



**Jamil Janjua,**  
ceo, Octara & Chief Editor  
janjua05@gmail.com

*Dear Reader,*

It has often been said that truth is often stranger than fiction, and that, in essence, is what **David Mattin** dwells upon in our lead story "Is This Really Happening?" For people in proactive mode, staying ahead of the curve comes naturally to them, and David is convinced that 2025 will be a transformative year. He talks about the strange new alliance between Donald Trump and Elon Musk, and the ascendancy of the Party of Tech Acceleration. He predicts an epic clash between they who want to accelerate the ongoing technology revolution, and those who want to slam on the brakes on stuff like Artificial General Intelligence (AGI). He fears that in some deep sense we'll have handed over the baton to the machines we built. Read the piece and be bewildered.

**Peter Diamandis** is up next and states that which many amongst us would consider the obvious, that your mind controls your lifespan, or at least the quality of it. He speaks of internal beliefs and the development of what he calls a Longevity Mindset that involves being excited about your life and your future, a future that is bigger than your past. In other words, hatching a big, hairy and audacious goal and believing that you can achieve it.

**Nice News** contributes some really nice news about Gen Beta, offspring of millennial and older Gen Z'ers, living until the 22nd century. They'll redefine what it means to belong, blending in-person relationships with global digital communities, and their parents will be well-equipped to help them. That's really reassuring.

**Eddy Quan** is his usual off-beat self, and takes a bizarre route to measuring the value of one's brand, inspired by the movie Day of the Jackal which is about an elite contract killer and the MI6 agent on his tail.

Back of the book we visit with Tariq Alexander Qaiser, the Mangroves man, who has just published his book of verses titled Soliloquies with a question mark. Stay safe, and keep lighting the candle to dispel the darkness should you encounter it 🙏

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# Is This Really Happening?

It seems 2025 will be a transformative year



**David Mattin** | 12 min read

I've been writing about emerging technologies and their implications for a decade and more. I can't remember a time when I felt so convinced — convinced, that is, in the way I am now — that we are living through an axis moment.

A new year is upon us, and all the signs are there: 2025 will be transformative.

First, there's the strange new alliance between Donald Trump and Elon Musk. It means that the Party of Tech Acceleration is about to enter the White House.

Tech platforms are already leaning into the Trump-Musk vibe shift. See Mark Zuckerberg's announcement this week that Meta will no longer fact check content posted by users.

Speaking on the Joe Rogan Podcast, Zuckerberg liberated a reservoir of anger that has clearly been accumulating for years: over the Biden administration, the broader political treatment of Big Tech, and the (in his view unreasonable) idea that social platforms are responsible for the content they display. The existing Facebook fact checking programme, he said, 'was like something out



of 1984'. It was time, instead, to 'prioritise speech'.

Zuckerberg can see — we can all see — that the wind has shifted. The apex platforms are ready to flex. Critics, meanwhile, say we should be doing *more*, not less, to rein them in.

But disagreements over content moderation are as nothing compared to what is ahead.

The vibe shift we're seeing now taps into a deeper framework that I've written about often; I mean [the creatures and machines framework](#). An epic clash is coming. It's between those, on the one hand, who want to accelerate the ongoing technology revolution, and those who want to slam on the brakes. The accelerationist ultras want new technologies to remodel the world around us and even, in the end, we humans ourselves; according to them it is our destiny is to merge with the machines. Meanwhile, the decelerationists say we must protect ourselves against the rabid form of technological modernity we have created; one that wants to eat everything familiar about human modes of living and being.

