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King, Kazakhstan president chair new round of Aqaba Process meetings in Astana

His Majesty in talks with Kazakhstan president: Jordan will not falter in its fight against terrorism, extremism

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah and Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Friday co-chaired a new round of the Aqaba Process meetings under the theme Security in the Field of Artificial Intelligence.

This round, held in Astana, covered ways of utilising artificial intelligence technologies in the fight against terrorism and extremism, and of developing mechanisms for cooperation, coordination and the exchange of expertise amongst participating countries, with the aim of promoting peace at regional and international levels, according to a Royal Court statement.

The meetings were attended by heads of state, officials, and experts from Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Jordan and Kazakhstan, as well as representatives of international companies specialising in artificial intelligence.

On the sidelines of the Aqaba Process meetings, His Majesty held separate meetings with Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon, Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, and Turkmenistan President Serdar Berdimuhamedov. Discussions covered ways of strengthening relations between Jordan and these countries, and increasing cooperation across various fields, particularly in economic, defence and technological sectors.



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

His Majesty King Abdullah and Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev co-chair a new round of Aqaba Process meetings in Astana, on security in the field of artificial intelligence

The King launched the Aqaba Process initiative in 2015 with the aim of enhancing coordination, cooperation, and exchange of expertise between various regional and international parties. Previous rounds have been held in Jordan, and other countries and organisations in partnership with Jordan, including Spain, Albania, Indonesia, Italy, Brazil, Bulgaria, the United Kingdom, Rwanda, Singapore, France, Norway, Nigeria, The Netherlands, the United States, Greece and the United Nations.

On Thursday, the King, during talks with President Tokayev, emphasised that Jordan will not falter in its fight against terrorism and extremism, nor will it allow anyone to threaten its security or harm its citizens.



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

His Majesty King Abdullah holds talks with Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in Astana on Thursday

During talks, attended by HRH Prince Ghazi, His Majesty's chief adviser for religious and cultural affairs and personal envoy, the King highlighted the deep-rooted ties and friendship between the two countries, their mutual respect, and shared commitment to peace and stability, according to another Royal Court statement.

His Majesty emphasised Jordan's commitment to advancing cooperation with Kazakhstan in key sectors, such as trade, investment, technology, defence, mining, uranium and tourism, noting the importance of establishing a direct flight route between the two countries.

Regarding developments in the region, the King underscored that the two-state solution is the only path towards achieving peace and stability, noting that Israel cannot be allowed to continue its attacks in Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank, nor its attempts to violate the sovereignty of Arab states.

His Majesty called on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities to bring an end to the escalation in the region, stressing that Jordan would continue to work with its partners, including Kazakhstan, to achieve stability.

For his part, President Tokayev said that Jordan is a time-tested and reliable partner for Kazakhstan in the Arab world, noting that the two countries share the same views on many regional and international issues, the statement said.

President Tokayev also emphasised that economic integration is the driving force of relations between the two countries, highlighting the importance of agreements in trade, investment, industry, agriculture, energy and technology.

During the visit, the Kazakhstan president also presented the Order of Al Farabi to the King. The Order of Al Farabi symbolises the close ties between Kazakhstan and the Arab world in the fields of science and Islamic studies, and is the first of its kind to be awarded to a head of state.

His Majesty bestowed on President Tokayev the Order of Al Hussein Bin Ali, in recognition of the distinguished relations between the two countries and their peoples.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Majdi Al Harasis, General Intelligence Department Director Maj. Gen. Ahmad Husni, Director of the Office of His Majesty Alaa Batayneh and Jordan's Ambassador to Kazakhstan Hamzeh Al Omari attended the talks.

Jordan vows no let-up in fight against terrorism following deadly terrorist attacks

- Calls grow for tougher measures against extremism as nation mourns fallen officer
- Prime minister pledges 'relentless' campaign against extremist groups, ideology

By Areen Abu Hammour

AMMAN — Jordan has vowed to intensify its fight against terrorism and extremism following two attacks in less than two weeks, including the killing of a police officer in the capital and a shooting at a church in Karak that left nine people dead and at least 40 others injured.

His Majesty King Abdullah on Thursday reaffirmed Jordan's determination to confront threats to its national security, stressing that the Kingdom would not allow anyone to endanger its stability or harm its citizens.

During talks with Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in Astana, the King said Jordan would remain steadfast in confronting terrorism and extremist groups.

The King reiterated the message in his Speech from the Throne at the opening of the third ordinary session of the 20th Parliament, paying tribute to the victims of the terrorist attack in Karak and stressing that Jordan would not tolerate attempts to undermine its security or sovereignty.

"A few days ago, the treacherous hand of terror sought to test our state's resilience and our people's resolve. But we will not back down. We will not allow the terrorists, the khawarej, to undermine the security and unity of this nation. They have no place among us. They have no place in our great Jordanian family. They betrayed it. They have no place in our midst… not now, not ever," the King said.

He also praised the Jordan Armed Forces–Arab Army and security agencies for their efforts to protect the Kingdom, describing their personnel as vigilant defenders who work around the clock to ensure the safety of Jordanians.

"This blessed land is defended by formidable soldiers whose unwavering vigilance, day and night, ensures that Jordanians rest secure in the certainty that they are always protected. Our brave Arab Army and security agencies put their lives on the line, vowing to ensure that Jordan's defences remain impenetrable and its flag flies high and proud," he added.

Prime Minister Jafar Hassan, meanwhile, mourned Corp. Jawad Salaytah, who was killed while performing his duty in Amman, describing him as a martyr who had sacrificed his life in service to the nation.

In a statement posted on social media, Hassan extended his condolences to Salaytah's family and relatives and wished a speedy recovery to his injured colleague, Lt. Firas Ananzeh.

"May God have mercy on Corporal Jawad Salaytah, the martyr of the nation and his duty," the premier said.

Hassan stressed that Jordan's fight against terrorism and extremist groups would continue, pledging that the government would show no tolerance towards ideologies threatening the country's security and social stability.

He also vowed firm action against terrorist groups, their hideouts and anyone cooperating with them.

Minister of Government Communication and Government Spokesperson Mohammad Momani said attacks targeting security personnel while carrying out their duties constituted an assault on the state's authority, the rule of law and all Jordanians.

"The Kingdom's security and stability remain paramount, and the government will not tolerate any act targeting Jordan and its people," Momani said.

He added that state institutions had the capacity to protect citizens and residents and firmly enforce the law against anyone who violated it.

Jordanians bid farewell to fallen officer

HRH Prince Feisal, the Regent, attended Salaytah's funeral on Friday, as thousands of Jordanians gathered to pay their final respects to the fallen officer.

The funeral prayer was held following Friday prayers at a mosque in Mushairfeh Al Shamaliah, before Salaytah was laid to rest in the town's cemetery in the Um Al Rasas District.

Continued on page 5



Petra photo

Police officers carry the body of Corp. Jawad Salaytah, who was martyred in a terrorist attack while on duty on Thursday



PSD photon

Corp. Jawad Ali Salaytah



JT file

The State Security Court

Trial of three suspects in Karak church attack resumes Sunday

By Rana Husseini

AMMAN — The State Security Court (SCC) is expected to hold its second session on Sunday in the trial of three suspects in the October 23 terrorist attack on St George Church in Hmoud, Karak Governorate, that killed nine people.

The SSC is expected to start hearing the prosecution witnesses, according to a senior judicial source.

Last week, the three suspects were informed of the charges and were assigned lawyers as stipulated by law during their first court hearing, according to Lawyer Amer Halaseh.

"The court hearing went smoothly and in accordance with the law," Halaseh told The Jordan Times.

The trial commenced following the conclusion of the investigations by SSC Prosecutor Brig. Gen. Ahmad Shahltough.

The prosecutor had said in a statement that the investigation had covered all necessary procedures, including hearing prosecution witnesses, collecting evidence from the crime scene, documenting the weapons and ammunition used in the attack, and questioning the defendants suspected of carrying out or participating in it.

> 'The court hearing went smoothly and in accordance with the law'

The prosecutor filed seven categories of charges against the defendants under the Anti-Terrorism Law of 2006 and the Penal Code of 1960.

The charges include nine counts of jointly committing terrorist acts resulting in death, in violation of article 2 and 7of the Anti-Terrorism Law and Article 76 of the Penal Code.

The defendants also face two counts of jointly committing terrorist acts using weapons and ammunition, under Article 7of the Anti-Terrorism Law, with reference to Articles 2 and 7of the same law and Article 76 of the Penal Code.

Other charges include jointly possessing weapons and ammunition with the intent to use them in terrorist acts, under Articles 3 and 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Law, with reference to Article 7 of the same law and Article 76 of the Penal Code.

The prosecutor also charged the defendants with conspiracy to commit terrorist acts using weapons, under the Anti-Terrorism Law. The remaining charges involve promoting the ideology of a terrorist group and committing acts likely to disrupt public order and endanger public safety and security, under articles 2, 3 and 7 of the said law.



Petra photo

Her Majesty Queen Rania offers condolences on Saturday to the family of Corp. Jawad Salaytah, who was killed in the line of duty in Amman on Thursday

Queen Rania pays condolences to family of Corporal Jawad Salaytah

AMMAN (JT) — Her Majesty Queen Rania offered condolences on Saturday to the family of Corporal Jawad Salaytah, who was killed in the line of duty in Amman on Thursday.

Speaking to the martyr's parents and family members gathered in Umm Ar-Rasas, the Queen relayed the condolences of His Majesty King Abdullah and expressed her heartfelt prayers for the soul of the deceased, asking God to grant patience and solace to his family, according to a statement from Office of Her Majesty.

Arab Christian leaders call for authentic theological discourse to counter Zionist narratives



Petra photo

The Second Arab Christian Conference commences in Amman on Friday, bringing together prominent Arab and international figures to discuss theological and political issues facing the region

AMMAN (JT) — The Second Arab Christian Conference commenced in Amman on Friday under the theme "Authenticity of Faith and Arab Identity", bringing together prominent Arab and international figures to discuss theological and political issues facing the region.

Organised by the Orthodox Educational Society in cooperation with the Arab Christian Initiative (Orouba), the two-day conference focuses on deconstructing and refuting the heresy of "Christian Zionism" and its impact on religious and political discourse, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Muhannad Shehadeh attended the opening alongside diplomats, academics, theologians and religious leaders from Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and the United Kingdom.

Addressing the inaugural session, Nermeen Sandaha, president of the society, said that the conference aims to trace the intellectual origins and theological claims of Christian Zionism, refuting them through biblical scripture, church tradition and historical evidence while highlighting its political reflections on the Palestinian cause.

Sandaha reaffirmed the centrality of the Hashemite Custodianship in safeguarding Christian and Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, emphasising the historical contributions of Arab Christians to regional development and national unity.

