

Welcoming Gynecology Excellence

Dr. Nusrat Jabir  
MBBS, DGO, DNB  
8 Years of Proficiency

Book Your Appointments

Naseem Medical Centre  
4411 1133 naseem.qa

Exceptional Stays, Impeccable Service

AL KHOR Warehouses & Camps Available  
READY TO OCCUPY 75+ Rooms Available Street 44, Industrial Area, Doha

+974 303 00 880  
+974 334 19 475

HABARI REAL ESTATE

#ForYouPalestine

Be part of the urgent relief for the people in Gaza

Donate now

talabat

A Four Star Hotel Offer For Rent Outlet

SPA, RESTAURANT, SHOP, LOUNGE, MASSAGE CENTRE, MEN'S SALON, LADIES SALON, CAFETERIA

Contact: 33598672, 66698828, 50556669

Family 45th Anniversary

Prizes Worth 500,000 1000+ Lucky Winners

450 Troileys 8.1 Million Points 225 Home Appliances

GULF TIMES

THURSDAY Vol. XXXIII No. 12872  
December 28, 2023  
Jumada II 15, 1445 AH  
www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

www.gulf-times.com gulftimes GulfTimes\_QATAR gulftimes GulftimesVideos

vodafone Use your local plan abroad

To activate, download MyVodafone App or dial: \*110\*120#

Roam Like Home Pack 150 QR Per Week

### Doha to host Gulf Water Conference

The Water Sciences and Technology Association (WSTA)'s 15th Gulf Water Conference to be held in Doha from 28-30 April 2024, will discuss the role of technology in the water sector through 74 research studies in this field. WSTA said that the conference's preparations are underway, indicating that it will be held in co-operation with the Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation (Kahramaa) and the Secretariat General of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC).

### Saudi to forge Islamic action plan to stop Gaza aggression

Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Mohamed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud affirmed that his country is committed to exploring an Arab-Islamic action to step up pressure on the international community to stop aggression on Gaza. Addressing the inaugural 8th session of the fourth year of the Saudi Shura Council, on behalf of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, the crown prince said the Kingdom convened the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit to address the tragic incidents facing Gaza Strip.

### Biden: Iraq air strikes aimed to deter Iran

The US military's air strikes on Monday in Iraq were to deter Iran and Iran-backed militia groups from conducting or supporting attacks on United States personnel and facilities, President Joe Biden said yesterday. The US military carried out retaliatory air strikes on Monday in Iraq after a drone attack earlier in the day by Iran-aligned militants that left one US service member in critical condition and wounded two other US personnel.

### US firm challenges Wagner in CAR

The US private security company Bancroft Global Development says it is in talks with the government of Central African Republic (CAR) over "future activities", in a move that could see Russia's Wagner influence challenged in the conflict-riven country. The US company said contacts with President Faustin Archange Touadera's government were underway.

### Miracle man survives being trapped in truck

A man who crashed his truck under an Indiana bridge and was pinned for nearly a week in the wreckage - unable even to reach his cellphone - has been found alive in what was described as a miracle. Two men scouting for fishing holes on Tuesday in Salt Creek, near the town of Portage, were hailed for discovering the gravely injured man, who told them he'd been trapped in his vehicle under the I-94 highway since December 20th - six full days. They called for help and after a challenging rescue from the deep ravine the man was airlifted to a South Bend, Indiana hospital with potentially life-threatening injuries. **Page 7**

### 'Gaza In Our Eyes' exhibition opens at Souq Waqif Art Centre



The Souq Waqif Art Centre has opened 'Gaza In Our Eyes' exhibition with the participation of 32 artists from Qatari citizens and residents affiliated with the centre. Through this exhibition the artists embodied everything happening in the Gaza Strip, along with the forced displacement and devastation of buildings and homes the Gazans are experiencing. **Page 2**

### Israel pounds central Gaza; massacre toll rises to 21,110

Reuters  
Cairo/ Gaza/Jerusalem

Israeli occupation forces pounded central Gaza by land, sea and air yesterday and Palestinian authorities reported dozens more deaths, with the UN health agency saying thousands of people were trying to flee the fighting.

Reflecting Israeli resolve to wipe out Palestinian resistance movement Hamas despite international calls for a ceasefire amid a humanitarian crisis, Israel's military chief Herzl Halevi said the war would last many months.

Israel also signalled it could step up its response to cross-border attacks from northern neighbour Lebanon, where Hamas ally Hezbollah is based.

A Gaza health ministry statement



Airport travellers walk past pro-Palestinian demonstrators blocking traffic on the road that leads to John F Kennedy airport, in New York City, yesterday.

said an Israeli air strike killed 20 Palestinians near the Al-Amal Hospital in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip.

In central Gaza's Al-Maghazi district, five Palestinians were killed in one air strike, medics said, while to the north in Gaza City health officials said the bodies of seven Palestinians killed overnight arrived at Al-Shifa Hospital.

Israel's military reported three more soldiers killed in action in Gaza, bringing total military losses in the enclave since ground operations began on Oct 20 to 166.

The Gaza health ministry said Israeli forces had killed 195 Palestinians and wounded 325 in the past 24 hours, bringing the recorded toll to 21,110 killed and 55,243 wounded in Israeli attacks in the coastal Palestinian territory since Oct 7. **Page 6**

## Cabinet approves draft law on nationalisation of jobs in private sector

QNA  
Doha

The Cabinet yesterday approved the draft law on nationalisation of jobs in the private sector and referred it to the Shura Council.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani chaired the Cabinet's regular meeting held at its seat at the Amiri Diwan.

After the meeting, HE Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs in a statement said the Cabinet considered the topics on its agenda and approved the draft law on nationalisation of jobs in the private sector and referred it to the Shura Council.

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) underscored the most prominent features of the draft law for job nationalisation in the private sector, following the esteemed

**The draft law aims to enhance the attractiveness of the labour market for the national workforce, increase the ability of private companies to employ citizens and develop their professional skills, says Ministry of Labour**

Council of Ministers' approval of the bill and its referral to the Shura Council.

The proposed law aligns with Qatar National Vision 2030, focusing on human development by providing quality investments and generating employment and training opportunities for all citizens. It also corresponds to the Ministry of Labour's strategy to enhance the active participation rates of the national workforce in private sector institutions and companies. Furthermore, it aims to open job fields and opportunities for citizens within the

National Manpower Affairs Programme's activities in the labour market, thereby maximising the use of qualified national competencies.

The ministry clarified that the new draft law aims to enhance the attractiveness of the labour market for the national workforce, increase the ability of companies and institutions to attract and absorb citizens, stimulate the participation of Qataris in the private sector, provide job stability for national personnel during their employment period. **To Page 2**

## Public bidding for 75 Al Furjan, Al Azzab shops to open on Jan 3

Qatar Development Bank (QDB) has announced a new initiative in the Al Furjan and Al Azzab market projects, under which it would allocate a number of commercial shops through public bidding, according to conditions and requirements that would be announced later.

QDB said that the new initiative would take place after exhausting the backup lists for these shops and that it comes within the framework of working to develop the allocation process to optimally utilise the shops in terms of ensuring the diversity of services and meeting the needs of the people of the concerned areas and supporting the beneficiaries of the services of the Al Furjan and Al Azzab markets that the bank supervises.

QDB pointed out that public bidding would be launched for up to 75 available commercial shops, and the application window would open on January 3 and continue until January 21, through Aswaq real estate management company, affiliated with QDB.

Regarding the activities approved in Al Furjan markets, QDB indicated that work had previously been done to add new activities to meet the needs of the people of the areas, as there are currently 42 approved commercial activities for practice in Al Furjan markets and 14 approved activities in Al Azzab markets. The tenant has the freedom to choose the activity suitable to him, provided that the policy of changing and repeating activities in the markets is taken into account.

The projects of Al Furjan and Al Azzab Markets were launched in co-operation with several government sectors to contribute to the economic and urban renaissance of the country. They consist of integrated commercial markets established on government lands and extending over different areas distributed in separate residential areas and aim to support the commercial and service sectors in the country as part of the development and renaissance of urban areas. (QNA)

## Trump's 2nd-term agenda: revenge, mass deportations

Reuters  
Washington

Republican Donald Trump is planning to punish his political enemies, deport millions of migrants and reshape global trade with pricey tariffs if he wins a second White House term in the November 2024 presidential election, according to his campaign and media reports.

Here is a look at some of the policies Trump has pledged to institute:

**TRADE** - Trump has floated the idea of a 10% tariff on all goods imported into the United States, a move he says would eliminate the trade deficit but one critic says would lead to higher prices for American consumers and global economic instability.

He has also said he should have

the authority to set higher tariffs on countries that have established tariffs on American imports.

Trump, in particular, has targeted China. He proposes phasing out Chinese imports of goods such as electronics, steel and pharmaceuticals over four years. He seeks to prohibit Chinese companies from owning US infrastructure in the energy and tech sectors.

**FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY** - Trump would seek to decimate what he terms the "deep state" - career federal employees he says are clandestinely pursuing their own agendas - through an executive order that would reclassify thousands of workers to enable them to be fired. That would likely be challenged in court. He has vowed to fire what he terms "corrupt" actors in national security positions and "root out" his political opponents.



Trump arrives to speak to his supporters during the Florida Freedom Summit last month.

Trump would require every federal employee to pass a new civil service test of his own creation. His team is also vetting scores of potential hires who could be counted on to implement his policies or perhaps in-

vestigate Trump's political enemies.

He would crack down on federal whistleblowers who are typically shielded by law and would institute an independent body to "monitor" US intelligence agencies.

Trump also would seek to bring independent regulatory agencies such as the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Trade Commission under presidential control.

**IMMIGRATION** - Trump has vowed to reinstate first-term policies targeting illegal border crossings, roll back Biden's pro-immigrant measures and forge ahead with sweeping new restrictions.

Trump has pledged to limit access to asylum at the US-Mexico border and embark on the biggest deportation effort in American history, which would likely trigger legal challenges and opposition from Democrats in Congress.

Trump has said he would seek to end automatic citizenship for children born to immigrants, a move that would run against the long-running interpretation of the US constitution.



# Qatar underscores its support to Palestinians

QNA  
Cairo

The Shura Council participated yesterday in an emergency meeting of Palestine Committee of Arab Parliament in Cairo, within the framework of the preparation for the parliament's special session due to be convened today at the General-Secretariat of Arab League titled: "Supporting Palestine and Gaza".

The session intends to discuss the developments regarding war on Gaza and the dangerous escalation in the West Bank.

Shura Council member Shaikh

bint Yousuf al-Jufairi, who represented the Council at the meeting, underscored the significance of the unwavering efforts to support the Palestinian people, espousing the Palestinian cause and the importance of getting humanitarian aid into Gaza Strip to handle the tragic humanitarian situations.

She also stressed ceasefire as the only way to halt bloodshed in Gaza, calling for abiding by the international humanitarian law with respect to the responsibilities of the occupying state, adding that the international community should uphold its responsibility towards the Palestinian cause.

Al-Jufairi affirmed that Qatar's

leadership, government, and people are at the forefront of countries that support the Palestinian cause with its entire phases, emphasising that Qatar continues to provide all kinds of humanitarian and development assistance to improve the living and economic conditions facing the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Arab Parliament Speaker, Adel bin Abdulrahman al-Asoumi, underscored that the parliament supports the Palestinian cause as the primary and central cause for Arabs, appreciating the Palestinian people for their relentless resilience and struggle to regain their land and their legitimate rights. (QNA)

# 'Gaza In Our Eyes' show opens at Souq Waqif Art Centre

The Souq Waqif Art Centre has opened 'Gaza In Our Eyes' exhibition with the participation of 32 artists from the Qatari citizens and residents affiliated with the centre.

Through this exhibition the artists embodied everything happening in the Gaza Strip, along with the forced displacement and devastation of buildings and homes the Gazans are experiencing there.

The showcased paintings at the centre's premises addressed the most renowned personalities who rose during the unprecedented and incessant Israeli aggression against Gaza since last October. The paintings also highlighted expressions that spread during the aggression, as they have been working in three-week workshops to showcase their masterpieces at the exhibition.

In remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Manager of the Souq Waqif Arts Centre Rowdha al-Mansoori said a contingent of the centre's fine artists are par-



ticipating in the exhibition hailing from various countries across the world.

The title of the exhibition 'Gaza In Our Eyes' implies that all artists participating in the event are embodying the artistic paintings based on their own perspectives, how they see incidents in Gaza to further translate their feelings and depict them through colours on artistic paintings, al-Mansoori added.

Al-Mansoori recalled the diversity of these artistic paintings in the expo in which expressionist graphic lie, along with per-

sonalities who rose during Gaza incidents from journalists and others, as well as tanks and peace pigeons, indicating that the artistic paintings express hope and tragedy the Palestinians are experiencing in Gaza.

In addition, the centre features major activities represented in the daily attendance of its affiliated artists and participation in the ceremonies that offer them the appropriate venue to showcase their innovations on daily basis which primarily give some kind of momentum to the fine art at the Qatari level. (QNA)

# Cabinet approves draft law on nationalisation of jobs

From Page 1

The law is also aimed at developing the professional skills of the national workforce, meeting the labour market's need for qualified personnel, and encouraging private sector companies and institutions to recruit and attract male and female citizens.

It granted the Ministry of Labour the authority to provide incentives, facilities, and privileges, including sending citizens to complete their university studies in co-ordination with the relevant authorities for

filling positions in the private sector. The appointment is restricted to Qatari men and women in leading and specialised roles in the private sector, in addition to qualifying and training the national workforce to assume leadership positions in the private sector.

The other topics that the Cabinet considered and took appropriate actions are:

Approval of the draft decision of the President of Civil Service and Government Development Bureau on the conditions and regulations regarding the length of practical

experience in the private sector. The draft decision's preparation comes in implementation of the provision of Article 17 of the Executive Regulation of Civil Human Resources Law issued by Cabinet Decision No 32 of 2016.

Taking the necessary measures to ratify a memorandum of understanding for co-operation in education between the governments of Qatar and South Africa.

Approval of: 1- A draft MoU for co-operation in the field of aviation training between Qatar Aeronautical Academy and the Oman

Aviation Academy.

2- The draft of the 7th executive programme for the cultural and educational co-operation agreement between the governments of Qatar and Oman for the academic years (2023/2024-2024/2025-2025/2026).

3- A draft grant agreement between the Qatar Fund for Development in Qatar and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees regarding multi-purpose cash assistance to Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan.

4- A draft basic contribution

agreement between the Qatar Fund For Development in Qatar and the World Health Organisation.

5- A draft basic contribution agreement to support regular resources for the UN Development Programme for the period 2023-2024 between the Qatar Fund for Development in Qatar and the UN Development Programme.

