



## WEATHER

Sunny and warm weather forecast countrywide.

TODAY 26° 17°

FRI 29° 20°

SAT 31° 18°



**'ABIA' SEEKS TO GIVE VOICE TO SILENCED YOUTH**

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**'DREAMER' ACCEPTED TO KINGS SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM**

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**COMPLIANT MATTER ASSUMES CAPTIVATING SHAPES IN TABBAA'S HANDS**

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## \$554.6m in foreign aid pledged to Jordan in the first quarter of this year

**AMMAN (JNews)** – The total foreign aid pledged to Jordan for the first quarter of this year amounted to \$554.6 million, about JD393 million, according to data published by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, carried by Al-Mamlaka TV.

The total sum included \$334.8 million for soft loans, \$30.5 million for development grants, \$189 million for supporting the Jordan Response Plan to the Syrian Crisis, and \$30 million for supporting regional projects. The period covered was from January 1 to March 30, 2022.

The total amount of foreign aid was distributed as the follows, 916 percent for soft loans, while the

percentage of regular grants reached 8.3 percent.

Distribution of aid per sector was as follow: 45 percent for projects that support promoting gender equality, 31 percent for employment, training and livelihoods projects, 16 percent for infrastructure projects, 3 percent for the education sector, 3 percent for water and sanitation projects, 2 percent for the agricultural sector, 0.24 percent for the health sector, 0.05 percent for the tourism sector, 0.14 percent for projects that support economic growth, in addition to projects that supports human rights by 0.08 percent, according to the ministry.

Meanwhile, total foreign funding pledged to Jordan in 2021 reached JD31 billion (\$4.4 billion), according to the ministry. It indicated that regular grants to Jordan amounted to JD1.3 billion, eased loans amounted to approximately JD1.2 billion, while support for Jordan's response plan to the Syrian crisis amounted to JD527.4 million.

# 45%

Of aid will go for projects that support promoting gender equality

## EIB considering a second \$250 million loan for National Carrier Project

**AMMAN (JNews)** – A decision is expected by the European Investment Bank (EIB) to approve a second \$250 million development loan for Jordan's National Carrier Project, Al-Ghad News reported.

According to the bank's website, a full environmental and social impact assessment of the project has been completed in line with the EIB's international best practices and standards. The decision is expected in the coming weeks.

The project aims to produce at least 300 million cubic meters of water that will be pumped from Aqaba's desalination station to Amman. It will also help the country adapt to the impact of climate change and create jobs during construction and operation phases.

Jordan has one of the lowest

per capita water figures in the world, which is expected to fall further in the coming years, due to increasing population (which is expected to increase from the current 10 million to 18 million people by 2047).

The project is a priority for the government and is in line with national priorities, in particular the 2016-2025 National Water Strategy.

The EIB had participated in a donors' pledge conference for the project, which was convened by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation last April, where the bank announced providing \$250 million as a development loan. The bank also announced its willingness to provide further support for the strategic project.

# Inflation rate expected to rise further in coming months, economists say

By Razan Abdelhadi

**AMMAN** – Official figures released on Tuesday show that the Consumer Price Index (CPI), a measure of inflation, rose by 2.62 percent in the first four months of 2022, to 104.58 points, compared to 101.91 points in the same period last year.

Economists interviewed by *Jordan News* said that the increase was expected, especially in light of the significant spike in the prices of foodstuffs and goods brought about by the war in Ukraine, income insecurity, the pandemic, and the global economic slowdown.

They also agreed that the recent rise in inflation is caused mainly by external factors, which is expected to continue to go up in the coming months.

Former banker Mufleh Aqel told *Jordan News* that a 2.6 percent rise is not huge, indicating that it "may reach 4 to 5 percent before the end of this year, especially that in strong economies like the US and a number of European states, the inflation rate has reached 7 percent so far."

"This is imported inflation, especially since the prices of foreign goods are rising," he said, adding that "there is no tool to control imported inflation".

"Inflation occurs when there is an increase in the prices of goods and a decrease in the purchasing power of the local currency, which affects aggregate demand, especially in the absence of a wage increase, and which will place a greater burden on those with limited incomes; it will also turn middle-income to low-income earners," Aqel added.

He cautioned that it is difficult to find solutions to the rise in inflation, especially in a country that relies heavily on imports. "We import wheat, barley, and oil, and thus the possibility of controlling inflation is difficult," he said.

Economist Hussam Ayesh told *Jordan News* that the inflation rate is still within safe limits, but the fear is that it will continue to rise.



(Photo: Shutterstock)

Ayesh said that "the high rate of inflation may exceed government expectations, especially since the government excludes from its calculations commodities whose prices fluctuate constantly, including foodstuff and energy".

He stressed the importance of having statistical data that shows the extent of the rise in inflation

when calculating the prices of all commodities.

According to Ayesh, inflation rates might continue to rise or remain at high levels in the coming months, stressing that "demand for goods did not return to its normal levels before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic" and expressing hope that "the government has plans to confront upcoming price increases".

Economist Wajdi Makhamreh told *Jordan News* that "the rise in the inflation rate in Jordan was expected in light of the global spike in prices due to the Russian-Ukrainian war".

"Prices rose sharply due in large part to the jump in the price of oil derivatives, which are now the highest in the Arab world," Makhamreh said.

"In the month of April, the inflation rate reached 3.59 percent, which is one of the highest rates Jordan has

witnessed in several years," he added.

Economist Mazen Irshaid told *Jordan News* that "the repercussions of the increase in inflation rate will be reflected on all economic sectors, in addition to individuals, companies, and the national economy itself".

"The purchasing power will weaken more and companies will have to raise their prices to maintain their profit margins," he said.

Irshaid said that the Central Bank of Jordan will be obliged to raise interest rates in the future in order to protect the Jordanian currency from losing more of its purchasing power.

"However, this step has disadvantages, especially on companies that depend on borrowing from banks. With the increase in interest rates, financing costs will rise. The same applies to consumers and citizens, and this leads to more erosion in the purchasing power," he said.

We import wheat, barley and oil, and thus the possibility of controlling inflation is difficult

## Jordan to host global gaming meet, confirms Kingdom as regional hub

**AMMAN (JNews)** – The Jordan Gaming Lab, a King Abdullah II Fund for Development (KAFD) project, is set to host the Global Mobile Games Industry Conference next November, in cooperation with the Jordan Gaming Task Force (JGTF), within the activities of the 11th Jordan Gaming Summit for 2022, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

KAFD Director Saeb Al-Hasan said the event is an opportunity for Jordanian youth and game developers to look first-hand at the latest developments in the sector, contribute to putting Jordan on the industry's map and enhance its role as a regional hub for the sector, underlining KAFD's support to Jordanian game developers partaking in the conference.

Nour Khrais, chairman of the JGTF and CEO of Maysalward, a Jordanian software company and a technical partner of the Jordan Gaming Lab, pointed out that the Jordan Gaming Summit will be launched in cooperation with Pocket Gamer Connects (PGC) Jordan, owned by Steel Media Ltd., a global company that organizes prominent events in the video games sector.

The conference will also host global companies specialized in developing mobile video games and a number of speakers to discuss the latest developments in game making and means of promotion, publication, and generating income, offering Jordanian, Arab, and international developers to network and connect through workshops and discussions.

Winners of the 12th edition of the App Challenge, a competition for 14 to 16-year-old school students, will also be announced during the conference, Khrais noted.

For the third year, PGC Jordan's conference will include a global competition for best independent developers, giving a chance for independent developers to showcase their games to a group of prominent specialists, strategic partners, and investors.

This year's conference, which is expected to bring together about 500 people, focuses on e-sports and how they have become a part of global sports and provides an opportunity for youth to compete for e-sports prizes.



(Photo: Shutterstock)

## Most victims of cybercrimes are women – CIU

**AMMAN (JNews)** – The number of cybercrimes registered in Jordan rose last year to nearly 13,000, an increase of 3,000 crimes from 2020, according to the Director of the Criminal Investigation Unit (CIU) at the Public Security Directorate, Major Mahmoud Al-Maghaira, Al-Ghad News reported.

Maghaira attributed the rise in cybercrime cases last year to the use of social media for long hours during the lockdown periods imposed in response to the spread of the epidemic.

He added that most cybercrimes committed involve libel, slander and defamation, spreading rumors, hate speech, and extortion, in addition to financial fraud. He noted that most victims are women, at a rate of 75 percent compared to men.

According to Maghaira, technological development had unveiled new patterns of cybercrimes, making it very difficult to identify and arrest perpetrators, especially since a good number of them are non-Jordanians who committed their crimes outside Jordanian territory.

## 90% of carp farms in Jordan Valley hit by deadly disease

By Dana Al-Zyadat

**AMMAN** – The head of the Jordan Valley Farmers Union, Adnan Khaddam, told *Jordan News* that tens of thousands of carps died in Jordan Valley fish farms, with losses exceeding JD300 thousand.

Initially it was believed that the fish died from Koi Herpesvirus. However, later on Wednesday, Directorate of Animal Production at the Ministry of Agriculture Director Khaalil Amr said that final lab results of tests on the dead carp showed that the fish were free of this viral epidemic.

Amr added that death was due to a fungal infection caused by the gill rot disease, which can be treated and managed.

According to Khaddam, the disease spread from the south Jordan Valley toward the north, affecting 90 percent of carp farms, which have been bred by farmers and the state Treasury to meet the needs of the local market.

Ministry of Agriculture spokesperson Lawrence Al-Majali told *Jordan News* that the ministry is monitoring the issue, and that an epidemic is possibly threatening fish farms, with symptoms beginning four days ago in the Al-Zour areas, which draws water from the Jordan River.

He added that fungal gill rot disease does not constitute an epidemic case and will not affect humans or animals.

Majali added that the ministry is working on developing a program to manage the disease in the short, medium, and long term.

Minister of Agriculture Khaled Hneifat asked that all treatment-importing procedures be facilitated to deal with this disease, adding that "there is full cooperation with the Jordan Fish farming and Aquaculture Association".

Chairman of the association Mohamad Shaheen told *Jordan News* that it is normal for fish to get infected, "especially in fattening projects", adding that fluctuations in temperatures led to a decrease in the immunity of fish.

Shaheen stressed that the matter requires immediate action, assessment, and compensation for farmers for their losses, work on insulation and sterilization of water, and feed examination.

According to Khaddam, it is important to have specialists in fish farming to deal with pests and diseases, and to support farmers by reducing production costs.

## BRIEFS

US health agency classifies Jordan COVID-19 "low" risk

**AMMAN (JNews)** — The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the US classified Jordan among countries with "low" risk for contracting COVID-19, according to Hala News.

Jordan's classification was changed from "moderately dangerous" to "low" risk on May 16, joining Saudi Arabia, Libya, Morocco, Djibouti, and Mauritania, Hala News reported.

It said the CDC advised US travelers to be "up to date" with their COVID-19 vaccines before traveling to the Kingdom.

## Doctor sentenced to 3 months for medical error that led to death

**AMMAN (JNews)** — A Jordanian court found a medical doctor guilty of malpractice which led to the death of a person, Hala News reported.

Initially, the judicial authority at the Magistrates' Court of Amman, headed by Judge Esamat Al-Rahamneh, sentenced the doctor to six months in jail, but quickly commuted it to three months.

Before issuing its verdict, the court heard that the convict performed a bariatric surgery for a 49-year-old person, but that complications after surgery led to his death.

A Technical Committee in the Ministry of Health said that there was a medical error that led to the death. The committee's decision was attached to the case file.

## Industrial Production Index up 5.3%

**AMMAN (JNews)** — The general Industrial Production Index (IPI) inched up by 5.31 percent in the first quarter of 2022 to 89.99 points, compared with 85.45 points in the corresponding period in 2021, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

In a monthly report issued Wednesday, the Department of Statistics said the IPI in March alone shot up by 10.39 percent, climbing up to 95.68 points compared with 86.68 points in the same month last year.

On a monthly level, it said the Index grew by 12.48 percent in March 2022, reaching 95.68 points against 85.07 registered in February the same year.

## Commission probes why aircraft veered off course in Aqaba

**AMMAN (JNews)** — The Civil Aviation Regulatory Commission (CARC) is probing why a training aircraft veered off course while landing at King Hussein International Airport in Aqaba, CARC's Chief Commissioner Haitham Mesto said, according to Khaberni.

Mesto said Wednesday the aircraft swerved for a few meters on the runway. In such cases, the commission "takes necessary measures, such as opening an investigation in the accident," Khaberni said.

The aircraft, a light single-engine Cherokee used for training, was flown by one pilot. The accident caused no damage.

# Norwegian envoy says Jordan key partner for global peace, stability

**AMMAN (JNews)** — Jordan is an important partner for international peace and stability and its political influence outweighs its size, somewhat like Norway, Norwegian Ambassador Espen Lindebeck said.

In an interview with the Jordan News Agency, Petra, the envoy emphasized that his country strongly believes that Jordan is a stabilizing factor and has a key role as the custodian of Christian and Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem.

Speaking on the occasion of the Norwegian National Day, Lindebeck expressed worries about the recent developments in Jerusalem and attempts to challenge the status quo there.

The envoy said diplomatic relations with Jordan date back to more than five decades ago, making the embassy in Amman one of Norway's biggest diplomatic missions, which is a testimony of the proximity in relations.

"Our cooperation with Jordan stretches over a wide variety of fields: from a shared political vision of peace and dialogue with close and earnest political discussions, to a strong cooperation in sectors such as humanitarian response for



The Norwegian Envoy to Jordan Espen Lindebeck. (Photo: Petra)

Jordan's hosting of refugees, education, and lately in defense".

"The successful state visit of their Majesties King Harald and Queen Sonja to Jordan in March 2020 further solidified this close relationship

and friendship" he said. He said it "reinforced our many common visions and goals, and an agreement of regular political consultations was signed".

His Majesty King Abdullah's visit

Jordan is also an important partner for Norway at a multilateral level, as both countries are staunch supporters of a strong international legal order.

to Norway last March illustrated the strong interest and genuine close relations at all levels, including at the very highest, Lindebeck explained.

Jordan is also an important partner for Norway at a multilateral level, as both countries are staunch supporters of a strong international legal order. "This is also reinforced by Norway currently being an elected member of the UN Security Council, and with the new reality in Europe and the world after the devastating illegal invasion of Ukraine," he said.

"As an important regional actor for stability and mediation, we consult closely with our Jordanian partners in matters related to peace and security in the Middle East and glob-

ally," noted the envoy, whose country hosted the first public meeting of Israeli and Palestinian leaders in 1993, which culminated in what is widely known as the Oslo peace accords.

On Palestinian-Israeli peace, Lindebeck said "only a negotiated two-state solution will create a lasting and sustainable peace between the parties."

