

King inaugurates SOFEX 2026 in Aqaba

- His Majesty tours exhibition, views displays of local, international companies
- SOFEX is one of the leading forums for manufacturers, suppliers of special operations equipment
- More than 400 official delegations representing 75 countries, 350 exhibiting companies from 38 countries are taking part in SOFEX 2026

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah, the Supreme Commander of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF), inaugurated on Tuesday the 15th edition of the Special Operations Forces Exhibition and Conference SOFEX 2026, in Aqaba, attended by Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hussein and Prince Hashem.

Organised in coordination with the JAF, SOFEX is one of the leading forums for manufacturers and suppliers of special operations equipment, providing a platform to showcase the latest military technologies, defence solutions and cyber security systems, and to exchange expertise and forge partnerships between leading international companies and participating official delegations, according to a Royal Court statement.

His Majesty was briefed by SOFEX organisers on the themes



His Majesty King Abdullah, the Supreme Commander of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army, inaugurates SOFEX 2026 at the Aqaba International Exhibition Centre, accompanied by Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hussein and Prince Hashem

of the conference and exhibition, and the key participants at this year's event, which is the largest to date in terms of exhibition space and number of participating countries. More than 400 official delegations representing 75 countries and 350 exhibiting companies from 38 countries are taking part in SOFEX 2026.

The King watched a video presentation documenting the exhibition's development over the years, which highlighted the most notable modern defence technologies and solutions displayed at SOFEX.

During the opening ceremony, SOFEX Chairman Brig. Gen. (retired) Ayman Al Bat-

ran emphasised that this year's exhibition in Aqaba is taking place at a critical juncture amidst increasingly complex regional challenges, the statement said.

He noted that addressing these rapidly evolving changes requires raising the level of preparedness and strengthening international cooperation, as well as fostering integrated strategic partnerships between nations, armed forces, security agencies, innovators and technology leaders in defence industries.

Batran added that over the course of three decades, SOFEX has succeeded in cementing Jordan's position on the global defence exhibition scene, embodying the Royal vision of establishing Jordan as a regional and international hub for defence innovation and technology.

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Jordan reaffirms strong ties with Syria, says security cooperation remains key

AMMAN (JT) — The government has reiterated the deep Amman-Damascus relations as well as its commitment to developing cooperation with Jordan's northern neighbour in a manner that ensures constant coordination in confronting all shared challenges, including the Daesh terror group, which poses a common threat to both countries.

In a statement on Tuesday, Minister of Government Communication Mohammad Momani emphasised the deep respect Jordan holds for the Syrian state and its brotherly people.

He stressed that coor-



dination between Jordan and Syria in combating terrorism, and the smuggling of weapons and drugs is institutional and ongoing, and has been in place for years.

stability," Momani said.

The minister stressed that the air strikes carried out on Monday by the Jordanian Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) targeted Daesh positions, following "Jordan's loss of patience with the movements of these terrorist groups and their threats to national security".

JAF said that Royal Jordanian Air Force carried out an operation targeting "terrorist hideouts in southern Syria, in retaliation for the attack on mourners at a church funeral in Karak on Friday".

The operation, named "Jordanian Deterrence -



Hundreds of trucks and commercial vehicles pile up on the road leading to the Jaber Border Crossing on Tuesday, following a decision by Syria to close the Nassib border crossing in both directions

Passenger buses cross into Syria amid border crossing closure — Al Mamlaka TV

AMMAN (JT) — Passenger buses bound for Syria crossed on Tuesday following the closure of the Jaber-Nasib border crossing between Jordan and Syria in both directions, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

The closure, announced by Syria's General Authority for Land and Sea Ports, led to a buildup of hundreds

of trucks, vehicles and passenger buses along the road leading to Jordan's Jaber Border Crossing.

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Netanyahu scrambles for votes as Israelis turn out in record numbers

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, fighting for his political life, scrambled to bring out his base on Tuesday as Israelis voted in record numbers in the country's first election since the October 7, 2023 war on Gaza.

With Israeli Arabs voters turning out in strong numbers, Netanyahu raised fears that leaders of the minority group were out to "steal the election" and reverse the hardline Jewish nationalist direction in which his government has taken the country.

Netanyahu's Likud Party also unsuccessfully asked election authorities to keep polls open past 10pm (20:00 GMT), as the opposition charged that he was looking for pretexts to challenge the results.

"We cannot leave

this battle here in the hands of the left and the Arab parties that want to bring an end to the Jewish state," a visibly tense Netanyahu told supporters as he tried to bring up turnout in a Likud stronghold.

"So no barbecues, don't go to the beach — go to the polling station and vote Likud," he said.

Nationwide turnout as of 6:00pm was 66.7 per cent, the highest at that point in the day since such statistics were first recorded in 1973, the Central Elections Committee said.

Israelis are casting their ballots in the shadow of October 7 and the multifront regional wars that it sparked, with the trauma from the attack still fresh and questions over accountability and security central to the campaign.

The close-fought vote

UN nuclear watchdog chief urges Iran to grant access

UNITED NATIONS, United States (AFP) — IAEA chief Rafael Grossi urged Iran during a UN Security Council meeting on Tuesday to grant immediate access to his agency so it can verify the Islamic republic's nuclear materials.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has not had access to key nuclear facilities in Iran since Israel, joined by the United States, launched a 12-day conflict in June 2025 that included strikes on nuclear sites.

Nuclear facilities have also been hit in the latest war, which erupted on February 28, and the IAEA has repeatedly called for access.

"I invite Iran to work with the IAEA without any further delay to clarify outstanding safeguards questions and to give the IAEA the



Satellite image released on February 10, shows Iran's Isfahan nuclear facility site

information and access the agency requires, so that it can verify all relevant facilities and material, as is Iran's legal obligation," Grossi said.

The Security Council meeting followed a resolution passed by the IAEA board last month that referred Iran to the top UN body over its nuclear "non-compliance".

The resolution, submitted by Britain, France, Germany and the United States, marks the first time Iran has been referred to the Security Council

in 20 years for failing to comply with its nuclear reporting obligations.

The move has been seen as largely symbolic as China and Russia hold power to veto any sanctions against their ally Tehran. Both countries were joined by Niger in voting against the IAEA resolution.

Iran's UN representative, Amir Saëid Iravani, called out the Security Council's "silence" regarding the US-Israeli strikes against his country.

"Today's meeting is an illustration of an established double standard in which the aggressor is shielded with impunity, the victim is placed under criticism and the language of non-proliferation is cynically appropriated to advance geopolitical objectives," he said.

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The Jordan Meteorological Department on Tuesday warns of potential flash floods in valleys and low-lying areas, including Aqaba and the Dead Sea, as the Kingdom remains under the influence of an unstable atmospheric condition expected to continue through Wednesday

Heavy rain expected nationwide as JMD issues flood warning

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Meteorological Department (JMD) on Tuesday warned of potential flash floods in valleys and low-lying areas, including Aqaba and the Dead Sea, as the Kingdom remains under the influence of an unstable atmospheric condition expected to continue through Wednesday.

The unstable weather pattern will bring heavy rain at times, accompanied by thunderstorms and hail, the JMD said.

JMD Director Raed Khattab told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that unstable conditions are forecast to continue on Wednesday, accompanied by a slight fall in

temperatures.

Scattered showers are expected across various parts of the Kingdom, turning heavy at times and accompanied by thunderstorms, which will further heighten the risk of flash flood.

He indicated that mild conditions will prevail across most parts of the country on Thursday, whilst remaining warm in the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea and Aqaba.

Low-altitude clouds are expected over the northern and central regions, with a chance of light showers in the north and parts of the central region late at night.

Khattab noted that temperatures will fall

further slightly on Friday, maintaining mild conditions across most parts of the country and warm weather in the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea and Aqaba, with a chance of scattered morning showers in the northern region.

He reiterated warnings against flash floods in low-lying areas and valleys, thunderstorms, hail and poor horizontal visibility caused by dust storms in desert areas, urging the public to stay clear of valley beds and flood-prone areas, exercise caution whilst driving, and guard against slippery road conditions in areas experiencing rainfall.

National conference on parental well-being, quality of life kicks off

AMMAN (JT) — Deputising for Her Majesty Queen Rania, Minister of Social Development Wafaa Bani Mustafa on Tuesday in Amman inaugurated the First National Conference on Parental Well-being and Quality of Life.

The two-day event, organised by the Royal Health Awareness Society in partnership with the Bernard van Leer Foundation, explores how urban systems, infrastructure, and communities impact families and young children, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Bani Mustafa stressed Queen Rania's vision that child well-being is inseparable from family support, noting its alignment with the National Social Protection Strategy (2025–2033) to foster empowerment and equal opportunity.

The minister said that the conference serves as a platform to foster partnerships between public, private, and civil society sectors to develop national policies and services.

Royal Health Awareness Society Director General Amal Arefij said that the conference adopts an inte-



Deputising for Her Majesty Queen Rania, Minister of Social Development Wafaa Bani Mustafa on Tuesday inaugurates the First National Conference on Parental Well-being and Quality of Life

grated vision for family well-being that extends beyond traditional mental health to encompass supportive social environments.

Bernard van Leer Foundation Representative Farah Jadallah stressed the importance of transitioning from temporary programmes to sustainable institutional services to support parents and early childhood development.

The conference agen-

da covers three main themes, including emotional well-being and maternal mental health, supportive urban environments and municipal infrastructure, and systemic policy innovation.

Interactive activities on the opening day utilised virtual reality technology to engage participants on topics such as perinatal depression, shared domestic responsibilities, school readiness and

family friendly urban design.

The conference's interactive experience concluded with an activity dedicated to the "Urban95" initiative, which highlighted the role of urban design, safe streets and child- and family-friendly public spaces in easing parents' daily burdens and stress and improving their quality of life.

The conference aims to establish a shared national platform to

strengthen cooperation and coordination among the health, municipal, infrastructure, housing and transport sectors.

It also seeks to turn learning and insights into collective action and develop recommendations and institutional commitments that will help guide future programmes and policies to support families and young children in the Kingdom.

JODDB launches 'HASEEN' app for secure, structured group communication

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Design and Development Bureau (JODDB) has launched "HASEEN", a dedicated application for managing communication within closed groups by enabling administrators to structure groups and manage members within an organised environment tailored to the operational needs of various institutions and entities.

