



Volume of land transit cargo increased by 84.7 per cent in the third quarter of 2026 according to Ministry of Transport

Land transit cargo rises 84.7% in Q3 2026 — ministry

AMMAN (JT) — volume of land transit cargo increased by 84.7 per cent in the third quarter of 2026 compared with the corresponding period of 2025, according to Ministry of Transport data released on Saturday.

Land transit cargo reached 4,944,135 tonnes in the third quarter of 2026, up from 2,677,264 tonnes in the same period of 2025, while imported cargo

rose by 6.9 per cent to 4,927,537 tonnes, compared with 4,608,507 tonnes a year earlier, Al Mamlaka TV reported. Imported domestic goods increased by 7.1 per cent to 4,780,766 tonnes. However, total overland freight movement declined by 10.4 per cent to 12,841,005 tonnes, down from 14,323,533 tonnes, due to an 18.5 per cent drop in exported cargo to

7,913,468 tonnes. Inbound and outbound truck traffic across all border crossings increased by 55 per cent to 575,815 trucks, compared with 371,444 in the third quarter of 2025.

Land passenger movement also rose by 32.8 per cent to 4,577,795 travellers, up from 3,447,692.

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Arab Potash posts 34% rise in nine-month net profit to JD169m

AMMAN (JT) — The Arab Potash Company (APC) reported a 34 per cent increase in net profit after provisions, income tax and mining fees during the first nine months of 2026, reaching JD169 million, compared with JD127 million in the corresponding period of 2025.

According to the company's data, operating profit from core potash operations rose by 66 per cent to JD175 million, up from JD105 million in the same period last year, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Net sales revenue increased by 16 per cent to JD563 million, compared with JD488 million previously, while investments in associate companies generated JD41 million in



The Arab Potash Company reports a 34 per cent increase in net profit during the first nine months of 2026

investment income, marking a 40 per cent increase. Total production reached 2.19 million tonnes by the end of

the third quarter, up 2 per cent from 2.15 million tonnes in the corresponding period last year. Sales volume also

reached a record of 2.25 million tonnes, representing a 3 per cent increase from 2.18 million tonnes. APC and its subsidiar-

ies injected \$1.23 billion in foreign currency into the Kingdom's banking system by the end of September, a 19 per cent increase compared with the \$1.03 billion recorded during the same period last year.

APC Chairman Shehadeh Abu Hdeib, said the financial and operational results reflect effective long-term corporate planning and the company's ability to maintain sustainable growth despite mounting geopolitical challenges.

He said the performance reinforces the company's position as a strategic pillar of the national economy, contributing to foreign currency reserves and stimulating local investment and industry.

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Syria's Foreign Minister Asaad Al Shibani speaks during a plenary session of the International Institute for Strategic Studies Manama Dialogue 2026 in Manama on Saturday

Jordan, Syria maintain strategic ties, strengthen security and military cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Syria's Foreign Minister Asaad Al Shibani has said that Syria and Jordan maintain strategic relations and close security and military cooperation aimed at safeguarding

their shared border and ensuring regional stability. Speaking at a session at the 22nd IISS Manama Dialogue 2026, Al Shibani highlighted the extensive cooperation

between Syria and Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon in securing their borders, according to the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA).

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Israeli protesters demand opposition ally with Arab parties to oust Netanyahu

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Hundreds of Israelis took to the streets on Saturday to urge the opposition to ally with Arab parties to oust prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has gone on the offensive against the minority group's leaders. Arab-majority parties made major gains in Tuesday's election, fuelled by anger over rhetoric targeting the community from Netanyahu's hard-right government, but opposition chief Gadi Eisenkot has not decided whether to seek a coalition with them. Joining a rally in Tel Aviv, Ayelet Raz said that the Arab community, which accounts

for around 20 per cent of Israel's population, had a right to political participation. "It's the last chance for real change," the 60-year-old psychologist said, warning that Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, was a "great manipulator". "We need to give peace a chance," she said. "Otherwise we'll have this bloodshed forever." Tuesday's election was inconclusive, with neither bloc reaching a majority in Israel's 120-seat parliament. Jewish-majority parties opposed to Netanyahu, known by his nickname Bibi, won 48 seats, while two Arab-majority parties, Raam and the

Joint List, secured a combined 19 seats. An alliance between the two camps would potentially give the anti-Netanyahu bloc a comfortable majority of 67 seats, but the idea is opposed by some parties in the opposition bloc. "Arabs and Jews will only win together" and "There is a majority for change" read some of the signs held by around 500 protesters in Tel Aviv. "67 — United we stand, divided we get Bibi" and "Why not, really — unless we are racist?" read some of the placards at the 100-strong rally in Jerusalem. Arab parties have only once formally sat in an Israeli govern-

ment, when Raam leader Mansour Abbas joined a short-lived coalition that lasted from 2021 to 2022. He has voiced a willingness to do so again. The Joint List's Yousef Jabareen, meanwhile, has told AFP he is willing to support Eisenkot in parliament without joining his government, citing, among other concerns, the war in Gaza.

Opposition division

Eisenkot, 66, a former military chief and political novice, largely shares Netanyahu's views on security issues including Gaza, which Israel has reduced to rubble since the Hamas surprise attack on October



Smoke rises as the Israeli military demolishes the homes of the two Palestinian gunmen who killed two Israeli soldiers at a West Bank checkpoint the previous week, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank city of Hebron, on Friday

7, 2023. Eisenkot reiterated on Saturday that he would only form a "Zionist gov-

ernment" whose members commit to the "recognition of Israel as a Jewish, democratic and

liberal state" and to the "recognition of Hamas as a terrorist organisation", conditions that

Arab leaders have previously refused to accept. While he has said he does not want a government dependent on Arab lists, Eisenkot has not explicitly rejected their external support. "I want them [the opposition bloc] to go ahead to be brave and do the right thing," said demonstrator Sharon Balaban, 55, a video artist in Jerusalem. Yair Golan, leader of the left-wing Democrats has enthusiastically supported the prospect of a government backed by Arab parties, saying it would be racist to exclude them, and on Thursday met Abbas.

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Jordan supports science diplomacy with new PSUT diploma for future leaders in science, international relations

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan has greatly enhanced its role in science diplomacy with the announcement of a new Diploma in Science Diplomacy to be taught at Princess Sumaya University for Technology (PSUT), during an orientation seminar bringing together Jordanian and European diplomats at the Landmark Conference Centre in Amman on October 29.

The seminar explored how scientific knowledge, research partnerships and shared technological capabilities can strengthen international relations, support evidence-based policymaking and contribute to peace, according to a Royal Scientific Society of Jordan (RSS) statement.

HRH Princess Sumaya Bint El Hassan, president of the RSS and UNESCO goodwill ambassador for science for peace, delivered the keynote address, titled “Jordanian Science Architecture and its Place in Global Partnerships”.

Drawing on more than two decades of engagement in science diplomacy, she called for closer collaboration between scientific institutions, governments and diplomatic services, and for a new generation of professionals equipped to connect science with international policy.

“I seek, like so many colleagues around the world, to generate or support those conversations and collaborations that may empower knowledge and prioritise science and technology, to help create a more hopeful future,” Princess Sumaya said.

She emphasised that scientific discovery alone cannot deliver its full benefits to society without the policies, partnerships and diplomatic engagement needed to translate knowledge into action.

“Science Diplomacy



HRH Princess Sumaya Bint El Hassan participates in an orientation seminar on science diplomacy for Jordanian and European diplomats at the Landmark Conference Centre in Amman on October 29

supports that mechanism by providing a language for dialogue between science and government, within state structures and across state borders,” she said.

Princess Sumaya placed peace at the heart of her address, recalling the World Science Forum 2017, held in Jordan under her chairmanship and guided by the theme “Science for Peace”.

She stressed that lasting peace requires more than the absence of conflict. It must be supported by dialogue, education, opportunity, understanding and a sustained commitment to human dignity.

“Scientific knowledge and engagement must be at the core of sustainable peacebuilding,” she said, highlighting the importance of scientific understanding in addressing challenges that no country can resolve alone, including water and energy security, climate change, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity.

Addressing young diplomats in particular, Princess Sumaya underlined their potential to

shape Jordan’s international relationships for decades to come.

She encouraged them to see science diplomacy as an opportunity to connect Jordanian knowledge and talent with international expertise, build partnerships founded on mutual respect and ensure that Jordan actively helps shape global conversations.

She also highlighted Jordan’s scientific and diplomatic institutions as the foundations of this work. The RSS, the Higher Council for Science and Technology (HCST), PSUT, SESAME and the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy each contribute to an environment in which research, education, innovation and international engagement can reinforce one another.

Princess Sumaya paid tribute to the longstanding contribution of her father, HRH Prince Hassan Bin Talal, to scientific advancement, regional cooperation and human development. His role in establishing the RSS in 1970, the HCST in 1987 and the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy in 1994 helped lay important

foundations for Jordan’s continuing engagement with science and international cooperation.

She described SESAME, the international scientific research facility in Allan, Jordan, as a practical demonstration of science diplomacy, showing how countries and scientific communities can cooperate around shared goals despite regional tensions.

Its significance extends beyond scientific research to the trust, dialogue and relationships that develop when people work together in pursuit of knowledge, she added.

“Today, we offer an institutional infrastructure, a pivotal location and an unrivalled passion for knowledge. We offer a home for Science Diplomacy in our region,” Princess Sumaya said.

The seminar opened with welcoming remarks by Ambassador of the European Union to Jordan Pierre-Christophe Chatzisavvas and Director of the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy Haifa Al Khraisha.

Their participation reflected the importance of cooperation

between Jordanian and European institutions in developing a shared understanding of science diplomacy and its growing relevance to international relations.

Jan Marco Müller, team leader at the European Commission’s directorate general for research and innovation, introduced the European Union’s approach to science diplomacy.

His session outlined the role of science and research in international engagement and provided a framework for understanding the instruments and institutional partnerships through which scientific cooperation can support broader diplomatic objectives.

Jordan’s scientific architecture and its place in global partnerships were outlined in Princess Sumaya’s keynote address, in which she connected the seminar’s international focus with Jordan’s own institutional experience, highlighting the country’s capacity to bring together research, education, innovation and diplomacy in support of regional and global cooperation.

