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Texas Muslim Coalitions and Interfaith Allies Launch Voter Drive Over School Curriculum Concerns



HOUSTON, Texas — In response to rising Islamophobia and controversial state curriculum revisions, Muslim organizations and interfaith partners across Greater

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Junaid Jamshed's Legacy Lives On: Human Necessity Foundation Fundraiser Exceeds Goal in Record Time



HOUSTON — The Pakistani-American community in Houston demonstrated a powerful display of philanthropy, raising over $110,000 in just 30 minutes for the Human Necessity Foundation (HNF) during a high-profile charity event. The total contributions quickly surpassed the initial $100,000 fundraising goal, turning the evening into a memorable success. The gathering brought together community members, philanthropists, and guests from all walks of life under the core message

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Karwan-e-Hayat to Host Cross-Cultural Mental Health Gala

Houston: Karwan-e-Hayat (KeH), the

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Pakistan stands shoulder to shoulder with KSA to safeguard its sovereignty, security: PM

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif,

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U.S. Senate, Texas Railroad Commission races remain tight less than month before early voting, TSU poll finds

A pair of polls just released suggest that many of

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Mamdani brands Netanyahu 'architect of genocide' after hosting Trump

NEW YORK — New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani has again called Israeli Prime

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Pakistan's Political Crisis

The People Need Relief, Not Another Confrontation

Syed Feroz Ahmed
Houston, Texas

Pakistan's present political and economic difficulties are deeply connected, and ordinary citizens are the ones who feel their effects most directly. While political parties debate, governments defend their policies and opposition parties demand accountability, millions of Pakistanis are struggling with the daily realities of inflation, expensive electricity and fuel, limited employment opportunities, education and healthcare costs, and falling household purchasing power. This article is not about defending one political side or criticizing another. It is about the urgent need for responsible politics, constructive dialogue and practical economic solutions. Pakistan cannot afford a cycle in which every disagreement becomes another confrontation. All stakeholders must recognize their responsibilities and work together to restore public confidence, protect ordinary families and create the political and economic stability needed for long term national development.

In fact, Pakistan is passing through another difficult period of political tension. The government and opposition are deeply divided, while ordinary people are facing a different and more immediate problem; the rising cost of living.

Even for the middle class and lower middle class families, life has become increasingly difficult. Inflation, expensive electricity, high food prices, rising school fees, medical expenses and increasing transport costs are putting household budgets under severe pressure. When petrol prices rise, the impact is felt not only at the petrol pump but also in the prices of food, transportation and almost every other necessity of daily life.

The government faces genuine economic difficulties. It has to manage foreign exchange, meet international financial commitments, control the budget deficit, deal with energy costs and maintain economic stability. International oil prices and other external factors can also affect domestic fuel prices.

The government therefore has limited room for giving blanket subsidies. At the same time, ordinary citizens cannot be expected to carry the entire burden of economic adjustment.

The Pressure on Ordinary Families

The middle class, lower-middle class, and poor families deserve special attention. Many salaried people do not qualify for major government welfare programmes, but their incomes are also not high enough to manage the rising costs of electricity, petrol, food, education, and healthcare.

Teachers, junior government employees, private-sector workers, small business owners, shopkeepers, and many professionals are finding it harder to maintain the standard of living they had in the past. Many families are struggling to meet their basic needs and are living from one paycheck to the next. They are postponing important purchases and cutting spending on education, healthcare, and other essential needs.

This is not just an economic issue or a number in a report. It is a real problem affecting the daily lives and future hopes of millions of families.

For a family struggling to pay the electricity bill, buy food, send their children to school, and pay for medical treatment, political arguments provide little help. People need practical action that can make their everyday lives easier and more secure.

The Responsibility of the Opposition

The opposition has an important role in a democracy. It has the right to question government policies, demand accountability and raise the concerns of ordinary citizens. However, the opposition also has a responsibility to offer practical alternatives. Criticism alone cannot solve Pakistan's economic problems. If opposition parties believe that the government's policies are wrong, they should clearly explain what they would do differently, how they would reduce inflation, how they would manage fuel and electricity prices, how they would create jobs and, most importantly, how they would finance their proposed programmes.

A strong opposition is important for democracy, but constructive opposition should also help the country find solutions.

The Government's Responsibility

The government, on the other hand, must understand that political stability cannot be achieved through administrative measures alone. People need to feel that their difficulties are being heard. Peaceful political activity and legitimate criticism should be allowed, while violence, destruction of public property and attacks on state institutions should not be tolerated.

Political cases should also be dealt with through fair and transparent legal procedures so that citizens do not feel that the law is being applied differently to different political groups.

Pakistan's political crisis is therefore not simply a dispute between the government and opposition. It is also a crisis of public confidence.

Many people are tired of continuous political confrontation. They want their leaders to spend less time fighting with one another and more time dealing with inflation, unemployment, electricity prices, education, healthcare and security.

They want stability because political instability ultimately affects investment, employment and household incomes.

A Need for National Dialogue

A national political and economic dialogue could provide a way forward.

The government, opposition parties, economists, business representatives and other important stakeholders should sit together and identify a few national priorities on which there can be broad agreement.

These should include:

- Reducing the cost of living.
- Protecting employment.
- Improving energy affordability.
- Increasing exports.
- Encouraging investment.
- Reducing unnecessary government expenditure.
- Widening the tax base.
- Improving education and healthcare.
- Strengthening public services.
- Creating greater economic stability.

The purpose of such a dialogue should not be to eliminate political differences. Differences are a normal part of democracy. The purpose should be to agree on issues where the national interest requires cooperation.

Government Spending and Public Confidence

The government should also examine its own expenditure and reduce unnecessary official privileges and non-essential spending.

At a time when ordinary citizens are being asked to make sacrifices, people naturally expect political leaders and state institutions to demonstrate financial discipline themselves.

Every rupee saved from unnecessary expenditure can help strengthen public confidence.

People are more likely to accept difficult economic decisions when they believe that those making the decisions are also prepared to make sacrifices.

Economic Policies Need Continuity

Political parties should also agree that Pakistan's economy must not become a victim of political competition.

Governments will change, and opposition parties will eventually have the opportunity to govern. Therefore, some basic economic policies should continue regardless of which political party is in power.

Long term investment, exports, education, energy reform, tax reform and employment creation cannot be treated as short term political projects. They require consistency over many years.

Investors also need confidence that important economic policies will not completely change every time there is a change in government.

Pakistan needs continuity in areas that are essential to national development.

The Role of Overseas Pakistanis

Pakistan is passing through a difficult period of political confrontation and economic uncertainty. At this critical moment, both overseas Pakistanis and the government have a responsibility to put Pakistan above personal, political, and institutional interests.

Overseas Pakistanis should support Pakistan without becoming a source of further political division. They should avoid spreading hatred, misinformation, and personal attacks. Their role should be to promote dialogue, tolerance, investment, knowledge, and national unity. They can contribute not only through remittances, but also through skills, technology, businesses, and international connections. Their political differences may be many, but their national interest should be one; a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Pakistan.

The government, on the other hand, must recognize overseas Pakistanis as partners in national development, not merely as a source of foreign exchange. Their investment and expertise require trust, transparency, security, respect, and a predictable system. The government should create an environment where every Pakistani, whether living in Lahore or London, feels that Pakistan belongs to them.

Pakistan does not need more division; it needs responsible leadership and responsible citizenship.

Overseas Pakistanis must bring investment and ideas, while the government must provide trust and opportunity. Together, they can turn political differences into democratic dialogue and economic difficulties into opportunities for national progress.

The message is simple. Pakistan first, political differences later; nation-building together, blame-game never.

Recognizing Economic Efforts

The present government, for its part, has taken several steps aimed at protecting the economy and providing relief during the current difficult period. It has continued efforts to control government expenditure, improve exports and investment, strengthen the energy sector and encourage private sector growth.

In response to rising fuel prices, the government has also introduced targeted relief measures for lower income users rather than relying only on broad fuel subsidies. It is also working on reforms in the petroleum and energy sectors and on improving the efficiency of public institutions.

These steps show an effort to maintain economic stability while creating conditions for longer term growth.

On the political side, the government has repeatedly called for differences to be addressed through Parliament, dialogue and constitutional institutions. These efforts can contribute to greater stability if they are accompanied by transparency, political tolerance and continued engagement with the opposition.

The government also deserves recognition for trying to protect the country from another serious economic crisis. Maintaining financial stability, meeting international obligations, improving foreign exchange reserves, encouraging investment and controlling unnecessary expenditure are difficult but necessary tasks.

However, economic recovery must ultimately reach ordinary households.

Stability in government accounts is important, but stability in the household budget is equally important for the common citizen.

Pakistan Needs Political Maturity

Pakistan does not need another political war. It needs political maturity.

The government should listen to the opposition and the concerns of the people. The opposition should hold the government accountable but also present workable solutions. Both sides should remember that the real purpose of politics is to improve the lives of citizens.

For a family struggling to pay the electricity bill, buy food, send children to school, meet medical expenses and fill a motorcycle or car with petrol, political arguments provide little relief.

The people need practical action.

Pakistan's political leaders therefore have a responsibility to rise above short term political interests and focus on the country's long-term stability.

There can be disagreement in Parliament, strong debate and different political opinions, but there must also be cooperation on issues that directly affect the lives and dignity of ordinary Pakistanis.

The country needs politics, but above all, it needs responsible politics that puts the people first.

The Time to Sit Together Is Now

Pakistan's future cannot be secured through confrontation, blame or criticism alone. If the government, opposition, political parties, business community, civil society and other stakeholders fail to develop a better understanding of one another and find common ground on matters of national importance, the country's economic growth, investment, employment and overall development will be adversely affected.

Differences are a natural and necessary part of democracy, but differences should be addressed through dialogue and institutions rather than through hostility in the streets or competing accusations in the media. Instead of standing on roads, at media centres or on political platforms blaming one another, our leaders and stakeholders should come together, sit across the table and honestly discuss the problems facing the country and the practical ways to resolve them.

Pakistan needs cooperation where cooperation is possible, accountability where accountability is necessary, and dialogue wherever disagreement exists.

The country's challenges are too serious and the people's difficulties too urgent for endless political confrontation.

The time has come to sit together, listen to one another, understand each other's concerns, find workable solutions and put Pakistan's national interest and the well being of its people above short term political differences.

If we fail to build a better understanding among all stakeholders, the cost will not be paid by politicians alone. It will be paid by ordinary Pakistanis through lost opportunities, weaker investment, fewer jobs, greater economic pressure and slower national development.

Pakistan belongs to all of us. Its problems cannot be solved by one party, one institution or one group alone. They can only be addressed when responsible people come together, put aside unnecessary confrontation and work honestly for the country's future.

A question of region

Crowded, noisy and poor, societies in this region struggle with imperfect democracies

Arifa Noor

"Don't know much about history, don't know much biology,

Don't know much about the science book, don't know much about the French I took…"

THIS is an old song, which seems to be an apt description of journalists — especially in Pakistan. Over the decades, the profession has moved on from print to television and now digital but our training remains rooted in old-fashioned 'generalism' (if there's such a word). As with the bureaucrats who run petroleum one day and health the other, we journalists move from commenting on foreign affairs one evening to the economy and healthcare the next. The notion of specialising in issues or studying them in depth is as alien to us as democracy is to Islamabad's neighbours.

Perhaps this is why most in the profession rarely bother with reading and books. Take history — even of Pakistan. Those of us who entered the field at the time of newspapers learnt the country's history through oral tradition. Late-night chats with senior colleagues, who had survived martial laws and newsroom working hours, told us of tumultuous times such as war, secession and dictatorship. They included those who remembered what it was like working during the censorship of Ziaul Haq's times, the night Pervez Musharraf removed the government or when an operation was first launched against the MQM in Karachi. The oral history we learnt alongside copy editing was the best counter-narrative to the whitewashed account taught in school books under Pakistan Studies. Our daastango provided us with a fun but patchy account of the land of the pure.

Patchy, for it leaves us with more questions than answers — the personal accounts that we learn history from are rooted in Pakistan but are a little sketchy on details of the region. Few journalists have travelled around the region and reported on other countries. As a result, many may point out similarities between Pakistan and Egypt (aren't they obvious?) but few will note what makes them different and why. For a hack such as myself, the biggest difference is perhaps Pakistan's impatience with its rulers. Our last dictator spent eight years in power, struggling in the last two. And in Egypt, Anwar Sadat spent 11 years in power, Hosni Mubarak around three decades, while Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has been ruling for 12 and is still going strong.

Closer to Pakistan, the Gulf states in general have also enjoyed stability and long reigns without much pressure from below. Evidently, this is due to oil, but can it explain everything? After all, Iran is no less oil-rich and yet it went through a revolution, which perhaps remains unprecedented as a political event in the region. Despite the authoritarianism of both the Shah and the theocracy that followed, Iran has demonstrated that its people believe in resistance. In recent years, they have pushed back multiple times against crackdowns; at times they have even compelled the state to change course. This is a strain missing in Iran's neighbours to the west.

But to its east, it's a different story. Pakistan and the rest of South Asia, in comparison to its western neighbours in the Middle East, are poorer and noisier.

Is this why this region has avoided the kind of authoritarianism that marks the Middle East? Crowded, noisy and poor, societies in this region continue to struggle with flawed and imperfect democracies; there is flirtation with authoritarianism but on paper most of them adhere or aspire to the framework left by the British. This is true of Pakistan where martial law dictators have also worked hard to prove their democratic credentials by holding elections. And with it comes the inability of rulers in the region to lord it over their citizens for long periods. Indeed, in recent years, Hasina Wajed's 15 years in power has been quite a feat. In India, Jawaharlal Nehru and Narendra Modi have also enjoyed prime ministerships for a similar period of time. On the other hand, in Pakistan, the longest power stints have been a bit shorter.

In a tradition closer to Iran, South Asia has also pushed back against dictators of the civilian (Wajed) and military (Musharraf) type, with street protests forcing them to call it a day. Strongmen such as Modi have also been bested by students armed with their wit and social media, while in Pakistan, authoritarian establishments have struggled to clamp down on criticism on X. This is not entirely new: back in the 1970s, both Indira Gandhi's imposition of the Emergency and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's authoritarian rule came to an end, albeit in very different ways. In one country, the democratic system pushed back while in the other, the military establishment did so.

With all our problems, Pakistan's journalists still sit in talk shows and complain about the censorship they face; their counterparts in nearby regions are perhaps not allowed to whine thus on live television. In most countries with censorship, journalists usually spend their time complaining about absolute freedom.

There is an 'argumentative' South Asian that shapes this region differently from its western neighbours. And perhaps also its eastern ones. Travel east to Myanmar and here once again, regimes tend to become more authoritarian and more long-lasting. The long detention of Aung San Suu Kyi under a martial law regime illustrates this best. After a short experiment with elections and civilian control, Myanmar has returned to military rule but one in which contestation by the people has turned to civil war. While this may seem alien to Pakistanis, it is worrying that in parts of our country we, too, face a situation where the state appears to only control the cities.

But what eventually determines the different state-society relationships in these countries? Why is Myanmar able to sustain military rule while Bangladesh is not? Or why has Pakistan, despite its close ties to the Middle East, not been able to impose a similar system of government? Now if I hadn't learnt history in newsrooms and had read more, perhaps I could have answered some of these questions.

The writer is a journalist.

The Forgotten Architects of the Republic: Why Pakistan's Urdu-Speaking Community Must Reclaim Its Administrative Legacy



By Amjad Qaim Khani | Houston

When Pakistan emerged on the map in 1947, it inherited a territory, a population, and a promise—but virtually no institutional machinery. The fledgling state lacked functional offices, basic stationery, and an established administrative apparatus. The foundation of the nation's nascent statecraft was laid largely by the Urdu-speaking migrants—the so-called *Mohajirs*—who crossed the border carrying not just personal belongings, but an unparalleled intellectual tradition and a deep commitment to governance. Today, as Pakistan grapples with administrative decay and socio-political polarization, reviving the founding spirit and bureaucratic excellence of this community is an institutional necessity.

The early Urdu-speaking migrants arrived from the cultural and administrative centers of the subcontinent—Oudh, Hyderabad Deccan, Lucknow, Madras, Bihar, and Gujarat. They brought with them a heritage shaped by literary giants like Mirza Ghalib and Mir Anees, alongside an unyielding devotion to public service. Men of the pen, many hailing from the prestigious Imperial Civil Service (ICS) and Indian Audit and Accounts Service, chose Pakistan out of conviction, seeking a professional, pluralistic republic.

Alongside Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah stood figures who built the country's early administrative core: Chaudhry Muhammad Ali, Mian Kifait Ali, and Ghulam Muhammad—an ICS alumnus from Aligarh who served as Pakistan's third Governor-General—as well as Iskander Mirza, a Sandhurst and Indian Police Service officer from Hyderabad Deccan. In the economic realm, industrial pioneers like Abbas Khalili—who abandoned immense wealth in Tamil Nadu to establish the SITE and Karachi Development Authority (KDA)—alongside the Ispahanis, the Habib family, Raja Amir Ahmed Khan of Mahmudabad, and industrial houses like Adamjee, Dawood, Valika, and Bawany, transferred their capital to bankroll an impoverished state. Legend recalls early civil servants purchasing office supplies with their own funds, driven solely by a duty to establish a functional republic.

This administrative pool provided Pakistan with its finest diplomats, jurists, and technocrats. Mysore's Agha Shahi and his brother Agha Hilaly defined early Pakistani diplomacy; Nagpur's M. Ikramullah served as the first Foreign Secretary; Bihar's S.K. Dehlavi transitioned the post-colonial bureaucracy; and Bengal's J.A. Rahim authored the original ideological platform for the Pakistan Peoples Party. Ambala's Qudratullah Shahab served three heads of state with legendary rectitude, while Lucknow's Syed Hashim Raza governed Karachi and East Pakistan with administrative finesse. From media under Z.A. Bokhari at Radio Pakistan to high diplomatic assignments under Aziz Ahmed, Qamar-ul Islam, and Abu Talib Naqvi, this educated cohort established a standard of meritocracy and professional ethics that defined Pakistan's early governance.

However, the structural shifts of the 1970s permanently altered this trajectory. The introduction of the rural-urban quota split in Sindh under the 1973 Constitution—intended as a temporary measure—became a permanent institutional barrier. Coupled with the fallout from the 1972 Sindhi Language Bill, the Urdu-speaking urban population found itself increasingly excluded from public sector employment and higher administrative cadres.

The consequences were profound. Disenchantment set in, and the community's participation in civil service examinations (CSS) declined sharply over subsequent decades. Deprived of traditional avenues for upward social mobility and misdirected by ethnic identity politics, a community once celebrated for its intellectual rigor saw its youth drift into political parochialism, street violence, and economic alienation. While many pivoted successfully to corporate sectors, medicine, law, and entrepreneurship, the community's presence in state decision-making shrank significantly.

