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Royal Hashemite Court mourns passing of Princess Rajwa's father

AMMAN (JT) — The Royal Hashemite Court mourns the passing of the father of HRH Princess Rajwa, Khaled Bin Musaed Bin Saif Bin Abdulaziz Al Saif, may his soul rest in peace.

By His Majesty King Abdullah's orders, the Royal Hashemite Court has announced three days of mourning, as of Sunday, February 18 2024.

The Royal Hashemite Court expresses its deepest sympathies and condolences to Their Majesties King Abdullah and Queen Rania, Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hussein and Princess Rajwa, and to Al Saif family in these difficult times.

OCCUPATION

Israeli forces kill 2 Palestinians in West Bank raid

TULKARM, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — Israeli occupation forces killed two Palestinian men during a raid in a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank on Sunday, the Palestinian health ministry said.

The deaths were the latest in a surge of violence in the Palestinian territory that has prompted growing international concern since Hamas's October 7 sudden attack on southern Israel sparked the Gaza war.

EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell on Sunday described the situation in the West Bank as being at boiling point and warned that "we could be on the eve of a greater explosion".

The Palestinian health ministry said two men, aged 19 and 36, were pronounced dead from gunshot wounds following an army raid in the Tulkarm refugee camp, in the north of the West Bank, which the UN says houses over 27,000 Palestinian refugees.

At least five other people were wounded in the Israeli military operation, according to the Palestinian Red



AFP photo

This handout photo released by the Brazilian Presidency shows Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva speaking during a press conference in Addis Ababa on Sunday

Crescent. The Israeli forces has stepped up its near daily raids across the West Bank in the aftermath of the attack on southern Israel in October. At least 398 Palestin-

ians have been killed by Israeli forces or settlers in the West Bank since October 7, according to the Palestinian health ministry. Israel captured the West Bank, includ-

ing East Jerusalem — which it later occupied — and the Gaza Strip in 1967 during the June War. Around 3 million Palestinians live in the territory along-

side roughly 490,000 Israelis in settlements deemed illegal under international law. The Palestinians seek the territory as the heartland of a future independent state.

Brazil's Lula accuses Israel of 'genocide' in Gaza

ADDIS ABABA (AFP) — Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva accused Israel on Sunday of committing "genocide" against Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip and compared its actions to Adolf Hitler's campaign to exterminate Jews.

"What's happening in the Gaza Strip isn't a war, it's a genocide," Lula told reporters in Addis Ababa where he was attending an African Union summit.

"It's not a war of soldiers against soldiers. It's a war between a highly prepared army and women and children," added the veteran leftist.

"What's happening in the Gaza Strip with the Palestinian people hasn't happened at any other moment in history. Actually, it has happened: When Hitler decided to kill the Jews."

They were among the strongest comments yet on the conflict from Lula, a prominent voice for the global south whose country currently holds the rotating presidency of the G-20.

The 78-year-old leader condemned Hamas' October 7 sudden attack on Israel the day it happened.

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'US remains dedicated to supporting Jordan on its path towards greater prosperity, stability'

AMMAN (JT) — US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has hailed the solid Washington-Amman relations as a "testament to a shared vision of peace, security, and prosperity for the entire region".

In a statement on the 75th anniversary of establishing the US-Jordan diplomatic relations, Blinken said, "Today, we celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. On February 18, 1949, Wells Stabler presented his credentials as the first American Chargé d'Affaires ad interim to Jordan. Since then, our countries have been partners, allies, and close friends."

"Over more than seven decades of partnership, our relationship has expanded to advance inclusive economic development, enhance opportunities for women and youth, ensure sustainable access to safe water, and promote commercial ties. Strengthening our security cooperation,



Antony Blinken

promoting regional stability and sustaining humanitarian efforts have been the cornerstones of our bilateral relationship. Our partnership has thrived over the last 75 years due to the steadfast bonds between the peoples of our two countries, as well as our leaders," Blinken said in the statement.

"That strong founda-

tion will enable us to further strengthen the US-Jordan strategic partnership in the future. We remain dedicated to supporting Jordan on its path toward greater prosperity and stability under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah and look forward to deepening our historic security, economic, and cultural ties."

AGGRESSION

Mediator says Gaza truce 'not promising' as Israel rejects calls to spare Rafah

GAZA STRIP, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — Mediator Qatar acknowledged on Saturday that prospects for a new pause in Israel's war with Hamas were "not really promising" as Israel rejected appeals to hold off on a threatened assault on the Gaza city of Rafah.

Truce efforts intensified this week as Qatar and fellow mediators Egypt and the United States scrambled to secure a ceasefire before Israeli forces enter Rafah, the last major population centre in Gaza untouched by Israeli ground troops.

Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, who met with negotiators from both Israel and Hamas this week, said efforts for a ceasefire had been complicated by the insistence of "a lot of countries" that any new truce involve further releases of hostages.

"The pattern in the last few days is not re-



AFP photo

People search for victims in the rubble of the Baraka family home in Deir Al Balah in the central Gaza Strip after it was hit in an Israeli air strike on Sunday

ally very promising," he said at the Munich Security Conference.

His assessment came as Hamas threatened to suspend its involvement in talks unless relief supplies are brought into the north, where aid agencies have warned of looming famine.

"Negotiations cannot be held while hunger is ravaging the Palestinian people," a senior source in the Palestinian militant group told AFP, asking not to be identified as he is not authorised to speak on the issue.

Earlier, Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh reiterated-

ed the group's demands, which Netanyahu called "ludicrous".

They include a complete pause in fighting, the release of Hamas prisoners and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

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OFFENSIVE

Russia trying to attack beyond Avdiivka, Ukraine warns

NOVOOLEKSANDRIVKA, Ukraine (AFP) — Russian troops launched multiple attacks to the west of the recently captured Avdiivka in a bid to force more gains on the battlefield, a Ukrainian army spokesperson on Sunday.

Facing manpower and ammunition shortages, Ukraine was forced to withdraw from the industrial hub in the eastern Donetsk region, handing Moscow its first major territorial gain since May 2023.

"The enemy is trying to actively develop its offensive," Dmytro Lykhoviy, a spokesperson for the Ukrainian army commander leading Kyiv's troops in the area, said on state TV on Sunday.

Ukraine's general staff reported 14 failed Russian attacks on the village of Lastochkyne, around 2 kilometres to the west of Avdiivka's northern edge.

"But our considerable forces are entrenched

there," Lykhoviy said.

He also reported failed Russian attacks near the villages of Robotyne and Verbove in the southern Zaporizhzhia region — one of the few places where Ukraine managed to regain ground during last year's counteroffensive.

But he said it would be "very difficult" for Russia to break through there, given heavy Ukrainian defensive lines and natural conditions of the terrain.

"The situation in the Zaporizhzhia sector is stable... No positions have been lost in the Zaporizhzhia sector," he said on Sunday on state TV.

'Important victory'

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday hailed the capture of Avdiivka as an "important victory" for his troops, just days ahead of the second anniversary of the invasion.

The battle for Avdiivka was one of the bloodiest of the two-year war, drawing comparisons with Russia's assault on Bakhmut, which it captured last May at the cost of tens of thousands of soldiers.

Avdiivka had symbolic importance to both Kyiv and Moscow — seen as a marker of Ukrainian resistance after it briefly fell to Russian-backed separatists in 2014.

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AFP photo

A digger arrives to help rescuers remove rubble from a school destroyed during an overnight missile attack on the town of Slaviansk, Donetsk region on Sunday

PRODUCTION



Petra Photo

The Jordan Artists Association (JAA) says it has the authority to issue permits for artistic profession, in accordance with the provisions of the JAA Law of 1997

JAA, RFC announce that syndicate has authority to issue permits

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Artists Association (JAA) and the Royal Film Commission (RFC) on Sunday announced the issuance of a circular addressed to local, Arab and international companies working in the field of film and television production, confirming that the Syndicate has the authority to issue permits for artistic profession, in accordance with the

provisions of the JAA Law of 1997.

During a press conference held at the Osama Mashini Theatre, Director Mohammed Yousef Abadi, head of the JAA, revealed that the syndicate's council has been working for about two years to coordinate with the RFC to issue this circular, stressing the joint efforts of the syndicate and the commission to promote Jordan's cultural and artistic endeavours.

He explained that the revenues generated by the permits to practice the profession will contribute to the syndicate's funds, especially those earmarked for health insurance and retirement benefits for Jordanian artists who are members of the syndicate, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The PCRF, which provides free medical care each year to thousands of children in occupied Palestine who have no access to the local healthcare system, has provided over the past four months humanitarian and medical aid to children in Gaza worth more than JD17 million, according to Vivian Khalef, the PCRF chairperson.



File photo

HH Princess Dina Mired

Since its inception, the fund has provided

medical care to approximately 2,000 Palestinian children outside of Occupied Palestine and humanitarian assistance to

some 130,000 people, she added. The PCRF has had a crucial role in strengthening the healthcare in-

frastructure in Palestine, establishing pediatric cancer wards, as well as intensive care and cardiology units in Ramallah.

HUMANITARIAN AID

Princess Dina Mired chairs Palestine Children's Relief Fund

The fund has provided medical care to approximately 2,000 Palestinian children outside of Occupied Palestine and humanitarian assistance to some 130,000 people

AMMAN (JT) — The Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF) on Sunday announced the formation of a new Technical Advisory Board, chaired by HH Princess Dina Mired.

The board comprises experts from various sectors, including health and humanitarian aid, PCRF said.

The new board was launched at a recent meeting of the association in Amman, which was attended by around 200 members from the charity, medical and Jordanian business sectors, as well as some representatives from supporting and donor organisations.

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HERITAGE

Community Archaeology: Bridging gaps between scholars, local communities

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — Traditionally, archaeological teams would go to the site, excavate, collect artefacts, analyse them and prepare reports that would be published in scholarly papers, journals and books. The involvement of the local community within the work of Jordanian and international archaeologists and their teams was minimal.

However, this approach has been recently challenged by the method that includes the local communities as a more active factor in archaeological projects. The objective of "community archaeology" has been to bridge the gap between scholars and the general public.

Due to a top-down approach by the government, the tourist sites often do not involve the local community enough. The Department of Antiquities (DoA) is more focused on the excavation, restoration and preservation of the archaeological sites and less on the education of the local community and raising awareness about the significance of site protection.

"The DoA dedicated fewer people, lesser time and money to public awareness, and its provision has been highly specialist in terms of the level of knowledge required for engagement,



Photo by Saeb Rawashdeh

Activity involving students of Madaba schoolchildren

with interpretation that could only be appreciated by the interested and the well-educated parties," said Arwa Badran, an archaeologist and a museum specialist.

Interpretation of sites and heritage has been neglected for a long time, however, we can witness that such an old-fashioned approach has been changing. Educational institutions, like elementary and high schools, can play a vital role in the process of engaging.

