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King meets with UK PM in London

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah met with United Kingdom Prime Minister Andy Burnham in London on Thursday.

Speaking to the media ahead of a bilateral meeting followed by an expanded one at 10 Downing Street, attended by HRH Crown Prince Hussein, His Majesty highlighted the depth of the historical ties between the two friendly kingdoms and the importance of continuing their cooperation across various fields, according to a Royal Court statement.

The King emphasised the need to strengthen economic partnerships between the two countries and to capitalise on their considerable potential, particularly in the implementation of major projects and the expansion of trade.

His Majesty commended the UK's support for the two-state solution, underscoring the need to step up efforts to deliver humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, particularly as winter approaches and noting the convergence of views between the two countries on many regional issues.

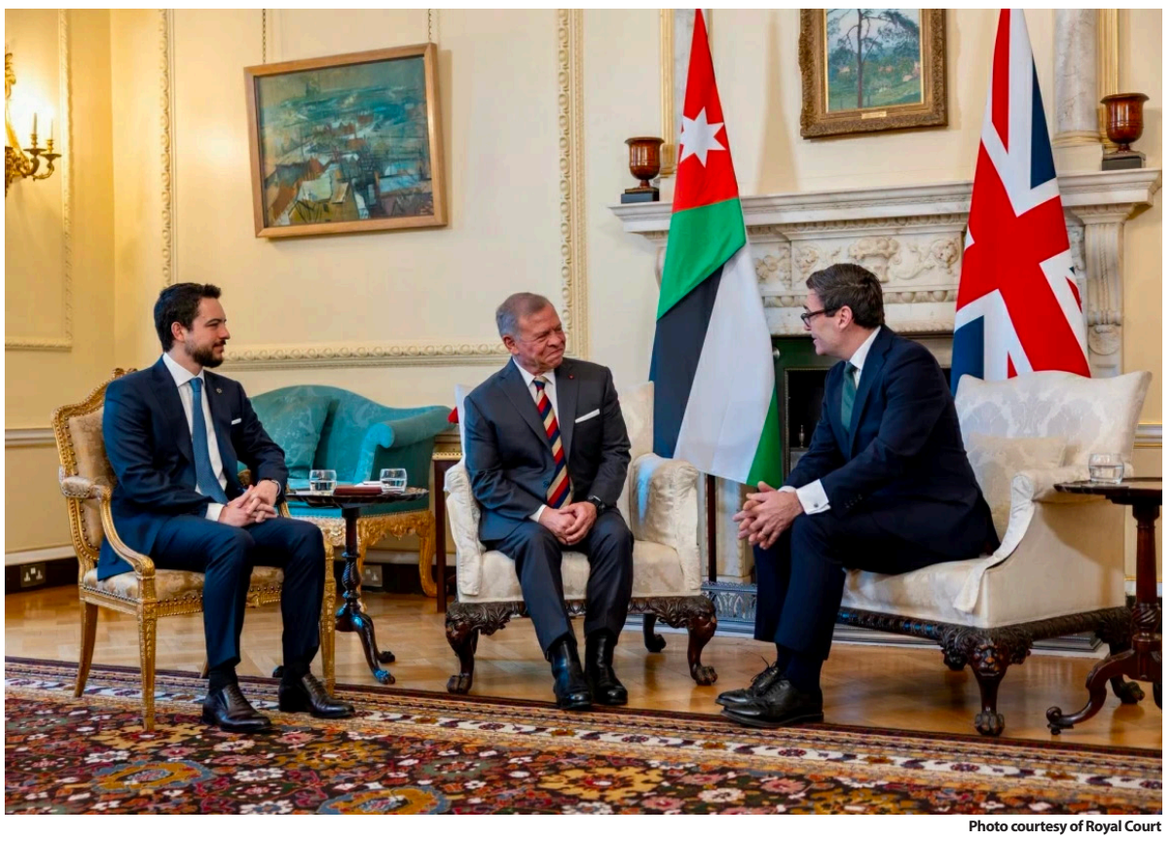


Photo courtesy of Royal Court

His Majesty King Abdullah holds a meeting with United Kingdom Prime Minister Andy Burnham in London, attended by attended by HRH Crown Prince Hussein

Speaking about regional developments, the King affirmed the need to continue working with the UK to support efforts to de-escalate tensions and restore stability in the Middle East.

His Majesty called for intensified international efforts to stop Israel's dangerous actions in the West Bank, which are aimed at expanding settlements and annexing land, as well as the violations against Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem and the deteriorating, humanitarian situation in Gaza, the statement said.

For his part, Prime Minister Burnham, speaking to the media, noted the strength of his country's relations with Jordan, noting the significant growth in the volume of trade between Jordan and the UK, and highlighting his country's interest in enhancing partnerships with Jordan and European countries in this regard.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, Director of the Office of His Majesty Alaa Batayneh and Jordan's Ambassador to the UK Manar Dabbas attended the meeting.



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

His Majesty King Abdullah meets in London with members of the British House of Commons and House of Lords, as well as former ministers and civilian and military officials

King meets with UK parliament members, former officials

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Thursday met with members of the British House of Commons and House of Lords, as well as former ministers and civilian and military officials, to discuss recent regional and international developments.

During the meeting, held in London, His Majesty emphasised the need to step up international efforts to restore security and stability to the Middle East, warning of the serious consequences of the ongoing conflict on the entire world, according to a Royal Court statement.

The King stressed that lasting peace and stability in the region cannot be achieved without a just and comprehensive resolution to the Palestinian issue, based on the two-state solution, while ensuring that Palestinians obtain their full legitimate rights.

The meeting also touched on the importance of the UK's role on the international stage, and the importance of continuing joint efforts to develop Jordanian-British relations and expand cooperation in service of mutual interests, and to enhance stability in the region.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, Director of the Office of His Majesty Alaa Batayneh and Jordan's Ambassador to the UK Manar Dabbas attended the meeting.



Photo courtesy of Royal Court

His Majesty King Abdullah, accompanied by HRH Crown Prince Hussein, meets in London with UK National Security Adviser Jonathan Powell

King meets with UK national security adviser

AMMAN (JT) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Thursday met with the United Kingdom's National Security Adviser Jonathan Powell.

During the meeting, held in London and attended by HRH Crown Prince Hussein, His Majesty emphasised Jordan's commitment to maintaining coordination and consultation with the UK on various regional developments, in order to achieve comprehensive and sustainable de-escalation, according to a Royal Court statement.

The King emphasised the importance of supporting efforts aimed at consolidating regional security and stability, and putting a stop to Israel's dangerous actions in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza.

Speaking about Syria and Lebanon, His Majesty reiterated the need to support their efforts to maintain their security and sovereignty.

The meeting also touched on the importance of working to strengthen Jordanian-British relations and building on the partnership between the two countries, in service of mutual interests.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, Director of the Office of His Majesty Alaa Batayneh and Jordan's Ambassador to the UK Manar Dabbas attended the meeting.

Jordan expresses condolences to Egypt over Cairo fire victims

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday extended its condolences to Egypt following a fire on the ring road in the Cairo's Al Waraq area that left several people dead and others injured.

In a statement, the ministry's Spokesperson Fouad Majali reaffirmed Jordan's solidarity with Egypt's government and people.

Majali also expressed condolences to the families of the victims and wished those injured a speedy recovery.

A fire erupted in Egyptian capital Cairo on Wednesday killing at least 31 people, the health ministry said, after a fuel truck reportedly overturned on a packed highway.

AFP footage showed a huge fireball and thick black smoke rising above the densely populated capital's Al Waraq neighbourhood as motorists sounded their horns and scrambled to get away. Surrounding buildings appeared to escape the flames.

State media reported that the fire broke out when a truck loaded with fuel overturned on Cairo's Ring Road — a crowded highway linking different parts of the capital — and burst into flames, engulfing nearby vehicles.

The health ministry said 39 ambulances were sent to the scene and 15 people were taken to hospital with injuries, four of them in critical condition.

"The scene was terrifying," Abdel Rahman Khalil told AFP, saying he arrived shortly after the crash and saw the overturned fuel truck engulfed in flames.

AFP images showed a grisly aftermath with cars burned out, as firefighters doused the truck's wreckage.

Egypt's public prosecutor said an investigation had been opened and DNA tests were being carried out to identify badly burned victims.



AFP photo

People stand next to the wreckage of vehicles in the aftermath of a fire that broke out in the Al Waraq neighbourhood of Imbaba district, Giza Governorate, onWednesday

Continued on page 5

AFP photo

A motorboat cruises along the shore off the town of Al Jeer on the Strait of Hormuz in the northern emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, with a tanker seen in the background, on February 25

Body of missing Jordanian sailor found off UAE coast — ministry

AMMAN (JT) — The body of Jordanian sailor Mohammed Hossam Otaibi was found off the coast of Ras Al Khaimah in the United Arab Emirates, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on Thursday.

Ministry Spokesperson Fouad Majali said that the UAE coast guard recovered the sailor's body on Wednesday.

Continued on page 5

Jordan, EU lead UfM call for regional stability, stronger Mediterranean cooperation

AMMAN (JT) — Foreign ministers of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) have called for renewed regional cooperation and stronger diplomatic efforts to address mounting security challenges, reaffirming their commitment to peace, stability and prosperity across the Mediterranean.

In a joint statement issued following the 11th UfM Regional Forum in Barcelona on Tuesday, ministers, meeting under the co-presidency of Jordan and the European Union, called for a more action-oriented and forward-looking organisation capable of responding to the region's growing challenges.

Photo: UfM

Representatives of the EU27 and 16 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries of the Union for the Mediterranean pose for a group photo following the ministerial meeting, co-chaired by Ayman Safadi, deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, and Kaja Kallas, high representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and vice president of the European Commission

In their joint statement, ministers reaffirmed the UfM's role as a platform bringing together Mediterranean partners and pledged to advance the implementation of its 2025 Vision Statement, focusing on three pillars aimed at connecting people, countries and economies.

They identified environmental protection, climate action, energy transition, digital transformation, higher education and connectivity as priority areas requiring stronger regional cooperation. They also highlighted opportunities to expand trade and partnerships, calling for joint efforts to transform shared challenges into mutually beneficial opportunities.

The statement, a copy of which was made available for The Jordan Times, expressed concern over the security situation in the Middle East and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, stressing the importance of respecting international law and intensifying diplomatic coordination with regional and international partners to prevent further escalation and restore stability.

Continued on page 5



Petra photo

Under the patronage of His Majesty King Abdullah, the 26th National Olive Festival and Rural Products Exhibition, organised by the Ministry of Agriculture from November 26 to December 5, opens on Thursday

Agriculture minister opens National Olive Festival and Rural Products Exhibition

AMMAN (JT) — Under the patronage of His Majesty King Abdullah, the 26th National Olive Festival and Rural Products Exhibition opened on Thursday, organised by the Ministry of Agriculture from November 26 to December 5.

Minister of Agriculture Saeb Khraisat said in his remarks that the annual event, held at the Mecca Mall Exhibition Centre, serves as a "key" commercial platform to bolster the national economy and raise the income of rural households, producers and farmers, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He reviewed vital achievements in the agricultural sector, noting that its contribution to economic growth in the second quarter of the year reached 7.8 per cent, placing it ahead of all other economic sectors.

Khraisat added that direct and indirect beneficiaries of the festival exceed 4,000, pointing out that the event showcases olive oil and its derivatives alongside rural family items.

For his part, Festival Director Abdullah Qudah said that the festival is a "vital" hub connecting local production with consumers and reflects a full year of effort by farmers, home-based producers and cooperative societies to present authentic Jordanian olive oil, traditional food preserves and handicrafts.

He noted that it has evolved into a genuine sales outlet within an integrated framework for economic empowerment, quality control and innovation.

> The event is held in partnership with several official and international bodies, private sector institutions and civil society organisations

He pointed out that beneficiary numbers at the annual olive festival ranged between 750 and 800 in previous years and rose to 1,150 in 2025, before surging this year to more than 4,000 participants at the same venue and within the same 11,000-square-metre space.

Qudah stressed that olive oil was thoroughly tested, including anti-adulteration checks using advanced equipment to ensure it was not mixed with other oils, as well as acidity checks as a primary indicator of quality, where lower acidity denotes a higher grade.

He added that festival management collected honey samples for testing in cooperation with the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) to verify they were free of tampering and added sugars, placing a QR code on each container.