Pakistan cannot afford the continued institutional marginalization of its urban intellectual centers. The solution does not lie in perpetual grievance or ethnic factionalism, but in an intellectual and educational renaissance.

The Urdu-speaking community must honor the legacy of its founders by re-engaging with statecraft. Restoring academic rigor, pursuing competitive public service examinations, and re-entering civil administration with the same integrity demonstrated by its forefathers is the surest path toward national reintegration. By reclaiming their identity as "men of the pen," the descendants of Pakistan's original administrators can once again become essential architects of a modernized, merit-based republic.

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WATER IS LIFE: HOUSTON GATHERING HIGHLIGHTS PAKISTAN'S CLEAN WATER CHALLENGE



By Nusrat Haris

HOUSTON: Some fundraising events are remembered for the amount of money they raise. Others leave a deeper impression because they remind us why a cause matters in the first place.

The recent fundraising event organized by the Human Necessity Foundation (HNF) in Houston brought together members of the Pakistani-American community, philanthropists and prominent personalities around one fundamental issue: access to clean and safe drinking water in Pakistan.

Displayed prominently behind the stage were the words "WATER IS LIFE." Throughout the evening, that message reflected a reality faced by millions of people for whom something as basic as safe drinking water cannot always be taken for granted.

The Human Necessity Foundation was established in 2015 by Capt. Sheikh Javed, with the late Junaid Jamshed associated with the organization as an honorary founding member. Clean drinking water has remained one of the foundation's central areas of work, including solar-powered filtration projects designed for communities where access to safe water and reliable infrastructure is limited.

Its water initiatives have reached areas including Tharparkar, Korangi, Manga Mandi, Nooriabad, Faisalabad, Matiari, Sadiqabad and Murree. A major solar-powered water project in Korangi was also established in memory of Junaid Jamshed, continuing his association with humanitarian work even after his passing.

That legacy was visible at the Houston gathering through the presence of Taimoor Junaid Jamshed, Junaid Jamshed's son, representing a younger generation connected to the humanitarian efforts his father supported.

Another prominent voice of the evening was Fauzia Kasuri, Senior Executive Director of Human Necessity Foundation, who reiterated the importance of clean drinking water and highlighted the continuing difficulties faced by communities across Pakistan. Her message brought the discussion back to a simple reality: water is not merely a development issue. It directly affects health, education and quality of life.

Renowned Pakistani actor Faysal Qureshi was also present and participated in the fundraising effort, using his public presence to help draw greater attention to the cause.

The statistics explain why this conversation matters. UNICEF data indicate that while approximately 91 percent of Pakistan's population has access to at least a basic drinking-water service, only around 45 percent has access to safely managed drinking water. UNICEF has also reported that bacterial contamination of household drinking water remains widespread in Pakistan.

That distinction is critical: having access to water does not necessarily mean having access to safe water.

The consequences extend far beyond thirst. Contaminated water can contribute to disease, while in communities where water must be collected from distant sources, the responsibility often falls disproportionately on women and children. Hours spent obtaining water can mean hours taken away from education, work and family life.

Pakistan's recurring floods and climate-related disasters have further complicated the situation by damaging water and sanitation infrastructure and contaminating existing supplies.

As someone who attended the Houston event, what stayed with me was not simply the fundraising taking place in the room. It was the contrast between two very different realities.

For many of us living in the United States, clean water arrives with the turn of a faucet. We rarely stop to think about it. Yet for families in vulnerable communities thousands of miles away, obtaining safe water can still shape the course of an entire day.

The purpose of highlighting this gathering is not to solicit donations or promote any organization. Rather, it is to draw attention to the issue that brought people together that evening. Human Necessity Foundation is one organization working in this area, alongside national and international efforts addressing Pakistan's broader water and sanitation challenges.

Perhaps that is also the significance of gatherings like this. Beyond fundraising, they make an issue visible.

Looking at the stage that evening, the words "WATER IS LIFE" seemed less like a slogan and more like a statement of fact.

We speak frequently about education, healthcare, economic opportunity and development. But all of them depend upon something much more fundamental.

Before almost everything else, life begins with water.

Nusrat Haris
Broadcast Journalist,
Entrepreneur & Social Activist

A thought for de-escalation

Secretary of State Marco Rubio hints at a possible meeting between Trump and his Iranian counterpart

There is a breath of fresh air as de-escalation moves onto the agenda of the warring sides. The contention from Tehran that it is willing to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, provided Washington eases military pressure and lifts the blockade of Iranian ports, is a welcome development. For many, it is déjà vu. Both the US and Iran had reached a similar understanding following their agreement in Islamabad, and global supply chains was heaving a sigh of relief as oil prices had slumped back to $80 a barrel.

This development has luckily coincided with Secretary of State Marco Rubio hinting at a possible meeting between President Trump and his Iranian counterpart, Masoud Pezeshkian, on the sidelines of the 81st session of the UN General Assembly. That, however, is a utopian thought as far as the Islamic Republic is concerned. Iran's military brass has recently upped the ante by saying it is ready for a long war, and this time around, all American interests in the region would be its targets.

Iran's demand - that the US should agree on a timeline for how the process will move forward - can be worked out. This demand, incidentally, has come a day after Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met with high-ranking Iranian officials in his earnest efforts to iron out a deal to end the stalemate. This makes a perfect case for reverting to diplomacy and picking up where the Islamabad MoU left off. A cooling-off phase is desired during which a ceasefire comes into force and Tehran convinces the Houthis to step back. The warfare deep inside Saudi Arabia, which is under attack from the Yemeni militia, is proving lethal to oil supplies on both sides of the Red Sea.

There is an opportunity amid the disaster for the UN, too, to revive its image. It must play a role in forging a consensus between Iran and the US. This will not only help further prospects for peace in the Middle East and beyond, but also strengthen the weakened muscles of international law. The UNGA needs to return to its Uniting for Peace resolution and broker a thaw without delay.

Saudi Arabia's 96th National Day

From Glorious Heritage to Global Influence; A Kingdom Rising with Vision and Purpose

'Saudi Arabia has a proud heritage, a confident present, ambitious leadership, a transforming economy, stronger international engagement, developing defense capabilities, and a future built around the potential of its people'.

Syed Feroz Ahmed
Houston , Texas

Saudi Arabia celebrates its 96th National Day on September 23, 2026.

National Day is a special occasion to celebrate the Kingdom's remarkable journey, its proud identity and its bright future. It is a day of happiness, unity and gratitude. A day when people come together to remember the past, appreciate the present and look forward to tomorrow with confidence.

The story of Saudi Arabia is a story of unity, determination and strong leadership. From its foundation, the Kingdom has continued to grow while protecting its traditions, values and cultural heritage. Today, Saudi Arabia stands as a modern and ambitious nation, proud of its history and confident about its future.

One of the most important chapters in the Kingdom's modern journey is the vision led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. His leadership has brought a strong sense of ambition and a clear belief that Saudi Arabia can achieve much more.

Under his vision, the Kingdom is working to create a future with greater opportunities for its people. Economic development, technology, tourism, education, culture, sports, investment and innovation are becoming important parts of the country's transformation.

But the true meaning of this transformation goes beyond new cities, major projects and modern technology. At its heart is the belief that the people of Saudi Arabia are the country's greatest strength.

The Crown Prince has placed young people at the center of the Kingdom's future. Saudi youth are being encouraged to learn, create, lead and take part in building their country. Their ideas, energy and ambition are helping to shape a new Saudi Arabia.

This is an inspiring message for the younger generation; the future is not something to simply wait for. It is something to build.

Saudi Arabia's development is also a beautiful example of how a country can move forward while remaining proud of its roots. The Kingdom continues to value its Islamic heritage, Arabic language, traditions, hospitality and cultural identity.

Modernization does not mean forgetting the past. It means taking the strength of the past and using it to build a better future.

The Kingdom's transformation has also opened new doors for the world to discover Saudi Arabia. Its historical places, natural beauty, cultural traditions and hospitality are receiving greater attention. Tourism, entertainment, sports and cultural activities are creating new opportunities and allowing people from around the world to experience the warmth and richness of Saudi society.

The 96th National Day is therefore more than a celebration of history. It is a celebration of possibility.

It is a reminder that great achievements begin with a dream, but dreams become reality through hard work, courage, patience and determination.

Saudi Arabia today is looking toward a future where its people can achieve their full potential. It is a future where young men and women can become entrepreneurs, scientists, professionals, artists, athletes, innovators and leaders.

Every generation has a responsibility to contribute to the progress of its country. The generation of today has been given an extraordinary opportunity to take the achievements of the past and build something even greater for the generations to come.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's vision represents this spirit of looking forward. It is a vision built around ambition, confidence and the belief that there should be no limit to what Saudi Arabia can achieve.

Strengthening the Kingdom's Security and Defense

An important part of this national transformation is the strengthening of Saudi Arabia's defense capabilities and national security. Under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Kingdom has placed greater emphasis on developing a more capable and self reliant defense sector, strengthening military readiness, supporting local defense industries and developing Saudi expertise and technology.

This approach reflects a broader commitment to protecting the Kingdom's sovereignty, security and national interests while developing capabilities within the country. A strong and secure nation provides an important foundation for sustainable economic growth, development and prosperity.

National security and economic development are closely connected. A country that has confidence in its security can focus more effectively on investment, innovation, education, infrastructure and opportunities for its people.

A Stronger Role in the World

Saudi Arabia's transformation is also reflected in its growing engagement with the international community. The Kingdom has continued to build relationships with countries and institutions around the world, expanding cooperation in areas such as trade, investment, energy, technology, culture, security and diplomacy.

This international engagement is important to Saudi Arabia's future. The Kingdom is not only developing its own economy and society; it is also seeking to become a stronger partner in a rapidly changing world.

The ability to maintain strong international relationships while protecting national interests is an important part of modern leadership. Saudi Arabia's position, resources, economic strength and strategic importance give it an important role in regional and global affairs.

Looking Ahead With Confidence

As Saudi Arabia celebrates its 96th National Day, the country has many reasons to look ahead with confidence.

The journey that began with unity continues through ambition. The achievements of the past provide the foundation for the opportunities of tomorrow.

The progress of the Kingdom is not measured only by major projects, new cities or economic development. It is also measured by the confidence of its people, the opportunities available to its youth, the growth of its national capabilities and the determination to build a better future.

The story of Saudi Arabia is ultimately a story of determination.

It is the story of a nation that knows where it came from, understands what it has achieved and continues to believe that its greatest chapters are still ahead.

On this 96th National Day, let us celebrate not only the Kingdom's history, but also its dreams.

Let us celebrate the people who built the nation, the leaders who guide its journey and the young generation that will carry its ambitions forward.

A Legacy of Vision and Leadership

As we celebrate Saudi Arabia's 96th National Day, the journey of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman stands as an important chapter in the Kingdom's modern history. During his tenure, Saudi Arabia has pursued a broad transformation of its economy, strengthened the role of the private sector, expanded opportunities for its people and invested in new areas such as tourism, technology, culture, logistics and innovation.

At the same time, the Kingdom has continued to strengthen its position on the international stage, building partnerships and playing an increasingly active role in regional and global economic and diplomatic affairs. The progress achieved through Vision 2030 reflects a clear ambition to move Saudi Arabia toward a more diversified and resilient economy and a more influential role in the world.

His leadership has also placed national security and defense among the important pillars of the Kingdom's long term development. Strengthening defense capabilities, developing local defense industries, improving military readiness and building Saudi expertise and technology are part of a wider effort to create a more capable and self-reliant nation.

The greatest measure of leadership is not simply what has been achieved today, but the foundations being created for generations yet to come. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's vision has given the Kingdom a powerful sense of confidence and possibility; a belief that Saudi Arabia can preserve its proud identity while reaching boldly toward a new future.

As the Kingdom moves forward, this spirit of ambition, determination and national pride will remain a defining part of Saudi Arabia's success story.

Saudi Arabia's pride is in its heritage.Its strength is in its people. Its confidence is in its vision. Its security protects its progress.And its future is filled with possibility.

Happy 96th National Day to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Proud of its past. Strong in its present. Fearless in its vision for the future.

Learning on the ruins

98% of schools in Gaza damaged or destroyed; Unicef reports 660,000 students' education affected by Israeli onslaught

Hundreds of thousands of Gaza's children are returning to in-person schooling after nearly three years. But while the milestone is significant, it is hardly cause for celebration. Every school in the territory will be missing students who were killed by Israel's bloodthirsty security forces. About 98% of schools in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed, and Unicef reports that some 660,000 students' education has been affected by the Israeli onslaught. Those students are still thankful that their lives have turned out better than the 22,000 students and 770 education workers murdered by Israel.

Then there is the physical reality of the new academic year. With almost all school buildings unusable, students are crammed into tents, tarpaulins and sheet metal structures, with some classrooms furnished with only mattresses and a blackboard. Abject poverty means many parents can't afford basics such as books, pens or uniforms. Some students who were able to take classes online or on the phone said it is the first time they have met their teachers.

Meanwhile, Unesco said 95% of university campuses in Gaza have been affected, with 22 of the 38 campuses completely destroyed. Over 1,100 university staff and faculty members have been reported killed. Gaza used to have an education rate of 97% before Israel's bloodlust struck. Now, the Palestinian Ministry of Education has described the dismantling of the schools and universities as "educide", which is catchy, but takes away from the actual genocide around the schools.

Experts have noted that the assault on education is not just causing pain today or even tomorrow. The damage done by Israel will reverberate for several decades, as Gaza struggles to cope with the loss of hundreds of doctors, nurses, engineers and teachers who could have helped the impoverished territory rise. The poverty rate in Gaza is over 90%. Even if hostilities stopped today, the area lacks the base to sustain its student population through high school, let alone university. The international community could change this, but for that they would have to care.

Trump welcomes Xi to Washington with lavish praise

US President Donald Trump will host Chinese leader Xi Jinping at the White House on Thursday for a day full of pageantry, as the US president sought to set the agenda by saying that both sides agreed no new controls were needed on fast-evolving AI technology.

Trump personally greeted Xi on the tarmac on Wednesday, the first time in more than six decades that a US president has welcomed a foreign political leader at Joint Base Andrews near Washington.

He will lay on more pomp and ceremony on Thursday, treating his guest to a formal welcome on the White House South Lawn, a military flyover, talks in the Oval Office and finally a grand state banquet.

"Super Intelligence (SI) will be a big topic of discussion, but I want to leave it exactly where it is," Trump said on social media, using his new moniker for artificial intelligence. "That is China's position also."

In another post, Trump said 73-year-old Xi looked "strong, vibrant, and fit", following recent rumours about the Chinese leader's health.

But the warm welcome masks deep tensions over thorny topics including the trade war between the world's top two economies, and Beijing's diplomatic and economic support for Iran.

Xi urged cooperation in comments reported by Chinese state media shortly after his arrival, saying that China and the United States should be "partners rather than rivals".

Trade truce

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Wednesday announced a two-month extension of a trade truce that was due to expire in November.

Both sides are keen to avoid plunging back into the trade war sparked by the US president's sweeping global tariffs last year.

But while Trump, 80, boasts that he will get results from what he calls his "great relationship" with Xi, few breakthroughs are expected.

Instead, their third meeting since Trump returned to power is aimed at maintaining the broader detente.

Xi's first White House state visit in more than a decade will therefore be more about spectacle than substance.

The program includes a military inspection in the Rose Garden — which Trump recently paved over — and a gift-giving ceremony involving Trump's wife Melania and Xi's wife Peng Liyuan.

Trump and Xi will make remarks in the morning and again in the evening, though it remains unclear if there will be an opportunity for reporters to put questions to the two leaders.

The state dinner will feature a host of top US tech and AI company bosses — although Xi's delegation includes no chief executive officers (CEOs), sources told.

'They appreciate it'

Trump and Melania met the Chinese presidential couple on a red carpet at Joint Base Andrews, before a military band played the national anthems and US bombers roared overhead.

"I thought it was a great little meeting, a great greeting, and I think they appreciate it," Trump told reporters, brushing off the fact that Xi had not welcomed him at the airport for his Beijing state visit in May.



$110,000 Raised in Just 30 Minutes at Houston Human Necessity Foundation Fundraiser

The Pakistani-American community came together at Tempura Restaurant for a major fundraising evening supporting the Human Necessity Foundation, with Taimur Junaid Jamshed, actor Faisal Qureshi and social leader Fauzia Kasuri among the prominent participants. The foundation, founded by the late Junaid Jamshed, received more than $110,000 in contributions within 30 minutes, highlighting the community's strong support for humanitarian and charitable initiatives.

"Under Attack": Texas Muslim Community Urges Record Voter Turnout to Fight GOP Policies

Democratic judicial candidate Lattisha Palmer called on American Muslims in Texas to vote in record numbers this November to challenge state Republican policies. Speaking at a fundraiser hosted by Jamil Mawani and attended by prominent business and community leaders, Palmer—who could become the nation's first Muslim county judge—highlighted key issues including public school curricula and anti-immigrant measures.















WHO TRAINS THE MIND?

Oman's men's hockey team, which will face Pakistan in the group stage, has psychologist Abdullah al Noufali listed among its support staff, while Qatar's shooting team has also been preparing with a specialist sports psychologist as part of its technical and mental preparation for major competitions, including the Asian Games



By Nabil Tahir

The night before Pakistan's horseback archery team was due to compete at the World Nomad Games, Arshaq Naeem was carrying more than the pressure of hitting a target from a moving horse.

There were expectations, doubts and, as he puts it, a "cocktail of emotions". Wearing Pakistan's colours on a world stage was a privilege, but for the captain of the horseback archery team, it also brought what he describes as a considerable mental toll.

Training had prepared him for the physical challenge. Horseback archery demands balance and stamina while keeping an eye on the target as the horse strides forward, leaving the rider only seconds to aim and release the arrow. But training could not entirely recreate what awaited him on competition day.

"In training, when there is no external pressure or audience, nerves are relatively calm," says Naeem. "But the match-day experience is quite different. On match day you have just one chance. Your every move counts towards your final score."

That difference had troubled him before. Until the World Nomad Games, Naeem had never worked with a sports psychologist. He had relied on his coach and his own understanding to build what he calls his "psychological stamina". What he found particularly difficult was the sudden strain that could arrive on competition day, something he says he did not know how to manage.

It returned on the first day of the Nomad Games.

As athletes prepared to compete, Naeem felt a sudden surge of self-doubt. This time, however, sports psychologist Mohsin Nawaz was with the Pakistani contingent. He reminded Naeem of the hours he had spent practising. Together, they mentally rehearsed what could go wrong while he was shooting and considered how he might respond to different situations. Naeem also used positive self-talk and box breathing before mounting his horse.