In a speech delivered on behalf of Archbishop Christophoros Atallah, president of the Council of Churches in Jordan, Archimandrite Foendeknos highlighted that the Christian presence in the Levant is an authentic component of the region's spiritual and cultural identity rather than a mere demographic detail.

Conference Chairman Humam Ghassib stressed the importance of formulating an authentic Arab theological discourse to counter fundamentalist Zionist narratives, proposing the publication of conference findings in Arabic and English along with digital broadcasts to reach global audiences.

Speakers, including Lebanese theologian Yaacoub Khalil and Jordanian historian Ali Mahafzah, highlighted the historic role of Arab Christians in the modern Arab renaissance and their steadfast stance alongside Muslim compatriots in defending national security.

On the second day, in the presence of Prime Minister Jafar Hassan and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Muhannad Shehadeh, participants completed intensive proceedings covering four main sessions focused on biblical, patristic, international and Enlightenment perspectives.

Participants expressed their strong condemnation of the cowardly terrorist attacks targeting citizens in Hmoud in Karak and Corporal Jawad Salaytah in Amman, highlighting that targeting innocent individuals constitutes an assault on national values and social cohesion.

Attendees emphasised that extremism does not differentiate between Muslims and Christians, stressing that Jordanians have proven across all crises that they stand as one body in defence of national security, while reaffirming that Jordan will remain an oasis of peace and stability under its Hashemite leadership.



Petra photo

Patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church in Iraq and the World Mar Paul III Nona on Saturday visits the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ (Al Maghtas) and underscores the location's spiritual significance as a cornerstone of global Christian pilgrimage

Chaldean patriarch visits Baptism Site, praises Royal custodianship of holy places

AMMAN (JT) — Patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church in Iraq and the World Mar Paul III Nona on Saturday visited the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ (Al Maghtas), underscoring the location's spiritual significance as a cornerstone of global Christian pilgrimage.

In statements to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Patriarch Nona highlighted that the delegation's visit signals the onset of expanded religious pilgrimages to the holy site, particularly as preparations accelerate ahead of Jubilee 2030.

The patriarch expressed deep appreciation for the stewardship of His Majesty King Abdullah in preserving the site, noting that Royal care reinforces its historical identity and international standing across the Christian world.

Director General of the Baptism Site Commission Abdullah Al Bawarid noted that visits by global church leaders remain vital to embedding Al Maghtas on the international pilgrimage map.

He stressed that institutional efforts, anchored by Royal patronage, ensure the site's environmental, historical and religious integrity are safeguarded for visitors worldwide.

The Chaldean patriarch was accompanied by Patriarchal Vicar Bishop Basil Yaldo, Bishop of Dohuk Azad Shaba, Latin Patriarchal Vicar for Jordan Bishop Iyad Al Twal, Chaldean Patriarchal Vicar for Jordan Monsignor Zaid Habbaba, and Secretary General of the Latin Archbishopric in Jordan Father Khaled Qamoh, in the presence of Deputy Director General of the Commission Abdulaziz Al Adwan.

Economic and Social Council discusses tourism challenges in Madaba



Petra photo

The Economic and Social Council on Saturday discusses the status of the tourism sector in Madaba and the challenges facing tourism establishments and professions

AMMAN (JT) — The Economic and Social Council on Saturday discussed the status of the tourism sector in Madaba, the challenges facing tourism establishments and professions, and ways to develop solutions and proposals to enhance the sector's competitiveness and sustainability.

Council President Musa Shteiwi stressed the importance of assessing the sector's current situation and developing solutions to support sustainable tourism in the governorate, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He made the remarks during a dialogue session held by the council with tourism stakeholders at the Madaba Institute for Mosaic Art and Restoration, attended by Council Secretary-General Nadheer Awamleh.

The session was held as part of preparations for a study titled "The Economic Importance of the Tourism Sector and Measuring Return on Investment".

Shteiwi said that the study seeks to analyse the economic importance of tourism and measure its return on investment by examining the current state of tourism activities, identifying the challenges they face and listening to the views and observations of sector workers.

He noted that the session aimed to discuss the main challenges facing the sector and their impact on the performance and operations of tourism establishments, as well as examine proposed policies and measures to strengthen tourism competitiveness and sustainability in the governorate.

Shteiwi stressed that the council is keen to involve various entities and stakeholders concerned with tourism across the governorates and benefit from their expertise and experience.

This would ensure that the study is based on a realistic assessment of challenges and opportunities, and that its recommendations contribute to developing the sector and maximising its economic and development impact.

Amayreh welcomed the participants, expressing his appreciation for hosting the session at the institute and highlighting the importance of discussing the state of tourism in Madaba and the challenges facing the sector.

The session addressed the impact of geopolitical and regional developments and crises on tourism activity, including their effects on bookings, visitor numbers, trip cancellations, occupancy rates, revenues and tourism investments.

Participants also discussed urgent government decisions needed to mitigate these effects, support tourism establishments and their employees, stimulate tourism demand and restore activity.

Jordanian delegation discusses women's financial inclusion at OECD meetings in Paris

AMMAN (JT) — A Jordanian delegation comprising women leaders and representatives of economic and financial institutions has participated in meetings of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris.

The meetings were held as part of the MENA Women's Economic Empowerment Forum, which focused on financial inclusion, financial literacy, and enhancing women's access to financial services and financing opportunities, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.



Petra photo

A Jordanian delegation comprising women leaders and representatives of economic and financial institutions participates in meetings of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris

The delegation included Reem Badran, who represents the Women's Economic Empowerment and Financial Inclusion Project in Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine, implemented by the OECD with support from the European Union and covering eight Arab countries.

It also included Thanaa Khasawneh, CEO of the Business and Professional Women Association (BPWA), Samia Smadi, senior gender and social development specialist at the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Women's Empowerment, Lama Samhouri, executive director of the Financial Consumer Protection Department, and Balqees Bahri, diplomatic attaché at the Jordanian embassy in Paris.

The project aims to develop policies and practices that enhance women's economic participation, improve their access to finance and financial services, promote financial literacy and strengthen the institutional environment supporting women in entrepreneurship, employment and investment.

It also focuses on addressing common challenges facing women in Arab economies, developing practical solutions to improve their economic and financial opportunities, and boosting their participation in productive and investment activities.

Khasawneh took part in a specialised session on financial inclusion and literacy, which addressed ways to enhance women's access to financial services and products and build their capacities in managing financial resources, saving and investment.

She also presented a number of national achievements in this field.

Badran highlighted the importance of regional coordination, exchanging expertise and strengthening cooperation among government institutions, the private sector, financial institutions and women's business organisations in the three countries she represents.

Jordan cultural, arts, sports agenda: November 8–14

ONGOING

"Antarctica: Continent of Peace" | Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Building 1, Amman

The photography exhibition presented with the embassy of Chile runs through November 23. It is open daily except Fridays.

Jordan Trail Thru-Hike | Um Qais to Aqaba

The guided hike is under way, with a listed end date of 18 November on the official calendar.

Registration is closed for the full trail, so this is for following along rather than joining.



JT file

Arab, friendly nations condemn terrorist attack that killed PSD officer in Amman

AMMAN (JT) — Arab and friendly nations on Saturday condemned the terrorist attack in Amman that killed Corporal Jawad Ali Khalaf Salaitah of the Public Security Directorate (PSD) and injured another officer, expressing solidarity with Jordan.

Syria, Qatar, Palestine, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, the Arab Parliament, along with the European Union Delegation to Jordan, issued statements denouncing the attack and reaffirming their support for the Kingdom's efforts to safeguard its security and stability, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The statements stressed the countries' rejection of all forms of terrorism, violence and extremism, regardless of motives, describing attacks on security personnel as a threat to public safety and stability.

They also expressed condolences to the Jordanian leadership, government and people, as well as Salaitah's family, and wished the injured officer a speedy recovery.

Ministers attend funeral of slain officer Jawad Salaitah

AMMAN (JT) — Ministers on Friday attended the funeral of Corporal Jawad Salaitah, who was killed in a terrorist attack in Amman, conveying the government's condolences to his family and wishing his injured colleague, Lieutenant Firas Ananzeh, a speedy recovery.

Ministers of Justice Bassam Talhouni, Interior Mazen Farrayeh, Political and Parliamentary Affairs Abdul Monem Odat, Tourism and Antiquities Emad Hijazeen, Youth Raed Adwan and Environment Ayman Sulaiman attended the funeral in Mshirfeh Al Shamaliyah, in the Um Al Rasas district.

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs also condemned the attack that killed Salaitah while he was performing his duty to protect national security, the Jordan News Agency, Petra reported.

The ministry said that the actions of extremists following "Takfiri" ideology had no connection to Islam, which prohibits aggression and safeguards human life.

It added that attacks on security personnel tasked with protecting citizens constituted an assault on the security of society as a whole.

The ministry offered condolences to Salaitah's family and wished Ananzeh a full recovery.



Petra photo

Ministers on Friday attended the funeral of Corporal Jawad Salaitah, who was killed in a terrorist attack in Amman

Senators call for review of Penal Code, Anti-Terrorism Law

AMMAN (JT) — Senators have called for a review of the Penal Code and the Anti-Terrorism Law to address legislative gaps and strengthen penalties following a terrorist attack in Amman that killed a Public Security Directorate (PSD) officer and injured another.

They stressed the need to resolve overlaps between the two laws, clearly define terrorist offences and ensure accountability based on each offender's role, while applying the harsher penalty where applicable, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Senator Ahmad Tbeishat said that the recurrence of terrorist attacks required a comprehensive review of Anti-Terrorism Law No. 55 of 2006 and its amendments, as well as the Penal Code, to strengthen deterrence and ensure perpetrators, instigators and accomplices are held accountable.



JT file

Senators call for a review of the Penal Code and the Anti-Terrorism Law to address legislative gaps and strengthen penalties

He called for tougher penalties, including extending the application of the death penalty to acts that threaten national security or people's lives, even when they do not result in fatalities.

He also called for criminalising online incitement and training for terrorist acts, as well as monitoring convicted terrorists after their release.

Tbeishat also called for enforcing the Crime Prevention Law, applying cumulative penalties and preventing convicted terrorists from benefitting from sentence reductions for good conduct.

He stressed the need to close legislative gaps that could undermine efforts to combat terrorism.

Senator Ihsan Barakat said attacks on security officers performing their duties threatened both their lives and society's security, calling for penalties proportionate to the gravity of such crimes and strict enforcement of the law while safeguarding fair trial guarantees.

She stressed the need to address all stages of terrorist activity, step up efforts to prevent extremism, counter hate speech and recruitment, and support state institutions, particularly the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) and security agencies. She also called for national unity behind His Majesty King Abdullah.

Senator Issa Murad called for imposing the maximum penalties on terrorists and lawbreakers and strengthening monitoring of individuals holding extremist views, both in prisons and after their release, to safeguard social stability.



