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## Houston Community Remembers Dr. Arif Riyaz at Isa al-e-Sawab Gathering

### Qadeer family hosts prayer gathering honoring the late diabetes professor and his legacy



HOUSTON, Texas: The Qadeer family hosted an Isa al-e-Sawab gathering in memory of Dr. Arif Riyaz, a professor of diabetes associated

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## Friends of Karachi Holds Memorial Program Honoring Adnan Sherwani

*Held at Haidery Restaurant's Banquet Hall with Support from Owner Mr. Haider*






HOUSTON, Texas: Friends of Karachi Houston hosted a memorial program in honor of Adnan Sherwani, a longtime member of the Houston community, remembering his life and offering prayers for the eternal

*Continued on page 13*

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### Talarico holds slight edge over Paxton in U.S. Senate race on cusp of election, poll shows

With early voting set to begin across

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### PM Shehbaz vows to restore peace, development in K-P after imposition of emergency

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif

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### IMF forecasts 1.3% contraction in Pakistan, 6.6% growth in 2027

The IMF on Thursday forecast a sharp drop in economic output in the Middle East, North Africa

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### Affordability, immigration and a referendum on Trump: Listeners weigh in on the U.S. Senate race in Texas

Early voting for the midterm elections

*Continued on page 12*

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# The Lamps That Never Asked Our Faith

**In Dallas, the lights of Navratri carry me home to a small town in Sindh, where friendship came before creed.**



By Raja Zahid Akhtar Khanzada

DALLAS — There are evenings in exile when a single lamp, burning in a stranger's window, can carry a man ten thousand miles across the earth and set him down in the street where he was a boy. I know this because it has happened to me this week.

The Hindu community of Dallas is observing Navratri, the nine nights of devotion. The temples are full, and the small clay lamps called diyas are burning in the houses. The faithful are fasting and praying, disciplining the appetites of the body in the hope of purifying the soul. After Navratri will come Dussehra, and after Dussehra, Diwali, when the light will spill out of the houses and into the streets.

But these lights are not, for me, only the lights of someone else's festival. They are the lights of Tando Allahyar, the small town in Sindh, in southern Pakistan, where I was born and raised. They are the memory of streets where the distance between one human being and another was no greater than the width of a courtyard wall. A wedding in one house was a celebration for the whole lane, and a death in one family was grief written on every face in the neighborhood.

We grew up there together, Hindus and Muslims, Shias and Sunnis, and people of other faiths besides. Each had a place of worship, each had rituals and holy days. And yet there was, beneath and between all of this, a common life, and no one in that common life imagined that his neighbor's faith was a danger to his own. We did not visit one another in order to convert one another; we went to share in one another's joy. We did not mistake another man's prayer for our own, but we honored his right to pray.

I suppose this is what people mean by tolerance. I have come to believe it was something more than that. It was the soul of Sindh. It did not need a name, because no one had yet threatened it.

I think now, with a peculiar ache, of two friends from those years.

The first was Devi Das Parmani. The record will say that he was a municipal councilor, a local political and social figure, and the record will be correct, and it will tell you nothing. He was my friend. I was a young reporter then, and he would come to me with a press release in his hand. He would hold it out with a smile and say, "This is my taweez — please, take my taweez."

A taweez is an amulet, a small written charm meant to bring protection or luck. It was a joke, of course. He knew perfectly well that news has its own weight and that a journalist has his own work to do. But there was in the joke an affection so unguarded that I can hear it still.

I would print his story. And then, often, we would sit. Tea would arrive, and pakoras, and the talk would turn to the town and its troubles. We spoke of politics and broken drains, of the grievances of ordinary people, and of the small joys that make up the larger part of any life worth living.

I understand now what I did not understand then. That tea was never only tea; the sweetness of an entire society had been stirred into it. Those pakoras were not merely something to eat; they were the taste of a friendship in which no one's religion had left any bitterness. It never once occurred to either of us to ask whether the man lifting the cup was a Hindu or a Muslim. We were friends, and friendship does not carry a religious identity card.

The second friend was Lal Chand, who worked in medicine. With him I share more memories of boyhood and youth than I could set down here: long conversations, chance meetings, celebrations attended side by side. There was a difference of belief between us, but no difference in our humanity. When his holy days came, we felt their joy too. We learned his traditions, went to his gatherings and counted the happiness of his household as part of the life we held in common.

From that same window of memory another face appears. Malik Yousfani is today the guiding spirit of the Hyderabad Gymkhana. In those years he was part of our circle and a close friend of Devi Das, and his elder brother, Siddiq Yousfani, was dear to me as well.

What I remember most about that family is something their father did. After the Partition of 1947, families uprooted from India arrived in Pakistan, having left behind their homes, their streets, their kin and the accumulated memory of generations. He opened the doors of his house to them. He fed them, sheltered them and steadied them. By the plain fact of what he did, he proved that the bond between human beings does not wait for permission from nation, language or creed.

Consider it. On one side were the wounds of Partition, the burned houses, the scattered families. On the other was a man opening his door and laying the balm of love on those wounds. A border can divide the land. It is far harder to divide what lives in the human heart.

All of these people are characters in a single story. It is the story of a Sindh where beliefs were different but there were no walls between hearts, where a man was known not by his religion but by his character and his love.

When the month of Muharram came, I would go to the gatherings where Shia mourners recited elegies for the martyrs of Karbala. Their majlis, their grief and their rituals were not foreign to us. We knew how to honor one another's feelings without agreeing on every article of faith.

In those days no one asked me whether I was Shia or Sunni. No one demanded to know why a Muslim boy was rejoicing at a Hindu festival. I think we simply did not speak the language in which such questions are asked. We had opened our eyes in a society that judged a person by conduct, by love, by the way he treated others. In that society, no one thought it necessary to abandon your own faith in order to respect someone else's.

Now, watching Navratri in America, I remember the Hindu friends in Tando Allahyar who kept those nights with such care. Many devotees fast, give up meat and certain other foods, and strive, each according to his tradition, toward purity of body and spirit. The customs vary from family to family and from region to region. But beneath them lies the same discipline, the same devotion, the same longing.

Then comes Dussehra, when, in some traditions, a towering effigy of the demon king Ravana is set ablaze as a sign of goodness triumphing over evil. The burning figure is more than a ritual. It is a summons to every one of us to defeat the arrogance, the cruelty and the hatred that live within.

I find a terrible depth in this. If the point is to burn what is evil, why do we not burn our hatred? Why do we not put our prejudice to the flame, along with the walls we have raised between human beings in the name of God? How many times will a man set fire to the Ravana outside him while keeping the Ravana within alive and well fed?

And then comes Diwali, the festival of lights. Lamps are lit in every house, sweets are shared, families and friends gather, and light is declared the victor over darkness.

But I have come to feel that the lamps of Diwali ought not to burn only on doorsteps. Some must be lit in the heart. One lamp for forbearance, one for love, one for the freedom to believe. And one more for the humanity we have left somewhere behind us in our political and social wars.

So the question returns to me again and again, and it will not let me go: What happened to us? Where did they go, the people who shared one another's joys? Where are the gatherings in which beliefs were separate and hearts were not?

Perhaps this is not only a question for Tando Allahyar. It is a question for our whole region, and above all for Sindh. Its civilization was shaped by Sufis, mendicants, dervishes and people of many faiths who had learned the difficult art of living side by side.

This is the land of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, of Sachal Sarmast, of the poet Sami. Here love was never treated as the private estate of a single religion. Here the mystical tradition valued what was inside a person far above the name he carried or the label he wore. When joy came to a Hindu home in this Sindh, Muslim friends arrived to offer their congratulations. When calamity came to a Muslim home, Hindu neighbors stood beside it.

I did not read this in a book. I saw it with my own eyes.

I can still see Devi Das's smile as he laid his press release before me and called it his amulet. I can still feel Lal Chand's company: the easy talk, the long evenings, the smell of tea and frying pakoras, untouched by any bitterness of creed. Sometimes I wonder where they all are now, what roads life has taken them down, how many lines time has drawn across their faces. But in memory they have not changed at all. Time can make a man old. It cannot make the memory of friendship old.

Exile has taught me something else. A man may travel thousands of miles from his homeland, but he carries his childhood with him. You can change your country, your city, even your language. You cannot remove from inside yourself the streets where you first learned what friendship, love and humanity mean.

And so, while Navratri is kept in America and Diwali waits a few weeks ahead, I am remembering the friends in Tando Allahyar who first opened their festivals and customs to me. They taught me a lesson I do not think any book could have taught so simply. To share in another human being's happiness, you do not need to share his religion. It is enough to be human.

When I look at the world now, at the divisions being deepened every day in the name of faith, something in me aches. I wish we could hand our children an inheritance of friendship instead of an inheritance of hatred. I wish they could grow up again in neighborhoods where no one learns to hate the temple by listening to the call to prayer, and where no Muslim feels his faith endangered by the sound of a temple bell. I wish we could understand that honoring another's right to worship is not a betrayal of our own belief. It is the measure of our moral stature.

We lived through a beautiful time, and I am not sure we knew it. There were disagreements, but not every disagreement became enmity. Our beliefs were separate; our sitting place was shared. No one asked your religion before inviting you to share his joy.

So, from Dallas, I send love, respect and good wishes to every Hindu friend who is keeping Navratri now and will light the lamps of Diwali soon. I send them to Pakistan, to India, to America and to everywhere in the world.

My prayer is that these lights will not stay inside houses and temples, but will kindle love and tolerance in the human heart. For darkness does not always come from the night. Sometimes hatred creates a darkness inside a man that a thousand lamps together cannot lift. And light does not always come from a lamp. Sometimes it comes from a friend's smile, from a cup of tea, from a plate of pakoras, or simply from standing beside someone in his sorrow.

Those evenings in Tando Allahyar may never return, but their light is still alive in me. Perhaps that is why every lamp burning in America leads me back to some old lane in Sindh. Devi Das Parmani is there, smiling, a press release in his hand. Lal Chand is sitting among friends. The tea is ready, and the smell of pakoras fills the air. No one needs to ask who is Hindu and who is Muslim.

There, before we were anything else, we were human beings.

If only we could learn to be human again.

# A nuclear order sans guardrails & Islamabad's case for talking

***Using coercive measures and undermining institutions do not produce stability.***

Zubaida Abbasi

The global order is running on habit more than rules, and political instability has become its background noise. The war in Ukraine grinds on, the Middle East has just lived through a US-Israeli war with Iran, and governments from Europe to Asia are rewriting their alliances in real time. In February, New START expired, and for the first time in decades no treaty caps the strategic arsenals of the US and Russia. The nuclear equation is no longer bipolar, and it is no longer only about arsenals. It is about thresholds, perceptions and which capitals can still pick up the phone. Deterrence theory was built for two superpowers; it is now being stretched across a crowded field of nuclear states, missile defences and fast-moving technology.

Pakistan sits at the centre of that equation. The four-day military exchange with India in May 2025, marked by missiles, drones and air combat, ended in a ceasefire on 10 May. India's own Chief of Defence Staff later conceded that aircraft were lost on the first night, and the story of effortless superiority did not survive contact with the evidence. Islamabad's reading is that credible deterrence kept a short war short, a reading that deserves a serious hearing.

Alliances and diplomacy have moved accordingly. In September 2025, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement, treating aggression against one as aggression against both. Beijing remains its partner of first resort, with CPEC entering its second phase. Then came the Iran war. Pakistan helped broker the 8 April ceasefire, hosted the first direct US-Iran talks in decades on 11-12 April, and signed the Islamabad Memorandum as guarantor in June. Last week the UN Secretary-General came to Islamabad to salute that leadership. Pakistan has become a venue where adversaries meet.

That is the backdrop to INC-2026, the Islamabad Non-Proliferation Conference on 20 and 21 October. Credit belongs to the Strategic Vision Institute for convening it. Bringing scholars from Russia, China, the US and Europe to Islamabad takes institutional confidence and a reputation for honest brokerage. Thirteen international speakers from six countries, nine in person and four online, will take up deterrence after May 2025, the collapse of arms control, missile defence and emerging technology. They include SIPRI's Wilfred Wan, Sir Lawrence Freedman and Rose Gottemoeller, who negotiated New START for Washington. They will sit alongside Pakistani scholars and diplomats, among them Ambassador Kamran Akhtar, Pakistan's envoy in Vienna, and SVI's Dr Naeem Salik.

Given that missile treaties do the real work, academic settings are still considered relevant because ideas precede policy. Peter Haas's work on epistemic communities showed how networks of experts shape what decision-makers consider thinkable. South Asia's nuclear debate has long run on borrowed categories: Waltz's confidence that nuclear weapons induce caution, Sagan's warning about organisational failure, Snyder's stability-instability paradox. May 2025 tested all three, and that evidence belongs to scholars as much as to spokesmen. Universities and think tanks also train the analysts and diplomats who will inherit these questions, and they can disagree in public without starting a crisis. A researcher who has heard Pakistan's reasoning first hand carries something no textbook written elsewhere can supply.

Pakistan arrives with a record worth hearing. Its six nuclear power plants supply 3,530 MW at a capacity factor above 90% and, by Foreign Office figures, 18.3% of the country's electricity. In March the IAEA Board of Governors unanimously approved safeguards for Chashma-5, a 1,200 MW unit under construction. In space, EO-1, EO-2 and EO-3 now form an indigenous Earth-observation series, and SUPARCO named Pakistan's first astronaut in these same weeks. The chosen pilot will spend about a week aboard China's Tiangong station, the first foreign astronaut it has carried.

None of this settles the deeper debate, and the conference should not pretend it does. But credibility in the nuclear order is earned by being safeguarded, being present and being willing to be questioned. Islamabad is offering all three. If INC-2026 leaves behind a record of arguments rather than slogans, it will have done more for stability than another communiqué.

The writer is an independent research and policy analyst with keen interest in strategic dimension of nuclear and space technologies. She can be reached out via LinkedIn

# The PHL

The decline of Pakistan hockey, once the pride of a passionate nation, is a painful reality. A sport that formerly brought home multiple World Cup trophies and Olympic gold medals has now sunk so low that many fear there is no hope for recovery. The situation has grown deeply pathetic; Team Pakistan now routinely struggles against second-tier nations, while their victories against third-tier opponents are hardly convincing. For years, the green shirts have failed to even qualify for the very premier tournaments they used to rule.

This fall from world-beating champions to struggling underdogs highlights a systemic collapse. Crucially, the crisis cannot be blamed on a lack of legacy. Pakistan's legendary former players have stepped into coaching and managerial roles over the years, yet they have failed to help revive the sport's former glory. The rot is deeper than leadership; it is structural. According to current hockey authorities, the sport has been circulating among a stagnant pool of just 30 to 35 players for a long time. With virtually no quality replacements waiting in the wings, the national team has run out of fresh talent.

To reverse this trajectory, Pakistan must radically rebuild its hockey ecosystem. While modernising sporting facilities and infrastructure is critical, the absolute priority must be popularising the game at the grassroots level. Recognising this urgent need, a pivotal step has finally been taken. The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has officially launched the Pakistan Hockey League (PHL).

Introduced at a formal ceremony in Islamabad, this league is a joint initiative between the PHF and a private marketing concern. The professional competition structure is explicitly designed to bring together international stars, local Pakistani talent, corporate sponsors and franchise team owners. By creating a commercial platform to inject financial investment and give local players elite exposure, the newly launched league is expected to serve as a fitting and much-needed foundation to revive the national sport and discover the next generation of champions.

# Russia's Pakistan signal?

Kamran Yousaf

**Three Russian security visits to three regional capitals last week deserve attention, particularly from Pakistan. On October 14, Russian Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev held crucial talks with Pakistan's civilian and military leadership in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The same day, Sergei Naryshkin, director of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, was in Kabul for talks with Taliban intelligence chief Abdul Haq Wasiq. In New Delhi, Aleksandr Venediktov, deputy secretary of Russia's Security Council, co-chaired security talks with Indian Deputy National Security Adviser Pavan Kapoor.**

The timing is difficult to ignore. Russia is a major power with deep historical connections across the region. India remains its longstanding strategic partner. Pakistan was on the opposite side during the Cold War, while Afghanistan carries its own complicated history for Moscow. What makes the latest diplomatic activity significant is that it comes as Indo-Pak tensions remain high and relations between Islamabad and Kabul have deteriorated sharply.

The starting point for understanding Moscow's moves is Afghanistan. Russia remains the only country to have formally recognised the Taliban government. That decision itself departed from the regional approach Pakistan had hoped countries would follow towards Kabul. The shift became even more visible at the Moscow Format meeting on October 5. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov offered a markedly different assessment of Afghanistan from Pakistan. While Islamabad accuses the Taliban authorities of harbouring the banned TTP, Lavrov praised Kabul's efforts against terrorist groups and described the Taliban-led administration as a "national government" that was governing the country successfully.

The differences surfaced dramatically when participants failed to issue a joint statement. Russian officials said Afghan objections to language relating to terrorism and Pak-Afghan tensions prevented consensus. Moscow still acknowledges that terrorist groups operating from Afghanistan threaten Russia and its allies. The crucial difference is that it increasingly separates that threat from the Taliban government itself.

It is against this background that last week's visits become significant. Kolokoltsev, the first Russian interior minister to visit Pakistan, received an unusually warm welcome. He met Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Field Marshal Asim Munir. Pakistan and Russia also signed an agreement to strengthen cooperation against organised crime. Yet the public warmth should not obscure potential differences over Afghanistan. Pakistani officials privately play down Moscow's growing proximity to the Taliban, arguing that Russia believes engagement can prevent Kabul from again opening the door to Western influence.

That explanation may only tell part of the story. Some diplomats also link Moscow's calculations to changing strategic alignments following the Makkah pact. Russia may be assessing what the new arrangement means for its interests in the Gulf and the wider region. One diplomat went further, alleging Russian assistance to the Houthis and arguing that a prolonged Gulf conflict benefits Moscow through higher energy prices. Such assertions remain difficult to independently verify, but they illustrate the suspicions surrounding Russia's regional moves. Perhaps most intriguing was Venediktov's visit to New Delhi. He and Kapoor chaired the seventh round of the India-Russia Special Mechanism on Pakistan and Afghanistan, a dedicated bilateral forum whose very title is noteworthy at a moment of acute Pakistan-Afghanistan tensions.

None of this proves that Moscow's simultaneous engagement with Islamabad, Kabul and New Delhi represents a coordinated strategy aimed at Pakistan or the Makkah agreement. But neither should the timing be dismissed as coincidence. Russia is clearly becoming more active across a region where old fault lines are widening and new alliances are emerging. Watch Moscow's next moves carefully; they may be the message for Islamabad and its allies.

