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JT photo

The Lower House passes on Wednesday the draft state budget law for fiscal year 2025

Lower House passes 2025 state budget bill

■ 90 of 129 deputies present vote in favour of law

■ Finance minister says economic indicators show growth despite wars, regional turbulence

AMMAN (JT) — The Lower House on Wednesday endorsed the draft state budget law for the fiscal year 2025.

During a session chaired by Lower House Speaker Ahmad

Safadi and attended by Prime Minister Jafar Hassan and Cabinet members, 90 out of out of the 129 lawmakers present voted in favour of the bill, the Jordan News Agency, Petra,

reported.

Replying to MPs' remarks on the draft law, Finance Minister Abdulhakim Shibli said that economic indicators show a growth and improvement in

the national economy despite wars and difficult conditions in the Arab world.

Shibli said that the government had not raised taxes on any basic commodities or

the income tax, noting that the tax burden in the Kingdom is within the rate of countries with similar economic conditions.

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'Gov't works on 'institutionalising' field visits, using hands-on approach'

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Government Communications Mohammed Momani said that the government is working on "institutionalising" the field visits and turning them into a hands-on approach to address problems and achieve the envisioned economic growth.

Momani explained that the government has created "special units" at the Prime Ministry tasked with planning field visits and following up on their outcomes, especially those carried out by Prime Minister Jafar Hassan.

The minister also said that, through field visits, the government seeks to send a message that "what is happening in the region will not be a reason for delaying the work on local issues to realize the sought-after economic growth".

Chairing part of a Cabinet session on Tuesday, His Majesty King Abdullah is the duty of every official to serve citizens, stressing the need to continue following up on their needs in the field.

His Majesty said regional developments will not delay the implementation of political,



JT file

Prime Minister Jafar Hassan inspects on the progress in Prince Feisal Sports City project in Karak during a field visit to the southern governorate on November 28

economic and administrative modernisation programmes, noting that public administration development is the cornerstone of the modernisation process.

Prime Minister Jafar Hassan reiterated the government's commitment to implementing the Royal directives to enable citizens to participate in defining development priorities at the local level and aligning

them with the Economic Modernisation Vision as stated in the Letter of Designation, according to the statement.

At a Lower House session, Hassan reiterated the government's commitment to prioritising urgent needs through ongoing field visits and addressing concerns raised by deputies during recent discussions.

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Gaza rescuers say 14 killed in Israel strikes

GAZA STRIP, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — Gaza's civil defence agency said a series of Israeli air strikes killed at least 14 people on Wednesday, in the latest violence to ravage the already devastated Palestinian territory.

Five people were killed and several wounded in an air strike on the house of the Barghout family in the Zeitun neighbourhood of Gaza City, the agency said.

Three people were killed in another strike targeting the house of the Al Banna family in the central city of Deir El Balah.

A strike in Gaza City killed five people, while a strike on the house of the Weshah family in Al Bureij refugee camp killed a child, it added.

An AFP journalist later observed people searching through the rubble of the house to salvage what they could.

Rescuers also recovered the bodies of three people who were killed by a drone strike in Rafah district on Tuesday.

The latest strikes came as mediators Qatar, Egypt, and the United States brokered negotiations between Israel and Hamas in Doha for a deal to end the fighting in Gaza and secure the release of hostages.

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DIPLOMACY

Safadi holds talks with EU senior officials on bilateral relations, Gaza, Syria

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi held talks on Wednesday with senior European Union officials on strengthening Jordan-EU relations.

Discussions focused on finalising a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement that will open broader horizons for economic, investment, trade, defence, and security cooperation, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

The talks also went over regional developments, particularly efforts to achieve an immediate and lasting ceasefire to end the Israeli aggression on Gaza and the unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe it has exacerbated.

Safadi and EU officials also discussed the situation in Syria.

Safadi met with European Council President Antonio Costa, conveying greetings from His



Foreign Ministry photos

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi held talks on Wednesday with senior European Union officials on strengthening Jordan-EU relations

Majesty King Abdullah and appreciation for the strong partnership between Jordan and the EU.

Costa commended King Abdullah's leadership in resolving regional crises and achieving a just and comprehensive peace

in the region, the statement said.

The meeting explored ways to enhance cooperation between Jordan and the EU, including the signing of the comprehensive strategic partnership agreement.

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Army foils drug smuggling attempt using drone on western frontier

By Ahmad Khatatneh

AMMAN — The Southern Military Zone on Wednesday thwarted a drug smuggling attempt involving a drone along the western frontier within its area of responsibility.

The Border Guards, in cooperation with military security agencies and the Anti-Narcotics Department, applied the rules of engagement after detecting and tracking the drone and brought it down inside Jordanian territory, according to a military source from the General Command of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF).

An army statement stressed that JAF remains committed to utilising its various capabilities and resources to prevent all forms of infiltration and smuggling, ensuring the security and stability of the Kingdom.

According to a recent



Petra photo

The Southern Military Zone on Wednesday thwarts a drug smuggling attempt involving a drone along the western frontier within its area of responsibility

statement to The Jordan Times, the Military Media Directorate said that there has been a noticeable shift in smuggling activities towards the southern borders of the Kingdom.

"The reasons behind this shift are multifaceted, rooted in a combi-

nation of rigorous security measures, regional instability, and the ingenuity of the criminal networks involved in drug trafficking," the directorate added.

"In response to this evolving threat, the JAF has deployed a combination of high-tech

solutions and strategic military initiatives, including the use of advanced surveillance technologies such as drones and satellite systems to monitor remote border areas, allowing the military to detect smuggling attempts in real time."

INTERFAITH

From Jordan to Vatican: Celebrating Christianity in the Holy Land

The Vatican is set to host exhibition focusing on Christianity's roots in Jordan

By Sophie Constantin

AMMAN — In February 2025, the halls of the Vatican Museums will unveil a unique exhibition, "Jordan: Dawn of Christianity / Giordania: Alba del Cristianesimo", a collection of 90 artefacts carefully curated to bring to life the enduring legacy of Jordan as a cradle of Christianity, bridging millennia of history and faith.

The exhibition, a collaboration between Jor-

dan's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the Jordan Tourism Board, and the Vatican, also commemorates the 30 years of diplomatic ties between Jordan and the Holy See. It coincides with the Holy Jubilee Year, themed "Pilgrimage of Hope", as well as the 60th anniversary of Pope Paul VI's historic visit to Jordan in 1964.

As His Majesty King Abdullah remarked, "Our country is home to a

A pilgrimage through artefacts

The one-month exhibition will offer visitors an extraordinary journey

through some of the most significant sites in Christian history. Artefacts from over 30 archaeological locations in Jordan have been meticulously selected to tell the stories of faith, resilience, and the spiritual heritage that connects the region to the foundations of Christianity, featuring five pilgrimage sites acknowledged by the Vatican such as Tel Mar Elias (the birthplace of Prophet Elijah), Our Lady of the Mountain

Church (shrine commemorating Mother Mary), Machaerus (the martyrdom of John the Baptist), and the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ.

Many of these archaeological treasures are being displayed outside of Jordan for the first time, underscoring their universal significance and offering a rare glimpse into Jordan's biblical landscape.

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Photo by Sophie Constantin

Mosque of King Abdallah I next to the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate in Amman

INVESTMENT

Jordan seeks to develop agricultural industries with focus on high-value crops

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Agriculture Khalid Hneifat on Wednesday said that the ministry aims to support investment opportunities and establish partnerships with investors to develop agricultural industries based on high-value crops.

He stressed that through the Economic Modernisation Vision, the National Plan for Sustainable Agriculture, and the investment pillar in the sector, the ministry seeks to promote investment opportunities in agricultural industry development, which will benefit rural communities, create job opportunities for

youth and introduce new crops, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The meeting also went over means to boost cooperation with the private sector...

This came during his meeting with Algerian investor Chakib Boublenza, specialis-

ing in crop farming and processing, in the presence of United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Representative in Jordan Nabil Assaf.

Talks during the meeting discussed enhancing investment opportunities and developing the carob sector within the ministry through the FAO-funded Value Chain Development Project in Jordan.

The meeting also went over means to boost cooperation with the private sector to support the project, including carob cultivation, production and processing, as a promising opportunity for this product.



The ministry aims to support investment opportunities and establish partnerships with investors

Al Hussein Fund for Excellence launches award for graduate projects

AMMAN (JT) — Al Hussein Fund for Excellence (HFE) on Wednesday launched the "Intaliq Award" (Go ahead in English) for graduate projects, which aims to inspire Jordanian youth to develop innovative solutions to the challenges the Kingdom may face in the coming years.

Emphasising the importance of youth in shaping Jordan's future, Governor of the Central Bank of Jordan and HFE Chairman Adel Sharkas said the award aims to encourage students to address local challenges while honing their skills and turning their ideas into impactful start-ups that can contribute to the Kingdom's economic growth.