6- A draft memorandum of understanding on co-operation to support the implementation of a project to make the percentage of out-of-school children in Rwanda zero between the Qatar Fund for

Development and the Ministry of Education in Rwanda.

The Cabinet also reviewed the following topics and took appropriate decisions regarding them:

1- The consolidated and audited financial statements of the Qatar Financial Center for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2022.

2- A report on the results of participation in the Ninth Conference of Environment Ministers in Islamic World.

3- A report on the results of participation in the Qatar-Africa Business Forum.

**مشتريات أكثر بسعر أقل**  
So much more for so much less

**Promotions Started**

- 10 QAR, 15 QAR, 20 QAR, 30 QAR
- 2kg Egyptian Mixed Pickles 18.00 (10)
- مصيرة مختلطة 2 كيلو Egyptian Mixed Pickles 2kg
- بروكلي إسبانيا 1 كيلو Broccoli Spain 1kg 13.50 (10)
- لحم جاموس بدون العظم هندي 1 كيلو Buffalo Boneless India 1kg 27.75 (20)
- شوكولاتة باونتي 57 جرام 5 قطع Bounty Chocolate 57gm X 5pcs 14.75 (10)
- البرلمان برمنه دقيق القمح 5 كيلو Parliament Whole Wheat Flour 5kg 20.00 (15)
- مصيرة قديمة جبنة رومي 1 كيلو Egyptian Old Rousy Cheese 1kg 44.00 (30)
- 2 DAYS ONLY
- 2 كيلو بروتين إسبانيا 1 كيلو Broccoli Spain 1kg 13.50 (10)
- 2 كيلو بروتين إسبانيا 1 كيلو Broccoli Spain 1kg 13.50 (10)
- 2 كيلو بروتين إسبانيا 1 كيلو Broccoli Spain 1kg 13.50 (10)

Promotion valid from 28.12.2023 to 30.12.2023. Bulk Purchase not allowed.

- 10.00 QAR, 6.50 QAR
- موز أصفر (انذاران) هندي 1 كيلو Banana Yellow (Nendran) India 1kg
- 6.00 QAR, 4.00 QAR
- الفاكهة الاحمر تركيا 1 كيلو Apple Red Turkey 1kg
- 17.75 QAR
- الدوخة دجاج طازج بدون عظم صدر بدون جلد 500 جرام Doha Fresh Chicken Boneless & Skinless Breast 500gm
- 42.75 QAR, 34.75 QAR
- قطع لحم ماعز باكستاني للكيلو Mutton Cuts Pakistan 1kg
- 2 DAYS ONLY
- 130 QAR, 84.75 QAR
- سمك السلمون فليليه النرويج 1 كجم Salmon Fillet Norway 1kg
- 2 DAYS ONLY
- 34.75 QAR, 24.75 QAR
- سمك الدنيس المتوسط تركيا 1 كيلو Sea Bream Medium Turkey 1kg

**LULU HYPER MARKET .COM**

SHOP ONLINE

DOWNLOAD LULU APP

Download "Lulu Shopping"

GET **5% BACK**

with your Doha Bank shopping Co-branded credit card  
Type 'LULU' & SMS to 92610 or visit any Doha Bank Branch

**0% INTEREST**  
Buy now, pay over 6 months

Where the world comes to shop

# Qatar's appeal as investment spot rises post-World Cup

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

The FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar not only left a lasting impact on the world of sports but also significantly boosted the country's appeal as an investment destination, according to an industry expert.

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, Outing Qatar founder and managing director Mosaad Moustafa Eleiwa said Qatar is witnessing a surge in interest from foreign investors, especially from neighbouring GCC nations.

He said investors are now eyeing opportunities in various sectors, drawn by the country's modern infrastructure, high-level amenities and business-friendly environment. These, he added, left a positive first impression on potential investors.

"The country became more popular to people. They were a visitor at the beginning, now, they want to be a business owner. They were surprised with the amenities...there are many five-star hotels, well-designed roads and structures, and the airport - one of the best in the world," said Eleiwa, who met with several potential investors from different countries, including those from the UK, Latin America and Iraq. He noted that the influx of visitors during the World Cup has transformed into a desire among many to become business owners in the country.

Eleiwa underlined the exceptional experiences provided by many businesses in Qatar, especially in the hospitality sector. He noted that the quality of service, even among hotels of the same brand, stands out, and visitors are looking for such details in every service provided.

He said Qatar's openness to visitors and business owners, and its family-friendly and flexible environment contributed to its growing appeal. The high level of safety and security is cited as a crucial factor, in attracting investors to establish businesses in the country.

"If you have the right skills, you will do good business here. Opportunities for foreign investors are growing, and the government is providing great potential," he said.



Mosaad Moustafa Eleiwa

About the unified GCC tourist visa, he said that such a move is seen as a game-changer, creating a positive impact on various sectors, not just limited to business. He believes that the visa will facilitate ease of access for visitors and potential investors, eliminating the need for lengthy visa approval processes. "Overnight I can come and book my flight while I'm sitting in my room. It gives us more opportunities to do business, and attract more potential investors," Eleiwa added.

He observed that Qatar is currently witnessing a surge in the number of visitors, particularly from Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The growth, he said, extends beyond the tourism sector, with an increasing number of hospitals and medical centres being built, potentially attracting visitors seeking medical treatment.

Eleiwa suggests that patients may find it more convenient to visit Qatar rather than travelling to countries like the US and the UK for their health-care needs.

Another sector that is booming in Qatar and is expected to attract more investors is the food and beverage industry. Eleiwa highlighted the diverse culinary offerings, ranging from local and regional cuisines to international options like Italian and Japanese.

## LuLu Hypermarket Qatar unveils highly anticipated 10/15/20/30 promotion

LuLu Hypermarket Qatar has announced the return of its eagerly awaited '10/15/20/30' promotion, which is scheduled to run until January 10, 2024.

The promotion offers customers the exclusive opportunity to avail incredible discounts from a selection of over 2,000 products spanning various categories, making LuLu the ultimate destination for New Year shopping.

During the promotional period, customers can indulge in an extensive range of top-quality products, carefully curated to meet the diverse needs of LuLu Hypermarket Qatar's valued patrons.

Whether it's daily essentials or indulgent treats, the promotion ensures affordability without compromising on quality, setting the stage for a truly exceptional shopping experience as Qatar steps into the New Year.

A spokesperson from LuLu management stated: "The 10/15/20/30 promotion has consistently been a tremendous success, and each year, we strive to introduce additional product lines tailored to enhance our customers' regular use, thereby elevating their overall shopping experience."

To elevate the excitement further, LuLu Hypermarket has prepared a host of special offers. The Hot Food and Bakery sections are set to enthrall shoppers with innovative value combo offers, including Arabic, Western, Chinese, South Indian, and North Indian cuisines, comple-



menting the main promotion with an array of delectable bakery delights. As a bonus, shoppers can also enjoy the 'LuLu Toy Carnival' promotion with exciting deals on toys, bicycles, ride-on cars and more, valid until January 6, 2024.

Furthermore, customers have the chance to participate in the 'Shop and Win' promotion at LuLu Hypermarket Madinatna. For every QR50 spent, shoppers receive a raffle coupon for a chance to win two Nissan Patrol 4.0L WGN XE V6 A/T 2023 and LuLu gift cards worth QR100,000 for 30 winners. The promotion is valid until April 14, 2024, with the draw scheduled for April 16, 2024, at LuLu Hypermarket Madinatna.

Meanwhile, the 'Shop and Win' promotion at Abu Sidra Mall offers customers the opportunity to win two Toyota Land Cruiser GXR 2023. Purchases worth QR50 entitle

shoppers to one raffle coupon. The promotion is valid until January 30, 2024, and the draw is scheduled for January 31, 2024, excluding outlets providing communications, exchange, gym, and travel services.

Known for their commitment to offering a diverse selection of global products at the best rates, LuLu hypermarkets continue to be the preferred shopping destination for many. With a dedication to high-quality offerings and an organised logistics system, LuLu Hypermarket Qatar invites shoppers to avail of this exceptional opportunity to save on their favourite products and the best shopping experience until January 10, 2024.

Visit LuLu Hypermarket Qatar and kickstart the New Year with excitement, by making the most of the 10/15/20/30 promotion - a gateway to unbeatable savings and a plethora of diverse offerings.

## Doha Bank staffer creates Guinness record



Shakeer Cheerayi, who works in Doha Bank Retail Banking, has been admitted into the Guinness World Records for the fastest crossing of Qatar on foot (male), after embarking on a solo ultra-marathon run from the Abu Samra border to Al Ruwais in one day, six hours and 56.50 seconds from February 17-18. Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Fahad bin Faisal al-Thani, Group CEO, expressed his felicitations and congratulated Cheerayi on his accomplishment. While awarding the accolade, Sheikh Abdulrahman further emphasised the significance of an active and healthy lifestyle, and Doha Bank's solid commitment to employee wellbeing.

## Vodafone Qatar launches new 'Roam Like Home Pack'

Vodafone Qatar has launched its new 'Roam Like Home Pack', which converts customers' current local plan benefits into roaming benefits while travelling.

Using My Vodafone App, eligible postpaid customers can easily purchase either weekly or monthly packs and can enjoy their local plan minutes and data starting from only QR150 per week.

In line with Vodafone Qatar's commitment to providing exceptional services that match the growing needs of its customers, the new packs offer a great way to enjoy using the same local benefits, stay connected, and to roam worry-free. Vodafone launched its 5G



roaming services in 2019 and has continued to build on its 5G roaming capabilities since then. The new packs will be eligible in 27 countries, including, France, Germany, Austria, the UK, as

well as the GCC region, among others.

For more information on Vodafone Qatar's roaming services and eligibility, visit <https://www.vodafone.qa/roaming>

## talabat recognised as 'Great Place to Work' in Qatar for 3rd consecutive year



Through the establishment of a culture centred around psychological safety, talabat ensures its employees feel valued, supported and empowered to authentically express themselves in the workplace.

talabat, the region's leading platform for everyday deliveries, has announced its Great Place to Work certification in Qatar for the third consecutive year.

talabat's ethos is grounded in the principles of "Make it Happen, Together We Grow, and Experience First," with a strong focus on instilling a sense of belonging that enhances openness and fosters empathy among all employees. Through the establishment of a culture centred around psychological safety, talabat ensures its employees feel valued, supported and

empowered to authentically express themselves in the workplace.

In a press statement, talabat Qatar managing director Francisco Miguel De Sousa said: "It is an amazing accomplishment for talabat to receive this award once again, as a clear testament to our dedication of cultivating a great work environment. We are honoured to be receiving this appreciation for the third year and we extend our gratitude to our employees, who are the driving force behind this continuous success. At talabat, we remain committed

to providing our team with the resources and support necessary for their personal and professional growth, enabling them to realise their full potential."

The Great Place to Work Certification is an impartial evaluation of a company's workplace culture, employing a rigorous methodology that includes anonymous employee feedback and a thorough analysis of company policies and practices. The certification stands as a testament to talabat's dedication to building a positive environment and workplace culture.



## Qatar Charity contests for community schools enhance students' skills

The "School Student Competitions" stages, organised by Qatar Charity under the supervision of the Qatar Charity Centre for Community Development - Communities, have come to an end, after witnessing wide participation from students of Asian and Arab schools in Qatar.

These competitions, according to an official statement from Qatar Charity, aim to develop and refine students' skills, enhance their cultural, artistic, linguistic abilities and to create an interactive atmosphere among members of the communities.

The competitions were held in three stages. Male and female school students competed through a variety of competitive activities. The first stage was organised at the Shantiniketan Indian School in Barwa Village



where about 100 students from the eighth to twelfth grades participated in drawing competitions. Pencil drawing, oratory and poetry in Arabic, Malayalam and English competitions were held.

The second stage, which was held at Pak Shamaa School at Mesaimeer, witnessed participa-

tion from 1,070 students from the category of nursery to seventh grade in various competitions. The participants competed in drawing pictures, colouring and narrating stories. Also, there were competitions for reciting poetry, reading news reports, public speaking in Arabic, English and



Malayalam, as well as for designing shapes with clay and drawing with watercolours.

The third stage was held collectively at Pak Shamaa School. It included artistic activities such as singing in Arabic, English and Malayalam. Eleven schools participated in this stage.

Abdul Rahman al-Hajri, director of Programmes and Community Development at Qatar Charity, said school student competitions come from Qatar Charity's duty towards different communities. "The competitions reflected the passion and positive interaction among the students and empha-

sised Qatar Charity's commitment to enhancing technical and linguistic skills among them," he said, noting that it is an opportunity to develop talents, encourage spirit of competition and cooperation between schools and to enhance cultural and sporting activities in society as well as for cultural exchange among members of communities. He added that the results of the competitions will be announced soon, and that the winners will be honoured.

The Qatar Charity Centre for Community Development - Communities works hard to bring closer and acquaint the communities residing in Qatar with the customs, traditions, cultural values, and ancient heritage of Qatar. The Centre has also been organising various activities and competitions for school students since 2009.

# Fanar holds various Islamic cultural events for reverts

The Sheikh Abdullah bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Centre (Fanar) at the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs recently held various programmes for the communities in Qatar. According to an official statement from Awqaf, Fanar's programmes included lectures that introduced the foundations of Islam and Islamic culture.

Also, awareness programmes and cultural gatherings were held for reverts. These programmes aimed to present an integrated and balanced image of Islam and its cultural and civilisational values.

The Department of Islamic Culture organised a lecture on 'Integrity to Islam' for speakers of the Oromo language from the Ethiopian community. The lecture was delivered by preacher Iskandar Abadir and it witnessed the presence of about 125 participants including men and women. The lecture addressed the meaning of integrity in Islam and steadfastness on the straight path and its importance in the life of a Muslim. The department also organised a short competition for attendees and distributed several prizes to the winners.

In terms of the mosque visiting programme, Fanar organised a visit for 92 people from different nationalities to the Qatar



Foundation's Education City Mosque. They learned about the components of the mosque and its unique style that represents the convergence of Islamic architecture and modernity. The participants listened to an explanation about how to perform ablution, its importance and the rituals of prayer.

As many as 84 people from various European countries visited the Grand Mosque to learn about the

mosques and local architecture. The cricket championship by Fanar continues for the reverts from the Sri Lankan community. The tournament aims to enhance communication between reverts with others and to support integration into society.

Also, it helps the participants learn entertainment etiquette in Islam and the importance of sports in a person's healthy life.



Various programmes were held to present an integrated and balanced image of Islam and its cultural and civilisational values.

# HBKU college hosts lecture on the Prophet's biography

Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU)'s College of Islamic Studies (CIS) held a lecture analysing the Sirah (biography) of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and how it can provide guidance and inspiration to Muslims around the world.