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# Kala Chapra and Lawrence of Arabia

Haroon Rashid Siddiqi

THE Lawrence's autobiographical masterpiece, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, remains one of the most influential accounts of irregular warfare, featuring on the reading lists of military academies and professional military education institutions around the world. Yet, for me, the book holds little attraction. It is the enigmatic, intriguing and self-effacing personality of its author that draws me to this extraordinary figure of history. The celebrated film Lawrence of Arabia, together with my childhood memories of Kala Chapra in Karachi, offers a more compelling reason to revisit his story. Sometimes obscurity offers refuge to greatness. Few figures illustrate this paradox better than Lawrence of Arabia.

As a young child, I remember travelling towards Karachi airport and seeing an enormous airship hangar known as Kala Chapra. The hangar was eventually dismantled in the 1960s, but it survives in the recollections of those who witnessed its imposing presence. What I did not know as a child was that Karachi had another, rather extraordinary association with Lawrence of Arabia. The very city whose skies and landmarks formed part of my childhood had once been home to a man who, having become a legend, was desperately trying to escape his own fame.

Colonel TE Lawrence occupies a peculiar place in history. The world remembers him as the British officer in flowing Arab robes who helped lead the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. The celebrated film Lawrence of Arabia immortalised his desert exploits, with Peter O'Toole's portrayal turning him into an enduring figure of heroic adventure.

Lawrence had encouraged Arab aspirations for independence while serving British imperial interests in the Middle East. The political settlement that followed the war fell far short of Arab expectations of independence. Conflicting wartime promises and the subsequent division of Ottoman territories left him confronting an uncomfortable truth: military success and political betrayal could coexist.

Perhaps this explains his growing determination to escape the public identity imposed upon him. In 1922, he enlisted in the Royal Air Force under the assumed name John Hume Ross, seeking the anonymity of an ordinary serviceman. When his identity was exposed, he was discharged. He subsequently joined the Royal Tank Corps under the name TE Shaw before returning to the RAF in 1925. A man celebrated across the world had abandoned his former military rank and public acclaim for the inconspicuous existence of an ordinary airman.

And this is where my childhood recollection of Kala Chapra acquires a significance I could scarcely have imagined. In January 1927, Lawrence arrived at the RAF depot at Drigh Road, Karachi, serving under the name Aircraftman TE Shaw. Far removed from the Arabian desert where his name had become legendary, he worked as a low-ranking airman in the Engine Repair Section, performing largely clerical duties rather than exercising any command.

There is a particular irony in the thought that Lawrence, whose desert exploits had captivated the world, was living anonymously in the very part of the subcontinent that I would later call home.

Karachi was not the end of Lawrence's Indian adventure. In 1928, he was posted to Miranshah, in the North-West Frontier Province, now called Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, where he served with the RAF. This was another world altogether: a stark, isolated military station in the rugged country bordering Afghanistan. Lawrence's story was not confined to Arabia or England; for a time, it unfolded in Karachi and along the North-West Frontier, places that remain integral to our own history.

There is something deeply human in this attempt to disappear. Most people spend their lives trying to become somebody. Lawrence, having become somebody in the eyes of the world, spent much of his remaining life trying to become nobody.

On 13 May 1935, Lawrence was involved in a motorcycle accident near his home in Dorset, England. He died six days later, aged 46. His death brought a premature end to a life that had already acquired the proportions of a modern myth.

Yet Lawrence's fascination lies not merely in his military achievements or tragic end. It lies in the contradictions that made him so difficult to understand. He was celebrated for his courage but burdened by guilt; admired for his leadership but suspicious of the fame it brought; and remembered as a man of extraordinary action who ultimately sought refuge in obscurity. His life raises an uncomfortable question: what happens when the world's idea of greatness becomes a prison for the person who embodies it?

The old Kala Chapra of Karachi and the elusive Lawrence of Arabia may appear to belong to entirely different worlds. Yet their histories intersect in the colonial aviation world of Karachi, where a man who had helped shape the destiny of Arabia served quietly under an assumed name. Both survive in memory, reminding us that disappearance is not always the same as oblivion. Sometimes what vanishes from sight acquires a more enduring presence in the mind.

# French protests

SEVERAL European states have witnessed mass protests over the past few days, mostly focusing on socioeconomic grievances. But the largest — and most violent — demonstrations took place in France. Over the weekend, nearly half a million people took to the streets in cities across France, with the protests descending into mob violence, looting, and arson. Thousands have been arrested. French students had been protesting for weeks, demanding improvement in the public education system. But the recent protests highlighted other issues, such as the cost of living and inequality. While the French state has blamed the 'far left' for the violence, and even France's far right has been careful about whom it blames, many outside the country have picked familiar targets: immigrants and people of colour. This is despite the fact that along with French citizens of black and Arab origin, many working-class white French people were also part of the protests. But facts matter little when the far right has a narrative to build. Weighing in with his pearls of wisdom, US President Donald Trump blamed "immigration" and "people with hatred in their hearts" for the violence. It is quite remarkable that the American leader did not blame Muslims and immigrants for the French Revolution and the Great Terror.

While violence is condemnable, scapegoating religious and ethnic minorities will not make societal problems go away. When the economy is going through tough times, immigrants and citizens with roots in other cultures and countries are the easiest to blame. European and Western governments need to address the core issues fuelling the unrest — poverty and inequality — and counter far-right talking points with facts. As economies worldwide contract, and societal pressures boil over, far-right agent provocateurs will seek further divisions based on race and religion. Progressive forces globally must counter these hateful aims through solidarity, and continue to call for justice and equality for all.

# SCHEDULE, PROCEDURES, RULES, & GUIDELINES FOR PAGH ELECTIONS 2026

The general elections of PAGH for the year 2026 will be conducted according to the Schedules, Procedures, Rules, and Guidelines (SPR&G) given in the table below. Contents of the SPR&G conform to the PAGH Constitution which can be found on the PAGH website. You are requested to familiarize yourself with these rules in order to facilitate a smooth and orderly election process. Particular attention is drawn to Articles 11 and 12 of the Bylaws.

***Remember*:** Responsibility to know and understand ALL rules and requirements is yours as PAGH Members. In any case of error or mistake or conflict, EC reserves ALL RIGHTS to change these guidelines and/or any process as needed. **In all such cases, the actual PAGH Constitution shall prevail.**

***[Note: All dates are fixed. However, scheduled times and venues for events mentioned herein may be changed as needed for optimum participation]***

| No | Activity/Event | Date/Time/Location | Procedures/Rules/Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Deadline for new membership or for old members to renew membership to be eligible to vote | Wednesday 09/30/2026 | As per article 11.4 of PAGH Constitution |
| 2 | Deadline to submit nominations | Monday 11/02/2026<br>5pm to 8pm CST<br>at<br>Pakistan Center | Nominations must be made only on official nomination forms for 2026 and must be accompanied with a non-refundable processing fee for President **$3,000.00** & fee for other positions **$2,000.00** and submitted to the EC2026 at the place and time designated for this purpose. The only acceptable form of payment shall be a cashier's check or money order made payable to PAGH. Nomination Form is being prepared and will be made available at the PAGH Headquarters or through a member of the EC2026 by 10/25/2026<br>**Five(5) Positions up for Elections are: (1)-President, (2)- General Secretary & Chairs of Committees for: (3)-Education, (4)-Culture & Religious, (5)- Publication** |
| 3 | Official announcement of all Nominees after qualifications check. | Monday 11/09/2026 | All official announcements shall be made on a bulletin board for display at PAGH Headquarters and, if possible, through the regular membership mailing, and/or on appropriate radio programs, and/or through local Pakistani newspapers and/or other reasonable electronic means. |
| 4 | Deadline to withdraw nominations | Friday 11/13/2026<br>Before 7PM CST<br>at Pakistan Center* | Nomination withdrawal must be made in writing, by a Nominee. Nominations not withdrawn prior to this deadline will be carried on the ballot. Once withdrawn, a candidate may not be re-nominated. In any event, withdrawal from candidacy does not imply a refund of the nomination processing fee. |
| 5 | Official announcement of CANDIDATES | Saturday 11/14/2026 | Election Commission shall release the List of Candidates which shall consist of those Nominees who were deemed eligible by EC and have not withdrawn. These names will appear on the ballot. |
| 6 | Membership List to be used by EC available to CANDIDATES | Sunday 11/15/2026<br>Only a Hard copy will be provided to the nominees at a cost of **$500.00** | The Membership List shall be the *ONLY* authority for eligibility to vote and PAGH Executive Committee is ***SOLELY*** responsible for preparing it and providing the list to EC2026. If your name does not appear on this list, you will not be eligible to vote. The Membership List will be made available, **ONLY** by EC2026, at a cost of $500,. |
| 7 | Official announcement of Nominees who have not withdrawn | Sunday 11/15/2026 | See Rule Number 3 |
| 8 | Special **Required** Meeting of the EC with candidate | TBA<br>at Pakistan Center* | The Election Commission shall meet with all qualified Nominees to further clarify rules and procedures in order to minimize false expectations and to establish a common Code of Ethics to be followed during the election process. Suggestions for any process improvement will be heard. Attendance of all qualified CANDIDATES is mandatory.<br>**(Date & time subject to maximum candidates' participation)** |
| 9 | Meet-the-Candidate Forum | TBA<br>at Pakistan Center* | There will be a "Question & Answer" session between the CANDIDATES and the general membership. It is intended to serve a dual purpose: (1) to provide an opportunity for candidates to present their agenda, and (2) for the membership to get to know each candidate better. |
| 10 | Early Voting<br>(If any) | TBD | As per PAGH Bylaws 12.3.6, any Early Voting, if held as per EC discretion, may be held "*on a maximum of three (3) different days during the eight-(8) day period immediately preceding the day of the General Elections*". EC will decide on the need and time and place once the nominations and withdrawals process has been completed. See below for voter eligibility. |
| 11 | General Elections Day Voting<br>(If any needed) | Sunday 12/13/2026<br>9am to 5pm CST<br>at Pakistan Center | The requirements for voting eligibility are as per Article 11.3 of the PAGH Constitution (circa 1999): "*Only members who are in good standing on or before September 30th of the election year and who are at least sixteen (16) years of age as of the day of General Elections for that particular calendar year and whose names appear on the final official list of the voting General Members shall be eligible to vote in the General Elections. All voting shall be in person. There shall be no proxy voting.*"<br>A valid picture identification, such as a driver's license, government issued ID, passport, or a high school ID card, will be required to ascertain the identity of every voter. Also, proof of date-of-birth will be required from members who are high school students. Minimum voting age is 16 years.as of the General Election Day. |

***Nomination forms will be available November 1 till deadline***

* Pakistan Center is located at 12638 Bissonett, Houston, TX 77099

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# Dr. Arif Riyaz Remembered with Love and Prayers at Houston Gathering

*The Qadeer family hosted an Isa al-e-Sawab gathering in Houston in memory of Dr. Arif Riyaz, professor of diabetes at Anwar Riyaz Qadeer Diabetic Institute in Lahore. His brothers, Anwar-I-Qadeer, Tariq Anwar Qadeer and Dr. Asaf Riyaz Qadeer, along with family members and community members, gathered to honor his memory through prayers and supplications, seeking Allah Almighty's mercy and the highest place in Jannat-ul-Firdous for the departed soul.*





















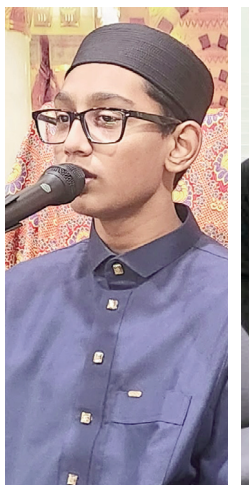





# Houston Mehfil Brings the Spiritual Spirit of Pakistan to Annual Milad-un-Nabi & Gyarhvi Sharif

***Sardar Omer Ashrafi hosted the annual Milad-un-Nabi and Gyarhvi Sharif at his Houston residence on October 17, 2026, featuring Quranic recitation by Zayan Khan, Hamd and Naat by Hafiz Kareem Sultan, and an inspiring address by renowned scholar Hazrat Allama Syed Shah Abdul Haq Qadri from Pakistan. Houston Islamic scholars Allama Mahboob Raza and Hafiz Abdul Gani Owasi, along with community members, attended the gathering, which recreated the spiritual ambiance of traditional outdoor mehfils in Pakistan.***

















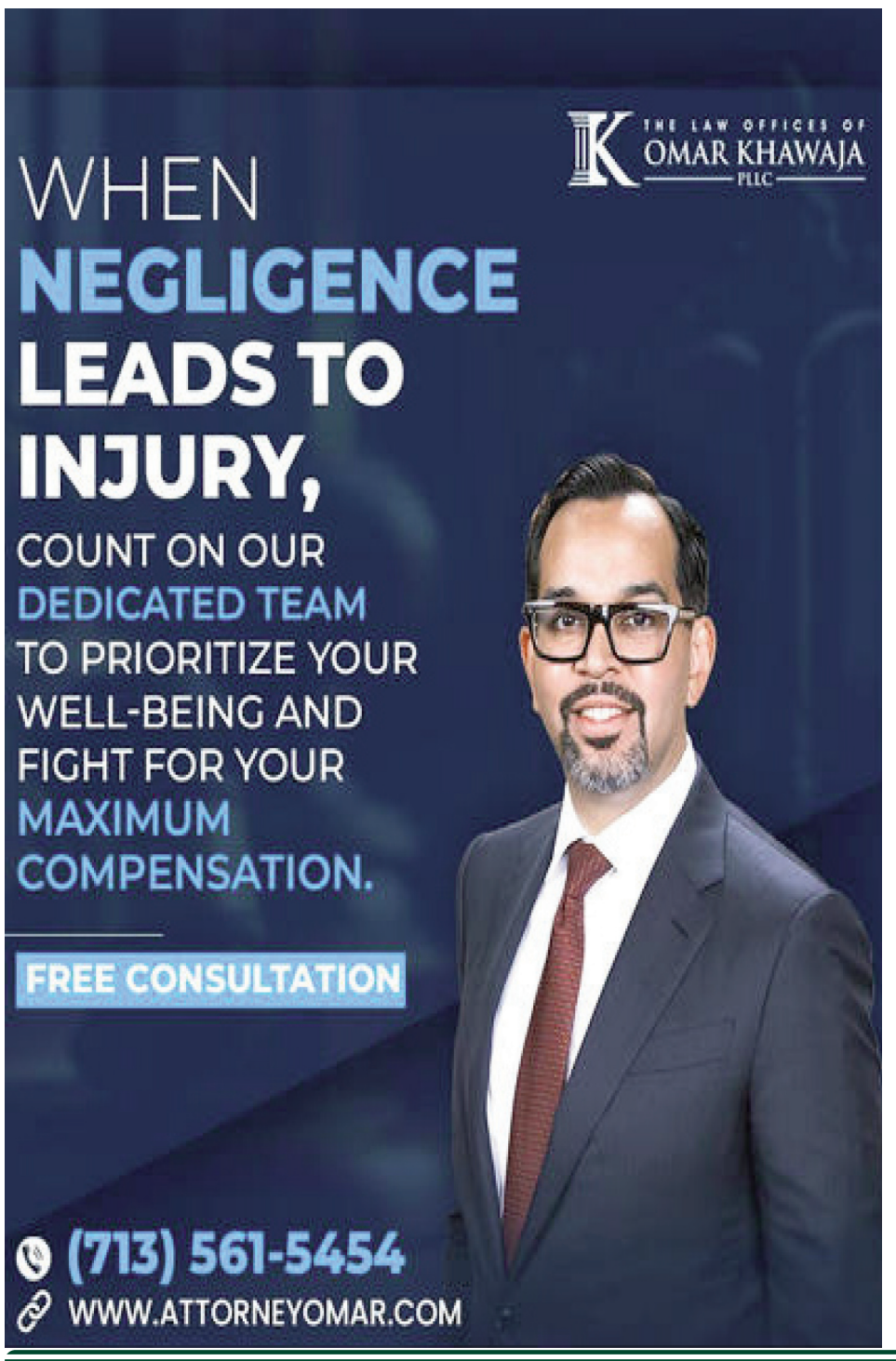






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# Pakistani women face highest heart disease mortality in South Asia, study finds

## *On the eve of World Heart Day, experts call for greater screening and follow-up as hypertension, diabetes, obesity and physical inactivity raise cardiovascular risks among women*

KARACHI: Pakistani women have the highest death rate from ischaemic heart disease among five South Asian countries, with high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity and physical inactivity identified as factors increasing their risk, health experts said on Monday.

On the eve of World Heart Day, cardiologists, gynaecologists and local industry leaders gathered at the Karachi Press Club (KPC) to announce the launch of a nationwide 'Her Heart Matters' campaign.

The campaign was launched by PharmEvo in collaboration with the Pakistan Cardiac Society, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Pakistan, the Pakistan Society of Internal Medicine, and Go Red for Women to promote screening, awareness and education for early detection and timely treatment of cardiovascular risks.

The experts said that a 2026 study published in JACC: Asia compared Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan using Global Burden of Disease estimates.

The study found that Pakistan had the highest age-standardised death rate from ischaemic heart disease among women in the five countries in 2021. Pakistan was also the only country studied where the ratio of deaths to estimated cases was higher among women than men, at 4.4 per cent compared with 3.1pc.

High blood pressure and diets low in vegetables and fibre were identified as leading contributors to heart disease deaths among Pakistani women.

The experts, speaking at a press conference at KPC, said heart disease among women was often ignored due to misconceptions that it mainly affected men, inadequate screening and poor follow-up during pregnancy, after childbirth and after menopause.

Prof Dr Tazeen Abbas, secretary general of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Pakistan, said women's heart health needed attention before and during pregnancy, after childbirth and after menopause.

She said many women stopped prescribed medicines during pregnancy or discontinued blood-pressure treatment after delivery, and should instead consult their doctors.

High blood pressure during pregnancy was often forgotten after childbirth, she said, and pregnancy-associated cardiomyopathy, in which the heart muscle weakens around pregnancy, could be serious if not treated in time.

Prof Dr Halima Yasmeen, chairperson and head of department at Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC), said heart disease had been detected in around four per cent of pregnant women screened at her clinic.

Prof Dr Shabnam Naveed, head of medicine at JPMC and Jinnah Sindh Medical University, said more than 90pc of women attending JPMC's diabetes clinic had one or more cardiovascular risk factors. Though a high-risk hospital group, the figure showed the close link between diabetes, hypertension, obesity and heart disease, she added, and lack of screening remained a barrier.