He also noted that a mechanism was adopted to utilise fruits and vegetables from the countryside with minor blemishes and surplus output by turning them into vinegar and jams, alongside medicinal and aromatic herbs.

Regarding price controls, he noted that the ministry did not intervene in pricing, leaving it to supply and demand and consumers' ability to discern quality, stressing that quality is not measured by price alone, but by concentration factors and ratios.

The event is held in partnership with several official and international bodies, private sector institutions and civil society organisations, led by the National Agricultural Research Centre, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, the Jordan Olive Mill Owners and Producers Syndicate, alongside a number of banks and cooperative and charitable societies supporting local produce.

Royal Court chief inaugurates new headquarters of Retired Military Officers Club



Petra photo

Royal Court Chief Yousef Issawi on Thursday inaugurates the new headquarters of the Retired Military Officers Club in Amman's Al Rawnaq neighbourhood, implemented upon Royal directives as part of Royal initiatives

AMMAN (JT) — Royal Court Chief Yousef Issawi, head of the follow-up committee for the implementation of Royal initiatives, on Thursday inaugurated the new headquarters of the Retired Military Officers Club in Amman's Al Rawnaq neighbourhood, implemented upon Royal directives as part of Royal initiatives.

The project comes within the framework of continued Royal attention to military retirees and veterans, and the keenness to provide a conducive environment for them to sustain their active role in serving the nation and society and strengthen communication among themselves, in appreciation of their dedication and sacrifices in the fields of honour and duty, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Issawi unveiled the commemorative plaque in the presence of Director-General of the Economic and Social Association of Retired Servicemen and Veterans (ESARSV) Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Adnan Raqad, Club President Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Anwar Ayasrah, and retired officers who are members and patrons of the club.

Issawi toured the club's facilities and was briefed on the equipment, maintenance and furnishing works carried out across the building.

Royal directives had been issued approving the purchase of a building to serve as a permanent headquarters for the Retired Military Officers Club in the capital, replacing the rented premises, after which the property was acquired, renovated and fully furnished.

The inauguration embodies the firmly established Hashemite approach of care for military retirees and veterans, who enjoy the attention and appreciation of His Majesty King Abdullah, the Supreme Commander of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF), in recognition of their dedication, sacrifices and contributions to safeguarding national security and stability and protecting the country's achievements.

In remarks during the opening ceremony, Raqad described His Majesty's care for military retirees and veterans as an "entrenched Hashemite approach" reflecting Royal appreciation for their service and sacrifices within JAF and security agencies.

He voiced retirees' pride in the continuous care extended by His Majesty and HRH Crown Prince Hussein.

Raqad noted that the club, named after the area in which it is located, was implemented under a Royal makruma and funded by the Royal Hashemite Court.

He highlighted the social and cultural role of military retirees' clubs in fostering fraternity among members and enabling them to continue serving their communities, pointing out that military retirees carry into civilian life the values of belonging, discipline and giving that accompanied them throughout their service.

Ayasrah reviewed the club's journey since its establishment in 1974 as a unifying home for retired officers, noting that it relocated among several premises over five decades until the Royal makruma fulfilled members' aspirations for a dedicated, permanent headquarters in Al Rawnaq, where they can meet and preserve the bonds of brotherhood and loyalty forged during their years of service.

With their accumulated expertise, rich experience and deeply rooted values of belonging, discipline and responsibility, military retirees constitute a vital national asset and a supporting pillar for the JAF and security agencies, with their contributions extending across various spheres of public life to advance nation-building and development and instil the values of good citizenship and national belonging among younger generations.

Lecture links US election shift to changing public opinion on Palestine

By Saeb Rawashdeh



Rami Khouri

AMMAN — The US midterm elections 2026 marked the major political shift as Democrats have gained control of both chambers of Congress. The Senate result is 56 seats for Democrats, including two independents who caucus with them, against 44 Republicans.

Although Donald Trump remains the US president, the 120th Congress, beginning on January 3, 2027, will have a Democratic majority in both chambers.

These elections were significant because of congressional oversight, legislation, presidential appointments and foreign policy.

Congressional control can influence military funding, foreign assistance and oversight of international agreements.

"We are in the moment where all dynamics in the Middle East and in the US and Europe are changing. Everything is in motion," said a former editor in chief of The Jordan Times and Arab-American pundit Rami Khouri, at a lecture titled "After American Midterm Elections: 2027 and beyond" organised Jordan Oxbridge alumni on Tuesday.

Every issue of the international politics is in motion, Khouri continued, adding that he stopped trying to predict the future events but to analyse what has happened, what changes are happening and why, and what impact these changes would have on the world.

The war with Iran impacted the entire world and it was one of the major reasons for the Democratic victory in November this year.

"The single driver of the current dynamism of the change is the Israeli genocide in Gaza and the rest of Palestine," Khouri underlined, noting that Zionist actions unleashed the global forces of protests, awareness, social-media dynamism of accountability and moral outrage.

Zionist-Palestinian conflict that started 120 years ago enters its peak after October 7, 2023 and the genocide in Gaza that was directly supported by the US government and governments in the region are protesting against the Israeli aggression, but in vain, Khouri noted.

"In the past 10 years, the US and Israel spearhead the genocide against the international rule of law," Khouri said, adding that they hurt the international institutions but did not destroy them completely.

What changed recently has been the ability of the Zionist propaganda machine, which has been closely coordinated with the American mainstream media and political culture in the US started to erode.

"The focus of Israeli propaganda has been reduced to the White House and key members of Congress," Khouri noted.

These changes are the result of the public opinion shift within the US where the majority of the US citizens support an independent Palestinian state.

What is so evident now is the global political public activism for Palestinian rights and against Israeli genocide, Khouri continued, adding that Palestine issue now is probably the leading moral force in the entire world.

"It is the issue that brings hundreds of thousands of protesters around the planet, which is unprecedented," Khouri stressed, noting that progressive media in forms of podcasts, online panels and independent analytical sites play major role in countering the Zionist narratives in the mainstream media outlets.

Progressive and independent media played a huge role in the shift of the public opinion towards the Palestinian political rights and forced the mainstream media not to ignore the plight of Palestinians under Israeli occupation.

"All of these changing trends converged in the election campaign," Khouri underlined, noting that popular activism has checked power elites to think twice about what they are doing.

"We can see parallel movements for justice in Palestine and less militarism," Khouri said.

UNESCO brings together education, science and culture to inspire young environmental champions in Aqaba

UNESCO photo

UNESCO, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development and the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority, organises an educational visit to the Aqaba Marine Reserve and Abu Bakr Al Siddiq Primary School for Boys

AMMAN (JT) — As part of Environment and Climate Month, coordinated by the embassy of France and the Ministry of Environment, UNESCO, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development and the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA), organised an educational visit to the Aqaba Marine Reserve and Abu Bakr Al Siddiq Primary School for Boys.

Twenty-five students took part in the visit alongside teachers, government representatives and development partners to raise awareness of marine biodiversity, environmental conservation and climate action, highlighting the connections between education, science and culture in promoting environmental sustainability, according to a UNESCO statement.

The initiative also reflects UNESCO's broader efforts through the Greening Education Partnership, which seeks to equip learners with the knowledge, skills and values needed to address climate change and promote sustainable development.

The visit took place in a particularly significant year for Jordan, following the inscription of the Aqaba Marine Reserve on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2026.

Home to an extraordinary diversity of marine life, including more than 150 species of hard corals, over 500 species of fish and nearly 1,000 species of mollusks, the reserve represents an important natural heritage whose protection requires continued collaboration among national institutions, local communities and international partners.

At the Visitor Centre, the reserve's guidance and community outreach team introduced students to the Aqaba Marine Reserve and its ecological importance as part of its programme of guided visits and environmental education.

Through exhibits and interactive discussions, students explored the diversity of marine life in the Red Sea, the role of coral reefs in the ecosystem and how they can help protect them. A field tour gave students the opportunity to connect what they had learned at the centre with what they saw in the reserve.

"Protecting our natural heritage starts with understanding and appreciating it. By bringing together education, science and culture, we can help young people connect what they learn in the classroom with the world around them and inspire them to become active participants in protecting it," said Noha Bawazir, UNESCO Representative to Jordan.

Nasser Zawaideh, Director of the Aqaba Marine Reserve, reaffirmed the reserve's commitment to continuing and further developing its outreach and education programmes and to hosting school visits and environmental initiatives.

He highlighted the role of these efforts in raising environmental awareness among young people and fostering a shared sense of responsibility for protecting the marine environment and conserving biodiversity.

The delegation then visited Abu Bakr Al Siddiq Primary School for Boys, one of six schools participating in the Greening Education pilot implemented by UNESCO in partnership with the Ministry of Education under the System Strengthening Partnership Programme, supported by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund partners: Canada, Italy, Norway and Switzerland.

During the school visit, students and teachers showcased the environmental initiatives undertaken through the pilot, sharing their experiences, achievements and lessons learned.

The activities highlighted how schools can serve as spaces for environmental learning and practical action, encouraging students, teachers and school communities to adopt more sustainable practices.

The visit also featured a participatory mural activity led by Jordanian artist Mike Derderian, engaging students in using art and creativity to express messages about environmental conservation and climate action. The activity demonstrated how creative expression can complement scientific knowledge and education in raising environmental awareness.

The event brought together representatives of the Ministry of Education, ASEZA, the Jordan National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, UNESCO and Canada, representing the MPTF partners, reflecting the importance of partnerships and cross-sectoral collaboration in advancing environmental sustainability.

UNESCO continues to support Jordan's efforts to integrate environmental sustainability into education, strengthen the role of schools in climate action and empower young people to contribute to a more sustainable future.

Safadi, EU foreign policy chief co-chair UfM regional forum in Barcelona

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi and European Commission Vice President and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas on Thursday co-chaired the 11th Regional Forum of Foreign Ministers of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in Barcelona.

Hosted by Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares, the forum brought together foreign ministers from member states and European Commissioner for the Mediterranean Dubravka Suica, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

Safadi stressed the importance of strengthening Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and economic integration, warning that unresolved and emerging crises threaten global security, disrupt trade, undermine food security and fuel inflation.

He said lasting peace must be based on respect for international law and international humanitarian law, accountability and the consistent application of international standards.

Gaza, he said, remains a stark example of the international community's failure to uphold international law, with more than two million Palestinians enduring a prolonged blockade.

Safadi said Palestinians in Gaza are starving and dying not because of a lack of food, medicine or funding for shelter, but because the Israeli government is preventing humanitarian aid from entering the enclave.

On the occupied West Bank, he pointed to settlement expansion at its highest level in more than three decades, continued land confiscations, economic restrictions and unprecedented settler violence.

On Lebanon, Safadi said the country had reached a US-sponsored tripartite framework aimed at ensuring security and state sovereignty, but its implementation remained obstructed by Israel's continued occupation and attacks.

Turning to Syria, he said UfM members welcomed the country's return to the forum in 2025 and supported its efforts to achieve stability. He accused Israel of undermining Syria's stability through territorial occupation and interference.

Safadi warned that the current Israeli government was perpetuating conflict to pursue expansionist ambitions, undermining prospects for regional integration in transport, electricity, gas, water, the environment and education.

He also called for a diplomatic solution to the crisis between the United States and Iran, one that ensures good neighbourly relations, non-interference and freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and Bab Al Mandab in accordance with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Safadi reiterated Jordan's condemnation of Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia and expressed the Kingdom's full solidarity with Riyadh. He stressed the need for Yemen's legitimate government to reach a settlement through dialogue that safeguards the rights and aspirations of the Yemeni people.

On the sidelines of the forum, Safadi held separate meetings with Albares, Bulgarian Deputy Foreign Minister Hristo Dikanski and Kallas. The talks focused on regional developments and the strategic partnership between Jordan and the European Union.



Foreign Ministry photo

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi and European Commission Vice President and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas on Thursday co-chairs the 11th Regional Forum of Foreign Ministers of the Union for the Mediterranean in Barcelona



JT file

The Foreign Ministry on Thursday condemns an Iranian drone attack on a vital site in Kuwait

Jordan condemns Iranian drone attack on Kuwait

AMMAN (JT) — The Foreign Ministry on Thursday condemned an Iranian drone attack on a vital site in Kuwait, which killed two Italian nationals and injured several others after falling shrapnel struck the area.