Following Princess Sumaya’s announcement of PSUT’s new Diploma in Science Diplomacy, President of PSUT Wejdan Abu Elhaja was invited to outline the new course.

The initiative is designed to bridge the worlds of science and diplomacy, equipping professionals with the knowledge and skills to engage with complex international challenges and connect scientific evidence with policy and diplomatic practice.

The seminar continued with Theodota Lagouri, representing the EU Science Diplomacy Alliance and CERN, who examined science diplomacy in practice and the contribution of international networks to developing collaboration across scientific and diplomatic communities.

Her session highlighted the importance of connecting expertise, institutions and practitioners to strengthen the field and expand opportunities for cooperation.

Director General of SESAME Khaled Toukan shared his facility’s model of international research partnership as

a major element of scientific infrastructure that can bring together researchers and member countries across political boundaries, building relationships through shared scientific goals and sustained collaboration.

The final session featured Director for Stakeholder Relations at CERN Ursula Bassler, who discussed CERN’s lessons in research partnerships.

Drawing on the experience of one of the world’s leading international scientific organisations, her contribution complemented the SESAME case study and highlighted the value of long-term institutional cooperation in supporting scientific progress and international engagement.

The seminar was facilitated by Hanina Ben Bernou of the European Union Delegation to Jordan and brought together officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, European diplomats posted to Jordan, alumni of the EU-Jordan programme in European Affairs with the College of Europe, and representatives of Jordanian scientific, technological and research institutions.

The discussions took place amid expanding cooperation between Jordan and European institutions through the EU-Jordan Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership, Horizon Europe, the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area and bilateral programmes.

The seminar aimed to strengthen diplomats’ understanding of these opportunities and their ability to connect scientific institutions, policymakers and international partners.

The launch of the PSUT Diploma in Science Diplomacy gives this shared ambition a

practical educational dimension. By bringing scientific literacy, policy understanding and diplomatic practice into closer alignment, the initiative seeks to prepare professionals to navigate increasingly complex international challenges and develop partnerships that connect research with public policy and society.

The seminar concluded with a retrospective video of the World Science Forum 2017, held on the shores of the Dead Sea in Jordan under the banner “Science for Peace”.

Hosted Jordan and organised by the RSS, the Forum was chaired by HRH Princess Sumaya and brought together more than 3,000 participants from 120 countries.

It remains a landmark gathering in Jordan’s scientific history, placing the country at the forefront of international discussions on science policy, scientific cooperation and the role of science in building peace, according to the statement.

Revisiting the Forum provided a fitting reminder that Jordan’s commitment to science diplomacy builds on years of international engagement and a vision that continues to shape its partnerships today.

The seminar reaffirmed Jordan’s commitment to placing knowledge, education and international cooperation at the heart of its engagement with the world.

As science and technology increasingly shape global challenges and opportunities, science diplomacy offers Jordan a means of mobilising its institutions, expertise and international relationships in pursuit of a more peaceful and sustainable future.



The Jordanian-Japanese Working Group on Economic and Investment Cooperation on Wednesday holds its second meeting

Jordanian-Japanese working group discuss expanding investment, trade ties

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordanian-Japanese Working Group on Economic and Investment Cooperation on Wednesday held its second meeting to review progress on bilateral agreements and follow up on the outcomes of its first meeting in July.

The meeting was co-chaired by Secretary General of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply Dana Zoubi and Deputy Chief of Mission at the Japanese Embassy Tomoko Watanabe, according to a ministry statement.

Participants included representatives of Jordanian public institutions, the Japan External Trade Organisation, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and

private sector entities from both countries.

Zoubi said continued coordination between the relevant authorities had resulted in progress on several items included in the joint action plan.

She stressed the ministry’s commitment to translating bilateral discussions into practical measures to facilitate business operations, support existing Japanese investments and attract new ventures to Jordan.

Watanabe said Japan views Jordan as an important regional hub for business and investment, highlighting opportunities in energy, logistics and regional connectivity to expand bilateral trade.

The two sides re-

viewed progress on the joint action plan and the outcomes of technical meetings held in recent months to address challenges facing Japanese investments in the Kingdom.

Discussions also covered ways to expand cooperation in the industrial, energy and logistics sectors, and make use of Jordan’s strategic location to access regional markets and explore joint projects.

The delegations agreed to continue technical meetings through February 2027 to implement the action plan and set timelines before submitting the final results to the Jordanian-Japanese Joint Committee, chaired by Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Yarub Qudah.

Jordan joins Association of World Election Bodies

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan, represented by the Independent Election Commission (IEC), has joined the Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB), expanding opportunities for cooperation and the exchange of expertise with election management bodies worldwide.

IEC Board of Commissioners Chairman Musa Maaytah addressed A-WEB members and attendees, expressing appreciation for the commission’s admission to the association, according to an



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IEC statement.

Maaytah stressed the importance of international cooperation and sharing expertise in

election management to improve electoral practices and uphold the principles of integrity, transparency and

participation.

A-WEB is an international organisation specialising in election management, with

Agriculture minister orders assessment of weather damage to Jordan Valley farms

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Agriculture Saeb Khreisat on Thursday instructed ministry officials to assess damage to farms in the Jordan Valley caused by recent weather conditions and prepare the necessary reports ahead of taking action under applicable regulations.

Khreisat directed technical teams and specialised committees across the ministry’s directorates to begin field assessments immediately and complete their work within the coming days, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The assessments will include detailed lists of affected agricultural areas and damaged crops to determine the extent of losses, he said.



Minister of Agriculture Saeb Khreisat on Thursday instructs ministry officials to assess damage to farms in the Jordan Valley caused by recent weather conditions

During an inspection tour of Rama and Sowayma in the Jordan Valley, Khreisat

examined damage to farms and met with local farmers to hear about the challenges

they faced following the recent weather conditions.

He reaffirmed the

government’s commitment to supporting farmers, mitigating the impact of the damage and maintaining agricultural production.

Khreisat also stressed the importance of strengthening agricultural protection and insurance mechanisms to help the sector cope with climate change and extreme weather events, commending farmers for their role in maintaining national food security.

Farmers welcomed the minister’s visit and expressed hope that procedures related to compensation would be completed swiftly. They also reaffirmed their commitment to supplying the local market despite the difficult circumstances.

SOFEX 2026 concludes with over 20,000 visitors, 350 exhibitors

AMMAN (JT) — The Special Operations Forces Exhibition and Conference (SOFEX 2026) concluded on Saturday in Aqaba, with participation from official delegations representing more than 75 countries and over 350 exhibiting companies from 38 countries.

The event attracted more than 20,000 visitors, including defence and security specialists, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

SOFEX Board Chairman Major General (Ret.) Ayman Batran said that the outcomes of this year's edition reaffirmed the exhibition's standing as a leading specialised defence and security event in the region and internationally.

Since its launch in 1996 under Royal vision, SOFEX has developed into a major platform bringing together



The Special Operations Forces Exhibition and Conference (SOFEX 2026) concludes on Saturday in Aqaba, with participation from official delegations representing more than 75 countries

decision-makers, military leaders and defence companies, Batran said.

He noted that the exhibition featured intensive bilateral meetings between participating delegations and exhibitors, resulting in several agreements and memorandums of understanding covering joint manufacturing, technology transfer, and research and development.

Batran said the strong international participation reflected confidence in Jordan as a secure and stable environment and a trusted partner in the defence industry.

Exhibition pavilions showcased a wide range of defence and security systems, including unmanned systems, anti-drone technologies, electronic warfare, artificial intelligence appli-

cations, cybersecurity solutions and training simulators. The programme also featured live demonstrations and panel discussions.

The strong participation of Jordanian companies highlighted the competitiveness and progress of the Kingdom's defence industries, providing opportunities to promote national products in international markets and support the national economy, he said.

Batran said hosting an event of this scale amid regional volatility demonstrated Jordan's stability and strength under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah and HRH Crown Prince Hussein.

He commended the participating delegations, exhibitors, sponsors, media outlets and official institutions for their contributions to the event's success.

AT A GLANCE

Safadi, Turkish counterpart discuss regional developments



AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi on Thursday discussed with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan during a telephone call regional developments and the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, according to a ministry statement.

Investment minister, Azerbaijani ambassador discuss cooperation



AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Investment Tariq Abu Ghazaleh and Azerbaijani Ambassador to Jordan Eldar Salimov on Wednesday met to discuss ways to strengthen investment relations and explore cooperation opportunities in areas of mutual interest. Abu Ghazaleh stressed the importance of expanding investment cooperation between Jordan and Azerbaijan and strengthening private sector partnerships to encourage mutual investments and make use of available opportunities in the Kingdom, according to a Ministry of Investment statement. Salimov underscored the importance of continued coordination between relevant authorities in both countries to strengthen bilateral relations and establish new investment partnerships across priority sectors. The meeting is part of the Ministry of Investment's efforts to strengthen Jordan's economic relations with friendly countries, promote investment opportunities in the Kingdom and build partnerships that support economic growth.

Gaza delegation offers condolences over Karak church attack

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordanian Field Hospital South Gaza on Thursday received a delegation of local community representatives who offered condolences over the deadly attack on St. George's Greek Orthodox Church in Hmoud village, Karak Governorate.

The delegation expressed solidarity with Jordan, stressing the strong fraternal ties between the Jordanian and Palestinian peoples, according to

a Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) statement.

The hospital's commander said the visit reflected the deep-rooted historical relations and mutual solidarity between the two peoples, adding that such initiatives strengthen bonds of friendship.

The delegation also praised Jordan's efforts, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah, to support the Palestinian cause at international

forums, commending the continued medical assistance provided by Jordanian field hospitals to residents of the Gaza Strip.

The attack took place on October 23, as people attended a funeral service at St. George's Greek Orthodox Church in Hmoud village, leaving nine people dead and 34 injured.

Security forces arrested three suspects on Monday, 26 October, after locating them inside an abandoned house.