"For a two-state solution to be sustainable, we believe it must be in line with international law. Norway has warned against unilateral action. Any annexation of land by force is unacceptable and in contravention of international law," he stressed.

Commenting on the refugee crisis, Lindebeck said that Jordan has over the years proved a generous host for many refugees from the region, providing safety and security to those who need it the most. He noted that the solidarity and humanity shown by Jordan, are important examples to look to in these times, and because of this, Norway has remained a consistent partner of Jordan, and has contributed with more than \$200 million in assistance since 2013 towards humanitarian and stabilization efforts.

## Jordan, Iraq to set up industrial city on their borders

**AMMAN (JNews)** — Jordan and Iraq agreed to establish an industrial city along their common border, Minister of Industry, Trade, and Supply Yousef Al-Shamali said, according to Hala News.

He told a press conference Wednesday that the agreement followed closed-door discussion with an Iraqi ministerial delegation headed by Iraqi Minister of Industry and Minerals, Manhal Aziz Al-Khabbaz.

The Iraqis arrived in Jordan Tues-

day for discussions on closer economic cooperation between the two neighboring countries, Hala News said. Shamali and Khabbaz co-chaired the general assembly of a Jordanian-Iraqi Company for Industry, according to Iraqi ambassador Haider Hadi.

Shamali, with Khabbaz next to him, told reporters that "consent" has been granted during discussions with the visiting Iraqi delegation for the establishment of the Industrial City project on the Jorda-

nian-Iraqi border Hala News reported.

He said setting up an industrial city is an opportunity to consolidate bilateral economic ties in the various sectors, especially industrial.

Khabbaz said that acquisition and leasing of border land between Jordan and Iraq for the establishment of the joint industrial zone has been completed. He said the joint industrial zone will provide job opportunities in both countries and attract investments.

## Digging oil begins under Jordan desert sand in southeast

**AMMAN (JNews)** — Jordan began digging for oil in Al-Sarhan well in the southeastern part of the Kingdom, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Saleh

Al-Kharabsheh said, according to Ad-Dustour News.

Kharabsheh said in a statement that the location of the well was determined after a thorough study of the area based on a three-dimensional seismic survey.

The information, which was analyzed to identify the glacier areas to which the region was exposed millions of years ago, was prepared by the energy ministry and the National Petroleum Company in collaboration with global oil and gas consultancy companies.

The project will see well drilling at depths of 1400-1750 meters, Kharabsheh said.

The first phase of the project is being implemented by national cadres from the ministry and the national petroleum company, he said.

The project is part of the ministry's efforts to explore natural resources, including oil and gas in order to carry through the ministry's vision of achieving energy security and reliance on local natural sources, in a hope that these will support the state treasury, according to the minister.

He emphasized the importance of the project in providing not only job opportunities for the local community, but also providing drinking water for the area.

The project will see well drilling at depths of 1400-1750 meters, Kharabsheh said.

## Qatar wants more Jordanian fruit and vegetables

**AMMAN (JNews)** — Qatari importers and food dealers are increasing the quantities of imported Jordanian fruit and vegetables, given the rising price of similar products imported from foreign markets, Hala News reported.

Prices of vegetable and fruit products, both domestic and imported, in the Qatari market have risen to possibly an unprecedented level with prices of some products jumping at a double rate, at best, the majority have risen from 30 to 40 percent.

According to Issa Mansouri, a Qatari trader and manager of a well-

known food import company in Doha, Qatar's vegetable and fruit market has been in high demand for over two weeks, contributing to a dramatic rise in prices, especially for imported products.

As a result, there has been a need to increase imports from the Jordanian market at levels higher than usual at such times of year.

Jordan's vegetable products now account for a large share of the consumption of the Qatari market, with the Kingdom's vegetables characterized by their high quality and very favorable competitive prices compared to their foreign counterparts.



(Photo: Shutterstock)

## Rooftop farming project launches

**AMMAN (JNews)** — Students from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate Schools launched their serial rooftop farming project, an initiative which seeks to develop farming and use rooftops in households in farming, in an event on Tuesday sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture, according to Al-Ghad News.

Minister of Agriculture Khaled Al-Hneifat, who sponsored the launching ceremony, emphasized the necessity to develop the relationship between the land, and involving school students in rooftop-farming.

He said such activities support land affiliation, serve the urban environment, and achieve part of the

home's food self-sufficiency, noting the ministry's willingness to support these projects through training, rehabilitation, and assistance in their development using modern technologies.

The minister also valued the efforts of those involved and the children and young people taking part in an initiative that is beneficial to the nation and society.

Leen Al-Madanat, general direc-

tor of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate Schools, spoke about the importance of the role played by the government in enhancing direct communication with schools, and their keenness to continuously meet and provide opportunities for students to express their thoughts and opinions and listen to their aspirations. She added that such communication allows students to participate in the planning of the future and to promote a sense of responsibility and belonging to the country.

Madanat said the schools' strategic objective is to prepare students and raise their awareness of the challenges, especially environmental ones.



## Jordan has enough stockpiles of goods and foodstuffs

**AMMAN (JNews)** — Jordan has a "huge" stockpile of goods and foodstuffs, enough to cover domestic need for several months, president of the Jordan Chamber of Commerce, Nael Al-Kabariti, said.

In comments reported by Jo24, Kabariti said all commodities are available in the local market.

He said intense competition between merchants locally led to a decrease in the price of some commodities, benefitting consumers.

But he warned that prices of some commodities have dramatically increased globally.

Energy costs are one of the most important operating factors in the commercial sector and one of the obstacles to economic growth.

"If energy costs decrease, that will reflect on the price of goods," he said. "But the price of electricity in Jordan is among the highest in the world and constitutes a significant burden on all sectors."



(Photo: JNews)

## Minister urges setting up detours ahead of road reconstruction

**AMMAN (JNews)** — Inspection tours of the "most affected" parts of the Desert Highway in the south began Tuesday by Minister of Public Works and Housing Yahya Al-Kisbi, as part of the ministry's project to reconstruct desert road, according to Al-Mamlaka TV.

Kisbi stressed, during the tour, "the necessity of establishing road diversions on the site, and securing them with the necessary public safety elements and warning signs, in order to divert traffic on them, within the agreed time periods, to ensure traffic sustainability

on the road, and to start reconstruction work."

He stressed that "it will be carried out along with the completion of the reconstruction of the most affected parts, from Ras Al-Naqab to Humayma, with a length of 17km, after the completion of the road diversions.

Kisbi said that "the work in the project to complete the reconstruction of the road has been divided into two grants, where the first grant will be for the area between Al-Marigha, passing through Ras Al-Naqab and reach-

ing Dabat Hanut, while the second grant for the area will be between Dabat Hanut and Humayma."

Kisbi added that the ministry "did not neglect its important social role, and in order to serve the local community, it employed the region's recent graduates through a system of mandatory employment to work on the project."

At the end of the tour, Kisbi praised the efforts made by the workers on the project to ensure that the project is completed within the agreed timeframes.



Minister of Public Works and Housing Yahya Kisbi and Mission Director of USAID Sherry Carlin attend the schools opening in Aqaba on Wednesday. (Photos: USAID Jordan Twitter page)

## Two USAID funded schools launched in Aqaba

**AMMAN (JNews)** – Minister of Public Works and Housing Yahya Kisbi, accompanied by Mission Director at the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Sherry Carlin, on Wednesday inaugurated two new schools in Aqaba, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

During the opening ceremony of Al-Amal Sign Language Secondary Coeducation School, Kisbi said the USAID-funded cooperation between the Public Works Ministry

and the Education Ministry contributes to achieving the goals of the national strategy for education by providing a modern and comprehensive learning environment that integrates people with disabilities in educational process, as well as reducing crowdedness in classrooms, and reducing the number of schools operating on the double shift system.

The cooperation will also increase rates of elementary educa-

tion enrollment to accommodate population growth, he continued, describing the recently-opened schools as a "model of modern schools that we aspire for our kids

to be part of."

He said Al-Amal Sign Language Secondary Coeducation School, which consists of three stories, will give hope to students with hearing disabilities due to its suitable design and special devices.

These new schools will alleviate the burden on the Ministry of Education and cover part of the increasing demands, he said, pointing to a USAID-funded project to build 25 schools across the Kingdom, 12 of

which have already been built.

Kisbi lauded the continuous support of the US government, people, and the USAID, looking forward to further cooperation in the future.

For her part, Carlin said: "When the USAID invests in inclusive education, it invests in human capacities of the Jordanian children and youth."

"We are extremely proud of our partnership with the ministries of public works and education," she

added, stressing that the modern schools are an example of a distinguished relation and partnership with the Jordanian government.

Principle of Al-Amal School Salam Majali commended the USAID's efforts in building and maintaining schools in Jordan, underscoring that the cooperation serves the local community, especially those with disabilities.



### SPONSORED CONTENT

## Roberto's Opens at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Amman

Signature restaurant and lounge takes in a 360-degree view of Amman from the 20th floor

**AMMAN** – In an atmosphere of great anticipation, Roberto's will be opening its doors on the 20th floor of The Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Amman, on May 29, for what promises to be a uniquely memorable experience.

Roberto's arrives in Amman with an impressive legacy and stellar reputation, having recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary in Dubai. An established star of the UAE's highly competitive culinary scene, Roberto's is known for its critically acclaimed kitchen, which operates under the overall direction of its Chief Culinary Advisor, three-star Michelin Chef Enrico Bartolini, and Corporate Chef Francesco Guarracino. The restaurant's kitchen in Amman will be headed by Executive Chef Carmelo Rosselli, who is already intimately familiar with the brand's concept.

Roberto's Restaurant General Manager in Amman, Marco Scarpa, said, "I simply cannot wait to execute Roberto's vision in Amman, and introduce the city to new and exquisite culinary experiences and Roberto's famously vibrant atmosphere."

As the signature lifestyle venue of The Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Amman, Roberto's commands the entirety of the hotel's top floor from where it enjoys striking views to complement the refined, elevated hospi-

tal experience. Across its expansive space the décor subtly changes from the dramatic urbane bar to the refreshing year-round alfresco terraces and the exclusive ambiance of the music lounge.

Roberto's stylish bar lounge is certain to become the place to be seen in the Jordanian capital. Guests can retreat with cocktails prepared by skilled mixologists to secluded window seats that have the unrivalled best view in town, enjoy a live DJ set and, as the evening progresses to night, watch the space transform to take on the lively buzz of a cosmopolitan lounge.

In the restaurant diners can relax in a sumptuously designed space, catch wafts of mouthwatering scents from the open kitchen and enjoy an inspiring menu that makes the most out of authentic Italian cuisine, with touches of unique fusion twists, using carefully sourced premium ingredients such as fresh oysters, live lobster, black cod, wild Mediterranean seabass, and Italian truffles.

With a menu that will evolve to reflect the seasons, and those breathtaking ever-changing views, Roberto's is certain to entice Amman's residents and visitors alike to return again and again for a new experience, a new view, and a new flavor.



## Threats to food security need to be addressed before reaching crisis point

By Nesreen Ghassan

**AMMAN** – In a report published on Tuesday, UNICEF warned of threats that might lead to a global food-security crisis, and of "children suffering from wasting" and dying from preventable diseases.

The organization warned that a set of global shocks to food security around the world - like the war in Ukraine, the fact that economies are still struggling to recover from the pandemic, and that some countries still suffer from drought because of climate change - is creating the conditions for a big rise in the number of people who are starving to death.

Even before the Ukrainian war put pressure on food security, around the world, conflict, climate shocks, and COVID-19 were having a catastrophic impact on families' ability to feed their children, said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, both nations among the world's top agricultural producers and exporters, has blocked supply lines and impacted global food security.

A previous UN report said that among Jordanians, 53 percent are vulnerable to food insecurity and around 3 percent of households are food insecure. Jordan ranked 7th in the Arab region and 49th internationally, out of 113 countries, on the 2021 Global Food Security Index.

"Jordan is not far from experiencing a food security crisis; we are experiencing a shortage of strategic stocks," head of Jordanian Poultry Producers Association Hassan Abu Daqr told *Jordan News*.

According to Abu Daqr, some global conditions must be addressed in order to prevent the problems from worsening.

The poultry sector was greatly affected by the Russian-Ukrainian war,



(File photo: Ameer Khalifeh/JNews)

which led to a reduction in the supply of feed and different kinds of oil, given that Ukraine is one of the major countries that exports wheat, feed, and oil, said Abu Daqr.

Climate change has also contributed to the decrease in the quantities of feed and an increase in their prices.

"To avoid the impact of these crises, I believe that the government should follow a strategy that helps farmers and poultry farmers," he

said, adding that this can be done by reducing taxes and giving local farmers financial facilities, like loans and grants.

Jordan Valley Farmers' Union President Adnan Khadam told *Jordan News* that "Jordan is currently witnessing a fourfold increase in the production costs", which have been greatly affected by the corona crisis, the Ukrainian war, and climate change.

Another consequence of the cli-

mate change is lower quantities of or no rain, which in Jordan translates dams filled only 30 percent of their capacity.

Adding to the food security woes, the unprecedented low temperatures Jordan witnessed this year had a significant impact on agricultural production and crops, Khadam said.

To avoid getting closer to a food security crisis, the government should create a specialized committee to study the problems and how to reduce their impact, which "could be a significant step toward solving the problems and not allowing them to exacerbate", he added.

"Farmers must be supported by reducing electricity prices, exempting them from taxes and customs duties, and giving them long-term loans," Khadam suggested.

**Jordan is currently witnessing a fourfold increase in the production costs, which have been greatly affected by the corona crisis, the Ukrainian war, and climate change.**

### SPONSORED CONTENT

## ZINC, Sager sign deal to educate on proper use of drones

**AMMAN** – The Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC) has signed a cooperation agreement with Sager Autonomous Robotics, a Jordanian UAV-based intelligent system and application solutions provider.

According to a Zain press statement, the deal was inked on Sunday by Zain Jordan's CEO Fahad Aljaseem and Sager's CEO Youssef Ammoura.

Under the agreement, the two companies will launch a program to educate people on the use of drones according to local and foreign legislation, in addition to holding a series of training courses and workshops in TechWorks—a Crown Prince Foundation initiative—and in all branches of ZINC.

A training program will also be launched to train drone operators to offer aerial photography services in

many fields and attract more people to develop their skills.

Sager will offer professional and high-quality aerial photography services in cooperation with Zain Studio to cover all events held by Zain.

The agreement enables Zain to keep supporting Jordanian innovation and start-ups, especially those that keep pace with developments and simulate important sectors, as drone technology is considered one of the most developed technologies and serves many sectors.

For its part, Sager stressed the deal's importance in spreading awareness on the safe and proper use of drones and moving this sector to a stage of stability to simulate its global development and progress.



