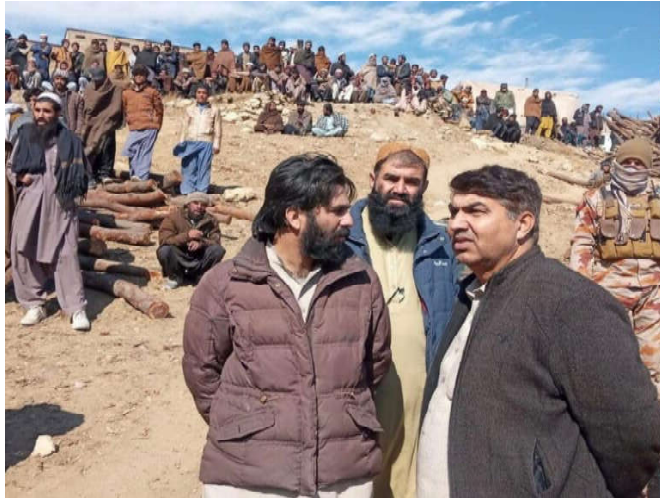


# QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Saturday, January 11, 2025

dquettavoice@gmail.com



People gathered outside a coal mine in Sanjdi where 12 miners were trapped: Photo taken from social media

## May 9 riots: Justice Afghan says military trials 'similar' to those in civilian courts

**NEWS DESK:** Justice Naem Akhter Afghan on Friday remarked that trials in a military court were "similar" to those in a civilian court, as a Supreme Court constitutional bench heard a case on military trials of civilians over last year's May 9 riots.

The case pertains to the military trials — and recent sentencing — of civilians for their role in attacks on army installations during the riots that followed ex-premier Imran Khan's arrest on May 9, 2023.



Justice Afghan's remarks came as the bench resumed hearing intra-court appeals (ICAs) challenging the Oct 23, 2023 ruling by a five-judge bench that had unanimously declared that trying the accused civilians in military courts violated the Constitution.

The seven-judge constitutional bench is headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan and also includes Justices Afghan, Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Musarrat Hilali, and Shahid Bilal Hassan.

In recent hearings, SC judges have questioned why the accused were "specifically" tried in military courts instead of anti-terrorism courts, with Justice Mandokhail observing that "the executive cannot play the role of judiciary".

During today's hearing, Advocate Khawaja Harris appeared as the defence ministry's lawyer and continued his arguments in the case. Additional Attorney General (AG) Anam Rehman was present as the state counsel.

Justice Afghan remarked, "There is also the facility to hire a lawyer of one's choice in a court martial case. The trials in a military court are also similar to ordinary (civilian) courts."

However, Justice Mandokhail wondered whether an "officer presiding over a military court is perfect enough to determine such harsh sentences".

Justice Hilali also questioned trials in military courts, noting that cases over the May 9 riots were registered under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), rather than the Army Act. The hearing was adjourned till January 13 (Monday), when the defence ministry counsel would continue his arguments.

Justice Hilali also questioned trials in military courts, noting that cases over the May 9 riots were registered under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), rather than the Army Act. The hearing was adjourned till January 13 (Monday), when the defence ministry counsel would continue his arguments.

## Musarrat Aziz's Killing Sparks Outrage Over Women's Safety

Continued to page 2

## Sanjdi Coal Mine Collapse: 12 Miners Trapped for 24 Hours, Rescue Efforts Continue

Syed Ali Shah, Manan Mandokhail:

**QUETTA:** A coal mine collapse in Sanjdi, 40 kilometers from Quetta, has left 12 miners trapped underground for over 24 hours due to a buildup of toxic gas.

Rescue operations continue, but the miners' fate remains uncertain as families endure agonizing uncertainty.

**Hazardous Rescue Operations Continue**

The incident occurred when a gas buildup caused the mine to collapse, trapping the workers. Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) teams, assisted by technical experts, are working tirelessly despite hazardous conditions caused by toxic gas and debris.

**Government Steps in for Support**

Provincial Mines and Finance Minister, Mir Shoaib Noshervani, expressed deep concern and ordered an immediate investigation into potential safety violations.

"No mine owner will be considered above the law or human life," he stated, emphasizing the need for accountability. Chief Inspector of Mines, Abdul Ghani Baloch, has been directed to expedite rescue efforts with additional teams.

**Call for Modern Safety Standards**

Noshervani highlighted the importance of implementing modern safety measures in

Balochistan's mining sector. "Strict legal action will be taken against those found responsible for negligence," he affirmed, pledging comprehensive reforms to ensure miners' safety.

**Families Await Updates**

As rescue teams continue their efforts, families of the trapped miners endure unimaginable distress. The tragedy has once again sparked urgent calls for stringent safety regulations in Balochistan's mining industry, which has seen frequent accidents in recent years. The government has vowed to utilize all resources to rescue the trapped miners, but the situation remains critical. Stay tuned for updates on this developing story.

## Elon Musk's Growing Influence on European Politics and UK Debates

Syed Ali Shah:

Elon Musk, the billionaire entrepreneur and owner of X (formerly Twitter), is increasingly shaping political discourse across Europe and the UK. From energy policies in Germany and Norway to immigration debates in France and the UK, Musk's comments and actions are stirring significant political reactions, particularly among right-wing parties.

### 1. Influence in Germany

Musk has openly criticized Germany's energy policies, especially the move away from nuclear power. He has advocated for nuclear energy as a solution to climate change, aligning with some right-wing parties that oppose complete reliance on renewable energy. Musk's views have sparked discussions about Germany's approach to its energy transition.

### 2. Immigration in France and Germany

In France and Germany, Musk has commented on the challenges posed by immigration. His statements often resonate with right-wing parties, which advocate stricter immigration controls. Critics argue that Musk's platform amplifies divisive narratives, fueling debates about national identity and border policies.

### 3. Norway's Electric Vehicle Policies

Norway, a global leader in electric vehicle adoption, has faced criticism from Musk regarding its generous EV subsidies.



He has questioned their sustainability, prompting debates within the Norwegian government and environmental circles.

