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Ahsan Iqbal Honored with Jinnah Cap at Houston Tribute to Pakistan's Founding Fathers



HOUSTON: The Quaid-i-Azam Foundation USA hosted a distinguished ceremony at its Jinnah Library in Houston to commemorate the 150th birth anniversaries of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and

Continued on page 11

Houston Rolls Out the Red Carpet for Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal at Grand Community Banquet



HOUSTON: Federal Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal, was warmly received by American community at a grand banquet dinner held

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In reversal, Mayor Whitmire says 'HPD is conducting an investigation' into ICE shooting

According to Mayor John Whitmire, the Houston Police Department is investigating the fatal shooting of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo by a federal immigration agent last week.

"We're doing everything possible at HPD to investigate this tragic

Continued on page 11

Bilawal proposes reconciliation commission to resolve AJK crisis, calls violence 'national tragedy'

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Wednesday described the violence in AJK as "a national tragedy" and proposed the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to help resolve the ongoing political

Continued on page 13

'They better behave,' Trump warns Iran amid fresh hostilities

United States President Donald Trump issued a new warning Wednesday to Iran, saying Tehran understands Washington's position and cautioned that it "better behave" amid tensions between the two countries.

After arriving in the state of Pennsylvania, where he is scheduled

Continued on page 11

Pakistan Chamber of Commerce USA Showcases Pakistan-Made FIFA World Cup 2026 Soccer Balls



HOUSTON: The Pakistan Chamber of Commerce USA (PCC USA) celebrated Pakistan's remarkable contribution to global sports manufacturing by showcasing

Continued on page 13

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In the aftermath of deadly shootings, ICE pauses most traffic stops

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement will pause non-urgent vehicle stops after two deadly shootings in less than a week, Maine Sen. Angus King's office tells NPR.

King's spokesman Matthew Felling says the Department of Homeland Security

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America's Paper King: The Petrodollar System and the Financial War in the Strait of Hormuz

Take a dollar bill from your wallet and hold it up to the light. What you are holding is, in the most literal sense, almost nothing — a blend of cotton and linen fibers, a few grams of material whose intrinsic worth is effectively zero. There is no gold behind it, no silver, no tangible reserve of anything waiting in a vault to give it substance. And yet this same slip of paper is accepted by a farmer in Brazil, trusted by a merchant in Shanghai, required by an oil trader in Riyadh, and treated as the foundational medium of commerce by a manufacturer in Tokyo. The question is not what this paper is. The question is why the world decided it was worth something. And now, as artillery exchanges echo across the twenty-one-mile width of the Strait of Hormuz, as Donald Trump announces a twenty-percent toll on every cargo ship that passes through those waters, as five hundred and three vessels sit at anchor in the Persian Gulf with nowhere to go, and as war-risk insurance has climbed to eight times its prewar level, a second question hangs in the air alongside the first: is the system that kept this paper at the center of the world economy for half a century now approaching its final turn?

The answer to the first question is a single word. Trust. Not machinery, not policy, not interest rates — a collective mental agreement that this paper holds value. And to understand how that trust was built, and what is happening to it today, you have to go backward in time, because no system appears from nowhere and no system disappears overnight. Both the building and the unraveling have their roots in history's deeper layers.

In 1944, while the world was still consuming itself in war, a quiet decision was being made in the New Hampshire resort town of Bretton Woods. Representatives of forty-four nations gathered to design a new international monetary order. Their agreement was straightforward in its architecture: all major world currencies would be pegged to the United States dollar, and the dollar itself would be convertible to gold at a fixed rate of thirty-five dollars per ounce. The logic was similarly straightforward. The United States was the only major economy that the war had not devastated. It held more than half the world's gold reserves. It had the industrial capacity, the political stability, and the military reach that no other country could match. The world extended it trust, and that trust became the foundation of the postwar economic order.

For roughly twenty-five years, the system worked. The world rebuilt itself. Trade expanded. Industry grew. The dollar became

the language of international commerce. But every concentration of power carries within it the seed of its own problem, and the problem here was excess confidence — the temptation, available only to the country that controlled the world's reserve currency, to spend beyond what any ordinary nation could sustain. Vietnam. Domestic expansion programs. Military commitments that stretched across the globe. By the late 1960s, the gap between the dollars in circulation and the gold supposedly backing them had become impossible to ignore. France's President Charles de Gaulle was the first to call the bluff explicitly — he sent dollars back to Washington and demanded gold in return. Others followed. The gold reserves drained. A French finance minister had already given this American privilege a name that has echoed through every subsequent debate about monetary power: the "exorbitant privilege." The right to print currency, purchase goods from the world, accumulate debt, fight wars, and receive dollars back in return — a structural advantage that gave the United States an economic reach far exceeding what its underlying fundamentals alone could have produced.

On August 15, 1971, the reckoning arrived. In what became known as the Nixon Shock, the United States announced that it would no longer convert dollars to gold. The Bretton Woods system ended in a single announcement. The dollar now rested on nothing but confidence in the American government, and the world found itself facing a question it had not anticipated: how do you sustain the value of a currency with no tangible foundation?

The answer came not from finance but from the ground — specifically, from beneath the deserts of the Middle East.

In 1974, a secret agreement was reached with Saudi Arabia, the existence of which was not publicly confirmed until 2016 when Bloomberg News filed a Freedom of Information Act request with the National Archives. The terms, reconstructed from what has since become available, were elegant in their simplicity. The OPEC nations, led by Riyadh, agreed to price oil exclusively in dollars. The United States, in return, agreed to provide military security to the Gulf states and to absorb the surplus dollars generated by oil sales back into the American financial system through Treasury bond purchases. What gold had provided as the anchor for the dollar's value, oil now replaced. Every nation on earth needed energy to run its economy. Energy required oil. Oil required dollars. Dollars flowed back to the



By Raja Zahid
Akhtar Khanzada

United States. The circle was self-reinforcing — cheap financing, low interest rates, and monetary power that multiplied far beyond what America's domestic economic performance would otherwise have justified. The world entered the arrangement so thoroughly that challenging it hardly occurred to anyone as a practical possibility.

But every system develops fractures, slowly and quietly, long before they become visible.

The euro's arrival in 1999 offered the first serious alternative reserve currency. The financial crisis of 2008 raised the question of whether the dollar was truly safe. China began building the infrastructure for yuan internationalization. But the decisive moment came in 2022, when the United States froze Russia's dollar reserves following the invasion of Ukraine. For the first time, in full public view, the world saw what many had long suspected but few had stated plainly: the dollar was not merely a currency. It was a political weapon. And once that became undeniable, it could not be unseen. Saudi Arabia quietly declined to formally renew the petrodollar agreement in June 2024, though it continues to price most of its oil in dollars. The dollar's share of global foreign exchange reserves had already fallen from seventy-one percent in 1999 to roughly fifty-seven percent. The erosion was real, if gradual.

Then, on February 28, 2026, something happened that transformed a slow-moving structural shift into an acute crisis.

The United States and Israel struck Iran, and Iran's first move was to turn the Strait of Hormuz into a weapon. The strait is not merely a geographic feature. Before the war, twenty percent of the world's oil and twenty percent of its liquefied natural gas passed through its twenty-one-mile width every day — more than twenty million barrels of crude and petroleum

products, flowing between the Iranian coastline to the north and the Omani shore to the south. It had been, for decades, a passage that no one controlled and everyone used freely, with no toll, no permission required, no question asked. Iran changed that. It attacked commercial vessels, laid mines, and announced that ships belonging to nations supporting the American and Israeli military campaign would not pass. Chinese-flagged tankers, however, were permitted transit — provided they paid their fees in Chinese yuan.

This was not merely a military maneuver. It was a declaration of financial war, and Iran understood precisely what it was doing. The petrodollar system's foundational logic, as the analyst Robert Pape has argued, was always that security and dollar usage were a package: you accept our protection, you price your oil in our currency. Iran was proposing a different package — accept our authority over this waterway, pay in yuan, and you may pass. China was already buying more than eighty percent of Iran's oil in yuan. Indian refineries were settling Russian crude purchases in yuan and UAE dirhams, bypassing SWIFT entirely. A multilateral central bank digital currency platform called Project mBridge — connecting China, the UAE, Thailand, and Saudi Arabia, which joined as a full participant in June 2024 — had become the operational corridor for energy settlement between Riyadh and Beijing, processing transactions without SWIFT systems or dollar conversion. According to Deutsche Bank research, by 2023 roughly one-fifth of global oil transactions had already shifted to non-dollar currencies. The 2026 war did not create this infrastructure. It activated it. For the first time, the alternative to the petrodollar was not theoretical. It was operational.

And then came July 13, 2026.

On that Monday, Donald Trump posted on Truth Social that "the U.S.A. will be, from this point forward, known as the Guardian of the Hormuz Strait," and that "as a matter of FAIRNESS," the United States would be "reimbursed, at the rate of 20% on all cargo shipped." He added: "The process and formation will begin immediately." The naval blockade of Iranian ports, briefly lifted after last month's ceasefire, was reinstated the following day.

This is where the answer to your question becomes most painful. Is Trump's twenty-percent toll a replacement for the petrodollar system? No. It is the first signature on the system's death certificate — and the hand holding the pen is American.

The petrodollar's entire logic

rested on a specific bargain: the United States provides security at no charge, and in return the dollar remains the indispensable medium of global energy trade. Every country that needed oil needed dollars. Every dollar spent on oil found its way back to Washington. The arrangement did not require explicit payment because the payment was structural — it came in the form of dollar demand, Treasury bond purchases, and the financial leverage that reserve currency status confers. Trump has now unilaterally dissolved that bargain. He is saying, in plain language, that the security the United States provides is no longer free. There is a bill. It is twenty percent.

The irony that has not escaped international observers is that weeks earlier, when Iran floated the idea of charging transit fees in the strait, Secretary of State Marco Rubio called it a violation of international law. The United Nations agency responsible for maritime regulation agreed: no country has the legal authority to impose tolls on an international waterway. Today the United States is doing precisely what it condemned Iran for proposing, and Iran's government has responded with undisguised mockery, saying that twenty percent "is of course too much — we will be fair." Andreas Krieg, a senior lecturer at King's College London's School of Security Studies, noted the self-defeating quality of the move: if Washington charges for access to the strait, it inadvertently validates Tehran's argument that monetizing passage through Hormuz is a legitimate exercise of power. "The United States has spent weeks insisting that freedom of navigation is a principle under international law," Krieg observed. "If it suddenly starts talking about charging for access itself, it weakens its own legal and political position while strengthening Tehran's narrative."

The financial backdrop against which all of this is playing out is not incidental. The United States national debt crossed thirty-nine trillion dollars on March 19, 2026, a figure that has been accumulating at roughly one trillion dollars every hundred days through 2025 and into this year. Annual interest payments on that debt now exceed one trillion dollars — more than the entire defense budget. All three major credit rating agencies have already downgraded American debt. The structure on which the petrodollar stands is itself under strain from within, and the Strait of Hormuz crisis is not relieving that strain; it is accelerating it.

Meanwhile, the world's central banks are buying gold at record levels. The reason is not difficult

Continued on Page 04

Pakistan and the United States; A Long Partnership of Cooperation and Shared Interests, 1947–2026

From Cold War cooperation to modern economic and security engagement, Pakistan and the United States have developed a long and evolving relationship shaped by shared interests as well as periods of disagreement.

SYED FEROZ AHMED

Houston, Texas

The United States celebrated the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 2026. This milestone provides a useful opportunity to reflect on its long standing relationship with Pakistan, which became an independent country on August 14, 1947. Since then, the two countries have maintained diplomatic relations and have cooperated in areas such as security, economic development, education, trade, and humanitarian assistance.

Soon after Pakistan's independence, the two countries established diplomatic relations. In the early years, the United States supported Pakistan through economic assistance and development programs. Pakistan also joined SEATO in 1954 and the Baghdad Pact in 1955, which later became the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in 1959. These steps reflected Pakistan's close cooperation with the United States and its Western allies during the early years of the Cold War.

During the Cold War, Pakistan became an important strategic partner for the United States in South Asia. The United States provided economic and military assistance, while Pakistan supported regional security objectives. At the same time, the relationship also experienced challenges because of changing regional politics and differing priorities.

One important period came during the 1965 India-Pakistan War, when the United States suspended military assistance to both India and Pakistan. Relations were tested again during the 1971 India-Pakistan War, which led to the creation of Bangladesh. Although the United States maintained ties with Pakistan, these events showed that the partnership was influenced by wider regional developments.

A major phase of cooperation followed during the Soviet-Afghan War, 1979–1989. Pakistan and the United States, together with other international partners, supported Afghan resistance groups opposing the Soviet occupation. Pakistan also hosted more than three million Afghan refugees, according to UNHCR

estimates, making it one of the world's largest refugee hosting countries. While this cooperation contributed to the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the conflict also had long term effects on regional security that continued for many years.

After the events of September 11, 2001, Pakistan became an important partner of the United States in global counterterrorism efforts. The two countries cooperated in intelligence sharing, logistics, and military operations. In 2004, the United States designated Pakistan as a Major Non-NATO Ally, recognizing its role in regional security. This period also brought serious challenges for Pakistan. According to figures reported by the Government of Pakistan, more than 80,000 Pakistanis, including civilians and security personnel, lost their lives because of terrorism, and the country suffered economic losses estimated at more than US\$150 billion. Different organizations have published varying estimates, but all agree that Pakistan paid a significant human and economic cost during this period.

Despite close cooperation, relations also experienced periods of difficulty. In 1990, U.S. sanctions were imposed under the Pressler Amendment because of concerns about Pakistan's nuclear program. Following Pakistan's nuclear tests in 1998, additional sanctions were introduced before many were later eased.

Nevertheless, both countries continued diplomatic engagement and cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

Humanitarian cooperation has remained an important part of the relationship. Pakistan has hosted Afghan refugees for more than four decades, while the United States has provided significant assistance during natural disasters, including the 2005 earthquake and the devastating floods of 2010.

Economic relations have also remained important. The United States is one of Pakistan's largest trading partners, with bilateral trade reaching approximately US\$6–8 billion annually in recent years. Pakistan exports tex-

tiles, apparel, leather goods, surgical instruments, rice, and information technology services, while American companies have invested in Pakistan's energy, telecommunications, and financial sectors.

People-to-people ties continue to strengthen the relationship. Thousands of Pakistani students study in the United States every year, including through the Fulbright Program. Pakistani Americans have made important contributions in medicine, engineering, business, education, science, technology, and public service, helping to strengthen links between the two countries.

For more than six decades, Pakistani Americans have been an important part of American society and the U.S. economy. Today, they include business owners, entrepreneurs, doctors, engineers, scientists, information technology professionals, educators, researchers, lawyers, public servants, and members of the U.S. Armed Forces. Many have established successful companies, created jobs, contributed to innovation, and strengthened industries such as healthcare, technology, finance, higher education, and small business. They also serve as a bridge between Pakistan and the United States by promoting educational, cultural, business, and charitable exchanges. Their achievements have enriched American society while helping to build stronger people to people ties between the two countries.

High level diplomatic engagement has also shaped bilateral relations. U.S. Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower (1959), Richard Nixon (1969), Bill Clinton (2000), and George W. Bush (2006) visited Pakistan, reflecting different stages of cooperation and dialogue.

In recent years (2024–2026), Pakistan and the United States have worked to broaden their relationship beyond security issues. Discussions have increasingly focused on trade, investment, energy, climate resilience, technology, critical minerals, public health, and education. Both governments have expressed interest in expanding economic cooperation while continuing dialogue on regional and global issues.

Pakistan has also maintained diplomatic contacts with countries across the Middle East, including Iran and the Gulf states, while encouraging peaceful dialogue during periods of regional tension. U.S. officials have continued to engage with Pakistan on regional security and diplomatic issues, reflecting Pakistan's strategic importance in South Asia.

The engagement between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Donald Trump has created opportunities for renewed dialogue on areas of shared interest. As with any bilateral relationship, the success of future cooperation will depend on regular diplomatic engagement, mutual respect, and practical collaboration.

Since 1947, Pakistan and the United States have experienced both close cooperation and periods of disagreement. Even during difficult times, the two countries have maintained diplomatic relations and continued to work together in areas such as trade, education, humanitarian assistance, counterterrorism, and regional stability. This long history demonstrates that the relationship has adapted to changing international circumstances.

As the United States celebrates the 250th anniversary of its independence, this milestone offers an opportunity to recognize the long history of engagement between Pakistan and the United States. Looking ahead, expanding cooperation in trade, investment, education, science, technology, energy, climate resilience, public health, and people to people exchanges can benefit both countries. By building on areas of common interest and addressing differences through dialogue, Pakistan and the United States can continue to develop a stable and constructive partnership that contributes to regional peace, economic development, and international cooperation.

The people of Pakistan and the Pakistani American community extend their congratulations and best wishes to the people of the United States on this historic anniversary. May the years ahead bring continued friendship, peace, prosperity, and greater cooperation between the two nations.

America's Paper King: The Petrodollar System and the Financial War in the Strait of Hormuz

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to understand. Gold cannot be frozen. It cannot be deployed as a political weapon. It sits outside the control of any single government. It is, in the language of monetary hedging, the asset that persists when trust in institutional arrangements fails. That central banks are accumulating it at historic rates is itself a statement about what sophisticated financial actors believe is happening to the arrangement that has governed global commerce for fifty years.

To be fair to the full complexity of the picture: the petrodollar is not dead, and the petroyuan is not its replacement. The depth, breadth, and liquidity of American financial markets remain unmatched by any alternative. The British pound's transition from reserve currency to secondary status took approximately thirty years, from the 1920s through the 1950s, and the dollar's unwinding, if it comes, will not happen faster. The

yuan remains a small fraction of global reserves. Most oil is still priced and traded in dollars. Analysts at Alpine Macro have noted that even Iran's yuan-denominated toll arrangements involve stablecoins that are themselves effectively dollar-denominated instruments.

But what is different this time, in ways that distinguish 2026 from every previous challenge to dollar dominance, is that the alternative infrastructure is for the first time genuinely operational rather than merely aspirational. The argument for de-dollarization used to be theoretical — a direction of travel, not a destination anyone had reached. Today, ships are transiting the Strait of Hormuz and completing transactions in yuan and cryptocurrency. Project mBridge is processing energy settlements between Riyadh and Beijing without touching a SWIFT wire or converting through a dollar account. Iran has demonstrated,

whatever else one thinks of its methods, that a toll can be charged at the world's most important energy chokepoint and that the world's largest economies will pay it.

These are not projections. They are facts established in the last five months.

The petrodollar was never really a story about a currency. It was a story about trust — trust that the United States would keep the sea lanes open for free, trust that the dollar would not be weaponized against those who held it, trust that the American security umbrella was available to anyone willing to price their commodities in the right denomination. All three of those trusts are now fraying simultaneously, and the most damaging blow to each of them has come not from Iran or China or Russia but from Washington itself.

When a system destroys its own foundational logic — when the guardian begins charging admission, when the principle of free navigation is abandoned by the country that most loudly proclaimed it, when the currency that was supposed

to be above politics is deployed as the sharpest political instrument available — history has a way of accelerating its conclusions. The British Empire discovered this at Suez in 1956, when American pressure forced it to abandon its pretensions to great power status in a single weekend. The lesson was not that British power had suddenly collapsed. The lesson was that the underlying reality had changed years before, and Suez simply made that reality undeniable.