A sports psychologist's presence at the World Nomad Games itself was unusual. The Traditional Sports and Games Pakistan Association had, for the first time, formally appointed a sports psychologist to work with its national contingent. For a support role that has long sat alongside coaches, physiotherapists and conditioning staff in elite sport elsewhere in the world, sports psychology remains far less routinely embedded across Pakistan's sporting structure.

When training meets pressure

For Nawaz, the difference between practice and competition is not simply the presence of a scoreboard. An athlete can spend months repeating the same movement in training, know the technique and possess the physical ability to execute it, yet find that the body responds differently when the same movement has to be performed with an audience watching and a result depending on it.

"There are a number of psychophysiological changes that take place when suddenly an athlete has to perform under pressure," says Nawaz. "This pressure cannot be copied in practice. It is exclusive to match day."

He recalls working with an athlete who possessed considerable physical strength, consistently performed well in practice and knew the techniques required of him. Yet when the final selection came, he failed to make the team.

"It was quite unexpected for me that such an excellent athlete would fail the final selection test," says Nawaz. When the two sat down for a mental assessment, he says they discovered a deeper fear: the athlete had convinced himself that something would go wrong at the last moment and he would not be selected.

"This belief triggered an uncontrollable amount of anxiety in him, and he could not deliver what he had learnt in practice," says Nawaz. They worked on reconstructing that belief and, according to Nawaz, when the athlete next appeared for selection, he made the team.

Naeem knew the difference between training and competition. "It happens quite often that while shooting the arrow, all of a sudden the nerves get triggered," he says. "It happens rarely in training when there is no external pressure or audience and the nerves are relatively calm. But the match-day experience is quite different. Simply saying 'Do not take pressure' does not work at all," he says. Mental toughness, he argues, has to be practised rather than demanded.

For Naeem, part of the training for mental grit involved examining the conversation taking place inside his own head. When Naeem began analysing those thoughts, he recognised a negative internal dialogue that was contributing to sudden bursts of anxiety. Before mounting, at the Nomad Games, he used positive self-talk and box breathing. He and Nawaz also mentally rehearsed possible problems he could encounter while shooting and considered alternative responses.

The objective was not to make the pressure disappear. It was to prepare Naeem for what to do when it arrived.

When should the mind be trained?

The World Nomad Games did more than introduce Naeem to a different way of handling competition pressure. They also made him question why that training had come so late.

Before reaching the international stage, he had never had access to a sports psychologist through an academy, club or domestic competition. Until then, he says, he had largely relied on his coach and his own experiences to work out how to handle the mental side of the sport.

"Now that I have met a sports psychologist, I believe I was missing out on a major valuable part of performance," says Naeem. "I had little idea how to deal with the cocktail of mental challenges that I had previously experienced."

Looking back, he no longer sees psychological preparation as something an athlete should encounter only when an international competition is approaching.

"Access to a sports psychologist is not an option, but in fact is as important as physical training," he says. "Mental training starts much before the actual competition, or even before the start of your sports career."

It is an argument Professor Dr Ejaz Asghar, Dean of the School of Sports, Rehabilitation and Allied Sciences at the Health Services Academy in Islamabad, makes even more strongly. Asghar believes psychological preparation should begin alongside an athlete's technical and physical development, rather than being introduced once a player has already reached a national camp. "Mental preparation is needed from the beginning of the practice sessions," he says. "Unless you practise these mental rehearsals, you can't excel."

The distinction is important because sports psychology, Asghar says, is still sometimes misunderstood as something an athlete needs only when there is a mental health problem. "It's a misconception," he says. Athletes practise physical, technical and tactical skills repeatedly until they become familiar with them; he argues psychological skills should be approached in much the same way. "You should prepare yourself mentally with regard to your mental toughness, and it must be a part of your regular daily training."

That means the question of access cannot begin and end with Pakistan's national teams. An athlete may spend years moving through academies, clubs and domestic competitions before reaching a national camp. By then, Asghar argues, much of the athlete's behaviour under pressure has already been shaped.

Even if a sports psychologist is introduced at national level, he says, there is still work that can be done. During a national camp, Asghar suggests a series of sessions could introduce athletes to techniques such as deep breathing, imagery, visualisation and progressive muscular relaxation. But he sees that as an intervention rather than a substitute for years of preparation.

"Sports psychologists should be part of your team, just like coaches, trainers, fitness trainers and conditioning coaches," says the sports psychologist who is currently with the Chess team in Uzbekistan. "That's the way we can enhance regular performance and build teamwork as well."

Nawaz makes a similar argument about where that support should exist. He wants access to sports psychologists not only in national federations, but in sports academies, clubs and universities.

"It is a mental support system that is necessary before the game, during the game and after the game," says Nawaz, because the psychological demands on an athlete do not suddenly begin when they walk into an international arena.

A place in the team

Asghar is currently working as a mental trainer with Pakistan's national rifle shooting team. He says he has been holding regular sessions with the shooters, including during their preparation for the Asian Games.

"They are practising regularly. They are taking advice and guidelines regarding this on a regular basis," says Asghar, who believes the arrangement should not be unusual. "Sports psychologists should be part of your team, just like coaches, trainers, fitness trainers and conditioning coaches."

For Olympian shooter Kishmala Talat, the support comes after years in which mental preparation was present, but was not a separate, structured part of her training. As a young shooter, she says, much of her understanding of pressure and nervousness came through competing, making mistakes and learning from experience.

That has changed ahead of the Asian Games. Talat says the National Rifle Association of Pakistan and Army Marksmanship Unit have provided the shooters with access to a qualified sports psychologist and structured mental-performance training.

The need for it is particularly apparent in a sport where even a change in breathing, heartbeat or concentration can affect the execution of a shot. Talat says nervousness can make her heartbeat more noticeable and alter her breathing and concentration. The challenge is not necessarily to eliminate those nerves, but to prevent them from affecting what comes next. "If I carry one bad shot into the next shot, then one mistake can become two, three or more," she says.

Looking back at her progression from domestic competition to the Olympics, Talat believes this kind of preparation should begin much earlier. "I definitely think mental performance should be developed alongside technical and physical skills from the academy level," she says.

The contrast within the same Asian Games contingent illustrates how uneven access can be. Shooting has incorporated mental-performance support into its preparation, while no sports psychologist has been identified with the wider Pakistan contingent.

Elsewhere, psychological support is appearing more explicitly in preparations for the same Games. India is travelling with a large sports-science support setup, with mental-health experts included alongside doctors and physiotherapists. Oman's men's hockey team, which will face Pakistan in the group stage, has psychologist Abdullah al Noufali listed among its support staff, while Qatar's shooting team has also been preparing with a specialist sports psychologist as part of its technical and mental preparation for major competitions, including the Asian Games.

Pakistan is not entirely outside this shift. Nawaz's appointment for the World Nomad Games gave traditional-sports athletes access to structured psychological preparation, while Pakistan cricket has introduced psychological assessment and mental-skills work at youth level. Hockey, too, has moved towards incorporating sports psychology into its high-performance setup.

For Nawaz, though, these individual appointments do not yet amount to consistent access across Pakistani sport. "Pakistani athletes are still struggling with their access to a sports psychologist domestically and internationally," he says, arguing that representation remains limited.

That perhaps leaves Pakistan somewhere between recognition and routine. Sports psychology is no longer entirely absent from the system: a horseback archer can work with Nawaz, shooters can receive structured mental-performance support and younger cricketers can be introduced to mental-performance work. The question is whether an athlete receives that support because it is considered a normal part of development, or simply because they happen to belong to a team that has decided to provide it.

Beyond the finish line

For Naeem, the value of psychological preparation became clear only after he had experienced both sides of it. For much of his career, pressure was something he had learnt to deal with largely through experience, his coach and whatever methods he could develop himself. At the World Nomad Games, for the first time, there was someone specifically responsible for helping him understand what was happening when those nerves arrived.

The difference was not that he stopped feeling them.

On the first day of competition, the self-doubt still came. There was still anxiety before mounting the horse, still the knowledge that one mistake could affect his score. What had changed was his response. He could slow his breathing, recognise the negative conversation beginning inside his head and return to the situations he and Nawaz had already rehearsed.

It is a relatively small change in the machinery surrounding an athlete: another specialist alongside the people responsible for technique, fitness, conditioning and recovery. But for Naeem, it changed how he understood preparation itself.

"Access to the sports psychologist is not an option," he says. "It is as important as physical training, because mental training starts much before the actual competition."

For Pakistan, perhaps that is where the larger question now sits. There are signs that the mind is beginning to find a place in the country's sporting setup, from shooters receiving structured mental-performance training ahead of the Asian Games to young cricketers being introduced to such work earlier in their development. But Kishmala's and Naeem's experiences also show how much athletes can learn through competition before that structured support arrives. The question remains not whether they can learn to handle pressure, but how far they must travel in their careers before someone teaches them how.

Pakistan stands shoulder to shoulder with KSA to safeguard its sovereignty, security: PM

Continued from front page

reiterating strongest condemnation of the recent Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia, reaffirmed that Pakistan stood unwaveringly, shoulder to shoulder, with the Kingdom in safeguarding its sovereignty, security and the sanctity of Islam's holiest sites.

The prime minister, in his message on the Saudi National Day annually observed on September 23, said that any threat to the sanctity and security of the Haramain Sharifain deeply wounds the sentiments of Muslims across the world, referring to the recent reprehensible attempted drone attack by Houthis on the Holy City of Makkah Al-Mukarramah.

Extending his warmest felicitations to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), and the brotherly people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, he said that the Kingdom's remarkable journey of progress and transformation was a source of pride and admiration not only for the Saudi nation, but also for Pakistan.

The prime minister, who is currently in New York to attend the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly, said that under the dynamic and visionary leadership of the crown prince, Saudi Arabia continued to make impressive strides towards greater prosperity, modernisation and innovation.

He said that Pakistan took immense pride in its historic and time-tested brotherhood with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, rooted in faith, mutual trust and an abiding bond between our peoples.

"Today, under the patronage of MBS, this brotherhood is growing into an even stronger strategic partnership, underpinned by our shared commitment to peace, security and the unity of the Muslim Ummah. Together, we have proudly signed the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement and the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement," he remarked.

Concluding with the slogan of "long live Pakistan-Saudi Arabia brotherhood," he prayed that the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia brotherhood would continue to grow from strength to strength.

Chairman Senate congratulates Saudi leadership, people on Saudi National Day

Chairman Senate Yousaf Raza Gilani extended his heartfelt greetings to the custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, the Saudi leadership and the brotherly people of Saudi Arabia on the 96th National Day of the Kingdom.

In his message, Gilani said Saudi National Day was a significant occasion to celebrate national unity, pride, progress and the Kingdom's remarkable development.

He expressed his best wishes for Saudi Arabia's continued peace, stability, prosperity and success.

Gilani said Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relations were rooted in shared faith, brotherhood, history, mutual respect and strong people-to-people ties.

Describing Saudi Arabia as a trusted and steadfast friend of Pakistan, he noted that the recent strategic mutual defence agreement further reflected the depth and enduring strength of bilateral relations.

The Chairman Senate emphasised that Pakistan attaches great importance to its fraternal ties with Saudi Arabia and remains committed to further strengthening parliamentary, economic, trade, investment, energy, education, health and cultural cooperation.

He expressed the hope that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia would continue working together for peace, security, prosperity and unity in the Muslim Ummah, while praying for the continued progress and well-being of the Kingdom and further strengthening of the brotherly ties between the two countries.

President Zardari felicitates Saudi leadership, people

President Asif Ali Zardari felicitated the leadership and people of Saudi Arabia on the occasion of the Kingdom's 96th National Day, saying the signing of the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement and the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement had further strengthened the strategic dimension of the longstanding Pakistan-Saudi partnership.

In his letters to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, President Zardari said Pakistan and Saudi Arabia shared "deep-rooted ties of faith, shared history, friendship, mutual trust and solidarity."

The president said the two countries "greatly value their close relations, marked by strong cooperation and mutual support at bilateral, regional and international fora."

He said the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement and the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement "mark important milestones in the long-standing partnership", adding that the agreements would contribute to "peace, stability and security in the region."

President Zardari expressed confidence that the "fraternal relations" between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia would continue to deepen and expand across diverse areas of mutual interest for the mutual benefit of the two countries and their peoples.

In his message to the Saudi crown prince and prime minister, President Zardari said he looked forward to welcoming him to Pakistan "at an early and convenient date".

He also expressed his desire to work closely with MBS "to further deepen and broaden bilateral cooperation" between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Trump hesitates over Saudi push for US strikes on Yemen's Houthis

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is facing a difficult choice over Saudi Arabia's demand for US military support against the Houthis in Yemen, as Washington weighs the risk of opening another front while already engaged in a wider conflict with Iran.

After weeks of hesitation, Trump reportedly ordered the Pentagon to prepare airstrikes against Houthi targets following a direct appeal from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, then days later backed away, deciding against strikes for now, according to administration officials cited in U.S. media.

The account could not be independently verified. The reversal highlights competing interests: Saudi Arabia is a key U.S. partner in the war against Iran, but the Houthis — the armed movement that controls much of northern Yemen and is aligned with Tehran — have so far avoided attacking US ships, giving Trump reason to stay out.

Saudi forces have come under renewed pressure as the Houthis expand attacks around the Red Sea and seize ground near the strategic Bab al-Mandab Strait. Riyadh has pressed Washington for help, while also showing it can restrict U.S. military access when its interests diverge.

The strategic risks are significant: US officials and regional analysts doubt another bombing campaign could force a Houthi retreat, after the group survived more than 50 days of intensive U.S. strikes in 2025.

A proposed Yemeni ground offensive depends on factions that have struggled against Houthi advances and remain divided.

That earlier campaign was costly. U.S. Central Command said it struck more than 1,000 targets, consuming munitions at a rate of roughly $1 billion in the first month, yet the Houthis kept attacking shipping and demonstrated they could absorb sustained pressure.

They have since rebuilt missile and drone capabilities. The stakes extend well beyond Yemen: the Bab al-Mandab and the nearby Strait of Hormuz are critical arteries for global trade and energy, and renewed hostilities could further disrupt maritime commerce and energy markets already strained by the wider Gulf conflict.

For now Trump has chosen delay. But with Riyadh pushing for deeper involvement and the Iran conflict continuing to reshape the region, the

Texas Muslim Coalitions and Interfaith Allies Launch Voter Drive Over School Curriculum Concerns

Continued from front page

Houston have unified on a joint platform to mobilize voters and counter discriminatory narratives through civic engagement.

The initiative, spearheaded by the Islamic Society of Greater Houston (ISGH), brought together community leaders, educators, and non-Muslim interfaith advocates following a summit and press conference aimed at confronting anti-Muslim bias and misleading educational content in public schools.

A Coalition Built for Civic Action

The mobilization comes after state education officials approved revised social studies standards, which community leaders and interfaith allies criticize for presenting one-sided and misleading depictions of Islamic history. Critics warn that incomplete or unfair instructional material risks embedding harmful stereotypes and marginalizing Muslim students in Texas classrooms.

"We are not asking the board to hide uncomfortable history, but to apply the same intellectual standard to everyone," said Daa'iyah Farooq, a retired Houston school counselor who joined interfaith leaders at the press conference.

In response, ISGH—which serves tens of thousands of families and operates numerous Islamic centers across the Houston region—convened local organizations and non-Muslim faith groups to establish a unified front focused on democratic action.

Harnessing the Ballot Box Against Hate

Addressing reporters, community leaders emphasized that active participation in elections is the most powerful tool to defeat hate-driven policies and demand accountability from elected decision-makers.

As part of the effort, area mosques and community centers are hosting ongoing voter registration drives, aiming to sign up approximately 1,000 voters every week.

"If you all go out and vote this time, Muslims' vote will make a difference in Houston and Harris County," stated ISGH President Emran Gazi, highlighting the strategic influence of Texas's growing Muslim electorate.

Advocating for Educational Fairness

Beyond the ballot box, coalition leaders pledged to maintain a presence at local school board meetings and state policy hearings to advocate for fair, balanced, and historically accurate curricula.

Organizers wrapped up the press briefing by urging all eligible residents to verify their registration status, assist neighbors and family members in registering, and make their voices heard in upcoming municipal and state elections.

Junaid Jamshed's Legacy Lives On: Human Necessity Foundation Fundraiser Exceeds Goal in Record Time

Continued from front page

displayed prominently behind the stage: "WATER IS LIFE." The event aimed to highlight the severe water crisis in Pakistan, where UNICEF data shows that while 91% of the population has access to basic water services, only around 45% has access to safely managed drinking water, with bacterial contamination remaining widespread.

Established in 2015 by Capt. Sheikh Javed, the Human Necessity Foundation counts the late cultural icon, Naat reciter, and singer Junaid Jamshed as an honorary founding member. HNF specializes in solar-powered filtration projects in regions with limited infrastructure, serving areas such as Tharparkar, Korangi, Manga Mandi, Nooriabad, Faisalabad, Matiari, Sadiqabad, and Murree. A major solar-powered water facility was notably established in Korangi in memory of Junaid Jamshed.

Faheem Akhoond delivered the introductory address, while Rehan Ahmed and Nabeel conducted the evening's program. Prominent figures in attendance included Taimoor Junaid Jamshed, who represented his late father's humanitarian legacy; Fauzia Kasuri, Senior Executive Director of HNF, who highlighted how contaminated water directly affects health, education, and quality of life across Pakistan; Faysal Qureshi, renowned Pakistani actor and chief guest, who used his public platform to rally support for the cause; and Emran Gazi, President of the Islamic Society of Greater Houston.

In his address, Akhoond expressed deep gratitude to all who attended and contributed. He praised the dedicated organizing team that made the event possible, giving special recognition to Arif Azeem, Emmad ud din, Faisal Khan, Sadiq Khan, Mrs. Rubab Bilal, Mrs. Mahajabeen Zaidi, Mrs. Anjum Kamran, and Mrs. Sambreen. The program concluded with a cultural and spiritual dimension, featuring a performance by renowned Qawwali artist Sher Miandad Khan. The evening served as a stark reminder of the contrast between everyday life in the U.S. and the daily struggle for clean water faced by vulnerable communities thousands of miles away.

Karwan-e-Hayat to Host Cross-Cultural Mental Health Gala

Continued from front page

Institute for Mental Health Care, is set to hold a high-profile program on Friday, September 25, 2026, bringing together community leaders, healthcare advocates, and dignitaries to highlight advancements in mental health support.

The evening event, scheduled to kick off at 7:00 PM with a welcoming meet-and-greet, features a blend of formal proceedings, executive briefings, and international community engagement. Reflecting strong ties between national and international supporters, the formal program will feature the national anthems of both Pakistan and the United States.