He added that the award aims to strengthen the link between



The award aims to encourage students to address local challenges while honing their skills and turning their ideas into impactful start-ups that can contribute to the Kingdom's economic growth

academia and the labour market by encouraging innovation that can boost the national

economy, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The award, which fo-

cuses on key sectors such as energy and water technology, information technology, healthcare,

environmental sustainability, infrastructure, agriculture and food security, invites university students to submit projects that address these areas.

Universities will carry out an initial assessment of the projects to ensure they meet the award criteria, with the top 10 projects from each institution being nominated for further consideration.

The shortlisted projects will be showcased at a national exhibition where a panel of judges will select winners.

The HFE, a key initiative of the Jordanian banking sector, is dedicated to promoting creativity and excellence in various fields, including culture, science and business.

DIPLOMACY



New ambassador of Japan presents credentials

AMMAN (JT) — Foreign Ministry Secretary-General for Diplomatic and Expatriates Affairs Majid

Qatarneh on Wednesday received a copy of the credentials of Japan's newly appointed ambassador to Jordan

Hideki Asari, as accredited and resident ambassador to the Kingdom, according to a ministry statement.



Shireen Abu Akleh was a graduate of the Yarmouk University's department of journalism and media at the Faculty of Arts in 1991

Yarmouk University starts receiving applications for Shireen Abu Akleh scholarship

AMMAN (JT) — The Faculty of Mass Communication at Yarmouk University has announced the start of receiving applications for the Shireen Abu Akleh Media Scholarship for the master's degree in media for the second semester of the 2024-2025 academic year.

In a statement released on Wednesday, the university said the scholarship covers admission and registration fees, as well as credit hour fees, excluding remedial and repeated courses.

The scholarship is open to all nationalities.

The university noted that recipients of the scholarship will be enrolled in the thesis track, with the condition that their thesis addresses issues related to Palestinian media or highlights

the impact of occupation and the suffering of the Palestinian people.

The scholarship is open to all nationalities

University President Islam Massad said that continuing to offer this scholarship for the third year reflects Yarmouk University's commitment to its national and Arab messages, as inspired by Jordan, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah, where Palestine remains the Kingdom's central

cause.

Massad stressed the critical role of media in supporting the Palestinian issue and highlighting the violations and hardships faced by the Palestinian people under the occupation.

The university's Board of Trustees launched this scholarship to honour the memory of Abu Akleh, who was assassinated by Israeli occupation forces while performing her journalist duties in Jenin Refugee Camp.

Abu Akleh was a graduate of the university's department of journalism and media at the Faculty of Arts in 1991.

For further details about the scholarship and application process, interested candidates can visit: <https://www.yu.edu.jo/index.php/ann-ar/6255-2024-2091>.

Discoveries at Tell Ammata suggest long-term activity, specialised tool use

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — Tell Ammata, located in Jerash Governorate, is where archaeologists found a lot of pottery between the Wadi Rajib and Tell Ammata.

Although several tools and flint debitage have been discovered in the vicinity of the pottery concentration, they cannot be positively associated with it. The dating of flint tools is, especially for the later periods like the Roman or Islamic eras, notoriously difficult, said Eva Kaptijn from Leiden University.

Kaptijn added that the flint distribution shows no clear clustering at the same location as the pottery concentration. Furthermore, there is no evidence to chronologically connect the flint to the concentration as the tools discovered here are of an ad hoc nature.

"No large flint collection has been discovered in the northern area. In most plots only one or two pieces of flint were collected. At first glance flint artefacts seem to be randomly distributed over the fields in this region; no clear clustering is visible. Furthermore, the distribution of waste and tools also does not demonstrate any spatial patterning," Kaptijn said.

She added that when the total number of flint artefacts and the ratio between waste and tools of this region is compared to other areas differences become apparent.

Fields located just a few kilometres to the south and surveyed by the same team yielded significantly fewer flint artefacts.

In the area around Tell Mazar and Tell Adliyyeh only one or two flint artefacts per hectare have been discovered, and the ratio between waste and tools is very high, even when compared to other concentrations, the scholar highlighted, adding that in this northern area tools constitute 36 per cent of the total flint assemblage.

"For the other fields surveyed in the same season only 25 per cent of the assemblage consists of tools," Kaptijn said.

The apparent lack of a flint concentration around the Ammata concentration is not an actual absence of clustering. The comparison with neighbouring areas to the south, surveyed by the same team and, therefore, not subject to collection biases, shows that the entire northern region should be considered as a dispersed cluster.

Selection of discovered tiles may be a result of the fact that pottery is mainly related to the specific locations in the landscape like settlements or farmsteads where it was used as e.g. storage containers and serving dishes, she underlined, adding that flint artefacts are, however, more used in special activities and less as passive receptacles.

"Scrapers were, for example, used in the prepa-



Flint tools from Wadi Jilat

ration of skins and sickle blades in the harvesting of cereals. Some of these activities, like cereal harvesting, without a doubt took place outside the settlement in the cultivated fields."

"Other activities, like the slaughtering of animals, may well have taken place outside the confines of the domestic space. This phenomenon would be reflected in a less dense clustering of flint tools," Kaptijn elaborated, stressing that it does not explain the waste distribution, for this distribution is related to the manufacturing of a flint tool and not to its use.

All tools collected in this area are made with a very simple ad hoc technique using local flint cobbles available everywhere in the fields. These cobbles are relatively small and rounded by water erosion as they were transported by wadis.

Many of the artefacts made from them still dis-

play this rolled outer surface, which is not cortex as such, but is technologically its equivalent.

The scrapers, notches and retouched flakes or pieces are all characterised by an ad hoc technology, she said, noting that due to this technology these artefacts are difficult to place in a chronological context.

"The retouched flakes, pieces and the notches all grow more abundant in the Late Neolithic period and predominate during Chalcolithic, EB and MB I periods. After that they lose currency and occur only seldom in LBA and IA," Kaptijn underlined, adding that the scrapers manufactured by an ad hoc technique are equally difficult to date.

They occur frequently during the Chalcolithic and EB Age, but decline afterwards. Of the retouched blades only one may be considered a backed blade and, therefore, may be dated more

specifically to the Chalcolithic period. The others are all simple retouched blades common throughout all periods, the scholar emphasised.

"There is, therefore, no reason to link the flint assemblage to the pottery concentration along the Wadi Rajib or to Tell Ammata. It is more likely that the assemblage is an accumulation of activity in several different periods."

"The ad hoc nature of the tools in combination with the flint waste and the type of flint makes it likely that these tools were produced locally when needed and were easily discarded when they broke or the need for them ceased," Kaptijn said.

She noted that the greater number of flint artefacts and higher frequency of tools compared with other areas suggest that this area either witnessed more activities or saw activity for a longer period of time or a combination of both.

The fact that this area, due to its location near the foothills of the eastern plateau, has more flint nodules is not the sole explanation for the greater number of flint artefacts.

"This would explain a larger amount of flint debitage and waste, but it is in disagreement with the higher frequency of tools as these would be transported to and discarded at the place where they were going to be used," Kaptijn concluded.

Lower House condemns Israel’s publication of maps depicting Jordanian, Arab lands as part of Israel

AMMAN (JT) — Lower House Speaker Ahmed Safadi condemned on Wednesday the publication by official Israeli accounts of maps depicting parts of Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria as part of Israeli territory.

The publication of the so-called “historical maps” by official accounts affiliated with the government of Israel, which claim territories from Jordan, the occupied Palestinian lands, Lebanon and Syria as part of their country.

At the start of Wednesday’s session, Safadi said, “This act, which reveals a criminal mindset and malicious ambitions, cannot be overlooked or tolerated.

“Whether it is meant to test reactions or arises from futile delusions, we respond with the voice and resolve of all Jordanians: Jordan, with its leadership, army, security, and people, knows how to thwart the enemy’s schemes and turn them against it,” he said.

Safadi commended the firm stance of the Foreign Ministry in rejecting this provocative action, urging further measures to stop such incitements that expose the occupier’s criminal ambitions, especially



Lower House Speaker Ahmed Safadi condemns the publication of maps by official Israeli accounts on social media platforms, which claim territories from Jordan, the occupied Palestinian lands, Lebanon, and Syria as part of their entity

amid the region’s ongoing tensions and instability.

He added, “In our role as the Lower House, we will address international parliaments to advocate for Palestinian rights and expose the brutality of this occupation.

We also call on the government to take decisive actions against the occupier [Israel]

through diplomatic and legal channels.”

Safadi emphasised that Jordan will remain resolutely Arab and strong under its leadership, while Palestine, Syria and Lebanon will continue to uphold their Arab identity.

The Foreign Ministry on Tuesday condemned the publication of the maps alongside “inflammatory” remarks

from Israel’s far-right finance minister, who advocated for the annexation of the West Bank and the establishment of settlements in Gaza, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

The ministry spokesperson, Sufian Qudah, reiterated Jordan’s “unequivocal” rejection of such actions, describing them as a blatant

attempt to undermine Palestinians’ legitimate rights to establish an independent and sovereign state based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

“These inflammatory actions and baseless claims, promoted by extremists within the Israeli government, perpetuate violence and instability,” Qudah said.