The twenty-one miles of the Strait of Hormuz are not, in the end, a story about oil. They are a story about whether the world's most powerful country can sustain the trust on which its monetary primacy depends, at precisely the moment when it appears most determined to spend that trust down.

The ships are waiting. The question is not whether they will eventually move. The question is in whose currency the passage will be settled when they do — and whether the answer will still be the same as it was last year.

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Back to war

The latest events will make it far harder for Iran and the US to reach a negotiated peace deal.

Zahid Hussain

THE tentative ceasefire has effectively collapsed even before the US and Iran could begin technical-level talks. Renewed American strikes and Iranian retaliation now threaten the interim deal barely a month after it was signed. The two countries are sliding back towards war: Donald Trump has announced the resumption of the blockade, while Iran has closed the Strait of Hormuz. The US president has also notified Congress that the conflict with Iran is on.

Trump's escalatory rhetoric — threatening to seize control of the strategic waterway and charge other countries for guarding it — may be dismissed as one of his usual bombastic flourishes, yet it has added to the tension. America's escalation, coming a day after the delayed funeral of the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed on the first day of the war on Feb 28, has stoked public anger in Iran. Many are calling for revenge.

Although a return to full-fledged war may not be imminent, the latest developments have made it far harder to reach a negotiated peace deal. The situation is half-war, half-peace, keeping the world on edge. The latest hostilities were apparently triggered by the strikes of Iran's Revolutionary Guard on two

tankers passing through the Strait of Hormuz for failing to follow instructions.

There may be an element of truth to the argument that Iran, by targeting Qatari and Saudi tankers, has overplayed its leverage, giving Trump an opportunity to hit back. But it is also a fact that Iran's action was provoked by the US attempt to guide commercial ships via the Omani route. Iran insists that its own waters offer the only viable route through the Strait of Hormuz for commercial vessels. For Iran, control of the strategic strait has become a key source of leverage; one Iranian official is quoted as saying it is more important than "dozens of atomic bombs".

Indeed, the Iranian action could have been avoided, but the US response was extraordinarily severe. The US strikes have mainly targeted civilian infrastructure, and Trump has rescinded the two-month sanction relief on Iranian oil exports.

The move may severely damage an already collapsing Iranian economy, yet there is no sign of Iran capitulating. Its retaliatory strikes on US bases in surrounding Gulf countries demonstrate Tehran's continued military capacity to hit back. Taken together, the hostilities have pushed the situation back to where it stood before the cease-

fire and temporary peace deal — in fact, it has grown even worse.

Iran's retaliatory strikes have also strained its relations with the Gulf countries, which had appeared to ease after the ceasefire. The closure of Hormuz may not go down well with other countries that had stayed out of the US aggression. The spike in international oil prices could worsen an already recessionary situation.

Most alarming is the fact that the conflict could expand across the region and beyond. Interestingly, Iran's nuclear issue, which the US described as the main reason for going to war, has receded into the background, while Hormuz, which was not an issue at all when the war started, has become the major point of contention.

Trump's latest move — seeking control of the waterway and charging commercial vehicles 20pc on cargo value for protection services — has added a more explosive dimension. "I want to be reimbursed because we're protecting a very rich portion of the world, we're spending money, and ... we are going to be reimbursed for protection," Trump said. His words mark a dramatic shift in US policy and violate global norms of freedom of navigation. Any such move would heighten tension and cause further economic disruption in the

region and beyond.

The contest has now turned into a battle for Hormuz. America and other countries had opposed Iran's control of the strait and suggestion to charge a toll. Trump's latest ambition to control Hormuz and collect service charges from oil-rich states amounts to an expansion of the military conflict. Most analysts, however, point out that many of his threats have never materialised.

America went to war by choice, albeit under pressure from Israel. It is now getting more and more entangled in a situation from which it will find it hard to extricate itself. Trump, with his country's massive military power, may be able to destroy Iran completely, but that may not bring the war to an end.

The collapse of the ceasefire, the resumption of American military strikes and the blockade of Iran have made it difficult to bring the negotiation process based on the 14-point MoU back on track, though neither side has rejected talks. The situation has made the task of Pakistan and other mediating countries very hard. One wonders whether the mediators can play any meaningful role at all now.

Each side wants a peace deal on its own terms. One can understand Iran's position as the party

aggressed against and defending its sovereignty. But Trump's whimsical and imperialistic designs have pushed the region into its worst crisis in recent history, with global implications. Meanwhile, Israel, which has opposed the interim peace agreement, now sees a fresh opportunity to restart the war. Its Defence Minister Israel Katz said last week that his country was prepared to resume its military campaign against Iran if needed, vowing to do so "with even greater force". Israel has already extended its war deep into Lebanon, occupying a large part of the country despite the US-brokered ceasefire. A renewed Israeli attack on Iran would turn into a wider conflagration — which is what the Zionist state wants. Trump's latest escalation fits in with Israel's strategy to destroy Iran, thereby eliminating any resistance to its expansionist designs.

A renewed US-Israel war on Iran is likely to place Pakistan, which mediated the ceasefire and secured the MoU, in a precarious diplomatic situation. It remains to be seen how our leadership, which has so far been basking in the international limelight, will steer the country through such a critical situation.

The writer is an author and journalist.

Poverty punished

THE challenge of illegal migrations should be viewed through a humanitarian lens. Harsh punishments for the poor overlook human misery, and end up criminalising poverty. Although collective global efforts have tried to end modern slavery, the scourge — rooted largely in the government's economic failure — persists with thousands being trafficked annually. Over the past couple of weeks or so,

Gujranwala, Gujrat and Sialkot courts have sentenced over 60 deportees — largely from Libya and Greece — to 10- to 15-day jail terms, with fines as high as Rs50,000. The FIA has imposed a five-year ban on foreign travel for the offenders. While disciplinary action is needed for illegal immigrants, sending the desperate to prison is merely a band-aid on a metastatic malaise.

People who brave treacherous waters in rickety boats in their pursuit of a better life abroad are not criminals but victims of dire socioeconomic conditions. Treating the indigent harshly is not effective. It is, in fact, a distraction from the absence of social welfare policies. The state must guarantee the rights of victims of human trafficking and smuggling so that they choose to stay. It must counter corruption,

powerful patronage, legal loopholes and the culture of criminal impunity. Without an institutional overhaul, databanks, training, funds and incentives for law-enforcement, toxic transnational cartels will expand. The West, responsible for most conflicts, can fork out a fraction of its expenditure on wars to secure sufferers, while those escaping our moribund economy should be facilitated — for instance, by

raising their outrageously low wages. The traps of trafficking rings widen as poverty and turmoil grow as revealed in the 2025 IOM report: at least 2,722 illegal migrants from the Asia-Pacific region died or went missing, with Pakistan's score standing at a disturbing 109. When rulers undercut citizens' living standards, and allow predators to get away with fines, the blame cannot be pinned on the victims.

Amir Zaidi Calls on Maulana Fazlur Rehman to Apologize Over Remarks About Pakistan's Martyrs

PAGH General Secretary says comments about fallen soldiers hurt martyrs' families, urges respect for the sacrifices of Pakistan's Armed Forces.

HOUSTON: Amir Zaidi, General Secretary of the Pakistan Association of Greater Houston (PAGH), has called on Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-F (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman to apologize for his recent remarks concerning Pakistan's martyrs, saying the comments have deeply hurt the families of those who sacrificed their lives in defense of the country.

Fazlur Rehman made the statement during a recent party rally in Punjab's Kasur, where he discussed the security and terrorism situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. During his address, he referred to the martyrdom of soldiers, stating that military personnel receive salaries to fight for the country.

Responding to the remarks, Zaidi described the speech as "deeply regrettable" and said that questioning or diminishing the sacrifices of Pakistan's Armed Forces was unacceptable.

Speaking to the American Chronicle, Zaidi said the country's soldiers continue to make immense sacrifices in protecting Pakistan's sovereignty and combating terrorism. He emphasized that political differences should never come at the expense of national unity or respect for those who have laid down their lives for the nation.

"We stand firmly with our Armed Forces and pay tribute to our martyrs, whose sacrifices continue to safeguard Pakistan's peace and



sovereignty," Zaidi said.

He further criticized Maulana Fazlur Rehman, alleging that his political rhetoric had contributed to divisions within society. Citing Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:32), Zaidi said Islam places the highest value on protecting human life and questioned what contributions, in his view, Fazlur Rehman had made as a religious scholar and political leader.

Zaidi contrasted those remarks with the role of Pakistan's military, saying soldiers of every rank willingly risk and sacrifice their lives to defend the country's borders, protect its citizens, and eliminate terrorism. Referring to Surah Aal-e-Imran (3:169), he paid tribute to the country's martyrs, saying their sacrifices would always be remembered with honor.

He urged Maulana Fazlur Rehman to withdraw his remarks and offer a public apology to the families of Pakistan's martyrs, stating that such comments had caused unnecessary pain to those whose loved ones gave their lives in service of the nation.

As debate over the remarks continues, community leaders have emphasized that honoring Pakistan's martyrs is a shared national responsibility and have urged public figures to exercise restraint and responsibility when speaking on matters related to national security and the sacrifices of the country's armed forces.

How Such Remarks Affect Pakistan and Overseas Pakistanis

Community leaders say that statements perceived as diminishing the sacrifices of Pakistan's Armed Forces or martyrs can have consequences both within Pakistan and among the millions of Pakistanis living abroad.

Within Pakistan, such remarks can deepen political polarization and divert attention from the country's ongoing security challenges. They may also cause emotional distress to the families of military personnel, law enforce-

ment officials, and civilians who have lost their lives in terrorist attacks or security operations. Many believe that public debate should remain respectful, particularly when discussing those who have died while serving the nation.

For overseas Pakistanis, controversial statements by prominent political or religious figures can also have broader implications. Members of the Pakistani diaspora often serve as informal ambassadors of their country and work to promote a positive image of Pakistan

in their adopted countries. Public controversies involving national institutions can create difficult conversations within diaspora communities and may overshadow efforts to highlight Pakistan's achievements, investment opportunities, culture, and resilience.

Community organizations in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and other countries have frequently emphasized that while political debate is a normal part of democracy, respect for the sacrifices of

Pakistan's security personnel and civilians who have lost their lives to terrorism should remain above partisan politics.

Many overseas Pakistanis believe that national unity on issues of security and counterterrorism strengthens Pakistan's international image and reinforces confidence among foreign partners and investors. At the same time, they also recognize that open discussion and criticism of public policy are part of a democratic society, provided such discussions are

Texas Rangers will investigate ICE shooting in Houston. Here's what that means

The Department of Public Safety and Texas Rangers will investigate the killing of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo alongside the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security, a DHS spokesperson confirmed Wednesday afternoon.

The investigation, which begins immediately, means Texas Rangers will have access to all evidence collected by the federal government, which is also conducting an investigation, according to DPS.

"At the completion of the investigation, the Texas Rangers' independent assessment of the evidence will be provided to the prosecuting entity as appropriate," Sheridan Nolen, press secretary at DPS, said in a statement.

DPS director Col. Freeman Martin also sent a letter to Houston police chief Noe Diaz, stating that he wanted to commit to "ensuring that this matter is investigated fully, effectively, and with complete transparency."

Original post:

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott confirmed the Department of Public Safety will be conducting an investigation into last week's ICE-involved shoot-

ing death of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo in Houston. Abbott said DPS will be working alongside federal and local law enforcement, but the state agency will also be conducting its own investigation.

"Anytime the Texas Rangers are involved, they work independently," Abbott said. "They're well known, not just in the state of Texas but elsewhere, for their independence in conducting investigations."

Abbott's remarks follow a formal request by Houston Mayor John Whitmire and Police Chief Noe Diaz for the Texas Rangers to conduct their own investigation in the interest of "enhanced transparency." Late Tuesday evening, Mayor John Whitmire and Houston Police Chief Noe Diaz requested the launch of a state-level investigation into the fatal shooting of a man in Houston by a federal immigration officer last week.

In a letter to the director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, which was shared with reporters by a representative from Whitmire's office, Diaz writes he and Whitmire "are asking for the Texas Rangers to conduct their own investigation which will ensure it is independent and

transparent. This has been done in previous cases."

Houston Public Media has repeatedly requested comment from the Department of Public Safety (DPS), which oversees the Texas Rangers. DPS representatives have acknowledged the requests but have yet to provide information or statements.

"We have asked the Texas Rangers, probably the best investigative body in the world, to come investigate this with a thorough, transparent investigation," Whitmire said Wednesday morning on CNN.

Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, a 52-year-old father of three who was originally from Mexico, was shot and killed by an officer with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on July 7. He had been living in the United States for decades without legal immigration status, according to his family. The ICE agents involved were not wearing body cameras, and no video footage of the shooting itself has surfaced.

Representatives with ICE have alleged Salgado Araujo "weaponized his vehicle" before an agent shot him in self-defense, a claim disputed

by the others in the van with him, including his brother, Victor Salgado Araujo. ICE's account echoes what has become a common refrain from the federal agency after fatal shootings by its agents, including one earlier this week in Maine.

A dispute about the Houston shooting could warrant a state-level investigation. The incident is already being investigated at the federal and local levels.

The FBI has stated it is investigating a potential assault on a federal law enforcement officer, while the Office of Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is investigating the shooting death. That prompted calls for an independent investigation at a time when ICE arrests and deportations have surged under President Donald Trump.

Harris County District Attorney Sean Teare said last week his office is investigating, and Whitmire on Tuesday reversed course and stated the Houston Police Department is "conducting an investigation." Whitmire and Diaz previously said the city lacked jurisdiction to investigate the shooting, a claim disputed by legal experts.

Quaid-i-Azam Foundation USA Honors Pakistan's Founding Visionaries with Ahsan Iqbal in Houston

The Quaid-i-Azam Foundation USA hosted a prestigious ceremony at its Jinnah Library in Houston to commemorate the 150th birth anniversaries of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Muhammad Iqbal. Federal Minister Professor Ahsan Iqbal, who was honored with a ceremonial Jinnah Cap, urged overseas Pakistanis to carry forward the vision of the nation's founding leaders, while community leaders Dr. Asaf Riyaz Qadeer, philanthropist Nasaruddin Rupani and other orators highlighted the importance of preserving Pakistan's heritage and values.



Consul General Aftab Chaudhary Hosts Grand Houston Banquet Honoring Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal

Hosted by Consul General of Pakistan in Houston Aftab Chaudhary, the grand banquet brought together diplomats, community leaders, business professionals, and elected officials to honor Federal Minister Professor Ahsan Iqbal. The evening featured discussions on Pakistan's Uraan development vision and a special presentation of a traditional Texas cowboy hat by Congressman Al Green, symbolizing the enduring friendship between Pakistan and the United States.



**Business Tycoon Tanweer Ahmed, Maxum Group CEO Uzair Hasan
Host Grand Muharram-ul-Haram Haleem Reception in Houston**

Hundreds of Pakistani-American community leaders, business executives, and distinguished guests gathered at Tempura Marquee for a traditional Haleem reception, celebrating Muharram-ul-Haram while promoting unity, cultural heritage, and community fellowship.



PCC USA's Aga's Minnah Scholarship Program Tops \$100,000 Thanks to Aga's Restaurant

The Pakistan Chamber of Commerce USA (PCC USA), with the generous support of Aga's Restaurant owner Shaukat Maredia, awarded \$40,000 in scholarships to 10 outstanding young women during the Aga's Minnah Scholarship Award Ceremony. The initiative has now invested a remarkable \$100,000 in education over the past three years, reinforcing PCC USA's commitment to empowering the next generation of leaders.



In reversal, Mayor Whitmire says 'HPD is conducting an investigation' into ICE shooting

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death, and anyone that says different is just wrong," Whitmire said.

Whitmire's remarks on Wednesday came one week after he and Houston Police Chief Noe Diaz said the department lacked jurisdiction to investigate, a claim disputed by legal experts. Since then, Whitmire said, the city turned over 911 audio and METRO bus video footage to the Harris County District Attorney's Office, which is investigating the shooting in addition to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General. HPD also offered assistance last week to the FBI, which is probing the incident as a potential assault on a law enforcement officer.

"My police chief, former Texas Ranger, has been conducting investigations, sharing everything we have as an HPD office with this district attorney — METRO tape, 911 video," Whitmire said. "I can't tell you how we continue to dialogue with the district attorney. But the jurisdiction is federal. They control the evidence. We're asking them to release that to the Texas Rangers."

Diaz said last week that HPD officers were not independently gathering evidence, and Whitmire did not clarify on Wednesday whether that has changed. An HPD spokesperson could not immediately say whether officers were seeking evidence.

Whitmire said the FBI was slated to execute a search warrant on the van driven by Salgado Araujo at 10 a.m. Wednesday, and the DA's office would be present. In a statement, a spokesperson for the DA's office said it would not discuss details about a pending investigation. The FBI declined to comment, including whether or not this was the first time the agency has looked at the van since the July 7 shooting, referring back to the mayor's office for clarification.

Whitmire announced the new stance under pressure from council member Edward Pollard.

"People want answers, people want some type of clarity, and people are frustrated with some of the actions of the city," Pollard told Whitmire.

Before the meeting, Whitmire instructed Diaz to request the Texas Rangers conduct their own investigation into the shooting. The Texas Department of Public Safety, which includes the Rangers, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Whitmire began his remarks on Wednesday by casting shadows at some community members and activists who spoke to the city council during a public comment session the day before. He said some speakers lacked "decorum" because they used "foul language," and the city will have "enforcement."

"We're not gonna allow that again," Whitmire said.

Ahsan Iqbal Honored with Jinnah Cap at Houston Tribute to Pakistan's Founding Fathers

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Allama Muhammad Iqbal, with Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal attending as the chief guest.

The event brought together members of the Pakistani-American community, business leaders, academics, professionals, and students to celebrate the lives and contributions of the two great visionaries who laid the ideological and constitutional foundations of Pakistan.

As a mark of respect and appreciation, Professor Ahsan Iqbal was presented with a finely crafted Jinnah Cap by the Quaid-i-Azam Foundation USA. The ceremonial presentation symbolized the enduring legacy of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and reflected the Foundation's commitment to preserving Pakistan's national heritage. Professor Ahsan Iqbal proudly wore the iconic Jinnah Cap throughout the ceremony, drawing warm applause from the audience and adding a symbolic touch to the celebration.

Delivering the keynote address, Professor Ahsan Iqbal said that the vision of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the philosophy of Allama Muhammad Iqbal continue to serve as a guiding light for Pakistan's future. He urged overseas Pakistanis to remain connected to their homeland and contribute towards the country's development through education, innovation, investment, and knowledge-sharing.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Asaf Riyaz Qadeer, Co-Founder of Quaid-i-Azam Foundation USA, welcomed the distinguished guests and thanked the Pakistani-American community for their continued support of the Foundation's educational and cultural initiatives. He said the celebration was organized to honor the timeless vision of Quaid-i-Azam and Allama Iqbal while inspiring younger generations to remain connected with Pakistan's history, heritage, and national ideals.

