

## Pak military courts convict 25 PTI men

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan military courts have convicted and sentenced 25 people for involvement in pro-Imran Khan unrest last year, the armed forces said yesterday, with the majority handed decade-long prison terms.

Ex-prime minister Khan was arrested in May last year after being ousted from office and mounting an unprecedented campaign of defiance against the nation's powerful military leaders.

His detention over graft allegations sparked nationwide unrest, some targeting armed forces installations, and prompting rare prosecutions of civilians in military courts.

Amnesty International called the move "an intimidation tactic, designed to crack down on dissent".

All of the convicted are men and 14 have been sentenced to a decade of "rigorous imprisonment", the military said with the remaining 11 set to serve lesser prison terms.

"All sentences announced by the military courts are disproportionate and excessive," said a spokesman for Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. "These sentences are rejected."

The verdicts were announced just three weeks after the capital Islamabad was gripped by fresh unrest, as tens of thousands of Khan supporters flooded in to demand his release.

The government said at least five security personnel were killed whilst PTI allege at least 10 of their own were shot dead by security forces before crowds retreated.



Palestinian women mourn a dead child, killed in an Israeli strike the previous night, at Al-Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

### MYANMAR CIVIL WAR

## Rebels 'capture junta western command in Rakhine state'

AFP, Bangkok

A Myanmar ethnic rebel group has captured a military regional command in Rakhine state, it said, in what would be a major blow to the junta.

The Arakan Army (AA) had "completely captured" the western regional command at Ann on Friday after weeks of fighting, the group said in a statement on its Telegram channel.

Ann would be the second regional military command to fall to ethnic rebels in five months, and a huge blow to the military.

Myanmar's military has 14 regional commands across the country with many of them currently fighting established ethnic rebel groups or newer "People's Defence Forces" that have sprung up to battle the military's 2021 coup.

Fighting has rocked Rakhine state since the AA attacked security forces in November last year, ending a ceasefire that had largely



held since the putsch.

AA fighters have seized swathes of territory in the state that is home to China and India-backed port projects and all but cut off state capital Sittwe.

The AA posted photos of a man whom it said was the Ann deputy regional commander, in the custody of its fighters.

AFP was unable to confirm that information and has contacted the AA's spokesman for

comment.

AFP was unable to reach people on the ground around Ann where internet and phone services are patchy.

In decades of on-off fighting since independence from Britain in 1948 the military had never lost a regional military command until last August, when the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) captured the northeastern command in Lashio in Shan state.

Myanmar's borderlands are home to myriad ethnic armed groups who have battled the military since independence for autonomy and control of lucrative resources.

Last month the UN warned Rakhine state was heading towards famine, as ongoing clashes squeeze commerce and agricultural production. "Rakhine's economy has stopped functioning," the report from the UN Development Programme said, projecting "famine conditions by mid-2025" if current levels of food insecurity were left unaddressed.

### BORDER OUTPOST ATTACK

## Pak Taliban kills 16 Pak soldiers

AFP, Islamabad

The Pakistani Taliban claimed a brazen overnight raid on an army outpost near the border with Afghanistan yesterday, which intelligence officials said killed 16 soldiers and critically wounded five more.

The siege started after midnight and lasted about two hours as around 30 militants pummeled the mountainous outpost from three sides, one senior intelligence official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

A second intelligence official also anonymously confirmed the toll of dead and wounded in the attack in the Makeen area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, 40 kilometres (24 miles) from the Afghan border.

Pakistan's domestic chapter of the Taliban claimed the attack in a statement, saying it was staged "in retaliation for the martyrdom of our senior commanders". The group claimed to have seized a hoard of military gear including machine guns and a night vision device.

## Drone attack hits Russia city 1,000 km from frontier

AFP, Moscow

Kyiv yesterday staged a major drone attack on the Russian city of Kazan, 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) from the frontier, as Moscow's troops captured a new frontline village in eastern Ukraine.

The drones damaged buildings in Kazan, capital of the Tartarstan republic, with a population of more than 1.3 million, but there were no victims, local officials said.

Kazan City hall said some fires had started and were being tackled by the fire brigade. The city's airport was temporarily closed, the Russian civilian aviation authority, Rosaviatsia, said.

Videos on Russian social media networks showed drones hitting high rise buildings setting off fireballs.

Russia on Friday staged strikes on the Ukraine capital, Kyiv, that left one dead and 13 wounded, according to the city's authorities. Another five people were killed in a Ukrainian attack on the Russian frontier region of Kursk, the local governor said.



People leave candles and floral tributes to the victims near the site where a car drove into a crowd at a Magdeburg Christmas market in Magdeburg, Germany yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

### CAR-RAMMING ATTACK ON X-MAS MARKET

## 5 killed, hundreds injured in Germany

AFP, Magdeburg

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz yesterday condemned the "terrible, insane" car-ramming attack on a crowded Christmas market that killed five people and injured more than 200.

Police arrested a 50-year-old Saudi psychiatry doctor at the scene Friday, next to the battered SUV that had ploughed through the festive crowd leaving a trail of carnage and bloodied casualties.

A sombre Scholz, dressed in black, visited the attack site yesterday with national and regional politicians in the eastern city of Magdeburg, where they laid flowers outside the main church.

Scholz said at least 40 of the injured were in a condition that people should be "worried" about them but gave no details.

He pledged that Germany would respond "with the full force of the law" to the attack. But he also called for unity in the country that has been plunged into a heated debate on immigration and security ahead of elections in

February.

As Germany reeled in shock from an attack that came eight years after a jihadist strike on a Berlin Christmas market claimed 13 lives, more details emerged about the Saudi man under arrest.

Taleb Jawad Al Abdulmohsen had lived in Germany since 2006 and held a permanent residence permit, working in a clinic near Magdeburg.

He had also worked as a rights activist who supported Saudi women and described himself as a "Saudi atheist". He had voiced strongly anti-Islam views, echoing the rhetoric of the far right in social media posts and interviews.

As his views expressed online grew more radical, he accused Germany's government of a plan to "Islamise Europe" and voiced fears he was being targeted by authorities.

The Bild daily said an initial drug test had proved positive when police used a test kit that can detect narcotics including cannabis, cocaine and methamphetamines. This was not immediately confirmed by authorities.

## Brazil bus accident kills at least 32

AFP, Sao Paulo

At least 32 people died early yesterday when a bus crashed into a truck and then caught fire in southeastern Brazil, officials said.

Around four in the morning, the bus travelling from Sao Paulo blew a tire near the town of Lajinha, in the state of Minas Gerais, causing the driver to lose control of the vehicle and hit a truck, the state's fire department said in a statement.

The bus went up in flames and at least 32 passengers died, the statement said. Another vehicle rammed into the bus from behind, but its occupants survived.

"After hours of work, firefighters managed to extinguish the flames and have removed charred bodies of victims" inside, the fire department said in a statement.

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পৃথিবী বদলাই

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