"Disconnection between the public and their heritage, and their lack of awareness of its importance, when coupled with poverty and unemployment, has led to the plundering of sites and selling artefacts for income," Badran said,

adding that the DoA has taken bold steps to combat this, previously working directly with looters and antiquities dealers to purchase and document stolen artefacts for public benefit, but more needs to be done.

In order to minimise the number of looters, gold diggers and vandals, the DoA and the archaeological teams have to involve the local community as stewards of the sites. The aim of the educational campaign should explain the benefits of the archaeological site for the local communities that are living nearby.

The education campaign is not limited to just the schools. "Using heritage as an

educational resource is valuable for children's learning about the past. Site visits are a chance to explore landscapes, structures, and even smells, sounds and colours, all of which provide a sense of scale and help trigger children's curiosity," Badran said, adding that such an experience puts "the evidence of the past into context".

The objects displayed in museums, on the other hand, provide evidence for enquiry-based learning about form, texture and construction, encouraging children to draw conclusions about how items were made and used and their context, Badran continued, adding that they can also be used to create sensory experiences and stories,

both of which are effective for children's critical thinking and connecting with the past.

Talking about objects, Badran said that they are important for engaging children in the study of the past itself, in the process of evaluating material evidence, to explain, interpret and construct narratives.

"The use of such physical environments to engage the mind in questioning and making inferences is attested by many scholars through time, from the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, through medieval Islamic philosophers, such as Abu 'Ali Al Husayn Ibn Sina (also known as Avicenna), to late modern and contemporary western educational theorists like John Dewey and Jean Piaget," the archaeologist underlined.

Other scholars, in their objection to single state narratives, began calling for exposure to multiple resources or narratives to encourage children's independent thinking and an appreciation of human diversity and contribution.

"This could be traced to the first half of the twentieth century in the writings of Grahame Clarke, as well as in the Arab region by the Egyptian scholar Taha Husayn and the Iraqi novelist Dhu Al Nun Ayyub," Badran concluded.

EDUCATION

Jordanian activist creates eco-friendly toys for sustainable future

By Maria Weldali

AMMAN — UNICEF Jordan is inspiring a young Jordanian to take significant steps toward a more sustainable world with her innovative eco-friendly toy project.

This initiative aims to provide children with smart and sustainable fun.

Rahaf Abu Mayyaleh, a 21-year-old community youth activist and climate leader, embarked on her climate action journey approximately three years ago. Her dedication has led to numerous accomplishments in the field.

Having worked as a child health coach for nearly four years, Abu Mayyaleh recognised a community need for children's toys that not only promote cognitive development but are also crafted from carefully selected materials to minimise their environmental impact.

In early 2023, Abu Mayyaleh launched her project, "4Health Edu", a fully Jordanian eco-conscious toy brand.

The project's motto is to bring joy and creativity to children while prioritising eco-friendly materials.

Taking an environmentally conscious approach, the "4Health Edu" products currently in development are made from sustainable materials. They

are designed to be both durable and safe for children and the environment, as Abu Mayyaleh explained in an interview with The Jordan Times.

"Instead, we strive to effect necessary changes."

Since joining UNICEF's Sawn programme, Abu Mayyaleh has utilised her skills to empower youth in the Balqa region.

She advocates for environmental awareness, garners support for environmental causes and contributes to policies aimed at reducing environmental impact, according to a UNICEF statement shared with The Jordan Times.

"Sawn", translating to "Preservation" in English, is a youth-led climate action initiative in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Youth, and Generations For Peace.

The programme aims to equip youth from all governorates in the Kingdom with the skills to lead climate action and advocate for a more sustainable future.

Abu Mayyaleh has also founded an innovative environmental project called "E-Waste Bank" in Ash-Shunah Al Janubiyah, to reduce waste accumulation and toxic emissions.

COOPERATION

PSD receives 6 forensic vehicles for crime scene investigation from Germany

Maaytah expresses gratitude to Germany for its support to Jordan

AMMAN (JT) — Public Security Directorate (PSD) Director Maj. Gen. Obaidallah Maaytah on Sunday met German Ambassador to Jordan Bertram von Moltke, with the discussions focusing on strengthening police cooperation between the two countries, particularly in the areas of capacity build-

ing, improving security and humanitarian services, and exchanging expertise, technology and modern policing method.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Maaytah witnessed the handing over of 6 vehicles offered by the German government and the Federal Police leadership to the PSD, ac-

ording to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Maaytah expressed gratitude to the German government...

These vehicles are

equipped with the latest technologies in relation to working with crime scene units in the forensic laboratories and evidence department.

Maaytah expressed gratitude to the German government for its support in combating crime and enhancing security and peace.

The German ambassador highlighted Jordan's key role in maintaining regional security and stability. He stressed his country's commitment to deepening cooperation with the PSD, supporting its efforts through capacity-building training programmes and providing modern technical equipment.



Petra photo

Public Security Directorate receives 6 forensic vehicles for crime scene investigation offered by the German government and the Federal Police leadership

TIES

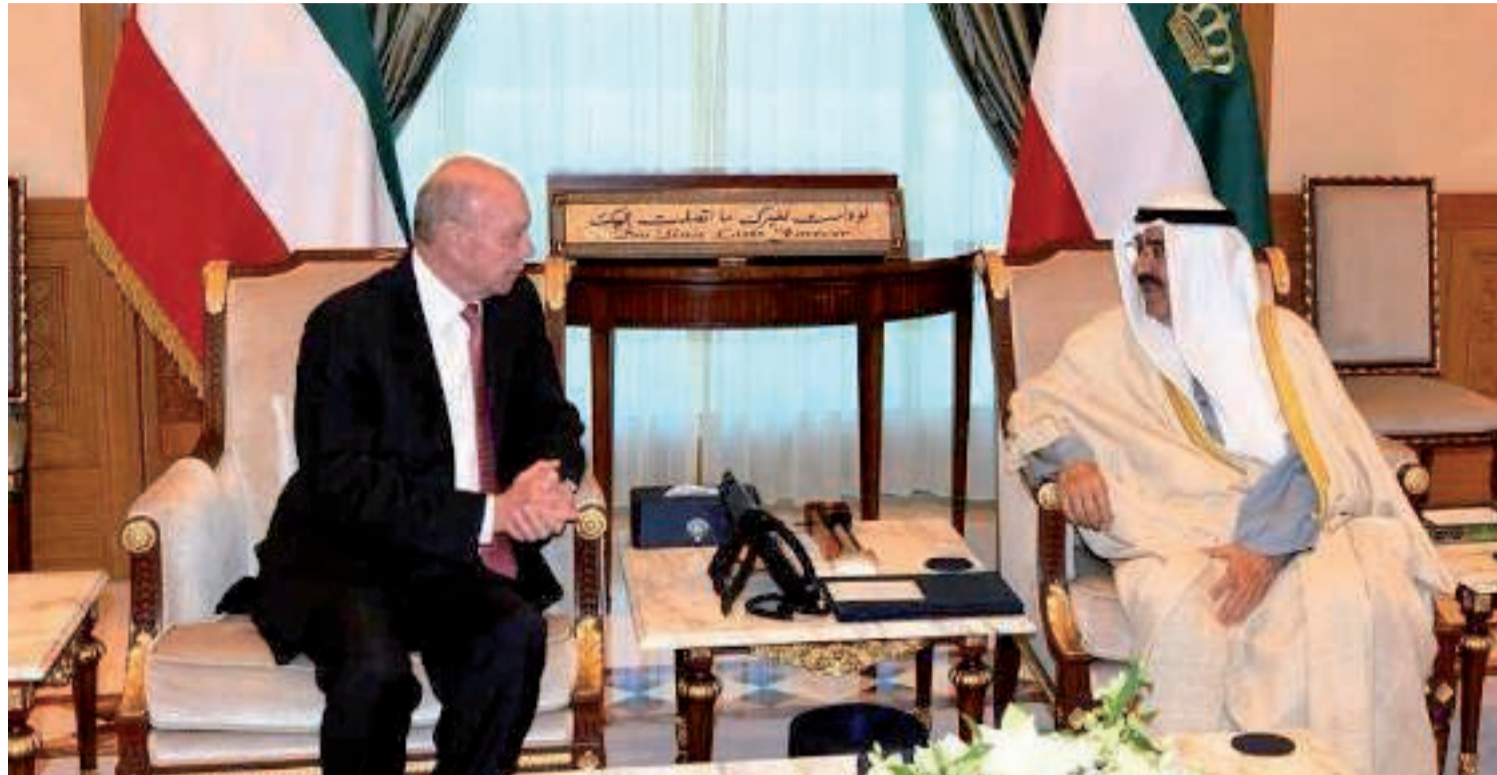
Fayez conveys King's message to Kuwait Emir

AMMAN (JT) — Senate President Faisal Fayez on Sunday conveyed a verbal message from His Majesty King Abdullah to Kuwait Emir Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah.

The message underscored the deep-rooted and robust relations between Jordan and Kuwait, and the commitment to further strengthen these ties across various sectors, as reported by the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

In his message, the King expressed his gratitude towards Sheikh Mishal and acknowledged Kuwait's supportive stance towards Jordan. He also emphasised the importance of ongoing coordination and consultation on diverse Arab and regional matters, with the aim of bolstering Arab and Islamic unity and collaboration.

Sheikh Mishal expressed his appreciation and respect for the King and affirmed the solid relations between the two nations and the alignment of their perspectives on numerous issues of mutual interest, including the Palestinian cause.



Senate President Faisal Fayez on Sunday conveys a verbal message from His Majesty King Abdullah to Kuwait Emir Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah

pressed his appreciation and respect for the King and affirmed the

solid relations between the two nations and the alignment of their per-

spectives on numerous issues of mutual interest, including the Pales-

tinian cause. Sheikh Mishal also lauded the King's ef-

forts to cease the Israeli aggression on Gaza. He also praised the King's

initiatives to rally international efforts towards establishing a political framework that leads to a fair and comprehensive resolution of the Palestinian issue that ensures the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to establish their independent and sovereign state, along the lines of June 4, 1967. He also commended His Majesty's humanitarian aid efforts for the people in Gaza.

Also on Sunday Fayez met with Kuwaiti Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Mohammed Sabah Al Salem Al Sabah. During the meeting, emphasised the historical depth of the relations between Jordan and Kuwait, which are founded on mutual respect and serve the interests of both nations and the just causes of the Arab world.

Fayez also expressed his appreciation for

Kuwait's supportive positions towards Jordan and reiterated Jordan's unwavering commitment to enhancing relations with Kuwait across various domains. He also discussed the current regional situation and its implications for Jordan.

Sheikh Mohammed expressed his appreciation for the close relations that exist between Kuwait and Jordan. He also pointed out Kuwait's keenness to support Jordan in all fields and to enhance bilateral cooperation for the benefit of the people and the two countries.