Motaz Jaradat, head of encryption projects at JODDB, said that the "HASEEN" application provides a suite of digital tools designed to streamline internal communication within closed groups, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

He noted that the app



The Jordan Design and Development Bureau launches 'HASEEN', a dedicated application for managing communication within closed groups by enabling administrators to structure groups and manage members

allows administrators to manage membership and control access permissions, establishing a communication framework aligned

with the operational requirements of targeted organisations.

Jaradat highlighted the potential for future expansion of the

digital product, which would allow a broader range of institutions to utilise its services according to their specific requirements.

He added that the platform empowers administrators to oversee groups and members, regulate the joining process, manage access privileges and handle invitations.

It also facilitates communication among group members by enabling the exchange of messages and files within a defined framework.

According to Jaradat, "HASEEN" integrates membership management and communication tools into a unified platform, streamlining the tracking of participant interactions and regulating access to group content based on user-specific permissions.

The application tar-

gets entities requiring structured communication among members, including work teams, administrative bodies and closed communities, by offering tools for membership control, invitation management and access restriction, alongside supporting message and file sharing.

The development of "HASEEN" falls within JODDB's ongoing efforts in design, development and technological innovation.

Established in 1999, JODDB operates across research, design, development and manufacturing, focusing on delivering solutions for the defence and security sectors.



The Arab Day for Population and Development falls on Wednesday, marking the anniversary of the establishment of the Arab Council for Population and Development in 1919

Arab world population nears 511 million — data

AMMAN (JT) — The Arab Day for Population and Development falls on Wednesday, marking the anniversary of the establishment of the Arab Council for Population and Development in 1919.

The annual occasion serves as a platform to assess demographic trends in the Arab region and foster sustainable development cooperation, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Demographic figures reveal varying fertility rates across the region, with Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Tunisia recording two or fewer births per woman.

Fertility rates ranged between 2.1 and 2.9 births per woman in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Oman, Morocco, Syria, Djibouti, Algeria, Palestine and Egypt.

Libya, Iraq, and Yemen recorded rates between 3 and 3.9 births, while Somalia recorded the highest rate at 6.4 births per woman, followed by Mauritania at 4.8, Sudan at 4.2, and the Comoros at 4.

Arab societies remain generally youth dominated, with children under 15 years old accounting for nearly 30 per cent of the total population.

In low income countries, children represent 48 per cent of the population in Somalia, 44 per cent in Yemen, 42 per cent in Mauritania and 40 per cent in Sudan.

Meanwhile, children account for 15 per cent of the population in Qatar, 16 per cent in the UAE and 18 per cent in Kuwait.

Elderly individuals aged 65 and above represent less than 5 per cent of the population in most Arab nations, with Tunisia recording 10 per cent, Morocco 9 per cent, Lebanon 8 per cent and Algeria 7 per cent.

Polish researcher's archive captures Palestinian agricultural traditions before 1948

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — Lucjan Turkowski (1905–1976) was a Polish ethnologist, researcher and museum specialist known for his highly detailed ethnographic work on Palestinian peasant agriculture.

The landscapes and communities in which Turkowski carried out his work remain deeply affected by events that continue to shape the region today, noted former director of the Amman's office of the Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL) Carol Palmer.

Palmer made her remarks during an event organised jointly by CBRL and the Palestine Exploration Fund on Friday to launch "Peasant Agriculture in the Jerusalem Hills", a book written by Turkowski and edited by Palmer.

"The manuscript records a rural world around Jerusalem at a pivotal moment in history, immediately before the profound transformations that reshaped the region following the war

of 1948 and the Nakba," she said.

"As such, it offers a glimpse of landscapes, livelihoods and communities on the eve of a profound rupture that would transform the lives of the people Turkowski described," Palmer noted.

The book cover shows activities on a threshing floor in the valley below Silwan, illustrating the close relationship between Jerusalem and its rural hinterland that lies at the heart of the manuscript.

In the upper left are some of the walls of the Old City and the Haram Al Sharif, including the Al Aqsa Mosque. The photograph was taken by Khalil Raad and collected by Turkowski during his time in Jerusalem.

The book contains three intertwined threads.

"The first is Palestinian rural life: Agricultural practice, local knowledge, food ways, and the relationship between Jerusalem and its hinterland. This is the book's principal subject and

Turkowski's primary focus," Palmer continued.

The second thread is the experience of displaced Poles, including Turkowski himself, and the third thread is the story of the manuscript itself and Turkowski's archive, Palmer said.

The core of the volume consists of Turkowski's ethnographic text, covering Chapters 3 to 10. These examine agriculture, animal husbandry, food production and food ways, providing a detailed account of rural life in the Jerusalem hills during the final years of the British Mandate.

"The photograph shows Lucjan Turkowski as a young man before war and exile brought him to Palestine," Palmer noted.

Palmer said that one of the most intriguing discoveries of the project was that this manuscript appears to have been intended as part of a much larger study of Palestinian material culture.

"What survives is both a complete work in its own right and a glimpse



Photo courtesy of the Council for British Research in the Levant

of a much larger project that was never fully realised. Turkowski's ambitions exceeded the time and resources available to him while serving with the Polish military in wartime Palestine," Palmer said.

Jerusalem and the surrounding villages formed a single economic and cultural landscape linked by the movement of people, goods and knowledge.

Villages supplied agricultural products, while Jerusalem acted as a centre of exchange, consumption and redistribution.

"Turkowski was therefore not simply describ-

ing villages. He was documenting the relationship between Jerusalem and its rural hinterland. Hebron appears in a similar way as an important regional craft centre," Palmer elaborated.

Another factor shaping rural life in the Jerusalem hills was access to water.

Turkowski repeatedly distinguishes between spring-fed settlements and villages dependent primarily on rainfall. The difference was often reflected in what people could grow and how they engaged with local markets.

"Villages with reliable water supplies frequently

became centres of horticulture and commercial cultivation, supplying vegetables and fruit to urban consumers."

"Irrigated gardens formed one part of this economy, but the hill country was also characterised by orchards, including both traditional olive and vine cultivation, and newer commercial fruit crops. Grain cultivation was concentrated in valleys and other areas of more level ground suitable for arable farming," Palmer noted.

Turkowski also distinguishes between fellahin, or peasant farmers and more specialised horticultural producers, suggesting different degrees of agricultural specialisation and commercialisation within the region.

"The Jerusalem hills were therefore not a uniform agricultural landscape. Differences in water availability, topography and access to cultivable land created different agricultural opportunities and economic roles," Palmer underscored.



Speaking at the opening of the 4th International Oil Shale Conference, Acting Secretary-General of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources Bahjat Adwan says that the ministry's policy relies on a diversified energy mix to guarantee supply continuity

Oil shale accounts for 14% of Jordan's electricity needs — official

AMMAN (JT) — Jordanian oil shale represents a “fundamental” energy source for the Kingdom, Acting Secretary General of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources Bahjat Adwan said on Tuesday.

He stressed the importance of continuing to develop its utilisation and promoting investments in the sector to enhance energy security and diversification, according to a ministry statement.

Speaking at the opening of the 4th International Oil Shale Conference, organised by Al Balqa Applied University in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, Adwan said that the ministry's policy relies on a diversified energy mix to guarantee supply continuity and strengthen the stability of the electrical grid, incorporating natural gas, petroleum products oil shale and renewable energy.

He noted that renewable energy currently contributes some 27 per cent to the Kingdom's electricity grid, reaffirming the ministry's direction to increase this proportion alongside the continued utilisation of various local and imported energy resources, according to a ministry statement.

Adwan highlighted that the Attarat oil shale-to-energy project contributes around 14 per cent of the Kingdom's electricity needs, stressing that Jordan possesses advanced expertise in the oil shale field and that the ministry continues to work on

maximising the benefit from this national asset.

Referring to previous setbacks, Adwan said that challenges faced by certain oil shale projects were largely tied to economic feasibility, production costs and processing expenses.

Adwan called on investors to capitalise on available opportunities within the oil shale sector...

He reaffirmed that the ministry views oil shale as a “valuable” national resource worthy of ongoing research, development and investment in extraction technologies.

Adwan called on investors to capitalise on available opportunities within the oil shale sector, whether in electricity generation or the production of petroleum derivatives.

He stressed the ministry's readiness to receive, review, and evaluate investment proposals technically and financially in accordance with current legislation and environmental standards.

Adwan stressed the

importance of the conference delivering practical recommendations that can be leveraged by both the government and investors to boost interest in oil shale, expand its applications, and encourage investment in the sector.

Vice President of Al Balqa Applied University Zaid Anbar said that discussions surrounding oil shale extend beyond its role as an alternative energy source to encompass energy independence, national security and economic growth amidst rapid shifts in global energy markets.

Anbar highlighted the need to strike a balance between exploiting natural resources and protecting the environment by developing sustainable extraction and processing techniques that reduce emissions and preserve ecosystems while maintaining economic viability.

He also underscored the necessity of strengthening partnerships between academia, the government and the private sector, alongside supporting applied scientific research and innovation to reach practical solutions for the energy sector.

The two-day conference, taking place in Amman, brings together researchers, experts, academics and specialists from Jordan and abroad to examine the latest scientific and technical developments in oil shale, investment opportunities, advanced extraction methods, and related economic and environmental considerations.

Tourism income climbs 4.9% to \$6.3b in first 9 months of 2026 — CBJ

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's tourism revenues rose by 21.5 per cent in September year-on-year to \$794.3 million, while total revenues for the first nine months of the year reached \$6.3 billion, up 4.9 per cent from the same period last year, according to Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) figures.

The data also showed an 18.8 per cent increase in revenues from Arab visitors and a 12.3 per cent rise in revenues from Asian markets during the first three quarters of the year, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Tourism specialists said the figures highlighted the sector's recovery and the importance of diversifying source markets, expanding promotional efforts and encouraging visitors to spend more and stay longer.

Tourism investor Osama Abu Taleb, said sustaining growth required reviving traditional European and North American markets while building on gains in Arab and Asian markets.

He called for extending visitors' average length of stay, increasing per-capita spending and developing integrated itineraries that spread tourism revenues to local communities and small businesses.

Abu Taleb also stressed the need to assess the



Jordan's tourism revenues rise by 21.5 per cent in September year-on-year to \$794.3 million according to Central Bank of Jordan figures

sector's performance through indicators such as length of stay, visitor spending, job creation and investment, alongside tourist arrival figures.