Founder of Ibne Sina Foundation, Nasaruddin Rupani, also graced the occasion and addressed the gathering. In his remarks, he emphasized the importance of community service, philanthropy, and education, stating that the principles championed by Quaid-i-Azam and Allama Iqbal continue to inspire Pakistanis around the world. He commended the Quaid-i-Azam Foundation USA for its efforts to preserve and promote the legacy of Pakistan's founding leaders among the diaspora.

The ceremony featured tributes to Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Muhammad Iqbal, followed by an interactive session and networking among attendees. The event concluded with a renewed commitment by the Pakistani-American community to uphold the ideals of leadership, unity, education, and public service championed by the two national icons.

The event was coordinated by Mr. Tahir Raza Bhatti, Tanweer Ahmed,

Dr. Asaf Riyaz Qadeer, and Air Commodore (R) Khalid Chasti, whose efforts contributed to the success of the commemorative gathering.

In the aftermath of deadly shootings, ICE pauses most traffic stops

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confirmed the policy shift. Maine Sen. Susan Collins also posted on X Tuesday that she had called for change.

"I spoke with DHS Secretary Mullin last night and urged him to cease all non-urgent vehicle stops," she wrote.

DHS told NPR in a statement that it will not "disclose or discuss law enforcement tactics," and it's unclear what this change will look like in practice.

The most recent death happened Monday in Biddeford, Maine, where ICE agents tried to pull over the car of 26-year-old Joan Durán Guerrero, a Colombian national.

"The vehicle attempted to flee the scene and fearing for public safety an officer discharged his weapon," DHS said in a statement. However, the agency has not provided any evidence to back the claims. The agents were not wearing body cameras.

Last week, Lorenzo Salgado Araujo was shot by agents in Houston after they attempted to pull him over. The Department of Homeland Security says Salgado Araujo tried to use his van as a weapon, prompting an agent to fire their weapon. But passengers in the van have disputed this account.

Paul Hunker, the former chief counsel of ICE in Dallas, told NPR the standards and principles of when to discharge a firearm are clear.

"I was an attorney for the officers — the person has to pose an imminent threat of harm to use deadly force," Hunker said.

He said whether the person poses an imminent threat is always from the perspective of the officer.

DHS Policy

The Department of Homeland Security's policy says deadly force cannot be used solely to prevent someone from fleeing ... unless the person poses a significant threat of death or serious physical harm to the agent or others.

DHS accused Salgado Araujo of weaponizing his car against the ICE officer. In Maine, the agency said Durán Guerrero posed a public safety threat.

But in these cases, there hasn't been video evidence to back up those allegations.

The latest development has been welcomed by former DHS officials who said a reset is needed in order to regain the trust of the public, and ensure no more lives are lost.

"That person could flee and present a big danger to people around them ... that's one of the reasons I think there are few vehicle chases because of the danger and the harm that could happen if one of those goes bad," Hunker said.

He said in the past, ICE's preference has been to assume custody of the undocumented immigrants who were already in jails, making it safer for the agents.

Sarah Saldaña, a former ICE acting director under President Obama, said the shift in policy is a good start.

"I think it's a very practical thing to do until the agency can get its officers more properly trained and attuned to what their effort is," Saldaña said. "Immigration enforcement should not be a deadly endeavor — it should be a method by which to make sure that people are complying with the law."

Despite the shift in policy, there are a lot of outstanding questions about what led to the fatal shootings of Salgado Araujo in Houston last week, and of Durán Guerrero in Maine this week.

None of the federal immigration agents were wearing body cameras, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

After the shooting of Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis in January, DHS vowed to quickly deploy body cameras to federal immigration agents nationwide.

But that hasn't happened.

The agency is blaming Democrats in Congress and the partial government shutdowns for this. But it is, again, vowing to deploy body cameras for all agents in the next 60 days.

That footage would have been key to knowing whether the agents followed protocol or not, and to hold the agents accountable, said Lauren Bonds, the executive director of the nonprofit National Police Accountability Project.

"Luckily in both instances there were witnesses, independent witnesses, that observed some things and were able to share some information," Bonds said. "But it's really hard to be able to hold ICE agents accountable in any manner if all we're getting from DHS right now is kind of vague statements about the car being used in a way that was either threatening the ICE agents or, in the case of Maine, threatening the public."

Bonds said the public needs to keep demanding answers and independent investigations to create a change in policy — like the pause on traffic stops made public Tuesday.

'They better behave,' Trump warns Iran amid fresh hostilities

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to address the Defence and Innovation Summit, Trump declined to set a specific deadline for Iran.

"I don't like giving deadlines, but they pretty much know — they know the story. They better behave," he added.

Meanwhile, Iran's Parliament Speaker and top negotiator, Mohammed Bagher Ghalibaf, said that Tehran "must always be prepared" for war, while stressing the need to "use the tools of diplomacy" to advance national interests.

"We have never sought war and do not seek it now, but we must always be prepared for battle and stand ready to defend our national security and interests to the last breath," Ghalibaf said in a statement on his Telegram channel.

"At the same time, we must also use diplomacy and negotiations to advance and safeguard our national interests," he added.

Iran says no talks with US

planned, focus remains on defending country

Iran has no plans to engage in talks with the United States and is focused solely on defending the country, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said on Wednesday, according to Al Jazeera.

Speaking to reporters, Baghaei said Tehran would honour its international commitments only if Washington fulfilled its own obligations. "Our commitments remain in effect only as long as the other side fulfills its pledges," he said.

Baghaei added that Iran had ceased implementing its obligations under the memorandum of understanding after the United States failed to uphold its side of the temporary agreement. "After the other party violated its obligations, we also refrained from implementing ours in any area where it was required," he said.

US military denies striking civilian target in Iran

"Iranian state media claims that US forces struck a civilian wheat storage facility in Hoveyze on July 14. This is FALSE," CENTCOM posted on social media.

Earlier, the US CENTCOM said it "completed a morning round of strikes against Iran at 7:30am ET on Wednesday."

It stated in a post on X that precision munitions were launched against coastal defense systems, cruise missile storage and launch sites on Greater Tunb Island during the 90-minute wave of strikes. "The strikes further degraded Iran's ability to attack commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz," it added.

Separately, CENTCOM stated that it had started a new round of attacks on Iran, beginning at 6am EST on Wednesday (3pm PKT). "The strikes are designed to further degrade military capabilities Iranian forces have used to attack commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz," CENTCOM said in a post on X.

IRGC threatens to halt Gulf energy exports over US naval blockade

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) threatened to cut off all energy exports from the Middle East over the reimposition by the US of naval blockade on its ports. "The export of oil and gas from the region will be either for everyone or for no one," it said in a statement.

Days of retaliatory strikes across the Middle East by Iran and the US — and both nations' attempts to assert control over the Strait of Hormuz — threaten to push the region back to all-out war.

When President Trump announced the return of the blockade on Iran on Monday, he also said he would impose a 20 percent fee on ships passing through the strait. But he dropped the plan to collect tolls hours before resuming the blockade, citing requests from allies in the Gulf.

GCC chief condemns 'treacherous' Iranian attacks

GCC Secretary-General Jassem Albudaiwi has condemned Iranian attacks on Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan, including strikes on infrastructure and facilities that injured Kuwaiti military personnel.

"The treacherous Iranian attacks on Bahrain, Kuwait, and Jordan reveal Iran's determination to drag the region into further chaos and

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'They better behave,' Trump warns Iran amid fresh hostilities

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instability, and its targeting of infrastructure is a dangerous escalation that the international community cannot remain silent about," said Albudaiwi in a statement.

The secretary-general described the attacks as an unprecedented escalation threatening regional security and accused Iran of disregarding international norms.

Albudaiwi urged the international community to take practical deterrent measures, halt further attacks and hold those responsible accountable. He affirmed the GCC's solidarity with Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan and its support for measures taken to defend their security, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Bahrain says it foiled Iranian missile, drone attacks

Bahrain thwarted several Iranian aerial attacks this morning, its defence forces said in a statement, according to Al Jazeera.

Manama called the attacks, which it said targeted civilians, "heinous" and a "flagrant violation of international humanitarian law".

It urged its citizens to avoid approaching any strange or suspicious objects.

Trump says Iran 'largely spent their best' missiles

In an interview with Fox & Friends, President Trump stated that Iran had "largely spent their best" missiles at this point in the conflict.

The president added, "If you look at over the last four or five days they've hit with a lot of missiles – and almost every one of them has been shot down."

US strikes kill at least seven at Iranian army base, Iran's Tasnim reports

At least seven personnel were killed in US strikes on an Iranian military base in Bampur overnight, Iran's army said on Wednesday, according to the semi-official Tasnim news agency.

The army said the strikes were intended to cause maximum casualties, with 13 missiles hitting a guesthouse, guard posts and accommodation facilities at the base near the southeastern city of Iranshahr.

It added that a number of personnel were also wounded and promised a "decisive response" to the attack.

Iran says more than 30 civilians killed in recent attacks on south

More than 30 civilians have been killed in recent attacks on southern Iran, government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani said on Wednesday.

"In the recent attacks on the southern part of the country, more than 30 civilians lost their lives," Mohajerani said in a post on the US social media platform X.

She did not specify where the attacks took place or provide further details about the casualties.

Separately, US strikes targeted three locations in the southwestern Iranian city of Bushehr on Wednesday morning, with no injuries reported, the province's governor said, according to Fars News Agency.

Iran ports authority says US projectile hit Chabahar maritime traffic center

The maritime traffic control center at Chabahar Port, southeastern Iran, was hit by US projectiles during overnight attacks, damaging its structure, the Ports and Maritime Affairs authority in Sistan and Baluchestan said on Wednesday.

The authority's public relations department said in a statement that the port's maritime traffic control center was struck following US attacks on Chabahar Port.

The maritime watchtower is a civilian facility mainly used for search and rescue operations for fishermen at sea, as well as for securing maritime trade, it said.

No casualties were immediately reported in the statement.

Iran vows to block more vital seaways as Trump orders renewed Iran blockade

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has vowed to close "all other export corridors that benefit the US and its allies", Iranian media reported, after Iran shut the Strait of Hormuz and the US reimposed a naval blockade of Iranian ports.

"Regional energy exports are either shared by all, or denied to all," the IRGC said in a statement carried by Iran's IRNA state news agency on Wednesday.

Analysts have said Iran has been signalling it may use its Houthi allies in Yemen to shut the Bab el-Mandeb gateway to the Red Sea, opening a new front against Washington and putting two of the world's most vital energy arteries at risk.

The narrow gateway links the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, through which Saudi oil exports and a substantial share of global shipping pass.

A senior Houthi official warned on Monday that the group was prepared to close the Bab el-Mandeb Strait - a move he said could send oil prices soaring to \$200 a barrel - if Saudi Arabia continued to attack Yemen, according to a report on Iran's Press TV website.

Houthi forces fired missiles at Saudi Arabia after accusing the kingdom of bombing an airport under their control on Monday, breaking a four-year truce in the conflict between the kingdom and the Iran-aligned group.

The Houthis have already shown they can choke global commerce through the Bab el-Mandeb. After the Gaza war erupted in October 2023, the Iran-backed group launched attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea, saying it was targeting vessels linked to Israel in support of Palestinians.

The latest threat to global shipping comes a day after the US military said it began a fresh round of strikes "to continue degrading Iranian capabilities used to attack commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz."

The United States said Iran had attacked seven commercial ships over the last week, leading to nearly a dozen crew members being killed, missing or injured.

The US military said late on Tuesday that it hit dozens of military targets near the Strait of Hormuz and Iranian coastal areas. The wave of strikes lasted seven hours, the US Central Command said in a statement.

Iran says US strikes hit wheat

silo, another site in Khuzestan

A wheat storage silo and another site in Iran's southwestern Khuzestan province were hit by US projectiles overnight, a provincial official said, according to Fars News Agency.

Valiollah Hayati, Khuzestan's deputy governor for security and law enforcement affairs, said a wheat silo in Hoveyze County and another site in Dasht-e Azadegan County were struck.

Hayati said no casualties had been reported.

He added that assessments were underway and that further details would be announced later.

More than 260 injured in latest US attacks on Iran: Iranian official

Hossein Kermanpour, the spokesman for the Iranian Ministry of Health, says 222 of the injured have received treatment and been discharged, according to Al Jazeera.

He said on X that three of the wounded people were under the age of 18, adding that at least two people were killed in the attacks.

The US forces struck dozens of Iranian targets and reimposed a naval blockade on its ports in a flare-up that entered the fifth day.

Jordan says its air defenses downed 3 missiles from Iran

Jordan's armed forces said Wednesday that its air defense systems intercepted and downed three ballistic missiles that entered Jordanian airspace from Iranian territory, the Jordan News Agency (Petra) reported.

A responsible military source at the General Command of the Jordanian Armed Forces said the missiles were intercepted and brought down at dawn, according to the agency.

The army said the incident caused no injuries or material damage, Petra added.

Royal Engineering Corps teams dealt with shrapnel that fell in several locations under approved technical and security procedures, the source said, adding that the sites were secured and necessary measures were taken to protect citizens and property.

Chinese UN envoy says US pushed world to 'dangerous precipice' with Iran attacks

Chinese Ambassador Sun Lei says that the US launching "major attacks against Iran" has "once again" pushed the region "into a dangerous precipice", as per Al Jazeera.

Sun made the comments after US envoy Mike Waltz claimed that China was not doing enough to stop the flow of goods to Iran and Yemen, a claim Sun said was "completely baseless".

"China exercises strict control over such exports," he said.

"The priority now is for the US to stop creating new conflicts and turmoil in the Middle East."

US accuses China of not doing enough to stop flow of goods to Iran, Houthis

Mike Waltz, the US ambassador to the United Nations, has accused China of not doing enough to stop the flow of goods to Iran and the Houthis that could have non-civilian uses, as per Al Jazeera.

"States like Iran, and to some degree companies and entities in China, have violated [a UN resolution imposing an arms embargo on the Houthis] with little consequence," Waltz told the UN Security Council in

prepared remarks late on Tuesday.

In a heated exchange with his Chinese counterpart, Waltz then said he was referring to "dual-use" items and "satellite imagery" provided to "Iran and the Houthis... that, of course, have civilian uses, but also have been used to threaten our partners, civilian aircraft, and commercial shipping".

'End of America's evils'

The IRGC said on Wednesday that the Strait of Hormuz would remain closed until what it described as "the end of America's evils". Before the war began in February, about a fifth of global oil and gas shipments passed through Hormuz each day.

The Guards said they had targeted what they described as command-and-control, logistics, fuel and military equipment facilities belonging to the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain, in response to the latest US strikes in the Strait of Hormuz.

They also said they had set fire to and destroyed what they described as a US logistics facility in Kuwait's Mina Abdullah and that their air force had struck what they described as a US base at Azraq in Jordan, targeting aircraft hangars. They said some of the US attacks had been launched from bases on Jordanian territory.

Earlier on Wednesday, Kuwait's state news agency reported that a fire was brought under control at a site targeted in Iranian attacks. It was not immediately clear whether the fire was at the same site referred to in the IRGC statement.

Jordan's air defence intercepted and shot down three ballistic missiles that entered the country's airspace from Iranian territory early on Wednesday.

The hostilities between Iran and the US reignited last week, fraying an already fragile truce reached in June after several months of fighting that has killed thousands of civilians, mostly in Iran and Lebanon.

US completes additional strikes against Iran: CENTCOM

The US Central Command (CENTCOM) said late Tuesday that it has completed an additional round of strikes against Iran, hitting "dozens of military targets" near the Strait of Hormuz and Iranian coastal areas.

"US fighter aircraft, drones and naval vessels launched precision munitions against Iranian missile and drone sites, naval capabilities and coastal defense systems during the seven-hour wave to further degrade Iran's ability to threaten commercial shipping and civilian crews," CENTCOM said in a statement.

The strikes came the same day US forces resumed a naval blockade against vessels transiting to or from Iranian ports and coastal areas, according to the statement.

"US forces remain vigilant, lethal and prepared to execute operations directed by the Commander in Chief," CENTCOM said.

Trump threatens to hit energy targets

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday threatened to hit Iranian power plants and bridges next week unless Tehran resumes negotiations.

"I'll save the energy targets for last, but ultimately we'll hit energy targets," Trump said in an interview with Fox News' Trey Yingst.

US negotiators had been in touch

with their Iranian counterparts to tell them "you better make a deal", Trump added.

As tensions escalated, Trump on Monday floated the idea of a 20% fee on shipping through the strait, which drew sharp criticism from the UN shipping agency and others. On Tuesday, he scrapped the idea and said, without providing details, that he would instead seek investment deals with Gulf states.

Oil prices rose on Wednesday, after closing up 2% to a one-month high on Tuesday, as the latest attacks deepened a supply disruption in the Strait of Hormuz.

For the second straight session, Brent closed at its highest since June 12, and West Texas Intermediate at its highest since June 15. Both contracts rose further in early Wednesday trading.

NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani calls to 'abolish ICE'

New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani took to X to condemn the killing of a 26-year-old Colombian man by an Immigration and Customs (ICE) agent in Maine.

Human rights groups identified the man killed in Biddeford on Monday as a Colombian national authorized to work in the US. Colombia's embassy said it was in contact with American authorities and was providing consular assistance to his family.

"This morning in Biddeford, Maine, a 26-year-old man said goodbye to his wife and daughter and left for work. Moments later he was dead, shot in the head by ICE agents, the second man ICE has killed in six days," Mamdani wrote. "ICE is killing our neighbors. ICE cannot be reformed. Abolish ICE."

This isn't the first time Mamdani condemned the agency's actions. According to USA Today, last month the mayor said that New York City opposes the agency's actions. This came after Tom Homan, the Trump administration's border czar, said earlier this month a big sweep is planned for the city.

"You're going to see more ICE agents than you've ever seen in New York City, and it's coming," he said on Fox News. "I just reviewed an operation plan, I'm not going to tell you exactly when it's going to happen, but it's coming." Mamdani responded to this saying that the city does not just oppose the actions of ICE, but "we are not going to be complicit with those actions either." He added that this includes ensuring every city agency complies with their "sanctuary city policies."

"It means that we do not allow ICE agents into our schools, our hospitals, our city property unless they can provide a judicial warrant signed by a judge," he said. "It means that we don't assist ICE with their civil immigration enforcement."

ICE said about the incident in Maine that agents were watching an address for a person with a final order of removal in Biddeford at around 07:00 EDT (11:00 GMT) on Monday. When the agency tried to stop someone driving from that address, "the vehicle attempted to flee the scene and, fearing for public safety, an officer discharged his weapon", ICE said, adding "the driver of the vehicle was struck".

Bilawal proposes reconciliation commission to resolve AJK crisis, calls violence 'national tragedy'

Continued from front page

crisis in the region.

"I propose the establishment of an independent commission of all concerned parties. The commission should be given a sufficiently broad mandate to examine the present situation, establish the relevant facts, consider the grievances and positions of all sides, review the outstanding political, legal, and administrative issues, and recommend a fair and durable way forward," said Bilawal while addressing PPP office-bearers and election candidates in Muzaffarabad.

He warned that prolonged unrest in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) would damage both the Kashmir cause and Pakistan's international reputation, urging all stakeholders to pursue a political solution to the crisis.

"The situation in Azad Kashmir over the past month has been deeply worrying. Every Kashmiri is worried, and every Pakistani is worried," he said. "The longer this continues, the greater the damage to the Kashmir cause and to Pakistan's reputation."