JT file

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday condemns the Houthi militia's attempt to target the Madinah region in Saudi Arabia

Jordan condemns Houthi attack targeting Saudi Arabia

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday condemned the Houthi militia's attempt to target the Madinah region in Saudi Arabia with a ballistic missile.

In a statement, the ministry said that the attack was a "provocation to Muslim sentiments, a flagrant violation of Saudi sovereignty, a threat to its security and stability, and a breach of international law and the UN Charter".

It also reiterated Jordan's absolute solidarity with Saudi Arabia, emphasising full support for all measures taken by Saudi Arabia to protect its security, stability, sovereignty, and the safety of its citizens and residents.

Industry minister inaugurates conference on future of accounting, auditing

AMMAN (JT) — Deputising for Prime Minister Jafar Hassan, Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Yarub Qudah on Saturday inaugurated the international professional conference of the Jordanian Association of Certified Public Accountants (JACPA), titled "The Future of the Accounting and Auditing Profession in the Arab World".

The conference brought together heads and representatives of Arab and international professional organisations, as well as regional experts and specialists, to examine developments in the accounting and auditing sector, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

In his address, Qudah said that the conference was being held at a time when improving the business environment, strengthening confidence in the national economy and promoting transparency, integrity and governance were essential to attracting investment and supporting sustainable economic growth.

He said the accounting and auditing profession had moved beyond the traditional tasks of preparing and reviewing financial statements to play a key role in economic decision-making, assessing institutional performance, managing risks and building trust between institutions and investors.

Qudah added that digital transformation and artificial intelligence were reshaping the profession by improving work quality, speeding up procedures, analysing large volumes of data and detecting risks.

He also stressed that technology should remain a tool to improve human efficiency and be accompanied by sound professional judgement, integrity, independence and objectivity.

JACPA Board Chairman Hussam Rahhal said rapid technological changes required a comprehensive review of professional tools and investment in capacity building to meet governance requirements while maintaining ethical standards.

President of the International Federation of Accountants John Bouquot highlighted the importance of keeping pace with international standards and the role of professional federations in promoting sustainable auditing practices in Arab and global markets.

President of the Arab Federation of Accountants and Auditors Jawad Shehili stressed the need to coordinate Arab efforts, develop legislative frameworks and qualify professionals in line with international standards.



Petra photo

Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Yarub Qudah on Saturday inaugurates the international professional conference of the Jordanian Association of Certified Public Accountants

Customs centres handle over 919,000 declarations in 10 months — association

AMMAN (JT) — Clearance and cargo transport companies in Jordan processed 919,470 customs declarations across customs centres and border crossings during the first 10 months of 2026, according to the Clearance and Cargo Transport Companies Owners Association.

The declarations included 319,027 for imports, 159,960 for exports, 18,356 for re-exports, 29,650 for temporary entry and 318,128 for transit goods passing through Jordan, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

Aqaba Customs Directorate recorded the highest number of declarations at 208,778, followed by the Omari border crossing with Saudi Arabia at 197,262 and Airport Customs Clearance at Zizya and Mushatta Free Zone at 143,000.



Al Mamlaka TV photo

The Clearance and Cargo Transport Companies Owners Association says that clearance and cargo transport companies in Jordan processed 919,470 customs declarations across customs centres and border crossings during the first 10 months of 2026

Amman, Sahab and Raqeem customs centres processed 119,558 declarations, while Jaber border crossing with Syria handled 80,239. Zarqa Free Zone recorded 56,384 declarations, followed by the E-commerce Centre with 39,531, Karameh with 18,304 and Mudawwara with 12,429.

Meanwhile, 497 container ships arrived at Aqaba Container Terminal during the January-October period, compared with 496 in the corresponding period of 2025.

Cargo handling at the terminal increased by 8 per cent to 896,290 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), up from 827,140 TEUs in the same period last year.

Imports in full containers reached 466,875 TEUs, up 12 per cent from 416,211 TEUs in 2025, while exports in full containers declined to 87,535 TEUs from 94,600 TEUs.

The main ports of Aqaba received 1,430 vessels during the first 10 months of 2026, an increase of 97 vessels compared with 1,333 in the corresponding period last year.

Cargo handling at the main Aqaba ports rose by 46 per cent to 12.386 million tonnes, compared with 8.494 million tonnes in the same period of 2025.

Association President Dhaifallah Abu Aqooleh said Jordan was strengthening its position as a regional logistics hub serving Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.

Amman Chamber of Commerce exports rise 20.9% in 10 months

AMMAN (JT) — The value of exports covered by certificates of origin issued by the Amman Chamber of Commerce increased by 20.9 per cent during the first 10 months of 2026 compared with the same period last year.

Exports reached JD1.328 billion, up from JD1.099 billion in the corresponding period of 2025, according to chamber data reported by the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The chamber issued 37,831 certificates of origin during the January-October period, compared with 34,679 in the same period last year, marking a 9.1 per cent increase.

Iraq topped the list of destination countries, with exports worth JD524 million covered by 2,426 certificates, followed by Switzerland with JD112 million across 31 certificates.

Saudi Arabia ranked third with JD100 million across 6,948 certificates, followed by the United Arab Emirates with JD99.9 million across 7,172 certificates and Egypt with JD72 million across 926 certificates.

By product category, foreign goods accounted for the largest share at JD653 million, followed by agricultural products at JD190 million, industrial products at JD165 million and Arab products at JD149 million. The remaining value was distributed among other commodities.

Certificates of origin are international trade documents verifying the country in which goods were produced, manufactured or processed, enabling customs authorities to determine their origin and apply the relevant tariffs.

The Amman Chamber of Commerce issues certificates of origin for Jordanian agricultural, animal and natural raw materials, re-exported foreign goods and foreign goods purchased locally, in accordance with applicable regulations.

It also issues certificates for industrial goods upon exporters' requests under the regulations governing national chambers of commerce.



AFP photo

Newly appointed White House Chief of Staff Stephen Miller is seen in the Presidential limousine upon arriving on Air Force One at Palm Beach International Airport in West Palm Beach, Florida on Friday

Trump names hardliner Miller chief of staff after midterms rout

WASHINGTON (AFP) — US President Donald Trump on Friday named Stephen Miller, architect of his hardline immigration policy, as his new chief of staff, signalling a bare-knuckle fightback after Republicans were hammered in the midterms.

Ultra-loyalist Miller, 41, will replace Susie Wiles, who becomes the first major White House casualty from the Democratic landslide earlier this week.

Democrats pledged they would fight "every step of the way" against Miller, who became synonymous with scenes of masked immigration agents committing violence after he backed federal agents who shot and killed two Americans.

"I wanted to make a change," Trump told reporters at the White House when asked why he named Miller to replace Wiles.

"Sometimes in life you have to make moves."

Trump's move was particularly startling as he had repeatedly insisted before the midterms that there was "zero chance" of replacing Wiles.

A White House official told AFP that Wiles had resigned on Thursday night.

But naming the combative Miller was the clearest possible signal from Trump that the gloves are now off after his brief conciliatory gestures to Democrats in the wake of the Republican midterms collapse.

"He's a great fighter," Trump said later at the airport in West Palm Beach, Florida, where he was accompanied by Miller. "He's been with me right from the beginning... and he's very loyal."

Known for his sharp suits and sunglasses, Miller has been one of Trump's closest aides for decades, pushing nativist policies that gelled with Trump's "America First" agenda.

As Trump's deputy chief of staff for policy and homeland security advisor, he was the brains behind the mass deportation program that defined the first year of the president's second term.

But he faced widespread criticism after the deadly shootings of two protesters by immigration agents in Minneapolis in January — incidents that sparked mass demonstrations.

"Stephen Miller is the architect of the most barbaric, inhumane policies of this administration. Trump couldn't have made a worse choice," Minority Leader Chuck Schumer posted on X.

"Our Democratic majorities will fight him every step of the way."

In a post on Truth Social earlier announcing Miller's appointment, Trump described him as "one of my most trusted advisors".

Trump said Wiles had "done an outstanding job" and would be "moving over to the Trump Political Operation. I want to thank her for her service as Chief of Staff — She has done a great job!"

White House communications director Steven Cheung said Miller was a "Trump OG, someone who has been with the President since the very beginning.

"He will help the Administration deliver on monumental victories for the rest of this historic second term."

Top administration figures also praised Wiles, the first female White House chief of staff, whom Trump dubbed the "ice maiden" for maintaining discipline in the West Wing.

For most of the last two years, the 69-year-old had largely prevented the chaotic staff movements and infighting that marred Trump's first term.

But as the midterms loomed the writing was increasingly on the wall for Wiles, who announced recently that she had been given the all-clear from breast cancer.

"Serving President Trump in the White House has been the honor of a lifetime," Wiles said in a statement on X, adding that Friday would be her last day in her job.

"I'm so proud to have been a part of what we've accomplished together from securing our border and cutting taxes to strengthening our economy and putting America First."

Major figures in Trump's Make America Great Again movement, reeling since the midterms, hailed Miller's appointment.

"It's Miller Time", posted right-wing journalist Jack Posobiec, referring to a famous slogan for an American beer brand.

Trump sat with CBS News programme "60 Minutes" for an interview that airs Sunday, and in published excerpts he said he expects to make a "little bit" of additional staff changes.

"I'll... be doing maybe a few changes. I don't wanna mention who," he said.

France probes if bomb threats against airlines linked to 'foreign powers'

PARIS, France (AFP) — French prosecutors have opened a probe into bogus bomb threats targeting dozens of commercial flights in Europe over the past week, notably including whether foreign powers could be involved.

The investigation aims to find "the authors of the e-mails who disseminated this false information... and to determine any potential links they may have to foreign powers", the office of the Paris prosecutor told AFP.

Several such instances concerned flights passing over French territory. The French government, for its part, has also said that the origin of the threats was being investigated.

Ireland's government said Friday that the hoax bomb claims sent to Irish media outlets were "likely" part of a "co-ordinated campaign of disruption" linked to the threats to airlines.

No explosives were found in any of the incidents so far, and those responsible have not been identified.



AFP photo

This video grab from AFPTV footage shows a Finnair plane taking off from Fiumicino Airport after it was diverted due to a bomb threat, with Italian air force jets having escorted it from Helsinki to Rome onThursday

Some of the messages came in e-mails signed "fighters of the Male State", which matches the name of a radical misogynist group in Russia, though AFP has not confirmed any link of it to the messages.

The group's founder, Vladislav Pozdniakov, denied any involvement, saying on social media Friday that the "movement does not exist since 2021".

European countries are closely watching for any Russian interference against economic sectors in Europe and even in daily life as Moscow's war against pro-Western Ukraine grinds towards its fifth anniversary.

Russian strikes damage bridge, energy facilities in Kyiv region — mayor



AFP photo

This handout photo taken and released by the Ukrainian Emergency Service on Saturday, shows Ukrainian firefighters as they work to extinguish a fire at an infrastructure facility following a Russian missile strike in Kyiv region, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine

KYIV (AFP) — Russian attacks have damaged energy facilities in the Kyiv region as well as a key bridge in the Ukrainian capital, its mayor said on Saturday morning.