Fayez conveys King’s greetings to Kuwait’s emir

AMMAN (JT) — Senate President Faisal Fayez on Wednesday conveyed greetings from His Majesty King Abdullah and HRH Crown Prince Al Hussein to Kuwait Emir Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah and Kuwait Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al Hamad Al Sabah.

During his visit to Kuwait City, Fayez met with the Kuwaiti Crown Prince, stressing King Abdullah’s pride in the deep-rooted and brotherly ties between Jordan and Kuwait.



Faisal Fayez

He also reiterated Jordan’s commitment to boosting these relations across various fields, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The discussions focused on enhancing Jordanian-Kuwaiti cooperation to serve the shared interests of both nations.

Regional issues, particularly the need to end the ongoing Israeli aggression against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, were also addressed.

The two sides reiterated the importance of sustained coordination on matters of mutual concern, stressing the necessity of unified efforts to address

regional challenges, including the crises in Gaza and Syria, and countering Israel’s aggressive policies and expansionist ambitions.

Sheikh Sabah commended the strong Jordanian-Kuwaiti ties and reiterated Kuwait’s commitment to bolstering cooperation in various sectors, meeting the aspirations of both countries.

Fayez highlighted King Abdullah’s relentless efforts to end Israeli aggression, facilitate humanitarian and relief aid to Gaza, and support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state based on the two-state solution.

He also expressed gratitude for Kuwait’s

steadfast support for Jordan, particularly in economic and trade sectors, calling for increased joint investments.

Fayez met with Sheikh Nasser Al Mohammed Al Ahmad Al Sabah, the former Kuwaiti Prime Minister.

Both sides underscored the strength and distinction of Jordanian-Kuwaiti relations, stressing their positive and mutually beneficial nature in advancing shared interests and supporting Arab causes.

Fayez also commended Kuwait’s principled stances on Arab causes.

Jordan’s Ambassador to Kuwait Sinan Majali also attended the meetings.



Jordan on Wednesday extends its condolences to the government and people of China following the devastating earthquake that struck southwest China on Tuesday, causing loss of life and injuries

Kingdom expresses condolences to China over earthquake victims

AMMAN (JT) — Jordan on Wednesday extended its condolences to the government and people of China following the devastating earthquake that struck southwest China on Tuesday, causing loss of life and injuries.

Sufian Qudah, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson, expressed the Kingdom’s solidarity with China at this tragic time. He expressed his condolences to the families of the victims and wished

the injured a speedy recovery, according to a ministry statement.

A devastating earthquake in China’s remote Tibet region killed at least 126 people and damaged thousands of buildings on Tuesday, state media reported, with tremors also felt in neighbouring Nepal’s capital Kathmandu and parts of India, according to AFP.

Videos published by China’s state broadcaster CCTV showed houses destroyed with

walls torn apart.

Rescue workers waded through rubble strewn across the ruins in the aftermath, footage showed, while some gave locals thick blankets to keep warm in sub-zero temperatures.

The quake struck rural, high-altitude Tingri County, about 80 kilometres north of Mount Everest near China’s border with Nepal, at around 9:00am (1:00 GMT) on Tuesday, AFP added.

Foreign minister, Belgian counterpart discuss bilateral ties, regional developments

AMMAN (JT) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Wednesday held extensive discussions with Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs, and Foreign Trade Bernard Quintin.

The talks focused on boosting bilateral ties between Jordan and Belgium and their shared commitment to expanding cooperation across various sectors, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

The two ministers also addressed regional development and efforts to secure a permanent ceasefire to stop the Israeli aggression on Gaza and ensure the delivery of sufficient and sustainable humanitarian aid into all parts of the besieged Strip.

Safadi also expressed gratitude for Belgium’s supportive position on achieving an immediate and lasting ceasefire in Gaza, underscoring the importance of continued cooperation in facilitating humani-



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Wednesday holds extensive discussions with Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs, and Foreign Trade Bernard Quintin

tarian assistance to the Strip.

Quinten stressed Jordan’s pivotal role in resolving crises and promoting security and stability.

The ministers also

discussed the situation in Syria, with Safadi briefing Quinten on his recent meetings with the leadership of Syria’s new administration.

Safadi also emphasised the necessity of

supporting Syria’s reconstruction, ensuring the country’s unity, sovereignty, and independence while addressing terrorism and safeguarding the rights of all its citizens.

The two ministers agreed to continue their consultations and coordination to further enhance bilateral relations and address ongoing developments in the region.

DIPLOMACY

Omani FM commends ties with Jordan, urges collective action on regional issues

AMMAN (JT) — Omani Foreign Minister Badr Bin Hamad Busaidi on Wednesday commended the strong and historic ties between Jordan and Oman, highlighting the mutual trust and respect that underpin their relationship.

Speaking at a media briefing in Muscat, Busaidi stressed that the long-lasting bond between the two countries has fostered extensive cooperation and partnerships across various sectors, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

He also praised the positive outcomes of Omani students pur-



Omani Foreign Minister Badr Bin Hamad Busaidi on Wednesday commends the strong and historic ties between Jordan and Oman, highlighting the mutual trust and respect that underpin their relationship

suing education in Jordan, acknowledging the substantial contributions of Jordanian professionals to Oman’s educational

and developmental progress.

Busaidi also underscored the critical importance of unified Arab efforts in

addressing regional challenges, particularly the Palestinian cause and the ongoing situation in Gaza, Petra added.

CRIME

Man arrested for stabbing sister to death

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Criminal Court prosecutor on Wednesday charged a man with premeditated murder in connection with the alleged murder of his sister in the Jordan Valley a day earlier, official sources said.

The 17-year-old victim was reportedly stabbed by her brother multiple times while at their family’s home on Tuesday night, Police Spokesperson Lt. Col. Amer Sartawi said.

“The suspect was immediately arrested and referred to the Criminal Court prosecutor for questioning and indictment,” Sartawi told The Jordan Times.

A senior source told The Jordan Times that the stabbing incident oc-



curred “following a heated argument between the two siblings”.

“The suspect headed to the kitchen, grabbed a knife and stabbed his sister in the back and stomach,” the senior source said.

The victim’s family contacted emergency services who transported her to a nearby hospital but she was declared dead on arrival, the senior source added.

A postmortem con-

ducted by a team of pathologists at the National Institute of Forensic Medicine indicated that the victim died of multiple stab wounds to the chest and stomach, a senior medical source told The Jordan Times.

The suspect was ordered detained for 15 days by the Criminal Court prosecution’s office at a correctional and rehabilitation centre pending further investigations.

Earlier in the week, Solidarity Is Global Institute (SIGI) issued a statement stating that the Kingdom witnessed 25 family homicides in 2024.

The total number of female victims was 18, including four children, according to SIGI’s statement.

The capital witnessed the highest number of recorded murders with 10, followed by six homicides in Irbid and three in Zarqa, according to the SIGI statement.

As for the most common weapons used in the family murders, SIGI said stabbing with sharp objects was the most used in the homicides, followed by gunfire as well the use of house utensils such as a cooking pan or spilling hot water.



Security forces loyal to Yemen's ruling Houthi group deploy outside Sanaa International Airport in the Houthi-held Yemeni capital on Monday

US says forces struck Houthi weapons stores in Yemen

SANAA (AFP) — The US military said on Wednesday its forces hit weapons storage facilities used by Yemen's Houthi rebels to attack American warships and commercial vessels.

The operation involved "multiple precision strikes", US Central Command [CENTCOM] said in a statement, adding "there were no injuries or damage to US personnel or equipment".

The statement did not specify the location of the storage facilities.

"The strikes are part of CENTCOM's effort to degrade Iranian-backed [Houthi] attempts to threaten regional partners and military and merchant vessels in the region," it said.

The Houthis' Al-Masi-

rah TV said there were five raids in the north-western Amran province and two in Sanaa province, where the capital Sanaa is located.

The operation involved 'multiple precision strikes'...

The Houthis seized Sanaa in 2014 from Yemen's internationally recognised government and control much of the war-torn country's most

populated areas.

For more than a year they have been firing missiles and drones at Israel and at ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, in what they say is a show of solidarity with Palestinians during the Hamas-Israel war in the Gaza Strip.

The Houthis' attacks in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden have destabilised a vital shipping lane, prompting strikes by the United States and sometimes Britain that began in January 2024.

Most Houthi missiles and drones launched towards Israel have been intercepted, but a missile wounded 16 people in Tel Aviv in December, according to Israel's military and emergency services.

CONFLICT

Red Cross urges unhindered aid access to flood-hit and freezing Gaza

GENEVA (AFP) — The Red Cross called on Wednesday for safe and unhindered access to Gaza to bring desperately needed aid into the war-torn Palestinian territory wracked by hunger and where babies are freezing to death.

