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President directs SLICP to pay insurance claim to nominees of a deceased policyholder

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has directed the State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLICP) to pay a death insurance claim worth Rs 300,000 along with a profit to the family members of a deceased policyholder, who had not been paid the claim for almost three years.

The president further asked the SLICP to form a panel of doctors to devise a policy on pre-insurance tests of proposed policyholders. The president gave these directions while rejecting a representation filed by SLICP against the order

of the Wafaqi Mohtasib, the President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Sunday. Saad Taheer (the complainant) alleged that his father had purchased a life insurance policy from the agency in 2013 for the sum assured of Rs 300,000/- with an annual premium of Rs 18,406. His father died in 2020, and he filed the death insurance claim which was repudiated by SLICP on the ground that the deceased had a pre-insurance ailment of hepatitis C, which he had deliberately hidden.

Feeling aggrieved, he approached the Wafaqi

Mohtasib which asked SLICP to reconsider the matter and provide appropriate relief to the nominees of the deceased policyholder. SLICP, then, filed a representation with the President against Mohtasib's order. The president held a hearing on the matter, and after listening to both sides, gave his decision.

He pointed out that the deceased purchased the policy in 2013, whereas SLICP had produced copies of medical reports of the year 2015 and all reports pertained to the post-insurance period and were

not worth consideration. He further noted that the confidential report of the SLICP field officer had also declared the insured as healthy at the time of issuance of the policy and had clearly stated that she knew the insured for the last two years. The president also referred to Section 80 of the Insurance Ordinance 2000, which provided that no policy of life insurance, after the expiry of two years from the date on which it was affected, shall be called into question by the insurer on the ground that a statement in the proposal.



ISLAMABAD: Activists of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) hold placards and Philistine national flags during Al-Aqsa Million March to express their solidarity with Palestinians in Federal Capital. (Inset) Chief of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) Saad Hussain Rizvi lead by Al-Aqsa Million March.



DOHA: Chairman JUI-F Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman in a group photo with the Leader of Hamas Ismail Haniyeh and others.

'Muslims must unite against Israel's atrocities', Hamas chief tells Fazl

ISLAMABAD (INP): ISLAMABAD: With Israel continuing its relentless bombing of the Gaza Strip, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman met Palestinian resistance group Hamas's leader Ismail Haniyeh and former chief Khaled Mashal in Qatar on Sunday.

The JUI-F chief is in Qatar where he is expected to reach out to the Arab world leadership to find a way to provide aid to Gaza which has been facing a dire humanitarian crisis due to the ongoing Israeli bombing of the strip following the October 7 attack by Hamas.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman

has urged all the Muslim countries to give all kinds of support to the Palestinians.

Addressing a gathering of JUI-F workers in Qatar, he said that he was doing all out efforts to highlight the Palestine issue in Pakistan, said a press release issued here Sunday.

In this regard, meetings were held in each province, which was also participated by the representative of Hamas in Pakistan.

In the second phase, Muslim countries, especially the Arab countries, were making a dialogue to highlight the importance of Palestine issue.

Rehman was in Qatar as the president of Hamas

is in Qatar. Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Qatar organized a program for him.

Addressing the workers, Rehman urged all Muslim countries, to give all kinds of support to the Palestinians.

According to a tweet posted by the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) on social media platform X, party chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman called on Haniyeh and Mashal in Doha, Qatar, and discussed with them the ongoing situation in Gaza.

Fazl was accompanied by a delegation including Maulana Rashid Mahmood Soomro and Mufti Abrar Ahmed, reached Qatar on Saturday, JUI-F spokesperson Aslam Ghori said.

Govt firmly believes in freedom of press & expression: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi on Sunday said the government fully and firmly believed in the freedom of press and expression that was enshrined in the Constitution.

Addressing the 5th anniversary of Independent Urdu, the minister congratulated the management and staff of the media outlet on achieving a milestone in its five-year journey.