In a statement, the ministry described the attack as a "flagrant violation of Kuwait's sovereignty, a threat to its security and stability, and a blatant breach of international law and the UN Charter".

The ministry reaffirmed Jordan's full solidarity with Kuwait and its support for all measures taken to safeguard its security, sovereignty and stability, as well as the safety of its citizens and residents.



JAF photo

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Majdi Harasis on Thursday receives Head of the NATO Liaison Office in Jordan Nora Elise Beck

Army chief, NATO, ICRC officials discuss cooperation with

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Majdi Harasis on Thursday received Head of the NATO Liaison Office in Jordan Nora Elise Beck to discuss ways to strengthen military cooperation and expand the partnership between the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) and NATO.

The meeting addressed prospects for joint coordination, enhancing the exchange of military expertise and knowledge, and expanding cooperation in training and qualification to strengthen military capabilities and serve mutual interests, according to a JAF statement.

The two sides also discussed key regional and international developments, efforts to promote security and stability, and issues of mutual concern.

The meeting was attended by senior JAF officers.

Also on Thursday, Harasis received Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Mission in Jordan Yann Fridez, along with the accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, attended by several senior JAF officers, the two sides discussed ways to enhance cooperation and coordination between the JAF and the ICRC, particularly in humanitarian aid delivery, relief programmes and the exchange of expertise in international humanitarian law, according to another JAF statement.

Harasis underscored the vital role of the ICRC in providing support and assistance to those affected by conflicts and disasters, commending ongoing bilateral cooperation across various humanitarian fields.

For his part, Fridez expressed appreciation for the JAF's efforts in supporting relief activities, stressing the importance of sustained joint coordination to achieve noble humanitarian goals.

Ministry targets investment growth through legislative reforms, incentives — minister

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Investment is working to improve Jordan's business environment, reduce bureaucratic hurdles and introduce targeted incentives to attract investors and expand economic opportunities, minister Tareq Abu Ghazaleh said on Thursday.

Speaking during a Lower House Financial Committee meeting to discuss the ministry's allocation under the 2027 General Budget Law, Abu Ghazaleh said that investment is a key driver of the Economic Modernisation Vision, contributing to gross domestic product growth, job creation and improved living standards, Al Mamlaka TV reported.

He stressed the importance of stimulating domestic investment before attracting foreign direct investment, noting that capital inflows are essential to supporting economic expansion amid fiscal constraints.

The minister said the ministry had reviewed legislation and incentives to support local and foreign investors, while seeking to leverage the Kingdom's competitive advantages, particularly its political and security stability under the Hashemite leadership.



Petra photo

Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh says that the ministry is working to improve Jordan's business environment, reduce bureaucratic hurdles and introduce targeted incentives to attract investors and expand economic opportunities

Regarding the investment conference, Abu Ghazaleh said its postponement in April due to regional aviation disruptions provided an opportunity to organise promotional roadshows in 10 countries and develop the event in cooperation with the European Union.

The conference attracted around 1,400 participants, mainly from the European private sector and Jordanian business community, and featured around 70 bilateral meetings. He said a follow-up mechanism had been submitted to the Prime Ministry to ensure ministries translate the outcomes into practical agreements and projects.

On the ministry's financial performance, Abu Ghazaleh said it had complied with government directives to rationalise spending, setting an internal target of reducing expenditure by 15 per cent during the current year without affecting its executive plan.

He also highlighted legislative reforms aimed at improving the investment climate, particularly the Amended Investment Environment Bylaw, which seeks to help businesses expand, benefit from incentives and reduce operating costs. The bylaw provides for a review two years after its implementation.

The minister also pointed to the Draft Investment Funds Law, prepared in cooperation with the private sector and venture capital funds and referred to the Prime Ministry, where it is undergoing constitutional and legislative procedures before referral to the Lower House. The proposed law aims to regulate the sector and mobilise capital for local ventures.

Regarding the Investment Window, Abu Ghazaleh said the ministry had introduced greater flexibility for commissioners, monthly performance evaluations and expanded powers to accelerate services and reduce bureaucracy.

He added that a risk-based compliance licensing system in development zones allows businesses to begin operations after submitting an undertaking to meet regulatory requirements within a specified timeframe.

Abu Ghazaleh said investment incentives had also been tailored to encourage job creation and direct capital towards governorates outside Amman, including through reduced operating costs and targeted investment packages.

He noted that targeted incentives had been approved for industrial sectors, particularly automotive manufacturing, with projects already operating in Zarqa Governorate and discussions under way to develop Aqaba as a smart port.

The minister stressed that further improvements to the business environment and opening additional sectors to foreign investment are essential to strengthening investor confidence and supporting the Kingdom's economic development.

INITIATIVE

Mountaliq launches region's first practical summit for digital economy skills

AMMAN (JT) — The Mountaliq Summit, a regional initiative focused on building digital economy skills and creating employment opportunities through artificial intelligence (AI), launched in Amman, bringing together more than 150 young participants from across the Kingdom for hands-on training.

Held in the presence of the Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smeirat, the three-day summit focuses on equipping young people with practical skills in AI-assisted development, digital marketing, content creation and e-commerce, according to a statement by the organisers.



Provided photo

The three-day summit focuses on equipping young people with practical skills in AI-assisted development, digital marketing, content creation and e-commerce

Organised by Mixed Sources in partnership with the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, the summit is sponsored by Jordan Bromine Company, with Replit serving as its official technology partner.

Participants from all governorates received hands-on training in AI-powered coding tools, known as "vibe coding", using Replit, as well as content marketing, AI video production, e-commerce and online sales.

Co-Founder and CEO of Mixed Sources Oula Farawati said the initiative aims to encourage young people to view AI as a tool for creating employment opportunities rather than a threat to existing jobs.

She said the practical training enables participants to develop their skills, improve productivity, access international clients and explore opportunities in global markets without having to leave their communities.

The summit will conclude on Sunday at the Hilton Amman with sessions focusing on how AI can support job creation, entrepreneurship and access to regional and international markets.

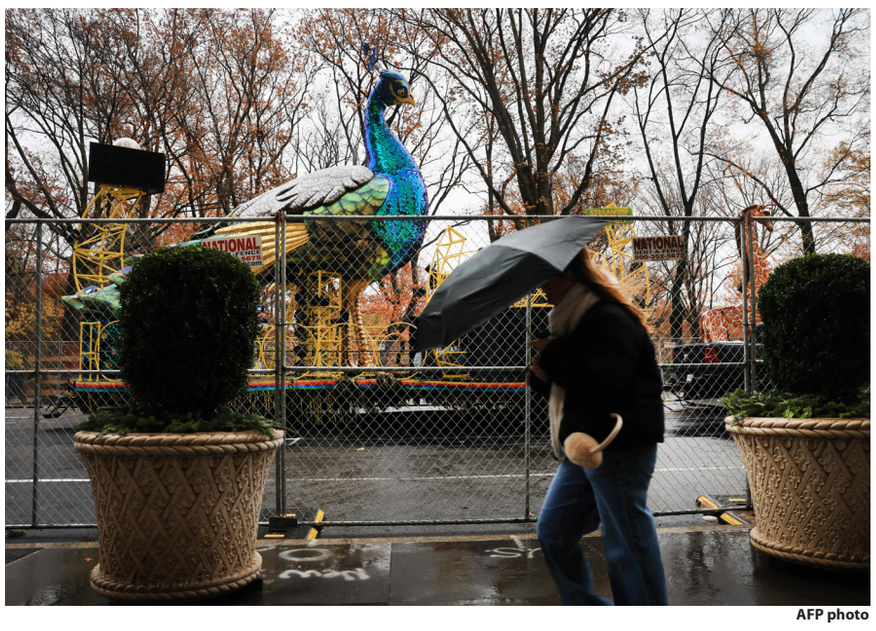
The closing programme will also showcase practical examples of how AI-powered solutions have improved efficiency in workplaces, businesses and communities.

According to the organisers, the summit is part of a broader initiative to establish a sustainable digital skills ecosystem, with practical training programmes planned across all governorates throughout the remainder of this year and into next year.

The initiative also includes mountaliq.com, a digital platform designed to connect young people with employment and freelance opportunities by allowing them to showcase their skills and access potential clients.

Mountaliq operates across three main tracks, namely, Sell, focusing on e-commerce and affiliate marketing; Create, covering content creation, digital marketing and freelancing; and Build, focusing on AI-assisted development and coding.

The organisers said the programmes are offered free of charge and are certified by CPD UK.



AFP photo

Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade floats sit in the wind and rain along Central Park West after the parade was postponed until Saturday on Thursday in New York City

New York postpones Thanksgiving parade as storm hits US East Coast

NEW YORK (AFP) — New York postponed the iconic Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade to Saturday due to a major storm, a first in the event's 100-year history, as extreme weather lashing the US East Coast caused power outages and travel delays.

The "Nor'easter" storm, which brought torrential rain and strong winds on Thursday, disrupted one of the country's busiest travel seasons for millions of people hitting the road and flying around during the holiday.

Power outages were affecting more than 400,000 people — across a number of states including Virginia, North Carolina and New Jersey, according to poweroutage.us, a platform that tracks outage data.

Thousands of flights have been delayed, with hundreds of others cancelled, according to data from the site FlightAware.

"With severe weather expected on Thanksgiving Day, and out of an abundance of caution, in partnership with the City the 100th Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade will be postponed," Macy's told AFP in a statement.

The date change has prompted questions about the thousands of parade participants, including musicians and technical staff, who had made arrangements for a Thursday parade.

"Our team is now working through the complex operational logistics required to bring the Parade to life on Saturday," the company said.

The annual parade sees brightly coloured balloons travel some 4 kilometres through the heart of Manhattan to Macy's Herald Square flagship store on 34th Street.

Millions of people typically gather to catch a glimpse of the festivities.

It is the first time in the event's history that it has been postponed. It was cancelled for three years, 1942, 1943 and 1944, during World War II.

'Heartbroken'

"This will be a heavy storm. We are expecting sustained winds between 30 and 40 miles per hour" on Thursday, Mayor Zohran Mamdani told a safety briefing.

"Winds will be strong enough to down tree limbs and power lines."

The worst of the storm will strike later on Thursday when strong winds, heavy rain and the evening high tide will coincide, the city warned in a travel advisory.

Governor Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey declared a state of emergency on Wednesday, anticipating that the storm will bring "damaging winds, heavy rain, coastal flooding, and potentially prolonged power outages".

The parade organisers would have been only too aware of the gusting winds that wrecked the parade back in 1997.

Volunteers struggled but failed to keep a tight rein on ropes that constantly threatened to slam into onlookers.

The careening 18-foot figure of the "Cat in the Hat" — from the popular Dr Seuss children's book — toppled a lamppost, knocking one bystander unconscious.

Another balloon, the purple dinosaur known to children as "Barney", went out of control, prompting police armed with scissors to puncture and deflate the balloon.

Yet another casualty was the "Pink Panther" balloon, which blew up over 42nd Street, sending shreds of pink rubber confetti raining on bystanders.

"While we are heartbroken that our parade was postponed, the safety of our partners, the safety of our participants — and spectators — is and always will be our top priority," said Macy's parade Executive Producer Will Coss.

Israel's Eisenkot and left-wing party agree coalition deal

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The centrist party of Gadi Eisenkot, who is trying to form the next Israeli government, and an allied left-wing party on Thursday announced they had agreed on a coalition deal.

The left-leaning Democrats are the second party to agree a coalition deal with Eisenkot's Yashar after the right-wing Israel Beiteinu Party did so on Tuesday, marking a further step towards forming a government.

Eisenkot has until December 6 — a deadline which can be extended by 14 days — to form a government to replace caretaker prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu after the October election failed to deliver a clear majority for either bloc.

"Gadi Eisenkot, chair of Yashar with Eisenkot, and Yair Golan, chair of the Democrats, have agreed to sign a coalition agreement between the two parties," a joint statement said on Thursday.

It comes two days after the Democrats announced they were suspending talks with Yashar, with Israeli media reporting disputes over the allocation of ministerial portfolios.



AFP photo

A Palestinian farmer harvests olives in the village of Deir Istiya, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on Thursday

Eisenkot, Liberman and Golan have a combined total of 36 lawmakers — far short of the 61 needed for a parliamentary majority.

Eisenkot's bloc also includes the Beyachad Party of former prime minister Naftali Bennett which has 12 seats but is yet to sign a formal coalition agreement with Yashar.