Dr Mohamed Modassir, senior researcher, Mohamed Bin Hamad Al Thani Centre for Muslim Contribution to Civilisation, CIS, laid the context for the event and introduced the following speakers: Dr Recep Senturk, dean; and Dr Dheem Mohamed, professor.

Dr Senturk delivered a presentation delving into how the prophetic model continues to provide timely advice for modern challenges. Furthermore, Dr Mohamed elaborated on the dire need to instil the love of the Prophet (PBUH) in individuals and discussed ways to achieve this in the contemporary setting as a prerequisite to following in the footsteps of the Prophet (PBUH). He explored how educational systems in Muslim lands can be made more conducive to achieving this objective. Commenting on the enduring relevance of the Sirah, Dr Senturk said: "The model of the Sirah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) continues to resonate with and



The lecture analysed the Sirah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and how it can provide guidance and inspiration to Muslims around the world.

inspire Muslims today in all dimensions of their lives. Its significance for today's world constitutes an essential element of Muslim engagement with the Sirah, and we at CIS are dedicated to positively impacting people in our community by encouraging an interest in Islamic scholarship."

In line with HBKU and the college's

innate dedication to dialogue, CIS overcomes borders to facilitate expertise and build capacity in Qatar and beyond. The college's research output is rooted in carefully designed research clusters that together promote interdisciplinary research agendas and inject new contributions to the world of global Islamic scholarship.

# QU students showcase research achievements

The College of Health Sciences at Qatar University (QU) announced the successful completion of the Master's defence presentations by the Department of Biomedical Sciences, marking a momentous achievement.

These presentations, according to QU, serve as a spotlight on the substantial research endeavours undertaken by 10 candidates pursuing a Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences. Among these scholars, four celebrated the culmination of their master's programmes, with three specialising in the Laboratory Management Track and one dedicated to the Research Track. Simultaneously, the remaining six presented their progress in Thesis I, offering glimpses into ongoing research projects slated for completion in the upcoming term.

The meticulously organised defence sessions featured esteemed faculty examiners from diverse health-related clusters, including the College of Medicine and other vital health sciences departments such as Public Health. These examination committees comprised both internal luminaries from QU's Biomedical Research Center and external experts from prestigious institutions like Sidra Medicine and Weill Cornell Medicine.

The graduates from the Laboratory Management Track - Esra Mohamed Moosa, Halah Noor Nasir, and Khalid Dabsan al-Qahtani - demonstrated exceptional efforts within their respective fields.

Collaborating closely with Dr Atiyeh Abdallah, Moosa delved into "Quality Control and Regulatory Framework for Implementing Machine Learning in Clinical Diagnosis". Nasir, guided by Dr Rozaimi Razali, explored "Machine



The presentations, according to QU, serve as a spotlight on the substantial research endeavours undertaken by 10 candidates pursuing a Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences.

Learning Prediction of Cancer from a Publicly Available Dataset"; while al-Qahtani, under Dr Rozaimi Razali's mentorship, focused on "Machine Learning Prediction of Diabetes from a Publicly Available Dataset".

Their groundbreaking work exemplified the effective utilisation of cutting-edge technologies, significantly advancing clinical diagnostics and disease prediction. In the Research Track, Hadil Adnan Abdulkader, under the mentorship of Dr Maha al-Asmakh, delved into the intricate relationship between clock genes, lifestyle, and obesity risk. Her research unveiled a significant association between the polygenic risk score from circadian-related genes and obesity in the Qatari population, independent of factors such as age, sex, education, smoking, and physical activity.

The Thesis I presentations offered

compelling insights into ongoing biomedical sciences projects, showcasing the contributions of Enas Said al-Absi, Fatima Hassan Ali, Tara Fathi Abdulazeez al-Barazeni, Sondos Abed Alhameed Muneer Yousef, Asma Allouch, and Nedhal al-Husaini. Under the guidance of various faculty members, these students exhibited their individual contributions, illuminating collaborative efforts within the Department of Biomedical Sciences.

Dr al-Asmakh, head of the Department of Biomedical Sciences, lauded this exceptional academic achievement, stating: "Congratulations to all our master's students who brilliantly defended their theses and capstone projects. We take immense pride in our recent graduates, recognising their findings as significant contributions poised to benefit Qatar's healthcare sector."

# Young Falconer activities wrap up at Sbkhat Marmi

The activity of Mazhab Young Falconer 2023 wrapped up on Tuesday at Sbkhat Marmi in the Sealine Area. Organised by the Qatari Al Gannas Association, the four-day event featured the closing ceremony during which the co-operating parties were honoured, and winners of the contests crowned.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), director of Al Gannas Association's championships and chairman of the Marmi Festival Committees, Miteb Mubarak al-Qahtani, emphasised that the association purposefully aims to curate the legacy of the Young Falconer activity and instil it in the hearts of the Qatari young generations and propagate this culture among them.

Al Gannas Association prioritised this event as one of the annual activities directed towards the emerging young generation to nurture spiritual and educational values in their hearts, as well as the culture of authentic popular heritage, al-Qahtani outlined.

He added that the activities of Mazhab Young Falconer primarily aims to encourage young people to invest in leisure time through directing them towards respecting the authentic Arab traditions and customs, in addition to supplying them with skills and talents to handle the words of the authentic Qatari popular heritage when they embark on practising the sniping hobby using falcons and riding horses.

The programme also aims to help young people benefit from religious and educational lessons with firm keenness to memorise verses from the Holy Qu'ran and the Prophetic Hadith, in addition to learning the etiquette of prayers and



The activities of Mazhab Young Falconer aims to encourage young people to invest in leisure time through directing them towards respecting the authentic Arab traditions.

public tenets when they come across to handle hunting activities from Islamic and Shariah perspectives, as well as learning the etiquette of Majlis, hospitality and preparation of Arabic coffee, al-Qahtani pointed out.

He affirmed that the association steadfastly strives to register a substantial number of Mi Mazhab events in the upcoming editions, since the outputs of these events are receiving standing ovations from guardians and supervisors. In similar remarks to QNA, Saeed Rashid al-Nuaimi from Al Gannas Association said

Mazhab Young Falconer was organised in perfect atmospheres amid huge turnout from younger participants who created enduring friendships and demonstrated their wits and responsiveness to their trainers, along with their ingenuity and intelligence. The Mazhab Young Falconer depended on the activity of sharing nights in camps which helped solidifying fraternity and love among participants and their supervisors, al-Nuaimi noted, pointing out that the camps spawned future falconers, as camps combined joy and entertainment and forged new acquaintances that benefited the participants. (QNA)



## QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	SUP/C/SOH/6449/23 PROVISION OF ERGONOMIC CONSULTANCY SERVICES TO CARRY OUT ERGONOMIC ASSESSMENT ON CALL-OFF BASIS	27/12/2023 to 09/01/2024	0	0	22/01/2024

### Scope of Work:

Provision of Ergonomic Consultancy Services to carry out Ergonomic Assessment on Call-Off Basis.

**Bid Validity:** Bid should be valid for 180 calendar days from the Tender Closing Date.

### Place for Tender Collection and Bid Submission:

ITT document for this tender will be available in QatarEnergy LNG website under Suppliers tab >Current Open Tenders. The bids shall be submitted through the QatarEnergy LNG online platform (SMART by GEP).

**Note:** Effective from 1st July 2023, bids received from Local Companies (established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) who are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal by Bid Closing Date (or commercial bid submission date if separately mentioned/notified) will not be accepted. Local Company that have been established for less than 2 years and insurance companies are exempted from this requirement. For further details please visit ICV Digital Portal:- <https://icv.qa/US>



## Al Bawasil camp activities offer fun, support for diabetic children

**U**nder the slogan “Yes, We Can”, the 24th International Al Bawasil Camp for Children with Diabetes, organised by the Qatar Diabetes Association (QDA), continued its activities with the involvement of 66 diabetic children.

According to an official statement, the camp is attended by 14 medical staff accompanying children from participating countries. These are in addition to 62 QDA employees and volunteers who care for children around the clock at the camp’s headquarters at the Aspire Sports Excellence Academy. The children are divided into four teams, the Shafallah team, the Awsaj team, the Aqoul team, and the Sidra team, with each team led by two skilled leaders and under the supervision of the camp’s medical committee.

The camp hosts the Vice-President of the International Diabetes Federation, Dr Adel al-Sayed

and Dr Sahinaz Karadins, Board Member of the Turkish Diabetes Foundation and former president of the Europe Region of the International Diabetes Federation.

This year, in addition to the countries of the Middle East, the camp also hosted India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Turkiye.

Children live in an atmosphere of joy and excitement at the camp. The programme combines entertainment and education with many interactive workshops, including those related to nutrition, insulin injection, as well as handicraft and a broad range of recreational games and overseas trips.

There are storytelling workshops every day along with a variety of entertainment games such as the water challenge and the selfie challenge, the daily Samer party, the “In Motion Pool” groups and the Baby Foot Tennis Championship because of

the importance of sport in diabetes management.

The outbound trips also resonated with children as they took trips to many places in Qatar, including the “Henna Salma Farm”, which they visited on Tuesday and stayed until evening. There was also a trip to the Oli Oli Museum in Katara and another trip to Expo 2023 Doha yesterday.

The camp is full of distinctive activities, including various challenges, a mask-making workshop, a masquerade ceremony, and a trip to the market dedicated to foreign delegations.

The camp began its activities on December 22 with 13 delegations from 12 countries between the ages of 7 and 11. The camp will continue until tomorrow.

Dr Abdullah al-Hamaq, executive director of QDA, said the organisers strive to make the children living with diabetes happy. “We are happy and confi-

dent that they receive the necessary support and care through the camp’s medical protocol and all the educational and recreational activities,” he said.

Al Bawasil Camp is managed by a qualified team consisting of physicians, nurses and dietitians along with administrative teams consisting of several professional committees including medicine, nutrition, activities and programmes, media, marketing, organisation and internal communication.

The first camp organised by QDA was held in January 1999 and has been held every year since then. It has become one of the most important camps for children with diabetes in the Mena region. In 2013, the International Diabetes Federation designated it as an international camp that could host children with diabetes from all over the world.

# Azerbaijan unveils spectacular winter season with grand opening ceremony

By Amjad Vanimal

**N**estled within the awe-inspiring embrace of the Caucasus Mountains, Shahdag Mountain Resort in Azerbaijan recently unveiled its winter wonderland with a grand opening ceremony. The weekend extravaganza, hosted by Azerbaijan Tourism Board in collaboration with the resort, welcomed approximately 90 international guests, including media and travel trade representatives from Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Tatarstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Belarus.

The guests were treated to an exploration of Shahdag Mountain Resort’s world-class infrastructure. Trade delegates seized the chance to conduct comprehensive hotel inspections, while media experts immersed themselves in providing extensive coverage and conducting captivating interviews. The winter kick-off event showcased the resort’s modern amenities and a diverse array of activities, ranging from the adrenaline-pumping thrills of the only mountain coaster in the Caucasus to the excitement of ziplining and the adventurous spirit of quadricycling.

The highlight of the festivities was the Opening Dinner and Gala Night, providing a splendid platform for networking and the chance to experience Azerbaijani hospitality while indulging in delicious local cuisines.

Simultaneously, B2B sessions played a pivotal role in orchestrating conversations between international guests and 80 local travel trade representatives in Baku. This platform nurtured collaboration, facilitated the exchange of valuable insights, and bolstered connections within the dynamic travel and tourism industry.

“We are honoured to have hosted such a distinguished group of international guests at Shahdag Mountain Resort. The winter season promises to be filled with excitement, adventure, and unique experiences for visitors from around the world,” said Florian Sengstschmid, CEO of Azerbaijan Tourism Board.

Shahdag Mountain Resort, positioned as the premier destination for winter sports and adventure, offers a diverse range of activities for all ages. Whether you’re a skiing enthusiast, a trekker, or a quad biking lover, Shahdag caters to both summer and winter pursuits amidst breathtaking mountain views. Summer activities



include zip-lining, mountain biking, paragliding, and swimming. Supported by an Austrian engineering firm, the resort features a rejuvenating spa. With 28 slopes spanning 30 kilometers and accommodations like Shahdag Hotel & Spa, Zirve Hotel Shahdag, Gaya Residence, Pik Palace, and Park Chalet, it epitomizes adventure and relaxation in the Caucasus.

Azerbaijan hosts two more mountain resorts – Tufandag and Agbulag. Tufandag, in Gabala, offers 15 kilometers of groomed slopes, complemented by winter activities like sledging and snow tubing. Agbulag, an hour from Nakhchivan city, provides picturesque scenery of the Lesser Caucasus Mountains, inviting visitors to enjoy skiing, snowboarding, and sledding. Azerbaijan’s trio of mountain resorts welcomes you to experience the enchantment of winter in the South Caucasus.

### Baku Beckons

Nestled at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Baku, Azerbaijan’s capital, unfolds a cultural tapestry that seamlessly weaves together tradition and modernity. At the forefront is the Heydar Aliyev Center, an architectural marvel envisioned by Zaha Hadid. Its flowing design serves as a symbol of Azerbaijan’s forward-looking spirit, housing exhibitions that delve into the nation’s history, art, and culture.

Baku’s premier business and residential hub, Port Baku, boasts a vibrant atmosphere with a series of bustling cafes, restaurants, and shops. The area also features impressive modern architecture for visitors to admire. Among the highlights is the contemporary Port Baku Mall, renowned as one of the city’s top luxury

shopping destinations. It offers an extensive collection of high-end international brands.

Yasil Bazar, the bustling “Green Bazaar,” beckons food enthusiasts with its vibrant stalls offering fresh produce and local delicacies. This market is a sensory delight, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the lively atmosphere of Azerbaijani culinary traditions.

Baku’s Old City, also known as Icherisheher, stands as a living testament to the city’s rich history. It’s a UNESCO-listed marvel encircled by ancient walls. Its narrow cobbled streets reveal historic landmarks like the Palace of the Shirvanshahs and the Maiden Tower, weaving tales from centuries past. Wander through its alleys to immerse yourself in the enchanting blend of history and culture.

For literary enthusiasts, the Baku Museum of Miniature Books presents a unique collection of tiny tomes from around the world. This hidden gem showcases the artistry and craftsmanship involved in creating miniature literary wonders.

Highland Park, perched above Baku, offers a stunning panorama of the city and the Caspian Sea. Also known as Dagustu Park, it’s a serene escape with lush greenery, well-manicured gardens, and walking paths. The elevated vantage point transforms Baku’s modern skyline during sunset, making it a picturesque retreat.

In a short journey through Baku, visitors embark on an odyssey through time, exploring the nation’s past, present, and future, all within the embrace of its rich cultural landscape.

### Azerbaijan sets sights on GCC tourists, highlighting proximity perks



Council (GCC) tourists, with a particular focus on Qatar.