"As a result of an overnight enemy attack, energy facilities in the Kyiv and Zhytomyr regions were damaged.

The situation with the capital's energy supply is extremely difficult," Mayor Vitaly Klitschko wrote on Telegram.

Damage to the facilities has affected the operation of heating and water supply systems in the city, the mayor said.

Klitschko wrote in another Telegram message that the Northern Bridge, one of several bridges connecting the eastern and western parts of Kyiv over the Dnipro River, was "damaged in an enemy attack", with specialists assessing the extent of it.

On Friday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned of more attacks on the country's energy sector and on civilian infrastructure.

Ukraine faces another difficult winter amid continued Russian attacks on its energy infrastructure despite renewed diplomatic efforts to end the war.

Klitschko said on Saturday morning that five people, including a 14-year-old child, were wounded in the Ukrainian capital during a Russian attack.

Pope Leo begins South America tour in 'fairly good shape'

MONTEVIDEO (AFP) — Pope Leo XIV arrived in Uruguay, where he will celebrate a Mass on Saturday, as he began a 12-day tour of South America in "fairly good shape".

Leo's sixth international tour takes him to the continent that helped shape his priesthood, just three weeks after surgery for a tumor on his right lung.

The 71-year-old Pontiff will visit Uruguay, Argentina and Peru on one of the most intense papal trips in decades, meeting political leaders, prisoners and the poor, as well as old friends.

Thousands of people, some waving yellow-and-white Vatican flags, lined the seafront of Uruguay's capital Montevideo to greet him as he waved from a custom-made Popemobile.

But the crowds were relatively sparse in Latin America's most secular country compared with Leo's recent visits to France and Spain.



AFP photo

Pope Leo XIV leaves after celebrating vespers with bishops, priests, deacons and religious men and women at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Montevideo on Friday

Speaking in a half-empty Plaza Independencia, after being welcomed by left-wing President Yamandu Orsi, the Pope lamented Uruguay's high suicide rates, among the highest in the world, and appealed for healthcare to be "accessible to everyone".

He said the care he received after his lung cancer diagnosis made him think of the "many men and women who lack the means to obtain a timely diagnosis" or receive treatment.

Leo will celebrate Mass on Saturday in a park in Paysandu, a city in western Uruguay, where 30,000 pilgrims are expected.

He will then return to Montevideo to visit Casavalle, the neighbourhood with the highest homicide rate in the capital, as well as the Catholic University and the Centenario Stadium, where he will preside over a prayer vigil for 60,000 people.

Leo's visit to Uruguay is the first to the country by a pope in nearly four decades.

In 'fairly good shape'

He told reporters on the plane carrying him across the Atlantic he was "in fairly good shape" following his surgery, and his advice for others facing their own cancer diagnosis was "not to be afraid".

The Pontiff said he was bringing a message of "hope" to the world's most Catholic continent.

Liberal Uruguay is at odds with the Catholic Church, as well as Latin America's new crop of conservative leaders, on issues such as same-sex marriage, abortion and euthanasia, which was legalised there last year.

Leo issued a call for the "protection of the unborn" but also spoke about issues specific to Uruguay, such as its high suicide rates, which he called "painful".

A committed environmentalist, he had praise for the small country's "remarkable" achievement in greening its economy, which runs mainly on renewables.

'One of my many homes'

The highlight of his tour will be Peru, where he spent nearly two decades as a missionary and which he has referred to as "one of my many homes".

The church's first US-born Pope, who has repeatedly clashed with President Donald Trump over the Middle East war, spoke on his plane about voting in this week's US midterm elections.

His mail-in ballot made history because he was the first Pope known to have voted in a political election.

"I'm proud to be an American and to exercise the right" to vote, he said.

> 'I'm proud to be an American and to exercise the right' to vote...

He will travel on Sunday to Argentina, the homeland of his predecessor Pope Francis, who disappointed many Argentines by not returning to visit during his papacy.

His trip is seen as a double homecoming of sorts, US-based Vatican expert Christopher White told AFP.

"History's first Latin American Pope, Francis, never returned to his homeland. Leo, a Peruvian citizen, now carries forward that mantle and legacy," said White, who wrote a book on Pope Leo.

Peru has been gripped by Pope fever in the run-up to his arrival.

Vendors in Lima are selling T-shirts and rosaries with his image on them, while Leo bread is on sale in bakeries.

A towering, 14 metre statue of Leo has also been erected in the port city of Callao, which he is set to visit.

The trip will take him to the former Inca capital of Cusco and the Amazon rainforest, but the pope will also revisit his former life as Robert Francis Prevost, with a supper among priests from his old diocese of Chiclayo and a private visit to a chapel he helped rebuild.

Refugees in Jordan gain access to digital documents, government services through Sanad App

AMMAN (JT) — Refugees living in Jordan can now access key digital documents and select government services through Sanad, Jordan's e-government services application.

This new initiative results from collaboration between the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency and the World Bank.

Through the Sanad application, refugees can access their digital documentation and use a growing range of online government services, helping make administrative processes more accessible, efficient and convenient.

The initiative forms part of the government's broader efforts to promote inclusive digital public services across the Kingdom by expanding access to Sanad for non-Jordanian residents, according to a UNHCR statement.

Throughout 2025, technical teams from the ministry, UNHCR and the World Bank worked closely to integrate refugee data into Sanad's platform and enable refugees to securely activate their digital identities.

A soft launch began in February 2026, supported by mobile Sanad teams deployed at UNHCR registration centres in Amman and refugee camps.

The teams helped refugees activate their accounts and provided information on how to use the application and access its services.

By July 2026, refugees were able to access key digital documents through the application, including their UNHCR asylum-seeker certificates and Ministry of Interior service cards.

These documents can support refugees in verifying their identity when accessing relevant services, in accordance with applicable government procedures.

Depending on their eligibility and available records, refugees may access school certificates delivered on Ajyal platform, and Social Security Corporation information for refugees who have work permits.

Refugees can also book appointments at government service centres located across the Kingdom.

To date, more than 20,000 refugees have activated their accounts on the Sanad application. Jordan has long demonstrated its commitment to hosting and supporting refugees.

Extending that commitment to the country's digital services is a major step forward, giving refugees faster, easier and more dignified access to the documentation and government services they need and ensuring that no one is left behind

The Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, UNHCR and the World Bank will continue working together to expand the documents and services available to refugees through the platform.

Shooting in Polish city of Krakow leaves five dead



AFP photo

Overall view taken through a window of the scene where police work in the historic center of Krakow, Poland, on Saturday where a gunman opened fire killing five people wounding around a dozen

KRAKÓW, Poland (AFP) — A shooting in the tourist heart of Poland's second city of Krakow on Saturday left five people dead and around a dozen wounded, police told AFP.

"A man drove a car onto Krakow's main square and began shooting at random people," a Krakow police spokesman said.

"As a result of the incident, five people were killed and around a dozen others were wounded."

He said the gunman was "neutralised and shot" by police officers and transported to hospital.

The police service for the Lesser Poland region said on X that police officers were among the wounded.

The gunman who on Saturday opened fire in Poland's second city of Krakow, killing five people and wounding over a dozen, acted alone and is Polish, a police spokeswoman told AFP.

"There is one perpetrator, it is a Polish man," she said by phone.

Prime Minister Donald Tusk confirmed the shooting following initial reports by local media which cited police and the fire department.

"I am being kept informed by the minister of the interior about the situation in Krakow following the tragic shooting," he wrote on X, adding that "the police are investigating the background and all the circumstances of the attack".

Justice Minister Waldemar Zurek wrote on X that "prosecutors, police and all the relevant services are already working at the scene".

He vowed that authorities would "ensure that the perpetrator of this crime is held fully accountable and severely punished".

Police did not immediately advance any potential motives for the gunman.

Shootings are rare in Poland, an EU and NATO member on the alliance's eastern flank that neighbours Ukraine.

The country was on high alert following a series of stabbings in October, which Tusk at the time denounced as part of a "cult of violence".

US military offers $20 million reward for information on 'Iran's nuclear programme'

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — Washington is offering a $20 million reward "and possible relocation" for information about Iran's nuclear programme, the US military said on Friday, as President Donald Trump reiterated Tehran wants to make a deal to end the war.

A State Department programme, Rewards for Justice, "is offering a reward of up to $20 million and possible relocation for information about Iran's nuclear programme, including its facilities, equipment, and associated personnel, such as those in the scientific community", US Central Command said on X.

The programme was established in 1984 under the State Department's national security rewards programme to offer money for information that protects American lives and interests.



AFP photo

A satellite image shows Iran's Arak heavy-water reactor facility Maxar Technologies

In its statement about the reward, the State Department said Iran's "lack of compliance with the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) on safeguards obligations has led to the agency's loss of "continuity of knowledge" regarding Iran's production and inventory of key components like centrifuges.

It gave no specific parameters on what information would yield a $20 million reward.

Trump has repeatedly said US forces have effectively obliterated Iran's nuclear programme.

"If we didn't hit Iran, you wouldn't have Israel today," Trump said Friday night in West Palm Beach, Florida. "If they had nuclear, they would have used nuclear. They would have obliterated the Middle East."

But the president also said Iran — which he stressed has had its economy and military severely damaged over eight months of war — is eager to end the conflict.

"We're dealing with them now. They want to make a deal very badly," he said.

Diplomatic efforts by mediators have been in full swing in an attempt to prevent any resumption of fighting.

And on Tuesday Iran's President MasoudPezeshkian said his government was still trying to resolve the crisis through dialogue.



AFP photo

Palestinian residents stand on the rubble of a house that was demolished by Israeli occupation forces in the so-called Area C of the Israeli-occupied West Bank on Thursday

Netanyahu says coalition with Arab parties would 'dismantle' State of Israel

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Saturday that a potential coalition between opposition parties and Arab lists would lead to the collapse of the country.

The statement came on the eve of the announcement by Israeli President Isaac Herzog of who will be tasked with forming the next government following last week's vote, with Netanyahu's rivals increasingly optimistic about removing the country's longest-serving prime minister.

The opposition, led by Gadi Eisenkot, a former military chief and political newcomer who has sought to appeal to secular and liberal Israelis, has opened the door to a once improbable alliance with ultra-Orthodox Jews.

It could give Eisenkot the numbers to form a coalition that might also include the moderate Islamist party Raam, whose leader has recognised Israel as a "Jewish state", and receive the external support of the Arab-majority Joint List.

"Such a government, dependent on Islamists, will dismantle the State of Israel from within, as is happening in European countries, and far worse than that," Netanyahu said in a pre-recorded speech, echoing the language of far-right politicians on the continent who claim parts of Europe have come under Islamic law.