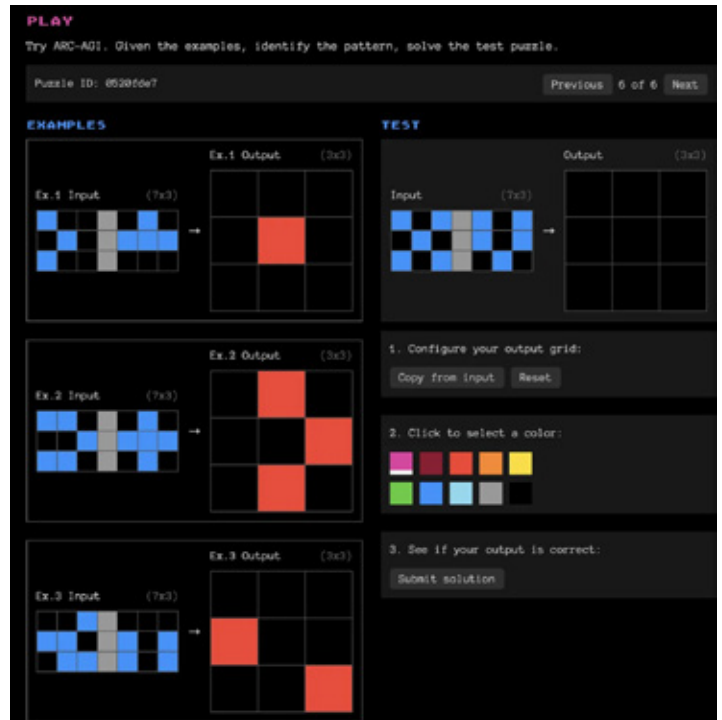
I believe that soon enough that conflict will be at the heart of our politics. What's happening with Musk and Trump is only the first act in a much longer play.

The technology that will do most to fuel this clash? It will, of course, be AI. And on that front — in case you hadn't noticed — vast change is afoot.

Given events that unfolded at the end of last year, it is probable that we're at the foothills of something we can meaningfully call Artificial General Intelligence (AGI).

I've long been reluctant to commit to the idea that AGI is near. Not least because *AGI* has

become a term without any clear definition. Still, OpenAI's new o3 model, announced just before Christmas, has taken huge steps forward when it comes to conquering problems in the Frontier Math benchmark. These are maths problems so hard that most of us can't even understand them, let alone offer a solution.



How much longer, then, until we say: *yes, under any reasonable definition, this is AGI?* In 2025, I think there's a high chance that we reach consensus that AGI is achieved, or at least imminent.

In some deep sense we'll have handed over the baton to the machines we built.

Vast changes across the economy, science and tech, culture and politics: they will all flow from this. How far back must we go before we find a technology as consequential? The invention of the internet? The printing press? Writing? Yes, writing itself: maybe we have to reach all the way back to that.

Meanwhile, we're currently amid a stark reminder that while machine intelligence

floats free in the cloud, we live here, on a planet called Earth. A planet that is not well.

Maybe my perspective is off. But (of course) it doesn't feel like it.



Many people have died. Pacific Palisades, an iconic suburb of LA, is gone. And at the time of writing the fires are still burning.

How do we orient ourselves amid all this?

You only have to spend five minutes in a newspaper archive to see that every age believes that it stands at a moment of unique, epochal change. You only have to read a history book. Or a religious text, even. We humans are forever saying, *this is it, the crossroads moment, the one that changes everything*.

So is our sense that we live at such a moment only another such case? Just a trick of the light?

I'm not so sure. Across so many dimensions I feel the old world — the world I was born into — fading away, and something new coming into being.

So this is the central question I'm carrying into 2025. Is what's unfolding now — is this moment — really as consequential as it seems? Can that be true? *Is this really happening?*

I know many of you will be asking the same question, or some version of it.

I'll keep watching. And via these postcards, and also longer essays, I'll keep sharing my reflections here. What's more, we can gather in the monthly Community Salons to share our thinking. As the year advances, the picture will grow clearer.

Right now I'm not sure about much. But I *am* sure that this year will be intense. I'm so glad that we can keep each other company along the way ■

**Source:**

[https://www.newworldsamehumans.xyz/p/is-this-really-happening?utm\\_source=post-email](https://www.newworldsamehumans.xyz/p/is-this-really-happening?utm_source=post-email)

# Your mind controls your lifespan

Peter Diamandis | 5 min read

I normally blog about technology... everything from AI to epigenetic reprogramming. And in the past I've gotten seriously criticized for promoting expensive longevity treatments that "are only for billionaires."