# Tense times ahead for Lebanon after elections

**BEIRUT (AFP)** – Hezbollah's opponents might rejoice at their loss of majority in parliament but Lebanon's packed political calendar now sets the stage for protracted deadlocks at best or violence at worst.

Sunday's polls passed without any major incident, in itself an achievement in a country which has a history of political violence and is suffering its worst crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war.

Iran-backed Hezbollah is a major political and military force, described by its supporters as a bulwark against enemy Israel and by its detractors as a state within a state whose continued existence prevents any kind of democratic change in Lebanon.

Hezbollah and its allies lost the clear majority they had in the outgoing parliament, despite a flurry of televised addresses by the Shiite group's leader Hassan Nasrallah in the week running up to the vote.

The biggest winners were the Christian Lebanese Forces party and new faces born of a 2019 secular protest movement, all of whom have a clear stance against Hezbollah.

"Old guard parties will seek to assert their political dominance in the face of the reformists who have entered parliament for the first time," said analyst Lina Khatib, head of the Middle East and North Africa Program at Chatham House.

## Speaker election

As of May 22, after the current assembly's mandate expires, the new

lawmakers will have 15 days to pick a speaker, a position Nabih Berri has held since 1992 and is not intent on leaving despite reaching the age of 84.

By convention, Lebanon's prime minister position is reserved for a Sunni Muslim, the presidency goes to a Maronite Christian, and the post of speaker to a Shiite Muslim.

Berri is a deeply polarizing figure but all Shiite seats in parliament were won by Hezbollah and the veteran speaker's own Amal party, which rules out the emergence of a consensual candidacy.

The election will be a first test of how willing Hezbollah's opponents are to challenge the Shiite tandem.

The leader of the Tehran-backed movement's parliamentary group set the tone as early as Monday when he warned rivals against becoming "shields for the Israelis".

His words were a reply to Samir Geagea, whose Lebanese Forces have championed the case for disarming Hezbollah, and had laid down the gauntlet by vowing never to support Berri's re-election or join a unity government.

The new polarization of Lebanese politics raises fears of a repeat of deadly violence that broke out in Beirut last year between Hezbollah-aligned fighters and FL supporters.

The L'Orient-Le Jour daily stressed in an analysis that Hezbollah's parliament majority in recent years had enabled it "not to resort to terror to impose its decisions and preserve its red lines".



**A woman ticks her ballot behind a privacy screen while voting in the parliamentary election at a polling station in Lebanon's capital Beirut, on May 15, 2022. (Photo: AFP)**

## Government formation

"The risk of a total stalemate is real, deadlocks are a Lebanese specialty," said Daniel Meier, a France-based researcher.

In Lebanon's unique and chaotic brand of sectarian consensus politics, forming a government can take months, even when the country

faces multiple emergencies.

Between the two latest elections, two out of four years were spent under a caretaker government with limited powers as the country's political barons haggled over cabinet line-ups.

The latest government, led by billionaire Najib Mikati, has only been

in place since September 2021 after a 13-month vacuum.

It was billed a mostly technocratic government tasked with guiding Lebanon to recovery, but each minister was endorsed by one of Lebanon's perennial heavyweights.

Whether any of the 13 MPs labeled as representing the interests

of the 2019 anti-establishment uprising would consider joining a coalition government with that same establishment is doubtful.

"There is change in the balance of power but this will not translate in a program for change because despite everything Hezbollah keeps its veto power," analyst Sami Nader said.

A quick fix would be to keep the Mikati government in a caretaker capacity until the presidential election.

## Presidential election

That is the last but not the least of the major hurdles in the institutional calendar.

Due by the end of the year, the new parliament's pick for a president to succeed Michel Aoun, who will be 89 by then, was further complicated by the latest election.

He groomed his son-in-law Gebran Bassil for years but the electoral surge of the Lebanese Forces, the Christian rivals of Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement, is a spanner in the family works.

Army chief Joseph Aoun has already been tipped as an alternative but talks could drag on.

"Probably we will have a long period of stalemate in the parliament," said Joseph Bahout, a professor at the American University of Beirut.

He predicted a tunnel of institutional deadlocks could delay reforms requested by the International Monetary Fund for a critically needed rescue package until the spring of 2023.

# Erdogan urges NATO allies to 'respect' concerns over Finland, Sweden

**ANKARA (AFP)** – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has threatened to block Finland and Sweden from joining NATO, urged the alliance's members on Wednesday to "respect" Ankara's concerns about the two countries, which Turkey accuses of harboring terrorists.

"Our only expectation from NATO allies is... to first understand our sensitivity, respect, and finally support it," Erdogan told his party's lawmakers in parliament.

Finland and Sweden on Wednesday submitted a joint application to join NATO as Russia's invasion of Ukraine forces a dramatic reappraisal of security in Europe.

Erdogan accused Stockholm of providing safe haven to members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) designated as a terror group by Ankara and its Western allies.

"We asked them to extradite 30 terrorists but they refused to do so," he said.

"You will not send back the terrorists to us and then ask our support for your NATO membership... We cannot say 'yes' to making this security organization less secure," he added.

Sweden has also imposed embargoes on arms sales to Turkey since 2019 over Ankara's invasion of Syria.

"We are sensitive about protecting our borders against attacks from terror organizations," said

Erdogan, calling on NATO allies to support Turkey's "legitimate" Syria operations or at least not to stand in their way.

The Turkish leader also said he was not warm to Swedish or Finnish delegations' request to visit Ankara for consultations.

"They want to come on Monday. They shouldn't bother. There's no need," he said.

Later Wednesday, Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin

had a series of telephone conversations with advisers to the heads of state and foreign ministries of Germany, Sweden, Finland, the UK, and the US, according to the Turkish presidency.

During these talks, Kalin indicated that Turkey was waiting for "concrete steps" to address its concerns about its national security.

In the event of "non-fulfillment of Turkey's expectations", the accession process of the two Nordic

countries "cannot move forward," Kalin added.

"Sweden's membership in NATO cannot be done until Turkey's well-founded concerns are dispelled. If you want NATO's second army to defend you in the event of aggression, you must accept this reality," Turkish presidency director of communications Fahrettin Altun said in an opinion piece published on Wednesday in the Swedish daily Expressen.



**Turkey's President and leader of the Justice and Development Party Recep Tayyip Erdogan (right) waves during a group meeting at the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara, on May 18, 2022. (Photo: AFP)**

# World's tallest building engulfed as Mideast sandstorms hit UAE

**DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AFP)** – The world's tallest building disappeared behind a grey layer of dust on Wednesday as sandstorms that have swept the Middle East hit the UAE, prompting weather and traffic warnings.

The 828m Burj Khalifa, which towers over Dubai and is usually visible across the busy financial hub, retreated behind a curtain of airborne dirt that shrouded much of the country.

The UAE is just the latest country in the path of sandstorms that have smothered Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and others in recent days, closing airports and schools and sending thousands to hospitals with breathing problems.

Capital city Abu Dhabi's air quality index (AQI) soared into the "hazardous" zone overnight, according to waqinfo and the Plume pollution app.

The Middle East's sandstorms are becoming more frequent and intense, a trend associated with overgrazing and deforestation, overuse of river water, and more dams.

Experts say the phenomenon could worsen as climate change warps regional weather patterns and drives desertification.

Emirati authorities issued a na-

tionwide warning urging residents to remain vigilant.

"Abu Dhabi Police urges drivers to be cautious due to low visibility during high winds and dust," the police force tweeted, as residents took to social media to publish pho-

tos and videos.

"Please do not be distracted by taking any videos or using your phone," it added.

## 'Hazardous weather'

A National Center for Meteorology



**A view of the haze obscuring the skyline of the Gulf emirate of Dubai with a mosque in the foreground during a heavy sandstorm. (Photo: AFP)**

graphic showed nearly all the country covered by the storm, with the warning: "Be on the alert: hazardous weather events are expected."

Winds with speeds up to 40km per hour are blowing the dust, it said, reducing visibility in some areas to less than 2,000m.

However, a Dubai airports spokesman said there was no impact on air traffic. Weather conditions were expected to remain the same for the next few days.

In neighboring Saudi Arabia, badly hit on Tuesday, conditions eased in the capital Riyadh on Wednesday but continued to restrict visibility in the city center.

Emergency rooms in Riyadh hospitals received some 1,285 people suffering from respiratory problems over 24 hours from the sandstorm, the state-run Al-Ekhabariya channel reported late on Tuesday.

The Saudi national weather center reported that dust was also affecting visibility in the west and south, specifically in Assir, Najran, Hael, and Medina provinces. Medina is home to Medina city, the second holiest city in Islam.

The center predicted another sandstorm would arrive in the kingdom by Sunday.

# Detained Algerian activist's life in danger – Amnesty

**ALGIERS (AFP)** – The life of a prominent Algerian activist is in danger after he began his second hunger strike during 11 months in detention without trial, Amnesty International warned Wednesday.

El Hadi Lassouli is a farmer and co-founder of the CNLD, a group established in the wake of the 2019 Hirak protest movement campaigning for rights of political detainees.

Lassouli, in his 50s, was arrested in June last year, Amnesty said without giving details of the charges.

Since his detention, "his health has seriously degraded, putting his life in danger, according to his family and his lawyers", the London-based rights group said in a statement.

Amnesty's Algeria director Hassi-

na Oussedik said he "should be released pending trial".

The CNLD prisoners' support group says more than 260 people are behind bars in Algeria in relation to the Hirak movement or rights campaigning.

Amnesty's warning came less than a month after the death in detention of fellow activist Hakim Debbazi.

Debbazi, 55, was arrested in February after publishing Facebook posts in support of the pro-democracy Hirak. He died on April 24, said the Algerian rights group LADDH.

An Algerian minister on Tuesday blamed "natural causes" for his death, which sparked a wave of anger and prompted his family to file a lawsuit for manslaughter.

# Iran seizes foreign tanker suspected of smuggling – state media

**TEHRAN (AFP)** – Iran's navy seized a foreign vessel in the Gulf and arrested its crew on suspicion of fuel smuggling, state media said Wednesday, in the second such operation in a week.

"A foreign ship, carrying 550,000 liters of smuggled fuel, was seized in the waters of the Persian Gulf," the judiciary chief for Hormozgan province, Mojtaba Ghahremani, told state TV.

"The smuggled fuel was seized and seven crew members arrested," he added, without specifying their nationalities.

"Operational forces and naval ves-

sels of the Islamic republic seized the vessel and escorted it to port," Ghahremani said, adding that "the ship has been handed over to the judicial authorities for legal proceedings and necessary investigations."

Iran's navy has stepped up its operations against fuel smuggling in the sea lanes of the Gulf, where a large portion of the world's oil is produced and shipped.

On Friday, Ghahremani said two vessels were seized and their six crew members detained.

Last month, at least three similar seizures were reported, on April 9, 15, and 24.

# 'Conflict, destruction' prevent return to Iraq's Yazidi heartland – NGO

**BAGHDAD (AFP)** – Violence and sluggish reconstruction have prevented the return to Iraq's northwestern town of Sinjar of its predominantly Yazidi population after the abuses of Islamist extremist rule, the Norwegian Refugee Council said Wednesday.

Five years after the defeat of the Daesh, which committed massacres against the Yazidis and used their women as sex slaves, the town's Yazidi, Muslim Kurdish and Arab residents are no closer to returning home, especially after a surge in violence earlier this month.

The aid group said that "nearly two-thirds of Sinjar's population – over 193,000 Yazidis, Arabs, and Kurds – remain displaced".

The Yazidis are a Kurdish-speaking minority who were persecuted by Daesh for their non-Muslim faith after its capture of the town in 2014.

"Widespread destruction of civilian houses, new clashes, and social

tensions" are preventing returns, NRC said in a report.

Out of 1,500 people surveyed by the aid group to determine how decisions to return home are made, about 64 percent "said their homes were heavily damaged". It added that "a staggering 99 percent of those who applied for government compensation had not received any funding for damaged property."

The aid group called on the Iraqi government and the authorities in the autonomous Kurdistan region to "prioritize the rehabilitation of infrastructure and the restoration of services to allow for safe housing, land, and property, alongside public infrastructure".

In early May, fighting broke out between Iraqi troops and Yazidi fighters affiliated with Turkey's banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), killing at least one Iraqi soldier.

More than 10,000 people fled the latest fighting, adding to the population of displaced.

# World Meteorological Organization warn that climate change is a lost game already

**GENEVA (AFP)** — Four key climate change indicators all set new record highs in 2021, the UN said Wednesday, warning that the global energy system was driving humanity towards catastrophe. Greenhouse gas concentrations, sea level rise, ocean heat, and ocean acidification all set new records last year, the UN's World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said in its "State of the Global Climate in 2021" report.

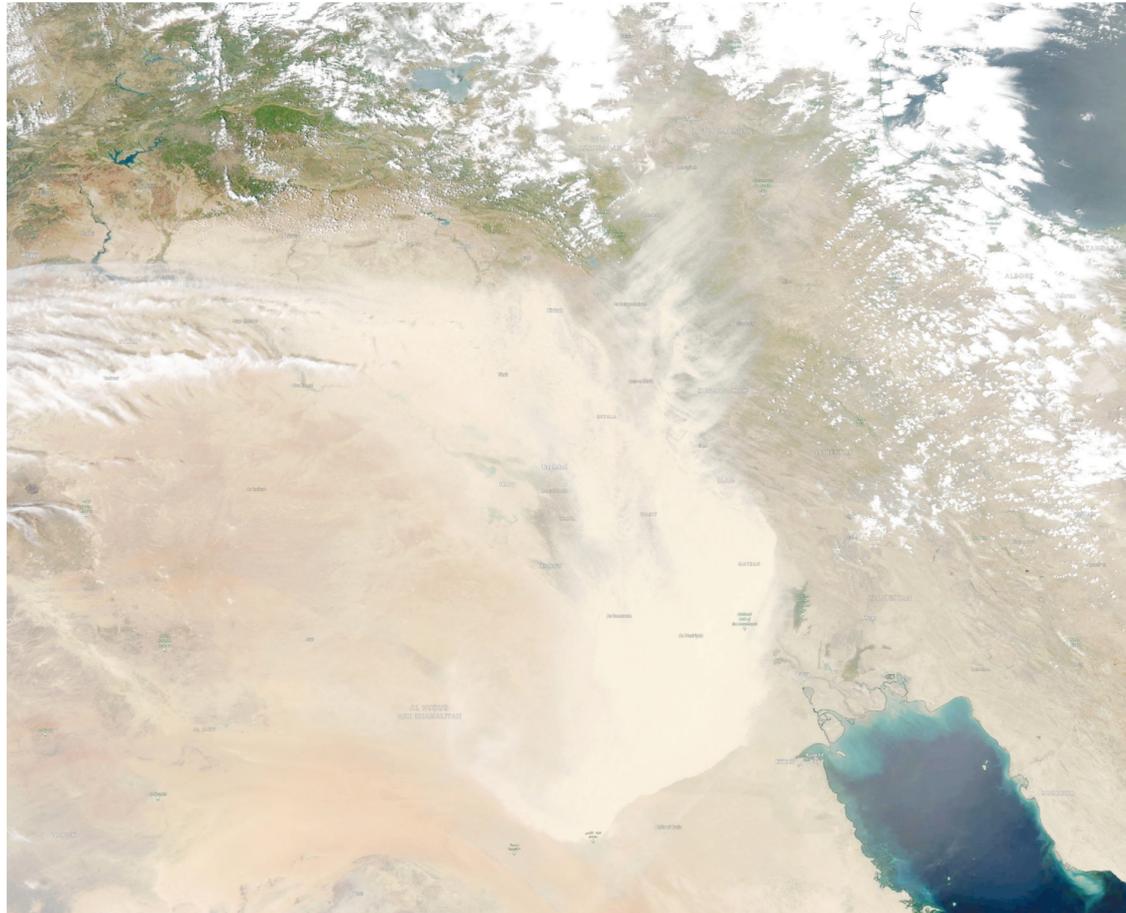
The annual overview is "a dismal litany of humanity's failure to tackle climate disruption," UN chief Antonio Guterres said. "The global energy system is broken and bringing us ever closer to climate catastrophe." The WMO said human activity was causing planetary-scale changes on land, in the ocean, and in the atmosphere, with harmful and long-lasting ramifications for ecosystems.

