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Amina Nuzhat

**SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER**

Syed Mubarak A. Shah

Ph. No. 0047-91698367

**ADVERTISING MANAGER**

M. Sultan Qureshi

Ph. No. +1(416)433-0112

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**E-Mail: lahoreintlondon@gmail.com**

**Send your writeups at**

**m.abbasi.uk@gmail.com**

**Write to :**

**Monthly Lahore International**

**Phone: +44 794 007 7825**

## Disclaimer

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Returning to schools for in person learning has been one of the most difficult conundrums for policy makers, teachers, students and parents to come to terms with. On the one hand, we still see Coronavirus cases continue to escalate in some parts of the world and wish nothing more than for teachers and students to be in a safe and healthy environment; and on the flip side, there is the growing concern that years of progress risk being reversed. At the heart of it all no doubt remains the health and wellbeing of students and teachers, but with the announcements of schools and education facilities reopening, the long term implications of lack of progression in learning and how teachers will bridge the gap remains a cause for concern for many. Studies at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic had already suggested that the pandemic would undo months of academic gains. Researchers predicted that, on average, students will experience substantial drops in reading and mathematics, losing roughly three months' worth of gains in reading and five months' worth of gains in mathematics by autumn 2020. For Megan Kuhfeld, the lead author of the study, the biggest takeaway isn't that learning loss will happen - that's a given - but that students will come back to school having declined at vastly different rates: "We might be facing unprecedented levels of variability," she says (Projecting the potential impacts of COVID-19 school closures on academic achievement, 05/2020). It is not merely the curriculum targets that are of concern, but also the disproportionate impact on students living in poverty and students of colour. As Kuhfeld suggests in her study, these families suffer higher rates of infection and the economic burden disproportionately falls on Black and Hispanic parents, who are less likely to be able to work from home during the pandemic. Schools have long served as "great equaliz-

ers," bridging the gap for lower income families. Remote learning and social isolation in the pandemic has unfortunately unveiled many inequities in the education system. Despite resources being allocated by schools to students for remote learning, the closure of in person learning has been disruptive for students particularly from these families. Let's now also take into consideration the impact of the unprecedented changes in education on students' mental wellbeing. Schools have served as a de facto mental health system for many children and adolescents, providing mental health services to 57 percent of adolescents who need care. Restricted access to these basic resources that give some mental and financial comfort for these households has been amplifying the learning crisis and widening the achievement gap, leaving many students behind. Post-COVID policy initiatives to improve education will need to rise to the challenges posed by increased reliance on remote learning. Educators will need to consider responses to address COVID-19's short-term disruptions for children falling behind, while also working on relationship building in a safe and supportive environment. This would lay the groundwork to improve children's mental health services in the long term in order to provide a more fair and equal education system post Covid-19. That is key to combating inequality in education. By prioritising investments that can help students achieve their fullest potential, no matter their background, policymakers across the globe can set their countries on the path towards healthier and more productive societies in a post-pandemic world, thus providing a basis for nurturing responsible citizens. These young individuals are ultimately the policy makers of the future who will be using the education provided to them today to rebuild our tomorrow.



# For Peace to Prevail, Pakistan Does Not Require Only Laws of Justice, But Also People of Justice

**By: Ikram Sehgal**



The Quaid's vision of Pakistan was of Muslims being a nation that was 'Islamic' as a state and as a society. The way democracy and governance thereof has been operated by Pakistani rulers, we have failed, at least so far, to create that nation, that state and that society. Citing justice in his writings as the "first virtue of social institutions", of which a government is one example, John Rawls highlights the importance of justice and of its centrality in a "well-ordered" society. Failing to provide justice equally to all, socio-economic, ethnic and other differences continue dividing the population. For the state to provide equal justice to all its citizens is not only according to Western political theory and ethics but very much at the core of Islam. In pre-Islamic times laws to provide justice were unaware of the principle of equality, mainly because they were made without understanding the will of God. One such example is the Code of Hammurabi. Named after the sixth Babylonian king this Code is one of the oldest deciphered laws in the world (1754 BC). It consists of 282 rules with scaled punishments, adjusting "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth". Based on social stratification depending on social status and gender, of slave versus free, man versus woman, other parts deal with contracts, business dealing, family law, regulations of government. It was one of the first formalized codes of law of humanity. While in theory the Code of Hammurabi was trying to achieve equality, in actual practice singular bias existed against those categorized in the lower end of the social spectrum. Justice was not based on equality of men, different laws provided for different justice for the three classes of men in society: property owners (or the elite), free men and slaves. Punishments for someone assaulting someone from a lower class were far lighter than if he had assaulted someone of

equal or higher status. For example, if a doctor killed a rich patient, he would have his hands cut off, but if he killed a slave, only financial restitution was required. Justice was different for men and women. While men were allowed to have out of wedlock sexual relations, women were punished severely for the same. Women could receive punishments that their male counterparts would not, as men were permitted to have affairs with their servants and slaves, whereas married women would be harshly punished for committing adultery. The Hammurabi Code suggests that the code may be better understood as a codification of Hammurabi's supplementary judicial decisions, and that, by memorializing his wisdom and justice, its purpose may have been the self-glorification of Hammurabi rather than a modern legal code or constitution. While there is no direct connection whatsoever between 'Hammurabi and Islam' there is no doubt that the Quran's basic connection with Arab law current at the time of the Prophet (PBUH). Islam could not have succeeded if an entirely new commandment unconnected to the current life would have come to them. There is an evolution visible in the understanding of humanity of God, the world and the purpose of life. The history of revelations and prophets is a step-by-step revealing of the Truth by God in accordance with the level of understanding that humanity had gained by the time of revelation. With the last revelation to the last prophet, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the complete Truth (all knowledge that is needed to be able to live according to God's wishes and intentions) has been given to humanity and humanity is now ready to live according to the ordained rules. In Islam, justice is a result of Aman (to be safe) and to have Am'nah (trustworthiness). Thus, the one who upholds safety and is trustworthy is Am'n. The prerequisite



for justice is trustworthiness. For peace and justice to prevail in an Islamic society, we do not require only laws of justice, but also people of justice who treat all those who come before them as equal human beings. Justice is not only the task of the courts but of individual Muslims as well. An important part of justice in both western and Islamic understanding is the idea of equality. Everybody across the social, ethnic religious divide, needs to be just to himself and to others and he has to have secure and easy access to justice. The state has to provide this, but with the state and its institutions consisting of individuals, the practice of justice and equality has to be nurtured in the character of the people. Unfortunately, in practice this seems to have been conveniently overlooked by Pakistani rulers with the result that today's Pakistan is lacking much of this basic requirement of justice be it western or Islamic – in state and society of the country. What goes here for a system of justice rather reminds one of the Hammurabi Code two thousand years before Islam. The rich in our country have easy access to courts and lawyers through their money and -sometimes- their connections or even the infamous client-patron relationship. For the middle classes, justice is already much more removed; it is expensive, long delayed and the outcome is anybody's guess. An if you get the verdict you

had expected there is nobody who would implement it for you. The majority of our people who are poor have no money left to pursue years or decades of staying in the courts, thus justice is unavailable -like in Hammurabi's times. In any case Pakistan's justice system in practice is far from being Islamic. While NAB must be commended for holding many crooks, businessmen, politicians and public servants, etc. accountable and recovering billions of rupees, most of our more notorious scoundrels are still free and continuing to cause not only political mayhem but acting against the State by targeting the Army. They mostly using the garb of political victimisation to camouflage (and thus legally escape) their crimes. The use of the political card has botched attempts at accountability by NAB in many cases. Moreover, the accountability process being stretched out over years has damaged the reputation of the accountability. While 'justice delayed is justice denied' is a maxim that holds true not without reason, one of most compelling positive factors about justice in Islam is that it is not delayed like it has been done in the Daniel Pearl case. The intervention of High Courts (and even the Supreme Court (SC)) in doling out bail for the accused on one pretext or the other has also badly compromised the process of accountability. Look at "Born Again" Nawaz Sharif



sipping coffee walking around Hyde Park in London! On the other hand take our faulty “evidence” process and procedure thereof. Consider just the Daniel Pearl murder case that had happened in 2002 being finally decided just recently. The acquitting of the accused may be due to missing or insufficient evidence but that decision should have taken into account that Omar Shaikh had confessed to the kidnapping of Danial Pearl and was therefore, at the very least, guilty of abetment in his murder. A major impediment to justice is that perjury is done freely and the courts accept it without using the available laws for punishment of telling lies in court. Those guilty of perjury (or causing perjury to be done shall be given exemplary punishment). The centre piece of the state and the nation, Justice is what holds the nation together and allows its citizens to identify themselves with their state and its institutions and government. Everywhere in the world people learn not from sermons but from example. And that starts in childhood at home and in school. Especially young people get frustrated when they are treated unjust or when they experience that their elders violate the ethical principles that they are preaching, be it lying, treating others disrespectful or deny them equal and just treatment. And when these young children grow up with such scrambled ethics they might finish university and become lawyers, judges, businessmen and teachers. But what kind of professionals they will be? Knowledge in any resort of science can only be applied successfully in life when it is supported and practiced with the right ethics. The result of the lack of justice is that both state and society in Pakistan lack stability, even after seventy years and despite the so many attempts to make the country ‘Islamic’, Pakistani society is torn apart by economic inequality, social strife and ethnic and religious separation, complicated by a weird understanding of Islam. The state and its institutions are not trusted and are marred by corruption and incompetence. Bureaucrats, politicians, even teachers are

thinking “If I cannot trust that I will be treated with justice why should I be true to the state?” Justice is the basic requirement of the law and of life and is important for maintaining order in society. And while justice is not only a task of the law it is the law that has to uphold it at last. As long as the basic demand for justice is not upheld, Pakistan will fail to fulfil its destiny. We cannot continue to practice the Hammurabic Code while keeping justice on public display as is practiced in Islam in theory only

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/720522/the-hammurabic-code-instead-of-islamic-justice/>

## CONGRATULATIONS

Dear readers you will be pleased to hear that our Chief Editor of Lahore International Magazine, Mohiuddin Abbasi has received the honour of recently being appointed as Senior Vice President of the Journalists Association of Pakistan. Our heartiest congratulations to Mohiuddin Abbasi as we send him our best wishes on this new title.