Yeah, some stuff today is expensive, and some of the most promising tech may not be available for many years...

But there is a super powerful therapeutic available right now—that is cheap and accessible to everyone.

Before I share that therapeutic, let's begin with a simple question.

How long do you think you'll live?

Seriously, what is your number?

Somewhere in your mind, you've buried a number, an expectation of your lifespan.

That age—when you expect to die—came from someplace... perhaps your parents, grandparents, or something you read.

Like it or not, that internal belief impacts your life and healthspan, and it's time for you to re-negotiate and change that target, to reprogram yourself. It's time to develop what I call a "Longevity Mindset."

How? First off, it involves being excited about your life and your future. As my friend Dan Sullivan says, "You need to have a future that is bigger than your past."

Need evidence? In a study of 69,744 women and 1,429 men, published in the prestigious journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, it was found that optimistic people live as much as 15 percent longer than pessimists. The study was conducted over three decades, controlling for health conditions, behaviors like diet and exercise, and other demographic information.

"Optimistic people live as much as 15 percent longer than pessimists."

IMHO, that is seriously impressive. You get a double dividend out of being optimistic.

Here's another story, from the annals of American History, that demonstrates the power of the will to live.

Two of America's founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, willed themselves to live long enough to see the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Even though the average life expectancy was only 44 years old in the early 1800s, Jefferson (who was 83) and Adams (who was 90) made it to July 4, 1826, both dying on that exact date: the 50th anniversary of the nation they had founded.

Clearly, they had a goal in mind, something to live for.

So, how long do you think you'll live?

Will you make it to 80 years old? Maybe 100? What mindset or purpose would you require to set a target of 120 healthy years and make it there?

Consider changing how you discuss your lifespan (healthspan) with others. Make it known to friends and family (with conviction) that you're shooting for 100, 120, or even 156. Pick a number that inspires you and program that into your mind.

One of the most important conversations you can have with yourself, your friends, and loved ones is to ask the following question:

"What would you do with an extra 30 years of healthspan?"

Having a clear vision—and emotionally connecting with why you want those extra decades—makes all the difference in the world. The results are powerful.

To give you some hope, it's worth noting that an organization I founded 30 years ago, the XPRIZE Foundation, is currently running a [\\$101 Million Healthspan XPRIZE](#) challenging teams to reverse the ravages of aging by 20 years. Incredibly, we now have over 550 teams competing from around the world. The results will be epic! ■

In Health,

Peter

Peter Diamandis <[peter@diamandis.com](mailto:peter@diamandis.com)>

# 2025 Marks the Start of Generation Beta



**By Nice News** | 4 min read

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The reign of Generation Alpha is over — now introducing: Gen Beta. While we have yet to see this new era take shape, we know that many of these children will be the offspring of millennials and older Gen Zers, living until the 22nd century.

Gen Beta kids, who are expected to become 16% of the global population by 2035, will grow up in a world infused with technology and AI, which could impact everything from their schools to doctor's offices. They'll walk the tightrope of forming their identities and developing relationships both online and IRL,

but their parents will be well-equipped to help them.

“We predict Generation Beta will embody the balance between hyper-connectivity and personal expression,” wrote author and social researcher Mark McCrindle, who coined the name Gen Beta. “They’ll redefine what it means to belong, blending in-person relationships with global digital communities.”

But tech isn't the only factor that will impact these quarter-century babies ■

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Source: [today@nicenews.com](mailto:today@nicenews.com)

# World's highest paid contract killah reveals 7 fig personal branding tip

By **Eddy Quan** | 5 min read

Last night I started watching this new series, Day of the Jackal, which is about an elite contract killer and the MI6 agent on his tail.

What began as a cozy Sunday night TV session quickly blossomed into an unexpected personal branding lesson.