The meeting also explored avenues to boost bilateral cooperation in diverse fields, including economic, investment, cultural, and educational sectors. The goal is to fortify mutual collaboration and deepen the close ties between the two countries.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Foreign minister leads delegation presenting oral argument on Israeli violations to ICJ

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi will lead on Thursday the Jordanian delegation presenting the oral arguments of Jordan before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague on Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

The oral argument is related to the advisory opinion requested by the United Nations General Assembly under Resolution No. 247/77, issued on December 30, 2022.

Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Sufian Oudah said that the Jordanian delegation includes, Safadi, Justice Minister Ahmed Ziadat and the legal team contracted by the Kingdom for this purpose, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Oudah emphasised that Jordan had submitted a written opinion of trail before ICJ on July 24, 2023, in which Jordan



Ayman Safadi

affirmed absolute support for the Palestinians' right to determine their destiny, and establish their independent and sovereign state on the pre-1967 borders with occupied Jerusalem as its capital.

Jordan's move is line with the Arab Peace Initiative, relevant UN resolutions, and on the basis of the two-state solution, which represents the only formula to achieve a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace, he said.

Oudah also noted that Jordanian written plea underlines the need for Israel to respect the his-

torical and legal status of Jerusalem and its Islamic and Christian holy sites, for which Jordan bears great responsibility under its historical Hashemite custodianship.

Oudah said that this is not the first time Jordan defends Palestinians before The Hague-based court. "In 2004, Jordan presented its argument before the court concerning the advisory opinion requested by the UN General Assembly on the legal consequences of the construction of the separation wall in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem".

Speakers of Lower House, UAE Federal National Council discuss ties, war on Gaza

AMMAN (JT) — Lower House Speaker Ahmed Safadi and UAE Federal National Council Speaker Saqr Ghobash on Sunday emphasised the need to end the war against Gaza and push towards a two-state solution for the benefit of the Palestinian people, including their right to an independent state of their own.

During the meeting, the two sides affirmed the "deep-rooted" relations between Jordan and the UAE and highlighted the high level of coordination to serve the interests of both nations, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

They also emphasised the importance of Hashemite Custodianship over Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem as central to the preservation of the city's identity and heritage.

In press remarks following the talks, Safadi said that Jordan and the



Lower House Speaker Ahmed Safadi and UAE Federal National Council Speaker Saqr Ghobash on Sunday emphasize the need to end the war against Gaza and push towards a two-state solution for the benefit of the Palestinian people

UAE see eye to eye on defending the Palestinians and advocating for the cessation of war on Gaza and the delivery of urgent aid to its people. He also praised the

UAE's support for Jordan in various fields, highlighting the inseparable security and stability of the two nations, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Ghobash praised the efforts led by His Majesty King Abdullah to clarify the realities in Gaza and the Palestinian territories. He also emphasised

the pivotal role of the Hashemite Custodianship in protecting Jerusalem's holy sites despite the political and economic challenges facing Jordan.

SECURITY

Army says five drug smugglers killed on border with Syria

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) said border guards stationed on the eastern borders with Syria foiled an attempt to "large" quantities of narcotics into the Kingdom.

JAF source said that Eastern Military Zone personnel applied rules of engagement with smugglers and killed five of them and injured four others in the operation at dawn on Sunday, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The source said that large quantities of illicit drugs were seized and handed over to the relevant authorities.

The army source reaffirmed JAF's resolve to deal with firmness with any threat to Jordan's national security.

The army has reported several drug smuggling attempts on the Kingdom's north-eastern borders with conflict-torn Syria, with JAF reported some incidents of smugglers opening fire at border guards in an attempt to enter the Kingdom "by force".

The army unveiled the largest operation in



Above, Jordanian army soldiers patrol along the border with Syria to prevent trafficking on February 17, 2022

January 2022 when it announced that it had killed 27 infiltrators as they tried to smuggle "large amounts" of narcotics from Syria into the Kingdom. The army said that the operation in late January came after the directives of the JAF chairman to change the rules of engagement. According to JAF

figures, a total of 194 smuggling and infiltration attempts have been recorded during the January-August period of 2023.

The army said that border guards on the north-eastern border with Syria have also dealt with 88 smuggling attempts using drones that carried narcotics

and explosives.

In 2022, the army said that it dealt with 383 smuggling and infiltration attempts that also resulted in the seizure of large quantities of narcotics and weapons.

JAF said that 361 smuggling attempts from Syria were foiled and about 15.5 million narcotic pills were

seized in 2021.

In the previous year, more than 130 smuggling attempts from Syria in 2020 were foiled and about 132 million amphetamine pills and 15,000 sheets of hashish seized, it said.

During a landmark meeting in Amman on May 1, 2023, Syria agreed to take effective measures towards curbing drug trafficking across its southern borders with Jordan.

The pledge came at a meeting in Amman of foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan, also attended by Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad.

Jordan, which shares a 378 kilometre-long border with Syria, has been warning of flourishing drugs trade in the northern neighbour, posing cross-border threats to the kingdom, the region, and the rest of the world.

According to studies conducted by international think tanks, Syria has transformed into the world's foremost narco-state, especially in manufacturing Captagon.

CRIME

Cassation Court upholds over 4 years in prison for drug dealer

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has upheld a January 2023 State Security Court (SSC) ruling, sentencing a drug dealer to four years in prison for possessing five Captagon pills in Amman in July 2022.

The court declared the defendant guilty of selling the illegal pills to an undercover agent in the Marka neighbourhood on July 12. The SSC handed the defendant a five-year prison term for the offence of possessing illegal narcotics and ordered him to pay JD5,000 in fines.

However, the court reduced the prison term to four years and the fine to JD4,000 to give the defendant a second chance in life.

Court documents said the Anti-Narcotics Department (AND) learnt the defendant was in possession of illegal narcotics and sent one of its agents to pose as a buyer. "The AND agent got



in touch with the defendant and asked him for five Captagon pills in return for JD10," court documents said. When the two met, AND agents immediately arrested the suspect, court papers added.

The defendant confessed to possessing the illegal pills to sell in the local market, court papers said.

The defendant contested the SSC's ruling through his lawyer, who argued that the court "did not provide solid evidence to implicate his client".

Meanwhile, the SSC prosecution office

asked the higher court to uphold the sentence and the fine imposed on the defendant.

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

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

The Court of Cassation judges presiding were Yassin Abdullat, Nayef Samarat, Hamad Ghzawi, Qassem Dughmi and Mohamad Khashashneh.



An Afghan women along with a girl collect water from the Kokcha River in Fayzabad of Badakhshan province on Thursday

AFP photo

Afghanistan special envoys meet in Doha

DOHA (AFP) — National and regional special envoys to Afghanistan convened in Doha Sunday in the second UN meeting of its kind in less than a year, though it remained unclear whether Taliban authorities would join the closed-session event.

The two-day meeting, hosted by the UN secretary-general, was due to discuss increasing engagement with Afghanistan and a more coordinated response to the Central Asian nation.

In the aftermath of the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, the international community has wrestled with its approach to the country's new rulers.

Into the first day of the convention in gas-rich Qatar, which hosted the Taliban during years of peace talks with the United States, the Kabul government's participation remained unclear.

Though the Afghan foreign ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment on plans to attend, the secretary-

general of the Norwegian Refugee Council wrote on X, formerly Twitter, it was "disappointing that the Taliban declined to attend the special envoy meeting".

"We urge all sides to do more to hammer out deals that can benefit the long suffering Afghan people," Jan Ege-land said.

The UN had extended an invitation to the Taliban authorities to participate, following their exclusion from the first meeting in May.

'Gender apartheid'

Organisers pushed to include voices from civil society inside and outside Afghanistan including women and from the media and businesses at the Doha convention.

A senior diplomatic source told AFP ahead of the meeting the Taliban government had said it would only attend as sole representative of Afghanistan at the convention -- excluding civil society representatives.

A second demand was that the Taliban

government delegation meet with the UN secretary-general and be given an opportunity to present its position, the source said on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of discussions.

'Respect for women's rights must be a core objective of the international community's engagement on Afghanistan'

On Saturday Taliban authorities said they had reiterated their conditions to the United Nations, emphasising that their participation in the UN-convened talks would be "unbeneficial" if those conditions were not met.

The Taliban's govern-

ment in Kabul has not been officially recognised by any other government since it took power and the administration has imposed a strict interpretation of Islam, with women subjected to laws characterised by the UN as "gender apartheid".

Many governments, international organisations and aid agencies cut off or severely scaled back their funding for Afghanistan in response — causing a serious knock to the already struggling economy.

'Inclusive meetings'

The meeting in Qatar will also consider the recommendations of a UN independent assessment on Afghanistan, which has suggested recognition of the Taliban authorities be tied to the removal of restraints on women's rights and access to education.

The assessment, backed by Western nations, also recommends the appointment of a UN special envoy, which the Taliban government has also rejected.

UN special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan Richard Bennett said he hoped the meeting in Doha "leads to a series of meaningful and inclusive meetings among key stakeholders" that would "prioritise discussions about human rights, particularly women's rights".

Ahead of the gathering in Doha, EU special envoy for Afghanistan, said the meeting offered a "significant opportunity... to hold meaningful discussions" and "engage on a way forward... in a UN-led process".

The UN's Working Group on Women, Peace and Security said the meeting in Doha "offers an important opportunity for the UN, the Security Council and the international community to reaffirm that the rights of Afghan women are not negotiable".

"Respect for women's rights must be a core objective of the international community's engagement on Afghanistan, and a priority agenda item for discussions in Doha," it added in a statement.

VOTE

Spain conservative leader in dock as Galicia holds election

MADRID (AFP) — Spain's north-western Galicia region votes on Sunday in a tight election that could see the country's opposition conservative party lose control of its traditional stronghold in a blow for its leader.

The Popular Party (PP) has governed Galicia since 2009, winning majorities in each of the last four elections under Alberto Nunez Feijoo who in 2022 left the rural region of some 2.7 million residents to become national party leader.



AFP photo

A voter casts a ballot in Pontevedra, on Sunday during the regional elections in Galicia. Spain's northwestern Galicia region votes Sunday in a tight election that could see the country's opposition conservative party lose control of its traditional stronghold in a blow for its leader

The first opinion polls published in January suggested the PP was on track for another victory but the race has since tightened with surveys suggesting the party could lose its absolute majority in the 75-seat regional parliament.

That would open the door to a coalition between the surging left-wing nationalist BNG Party and Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's Socialists, which govern nationally in a minority coalition that relies on smaller regional parties to pass legislation.

by parliament — a "humiliation" and the PP has staged large demonstrations against it.

The apparent U-turn has upset members of his party and left him open to accusations of hypocrisy.

"In the morning he negotiates a rally and pardons and in the afternoon, he protests against the separatists," Sanchez said on Thursday at a campaign rally in Galicia.

That gave Sanchez a lifeline to stay on despite his Socialists having finished second.