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 ☎ 0334-4299992  
 ☎ +92-300-9705028, 0313-5310248, 0311-8404385  
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# Forcing students to learn Arabic has no practical or moral benefit

By: Prof Pervez Hoodbhoy



IN every school of Islamabad every child shall henceforth be compelled to study the Arabic language from Grade 1 to Grade 5. Thereafter he or she shall learn Arabic grammar from Grade 6 to Grade 12. By unanimous vote, that's what the Senate of Pakistan has decided. Introduced on Feb 1, 2021 as a private member's bill by Senator Javed Abbasi of the PML-N, the Compulsory Teaching of Arabic Language Bill, 2020, will become an act of parliament once approved by the National Assembly. Thereafter it is likely to be applied across the country.

Should we citizens celebrate or be worried? That depends upon whether desired outcomes can be attained. Let's therefore see what reasons were given by our lawmakers for the bill, one that will deeply impact many generations to come. First, the bill states that proficiency in Arabic will "broaden the employment and business opportunities for the citizens of Pakistan" in rich Arab countries. While attraction to Arab oil wealth is understandable and has long been pursued, this reason is weak. Jobs and businesses go to persons with specific skills or those who have deliverables to offer. Forcing students to learn Arabic won't make them virtuous but setting good examples of moral behaviour might.

Just look at who gets invited to GCC countries. Westerners having zero familiarity with Arabic but high expertise are most sought after. Indians are a distant second, getting only about 10 per cent of high-level jobs with the rest performing menial and unskilled construction tasks. Pakistanis stand still further below with only 3pc at higher levels. This is because of low professional and life skills. With the Pakistani schoolchild now to be burdened with learning yet another

language, achievement levels will further deteriorate. If the Pakistani job seeker could use his school-learned Arabic to communicate with Arabs, would it improve matters? This is unlikely. Graduates from Pakistani madressahs seeking to understand the Holy Quran spend their lives trying to master classical Arabic. And yet they have zero job prospects in the Middle East. Present enrolment in Arabic language courses and university degree programmes is therefore very low. In fact, after starting such programmes over 20 to 30 years ago, some universities later closed them down. For the boy now in an Islamabad school compelled to learn classical Arabic, communication with Arabs in their Arabic will not be easy. In fact, the poor fellow will be quite at sea. Only modern versions of Arabic are spoken in various Arab countries, not classical Arabic. Imagine that a Pakistani lad trained in ye olde Englisch — the "proper English" of Shakespeare or the Canterbury Tales — was to land up in today's England. He might be a source of merriment but getting a job would be tough. Second, the bill claims that school-taught Arabic will enable students to understand the Holy Quran better and so become better Muslims. Are the bill's sponsors not aware that, beginning with Persian in the 10th century, the Quran has undergone translation into all major languages? This was necessary because it is extremely difficult for non-Arabs to understand the Quran's wonderfully rich and nuanced classical Arabic. Many scholars have spent entire lives performing such monumental translations, knowing that words have meanings that subtly change with time. But even so, no two translations completely agree and sometimes different interpretations emerge. Given these





emergency wards; our students would be reading books rather than noisily demonstrating for their “right to cheat”; our political leaders would not be looters and our generals would no longer have secret overseas business franchises. While some chase such delusions, others nervously search for their civilizational roots in some faraway land — Saudi Arabia earlier and now Turkey. Thus quite a few are

difficulties, absorbing the contents of the Quran through an Urdu translation is surely much easier for a Pakistani school student.

Deeply puzzling, therefore, is the statement from the minister of state for parliamentary affairs: “You cannot understand the message of Allah, if you do not know Arabic.” If true, that massively downgrades most Muslims living on this planet. The entire Muslim population of Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Iran, or Turkey cannot be made to understand or speak Arabic. And what of those long dead Muslims who tried hard to follow the teachings of Islam but never learned — nor tried to learn — the Arabic language?

That knowing Arabic — any version — can make one a better person or create unity is a bizarre thought. If true, the Arab states would be standing together instead of several rushing to recognize Israel even as it gobbles up the last bits of Palestine. Has the Arabic language made Arab states beacons of moral integrity, parsimony, and high thinking? Are our senators claiming that today’s Arabs are paragons of virtue? But truly, it would be wonderful if teaching Arabic to kids, and further jacking up the religious content of education, could change students for the better. Just imagine! Future Pakistani lawyers would not be rampaging goons who destroy court property and randomly attack patients in hospital

drawn to Arabic. But curiously, Arabs show no interest in reviving Arabic. Their new generations are hell-bent upon modernising and moving towards English. Now for several decades, an energized Arab world has been luring American universities with large sums of money to open local campuses in GCC states. Part of that investment is paying off. The success of Al-Amal, the UAE spacecraft that entered orbit around Mars some days ago, was officially celebrated as an Arab Muslim success. While one feels happy at this, it is really the triumph of Western technology harnessed by a few forward-looking Arabs who have learnt to speak the language of modern science. A thousand years ago that language was only Arabic. But in our epoch it is only English. In forcing kids to learn Arabic, all those sitting in Pakistan’s Senate — with just a single exception — forgot that they are Pakistanis first and that Pakistan was made for Pakistanis. Rather than behave as sniveling cultural orphans seeking shelter in a rich uncle’s house, they need to take pride in the diversity and strength of the myriad local cultures and languages that make this land and its people. The writer is an Islamabad-based physicist and writer.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1607107/making-arabic-compulsory>

# A short history of religious bigotry in Islamic Republic

By: Yasser Latif Hamdani



Last week during the hearing on Punjab's dissolution of local bodies, Justice Qazi Faez Isa made a number of damning observations on the conduct of not just the Government of Punjab but also the conduct of the Federal Government vis a vis freedom of the press. He said in clear language that media in Pakistan is not free. To back this up he asked the media persons to raise their hands if they think media free in Pakistan. No hands went up. When he asked them to raise their hands if they think media is not free, all hands went up. It was a very embarrassing moment for the Federal Government, which for the last two and a half years has held no punches to ensure that the media is made compliant to their whims and sensitivities. Without a free media there can be democracy. Justice Qazi made another astute observation: While a person is free to dislike some provisions of the Constitution by right, the constitutional framework and method is supreme. It is this part – the right to dislike some provisions – that was the most important part of His Lordship's observations.

There is much that one dislikes about the present Constitution i.e. its discrimination against Non-Muslims and its theocratic undertones. Still this is the Constitution we have and we must work within its framework to deliver a democratic society. Extreme right wing only sees those clauses that benefit them but forget that the Constitution provides fundamental rights of freedom of speech and religion. The same Constitution also provides for minorities the right to freely profess, practise and propagate their faith while being allowed to freely developed their culture. However

consider for example the case of Ahmadis. Declared Non-Muslim by this Constitution in 1974 (a provision they dislike as is their right), since 1984 they are not allowed to free profess, practice and propagate their faith or develop their culture freely. In fact they are routinely imprisoned for their faith or even reading the Holy Quran. As if that was not enough they are not allowed to even publish their own books for their own consumption. This is championed as a constitutionally sanctioned discrimination when the Fundamental Rights, both Article 19 and Article 20, say otherwise. These Fundamental Rights are immutable and cannot be made subject to Ahmadis agreeing to their classification as Non-Muslim. Constitution declares them Non-Muslim for the purposes of law and constitution but it does not make it obligatory on them to consider themselves Non-Muslim. Pakistan had embarked on the Islamic Republic project in 1956.

The makers of the first constitution were mindful of the fact that the very nature of the Islamic Republic will come to be contested between the modernists and the orthodoxy. The framers of 1956 Constitution were not outright secularists – though it would have been better if they were- because if they had been they would not have wanted an Islamic Republic. Therefore they ensured that other than the office of the president, there were no bars against any community. The office of the Prime Minister was open to every community and more importantly the Republic had no state religion. The 1956 Constitution had no religious oaths and unfettered fundamental rights of freedom of speech and religion. By



and large the Constitution of 1962 – which unlike the 1956 Constitution was not framed by a Constituent Assembly and was presidential in nature- followed the tradition of keeping religion and state had somewhat a distance. Indeed initially the 1962 Constitution had named the country Republic of Pakistan, something, which was changed back to the Islamic Republic by first amendment. All of this changed in 1973. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a towering political figure but he was driven by this mad notion that the constitution must be made by the consensus of all sections including the religious right. He had come to power defeating the parties of the right and the main opposition to him the NAP was also secular.

What drove him to seek the consensus of the religious right is one of life's great mysteries as are his actions in 1974 because he was no bigot- indeed far from it. These are questions only Bhutto could have answered but providence did not give him the opportunity to right the wrongs. 1973 could have been Pakistan's moment but it was blown and is now a cautionary tale. 1973 Constitution was further mangled by General Zia's bigoted dictatorship and now enables the kind of ruthless denial of fundamental rights that we see. Consider for example the judgment by Islamabad High Court in the now famous Allah Wasaya Case, PLD 2019 Page 62, authored by the now disgraced "Justice" Shaukat Aziz Siddiqi. It builds on Zaheeruddin v State, 1993 SCMR 1718, which had upheld the persecution of Ahmadis as being constitutional. The Allah Wasaya Case went further. First it repeated the propaganda against Ahmadis declaring them enemies of the state.

The thrust of it was that no Ahmadi should hold an office in the state. Clearly the disgraced judge either had no idea or deliberately chose to overlook the fact that the reason Pakistan today has UNSC Resolutions on Kashmir was the good work of an

Ahmadi. Zafrullah Khan, appointed Foreign Minister by none other than Quaid-e-Azam Mahomed Ali Jinnah himself, had gotten the resolutions we wave in India's face. The last official action by the Quaid-e-Azam was to give Zafrullah Khan the plenipotentiary powers on the Kashmir issue. The disgraced Judge also forgot to mention that an Ahmadi General who was on the verge of taking all of Kashmir before he was replaced by Yahya Khan in 1965 who went ahead and blew that great opportunity. It was an Ahmadi Mirza Muzaffar Ahmad as the Federal Finance Secretary who got the Tarbela and Mangla Dams made. Earlier he was instrumental in getting the Indus Basin Treaty being signed which protected Pakistan's rights as the lower riparian state. It was an Ahmadi, Dr Abdus Salam, who founded SUPARCO (and sent a satellite into space long before most countries in Asia) and then led the famous Multan Conference where the idea of Pakistan's nuclear bomb was born. My guess is that the now disgraced judge Shaukat Aziz Siddiqi is too ignorant to know these facts or too much of bigot to appreciate the salience of these contributions. The judgment did not stop here. "Justice" Siddiqi also ordered that Ahmadis should be stopped from calling themselves Ahmadis and also forced to add "Qadiani" "Mirzai" or "Ghulam-e-mirza" to their name. The ignorant disgraced judge thus wanted to replicate the Nazi model in Pakistan.

