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Dangerous Iranian organizations are conspiring, targeting Jordan's national security – Col. Hiyari

AMMAN (JNews) – The Director of Military Information, Col. Mustafa Al-Hiyari, has said that members of the Jordanian Armed Forces—the Arab Army are facing a systematic drug war targeting Jordanian society and the values of its members, led by organized groups supported by foreign parties, Al-Mamlaka TV reported.

He referred to the interview last week of His Majesty King Abdullah II with the Hoover Institution, where he said that the vacuum that Russia will leave, especially in southern Syria, is being filled by Iran and its proxies, namely pro-Iranian militias. Hiyari added that "dangerous Iranian organizations are conspiring and targeting Jordan's national security."

In an interview with Al-Mamlaka TV on Monday, Hiyari explained that drug smuggling operations from Syria to Jordanian territory are carried out by three to four groups, each consisting of 10 to 20 people, including those who work on reconnaissance and surveillance, while another try to distract monitoring efforts by the armed forces. A third waits for the appropriate opportunity to carry out smuggling operations.



An undated photo of drugs seized in previous smuggling operations thwarted by the Jordanian Armed Forces the Arab Army. (Photo: Facebook)

Hiyari added that "sometimes the

smugglers receive support from undisciplined groups from the Syrian border guards and other groups."

"We are seeing undisciplined and armed criminal groups pursuing the smuggling process in a professional

manner, and recently they started targeting weapons and using force," said Hiyari. He added that "the smugglers have no connection with groups inside Jordan."

Regarding the presence of extremist and terrorist groups close to Jordan's northern and eastern borders, Hiyari said Daesh, Jabhat Al-Nusra, and Ansar Al-Din all have presence close by while in other areas there are pro-Iranian organizations, and the latter "are more dangerous because they have a foreign agenda and target Jordan's national security".

Hiyari said that the topography of the northern border is complicated, as the western part is made of rugged mountainous areas, while in the central part there are volcanic rocks which make it impossible for military vehicles to travel through them. The eastern part is an open desert where vehicles are used in smuggling operations.

He added that the penalty for a smuggler carrying a single load has increased to JD10,000, from JD2000, after the army had changed the rules of engagement.

Hiyari said that the new rules of engagement remain in force until now, and "we will continue to apply them because they had a positive result, and the evidence is the size of the recent seizures, which has doubled since the beginning of the year."

He added that the armed forces is working on plans to bring in and manufacture drones to target smugglers and for surveillance purposes, in addition to installing radars that disable drones used by the smugglers.

"The armed forces is facing this threat on behalf of Jordan, the countries of the region, and the countries of the world, as reports indicated that drugs that are manufactured in Syria have reached European countries."

He added that the armed forces and the rest of the state's agencies are confronting drug smuggling on behalf of the countries of the region and the world, and therefore "we expect that others will help Jordan as they did previously because leaving Jordan alone will have unimaginable consequences."

93% of Jordanian journalists practice self-censorship, report finds 96.6% believe the biggest threat are laws enabling the imprisonment of media professionals

AMMAN (JNews) – The Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ) issued a report on Monday on the state of media freedoms in the Arab world in 2021. Titled "Threatened", the report covered five Arab countries: Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Morocco.

The investigative study conducted by the center found that, in Jordan, government interventions top the challenges facing journalists, at a rate of up to 90 percent, 96.6 percent of the respondents said the government is not keen on preserving the independence of the media. Another 96.6 percent of Jordanian journalists believe that the biggest threat are laws enabling the imprisonment of media professionals. Thus, self-censorship is higher in Jordan than in any other country surveyed, with a percentage of 93.3 percent of the sample.

The report aims at exposing the state of the media in the five countries covered, the condition of journalists, the political, economic, and legal environments in which they work, and the impact of these environments on media freedoms.

The report concluded that media freedoms in the Arab region, in general, and in the five countries, in particular, are under siege, subject to restrictions in some countries and seriously threatened in others.

It emphasized the relatively similar characteristics of and challenges in Arab countries, pointing to what it described as extensive control of the executive authority over the judicial and legislative branches.

The report pointed to the most recent classification of the five countries in the Media Freedom

Index issued by Freedom House: Jordan and Palestine as "not free", while Tunisia, Lebanon, and Morocco as "partly free".

The report noted that monarchies in both Jordan and Morocco enjoy wide powers, that the executive authorities in both are the strongest, and that the judiciary in the five countries is occasionally subjected to soft interventions; it also noted the weak parliamentary oversight over government action.

It pointed to the similar economic situation and legislative environment in the five countries, highlighting the freedom-depriving penalties in cases of freedom of expression, whether on charges of defamation, disturbing the public peace, or other broad charges, among others.

The report explained that while some laws regulating the work of the media in the five countries do not include freedom-depriving penalties, the multiplicity of legal references in these countries makes it possible to sentence journalists to prison terms. In some of these countries prosecutors do not use publication laws to prosecute journalists, but resort to the Penal Code or anti-terrorism laws instead.

The report said that even though there are freedom of information laws in Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, and Lebanon, their application varies from one country to another. In Jordan and Tunisia the law is applied selectively.

The report pointed to cases of mobile phone tapping, beatings, denial of the right to cover an issue, threats, and self-censorship as common violations in all five countries.

It said that in these countries,

governments are doing everything they can to control digital media by enacting restrictive legislation and harassing bloggers and media professionals. Moreover, governments in these five countries deal with the media as a security issue.

The report referred to the recommendations issued by the center in its previous Arab reports (2012-2018), noting with frustration that nothing has changed since the first one was published.

It called on the executive and legislative authorities in the five countries to build stronger ties with the media by selecting professional media spokespersons who are able to communicate effectively with journalists, provide them with information that helps them perform their tasks, and facilitate their work.

The report called on civil society organizations to form a broad coalition that includes legal experts, media professionals, and parliament members to develop alternative legal texts for crimes related to freedom of expression.

It recommended that civil society organizations start a media campaign to explain and publicize the issue of lack of accountability of governments that punish journalists, to develop clear legislation targeting those who attack journalists or media personnel while performing their jobs, and to consolidate the principle of voluntary union membership, among other things.

The report called on journalists and lawyers unions in the five countries to establish specialized centers to provide legal assistance to media professionals, boost their professional competence, and improve the efficiency of lawyers working in those centers.

Future of Jordan-Israel ties scrutinized by think tank

By Batool Almasri

AMMAN – Jordan-Israel relationship could be threatened by Israel's constant violations and provocations in Jerusalem and at the Muslim holy sites, and by its policy of assassination, the latest of being journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, say political analysts.

That was also the conclusions reached by pundits attending a discussion held by the Politics and Society Institute, a Jordanian think tank, last week.

The institute held a brain-storming session with a group of researchers and political experts about the implications on the Jordanian-Israeli ties of recent events in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The session concluded that Israel's acts are tantamount to political bullying, and that should make it incumbent on Jordan to carefully scrutinize the Israeli policies and the US role in the region in an attempt to follow policies in a manner that serves and protects Jordanian national and security interests.

Former foreign minister and Jordan's first ambassador to Israel Marwan Muasher, who participated in the discussions, said that it is clear that Israel today is acting against Jordanian interests. Israel's almost daily breaches of Al-Aqsa Mosque demonstrate its disregard for the Jordan-Israeli peace treaty, said Muasher.

"Israel's refusal to withdraw from Palestinian lands and to allow the establishment of a Palestinian state indicates that Israel is attempting to resolve the conflict without taking Jordan's interests into consideration," Muasher said.

"We must oppose Israeli attempts because they pose an existential threat to Jordan, and we must engage with international forums to expose this Israeli threat and preserve Jordanian interests," he added.

While emphasizing that Jordan is capable of dealing with this threat, he also underlined the danger of abandoning the two-state solution to Arab and international allies, particularly the US.

"Jordan is not weak and should not cave in to such pressures," he said.

Political analyst Hamada Faraneh told *Jordan News* he believes that Jordan is in danger because the Israeli right-wing is attempting to export the Palestinian problem, as it did in 1948, to Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, by expelling Palestinians from their lands.

Faraneh said that Israel considers Jordan to be the alternative homeland of Palestinians because of political, historical, and demographic realities.

Israel, Faraneh said, has no leverage over Jordan, and the Kingdom can adopt a firm policy vis-à-vis Israel, just as it did when it rejected the Trump peace plan and Benjamin Netanyahu's plan to annex parts of the Jordan Valley.

Political analyst Amer Al-Sabaileh does not believe that Israel poses a serious threat to Jordan.

He said that the notion of a security or existential threat to Jordan is exaggerated, because, despite the Kingdom's geographical proximity to Israel, the existence of a peace treaty and security cooperation between the two countries means that there are always ways to defuse tensions.

5.8% divorce rate in Jordan in 2021

AMMAN (JNews) – Chief Islamic Justice Abdel Hafez Al-Rabtah said Tuesday that the rate of divorce cases had reached 5.8 percent during 2021, according to Khaberni.

His statements came during the presentation of the statistical report for 2021, which includes indicators such as the number of cases considered in Sharia courts and the

number of marriage and divorce contracts.

According to the report, the Islamic Justice Department examined 700,000 transactions in 2021, with the number of family cards issued to beneficiaries reaching 74,000, an increase of 45 percent.

The number of marriages increased to 76,000, while the mar-

riage of minors decreased by 1.2 percent. The report indicated that the Department of the Chief Justice refused to approve dozens of cases of marriage of persons under 18 years of age.

The report indicated that the rate of divorce cases amounted to 5.8 percent, while the Alimony Credit Fund spent about JD16 million.

On the occasion of Independence Day

Arab Bank
is honoured to convey to His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein

and to the people of Jordan its most cordial wishes and greetings

BRIEFS

CARC refutes information about closing Jordanian airspace

AMMAN (JNews) – The Civil Aviation Regulatory Commission (CARC) on Tuesday denied the validity of circulated information concerning the closure of the Jordanian airspace, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

In a statement, CARC Chief Commissioner, Captain Haitham Mesto, confirmed that the Kingdom's airspace was not closed, with non-stop international aviation transit occurring as usual.

"The suspension of take-off and landing took place in Queen Alia International Airport for a period of 40 minutes only, for the purpose of preserving the safety and security of civil aviation," he explained.

13,000 cybercrimes dealt with in Jordan in 2021

AMMAN (JNews) – Director of the Criminal Investigation Unit at the Public Security Directorate Maj. Mahmoud Al-Maghaira said that the unit dealt with about 13,000 cybercrimes in 2021, according to Khaberni.

Maghaira, who said that the unit issued a statement on Saturday regarding the increase in cases of social media page thefts, advised people who have personal pages on social media to link their accounts with an active email and an active phone number.

Maghaira urged citizens not to open links on cell phones claiming to come from the support team of a social network application company, which ask users for passwords, or "codes" to reset passwords, which makes it easier for hackers to access accounts.

JPMC listed on MSCI Frontier Market 100 Index

AMMAN (JNews) – Morgan Stanley Capital International Inc. (MSCI) has listed the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC), a public shareholding company on the MSCI Frontier Market 100 Index. It will be available for international investment funds as of May 31, 2022, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The listing came after the company met a set of financial standards, including profitability, liquidity, and share market value, as well as the company's potential to generate continuing additional value for its shareholders, according to a disclosure by the JPMC.

PM urges speedy completion of law regulating investment environment

AMMAN (JNews) – The Cabinet on Monday discussed a number of issues related to the draft law regulating the investment environment, according to Al-Mamlaka TV.

Prime Minister Bisher Al-Khasawneh stressed the need to expedite the completion of the law, so that it could be referred to the Lower House, according to constitutional procedures, for approval.

Khasawneh said the law should reflect the purpose for which it was created: enhancing the competitiveness of the Jordanian economy and its ability to attract investments, developing legislation regulating economic investment in Kingdom, and eliminating hurdles and bureaucracy that hinder economic activities.

Polish media delegation tours Jordan

AMMAN, (JNews) – The Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) has received a delegation of Polish journalists to tour the Kingdom, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

JTB Director-General Abdul Razzaq Arabiyat said the visit is within the board's plans to promote tourism in Jordan, according to a JTB statement on Tuesday. He added that the visit arose for the Polish to look firsthand at tourism and archeological sites, and to promote Jordan's features in Polish media.

The Polish delegation commended archeological sites in the Kingdom and its attractive and diverse environment.

King visits JAF Central Command, commends army personnel's professionalism

AMMAN (JNews) – His Majesty King Abdullah, the Supreme Commander of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF), visited the General Command of the JAF, according to a Royal Court statement.

King Abdullah was received by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti and a number of senior JAF officers.

His Majesty met with Huneiti and was briefed on a number of operational, logistical, and training-related issues of concern to JAF, as well as plans for military modernization.

The King was also briefed on efforts by JAF personnel to safeguard Jordan's borders.

His Majesty commended JAF personnel's readiness and their professionalism in upholding their duties.



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His Majesty King Abdullah II, the Supreme Commander of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army, visits the General Command of JAF. (Photo: Royal Court)

Obesity costs Jordan JD650 million annually

AMMAN (JNews) – The expense of treating obesity and the resulting chronic diseases cost Jordan around JD650 million annually, according to a statement by President of Al-Ahliyya Amman University Sari Hamdan, in a study published by the National Centre for Diabetes and Endocrinology, Khaberni News reported.

During a lecture entitled "Health, psychological, social, and economic aspects of sport" at the Jordan Society for Scientific Research, Entrepreneurship, and Creativity, on Monday, he said that the rate of obesity among Jordanian women stands at 84 percent and men 80 percent. The study also revealed that the mortality rate from obesity is 10 percent annually. The study ranked Jordan among the top 10 countries in the world for obesity of its citizens.

He added that physical activities improve overall health, increase the vital capacity of the

lungs, develop the muscle system, reduce prevalent diseases, especially heart disease and excessive obesity, and improve physical fitness, harmonious bodily composition, and weight control.

He called for scheduling food at the right times, skipping between meals snacks and refraining from sugar once and for all: because sugars that exist in carbohydrates and fruits is enough for the body.

A presentation of the psychological aspects of sport, noted the improvement of psychological satisfaction with the shape of the body, in turn reducing the anxiety of exercising and increases self-confidence. He noted that in Jordan there are more than 3,000 fitness centers that are licensed by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and there are more than 15,000 employees in such centers, and the demand for these centers has been increasing over the years.

Ministry of Education 'needs 10,000 teachers'

AMMAN (JNews) – Head of the Supreme Council of the National Center for Curriculum Development, Azmi Mahafazah, said on Tuesday that the ministry has 4,000 vacancies for teachers, but the ministry needs 10,000 teachers, according to Jo24.

During a meeting of the Parliamentary Education and Youth Committee, he said that new curriculum for science and mathe-

matics will be introduced in the next stage of high school, including physics, chemistry, biology and earth sciences.

Meanwhile, Minister of Education Wajih Owais has said that the most important point for the ministry is the training of teachers.

Owais pointed out that there are 700 unaffiliated schools, noting that most schools do not fit the educational environment.

International system has proven to be fragile and vulnerable – Safadi

AMMAN (JNews) – Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Ayman Safadi, said on Monday that the Israeli occupation forces' attack on the funeral of Palestinian journalist Shereen Abu Akleh on May 13 is an "inhumane behavior that cannot be imagined," Al-Mamlaka TV reported.