Eisenkot's wide-ranging anti-Netanyahu camp has faced divisions on whether to forge alliances with the ultra-Orthodox parties, or the Arab-majority lists, or whether to form a national unity government with Netanyahu's right-wing Likud.

The Democrats have been pushing Eisenkot for a coalition with two Arab-majority lists that achieved an unprecedented seat haul in the vote, in a bid to unseat Netanyahu.

The party viewed the four rounds of talks between Yashar and Likud unfavourably in recent days over the possibility of a unity government. No breakthroughs on that front have ostensibly been reached.

Liberman on Thursday warned that Netanyahu was trying to derail the government's formation.

"He will drag out negotiations over a 'unity' government until the last moment, look for a pretext to blow them up, and even if such a government is formed, he will try to engineer a crisis within a few months to drag Israel back to elections," added Liberman, a hawkish former aide to Netanyahu who has become a strident critic.

Liberman has refused to serve in a government that relies on Arab-majority parties and has instead advocated an alliance with the two ultra-Orthodox parties, despite his years of criticism of the community and the fact that the issue of ultra-Orthodox military conscription remains a thorny one.

French village tackles depopulation with near-free plots of land

PARLAN, France (AFP) — France's rural communities are emptying out, but in the village of Parlan, hundreds of new residents have put down roots, drawn by the promise of virtually free land.

In 2008, the village in southern France was suffering from the same rural depopulation seen in other parts of the country.

Newly elected mayor at the time, Michel Teyssedou, decided to act.

"We decided to create a very strong and unprecedented incentive by offering plots of land free of charge," said Teyssedou, now 72.

The local authority began buying land and transferring it for a legally required token fee to first-time homeowners. In return, the new owners commit to building a home and remaining in the village for at least 10 years.

The offer attracted around 30 families over more than 15 years and the community's population has doubled to more than 500 residents as of January this year, with thriving local businesses.

Aline Visy, 73, is among the newcomers who acquired a building plot for the symbolic sum of 5 euros ($5.50) per 1,000 square metres.

She built a single-storey house with a large window overlooking the village.

"Financially, it's very attractive: The money you don't spend on the land can go into the house," the retired nurse told AFP, adding that she was also drawn by the range of local shops, unmatched in neighbouring villages.

Nearby, another house under construction is waiting for its future occupants.

Rural areas face "major challenges in attracting residents" because of a lack of housing suited to the needs of people looking to settle there, Teyssedou said, describing housing as a "strategic" issue.

But, he added, "it's not enough simply to offer building plots. You also have to create a network of services, particularly local shops".

The village authorities also invested in an empty house and converted it into commercial premises with two flats.

It also bought a former barn, later sold to an osteopath who now practises in the village.

Laurent Laborie, a butcher and grocer, also received support from the local authority to expand his shop in the village centre.

"We're providing services that didn't exist before, with fruit and vegetables, cheese, everyday groceries and emergency essentials," the 56-year-old said, noting that some customers now do most of their shopping there.

The additional services are particularly valuable as rising fuel prices can make travelling to the city of Aurillac for groceries "very expensive", the mayor said.

The municipality also provided premises for a young couple from Rambouillet, near Paris, to open a restaurant.

"I could feel the village was dynamic. We have so many shops here, it makes you want to live here," said Julien Fleury, 39, who opened "Le Fumoir du Cantal", serving dishes based on smoked meat and fish.

In 2012, Audrey Carriere, 37, also took advantage of the land scheme to build a house in the village, where she opened a hair salon. Demand grew so quickly that she later expanded the business and hired a second hairdresser.

In terms of the cost of the project, the mayor said added tax revenues mean the municipality is "coming out ahead".

"The right question isn't how much it costs, but how much it brings in," he said.

"For me, there are no territories without a future, only territories without a project."

Aid cuts push starving Nigerians into extremist embrace

By Aminu Abubakar
Agence France-Presse



AFP photo

A porter carries a sack of millet at Dawanau grain market, the largest grain market in west Africa, on the outskirts of the northern Nigerian city of Kano, on March 21, 2014

KANO, Nigeria — Every month, Nigerian fisherman Musa travels with dozens of others from a town on the shores of Lake Chad deep into territory controlled by Boko Haram militants to access islands where fish are plentiful.

For more than a decade, the 46-year-old from Doron Baga relied on food handouts from international charities to feed his two wives and nine children after being forced to flee extremist violence.

But his life changed last year after the United States slashed foreign aid, drastically cutting funding to international charities that provide humanitarian relief to hundreds of thousands of people displaced by Nigeria's 17-year extremist conflict.

In interviews with farmers, NGOs and intelligence sources, AFP has learned how fishermen like Musa feel they now have no choice but to seek out work with the extremists to feed their families. Hunger forced many of them indirectly into extremist ranks.

Their accounts illustrate the complexity of resolving Nigeria's entrenched insurgency even as the US government extends military aid to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who is seeking reelection in January with insecurity one of his top challenges.

After paying levies, Musa and other fishermen are ferried by Boko Haram fighters on large, motorised boats from the shores of the lake near Baga to the islands of Shuwa and Dan-Katsina, which are known for their huge fish reservoirs.

"Once we are in their territory, we are part of them and do as they say because we have no option," Musa, who used only his first name for safety reasons, told AFP by phone.

Like thousands of others, he once lived in a makeshift camp in Maiduguri, the capital of north-eastern Borno state — the epicentre of extremist violence that has wreaked havoc in Africa's most populous nation for nearly two decades.

Even before the aid cuts, the state government started closing camps, pushing displaced families to areas that aid agencies warned were still not fully liberated from extremists.

While the conflict has ebbed sharply since its peak as extremists were forced back, the fighting is fluid and farmers say they are still targeted by militants.

Arzika, another fisherman from Baga, said he preferred the "huge risks" of making a living by fishing in the extremist-controlled territory than watching his family go hungry.

'Less funding available'

Fishermen run errands for extremists, delivering supplies during the trips and updating them on the situation in areas outside their control.

That puts fishermen at risk of being caught between the extremists and the military. Both sides accuse some communities of working with their enemies.

Aid cuts and the rising insecurity have driven hunger in parts of the northeast to levels unseen in nearly a decade, according to the World Food Programme (WFP), the largest international food aid distributor.

Since the cuts came into effect, the number of people facing acute food shortages has swelled to more than three million from 1.6 million, in Borno alone, said WFP.

Over 17 million people across nine conflict-affected states in northern Nigeria "are experiencing crisis, emergency or catastrophic levels of hunger", an almost two million increase since last year, it added.

"There is simply far less funding available," Arjun Jain, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees representative in Nigeria, told AFP.

"Humanitarian agencies are receiving much less than is needed, and some have been forced to shut down altogether," he said.

The significant reduction in funding has seen a corresponding deterioration in the security situation, he added.

Being displaced to places that are unable to support them adequately, including parts of neighbouring Niger, Nigerian refugees face impossible choices.

"They can return home and live in extreme poverty, watching their circumstances deteriorate further" or "may feel compelled to associate with gangs or armed groups simply to survive", Jain said.

In July, WFP said "communities have reported cases of individuals joining armed groups in search of food or income," attributing the "desperate coping strategy" to suspension of food aid to the displaced due to "extreme funding shortfalls".

Borno fisherman unionist Sani Abdullahi said the food aid cuts left the extremist-controlled lake as the only survival option for many colleagues.

"Many have no other choice," Abdullahi said.

Abdulaziz Mala, executive director of Swift Relief, a Maiduguri-based charity, said some young men have turned to drugs, theft and kidnapping, while others have joined extremists ranks as suppliers.

"This has led to some of them being easy recruits and willing tools" of the militants, Mala said.

Despite the cuts, a US State Department spokesperson told AFP the "United States remains the most generous nation in the world for life-saving humanitarian assistance" — channelling over $4.8 billion through the UN agencies such as OCHA, UNICEF and WFP since December last year.

"Nigeria benefits significantly from this funding," said the spokesman, but added that more needs to be done, particularly in supporting IDPs.

AFP contacted Nigeria's humanitarian affairs ministry and the military for comment but received no response.

Lake Chad, the freshwater lake which straddles Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad, is largely under Boko Haram control, where it has turned several of its islands into a sanctuary.

The lush vegetation and fertile soil attract fishermen, farmers, herders and loggers who pay "tax" to fish, cultivate crops, graze and collect firewood.

This has given Boko Haram a financial and recruitment edge over its ival, the Daesh group in West Africa, which has been facing a cash crunch.

The two rival groups often clash over territory and resources.

Daesh — which also relies on levying cattle herders, fishermen and farmers — controls limited fringes of Lake Chad, after Boko Haram pushed them out and took over most of the area.

Boko Haram has diversified ways of generating money, including taxes on fishermen, herders, farmers, loggers and from animal hides, the gum Arabic trade as well as ransom from kidnapping, the source said.

Kidnapping for ransom is a lucrative business in Nigeria.

According to Lagos-based SBM Intelligence, criminal groups raised nearly $6 million in ransom payments between July 2025 and June 2026, 90 per cent of it to Boko Haram, following two mass kidnappings: 260 pupils from St Mary's Catholic School in Niger state and more than 400 people in Ngoshe, Borno state.

The government denied paying the ransoms.

"Boko Haram has the money to throw around and people too weak to brave the hardship are drawn to them," said Babakura Kolo, an anti-extremist militia assisting the Nigerian military.

Boko Haram's solid revenues from illicit taxes in the Lake Chad area it controls have given it the financial muscle to recruit more desperate young men.

In February, Boko Haram launched a recruitment drive of 1,500 fighters in the forest straddling Yobe and Borno near the border with Niger, according to the intelligence source.

In under a week, over "5,000 candidates showed up, some of them from as far as Chad", said the source.

His account was supported by fisherman Sani and militiaman Kolo. "All of them are young men in their prime," Kolo said.

Fishermen operating there "risk being mistaken for the insurgents" by the military, Mala said.

In one incident in May, dozens of Nigerian fishermen were killed when Chadian jets pummeled Shuwa island, according to anti-extremist militia and fishermen's union.

The bombardments were in response to the group's attacks which killed around 30 Chadian soldiers, including two generals.

"If people were getting aid, why would they take this risk and put their lives on the line?" fisherman Abdullahi asked.

Jordan climbs to 40th in 2026 IMD world digital, AI ranking

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan climbed three places to rank 40th out of 70 economies in the 2026 World Digital and AI Ranking, published by the International Institute for Management Development (IMD), scoring 76.77 out of 100, the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship said on Thursday.

The Kingdom has improved its overall ranking by 16 places since 2022, maintaining its sixth-place position among Arab countries. It also ranked ahead of several major economies, including India, Greece, Brazil and Turkey, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Jordan ranked first globally in several indicators, including telecommunications investment as a share of GDP and the number of days required to start a business. It ranked second globally in AI skills and third in indicators related to regulatory frameworks, investment incentives and corporate adoption of AI technologies.

The Kingdom recorded its greatest improvement in the efficiency pillar, advancing 16 places to rank 27th globally. This was driven by a significant improvement in AI adoption, which rose from 66th to 22nd place, alongside an 18-place gain in AI readiness, also reaching 22nd.



JT file

Aerial photo of Amman

Jordan also made progress across other key pillars, advancing six places in workforce development to 36th, six places in business agility to 23rd, three places in technology and infrastructure to 31st, and two places in societal values to 44th.

The ministry attributed the improvement to the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy and Implementation Roadmap (2023–2027) and the Economic Modernisation Vision, which prioritise strengthening digital infrastructure, developing technological talent and providing investment incentives to position Jordan as a regional hub for innovation.

Published annually by the IMD, the ranking assesses economies' digital competitiveness and their ability to adopt and leverage AI for economic growth. It evaluates performance across 88 criteria grouped into five pillars: Governance, technology and infrastructure, efficiency, workforce development and values.

Le Pen slams push for EU budget deal before French election

BRUSSELS (AFP) — EU leaders locked horns over the bloc's budget at a summit meeting in Brussels on Thursday, as far-right leader Marine Le Pen slammed an "underhanded" push to lock in the long-term spending plans before French presidential elections next year.

European Council head Antonio Costa turned up the pressure upon arrival at the budget talks, where heavyweight Germany is pressing for cuts as well as burden-sharing on money for Ukraine.

"Now it is time for all of the leaders to participate in this debate with an open mind, a constructive approach, and a sense of compromise," Costa said, calling for a deal "by the end of this year".