Prof Dr Fawad Farooq, general secretary of the Pakistan Cardiac Society, said stress was another important contributor to cardiovascular disease. Women could add walking and other physical activities to their routines even with limited space or time, he added.

He said specialised cardiac hospitals were receiving large numbers of patients with heart attacks and chest pain because "Pakistan lacked an effective primary and secondary cardiovascular care network".

"At the NICVD, spaces meant for one patient sometimes have to accommodate several patients, while multiple heart-attack patients can arrive at the same time," Prof Farooq said, adding that tertiary hospitals alone could not manage Pakistan's growing cardiovascular burden.

He said some patients stopped taking prescribed medicines within weeks of undergoing angioplasty, exposing themselves to further complications. Stronger primary care, proper follow-up and continued use of medicines were necessary to prevent repeat heart attacks and reduce pressure on specialised hospitals.

Dr Mansoor Ahmed, Professor of Cardiology at the Karachi Institute of Heart Diseases, said the longstanding belief that women did not develop heart disease had been proved wrong.

He said heart disease affected women as well as men, but Pakistani women often placed their own health behind household responsibilities. Families also failed to give adequate attention to women's medical needs, while limited physical activity was increasing their risk.

He added that diabetes had become a major public health problem in Pakistan and frequently occurred alongside cardiovascular disease.



## IMF forecasts 1.3% contraction in Pakistan, 6.6% growth in 2027

*Continued from front page*

and Pakistan this year due to the US-Israeli-led war against Iran, followed by a rebound to 6.6% growth in 2027, while warning that further energy production disruptions could worsen the outlook.

The International Monetary Fund said the region's output was expected to contract by 1.3% as a result of the war's impact on energy production, shipping, tourism, trade and confidence. Economic output would increase sharply in 2027, but output in those economies would generally stay below pre-war projections.

The war's impact had been substantial, but uneven, with oil-exporting economies directly affected by disruptions to energy production and shipping hit harder, and oil importers proving to be more resilient, the IMF said in its regional outlook released Thursday in Dubai.

The IMF said its baseline assumed that the conflict would abate in early 2027 and that trade would gradually normalize during the year, but it said the outlook remained clouded by "exceptionally high uncertainty."

"The main risks derive from further disruption to energy production and trade routes that could drive energy prices higher," the IMF said in a statement outlining its key messages, noting external financial conditions could also tighten.

External financial conditions could also tighten if investors reassess AI-driven productivity gains and interest rates rise further amid heightened concerns about inflation and fiscal positions, it said.

Oil importers had proven more resilient, with domestic demand supported by remittances and tourism flows, favorable financial conditions, and prompt policy responses that safeguard consumers from higher commodity prices, the IMF said.

Growth in the Caucasus and Central Asia was moderating toward a more sustainable pace, the IMF said, forecasting a 5.2% rise in economic output in 2026 and 5% in 2027.

The IMF underscored the mantra it delivered during last week's annual meetings, urging policymakers to prioritize maintaining price stability, while preserving fiscal sustainability, maintaining central bank independence and enacting structural reforms to boost productivity and create jobs.

## Talarico holds slight edge over Paxton in U.S. Senate race on cusp of election, poll shows

*Continued from front page*

Texas Monday morning, Democratic state Rep. James Talarico leads Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton by two percentage points among likely voters in the U.S. Senate race, according to a recent poll by the University of Houston's Hobby School of Public Affairs.

The survey shows Talarico with the support of 48% of likely voters, compared to 46% backing Paxton, with 3% for Libertarian Ted Brown and 3% still unsure.

The margin of error in the poll is 2%, making the result a statistical dead heat. However, Mark Jones of Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, who coauthored the report, said Talarico's performance is the strongest late-campaign performance he's seen from a Texas Democrat in decades.

"Even in 2018, [Democratic nominee and then-U.S. Rep.] Beto O'Rourke was trailing [Republican U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz] in virtually every poll at this point in the race," Jones said. "In contrast, in most polls being done, Talarico has an advantage. Sometimes it's as small as two [percentage points], like in this poll, or one. In a few, it's as high as three or four, but it's rare to find a poll that's not linked to some party or some organization which is at least implicitly or explicitly towards Ken Paxton that has Paxton up."

While the survey shows 98% of likely Democratic voters planning to vote for Talarico, only 88% of likely Republican voters said they plan to vote for Paxton. Six percent of Republican voters said they plan to vote for Talarico, compared to 1% of Democratic voters who plan to vote for Paxton.

"You put that together," Jones said, "and that's the difference between Paxton being ahead by a few points and Talarico being ahead by a few points where he is today."

In addition, 60% of independents said they plan to vote for Talarico, compared to just 32% who said they plan to vote for Paxton.

Jones said three other major factors are weighing against the Republicans in the Senate contest: President Donald Trump's poll numbers are underwater in Texas; Paxton is widely viewed as a controversial candidate; and Talarico is just as widely viewed as potentially playing a key role in helping the Democrats take back control of the U.S. Senate.

Virtually all the other statewide races examined in the survey show the Republican candidates leading their Democratic rivals by slimmer-than-usual margins for the GOP in Texas, but still well outside the margin of error. Jones said the combination of strong Republican voter identification, strong Republican financial advantages, and low name recognition for most candidates other than incumbent Gov. Greg Abbott and incumbent Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick is helping most GOP candidates overcome the White House's drag on the ticket.

"I think the only unknown for Republicans is will they be able to ensure that their voters actually turn out to the vote [this] cycle," Jones said. "And to the extent to which Republicans vote instead of staying home, Greg Abbott, Dan Patrick, [state Sen. and Attorney General candidate] Mayes Middleton, [state Comptroller] Don Huffines, and others should be in good shape, although they may be sweating a bit until midnight passes and they see where most of the early vote and Election Day vote has been cast."

The one other potential trouble spot Jones sees for Republicans is in the race for Texas Railroad Commissioner. Republican nominee Bo French has been embroiled in multiple scandals over social media posts over the past year and a half — the most recent being a screenshot of students of color at a University of Texas football game, which he claimed was evidence that "foreigners" were displacing Americans.

The new survey shows French leading his Democratic opponent, state Rep. Jon Rosenthal, by 45% to 43%, with Libertarian Arthur DiBianca at 2% and 10% of voters still unsure who they'll support.

"We do know that the more people learn about Bo French, the less they like Bo French," Jones said. "But if more than half of voters don't know who Bo French is, that's good for both French and bad for Jon Rosenthal, who by comparison also is not at all well-known, with close to three out of four likely voters having no idea who Rosenthal is."

## Affordability, immigration and a referendum on Trump: Listeners weigh in on the U.S. Senate race in Texas

*Continued from front page*

begins today across Texas. Most polling in the U.S. Senate contest — including the latest statewide survey from the University of Houston's Hobby School of Public Affairs, released late Sunday night — either shows Republican state Attorney General Ken Paxton and Democratic state Representative James Talarico in a statistical dead heat or Talarico in the lead.

Houston Public Media conducted a survey of listeners to ask them what issues they're concerned about, including those that could shape the Senate contest. Their answers suggest that the contest is as much a referendum on President Donald Trump's performance as it is a judgment on which candidate would better serve the people of Texas.

"Too many Americans ... are really suffering economically"

One of the main issues resonating with voters across the political spectrum is affordability. Jerry Pollio, a business consultant based in Houston's Museum District, said he's inclined to vote for the candidate rather than the party. He's leaning toward Talarico.

"You go to the grocery store, you go to the gas pump," Pollio said, "and I just see things continue to escalate rather than, I don't know if companies have an incentive after, let's say after the pandemic to lower prices once again, but I just see that it's becoming more and more of a struggle to afford everyday things."

Rebecca Trahan, a former professional athlete and Republican activist from Katy, is supporting Paxton — in large part because she feels he's responded to her concerns as state attorney general. But she's also feeling the pain of higher prices.

"What I'm thinking about, especially as a single parent, is ... about rising grocery bills," Trahan said. "I'm also thinking about the possibility of rising gas prices and how I'm going to be able to pay my bills."

Alisa Cunningham is an independent from the Clear Lake area. A retired history teacher, Cunningham said she's looking for new ideas.

"My homeowner's insurance is going up. My auto insurance is going up. The groceries are going up. The gas is going up. And wages aren't going up," Cunningham said. "I'm having to work part time because I can't live on my retirement. So, it's just, something's not right."

Then there's James Stevens of College Station, a retired construction company owner and lifelong Republican. He blames President Trump and Republican lawmakers for high prices

"There are too many Americans that are really suffering economically, and it doesn't have to be that way, and everything they've done has damaged the affordability aspect of the economy rather than helping it," Stevens said. "I think the tariff situation was misplaced because the importers have simply raised their prices. We see the results of the misbegotten war, prices at the pump, the cost of shipping, the cost to farmers to produce the food that we need. A terrible mistake."

**Paxton and Trump**

The economy is not the only reason Stevens said he's voting for Talarico. For him, personal integrity is very much an issue.

"I would say that one of my main concerns is corruption," Stevens said. "I find it astounding that somebody like Ken Paxton would show his face in public, much less offer himself to represent the people of Texas in the Senate."

Personal integrity is also a key issue for David Nickeson, a retired physician in the Clear Lake area. Nickeson, who considers himself a Democrat, acknowledged Talarico doesn't have as much experience as Paxton, but he said Paxton has the wrong kind of experience.

"His defrauding investors, his selling the offices of the attorney general to political donors of his, his firing all his staff. So, I think he was rightly impeached," Nickeson said. "I'd say that I just am in favor of Talarico because the alternative is so bad."

For other voters, the contest is more than a question of Paxton's personal integrity. It's about whether Paxton or any Republican will be inclined to act as a check on Trump.

"The lack of due process," said Frederick Neill from unincorporated Katy, "Immigration. Changing the names on things. I don't know where to start with Donald Trump."

Neill, a researcher at Baylor College of Medicine, said he voted for Talarico in the Democratic primary, but before that, he'd voted Republican in every election dating back to the 1970s.

"[Trump's] gathered so many Republican office holders into his sphere that it just seems like, as a Republican, I would like to just kind of restart, toss them all out, and let them go find another job, and we'll get some more actual true conservatives in," Neill said. "That's my goal."

That's far from the consensus among Republicans. Michael Ratke, a farmer and entrepreneur from Farwell in the Texas Panhandle, said he voted for Paxton over incumbent Sen. John Cornyn in the Republican primary precisely because he thinks Paxton is more likely to support Trump's agenda.

"It seemed to me that that ... if you say the Republicans have the Senate and the House and the White House, you should be able to pretty much have a road map for what your policies were," Ratke said. "Clinton did it in '92, Obama did it in '08. And now here we are, the second time around, where Trump wins by a significant amount, and then yet you've got Republicans that are not on board with what he's doing because — I don't know if they don't like him. He's brash, he's obnoxious, but he's very results-oriented."

"I know we need secure borders, but ... "

Ratke said his top concern is immigration and border security. He pointed to Dearborn, Michigan, a community where much of the population is made up of immigrants of Middle Eastern or North African descent, as an example of why he supports stricter controls.

"I'm not a hater. I love my neighbor. Jesus commanded us to love our neighbor, and I do, and I pray for those that ... don't know him, but on the other hand, as a country we have got to watch and see what's going on, Ratke said. "Things that are going on in Dearborn, Michigan, with just letting uncontrolled immigration happen there, it's not recognizable."

Rebecca Trahan of Katy said border security is also one of her top priorities and another reason she's supporting Paxton.

"I think we are a wonderful nation of immigrants who become citizens," Trahan said. "I don't want to necessarily lock them out, because I believe that we are the land of opportunity, but I do want some sort of a crackdown at the border. That's for sure."

Immigration is also a concern for Fabian Gonzalez, a process technician based in rural Fort Bend County, but for a very different reason. He said his family has lived in Texas since before it became a state, but he feels that Trump's anti-immigration rhetoric and policies have put a target squarely on the backs of Mexican Americans like him.

"I've seen a lot of my people start voting for Republicans, and I just do not understand that," Gonzalez said. "The Republican agenda basically preaches, I think, hatred toward Mexican Americans, and I think Trump's world has legitimized the ability to send that hatred toward, in my case, Mexican Americans and justify that."

Gonzalez said he's planning to vote Democratic. So is Carolyn Hopkins, a retired nurse from Missouri City.

"I know we need secure borders, but we also need to have respect for human life," Hopkins said, "And I think it's not right to arrest people who are in the process of getting their citizenship, especially like showing up at a courthouse where they're showing up to do what they're supposed to do and then get arrested."

For Rebecca Chirak, an educator in southwest Houston, overreach by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the prime concern. She said she's been reading a constant stream of posts on the Nextdoor social media site about ICE activity in her area.

"At this point, we essentially have poorly trained armed government thugs just profiling people and pretty much brutalizing them publicly,"

***Continued on Page 13***

## Friends of Karachi Holds Memorial Program Honoring Adnan Sherwani

*Continued from front page*

peace of his soul.

The memorial program was held at the banquet hall of Haidery Restaurant, with the support of restaurant owner Mr. Haider, whose cooperation helped facilitate the gathering in remembrance of the departed community member.

Sherwani passed away at Tabba Heart Institute in Karachi following a sudden heart attack, leaving family members, friends and members of the Houston community mourning his loss.

The memorial gathering provided an opportunity for community members to pay tribute to Sherwani, reflect on their association with him and extend condolences and support to his bereaved family during this difficult time.

The gathering reflected the bonds of friendship and community that continue to connect Pakistani Americans in Houston, even when distance separates them from their homeland.

Community members prayed that Allah Almighty grant Sherwani the highest place in Jannat al-Firdaus, forgive his sins and fill his grave with divine light. They also prayed for patience, strength and comfort for his family as they cope with the loss of their loved one.

The memorial served as a reminder of the lasting connections forged through friendship and community service, as those gathered came together to honor Sherwani's memory and pray for his eternal peace.

Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un — Indeed, to Allah we belong, and to Him we shall return.

## Houston Community Remembers Dr. Arif Riyaz at Isa al-e-Sawab Gathering

*Continued from front page*

with Anwar Riyaz Qadeer Diabetic Institute in Lahore, bringing family members, relatives and community members together in prayer and remembrance.

The gathering was held at Shahnai Reception Hall in Houston, where attendees offered prayers for the departed soul and remembered Dr. Riyaz's life and professional contributions to the field of diabetes education and care.

Dr. Riyaz was associated with Anwar Riyaz Qadeer Diabetic Institute in Lahore, where he served as a professor of diabetes. His passing was a loss for his family and those who knew him through his professional and personal connections.

According to the family's announcement, Dr. Riyaz was the brother of Anwar-I-Qadeer, Tariq Anwar Qadeer and Dr. Asaf Riyaz Qadeer; the son of Professor Riyaz-I-Qadeer; and the son-in-law of Maulana Abul A'la Maudoodi.

The gathering reflected the family's desire to honor his memory through prayers and supplications, seeking Allah Almighty's forgiveness and mercy for the departed.

The family and attendees prayed that Allah grant Dr. Riyaz the highest place in Jannat-ul-Firdous, illuminate his grave and provide patience and strength to his loved ones.

The gathering concluded with prayers for the departed soul and condolences for the bereaved family.

Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un — Indeed, to Allah we belong, and to Him we shall return.

## Affordability, immigration and a referendum on Trump: Listeners weigh in on the U.S. Senate race in Texas

*Continued from page 12*

Chirak said. "And it isn't normal. It should not be normalized."

**Christian nationalism as an issue**

Both Talarico and Paxton have made Talarico's religion a focal issue in their campaigning. Talarico, a former Presbyterian seminarian, has leaned heavily into his progressive vision of Christianity throughout his career in the state Legislature. He made his name in no small part as an opponent of legislation to require the display of an explicitly Protestant translation of the Ten Commandments in all public school classrooms — legislation that became law last year and is now the focus of multiple lawsuits for potentially violating the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

Talarico has argued that the sponsors of such legislation are Christian nationalists, far-right conservatives bent on writing their interpretation of Christianity into politics and law. For their part, Paxton and his supporters have accused Talarico of hating Christianity, a phrase Paxton's campaign went so far as to put in the mouth of an AI-generated image of Talarico in one of his commercials.

"I don't believe that there should be the Ten Commandments in the schools," Carolyn Hopkins said. "I don't believe that you can dictate people's behavior by having a set of rules on the on the wall. So, I think for people to think, well, if we just put these rules in place, then we can get society back to a moral compass — I don't think that's going to work."

That's also the view of Chad McElveen, a United Methodist pastor in the Westchase-Memorial City area, who said he's voting for Talarico.

"I just see him as being a better candidate going against Christian nationalism, while still being a Christian himself and not being against the church, but just making sure that it's not going too far to hinder people and hurting others," McElveen said.

## PM Shehbaz vows to restore peace, development in K-P after imposition of emergency

*Continued from front page*

on Thursday vowed to eliminate terrorism and restore peace and development in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), saying the government had been compelled to impose emergency and governor's rule in the province because of the deteriorating security situation.

Addressing a meeting of the apex committee on the National Action Plan at Governor House in Peshawar, the prime minister described K-P as a beautiful province inhabited by brave and resilient people.

He said the government had been forced to take difficult decisions and prayed for Allah's guidance in restoring peace and advancing development in the province. The prime minister expressed deep sorrow over the deaths of a teacher and children in the collapse of a school roof in Peshawar.

He said he had directed K-P Governor Faisal Karim Kundi to immediately visit the site and ensure a comprehensive investigation into the tragedy.

Turning to the security situation, PM Shehbaz said developments over the past six years had severely affected peace and law and order in the province. He recalled that Pakistan's armed forces and security institutions had made immense sacrifices to eliminate terrorism from K-P and other parts of the country.

According to the prime minister, complete peace had been restored in the province by 2018 through the sacrifices of security personnel, mothers, sisters and children. He said around 80,000 people had lost their lives in the fight against terrorism, while the country had suffered losses amounting to billions of dollars.

The prime minister also acknowledged the sacrifices made by several political families in K-P during the fight against terrorism, saying many families had been devastated.

However, he said that terrorists had been brought back during the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government's tenure, reversing the gains achieved through years of sacrifices. He said the people of K-P had suffered the consequences of those decisions.

PM Shehbaz maintained that thousands of security personnel had sacrificed their lives to secure the future of the nation's children and that failing to recognise and respect those sacrifices was unacceptable. He accused the previous PTI administration of neglecting education, healthcare, security and other public welfare sectors in the province.