During his participation in a dialogue session on the Middle East region, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland, Safadi explained that the killing of the Palestinian-American journalist Abu Akleh "is a crime that should have resonated widely in the world because she was doing her job."

He renewed his call for a "comprehensive investigation to help

ensure that the killers are held responsible," noting that Abu Akleh's death was a "tragic accident."

"This is one of many incidents. There were dozens of Palestinians who were killed in clashes in the occupied territories. There is certainly no political horizon for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This kills hope, and this allows frustration to overspill and radicals to become empowered everywhere," Safadi said.

"The Palestinian crisis has been going on for decades, and the Charter of the UN and international laws have been violated for many years," noting that "the crises in Syria, Libya, and Yemen suffer from policy management failures," he added.

Safadi stated that "the issue of

Jordan partakes in Milipol Qatar 2022

AMMAN (JNews) – Jordan is attending the homeland security and civil defense exhibition, Milipol Qatar 2022, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The event which kicked off on Tuesday morning, under the patronage of the Emir of Qatar, sees director of the Public Security Department (PSD), Maj. Gen. Hussein Hawatmeh, representing Jordan. An annual event which Jordan has always been committed to participating in.

The exhibition, held from May 24 to 26, was opened by Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al-Thani. A total of 220 companies representing 22 countries are taking part in the exhibition.

The exhibition's pavilions showcase many homeland security and civil defense systems and devices produced by different countries. Milipol Qatar 2022 is a great opportunity for experts to look firsthand at the latest products and equipment in this field. Cybersecurity risks will also be discussed during Milipol Qatar by global and local experts, providing a host of possible solutions to mitigate the growing cybersecurity risks.

No Monkeypox "recorded" in Jordan, yet

AMMAN (JNews) – Advisor at the Prime Ministry for Health Affairs, Adel Al-Balbisi, confirmed on Monday that no case of Monkeypox has been recorded "so far" in either public or private hospitals in the Kingdom, according to Al-Mamlaka TV.

Balbisi called on citizens not to panic about Monkeypox, stressing that "this virus will not start a pandemic because it is difficult to transmit from one person to another". He indicated that "there is strict control in the health centers of the Ministry of Health, which are located at the crossings and borders," stressing "their continuous follow-up on mechanisms for monitoring cases

and detecting them if there is any".

Balbisi explained that "suspected cases are those who suffer from an unexplained skin rash" in addition to one of the following symptoms, high temperature of more than 38.5 degrees, muscle pain, swollen lymph glands, or general exhaustion. "If these symptoms were noticed and there is suspicion of the virus, the ministry will investigate the case, by taking (PCR) samples or taking a swab from the skin."

Balbisi pointed out that "among the measures taken by the ministry, two isolation rooms have been allocated in Al-Bashir hospital as a precaution".

Campaigns launch to boycott chicken after price increase

AMMAN (JNews) – Following the significant rise in the price of chicken and the government letting go of price ceilings, citizens have launched a public movement on social media to boycott chicken and its products, to put pressure on the authorities and those in the agricultural sector, according to Al-Ghad News.

The campaign which kicked off Sunday morning, is unique in that it is fully public-funded, and spreading fast and wide on the internet.

Jordan's water situation worrisome, solutions exist

By Batool Almasri

AMMAN – On Monday, Water Ministry spokesman Omar Salameh said in a televised interview that this summer will be as critical as in previous years in terms of water supply.

Water sector experts see many reasons for the persistent water scarcity in the country, and suggest solutions.

According to Salameh, Jordan has always suffered from low quantities of water and growing demand for this commodity, but since and the quantity of drinking water in dams is limited, the burden increases in the summer.

It is probable for some Jordanian regions to witness water shortages, but the ministry is fully prepared to deal with the situation, has effective plans in place, Salameh said, without elaborating on the details of these plans.

He attributed the water shortage to a variety of factors, including lack of precipitations, a decrease in the amount of underground water, rising temperatures, and ongoing climatic changes.

At the same time, he said, the return to normalcy and the resumption of activities in the field of industry and tourism, following the pandemic, resulted in an increase in

demand for water. To that, he should be added the large number of people who returned to Jordan following the period of pandemic, he said adding that these numbers are still growing as a result of the global political situation.

UNDP Director of Projects Sami Tarabieh told *Jordan News* that "there is always an equivalent of 20 percent to 25 percent deficit in Jordan's yearly water budget, thus the water situation for this summer will certainly be somewhat unsatisfactory, as usual".

According to Tarabieh, this is due to natural causes, in the first place, such as Jordan's scarcity of water supplies, as well as to drought and continued weather fluctuations, which put undue strain on the few available water resources.

At the same time, the growing number of refugees is an added hardship "since it defies the government's plans by the rapid and unpredictable demographic increase", he said.

"What the government is attempting to do in terms of plans and projects to control the national water security, such as the National Water Carrier Project and water harvesting projects, may be insufficient, and the reason for this is entirely due to Jordan's limited resources, as water-related projects always require large



(Photo: Envato Elements)

infrastructure and large funding that the government cannot provide," he said, adding that "relying on external funding often takes a long time".

According to Tarabieh, the government should implement long-term solutions to regulate the water situation, such as cooperation between the water and agriculture sectors, the latter usually having a water bill of more than 68 percent.

He also stressed that the problem of water leaks must be addressed

water since it just adds to the financial load.

Researcher and water expert Muna Hindiyyeh said that Jordan's persistent water deficit is a very old issue that requires sustainable solutions because it is closely tied to food security.

"Natural reasons play a significant role in this water scarcity, but the government's policies and programs have the greatest impact on this sector," said Hindiyyeh, adding that "the

government is not properly utilizing current resources, and their clever exploitation would take Jordan to a higher level of self-sufficiency".

Hindiyyeh believes there are many sustainable solutions to the problem, such as using solar energy to operate desalination and water purification plants, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, and taking advantage of international cooperation to obtain adequate financing to complete the massive projects that the government started but did not complete.

It is important to rely on specialists in the field of water and water engineering at this stage, which are very few in Jordan, she said, adding that "the matter begins with the provision of university specializations in the field of water, which would have a significant impact on Jordan's water future".

Hindiyyeh commended the government for reusing wastewater by updating specifications and standards for wastewater reuse, pointing out that Jordan only benefits from 68 percent of this water, while "such a project would provide 80 percent to 90 percent of this water for use in various sectors".

"We have to start thinking about answers in unexpected ways, or we will never progress if we keep using the same ideas we did decades ago," she said.

ASEZA, JICA sign technical assistance agreement

AMMAN (JNews) – A technical assistance agreement was signed on Tuesday by the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA), the Aqaba Development Company, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), with an aim to help the authority modernize the master plan of the southern coastal city, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The project, which will be carried out with support from the Japanese government, in collaboration and coordination with the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. The project entails formulating a vision, strategy, plan, and sectoral policy for urban social and economic development, according to Nayef Bakhit, ASEZA's chief commissioner.

He emphasized that this will lead to increased investment opportunities in all development areas, including economic and social aspects, with a focus on land use efficiency.

Bakhit added that the project aims to strengthen ASEZA and Aqaba Development Company's urban planning capabilities by incorporating the latest and best international practices, as well as bringing in international expertise, which will result in better procedure management and service delivery in the areas of real estate regulation and development.



(Photo: Aqaba Container Terminal)

Bakhit stated that the project is critical to accelerating Aqaba's economic development and improving services for citizens and visitors, applauding JICA's role in providing technical assistance to ASEZA through this project, which is set to begin in August 2022.

Miyahara Chie, JICA's chief representative in Jordan, stated that JICA is proud to collaborate with the ASEZ and support its long-term growth goals. She went on to say that Aqaba can play a bigger role than envisaged, evolving into a significant export and import hub not just for Jordan but for the region, which will increase tourism potential, and serve as a critical location for water and energy security.

She noted that JICA has been active in Jordan's northern region for the past few years, but is now looking forward to expanding its activities in the south, hoping that this project will become the cornerstone of JICA and the Authority's activities for years to come.



State of the country report 'gives realistic diagnosis', should be taken seriously by gov't

By Nesreen Ghassan

AMMAN – The Economic and Social Council's fourth annual "State of the country report, 2021", published on May 22, reviewed the performance of 21 government sectors and issued recommendations that may help improve their work and address weaknesses inherent in some.

The report, which found that the economic and social effects of the pandemic continue to in-

form government policies and legislation, that the competitiveness of the national economy continues to decline, that there is inefficient use of available economic resources, obstacles to the entry of foreign investments, and high energy costs, issued a set of recommendations to address the shortcomings and stimulate economic growth.

Economist Salameh Aldarawi told *Jordan News* that the Economic and Social Council report "is a great effort", and that "it

gives a realistic diagnosis of the actual situation in which many sectors are".

Still, he believes that the "report will be handed over to the government, just like the rest of the previous reports, and most likely its recommendations will be put on the shelf".

He said that "the government does not take the recommendations of these qualitative reports" seriously, "despite their importance to the decision makers".

His advice to the council was to

conduct a "detailed sectoral research, instead of the comprehensive nature" of the report now.

According to Yusuf Mansur, CEO of Envision Consulting Group and former minister of state for economic affairs, "the report should come up with practical and actionable solutions", instead of mentioning "the negatives, the problems, and the regress, which are all well-known" anyway.

Moreover, Mansur believes that the report "did not come

with new recommendations, most of the report's outcomes were old".

According to Mansur, description of the situation in such a report should constitute only 20 percent, and 80 percent should be solutions and recommendations.

Amer Shobaki, an economist and specialist in oil and energy affairs, told *Jordan News* that "the demands and recommendations of the 2021 report are the same with those in previous re-

ports", adding that successive governments failed to address or solve problems and challenges.

"We need decisive, real, and balanced decisions by the government to tackle these challenges," said Shobaki who contributed to this year's report.

Firas Balasme, energy expert and CEO of FB Group, said that "the report is very helpful in addressing the energy sector", adding that it has a lot of information, highlights problems and gives solutions.

SPONSORED CONTENT

Four Seasons hotel Amman awarded five-star hotel honor by 2022 Forbes Travel Guide

AMMAN – Four Seasons Hotel Amman announced that it is the first and only hotel in Jordan to have earned the coveted five-star rating from Forbes Travel Guide, the only global rating system for luxury hotels, restaurants, and spas.

Elevating its appeal further as one of Jordan's top luxury destinations, Four Seasons Hotel Amman invites guests to discover an entirely new hospitality experience following the completion of its extensive renovation program. The hotel has been completely redesigned, and blends the finest traditions of Jordanian hospitality with contemporary elegance to create a relaxing "home away from home" that is set to enchant both local visitors and international travelers.

The enhanced guest experience begins on the approach to the hotel, which sits atop the tallest of Amman's seven hills in the prestigious Abdun residential district. Visitors are greeted with elegant exterior lighting on the white stone-and-glass building and a completely new road framed by intricate landscaping, before arriving at the redesigned vestibule area that leads to the lobby. This grand entrance sets the tone for the tasteful interiors found within, which reflect the Jordanian capital's intersection of Arabic, Islamic, and western cultures.

Carlo Stragiotto, general manager at Four Seasons Hotel Amman, said, "we are very proud that we have achieved the Forbes Travel Guide five-star rating, which is globally recognized as one of the highest accolades in the world of hospitality. This is testament to the fact that we are able to offer our guests an unrivaled luxury experience thanks to our exceptional people. The emphasis placed on quality of service by the Forbes rating system makes it especially rewarding to know we are consistently delivering impeccable hospitality in true Four Seasons style. This achievement highlights the outstanding craftsmanship and dedication of our teams, whose shared passion for creating extraordinary experiences shines through and brings great delight to our guests on a daily basis."

Stragiotto added, "We are also proud to offer industry-leading technology such as the Four Seasons app and chat, as well as our lead with care initiative for enhanced health and safety measures."

"Travel has come back strongly, and the resilient hospitality industry

is creatively rallying to accommodate the increased occupancy demand for most regions," says Hermann Elger, ceo of Forbes Travel Guide. "While the industry faces some lingering issues, the 2022 award winners proved ready for those challenges and more, demonstrating the best that luxury hospitality has to offer."

At Four Seasons Hotel Amman, visitors are invited to discover more than just world-class accommodation and culinary craftsmanship. The hotel's concierge team is ready to help guests explore Jordan's capital and beyond by sharing their personal favorites and revealing hidden gems through exclusive excursions to the north of Jordan. These passionate local experts are happy to put together customized itineraries that will help make guests' stays even more memorable.

Methodology

Star ratings are awarded by a team of anonymous professional inspectors who travel the world to assess hotels, restaurants, and spas based on 900 objective standards. Star ratings ultimately emphasize quality of service. Five-star properties are defined as "outstanding, often iconic properties with virtually flawless service and amazing facilities." Forbes Travel Guide rates properties in 73 countries throughout the world.

About Forbes Travel Guide

Forbes Travel Guide is the only global rating system for luxury hotels, restaurants and spas. Anonymous professional inspectors evaluate based on up to 900 objective standards, with an emphasis on exceptional service, to help discerning travelers select the world's best luxury experiences. The only way to get a five-star, four-star, or recommended rating is by earning it through this independent inspection process.



(Photo: Four Seasons)

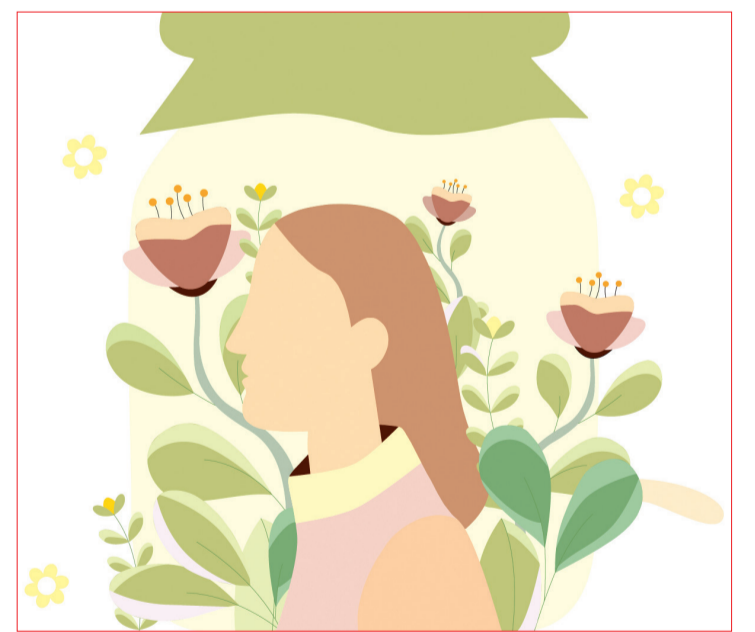
A woman to the rescue

AMMAN – Life as a refugee is a constant struggle: a struggle to find shelter, eat, provide, feel safe again, and live a decent life. Opportunities in a refugee camp are limited, and the situation does not differ much in host communities. Leaving their lives behind, refugees quite literally start from scratch. Despite the pain and agony, they find their way. Forty-four-year-old Mokhlisa is another example of refugees' strength and the determination to find a bright future.

Ten years ago, Mokhlisa was forced to leave her home in Syria to escape the war. The night she and her family fled, her village was under heavy bombardment, leaving them with no option but to pursue an unknown future. Their journey to Jordan was terrifying. With four kids, they walked into the darkness in the middle of the night. "I cannot begin to describe the terror we went through that night, not to mention the physical exhaustion... When we saw the Jordanian border police, I broke down in tears, my legs collapsed, and I fell to the ground. I thanked God for (my) making it to this safe harbor with my family."