Thankfully his big mouth got him into trouble soon enough and Pakistan was rid of General Zia junior before he could become the Chief Justice of Islamabad High Court. One wishes that Pakistan had more of Justice Qazilwas and fewer Justice Siddiquees.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/721551/a-short-history-of-religious-bigotry-in-our-islamic-republic/>

# Pakistan: Enjoying Turkish dramas, avoiding realism

By: Elf Habib

Pakistan's media and drama domains, for quite some time, have been buzzing with government-sponsored dubbing, discussion and the display of a Turkish drama based on the life and deeds of Ertugrul. He is believed to be the father of Osman, after whom the much-adored Osmania Caliphate (1299-1923) was named. Pakistan's passion for the initial tribal feuds, fights, expeditions and the exploits that led to the founding of this Muslim dynasty can be ascribed to its overtly ostentatious fervour for Islam and a special warmth, affiliation and interaction with Turkey. Nawaz Sharif, after his trip to Turkey, was also so fascinated by its traffic system that a contract for installing the computerized Turkish traffic signals at 190 crossings in Lahore was almost instantly awarded to a Turkish firm. Even General Musharraf, despite being a dictator,

tain's enclave so that he may prosper. The fervor for Turkey, as evidenced by the excessive outburst of the Khilafat Movement, was rooted amongst the Muslims of the subcontinent even before its partition. Yet, the most baffling aspect of this affiliation is that the Muslims in the subcontinent never moved to embrace Turkish traditions, spirit and the mindset to accept the realities, pragmatic paths and policies. Turkey's realization about the receding role of religion as an instrument for state policies and international affairs manifested in its alliance with Germany during the First World War. Its caliphate had collaborated with various Christian countries in many earlier conflicts as well. Such alliances of a supreme Muslim Caliphate now may seem quite heretic to most fundamentalist segments. The second great realisation came from rising



Arab nationalism and revolt against the Turkish rule that battered the basis and bonds of the Caliphate. The Muslims in India, on the contrary, protested for its continuation. Some of them are still obsessed with the idea of obliterating democracy and nationalism to recreate a Caliphate through sheer coercion, force and violence. Atatürk and his companions similarly grasped the colossal human and material sacrifices endured

declared his adoration for Ata Turk—the founder of the modern democratic Turkey that soon surpassed its epithet of a sick man vying for acceptance and inclusion into the European Union. Now once again, our government is parading its passion for a Turkish drama that depicts thirteenth century clan culture, clashes and intrigues to secure and stabilize a chief-

to retrieve Turkey from the Allied war machine. They elicited a marvelous prescience to accept the reality about the unprecedented western strides in science, technology, manufacturing and maritime marvels and their inevitable impacts on human thought and behaviour. They understood the perils and predicaments of pursuing futile idealistic phan-



toms and preferred to transform Turkey into a modern constitutional republic riveted to secularism and sworn to all terrestrial human needs. These steps evidently sparked reaction and resistance by the supporters of the conservative interpretation of Islamic thought and practice. The dominant army control also fuelled further alienation amongst the segments striving for civil supremacy over these sectors. This led to the emergence of Islamic minded forces and the AJK party eventually swept the polls in 2002. It was feared that their religious leaning would rewind or impede the path of secularism and integration with the European Union but Turkey, once again, demonstrated remarkable rationality and resolve to retain the path of secularism and collaboration with the west. The Islamic party even more resolutely strove for integration, amended the constitution and aligned the civil and criminal codes mostly to European standards. The country has undertaken eight reform packages and revised 218 articles, spanning 53 different laws and even abolished capital punishment. Internationally espoused provisions for freedom of thought and expression were instituted instead. Females also have equal rights in inheritance and matrimonial partnerships. Decisions of the European Court of Justice, as per some prescribed rules, take precedence over the national courts. This trend of absorbing some egalitarian western values is indeed quite instructive for religious parties in other Muslim countries, including Pakistan. There is a lot to be learnt from the Turkish trek to reality and replacement of its morbid dreams and delusions for a greater glory and grandeur despite the mounting spiral of debt, dependency, dole outs, derelict economy, utilities and the worsening of living conditions and sufferings of its masses.

<https://nation.com.pk/15-Feb-2021/adoring-turkish-dramas-avoiding-the-realism>

## India: Gang nabbed for trafficking girls to Middle East

Hyderabad: Special operations team of LB Nagar on Tuesday busted Al-Hayath tours and travels, Malakpet and arrested four interstate human traffickers and rescued a woman victim being trafficked to Oman. The police seized visa documentation, 40 passports belonging to various persons, Rs. 6000 and mobile phones. According to the police, the main accused has been identified as Mohammed Imtiyaz (35) who is a travel agent and had a gang of fellow accused who helped him in this. The gang indulged in illicit human trafficking by trying to send a woman Shaik Khader bee of Medipally to Muscat, Oman, in a fraudulent manner, promising her work on visiting visa instead of working visa. Rachakonda commissioner of police Mahesh Bhagwat said in a press conference that Imtiyaz got acquainted with her through her aunt and knowing her financial problems he started offering her jobs in the Middle East. He then arranged for a visa and booked her a flight to Muscat on February 2. The victim felt something was fishy when the suspects asked her to share her pictures to them on whatsapp after which they will pay her the promised sum of Rs.30,000. She grew suspicious and escaped from the airport. Further, the suspects had collected passports from nearly 40 people including 12 women and 28 men to make visa arrangements for sending them to different Gulf countries. They and two other travel agencies in Kadapa were found to be involved in the racket, and were trafficking women to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Dubai and Qatar, said the commissioner of police.

<https://www.siasat.com/human-trafficking-gang-involved-in-women-trafficking-nabbed-2086621/>

# The railway lines in Pakistan and the stories they tell



PAKISTAN RAILWAYS  
پاکستان ریلویز

By: Salman Rashid



A wintry morning. A small, all but abandoned, railway station. A few scrawny plants growing between its building and a double rail track glued on a cheerless slope with sombre, brooding hills closing in from all sides as if to prevent the station from escaping. That was Hirok station in the heart of Balochistan's Bolan Pass — or at least that is my most abiding memory of it. On a bench in front of the building lay what looked like a body shrouded in a grey shawl. To the grinding sound of our trolley's brakes, it raised a bit of the shawl from its head to cast a bleary eye in our direction. Recognizing the trolley men, it waved a languid hand and went back under the shawl. We passed on down the slope, once again gathering speed. It was March 1995 and friends in the railway had arranged for me to be taken down the Bolan Pass by trolley. From Kolpur station at the western head of the pass to the

coal town of Machh, around 25 kilometres in the south-east, it is all the way down. After the initial push, the trolley goes screaming down the sharp gradient powered only by gravity. This slope had once seemed impossible for broad gauge steam engines to negotiate.

It was, indeed, for the sharp gradients of the Bolan Pass that railway engineers took the line north from Sibi through the Nari Gorge and across the dramatic Chappar Rift in order to connect Quetta with the rest of British India. But the unstable geology and the continual mud and rock slides in the rift told Raj railway engineers that another line was needed if they had to get to Kandahar in a hurry. And the hurry was imperative.

Having resoundingly lost the First Afghan War (1839-42), the army of the East India Company was paranoid with fear of Russia marching into Afghanistan. The situation only worsened



in the latter half of the 19th century as tensions between Czarist Russia and Victorian Britain rose to a fever pitch, both vying for imperial superiority in Central Asia. Since railway was the fastest way to transport troops, Russia was swiftly embroidering Asian deserts with steel threads east of the Don River even as British engineers hastened to match stitch for stitch through the Subcontinent and across the shale and limestone barriers of the Suleman Mountains and the Bolan Pass.

It was not until seven years after the end of the second Afghan War (1878-80) that the first line through Chappar Rift reached Quetta. But landslides and floods plagued the route even when it was being built, necessitating an alternate line. This seemed feasible only through the more stable geology of the Bolan Pass.

Originally, the line from Sibi was to swing due west to reach the village of Rind Ali (Rindli on British maps of that era). Here it would veer north-west for Hirok through the Kundlani Gorge. As the summer began in 1885, the line started to inch forward. Through furnace blasts of searing wind, labourers and engineers toiled to put a broad gauge (five feet and six inches wide) line.

To add to the discomfort of the heat, cholera broke out in construction camps, resulting in the deaths of several hundred workers. Still, with remarkable doggedness, the builders kept at it, perhaps driven by the desire to reach the cooler heights as quickly as possible. By mid-November that year, when the heat had already let off, the line reached Hirok (where the body under the shawl had waved to me) at 1,400 metres above the sea. Now came the hard part. The height rose dramatically to 1,790 metres within the 12 kilometres distance between Hirok and Kolpur through the Dozan Gorge. This rise of 390 metres in such a short distance was so sheer that not even the most powerful locomotive of the time could haul a train up it.

Elgin Bridge in the Dozan Gorge The railway-men's answer was to put in a smaller metre gauge (three feet and three inches wide) line

between Hirok and Kolpur. The line to Quetta from Kolpur was again to be broad gauge, passing across what is known as Dasht-e-Bedaulat (the Wretched Plain) — nothing grew here except a few grasses and, if winter rain and snow were abundant, some flowers. (In the early 1990s, I saw the first of several tube wells sprouting on the plain. Within years, it stood transformed with seasonal wheat and orchards.) The change in gauge meant that freight and passengers would be transhipped from broad gauge carriages to the smaller ones at Hirok.

After being hauled up to the cool heights of Kolpur, they would be shipped again to the larger vehicles. If that was not trouble enough for sahibs and memsahibs, another problem was that the line, sitting on the stony bed of the Bolan River as it passed through the tortuous Dozan Gorge, suffered periodic damage when rain sent down a flood in the otherwise dry stream. Once again, it was realised that this too was not the answer and plans were put in place to lay a 'high level' broad gauge line from Sibi to Dozan.