Sengstschmid underscored the significance of Azerbaijan as a winter tourist destination, particularly for the GCC markets. As winter approaches, he emphasized the diverse opportunities available for nationals and residents to revel in the scenic beauty of Azerbaijan. “Now that winter is upon us, we believe it’s crucial for the GCC markets to recognize the myriad opportunities the season brings for nationals and residents. Baku is conveniently close to all GCC countries, providing a gateway to enjoy the mountains, even for those not into skiing. There are a plethora of activities such as cable car rides, roller coasters, bungee sliding, off-road driving, horseback riding, and luxurious spas. This presents a pivotal opportunity for us to showcase the top-notch services offered in winter resorts and mountain retreats,” remarked Sengstschmid.

Addressing the Gulf countries individually, Sengstschmid pointed out the close proximity of Azerbaijan to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE. With numerous flights connecting these regions to Baku, including those from Qatar Airways, Azerbaijan Airlines, Wizz Air, and Air Arabia, the CEO stressed the diverse opportunities awaiting tourists. He highlighted the importance of targeting not only locals and nationals but also residents in the GCC, extending to them a convenient and affordable winter escape.

Sengstschmid unveiled ongoing tourism development projects, with new resorts set to open in Azerbaijan. Notable mentions included a resort in Shabran on the Caspian seaside and a recently inaugurated wellness and health resort. He emphasized the diverse natural and cultural resources of Azerbaijan, urging visitors to explore beyond Baku and discover the richness of the country’s regions.

When asked about target audiences, the CEO indicated that Azerbaijan is keen on attracting families and solo women travellers due to the destination’s safety and ease of travel. Additionally, the focus on winter promotion was underscored, with existing collaborations with major consolidators, online travel agencies (OTAs), and airline partners in the GCC actively championing the allure of Azerbaijan’s winter season.





# Maersk schedules dozens of vessels to travel via Suez Canal

Reuters  
Oslo

Denmark's Maersk has scheduled several dozen container vessels to travel via the Suez Canal and the Red Sea in the coming days and weeks, it said yesterday, in a further sign that global shipping firms are returning to the route. The world's top shipping companies, including container giants Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd, stopped using Red Sea routes after Yemen's Houthi fighter group began targeting vessels earlier this month, disrupting global trade.

Maersk's share price fell 5% by 1330 GMT yesterday, partly reversing last week's gains, as a return to the shorter routes through the Suez Canal from voyages around Africa might prompt a freight rates correction.

Other shipping stocks also fell, including Hapag-Lloyd which dropped 6%, oil tanker group Frontline which was down 5.3% and car shipping service Hoegh Autoliners which was 3% lower.

Maersk said on Dec 24 it was preparing a return to the Red Sea for both eastbound and westbound journeys, citing the deployment of a US-led military operation to protect vessels against Houthi attacks,

but provided few details. The schedule remains subject to change based on specific contingency plans that may be formed over the coming days, the company said yesterday. France's CMA CGM on Tuesday said it was increasing the number of vessels travelling through the Suez Canal.

Among the vessels listed in a Maersk advisory to clients yesterday was the Maren Maersk, which departed Tangiers on Dec 24 and would "continue via Suez Canal" with an estimated time of arrival in Singapore on Jan 14.

But many of its vessels are still scheduled to take the journey around Africa, the advisory showed. Maersk has since Dec 19

rerouted ships around Africa via the Cape of Good Hope to avoid attacks, charging customers extra fees and adding weeks to the time it takes to transport goods from Asia to Europe and to the east coast of North America.

It announced on Dec 22 that it would add charges of \$700 for a standard 20-foot container travelling from China to Northern Europe, consisting of a \$200 transit disruption surcharge and a \$500 peak season surcharge.

The transit disruption charge was imposed last week with immediate effect while the peak season addition is valid from Jan 1. It was not immediately clear

how the decision to restart some Red Sea shipments would affect the surcharges.

The company declined to comment further when asked about its vessel schedules. "At the moment, we cannot say anything more than what has been shared," a Maersk spokesperson said in a statement.

German rival Hapag-Lloyd still considers the situation too dangerous to pass through the Suez Canal, a spokesperson for the company said yesterday, adding that it would continue to reroute its vessels via the Cape of Good Hope.

"We continuously assess the situation and plan a next review on Friday," the spokesperson said.



A Palestinian man listens to his radio in a refugee camp in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

## Radio sets make a return in conflict-hit Gaza

AFP  
Gaza Strip

Before war broke out in Gaza, Mahmud al-Daoudi could never have imagined the radio sets gathering dust in his shop would be in such high demand, offering his customers a precious link with the outside world.

Power cuts have long been a part of everyday life, but the besieged territory's 2.4mn people are now enduring long blackouts after Israel cut off electricity and fuel supplies.

Its relentless assault has killed more than 20,000 Gazans, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry.

Israel began its devastating air and ground offensive following the October first week storming by Hamas fighters.

It is now impossible to plug in computers or television sets, recharge phones or access the Internet without generators or solar panels, a luxury few Gazans can afford.

But to keep up with the news, there's always the battery-powered radio.

"We had a full stock but we've

been completely out of them since the first week" of the war, Daoudi said. With the phone and Internet cuts, "radio is the only way to find out what's going on," he said.

The long battery life is another plus, he said from his store in Rafah, at the southern end of the territory. Before the war, a radio cost around 25 shekels (\$7) — now, they go for around 60 shekels (\$16).

"We've even resold the broken radios people returned to us," the 33-year-old said.

When the radio sets disappeared from the shelves, customers asked for old telephones with built-in radios and torches, a welcome help when night falls.

"Now we're running out of phones," Daoudi said.

### 'MOVING BACKWARDS'

It's impossible to order new stock, with only limited humanitarian aid trickling into the territory.

"People want to follow the news, hear where the shelling is taking place and find out about the fate of their families," said Hussein Abu Hashem, who has run out of radios at his shop too.

According to the UN, 1.9mn Palestinians have been displaced since the start of the war, around 85% of the population.

Many of them are now living in makeshift camps in the south of the territory where they lack basic supplies.

"I don't know what's happening around us, where the strikes are, which houses are targeted, who's alive, who the martyrs are," Umm Ibrahim said in the southern city of Khan Yunis.

"We want to receive news from anywhere in Gaza," she said.

"When my battery runs out, I walk around the camp and listen out for other people's radios." Stations such as BBC Arabic and Al Jazeera have launched special channels to help keep displaced people up to date with the news.

Some Gazans, like 75-year-old Hebrew-speaker Mohamed Hassouna, manage to pick up the news from Israeli radio stations.

He said it allows him to keep up with the latest "from the Israeli side".

"I keep my children and neighbours informed," he said. Outside his tent, Salah Zorob, 37, spends his time flicking through radio stations on his mobile phone.

"The world is moving forward with modern technology but here in Gaza we're moving backwards," he said. "They're going to take us back to the Stone Age."

## eSIM cards help war-torn Gaza stay online

AFP  
Rafah

Power cuts have become a fact of life in war-torn Gaza. But thanks to embedded SIM cards, Palestinians can still access the Internet and stay in touch with loved ones abroad.

"Without them, we'd be cut off from the world," said Hani al-Shaer, a local journalist who depends on eSIM cards to do his live streams.

"And no one would know what was happening in Gaza," he added, just as the besieged territory on Tuesday experienced the latest in a series of telecoms breakdowns since the conflict began.

The war erupted after Hamas fighters stormed Israel in the first week of October.

Vowing to destroy Hamas, Israel has led a massive air and ground campaign against the Palestinian fighters in retaliation.

The offensive has left vast areas of Gaza in ruins and killed at least 20,915 people, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

Human Rights Watch has warned that phone and Internet disruptions in Gaza could "provide cover for atrocities and breed impunity while further undermining humanitarian efforts and putting lives at risk".

### SIMPLE IDEA

Internet and telephone services that were cut on Tuesday were gradually being restored in central and southern areas of Gaza, the Palestinian telecommunications company Paltel said on X, formerly Twitter.

The idea behind the eSIM is simple: they are a software version of the chips usually inserted into phones to connect to cellular networks and the Internet.

Embedded directly into a device, they can be activated using a QR code, which Gaza residents receive from family members liv-



A Palestinian man uses his phone as he sits amid the rubble of destroyed buildings in Gaza City. Thanks to embedded SIM cards, Palestinians can still access the Internet and maintain a channel of communication with loved ones abroad.

ing abroad. The Gaza residents are then able to connect in roaming mode to a foreign network — often an Israeli one or sometimes Egyptian.

The eSIM has been a godsend, said Samar Labad.

The 38-year-old fled her home in Gaza City for the south, where tens of thousands of displaced Palestinians have been living in makeshift camps.

Now in Rafah, she had lost contact with her family for over a week. But then her brother — who lives in Belgium — sent her an eSIM.

"The connection is not stable, but it does the trick," she said. "At least we can stay in touch to reassure each other, even if intermittently."

She also has loved ones in Khan Yunis.

"I find out how they're doing from someone who lives with them, whose phone is eSIM-compatible," she said.

Service is only available in areas near the border with Israel. Otherwise, people have to climb onto a roof to catch a signal.

### SEARCH FOR VICTIMS

Ibrahim Mukhaimar, who

owns a mobile phone store, said his main customers are journalists who use eSIMs to provide the outside world with an accurate account of the situation in Gaza.

He said they vitally communicate "that there is a lack of basic items necessary for survival" in the besieged territory.

His eSIM customers also include "doctors and civil defence employees who are looking to learn the exact location of strikes in order to help people", Mukhaimar said.

Employees of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, also use them to organise aid convoys.

While the cards help offset telecom outages, Internet access is required to activate them in the first place. The price varies from "15 to 100 dollars, depending on how long they're valid for", said video journalist Yasser Qudieh.

He added that journalists with eSIMs end up serving as messengers for others. The other journalist, Shaer, said: "Many expats get in touch with us to follow the latest news from Gaza and get information regarding their families."

### Turkiye's Erdogan says Israeli PM Netanyahu no different from Hitler

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was no different from Adolf Hitler and likened Israel's attacks on Gaza to the treatment of Jewish people by the Nazis, Reuters reported from Ankara. Nato member Turkiye, which supports a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has criticised Israel's air and ground assault on Gaza, called it a "terror state" and said its leaders must be tried in international courts. Sharpening his rhetoric, Erdogan said Turkiye would welcome academics and scientists facing persecution for their views on the conflict in Gaza, adding Western countries supporting Israel were complicit in what he called war crimes. "They used to speak ill of Hitler. What difference do you have from Hitler? They are going to make us miss Hitler. Is what this Netanyahu is doing any less than what Hitler did? It is not," Erdogan said. "He is richer than Hitler, he gets the support from the West. All sorts of support comes from the US. And what did they do with all this support? They killed more than 20,000 Gazans," he said.

## Iran's Guards link Hamas storming of Israel to general's 2020 killing

AFP  
Teheran

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said yesterday the October attacks on Israel by Hamas fighters were in part a retaliation of the US killing in 2020 of a top Iranian commander.

The Palestinian armed group rejected earlier remarks by a Guards spokesman appearing to suggest that a key motivation for the October first week storming into Israel was to avenge Qasem Soleimani's death on Iran's behalf.

Israel responded with a withering offensive that has killed more than 21,100 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry.

Iran, which supports Hamas financially and militarily, has hailed the deadly attacks as a "success" but denied any direct involvement. "Undoubtedly, part of the great historic victory...is due to the efforts



Banners condemning Israel and calling for an end to the conflict in the Gaza Strip hang outside a mosque along a street in Teheran, yesterday.

of General Qasem Soleimani," Ramezan Sharif, spokesman for Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), said of the Hamas attacks. Soleimani, the former commander of the Quds Force, the IRGC's foreign operations arm, was killed in a US drone strike in Baghdad on January 3, 2020.

"One can consider the (Hamas) operation's success as part of the resistance's revenge against his cowardly assassination," Sharif was quoted by

as saying Fars news agency.

He said that "the 70-year oppression, the occupation, insults to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the siege and massacre of the defenceless Palestinians" were also among the motives for the Hamas storming.

"We have announced on several occasions the motivations and reasons behind Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, namely the dangers facing

Al-Aqsa Mosque," said Hamas in a statement.

### TRAGEDY

#### At least 40 more people die in floods and landslides in DR Congo

At least 40 more people have died in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, local authorities said, after heavy downpours overnight on Tuesday unleashed floods and landslides that left residents digging through the mud to find bodies, Reuters reported from Bukavu, DR Congo.

In the city of Bukavu, onlookers gathered to watch yesterday as a group of men hauled a car out of the mud to recover a woman's body from underneath, a Reuters witness said. At least 20 people died in Bukavu and at least 20 more were killed in the village of Burinyi, 50km from Bukavu, according to officials in the two places. Bukavu resident Yvonne Mukupi, who was able to stay clear of the deluge, said her neighbour was swept away by the flood waters. "We have managed to recover three bodies under the trees but others have not been found yet," she said. Poor urban planning and weak infrastructure make communities like Mukupi's more vulnerable to extreme rainfall, which is becoming more intense and frequent in Africa due to warming temperatures.

### UNREST

#### Toll rises in Nigeria attacks to nearly 200

The death toll from a series of attacks on villages in central Nigeria has climbed to almost 200, local authorities said yesterday, as survivors began to bury the dead, AFP reported from Bokkos, Nigeria. Armed groups launched attacks between Saturday evening and Tuesday morning in Nigeria's Plateau State, a region plagued for several years by religious and ethnic tensions. Authorities had previously put the death toll at 163. During a meeting with Nigeria's vice president yesterday, Monday Kassah, head of the local government in Bokkos, Plateau State, said that 148 Bokkos villagers had been killed in the attacks. At least 50 people were also reported dead in several villages in the Barkin Ladi area, according to Dickson Chollom, a member of the state parliament. There are fears the death toll could rise further as some people remain missing, Kassah said on Tuesday, adding that 500 people had been injured and thousands displaced. A large number of the dead were buried on Tuesday.

# Glock, inventor of cult guns, dies at age 94

AFP  
Vienna

Austrian engineer Gaston Glock, whose eponymous Glock pistol achieved global cult status, died yesterday, according to the company.

"In Memoriam Gaston Glock 07/19/1929–12/27/2023," read the company's site, showing a photo of Glock – standing arms crossed in a dark suit with a maroon tie – against a black background.

Though the notoriously private Glock may not have been world famous, his invention, wielded by police and outlaws alike, certainly made its mark worldwide, matched by few other weapons.

Media-shy Glock hit the headlines several times – notably in 1999 when he survived a murder attempt and years later during his acrimonious divorce from his first wife Helga.

He was not a stranger to the society circuit, however, hosting glamorous parties with his second wife, Kathrin, attended by celebrities and politicians.