It took Mokhlisa and her family a couple of years to finally settle in Ramtha city, where they currently reside. Nothing came easy in Mokhlisa's life. Her husband's heart condition worsened, and they had no source of income: "There were days when we did not have a cent in the house." Determined to provide for her family, Mokhlisa started selling homemade pickled goods. She noticed interest from her Jordanian neighbors, and sales picked up. All she had in mind when she began was feeding her family. She had no intention of making it a business and never dared to dream that her work could expand. Seven years later, Mokhlisa became the backbone of her family, the sole provider for her sons and her daughter's families: "It's not easy but thank God I am capable of providing and being independent."

Mokhlisa first heard about the "Improving Protection Spaces and Practices (IPSP) for Syrians and Jordanians in Host Communities" program that Generations for Peace (GFP) implemented through one of her friends. She joined, hoping to learn new skills that would allow her to expand her business and help the people around her.



(Photo: Generation For Peace)

Being the eldest in the program did not deter Mokhlisa from engaging in the sessions and activities. She never missed a session and was attentive, taking notes of everything new. "I joined the program with the sole purpose of learning anything that would help me grow my small business. Never have I thought the program would give my life a new taste," Mokhlisa explains.

"During the past 10 years, I forgot who I am. I was consistently worried about the future, feeding my family, and taking care of my sick husband. However, through the program, I could, for once, disconnect from my worries and my daily responsibility, express my thoughts, and most importantly appreciate myself." The program provided Mokhlisa with a supportive space in which to put herself first, even if it was only for a couple of hours a day. She was able to unplug and reconnect with herself.

"It felt wonderful to feel appreciated. I was immensely proud when I shared my success story with the rest of the participants. I felt fearful at first to stand and talk in public, but once I started talking, I felt a sense of ownership and pride, and the crowd made me feel as if I was amongst my family," she said. Mokhlisa found the sessions on child protection eye-opening. It had never crossed her mind that she was responsible for monitoring what her kids saw on the internet. Moreover, the social media and computer training she received in the program was very beneficial for her: "I am not saying I'm an expert now, but I can surf the web, and I can respond to requests I get on my business' Facebook page." She has passed the knowledge that she learned to her husband, who now handles her page on social media. Today, Mokhlisa's business has reached Amman, Aqaba, and other governorates. When the demand is high, she employs her Jordanian neighbors to help. "My neighbors also suffer financially, and I try to support them by asking for their assistance with work. In return, I pay for their efforts; a win-win situation." She is confident and determined to expand her business further and help her community.

BRIEFS

Algeria president sacks central bank chief

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune on Monday sacked central bank chief Rostom Fadli, in office for less than two years, the presidency announced without giving any further explanation.

Tebboune appointed Mr Salah Eddine Taleb to replace him. Fadli took office in June 2020 as interim head of the central bank of Africa's fourth-biggest economy, later being confirmed in the role.

Algeria is a rentier economy dependent on oil exports for 90 percent of its foreign income, and therefore vulnerable to price movements. Despite seeing those revenues explode in recent months with the energy crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the North African country has also been hit hard by concurrent price hikes on its vital wheat imports.

Three Turkish soldiers killed in Iraq

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Three Turkish soldiers serving in northern Iraq as part of operations against Kurdish militants were killed Tuesday, the defence ministry announced.

Another four soldiers were wounded during fighting, said the ministry statement, which did not say where the clash took place.

Turkey's official news agency Anadolu said the Turkish soldiers had clashed with fighters from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which Ankara and its western allies say is a terrorist organisation.

Ankara has launched a series of operations against PKK fighters in Iraq and Syria, the latest one in northern Iraq beginning in April.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday that Turkey would soon launch a new military operation into northern Syria which he said was designed to create a 30km (19-mile) "security zone" along their border.

Four migrants drown, three missing off Libya

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Four migrants were found dead and three were missing after their boat capsized off the Libyan coast, the North African country's coast guard said Tuesday.

The agency also rescued 13 migrants who had been shipwrecked as they tried to cross the Mediterranean to Europe, it said in a statement.

"The rescued migrants were taken to the Mellitah landing point and handed to the competent authorities," it said, adding steps would be taken to send them "back to their countries".

Twelve of the rescued migrants were Syrian, along with one Egyptian, a navy official told AFP. The nationalities of those who died, three men and a woman, were unknown.

Since the start of the year, 129 people have died attempting the crossing, 459 have gone missing, and 6,340 migrants have been intercepted and returned to Libya, according to figures published by the UN's migration agency on Monday.

Young Lebanese voters shake grip of traditional parties

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese law student Charbel Chaaya spent the election campaign distributing flyers in Beirut and trying to convince his parents to vote for independents to shake the grip of established parties.

The 21-year-old activist is one of many young voters who went against their parents' political views and helped propel at least 13 independents to parliament last week for the first time in decades. "My parents think I'm too idealistic, that this country will never change," he said, adding that his father voted for a traditional Christian party, the Lebanese Forces. "There is a generational gap," Chaaya said. "Our generation knows that sectarian and traditional politics simply don't work anymore."

Chaaya is part of a new generation seeking a progressive approach to politics, blaming established parties dating from Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war for an economic meltdown that has pushed thousands to flee the country. This has widened a generational gap between young people voting for change and an older generation often attached to civil war-era parties.

The Iran-backed Shiite Hezbollah group and its allies fell just short of the 65 seats needed to control the 128-seat parliament, losing their clear-cut majority. This time, the May 15 polls brought in a record number of independents to parliament, totaling a small but significant tenth of the assembly.

'Different language'

Chaaya headed his university's secular club, one of dozens of political groups bringing together young supporters of a mass protest move-



Five young Lebanese demonstrators wave national flags as they take part in the capital Beirut's downtown district. (Photo: AFP)

ment that began in October 2019. In his Chouf-Aley district, southeast of Beirut, voters ousted Hezbollah ally Talal Arslan in favor of independent newcomer Mark Daou, a university lecturer and advertising professional.

A massive number of those campaigning for his list were young people in their twenties, Daou said. "We speak a different language than the traditional parties, that's why people like us," said Daou. "We don't speak in sectarian terms."

Lebanon shares power among its

18 recognized religious communities, and politics are often treated as a family business. This was a clear break from voting patterns in Lebanon, where each community usually supports politicians from their own religious sect.

Polling expert Rabin Haber of Statistics Lebanon said that while voter data could not be broken down by age, on social media young people seemed to express far greater support for independent candidates than established parties.

Newly-elected independent MP

Elias Jarade, a 54-year-old Harvard-educated ophthalmologist, said most voters who came up to him were young people from different political backgrounds. "All those who came to our tents and said they voted for us were young men and women, from different regions, religions and political backgrounds," Jarade said. He was one of two independent MPs who snatched seats from allies of the powerful Hezbollah in its south Lebanon strongholds.

The independent MPs are mostly

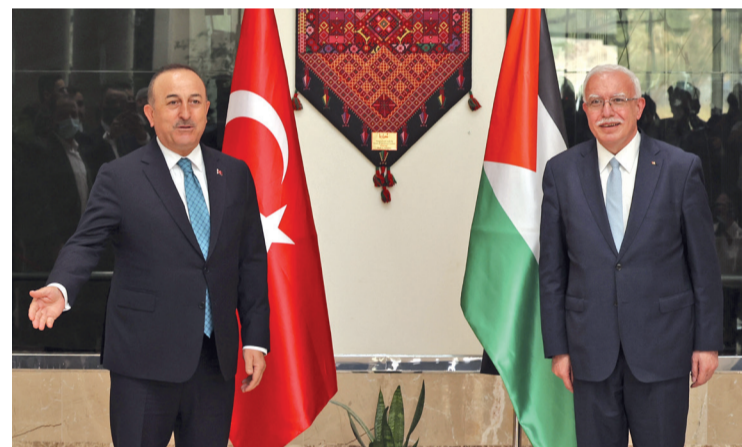
university professors and respected professionals who entered politics after the 2019 mass protests.

'Space to have a conversation'

Karl, a 30-year-old Beirut resident, went against his parents' wishes and voted for an independent in the country's south, after growing disillusioned with the Christian Free Patriotic Movement of President Michel Aoun, a Hezbollah ally. Karl, asking that only his first name be used, said that there is a trend of younger people voting for independents, despite their limited gains in the south. "At the same time the older generation is also transmitting its own war trauma to their children," he said.

On his way to vote in his hometown, Karl passed by the southern town of Ghazieh, where he saw children chanting slogans and bearing flags for Hezbollah and its ally the Shiite Amal movement. The scene was emblematic of the tight hold the two groups have in south Lebanon, where independents are often threatened and intimidated, according to observers and rights groups.

Sami, 21, who also asked for his first name to be used, said he had failed to dissuade his parents from voting for Hezbollah and Amal. "I thought I had convinced my mother, but in the end there is always something that pulls her back to her beliefs," he said, a common complaint among young voters AFP spoke to. But Sami said he was cautiously optimistic about the independents' modest victory in the south. "Our region was monochrome, there was no space for debate on alternatives to these parties," Sami said. "This opened up, at least, some space to have a conversation."



Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki (right) receives Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu in Ramallah. (Photo: AFP)

Turkish minister aims to boost Palestinian economy in rare West Bank trip

RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — Turkey's top diplomat announced Tuesday a raft of new agreements to bolster the struggling Palestinian economy, during the first high-level Turkish visit to the Israeli-occupied West Bank in 15 years.

During Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu's trip to Ramallah, Turkey signed nine new pacts with the Palestinian Authority, ranging from agriculture to education and trade.

Cavusoglu will meet Israeli officials on Wednesday, the latest step in a diplomatic thaw between Ankara and Israel. He will also make a private visit to the Al-Asqa mosque compound in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem.

Alongside his Palestinian counterpart Riyad al-Maliki, Cavusoglu pledged to push ahead with plans for the construction of an industrial

zone in the Palestinian territories. "The necessary order has been given; there is no luxury for evading and delaying this project," he said, also setting a \$2 billion annual bilateral trade target and pledging more scholarships for Palestinians to study in Turkey.

The World Bank warned this month that the Palestinian economy was in a "precarious" state, with the cash-strapped Palestinian Authority — a major West Bank employer — only paying partial wages since November.

Maliki described Cavusoglu's visit as "historic" and reflecting the "special relationship between the two countries". Turkey has long been a vocal supporter of the Palestinian cause, but visits to the West Bank had been obstructed by a 15-year diplomatic rupture between Ankara and Israel.

Syrian refugees in Turkey left in limbo

SANLIURFA, Turkey (AFP) — Samira hears the same message from Turkish politicians on the television day and night: Syrian refugees like her must return home. But her home near Damascus is still not safe, she says.

The 44-year-old from Ghouta is one of the hundreds of thousands of refugees in Turkey's Sanliurfa province, which shares a long border with Syria. Civil war in Samira's homeland is estimated to have killed nearly half a million people and displaced millions since it began with a brutal crackdown of anti-government protests in 2011.

Turkey has fervently opposed Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, backing rebels calling for his removal and opening its doors to refugees. But a new wave of economic turbulence, which has seen inflation spike and the value of the lira drop, has put Turkey's 3.7 million Syrian population under enormous strain.

Samira said she has never felt so much pressure since she fled to Turkey in 2019. "I don't think about going back, they destroyed our house. The situation is bad over there," she told AFP from her modest ground floor flat in the city of Sanliurfa, which is home to around half a million Syrian refugees — a quarter of the province's population.

Refugees fear they will be used as a scapegoat for Turkey's problems in the 2023 electoral campaign, as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan faces rising public anger over their presence.

"Very scared"

The main opposition, the Republican People's Party (CHP), has

promised to send them back to Syria, while the leader of the far-right Victory Party has admitted funding a viral social media video aimed at scaring Turks about a "silent invasion" of migrants. Earlier this month, Erdogan said Ankara was aiming to encourage a million Syrian refugees to return to "safe zones" on the Turkey-Syria border by building them housing and local infrastructure.

"Send Syrians back, send Syrians back! This is what we hear on television from morning to evening," said Samira, sitting on a cushion on the floor and unwilling to give her full name. Despite pressure from opposition parties, Erdogan has pledged that Turkey will not force Syrian refugees back and "will not throw them into the lap of murderers". But his assurances are not allaying their fears.

A few metres from Samira's house, 43-year-old Umm Mohamed, who runs a grocery store selling Syrian bread, fava, and olives, cannot understand the turn of the tide in society. "We are very scared," she said, standing behind the counter, her eyes looking timid beneath a black veil. "We feel the pressure. As a foreigner, we have to be polite all the time."

Syria not an option

Mohamed's husband defected from Assad's army. "We can't go back," she said. "They would kill

us." Fatima Ibrahim, in her early 30s, married a Syrian refugee after fleeing to Turkey nine years ago. The economic fallout is hitting them just as hard as the Turks, she said. Her husband lost his job as a blacksmith during the Covid pandemic. Two weeks ago, he found a job as a farmer in central Konya province — 700km (435 miles) from Sanliurfa. "Employers pay us less, so locals are annoyed, blaming us for accepting a wage less than theirs," she said, sitting next to her three young sons. "Sometimes we hear from the locals that we should go back, that we have caused them to lose their jobs" she said.

But returning to Syria is not a possibility for Ibrahim. "I will never go back. I will either stay here or flee to Europe. There's no third option," she said.

"Don't mingle"

Ibrahim said she maintains a low profile in public to avoid trouble, keeping contact with locals to a minimum. "I don't visit my neighbours, and they don't visit my home. We don't mingle," she said.

Haifa, a 39-year-old English teacher from Aleppo, has fluent Turkish after nine years here, and avoids speaking Arabic in public so as not to attract attention. "I want to keep myself safe," she told AFP, after she was exposed to verbal assaults on the street. "Political issues affect us more than the economy," she said.

Haifa said: "You think it is easy to leave everything behind you? Your memories, your house, everything. You cannot even visit your mother or father's grave."

Two killed, 120 injured in Abu Dhabi gas explosion

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Two people were killed and 120 injured in a gas cylinder explosion in a restaurant in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi, police said.

Initial reports "showed that 64 people sustained minor injuries, 56 others were moderately wounded, and two people died", police tweeted.

The blast on Monday set off a fire that damaged the facades of six buildings and a number of stores before being brought under control, they added. Four of the damaged buildings were "safely" evacuated, with efforts underway to find their residents temporary housing "until

the buildings are completely secured", the police said. Pictures released by Abu Dhabi police showed first responders tending to a person on a gurney, and debris and broken glass strewn across the pavement.

A witness told The National newspaper that he heard two explosions around lunchtime. "The first sound was small, and people started calling the fire and police," said the man, who was not identified. "Then soon, there was a big blast. It was a really big sound. The windows shook and in some offices, the windows shattered."

The authorities gave no indication

of foul play.

However, the UAE has been on heightened alert since a Yemen rebel drone and missile attack killed three oil workers in Abu Dhabi on January 17. Authorities have since thwarted three similar attacks, including one claimed by a little-known militant group believed to have ties with pro-Iran armed factions in Iraq.

The UAE is part of a Saudi-led military coalition that has been fighting in Yemen since 2015 to support the government against Iran-backed Huthi rebels, who control the capital Sanaa.