Neither side reached a majority in the October 27 election, in a country deeply polarised by Netanyahu's hard-right rule and worn down by three years of war.

Speaking on Thursday after consultations with all parties, president Isaac Herzog, who must select a candidate to form the next government, acknowledged it would be logical to give the mandate to Eisenkot, who was recommended by factions representing 67 lawmakers as opposed to 46 for Netanyahu's bloc.

The president has also sent signals that he would like to explore a national unity government bringing together Jewish Israelis from the two camps.

On Saturday, Netanyahu reiterated his support for that idea.

"I call for the establishment of a national unity government that will include all the parties of the national camp and all the Zionist parties that want to safeguard our state, the one and only state of the Jewish people," he said, stopping short of claiming that he should lead such a coalition, as he has done in another recent speech.

Jordan vows no let-up in fight against terrorism following deadly terrorist attacks

Continued from page 1

Police Spokesperson Brig. Gen. Amer Sartawi said Salaytah was stabbed while on duty on Madina Munawara Street at around noon.

"Salaytah was taken by surprise by a man who stabbed him with a sharp object," Sartawi told The Jordan Times.

A patrol stationed in the area intervened and arrested the suspect, while one of the officers sustained a facial injury, Sartawi said.

Salaytah was rushed to a nearby hospital but died shortly after being admitted, according to the police spokesperson.

"We started questioning the suspect who confessed to plotting to carry out a terrorist attack against police officers," Sartawi added.

The Public Security Directorate (PSD) mourned Salaytah, describing him as a martyr who had remained committed to his duty and the nation.

"We pray to God Almighty to encompass him in His vast mercy, to grant him a place in the highest reaches of Paradise alongside the martyrs and the righteous, and to bestow patience and solace upon his family and colleagues," the PSD said in a statement.

Senior military officials, lawmakers, dignitaries and political party leaders attended the funeral, alongside large numbers of mourners. Some attendees recited poetry in tribute to the officer and called for a firm response to terrorism and extremism.

Authorities said preliminary investigations indicated that the suspect had been planning an attack targeting security personnel. Prosecutors at the State Security Court have launched an investigation into the incident.

Calls grow for tougher measures

The Amman attack came less than two weeks after gunmen opened fire during a funeral at St. George's Greek Orthodox Church in Hmoud village in Karak, killing nine people and injuring at least 40 others.

Authorities described the shooting as a terrorist attack, prompting renewed calls for stronger security measures and intensified efforts to counter extremist ideology.

The trial of three suspects in the Karak shooting began at the State Security Court last week. The defendants face several terrorism-related charges, including nine counts of committing terrorist acts resulting in death.

The two incidents have reignited debate over the need to review existing legislation, address legal loopholes and introduce tougher penalties to deter terrorist acts and protect society.

Lower House Speaker Ibrahim Tarawneh said on Friday that the Chamber would work with the government to review existing laws, identify legislative gaps and strengthen measures to combat extremism.

Former prime minister and Senator Abdullah Ensour, who attended Salaytah's funeral, called for a broader cultural approach to tackling radicalism, including revising school curricula and promoting values of tolerance and moderation.

MP Saleh Armouti, of Islamist leaning, called for the implementation of the death penalty and tougher legislation to counter radicalism.

Experts have argued that combating terrorism requires a comprehensive approach extending beyond security measures to address the ideological and social factors that contribute to extremism.

They have called for greater public awareness, stronger national unity and accountability for those involved in terrorist activities, alongside measures to strengthen the country's ability to protect society.



AFP photo

Mourners attend the funeral of those who were killed in the attack that took place two days earlier at the Greek Orthodox Church in the village of Hmoud in Karak governorate on October 25

Guatemalan lawmaker, three police officers killed in attack

GUATEMALA CITY (AFP) — A Guatemalan opposition lawmaker and three police officers were killed in an armed attack on Friday, authorities said.

The attack targeted Congressman Julio Portillo, who was in the town of Rio Hondo, in the eastern Zacapa department, which is known to have drug trafficking activity.

"President Luis Contreras, members of the Board of Directors and lawmakers mourn the tragic passing of Congressman Julio Cesar Portillo Paz, representative of the Zacapa district," Guatemala's Congress posted late Friday on X.

The congressman died in a state hospital from gunshot wounds, the director of the Zacapa medical center, Luis Najera, told reporters.

Three police officers were killed in the "direct attack against the lawmaker", the interior ministry said.

The suspects escaped and were not identified.

President Bernardo Arevalo condemned the attack and instructed security forces to collaborate with the Public Prosecutor's Office to "clarify these events and identify those responsible".

"We will not allow criminal violence to prevail over the lives and security of Guatemalans," he said on Saturday.

The Lorenzana family cartel, which has links to Mexico's Sinaloa cartel, controls the drug trade in Zacapa.

Portillo won his seat in 2023 for the Cabal party, but has since switched to another opposition party, National Unity of Hope, led by former first lady Sandra Torres.

She is expected to run for president in Guatemala's elections next year.

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Crown Prince's Estonia visit highlights AI's role in shaping Jordan's future

By Lubna Hanna Ammari

The visit of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hussein to Estonia offers an important opportunity to reflect on the growing role of artificial intelligence (AI) in shaping the future of nations, and on how Jordan can harness this rapidly advancing technology to strengthen its economy, improve public services and enhance national security.

During his visit to Järva County on Friday, the Crown Prince observed live demonstrations of advanced drone and counterdrone technologies and was briefed on AI-powered field intelligence, border surveillance, air traffic control and security systems. These technologies demonstrate how AI is increasingly becoming an essential component of modern defence capabilities, enabling faster data analysis, improved monitoring and more informed decision-making. His participation in the Tallinn Digital Summit 2026 also highlighted the importance of digital transformation, cybersecurity and AI in strengthening national competitiveness.

Beyond the defence applications showcased during the visit, Estonia's experience provides valuable lessons for Jordan in understanding how technological innovation can be translated into practical benefits for society and the economy.

Estonia has established itself as one of the leading examples of digital transformation, demonstrating how sustained investment in digital infrastructure, secure data systems and technological innovation can reshape government operations and public services. Its experience highlights an important principle: Successful digital transformation is not simply about introducing new technologies, but about integrating them into the way institutions operate and deliver services to citizens.

For Jordan, this experience is particularly relevant as the Kingdom seeks to accelerate its digital transformation and strengthen its position as a regional hub for technology and innovation. The country has already taken important steps in this direction through its National Artificial Intelligence Strategy and Implementation Plan 2023–2027, which includes 68 projects designed to develop the national AI ecosystem and promote the adoption of AI across priority sectors.

The challenge now is to translate these strategic ambitions into tangible outcomes that improve people's lives and contribute to sustainable economic growth.

National security and defence represent an important dimension. The technologies demonstrated during the Crown Prince's visit illustrate the potential of AI in analysing surveillance information, detecting emerging threats, monitoring borders and supporting the operation of drone and counterdrone systems. For Jordan, developing expertise in these areas could strengthen its ability to respond to evolving security challenges while encouraging partnerships, research and investment in advanced technologies.

However, realising these opportunities requires more than purchasing advanced systems or adopting international technological solutions. Jordan needs to invest in developing local expertise, strengthening university research, supporting technology start-ups and encouraging cooperation between government institutions, the private sector and academic organisations. Equally important is establishing effective regulatory frameworks that ensure the responsible use of AI, protect personal data and maintain public trust.

The Estonian experience also demonstrates that digital transformation must be supported by a comprehensive national vision and long-term commitment. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Estonia continues to perform above the OECD average in digital government, particularly in data-driven public services and the proactive delivery of government services.

Ultimately, AI should be viewed not merely as a technological advancement, but as a strategic investment in Jordan's future. Its successful adoption could improve productivity, create new employment opportunities, attract investment, and help address some of the Kingdom's most pressing economic and social challenges.

The Crown Prince's visit to Estonia therefore carries significance beyond the technologies showcased during the demonstrations. It highlights the value of international knowledge exchange and the importance of learning from countries that have successfully integrated technology into their development models.

For Jordan, the next step is to move decisively from digital ambition to practical implementation, ensuring that AI becomes a driver of innovation, economic resilience and sustainable development, while placing people and their needs at the centre of technological progress.

The author is a specialist in educational technology

The sixth review with the IMF

By Raad Mahmoud Al-Tal

The staff-level agreement reached between Jordan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the sixth review of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and the third review of the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) represents an important milestone in Jordan's economic reform process. The significance of this review lies not only in the additional financing of approximately $294 million, comprising $133 million under the EFF and $161 million under the RSF, but also in the continued commitment to implementing agreed reforms despite regional challenges and economic pressures.

The importance of the review is reflected in the IMF's confirmation that Jordan has met all quantitative performance criteria and completed most of the structural benchmarks due under the programme. This demonstrates progress in programme implementation, but raises a deeper economic question: To what extent have these commitments and policy measures translated into tangible and sustainable improvements in economic performance?

On the fiscal front, the government managed to achieve its primary fiscal deficit target in 2026, despite a decline in tax revenues equivalent to approximately 0.8 per cent of GDP during the first half of the year as a result of regional developments. Spending restraint, together with improved revenue collection during the third quarter, helped contain this shortfall. This experience highlights the importance of sound fiscal management in absorbing external shocks. However, it also underscores the need to broaden the tax base and improve collection efficiency rather than relying increasingly on expenditure restraint.

The 2027 budget targets a primary deficit of 0.9 per cent of GDP for the central government, excluding grants, alongside efforts to reduce public debt to approximately 80 per cent of GDP by 2028. While these targets are important for strengthening fiscal sustainability, achieving them requires a balanced approach to public expenditure, ensuring that fiscal consolidation does not come at the expense of capital investment, development projects and productive social spending.

The third review under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility carries particular importance because it addresses structural vulnerabilities and long-term risks. The associated reforms include establishing a central register of infrastructure assets owned by government companies in the construction and energy sectors, strengthening health preparedness, and defining financing mechanisms for health emergencies. These measures are economically significant because they help improve public asset management, reduce vulnerabilities and limit potential future fiscal liabilities.

Economic indicators reflect Jordan's ability to maintain macroeconomic stability amid a turbulent regional environment. The economy recorded real growth of approximately 3 per cent during the first half of 2026, while foreign reserves reached $27.5 billion, covering around 8.8 months of imports. Inflation remained stable at 2.26 per cent. These indicators demonstrate the resilience of monetary and external stability, while economic growth projections for 2026 range between 2.8 per cent and 3 per cent.

However, maintaining stability does not necessarily mean that structural and productive challenges have been resolved. Current growth rates make it essential to focus on the sources of growth and their capacity to generate employment, increase productivity and raise domestic value added. This highlights the importance of strategic projects, such as the Aqaba-Amman water de-salination and conveyance project and railway development projects, as investments capable of strengthening productive linkages, reducing transportation costs and creating new opportunities for investment.