He appreciated the role of the Independent Urdu in promoting digital Urdu journalism in Pakistan, besides providing quality contents to its audience through different means.

"The platform has contributed significantly to the progress of digital Urdu journalism in the country," he remarked on the occasion while expressing best wishes for the media outlet.



HYDERABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindhi talking to media persons during the PM Youth Skill Development Program held at Sindh Museum.

General Election to be held on time in a free, fair, transparent manner

HYDERABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister of Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindhi, has said that the general election will be held on time in a free, fair, and transparent manner, as announced by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

He expressed these views while talking to the media after the inauguration of the Government College

of Technology Hyderabad as the assessment center for the Skill Verification Program (Takamol) here on Sunday.

The Federal Minister said that Takamol was that institution in Saudi Arabia that was conducting vocational tests on students who were desirous of making a career in the vocational field and going to Karachi for such tests.

NADRA enhances vigilance against cyber security breaches

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Database and Registration Authority plays a crucial role in ensuring the stability and security of Pakistan.

According to a report, Pakistan has long been plagued by criminals using fake identity cards. The primary purpose of creating counterfeit identity cards and other official documents is to undermine the security and stability of the country, a concern shared by many nations.

Several external factors, such as the availability of fake documents and lax data verification procedures, contribute to the issuance of counterfeit identity cards.

Internal factors, like the corruption of some employees seeking financial gains, further exacerbate the problem.

In Pakistan, a robust system implemented by Nadra has identified and revoked more than 18,000 illegal identity cards.

ECP summons list of private schools, teachers for General Election

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan has summoned the list of private schools for polling in general election, a spokesperson of the electoral body said.

The ECP will also setup polling stations in private schools' buildings for convenience of voters.

The election commis-

sion collecting details of private schools' teachers and buildings.

District election commissioner has written letter to the EDO Education and demanded details.

The services of private schools' teachers will be availed in case of shortage of the government servants.

Flood-affected areas Pakistan successfully secures approximately \$3b, approves 21 development projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): Since the launch of Resilience, Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (4RF) framework launched by the Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiatives, the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) successfully approved 21 development projects worth \$3 billion for flood-affected areas of Pakistan while securing maximum pledges committed in Geneva for flood 2022.

Last year Pakistan faced an unprecedented devastation due to torrential rains and flooding in most parts of the country, particularly in Balochistan and Sindh affecting 33 million people resulting in economic losses worth \$30 billion, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

In response, the government had devised a comprehensive 4RF framework, which proposed effective coordination and participation arrangements among federal and provincial governments, development partners, donors, international and national NGOs and academic and private sectors.

In January this year, Pakistan successfully secured pledges of \$ 10 billion from donors during the International Conference on "Climate Resilient Pakistan", jointly hosted by Pakistan and the UN in Geneva. While making concerted efforts to

implement the 4RF framework the CWDP successfully approved 21 development projects which include Emergency Flood Assistance Project (EFAP) on Farm Water Management component worth \$475.00million, Access to Clean Energy worth \$47.00m, DRR project for Rehabilitation/Reconstruction worth \$31.28m; Emergency Flood Assistance Project worth \$8.00m; Post-Flood 2022 Reconstruction Program: Resilience Enhancement and Livelihood worth \$400.00m; Sindh irrigated Agriculture Productivity Enhancement Project worth \$ 8.30m; Competitive & Livable City of Karachi worth \$27.00m.

Rallies held in P'abad in solidarity with Palestinians

ISLAMABAD (INP): Protest rallies to express solidarity with oppressed Palestinians were taken out in Islamabad Sunday. Hundreds of people took part in the rallies and chanted slogans against Israeli continued aggression and atrocities being perpetrated in Gaza.

They also called on international community to play its role and stop genocide of Palestinians.

At the United Nations, Pakistan has advocated the right of Palestinians to establish an independent and viable state within the borders of pre-1967, with Al-Aqsa as its capital.

Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York Munir Akram during General Assembly's Fourth Committee meeting said first and foremost a ceasefire is required in Gaza.

Report quoted petroleum division sources as saying that there is an urgent need to increase fuel storage capacity. According to the sources, petroleum companies have to store petroleum products for 21 days, the government wants the strategic petroleum reserves to be for a period of at least three months, however, the final reserves and the period can be determined only after a careful assessment of the country's needs.

Govt decides to increase strategic reserves of petroleum

ISLAMABAD (Online): Caretaker federal government has decided to increase the strategic reserves of petroleum.

According to media reports, the caretaker government has decided to increase the strategic petroleum reserves due to the situation in the Middle East, the strategic petroleum reserves will be kept by PSO.

Nawaz to commence PML-N poll campaign next week

LAHORE (INP): With the official announcement of the election date, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif is gearing up to campaign across Pakistan, starting next week. The three-time prime minister returned to Islamabad in October after spending four years in self-imposed exile in London. Upon his return, Nawaz addressed a massive crowd of PML-N workers and supporters in his hometown, Lahore, where he reaffirmed his deep affection for the Pakistani people.

NA Speaker flays Israeli Minister's statement of using nuclear weapons

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf has strongly condemned the Israeli minister's statement about using nuclear weapons on the Gaza Strip.

The threat of using nuclear weapons on innocent Palestinians is a testament to Israeli brutality and warmongering, said the NA Speaker in a statement on Sunday. Ashraf said Israel, in lust for power, was bombing Gaza indiscriminately, where millions of Palestinian citizens, especially children, women, and the elderly, have become victims of its aggression. He urged the world powers to take immediate steps to stop Israel's insanity and war frenzy.

First phase of Raiwand Ijtima concludes with prayers for Pak, Muslims

LAHORE (APP): The first phase of the three-day Tableeghi Ijtima concluded in Raiwind on Sunday with special prayers led by Maulana Muhammad Ibrahim for the prosperity and solidarity of the country and unity of the Muslim world.

Hundreds of thousands of people from across Pakistan and other countries attended the annual congregation in Raiwind, about 36 kilometers from Lahore.



KARACHI: Convener MQM-P Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddique addressing the dinner hosted in honour of MQM-P Legal Aid Committee.

Nadeem says: 'Attacks on Gaza's hospitals condemnable'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr Nadeem Jan on Sunday said that attacks on hospitals and healthcare workers in Gaza are highly regrettable.

In a statement, the minister said all such attacks should be stopped immediately.

He said health workers should be given access to the injured.

PUC stands united against terrorism, calls for ceasefire in Gaza

LAHORE (APP): The Central Executive and Consultative Body of Pakistan Ulema Council on Sunday convened a significant meeting, addressing the current situation in Pakistan, Palestine, and the Islamic world.

More than two hundred members of the PUC executive and consultative

body participated in this gathering, presided over by Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi.

In a comprehensive declaration, the meeting emphasized that hostile forces, including India and its allies, are allegedly involved in acts of terrorism within Pakistan.

PTDC planning to establish TIC at Gwadar airport

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) was planning to establish a modern Tourist Information Center (TIC) at New Gwadar International Airport to facilitate the foreign and local tourists about their destination.

Talking to APP, a PTDC official said the establishment of TIC would provide comprehensive information to tourists thronging to Pakistan from various countries to enjoy the beauty of recreational sites of Balochistan province. An official said that

TIC would not only play a pivotal role in promoting tourism globally but also emphasize the need for state-of-the-art facilities. He highlighted the growing significance of Gwadar as a tourist destination, attracting visitors from across the country and around the world.

He said that Caretaker Minister of State for Tourism Wasi Shah was committed to construct Tourist Information Center at Gwadar airport as soon as possible to provide all kinds of information and facilities to tourists.