Opening with a traditional Tilawat following Maghrib prayer, the gathering will feature key operational and vision updates from KeH leadership. Mohammad Salim, Board Chair, alongside Rahal Saeed, Chief Executive Officer, will present a comprehensive introduction to Karwan-e-Hayat's ongoing psychiatric care initiatives and community outreach campaigns. Attendees will also view informative video presentations showcasing the institute's impact across mental healthcare facilities.

Key highlights of the schedule include:

7:40 PM – 8:00 PM: Executive Welcome and Introduction by Board Chair Mohammad Salim and CEO Rahal Saeed.

8:10 PM – 8:35 PM: Addresses by the Chief Guest and distinguished Guests of Honor.

8:35 PM – 8:45 PM: Interactive Discussion and Q&A session.

8:45 PM – 8:55 PM: Closing remarks and Vote of Thanks delivered by Yacoob Suttar, Board Vice-Chair of KeH.

The program will conclude with a community dinner at 8:55 PM, offering guests an opportunity to network and discuss future collaborative efforts in expanding accessible mental healthcare services.

U.S. Senate, Texas Railroad Commission races remain tight less than month before early voting, TSU poll finds

Continued from front page

the midterm elections in Texas could be heading for a photo finish, with Republicans in danger of losing at least one statewide contest to Democrats for the first time in more than 30 years.

The first poll, produced by Texas Southern University's Barbara Jordan Public Policy Research and Survey Center, provides the latest indication that Democrats could prevail in the U.S. Senate contest to replace Republican incumbent Sen. John Cornyn. While Attorney General Ken Paxton soundly beat Cornyn in the Republican Party's primary runoff, Paxton has trailed Democratic state Rep. James Talarico in multiple surveys since mid-summer.

TSU's poll shows Talarico leading Paxton 47% to 46%, with 3% supporting Libertarian Ted Brown and 4% undecided. Talarico's lead is within the margin of error. Paxton holds the lead among white likely voters by 19 percentage points, while Talarico holds a 19-percentage point lead among Latino voters and a 77-percentage point lead among Black voters.

Mark Jones, a Rice University political scientist who coauthored the survey with TSU political scientist Michael Adams, said that President Trump is acting as a drag on the Republican ticket across the board in Texas.

"Normally in Texas, a Republican running a statewide race starts off with a cushion of somewhere between seven and 10 [percentage] points, but this time around Trump has effectively eliminated most of that cushion, meaning that candidate quality is now playing a larger role than it has in the past when simply having an 'R' next to your name pretty much guaranteed victory," Jones said.

The TSU survey found Trump's approval rating in Texas is seven points underwater, with Trump viewed favorably by 46% of likely voters and unfavorably by 53%.

"The principal factors that are dragging President Trump's approval ratings down are a general disapproval of his performance in his job as president and his handling of policy issues ranging from the economy to immigration and border security," Jones said.

Paxton has been hampered in his general election race with Talarico by a record of political scandals, including impeachment by the Texas House of Representatives on allegations of corruption and a messy divorce trial hinging on Paxton's marital infidelities.

Another nailbiter contest is the race for Texas Railroad Commissioner, with Republican Bo French leading Democratic state Rep. Jon Rosenthal 44% to 42%, with 3% supporting Libertarian Arthur DiBianca and 11% undecided. French's lead also falls within the margin of error.

As in the U.S. Senate race, scandal is playing a role in the Railroad Commissioner contest. French is experiencing backlash from his own party to his social media posts of a photo from a University of Texas football game. The photo shows a crowd of people of color, who French denigrated, without evidence, as foreigners.

Among the other major contests, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott holds a four-point lead over Democratic state Rep. Gina Hinojosa. Republican Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick leads Democratic state Rep. Vikki Goodwin by six percentage points. In the race to succeed Paxton as state attorney general, Republican state Sen. Mayes Middleton leads Democratic state Sen. Nathan Johnson by five points.

"One thing that is important to keep in mind is that, across the board, the Republican statewide candidates tend to have more resources than their Democratic rivals, meaning that they should be able to shift some of the undecided vote to them as well as boost Republican turnout in the home stretch simply through outspending their Democratic opponents," Jones said.

That undecided vote is significant, as illustrated by another poll just released by the nonpartisan public policy research organization Texas 2036.That poll finds that one in six Texas voters is both unaffiliated with a political party and undecided how to vote with less than a month remaining before the start of early voting.

The Texas 2036 poll finds that only half of the respondents say they're willing to vote exclusively for one party, with 26% saying they plan to vote only for Republican candidates and 24% planning to vote only for Democrats.

"One of the key things that stands out to me as we break down the interests of these voters, these last ones to make their decisions, is how much enthusiasm they have for kind of the bread-and-butter issues that impact regular life," said John Hryhorchuk, senior vice president for policy and advocacy at Texas 2036. "Improving educational outcomes, healthcare affordability, energy prices, childcare — these issues really shine through in the data as the things that they themselves are saying would make them more likely to support a candidate."

Mamdani brands Netanyahu 'architect of genocide' after hosting Trump

Continued from front page

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu an "architect of genocide against Palestinians," insisting that international accountability must apply to leaders accused of grave violations of international law, shortly after a notably cordial meeting with President Donald Trump.

In an interview with CNN, Mamdani described Netanyahu as "a war criminal" and "an architect of a horrific genocide against Palestinians in Gaza," and said the Israeli leader should be subject to the International Criminal Court's arrest warrant when he travels to New York for the UN General Assembly.

The ICC issued warrants in November 2024 for Netanyahu and his former defence minister over war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza; a UN commission of inquiry and leading rights groups have separately concluded that Israel's campaign amounts to genocide, a charge Israel rejects.

Mamdani said he raised accountability during his meeting with Trump at Gracie Mansion, the mayoral residence, arguing that no leader should be above the law.

He has previously said Netanyahu should be arrested if he entered the city, but has since acknowledged he lacks the legal authority to do so, and said he will not join planned demonstrations around Netanyahu's visit.

Netanyahu, who is scheduled to address the General Assembly later in the week, has hit back at Mamdani and vowed to use his speech to attack the mayor.

The meeting with Trump marked a moment of political pragmatism.

Despite sharp differences over immigration and foreign policy, the two discussed federal immigration enforcement and a multibillion-dollar housing project, and Trump publicly praised Mamdani, who said he would engage with anyone able to deliver tangible relief for New Yorkers.

The exchange places the war in Gaza and the ICC warrant back before a global audience as world leaders gather in New York — a Muslim mayor of America's largest city pressing the case for accountability against a visiting head of government his own guest, the U.S. president, continues to shield.

Retired Lt Gen Nauman Mahmood appointed first head of Makkah Defence Alliance secretariat



The Foreign Office (FO) announced that retired Lieutenant General Nauman Mahmood had been appointed as the first secretary general of the Makkah Defence Alliance between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye.

"The government of Pakistan is pleased to announce the appointment of Lt Gen Nauman Mahmood, Hilal-i-Imtiaz (Military), (retired), as the first secretary general pursuant to the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement," the FO said in a handout, referring to the alliance's initial name.

"The secretary general will lead the general secretariat of the alliance being established at Riyadh," the FO said.

The agreement — signed by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye on August 7 — empowers member states to treat an attack against one of them as an attack against all.

Its inaugural meeting was held on Aug 31, where officials from all member states met in Istanbul to establish the institutional structure of the alliance and Pakistan was picked to head its secretariat in Riyadh.

Under the decisions taken during the meeting, a secretariat headed by a secretary general will be established in Saudi Arabia to support the alliance's work under the agreement. The secretariat will initially be headed by a secretary general from Pakistan for three years.

The three countries also agreed to take steps to further institutionalise their cooperation in a manner that would enhance their solidarity, ensure the credibility and effectiveness of their collective deterrence and defence, and contribute to regional efforts and cooperative security towards a just, inclusive and lasting peace.

Since its signing, there has been conversation about the possibility of its expansion, with Turkiye initially suggesting the possibility of Egypt's inclusion. Though there has been no confirmation from Cairo.

From Pakistan, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar clarified soon after the signing that the pact was defensive in nature, with the latter saying that it was also "open to any country in the region" willing to uphold its fundamental principles.

However, when Foreign Office spokesperson Sajjad Haider Khan was asked about possibility of the pact's expansion during a weekly media briefing on Sept 10, he said an expansion was not on the cards at that point.

The three countries first needed to solidify the new organisation before considering opening it to other states with similar threat perceptions and requirements, he explained.

Meanwhile, Inter-Services Public Relations Director General Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said last week that the alliance has no "regional aspirations", adding that it was intended for collective deterrence.

Meanwhile, as the US-Iran conflict continues to expand with Yemen's Houthi rebels attacking Saudi Arabia, he also said that Pakistan would go to "any extent" to defend Saudi Arabia, adding that Islamabad's commitment to the kingdom's security was "unconditional".

Talarico works to reach Black voters in his bid to win a US Senate seat as a Democrat in Texas



HOUSTON — Juli McShay had a few pointed questions for James Talarico, the Democratic nominee for the U.S. Senate in Texas, when she stood up during a town hall in Houston.

Black audiences like this one are key to Talarico's effort to defeat Republican state Attorney General Ken Paxton and become the first Democrat to win a statewide race in Texas since 1994. But McShay's questions represented lingering apprehension about his campaign's outreach.

She told Talarico, who's white, that she and others had given his campaign ideas for engaging Black voters, yet "it has never happened."

"You're saying one thing, but we're waiting on the action," said McShay, who's a political science professor.

"I want to ask for two contradictory things," responded Talarico, adding that he had implemented some ideas and more were coming. "One is patience. The other is urgency."

That was in July. Polls over the summer indicated that a large majority of Black voters already supported Talarico, but the candidate has labored to expand that and erase any doubt, saying he wants to make sure the Democratic Party doesn't continue taking Black voters for granted.

His campaign announced what it described as a historic investment of $25 million to reach Black voters in Texas. He has also received an endorsement from the political arm of the Congressional Black Caucus and elected leaders, hired veteran Black political operatives and Black-owned firms, visited Black churches and businesses and appeared on Black media shows.

Two months after McShay confronted Talarico, she said she's been encouraged by some of the candidate's decisions. She's working on what she calls a report card to publish in the Houston outlet the Forward Times.

"He's not getting an A+," she said, but maybe a "C or a B."

Talarico won a complicated primary

Talarico beat U.S. Rep. Jasmine Crockett, who is Black, in the Democratic primary. Crockett had faced some racially charged attacks on social media, creating some raw feelings during the race.

Although Talarico had welcomed her to the primary and said "we will always treat Crockett with the utmost respect," McShay said she wanted him to come down harder against online posters' vitriol.

So she asked about that, too, at the town hall, and Talarico replied with a sharper edge. "If you claim to be my supporter, if you claim to be a part of this movement that we are building, please keep Congressman Crockett's name out of your mouth," he said to some applause. "She is a leader in the state, she's a leader in this country, and she deserves the utmost respect."

Talarico's outreach to Black communities, getting people energized and to the polls in November, is also working against some of the residual wariness from voters like Edward Richard, which is applied to most Democratic politicians.

Richard said in July that he will likely vote for Talarico, but he wanted to see more of him to answer a boiled-down question: "Are you for us?" The answer wouldn't necessarily change his vote, but it could spark an enthusiasm that he said would push him to attend rallies and talk up Talarico to his friends and church colleagues.

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.

Houston Muslim and Interfaith Leaders Launch Voter Registration Drive Over Texas Curriculum Revisions

In response to newly approved Texas social studies standards, the Islamic Society of Greater Houston and allied faith groups are mobilizing voters across Harris County to push back against anti-Muslim bias through civic participation.

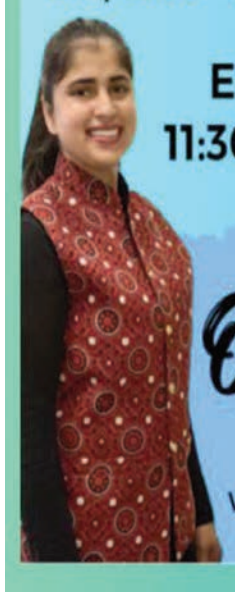
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HKSCA President Muhammad Saeed Sheikh Attends 96th Saudi National Day Celebration in Houston



HOUSTON, TX — Muhammad Saeed Sheikh, President of the Houston-Karachi Sister City Association (HKSCA), attended the celebration of the 96th National Day of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Houston.

The occasion provided an opportunity for Sheikh to meet and personally welcome the newly appointed Consul General of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Houston, Her Excellency Wafa bint Abdullah Al-Marzouqi, and congratulate her on her historic appointment as the first Saudi woman to serve as Consul General.

Continued on page 28

Texas Democratic Candidate Lattisha Palmer Urges Record Muslim Voter Turnout in Historic Judicial Bid



TEXAS — In the lead-up to the upcoming November elections, Democratic judicial candidate Lattisha Palmer has urged the American Muslim community to mobilize for record turnout at the polls, framing the vote as a crucial effort to challenge anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant policies attributed to the Republican Party. If elected to the judicial bench, Palmer—who has emerged as a favorite in her race—would become the first Muslim county judge in the United States. Speaking at a campaign event in Texas, local representative Kamran Jilani voiced strong criticism of the current state leadership under Republican Governor Greg Abbott, characterizing recent administrative actions and state policies as equivalent to a direct attack on the Muslim community.

The high-profile fundraising gathering in support of Palmer was organized by prominent businessman

Continued on page 28

Daniel Wong, Morgan, and Nehls Mobilize Fort Bend Voters in Richmond Drive



RICHMOND, Texas — Fort Bend County voters and grassroots supporters gathered at Safari Ranch Texas on September 18 for a high-energy "Get Out The Vote" (GOTV) Rally and Fiesta Dinner, headlined by candidate for Fort Bend

Continued on page 28

Houston's Arwa Coffee House Unites Community to Raise Major Funds for Junaid Jamshed Hospital



HOUSTON — In a powerful demonstration of community spirit and philanthropy, Arwa Coffee House hosted a remarkable evening of generosity on September 20, 2026, bringing together local leaders, state dignitaries, and cultural figures in support of the Human Necessity Foundation's landmark Junaid Jamshed Hospital project.

The high-energy gathering was headlined by Pakistani star actor Faysal Quraishi as the special guest, alongside Taimur Junaid Jamshed, who played a central role in mobilizing community support and driving fundraising efforts in honor of his late father's humanitarian vision. A substantial amount was raised during the event, fueled by key backing

Continued on page 28

Texas Senate race focuses on high prices — but what can candidates actually do about it?

Affordability has dominated the U.S. Senate race in Texas, with both candidates promising to help voters' pocketbooks. But there are limits on how much they actually can do to combat rising costs if elected.

While President Donald Trump isn't on the ballot, the economic impact of his policies — including the ongoing conflict in Iran — is on many voters' minds. Gas prices have gone up, and that has affected people's views of the economy, said University of Michigan economist Joanne Hsu. She directs the university's long-running Surveys of Consumers.

"Consumers are loud and clear that the number one factor on their minds when it comes to the economy is the cost of living," Hsu said. "It's about purchasing power. It's about high prices."

Zach Milton, a Democrat from Dallas, has a negative view of the economy. Milton said the war in Iran and the increase in tariffs under Trump are to blame.

"It's horrible, and there's a

Continued on page 28

Protesters gather at Texas Capitol a day after Austin ICE shooting

Protesters gathered at the Texas Capitol late Monday for the second night of protests tied to the shooting of an Austin resident by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer.

Wilber Rafael Garces Perez, a Venezuelan citizen, is in ICE custody in South Texas. His lawyer, Kate Lincoln-Goldfinch, said he still has a bullet lodged in his back.

Monday night's protest at the Capitol was organized by La Frontera Unida, an immigrant rights group. About 150 people were in attendance,

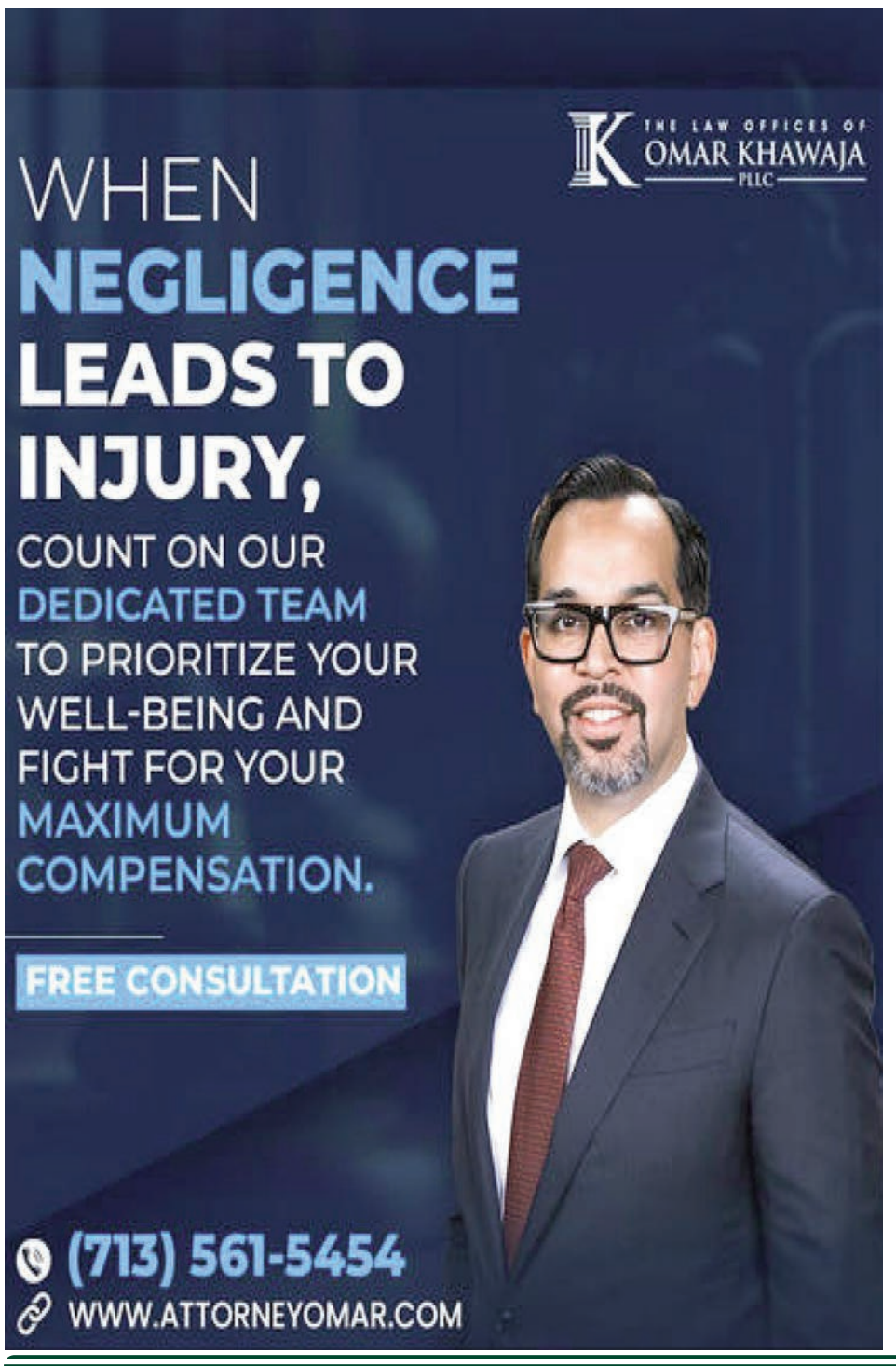
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Worms in the system

Poor sanitation, unsafe water expose kids to preventable stomach infections, threatening nutrition, growth & education

> The question, is not simply how many children receive deworming medicine, but whether schools are providing the conditions needed to keep them healthy after the medicine has been administered

By Muhammad Ilyas/Wisal Yousafzai/Tufail Ahmed

A school is meant to be a place where children learn, grow and prepare for the future. But for millions of children across Pakistan, some of the most basic conditions for healthy learning — clean drinking water, functional toilets, soap and regular health checks — remain uncertain.

