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King at Jordan-EU Investment Conference: Jordan is ready for investors



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

His Majesty King Abdullah inaugurates the Jordan-EU Investment Conference in the presence of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and HRH Crown Prince Hussein

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah, in the presence of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, inaugurated on Thursday the Jordan-European Union Investment Conference. Held for the first time, the conference builds on the EU-Jordan Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership by strengthening economic and investment ties.

During the opening session of the conference, attended by HRH Crown Prince Hussein, His Majesty delivered an address in which he highlighted the strength of the partnership between Jordan and the EU, which has evolved over the last two decades into a strategic relationship. The following is the full text of His Majesty's remarks:

"In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Madam President,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,

Thank you all. I am delighted to welcome you to this first Jordan-EU Investment Conference.

Madam President, let me express Jordan's great appreciation for your leadership, and to the European Union and its member states. Our partnership reflects the long, deep ties among us, and our shared enthusiasm for the immense things we can achieve, together.

My friends,

For over twenty years, Jordan and the European Union have cultivated an enduring, strategic bond, evolving far beyond mere trade. Today, we celebrate the next chapter of this journey.

The 2025 Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership infuses new life into our cooperation, which honours our past, while securing a dynamic future. Now, this conference launches the vital operational stage: The formation of prospects and executable opportunities.

From the Jordanian side, our European partners, will hear about a wide array of solid-value economic opportunities. In digital infrastructure. Renewable energy. Advanced manufacturing. Tourism. Transport. Agri-business. Circular Economy. Mining. Water security. Clean technologies. And more. With our European friends, we also lead the new supply pathways of humanitarian aid — a field with global applications.

A significant advantage, particularly for our two regions, is Jordan's strategic position as an East-West gateway. As the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) takes shape, Jordan is well positioned to serve as a vital middle-mile hub, offering investors a strategic base to access regional and international markets, while strengthening trade connectivity.

And we are ready for you — with a bilingual, highly-skilled workforce, extensive free-trade agreements, well defined opportunities, and the full cooperation of our public and private sectors.

Investors need confidence. They need clear regulations, competitive operating conditions, access to finance and reliable partners, capable of delivering projects. This is why our Economic Modernisation Vision places the private sector at the centre of Jordan's growth.

To bring this vision to life, Jordan's upgraded investment laws, streamlined administrative processes and competitive incentives, offer an ideal opportunity to accelerate capital growth, within a secure, stable market.

Your Excellencies;
dear friends,

It would be remiss of me if I did not acknowledge the regional developments that reshaped our plans earlier this year. Yet, Jordan remains a steadfast pillar of stability and a trusted destination for investment.

Amid the uncertainties our world faces, cross-regional partnerships remain essential to our shared future.

This reflects what Jordan is all about. My country has long believed that resilience is strengthened through unity, and shared ambitions are realised… through collective action.

Continued on page 5

King, European Commission president witness signing of agreements, MoU



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

His Majesty King Abdullah and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen witness the signing of two cooperation agreements and a memorandum of understanding

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen witnessed on Thursday the signing of two cooperation agreements and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), within the framework of the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership between Jordan and the European Union, according to a Royal Court statememt.

Held during the opening session of the Jordan-EU Investment Conference, attended by HRH Crown Prince Hussein, the signing ceremony included a Financing Agreement between Jordan and the EU for Inclusive Socio-Economic Modernisation Multi-Sector Budget Support, with a grant of 110 million euros, and a Financing Agreement between Jordan and the EU for Economic Resilience, Trade and Investment, with a grant of 63 million euros. Both agreements were signed by Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Zeina Toukan, and European Commissioner for the Mediterranean Dubravka Šuica.

A MoU between the European Union and Jordan for Macro-Financial Assistance, establishing 500 million euros in concessional loans, was signed by Finance Minister Abdel Hakim Al Shibli and European Commissioner for the Mediterranean Dubravka Šuica.



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

His Majesty King Abdullah meets with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on the sidelines of the Jordan-EU Investment Conference, to discuss the European Union-Jordan Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership

King meets with European Commission president

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Thursday met with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, on the sidelines of the Jordan-EU Investment Conference.

The meeting, attended by HRH Crown Prince Hussein, covered the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership between Jordan and the EU, with His Majesty emphasising the need to broaden the scope of cooperation between the two sides across various fields and to build on existing momentum, according to a Royal Court statement.

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Photo courtesy of Royal Court

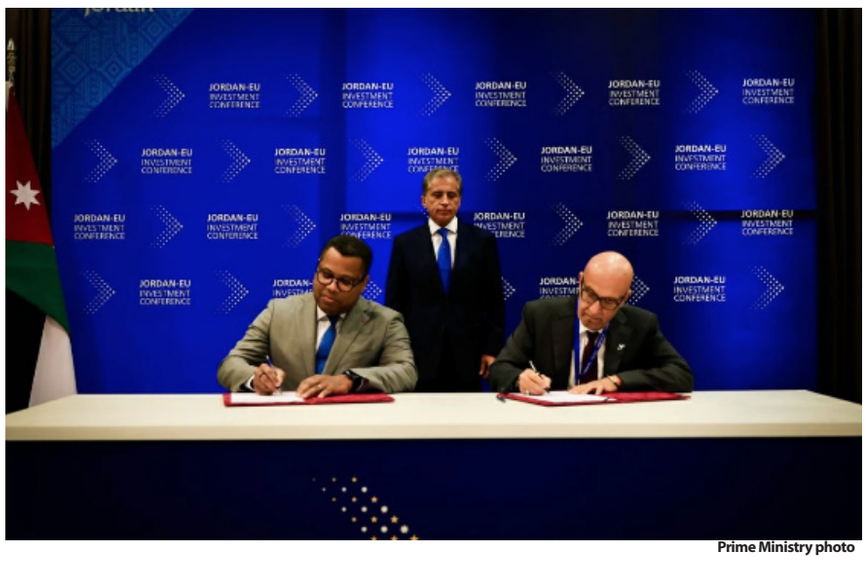
His Majesty King Abdullah and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) President Odile Renaud-Basso discuss ways to strengthen the strategic partnership between Jordan and EBRD

King, EBRD president discuss cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) President Odile Renaud-Basso, during a meeting on Thursday, discussed ways to strengthen the strategic partnership between Jordan and EBRD, as well as opportunities to expand cooperation in the fields of investment and development, in support of the Kingdom's economic priorities.

Continued on page 5

Prime minister attends signing of $6.6 billion Water Carrier Project agreement



Prime Ministry photo

Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Thursday attends the signing of the National Water Carrier Project agreement between the government and lead developer Meridiam

AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Thursday attended the signing of the National Water Carrier Project agreement between the government and lead developer Meridiam.

The agreement was signed at the Jordan European Investment Conference, marking the launch of executive works for the project after its foundation stone was laid on Wednesday under Royal patronage.

The agreement was signed by Minister of Water and Irrigation Raed Abu Saud and Meridiam Chief Executive Officer Thierry Deau, in the presence of Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Zeina Toukan, according to a ministry statement.

The National Water Carrier Project is the largest strategic project in the Kingdom's history in terms of construction volume and investment cost, and ranks among the largest water desalination and conveyance projects in the region and the world.

The project will cover nearly 40 per cent of Jordan's drinking water needs.

With a total cost of $6.6 billion, the project represents the largest strategic investment in Jordan's history. Its financing is built on a broad national and international partnership bringing together the government, the private sector, Jordanian banks, financing institutions and international donors.

The project aims to provide 300 million cubic metres of de-salinated drinking water annually from the Gulf of Aqaba, meeting around 40 per cent of the Kingdom's drinking water demand, with water pumping expected to begin by the end of 2030.

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Provided photo

High-level Jordanian and European delegation on Wednesday visit Aqaba Digital Hub

High-level Jordanian, European delegations visit Aqaba Digital Hub

AMMAN (JT) — A high-level Jordanian and European delegation on Wednesday visited Aqaba Digital Hub (ADH).

The delegation included Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Zeina Toukan, European Commissioner for the Mediterranean Dubravka Šuica and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) President Odile Renaud-Basso, alongside other officials.

During the visit, the delegation toured the facility, Jordan's first digital hub and largest data centre, and was briefed on its digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence computing capabilities and international connectivity network, according to a ADH statement.

The visit highlighted Aqaba's potential as a regional digital hub and a connectivity corridor linking Europe, Africa and Asia, as well as the investment made in developing its digital infrastructure.

The visit also underscored cooperation between Jordan and European institutions in advancing digital transformation, attracting investment and developing infrastructure to support economic growth and regional connectivity.

Aqaba Digital Hub is among the projects supported by the European Union's Global Gateway initiative, which promotes investment in sustainable infrastructure and connectivity.

Toukan said that the hub, which houses the Kingdom's largest data centre, strengthens Aqaba's position as a digital connectivity corridor linking Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

She added that the project supports the Economic Modernisation Vision's goal of positioning Jordan as a regional centre for technology and innovation, while equipping young people with digital skills and creating employment opportunities.

Toukan also valued the support provided by the European Union, the EBRD and the European Investment Bank for the project.

Šuica said that the hub would help establish Jordan as a digital gateway linking Europe, Africa and Asia, adding that the EU was supporting investment in digital infrastructure, economic growth and skills development among young Jordanians.

EBRD President Renaud-Basso said that investment in modern digital infrastructure could strengthen Jordan's competitiveness, attract private-sector investment and create new opportunities.

She described Aqaba Digital Hub as an example of the Global Gateway initiative, bringing together connectivity, innovation and skills development, and reaffirmed the bank's commitment to supporting Jordan's efforts to build a more digital, competitive and resilient economy.

Aqaba Digital Hub Founder and CEO Eyad Abu Khorma said the company was seeking to strengthen Jordan's position as a digital gateway connecting Europe, Africa and Asia through investments in data centre infrastructure, international connectivity and artificial intelligence computing.

He added that cooperation with European institutions offered opportunities to attract further investment and expand the hub's capabilities and regional presence.

The facility integrates data centres, telecommunications infrastructure, cloud services and artificial intelligence computing capabilities to support Jordan's digital economy and connectivity with regional and international markets.

EU, EIB back Medusa to strengthen Mediterranean digital links, connect Jordan's research community



Photo courtesy of the EU embassy

The European Investment Bank is supporting the Medusa Submarine Cable System across the Mediterranean with a loan of up to 60 million euros

AMMAN (JT) — A 11.1-million-euro EU grant will support the terrestrial extension from the Medusa Submarine Cable System's Egyptian landing point in Port Said to Jordan, with a particular focus on research and education.

Separately, the European Investment Bank (EIB) is supporting the Medusa Submarine Cable System across the Mediterranean with a loan of up to 60 million euros, according to an EU embassy statement.

The project is driven by AFR-IX Telecom, a Spanish telecom and infrastructure operator, to improve digital economy and helping expand access to faster, more reliable digital connections between Europe and North Africa.