### 4. UK Child Abuse Convictions

Musk has brought attention to the issue of child sexual abuse in the UK, calling for stricter measures and higher conviction rates. His comments have sparked discussions about the effectiveness of UK law enforcement and the need for reforms to protect vulnerable children.

### 5. Free Speech and European Regulations

Musk's ownership of X has placed him at odds with Euro-

pean Union regulations, particularly the Digital Services Act (DSA). While Musk champions free speech, European regulators emphasize content moderation to curb misinformation and hate speech, leading to clashes over online governance.

### 6. Criticism of Media Coverage

Musk frequently challenges European media outlets, accusing them of biased reporting on his companies and policies. This has fueled debates about media neutrality and freedom of the press in Europe.

### 7. Impact on Right-Wing Narratives

Musk's outspoken nature and influence on social media have been embraced by some right-wing parties in Europe. His criticism of immigration policies and support for alternative energy solutions often align with their agendas, giving their narratives a global platform.

### 8. Economic and Technological Collaboration

Despite controversies, Musk continues to collaborate with European governments on renewable energy and technological advancements. Tesla's factories in Germany and partnerships in renewable energy are contributing to economic growth and innovation in the region.

## Blast Targets Security Forces' Vehicle in Chaman: Two Civilians Injured

Sardar Muhammad Khondai:

**CHAMAN:** A powerful blast targeted a security forces' vehicle in Chaman, a key Pakistani city bordering Afghanistan, on Friday evening.

Police confirmed that the attack was carried out using a remote-controlled bomb, leaving two civilians injured and causing significant damage to the vehicle.

**Details of the Incident**

According to law enforcement, the explosive device was planted in a motorcycle parked along the roadside. The bomb detonated just as the security forces' vehicle passed by the spot. Eyewitnesses reported a loud explosion, creating panic in the area.

### Casualties and Medical Assistance

Two civilians sustained injuries in the blast and were immediately

rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital, Chaman, for medical treatment. The condition of the injured is reported to be stable, according to hospital sources.

### Preliminary Investigations

Initial investigations suggest the bomb was remotely detonated, indicating a calculated attempt to target the security forces. Police and security agencies have cordoned off the area and are conducting a thorough investigation to identify the perpetrators.

### Developing Story

Authorities have intensified security measures in Chaman following the attack. This is a developing story, and more updates will follow as new information becomes available.



## Tribal Elders Meet IG FC South in Dalbandin: Border Trade and Smuggling Discussed

Riaz Baloch:

**DALBANDIN:** Tribal elders met Inspector General Frontier Corps (IG FC) South, Major General Bilal Sarfraz Khan, in Dalbandin to discuss border trade, smuggling issues, and local development.

The IG FC highlighted Chagai district's peaceful nature and the Frontier Corps' contributions to health, education, and sports. Buy vitamins and supplements

### Smuggling and Border Trade

Major General Bilal clarified that smuggling along the Pak-Afghan and Pak-Iran borders cannot be considered legitimate trade.

"District fuel consumption is 2 million liters, but 24 million liters were being smuggled nationwide," he stated, emphasizing strict government regulations.

### Tribal Elders Seek Leniency

Elders, including former Minister Sakhi Mir Amanullah Notezai, requested leniency for border residents whose vehicles had been confiscated. They stressed that the livelihoods of many poor families

depend on border trade. Major General Bilal assured the elders of his efforts to release the seized vehicles but reiterated the importance of avoiding smuggling and seeking sustainable livelihoods.

### Token System Misuse

He noted the misuse of the token system for border trade, where some households held multiple tokens, depriving rightful beneficiaries.

### Tribal Elders Seek Leniency

Elders, including former Minister Sakhi Mir Amanullah Notezai, requested leniency for border residents whose vehicles had been confiscated.

The IG FC assured efforts to address their concerns while urging the community to focus on education and sustainable income sources.

### Appreciation for FC's Support

The meeting concluded with tribal elders thanking Major General Bilal Sarfraz Khan and Brigadier Sajjad Ali for their ongoing support and cooperation with Chagai district residents.



## National Assembly (NA) body urges transparency in (MDCAT)

Continued to page 3

## Islamabad court approves bail for 153 PTI workers involved in D-Chowk protest

Continued to page 4

THE RISING DEATHS OF COAL MINERS

Editor: Asim Khan

The rising deaths of coal miners in Balochistan

Shocking incidents inside the coal mines of Balochistan are almost the order of the day. Worst poverty and unemployment force people to put their lives at peril while extracting coal from mines in Balochistan. At the cost of living, poverty-hit people from Shergilla, Swat areas of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, Toba Kakari area of Pishin, and people from southern Afghanistan work in killer coal mines of Balochistan.

At least six coal miners were killed after the mine was filled with methane gas in the Shahrag area of the Harnai district a few days ago. Rescue workers and fellow miners made hectic efforts to save their lives. But, they failed to do so. The officials merely issued condolence statements with no promise of taking action against the responsible people.

Sadly, such incidents make no headlines in the newspapers and TV channels. No action has been taken against the mine owner, contractor, and concerned people. The government has also not announced any compensation for the heirs of the victims. Sadly, such incidents make no headlines in the newspapers and TV channels. This is also one of the underlying reasons behind rampant incidents inside mines in Balochistan.

Hazardous working conditions have claimed thousands of precious human lives in Dukat, Quetta, Sorghar, Chahang, Bolan, Mach, and Harnai areas of Balochistan. Despite repeated appeals on behalf of human rights organizations and labor unions, the Balochistan government has not ensured improved safety conditions inside mines of the province.

Strange: 18 inspectors posted for 3000 mines. Around 60,000 miners have been working in over 3,000 coal mines in Balochistan. For more than 3,000 coal mines, the Balochistan mines and mineral department has appointed only 18 mine inspectors. Under the 1923 mines and mineral act Balochistan, coal miners cannot enter the mine without the inspection of the mine by an inspector. Women, children, and aged people are not allowed to enter coal mines as per the 1923 mines act. The Balochistan government and mines owners must take steps to improve working conditions for the coal miners before it is already late.