Intestinal worms are often invisible, but their consequences are not. For children, an infection that may begin with contaminated water, unhygienic food, poor sanitation or inadequate handwashing can gradually affect nutrition, physical development, energy levels and concentration in the classroom.

Symptoms of a worm infection may include recurrent abdominal pain, weakness, fatigue, loss of appetite, nutritional deficiencies, iron deficiency anaemia and impaired physical growth. Hookworm infections are particularly associated with anaemia among young girls, although infection patterns can vary according to environmental and lifestyle conditions.

In this case, intestinal worms are more than a medical problem. They deprive children of nutrients, affect growth and make it harder to concentrate in the classroom. While school-based deworming programmes have reached millions of children, health experts caution that a dose of medicine cannot solve a problem that is repeatedly recreated by unsafe water, poor sanitation and inadequate hygiene.

The question, therefore, is not simply how many children receive deworming medicine, but whether schools are providing the conditions needed to keep them healthy after the medicine has been administered. Across Punjab, Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), accounts from students, parents, doctors and education and health officials point to gaps in facilities, monitoring and continuity that could undermine efforts to protect children from preventable infections.

Therefore, health experts and school administrations continue to confront a problem that extends beyond the simple provision of medicine. Deworming tablets may treat an existing infection, but without clean drinking water, functional toilets, soap, proper handwashing facilities and sustained health education, children remain exposed to the same conditions that can lead to reinfection.

A dirty dilemma

According to figures cited in Pakistan's national soil-transmitted helminth survey, based on World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates, around 21.7 million school-age children and 9.3 million preschool children in Pakistan are infected with soil-transmitted helminths. WHO says such infections are particularly common in communities where sanitation and hygiene are inadequate. Globally, around 1.5 billion people are affected by these parasitic infections, with children among the groups most vulnerable to their effects.

> **WHO says such infections are particularly common in communities where sanitation and hygiene are inadequate. Globally, around 1.5 billion people are affected by these parasitic infections, with children among the groups most vulnerable to their effects**

The problem is particularly significant because school-based health programmes cannot reach every child. In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, for instance, the 2023 Population Census recorded 4.92 million children aged five to 16 as out of school, representing 37.49 per cent of children in that age group. The figure includes around 2.92 million girls and two million boys. The large number of children outside the formal education system presents an obvious challenge for programmes that rely on schools as the primary point of access.

The Interactive Research and Development (IRD) has been implementing a school-based deworming programme in Pakistan since 2019. According to its Pakistan Deworming Initiative (PDI), the programme has so far reached 25.3 million children. They told The Express Tribune that 26,753 schools in 22 districts of K-P are registered with the programme, covering both public and private educational institutions. It said the initiative was not limited to K-P, adding that the Balochistan government had also formally taken ownership of the programme.

Yet the question remains whether reaching millions of children through periodic campaigns is enough to break the cycle of infection. Public health experts maintain that medicine alone cannot address the environmental conditions that allow intestinal worms to persist. Improved sanitation, safe drinking water, handwashing facilities and hygiene education are equally important components of prevention.

In Punjab, this question assumes particular importance as the School Health and Nutrition Programme already provides a framework for screening children, raising awareness about health and hygiene and referring children to health facilities when necessary. What remains essential is determining how consistently these services translate into functioning facilities and measurable outcomes at school level.

Schools need to be examined not merely for whether they possess toilets or water points on paper, but whether children can actually use clean toilets, access safe drinking water, wash their hands with soap and receive timely health information. Equally important is the availability of district-wise records showing how many children are receiving deworming medicine, how many schools are covered and whether programmes are being repeated according to health requirements.

The hygiene gap

A toilet sign on a crumbling school wall means nothing when the water tap is bone-dry and the washbasin is covered in grime. Across the country, the illusion of school hygiene is quietly failing children, turning classrooms into breeding grounds for preventable infections both inside the gates and at the snack stalls outside.

In Punjab's schools, the condition of basic facilities can determine whether a deworming programme addresses the problem or merely treats one stage of it. During reviews of public and private educational institutions, questions have emerged over whether toilets are clean, whether drinking water is continuously available, whether washbasins are functional and supplied with soap, and whether school administrations regularly conduct deworming programmes.

The distinction between having a facility and having a usable facility is significant. A water tap without safe water, a washbasin without soap or a toilet that is rarely cleaned may technically exist but offer limited protection against infection.

Students themselves have highlighted these gaps. Some students said that while their schools had water facilities, soap or adequate handwashing arrangements were not always available. Others reported that washrooms were not cleaned regularly. Some children said they had received deworming medicine but were not given sufficient information about its benefits or why the medicine was necessary.

For students, the connection between facilities and health is often straightforward. Many believe that consistently available clean drinking water, soap and clean washrooms could help prevent illness and make schools healthier places. When it comes to female students, the absence of clean and safe toilets, water and soap can create an additional burden, particularly during menstruation.

The problem is not restricted to Punjab. In Karachi, government schools have long faced complaints regarding sanitation, toilets, handwashing facilities and drinking water. According to Professor Dr Waseem Jamalvi, President of the Pakistan Paediatric Association Sindh, government-school toilets often lack proper cleanliness arrangements as well as soap and sanitiser. He described the absence of clean drinking water and proper toilet facilities at the primary-school level as a serious concern.

Private schools, according to Jamalvi, generally have better-maintained washrooms and handwashing facilities. However, differences between institutions mean that access to basic health and hygiene services cannot be assumed simply on the basis of whether a child attends a public or private school.

The situation becomes more complicated when children leave school premises. In Karachi, unhealthy food and drinks are frequently sold at roadside stalls around government schools. Brightly coloured beverages and other unhygienic food items may expose children to gastrointestinal problems, particularly where clean water and handwashing facilities are already inadequate.

Parents also face an information gap. Symptoms such as abdominal pain, loss of appetite and weakness may be dismissed as ordinary childhood problems, delaying medical examination. Health experts advise that children experiencing persistent symptoms should be medically assessed rather than being treated on assumptions.

Ayesha Tariq, a resident of PIB Colony, said her six-year-old son, Shayan, repeatedly complained of abdominal pain and loss of appetite and appeared restless at night. Initially, she did not associate the symptoms with intestinal worms and consulted a family physician. A stool test and other examinations subsequently confirmed the infection. She said the experience made her realise that parents often underestimate the relationship between contaminated water, food, hand hygiene and intestinal infections. She advised parents to teach children to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet, ensure drinking water is clean and safe, and provide hygienic food.

The mother of seven-year-old Rimsha, who was receiving treatment at the National Institute of Child Health (NICH), described a similar experience. Her daughter had suffered severe abdominal pain for around a month and had difficulty eating properly. Medical examinations, including blood and stool tests, detected intestinal worms and intestinal inflammation.

According to Rimsha's mother, doctors linked her daughter's illness to unhygienic food and contaminated water. She said the child frequently ate market food, including French fries, before developing health problems. The child was later admitted to the NICH emergency department, where she received treatment.

More than just a syrup

Treating children for intestinal infections while leaving them to navigate contaminated water, missing soap, and defunct health screenings is like bailing water from a sinking boat. Without clean facilities, routine checkups, and a continuous system of care, one syrup alone will never stop the cycle of reinfection.

Health experts say intestinal worm infections are closely associated with poor hand hygiene, contaminated drinking water, inadequate toilets and poor sanitation. For girls, the condition of school facilities has an additional importance. Clean and private toilets, adequate water and soap are essential for menstrual hygiene and dignity. Poor facilities can cause discomfort and may contribute to absenteeism during menstruation.

The lack of regular school health screening adds to the prob]lem. Karachi's School Health Services programme, launched in 1987 with WHO and UNICEF cooperation, once provided routine medical examinations to schoolchildren. According to the report, 423 doctors were assigned to examine around 600,000 children. Female doctors were assigned to girls' schools and male doctors to boys' schools.

Students received medical examinations, hygiene education, dental checks and monitoring for nutritional deficiencies, weight problems and anaemia. The programme continued for about 25 years before being discontinued by the Health Department in 2012. Its closure left government schools without the same system of routine health screening, making it difficult to establish reliable data on intestinal worms and other illnesses.

Pakistan has conducted several phases of deworming through the Pakistan Deworming Initiative, reaching millions of children. However, more detailed district-level information is needed, particularly in Punjab, to determine how many public and private schools are covered, how many children receive treatment each year, and how many miss or decline the medicine.

Schools should maintain clear records of their deworming activities, including when the last campaign was conducted, how many children received medicine, how parents were informed and what instructions were given to staff.

Experts stress that deworming should not be treated as a one-time campaign. It needs to be linked with school health, nutrition, safe drinking water, sanitation and handwashing programmes. Regular monitoring of toilets, water points and handwashing facilities could help identify the conditions that allow infections to return.

Punjab's School Health and Nutrition Programme provides a possible framework for this approach through health screening, hygiene awareness and referrals to healthcare facilities. However, reliable district-wise data is needed to measure how consistently these services are being provided.

Research involving schoolchildren in different parts of Punjab has also reported a significant prevalence of intestinal parasitic infections and linked them with sanitation, water quality, personal hygiene and socioeconomic conditions. Experts therefore emphasise that medicine alone cannot prevent reinfection. Deworming may remove worms, but it cannot provide clean water, soap or safe toilets.

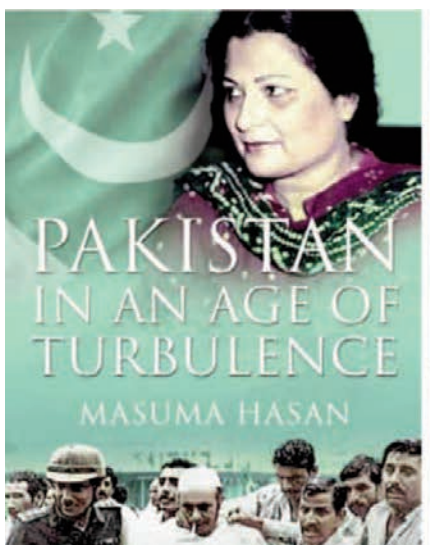
The challenge is even greater for children who are out of school, particularly in K-P, because school-based programmes cannot reach children who are not enrolled or regularly attending classes. Karachi faces a different challenge because the discontinuation of school health services removed a system that once provided routine medical examinations to large numbers of children.

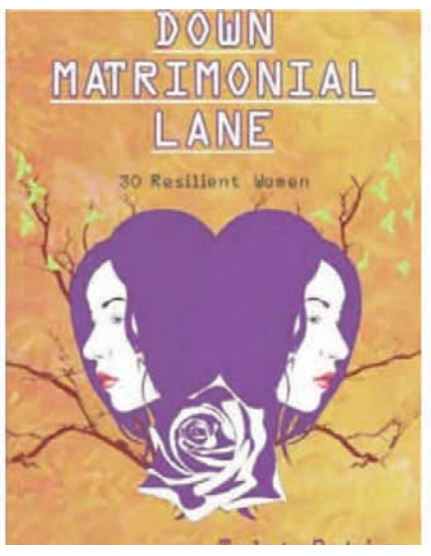
Experts also emphasise prevention at home. Parents should teach children to wash their hands with soap after using the toilet and before eating, provide clean drinking water, keep their nails trimmed and discourage children from putting soil or dirty objects into their mouths.

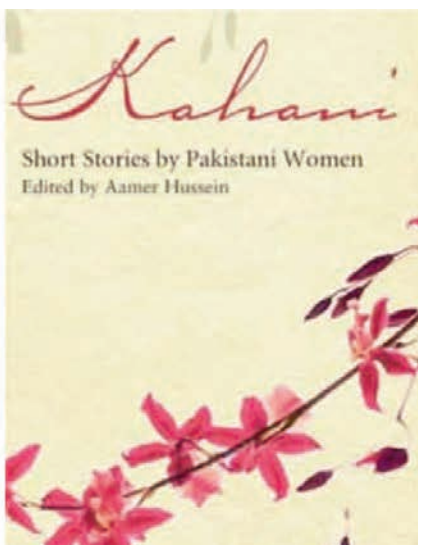
A deworming syrup can clear an infection, but it cannot stop the next one from taking hold. True protection requires clean water, safe toilets, soap, and regular health checks. Until these basics become the everyday reality inside every school, children will remain trapped in a relentless loop of preventable illness.

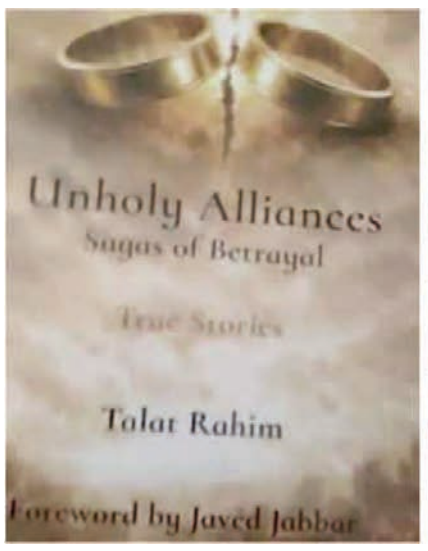
The truths we tell about ourselves

In this post-truth age of fake news and eroding trust, how much truth do writers tell to turn memory into stories?

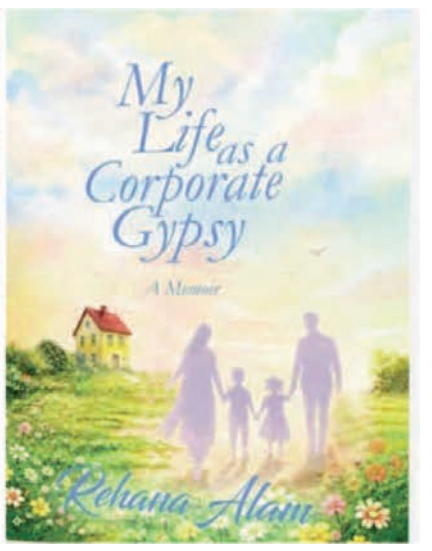












By Taha Kehar

In an age where trends on social media are transient, I spent many years harbouring an enduring, even unhealthy, obsession with a term that was widely discussed after the Brexit referendum and Trump's first stint as president. Billed as Oxford Dictionaries' word of the year in 2016, 'post-truth' wasn't just an adjective, but an indictment of the human condition. The term marked the death of objective facts and the dawn of an era where emotional appeals hold sway.

For almost a decade, this term became part of my everyday vocabulary, prompting me to inhabit the skin of a sceptic. Using 'post-truth' before any noun had morphed into a bad habit and, perhaps even, a tool of convenience. It didn't serve as just another compound adjective in phrases such as 'post-truth realities' or 'post-truth politics'. Instead, it was a critical device through which I viewed the world and gauged its commitment to honesty.

As an avid reader, I've always found solace in the printed word, viewing it as a window into reality. Burdened by a post-truth lens, I'd become increasingly cynical about facts and insisted on subjecting them to scrutiny until I could find in them some semblance of a verifiable truth. In those years, I was drawn more towards memoirs than autobiographical accounts.

For most readers, the terms 'autobiography' and 'memoir' are used interchangeably. Life-writing, though, is a complex art, and it is difficult to rely on a single technique to chronicle the many shades and flavours of our lives. Autobiographical texts benefit from the spirit of completeness as they attempt to portray the highs and lows of an individual's entire life in vivid detail. Rooted in facts, formal autobiographies are believed to possess greater historical significance by critics owing to their objectivity and fearlessness.

However, memoirs tend to be far more selective in their scope, presenting only a snapshot of a person's life. Even if they are fragmentary, memoirs are strengthened by their perceived subjectivity. Memoirists often rely on literary devices used by fiction writers to reconstruct a forgotten or, perhaps, vaguely remembered moment. This shouldn't be viewed as an attempt to fabricate information. Memory, as many of us will concur, is unreliable; it can elude us just as easily as it can whisper secrets into our ears. Faced with such a wildly unpredictable beast, most memoir writers prefer to recreate the past based on hindsight, thereby viewing it from observations and reflections made in the present.

As I grew increasingly suspicious of an inherently 'post-truth' world, autobiographies became anathema. I was unapologetic about my aversion to them. Why wouldn't I harbour suspicion about such fact-driven enterprises? In these harrowing times, when fake news haunts us like a spectre, information in all its forms is dangerous, akin to a life-threatening virus. Trust, therefore, is an asset that is constantly losing value. Could I then trust autobiographies to provide me anything other than half-truths, vainglorious accounts of valour and self-congratulatory praise?

Memoirs were safer as they didn't disguise themselves behind a veneer of objectivity. From the outset, they exposed their leanings, reminding me that I didn't have a front-row seat to a game of deception. Memoirs weren't afraid of the murkier space where facts lost ground and some form of fictionalising seemed integral. They were, to me, an ideal map to navigate the doom and gloom of those post-truth realities I dreaded so much.

Yet, as a storyteller, I couldn't escape the pull of fiction, which opened a doorway into the lives of characters who were possibly based on real people. Fascinated by the porous boundaries between fiction and life-writing, I read novels and short fiction based on the lives of their authors.

In 2020, as the pandemic struck, I devoured Zeeba Sadiq's 38 Bahadurabad, a novel that skilfully welds fictional and autobiographical elements. In this slim debut novel, the author attempts to understand Dr Sadiq, her beloved father, with whom she spent her early childhood years in the eponymous residence in Karachi. In a series of interconnected sketches that alternate between the first- and third-person voices, the author examines memories of her father from various angles. The purpose of this exercise is to confront his paradoxical image as an upstanding family man who once abandoned his first family in England.

While 38 Bahadurabad is often categorised as fiction, the unique treatment of its autobiographical strands renders this book a fascinating exploration of how fact can be presented in life-writing. For instance, Zeeba Sadiq frequently uses humour as a crutch to evade uncomfortable conversations or painful epiphanies about Dr Sadiq's life.