The new grant builds on 40 million euros in EU funding already awarded through the Neighbourhood Investment Platform for a dedicated research and education subnetwork on both shores of the Mediterranean.

It brings the EU grants channelled through the EIB for these connections to 51.1 million euros.

Working with GEANT, Europe's research and education networking organisation, the project aims to connect around 500 institutions in the Southern Mediterranean with their European counterparts, making it easier for universities and research centres to exchange data, collaborate on scientific projects and access digital resources.

Medusa is a flagship project under Global Gateway, the EU's strategy to support sustainable and trusted infrastructure and stronger international partnerships.

The investment advances digital cooperation across the Southern Mediterranean, combining European technology and financing with the expertise of telecommunications partners in the region.

By diversifying digital routes across the Mediterranean, Medusa will help strengthen network resilience and support economic competitiveness in the countries it connects. Furthermore, Medusa will help implementing the EU's Pact for the Mediterranean and its actions for stronger, more sustainable and integrated economies in the region.

The project supported by the EIB comprises more than 8,000 kilometres of cable and 21 landing points, linking Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Malta, Greece and Cyprus with Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and the recent incorporation of Syria, alongside the extension to Jordan.

Its first phase, connecting France, Morocco and Tunisia, is complete and already providing services. The EIB loan is supporting the second phase, for which cable deployment is under way.

The system uses the latest generation of European submarine cable technology, with 24 fibre pairs and an open architecture designed to provide substantial additional capacity and flexibility. It will support the development of advanced digital services, including 5G, cloud computing and artificial intelligence.

"Reliable digital connections are essential for innovation, economic resilience and cooperation. With Medusa, we are supporting infrastructure that brings Europe and its Mediterranean partners closer together," said EIB Vice-President Gelsomina Vigliotti.

"The new connection will help Jordan's research and science communities share knowledge and collaborate more easily, creating new opportunities for learning and innovation. Beyond research and science, it will help expand access to faster, more reliable digital connectivity for businesses and public services in Jordan," added Vigliotti.

"Connecting Jordan to the Medusa submarine cable network will strengthen its digital links with Europe and the wider Mediterranean. Jordan's research community has much to offer to Europe," said EU Commissioner for the Mediterranean, Dubravka Šuica.

Šuica added that faster, more reliable connections will make it easier for researchers at SESAME and for students and scientists at Jordanian universities to share data and work on joint projects with their European peers.

"Better connectivity can also help Jordanian businesses reach new markets and improve access to public services. Through Global Gateway and the Pact for the Mediterranean, we're investing in the infrastructure that makes this cooperation possible," noted Šuica.

"MEDUSA was conceived to bring the two shores of the Mediterranean closer together through better digital connectivity. This new EU support reinforces that vision, enabling universities and research institutions across Europe, North Africa and Jordan to collaborate, exchange knowledge and access the digital resources they need," said COO of Medusa Damien Bertrand.

Jordan, Uzbekistan seek to deepen religious, cultural ties

By Mai Anati



Photo courtesy of the Uzbek embassy

The Uzbek embassy in Amman on Thursday holds an event to present Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's book, The Contemporary World and New Uzbekistan

AMMAN — Jordanian and Uzbek officials on Thursday called for expanding cooperation in religious, cultural, scientific and economic fields, highlighting the two countries' shared commitment to promoting moderation, coexistence and interfaith dialogue.

The remarks came during an event organised by the Uzbek embassy in Amman to present Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's book, The Contemporary World and New Uzbekistan, attended by political, religious and academic figures, researchers and officials from both countries.

Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Khalaileh said that Jordan continues to promote the true image of Islam, based on moderation, tolerance and compassion, while strengthening coexistence among different components of society.

He said the Amman Message reflects Jordan's commitment to presenting the true teachings of Islam and promoting tolerance and moderation, noting that Muslims and Christians in the Kingdom share a common national identity.

Khalaileh also highlighted His Majesty King Abdullah's initiative to establish World Interfaith Harmony Week, observed annually during the first week of February, as an international platform for dialogue and understanding among followers of different religions.

He welcomed the Uzbek delegation and stressed the importance of strengthening religious, cultural and humanitarian cooperation between the two countries.

The Kingdom's Grand Mufti Ahmad Hasanat called for closer religious and scientific cooperation, particularly in Islamic jurisprudence, research and the development of religious scholarship to address contemporary challenges.

He said Jordanian-Uzbek religious ties are rooted in a shared Islamic heritage, noting Uzbekistan's historic contribution to Islamic scholarship through prominent figures, including Imam Al Bukhari and Imam Abu Mansur Al Maturidi.

Hasanat also referred to a memorandum of cooperation signed in August between the General Iftaa Department and the Fatwa Centre of Uzbekistan's Muslim Board, which provides a framework for joint research, the exchange of expertise and the training of muftis.

Uzbek Presidential Adviser and President of the International Academy of Islamic Studies Muzaffar Kamilov said bilateral relations were entering a new phase of development, driven by the political will and joint efforts of the two countries' leaders.

He highlighted growing cooperation in science, education, culture and religious affairs, commending Jordan's role in promoting moderation, tolerance and dialogue between religions and cultures.

Senate member and head of the Jordanian-Uzbek Parliamentary Friendship Committee Haitham Obeidat said relations between the two countries are based on friendship and mutual respect, with considerable opportunities to expand cooperation in trade, investment, education and culture.

He said parliamentary diplomacy provides an important bridge between the two peoples, helping strengthen mutual trust and understanding.

Obeidat called for translating strong bilateral ties into practical programmes and joint projects, pointing to potential cooperation in investment, trade, tourism, agriculture, industry, healthcare, education, technology, water and energy.

Uzbek Ambassador to Jordan Naderjan Turgunov said diplomatic relations, established in 1993, had developed considerably, with cooperation expanding across several sectors.

He noted that King Abdullah's book Our Last Best Chance was recently presented in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, while Thursday's event in Amman introduced Mirziyoyev's book, The Contemporary World and New Uzbekistan.

Turgunov said the two publications highlight reforms and achievements in both countries and reflect converging visions on development and modernisation.

The book examines global political, economic, social and environmental transformations, as well as Uzbekistan's reform and institutional modernisation process since 2016. It also outlines the president's vision for sustainable development, the rule of law and a state that serves its citizens.

The event featured speeches, visual presentations and academic publications, with contributions from Uzbek Committee for Religious Affairs Chairman Siddiq Toshbayev, Uzbek Mufti Nuriddin Khaliqnazar and representatives of specialised research and academic institutions.

Discussions focused on Uzbekistan's reform and modernisation process, its civilisational and scientific contributions, and prospects for further cooperation with Jordan.

Princess Basma Bint Ali attends opening of third Jordan Saffron Festival



Petra photo

HRH Princess Basma Bint Ali on Thursday attends the opening of the third Jordan Saffron Festival and rural products exhibition at a saffron farm in Mafraq

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Princess Basma Bint Ali, founder of the Royal Botanic Garden and chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Hashemite Fund for Development of Jordan Badia (HFDJB), on Thursday attended the opening of the third Jordan Saffron Festival and rural products exhibition at a saffron farm in Mafraq.

Addressing the opening ceremony, Adel Suboh, owner of Jordan's first saffron farm, said that the launch of saffron cultivation in the Kingdom represents a "promising" economic opportunity, an additional source of income and a gateway to empowering rural families, particularly women and youth, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He noted that efforts subsequently focused on expanding the experience from an individual initiative into a national project opening new horizons for farmers across the Kingdom.

Suboh added that a specialised centre had been established to train farmers and agricultural engineers, alongside participants from Saudi Arabia, providing theoretical and practical training to transfer knowledge and expertise to those wishing to enter the field, while creating seasonal employment opportunities for around 20 women.

He noted that the festival also featured the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Saffron Jordan and the fund to enable entrepreneurs and families in Badia areas by providing them with saffron bulbs, technologies, expertise and technical know-how to launch farming initiatives starting next season.

The significance of the MoU, he noted, stems from turning saffron cultivation into productive ventures that generate new income sources for Badia residents and strengthen socioeconomic development in their communities.

Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) Director General Mohammad Doujan said that the corporation adopts targeted programmes for select sectors, particularly high-yield ones, by offering concessionary, interest-free financing for those seeking to cultivate saffron.

He noted growing demand for the programme, particularly following the signing of an MoU with Saffron Jordan, under which prospective growers receive training and qualification and are granted interest-free loans of up to JD15,000 to help ensure the projects create jobs.

Rida Shalabi said that developing saffron cultivation in Jordan should rest on an integrated scientific and economic vision anchored in scientific research and innovation, competitive value chains, rural development and local community empowerment.

Mafraq Agriculture Directorate Director Inam Mashaqbeh said that holding such festivals helps spread this agricultural culture while providing a platform to market and display rural products, thereby boosting the socioeconomic development of the agricultural sector, encouraging the exchange of expertise among attendees and participants, and raising agricultural and food awareness.

Mafraq Governor Osama Hashim, HFDJB Director General Ayesh Qatarneh, and saffron growers and enthusiasts from Jordan, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Oman attended the ceremony.



Petra photo

The International Finance Corporation and Arab Bank sign a $100 million investment agreement to support water projects in Jordan

IFC, Arab Bank sign $100m agreement to support water sector in Kingdom

AMMAN (JT) — The International Finance Corporation (IFC) and Arab Bank have signed a $100 million investment agreement to support water projects in Jordan and strengthen the sector's resilience to water scarcity and climate change.

The agreement, signed under the Water Adaptation and Resilience Bonds programme, was attended by Minister of Water and Irrigation Raed Abu Saud and aims to finance local projects to reduce water losses, improve water-use efficiency and upgrade infrastructure, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The funding will also support the expansion of wastewater treatment and reuse capacity, as well as strengthen the resilience of water facilities and networks to climate change impacts.

The agreement aims to improve the sustainability and reliability of water services in line with national water priorities and the Kingdom's broader water security goals.

The partnership brings together international development financing and the banking sector to mobilise investment for Jordan's water infrastructure and support the sustainable management of water resources.

Prime minister, EU commissioner discuss cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Thursday met with European Commissioner for the Mediterranean Dubravka Šuica on the sidelines of the Jordan-Europe Investment Conference, in the presence of Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Zeina Toukan.

The two sides highlighted the conference's role in strengthening economic and investment ties between Jordan and the European Union, attracting investment and advancing joint projects, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The talks also covered cooperation priorities and ways to expand collaboration across various sectors in support of Jordan's economic and development goals.

Hassan praised the partnership with the EU under the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership signed in 2025, commending the bloc's support for the conference and its backing of Jordan's development programmes in key sectors, particularly water, transport and energy.



Petra photo

Prime Minister Jafar Hassan on Thursday meets with European Commissioner for the Mediterranean Dubravka Šuica

He also highlighted the National Water Carrier project, whose foundation stone was laid on Wednesday, as one of the key strategic projects receiving European support.