Damn our obsession with dams

By Syed Mohammad Ali:

Despite having fresh-water resources in abundance, Pakistan is significantly water-stressed, and on its way to becoming a water-scarce country. The increasingly populous country has not been able to address unchecked exploitation of groundwater and the inefficient irrigation practices in agriculture, which uses up well over 90% of all the water consumed nationally. The melting of the Himalayan glaciers, which sustain the rivers flowing from the Indus basin via the Andia into Pakistan, necessitates an urgent rethink of our existing water management strategies.

The World Bank-brokered Indus Water Treaty (IWT) of 1960 treaty bifurcates the major rivers flowing from the Indus. Pakistan has been allocated three western tributaries of the Indus, which allows it to use 80% of all the water flowing through the Indus. However, the IWT was put into effect when global warming was not a known concept, and the treaty itself enabled a spree of damming projects based on the ill-informed view that damming river waters to naturally flow into the sea was a waste of freshwater.

With the support of donors, both India and Pakistan have now built numerous dams, barrages and canals on the Indus. Yet, the growing demand for water on both sides of the con-

tested border has led to growing water disputes, and India has been informed Pakistan that it wants to renegotiate the IWT's terms, to potentially allow India to build more infrastructure on the western rivers allocated to Pakistan.

Furthermore, water sharing disputes between Punjab and lower riparian provinces of Sindh and Balochistan are also a growing problem. Yet, Pakistan continues placing faith in disruptive top-heavy interventions to address its water woes. Various governments have poured money into the extension of the irrigation system that had been put in place by the British raj and commissioned the construction of new dams and barrages to harness river-waters for agriculture and to generate hydro-electricity. These infrastructural interventions have caused havoc for our river ecosystems and led to major water-logging and salinity. Pakistan wants to construct more dams even though the existing river-damming has significantly reduced the outflow of water into the Arabian sea, leading to significant sea water intrusion into coastal areas, which is contaminating underground aquifers.

Dealing with these complex challenges requires a paradigm shift in our policy-making to explore more sustainable means to utilise and conserve our precious rivers. There is growing momentum around the world to allow rivers to flow freely by removing intrusive infrastructure on major transborder rivers such as the Rhine and Danube in Europe. Nearly 2,000 dams have also been removed across the US in recent years.

Although the lingering animosity between India and Pakistan does not allow the two neighbours to coordinate the removal of dams all along the Indus, Pakistan itself can explore this approach of restoring the free flow of the rivers given to it by the IWT.

Hydrologists like Hassan Abbas have been calling for ditching the dam-centric approach and instead adopting the flowing river model in an incremental manner by first removing downstream diversions dams such as the Kotri Barrage. Instead of pouring money into rehabilitating Kotri Barrage and building more irrigation canals which waste water via seepage and evaporation, Abbas suggests using low-cost pipes to carry water to surrounding farmlands. It would be good to see the government assess the feasibility of such out-of-the-box proposals, and to gradually replicate them, if initial efforts prove to be more efficient in providing water to end-users, in addition to delivering varied environmental benefits. Maybe the 'Living Indus' initiative, now working on a range of restoration measures including mangroves reforestation and glacial

Redefining US-Pakistan relations

By Donald Blome:

Since arriving in Pakistan in May 2022 as US Ambassador, my focus has been to strengthen and redefine the US-Pakistan relationship, grounding it firmly in areas of mutual interest and cooperation on shared global challenges. It was time to reframe the relationship - not as a lens of Afghanisthan-Pakistan or India-Pakistan, but as a deep and enduring partnership between the United States and Pakistan. In the last two and a half years, we've broadened and deepened that partnership and made it important progress in areas that matter most to Pakistanis: jobs, affordable energy, clean water, health, and education.

It hasn't always been easy. Together, we've faced monumental challenges: devastating floods, a global pandemic, economic uncertainty, and the lingering effects of war. But those of us who've worked together to strengthen this relationship understand something fundamental: this journey is long, and each step we take - each act of collaboration - brings us closer to a future of shared prosperity and security for both our nations.

The United States and Pakistan share a history of cooperation and partnership that goes back to the 1950s. In recent years, we've built on that

legacy. After the devastating floods of 2022, we didn't just respond, we mobilised the international community to help millions of Pakistanis rebuild and rebuild health facilities, water systems, and schools. More than \$2.6 billion in US assistance helped Pakistani communities rise from the devastation. But we didn't stop there - we made sure that our recovery efforts built a strong foundation for future progress.

For decades, the United States has invested in Pakistan and its people. In the last two and a half years, we continued to build on those investments. The United States didn't just help build the Mangla, Tarbela, and other dams that provide clean energy to millions of Pakistanis. Recent upgrades funded by the United States - including new GE turbines - increase access to reliable, affordable electricity for millions more, and provide power to generations to come.

Since 2005, the United States has invested almost \$2 billion in infrastructure across Pakistan - roads and bridges, schools and universities, health clinics and hospitals, solar and hydro energy solutions, electricity transmission lines, and water and irrigation. US

investment has and continues to create jobs for Pakistanis, provide training, technology, and upskilling; and lift up local communities. And our investments are built on US-funded grants, not loans, which do not need to be paid back. That's the kind of partnership we believe in.

Economic growth has been a cornerstone of our relationship. During my tenure as Ambassador, we've made economic reform and increasing US trade and investment top priorities. Because we want to see a Pakistan that is safe, strong, and secure, a Pakistan that is economically independent. A Pakistan able to take advantage of its place in the global economy that can reap the benefits of fair and competitive markets.

In recent years, we've seen Pakistan's exports to the United States grow steadily, and children at risk of death from malnutrition - reflect our shared commitment to the well-being of Pakistan's people.

Across all of these areas, we have built something enduring. The US-Pakistan partnership reflects the best of what we can achieve when we work together with shared purpose.

Traveling across Pakistan - from Gwadar to Gilgit, and everywhere in between - I've been struck by the beauty of this country and the richness of its culture. I've

stood at 53.9 (it ranges from one to 100) which is 35.8 per cent higher than in 2015 and 2.2pc than in 2022. The improvement is predominantly seen in reproductive, maternal and child health, while there are issues of data availability for NCDs. Islamabad Capital Territory ranked the highest with a score of 63.9, followed by Punjab at 55.5. Balochistan has the lowest SCI of 38.4.