WMO chief Petteri Taalas said the war in Ukraine had been overshadowing climate change, which "is still the biggest challenge we are having as mankind". The report confirmed the past seven years were the top seven hottest years on record. Back-to-back La Nina events at the start and end of 2021 had a cooling effect on global temperatures last year. Even so, it was still one of the warmest years ever recorded, with the average global temperature in 2021 about 1.11 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level.

The 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change saw countries agree to cap global warming at "well below" 2C above average levels measured between 1850 and 1900 — and 1.5C if possible. "All major climate indicators are quite frankly heading in the wrong direction and without much greater ambition and urgency, we are about to lose the narrow window of opportunity to keep the 1.5-degree goal alive," Guterres' climate action advisor Selwin Hart told a press conference.

Taalas said the climate was changing "before our eyes". "The heat trapped by human-induced greenhouse gases will warm the planet for many generations to come. Sea level rise, ocean heat, and acidification will continue for hundreds of years unless means to remove carbon from the atmosphere are invented," he said.

Four key indicators of climate change "build a consistent picture of



**NASA satellite image of sandstorm in Iraq and neighbouring countries. Sandstorms across the Middle East have delayed flights, closed schools and hospitalised thousands, a phenomenon experts say could worsen as climate change warps regional weather patterns. Countries have been grappling with the problem for longer: fuelled by soil degradation, overgrazing, deforestation, intense droughts and low rainfall linked to climate change. (Photo: AFP)**

a warming world that touches all parts of the Earth system", the report said. Greenhouse gas concentrations reached a new global high in 2020, when the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO2) reached 413.2 parts per million globally, or 149 percent of the pre-industrial level. Data indicate they continued to increase in 2021 and early 2022, the report said.

Taalas reiterated COVID-19 lockdowns had had no impact on atmospheric greenhouse gases concentrations. Global mean sea level

reached a new record high in 2021, rising an average of 4.5 millimeters per year throughout 2013 to 2021, the report said. That is more than double the average annual rise of 2.1 mm per year between 1993 and 2002, with the increase between the two time periods "mostly due to the accelerated loss of ice mass from the ice sheets", it said. Taalas said the melting of glaciers would raise sea levels for hundreds or thousands of years to come, due to CO2 concentrations in the atmosphere.

"This is a lost game already," he said. Ocean heat hit a record high last year, exceeding the 2020 value, the report said. And it is expected the upper 2,000 meters of the ocean will continue to warm in the future — "a change which is irreversible on centennial to millennial timescales", said the WMO. The ocean absorbs around 23 percent of the annual emissions of human-caused CO2 into the atmosphere. While this slows the rise of atmospheric CO2 concentrations, CO2 reacts with seawater and leads

to ocean acidification. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded with "very high confidence" that open ocean surface acidity is at the highest "for at least 26,000 years".

"We should take action now," Taalas told AFP. "We are now heading 2.5 to three degrees warming instead of 1.5, which would be best for our future. It is better to invest in climate-friendly technologies than to live with the consequences of climate change that are going to be even 20 times more expensive if we fail."

## BRIEFS

### Nine Dead, 24 Injured in an "anti-terror" operation

**DUSHANBE (AFP)** — Nine people including a Tajik officer died Wednesday and 24 others received injuries during an "anti-terror" operation in a restive Tajikistan region bordering Afghanistan and China, the interior ministry said.

One officer died and 13 troops received serious injuries, the ministry said, adding that eight members of an "illegal armed grouping" had been killed and another 11 wounded during an operation in the eastern region of Gorno-Badakhshan, the ministry said in a statement.

### Wall collapse kills 12 people: another industrial tragedy in India

**AHMEDABAD, India (AFP)** — At least 12 people were killed after a wall at a salt packaging factory collapsed on Wednesday in India's western state of Gujarat, police said. It was unclear what caused the 3.6m high wall to come down but police said they will be investigating the owner of the site for negligence.

"12 people including five women and seven men have died in the incident. One person injured in the accident is under treatment," police superintendent Rahul Tripathi told AFP. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is from Gujarat, called the incident at the Sagar Salt factory in the industrial area of Havald town a "heart-rending" tragedy.

"In this hour of grief, my thoughts are with the bereaved families. May the injured recover soon. Local authorities are providing all possible assistance to the affected," he said on Twitter. Modi also announced 200,000 rupees (\$2,578) compensation for the families of those who lost their lives.

Factory accidents are common across India, with owners ignoring basic safety requirements and often operating without permits. Last week, 27 people died in a fire at a commercial building manufacturing Wi-Fi routers in New Delhi.

## Belarus introduces the death penalty for terrorism offenses

**MOSCOW (AFP)** — Belarus has introduced the death penalty for attempts to carry out acts of terrorism, Russian news agencies reported Wednesday, charges that several opposition activists face in the ex-Soviet country. Belarus, a close ally of Russia that has supported its military offensive in Ukraine, is the only country in Europe that continues to carry out executions despite calls for a moratorium.

"Lukashenko signed a law on the possibility of the death penalty for an attempted terrorist act," the RIA Novosti news agency reported, citing an online government portal for legal information. It said the law would come into force 10 days after its publication.

Two years ago, Belarus faced historic protests against the re-election of strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled the country with an iron fist for over two decades. Thousands of activists were arrested in the crackdown and the key leaders of the opposition movement are now either jailed or in exile. Among them was Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, a political novice who ran against Lukashenko in the August 2020 polls in place of her jailed husband. She now leads the Belarusian opposition from exile in Lithuania, while her husband Sergei Tikhanovskiy is serving 18 years in jail on what supporters believe are politically motivated charges.

Last March, Belarusian prosecutors charged Tikhanovskaya in absentia with "preparing acts of terrorism as part of an organized group," according to Belarusian state news agency Belta. Tikhanovskaya denounced Wednesday the decision of the "lawless regime" to expand the use of the death penalty, saying it targeted anti-government activists.

### 'Political killings'

"This is a direct threat to activists opposing the dictator and the war," Tikhanovskaya tweeted. "I urge the international community to react: sanction lawmakers and consider any tools to prevent the political killings," she added.

Belarus and its leadership are already under a litany of Western sanctions over its handling of the opposition protest and over its support for Moscow's campaign in Ukraine. But many opposition activists remain behind bars in Belarus awaiting trial.

On Wednesday, a Belarusian court in the city of Grodno started a closed-door hearing in the case against 12 activists accused of "preparing acts of terrorism", according to Belarusian rights group Vyasna. Among them is veteran activist Nikolai Avtukhovich, who has already served more than seven years in jail. The 59-year-old faces a litany of other charges, including treason. The activists are accused of setting a policeman's home and car on fire, and burning another policeman's car in the autumn of 2020.

Capital punishment in Belarus, carried out by shooting, is highly secret and there are no official statistics. The last known death sentence in Belarus was carried out against Victor Pavlov, who was arrested in January 2019 on suspicion of murder and larceny, according to the UN Human Rights Committee.

The committee had called for his execution to be halted while it examined his allegations of torture in detention but said in a statement in March that his family had been informed it had taken place, without any information about when he was executed.

Pavlov was the 15th person executed in Belarus since 2010 while their case was still pending before the committee, it said.

## Woman charged in Switzerland for Daesh knife attack

**GENEVA (AFP)** — A woman has been indicted for attempted murder on behalf of Daesh over a brutal knife attack in November 2020, according to Swiss prosecutors. The 29-year-old unnamed woman allegedly attacked two women in a department store in the southern city of Lugano.

She has been charged with attempted murder and violating laws against association with Al-Qaeda, Daesh, and related groups, according to the indictment. She was also charged with unlawful prostitution. The attorney general's office said the indictment related to a "jihadist knife attack" and the alleged assailant, a Swiss citizen, "intended to kill her victims and to commit a terrorist act on behalf of Daesh."

"The suspect acted wilfully and with particular ruthlessness. She brutally attacked her randomly selected victims with a knife, with the aim of killing them and thereby spreading terror throughout the population on behalf of the 'Islamic State,'" it said.

One of the two victims sustained serious neck injuries while the second victim, with help from others at the scene, managed to overpower her attacker and hold her until police arrived. The attacker was arrested and detained. Police quickly discovered she had been linked to a 2017 Islamist extremism investigation.

The woman had formed a relationship on social media with an extremist fighter in Syria and attempted to travel to the war-torn country to meet him, police alleged at the time. She was stopped by Turkish authorities at the Syrian border and sent back to Switzerland, they said, adding that the woman had suffered from mental health problems and been admitted to a psychiatric clinic.

## Russian soldier pleads guilty at Kyiv war crimes trial

**KYIV (AFP)** — A Russian soldier pleaded guilty on Wednesday to killing a Ukrainian civilian in the opening stages of Moscow's invasion during the first war-crimes trial held since the war began.

The hearing in a packed Kyiv courtroom is the first in a series of proceedings being brought by Ukraine against Russian servicemen who have been accused of carrying out atrocities by Kyiv and its Western allies.

They are also a public test of Ukraine's judicial system at a time when international institutions are simultaneously investigating abuses allegedly committed by Russian forces.

Russian soldier Vadim Shishimarin is accused of killing a 62-year-old man in northeast Ukraine on February 28, just four days into the Russian invasion.

The 21-year-old from the Siberian region of Irkutsk in eastern Russia has been charged with war crimes and premeditated murder faces a possible life sentence.

Asked in court if he was guilty of killing the elderly civilian, the

sergeant responded "yes".

The Kremlin said earlier Wednesday that it had "no information about the case".

Moscow's "ability to provide assistance due to the lack of our diplomatic mission there is also very limited," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Wearing a blue and grey hoodie, the youthful-looking soldier with a shaved head looked towards the ground as a prosecutor read out charges against him in Ukrainian.

Viktor Ovsyannikov, the soldier's lawyer, said he would build his case after hearing "testimonies of witnesses" and described the trial as without precedent.

"In Ukraine, this is the first criminal case of this type. Judges have never before announced these kinds of verdicts," he said following the hearing.

He added that he had not liaised with anyone in Russia on the case, with the exception of Shishimarin's mother.

Ukrainian authorities had earlier said the Russian soldier was cooperating with investigators.

Prosecutor Andriy Sinyuk told reporters that two witnesses — including one of the Russian soldiers who was with Shishimarin at the time of the incident — will be brought to testify in court.

The soldier's weapon will also be examined as part of the probe, he said.

Prosecutors say Shishimarin was commanding a unit in a tank division when his convoy came under attack.

He and four other soldiers stole a car, and as they traveled near the village of Chupakhivka in the Sumy region, they encountered a 62-year-old man on a bicycle.

"One of the soldiers ordered the accused to kill the civilian so that he would not denounce them," the prosecutor's office said.

Shishimarin then fired a Kalashnikov assault rifle from the window of the vehicle and "the man died instantly, a few dozen meters from his home", they added in a statement.

Ukraine authorities announced the soldier's arrest earlier in May alongside a video in which Shishimarin said he was fighting to "support his mother financially".

Ukraine's chief prosecutor Iryna Venediktova on Twitter said there were "over 11,000 ongoing cases of war crimes and already 40 suspects".

Oleksandr Pavlichenko, the head of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group for Human Rights, said that in the Shishimarin case "the motivation is not only legal, but political as well."

What is at stake, he said, is whether Ukraine "will have a real judicial process or just a play for the public".

The trial is due to continue on Thursday, when two more Russian servicemen are expected in a central Ukraine court for firing rockets at civilian infrastructure in the northeastern Kharkiv region.



**Photo caption: Hamlet Zinkivskiy, Ukrainian street artist, "paints the walls" devastated by the war in Kharkiv. (Photo: AFP)**

## Brilliant classical performance by members of Amman Chamber Orchestra



JEAN-CLAUDE ELIAS

IT WAS FULL house at Halim Salfiti Auditorium Saturday night, for a concert of classical music that featured four first-class performers from the Amman Chamber Orchestra: pianist Karim Said and violinist Nabih Boulos from Jordan, and cellist Jena Semaan and violinist Ihab Jamal from Lebanon.

Perhaps the huge attendance was partly the effect of audiences finally returning to theatres after long months of frustrating lockdowns, but mainly because of the quality and the beauty of the music program, combined with the talent of the performers.

Said started the concert with two exquisite piano compositions by Frederic Chopin, the epitome of classical romantic piano music: first the Fantaisie-Impromptu in C sharp minor and then the Prelude Op. 28, known as the "Raindrop". Said played the two well-known pieces with ease and elegance, perfectly rendering the dynamics, the nuances, and the spirit of these two works by the celebrated Polish composer.

Speaking to *Jordan News* after the concert, the musician said that the first piece "I learnt to play when I was a young student, and it means a lot to me. Technically it is not as difficult as one may think, and of course, it is very beautiful".

As for the "Raindrop" prelude, told the audience before starting to play that the piece featured a regularly repeated "A flat" note, that precisely conjures up the sound of raindrops for the listener. The prelude is written in the "D flat" key.

The second part of the concert brought violinist Nabih Boulos on stage to join Said to perform Johannes Brahms' violin sonata No. 3 in D minor. From the onset Boulos showed his mastery of his instrument: exceptional precision, delicate alternance between the forte and the piano dynamics, subtle tonality, and excellent synchronization with Said, confirming that he is one of the finest and most talented Jordanian classical violinists.