Bilawal said every death reported during the unrest was "a national tragedy" and extended his condolences to the families of those killed.

He stressed that "every allegation should be investigated diligently, impartially and according to due process", warning that "continued confrontation can only result in further loss and inflammatory accusations."

Calling for restraint, Bilawal said: "I appeal to the protesters to pause further protests, sit-ins, and long marches if this proposal is acceptable to the Government of Pakistan, the AJK government, and the protesters."

He said he had discussed the proposal with Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, who had assured him he would raise it with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Bilawal added that politics should be conducted responsibly so that no enemy of Pakistan could exploit the country's internal issues.

Also Read: DPM Dar meets Bilawal, discusses country's overall situation, AJK matters

He also reiterated his support for dialogue, saying the state had a legitimate position that it could not be blackmailed into surrendering, but the grievances raised by protesters also needed to be addressed. "We still want a middle ground. We want a peaceful, political solution to all outstanding issues," he said.

Referring to criticism of Pakistan's military, Bilawal said: "If anyone speaks against Pakistan, the Pakistan Army or our armed forces, whether from Kashmir or elsewhere in Pakistan, we cannot tolerate it." "Our armed forces are our red line."

Turning to broader constitutional questions, Bilawal proposed convening an AJK constitutional convention after the elections to consider governance reforms.

"The people of Kashmir should decide whether further constitutional, political, administrative, and economic reforms are needed," he said. "The decision about Kashmir must be made by Kashmiris, not by Islamabad or any other

city."

Addressing the contentious issue of the 12 reserved seats for Kashmiri refugees in the AJK Legislative Assembly, Bilawal said: "No constitutional amendment can be imposed through guns or sit-ins."

"If the issue is the 12 reserved seats, then let the people decide. If they want to keep them, keep them; if they want reforms, discuss reforms. But the representation of refugees must be protected," he added.

He also proposed granting AJK greater representation in Pakistan's national institutions through observer status in bodies such as the National Finance Commission, the Council of Common Interests, Parliament and the Senate, saying it would allow Kashmir's concerns to be raised before disputes escalated.

Despite the unrest ahead of the July 27 AJK elections, Bilawal said the PPP would continue its campaign. "I am here, and I am not going anywhere," he said. "Whether this issue is resolved or not, I will stand with the people of Kashmir, with our party workers, and we will contest this election."

Bilawal also outlined the PPP's broader vision for AJK, saying the party's struggle had always centred on securing "property rights", "the right to employment" and greater rights for the people of Kashmir.

Referring to reforms introduced by the PPP government in Gilgit-Baltistan, he said the party had transferred land ownership to local residents and pledged to pursue similar efforts wherever people had been denied ownership rights.

"If the new generation is to receive new rights, then we will have to continue that struggle together," he said, adding that the PPP remained committed to expanding the political, economic and administrative rights of the people of AJK.

Contrasting the PPP with its political rivals, Bilawal said other parties "take away rights and jobs", while the PPP was "the only party that gives rights and creates employment".

He also reiterated that the future of Kashmir must be determined by its people. "Some people believe Kashmir's future lies elsewhere. I believe Kashmir's future lies only in the hands of Kashmiris," he said, adding that the current crisis should be resolved "through peaceful and political means".

Turning to the July 27 elections, Bilawal said the PPP would raise election-related concerns with the federal government and welcomed assurances from the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) that the electoral mandate in AJK would be respected.

He said Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and the PML-N leadership had assured him that if the PPP won the elections, "The mandate of the people would be respected", just as the PPP believed its mandate had been respected following its victory in Gilgit-Baltistan.

"I also assure them that if they win, we will respect their mandate as well," Bilawal said, adding that respecting the public's verdict should become a democratic norm regardless of which party emerged victorious.

'Positive signals being received for peaceful resolution of AJK matter'

Later, in a post on X, JAAC said that a government delegation, led by former prime minister Raja Pervez Ashraf, arrived in Rawalakot today and held another round of talks with representatives of the committee.

"According to sources, during the

talks, the committee gave the government delegation time until this afternoon for further consultation on its demands, after which the delegation departed back to Muzaffarabad," it said.

It further added that according to reports, the PPP chairman was staying in Muzaffarabad to oversee the negotiation process, while Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman was also playing a role in contacts and reconciliation efforts between the parties.

"Sources say that positive signals are also being received from relevant state institutions for a peaceful resolution of the matter, and all parties are making serious efforts to make the negotiations successful," said the statement.

JAAC said that as per sources, if the talks succeeded, important progress was expected to emerge today, along with an announcement from the committee to end the ongoing sit-in.

The statement further added that the core members of the JAAC were currently engaged in an important consultative meeting, adding that "shortly after the meeting concludes, the core members will be present among the people. Further progress will be communicated in a timely manner."

Bilawal met DPM Dar on Tuesday to discuss matters relating to AJK, following an earlier meeting between the two last week.

Earlier this month, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) and the PPP announced an electoral alliance for the upcoming elections in AJK. JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Bilawal also held a meeting and called for dialogue to resolve the ongoing unrest in AJK.

Bilawal also previously announced that the PPP and JUI-F would jointly contest the upcoming AJK elections. He also appealed to JAAC to remain within the bounds of the law and the Constitution.

Background

The recent unrest and deadly clashes broke out in areas, including Rawalakot, where the JAAC had been holding a sit-in outside the Combined Military Hospital Rawalakot. AJK police allege that armed JAAC members opened fire on deployed law enforcement in a planned attack, leaving four personnel dead and around 20 injured. JAAC, however, disputes this account, claiming security forces used tear gas and fired shells toward the hospital.

According to the AJK police, three individuals linked to the JAAC and four law enforcement personnel were killed during the protests. JAAC, however, said in a statement that seven individuals were killed and dozens were injured when street firing was carried out in the dark after electricity was allegedly cut off.

The clash came as the AJK government and the JAAC witnessed a face-off, as the election date for AJK was announced for July 27.

AJK's 53-member legislative assembly includes 12 seats reserved for Kashmiri refugees — people who fled Indian-controlled Kashmir in 1947 and 1965 and are now scattered across Pakistan. Six seats represent refugees from the Jammu division (~434,000 people) and six from the Kashmir Valley (~30,000 people) — an already lopsided arrangement that many see as unfair.

The region witnessed one of its most turbulent periods in October last year when protests led by the JAAC erupted over demands for constitutional and governance reforms. At least nine people, including three policemen, were killed during the unrest.

The JAAC, which organised the protests and strike, had presented a wide-ranging charter of demands, including an end to the privileges enjoyed by the ruling elite, the abolition of 12 assembly seats reserved for refugees, and the scrapping of the quota system.

Two days after the violence, the government and the JAAC reached an agreement covering 12 core and 13 additional points. Under the accord, both sides agreed to constitute a high-level committee to examine the issue of refugee seats in the AJK Legislative Assembly.

Pakistan Chamber of Commerce USA Showcases Pakistan-Made FIFA World Cup 2026 Soccer Balls

Continued from front page

the official FIFA World Cup 2026 soccer balls during its recent event, highlighting the country's internationally recognized craftsmanship and industrial excellence.

The display paid tribute to Pakistan's world-renowned sports goods industry, particularly the city of Sialkot, which has long been regarded as the global hub of hand-stitched football production. The official match balls for the FIFA World Cup 2026—co-hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico—are proudly manufactured in Sialkot by skilled Pakistani craftsmen.

PCC USA officials said the exhibition was aimed at recognizing Pakistan's growing reputation as a global manufacturing leader and promoting the country's export potential before members of the business community and distinguished guests.

Speaking on the occasion, chamber representatives applauded the outstanding efforts of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Pakistan's sports goods manufacturers for maintaining the highest standards of quality and innovation. They noted that Pakistan's continued selection to produce footballs for the world's most prestigious sporting event reflects decades of expertise, precision, and dedication.

"This achievement is far more than a commercial success," the chamber stated. "It represents the resilience, talent, and craftsmanship of Pakistani workers and entrepreneurs who have made 'Made in Pakistan' a globally respected mark of quality."

The chamber emphasized that the FIFA World Cup 2026 presents an exceptional opportunity to showcase Pakistan's manufacturing capabilities to billions of viewers worldwide, reinforcing the country's position as a trusted supplier of premium sporting goods.

PCC USA reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening trade and investment relations between Pakistan and the United States while continuing to promote the achievements of Pakistani industries on international platforms. The organization also congratulated the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Pakistan's exporters, manufacturers, and the thousands of skilled artisans whose craftsmanship continues to bring global recognition to the country.

The event concluded with participants expressing pride in Pakistan's enduring legacy in sports manufacturing, describing the official FIFA World Cup 2026 soccer ball as a symbol of the country's excellence, innovation, and contribution to the global sporting community.

Houston Rolls Out the Red Carpet for Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal at Grand Community Banquet

Continued from front page

in his honor during his official visit to Houston.

The elegant reception, hosted by the Consulate General of Pakistan in Houston in collaboration with prominent Pakistani-American community leaders, took place at the Marquee Banquet Hall and brought together business leaders, professionals, elected officials, community representatives, and members of the Pakistani diaspora.

Guests were welcomed by Consul General of Pakistan in Houston, Aftab Chaudhary, who highlighted the important role overseas Pakistanis continue to play in strengthening Pakistan's economy, promoting investment opportunities, and enhancing bilateral relations between Pakistan and the United States. He also appreciated the continued support and contributions of the Pakistani-American community toward Pakistan's development.

Addressing the gathering, Professor Ahsan Iqbal outlined the Government of Pakistan's vision under the 5-Point Uraan Pakistan Program, focusing on sustainable economic growth, human capital development, infrastructure and connectivity, environmental sustainability, and institutional strengthening. He emphasized that overseas Pakistanis remain indispensable partners in Pakistan's journey toward economic prosperity through investment, innovation, and knowledge sharing.

The minister also discussed Pakistan's ongoing development initiatives and reforms aimed at creating a more investor-friendly environment. He invited overseas Pakistanis to actively participate in Pakistan's economic transformation and contribute to the country's long-term progress.

The event was also graced by U.S. Congressman Al Green, who presented Professor Ahsan Iqbal with a traditional Texas cowboy hat as a symbol of Texas hospitality and friendship. The presentation drew warm applause from the audience and highlighted the strong and growing relationship between the Pakistani-American community and local leadership in Texas.

Community leaders welcomed the minister's visit and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening economic, educational, and cultural ties between Pakistan and the United States. The program was hosted by Abraham Javed, who served as the Master of Ceremony and guided the evening's proceedings.

The banquet concluded with a dinner and networking session, allowing attendees to engage with Professor Ahsan Iqbal and discuss issues of mutual interest. The event reflected the enduring bond between Pakistan and its diaspora in Houston while underscoring the community's continued commitment to Pakistan's progress and development.

Houston Emerges as a Hub for Pakistani and Indian Cuisine

HOUSTON, TX — With one of the largest South Asian communities in the United States, Houston has steadily grown into a major destination for Pakistani, Indian, and Indo-Pak cuisine. From Hillcroft Avenue to Sugar Land and Katy, dozens of restaurants now offer everything from traditional home-style meals to fine dining, street food, and vegetarian buffets.

A Strong Pakistani Culinary Presence

Pakistani restaurants in Houston are especially known for their rich curries, slow-cooked dishes, and barbecue. Aga’s Restaurant & Catering on Wilcrest Drive continues to be one of the city’s most popular desi dining spots, widely recognized for its biryani, nihari, karahi, and grilled meats. Nearby, Savoy Restaurant, Himalaya, and Javed Nihari have long served authentic Pakistani flavors, attracting

diners from across the metropolitan area.

In Sugar Land and surrounding suburbs, restaurants such as Lasbela Restaurant, Mai Colachi, Karahi Boys, and Bar-B-Q Tonight have further expanded the reach of Pakistani cuisine, offering halal BBQ, karahi, and traditional curries in family-friendly settings. Casual eateries like Maza Pakistani Grill, Bismillah Restaurant & Cafe, and Khan BBQ & Grill cater to both dine-in and takeout customers.

Food trucks and cafés, including Pak-Man, Chai Shai, and Meerut BBQ House, have also gained popularity for bringing Pakistani street food, tea culture, and late-night barbecue to Houston’s food scene.

Indian Restaurants Offer Regional Diversity

Indian cuisine in Houston reflects a wide range

of regional traditions. North Indian and Punjabi-style restaurants such as Kiran’s, India’s Restaurant – A Taste of Paradise, and Nirvana Indian Restaurant offer classic curries, tandoori dishes, and lunch buffets popular with office workers and families.

South Indian and vegetarian dining is well represented along Hillcroft Street, where restaurants like Udipi Café, Shiv Sagar, Govinda’s Vegetarian Cuisine, and Maharaja Bhog specialize in dosas, thalis, and Gujarati or Jain meals. These establishments attract both vegetarian diners and those seeking lighter, traditional fare.

Fine Dining and Modern Fusion

Houston’s South Asian dining scene has also moved into the fine-dining space. Restaurants such as Musaafer, Verandah, Da Gama, and Pondicheri present modern interpretations of Indian and Indo-

Pak cuisine, blending traditional spices with contemporary presentation. These venues have helped bring South Asian food into Houston’s upscale dining conversation.

A Reflection of Community Growth

Most Pakistani and Indian restaurants in Houston offer halal options, and many serve as cultural gathering spaces for families, students, and professionals. The concentration of eateries along Hillcroft, Southwest Freeway, Sugar Land, and West Houston reflects the growth and influence of the Pakistani and Indian communities in the region.

As Houston continues to diversify, its Pakistani and Indian restaurants not only provide authentic food but also contribute to the city’s multicultural identity — making South Asian cuisine an essential part of Houston’s dining landscape.

Here is the list:

Aga’s Restaurant & Catering – 11842 Wilcrest Dr, Houston, TX 77031

. Phone: (832) 786-8000

. Dine-in and takeout; Halal Indo-Pak cuisine. Known for its halal goat chops, beef kebabs and chicken lollipops

, plus classics like biryani and mango lassi.

Lasbela Restaurant & Catering (Sugar Land) – 13849 SW Fwy, Sugar Land, TX 77478

. Phone: (832) 999-4490

. Dine-in/takeout; Pakistani fare. Specialties include rich curries and BBQ – e.g. malai handi chicken, fried fish and kebabs, all Halal.

Khan BBQ & Grill – 17001 W Little York Rd, Houston, TX 77084

. Phone: (832) 593-0110

Pakistani/Indian BBQ and grill (dine-in/takeout). Famous for its tandoori meats and curries – chicken tikka, butter chicken, biryanis, kababs like chapli and nihari, all Halal.

Pak-Man (Food Truck) – Mobile (Houston-area)

. Phone: (832) 915-0898

. Halal Pakistani street food truck. Specializes in fusion “burgers” and South Asian snacks – e.g. biryani bowls, samosa wraps, Pakistani-style sliders

Karahi Boys – 16535 Lexington Blvd Ste 100, Sugar Land, TX 77479

. Phone: (281) 800-5880

Indo-Pak (dine-in/takeout). Offers flavorful Pakistani grills – rich karahi and karahi fries, mixed grills and biryanis

– plus giant naan and spice-forward curries, all Halal.

Bundu Khan Kabab House – 10941 FM 1960 W, Houston, TX 77070

. Phone: (281) 477-7897

. Dine-in/takeout; Pakistani BBQ & Halal. Known for its breakfast specials (halwa puri) and kababs, plus biryanis and curries in a casual setting

Bar BQ Tonight – 14838 Park Row Blvd Ste A, Houston, TX 77084

. Phone: (346) 594-2097

. Dine-in/takeout; Pakistani BBQ/Grill. Serves classic karahi (meat wok), malai boti, beef bihari kababs and other BBQ meats, all Halal.

Mai Colachi – 15425 SW Fwy, Sugar Land, TX 77478

. Phone: (281) 240-0786

. Dine-in; Halal Pakistani/Indian. Upscale BBQ and grill – steaks, tandoori meats and kebabs – and rich curries (mutton karahi, etc.)

“Mouth Watering BBQ, Halal Steaks and Karahi & Curries”

Javed Nihari – 14631 Beechnut St, Houston, TX 77083

. Phone: (346) 330-4240

. Dine-in/takeout; Pakistani. Famous for authentic Nihari (slow-cooked beef stew) and biryanis, plus spicy curries. All halal meats.

Bismillah Restaurant & Cafe – 5696 Hillcroft St, Houston, TX 77036

. Phone: (713) 587-9300

. Pakistani/Indian halal burgers and sandwiches. Known for its “patty melt” burgers and traditional Pakistani bun kebabs on paratha (all Halal).

Chai Shai – 6632 Southwest Fwy, Houston, TX 77074

. Phone: (832) 939-8112

. Dine-in; Pakistani cafe/bakery (tea room). Specialty: Karak tea (“chai shai”), breakfast sandwiches and buns (e.g. “Bun Ka Baap” pork/salwa roll) and South Asian snacks

. Halal meats and sweets.

Maza Pakistani Grill – 15655 JFK Blvd Ste L, Houston, TX 77032

. Phone: (281) 741-2571

. Dine-in/takeout; Pakistani. Offers tandoori grill and curries – chicken tikka, seekh kabab, Butter Chicken, biryani and goat curry. All Halal.

Himalaya Restaurant – 6652 Southwest Fwy, Houston, TX 77074

. Phone: (713) 532-2837

. Dine-in; Indian/Pakistani/Himalayan. Family-style dining with classic curries (palak gosht, goat karahi), biryanis and grilled meats (biryani pictured). Halal.

Mezban – 6655 Harwin Dr Ste A108, Houston, TX 77036

. Phone: (713) 952-0606

. Dine-in; Indian/Pakistani Buffet. All-you-can-eat buffet (Halal) featuring biryanis, kebabs, curries and sides.

Meerut BBQ House (Food Truck) – 11910 S Texas 6, Sugar Land, TX 77498

(Fri–Sat nights). Phone: (346) 667-6308

. Mobile Halal Pakistani BBQ. Grill specialties: chicken tikka, wings, bihari boti, tikka rolls and parathas

DDK Kabab & Grill – 11797 S Hwy 6, Sugar Land, TX 77498

. Phone: (832) 500-4618

. Dine-in; Indian/Pakistani BBQ. Tandoori and grilled specialties (mixed grill, seekh kababs, chicken tikka, goat chops) plus biryanis and curries. All Halal.

Tolo Kabab House – 7555 Bellaire Blvd Ste B, Houston, TX 77036

. Phone: (281) 888-7398

. Dine-in; Afghan/Pakistani. Features Afghan specialties (mantoo dumplings, kabuli pulao, chapli kebabs) and Kabab/Pilaf dishes. Halal.

Shalamar Restaurant – 15142 Highway 3, Webster, TX 77598

. Phone: (281) 488-4151

. Dine-in; Pakistani/Indian. Neighborhood halal eatery serving karahis, biryanis, tikka masala and more

. Friendly ambience with both lunch buffet and a la carte.

Nirvana Indian Restaurant – 14545 Memorial Dr, Houston, TX 77079

. Phone: (281) 496-3232

. Dine-in buffet (Halal) – specializes in all-you-can-eat vegetarian-friendly Indian buffet and seafood specials

. Known for its elaborate buffet thali (notably chicken biryani, palak paneer, aloo gobi, etc.) and casual setting.