The Jordanian Field Hospital South Gaza on Thursday receives a delegation of local community representatives who offered condolences over the deadly attack on St. George's Greek Orthodox Church in Hmoud village



Turkish Ambassador to Jordan Hakan Karaçay

Jordan-Turkey trade exceeds \$2b in 2025, grows 20% in 2026

AMMAN (JT) — Trade between Jordan and Turkey exceeded \$2 billion in 2025, with bilateral trade volume increasing by 20 per cent during the first eight months of 2026 compared with the same period last year, Turkish Ambassador to Jordan Hakan Karaçay said on Thursday.

Speaking at a reception marking the 103rd anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, Karaçay said that around 100 Turkish companies operate in Jordan through direct investments or local partnerships, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He also highlighted expanding air links between the two countries, noting that Turkish Airlines, AJet, Pegasus, Royal Jordanian and Jordan Aviation operate a combined 124 weekly flights between Jordan and Turkey.

Karaçay said the

close ties between His Majesty King Abdullah and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan continue to underpin bilateral relations, citing the King's official visit to Turkey on February 7, 2026.

The ambassador also expressed condolences to the families of the victims of the attack targeting Hmoud Church in Karak Governorate on October 23...

He added that 2027 would mark the 80th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries, providing an opportunity to further strengthen bilateral cooperation.

The ambassador also expressed condolences to the families of the victims of the attack targeting Hmoud Church in Karak Governorate on October 23, condemning the attack and expressing Turkey's solidarity with Jordan.

On regional developments, Karaçay said the two countries maintain close political consultations, reaffirming Turkey's support for the Hashemite Custodianship over Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem and the two-state solution as the basis for achieving a just peace.

He also reaffirmed Turkey's continued political and financial support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, noting that the agency had recently established an office in Ankara to strengthen its operational support.

EU pledges continued support for Jordan in combating extremism — ambassador

AMMAN (JT) — The EU and its member states will continue supporting Jordan's efforts to combat extremism and terrorism, EU Ambassador to Jordan Pierre-Christophe Chatzisavvas said on Saturday.

Chatzisavvas made the remarks during a high-level, closed-door dialogue organised by the Politics and Society Institute (PSI) and the Mohammad Hammouri Cultural Forum for Cultural Development, attended by former prime ministers, senators, MPs, academics, journalists and researchers, according to a PSI statement.

He offered condolences to Jordan and the families of the victims of the attack on St. George's Greek Orthodox Church in Hmoud village, Karak Governorate on October 23.

He said that the attack went beyond Jordan's borders in its impact, describing the targeting of innocent people as an assault on shared human values.

The ambassador reiterated the EU's commitment to supporting Jordan's capacity to counter extremism and terrorism, highlighting



The EU Ambassador to Jordan Pierre-Christophe Chatzisavvas says on Saturday that the EU and its member states will continue supporting Jordan's efforts to combat extremism and terrorism

the partnership between the two sides and Jordan's role in promoting regional security and stability.

Chatzisavvas also highlighted the Jordan EU Investment Conference, scheduled for November at the Dead Sea under the patronage of

His Majesty King Abdullah, with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen expected to attend.

He said the conference aims to turn the strategic partnership into investment opportunities by bringing together investors, com-

panies and financial institutions. Priority areas include technology, energy, high-value industries, logistics, infrastructure and water security.

The conference is also expected to support job creation, knowledge and technology transfer and the competitiveness of the Jordanian economy.

The dialogue examined the future of Jordan-EU relations amid political and security developments across the region, including their implications for existing partnerships and prospects for cooperation.

Participants also discussed Jordan's position in the evolving regional landscape, the EU's role in responding to political and security developments and the need to reassess regional relations in light of their implications for security and stability.

CRIME

Cassation Court upholds 10-year sentence for drug dealer

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld a January 2024 State Security Court (SSC) ruling sentencing a man to 10 years in prison after convicting him of possessing and selling illegal narcotics in Aqaba in September 2023.

The court declared the defendant guilty of possessing and selling a variety of illegal narcotics in the local market.

The SSC handed the

defendant a 15-year prison term for the charges and ordered him to pay JD10,000 in fines.

However, the court decided to reduce the sentence to 10 years in prison while maintaining the JD10,000 fine "to give the defendant a second chance in life".

Court documents said the Anti-Narcotics Department learnt that the defendant owned illegal drugs with the intent to sell in the local market.

"The law-enforcement agency officers raided the defendant's home on September 4 and found a variety of illegal drugs in his possession," court papers said.

"Officers found 1,400 Captagon pills and some hashish wrapped in foil paper at the defendant's home," court papers added.

The defendant confessed to owning the illegal drugs to sell in the local market when he was arrested, the court

transcripts stated.

The defendant contested the SSC's ruling through his lawyer, who argued that "there were legal errors in the investigation procedures".

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

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

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

Therefore, the higher court maintained, "the defendant deserves the punishment and fine he received".

The Cassation Court bench comprised judges Yassin Abdullat, Qassem Dughmi, Nayef Samarat, Hammad Ghazawi and Mohammad Khashashneh.



A protester wearing a Batman costume gestures in front of a French national flag during a demonstration in Lyon, central-eastern France, on Saturday

Clashes break out as hundreds of thousands protest in France

PARIS, France (AFP) — Police fired tear gas and clashed with protesters in Paris and elsewhere on Saturday as hundreds of thousands marched across France against soaring living costs and police violence, with some demonstrators dressed as clowns and witches for Halloween.

While the third consecutive day of nationwide protests was largely peaceful, tensions erupted in several cities later Saturday.

After a march on the outskirts of Paris in bright sunshine, clashes broke out between police and some demonstrators as the procession reached its final destination.

Dozens of masked people dressed in black used hammers to pry up paving stones and hurl them at police. At least one incendiary device was also thrown at security forces. Police responded with tear gas and several baton charges.

"A hard core of several hundred rioters" at the rear of the march attacked police with projectiles, including a Molotov cocktail, the police prefecture said. Officers were seeking "to restore public order", it added.

In Lyon, France's third-largest city, people threw projectiles at police, prompting officers to fire tear gas, according to a journalist at the scene.

In the southern city of Toulouse, police used water cannon against an unauthorised protest that drew several thousand people, mostly young demonstrators.

Elections looming

The demonstrations come in a febrile political climate, with presidential elections less than six months away and far-right leader Marine Le Pen topping opinion polls.

'Everyone is staying home. No one is going to come and buy anything'

The protest movement, bringing together Yellow Vest activists, trade unions, and high school and university students, initially focused on the rising cost of living, inequality and deteriorating learning conditions.

Following a security clampdown and serious injuries to some protesters, the movement broadened its demands to include greater protection of civil liberties and the right to protest.

Similar youth-led demonstrations have been seen across Europe in recent weeks.

Dressed up as angry citizen'

Earlier Saturday, thousands of people, some wearing costumes ranging from Spider-Man to Frankenstein, walked through eastern Paris as a helicopter circled overhead.

Placards read: "No need for tear gas to make our future look bleak" and "Dressed up as an angry citizen for Halloween".

"We say no to the cost of living, no to the far right, yes to high school

UK police arrest Palestine Action supporters ahead of Supreme Court hearing

LONDON (AFP) — British police on Saturday arrested at least 139 Palestine Action supporters, who protested in London and Edinburgh days ahead of a court appeal over the government's contentious ban of the group.

London's Metropolitan Police began detaining people shortly after hundreds started a lunchtime "mass action" outside the US embassy, an AFP reporter witnessed.

The force said in an evening update that officers were "continuing to make arrests" as they confirmed that 139 had already been detained.

Police have arrested more than 4,000 people on suspicion of showing support for Palestine Action, according to campaigners, after the British government outlawed it under anti-terror laws in July 2025.

Many of those arrested, including senior citizens and Holocaust survivors, have displayed signs at rallies reading: "I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action."

In July, hearings related to more than 2,000 of those cases

were postponed until later this year.

"It is truly dystopian that there have now been over 4,000 arrests under terror laws for peaceful vigils," Protest organisers Defend Our Juries said in a statement.

The ban puts the group on a blacklist that also includes Palestinian Hamas and the Lebanese group Hizbollah.

It made membership of, or support for, Palestine Action a criminal offence punishable by up to 14 years in prison.

The group's co-founder Huda Ammori has legally challenged the ban, arguing it was "disproportionate" and infringed human rights.

The Supreme Court is set to hold a two-day hearing on the high-profile case from Wednesday, after the Court of Appeal in June ruled in the government's favour.

Saturday's London protesters held banners bearing slogans such as "How is trying to stop a genocide a crime?" and "We are protesters, not terrorists."

Attendee Angie Zel-

Iran says US tone has 'changed' as Washington seeks negotiations

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran on Saturday said the tone of the United States had "completely changed" as Washington seeks to restart negotiations with the Islamic republic.

While the US and Israel have upped their threats to order fresh strikes, Vice President JD Vance also sent a letter to Iranian officials in recent days in a bid to revive talks.

"I read the letter. I haven't yet responded. Their tone has completely changed," Mohsen Rezaei, the head of Iran's supreme national security council, said in a video broadcast on Iranian television.

He said the change in tone was "a good sign" and showed Iran had "consolidated its victory".

Rezaei said he had not responded to the letter and would not comment further on its contents.

His comments came as indirect mediation via Qatar continued, though Iranian officials said earlier on Saturday that they had no plans to meet with US officials.

Iran's army warned Saturday that any new US attack would only spread their war wider, following threats by America and Israel of further military action as they hold crucial



This handout photo released by Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) official website Sapanews on February 17, shows a rocket being fired from a boat during a military exercise by members of the IRGC and navy in the Strait of Hormuz

elections.

"If the US president once again embarks on more regional adventurism under pressure from and in an attempt to appease, the Zionists, the flames of war will undoubtedly engulf a much wider geographical area," Iranian army spokesman Mohamad Akraminia said in a post on X, without elaborating.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also warned on Saturday that "Iran's Powerful Armed Forces will deal against those who dare harm our people".

The Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday that Vance had sent his letter to Iran's security chief at the direction of President Donald Trump in a bid to revive negotiations and avert further US strikes.

Iran has confirmed receiving the letter but has not announced any response.

The US holds midterm elections on Tuesday that could determine the direction of the war, which has proven unpopular with American voters following a spike in energy prices due to the conflict.

