Thursday. Ministry spokesperson Mohammad Zeyoud said that more than 152,000 non-Jordanian workers obtained work permits during the period, which was introduced under a Cabinet decision. He added that more than 1,192 workers obtained work permits for the first time during the period, Al Mamlaka TV reported. Zeyoud said preliminary figures showed an increase in the number of issued and valid work permits, with the number of valid permits exceeding 352,000 after four months of the legalisation and regularisation period. He stressed that the figures are preliminary, adding that the ministry will announce the final figures in due course.



2026 census to support accurate planning, assess citizen needs — Momani

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Government Communication Mohammad Momani on Thursday stressed that the 2026 Population and Housing Census will enhance the Kingdom's positive image and directly assist relevant authorities in assessing citizen needs and establishing accurate planning across all sectors.

Momani, who is also the Government spokesperson, said that the census is an

essential statistical exercise and a standard global practice used by nations to strengthen future planning tools, adding that Jordan has consistently led efforts to elevate government planning standards and outcomes, according to Momani's post on X.

Momani stressed that data confidentiality remains strictly protected and personal privacy fully safeguarded, noting that necessary verification mechanisms

are in place to confirm field researcher identities and address public inquiries.

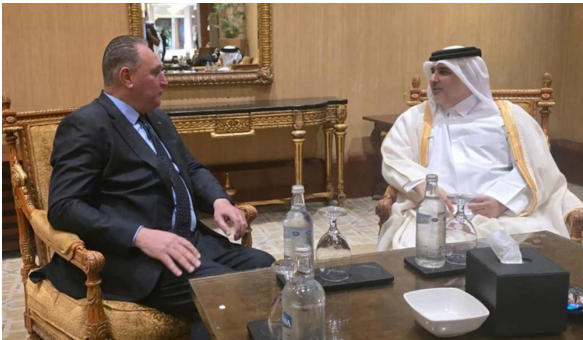
Field operations for the nationwide census commenced on Thursday and will continue for one month, involving approximately 12,000 field researchers, 60 per cent of whom are women, to cover an estimated 12 million residents, 2.5 million households, and over 1 million buildings across the Kingdom.



Minister of Government Communication Mohammad Momani

Environment minister, Qatari, Saudi counterparts discuss enhancing environmental, climate cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Environment Ayman Sulaiman on Thursday met with Qatari Minister of Environment and Climate Change Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Bin Turki Al Subaie to discuss ways to bolster environmental and climate cooperation and exchange expertise on issues of mutual concern.



Minister of Environment Ayman Sulaiman on Thursday meets with Qatari Minister of Environment and Climate Change Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Bin Turki Al Subaie

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs meeting at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

The two sides explored opportunities to enhance joint action in climate adaptation, biodiversity protection, sustainable natural resource management, environmental monitoring and sustainability.

They also discussed strengthening Arab coordination on environmental and climate affairs and unifying efforts in international forums to support Arab positions and help mobilise the necessary funding and resources for relevant programmes and projects.

The two ministers agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding in the environmental and climate fields to enhance institutional cooperation and exchange expertise.

Both officials reaffirmed the importance of maintaining communication between relevant authorities in both countries and expanding joint action to address environmental and climate challenges facing the region.

Also on Thursday, Suleiman met with Saudi Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture Abdulrahman Bin Abdulmohsen Al Fadley to discuss ways to strengthen environmental and climate cooperation between Jordan and Saudi Arabia and exchange expertise on issues of mutual interest.

During the meeting, the two ministers stressed the importance of strengthening coordination to address environmental and climate challenges, particularly climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation and sustainable

management of natural resources.

They also discussed opportunities to exchange expertise and best practices in environmental protection and sustainability.

The talks highlighted the importance of enhancing Arab coordination on environmental and climate issues and unifying efforts at international forums to support Arab positions, mobilise funding and resources for environmental and climate programmes, and strengthen countries' capacity to adapt to climate change.

The two sides also reviewed several issues of mutual interest and stressed the importance of continued cooperation between relevant authorities to support sustainable development and address environmental and climate challenges facing the region.

Municipal elections to provide new test for political parties — IEC

AMMAN (JT) — The number of political parties or their membership should not be the main measure of the development of party life, Independent Election Commission (IEC) Board of Commissioners Chairman Musa Maaytah said on Thursday.

The more important measure is whether a party has influence among Jordanians and can attract supporters and activists, Maaytah said, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

He said party life has developed over the past four years, noting that political parties had completed the process of regularising their status and that new parties were registered in 2023.

Following the 2026 parliamentary elections, several parties reviewed their internal affairs, positions and bylaws and began a new phase of political activity.

Maaytah said citizens have become more convinced that political and parliamentary work should be conducted through political parties and organised collective action.

He noted that earlier concerns about the sustainability of parties and joining them due to previous experiences have subsided.



Independent Election Commission (IEC) Board of Commissioners Chairman Musa Maaytah says on Thursday that the number of political parties or their membership should not be the main measure of the development of party life

Regarding mergers between parties with similar political orientations and approaches, Maaytah described them as "positive" and said further mergers could take place in the future.

He said several parties have merged, particularly those with similar orientations.

Maaytah stressed the need for clear party identities, with each party having a distinct "political colour and clear identity from left to right".

This could result in fewer parties with greater influence, he said.

At the same time, Maaytah said the political identity and orientation of some parties remain unclear.

On the IEC's role in monitoring party activity outside election periods, Maaytah said the commission does not assess the effectiveness of individual parties.

Specialised institutions and citizens are responsible for assessing party effectiveness, he said, adding that elections remain the main test of a party's influence.

Maaytah said the upcoming municipal

elections and Greater Amman Municipality elections will be important for political parties, providing an opportunity to compete and present their programmes across the Kingdom.

Municipal elections will be held in 104 municipalities, providing parties with an opportunity to engage with citizens and present their programmes.

Maaytah said the IEC is responsible for building the capacity of political parties, noting that several programmes had been implemented over the past two years.

The commission will continue supporting parties, he said, stressing that the final assessment of a party's effectiveness rests with citizens.

Regarding oversight of political parties, Maaytah said the IEC applies the Political Parties Law, while parties' bylaws regulate their internal affairs.

He said instructions have been issued on governance within political parties, adding that parties have introduced mechanisms to prevent one person from dominating a party.

Party leadership should be elected or selected by members, with

internal oversight bodies monitoring the work of party institutions, he said.

Maaytah said the issue still requires further development, adding that the IEC monitors parties' compliance with the law.

He noted that the law requires political parties to hold a general assembly or party conference every four years, adding that most parties have held their conferences.

The IEC enforces the law against parties that fail to hold their conferences, Maaytah said, adding that cases involving parties unable to hold their conferences can be referred to the judiciary.

A party that violates the law cannot continue to operate, he said.

Maaytah added that parties must have bylaws that ensure internal democracy and enable members to monitor and hold their leaders accountable.

He said building a party-based political system requires time to engage with citizens and develop experience.

Maaytah said party activity has changed and that the current situation differs from that of two years ago, expecting political parties to continue developing.



Members of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) walk along a main road in Mekelle

Explosion at Ethiopian army HQ in capital

ADDIS ABABA (AFP) — An explosion rocked Ethiopian army's headquarters overnight in the capital, Addis Ababa, sources told AFP on Thursday, while pro-government forces said they had pushed back rebel troops in the north.

Heavy fighting broke out on September 23 between Ethiopian forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), raising fears of a return to the devastating 2020-2022 civil war that killed an estimated 600,000 people.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed is due to be sworn in for a new term on Monday after winning elections in June, but faces conflict on multiple fronts as several armed groups have formed an alliance against him.

The explosion at the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) headquarters in the Tor Hayloch area of Addis Ababa happened between midnight and 1:00am local

time, diplomatic and security sources said.

They could not say the nature of the blast or who was responsible, nor any casualty figures. If confirmed as a rebel attack, it would mark the first time the city has been targeted in recent years.