Heavy rain and flooding have ravaged the makeshift shelters in Gaza, leaving thousands with up to 30 centimetres of water inside their damaged tents, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said.

The dire weather conditions were "exacerbating the unbearable conditions" in Gaza, it said, pointing out that many families were left "clinging on to survival in makeshift camps, without even the most basic necessities, such as blankets".

Citing the United Nations, the IFRC highlighted the deaths of eight newborn babies who had been living in tents without warmth or protection from the rain and falling temperatures.

Those deaths "underscore the critical severity of the humanitarian crisis there", IFRC Secretary-General Ja-



Palestinian father Tayseer Obaid who was displaced with his family from the north of the besieged Gaza Strip, prepares to dig a trench in his tent in an attempt to protect his children from the cold and Israeli strikes

gan Chapagain said in a statement.

"I urgently reiterate my call to grant safe and unhindered access to humanitarians to let them provide life-saving assistance," he said.

"Without safe access, children will freeze to death. Without safe access, families will starve. Without safe access, humanitar-

ian workers can't save lives."

Chapagain issued an "urgent plea to all the parties... to put an end to this human suffering. Now".

The IFRC said the Palestine Red Crescent Society was striving to provide emergency health services and supplies to people in Gaza, with an extra sense of

urgency during the cold winter months.

But it warned that "the lack of aid deliveries and access is making providing adequate support all but impossible".

It also lamented the "continuing attacks on health facilities across the Gaza Strip", which it said meant people were unable to access the treatment they need.

"In the north of Gaza, there are now no functioning hospitals," it said.

The IFRC stressed that the closure of the main Rafah border crossing last May had had a dramatic impact on the humanitarian situation, warning that "only a trickle of aid is currently entering Gaza".

RELIEF

UN calls for \$370 m in new humanitarian aid for Lebanon

UNITED NATIONS, UNITED STATES (AFP) — The United Nations joined the Lebanese government on Tuesday to appeal for an additional \$371.4 million in humanitarian aid for people displaced by the conflict between Israel and Hizbollah.

The extension builds on an initial aid appeal for \$426 million launched in October, as all-out war flared between the two sides and sent hundreds of thousands in Lebanon fleeing their homes.

That appeal raised approximately \$250 million, according to the UN.



Spanish UNIFIL peacekeepers forces patrol inside a military vehicle in the southern Lebanese village of Al Mari, near the border with Israel, on January 7, 2025

Following nearly a year of exchanges of cross-border fire initiated by Hezbollah over the war in

Gaza, Israel in September stepped up its bombing campaign and later sent troops into Lebanon.

After two months of warring, in which Hizbollah's influential chief Hassan Nasrallah and multiple other leaders were killed, a ceasefire deal was reached that went into effect in late November.

"While the cessation of hostilities offers hope, over 125,000 people remain displaced, and hundreds of thousands more face immense challenges rebuilding their lives," Imran Riza, the UN humanitarian coordinator in Lebanon, said in a statement on Tuesday.

The additional funding "is urgently required

to sustain life-saving efforts and prevent further deterioration of an already dire situation", he added.

The appeal is primarily aimed to assist an estimated 1 million Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian refugees affected by the conflict, funding a three-month period of emergency efforts through March 2025.

Since the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon began on November 27, more than 800,000 displaced people in Lebanon have been able to return home, according to UN figures.

Hundreds rally for South Korea's Yoon as new arrest bid beckons

SEOUL (AFP) — Hundreds of supporters of South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk-yeol rallied outside his residence on Wednesday as investigators prepared a fresh attempt to arrest him.

Yoon has refused questioning and resisted arrest since his bungled December 3 martial law decree plunged South Korea into its worst political crisis in decades.

Investigators secured a new arrest warrant on Tuesday after an initial seven-day order expired. Several hundred members of his base rushed to the presidential residence in central Seoul in response, braving sub-zero temperatures.

"A large number of people are coming out to join us. Despite the cold weather, many stayed up all night last night, braving the chill," Lee Hye-sook, a 57-year-old Yoon supporter, told AFP outside the residence.

"Witnessing their resilience against the wind and cold, I am confident that President Yoon Suk Yeol will return, and we will prevail."

Some supporters left flowers outside and ribbons with the Trump-style slogan "Make Korea Great Again", while others waved American flags at the gates of the compound from where the suspended leader has resisted arrest.

Despite a cold weather warning that temperatures were expected to fall to -10°C, the suspended president's supporters were defiant, shouting "impeachment is invalid".

Rival protesters calling for Yoon to be punished waved glowsticks, commonly seen at K-pop concerts, and held placards that read, "Detain, arrest insurrectionist Yoon Suk-yeol."

Yoon's legal team said on Wednesday he remains inside the residential compound, after investigators cast doubt a day earlier on his whereabouts.

"Last night, I personally visited the official residence, met the president there, and left," said his lawyer Yoon Kap-keun, who is unrelated.

The Corruption Investigation Office [CIO], which is leading the probe into the president, has kept secret the duration of the new warrant.

Yoon would become the first sitting South Korean president to be arrested if investigators are able to detain him.

Yoon's legal team said they would not comply with the current warrant, but only a stronger one from a different court if approved, accusing investigators of targeting an allegedly liberal-leaning judge for the initial orders.

standoff.

"Under no circumstances should there be any injuries to citizens or conflicts among government agencies. Please ensure every precaution is taken," Choi said in a meeting with officials.

South Korea's Constitutional Court has slated January 14 for the start of Yoon's impeachment trial, which would proceed in his absence if he does not attend.

His legal team said he planned to attend the trial at some stage and lawyer Yoon Kap-keun told reporters on Wednesday "the president's position... remains unchanged".

"Of course, issues related to security and safety must be resolved in advance," he said.

National Assembly Speaker Woo Won-shik wrote on X it was distressing to watch Yoon mobilise force to stop his arrest because the "whole world" was watching.

Investigators are trying to work out how to tackle an expected wall of security after being stopped by hundreds of Presidential Security Service [PSS] guards last week.

"The number of PSS personnel cannot be disclosed as it is confidential information," a service spokesperson told AFP.

On Wednesday parliament voted down two bills to investigate Yoon and his wife for different charges, failing to get the two-thirds majority they needed.

The impeached Yoon is being investigated on charges of "insurrection" and, if formally arrested and convicted, faces prison or, at worst, the death penalty.

The constitutional court has up to 180 days from December 14, when it received the case, to determine whether to dismiss Yoon or restore his presidential powers.

France, Germany warn Trump against threatening 'sovereign borders' on Greenland

PARIS (AFP)—France and Germany on Wednesday warned Donald Trump against threatening "sovereign borders" after the US president-elect refused to rule out military action to take Greenland, an autonomous territory of European Union member Denmark.

"There is no question of the EU letting other nations in the world, whoever they may be... attack its sovereign borders," French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot told France Inter radio.

"We are a strong continent. We need to strengthen ourselves more," he added.

In Berlin, German government spokesman

Steffen Hebestreit said in response to Trump's remarks that "as always, the firm principle applies... that borders must not be moved by force".

Barrot described Greenland as "European territory". Greenland is associated with the European Union through Denmark, of which it is a self-governing territory, but withdrew from the European bloc in 1985 after securing autonomy.

Trump set off new alarm on Tuesday at a press conference when he refused to rule out military intervention over the Panama Canal and Greenland, both of which he has said he wants the United States to control.

"We need Greenland for national security purposes," he declared.

His comments coincided with a private visit by his son Donald Trump Jr. to the mineral- and oil-rich autonomous Danish territory on Tuesday.

"If you ask me: 'is the United States going to invade Greenland?' the answer is no," said Barrot.

But he added: "We have entered an era that is seeing the return of the law of the strongest."

"Should we be intimidated? Should we be overcome with worry? Evidently, no."

"We need to wake up and reinforce ourselves, militarily, in competition, in a world where the law

of the strongest prevails."

Barrot said he believed that the United States is "inherently not imperialistic" and said he "did not believe" that it is changing.

However French government spokeswoman Sophie Primas told reporters after a cabinet meeting that there was a "form of imperialism" in Trump's comments.

"Today we are seeing the rise in blocs, we can see this as a form of imperialism, which materialises itself in the statements that we saw from Mr Trump on the annexation of an entire territory."

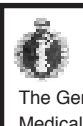
"More than ever, we and our European partners need to be con-

scious, to get away from a form of naivety, to protect ourselves, to rearm," she added.

The German government spokesman refused to be drawn on whether Berlin takes Trump's threats against NATO allies Denmark and Canada seriously.

"I don't want to assess" the comments, Hebestreit told a news conference, adding only that the German government had "taken note" of them.

At the news conference, Trump called the border with the United States' northern neighbour Canada an "artificially drawn line" and promised to rename the Gulf of Mexico the "Gulf of America".