In national terms, it means that around 114 million individuals in Pakistan are not even able to access essential health services either through the public or private sector. Pakistan has a lower SCI than the entire country. It is a standard methodology developed by the WHO and World Bank in which eight health services - including maternal and child health, communicable diseases and non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and four values from 'service capacity and access' - are factored in.

Nationally, by the end of 2023, the SCI produced seven reports, the last one in 2023. Pakistan has started to systematically produce an annual national UHC monitoring report. The first was in 2023, while the 2024 report has not yet been published.

But then, 'perfect' is the enemy of 'good'. We cannot be perfect, but we can be better. We can improve our health services by employing improvisations, and using indicators as well as qualitative methods and bring all these together to see how we are faring in UHC.

In 2015, a watershed Sustainable Development Agenda was approved by all heads of states at the UN. UHC became target 3.8 under the third SDG. It is a mindfull of what UHC consists of.

The WHO's definition of UHC is 'ensuring that "when all people and communities can use the promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services they need, of sufficient quality to be effective, while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose them to financial hardship."

Do we have such a composite relevant metric covering all health crisis in the country, there have been some important developments with regard to UHC in Pakistan, including the development of the Essential Package of Health Services at the national and provincial level, and health insurance in the form of the Sehat Sahulat programme, albeit limited to hospitalisation.

UHC's third important element is regular monitoring, which is my topic today. Monitoring UHC is complex, at best, it indicates its advancement in providing water to end-users, in addition to delivering varied environmental benefits. Maybe the 'Living Indus' initiative, now working on a range of restoration measures including mangroves reforestation and glacial

UHC monitoring in Pakistan

By Zafar Mirza:

UNIVERSAL Health Coverage is always a work in progress. This is why 'advancing UHC' is better phrasing than 'achieving UHC'. As I have written previously on these pages, despite a multidimensional public health crisis in the country, there have been some important developments with regard to UHC in Pakistan, including the development of the Essential Package of Health Services at the national and provincial level, and health insurance in the form of the Sehat Sahulat programme, albeit limited to hospitalisation.

UHC's third important element is regular monitoring, which is my topic today. Monitoring UHC is complex, at best, it indicates its advancement in providing water to end-users, in addition to delivering varied environmental benefits. Maybe the 'Living Indus' initiative, now working on a range of restoration measures including mangroves reforestation and glacial

UHC's third important element is regular monitoring, which is my topic today. Monitoring UHC is complex, at best, it indicates its advancement in providing water to end-users, in addition to delivering varied environmental benefits. Maybe the 'Living Indus' initiative, now working on a range of restoration measures including mangroves reforestation and glacial

UHC's third important element is regular monitoring, which is my topic today. Monitoring UHC is complex, at best, it indicates its advancement in providing water to end-users, in addition to delivering varied environmental benefits. Maybe the 'Living Indus' initiative, now working on a range of restoration measures including mangroves reforestation and glacial

UHC's third important element is regular monitoring, which is my topic today. Monitoring UHC is complex, at best, it indicates its advancement in providing water to end-users, in addition to delivering varied environmental benefits. Maybe the 'Living Indus' initiative, now working on a range of restoration measures including mangroves reforestation and glacial

UHC's third important element is regular monitoring, which is my topic today. Monitoring UHC is complex, at best, it indicates its advancement in providing water to end-users, in addition to delivering varied environmental benefits. Maybe the 'Living Indus' initiative, now working on a range of restoration measures including mangroves reforestation and glacial

The talented Mr ELON Musk

By Aqdas Afzal:

ELON Musk's journey from a precocious kid to the world's richest man makes for an interesting biopic. From SpaceX to Tesla, from PayPal to the social media platform X, he seems to have done it all, and more.

Musk is now all set to become the head of the new Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, with sweeping powers to reduce the size of the US state to the tune of almost \$2 trillion, from a federal budget of roughly \$7tr. Musk will also play a giant role in guiding future policy, especially on artificial intelligence and cryptocurrency, as one of his key allies has now been named 'AI and crypto czar'.

This new Trump-Musk alliance is a coming together of political and economic power. Musk's most recent incarnation as 'first buddy', or the US

president's close political and business adviser, is ostensibly due to the role he played in Trump's electoral success by putting his own money on the line. Musk's outsized influence in the incoming administration has prompted some to refer to him pejoratively as 'President-in-Musk'.

Given Musk's formidable role in the incoming administration, let's examine some important questions. Why has Musk got the state behind his crosshairs? Is Musk trying to fashion the US according to his worldview? Does Musk's rise bode well for the future of the US? Musk has been successful in implementing his agenda? This new Trump-Musk alliance is a coming together of political and economic power.

South Africa. Perhaps this is one reason why tech-entrepreneurs like Musk show 'libertarian' tendencies that reflect unhinged antipathy towards the state and bureaucracy. Given Musk's penchant for libertarianism and arguing that limited economic growth can only be brought about within competitive markets through technology and AI.

In reality, any technocratic system that promises economic growth by reducing the size of the state in favour of private equity is ultimately only a worldview. Often, such plans are an extension of Darwinian thinking like 'natural selection', whereby nature favours competition by ensuring the 'survival of the fittest'. It should thus not come as a surprise that one of the main targets of the new DOGE list of 'regulations' is the US state welfare programmes like Medic-

aid, Social Security, and Medicare; people need to either sink or swim. Musk not only contributed massively to the Trump campaign - \$277 million - but also tirelessly used his social media platform to enhance Trump's electoral fortunes. Musk's resulting influence within the new administration is apparent in a quid pro quo arrangement, does not bode well for US democratic systems.

First, Musk is seeking a small state, Trump administration is getting ready to further enlarge the state's ambit through tariffs and subsidies for the upcoming trade war against the rest of the world.