LAHORE: Mayor of London Borough of Hounslow Afzal Kayani is addressing press conference at the Press Club.

Voices of Compassion: Advocating for Human Rights in Pakistan

By Ayesha Rafiq

women who have achieved greatness in various fields, but they are often the exception rather than the rule. It is time to break free from the chains of gender bias and empower every Pakistani woman to realize her full potential.

Two struggles



Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

The year 1947 witnessed the emergence of two disputes — Palestine and Kashmir. Both remain unresolved. At the heart of both disputes is the unfulfilled right of two peoples to self-determination. Both are protracted cases of resistance to foreign occupation.

the Partition Plan of 1947, Jammu and Kashmir, being a Muslim-majority state and with borders contiguous with Pakistan, should have joined the latter. When the Hindu maharaja of Kashmir dalled, the tribals from Pakistan's frontier region rose up and liberated a segment of the state.

non-Kashmiris from different parts of India and offering them domiciles and voting rights. Pakistanis have always stood for the rights of Palestinians to have an independent and viable state of their own.

There has been voices in Pakistan, which believe that by not recognising Israel, we have become a target of Jewish lobbies in the US. Another argument is that the Indo-Israel nexus is working against the interests of Pakistan and Kashmiris.

Despite being a nation known for its religious diversity, there are instances of persecution and discrimination against religious minorities. Respect for the rights and beliefs of all citizens, regardless of their faith, is a fundamental pillar of human rights.

deep sense of compassion, not criticism. Every nation faces its unique challenges and struggles, and Pakistan is no exception. The people of Pakistan have shown remarkable resilience and strength in the face of adversity.

Commerce News



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali addressing the ceremony organized by Peshawar Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industries.

PIAF chairman stress structural reforms for sustainable eco. growth

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) Faheemur Rehman Saigol has said the real answer to country's problems lies in the structural reforms, as there are a number of inefficiencies in tax collection, which must be removed.

LESCO recovers over Rs 8.6m from 341 defaulters

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO), in collaboration with Tehsildars (Recovery), has recovered Rs 8.6 million from 341 chronic defaulters in all five districts - Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara - on the 53rd day of its recovery campaign.

Stable monetary policy leads to sustainable growth, attracting foreign investment

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman and Chairman Kyrgyzstan Trade House Meher Kashif Younis Sunday said stability in monetary policy is a cornerstone of sustainable economic growth and an indispensable factor in attracting foreign direct investment.

Poppy growth down 95% in Afghanistan since Taliban ban: UN

UNITED NATIONS (INP): Poppy cultivation and opium production have plunged 95 percent in Afghanistan since Taliban authorities banned the crop, according to a UN report published Sunday.

Türkiye aims growing EV market: Tayyip

ISTANBUL (Xinhua/APP): Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday said Türkiye was proceeding on the path of having a rapidly growing electric vehicle (EV) market after launching its first domestically-produced electric car TOGG last year.

SCCI fundraiser for Palestine on 6th

SIALKOT (APP): Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Abdul Ghafoor Malik has said that 2.2 million refugees in Gaza are suffering from severe humanitarian crisis due to the worst siege by Israel.



ISLAMABAD: People purchasing traditional items from stalls setup during Ten-Days 'Folk Festival Lok Mela' at Lok Virsa.

82 power pilferers netted across the MEPCO region

MULTAN (APP): Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO) teams have raided and caught 82 power pilferers during ongoing operations across the region. The task force teams have raided at various places and registered cases against 50 power pilferers, while nine power pilferers were arrested while stealing electricity.

Amidst global challenges Chairman PHSA highlights urgent need for agricultural sector diversification

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan Hitech Hybrid Seed Association (PHSA) Shahzad Ali Malik Sunday said in emerging global challenges, it has become increasingly evident that the diversification of our agricultural sector is the need of the hour to meet ever increasing food staple needs in the wake climate change.