Fatima Ibrahim, who came from Kobane (Syria), poses with her children in Sanliurfa on May 17, 2022. (Photo: AFP)



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Tedros, from 'child of war' to two-term WHO chief

GENEVA (AFP) — Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who is all but guaranteed to secure a second term as WHO chief Tuesday, describes himself as a man of peace, shaped by a childhood in war.

The first African to head the World Health Organization and the sole candidate on the ballot for the next five-year term has become a familiar face as he spearheads the global response to the coronavirus pandemic. But while COVID and other pandemic threats continue to feature prominently in his speeches, Tedros has in the run-up to Tuesday's election increasingly focused on the heavy toll war and conflict like the ones raging in Ukraine are taking on global health.

"More than ever pandemics and war shakes and shatters the foundations on which previously stable societies stood," the 57-year-old former Ethiopian minister of health and foreign affairs said on the first day of WHO's main annual assembly Sunday. "And it leaves psychological scars that can take years or decades to heal," he said, stressing that he had experienced this firsthand.

"I am a child of war," he said, the emotion palpable in his voice.

'Pain and loss'

"The sound of gunfire and shells whistling through the air; the smell of smoke after they struck; tracer bullets in the night sky... These things have stayed with me throughout my life, because I was in the middle of war when I was very young."

Years later in 1998, when war returned to Ethiopia, "I felt the same fear as a parent myself... and my children had to hide in a bunker to shelter from the bombardment." And, he said, "I feel the same pain and loss again now," with the conflict that has been raging in his home region of Tigray since late 2020.

"Not only a child of war, but following me throughout," said Tedros. One thing was clear, he said: "where war goes, hunger and disease follow shortly behind."



WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus left shares hand sanitizer with President of Kenya Uhuru Kenyatta right during the opening of the 75th World Health Assembly of the WHO in Geneva on May 22, 2022. (Photo: AFP)

The global community cannot properly address the mountain of health emergencies and challenges we face, including the COVID-19 crisis and emerging pandemic threats, "in a divided world". Peace "is a prerequisite for health". That is a message he is eager to push as he prepares to take on a second term.

There will be a secret-ballot vote at the World Health Assembly on Tuesday, but with no other candidates running, Tedros's win is basically a foregone conclusion.

Turbulent

His first term in office was turbulent, as he grappled not only with the global response to the pandemic but also a long line of other crises, including a sexual abuse scandal involving WHO staff in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

While Tedros has faced his share of criticism, he has received broad backing.

African nations especially have been pleased at the attention paid to the continent and at his relentless campaign for poorer nations to receive a fair share of COVID vaccines. Since President Joe Biden's arrival in the White House, Tedros has also enjoyed support in Washington.

That marked a major about-face from the start of the pandemic, when Biden's predecessor Donald Trump began pulling the United States out of the WHO, accusing it of being Beijing's puppet and helping cover up the initial outbreak.

Ironically, the main source of opposition has come from Tedros's own country. Angered by his comments about the dire humanitarian

situation in Tigray, Ethiopia's government accused him of having "abused his office" to advance propaganda.

But those arguments appear to have little traction, and Tedros should have no difficulty securing in at least two thirds of the votes as needed Tuesday. There will be no shortage of challenges in his second term, with the COVID-19 pandemic still raging and demands for dramatic reforms of the entire global health system to help avert similar threats going forward. And new health menaces already loom, including hepatitis of mysterious origin that has made children in many countries ill, and swelling numbers of monkeypox cases far from Central and West Africa where the disease is normally concentrated.

Xinjiang leak sheds new light on China's 're-education' camps

BEIJING (AFP) — A leak of thousands of photos and official documents from Xinjiang has shed new light on the violent methods used to enforce mass internment in the region, researchers said Tuesday. The files, obtained by academic Adrian Zenz, were published as UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet begins a long-awaited and controversial trip to Xinjiang.

Activists say Chinese authorities have detained more than one million Uyghurs and other mostly Muslim minorities in a network of detention centers and prisons in the region, which Beijing has defended as "training centers".

But the trove of police photographs and internal documents — sent to Zenz by an anonymous source who hacked into official databases in Xinjiang — add to evidence that the mass internments were far from voluntary, with leaked documents showing top leaders in Beijing including President Xi Jinping calling for a forceful crackdown.

The files include a 2017 internal speech by Chen Quanguo, a former Communist Party secretary in Xinjiang, in which he allegedly orders guards to shoot to kill anyone who tries to escape and calls for officials in the region to "exercise firm control over religious believers".

A 2018 internal speech by public security minister Zhao Kezhi mentions direct orders from Xi to increase the capacity of detention facilities. After initially denying their existence, Beijing has claimed the facilities are vocational training schools, attended voluntarily and aimed at stamping out religious extremism.

But the leaked documents give an insight into how leaders saw the minority population as a security threat, with Zhao warning that more than two million people in southern Xinjiang alone had been "severely influenced by the infiltration of extremist religious thought".

Mugshots

More than 2,800 police photos of Xinjiang detainees included minors such as 17-year-old Zeytunigul Ablehet, detained for listening to an illegal speech, and 16-year-old Bilal Qasim, apparently sentenced for being related to other detainees. The details echo a separate police list leaked earlier to AFP which showed the government crackdown snaring hundreds of people at a time from villages, often many from the same household.

"The sort of paranoid threat perception comes out in these files, and the internal justification for why one has to move against an entire population," said Zenz in video comments published alongside the leaked files. Zenz works for the US-based non-profit organization the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation.

The files, parts of which have been verified by multiple news organizations including the BBC and Le Monde, also provide a window into life in detention facilities. Photos appear to show officers restraining hooded and shackled inmates with batons, while other guards wearing camouflage stand by with firearms.

UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss on Tuesday called the details of the newly leaked documents "shocking" and urged China to grant Bachelet "full and unfettered access to the region so that she can conduct a thorough assessment of the facts on the ground".

But China's foreign ministry dismissed the leaked documents as "cobbled-together material" by "anti-China forces smearing Xinjiang", with spokesman Wang Wenbin accusing media of "spreading lies and rumors".



'Hulk' star Ruffalo joins call for global wealth tax

DAVOS, Switzerland (AFP) — US actor Mark Ruffalo on Tuesday joined a call by over 150 wealthy people for governments to tax them more, as global elites and policy-makers met at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Swiss resort Davos.

The face of Hulk in a decade of Marvel movies was one of dozens of new millionaires to put their names to an open letter titled "In Tax We Trust", which was first delivered to attendees at a virtual WEF conference in January.

"While the world has gone through an immense amount of suffering in the last two years, we have actually seen our wealth rise during the pandemic — yet few if any of us can honestly say that we pay our fair share in taxes," the letter read.

The Patriotic Millionaires group said it had boosted the number of signatories to over 150 by May, from 100 in January.

Its chairman Morris Pearl, a former managing director at mammoth asset manager BlackRock, vowed in a statement to "continue to pressure global leaders to heed our call: tax the rich before it's too late".

But Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) secretary-general Mathias Cormann said that wealth taxes could be less effective than other

revenue-raising options. "They don't necessarily raise that much revenue," he told a panel discussion at Davos. "In terms of the politics of it, it's attractive, but in terms of the substance of what it achieves it's not that attractive."

Cormann did suggest that "property taxes are probably the most efficient, least distorting" form of wealth tax. "There's huge scope in wealth taxation... it's been tried, and in some countries, it works," Oxfam executive director Gabriela Bucher responded. "These amounts being accumulated. You could not spend them in several lifetimes."

Cormann and the OECD are betting on a deal struck by over 130 countries last year to tax multinational companies at a minimum of 15 percent to boost revenue for hard-up governments. Asked if Washington might walk back its commitment should Republicans win control of Congress at November mid-term elections, Cormann said that "it's in the rational self-interest of the US to be part of this deal".

For companies, it's "much better for them to be operating in a globally consistent framework" rather than navigate conflicting tax regimes, he added. "I can't imagine that any country or any side of politics in any country would make a judgement that would put themselves at that sort of disadvantage."



Relatives of people killed or injured during a police raid on May 24, 2022, in Rio favela which left 11 people dead on Tuesday. This was the deadliest police raid in a year in Rio. (Photo: AFP)

Pakistani opposition party says 'hundred arrested' ahead of protest march

ISLAMABAD, (AFP) — Pakistani police detained hundreds of supporters of ousted prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party ahead of a major sit-in planned by the former leader, senior party members and police sources said Tuesday.

Khan, a cricket star turned populist politician, was kicked out of power last month through a vote of no-confidence but has heaped pressure on the country's fragile new coalition government by staging mass rallies across the country since then.

"More than 200 supporters of PTI have been arrested in Punjab," a police official in Lahore, the capital of Pakistan's largest province, told AFP on condition of anonymity. "We have raided their houses and have arrested many of them."

A second official, asking not to be named, provided the same information, adding that those arrested had been booked on public order offenses and remain in detention.

Khan has alleged that he was removed through a "foreign conspiracy" and plans on Wednesday to lead an anti-government march from his power base in the northwestern city of Peshawar to the capital Islamabad, with tens of thousands expected to attend. The former prime minister said he would stage a sit-in until the government dissolves parliament and sets a date for fresh elections.

Fawad Chaudhry, the former information minister in Khan's government, accused police of carrying out the overnight raids without warrants and put the number of arrested at more than 400. "More than 1,100 houses were raided overnight. Police entered the houses without any warrants and insulted women and children," he tweeted.

Police have not officially commented on the arrests or allega-



A supporter of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, waves flags beside containers stacked by the authorities to block the Red Zone ahead of a planned sit-in in support of ousted prime minister Imran Khan. (Photo: AFP)

tions. On Tuesday, Khan tweeted that his supporters had a right to peacefully protest. "The brutal crackdown on PTI leaders and workers in Punjab and Islamabad has once again shown us what we are familiar with — the fascist nature of PMLN when in power," he said in a tweet, referring to the party of current Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

On Saturday, senior PTI leader and former minister Shireen Mazari was arrested near her house in the capital over a decades-old land dispute. She was briefly detained before a court-ordered her release.

In 2018, Khan was voted in by an electorate weary of the dynastic politics of the country's two major parties, with the popular former sports star promising to sweep

away decades of entrenched corruption and cronyism. He was brought down in part by his failure to rectify the country's dire economic situation, including its crippling debt, shrinking foreign currency reserves and soaring inflation.

Sharif is now grappling with the same crisis, as well as rising militancy and soured relations with the West.

Ten dead in attack on bars, hotel in central Mexico

CELAYA, Mexico (AFP) — Gunmen killed 10 people in an attack on a hotel and two bars in the city of Celaya in central Mexico, security officials said Tuesday.

The attack late Monday claimed the lives of seven women and three men and left two people injured, according to the security secretary in Celaya, in the central Guana-

juato state. Officials found the dead bodies upon arrival in the neighborhood of Valle Hermoso after reports of gunfire, the unit said in a statement.

Witnesses said the victims were shot, after which the attackers poured gasoline to set the establishments on fire. They said the bodies were scattered among plas-

tic tables and chairs, and one was lying on the sidewalk. A known criminal group of the region left behind calling cards claiming the massacre.

Guanajuato, a thriving industrial region that hosts a refinery and a major pipeline, has become one of Mexico's most violent states due to a dispute between the Santa Rosa

de Lima and Jalisco New Generation cartels.

The gangs fight for control of trafficking routes for drugs and stolen fuel. Since December 2006, when the government launched a controversial military anti-drug operation, Mexico has recorded more than 340,000 murders, according to official figures.

On Russia's role in south Syria and the end of Amman-Damascus détente



OSAMA AL SHARIF

For Jordan, a country that has emerged relatively unscathed from the ashes of the Arab Spring, the raging civil war in neighboring Syria has been a source of anxiety and a key security concern. For decades, relations between the two countries were marked by mutual suspicions, ideological differences, and opposite regional and global alliances and agendas.

President Bashar Al-Assad's early attempt to liberalize his country and depart from the authoritarian legacy of his father was short lived. His Majesty King Abdullah and Assad made some headway in trying to build a personal rapport, but that too was derailed by domestic and regional events.

The eruption of the Syrian uprising in 2011, that was followed by civil war, put ties between the two countries on hold. Jordan's position fluctuated on the Syrian crisis, with King Abdullah at one stage calling on Assad to step down. The Syrians accused Jordan of backing, training, and arming rebel groups.

But as more foreign countries and non-state actors stepped in to take sides in the brutal civil war, Jordan re-evaluated its position. As Daesh emerged in Syria and Iraq, threatening to destabilize the entire region, and as Iran and its proxies dug deep in Syria to defend the regime, while Turkish troops created enclaves inside Syrian territory, King Abdullah's approach to the crisis shifted.

Embroidered in the war against Daesh, a war that was coming close to home, the King was the first leader to welcome Russia's military intervention in Syria in 2015 to rescue the besieged Assad regime.

With Russian forces firmly entrenched in most parts of Syria, King Abdullah and Russian President Vladimir Putin reached an understanding whereby the Kremlin would keep pro-Iran militias, including Hezbollah and other extremists as far away as possible from Jordan's borders with Syria. With US troops now in Al-Tanf base and in eastern Syria, the King had to navigate through tough geopolitical hurdles to maintain his understanding with Putin while making sure that his American allies appreciated the delicacy of Jordan's position.

Jordan embraced Putin's attempt to find a political common ground for the regime and the Syrian opposition through the Astana and Sochi processes, while backing the UN-sponsored Geneva talks.

Even after Syrian government troops finally succeeded in retaking Daraa and control most of the 360-kilometer border with Jordan, Amman hoped that Damascus would honor its understandings with Moscow. That arrangement had worked for some time.

More than 11 years after the eruption of the Syrian crisis, when he travelled to Washington, in July 2021, the King carried with him a road map for a resolution to the crisis that centered on rehabilitating the regime rather than replacing it. To prove his point, the King gave the go-ahead to a gradual process of normalization between Amman and Damascus last year.

That process saw the reopening of borders, the exchange of official visits and the resumption of joint ministerial meetings, and culminated, with King Abdullah receiving a call from Assad last October for the first time since 2011. Jordan and Egypt got the green light from the US to supply energy-starved Lebanon with gas and electricity through Syrian territory.

But the Amman-Damascus spring was cut short. Assad was reluctant or unable to meet King Abdullah half way. The Syrian president had to coordinate his moves with Tehran and Moscow first. The effort to rehabilitate the regime was also interrupted by the Russian invasion of Ukraine last February.

Meanwhile, to Jordan's frustration, Syrian smugglers ratcheted up their activities across the Jordanian border, with a marked increase in attempts late last year. In January, the Jordanian Army intercepted and repulsed a huge operation that resulted in the killing of 27 smugglers and the confiscation of a huge cache of hashish and Captagon pills. In one of the operations, a Jordanian officer was killed and three border guards were wounded.

The complicity of Syrian army elements in facilitating what Jordan described as an organized operation was clear, and Amman did not hesitate to blame the regime and pro-Iran militias. These operations are believed to have become a source of much-needed cash by the regime.

While Jordan remains a transit country for these drugs, the destination being Gulf markets, there are disturbing signs that more drugs are now finding their way on Jordanian streets. The situation had become so dire that the army ordered a change in the rules of engagement in February, giving officers a free hand in dealing with infiltrators.