The second reason has to do with Musk's apparent pro-China tilt. China is Tesla's biggest market outside the US, while Musk also enjoys access to top Chinese

leaders. In April this year, Musk had an one-on-one meeting with Premier Li Qiang. As the rivalry between US and China gets more intense, as evidenced by Trump populating his administration with China hawks, the odds of Musk's success do not appear very high.

Still, Musk's techno-libertarian mission is going to be a tall order for many reasons. First, Musk will have to walk a fine line as where Musk is seeking a small state, Trump administration is getting ready to further enlarge the state's ambit through tariffs and subsidies for the upcoming trade war against the rest of the world.

The second reason has to do with Musk's apparent pro-China tilt. China is Tesla's biggest market outside the US, while Musk also enjoys access to top Chinese

leaders. In April this year, Musk had an one-on-one meeting with Premier Li Qiang. As the rivalry between US and China gets more intense, as evidenced by Trump populating his administration with China hawks, the odds of Musk's success do not appear very high.

Still, Musk's techno-libertarian mission is going to be a tall order for many reasons. First, Musk will have to walk a fine line as where Musk is seeking a small state, Trump administration is getting ready to further enlarge the state's ambit through tariffs and subsidies for the upcoming trade war against the rest of the world.

The second reason has to do with Musk's apparent pro-China tilt. China is Tesla's biggest market outside the US, while Musk also enjoys access to top Chinese

## Matric students get big relief from education dept

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh government has restrained the private school managements from charging June and July fees from students appearing in matric exams this year.

Additional Director Private Schools Karachi Rafia Javed said that complaints were filed against some private schools for demanding June and July fees from matric students.

Speaking to a private TV channel, she said that private schools are prohibited

from collecting June and July fees from matric students who are set to appear in examinations in March 2025. According to the directive, students appearing for their matriculation exams are required to pay their fees up to April 2025.

The additional director warned that private schools violating this directive will face action. Meanwhile, students from primary to 9th grade will be required to pay their June and July fees, with vouchers being issued in April

and May 2025, respectively. Vouchers issued for June and July fees will be payable until the end of July 2025.

Read More: Schoolchildren to get warm clothes in Punjab Earlier, the Punjab government directed all the private schools across the province to comply with the Lahore High Court's order regarding buses for students.

Secretary of School Education, Khalid Nazeer Watto, has issued a warning to all private schools to submit an action plan for school transport arrangements by the end of the day, or risk cancellation of their registrations.

Khalid Nazeer Watto ordered all the schools to submit an action plan about the compliance with Lahore High Court's order.

Secretary School Education also asked the schools' management to submit the total number of students and a list of buses to ensure that the court's order is being followed.



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui met with a high-powered delegation led by H.E. Dr. Nasr Mohamed Iyad, Grand Mufti of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

## 37 killed in north Syria clashes between pro-Turkey, Kurdish forces: monitor

DAMASCUS (INP): Battles between Turkish-backed groups and Kurdish forces supported by air strikes, and Kurdish-led forces killed 37 people on Thursday in Syria's northern Manbij region, a war monitor said.

The latest reported fighting comes despite the United States saying Wednesday that it was working to address Turkey's concerns in Syria to dissuade the NATO ally from escalating an offensive against Kurdish fighters. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor reported "fierce battles in the Manbij countryside... in the past hours between the (Kurdish-led) Syrian Democratic Forces and the (Turkish-backed) National Army factions... with Turkish air cover".

"The attacks killed 37 people in a preliminary toll," mostly Turkish-backed combatants, but also six SDF

fighters and five civilians, said the British-based Observatory with a network of sources inside Syria. The monitor said at least 322 people have been killed in fighting in the Manbij countryside since last month.

On Wednesday, Mazloum Abdi, who heads the US-backed SDF, said his group supported "the unity and integrity of Syrian territory". In a written statement to AFP, he called on Syria's new authorities "to intervene in order for there to be a ceasefire throughout Syria". Abdi's comments followed what he called a "positive" meeting between Kurdish leaders and the Damascus authorities late last month. Turkish-backed factions in northern Syria resumed their fight with the SDF at the same time as Islamist-led rebels were launching an offensive on November 27 that overthrew Syrian president Bashar al-Assad

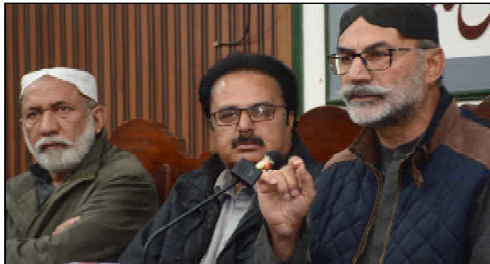
just 11 days later.

The pro-Ankara military operation against Kurdish forces in capturing Kurdish-held Manbij and Tal Khatat in northern Aleppo province, despite US-led efforts to establish a truce in the Manbij area. The fighting has continued since, with mounting casualties. On Wednesday Washington's Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Turkey had "legitimate concerns" about Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) militants inside Syria and called for a resolution in the country that includes the departure of "foreign terrorist fighters". "That's a process that's going to take some time, and in the meantime, what is profoundly not in the interest of everything positive we see happening in Syria would be a conflict, and well work very hard to make sure that that doesn't happen," Blinken told reporters in Paris. Turkey on

Tuesday threatened a military operation against Kurdish forces in Syria unless they accepted Ankara's conditions for a "bloodless" transition after Assad's fall.

Syria's Kurds control much of the oil-rich northeast of the country, where they enjoyed de facto autonomy during much of the civil war since 2011. The US-backed SDF spearheaded the military campaign that ousted Islamic State group jihadists from their last territory in Syria in 2019.

But Turkey accuses the main component of the SDF, the People's Protection Units (YPG), of being affiliated with the PKK, which has waged a four-decade insurgency against the Turkish state. The PKK is considered a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the United States, the European Union and most of Turkey's Western allies.



QUETTA: EX Senator Haji Lashkari Raisani talking to media during visits Quetta Press Club (QPC).

## Trump to be sentenced in hush money case, days before his inauguration

WASHINGTON (INP): U.S. President-elect Donald Trump is scheduled to be sentenced on Friday for his criminal conviction stemming from hush money paid to a porn star, a case that for a time overshadowed his bid to retake the White House.