The result of the election "could mean the political end of Feijoo, because there is nothing more painful than losing when you are playing at home", Jose Pablo Ferrandiz, a director at pollster Ipsos, told daily newspaper La Vanguardia.

The PP has governed Galicia for 36 of the 42 years it has existed under Spain's post-dictatorship system of autonomous regional governments.

'Don't let nationalism come to this land, there is no territory where it has gone well'

Polls will close at 8:00pm (19:00 GMT), with official results expected several hours later.

'Political end'

If the PP loses its absolute majority in Galicia, Feijoo's hold on the party will weaken.

It already took a hit after the PP won the most seats in Spain's July election only for Feijoo to fail to cobble together a working majority in parliament to form a government.

The region located above Portugal is one of Spain's most conservative. It was the birthplace of long-time dictator Francisco Franco and his right-hand man Manuel Fraga, as well former PP Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy.

Feijoo has warned that a victory for the BNG would bring the "social rupture" seen in Catalonia, which is governed by separatist parties, to Galicia.

"Don't let nationalism come to this land, there is no territory where it has gone well," he said during a final campaign rally on Friday.

The BNG, led by Ana Pontón, has made language a key issue, campaigning on promises to boost the use of the regional Galician language in public education and civil service.

TRIP

UK's Cameron to visit Falkland Islands — gov't

LONDON (AFP) — Foreign Minister David Cameron is to visit the Falkland Islands, over which the UK fought a war with Argentina in 1982, where he will stress London's commitment to its right to self-determination, his office said on Sunday.

Cameron will visit the South Atlantic archipelago during the first leg of his trip to South America and New York, the first visit of a UK Cabinet minister to the islands since then defence secretary Michael Fallon in 2016.

It comes amid the rise to power of maverick Argentine President Javier Milei, who has said he hopes to recover the islands diplomatically, although UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has rejected the idea.

Cameron will meet Falkland islanders "and see their work to build a thriving community and protect their natural environment", said the Foreign Office, but did not specify a date.

"He will reiterate the UK's commitment to uphold the islanders'

right of self-determination," it added.

Argentina claims it inherited the wind-swept islands from Spain when it gained independence while Britain says it has historically ruled them and that the islanders should have the right to self-determination.

Falkland islanders voted 99.8 per cent in favour of remaining British during a 2013 referendum.

Cameron said that the islands "are a valued part of the British family, and we are clear that as long as they want to remain part of the family, the issue of sovereignty will not be up for discussion".

"The Falkland islanders should be proud of the modern, prosperous community they have built," he added.

Cameron will honour British service personnel who lost their lives during the 1982 conflict.

The war claimed the lives of 649 Argentine soldiers, 255 British soldiers and three islanders.

RELEASE

Thai ex-PM Thaksin returns home from police hospital

BANGKOK (AFP) — Former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra arrived back at his Bangkok home from police hospital early Sunday, just six months after his dramatic return to the kingdom from 15 years of self-imposed exile.

The controversial billionaire, twice elected premier and ousted in a 2006 military coup, was jailed for eight years on graft and abuse-of-power charges upon his return in August.

But his sentence was cut to one year by King Maha Vajiralongkorn within days of his return and the government said last week the 74-year-old was eligible for early release because of his age and health.

Thaksin — wearing a neck brace and sitting next to his daughters Paetongtarn and Pintongtarn — was driven away Sunday from the police hospital in central Bangkok where he has spent the last half year.

A handful of people protesting his release had gathered in front of the hospital.

The car then drove to Thaksin's home, where a welcome-home banner was tied across the gates.

The exact details of his release are not clear, but Thaksin may be subject



Members of the media gather outside the family compound of Thailand's former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra following his release from a police hospital in Bangkok on Sunday

AFP photo

to monitoring — possibly with an ankle tag — and restrictions on his right to travel.

The former Manchester City owner's arrival in Thailand came on the same day his Pheu Thai party returned to government in alliance with pro-military parties, leading many to conclude that a backroom deal had been struck to cut his jail time.

The rumours grew

stronger when he was transferred to a police hospital within hours of being sentenced because of his poor health.

He was reportedly suffering from chest tightness and high blood pressure when he was admitted to hospital, and his family have said he underwent two operations in the following months.

The government has denied any deal and

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, of the Pheu Thai party, has insisted "he already served his jail time" — although it is not clear that Thaksin has spent any time in a prison cell.

Power tussle

The former telecoms tycoon is one of the most influential but divisive figures in modern Thai history.

Thaksin is loved by millions of rural Thais for his populist policies in the early 2000s but has long been opposed by the country's royalist and pro-military establishment.

The tussle for dominance between the establishment and Thaksin and his allies has largely defined Thai politics over the past two decades.

Police laid lese-majeste

charges against him last week over comments he made in South Korea almost a decade ago, although it is not clear whether prosecutors will take the case to court.

His critics suspected him of pulling strings in the kingdom even from exile, which he spent mostly in Dubai before his return.

Thaksin's sister Yingluck Shinawatra was elected prime minister for Pheu Thai in 2011, only to be ousted in a coup herself in 2014.

His daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra, now the party's chief, was one of the leading faces in its campaign for last year's general election and has been tipped as a possible future prime minister.

The election last May marked the first time in more than 20 years that a Thaksin-linked party failed to win the most seats in parliament.

Pheu Thai was beaten into second place by the upstart progressive Move Forward Party (MFP). But pro-establishment forces in the senate blocked MFP's leader Pita Limjaroenrat from becoming prime minister, and Pheu Thai's deal with military-linked parties then shut the newcomers out of government.



People take part in the opposition march 'For our democracy' called by various organizations to demand a 'free vote' in the upcoming June 2 presidential election, at the Zocalo Square in Mexico City on Sunday

Pre-election protests in Mexico as ex-mayor joins presidential race

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — Mexico City ex-mayor Claudia Sheinbaum officially entered the presidential race on Sunday amid protests against incumbent Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, whom she hopes to replace as the first-ever woman in the post.

Mexico's electoral commission said it had received the registration of Sheinbaum, a member of Lopez Obrador's ruling Morena party and the favourite, according to polls, to win the June 2 vote.

Meanwhile, thousands of Mexicans took to the streets of the capital to demand a "free vote" and "defence of democracy" as they accused the government of interfering in the election campaign even before it has officially begun.

Dressed in white and pink, opponents marched on the central Zocalo Square that houses the seat of government.

"Our democracy cannot be touched," read a banner unfurled on a stage where several opposition leaders delivered speeches.

Organisers of the protest accuse the government of using state resources to shift the vote in favour of 61-year-old Sheinbaum, who polls at about 64 per cent of

voter intention, and of seeking to rein in the powers of the electoral commission.

"The reforms sent by the president [to congress] attack independent institutions... It is necessary to defend them," Jorge Reyes, an 18-year-old student, told AFP of a package of proposals that include a raise in pensions.

Lopez Obrador has slammed the call to protest as a "demonstration to defend corruption".

Two women

Sheinbaum, a scientist by training, is a staunch supporter and confidante of Lopez Obrador, a leftwing populist who enjoys an approval rating of more than 60 per cent but is required by the constitution to leave office after a single six-year term.

She was a spokesperson for Lopez Obrador during his failed 2006 election bid, and served as Mexico City mayor from 2018 until earlier this year when she stepped down to run for president.

Sheinbaum will face Xochitl Galvez, an outspoken 60-year-old businesswoman and senator with Indigenous roots selected to represent an opposition coalition, the Broad Front for Mexico. One of the two in all

likelihood will become the first woman president of Mexico, a country with a long tradition of machismo.

Sheinbaum, the granddaughter of Bulgarian and Lithuanian Jewish immigrants, is known for her reserved, cautious style and has vowed to continue Lopez Obrador's policy agenda.

Like the incumbent president, she portrays herself as a defender of the poor, including Indigenous communities.

The entry of Galvez — born to an Indigenous Otomi father and mixed-race mother — has shaken up the presidential race.

Her first name means "flower" in the Nahuatl Indigenous language, and her background sets her apart from the traditional conservative opposition.

She wears Indigenous clothing, uses colloquial language peppered with swear words and is known for travelling around Mexico City by bicycle.

The opposition coalition is made up of the Institutional Revolutionary Party — which ruled the country for more than 70 years until 2000 — the conservative National Action Party and the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution.

DIPLMACY

Blinken to pay first trips to Brazil, Argentina as Lula leads G-20

WASHINGTON (AFP) — US Secretary of State Antony Blinken next week pays his first official visits to Brazil and Argentina, the State Department said, as he looks for common ground with the Latin American powers' independent-minded leaders.

Blinken will hold talks in the capitals Brasilia and Buenos Aires and also take part in a Group of 20 meeting of foreign ministers in Rio de Janeiro where he could have rare in-person interaction with his Russian counterpart.

For the globe-trotting top US diplomat, it has been a striking absence to go more than three years into his tenure without visiting Brazil, the Western Hemisphere's most populous country after the United States.

But Brazil was led until early 2023 by far-right Jair Bolsonaro, one of the closest international allies of Donald Trump.

Leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva returned to power last year and shortly afterward headed to Washington for talks with President Joe Biden, with the two veteran politicians prioritising action on climate change, labor rights and democratic values at home.

Blinken, in the Brazilian-led G-20 meetings, will discuss "increasing peace and stability, promoting social inclusion, reducing inequality" as well as efforts to support violence-wracked Haiti, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in announcing the trip.

But Lula, previously present from 2003 through 2010, has a strong independent streak and has distanced himself from Biden's push to isolate Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

Bruna Santos, director of the Wilson Centre's Brazil Institute,



Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar (left) and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken take part in a panel discussion at the Munich Security Conference (MSC) in Munich, southern Germany, on Saturday

said the Biden team has come to understand from Lula's first year that "they can be good friends, allies sometimes, but not allies at other times".

She said that while the United States has come to understand Brazil's stance on Ukraine, Lula has been strikingly silent on Venezuela, where leftist leader Nicolas Maduro's refusal to allow increasing election candidates has triggered a snapback of some US sanctions.

Beyond the past with Bolsonaro, Brazilians feel the Biden administration has less interest in Latin America, especially with its focus on Ukraine and the Middle East, she said.

"There is the sense that the relationship doesn't live up to its potential and it's not being treated as a priority," she said.

Forum for US-Russia?

Lula has previously said that Ukrainian

President Volodymyr Zelensky and Western powers bore some responsibility for the war with Russia.

Lula earlier also promised Russian President Vladimir Putin, facing an International Criminal Court arrest warrant, that he would be safe if he visited Rio for the G-20 summit in November, although he later backtracked and said it would be up to Brazil's judiciary.

Putin did not visit last year's G-20 summit in New Delhi, even though India, unlike Brazil, is not part of the Hague-based court.

At the last G-20 foreign ministers' meeting in New Delhi in March 2023, Blinken held his only one-on-one in-person meeting, albeit briefly, with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov since the Ukraine invasion.