This is why King Abdullah warned last week, in an interview with Stanford University's Hoover Institution, that while the presence of Russia in southern Syria was a source of calm, any "vacuum will be filled by the Iranians and their proxies" and that "unfortunately, we are looking at maybe an escalation of problems on our borders".

Much more than a warning about a vacuum if Russia leaves Syria, a move that may be elicited by the redeployment of troops to the Ukraine fronts and would almost certainly enable Iran and its proxies to fill it, the message is also for Assad who has become hostage to his Iranian benefactors and is unable to stop what Amman now sees as blatant aggression along its borders. Assad's poor choice puts the normalization effort - an effort that would have benefitted Damascus the most - in jeopardy.

The writer is a journalist and political commentator based in Amman.

GLF is a breath of fresh air for Jordanian and regional farmers



RUBA SAQR

Jordan is the first country in the Middle East and North Africa to host the Global Land Forum (GLF); that is a big deal, both in developmental and political terms. The multi-layered message and vision of this international event holds great significance for the Kingdom and, in the future, for Palestine - as it places farmers, rural women, and indigenous farming communities and people at the heart of domestic agricultural policies.

Mike Taylor, director of the International Land Coalition (ILC), a global alliance of over 300 civil society and intergovernmental organizations in different parts of the world, described the event as "an opportunity for Jordan to show the world how it is building an inclusive and 'people-centered' land governance system".

The quote could be seen as gently nudging Jordanian decision makers toward empowering small farmers, who are the real backbone of the country's food security, as well as adopting socially equitable and inclusive policies that empower youth and women.

The truth of the matter is that the government seems to be more interested in large-scale industrial agriculture than in small farmers. Last week, Investment Minister Khairy Amr met with a private-sector delegation from a foreign country and discussed agriculture, among other "competitive sectors", as a potential area for investment, a first for Jordan.

That is why having an event of this scale (900 participants) and nature in Jordan is a pivotal moment for the country. It may encourage our decision makers to go back to the drawing board and reorient our agricultural priorities and policies in a way that puts humans first.

Notably, the ninth edition of GLF, held under the title "Toward solutions to climate change crises", is organized by the EU, the Ministry of Agriculture of Jordan, and SEEDS, a local NGO that focuses on youth development, women empowerment, and the promotion of environmental protection and awareness.

The annual event is the brainchild of the ILC, whose offices are hosted at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), also one of

GLF's strategic partners, and an organization that puts "small-scale farmers at the forefront of food systems transformation".

Two global events; two opposing visions

Two international conferences opened on the same day, on May 23. Their agendas are conflicting, to say the least. One is pro-grassroots communities in the farming sector, while the other is about keeping corporate-centric globalization attitudes intact.

The land forum (on the shores of the Dead Sea) gives emphasis to people-centered food security approaches, strong small-scale farming systems, locally managed ecosystems, and effective actions against land grabbing.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the World Economic Forum (WEF) - held in Davos, Switzerland - prioritizes large-scale industrial farming that protects the corporate interest of agricultural multinationals and Big Tech companies, rather than the local communities.

WEF's sessions could be described as a desperate attempt to breathe life into globalization, but without any meaningful critique of its role in diminishing generations of agricultural communities all over the world, while aggrandizing long supply chains that are a main cause of climate change.

On Monday, WEF highlighted an article on its front-page, titled "Why artificial intelligence is vital in the race to meet the SDGs". The article says that agri-tech can "direct machinery to carry out tasks autonomously", which removes the human hand from the agricultural equation. In typical lobbying fashion, the article also attempts to spin pro-Big Tech attitudes as being good for farmers.

The difference between the two events is that GLF is powered by grassroots civil society organizations that care about people, while WEF is a meeting point for like-minded corporate leaders who are after their narrow interests and steep annual profit margins.

Globalization and the erosion of local agricultural communities

Jordan has suffered for too long from what many like to coin as the country's chronic "lack of planning" in the water and agricultural sectors, which

has resulted in the encroachment of urbanization on large swathes of arable lands, among other adverse effects.

Luckily, GLF is here to offer the Kingdom an alternative point of view to the often capitalist, industrialist and artificial intelligence-obsessed approaches - often proposed by international bodies that rarely put humans or local communities at the forefront of their policies.

Our decision makers are known to adopt such policies with a blindfold over their eyes, resulting in the deeply unfortunate deterioration of Jordan's once bustling agricultural sector. In the 1960s, Jordan was known to export its "surplus" of wheat production to the United Arab Republic (of Syria and Egypt); that is how grave the decline is.

In India, the deterioration is even steeper. An anti-globalization movement called the International Rivers Network (IRN) has stormed the plenary sessions of the World Bank at the World Water Forum two decades ago to protest the bank's deliberate policies of building large-scale dams in historically agricultural communities, as if in a deliberate move to disregard the livelihoods of the local communities living there.

The result was the erosion of generations of farmers, who inherited a burgeoning agricultural tradition from their ancestors, and turning them into beggars on the streets of New Delhi. The slums that plague the Indian capital are in fact populated by the daughters and sons of small farmers who were forced off their lands to fulfill the World Bank's aggressive "developmental" policies.

All what the IRN wanted was for the bank to look for other locations to build those dams, and in a way that honored the people living on those lands, while protecting their agricultural heritage and livelihoods.

Land rights, or what experts call "land tenure", is a central theme in the ninth edition of GLF.

Israel is not part of the global network of land-rights defenders

Researching the event, it was interesting to see that Jordan has five members in the ILC, while Palestine has four. Israel, on the other hand, has zero members in the coalition.

The fact that the ILC is concerned with the "land rights" of "indigenous people" is probably a thorny political issue for the occupying regime, which may explain the absence of members from Israel.

If attitudes adopted by the ILC become mainstream globally, this will eventually bring justice to the Palestinians, whose land, water, and agricultural rights are being violently attacked and robbed by their occupiers on daily basis.

Coalitions like the ILC are giving voice to grassroots communities and civil society organizations in a way that counters global trends that put corporates before people. What we are seeing here today is the unravelling of social and political injustice at grassroots level.

That is why hosting this event in Jordan is a breath of fresh air for small-scale local farmers, and may be signaling renewed hope that Jordan is probably on a path toward honoring our rural communities as the true guardians of food security.

Ruba Saqr has reported on the environment, worked in the public sector as a communications officer, and served as managing editor of a business magazine, spokesperson for a humanitarian INGO, and as head of a PR agency.



(Photo: Ameer Khaifeh)

To stem Iraq's drug trade, rein in the militias that enable it

HAI D HAI D

Last month, nearly 16 million Captagon pills, an amphetamine-type stimulant that is quickly becoming one of the Middle East's most ubiquitous narcotics, were seized by Iraqi security forces in three separate raids. It was a massive haul of illicit drugs.

Yet, it was also a fraction of the region's illegal trade, a criminal enterprise that Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), state-sponsored militias, is facilitating by protecting those involved.

The majority of Iraq's Captagon comes from neighboring Syria, which is the main producer of the pills in the Levant. To combat the surge in Captagon trafficking into the country, Iraqi authorities have scaled up enforcement, a welcome change after years of turning a blind eye. However, these efforts will almost certainly fail if the PMU involvement in the drug industry continues unabated.

For now, the Captagon crisis is getting worse. During April alone, Iraqi security forces reported record levels of drug seizures. On April 5, police in Anbar intercepted a smuggler who illegally crossed the border from Syria with 1.8 million pills. A few weeks later, Iraqi forces found 8 million pills hidden in a truck heading to Baghdad from Syria. And on April 30, Iraqi security forces broke up a drug trafficking ring and seized 6.2 million pills of Captagon set for distribution in the country.

Iraq, like Lebanon and Jordan, has long been used as a transiting corridor for Captagon from Syria to Saudi Arabia. The country's importance for Syria's illicit business - valued at more than \$5.7 billion - has grown significantly over the past year due to the increased difficulty in shipping drugs

through Lebanon. Saudi Arabia's ban in April 2021 on imports of fruits and vegetables from Lebanon pushed smuggling networks to increase their reliance on Jordan and Iraq.

The surge in regional smuggling operations is evident in the number of narcotics confiscated by the authorities. In the first four months of 2022, the Jordanian army intercepted 17 million pills of Captagon, compared to 15.5 million pills seized in all of 2021 and 1.4 million in 2020. The surge in illegal activity, along with the killing of a Jordanian soldier, prompted Jordan to increase its anti-drug measures along its border with Syria and to employ a shoot-to-kill policy, which has increased the risks smugglers face.

Iraq, as a result, is attracting more smuggling traffic, a surge it is not prepared to handle. The country lacks trained counter-narcotics forces and modern equipment for its border crossings and airports. In addition, the PMU, which have a strong presence on both sides of the Syria-Iraq border, are directly involved in facilitating drug smuggling to Iraq. Besides having a strong grip over Al Qaim official border crossing, the PMU run dozens of unofficial makeshift corridors between the two countries - including crossings at Al Sikak, Akashat, Hwaijeh, and Al Sanjak.

Moreover, as I have seen during fieldwork for my research, many groups are involved in enabling drug operations between Syria and Iraq, including Harakat Al Abdal, Liwa Al Tafuf, and Asaib Ahl Alhaq (also known as the Khazali Network). However, Kataib Hezbollah reportedly has the most influence over this illicit trafficking business.

I also found that most drug trafficking is done in

coordination with smugglers, which gives the armed factions plausible deniability if these shipments are intercepted by the authorities. After securing transportation for the narcotics inside Syria, smugglers move the illicit substances to Iraqi trucks in coordination with the respective armed groups. In exchange for safe passage, the Iraqi factions charge fees based on the size of the shipment.

PMU have even used their political connections to arrange for the release of drug traffickers and dealers who have been arrested. While most of these instances go unnoticed by the media, a case did recently make headlines. Jawad Louay Al Yasseri, whose father was then governor of the central province of Najaf, was convicted of drug trafficking in 2018 when 5.6 kilograms of cannabis and 7000 narcotic pills were found in his possession during the arrest. Despite being sentenced to life in prison, Yasseri and two fellow defendants in the case were quietly granted a presidential pardon and released in January.

Given such nepotism and corruption, it is clear that Iraq's narcotics problem will not be solved without addressing the PMU's role in drug trafficking. Failing to rein in these profiteers will render all other anti-drug measures in Iraq ineffective, enable Syria's Captagon industry to grow exponentially, and pose an increasing health and security risk to Iraq, the region, and beyond.

The writer is a Syrian columnist and a consulting associate fellow of Chatham House's Middle East and North Africa program. ©Syndication Bureau, www.syndicationbureau.com



3rd AIFF edition expands while RFC has distinctive presence at Cannes

By Israa Radadyeh

The Amman International Film Festival-Awal Film (AIFF) will take place in an expanded format in its upcoming third edition, which is scheduled to take place between July 20 and 27, 2022.

In its previous edition, AIFF screened 51 films from 26 countries, and hosted 40 directors, along with international experts, mentors, and trainers.

The expanded format is testimony to the success of AIFF's past editions. The festival supports new players in filmmaking and offers fresh content.

AIFF's president, HRH Princess Rym Ali, said in a statement published on the festival's website: "We are proud of the success of the AIFF so far: it has proved, amongst other things, that Jordan has earned its place as a cultural meeting point for filmmakers and film buffs, where creative talents can thrive."

There are four competitive categories for first-time directors, actors, screenwriters, and editors to earn distinctive awards – each complemented by the Black Iris trophy and a monetary prize. To be eligible, films must be released in 2021 or 2022 and be Jordanian premières.

Amman Film Industry Days – the professional arm of the festival

– will take place alongside the screenings. AFID hosts masterclasses, workshops and three pitching platforms: two for projects in development and one for films in post-production. Projects are selected by juries consisting of Arab and international film professionals to receive in-kind and cash awards.

Festival director Nada Doumani told Jordan News: "AIFF will have another selection of high-quality Arab and international movies competing for the Iris Awards. In parallel, the festival will run the Amman Film Industry Days (AFID). The competitive sections include Arab feature-length narratives, Arab feature-length documentaries, and Arab shorts international movies by first-time directors. This year, we have received many very good submissions, and hence we expect the screening program to be outstanding and to appeal to a large audience."

"The new activities and features this year will contribute to elevating the standard of the festival, which has quickly become renowned in the region and beyond, mainly for its professionalism and focus on first-time achievements."

Supporting filmmakers

The Amman Film Market is a new tool coming to AIFF. It will represent a space to connect filmmakers with a large wave of incoming funders, partners, and distributors, said Doumani.



There also will be a third pitching platform targeting only Jordanian filmmakers who are developing their first feature-length documentary or narrative project.

A sustainable and environmentally friendly film festival

Being conscious of the environmental impact that accompanies any large-scale event, AIFF adopted a "green approach" in its second edition.

AIFF removed its diesel generators which were a main power source at drive-in cinemas to offset its carbon footprint. It encouraged the use of electric vehicles, instead. Waste and print material are being recycled and replaced with environmentally friendly packaging. It also coordinated the planting of 674 trees around Jordan.

To highlight the importance of sustainability, AIFF hosted a panel called "Greening the Screen", which was led by specialists in the field of social and environmental impact.

Doumani assured the continuation of their "green approach". Steps are planned to not only reduce their emissions, but also have a positive impact on the environment by partnering with local environmental initiatives.

Jordanian presence at Cannes

For a 12th year, the Jordanian Pavilion attended the Cannes Film Festival with the purpose of promoting Jordan's various film locations.

"Since the COVID-19 pandemic forced the world to lockdown, the festival stopped its activities. But now with this strong comeback, the world is eager to find new locations to produce films," Mohanad Al-Bakri, the managing director of The Royal Film Commission (RFC), told Jordan News while in Cannes.

"We have received many visitors and applications from all around the world including producers and filmmakers who stopped at the Jordanian Pavilion in Cannes. We owe this to the success that Jordan achieved during the lockdown when they hosted various filming crews," Bakri added.

Two films screened in Cannes



this year shot most of their scenes in cooperation with Jordanian crews during the lockdown.

One of the films, "Holy Spider," by the Iranian-Danish director Ali Abbasi, consisted of a 90 percent Jordanian crew, Bakri said.

The film follows a journalist's investigation of a serial killer who targeted sex workers, as a result of his religious quest to "cleanse" Mashhad, a city in Iran, of sinners. Though the story takes place in Iran, the film was shot in Jordan, where Abbasi believed societal truths could be reflected.

The second film, "Rebel," directed by Adil El-Arbi and Bilall Fallah, was screened in the Midnight Section at Cannes. Around 80 percent of the movie was shot in Jordan

and the rest in Belgium.

This film's associate producer, Rula Nasser, is Jordanian and utilized financial incentives from both countries.

"International film festivals such as Cannes and Berlin provide us with ample space to offer Jordanian expertise and competencies that compete with neighboring Arab countries in the field," Bakri added.

"What changed this year is the elevation of Jordan's reputation. We received major global attention. Participants and visitors of the festival know the location of the Jordanian Pavilion."

"There is great interaction between producers and directors looking for new filming destinations."



(Photos: Handouts from the Royal Film Commission)

STYLE

'Clean Girl Aesthetic': Recreating TikTok's viral trend in Amman

By Freya Insoll

While the internet is always abuzz with new trends to try, one look that has gained particular traction in recent months is the "Clean Girl Aesthetic". For those of us who use TikTok, the phrase is probably not unfamiliar; the minimalist and sleek style has made its way to the forefront of fashion-tok, with every It Girl trying her hand at a slicked-back bun and bushy brow.