Ulema, Mushayekh express solidarity with Pak forces

LAHORE (APP): In a significant declaration, the Pakistan Ulema Council gathered over two hundred members of its Executive and Consultative Body to express solidarity with Pakistani forces in their fight against terrorism. The declaration, led by Central Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, highlighted the involvement of hostile powers, including India and its allies, in terrorist

incidents within Pakistan. The declaration called upon the international community to take immediate steps against India's continued support for terrorism and commended the Pakistani nation, army, and security agencies for their commendable response to recent terrorist incidents. Ulema, Mashayekh, and religious scholars from across the country voiced their support for Pakistan's Army and security agencies in the

battle against extremism and terrorism. The successful thwarting of a terrorist attack on the Mianwali PAF Airbase was observed as a point of pride. Furthermore, the Pakistan Ulema Council affirmed its endorsement of the Paigham-e-Pakistan narrative and decrees, and plans to hold Paigham-e-Pakistan Conventions nationwide. The declaration also emphasised that attacks on Pakistan's armed forces,

security institutions, government, and non-government installations are not permissible under any circumstances. Armed struggle by any individual, party, or group is not legally permissible in Pakistan, and the government reserves the right to take legal action against those who engage in such activities. Turning their attention to the dire situation in Palestine, the declaration expressed concern over Israel's siege of Gaza.



LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi presides over the meeting to review on window operation for facilitation of Investors and Industrialists.



LAHORE: A group photo of President Press Club Azam Chaudhry with Mayor of London Borough of Hounslow Afzal Kayani after the meeting at Press Club.

Physiotherapy centre at Dolphin Police HQs becomes operational

LAHORE (APP): A Physiotherapy centre became operational at Dolphin Police headquarters, Walton, here on Sunday. It would provide facilitation to Dolphin personnel, a spokesperson told APP here. Centre head Physiotherapist Muhammad Irfan said that qualified physiotherapists would be present at the centre round-the-clock. He said physiotherapy would help patients get relief from pain of osteoporosis and

Crackdown on vehicles with tampered, fake number-plates

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) has launched a crackdown on vehicles with fake number-plates in the provincial metropolis, authority's spokesperson told APP on Sunday. He said that an auto-rickshaw with a fake number-plate was caught standing at Expo Chowk, with the help of Safe City cameras. He said a team issued instructions to the Nawab Town police station to impound rickshaw and arrest the driver.

Kidneys transplanted at Jinnah Hospital by using latest procedures

LAHORE (APP): Two cases of kidney transplant were successfully completed by using the latest procedures at Jinnah Hospital. A team headed by Professor Dr Naveed Iqbal, Assistant Professor Dr Shabbir Chaudhry and Assistant Professor Dr Salman Arshad performed the task. After one-month stay at the hospital, both patients were discharged in a special ceremony here on Sunday. Punjab Human Organ Transplantation Authority (PHOTA) Director General Dr. Shehzad Anwar attended the ceremony as the guest of honour. He congratulated the doctors and paramedical staff for

CM Naqvi reviews proposals regarding 'One roof one stop'

Independent Report LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday presided over a special meeting at the CM Office for establishing 'One Window Operation' in which proposals regarding 'One Roof, One Stop' solution for the investors and industrialists in Lahore were reviewed. The participants in the meeting were informed that Faisalabad Industrial Estate Development and Management Company (FIEDMC), Punjab Industrial Estate Development and Management Company (PIEDMC) and Punjab Small Industries Corporation (PSIC) would provide services in 'One Window Operation' Centre. The empowered officials of Local government, Environment, Housing and other departments would also be present at the One Window Centre. LESCO and Sui Gas counters would also be set up in the One Window Centre. Facility to obtain NOCs of land transfer,

Safety of life, property top priority: SP

SARGODHA (APP): Superintendent of Punjab Highway Patrol Police Sargodha Region Akhtar Hussain Joyia said that the safety of people's life and property is the first priority of the force. Talking to APP here on Sunday, he said that the main objective of Punjab Highway Patrol was to secure all the major highways of Punjab and provide all kinds of assistance to commuters. He said that now the responsibilities of PHP include the arrest of outlaws, operations against illegal weapons and drugs.