Šuica reaffirmed the EU's commitment to its strategic partnership with Jordan and its continued support for the Kingdom's efforts to implement the Economic Modernisation Vision and achieve its objectives.

Water Ministry, EBRD sign $68m financing agreement for wastewater project

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Water and Irrigation Raed Abu Saud and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) President Odile Renaud-Basso on Thursday signed a financing agreement worth $68 million to rehabilitate and expand the Al Shallala Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The financing package comprises a $55 million concessional loan from the EBRD and an 11.4 million euro grant, equivalent to approximately $13 million, from the European Union, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The project aims to upgrade the existing facility, increase its operational efficiency and more than double its treatment capacity from 13,700 to 30,500 cubic metres per day to accommodate growing wastewater flows.

The expansion includes the design, construction and operation of new treatment units alongside the existing facilities.

It will also increase energy generation through biogas production and provide more than 26,000 cubic metres of reclaimed water daily for agricultural irrigation, meeting high technical standards.



Petra photo

Minister of Water and Irrigation Raed Abu Saud and EBRD President Odile Renaud-Basso on Thursday sign a $68 million agreement to expand Al Shallala Wastewater Treatment Plant

The project reflects Jordanian-European cooperation in supporting sustainable infrastructure and improving wastewater treatment services, Petra reported

The EBRD and the European Union have maintained a long-standing partnership in Jordan, supporting investments in wastewater treatment, solid waste management, sustainable energy, green finance and small business development.

Since beginning operations in Jordan in 2012, the EBRD has invested more than 2.5 billion euros in 91 projects across the Kingdom, with 75 per cent of its investments directed towards the private sector.

40m euro German financing to upgrade sanitation services in Jordan

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan and Germany on Thursday signed a 40 million euro concessional financing agreement to improve sanitation services and expand sewage networks in parts of the Kingdom.

The agreement, signed during the Jordan-Europe Investment Conference, was provided by the German government through the German Development Bank (KfW), the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Raed Abu Saud and Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Zeina Toukan signed the agreement on behalf of Jordan, while KfW Director Klaus Müller signed for Germany.

The project will upgrade sanitation services, and expand sewage networks in Karak Governorate and areas southwest of Amman, improving service delivery, protecting the environment, and reducing health and environmental risks.

The financing also aims to improve infrastructure efficiency and strengthen the capacity of the water and sanitation sector to meet growing demand.

The agreement builds on Jordanian-German cooperation in developing water and wastewater infrastructure and supporting priority national projects.



Al Mamlaka TV photo

Minister of Water and Irrigation Raed Abu Saud and German Development Bank Director Klaus Müller on Thursday sign a 40 million euro concessional financing agreement to upgrade sanitation services and expand sewage networks in Jordan

Prince Mired honours top-performing students with disabilities

AMMAN (JT) — HRH Prince Mired, chief chamberlain and president of the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, on Thursday honoured students with disabilities who achieved averages of more than 95 per cent in the 2025–2026 General Secondary Education Certificate Examination (Tawjihi).

A total of 351 students with disabilities passed the examination, including 208 who qualified for university admission and 143 for college, while 102 students were required to sit supplementary exams, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Another 28 students, including 12 boys and 16 girls, achieved averages of 90 per cent or higher.

During a meeting at the council's headquarters, Prince Mired congratulated the students on their achievements and commended their efforts and perseverance, wishing them continued success in their academic and professional lives.

He stressed that students with disabilities have the right to education on an equal basis with their peers, highlighting the responsibility of educational institutions and relevant authorities to remove environmental and attitudinal barriers and provide reasonable accommodations to ensure their full participation in education.

Prince Mired also praised the support provided by students' families throughout their education, as well as the efforts of teachers and schools in providing the necessary educational facilities and support.

He said inclusive education is a fundamental right guaranteed by national legislation and international conventions, adding that the students' achievements demonstrate the importance of equality and equal opportunities.

He noted that their success goes beyond individual achievement, reflecting society's ability to embrace diversity and make it a driving force for comprehensive and sustainable development.

Prince Mired called for continued efforts to develop educational and training policies that improve access to universities and higher education institutions for persons with disabilities and ensure fair employment opportunities.

He reaffirmed the council's commitment to empowering persons with disabilities and supporting initiatives that promote their active participation in all areas of life.



Petra photo

HRH Prince Mired on Thursday honours students with disabilities who achieved averages of more than 95 per cent in Tawjihi

UNICEF event brings together children from across Jordan to mark World Children's Day

By Hanan Abuzaid

AMMAN — Hundreds of children from across Jordan gathered at the Children's Museum in Amman on Wednesday for a World Children's Day event organised by UNICEF.

The participants represented all governorates and included refugees, children with disabilities, youngsters from vulnerable communities and children from Gaza.

Through group games and interactive workshops, the event highlighted every child's right to education, healthcare, protection and safe spaces to play.

Children took part in activities and sessions across the museum, interacting with peers from different backgrounds.

Speaking to The Jordan Times on the sidelines of the event, UNICEF Representative to Jordan Marc Rubin said the gathering provided children with an opportunity to interact, play and express themselves.

"Today this is really for us to make sure that children come here and are able to play, to interact with each other and to be heard," Rubin said. "There are hundreds from all over the country, from different walks of life, even children from Gaza came here. For us, it is really to make sure that they can be here, they can be heard and have a day for themselves."



Photo by Ahmad Khleifat

Hundreds of children from across Jordan gathered at the Children's Museum in Amman on Wednesday for a World Children's Day

Asked about the impact of declining global humanitarian funding on UNICEF's operations in Jordan, Rubin acknowledged the financial pressures, stressing the organisation would continue to prioritise essential services for children.

"The global funding situation is dire, for sure, but there are some principles that UNICEF will not let go, and it is about children being safe, children being able to learn and children being healthy," he said. "Those programmes on child protection and on education will basically continue and will not be compromised."

Ten-year-old participant Ayman Bawab said taking part in the event and speaking at the gathering was a meaningful experience.

"It means many things. It means helping many children from Gaza and Sudan, and it just makes me feel good," Ayman said, adding that being invited to speak at the event meant a great deal to him.

UNICEF called on government institutions, businesses, families and communities to listen to children, and take their views into account when making decisions affecting their lives.

The event was supported by the Greater Amman Municipality and private sector partners Careem, Abdali Boulevard, Bank Al Etihad and Jordan Gate Towers.

Police arrest 13 alleged drug dealers, seize narcotics across Kingdom

By Rana Husseini

AMMAN — The Anti-Narcotic Department (AND) on Thursday announced the arrest of 13 alleged drug dealers in various parts of the Kingdom, according to police.

Law-enforcement officers seized some weapons and large amounts of marijuana, Captagon pills, Crystal meth and hashish that were allegedly found with the suspects, Police Spokesperson Lt. Col. Amer Sartawi.

Sartawi told The Jordan Times that AND officers dealt with four cases in Amman, including one involving three alleged drug dealers who were arrested following a raid.

"The arresting force found 15 kilogrammes of marijuana, 1 kilogramme of hashish and 250 grammes of Crystal meth," according to Sartawi.

In another incident, the police official maintained that an alleged drug dealer was arrested while riding his vehicle.

Officers reportedly seized 2.2 kilogrammes of hashish that was in his vehicle, he added.

Meanwhile, AND received a tip about two alleged drug dealers who had large amounts of illicit drugs "that were intended to be sold in the local market in Ruweished area".

"AND agents drew a plan to arrest the two while they were driving their vehicle, but one suspect was able to escape, and search is ongoing for him," Sartawi added.

Law-enforcement officers allegedly found 26,000 illicit pills in the vehicle, he stated.

In another case on the desert road, Sartawi said that AND officers pulled over a vehicle and arrested three suspects after allegedly finding "one kilogram of Crystal meth and two weapons".

All suspects were referred to the State Security Court prosecution office for further questioning and indictment, according to a statement by the Public Security Directorate.

China, US, Russia issue 'Declaration towards Peace' after first summit



AFP photo

China's President Xi Jinping, US President Donald Trump and Russia's President Vladimir Putin pose for photos as they arrive for a trilateral meeting at Kylin Villa on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in Shenzhen, in China's southern Guangdong province, on Thursday

SHENZHEN, China (AFP) — China, the United States and Russia issued a "Declaration towards Peace" on Thursday after their leaders held an unprecedented summit, laying out common ambitions to overhaul the UN and keep the International Criminal Court in check.

Xi Jinping, Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin met in China against a complex backdrop, with Russia's years-long offensive in Ukraine grinding on, Trump bogged down in the Middle East and an ascendant China looking to strengthen its hand in East Asia.

"The three heads of state had an in-depth exchange of views on the current international situation and committed to maintaining strategic stability and international security," a White House version of the statement said.

"We discussed the question of democracy. And what is democracy? It's what? It's the liberal order that certain circles put together and still now are trying to impose on the whole world," Putin told a news conference in the southern city of Shenzhen.

The three men made opening remarks touching on weighty topics from nuclear weapons to the war in Ukraine as they met around a large, dark round table with a pink flower arrangement at its centre.

The discussion behind closed doors in Kylin Villa ended after an hour and 20 minutes.

Trump said the leaders were "making history", while Putin said they wrote a new "page in the history of diplomacy".

"The three countries share a common perspective on safeguarding world peace," Xi said.

On his way home to Washington, Trump called into a meeting of European leaders to discuss Ukraine and update them on his three-way summit.

Not all of those European leaders were impressed: German Chancellor Friedrich Merz called the Trump-Xi-Putin talks a "photo op", and French President Emmanuel Macron said it would not "lead to a reorganisation of the world".

Trump said he would give a press conference on Friday about his "Great and Highly Consequential Trip" to China.

ICC, UN and oil

In their joint statement, Trump, Xi and Putin "recognised that the principle of state consent and respect for immunities of State officials are of paramount importance, and concurred that the International Criminal Court(ICC) and other similar bodies must not abuse their jurisdiction".

Putin is subject to an ICC arrest warrant, while Trump's administration has vowed to dismantle the court "brick by brick".

The leaders said they were "committed to reform the UN so that the UN can respond more effectively to global challenges and conform to its fundamental mission of international peace and security".

The joint statement said the countries plan to boost supply and production of refined petroleum products, and reaffirmed the importance of "stable energy flows".

The summit stoked fears that the three men want to divide the globe into spheres of influence, for example by making decisions impacting Ukraine over the heads of Kyiv or Europe.

But Trump said he wanted to make a deal on Ukraine "with Europe by his side", according to special US envoy Jared Kushner.

'Reducing nuclear risks'

Earlier Thursday, Trump and Putin held a meeting — their first since August 2025 — with the 80-year-old US president calling the Russian his "friend".

Putin responded in English: "Nice to meet you."