Hakim Shatnawi, a professor of tourism and hospitality management at Yarmouk University, said growth during the first nine months of 2026 had been driven largely by Arab and Asian visitors, helping the sector

recover amid regional challenges.

He added that a stronger return of long-haul international tourists would benefit hotels, restaurants, transport providers and tour operators, particularly in destinations such as Petra and Wadi Rum.

Bahjat Hamdan, a board member of the Jordanian Businessmen Association and a tourism investor, called

for expanding direct air links to Aqaba, promoting emerging destinations and strengthening specialised tourism segments, including medical, religious, ecotourism, adventure and business travel.

He also highlighted the need to improve workforce skills, raise service standards and facilitate financing to help tourism businesses remain competitive.

JEDCO participates in Arab-African forum on intellectual property, export competitiveness

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Enterprise Development Corporation (JEDCO) is participating in a three-day Arab-African forum on intellectual property and export competitiveness, which opened on Tuesday in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to explore ways to strengthen the competitiveness of Jordanian enterprises and expand their access to international markets.

JEDCO CEO Ghaleb Hijazi, is representing the corporation at the forum, organised by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in cooperation with the Ethiopian Intellectual Property Authority and running from October 27 to 29, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

In a statement issued



The Jordan Enterprise Development Corporation is participating in a three-day Arab-African forum on intellectual property and export competitiveness in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Tuesday, JEDCO said its participation aims to strengthen international cooperation and promote the use of intellectual property systems to support exports of goods and services and

create growth opportunities for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Discussions focus on international mechanisms for protecting intellectual property,

including the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), the Madrid System for the international registration of trademarks and the Hague System for the international registration of industrial designs.

Participants are also examining ways to improve services for exporters, strengthen institutional cooperation and help businesses protect their intellectual assets as they enter foreign markets.

Other sessions address challenges in securing intellectual property rights and the need to develop institutional frameworks and advisory services that support innovation and export development.

JEDCO said the forum provides an opportunity to exchange expertise with regional and international partners and identify practices that could help Jordanian businesses improve their competitive position in regional and global markets.

SOFEX 2026 showcases growing focus on AI, drones, emerging defence technologies

AMMAN (JT) — Around 50 per cent of companies participating in the Special Operations Forces Exhibition Conference (SOFEX 2026) are focusing on emerging technologies, future capabilities, uncrewed systems and drones.

Jordan Design and Development Bureau (JODDB) Spokesperson Moataz Atein said on Tuesday that the bureau is unveiling 49 new products during the 15th edition of the exhibition, with a strong focus on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, virtual reality and encryption technologies, Al Mamlaka TV, reported.

Atein noted that 18 of the new solutions fall within these tech domains, which are seeing growing interest across both military and civilian sectors.

He highlighted spe-

cific applications including HASEEN, Moeen, and Aoun, which utilise artificial intelligence to support operational decision making within military institutions.

The spokesperson said that SOFEX features participation from nearly 400 delegations representing 75 countries, alongside 350 exhibiting companies from 38 nations.

He added that advanced technologies, uncrewed systems, and drones are positioning themselves at the forefront of participant interests.

Atein added that the Middle East Special Operations Conference (MESOC), held ahead of the exhibition's opening, extensively addressed uncrewed platforms and emerging technologies amid rapidly evolving global security threats.



Photos by Ahmad Khalfat





People gather to celebrate Serbia's student-led movement victory a day after Serbia's snap parliamentary elections in Novi Sad on Monday

Serbia's students demand state media chiefs resign after poll win

BELGRADE (AFP) — Serbia's student movement on Tuesday demanded the bosses of the national broadcaster resign over alleged bias during the 14-year rule of Aleksandar Vucic's right-wing nationalist party, which was defeated in weekend elections.

Sunday's historic victory by the student-backed list came after two years of protests sparked by the 2024 collapse of a railway station canopy in Novi Sad that killed 16 people.

Widely blamed on corruption, the disaster triggered some of Serbia's largest protests since the fall of strongman Slobodan Milosevic in 2000.

But throughout the protests, students regularly accused the publicly funded Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) of deliberately ignoring and denigrating demonstrators.

"We demand the resignations of the RTS director general, his deputy, the editors-in-chief responsible for news coverage and all news editors," the students said in a letter on Tuesday.

They accused RTS of selective reporting and failing to scrutinise officials.

"We consider it particularly unacceptable to uncritically report insulting remarks and messages targeting students and other citizens over their views," they said.

The broadcaster has yet to respond.

On election night, the

broadcaster stopped covering events in Belgrade after Vucic conceded defeat, despite thousands celebrating into the early hours across several parts of the capital.

'Blind eye'

Earlier, the editor-in-chief of a separate state media channel in northern Vojvodina province resigned, with a presenter also making an on-air apology.

'The public broadcaster has failed to fulfil its role for many years'

"The public broadcaster has failed to fulfil its role for many years," a presenter said on Monday.

"It turned a blind eye, kept silent,"

Meanwhile, civil society groups and media associations urged regulators to revoke the licence of Informer

TV, a private pro-Vucic station, citing repeated violations of broadcast rules.

Informer was infamous for vitriolic attacks on opposition figures, often launching expletive-laden smears against protesters.

In recent years, journalists and media watchdogs have reported increasing pressure on independent media, including threats, lawsuits and intimidation.

Late Monday, dozens of people, including the mother of a Novi Sad disaster victim, stormed Informer's premises and disrupted its broadcast.

In a video posted online, Dijana Hrka, whose son died in the station collapse, demanded an apology from Informer editor-in-chief Dragan Vucicevic.

But the student movement denied involvement in the incident, saying: "There is no place for conflict and violence".

With almost all votes counted, the student-backed list has won 52.8 per cent of the vote, which will give it around 140 seats in the 250-seat parliament, enough to govern alone, according to the central election authority.

Final results await the expiry of a three-day appeals period, after which parliament will be constituted, and the leaderless movement will form a government, naming a prime minister.

Brazil's Bolsonaro has passports cancelled as whereabouts unclear

BRASÍLIA (AFP) — Brazil's Flavio Bolsonaro, politically isolated after refusing to accept election defeat, had his passports cancelled on Tuesday as speculation swirled over his whereabouts.

Bolsonaro, 45, was defeated by incumbent Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Sunday and is set to lose his parliamentary immunity as his legal woes pile up.

While he cried foul and vowed to challenge the election legally, his party and allies have accepted the result, leaving him increasingly isolated.

Bolsonaro last spoke publicly on Monday afternoon in a video on social media saying he had been banned from leaving the country and ordered to surrender his passports.

However, while he said he would comply with the order, he had failed to do so by Tuesday afternoon.

"Flavio Bolsonaro's passports have been cancelled," a police source told AFP on condition of anonymity, adding that "there is no formal record of Flavio Bolsonaro leaving the country".

Argentina's security ministry and migration authorities on Tuesday denied local media reports that Bolsonaro had entered the neighbouring country.

Bolsonaro had said the order to surrender his passports was based on a comment by his US-based brother Eduardo Bolsonaro, who told a US podcast two days before the election that "if my brother does



Vehicles belonging to the motorcade of Brazilian right-wing senator and former presidential candidate for the Liberal Party (PL) Flavio Bolsonaro leave his condominium in Brasilia on Tuesday

not win, I am in favor that he would leave the country".

Flavio Bolsonaro is under legal scrutiny in several cases, including a corruption probe over the financing of the biopic "Dark Horse" about his father, former president Jair Bolsonaro, who is under house arrest for plotting a coup.

"I never had any intention of leaving the country. I will surrender my passports and defend myself against this travesty," Flavio Bolsonaro said.

Foreign interference probe

Members of Flavio

Bolsonaro's inner circle did not respond to AFP requests for comment on Tuesday on his movements.

AFP observed a motorcade leaving his residence in Brasilia, though it could not be determined whether the senator was inside any of the vehicles.

Lula, who turned 81 on Tuesday, staged a dramatic comeback after losing to Bolsonaro in a first-round vote.

After a revamped campaign and massive mobilisation from the left, he pulled around 4.4 million more votes than his rival.

Bolsonaro refused to accept the result, com-

plaining about an extension of voting hours and accusing Lula of an abuse of powers over a flurry of social spending announcements during the campaign.

While congratulations rolled in for Lula from world leaders on both sides of the political divide, US President Donald Trump, an ally of the Bolsonaro family, said the election "looked terrible to me".

"I didn't take sides but it looked like another rigged election frankly," he told reporters in Washington. "It looked so corrupt."

After the bitter election race, a supreme

court justice on Tuesday ordered police to investigate alleged foreign funding of Bolsonaro's election campaign, and other interference from abroad such as social media "manipulation".

Justice Flavio Dino ordered the investigation of "the possible origin, circulation and destination of foreign resources" during the campaign.

He also ordered the probe of "deliberate asymmetries and algorithmic manipulation by internet companies aimed at favouring or harming candidacies in Brazil's electoral process".

ASEAN envoy to visit Myanmar Wednesday — Thai FM

BANGKOK, Thailand (AFP) — ASEAN's special envoy for Myanmar, Philippines Foreign Secretary Maria Theresa Lazaro, will visit Naypyidaw on Wednesday and Thursday, her Thai counterpart said.

There was no immediate indication of whether she would meet with former democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been detained in Myanmar since being ousted in a 2021 military coup.

Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow — whose country is a member of the 11-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) — told reporters in Bangkok on Tuesday that the itinerary "is being worked out".

Lazaro said in July she would visit Myanmar this year in an effort to expand access to humanitarian assistance in the country, which was plunged into civil war by the coup led by military chief turned

civilian president Min Aung Hlaing.

ASEAN chair the Philippines had earlier this year requested "brief access" for its envoy to Suu Kyi, but was rebuffed.

In August, Suu Kyi met with a representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the first publicised meeting with a foreign official since her ouster.

In response, the Philippines called for the now 81-year-old's "complete and unconditional release", and repeated

its request for access.

Sihasak said Lazaro's visit was timed to allow the envoy to report back to a meeting of ASEAN ministers ahead of a leaders summit.

"The details of her visit, the itinerary is being worked out," he said at a joint media appearance with his Malaysian counterpart.

"She is going there as the ASEAN special envoy, and we hope that there'll be good progress and some progress for her to report on when

the ASEAN foreign ministers meet in Manila prior to the ASEAN Summit."