KP Govt unearths misappropriations in payments to PTI U-Tubers

PESHAWAR (APP): The internet users in Pakistan swelled to a record 87.35 million in January this year, helping them to get all types of information on varieties of subjects including geopolitical development, economic, social, sports and culture besides others day-to-day happenings in and around the globe on a single click on mobile phones. In the wake of 4.4 million increases in the internet users during the last two years in the country, the number of active cellular mobile connections had swelled to a record 191.8 million, which is equivalent to 80.5 percent of the total population of the country. Presently, the number of social media users' had registered an upward increase to record 71.50 million. The data of social media platforms have revealed that 37.30 million people were using facebook, 71.70 million YouTube, 12.95 million instagram, 16.51 million Tik Tok, 9.30 million LinkedIn, 4.65 million twitter and 25.70 million snapchat in the country.

Preparations for General Elections in KP begins

PESHAWAR (APP): The preparation for the general election got under way all across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with a list of more than 5000 women teachers ready to give duty. In this connection, a letter was issued by the Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to all the education officers to prepare the staff for the forthcoming general election to be held soon. General elections will be held soon, the letter says. The list of teachers of the schools in the four towns of the city is ready, the letter said. The list of teachers does not include IBN and email addresses; check the list of concerned education officers and add more information, as the letter issued on November 3 says, without mentioning the date of the election.

International News

Palestinian president presses US to secure Gaza ceasefire

Monitoring Desk GAZA: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas demanded an immediate Israeli ceasefire at a meeting with top US diplomat Antony Blinken on Sunday, as Gaza's health ministry said dozens died in a strike on a refugee camp overnight. Blinken, who has repeatedly dismissed the idea of a ceasefire by Israel for fear it would benefit Hamas, was making an unannounced visit to the occupied West Bank, as part of effort to try and ensure the Israel-Hamas war does not spread in the region. His visit to Ramallah took place as people sifted through rubble for victims or survivors at the Maghazi refugee camp in Gaza. "All night I and the

other men were trying to pick the dead from the rubble. We got children, dismembered, torn apart flesh," said Saeed al-Nejma, 53, adding that he had been asleep with his family in their single-storey house when the blast hit his neighbourhood. A spokesman for the health ministry in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip said earlier on Sunday that the Israeli military had struck the camp overnight, killing at least 47 people. In a separate attack, 21 Palestinians from one family, including women and children, were killed in Israeli strikes targeting Gaza overnight, the health ministry said. Reuters could not independently verify these accounts.



Demonstrators take part in a protest inside Charing Cross station following the 'London Rally For Palestine'.

Gaza situation worsens as Israeli strike hits school

Monitoring Desk GAZA CITY: Israeli troops launched an operation in Gaza early on Saturday, including a strike on a UN-run school in which 15 people were killed, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. The strike on school was carried out by Israel even as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken faced a rising tide of anger in meetings with Arab foreign ministers. Blinken reaffirmed US support for "humanitarian pauses" in the Palestinian territory to ensure desperate civilians get help, a day after Israel's hawkish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave the idea short shrift. Blinken began the day in Amman by holding talks with Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani of Qatar, a mediator between Tel Aviv and the Palestinians. The talks come amid mounting Arab anger over the civilian death toll in Gaza, and increasing fears that other states would get involved. In London, Berlin and other cities around the globe, thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters gathered to call for a ceasefire in Gaza. Speaking at a news conference in Amman about sparing civilians and speeding up aid deliveries, the top US diplomat said: "The United States believes that all of these efforts will be facilitated by humanitarian pauses." Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi called for all sides to work together to "stop a catastrophe that will haunt the region for generations". Washington has deployed a powerful fleet to the eastern Mediterranean and hopes that it has deterred Hezbollah from a full-scale attack on Israel, but border clashes continue. A key focus of Blinken's visit to Israel on Friday was to persuade Netanyahu to enact "humanitarian pauses". Netanyahu said later, however, that he would not agree to a "temporary truce" with Hamas until it releases more than 240 prisoners in its custody since Oct 7.