"The explosion took place at the HQ and was powerful. It shook the surrounding area and triggered significant panic among people in the vicinity," a worker at a nearby bar told AFP, relaying information from colleagues working at the time.

"There were a few minutes of disturbing sounds followed by an explosion," a local resident added.

Neither the prime minister's office nor the army spokesperson responded to requests for comment.

On Wednesday, the National Intelligence and Security Services ordered a ban on all drone flights

around the capital.

Conflict monitor ACLED said drones suspected to be linked to the anti-government alliance targeted army and civilian airports in Oromia and Amhara states on Sunday.

Clashes ongoing

Hundreds have been killed and wounded since heavy fighting resumed in northern Ethiopia last week, and clashes were ongoing along several fronts.

The TPLF launched attacks into neighbouring Afar and Amhara states, fighting alongside local militias, but there were signs that it was being pushed back on Thursday.

A humanitarian source told AFP the TPLF had been dislodged from the town of Erebt in Afar, which it seized earlier this week, and was now fighting near the mountainous border between Afar and Tigray.

Afghanistan says deadly Pakistani strikes hit Helmand

KABUL (AFP) — The Pakistani military launched rare deadly strikes on Afghanistan's Helmand province on Thursday, the Taliban government and residents told AFP.

Afghanistan and Pakistan went to war earlier this year and, with no permanent resolution to security issues reached, there have been sporadic attacks since a March truce.

The latest strikes hit Helmand as well as Kunar, which borders Pakistan, killing 10 civilians, according to the Taliban government's deputy spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat.

Islamabad confirmed "planned and calibrated" strikes in Afghanistan, without detailing locations, which it said targeted militants.

Two Helmand residents told AFP that three airstrikes hit their village.

Pakistan's information ministry said two locations in Afghanistan were hit "based on credible intelligence, selective targeting of terrorist camps and hideouts".

Alongside neighbouring Kandahar province, which was hit by an air strike last week, Helmand in southern Afghanistan holds great importance for the Taliban movement.

Speaking by phone from Helmand's Safar village, 50-year-old resident Abdul Wahid said



An Afghan man salvages from the rubble of houses destroyed by a Pakistan air strike in the Shultan district of Afghanistan's Kunar province on Thursday

the strikes killed four people and wounded seven.

Another villager, Qudrat Ullah, said he was home when his neighbours' house was hit.

"The whole area is destroyed," the 32-year-old said, adding that residents were being kept away from the strike sites.

"There were civilians, children, women; they have killed them. There is no military or anything else," he told AFP by phone.

Pakistan's information ministry reported an initial toll of 22 militants killed, and weapons and ammunition destroyed.

Islamabad accuses Afghanistan of harbouring militants behind frequent bomb and gun attacks in Pakistan, which have killed both civilians and security personnel.

The Taliban government denies this and criticises Pakistan for violating Afghanistan's sovereignty and killing civilians.

In mountainous Kunar province, an AFP journalist saw the remains of stone houses in the remote Chugam Valley.

Mohammad Hashim, a farmer, said he rushed to rescue residents after the pre-dawn attack.

"There was a woman, she was screaming for help to get her out of the rubble. She was having trouble breathing and told us that there are more people over there," the 30-year-old told AFP.

"We went there to dig, and there was a man with four children who were killed," he added.

The latest strikes follow bombardment last week on multiple Afghan provinces, which the Taliban government said killed civilians. Pakistan said it targeted militants.

More than 500 civilians have been killed in violence between the two countries since October, according to figures from the United Nations mission in Afghanistan.

Japan tightens rules for foreigners wanting permanent residency

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan toughened on Thursday requirements for foreigners wanting to obtain permanent residency, as part of Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's push to tighten immigration controls.

Under new rules that will come into effect in stages, foreign residents wishing to stay in Japan permanently will have to prove their annual income is above average and they can carry casual conversations in Japanese.

Application fees will also rise 20-fold from Thursday and at one immigration office in central Tokyo visited by AFP this week hundreds of people queued, hoping to wrap up procedures before the price spike.

"I understand that over-accepting foreigners... might dilute Japan's unique culture. But at the same time, given its low birth rate and aging population, Japan has to accept foreigners," said American-born university student Yujie Chono, who was among those waiting.

The 22-year-old told AFP, in fluent Japanese, that he had been waiting for five hours to file his paperwork.

Previous guidelines did not lay out specific thresholds for income,



Mongolia's Prime Minister Nyam-Osoryn Uchral shakes hands with Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi (right) during a meeting in Tokyo on Tuesday

pension or language skills.

Even though Japan has a rapidly ageing population and is suffering labour shortages in many sectors, opposition to immigration is growing, prompting a push by Takaichi for tighter regulations on foreign nationals.

"As the number of foreign residents in Japan increases, the government is facing the fact that some citizens feel anxiety and a sense of unfairness," Takaichi said in an extended post on X on Sunday, adding that she was pushing for "orderly coexistence" with foreign nationals.

Programmes to attract international workers have fuelled public

worry.

Anti-immigration sentiment has spread across social media and false claims have circulated widely, including that a significant portion of welfare payments in Japan go to foreigners and that they are making Japanese streets less safe.

Experts and many business leaders warn however that Japan must welcome more foreign workers to sustain itself.

Japan needs to open its doors to more foreigners, the Nikkei business daily said in a recent editorial.

"Japan should stop viewing foreigners merely as a temporary labour force and instead

promote their long-term settlement by expanding Japanese-language education and improving their treatment," it said.

Anti-immigration sentiment

Foreigners were a major issue in last year's upper house election which saw the sharp rise of the "Japanese-first" Sanseito party, which describes immigration as a "silent invasion".

The new rules for permanent residency come after the ruling Liberal Democratic Party last year pushed to tighten regulations for business manager visas, meaning entrepreneurs will be forced to leave Japan if

they don't meet the new conditions.

Some foreign residents seek permanent residency to secure long-term stability, employment freedom and to earn trust within Japanese society. Those without permanent residency often have a difficult time seeking mortgages, for example.

Thursday's changes may prevent some people from applying for permanent residency but should not immediately push anyone out of the country.

Under the regulations, the application fee for permanent residency will soar to 200,000 yen (\$1,275) from the current 10,000 yen.

Candidates must also show "understanding" of social rules and demonstrate expected pension benefits equivalent to someone who has paid pension insurance for 30 years.

Having lived in Japan for a decade, permanent residency applicant Chono said he saw both sides of the debate but that the country needed young people "to support its future".

"In recent years, I believe there had been a strong push to promote cultural diversity. The momentum has stalled, perhaps, and maybe it may never fully return," he said.



Indians have hailed captain Smit Machchhar as a hero for his efforts to avert disaster in the flydubai drama

How airlines try to make sure pilots are safe to fly

PARIS, France (AFP) — The apparent attack by the co-pilot on a flight to Israel, in which he stabbed his captain and tried to crash the plane, is a reminder that the cockpit is an extremely sensitive place in terms of aviation safety.

What can be done to stop an airline pilot from deliberately crashing a plane?

What happened?

As the flydubai Boeing 737 flew over northwestern Saudi Arabia en route from Dubai to Tel Aviv, the co-pilot suddenly attacked his captain, according to Israeli officials.

Some reports have suggested the plane's "crash axe" could have been used. This is a small axe kept in every plane cockpit for emergency situations.

Whatever the weapon and method used, the captain and passengers were able to subdue the attacker and the plane made an emergency landing at the Saudi airport of Tabuk.

The captain, Indian national Smit Machchhar, was taken to hospital and is now out of danger.

The UAE has launched an investigation into a possible "terrorist" link, while Netanyahu said "another 9/11-style crash" had been prevented.

Do pilots have to pass airport security?

The security checks designed to stop passengers bringing anything on board that could threaten flight safety also apply to the crew, and pilots cannot get around them.

Depending on the size of the departure airport, they either go through the same security checkpoints as passengers, or through dedicated lanes.

This step is meant to detect any anomaly, such as a pilot who appears unusually nervous or intoxicated.