While fashion journalists have labeled the aesthetic a repackaged form of minimalism, the Clean Girl look also draws influence from the off-duty model style, with a twist of tom-boyishness thrown in. Dewy skin, shiny hair, and paired-back outfits form the heart of the look, giving the wearer an effortlessly healthy glow that suggests she has well and truly got her life together.

If you have been looking for a new style to try out and tend to gravitate towards minimalism, then the Clean Girl look may be for you. With only a few simple steps and a few basic products, you will soon be walking the streets as Amman's answer to Bella Hadid.

When looking to adopt this style, it's essential to get your basics right, so good skincare is a must. To nail the no-makeup makeup element of the look, it's important to give your skin the love and attention it needs to thrive and glow without a heavy foundation base.

If you are a skincare newbie, I recommend starting with a hydrating facial spray, a hyaluronic acid serum, a simple moisturizer, and a dedicated facial SPF.

Moisture and hydration are key to plumping and freshening up your complexion, and SPF 50 is a must to keep your skin healthy and protected from the sun, preventing premature aging and sun-induced damage.

When looking to grow or refresh your skincare routine, I also recommend heading to one of the many pharmacies situated throughout Amman.

Pharmacies tend to provide a range of



While fashion journalists have labeled the aesthetic as a repackaged form of minimalism, the Clean Girl look also draws influence from the off-duty model style, with a twist of tom-boyishness thrown in. (Photo: Envato Elements)

skincare brands – ranging from the well-known giants such as L'Oréal and Garnier, to less well-known specialist brands such as La Roche Posay and Embryolisse.

If you are willing to spend within the mid-range bracket, then La Roche Posay provides exceptional skincare for a great price – if you are averse to a multi-step regime, then their Anthelios sunscreen products frequently incorporate skincare saviors such as Niacinamide and Vitamin C, which allows you to cut down the products you use daily.

It can also be beneficial to consult a dermatologist if you are unsure about what products best suit your skin.

Once you have nailed the skincare side of things, you can move on to experimenting with makeup. While the no-makeup makeup look is always more complicated than it would first appear, it's still fairly easy to give yourself the dewy look of a supermodel with a few simple items.

The crux of the look is a glowy base, flushed cheeks, groomed brows, and a glossy lip, so it's essential to add some

shine-inducing products to your repertoire.

I would recommend starting with a dewy primer – my favorite luxury option is the Hollywood Flawless Filter from Charlotte Tilbury; this acts as a primer-foundation hybrid that gives you an unbeatable glow.

Next up is concealer. Clean Girl enthusiasts tend to skip the foundation stage and go straight in with a lightweight concealer, placing it around the eyes, brows, nose, and cupid's bow to give a lifted look.

There are a wealth of concealers on the

market, so I would recommend sticking with your favorite and experimenting with the amount you need to create a skin-like finish.

Groomed brows, glossy lips, and a slick of mascara are equally essential to the look. For brows, using a basic eyebrow pencil can help accentuate your natural brow shape (the L'Oréal Skinny Brow Pencil is a great option), follow this with an upwards brush through with some bar soap.

For lips, a hydrating lip oil will give you an all-day shine while simultaneously providing moisturizing benefits – a current trending product is the Dior lip oil. However, this can be switched out for a more budget option of your choice.

Any mascara will do – just make sure not to go too heavy on the lashes.

The clean girl aesthetic does not solely revolve around your skincare and makeup; it also requires some considered clothing choices. As trends go, this one is well suited to Amman, as it largely consists of oversized minimalist pieces that lend well to a modest look.

The Clean Girl will often be seen sporting an oversized shirt and neutral bottoms, complimented with dainty gold jewelry and Matrix-esque sunglasses.

To expand your shirt collection, either head to the mall or a second-hand clothes shop. At the mall, shops such as Zara and Stradivarius currently carry a range of shirts in varying colors, textiles, and shapes.

If you want a more traditional oversized men's shirt, then head to the second-hand shops on Buhturi Street or Friday Market for some great budget options. You can also pick up tomboyish jeans or smart trousers from the mall or when thrifting. Feel free to customize the look to your tastes.

If you feel you may want to give the Clean Girl Aesthetic a go, then begin by reworking your closet or pick up some basics at the aforementioned shops. If your go-to looks tend to be more on the maximalist end of the spectrum, then the Clean Girl aesthetic may not be for you. However, if you like to play around with simple, glowy, understated looks, then this trend will be one to try.

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FITNESS

The importance of nurturing athletic talent

By Saeed M. Al-Karmi

“There is some sort of connection between the kid and the sport,” “they are really good and love the sport,” or “this kid is really talented!” are all phrases that have been said frequently about many young athletes. But what is talent? Who can identify talent? And at what age can we determine if a child is talented?

Baker et al. identified talent as an innate characteristic and something that exists and can be identified early in an athlete’s career. If identified, this talent can predict later success and expertise.

This definition implies that talent cannot be “forced,” nor can someone be trained or learn how to be talented. If it can be identified early and developed, it can predict future success – it is considered a talent.

Talent is not considered sport-specific because abilities developed at a young age can reflect the child’s motor skills. It is widely accepted that children should be exposed to multiple sports throughout their childhood to develop lifelong athletic activities, avoid athlete burnout, and maximize athletic potential.

Additionally, children should work on developing their motor skills and physical literacy. The Canadian Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model states that before the age of 12 for boys and 11 for girls, there is no need for sport-specific skills and fitness (except for a few early specialization sports such as figure skating).

With that in mind, coaches specializing in talent identification have extensive knowledge and expertise in the “superior” level of agility, balance, coordination, flexibility, and cognitive and mental benchmarks.



Unfortunately, talent alone is not enough; with talent identification comes talent development.

Bill Beswick, a leading sports psychologist, explains that there are three types of players. Player A is technically and physically superior as a player but weak mentally. Player B is mentally superior but is weak technically and physically. Player C is superior technically, physically, and mentally.

Beswick contended that players similar to Player C should be trained differently, confirming that talent identification is not the final step but the first step before targeting the right development plan.

Another factor that is examined concerning talent identification is relative age. A group of researchers highlighted the difficulty of accurately predicting future performance abilities, coupled with the complexities of the athlete development process.

This can result in biases during the recruitment process into talent development pathways (Baker et al., 2018; Till and Baker, 2020). One such selection bias that has been consistently highlighted in the literature is relative age effects (RAEs; Barnsley et al., 1985; Smith et al., 2018).

Relative age effects illustrate that when athletes are banded according to (b)annual-age groups, those who are born near the beginning of the selection year (i.e., September 1 in the UK) are often overrepresented compared with those who are born toward the end (i.e., August 31; Coble et al., 2009). Possible explanations that have been offered for this effect include enhanced physiological and cognitive maturity of relatively older athletes, which allows them to outperform their younger age-matched peers (Doncaster et al., 2020).

An important milestone for athletes is their Peak Height Velocity and puberty. Literature suggests that PHV can occur during different stages of puberty, and therefore, PHV and puberty are considered different milestones.



(Photos: Envato Elements)

The Canadian LTAD suggests that strength, endurance, and sport-specific training should occur at the age of 12 for boys and 11 for girls, showing that young athletes should begin sport-specific training and fitness at puberty.

The LTAD also suggested that the optimal age to develop skills is 9-12 for boys and 8-11 for girls. This is also supported by a study published by K. Janacek, J. Fiser, and D. Nemeth titled “The Best Time to Acquire New Skills: Age-related Differences

in Implicit Sequence Learning across Human Life Span”.

The study investigated implicit skill learning in subjects between 4-85 years of age. This learning underlies motor, cognitive, and social skills across the life span. Subjects were presented with an implicit probabilistic sequence learning task measured by raw reaction time (RT). The study found that the difference in implicitly learning high versus low probability events exhibited a rapid decrease around the age of 12. Athletes can rapidly develop physical strength and endurance during puberty while having a lower learning curve for skills during the same period. This also reflects that young athletes considered to be “late bloomers” actually have a bigger “window” to develop skills. Conversely, young athletes considered to be “early bloomers” within their community can have a physical advantage in terms of strength and endurance compared to their peers. Such differences can confuse people into thinking someone is talented physically while they are only early bloomers. With the right strength and endurance plan, others might consider someone to be a sport-specific or technically “gifted” player, while they might only be a late bloomer.

Ultimately, it is always best for everyone to give children the chance to play and enjoy sports. Before judging a player, their future, and their decisions, it is important to consider the biosocial perspective and understand the science behind sports, talent identification, and talent development.

Pilates: The benefits and where to practice

By Rifaat Al-Nasser

Growing up as a sickly child, German physical trainer Joseph Pilates was determined to find an exercise to recover and build his frail body. Having studied yoga, martial arts, Zen meditation, and Greek and Roman exercises, he created a blended practice known as Pilates.

This practice is a low-impact resistance training that became popular once introduced in the US in 1923. Since then, it has been used for rehabilitation and holistic exercise. Pilates has experienced a boom in popularity in the last decade. It aims to join body and mind to create more economic movements that mimic and expand upon our natural everyday motions.

What is Pilates?

The ultimate goal of Pilates is the union of body and mind in a way that allows for optimal and instinctual mechanical balance and strength. There are six central elements of Pilates: Centering, Concentration, Control, Breath, Precision, and Fluidity.

1. Centering
The body’s core is from the shoulders to the hips and serves as the main power source for most movements. Mastery of this principle will facilitate the practice of all other principles, allowing them to blend into each other seamlessly.

Centering begins with stabilizing the spine. For example, one technique known as abdominal hollowing draws the navel (belly button) to the spine. It protects the spine, providing a stronger support system by engaging the deep abdominal muscles.

As a result, this can improve posture, alleviate certain daily standing and sitting aches, and build strength systematically.

1. Concentration

One of the unique aspects of Pilates is the holistic approach to training. The mind is just as important to train. When performing exercises, there is an emphasis on ensuring smooth movements. The main technique used is movement visualization, which is simply imagining the motion before and during its conduction.

2. Control

Control is having full reign over your

own body, which can be achieved by combining the first two principles. When the exercise originates from the core and is done with mindfulness, the movements will be exactly how they are imagined with the appropriate strength.

3. Breath

Proper breathing techniques are considered to be fundamental in Pilates. A forced “belly” breathing method is the most commonly used technique. This form of deep breathing engages the core and enriches the body’s tissues with oxygen, thus improving circulation. Additionally, it will help improve mental function, which relates to concentration and movement ease, which relates to control.

4. Precision

The quality of movements is of greater importance than the quantity. With mindfulness of alignment and trajectory of each body part, the focus should be on achieving a precise and perfect movement.

5. Fluidity

Pilates exercises should be performed as a graceful flow of motions rather than static, isolated movements following each person’s breathing rhythm.

By practicing fluent transitions, the flow achieved will create more purposeful movements in everyday life. Mastery of this principle is what can set beginners and advanced practitioners apart.

Physical and mental benefits

There are many benefits to the physical body with Pilates’s holistic approach as it targets multiple muscles at once, evenly training the entire body.

By incorporating various positions and planes, such as sitting, lying, and standing, your muscles are worked from every angle. Over time, this will provide a deep and uniform tone that can sculpt your physique.

The more you engage your muscles, the more defined they become.

When paired with an appropriate healthy diet, you can change your

shape completely. As it uses natural motions and body weight, Pilates can produce a lengthened, sculpted, yet natural figure.

Additionally, everyday tasks such as carrying groceries, doing housework, and climbing stairs may become much easier.

Pilates has other unique advantages that can prove more beneficial than other forms of physical activity. Poor alignment is a major cause of everyday aches and pains and restricted movement.

When our skeleton is misaligned, our muscles are held at suboptimal lengths, causing stress on the muscles, ligaments, and joints. Pilates can help correct misalignment, which can alleviate the impact of gravity on your spine and joints, reduce the risk of strain, and improve posture in general.

Similarly, Pilates can also help improve flexibility. Having a full range of motion is the core for most forms of exercise, and keeping your movements unrestricted will free the ten-

sion in your muscles. This will further improve posture and help joints stay healthy. The more flexible a joint is, the more immunity it has to the wear and tear aging puts on it. This is especially important for people with arthritis and other joint conditions. Additionally, flexibility will improve circulation, leading to better skin and hair health and more energy.

Endurance, which preliminarily comes from mental strength and persistence, can be built using the principles of concentration. In conjunction with physical endurance, mental fortitude will also begin to increase. Like most exercises, Pilates can relieve stress by releasing “feel-good hormones” called endorphins. However, due to its unique cognitive training, Pilates also has additional advantages over other forms of exercise, such as weightlifting. It forces you to focus on each movement of your body at that moment rather than on the stresses of life.

A 2009 study comparing Pilates

to a form of martial arts known as Taiji Quan showed that the individuals who practiced Pilates had a significantly increased mood and self-efficacy. Both groups experienced an equal improvement in sleep quality, strength, and balance.

Health benefits

Pilates change the lives of people suffering from various ailments tremendously. As a result, it has often been incorporated into many physical therapy and rehabilitation regimens for those with a certain condition.

A common problem affecting many people is lower back pain which can result from long hours spent in a chair, the focal point of Pilates, centering, integrates stabilization and elongation of the spine into most exercises. A 2006 study concluded that Pilates can be more efficacious than normal care for individuals with chronic lower back pain. A 2009 study also supported this, adding that after just 15 sessions, patients showed an improved weight distribution while walking and reduced pain.

Pilates has also become quite popular in the older population due to its benefits for certain conditions such as arthritis, considering exercise is extremely important in alleviating the symptoms.

Exercises must not cause any additional stress on the joints, such as running, but must also build muscle and increase flexibility around the joints. Pilates, which perfectly achieves those goals, is cheap, accessible, and easy.

For health care providers of elderly patients, fall prevention is a primary concern. A study of elderly subjects, ages 65-81, in a 10-week Pilates training program showed that Pilates was safe when performed correctly and improved postural stability and balance, which can help prevent falls.

Pilates in Jordan

To experience Pilates group lessons, many gyms and dance studios around Jordan offer classes.

The Salida Dance Studio in Al-Rawabi offers Pilates classes using equipment such as the Reformer, the chair, and the tower five times a week.

The GX Gym for women and children and the Fitness One Vega Gym also offers group Pilates classes in Amman.



(Photo: Envato Elements)

THE WEEKLY APP ROUNDUP

Twitter's misinformation battle, TikTok MiniGames, and Instagram story feeds

By Andrey Demiyano

This week we have some interesting news coming your way: in light of the current political landscape, Twitter has begun lashing out against misinformation, TikTok is teasing users about getting games put onto the platform, and Instagram is shaking things up with their story feeds.

So, let's jump into the freshest app news this week.

Misinformation and Twitter: Adding fuel to the fire

Twitter has established a new policy to combat disinformation in times of crisis; if tweets are found to be propagating disinformation, the site will prevent their dissemination.

Twitter's head of safety and integrity recently stated in a blog post that information moderation involves more than merely leaving up or taking down content.

Twitter has broadened the spectrum of possible actions to ensure that they are appropriate to the seriousness of the potential harm.

During an emergency, hoaxes, and other disinformation are prevalent, as individuals rush to distribute information without fully checking its reliability.