On Thursday, Suu Kyi's son Kim Aris was allowed to speak to her on the telephone for the first time in more than five years, in a call from Myanmar's London embassy.

The UK-based Aris told AFP afterwards that his mother had sounded "fairly healthy", but added: "I remain very concerned about her well-being."

India orders evacuations as Cyclone Arnab looms

KAKINADA, India (AFP) — Indian authorities ordered nearly 100,000 people to evacuate homes in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, ahead of a severe cyclone the national weather office expects to make landfall by Wednesday.

Neighbouring Nepal and Sri Lanka have also issued weather warnings.

Cyclone Arnab is forecast to hit India's southwestern Andhra Pradesh coast as a "very severe cyclonic storm", with gusts of up to 150 kilometres per hour on Wednesday morning at 6:00 am GMT (11.30 am Indian Standard Time), the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in a bulletin.

Torrential rain lashed the coast in the port city of Kakinda as heavy waves crashed on shore.

"I've never seen anything like this before," Kotesw Kumar, 35, told AFP, adding the government warned people to stock up on groceries.

"There was a cyclone here three years ago, but the water didn't rise this much."

Cyclones, called hur-



A scooterist rides along the Bay of Bengal coast during rainfall in Andhra Pradesh's Kakinada on Tuesday ahead of cyclone Arnab's expected landfall

ricanes in the North Atlantic and typhoons in the Pacific, are a regular menace in the Bay of Bengal and northern Indian Ocean.

The storm season, however, has been turbocharged by the El Nino weather phenomenon that has caused unprecedented warming.

Neighbouring Sri Lanka, meanwhile, closed schools with warnings of torrential rain, with the island's Department of Meteorology warning storms could trigger flash floods and

mudslides.

The military has been placed on alert, Colombo's Disaster Management Centre said.

Indian media reported that as many as 50,000 people have been told to move to safe areas in Andhra Pradesh, and 48,000 in Odisha.

'Damage'

Nepal's disaster authority issued a warning on Tuesday, saying that as the storm travels inland towards the Himalayas — likely overnight

on Thursday — it will bring heavy rainfall as well as "a high risk of heavy snowfall, snowstorms and avalanches".

It called on tourists to avoid travelling to high mountain areas and advised those already there to remain in safe locations.

Nepal is still recovering from a catastrophic August 26 flood sparked by a glacial mountain collapse, which swept away more than 1,400 people and left over 5,000 missing.

India's weather bu-

reau said it expects the cyclone to result in "total destruction" of thatched houses and create localised flooding, uprooting of power and communication poles, and "widespread damage" to standing crops.

In Kakinada, police barricaded roads leading to the sea.

Andhra Pradesh State Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu ordered the storm to be "constantly monitored and advance precautions taken", his office said in a statement on Monday.

"Adequate shelters and evacuation arrangements have been made," New Delhi's Cabinet Secretariat said in a statement.

The neighbouring Indian state of Odisha opened 1,735 cyclone shelters and imposed restrictions on movement in landslide-prone zone areas, the state's information office said.

Local media reported that Andhra Pradesh authorities ordered evacuations in key, low-lying areas and shut "all educational institutions" in some districts from Tuesday until Saturday.

French Senate weighs bill to make protesters pay for unrest damage

PARIS, France (AFP) — The French parliament's upper house on Tuesday debated a controversial bill that would make protesters financially liable for damage caused during street demonstrations, despite warnings from critics that it could curb the right to protest.

The bill was drafted in response to riots that followed Paris Saint-Germain's victory over Arsenal in the UEFA Champions League final in May.

But it has taken on added significance after weeks of protests over inequality and soaring prices culminated in some of the worst violence France has seen in years on October 17, when thousands of businesses across the country were damaged and looted.

The legislation, due to be voted on later Tuesday, was expected to receive strong backing in the upper house, where a right-wing and centrist alliance holds a majority.

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen, whom opinion polls place as the front-runner to succeed Emmanuel Macron in next

spring's presidential election, supports the legislation.

Speaking in parliament, Interior Minister Laurent Nunez stressed the "urgency" of responding to the damage and scenes of chaos seen on October 17.

"We can no longer allow the vast majority of our fellow citizens to pay for a minority of vandals," he said.

Under the legislation, protesters could be ordered to pay up to 10,000 euros for damage caused during street demonstrations.

But critics argue that people who took no part in vandalism could nonetheless be held liable if they were deemed to have been associated with those responsible.

The bill introduces joint financial liability for anyone found to have "knowingly participated" in a group formed with the intent of carrying out acts of vandalism.

It would also apply to individuals who "voluntarily" continued to take part in a gathering likely to disrupt public order after two police dispersal

warnings.

Welfare benefits and housing assistance could also be seized to help cover the cost of damages under the scheme, a provision that has drawn sharp criticism from left-wing parties and advocacy groups.

Left-wing lawmakers accused the government of an "authoritarian drift" at the expense of the "freedom to demonstrate".

Communist senator Fabien Gay denounced what he called a "legal travesty that deliberately conflates protesters and rioters".

Two motions to reject the bill outright, tabled by the left, were defeated.

In a letter published in French daily Le Monde last week, a coalition of trade unions and student groups warned of a "serious infringement on the freedom to demonstrate."

They argued the measures would disproportionately affect "the poorest families" and encourage "arbitrary police action".

Amnesty International has urged the government to abandon the proposal.



A group of armed defectors from the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) arrive in vehicles as they are believed to be surrendering to the Sudanese military, in the west of Omdurman on August 19

Drone strike on Sudan’s Nyala kills 21, injures 40 — medical source

KHARTOUM (AFP) A drone strike on a market in Nyala, the de facto capital of Sudan’s paramilitary Rapid Support Forces in western Darfur, killed 21 people and wounded at least 40 others, a medical source and witnesses told AFP on Tuesday.

One Nyala resident said a market in the city’s north was struck by a drone on Monday around 8 pm (18:00 GMT). Another said the market was frequented by young men, particularly RSF fighters.

“Twenty-one people were killed in last night’s bombing, and more than 40 others injured,” a medic at Nyala Hospital said, though he was unable

to identify how many were RSF fighters.

The war is currently being fought primarily via drones

Sudan’s military, at war with the RSF since April 2023, regularly strikes Nyala, where

the RSF has declared a rival government to the army’s internationally recognised one in Khartoum.

The war is currently being fought primarily via drones, with both sides launching sophisticated attacks from across the country, killing dozens of civilians at a time.

In the first three weeks of October alone, drone strikes killed over 300 people and injured hundreds more, according to a UN tally.

Since it began, the war has killed more than 200,000 people, aid workers estimate, and has triggered the world’s largest hunger and displacement crises.

Deadly Al Shabaab ambush strikes Somali army as security crisis mounts

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Scores were reported killed on Tuesday from a major clash between Somali government forces and Al Shabaab militants, at a time when international donors are slashing aid to the country’s armed forces.

The Al Qaeda-linked Al Shabaab group has been fighting the government for two decades and still controls large swathes of central Somalia despite a massive international operation against it.

It launched an attack on Monday afternoon on Turkish-trained government troops and an allied militia in the Lower Shabelle region in South West State, near the city of Leego, using explosives-laden vehicles.

Al Shabaab claimed to have killed 321 troops and taken prisoners, weapons and vehicles during the three-hour ambush.

The government presented the incident as a “major assault” by its forces on Al Shabaab, saying it had killed 75 militants and wounded 56.

Neither account could be independently verified.

Samira Gaid, a well-connected military analyst, said the army was hit by “layers and layers” of suicide attackers on a narrow road through muddy terrain.

The decision to send the army to travel through the area — a known insurgent hot spot — “wasn’t well planned”, said Gaid.

To Al Shabaab, it was “an opportunity for them to strike [the Somali Na-



File photo: Soldiers of African Union's peacekeeping mission in Somalia search for explosive devices next to their base in Ceeljaale, southern coastal Somalia, on September 19, 2019

tional Army], knowing how weak it was”.

She said the attack would be “shattering the morale and also the unity or the cohesion” of the army at a time when it is already facing severe salary cuts.

‘Collapse of authority’

Local media platform Baidoa Online said the government had called an emergency meeting of the Cabinet to discuss the “heavy casualties and substantial military equipment losses” during the incident.

A security source said it was doubtful that hundreds of soldiers were killed, but said that at least four Somali military vehicles had been

destroyed.

“It’s not so much about this specific attack as it is about the collapse of federal authority across virtually the entire South West State,” the security source told AFP.

“We’re looking at a notable expansion of Al Shabaab influence across South West State.”

Somalia ousted South West State’s governor earlier this year, but has faced repeated attacks by his forces, attempting to regain control of the area. The government claims he is working with Al Shabaab.

Former president Sharif Sheikh Ahmed weighed in by stating on Tuesday that “the National Army is the nation’s most precious asset. Somali soldiers’ lives must not be

gambled with or used to pursue political ambitions and personal interests.

“Regrettably, the repeated heavy losses suffered by the army raise serious questions about the quality of planning, intelligence, operational preparedness and the independence of military command,” he said, calling for an independent and transparent investigation into the army’s repeated losses and into whether there had been any negligence.

Meanwhile, the government’s fight against Al Shabaab is increasingly threatened by international funding cuts.

After decades of being the biggest donor to the coalition, the United States has cut all funding

to a crucial United Nations logistics mission, putting the future of combat operations in doubt.

Washington argues that Somalia’s government has failed to make progress in uniting the country and tackling the insurgent threat.

Turkey has emerged as a key backer of the Somali government, but Gaid cautioned their air support could “embolden” an over-confident government that was not listening to military advice.

“All of these are signals that things are collapsing inward,” she said, but “no one is really paying attention to how these battles are going to affect the entire sum”.

“We’re going into uncharted territory,” she said.

King inaugurates SOFEX 2026 in Aqaba

Continued from page 1

For his part, the commander of the King Abdullah II Royal Special Forces Group said the nature of modern warfare is developing rapidly as a result of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and autonomous systems, pointing out that technical superiority is not enough unless combined with field experience and

the ability to adapt quickly.

The commander underscored that tackling future threats requires the forging of close international partnerships, given that the future of special operations forces is shaped by cooperation and shared strategic choices.

His Majesty toured the exhibition and viewed the displays of a range of local and in-

ternational companies, as well as the latest developments in military technology, the defence industry, and innovative security solutions.