Maharaja Bhog – 8338 Southwest Fwy, Houston, TX 77074

. Phone: (713) 771-2464

. Dine-in buffet; Gujarati veg Thali (Indian Vegetarian). All-vegetarian Gujarati/Marwari feast served in unlimited thalis – dals, vegetables, chutneys, sweets. Family-style dinner with Jain options available.

Shiv Sagar – 6662 Southwest Fwy, Houston, TX 77074

. Phone: (713) 977-0150

. Dine-in buffet; Indian Vegetarian. Offers Gujarati-style thali buffet and à la carte (e.g. dosas, curries, breads) in a casual family setting.

Govinda’s Vegetarian Cuisine – 1320 W 34th St, Houston, TX 77018

. Phone: (346) 266-1626

. Dine-in buffet (ISKCON temple café); all-vegetarian (vegan-friendly) Indian. Specializes in Jain/South-Indian-

inspired thali buffet and a variety of healthy veggie dishes.

Da Gama – 600 N Shepherd Dr Ste 520, Houston, TX 77007

. Phone: (281) 888-7806

. Dine-in; Indo-Portuguese. “Indian canteen” for modern fusion – small plates of Goan and Anglo-Indian style (pork vindaloo, sausage rolls, tandoori masalas), plus craft cocktails. Creative brunch and lunch offerings.

Surya India – 700 Durham Dr Ste 200, Houston, TX 77007

. Phone: (713) 864-6667

. (Note: This contemporary Indian fine-dining by Chef Sheel Joshi operated near Rice Military.) It was an upscale dining room with modern Indian plates (award-winning chef, halal)

Kiran’s Restaurant – 2925 Richmond Ave Ste 160, Houston, TX 77098

. Phone: (713) 960-8472

. Dine-in; Upscale Indian. Fine dining Punjabi cuisine – tandoori grills (chicken tikka, lamb kababs), rich curries (butter chicken, lamb vindaloo) and innovative fusion dishes (Seafood tandoori platter)

India’s Restaurant – A Taste of Paradise – 5704 Richmond Ave, Houston, TX 77057

. Phone: (713) 266-0131 (also 266-0805)

. Dine-in/buffet; North Indian (vegetarian & non-veg). Long-standing Uptown eatery serving generous lunch buffet and à la carte curries (vegetarian, chicken, mutton), tandoori breads, and Chinese-Indian “desi Chinese” classics.

Mirch Masala – 10758 Cypress Creek Pkwy, Houston, TX 77070

. Phone: (281) 955-9878

. Dine-in/buffet; Indian vegetarian-friendly. All-you-can-eat North Indian buffet (Halal) featuring Gujarati and Rajasthani specialties – biryanis, curries, dal, sambhar, desserts (e.g. ras malai) in a colorful family-style setting

Pondicheri – 2800 Kirby Dr Ste B132, Houston, TX 77098

. Phone: (713) 522-2022

. Dine-in/cafe; Modern Indian fusion. Casual cafe known for creative South-Indian-inspired breakfast/brunch (e.g. masala egg wraps, Belgian waffles with Indian flavors) and lunch plates (Indian-style burgers, thali bowls)

. Uses local ingredients and has bakery items.

Musaafer – 5115 Westheimer Rd Ste C-3500, Houston, TX 77056

. Phone: (713) 242-8087

. Fine-dining Indian (Michelin-rated); Halal. Upscale contemporary Indian cuisine – tasting menus featuring tandoori grills, biryanis and modern “street food” plates. Known for gourmet renditions like lamb chops, butter chicken, and creative desserts.

Verandah – 3300 Kirby Dr Ste 7A, Houston, TX 77098

. Phone: (832) 886-4291

. Dine-in; Indian (Malabar/Coastal). Upscale Indian restaurant (Kirby Collection) offering regional specialties – Kerala shrimp curry, Goan fish curry, biryanis, tandoori grills (Awadhi biryani pictured)

. Creative cocktails and vegetarian options also featured.

Udipi Café – Hillcroft – 5959 Hillcroft St Ste A, Houston, TX 77036

. Phone: (713) 334-5555

. Dine-in buffet; South Indian vegetarian. Casual cafeteria known for all-you-can-eat thali and dosas – specialties include ghee roast dosa, Mysore masala dosa and South Indian banana-leaf thali

. Vegetarian fare (many vegan options) in a lively setting.

PCC USA Showcases Pakistan-Made Official FIFA World Cup 2026 Soccer Balls

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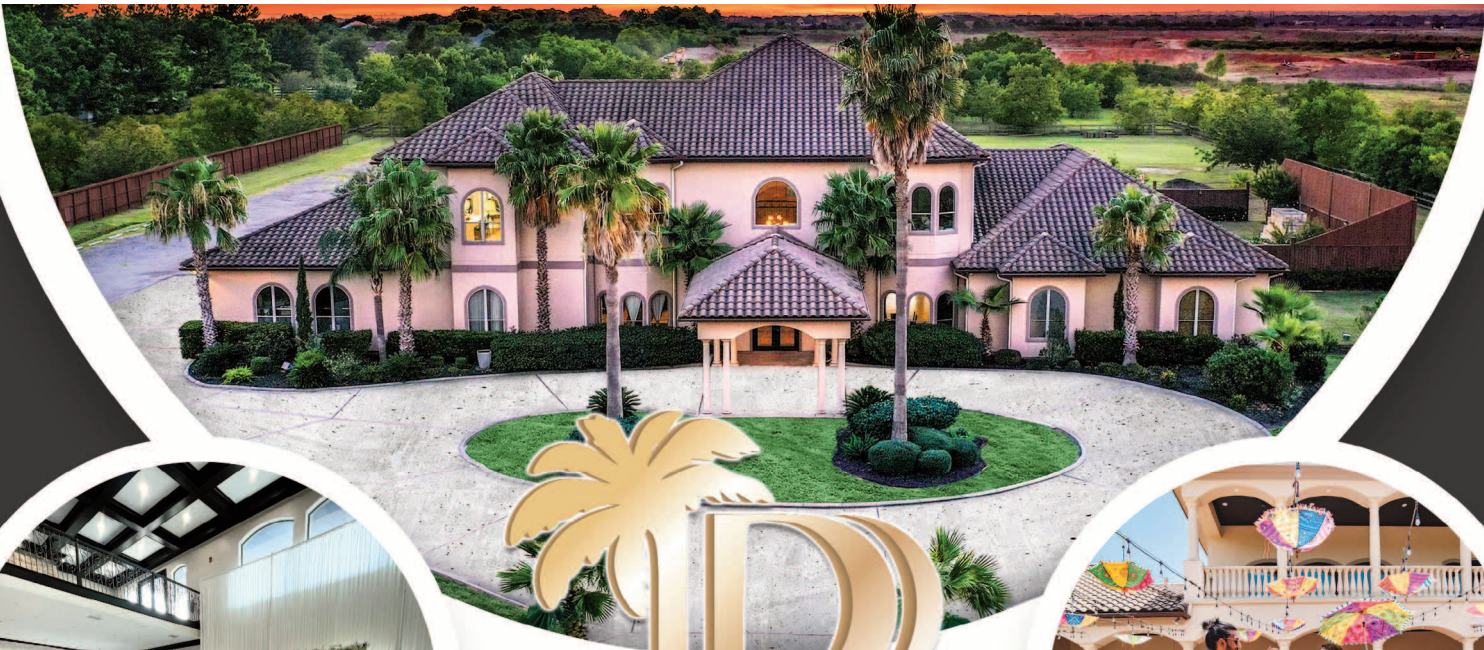
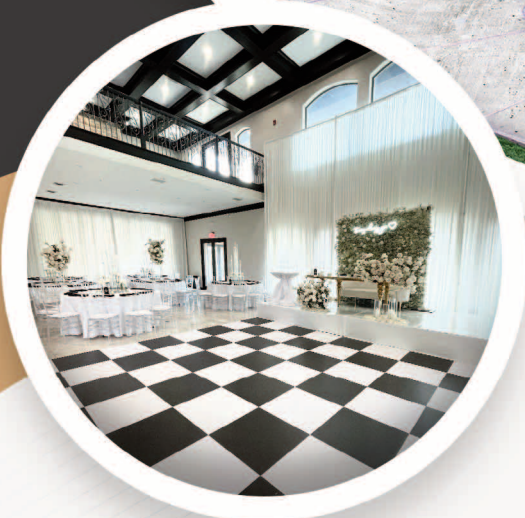
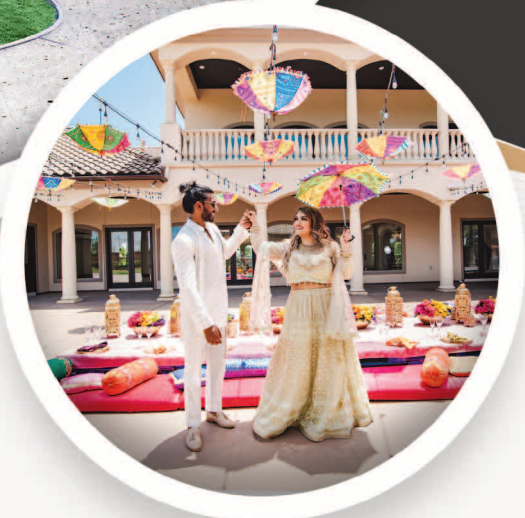


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Business Tycoon Tanweer Ahmed and Maxum Group CEO Uzair Hasan Host Haleem Reception



HOUSTON, Texas: Prominent members of the Pakistani-American community gathered in Houston for a Muharram-ul-Haram Haleem Reception hosted by business tycoon Tanweer Ahmed and Maxum Group CEO Uzair Hasan, bringing together distinguished personalities from across the United States in an evening that celebrated faith, tradition, and community unity.

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PAC Unites Houston Community in Support of Pakistan's Blind Cricket Movement



HOUSTON: The Pakistani-American Congress (PAC) brought together prominent members of Houston's Pakistani-American community to host a grand Welcome Reception Dinner in honor of the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) delegation, reaffirming its commitment to supporting blind

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PCC USA, Aga's Restaurant Celebrate \$100,000 Scholarship Milestone with \$40,000 Awards

Recognize 10 Exceptional Young Women with \$40,000 in Scholarships



HOUSTON: The Pakistan Chamber of Commerce USA (PCC USA) successfully hosted the Aga's Minnah Scholarship Award Ceremony, celebrating academic excellence and empowering young

women through higher education. The event marked another significant milestone in the chamber's ongoing commitment to supporting future leaders within the Pakistani-American community.

With the generous support of Mr. Shaukat Mareedia, owner of Aga's Restaurant & Catering, the scholarship program has now awarded a total of \$100,000 over the past three

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One Homes Unveils \$35 Million Luxury Project 'One Edition' in Lahore at Houston Event



HOUSTON: Pakistani real estate developer One Homes has announced its next flagship residential development, One Edition, during a launch event in Houston, introducing a new luxury project in

Lahore aimed primarily at overseas Pakistanis.

The announcement comes as One Homes begins the handover process for its landmark One Canal Road development in Lahore, marking

another milestone in the company's expansion into Pakistan's premium residential market.

Located on Raiwind Road in Lahore West, One Edition is a \$35

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Riaz Ali Films USA Celebrates Film Shoot and Cast Birthdays During "Yeh Wada Hai" Production



HOUSTON: Riaz Ali Films USA held a special shooting session for its second international film, "Yeh Wada Hai," at Aga's Restaurant & Catering in Houston. The film aims to spread

awareness about cancer and carries the powerful message, "No One Fights Alone."

The event brought together the film's cast, crew, and invited guests

in a celebratory atmosphere. Alongside the filming, the birthdays of several cast members were also celebrated, making the occasion both a production milestone and a festive gathering.

Produced by Riaz Ali and directed by Dr. Nandini Sarkar, Yeh Wada Hai is a multilingual international project focused on promoting cancer awareness and encouraging hope and support for patients and their

Continued on page 28

Hundreds protest at Houston City Hall as Whitmire says city shared evidence with DA's office



Dozens gathered outside of Houston City Hall on Tuesday July 14, to protest U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement operations and call on local leaders to hold those responsible for Lorenzo Salgado Araujo's death accountable.

Hundreds came to Houston City Hall on Tuesday, many to speak out against immigration enforcement operations in the city and last week's fatal shooting of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo by a federal agent.

Jennifer DeLatte, who lives in the East End neighborhood where the shooting happened July 7, arrived just after 1 p.m. and waited nearly

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The scars that never fade

Despite laws and penalties, acid attacks continue to expose the gaps between legislation and justice

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For a gender conditioned to scrutinise every mirror they pass in pursuit of aesthetic perfection, the sight of a disfigured face becomes nothing short of a nightmare



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The choice to target the face reflects deeply rooted gender norms in which a woman's social standing, marriage prospects and economic opportunities often remain closely tied to her appearance

Mahnoor Omer

By **HAMMAD SARFRAZ/Asif Mehmood/Razzak Abro/Tufail Ahmed/Wisal Yousafzai**

Acid is unforgiving. It does not simply burn skin; it erases identities, reshapes futures and leaves survivors carrying visible reminders of violence long after their wounds have healed. For many victims, the attack lasts only seconds, but its consequences unfold over a lifetime—through painful surgeries, social isolation, psychological trauma and a frustrating search for justice.

Earlier this year, the country watched in horror as Dr Mahnoor Nasir, a young doctor in Quetta, suffered severe burns after acid was allegedly thrown at her by a colleague who had reportedly persistently harassed her. The attack left her with critical injuries, forcing her transfer to Karachi for specialised treatment, and reignited national outrage over a crime many believed had become less common.

But for those working with survivors, Mahnoor's case was not an isolated tragedy. It was a stark reminder that acid violence continues to devastate lives, often in circumstances rooted in rejection, coercion and gender-based abuse. For Mahnoor Omer, a human rights lawyer and gender consultant, acid attacks are among the most extreme manifestations of gender-based violence because their purpose is not simply to injure but to erase identity, autonomy and social standing.

"Acid attacks disproportionately target the face, and that is not incidental—it is deliberate," she said. "One survivor I interviewed in Rawalpindi told me, 'I wish he would have just killed me instead.' That has stayed with me because it reflects how many survivors experience the attack as something worse than death."

For a gender conditioned to scrutinise every mirror they pass in pursuit of aesthetic perfection, the sight of a disfigured face becomes nothing short of a nightmare. Raised

in a misogynistic culture where even an occasional acne mark can invite public ridicule, many survivors spend years undergoing reconstructive surgeries while coming to terms with the possibility that they may never look the way they once did.

According to a Karachi-based mental health expert, who is also a professor at a leading medical university, the psychological damage of an acid attack often extends far beyond the survivor. "Families absorb the trauma, communities internalise the fear, and other women, above all, receive a chilling message about the cost of existing in public. For some victims, there is no recovery because we, as a society, disown them in ways we shouldn't."

Despite successive legal reforms and increasingly stringent provincial laws, acid attacks remain a grave threat to women in Pakistan, with wide disparities in reported cases pointing to a troubling gap in documentation and enforcement. According to NGO data, Pakistan records an average of 150 to 200 acid attacks annually, though experts believe many cases go unreported.

Figures compiled by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) show 28 incidents affecting 31 women in 2025, with 27 reported in Punjab and three in Sindh, while 11 cases were recorded in the first four months of 2026, all in Punjab. However, Sindh Police reported five cases in 2025 and one more in early 2026, highlighting inconsistencies in official data.

In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, police recorded only three cases in 2025 and two in early 2026, a strikingly low figure for a province of over 40 million people, reinforcing concerns that many attacks go unreported rather than prevented.

Following the recent attack on Dr Mahnoor, the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women drafted a

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Figures compiled by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan show 28 incidents affecting 31 women in 2025, with 27 reported in Punjab and three in Sindh, while 11 cases were recorded in the first four months of 2026, all in Punjab

new provincial law on acid and burn-related crimes. However, lawyer Mehwish Mohib Kakakhel noted that Pakistan's key challenge is no longer legislation but implementation, as weak investigations, limited legal support and out-of-court settlements continue to undermine justice.

When justice ends on paper

Pakistan strengthened its legal response to acid violence through the Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act, 2011, recognising acid attacks as a distinct offence under Sections 336-A and 336-B of the Pakistan Penal Code. The law introduced punishments ranging from 14 years' imprisonment to life, along with substantial fines.

More recently, Punjab introduced the Punjab Acid Control Act 2025, making the sale of acid without a licence a non-bailable offence and requiring vendors to maintain purchaser records. Yet for survivors, the existence of laws has not always translated into justice.

Legal expert Abdullah Malik believed that while Pakistan's legal framework is comparatively strong, its implementation remains the biggest obstacle. Weak investigations, difficulties in collecting evidence and prolonged court proceedings often prevent survivors from receiving timely justice.

"Investigative shortcomings and prolonged court proceedings often prevent victims from receiving timely justice," he said, noting that some studies place conviction rates in acid attack cases at only 17.3 per cent.

Lawyer Mehwish Mohib Kakakhel, who represents acid attack survivors before the Peshawar High Court, explained that many victims are forced to abandon legal battles because they lack access to legal assistance and support services. "Both the federal and provincial governments have enacted strong legislation, but implementation remains the biggest challenge," she said.

According to Kakakhel, survivors are often pressured into out-of-court settlements, allowing offenders to avoid meaningful punishment. Weak police investigations further damage cases before they even reach trial, while the availability of corrosive substances continues to raise concerns.

According to Zulfiqar Abbasi, in-charge of the Human Rights Cell of Sindh Police, most reported cases in Sindh continue to originate from Karachi. Rights advocates argue that the continued accessibility of acid remains a major factor behind these crimes.

A chemical trader in Karachi's Saddar area,

speaking anonymously, informed that corrosive substances are commonly purchased for household cleaning and agricultural use. "People buy acid to clear blocked sewer lines or remove stains from floors and surfaces. How can shopkeepers refuse to sell it?" he said.

However, Qazi Khizar, Vice Chairman of the Sindh Chapter of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, argued that the issue is not the absence of regulations but their weak enforcement.

Under the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act, 2011, sellers are required to obtain licences and maintain purchaser records, while offenders can face life imprisonment. "The problem is implementation. If existing laws had been enforced properly, many of these attacks could have been prevented," Khizar said.

For this reason, Omer believed prevention requires more than criminal penalties. "While Pakistan has strengthened punishments for acid attacks, implementation remains inconsistent, particularly in regulating the sale of corrosive substances across provinces. Licensing regimes similar to those introduced in Punjab should be enforced nationwide, backed by strict monitoring and meaningful penalties for illegal sales," said Omer.

Long-term prevention, however, requires confronting the attitudes that give rise to such crimes. Omer advocated integrating education on gender equality, consent and respectful relationships into school curricula, arguing that preventing violence begins with challenging harmful notions of ownership and control during childhood rather than after they manifest in adulthood.

She pointed to initiatives in countries such as the United Kingdom that incorporate healthy relationships and violence prevention into school education, alongside Bangladesh's experience, where tighter regulation of acid sales combined with sustained advocacy contributed to a significant decline in attacks.

Violence rooted in ego

Behind the brutality of acid attacks lies a consistent logic of control—an effort to punish women for refusal, erase their autonomy and mark their bodies with lasting consequences.