Boulos is now based in Lebanon, but regularly comes to Jordan to work, collaborate, and perform with the Amman Chamber Orchestra. Said and Boulos excelled in the particularly challenging fourth movement of the sonata, the "Presto agitato".

The third and last part of the concert consisted of Felix Mendelssohn's Piano Trio No. 2 in C minor. It is also a composition in four movements, like Brahms' sonata, and was performed by Said, along with his Lebanese fellow colleagues Semaan and Jamal. More lyrical than Brahms' sonata, especially in its slower movements and in the phrases played by the violin, it particularly appealed to the audience, judging by the applause and by the comments overheard after the concert. The enthusiasm of the audience was such that some were unable to refrain from applauding between movements, despite being specifically asked not to at the beginning of the concert by the organizers.

While playing Mendelssohn's Piano Trio, the musicians demonstrated amazing synergy, culminating in a brilliant, passionate "Finale" that is annotated by the composer as "Allegro Appassionato".

Semaan played the cello with a level of expression and control that belies her young age; one usually imagines that great cellists are "old" musicians.

According to najihakim.com, Semaan "started learning cello at the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music. ... After graduating from high school, Jana moved to Berlin where she was granted a scholarship to pursue cello studies. One year later, she auditioned to the State University of Music and Performing Arts (HMDK) in Stuttgart. ... She is a board member of the newly founded German-Lebanese Artists Society."

Speaking of the Piano Trio, Said told *Jordan News*: "Mendelssohn's music is dear to my heart, and though the German composer is very well known, of course, I think he deserves an even greater recognition, globally speaking. I love this Piano Trio and I have played it several times, in different places and countries, including in the UK and in South Korea."

The concert was highly successful and confirmed, beyond any doubt, that the four young musicians are true virtuosos, probably among the very best in the entire region.

In addition to being a renowned pianist, Said is also the conductor of the Amman Chamber Orchestra and the driving force behind the newly established Amman Institute for Performing Arts, both endeavors entirely supported by the Arts Foundation of Bank Al-Etihad.

His repertoire hardly stops at the traditional romantic pieces he played at the concert. He has also recorded works by Arnold Schoenberg, Leos Janacek, and Bela Bartok.

"My career really took off in Europe after I recorded Schoenberg's compositions," he told *Jordan News*.

He resides in Amman but goes to Berlin once a month.

**The writer is a computer engineer and a classically trained pianist and guitarist. He has been regularly writing IT articles, reviewing music albums, and covering concerts for more than 30 years.**

# Ignore the Middle East at one's peril: Turkey plays games in NATO



JAMES M. DORSEY

**A**MID SPECULATION about a reduced US military commitment to security in the Middle East, Turkey has spotlighted the region's ability to act as a disruptive force if its interests are neglected.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan set off alarm bells this week, declaring that he was not "positive" about possible Finnish and Swedish applications for NATO membership in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

NATO membership is contingent on a unanimous vote in favor by the organization's 30 members. Turkey has NATO's second-largest army.

The vast majority of NATO members appear to endorse Finnish and Swedish membership. NATO members hope to approve the applications at a summit next month.

A potential Turkish veto would complicate efforts to maintain trans-Atlantic unity in the face of the Russian invasion.

Erdogan's pressure tactics mirror the maneuvers of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who threatens EU unity by resisting a bloc-wide boycott of Russian energy.

Earlier, the UAE and Saudi Arabia rejected US requests to raise oil production in an effort to lower prices and help Europe reduce its dependence on Russian energy.

The two Gulf states appear to have since sought to quietly backtrack on their refusal.

In late April, France's TotalEnergies chartered a tanker to load Abu Dhabi crude in early May for Europe, the first such shipment in two years.

Saudi Arabia has quietly used its regional pricing mechanisms to redirect from Asia to Europe Arab "medium", the Saudi crude that is the closest substitute for the main Russian export blend Urals, for which European refineries are configured.

Erdogan linked his NATO objection to alleged Finnish and Swedish support for the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), which has been designated a terrorist organization by Turkey, the US, and the EU.

The PKK has waged a decades-long insurgency in southeast Turkey in support of Kurds' national, ethnic, and cultural rights. Kurds account for up to 20 per cent of the country's 84 million population.

Turkey has recently pounded PKK positions in northern Iraq in a military operation named Operation Claw Lock.

Turkey is at odds with the US over American support for Syrian Kurds in the fight against Daesh. Turkey asserts that America's Syrian Kurdish allies are aligned with the PKK.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu warned that Turkey opposes a US decision this week to exempt from sanctions against Syria re-

gions controlled by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

"This is a selective and discriminatory move," Cavusoglu said, noting that the exemption did not include Kurdish areas of Syria controlled by Turkey and its Syrian proxies.

Referring to the NATO membership applications, Erdogan charged that "Scandinavian countries are like some kind of guest house for terrorist organizations. They are even in parliament".

Erdogan's objections relate primarily to Sweden, with Finland risking becoming collateral damage.

Sweden is home to a significant Kurdish commu-

Moreover, Turkey risks endangering significant improvements in its long-strained relations with the US.

Turkish mediation in the Ukraine crisis and military support for Ukraine prompted US President Joe Biden to move ahead with plans to upgrade Turkey's fleet of F-16 fighter planes and discuss selling it newer, advanced F-16 models even though Turkey has neither condemned Russia nor imposed sanctions.

Some analysts suggest that Turkey may use its objection to regain access to the US' F-35 fighter jet program. The US cancelled in 2019 a sale of the jet to Turkey after the NATO member acquired Russia's S-400 anti-missile defence system.

Erdogan has "done this kind of tactic before. He will use it as leverage to get a good deal for Turkey," said retired US Navy Admiral James Foggo, dean of the Center for Maritime Strategy.

A top aide to Erdogan, Ibrahim Kalin, appeared to confirm Foggo's analysis.

"We are not closing the door. But we are basically raising this issue as a matter of national security for Turkey," Kalin said, referring to the Turkish leader's NATO remarks.

"Of course, we want to have a discussion, a negotiation with Swedish counterparts."

Spelling out Turkish demands, Kalin went on to say that "what needs to be done is clear: they have to stop allowing PKK outlets, activities, organizations, individuals and other types of presence to... exist in those countries."

Erdogan's brinkmanship may have its limits, but it illustrates that one ignores the Middle East at one's peril.

However, engaging Middle Eastern autocrats does not necessarily mean ignoring their rampant violations of human rights and repression of freedoms.

For the US and Europe, the trick will be developing a policy that balances accommodating autocrats; at times, disruptive demands, often aimed at ensuring regime survival, with the need to remain loyal to democratic values amid a struggle over whose values will underwrite a 21st century world order.

That would require a degree of creative policy-making and diplomacy that seems to be a rare commodity.

**The writer is an award-winning journalist and scholar, a senior fellow at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute and adjunct senior fellow at Nanyang Technological University's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, and the author of the syndicated column and blog, *The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer*.**



(Photo: AFP)

nity and hosts Europe's top Kurdish soccer team that empathizes with the PKK and Turkish Kurdish aspirations. In addition, six Swedish members of parliament are ethnic Kurds.

Turkey scholar Howard Eissenstat suggested that Turkey's NATO objection may be a turning point.

"Much of Turkey's strategic flexibility has come from the fact that its priorities are seen as peripheral issues for its most important Western allies. Finnish and Swedish entry into NATO, in the current context, absolutely not peripheral," Eissenstat tweeted.

The Turkish objection demonstrates the Middle East's potential to derail US and European policy in other parts of the world.

Middle Eastern states walk a fine line when using their potential to disrupt, to achieve political goals of their own. The cautious backtracking on Ukraine-related oil supplies demonstrates the limits and/or risks of Middle Eastern brinkmanship.

So does the fact that Ukraine has moved NATO's center of gravity to northern Europe and away from its southern flank, which Turkey anchors.

# Three companies control a piece of nearly everything; should one worry?



FARHAD MANJOO

NEW YORK TIMES

**W**HEN I GOT on the phone with Vivek Ramaswamy one afternoon, I was not expecting to find common cause. Ramaswamy is a tech entrepreneur, a frequent contributor to

conservative outlets including The Wall Street Journal's editorial page and author of a book whose very title sounds as if it were formulated in a lab at Fox News to maximally tickle the base and trigger the libs: "Woke, Inc.: Inside Corporate America's Social Justice Scam."

I had reached out to Ramaswamy to discuss his new venture, Strive Asset Management, an investment firm that he says will urge corporations to stay out of politics. Among Strive's funders, though, is one of the more politically active people in business, Peter Thiel, a billionaire venture capitalist who supported Donald Trump and is now funding a slate of Trump-loving congressional candidates.

It turned out I was right: I did not agree with a lot of what Ramaswamy had to say. Not only are our politics radically at odds, we also differ on what "politics" means in modern American capitalism. Yet despite our disagreements, something odd happened. I found myself nodding along with what is perhaps Ramaswamy's fundamental point: that three gigantic American asset management firms — BlackRock, Vanguard and State Street — control too much of the global economy.

The firms manage funds invested by large institutions such as pension funds and university endowments as well as those for companies and, in some cases, individual investors such as me. Their holdings are colossal. BlackRock manages nearly \$10 trillion in investments. Vanguard has \$8 trillion and State Street has \$4 trillion. Their combined \$22 trillion in managed assets is the equivalent of more than half of the combined value of all shares for companies in the S&P 500 (about \$38 trillion). Their power is expected to grow. An analysis published in the Boston University Law Review in 2019 estimated that the Big Three could control as much as 40 percent of shareholder votes in the S&P 500 within two decades.

Why is this a problem? Ramaswamy argues that the main issue is that the firms are using their heft to

push companies in which they hold large investments into adopting liberal political positions — things such as focusing on climate change or improving the diversity of their workforce. I think that is a canard.

The real danger posed by the three is economic, not political. The American economy is lumbering under monopoly and oligopoly. In many industries, from airlines to internet advertising to health care to banks to mobile phone providers, Americans can do business with just a handful of companies. As journalist David Dayen has argued, this increasing market concentration reduces consumer choice, raises prices and most likely harms workers.

BlackRock, Vanguard and State Street have been extraordinarily good for investors — their passive-investing index funds have lowered costs and improved returns for millions of people. But their rise has come at the cost of intense concentration in corporate ownership, potentially supercharging the oligopolistic effects of already oligopolistic industries.

John Coates, a professor at Harvard Law School, has written that the growth of indexation and the Big Three means that in the future, about a dozen people at investment firms will hold power over most American companies. What happens when so few people control so much? Researchers have argued that this level of concentration will reduce companies' incentives to compete with one another. This makes a kind of intuitive sense. For example, because Vanguard is the largest shareholder in both Ford and General Motors, why would it benefit from competition between the two? If every company is owned by the same small number of people, why fight as fiercely on prices, innovations and investments?

Indeed, there is some evidence that their concentrated ownership is associated with lower wages and employment and is already leading to price increases in some industries, including in airlines, pharmaceuticals and consumer goods. The firms dispute this. In a 2019 paper, Vanguard's researchers said that when they studied lots of industries across a long period of time, "we do not find conclusive evidence"

that common ownership led to higher profits.

But if the Big Three keep growing, the effects of their concentrated ownership will get only worse. Einer Elhaug, also of Harvard Law School, has written that concentrated ownership "poses the greatest anti-competitive threat of our time, mainly because it is the one anti-competitive problem we are doing nothing about."

In late 2018, a few months before his death, John Bogle, the visionary founder of Vanguard who developed the first index fund for individual investors, published an extraordinary article in The Wall Street Journal assessing the impact of his life's work. The index fund had revolutionized Wall Street — but what happens, he wondered, "if it becomes too successful for its own good?"

Bogle pointed out that asset management is a business of scale — the more money that BlackRock or Vanguard or State Street manages, the more it can lower its fees for investors. This makes it difficult for new companies to enter the business, meaning that the Big Three's hold on the market seems likely to persist. "I do not believe that such concentration would serve the national interest," Bogle wrote.

Bogle outlined several ideas for limiting their power, but he pointed out problems with a number of them. For example, regulators could prohibit index funds from holding large positions in more than one company in a given industry. But how then would they offer an index fund that invested in all companies in the S&P 500, one of the most popular kinds of funds?

Coates, of Harvard, argues that policymakers will have to move carefully to manage the dangers of concentration without limiting the benefits to investors of these firms' low-cost funds.

"No doubt getting the balance right will require judgment and experimentation," he wrote.

But the most pressing issue is for us to recognize the problem. The growing influence of three large fund managers is not likely to diminish. Ramaswamy's take on the problem is wrong, but he's right that it's a problem. How much power do the three companies have to accumulate before we decide it's too much?



(Photo: Handouts from Generation for Peace)

# 'Abia' seeks to give voice to silenced youth

By Tala Kayyali

**AMMAN** — A dark, dimly lit stage hosts a women's support group of some sort. Amidst the sharing of stories, the atmosphere is abruptly disrupted as a man, angrily and loudly, stomps in and confronts a woman in the group, causing the rest to stand up to her defense. Sam Nutt, an Irish director, loudly interjects "cut!" breaking the spell cast by the actors.

Leading a crew almost entirely composed of local Arab youth, Nutt shared his notes, and they began setting up for their next take.

In a collaboration between Generation for Peace, a leading global non-profit peace-building organization founded by HRH Prince Feisal Al-Hussein, and Cinemagic, an award-winning film charity from Northern Ireland that offers a cinematic window to the world through a diverse range of storytelling, a film titled "Abia" is coming to life.

Between takes, Cinemagic CEO and film producer Joan Burney Keatings MBE told *Jordan News* that after meeting the Irish ambassador to Jordan in Ireland, they were able to share the common struggles between youth in both countries. Through these common grounds, they "thought it would be a great opportunity to try and make a film with young people from different communities here in Amman."

The Irish Embassy funds and supports the project, and according to Keatings, this project aims to "give them (youth) an opportunity to develop skills and work behind the camera and, more importantly, give them an opportunity to try and gain experience that could help them get employment".

"Abia" tells the harrowing tale of the refugee crisis, gender-based violence, and devastating repercussions.

This story, while heartbreaking, is unfortunately not uncommon in the region. Lead actress Raean Hashem AlMasri told *Jordan News* of her own family's tale, where she saw her aunt going through similar events and how they helped her feel more connected to the role.

"I have an aunt who is married to a Syrian guy, and she was living in Syria. And after the war, some issues happened, and she had to return to Jordan. I feel like I can at least send a message to the world."

Through a series of conversations while working, the film's concept came to life when Keatings asked the youth: "What do you want to say?"

The general consensus was to say something about topics surrounding social cohesion and gender violence. "It was the one subject that they all wanted to talk about," he said.

"We gathered a lot, we took a lot of feedback, and we worked it into the script. We worked in consultation with young people and with a lot of experts here in Jordan to make sure we were being true to the story... That took a lot of time in development."