Last Tuesday, Israel also held legislative elections, with voters given a chance to offer a verdict on right-wing prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Under Netanyahu, who has vowed to topple Iran's government, Israel and Iran have engaged in direct military confrontations after decades of shadow war.

The Middle East war began in late February with US-Israeli strikes on Iran that killed the country's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as well as senior military commanders.

Most recently hostilities have focused on the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial Gulf shipping route for energy exports that Iran has blockaded since the start of the war.

The US has in retaliation been blockading Iranian ports in an attempt to squeeze the nation's economy.

German police fire water cannon during tense 'Gen Z' protests

FRANKFURT (AFP) — German police fired water cannon to disperse firework-hurling protesters on Saturday and were also pelted with other projectiles, as tensions rose at the end of massive youth-led protests.

In Berlin, Frankfurt, Cologne and dozens of other cities, demonstrators turned out for the protests organised by the group "GenZ regelt!" (GenZ has got this), the latest by disillusioned youth in Europe.

Thousands of police were deployed across the country and, after mostly peaceful demonstrations, tensions rose in the evening in some places.

In the western city of Cologne, where one of the biggest demonstrations took place, police fired water cannon to disperse a crowd after saying protesters had targeted officers with fireworks.

"We will not tolerate violence against emergency workers," said a police statement.

Earlier, a march through the city was halted after demonstrators started setting off fireworks. A march was also temporarily halted in Frankfurt after protesters set off fireworks.



Riot Police scuffle with protesters after a demonstration organised by 'GenZ regelt!' (Gen Z has got this!) in Frankfurt am Main on Saturday

In Berlin protesters hurled bottles and eggs while protesters set barricades ablaze in Hamburg, and police were using pepper spray on demonstrators in some places, Germany's daily Bild reported.

Demonstrators had earlier taken to the streets waving signs that read "Time for resistance", and "Merz must go", in reference to conservative Chancellor Friedrich Merz.

They have been inspired by similar movements across Europe, including in France and Italy.

"We're taking to the streets for a life that everyone can afford," said Veronika Dinter, a spokeswoman for the "GenZ regelt!" movement.

"Hardly anyone still believes in a better future if everything just continues as it is."

The movement's complaints range from the high cost of living to poorly maintained schools, government spending cuts and, more broadly, what it sees as politicians making decisions with apparently little regard for the younger generation.

They are also unhappy with sharply increased military spending and a new

voluntary service model aimed at boosting troop numbers, fearing it is a step towards bringing back conscription.

Several thousand demonstrators turned out in Cologne while the figure was around 5,000 in Berlin and 8,000 in Frankfurt, according to police.

There were also sizeable gatherings in other parts of the country, although the numbers were below the 170,000 nationwide that organisers had hoped for.

Authorities have been worried the protests, coinciding with Halloween, could be marred by the same

kind of violence seen elsewhere in Europe.

Protests were also taking place in France for a third straight weekend. Nationwide demonstrations there on October 17 degenerated into some of the country's worst rioting in years.

Berlin is in contact with officials in France and Italy amid fears that radicals from overseas could seek to join the German protests.

But, prior to the protests, authorities said that they had not seen evidence of concrete plans for violence.

The "GenZ regelt!" movement explicitly rejects violence.

It stresses that "extremist groups, anti-constitutional symbols, racism and hate speech have no place with us — no matter from which side".

Christian Volk, an expert in protest movements, said there was the potential to see a major movement emerge in Germany.

But Volk, from Berlin's Humboldt University, told AFP there were key differences with France, which has a "completely different tradition when it comes to confrontational forms of protest".



Pro-Palestinian activists and supporters stage a protest in support of the proscribed group Palestine Action outside the US Embassy in London, on Saturday

VIGIL

Spanish village gathers for memorial Mass for train crash victims

URDA, Spain (AFP) — Residents and local officials gathered on Saturday in a Spanish village near the site of a high-speed train collision that killed at least 69 people for a memorial Mass honouring the victims.

The pews inside the San Juan Bautista church in Urda, in the central province of Toledo, were packed, while dozens more people gathered outside to listen to the service. Some wiped away tears.

Investigators are looking into the cause of one of Europe's deadliest rail disasters this century, which occurred when a train travelling from Madrid

to Seville crashed into a stationary train on Wednesday.

'Dear families affected by the train accident, you are not alone. Society is with you, the best of society is with you'

Archbishop of Toledo Francisco Cerro acknowledged that "there are no words that can

offer comfort" to those who had lost loved ones.

But he added: "Dear families affected by the train accident, you are not alone. Society is with you, the best of society is with you."

He urged the public not to forget the tragedy, calling for such disasters never to happen again.

He also paid tribute to emergency service workers and volunteers, praising what he described as "a genuine wave of solidarity".

The president of the Castilla-La Mancha region, Emiliano Garcia-Page, and Urda mayor Manuel Galan were among those attending the service.

'In great pain'

Residents of Urda, which has a population of around 2,500, "are very badly affected, in great pain and with a great need for support", Galan told Spanish public television ahead of the Mass.

Village pharmacist, 78-year-old Antonio Garcia Colina, said he had rushed to the scene of the crash in his car shortly after it happened to try to help the injured and witnessed several people dying.

"As I walked toward the scene of the disaster, toward ground zero, I started seeing that the passengers were in bad shape as



People attend a funeral mass for the 69 fatal victims of a high-speed train collision occurred on Wednesday, in Urda, on Saturday

they were being pulled out of the train cars," he told AFP TV, describing the scene as "hellish".

Relatives of the victims, who have been providing DNA samples to help identify

the dead, face an agonising wait for news as rescue teams continue to sift through the wreckage and forensic experts work to identify the bodies.

Authorities overseeing the process have completed autopsies on all 69 people killed in the crash, of whom 36 have so far been identified.

Wednesday's crash was Spain's second major train disaster this year.

In January, 46 people were killed when one train derailed and slammed into the side of another travelling in the opposite direction on the same route, near the southern village of Adamuz.

US, S.Korea, Japan vow 'complete' N.Korea denuclearisation

SEOUL (AFP) — The United States, South Korea and Japan reaffirmed their commitment to the "complete denuclearisation" of North Korea on Saturday, as Pyongyang continues to reject disarmament ahead of possible talks with Washington.

Speculation is mounting over a potential meeting between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un at next month's APEC summit in China, with Trump making repeated overtures to Pyongyang for nuclear talks.



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio speaks the G20 foreign ministers' meeting in Atlanta, Georgia on Friday

of UN Security Council resolutions, including a ban on supporting revenue for North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

Despite long-running UN sanctions, North Korea, which is backed by Russia and China, has enshrined its status as a nuclear-armed state in law, with its regime repeatedly declaring its atomic arsenal permanent and irreversible.

Open to meeting

Trump has made repeated overtures to Pyongyang for nuclear talks, while scaling back joint military drills with ally South Korea.

The mercurial US leader even bucked long-held US policy last year by conceding that North Korea was already "sort of a nuclear power", while reaching

out to Pyongyang for talks, saying he was "100 per cent" open to a meeting, a suggestion that went unanswered.

Analysts and South Korea's spy agency say Kim may have conveyed Pyongyang's position on potential talks with Trump to Beijing during a recent visit to the Chinese border city of Dandong.

South Korea's dovish President Lee Jae My-

ung, who has repeatedly offered Pyongyang talks without preconditions, suggested in September that Washington seek a freeze, rather than the immediate elimination, of the North's nuclear programme in return for sanctions relief.

Critics have said such an approach risks tacitly accepting North Korea as a nuclear-armed state while allowing Pyongyang to win sanctions relief without giving up its arsenal.

Analysts say China may also be moving towards tacit acceptance, pointing to the omission of North Korean denuclearisation from statements after Kim and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in June.

Pyongyang denounced a joint statement on Saturday by a group of nations monitoring sanctions implementations against it, vowing that "the stereotyped sanctions racket of the US and the West can neither influence the position of the DPRK [North Korea] as a nuclear weapons state".

Polish president holds crisis talks in court standoff

WARSAW (AFP) — Poland's President Karol Nawrocki held crisis talks with political leaders after a dramatic showdown at the constitutional court in an escalating dispute over judicial independence.

The row over appointing the court's judges has spawned a constitutional crisis in the EU country, where a centrist government is vying with a nationalist head of state and opposition.

Prime Minister Donald Tusk's government has been trying for weeks to force out the court's judges, arguing they are not politically neutral.

He faces fierce resistance from the right-wing PiS Party, whose former government appointed them.

Followers of the opposition right-wing Law and Justice party (PiS) gathered outside the court, extending protests that have been running for weeks in support of its judges.

Riot police had surrounded the court on Friday when protesters rallied there following the suspension of its president Bogdan Swieczkowski.

Demonstrators chanted: "Tusk traitor" and tried to push through security barricades. Police said three people were arrested.

Responding to the peak in tension, Nawrocki — a right-wing independent — cut short a trip to Senegal and returned to Warsaw where he summoned party leaders for talks at his office on "the threat to internal security".

Representatives of na-

tionalist, far-right and some ruling coalition parties attended the talks at the presidential palace, while Tusk's Civic Coalition Party stayed away, according to Polish media.

The Left, a coalition member, said it had not been invited and would not have attended because it considered Nawrocki a party to the dispute.

No breakthrough had emerged by Saturday afternoon.

Demonstrators outside the court accused Tusk's government of trying to seize control of the institution.

"This is Donald Tusk destroying democracy," protester Iwona Dudek, 62, who had travelled from a German border town with her husband, told AFP. "It's a tragedy."

But she added: "Donald Tusk has done the impossible. He has united the entire right wing."

The court's official X account described the government move as a "coup d'etat".

But Tusk, in his speech Saturday evening, said: "Let's call things by their name. For years in Poland there exist organisations and politicians who wish to destroy democracy and rule of law."

He called Friday's unrest "horrifying".

"I very much wish that we would never have to witness similar scenes in Poland again," he added.

pointed by the PiS government that ruled from 2015 to 2023.

The court frequently ruled in favour of Polish legislation over EU law.

The European Union accused Poland's highest court of being too close to the nationalist leadership of the time.

Tusk, a strongly pro-EU figure, vowed to end the dispute with Brussels after winning the election in 2023.