At the same time, she relies on narrative foils to reveal her father's unique attributes. In this novel, facts aren't overlooked; they are merely scrutinised and presented in a palatable form.

British-Pakistani author Aamer Hussein's short stories were my truest companions as I negotiated the dilemmas of a post-truth world. For decades, his work has navigated the flexible boundaries between fiction and autobiography to advantage. The author often examines events from his own life, such as a cancer diagnosis and his experience with grief, through a fictional lens. For instance, 'The Garden Spy' introduces us to a narrator who copes with loss, cancer and the uneasy solitude of Covid-19 lockdown.

In his exclusively memoir pieces, Hussein fashions himself as an onlooker who comes alive on the page through the people, places and eras he evokes. 'Words and Music' hearkens back to the 1960s when a young Hussein discovers that Pakistani film actor Shamim Ara is his neighbour in Karachi. This memory is a catalyst through which the author evokes a bygone era when he developed a fascination with film songs and poetry. 'Uncle Rafi' offers a glimpse of the brief literary career of the author's maternal granduncle. 'Teacher' portrays Hussein as an eager student to purple-robed Shah Sahab, an Urdu teacher he encountered in London at a pivotal stage in his life. 'Suyin: A Friendship' pays homage to Chinese-born Eurasian author Han Suyin. As Hussein's close friend, she urged him to explore the inner rhythm of his mother tongue whenever he put pen to paper.

Even so, as a literary critic, I found myself reading and interpreting conventional autobiographical works, and deriving an unexpected joy from their formalistic spirit. It was through these reviewing assignments that my faith in facts was ultimately restored. However, I didn't simply rebuild my trust; I simply learnt to accept their claim to objectivity while recognising that they may not paint a complete portrait. As a reader, I swiftly began taming the instinct to blindly trust information. Instead, I chose to embrace facts as a version of reality instead of the unvarnished truth. The techniques adopted by some authors of autobiographical texts helped me analyse the ways in which facts were being handled.

Scholar and former diplomat Masuma Hasan's Pakistan in an Age of Turbulence didn't strike me as a typical autobiography. Using sound research and objectivity as a weapon, she situated her story against Pakistan's broader political context. What emerges from this account is a captivating story of a woman who remained an insider within the power corridors and rose to a position of prominence in the Civil Service. Hasan neither boasts about her achievements nor sugarcoats realities – qualities that render her memoir all the more neutral.

At first glance, Shahbaz Taseer's Lost to the World: A Memoir of Faith, Family and Five Years in Terrorist Captivity could be viewed as a memoir rather than a strictly autobiographical text. The text stands out for effortlessly straddling objective truth and subjective reality. Taseer's memoir came through as poignant because he didn't shy away from exploring the emotional turmoil he encountered during his confinement. As a consequence, Lost to the World moves beyond reportage and shines a revealing light on the tumultuous years the author spent in captivity.

Similarly, Mukhtar Husain's Foundations and Form: Memoirs of a Pakistani Architect offers a dispassionate, well-modulated account of a life with clinical precision. Relying on subheadings, the narrative reproduces every facet of the author's life, leaving little room for gaps and blind spots.

Above all, the book offers a compelling social history of Karachi from the 1950s to the contemporary moment, which suggests that life-writing doesn't have to be a self-centred endeavour.

My reservations about autobiographical texts in a post-truth era were somewhat allayed when Annie Ernaux won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2022. Ernaux clinched the coveted award for "the courage and clinical acuity with which she uncovers the roots, estrangements and collective restraints of personal memory". Curiously enough, she is known to have pioneered "autosociobiography", a literary genre that views the personal memoir as a portal of sorts into the broader structures of society. Her expansive oeuvre boasts stellar examples of texts that bypass her private emotions and use her experiences as case studies of how women's bodies and desires are policed by society. In Happening, Ernaux draws an intimate line of connection between her clandestine abortion and class constraints and institutional pressures in France of the 1960s. Simple Passion turns an intimate gaze on an intense love affair and reveals how social pressure dictates women's romantic interactions.

Since then, I have made a conscious effort to understand the motivations of autobiographical writers in the hope that they will help me erase all my doubts about facts in a post-truth world.

"Autobiographies are interesting to read," novelist, translator and memoirist Rehana Alam says. "But only those people who have unique lives in some way or who can shed light on world events from exceptional perspectives."

Memoirs, she believes, allow authors "the latitude to write about only remarkable periods of their lives and not to chronicle the entire span from birth onward." Her own memoir, My Life as a Corporate Gypsy, spans the nearly three decades when she and her family moved across finstitutional pressures in France of the 1960s. Simple Passion turns an intimate gaze on an intense love affair and reveals how social pressure dictates women's romantic interactions.

Continued on Page 21

CRICKET: FAILING EVERY TEST

During the just-concluded tour, the English media labelled the Pakistan cricket team as the worst to tour England in 50 years. By the end of the series, most agreed. But the team's failures on the field were only the tip of the issues…

Muhammad Abu Bakar Farooq

Pakistan Test captain Babar Azam flew back to Lahore from London with seven teammates missing from the squad he flew out with and only one World Test Championship (WTC) point after a five-Test tour of the West Indies and England. Pakistan had earned 12 WTC points from their lone Test win in the Windies, only to lose 11 of them during the England 3-0 whitewash.

The England tour has been compared with the 2010 spot-fixing scandal, even without any such case this time. It has been an absolute humiliation not just for the team but also for the fans sitting in front of their television screens. The English media called it the worst Pakistan team to tour England in 50 years, and many Pakistanis who initially criticised the British media for making such statements eventually agreed with them by the end of the tour.

Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB's) Director of High Performance and selector Aaqib Javed, who expected at least one victory from the five Tests on the tours of England and the West Indies, also had to justify changes to the squad and coaching staff after Pakistan called two coaches and seven players back home and sent replacements during the tour.

We cannot even call this Pakistan team's journey a rollercoaster ride, because a rollercoaster at least has some upward spikes, unlike Pakistan's current record, with the team sitting at the bottom of the World Test Championship points table.

Every player on this tour has been a separate story. It starts with Salman Ali Agha, who led Pakistan in the first Test at Headingley in the absence of Babar Azam. He was not part of Pakistan's playing XI for the next Test at Lord's, and it shocked the world when he was dropped from the squad after the second Test, when Pakistan made wholesale changes following the series defeat. At one point, when the Pakistan team already had a scheduled meeting with the King of the United Kingdom, they did not even know which group of players would be on Pakistan's bus when it arrived at the Palace.



A dejected Pakistan side after defeat in the second Test at Lords | X

However, even if we agree that changes to the squad during the tour were inevitable, it was still difficult to digest the decision to drop the captain of the first Test. Salman Ali Agha has been among Pakistan's top three Test run-scorers since his debut, and we have seen him rescue Pakistan's batting line-up several times during collapses and difficult situations in Test cricket.

Agha was not the only major player to be dropped. Imam-ul-Haq and Mohammad Rizwan were even more severely penalised, and sent back to Pakistan on the first available flight after the defeat at Lord's, where Pakistan had a great record previously. However, they could not protect their 5-4 lead against England, which has now become 5-5 in their head-to-head Test record. Allegations of a fake injury involving Imam and disciplinary violations involving Rizwan are still being investigated by the National Cyber Crimes Investigation Agency in Pakistan.

This was not a series defeat that we were completely unprepared for, but Pakistan's failure to even put up a fight appeared to exhaust the PCB's patience. It led them to drop even Ali Usman and Awais Zafar, who were on their maiden Test call-ups. Ali Usman had become the first spinner in 32 years with a five-wicket haul at Headingley, while Awais Zafar had only just made his Test debut in the West Indies. Yet both were dropped following Pakistan's poor performances in the England series.

Usman, with the experience of 57 first-class matches, was replaced by Arafat Minhas, who had played just 17 first-class matches, taking only 22 wickets at an average of 32. That decision was probably influenced by his batting ability, as Pakistan also had a new head coach, Mike Hesson, along with seven new players in the squad.

Historically, Hesson has been inclined towards all-rounders, both while coaching Pakistan in white-ball cricket and Islamabad United in the PSL. That may also explain why Pakistan called up Saim Ayub, who had been playing in the Caribbean Premier League and had even scored a T20 century before receiving this Test call-up.

However, former England captain Nasser Hussain called the decision disrespectful to Test cricket, questioning the logic of calling up a player who had been playing T20s in the heat of the Caribbean and suddenly bringing him to England's 10-degree conditions to face the Dukes ball at the top of the Test order.

After all the chaos and among all the changes, Razaullah remains perhaps the only major positive from this series. He touched 90mph with the ball, allowing Pakistan fans to finally breathe a little easier, after the team had struggled for a long time with the declining pace of its fast bowlers.

But Razaullah added another dimension with his batting when he lit up Edgbaston with a fiery knock that included nine sixes, eight of them coming against fast bowlers. With only eight first-class matches behind him, Razaullah made his mark on the international stage after a sudden Test call-up.

What made his performance even more impressive was that Pakistan had been using the cold weather and lack of acclimatisation as explanations for their struggles in the first two Tests. Yet, this young player impressed the world just four days after arriving in the UK. He is not accustomed to playing a lot of long-form cricket, so it will be extremely important to see how the PCB manages him and his workload if they want to develop him into a long-term prospect.

If we ignore all the changes to the playing squad, the sacking of the head coach and bowling coach during the tour still stands out. We may have to go back years to find another incident involving changes of this magnitude in the middle of a tour. Sarfaraz Ahmed and Umar Gul, who were appointed head coach and bowling coach respectively just before the Bangladesh tour a few months ago, are no longer part of Pakistan's dressing room.

Following the 3-0 whitewash, rumours about Babar Azam's removal as Test captain are even more concerning. Pakistan moved from Babar to Shan Masood as Test captain three years ago, and then brought Babar back before this tour. Yet Pakistan's bowling is still conceding long partnerships to tailenders, the batting line-up is still collapsing, and the results are still not going in Pakistan's favour. So how would another captaincy change fix these fundamental issues?

If we cannot tolerate the failures of players like Salman Ali Agha and Mohammad Rizwan, who have carried Pakistan's batting for years, then how can Pakistan build a Test team that combines experienced players with young talent and performs consistently?

Babar Azam and Shan Masood are the only two players in the current set-up to have played more than 50 Tests for Pakistan. Especially when Pakistan does not have ready-made replacements waiting on the bench, the only realistic way forward is to persist with a core group of players and benefit from the experience in which Pakistan has already invested for years.

The same principle should apply to the coaching staff. If a coach is not even given a complete WTC cycle, how can he be held fully accountable for the team's results after just three series?

The writer is a cricket correspondent and digital

content creator. X: @abubakartarar

The truths we tell about ourselves

Continued From Page 20

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Memoirs, she believes, allow authors "the latitude to write about only remarkable periods of their lives and not to chronicle the entire span from birth onward." Her own memoir, My Life as a Corporate Gypsy, spans the nearly three decades when she and her family moved across four continents owing to her husband's job. This is her third book and first autobiographical work. Captivating, enriching and emotionally resonant, Alam's memoir traces the contours of her peripatetic life, revealing its many moments of turbulence and tranquility. Yet, this is not a conventional travel memoir peppered with cliched reminiscences. Within its pages emerges a tableau of how one can fashion homes in foreign lands through successive relocations.

"That time [in our lives, which was] one of great adventure and adaptation for us, also delineates a method of doing business by multinational corporations which has now been abandoned," Alam says. Her words are a comforting reminder of how memoirs embody both individual and collective realities. At times, memories elude us and authors have to rely on diary entries for guidance. Alam, though, possesses an almost photographic memory of key events. "The dates of our sojourn in the various countries [are] etched on my mind together with the outstanding experiences and anecdotes of those periods," she says. "Diaries and notes were not needed to write my memoir."

Much like Alam, Talat Rahim wrote other books before venturing into life-writing.

"I chose to write my memoir after I had written four books on other people," she says. Rahim wrote about bureaucrats, divorcees, hypocrites and even published a book of 22 interviews with people from India and Pakistan. All of these books were steered by factual accounts.

Her publisher once referred to Rahim as "a very unusual woman" who spends her time talking and writing about other people.

"That really got my goat," she says. "I braced myself to write my own story, published under the title I Did It My Way: My Life Uncensored."

Shifting gears came with its own challenges. "It takes a lot of courage to write with a no-holds-barred attitude," Rahim asserts. "I was afraid people would not be interested in my story, but this was the only story I had withheld and not talked about earlier."

Despite her initial reservations, Rahim wasn't plagued by writer's block, but felt some sections were "tough to write".

"I would stop midway with the question of the intrinsic worth of such a book," Rahim says. "Nonetheless, I decided for my own amusement to write about incidents I could recall as I went down memory lane. I spoke of myself and the very eventful and unusual life I have led, [which was] so different from [those of] my contemporaries who were all married after graduation, had babies and are now grandmothers."

Unlike her peers, Rahim married late, had no children and lost her husband. She worked with, and for, bureaucrats for 25 years, and travelled the world at "government expense".

"After taking a golden handshake from government service, [I] started to write books and published In 2023, I wrote my memoir."

Rahim confesses that she has never maintained a diary in her life.

"The Almighty has bestowed me with an elephant's memory," she proudly declares. "My memoir records interesting details of a well-lived life, all from memory!" The underlying purpose of Rahim's memoir is to encourage women "to learn and understand how to live life on their own terms".

"I don't want them to be bogged down by that very distasteful remark, 'What will people say?'," Rahim says. Her creative vision reaffirms the fact that memoirs are more than just a document of personal victories; they can also serve the collective good.

As I plumb the depths of the autobiographer's mind, it gradually dawns on me that my concerns about post-truth realities are a bit extreme, if not entirely trivial. Facts aren't ghoulish entities we must fear; they are a potent force we must actively confront.

The writer is a critically acclaimed author

All facts and information are the sole responsibility of the writer


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Voices of the Metropolis:

How Houston Community Media Transformed Local Journalism and Empowered Diverse Communities



By Jamil Siddiqui

Across Greater Houston, dozens of native languages echo through neighborhood centers, family-run enterprises, places of worship, and commercial corridors. As one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse metropolitan areas in North America, Harris County and its surrounding regions serve as a vibrant crossroads for African, African American, East Asian, South Asian, Latino, Middle Eastern, and Caribbean communities.

Yet for decades, a persistent paradox defined the local news landscape. While the region grew rapidly in diversity, traditional mainstream media outlets struggled to consistently reach, accurately represent, or address the specific daily needs of non-English speaking and minority residents. Vital information regarding healthcare, municipal elections, housing assistance, and emergency alerts frequently failed to reach the very populations that needed it most.

In July 2022, a transformative response emerged. Supported by foundational funding from the Houston Endowment and operating under the umbrella of American Community Media Services—co-coordinated by seasoned media leaders Sandy Close, Nguyen Lee, and Nakia Cooper—Houston Community Media (HCM) was established. Designed as an alliance of multilingual, multiracial news outlets, HCM has fundamentally reshaped how information flows through Houston, converting isolated grassroots publications into an empowered collective force.

Breaking Silos Through Inter-Ethnic Collaboration

Before the inception of Houston Community Media, ethnic media outlets across the region operated largely in isolation. Spanish-language radio stations, Vietnamese print weeklies, Mandarin digital channels, African American newspapers, Urdu community publications, and South Asian broadcasts served their respective audiences effectively but rarely collaborated across cultural boundaries.

HCM dismantled these traditional silos by organizing joint reporting initiatives, shared editorial projects, and cross-cultural exchanges. When major policy shifts or regional crises occur, HCM enables outlets representing different demographics to cover these developments from a shared, multi-faceted perspective. An investigative piece regarding tenant rights or environmental health in East Houston is translated, adapted, and syndicated across multiple language outlets simultaneously. This cross-cultural bridge-building fosters mutual empathy among Houston's diverse demographic groups, proving that while cultural contexts differ, the fundamental aspirations for safe neighborhoods, quality education, and economic mobility remain universal.

Empowering the Pakistani American Community in Greater Houston

Greater Houston is home to one of the largest and most dynamic Pakistani American populations in North America, with deep roots spanning Sugar Land, the Hillcroft cultural district, Katy, Spring, and the broader Harris County area. From healthcare professionals and tech entrepreneurs to educators, small business owners, and civic advocates, Pakistani Americans play a vital role in the region's economic and cultural life. However, navigating complex local government policies, small business regulations, and civic systems often required dedicated, culturally resonant news channels that mainstream media could not provide.

Houston Community Media has become an essential champion for the Pakistani American community by elevating its local press—including Urdu-language publications, South Asian weekly newspapers, and digital news platforms. Through HCM's collaborative umbrella, Pakistani American news outlets receive crucial support, including syndication access, professional grants, and advertising equity. This enables local journalists to deliver timely, high-quality reporting tailored specifically to Urdu-speaking and South Asian households.

Through HCM's network, crucial information regarding naturalization drives, voter registration, state and local primary elections, and immigration updates is translated and contextualized for Pakistani American families. When new tax incentives, commercial regulations, or small business grant programs are introduced, HCM ensures that Pakistani entrepreneurs on Hillcroft and across the Houston metro area have clear, direct access to these opportunities.

Furthermore, HCM's roundtable briefings provide Pakistani American community leaders and journalists a direct seat at the table with key decision-makers, including Harris County district attorneys, mayors, police chiefs, and state representatives. This direct line of communication has proven vital for addressing pressing community priorities, such as hate crime prevention, public safety around commercial hubs, youth development programs, and religious cultural awareness. By connecting Pakistani American media with broader African American, Latino, and East Asian press networks, HCM fosters strong inter-ethnic solidarity, ensuring that the Pakistani diaspora is both fully informed and actively engaged in shaping Houston's collective future.

Lifesaving Communication and Civic Empowerment

The practical impact of HCM's collaborative model is felt in the daily lives of millions of residents, particularly during moments of crisis and civic transition. In a Gulf Coast region routinely subjected to severe weather events, extreme heatwaves, and tropical storms, timely information saves lives. Mainstream disaster announcements often miss residents who rely on non-English broadcasts or community press. HCM ensures that emergency notices, cooling center locations, and disaster relief guidance are rapidly translated and distributed through trusted local publishers before extreme weather strikes.

Civic participation has experienced a similar revitalization. Navigating complex legal systems, primary election ballots, and voter registration requirements can be intimidating for immigrant and first-generation citizens. Through dedicated media briefings and naturalization drives, HCM translates intricate legal and electoral mechanisms into accessible, culturally tailored guidance. By clarifying how local decisions impact household budgets and public services, HCM turns passive news consumers into active participants in the democratic process.