The sixth review is therefore more than another financing milestone. It provides an opportunity to assess the progress of Jordan's economic reform programme. Although progress has been achieved in strengthening macroeconomic indicators and meeting performance criteria, the next phase requires deeper structural reforms, a more competitive business environment, stronger private investment and greater public-sector efficiency.

The success of the programme should not be measured solely by the completion of reviews or the availability of financing. Rather, it should be measured by its ability to transform fiscal and monetary stability into more productive economic growth, sustainable employment opportunities and tangible improvements in living standards.

Who gets to be called emotional

By Ruba Zeidan

Can those students even find Gaza on a map

Speaking at the One Young World Summit in Cape Town on November 3, Her Majesty Queen Rania recalled hearing this question about pro-Palestinian student protesters and explained why she pushes back against it.

I was struck by the question itself. Geography is worth knowing, certainly. But when did knowing the location of a place become a test of someone's right to care about what happens there?

Public arguments are easily redirected. Instead of examining the protesters' claims, we examine the protesters: Their knowledge, their age, their emotions. By the time we have finished evaluating their qualifications to speak, the original subject has often disappeared.

Consider the vocabulary of public debate. A young protester is emotional. A political leader is resolute. A demand for equal treatment is idealistic. A refusal to act is pragmatic.

These descriptions may sometimes be justified. But language does more than express an opinion; it influences whether an opinion is considered worth examining at all.

Queen Rania challenged a familiar assumption when she said, "Caring deeply is not the opposite of thinking clearly."

We have grown used to treating emotion and reason as competing qualities. The composed speaker appears knowledgeable, while the distressed speaker is expected to recover their objectivity before being taken seriously.

Yet anger may be an entirely reasonable response to an accurate understanding of events. It may also arise from misinformation. Neither possibility can be established by observing someone's emotional state.

We need evidence.

What troubles me is how often evidence is demanded from those who express outrage, while restraint is accepted as though it were itself proof of sound judgment. Calmness can disguise a weak argument just as anger can accompany a strong one. The responsibility to substantiate a claim belongs to both speakers.

The Queen's use of the Arabic word qahr added another dimension. It names a particular pain that comes when suffering is dismissed, denied or treated with contempt. English has approximate translations, but none carries its full weight. The word captures something important: Injustice can be compounded by the refusal to acknowledge it. Language becomes part of the experience of injustice, not merely a way of describing it.

The implications extend beyond protests. Queen Rania criticised governments that recognise evidence yet choose to disregard it, calling that choice "a cop-out dressed up as neutrality".

It is a challenging formulation, particularly in diplomacy, where restraint and carefully chosen language can be indispensable. Diplomats have legitimate reasons not to speak like activists. Mediation requires discretion. Humanitarian organisations depend on neutrality to reach people in need. Public silence sometimes protects negotiations that would otherwise collapse.

But neutrality must be judged by its purpose and consequences. Withholding judgment while evidence is being examined is different from declining to respond once it has been established. Treating parties impartially is different from applying different standards to similar conduct. The language may sound identical. The responsibilities are not.

Journalism faces a related dilemma. In 1972, sociologist Gaye Tuchman described objectivity as a strategic ritual: Professional routines that demonstrate fairness and protect journalists from criticism. A report may quote two opposing claims and appear perfectly balanced, even when the evidence supports one far more strongly than the other. Giving competing voices space is part of responsible journalism. Investigating what they say is equally important.

As someone working in journalism education, I encounter this challenge constantly. Our students consume political information in an environment where a short video can reach millions before anyone has established when it was recorded, who produced it or what happened outside the frame. The emotional reaction arrives instantly. Verification takes time.

Queen Rania's advice to young people was practical: "Look at the reports, not just reels." I would extend it to all of us.

An image of suffering may disturb us before we understand its circumstances. That response can motivate valuable inquiry, provided we then examine the source, look for corroboration and remain willing to reconsider. Media literacy should cultivate those habits. But I would be concerned if we produced a generation able to identify every manipulated image while growing indifferent to the human realities that genuine images reveal.

Jordan is a particularly interesting place for this discussion. We live close to conflicts that are often discussed internationally in the careful vocabulary of diplomacy, while their consequences remain immediate for us.

That proximity requires discipline. Emotional investment can sharpen our attention, but it can also introduce assumptions we must be prepared to question. Distance, meanwhile, guarantees no objectivity. Sometimes it provides perspective. Sometimes it simply makes suffering easier to discuss in the abstract.

The challenge is to remain attentive without becoming credulous, and critical without losing our capacity to care.

What I take from Queen Rania's Cape Town remarks is an invitation to examine the standards by which we judge public arguments, including those we agree with. We should ask more of speakers than emotional conviction and more of institutions than polished declarations of neutrality. Evidence, consistency and accountability are reasonable expectations of both.

So the next time someone challenges a young protester to locate Gaza on a map, we should teach them the geography.

Then return to what they were trying to tell us.

The map was never the real subject.

US and Israeli elections: Domestic calculations and international concerns

By Ahmad Abdelbaset Rjoub

The significance of the US and Israeli elections extends beyond changes in the domestic balance of power. Their outcomes have also shaped the calculations of allies and adversaries, raising questions about the future policies of President Donald Trump and prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Amid domestic pressures and international uncertainty, both Trump and Netanyahumay, find their room for maneuver narrowing, without necessarily facing fundamental changes in established policies or alliances.

In the United States, Democratic gains in Congress have altered the political landscape and highlighted public dissatisfaction with aspects of the Republican administration's record, including living costs and foreign policy. In Israel, the Knesset election has raised questions about Netanyahu's ability to assemble a governing majority. Although the two political systems differ, both developments illustrate how electoral pressures can complicate the plans of leaders accustomed to considerable political influence.

Trump and Netanyahu have maintained a close relationship, particularly over Gaza, Iran, and broader regional security. Yet personal understandings cannot eliminate the constraints imposed by legislatures, coalition politics and public opinion. The important question is not whether their relationship will suddenly end, but how much freedom each leader will retain to pursue shared priorities.

In Washington, a Democratic congressional majority would gain substantial influence over legislation, federal spending and oversight. Trump could respond by negotiating with opponents or relying more heavily on executive powers and presidential vetoes. Either approach carries political costs. Legislative confrontation risks prolonged gridlock, while compromise may require concessions unpopular with parts of his Republican base.

The Democrats, however, face their own test. Winning seats is different from demonstrating an ability to address economic anxieties and public demands for effective government. Their influence will depend not only on the size of their majority but also on party unity and the constitutional limits of congressional authority. Foreign policy, in particular, remains an area where the presidency exercises considerable power.

Israel presents a different challenge. If Netanyahu's bloc falls short of the 61 seats required for a Knesset majority, his prospects depend on difficult coalition negotiations and the positions of potential partners. Unlike Trump, whose presidential term continues despite congressional opposition, Netanyahu's ability to govern depends directly on parliamentary confidence. This distinction matters when assessing the political vulnerability of the two leaders.

International reactions to the American results reveal divergent expectations. In Europe, some political circles see Democratic gains as an opportunity to revisit disagreements over climate policy, trade, and transatlantic relations. Yet European governments also recognise that cooperation with Washington must continue regardless of which party controls Congress. Electoral change may soften some disputes without reversing the administration's overall direction.

In the Middle East, the implications are especially uncertain. Iran has little reason to assume that a change in congressional leadership will automatically transform Washington's approach. Nevertheless, stronger legislative scrutiny of military operations and expenditure could complicate certain decisions. Such constraints may influence tactics, even when strategic disagreements remain unresolved.

For Israel, the growing visibility of Democrats critical of its conduct in Gaza and of unconditional military assistance could intensify debate in Congress. But American support for Israel rests on longstanding strategic, political, and institutional ties. A shift in congressional power may change the tone and intensity of oversight without producing an immediate rupture in bilateral relations.

Elsewhere, including Asia and Africa, governments are likely to judge these developments through their own interests. Some will prioritise continuity in security and economic partnerships; others may hope for adjustments in American engagement. There is no single international response because the consequences of political change in Washington vary from one region to another.

The overlap between the American and Israeli electoral developments is therefore significant, but it should not be overstated. Domestic weakness could encourage Trump and Netanyahu to seek accommodation, or push them toward tougher positions intended to reinforce support at home. Neither outcome is inevitable and the regional consequences will depend on decisions still to be made.

Ultimately, the elections do not mark the end of both influence. They suggest, instead, a period in which domestic political calculations may increasingly shape foreign policy choices. Whether this produces compromise or confrontation will determine how deeply the effects are felt beyond Washington and Tel Aviv.



Photo Courtesy of int@j

CEO of the ICT Association of Jordan (int@j) Nidal Bitar speaks at the national AI summit entitled 'from Adoption to impact'

Jordan seeks to expand AI adoption, strengthen national capabilities

By Ilham Darwazeh

AMMAN — Jordan is seeking to move beyond adopting artificial intelligence (AI) towards developing national capabilities and ensuring that the technology contributes to economic and social development, according to industry representatives.

The national AI summit entitled "from Adoption to impact", organised recently by the Information and Communications Technology Association of Jordan (Int@j), provided an opportunity to highlight the Kingdom's progress in AI adoption, government initiatives and efforts to prepare the workforce for technological change.

CEO of the ICT Association of Jordan (int@j), Nidal Bitar, said the timing of the summit was particularly significant ahead of the Jordan-EU Investment Conference scheduled for November 19, providing an opportunity to showcase Jordan's technological potential to international partners.

"Jordan is full of potential and is really focusing on AI, not just from adoption only but also manufacturing AI, if I may say," he said.

He added that the objective was to ensure AI generated economic and social benefits that contribute to the country's prosperity.

Nidal said Jordan had made considerable efforts to develop policies and regulations and encourage companies to adopt AI technologies.

He noted that the Jordan Academy for Government and Administrative Development was working to spread AI knowledge and awareness among more than 200,000 government employees, while national initiatives were also targeting the application of AI in education and healthcare.

According to an Int@j survey conducted approximately a year ago, around 60 per cent of surveyed technology companies were already incorporating AI into their operations, a figure Nidal expected to exceed 80 per cent in the next measurement.

He also cited the Microsoft AI Index, according to which Jordan ranked 29th globally and third among Arab countries in AI use.

Beyond adoption, industry representatives stressed the importance of ensuring that women and young people participate in and benefit from the country's technological transformation.

Head of Women Economic Empowerment Unit-SHETECHS at int@j, Zain Asfour, said women's participation should be viewed as an essential component of the technology sector's economic growth rather than as a separate empowerment agenda.

"We look at women as an essential partner in growth, a main driver in creativity and innovation," she said.

Asfour cited figures indicating that although women account for more than 50 per cent of university graduates in technology-related fields, their contribution to the sector stands at around 32 per cent. Their representation falls further to 14 per cent in technical roles and 4 per cent in leadership positions.