The prime minister described the neglect as an example of criminal negligence and insensitivity, saying it had contributed to the resurgence of terrorism in recent years. He claimed that 5,000 vacant police posts had remained unfilled during the previous provincial government's tenure, while the Safe City project in K-P was still incomplete.

He also criticised the lack of attention to training and equipping the counter terrorism department (CTD) and police.

Referring to the 2010 National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, PM Shehbaz said all provinces had collectively agreed to support K-P in its fight against terrorism.

He said the chief ministers had recognised K-P as a frontline province in the fight against terrorism and agreed to allocate an additional one per cent from federal and provincial shares to support its counter-terrorism efforts.

According to the prime minister, K-P had received Rs800 billion under the NFC Award for counter-terrorism since 2010. He expressed regret that terrorism had resurfaced despite the allocation of substantial resources.

PM Shehbaz said that the provincial security forces had not been provided adequate training, modern weapons or other necessary equipment. He described the situation as deeply troubling and recalled that the federal government had repeatedly assured PTI chief ministers of its support in combating terrorism.

Turning to the national economy, the prime minister said the government had worked tirelessly over the past two-and-a-half years to restore economic stability. He credited the joint efforts of the political and military leadership for stabilising the economy, saying even those outside Pakistan acknowledged the country's economic recovery.

The prime minister questioned whether the federal government could continue watching K-P suffer from terrorism and bloodshed. He said a political committee had been formed and its members had worked for 48 hours to negotiate a solution.

PM Shehbaz disclosed that he had consulted President Asif Ali Zardari twice over the deteriorating situation in K-P before the government decided to take difficult measures.

He maintained that the decision to impose emergency and governor's rule was taken because of the prevailing circumstances. The prime minister said an advisory council had been established, comprising competent and honest individuals from various professional backgrounds.

He said the people of K-P had waited 13 years for their problems to be addressed and wanted basic facilities to be made available at their doorsteps. PM Shehbaz stressed that the change in the province must produce positive results and expressed confidence that security and overall conditions would improve with collective efforts.

He also accused PTI of failing to fulfil its anti-corruption promises, and said that the party had become involved in corruption despite seeking votes on a platform of accountability.

The prime minister referred to several corruption cases in K-P, including Rs100 billion in a clean drinking water project and Rs37 billion in the Kohistan mega scandal. He also said that contracts for the placer gold project had been awarded to favoured individuals.

Defending the federal government's decision, PM Shehbaz maintained that the Constitution and law provided the authority to take the measures implemented in K-P.

He thanked the government's coalition partners for supporting the decision and expressed particular gratitude to President Asif Ali Zardari and PML-N President Nawaz Sharif.

The prime minister described K-P as the land of Rahman Baba and Khushal Khan Khattak, recalling that the province had voted overwhelmingly to join Pakistan at the time of independence.

He said the province was currently facing terrorism, a lack of basic public facilities and widespread deprivation.

PM Shehbaz pledged that the federal government would work alongside the military leadership to address the problems faced by the people of K-P.

He vowed to restore an era of peace, prosperity and development in the province and fulfil the aspirations of its people.

According to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the meeting was attended by the Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, K-P Governor Kundi, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi.

Other participants included Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam, Economic Affairs Minister Ahad Khan Cheema, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, Power Minister Sardar Awais Leghari and Adviser to the Prime Minister Rana Sanaullah.

Senior military leadership and high-ranking officials from relevant institutions also attended the meeting, according to the PMO.

The visit marked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's first trip to Peshawar in more than a year. His last visit to the city was on June 3, 2025, when he and other federal ministers addressed a grand jirga attended by prominent tribal elders from across the province.

The first provincial apex committee meeting following the imposition of governor's rule was held at Governor House on October 12, co-chaired by Governor Kundi and Interior Minister Naqvi.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said the federal government had made repeated attempts to obtain the provincial government's cooperation before resorting to the constitutional measures. Prime Minister Shehbaz also said the government had been left with no alternative after negotiations failed to produce an agreement.

The meeting reviewed the security situation and counter-terrorism measures, with participants agreeing to strengthen the police and counter-terrorism department through additional equipment, vehicles, weapons, and manpower.

The forum also called for coordinated action by relevant institutions to restore peace and improve law and order.

Governor's rule imposed in K-P

On October 11, President Asif Ali Zardari approved Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's advice to impose an emergency and governor's rule in the province under Articles 232 and 234 of the Constitution, citing a deterioration in the security situation, an increase in terrorist attacks, and what it described as the provincial administration's failure to cooperate effectively in counter-terrorism efforts.

Under the new arrangement, executive powers were transferred to Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, assisted by an advisory council, while emergency measures were imposed in 12 districts. The PTI rejected the federal government's position and opposed the move.

The decision followed weeks of tensions between the Centre and the PTI-led provincial administration, alongside negotiations aimed at securing agreement on a joint strategy against terrorism.

The measures resulted in the removal of Chief Minister Sohail Afridi and his cabinet from office, with executive authority transferred to the governor.

The decision followed weeks of escalating confrontation over counter-terrorism policy, the PTI's planned long march to Islamabad and the province's deteriorating security situation. The federal government had repeatedly warned that governor's rule or an emergency could be imposed, accusing the provincial administration of failing to cooperate adequately with the Centre on counter-terrorism. The PTI rejected the allegations, arguing that K-P was itself bearing the brunt of terrorism and accusing the federal government of using security concerns to undermine its elected government.

On September 21, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said the government was consulting the Law Ministry on legal options, including governor's rule, if the PTI proceeded with its march.

The provincial government rejected the allegations. Afridi warned that any attempt to remove the elected provincial government would prompt a strong public response.



# Active Recovery May Be Better Than Doing Nothing on Your Rest Day–Here's What Physical Therapists Recommend

Exercise is what breaks your body down (in a good way), while recovery is what builds it back up. Yet for most people, recovery often takes a back seat in their fitness routine. Research suggests that inadequate recovery can increase the risk of overuse injuries, with studies estimating that overtraining-related injuries account for a substantial proportion of sports-related injuries.1

"Exercise and rehabilitation both create stress on the body, and that stress is necessary for improvement," says physical therapist Alex McRobbie, PT, D.P.T., OCS. "Recovery is when the body has the opportunity to adapt to that stress. Without adequate recovery, we can increase the risk of an overload injury and impair performance gains."

But that doesn't mean you have to be completely sedentary on rest days. In fact, there may be benefits with light active recovery. So, we asked physical therapists for their top recommendation, and they all said the same thing: low-intensity walking as a form of active recovery. Here's what you need to know.

**Why Physical Therapists Recommend Walking for Recovery**

**It Promotes Blood Flow**

Physical therapists favor walking as a recovery tool because it keeps your body moving without creating the same physiological demand as more intense forms of exercise. "Light movement promotes blood flow, which helps deliver oxygen and nutrients throughout the body while supporting the processes involved in recovery," says Paul Schroeder, PT, M.P.T.

Research shows that active recovery, such as walking, can accelerate the removal of blood lactate following strenuous exercise compared with complete rest. It may also help reduce the perception of muscle soreness and stiffness after intense training.2

**It May Support Performance Recovery**

Beyond reducing muscle soreness, active recovery may also help restore performance more quickly than doing nothing. "Research suggests that active recovery may be useful for helping to restore explosive performance," says Joseph Hribick, PT, D.P.T., D.Sc., COMT, FAAOMPT.3 This may help you return to physical activity sooner while maintaining performance.

**It's Accessible and Easy to Scale**

Walking has almost no barriers to entry and is suitable for most fitness levels. "Walking is an essential recovery practice because of its accessibility, as it does not require equipment and can easily be adjusted based on someone's age, fitness level or stage of recovery," says Schroeder.

**It Proves That "Rest" Doesn't Have to Mean Being Sedentary**

A common misconception about recovery is that it requires complete rest, but physical therapists push back on this idea. "Walking as a form of active recovery is great because it reinforces the idea that soreness doesn't necessarily mean someone needs to remain completely sedentary," says Hribick. Light movement on rest days can help you stay active without adding significant physical stress.5

"Movement is medicine, and recovery doesn't always mean being completely still. Gentle activity can be an effective way to keep the body moving without adding excess stress," says Schroeder.

**How to Do It**

For most people, 10 to 30 minutes of low-intensity walking at a comfortable pace following a challenging workout or on a recovery day is an excellent starting point. Aim for three to five days per week. Both McRobbie and Hribick recommend using the "talk test" to gauge effort, where you should be able to carry on a conversation comfortably during the walk.

"If your recovery session starts feeling like another workout, you are going too hard and are defeating its purpose," says Hribick.

If you're recovering from an injury or surgery or have a preexisting health condition, speak with your health care provider or a physical therapist before starting a new walking routine.

**Other Tips to Support Recovery**

While walking is a useful form of active recovery, physical therapists also recommend the following strategies:

Prioritize Sleep. Sleep is a nonnegotiable for recovery, as it's when your body repairs tissue, restores energy and consolidates the adaptations made during training.

Fuel and Hydrate Well. Eating a balanced diet and staying hydrated gives your body the nutrients and fluids it needs to recover between sessions.8

Schedule Recovery into Your Training Plan. Consider alternating your more intense training sessions with lighter rest or active recovery days to give your body time to adapt rather than continually accumulating fatigue.9

Incorporate Mobility Work. Doing some light stretching, yoga or Pilates on recovery days can help maintain range of motion without placing additional stress on your sore and recovering muscles and joints.

Listen to Your Body. If you experience lingering soreness or fatigue for days after a workout, reduce your activity level and consider skipping the walk rather than pushing through discomfort.

**Our Expert Take**

Walking is an accessible form of active recovery that physical therapists recommend to help promote blood flow, reduce muscle soreness and support recovery between training sessions. Combine walking with quality sleep, balanced nutrition and a training plan that incorporates rest and lighter days, and

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## DATES TO KNOW

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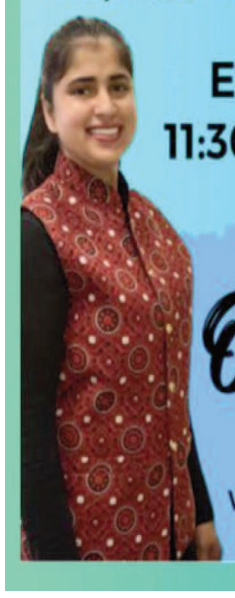
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AMERICAN CHRONICLE
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COMMUNITY




# Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and Son Shahzaman Ali Khan Celebrate Father-Son Musical Legacy in Houston

***Rehan Siddiqui Presents 'Once Upon a Time' Tour, Bringing Generations Together Through Sufi Music and Qawwali***



HOUSTON, Texas: Legendary Pakistani vocalist Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and his son, Shahzaman Ali Khan, brought a special father-son musical partnership to Houston as they appeared together at the "Once Upon

*Continued on page 28*

# Houston Mehfil Recreates Pakistan's Spiritual Ambiance at Annual Milad-un-Nabi and Gyarhvi Sharif



HOUSTON, Texas: The spiritual warmth, devotion and cherished traditions of Pakistan came alive in Houston as Sardar Omer Ashrafi hosted the annual Milad-un-Nabi and Gyarhvi Sharif gathering at his residence on Saturday, October 17, 2026, bringing community members together for an evening of religious reflection, reverence and fellowship.

Set in a beautifully arranged outdoor setting reminiscent of traditional religious gatherings in Pakistan, the mehfil created an atmosphere of spirituality and nostalgia, allowing attendees to reconnect with the religious customs and cultural traditions of their homeland.

The program began with the recitation of the

*Continued on page 28*

# Houston's South Asian Media Community Mourns the Loss of Shazia Gaddi, Co-Owner of Sangeet Radio

HOUSTON, TX — The South Asian media landscape in Houston is grieving the loss of Shazia Gaddi, co-owner of Sangeet Radio alongside her husband, Saeed Gaddi. As a driving force behind one of Houston's oldest and most established South Asian broadcasting networks, she leaves behind a profound legacy of community connection and cultural preservation.

Her funeral prayer (Janazah) was held on Saturday, October 19th, at 1:30 PM following the Dhuhr prayer at Masjid As Sabireen, located at 610 Brand Ln, Stafford, TX 77477. According to the official community announcement, Shazia Gaddi was the beloved wife of Saeed

*Continued on page 28*

# Sugar Land City Council approves $15M revitalization efforts for historical Imperial Sugar Char House landmark

The Sugar Land City Council approved a $15 million infusion of future sales tax revenue on Tuesday to fund revitalization efforts for one of the city's historic landmarks, the Imperial Sugar Char House.

"This has been a desire for this community for 20 years to preserve this structure and eventually

*Continued on page 28*

# M. Khalid Javed, Mecca Masjid Beechnut Custodian, Passes Away; Remembered for Community Service



HOUSTON, Texas: M. Khalid Javed, custodian of Mecca Masjid Beechnut in Houston, has passed away. He is remembered for his dedication to the mosque and his efforts to help establish a cemetery for the Muslim community in Needville, Texas.

Javed played an important role in helping Mecca Masjid Beechnut secure its own cemetery, providing the Muslim community with a dedicated burial ground and a

*Continued on page 28*

# Provisional ballots in Texas: What voters should know if they're not on a poll's registration list

***If a voter's eligibility is uncertain, they can still cast what's called a provisional ballot. Here's how they qualify — and how officials ultimately decide whether they're counted.Complete sentence summary goes here.***

This coverage is made possible through Votebeat, a nonpartisan news organization covering local election administration and voting access. Sign up for Votebeat Texas' free newsletters here.

Early voting is now underway in Texas for the Nov. 3 midterm elections. Texans had until Oct. 5 to register to vote. But two recently discovered backlogs of voter registration records caused by state errors have flooded the offices of election officials who process that paperwork.

If a registration is not processed by the time a voter shows up to cast a ballot, their name may not appear in the list of registered voters at the polling place. But those voters can still vote by casting a provisional

*Continued on page 29*

# Harris County DA says witness to ICE auto-pedestrian incident has been relocated by ICE

Harris County District Attorney Sean Teare said his office has interviewed the man who was detained in the backseat of an unmarked U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) vehicle when an agent struck Miguel Parra Hernandez in northwest Houston on Saturday.

"We were the only law enforcement that ever spoke to him." Teare said.

In an appearance on Hello Houston, Teare said ICE had already moved the witness more than 300 miles south to the Port Isabel detention center when his office requested an interview with the detainee.

*Continued on page 28*






# The Habit You Should Start for Better Liver Health, Recommended By Experts

## The best part is it's free and easy to add to your everyday routine.

Liver health may not be as trendy as gut health, but it should be. Chronic liver disease, including cirrhosis, is the ninth leading cause of death of American adults.1 And it's becoming increasingly common. By 2040, more than 40% of us are expected to develop metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD), formerly called nonalcoholic fatty liver disease.

Fortunately, there are proactive steps you can take to protect your liver. And one of them is surprisingly easy for most people. Simply "get up!" says Julia Wattacheril, M.D., M.P.H., director of the of the Metabolic Dysfunction Steatotic Liver Disease Program at Columbia University's Center for Liver Disease and Transplantation. Because when you sit less, you stand more, which is key for long-term liver health.

Plus, it doesn't require a major lifestyle overhaul. "Focusing on small changes that can be sustained over a long period of time is key," says Wattacheril. "Simply 'getting up' is simple to remember and is something most people can do right now."

Before we dive into why this act is so effective, you may be wondering what makes liver health so important to begin with. The answer is lots of reasons. Your liver is your body's primary detoxification system, helping to filter blood and remove toxins from the body. It also plays an important role in metabolizing nutrients and drugs, digestion, storing fat-soluble vitamins and supporting immune and thyroid health.

Read on to find out why getting up is an easy way to sit less, stand more and give your liver the love it deserves.

**How Standing More Can Support Liver Health**

**Empowers Positive Lifestyle Choices**

Simply standing up can lead to a cascade of healthy habits that may help you make positive behavior changes that stick. "Choosing to stand expands capacity for additional positive health changes that open up longer-term benefits. For example, exercise and intentional movement is associated with other proactive health choices, [such as] better nutritional intake, alcohol avoidance, engaging mental health support, practicing good sleep hygiene and socialization," says Wattacheril.

**Builds Muscle**

Standing may not seem like a workout, but it helps build and maintain muscle. And having sufficient muscle is particularly important for people with liver disease, like cirrhosis, who frequently experience frailty or weakness due to muscle loss.

Nguyen VV, Wang S, Whitlock R, et al. A chair-stand time of greater than 15 seconds is associated with an increased risk of death and hospitalization in cirrhosis. Canadian Liver Journal.

For instance, one study found that people with cirrhosis who needed more than 15 seconds to complete a chair stand test (which requires being able to go from sitting to standing) had an increased risk of mortality.

**Keeps You Active**

Even small amounts of physical activity can have health benefits. Research has found this may be especially true for improving liver function and preventing MASLD.5,6 Making a conscious effort to get up and out of your chair may not seem like much. But it can help you stay active by sending subtle signals to your brain that it's time to get up and start moving. How so? "Just standing gets boring so you're going to start moving," says Wattacheril. "It's an intentional, embodied quick win to enhance motivation and accountability."

**Helps Balance Blood Sugar**

Taking a break from sitting and standing more often may help your liver via another pathway: better blood sugar control. "Fatty liver disease is believed to reflect insulin resistance," explains Arvind Reddy, M.D., M.P.H., a specialist in gastroenterology and hepatology. "Staying healthy, following a balanced diet and exercising regularly are all important factors in lowering insulin resistance." In addition to helping protect against fatty liver, these healthy habits also prevent other disorders associated with insulin resistance, such as diabetes, hypertension and atherosclerosis, he adds.

In fact, one systematic review and meta-analysis found that people who stood an extra 1.3 hours per day experienced a small, yet statistically significant decrease in fasting blood glucose and body fat compared to people who spent that time sitting.7 While standing isn't a replacement for physical activity, it's an easy way to support your liver and blood sugar when you're stuck behind a desk or sitting for hours on end.

**Regulates Metabolism**

"The liver is the seat of metabolism, constantly in biological conversation with both muscle and fat," says Wattacheril. This powerhouse helps metabolize protein, fat and carbohydrates.8 "Instead of viewing the liver only as an organ that filters toxins or receives infections, it's helpful to think about how positive habits—like standing instead of sitting—can actively support liver health," she says.

**Other Strategies to Support Liver Health**

Keeping your liver in top shape is all about balance, says Charlotte Martin, M.S., RDN. "Focusing on both limiting less-healthy habits and adding in positive ones makes liver health feel less restrictive and more like an overall lifestyle upgrade," she says. "These changes don't just protect the liver, they support heart health, digestion and energy levels, too."