Connecting Communities with Decision-Makers

Central to HCM's strategy is its series of interactive roundtable briefings and community forums. These events bring community journalists directly face-to-face with elected officials, district attorneys, state representatives, public health experts, and municipal decision-makers. Rather than relying on static press releases, ethnic media publishers ask direct questions about public safety, youth development, predatory financial practices, and housing security on behalf of their readers.

These briefings frequently produce immediate tangible outcomes. Discussions around public safety have led to targeted awareness campaigns educating immigrant communities on consumer protection laws and legal protections against auto sales fraud. Multi-part briefing series addressing youth development have highlighted critical intersections between mental health access, juvenile justice reform, and family support systems, elevating grassroots concerns to state-level policy discussions.

Economic Equity and Professional Sustainability

For local and ethnic news outlets to survive in the digital age, editorial passion must be paired with financial sustainability. Grassroots publications face intense economic headwinds, from shrinking print revenues to platform algorithm shifts. HCM actively advocates for equitable advertising distribution from municipal agencies, county governments, and corporate entities. By demonstrating the vast reach and deep trust ethnic media outlets hold within their communities, HCM helps secure crucial advertising dollars that keep independent newsrooms solvent.

Alongside financial advocacy, HCM invests heavily in human capital. Through dedicated reporting fellowships, specialized skills workshops, and investigative stipends, HCM provides community journalists with the resources and training needed to produce high-impact, rigorous journalism. Emerging reporters gain mentorship, legal guidance, and connections to expert sources, elevating the overall quality and influence of local news across the region.

Redefining the New Mainstream

The work of Houston Community Media challenges the outdated notion that community and ethnic news is secondary or peripheral to general market journalism. As urban demographics shift across the country, hyper-local, multilingual media represents the true future of local news. By championing equity, fostering inter-ethnic solidarity, and demanding accountability from public institutions, Houston Community Media has built a durable blueprint for inclusive civic engagement—ensuring that every voice in North America's most diverse metropolis is heard, informed, and empowered.

A Day of Hope at Arwa Cafe: Faheem Akhoond and Houston Community Rally for Junaid Jamshed Hospital

Arwa Coffee House hosted an extraordinary evening of philanthropy in Houston, bringing together community members, state officials, and cultural icons to support the Human Necessity Foundation's Junaid Jamshed Hospital project. Key organizer Faheem Akhoond, alongside star actor Faysal Quraishi and Taimur Junaid Jamshed, spearheaded the gathering to mobilize substantial financial backing for the healthcare cause. The event was further elevated by the presence of Texas State Representative Dr. Suleman Lalani and Justice of the Peace Sonia Rush, uniting community advocacy with civic leadership in a powerful display of hope and generosity.














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EDUCATION: REBUILDING A DREAM

Bangladesh's emerging defence industry, growing military cooperation with China and Türkiye, and potential interest in the Makkah pact are reshaping the conversation around its security policy. The changes also have implications for its relationship with India



The state of one of the classrooms at the school before it was adopted in 2022 | Photos courtesy the writer



Eighth-grade students during a class at Happy Dale School in September 2026

Dr Asghar Naqvi Published

There was a time when Happy Dale School was counted among Karachi's respected educational institutions. This happened soon after it was established in 1951 by educationist Amina Mumtaz, who came from a family of trailblazing women — her siblings included women's rights pioneer Hajrah Begum, actor and singer Zohra Sehgal, and theatre artist Uzra Butt.

Mrs Mumtaz also served as the school's principal. I remember her fondly from my time there until my matriculation in 1971. At that time, the school had side-by-side campuses for boys and girls.

The teachers, at least in the boys' sections, were stern but fair, and would sometimes even resort to forms of punishment that would shock parents today. The education was rigorous but engaging and, under Mrs Mumtaz's supervision, the school produced graduates who went on to serve the country in a wide range of professions, from diplomacy to law, medicine, engineering and the judiciary.

The nationalisation of private schools and colleges in 1972 brought major changes to Pakistan's education system. The transition initially retained much of the existing teaching and non-teaching staff, but standards and management gradually deteriorated. Parents lost trust in government schools, with even those having limited financial means looking toward private education.

Happy Dale School became one of the casualties of this wider decline. The boys' school was shifted to a different location and, over the years, the girls' school was reduced to offering secondary education only.

RECOGNISING THE DEBT

In 2021, I was part of an alumni group that visited the school — now the Happy Dale Government Girls Secondary School. The conditions we encountered were deplorable.

The classrooms lacked furniture, the blackboards were barely hanging in place, and only a handful of classrooms had fixtures and fans. The windows were broken, the doors were crumbling and the bathrooms were not operational.

At the time, the school had 33 students. A handful of them had taken that year's matriculation exam, and the clearance rate was deplorable. There were also concerns about security, irregular attendance, poor admissions, weak academic results and a lack of motivation among some members of the teaching staff.

For those of us who took part in the visit, the condition of the school was not a reason to give up. It was a reason to act. We agreed that the school could be transformed once again into a place where children could receive quality education.

We set up the Happy Dale School Alumni Foundation (HDSAF) and applied for the school under Sindh Education Foundation's school adoption policy. In 2022, we were entrusted with the school.

The foundation had two immediate challenges: repair the school and rebuild its culture of learning. An administrator was appointed to oversee the day-to-day running of the institution. Infrastructure improvements began, while members of the alumni foundation worked with teachers and staff to improve academic standards.

BEYOND PAINT AND BUILDINGS

The revival of Happy Dale was never intended to be simply a renovation project.

It included curriculum development, teacher training and monitoring of classroom performance. Extra classes were introduced after school hours.

Gradually, the emphasis shifted from simply having a functioning school to creating an environment where students could actually learn.

One of the most striking aspects of the transformation has been the introduction of facilities that are often missing from government schools. A science laboratory and improved playground facilities are part of the renewed school environment. A bank donated 30 computers for a computer lab.

But, perhaps, even more unusual are the daycare centre and medical clinic. The daycare centre was created to support young teachers who have small children. The idea was practical: young children accompanying their mothers could otherwise disrupt classroom teaching. By providing a dedicated space, the school could support its teachers while protecting the learning environment.

The clinic provides day-to-day medical assistance and regular check-ups. It has also hosted a thalassaemia screening programme, through which six students were identified as carrying the relevant genes and were provided with counselling.

Another important initiative has been the introduction of early childhood education, or ECE, within the boundary of the school. ECE carries particular importance because of the school's location in Nazimabad, close to an underprivileged community from which many of its students come.

The response from families has been encouraging: enrolment in the ECE programme has exceeded expectations. The school has even celebrated its first graduation ceremony for children completing KG2 — a small ceremony perhaps, but a significant symbol of a new beginning.

MEASURING SUCCESS

The strongest evidence of an institution's transformation is not its freshly repaired walls or new equipment. It is the improvement in enrollment and student retention — the secondary school now boasts 100 students.

It is also in the results of students who sit for their examinations. Sixteen girls appeared for this year's matric exams and every one of them passed. This is a 100 percent success rate. Even more remarkably, five of the girls secured more than 80 percent marks — an uncommon achievement for a government school.

One of our high-achievers has already been hired for ECE teaching. Like the majority of our students, she hails from a family of extremely limited means — her father earns minimum wage, while her mother works as house help. By keeping her engaged with the project, the foundation hopes to help the girl with further education. It is a pathway that the school plans to create for other students as well.

This success has been made possible by the combined effort of students, teachers and administrators, who worked to rebuild the academic culture of the institution. For an institution that had once struggled with absenteeism, poor facilities, declining admissions and weak academic performance, the result represents far more than an examination statistic. It represents a restoration of confidence.

The story of Happy Dale is ultimately not only about one school. It raises a larger question about the future of government education in Pakistan. The decline of public schools is often discussed in terms of budgets, buildings and staffing. All of these matter. But Happy Dale suggests that community involvement, committed management, teacher development and accountability can also make a difference.

The transformation did not happen overnight. It required infrastructure investment, administrative oversight, academic monitoring and, above all, people willing to take responsibility for a school they cared about.

The alumni who returned to Happy Dale could have simply remembered it as the institution it once was. Instead, they chose to help rebuild it. That decision has given a new generation of girls something that every child deserves: a school in which they can learn, dream and believe that their circumstances do not have to determine their future.

The writer is a board member of the Happy Dale School Alumni Foundation. He can be contacted at asghar.naqvi1955@gmail.com

WHAT A DAY AT ARWA: Houston's Arwa Coffee House Unites Community to Raise Major Funds for Junaid Jamshed Hospital

Continued from page 17

from host venue Arwa Coffee House, community organizer Faheem Akhoond, Amin Narsi, and Mr. Rashid, father of sponsor Ali Rashid.

Beyond its charitable success, the evening highlighted the civic strength and solidarity of Houston's community. Prominent guests included Texas State Representative Dr. Suleman Lalani, who attended with his wife Zakia Lalani, as well as Justice of the Peace Sonia Rush. Both dignitaries addressed the audience, encouraging active participation in upcoming elections and reinforcing the importance of civic engagement. Combining healthcare advocacy with civic responsibility, the gathering stood out as an unforgettable celebration of Houston's unity, compassion, and hopeful spirit.

Daniel Wong, Morgan, and Nehls Mobilize Fort Bend Voters in Richmond Drive

Continued from page 17

County Judge Daniel Wong.

Taking center stage before a packed room of local constituents, business owners, and community leaders, Wong delivered a keynote address focused on fiscal accountability, economic expansion, and lowering the property tax burden on area homeowners. The campaign gathering aimed to energize volunteer networks and drive voter turnout across Richmond and greater Fort Bend County.

Wong shared the spotlight with fellow candidates Matt Morgan (running for State Representative) and Trever Nehls (running for U.S. Congress). Together, the candidates emphasized the strategic importance of early voting and grassroots mobilization, outlining their shared priorities for local infrastructure, public safety, and regional growth.

The campaign gathering drew strong community backing and active participation from local residents. Attendees had the opportunity to meet directly with Wong to discuss key policy issues facing Fort Bend constituents, closing out an evening designed to anchor momentum heading into the final stretch of the election cycle.

HKSCA President Muhammad Saeed Sheikh Attends 96th Saudi National Day Celebration in Houston

Continued from page 17

Sheikh extended his warmest congratulations to the leadership and people of Saudi Arabia on their National Day and wished Consul General Al-Marzouqi every success in her new assignment. He expressed his commitment to continued engagement with the Consulate and looked forward to opportunities for cooperation that strengthen Houston's international and community relationships.

The evening also brought together members of Houston's Consular Corps, representatives of the Mayor's Office of Trade and International Affairs, community leaders, and distinguished guests representing countries from around the world.

Sheikh noted the longstanding relationships connecting Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United States, emphasizing the importance of diplomacy, community engagement, and people-to-people relationships in building greater understanding and cooperation among nations.

"We warmly welcome Her Excellency Wafa Al-Marzouqi to Houston and wish her tremendous success in this important assignment. We look forward to working together and further strengthening the bonds of friendship among our communities," Sheikh said.

Texas Democratic Candidate Lattisha Palmer Urges Record Muslim Voter Turnout in Historic Judicial Bid

Continued from page 17

Jamil Mawani. Held in favor of Palmer's historic judicial bid, the event drew a significant gathering of Pakistani, Indian, and American business leaders, civic organizers, and community members. The assembly was presided over by prominent political figure and business personality Maryam Khan, with key attendees including Islamic Society of Greater Houston President Imran Ghazi, Pakistan Association of Greater Houston President Siraj Narsi, and well-known Pakistani-American businessman Nasruddin Rupani, alongside Muzaffar Siddiqui, Afsheen Charnia, Dr. Barakat Charnia, and Fozia Qasuri.

Addressing the audience, speakers emphasized the critical need for Texas to address controversial political measures and anti-immigrant initiatives, stressing that exercising voting rights in record numbers remains the most effective tool for civic representation and systemic change. Event host Jamil Mawani formally announced the complete support of the Mawani Group for Lattisha Palmer's judicial campaign.

Reinforcing the message, Pakistan Association President Siraj Narsi described the upcoming contest as the most important election of their lives, calling on all eligible voters within the diaspora to actively participate. Additionally, Islamic Society President Imran Ghazi highlighted pressing local issues facing Muslims in Texas, drawing specific attention to growing concerns regarding the inclusion of misleading and inaccurate content about Islam and Prophet Muhammad in top public school curricula.

Texas Senate race focuses on high...

Continued from page 17

reason for that," he said. "The policymakers are at fault."

Leah Gibson, a Republican from Anna, also said prices are high. But Gibson said wages have also increased.

"Yes, I think things are high, but it seems like it's always been that way," she said. "There's always going to be something that we're not satisfied with as far as inflation or prices or whatever."

People who attend political rallies for either Texas U.S. Senate candidate — Democrat James Talarico or Republican Ken Paxton — are likely to hear the candidates blame the political party they oppose for high prices and their pledges to fix the problem.

But whoever wins in November will become the junior senator from Texas — and just one among 100 others in the Senate and perhaps part of a narrow majority. And the victor may struggle to find the support necessary to pass any economic plan they propose.

The American Dream

Talarico has focused much of his campaign on affordability. When Republicans falsely accused him of being vegan, he pivoted the conversation to the rising cost of beef.

Talarico also hosted a food drive in Oak Cliff on the first day of the GOP midterm convention in Dallas.

"While we're here serving our neighbors, billionaire mega donors and their puppet politicians are clinking their champagne glasses," he said. "They are toasting to their own corruption. They are celebrating corrupt tariffs, billionaire tax breaks and a new forever war that are all driving up costs."

Talarico's economic plan, titled the New American Dream, includes raising the federal minimum wage to $15 an hour and increasing taxes on billionaires and corporations.

The Texas state representative blamed billionaires for the affordability crisis when he announced his economic plan during a rally at an esports stadium in Arlington last month.

"The top 1% has put the American dream behind a paywall," Talarico said.

Paxton has also campaigned on affordability. He promised to preserve the American Dream during his speech at the Republican midterm convention.

"Everywhere I go, I meet Texans working harder than ever, but still worried that they will never get ahead," he said. "Those are the people that I'm fighting for. And I want every Texan to be able to buy a home, raise their family, and live a healthy life."

The attorney general also unveiled his economic plan, Protecting the Texas Promise, in North Texas in August at a crowded Mexican restaurant in Allen. Paxton shared several proposals, including a $25,000 tax deduction for medical expenses and a $50,000 tax deduction for first-time home buyers.

Both Senate candidates talk about affordability and the American Dream. And both have proposed expanding child tax credit. Like Paxton, Talarico has also said he would lower health care and housing costs. His proposals include reinstating enhanced premium tax credits under the Affordable Care Act and expanding the low-income housing tax credit.

Still, there are key differences. Talarico blames billionaires for the economic strife many voters are experiencing. Paxton says inflation and high prices started during President Joe Biden's administration.

"There's no doubt that inflation started years ago and it's had an impact on families," he told reporters at his Allen rally in August.

Negative outlook

Paxton, one of Trump's strongest supporters, has to tread lightly when discussing the economy, said Brandon Rottinghaus, a political science professor at the University of Houston. A recent poll from the Texas Politics Project found about 54% of voters disapprove of the president's handling of the economy, including at least 1 out of every 5 Republicans surveyed.

"Ken Paxton has to thread the needle here between talking about affordability as a key issue, bringing up his own policy objectives, but also making sure to not anger the Trump administration or talk badly about them in terms of their role in making the economy what it is," Rottinghaus said.

Paxton's approach is to point to systemic issues, not the performance of the economy itself, said Joshua Blank, the research director of the Texas Politics Project. This approach allows him to toe the line without criticizing the president, Blank said.

"That actually ties into many of the culture war themes that Republicans are also leaning on with respect to DEI, with respect gender and sports, and the idea that essentially, the system is unfair, in a way that is not a criticism of the economy," he said.

People across the political spectrum are dissatisfied with the economy and high prices. Nearly one in three voters cite inflation or the economy as the most important problem facing the state in the Texas Politics Project poll. The numbers are roughly the same among Democrats, Republicans and independents.

The University of Michigan Surveys of Consumers found similar results, placing the consumer sentiment index for early September at 47.8. The survey also found that expectations of business conditions and personal finance have "plunged" due to fuel prices and tariffs.

Gibson, the Republican from Anna, said she would like for gas prices to be lower, but she expects things will improve.

"I think we just have to be patient," she said. "I think it will eventually come back down."

The war in Iran and its impact on gas prices has negatively affected the value of the dollar, said Karen Dubrow, an independent from Plano who describes herself as a "violent moderate."

"I think our economy is at a questionable place right now," Dubrow said. "We were bad with COVID, and we started crawling out of it and things started looking up, and now I think it's plummeting."

Talarico, she said, is better equipped to address the higher cost of living. The Attorney General is too focused on social causes that distract from more important issues, like the economy, Dubrow said.

Steve Griffin also favored Talarico's approach to the economy. Griffin volunteered at the Talarico campaign's Love Thy Neighbor food drive ahead of the GOP midterm convention in Dallas.

"The fuel has gone up and down, so it's a significant factor for a lot of people," he said. "The reason we're here today is because there are so many people in food insecure positions, and that hasn't been addressed by the current administration at all, not even attempted."

The president has promised an economic boom for months, pointing to gains in the stock market.

People with shares in the stock market, Hsu said, are more likely to have a more positive view of the economy. The top 90% of income earners own about 87% of corporate equities and mutual fund shares in the first quarter of 2026 according to data from the Federal Reserve.

"If you have large stock holdings, you are seeing a ton of wealth gains," she said. "And if you're not, the number one factor is prices, and you don't have the buffer of a stock portfolio to buffer that pain."

Campaign promise

Paxton and Talarico may be overestimating the power and support they'll have in the Senate to pass their economic plans, said Thomas Gray, a political science professor at the University of Texas at Dallas.

Building power and influence in the Senate, Gray said, takes time. Even more established members often struggle to pass legislation in the closely divided Senate.

But a close split of power between the political parties in the Senate could benefit newer Senators, said Cal Jillson, a political science professor at Southern Methodist University.

"If the Senate is a one or two vote majority either way, every Senator has bargaining power at that point," Jillson said.

Discussing economic policy is also a campaign tactic. Candidates, Gray said, propose economic policy to show where they stand on a key issue for voters.

"It's what we do in politics," he said. "We talk about what we would do in this imaginary world where we were dictator."

The reality, Gray said, is less glamourous.

"For most freshmen, especially a freshman in the minority party in the Senate, you're looking at zero or one thing, and if you look at their list, they'll have things like naming a post office or something," he said. "It's just not something where you walk in on your first day and suddenly you say, you know what, we're going to spend $50 billion on new tax credits."

Protesters gather at Texas Capitol a ...

Continued from page 17

and there was a heavy police presence. The organized protest ended peacefully just after 9 p.m.

Outside the Capitol gates, the crowd chanted: "Up, up with immigration; down, down with deportation," "We want justice; we want rights; we want ICE out of our sights" and "No more hate, no more fear; ICE has no business here."