Leaders have spent nearly all of 2026 butting heads over the size of the 2028-2034 budget after the European Commission proposed a 2-trillion-euro spending plan, which most capitals disapproved.

The EU wants an agreement by December to avoid tense negotiations spilling into a year of elections across Europe — most crucially in France.

Currently the frontrunner to succeed President Emmanuel Macron next spring, the eurosceptic Le Pen has vowed if elected to slash France's budget contribution, shelve plans for further EU enlargement and pull the plug on funding for Ukraine.

Macron himself raised the stakes on the summit eve by threatening to walk away if there is no deal before 2027 — prompting Le Pen to hit back on Thursday.



AFP photo

Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella presenting their 'counterbudget' plan to tackle France's debt load

"Our country is on the brink of default and social upheaval. Our leaders should be focusing on setting things right, rather than resorting to underhanded political manoeuvring to thwart the democratic will of the French people," she wrote on social media.

A senior European diplomat acknowledged that the French election was the "primary concern" hanging over the talks.

"The prospect of a potential Le Pen victory — and its consequences — is always in the back of everyone's mind," the diplomat said.

But several leaders pushed back at that narrative, with Austrian Chancellor Christian Stocker telling reporters he was "certainly not afraid of an election in France".

"Fear is never a good approach, neither in long-term budget negotiations nor in politics in general," he said.

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni of Italy had a similar message.

"We know there is a collective push to reach a solution by the end of December, but I will not let the timeline dictate the outcome of this file — I have no hard deadline," she told reporters in Brussels.

Ukraine link

An already-fraught dealmaking process was made even more difficult after German Chancellor Friedrich Merz linked any resolution to an agreement on Ukraine funding by all 27 EU countries.

Member states are being asked to back an extra 45-billion-euro ($49 billion) loan to help keep Ukraine funded through 2027, but Prague, Budapest and Bratislava want an opt-out.

Merz said on arrival he considered this a non-starter, warning that "the European Union consists of 27, not 23 or 24".

The German leader has come under fierce criticism after making any budget agreement conditional upon all EU nations chipping in to finance Ukraine.

'The prospect of a potential Le Pen victory — and its consequences — is always in the back of everyone's mind'

The three reluctant countries, which opted out of a similar giant loan last year, are normally net recipients of European money.

Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico, who maintains close ties with the Kremlin, has accused Germany of "blackmail" while Czech leader Andrej Babis vowed to "fight" for EU funds, saying Ukraine financing should be dealt with "separately".

The latest budget proposal by Costa sought to bridge divisions by slashing the budget by 204 billion euros and proposing a tax on digital companies.

But there was little expectation of a deal this week, with a final summit already planned in December to get the budget over the line.

"There is still a great deal that needs to happen" before a deal, said Prime Minister Rob Jetten of The Netherlands, part of a group of so-called "frugal" EU countries clamouring for a smaller budget.

The race to replace European Central Bank chief Christine Lagarde is also on the summit menu, a key appointment that hinges on a broader French-German deal.

Two Italians killed in Iranian drone strike in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — An Iranian drone attack in Kuwait killed two Italian technicians working on an air defence system on Thursday, marking the first fatal strike in the Gulf state for months.

The deaths, confirmed by both Italy and Kuwait, came as Iran has ratcheted up attacks on Kuwait and Bahrain in the last week while it continues to fight the United States for control of the contested Strait of Hormuz.

"Around 2:00 PM today, several Iranian-made drones targeted Kuwaiti military installations, including an air-defence detection station where two Italian technicians from Rheinmetall were working," Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani told the Senate.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni took to social media to offer her condolences.

"My thoughts are with all those affected by the attack and their families," she wrote on X.

Iran's military however quickly denied that it was behind the deadly attack on Kuwait.

Armed forces spokesperson Abolfazl Shekarchi refuted the claims that Iran was involved and blamed false flag operations by Israel and the United States for the attack, without providing evidence.

"No military or offensive operations have been conducted by the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region," he said, state TV reported.

But EU chief Ursula von der Leyen called for more pressure on Tehran after the deaths.

"We must step up pressure on Iran to put an end to these unacceptable attacks against its neighbours and our partners in the Gulf," she wrote on social media.

Earlier, the Kuwait defence ministry said at least four people were injured in the incident, saying several drones had targeted an unspecified, vital location in the country.

The ministry also confirmed the deaths of the two Italians.

Jordan expresses condolences to Egypt over Cairo fire victims

Continued from page 1

The health ministry said it had raised its emergency alert level and Health Minister Khaled Abdel Ghaffar had traveled to the scene and nearby hospitals.

The health minister's spokesman told state-linked Al Qahera News that "the Ring Road has been reopened, and the remnants of the accident have been cleared".

Footage carried by Al Qahera News showed the charred truck's wreckage being removed, while traffic partially resumed around it.

A spokesperson for the Egyptian Cabinet told local media that Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly had ordered an investigation into the causes of the accident.

He said the government was awaiting a full clarification before determining "future measures regarding the transport of petroleum products and ensuring safety and security during such transport operations".

Body of missing Jordanian sailor found off UAE coast — ministry

Continued from page 1

He added that the ministry, through its Operations Directorate and the Jordanian Embassy in Abu Dhabi, was coordinating with the sailor's family and Emirati authorities to complete arrangements for repatriating his body to Jordan for burial.

The spokesperson praised in a statement the efforts of authorities in the UAE and Oman, which he said, had been conducting search operations since Otaibi was reported missing, as well as their cooperation with Jordanian diplomatic missions in both countries.

Majali also extended his condolences to the sailor's family.

The ministry said previously that Otaibi went missing after an oil tanker operated by UAE-owned ADNOC Logistics and Services came under attack in the Strait of Hormuz last week.

Jordan, EU lead UfM call for regional stability, stronger Mediterranean cooperation

Continued from page 1

On the Palestinian issue, the ministers reiterated their commitment to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the two-state solution, under which Israel and Palestine would coexist as democratic states within secure and internationally recognised borders, in accordance with relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

They voiced concern over the lack of progress in implementing the ceasefire and other provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 2803, while calling for support for the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution.

The ministers also expressed grave concern over the deteriorating situation in the occupied West Bank, rejecting unilateral measures, annexation, settler violence, settlement expansion and any forced displacement or expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza or the West Bank.

They called for an immediate halt to measures undermining the two-state solution and stressed the need to preserve the legal and historical status quo of Jerusalem's holy sites, including the Hashemite custodianship.

The statement also underscored the indispensable role of the United Nations and its agencies, particularly the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), in providing essential assistance to civilians in Gaza and across the region.

The ministers called for the unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza and the West Bank, stressing that humanitarian organisations must be allowed to operate independently and impartially. They also emphasised that civilians must be protected at all times and that all parties must comply with international humanitarian law.

On Lebanon, the ministers welcomed the framework agreement signed by Lebanon and Israel in June 2026, urging all parties to honour its provisions and engage constructively in further negotiations aimed at achieving a permanent end to hostilities.

They also called for the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, describing it as the basis for any lasting solution.

Regarding Syria, the ministers reaffirmed their support for the country and its government's efforts to rebuild the state while safeguarding its security, stability, unity and sovereignty.

They stressed the importance of continuing support for Syrian refugees and host countries until conditions allow for voluntary, safe and sustainable refugee returns.

On Ukraine, the ministers called for realising a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in accordance with the UN Charter. They reaffirmed their support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, including its territorial waters.

They also welcomed ongoing US-led efforts to facilitate peace through direct negotiations and stressed the importance of achieving a full, comprehensive and reciprocal ceasefire.

Gulf security and freedom of navigation

The statement also expressed support for GCC countries, warning that continued instability in the Gulf could disrupt global supply chains, particularly those involving energy, fertilisers and food.

Such disruptions, the ministers cautioned, could have serious consequences for economies and vulnerable populations across the Mediterranean region and beyond.

They stressed the importance of safeguarding freedom of navigation and maritime security in accordance with international law, specifically highlighting the right of passage through the Strait of Hormuz.

In this context, the EU-Jordanian co-presidency referred to the No Fees/No Tolls Pledge and invited all UfM member countries to join the initiative.

The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the UfM as a platform for practical cooperation, with renewed efforts to address regional crises, deepen economic partnerships and advance a shared vision of peace and prosperity throughout the Mediterranean.

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From leadership to excellence: CBJ wins cybersecurity gold

Dr Hamza Alakalik

A cybersecurity award is more than recognition for protecting computer systems. It shows that trust has become an economic asset, as important as capital and liquidity. When the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) wins the Gold Level in the 2026 Cybersecurity Excellence Award, ranking first among public sector institutions, the achievement reflects more than technical performance. It raises a larger question: how can Jordan protect a financial system that safeguards savings and supports businesses, while creating room for innovation and growth?

The award covered the 2023–2025 cycle and was launched by the National Cyber Security Centre with the King Abdullah II Centre for Excellence. The result recognises sustained work in security controls, governance, risk management and cyber resilience. They determine whether an institution can protect services and recover from disruption.

The responsibility is significant. Licensed banks' assets reached around JD 74.1 billion at the end of 2025, while deposits stood at approximately JD 51 billion. A major disruption would not remain a technical problem inside one institution; it could affect businesses, workers and confidence across the economy. Cybersecurity is therefore a main part of financial stability.

Such achievement rarely results from technology alone. It requires leadership that recognises risks early, sets priorities and turns strategy into institutional practice. Under Governor Dr Adel Al Sharkas, the Central Bank has treated cyber resilience as a shared responsibility, extending beyond its own systems to the financial institutions it supervises. The governor's contribution lies in setting direction, supporting expertise and making accountability part of institutional culture.

There is practical evidence of this approach. In 2019, the Central Bank initiated a cyber incident response team in coordination with banks. In early 2020, it established the Financial Sector Cyber Incident Response Team, JO-FinCERT. In August 2022, signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Cyber Security Centre to formalise cooperation. These steps created channels for sharing threat information, coordinating responses and strengthening preparedness. They turn cooperation into capability.

The next challenge is to keep pace with financial innovation. Instant payments, digital wallets, open banking and cloud services make finance more accessible and create opportunities for new businesses. They also increase system connections, data flows and exposure to fraud and identity theft. A secure environment is not an obstacle to innovation; it is one of its foundations. Investors need predictable rules, businesses need reliable infrastructure and customers need confidence that their money and information are protected.

Data governance must define what institutions collect, why they use it, who can access it and when it should be deleted. Privacy should be built into services from the start. Artificial intelligence can identify suspicious transactions and improve risk assessment, but it requires testing for accuracy and bias, protecting data and retaining human review when decisions affect customers. Innovation must remain explainable, fair and accountable.

The Central Bank's agenda must look beyond awards. Progress should be measured through faster detection and containment, reliable service recovery, independent testing, skilled professionals and stronger oversight of third-party providers. Smaller institutions should raise standards through shared expertise.

The Gold Award is an important milestone, but its greatest value lies in what follows. A strong central bank is measured not only by the systems it protects, but by its ability to keep finance working under pressure, safeguard personal data and enable responsible innovation. When citizens trust their payments and savings, and investors see a secure environment for business growth, cybersecurity becomes more than defence. It becomes a foundation for confidence, economic opportunity and Jordan's national digital future.

Legal certainty as Jordan's economic asset

By Mamoun Ahmad Al Omari

"The law recognises neither name, nor position, nor influence." With these words, delivered on November 2 in the Speech from the Throne opening the third ordinary session of the Twentieth Parliament, His Majesty King Abdullah set a firm standard for public office: No immunity for anyone who abuses their position, and the authority of the state and the rule of law above all else. The sentence was addressed to those who hold public power, yet its implications reach well beyond accountability. It also offers an important economic message: In a region marked by uncertainty, and a world competing fiercely for capital, what gives investors the confidence to commit to a country for the long term?

The answer begins with institutions. A country's economic strength rests not only on its natural resources, infrastructure and capital, but also on the reliability of its legal system. Clear legislation, consistent administrative decisions and effective protection of rights allow businesses to plan with confidence. Legal uncertainty, by contrast, increases transaction costs, raises risk premiums and discourages long-term investment.