**To help your liver function at its best, try these expert-backed tips:**

Limit alcohol. The liver is your body's main filter for metabolizing alcohol. "Regular drinking, even at what some people think of as "moderate" levels, can increase fat buildup in the liver, [lead to] fatty liver disease and drive inflammation that sets the stage for more serious conditions like hepatitis or cirrhosis," says Martin. "By cutting back, or better yet, avoiding alcohol, you're giving your liver a break from one of its biggest stressors."

Maintain a healthy weight: Overweight and obesity are leading risk factors for MASLD, and the more you weigh, the greater your odds. While fad diets may seem like the answer, rapid weight loss can also increase the risk of this disease.9 If you could use help losing weight, speak with your health care provider, who can refer you to a registered dietitian to develop healthy weight-loss strategies.

Stay physically active: Standing up and sitting less is a great start toward liver health. But don't stop there. Engaging in physical activity helps regulate blood sugar and cholesterol, both of which play a key role in liver health. Shoot for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week, plus two strength-training sessions.

Be mindful of medications and supplements: The liver processes nearly everything you consume, including over-the-counter pain relievers and herbal supplements. Taking more than directed, or combining these with alcohol, can be harmful, notes Martin.

Get screened and vaccinated. Hepatitis A, B and C can all increase your chances of developing liver disease.11 Reddy recommends staying up to date on hepatitis C screenings and hepatitis A and B vaccines.

**Our Expert Take**

Your liver plays a critical role in nutrient and drug metabolism, digestion and total body health. So, make it a top priority. One easy, expert-backed habit for better liver health is getting up and out of your chair. This simple action can help you sit less and stand more. In return, you'll protect your liver health by building muscle, staying more active, balancing blood sugar and regulating metabolism. You'll also be empowered to make positive lifestyle choices.

Of course, the act of getting up is more challenging for some people than it is for others, says Wattacheril. However, it can be modified for various needs, she says. If you could use some strategies to make getting up and standing easier, speak with your health care provider. Even the smallest changes can have big benefits.

# ESSAY: THE SURNAME DOES NOT FIT

***What happens when a family retains its ancestry but loses the language associated with it? For an Urdu-speaking Pakhtun family in Pakistan, the answer has meant generations explaining a surname that no longer fits neatly into the country's ethnic categories***

**Fareha Iqtidar Khan**



Growing up in Pakistan, introducing myself always required a disclaimer.

Because my surname is Khan, people instantly assume I speak Pashto and either hail from the north or belong to a specific tribal culture. Instead, I grew up in an Urdu-speaking household, shaped by the cultural traditions of Uttar Pradesh (UP) in undivided India. For my entire life, I have found myself having to justify my own surname.

In Islamabad, a bureaucratic city where almost everyone hails from somewhere else, two questions governed my 1990s school playground experience: "Tum loag kaun ho?" [Who are you people?] and "Tumhara gao'n kaun sa hai?" [Which village do you hail from?].

My classmates mapped their lives to specific ancestral villages across Punjab, Sindh or Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. When they looked at me, a kid with the surname Khan who spoke meticulous and formal Urdu, the equation did not add up.

To the first question, I usually replied, "Urdu-speaking". To the second, I offered a familiar routine: I pointed to Haripur, where my mother was born and which my father still considers his hometown, to account for my surname. Or I cited Karachi, where both my parents' families later settled, to explain the way I spoke Urdu.

When I finally offered the truth, UP, it satisfied no one. For native Pakhtuns, a Khan without Pashto was an imposter. For Muhajirs — Urdu-speaking migrants and their descendants — my surname belonged to an entirely different ethnic universe.

I was trapped in a cultural blind spot: too much of a Khan for the south, too much of a Hindustani for the north. I was an Urdu-speaking 'Pathan' — an identity that made complete sense in the history of north India, but registers as a contradiction in modern Pakistan.

**FROM the highlands TO AWADH**

This contradiction has a very specific history. During the Awadh era (1722–1856), our ancestors brought their Pakhtun lineage from the Afghan highlands into Madhya Pradesh and, later, Uttar Pradesh. The migration was circular; when geopolitical storms made the north Indian plains unliveable, they retreated to the Afghan highlands, returning to the UP estates when the dust had settled.

There, the family became landed gentry, eventually managing a consolidated estate of 60 villages centred around Dudhara. Over generations in the plains, Pashto gradually gave way to Urdu, its nuances and ashrafia [ruling elite] etiquette, while the family retained "Khan" as an heirloom of ancestry.

But they carried it with a strict regional distinction. Locals pronounced it as a soft, nasalised Khaa(ñ), a title reserved by the society of eastern UP for noble, landed families. In the fluid history of the plains, it was a vocal marker of class that blurred the lines between the migrated Afghan gentry and the established elite who shared their status.

The true depth of our lineage was rarely a formal topic at the dinner table. It just slipped out in casual conversations. I still remember sitting in the corner of my paternal grandfather's bedroom while my maternal aunt asked him about where we truly came from, making sure my siblings and I heard the story.

With the quiet indifference of an elder who understood the Subcontinent's deep, fluid memory, he traced our line back to an ancestor named Laali Khan. It was a rustic Pakhtun name, matching the Pashto word for an affectionate brother or a precious gem. When speaking of our heritage, he bypassed the colloquial north Indian 'Pathan' altogether, referring to us simply as Afghan. It was perhaps a subtle adherence to classic ashrafia conventions, using the historic Persian ethnonym to emphasise a lineage rooted in the highlands.

It was a history far too layered and ancient to explain to acquaintances who demanded instant and one-word labels. When implored about my surname, I lacked the vocabulary for such vastness. So I gave protective, flattened answers, letting them believe I was just a walking contradiction of "Urdu-speaking Khan" or allowing them to dismiss me as a feudal relic.

It was easier to let them assume a convenient falsehood than to unpack a centuries-long migration that my own family was still slowly revealing to me.

**THE COST OF KEEPING THE NAME**

When Partition divided the Subcontinent in 1947, generational landholdings and local prominence shielded my family from the worst of the violence. Their property and position allowed them to delay their departure, migrating to Pakistan as Muhajirs only in 1951.

My paternal grandfather, an Aligarh-trained engineer, spent decades leading Pakistan's Telephone and Telegraph Department, rising through postings in Haripur, Karachi, Peshawar and Islamabad. Yet, despite building the nation's physical infrastructure, our place in its social landscape remained unmapped.

Today, a significant number of families among Sindh's Urdu-speaking population share some version of this history, tracing paternal roots back to Pakhtun settlements in north India. Yet, in modern Pakistan, where state categories demand rigid ethnic lines, carrying a name that requires a history lesson at every introduction becomes exhausting.

The pressure eventually took its toll. Over the years, several of my paternal cousins in Karachi and along the northern borders quietly removed "Khan" from their legal documents. In Karachi, amidst historic political friction between Muhajir and Pakhtun communities, being an Urdu-speaking Khan meant constantly navigating mutual suspicions.

In areas bordering KP, opening your mouth to speak Urdu instead of Pashto meant failing a daily test of authenticity. For them, dropping the name was not an act of historical denial. It was a practical choice to make life easier.

For those of us in Islamabad, keeping the name was less perilous, but no less awkward. On Eid holidays and during summer vacations, my cousins and I would trade stories of the side-eyes we drew: resentment from native Pakhtuns who assumed we were British-era title-holders and scepticism from Muhajirs who viewed the name as foreign.

Today, as urban politics and state polarisation increasingly flatten regional nuance into rigid caricatures, the space for intermediate identities is shrinking faster than ever. Modern statecraft increasingly demands that you fit a precise cultural template. You are either a Pashto-speaking highlander or an Urdu-speaking Muhajir. Yet for those of us who kept the surname, retaining 'Khan' was never an act of identity crisis or historical denial. It was a silent refusal to disown a complex heritage for bureaucratic ease.

**WHAT REMAINS**

As the last generation with memory of pre-Partition Awadh gradually passes away, these oral histories risk slipping into total erasure. Living in the grey space between these categories has shifted from a personal quirk into a daily negotiation, a resolve to hold on to an ancestry that modern boundaries insist on levelling.

What remains when an identity loses its language but keeps its name? You inherit the ashrafia tehzeeb [elite etiquette] and Lakhnavi Nishist-o-Barkhaast [Lucknow's social demeanour] of North Indian court culture alongside a quiet determination passed down from the mountains.

To be an Urdu-speaking 'Pathan' is to be tied to the refinement of UP and the enduring resolve of the highlands. It is to live in the space between national categories, a witness to a fluid and migratory South Asia that existed long before modern borders insisted on neat, singular boxes.

The writer is an Islamabad-based geopolitical researcher and editor.

# The return of offline fun

*From board-game nights to reading circles, people are finding new ways to unwind, make friends and enjoy time*

**What began as a Facebook group now holds reading sessions in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Gujranwala, Faisalabad and Hyderabad. The physical gatherings are deliberately small, usually bringing together 10 to 15 people**

**Siddiqui has noticed a difference in his habits too. Before he started attending board-game events, he would often spend his spare time playing mobile games or scrolling through Instagram. It kept him occupied, but he didn't always feel relaxed afterwards**

By Nabil Tahir |

For Zainul Hassan Siddiqui, making friends in a new city turned out to be harder than expected. He had lived in Quetta, Lahore and even the United States before moving to Karachi in 2022. Naturally sociable, he was used to being around people, but building a social circle in a city where work occupied much of his time was another matter.

A corporate lawyer pursuing an executive MBA over the weekends, Siddiqui had little trouble keeping himself busy. What he missed was having people to spend time with outside work, without needing a particular occasion to meet.

Earlier this year, he began looking for activities that would help him meet people. Alongside padel, he discovered organised board-game nights, including one hosted by a community-driven board game group which hosts events in Karachi. He went along hoping to socialise. What followed was more than an occasional evening of entertainment.

Some of the strangers he met at those gatherings are now close friends. They meet outside organised events, visit one another's homes and spend four or five hours playing strategy games, often accompanied by friendly taunts and arguments over moves.

Siddiqui now attends board-game gatherings at least twice a week, despite his demanding schedule.

His experience is part of a wider picture of people finding ways to spend their leisure time together, whether around a board game, a book or a conversation that doesn't begin and end on a screen.

For some, these gatherings offer an opportunity to make friends. For others, they provide a few hours away from work, family responsibilities or the familiar habit of scrolling through social media. And sometimes, as Siddiqui discovered, a game is simply an excuse to find people worth meeting again.

**Bringing strangers together**

Taha Jawed had been playing board games for six or seven years, but finding others who shared his interest wasn't always easy. Most people he came across knew Ludo, Monopoly or Sequence. There was a whole range of games beyond those familiar titles, but not enough people to play them with.

Six months ago, he and his wife, Yusra, decided to do something about it. They started Boardgame Baithak, a community built around bringing people together to play.

Recalling how difficult it had been to find people familiar with different board games, Jawed says, “We set out to change that through action.”

Their first gathering attracted five people. Today, Jawed says, the community has more than 200 members, although a typical game night brings together around 15 to 20 players.

The format is straightforward. People turn up, the organisers explain the rules in about five minutes, and the games begin. Flip 7, Feed the Kraken and Mafia are among the favourites. Some involve as many as 12 players, and there is no limit on how many games someone can try during the evening.

Jawed estimates that 90 per cent of participants are newcomers. Many attend alone initially and bring their spouses or friends the next time.

“Digital entertainment is overrated in my honest opinion,” he says. “There's nothing like forming connections and engaging with people in real time.”

He has watched people who first met at these events go out for dinners, arrange padel games and even form business connections. Once, a participant brought along their own collection of games and told the organisers, “Let me host you now.”

Another participant, Sidrah Ramzan, a 31-year-old copywriter, who also has a three-year-old child, says free time is difficult to come by. When she does get some, she often ends up scrolling through social media.

She and her husband were initially cautious about meeting strangers, but found the organisers welcoming. They now attend roughly every other week.

“My favourite part is the friendly banter that goes on,” she says.

Sidrah has made friends there, although she doesn't attach too much significance to it.

“I have made a ton of friends through these events and it's fun to learn about new people. Wouldn't say meaningful connection because it's more for unwinding and not deep conversations.”

For Sidrah, that is reason enough to keep going.

Reading and conversations

Not everyone looking for company wants to spend an evening competing over a board game. For some, sitting around a table discussing a book is enough.

Saniya Imtiaz started Pakistan Book Readers Club in 2016, at a time when she felt conversations around books and literature were becoming less common. She remembers an earlier culture of people gathering to discuss ideas, writers and what they had been reading. She wanted to create a space for those conversations again.

What began as a Facebook group now holds reading sessions in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Gujranwala, Faisalabad and Hyderabad. The physical gatherings are deliberately small, usually bringing together 10 to 15 people.

Imtiaz says larger gatherings can make it difficult for everyone to contribute. With fewer people, discussions are easier to manage and participants have more opportunities to share their views.

The conversations are not always limited to a particular book. Sometimes there is a theme, while other sessions bring authors and readers together.

“If we are discussing one book, then everyone's interpretation will be different,” Imtiaz explains. A reader might notice something another has missed, or understand a character or idea differently. For her, that exchange is what makes reading together worthwhile.

Over the years, she has seen these meetings develop into something beyond literary discussions. Members exchange books, recommend unfamiliar authors and sometimes send books to readers who cannot afford to buy them.

In smaller towns, where finding books can be difficult, members have also helped get books to one another through people travelling between cities.

One gathering that stayed with Imtiaz was with women writers and aspiring authors in Karachi. Some participants spoke about the difficulty of expressing themselves openly. Hearing published authors discuss their experiences encouraged others to consider writing themselves, even if only a short poem.

But not every reader is looking for a club.

Saadia Khan, a marketing executive who reads almost daily, prefers the experience of reading alone.

“I'd rather read alone, because I cannot stand slow readers (no offense),” she says.

She does, however, enjoy discussing books afterwards, particularly when someone else's interpretation challenges her own.

Saadia has considered joining a reading club but struggles to find the time to commit regularly. For now, conversations with fellow readers are enough to introduce her to books she might otherwise never discover.

**Is it really about escaping screens?**

Sidrah was scrolling through Instagram when she came across a post about board game gatherings and thought it might be something she and her husband would enjoy. They went, met a few people and have been returning ever since.

The irony isn't lost on her. An activity she discovered through social media has become one of the few occasions when she barely looks at her phone.

“We barely use our mobile phones, maybe just to take a picture or two. Other than that, it is all about socialising and playing games,” she says.

Siddiqui has noticed a difference in his habits too. Before he started attending board-game events, he would often spend his spare time playing mobile games or scrolling through Instagram. It kept him occupied, but he didn't always feel relaxed afterwards.

He explains that watching reels can distract someone for half an hour without doing much about the stress they were trying to escape. At a game night, there is something to react to, someone to argue with over a move, or a joke being made at another player's expense. His overall phone use, he says, has reduced considerably since he began making time for these activities.

For Saadia, an avid reader since childhood, putting the phone aside comes more naturally. She doesn't need a gathering or a scheduled activity to do it.

“Sure, scrolling through reels can be fun. But nothing beats getting lost in a book for hours. The storytelling, world-building, and character arcs are really immersive. It's like watching a movie only I can see.”

Saadia says reading hasn't completely changed her screen time. She still uses social media, but often finds herself choosing a book instead.

Saniya, meanwhile, has encountered readers who specifically want printed books because they already spend much of their day looking at screens. But she also knows people who rely on PDFs because buying physical books isn't always affordable.

Pakistan Book Readers Club itself uses WhatsApp and Google Meet to keep discussions going, particularly for members who cannot attend in person because of travel expenses or responsibilities at home.

For them, being online isn't necessarily a habit they are trying to break. It is how they remain part of a reading community.

The effort behind offline fun

Finding an activity you enjoy is one thing. Making room for it in an already crowded week is another.

For Siddiqui, time is the biggest challenge. His work as a corporate lawyer sometimes involves long hours and even all-nighters. Add weekend classes to the mix, and there are weeks when attending a game night means sacrificing a little sleep.

Yet missing a gathering brings its own frustration. Siddiqui says seeing photographs and messages in group chats after an event he couldn't attend leaves him with a genuine fear of missing out. The people he met through these activities have become such a regular part of his life that he doesn't particularly enjoy being absent.

Organisers have their own difficulties. Jawed says maintaining a consistent booking system has been the main challenge for him and his wife. Getting people interested is no longer the problem it was when he started.

For Saniya, who has spent a decade running her book club, the obstacles are considerably broader. Finding affordable venues remains difficult, particularly when the intention is to keep participation free.

She has approached organisations for collaborations, hoping some might offer space for meetings. Removing the venue expense, she explains, makes it easier to arrange gatherings without passing the cost on to readers.

There is also the question of access to books themselves. Imtiaz points to the ease with which people can find places to eat or shop, even in smaller towns, compared with the effort sometimes required to find a bookshop.

She believes reading communities still need greater support, both from institutions and private organisations.

Yet running the club has also brought an unexpected source of help. Imtiaz says homemakers in their forties, fifties and sixties, along with retired people, have volunteered their time to organise activities and support the community.

For some, it has become an opportunity to contribute after years spent managing households or completing their working lives.

Saadia understands the difficulty of committing to a regular gathering. Although she likes the idea of joining a reading club, finding time for it has kept her from taking that step.

It is a reminder that an interest in something does not always translate into attendance. Between work, family, travel and other commitments, even a few hours of leisure can require planning.

**More than a way to pass time**

There is one thing Saniya has noticed over the years. People who cannot attend every reading session still try to remain involved. Some return after missing several meetings, while others keep up with the discussions whenever they can. For her, that continued interest matters as much as the number of people in the room.

Jawed has seen something similar. People who initially came to learn a board game eventually become familiar faces, comfortable enough to bring their own games and introduce others to something new.

For Siddiqui, what began as an attempt to find something to do outside work has become a regular part of his week. There are still deadlines, classes and family commitments to manage. But there are also people he looks forward to seeing.

The games may change from one evening to another. Some take only a few minutes to learn; others can occupy an entire afternoon. What Siddiqui has gained, though, is a group of people he can call when he wants to play.

And that is something he didn't have when he first moved to the city.

# Vows under trial

## As Christian family law reform gains ground, colonial-era statutes leave minority women trapped in broken marriages

By Asif Mehmood

For years, Asiya Bibi has lived separately from her husband in the quiet residential pockets of Lahore, bound to a marriage that exists only on paper. She no longer wishes to remain in the union, yet obtaining a legal divorce remains an uphill, almost insurmountable battle. Under current statutory requirements, she must present and prove specific, highly restrictive grounds in court—a process that is not only emotionally exhausting but often legally impossible to establish after years of complete estrangement.