Tender Reininvitation

The General Headquarters of the Jordan Armed Forces/Royal Medical Services hereby Announces Tender **P7/2025/2**
(تعزير مستهلكات الكلية الاصطناعية)


Bidders who desire to participate therein can obtain a copy of the tender documentation against a fee of **JD75** non-refundable, provided that they bring along a valid trade licence.

Closing date sharp 1:00 P.M., SUN 19th of JAN 2025. Non-conditional bid bond equal to (3%) of the total value of quotation must be submitted along with the quotations.

Any quotations/offers will not be accepted after above mentioned closing date and sharp time.

(The winning bidder is responsible for paying advertisement fees, regardless how often the bid is announced.)

For more details please contact us at www.jrms.jaf.mil.jo



Tender Invitation

The General Headquarters of the Jordan Armed Forces/Royal Medical Services hereby Announces Tender **P37/2025/58/1**
(REAGENTS FOR ENDOCRINOLOGY SPECIAL TEST BY ELISA)


Bidders who desire to participate therein can obtain a copy of the tender documentation against a fee of **JD25** non-refundable, provided that they bring along a valid trade licence.

Closing date sharp 1:00 P.M., WED 5th of FEB 2025. Non-conditional bid bond equal to (3%) of the total value of quotation must be submitted along with the quotations.

Any quotations/offers will not be accepted after above mentioned closing date and sharp time.

(The winning bidder is responsible for paying advertisement fees, regardless how often the bid is announced.)

For more details please contact us at www.jrms.mil.jo



Tender Reininvitation

The General Headquarters of the Jordan Armed Forces/Royal Medical Services hereby Announces Tender **P31/2024/2**
(لشراء عطاء مستهلكات (FDG-INJECTOR)

Bidders who desire to participate therein can obtain a copy of the tender documentation against a fee of **JD50** non-refundable, provided that they bring along a valid trade licence.

Closing date sharp 1:00 P.M., SUN 19th of JAN 2025. Non-conditional bid bond equal to (3%) of the total value of quotation must be submitted along with the quotations.

Any quotations/offers will not be accepted after above mentioned closing date and sharp time.

(The winning bidder is responsible for paying advertisement fees, regardless how often the bid is announced.)

For more details please contact us at www.jrms.jaf.mil.jo

Blinken swats away Trump bombast in France swan song

PARIS (AFP) — Signing off as America’s top diplomat, Antony Blinken was feted on Wednesday by ally France — and forced to brush aside bombastic remarks by incoming president Donald Trump.

Blinken, on a farewell tour less than two weeks before Trump takes office, visited Paris where President Emmanuel Macron was presenting him with the Legion of Honour, France’s highest order of merit.

“I would like to tell you that you show the face of the America that we love,” French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot told Blinken before the ceremony.

But as Blinken looked to highlight President Joe Biden’s efforts to nurture alliances, the secretary of state was asked to address threats by Trump against Greenland.

The president-elect has made clear his designs on oil-rich and strategically placed Greenland, an autonomous territory of European Union member Denmark, and refused



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (left) and France’s Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noel Barrot take speak during a joint press conference at the Quai d’Orsay in Paris, on Wednesday

to rule out military action.

Asked about the remarks at a news conference with Barrot, Blinken, without using Trump’s name, said: “The idea expressed about Greenland is ob-

viously not a good one, but maybe more important, it’s obviously one that’s not going to happen.”

“So we probably shouldn’t waste a lot of time talking about it,” Blinken said.

Musk ‘private citizen’ for now

Blinken, a longtime Democratic Party policymaker and aide to Biden who generally has steered clear of electoral politics, also played

down statements by Elon Musk, the technology entrepreneur joined at the hip with Trump for months.

The South African-born billionaire, who has been tasked by Trump with an initia-

tive to curb government spending, has rattled European politicians by championing the far right in Germany and Britain.

“Private citizens in our country can say what they want,” Blinken said. “He, like any American, has the right to express his views.”

Barrot, however, took direct aim at Musk and regretted the direction of Trump’s Republican Party, which championed more traditional security partnerships with Europe under Ronald Reagan.

“Everyone has the right to express their opinions, but obviously when you’re participating or aspiring to participate in a government, opinions take on a particular meaning,” Barrot said.

Barrot said Musk was making alliances with “parties of the far right that flirt with neo-Nazi currents, as is the case with the AfD” in Germany.

“The Republican Party will have to take responsibility for linking its destiny to parties that represent what the

Republican Party always fought against,” he said.

Hoping for French leadership

Blinken also visited South Korea and Japan on the tour and will head Thursday to Italy, where he will consult European allies on Syria and join Biden in an audience with Pope Francis.

But the visit to France, including the private ceremony for the Legion of Honour award, is especially poignant for Blinken, a fluent French speaker who spent part of his childhood in Paris and has spoken of France’s role in forming his worldview.

The decision to recognise Blinken also illustrates the full turnaround in relations since the start of Biden’s term in 2021, when France was infuriated after the United States forged a new three-way alliance with Britain and Australia that resulted in the rescinding of a lucrative contract for French submarines.

Blinken and Barrot hailed their partnership in addressing a series of hotspots including the Middle East.

Blinken pointed in particular to work between the United States and France on a ceasefire in Lebanon after Israel decimated militant group Hizbollah.

The ceasefire “is creating the possibility for a much different and much better future”, Blinken said.

With Trump expected again to push European allies to do more on security and to push for a settlement between Ukraine and Russia, Blinken hailed France’s role training Ukrainian troops as “one of the strongest examples of burden-sharing” he had seen.

“I think in the months to come, France’s leadership will be essential for ensuring that Ukraine has what it needs to be in the strongest possible position to defend its democratic independence, whether that’s on the battlefield or at the negotiating table,” Blinken said.

Breakaway Transnistria says it has less than a month of gas left

Moscow (AFP) — The breakaway Moldovan region of Transnistria will run out of gas used for limited cooking and heating in less than a month, authorities warned on Wednesday, as a shutdown in Russian supplies plunges the separatist state into crisis.

The tiny self-proclaimed republic bordering Ukraine has been unable to provide heating and hot water to residents since Janu-

ary 1, when Moscow cut off gas supplies to Transnistria, saying the Moldovan government was not paying its bills.

“The country is not only in a state of energy crisis, but also a humanitarian one,” the region’s deputy prime minister, Sergei Obolonik, was quoted as saying in a statement on a government website.

“The 13 million cubic metres of gas in reserve make it possible to supply a number of social

facilities and other vital infrastructure, as well as residential multi-storey buildings for cooking... The resource will be enough for another 24 days from today,” the statement said.

With temperatures hitting freezing, people have been forced to burn wood or rely on plug-in electric heaters.

The resulting surge in electricity demand has heaped pressure onto the Soviet-era energy grid, prompting authori-

ties to order blackouts to conserve power.

Transnistria’s largest power station switched to burning coal on January 1 but only has enough reserves for 50-52 days of electricity, according to authorities.

Operating the plant at its maximum capacity with coal is “extremely risky” due to its ageing equipment, the statement added.

“They tested the generation of 170 megawatts per hour. But constantly

working in this mode is fraught with emergency situations, a complete shutdown of the station and a collapse of the energy system,” it said.

Some of the few factories still open may be forced to operate at night to avoid overloading the grid, officials said.

‘Manipulation’

Authorities have made free firewood available while telling residents to dress warmly, gath-

er into a single room and seal windows with blankets.

Russia’s Gazprom halted gas to Transnistria over what it said were longstanding debts with Chisinau, the same day a major gas transit agreement between Moscow and Kyiv to pipe gas across Ukraine came to an end.

Moscow says Moldova and Ukraine are at fault, alleging that Chisinau has ignored

its debts and that Kyiv “cynically” ended gas transit and fuelled the crisis.

Moldova, which had been getting most of its electricity via Transnistria but is now importing power from Romania, says Russia is blowing its debts out of proportion for political reasons.

Chisinau also has the support of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who on Wednesday said Mos-

cow was “stirring up social tensions” and “manipulating with energy resources”.

He said Ukraine was ready to supply coal to Moldova, without specifying if he meant for the breakaway republic of Transnistria or the rest of the country.

Internationally recognised as part of Moldova, Transnistria declared independence at the end of the USSR and has since relied on Moscow’s support.

Safadi holds talks with EU senior officials on bilateral relations, Gaza, Syria

Continued from page 1

Safadi also met with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas in a meeting that reviewed mechanisms to deepen Jordan-EU cooperation on regional challenges and shared concerns.

Both Safadi and Kallas reaffirmed the Jordanian-European partnership and the shared commitment to strengthening it, emphasizing the importance of finalising discussions to sign the strategic partnership agreement.

The two officials also discussed efforts to secure an immediate and

lasting ceasefire in Gaza and coordinate humanitarian aid delivery to the Strip.

They also exchanged views on the developments in Syria, with Safadi briefing Kallas on the outcomes of his discussions with Syria’s new leadership.