But the country's president, a right-wing independent, has blocked nominations to the court under his administration.

Swieczkowski's suspension was announced on Friday by another judge, Anna Korwin-Piotrowska, who said the move was needed to restore the rule of law.

"After years of PiS-led lawlessness, this is a difficult process, sometimes painful, and it requires decisive action," Tusk said on X.

"There is no other way."

The European Commission on Saturday urged Nawrocki to approve the new judges who were nominated by parliament, so the court could function in line with the constitution and EU law.

The European Commission on Saturday urged Nawrocki to approve the new judges who were nominated by parliament in line with the constitution and EU law, a spokesman told AFP.

The US ambassador to Poland, Tom Rose, warned all sides: "Don't take any action that could provoke violence or further escalation."

Land transit cargo rises 84.7% in Q3 2026 — ministry

Continued from page 1

Air transport data showed a 14.9 per cent increase in aircraft movements to 28,181 flights, compared with 24,527 in the corresponding period of 2025. Passenger traffic also rose by 6.11 per cent to 3,127,019.

Air cargo volume in-

creased by 3 per cent to 20,549 tonnes, up from 19,950 tonnes, while air mail volume declined by 21.85 per cent to 198.5 tonnes, compared with 254 tonnes in the third quarter of 2025.

Maritime transport statistics for Agaba ports showed a 9 per cent decline in total cargo traf-

fic to 6,764,241 tonnes, down from 7,433,023 tonnes in the same period of 2025.

Sea imports fell by 4.81 per cent to 3,981,133 tonnes, while exported cargo decreased by 14.39 per cent to 2,783,108 tonnes.

Imported container traffic increased by 23.53

per cent to 167,778 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), while exported container traffic rose by 8.94 per cent to 146,491 TEUs.

This brought total container traffic up by 16.27 per cent to 314,269 TEUs, compared with 270,286 TEUs in the third quarter of 2025.

Railway transport performance also improved in the third quarter of 2026 compared with the second quarter of the same year.

Train trips increased by 24 per cent, from 25 to 31, while passenger numbers rose by 22.3 per cent, from 3,655 to 4,469.

Arab Potash posts 34% rise in nine-month net profit to JD169m

Continued from page 1

Abu Hdeib added that advancing capital projects would enhance Jordan's global competitiveness in the mining sector. He also commended the efforts of the executive management and workforce in safeguarding shareholders' interests and supporting comprehen-

sive socio-economic development.

APC Chief Executive Officer Maen Nsour, attributed the strong financial results to targeted marketing strategies aimed at expanding the company's presence in high-margin markets while consolidating its established export shares in major traditional markets.

Nsour said prudent management of production efficiency and supply chains, alongside the adoption of alternative shipping solutions amid challenging geopolitical conditions, had enabled the company to navigate volatility in maritime transport and fulfil its contractual commitments across global markets.

He added that APC was pressing ahead with its expansion plans, led by the Southern Expansion Project, to increase production capacity and meet growing international demand for potash and fertiliser products, while boosting the mining sector's contribution to GDP.

APC continues to

implement its strategic plans, focusing on sustainability, digital transformation and reducing its carbon footprint, alongside expanding downstream derivative industries to maximise the added value of national mineral resources, in line with the Kingdom's Economic Modernisation Vision.

Israeli protesters demand opposition ally with Arab parties to oust Netanyahu

Continued from page 1

But Avigdor Liberman, leader of the right-wing anti-Netanyahu Yisrael Beiteinu

Party, has said he will not enter a coalition that relies on Arab parties, even for external support.

"Whoever wants

to rely on supporters of terrorism, let them. Yisrael Beiteinu will not be there," he wrote on Facebook on Friday.

Jordan, Syria maintain strategic ties, strengthen security and military cooperation

Continued from page 1

The top diplomat described Jordanian-Syrian relations as comprehensive, particularly in the security and military fields, noting that strategic cooperation is also pursued through the Higher Coordination Council, which is scheduled to hold its third session next month.

He also said that the region faces growing challenges from cross-border militias and armed

groups operating outside state institutions, undermining governments' authority over decisions of war and peace.

He affirmed that Syria would stand alongside Jordan and the Gulf states in confronting any aggression, while condemning missile and drone attacks.

"Syria has moved beyond the trenches of conflict to take its place in shaping regional security," Shibani, stressing that lasting security

depends on states capable of protecting their populations, neighbours respecting one another's sovereignty, and agreements that withstand difficult challenges.

The Syrian foreign minister also outlined the country's recovery efforts and its positions on a range of regional and international issues.

Speaking during a visit to a condolence house in Daraa in southern Syria on Thursday, Shibani said that Jordan had

expressed dissatisfaction over the deaths of civilians in a recent incident and agreed to form a joint committee with Syria to investigate the circumstances.

Shibani Syrian-Jordanian relations as being at their strongest in a century, stressing that the incident would not undermine ties between the neighboring countries.

He said that the strength of bilateral relations should serve as a foundation for address-

ing disputes and resolving incidents fairly, rather than allowing them to damage longstanding ties.

He also said that both sides needed to use the incident as an opportunity to further strengthen relations.

He also warned against attempts to exploit the situation to stir tensions between the two countries, saying that public awareness on both sides would help prevent escalation.

He said Jordanian officials had taken the incident seriously, offered condolences to the victims' families and demonstrated concern for the humanitarian consequences.

Jordan had also agreed to establish a committee to follow up on the case and investigate the circumstances surrounding it, he added.

The Syrian foreign minister said that the governments of both countries had handled

the incident responsibly, emphasising their shared security interests.

"Jordan's security is part of Syria's security, and Syria's security is part of Jordan's security," he said.

The top diplomat added that relations between the Syrian and Jordanian peoples were rooted in historical and popular ties, stressing the importance of preserving goodwill and maintaining communi-

cation despite incidents that could strain bilateral relations.

The minister expressed hope that the committee would complete its work successfully and that the Jordanian side would conduct further investigations to help establish the facts and ensure justice.

He called for efforts to move beyond the incident and strengthen Syrian-Jordanian relations at both official and popular levels.

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Who protects tax fairness?

By Raad Mahmoud Al-Tal

The effectiveness of tax policy should not be judged solely by the amount of revenue it generates. It should also be assessed by its ability to ensure fairness among taxpayers and prevent distortions that allow tax privileges to become a source of unfair competition. At a time when public finances are under increasing pressure, reviewing tax exemptions and special provisions is more important than ever. The objective, however, should not be to impose additional tax burdens, but to ensure that legally due revenues are collected and that incentives serve their intended economic purposes.

Free zones were established to strengthen the economy's links with international markets, promote exports and re-exports, facilitate international trade and transit, and attract domestic and foreign investment by offering a competitive business environment. They are also intended to develop the country into a regional hub for logistics, storage and distribution, create employment opportunities, facilitate the transfer of knowledge and technology, and generate added value for the national economy. In this context, tax exemptions and investment incentives should be viewed as instruments for achieving these objectives, rather than as ends in themselves. When activities within a free zone increasingly serve the domestic market, moving beyond their intended role in international trade and re-export, questions arise about whether the incentives remain justified by the nature of the activities being undertaken. More importantly, it becomes necessary to ensure that these privileges do not create an unfair advantage over businesses operating within the domestic market and complying with the applicable tax obligations.

Vehicle trading in the Zarqa Free Zone provides a case that warrants closer examination. Available data covering the period from the beginning of 2022 to 25 October 2026 show that approximately 195,600 vehicles were cleared, with a total value of nearly JD 2.69 billion. The estimated net profit amounted to approximately JD 537.8 million. Applying a hypothetical income tax rate of 20 per cent to these estimated profits would imply a tax amount of approximately JD 107.6 million.

More specifically, the data indicate that approximately 196,000 vehicles were cleared for the domestic market during the same period, with a total value approaching JD 2.69 billion. Based on the estimates provided, net profits reached approximately JD 537.8 million, equivalent to a hypothetical income tax liability of around JD 107.6 million at a rate of 20 per cent. These figures raise important questions about the actual tax obligations arising from this activity and the extent to which taxes collected are consistent with the profits generated. It is important to emphasise that this amount represents an estimate based on an assumed tax rate, rather than a confirmed figure for unpaid tax.

The data also point to a substantial expansion in domestic market activity. The number of vehicles sold locally increased from approximately 40,300 in 2022 to 82,600 in 2025. Over the same period, estimated profits rose from JD 99.1 million to JD 193.5 million. This growth highlights the need for more effective tax oversight, particularly through linking customs records with commercial invoices and tax returns. Such integration would help establish a more accurate picture of actual profits and the tax obligations associated with them.

From an economic perspective, applying different tax treatments to businesses engaged in similar activities and competing for the same consumers can distort market competition. It may also encourage investment to flow towards activities that benefit from preferential tax treatment, rather than towards those offering greater efficiency, productivity or economic value. The consequences extend beyond potential revenue losses. They can affect the allocation of resources, undermine the competitiveness of businesses operating within the formal economy, and limit their ability to survive, invest and expand.

What, then, needs to be done? The first priority is to review the legislation governing free zones and establish a clear distinction between activities serving foreign markets and transactions that ultimately supply the domestic market. All such transactions should be subject to the tax obligations prescribed by law. In addition, economic incentives should be evaluated periodically against measurable outcomes, including their contribution to exports, investment and employment, as well as their fiscal cost to the Treasury. This would help determine whether the benefits generated by these incentives justify the revenue foregone.

Tax reform should not be understood as a call to eliminate investment incentives or undermine the role of free zones. Rather, it should ensure that these incentives are directed towards activities that generate genuine added value for the national economy. Fairness in tax treatment is not simply a means of increasing government revenue. It is a fundamental requirement for a competitive market, a level playing field for businesses, a more attractive investment environment and greater confidence in economic policy.

The question is not whether free zones should enjoy incentives, but whether those incentives are achieving the economic objectives for which they were introduced, without undermining tax fairness or distorting competition.