In 1888, work began on new bridges and tunnels. Two years later, as if to prove the old adage about the best laid plans of mice and men, nature brought down a huge flood through the gorge, washing away the bridges, girders and all. The Kundlani Gorge route just turned out to be another replay of the maddening Chappar Rift route. So, yet another alternative was needed. The line was now to be built through somewhat higher Mushkaf Valley that sits between Sibi and Hirok. With a shallower gradient difference, the line was forced all the way up to Hirok through places with names as mysterious as Aab-e-Gum (Lost Water, where the Bolan River disappears underground) and as evocative as Machh (Date Palm). Hirok onward, some magnificent bridges and a number of tunnels took the line to the top of the pass at Kolpur. Even now, trains had to be hauled up from Machh to Kolpur with what in railway parlance is called a banking engine, that is, an extra engine at the back of the train

to give it additional upward push.

The tunnels here have interesting names: there is Windy Corner and then there are Mary Jane, Cascade and Summit. The second one is named after the wife of F L O'Callaghan, the pioneer of this line, and the last one is an obvious reference to the top of the Bolan Pass. Below Cascade, right next to Elgin Bridge, there is a bit of another mystery: a smaller tunnel. This is the old metre gauge tunnel abandoned after the broad gauge line became operational. It was in 1894 when the first 'through' train from down country rolled into Quetta by the Mushkaf-Bolan route. By and by, this became a daily service even while the once a week up and down service through the Chappar Rift also continued. Then, in July 1942, came the flood in the rift to wash out that line. If Raj engineers had little interest to re-establish it, it was only because the Bolan Pass line was running trouble-free.

Climb to a vantage point high above the valley floor in Dozan Gorge and watch the diesel engines hauling green and cream coaches along the brown contours of the landscape into Cascade Tunnel. As the clatter and growl of the engine turns into a boom and, later, as the noise reverberates solidly off the rocky bed of the dry stream when the lines travels over the magnificent Elgin Bridge, the flesh crawls and the eye mists.

It is like being in a high adventure movie. And as you contemplate the scene below, of a sudden you are hit with one realisation: had periodic disasters not devilled the Chappar Rift, the Bolan Pass line would never have been laid. At Quetta, the line spreads out in three prongs: one going south-west to the Iranian frontier; the other going west across the Khwaja Amran Mountains to Chaman; and the third going north-east to Zhob. Each of these lines has a story of its own to tell.

<https://herald.dawn.com/news/1398917/the-railway-lines-in-pakistan-and-the-stories-they-tell>

## Good to be done

Boris Johnson's comments in 2018 referring to Muslim women wearing burkas looking like "letter boxes" has not helped matters, she says, adding that there was evidence to show people found it more acceptable to repeat such comments after the then Conservative backbencher chose to use such language. "I think everybody remembers that," she says. "You remember it. I remember it."

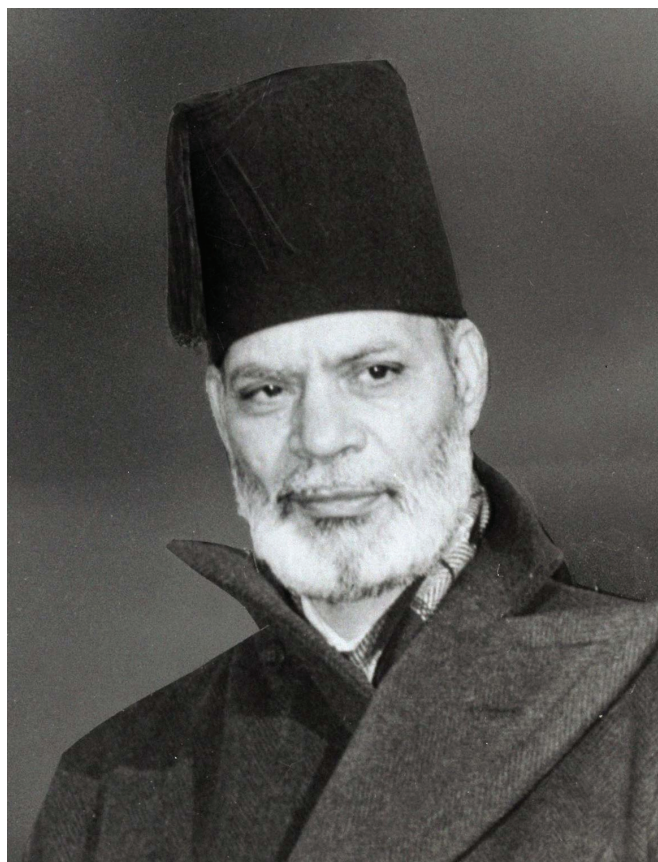
When it comes to the departure of Donald Trump from the White House, Ms Mohammed does not hold back. "I think the whole planet breathed a sigh of relief," she says. "He gave a lot of confidence to racists and we all saw what happened on Capitol Hill. I think it is good for everybody that he's gone."

But that is enough negativity for the new secretary general. She believes there is a great deal of good to be done and she wants to crack on with it. Her enthusiasm and optimism are infectious. "I can't wait to get on with the work," she says. "There's a lot to do and I really want to make a difference." It is hard to believe that optimism will not pay off for her, and the entire Muslim community.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/uk/zara-mohammed-first-woman-head-muslim-council-britain-inspire-women-fight-islamophobia-860826?ITO=newsnow>



# First Foreign Minister of Pakistan



This is Pakistan's first Foreign Minister Sir Zafrullah Khan appointed by Jinnah himself after Independence. Same Sir Zafrullah Khan who convinced United Nations as Pakistan's Foreign minister that Jammu & Kashmir is a disputed territory and not integral part of India.

Since independence all successive governments stance is that Kashmir should be resolved through UN resolutions but NO ONE points-out that it was because of hours and hours of lengthy speeches by Sir Zafrullah Khan not only in regards to Kashmir for their Right of Self-determination but also for the rights of people of Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Jordan and many other Muslim countries, same Sir Zafrullah Khan was at the forefront in getting them much-needed Independence. Here are few of his achievements which his own countrymen disregard because of his Ahmadiyya belief

- Former Member of Viceroy's Executive Council.
- Former Railway and Communications Minister of India.
- Former Senior Judge of Federal Court of India.
- Former Advisor of Chamber of Princes of India.
- Former President of All India Muslim League.
- Former Agent General of India in China.
- In 1937 he represented Viceroy of India and British India at the coronation ceremony of King George VI.
- First Foreign Minister of Pakistan.
- Former Vice President of the International Court of Justice, The Hague.
- Former President of International Court of Justice, The Hague.
- Former President of United Nation's General Assembly.
- Former Pakistan's Permanent Representative at the UN.

# UK: For Muslims wary of the Covid vaccine: there's every religious reason not to be distrustful

By Sadakat Kadri, Barrister

As the UK's Covid-19 vaccination program has accelerated, optimism about its effectiveness has been rising. According to the Office for National Statistics, more than nine in 10 people are now keen to get a jab, up from 78% in December. But there are significant racial disparities. The Royal College of General Practitioners reports that enthusiasm within Asian and black communities dips by between two-thirds and a half, and – as many imams have acknowledged – the suspicion of vaccines is disproportionately high among Muslims. Why? Influential traditions warn that innovations sometimes come with danger, and a fear of God can produce fatalistic attitudes towards disease: even viruses are part of creation, after all. But the

most distinctively Islamic concern is much simpler. Lots of believers worry that vaccines contain pork. The belief isn't as far-fetched as it might sound to non-Muslims. Chemically purified gelatine (like the gooey albumins found in salmon and egg whites) is useful to stabilize the active ingredients of many drugs. Manufacturers have been stepping up the search for substitutes, but animal products are therefore common in injectable solutions. That's led Muslims sometimes to worry that they might be haram, forbidden. Indonesia's most authoritative religious body denounced inoculations for meningitis in 2008 (which, quite counter-productively, disqualified thousands of unvaccinated Muslims from hajj later that year), and a similar condemnation in 2018 contributed to a major measles outbreak. In

parts of northern Pakistan, Somalia and Nigeria, false rumours about polio vaccines haven't just endangered children's health; hospitals have been torched and clinicians have been murdered.

The fear of life-saving medicines is ironic – not least, because Iranian physicians such as Ibn Sina once made Islamic culture synony-



mous with scientific progress – but mercifully, hardline opposition is confined to ultracautious conservatives and reckless extremists. There's a lot more support for vaccinating children in south Asia and north Africa than in Europe (the rate in France is lowest of all), and anti-vax sentiment is consistently high in only two Muslim-majority states: Indonesia and Nigeria. Most sharia scholars, meanwhile, justify haram ingredients by invoking a concept known as “transformation” (istihala) – essentially, a recognition that things can change – which has been loosening things up ever since it explained 1,200 years ago why the Qur'an's disapproval of wine didn't rule out cooking with vinegar. Jurists have also reminded Muslims that necessity and public welfare take priority in emergencies, and



stressed Islamic law's five goals (the *maqasid al-sharia*) – which include the preservation of life. These traditions inspired muftis in Moscow to declare last week that even if scientists had used gelatine in Russia's Sputnik vaccine (which they deny), inoculations would be permissible. Though Chinese vaccine manufacturers have been vague about what's in their products, Indonesia's Ulema Council has called Sinovac "holy and halal", while scholars in the United Arab Emirates and Egypt endorsed Sinopharm with observations that dietary restrictions matter less than human lives. Sharia-compliance has been even smoother with the Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines. All three manufacturers say they contain no animal derivatives, and stamps of approval have come from the British Islamic Medical Association, the Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America and the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia. That's important. It's helping imams allay community concerns, and encouraging sheikhs to get jabbed on television. But fine points of Islamic jurisprudence also distract from a bigger picture. It isn't humility before God that's fuelling doubt. It's an uneasy suspicion of powerful figures whose hostility to Islam is presumed. Iran's supreme leader has forbidden vaccine imports from the US and UK, regardless of ingredients, simply because he distrusts both countries. Egypt's retired grand mufti, Ali Gomaa, hasn't worried about gelatine, but he's suggested on his TV show that Covid-19 might be a biological weapon linked to 5G technology and 100,000 orbiting satellites. In the name of "anti-Zionism", people are rehashing the familiar slur that Jews spread disease, while a petitioner to Pakistan's high court has alleged that Muslims are being injected with not just pig and chimpanzee DNA, but tractable microchips too. Political scepticism is endemic in the Muslim world, and it isn't always unjustified. At least one conspiracy theory involving the vaccination of Muslims was certainly real: the 2011 operation to locate and kill Osama bin Laden

in Abbottabad started with a CIA intelligence-gathering operation disguised as an inoculation drive. But it's no accident that the plots now being imagined by some Muslims resemble fantasies associated with secular cults such as QAnon. Global communications networks are enabling anxious people everywhere to share ideas they might ordinarily dismiss as paranoid or ridiculous. That illustrates the crucial challenge posed by this pandemic: though it presents a universal threat, heightened alarm is obscuring the value of joint action. That's inherently narrow-minded. Vaccines owe their very existence to multicultural collaboration. The experimental treatments that culminated in Edward Jenner's first inoculation in 1796 grew out of smallpox precautions learned from the Ottoman Empire and China, which reached America independently through a North African slave. And the medical benefits of multiculturalism aren't just historical. The couple who synthesized the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine are both Germans of Turkish Muslim origin. At the risk of emphasizing the obvious, no one can sensibly maintain therefore that it's Islamic to oppose vaccination. Too many people who contract disease for want of immunisation already live in Muslim-majority states, and though Covid-19 doesn't have a religion, it discriminates by race.