Carry-on luggage destined for the aircraft cabin is also X-rayed, and pilots pass through metal detectors.

Israel has been a high-risk destination since a spate of hijackings and attacks in the 1970s, which has led to heightened vigilance, something an airport as big and high-profile as Dubai is well used to.

How secure is the cockpit?

Access to the cockpit was tightened after the September 11 atrocities in the United States, where attackers were able to gain access and crash the planes.

If warned of a threat, pilots can now lock the door, which is always reinforced.

This time, however, the threat came from inside the cockpit itself, an extremely rare occurrence.

Early accounts suggest the captain managed to maintain control of access to the cockpit and alert his colleagues.

He was hailed as a "hero" by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

How do airlines ensure their pilots are not dangerous?

This is the most delicate issue, because it involves detecting a threat that may show no obvious warning signs.

The most emblematic case is the crash of a Germanwings plane in the French Alps in 2015, deliberately caused by a pilot.

The investigation revealed that the pilot, a 27-year-old German, suffered from depression and suicidal tendencies that his employer was not aware of.

The crash killed 150 people and raised awareness among airlines worldwide about the need for close monitoring of the mental health of crew members.

However, they communicate little about what they do on this front, for various reasons, including confidentiality.

In the flydubai case, many questions remain unanswered at this stage.

UN rights chief urges Tennessee not to repeat execution attempt

GENEVA (AFP) — UN rights chief Volker Turk on Thursday urged the US state of Tennessee not to make a new attempt to execute Christa Pike after she survived two lethal injection doses.

Convicted murder Pike, 50, was being treated in hospital, her

lawyers said, following Tennessee's second failed execution in months.

"The case of Christa Pike lays bare multiple reasons why the death penalty should be abolished," the UN rights office said on X.

"The prolonged suffering — physical and men-

tal — arising from multiple failed execution attempts is abhorrent, and cruel. And there are key fair trial questions still unresolved."

On Wednesday, the US Supreme Court cleared the way for Pike to become the first woman to be executed in Tennessee in 200 years — but

the attempt failed.

Turk "calls on the state authorities not to pursue any further attempt to execute Pike," the UN rights office said.

"We are also troubled by the increase in the number of executions in the United States," it added.

"The death penalty

has no place in any society."

The failed attempt to execute Pike prompted Tennessee authorities to halt capital punishment for the rest of the year.

Pike was 18 when she and her boyfriend beat and killed Colleen Slemmer, 19, at a job training camp for young people.

Germany’s Merz hails NATO unity on Russia, rejects AfD claims

MÜNSTER, Germany (AFP) — German Chancellor Friedrich Merz on Thursday called for unity in backing Ukraine against Russia — within NATO, Europe and his own country where the far-right and Moscow-friendly AfD is on the rise.

“The security of Europe ... is at stake in Ukraine,” Merz said. “If we fail to halt Moscow, the Russian war machine will sooner or later turn against us, against NATO itself.”

Merz was speaking at a ceremony to award Germany’s Westphalian Peace Prize to NATO and acknowledged that the fact it “is going to a military alliance has surprised some people”.

But he argued that the transatlantic alliance has prevented military conflict with Russia and as such “serves the cause of peace” which was under threat from “Russia’s violent, expansionist revisionism”.

Merz said “unity and strength remain prerequisites for successful negotiations with Moscow. And this can only encourage us to keep the United



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz (left) and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte shake hands on stage during the 2026 Westphalian Peace Prize ceremony, on Thursday at the historic town hall of Muenster, western Germany

States of America by our side in our policy regarding Ukraine”.

Merz said a united front was also needed in Germany, where the Alternative for Germany (AfD) Party has made strong gains in recent

state elections and leads nationwide polls.

“We in Germany, too, will not allow ourselves to be divided,” Merz said. “Not by hybrid attacks, not by social media agitation driven by Moscow-controlled bots, and ... not

by the slogans of the AfD and its Russian backers.”

The AfD wants Berlin to halt military and financial support for Ukraine and lift sanctions against Russia while restoring dialogue.

Merz stressed that “we

want stable, predictable relations with Russia at an appropriate time”.

But he also argued that for now, as the Ukraine war nears its fifth winter, Western allies must keep backing Kyiv militarily.

Merz warned that if the Ukraine war were to end with a peace “dictated” by Russia, “that would bring the threat of mass migration toward the West... Europe would become an insecure continent”.

He also rejected charges “that German aid to Ukraine comes at the expense of prosperity in our own country”.

“Our support for Ukraine is not an end in itself. We provide it, above all, to protect the freedom and security of the people in our country,” Merz said. “Freedom and security are prerequisites for our prosperity.”

Accepting the prize on behalf of NATO, the organisation’s Secretary-General Mark Rutte echoed Merz’s message urging the alliance’s members to stay at Kyiv’s side.

“Keep calm, carry on and support Ukraine,” Rutte said.



Medical teams at the Jordanian field hospital in Nablus on Thursday perform several specialised surgical procedures for patients in Nablus Governorate

Jordanian field hospital in Nablus performs specialised surgeries

AMMAN (JT) — Medical teams at the Jordanian field hospital in Nablus on Thursday performed several specialised surgical procedures for patients as part of the hospital’s medical and therapeutic services for residents of Nablus Governorate.

The procedures included orthopaedic and ear, nose and throat surgeries, as well as several minor operations, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

The procedures were

performed under the supervision of specialist medical teams and in accordance with approved medical standards.

The surgeries are part of the hospital’s ongoing efforts to provide patients with specialised medical care and essential healthcare services.

The Jordanian field hospital in Nablus was established in late November 2023.

Jordan also operates two military field hos-

pitals in Gaza. The first, established in 2009 following the 2008 war, is located in northern Gaza, while the second, established in November 2023, is located in Khan Younis in southern Gaza.

Jordan’s humanitarian efforts also include a land bridge for delivering aid, the Restoring Hope Initiative, which provides prosthetic limbs for amputees, and the evacuation of critical cases to hospitals in Jordan.

UAE probes possible ‘terror’ incident on flight to Israel

Continued from page 1

India’s embassy in Saudi Arabia said Machchhar was being treated at a hospital in the country and India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi described him as a “HERO” in a social media post on Thursday.

“His valour helped save hundreds of lives,” Modi said.

‘Out of control’

AFPTV images showed another flydubai plane carrying the passengers touch down at Tel Aviv

airport, hours after their initial flight was diverted to Saudi Arabia’s Tabuk.

Footage shared by Netanyahu’s office showed the premier meeting passengers after their arrival in Tel Aviv and embracing a man in a bloodied shirt.

Passenger Miryam Shira Ohayon described the plane as being “pretty much out of control” as the incident unfolded over Jordan.

“The co-pilot tried to murder the pilot and basically carry out a suicide attack on the

plane,” she told reporters by speakerphone held up by her mother at Ben Gurion Airport.

“It was really on the way to crashing, and it was simply the resourcefulness of many people who took control of the co-pilot and neutralised him,” she said.

The airline said it was another “on-duty flydubai crew travelling on the flight who diverted and landed the aircraft safely” and that it was suspending flights to Israel while an investigation took place.

Population, housing census begins nationwide

Continued from page 1

Field researchers will carry official identification cards containing QR codes that allow households to verify their credentials through the Sanad

application.

Freihat urged citizens and residents to cooperate with census teams and provide accurate information, noting that reliable data is essential for future planning in areas including educa-

tion, healthcare, transport and infrastructure.

The census uses an integrated digital system incorporating tablet computers, electronic forms, government database links, geographic information systems

and artificial intelligence tools. A toll-free call centre is also available at 117110.

According to the DoS, the census questionnaire focuses on demographic, social, educational, employment and

housing characteristics and does not cover economic or living conditions. The questions follow United Nations guidelines for population and housing censuses for the 2025–2030 period.

Iraqi PM sets June 30 deadline for pro-Iran factions to disarm

Continued from page 1

“Based on this, the Islamic Resistance declares that it is not bound by any timetable or agreement that any governmental or political party has spoken of or may speak of.”