According to the new policy,

tweets labeled as disinformation will not necessarily be removed or banned; rather, Twitter will include a warning label. Users will be required to click a button before the message is displayed, similarly to how pornographic photos are already suppressed on the site.

Misinformation postings will also be barred from promotion.

Initially, these stricter regulations will only apply during times of crisis, much like the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

The regulation comes at a precarious and inopportune moment for the platform, which is in uncertainty due to Elon Musk's temporarily stalled takeover of the firm.

TikTok MiniGames: A teaser of things to come

Imagine jumping onto TikTok to play games instead of watching short videos for hours on end.

Well, now you can – the app is now testing games in Vietnam, according to Reuters.

TikTok is preparing a big push into mobile gaming, with a business official reportedly revealing that HTML5 mini-games are being tested. And sources have said that the app launched ad-supported games based on the library of its parent firm, ByteDance.

It's important to remember that it collaborated with Feeding America last year to create Garden of Good, a FarmVille-like experience



(Photo: Freepik)

in which users can earn points and donate them.

TikTok also collaborated with FarmVille creator Zynga to create an HTML5-based endless runner for the app Disco Loco 3D.

TikTok is not a stranger to gaming streaming software either; the app provides "Live Studio" for PCs and allows certain artists to incor-

porate mini-apps in their movies.

According to sources online, TikTok may expand into live streaming with new games and experiences to enable broadcasters to interact with viewers. A Pictionary-style game is one example, and buying during live streams is another.

The presumed purpose of all of

this is for ByteDance to generate additional income and increase the length of time consumers spend using TikTok.

Instagram expanding its 'Stories' feature

Instagram's "Stories" feature has been a smash for the company, with many users disregarding standard

Instagram posts entirely in favor of the stories stream.

Users may now upload up to 100 stories each day, and followers must tap through all of them or swipe to the next story.

But with the latest update, Instagram will only show three stories, and viewers must hit a "Show All" button to see more; otherwise, Instagram will automatically go on to the next person's story.

It's an intriguing approach, and we can see the reasoning behind it; viewers will be able to get to the information they are interested in faster and then opt for more if they wish.

However, it might be highly frustrating for users and will surely impact how the tool is utilized. Users will witness a significant decline in views after the first three stories, so they will be incentivized to either limit their material to three stories or move critical elements into the first three stories.

Those accustomed to exceeding the daily limit of 100 stories will certainly feel penalized by the move. It also makes Q&As, which are regularly held under Instagram's stories feature, less accessible.

As of the writing of this article, it appears that just a few people have gotten the update. As a result, we believe Instagram is testing the waters before committing to a bigger roll-out. And we will be watching to see how it progresses.

GAMES & HOROSCOPES

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HOROSCOPES BY MAGI HELENA



ARIES
There may be no rest for the weary right now. People might hang on your every word, meaning you have to consider your responsibility to treat their trust with care. Show sensitivity to avoid sparking jealousy.

CANCER
Let someone else lead the way. Have faith in a partner or coworker who has chosen a safe path. If you detect signs of jealousy or possessiveness, just remind someone of your commitment and past actions.

LIBRA
You may be tempted to bite off more than you can chew. You might become fixated on owning something expensive or on a romantic partner to the exclusion of all else. Juggling your personal life and career may feel draining now.

CAPRICORN
A one-track mind can get you into a rut, so you may want to avoid becoming obsessed with something or someone. Patience is likely to be required as you set new intentions and devise new strategies.

TAURUS
Commit yourself to a calm mind and right relationship between yourself and others. Instead of envying anyone, uplevel your own life. Don't try to accomplish too many things at one time as your energy levels may be low.

LEO
Take every opportunity to learn, even from seemingly unfair criticism. When your mind is open, you can learn to do things in a better way. Remind yourself that every experience can give you new tools for living.

SCORPIO
When you fully open yourself to universal abundance, you'll always have enough money and enough love. It is true that the more you share with others, the more you will receive in return. But also consider your own self-care needs.

AQUARIUS
You know it is not whether you win or lose but how you play the game. You must apply scruples and display ethical behavior to avoid making a serious mistake. Accept someone's admonitions with humility.

GEMINI
Your ability to dig deep and find the facts gives you an advantage. Discuss how to handle problems or achieve your goals. Someone's clarity and insight can help you develop a sensible and worthwhile game plan.

VIRGO
Exchange energizing ideas. Profound and stimulating conversations may offer insights that you would never discover on your own. Ask for favors, knock on doors and look for opportunities to improve your situation.

SAGITTARIUS
Put your passions into perspective. Talk things over with loved ones who may offer insights that help you find a balance in moving forward. You can make things run more smoothly by sticking to your plans.

PISCES
Lay the most important ideas out on the table. You may be able to make headway with an important plan by gathering the best minds in one spot. You are wiser than usual about finding ways to improve your prospects.

GOREN BRIDGE BY BOB JONES

PLAY PROBLEM

Both vulnerable, North deals

NORTH		EAST	
♠ A 10	♠ 9 6	♠ 9 6	♠ 9 6
♥ A Q 10 3	♥ 6 4	♥ 6 4	♥ 6 4
♦ Q 7 6 4 3	♦ K J 10 9 5	♦ K J 10 9 5	♦ K J 10 9 5
♣ A Q	♣ J 6 5 2	♣ J 6 5 2	♣ J 6 5 2
WEST		SOUTH	
♠ Q J 8 7 2	♠ K 5 4 3	♠ K 5 4 3	♠ K 5 4 3
♥ 9 8 7	♥ K J 5 2	♥ K J 5 2	♥ K J 5 2
♦ A 8 2	♦ Void	♦ Void	♦ Void
♣ 8 4	♣ K 10 9 7 3	♣ K 10 9 7 3	♣ K 10 9 7 3

The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣*	Pass	5♦**	Pass
6♥	All pass		

*0 or 3 key cards, among the 4 aces and the king of hearts
**Asks for the queen of hearts

Opening lead: Nine of ♣

Today's deal is from a tournament in Europe some years ago. No North-South pair bid and made six hearts on

these cards. Two pairs bid to seven hearts, but neither declarer took all 13 tricks. Barry Jones (no relation), of Wales, gives us the winning solution. Think about it yourself before reading further.

South wins the opening heart lead in hand with the king, leads a club to dummy's ace, and ruffs a diamond. A club to dummy's queen is followed by another diamond ruff. A spade to dummy's ace allows South to ruff another diamond with his remaining heart, the jack. South next ruffs a club with dummy's 10 of hearts, setting up the club suit, and draws trumps with dummy's ace and queen of hearts as he discards two low spades from his hand.

South proudly claims the last three tricks with the king of spades and the king-10 of clubs. Was that so hard?

The problem with deals like this is that declarer will naturally start thinking about ruffing losers in dummy rather than ruffing losers in his hand. Both approaches are equally effective and timing the play is the most important thing.

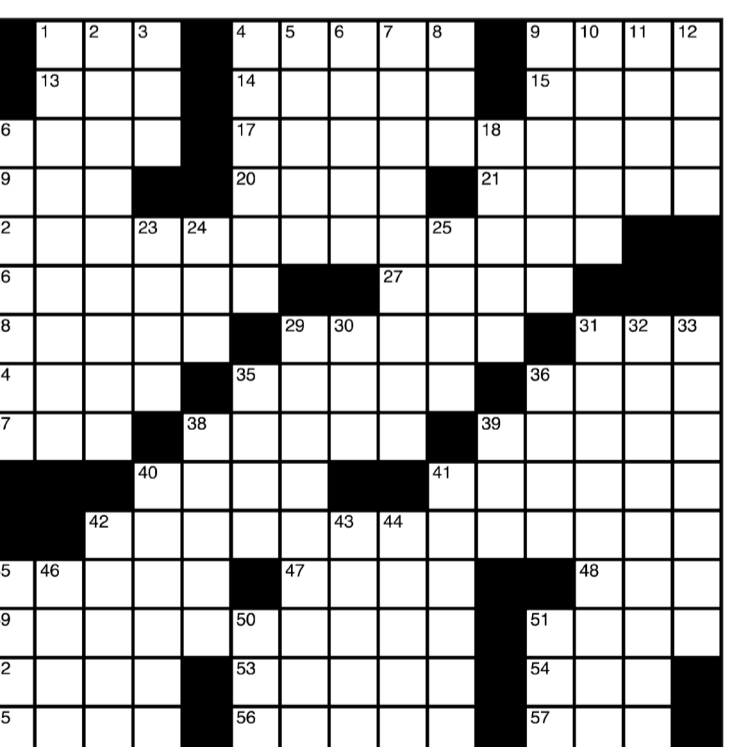
CROSSWORD BY JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS AND RICH NORRIS

Across

- 1 Earth, for one
- 4 Dred Scott decision Chief Justice
- 9 Leg section
- 13 Two-digit sign
- 14 Thrifty to begin with?
- 15 Central Plains tribe
- 16 "___ la vie"
- 17 "Guide for Smithsonian visitors, say
- 19 Food scrap
- 20 Hardly libertine
- 21 Pithy saying
- 22 "Ken Burns specialty
- 26 Fairy tale figures
- 27 Mother ___
- 28 Money with hits
- 29 Retreats
- 31 Word with bonds or games
- 34 Line holder
- 35 Barely detectable
- 36 Tiny particle
- 37 Future H.S. grads, probably
- 38 Volcanic eruption sight
- 39 Nested supermarket array
- 40 Nana
- 41 "Amen to that!"
- 42 "Southeast Asian colonial region dismantled in 1954
- 45 Earth's volume?
- 47 Mandlikoua of '80s tennis
- 48 Mexican pinch?
- 49 Classic Looney Tunes tagline offering some "direction" in solving the starred clues
- 51 Office figure

Down

- 1 With 3-Down, sportsbook option based on the final score
- 2 Game system turnoff options
- 3 See 1-Down
- 4 What a siren does
- 5 Lexus competitor
- 6 Polite denial
- 7 Combat demarcation point
- 8 "___ busy?"
- 9 Indulge
- 10 Starting players
- 11 Sleep-inducing, maybe, as a lecture
- 12 Fancy party
- 16 Eccentric old guys
- 18 "Downton Abbey" personnel
- 23 Man's name that becomes a measurement when one letter is moved
- 24 Once called
- 25 The Alamo, e.g.
- 29 Starting point of many modern missions
- 30 Intention
- 31 Unsettling
- 32 Puts in sync with
- 33 Zips again, as a Ziploc bag
- 35 Rich dessert



Yesterday's Solution

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

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

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

Jordanian basketball stars, experts share NBA finals predictions

AMMAN (JNews) – The NBA Finals will bring Eastern and Western conference champions to their final match that determines the league champion.

The Eastern conference seems to be more complicated; in Game 4, Boston Celtics won against Miami Heat 102-82 with Game 5 to be played Thursday. The Eastern Conference champion will likely meet Golden State Warriors, which are on their way to ending the series in the Western conference having scored three victories over Dallas Mavericks.

Huge excitement and different star performers surfaced during the series. A number of basketball stars and fans gave their opinion and expectations about the final, as well as the best player in the tournament.

Former national team captain Maan Odeh expects the Miami Heat and the Golden State Warriors to qualify for the final. He also predicts Stephen Curry to be selected the best player in the tournament.

Former star of Jordan's national team and coach of the Fuheis women's team Faisal Al-Nsour expects the Warriors and Boston to qualify for the final, which he expects to be very tight. Coach Nsour believes the best player will be Celtics player Jayson Tatum.

Coach and teacher at the Baccalaureate School, Amman, Ata Jabri, who is a passionate follower of the NBA matches, expects the Warriors and Miami to qualify for the final and chose Jimmy Butler as the best player.

Al-Wehdad club coach and former national



NBA

team star Moatasem Salemeah also expects Miami and the Warriors to reach the final, Miami to win the title and Jimmy Butler to win the best player award.

Sports commentator and specialist in basketball Mohammad Malas expects the final to be between the Warriors and the

Celtics, with the Warriors winning the title. As for the best player, he offered three choices: Stephen Curry, Jayson Tatum, and Luka Donkic.

Zaid Sahouri, coach and national commentator who is a fan of Miami, expects the Warriors and Miami to qualify for the final, he stated that he "feels" that Miami Heat will win the title, and Miami player Jimmy Butler will win the best player award.

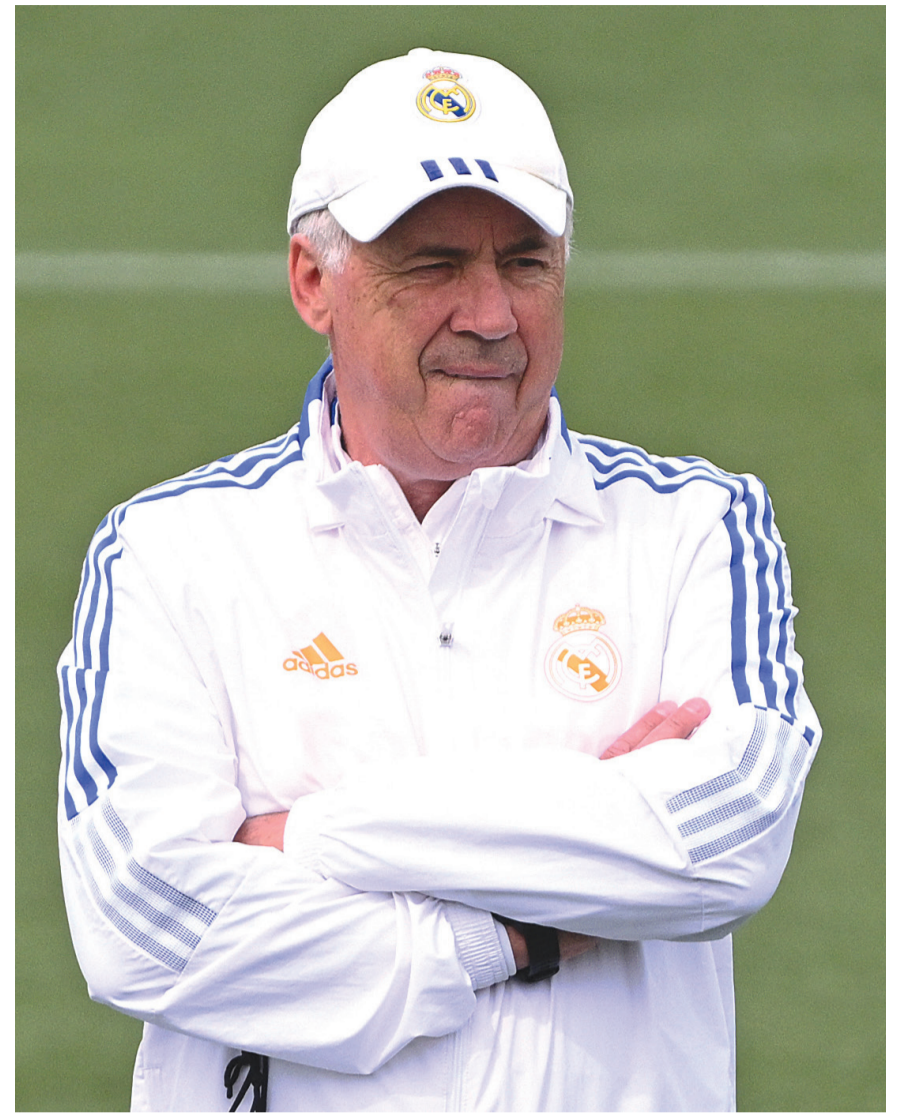
Former star of Jordan's national team Zaid Al-Khas expects the Warriors and the Celtics to reach the final, and Boston to win the title. The best player will be between Jason Tatum and Steve Kerry.