Trump and Xi then came together — their third time this year — for one-on-one discussions, with the US leader highlighting a "very special relationship".

Putin, 74, and Xi, 73, held talks on Wednesday — their 50th meeting, the Chinese president said.

Beijing, Washington and Moscow previously gave different accounts of the agenda for the three-way meeting on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit, a forum of 21 economies around the Pacific Rim.

Washington initially signalled that Ukraine was off the table, before Trump said the war would feature. Xi does not view the conflict as China's problem to solve.

Washington had also flagged up the Iran war and nuclear disarmament as topics of discussion, after a US-Russia bilateral treaty on atomic weapons expired in February.

Beijing has long maintained that the United States and Russia must reduce their giant nuclear arsenals before it agrees to talks on its smaller stockpile.

The final statement said that the countries would "conduct a dialogue on reducing nuclear risks and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons".

'Cheap violin'

Breaking with decades of diplomatic protocol, Xi met Trump at the airport, with the men briefly hugging before a red-carpet greeting complete with cheering children and a flyover.

Critics warned that the optics from the meeting would be damaging for the US president — but a fillip to Xi and Putin.

The meeting "gives Putin a platform to legitimise his war of aggression over Ukraine with seemingly little repercussions", said Lyle Morris at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

"Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin are playing Donald Trump like a cheap violin," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said.

CONFLICT

Iran war has cost more than $48 b — Pentagon official



AFP photo

Congressional Budget Office had put the cost of the war at $38 billion as of August 1

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The war against Iran has cost the US military more than $48 billion since the United States and Israel launched the conflict in late February, a Pentagon official said on Thursday.

That figure is an increase of roughly 26 per cent from one previously provided by the Congressional Budget Office, which put the cost of the war at $38 billion as of August 1.

"As of November 13, it was $48.3 billion," Arthur Miller, the Pentagon's deputy comptroller, told lawmakers.

"That number includes munitions, equipment replacement costs, and operational cost," Miller said during a hearing on his nomination as assistant secretary of the Navy for financial management.

The figure does not include damage to US bases in the Middle East, some of which have been hit hard by Iranian drone and missile attacks, nor does it take into account the harm to the global economy.

The war has caused widespread economic fallout, with Iran seeking to block commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz waterway — a vital conduit for shipments of crude and gas — and its Houthi allies in Yemen targeting Saudi Arabia's oil infrastructure and shipping.

The United States has meanwhile blockaded Iran's ports — an effort involving a major US naval presence in the Middle East, including aircraft carriers.

Denmark's parliament ratifies security agreement with US, Greenland



AFP photo

Denmark's Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen (sitting right) attends the second legislative process and vote on the security agreement between Denmark, Greenland and the US in the Parliament Hall at Christiansborg in Copenhagen, on Thursday

COPENHAGEN (AFP) — Denmark's parliament on Thursday voted to ratify the security agreement signed in September with the United States and Greenland, aimed at easing tensions over President Donald Trump's desire to annex the vast Arctic island.

Denmark's parliament, the 179-seat Folketing, approved the text after a second reading, with all 109 deputies present in the chamber voting in favour.

The vote took place without debate or opposition.

Parliament in Greenland ratified the text in early November.

Signed in New York on September 22, the agreement supplements a 1951 accord on the United States' military presence in Greenland.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen hailed "a great day" on social media, stressing that the agreement was "good for Greenland, the Kingdom of Denmark and the United States. And for NATO and Europe".

It is "an agreement that respects the Kingdom's sovereignty. Territorial integrity. And the Greenlanders' right to self-determination", she added.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the ratification "will make us all safer, stronger, and more secure".

"This agreement modernises the United States-Denmark-Greenland defense partnership and bolsters the national security of the United States and our allies in NATO," he wrote on X.

The agreement will enter into force once Denmark officially informs the United States that it has ratified the deal.

The agreement allows the United States to build two military bases in Greenland and blocks countries outside the European Union and NATO from strategic sectors, in order to stop China or Russia gaining influence over the territory, particularly through investments.

Greenland is an autonomous territory of Denmark but the deal is to remain in force even if Greenland gains full independence.

Since returning to the presidency in January 2025, Trump repeatedly insisted that the United States needed to control Greenland for strategic reasons, alarming NATO ally Denmark and other partners.

TALKS

COP31 draft climate deal removes mention of fossil fuels

ANTALYA, Turkey (AFP) — COP31 co-host Australia unveiled a new draft agreement on Thursday that drops any mention of fossil fuels, the leading driver of climate change.

The nearly 200 nations involved in the global climate talks in Turkey have until Friday to strike a final agreement, though the marathon negotiations often run into overtime.

A sweeping draft pact unveiled earlier in the week laid out competing positions on flashpoint topics from energy to finance and trade, drawing criticism for its length and complexity.

After days of tense consultations, negotiations chair Australia published a slimmed-down text half the original length containing fresh language and new proposals on some of the most contentious issues.

But a proposal "for accelerated action to phase out fossil fuels" was nixed in the revised text, which also made no explicit mention of coal, oil or gas by name.

Many countries have pressed for strong language on fossil fuels in Antalya after last year's summit in Brazil ended with no mention of them in the final deal.

Nations agreed at COP28 in Dubai two years ago to transition away from fossil fuels, but language around energy sources is highly contested at the UN climate talks, where decisions are taken by consensus.

The draft "cover decision" is designed to capture the outcome of COP31 and set the course for future action as global temperatures rise and climate disasters multiply.

Difficult backdrop

The summit is unfolding against a record-breaking El Nino, disasters fuelled by climate change from Europe to Nepal and a global energy shock triggered by the Iran war.

The latest text said that taking steps to electrify the global economy could have "significant benefits" in shoring up energy security and cutting planet-heating greenhouse gas emissions.

It includes a call to increase the global share of final energy demand met by electricity to 35 per cent by 2035 — a key initiative of COP31 host Turkey.

The draft also proposes further discussions toward "tripling" finance for climate adaptation measures by 2035 in a nod to a key demand by developing nations.

Rich nations have resisted calls to increase support for countries struggling to adapt to climate change, citing budget constraints and insisting that big emerging economies also contribute.

The draft expresses "deep concern" about the imminent breach of the 1.5°C temperature goal set under the Paris accord and underscored the importance of the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

On Thursday, Panama threatened to block any deal that did not meet its demands, including a request to cap oil global production.



AFP photo

COP31's President and Turkey's Minister of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change Murat Kurum (centre) and Chris Bowen, Australia's Minister for Climate Change and Energy (right) leave after a press conference during the UN Climate Change Conference (COP31) in Antalya on Thursday

34 Haiti gang members killed in security op — police

PORT-AU-PRINCE (AFP) — Police in Haiti said on Thursday they had killed 34 suspected gang members in a major raid in the Martissant neighbourhood of the capital Port-au-Prince.

A witness said explosions and gunfire could be heard in Martissant, an area that has long been controlled by gangs that have wrought havoc on the country, the poorest in the Americas.

Police said in a post on Facebook that they had targeted a base of the leader of the Ti Lapli gang.

Haiti has faced a deep political and security crisis for years, with gangs seizing control of much of the island nation through a campaign of violence marked by murder, kidnapping and rape.

Numerous armed forces are now operating in Haiti, with uncertain levels of coordination, including the Haitian police and army, the multinational UN-backed Gang Suppression Force (GSF), foreign mercenaries and most recently, soldiers from El Salvador.

Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele has sent more than 2,000 troops into Haiti since late October, after four soldiers from his country went missing during a GSF operation.

The new Salvadoran deployment, despite being separate from the GSF, has been welcomed by Haitian authorities, who have long sought reinforcements.

It was not immediately clear if Haitian national police had assistance for Thursday's operation.

The UN rights office documented 4,595 people killed and 2,050 injured as a result of armed violence during the first 10 months of 2026 in Haiti.

Haiti is now attempting to organise its first elections in more than a decade.

The first round of presidential and legislative elections has been set for July 18, 2027.

Martine Moise, the country's former first lady whose husband Jovenel Moise was assassinated in July 2021, is running for president.

Polls originally set for December 2026 were rescheduled.



AFP photo

People rally in support of Salvadoran Army troops in their mission to help the fight against gangs, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on Wednesday

Hegseth visits Ecuador to bolster anti-narco fight

QUITO (AFP) — US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth on Thursday held talks on "confronting narco-terrorist threats" with Ecuador's president on the third leg of a tour to shore up support for Washington's agenda in Latin America.

Ecuadoran President Daniel Noboa has strong backing from his US counterpart Donald Trump for his crackdown on the cocaine-trafficking gangs that have plunged the country into violence.

Quito is the third leg on Hegseth's tour of the region, which has already taken him to Venezuela and Colombia.

It comes after he narrowly avoided impeachment by US lawmakers over the war on Iran and legally dubious strikes on alleged Latin American drug-trafficking boats that killed over 200 people.

AFP journalists saw him enter government buildings in central Quito under heavy security for a meeting held behind closed doors.



AFP photo

An Ecuadorean soldier stands guard outside Carondelet Palace during the visit of US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth in Quito on Thursday

The Ecuadoran foreign ministry confirmed the meeting, without specifying who was present.

From Quito Hegseth will travel back north to the Central American nation of Honduras to meet another Trump ally, President Nasry Asfura.

This is the Pentagon chief's first official visit to South America, a region Trump views as part of Washington's exclusive sphere of influence and which has been a major focus of his second term.

Ecuador is one of over a dozen Latin American countries, including Colombia and Honduras, that have joined Trump's right-wing "Shield of the Americas" military and political alliance.

Hegseth began his tour on Wednesday with a surprise visit to Venezuela, where US forces toppled socialist president Nicolas Maduro in a January 3 raid that killed over 100 people in Caracas.

During a meeting with interim president Delcy Rodriguez he vowed to "hunt" down drug traffickers.

Reports of rights abuses

He reiterated that message later Wednesday in Colombia, the world's biggest producer of cocaine, where he oversaw the delivery of a C-130 Hercules military transport plane.

"In each country, according to each country's laws but in working together, we are going to find, we are going to hunt, we are going to kill and defeat narco-terrorists," he said, standing alongside Colombian ministers.

The US has ramped up support for Ecuador's fight against the drug-trafficking groups that smuggle vast amounts of cocaine through ports such as Guayaquil to world markets.

Hegseth reiterated Washington's "steadfast support" for Noboa's crackdown, even as rights groups warn of widespread rights abuses by the security forces.

The US defence department added that he and Noboa also discussed combatting illegal mining, another major revenue spinner of organiced crime gangs in the region.

AFP uncovered at least 20 US military flights to an isolated base on Ecuador's Pacific coast, including C-130 Hercules and C-17 Globemaster transport planes, V-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft and Black Hawk helicopters.

Satellite imagery shows the base undergoing significant construction work in recent months.