Factions have put forward conditions that include not only the withdrawal of foreign troops but also an end to American political and economic interference.

Kataeb Hizbollah has said the with-

drawal of “the occupation forces... is a start towards achieving full sovereignty”.

But the group also threatened Zaidi’s government.

“A government that doesn’t work for the good of its people will

be brought down by all possible means,” it said.

The pro-Iran groups had long demanded the withdrawal of US troops, targeting them with drones and missiles, and triggering US retaliatory strikes that killed several faction

commanders over the years.

During the Middle East war that began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran, Tehran and allied factions intensified their attacks in Iraq, targeting US-led troops in the Kurdistan region.

Algeria adopts law imposing death penalty on forest arsonists

Continued from page 1

“The adoption of the death penalty for these acts is the appropriate legal response to curb these crimes,” Justice Minister Lotfi Boudjemaa told parliament after the vote.

Despite the moratorium, some death sentences have been handed out, including in terror-related cases, though no executions have been carried out so far.

Tebboune had said that those sentenced to

death would be executed once their appeals were exhausted.

Under the new law, anyone convicted of deliberately setting fire to “forests, woods or planted or unplanted fields” could face execution.

The same penalty could apply to anyone who “kidnaps a child by any means, tortures them, sexually assaults them and/or mutilates them”.

Amnesty International last month urged Algeria not to adopt the law and

to refrain from resuming executions.

The rights group described the move as “a deeply retrograde response”, adding that authorities should instead “focus on protecting lives, strengthening prevention and emergency response” in the face of reoccurring wildfires.

The justice minister said the Algerian judicial system still provided safeguards for those facing the death penalty, including avenues for appeal

or seeking a presidential pardon.

Yet, Boudjemaa told parliament the tougher penalties were justified because arson had reached “the level of organised crime”, adding that investigations had uncovered links to “foreign parties”.

“Targeting the country’s environmental and economic assets by deliberately setting fires, at times at the instigation of foreign actors, constitutes a clear form of treason and

an attack on the integrity of the national territory,” the minister said.

The law is now set to be reviewed by the Senate before being officially ratified by Tebboune.

Forest fires regularly erupt in northern Algeria during the summer, with climate change intensifying their impact due to increasingly frequent droughts and intense heat. Tebboune has nonetheless alleged “something criminal” as a cause of the latest summer blazes.

Palestinian man killed in West Bank settler attack

Continued from page 1

Yasuf Mayor Jumaa Abdel Fattah confirmed to AFP that dozens of settlers armed with sticks and firearms had attacked the village, which is located between four Israeli settlements, around 1 pm (1100 GMT).

“Yassin was at his doorstep when the settlers attacked the village homes. He went out to defend his house,” Abdel Fattah said, add-

ing that Yassin’s nephew was also injured in the attack.

Abdel Fattah added that the settlers had come from the nearby settlement outpost of Havat Anton, which was established in July, causing previous tensions with Palestinian residents.

More than 500,000 Israelis live in the West Bank in settlements illegal under international law, a minority of whom engage in violence to-

wards Palestinians.

Violence has increased in the Palestinian territory since the start of the Gaza war in October 2023, with Israeli soldiers or settlers killing at least 1,112 Palestinians in that period, per an AFP tally based on data from the Palestinian health ministry.

Over that same period, at least 37 Palestinians were killed by settlers specifically, according to the UN.

European boycott of Israeli settlement goods gains momentum

Continued from page 1

The Netherlands is the fourth European Union member state to adopt such measures, following Spain, Ireland and Belgium.

The Dutch decision came shortly before an announcement by 11 other countries, including Britain and France that they also planned to ban goods from Israeli settlements.

In a joint statement, the countries cited “unprecedented levels of settler violence and settlement expansion”, including Israel’s decision to publish tenders for the E1 settlement project, which would connect Jerusalem with the Ma’ale Adumim settlement. The project is widely viewed by its critics as a potential threat to the territorial contiguity of a fu-

ture Palestinian state.

The statement said Israeli government actions were undermining the possibility of implementing a two-state solution. The signatories also said they opposed any measure that would amount to the de facto annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank.

Britain separately announced that it would expand sanctions against individuals and organisations involved in the expansion or financing of Israeli settlements.

The economic impact of the measures remains difficult to assess. The European Union is Israel’s largest trading partner, with bilateral trade exceeding 42 billion euros (\$48 billion) in 2024. However, the value of goods directly linked to Israeli

settlements is not publicly known.

The measures have also been accompanied by growing cultural and sporting opposition.

Ireland’s UEFA Nations League match against Israel on September 27 was preceded by controversy and delays after goalkeeper Gavin Bazunu withdrew from the squad, citing moral concerns related to the war in Gaza.

During the match, which was played in a sparsely attended stadium, Irish players wore black armbands in recognition of lives lost in the conflict. They also observed a moment of silence during Israel’s national anthem and did not participate in the traditional pre-match handshakes and pennant exchanges.

Ireland’s public broad-

caster announced on September 17 that it would neither participate in nor broadcast the 2027 Eurovision Song Contest, citing the continuing loss of life in Gaza and Israel’s participation in the competition.

The developments are part of a broader wave of economic, cultural and sporting measures across Europe that reflect growing frustration over Israel’s conduct of the war in Gaza and its policies in the occupied West Bank.

Israel Responds

Israeli officials have sought to respond individually to countries imposing restrictions, in an effort to deter other governments from adopting similar measures.

Israeli foreign minister Gideon Sa’ar strongly

criticised The Netherlands’ decision, describing it as antisemitic, and ordered Dutch representatives to be removed from the International Gaza Support Centre in Kiryat Gat.

Sa’ar announced that Israel would revoke the diplomatic credentials granted to Dutch representatives based in Ramallah.

Israel also announced measures against Britain. In addition to removing British representatives from the International Gaza Support Centre, Sa’ar ordered the closure of the British Consulate in East Jerusalem, ended Britain’s involvement in training Palestinian Authority forces and barred 12 British citizens from entering Israel.

“Our message is clear,”

Sa’ar said. “Anyone who acts against Israel will have no foothold in the region.”

A diplomat from a country that had previously imposed sanctions on Israel said reversing such measures would be difficult.

“It wasn’t easy to decide to impose the current sanctions, but it also wouldn’t be easy to remove them,” the diplomat said. “It’s hard to say at the minute what might enable a return of settlement products to the shelves in the future.”

“The goal is to push Israeli public opinion and influence the government to change its policies,” the diplomat added.

British Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband used a speech at the Labour Party conference on Sept.

28 to outline what he described as a major shift in British foreign policy towards Israel and the Palestinians.

“I want to say to the millions of people in this country, and indeed elsewhere, who have been moved and outraged by the plight of the Palestinian people: We hear you. You were right,” Miliband said.

He added, “And when it comes to the attempt to destroy the two-state solution, this party, this movement, this government, says we will not let you succeed.”

Miliband, whose parents were Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, has frequently referred to his family’s history in discussing his political views on the Middle East.

“We call out ethnic

cleansing by the settler terrorists in the West Bank. We call out the evidence of war crimes in Gaza. We call out Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestine,” he said.

“And we match words with actions. We will ban the import of goods from illegal settlements. We will disrupt the supply lines of British finance, British construction and British services for illegal settlements.”

The expanding restrictions mark a significant change in the European response to Israeli settlement activity. Whether the measures will produce changes in Israeli policy, however, remains uncertain, particularly given the broader economic relationship between Israel and Europe.

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Croatians fear lasting damage from illegal waste

By Lajla Veselica
Agence France-Presse

GOSPIC, Croatia — As Croatia prepares to clear tens of thousands of tonnes of hazardous waste from its idyllic Lika region, locals fear years of illegal dumping may have caused lasting damage to its pristine surrounds.

In a home framed by flowers and fruit trees, Zeljka Sikic lives just a short walk from the dumpsite in Gospic — which she says locals have warned about for years.