The United States has argued that Russia is not serious about negotiations but Biden's support for Ukraine

has been weakened by a deadlock in Congress on approving new war funding, with Trump, seeking a comeback, musing that Russia is destined to win.

'There is the sense that the relationship doesn't live up to its potential and it's not being treated as a priority'

Bolsonaro, in a parallel to Trump, is facing serious legal problems with police investigating whether he and his inner circle orchestrated a coup attempt when rioters swarmed

government buildings in Brasilia after Lula's inauguration.

Argentina's President Javier Milei, who took office in December, has also drawn parallels to Trump with his abrasive style, anti-establishment comments and calls for a war on socialism, and the former US president congratulated him on his win.

The Biden administration has nonetheless had less reluctance to work with Milei than Bolsonaro, seeing the Argentine leader as idiosyncratic but not anti-democratic.

Blinken, who has made five trips to the Middle East since the Hamas-Israel war, will also find a rare enthusiastic backer of Israel in the Argentine leader.

Milei visited Israel this month on his first state visit and has promised to move Argentina's embassy to Jerusalem, a step taken only by the United States and four small countries.

UNREST

UN flags dangers of Daesh entrenchment in West Africa

UNITED NATIONS, United States (AFP) — Senior UN officials on Sunday highlighted deteriorating security conditions in West Africa linked to the growing entrenchment of the Daesh group and its affiliates.

Despite progress in combatting the group, it "continues to pose a serious threat to international peace and security," particularly in the "most affected" regions of West Africa and the Sahel, Vladimir Voronkov, UN under secretary-

general for counterterrorism, told the Security Council.

"The situation in this region has deteriorated in [the past six months] and is becoming increasingly more complex, with local ethnic and regional disputes conflating with the agenda and operations of these groups," he said.

"Daesh affiliates continued to operate with increasingly more autonomy from the Daesh core," he said.

"Should this trend of

greater autonomy persist, the report alerts to the risk that a vast area of instability may emerge from Mali to the borders of Nigeria," Voronkov said, referring to a new report from Secretary-General Antonio Guterres out this week.

The report noted "internal divisions" within Daesh — as indicated by last August's delayed announcement of the death of leader Abu Al Hussein Al Hussein Al Qurashi — and the possibility of "a shift

in the centre of gravity of the Daesh core away from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic".

"Africa and Afghanistan were mentioned as viable locations" for successor Abu Hafs Al Hashimi Al Qurashi — "with the former reportedly being more likely," the report said.

"Daesh and its affiliates are becoming more ingrained in parts of the African continent. They are exploiting the political instability and expanding

their radius of influence, their operations and territorial control in the Sahel with growing concerns for coastal West Africa," said Natalia Gherman, executive director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate.

"The African continent now accounts for almost half of terrorist acts worldwide, with central Sahel accounting for about 25 per cent of such attacks," she added.

Russia trying to attack beyond Avdiivka, Ukraine warns

Continued from page 1

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the decision to withdraw was taken to save as many lives as possible among his troops.

Some Ukrainian soldiers were captured during the hasty retreat, the army said, without providing details.

Russia's capture of the town has raised fears its forces could now try to advance further into the Donetsk region, which it claims to have annexed.

In the village of Novooleksandrivka some 30 kilometres west, local Vadym told AFP that, for

now, he was staying put with his wife and child, born one week ago.

The 22-year-old said shelling by the advancing Russian forces was "constant".

Around 200 people remain, but the attacks had not yet pushed him to leave with his family.

"I hope it will stop. And if it doesn't stop, we will try to leave."

Kyiv's newly-installed commander-in-chief Oleksandr Syrsky vowed on Sunday his forces would "eventually return to our Ukrainian Avdiivka".

Concerns are growing in Kyiv and the West over Ukraine's ability to thwart

a renewed Russian offensive without unlocking a stalled \$60-billion US aid package.

US President Joe Biden on Saturday directly blamed Congress, where political wrangling has held up a Ukrainian aid bill since last year, for Kyiv's loss of the town.

"Ukraine's military was forced to withdraw from Avdiivka after Ukrainian soldiers had to ration ammunition due to dwindling supplies as a result of congressional inaction, resulting in Russia's first notable gain in months," the White House said in a readout of a call between Biden and Zelensky.

Mediator says Gaza truce 'not promising' as Israel rejects calls to spare Rafah

Continued from page 1

Israel said on Saturday it detained 100 people at one of Gaza's main hospitals after troops raided the complex, with fears mounting for patients and staff trapped inside.

At least 120 patients and five medical teams are stuck without water, food and electricity in Nasser Hospital in Gaza's main southern city of Khan Yunis, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

Israel has for weeks concentrated its military operations in Khan Yunis, the hometown of

Hamas's Gaza leader Yahya Sinwar, the alleged architect of the October 7 sudden attack that triggered the war.

Intense fighting has raged around Nasser Hospital — one of the territory's last major medical facilities that remains operational.

The Israeli military said troops entered the hospital on Thursday, acting on what it said was "credible intelligence" that hostages had been held there. It later acknowledged it found no firm evidence that they had.

The power was cut and the generators

stopped after the raid, leading to the deaths of six patients due to a lack of oxygen, according to Gaza's health ministry.

A witness, who declined to be named for safety reasons, told AFP the Israeli forces had shot "at anyone who moved inside the hospital".

'We need food now'

In northern Gaza, many are so desperate for food they are grinding up animal feed.

"We're going to die from hunger, not by bombs or missiles," said

Mohammed Nassar, 50, from Jabalia in northern Gaza.

As a much-needed delivery of supplies arrived in southern Gaza Saturday, the UN warned that Gazans are close to famine.

Palestinians in Rafah have grown so hungry that they are stopping aid trucks to take whatever they can manage, according to the UN.

With intense fighting around Khan Yunis, even more people are fleeing into Rafah, despite the risk of an imminent invasion there too, according to the UN agency for Palestinian

refugees.

The promised military operation has ignited speculation that Palestinian refugees could be forced into neighbouring Egypt.

After satellite images appeared to show extensive construction work along the border, an Egyptian human rights monitor claimed preparations were underway for a camp to receive displaced Palestinians in the Sinai Peninsula.

Egypt has publicly denied any such plans and since the start of the war has refused to open its border to refugees.

Brazil's Lula accuses Israel of 'genocide' in Gaza

Continued from page 1

But he has since grown vocally critical of Israel's retaliatory military campaign.

Lula criticised Western countries' recent decisions to halt aid to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, after Israel accused some of its employees of involvement in the October 7 surprise

attack.

Lula, who met with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh on Saturday on the sidelines of the summit, has said Brazil will increase its own contribution to the agency, and urged other countries to do the same.

"When I see the rich world announce that it's halting its contributions to humanitarian aid for

the Palestinians, I just imagine how big these people's political awareness is and how big the spirit of solidarity in their hearts is," Lula said.

"We need to stop being small when we need to be big."

He reiterated his call for a two-state solution to the conflict, with Palestine "definitively recognised as a full and sovereign state".

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Humanitarian needs and political realities in Gaza

The ongoing conflict in Gaza appears to be entering its final stages, particularly with the focus now centred on Rafah. Day by day, the situation intensifies, with a gradual operation unfolding from the north to the central regions and towards Gaza's main southern city of Khan Yunis. Amidst this, over 1.2 million people find themselves concentrated in the southern part of Gaza.



Amer Sabaileh

However, the paramount concern remains: How will this war conclude, and what lies ahead for the refugees amassed in this area? For Israel, the continuation of the conflict may seem imperative, yet, for the international community, safeguarding human lives is a top priority. Consequently, various political proposals have emerged to end the war while urging Israel to exercise restraint in military operations to protect civilian lives in this complex environment.

Efforts to find a political solution face the significant challenge of convincing parties like Hamas to participate constructively. This requires a complex approach, possibly involving individuals with affiliations close to Hamas but not within the movement itself.

Furthermore, addressing the potential aftermath of the conflict in Rafah raises concerns about managing the humanitarian crisis and the welfare of the concentrated population. International pressure to find solutions may lead to revised priorities and strategies, including reconsidering funding for UNRWA and searching for new practical steps.

Simultaneously, Israel must reassure its allies and the international community regarding the effectiveness of measures taken to safeguard civilian lives. As the conflict in Gaza evolves, attention is drawn not only to the southern borders but also to the north, particularly the escalating situation along the Lebanese border.

As the conflict in Gaza persists and the likelihood of preventing an invasion of Rafah diminishes, priorities have shifted significantly. Discussions about the necessity of humanitarian aid and rescue plans have brought to light the complexities of the Palestinian political landscape, especially among the deeply fragmented situation within Palestinian leadership. Currently, there is no clear representation for a plan towards a technocratic government, and questions arise regarding the role of the Palestinian Authority in such a scenario. Addressing these issues poses a formidable challenge in finding solutions to the ongoing crisis.

Meanwhile, the situation in Gaza unfolds amidst a region seemingly at a standstill. The resolution of the conflict in Gaza may serve as a catalyst for addressing other conflicts, particularly the longstanding issue between Israel and Hizbollah, and the potential application of UN Resolution 1701. However, it is evident that Iranian interests oppose any escalation of conflict, highlighting the need to prevent Iraqi resistance groups from targeting American troops. Recent attacks resulting in American casualties have prompted a firm response, yet this does not signify the end of such incidents. Rather, it underscores the complexity of Iraq's political landscape and its control.

In a broader regional context, the ongoing conflict in Gaza has led to the emergence of multiple fronts, extending from Yemen to Lebanon. However, the resolution of these conflicts may not hinge solely on the conclusion of the war in Gaza. Instead, the war has brought to the surface a multitude of longstanding issues that require a comprehensive resolution. Addressing these issues incrementally may pave the way towards stability, with Lebanon potentially being the starting point for this process.

Moreover, the conflict in Gaza has highlighted unresolved issues across the region, prompting the need to address underlying problems systematically. Perhaps Lebanon will be the starting point in this endeavour. While the war in Gaza has triggered conflicts across the region, its resolution is no longer solely contingent upon ending the conflict itself. It has unveiled deep-rooted issues that demand comprehensive and gradual resolution, with each step potentially paving the way for peace in the broader context.

Global economy; Is there a way out?

In a recent report, the World Bank has warned that the world may be heading towards an economic recession due to the disturbances and financial crises witnessed in the global markets, particularly in the economies of emerging markets and the continuation of the central banks in raising the interest rates to reduce inflation. The report indicated that the global economy has become fragile and can no longer withstand any new challenges, already suffering from severe slowdowns, especially in the United States, China and the Eurozone. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) report for the year 2023 also pointed out that the global economic situation is fraught with risks, with uncertainty prevailing worldwide due to rising interest rates, inflation rates, as well as political disputes. The report added that the global economy is suffering losses due to the failure to address many issues, witnessing significant impact from global events starting from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and its humanitarian, health and economic disasters, to Ukraine war in 2022 and its consequences on global food security, energy supplies and the unprecedented rise in global inflation rates, as well as the rise in interest rates and their negative effects on slowing down economic recovery, and finally, the Gaza war in 2023 and the events in the Red Sea and their impact on global trade, energy markets, and the subsequent economic effects locally, regionally, and internationally. The global economy has faced numerous challenges, leading some countries to take measures to support their economies, such as adopting assistance and aid programmes, implementing financial incentive programmes to stimulate the economy, i.e. tax cuts, loan financing, supporting vital sectors, financing companies, boosting trade, encouraging international investment and reducing tariffs.