Here, two closely related ideas should be distinguished. The rule of law answers the question of who is bound by the law: Everyone, including those who hold power, is subject to the same rules and accountable before independent courts. Legal certainty answers a different question: Whether the law itself can be known and relied upon. It means that individuals and businesses can know the rules in advance, trust that they will not change suddenly or retroactively, and predict how authorities and courts will apply them. It rests on clear and accessible legislation, respect for legitimate expectations, and the consistent enforcement of contracts and judgements. The two can diverge: A state may apply its laws equally to all, yet amend them so frequently that no investor can plan with confidence. The rule of law makes the law fair; legal certainty makes it dependable. Investors need both, but it is certainty that allows them to commit capital for decades.

This becomes particularly important for Jordan's strategic investments. Major projects in water, energy, transport and industry require substantial capital and commitments extending over decades. Investors and lenders assess these projects not only by their expected financial returns, but also by the reliability of the legal and regulatory environment in which they operate. Will contracts be honoured? Will regulatory decisions remain consistent? Will disputes be resolved fairly and efficiently? Legal certainty can reduce risk premiums and improve financing conditions. For such projects, it is not merely a background condition. It is part of the price of capital itself.

Equal application of the law also shapes the quality of competition. Markets reward efficiency and innovation when rules are transparent and apply equally to all participants, regardless of their size or connections. Where administrative decisions are predictable and public officials are held accountable, businesses can compete on productivity rather than proximity to power. His Majesty's emphasis on public responsibility and accountability therefore carries an important economic implication. Integrity in public institutions reduces the hidden costs of doing business, encourages entrepreneurship and strengthens confidence in the fairness of the market.

Jordan already has an institutional foundation on which to build. In Transparency International's 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index, Jordan improved by one point to score 50 out of 100, ranking 56th among 182 countries and territories. This progress is encouraging, while also highlighting room for further institutional improvement. International evidence shows why such progress matters: The World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index 2026, released on 21 October, finds that countries with above-average GDP per capita score 0.68 or higher, a reminder that the distance between good institutions and greater prosperity can be measured.

The challenge now is to translate principle into measurable institutional performance. A legal system is not judged solely by the number of laws it enacts, but by how consistently and efficiently those laws operate in practice. In international commercial transactions and arbitration, investors examine both the legal framework and its practical application. They want to know how long enforcement procedures take, whether arbitral awards can be recognised and enforced effectively, and whether regulatory decisions can be anticipated with reasonable confidence. Licensing procedures, regulatory approvals, contract enforcement and commercial dispute resolution are areas where legal certainty becomes visible. Clear institutional responsibilities, transparent procedures, published decision timelines and efficient judicial and arbitral mechanisms can turn legal certainty into a measurable driver of economic competitiveness.

For Jordan, legal certainty should become a competitive advantage in attracting strategic investment. The Kingdom may not possess the natural resources of larger economies, but it can strengthen its investment appeal through institutions that investors can rely on and contracts that are enforced on time. In a region where geopolitical uncertainty continues to influence investment decisions, a stable and predictable legal environment can help Jordan attract long-term capital, develop strategic industries and strengthen its position in regional and international value chains. This approach also supports the objectives of Jordan's Economic Modernisation Vision by connecting institutional reform with investment, productivity and sustainable economic growth.

Ultimately, the economic value of legal certainty must be measured by its impact on citizens. Its purpose extends beyond protecting investors or improving international rankings. When institutions operate effectively, businesses are better able to invest, projects can move forward with fewer unnecessary delays, and the economy gains greater opportunities to create productive employment and improve public services. These outcomes are central to sustainable development and to the well-being of future generations.

His Majesty's message that the law recognises neither name, nor position, nor influence is therefore more than a statement of legal principle. It is a foundation for stronger institutions, fairer competition and greater economic confidence. By translating that principle into consistent institutional practice, Jordan can make the rule of law a lasting competitive economic asset and a source of prosperity for all Jordanians.

Intrigue ratchets up as UN struggles to pick its new leader

Agence France Presse

UNITED NATIONS, United States — As the world grapples with brutal wars, economic woe, pandemics and AI strife, the organisation created to address humankind's biggest challenges is paralysed by division and faces the prospect of a leaderless next chapter.

There is a real chance for the first time in the United Nations' history that Secretary General Antonio Guterres will finish his term on New Year's Eve with no successor in place, experts warn.

"It is a credible contingency, although a late agreement remains possible and UN officials are preparing contingency plans," said Thibault Camelli, a former diplomat at the UN and now a researcher at New York University's Centre on International Cooperation.

Since July, the UN Security Council, charged with picking Guterres' replacement, has held nine rounds of its opaque selection process known as straw polling.

Rebeca Grynspan, former vice president of Costa Rica and former head of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), has come first in eight of them.

But her elevation is far from assured.

Grynspan, along with all the other candidates, has attracted negative signals from permanent members of the Council which would have the power to veto her appointment.

"Divisions between the Security Council's permanent members, in particular China, Russia, and the US, are responsible for the murky state of the secretary-general race," said Daniel Forti of the International Crisis Group.

'Political heat'

The major world powers are unable to compromise on much of the UN's work to resolve conflicts in Sudan, Gaza and Ukraine, and the appointment of the organisation's hunt for a leader is no different, he added.

The United States under President Donald Trump has pushed "America first" policies that strike at the heart of the UN's multilateral founding ideals.

"We have to reform, and we have to clean house. We have to make this place work better," Washington's ambassador to the UN Mike Waltz said previously, making him far more vocal than his fellow permanent Security Council envoys.

"It can't be so bloated and bureaucratic."

There are fears among some in the UN system that Grynspan "is too much of an insider to make change", according to Esther Brimmer, a former US Assistant Secretary of State in the Obama administration.

Camelli, the researcher, said that it is widely believed Washington is opposed to Grynspan, as is Moscow.

Late entrant to the race Emirati Lana Nusseibeh, widely seen as Washington's likely favourite, has struggled to build momentum. Others could still join the race.

The lack of consensus, combined with "the enormous political and financial pressures facing the organisation make the job of secretary general a far less attractive post than in years past", said Forti.

Pointing to swinging budget cuts and the organisation's sidelining by the US, the head of one UN agency said "morale has been pretty low for a while now".

"People are hoping that the new secretary general is going to be someone that brings renewal and some fresh thinking, but I think that is only to be expected after 10 years," two full terms as leader, they added.

One thing many countries have agreed on is the need for the UN to have its first woman leader in its 81 year history.

The powerful permanent members of the security council "have begun actively discussing the selection process among themselves, a sign they are beginning to feel the political heat," added Forti.

'A handshake with Jensen': Why tech fought to save Nvidia's founder

Agence France Presse

WASHINGTON — From Steve Jobs to Elon Musk, Silicon Valley has long rallied behind outsized founders seen as inseparable from the companies they built, and in Jensen Huang, the tech world found its latest figure to defend at all costs.

The idea is central to the industry's mythology, often distilled as "founder mode", the belief that companies thrive when founders stay hands-on rather than ceding control to executives.

The spy scandal that pushed Huang out of Nvidia was treated by a powerful slice of the industry as a threat to that ethos and something to be fought rather than a verdict to be accepted.

The campaign to bring him back began within hours of his November 12 resignation, led by investors and executives with deep stakes in the AI boom, several of them with close ties to President Donald Trump.

It succeeded on Monday, when Nvidia's board reinstated Huang 11 days after accepting his resignation and six days after its chair told investors the company did "not intend to reinstate Jensen as CEO".

"The mistake has been corrected," posted Musk, one of the loudest voices from the start.

Hours before Huang's departure was announced, Musk responded to a post urging him to hire Huang by saying: "That would be an honour."

The next day he said he was signing a petition for Huang's reinstatement, and he later likened the ouster to kicking Michael Jordan off a basketball team.

Less known to the public is Gavin Baker of Atreides Management, who with Altimeter Capital's Brad Gerstner wrote to Nvidia's board two days after the resignation, urging a "slow, measured, and deliberate" leadership search that kept open "the potential return of Jensen Huang".

Their funds together hold billions of dollars in Nvidia stock.

An open letter, "Stand With Jensen", signed by Musk, Epic Games chief Tim Sweeney, Uber co-founder Travis Kalanick and Y Combinator head Garry Tan, demanded Huang's reinstatement pending an independent investigation.

Its organisers said it drew more than 200,000 names, including thousands of self-identified Nvidia employees.

Echoes of Altman

The episode drew comparisons with the brief ouster of Sam Altman at OpenAI, which also played out just before Thanksgiving, in November 2023.

OpenAI's board fired Altman, saying he had not been consistently candid with directors, then reinstated him five days later after nearly all the company's staff threatened to quit and Microsoft offered to hire him.

Nvidia's board said Monday it was now satisfied with Huang's "candor and ability to lead".

"Huang has become so central to Nvidia's identity and the broader AI trade that his departure fueled uncertainty during an already volatile period for the industry," said Emarketer analyst Jacob Bourne.

"His return may help restore investor confidence, but the upheaval echoes Sam Altman's brief ouster and reinstatement at OpenAI, raising similar questions about corporate governance and the outsized influence of individual leaders over the future of AI," he added.

In an earlier era, Apple's 1985 ouster of Jobs came to be seen, fairly or not, as one of tech's great blunders.

He returned more than a decade later and led the company to heights few had imagined.

Web of deals

But unlike Jobs or Altman, Huang has come to be seen as more than the leader of a single company, he is viewed as propping up a US economy perilously dependent on the AI boom.

The investors defending him were also trying to salvage an AI spending bonanza under pressure on Wall Street.

Under Huang, Nvidia became one of the AI industry's main financiers, taking stakes in the startups and cloud providers that buy its products and guaranteeing their data center deals.

Huang is credited with holding that web together. Many of the deals, Musk wrote on X on November 14, were "a handshake with Jensen, not a written contract".

Huang is now back to hold it all together.

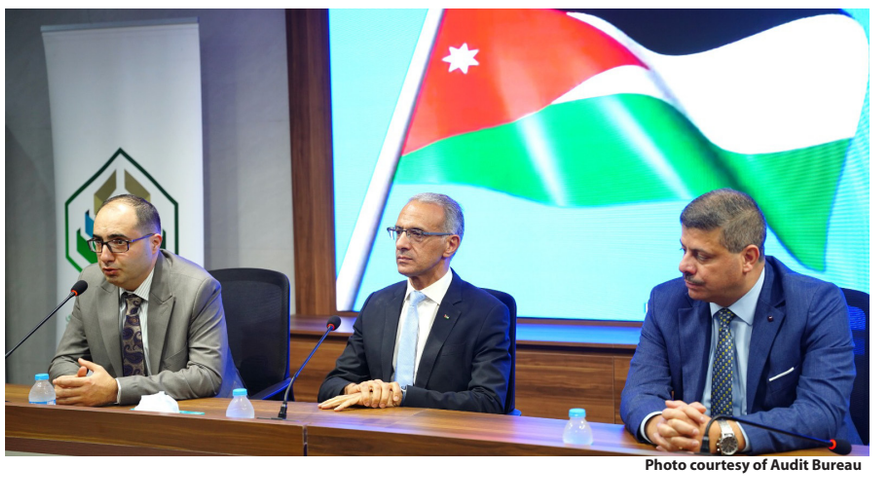


Photo courtesy of Audit Bureau

Audit Bureau President Radhi Al Hamadeen on Thursday inaugurates an introductory and training workshop on the Enterprise Resource Planning system, SAP Business One, for the local administration sector at the Cities and Villages Development Bank

Audit Bureau launches ERP training workshop for local administration sector

AMMAN (JT) — Audit Bureau President Radhi Al Hamadeen on Thursday inaugurated an introductory and training workshop on the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, SAP Business One, for the local administration sector at the Cities and Villages Development Bank (CVDB).

The workshop brought together 43 Audit Bureau staff members from across the Kingdom's governorates, in the presence of Ministry of Local Administration Secretary General Tareq Batayneh and CVDB Director General Waseem Haddad.

Al Hamadeen said the system represents a strategic milestone in modernising local administration and upgrading financial and administrative workflows by integrating procedures within a unified electronic environment that ensures accurate data linkage and comprehensive financial oversight.

He explained that the platform goes beyond automating accounting transactions to reorganise institutional operations, standardise procedures, strengthen internal controls, improve the management of revenue, expenditure and liabilities, reduce duplication and errors, and enhance transparency, accountability and institutional discipline.

The president of Audit Bureau said the system covers general ledger and accounting entries, treasury operations, receipts, payments, transfers, bank reconciliations, procurement and supplier management, inventory and warehouse tracking, fixed asset management and depreciation calculations, customer accounts, project cost tracking and performance analysis.