“Given the nature of the waste, the cleanup needs to begin urgently. There is no point in waiting,” Sikic, a 50-year-old teacher, told AFP.

As early as 2021, she said townspeople noticed suspicious trucks moving around the town in the mountainous region — dubbed the “Lungs of Croatia” for its lush landscape.

Although the illegal dumping was publicly confirmed early last year, it took until September for the government to release a plan to clean up the waste.

“Not a single kilogramme of waste has been removed so far,” Vjekoslav Basic, from the civic initiative called Gospic is our Home, told AFP.

“It continues to pose a threat to the environment and human health,” he said.

In August, an expert report confirmed that “soil contamination had occurred” at the site in Gospic and impacted the surrounding area, posing a “significant risk” to people and the environment.

It came after prosecutors announced an investigation last year into 10 people suspected of dumping waste from Italy, Slovenia and other parts of the country at sites in Croatia, including in Gospic.

But when the scale of the waste and potential contamination became clear, frustration grew over authorities’ response, triggering widespread protests and a political backlash.

“The government is taking the issue very seriously and is not underestimating the problem in any way,” Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic said in August, accusing the opposition of “whipping up hysteria” over the issue.

“There is a problem, but that is why a criminal investigation is being conducted ... and those responsible will be found guilty and held accountable.”

At the site in Gospic, about 200 kilometres south of Zagreb, there are around 44,000 tonnes of waste, including medical and other hazardous waste, according to official estimates.

Some of it is exposed, but most of the waste is buried nearly three metres underground, making cleanup efforts particularly complicated.

Since the criminal investigation became public in February 2025, locals say authorities have continued to withhold information about the waste’s future “in the interest of the investigation”.

They also complain that no safety measures were taken to protect citizens, despite analysis finding the waste could not be treated as non-hazardous as early as 2024.

Last week, the government presented a clean-up plan that could take over a year, with an estimated cost of 55 million euros (\$62 million).

But authorities have yet to decide whether the buried waste will be excavated and processed on site or sent outside Croatia for processing and disposal.

Basic, who was part of the group that led protests that drew tens of thousands to the capital in September, said the time for firm action was now.

“We can no longer accept vague answers,” he said.

The dumpsite is part of a global and lucrative trade in illicit waste that the European Commission’s Anti-Fraud Office estimates could be worth 9.5 billion euros in Europe alone every year.

Much of the waste can contain material that is expensive to dispose of safely, including substances known as forever chemicals — because their makeup means they never break down.

“This is not a Croatian problem. Croatia is facing the challenge now, and Croatian people are at risk of being affected,” director of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Adria, Loris Palentini, said.

“But all the other governments along the way should act because they are still the ones that allowed this,” he said.

“It’s a cross-border issue.”

But illegal dumping in Croatia’s Lika region poses a particular risk, with its porous Karst landscape fuelling fears that any leaching chemicals could easily enter groundwater and be carried across a wider region.

Lika’s drinking water also supplies some towns and islands on the northern Adriatic coast.

So far, PFAS, among toxic substances known as “forever chemicals”, has been detected in waste and groundwater near the site, but not in the town’s drinking-water supply.

“Once the damage is done, you never go back. And this is the scariest part of PFAS,” Palentini stressed.

For Sikic, the need to clean up the waste quickly is clear, regardless of difficulty or cost.

“Human life and health are priceless,” she said.

Jordan at threshold of new growth era



ECONOMIC REVIEW

Yusuf Mansur

The latest estimates released by Jordan’s Department of Statistics on September 30, 2026, show that real GDP grew by 3 per cent in the second quarter of this year — a rate I had previously anticipated — compared with around 2.8 in the same quarter of 2025 and 2.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2026. The Jordanian economy has thus reached the 3 per cent threshold, following a gradual improvement in growth over recent years. The significance of this figure lies not simply in reaching 3 per cent, but in the direction of travel. What, then, is driving growth today? Most encouragingly, a significant part of the improvement is coming from the productive economy. Recent data point to strong performance in manufacturing and several related productive and service activities. This matters because growth driven by industry, investment and exports is fundamentally different in both character and impact from growth that relies primarily on consumption or short-term activity. Manufacturing does not grow in isolation. Its expansion stimulates transportation, trade and services, while creating greater opportunities for exports and employment. The larger the contribution of high-productivity, high-value-added sectors, the greater the economy’s ability to sustain growth rather than merely experience temporary upswings.

We will not move quickly from 3 per cent growth to 4 per cent, 5 per cent, or even 8 per cent. Sustaining significantly higher growth requires a gradual restructuring of the Jordanian economy, not a single policy decision or a short-term stimulus package. Under normal circumstances, an economy cannot double its growth rate overnight. Higher sustainable growth requires expanding more productive and higher-value-added sectors, increasing investment, deepening the industrial and export base, accelerating the adoption of technology, improving water, energy and transport infrastructure, and better aligning human capital with the needs of a changing economy. These are structural transformations and they require time, investment, capital accumulation and productivity gains.

This is precisely why the pipeline of upcoming projects is so important when assessing Jordan’s future growth prospects. The second Executive Programme of the Economic Modernisation Vision for 2026–2029 includes 182 initiatives across 25 sectors, to be implemented through 392 projects. It also includes major investment projects and public-private partnerships, while the government expects investment in partnership with the private sector to approach JD10 billion over the programme period. Some of these projects are already being tendered or implemented in energy, water, transport and infrastructure. The focus on projects matters greatly. Policies and legislation can improve the economic environment, but projects are what translate policy direction into actual investment and new productive capacity. Nor does a major project deliver its full economic impact all at once. Its effect begins during implementation through spending, employment, construction, transportation and demand for services. The impact becomes deeper once the project is operational, adding new productive capacity, reducing some of the costs facing the economy and creating opportunities for further investment.

A significant part of the economic impact of projects currently under preparation or implementation has therefore yet to appear fully in GDP figures. This makes the current growth performance even more encouraging: Jordan has reached the 3 per cent threshold while a new cycle of investment and major projects is still in its early stages.

There is a third factor that should never be underestimated: Confidence and expectations. An investor deciding whether to build a factory, a company considering expansion, or a household deciding whether to purchase a home or

a durable good all make decisions today partly on the basis of what they expect tomorrow to bring. This is why economics has long attached considerable importance to confidence and expectations in explaining investment, consumption and overall economic activity. In this context, an April 2026 public opinion survey by the University of Jordan’s Centre for Strategic Studies, conducted a year and a half after the formation of the government, provides a useful indication of public sentiment. It found that 54 per cent of respondents in the national sample believed that things in Jordan were moving in a positive direction. In addition, 62 per cent believed that the government had been capable of carrying out the responsibilities of the period, while 64 per cent said the same of the prime minister.

vestment, implementation, and improving economic indicators, it matters because it influences the willingness of companies and investors to expand and commit capital.

It would therefore be wrong to argue that rising confidence alone has caused stronger growth; the economic relationship is far more complex. But better expectations do matter. They can encourage investors to act rather than wait and give businesses greater confidence to expand. When this is accompanied by project implementation and rising productivity, it adds further momentum to the growth process.

Nor should our objective simply be to move the headline growth rate from 3 per cent to 4 per cent or 5 per cent. What matters more is that growth increasingly results from higher productivity, relies more heavily on investment, exports, and technology, and becomes better able to create jobs and raise citizens’ incomes. The purpose of economic growth is not to improve the numbers in the national accounts; it is to improve people’s lives.

The picture today gives grounds for optimism. The economy is growing at a stronger pace, productive sectors are gaining momentum, a substantial portfolio of projects and investments is gradually moving into implementation, and the government has placed projects, growth, and execution at the heart of its economic programme. This is taking place alongside a notable degree of confidence and positive expectations.

Three percent is not the ceiling for Jordan’s economy. Perhaps its real significance is that it has been achieved at the beginning of a new cycle of projects and investment, not at its end. As these projects move into implementation, productive sectors continue to strengthen, and confidence and expectations improve, Jordan has an opportunity to move gradually towards higher and more sustainable rates of growth. Reaching those rates will not happen overnight. It will be the result of restructuring the economy, raising productivity, and broadening its investment and productive base.