SOFEX 2026: Localising defence technology in the era of smart warfare



Mohammad Ali Mehaidat

The launch of the 15th edition of the Special Operations Forces Exhibition and Conference, SOFEX 2026, in Aqaba reflects a strategic reading of unprecedentedly rapid shifts in the security and military landscape. Held under Royal patronage, the event reinforces SOFEX's position as a key platform for anticipating the emerging operational environment, where conventional warfare increasingly intersects with asymmetric threats and the expanding roles of artificial intelligence, cyber threats, and unmanned aerial systems. These developments are reshaping the concept of military readiness, shifting the focus from the quantitative acquisition of equipment to the ability to anticipate and detect risks, understand their patterns, and rapidly adapt through the integration of information, technology and human capabilities. SOFEX therefore serves as a strategic platform for anticipating operational requirements and identifying solutions that strengthen the defence systems of armed forces and security agencies.

The choice of Aqaba as the host city for this defence event reinforces its exceptional geopolitical significance, given its location on the Red Sea and its links to regional supply chains and trade networks. Aqaba's strategic importance has grown further amid disruptions and risks to maritime navigation through key strategic Straits such as Bab Al Mandeb and Hormuz. This significance is further enhanced by Aqaba's position as an international communications hub and by the Aqaba Digital City, which supports artificial intelligence technologies and advanced applications. These assets complement Aqaba's role as a vital investment and tourism hub within Jordan's Golden Triangle, reflecting the strategic vision articulated by His Majesty King Abdullah at the United Nations General Assembly: "We are strengthening connections from the Gulf to the Mediterranean as a hub for trade, industry, and technology — while responding to humanitarian crises."

Modern warfare requires a fundamental shift in decision-making, with superiority increasingly dependent on the ability to aggregate vast volumes of data and process them in real time, transforming them into actionable intelligence that provides command-and-control systems with a precise strategic and operational picture. Jordanian leadership in this field is demonstrated through the innovative technological solutions showcased by the Jordan Design and Development Bureau (JODDB) at SOFEX. The "Awn" platform provides an intelligent environment for military planning and the development of operational scenarios, enabling commanders to assess situations and make informed decisions. The "Moeen" platform serves as an advanced intelligence tool for collecting and analysing data, while the "SHARP I" intelligent system completes this operational integration by coordinating air operations, monitoring flight paths, and enhancing airspace awareness between aircraft and control centres.

This intelligent use of data is complemented by the protection of military infrastructure in cyberspace and cyber intelligence capabilities for detecting malicious activity and providing early warning. Together, these national systems form a digital and human shield that safeguards the effectiveness of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army, ensures the sovereignty of Jordanian decision-making, and demonstrates the country's ability to develop and localise artificial intelligence capabilities.

Unmanned aerial vehicles and autonomous systems are driving a structural shift in combat tools and battlefield reconnaissance concepts, fuelled by their rapid proliferation, low operating costs, diverse payloads and direct autonomous guidance in complex environments. The technical displays at SOFEX reveal a strategic drive to localise unmanned systems and transfer the technology required to manufacture and develop them domestically. They feature a new generation of UAVs equipped with autonomous navigation algorithms and reconnaissance swarms, alongside advanced counter-UAS (C-UAS) systems employing radar and electro-optical detection, electronic defeat and direct kinetic engagement. These technologies

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are integrated with Special Operations concepts to link detection and interception data with command-and-control centres and enable the selection of the appropriate response to each threat. This capability assumes particular strategic importance in Jordan's security environment, where it supports efforts to counter organised smuggling, secure the borders protect critical infrastructure, and combat terrorism. The systems showcased at SOFEX thus represent operational capabilities that enhance the readiness of the Jordan Armed Forces and support the Kingdom's inherent and legitimate right to protect its territory and national sovereignty.

In conclusion, SOFEX's deeper strategic value extends beyond the platforms and exhibits on display to building sustainable national capabilities and localising defence knowledge. The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) continues to shape an operational approach centred on linking technology to operational requirements, industry to sustainability, and international cooperation to the higher national interest, transforming innovation into genuine readiness capable of addressing all challenges. These efforts are guided by the vision and direction of His Majesty King Abdullah, Supreme Commander of the Jordan Armed Forces, whose strategic leadership continues to reinforce a doctrine of readiness and continuous modernisation, ensuring that the Jordan Armed Forces remain a stronghold safeguarding Jordan's security and protecting its national assets.

Brig. Gen. Mohammad Ali Mehaidat — director of Military Media at the Jordan Armed Forces - Arab Army (JAF)

Jordan and Syria: Border security and the responsibility of neighbourhood

By Hasan Dajah

The relationship between Jordan and Syria transcends mere geographical proximity; it is a deep-rooted human, economic, and social connection. This bond is exemplified by Jordan's historical hosting of approximately 1.3 million Syrians-including both long-term residents and refugees-to whom it has provided healthcare and educational services, despite limited resources and a scarcity of international support.

This assistance has also included the deployment of Jordanian Civil Defence teams to help extinguish major fires, as well as the dispatch of over 186 relief trucks in the wake of the devastating earthquake. The stability of Syria is a strategic interest for Jordan, just as Jordan serves as a pillar for Syria's recovery. Consequently, Jordan requires a Syrian state capable of securing its own borders, while Syria needs an active partnership with Jordan-one that supports its recovery, reconstruction, and reintegration into the Arab fold-thereby transforming humanitarian solidarity into sustainable strategic cooperation that bolsters security and peace.

Throughout the years of the Syrian crisis, Jordan has shouldered significant humanitarian, economic and security burdens. Its society opened its doors to host and support those in need, despite constrained resources and the resulting strain on public services and employment opportunities.

This response was not merely a temporary measure to address a refugee crisis; rather, it reflected a profound recognition that the Syrian people are an integral part of the region's human fabric, and that abandoning them in their moment of distress would run counter to the fundamental responsibilities inherent in being a neighbour. However, solidarity-no matter how broad-does not negate a state's right to protect its citizens, nor does it transform its borders into an open space where its security and stability can be drained.

The danger in southern Syria lies in the fact that the fragility of institutional control may allow for an overlap between armed groups, smuggling networks, local interests and illicit economies. These actors do not necessarily require a shared ideology or a unified command to engage in mutually beneficial exchanges; funding, weaponry, or transit routes may bring them together. Consequently, drawing a rigid distinction between terrorism and organised crime can obscure the true nature of the threat-especially when the proceeds from smuggling become a source of funding for violence, or when networks used for transport and concealment serve as infrastructure for various groups with disparate agendas.

It is also essential to distinguish between the Syrian authorities' inability to exert control over certain areas and a lack of political will to do so. The former necessitates institutional support, intelligence cooperation and capacity building, whereas the latter requires explicit political engagement and a clear delineation of responsibilities. These two scenarios may intersect during a transitional phase, characterised by a multiplicity of power centers and varying degrees of state authority to enforce its decisions. Most concerning — and infuriating-is that some of these groups have collaborated with Israel in activities aimed at destabilising Jordan.

Conversely, Jordan cannot indefinitely defer its own security while waiting for its neighbor to complete the process of building its institutions. A state is accountable to its own citizens for preventing threats, not merely for managing the consequences once they have materialised. However, the effectiveness of any security action is not measured solely by its immediate force, but by its capacity to diminish threats and prevent their resurgence, all while protecting civilians and avoiding an escalation of tensions. Security imperatives do not exempt a decision from the need to account for its political and humanitarian consequences; rather, such considerations are integral to its success and sustainability.

This highlights the importance of integrating deterrence and cooperation into a single, coherent policy. Deterrence makes it clear that Jordan's borders are not a testing ground for the state's threshold of endurance, while cooperation paves the way for addressing the root sources of threats before they reach the border. Relying on only one of these approaches creates a strategic gap: force alone may merely prompt networks to shift their locations or tactics, while coordination without implementation risks becoming nothing more than an exchange of messages.

What is required is the transformation of political understanding into an operational framework equipped with mechanisms for monitoring, accountability, and rapid response.

Confronting an armed group does not equate to hostility toward the Syrian people...

Such a framework can be built through permanent security communication channels, systematic information sharing, and clear mechanisms for verifying reports and tracking suspected individuals or networks. Furthermore, there should be an agreement on procedures to prevent misunderstandings during border incidents, as well as criteria for assessing progress-distinct from mere public statements. Trust between states is not built on pleasantries alone; it accumulates when institutions honor their commitments, with results manifested in reduced risks and an enhanced capacity for both sides to protect their populations and secure border crossings.

Moreover, any comprehensive approach must also incorporate economic and social dimensions. Areas with limited livelihood opportunities are more susceptible to being co-opted by smuggling networks, armed groups and extremist organisations.

Consequently, revitalising legitimate trade, facilitating the movement of goods under clear regulations and supporting employment in border communities can diminish the incentives that fuel criminal economies. These measures are not substitutes for security actions; rather, they are conditions that help consolidate the outcomes of such actions. A stable border requires a population that perceives its own interests as aligned with the rule of law and legitimate exchange, rather than with the persistence of chaos.

Media discourse, for its part, bears the responsibility of shielding the relationship between the two peoples from incitement and sweeping generalisations.

Confronting an armed group does not equate to hostility toward the Syrian people, and criticising security shortcomings should not entail disregarding the suffering in Syria or the complexities of its recovery.

Likewise, respect for sovereignty must be coupled with the responsibility to ensure that one's territory is not used to harm neighbours. Any disagreement regarding security measures should be addressed through facts and institutional channels, rather than by turning public anxieties into fuel for mutual mobilisation.

It is in Jordan's strategic interest for Syria to become a partner capable of preventing threats, and for the border to transform from a source of concern into a space for engagement and development. Therefore, the most constructive message to Damascus is one that combines candor with a readiness to provide support: Jordan's security is an unwavering priority, Syria's stability is a shared interest, and genuine solidarity is only realised when it translates into mutual responsibility and concrete action. States cannot choose their neighbours, but they can choose how to manage the relationship-by allowing suspicions and crises to accumulate, or by building a partnership, that safeguards people, borders and the future.

The writer is professor of strategic studies at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University

BUSINESS

Sunday, November 1, 2026



Photo Courtesy of Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply

The Swedish embassy in Amman on Saturday launches the Swedish-Jordanian Business Guide 2026, in the presence of Swedish Ambassador to Jordan Maria Sargren and Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Yarub Qudah

Swedish embassy launches Swedish-Jordanian Business Guide 2026

AMMAN (JT) — The Swedish embassy in Amman on Saturday launched the Swedish-Jordanian Business Guide 2026, in the presence of Swedish Ambassador to Jordan Maria Sargren and Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Yarub Qudah

Speaking at the launch, Qudah stressed the importance of continued cooperation between the government and the private sector to overcome obstacles, improve the business environment and strengthen bilateral partnerships.