Shelling kills 15 civilians in Sudan, RSF claims gains in Darfur

Monitoring Desk WAD MADANI: At least 15 civilians in Khartoum were killed on Saturday "when shells fell on their homes", a medical source said, as paramilitary fighters battling Sudan's army claimed gains in Darfur. The victims' bodies were taken to Al-Nau hospital in Omdurman, a district of greater Khartoum, the medical source told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. Fighting since April between the forces of army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), has raged in heavily populated areas. The struggle between the rival generals has crippled essential services in Sudan and razed entire neighbourhoods of the capital and the vast western region of Darfur. In nearly seven months of war, more than 10,400 people have been killed, according to a conservative estimate from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.



Debris of houses collapsed during an earthquake are pictured in Jajarkot, Nepal.

Qatar says Gaza hostage releases need 'period of calm'

Monitoring Desk DOHA: Qatar's foreign ministry said on Sunday that without a "period of calm" in Gaza its mediators would not be able to secure the release of Israeli hostages held there. "Any hostage release has to be linked to a period of calm that allows for the release of hostages to work, which is something we have not seen for a while," Majed Al Ansari, Qatar's foreign ministry spokesperson told reporters. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday rejected U.S. calls for a temporary stop to Israel's offensive against Hamas to facilitate work to free more than 240 hostages seized by the Palestinian Islamist group. Israel would not pause its attacks unless the hostages held by the mili-

Turkey's main opposition elects Ozel as new leader in local elections run-up

Monitoring Desk ANKARA: Turkey's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) on Sunday elected Ozgur Ozel as its new leader, ending a 13-year term for incumbent Kemal Kilicdaroglu, as the country gears up for local elections next March. Ozel, 49, has been serving as the CHP's deputy parliamentary group chairman since 2015 and has been a lawmaker since 2011. He announced his candidacy in September, after Kilicdaroglu and the CHP's painful defeat to President Tayyip Erdogan and his ruling political alliance in May presidential and general elections. Ozel, a pharmacist by trade, received 812 of 1,366 possible votes at a tense, hours-long party congress in Ankara that took two rounds. "This is the greatest honour of my life," Ozel said after the results were announced, while thanking Kilicdaroglu for his work at

Netanyahu suspends Israeli minister over Gaza nuclear comment

Monitoring Desk JERUSALEM: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday disciplined a junior member of his cabinet who appeared to voice openness to the idea of Israel carrying out a nuclear strike on Gaza, where the war with Hamas is inflicting a spiralling Palestinian civilian toll. Netanyahu's office issued a statement saying that the minister concerned - Heritage Minister Amihay Eliyahu, from a far-right party in the coalition government - had been suspended from cabinet meetings "until further notice". Asked in a radio interview about a hypothetical nuclear option, Eliyahu had replied: "That's one way."

Russia says it test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile from a new nuclear submarine

Monitoring Desk MOSCOW: The Russian military on Sunday reported a successful test launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile designed to carry nuclear warheads from a new nuclear submarine. The report comes as tensions are soaring between Russia and the West over the fighting in Ukraine. Adding to those tensions, President Vladimir Putin last week signed a bill re-

4.4m people stateless worldwide, says UN

Monitoring Desk GENEVA: The UN said on Saturday that 4.4 million people worldwide were known to be stateless, though the true figure would be significantly higher due to their relative "invisibility". UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, said statelessness had a "devastating impact" on those left without a nationality, as it called for more to be done to combat such exclusion.