The opportunity to work so close-



**The film's concept came to life when Keatings asked the youth: "What do you want to say?" The general consensus was to say something about topics surrounding social cohesion and gender violence.**

ly with professionals has greatly benefitted the entire cast and crew. Issa Al-Hallak, one of the assistants to the director, told *Jordan News* that when he first started with Generations for Peace institute, his knowledge in filmmaking "wasn't that great". But, his opportunity to learn grew rapidly.

"Every time we had a meeting, I would come across something new to learn in different aspects. For example, I learned about the financial management of filmmaking and

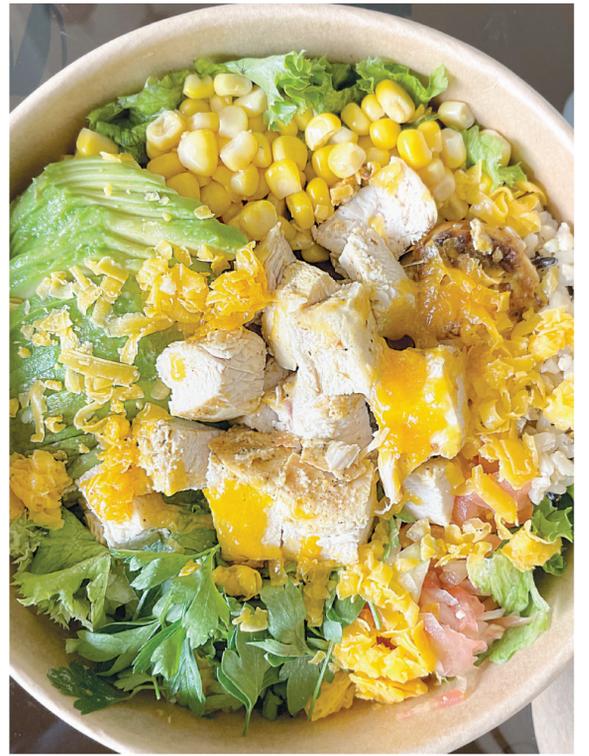
picked up some good tips to consider when managing a filmmaking process."

Organizations like Cinemagic serve as a means to inject experience, skill, and opportunity into communities similar to and including the Amman film scene. Considering for many local talents, pursuing a career in the film industry is an unattainable pipe dream, and due to the fact that they also struggle to have their stories represented and their voices heard, initiatives like these provide a means to giving a voice to those who frequently struggle to hold the mic.

Keating hopes that this is the first of many film projects for them in Jordan. "We have been really, really just blown away by the kindness and the generosity of spirit of people here. From the participants to the crew, we have been made to feel so, so welcome, so we definitely want to come back," he said.

"We really feel that now that we've started to do some work here in the Middle East, we really want to grow this (the project), and we hope this becomes an annual project in Amman."





GOOD FOOD

# 'Raw': Salads and the cloud kitchen hype

By Zeid Odeh

As a professional in the food and beverage industry, partaking in the overall experience of restaurants can be pretty rewarding on a day off. Who does not enjoy a day out in the beautiful weather, with a cold drink and some food to share?

However, as everything around us evolves, so does the restaurant industry. I have reviewed several restaurants for the past few months, mostly upper casual and fine dining ones. This time I decided to go on a different path in the restaurant industry and highlight a new trend that is getting its own share of attention, the cloud kitchen.

Most of us have heard the term before, or probably heard of a ghost kitchen or central kitchen. Even though we have been using those terms interchangeably, there are a few differences between them. A cloud kitchen has no physical restaurant where you can dine, only

a workplace with equipment to prepare and execute orders. There could be multiple food brands operating in the same place.

A ghost kitchen exists virtually in various locations, but operates in one kitchen. This way, it delivers to a wider range of locations and appears on multiple delivery platforms. Finally, a central kitchen is owned by a company that offers space to store and prepare food for all restaurant branches and outlets. Central kitchens can be rented by smaller restaurants that need more storage or cooking space, and equipment, to cater to large demand in the market.

The number of cloud kitchens has been increasing noticeably during the pandemic when people started relying more on delivery services, rather than dining in. From a financial aspect, it is way cheaper to operate a kitchen than a full restaurant, as labor cost drops drastically, as does the cost involved in decorating the interior, design, furniture, and operation.

When I first moved back from the

US, I wanted to carry on with the food truck business that I had started to work on back there. However, the rules and regulations for such businesses are very complex in Amman, due to the fact that set standards need to be monitored and spot-checked at any given time. I am sure many have thought of doing the same until they had to go through the discouraging rules and regulations set for operating food trucks, so cloud kitchens sounds more tempting.

A cloud kitchen might get one closer to the restaurant dream, yet, what many fail to realize is that ours is not a culture of innovation, but tend to jump into an oversaturated market; think of every single burger place in every corner in Amman.

And so, with the reduction of the cost factor, one should put more effort into acquiring a competitive advantage; what sets you apart from the competition, and are you bringing a new concept to the market?

Social media presence should be your best friend in this case, since

there is close to no human interaction if a customer decides to order from your restaurant. (No, the call from the driver to get to the destination does not count).

As your business works remotely, it is vital to establish a personal touch to widen the customer base and win their trust. Building an engaging presence on social media channels to form a direct connection with the customers is important. Also, posting images and videos of the restaurant staff working in the kitchen helps with transparency.

Aside from the operational introduction, this week, I was craving a salad for a change, so to try out the cloud kitchen restaurants, I decided to order from a place I find reliable, with value for money, so I ordered from Raw. Their online menu has different salads from multiple cuisines, which serves those who are looking for something different.

I love the fact that they have a build-your-own-salad option which, is great if you are on a keto diet or just picky.

Even though I usually build my

own salad, this time I decided to order their house specialties. I ordered halloumi salad, Mexican salad, and Tokyo Drift. The salads are served with the dressing on the side to prevent the lettuce from wilting until the food is delivered. You might want to drizzle the dressing and shake the container vigorously instead of trying to toss it. Consider it your workout.

The halloumi salad contains rocca, mixed leaves, cherry tomatoes, and grilled zucchini, served with a tangy vinaigrette dressing. The salad and ingredients were fresh, the zucchini were beautifully roasted with light seasoning and the dressing complements the overall dish.

The Mexican salad contains mixed leaves, wild rice, pico de gallo, sweet corn and avocado, with a cilantro dressing. Even though this is a pretty simple and comforting salad, the dressing was a highlight. I am not usually a fan of cilantro, but this one was not overpowering, which was great.

The Tokyo Drift salad with the teriyaki dressing, assuming it was

named like that because the teriyaki was invented in Japan in the 1700s, contained edamame, rice noodles, carrots, crunchy peanuts, and sesame seeds. The dressing was pretty light, unlike the one in the Mexican salad, which was creamier.

Serving all the dressings in the same quantities does not give the same outcome all the time. This salad needed a little more dressing since the noodles did not get enough and tasted a little bland in the overall mix.

There is not much of a personalized experience in this segment of the food and beverage operations, but with such a fast-paced lifestyle, people do look for convenience. I believe that cloud kitchens have more potential to expand from what they currently are. If a new concept of a cloud kitchen were to collaborate with people who rent on Airbnb, by planning meals for breakfast and delivering them, that would solve a huge problem for those who rent out apartments yet still look for the hotel touch of serving daily breakfast.



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With masking and vaccination requirements largely dropped in Italy and summer approaching, crowds have begun to return to Rome's Centro Storico — the area most dependent on tourism and the hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic. (Photos: NYTimes)



TRAVEL

# IN ROME, NEW FOOD AND OLD SITES BECKON

(NYT) — With masking and vaccination requirements largely dropped in Italy and summer approaching, crowds of travelers have begun to return to Rome's Centro Storico — the area most dependent on tourism and the hardest hit by the pandemic — according to hoteliers and others working near Rome's iconic spots.

"Trevi Square and the whole center of Rome is full of tourists again," said Fabrizio Rezza, reservations manager for the Hotel Fontana, referring to the throngs around the storied monument in front of the hotel, Trevi Fountain. "It seems like no one is afraid of COVID any longer."

And so the Eternal City continues to live up to its name, boosted by some long-awaited reopenings and a crop of new restaurants, hotels and cultural spots all over town.

**Museums and archaeological sites**  
Under renovation since 2007, the distinctive circular Mausoleum of Augustus (5-euro admission) began welcoming the public again last year, and the Casa Romana, a fourth-century dwelling beneath the free Museo di Scultura Antica Giovanni Barracco, has also reopened after an even longer hiatus.

Among Rome's fledgling cultural venues, the new Museo Ninfeo offers visitors the chance to admire the ruins of a former hideaway and pleasure garden for emperors like Claudius and Caligula. (The museum is open Saturday and Sunday only. An adult ticket costs 14.30 euros and can be purchased through Vivaticket.) The just-opened (and free) Garum museum (named after an ancient Roman fish sauce) traces the history of Italian cooking and eating. Housed in a 16th-century palazzo, the new museum showcases centuries-old utensils, vessels, molds, and other cookware, as well as an extensive library of books and prints related to the culinary arts.

Italy has also reintroduced free admission for state museums and archaeological sites the first Sun-

day of each month. At all other times, certain tourist hot spots, notably the Colosseum site (which includes the Forum and Palatine Hill; 16 euros), and Galleria Borghese (13 euros; free for those 17 and under), require tickets to be purchased online.

**Vast buffet of new restaurants**  
Over the past two years, many beloved restaurants in Rome were forced to shutter, such as Michelin-starred Metamorfoosi, the panoramic hilltop Lo Zodiaco, and Doozo, considered by some to have been Rome's best Japanese restaurant.

But fittingly for a food-centric city, Rome's red-hot dining scene is serving up a vast buffet of new restaurants, from thin-crust pizzerias awash in craft beer (L'Elementare), to gourmet delis abounding in prosciutto platters and grilled meats (Aventina), to natural-wine boutiques with an ace selection of Italian dishes served from an open kitchen at the back (Enoteca l'Antidoto).

Some of the most-sought new tables are at Romanè, the new restaurant from celebrity chef and restaurateur Stefano Callegari, famous as the inventor of the trapizzino, a conelike bread container that can be filled with anything from eggplant parmigiana to beef tongue in green sauce. Loud, friendly, and unpretentious, Romanè serves up reverent and occasionally embellished takes on classic Italian cuisine, including crackly fried artichoke, spaghetti Amatriciana and "the best chicken cacciatore I ever ate in my life," in the words of food journalist and olive oil specialist Luciana Squadrilli. Expect to pay around 60 euros for a three-course meal for two people.

**Hotels: Luxury and kitsch**  
The lack of tourists also hurt the accommodations sector, which has suffered some of the worst losses. According to Giorgio Palmucci, president of ENIT, the national tourism agency, around 400 regional hotels have closed during the pandemic. They include giants



like the Sheraton Hotel Roma and Conference Center and the Selene, which had hosted luminaries like former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Despite significant losses, the hotel sector is starting to rebound, thanks to recent arrivals like the luxurious W Rome (rates in May from 720 euros) and the kitsch-cool Mama Shelter Roma (rates in May from 289 euros), with its roof bar, coworking space and plant-draped restaurant. For particularly fat wallets, the Maalot Roma (rates in May from 423 euros) is a hushed townhouse blending contemporary artworks and historical furnishings (tufted couches, Oriental carpets) that has been earning raves for the plush Don Pasquale restaurant. While waiting for your table, you can sit at the intimate two-seat bar and sip the excellent signature cocktail, Almost a Classic Drink (14 euros), which enlightens a traditional Vieux Carré with a dose of grappa.

For slimmer billfolds and more Scandinavian tastes, the new 55-room Camplus Hotel Roma Centro (rates in May from 123 euros) is a haven of clean lines and muted colors near the city's central rail station, Termini.

**Pizza Labs, Patti Smith, and other summer events**  
Summer festivals are set to unfold around Rome, with some returning after a pandemic-era pause. In late May, around 60 master pizza chefs will knead, toss, and bake their way into the hearts (and

stomachs) of those attending the free La Città della Pizza.

The festival celebrates Italy's most famous food in its many permutations — Neapolitan, Roman, folded, fried — as well as bread and olive oil, and a free "pizza school" will offer further indoctrination into the art of the pie. You can then wash it all down in mid-June with some of the 2,500 Italian and international vintages on hand at Vinoforum (admission, 20 euros), the city's big annual wine and spirits gala.

On the musical front, the city-wide, multiweek concert series known as Rock in Roma (most shows 20 to 40 euros) makes its return in June after a two-year hiatus. Held at large venues around town — notably the ancient Circus Maximus — this year's series will feature Italian and international performing artists like Patti Smith, Massive Attack, Herbie Hancock, Suicidal Tendencies, and Mane-skin.

**Important COVID-19 information**  
The Italian government has lifted the country's state of emergency and recently eliminated many of the former regulations, but proof of vaccination or recovery from COVID-19 is still required to enter Italy from a foreign country.

Within Italy, such proof is no longer required to enter nearly all venues, and masks are no longer mandatory in the vast majority of indoor spaces.

The notable exceptions are public transportation and enclosed entertainment venues — including movie theaters, playhouses and concert halls — which require FFP2-type masks (similar to N95 and KN95 models). Current health guidelines can be found on the official Italia tourism website.



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BOOK REVIEW

# A necessary, gleeful interjection in daily life experiences

By Jude Taha

When first introduced to *The Book of Delights* by Ross Gay, I was a junior in college, in early 2019, overwhelmed by classes, continents away from family, yearning for something, perhaps a spark, in my life, and definitely unaware of what would be in store in just a few short months (read, global devastation).

Gay, an American poet and professor was, at the time, visiting my college campus a day before I was set to take off for a conference in Boston. By pure luck, I was able to attend one of his readings – and help my English advisor set up a station to sell Gay's books – and I was in awe.

Gay's wisdom spills over in his writings, lighthearted and welcome. As life would sometimes have it, his book was exactly what I needed, a gleeful interjection in my daily life. It still is a faithful companion that I frequently re-read.