The King was also briefed by company representatives and pavilion managers on the nature of their exhibits and the latest special operations equipment and smart systems that have been developed.

On the sidelines of

SOFEX, the King held meetings with Chief of Staff of the Lebanese Armed Forces Maj. Gen. Hassan Odeh and Lebanon Minister of National Defence Michel Menassah, United Kingdom Defence Senior Adviser to the Middle East and North Africa Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren, Deputy Supreme Allied Commander for NATO Gen. Aurelio Colagrande, Rear Admiral

Samuel Majou of the French Armed Forces, Maj. Gen. Michał Strzelecki of the Polish Armed Forces, Chief of Staff of the Malaysian Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Datuk Azhan Md Othman, and Chief of Staff of the Barbados Defence Force Brig. Carlos Lovell.

A number of Royal Family members, and senior officers and officials also attended opening ceremony.

Passenger buses cross into Syria amid border crossing closure — Al Mamlaka TV

Continued from page 1

Al Mamlaka reporter said that the queue stretched for approximately three kilometres, with trucks and vehicles prevented from entering the border crossing.

Refrigerated trucks had been stranded since the early hours of the morning, raising concerns about potential damage to perishable goods.

Hundreds of trucks, commercial vehicles, and passenger buses piled up on the road leading to the Jaber border crossing with Syria on Tuesday, following a decision by the Syrian General Authority for Land and Sea Borders to close the Nassib border crossing in both directions.

Vehicles backed up along a 3-kilometre stretch after being barred from entering the Jaber crossing, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

Meanwhile, President of the Association of Owners of Clearance and Transport Companies Daifallah Abu Aqoula told Al Mamlaka TV on Tuesday that the closure of the Nassib border crossing on the Syrian side is affecting freight movement between Jordan and Syria, with concerns over delays, higher transport costs and potential losses for traders.

Abu Aqoula said that the Jaber border customs centre remains operational, with no decision to close it announced so far, warning that a prolonged closure of Nassib could affect freight movement, particularly if it lasts more than two or three days.

Freight transport between the two countries had been operating under a “back-to-back” system at the Nassib customs centre, which requires representatives and specialists to oversee the unloading and transfer of goods.

Syrian authorities have removed customs clearance agents and workers from the centre, leaving only government agencies, Abu Aqoula added.

Large numbers of trucks remain at the Nassib and Jaber customs centres, while others are waiting at the gates of Jaber. Meanwhile, goods unloaded at Aqaba Port are awaiting customs clearance and transport to Syria, raising concerns over further delays if the closure continues, he said.

He said that around 1,500 shipments pass through the Jaber customs centre daily, including incoming and outgoing lorries, whether loaded or empty.

Abu Aqoula warned that continued closure could affect per-

ishable goods and increase transport costs, although refrigerated shipments can be kept for weeks.

He added that the delays could also affect goods at ports and other border crossings, as well as cargo arriving by air, including refrigerated and perishable goods.

Abu Aqoula expressed hope that the Nassib crossing would reopen on Wednesday, allowing freight movement to resume as normal and preventing further disruption to shipments destined for Syria.

He said that the relevant Syrian authorities were capable of assessing the security situation and taking the necessary decisions to ensure the movement of goods and passengers, noting the presence of large numbers of Jordanians in Damascus and other Syrian governorates, as well as the trade and social ties between the two countries.

Abu Aqoula stressed the need to reopen the crossing as soon as possible to limit the impact on transport operators, traders and trade between Jordan and Syria.

Later on Tuesday, passenger buses were allowed entry into Syria following the closure of the border crossing, according to Al Mamlaka TV.

Jordan reaffirms strong ties with Syria, says security cooperation remains key

Continued from page 1

He noted that preliminary results of these operations indicate, so far, significant losses within Daesh ranks, estimated at more than 20 members, as well as the destruction of a large weapons depot belonging to the organisation.

Momani, who is also the government spokesperson, expressed regret over the civilian casualties. He stated that

Jordan had refrained from targeting locations where intelligence indicated the presence of civilians, emphasising that the relevant Jordanian authorities are following up on this matter with their Syrian counterparts.

Momani stressed that Jordan always takes all necessary precautions to avoid harming civilians, adding that the lives of innocent civilians beyond Jordan’s borders is

as important as the lives of Jordanians.

Momani explained that Jordan will work with its Syrian counterparts to establish a joint committee to follow up on their percussions of the operation against Daesh to enhance coordination in combating terrorist organisations, in a manner that ensures the security of both countries and their peoples and protects civilians.

Momani affirmed that the security of Jordan and Syria is one and the same, and that combating terrorism, which targeted Jordan several days ago in the village of Hmoud in Karak, is a shared objective for both countries.

He added that the two countries will continue working to strengthen their deeply rooted brotherly relations.

The minister emphasised that no one can

question Jordan’s commitment to Syria, adding that the Kingdom has hosted Syrians, stood by them, and continuously provided them with support.

He also noted that Jordan coordinates with international parties to safeguard Syria territory, ensure its unity and stability and protect it against ambitions directed at the country, particularly in southern Syria.

Netanyahu scrambles for votes as Israelis turn out in record numbers

Continued from page 1

Speaking afterwards at a polling station, Eisenkot called on Israelis to vote to replace “the worst government since the state was established”.

Arab minority in spotlight

Some 7.3 million people are eligible to vote, with tens of thousands of Israelis estimated to have flown in from abroad for an election seen as crucial to deciding the future character of their country.

Eilana Zisblit, 55, told AFP she had travelled back from Canada, where she has lived for

almost 30 years, to vote for a centre-right party in Eisenkot’s bloc.

“The country is going in a really, really bad direction. Both for Jews and Arabs living in the country, and for Jews living abroad,” she said.

The time to act is “now, or the country really won’t survive anymore”.

Turnout appeared to be unusually high among Israeli Arabs and in east Jerusalem.

Netanyahu, 77, has served as prime minister on and off for more than 19 years.

Throughout his career, he has repeatedly raised the spectre of Arab voters as a threat. He warned Tuesday of

Arabs voting by the busload, writing on social media that Israel could wake up to a “government of the left wing and Muslim Brotherhood”.

Netanyahu said that three senior officials of the United Arab List had been arrested with envelopes full of cash in the south.

United Arab List head Mansour Abbas, who could emerge as a kingmaker in a close election, accused Netanyahu of “lying and inciting” to mobilise his voters.

In Tel Aviv, left-wing party The Democrats, which is part of Eisenkot’s opposition bloc, said police had arrested a man with a knife who had moved

threateningly towards its leader Yair Golan.

“Incitement and violence will not intimidate us,” Golan said in a statement, blaming the incident on the “poison machine” of Netanyahu.

Trump endorsement

Netanyahu returned to power in December 2022, bringing into his coalition far-right ultranationalists who have since seen their political clout skyrocket.

Seeking to unseat the premier is an informal bloc of parties led by Eisenkot’s Yashar party and spanning from the right to the centre-left — including former prime ministers Naftali

Bennett and Yair Lapid, as well as seasoned politician Avigdor Lieberman and left-leaning Golan.

The Arab minority accounts for some 21 per cent of the population but Eisenkot has been coy on whether he would ally with their lawmakers to wrest power from Netanyahu.

Netanyahu has cast himself as the only person who can keep Israel safe.

In the last days of the campaign, he posted an image of a nuclear bomb destroying Tel Aviv and talked up his endorsement by US President Donald Trump, who is also fond of alleging election fraud.

UN nuclear watchdog chief urges Iran to grant access

Continued from page 1

Before the June 2025 strikes, the IAEA calculated that Iran possessed approximately 440 kilograms of uranium enriched to 60 per cent, which is close to the 90 per cent needed to make a bomb and

well above the 3.67-per cent limit set by a 2015 now-defunct agreement with Iran.

Since June 2025, the fate of the stockpile has remained uncertain.

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened to renew strikes against Iran,

possibly after the mid-term elections next week.

“Do I make a deal with them, or do I finish them off? That’s my — it’s the only question. Do I make a deal, or do I finish them off?” he said in a Fox News interview on Sunday.

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Jordan’s security essential to regional stability

Jordan’s military strikes targeting terrorist hideouts in southern Syria on Monday signal that the Kingdom will no longer tolerate attempts to undermine its security and stability.

For years, Jordan has confronted persistent attempts to smuggle weapons and drugs across its northern border, alongside infiltration attempts by members of extremist organisations.

As the government made clear on Tuesday, Jordan’s patience with these activities and their impact on national security had run out.

The Royal Jordanian Air Force carried out the operation on Monday night, targeting sites belonging to Daesh terrorist organisation in southern Syria. The strikes were based on field intelligence intended to eliminate confirmed threats and planned attacks against Jordan. Preliminary assessments indicated significant losses among the organisation’s ranks, estimated at more than 20 members, and the destruction of a large weapons depot.

The operation came days after the attack on mourners attending a funeral at a church in Hmoud village in Karak. It underscored the seriousness with which Jordan views the activities of extremist groups and the need to prevent them from exploiting instability across its northern border.

Instability in southern Syria has created conditions that allow armed groups and trafficking networks to operate, move weapons and narcotics, and carry out activities with consequences beyond Syrian territory. For Jordan, these are not distant concerns. They directly affect border security and the safety of its citizens.

Yet, Jordan’s determination to confront these challenges should not be mistaken for hostility towards Syria or its people.

Jordan remains committed to developing relations with Damascus and strengthening coordination on shared concerns, including terrorism, arms smuggling and drug trafficking. Jordan has reaffirmed its deep respect for the Syrian state and people, noting that security coordination between the two countries has been institutionalised and ongoing for years.

Jordan’s ties with Syria extend beyond official relations. We all recall the images of Jordanian soldiers helping elderly Syrian women and men fleeing violence, carrying children to safety and assisting families seeking refuge in the Kingdom. Jordan opened its borders to Syrians escaping conflict and provided support to those who sought safety here.

That history matters. Jordan’s position is not directed against Syria, but against the instability and armed activities that threaten both countries.

Jordan’s commitment to protecting civilian lives extends beyond its borders. The Kingdom maintains that innocent civilians in Syria deserve the same consideration and protection as Jordanians, reflecting its belief that human life and dignity must be respected regardless of nationality or location.