Safadi, along with Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Zeina Toukan, met with European Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič.

Safadi and Toukan also held discussions with European Commissioner for the Mediterranean Dubravka Šuica.

Safadi, joined by Toukan, met with Chair of EU Political and Security Committee Delphine Pronk and committee members representing EU member states and institutions.

During the meeting, Safadi stressed the need to end the Israeli aggression on Gaza, warning of its catastrophic consequences for regional and global security.

He called for international pressure on Israel to cease using starvation as a weapon and to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Safadi also highlighted the importance of con-

tinued support from the EU and the international community for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), emphasizing its vital role in providing services to refugees and assisting people in Gaza in coping with the humanitarian crisis caused by Israeli aggression.

He further cautioned against illegal Israeli measures in the West Bank, which undermine all prospects for a just and comprehensive peace, emphasizing that achieving peace requires fulfilling the Palestinian people’s right to freedom and an

independent, sovereign state on the June 4, 1967 lines with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the two-state solution.

Safadi reiterated Jordan’s commitment to supporting the Syrian people, emphasizing the need for a Syrian-led process that ensures Syria’s security, stability, unity, and sovereignty while preserving the rights of all its components.

He stressed the importance of providing humanitarian support to Syria during this transitional phase and creating conditions for the voluntary and dignified return of Syrian refugees.

Lower House passes 2025 state budget bill

Continued from page 1

Upon referring the bill to the Lower House in late December, Shibli said that the economy is projected to grow at a real GDP rate of 2.5 per cent in 2025, increasing to 3 per cent in 2026 and 2027. Nominal GDP is expected to grow by 4.9 per cent in 2025 and 5.6 per cent in 2026 and 2027.

At the time, Shibli attributed the anticipated growth to improved performance in vital sectors such as construction, tourism and industry, as well as increased export growth.

Additional drivers include the positive effects of lower interest rates, which will expand lo-

cal credit and stimulate investment, and the implementation of major projects such as the National Carrier Project, railway infrastructure and the construction of new hospitals and schools, the minister said.

Inflation rates are expected to remain moderate, with a projected 2.2 per cent in 2025, 2.5 per cent in 2026, and a decline to 2.3 per cent in

2027.

The current account deficit in the balance of payments, as a percentage of GDP, is projected to reach approximately 4.6 per cent in 2025, decreasing to 4.1 per cent in 2026 and 3.8 per cent in 2027.

The draft budget law estimates total public expenditures at JD12.511 billion, including JD11.042 billion in current expenditures and JD1.469 billion in capital expenditures, representing a 16.5 per cent increase from 2024.

It also estimates total public revenues at JD10.233 billion, including JD9.498 billion in domestic revenues and JD734 million in foreign grants.

From Jordan to Vatican: Celebrating Christianity in the Holy Land

Continued from page 1

Lina Annab, Jordan’s Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, described the exhibition as a groundbreaking initiative: “This exhibition celebrates the origins and heritage of Christianity in Jordan, the first of its kind in size and scope, shedding light on Jordan’s exceptional cultural wealth. It is part of a long-term plan to introduce the history of both Christian and Islamic heritage, highlighting the roles of the civilisations that have existed in Jordan.”

Visitors will marvel at intricate mosaics, early Christian symbols, and relics that reflect a land where faith and culture have intertwined for centuries. The exhibition traces the evolution of Christianity, from the baptism of the Christ

through the Byzantine era, to the rise of the Islamic eras, and into the present Hashemite era. Each artefact is a living testament to the stories that have shaped religious traditions worldwide, and to how Christianity continues to thrive in Jordan to this day.

A legacy of coexistence

Jordan’s contribution to Christianity extends far beyond its ancient past. Christians in Jordan, whose roots date back to the first century, remain an integral part of the country’s cultural and social fabric.

“Today, Jordanian Christians are committed to preserve their Arab Christian heritage. Along with their Muslim brothers and sisters, they form a harmonious society that transcends difference in

religion. Jordanians embrace plurality in its most beautiful meaning, recognising the cultural values of both Muslims and Christians as a shared treasure,” Annab said.

Jordan holds the distinction of having been visited by four popes, first by Pope Paul VI in 1964, followed by Pope John Paul II in 2000, Pope Benedict XVI in 2009, and Pope Francis in 2014.

Archbishop Giovanni Pietro Dal Toso, Apostolic Nuncio to Jordan, highlighted this unity: “One of the very first trips of a Pope outside of Italy in modern times was Pope Paul VI landing in Amman in order to visit the Holy Land in 1964. Jordan is a biblical land, because of all the events that happened here, making it an integral part of the Holy Land.”

“This exhibition is also

fundamental on a spiritual level,” he told The Jordan Times. “When I personally came to Jordan, I discovered those places I had read about in the Bible, finally seeing them with my own eyes. I hope that more Christian people can also experience this here, and that the exhibition overall brings people closer to their faith.”

Religious tourism in Jordan

The event serves as a call to action, inviting the world to engage with Jordan’s spiritual and cultural treasures.

“People outside of Jordan are often surprised to learn that we have Christians in Jordan, they do not know that the origins of Christianity are here,” Annab told The Jordan Times. “Jordan is the region where Jesus was

baptised. We want, for the future, to showcase the importance of Jordan and the faiths on this land, whether Islam or Christianity, to the world.”

As Abdulrazzaq Arabiyat, director of the Jordan Tourism Board, noted, initiatives like these have the potential to promote Jordan as a leading pilgrimage destination, furthering its role as a steward of interfaith understanding.

“What separates humanity is minuscule compared to what we hold in common, in terms of love, peace, justice, and compassion,” said Annab. She said that under the Hashemite Custodianship, His Majesty King Abdullah is the protector of both Islamic and Christian Holy Sites of Jerusalem, ensuring their preservation for generations to come.

‘Gov’t works on ‘institutionalising’ field visits, using hands-on approach’

Continued from page 1

In a recent report, the Prime Ministry said that the prime minister has visited a total of 37 locations across the country between September 25 and December 9 of 2024.

Out of these field visits, the report said that a total of 71 procedures for development and improvement have been taken covering health-care, education, agriculture, industry, youth,

tourism, environment and social care sectors.

The report said that 26 procedures have been finalised while work is still underway on another 45 improvement procedures, the report said.

Israeli military says 34 of those are dead.

The attack resulted in the deaths of 1,208 people on the Israeli side, mostly civilians, according to Israeli official figures.

Israel’s retaliatory

offensive has killed 45,936 people in Gaza, the majority of them civilians, according to figures from the territory’s health ministry which the United Nations considers reliable.

Gaza rescuers say 14 killed in Israel strikes

Continued from page 1

During their October 7, 2023 attack which sparked the war in Gaza, Palestinian militants seized 251 hostages, of whom 96 remain in Gaza. The Is-

NATURAL RESOURCES

Tender floated to study establishment of stations to supply natural gas for vehicles

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources on Wednesday announced the re-offering of the purchase of consulting services to study the establishment of compressed or liquefied natural gas supply stations.

The ministry added the tender is to determine the fair commission for companies interested in this activity according to specifications and conditions, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The ministry set the date of selling copies of the invitation to tender electronically from January 16 to 19 to receive inquiries, and the start of submitting bids will be between January 23 and 30.



File photo

Industrial sector grows by 4% during first 9 months in 2024

AMMAN (JT) — President of the Jordan Chamber of Industry Fathi Jaghbeer on Wednesday said that the industrial sector achieved a growth of 4 per cent during the last three quarters of 2024, compared with the same period in 2023.

Jaghbeer added that this growth reflects the significant role of the industrial sector in supporting the national economy, which contributed 40 per cent of the real total growth, to the overall 2.4 per cent of economic growth recorded during the last three quarters of last year, despite the developments in the region.

He added that various major industrial sectors witnessed positive developments, with the mining and

quarrying sector recording a growth of 4.9 per cent, manufacturing industries by 3.8 per cent, while the growth in the electricity and water sector reached 4.5 per cent, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

Jaghbir pointed out that these results reflect the importance of the industrial sector as a key pillar of growth and development in the Kingdom and show the exceptional ability of the industrial sector in facing changing challenges.

He added that the industrial sector proves once again that it is capable of adapting to difficult economic conditions and transforming crises into opportunities for growth and development.

COOPERATION



Petra photo

Chairman of the Jordanian Businessmen Association Hamdi Tabbaa highlights the investment opportunities in sectors such as ICT, artificial intelligence, energy, transportation and tourism

Jordan, India explore economic partnership

AMMAN (JT) — Chairman of the Jordanian Businessmen Association Hamdi Tabbaa and Indian Ambassador Manish Chauhan on Wednesday discussed strategies to boost economic relations and explore new economic partnerships between Jordan and India.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, Tabbaa stressed the importance of fostering advanced economic cooperation that benefits both nations, leveraging the strong ties between Jordan and India across various sectors, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

He underscored the

significance of attracting more Indian investments to Jordan and enhancing trade exchange by increasing interactions among private sector companies.