Born in 1929, Glock studied

mechanical engineering at a college in Vienna.

In 1963 he founded his own consumer goods firm in the town of Deutsch-Wagram, 20km outside Vienna.

By the early 1980s Glock had branched into military supplies and decided to answer a call for tenders put out by the Austrian army, which wanted to update its pistols.

He devised the Glock, a firearm that revolutionised the field: made largely of non-metal components, lighter, easier to take apart, more reliable, able to carry more bullets than other brands.

Once the contract with the Austrian army was finalised, the company's fortunes soared when it entered the American and then the global market.

Between 2014 and 2017 alone, the company's worth is estimated to have risen by almost 50% and in 2021, Forbes estimated the fortune of Gaston Glock and his family at \$1.1bn.

American pop culture in particular helped Glock attain its iconic status.

"At the end of the 1990s, Glock was the most mentioned brand"



Austrian engineer Gaston Glock at an event in Velden, Carinthia, Austria. Right: A woman points at a Glock handgun during the annual National Rifle Association (NRA) convention in Dallas, Texas. (AFP, Reuters)



in the American Top 50 singles chart, Fritz Ofner, one of the directors of a film about the Glock, told AFP in 2018.

But along with the huge wealth came a darker side to the Glock story.

In 1999 a feud within the business almost cost him his life af-

ter Charles Ewert, who managed Glock's affairs in Luxembourg, tried to have him killed.

Ewert – also known as Panama Charly – was sentenced to 20 years in jail for having organised the attempted murder in a Luxembourg car park, in which Glock was attacked with a hammer and

sustained serious head injuries.

Glock's personal life also attracted press attention when after more than 50 years of marriage, in 2011 he and his wife Helga went through a bitter divorce.

In 2014, his then ex-wife unsuccessfully attempted to sue Glock for \$500mn, accusing him

of racketeering and of diverting funds from the company, as well as treating his family "with the senseless and self-destructive rage of Shakespeare's King Lear".

The lawsuit made a host of claims about how Glock had spent the money, including hiring strippers to represent the company at trade shows.

Following his second marriage, the couple turned their attention to investing in horse-racing, opening a vast equestrian complex in southern Austria.

The Glock Horse Performance Center played host both to races and red-carpet events graced by the likes of British singer Robbie Williams and supermodel Naomi Campbell, as well as Austrian government ministers.

Glock and his company were not reticent about using legal means to defend their reputation, but this wasn't always successful.

In 2012 the company lost a long-running lawsuit for defamation against the human rights organisation Amnesty International, which had drawn attention to reports of a Glock weapon being used by rebels in Sudan.

## Miracle on I-94: Driver rescued after nearly a week trapped

A man who crashed his truck under an Indiana bridge and was pinned for nearly a week in the wreckage – unable even to reach his cellphone – has been found alive in what was described as a miracle.

Two men scouting for fishing holes on Tuesday in Salt Creek, near the town of Portage, were hailed for discovering the gravely injured man, who told them he'd been trapped in his vehicle under the I-94 highway since December 20th – six full days.

They called for help and after a challenging rescue from the deep ravine the man in his late twenties was airlifted to a South Bend, Indiana hospital with what police described as potentially life-threatening injuries. The drama began when the man's pickup swerved off I-94, about 40 miles southeast of Chicago, plunged down the ravine, rolled across the creek and wedged itself under the bridge, according to Indiana State Police Sergeant Glen Fifield.

The man drank rainwater in order to survive, police said, but couldn't call for help as his phone was out of reach.

"This is a miracle that this gentleman is alive today, and that these two gentlemen just happened to be on that creek," Fifield, standing next to the fishermen-rescuers, told a press conference late Tuesday in the Midwestern US state. Mild Christmas holiday weather was a major factor in the man's survival. But with the temperatures dropping considerably overnight into yesterday, "I don't believe that he would have made it through the night," Fifield said.

The fact the man was discovered in time was its own miracle. With the wreckage all but invisible from the busy traffic lanes above, no-one had reported an accident. Even another group of fishermen who waded through the water earlier had failed to spot the crashed truck. But Mario Garcia did. He and his son-in-law were walking the creek, seeking out new spots to fish, when they noticed something shiny on the bank.

"I looked inside and moved the white airbag, and there was a body in there," Garcia told reporters, saying he had believed the man was dead. "I went to touch it, and he turned around. And that – it almost killed me there, because it was kind of shocking. But he was alive," he said.

"He was very happy to see us...I've never seen a relief like that." US media, citing Indiana police, later identified the driver as Matthew Reum, 27. "He mentioned he had been there since last Wednesday," Garcia said. "He says he tried yelling and screaming but nobody would hear him," Garcia said. "He had to survive on just his youth...and God's help," he added. "Because I don't see no other way."

## Apple wins watch ban delay in patent feud

A federal court handed Apple a victory yesterday by suspending a ban on the US sale of its latest Watch models in a feud over patents with health company Masimo.

The ban on certain Apple smartwatch models came into effect Tuesday, after the Biden administration opted not to veto a ruling on the patent infringements.

But the federal court said the ban order would not take effect pending the appeals process. After a complaint by Masimo, the United States International Trade Commission (ITC) decided in October to ban Apple Watch models over a patented technology for detecting blood-oxygen levels. Masimo contends it invented the technology and that Apple poached key employees to win access to the know-how.

Apple last week paused its US sales of Apple Watch Series 9 and Apple Watch Ultra 2 in compliance with the order.

But the iPhone-maker contends that the ITC finding was in error and should be reversed, and appealed the decision in the federal appeals court. Masimo declined to comment on the development. Apple did not immediately reply to a query from AFP.

# Mexico leader urges US to invest in people, not walls

Reuters/AFP  
Mexico City

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said yesterday the US Congress should focus on investing in people instead of building walls, hours before he was set to meet Secretary of State Antony Blinken to discuss migration to the United States.

President Joe Biden's administration is seeking help from Lopez Obrador's government to stem migration flows and cope with record numbers of people trying to reach the US border, a key issue ahead of the US presidential election in November.

The meetings come after more than half a million migrants this year crossed the dangerous Darien Gap jungle into Central America – double last year's record – many fleeing crime, poverty and conflict to seek entry into the United States. Lopez Obrador, who last week assured the United States that Mexico would help ease migratory pressures, said the US Congress should be investing in poor people in Latin America and the Caribbean "instead of putting up barriers, barbed wire fences in the river, or thinking about building walls".

"It is more efficient and more humane to invest in the development of the people and that is what we have always proposed, Lopez Obrador told a press conference.

Lopez Obrador added that he expects next year's US election will bring the issue of migration to the forefront. "We have to take care because campaigners use this issue as a rallying cry," Lopez Obrador said.

Former US president Donald Trump, the leading candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 2024, has promised to crack down on illegal immigration and restrict legal immigration if elected to a second four-year term in office. Trump focused on building a wall on the Mexico border during his first term and has pledged to close gaps in the border wall if re-elected. His administration built 450 miles of barriers across the 1,954-mile border, but much of that replaced existing structures.

Lopez Obrador planned to meet midday in Mexico City with Blinken, who will also speak with Mexican Foreign Minister Alicia Barcena. The US delegation includes Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

A State Department spokesman said they will discuss "unprecedented irregular migration

in the Western Hemisphere and identify ways Mexico and the United States will address border security challenges."

Yesterday, thousands of migrants and asylum seekers marched slowly north from southern Mexico in a caravan hoping to reach the US border, many carrying small children.

"We don't need to go back to our country if we don't have anything there," said Nohemia Zendejas, a mother on the road with four children in tow. "I come from Venezuela and Venezuela is broken".

The unusual Christmas week trip by the top American diplomat was abruptly scheduled as the rival Republican Party presses Biden to crack down on migration as a condition for providing the votes in Congress for one of his key priorities – support for Ukraine.

Around 10,000 people without authorisation are trying to cross the southern US border each day, nearly double the number before the pandemic, with a new caravan of hundreds if not thousands of people leaving by foot from southern Mexico on Sunday. US border authorities have been so overwhelmed that they have

suspended several legal crossings to focus on processing migrants.

Mexican President Lopez Obrador said yesterday that Mexico was "helping a lot" on tackling migration.

"We're going to keep doing it and we want to reach an agreement," he said at his morning news conference, adding that next year's US elections were giving fresh impetus to the issue.

"People leave their towns out of necessity and there's a lot of economic and social crisis in the world. It's necessary to further promote productive activities and job creation," Lopez Obrador said. The package proposed by Biden to Congress would also fund 1,300 additional Border Patrol agents to help address migration.

The Biden administration has warned that without a deal, Ukraine will soon run out of weapons needed to repel the nearly two-year-old Russian invasion.

Andrew Rudman, director of the Mexico Institute at the Wilson Center in Washington, expected Blinken to seek additional support from Mexico to keep migrants within its borders, such as temporary work permits.



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (third from left) attends a meeting with Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas to discuss migration, in Mexico City yesterday. (Reuters)

# Activist laments 'Western hypocrisy' on stranded Afghans

AFP  
Paris

Afghan activist Rita Safi has harsh words for western governments she said have failed to deliver on promises to help women from Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

Safi herself has made it to France where she is seeking asylum, but her sister Frozan was not so lucky. She died in a hail of bullets back home because she, too, was a defender of women's rights.

Speaking in a shelter outside Paris, the 29-year-old Rita Safi said her sister would still be alive had the promised help been forthcoming.

"They were saying that they would support us, but these were just words," she said. "They left us alone. This is the reason why I lost my sister."

Safi had hoped for more support from Western powers after the Afghan capital Kabul fell to the Islamist group in 2021.

But a large majority of Afghans did not make their evacuation lists follow-

ing the takeover, leaving them at the mercy of their new rulers.

Safi's older sister Frozan was a prominent human rights defender in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Her body was found in October 2021, just over two months after the Taliban takeover. She was 29.

"She was killed so brutally by the Taliban," she said, showing AFP an image of her coffin draped in a red cloth on her phone.

"She was shot with seven bullets. Her face was totally destroyed."

The Afghan authorities said that four women died that day and that they had arrested two people in connection with the killings.

After speaking to the media about the killings Safi said that she, too, received death threats.

Safi managed to escape to Pakistan in December 2021. She only had a two-month visa but hoped a Western nation would soon give her refuge.

Instead she was forced to spend two years in the Pakistani capital, living in constant fear of deportation.

During this time, the Taliban authorities continued to exclude Afghan women and girls from ever more spheres of public life, including high school and university, as well as parks, fairs or gyms.

It was not until a French journalist highlighted Safi's plight in an article and vouched for her request for a French visa that things started to look up.

She was among around a dozen Afghan women to land in Paris on December 8. All have sought asylum and will likely be given it.

Rights groups have said many Afghans have been left in limbo in Pakistan, at risk of deportation.

Some 600,000 people have fled across the border to Pakistan since the Taliban returned to power in 2021.

But since October, some 345,000 Afghans have returned home, including after being deported.

"There are so many women like Rita in Pakistan who have had relatives killed or abducted in Afghanistan, who have been threatened," said French journalist Margaux Benn, who is member of a collective trying to help these Afghan women.

"But they haven't met a Westerner who wanted to help them, so their cases stay at the bottom of the pile."

Therina Jerolon, from Amnesty International, said the visa application was so "long and complex" that Afghan women had basically been "abandoned to their own fate".

Since 2021, France says it has handed over 15,000 visa to Afghans, "mostly women, rights defenders, journalists and magistrates".

But Delphine Rouilleault, the head of the France Terre d'Asile ("France Land of Asylum") association, said that hardly anyone had landed in France over the past year.

"No-one has arrived from Afghanistan, and only very few Afghan women have landed from Pakistan," she said.

The French foreign ministry did not reply to a request for comment.

Afghanistan is home to some 40mn people. Since the Taliban takeover, the United Kingdom has given refuge to 21,500 Afghans, most through a massive airlift operation in late August 2021.

The United States has taken in

90,000, most also in 2021.

Some 30,000 have travelled to Germany, where authorities have said they are "very worried" by deportations from Pakistan.

Sweden and Denmark have said they would automatically give Afghan women visas despite tough immigration policies, but it is unclear how many have benefited.

Neveen Hashim, a 32-year-old Afghan women's rights activist who landed in France in September, said it was not enough.

Afghan women in Pakistan are often single and more vulnerable to abuse, she said.

And "if they are deported back to Afghanistan, they will definitely be facing death, or detention, or jail," she added.

The West spoke about "civilisation, democracy and human rights" she said, but "they left us at the mercy of a regime who... closed every door in our face."

"The international community is hypocritical," she said.

Her sister Rafah, who is in Pakistan, is hoping for the French authorities to grant her a visa.

## Japan department store chain red-faced after Christmas cake fiasco

AFP  
Tokyo

In prim and proper Japan, all it took to prompt a prestigious department store chain into an earnest, public apology in the aftermath of Christmas were complaints over mangled \$40 cakes. "Cake collapse" has dominated headlines for

days in Japan after irate consumers took to social media over the weekend to post pictures of crumbled Christmas cakes delivered to their doorsteps.

Sold online by major chain Takashimaya, the strawberry-topped cakes - meant to be immaculately decorated - arrived to some customers miserably flattened and fragmented, images on social

media showed. Out of the nearly 3,000 frozen cakes sold, more than 800 were confirmed to have been marred as of Tuesday night, Takashimaya said in a statement yesterday. "We would like to apologise deeply for the deformation in our frozen Christmas cakes that betrayed the expectations of many of our customers," Takashimaya senior official Kazuhisa Yokoyama told

a nationally televised news conference. The firm said customers may be reimbursed for the cakes, priced at 5,400 yen a piece, depending on delivery conditions.

The debacle left Takashimaya officials organising an exhaustive probe into its production and delivery partners. Takashimaya though "couldn't identify a cause", Yokoyama told reporters, claiming

temperature management was not the issue. Still, "we, as the seller, are responsible for delivering our products to the hands of our customers, including from production to distribution", Takashimaya said in the statement. "The entire responsibility rests on us."

Many consumers expressed disappointment at the destroyed cakes, while others tried their best to keep

their Christmas spirits up. One user of social media platform X described the creativity with which their friend had let a three-year-old son decorate the cake "as he likes" to cover up the mess.

With chocolate spread all over, "the result was funnier than when it had arrived...it's now full of children's dreams", said the X post which garnered more than 16mn views.

## Parasite actor Lee Sun-kyun found dead in car, suicide suspected

AFP  
Seoul

South Korean actor Lee Sun-kyun, best known globally for his role in the Oscar-winning film *Parasite*, was found dead in Seoul yesterday, police said. The 48-year-old actor was found inside a vehicle parked on the street in the capital's mid-northern Seongbuk district, an official from the Seongbuk police station told AFP.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported, citing police, that Lee had left a "note that reads like a will". He had been under police investigation over his alleged use of marijuana and other drugs.