Early on in the story, an anonymous source contacts the Jackal to hire him for a new hit job.

Now I've never hired a contract killer before but as you can probably imagine.... it's not the kind of service you find on LinkedIn.

It's more of a "deposit a large sum of money into this offshore bank account and wait until the target is dead before you deposit a larger sum of money" kind of deal.

But on this particular project, the client requests an in-person meet up with the Jackal.

He says he doesn't do in-person meetings but the client insists.

So he names his price. \$1,000,000 USD.

Payment is made within 24 hours and the meeting is arranged and held.

*I won't reveal much else but here are a few fun facts you should know :*

- > The meeting lasted less than 60 seconds
- > No deal was made during the meeting so the prospect essentially paid a million dollars for an in-person sales call
- > There was no refund policy
- > The killer does not have any social media

Yet.... The prospect still happily paid seven figures to meet.

*If you haven't spotted the lesson then let me lay it out for you:*

There aren't that many contract killers available and certainly not that many that possess the necessary skills, experience and expertise to do a job of this level.

Which is why the Jackal is able to charge seven figures for a sales call.

## So how does this apply to you?

One of the most common confusions I see with people who are building their brands is not knowing how to measure the value of their brand.

By default, most people make the mistake of valuing their brand based on how many followers they have or how much engagement they got on their most recent post.

## But the real tangible measure?

Is how much are prospects willing to pay you for an hour of your time?

The Jackal charges a million for a sales call about a possible hit job.

Jay Abraham (last I checked) charges a million dollars to come and consult your business for the day.

Some of your favourite gurus charge anywhere from \$100 to \$1,000 for a zoom call.

Whatever your number may be, you should ask yourself....

What are you doing to increase this number each and everyday?

In other words.... How are you adding value to the marketplace to justify increasing your charge out rate?

That's the branding lesson most branding gurus won't tell you ■

## Your man

Eddy "not the Jackal" Quan

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**Eddy Quan** <[eddy@eddyquan.com](mailto:eddy@eddyquan.com)>

# MANGROVES MATTER



## Delta on Edge of Extinction

## TAQ In Search of Sustainability; Launches SOLILOQUIES?

### Unwinnable battle?

Tariq Alexander Qaiser, codenamed TAQ, is an architect turned frontline conservationist clearly fighting what appears to be an unwinnable battle. But the mangroves in the creeks around Karachi are a cause worthy of championing, notwithstanding the inevitable sacrifice that human settlements must make if they're to progress up the development ladder. That, however, is an old paradigm long redundant and discarded by enlightened societies that have understood the very tangible benefit of staying on the right side of Nature. In 2022 the Pakistan government chose to send TAQ as a representative to participate in the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, COP27, in Sharm El Sheikh, in Egypt, where he passionately pleaded the case for the rejuvenation of mangroves.

### Powerfully expressed emotions in verse form

TAQ's latest offering to the world of conservation is SOLILOQUIES? A book of powerfully expressed emotions in verse form, verses that he has penned over an extended period of time encompassing a variety of dimensions. Late Dr. Ishrat Lindblad, who served as professor of English literature at Stockholm University, Sweden, has penned the foreword to SOLILOQUIES? in which she says that TAQ's experience as a successful architect has endowed him with the ability to combine the concrete with the aesthetic.

**“Planting mangroves is important. But without a willingness to understand the requirements of an obligate halophyte – the mangrove – and the ecosystem it will grow in, this effort can only be seen as green-washing and the ticking of boxes on corporate forms” – TAQ**

“In his work, he places concrete images which reveal the natural beauty of the world in which we live, with the music of poetry, thus creating a unique aesthetic experience. The book is divided into seven sections. It opens with beautiful photographs of flourishing trees and flowers that are followed by images of trees cut down, and verses that describe how the precious mangroves of the islands in the creeks surrounding Karachi are being ruthlessly destroyed by city planners.”