Protecting civilians must go hand in hand with safeguarding national security. Jordan cannot allow extremist organisations to exploit instability in southern Syria to plan attacks, move weapons or endanger its territory. The challenge is to neutralise these activities while taking every possible precaution to prevent harm to civilians.

Jordan has consistently supported Syria’s security, unity and territorial integrity. Its objective is not to undermine its neighbour, but to help ensure that instability does not threaten either country. Lasting security will require effective cooperation, practical measures on the ground and a shared commitment to preventing extremist groups and trafficking networks from exploiting the situation in southern Syria.

Jordan has made its position clear: it will continue to protect its national security while seeking stronger relations and coordination with Syria. The challenge now is to ensure that these efforts translate into lasting security for both countries.



Hana Namrouqa

Why Southern Syria matters to Jordan’s stability



Samih Maaitah

For years, throughout the Syrian crisis and perhaps even before it began, southern Syria has been a source of serious concern for Jordan’s national security. The proliferation of extremist terrorist groups, the expansion of Iranian-backed networks, and the persistent smuggling of weapons and narcotics across the border have compounded the threat.

During periods when the Syrian state lost control of the south, Jordan was left to shoulder much of the burden of safeguarding its own security and protecting its borders.

Following the fall of the former Syrian regime, Jordan demonstrated a genuine commitment to building constructive relations with the new Syrian authorities. The two countries established close ties, underpinned by high-level cooperation and coordination across a broad range of fields. Yet, despite this progress, southern Syria has continued to pose security concerns for Jordan.

Amman has consistently opposed any attempt to partition Syria and has remained vigilant against threats to both Syria’s territorial integrity and Jordan’s national security. Particular concern surrounds extremist organisations that threaten the stability of both countries, especially amid allegations that some of these groups may coordinate with Israel, whose military operations in southern Syria continue.

The Friday’s terrorist attack at Hmoud Church in Karak cannot be viewed in isolation from the security threats emanating from southern Syria. According to documented intelligence available to the Jordanian authorities, the connection was based on intelligence findings rather than speculation. Faced with a threat to its citizens, Jordan could not afford

to leave any available means of counterterrorism unused. Its response included forceful strikes against the hideouts of these organisations, killing several of their members.

At the same time, Jordan has remained mindful of the importance of maintaining constructive relations with Syria. Coordination between the two sides has been part of this approach. Jordan’s record during the Syrian crisis is instructive: Even when the Syrian state had lost its presence in parts of the south, the Jordanian army did not cross into Syrian territory.

For Jordan, national security remains the highest priority. Armed extremist organisations must understand that threats to Jordan will be met with a firm response. Yet, deterrence and cooperation are not mutually exclusive.

Jordan remains committed to coordination with the Syrian state at every level, recognising that both countries face a common threat.

Amman also understands the considerable challenges con-

fronting Syria, both at home and abroad. Efforts to confront extremist groups therefore serve the interests of both countries: They help protect Jordanian citizens while contributing to Syria’s security and stability.

Jordan’s right to defend its national security is not negotiable. At the same time, coordination with Syria remains essential. These are complementary principles, not competing priorities. Effective cooperation can help prevent security threats from escalating and strengthen the ability of both states to protect their citizens.

The Jordanian army has a long record of receiving and protecting Syrians who fled violence and death, welcoming tens of thousands of people seeking refuge. That humanitarian responsibility reflects a commitment that extends beyond borders: The preservation of innocent human life. Jordan’s concern for the safety of Syrian civilians remains undiminished.

Karak and its Syrian aftermath: Jordan’s unity in the face of terrorism

By Hasan Dajah

The terrorist crime that targeted Hmoud Church in Karak on October 23 was not merely an assault on the worshippers and those attending a funeral; it struck the collective conscience of all Jordanians, subjecting the security and cohesion of society to a painful test. From a strategic perspective, the targeting of a religious site can be understood as an attempt to shift the violence from the bodies of the victims to the relationships between citizens-transforming grief into mutual fear. Yet, the Jordanian response moved in the opposite direction: the tragedy became an occasion to reaffirm a shared sense of belonging, rejecting any attempt by terrorism to define Jordanians through divisions they themselves reject.

The public response was both swift and profound. Jordanians rushed to donate blood, and hospitals were crowded with people eager to offer something tangible to save the wounded. The Jordan News Agency (Petra) reported that, within just a few hours, approximately 220,000 milliliters of blood had been donated. Behind this figure lies a greater national truth: That the life of a Jordanian is the responsibility of their fellow citizen, and that religious differences are, in this context, non-existent. When a Muslim extends his arm to save his Christian brother, the blood itself becomes a living expression of a single nation-national unity embodied in a humanitarian act that transcends mere speeches and slogans.

This message was further reinforced by the presence of both official and public figures. The visits by official representatives and figures from all segments of Jordanian society to those affected underscored that the state stands by its citizens in times of suffering, and that protecting their lives and dignity is a responsibility that allows for no discrimination. This response is significant because it combines compassion with resolve: Comforting families, caring for the wounded, and pursuing those responsible. Successfully confronting terrorism requires a state capable of enforcing the law, as well as a society capable of preventing such crimes from escalating into internal strife among its various components.

However, the domestic dimension of this crime does not negate its regional security implications. On October 26, Jordan announced that it had carried out airstrikes against sites in southern Syria, which it identified as being linked to terrorist groups connected to the perpetrators of the attack. This account warrants close attention as further investiga-

tions and official statements emerge.

These developments bring the dilemma of southern Syria back to the forefront for Jordan; borders do not effectively separate the security of two states when armed networks can exploit weak border control, the proliferation of weapons, and established smuggling routes. Jordanian concerns predated the political transformation in Syria and have persisted ever since-for instance, in March 2025, it was announced that an infiltration attempt by armed smugglers had been thwarted, with authorities seizing narcotics and weapons. This continuity reveals that a mere change in power is insufficient to dismantle networks that have built up their interests and capabilities over years of conflict.

...Borders do not effectively separate the security of two states when armed networks can exploit weak border control, the proliferation of weapons, and established smuggling routes...

security requires precise intelligence, disciplined targeting, the protection of civilians, and the closure of spaces exploited by armed groups. It is in the mutual interest of both nations to prevent any friction from disrupting cooperation; a breakdown in relations would only provide further opportunities for networks of violence and smuggling. Both countries require actionable and measurable steps that go beyond mere meetings and statements.

Alongside this security dimension, there is the significance of the image of Jordan presented to the world through interviews conducted by American media personality Tucker Carlson. An episode focusing on Christians in the Holy Land — filmed at the Baptism Site (Al Maghtas)—was released on February 4, 2026 (US time). It featured Bishop Hosam Naoum, the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, and Saad Muasher, Chairman of the Jordan Ahli Bank. The segment offered a glimpse into the Jordanian experience through firsthand accounts, challenging the stereotypes that often reduce the entire region to a narrative of religious conflict.

Muasher spoke of his sense of belonging and equality, affirming that he had never personally experienced discrimination because of his Christian faith. He linked the flourishing of the Christian community to the presence of rights, stability, and the leadership of the Hashemite monarchy. Bishop Naoum expressed his sense of comfort and freedom in Jordan, while Carlson remarked on the care shown toward holy sites. The strength of these accounts lies in their portrayal of Jordanian Christians as authentic citizens and partners within society. They serve as significant testimonies to the personal experiences of those who shared them-without, however, being transformed into an absolute judgement that would negate the ongoing need to strengthen rights and participation for all citizens.

The significance of this presence is amplified by the scale of Carlson’s audience; as of October, he had approximately 17.9 million followers on X and 5.78 million subscribers on YouTube, in addition to millions more across other platforms. This reach provides an opportunity to highlight the model of Muslim-Christian coexistence in Jordan and to challenge prevailing stereotypes about the region. In this context, one might consider the possibility that actors hostile to Jordan’s stability-such as extremist, “takfiri” terrorist groups-could seek to tarnish this image and undermine national cohesion, potentially acting in coordination with or under the direction of Israel.

Such an agenda involving planning, guidance, and funding-would serve the clear interest of damaging the image of Jordanian social harmony between Christians and Muslims. More importantly, the solidarity shown by Jordanians-including the act of donating blood for the victims-effectively thwarted any attempt to exploit the crime to incite sectarian strife. It demonstrated that a shared national identity is far stronger than any effort to transform religious differences into a rift that could tear society apart.

Furthermore, the targeting of Jordan’s national cohesion could be viewed as a potential attempt to leverage unrest to serve an Israeli objective: diverting attention away from the crimes and violations occurring in Gaza and the West Bank, while entangling Jordan in internal challenges that drain its focus and political and diplomatic efforts. Manufactured crises-regardless of their origin-create opportunities to weaken regional solidarity and distract from the suffering of the Palestinian people. The most effective Jordanian response remains the strengthening of national unity, the thwarting of incitement, and the continued defense of Palestinian rights-ensuring that this crime cannot be exploited to destabilise Jordan’s position or undermine its internal cohesion.

In the face of attempts to capitalise on this crime, Jordan can simultaneously protect its domestic front and uphold its supportive role towards Palestine. It does so by relying on the solidarity and awareness of its citizens, refusing to let terrorism distract from national priorities or allow religious diversity to become a gateway for strife and division among its people.

What is required today is to transform solidarity into a sustainable practice: Supporting the families of the victims and the injured, enhancing the protection of places of worship, confronting incitement, and developing border cooperation rooted in mutual responsibility. The perpetrators of this crime sought to inflict pain-perhaps betting that it would erode national trust-but the Jordanian people provided their answer by standing together and sharing the duty of rescue. From Karak, Jordan’s message is reinforced: It is a state that protects its citizens, a society that preserves its bonds of goodwill and a nation that unites its people in life, destiny and responsibility-confronting terrorism with awareness, cohesion and justice.

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BUSINESS

Wednesday, October 28, 2026

Industrial exports rise 8.3% to JD6.04b in first eight months of 2026

Chemicals, cosmetics rank first among industrial export sectors, reaching JD1.43b

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan's industrial exports rose by 8.3 per cent in the first eight months of 2026 to JD6.04 billion, up from JD5.58 billion in the same period last year, according to data released by the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI) on Tuesday.

Industrial exports accounted for 93.5 per cent of the Kingdom's total exports during the period, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Chemicals and cosmetics ranked first among industrial export sectors, reaching JD1.43 billion, up 15.5 per cent and accounting for 22.1 per cent of total national exports. Leather and garments exports reached JD1.24 billion, while engineering, electrical and information technology industries recorded JD1.06 billion.