Research has established clearly that black and Asian people are disproportionately infected and hospitalized, and mortality statistics suggest they are more likely to die. As sharia scholars have said many times, vaccination isn't merely a permissible choice for Muslims. Because it helps to protect others, it is what they call a *fard kifaya* – a collective obligation.

Sadakat Kadri is a barrister and author of *Heaven and Earth*:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2021/feb/18/muslims-wary-covid-vaccine-religious-reason>

# Will Britain Stand up for Liberal Muslims?



I'm used to hatred and rejection. I've needed 24/7 police protection ever since my book, *Islam Needs a Sexual Revolution*, was published in 2009. My social media channels are regularly flooded with derogatory messages and death threats. "May Allah put you on the right path, or destroy you!" is one of the very few examples that can be repeated before the watershed. Abuse was at its worse when I opened Germany's first liberal mosque, the Ibn Rushd-Goethe Mosque, in 2017. I wanted people to be able to worship in a place that advocates an interpretation of Islam which reflects the values of the Western society in which I live. I was Germany's first female head and preacher of a mosque — it was a historic moment for the state and for me personally. The Ibn Rushd-Goethe is a holy place where women and men can pray and preach together, where the veiling of the whole face (Niqab) is forbidden and where the Koran is interpreted through a contemporary lens. The reaction we got was strong.

A fatwa was issued by the Egyptian Fatwa Council. Turkey's main religious authority, Diyanet (directly run by the presidency), denounced the mosque as "depraving and ruining religion". It was an attempt to deprive Germany's Muslim population, including four million people of Turkish origin, of the right to freely exercise their religion and freedom of expression. During our opening ceremony, a Turkish news station attempted to stage footage of the Quran being dishonored. Turkey's secret services visited the mosque repeatedly; I was attacked directly from Ankara and our supporters challenged. Diyanet denounced us as terrorists and supporters of Fethullah Gülen, a preacher who is a sworn enemy of President Erdogan. This mes-

sage suited the narrative being pushed by Erdogan's party, AKP, directly to the Turkish community in Germany: that we are a politically motivated, inherently unIslamic movement.

But that couldn't be further from the truth. I am simply trying to enable ordinary Muslims to follow their faith. Many are joining me; my mosque attracts several hundred visitors a month. I have given speeches to, and led talks for, liberal Muslims and defenders of freedom of speech across the world. Every day, I am inundated with requests for guidance from fellow travellers looking for the courage and support to follow their faith. And I am exploring sites in London and Vienna for more liberal mosques, to meet demand. We are on the cusp of something truly exciting. And today, more than ever, we need to look at the future of Islam. In Vienna, in Nice, in Paris and also, with less public attention, in Dresden, the vivid horrors of Islamist terrorism are back. Yet again, we hear the familiar questioning and soul searching: could these attacks have been avoided? Well my answer is simple: No. And we can expect more of the same for so long as the violent ideology that underpins this terror — political Islam or Islamism — remains. It is an ideology that I have campaigned against my whole life, to the detriment of my own personal security and liberties. And that in itself highlights the challenge.

Islamism is the political ideology that guides Isis, Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. Its aim is to achieve an Islamic state through political action or violent struggle. It is an ideology that segregates people based on sex, divides communities along religious lines and fuels hatred and suspicion of open discussion



and debate on contemporary values. That's why what we are doing in my mosque — and beyond — is so important. Our movement has been consistently praised and used as a powerful counter-voice to Islamists across the country. Our growth is a testament to the bravery of ordinary Muslims wishing to follow their faith, and to the protection and support given to us by Germany. When Ankara threatened us — as it has threatened President Macron and France — the German Government proactively and very publicly intervened. State support and intervention is so critical. President Macron has bravely attempted to lead a debate about the future of Islam and its integration into the West, highlighting the dangers of allowing Islamists to create a state within a state. This has been followed by intervention from the French state services who inspected 51 Islamist NGOs, recommending several be dissolved. In Vienna, the Austrian government raided several associations and societies suspected of belonging to and supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. During the raids, the police reportedly found assets worth more than €25 million, stored in 130 bank accounts. Only last week, Charles Michel, President of the EU Council, spoke of establishing a European institute to train imams in Europe to “fight the ideology of hatred”. A European delegation consisting of Macron, Merkel, Ursula Von der Leyen and Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz have now consulted on new, tougher EU regulations in Paris. And, last week, Chancellor Kurz confirmed he will create a new offence for “political Islam”, so the Austrian state can “take action against those who are not terrorists themselves, but who create the breeding ground”. These are radical steps and shows a clear trajectory to combating Islamism. Which is why I have to ask: where is the UK?

Islamists such as the Muslim Brotherhood spent years attempting to insert themselves into UK politics and media. Instead of elevating liberal voices in Islam, we see regression.

The UK has also overseen significant growth in the funding of religious and educational institutions by charities and entities from Qatar and Turkey. In December last year, President Erdogan opened an eco-mosque in Cambridge, addressed a rally of supporters of his Justice & Development Party in London, and met with two prominent Islamists in the UK with links to Hamas. These are the very same states who want to shut me down. Younger Muslims in Germany and the UK — home to some 3 million Muslims — are desperate to join the fight against Islamism but fearful of the consequences. I have been inundated with private messages of support since announcing my intention to found a liberal mosque in Britain, but these same people fear being targeted and persecuted for their beliefs if that support were made public. That is surprising in a country like England, where these moderate religious voices need to be encouraged and supported. Unfortunately, unlike me, they cannot rely on 24/7 police protection — and the attacks across Europe will discourage many from speaking up. But the immediate steps being taken in France and Austria can give us courage. I want them to be met in equal force by progressive, liberal Muslim voices who are championed and supported by the state apparatus. I struggled for years in Germany to get where I am now. I want to help recreate that success in the UK and allow liberal Muslim communities to flourish. That means giving British Muslims the education, religious materials and roadmap that successfully established and preserved the Ibn Rushd-Goethe Mosque in Berlin. It means offering hope and courage to British Muslims in private — ensuring access to our global support community — while defending their right to religious freedom in public. And most important, it means challenging the very voices who want to restrict religious freedom.

[https://uherd.com/2020/11/will-the-uk-stand-up-for-liberal-muslims/?tl\\_i](https://uherd.com/2020/11/will-the-uk-stand-up-for-liberal-muslims/?tl_i)

# UK: Record 56 Muslims listed in New Year's Honours

By: Elham Asaad Buaras

A record number of Muslims have been recognized in the New Year's Honours list.

A total of fifty-six (three CBEs, one CB, 11 OBEs, 22 MBE, 19 BEM) Muslims made the most ethnically diverse honours list, with 14 % of recipients coming from BAME background. Covid-19 is referenced 228 times in the honours list, and many recipients are unsung heroes who have battled to save lives and keep the NHS afloat during the pandemic. Among them is Associate Professor in Public Health at Southampton University, Dr Nisreen Alwan, who is awarded an MBE for her services to the health sector. The 46-year-old, listed on the BBC's global Top 100 Women, initiated the call to count 'Long Covid', a term to describe the effects of the virus weeks or months beyond the initial illness.

<https://twitter.com/Dr2NisreenAlwan/status/1344996524221210625?s=20>

Alwan worked with a large team of experts. Liaising with public health, social science, geospatial mapping, technological scientists in infectious disease and molecular biology and Southampton City Council to develop and deliver a weekly testing pilot with rapid

scale-up to citywide testing once the testing strategy is proven. "I am so honoured and grateful to be nominated and feel a huge responsibility to continue contributing to society in a meaningful way, a big thank you to all those who supported me during this difficult year. Through the work I did, I connected with so many kind, dedicated, and wise people. This gives me hope and energy to always seek positive change," Alwan told The Muslim News. Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals Medical Director, Dr Mohammad Tayyab Haider, 55, will be awarded an MBE for services to the NHS, particularly during the Covid-19 response to the community in Essex. Haider is recognised for his outstanding medical leadership during the pandemic crisis making himself always available, sorting rotas to ensure the hospital had enhanced and effective 24 hours medical cover in key specialities such as respiratory medicine and intensive care. In the field of sport, Shahab Uddin, Legal Director of the British Olympic Association, is to be made an MBE for services to sport during the pandemic. Since the postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, he has renegotiated over 100



Dr Nisreen Alwan MBE



Salma BI BEM



Dr Fayyaz Afzal OBE



Shahab Uddin MBE



Halima Cassell MBE



Samah Khalil BEM



detailed legal contracts, including contracts with key suppliers encompassing venues, pre-Games training camps, hotels, accommodations and travel as well as all the sponsor and licensee agreements. The 43-year-old has overseen two Summer and three Winter Olympic Games, negotiating every contract for athletes, visitors, accommodation, sponsors, licensing and all other business. He leads the negotiations for all sponsorship agreements with the International Olympic Committee and has secured record sponsorship agreements. Uddin told The Muslim News, "I am incredibly fortunate to do a job I am passionate about and being recognised in this way, alongside so many incredible individuals, is a huge honour." Also recognised for contribution to sport is history-maker Salma Bi, 34, who is to be made a BEM for services to cricket and diversity. The off-spinner made history aged 22 when she became the first British Asian player to be selected for Worcestershire County. Bi, who taught the Under-15 Girls Team, was named 'Coach of the Year' at the club for her work on helping them get a promotion. She has coached over 1,000 girls throughout her career with nearly half of them continuing their sporting careers. She also leads an Asian's Women's cricket team, and they played for the White Ribbon Trophy against Combined Services Women Team to 'bowl out domestic violence', a historic fixture aimed at raising awareness of domestic abuse and violence against children. Bi told The Muslim News she is "absolutely thrilled" with the recognition. "As a Muslim advocate, it gives me great pleasure to set the legacy of Muslim women achieving high levels in the sports field. As a multi-award winner, I want to remind all the girls and women out there from ethnic minority groups to never give up. Hold on tight to your faith and trust in the Almighty to achieve big." Another ground-breaker to be recognized is district judge Dr Fayyaz Afzal OBE, who is awarded a CBE for services to the judiciary and diversity and inclusion. Afzal, a 2018 winner of The

Muslim News Iman Wa Amal Award, holds the mantle of the first and only Muslim district judge in the East Midlands as well as the first blind district Judge in the UK. Afzal, who grew up in Rochdale, was sworn in at Derby Combined Crown Court on February 17, 2017. Afzal told The Muslim News he holds a strong belief "that the judiciary should reflect the society it serves which includes Muslims and those with a disability. I promote diversity/inclusion as a Diversity and Community Relations Judge and as President of the Midlands Asian Lawyers Association. I hope that the latest honour serves as confirmation to those in doubt about entering the legal profession are reassured that it can be done and that promoting diversity/inclusion is essential."