The first presentation and reading of SOLILOQUIES? was hosted by the German Consul General Dr. R. Lotz at his residence in Karachi. It was an intimate evening with 100 guests invited by the consulate, from the diplomatic community and those who worked on and supported the book.

“My quest for creating NATURE RESERVES in Karachi continues, here taking on a literary cloak of words and verse. Perhaps words, thoughts might achieve the needed impact... It might happen... Optimism is desired... Hope is hope... But many more of us need to speak... To ask. The future has to be a joint existence with Nature,” says TAQ.

### Tackling form over substance

Planting mangroves has become a popular CSR activity. But in our rush to tick the right box, are we actually regenerating any mangrove growth? Tariq Alexander Qaiser poses the question in Dawn AURORA's piece 'Saving Karachi's Oxygen Islands (November 4, 2024).

I would like to state two verifiable truths, says TAQ in what is definitely a most comprehensive comment on the state of the Mangroves.

“First, the mangroves of the Eastern Delta of the Indus River Basin, far from urban centers, are being replanted. These efforts are commendable. Second, the mangroves of the Western Delta of the Indus River Basin are being ignored. These are the mangroves near coastal cities, especially Karachi. They are being cut, removed and sold at throwaway prices. Mangrove lands are being allocated for development. Some small-scale plantation is being done sporadically and then often broadcasted with fanfare.”

### Green-washing

Planting mangroves is important. But without a willingness to understand the requirements of an obligate halophyte – the mangrove – and the ecosystem it will grow in, this effort can only be seen as green-washing and the ticking of boxes on corporate forms, says TAQ, taking civil society to task.



# Mangrove forests Korangi



## Karachi's Coastal Beauty: The Mangrove Forest

“Mangroves are intertidal plants; they need the twice-daily ebb and flow of saltwater tides to live, grow and thrive. **Mangroves should not be planted in gardens on terrestrial land or in sweet water riverine flood plains that see water only in gaps of months or years.**”

### Carbon credit business flourishing

Mangroves for carbon credits are being planted substantially and successfully in what TAQ calls the Eastern Delta. This is in the estuaries east of the Port Qasim channel.

“The carbon credit business is in full momentum around Keti Bandar and Shah Bandar, and it is generating profit. If these mangrove plantations are not monitored, nurtured and protected and if the dying saplings are not replanted, only approximately 30% will grow into a community of trees – into mangrove forests. This will take a few decades. The environment will benefit substantially, but only when these forests grow and mature.”

**This is the time to push for and implement marine protected areas, and protected nature reserves on our islands, especially Bundal Island and Khiprianwala Island. Our city needs these forests to be here for ourselves and our children’s future” – TAQ**

### Long-term financial plan missing

“Funds will be required to pay for manpower, technical skills, fuel for boats, and the costs of independent monitoring

**“Enlightened societies have understood the very tangible benefit of staying on the right side of Nature” – Author**

organizations to oversee this critical activity. These funds and organizations are as yet to be identified and allocated. They are not part of a long-term financial plan. The success of mangrove replantation depends on the growth of these saplings into a forest, and not just on the plantation drive and the ledger of accounts recording the number of seedlings put into the ground.”

Global warming and its fallout, climate change, is not just a perceptual reality. It is empirical, quantifiable and present. The resulting changes are being felt globally, and especially in Pakistan.

Glacial melt and the changing patterns of rainfall storms are resulting in the flooding and devastation of communities. Runoff of fertile soil, waterlogging, and rising terrestrial salinity are impacting our ability to provide food for ourselves, let alone for other countries.

**“The mangroves of the Western Delta of the Indus River Basin near coastal cities, especially Karachi, are being cut, removed and sold at throwaway prices. Mangrove lands are being allocated for development” – TAQ**

## Sixth mass extinction of life

Rising sea levels and the warming of the ocean's surface have already started and coastal communities and cities will see climate migration. Species change is already present; we are in the sixth mass extinction of life on this Earth.