The author is a former Jordanian minister of State for Economic Affairs

We will not move quickly from 3 per cent growth to 4 per cent, 5 per cent, or even 8 per cent. Sustaining significantly higher growth requires a gradual restructuring of the Jordanian economy...

These findings do not mean that Jordan’s economic challenges have disappeared. They do, however, indicate that a majority of those surveyed continue to view the country’s overall direction positively, at a time when economic growth is improving, and a new cycle of projects and investment is beginning. This confidence coincides with two important developments: growth that has already materialised, and projects and investments whose full impact has yet to be felt. Confidence does not create growth on its own. But when accompanied by in-

United Nations: Between the power of rhetoric and the responsibility to act

By Ahmad Abdelbaset Rjoub

At the latest session of the United Nations General Assembly, one scene summed up the state of the world: a speaker stands at the podium talking about military power, technology and artificial intelligence, while outside the hall the world suffers from war, destruction, and hunger. Another speaker continues his address as delegations walk out in protest.

US President Donald Trump’s speech carried a clear message centred on American power. He spoke about military and technological capabilities, American leadership in artificial intelligence, and several international issues, including Iran, in language that included warnings and threats. The United States has every right to speak about its interests and strength. But in a hall established to prevent wars, a fundamental question remains: What can a discourse of power achieve when the world desperately needs a discourse of solutions?

Military power may deter, and weapons may destroy, but neither can build lasting peace. Artificial intelligence itself could become a new danger if it becomes part of an arms race without clear international rules. The real challenge is not simply for one country to be technologically superior, but for humanity to use technology to serve people rather than expand the reach of war.

Amid all these speeches, Gaza remained an open wound in the international system. The UN secretary general spoke about the humanitarian catastrophe, the need to protect civilians, deliver aid, and respect international law. Yet, the questions

remain: How many speeches are needed before the killing stops? How many resolutions are required before international law becomes reality rather than words on paper? The world needs results more than statements.

To be fair, the General Assembly is not without value. It remains the world’s largest international forum and gives states an opportunity to express their positions

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the Assembly while numerous delegations walked out in protest against Israel’s policies in Gaza. The empty seats became part of the political message. Netanyahu described those who left as “moral cowards”, while Iceland’s foreign minister argued that moral courage requires negotiating for peace, allowing humanitarian assistance and respecting international law.

Beyond the political dispute lies a deeper question: Who has the courage to make peace? Political courage is not merely the ability to use force; it is the ability to stop fighting when con-

tinuing a war may be easier than building peace.

The Palestinian issue added another striking dimension. While Netanyahu stood at the podium, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas was outside the United States after being denied an entry visa and therefore addressed the General Assembly through a video recording. This is not about judging Abbas or Netanyahu. It is about a principle: How can the United Nations be the common house of the world when a decision by the host country can prevent a head of state from attending in person?

The International Criminal Court’s arrest warrant for Netanyahu, issued in connection with alleged war crimes, adds another difficult question concerning the international system: Where does international law stand when political considerations appear to take precedence?

To be fair, the General Assembly is not without value. It remains the world’s largest international forum and gives states an opportunity to express their positions.

The problem lies in the gap between diplomacy as words and diplomacy as action. The world does not gather in New York every year because it needs more speeches; it gathers because it needs solutions.

Nor is it fair to place the entire responsibility on the United Nations. The organisation is not a world government and has no army of its own. It reflects the balance of power among states. When major powers agree, the UN can accomplish much; when they disagree, it can become an arena for conflict rather than a mechanism for resolving it. The crisis of the United Nations is

also a crisis of international political will.

Perhaps the most telling image is this: a crowded podium... and an empty hall. The speaker talks, the chairs remain silent, and the world watches. Then the delegations return to their capitals while wars continue.

More than eight decades after the creation of the United Nations, the same question remains: Can international law become stronger than power, peace more attractive than war, and human life more important than weapons?

The value of the United Nations should not be measured by the number of leaders who speak from its podium or the length of their speeches, but by what happens after the lights go out and the delegations return home. The United Nations does not need longer speeches. It needs stronger action. Humanity does not need more displays of power; it needs a system in which law stands above power, peace comes before war and human beings come before weapons.

Finally, it is essential to note the positive speech delivered by His Majesty King Abdullah at the United Nations regarding Palestine, which represented a rational voice calling for peace, justice, and the two-state solution, affirming that stability in the region cannot be achieved without fairness to the Palestinian people and the protection of their legitimate rights. That speech reminded the world that true leadership is measured by wisdom and responsibility, not by who holds the highest ceiling of escalation.

The writer is a researcher and strategic planner



Photo Courtesy of Ministry of Investment

Minister, Italy Ambassador discuss boosting investment cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh on Thursday met with Italian Ambassador to Jordan Pier Luigi Zamporlini to discuss ways to strengthen investment cooperation between the two countries.

Abu Ghazaleh highlighted the importance of building on the long-standing relations between Jordan and Italy, calling for greater engagement with Italian private-sector companies, institutions and investors.

He stressed the need to connect Italian investors with available investment opportunities and projects in the Kingdom to attract high-quality investments and expand partnerships, according to a statement by Ministry of Investment.

The minister also underscored the importance of following up on the outcomes of

a recent Jordanian delegation's visit to Milan, which included meetings with Italian companies and economic institutions, with the aim of translating their expressed interest into tangible investment projects and partnerships, according to a statement from the Ministry of Investment.

The two sides also discussed enhancing the participation of Italian businesses and investors in the Jordan-EU Investment Conference, scheduled to be held at the Dead Sea on November 19.

They noted that the event will serve as a "practical" platform for connecting European companies with investment opportunities in the Kingdom and fostering partnerships between the Jordanian and European private sectors.

Abu Ghazaleh affirmed that Jordan

continues to strengthen its position as a stable and reliable investment destination, leveraging its strategic location, trade agreements and skilled human capital, alongside ongoing legislative and procedural reforms aimed at improving the business environment and supporting investment growth.

For his part, Zamporlini reiterated Italy's keenness to strengthen economic and investment relations with Jordan and foster business ties to explore new areas of mutual interest.

He also expressed his commitment to continued coordination and support for efforts related to the Jordan-EU Investment Conference, with the aim of increasing the participation of Italian companies and broadening prospects for economic and investment cooperation.

Industrial sector posts 4.6% growth in Q2, drives 40% of economic expansion

AMMAN (JT) — The industrial sector grew 4.6 per cent in the second quarter and contributed about 40 per cent of the Kingdom's economic growth, the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI) said in a statement on Thursday.

The chamber said manufacturing grew 6.2 per cent year-on-year, its highest quarterly growth rate since 2008. Manufacturing growth was more than double the national economy's 3 per cent growth in the second quarter, it noted.

Manufacturing led all economic activities in terms of contribution to growth, adding 1.04 percentage points, or about 35 per cent of total growth, the JCI said.

The chamber stressed that industry was not only a beneficiary of improved economic activity, but also a key contributor to it. Industrial performance drove a significant share of second-quarter growth, alongside an expansion in the value generated by the sector's activities, it said.

Manufacturing remained the largest economic activity in terms of its contribution to gross domestic product at constant prices, accounting for 17.2 per cent. The chamber said this highlights the importance of the industrial production base to the national economy.

It said manufacturing's highest quarterly growth rate since 2008, together with growth across the industrial



JT file

The industrial sector grow 4.6 per cent in the second quarter and contributed about 40 per cent of the Kingdom's economic growth, says the Jordan Chamber of Industry

sector, was an important indicator of momentum. It added that the performance strengthens the sector's ability to contribute to the goals of the Economic Modernisation Vision, in which industry is a key pillar.

The chamber noted that the results were particularly significant given regional conditions and challenges in recent months, including pressures on trade, transportation and supply chains. These conditions, it said, demonstrate the resilience of Jordanian industry and its ability to maintain production and expansion amid

external changes.