Director of Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre (CRCC), Norah Al-Ani, 50, is to be made an MBE for services to social justice and gender equality. Al-Ani is credited for rescuing CRCC from a funding crisis; she helped grow the centre's annual budget from around £50k to a quarter of a million pounds in eight years. She also oversaw the organisation's transformation, bringing in helpline volunteers, so it could remain open. The helpline has grown from opening once a week to three times a week, receiving over 6,000 calls so far.

Halima Cassell, 45, a Shropshire-based sculptor and 2015 winner of The Muslim News Alhambrā Award for Excellence in Arts is awarded an MBE. Cassell is recognised for her established style and outstanding contribution to the arts, fusing her Asian roots with a fascination for African pattern work. Cassell works primarily in bronze and clay to create a range of geometric sculptors seen at exhibitions, displays and galleries across the globe. With an ongoing project that moves to include clay and designs from all parts of the world, her work featured in a major exhibition at Manchester Art Gallery from 2019.

<http://muslimnews.co.uk/newspaper/home-news/record-56-muslims-listed-new-years-honours/>



# UK: Heavy Is The Head That Wears The Hijab

By: Dr. Suriya Bi



*“A staff member told me she wanted to burn my scarf when I was changing so I would have no choice but to come outside the changing room without one.”*

This was the harrowing account of a British Muslim woman who participated in the world's largest study I conducted into Muslim women's experiences of work and career development, which was launched in Parliament in February 2020. Amongst the 425 survey responses and over 50 one-to-one interviews, the “Empowered Employment” report found that almost half of all women stating they had experienced Islamophobia in the workplace. British Muslim women who were doctors experienced patients who did not want to be treated by them because they were Muslim. British Muslim women teachers faced parents of their students removing them from the class and in some cases, the school, due to not wanting their child to be taught by a Muslim. Another participant told me that she was sacked after she refused to remove her headscarf at work. Some reported receiving anonymous hate mail after terrorist incidents. Others shared instances where colleagues held glasses of wine and alcohol mockingly in their faces during Ramadan.

The relationship between Islamophobia and work and career development for Muslim women, therefore, is acuter than ever before, and being visibly Muslim by way of wearing a headscarf, places women at greater risk.

The tug of war between wearing your religion and being Muslim and being British was also seen in the stark loss of aspiration and talent between the ages of 14-22. For instance, while 79 participants wanted to enter the medical field in secondary school, only 1 participant entered the field as a doctor. Similarly,

while 46 participants wanted to become lawyers, only 12 became lawyers upon graduating university, and while 39 participants wanted to become journalists and/or enter the media profession, only 7 entered the profession. These results show an alarming discrepancy between aspired-to profession and actual profession, which invites a discussion about the challenges and obstacles Muslim women are faced with in this crucial period where women will complete significant educational milestones such as GCSEs, A levels, and university degrees. For some women like myself, Islamophobia and racism conflate with a specific socio-economic background to exacerbate experiences in education and workplaces. Born and raised in one of the most disadvantaged areas in the UK (Alum Rock, Birmingham), the sheer weight of wearing the hijab in this increasingly right-wing and anti-Muslim climate has been a hallmark of my adulthood thus far. In 2015, I set out to study my Ph.D. as a 23-year-old, which I decided to fund through employment after I was continuously rejected for scholarships. A week into my employment, a teacher showed a graphic 18-rated video footage of people jumping to their deaths during the 9/11 attacks to a group of 11-year-olds, some of whom had special education needs, and the majority of whom were Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) children. The white teacher prefaced the showing of the video with “the 9/11 attacks have been written out of history, we must show what the Muslims did to us.” I raised a concern as to the necessity of showing the video to find that 40 minutes later, the school decided to unfairly dismiss me.

This led to me seeking justice in the employment tribunals, for which I won some claims



in 2017, but aspects of which are ongoing. The fact that I wore a hijab led teachers to misunderstand my genuine child safeguarding concern for a religious issue. This had a knock-on effect on my Ph.D. studies, for which I was denied support from my university despite the university knowing how rare it was for someone from my background to be studying for a Ph.D. What is unique about Islamophobia for women who wear the hijab is that we experience it simultaneously in multiple spaces, burdened with the weight and tarnished with the scars of each experience onto the next. For me, I experienced discrimination in the workplace, in the education space, and in the legal space all at the same time, as with many of the women who took part in the study. Borrowing from Stormzy then, “heavy is the head that wears the hijab”, is more fitting of a description for hijab-wearing Muslim women who experience the amplified effects of Islamophobia in contemporary times, from the UK to France, to the USA.

In the report’s findings, I make specific recommendations for employers and workplaces, educational institutions, community organizations, and policymakers, and suggest they form a bedrock partnership to make work and education spaces more inclusive environments for Muslim women. For employers and workplaces, the recommendations include implementing name-blind applications as part of HR policy and practice, instilling a culture where networking activities take place in non-alcoholic environments, and to issue clear guidelines to all staff as to what comprises Islamophobic behaviour and the steps that will be taken to address such acts of gross misconduct. For educational institutions, which can collectively take a leading role in implementing the research findings to aid Muslim women’s development before they enter the workplace, it is recommended that targeted careers events for women and their families are offered to increase awareness

about a wide variety of career options. Further, it is recommended that universities offer mentoring and development programs for Muslim women, such as the Muslim Women’s Skills Workshops I delivered at SOAS, University of London earlier this year, which were a first for any UK university. Empowerment must extend beyond lip service, to actual change in structures and systems.

<https://themuslimvibe.com/muslim-life-style-matters/women/heavy-is-the-head-that-wears-the-hijab>

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

We are truly grateful to our esteemed readers for their continued interest in **Lahore International** and **Aabgeenei Magazines** through which we have been able to fulfil our vision of promoting understanding of different sections of society through our informative articles.

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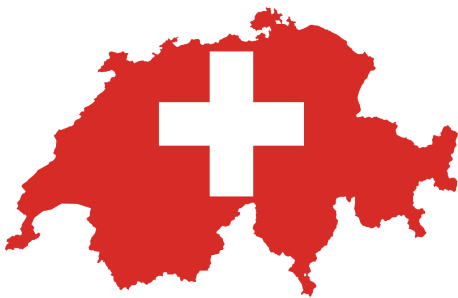
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## Swiss Burqa Ban Vote Appeals To Islamophobia and Feminists

Often referred to as “the Burqa ban”, the initiative by right-wing groups also includes a ban on the wearing of Niqabs as well as other non-religious forms of face coverings. The vote is scheduled for March 7. The campaign takes place as hygiene masks are mandatory in busy public places due to the current coronavirus pandemic. It adds an ironic note to a debate which takes in religious freedom, female equality and fears of terrorism.

What’s at stake? The proposal aims to outlaw the wearing of face coverings in public, notably in the streets, in public transport and offices, restaurants, shops and football stadiums. Exceptions are not allowed for tourists. However, special rules apply for religious sites, health reasons or particular weather conditions. In a bid to block the initiative, parliament has approved a legal reform which would ban face coverings purely for the purpose of identifying an individual, notably in public office or in public transport. The alternative proposal foresees measures to promote equal rights for and integration of Muslim women. The legal amendment will come into force if the initiative is rejected in the nationwide vote. What are the main arguments for and against? Supporters argue a face covering ban helps prevent terrorist attacks and other forms of violence. At the same time the ban is seen as a way to promote equality between Muslim women and men, giving women freedom from a discriminatory patriarchal society. Members of the initiative committee have warned of Islam spreading in Europe and threatening Christian culture. But the committee rejects allegations that its proposal is undermining religious freedom. Instead the ban is aimed at strengthening basic values of the western world, they say. In addition, supporters stress that similar restrictions are in place



The number of women in Switzerland wearing a burka or a niqab in public is estimated at 30, but supporters of the initiative argue a nationwide law is needed. Gian Ehrenzeller/Keystone