A series of entertainment industry events in South Korea were announced as cancelled on Wednesday in order to pay condolences to the late actor.

Filmmaker Byun Young-jo, who collaborated with Lee on her 2012 thriller *Helpless*, honoured his memory by sharing a pitch-black image on her Instagram account. Actress Claudia Kim, also known as Soo Hyun, wrote on the social media platform that Lee's death was "a loss of great talent" for the industry.

"Everyone deserves to be forgiven for their mistakes. Everyone deserves a second chance," she wrote.

Once celebrated for his wholesome image, local news outlets reported that the actor was being dropped from television and commercial projects following the scandal. A graduate of South Korea's prestigious Korea National University of Arts, Lee made his acting debut in 2001 in



An ambulance carrying the body of actor Lee Sun-kyun leaves a park in central Seoul.

a television sitcom titled *Lovers*. He later won acclaim for his performances in a variety of roles, including a charismatic chef and a genius neuroscientist who is incapable of empathy.

Lee received widespread critical acclaim for his performance in the 2018 TV drama series *My Mister*, for his portrayal of a diligent architectural engineer. Globally, he is best known for his role as the wealthy and shallow patriarch in director Bong Joon-ho's 2019 Oscar-winning film *Parasite*.

He was also recognised for his performances in romance flicks, such as the 2007 TV drama *Coffee Prince* and the 2012 film *All About My Wife*. Lee made appearances in South Korea's internationally acclaimed filmmaker Hong Sang-soo's movies, such as *Our Sunhi* (2013) and *Oki's Movie* (2010).

His latest released film, this

year's horror flick *Sleep* - in which he played a husband whose sleepwalking eventually leads to terrifying circumstances - was well-received and featured in the Critics' Week section at the Cannes festival.

Devastated fans expressed their grief on social media, with one user writing on X: "I laughed and cried a lot while watching your acting. Thank you." Renowned Korean-American writer Min Jin Lee also expressed her condolences. "Lee was praiseworthy in *Parasite* and exceptional in *My Mister*," she wrote on Instagram. "May he be remembered for his excellent work and creative gifts."

Lee's reputation suffered a significant blow when South Korean authorities launched an investigation into his alleged drug use in October. He had been suspected of using illicit drugs at the residence



South Korean actor Lee Sun-kyun arriving at a police station in Incheon for his police questioning over his alleged use of marijuana and other psychoactive drugs earlier this week.



Police investigate a car in which the body of actor Lee Sun-kyun was found at a park in central Seoul.

of a hostess employed at a high-end bar in Seoul.

According to Yonhap, the actor asserted that he was "tricked" by the hostess into consuming the drugs and was unaware of what they were. Lee had tested negative for drugs twice, during police investigations and in a lab test last month, the news agency reported.

He had also lodged a complaint against two individuals, including the hostess, alleging that they

had blackmailed him and extorted money from him. From December 23-24, he attended his third police investigation session, which lasted 19 hours, Yonhap reported.

He briefly spoke to reporters in late October before entering a police station in Incheon to meet with investigators. "I sincerely apologise for causing great disappointment to many people by being involved in such an unpleasant incident," he said at the time. "I feel sorry for my family, which is

enduring such difficult pain at this moment. Once again, I sincerely apologise to everyone."

South Korea has extremely tough laws on illegal drugs, with Koreans who take drugs such as marijuana legally abroad risking prosecution upon returning to their home country. The Seongbuk police official said authorities believed his body had been taken to the Seoul National University Hospital. Lee is survived by his wife, actress Jeon Hye-jin and two sons.

## Seoul organises drills to guard against surprise attack by North

Reuters  
Seoul

More than 1,000 South Korean military, police and emergency personnel joined rare defence drills on Wednesday that simulated an attack by North Korea on Seoul, to counter fears the city is in striking distance of Pyongyang's weapons and covert attack.

The exercise comes amid heightened tension after the North tested an intercontinental ballistic missile

and launched its first military spy satellite, with the neighbours reinstating last month some military measures eased after a 2018 pact.

Yesterday's drills simulated attacks on a major water supply facility, telephone network stations, and an underground communications and power cable corridor. Seoul's distance of just 38km from the military border with the North makes it particularly susceptible to an attack at any time, Oh added.

The densely populated centre of government, business and finance is home to 9.4mn people, with an

additional 1.4mn who work and go to school there each day.

Oh has adopted a hardline position against North Korea, arguing that the South must possess its own nuclear weapons as the only way to neutralise the threat from Pyongyang. However, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol has ruled out owning nuclear weapons, making it a priority instead to bolster a military alliance with the United States and restore security ties with Japan.

The drills came on a day that South Korea imposed new sanc-

tions on eight North Koreans linked to nuclear and missile programmes. The neighbours have clashed at sea and one of the South's islands was bombed by the North, killing scores on both sides, but there has been no direct attack on Seoul since the end of the Korean War in 1953.

This month's test of the North's latest ballistic missile followed November's successful launch of its first military spy satellite, while a constitutional revision in September enshrined use of nuclear weapons as a national defence policy.



People clean up their home after flooding in the Ban Yakang area of Mueang district in Narathiwat.

## Tens of thousands hit by southern Thai flooding

AFP  
Bangkok

Floods in southern Thailand have killed at least six people and affected tens of thousands of households, authorities said yesterday. The floods, which began on December 22, have hit more than 70,000 homes across the provinces of Satun, Songkhla, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, regional officials said.

Six people including an 89-year old woman and a toddler were killed in Narathiwat, deputy provincial governor Preecha Nualnoi told AFP. Another person was still missing following days of intense rain, which sparked floodwaters that reached around 3m in height in some places, he said.

Local media footage showed streets submerged by the muddy deluge and residents taking refuge on rooftops. Relief teams worked by night to hand out bottled water and snacks and check buildings for damage or casualties. Thailand's Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation said the water level had reduced on Wednesday morning.

Some rail services in Narathiwat province, which borders Malaysia, had resumed following days of closure due to track subsidence, deputy governor Preecha said. The kingdom's rainy season typically brings months of daily deluges but scientists say man-made climate change can make rainfall more intense.

In 2011, widespread flooding killed hundreds and damaged millions of homes around the country.

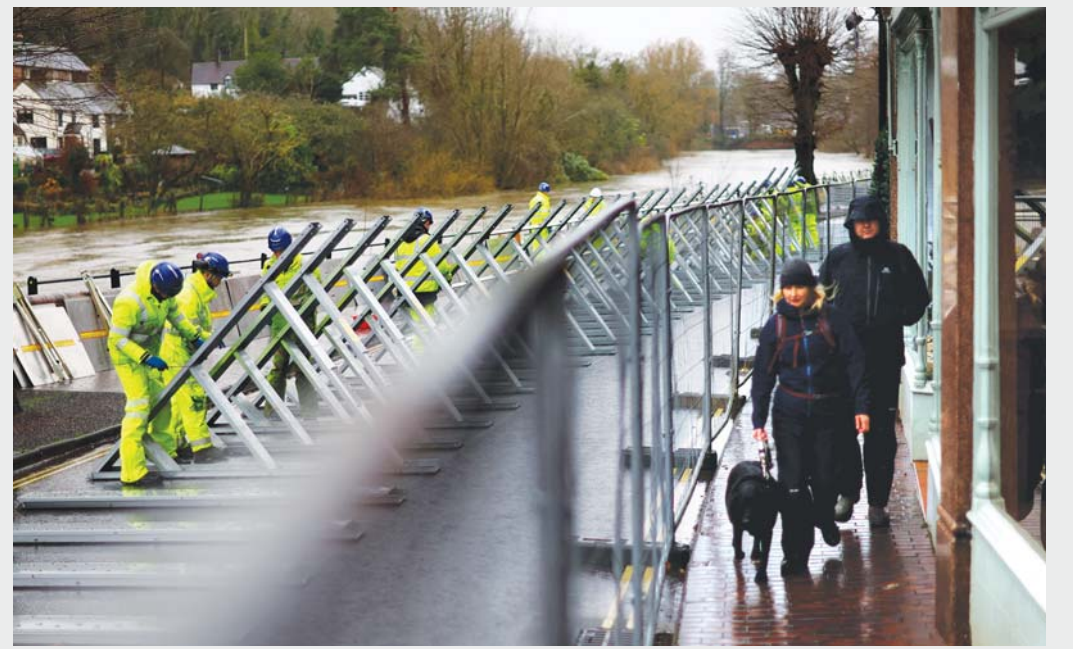


South Korean soldiers take part in an anti-terror drill against North Korea's possible provocations amid mounting tensions on the Korean peninsula, in Seoul.



Firefighters take part in an anti-terror drill.

## Flood barriers along River Severn



Environment Agency workers prepare the flood barriers along the River Severn in Ironbridge after heavy rain from Storm Gerrit, in Shropshire, Britain.

# Britain post-Christmas shopping provides some cheer for retailers



A beggar sits on the pavement as shoppers and red London buses pass by on Oxford Street in central London.

Reuters  
London

British shopper numbers at stores on Boxing Day rose from a year earlier, especially in London, research data showed yesterday, marking a strong start to the post-Christmas bargain-hunting spree.

Research group MRI Software said footfall rose 4% across all UK retail destinations on Dec 26.

Known in Britain as Boxing Day, the date that traditionally launches high-street sales was in the Victorian era the time when the rich would donate leftover food and

goods from Christmas Day festivities to the poor. Stores in central London saw the biggest jump, with MRI - formerly called Springboard - estimating a 10.6% jump in footfall, probably because of an inflow of tourists for the holidays. Overall shopper numbers were still weaker compared to pre-pandemic figures, with footfall 14.9% lower than 2019 levels, reflecting the hit to household spending from inflation and the shift towards online shopping.

"Many people may be tightening their purse strings given the cost of living status, or may still be spending time with their families on Boxing Day and not be heading out to stores and destinations until



Boxing Day footfall from shoppers was up 4% across all UK retail, high streets enjoyed a nearly 10% increase in shoppers on last Boxing Day, while central London saw footfall up 10.6% compared with last year.

later in the week," MRI Marketing and Insights Director Jenni Matthews said.

For all retail sales, including online and in-store, an analysis by GlobalData for internet marketing service VoucherCodes estimated a 2.9% decline this Boxing Day at

3.68bn pounds (\$4.69bn).

For the entire Dec 25-31 week, the report predicted a 3.8% fall. But sales in the run-up to Christmas increased from last year. Mastercard data, which measures both in-store and online retail sales, showed a 2.6% rise in sales

value year-on-year for the Nov 1-Dec 24 period. "UK consumer spend volume during the period peaked during Black Friday, as savvy shoppers looked out for promotions to make the most of their spending and navigate inflation," Mastercard said.

## Hunt to deliver budget on March 6 as election looms

Reuters  
London

British finance minister Jeremy Hunt will present the spring budget on March 6, in what is likely to be the government's last major chance to prepare the ground for an election that must be held by January 2025.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservatives are heavily trailing the main opposition Labour Party in the polls, but the country's weak economy and budget deficit mean Sunak and Hunt have little room for pre-election giveaways.

Many Conservative lawmakers have called for fresh tax cuts in the run-up to the election to help win back voters, many of whom are indicating they want change after 13 years of Conservative government.

According to the latest opinion poll by Ipsos in December, support for the Conservatives stood at 24%, far behind the opposition Labour Party's 41%.

Hunt's budget statement on March 6 will include tax and spending plans as well as new growth and borrowing forecasts and government debt issuance for the 2024/25 financial year. The Treasury Department announced the date on X on Wednesday, saying that Hunt had asked the country's Office for Budget Responsibility to prepare its forecasts for then.

Media reports in recent months have speculated the spring budget would contain new tax cuts, following on from breaks given to workers and businesses by Hunt in the autumn budget in November.

The Telegraph on Tuesday that Sunak was considering axing inheritance tax. While official data released in December showed that the budget picture has deteriorated, public sector net borrowing was 24.4bn pounds higher than in the April-November period a year earlier, a smaller debt interest bill thanks to slowing inflation that could restore some room for pre-election tax cuts.

## Self-driving cars could be on roads by 2026: minister

Reuters  
London

Self-driving cars could be on some British roads by 2026, the country's transport minister Mark Harper said yesterday. Cars with full self-driving technology are not currently permitted on Britain's roads but the government's Automated Vehicles (AV) legislation is going through parliament, meaning that a legal framework for them should be in place by the end of 2024, said Harper.

"Probably by as early as 2026 people will start seeing some elements of these cars that have full self-driving capabilities being rolled out," Harper told BBC Radio. "It'll be gradual...so there'll be companies rolling it out to be used in certain places." Critics of the technology, which has been trialled in the United States, say that the vehicles can cause crashes, and in California, regulators ordered General Motors' driverless car unit Cruise to remove its vehicles from state roads after an accident in October. Britain's Harper said that the technology had the potential to improve road safety.

"Everything I've seen about automated vehicles and self-driving technologies, it's very focused on keeping people safe," he said. Under the legislation announced in November, Britain plans for the makers rather than the owners of self-driving cars to be legally liable for any crashes, and the government has said the bill will protect users and promote safety in the AV industry.

## Birthday mania



Fans of Bollywood actor Salman Khan display his portrait outside the artist's residence to celebrate his birthday in Mumbai yesterday.

# India probes suspected human trafficking after nationals return

Reuters  
Ahmedabad

India has launched an investigation into how 303 Indians ended up on a chartered flight that was grounded in France last week because of suspected human trafficking, authorities in the western Indian state of Gujarat said yesterday.

Tipped off by an anonymous informant, French authorities on Friday prevented the plane from flying to its listed destination of Nicaragua from a refuelling stopover at Vetry airport in north-

eastern France. It had taken off from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with 11 unaccompanied minors among the passengers, 276 of whom returned to India on Tuesday.

Many of the Indians onboard hailed from Gujarat, officials said. Sanjay Kharat, a senior Gujarat police official, said authorities had obtained the names and addresses of 21 persons from the state who were on the flight, and that investigators were trying to determine who facilitated their travel.

"Our teams have already spoken with some of them... (or) their family members," he said.

The flight was operated by Romania's Legend Airlines. Its lawyer Liliana Bakayoko declined to name the client who chartered the plane, citing contractual confidentiality.

An official at India's home ministry, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Reuters the registration of the chartered flight and "people operating this entire nexus" had been identified, but declined to elaborate.

A ministry spokesperson did not respond to an email seeking further comment.

French authorities placed two of the passengers on "assisted

## The Indian home ministry official said Indian immigration officials were also being questioned to see if any children had left India unaccompanied

witness" status after investigating them for suspected people smuggling, while another 25 remained in France to apply for asylum. In France, "assisted witness" is an intermediate status between that of a witness and an indicted suspect. Reuters was not immediately able to speak with any of those who returned to India, with some declining to talk after emerging

from Mumbai airport and others hiding their faces with their hands or clothing.