She said these gaps highlighted the need to strengthen women's career progression and ensure that qualified female professionals could access opportunities across the technology industry.

This year, Int@j integrated its Women Economic Empowerment initiative, previously organised through a separate SHETECHS forum, into the national AI summit.

"The decision this year was that the narrative of separating initiatives that support females from the workforce, the private sector and the economy should change," Asfour said.

"Women are part of the workforce and we cannot look at them in a separate agenda," she added.

The summit also sought to engage younger generations in shaping Jordan's technological future. Asfour highlighted a student competition in which participants presented videos outlining their vision for Jordan in 2033 and how AI could address real-life challenges and improve people's everyday lives.

She said bringing students together with representatives from government, industry and academia was important to ensuring that the future workforce could participate in and benefit from technological transformation.

Discussions at the summit also highlighted the importance of digital sovereignty, national data capabilities and the development of skills needed to manage and apply AI responsibly.

Participants stressed that Jordan's ambitions would depend not only on access to advanced technologies, but also on developing local expertise, strengthening infrastructure and ensuring that women and young people had equal opportunities to contribute to the sector.

Food exports rise 16.3% to JD703m in first eight months of 2026



JT file

Food sector exports increase by 16.3 per cent during the first eight months of 2026, reaching JD703 million according to the Jordan Chamber of Industry

AMMAN (JT) — Food sector exports increased by 16.3 per cent during the first eight months of 2026, reaching JD703 million, compared with JD605 million in the same period of 2025, according to the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI).

Food sector representative Mohammad Jitan attributed the growth to market diversification and rising demand in regional and European markets, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Exports to Syria surged by 110 per cent to JD26 million, up from JD13 million in the same period of 2025, while exports to Palestine rose by 83 per cent to JD27 million, compared with JD15 million.

Exports to the Netherlands increased by 47 per cent to JD13 million, up from JD9 million in the corresponding period of 2025.

Saudi Arabia remained the leading destination for Jordanian food exports, with shipments rising by 8 per cent to JD161 million, compared with JD149 million in the same period last year.

Iraq ranked second, with exports increasing by 34.3 per cent to JD147 million, up from JD112 million.

Exports to the United Arab Emirates rose by 4 per cent to JD74 million, while shipments to Qatar increased by 34 per cent to JD38 million and those to Kuwait by 19 per cent to JD29 million.

Meanwhile, exports to the United States declined by 21 per cent to JD29 million, down from JD36 million, while shipments to Yemen fell by 4 per cent to JD19 million.

In terms of product categories, various food preparations topped the list, with exports reaching JD95 million, an increase of 24 per cent from JD77 million.

Meat products recorded a significant increase of 36.6 per cent, reaching JD93 million, up from JD68 million.

Manufactured tobacco products reached JD92 million, up by 3 per cent, while vegetable and fruit preparations increased by 2 per cent to JD69 million.

Cereal and flour preparations rose by 13 per cent to JD52 million, while sugar products increased by 8 per cent to JD48 million. Exports of coffee, tea and spices reached JD45 million, up by 4 per cent.

In contrast, cocoa preparations declined by 24 per cent to JD45 million, compared with JD56 million in the same period of 2025.

Bank of England lifts rate for first time since 2023 to fight inflation



AFP photo

Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey attends the Bank of England Monetary Policy Report press conference at the BoE in London on Thursday

LONDON (AFP) — The Bank of England (BoE) raised its benchmark interest rate to four per cent last week, the first increase in more than three years, as soaring energy costs push up global inflation.

The BoE warned UK inflation risked hitting 6.2 per cent in the third quarter of next year from 3.5 per cent currently, in a worst case scenario of oil prices soaring far beyond $100 a barrel because of the Middle East conflict.

At the same time, the central bank upgraded its economic growth forecasts for this year and next, driven by "strength in business investment" which "partly reflects strength in AI-related demand", it said in a statement.

The central bank tightened borrowing costs by a quarter point, catching up with the US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank in lifting rates since the start of the Middle East conflict.

Along with Ukraine's strikes on Russian refineries, disruptions to Gulf energy supplies owing to the US-Iran war have caused record-high diesel prices around the world.

"There is now enough inflationary pressure in the pipeline caused by the rise in energy prices, that an increase in Bank Rate is warranted," BoE governor Andrew Bailey said Thursday.

"Today's increase shouldn't be seen as the first in an inevitable long sequence of hikes. But, unless the conflict in the Middle East is resolved, neither does it seem likely to be the last increase," he added.

Growth upgrades

The BoE estimated UK gross domestic product to hit 1.6 per cent this year and 1.3 per cent next year.

In July, it had forecast GDP output of 1.1 per cent in both years, while its expectation for UK growth to slow next year mirrored recent forecasts from the country's government and International Monetary Fund.

The BoE last raised its key interest rate in August 2023, and has kept the cost of borrowing at 3.75 per cent since December.

"Ultimately, how high interest rates rise and how long they stay high depends on what happens to energy prices and the domestic economy, as they will largely determine the extent of the second-round inflation effects," Paul Dales, chief UK economist at Capital Economics research group, said Thursday.

The BoE added that its central forecast is for UK inflation peaking at 4.9 in the second quarter of next year.

Millions of Britons face a jump in energy bills from the start of 2027, even after the Labour government offered some assistance in its annual budget announcement last week.

Tech stocks bounce but fail to recover losses



AFP photo

Investors widely expect the Fed to raise interest rates by a quarter percentage point at its next meeting in December to bring down stubborn inflation

LONDON (AFP) — Tech stocks bounced on Wall Street on Friday but failed to fully recover from the previous day's rout on fears that the victorious Democrats will slam the brakes on the rollout of AI infrastructure.

Investors welcomed a partial recovery for the tech-heavy Nasdaq after its plunge on Thursday, which sent Asian and European markets tumbling.

But the Nasdaq technically entered a correction after dropping more than 10 per cent over the past month, raising doubts about the eventual payoff from massive AI investments.

And if tougher US regulation of the AI data centre rollout emerges from the defeat of President Donald Trump's Republicans this week, market players could turn even more wary.

But a report showing that the US economy added 165,000 jobs last month, far more than analysts had expected, helped boost confidence on the economy on Friday.

"Bargain hunters are piling back into US stocks, led by technology shares, as a stronger-than-expected jobs report, lower unemployment and improved consumer sentiment reinforce the resilience of the US economy despite higher energy costs," said IG analyst Axel Rudolph.

The Philadelphia Semiconductors index, which includes the major chip players in the AI industry, rose 4.7 per cent.

"The market is hoping to hit a reset button today, yet the path ahead is anything but clear," said Briefing.com strategist Patrick O'Hare.

> 'Big worries are colliding — the build-out of data centres looks set to slow...'

While the US jobs data — including a dip in the unemployment rate to 4.1 per cent — reassured investors on the strength of the economy, it also cleared the way for the US Federal Reserve to raise interest rates.

Investors widely expect the Fed to raise interest rates by a quarter per centage point at its next meeting in December to bring down stubborn inflation.

Rising interest rates would further complicate the calculus for tech firms that have propelled markets worldwide over a four-year bull run.

"Big worries are colliding — the build-out of data centres looks set to slow, which risks shredding the spending spree underpinning the boom, right at the time that investors have become super nervous about returns on this massive investment," said Susannah Streeter, chief investment strategist at Wealth Club.

The Tokyo and Seoul stock markets closed out their weeks with losses of six per cent following the Nasdaq's 5.5 per cent collapse on Thursday, its worst showing since April last year when Trump unveiled his wide-ranging global tariffs.

On Seoul's Kospi stocks index, chip giant SK hynix slumped 10 per cent and its rival Samsung lost 6.4 per cent.

The London, Paris and Frankfurt stock markets finished down, despite featuring few technology firms.

Elsewhere, the dollar firmed following the US jobs data.

SPORTS AT A GLANCE

FOOTBALL

Bayern, Dortmund win to stay tight at the top of Bundesliga

BERLIN (AFP) — Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund remained neck and neck at the top the German Bundesliga table after 2-1 wins over Mainz and Elversberg on Saturday. Bayern and Dortmund, who drew 2-2 in Munich last Saturday, are locked on 21 points, with the defending champions ahead on goal difference after nine rounds. Harry Kane assisted on both goals as Bayern won at bogey side Mainz for just the third time in their past seven Bundesliga visits. Goalless in three games since winning the Ballon d'Or in late October, Kane set up Joshua Kimmich's opener after 14 minutes and laid on a second-half goal for Lennart Karl. The England captain has continued to show his prowess as a provider this season and has 10 assists to go with 10 goals in all competitions. Bayern, who won 2-0 at Atletico Madrid in midweek, continue to defy a mounting absentee list.

CRICKET

Pakistan adds three uncapped players for Sri Lanka Test

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan (AFP) — Pakistan added four players, including three uncapped names, to their squad on Saturday for the two-Test series against Sri Lanka starting next week. Promising pace bowlers Ali Shabbir, 19, and Saqib Khan, 31, get their first chance for Pakistan, along with experienced all-rounder Aamer Jamal. A green pitch is expected for the first Test starting in Rawalpindi on Monday. Tayyab Arif, 20, was also added after scoring 727 runs in the recently concluded domestic tournament, a Pakistan Cricket Board release said. Batter Abdullah Fazal and spinner Ali Usman have been dropped. Jamal, who has played nine Tests, returns to the squad after being one of seven players sent home from the disastrous tour of England in August. Pakistan lost 3-0 in England and have since reshuffled their Test squad. The two-match series is part of the World Test Championship, in which Pakistan are currently ranked ninth and last and Sri Lanka are seventh. The second Test will start in Lahore on November 17.

Jordan contests U17 Asian Cup 2027 qualifiers

By Aline Bannayan



(JFA photo)

Jordan's team training in Laos ahead of the kickoff of U17 Asian Cup qualifiers

AMMAN — Jordan's U-17 men's team starts qualifiers for the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) U-17 Asian Cup 2027 on Sunday when they face hosts Laos in their first Group D match which also includes Sri Lanka, Iranand Pakistan.

35 teams will contest the qualifiers in 7 groups with group winners joining the 9 teams who qualified to the U-17 World Cup at the next edition of the U-17 Asian Cup 2027to be held in Uzbekistan. Theautomatic qualifiers are China, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

Before leaving home for their group qualifiers, Jordan played Bangladesh in two matcheswinning 2-0 and 3-2.

Since first playing the qualifiers in 1985, Jordan will seek to qualify to the competition for the fourth time after they qualified in 1990, 2010, and 2018. Jordan didn't make it to the 2026 U-17 Asian Cup when it was decided it would be held annually.

In other divisions this year, Jordan qualified for the10thtime to the U-20 Asian Cup set for China in 2027. The team's best performance of finishing fourth in 2006 when theyadvanced to the U-20 World Cup in 2007. In previous editions, they exited the group stages in 1977, 1978, 2008, 2010, 2018 and 2025; exited the quarterfinals in 2012 and 2023. They did not qualify in 2014 and 2016. On the other hand, the men's U23 squad exited the 2026 AFC U-23 Asian Cup quarters after losing to eventual and reigning champs Japan.