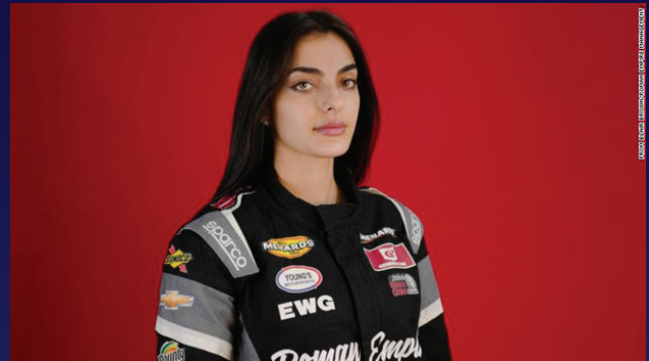
in other countries and that regional Burqa bans introduced in Switzerland five years ago have been efficient. However, opponents say a Swiss-wide face covering ban is unnecessary, damaging for tourism and not in line with the divided power structure between the national and the cantonal authorities. They say there is no reason to amend the country’s constitution for a very small group of people – estimated at up to 30 women - who wear a Niqab or Burqa of their own free will. Opponents say a ban would not be able to boost equal rights for Muslim women and improve their integration in Swiss society. A legal reform, approved by parliament last year, is better suited, they say. Opponents also warn that tourists from wealthy Arab Gulf states could be discouraged from holidays in Switzerland if the ban wins a majority in the vote. Why do voters have a say? A committee of right-wing politicians and conservative activists submitted the necessary number of signatures to force a nationwide ban on face coverings in public. More than 105,500 signatures for the people’s initiative were collected between March 2016 and September 2017. Under the Swiss system of direct democracy, an amendment to the country’s constitution needs the support of at least 100,000 Swiss citizens. Who are the oppo-



nents and supporters? The main supporters of the initiative are the right-wing Swiss People's Party as well as other conservative groups and several politicians from centre-right and centrist parties. A group of feminists and liberal Muslims have also come out in favour of the ban on Burqas and niqabs in public. The supporters face a broad alliance of opponents from the other main political parties from the left to the centre, the government and a clear majority of the Swiss parliament. Human rights and women's groups, church committees as well as the Swiss tourism sector and trade unions have also recommended rejection of the proposal. How does Switzerland compare with other countries? About 15 countries in Europe have introduced general face covering bans over the past decade. France was a front-runner in 2011, but Switzerland's other three neighbouring countries – Germany, Italy and Austria - have also implemented restrictions; either general bans, or specific and regional measures. Burqa and niqab bans of some sort are in place in numerous countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and North America. In Switzerland, two of the country's 26 cantons have imposed a Burqa ban since 2016. Another 15 cantons have banned face covering for demonstrations and sports events. What's does the Burqa vote have in common with the minaret ban? The committee behind the Burqa ban is the same as the one that launched a proposal for a ban on the construction of new minarets in Switzerland. The vote in 2009 resulted in a ballot box upset when 57.5% of voters and 22 of the 26 cantons came out in favour of outlawing new minarets at mosques. Unlike 12 years ago, opinion polls suggest that supporters of Burqa ban enjoy solid initial backing. But experts say another political upset appears less likely, as anti-Islamic sentiment is no longer taboo.

[https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/Burqa-ban-vote-appeals-to-islamophobia-and-feminists/46334100?](https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/Burqa-ban-vote-appeals-to-islamophobia-and-feminists/46334100?lang=en)

## NASCAR's first Arab American female driver to make her debut



Toni Breidinger says that when she sat behind the wheel of a go-kart at age 9, she knew she would become a race car driver. Twelve years later, Breidinger has become the first Arab American female driver to participate in a NASCAR national series, according to NASCAR. The 21-year-old joined the racing team Young's Motorsports to race in the 2021 stock car competition ARCA Menards Series and NASCAR's pick-up truck competition, Camping World Truck Series, which begins with the Lucas Oil 200 at Daytona International Speedway in Florida on Saturday. "I'm honored and excited to be the first, but i don't want to be the last," Breidinger, who is of Lebanese descent, told CNN. "I hope I can pave the way for future female Arab drivers as well." Breidinger is a 19-time United States Auto Club winner, a record for any female driver, and debuted in the Top 10 at Madison International speedway in ARCA Menards in 2018. Breidinger said racing on the Daytona speedway "is a dream come true." "Daytona has always been on my bucket list to race at. Every driver's dream is to race there one day," she said. "It's such a historic track. It's a step in the right direction to hopefully race in the Daytona 500 one day." Breidinger hopes to one day reach the NASCAR Cup Series, the top racing series. "As soon as I got into a go-kart, I really just knew," Breidinger said. "I've always had so much passion for it. I love the competition, the adrenaline rush. I'm hooked on it." <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/02/13/us/daytona-nascar-arab-american-female-driver-toni-breidinger-trnd/index.html>

# USA: Saleha Jabeen first female Muslim Chaplain has graduated.



28 Saleha Jabeen, US military's first India-born female Muslim chaplain, has graduated from Air Force Basic Chaplain Course, vowing to take her duty as a spiritual mentor very seriously. The historic graduation ceremony was held on February 5, an official statement said. Jabeen said she was grateful for the opportunity and aware of the responsibility that she has to set an example and show that there is a place in the military for anyone who wants to serve. "I did not have to compromise on any of my religious beliefs or convictions. I am surrounded with people who respect me and are willing to receive what I bring to the table as a woman, a faith leader, and an immigrant," she said. "I am provided with numerous opportunities to learn and develop skills that best equip me to be a successful officer and a chaplain in a pluralistic environment," Jabeen said. Jabeen was commissioned in December as a Second Lieutenant at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, becoming the first female Muslim chaplain in the Department of the Defense. She came to the United States 14 years ago as an international student. "I get to provide spiri-

tual care to all service members, guardians and families and advise the commanders on religious and moral matters regardless of my faith, ethnicity or gender. Like our boss says, it has never been a better time to serve as a chaplain in the US Air Force Chaplain Corps," she said. Capt. John Richard-

son, Air Force Chaplain Corps College staff chaplain, said that his goal is to create chaplains who are ready to provide front-line ministry upon graduation. "They are trained to lead the units they serve spiritually. The bottom line is to care for Airmen - every single Airman. When they care for Airmen in a professional way, every other aspect of our calling falls into place: advising leaders and providing for the religious needs of our force," Richardson said. Capt. Mara Title, Air Force Chaplain Corps College staff chaplain, said Jabeen's addition to the chaplain corps will be of great benefit to everyone. "The Air Force Chaplain Corps endeavors to promote diversity in all respects," Title said. "Chaplain Saleha Jabeen's presence enables an even broader scope of spiritual care for our Airmen, and for this we are very grateful. She is as determined to take on the role of chaplain as she is kind, caring and compassionate. We are thrilled to have had the opportunity for her to graduate with the class of BCC 21A," she said.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news>





## UK: Manchester City using social media to spread female participation in football



DUBAI: An online initiative set up by Manchester City with the aim of inspiring a new generation of female footballers is back for its fourth edition after attracting thousands of young girls since its inception in 2018. This year, the program is looking to raise participation even further in the wake of the disruptions that the COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked on sporting participation around the world. #SameGoals pledges to deliver a special limited-edition football provided by PUMA to every girl who shares a video showing them scoring or saving a goal, with the aim of helping her maintain her passion and focus on achieving her dreams during a difficult period. "I'm really looking forward to being involved in the initiative and the workshops," Manchester City and Scotland midfielder Caroline Weir said. "It's been really exciting to see #SameGoals grow year-on-year so far." "The players who held the football clinics last year were blown away by the response and although this year we won't be able to do things in person as usual, it's so important to continue the growth of #SameGoals however we can in these unprecedented times," she added. To receive their free ball, girls need to post a video on Twitter, Instagram or TikTok, that shows them scoring or saving a goal using #SameGoals. The goal can be created anywhere using any kind of ball, the more creative - the better. Participants can then upload their video on the official Manchester

City website. "Keeping fit and motivated has never been so important as it has this past year either," Weir said. "To have already had so many young girls get involved in the past three years is just amazing, but I know there's a lot more out there and we'd love you to join in." "I've been in the position of those young girls wanting to play football and the #SameGoals campaign really does enforce just how much Manchester City cares about growing the women's game, right from grassroots level," she added. In addition to the social media movement at the event's core, previous years have seen City Football Schools host special coaching clinics for young girls across the UAE as part of the campaign. As part of the 2021 campaign Manchester City will also be hosting a series of free online workshops focused on women's football, with several professionals across the club taking part. The series will cover business and management perspectives as well as coaching and technical tips, with the likes of head coach Gareth Taylor, managing director Gavin Makel, first team players Weir, Esme Morgan and Sam Mewis offering their support amongst others. "Increasing participation levels at grassroots level and encouraging young girls to have their first experience of playing football is something that we, as a Club, are tremendously passionate about," said Gavin Makel, managing director of Manchester City Women. "The #SameGoals campaign is a great example of that, having engaged with thousands of people worldwide over the last four years." "Being able to see and hear some of the inspiring stories through #SameGoals is something that we are very proud of, as we aim to make meaningful impact with not just individuals, but within local communities," he added.

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1808991/sport>

# First British Bangladeshi Mansoor Ahmad honoured with British Citizen Awards



Mansoor Ahmad, the first British Bangladeshi, has been honoured with the British Citizen Awards (BCA) Roll of Honour January 2021, receiving the BCAv – Medal of Honour for his extraordinary endeavours and incredible inspirational and voluntary contribution to the British Community. The BCA Medal Presentation Ceremony was scheduled to take place on the 28th January 2021, but due to the Coronavirus Pandemic the ceremony has had to be postponed. Mansoor Ahmad, recipient of this Award has received a British Citizen Award Medal along with a Memory Stick containing a short presentation by courier. Mansoor will also be invited to the UK Parliament, a Place of Westminster to receive his Certificate of Honour when it is safe to do. Mansoor arrived in the UK from Bangladesh in February 2007 under the British Government Highly Skilled Migration Programme. He is committed to alleviating the suffering and hardship of those in his local community, applying his accountancy knowledge to offer free services to the members of the community and free business and consultancy advice for those on the fringes, encouraging them to embark on their own business. He believes that education is key to opportunity. He has volunteered as a school governor for 14 years, promoting cohesion and equality. To further promote cultural cohesion, he raises funds for national charities supporting education, integration and interfaith peace. Mansoor is seen every year behind the table of the Poppy Appeal, or shaking his collection tin in the street. He is involved in the organising but is also part of the team 'doing', whether that is running in the 'Fun Run', litter picking, or actively helping the underprivileged in his neighbourhood. He is a keen advocate of breaking down cultural barriers, whilst



respecting all cultures, and enjoys nothing more than seeing someone benefit from any of his community works. Mansoor expressed his feelings on receiving this Awards, 'It's a huge honour for me to receive this award and I am really happy that the British Citizen Awards recognised my voluntary contribution rendered selflessly towards the British community. My sincere thanks & gratefulness to British Citizen Awards. This honour and acknowledgement will certainly enthuse and motivate me to continue my efforts to the community in the future.' Previously, Mansoor Ahmad was awarded the Mayor of London Borough of Merton's Covid-19 Award in December 2020 for his outstanding local contributions, and for the noteworthy differences which he made in people's lives during the challenging period of the Covid-19 pandemic. He was also awarded with the House of Lords British Community Honours Award (BCHA) in October 2019, held at the UK Parliament, for his immense support towards British Society, having been presented with the Certificate of Recognition from British Citizen Awards in January 2019 for exceptional contributions to society, and