"We have been living completely separate lives for a very long time," Asiya says, reflecting on the prolonged legal limbo that has defined her recent years. In every practical sense, the marriage ended long ago. "But the law demands that I go to court and publicly prove specific faults or accusations. Why should a woman be forced into lengthy, degrading court battles when both parties know the relationship is irretrievably broken?" Asiya asks.

Asiya calls for a legal framework that grants women the right to dissolve a marriage with dignity, particularly when separation has persisted for years and any prospect of reconciliation has vanished. Her experience highlights the painful disconnect between administrative legal procedures and the lived realities of individuals trapped in unworkable marriages. Asiya's dilemma reflects a broader structural crisis across Pakistan, where millions of Christian citizens remain governed by colonial-era family laws that have failed to evolve alongside contemporary society.

**A colonial legacy**

Marriage, divorce, and inheritance form the bedrock of personal status and family life, yet the legal framework governing these matters for Pakistan's Christian community dates back to the peak of the British colonial era. The primary statutes—the Christian Marriage Act of 1872, the Divorce Act of 1869, and the Succession Act of 1925—were enacted more than a century ago under the British Raj.

Over the decades, family structures, gender roles, economic dynamics, and social expectations across Pakistan have undergone radical transformations. Yet, these foundational legal statutes remain frozen in time, leaving lawmakers, judges, legal practitioners, and community members continually grappling with provisions that no longer reflect modern social conditions or basic constitutional rights.

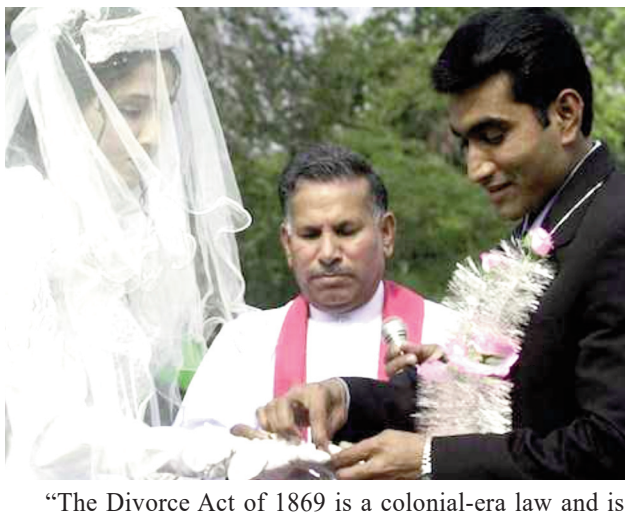
While superior courts have occasionally reinterpreted archaic clauses to address pressing grievances, legal experts emphasise that piecemeal judicial interpretation cannot substitute for a comprehensive, legislative overhaul. Relying on courts to bend outdated statutes to fit modern needs creates inconsistency across different jurisdictions, leaving litigating families in state-wide legal uncertainty.

Advocates for reform argue that a modernised family law framework must establish clear, straightforward procedures, safeguard human dignity, and provide effective, accessible remedies when marital or inheritance disputes arise. Crucially, reformers contend that the law should explicitly recognise situations where a marriage has irretrievably broken down, rather than forcing estranged spouses to remain legally bound to a union that has ceased to exist in practice.

**The battle over divorce reform**

Divorce remains the single most formidable legal hurdle for Christian women in Pakistan. Under Section 10 of the Divorce Act of 1869, dissolving a Christian marriage requires fulfilling rigid, narrowly defined grounds. Historically, this meant that grounds for divorce were exceptionally restrictive, leaving women trapped in hostile or abusive households even after years of physical separation, severe domestic conflict, or complete emotional abandonment.

Peter Jacob, executive director of the Centre for Social Justice, points out that the 1869 statute is fundamentally incompatible with contemporary international human rights standards and constitutional guarantees of equal protection. According to Jacob, legal protections for Christian women will remain critically incomplete unless Section 10 is comprehensively amended to incorporate explicit grounds such as mental and physical cruelty, failure to provide financial maintenance, and the irretrievable breakdown of marriage.



"The Divorce Act of 1869 is a colonial-era law and is no longer compatible with contemporary social conditions," Jacob says. It was drafted for a completely different social milieu. "Judicial interpretations can provide temporary relief in individual cases, but comprehensive reform can only be achieved through legislation by Parliament. A modernised law," he argues, "should provide clear procedures and safeguards while ensuring that women are not forced to remain in marriages that have effectively ended."

According to him, women's legal protection will remain incomplete unless Section 10 of the Divorce Act includes grounds such as cruelty, failure to provide maintenance and irretrievable breakdown of the marriage.

In recent years, superior courts have attempted to bridge this statutory gap through landmark judicial precedents. Lahore High Court advocate Samuel Pyara highlights a crucial ruling delivered in February 2026. In that case, the Lahore High Court held that if a husband and wife have been living apart continuously for two years, the continuous breakdown of the marital relationship and abandonment by a spouse can serve as valid legal grounds for divorce.

Commenting on the landmark decision, Lahore High Court advocate Samuel Pyara points out that judicial recognition of prolonged separation offers much-needed relief to women in unworkable marriages. While progressive rulings set valuable precedents, he maintains that only a comprehensive legislative amendment can deliver lasting, uniform protection across the country.

**Legislative momentum**

Recognising the growing urgency of statutory updates, provincial assemblies across Pakistan have initiated steps toward reform, though progress across regions remains fragmented and uneven.

In Punjab, where a significant proportion of Pakistan's Christian population resides, concrete legislative steps were taken earlier this year. A draft amendment to the Christian Marriage Act was introduced in the Punjab Assembly aimed at overhauling registration standards and age restrictions. In September 2026, the Punjab Assembly's Standing Committee on Human Rights and Minority Affairs formally approved the draft amendment.

Key provisions of the Punjab draft include setting the uniform minimum marriageable age for both Christian men and women at 18 years, mandating compulsory registration of all Christian marriages, and establishing modern, standardised systems for record-keeping. To support these statutory changes, the Punjab provincial government has also begun developing an online digital portal for marriage registration, aiming to make the process transparent, accessible, and less vulnerable to record tampering or fraud.

Similar legislative stirrings have occurred in other provinces. In Sindh, provincial authorities introduced a draft Christian family law framework to review age, registration, and dissolution standards. Similarly, in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), a draft amendment to the Christian Marriage Act was submitted to the provincial assembly for consideration.

However, despite these encouraging regional efforts, no provincial assembly has yet passed a fully integrated, comprehensive Christian family law code. The absence of a single, unified legal framework means that different aspects of family life—marriage, divorce, child custody, guardianship, and inheritance—continue to be governed by separate, fragmented statutes enacted in different centuries, creating legal ambiguity for families and attorneys alike.

**Inheritance and property rights**

Beyond marriage and divorce, the question of inheritance and property rights remains a vital battleground for Christian women in Pakistan. Matters of succession and inheritance for Christians are primarily governed by the Succession Act of 1925.

While Pakistani courts have repeatedly affirmed that Christian women possess an indisputable legal right to inherit ancestral and acquired property, the real-world execution of these rights is fraught with severe obstacles. In practice, legal rights guaranteed on paper rarely translate automatically into actual property ownership.

Christian women frequently encounter daunting procedural delays when applying for succession certificates, administrative inertia within land revenue departments, and intense socio-cultural pressure or resistance from male relatives. In many cases, property disputes linger in lower courts for years, during which women are deprived of financial security and income generated by inherited assets.

Legal scholars and human rights advocates emphasise that any broad-based reform of Christian family laws must include robust administrative mechanisms to enforce inheritance rights. Streamlining the issuance of succession certificates, penalising coercive property waivers, and creating specialised legal aid mechanisms are critical steps toward ensuring that women can claim their rightful economic shares without fear of intimidation or financial ruin.

As legislative momentum builds, the debate over family law reform has highlighted delicate tensions between civil rights modernisation and religious tradition. Within the Christian community, marriage is viewed not merely as a civil contract recognised by the state, but as a sacred, lifelong spiritual sacrament.

The Church of Pakistan and various denominational leaders have expressed lingering reservations regarding legislative processes that do not fully engage church authorities. Church representatives maintain that because Christian matrimony involves deep theological principles, any alterations to statutory rules governing marriage and dissolution must carefully respect ecclesiastical traditions.

Church leaders argue that while administrative improvements—such as raising the marriage age to 18 and implementing digital registration—are widely welcomed, changes surrounding divorce standards require careful theological nuance. They stress that comprehensive, structured consultations between state lawmakers, legal experts, women's rights organisations, and church leadership are essential to ensure that new laws align with constitutional guarantees without impinging upon religious doctrine.

Falbous Christopher, a Christian member of the Punjab Assembly, emphasises the necessity of building broad consensus among all stakeholders before finalising legislation. He calls for bringing marriage age, registration, divorce, custody, and inheritance under one comprehensive legal framework, but cautions that all stakeholders—including clergy, legal experts, and civil society—must be taken into confidence to ensure reforms solve real-world problems while respecting the community's religious identity.

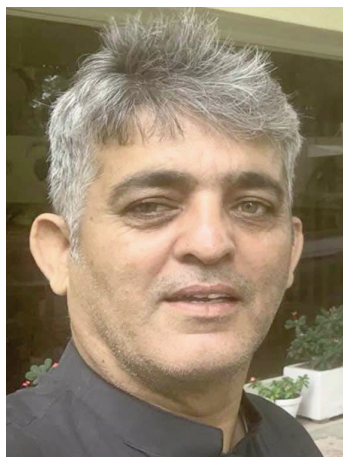
**The road ahead**

The ongoing debate surrounding Christian family laws in Pakistan extends far beyond technical legislative editing. At its core, the drive for reform is about fundamental human rights, gender equality, institutional protection for vulnerable women and children, and equal access to justice under the constitution.

While recent judicial decisions from the Lahore High Court and draft legislative proposals in Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa mark important steps forward, temporary remedies and piecemeal drafts are not enough. Without a unified, nation-wide or fully enacted provincial legislative framework, thousands of women like Asiya Bibi will remain trapped in legal uncertainty, caught between antiquated nineteenth-century statutes and twenty-first-century social realities.

Achieving meaningful, lasting reform will require sustained political will, parliamentary commitment, and collaborative dialogue among provincial assemblies, higher courts, religious institutions, and civil society advocates. Only through a balanced, comprehensive legislative framework can Pakistan ensure that its Christian citizens are granted the legal certainty, dignity, and rights they deserve.


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# Houston's Friends of Karachi Pay Heartfelt Tribute to Adnan Sherwani

***A deeply moving memorial brought the Houston community together to honor the life and legacy of longtime community member Adnan Sherwani, who passed away following a sudden heart attack in Karachi. Friends offered heartfelt tributes and prayers, seeking Allah's mercy for the departed soul and strength and patience for his grieving family.***


















































# A Father-Son Musical Duo! Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and Shahzaman Ali Khan Mesmerize Houston

**Presented by Rehan Siddiqui, the "Once Upon a Time" Tour featured legendary Pakistani vocalist Rahat Fateh Ali Khan alongside his son, Shahzaman Ali Khan, at Reliant Arena on October 17, 2026. The father-son duo celebrated the timeless magic of Sufi music and qawwali, creating a memorable evening for Houston's South Asian music lovers.**

# This Habit Could Cut Your Diabetes Risk in Half, New Study Says

## Keep your cardio routine, but don't skip the weights.

If you've ever gone to the gym to exercise, chances are you've witnessed firsthand the divide between those doing cardio and those doing strength training. On one side of the gym, you have the aerobic exercisers logging miles on the treadmill, shuffling on the elliptical or riding a stationary bike. On the other, you've got resistance trainers repping out chest presses, dropping into weighted squats or curling dumbbells into biceps curls.

And while neither the cardio-lovers nor the strength-trainers are right or wrong, there can seem to be a divide between the two. That's despite recommendations that adults should get both types of exercise each week—at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, plus two days of muscle-strengthening activity.1 Research also suggests that engaging in both types of physical activity is associated with a lower risk of several chronic conditions, including heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer.23

Now, new research adds to the case for



incorporating both aerobic exercise and resistance training. A recent study published in the Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport found that people who regularly engaged in both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities had a lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes along with several chronic conditions.4

**How Was the Study Conducted?**

Researchers gathered data for this study from the HABITAT (How Areas in Brisbane Influence Health and AcTivity) cohort, a large study of more than 11,000 adults ages 40 to 65 living in Brisbane, Australia.5 The cohort followed participants over nearly a decade, with surveys conducted in 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2016.

For this analysis, researchers used a sample size of about 8,000 individuals from the HABITAT cohort. The researchers looked at participants' physical activity and health history. Participants reported their physical activity by tracking how much time they spent walking and doing moderate- and vigorous-intensity physical activity, as well as how often they participated in muscle-strengthening activities like weight lifting and other exercises designed to increase strength.

Researchers then grouped participants into categories based on whether they met the recommended amount of aerobic activity, muscle-strengthening activity, both or neither. The recommended amount of aerobic activity was at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week, while the recommendation for muscle-strengthening exercise was at least two days per week.

In addition to tracking their physical activity, participants also reported whether they had been diagnosed with long-term health conditions, defined as conditions lasting six months or longer. For this study, researchers were specifically interested in the development of diabetes (both type 1 and type 2), cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and cancer.

Overall, the aim of this study was to investigate the combined effects of meeting both aerobic and muscle-strengthening exercise guidelines and whether that had an impact on the incidence of those four major chronic diseases.

**What Did the Study Find?**

Researchers found that meeting both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity guidelines was associated with about 50% lower odds of developing type 2 diabetes. There was also a potential association with lower risk of developing high blood pressure, cancer and heart disease, though those findings were less consistent.

In terms of the types of physical activity participants engaged in, the results looked like this:

Aerobic activity only: About 50% of participants met only the aerobic activity guideline from 2007 to 2011, falling to about 40% from 2011 to 2016.

Muscle-strengthening activity only: About 1% of participants met only the muscle-strengthening guideline throughout the study period.

Both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity: About 12% met both guidelines from 2007 to 2011, increasing to about 23% from 2011 to 2016.

Neither activity guideline: About 37% of participants met neither guideline throughout the study period.

Together, these numbers highlight how much more common aerobic activity was than strength training among participants. And, although the percentage meeting both guidelines increased over time, muscle-strengthening activity alone remained uncommon.

The strongest and most consistent finding was the association between meeting both physical activity guidelines and lower odds of developing type 2 diabetes. Some findings also pointed to lower odds of heart disease, cancer and high blood pressure among participants who met one or both activity recommendations, but those associations were less consistent.

**How Does This Apply to Real Life?**

Researchers emphasized the importance of promoting both types of activity in public health initiatives to highlight the value of this combined approach for chronic disease prevention. The study also highlights a potential gap in physical activity, as aerobic activity was much more common than muscle-strengthening activity among participants. Making sure people understand that resistance training is an important part of a health-promoting exercise routine could help close that gap.

It's probably no surprise that regular physical activity is associated with better health outcomes and a lower risk of developing certain chronic conditions like type 2 diabetes. This study adds to a growing body of evidence that both aerobic activity and muscle-strengthening exercise have a place in a well-rounded physical activity routine. While it may feel overwhelming to incorporate both types of exercise into your schedule, we've rounded up a few simple strategies to help you bring more movement into your week in an approachable, sustainable way.

Break up movement throughout the day. It's not necessary to get all your aerobic activity from one long sweat sesh. Instead, consider things like taking the stairs instead of the elevator, going for a 20-minute walk during lunch or squeezing in a few jumping jacks between meetings.

Start with body-weight exercises. You don't need a home gym—or a gym membership—to strength-train. Exercises like squats, lunges, pushups and planks can help build muscle using your own body weight.

Build a routine you can maintain. Schedule workouts at times that realistically fit into your week. Staying consistent is the most important.

Make it social. Take a workout class with a friend, join a walking group or find a strength-training buddy. Having someone to move with can make physical activity more enjoyable and provide extra motivation.

Don't forget recovery. More exercise isn't necessarily better. Give your muscles time to recover between aerobic and strength-training sessions, especially when you're starting a new routine.

**Our Expert Take**

The results from a recent study published in the Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport suggest that meeting both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity guidelines may be particularly beneficial for type 2 diabetes prevention. While the study found some associations between physical activity and lower odds of heart disease, high blood pressure and cancer, those findings were less consistent. That said, these findings add to a growing body of research that suggests that the combination of both activity types is important in chronic disease prevention.

# When marriage was the only plan

*A classic gets a radical makeover, but the lead character finds a woman whose predicament feels surprisingly familiar*





By Fouzia Nasir Ahmad |

There is something disconcerting about watching a 19th-century woman dream of a career rather than a husband. Not because the idea is particularly radical today, but because The Doll keeps reminding us how radical it once was — and how little some of the underlying circumstances have changed.

Netflix's Polish adaptation of Bolesław Prus's classic novel has arrived with all the ingredients of a prestige period drama: magnificent costumes, sumptuous interiors, grand ballrooms, complicated romances, social hierarchies and enough money visibly spent on every frame to make 1878 Warsaw look like a place one might actually want to visit on a time-machine trip.

But The Doll, directed by Paweł Maślona, is not really interested in offering us a comfortable historical getaway. Beneath all that velvet, crystal, Victorian showpieces with figurines and roses, and beautifully restored architecture is a rather less decorative story about money, marriage, class and what happens to women who want a life that does not fit neatly into the role assigned to them. That may also explain why the series has proved so contentious in Poland.

Prus's novel, originally published in the 1880s, is not simply another period classic there. It is required school reading and part of the country's literary and cultural identity. Netflix's decision to give it a distinctly contemporary treatment therefore amounted to more than an adaptation. And when that happened, it sparked a conversation across polish society about who owns a classic — the author, the teachers who have taught it, generations of readers, or the filmmakers attempting to make it speak to a new audience.

Maślona certainly does not approach the text reverentially. The characters speak contemporary language, including profanity that would have been unthinkable in a traditional screen version. Some of the liberties are even more startling. Stanisław Wokulski and Rzecki are shown snorting cocaine, among other departures from the familiar literary world. Netflix's social-media campaign was equally determined to drag Prus into the present, describing relationships in the language of the internet, with references to such things as "daddy issues" and "toy boy!"

For admirers of the novel, this was not modernisation but sacrilege. For others, it was precisely the point: a classic survives by being reinterpreted rather than embalmed. The debate continues.