The U.S. Supreme Court paved the way on Thursday for the 9:30 a.m. ET (4:00 GMT) sentencing in New York state court in Manhattan, rejecting a last-minute request by Trump to halt it 10 days before his Jan. 20 inauguration.

Justice Juan Merchan, who oversaw the six-week trial last year, has signalled he does not plan to send Trump to jail or to fine him. But by granting an unconditional discharge, he would place a judgment of guilt on Trump's permanent record.

He fought tooth and nail to avoid the spectacle of being compelled to appear before a state-level judge days before returning to the public office he lost four years ago.

"He doesn't want to be sentenced because that is the official judgment of him being a convicted felon," said Cheryl Bader, a law professor at Fordham University in New York.

The trial played out against the extraordinary backdrop of Trump's successful campaign to retake the White House. The sentencing marks the culmination of the first-ever criminal case brought against a U.S. president, past or present.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, a Democrat, charged Trump, a Republican, in March 2023 with 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up his former lawyer Michael Cohen's \$130,000 pay-

ment to adult film star Stormy Daniels for her silence before the 2016 election about a sexual encounter she said she had with Trump, who denied it.

Trump defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton in that election. The Manhattan jury found Trump guilty of all 34 counts on May 30.

Prosecutors argued that despite the tawdry nature of the allegations, the case was an attempt to corrupt the 2016 election.

Critics of the businessman-turned-politician charged that other legal entanglements he faced to bolster his contention that he was unfit for public office.

Trump flipped the script. He argued the case — along with other criminal indictments and civil lawsuits accusing him of fraud,

defamation and sexual abuse — was an effort by opponents to weaponize the justice system against him and harm his reelection campaign.

He frequently lashed out at prosecutors and witnesses, and Merchan ultimately fined Trump \$10,000 for violating a gag order. As recently as Jan. 3, Trump called the judge a "radical partisan" in a post on his Truth Social platform.

In a decision that said setting aside the verdict would "undermine the Rule of Law in immeasurable ways" and wrote that Trump's behavior during the trial showed disrespect for the judiciary.

"Defendant has gone to great lengths to broadcast on social media and other forums his lack of respect for judges, juries, grand juries and the justice system as a whole," Merchan said.

## Lebanon's parliament army chief Joseph Aoun elected president

DUBAI (INP): Lebanon's parliament elected army chief Joseph Aoun head of state filling the vacant presidency with a general who has US support and showing the weakened sway of Hezbollah after its devastating war with Israel.

In a speech to the chamber, Aoun, 60, vowed to work to ensure the state has the exclusive right to carry arms, drawing loud applause as lawmakers from Hezbollah congratulated Lebanon, saying on X he hoped Aoun's election would contribute towards stability and good neighbourly relations. US ambassador Lisa Johnson, attending the session, told Reuters that she was "very happy" with Aoun's election.

The presidency, reserved for a Maronite Christian in Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing system, has been vacant since Michel Aoun's term ended in October 2022, with deeply divided factions unable to agree on a candidate able to win enough votes in the 128-seat parliament.

Joseph Aoun fell short of the 86 votes needed in a first round vote, but crossed the threshold with 99 votes in a second round after lawmakers from Hezbollah and its Shi'ite ally the Amal Movement backed him.

Hezbollah lawmaker Mohammed Raad said that by delaying their vote for Aoun, the chamber had "sent a message that we are the guardians of national consensus".

Momentum built behind Aoun on Wednesday as Hezbollah's long preferred candidate, Suleiman Franj, withdrew and declared support for the army commander, and as French and Saudi envoys shuttled around Beirut, urging his election in meetings with politicians, three Lebanese political sources said.

A source close to the Saudi royal court said French, Saudi, and U.S. envoys had told Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, a close Hezbollah ally, that international financial assistance — including from Saudi Arabia — hinged on Aoun's election.



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Pegasus Airline & Hittit Ms. Nur Gokman called on Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Privatization & Communications Abdul Alesan Khan.

## National Assembly (NA) body urges transparency in (MDCAT)

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Assembly Standing Committee on National Health Services, Regulation, and Coordination emphasized the need for transparency, fairness, and equity in the Medical and Dental College Admission Test (MDCAT).

The meeting of the NA body was held with Dr. Mahesh Kumar Malani in the chair. During the meeting a single, nation-

wide curriculum was proposed to address regional disparities in education and ensure a level playing field for all students.

Final decisions on this and other reforms will follow further legal reviews and stakeholder consultations.

Concerns about out-of-syllabus questions in recent exams were discussed, with the committee recommending greater accuracy in question papers to avoid post-exam corrections. A revised an-

swer key had previously addressed students' grievances about deleted questions.

Introducing juvenile cards for biometric verification was proposed, similar to practices in A-level and O-level exams, to curb impersonation during the registration process.

Flaws in the current PMDC software were highlighted in the meeting, which had caused errors during registration. The committee stressed the

need for robust systems to ensure a seamless process.

The meeting reinforced the committee's commitment to enhancing Pakistan's healthcare sector by ensuring that reforms in educational standards and professional regulation are implemented effectively.

The recommendations aim to uphold fairness and credibility in the MDCAT process while fostering trust in the healthcare and education systems.

## Persons involved in human trafficking, visa fraud apprehended

LAHORE (INP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Gujranwala Zone on Friday apprehended five individuals involved in human trafficking and visa fraud during raids in Gujranwala and Gujrat. According to FIA spokesperson, the accused were identified as Farooq Adil, Nazakat Ali, Muhammad Asif, Muhammad Ahsan and Adnan Ali.

The arrested agents were found to be involved in illegally sending citizens abroad.

A spokesperson said that accused Nazakat extorted five million rupees from citizens under the pretence of sending them to Libya and Europe. Farooq Adil deceived a victim by promising employment in Romania, extracting 1.45 million rupees. Muhammad Asif

swindled a citizen of 1.1 million rupees by offering a job in Kyrgyzstan. Muhammad Ahsan collected 1.03 million rupees from a victim with promises of employment in Kuwait and Adnan took 1.3 million rupees from a citizen promising employment in Italy.