Omer noted that researchers have described acid violence as a form of "social death" because the objective extends far beyond physical injury. By permanently disfiguring a woman's face, attackers seek to strip away her identity and fundamentally alter the course

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The walls around the music

Talented women were always there. The permission, infrastructure and recognition were often not



By Brian Bassanio Paul

There is a woman in my family who sings old Indian film songs and ghazals in a voice that stops time. At weddings, at gatherings, at the quiet celebrations that orbit a Pakistani household, she sings with a musical intelligence, an instinctive sense of phrasing, of where to let a note fall that I have never heard matched in any formal setting. She still sings at times.

She has almost never performed in public.

Nobody decided this out loud. There was no decree, no intervention, no prohibition anyone could point to. It was simply understood, the way so many things are simply understood in our culture, that her voice belonged to the room, and the room only. Beyond those walls, other things were permissible. Beyond those walls, she was a woman. The music stayed inside.

I see a version of this story everywhere I look. Female friends who sang beautifully at church gatherings, at family ceremonies, in Christian and Muslim households alike, voices of real quality, real feeling, who never took those voices into the world. The gift was always present. The permission was not.

This piece is an attempt to understand why. Not in a spirit of grievance, but in a spirit of genuine inquiry. Because the gap between what women can do musically and what Pakistani music publicly acknowledges them doing is not a small oversight. It is a structural condition. And it is worth examining honestly.

Pakistan has produced female singers of towering stature. Noor Jehan, Malika-e-Tarannum, the Queen of Melody, sang over 2,500 songs for Pakistani cinema and is considered one of the greatest voices the subcontinent has ever produced. Iqbal Bano sang Faiz Ahmed Faiz in front of 50,000 people in Lahore, wearing a black sari in deliberate defiance of a regime that had tried to ban the garment. Abida Parveen has carried Sufi devotional music to audiences across the world. Farida Khanum, Roshan Ara Begum, Reshma, the names accumulate.

But notice what all these names have in common. They are singers. All of them. The voice, it seems, is the one instrument Pakistan has consistently permitted women to play in public.

Step outside the territory of the voice and the landscape changes almost completely. Who are Pakistan's female instrumentalists? Who are the female composers, the female music directors who have shaped the sound of a Lahore film or a radio broadcast? Who holds the title of Ustad — the master — as a woman? Which gharana, those ancient hereditary lineages of classical musical knowledge, has a woman at its head? Who are the female executives who have built music companies, founded labels, run the business of music?

The answers are nearly all the same: there are very few, and most of those few have been forgotten.

This is not a Pakistani peculiarity alone; women have historically been underrepresented in the instrumental and administrative dimensions of music across South Asia and beyond. But Pakistan's case has particular characteristics, rooted in particular histories that are worth examining on their own terms.

It is important to begin with what existed before what exists now. Before 1947, Lahore was one of the great musical cities of the Indian subcontinent. The Patiala gharana, today Pakistan's most celebrated classical lineage, was rooted in



Punjab. The Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, India's first music university, was established in Lahore in 1901. The city hummed with hereditary musicians, court singers, shrine performers, and a rich informal tradition of musical knowledge passed across generations.

Women were not absent from this landscape. They were, in some ways, central to it. The miraasans, women from the hereditary mirasi musician communities, performed at Sufi shrines and ceremonial gatherings across Punjab, singing in obscure ragas that have since largely vanished. Historical researcher Radha Kapuria, in her work on colonial Punjab, documents the considerable presence of female performers in the courts of Ranjit Singh and the princely states that followed.

There is also the case of Goki Bai, a figure almost entirely absent from the popular memory of Pakistani classical music, without whom the Patiala gharana as it exists today would not have its shape. She was the crucial pedagogical link between the early 19th-century maestro Ustad Behram Khan and the pair Ali Bakhsh and Fateh Ali, recognised as the founders of the Patiala lineage. She trained them. The gharana's official genealogy, traced patrilineally as all gharana lineages are, does not foreground her name. This is not unusual, it is the rule.

Musical lineage in the Hindustani gharana system is traced through the male line. Women who were taught, or taught others, or formed the connective tissue of knowledge between generations, appear in footnotes, if they appear at all. The system was not designed to remember them.

Before British colonialism reshaped the subcontinent's moral landscape, the tawaif, the courtesan, occupied a complex and respected place in North Indian cultural life. She was not merely an entertainer. She was a trained multi-instrumentalist, a poet, a keeper of classical knowledge, a figure of refinement whom the educated and the powerful considered worth knowing. Tawaifs from Lahore's Heera Mandi were central to the city's musical world.

British Victorian morality, combined with the rising nationalist movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries, systematically delegitimised this world. The tawaif was recast as merely a sex worker, her artistry ignored, her knowledge devalued, the distinction between performer and prostitute deliberately collapsed. Pakistan's post-Partition project of Islamic identity deepened this collapse. As Dawn has noted, Pakistan's episteme has never fully managed to separate the performer from the sex worker when the performer is a woman.

The consequence is structural. A respectable woman from a non-musician family who wants to perform music in public in Pakistan carries, whether she knows it or not, the shadow of this collapsed distinction. The voice, disembodied, intimate, associated with religious devotion and domestic celebration is somewhat sheltered from this shadow. The instrument is not. Sitting at a tabla, holding a sitar, playing a harmonium on a stage, these acts place a woman's body in a professional, public, sustained relationship with a performance space that is still, in the social imagination, associated with the kotha.

The gharana system those hereditary lineages of musical knowledge that have structured North Indian classical music for centuries is built on a patrilineal model. The ustad passes his knowledge to his sons, his nephews, his male disciples. The lineage descends through men. Women in gharana

households learned music, often to a very high level, but they were, as a rule, not the ones who transmitted it publicly, who took disciples, who represented the gharana's face to the world.

The title of Ustad, literally 'master,' the honorific that confers musical authority, has historically been given to men. As the Indian musicologist and writer on women in classical music has observed, a Muslim male musician would be an Ustad; a Hindu male musician would be a Pandit; a woman musician remained a 'bai.' Not a title of authority, but a label. Not a lineage-bearer but a practitioner. The denial of the title is not cosmetic, it is a denial of the right to transmit, to be a source, to be an authority in the tradition.

One searches the roster of Pakistan's gharanas today, the Patiala gharana, the Talwandi gharana of dhrupad, for a woman at the head of any lineage. One searches in vain. This is not because women lacked the knowledge. It is because the system was not designed to recognise their authority as knowledge-holders.

Music in Punjab has historically been the profession of the miraasi communities, hereditary musician castes of low social status whose identity was defined by their role as performers, genealogists, and musical servants of higher-caste patrons. This association between music-making as a profession and low social status created a powerful social trap for women from respectable families.

For a woman from a middle-class or upper-class Pakistani family, pursuing music professionally, not just singing at a wedding, but training seriously, performing publicly, earning money from music, building a life in it, meant associating herself with a social category that 'good' families worked hard to distinguish themselves from. The stigma was doubled for women: not just the stigma of music's low-caste associations, but the added weight of being a woman who was visible, professional, and economically engaged in that world. The two stigmas reinforced each other.

This is why, in my observation across my own social circles, women of considerable musical talent sang beautifully in private, at weddings, celebrations across different households and then stopped. The talent was real. The professional pathway was structurally blocked at every level: by family expectation, by social stigma, by the absence of role models, and by the absence of safe, accessible infrastructure.

The military dictatorship of General Zia was not, strictly speaking, a total ban on music. But it was a sustained, institutionalised campaign to narrow the public space for cultural expression and women bore a disproportionate share of its weight. Cinema declined from over 1,300 screens to barely 35 by the 1990s. Concerts were suppressed. Schools lost their extracurricular activities. Public space contracted.

The women who performed publicly during this era did so at considerable personal cost. Iqbal Bano, singing Faiz's 'Hum Dekhenge' in a banned black sari at Lahore's Al-Hamra Hall in 1985, was subsequently banned from appearing on national television and stage. She became a symbol of defiance but the cost of defiance was precisely that: silence enforced by the state.

The Zia era did not create the exclusion of women from Pakistani musical life. But it deepened and formalised it, embedding conservative social norms into institutional structures, schools, broadcasting, public space, that outlasted the regime. The music industry that re-emerged in its

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The walls around the music

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aftermath was one in which male dominance had been further entrenched.

Numbers, when they are available, are instructive. When they are absent, their very absence is the data.

I hold a Master's degree in Music at the University College of Arts and Design. Over two years of study, there was one female student in the cohort. A second enrolled briefly and left before completing the programme. There were no female instructors, not one, in any musical subject across the entire course. This was not experienced as unusual. It was simply the landscape.

The National Music Academy, Lahore, follows a similar pattern: fewer female students than male, and dramatically fewer female teachers. Not zero, but few. And the gap between students and teachers is itself a data point about the pipeline: women may be permitted, in small numbers, to learn. They are rarely permitted to become the ones who know.

As Natasha Noorani, singer, ethnomusicologist, and co-founder of the Lahore Music Meet, said in an interview: "There are plenty of talented female singers, composers, musicians and producers in Pakistan. The problem is barrier to entry. Considering how sketchy and inaccessible things such as studio spaces can be, it's yet another hurdle for women to deal with both in learning and in recording their music."

The barrier is not always visible. It is not always a locked door. It is often the absence of a key, a female instructor to look up to, a studio environment that feels safe, a family that views serious music education as a legitimate path for a daughter, a concert audience where you do not feel conspicuous. Without these things, even the most talented women tend to keep their music where it began: inside the room.

Shamim Nazli was born in 1940 in Faisalabad. She was the sister of the celebrated playback singer Mala. She composed music for Pakistani films, a field so comprehensively dominated by men that her entry into it was, by any measure, extraordinary.

She composed the music for two Urdu films: Baharen Phir Bhi Ayein Gi in 1969 and Bin Badal Barsaat in 1975. The second film ran for 54 weeks in Karachi, achieving Golden Jubilee status. Critics credited its success largely to Nazli's music. She died in 2010.

In the more than 75-year history of Pakistani cinema, she remains, as far as my research can establish -- I would be glad to know if there are more, the only woman to have composed and directed music for Lollywood films.

Nazli's story reveals the mechanism clearly. Despite her competence, proven by a commercially successful film, she was not given more assignments. It is reported that the Tafo brothers, who dominated the instrumental scene in Lollywood at the time, would refuse to cooperate with any composer they perceived as a threat to their dominance. Whether or not this specific account is fully accurate, it captures something true: the informal gatekeeping of a male-dominated industry is often more effective than any formal exclusion.

Nazli believed in creating original music, and she did not accept what certain producers demanded of her. She composed, and then she was not commissioned. And so the history of Pakistani film music contains one name where there should be many.

It is useful to place Pakistan's situation in a comparative frame not to judge, but to understand.

India, which shares the same gharana system and many of the same social attitudes toward women in music, has nonetheless produced more visible female instrumentalists. Annapurna Devi, surbahar virtuoso and daughter of Ustad Allauddin Khan, became one of the 20th century's great



musicians, though she spent most of her career teaching privately rather than performing, in part due to the suffocating dynamics of her marriage to Ravi Shankar. Sharan Rani played the sarod. A new generation of female instrumentalists in Hindustani music, violinists, flutists, sitar players, is now gaining visibility through social media and dedicated platforms. The barriers are real in India too. They are somewhat lower.

Turkey presents a starker contrast. The Ottoman court produced accomplished female multi-instrumentalists, Dilhayat Kalfa and Ayşe Sultan among them and the modernising Turkish republic of the 20th century built on this tradition. Female instrumentalists and composers have been part of Turkey's musical mainstream for decades. İdil Biret and Gülsin Onay are internationally recognised pianists. Sefika Kutluer is a flute virtuoso. These are not exceptions, they are part of a landscape.

Iran offers a cautionary parallel in the opposite direction. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, women were formally banned from performing publicly for mixed-gender audiences. Female musicians went underground or into exile. The ban has been partially relaxed and endlessly contested since, but its existence as formal policy reveals what informal exclusion in Pakistan has achieved without needing to be written into law.

Pakistan sits in an uncomfortable middle: no formal ban, but an informal architecture of exclusion that has been equally effective.

At the All Pakistan Music Conference, one of the country's premier showcases of classical music, the handful of female performers who do appear are, almost without exception, singers. The audience, too, skews heavily male. This is personal observation, not a surveyed statistic, and it is offered as such. But it is an observation that others in Pakistani music circles have made consistently.

The gap is not only on the stage. It is in who feels that the concert hall is a space for them. A woman walking into a classical music conference or a rock show as an audience member enters a space where her presence is already in the minority. This is not a trivial detail. It means that the next generation of female musicians is forming in a world where the audience, the community that sustains and validates musical ambition, is already telling a particular story about who music is for.

And still something is moving.

Natasha Noorani, a singer, ethnomusicologist, co-founder of the Lahore Music Meet, former General Manager of Coke Studio Season 10, and manager of the band Strings, is, by any reasonable measure, a music executive. She built a festival from the ground up that has, over ten years, showcased over 150 Pakistani artists and held over 200 sessions on music and culture. The Lahore Music Meet was founded and directed by women: Noorani, Zahra Paracha, Noor

Habib, Ayesha Haroon. When you walk into LMM, you are walking into a music institution run by women.

Zahra Paracha is a guitarist, producer, and songwriter who has worked across genres and bands, Sikandar Ka Mandar, Biryani Brothers and co-produced music for the Netflix series Class. Natasha Humera Ejaz, based in Islamabad, founded her own independent label, Tiny Dancer Live, and holds a certificate in audio production from the International College of Music in Kuala Lumpur. These are not just performers, they are builders.

Eva B raps in a veil and makes music about Lyari. Annural Khalid became the most-streamed Pakistani woman artist of 2024 without any major label machinery behind her. Shae Gill's voice is on Pasoori, the most-heard Pakistani song of this decade. Women are producing, engineering, writing, performing, and organising in ways that simply did not have structural support a generation ago.

Digital platforms have made part of this possible. Spotify's EQUAL Pakistan programme, social media, YouTube, and the global reach of streaming have allowed female artists to build audiences without passing through the traditional gatekeepers, the studio owners, the label heads, the old-boy networks of the industry. The infrastructure is imperfect and the access is unequal. But the bypass exists. And women are using it.

Music education, too, is slowly changing. There are more female students in music programmes than there were a decade ago, even if the numbers still trail far behind. The conversation about women in music, their challenges, their barriers, their rights to the same professional respect as their male peers, is being had publicly, in print, at festivals, in classrooms. A generation ago, this conversation was largely absent from public discourse.

My aunt still sings at family gatherings. Old film songs. Ghazals. Folk melodies that she carries from some deep place in her memory. She sings with the same quality she has always had, a richness and accuracy and feeling that you do not learn. You are born with it, or you are not.

She has never been asked why she did not perform publicly. The question has no obvious answer. No one decided this. It was simply understood, in the way that so many of the most consequential decisions in Pakistani musical culture have been 'simply understood': through a silence that passes from one generation to the next without ever needing to be spoken.

But silences can be named. They can be examined. And once examined, they are no longer quite as simply understood as they were before.

The story of women in Pakistan's music is not a story of absent talent. The talent is visible everywhere at weddings, at churches, at family gatherings, at the small performances and social media uploads that accumulate quietly and without institutional support. The story is one of absent infrastructure: the teachers, the titles, the studios, the stages, the contracts, the communities that tell a young woman with musical gifts that those gifts are worth taking seriously beyond the walls of the room.

That infrastructure is being built. Slowly, by women who decided not to wait for permission. What they are building deserves not just our attention, but the industry's serious investment, in music education, in safe performance spaces, in commissioning female composers and music directors, in acknowledging female knowledge-holders with the titles and authority they have earned.

The voice, as it turns out, was never the whole story. It was just the part we were allowed to hear.

The writer is a music enthusiast and cultural critic. He writes about the intersection of music, society, and the human condition.

Pakistani doctor elected president of leading mental health body

KARACHI: Dr Ayesha I. Mian has been elected as the president of the International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions (IACAPAP) for the 2026-2030 term.

According to a press release, her election makes her the first Pakistani and the first South Asian to lead the organisation since its establishment in 1937.

Dr Mian's election marks an important moment not only for Pakistan but also for the growing recognition of expertise emerging from low- and middle-income countries.

An alumna of Aga Khan University, Dr Mian previously



served on the faculty of the University of Texas and Baylor College of Medicine. After returning to Pakistan in 2013, she became Founding Dean of Student Experience and Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at AKU, where she established Pakistan's first Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship training programme.

She currently serves as the Founder and CEO of Synapse — Pakistan Neuroscience Institute, where she continues to advance evidence-based clinical services, education, research, and advocacy to strengthen mental health systems in Pakistan.

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Pak-Am Tech Council Hosts Strategic High Tea Honoring Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Focuses on AI-Driven Digital Economy

Los Angeles: The Pak-Am Tech Council hosted a strategic high tea in honor of Pakistan's Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal, bringing together technology leaders, investors, government officials, and members of the Pakistani-American community to discuss Pakistan's digital future.

The event was attended by Pakistan's Consul General Asim Ali

Khan, Pak-Am Tech Council President Najeeb Ghauri, founder Waqar Ali Khan, Bay Area President Wajahat Hussain, along with prominent figures from the technology industry, investment community, academia, and government.

Participants held detailed discussions on accelerating Pakistan's AI-powered digital economy and expanding the country's information technology exports. The meeting also

emphasized increasing freelancing opportunities, strengthening the start-up ecosystem, and providing greater support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to drive innovation and economic growth.

Speakers underscored the importance of collaboration between government, industry, investors, and overseas Pakistanis to position Pakistan as a trusted global hub for artificial intelligence, software

development, and high-value digital employment.

The participants also agreed to establish monthly Zoom coordination meetings involving the Pak-Am Tech Council, the office of Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal, and representatives of relevant ministries. The regular meetings will monitor progress on key initiatives and help ensure effective implementation of strategies aimed at advancing

Pakistan's digital economy.

Concluding the event, attendees expressed confidence that closer cooperation among the government, private sector, investors, universities, and the Pakistani diaspora would help unlock Pakistan's technological potential and accelerate the country's emergence as a leading destination for innovation, artificial intelligence, and the global digital economy.



One Homes Unveils \$35 Million 'One Edition' Luxury Development in Lahore

Launched at an exclusive event in Houston, One Edition is a \$35 million luxury residential project on Raiwind Road in Lahore West, just 10 minutes from the Lahore Ring Road. Designed by internationally renowned architect Kobi Karp, the development is tailored for overseas Pakistanis and offers world-class amenities and globally inspired living.



Pakistani-American Congress Welcomes PBCC, Inspires Community Support for Blind Cricket

The Pakistani-American Congress (PAC) hosted a grand reception in Houston to honor the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC), recognizing its global contributions while announcing a fundraising initiative and community support for the Blind Cricket Hostel in Lahore.



Muhammad Baig Hosts Dawat-e-Haleem in Connection with Muharram-ul-Haram at Chaat-N-Paan

HOUSTON: A well-attended Dawat-e-Haleem was organized by Muhammad Baig, owner of Chaat-N-Paan, in connection with Muharram-ul-Haram at his restaurant in Houston. The gathering brought together members of the Pakistani-American community after Jummah prayers, offering an opportunity for fellowship, reflection, and community engagement.