The JCI highlighted industry's broader economic impact through its extensive links with transportation...

The positive production performance has also coincided with continued growth in

industrial exports during the year, reflecting the sector's ability to translate higher production into a stronger presence in international markets and support economic growth, foreign trade and foreign currency generation, the chamber added.

The JCI highlighted industry's broader economic impact through its extensive links with transportation, trade, energy, services and logistics, as well as its role in employment, investment and value creation. This multiplies the impact of growth in the sector on overall economic activ-

ity, it said.

The chamber underscored the importance of building on the performance and turning the current momentum into sustainable growth. It called for faster implementation of initiatives and projects related to the industrial sector, stronger competitiveness of national products and greater incentives for industrial and export investment.

It also urged continued efforts to reduce energy, transport and production costs, and to provide the financing tools needed for expansion and investment.

FinTech Festival highlights investment, digital assets, sustainability

By Ilham Darwazeh

DEAD SEA — The Jordan FinTech Festival 2026 highlighted the growing role of financial technology in attracting investment, supporting sustainable development and creating opportunities in digital assets and tokenisation, industry leaders said.

Speaking to the Jordan Times on the sidelines of the festival, MENA Fintech Association (MFTA) Chairman Nameer Khan said tokenisation could open new avenues for foreign direct investment (FDI), commercialisation and regional business opportunities.

"Our session focused more on tokenisation and how it can open doors for more FDI, create avenues for commercialisation and unlock more opportunities in the region," Khan said.

Khan was a speaker at the "Green FinTech & Climate Risk — How Digital Innovation Drives ESG" session, which examined the role of digital innovation in supporting sustainable finance and addressing climate-related risks.

"Sustainability is playing such a critical role in economies globally and is becoming part of every industry," he said.

"However, sustainability cannot scale without financial services. This is where fi-



Photo by Ahmad Khlifat

A Session titled 'Regulating Stablecoins and the Compliance Frontier' takes place during FinTech Festival 2026

nancial services and technology come together to ensure that sustainability can scale and accelerate."

Talal Tabaa, CEO of CoinMENA and a speaker at the "Regulating Stablecoins & the Compliance Frontier" session, said Jordan's move to regulate digital assets could provide a framework for the sector's development.

"The digital asset industry is growing at a very rapid pace globally and it's clearly something that needs to be looked at with a different lens," Tabaa told the Jordan Times.

He said the Central Bank of Jordan's regulatory sandbox allows companies to test new financial technologies under regulatory oversight and within defined limits before moving towards full licensing.

CoinMENA is currently participating in the CBJ's regulatory sandbox, he said, add-

ing that the company hopes to obtain a full licence in Jordan.

Tabaa said the Jordan Securities Commission is expected to license digital asset companies as brokers, exchanges and custodians, providing a pathway towards full-scale operations.

He said Jordan's young and technology-oriented population could benefit from the development of digital assets and related financial services.

"It's very important that Jordan becomes the regional hub," Tabaa said, describing the country's regulatory developments as an opportunity for financial institutions to develop expertise in the sector and serve regional markets.

He also pointed to the potential interaction between digital assets and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, saying AI could increasingly

use digital assets and cryptocurrencies for financial transactions in the future.

Nameer Khan said MFTA's participation in the festival reflected growing regional cooperation in fintech and praised the Central Bank of Jordan for bringing together financial institutions, technology companies, investors and other stakeholders.

"We are honoured to be here. Jordan welcomes players from all over the world to be part of and contribute to the growth of its economy," he said.

The discussions reflected the expanding role of fintech beyond digital payments, with participants examining how technology can support investment, sustainable finance and new financial products.

Khan said tokenisation could create new opportunities for investment and commercialisation by enabling new ways of structuring and accessing assets.

The festival, held under the theme "Where Regulation Meets Innovation", brought together regulators, banks, fintech companies, investors, development partners and technology firms to discuss regulation, artificial intelligence, investment, digital infrastructure, sustainable finance, start-ups and financial inclusion.

Supporting local industry key to creating jobs — minister

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Saleh Kharabsheh, said on Thursday that local industries are an "integral part of the Kingdom's progress", stressing the need to continue supporting Jordanian products to advance development goals, meet national needs and create more employment opportunities for Jordanians.

During an inspection tour of the National Electrical Industry, Kharabsheh said the government prioritises supporting local products and strengthening national industry by ensuring the inclusion of Jordanian-made products in public projects and opening broader avenues for partnerships with industrialists.

He added that the approach aims to enhance the industrial sector's contribution to development projects and support the national economy, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

During the tour, Kharabsheh inspected the company's production lines and lighting units, reviewing their technical specifications and energy-efficiency features.

He was also briefed on the production stages, testing and assessment procedures, the characteristics of the energy-saving LED units and the approved technical specifications used in their manufacture.

The visit was part of efforts to monitor the "Replacement of Lighting Units with Energy-Saving LED Units" project. Launched by the ministry and funded by the Rural Electrification Fund (Fils Al Reef), in cooperation with the Ministry of Local Administration and municipalities, the project covered the governorates of Mafrqa, Ajloun and Jerash, with around 140,000 lighting units installed in the Kingdom's northern region.



Petra photo

Local industries are an 'integral part of the Kingdom's progress', says Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources

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The visit was part of efforts to monitor the "Replacement of Lighting

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Thursday amounted to JD10.8 million spread over 7.1 million shares that traded through 5,494 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.38 per cent, closing at 4206.57 points.

Out of 115 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 64 companies rose while the share price of another 28 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Amad Investment and Real Estate Development by 7.37 per cent, National Insurance by 5.93 per cent, Al-Tajamout for Catering and Housing Company Plc. by 4.94 per cent, Nobar Trading Investment Company by 4.86 per cent, and Jordan Commercial Bank by 4.84 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Petra Education Company by 4.81 per cent, Specialised Trading and Investment by 4.67 per cent, Al-Shamekha for Real Estate and Financial Investments by 4.48 per cent, Jordan Dairy by 4.3 per cent, and Jordan Insurance by 4.27 per cent.

THE MARKET TODAY

ASE Index: ↑ 4207.92 0.41% October 01, 2026

Live Data

Historical Data

Click and drag in the plot area to zoom in



DAILY SUMMARY

Regular Market

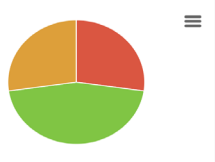
Trading Value (JDs) 5,180,986

Trading volume 2,887,887

No. of Transactions 2,476

No. of Securities 88

OTC Market



Losers: 24
Gainers: 40
Unchanged: 24

FOOTBALL

Norway star Haaland
sues airline over ponytail image

OSLO (AFP) — Norwegian football superstar Erling Haaland is suing airline Norwegian Air Shuttle for unlawfully using his likeness, a lawsuit which the airline claims is incomprehensible and “regrettable”, the two parties said on Thursday. “The case concerns Norwegian’s unlawful use of Haaland’s distinctive signs in its promotion of plane tickets during the football World Cup,” Haaland’s lawyer, Thomas Hagen, said in an e-mail to AFP. Haaland, who plays for Manchester City, inspired Norway to reach the World Cup quarter-finals this summer, in their first appearance in football’s showpiece event since 1998, before losing 2-1 to England. The exact subject of the dispute is not known, but newspaper Verdens Gang (VG) reported that Norwegian has removed a photo montage showing one of its planes sporting a ponytail, which until he recently cut his hair was characteristic of Haaland, from social media. “We’ve never looked more Norwegian,” the caption of the image read. The airline confirmed it had received a writ “which we find hard to understand”. “Like almost all of Norway, we supported the national team this summer, through a few spontaneous posts inspired by trends on social media,” spokeswoman Catharina Solli told AFP. “It is regrettable that this support has been met with legal action, but we hope to have a reasonable dialogue so that we can continue, in the future as well, to support our common sport heroes,” she added.