The result is a series that has clearly touched a nerve. It reportedly entered the top ten most-watched lists in 41 countries, while in Poland the arguments around it became sufficiently heated for Prime Minister Donald Tusk to appeal publicly for calm. Yet the most interesting modernisation is not the profanity, the cocaine or the marketing.

It is Izabela Łęcka, the lead character. Played by Sandra Drzymalska (a highly acclaimed Polish actress known for her prominent roles in international cinema) with an almost unnerving restraint, Izabela is beautiful, aristocratic and accustomed to privilege. But she is also considerably more purposeful than the decorative society woman one might expect from the setting. She does not particularly want a husband. She wants a life.

She dreams of travelling to Paris and writing about what she sees for a local, proto-feminist magazine. She watches women around her being dismissed and belittled and appears unwilling to accept that this should simply be their fate. She rejects suitors, sometimes quite mercilessly, and has little patience for the expectation that her future should consist of selecting the least objectionable man from a queue. There is a practical problem with all this. She is a woman. And, more importantly, she is a woman whose family finances are collapsing.

Her father, Tomasz Łęcki, has placed a considerable amount of money in a mysterious business venture while already carrying substantial debt. When the arrangement fails, the consequences are not merely financial. Izabela's carefully imagined future begins to disappear with it. And suddenly the question becomes much larger than whether a young aristocrat should marry.

What happens to a woman when the society she belongs to has given her no other viable way of surviving? This is where The Doll unexpectedly brought to mind My Brilliant Career, based on a 1901 semi-autobiographical novel heavily inspired by the real life and mindset of Miles Franklin, its teenage author. The two stories belong to very different countries, periods and social worlds, yet both give us young women who look at marriage and think: surely there has to be something else.

There is something particularly revealing about seeing the same problem emerge in such different cultures. We often imagine the enforced marriage of women as a particularly South Asian or Eastern phenomenon, something that belongs to societies where daughters are still expected to be married off rather than encouraged to become economically independent. The Doll is a reminder that this was hardly a problem confined to our part of the world.

Women in the West were being channelled into marriage too, and not so very long ago. The difference between being born a son and being born a daughter could determine whether a child grew up with the expectation of supporting a family or with the expectation that somebody else would eventually support her.

That is one of the harsher truths beneath the beautiful surfaces of The Doll. Izabela may live in a grand mansion and wear exquisite clothes, but privilege does not automatically translate into independence. A woman can have education, intelligence, opinions and ambition and still find herself without the financial machinery to turn any of those things into a life. A son could be an heir. A daughter could be an expense. A son could be expected to earn. A daughter could be expected to marry. Unfortunately, if the marriage failed to materialise — or if she refused it — the family could be left wondering what exactly she was going to do with herself.

The cruelty of that arrangement becomes particularly stark when one thinks of the phrase "support the family". We have traditionally imagined this as something sons do for parents while daughters are married into another household. But what happens when a daughter is perfectly capable of contributing? What happens when she can write, work, run a business, teach, create or earn — but the social order has decided that these are not respectable ambitions for her? That is the real anachronism The Doll exposes.

Not that women in 19th-century Warsaw spoke like people on Netflix today. That they were expected to live as though economic independence were an inappropriate ambition. Izabela is therefore more interesting than the argument over whether she is faithful to Prus's original characterisation.

Traditionally, she has been read as cold, superficial and self-absorbed: a beautiful aristocrat who looks down upon others. The series gives her considerably more interior life. This has pleased some modern critics and irritated others who believe the adaptation has distorted Prus's intentions.

What is undeniable is that Drzymalska makes Izabela difficult to ignore or forget. She does not play her as a cheerful feminist heroine transplanted from the 21st century. There is very little sweetness about her. Izabela is calculating, proud and often severe. She can be blunt to the point of cruelty. She does not soften herself to make her ambitions palatable. Her face is frequently unreadable, and when emotion finally breaks through, the effect is all the stronger.

Drzymalska's best work is done in these silences. A suppressed reaction, a flicker of vulnerability, the moment when composure gives way — these become more eloquent than dialogue. Sometimes, her incredibly beautiful smile says it all.

Around her, the series assembles an entire society struggling with its own contradictions.

The mini-series also offers romance, obsession, revenge, business intrigue and the divide between the aristocracy and those who serve it. The servants are not simply background furniture in the magnificent houses. Some are given lives and personalities of their own, allowing the series to move beyond the drawing rooms and remind us that those who kept those drawing rooms functioning were humans too.

Much of The Doll was filmed in Poland's Lower Silesian Voivodeship in the southwest, with the production making use of numerous historic locations across the region to recreate the look and feel of Polish society in the 1870s. . Joanna Macha's sets were painstakingly constructed period interiors. The ballrooms and noble residences have scale without feeling like empty showcases. The production design is extraordinary, capturing both the opulence of the aristocracy and the grimy poverty of the lower classes, making the contrast between their worlds impossible to miss. Because, ultimately, the story is about people trapped by the systems that surround them.

**One does feel at times that The Doll tries to tell too many stories at once**

Six episodes are asked to accommodate business, class, feminism, romance, revenge, betrayal and social ambition. There is enough material here for a much longer series, and the show occasionally feels as though it is racing to complete an argument just when it has persuaded us to care about the characters. This is perhaps its strangest weakness: The Doll does not overstay its welcome. It leaves rather too soon.

It takes considerable time to establish its world and its people, only to end before we have fully settled into them. Some of the intrigue consequently feels compressed, while some of the relationships could have benefited from more breathing space. Yet the series is difficult to dismiss because of what it leaves behind. The uncomfortable recognition that the distance between Isabela's world and ours is not always as great as the costumes suggest.

We may have changed enormously in many ways. Women today have vastly greater access to education, employment, property and financial independence in many parts of the world. But the old assumption that a woman's security is fundamentally tied to marriage has hardly vanished everywhere. In different forms and to different degrees, daughters can still be treated as future wives rather than potential earners; careers can still be regarded as secondary to family expectations; and financial dependence can still become a mechanism through which choices are quietly narrowed.

That is why the modernisation of The Doll may be less outrageous than some of its Polish critics fear. Not just the profanity, the social-media slang will date even faster. But a woman asking what she might do with her life when everyone around her has already decided what she should be doing? That question travels remarkably well. Perhaps that is what a classic is supposed to do.

In the 1878 Warsaw that is beautifully reconstructed, the dresses, mansions and ballrooms belong to another world. The predicament does not, and that, more than the controversy surrounding its modern language or its provocative reinterpretations, may be the reason this Polish doll has found an audience far beyond Poland.

## M. Khalid Javed, Mecca Masjid Beechnut Custodian, Passes Away; Remembered for Community Service

*Continued from page 17*

lasting resource for families during times of grief. His efforts reflected his commitment to serving the religious and practical needs of the community.

He also encouraged community members to contribute donations to Mecca Masjid Beechnut, supporting the mosque's religious activities and community services. His work highlighted the importance of dedicated individuals in maintaining islamic institutions and developing essential facilities for future generations.

His Salat al-Janazah was held on Thursday, October 15, at 2 p.m. at Mecca Masjid Beechnut, followed by burial at Mecca Cemetery in Needville, Texas.

Community members were urged to remember Javed in their prayers and ask Allah Almighty to forgive his shortcomings, grant him Jannat al-Firdous, and provide patience and comfort to his family. Ameen.

## Houston's South Asian Media Community Mourns the Loss of Shazia Gaddi, Co-Owner of Sangeet Radio

*Continued from page 17*

Gaddi, founder and CEO of Rajput Media and Sangeet Radio, the devoted mother of Kashif, Hassan, Asad, and Asif Gaddi, and the sister of Rizwan Gaddi. Family, friends, and listeners across the region have shared heartfelt tributes, offering prayers (*Inna Lillahi wa Inna Ilayhi Raji'un*) for her peace, mercy, and highest status in Jannah, as well as strength for the family during this time of grief.

Under the guidance and leadership of Saeed and Shazia Gaddi, Sangeet Radio has served the Greater Houston area for nearly 30 years. Catering to the vibrant South Asian diaspora, the station has long stood as a vital cultural lifeline by delivering music, local news, and essential community programming. Her passing marks a significant loss for Houston's ethnic broadcasting landscape, where her contributions will be fondly remembered.

## Houston Mehfil Recreates Pakistan's Spiritual Ambiance at Annual Milad-un-Nabi and Gyarhvi Sharif

*Continued from page 17*

Holy Quran by Zayan Khan, son of the host, setting a reverent tone for the gathering. Hafiz Kareem Sultan then presented Hamd and Naat, praising Allah Almighty and expressing love and devotion for Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

The highlight of the evening was an inspiring speech by the distinguished guest speaker from Pakistan, Hazrat Allama Syed Shah Abdul Haq Qadri. His address offered spiritual guidance and reflections on the significance of Milad-un-Nabi, faith, and the enduring importance of Islamic teachings in everyday life. His powerful words deeply resonated with the audience, adding to the spiritual significance of the occasion.

Prominent Houston religious scholars, including Allama Mahboob Raza and Hafiz Abdul Gani Owasi, also attended the gathering, joining other community members in honoring the occasion.

Beyond its religious significance, the mehfil reflected the commitment of Pakistani Americans to preserving their spiritual heritage and passing cherished traditions on to the next generation. The outdoor arrangement, familiar religious atmosphere and shared devotion evoked memories of similar gatherings in Pakistan, creating a meaningful connection between the community's roots and its life in America.

The annual gathering concluded as a memorable occasion of faith, devotion and community unity, reaffirming the importance of religious traditions in keeping the Pakistani-American community connected to its cultural and spiritual identity.

## Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and Son Shahzaman Ali Khan Celebrate Father-Son Musical Legacy in Houston

*Continued from page 17*

a Time" Tour on October 17, 2026, at Reliant Arena. Presented by prominent Pakistani-American music promoter Rehan Siddiqui, the concert celebrated the enduring appeal of South Asian music and the passing of musical traditions from one generation to the next.

The performance highlighted Rahat Fateh Ali Khan's celebrated career and introduced audiences to the special connection he shares with his son, Shahzaman. For fans of Pakistani music, seeing a renowned artist perform alongside his son added a meaningful family dimension to an evening dedicated to soulful melodies and musical heritage.

Rahat Fateh Ali Khan has earned international acclaim for his powerful vocals and mastery of Sufi music and qawwali, as well as his success in popular film music. His distinctive voice and emotionally rich performances have made him one of Pakistan's most recognized musical ambassadors, with devoted audiences across South Asia, North America and beyond.

Shahzaman Ali Khan's appearance alongside his father underscored the continuation of a musical tradition within the family. The father-son pairing offered audiences an opportunity to appreciate both the legacy of an established musical star and the next generation carrying that tradition forward.

The concert also reflected the enduring influence of qawwali, a musical tradition deeply rooted in Sufi poetry and spiritual expression. Through its powerful vocals, rhythmic compositions and emotional depth, the genre has crossed cultural and geographical boundaries, connecting audiences from diverse backgrounds.

Rehan Siddiqui's presentation once again highlighted his role in bringing prominent South Asian artists to Houston. His concert promotions have provided Pakistani-American and other South Asian communities with opportunities to enjoy live performances by celebrated artists while maintaining a connection with the music and cultural traditions of the subcontinent.

The event was associated with Aga's Restaurant & Catering, reflecting the involvement of Houston's South Asian business community in cultural and entertainment events.

The "Once Upon a Time" Tour added another chapter to Houston's vibrant South Asian entertainment scene, celebrating the power of music to unite generations. With Rahat Fateh Ali Khan sharing the stage with his son, Shahzaman Ali Khan, the concert offered a memorable celebration of family, heritage and the continuing appeal of Pakistani music.

## Sugar Land City Council approves $15M revitalization efforts for historical Imperial Sugar Char House landmark

*Continued from page 17*

redevelop the Imperial Sugar site," Director of Redevelopment Devon Rodriguez said. "We are taking huge, bold trailblazing steps in making that happen."

Tuesday's unanimous vote awarded the multi-million-dollar construction contract to Bellows Construction to preserve the char house. Sugar Land, located southwest of Houston, was a town built around the operations of Imperial Sugar in the early 1900s. The historic char house was built in 1925 and continued operating until the refinery closed in 2003.

The major undertaking addresses a long-standing community goal to protect the structure for future use. Work on the char house includes constructing a new roof, structural repairs to the building's exterior walls, as well as steel and masonry repairs, and mechanical and electrical improvements. The historical Imperial Sugar signage will also be restored on the building. City officials anticipate construction beginning in December with an estimated completion date of around May 2028.

Council member Sanjay Singhal raised concerns about investing in the building without ensuring it is structurally sound for future redevelopment use.

"It would be quite bad if you put this money and we find some structural defect," Singhal said.

Assistant City Engineer Robert Wilson said they've already completed structural assessment on the building.

"The building is a very large steel structure that is surrounded with brick and masonry," Wilson said. "So it is a very strong building and it is built on a very strong foundation."

Wilson said alongside annual maintenance on the building, the new roof and windows will help give an extra 20-30 years to the facility.

"We anticipate that building will be in place for a very long time," he said.

The move signals the city's momentum on broader redevelopment on the Imperial Sugar site since acquiring the Imperial Historic District in 2025. The vote continues a comprehensive preservation plan for the char house after it sat vacant for years. Many private owners and developers have tried to revitalize the area and restore the building over the recent years, with little success, as previously reported by Houston Public Media.

Urbano Architects was selected to lead on design efforts for the preservation project. Representatives from the Houston-based architecture firm said in a statement that a groundbreaking is anticipated in November and that planned improvements will align with Texas's Historical Commission standards, which could make the site eligible for future historic tax credits to help offset future development costs and reduce the need for public funding.

Taxpayers won't be directly funding the bulk of the project, Rodriguez said. The $15 million construction contract will be paid for through a $50 million certificate of obligation the city issued in 2025 to acquire the property, along with revenue from designated sales and hotel occupancy taxes earmarked for economic development.

Sugar Land has experienced expansive growth over the years as well as advancement in other long-term city projects including the Lake Pointe Redevelopment District, a 70-acre mixed use development site, has left the city with less than 4% of developable land remaining, according to officials.

Rodriguez addressed councilmembers' concerns on what the end-goal will be for this historical site. She said they're still reviewing proposals to select a master development partner for the project. City officials expect to share more details early next year, after which negotiations with the selected partner would take place.

## Harris County DA says witness to ICE auto-pedestrian incident has been relocated by ICE

*Continued from page 17*

The DA's office immediately sent an investigator to interview the witness.

"We notified ICE the second we were made aware of them that this individual is a material witness [and] we need to speak to him," Teare said. "The interview for us ended at about 8 p.m. that night. He was on a plane sent to Mexico by 1 o'clock the next morning."

ICE nor the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immediately responded to a request for comment regarding why the witness had been relocated to Port Isabel.

On Oct. 10, an ICE vehicle struck Parra Hernandez after he exited a vehicle following a pursuit on Clay Road in northwest Houston. Parra-Hernandez suffered a broken leg and is still receiving treatment as of Friday, according to his family. He was the passenger of the vehicle ICE had been pursuing, according to DHS.

According to a spokesperson for DHS, ICE agents were conducting a "targeted enforcement operation in Harris County to arrest Jose Mendoza-Cervantes," who ICE claimed was driving the vehicle and fled the scene.

A DHS spokesperson said the incident is under an active internal investigation and, per standard practice, the officer involved has been suspended.

"Allegations that ICE struck Miguel Parra-Hernandez intentionally are reckless and false," the spokesperson said. "The men and women of ICE are entrusted with upholding the rule of law and are held to the highest standards of professionalism, integrity, and ethical conduct."

Teare said Parra Hernandez's case may be "even more egregious" than the Lorenzo Salgado-Araujo case. Salgado-Araujo was shot and killed by ICE agents in early July during another "targeted enforcement operation," of which Salgado-Araujo was not the intended target.

In the Parra-Hernandez case, Teare said his office has not yet seen the ICE agent's body camera footage and has not yet confirmed the cameras were turned on during the incident. They say sheriff's office body camera footage confirms the ICE agents were wearing body cameras.

FIEL Houston, a local civil rights organization, said Friday it had been contacted by the daughter of the man ICE was allegedly searching for the day Parra-Hernandez was struck by an ICE vehicle. According to FIEL, the man ICE was looking for had been dead for nine years.

"The biggest shock came on Wednesday afternoon when the daughter [of] alias Jose Cervantes Mendoza came forward, who we now know his name is Jose Hector Jimenez Mendoza," Caesar Espinosa, the executive director of FIEL, said at a press conference Friday. "She called our office sobbing because she saw her dad's picture all over the news, all over the ICE website and saying that they were looking for her dad."

On Thursday, the New York Times reported that this same daughter, Jamie Jimenez, provided a Mexican death certificate showing that Jimenez Mendoza died in Laredo in October 2017. Houston Public Media has not independently verified the reported death certificate.

Espinosa said Jimenez Mendoza died "at the hands of" U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) while attempting to cross into the U.S.

"So whether it's a government flaw, or whether it's irresponsibility, or whether they didn't fingerprint Mr. Jose Hector Jimenez when he passed, there had to have been a record that Jose Hector Jimenez was deceased nine years ago," Espinosa said. "We have all the verifying documentation to prove that, which we have turned over to the district attorney's office.

On Friday, Espinosa said Parra-Hernandez was still awaiting additional surgeries while he remained in ICE custody at a hospital.

"He still has multiple fractures on his right leg, still has to have reconstructive surgery on his ankle, and more importantly, his state of mind is slowly starting to deteriorate," Espinosa said. "This man is in his bed and around him 24-7 are armed ICE agents."

## Provisional ballots in Texas: What voters should know if they're not on a poll's registration list

*Continued from page 17*
ballot.

Here's what to know about casting a provisional ballot in Texas:

**What is a provisional ballot?**

Federal law requires that provisional ballots be offered to any voter whose eligibility is uncertain, such as a voter who isn't appearing on the list of registered voters due to an administrative error.

Provisional ballots are kept separate from all other ballots until after the election. Election officials then determine whether the voter is eligible to vote and whether the ballot should be counted.

Provisional ballots in Texas are offered during both early voting and on Election Day.