Food and agricultural exports rose by 16.3 per cent to JD703 million, while plastics and rubber exports increased by 20 per cent. Construction industries recorded the strongest sectoral growth, surging by 55.7 per cent, followed by wooden products and furniture at 16.7 per cent, and paper and packaging at



Industrial exports rises by 8.3 per cent in the first eight months of 2026 to JD6.04 billion, according to data released by the Jordan Chamber of Industry on Tuesday

7.6 per cent.

Garments were the leading export commodity, generating JD1.18 billion and accounting for 18.2 per cent of total exports. Nitrogen and chemical fertilisers reached JD780 million, while raw potash exports totalled JD403 million.

Other commodities recorded significant growth, with organic chemical products rising by 171 per cent, adding JD57.4 million to exports. Iron and steel exports increased by 86 per cent, copper by 77 per cent, aluminium by 30 per cent and plastics by 20 per cent.

The United States remained Jordan's largest export market, with exports reaching JD1.29 billion, followed by Iraq at JD750.5 million, India at JD729.8 million and Saudi Arabia at JD721.2 million. Exports to China totalled JD265.4 million, while those to the United

Arab Emirates reached JD246.8 million.

Exports to Iraq rose by JD151.2 million, or 25.2 per cent, while shipments to China increased by 74.6 per cent. Exports to the UAE grew by 27.8 per cent, Syria by 29.3 per cent and Palestine by 25.9 per cent.

Study highlights untapped potential for Jordanian Exports to Uzbekistan

AMMAN (JT) — Uzbekistan offers significant untapped potential for Jordanian exports, particularly in pharmaceuticals, processed foods, confectionery, plastics and packaging materials, according to a joint study by Export House and the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply.

Uzbekistan's total commodity imports reached nearly \$35.3 billion in 2024, including \$2.28 billion in product categories manufactured in Jordan, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported, citing the study.

While Jordan's global exports in these categories totalled \$1.15 billion, shipments to Uzbekistan amounted to just \$741,000, highlighting substantial opportunities for Jordanian businesses to expand their presence in the market.

Pharmaceuticals represent the largest opportunity, with Uzbekistan



Petra photo

importing \$1.111 billion in finished medicines in 2024, compared with Jordan's global pharmaceutical exports of \$728 million.

Other promising categories include sweets, chocolate and bakery products, for which Uzbek imports reached \$189 million, as well as plastics and packaging materials at \$104 million and tahini, halva and preserved plant products at \$38 million.

Uzbekistan's economy grew by 7.7 per cent in 2025, reaching a gross domestic product of

\$147 billion, with industry accounting for 26.8 per cent of economic output.

However, the study identified several challenges facing Jordanian exporters, including duty-free access enjoyed by products from Commonwealth of Independent States countries, high land transport costs and technical registration requirements. Jordanian goods also face stiff price competition from Chinese manufacturers.

Pharmaceutical exports require registration with Uzbekistan's

Ministry of Health, laboratory testing and compliance with national Good Manufacturing Practice certification requirements, which took effect on January 1, 2026, according to the study.

The report said a preferential trade agreement between Jordan and Uzbekistan could improve the competitiveness of Jordanian products in the market.

Export House recommended that companies identify applicable tariff classifications, work with experienced local agents, conduct trial shipments and participate in trade exhibitions in Tashkent in 2027. These include UzFood, O'zuPack, Power Uzbekistan, UzMedExpo and InterPackExpo.

The study is part of a broader joint initiative examining export opportunities in five promising markets: Indonesia, Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Kenya and Malaysia.

Labour Ministry to launch 30-day campaign on employment, workplace safety, nurseries

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Labour on Tuesday launches a 30-day awareness campaign to ensure private-sector establishments comply with requirements on employing persons with disabilities (PWDs), providing occupational health and safety personnel, and establishing nurseries for employees' children with qualified staff.

Ministry Spokesperson Mohammad Zyoud said employment teams had begun field visits to raise employers' awareness of their legal obligations and identify available job opportunities, according to a statement by Ministry of Labour.

Employers are being encouraged to use the national employment platform, Sajil (<https://sajil.gov.jo>), to recruit qualified graduates for nursery-related positions and occupational health and safety



Petra photo

The Ministry of Labour on Tuesday launches a 30-day awareness campaign to ensure private-sector establishments comply with requirements on employing persons with disabilities

roles, particularly in specialisations with limited employment prospects.

The Ministry has called on PWDs, occupational health and safety specialists, and individuals qualified to work in nurseries to register or update their information on Sajil.

The Ministry will

assess their qualifications, identify suitable vacancies and refer those requiring further preparation to training programmes in coordination with the Vocational Training Corporation.

Minister of Transport and Minister of Labour Nidal Oatamin has directed the ministry's

employment and inspection directorates and the National Employment Programme team to monitor compliance with the Labour Law, the Law on the Rights of PWDs and legislation governing occupational health and safety.

The requirements include meeting statutory employment quotas for persons with disabilities and complying with workplace safety standards and nursery provisions.

Zyoud said the Ministry would provide support through the National Employment Programme to establishments that meet the legal requirements and the programme's eligibility criteria.

Following the 30-day awareness campaign, the Ministry will launch expanded inspection campaigns and take legal action against establishments that fail to comply with the law.

Mining sector seeks global investment at International Conference in Australia

AMMAN (JT) — Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources Secretary General Amani Azzam presented investment opportunities in Jordan's mining sector at the International Mining and Resources Conference (IMARC 2026) in Sydney, highlighting the country's mineral resources and potential for partnerships with international companies.

Speaking during a session on global investment opportunities, Azzam outlined Jordan's competitive advantages for mining investment and efforts to attract international investors, according to a statement by the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources.

She said His Majesty King Abdullah's recent visit to Australia and meetings with mining companies reflected Royal efforts to expand international cooperation and attract investment to the sector.

Mining is a priority under the Economic Modernisation Vision, which targets annual growth of 10 per cent in the sector's contribution to gross domestic product through 2033.

The National Mining Strategy for 2023-2033 focuses on expanding exploration, attracting private-sector investment and increasing the added value of mineral resources.



Photo Courtesy of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources

Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources Secretary General Amani Azzam presents investment opportunities in Jordan's mining sector at the International Mining and Resources Conference in Sydney

Investment opportunities include copper, gold, phosphates, rare earth elements, base metals, silica and basalt.

Azzam reviewed progress on mining projects, including executive agreements signed for copper and gold in 2025, and a further copper agreement signed in October 2026.

Studies on phosphate projects in the eastern region are also advancing, with new executive agreements expected before the end of the year.

She stressed the importance of moving beyond raw material extraction towards downstream manufacturing to increase value added, expand domestic industrial production and create jobs.

The ministry said

Natural Resources Law No. 19 of 2018 provides the legal framework for mineral exploration, while incorporating project executive agreements into legislation helps ensure legal stability for long-term investment.

It is also facilitating access to technical data through an interactive map on its website and preparing to launch a digital platform for submitting applications.

Azzam reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to responsible mining, environmental protection and ensuring that projects deliver socio-economic benefits to local communities.

IMARC 2026 brought together 12,000 participants from 120 countries and more than 500 exhibitors.

Tech firms gain on Anthropic IPO optimism; HSBC slumps in London

LONDON (AFP) — Tech firms rose Tuesday for a second day as AI titan Anthropic's IPO filing revived optimism over the sector.

But gains were tempered as traders awaited key earnings reports and central bank meetings.

In New York, the tech-heavy Nasdaq led the way, up more than 1 per cent in midday trading. The wider S&P 500 was also higher, but not by as much, while the Dow was little changed.

In a share-launching filing Monday, Anthropic, the mother company for Claude AI, reported first-half revenue surged about 1,300 per cent year-

on-year, but also flagged heavy capital spending ahead.

"The fact that this five year-old company could soon launch a record-breaking IPO helped boost investor confidence, following a decidedly rocky period across AI-adjacent corporations of late," said David Morrison, an analyst at Trade Nation.

Tesla, Nvidia, Apple and Microsoft were all trading higher.

In London, the benchmark FTSE 100 index was dragged down by HSBC, whose share price fell 5.4 per cent after its bumper profits undershot market expectations.

Mercedes-Benz shed 3.8 per cent in Frankfurt after the German carmaker cut its full-year outlook, underperforming the DAX index which slightly rose overall in afternoon trading. Paris also rose.

Earlier, equities rose in Japan and Korea, also boosted by Anthropic's IPO filing.

The sale is seen as a crucial test of whether the AI boom can deliver profits and a disappointing reception could dent enthusiasm further, with traders questioning the vast sums invested in the sector as well as several companies' financial positions.

The filing lays out risks for the AI industry, which has faced a string of damaging reports in recent months.

Seoul's stock market briefly jumped more than 4 per cent on Tuesday thanks to strong gains in chip makers SK hynix and Samsung.

Tokyo added 1.8 per cent on spikes in Tokyo Electron, Advantest and SoftBank.

"Sentiment towards technology has improved as investors assess Anthropic's IPO filing at the start of a week packed with corporate earnings and the Federal Reserve's rate decision," said Fiona Cincotta at FOREX.com.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Tuesday amounted to JD11.5 million spread over 4.8 million shares that traded through 4,896 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.08 per cent, closing at 4153.51 points.

Out of 100 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 29 companies rose while the share price of another 42 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Jordanian Expatriates Investment Holding by 6.67 per cent, Al Quds Ready Mix by 4.55 per cent, Jordan Vegetable Oil Industries by 4.17 per cent, Universal Modern Industries by 4.15 per cent, and Shira Real Estate Development and Investments by 4 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Jordan Dairy by 4.93 per cent, Arab Aluminium Industry /Aral by 4.90 per cent, Amad Investment and Real Estate Development by 4.15 per cent, Jordan Poultry Processing and Marketing by 4 per cent, and Ubour Logistic Services Plc by 3.95 per cent.