Europe's young protesters are right to be worried, says Nobel economist Stiglitz

PARIS, France (AFP) — Young people protesting across Europe are right to be worried and have "legitimate" widespread concerns, Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz told AFP in an interview on Thursday.

From France and Germany to Italy and Spain, hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets in recent weeks, rallying against spiralling living costs, a housing crunch, poor pay, underfunded education and the climate crisis.

"Part of the problem in France in particular, but also all across the West, is inequality across generations," Stiglitz said on the sidelines of a meeting in Paris.

The 83-year-old American economist said many were inheriting a world shaped by rising inequality, sky-high housing costs, climate change and other issues.

"They can't afford housing. They're not given the education that would make them productive. AI is giving rise to new sets of anxieties," said the former World Bank chief economist and co-recipient of the 2001 Nobel economics prize.

Combined with sluggish growth and widening wealth gaps, Stiglitz said those pressures have fuelled fears that younger generations may never match the living standards their parents enjoyed.

"I think all that... particularly [those] young people are protesting, I think those are legitimate complaints."

Tax the rich

Stiglitz, a long-time advocate of taxing the ultra-wealthy, argued that governments would have room to respond to social demands if they were willing to raise more revenue.

He backs proposals for surcharges on major fortunes, such as the suggestion by French economist Gabriel Zucman for a minimum levy of around 2 per cent of fortunes above $110 million.

"There is so much money at the top that even a small tax rate on the top generates a huge amount of money," he said.

With France running one of the largest public deficits in the European Union, he said governments could spend more on public services if they increased tax revenues.

"The wealth tax would be a source of revenue," Stiglitz said.

Ideally, such taxes would be levied across the European Union, he added, arguing the bloc's free movement of people and capital made tax avoidance easier.

Tough choices

But the economist warned higher taxes alone would not solve Europe's challenges.

As the continent seeks to reduce its dependence on the United States, governments will also have to re-examine how they spend public money, he said.

"Students may not fully understand," Stiglitz said, that beyond the usual budget pressures, "this is a particularly difficult time".

The Columbia University professor said European countries should rethink parts of their public spending and backed more flexible pension systems that reflect longer life expectancy, while taking account of physically demanding jobs.

Turning to the United States, Stiglitz said the recent defeat of a proposed billionaire wealth tax in California showed how "America's democratic politics have been undermined by money".

"The billionaires were willing to spend hundreds of millions of dollars not to pay their fair share of taxes."

King at Jordan-EU Investment Conference: Jordan is ready for investors

Continued from page 1

Today's gathering is a testament to that spirit. Let us seize this opportunity to translate our shared aspirations into concrete investments and enduring partnerships.

It is now in your hands—Europeans and Jordanians—to empower inter-regional enterprise. By integrating our economies' exceptional strengths, resources, and expertise, you will realise unique opportunities. And you will open the door to new horizons, maximising joint economic benefits.

By unlocking the full strength of our interconnected economies, we can deliver the opportunities our peoples aspire to, and deserve.

You are the vanguard. It is your leadership, here and in the days ahead, that will point the way to prosperity and growth.

'Jordan is a beacon of stability and resilience in the region'

So, may this conference turn dialogue into delivery — for you, for us, and for the future we share. I wish you the greatest success. Thank you."

For her part, President von der Leyen emphasised in her speech during the opening ceremony that "Jordan is a smart investment". The president described it as a logical choice from a political perspective, and a practical way to support regional stability, in addition to the economic benefits it offers.

Underscoring the European Union's commitment to sustaining its friendly relations and strategic cooperation with Jordan, a partnership recently exemplified by a 1.6 billion euros grant in European support for the National Water Conveyance Project.

She noted that "as the geopolitical situation became more uncertain, few thought this conference would be possible. Yet here we are. Because we are ready to get to work", adding, "These are precisely the moments when our cooperation matters. Because, ladies and gentlemen, Jordan is a beacon of stability and resilience in the region."

The EC president added that European nations hold Jordan in high regard and stand by the Kingdom during times of regional uncertainty, stressing the importance of both sides continuing to work together and to look toward the future with optimism and determination.

The Jordan-EU Investment Conference brings together over 700 participants—including officials, investors, and business leaders from Jordan and across the European Union, as well as representatives from international financial and economic institutions. More than 30 speakers featured across over 10 key sessions.

The opening session was attended by HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan, Prime Minister Jafar Hassan, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, Director of the Office of His Majesty Alaa Batayneh, several government ministers, and officials and private sector representatives from both Jordan and the European Union.

King meets with European Commission president

Continued from page 1

The King underscored the importance of the Jordanian-EU Investment Conference in translating the partnership between the two sides into investment opportunities and tangible high-value projects that strengthen the private sector's role in building sustainable economic partnerships.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, Director of the Office of His Majesty Alaa Batayneh, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Zeina Toukan, Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh, and Jordan's Ambassador to Belgium Yousef Bataineh attended the meeting.

Prime minister attends signing of $6.6 billion Water Carrier Project agreement

Continued from page 1

Infrastructure for the project includes a water transmission pipeline stretching approximately 417 kilometres from Aqaba to Amman, alongside pumping systems designed to lift water to elevations reaching 1,100 metres above sea level.

The project also incorporates solar power generation facilities with a capacity of around 300 megawatts to cover nearly 30 per cent of its electricity requirements.

Once operational, the project is expected to raise the annual per capita water share from 60 to 110 cubic metres and increase water supply frequency from one day to three days per week across the Kingdom's governorates.

Development of the project is being led by a consortium comprising Meridiam as lead developer and Suez as technical and operational partner, under a public private partnership model.

Founded in 2005, French firm Meridiam specialises in the long term development, financing and management of public infrastructure projects, managing more than 130 projects worldwide. Suez is a global group with over 160 years of experience in the water sector, operating in 40 countries and bringing nearly 50 years of seawater desalination expertise across more than 260 desalination plants globally.

King, EBRD president discuss cooperation

Continued from page 1

The meeting, held on the sidelines of the Jordan-EU Investment Conference and attended by HRH Crown Prince Hussein, touched on ways to promote sustainable growth and attract further investment, according to a Royal Court statement.

His Majesty commended EBRD's support and funding for strategic projects of national priority, most notably the National Water Conveyance Project, as well as efforts to develop the green hydrogen sector.

The meeting also explored opportunities to expand EBRD's investments in Jordan. To date, the bank's cumulative portfolio in the Kingdom stands at an estimated 2.5 billion euros, across 91 projects in various sectors since operations began in 2012.

For her part, Renaud-Basso emphasised EBRD's commitment to continuing to work with Jordan in a number of key sectors.

Director of the Office of His Majesty Alaa Batayneh and Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Zeina Toukan attended the meeting.

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Fast and furious: NATO wrestles with speed of AI-driven warfare

By Didier Lauras
Agence France-Presse

IZMIR, Turkey — With growing concern, NATO militaries and defence giants are watching how artificial intelligence (AI) on the battlefield is forcing them into an ever-more urgent race against time.

Since Tuesday, military chiefs, officials and defence experts from the transatlantic alliance's 32 member states and Ukraine have gathered in the Turkish city of Izmir for NATO Edge, a three-day conference on critical technologies and digital warfare.

And the key message is this: Success no longer depends on having information your enemy lacks, but on connecting the dots faster.

For Admiral Pierre Vandier, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, the challenge is no longer about the available technology but "the speed at which we can integrate it, adapt it and scale it".

"Decisive change is from data to understanding, from understanding to decision, from decision to effect," he told delegates.

"AI accelerates every link in that chain. Terabytes float in from the field every day," Vandier said.

"Today, time is not our friend anymore. Speed of geotechnical chaos, speed of technology, speed of enemy adaptation... Our environment is a race."

For the past two days, military and political leaders have been locked in debate with hi-tech firms about how to speed up their interactions.

But while dealing with an alliance like NATO offers strength in numbers and capabilities, it is much slower than working with a single state.

"NATO is a little more challenging to deal with than a member nation," admitted Mitch Free, vice president of Vantor, which provides satellite imagery for defence and intelligence agencies.

"Now... they're really starting to accelerate how they interact with industry much earlier."

Today's battlefields are about swarms of drones, jamming technologies, cyber ops, electromagnetic attacks, the use of space and the real-time mapping of both enemy and allied troop movements.

One-minute response time

"Within seconds, the question is: what's coming at me? Where will it hit, how do I respond?" said a European industrialist, speaking on condition of anonymity.

On the frontline, that means "a team has one minute between the moment something triggers a sensor and the moment the enemy strikes".

For defence companies, there is no room for error: It is one thing to successfully demonstrate a product in an air-conditioned office but quite another to prove its effectiveness under fire.

"A drone that doesn't adapt to new electronic warfare within a month or two becomes obsolete," warned Oksana Ferchuk, Ukraine's minister for digital transformation.

In the ongoing war with Russia, "when a front-line unit reports a problem, a successful solution must be delivered within weeks", and it must be continuously improved, she said.

"So, we stopped thinking of capability as a finished product and started treating it as a continuous cycle. You must build, test in the field, receive feedback, update and repeat," she said.

To do that, "we need to bring businesses closer to the battlefield," insisted Maj. Gen. Rainer Beeck, one of NATO's top cyberspace commanders.

Although the newest products are all AI-designed from the outset, they must be able to incorporate modifications and upgrades, while older systems must be adapted to operate with AI without disrupting the functioning of the overall system.

Jurgen Eckel, head of strategy and innovation at Airbus Defence and Space, put it bluntly.

"AI is changing faster than military doctrine."

Fuelling hatred': Myanmar genocide ruling spotlights general turned president

Agence France- Presse

BANGKOK, Thailand — The top UN court's ruling on Thursday that Myanmar committed genocide repeatedly name-checked one man, Min Aung Hlaing, the country's president who, as a general, led the military during the campaign against the Rohingya.

The International Court of Justice's findings concerned state culpability, not individual guilt over the Myanmar military's campaign of rape and killings against the mostly Muslim Rohingya minority in 2017.

But Min Aung Hlaing was called out for his speeches against the Rohingya while armed forces chief during the so-called "clearance operations" in western Rakhine state.

"The court considers that the Senior General's messages, as reported, were capable of fuelling hatred against the Rohingya," the ruling said.

It said he repeatedly portrayed them as "a violent threat to other ethnic groups that needed to be addressed".

He gave speeches during the violence praising the security forces' "brilliant efforts" and referring to "'solving' the 'unfinished job' of the 'Bengali problem'", the court said.

Min Aung Hlaing took power in a 2021 coup and was installed as civilian president this April. Since then, he has embarked on a tour of regional capitals in a bid for international recognition.

The court had "made him the most prominent agent of the genocide", said independent Myanmar analyst David Mathieson.

"By naming him several times, it definitely puts him even further in the crosshairs than he already was."

Richard Horsey, senior Asia adviser at the International Crisis Group, noted the ruling was not against Min Aung Hlaing personally.