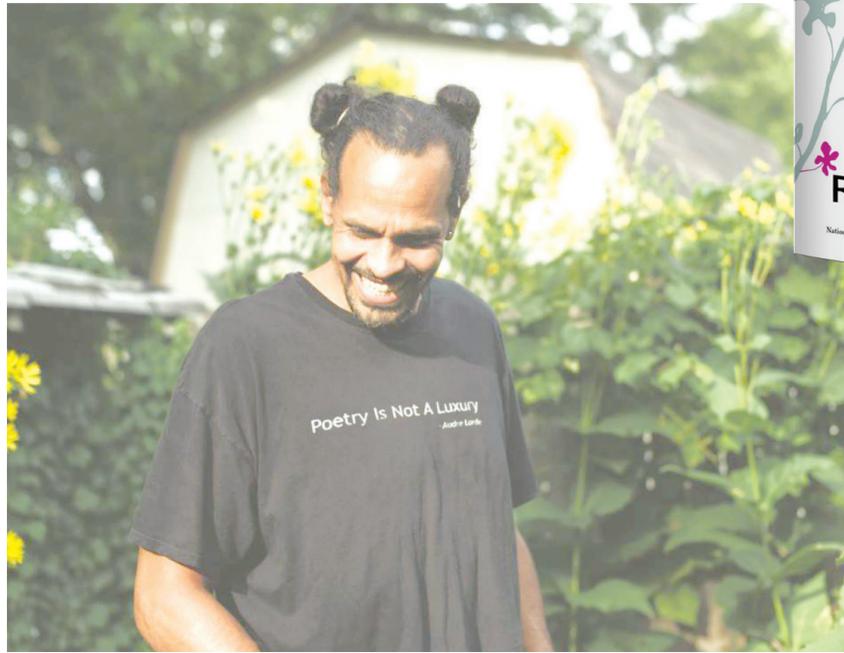
In the 274-page book, Gay jots down almost daily his life happenings in the course of a year, from birthday to birthday, in a series of essays. His goal is to show gratitude for the things that brought delight to his life; he does it by critically and enthusiastically writing his thoughts on people and occurrences, taking

The stories and anecdotes both offer an escape and are a stern reality check; a reminder that delight exists where we look for it or create it, and why we must always seek it out.

time off from the arduous demands of his daily life.

First handwritten then copied into a word document, Gay's book encapsulates honest delight at big and small; at the rare trust shown by people who leave their bags in a train unattended for long periods of time, or at the elegant movements of a praying mantis. He also astutely, but never bitterly, hints at his experience as a Black man in America or at perception, often biased, of one's acts.

Gay's delights over the course of a year – with a few days missing here and there – are not an emotionally insensitive rant of toxic positivity. This book is not a self-help



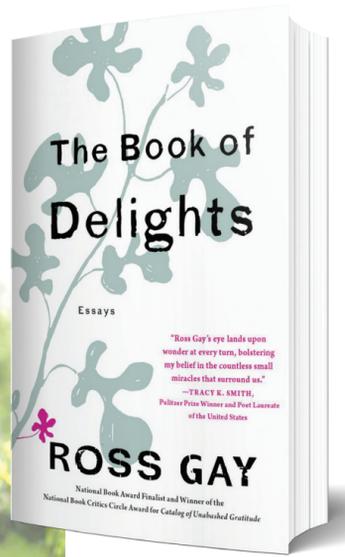
Undated photo of author Ross Gay, author of *The Book of Delights*. (Photo: Ross Gay's website)

book; rather, through essays of different lengths and a great deal of emotional intelligence, readers are invited to assess and reshape their daily interactions and ideals, acknowledge the impact ignored peo-

ple, emotions, and even plants growing in the cracks of an old sidewalk may have on one's being and, like Gay, simply enjoy the gift of life.

The language of the essays, highly intellectual but also accessible to

most, does not shelter one from daily struggles. Blunt, veiled, conversational, philosophical serious, or sarcastic, it is used to create writing of various lengths, which makes it easy to read and, like Scheheraza-



de's stories, is a fascinating page-turner.

Readers have access to Gay's thinking, come to similar conclusions and enjoy the interjections sprinkled between the paragraphs. The "limited" perspective – that of the author – does not dull the writing, which stays constantly charming, relatable, and attractive.

Reshaping our perceived reality, Gay himself is a delight that reminds us of the magic in daily life without the unrealistic rose-colored glasses.

This book is an excellent addition to every personal library; it gives much-needed joy at a time joy seems to be sorely missing.

The stories and anecdotes both offer an escape and are a stern reality check; a reminder that delight exists where we look for it or create it, and why we must always seek it out.

## GAMES & HOROSCOPES

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### HOROSCOPES



BY MAGI HELENA

**ARIES**  
Sticklers for perfection may demand a great deal from you. Fortunately, you could be equipped with a host of reasonable replies. Do some research to be sure your ideas are actually achievable — not just intriguing.

**CANCER**  
Some people keep giving until it hurts. Generosity is a fine quality, but you may suspect that someone is trying to take advantage of your kind nature. Give them a second chance and the benefit of the doubt for right now.

**LIBRA**  
Someone who expects you to meet their exacting standards could be covering up their own issues. You may be prompted to perform a spontaneous act of kindness that can mend fences you did not even know were broken.

**CAPRICORN**  
You might realize just how far you've come when you recall the good old days, some of which were not particularly good. There may be an opportunity to review a past mistake and learn an important lesson.

**TAURUS**  
When you are passionate about your job or intent on a project you could play hard to get. If you have someone in your romantic crosshairs, your best bet is to just play it cool until there is more time for fun.

**LEO**  
Who you know is often more useful to your ambitions than what you know. You may associate with people who have high standards and even higher expectations. Team up with people who inspire you to do better and reach further.

**SCORPIO**  
You and a friend or loved one could enjoy working side by side at a community event. Touch base with people you haven't seen in years. The way a confidential matter is handled may have consequences in the future.

**AQUARIUS**  
Keep working on achieving your dreams. Being honest and forthright, however, is more important now than your needs and ambitions. Stay centered and keep your cool if errors or hidden obstacles appear during the day.

**GEMINI**  
You are likely able to think very clearly at this time, and you may easily detect falsehoods, omitted information and rip-off schemes. Give some quiet attention to the beauty and poetry in the world around you.

**VIRGO**  
Money is not everything. Creating a feel-good atmosphere might be the best indication of your success. Some workplace skeletons may come out of the closet, or you may have insights into a health problem.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
You are guided by your conscience to do the right thing. When you have a serious intention coupled with persistent efforts, it is most likely to become a reality. Enjoy a laugh-out-loud experience with friends and family members.

**PISCES**  
Your dreams can become reality if you are determined and apply consistent will power. Someone may appreciate your offer of a helping hand. Be generous with your cash and tolerant of someone's idiosyncrasies.

### GOREN BRIDGE

BY BOB JONES

#### PURITY

Both vulnerable, South deals

**NORTH**  
♠ 4 3  
♥ A Q 4  
♦ K 6 2  
♣ A Q J 8 3

**WEST**  
♠ K 10 8  
♥ J 9 7 6 2  
♦ A 9  
♣ 9 4 2

**EAST**  
♠ J 7 6 2  
♥ K 10 5  
♦ 10 8 7 4  
♣ 6 5

**SOUTH**  
♠ A Q 9 5  
♥ 8 3  
♦ Q J 5 3  
♣ K 10 7

The bidding:  
**SOUTH** 1NT **WEST** Pass **NORTH** 3NT **EAST** All pass

Opening Lead: Six of ♥

Many bridge sins are committed in a duplicate pair game, and for good reason. Extra tricks are crucial to success and a player will take risks trying to get them. In today's deal, a duplicate declarer would likely play the queen of hearts from dummy on the opening heart lead. Should that succeed, there will be at least one over-trick and possibly more. On this deal, however, East would win and continue the suit until the ace was knocked out. South would eventually lead a diamond, hoping that East held the ace. On this deal, West would win the ace and cash two more heart tricks for down one.

Team competition, and rubber bridge, are purer forms of the game. Only making the contract – or defeating it – matters. A rubber bridge declarer should play low on the opening heart lead. East would win with the 10 but could not continue the suit. South should rise with his ace after a spade shift and lead a diamond. Even if East holds the ace of diamonds, declarer's nine of spades will prevent the defenders from taking more than two spade tricks. Making three!

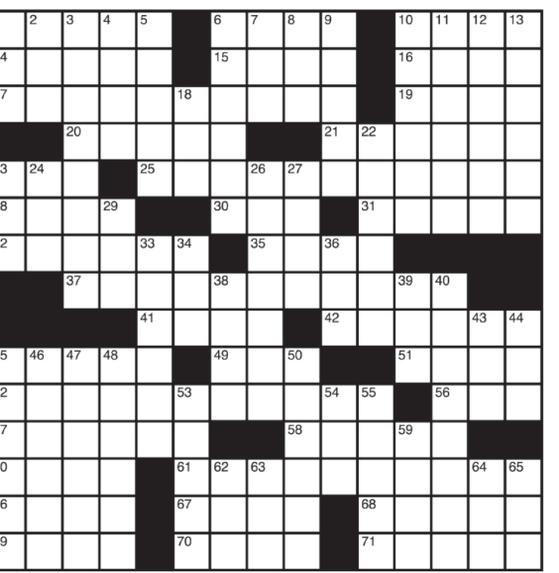
Finding a safe line of play for your contract is a skillful endeavor. Playing for overtricks can be more exciting, but not necessarily more rewarding.

### CROSSWORD

BY JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS AND RICH NORRIS

- Across**
- 1 Caribbean resort island
  - 6 \_\_\_-centered: vain
  - 10 Walmart warehouse club
  - 14 Blood drive participant
  - 15 One-named New Age singer
  - 16 Coagulate, as blood
  - 17 Bull's-eye location
  - 19 "M\*A\*S\*H" star Alan
  - 20 "Wayne's World" co-star Mike
  - 21 California city \_\_\_by-the-Sea
  - 23 Sch. with a Phoenix campus
  - 25 Result of a weak phone signal
  - 28 Sushi bar soup
  - 30 "Norma \_\_\_": Sally Field film
  - 31 Payments to landlords
  - 32 Future attorney's study
  - 35 Threesome
  - 37 Maximum a country can borrow
  - 41 Wild hog
  - 42 "Blah, blah, blah," briefly
  - 45 Allergic reaction
  - 49 March Madness network
  - 51 Inviting store sign
  - 52 Pro team's selection from a pool of college players, say
  - 56 Frying \_\_\_: kitchen tool
  - 57 Unwilling to hear, as criticism
  - 58 Fairy tale bears count
  - 60 Chair parts
  - 61 U.S. capital whose location is a hint to 17-, 25-, 37- and 52-Across
  - 66 Fencing sword
- Down**
- 1 Total up
  - 2 Caviar
  - 3 Not entertained in the least
  - 4 \_\_\_ shop: auto repair site
  - 5 Rainbow-shaped
  - 6 Motion detector, e.g.
  - 7 Strep-treating doc
  - 8 Soap-making need
  - 9 Trauesty
  - 10 In short supply
  - 11 Brothers Duane and Gregg of rock
  - 12 Classic Ford auto
  - 13 Delays on purpose
  - 18 Goof up
  - 22 Cleverly skillful
  - 23 Sound system part
  - 24 Knight's title
  - 26 Longtime Penn State football coach Joe
  - 27 Prefix with scope
  - 29 Grand \_\_\_ Opry
  - 33 "Who's on First?" straight man
  - 34 Geneva-based commerce gp.
  - 36 Land in l'eau
  - 38 Pope's relig.
  - 39 Sgt. or cpl.
  - 40 Pinocchio's creator
  - 43 Drink from leaves
  - 44 Wolf Blitzer's channel

- 67 New York canal
- 68 Prince of Darkness
- 69 "I'm warning you"
- 70 Tear to shreds
- 71 Govt. security



**Yesterday's Solution**

45 Discombobulated  
46 Obnoxious sort, in slang  
47 \_\_\_-Dags ice cream  
48 Counterbalance  
50 Gave 10% in church  
53 Shrink in fear  
54 White Sox, in line scores  
55 Physicist \_\_\_ Mach  
59 "A Visit from the Goon Squad" writer Jennifer  
62 "\_\_\_ you okay?"  
63 Sermon subject  
64 Cheerios grain  
65 Opposite of SSW

G O B S E D O N A B E D S  
A R I T H M E T I C E X I T  
S I L H O U E T T E C H A D  
P O K E R P O S T B A I L  
A L E R T S Y O U B E T  
R E D E E M W I L D S I D E  
I R O N E D Y E T I S  
P O M S G A L E N R A N T  
E V E N T S T O O G E  
R E D O U B T S O N A J A G  
T R I P L E K O S O V O  
C A L L E R I D M O V E R  
C O L A F I N E D I N I N G  
O M A N E G O M A S S A G E  
W E B B D A N I S H L E D

### SUDOKU

LEVEL 1 2 3 4

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, please visit [sudoku.org.uk](http://sudoku.org.uk)

8								7
		6	9					3
			1	3	4	9		
								5
7								
	8		4	5				
2				8	5			
4					6			2

# 'Dreamer' accepted to Kings Summer Enrichment Program

By Eleri Connick

**AMMAN** — For the first time in their five-year history, Squash Dreamers have had one of their "dreamers" accepted onto the Kings Academy Summer Enrichment Program. Bringing to fruition the power in sport and investing in young girls' education, mental health, physical health, confidence, and most importantly, living up to their namesake and championing the power to dream of a better future.

Israa, a 12-year-old Syrian refugee and her three sisters — who left Syria during the war — have been participating in the Squash Dreamers program for the last three years.

Despite the challenges she has faced, Israa is a highly motivated young lady who has worked incredibly hard in both squash and English. Executive Director Daisy Van Leeuwen Hill told Jordan News that "Israa never fails to do all she can to better herself and work towards her big dreams".

Israa can expect to take part in classes that will allow her to develop academically, grow her confidence, and share her sporting hobbies with others, all whilst attending the academy.



Israa (bottom right) and fellow dreamers during their first year at the Squash Dreamers program in 2019 with Executive Director Daisy Van Leeuwen Hill (top right). (Photo: Handout Squash Dreamers)

Van Leeuwen Hill stated that she looks forward to seeing many more dreamers follow suit and apply for educational programs on scholarships when they are ready which will, in turn, transform their future prospects.

Israa's story is a testimony to Squash Dreamers' mission to create a real difference in the lives of young

girls through sports and education.

Van Leeuwen Hill said: "Whilst we cannot claim that every one of our girls will become world champions or get into Ivy League schools, what we can claim is that every girl will become a champion of her own life".

The team at Squash Dreamers are constantly trying to find ways in which to support more young girls

and recently began supporting 65 girls from a local orphanage all of whom are thriving in their new love of Squash and their newfound family at Squash Dreamers.

With school holidays on the way, and Israa enjoying her summer at King's Academy, the Squash Dreamers team will be running their biggest summer program to date.

Squash Dreamers provide underprivileged Jordanian girls and young Syrian and Iraqi refugees, known as "the dreamers", the resources to catch up in their education, gain a competitive scholarship advantage through sport, and learn English to gain access to international schools.

The King's Academy Summer Enrichment program is one of the top educational institutions in the Middle East with a world-class university counseling service that receives young people from around the world to study at their boarding campus in Madaba, Jordan.



MORE SPORTS  
ONLINE  
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## Butler brings heat as Miami sink Boston in series opener

**MIAMI, United States (AFP)** — Jimmy Butler scored 41 points as the Miami Heat produced a devastating comeback to defeat the Boston Celtics 118-107 in their opening Eastern Conference finals series clash on Tuesday.