He added that user permissions and approval levels reinforce the separation of duties and ensure audit traceability.

Al Hamadeen underscored the system's role in supporting the transition from cash-basis to accrual-basis accounting in the local administration sector, enhancing financial disclosure and reliability in line with a 2016 Cabinet decision mandating the adoption of accrual accounting across government entities.

He affirmed that the bureau is focused on building the technical and oversight capabilities of its staff to meet the requirements of digital transformation and advance auditing methodologies, supporting public sector modernisation, good governance, spending efficiency and the protection of public funds under Royal directives.

The president added that the bureau is moving towards post-auditing to reinforce oversight independence and the separation of responsibilities, allowing local administration entities to exercise their executive mandates while the bureau retains its independent role in verifying compliance with legislation and regulations at every stage of decision-making.

Haddad welcomed the Audit Bureau president and workshop participants, noting that the event is the first of its kind focusing on the ERP SAP Business One system.

He added that further training sessions would be held to deepen technical knowledge and strengthen institutional capacity.

EBRD backs landmark Aqaba-Amman water de-salination project with $475m financing



AMMAN (JT) — The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is strengthening Jordan's water security and climate resilience by financing the landmark Aqaba-Amman Water Desalination and Conveyance Project, with support from Canada and Finland.

The EBRD financing package comprises a senior A loan of up to $475 million (434 million euros) and a B loan of up to $45 million (41 million euros) from the ILX Fund to the National Carrier Project Company, the special-purpose vehicle established to implement the EBRD's first water de-salination public-private partnership.

The project has a total value of $6.7 billion (6.2 billion euros), with the financing forming part of a wider $4.5 billion (4.1 billion euros) debt package provided by a consortium of international financial institutions and local banks, according to a statement by EBRD.

The project is also receiving concessional financing through the EBRD's High-Impact Partnership on Climate Action (HIPCA), including $30 million (27 million euros) from Canada and 7 million euros from Finland, to help ensure the affordability of water charges for end-users.

The EBRD financing will support the construction of a seawater desalination plant in Aqaba with an annual capacity of 300 million cubic metres, alongside a 438 kilometre conveyance system to transport drinking water from Aqaba to Amman.

A dedicated 281 megawatt-peak solar photovoltaic plant will meet around 30 per cent of the project's electricity requirements.

Once operational, the infrastructure is expected to meet around 40 per cent of Jordan's municipal water needs and directly benefit approximately 4.3 million people. It will improve the reliability of water services, ease pressure on depleted aquifers and reduce reliance on increasingly scarce freshwater resources.

EBRD president, Odile Renaud-Basso, said the project would transform Jordan's water security by providing millions of people with a reliable and sustainable source of drinking water.

She said the bank was pleased to be among the leading lenders to a project bringing together the Jordanian government, private investors, international financial institutions and donors to address one of the country's most urgent climate challenges, while establishing a model for resilient water infrastructure across the region.

Renaud-Basso added that the project builds on the EBRD's long-standing engagement in Jordan's water sector, where it has invested 190 million euros and mobilised 113 million euros in grants and concessional financing since 2012.

The project will also support human capital development and economic inclusion in Jordan's water sector, particularly among women and young people.

A gender and inclusion action plan will promote access to employment and training, while planned technical assistance will help develop national skills standards and training courses for priority roles in the water sector.

The EBRD is financing the project alongside 13 international financial institutions and development partners, including; the US International Development Finance Corporation, the European Investment Bank, the International Finance Corporation the Green Climate Fund, Proparco, The Netherlands Development Finance Company and Deutsche Investitions und Entwicklungsgesellschaft.

Other partners include the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, Cassa Depositi e Prestiti, the OPEC Fund for International Development and Swedfund International. The financing also involves a syndicate of commercial Jordanian banks.

The National Carrier Project Company is owned by Meridiam, Suez International and the Social Security Investment Fund. It signed a 30-year project agreement with the Ministry of Water and Irrigation in January 2025.

The EBRD began operating in Jordan in 2012 and has since invested more than 2.5 billion euros in 91 projects across the Kingdom, 75 per cent of which have been in the private sector.

HIPCA donors include Austria, Canada, Finland, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Switzerland, the Taiwan International Cooperation and Development Fund (Taiwan-ICDF), the United Kingdom and the United States, according to the statement.

Jordan, Egypt seek to boost trade, investment ties at joint business council meeting

AMMAN (JT) — The 23rd session of the Jordanian-Egyptian Joint Business Council concluded in Cairo on Wednesday, with representatives of the business communities in both countries discussing ways to strengthen economic and investment cooperation, increase bilateral trade and explore opportunities for joint ventures.

The meeting, organised by the Jordanian Businessmen Association and the Egyptian Businessmen Association, brought together representatives of the private sectors in both countries to discuss expanding partnerships and tapping into available investment opportunities, the Jordanian Businessmen Association said in a statement.

Jordanian Ambassador to Egypt Amjad Adaileh said the joint council represents an important milestone in the development of economic relations between the two countries, translating their deep political and fraternal ties into tangible economic and investment partnerships, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He said Jordan and Egypt have significant competitive advantages and economic potential that could be better utilised through coordinated efforts and greater economic integration, which has become essential to keeping pace with economic changes and securing a better future for both countries.

Adaileh stressed the importance of aligning bilateral cooperation with the objectives of Jordan's Economic Modernisation Vision, strengthening industrial integration and capitalising on the production capacities and expertise available in both countries.

He added that the council's success should be measured by tangible results and joint investment projects, affirming the Jordanian government's readiness to facilitate Egyptian investments and provide a suitable environment for investors seeking to expand their businesses in the Kingdom.

Jordanian Businessmen Association President Ayman Alawneh said Jordanian-Egyptian relations are founded on historical and fraternal ties and a strategic partnership, noting that the joint council, established in 1985, provides an important platform for strengthening communication between the two business communities and exploring trade and investment opportunities.

He said considerable opportunities exist to increase bilateral trade and mutual investments, particularly in energy, pharmaceutical and food industries, fertilisers, chemicals, logistics and information technology.

Alawneh also highlighted the importance of establishing joint industrial projects and benefitting from the strategic locations of both countries and their trade agreements to access wider regional and international markets.

He added that the association would continue coordinating with its Egyptian counterpart, intensifying exchanges of business delegations, economic visits and bilateral meetings, strengthening partnerships between companies and addressing challenges facing investors to turn available opportunities into tangible investment projects.

Egyptian Businessmen Association President Ali Eissa highlighted the joint council's role over the past decades in strengthening economic and trade relations, and fostering communication between the two business communities.

He stressed the importance of building on the council's achievements to expand cooperation and joint investment, noting that bilateral trade remains below the level of both countries' ambitions and economic potential.

Eissa called for greater efforts to increase mutual exports, diversify traded products, tap into untapped export and investment opportunities, identify priority sectors and strengthen partnerships between Jordanian and Egyptian companies.

During the meeting, Jordanian Embassy Commercial and Economic Counsellor Wafa Jreis delivered a presentation on trade and investment opportunities in Jordan, highlighting promising economic sectors and the advantages offered by the Kingdom's investment environment.

Egyptian Embassy Commercial Minister Plenipotentiary in Jordan Abeer Kamal also presented an overview of trade and investment opportunities in Egypt, and promising sectors for Jordanian investors.

She highlighted the significant progress in economic relations between the two countries and the broader prospects this creates for expanding trade and investment cooperation and strengthening partnerships between their business communities.

According to figures presented at the meeting, bilateral trade reached around $821 million by the end of August 2026, comprising $172.1 million in Jordanian exports to Egypt and $648.8 million in imports from Egypt.

Jordan's main exports to Egypt included potash, phosphoric acid, fruit and nuts, clothing, fertilisers and pharmaceutical products. Imports from Egypt mainly comprised fruit and vegetables, dairy and egg products, gas, machinery and electrical equipment, and cleaning and cosmetic preparations.

Egyptian investments in Jordan reached approximately $965 million in the first half of 2026, concentrated in transportation and storage, financial and insurance activities, and wholesale and retail trade.

Remittances from Egyptian workers to Jordan totalled around $1.464 billion, while remittances from Jordan to Egypt increased by 22.7 per cent to nearly $630 million during the first three quarters of 2026.

European stocks rally as tech jitters ease

LONDON (AFP) — European stock markets rallied on Thursday after gains in Asia, as the technology sector stabilised ahead of a long holiday weekend in the US, with Wall Street closed on Thursday for Thanksgiving.

Investors also took in stride US President Donald Trump's latest tariffs against 14 economies over claims of excessive production.

"The rollercoaster stock market is back on an upwards path as a new round of Trump tariffs aren't as bad as feared and the US takes the day off to celebrate Thanksgiving," said Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

In Europe, Frankfurt and Paris jumped almost 2 per cent and London advanced 1.6 per cent in midday deals.

Tokyo and Hong Kong each closed up around 1 per cent, while the technology-heavy Seoul index rose 0.3 per cent.

Global markets have whipsawed this week as investors moved from optimism over Jensen Huang's return to the chip giant Nvidia — despite his affair with an alleged Chinese spy — to fears over the sustainability of the AI boom.

Wall Street stocks pared huge early declines on Wednesday as tech shares partially recovered from the sell-off, just in time for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Meanwhile expectations that the Federal Reserve will raise US interest rates next month were boosted by inflation reaching a three-year high in the world's biggest economy, alongside data showing stronger-than-expected economic growth.

Investors are keeping an eye on possible retaliation to the new US tariffs on some of its biggest trading partners, including the European Union, India, Japan and South Korea.

The duties of up to 20 per cent face a period of public comment before taking effect, with a senior US official saying the proposals sought to take existing trade deals into account.

China faces a 20 per cent toll, but US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said the new levies were within the bounds of existing trade negotiations with Beijing.

Nonetheless Beijing warned Washington not to engage in "tariff wars and trade wars".

In company news, shares in UK defence firm Babcock climbed almost seven per cent after it secured a £8.7 billion government contract to maintain the Royal Navy's submarines.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Thursday amounted to JD6.7 million spread over 3.1 million shares that traded through 2,989 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.46 per cent, closing at 3977.99 points.

Out of 95 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 29 companies rose while the share price of another 33 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Irbid District Electricity by 3.62 per cent, Al Faris National Company for Investment and Export by 3.51 per cent, Arab Banking Corporation in Jordan by 3.37 per cent, National Portfolio Securities by 3.30 per cent, and Al Dulayl Industrial Park and Real Estate Company Plc. by 3.08 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Al Dawliyah for Hotels and Malls by 4.69 per cent, Gulf Insurance Group in Jordan by 4.52 per cent, Al Sanabel International for Islamic Investments Holding Plc. Company by 3.92 per cent, Al Rakaez Investment Company by 3.7 per cent and Jordan French Insurance by 3.7 per cent.



SPORTS AT A GLANCE

TENNIS

Two-time champion Sinner out of Australian Open after surgery

MELBOURNE (AFP) — World No.2 Jannik Sinner was on Thursday ruled out of the Australian Open in January as he recovers from right knee surgery. The Italian, who won the season-opening Grand Slam in 2024 and 2025, announced this week that he had gone under the knife at a clinic in Finland. He has not played a match since winning Wimbledon for the second time in July, with his appearance at Melbourne Park always in doubt. "We've been in regular touch with Jannik's team and they've confirmed he won't be joining us for the AO in January following his recent surgery," Tennis Australia chief Andrew Abdo said in a statement to AFP. "Jannik loves competing here in Melbourne and is looking forward to returning for AO 2028. We wish him all the very best with his recovery and look forward to seeing him back on court soon." Sinner was having a brilliant campaign this year before being stopped by his knee problem, with five Masters 1000 titles alongside his triumph at Wimbledon.

Hosts Italy edge South Korea to reach Davis Cup semifinals

BOLOGNA, Italy (AFP) — Three-time reigning Davis Cup champions Italy booked their place in the semifinals on Wednesday as Matteo Berrettini and Andrea Vavassori won the decisive doubles rubber to clinch a 2-1 victory over South Korea. Former World No.5 Lorenzo Musetti beat 787th-ranked Hong Seong-chan 6-0, 7-6 (7/5) in the opening rubber to put hosts Italy on the board in Bologna. However, Kwon Soon-woo kept an unfancied Korean team alive in the tie with a surprise three-set win over world number seven Flavio Cobolli, Italy's top-ranked player in the absence of the injured Jannik Sinner. Berrettini and Vavassori squeezed past Kwon and Chung Hyeon in a pair of tie-breaks to seal Italy's passage into the last four, saving four set points in the second set to prevail 7-6 (7/2), 7-6 (13/11). Italy go on to face the Czech Republic, who downed Canada 2-0 in the first quarter-final on Tuesday. Germany and World No.1 Alexander Zverev take on Britain on Thursday before Carlos Alcaraz leads Spain against Austria.