"But he commanded the military during the 2017 operations and he is now the head of a state found responsible for genocide," Horsey told AFP via email.

He did not expect it to stop the leader travelling, but it would "make his effort to be accepted as a normal head of state harder", he said.

"Any government that receives him will now be asked about it."

'Legal exposure'

The UN court's decisions are binding and cannot be appealed, but it has no way of enforcing its verdicts.

Min Aung Hlaing's "more serious legal exposure lies elsewhere", said Horsey.

In 2024, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, also based in The Hague, asked judges for an arrest warrant for Min Aung Hlaing over alleged crimes against humanity.

A case is also under way in Argentina under the principle of universal jurisdiction, the idea that some crimes are so heinous they can be heard in any court.

The bespectacled Min Aung Hlaing became armed forces head in 2011, just as Myanmar broke with its history of iron-fisted martial rule and began an experiment with democracy.

He spent a decade jostling with civilian leaders, playing second fiddle to Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, the nation's internationally feted campaigner for popular rule.

Suu Kyi addressed the International Court of Justice at a hearing in 2019, saying the case risked reigniting the crisis that led to the Rohingya's expulsion and said there was no "genocidal intent" behind the crackdown.

She was accused of defending the generals, leaving her international reputation in tatters. She was not mentioned in the verdict.

Myanmar has always denied genocide, arguing that its actions targeted a military uprising from insurgents after a series of attacks left a dozen security personnel dead.

Min Aung Hlaing has always steadfastly rejected allegations of human rights abuses.

But he was sanctioned after the violence against the Rohingya by the United States over what Washington called "ethnic cleansing".

He was further sanctioned and Myanmar widely shunned after he led the coup just months away from mandatory retirement.

The putsch triggered a civil war that conflict monitor ACLED estimates has killed more than 100,000 people on all sides.

UN watchdog warns states must allow citizens to create and join groups

By Nina Larson
Agence France-Presse

GENEVA — States cannot criminalise people for simply creating and forming groups such as trade unions or political parties, a UN watchdog warned on Thursday, as crackdowns on civil society ripple across the world.

The United Nations Human Rights Committee reminded countries of their obligations to respect the right to freedom of association, saying they cannot require state authorisation or misuse counterterrorism laws to prohibit groups from forming.

The warning came as rights defenders, trade unions, political parties and grassroots movements face increasing legal and administrative barriers.

The committee, made up of 18 independent rights experts tasked with monitoring how countries implement the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, stressed that the right to free association, guaranteed in article 22 of the treaty, was "a cornerstone of any democratic society".

That right, which allows citizens to organise in their own interests without state interference, was also "an essential prerequisite to... realise a wide range of other rights", it said.

"Attacks and infringements on the right to freedom of association are thus a crucial barometer of a broader crackdown on human rights, the rule of law and democracy."

Huda Ammori, the co-founder of Palestine Action, a pro-Palestinian group which has gone to Britain's highest court to challenge its ban in the country as a "terrorist" organisation, told AFP she believed the committee's new guidance "strengthens my case".

Thursday's document, she said in an e-mail, "makes clear that international law protects organisations and movements using disruptive, civil disobedience tactics, even if they are viewed unfavourably by the authorities".

It shows, she said, that "the government cannot simply label a movement 'terrorist' and use that designation to suppress dissent by extinguishing the fundamental rights of its members and supporters".

'Deeply concerning'

Committee Vice Chair Helen Tigroudja told AFP that recent reviews, including of Britain, Hong Kong and India, as well as South Korea, Israel, Russia and Turkey, "raised concerns on several aspects regarding formal and informal associations".

"The contexts might be different but the trends are global and deeply concerning," she said in an e-mail.

She did not detail specific cases, but several have spurred international condemnation, including Britain's decision to ban Palestine Action.

Also raising concerns have been India's crackdown on the youth-led Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) movement and the lengthy prison sentences handed to leaders of a group that once organised annual vigils in Hong Kong for those killed in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989.

> Individuals and groups could not be designated as 'terrorist' for things like "engaging in peaceful advocacy or activities" or providing humanitarian assistance

"The right to freedom of association is not conditioned by a state's authorisation or acknowledgement," the committee stressed.

Individuals, it highlighted, must be free to decide whether to form or join registered or informal associations.

"The mere fact of joining or being a member of a non-registered association must not be criminalised or sanctioned," it said.

Right to dissent

In their new guidance, the experts emphasised that the right "covers ideas, activities and actions that might be labelled as controversial, dissent or disruptive".

The committee also warned against the misuse of counterterrorism and national security legislation to rein in freedom of association.

Individuals and groups could not be designated as "terrorist" for things like "engaging in peaceful advocacy or activities" or providing humanitarian assistance, it said.

The guidance also took issue with the expanding use of so-called "foreign agent" laws in Russia and elsewhere against individuals and organisations receiving support or funding from abroad.

Article 22 "protects the right to seek, have access, receive and expend funding and other material resources, including those coming from outside the state party", it said.

The committee acknowledged that the freedom of association was not absolute, but stressed that restrictions must remain "exceptional, strictly limited and fully in line with article 22".

The committee wants to see its guidance taken into account by authorities drafting legislation and assessing the legality of restrictions placed on the right to freedom of association, Tigroudja said.

It could also be used by civil society and "for strategic litigation", she said.

The constant reinvention of Austria's Empress Sisi

By Femke Colborne
Agence France-Presse

VIENNA — Visitors flocked from around the world on Thursday to see a newly redesigned exhibition in Vienna on imperial icon Empress Elisabeth, subject of a string of films and TV series, and various misunderstandings, according to historians.

Elisabeth, nicknamed Sisi, spent 44 years as empress alongside Franz Joseph I during the final decades of the Habsburg Empire, until her assassination in 1898 by an anarchist during a trip to Geneva.

She has become a global phenomenon over the decades thanks to her portrayals in numerous popular films and shows, including the Netflix series "The Empress".

But historians say the image many people have of her today, as a romantic, rebellious feminist who railed against the constraints of court life, bears little resemblance to the woman she actually was.

The Sisi Museum, one of Austria's most popular museums, with 927,000 visitors in 2025, unveiled its new design on Thursday after a multiyear renovation costing 15 million euros ($16 million).

Visitors to the museum can see clothes and shoes that belonged to Sisi, as well as paintings, family mementoes and exercise apparatus representing the empress's famous dedication to fitness.

New attractions include the Weissgoldzimmer (White-Gold Rooms), lavish Rococo rooms that had previously been used as offices by the Austrian chancellery.

Several new objects are also on display, including a highly decorative Boesendorfer grand piano made for Elisabeth, as well as previously unseen dresses, shoes and riding equipment.

Fairytale heroine

Museum curator Michael Wohlfahrt said the aim of the redesign was to move beyond the image of Sisi as a larger-than-life cultural icon, with new themes and a wider selection of exhibits that present her "in a completely new environment".

"The goal is to help people begin to understand that Empress Elisabeth was not a cult or fictional figure, but that behind this beautiful facade there was a real person," Wohlfahrt told AFP.

Erin Murphy, 24, visiting from the United States, said she had first come across Sisi watching "The Empress".

"The first thing you notice about her is her very long hair," Murphy said, noting that she had also heard about Sisi's "intense regimen for exercise and dieting, and that she was kind of wild and not of the court".

Over the past seven decades, Sisi, who was killed at age 60, has been repeatedly reinvented for new audiences.

The "Sissi" film trilogy, starring Romy Schneider and released between 1955 and 1957, presented her as a romantic fairytale heroine who falls head over heels in love with Franz Joseph.

The 2022 film "Corsage" depicted Elisabeth as a middle-aged woman struggling with ageing, beauty standards and the pressures of public life.

And more recent series from RTL+ and Netflix portray her as a strong-willed, rebellious woman determined to challenge the restrictions imposed by the imperial court.

'Feminist rebel'

"Each era has picked out one true thing about her and treated it as the whole person," Christopher Brennan, a historian specialising in the Habsburg Empire, told AFP.

Recent depictions have sought to portray Sisi as a "feminist rebel", Brennan said, and there is "something in that".

"But what she fought for was, above all, her own freedom, and she could win it because she was an empress. She was not fighting for women's freedom," Brennan said.

For Katrin Unterreiner, a former curator of the Sisi Museum who has written several books about the empress, "people repeatedly project contemporary ideas onto Elisabeth simply because she seems to fit the present age".

"Many of the ideas now associated with Elisabeth are based on historical misunderstandings," Unterreiner said.

"She was not famous in her own lifetime. She withdrew completely from public life. She didn't want to be famous and she wasn't particularly popular."

For Wohlfahrt, however, Elisabeth has an enduring appeal that has survived through all her various reinventions.

"She demanded the right to determine her own life, and that's something that makes her timeless, even for people today," he said.

"It doesn't matter whether you're a man or a woman, young or old. Everyone wants to live a self-determined life."



JT file

Chairman of the board of commissioners, Emad Abu Haltam, says the Jordan-EU Investment Conference reflected the Kingdom's commitment to attracting investment and strengthening economic ties with the European Union

'Jordan-EU conference reflects commitment to stronger economic ties'

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the board of commissioners, Emad Abu Haltam, said the Jordan-EU Investment Conference reflected the Kingdom's commitment to attracting investment and strengthening economic ties with the European Union.

Held under Royal patronage and attended by King Abdullah and Crown Prince Al Hussein, the conference brought together European and Jordanian officials and investors to explore investment opportunities across several sectors.

Speaking to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, on the sidelines of the conference, Abu Haltam said His Majesty had called for the private sector to play a leading role in driving development and investment.

Projects presented at the conference covered infrastructure, transport, energy, water, high-value-added industries and advanced technology, among other sectors, he said.

Abu Haltam said Jordan's strategic location at the crossroads of Asia, Africa and Europe offered European investors a regional base for manufacturing and exporting to neighbouring markets.

He added that EU representatives and other participants had described Jordan as a reliable economic and investment partner, encouraging European businesses to explore opportunities in the Kingdom.

The government had revised economic policies and business regulations, introduced investor support measures and strengthened public-private partnerships to facilitate the implementation of major projects, he said.

Abu Haltam cited the recent launch of the National Water Carrier project and the signing of investment agreements during the conference as examples of royal support complementing government efforts to attract investment.

Despite regional uncertainty, Jordan continued to attract investor interest, supported by its political and economic stability, Hashemite leadership and commitment to meeting its obligations and supporting investors, he said.

He stressed the importance of following up on the conference's outcomes to translate investment commitments into tangible projects, adding that long-term investment would support economic growth, create jobs and advance the targets of the Economic Modernisation Vision.

Continued implementation of the vision's programmes and projects, alongside stronger private sector cooperation, would enhance the competitiveness of the Jordanian economy, and encourage domestic and foreign investment, Abu Haltam said.

Jordan, Syria seek stronger regional transport and railway links

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan and Syria are working to strengthen economic ties, expand regional transport networks and attract investment in infrastructure and reconstruction projects, officials said on Thursday.