In women's age group divisions, Jordan's U-17 women's squadrecently failed to advance past qualifiers to the AFC U-17 women's Asian Cup 2027.

Shelton ends Van Assche's run to reach Paris Masters final



AFP Photo

US' Ben Shelton stretches to play a backhand return to France's Luca Van Assche during their men's singles semi-final match on Saturday

PARIS (AFP) — World No.4 Ben Shelton fought from behind to end home hope Luca Van Assche's surprise run at the Paris Masters on Saturday, booking his spot in a sixth tour-level final this season.

Shelton defeated the French World No.47 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 in their last-four meeting.

The US Open runner-up will meet either Carlos Alcaraz or former World No.2 Casper Ruud in Sunday's showpiece match.

The 24-year-old already holds two 1000-level titles to his name, after winning the last two editions of the Canadian Open.

Despite being a break up in the deciding set, Van Assche fell just short of securing the biggest win of his career and reaching a first Masters final as Shelton showed his fighting spirit once again.

It was a tournament to remember for the 22-year-old, however, after eliminating former world number five Lorenzo Musetti and US 15th seed Learner Tien en route to the semi-finals. In the first set Shelton rarely looked comfortable and amassed errors on his usually solid groundstrokes.

The rot eventually spread to his most formidable weapon, his serve, as Van Assche earned himself a vital break in the 11th game before holding to 15 to claim the frame in confident fashion. The Atlanta native ended the set with 17 unforced errors, compared to just six from Van Assche.

Shelton's level slowly began to rise in the second set, and a whipped forehand passing shot at 15-40 allowed him to break Van Assche and move ahead 4-2. With the set on his racquet, Shelton duly served it out to bring up a deciding frame.

The nerves were palpable on court as two error-strewn games from both players produced consecutive breaks midway through the third set.

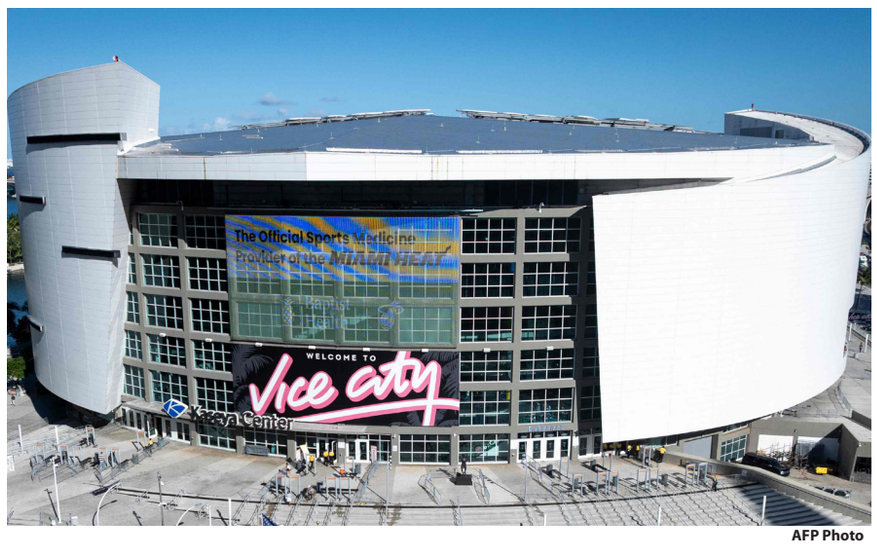
But once back on level terms, Shelton, the more experienced player in the later stages of tournaments with 10 final appearances under his belt, exchanged a relaxed high five with his father and coach Bryan after a backhand winner to hold, before promptly breaking Van Assche in the next game to lead 4-3.

Shelton brought up two match points, securing his spot in the final at the second time of asking.

Later, Alcaraz will take on Norway's Ruud in the other semifinal as the seven-time Grand Slam winner bids to reach the championship match at the Paris Masters for the first time.

'Grand Theft Auto VI': What we know

By Kilian Fichou
Agence France-Presse



AFP Photo

An aerial view shows the 'Vice City' sign on the Kaseya Center ahead of the launch of Grand Theft Auto VI, in Miami, Florida, on Thursday

PARIS, France — Online previews, a 26-minute Netflix teaser and media leaks and interviews have given "Grand Theft Auto" fans a taste of what awaits when the game's latest title drops on November 19.

Here is what we know about the long-awaited entry in the Rockstar franchise which, despite the name "GTA VI", is the eighth instalment in the series owned by US-based Take-Two Interactive.

Viewer discretion is advised: The realistic game features alcohol and drug use along with plenty of salty language in both English and Spanish.

What's it about?

Since its launch in 1997, "GTA" has been serving up a criminal underworld where players carry out heists and attacks in fictional — but increasingly realistic — American cities that can be almost infinitely explored. The latest game sticks to the script with two new stars, Jason Duval and Lucia Caminos, a "Bonnie and Clyde" team taking on enemies, store owners and the police against a cinematic backdrop of intrigue.

For the first time since the initial game, a woman is one of the main characters and "GTA VI" highlights the bond between the two, with players able to take their relationship further — or not.

There's a supporting cast of dozens of colourful characters, such as a conspiracy-minded hacker, a multinational CEO and a strip club owner.

The game also includes plenty of sarcastic swipes at many facets of modern living, not least social media and over-the-top advertising.

Where are we?

The action takes place in Vice City, the Miami-inspired megalopolis that first appeared in 2002, in the fictional state of Leonida — a stand-in for Florida.

Neighbourhoods are numerous and players can interact with all types of residents, or venture outside the city to an Everglades-style swamp or ocean islands teeming with tropical animals.

Scenes include dance clubs, dilapidated apartment complexes, strip malls and skyscraper rooftops — feel free to jump off one and use your parachute.

"GTA VI" has a playing "surface" two times bigger than in the previous game, and Rockstar says it will have 10 times as many buildings that characters can enter.

What can players do?

Almost whatever they want. But car chases, robberies and shoot-outs are the heart of the game.

Players are given missions ranging from break-ins to assassinations to drug deals, all the while being free to roam.

But there is a plot, and if you stray too much — randomly robbing a jewellery store or shooting up passing cars — the police will start hunting you down.

The realism even sees characters' appearances change based on their dietary choices. And cars now have a fuel gauge.

For now it's a one-player game, though many fans expect an online multiplayer version will be released next year.

What else is new?

Graphic details are much richer thanks to the latest generation of game consoles, which are much more powerful than those available 13 years ago when "GTA V" was released. Rockstar set up a dedicated Los Angeles studio to create the animations and dialogue for the dozens of non-player characters (NPCs), aimed at giving each a realistic identity.

Along with classic rock hits and action-movie background music, the game also features an original score by French electro hitmakers Justice.

An official "GTA VI" soundtrack will include tracks by artists from American rapper Travis Scott to Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards.

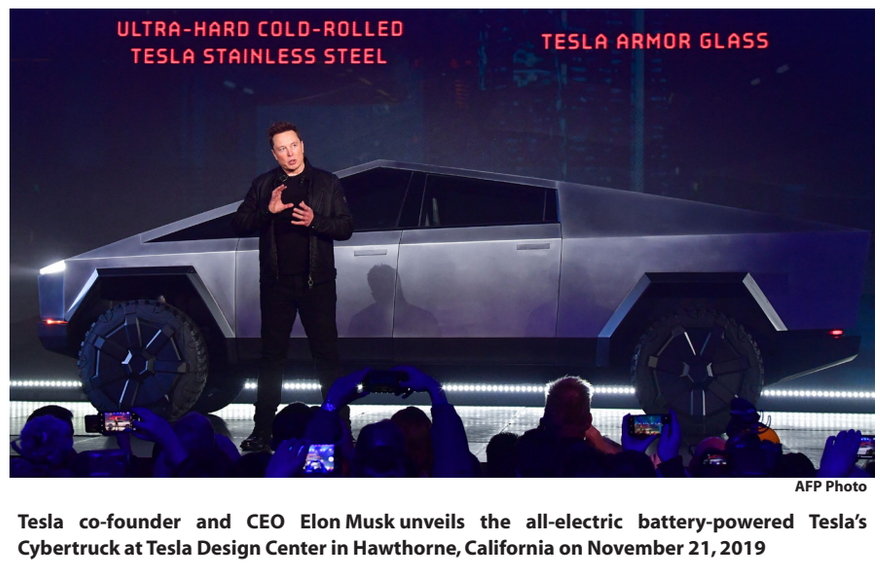
When, and how much?

"GTA VI" will be released on November 19 for the PlayStation 5 and Xbox consoles, with a PC version planned for an unspecified date.

The base price is $79.99 (79.99 euros in Europe) but a special edition costing $99.99 offers a variety of bonus material such as unique cars and weapons.

It can be bought online or in stores, but the box will contain only a download code, not an actual disc. Preorders began on June 25.

Take-Two has not since given any indication of demand, but analysts expect it could be the most profitable entertainment release ever.



AFP Photo

Tesla co-founder and CEO Elon Musk unveils the all-electric battery-powered Tesla's Cybertruck at Tesla Design Center in Hawthorne, California on November 21, 2019

Musk's futuristic Cybertruck rolls towards exit

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — Production of Cybertrucks — the pickups hailed by enthusiasts as a symbol of Elon Musk's futuristic ambitions and equally hated as ugly reminders of the Donald Trump era — will wind down, the Tesla CEO said on Friday.

Tesla will stop building the truck at its Texas factory around the middle of 2027 to free up space for its Cybercab robotaxi, Musk said. "Tesla will be winding down production of the Cybertruck at Gigafactory Texas around the middle of next year to make room for increased Cybercab production," Musk wrote on X.

Musk did not say whether the truck would be built elsewhere or discontinued altogether, nor what would happen to outstanding orders.

Wes Morrill, the Cybertruck's lead engineer, wrote in a separate post that the truck "was an incredible technology development platform and lives on through Cybercab".

"Thanks to everyone who contributed to making the future [look] like the future," he added.

Tesla fans lamented the departure of the Cybertruck on X, the social media platform Musk owns, but the tycoon reassured them that the Cybertruck fleet "will be around for a long time".

The truck came to be seen as an extension of Musk himself, and its image became entangled with his politics as he took on a high-profile role leading the Trump administration's cost-cutting Department of Government Efficiency. Some owners reported vandalism and harassment.

The angular stainless-steel behemoth was unveiled in November 2019, and Musk said at the time it had drawn 250,000 preorders within days.

Production was originally slated for 2021 but was repeatedly delayed, with customer deliveries starting in late 2023.

Tesla built its Texas lines with planned capacity of 250,000 trucks a year, but sales have come nowhere near that figure.