The global economy has entered 2024 with uncertainty, in addition to the increasing tension between the world's two largest economies - China and the United States. The internal difficulties facing both economies, such as local debt crises, rising

interest rates and inflation, impacted their role in achieving global economic recovery. In general, the global economy is currently suffering amidst financial sector chaos, international trade stagnation and investment decline. The investment climate has been affected by the crises that have resulted in economic growth slowdown, financial and banking system failures, with increasing global unemployment rate reaching 5.3 per cent, according to the International Labour Organisation. Additionally, countries are facing a trade imbalance, with a trade drop reaching 18.7 per cent (\$774 billion), which may lead to deterioration of local currencies and instability in financial markets.

The global economy is also experiencing widespread slowdown with uncertainty and ambiguity about future trends, leading to increased poverty rates and social problems

The global economy is also experiencing widespread slowdown with uncertainty and ambiguity about future trends, leading to increased poverty rates and social problems. The World Bank

reports indicated global growth slowdown from 6 per cent to 2.9 per cent in 2023. Many countries have been affected by the international economic recession, with global economic growth rates declining from 3.4 per cent to 2.8 per cent due to continued interest rate hikes, reaching record levels of 5.5 per cent by late 2023. Global trade activities have also faced significant challenges, with inflation rates continuing to rise to 9.1 per cent in US market in 2022, however it declined to 4.5 per cent by end of 2023. Supply and demand dynamics, global supply chains, have also been affected, with increased shipping and logistical costs in a turbulent scene that does not give promise for international trade.

On a related note, public debt levels have increased for many countries, with the global debt-to-GDP ratio rising to 337 per cent due to slowed growth and increased prices. The report provides that global debt has exceeded \$307 trillion, while global GDP reached \$103 trillion, posing significant challenges for countries in managing their debts and securing sustainable borrowing in the future. This in turn forced credit rating agencies to review countries' abilities to repay their debts and achieve healthy growth rates. The continued state of uncertainty has negatively impacted global economic growth since 2020, affecting foreign investment. As per IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, foreign investment is now divided according to geopolitical lines not for economic causes.

This division has led to growth slowdowns between non-aligned blocs and a decline in global trade activities within economic blocs from 2.2 per cent to 1.7 per cent, and trade volume reduction from 3 per cent to 1.9 per cent, harming many economies. However, IMF predicts global trade growth of 3.5 per cent in 2024, with advanced economies' imports ris-



Haider Majali

ing by 3 per cent and emerging economies by 4.4 per cent. On the other hand, it is noted that the global economy relies on the US interest rate pricing policy, as the interest rate index in US market drives global financial markets and monetary policy-making. This leads to problems related to public debts, increased financing costs, and budget deficits, especially in economies pegged to the US dollar. The increased debt will exaggerate the economic crises and will contribute to the slowdown of economic growth to 2.4 per cent in 2024.

Nonetheless, there exist available solutions to reverse the decline and rescue the global economy. Such solutions depend on the nature of the challenges, that includes enhancing free trade and globalisation, financial stimulus to achieve monetary stability, improving financial transparency, enhancing economic governance, accountability, fighting corruption, activating monitoring systems, and valuing workers' rights. In addition, investing in infrastructure and improving education and training to meet labour market needs, enhancing innovation and entrepreneurship, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises to create new jobs, and adopting digital and technological transformation are essential solutions to rescue the economy. Furthermore, adopting flexible monetary policies to promote economic growth, such as reducing interest rates, easing monetary policy, asset purchases, and providing financing to banks and companies, is an important driver of the economy. Finally, international coordination in addressing the challenges is necessary to improve global economy. For example, resolving the war in Ukraine which has cost the world hundreds of billions, allocating aid from major countries to low-income countries in the form of grants and assistance, and the IMF and major countries waiving the repayment of loans to countries with reform programs to support them in economic reform efforts are all realistic solutions to rescue the global economy.

Haider Majali is an economic and investment expert. haider.majali@gmail.com

The story of an economy and a nation's determination

Jordan is classified by international institutions as a low- to middle-income country, with a small, open economy, limited natural resources, especially those discovered and exploited, interconnected with the global economy, and possessing the ability to quickly adapt and absorb shocks.

The Jordanian economy has been subjected to several shocks throughout its history: Economic, financial and banking, as well as various political, security and health shocks, all of which had economic and financial effects. Jordan has never emerged from a crisis or shock without entering into another, often stronger one. Some of these crises had a significant and clear impact on the structure and composition of the national economy, while others had a marginal effect, and some even altered Jordan's demographic makeup. The Jordanian economy has managed to address these shocks and crises and mitigate their consequences to varying degrees. Yet, the impact of some of them still persists on the structure of the Jordanian economy and some of its sectors to this day.

These shocks challenged the flexibility of the economy and its ability to adapt, revealing challenges and opportunities for achieving sustainable growth. However, successive crises, regional instability, and, more recently, the global pandemic, have left difficult economic impacts, with poverty and unemployment rates reaching unprecedented levels. Some of these crises also affected inflation rates, pushing them beyond the familiar monetary stability described in economic literature. Furthermore, some led to an increase in the trade deficit and the deficit in the general budget, resulting in elevated levels of government debt surpassing acceptable limits for years.

Despite these challenges, the



Adli Kandah

Jordanian economy has witnessed significant developments over the past decade, both in terms of production and employment, as well as openness to the external

world. Economic sectors have undergone radical structural changes in their contributions to the Gross Domestic Product.

The Jordanian economy has demonstrated its ability to adapt to external and internal shocks, with Jordan showing, in most cases, effective and efficient crisis management.

The Jordanian economy has gradually transformed into a primarily service-based economy. The development of the government sector and the increase in its economic role have contributed to strengthening the role of the service sector. Today, the services sector employs more than two-thirds of the workforce in the national economy and contributes to nearly the same percentage of the Gross Domestic Product. This indicates the Jordanian economy's evolution towards diversifying sectors and increasing the importance of service sectors in the national economy.

The Jordanian economy has not been immune to regional and global economic developments due to its openness to the global economy through foreign trade and direct foreign investment, in addition to the impact of remittances from Jordanian workers abroad, which have significantly increased with the growth of the Jordanian workforce abroad.

The impact of crises and shocks on the Jordanian economy cannot be ignored, as the economy heavily depends on external factors and stability in

the regional and global arenas.

Therefore, it is imperative for policymakers to closely monitor how these crises and shocks affect the implementation of national economic plans, strategies and policies, and how, sometimes, these shocks may force some plans to stumble or deviate from their predetermined path, prompting decision-makers to rethink and restructure priorities.

It is acknowledged that the path to economic stability and growth is filled with successes and challenges alike. The journey continues, and the lessons learned from the history of the Jordanian economy are invaluable guides as Jordan always faces future challenges with the spirit of resilience to overcome what awaits in the future

On the other hand, these shocks can also be an opportunity to develop new strategies and improve the ability to plan and prepare to face difficult challenges.

The journey through Jordan's economic history since 1921 until 2022, as documented in the first edition of the book published by the Royal Hashemite

Documentation Centre last week, under the title: "The Jordanian economy, financial and economic crises, Adaptation, and Overcoming Challenges 1921-2022.", was filled with challenges, shocks and crises, yet, it also witnessed strong determination, resilience, adaptability and steadfastness.

Throughout this period, the Jordanian economy has overcome numerous crises, from internal disturbances to regional conflicts and global crises. It has succeeded forcefully and resolutely in overcoming all these challenges and difficulties, paving its way to the future on a solid foundation, thanks to the wise leadership vision and the strong spirit of its people.

This is the story of an evolving economy that has carved out an important place in a rapidly changing world, embodying the determination of the nation with all its conscious and cohesive components to achieve progress and build a prosperous future.

It is acknowledged that the path to economic stability and growth is filled with successes and challenges alike. The journey continues, and the lessons learned from the history of the Jordanian economy are invaluable guides as Jordan always faces future challenges with the spirit of resilience to overcome what awaits in the future.

Jordan, with its political institutions and wise leadership, remains an example to be followed in confronting economic and political challenges with determination and resilience. The Jordanian state is earnestly working on developing economic and social strategies that contribute to achieving stability and sustainable growth. Moreover, the Jordanian economy reflects its ability to respond to challenges and crises effectively, demonstrating its capacity to adapt and deal with shocks wisely and resolutely. May God protect Jordan.

BUSINESS

Monday, February 19, 2024

AVIATION

Union calls Lufthansa ground staff strike at German airports

BERLIN (AFP) — Union Verdi called on ground staff at Lufthansa to stage a walkout on Tuesday across Germany's biggest airports, in the latest strike to plague the country in recent weeks.

The industrial action affecting seven airports including Frankfurt, Munich and Berlin will start at 4:00 am (03:00 GMT) on Tuesday and end at 7:10 am on Wednesday, the union said in a statement.

No progress had been made in negotiations on working conditions, the union said, calling the strike of 25,000 workers, including maintenance employees and airport counter staff across the company.

Among sticking points were what the union said was an overly low pay offer made to the staff in comparison to other employee categories such as pilots.

"While the company is offering pilots with annual basic wages of up to



AFP photo

Airplanes of German airline Lufthansa are parked at the Franz-Josef-Strauss airport in Munich, southern Germany, during a strike of the ground staff employees of Lufthansa on July 27, 2022

270,000 euros (\$298,000) raises reaching two digit figures, ground staff are unable to break even given the inflation of the last years," said Verdi's lead negotiator Marvin Reschinsky.

The union added that

it expected major flight disruptions over the walkout.

"We don't want this escalation. We want a quick result for employees and passengers," said the union, which is seeking pay rises of 12.5 per cent, and

a minimum of 500 euros more a month.

The next round of negotiations will take place on February 21.

Germany has been hit by a spate of strikes across varying sectors including transport,

the civil service and supermarkets.

Pinched by inflation over the last years and in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, workers are demanding higher wages to cope with the cost of living.

BUDGET

Singapore gives households and companies tax relief

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Singapore unveiled last week a relief package for individuals, including rebates for utility bills to help ease the high cost of living in the city-state.

The announcement was made during the 2024 national budget statement coming ahead of general elections due next year.

The polls are set to mark a major political transition, with a younger crop of leaders set to lead the Southeast Asian economic powerhouse.

Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong presented the wide-ranging budget in parliament that earmarked Sg\$3.2 billion (\$2.4 billion) to support households and companies grappling with inflation.