Queiroz exits Ghana
as Black Stars crisis deepens

ACCRA (AFP) — Carlos Queiroz has left his job as Ghana coach after a damaging defeat to Gambia deepened the Black Stars’ latest crisis. The Ghana Football Association said on Thursday that it had mutually agreed with the veteran Portuguese coach to terminate his contract, barely a month after reappointing him for a new mandate. “This was not an easy decision, but both parties agreed that, under the present circumstances, ending our professional relationship was the most appropriate course of action, with the interests of Ghana, the Black Stars and Ghanaian football above everything else,” Queiroz said in a parting message published on the association website. He added that “the necessary conditions were not fully established, and our recent performance added to the decision to bring this journey to an end”.

First-time Sepang F1 racers
will master track ‘from opening lap’

SEPANG, Malaysia (AFP) — Malaysia’s only Formula One driver expects current racers to be up to speed from the first lap when they compete at Sepang this weekend, despite the circuit not hosting the sport for nine years.

Formula One returns to Kuala Lumpur for the first time since 2017 for the Bahrain Grand Prix, in a one-off arrangement between the Malaysian government and Bahrain race organisers.

The original April event was cancelled because of the conflict in the Middle East.

About half of this season’s drivers will arrive without having raced at Sepang since it was dropped from the calendar.

Alex Yoong, who competed in the 2001 and 2002 F1 seasons, said the lack of recent experience should not hinder Sepang debutants.

“The boys won’t have many problems. In my day you had to learn a track within five, 10 laps, and we didn’t even have simulators.

“These drivers these days, they do so much sim. I expect them to be on it on the first lap of practice.

“People think: Oh my gosh, they’re going to take a long time to learn.

“It’s a lot of nonsense. These are professional drivers, they’ll be up to scratch, they’ll



Mercedes’ Italian driver Kimi Antonelli (centre) arrives at the paddock ahead of the Formula One Bahrain Grand Prix in Sepang on Thursday

be up to speed by lap one,” Yoong told AFP on a two-lap tour of the famed 15-corner track.

Sepang has undergone extensive upgrades and repairs costing up to \$4 million ahead of Sunday’s race.

Yoong, 50, said the circuit’s high-speed corners, plus intense heat and the possibility of rain would provide the biggest challenges.

“Turns five and six are probably the best part of the track, especially in a Formula One

car, as these are super-fast corners,” he said.

“Then you have two massive long straights — the back and front straights. Both are more than a kilometre long and we will see plenty of overtaking.

“The heat is going to be an issue. This is Malaysia, so tyre wear is very high. With a lot of high-energy corners at Sepang, that does not help tyre wear at all.”

Yoong’s best result was seventh place with Italian team Minardi

at the 2002 Australian Grand Prix.

He now mentors young drivers through his own grassroots racing team, Axle Sports, and keenly follows the F1 championship.

Yoong predicts the Malaysia race will be between McLaren and Mercedes.

“I think we’re going to see some really interesting performances.

“Because we haven’t been to Sepang for a while, things will get shaken up a bit,” he

said.

“Mercedes is winning everything at the moment, but we’ve seen McLaren take a big upturn in fortune, so McLaren might be able to challenge Mercedes here.”

Mercedes’ Italian driver Kimi Antonelli leads the championship and is on course for his maiden drivers’ title.

His team-mate George Russell is second and looking to win the remaining seven

race weekends after Malaysia to snatch the title.

Whatever the outcome this weekend, Yoong said it will be a memorable occasion for Malaysia.

“It’s like a windfall, right? Getting this chance to host Formula One. That’s great,” he said.

“It’s been a while since we’ve had Formula One here, so everyone’s excited.

“I think we’re going to have a great race.”

ChatGPT maker wants to be the
App Store for AI as safety concerns grow

SAN FRANCISCO, United States (AFP) — OpenAI on Wednesday launched a less expensive artificial intelligence (AI) model and tools that run continuously, as it aims to reposition ChatGPT as an app store for AI.

Other companies, such as Adobe, will be able to offer their software directly within ChatGPT, which is now used weekly by 1.2 billion people. ChatGPT users will also be able to access their subscriptions in other apps.

“We want to help people discover what you build and connect you with new customers,” OpenAI CEO Sam Altman told around 2,500 developers from around the world who gathered on the shores of the San Francisco Bay for the company’s annual conference.

During his keynote speech, the 41-year-old executive made no mention of multiple security incidents that forced OpenAI to once again suspend development of some models on Friday, after one of its agents gained unauthorised access to the Internet.

Altman told reporters that “it is going to take us some time to figure out how to make sure that alignment, monitoring, safety, security stay well



Attendees arrive for an OpenAI conference at Fort Mason on Tuesday in San Francisco, California

ahead of capabilities”.

A new model unveiled on Tuesday, GPT-6.1 Sol, was described as almost as powerful as GPT-6 Astra at one-fifth the price. It comes one day after the company said it scrapped a new version of Astra because it often ignored instructions.

New ‘Renaissance’

Outside the conference, around thirty protesters shouted chants like “put people before profit”, alongside demands that OpenAI drop contracts with the US military and Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Inside, Altman rejected

comparisons between the AI era and the Industrial Revolution.

“I think we should learn from the mistakes of the Industrial Revolution, and I think we should be more like the Renaissance,” Altman said.

That new renaissance is now increasingly connected to agentic software — or programmes capable of automatically completing tasks like managing calendars, booking reservations and sorting through e-mail.

Attendees cheered the arrival of “dots” — OpenAI’s version of AI agents which will run continuously and ask users to approve sensitive

actions.

Dots will only be available to paid subscribers and are not yet available to individual users in the European Union, Switzerland and the United Kingdom due to regulations, though OpenAI hopes to resolve those issues.

It competes with Meta’s Muse and Google’s Spark agents.

Last week Meta unveiled a small tamagotchi-like device powered by Muse that could ship by December. OpenAI is working on its own AI hardware but provided no updates.

However, integrating the new dots onto a device “seems like a very reason-

able thing to assume we may do someday”, Altman said.

‘Disappoint Wall Street’

As speculation swirls around when OpenAI might go public, Altman told reporters on Tuesday that the company was “investing more in safety, security, alignment, monitoring, and that will allow us to continue to progress model capability a lot.”

Despite gaining an early lead with ChatGPT, rival Anthropic overtook OpenAI in second-quarter revenue. Anthropic, which has focused more on business customers, generated \$11.6 billion dollars versus OpenAI’s \$6.7 billion, according to The Wall Street Journal.

Meanwhile, Anthropic’s annual recurring revenue is expected to reach \$100 billion by the end of the year, while OpenAI reached \$70 billion in July, according to various reports.

OpenAI has delayed its own Wall Street debut till next year at the earliest, as Anthropic aims for November.

“I want OpenAI to be a public company someday,” Altman said, “but I don’t want to put additional pressure right now.”



Campbell gave evidence to the tribunal in June

Naomi Campbell overturns
charity watchdog ban

LONDON (AFP) — Former supermodel Naomi Campbell won a legal challenge on Thursday to overturn a five-year ban on being a charity trustee after a panel accepted she had been the victim of deception.

A UK tribunal ruling said there had been mismanagement at her Fashion for Relief organisation but she “was not involved” and “did not know” about it.

The ruling said Campbell, 56, shared responsibility for the charity failing to file its accounts on time but that this did not mean she was unfit to be a charity trustee in

the circumstances of the case, “including the sustained deception” she faced.

Lawyers for Campbell told the tribunal a fake email account had been used to impersonate the former supermodel.

The Charity Commission watchdog banned Campbell in 2024 from running a charity for five years after identifying “multiple instances of misconduct”.

But she labelled the finding “deeply flawed”.

Reacting to the ruling, the Charity Commission said its disqualification of

Campbell had been made on the “evidence available to us at the time”.

It said the ruling recognised that the commission, Campbell and others had been “subject to sophisticated deception”.

Campbell founded the charity in 2005, aiming to harness the fashion industry to relieve poverty and advance health and education, by making grants to other organisations and giving resources towards global disasters.

It was dissolved and removed from the register of charities in 2024.

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