Tabbaa stressed the importance of fostering advanced economic cooperation...

Tabbaa also highlighted the investment opportunities in sectors such as ICT, arti-

ficial intelligence, energy, transportation and tourism, supported by the new Investment Environment Law.

Chauhan echoed the need to expand cooperation across diverse economic sectors, focusing on technology transfer, training and investment integration, noting that Indian investments in Jordan are among the most significant in the region.

Trade between Jordan and India reached approximately \$3.3 billion in 2023, with key Jordanian exports to India including chemical industries, fertilisers, aluminium and pharmaceuticals.

AGRICULTURE

Agreement signed to establish sorting, packaging for dates industry

AMMAN (JT)—Secretary General of the Jordan Valley Authority Hisham Hisa and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Dates Cooperative Agricultural Society (DCAS) Raed Saaida have signed a land lease agreement for the association to establish sorting, packing, packaging and refrigeration workshops to support date farmers in the Kingdom.

Hisa said in a statement on Wednesday that the Jordan Valley Authority seeks to stimulate investment in the Jordan Valley and support leading cooperative societies, especially in the palm sector, which is witnessing significant expansion, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He stressed that the



File photo

The Dates Cooperative Agricultural Society signs a land lease agreement for the association to establish sorting, packing, packaging and refrigeration workshops to support date farmers in the Kingdom

authority will not hesitate to provide all forms of support and assistance to farmers, empower them and improve irrigation services.

The authority is ready

to provide any requirements for the palm agricultural sector, from training farmers on irrigation management, to employing technology in this sector for optimal

use, he added.

Saaida said that the agreement highlights the authority's developmental role in serving farmers, and that it will contribute to providing

the basis for establishing date sorting, packing, packaging and refrigeration workshops, which will help develop the sector and highlight it globally as a high-end product that reflects the "pioneering" Jordanian agricultural experience.

He noted that the project will provide more than 80 job opportunities and will allow DCAS to establish a research station specifically to the palm sector.

He praised the role of the authority in monitoring the water situation and the needs of palm farmers.

Agriculture Minister Khalid Hneifat recently said that cumulative exports of dates increased to 16,280 tonnes in 2024, marking a 7 per cent rise from 2023.

US tariff and inflation fears rattle global markets

LONDON (AFP) — Stock markets were rattled on Wednesday by worries about incoming US president Donald Trump slapping tariffs on imports and the fading prospects for interest rate cuts.

A CNN report that Trump is considering declaring a national economic emergency to provide legal cover to impose tariffs on all imported goods sent US and European stocks

into the red and the dollar higher against major rival currencies.

"Perhaps more than even during his last term of office, traders will need to pay close attention to everything coming from the new President," said David Morrison, senior market analyst at Trade Nation.

"And, just to prove a point, the dollar has soared while risk assets have tumbled on reports that Trump is mulling a

national emergency declaration to allow for new tariff programme."

Susannah Streeter, head of money and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown said that there is nervousness about the future given Trump's unpredictable governing style.

"Aside from the impact on global trade and growth prospects the big worry is that a big swathe of tariffs will stoke the embers of in-

flation and fan consumer prices," she said.

"Expectations are growing that this will tie the Fed's hands and limit interest rate cuts in the US even further this year."

The Fed has already lowered its outlook for rate cuts to two reductions this year, down from the four forecast in September before Trump's election victory.

Data released on Tuesday and Wednesday

pointed to price pressures and a relatively robust US labour market, denting hopes of several more cuts to interest rates in the world's biggest economy.

"Yesterday's signs of rising inflation in the US have combined with an 11-month low in jobless claims to push back expectations of any rate cuts in 2025," said Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at online trading platform IG.

Germans turn to balcony solar panels to save money

By Sophie Makris
Agence France-Presse

BERLIN — As snowflakes gently settled on his balcony solar panels on a cold winter's day, Berliner Jens Sax checked his smartphone to see how much electricity they were generating.

The amount was modest now, said Sax, who admitted to being addicted to the phone notifications that keep track of the panels' output, "but we've saved 79 euros since installing them in August".

More than 800,000 such kits had been installed in Germany by the end of 2024, official data shows — boosted

by subsidies and a desire to save amid high energy costs.

That was more than double the number from a year earlier and 10 times the figure for 2022.

EmpowerSource, a consultancy, estimates that 3 million kits are now in operation nationwide, including those that have not been officially registered.

Installation numbers are likely an underestimate, said Leonhard Probst, a researcher at the Fraunhofer Institute for Solar Energy Systems, since the kits often remain unregistered.

Cheaper than photovoltaic roof panels and easy to install — the

panels simply plug into power sockets — balcony solar is taking off as Germany seeks to switch to renewables.

Europe's largest economy wants 80 per cent of gross power consumption to come from renewables by 2030, up from 59 per cent in 2024. Solar power supplied 14.6 per cent of Germany's electricity last year.

Far less powerful than roof panels, balcony solar kits cover only part of a household's energy needs and are used for tasks such as charging computers or powering dishwashers.

Probst estimates that the kits make up only about two per cent of the almost 100 giga-

watts of Germany's total solar capacity, but he expects that share to grow and thinks the kits could boost solar more broadly.

"There's an educational effect, it familiarises a larger number of people with solar power and might spur them to invest in more powerful systems," he said.

Oliver Lang, based in Berlin and head of solar kit company Sonnenrepublik, said the firm had grown in recent years thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

"At the beginning it was niche, there was very little demand when we started selling them six years ago," he said.

AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Wednesday amounted to JD 20.7 million spread over 11.3 million shares that traded through 2,696 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.34 per cent, closing at 2572.64 points.

Out of 89 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 34 companies rose while the share price of another 31 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Arab Potash by 7.49 per cent, Irbid District Electricity by 6.69 per cent, Al Daman for Investments by 5.00 per cent, Amad Investment and Real Estate Development by 4.60 per cent, and Jordan Hotels and Tourism by 4.52 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Al-Quds Ready Mix by 6.15 per cent, Jordan Dairy by 4.97 per cent, Al Sharq Investments Projects (holding) by 4.9 per cent, National Portfolio Securities by 4.62 per cent, and Afaq Holding for Investment and Real Estate Development Co. Pl.c by 4.41 per cent.



TENNIS

Top seed Shelton ousted by Czech teenager in Auckland

AUCKLAND (AFP) — US top seed Ben Shelton’s preparation for the Australian Open was dealt a blow on Wednesday with an upset loss to Czech teen sensation Jakub Mensik at the Auckland Classic. Playing his first match in nearly two months, world number 21 Shelton was beaten 7-6 (7/2), 4-6, 7-5 in the second round by the powerful Mensik. A clash of two of the world’s premier young players ended after more than two- and- a- half hours when Shelton’s serve was broken for the first time, in the 12th game of the third set. The 22-year-old American, who received a bye through the first round, served strongly but couldn’t match the consistency of his 19-year-old opponent’s groundstrokes. Left-hander Shelton will have little match play under his belt heading to the Grand Slam tournament in Melbourne, having not previously played since representing the US in the Davis Cup nearly two months ago. World No. 49 Mensik faces a quarter-final against the highest-ranked player remaining in Auckland, Portuguese seventh seed Nuno Borges. The tournament’s top four seeds all tumbled out in the second round. Second seed and defending champion Alejandro Tabilo of Chile was toppled in three sets by American qualifier Nishesh Basavareddy. Argentine third and fourth seeds Sebastian Baez and Francisco Cerundolo were both eliminated in straight set defeats.

Pegula launches season in style, Navarro also wins at Melbourne tune-up

ADELAIDE, Australia (AFP) — Jessica Pegula dropped just five games to romp past Maria Sakkari at the Adelaide International on Wednesday in a delayed start to her season days before the Australian Open. The top seed and US Open finalist, who had a bye in the first round, overwhelmed the Greek former World No.3 6-4, 6-1. The World No.7 will play either Spain’s Paula Badosa or fellow American Ashlyn Krueger in the quarter-finals. Pegula, who last played at the WTA Finals in November, improved her record against Sakkari to 6-5 as the Greek player works her way back from a shoulder injury. “It’s always tough getting the first win of the year, you don’t know what to expect,” said Pegula. “But it’s good heading into Melbourne next week. My focus is on doing well here first. It’s fun to problem-solve on court and have a good attitude to start the year.” Second-seeded fellow American Emma Navarro, ranked eight in the world, came through a tougher assignment needing two hours to battle past Ekaterina Alexandrova 7-6 (7/4), 6-4.

The nomadic mini-city behind the Dakar Rally event

By Alexandre Marchand
Agence France-Presse

BISHA, Saudi Arabia — Television loves the Dakar Rally with its crisp, dramatic images of cars, motorbikes and trucks ploughing through the blood-red sands and dunes of Saudi Arabia. But television doesn’t show the whole picture, veering its lens away from the camp of 3,500 people, six planes, 11 helicopters, 100 trucks and 70 buses — the gigantic logistical machine that moves a mini-city in the desert from stage to stage and keeps the show, figuratively, on the road.