Attendees were served traditional haleem and enjoyed spending time together in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. The event reflected the spirit of Muharram by promoting unity, respect, and togetherness among community members.

Speaking on the occasion, Muhammad Baig thanked everyone for attending and emphasized the importance of observing Muharram-ul-Haram

with reverence while preserving cultural and religious traditions. He noted that such community gatherings help strengthen bonds among Pakistani-Americans and provide an opportunity for families and friends to come together.

The event was attended by community leaders, local business owners, families, and friends, all of whom appreciated the hospitality extended

by the host. Guests praised the arrangements and expressed their gratitude to Muhammad Baig and the Chaat-N-Paan team for organizing a meaningful gathering in observance of Muharram-ul-Haram.

The Dawat-e-Haleem concluded with prayers for peace, unity, and prosperity for the community and for people around the world.



Community Celebrates the Blessed Return of Haji Nasir Yunus and Haji Masood Harris at Dawat-e-Hajj Reception



A heartfelt Dawat-e-Hajj reception was held in Sugar Land, Texas, to honor Haji Nasir Yunus and Haji Masood Harris on the successful completion of their sacred Hajj pilgrimage. Family members, friends, and well-wishers gathered to congratulate the honored pilgrims, offer prayers for the acceptance of their Hajj, and celebrate their safe return. The evening was marked by warmth, fellowship, and gratitude, reflecting the spiritual significance of one of Islam's most cherished acts of worship. May Allah accept their Hajj and bless them with continued guidance, health, and countless rewards. Ameen.

What makes life worth living

Despite all our progress, we still struggle to answer life's simplest question. We've looked in the wrong places all



Despite all our progress, we still struggle to answer life's simplest question. We've looked in the wrong places all

By Rabia Khan |

I often find myself captivated by a question that has puzzled philosophers, psychologists, poets, theologians and ordinary people like myself for centuries: What does it mean to be truly happy? At first, the answer appeared deceptively simple. Like millions of others, I believed happiness would arrive with academic success, financial security, professional recognition, or the fulfilment of long-cherished dreams.

Yet the more I read philosophy, psychology, religion, and neuroscience and the more I observed the lives of people around me; the more I realised that humanity has been asking the same question for thousands of years. Despite extraordinary scientific progress, technological innovation, and material prosperity, happiness remains one of the greatest mysteries of human existence.

Every civilisation has pursued happiness in its own way. Ancient philosophers sought it through wisdom. Religious traditions searched for it in faith and compassion. Modern psychology examines it through scientific research, while contemporary society often attempts to purchase it through consumerism, entertainment, and endless self-improvement. We have become better at making a living than understanding what makes a life worth living.

Everyone wants to be happy, no matter their culture, religion, or country. We study hard, work long hours, build careers, buy homes, travel the world, and nurture relationships because we believe these experiences will eventually lead us to happiness. Yet despite chasing it personally and professionally, happiness often slips through our fingers like running water. The closer we believe we are to capture it, the more elusive it seems.

Happiness is more than a pleasant feeling. It is closely linked to better physical and mental health. Research shows that happier people often have healthier hearts, stronger immunity, greater resilience, better relationships, and may even live longer. If happiness were a medicine, it would be one of the most powerful, yet it cannot simply be bought.

The difficulty begins with a surprisingly simple question: What exactly is happiness? There is no single definition of happiness. For some, it is pleasure or success; for others, it is peace, purpose, or life satisfaction. True happiness comes from meaningful experiences, gratitude, and accepting life as it is.

For Socrates, happiness began with self-knowledge. His famous declaration that "the unexamined life is not worth living" was not

simply an invitation to think deeply; it was a reminder that people often spend their lives pursuing goals they have never questioned. A person who blindly follows society's definition of success may achieve wealth and status yet remain profoundly dissatisfied because those achievements were never truly aligned with their values.

His student, Aristotle, offered an even more influential vision. He rejected the idea that happiness was merely a feeling of pleasure. Instead, he described it as eudaimonia—a state of human flourishing achieved through virtue, wisdom, meaningful relationships, and purposeful action. According to Aristotle, happiness is not something we possess; it is something we practice. It is the result of living well rather than living comfortably.

Another Greek philosopher, Epicurus, is often misunderstood as an advocate of luxury and indulgence. In reality, he believed almost the opposite. True happiness, he argued, comes from simple pleasures, enduring friendships, freedom from fear, and liberation from unnecessary desires. A modest meal shared with good friends, he believed, could bring greater happiness than a lavish feast accompanied by anxiety and ambition. His philosophy seems remarkably relevant today, when many people sacrifice peace of mind in pursuit of lifestyles they rarely have time to enjoy.

Centuries later, philosophers continued to explore happiness. Arthur Schopenhauer believed people suffer because they always want more. Modern psychology calls this the hedonic treadmill—we quickly get used to new pleasures, and they soon stop making us happy.

Existential thinkers saw happiness differently. Friedrich Nietzsche believed that having a purpose helps people endure hardship. Viktor Frankl later showed that people who find meaning in life are more resilient. His message was simple: happiness comes not from avoiding suffering, but from living with purpose.

If philosophers have spent over two millennia pointing humanity in the same direction, why do so many of us continue searching elsewhere? Why, despite extraordinary progress and unprecedented comfort, does happiness still seem just beyond our reach?

If the human brain is naturally wired to notice danger, disappointment, and dissatisfaction, does that mean happiness is little more than an illusion? Not at all.

While evolution helped humans survive, it also gave us the ability to think, make choices, and change our lives. Unlike other animals, we can improve our habits, develop good values, and create a more meaningful life. In this way, science supports what philosophers have long believed.

Over the last three decades, a new field



known as positive psychology has transformed the scientific study of happiness. Rather than focusing solely on depression, anxiety, and mental illness, researchers began asking a different question: What enables people not merely to survive, but to flourish?

One of the pioneers of this movement, Martin Seligman, argued that happiness is much more than feeling good. He proposed the PERMA model, suggesting that a flourishing life rests on five pillars: Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. Together, these elements reveal that happiness is not a single emotion but the outcome of a well-lived life.

Perhaps the most surprising discovery in happiness research concerns kindness.

Modern culture often tells us that when we feel unhappy, we should reward ourselves, buy something new, book an expensive holiday, eat our favourite dessert, or indulge in luxury. Such experiences may provide temporary pleasure, but research suggests they rarely produce lasting happiness. In contrast, people who regularly perform acts of kindness, helping a neighbour, mentoring a student, supporting a charity, visiting an elderly relative, or simply listening to someone in distress—consistently report greater emotional well-being and life satisfaction.

Why?

Because generosity creates connections. It awakens emotions such as gratitude, trust, compassion, and love feelings that strengthen both individuals and communities. Happiness, it seems, grows when it is shared.

Equally powerful is the practice of gratitude.

It is easy to dismiss gratitude as little more than good manners, yet psychologists increasingly describe it as one of the most effective habits for improving well-being. Gratitude shifts our attention from scarcity to abundance. Instead of asking, "What is missing from my life?" it asks, "What blessings have I overlooked?"

This simple change in perspective has profound consequences.

Grateful people focus on what they have rather than what they lack. Gratitude does not remove life's challenges, but it helps us see beyond them. Research shows that practicing gratitude boosts positive emotions and well-being, making it both a virtue and a skill that can be developed.

Many people assume happiness follows success. Yet history repeatedly suggests the opposite. Those who devote themselves to causes greater than themselves often experience a deeper and more enduring satisfaction than those who pursue achievement alone.

No one showed this more clearly than

Viktor Frankl. After surviving Nazi concentration camps, he concluded that people who find meaning through love, faith, or hope are more resilient. He believed that the greatest human need is not pleasure, but purpose.

Frankl's experience challenges one of modern society's greatest assumptions. Happiness is not always found when life becomes easier. Often it emerges when life becomes meaningful.

Whether one reads the holy books and scriptures, or the teachings of Buddhist monks, a striking pattern emerges. Lasting happiness is consistently linked with gratitude, patience, generosity, forgiveness, humility, and service rather than material wealth.

Gratitude is presented not merely as a virtue but as a path to inner peace. Charity purifies the heart by shifting attention away from the self toward the needs of others. Patience is portrayed not as passive suffering but as courageous perseverance through life's inevitable trials. Likewise, contentment teaches that true wealth lies not in possessing everything one desires but in appreciating what one already has.

These principles are remarkably consistent with contemporary psychological research.

Both science and spirituality suggest that happiness is cultivated through habits rather than possessions, through relationships rather than riches, and through contribution rather than consumption.

Literature echoes the same message. Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky believed that true happiness comes from serving others, showing compassion, and building meaningful human relationships.

Happiness cannot be purchased because it was never a commodity. It cannot be inherited because it is not a possession. It cannot be permanently secured through achievement because every achievement eventually becomes ordinary.

Instead, happiness is cultivated through the choices we make every day—the choice to forgive rather than resent, to give rather than hoard, to appreciate rather than complain, to seek meaning rather than merely success, and to love despite the certainty that life will sometimes bring disappointment.

It is forgetting what truly matters.

For all our technological achievements, humanity continues to wrestle with an ancient dilemma. We have built skyscrapers that touch the clouds, developed artificial intelligence that can solve complex problems, and connected billions of people through digital networks. Yet many of us still struggle to answer the simplest of questions: How do we live a happy life?

Perhaps the answer does not lie in

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Riaz Ali Films USA Celebrates Film Shoot and Cast Birthdays During "Yeh Wada Hai" Production

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families. The film features a diverse cast and production team committed to delivering a meaningful social message through cinema.

The production team includes Zeeshan Khuwaja as cinematographer, Maaz Moid as lyricist, and Javed Iqbal as music director.

Guests attending the event appreciated the filmmakers' efforts to use the power of cinema to raise awareness about cancer and inspire communities to stand together in the fight against the disease.

The gathering concluded with a cake-cutting ceremony, group photographs, and best wishes for the successful completion and worldwide release of "Yeh Wada Hai."

One Homes Unveils \$35 Million Luxury Project 'One Edition' in Lahore at Houston Event

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million luxury residential development strategically positioned on one of the city's major thoroughfares, approximately 10 minutes from the Lahore Ring Road. The project is designed to provide convenient access while offering high-end urban living.

According to the developers, One Edition continues One Homes' mission of creating internationally inspired residences tailored to the needs and expectations of overseas Pakistanis seeking premium investment and living opportunities in their homeland.

The project's design draws inspiration from Lahore's rich history, cultural identity and architectural heritage, blending traditional influences with contemporary luxury. Internationally acclaimed architect Kobi Karp, who also led the design of One Canal Road, has returned as the lead architect for the new development.

Adding to the project's international credentials, Jolie Design Studio, a London-based sensory-led interior design firm, will make its Pakistan debut through One Edition, bringing a globally recognized design approach to the interiors.

Residents of One Edition will have access to a wide range of upscale amenities, including a family swimming pool, private cinema, indoor cricket simulator, restaurant and café, fitness studio, salon and spa, landscaped courtyard garden, and a dedicated residents' supermarket.

Company representatives said the project reflects One Homes' long-term vision of raising Pakistan's real estate standards through global partnerships, world-class architecture and a deep understanding of the requirements of overseas Pakistani buyers.

The Houston launch attracted members of the Pakistani-American community, investors and real estate

professionals, highlighting the growing interest among overseas Pakistanis in premium residential developments in Pakistan. One Homes said it remains committed to delivering internationally benchmarked projects that combine quality construction, innovative design and modern lifestyles for global Pakistani investors.

PAC Unites Houston Community in Support of Pakistan's Blind Cricket Movement

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cricket and empowering visually impaired athletes in Pakistan.

The event, hosted on behalf of the Pakistani community of Greater Houston and facilitated by Dr. Ashraf Abbasi, welcomed Syed Sultan Shah, Chairman of PBCC and President of World Blind Cricket Ltd., along with members of the PBCC delegation.

The reception was attended by a large number of distinguished Pakistani-American professionals, business leaders, and social activists, including Dr. Mazhar Chaudhary, Lala Gulfaraz Khan, Dr. Barkat Charania, Qamar Sheikh, Zubair Ashraf, Mahmood Chaudhry, Babar Khan, Mumtaz Khan, Khurshed Durrani, and Feroze Khan, who gathered to recognize PBCC's remarkable contributions to promoting blind cricket and creating opportunities for persons with visual impairments.

During the ceremony, PAC presented Syed Sultan Shah with a commemorative shield and a cricket bat signed by the organization's leadership in recognition of his outstanding services and lifelong dedication to the development of blind cricket in Pakistan and around the world.

Muhammad Sohaib, PBCC's U.S. Coordinator and a PhD scholar at the University of North Texas, was also honored with a commemorative shield for his efforts in strengthening ties between PBCC and the Pakistani-American community in the United States.

One of the evening's most significant announcements came from PAC, which pledged to organize a major fundraising event in the United States to support the future development of blind cricket in Pakistan. In addition, several community members announced financial contributions toward the construction of the Blind Cricket Hostel in Lahore, a landmark project that will provide accommodation and modern training facilities for visually impaired cricketers.

Expressing his appreciation, Syed Sultan Shah thanked Dr. Ashraf Abbasi, PAC, and the Pakistani-American community for their warm hospitality and unwavering commitment to the cause of blind cricket. As a gesture of gratitude, PBCC presented Dr. Ashraf Abbasi with a commemorative shield in recognition of his leadership and tireless efforts in mobilizing community support.

The evening concluded with a renewed commitment from both PAC and PBCC to work together in expanding opportunities for visually impaired athletes, strengthening community engagement, and ensuring that blind cricket in Pakistan continues to grow with the support of overseas Pakistanis.

PCC USA, Aga's Restaurant Celebrate \$100,000 Scholarship Milestone with \$40,000 Awards

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years. This year alone, 10 outstanding young women received scholarships of \$4,000 each, totaling \$40,000, to assist them in pursuing their academic and professional goals.

The scholarship recipients were selected through a dedicated committee comprising Ms. Minnah Rehman, Manal Jaffer, and Affaf Sharif, whose commitment and careful evaluation ensured the recognition of deserving students based on merit and potential.

The ceremony was attended by State Representative Suleman Lalani, who joined community leaders in congratulating the scholarship recipients and commending the initiative for investing in education and empowering the next generation of women leaders.

Also present was Mr. Salaman Razzaqi, Patron-in-Chief and Chairman of the Advisory Council, along with Advisory Council members Mr. Qaiser Rashid, Mr. Pervez Sultan, Mr. Feroz Ahmed, and Mr. Shahid Hashmi, whose continued leadership and support have played an instrumental role in the success of the scholarship program.

Special appreciation was also extended to Shaheen Hashmi, Ambassador of the initiative, for her unwavering support and contributions toward making the event a success.

Addressing the gathering, organizers highlighted the importance of education as a catalyst for community development and reaffirmed their commitment to expanding opportunities for deserving students through the Aga's Minnah Scholarship Program.

The Pakistan Chamber of Commerce USA congratulated all scholarship recipients on their achievements and expressed heartfelt appreciation to their families for encouraging and supporting their educational journeys. The organization also thanked all donors, volunteers, community leaders, and attendees whose continued support has enabled the scholarship program to grow into one of the chamber's flagship initiatives.

Now in its third year, the Aga's Minnah Scholarship Program continues to strengthen educational opportunities for young Pakistani-American women, reflecting the Pakistan Chamber of Commerce USA's enduring commitment to fostering leadership, academic excellence, and community advancement.

Business Tycoon Tanweer Ahmed and Maxim Group CEO Uzair Hasan Host Haleem Reception

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Held at Tempura Marquee, the

reception attracted a large number of business leaders, community organizers, media representatives, social figures, political personalities, and professionals from various walks of life. Several distinguished guests also traveled from different U.S. cities to attend the event.

Organized in connection with Muharram-ul-Haram, the gathering provided an opportunity for members of the Pakistani-American community to come together, share the traditional Haleem meal, and strengthen bonds of friendship and mutual respect.

Guests commended Tawveer Ahmed and Uzair Hassan for hosting the reception and for their continued efforts to bring the community together through events that promote unity, cultural heritage, and meaningful engagement.

The evening was marked by a warm and welcoming atmosphere, as attendees exchanged views on community affairs, renewed friendships, and reflected on the significance of Muharram-ul-Haram while celebrating Pakistan's rich traditions.

The strong turnout at the Haleem reception highlighted the solidarity, cultural pride, and close-knit spirit of the Pakistani-American community in Houston, reinforcing the importance of such gatherings in preserving traditions and fostering lasting community connections.

Hundreds protest at Houston City Hall as Whitmire says city shared evidence with DA's office

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four hours for her chance to speak to city officials.

"I woke up last Tuesday morning to hear another person was extrajudicially executed by ICE – this time, it was my neighbor Lorenzo," DeLatte said. "I bought my house in the East End because it was a safe place to live, because of people like Lorenzo, hardworking, law-abiding families to look out for one another."

Sasha Monterroso urged the city council to launch its own independent investigation of the shooting death – one of several across the country during the last two years at the hands of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Arrests and deportations have surged during the second term of President Donald Trump.

"Justice cannot depend on who pulled the trigger," Monterroso said. "Accountability cannot disappear because a federal badge was involved. An independent investigation is not an attack on the law enforcement. It is a commitment to transparency, accountability, and the principle that no

one is above scrutiny."

Each speech inside the council chambers was echoed by the raucous chants of dozens of protestors outside who stood for hours during the public comment session, making demands for accountability and transparency.

Mayor John Whitmire opened the meeting with a moment of silence to honor Salgado Araujo, a 52-year-old father of three who was originally from Mexico and had lived in the U.S. for more than 30 years, according to his family. Whitmire added the city has given the Harris County District Attorney's Office evidence from the shooting, including audio of a 911 call, video footage from a METRO bus and other resources supporting the DA's investigation.

Last week Whitmire joined calls for an investigation, but a probe by the Houston Police Department has not been announced or launched despite requests by local residents and politicians along with immigration rights organizations and advocacy groups.

The Office of Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which oversees ICE, is investigating the shooting death. The FBI is investigating whether there was an assault on a federal law enforcement officer.

"The city is doing everything possible to assist with a thorough and independent investigation," Whitmire said. "District Attorney Sean Teare and Houston Police Chief Noe Diaz are meeting with the FBI's regional director this afternoon. Our hearts remain with the Salgado family during this difficult time. We also extend our prayers to the family of the young man who was shot and killed yesterday in Maine. The city comes together when we face challenges, and that is what we are doing today."

Diaz announced Friday that he planned to meet with the local FBI office to find a path forward so the agencies can share evidence. Late Tuesday evening, the mayor's office said it instructed Diaz to send a letter requesting an independent investigation by the Texas Rangers, the criminal investigative branch of the Texas Department of Public Safety.

In a Tuesday evening social media post, the FBI's Houston office said it provided an update to HPD, the DA's office, the Rangers and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas.

"FBI leaders welcomed questions and received valuable feedback from our local, state, and federal leaders," the post stated. "... Since this remains an ongoing investigation, no further details will be provided."

Also Tuesday, ICE leaders decided to pause non-urgent vehicle stops after two deadly shootings of motorists in less than a week, Maine Sen. Angus King's office told NPR.

"It's a shame that it has to come after a loss of life," Whitmire said.