Former basketball player and founder of the Trusted Jordanian Basketball Facebook page Mohammad Abu Alia, who is residing in the US, believes that Boston will win the final, beating the Warriors along the way, and that Stephen Curry will win the best player award, despite losing the final.

Player and former star of Jordan's national team Captain Ayman Deiss has been saying since the beginning of the league that the Miami and the Warriors will reach the final; he is a big fan of the star Stephen Curry, who he thinks will win the best player award.

These are the opinions and expectations of some of Jordan's basketball stars and experts, but the strength of the NBA always makes predictions difficult.

We expect a fiery final; the victory will depend on the physical fitness and mental strength of the players, as well as on the players' injuries.



Real Madrid's Italian coach Carlo Ancelotti heads a training session at the Ciudad Real Madrid in the Madrid's suburb of Valdebebas during the club's Media Day on May 24, 2022 ahead of their UEFA Champions League final match against Liverpool. (Photo: AFP)

Ancelotti 'respects' Mbappe decision, says Real Madrid focused on final

MADRID (AFP) – Carlo Ancelotti said on Tuesday he "respects" Kylian Mbappe's decision to stay at Paris Saint-Germain but insisted Real Madrid's players are fully focused on the Champions League final.

Real Madrid were desperate to sign Mbappe when his contract expired this summer but the striker rejected a move to Spain, opting instead to sign a new three-year deal with PSG.

Ancelotti was asked on Tuesday if the hype surrounding Mbappe could affect his players, as Madrid look to defeat Liverpool on Saturday and win the club's 14th European Cup.

"It's quite clear for us what we have to think about," Ancelotti said in a press conference.

"We have never talked about players from other clubs. We have total respect for everyone, we respect the decisions they take and we respect other clubs."

"We have to do our jobs and it's quite clear what we have to think about, which is the final."

Ancelotti was reluctant to discuss Mbappe.

When asked if he was personally disappointed by the Frenchman's decision, he said: "I understand you have to do your jobs but I never talk about players who don't be-

long to Madrid and I'm not going to."

Real Madrid won La Liga last month with four games to spare while Liverpool was pipped to the Premier League title by Manchester City on Sunday.

Liverpool has already won the FA Cup and League Cup this season but have been hit by a handful of injuries this month, with Thiago Alcantara and Fabinho both struggling to be fit for the final.

Mohamed Salah, who has had a groin injury, and Virgil van Dijk, who has had a knee problem, both started on the bench against Wolves on Sunday, with Salah coming on in the second half.

Ancelotti said all his players are in "good condition" while Gareth Bale and Eden Hazard both trained at Valdebebas on Tuesday. Hazard and Bale have been on the fringes of the first team all season but Ancelotti said they could play against Liverpool.

"Hazard is training well, he can play in the final. Bale can play too, everyone is motivated," said Ancelotti.

"The feeling in this moment is to enjoy, prepare well, for now we are calm and happy. As we get closer to the match there will be all the other things, some nerves, all very normal."

"Today there is just a lot of motivation to play in another final."

Bayern sign right-back Mazraoui from Ajax



Ajax's Moroccan defender Noussair Mazraoui reacts during the UEFA Champions League football match between SL Benfica and Ajax at the Luz stadium in Lisbon. (Photo: AFP)

BERLIN (AFP) – Bayern Munich has signed Morocco right-back Noussair Mazraoui from Ajax on a free transfer, the Bundesliga champions announced on Tuesday.

Mazraoui has signed a deal until 2026 with the Bavarian giants who won a 10th straight Bundesliga title this season.

"I'm excited about joining one of the biggest clubs in Europe," the 24-year-old said in a statement.

"I've chosen this club because I can win the biggest titles here."

Mazraoui, who was born in the Netherlands, will rival France international Benjamin Pavard, who can also play at center-back, for the right-back place.

He is known as an attacking full-back and he scored five goals this term as Ajax won the Eredivisie title.

"Noussair Mazraoui is the next building block to further strengthen our team and gives us more options," said Bayern CEO Oliver Kahn.

It was his third Dutch title with Ajax, for whom he made 137 appearances having progressed through their academy.

"He had offers from all over Europe and chose us because we have a clear plan with him and want to achieve big things with him," said sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic.

Tatum stars as Celtics rout Heat to square series

BOSTON, United States (AFP) – Jayson Tatum rediscovered his scoring touch with 31 points as the Boston Celtics thrashed the Miami Heat 102-82 to level their NBA Eastern Conference finals series on Monday.

Two days after dropping their opening home game of the best-of-seven finals, Boston came roaring back at the TD Garden with a one-sided game four blowout that squares the series at 2-2.

Tatum also finished with eight rebounds and five assists, with support coming from Payton Pritchard (14 points) and Derrick White (13). Jaylen Brown and Robert Williams added 12 points apiece.

Al Horford led a hard-nosed Boston defensive effort with 13 rebounds and four blocks.

Victor Oladipo led the scoring for Miami with 23 points from the bench.

None of Miami's starting line-up made double figures, making a paltry 18 points in total.

"We just came and redeemed ourselves," Tatum said.

"We knew this was a game that we really needed, to protect home court. After the last game we were just ready to play, to get back out here and play better."

"It's been a back and forth series so far. It's best of three now, we'll just go away now for game five and get ready."

Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said his team had never been able to recover from a poor start.

"They came out and jumped on us," Spoelstra said. "I think more than anything our offense hurt us at the beginning. We just weren't purposeful."

"But we're not making any excuses. They outplayed us tonight for sure. We never could get any kind of a grip on the game."

Highs and lows

Spoelstra insisted that his team would mount a response in game five.

"This is part of the playoffs. There's a lot

of extreme highs and extreme lows, and a lot of emotion," said Spoelstra. "You just have to stay the course and stay together."

"And it's a great series. You have to embrace that."

The game was effectively won in the first two quarters as Boston punished a strangely subdued start by Miami to race into a 29-11 lead in the first quarter.

Tatum, who had been restricted to just 10 points in Saturday's game three defeat, was back to his sharp-shooting best with 12 points in the first quarter alone.

With Miami's offense unable to penetrate a Boston defense bolstered by the return of Williams, the Celtics kept the pressure on in the second quarter, extending the lead to 27 points at one stage.

There was no better illustration of Miami's offensive impotence than the first-half points haul of their starting line-up.

With Jimmy Butler contributing just six points, the Heat's starters totaled 10 points in the first half, with only Oladipo's 18 points off the bench preventing a total humiliation.

Miami made just 11-of-40 attempts from the field in the first half, a shooting percentage of just 27.5 percent.

Any hopes Miami had of mounting a second-half fightback were quickly snuffed out in the third quarter.

Boston outscored the Heat 12-4 immediately after the interval to pull clear by a whopping 32 points with the lead at 69-37.

The departure of Williams with what appeared to be left knee soreness midway through the third quarter helped Miami reduce the deficit to 23 points at 73-50, but it was only a temporary reprieve.

Boston continued to score steadily at the start of the fourth quarter and were sitting on a 31-point lead at 88-57 with just under nine minutes remaining before closing out a wire-to-wire win.

The series now swings back to Florida, with top seeds Miami hosting game five on Wednesday.

Medvedev eases through at French Open as Rune strikes teen blow

PARIS (AFP) – World number two Daniil Medvedev eased into the French Open second round on Tuesday as Denmark's Holger Rune reminded Roland Garros that Carlos Alcaraz is not the only teenager dreaming of the title.

Medvedev, who came into Paris with just one match on clay this year following hernia surgery, routed Argentina's 103rd-ranked Facundo Bagnis 6-2, 6-2, 6-2 on the back of 35 winners and eight breaks of serve.

"I love Roland Garros, especially since last year," said Medvedev, who had lost in the opening round on his first four trips to Paris before reaching the quarter-finals in 2021. "I hope this year I can go further."

Rune, 19 and just a week older than the highly-rated Alcaraz, marked his main draw debut with a 6-3, 6-1, 7-6 (7/4) dismissal of 14th-seeded Canadian Denis Shapovalov.

Rune, the boys champion in 2019 and a former world junior number one, entered Paris at a career-high 40 having started 2021 outside of the top 400.

In the current clay season, he won his first title in Munich, beating world number three Alexander Zverev on the way.

Shapovalov committed 53 unforced errors in a tie played at breakneck speed.

"I didn't really show up today but Holger played great tennis," said Shapovalov, a Wimbledon semi-finalist in 2021.

Later Tuesday, fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, who lost last year's final to Novak Djokovic after leading two sets to love, has a dangerous assignment against Italy's Lorenzo Musetti in the night session on Court Philippe Chatrier.

The 20-year-old, ranked 66, also led Djokovic by two sets in the last 16 in 2021 before injury curtailed his challenge.

This year on clay he made the quarter-finals in Marrakech and the third round at Monte Carlo, Barcelona and Madrid where he was forced to retire against world number three Alexander Zverev.

However, Tsitsipas is enjoying an impressive clay court season in which he has suc-

cessfully defended his Monte Carlo title, was runner-up in Rome and made the semi-finals in Madrid.

The Greek also enjoys a season-leading 31 wins on the tour this year.

Ostapenko Wimbledon doubt

Two former women's champions were also in action.

Simona Halep, the 2018 champion, who is working with Serena Williams's coach Patrick Mouratoglou, faces Nastasja Schunk, an 18-year-old lucky loser from qualifying, ranked at 165 in the world.

Jelena Ostapenko, who was a shock Roland Garros winner in 2017, defeated Italy's Lucia Bronzetti 6-1, 6-4 to end a five-match losing streak having started the year winning 14 of 18.

Ostapenko became the latest player to cast doubt on her appearance at Wimbledon after the tournament was stripped of ranking points in response to its banning of Russian and Belarusian players.

"If there are no points, I'm not really sure what I'm going to," said the Latvian.

"I think maybe they are going to change their mind. I'm not sure about points. But I think a lot of things may happen within the next week or two weeks."

Spain's world number four Paula Badosa, a quarter-finalist in 2021, takes on France's Fiona Ferro.

Before that match on Court Philippe Chatrier, French fans will possibly bid farewell to Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, the former world number five who will retire once his French Open campaign ends.

Tsonga, unseeded, lost the 2008 Australian Open final to Djokovic as the Serb claimed the first of his 20 Grand Slam titles.

He made it to the semi-finals twice at both the French Open and Wimbledon and finished runner-up to Roger Federer at the ATP Finals in 2011.

"It's a moment which I am sure will be full of emotion," said the 37-year-old who takes on eighth seed Casper Ruud, the champion in Geneva at the weekend.



A slew of celebrations will mark Jordan's 76th Independence Day

By Aysheh Alghabin

Since COVID-19 safety measures have eased, Jordanians across the Kingdom are eager to celebrate their 76th Independence Day. This year, while the holiday was pushed to Thursday, there will be no shortage of celebrations starting Wednesday across all 12 governorates. From live shows, plays, DJs, and special performances of Jordan's most famous singers, here is what to expect for a weekend full of celebration.

Across various governorates, a Royal Air Forces F16 performance will kick start celebrations, and local folk bands will be trekking across various locations, bringing traditional folk music to the weekend celebrations.

In Amman, those who have never seen the Jordanian Army Band live can seize the opportunity and watch them launch the events at the King Abdullah II Park in Al-Muqabalein starting at 5pm on Wednesday.

Following the band will be a gliding show performed by the Royal Jordanian Gliding Club, a skydiving show by the Jordanian Special Forces, and a Royal Jordanian Falcons aircraft show.

Ending the day will be patriotic musical performances by Hussein Al-Salman, Hamde Manaseer, and Zain Awad.

For those more interested in plays, the Odeon Theater will be putting on a children's play followed by the famous Jordanian play "Sajel Ana Arabi" (Write, I'm an Arab) performed by Al-Aam Ghafel.

"Sajel Ana Arabi" will repeat till Friday, daily at 5pm. Children can enjoy suitable events at the Hashemite Plaza from Wednesday to Friday 4-7pm. Maan band will be putting on a folk show at the Roman Amphitheater at 7pm starting Wednesday and again daily till Friday at the same time.

Throughout the three days, the Jubaiha Gardens Festival titled "Let's celebrate our Independence" is welcoming guests from 10am till 10pm.

There will be no lack of celebrations or performances marking the 76th Independence Day. In Madaba, starting at 7:30pm will be a show at the Imad Al-Din Zengi stadium on Wednesday, with singer Ziad Saleh expected to take the stage. And on Friday, also in Madaba, famous Jordanian singer Nidaa Sharara will be performing, offering a perfect end for the day's long festivities.



Across various governorates, a Royal Air Forces F16 performance will kick start celebrations, and local folk bands will be trekking across various locations ...

In Zarqa, Prince Mohammed Youth City will start celebrations at 5pm with singer Omar Alsaqar expected to perform on Wednesday.

Those in Balqa worried about missing celebrations, do not worry, as HRH Prince Al-Hussein Sports Complex will be holding celebrations from 5-10pm from Wednesday to Friday, with performer Haitham Elias concluding the event on Wednesday, Wessam and Hussam Al-Lozi on Thursday, and Hamdee Manaseer on Friday.

Mafraq at Prince Ali Bin Al-Hussein Sports Complex and Irbid at al-Al-Hasan Sports City will hold celebrations Wednesday till Friday from 5-10pm. On Wednesday, at Mafraq, Basar Alsarhan will be the main attraction Wednesday, Haitham Elias on Thursday, and Wessam and Hussam Al-Lozi on Friday.

In Irbid, Najm Al-Salman will take the stage Wednesday, Bashar A-Sargan Thursday, and Yahia Sweis on Friday. All performances will begin at 8:30pm.

Jerash celebrations will decorate the historical sights, with Neda Sharara taking the stage at 9pm in the Southern Theater on Wednesday. On Thursday, the Jordanian Armed Forces will perform at 6pm, followed by a performance by Ziad Saleh.

And fan-favorite Hussein Al-Salman will end the celebrations on Friday.

Ajloun will celebrate at Al-Hussein Camp for Youth with Ziad Saleh performing on Wednesday at 8:30pm, Neda'a Sharara on Thursday at 8:30PM, and Ziad Saleh on Friday at 8:30pm. Children's games will also be available.

Maan and Al-Karak should be on people's lists for a place to go during the three-day festivities. In Maan at Princess Haya Bint Al-Hussein Stadium, different events will take place, including Saad Abu Tayeh live at 6pm on Wednesday, Rami Khaled on Thursday, and Rami Shafeeq on Friday at the same time.

If you are fond of the outdoor but do not want to visit Jerash, Al-Karak castle will host Rami Shafeeq at 9pm on Wednesday, and Hamde Manaseer at 8:30pm and Rami Khaled at 8:30pm on Friday.

Aqaba will celebrate at the Arab Revolt Plaza with Wessam and Hussam Al-Lozi on Wednesday at 9pm, Rami Shafeeq on Thursday at 8:30pm, and on Friday Saad Abu Tayeh at 8:30pm.

Whether you prefer to stay near or visit a new place, Independence Day celebrations across the governorates will offer games, plays, and performances that cannot be missed. So make sure to mark your calendars.



(Photos: Twitter)