The crowd spanned multiple age groups, from grandmothers to young teenagers.

Jere Confrey, herself a grandmother, was at the protest with her husband. She says the shooting happened near her home. After hearing the news, she said she felt compelled to go out and protest.

"Anybody who gets approached by an unmarked vehicle and rammed is gonna be in fear, and I believe nobody's above the law in this country," Confrey said. "I believe there are ways to do things justly, even through an immigration process. … The way this is being done to ram somebody and then shoot them in their car without any identification is obscene."

Process becomes punishment

Exceptional powers created against today's adversary may become tomorrow's weapon against those who created them.

Tahsin Shah

A STATE does not demonstrate its strength by the number of its critics it can imprison. Its strength is measured by its willingness to tolerate dissent, submit executive power to law and allow courts to protect even those whom the state considers troublesome. Pakistan today faces a troubling test on all three counts.

The cases of Baloch activist Dr Mahrang Baloch and lawyers Imaan Mazari Hazir and Hadi Ali Chattha are different in their facts and legal foundations. Yet, taken together with the treatment of political opponents and other dissenting voices, they raise a larger question: is the criminal justice system increasingly being used not merely to prosecute alleged offences, but to manage dissent?

Mahrang Baloch emerged as a prominent voice against enforced disappearances and alleged extrajudicial killings in Balochistan. In June, an antiterrorism court sentenced her and another activist to life imprisonment in a case arising from the death of a security official during the 2024 Baloch Raji Machi. Amnesty International criticised the proceedings as an expedited secret trial, stating that no direct evidence linking her to the violence had been presented. Her case has consequently become emblematic of wider concerns about due process and the treatment of Baloch dissent.

The state is entitled — indeed obligated — to prosecute violence. Human rights advocacy or political activism cannot confer immunity from criminal law. But the converse is equally important: allegations of disloyalty or association with hostile organisations cannot substitute for evidence establishing individual criminal responsibility. The graver the charge, the greater the need for transparent proceedings and scrupulous due process.

The experience of Imaan Mazari Hazir and her husband, Hadi Ali Chattha, raises another disturbing issue. Both lawyers and human rights activists, they were sentenced in January to 17 years' imprisonment under multiple provisions of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act in relation to social media posts. On Sept 17, the Supreme Court suspended their sentences and ordered their release. Within hours, they were arrested in another case and sent back to jail.

Whatever the ultimate merits of that second case, the sequence raises a fundamental rule-of-law concern. If obtaining bail in one case merely opens the door to detention in another, judicial relief risks becoming theoretical. Liberty cannot meaningfully depend upon how many FIRs remain available after a court orders someone's release. This phenomenon has implications far beyond individual defendants. Arrest becomes punishment before conviction; multiplicity of proceedings becomes a mechanism for prolonged detention; and appellate delay can make eventual acquittal an inadequate remedy. A person who spends years incarcerated before a conviction is overturned cannot be given those years back.

HRCP's 2025 report described a severe contraction of civic space and raised concerns about erosion of judicial independence. It documented the increasing use of cybercrime, sedition and antiterrorism laws against journalists, political workers, activists and lawyers, alongside continuing reports of enforced disappearances and restrictions on expression.

These developments occur against a persistent public perception that unelected institutions — particularly the security establishment — exercise influence over political and accountability processes. Both the establishment and government have rejected various allegations of political persecution. Such competing claims cannot be resolved by assertion. That is precisely why visibly independent courts, transparent trials and faithful compliance with judicial orders are irreplaceable.

The controversy surrounding former prime minister Imran Khan's medical treatment illustrates the institutional problem. On Aug 18, the Supreme Court ordered that he be shifted to Shifa International Hospital for examination and treatment, with his personal physician and sister. Instead, he was taken to the government-run Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences and returned to prison, prompting allegations of non-compliance.

The matter was fixed for Sept 16, but by then, the Federal Constitutional Court had requisitioned the record of the hospital transfer cases. The Supreme Court itself expressed reservations about the FCC's intervention but, citing judicial comity, adjourned proceedings for three weeks while seeking the attorney general's assistance on the jurisdictional question. What began as the straightforward issue of compliance with a prisoner's medical treatment order thus became entangled in a dispute over the jurisdiction of Pakistan's two apex courts — a development critics view as having shifted attention from the unanswered question: was the original order obeyed?

The issue need not be Imran Khan personally. Tomorrow it may be someone from an entirely different political camp. The constitutional question is whether an order of the highest court binds the executive in practice or merely begins another round of litigation. Montesquieu warned that "there is no liberty" where judicial power is not separated from the other powers of the state. The warning remains strikingly relevant. Courts cannot preserve liberty merely by issuing orders; those orders must command obedience. Pakistan does not need weaker security institutions. It needs stronger constitutional institutions.

Allegations of terrorism, violence and incitement should be prosecuted where evidence exists, but antiterrorism and cybercrime legislation must not become convenient substitutes for ordinary criminal process. Trials involving political activists should be transparent. Appeals involving incarcerated defendants require genuinely expedited hearings. Bail and release orders must be implemented in substance, not defeated through serial detention.

Most importantly, enforced disappearance can have no place in a constitutional state. Every person detained by the state must be produced before a court, informed of the accusation and afforded access to counsel.

The government, opposition and establishment should all understand the same principle: exceptional powers created against today's adversary may become tomorrow's weapon against those who created them. Pakistan's crisis, therefore, is larger than Mahrang Baloch, Imaan Mazari Hazir, Hadi Ali Chattha or Imran Khan. It concerns the boundary between the citizen and the state. A criminal justice system earns legitimacy not when it efficiently imprisons the unpopular, but when it protects due process precisely when doing so is politically inconvenient. The ultimate test of the rule of law is simple: whether law restrains power — or power determines what the law will mean. n

The writer is a retired inspector general of police and former DG FIA.

Revamped partnership

Pakistan and the US have taken many steps to boost ties.

Masood Khan

PAKISTAN has long desired a standalone, broad-based relationship with the US. That objective is now within reach. On the sidelines of the UN high-level session, the leaders of Pakistan and the US are scheduled to meet to scan the evolving regional and international situation and strengthen bilateral ties.

In the past year, especially during the ongoing war between Iran and the US, both countries have worked closely to explore pathways to de-escalate the situation. Washington has publicly recognised contributions toward securing peace across South and Central Asia. Moreover, Pakistan has enjoyed trust from both Washington and Tehran to broker a ceasefire, facilitate face-to-face talks, and sign a memorandum of understanding that provided a framework for talks. Regrettably, that process has not moved forward, but Pakistan continues to pursue all avenues to end the war.

Pakistani and US leaderswill meet when Pakistan'sdiplomatic standingis at an all-time high. Over the past year,the rapport that Field Marshal Asim Munir and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif developed with President Donald Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance has widened the bandwidth to move Pak-US relations to a higher level.

Deep historical roots bind the two countries' relationship, which began at the height of the Cold War. In 1971, Pakistan facilitated a détente between the US and China. In the 1980s, it partnered with the US and its allies to restore Afghanistan's freedom. After 9/11, the US and Pakistan collaborated to fight against terrorism. This sustained cooperation has built a stronger foundation of understanding between the political and military leaderships of the two countries.

Over the decades, Pakistan has learnt one clear lesson: cooperation centred solely on security imperatives can leave political troughs and institutional vacuums in its wake.

Instead of goodwill, mistrust surfaces. We have an opportunity to rectify this trend. We have an opportunity to craft a multifaceted model that survives periods of intense strategic partnerships. The good news is that officials from both nations have taken steps to move the relationship beyond purely transactional security dynamics. However, much work remains.

Following the May 2025 Pakistan-India war, the US successfully mediated an end to hostilities. Many think this marked a new phase of bonhomie between the two nations. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, however, confirmed that the US initiated outreach to Pakistan for a diplomatic reset before the war to rebuild "an alliance, a strategic partnership". He stressed that while fully aware of regional complexities regarding India, the US goal was to expand counterterrorism (CT) cooperation with Pakistan into broader economic and strategic avenues. He clarified this would not come at the expense of America's ties with India.

Pakistan is one of the most consequential states in West Asia. Significantly, it has huge economic potential. As Washington seeks more diversified supply and value chains in Eurasia, Pakistan should be seen as a developing hub for trade, energy, transport and overall connectivity.

In New York, the US and Pakistani leadership should reignite diplomacy, in collaboration with regional countries, to end the wars in the Middle East and to resolve the long-standing issue of Palestine under the auspices of the Board of Peace.

Over the past year, Pakistan and the US have taken several steps to strengthen bilateral ties. The approval of nearly $1 billion for military hardware, such as F-16 sustainment packages, bolsters shared security goals. CT dialogues have given a roadmap for countering threats from IS-K and other terrorist organisations. More importantly, the two sides are crossing new thresholds to deepen cooperation in cryptocurrency, critical minerals, new technologies, agriculture, and renewable energy. But the pace of implementing agreements needs to be accelerated.

For the rest of the world, the war on terror may have ended, but for Pakistan it continues to be a potent threat. What is shocking is that the TTP, operating from Afghan soil, are using sophisticated American arms left behind by US troops in 2021. Pakistan needs a matching platform to eliminate terrorism from this region.

Last year in May, President Trump had promised that he would work with both India and Pakistan to see if a solution concerning Kashmir could be reached. It is high time Kashmir was put back on the international diplomatic radar, as the issue continues to imperil peace in the region.

Pakistan and the US have worked together successfully in different phases of their history. Now is the time to take this relationship to a higher, stronger level.

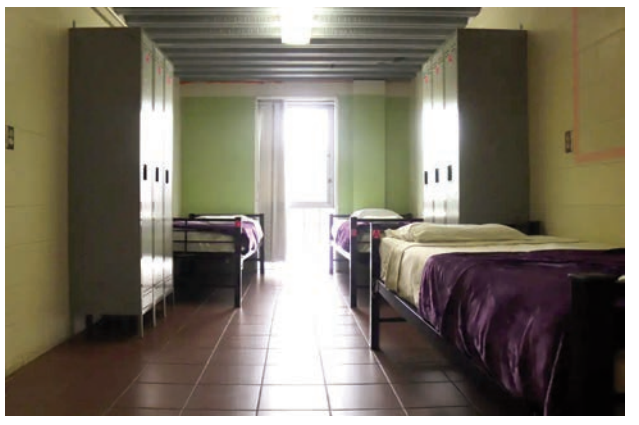
The writer is a former ambassador to the US, UN and China.

HOMELESS CENTER IN HOUSTON'S EAST DOWNTOWN SERVES MORE THAN 420 PEOPLE IN FIRST THREE MONTHS

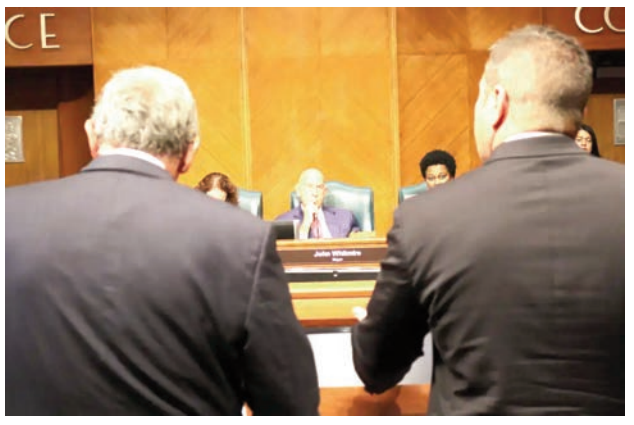
In Houston's East Downtown, a large residential service center for homeless people has been in operation for about three months. It's intended to provide a path from the streets into housing — but capacity is limited.



Homeless people wait in line for meals provided by a church group in East Downtown, a few blocks from a new service center at 419 Emancipation Avenue.



Each room at 419 Emancipation Avenue contains three beds and a set of lockers.



Houston housing director Mike Nichols and public safety director Larry Satterwhite speak to the Houston City Council and Mayor John Whitmire about the city's initiative to address homelessness in Oct. 2025.



Robyn Rame was served by the city-owned Navigation Center in July, 2026.



Thomas Romero stands in his rent-free studio unit at a nonprofit apartment complex operated by New Hope Housing in Houston.

In Houston's East Downtown, a new residential service center for homeless people — known simply as "419" by local officials — sits on the bustling Emancipation Avenue, near a light rail stop.

Early in the morning, people walk to and from the residential service center, across four lanes of traffic.

Not everyone served there has rave reviews.

"It's like jail," Tawanne Williams said.

Standing on a sidewalk near the facility, Williams said she's homeless because she fled domestic violence. She had harsh complaints about the food, bugs and the attitude of facility staffers.

"They treat us like s—," Williams said. "They feed us nasty ass food. It be cold. They don't give a f— about us in there."

"They wasn't doing that when I was in there," Calandra Brown interjected. It was unclear why Brown became homeless, or how long she lived on the streets before arriving at 419. She said the food was hot, and the staffers were kind.

"I asked the Lord to get me in because I'm tired of sleeping outside," Brown said.

Brown said staff removed her from the facility after a screening process found an active warrant. According to Harris County criminal court records, she had an active misdemeanor theft case.

Still, she enjoyed her time there — and wanted to get back in.

"It was cool," Brown said. "They would feed a hot meal every day. It was cool with me."

The Harris Center, which operates the facility, declined to allow Houston Public Media inside the building while it was in operation, so a reporter spoke with people outside.

For the most part, they painted a positive portrait of 419, which serves as the cornerstone of Mayor John Whitmire's initiative to reduce street homelessness in Houston.

Whitmire's administration has an ambitious goal — cutting the unsheltered population living on the streets in half within two years — but three and a half months after 419 opened, it's unclear how much the new facility has moved the needle. Bruce Brown, no relation to Calandra, said he landed on the streets after a dispute with his former landlord led to an eviction. He was on his way to a dentist appointment from the facility.

"It's been a blessing, and there's opportunity here," he said. "You've got a base of operations where you can think, and you can plan."

People can use the time to find work, receive psychiatric care and medical services, get their papers in order — and get on the path to permanent housing.

"It's kind of like going to prison," he said. "You can use the time to your advantage. It can work for you or against you."

The city has an ambitious goal. What progress has been made?

In response to a public records request, the city's housing department withheld performance metrics showing how many people have been sheltered and where they've landed.

In a statement, a spokesperson for the city's housing department said more than 420 people have been served, but they didn't answer questions about how many of them have moved into permanent housing.

Some of them have taken one step in that direction — by moving onto the city's Navigation Center.

This is the other city-owned shelter and service center, which opened in 2023. It's half the size of 419, with about 110 beds. And it's harder to get in because residents must have a referral to a housing program — which means they must be on a waitlist for an apartment.

In July, Robyn Rame was waiting for an apartment at the center. She had just gotten her housing referral at 419.

"It's not a 'shelter' shelter," Rame said. "It's totally different."

Rame said the facility at 419 is just a larger version of the Navigation Center, and they're both unlike any shelters she stayed at during her three years on the streets in Houston.

"They have classes. They have medical on site," Rame said. "They have counselors. They have all this stuff. I mean, it's not just somewhere to go to and go to sleep and then leave again."

She said she struggled with substance abuse before becoming sober while living on the streets of Downtown Houston.

Substance abuse continued among the shelter population at 419 Emancipation, she said.

"People go out, they come back high and drunk, and somehow they get back in," Rame said. "But that's neither here nor there. That's on them. You do you, keep you clean and move on."

In a statement, a spokesperson for the Harris Center said, "If a guest is determined to be intoxicated to the extent that they cannot safely remain at the facility, staff coordinate with the Houston Recovery Center and, when appropriate, law enforcement to facilitate transport to the Houston Recovery Center's Sobering Center or another appropriate level of care."

Rame said she was able to move to 419 from a treatment program. Many others have been dropped off by law enforcement, according to officials. But because of the 222-bed capacity, people have had trouble getting in at the front door.

In a police report obtained by Houston Public Media, an officer described seeing a man "upset, crying and frustrated," because, the man told the officer, "he was refused from [419] because it was full." The officer took him to Houston Recovery Center — a sobering facility.

"I am thrilled that people want to be there," Mike Nichols, director of the city's housing department, said. "I'm thrilled that people want to stay there ... People want to be there because they feel safe. The food is good. The programs are important. And that's good."

But, he said, 419 is intended to act as a "front door" to the region's homeless response system, and the city and its partners need to move people through that door — into treatment or housing — more quickly.

"There'll never be a possibility for a place that's so big that takes care of all of this," Nichols said, "But now we have to find what we promised, which is a system of moving on."

According to local officials, about 40,000 people have been moved off the streets into permanent housing in the Houston area over the past 15 years, but the unsheltered population living on the streets has held steady at around 1,200 since 2023.

If Nichols and Whitmire's administration meets their goal with the new facility, the population will reach a historic low — about 600 — sometime in 2028.

Moving forward

Last year, city officials said they got more than 200 people off the streets. One of them was Thomas Romero. Now, every day, he turns a key to open the door of his apartment.

During a decade of living on the streets, he said he spent a lot of time thinking about an apartment unit — about the key to the door.

"My keys was in my mind already," Romero said. "Because I prayed about the keys. I prayed about the doorknob. I prayed about the door."

The apartment came with a bed, and churches have provided pots and pans, an air-fryer and a microwave.

It's a cozy studio unit — not big, but it has enough room for guests, who he loves to feed.

"I don't have enough kitchen space, but the space I have is mine," Romero said, "and when people come, they pull up, and they bring their own plates."

They have a narrow selection of condiment options — Tabasco, Valentino and salsa.

"I could get rid of everything else, but if I ain't got hot sauce — I got to stay with my hot sauce," Romero said. "You see all the different hot sauces. You know, I eat a jar of hot sauce a week."

He's on a rent-free, one-year lease at an apartment complex operated by the nonprofit New Hope Housing in Houston.

A Houston Public Media reporter first met Romero in December 2025 at the Navigation Center, where he arrived after sleeping on the streets of Downtown Houston. He said he had struggled with substance abuse after a series of deaths in his family.

Since getting the unit in January, he's been working as a part-time driver and looking for a steady job, saving up for a car and a house.

"I'm not going back," Romero said. "Why go backwards when you can go forward?"

Going forward, city officials hope, 419 will help more people follow in Romero's footsteps.

Daniel Wong Leads GOTV Rally and Fiesta Dinner in Richmond

Candidate for Fort Bend County Judge Daniel Wong headlined a "Get Out The Vote" rally and campaign dinner at Safari Ranch Texas on September 18. Addressing local constituents alongside State Representative candidate Matt Morgan and Congressional candidate Trever Nehls, Wong outlined key priorities for Fort Bend County—focusing on economic expansion, property tax relief, and regional infrastructure to drive voter turnout ahead of the general election.



























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