The Indian home ministry official said Indian immigration officials were also being questioned to see if any children had left India unaccompanied.

"All these people landed in (the UAE) at different times, and they congregated to leave on the same

plane. They had legal tourist visas to enter Dubai," the official told Reuters. The plane was held in France a day after the US State Department said it would impose visa restrictions targeting individuals operating charter flights into Nicaragua for migrants heading towards the US-Mexico border.

According to US Customs and Border Protection data, the number of Indians caught trying to enter the United States illegally has tripled over the past three years. US authorities caught 96,917 Indians between October 2022 and September 2023, up from 30,662 three years earlier.



**CHAIRMAN**

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

**Deputy Managing Editor**

K T Chacko

- 📍 P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
- ✉ editor@gulf-times.com
- ☎ 44350478 (News),
- ☎ 44466404 (Sport),
- ☎ 44466636 (Home delivery)
- ☎ 44350474
- 📘 facebook.com/gulftimes
- 🐦 twitter.com/gulftimes\_Qatar
- 📷 instagram.com/gulftimes
- 📺 youtube.com/GulftimesVideos

**GULF TIMES**

# What's next after US Apple Watch import ban?

A ban restricting imports of Apple's popular Apple Watches into the United States has gone into effect. Here is a look at what the ban means for consumers and what is next for Apple.

**Why was the ban imposed?**

The US International Trade Commission in October ordered Apple to stop importing and selling Apple Watches based on a complaint from medical-monitoring technology company Masimo.

The ITC, a federal agency that handles international trade disputes, determined that an Apple Watch feature for reading blood-oxygen levels infringes Masimo's pulse oximetry patents.

The administration of President Joe Biden had 60 days, until December 25, to veto the order based on public policy concerns but chose not to do so.

## Apple is expected to appeal the ban to the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington

**How are US Apple Watch sales affected?**

Cupertino, California-based Apple announced on December 18 it would preemptively pause US sales of its latest high-end Series 9 and Ultra 2 models ahead of the Christmas Day deadline. The ITC's order does not affect the lower-priced Apple Watch SE, which does not have pulse-oximetry capabilities and remains on sale at Apple.

The ITC decision says it applies only to Apple Watches with the light-based pulse oximetry capability in question, but does not specify which models with that technology

are affected. Apple first introduced pulse oximetry in its Series 6 watches, and Masimo has argued that all Apple Watches with the technology infringe its patents.

Apple said it would also stop replacing out-of-warranty watches going back to Series 6 based on the ban.

The ban specifically applies to Apple and its "affiliated companies, parents, subsidiaries, or other related business entities," and may not affect other retailers selling Apple Watches.

Series 9 Apple Watches were still available from sellers including Amazon, Best Buy and Walmart as of December 26.

**What are the accusations against Apple?**

Masimo, which released a watch last year that also reads blood-oxygen levels and tracks other health indicators, accused Apple of hiring away its employees and stealing its technology after discussing a potential collaboration. A jury trial on Masimo's allegations in California federal court ended with a mistrial in May and has not yet been rescheduled.

Apple has called Irvine, California-based Masimo's legal actions a scheme to clear a path for its competing smartwatch, and has countersued Masimo for patent infringement in Delaware federal court.

**What are Apple's options now?**

Apple is expected to appeal the ban to the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington. The ITC on December 20 rejected Apple's bid to pause the ban during an appeal.

Apple is also reportedly working on software changes to enable its watches to operate without infringing Masimo's patents. It could resume importing and selling the watches if US Customs and Border Protection approves the workaround.

Masimo has said that its patents cover hardware, and that a software fix would not work.

Masimo CEO Joe Kiani has also indicated that he is willing to settle the dispute.

**To Advertise**

✉ gtadv@gulf-times.com

**Display**

☎ 44466621 ☎ 44418811

**Classified**

☎ 44466609 ☎ 44418811

✉ gtcad@gulf-times.com

**Subscription**

✉ circulation@gulf-times.com

© 2023 Gulf Times. All rights reserved

## Economic unease in Buenos Aires



Members of the Argentine Workers' General Confederation and social organisations attend a protest against new Argentine President Javier Milei's economic reforms outside the Justice Palace in Buenos Aires yesterday. (Reuters)

# Is France's economy now stronger than Germany's?

Over the past two years, France has attracted more than twice as much FDI as Germany

By Marcel Fratzscher  
Berlin

The contrast between the French and German economies has rarely appeared so stark.

While France continues to enjoy surprisingly strong growth and is increasingly attractive to both foreign and domestic investors, Germany is struggling – even if it is far from being the sick man of Europe – owing to a severe political crisis that has cast a shadow over its economic outlook and is weighing heavily on economic sentiment.

But this interpretation overlooks a fundamental fact: Germany and France are more interdependent than ever. To maintain economic growth and assert their influence globally, they must work together to strengthen the European Union.

The French economy demonstrated remarkable resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2022 energy crisis. Over the past two years, France has boosted its competitiveness, improved its business environment, and attracted more than twice as much foreign direct investment as Germany.

By contrast, Germany's declining competitiveness has forced it to rely on substantial subsidies to lure international investors and support its own industry. Consequently, while France is expected to grow by 1% in 2023, German GDP is expected to contract, followed by minimal growth in 2024.

These diverging trajectories can be attributed to three main factors. First, the French presidential system allows President Emmanuel Macron to set clear priorities and implement new measures quickly. This has enabled Macron to pursue major reforms

of France's pension system and labour market, streamline existing regulations, and establish bold industrial-policy goals that are now beginning to yield significant returns, including steady declines in unemployment.

Meanwhile, Germany is grappling with political gridlock. The so-called traffic-light coalition – comprising Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democratic Party, the Greens, and the Free Democrats – is failing. Deep ideological divisions have led to a political impasse that is threatening to paralyse the country, reflected in the government's ongoing struggle to finalise its 2024 budget.

Germany's complex federal system, known for its robust checks and balances, was designed to cement its democratic principles and prevent a return to authoritarianism. As such, it prioritises stability over speed and flexibility. This preference is now taking a toll on the economy, as Germany urgently needs to implement major regulatory, fiscal, industrial, and trade reforms.

Another critical difference between France and Germany lies in their different approaches to economic openness. Germany's postwar economic model has relied heavily on exports, which now account for nearly half of the country's total economic output. This model has been shaped by political forces, foreign-policy preferences, and – before the euro – by monetary policies centred around a strong Deutsche Mark.

Moreover, Germany's economic and fiscal policies have historically favoured the industrial sector, from automobiles to chemicals and mechanical engineering. This fixation has led German politicians to focus on boosting the industrial sector's share of economic output, which is currently nearly double that of France.

Despite these differences, the economies of France and Germany have far more in common than is generally acknowledged. While France has outperformed Germany over the past four years, it is still catching up to the remarkable economic boom Germany experienced in the 2010s. Notably, Germany has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Europe, and its companies have maintained their strong global market shares.

Moreover, in response to the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and heightened geopolitical tensions, both Germany and France have pursued increasingly protectionist economic agendas. Both have adopted national industrial policies that involve subsidising domestic companies through reduced electricity prices, direct financial assistance, and various tax benefits, and have effectively launched a subsidy race to attract foreign investors and multinational companies such as Tesla and Intel. These measures are unfair to companies in weaker European economies, reduce competition, and risk undermining the single market, the EU's most significant economic achievement.

Both countries also have robust social-welfare systems in need of immediate reform. As inflation fuels social polarisation and political discord, far-right movements are gaining ground. The wave of populism and right-wing extremism engulfing many Western democracies is now heading for Germany. With the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) on course to win three key state elections in 2024, Germany could be facing an even deeper political crisis.

Lastly, both Germany and France are threatened by the escalating geopolitical rivalry between the United States and

China. To maintain economic growth, both countries must move away from nationally oriented economic and fiscal policies and work together to reform and strengthen the EU. The latest reform of the Stability and Growth Pact is insufficient to foster investment and the transformation of the European economy.

On their own, the French and German economies lack the necessary scale to compete effectively against the world's two largest economies, especially in critical emerging sectors like artificial intelligence and digital services. Both governments would be wise, therefore, to focus on their similarities rather than their differences. Instead of competing against each other, they should unite around a common cause. After all, the prosperity France and Germany enjoy today can be largely attributed to their close partnership over the past 70 years, which has been instrumental in advancing Europe's economic interests.

Faced with strong opposition from Germany, Macron seems to have abandoned his ambitions to reform Europe. This is a mistake. Both governments should change course and bolster the EU's single market, complete the banking union, pursue capital-market union, develop a joint industrial policy, and streamline regulation and bureaucracy. And, not least, a common fiscal capacity is vital for crafting economic and industrial policies that embody European values and objectives. – Project Syndicate

● Marcel Fratzscher, a former senior manager at the European Central Bank, is President of the think-tank DIW Berlin and Professor of Macroeconomics and Finance at Humboldt University of Berlin.



On their own, the French and German economies lack the necessary scale to compete effectively against the world's two largest economies, the US and China, especially in critical emerging sectors like artificial intelligence and digital services, says the author.

# Delors, father of European integration, dies at 98

Reuters  
Brussels

Jacques Delors, a passionate advocate of post-war European integration and a founding father of the European Union's single currency project, has died, his family said. He was 98.

The French socialist served as president of the European Commission, the EU executive, for three terms — longer than any other holder of the office — from January 1985 until the end of 1994, a time of rapid change for Europe's emerging union.

The era was marked by forthright clashes of vision between federalists such as Delors, who believed passionately in an "ever closer union", and Britain's then prime minister Margaret Thatcher, who firmly resisted any shift of power to Brussels.

So antagonistic did relations between London and Brussels become towards the end of Thatcher's time in office, especially over the plans for monetary union, that Delors' death came three years after Britain fully exited the EU on December 31, 2020, following tortuous negotiations and 47 years of membership.

Delors, a Catholic trade unionist with a background in economic planning, was an outspoken force at the heart of the Brussels bureaucracy, tirelessly crafting compromises among member states to build the European single market, one of the EU's defining achievements.

He oversaw a period of rapid enlargement, with the 10-member European Com-



END OF AN ERA: Jacques Delors.

munity, as it was then called, growing to 12 with the accession in 1986 of Spain and Portugal and then adding Sweden, Austria and Finland in 1995.

The era was defined by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, as the tectonic plates underpinning modern Europe shifted. The post-war ideal of a unified continent — the dream of federalists — began to seem real.

Delors' commitment to a united Germany led to a close bond with then German chancellor Helmut Kohl and helped to cement the Franco-German relationship that re-

mains critical to the EU. Those who worked with Delors recall a man with endless energy and drive who was not afraid to lose his temper or twist the right arm if it might get the deal he believed possible.

"I like Delors above all for his intellect. He had the most formidable brain I ever encountered," Peter Sutherland, a former commissioner from Ireland, said of him in the 1990s. "But he was extremely tense, like a coiled spring."

Others describe the small, dapper man with heavy-framed glasses and grey hair swept back as someone capable of applying

"rudeness, finesse, insight and diplomatic skill" all at the same time "while promising more than there really was".

Of himself, Delors once said: "I don't hide. I make mistakes, I lose my temper. But people say, 'that guy, he's human.' I shall never be a great politician because I cannot get concerned about my image."

Jacques Lucien Jean Delors was born in Paris in 1925 to a devoutly Catholic family. He earned a degree in economics from the Sorbonne and followed his father into a career at the central bank.

A union member from a young age and a staunch defender of labour rights throughout his life, Delors joined the Socialist Party in the 1970s, carefully balancing his politics with his religious faith and a belief in a market economy.

After a two-year stint in the European Parliament, where he headed the economic affairs committee, he served as minister of finance, economics and budget under President Francois Mitterrand, gaining a front-row seat on the shaping of economic policy in Europe in the early 1980s.

As president of the Commission from 1985 he was convinced of the need to forge deeper economic and monetary ties among the member states of the European Community.

That passion for integration is what would set him on a collision course with Thatcher, who saw in Delors all the dangers of a French-dominated European super-state.

Their bristling animosity came to a head in 1988, after Delors made a pro-Europe

speech to Britain's Trade Union Congress, an enemy of Thatcherism, prompting a severe retort from Thatcher in a speech in Bruges weeks later.

The blood rose again in 1990, when Thatcher's government was on its last legs and Britain was becoming isolated in Europe.

Challenged in parliament over her Europe policy, Thatcher said: "The president of the Commission, Mr Delors, said...he wanted the European Parliament to be the democratic body of the Community, he wanted the Commission to be the executive and he wanted the Council of Ministers to be the Senate. No! No! No!"

Delors ushered through the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which established the European Union, and launched the single market in 1993, finally stepping down in December 1994.

He decided not to run for the French presidency in the 1995 election and remained mostly preoccupied with European issues, setting up his own think-tank, Notre Europe, and supporting groups dedicated to federalism.

He spoke often during Europe's 2010-2013 debt crisis about his belief in the single currency, the euro, while acknowledging its faults as a project launched with strong political will but insufficient economic underpinning.

Delors is survived by his daughter Martine Aubry, a French politician who is mayor of Lille and who campaigned to be the socialist candidate for the French presidency in 2011, losing to Francois Hollande.

## Eiffel Tower closed as staff go on strike

AFP  
Paris

The Eiffel Tower, one of the world's top tourist attractions, was closed yesterday after staff went on strike, the landmark's operator said.

The one-day stoppage on the 100th anniversary of the death of engineer Gustave Eiffel, who built the tower, was to protest against "the current way it is managed", the hard-left CGT union said in a statement.

The tower's operator SETE was "headed for disaster", it said.

The CGT said management was running the Eiffel Tower according to a business model that was "too ambitious and unsustainable" and that it said was based on an inflated estimate of future visitor numbers, while under-estimating construction costs.

SETE apologised to visitors, advising anyone with electronic tickets for yesterday "to check their email" for more information on their booking.

The Eiffel Tower — Paris's most famous landmark — attracts nearly 7mn visitors a year, around three-quarters of them foreigners, according to its website.

During the Covid pandemic numbers dropped sharply due to closures and travel restrictions, but recovered to 5.9mn in 2022.

The CGT said the tower's management was basing its future budget on 7.4mn annual visitors, although "this level has never been reached".