The accused had disappeared after collecting hefty amounts from victims, said spokesperson.

FIA Director Gujranwala Zone, Abdul Qadir Qamar emphasized that all available resources were being used to apprehend remaining perpetrators. "No one will be allowed to endanger the lives of innocent individuals," he asserted. "Based on solid evidence, we will ensure the culprits receive the appropriate punishments," he concluded.



JAMSHORO: Vice Chancellor LUMHS Prof. Dr. Ikram Din Ujjan giving shield to a participant during Annual International Conference of Health Professions Education (ICoHPE-2025) & LUMHS Grand ALUMNI Gala Reunion at LUMHS Jamshoro.

## Senate Committee discusses civil Servants amendment bill, 2024

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat, chaired by Senator Rana Mahmood ul Hassan, convened on Friday to discuss

"The Civil Servants (Amendment) Bill, 2024". Senator Dr. Afhan Ullah Khan, bill's mover, stated that the civil servants take an oath of faithfulness and loyalty to the State of Pakistan, and therefore it is impossible for any individual/civil servant to be loyal to two countries.

Senator Saadia Abbasi argued that in Countries like UK and USA, the citizens can pos-

sess dual nationality. Surprisingly, in the USA, except for the office of President, a dual National can hold any Public Office, she added.

She stated that the Government of Pakistan should devise a policy concerning dual nationality, streamlining the bars and requisites for the dual nationality.

Senator Saadia Abbasi and other members maintained that the bar of dual nationality should apply to all civil servants and there shouldn't be any exceptions, and if any, it should be for everyone.

Secretary Cabinet Divi-

sion, Kamran Ali Afzal, informed that the matter was discussed in "Secretaries Committee" and there are no aversions on the dual nationality. He argued that it is intuitively difficult for any individual to be loyal to two countries.

The Committee decided to discuss the Secretaries Committee report in the next meeting for the resolution of the matter.

Furthermore, the Committee ratified the nomination of Senator Shahadat Awan as Member of the Board of Governors the Cannabis Control and Regulatory Authority.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Moin Naqvi in a meeting with JUI-F Chief Maulana Fazal-Ur-Rehman.

## PIA plane takes off for Paris, marking flights resumption to Europe

ISLAMABAD (INP): A sure-shot relief for Europe-bound Pakistani travellers as the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) resumed its direct flights to Paris Friday, marking the end of a four-and-a-half-year-long suspension.

PIA's first flight after the long gap was fully booked as it took off from Islamabad International Airport carrying 323 passengers to the French capital.

A Boeing 777 was used for the long-awaited flight. The PIA will operate two weekly flights to France.

PK-750 will land in Paris at 4:55 pm local time and then will depart Paris for Pakistan at 7:00 pm local time. The plane will return to Islamabad Airport at 6:55 am on Saturday morning.

Addressing a ceremony at the Islamabad Airport to mark the resumption of PIA flights to Europe, Minister for Defence and Aviation Khawaja

Muhammad Asif said that "a statement" led to the closure of a profitable route for the PIA, causing loss of hundreds of billions of rupees. "Our government through sheer hard work got these flights resumed in shortest possible time," he added.

The minister said that very soon flights to other European countries will start.

To celebrate the relaunch, PIA has decorated the aircraft with a model of the Eiffel Tower on its tail and the slogan "I Love Paris" on the nose. The Boeing 777 has been prepared in line with European Union aviation standards.

A PIA spokesman said the airline is now expanding its wings to Europe and will operate direct flights between Islamabad and Paris twice a week, on Fridays and Sundays. He said the new service has been well-received, with full bookings for the first two flights.

The spokesman insisted that this direct route to Paris addresses a long-standing demand from the Pakistani community in France and Pakistan, offering affordable fares and time savings.

The airline has introduced a wireless in-flight entertainment system on the route, allowing passengers to access entertainment on their own devices.

Additionally, PIA has partnered with Air France to provide onward connections to 21 destinations across Europe and the UK via Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG).

The relaunch of PIA flights follows the European Aviation Safety Agency's (EASA) decision to lift the ban on Pakistani airlines operating in EU countries.

The ban, which has been in place for over four years, was lifted recently, enabling PIA to resume services in Europe and the UK.

## Two die, three injured in series of Karachi road accidents

KARACHI (INP): At least persons lost their lives and three were injured in a series of devastating road accidents in Karachi within a short span.

In a traffic accident occurred on Shaheed-Millat Road two motorcyclists died when they were hit by a fast-moving car.

According to traffic police, the speeding car struck the motorcyclists, causing them to lose control and fall onto the road.

A tanker truck, which was following the car, failed to stop in time and ran over the fallen motorcyclists.

The tanker dragged the motorcycle and its occupants for a distance before coming to a halt, killing two persons. Furthermore, in May, the port city registered 48 deaths and 464 injuries, while in June

hospital for medical treatment. The police have taken the tanker driver into custody.

Separately, two vehicles collided on Shahrab-e-Faisal, leaving two women injured. Rescue teams rushed to the scene to provide medical assistance.

It may be noted here that nearly 9,000 traffic accidents were reported in Karachi in 2024, killing 771 and injuring 8,174 citizens, according to rescue services.

In January 2024, Karachi reported the deaths of 94 individuals and injuries to 734 in road accidents, in February 57 deaths and 720 injuries, March 49 deaths and 521 injuries and April registered 64 deaths and 490 injuries in Karachi.

Furthermore, in May, the port city registered 48 deaths and 464 injuries, while in June

the number of deaths was 73 and 649 people were injured.

July also registered 35 Karachi deaths, while 627 others were injured. In August, 45 deaths and 521 injuries, in September, 70 deaths and 781 injuries and in October 2024, 66 deaths and 980 injuries were reported as per report of the rescue services.

Karachi witnessed 90 deaths in November and injuries to 989 people, while in December-to-date, 80 people have lost their lives in road accidents in Karachi and 700 have been injured.

On average, 25 accidents occurred daily, leading to the death of 2 to 3 people per day, the report highlighted.