Butler led a revitalized Miami second-half display as the Heat transformed an eight-point half-time deficit into a double-digit lead against a depleted Celtics side at Miami's FTX Arena.

Trailing 62-54 at the break, Miami outscored the Celtics 39-14 in the third quarter to set up a victory that gives the Eastern Conference top seeds a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven series.

Butler received scoring support from Tyler Herro, with 18 points, and Gabe Vincent with 17 points.

But the win owed as much to Miami's renewed defensive effort in the second half, with the Heat shutting down Boston's Jayson Tatum and forcing a series of crucial turnovers and 11 blocks throughout the game.

"The guys were just really disappointed at half-time," Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said.

"I barely needed to say anything. Everyone was just really disappointed at our defensive focus and effort," added Spoelstra, praising the leadership of Butler during the third-quarter blitz.

"Jimmy just inspired everybody in that third quarter," Spoelstra said.

"Every time and pocket in the game when we needed control, or to get the right shot, or make the right decision, Jimmy had his fingerprints on it."

Butler said Miami had decided to go back to basics in the second half.

"Keep the game easy, simple, learn to capitalize off their mistakes," Butler said. "That's what changed in the second half. I didn't change anything. I continued to play basketball the right way. Shoot the ball when I'm open, hit the open guy."

### 'Lost composure'

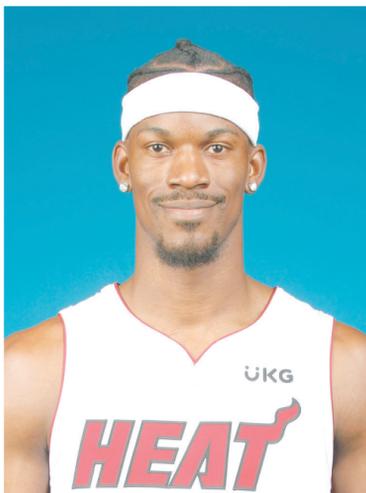
The Celtics shrugged off the injury absence of Marcus Smart and Al Horford (COVID-19 protocol) to look the sharper side in the first half, taking a 10-4 lead in the opening minutes.

Miami were initially unable to cope with the movement of Tatum, who bagged a career-high 21 points in the opening two quarters, shooting nine-of-14 from the field.

Boston led by as much as 13 at one stage in the second quarter before Miami trimmed the deficit to eight points at the interval.

Robert Williams, starting in place of Horford, also delivered a big first-half performance with 5-of-5 shooting for 12 points as well as two crucial blocks to deny Miami.

But it was a different story after the break as Miami out-hustled the Celtics defensively while



(Photo: Jimmy Butler's Twitter)

raining down a deluge of buckets.

An incredible 22-2 run changed the complexion of the game and powered Miami into a 12-point lead at 76-64.

A nine-point Boston run cut the Miami lead to three points at 76-73, but the Heat rediscovered their scoring momentum and pulled away once more.

Two more Butler free throws made it 93-76 heading into the fourth quarter, and a 17-point lead became 20 soon afterwards.

Boston chipped away at the Miami lead to get within single digits, but Miami held on to claim the series opener.

Boston coach Ime Udoka could not hide his disappointment at the decisive third quarter that changed the game. The Celtics outscored Miami in every other quarter.

"We just lost our composure," Udoka said. "We won three-quarters other than that one. We semi-bounced back in the fourth and played well again and matched their physicality. But 39-14 is tough to overcome."

"We had one poor quarter that hurt us and it was strictly from a physicality standpoint. It wasn't anything different that they did."

"They just came out and imposed their will. Disappointing that we came out as flat as we did."

"They increased the physicality and it made that much of a difference."

Game two takes place in Miami on Thursday.

## Liverpool's Klopp has 'no reason' to talk to Gerrard before title climax

**LONDON (AFP)** — Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said he'd no intention of contacting club great Steven Gerrard to offer words of encouragement before the climax to a thrilling Premier League title race this weekend.

Klopp's much-changed side beat Southampton 2-1 on Tuesday to move just one point behind leaders Manchester City with one match to play.

Liverpool, seeking to become champions for the second time in three seasons, complete their campaign at home to Wolves on Sunday, hoping an Aston Villa team now managed by Gerrard can do them a major favor away to City.

Klopp is confident Villa, who also host relegation-threatened Burnley on Thursday, have sufficient motivation of their own to pull off a shock result at the Etihad Stadium. "No, of course not," replied the German, when asked if he planned to speak with former Liverpool captain Gerrard.

"Stevie prepares now for Burnley, who are fighting for everything. It's Villa's last home game. They will play that game and then collect the bones (freshen up) and go again on Sunday."

"There's no reason to talk to him. We all know that Villa wants to win because Villa wants to win — that's it."

Klopp made nine changes to his side at St Mary's following Saturday's grueling FA Cup final win over Chelsea in a penalty shootout.

Liverpool fell behind against Southampton to Nathan Redmond's superb early opener but equalized through Takumi Minamoto before Joel Matip headed a crucial second-half winner.

Victory kept alive Liverpool's hopes of an unprecedented quadruple, with the Reds having already lifted both domestic cups ahead of a Champions League final against Real Madrid on May 28.

Matchwinner Matip said the team must not become distracted by events elsewhere.

"We can only look at our game," he told Liverpool's website. "It will be tough enough to play against Wolves and our full concentration is on Wolves — that's the only thing we can change and that's what we are doing."

"It will be hard enough and if our head is somewhere else that would make it even more of a tough challenge."



Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp celebrates at the end of the English Premier League football match between Southampton and Liverpool at St Mary's Stadium in Southampton, southern England on May 17, 2022. (Photo: AFP)

## BRIEFS By Khaled Al-Omeri



(Photo: Jordan Golf Federation)

## Women's golf participates in Egypt's 'Nefertiti Cup'

**AMMAN** — A national golf delegation arrived in the Egyptian city of Hurghada on Wednesday to participate in the Egyptian International Women's Golf Championship "Nefertiti Cup", which will be held at

El-Gouna stadiums from May 20-22.

The golf delegation includes the two players, Majd Najada and Yasmine Daher, in addition to Iraqi national team coach Amer Radi.



(Photo: Jordan Olympic Federation)

## Abu Al-Saud, Nagoj to represent Jordan at Artistic Gymnastics FIG World Challenge Cup 2022

**AMMAN** — Gymnasts Ahmed Abu Al-Saud on the pommel horse and Salim Nagog on the event floor, pommel horse, vault, rings, parallel bars, will represent Jordan at the Artistic Gymnastics FIG World Challenge Cup 2022 in Varna, Bul-

garia from May 24-31.

The delegation is headed by Shadi Khoury and accompanied by referee Mohammed Al-Akhdar, physiotherapist Hala Maharmeh, and Armenian coach Jurgen Serikanian.



(Photo: Jordan Motorsports)

## Al-Attayah seeks to win Middle East title for 15th time in Jordan

**AMMAN** — The Jordan Rally 2022, the fourth round of the Middle East Rally Championship will begin Thursday from the Royal Automobile Museum in Amman, with the participation of 26 local, Arab, and international competitors.

Qatar's Nasser Al-Attayah, who won the Jordan Interna-

tional Rally 14 times and a 16 time Middle East Rally Champion, leads the list of participants.

Attayah leads the general standings of the Middle East Rally Championship, 50 points ahead of Jordanian rider Issa Abu Jamous, who leads (Merck 2) and aspires to win the title.

## Russian gymnast banned for one year for pro-war 'Z' symbol

**PARIS (AFP)** — A Russian gymnast who sported an insignia linked to his country's invasion of Ukraine on a medal podium has been banned for one year, a disciplinary panel said.

Ivan Kuliak's singlet had the letter "Z" prominently placed as he stood next to Ukraine's Kovtun Illia, the gold medalist at a World Cup event in Doha in March.

The "Z" has been seen daubed on Russian tanks and vehicles in Ukraine and has come to symbolize support for the invasion.

A disciplinary commission of the Gymnastics Ethics Foundation (GEF) found that Kuliak violated rules of the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG), the sport's ruling body.

"Mr Kuliak is not allowed to participate in any FIG-sanctioned event or competition organized by an affiliated FIG member federation for one year as of the date of this decision," GEF said.

Kuliak must also return his bronze medal and prize money of 500 Swiss francs (\$500). He has 21 days to appeal against the punishment.

It had already been decided that all Russian and Belarusian gymnasts will be banned from



(Photo: Twitter)

future competitions.

"If the protective measures keeping Russian athletes from competing are still in place on 17 May 2023, the ban shall continue and expire six months after the removal of said measures," GEF said.

## Tuchel tells Chelsea to prepare for 'rebuilding' to keep up with rivals

**LONDON (AFP)** — Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel expects the London team to face a period of "rebuilding" following the London club's planned sale.

The Blues are blocked from making new signings or securing existing players to new deals under the strict terms of the temporary British government license.

Owner Roman Abramovich put Chelsea on the market in early March, just days before he was sanctioned by the government following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

After a lengthy bidding process, a consortium led by LA Dodgers co-owner Todd Boehly has won the battle to buy the Premier League club in a \$5.2 billion deal.

The government, however, have yet to grant a license to complete the sale — the final step of the purchase process — amid concerns over Abramovich's links to Russian president Vladimir Putin.

Chelsea will lose Antonio Rudiger to Real Madrid and Andreas Christensen to Barcelona on free transfers at the end of the season and there is no certainty over their replacements at Stamford Bridge.

Tuchel's team are third in the Premier League ahead of their penultimate game of the season at home to Leicester on Thursday, but are 19 points adrift of second-placed Liverpool and 20 behind leaders Manchester City.

"You ask many times if we have a delay in approaching players and making plans; of course, a huge delay," Tuchel told a pre-match news conference on Wednesday.

"We are affected by it, players are going out. We are rebuilding, not improving the squad. This is always challenging but we are up for the challenge."

The German, who saw Chelsea suffer an agonizing penalty shootout loss to Liverpool in the FA Cup final at Wembley last weekend, added: "I don't know where we are from day one."

"What I can promise is that I will be here — if I can promise that. I will be here with full energy and positive energy."

"It will be very challenging to make up for the disadvantage, given the situation of the other two teams, City and Liverpool, who are already improving the squad and set one benchmark after the other in all aspects of the game."



# COMPLIANT MATTER ASSUMES CAPTIVATING SHAPES IN TABBAA'S HANDS

By Ica Wahbeh

“**R**efraction” is the name Samer Tabbaa gave his latest exhibition, and seeing the amount of angles, indentations, notches, and protrusions that constantly create new contours, and the playful patches of color in his works, one can but agree that it is an apt appellation.

At a subtler level, the artist says he “chose this title because I like to change my direction of thought in order to fit the material I am working with at the time. ... New lights through old visions”.

Tabbaa’s works, whether old or new, are unmistakably his. Those on display now at Karim Gallery range from 2007 to 2022; some elicit that familiar, warm feelings old acquaintances do, the newest surprise with their exuberant colors that might be an expression of relief after the taxing period of the pandemic, a triumphant display of resilience and defiance whose message is that humanity, after all, cannot so easily be vanquished and that its legacy is here to stay.

The works — sculptures and sculptural paintings — are elegantly projected against the white walls of the bright gallery. To create them, the artist used a wide array of media with masterful control. Wood, paint, tar, coal, stone, marble, metal, and acrylic are all compliant materials in the artist’s hands that shape them in unlikely, highly tactile forms of remarkable beauty.

The square works — encaustic and coal, graphite, mixed media, or acrylic on MDF or wood — in colors as different as tar-black, magenta, cobalt blue, yellow-green, or gold, but not only, are mostly in relief, assume a sculptural quality rather than be two-dimensional paintings.

Evoking distant worlds of twinkling and swirling stars, of immense depths in which space debris is pulled by some gravitational force, Tabbaa’s

bits of graphite, coal, or golden dabs of color “land” in a sensibly chaotic pattern on the warm surface of his works, in patterns that evoke lunar, barren landscapes of eerie beauty.

How long will they hang precariously on the surface before another mysterious, stronger force pries them free and sends them whirling in the atmosphere?

Is their delicate sturdiness hinting at our frail, temporal life? Are they representations of the infinite cosmos? Are the images renditions of the outer space, voracious black holes included, or more familiar expanses of desert, dolmens, and all that may have lingered in the memory of the artist’s genes?

Whatever they are, like a magnet, they pull the viewer in a lulling embrace, entrancing and mesmerizing.

Two bigger images are quite playful. In one, small black craters on blue background find some counterweight in the graphite chunks placed haphazardly, yet artistically, on the wood, creating a lively dynamic. The other, the most recent (produced in 2022), is a wooden panel in elegant grey carved here and there, where the chisel bit, it left some sort of prints that are partly painted in bright colors, creating an abstract work that is refreshingly cheerful.

The labor of love of this artisan — for, Tabbaa is a craftsman first and foremost — has produced a sober, yet happy, world in which the viewer could immerse themselves for hours trying to read hidden messages or delight in discovering the obvious.

Part of this world is made up of Tabbaa’s sculptures, imaginative works artistically outlined against the space around. Untitled all, the standalone or mounted

sculptures are made of wood, stone, marble, and MDF.

The mono- or polychromatic sculptures are aesthetically pleasing, ingenious, highly decorative, and, at times, deceptively simple.

One eye-catching work, made of a juxtaposition of slabs of Jordanian stone, pinewood, and Mexican marble, could be taken for a stack of books or a prehistoric monument whose meaning the posterity should endeavor to decipher.

A vertical asymmetrically scalloped wooden structure could be a primitive totemic pole or simply a column like the many left by successive civilizations all around Jordan.

Another sculpture, a pastel gray slab of painted wood with facets cut at most fascinating angles, and which could pass for a fallen meteorite, has rectangular pieces of aluminum protruding here and there. At intervals, depressions sink into edges, softening the sharp lines, changing the shape — does not refraction happen this way? — and creating a most intriguing sculpture that is rightfully given the pride of place in the center of the gallery.

A wooden “bench” with slats at symmetrical angles — one could almost hear the music produced by these piano tiles-like planks — is highly decorative and cleverly complemented by a nearby wall-mounted sculpture in blue-painted MDF and mahogany. The ingenious positioning of the pieces of wood at different heights creates a playful dynamic, testimony to the creativity of the artist.

The sculpture realized from half

(Photos: Handouts from Karim Gallery)

a tree trunk cut at interesting levels shows perhaps best Tabbaa’s intimate understanding of, and connection with, the material he masterfully interacts with.

He skillfully makes the matter comply with his will, not by brutally hewing it but by gently and knowingly following its natural grain and lines in harmonious synergy whose outcome is outstanding works of art.

The exhibition is on until June 12.

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