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THURSDAY FEBRUARY 15, 2024
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**Turkey ready
to cooperate
with Egypt
on Gaza**

CAIRO

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday that Turkey was ready for cooperation with Egypt to rebuild Gaza as he made his first visit to the country since 2012.

Erdogan and his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah Al Sissi held a joint news conference in Cairo after bilateral talks, taking a big step toward rebuilding relations between the regional powers. Erdogan said the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza topped the agenda of their talks. "We will continue to cooperate and stand in solidarity with our Egyptian brothers to put an end to the bloodshed in Gaza," he said, adding Turkey was determined to step up talks with Egypt at all levels in order to establish peace and stability in the region.

President Erdogan also vowed to boost trade with Egypt to \$15 billion in the short term, adding that the two countries were evaluating energy and defence co-operation.

"I'd like to emphasise the continued connection between our peoples, over the past ten years, while our trade and investment relationship saw steady growth," Al Sissi said.

—Reuters
SEE ALSO P9

Modi opens region's biggest Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi

SHAIKH NAHAYAN: STRUCTURE A SYMBOL OF TOLERANCE AND UNITY IN UAE

ABU DHABI

BY SAJILA SASEENDRAN
Senior Reporter

The UAE yesterday scripted a new chapter in history with the opening of the Middle East's biggest and Abu Dhabi's first Hindu temple, BAPS Hindu Mandir, by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

During the public dedication ceremony of the Dh350m stone temple in Abu Mureikha, Shaikh Nahayan Mabararak Al Nahayan, Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, shared the Indian community's optimism for the temple's success, envisioning it as a symbol of tolerance and unity in the UAE.

Modi thanks President

Modi, in turn, thanked the UAE President His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan's generosity, dedicating the temple to symbolise the shared heritage and friendship between India and Arab countries.

"Thank you is a small word," he said and urged the audience to give a standing ovation to the UAE's leader and applauded him. Modi praised the temple's role in fostering diversity and inclusion, aligning with Shaikh Mohammad's vision of fraternity. He expressed immense



Courtesy: X/@narendramodi

■ Narendra Modi is flanked by two Hindu priests in front of the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi which he inaugurated yesterday. The structure was built at a cost of Dh350 million.

gratitude to Shaikh Mohammad, recognising the temple as a new UAE landmark contributing to the growing people-to-people connections and more visitors to the country. Modi

highlighted the historic trade ties between India and Arab nations, portraying the temple as a symbol of their growing ties in cultural and heritage connections. Thousands from

across the world attended the invitee-only event while only the priests and volunteers attended a consecration event earlier in the morning.

SEE ALSO P2

NATION

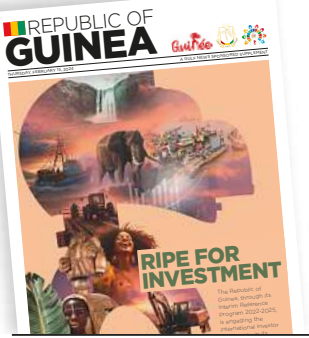
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Israel hits villages in south Lebanon

Four killed, nearly a dozen wounded in strikes responding to Hezbollah rockets

BEIRUT

A barrage of Israeli strikes on villages across southern Lebanon yesterday killed four people and wounded nearly a dozen, two Lebanese security sources said, as Israel said it had responded to Hezbollah rocket fire with air strikes and other bombardment.

A woman and her two children were killed in an Israeli strike on the village of Al Sawana, the sources said. Lebanon's powerful armed group Hezbollah said a strike on a separate town killed one of its fighters.

Eleven people were wounded across the south and the level of damage was "vast", the sources said.

Hezbollah and the Israeli military have been exchanging fire for more than four months, after the Lebanese armed group launched rockets across the disputed frontier.

Hezbollah did not announce any operations yesterday. The head of its executive council said that Israel's attacks onto Lebanese territory yesterday "cannot pass without a response".

Ilana Stein, an Israeli government spokesperson, told journalists that "numerous launches" identified as coming from Lebanon yesterday morning had left one Israeli woman dead and another eight hospitalised.

The cross-border shelling has already killed more than 200 people in Lebanon, including more than 170 Hezbollah fighters, as well as around a dozen Israeli troops and some Israeli civilians.

—Reuters

**Hezbollah and the
Israeli military have
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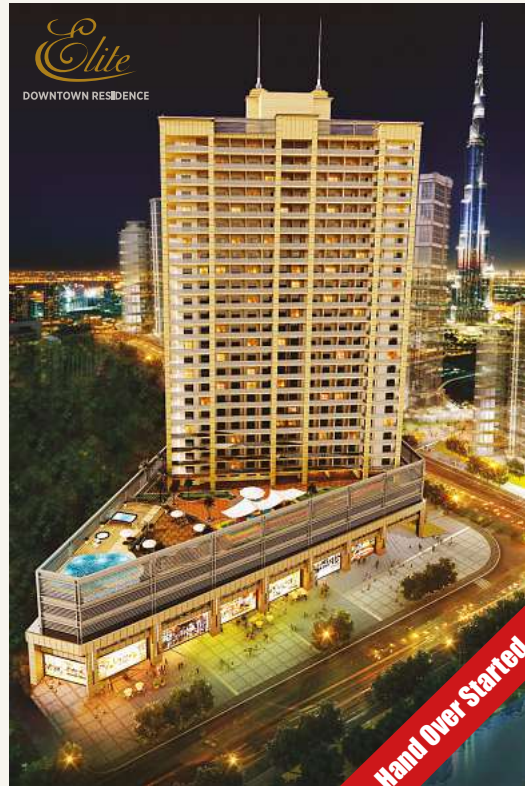
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