He also highlighted investment opportunities in the Kingdom, particularly in major strategic projects, including the National Water Carrier, the national railway project and Amra City, as well as potential opportunities arising from

Syria's reconstruction, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Qudah called on Swedish companies to capitalise on the investment opportunities available in the Kingdom and draw on their expertise to support development projects.

Sargren highlighted the importance of trust, long-term relationships, quality and innovation in Swedish business culture, noting their role in strengthening partnerships with Jordanian companies.

The launch was attended by representatives of the Swedish-Jordanian Business Network (SJBN), as well as officials from the public and private sectors.

The guide features Swedish companies operating in Jordan across several sec-

tors, including health-care, telecommunications, energy, water, industry, transport and consumer goods. It provides company profiles and contact details to facilitate business ties and explore opportunities for cooperation.

It also highlights key milestones in Jordanian-Swedish relations, trade exchanges, digital innovation in Sweden, and cultural and literary ties between the two countries.

Established in November 2022 during the King of Sweden's official visit to Jordan, the SJBN brings together Swedish companies operating in the Kingdom under the auspices of the Swedish embassy. The network aims to promote the exchange of expertise and strengthen trade and economic cooperation.

Petrol prices raised for November, keeps diesel, kerosene rates unchanged

90-octane petrol increases by JD0.030 per litre, 95-octane petrol increases by JD0.015 per litre

AMMAN (JT) — The Fuel Pricing Committee on Saturday announced on its monthly meeting the local fuel prices for November.

Reviewing the prices of petroleum derivatives in October compared with previous months, the committee noted continued pressure from rising global fuel costs amid ongoing geopolitical tensions in the region and their impact on international markets, according to a statement by Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources.

Despite the increase in international prices, the committee decided to partially adjust local fuel prices for November, in line with the government's efforts to mitigate the impact on citizens and economic sectors.

Under the decision, 90-octane petrol increased by JD0.030 per litre, while 95-octane petrol rose by JD0.015 per litre. The prices of diesel, kerosene and household gas remained unchanged.

Following the adjustment, 90-octane petrol will be sold at JD1.080 per litre in November, up from JD1.050, while 95-octane petrol will cost JD1.375 per litre, compared with JD1.360 in October. Diesel will remain at JD0.900 per litre and kerosene at JD0.550 per litre.



JT file

The Fuel Pricing Committee decides that petrol prices is raised for November, and keeps diesel and kerosene rates unchanged

The price of a 12.5 kilogramme household liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinder will remain fixed at JD7. Meanwhile, the government will continue to subsidise industrial LPG, with support amounting to JD2.4 million for November.

The committee stressed that local fuel pricing is based on the monthly average of international prices over the 30 days preceding the pricing date.

However, under the gradual adjustment approach adopted since the beginning of the crisis, local prices continue to fall short

of actual global costs, as the government absorbs part of the difference to ease the burden on citizens and economic sectors.

The estimated actual costs of fuel derivatives for November stand at JD1.132 per litre for 90-octane petrol, JD1.034 for diesel and JD1.048 for kerosene, compared with approved local prices of JD1.080, JD0.900 and JD0.550 per litre, respectively.

The committee said total subsidies and price differences borne by the government since the start of the crisis through the end

of October had reached around JD290 million, reflecting higher global fuel costs and the decision not to pass the full increases on to consumers and the national economy.

It added that maintaining diesel and kerosene prices reflects the government's efforts to ease financial pressures on citizens and economic sectors, particularly transport, production and heating, amid continued uncertainty in global markets.

The committee also said it would continue to assess developments in global

energy markets and their impact on local costs each month, taking into account price movements and geopolitical conditions, with the aim of limiting local price fluctuations and providing greater stability for citizens and economic sectors.

The Energy and Minerals Regulatory Commission also decided to set the fuel price difference charge on electricity bills for November 2026 at zero. The commission noted that the approved rate remains unchanged from that of October, according to a commission statement.

US oil giants report profit surge again on Iran war

NEW YORK (AFP) — US oil giants reported recently another quarter of soaring profits reflecting higher oil prices and refining margins due to the US-Iran war.

ExxonMobil's profits in the period came in at \$15.4 billion, slightly more than double the \$7.5 billion in the year-ago period, while Chevron's profits were \$9.9 billion, compared with \$3.5 billion in the year-ago quarter.

The surge in US petroleum earnings comes on the heels of similar increases at European companies as the US-Iran war drags on. The impacts have been most dramatic in refining, where the profit margins for processing crude oil into gasoline, diesel and other petroleum products have exploded in recent months.

Steep price increases and supply shortfalls in some cases have sparked protests in parts of Asia, Latin America and



AFP photo via Getty Images North America

The ExxonMobil and Chevron company logos are displayed on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange during morning trading on July 24, in New York City

Europe. In the United States, President Donald Trump's Republican party faces a stern test in next week's midterm elections, with high gasoline and diesel prices souring the mood of consumers.

At ExxonMobil, oil prices averaged around \$85 per barrel during the period, about a third more than in the 2025 quarter. Refining margins were

\$50.3 per barrel, almost three times the level in the year-ago period as the company cited efforts to boost output of diesel and other key products that have seen supplies tighten.

"Refining capacity in Russia and the Middle East remained curtailed, with roughly 10 per cent of global capacity offline," the company said in pre-

pared remarks ahead of a conference call.

"North American refineries sustained high operating rates during the quarter but were unable to fully offset reduced global refining capacity availability," according to the remarks.

The efforts to boost output translated into 100 per cent crude unit utilisation at US Gulf Coast refineries, ExxonMobil said in its press release.

Chevron scored higher profits in its upstream business, but also won its greatest increases in the downstream area, where profits of \$4.9 billion were more than four times the level in the year-ago period.

The NGO 350.org, which advocates for clean energy and other measures to address climate change, called for "permanent levies" on "exceptional" oil industry profits, with the funds going to consumers and to finance the energy

transition.

"As we head into the midterms, energy affordability is on everyone's minds," said Candice Forten, US campaigns manager for 350.Org.

"Families and small businesses want reliable electricity they can afford, and communities want a say in how their land, water and energy resources are used," Forten said. "Yet as people struggle with energy bills and the impacts of extreme weather, the biggest oil companies are forecast to make billions."

Forten called for policies to ensure that data centers for artificial intelligence do not drive up electricity bills and that oil companies "pay their fair share towards the costs of the crisis, rather than leaving the public to pick up the bill".

Shares of ExxonMobil rose 2 per cent in pre-market trading, while Chevron climbed 1.7 per cent.



AFP photo

A woman walks past a giant logo of the Euro currency inside the headquarters of the European Central Bank in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, on Thursday, ahead of a press conference on the Eurozone's monetary policy

Eurozone growth holds up despite energy crunch

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AFP) — The eurozone economy grew more than expected in the third quarter, official data showed on Friday, demonstrating resilience despite the impact of the Middle East war and surging energy costs.

Economists said the single currency area's growth held up well but warned of the potential for stagflation — a nightmare mix of stagnant growth and high inflation.

The EU's statistics agency said GDP across the 21-country euro area expanded by 0.4 per cent in the third quarter, a slowdown from the 0.6 per cent seen in the second quarter.

The figure was higher than the 0.2 per cent predicted by economists surveyed by Bloomberg.

But Ireland's whop-

ping 5.5 per cent growth in the third quarter skewed the data, as economists said the euro area grew by 0.2 per cent excluding Ireland.

Eurozone inflation hit a three-year high of 3.8 per cent in September...

He pointed to European industry benefitting from higher spending on defence and infrastructure, as well as the tech boom.

Paolo Grignani, senior economist at Oxford Economics, said the data "paint a mixed picture for the eurozone with stagflationary tendencies: GDP growth held up well, but national inflation releases surprised to the upside".

Eurozone inflation hit a three-year high of 3.8 per cent in September, as the US-Israel war on Iran fuelled a surge in energy prices.

With Europe heading for winter, experts warned there are challenges ahead. Colijn said that "steadily" rising energy costs, including gas prices, means Europe "will see an additional growth challenge" in the winter.

Markets lashed by tech rout as earnings fan AI fears

NEW YORK (AFP) — Technology firms retreated further on Friday after more poorly received earnings from US titans fanned deepening concerns about the AI investment boom.

Amazon became the latest tech giant to face pressure on Wall Street after it missed earnings expectations and signaled more aggressive AI spending ahead. Chip giant Intel sank nearly 30 per cent after its outlook disappointed.

Declines by those two companies and others translated to a bruising finale to an ugly week for

the Nasdaq, which ended the day down nearly 3 per cent.

The Dow and S&P 500 also finished firmly lower in a session also marred by a jump in oil prices and a fall in bitcoin prices after cryptocurrency exchange Binance acknowledged what could be the biggest hack of its kind in the world.

"The end of the week is dominated by a continuation of the recent AI sell-off on disappointing earnings, and concerns about the safety of crypto," said Kathleen Brooks, research director

at XTB trading group.

"The past couple of days, some of the big tech names related to AI have been dragging the market down," said Peter Cardillo of Spartan Capital Securities. "All the money that was spent is basically being questioned, whether or not it will pay off."

Microsoft, Alphabet and Amazon all reported quarterly results this week, and each signalled it would keep pouring money into data centres and chips even as investors grow impatient for returns.

Along with Meta,

which reported last week, together the four companies are on track to spend more than \$700 billion on capital investment this year — roughly the size of Argentina's or Belgium's entire economy — much of it on AI infrastructure, according to analyst estimates.

Friday's session on Wall Street also proved difficult for other AI-linked companies, with Nvidia shedding 4.2 per cent, Micron 5.3 per cent and data center company CoreWeave losing nearly 10 per cent.

The steep losses for tech firms Friday re-

versed optimism earlier in the week prompted by AI giant Anthropic's IPO filing.