The discussions took place during a specialised panel titled "Jordan's Competitive Advantage and New Market Opportunities", held on the sidelines of the Jordan-EU Investment Conference 2026 at the Dead Sea.

The session explored Syria's economic priorities and investment landscape, as well as opportunities for Jordanian, European and regional businesses in trade, transport, logistics, energy and infrastructure, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Participants highlighted Jordan's skilled workforce, financial services, logistics capabilities, private sector expertise and strategic location as key advantages in connecting Syrian markets with Europe and the Gulf.

Investment Minister Tareq Abu Ghazaleh said Jordan's regional economic vision was based on strengthening Arab economic connectivity and promoting joint projects that support sustainable development.

He said the Kingdom sought to play a central role in linking Arab economies through railway, trade, industrial and knowledge-based networks, adding that Jordan served as a gateway connecting regional markets with Europe and the Gulf.

Addressing Syria's economic challenges, Abu Ghazaleh said coordinated regional and international efforts were needed to support reconstruction and recovery.



Petra photo

A session titled 'Jordan's Competitive Advantage and New Market Opportunities', held on the sidelines of the Jordan-EU Investment Conference 2026 at the Dead Sea

Discussions between Jordanian officials and Syrian ministers had covered cooperation in transport, energy, infrastructure and housing, alongside efforts to identify viable development projects and attract investment, he said.

He stressed that investment should contribute to economic and social development by creating jobs, improving services and stimulating growth.

Abu Ghazaleh also announced the establishment of a dedicated Syria affairs office within the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply to support investors, coordinate with relevant authorities and address challenges facing joint projects.

Several investment opportunities in transport, energy, training and capacity-building are being assessed for financial viability before being presented to investors, he said.

For his part, Syrian Transport Minister Yarub Badr said efficient transport networks were essential for economic growth, trade and cross-border movement, adding that infrastructure investment could not succeed without reliable connections for passengers and freight.

He said the Jordanian and Syrian transport ministries maintained regular communication to advance plans for regional connectivity.

Badr pointed to an agreement between Jordan, Syria and Türkiye to improve links between their transport networks, and facilitate economic and social exchanges.

Saudi Arabia had also expressed interest in joining the cooperation framework, he said, adding that a meeting involving the transport ministers of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and Türkiye was expected to take place in Damascus to discuss regional transport integration and trade facilitation.

Badr said Syria had prioritised rehabilitating its transport infrastructure to restore its role as a transit corridor linking the Gulf with Türkiye and Europe, while improving connectivity between Iraq and the Mediterranean.

The government had allocated around $670 million over three years to rehabilitate and upgrade major roads to accommodate increased cross-border traffic, including trucks, fuel tankers and buses, he said.

The first project under the plan involves rehabilitating the Nasib-Damascus highway, he added.

On railway connectivity, Badr said regional transport projects, particularly the proposed Jordan-Syria railway link, should be treated as integrated regional initiatives rather than separate national projects.

He stressed that their success depended on coordinated planning and operations between Amman and Damascus.

Talks with European investors and companies had focused on developing the railway connection as a regional project capable of supporting economic recovery and development, while assessing potential challenges and investment risks, he said.

Badr added that cooperation among the countries involved would strengthen investor confidence and improve the long-term economic viability of regional transport projects.

China tech giant Alibaba to use more domestic chips

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese tech giant Alibaba said on Thursday it would move towards greater reliance on domestically produced artificial intelligence (AI) chips, as the United States tightens export controls for the sensitive components.

Washington this week announced new rules to crack down on the large grey market of Chinese companies renting computing power from data centres in Southeast Asia full of high-end US-designed chips.

Eddie Wu, Alibaba's chief executive, said during an earnings call that the new restrictions would affect the company's products and services in 2027 and bring "very big uncertainty" to the global supply chain.

"After 2027, we actually believe that the vast majority of our new AI chip supply should consist primarily of our own domestic T-Head chips," Wu said. T-Head is Alibaba's in-house chip-design arm.

"We will also buy other domestic chips to support our internal inference demand," he said, referring to the process of running, rather than training, AI models.

The United States restricts export to China of high-end chips used to train and run AI tools made by Californian company Nvidia, citing national security reasons.

The US announcement to close the loophole in its export controls followed the eruption of an espionage affair scandal at Nvidia that has forced out longtime CEO Jensen Huang.

Wu, who also leads Alibaba's AI ventures, said the company was currently training the next generation of its flagship Qwen model on its own chips.

Before quitting as Nvidia CEO last week, Huang had lobbied the Trump administration to allow more of his company's chip sales to China, warning that the controls would otherwise boost the competitiveness of the Chinese chip industry.

On Wednesday, Tencent, another Chinese tech giant, had said that tighter US export restrictions in the wake of the Nvidia scandal would boost the development of Chinese semiconductors in the long run.

Alibaba posted a major quarterly revenue bump for the quarter ended September 30. Its quarterly revenue was 271.5 billion yuan ($40.7 billion), up 10 per cent compared to the same period a year earlier, the company said in a press release.

The firm's net income attributable to ordinary shareholders — a measure of profit — was 64.5 billion yuan from July to September, up 207 per cent year-on-year, the results showed.

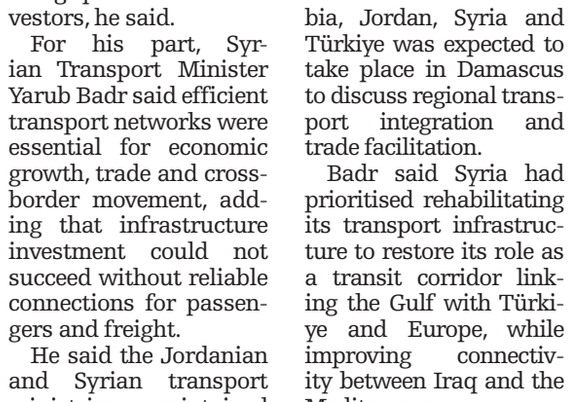
The huge jump was largely due to increased income from investments, the company said.

QAIA passenger traffic falls 6.6% in October

AMMAN (JT) — Airport International Group (AIG), the Jordanian company operating Queen Alia International Airport (QAIA), on Thursday reported year-on-year declines in passenger numbers, aircraft movements and air cargo volumes in October 2026, amid prevailing regional conditions.

According to figures reported by Al Mamlaka TV, QAIA handled 781,227 passengers in October, down 7.8 per cent from September and 6.6 per cent compared with October 2025.

Aircraft movements totalled 6,453, declining by 7.2 per cent month on month and 9.6 per cent year on year.



JT file

Aircraft movements total is 6,453, declining by 7.2 per cent month on month and 9.6 per cent year on year according to Airport International Group

Air cargo volumes, meanwhile, reached 7,076 tonnes, up 1.6 per cent from September but down 2.6 per cent compared with the same month last year.

AIG Chief Executive Officer Nicolas Devilier said the decline in airport traffic should be viewed within the broader context of prevailing regional conditions.

He added that the company remained focused on maintaining service and operational standards for passengers and airline partners, while continuing to develop services and offerings to meet airlines' operational needs.

These efforts aim to reinforce QAIA's position as a reliable gateway to Jordan and a key driver of tourism and economic activity in the Kingdom, he said.

Tech stocks rise as investors brace for Anthropic trading

LONDON (AFP) — Technology shares mostly rose on Thursday as AI titan Anthropic prepares to start trading following its record IPO, which gives investors a chance to bet directly on the prospects for the maker of the hugely successful Claude models.

In a highly anticipated initial public offering on Wednesday, Anthropic priced its shares at $83 each, raising more than $80 billion — topping Elon Musk's SpaceX's blockbuster stock sale in June.

That values the company at around $1.5 trillion ahead of the start of trading in its shares on the Nasdaq later Thursday.

"Anthropic's IPO is a big near-term win for the tech sector and should help restore some investor confidence that the AI revolution growth thesis is not waning," said Dan Ives of Yorkville Ives & Co.

The news reinforced optimism that was hammered last week after the shock resignation of Nvidia boss Jensen Huang over his extra-marital affairs, including with a woman suspected of being a Chinese spy.

The scandal rocking the chip giant has compounded growing concerns about the eye-watering sums pumped into the AI buildout and when they will see a return on investment, if at all.

Traders have also been spooked by the US Commerce Department's move to close a loophole allowing Chinese companies to access Nvidia's powerful AI chips remotely, adding to worries that a new Democratic-led Congress will impose further regulations.

Nvidia shares got a bump in early trading on Tuesday, adding 3.8 per cent on opening, after weeks of losses.

The tech-heavy US indexes S&P 500 and the Nasdaq both opened higher on Tuesday, after a slip for the less tech-focused European indexes.

In Asia, tech stocks closed mostly higher — Seoul and Tokyo, home to most of Asia's leading AI-linked firms, rose after a rocky couple of weeks.

But stocks in Taiwan slumped as investors eyed the trilateral summit between Chinese President Xi Jinping and his US and Russian counterparts Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, against a backdrop of fears about a Chinese takeover of the island.

Elsewhere, oil prices edged higher after the International Energy Agency said the crisis in the Middle East had created the "largest threat" to energy security in history.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Thursday amounted to JD11 million spread over 6.8 million shares that traded through 3,993 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.11 per cent, closing at 4028.78 points.

Out of 97 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 34 companies rose while the share price of another 32 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Amad Investment and Real Estate Development by 5.15 per cent, Jordan Poultry Processing and Marketing by 4.76 per cent, Al Tajamouat for Touristic Projects Company Plc. by 4.49 per cent, Al Tajamouat for Catering and Housing Company Plc. by 4.40 per cent, and Amwaj Properties by 4.35 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Darat Jordan Holdings by 6.49 per cent, Jordanian Company for Developing and Financial Investment by 5 per cent, Al Nisr Al Arabi Insurance by 4.63 per cent, Assas for Concrete Products Company Ltd. by 4.27 per cent, and Comprehensive Land Development and Investment by 3.85 per cent.



SPORTS AT A GLANCE

Shelton on brink of ATP Finals last four after beating Jodar

TURIN, Italy (AFP) — American Ben Shelton beat Spaniard Rafael Jodar 7-6 (10/8), 7-5 to take a big step towards the semifinals of the ATP Finals on Thursday. With his second win in three group-stage matches, World No.4 Shelton moved closer to joining Alexander Zverev and Carlos Alcaraz in the last four. The American, 24, had to work hard against Jodar who held two set points in the first set tie-break. After clinching a hard-fought opening set that lasted over an hour, Shelton quickly broke Jodar's serve in the second. Trailing 3-1 and then 4-2, the 10th-ranked Spanish newcomer mounted a comeback. The 20-year-old levelled at 4-4 and then took a 5-4 lead but eventually wilted, losing three consecutive games and falling to his third defeat of the week in his debut at the elite season-ending event. Shelton will be in the semis unless seventh-ranked Frenchman Arthur Fils beats World No.1 Zverev in straight sets. Meanwhile, World No.3 Alcaraz is awaiting the results of an MRI scan he underwent Thursday on a hamstring injury picked up in his win over Russia's Daniil Medvedev on Wednesday.