Uphill task for Jordan as FIBA World Cup qualifiers resume

By Aline Bannayan

AMMAN — Jordan's basketball squad is up for two crucial matches in Window 5, Round 2 Asian qualifiers for the 2027 FIBA World Cup when they face New Zealand on Friday and Australia on November 29 in two away matches in Malaysia.

With a revamped lineup which includes mostly younger stars who managed to shine in the latest two friendlies against Lebanon, losing 89-79 before winning 100-97, the squad is upbeat although the task at hand is hard against their Asian counterparts.

Teams are contesting eight Asian slots in two groups with the top three from each group and the best 4th placed team advancing to the World Cup. Jordan is in the challenging Group E now headed by Australia followed by New Zealand, Iran, Jordan, the Philippines and Syria while Lebanon heads Group F followed by Japan, China, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and South Korea.

The Kingdom's team, now fourth in Group E after two defeats in Window 4, 82-81 in OT to the Philippines and 126-93 to Australia, have made its chances of moving to their third consecutive and fourth overall World Cup now based on winning at least two or three matches of its remaining four qualifiers to secure qualification. Window 6 is set for February 25 and 28, 2027 against the Philippines and New Zealand.



JBF photo

Jordan's Sami Bzai' (right) and Abdullah Olajuwon in training ahead of Window 5 matches

In the past windows, the squad clearly lacked a cohesive attack and relied on individual efforts of an ageing lineup. This time around, and despite the admin snags at the Jordan Basketball Federation forcing late preparations, incoming Spaniard coach Luis Guil Torres, who took charge of the team in late summer, has been credited with turning around the team, enlisting the efforts of mostly under 25 players led by Abdullah Shatat, Rawhi Kilani and others to join Abdullah Olajuwon, Ahmad Hamarsheh, Hashem Abbas and Freddie Ibrahim with three point expert Sami Bza'i back following a long suspension and Perrin Buford replacing Jalen Harris as the naturalized recruit on the roster. The squad will miss some players on the injury list headed by veteran Ahmad Duweiri and Amin Abu Hawas.

This summer, Jordan finished 6th at the 45th William Jones Cup — a tournament they had won twice before. Jordan then exited the 2006 Asian Games quarterfinals after it was silver medalist at the previous Games in 2023. The team could not salvage the situation with the recruitment of pro Buford, alongside former veteran pro Dar Tucker while Jalen Harris was off the list. Furthermore, the team's woes were compounded when star centre Duweiri was sidelined with injury and underwent surgery. Following these disappointing performances, Jordan regrouped earlier this month with a new roster hoping to rebuild the team to serve the game for the long run.

A total of 80 national squads from the four FIBA regions are contesting the qualifiers in six windows from November 2025 to March 2027 following which seven teams from Asia, five teams from Africa, seven from the Americas, and 12 from Europe will advance to the 2027 World Cup in Doha which is a direct qualifier for seven national teams to the 2028 Olympic Games. The seven best ranked Asian teams from Round 2, as well as Qatar qualify automatically as host. If Qatar is not ranked among the top four in their group the fourth place teams from groups "E" and "F" will be ranked against each other to decide the final qualifier.

Apart from qualifying to the World Cup three times in 2010, 2019 and 2023, Jordan qualified to the U-19 Basketball World Cup in 1995 and 2025. They won the silver medal at the 2023 Asian Games. At the last 31st FIBA Asia Cup 2025, Jordan's squad failed to keep up the nation's impressive record finishing 11th among 16 nations after previously reaching the medals podium twice. So far, the Kingdom has played at the FIBA Asia Cup 17th times, with their best position runner-up in 2011, 3rd in 2009 and 4th in 2022.

Regionally, they also the first Arab team to win the William Jones Cup in 2007 and 2008, and later won the 17th Arab Basketball Championship for the first time and finished runner-up to Egypt at the Pan-Arab Games.

Group E Standings

	P	W	D	PF	PA	PTS
Australia	8	8	0	814	560	16
N. Zealand	8	6	2	778	638	14
Iran	8	5	3	599	542	13
Jordan	8	5	3	684	668	13
Philippines	8	4	4	615	614	12
Syria	8	2	6	534	719	10

'Unbelievable catch': Pakistan motorbike passenger becomes cricket sensation

By Lehaz Ali
Agence France-Presse

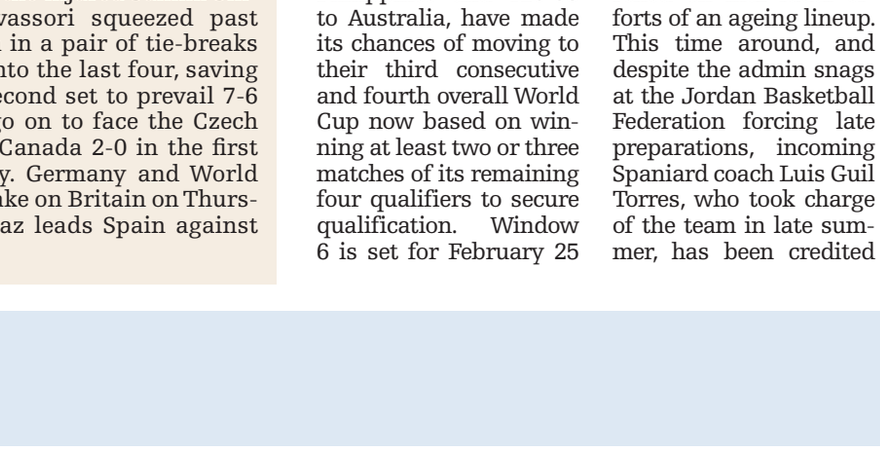
PESHAWAR, Pakistan — Returning home from work on the back of a friend's motorbike in northwest Pakistan, Mehran Khan acted on pure instinct when a cricket ball sailed towards him and he nonchalantly took a one-handed catch that has won him instant global fame.

"I told my friend who was riding the motorcycle to lower his head. I stood up slightly on the moving motorcycle and caught it," the civil servant, an experienced amateur cricketer, told AFP.

"Words cannot describe how happy I was after taking that catch. It felt as though I had achieved something extraordinary," the 27-year-old added.

Khan and his friend were motoring past a match in the Swat Premier League in the city of Mingora when the ball arched towards them over the boundary on Tuesday.

Batsman Abrar Lala struck a looping six, sending the ball towards the road adjoining the cricket ground in Pakistan's picturesque Swat Valley, where Khan plucked it out of the air with one hand.



AFP photo

Mehran Khan (third right) attends a Swat Premier League match in Mingora city in Pakistan's Swat Valley on Thursday

"I have been playing cricket since childhood and have played several matches at this very ground," Khan, a government employee with the Public Health Engineering Department, explained.

"When the batsman hit the six I instinctively wished I could catch the ball," he added.

The moment has gone viral around the world and drawn the praise of cricketing greats.

'Massively viral'

"Fame that some people do not achieve in years came to me through a video lasting just a few seconds," Khan said.

"My life has changed completely. Now, whenever I go out, people recognise me and ask to take selfies with me.

"When I returned home that night my family gave me a wonderful welcome," he said.

"Nobody had ever asked to take selfies with me like that before," he added.

Khan, a batsman, fast bowler and accomplished fielder, said the footage was uploaded by a local TikTok user before going "massively viral".

He said he was particularly proud to see the video shared by Australian fast bowler Brett Lee on his Facebook page.

"I could not contain my happiness. Just imagine, I am an ordinary cricket player and here is a legend like Brett Lee sharing my catch. He captioned it 'Unbelievable Catch,'" Khan said.

The motorbike carrying Khan and his friend was still speeding past the ground when the match's commentator asked the police to stop the pair and bring them back.

"I was already very excited but when I entered the ground, the commentator announced that the man who had taken the catch outside the ground was now inside the ground. All the players and spectators erupted into applause," Khan said.

'Man from the mountains'

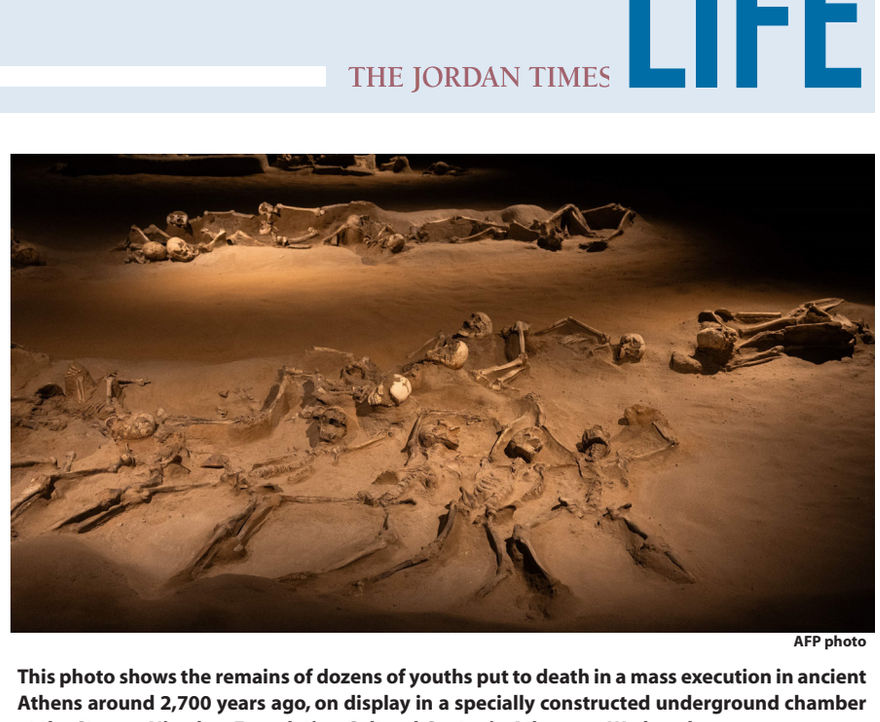
He explained that the tournament's organisers awarded him PKR 10,000 ($36) for the catch. He thanked God for being "blessed with so much respect and recognition".

Khan said in some online comments, social media users have joked he made off with the ball.

"But that is not true. I did not run away. I handed the ball over to the tournament organisers inside the ground," he said.

Khan now hopes the league will return the ball to him as a souvenir of the extraordinary moment.

Since becoming a father eight months ago, Khan feels he has been on a lucky streak that began with the arrival of his daughter.



AFP photo

This photo shows the remains of dozens of youths put to death in a mass execution in ancient Athens around 2,700 years ago, on display in a specially constructed underground chamber at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre in Athens on Wednesday

Ancient Athens mass grave goes on display

ATHENS (AFP) — The 2,700-year-old remains of dozens of youths put to death in a mass execution in ancient Athens went on display on Wednesday in a specially constructed underground chamber south of the Greek capital.

The ancient necropolis in Faliro, south of Athens, has been found to contain over 2,000 dead of all ages, in addition to a number of buried horses.

In 2016, archaeologists found 79 men arranged in three trenches, tied together in groups. Many had corroded iron shackles around their wrists, and most were young adults or juveniles.

Experts working on the decade-long project have said the men were in their prime, and had all received a killing blow at the base of the skull with a blunt instrument.

Visitors to the macabre display, which lies at the centre of a dark, winding corridor beneath the park area of the Stavros Niarchos Cultural Centre, are greeted by a sign at the entrance warning: "Real skeletons of people who died violently are exposed in the area."

"Please consider this for the continuation or termination of your visit."

Inaugurating the 920-square-metre display, Culture Minister Lina Mendoni said the find sheds light on "one of the darkest pages" in Athens' long history, a time when rival groups fought for control of the city before political reforms gave rise to decades of democracy.

The men had met a "violent, tragic death", Mendoni said.

Dubbed the "Captives of Faliro" by the media, the skeletons were temporarily relocated for their protection, until the new 7.5-billion-euro ($8.2 billion) structure could be completed in 2023.