Set up under tight security on a 25-hectare sand plain in the Bisha region in the south-west of the country, the Dakar start bivouac was in full swing in these early days of the 2025 edition.

Night and day, generators chunter away next to white tarpaulin structures as large as aircraft hangars. Trucks fill the cisterns of the 200 or so toilets and showers, while others sprinkle water on the roads to settle the dust raised by the constant stream of vehicles.

Roaring sandstorms whip up around the sea of small camping tents, in which most of the inhabitants of this itinerant community



AFP photo

French driver Sebastien Loeb runs his Dacia Sandrider after crashing during stage 3 of the 47th Dakar Rally between Bisha and Al Henakiyah, on Tuesday

sleep. No five-star hotels here.

The tent that makes up the canteen is a massive 1,600 square metres and sits next to a games arcade, sports fields, two shops and a stage with a giant screen.

It’s a whole self-contained little world far from the cities which has to be transported throughout the 12 stages.

“The basic mission of logistics is to put in place the people and resources so that each service, customer and competitor can operate and experience

their event in the best possible conditions,” Guillaume Kleszcz, logistics director for the ASO organisation, told AFP.

On each Dakar, the organisers have to provide around 10 bivouacs like this one, which follow the competitors as they make their way across the Arabian Peninsula, where the competition has pitched its tent since 2020.

Almost every day, a new mini-city will have to be created from scratch in the midst of sand and stones.

“Each site takes

around 10 days to set up,” says Arnaud Calestroupat, Dakar logistics manager. “First we level the ground, then we install the structures, the electrics.”

As far as possible, the logisticians duplicate what they can to get as far ahead as possible in the assembly.

For example, there are two copies of the race control centre. The one used in bivouac 1 goes directly to bivouac 3 with the one in bivouac 2 sent in advance to bivouac 4, and so on.

Similarly, the catering tent, which will

serve up in the region of 100,000 meals over the duration of the rally, will be available in four different versions, which will alternate with each other.

Thanks to these rotations, the organisers are almost two bivouacs ahead of the race.

Each area is structured in the same way.

“In the centre is the technical area, which is the work area,” says Calestroupat.

“Opposite is the living area, which is accessible to everyone, where everyone can meet and get together.

And around these two

large areas will be all the paddocks.”

The paddock is where the teams have their living quarters.

Not everything can be cloned, however, starting with the people.

At each change of bivouac, 500 people, including organisers, press and teams, are moved at dawn by specially chartered planes so that they can be at the finish point, several hundred kilometres away, even before the start of the race.

As for the television production team, they must have finished their work by early evening to pack up the equipment and transport it overnight by lorry to the next location.

There, it is immediately re-installed so that it is ready to go again when the cars and bikes start the next morning.

This gigantic scale requires an army of men and women: out of the 3,500 people usually accommodated at a bivouac, the organisation and the various service providers account for some 800 to 900 people.

But none of this will be seen on television which will focus instead on the men and women bravely throwing their vehicles across the dunes in a bid to win the rally.

And no one would have it any other way.

LIFE

Who’s winning the CES autonomy race? Not cars

By John Biers
Agence France-Presse

LAS VEGAS — This week’s Consumer Electronics Show unveils major new autonomous transport products for farms, boating and construction sites, highlighting a yawning gap with autos, where scalable driverless technology is further away.

The group of offerings include autonomous tractors, construction dump trucks and boats that dock themselves, as well as a robotic golf cart that doubles as an AI-enhanced super caddy.

That these products are already poised for commercialisation betrays the sophistication needed for autonomous road travel even if companies like Google-backed Waymo are making some headway.

On roads, “the complexity of the problem multiplies significantly”, said Barry Lunn, CEO of sensor company Provizio.

The machine learning challenge for cars amounts to “the hardest AI challenge in human history”, Lunn said.

The difficulty reflects the array of unpredictable factors that can interfere with road transport, such as unexpected manoeuvre by fellow drivers, pedestrians or falling branches.

These conditions, known in tech circles as “edge cases”, are present in every kind of autonomous transport, even if they seem uniquely difficult for cars.

In marine transport,



AFP photo

Attendees visit booths from technology companies from Hong Kong, China and South Korea during the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada on Tuesday

edge cases can involve poor light or rainy conditions, said David Foulkes, chief executive of Brunswick, a boat building company. These dynamics, as well as the presence of salt and other deposits in a marine environment can interfere with key hardware.

At CES, Brunswick is showcasing the autonomous docking system on the Boston Whaler, a 40-foot luxury boat that uses six stereo cameras that are derived from military drone technology.

Brunswick saw little upside in broad use of autonomy because recreational boaters relish the experience of driving but docking is the one area where boaters

“appreciate additional help,” said Foulkes.

“Just like every other autonomy system, you kind of spend 20 per cent of your time on the main use cases and then all the rest on the edge cases,” said Foulkes, who worked at Ford for 18 years.

Learning system

In agriculture, technologists also face distinct complications.

Willy Pell, chief executive of Blue River Technology, which is owned by John Deere, said the company discovered that lights on tractors attracted insects at night, which can interfere with key sensor equipment.

“A moth weigh-

ing less than a single ounce would bring our 40,000 pound machine to a halt,” Pell said at a news conference on Monday.

“It was a software bug in all senses of the word.”

Three years ago at CES, Deere unveiled a driverless tractor that could be operated from a smart phone.

Whereas the original machine could only perform very narrow tasks such as preparing soil for planting, this year’s “second generation” model uses many additional cameras to drive faster and perform more tasks.

The system incorporates thousands of real-world experiences, reflecting “years and

years of farming across these different edge cases”, Pell said.

The 188-year old agricultural equipment maker is also presenting an autonomous battery-run lawn mower for landscaping, an autonomous dump truck for construction sites and an autonomous diesel orchard tractor.

The orchard tractor can be used to spray insecticide six to eight times per year, the type of work where skilled labor is notoriously scarce.

Looming questions

When it comes to car autonomy on public roadways, companies are making progress but

still not close to mainstream adoption.

Waymo, which now operates commercial robotaxi service in three US cities, recently faced a novel security challenge after female riders in San Francisco were harassed by another vehicle that followed the robotaxi, according to a December Washington Post report.

Waymo, which served 4 million autonomous rides in 2024, plans to add its service to other US cities and Tokyo in its first international foray. The company’s co-CEO Tekedra Mawakana will headline a keynote later this week at CES.

Other big autonomous players at CES include the Amazon-owned Zoox and car companies such as Mercedes-Benz and BMW, which have received approval from the German government for autonomous driving in very limited situations.

While major player Tesla is not at CES, some exhibitors are preparing for the day when today’s driver is able to tune out the road.

“Consumers are looking at cars as... another environment where you want to be relaxed or enjoy yourself,” said Jeff Jury, senior vice president at Xperi, which sells multimedia technology in cars.

“You’re going to see a continual march towards autonomy but this idea of full autonomy [in cars] is still 10 or 15 years away,” Jury said. “There’s just too much that needs to be worked out.”

FILM

Award-winning migrant actor earns visa

LILLE, France (AFP) — An undocumented 23-year-old Guinean migrant living in France who won a prize at the Cannes film festival last year has been granted a work permit, enabling him to avoid deportation, his lawyer said on Wednesday.

Abou Sangare won rave reviews as the lead actor in last year’s film “L’Histoire de Souleymane” (“Souleymane’s Story”) in which he played a food delivery cyclist in Paris who is preparing for an immigration interview.

He won the prize for best male performance in the secondary Un Certain Regard section at Cannes in a role that reprised many of his own personal experiences as an undocumented migrant living in France.

After making three unsuccessful requests for work visas and being subject to a deportation order, he succeeded on Monday in obtaining a one-year permit for the first time, his lawyer Claire Perinaud told AFP.

“He will ask for renewals and will be able to move to longer-term visas at a later date,” she said, confirming a story that was first reported in his local newspaper Ici Picardie.

Sangare told the Liberation newspaper that he had been offered a job as a mechanic and intended to take it up, rather than pursue a career in film.

“There might be offers but I’m a mechanic, that’s my trade,” he said. “I can’t wait to start working in the garage.”

Despite having no acting experience, Sangare was picked by director Boris Lojkine after he attended a casting call in his hometown of Amiens in northeast France, in between off-the-books jobs fixing cars and helping out at a local education charity.

He left Guinea as a teenager, seeking to make enough money to pay for medical care for his epileptic mother.

His journey took him across the Sahara to Algeria and Libya then across the Mediterranean in an inflatable boat to Italy and finally France.

“When we chose Sangare to play the main role in the film, it was a big responsibility,” director Lojkine said in October when his film was released in France. “It’s only when he has his papers that I will have the impression of having finished my film.”