"Given the importance of tech stocks to global markets, it is not surprising to see stock markets around the world ending the week with heavy losses," said market analyst Chris Beauchamp at online trading and investing platform IG.

South Korea's tech-heavy Kospi index closed out its week down 3.5 per cent and Tokyo finished with a 2 per cent loss.

Hong Kong, however, closed up 1.5 per cent.

FOOTBALL

Aston Villa to take legal action against pundit Carragher

LONDON (AFP) — Aston Villa have announced plans to take legal action against former Liverpool defender-turned-pundit Jamie Carragher for what the club described as "unacceptable insults" about the club and its supporters. Carragher, a prominent pundit with Sky Sports and CBS, has been hit with a backlash by Villa fans for suggesting that manager Unai Emery should be a candidate to replace the under-fire Michael Carrick at Manchester United. "Aston Villa will initiate legal action against Jamie Carragher for his unacceptable insults about the club and its fans," Villa chairman Nassef Sawiris said in a short statement posted on the club's social media feeds. "Aston Villa will not allow anyone to stop our ascension in English and European football." Carragher, 48, responded by offering an apology. "I'd like to apologise to Aston Villa, the owners and their fans. My language this week was clumsy and wrong," Carragher posted on social media. "I can assure Villa fans it was tongue in cheek but I can understand it's not come across that way, so apologies." Emery has transformed Villa's fortunes since taking charge four years ago.

Chelsea manager Alonso dismisses talk of Estevao loan deal

LONDON (AFP) — Xabi Alonso said Friday there had been no discussions about loaning out Estevao as the Brazilian teenager struggles to force his way into the Chelsea manager's first-team plans. The 19-year-old provided some rare highlights during a largely forgettable campaign for the Blues last season that saw Liam Rosenior sacked as Chelsea boss in April. But he has yet to start in the Premier League under Alonso, with Estevao having played just 172 minutes of first-team football so far this season. The rising star remained an unused substitute as Chelsea were knocked out of the League Cup by Liverpool in a penalty shoot-out on Wednesday, with his path into the starting side blocked by Alonso's favoured front three of Morgan Rogers, Cole Palmer and Joao Pedro. Nevertheless, Alonso — speaking ahead of Chelsea's match at home to Manchester United in the Premier League on Saturday — said of Estevao: "Sure, he will play. The season is long and there will be moments for everyone." "He will have his games, his minutes. We are still early in the season but he will be there."

By Rayan Jaafra

AMMAN — Week 7 of the Jordanian Pro League kicked off on Thursday at Petra Stadium, where Jazeera and Salt played out a tense, hard-fought 1-1 draw. Salt were reduced to ten men early on when Omar Hasnin received a second yellow card in the 32nd minute. Jazeera broke the deadlock in the 70th minute after Yaseen Bakhit won and successfully converted a penalty, bringing his tally to five goals in seven appearances. Despite their numerical disadvantage, Salt hit back swiftly in the 74th minute through Ali Tamari, whose low drive eluded goalkeeper Qais Abbasi.

Action shifted to King Abdullah Stadium on Friday morning for an entertaining clash between second-placed Ramtha and Baqa'a. Ramtha opened the scoring when Saif Darwish reacted quickest to a loose ball deflected off a Baqa'a defender. Darwish then turned provider just before the break, slipping a pinpoint ball through to foreign import Gassam Al Fousini, who finished past goalkeeper Malek Shalabi to double the lead in the 45th minute. Baqa'a struck back early in the second half through Obaida Al Samarneh, who unleashed a ferocious first-time volley that beat goalkeeper Murad



Petra photo

Al Hussein Irbid midfielder Salahdeen Farash celebrates his late goal against Al Faisali

Al Falouji.

On Friday evening's fixture, Wihdat stumbled against Arabi Irbid. Wihdat thought they had taken an 18th-minute lead through Pafa Diop, only for FIFA-listed referee Adham Makhadmeh to chalk the goal off following a VAR review for a prior foul. Arabi then delivered the de-

cisive blow in the 56th minute; Motaz Obaidat met a bouncing ball inside the area and rifled a brilliant first-time shot into the top corner, leaving goalkeeper Mohammad Al Amwasi with no chance. Despite sustained late pressure from Wihdat, Arabi held firm to their second win of the campaign and

hand Wihdat their second defeat.

And on Saturday at Amman International Stadium, title holders Hussein Irbid produced a statement victory, defeating league leaders Faisali to inflict their first loss of the season. Hussein snatched the winner in the 91st minute through substitute

Salah Al Din Al Farash — who had replaced Youssef Qeshta in the 58th minute — latching onto a brilliant assist from Ali Hajbi to finish coolly past the Faisali keeper. The dramatic counter-attack came moments after Hussein goalkeeper Yazid Abulaila pulled off a crucial, match-saving stop to deny

Waseem Riyalat's goal-bound effort.

The round concludes on Sunday at Petra Stadium, where newly promoted Doqara face Shabab Ordon. Shabab Ordon will be hunting their first win of the season, while Doqara look to secure their second victory to pull further away from the relegation zone.

At half a century, Senegal's Orchestra Baobab bets on new generation

By Becca Milfeld
Agence France-Presse

DAKAR — Sitting on a couch in their manager's office, three of the oldest members of Senegal's Orchestra Baobab, the legendary Afro-Cuban and west African fusion group, banter like family. Several evenings later, their guitar and saxophone melodies conjured the same convivial chemistry, electrifying a Dakar nightclub and getting partygoers dancing cha-cha steps and swaying their hips — as the band has done so many times in its half-century history. The much-loved orchestra, which blends regional Wolof griot music, Congolese rumba, Senegalese mbalax, jazz and other traditions through an Afro-Cuban filter, released "Made in Senegal", its first album of new songs in nearly 10 years, on October 23. Like the mighty baobab tree it is named for, Orchestra Baobab remains standing despite its age, thanks in part to a new generation of musicians slowly replacing its iconic veterans. Two groups of the oldest then youngest members of the nine-person ensemble sat down with AFP to explain the endur-



AFP photo

Orchestra Baobab rhythm guitarist Yahya Fall, 76, says the group's new music has a fresh vibe

ing magic. In the band's latest music "you can sense a freshness, something new, something exceptional, something people haven't really heard from the founders before", rhythm guitarist Yahya Fall, 76, told AFP. The group's joyful swinging sound, produced across guitars, drums, saxophones and vocals, alternately rollicks and sways, at times highly energetic and at others seducing listeners with lilting refrains. The handful of new members, mostly in their 30s and 40s, say they aspire to sustain the band's historic soul and core sound, adding only a dash of their personal

flavour. Vocalist Korka Dieng, who started singing with Baobab in 2023, jolted the group into the 21st century as its first and only woman member. The 44-year-old said she and the other younger musicians each bring their own touch, but try "to preserve the originality that brought the legendary orchestra to where it is today". The young members "will be able to ensure Baobab lasts a full century", 73-year-old percussionist Mountaga "Taga" Koite, the band's last remaining original member, told AFP with a twinkle in his eye. The orchestra, which ruled Dakar's club scene

and airwaves after its birth in 1970, eventually went on hiatus only to reemerge in the early 2000s and achieve international fame. Trombone and tenor saxophonist Wilfried Zinsou, part of the new guard at 48, described the orchestra as a national treasure, touring across Europe and elsewhere when not performing in Dakar. "People view Senegal through us, we bring Senegalese culture with us. Those unfamiliar with Senegal see the country through Orchestra Baobab," he told AFP. The group is even planning a concert series outside their urban stronghold of Dakar, hav-

ing never gone on tour in Senegal's regions, orchestra leader Thierno Koite, brother of "Taga", told a press conference on October 20.

Not just 'old school'

On a recent Sunday night in Dakar, Baobab played the well-known venue Just For You. Friends and couples swayed at their tables until a prolonged wail of the saxophone in Baobab anthem "Utrus Horas" sent a shock through the room. First two women jumped from their seats to dance, before others rushed to the front of the hall, swinging and stepping to the sultry rhythm. "I danced to Orchestra Baobab at age 15-16 and still today", 62-year-old fan Moustapha Samb told AFP, describing the group as "a monument, it represents memory and resilience" for Senegal. Listeners are "starting to realise that Orchestra Baobab isn't just old-school. There is a new generation", vocalist Dieng told AFP. Of the 12 songs in "Made in Senegal", approximately half are newly composed, and the vast majority have not yet appeared in a Baobab album.

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP) — Patrick Stewart, the British Shakespearean actor who became a Hollywood megastar through roles in the "Star Trek" and "X-Men" franchises, has died at his home in Los Angeles. He was 86. His death on Wednesday came after a "brief and poignant journey" with Alzheimer's disease and Lewy body dementia, according to an official statement on his social media accounts. "His sonorous voice and singular talent will forever be synonymous with indelible performances in every genre," the statement said. The actor, who hailed from the northern English region of Yorkshire, trod the boards in Britain with the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre in London, and worked on British television. But he rocketed into the pop culture history books in his mid-40s when he was cast as Captain Jean-Luc Picard in "Star Trek: The Next Generation," the first live-action television spinoff of the trailblazing sci-fi series from the late 1960s. He effectively filled the boots of William Shatner's Captain Kirk from the original show — to resounding success, both in the TV series and in several films. Picard became known for a few catchphrases including "Make it so" and "Engage!" But his move to America in 1987 was initially greeted with disdain by The Los Angeles Times, who wrote him off as an "unknown British Shakespearean actor". Stewart later dubbed suggestions he was "slumming it" by moving into US television offensive. He once called his Shakespearean bona fides "nothing but a preparation for sitting in the captain's chair of the Enterprise".



AFP photo

English actor Sir Patrick Stewart and his wife Sunny Ozell arrive for the Los Angeles premiere of the final season of 'Star Trek: Picard' at the TCL Chinese Theater in Hollywood, California, on February 9, 2023

to the far reaches of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, but into science fiction's most iconic final frontier aboard the Starship Enterprise," the official statement said. Aboard the Enterprise Stewart was 47 when he debuted as Picard in "Star Trek: The Next Generation," the first live-action television spinoff of the trailblazing sci-fi series from the late 1960s. He effectively filled the boots of William Shatner's Captain Kirk from the original show — to resounding success, both in the TV series and in

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