



This picture shows a decommissioned Jordanian Armed Forces' AH-1 Cobra helicopter being submerged into the waters of the Red Sea off the coast of the southern Jordanian port city of Aqaba, as part of preparations for a new underwater military museum. — AFP photos



A handout picture shows a sunken Jordanian Armed Forces' Khalid battle tank on the seabed of the Red Sea off the coast of the southern port city of Aqaba.



A sunken Jordanian Armed Forces' armored vehicle on the seabed of the Red Sea.



A sunken Jordanian Armed Forces' AH-1 Cobra helicopter being lowered to the seabed of the Red Sea.

# Fish tanks: Jordan sinks military hardware for underwater museum

**S**unken tanks, a troop carrier and a submerged helicopter: Jordan yesterday opened its first underwater military museum off its Red Sea coast. The kingdom is hoping the 19 decommissioned pieces of military hardware, submerged at depths up to 28 meters (92 feet), will attract tourists to the already popular diving resort of Aqaba. The Underwater Military Museum Dive Site includes several tanks, an ambulance, a military crane, a troop carrier, an anti-aircraft battery, guns and a combat helicopter, the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) said.

The sunken items have been "stationed along the coral reefs imitating a battle tactical formation", ASEZA said in a statement. The museum aims to offer a "new type" of museum experience combining "sports, environment and

exhibits" for divers, snorkelers and visitors on glass-bottomed boats, it said. The launch was marked by a ceremony with music from the Jordanian Armed Forces band and a local folk group, AFP photographers there said. The northern Red Sea is popular with divers attracted by its coral reefs, which are in relatively good health despite global reef depletion due to global warming.

ASEZA said it had removed "hazardous materials" from the hardware to protect the marine ecosystem. It said the museum would allow the creation of artificial reefs and promote the recovery of the area's natural reefs by "drawing visitors away to an alternative site." — AFP



A sunken Jordanian Armed Forces' tracked medical vehicle on the seabed of the Red Sea.



A sunken Jordanian Armed Forces' armored vehicle on the seabed of the Red Sea.



A sunken Jordanian Armed Forces' battle tank on the seabed of the Red Sea.



## Hermes defies trade tensions as China leads growth

**G**lobal trade tensions may have sapped growth for many firms, but luxury handbag maker Hermes said Tuesday it posted a double-digit rise in second quarter sales thanks in part to China. For the months of April through June the firm recorded a 14.7 percent increase in sales to 1.67 billion euros (\$1.87 billion), beating the consensus of analyst forecasts compiled by both Factset and Bloomberg. Over the first half of the year sales rose by 15.1 percent to 3.28 billion euros. "Hermes sales were very dynamic in the first half of 2019, in all regions and in all business lines," said chief executive Axel Dumas. Asia excluding Japan led the growth among regions, where sales jumped by 18.6 percent in the second quarter when exchange rates changes are excluded, "with positive

momentum in continental China and double-digit growth in all other countries in the area," Hermes said in a statement. Financial Director Eric du Halgouet acknowledged that sales in Hong Kong were impacted by the pro-democracy demonstrations in June, with two of its six shops there having to make brief closures. However he noted that sales growth there was still in the double digits for the half year.

Sales rose by nearly 10 percent in Japan and the Americas as well. Jewelry and home products enjoyed the best second quarter growth of nearly 21 percent, although it makes up less than 8 percent of total sales. The main business line that includes handbags rose by 12.2 percent, while the ready-to-wear and fashion acces-

sories unit rose by 16.9 percent. "In the medium term, despite growing economic, geopolitical and monetary uncertainties around the world, the Group confirms an ambitious goal for revenue growth at constant exchange rates," said Hermes. It has previously indicated that its operating margin will likely come in at slightly less than the record 34.5 percent it recorded in the first half of 2018 when it publishes half year results in September. Hermes shares slid 0.4 percent in Paris where the CAC 40 index was up 0.4 percent. — AFP