TENNIS

Venus Williams suffers 16th defeat in a row with loss to teenager

SHANGHAI (AFP) — Venus Williams suffered her 16th loss in a row in singles tennis as the 46-year-old American icon was defeated by teenager Lilli Tagger in straight sets at the Guangzhou Open on Tuesday. Austria's Tagger, who is 28 years younger than the former world number one, eased through 6-2, 6-2 in southern China. Williams, a seven-time Grand Slam singles champion, last won a singles match on the WTA Tour in July last year. Now ranked 599 in the world, Williams last played at the US Open in August-September, when she lost in the first round in straight sets to Sofia Kenin. Williams won in the doubles with Indonesia's Janice T'jen in Guangzhou on Monday. They will play again on Wednesday. The 53rd-ranked Tagger faces Magda Linette of Poland in the next round.

Rybakina looking to clinch year-end number one in Tokyo

TOKYO (AFP) — Elena Rybakina said on Tuesday that she had "definitely got more attention" since becoming world number one as she looks to clinch the year-end top ranking this week in Japan. The Moscow-born Kazakh player became world number one for the first time last month after winning the US Open, replacing Aryna Sabalenka at the summit. The achievement punctuated Rybakina's rise in a year in which she also won the Australian Open in January and now has three Grand Slam career titles. The 27-year-old said she was exhausted mentally and physically after her US Open win but she bounced back to claim her fourth title of the season last week at the Ningbo Open in China. She has already secured her place at next month's season-ending WTA Finals at Indian Wells. Rybakina can also clinch the year-end number one ranking if she beats fellow Kazakh Yulia Putintseva in her first match at the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo. "The earlier I can confirm it the better," she said. "For me it's important just to get some matches and be prepared for the final eight. If I can make sure here after a win that I am going to stay number one then great, if not I will have another chance at the final eight." Rybakina took some time off after the US Open and returned at the China Open, losing to 118th-ranked Alina Charaeva in the first round. She missed the Wuhan Open with a foot injury before beating Leylah Fernandez in the Ningbo final.

Bayern 'risk' reaps huge reward for Ballon d'Or winner Kane

LONDON (AFP) — The crowning moment of Harry Kane's career came back in his native city of London, but winning the Ballon d'Or would not have been possible without taking the "risk" of moving to German giants Bayern Munich.

A product of the Tottenham academy, Kane blossomed into the club's all-time record goalscorer, with 280 goals by the time he departed in 2023.

Yet, even Kane's firepower could not end Spurs' long wait for silverware as he headed to Bavaria seeking trophies to add to a host of goalscoring records.

The England captain's decision to leave his homeland, with Alan Shearer's record for most Premier League goals in sight, was questioned at the time.

And some in Germany doubted the wisdom of paying a reported initial fee of 100 million euros (\$112 million) for a 30-year-old.

But the move has proved a spectacular success for both Kane and Bayern.

"Making the move to Bayern Munich was a big step in my career. Some people saw it as a risk, but for me it was always about improving," Kane told AFP at the glitzy London gala on Monday.

"Being around the teammates I am, the team, the club, has definitely pushed me on to another level."

Kane has plundered



England and Bayern Munich forward Harry Kane (right) reacts next to Brazil's former footballer Ronaldo after receiving the Ballon d'Or award for the best male footballer during the 2026 Ballon d'Or France Football award ceremony at the Palladium Theatre in London on Monday

goals at an astonishing rate since moving to Germany, without sacrificing his ability to drop deep and also act as a playmaker.

In last week's 2-2 draw against Arsenal he scored for a 10th consecutive Champions League game and also provided one of the assists of the season for Alphonso Davies.

Overall, Kane has struck 156 times in 159 games for Bayern, picking up two Bundesliga titles and last season's German Cup in the process.

That trophy haul is still scant reward for an outstanding career built on hard work and consistency.

"Work hard in silence. Let success be your noise," Kane posted on social media late on Monday.

But the move to Bayern has given Kane the platform to be considered among the world's best.

"There's no way Harry Kane could have won the Ballon d'Or if he was playing for Tottenham," said former England defender turned pundit Jamie Carragher.

Bayern's domination — they have won 13 of the past 14 titles — means the Bundesliga is often demeaned outside of Germany.

But by playing for one of the biggest clubs in the world, Kane is guaranteed to play Champions League football every season, and Bayern often go deep into the competition.

'Lot to achieve'

The move has also paid dividends for England.

Tottenham's reliance on their talisman meant

Kane was forced to push himself to the limit during the exhausting English football schedule, with two domestic cup competitions and no winter break.

By contrast, the Bundesliga takes a three-week break over the festive period and there are only 18 teams, resulting in four fewer league games than in the Premier League.

The added bonus for Kane is that Bayern often rest their star names later in the season to keep them fresh for the Champions League.

Kane has captained England in the past five major tournaments, which have ended in defeats in two finals, two semifinals and a quarter-final.

At 33 he still believes he has unfinished business at international level and the extra rest afforded by the Bundesliga could prolong his career.

"To be winning awards like this just shows why I made the move in the first place," said Kane.

"There's always ambition, there's always dreams for new achievements, new things. I still have a lot to achieve in this game."

The Champions League at club level and to win a major trophy with England is the number one priority for sure. There are so many great things I want to achieve."

Bayern have also been big winners from their investment in Kane.

The German club are often overshadowed by Barcelona and Real Madrid in the battle for individual honours but Kane has brought the Ballon d'Or back to Munich for the first time since Karl-Heinz Rummenigge won the award in 1981.

The club and Harry Kane have got together, grown together and achieved the highest aims together. We are proud that this all-round outstanding sportsman and person is part of our FC Bayern family," said Bayern president Herbert Hainer.

Dutch broadcaster pulls out of Eurovision over Israel 'sensitivities'

THE HAGUE (AFP) — The Netherlands will not participate in next year's Eurovision Song Contest, its public broadcaster NPO said on Tuesday, citing "sensitivities" over Israel's participation.

The Dutch withdrawal is the latest in a series of boycotts from countries unhappy at Israel's inclusion in the annual music festival, given its military campaign in Gaza sparked by the October 7 Hamas surprise attacks.

"We have known for some time that Israel's participation elicits various reactions in society and causes discussion and division," said Jurre Bosman, NPO's media director, in a statement.

"Therefore, after consultation with the Board of Broadcasters, the NPO has decided to forgo participation in 2027," added Bosman.

The Dutch decision brings to an end a series of flip-flops over its participation, highlighting the divisive nature of the debate in the country and more broadly.

In August, the AVROTROS broadcaster, which selects the Dutch entry and broadcasts the show, had pulled out, saying the event can "no longer be considered neutral" given divisions over the Gaza war.



Since its launch in 1955, Eurovision has become the ultimate pop platform

But a month later, NPO stepped in to replace AVROTROS, saying it would take on the responsibility, only to reverse course with its decision on Tuesday.

Jet de Ranitz, NPO's executive chairman, acknowledged their decision would disappoint many Dutch Eurovision fans and stressed that the contest would still be aired on the public channels.

However, De Ranitz said: "We must conclude that it is currently too early to participate in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2027."

"Due to the sensitivities surrounding the themes currently at play, we have decided to take a step

back for the time being," added De Ranitz.

'Bangaranga'

In August, organisers announced they were excluding any country involved in an armed conflict from hosting the competition.

But that has not prevented withdrawals, with Ireland already announcing they will not take part and the head of the Spanish public broadcaster also coming out in favour of a boycott.

Earlier this month, the Czech public broadcaster pulled out, but cited spending cuts as the reason.

Next year's contest, the world's biggest live tel-

vised music event, will take place on May 15 in Bulgaria's Black Sea city of Burgas.

It will be the first time the Balkan nation has hosted the contest, coming after Bulgarian singer Darina Yotova, known as Dara, won this year's contest in the Austrian capital Vienna with the catchy floor-filler "Bangaranga".

Since its launch in 1955, Eurovision has become the ultimate pop platform, catapulting Swedish icons ABBA to worldwide fame, as well as boosting the likes of Celine Dion, Cliff Richard and Olivia Newton-John.

The 2026 competition was watched by 131 million viewers, down 35 million from the year be-

fore after five countries boycotted it over Israel's participation.

The Netherlands, Iceland, Spain, Ireland and Slovenia all pulled out of the 2026 contest — with the latter three refusing to broadcast the show at all.

The Dutch took part in the very first Eurovision Song Contest back in 1956, and have won on five occasions.

Their most recent winner was Duncan Laurence, whose song Arcade won the contest in 2019, going on to top charts globally.

It became the first Eurovision entry to reach one billion streams on Spotify, according to the Eurovision website.

The head of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which organises the show, said he was "deeply sorry" that The Netherlands would not be taking part.

"We understand their decision, and we respect the strength of feeling behind it in the Netherlands," said Martin Green in a statement.

"At the same time, we believe the Eurovision Song Contest matters in a divided world."

NPO's Bosman said the broadcaster was still talking with the EBU about the future of the contest.



Rapper Jay-Z, shown on the sideline at last season's Super Bowl, will serve as the halftime musical performer at next February's Super Bowl in Los Angeles, the NFL announced

Jay-Z to perform at Super Bowl LXI halftime show — NFL

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — Rapper Jay-Z will perform at the Super Bowl LXI halftime show this February in Los Angeles, the NFL announced on Monday.

Jay-Z's Roc Nation entertainment company has produced the star-packed Super Bowl halftime show each year since 2020, selecting the headliners, but the hip-hop mogul has not previously performed himself at the event.

"When we first reached an agreement with Roc Nation to produce the show, I had just one request: That Jay-Z take the stage himself one day, whenever the

moment felt right to him," NFL commissioner Roger Goodell said in a joint statement.

"I couldn't be more excited for fans around the world to experience the artistry, creativity and cultural impact he will bring to the Super Bowl stage."

The announcement did not specify whether Jay-Z would be the sole headliner.

It came after Jay-Z — who is married to pop megastar Beyonce — performed two shows last weekend at Los Angeles' SoFi Stadium, which will serve as the venue for the Super Bowl on February 14.

Those gigs served as the culmination for a

year-long tour celebrating the 30th anniversary of his debut album "Reasonable Doubt".

"From 'Reasonable Doubt' to standing on the Super Bowl halftime stage, this has been a journey," said Jay-Z, whose real name is Shawn Carter.

"Thirty years of music, work, and culture on the world's biggest stage. This run continues to be a dream come true."

In an indication of the level of star power Jay-Z could potentially bring with him to the halftime spectacular, he was joined on-stage in Los Angeles by John Legend, DJ Khaled, Dr Dre and Snoop Dogg.

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