**In Texas, who is offered a provisional ballot?**

There's a long list of circumstances under which a voter will be offered a provisional ballot instead of a regular one. It includes:

- A voter believes they are properly registered to vote, but does not appear on the list of registered voters and the voter registrar's office is unable to immediately verify the voter's registration status.
- A voter is on the precinct list of registered voters, but their registered residence address is outside the political subdivision in which the voter is seeking to vote.
- A voter is registered to vote but attempting to vote in a different precinct from where they are registered.
- A voter does not provide an acceptable form of identification.
- A voter's name on their identification is not substantially similar to the name on the official list of registered voters.
- A voter's identity cannot be verified by the identification presented.
- A voter has received a disability exemption, but does not have a Voter Registration Certificate indicating such exemption.
- A voter has applied for a ballot by mail, but has not yet properly canceled the mail ballot application.
- A voter votes during polling hours that are extended by a state or federal court.

**What do provisional ballot voters have to do at the polling place?**

Voters who agree to cast a provisional ballot will be asked additional questions by the election judge — the person supervising the polling location — to gather details election officials can later use to determine whether the voter is eligible. For example, if a voter isn't appearing on the list of registered voters, the election judge might ask when and how the voter registered. If the voter registered through the Texas Department of Public Safety while obtaining or updating their driver's license or state ID, election officials will make note of that to help them investigate the problem with the voter's registration. (The state uncovered a backlog of hundreds of thousands of voter registration updates held up by that DPS driver's license portal last month, though the backlog was reportedly cleared up by mid-October.)

Voters will also be required to sign an affidavit that will act as a new voter registration form. The election judge will also fill out a form indicating the reason the voter is casting a provisional ballot. Both the voter and the election judge will sign the forms.

**How are provisional ballots cast?**

Once the voter and the election judge fill out all required forms, voters will head to the voting booth to cast their ballot just like everyone else at the polling location. In most counties, voters will mark their choices using an electronic ballot marking device. Some counties use paper ballots that voters mark by hand.

Once the voter is finished making their selections, the voter's ballot must be placed in an envelope. Election workers keep it secure in a sealed container, separate from regular ballots. The ballots are then delivered to the county's election officials for review.

Who determines whether a provisional ballot is counted or not?

During early voting and in the days after Election Day, county voter registrars will review their records in connection with any provisional ballots cast. They'll determine whether the voter was actually registered by the deadline, and whether there's any missing information that the voter might need to provide.

That information, combined with the notes and information gathered by the election judge at the polling place, is then delivered to the Early Voting Ballot Board — a group of people appointed by the county elections board that includes members of both political parties. The group is tasked with processing mail-in ballots to ensure they contain all the required information voters need to submit, and they also make determinations on provisional ballots.

**How do I know whether my provisional ballot was counted?**

Voters will be mailed a notice around two weeks after Election Day informing them of the determination made by the Early Voting Ballot Board.

Local election officials must conduct the canvass of votes — the official review and certification of votes that were counted — between Nov. 6 and Nov. 17. According to the Texas election code, election officials must deliver a written notice of the outcome of provisional ballots "no later than the tenth day after the local canvass."

The notice must state whether a voter's ballot was counted. If it was not counted, the notice must include the reason why it wasn't. If the voter has additional questions, the notice will include contact information for local election officials.

## Texas is lobbying for the new U.S. Space Academy. Taxpayers could foot a $100 million bill

***There's bipartisan momentum from Texas officials to make the Lone Star State the home of the U.S. Space Academy. A state commission suggested spending up to $100 million in taxpayer money to secure the selection.***

Texas space leaders, with bipartisan backing, are campaigning to bring the Trump Administration's new Space Academy to the Lone Star State. If that happens, Texas taxpayers could pay for as much as $100 million of it.

In a September meeting of the Texas Space Commission (TSC), a state-level entity that awards contracts and grants to invest in Texas' space industry, the board hypothesized putting up a nine-figure sum as an incentive for Texas to be selected.

Three members of the TSC board — Nancy Currie-Gregg, Heather Wilson, and Evan Loomis — are also part of the state-appointed team tasked with drafting Texas' proposal for the Space Academy.

"I think it might be important for the Space Commission board to make very clear that we intend to support this in a significant way," Wilson, who's also the president of the University of Texas at El Paso, said during the meeting. "And whether it's $100 million, or whatever set aside ... I think it sends a pretty clear message that Texas is in, and I don't think that's a bad thing."

The bidding process for the Space Academy has been largely kept under wraps. A spokesperson for the team drafting Texas' proposal said it was "premature" to arrange interviews with members of the team until the proposal is finalized.

Representatives from the TSC did not immediately return a request for comment.

Though the conversation amongst TSC board members was non-binding, it does give insight into the push for Texas to host the Space Academy and that taxpayers may be on the hook for a portion of it. The $100 million figure could also be changed, though TSC board members have only suggested that figure.

"Is $100 million what we as a group believe actually gets it done?" Sassie Duggleby, another board member, said during the meeting. "Like, is that a big enough stake in the sand to say that we want this?"

"I think it's a good starting point," board member Brad Morrison replied. "And, again, I think what we're saying is we have this immediate opportunity in front of us to help our federal partners accomplish something that is history-making."

**The Space Academy**

It was in Houston that President Donald Trump announced his intention to create a new U.S. Space Academy (USSA). Texas lawmakers and space advocates watched as he signed an executive order to move forward with the academy.

"I know where some people want it, that are in this audience," Trump said at the Johnson Space Center. "Everybody wants it because it's the hot thing."

NASA unveiled its Request for Information process soon thereafter. Each state was allowed one submission, at the governor's behest. Texas leaders, under Gov. Greg Abbott's order, moved quickly. Abbott created a leadership team for the bid, led by Texas House Republican Greg Bonnen.

"No state can match what Texas brings to this mission," Abbott said in a press release. "NASA's Johnson Space Center, world-class universities, a premier commercial space industry, major military installations, and an unmatched aerospace workforce give Texas every asset the United States Space Academy requires."

Each state must submit its proposal by Nov. 16. From there, the presidential commission tasked with overseeing the process, which includes NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth among others, will make their recommendations to the president by Dec. 26.

NASA intends to break ground on a USSA facility no later than 2027, with instruction beginning in 2028 and a permanent campus opening in 2031. The inaugural class beginning in 2028 is expected to have approximately 300 students.

As part of the pitch from each state, NASA requires proposals to include plans for both interim instruction between 2028 and 2031, as well as the permanent campus plan from 2031 onward. The eventual campus must be at least 300 acres and have space for 4,000 students, according to the government's Request for Information form.

Each state is also tasked with estimating the costs of establishing the USSA, as well as partnerships at the local and state level that might offset costs from the federal government.

NASA is also requesting each state to offer information for proposed USSA sites in proximity to international airports, NASA facilities, other academic institutions that would support the USSA, and "industry hubs tied to space, aeronautics, science, engineering, technology, manufacturing, or research relevant to the Academy's mission."

**The Lone Star State's bid**

A bipartisan coalition of Texas lawmakers at the federal and state level have pushed the Trump Administration to select Texas as the site of the USSA, potentially near Houston specifically. All but one of the entire Republican delegation of Texas, led by Senator Ted Cruz and House member Brian Babin, signed a letter saying, in part, "Texas has all the right stuff."

"The United States has already built a world-class space ecosystem in Texas," the letter reads. "Leveraging that ecosystem will allow the Space Academy to begin with capabilities that other locations would have to spend years developing."

Several Democrats, led by Congress member Christian Menefee, have similarly called for Texas' selection.

"Our state government has already put money behind this vision, appropriating hundreds of millions of dollars for a state Space Commission and for new research infrastructure," their letter reads. "Texas has shown that we put our money where our mouth is, and that support will only grow if the Academy calls Texas home."

The Texas Space Commission has indicated it wants to do exactly that. Though their Sept. 23 board meeting did not result in any official action — and its board members stressed that their discussion was non-binding — multiple board members indicated that a financial contribution would benefit the state's proposal.

When the Texas legislature created the TSC in 2023, one of the commission's main priorities was issuing grants under the Space Exploration and Aeronautics Research Fund, with a $150 million budget. TSC has since issued 24 grants totaling that amount to organizations like Blue Origin, Intuitive Machines, SpaceX, Rice University, and more. In the 2025 legislative session, Texas lawmakers gave the commission an additional $300 million to spend.

The details of the Space Academy proposal are under wraps. NASA stated earlier this month that it does not plan to publish all of the states' bids for the USSA, but that "information about the selected location, including portions of its submission, may be shared publicly."

Norman Garza, a representative for the team leading Texas' pitch, deferred to Abbott's initial press release announcing the team, noting that the process "is a competition amongst states."

"It would not be in the best interest of the State of Texas to unnecessarily disclose any potential elements of the proposal development process ... before the State's proposal approved by the Governor ... and submitted to NASA for consideration by the Presidential Commission making a recommendation to President Trump," Garza said in an email to Houston Public Media.

Texas is not alone in that competition. Governors and members of Congress from Florida, Ohio, West Virginia, Arizona, Alabama, and Louisiana have all publicly stated they have either begun work on a proposal or desire to do so.

# The school at home

*Growing interest in homeschooling shows parents' safety concerns, but home learning brings its own responsibilities*

> **Homeschooling is not bound by bells, fixed terms or rigid timetables. Lessons can take place in the morning or evening, on weekdays or weekends, and holidays can be taken when it suits the family**

> **Some families want education to reflect their faith, moral outlook or cultural traditions. They may feel that mainstream schools either ignore these values or teach ideas that conflict with them**

By Rabia Khan

For most of the last century, the picture of childhood education was simple: children put on a uniform, walked or rode to a school building, sat in a classroom with dozens of classmates, and returned home in the afternoon. Today that picture is changing. In countries as different as Pakistan, a growing number of parents are deciding that the best classroom for their child is the one in their own living room. Homeschooling, once seen as an unusual choice made by a handful of families, has become a serious and increasingly visible alternative to traditional schooling.

Having spent the last twelve years in the teaching profession, I have seen first-hand both the strengths and the limits of the classroom. I have taught children who blossomed with a little individual attention, and I have also watched capable students slip through the cracks in a room of forty because no one had the time to notice them. For this reason, I understand why parents turn to homeschooling, and I do not dismiss their concerns.

At the same time, my experience has taught me that school is more than lessons and examinations. It is where children learn to share, disagree, compete, cooperate and grow in confidence among people who are not their family. Homeschooling can give a child warmth and focus, but it works best when parents are committed, organised and willing to give the child regular contact with teachers, peers and the wider community. In my view, the real question is not whether home or school is better, but whether each child is receiving a complete education, academic, social and moral, in the setting that suits him or her best.

**What is homeschooling?**

Homeschooling, also called home education, is the practice of educating children at home or in community settings arranged by the family, rather than in a conventional public or private school. Parents may teach the child themselves, hire private tutors, enroll the child in online courses, or combine several of these methods. Some families follow a formal curriculum that closely resembles what a school would teach. Others prefer a flexible approach in which learning grows out of the child's interests, daily life, travel and projects.

**Why has homeschooling become so common?**

No single reason explains the growth of homeschooling. Families arrive at the decision for many different reasons, and often several of them overlap. The most common are described below.

The most frequent reason is simple disappointment. Parents look at the education their children are receiving and feel it is not good enough. In many public systems, classrooms are overcrowded, teachers are overworked and under-supported, and lessons depend heavily on memorisation for examinations. Even in some expensive private schools, parents complain that results matter more than real understanding. When families lose confidence in the local schools and cannot afford or find a better one, teaching at home starts to look like a realistic option. Concerns about bullying, violence, peer pressure, and harassment lead some parents to choose homeschooling. It can provide children with a safer environment and give parents greater control over their social surroundings.

In Pakistan, safety is a major reason some parents choose homeschooling. Concerns about terrorism, unsafe transport, bullying, harassment and corporal punishment can make schools feel risky. For some families, home education offers greater physical and emotional security, despite fewer social opportunities.

In a traditional classroom, one teacher must move a whole group through the same material at the same pace. Some children find this too slow and become bored; others find it too fast and quietly fall behind. Homeschooling lets parents match the pace and style of teaching to the individual child. A student who loves mathematics can move ahead, while a student who struggles with reading can spend extra time until the skill is secure. For many parents, this flexibility is the strongest argument in favour of home education.

Some families want education to reflect their faith, moral outlook or cultural traditions. They may feel that mainstream schools either ignore these values or teach ideas that conflict with them. By teaching at home, parents can weave religious study, language, ethics and family traditions into the child's daily education rather than leaving them for evenings and weekends.

Children with learning differences, disabilities or other challenges may struggle in mainstream schools. Homeschooling allows parents to adjust the environment, schedule and teaching methods to meet their needs. It can also benefit gifted children who need more challenging learning.

Homeschooling suits families who travel, move often, or live in remote areas. It also allows children to balance education with activities like sports, music, acting, or entrepreneurship.

Twenty years ago, a parent who wanted to teach advanced science or a foreign language at home would have faced a difficult task. Today, free video lessons, interactive platforms, digital libraries, online tutors and complete virtual curricula are available to anyone with an internet connection. This has lowered the barrier dramatically.

The pandemic closed schools around the world and forced millions of families to teach at home, at least temporarily. For many, the experience was difficult. For others, it was a revelation: they saw how their children learned, discovered that the school day could be much shorter and more focused than they had assumed, and enjoyed the closer family relationship.

In some regions, there is simply no good school within reach, or the available private schools charge fees that families cannot afford. Homeschooling, though not free, can sometimes cost less than private tuition, especially when parents use free online materials and community resources.

Supporters of homeschooling point to several real strengths. A teacher with one or two students can notice immediately when a child is confused, tired or bored, and can respond at once. The learning plan can follow the child's strengths, interests and speed. This one-to-one attention is often cited as the reason homeschooled children can cover material efficiently and develop confidence in their abilities.

Homeschooling is not bound by bells, fixed terms or rigid timetables. Lessons can take place in the morning or evening, on weekdays or weekends, and holidays can be taken when it suits the family. Learning can happen in museums, farms, markets and nature as easily as at a desk. This flexibility can reduce stress and make learning feel more natural and enjoyable.

Spending more time together gives parents and children the chance to build deeper relationships. Parents are more aware of their children's progress, worries and character. Brothers and sisters often learn to cooperate and help one another. Many homeschooling families report a closer, more communicative family life.

At home, children are generally protected from bullying, constant peer comparison and the pressure to fit in. Children who are shy or sensitive may find it easier to ask questions and make mistakes without fear of embarrassment. Parents can include practical skills that schools often neglect: cooking, budgeting, gardening, basic repairs, first aid and communication. They can also guide moral and character development in a consistent way, connecting what is learned to how the family lives. Because there is no pressure to cover a fixed syllabus in a fixed time, children can explore subjects in depth. A child fascinated by astronomy, history or coding can spend weeks on it. This depth can build real curiosity and independent thinking, qualities that examinations alone do not measure.

A large part of the school day is spent on registration, transitions, waiting and managing large groups. Homeschooled children often complete their core academic work in a few focused hours, leaving time for reading, hobbies, exercise and creative projects.

Homeschooling is not a perfect solution, and honest discussion must include its limits and risks. A common concern is that homeschooled children may have fewer opportunities to interact with diverse peers. Schools help children develop teamwork, conflict resolution and social skills. Homeschooling families can provide these experiences through sports, community groups, cooperative classes and friendships, but it requires regular effort.

Teaching is a demanding profession. A parent who homeschools must plan lessons, find resources, assess progress and keep the child motivated, often while also managing the household. This is tiring and time-consuming, and the work usually falls most heavily on one parent, who may have to give up a career or reduce working hours. Burnout is a real risk.

Loss of one income, together with the cost of books, materials, online courses, tutors and activities, can place a strain on the family budget. Homeschooling can be inexpensive, but doing it well often is not.

No parent is an expert in every subject. Advanced mathematics, laboratory science and foreign languages can be especially difficult. Without outside checks, gaps in a child's knowledge may go unnoticed for years. Parents may also be tempted to avoid subjects they find difficult or dislike. Tutors, online courses and regular external assessments can reduce the risk, but they require time and money.

Schools provide science laboratories, libraries, sports grounds, music rooms, drama stages and competitions. Replicating these at home is difficult. Children may miss the experience of team sports, school plays, debating contests and group projects unless parents find alternatives elsewhere.

Formal qualifications are often required for university and employment. Homeschooled students may need to take exams as private candidates, which can involve extra costs and paperwork. Families should plan the qualification pathway early.

Spending most of the day with the same few people can create emotional intensity. Without other adults and mentors, a child's view of the world may be narrower. Some children also find it harder to adapt later to the structure of university, workplaces or large organisations. Even a supportive family cannot fully replace the variety of voices and experiences a school provides.

Where regulation is light, there is little to ensure that every homeschooled child is actually receiving a good education or is safe and well. Most homeschooling parents are dedicated and responsible, but the absence of external checks leaves a small number of children at risk of neglect. This is why many educators argue for reasonable registration and periodic assessment.

**Is homeschooling right for every family?**

Homeschooling can succeed, but it does not suit everyone. Several questions can help a family decide. Can at least one parent commit seriously to planning and supervising the child's learning over many years? Can the family manage on the available income and cover materials and outside classes? Does the child respond well to learning at home, or does he or she thrive on the energy of a classroom? Is there a realistic plan for regular contact with friends and other adults? Are the registration requirements, examinations and future university plans understood? Many families choose a middle path through part-time homeschooling, hybrid schools or online education. Successful homeschooling usually involves a regular routine, varied learning resources, progress checks and support from other homeschoolers. Most importantly, parents should listen to their children and adapt learning to their changing needs.

Moreover, Erum Khan, who has taught for 14 years, firmly opposes homeschooling. “Children need more than a parent as a teacher because they learn best when exposed to different teachers, ideas and classmates,” she says. Although she acknowledges that individual attention is valuable, she warns that parents may lack training in teaching methods, assessment and certain subjects, which can lead to hidden learning gaps. “Parents cannot handle the children at home,” she adds.

On the issue of safety, Khan understands parents’ concerns but believes the solution should be to make schools safer rather than remove children from them. She also argues that schools teach important life skills such as sharing, teamwork, handling disagreements; waiting for a turn and accepting different opinions; lessons that cannot be fully learned from textbooks.

Homeschooling has become popular because it offers personalised learning, safety, flexibility and greater family involvement. Children can receive individual attention, learn at their own pace and study in a calm, supportive environment.

However, homeschooling has challenges, including limited social interaction, parental pressure, costs and possible learning gaps. Without proper planning, children may miss important skills, qualifications and school experiences.

The wisest conclusion is that homeschooling is neither a miracle nor a mistake. It is a serious responsibility that works best for families who are well prepared, well informed and willing to adapt. Whether a child learns at a school desk or at a kitchen table, the goal is the same: to raise a curious, capable and confident young person ready to take part in the world. The best choice is the one that serves that goal for the particular child in front of us.

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