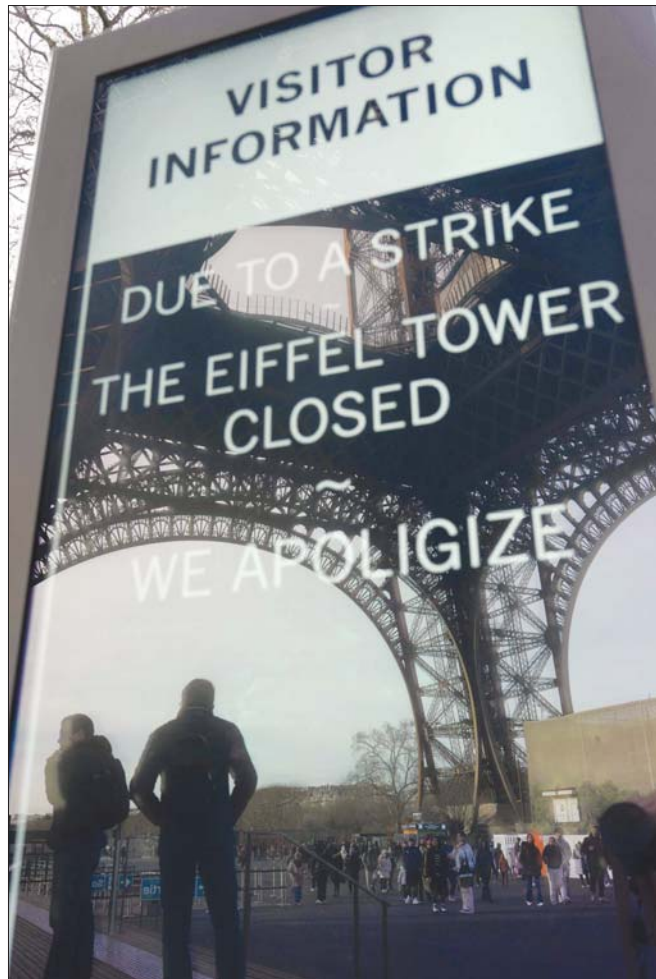
Stephane Dieu, a CGT union rep at the Eiffel Tower, told AFP that the monument was not sufficiently funded to pay for "very large maintenance work" that was needed.

"The Eiffel Tower is old, it's an old lady of 130 years," he said. "We have lifts here that were built in 1899."

Unless a financial deal could be made with the city of Paris, "we will run out of cash in 2025, despite our visitor numbers".

Some visitors who had hoped to go up the 1,083-foot structure expressed their frustration when they were turned away.

"We came here this morning to visit this magnificent Eiffel Tower," said Alessandro Monaco, 40, an Italian tourist.



A board informing visitors that the site is closed at the bottom of the Eiffel Tower in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

## Italian may regain use of hand after nerve transfer

Reuters  
Turin

A man may regain the use of his hand, left paralysed by a severe road accident, thanks to a pioneering nerve transfer operation from his partly amputated leg, doctors in northern Italy said.

Surgeons at Turin City Hospital (CTO) transferred part of the man's sciatic nerve, which controlled the movement of his amputated foot, to his brachial plexus, the network of nerves that connect the spinal cord to the shoulder, arm and hand.

"It's the first time that someone transfers a component of the sciatic nerve to the brachial plexus", Paolo Titolo, one of the surgeons who performed the operation, said in an interview with Reuters yesterday.

Marcello Gaviglio, a 55-year-old healthcare worker had to have half his left leg amputated after he was hit by a motor-bike five months ago while travelling to work on his moped.

He suffered serious injuries to his brachial plexus as well as his leg, leaving him unable to use either of his hands.

Because the part of the sciatic nerve that controlled his left foot was no long-

er needed, it could be transferred to the shoulder area in the operation carried out on December 21, potentially restoring the mobility to one of his hands.

Before it is clear if that is possible, Gaviglio will have to undergo around 5 months of post-operative care. For now, he is still unable to move the hand at all.

Nerve transfer surgery is not new, but it has not previously involved moving a nerve that normally controls the foot to an area that controls the hand.

"We think this is pioneering surgery because if it works it means that the brain plasticity can control also other parts of the body that we didn't expect and also opens new fields in neuro studies," Titolo said.

The aim is to restore "some grasp function" to the hand, which will then be able to help the other hand to do things, he added.

The procedure was the result of four years of research and was published in the medical journal Injury.

Gaviglio, the patient, said he had given little thought to the pioneering aspect of the surgery, he just felt it was an opportunity he should take advantage of.

"I thought about relying on a team of very good doctors and being able to move my hand again a little bit," he said.

## Poland liquidates all public media for restructuring

AFP  
Warsaw

Poland's new culture minister yesterday announced the liquidation of all public media, which have been seen as a mouthpiece of the previous populist-nationalist government, ahead of a restructuring.

Bartlomiej Sienkiewicz said the move would "guarantee the working and restructuring" of the public television and radio stations and

national press agency PAP while avoiding staff layoffs, according to a statement published on X.

"The liquidation status can be withdrawn at any time by the owner", the state, he wrote.

The latest action is likely to aggravate the standoff between the government and President Andrzej Duda, an ally of the previous administration who has criticised the government's reforms and vetoed subsidies to state media.

Prime Minister Donald Tusk's pro-EU government took power earlier this month after

eight years of rule by the right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) party.

It justified last week's sacking of the management of public media as a bid to restore "impartiality", after they were regularly accused of biased reporting, transmitting government propaganda and launching verbal attacks on the opposition under the PiS.

The move to sack the management prompted a sit-in by PiS lawmakers in the offices of the state broadcaster who say the reforms are an attack on media freedoms.

# German political heavyweight Wolfgang Schaeuble dies

AFP  
Berlin

Wolfgang Schaeuble (pictured), one of the most important figures in German politics for decades and an icon of budgetary rigour in the eurozone, has died aged 81, the German parliament said yesterday.

Schaeuble, who was a minister under chancellors Helmut Kohl and Angela Merkel, and played a key role in German reunification in 1990, died peacefully in the night, the Bild daily reported.

The current Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Schaeuble had "shaped our country for more than half a century".

"Germany has lost a sharp thinker, passionate politician and pugnacious democrat," Scholz wrote on X.

Merkel also paid tribute to Schaeuble in a statement shared by her office, describing him as "an outstanding personality... who shaped our country in many ways."

As finance minister for several years under Merkel, Schaeuble carved out a reputation as the guardian of German budgetary rigour, particularly during the Greek debt crisis.

Describing himself as "pitiless" in his management of Germany's public purse, he showed the same exactitude towards his euro partners, campaigning for tight fiscal discipline and insisting on stringent conditions for any bailout contribution by Berlin.

His harsh stance made him unpopular with many Greeks in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2007-2008 and the ensuing eurozone debt crisis.

Former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, who clashed with Schaeuble during the crisis, yesterday accused his erstwhile counterpart of having contributed to "the impoverishment of Greece".

"History will judge him harshly, but not more harshly than those



who succumbed to his destructive policies," he wrote on X.

Born in Freiburg in 1942, Schaeuble was the longest-serving member of the Bundestag, the lower house of parliament, where he had sat since 1972.

It was under former conservative leader Kohl that the pro-

European Schaeuble forged his career, rising through the ranks to eventually become chief of staff for the chancellor, to whom he was long seen as the heir apparent.

Together they oversaw Germany's national reunification, before personal tragedy struck Schaeuble

— an assassination attempt by a deranged man in 1990 left him badly injured and forced him to use a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

The son of a conservative politician, Schaeuble was known for his biting wit and unerring sense of duty. He was married with four children.

His biographer Peter Schuetz described him as the "most honest man" he knew, "even if he's not always the most charming".

After a slush-fund scandal shattered Kohl's reputation in the 1990s, Schaeuble spent a period in the political wilderness before making a comeback in 2002.

While Merkel refused to back him two years later for the role of federal president — instead picking former International Monetary Fund chief Horst Koehler — he became interior minister in 2005.

Schaeuble was criticised by civil liberties groups for curbing rights in response to the threat of extremist attacks.

However, Merkel rewarded him in 2009 when she tapped him for the more high-profile finance ministry.

Christine Lagarde, president of the European Central Bank, hailed Schaeuble as "one of the most influential European leaders of his generation".

"I personally witnessed his commitment to Europe, his intellectual rigour and his statesmanship," she wrote on X.

Schaeuble subsequently served as president of the Bundestag from 2017 until 2021, and remained a member of parliament up until his death.

He had been suffering from cancer for several years, according to Bild.

In a recent interview with Der Spiegel magazine, Schaeuble admitted he felt "lonely" as most of his peers were no longer around, but it did not appear to bother him.

"I can now observe my life as it comes to an end," he said. "I find it exciting to observe myself."



Environmental solidarity event held, showcasing the close ties between the QU community and the history and culture of Palestine.



# QU students in a show of deep-rooted solidarity with Palestinians

Qatar University (QU) students, in a powerful display of solidarity and cultural awareness, organised an artistic and environmental solidarity event demonstrating the close ties between the QU community and the history and culture of Palestine.

The Elia Club and the Environment and Sustainability Club, in conjunction with the Student Activities Administration, launched this initiative against the backdrop of exceptional circumstances in Gaza and the Palestinian territories facing aggression and human, environmental, and infrastructural devastation.

In a press statement, QU noted that the event aims to bolster solidarity with the Palestinian cause, enhance social awareness among students, integrate them into campus activities, and encourage active

participation in important social and political issues.

During her participation in planting trees in the designated area within QU's campus, Dr Eiman Mustafawi, vice-president for Student Affairs, expressed pride in the university's students for their proactive engagement and positive solidarity with the Palestinian cause. The students contributed significantly by forming a map on the ground, symbolising the deep-rooted history and resilient people across every city and neighbourhood in Palestine.

Dr Mohamed Diab, associate vice-president for Student Life and Services, highlighted the significance of this gesture, acknowledging the unique step taken by the students of QU to convey a message of unconventional solidarity filled with resilience and roots.

Dr Diab emphasised the importance of student life in providing opportunities for such activities to create an educational and developmental environment, shaping students' personalities and their ability to integrate into society and engage with significant issues.

Engineer Mai Hamad Fetais, director of Facilities and General Services Department, affirmed the administration's constant endeavour to support QU students and affiliates in achieving their goals through exceptional activities.

The administration contributed by allocating a green area within the university campus to serve as a symbolic address of solidarity with Palestine, providing various plants typical of different Palestinian cities.

A specialised team of farmers supported the students in success-

fully executing this experience.

Jaziya al-Asmar, Elia club vice-president, reiterated the students' belief in the pivotal role they play in raising awareness about social issues, stating: "We believe in the vital role of students in raising awareness about social issues, especially those affecting the hearts of our people in Gaza and Palestine overall."

Al-Asmar added that Palestinian people are deeply rooted in their land, and "we all stand in solidarity with every grain of soil and every drop of pure blood that narrates the story of this resilient people and this sacred land. Our students enthusiastically participated in planting various Palestinian plants on our beloved university campus, serving as a sustainable reminder of Palestine and its perpetuity as a symbol of pride, dignity, and resilience."

**WEEKEND DEALS** | العرض متاح في جميع منافذ سفاري بتاريخ: 28/12/2023  
Promotion available at all Safari outlets on: 28-12-2023  
Purchase limit may apply. Offer valid until stock last only. قد يكون هناك حدود للمشتريات العرض ساري حتى نفاد الكمية

 <b>15.75 QR</b> دريسكول الفراولة أمريكي 400 جم 1 علبة <b>Driscoll's Strawberry USA 250g 1Box</b>	 <b>14.75 QR</b> دريسكول توت العليق اسود أمريكي 170 جم 1 علبة <b>Driscoll's Blackberry USA 170g 1Box</b>	 <b>5.25 QR</b> توت افريقي 125 جم 1 علبة <b>Blueberry Africa 125g 1Box</b>	 <b>3.50 QR</b> رمان مصري اكجم <b>Pomegranate Egypt 1kg</b>	 <b>2.50 QR</b> مندرين باكستاني اكجم <b>Mandarin Pakistan 1kg</b>	
 <b>18.50 QR</b> حبار عماني طازج اكجم <b>Fresh Squid Oman 1kg</b>	 <b>3.75 QR</b> سردين عمان طازج اكجم <b>Fresh Sardine Oman 1kg</b>	 <b>24.50 QR</b> سلمون طازج ايراني اكجم <b>Fresh Salmon Iran 1kg</b>	 <b>21.00 QR</b> لحم بقري محلي بالعظم اكجم <b>Local Beef With Bone 1kg</b>	 <b>26.00 QR</b> لحم ضاني تنزاني اكجم <b>Tanzanian Mutton 1kg</b>	 <b>8.75 QR</b> برديكس دجاج شوية 900 جم <b>Perdix Chicken Griller 900gm</b>
 <b>17.00 QR</b> ابو فوس حليب كامل الدسم لتر 3 احبة <b>Rainbow Rtd Organic Full Cream Milk 1ltr x 3Pcs</b>	 <b>2.75 QR</b> فطرات مياه معدنية 1.5 لتر 6 احبة <b>Qatarat Mineral Water 1.5Ltr x 6pcs</b>	 <b>18.25 QR</b> جبنة ابو الولد 480 جم 2 احبة <b>Regal Picon 480gm x 2pcs</b>	 <b>12.00 QR</b> علي كافيه كلاسيك 3 في 1 20 جم 3 احبة <b>Alicafe Classic 3in1 20gm x 3'S</b>	 <b>60.00 QR</b> نيدو كيس حليب مدعم 2250 جم <b>Nido Fortified Pouch 2250gm</b>	 <b>14.50 QR</b> ليبتون شاي العلامة الصفراء اكجم احبة <b>Lipton Yellow Label Tea Bag Fresh 100'S x 2gm x 1pc</b>
 <p><b>6 KG GOLD</b> Spend QR.50/- &amp; get an E-Raffle coupon to Win 6 kg Gold Win 1 kg Gold in Every Lucky Draw PROMOTION STARTS FROM: 20-07-2023 to 20-04-2024 4<sup>th</sup> Lucky Draw On :17-01-2024 At Safari Hypermarket, Barwa Village</p>			 <b>19.50 QR</b> برليمينت دلايت دلايت ارز بسمتي 4.54 كجم <b>Parliament Daily Delight Basmati Rice 4.54kg</b>	 <b>20.75 QR</b> اوروما زيت دوار الشمس 3 لتر احبة <b>Orima Sunflower Oil 3ltr x 1pc</b>	 <b>11.00 QR</b> تايد مسحوق غسيل 1.5 كجم احبة مشكل <b>Tide Detergent Powder 1.5kg Asrtd. x 1pc</b>

Safari Mall, Abu Hamour, Tel: +974 44191441, Safari Hypermarket, Salwa Road, Tel: +974 44099088, Safari Hypermarket, Al Khor, Tel: +974 44482555, Safari Hypermarket, Barwa Village, Tel: +974 44118704, Safari Hypermarket, Industrial Area, Tel: +974 44689058

www.facebook.com/safarhypermarket | www.instagram.com/safarimallqatar