A personal income tax rebate of 50 per cent capped at Sg\$200 for the last tax year, will be granted, while families will also re-

ceive cash and rebates for their utility bills.

"These are concrete ways to help Singaporeans tackle cost of living pressures," said Wong, who is expected to succeed Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong before general elections due by November 2025.

said.

Companies will also enjoy a 50 per cent corporate income tax rebate, capped at Sg\$40,000, as part of a package to help businesses.

"Many companies have seen increases in their wage bills, rental and utilities, amongst others," said Wong, 53.

Prime Minister Lee has said he intends to hand over the reins to Wong later this year.

When Wong takes over, it would be only the second time since Singapore's independence in 1965 that the prime minister is not a member of the Lee family.

Lee Hsien Loong's father, Lee Kuan Yew, was the country's first prime minister.

"It's a pro-social budget, with about three-quarters of the speech devoted to social measures," said Eugene Tan, an associate law professor at the Singapore Management University.

'It's a pro-social budget, with about three-quarters of the speech devoted to social measures'

'Let me assure everyone we will always have your backs,' he

INFLATION

US wholesale prices rose more than expected in January

WASHINGTON (AFP) — US wholesale prices rose more than expected in January, according to government data published on Friday, as services costs were lifted by a jump in the index for hospital outpatient care.

The producer price index (PPI) rose 0.3 per cent in January after falling by 0.1 per cent a month earlier, the Labor Department said in a statement.

This was above market expectations of a smaller 0.1 per cent rise, according to Briefing.com.

"PPI inflation surprised to the upside in January," High Frequency Economics chief US economist Rubeeela Farooqi wrote in a note to clients.

"The data show significant progress on producer prices from rates of change a year earlier," she added. "But like the CPI, monthly changes accelerated to start the year."

The uptick in producer prices follows a similar monthly increase in the headline consumer price index (CPI) inflation measure in January, which rattled financial markets and pushed away expectations of an imminent interest rate cut by the US Federal Reserve.

Stocks on Wall Street ended the day lower following the new inflation readings. US Treasury yields, which are heavily influenced by interest rate expectations, rose on the news.

The "major factor" behind the rise in the services index was the 2.2 per cent monthly rise in hospital outpatient care, while a range of other services also rose, the Labor Department said in a statement.

This helped to counteract the decline in the index for final demand goods, which was driven by a 1.7 per cent decline in energy prices.

MERGER

Wave of deals puts US shale oil back in focus

By Thomas Urbain
Agence France-Presse

NEW YORK (AFP) — American shale oil is back at the centre of the global petroleum game, a driver of major deals involving petroleum giants more inclined to buy up rivals than to undertake wildcat exploration.

On Monday, Diamondback Energy announced the \$26 billion acquisition of Endeavour Energy, combining two of the top 10 producers in the Permian Basin, which has the largest unconventional petroleum reserves in the United States.

The Permian, which is located in western Texas and eastern New Mexico, has emerged as an especially hot commodity.

In October, ExxonMobil announced the acquisition of Pioneer Natural Resources, the biggest Permian producer, for about \$60 billion.

That was followed in December by Occidental Petroleum's \$12 billion takeover of CrownRock, another Permian producer.

"Consolidation in the space was a bit overdue

because the exploration and production space is fairly fragmented, or had been, until all these deals," said CFRA Research analyst Stewart Glickman.

"People have this idea that it's very monopolistic," Richard Sweeney, an economics professor at Boston College, said of the oil industry in places like the Permian.

"The US oil and gas market is incredibly fragmented," Sweeney said. "There's, like, easily 50 firms that drill a substantial number of wells in Texas."

One large deal that doesn't involve the Permian is Chevron's \$53 billion purchase of Hess Corporation. However, Chevron highlighted the appeal of Hess's assets in the Bakken region in the state of North Dakota, another big shale region.

Such shale basins take advantage of horizontal drilling techniques, which permit the drilling of wells from miles away once large companies buy neighboring sites.

The addition of the Pioneer acreage "means fewer wells" and lower



AFP file photo

Pump jacks are seen on the Bakken Shale Formation, near Williston, North Dakota, on September 6, 2016

capital spending, said Kathryn Mikells, chief financial officer at ExxonMobil.

More production overall?

While the investment surge in the Permian has helped to lift US oil production to an all-time high above 13 million barrels per day, analysts say the wave of mergers will not necessarily translate into ever-higher output.

"The more concentration you get, the greater

the chance that you will see less production," said Bill O'Grady of Confluence Investment Management. "It's competition that leads to greater supply."

Sweeney predicted that companies like ExxonMobil and Occidental will be more selective in drilling the best prospects from their increased properties, focusing on highly profitable production.

"It's more economic to buy someone else's reserves than to look for new locations in

the United States," said Andy Lipow of Lipow Oil Associates, who expects more US-centred deals in part because "there aren't that many attractive opportunities outside of the United States".

Wall Street has generally blessed the shale-focused transactions as a preferable option to costly exploration campaigns; the trend also doesn't threaten the industry's ability to keep plying shareholders with dividends and stock repurchases, said

Glickman. The shale deals come as some financial heavyweights such as BNP Paribas, Barclays and HSBC shun large new petroleum projects amid pressure from environmentalists.

Efforts to address climate change could doom fossil fuel projects in the long term, but fossil fuels still account for more than three quarters of global energy use. If anything, these deals show the staying power of petroleum.

The recent deals have included the natural gas-focused takeover of Southwestern Energy by Chesapeake Energy for \$7.4 billion.

But Glickman expects less consolidation in this area, noting the volatility of natural gas prices, which have dropped to their lowest point in three and a half years in the United States.

"You can probably make safer budgeting assumptions with less volatility on the oil side than on the gas side," he said, adding that oil "would still probably be the target, if you're trying to grow acquisition".

MARKETS

Tokyo stocks close at fresh 34-year high

TOKYO (AFP) — Tokyo stocks closed higher last week with the key Nikkei index ending at a new 34-year high, partly supported by Wall Street rallies.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index added 0.9 per cent, or 329.30 points, to 38,487.24 while the broader Topix index ended up 1.3 per cent, or 32.88 points, at 2,624.73.

Tokyo shares were boosted by Wall Street gains and sound earnings reports by US chip-equipment maker Applied Materials, analysts said.

"In the Japanese market, chip-linked shares soared" before slowing down later in the day, IwaiCosmo Securities said.

The dollar fetched

150.25 yen in Asian trade, against 150.24 yen in New York.

'Its monetary easing environment will likely continue for a while'

At a parliament session on Friday, Bank of Japan Governor Kazuo Ueda said "its monetary easing environment will likely continue for a while" even if the bank partially lifts its ultra-loose measures such as a negative inter-

est rate, Daiwa Securities said.

That comment "provided a sense of relief to the market", the brokerage added.

Even as the Nikkei index approaches its highest-ever closing value of 38,915.87, a record set in December 1989, "there is no overheating" felt in the market, SBI Securities senior strategist Ichiro Asai told AFP.

Other positive factors include the "relatively low price of Japanese shares" compared to those in overseas markets, partly helped by the cheaper yen, he said.

There are mixed views among market-watchers about whether the Nikkei will break its record soon,

Asai added.

"One group think these rapid rises will trigger some kind of adjustment, but the other thinks share prices can surpass the record without hitting any psychological barriers."

Among major shares in Tokyo, Olympus jumped 5.4 per cent to 2,165 yen, oil refiner Idemitsu Kosan gained 5.3 per cent to 927 yen, and trading house Mitsui & Co added 3.6 per cent to 6,267 yen.

Chip-testing equipment maker Advantest slipped 0.4 per cent to 7,020 yen after soaring in early trade, while chip-making equipment manufacturer Tokyo Electron ended up 0.4 per cent at 35,350 yen.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE



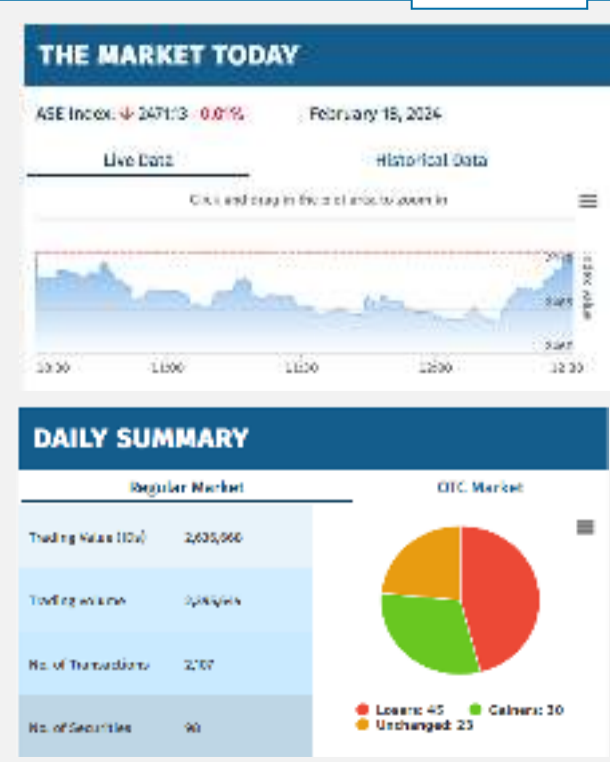
AMMAN (JT) Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Sunday amounted to JD 2.6 million spread over 2.4 million shares that traded through 2,107 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.01 per cent, closing at 2471.13 points.

Out of 98 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 30 companies rose while the share price of another 45 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Gulf Insurance Group - Jordan by 5 per cent, Specialised Trading and Investment by 4.74 per cent, Philadelphia International Educational Investment Company by 4.38 per cent, Premier Business and Projects Co. Ltd. by 4.26 per cent, and Sura Development and Investment P.L.C by 4.05 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Rum Group for Transportation and Tourism Investment by 8.33 per cent, Irbid District Electricity by 6.73 per cent, Specialised Investment Compounds by 5.43 per cent, Al-Tahdith for Real Estate Investments Company by 5 per cent, and Al-Rakaez Investment Co. by 5 per cent.