Our untreated pollution is flowing unabated into our seas. The organic and chemical toxins are changing the biology and botany of our waters. Solid plastic waste is not only a danger to our marine life but is also a catalyst for increasing the temperature of the water surface. “This has escalated within my lifespan. I am pained to be witnessing it. These are empirical facts,” laments TAQ.

## Change the microclimates of localities

We are at risk. However, efforts in localized areas can still help mitigate some of the extreme effects of global warming. “Attempts to change the microclimates of localities need to be undertaken urgently. Our mountains need to be reforested, the riverbeds and flood plains of our Indus River and its tributaries need to be replanted, and our cities need parks and avenues of trees, with the rooftops covered in plants. Our saline farmlands require halophytes planted on them; our vast delta needs to be revived. Nature-based solutions by locals in localized areas are required on an ongoing basis if our communities and culture are to survive.

## Indus Delta's reforestation and biodiversity revival

The Sindh Forest Department, especially the office of the Conservator of Forests, Mangroves, is doing seminal work in the reforestation and biodiversity revival of our delta, says TAQ. “The carbon credit market has given their work a boost. One has to appreciate it when business enterprise facilitates the regeneration of nature. However, if the protection, monitoring, and nurturing of the new plantations as previously mentioned is not implemented, this revival is at risk.”

The Indus River Delta spans about 6,000 square kilometres across, and about 93% of this is in the Eastern Delta, and parts of this vast area are slated for replantation, which is commendable.

“However, this section of the delta has very little river water flowing into it, due to barrages and dams built upstream. Consequently, the pH of the water here is less than ideal, except when upstream flooding happens. This results in slow growth of saplings into trees and about two-thirds of the newly planted atrophy. They need to be replaced, and all need to be protected.”

The remaining seven percent is the Western Delta. These are the islands of Karachi. The growth of mangroves here is faster and more profuse. This is because of the outflow of wastewater from our coastal cities.

## Merciless sound of chainsaws

“I have personally photographed and am witness to Avicenna Marina Mangrove forests with canopy heights above 50 feet. The trees on these islands are being cut. The tall canopies I photographed in 2012 are gone, and the current height of the mangroves on Bundal Island is now only in the range of 20 to 25 feet. In 2021, due to the disturbance and sound of chainsaws, the flamingos migrated to other areas, and Brahmini kites had to leave for a lack of tall trees to nest on.”

## Dystopia of Development

These low-lying alluvial deltaic islands made of shifting sands were slated for industrial and residential high-rise development. These islands, where almost 60% of the sandbanks are flooded by the ocean twice a day, would have required a retaining seawall of about 13 feet above low tide sea level. Imported or dredged infill for the 24-kilometre square of Bundal Island alone would have been needed.

The longshore drift currents along our coast erode and reshape

**“In his work, he places concrete images which reveal the natural beauty of the world in which we live, with the music of poetry, thus creating a unique aesthetic experience” – Dr. Ishrat Lindblad on SOLILOQUIES?**

these islands constantly, and the seawalls require constant rebuilding. The unaffordable high initial capital investment and continuous expenditure to reconstruct the shores would literally be carried away by the sea.

“I can only be thankful that these plans do not seem to be progressing. Karachi has been blessed with this natural resource, our island's mangrove forests. Even if we just protect them from being cut and allow the seeds to propagate naturally, without being trampled, within a 15-year period we will have vast forests of oxygen-producing mangroves upwind to Karachi.”

## Clarion call to action

This is the time to push for and implement marine protected areas, and protected nature reserves on our islands, says TAQ, sounding the clarion call to action. “Especially Bundal Island and Khiprianwala Island. Our city needs these forests to be here for ourselves and our children's future ■”

*Tariq Alexander Qaiser is an architect and environmentalist. His YouTube channel is [Edge of Delta](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...). [edgeofdelta@gmail.com](mailto:edgeofdelta@gmail.com)*

Nature Calling for Action Stations!  
Public-Private Partnerships to the fore!

<https://deltabluecarbon.com/>