In 2023, more than 1,400 people lost their lives and over 18,000 were wounded in road accidents in Karachi.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research Mr. Rana Tanveer Hussain chairing a meeting with Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) in IDAP.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding Appellate Tribunal Inland Revenue.

## Islamabad court approves bail for 153 PTI workers involved in D-Chowk protest

NEWS DESK: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Islamabad on Friday approved the bail of 153 PTI workers who were arrested on November 26 when law enforcement agencies carried out a crackdown on protesters at Islamabad's D-Chowk.

On Nov 13, Imran issued a "final call" for nationwide protests on Nov 24, demanding the restoration of the PTI's electoral mandate, the release of detained party members, and the reversal of the 26th Amendment which he said had strengthened a "dictatorial regime".

In the wake of the protest, human rights organisation Amnesty International demanded a transparent investigation of the state's "deadly crackdown" against PTI supporters from D-Chowk.

Numerous PTI workers were arrested in the ensuing crackdown while multiple cases were filed against the party leadership and supporters. According to the federal capital's police chief, more than 1,400 suspects had been arrested by the Islamabad and

Rawalpindi police.

On January 3, an Islamabad ATC granted post-arrest bail to 250 PTI arrested on Nov 26, while on January 6, as many as 192 PTI workers, who were detained in Jhelum district jail, were released after their bail petitions were accepted by an ATC in Islamabad.

During today's hearing, which was presided over by ATC Judge Ahsan ul-Haq, Muhammad Zulqar-nain, the petitions of 177 PTI workers were heard.

Subsequently, bail was granted to 153 PTI workers, while the court rejected the pleas of 24 workers. The following were counsel for the PTI workers: Ansar Kayani, Sardar Masroof Khan, Mirza Aslam Baig, Fatullah Burki, and Murtaza Turi.

Of the 48 workers whose cases were registered at the Karachi Company Police Station, bail was granted to 43 workers while the cases of five were dismissed.

The cases of seven workers were registered at the Tarnol Police Station, of which

two were granted bail, while the cases of five were rejected.

Ten cases were registered at the I-9 Police Station, of which nine workers were granted bail and the case of one was rejected.

At the Kohsar Police Station, case no 1033 was registered, and 28 of the arrested were granted bail while the applications of five were rejected.

Of the eight cases registered at the Ramna Police Station, three workers were granted bail while the applications of five were rejected.

All 25 workers whose cases were registered at the Secretariat Police Station were granted bail.

Of the 45 cases registered at the Margalla Police Station, 42 workers were granted bail while the applications of three were rejected.

The bail of one worker registered at the Kohsar Police Station under Case 1032, was accepted.

The court granted bail to all workers against Rs5,000 bonds.

## Punjab set to raise new 'riot management' force

LAHORE: A summary before Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz calls for raising a new 'riot management police' (RMP), consisting of 5,000 personnel to handle large crowds and violent protests, Dawn has learnt.

The summary, moved by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr Usman Anwar, was given the green light by the chief minister after he and DIG Athar Waheed briefed her on the significance of the force. The RMP is going to be constituted under the controversial Right to Peaceful Protest Act, 2024. Headquartered in Lahore, the force will be headed by a police officer not below the rank of DIG and assisted by a superintendent of police (SP). It will have eight regional offices, each headed by a regional SP.

An official told Dawn that the RMP will be based in Lahore, Multan and Sargodha, and its scope would be extended to other major cities. Sharing details, the official

said the scheme was proposed by the Punjab police high-ups against the backdrop of May 9, 2023 incidents, which saw damage to public and private properties as well as injuries to law enforcement personnel. The 30-page draft of the proposed RMP was prepared by Lahore Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) DIG Athar Waheed, he added. Talking about the salient features of the project, he declared that the RMP would be among the few police forces in the country authorised to recommend punishments for damage to public and private properties by protesters. "Attackers and organisers of violent agitations would have to pay compensation for the damage to the state and the citizens," the proposed legislative framework of the scheme, seen by Dawn, says.

According to the draft, the force will be trained in non-lethal intervention techniques, communication and negotiation strategies with protest leaders, while

personnel will be imparted psychological training to understand crowd dynamics and anticipate actions.

About the equipment and other logistics, the summary proposes advanced non-lethal crowd control tools such as tear gas, sound cannons, rubber bullets, electric shock shields and surveillance, besides improved communication systems for better coordination between field units and command centres. This anti-riot equipment would be essential for the RMP in controlling and dispersing crowds during protests and demonstrations.

The proposed RMP would also have, for the first time, specially trained dogs to help disperse crowds, apprehend protesters and act as deterrents to unlawful activities, as per the summary. The scheme proposed bullet-proof vehicles for the additional IG and the DIG RMP Punjab, besides 650 other vehicles, including armoured anti-riot trucks, water cannons.



ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to PM for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam addressing a seminar on "COP 29 Commitments to COP 30 Action: A Critical Analysis" at NUST.

## Pakistan will continue to raise voice for IIOJK people

NEW YORK (INP): Pakistan said it will continue to raise voice for the people of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) for their inalienable and United Nations (UN) sanctioned right to self-determination.

Talking to a 12-member delegation of the students belonging to Eckerd College, St. Petersburg Florida, in New York, Pakistan's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Usman Jadoun underlined the centrality of the Kashmir cause to Pakistan's foreign policy.

He said that unless the long-standing problem of Jammu and Kashmir is settled in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions and the aspirations of Kashmiris, there cannot be a lasting peace in South Asia or the unlocking of regional economic potential.

Israel's prolonged murderous campaign in Gaza, according to Ambassador Usman Jadoun, is a failure of the international system, defined by the UN Security Council's immobility.

He said that the Middle East as a whole will stay un-

stable and undermine regional and international peace and stability until Palestinians were given the opportunity to establish their own state.

Usman Jadoun said Pakistan is staunchly opposed to the addition of new permanent members to the Security Council.

He said that as part of Uniting for Consensus (UIC) group, Pakistan wants the reform process to be undertaken in such a way that makes the Council more democratic, efficient, transparent and accountable.