FOOTBALL

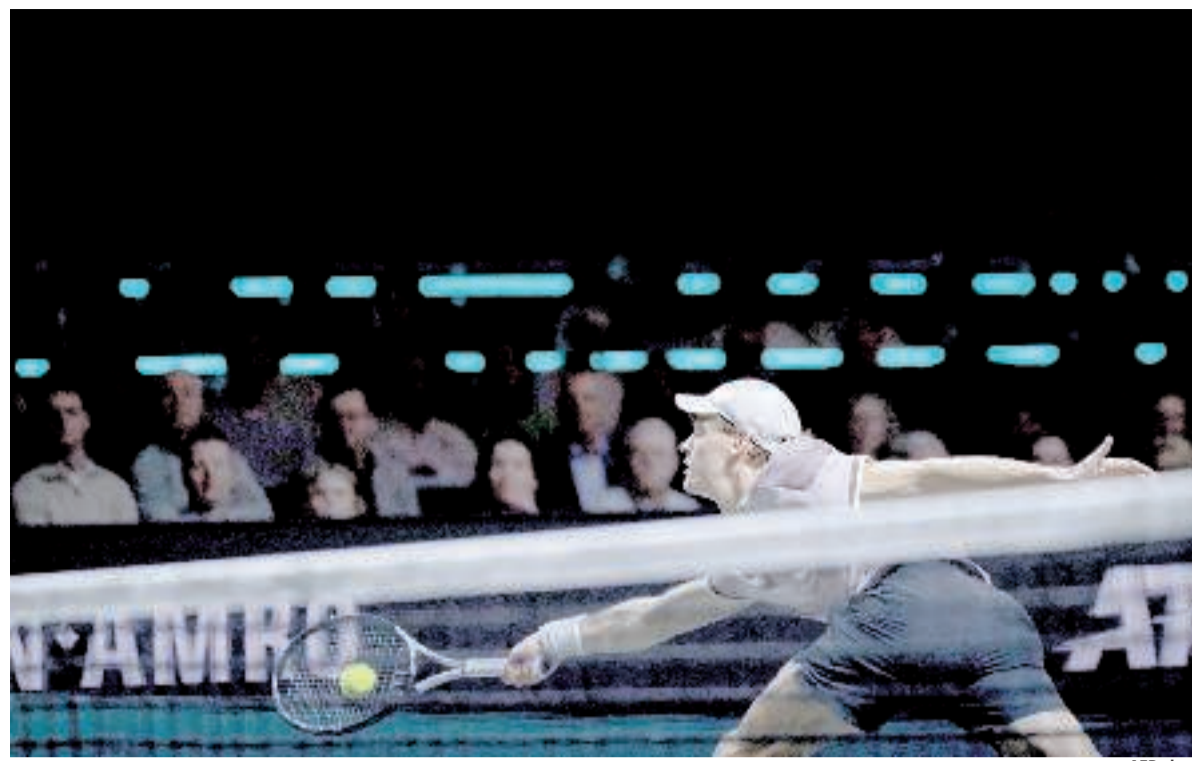
Monaco slip up in Ligue 1 race

PARIS (AFP) — Monaco missed the chance to climb back up to second place in Ligue 1 when they lost 2-1 at home to Toulouse on Sunday while Rennes comfortably beat Clermont 3-1 to continue their winning streak. Toulouse opened the scoring in the 41st minute when skipper Vincent Sierrro caught Monaco goalkeeper Philipp Kohn out of position on a free-kick. Monaco levelled just after the restart through Maghnes Akliouche but failed throughout the game to capitalise on a host of other chances. Centre-forward Folarin Balogun was the main culprit. The American fluffed an early one-on-one with goalkeeper Guillaume Restes and then squandered another golden opportunity from close range after being set up by Thilo Kehrer. Defeat means Monaco stay fourth on 38 points, level with Lille, who beat Le Havre 3-0 on Saturday, and one point behind Nice who slipped to a 1-0 loss at Lyon on Friday. Paris Saint-Germain, who beat Nantes 2-0 on Saturday, remain clear leaders on 53 points, 14 ahead of Nice.

ATHLETICS

Dutch runner Femke Bol breaks own 400m indoor world record

PARIS (AFP) — Femke Bol broke her own indoor 400m world record on Sunday as she recorded a time of 49.24sec in the Dutch championships in Apeldoorn. Bol, the double world champion outdoors at 400m hurdles, improved her own record set at the same venue last year by two hundredths of a second. The 23-year-old had demonstrated she was in the form for fast times by opening her season with 49.69sec in Metz before going even faster in Lievin last week with 49.63sec. She is the hot favourite to win the 400m at the World Indoor Championships in Glasgow in two weeks' time. Lieke Klaver showed that The Netherlands are in contention for gold and silver in that event by smashing her personal best with a time of 50.10sec to become the second fastest indoor performer of the year.



Italy's Jannik Sinner returns the ball to Australia's Alex de Minaur during their men final at ABN AMRO Open tennis tournament at Ahoy Arena, in Rotterdam, on Sunday

Sinner a winner again as he powers to Rotterdam Open crown

ROTTERDAM, Netherlands (AFP) — Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner powered to his first Rotterdam Open on Sunday, breaking down a determined defensive effort from Australia's Alex De Minaur to win 7-5, 6-4 in a high-quality battle. The win extended the Italian top seed's unbeaten streak to 15 — including his run to glory in Melbourne — and takes him to a career-high third in the world rankings. A lengthy rally at game point left Sinner lying on the floor gasping for breath after diving unsuccessfully for a powerful backhand drive up the line from his opponent. But the confident Sinner recovered quickly and had his own break points in the very next game, converting at the second time of asking as De Minaur ill-

advisedly left a volley that dropped on the baseline. Serving a second time for the set, Sinner this time made no mistake, closing it out to the delight of a packed Rotterdam crowd. There was no let-up in intensity at the start of the second set, De Minaur scrapping back everything Sinner threw at him and the two players trading breaks to level at 3-3. A tired-looking De Minaur backhand into the bottom of the net gifted Sinner another break of serve in the next game and this time the Italian held serve to take him within one game of the title. The gritty De Minaur made him serve it out and fought to the end but Sinner was ultimately too strong and finished it off 6-4. The two are good friends off the court and former doubles partners and they embraced warmly at the net as the Rotterdam crowd gave them a thunderous ovation for an entertaining match. De Minaur's run to the final included a pulsating semifinal against Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov, later describing it as his "best match on tour". Sinner's path was serene, with injury-prone Canadian veteran Milos Raonic withdrawing at the start of the second set in the quarter-final and a straightforward win over local boy Tallon Griekspoor in the semis.

Barry Richards leads tributes to S.Africa's 'cricket giant' Procter

DURBAN, South Africa (AFP) — Long-time friend and team-mate Barry Richards said "a giant has fallen" as he paid tribute to former South African all-rounder Mike Procter, who died aged 77 near Durban on Saturday.

"We were part of each other's lives," said Richards of his 65-year friendship with Procter. Richards and Procter, acknowledged as two of South Africa's greatest cricketers, played against each other as schoolboys and went on to play together for the Natal province and South Africa at both junior and international level.

"Anyone who played for Natal, Rhodesia and Gloucestershire in the 1960s and 70s knew that they were in the presence of a genius," said Richards. Procter and Richards teamed up for four Tests, starring for South Africa as they won all four matches against Australia in 1969-70 before their international careers were cut short by the international isolation caused by South Africa's apartheid policy. Vincent van der Bijl, who formed a devastating new ball partnership for Natal with Procter, described his former team-mate as "the most unpretentious great cricketer I knew". Van der Bijl, a former International Cricket Council head of umpires and match referees, said Procter was "a warrior on the field". "He played the game tough and yet amateur in spirit. He used to end eve-

ry pre-game session by saying, 'Let's go and have some fun.' He played the game as it should always be played. It was a real privilege to play with and against him."

Procter was South Africa's first coach when that period of international isolation ended in 1991.

Fast bowler Allan Donald made his international debut under him. "I learned a lot from him. Just to listen to him was an experience. He made me aware of what was needed to have the mentality of a fast bowler," he said.

Ali Bacher, former managing director of South African cricket, captained Procter in the series against Australia.

"He was one of the most outstanding cricketers that South Africa has produced. He bowled fast, swinging deliveries and as a batsman was good enough to have batted at number five for any country in the world," he said.

Cricket South Africa president Ribhan Richards described Procter as "not just a giant on the field but a beacon of hope and inspiration off it."

Dolphins Cricket, formerly the Natal Cricket Union, said in a statement that Procter's "legacy will endure as an inspiration for generations to come".

"His career as a world-class cricketer was outstanding, his leadership prowess was noteworthy and his role as a cricket administrator and coach was remarkable."

LIFE

THE JORDAN TIMES

FAMILY FLAVOUR

Our Shadow

By Nathalie Khalaf, Holistic Counsellor



Our shadow: that part of us of which we are unaware. The part of us we are alienated from since very early on in childhood, which hides all we do not want to be associated with.

Mirror of the other

In other words, the shadow is that part of us we are disconnected from.

We notice it in others when we dislike them and even when we praise them. What we should understand is that we are all simi-

up disowning some good and some bad qualities. Any undesired characteristic we are taught to believe in as "bad, shameful" or "unlovable" will be projected onto others in our surroundings.

When we project something onto others, it will seem as if we have no power over our surroundings and we may get caught up in serious emotional distress.

We can project both negative and positive emotions. So instead of hating a certain person, we feel as though that person hates us! Instead of admiring the good qualities in another person, we may feel we are worthless and that the world around us is filled with people who are better than us.

Suppressing emotions

A simple way to detect our shadow is to notice how we feel towards others in our judgement of them or in praising them. For instance, we may think a person is a liar and always gets away with things.

We can look within ourselves and the discomfort we feel at the idea of lying. We may have been brought up to believe it is a bad characteristic. That lying makes us not lovable and will bring on punishment.

So, most of us shelve the ability to lie into our shadow. But we would not be able to recognise it unless we are capable of lying. We just suppress it



and judge it in others. This may lead to us one day lying without realising or admitting it.

A conscious choice

We may feel so ashamed that we may

bury it even deeper within the layers of ourselves.

Here is what we can do instead: realise that we are all capable of lying, see it as a conscious choice and that we may even need to lie

when we cannot or do not want to handle the truth.

Some people may lie as a defence mechanism, others may use it as a manipulative way to get what they want; all of this, of

course, comes from our upbringing and childhood.

Our choices

Whatever it is, we simply need to become aware that we all have the option of lying, but can make that decision a conscious one: "I know I can lie if I want to, but I choose not to."

I therefore can understand why another may choose to do it and I find it in my heart not to judge them anymore."

The second example is of praising someone so we may say: "Oh! I wish I were that generous." We can all agree that generosity is also a human choice, not a trait some people are born with. So, find the

generous self within you, connect to it and make a conscious choice to become more and more generous. In a nutshell, we only see and recognise in others what we know exists inside of ourselves.

So, let us face it and bring it into the light. For one good reason, this exercise will lessen the distance between us and others and help us judge less and accept more.

"Confronting the shadow means to stop blaming others". Edward Edinger

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Disconnecting from the self

Some studies indicate that some people create images and beliefs and disconnect from parts of themselves. They turn into their "shadow" and that's how neurosis and mental illnesses emerge.



lar, we have the same wants, needs and feelings.

We are all mirrors of each other. So, whatever I like or dislike in another, exists in me otherwise my psyche will not recognise it.

The shadow. That hidden, repressed, for the most part, inferior and guilt-laden personality whose ultimate ramifications reach back into the realm of our animal ancestors.

We are disconnected with parts of our 'self' or psyche at the shadow level. We thus end