CRICKET

Nicholls ton leads New Zealand fightback to 243-5 in first India Test

WELLINGTON (AFP) — Henry Nicholls scored an unbeaten 113 on Thursday as New Zealand overcame a brilliant return from India's Jasprit Bumrah to end the first day 243-5 in the first Test in Wellington. Nicholls and Glenn Phillips, who was 94 not out, rescued New Zealand from 70-5 shortly after lunch, their 173-run partnership giving the hosts the honours on a testing opening day. They were made to fight through spells of relentless fast bowling from Bumrah, playing his first Test in almost a year. The 32-year-old took a wicket with his third ball of the day and ended with 3-52 from 17 overs. Outside of Bumrah, New Zealand's batsmen were barely troubled following a difficult opening session prompted by India captain Shubman Gill winning the toss and deciding to bowl. Nicholls arrived at the crease on the fourth ball of the morning, defending stoutly and restricting the use of his favoured cut shot. The result was a composed and controlled hundred that relied on patience more than swashbuckling stroke play. He found an able partner in Phillips, who walked to the crease shortly after lunch and immediately found his timing with powerful drives and deft cut shots.

'Man of integrity' Diallo can restore proper values to FIFA: UEFA vice president

PARIS, France (AFP) — French football chief Philippe Diallo's bid to depose Gianni Infantino as FIFA president is less about replacing one man than overhauling how football's governing body has been run under him, a UEFA vice president told AFP.

Laura McAllister, who in 2023 became the first woman to be elected a vice president of European football's governing body, said Diallo was a "man of integrity" and his values aligned with UEFA "which it feels are critical to change the governance of FIFA".

UEFA have been in the vanguard of opposition to Infantino — they described his shortlived FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE) plan to sell stakes in the World Cup to private investors as a "shabby, back room, opaque deal".

McAllister said although some have dismissed Diallo as a stop-gap candidate, after others such as CONCACAF president Victor Montagliani and elder statesman Arsene Wenger opted out, he stood on his "merits".

"We knew it would be a tricky process to find an appropriate candidate with regime change and accountability as the programme," she told AFP in a phone interview on Wednesday.

"Philippe Diallo can do that adeptly. Were there other candidates mentioned before? Yes there were, but it is now about the timetable of aligning values and articulating them.



AFP photo

FIFA President Gianni Infantino (left) and FFF President Philippe Diallo talk during the 2026 World Cup Group I football match between France and Iraq at the Philadelphia Stadium in Philadelphia on June 22

"It does not matter about who might have been a candidate, this is the here and now and he is a strong and credible values-driven candidate."

Diallo and former Japan Football Association president Kozo Tashima are hoping to dash Infantino's hopes of a fourth and final term in Rabat on March 18 next year.

"We respect him a lot, his values align with ours," McAllister said of Tashima. "Let us see how that plays out."

McAllister is at pains to insist it is more about changing the system than replacing one person.

"It was never about ridding FIFA of one leader, it is about reform of the framework of governance, finance and redistribution system," she said.

'Patterns of behaviour'

McAllister said Diallo, a 63-year-old lawyer whose Senegalese-born father boxed for France at an Olympics, should not be seen as solely a European candidate.

"He is a francophone, which is an important asset in lots of CAF [Confederation of African Football] countries," she said.

CAF have been among Infantino's most vocal supporters, partly because Morocco is co-hosting the 2030 men's World Cup. The South American governing body CONMEBOL also backs him.

More surprising was the Asian Football Confederation's (AFC) volteface — having heavily criticised Infantino, they announced last month they supported his reelection.

McAllister, a former captain of the Wales women's football team, noted though that confederations do not vote as a bloc.

"There is a soft space which Philippe can exploit and convince some federations within each confederation to support a reform agenda," the 61-year-old said.

"There is a lot of discomfort around the behaviour of Gianni Infantino and a desire to challenge the concentration of power in his hands.

"This applies everywhere in world football. This is not about Europe, the same rules apply globally."

McAllister, an academic who teaches governance at Cardiff University, said she believes the Asian confederation's values aligned with Diallo's.

"His campaign will be a programme for change, modernising governance and accountability to who matters, as FIFA money belongs to associations, not any individual," she said.

"The AFC and CONCACAF have aligned themselves with this agenda, for a president neither to operationally manage nor to intervene in decisions."

Infantino looked odds-on to be reelected unopposed after a highly successful staging of this year's World Cup, co-hosted by three countries for the first time.

However, the revelations of his FFE plan changed the dynamic completely.

"Patterns of behaviour stack up against him," McAllister said, detailing the incendiary FFE initiative but also the awarding of a FIFA Peace Prize to Donald Trump, which points to a perceived sycophancy towards world leaders.

Then there was the introduction of hydration breaks at the World Cup and the decision to suspend a red card for USA forward Folarin Balogun at Trump's request.

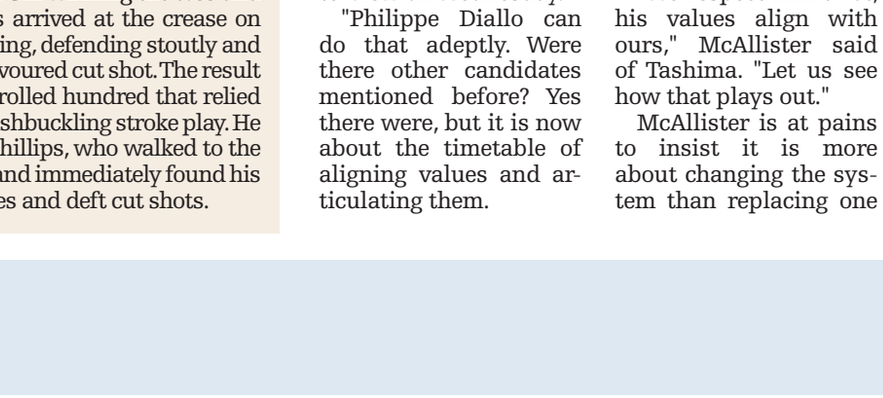
Some had hoped for a woman candidate.

However, McAllister said the time was not right for either her or another vocal Infantino critic, Norwegian football chief Lise Klaveness.

"I do not necessarily think the football world is ready for a reforming woman candidate, but it will be soon," she said.

Homo erectus was more adaptable than previously thought

By Bénédicte Salvetat Rey
Agence France-Presse



AFP photo

Homo erectus had been thought to have died out in Asia because it could not adapt to the environment

PARIS — Homo erectus — our distant relative — adapted to an environment in the dense forests of southern China, according to two studies published on Wednesday that challenge the prevailing theory about how it went extinct.

Our ancestors survived for nearly 2 million years — far longer than Homo sapiens, the only human species in existence today, which has only been around for some 300,000 years.

The ancient humans migrated from the grassy savannas of Africa, across Asia, to the open environments and light forests of Java, where the most recent fossils dating back 108,000 years have been found.

Until now, scientists thought that their disappearance in Asia was due to their inability to adapt when their environment began to transform into a tropical rainforest.

"The prevailing view about Pleistocene hominins in East and Southeast Asia is that, other than Homo sapiens, they couldn't exploit forest environments," said palaeontologist Yingqi Zhang, from the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

"They couldn't survive in the subtropical forest environments in southern China. So the forests in southern China formed a barrier for them to migrate. That's the former view. But our findings turn that around completely," he told reporters.

The two studies, published in Nature, focus on the discovery of nine fossilised hominin teeth in two neighbouring caves in southern China.

Analysis of their proteins has made it possible to unambiguously attribute eight of them to Homo erectus, while the ninth remains unidentified for the time being.

Using several dating techniques, the scientists were able to show that the fossils date back to between 324,000 and 184,000 years ago.

Until now, the most recent fossils attributed to Homo erectus in China dated back to about 400,000 years ago.

"Our research fills that gap," said the researchers, who in the second study were able to reconstruct the environment in which the hominins lived.

Porcupines

In total, nearly 20,000 animal teeth were found in the two caves and were likely accumulated at the time by porcupines that collected bones to eat and sharpen their teeth.

"Basically, these teeth we found in the caves are the things they left behind," said Zhang.

The collection of animal remains included fossils of orangutans, elephants and rhinoceroses.

They also found fossils of the elephant-like Stegodon and Megalovis, which resembled a large goat, both of which are now extinct.

The researchers analysed the carbon isotopes present in the animals' tooth enamel to uncover clues about their diets.

Renaud Joannes-Boyau, a geoarchaeologist at Southern Cross University in Australia, said food, drink and other elements in the environment are absorbed by various parts of the body.

"If it's in your teeth, it stays forever," he added.

"That carbon tells us what kind of plants in the environment are there and what kind of ecosystem. And then what we see is a very, very dense rainforest."

Because teeth grow in a manner similar to tree rings, scientists were also able to reconstruct the early years of these individuals, with even more surprising results.

Analysis of specific isotopes, which can be used to identify the environment, revealed that Homo erectus migrated long distances during childhood, from present-day Vietnam, some 250 kilometres away from the caves.



AFP photo

Members of Cuban urban dance company Los Datway participate in the filming of a social media video in Havana on October 29

Latin America finds new rhythm in Cuban reparto music

HAVANA (AFP) — Cuba's "reparto" genre has soared from humble beginnings to centre stage of the Latin American music scene, counting Spanish superstar Rosalia and Puerto Rican artist Daddy Yankee among its fans.

Emerging roughly two decades ago in so-called "repartos", working-class neighborhoods on the outskirts of Havana, the genre did the rounds on cell phones and USB sticks before blowing up on social media.

A slick blend of energetic rhythms, catchy hooks and a generous dose of slang about money, parties and sex, reparto draws inspiration from Cuba's timba style and Latin America's world-famous reggaeton.

Bebeshito, Charly & Johayron, and Ja Rulay are some of its most popular artists of the moment, with their success driven by better Internet access on the island, the arrival of Tiktok, and Cuban migration to Miami.

"After we Cuban artists set up shop in Miami and started to understand this [the music industry], that's when everything happened," Carlos Eduardo Perez told AFP at Miami's Billboard Latin Music Awards gala last month.

Listeners might not recognize his real name.

In the music world he goes by "Helabusador" — one of many flashy nicknames that complement the extravagant clothing, thick chains, gold teeth and tattoos quintessential to "reparteros".

Although no representatives of the genre featured among the nominees, several performers walked the event's red carpet, possibly due to the raging success of "Dichavate", a track by Helabusador, Rey Tony and Ya Ice Dilan that has racked up 170 million YouTube views.