The soul of medicine

Murad Moosa Khan

“You are in this profession as a calling, not a business; as a calling which exacts from you at every turn self-sacrifice, devotion, love and tenderness to your fellow men. Once you get down to a purely business level, your influence is gone, and the true light of your life is dimmed” — Sir William Osler (1849–1919)

Few figures in modern medicine command as much reverence and respect as Sir William Osler. Canadian by birth, he was one of the founders of Johns Hopkins Hospital in the US and later Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, England. Described as the ‘father of modern medicine’, Osler combined scientific rigour with deep humanism in medicine. More than a century after his death, his teachings remain highly relevant for physicians navigating the technological complexities of contemporary medicine.

Osler believed that medicine was not merely a technical profession but a calling — a lifelong moral commitment to humanity rather than a simple business or trade. He emphasised compassion, humility, lifelong learning, bedside teaching and the importance of treating the patient rather than merely the disease. His famous aphorism, “The good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient who has the disease”, captures his philosophy of medicine, at the heart of which

was the doctor-patient relationship. He viewed medicine as profoundly personal, anchored in empathy, listening and human connection. Clinical competence alone was insufficient; the physician also needed character, compassion and integrity. He believed medicine was fundamentally a service profession, not merely a business, and the physician’s primary duty, above all else, was the patient’s welfare, not financial gain.

Osler, of course, practised in a very different era, but his ethical philosophy challenges the commercialisation of medicine we see today. This does not mean physicians should not be fairly compensated. Rather, it raises deeper questions about healthcare that today is governed primarily by market forces. Hospitals function like corporations and efficiency, profitability, and competition have overshadowed empathy, equity and ethical responsibility. Terms such as ‘volumes’, ‘targets’, ‘packages’, ‘profits’ and ‘discounts’ have found their way into the healthcare lexicon, replacing ‘ethics’, ‘morality’, ‘dignity’, ‘compassion’, ‘empathy’, ‘trust’ — terms once associated with the medical profession.

What would Osler say about medical practice in Pakistan today, where a flourishing private medical sector coexists with a chronically

underfunded and poorly organised public health system? In overcrowded government hospitals, accessed by the poorest of society, physicians face huge patient volumes, limited resources and systemic corruption. Consultations may last only a few minutes and staff struggle to provide individualised care.

At the other end of the spectrum, private healthcare in Pakistan increasingly reflects market-driven models of care, unaffordable to the vast majority. Quality care depends on one’s ability to pay. For millions of Pakistanis, catastrophic out-of-pocket expenditures push families into debt or force them to forgo treatment altogether. In the absence of an effective universal public health system, private healthcare has become a billion-dollar industry and the major provider of care, particularly in cities. Osler’s philosophy would urge us to ask not only how healthcare is delivered, but for whom?

Pakistan’s health challenges today remain deeply connected to social determinants: poverty, malnutrition, poor sanitation, environmental degradation, low literacy and gender inequality. Health problems such as tuberculosis, dengue fever, diarrhoeal illnesses, infant and maternal mortality cannot be addressed through clinical medicine alone. Preventive medicine and health promotion are non-existent.

The country’s public health infrastructure remains fragmented and underfunded. Osler understood the importance of broader social conditions in shaping health, as he worked in a period when infectious diseases, poverty, sanitation and public health reforms were central concerns — ironically, conditions that were not very different from what we find in Pakistan today!

Osler reminds us that medicine cannot be separated from social responsibility. He believed physicians should engage not only with individual patients but with the broader conditions affecting community well-being. They should not confine themselves to narrow technical roles but actively engage with questions of equity, access and public welfare. Physicians occupy positions of significant social trust and influence, and they must use their influence to advocate for fair health policies and social justice. They must advocate for stronger public health systems, equitable healthcare financing, preventive care and universal access to healthcare. Few physicians in Pakistan commit themselves to these roles.

Osler also exemplified a model of ethical leadership based on professionalism, integrity and service above status, prestige or financial gain. In Pakistan, where healthcare governance is often affected by

political instability, resource disparities, institutional weaknesses and endemic corruption, ethical medical leadership is critically important.

William Osler transformed medicine by insisting that scientific excellence and human compassion were inseparable. He revolutionised medical education by shifting it out of the traditional lecture hall and into the hospital wards, pioneering the bedside clerkship model and the residency training system, requiring students and young doctors to learn through direct, hands-on patient care and observation, which is practised today. He said, “Medicine is learned by the bedside and not in the classroom.”

His teachings continue to resonate because they directly address conflicts at the very heart of the medical profession — the importance of scientific progress versus medicine as an art, grounded in human understanding. He reminds us that medicine cannot simply be a marketplace commodity or a technical enterprise disconnected from social realities.

Ultimately, Osler believed that medicine was about caring for human beings, in all their vulnerability and dignity. In today’s age of blatant commercialisation and commodification, rising costs of healthcare, social injustice, inequality, and technological complexity, that vision

Balochistan security crisis

The state must revisit its security policies in the volatile province.

Muhammad Amir Rana

THE latest surge of violence in Balochistan has once again compelled Pakistan’s civil and military leadership to reaffirm its resolve to eliminate terrorism. During a high-level visit to Quetta following a series of deadly attacks, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir, during a provincial apex committee meeting, declared that the country’s political and military leadership had reached a “mutual and singular decision” to eradicate terrorism.

While the apex committee was meeting in Quetta to discuss the implementation of the National Action Plan, another, less visible process involving the local community was unfolding only a short distance away. In the Hanna Urak area, a jirga of local elders was engaged in direct negotiations with an armed group that had abducted several citizens. Apparently, the elders secured the hostages’ release without any visible involvement of the district administration or provincial government. The abductors reportedly claimed affiliation with the banned TTP, although their identity and motivations could not be conclusively established.

One is uncertain about what impact the resolve shown by the civil and military leadership vis-à-vis the volatile security situation will have in

the province. However, it is clear that the growing gap between the state and the civilians is making Balochistan’s security landscape more complicated. Not only have a variety of Baloch insurgent groups become hyperactive, but the TTP and even the IS have found space and have started terrorist activities, as seen in the assassination of two Christian cricketers in Mastung. The criminal threat has become particularly critical, especially in the province’s urban areas.

However, no substantial change has been witnessed in the state’s policy in the last few years. Whenever the level of violence decreases, the government claims victory over terrorism. But when violence increases, it puts all the blame on external factors.

It does not require a special lens to see how violent actors are surviving and thriving. Baloch insurgent groups have repeatedly demonstrated an ability to adjust their operational tempo to strategic requirements, temporarily reducing activity before resuming attacks with greater intensity. Consequently, a single month of lower incident numbers should not be interpreted as evidence that the conflict is diminishing. Instead, it may reflect a period of tactical recalibration on the part of these groups.

The data from the last few weeks suggests that the insurgency remains

geographically dispersed, operationally flexible, and strategically deliberate. Although the total number of attacks declined, 17 incidents across 13 districts indicate that insurgent groups retain the capacity to operate simultaneously across a wide and challenging geographical area. In June, the banned Balochistan Liberation Army alone conducted attacks in nine districts, demonstrating sustained operational reach rather than a contraction of its activities. This month, the BLA launched an assault on Chagai district and destroyed public as well as several private properties.

The group is increasingly focusing on launching assault operations, but it also continues to carry out operations that can be classified as revenge attacks, especially on the anniversaries of Baloch nationalist and insurgent leaders. The recent attack in Khuzdar, particularly targeting Shafiq Mengal, currently affiliated with the PPP and previously accused of heading a militia operating against the insurgents, is a case in point. The Majeed Brigade’s attack on his residence was said to be an act of revenge.

One of the most notable developments witnessed during the last few weeks is the BLA’s activity in Qilla Abdullah and Pishin — border districts with predominantly Pakhtun populations that have historically

experienced violence associated with the TTP rather than Baloch nationalist insurgents. The group’s attacks on police posts, the seizure of weapons and destruction of security infrastructure represent a significant expansion beyond its traditional areas of operation. While it remains unclear whether this reflects opportunistic exploitation of security forces already strained by the TTP threat or a deliberate effort to broaden its operational presence, insurgent movements that successfully expand into new geographic areas generally demonstrate growing confidence and organisational capability rather than decline.

The selection of targets also reflects a consistent strategic logic. Attacks against commercial and industrial assets, including the destruction of gas tankers on the Pakistan-Iran highway, the killing of a water tanker driver supplying the state-owned Oil and Gas Development Company, the abduction of another driver, and the assassination of a construction contractor, appear intended to increase the economic costs of operating in Balochistan. Such actions reinforce insurgent narratives portraying economic activity as the exploitation of Baloch resources, while discouraging external investment.

Similarly, the bombing of two bridges on national highways disrupt-

ed transportation infrastructure and imposed additional economic and logistical costs. The attack on a 220-kV electricity transmission line in Dera Murad Jamali further expanded this pattern by targeting critical energy infrastructure. Beyond the immediate disruption to electricity supply, such attacks also undermine public confidence in the state’s ability to provide essential services and maintain security.

Afghanistan holds a central role in the ongoing wave of violence in Balochistan and KP. Afghanistan provoked tensions in June by carrying out drone attacks inside Balochistan, forcing Pakistan to retaliate with strikes against TTP hideouts and safe havens along the Pak-Afghan border, killing several terrorists and destroying key infrastructure, including training facilities, command centres, and ammunition depots.

Pakistan also issued demarches to Afghanistan after investigators concluded that Afghan nationals were involved in the terrorist attack on a Pakistan Rangers camp in Karachi on June 27. However, Afghanistan should not be used as an excuse for the failure of security policies, which are not working well in either Balochistan or KP. There may be a need to look deeper into these policies.

The writer is a security expert.

The scars that never fade

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of her life.

According to Omer, the choice to target the face reflects deeply rooted gender norms in which a woman's social standing, marriage prospects and economic opportunities often remain closely tied to her appearance. In many communities, survivors not only face lifelong medical complications but also exclusion from education, employment and marriage, compounding the trauma long after their physical wounds begin to heal.

"The calculation by attackers is deliberate," she said. "They understand that disfigurement carries lifelong consequences that extend beyond the physical injuries. It is intended to rob a woman of her confidence, dignity and place in society."

The attacks frequently follow rejected marriage proposals, refusal of romantic advances, domestic disputes or attempts by women to exercise autonomy over their own lives. In such cases, Omer said, acid becomes a weapon of punishment and control rather than impulsive violence.

"It is almost as if the perpetrator is saying, 'You said no to me, so I will ensure no one wants you again,' or 'You won't be able to say no again,'" she said. "The attack is meant to leave a permanent mark—not only on the survivor's body but on her future."

She argued that these crimes are symptoms of broader patriarchal attitudes that normalise male entitlement over women's choices and bodies. "These attacks are not isolated acts of individual rage. They are enabled by socialisation that teaches some men they should never accept rejection, particularly from a woman."

Omer pointed to cases, including those documented in the Academy Award-winning documentary, *Saving Face*, where family members actively participated in attacks, illustrating that such violence is often reinforced within households rather than committed by perpetrators acting alone.

She also called for earlier intervention before violence escalates. Many survivors, she noted, report experiencing threats, harassment or coercion before the attack itself. Better reporting mechanisms, accessible helplines and awareness campaigns—particularly in rural and underserved communities—could enable authorities to identify high-risk cases before irreversible harm occurs.

Omer also warned against the cycle of public outrage that follows many high-profile incidents before quickly dissipating. "We react with shock, grief and discussion, but once the news cycle moves on, so does public attention," she said. "Structural change requires sustained civic pressure, not periodic bursts of outrage."

For survivors, she added, the attack is designed to inflict far more than physical pain. "An acid attack is an assault on identity. It seeks to force women out of public life, employment, education and even their own sense of self. That is why prevention must address not only the weapon, but the beliefs that make someone think they have the right to use it."

Social activist Rashida Qureshi described acid violence as one of the most extreme forms of gender-based violence, linking attacks to rejected marriage proposals, domestic disputes, property conflicts and attempts to control women's choices.

"An acid attack doesn't end when the physical wounds begin to heal. It can forever fracture a woman's sense of safety, identity, and trust in the people around her. Many assume that recovery happens when they undergo reconstructive surgery. But recovery happens when we help survivors reclaim the belief that they deserve to be seen, valued, and free from fear," added a Karachi-based psychologist.

Beyond mere survival

Acid violence does not end when the flames fade or when a court case concludes. For survivors, the aftermath often means years of surgeries, psychological recovery and rebuilding a life shaped by trauma. The scale of this struggle is visible at the Civil Hospital Karachi Burns Centre, the only dedicated public-sector burns facility in Sindh and a major referral centre for Balochistan.

According to Dr Khalid Bukhari, Medical Superintendent of Civil Hospital Karachi, the centre treated 20,542 patients suffering from acid attacks and other burn injuries between January 2005 and May 2026. During this period, 7,804 patients died, while 10,768 recovered. The facility also carried out 62,452 surgical procedures and treated 312,569 patients through its outpatient department.

Among them were 448 acid attack survivors treated between January 2007 and May 2026, including 290 men and 156 women. Although acid attacks represent a smaller proportion of overall burns, doctors emphasise that their impact is uniquely destructive because they are often deliberate attempts to permanently alter a person's appearance.

Dr Summaiya Tariq, Police Surgeon Karachi, described acid violence as one of the most devastating crimes because of its lasting physical and psychological consequences. "Survivors often require months or years of reconstructive treatment. Many continue to experience fear, anxiety and loss of confidence long after their wounds heal," she said.

"For unmarried women, the social consequences can be especially severe, as disfigurement may affect marriage

prospects and acceptance within communities," added Dr Tariq, who further revealed that in 2025, the Karachi Police Surgeon's Office recorded 54 acid attack victims treated at Civil Hospital Karachi, Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre and Abbasi Shaheed Hospital.

Former Burns Centre head and plastic surgeon Dr Ashraf Ganatra explained that acid injuries are chemical burns capable of destroying skin, tissue and eyesight within moments. While some injuries occur accidentally, he said deliberate attacks often target the face with the intention of causing permanent damage.

"When acid comes into contact with the eyes, it can severely damage the cornea and lead to partial or complete blindness," he explained. He stressed that immediate washing of the affected area for at least 30 minutes can reduce damage, although many survivors still require repeated surgeries and long-term treatment. The psychological consequences are equally significant.

According to Dr Chooni Lal, Head of the Psychiatry Department at Jinnah Hospital, acid attacks affect a survivor's confidence, personality and quality of life. Depression, anxiety and social withdrawal are common, with many victims avoiding public spaces because of fear of judgement. "Psychological treatment can help survivors recover and rebuild confidence," Dr Lal said, adding that recovery requires long-term counselling and support.

Meanwhile, Hina Pervaiz Butt, Chairperson of the Punjab Women Protection Authority claimed that the Punjab Acid Control Act 2025 aims to prevent such crimes by regulating acid sales through mandatory licensing and purchaser records. Selling acid without a licence is punishable by up to three years' imprisonment and a fine of Rs500,000.

SSP Investigation and former AIG Gender Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Ayesha Khan rejected suggestions that law enforcement treats such offences lightly.

"Cases involving violence against women are among our top priorities. Whenever an incident is reported, an FIR is registered on the basis of facts and evidence. Whether it is an honour-related crime, domestic violence, or an acid attack, police investigations are conducted strictly in accordance with the law," she said.

While Pakistan has made progress through stronger laws and greater awareness, experts agree that legislation alone cannot eliminate acid violence.

Until enforcement is strengthened, hazardous substances properly regulated, and survivors given sustained medical, psychological and social support, acid attacks will continue to lay bare how violence rooted in control, entitlement and punishment of women's autonomy outpaces legal protections.

What makes life worth living

Continued From Page 27

discovering something new, but in rediscovering something old.

In Pakistan, despite inflation, unemployment, political uncertainty, and economic hardship, happiness often reveals itself in ways that statistics cannot measure. It appears in the aroma of tea shared among neighbours after a long day, in children playing cricket with improvised bats in narrow streets, in families gathering around a dinner table during Ramadan, and in strangers rushing to help flood victims or earthquake survivors without expecting recognition. These are not merely cultural traditions; they are reminders that human connection remains one of the greatest sources of joy.

At the same time, Pakistan is not immune to the pressures of modern life. Young people increasingly measure their worth through social media approval. Career ambitions often leave little room for family relationships.

Consumerism encourages people to equate success with possessions rather than purpose. The result is a quiet paradox: as opportunities expand, many people's sense of fulfilment seems to shrink.

Start each day with gratitude, move your body, and make time for someone who matters. Read a few pages, step away from your screen, spend a little time in nature, and don't forget to laugh whenever you can. Be kind without expecting applause, forgive what no longer deserves space in your heart, and find purpose even in the smallest tasks. Most importantly, consume less comparison, greed, envy, bitterness, and the endless rush to do more. Happiness is rarely waiting somewhere else — it is usually built, one ordinary day at a time. Unlike medicines purchased from a pharmacy, this prescription has no harmful side effects. The more generously it is shared, the more powerful it becomes.

The French philosopher

Albert Camus once suggested that even in an imperfect and often absurd world, human beings possess the freedom to create meaning. His insight reminds us that happiness is not the absence of hardship but the courage to continue living with hope despite it.

Similarly, the Persian poet Jalal al-Din Rumi encouraged people to look inward rather than endlessly searching outside themselves. Modern neuroscience, positive psychology, and ancient philosophy unexpectedly converge on this same truth: the external world can provide comfort, but lasting happiness grows from the character we cultivate within.

The greatest irony of modern civilisation is that while we have learned how to make a living, we are still learning how to make a life.

Instead of asking, "How can I become happy?" Perhaps we should ask, "How can I live so meaningfully that happiness becomes a natural consequence?"

People who serve others may

not feel happy every day, but they often find deep fulfilment. Whether they are parents, teachers, doctors, journalists, soldiers, or volunteers, their sense of purpose gives their lives lasting meaning.

This is why happiness cannot be reduced to a smile or a pleasant mood. It is not constant excitement, uninterrupted pleasure, or the absence of sorrow. Such a life has never existed. Happiness is better understood as the quiet confidence that one's life has value, that one's relationships are genuine, and that one's actions leave the world slightly better than it was before.

The ancient Greeks called it *eudaimonia*, while others call it well-being, contentment, or inner peace. Whatever the name, the message is the same: true happiness comes from the choices we make—to love, forgive, serve, be grateful, and live with purpose rather than simply chase success.

As the American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson wisely observed,

"The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, honorable, compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well."

After centuries of philosophy, psychology, and spiritual wisdom, the message remains the same: happiness is not a destination but a way of living. It is found not in wealth, success, or status, but in purpose, gratitude, meaningful relationships, kindness, and integrity.

Modern life often encourages us to chase external achievements while overlooking what truly matters. Yet lasting happiness is built through our daily choices—how we love, serve, forgive, and appreciate what we have.

The greatest prescription for happiness is simple: live a life filled with meaning, compassion, gratitude, and purpose. When we do, happiness is no longer something we chase—it naturally becomes part of who we are.

The writer is a teacher and a freelance contributor

Riaz Ali Films USA Celebrates Film Shoot and Cast Birthdays During "Yeh Wada Hai" Production

Riaz Ali Films USA held a special shooting session for its second international film, Yeh Wada Hai, at Aga's Restaurant in Houston. The cancer awareness film's cast and crew also celebrated cast members' birthdays during the event, marking another milestone in the production.





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