for being an encouraging example to other British citizens. Mansoor has dynamically been associated with several Schools of the Community where he has been contributing towards education of students, school development plan, backing to the strategic discussion at governing board meetings. He enthusiastically served as Parent Governor, Chairman & as a member of many Committees. His immense contribution to schools in various decision making activities at some challenging times is really appreciable. Mansoor said “Supporting schools to me seems like a brilliant thing to do and I am helping schools shape our future citizen. And the reason I became a governor locally is to make a difference to that school.” The Community example has been serving as a co-opted member for the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Young Children People Overview & Scrutiny Panel under Merton Council. He has presently been serving as a Governor of Ricards Lodge Secondary School and St. John Fisher School, and is vigorously been attached with various school committees. Mansoor is a member of the Commonwealth Journalists Association UK and has authored numerous articles published in prestigious national and international journals, magazines and newspapers. Mansoor is a qualified accountant currently serving as Manager of Accounts & Finance with Al Shirkatul Islamiyyah, one of the largest Charities in the UK. He is a life dedicated member of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK. Mansoor served as Finance Manager with Chittagong Stock Exchange, Bangladesh for over 11 years. He also served as a visiting lecturer with University of Science & Technology (USTC), Preston University, Premier University, Southern University Bangladesh, Edward University & University of Honolulu (Chittagong Campus, Bangladesh) and taught at BBA, MBA and ACCA Levels. Mansoor attended a good number of Seminars, Workshops and Conferences where he spoke as presenter and key note speaker on various occasions.

## US Law Journal Elects its First Muslim President

BOSTON: The Harvard Law Review has named a Los Angeles-born Egyptian-American as, what it believes, is its first Muslim president in its 134-year history, elevating him to the top of one of the most prestigious US law journals. Harvard Law School student Hassaan Shahawy said he hoped his election represented “legal academia’s growing recognition of the importance of diversity, and perhaps its growing respect for other legal traditions”. Among the legal



and political luminaries who have worked at the Harvard Law Review was former US president Barack Obama, named the journal’s first Black president in 1990. Three serving members of the Supreme Court were editors of the Harvard Law Review, as were the late judges Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Antonin Scalia.

“Coming from a community routinely demonized in American public discourse, I hope this represents some progress, even if small and symbolic,” Shahawy, 26, wrote in an email.

Law reviews are staffed by the top students at US law schools, who are often recruited for judicial clerkships and other prestigious jobs in the profession.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1605759/us-law-journal-elects-its-first-muslim-president>

# RAJU, THE WHITEWASHER

A smooth, shining, spotless coating of whitewash without any visible marks of a brush on the fence or walls of any house in our locality would invariably make the people say with conviction that it was the dexterous hand of Raju that had lent dazzle to the dull surface. Such was the fame of his work ! His name had become synonymous with the art of whitewashing. His real name was Allah Ditta but he was popularly known as Raju. He was a native of Haryana but settled in Punjab . As a child, I saw him living in a small room with bare minimum belongings. He might be in his late twenties or early thirties then. Raju was a man of medium height , large ears, long and pointed nose, sunken eyes, craggy and furrowed face, wrinkled forehead and thin eye- brows. He had thin hair on his head. He had no bears, no moustache and no whiskers. He walked with a brisk pace taking big strides . He spoke with a raspy and gravelly voice. He wore simple pyjamas and kurta, covered his head with a cloth and wore a towel over his shoulders. In winters , he put on a sweater, pullover , jacket or waistcoat . He led a celibate life for reasons unknown to public. That's why he cooked his meals himself. We never saw any relatives visiting him nor did he ever go to meet anyone. He lived alone till his last breath. By nature, he was a jolly fellow and liked to crack jokes . He would often burst into loud belly-laugh and guffaws. Raju was an expert in the art of whitewashing. Although he also painted doors and windows , whitewashing was his forte. Dressed in pyjamas and kurta speckled with splashes and sprinkles of whitewash and paint, holding a pail containing a couple of brushes in the left hand and smoking a biri -the poor man's cigar- nicely tucked between the middle



and index fingers of his right hand, he could be seen going to earn his daily bread. Before moving further, let me say a few words about whitewash. Quick lime is used for whitewashing. It produces Calcium hydroxide when mixed with water, and absorbs carbon dioxide from environment. As a result, it produces Calcium carbonate which creates a hard coat-

ing on the walls. Different additives like indigo, glass , glue , etc are also added to it for durability. Salt is also added to prevent mold which also helps it bind . Its benefit is that if you brush off when it dries, you won't get a dust mark. Whitewash is also tinted for decorative use. It is also mixed with earths to achieve different colours. People also mixed DDT into it to make it mosquito-repellent. Raju prepared the whitewash perfectly well. He

would soak quick lime in water a day before in a half-cut oil-drum . Next day he would mix the necessary ingredients to the solution. He also prepared his own brush . In those days stems of rush were soaked and then twisted into strings and flattened by beating to make it a perfect brush for whitewashing. The ends were cut to make it even and smooth. People opted for used brushes as it was easy to run them on walls . New brushes would take time to get smoothened. Raju made his own brushes . As for buckets, old tin cans were commonly used . Two holes were made in the can in diametrically opposite sides and then a strong rope or iron wire was tied to work as a handle. Raju had several buckets of this kind. Gradually, he discarded using rural brushes and buckets and replaced them with paint brushes and used paint-buckets .

Raju was a simple man with even simpler habits . He was hardworking, honest, sincere and self-respecting. He earned his bread by



the sweat of his brow and never begged from anyone till the last breath of his life.

He was very fond of listening to the radio . He had kept a transistor and was a regular listener of BBC Urdu and Hindi service, running commentary of cricket matches and the program 'Tameel e Irshad' broadcast by All India Radio Urdu Service daily at around 10 or 10:30 pm which played old film songs. He would keep the volume at the maximum to enjoy the songs to the fullest. As I have already mentioned that he lived alone , he filled the void of his loneliness by feeding the stray and street dogs which always hovered around his room. Perhaps he found a better company in them than in the selfish and ungrateful human beings. Even dogs showed their love to him by wagging their tails while jumping around him. A friend of mine narrated an incident to me about Raju that during the floods of 1993 in Punjab, water entered his room at night . A couple of dogs were also there. Raju lifted the dogs and put them on the cot . He and the dogs lay all night there. In the morning , a rescue team evacuated them safely. This shows his immense care and concern even for the life of animals. Towards the end of 1990's, excessive biri smoking had made him very frail and weak. He was given to regular bouts of severe coughing. He could no longer work . As the saying goes: As he is no longer beautiful, he is no longer useful. Similarly, when an artist could no longer wield his brush, nobody offers him a canvas to paint. Raju fell on bad days. No work, no money. Almost three decades of active life in whitewashing couldn't even make him save a little amount to supply him with simple supper in his last days. This is the hard truth and tragedy of the life of every daily wage. But still the world is not without kind men. A philanthropist neighbour provided him daily meals. Even in that situation, he didn't forget to feed the street dogs-- his constant companions. Some other well-wishers and sympathisers helped him with cash and kind. But Raju never held out his palm for alms . A salute to his self-respecting nature! Perhaps it was the year 2000. One day someone broke the sad news that Raju had passed

away. He died in his sleep. Inna lillahe wa inna ilaihe rajiun: Verily, to Allah we belong and verily to Him shall we return. A man whose brush lent dazzle to the dull walls, had to leave his own life unfurnished. He was just 55 years old. Perhaps a life of loneliness where no friends or relatives to talk to, no company to share his pains , and sorrows and wounds of helplessness corroded him from inside . His was not a solitude of choice but a forced hermitage. His sad end reminds me of a few lines from the poem 'Ode to Solitude' by Alexander Pope:

Thus let me live unseen, unknown,  
Unlamented let me die.  
Steal from the world, and not a stone  
Tell where I lie.

Indeed , no tombstone adorns his grave .  
I conclude this piece with a quatrain written by Ishaq Sajid, a famous Urdu poet:

Marne waley tujhe mubarak ho,  
Zindagi Ka azaab khatm hua,  
Khwahishon ki kitaab bund hui,  
Hasraton Ka nisaab khatm hua.

( O Man, be thou grateful to Death,  
As it terminates the torments of life,  
Draws the curtain on the door of desires,  
And dissolves the web of wistfulness.)

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 lahoreinternational

 lahoreinternational

 lahoreintl

 +447940077825

 +447940077825

 lahoreintlondon@gmail.com

# CHILDREN—LEADERS OF TOMORROW

By: **Laiq Ahmed Atif - Missionary Malta**



Children are the future of a nation. Today's youth are the leaders of tomorrow. So if we want a better future, a stronger country, and a prosperous world then it is very important to give our children an appropriate and proper upbringing. Every society and every religion attaches great importance to raising children. Islam as a religion greatly emphasizes this subject and states that children should be given the best possible upbringing. However, Islam speaks on this subject in a unique way and it focuses on actions and practical examples, not just words, because 'actions speak louder than words'. When we are building our future generation we have to 'walk the walk', meaning that we should set forth excellent examples for our children to follow and we must live practical lives. This is so our children can observe wonderful examples at their homes and can build their character in a genuine and practical manner based on the core Islamic values. The primary teachers of children are their parents from whom they learn and Imitate from. Every action of the parents affects the children; what they eat, what they wear, how they treat each other, how they address each other, how they drive, how they walk on the street, if they smoke, if they use bad language, if they are spiritual, punctual in observing prayers, paying charity and helping others and so on. We often see children adopt their parents' profession in their practical lives. The famous sayings: 'A tree is known by its fruit'; and 'The apple doesn't fall far from the tree' are phrases that are extremely pertinent for children who display qualities or talents that are similar to those of their parents. This fact shows how important it is for parents to demonstrate high moral values. Therefore, Islam teaches that in order to

achieve the best relationship between you and your children, it is fundamental that the relationship between you and your spouse should also be excellent. Parental behaviour should lead to the creation of the ideal environment for a healthy family life. The relationship between a man and his wife should be like that of true, sincere and loyal friends; both of them should behave in an exemplary manner at home. It is one of the obligations of parents to educate and train their children in the right manner. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said: "A child is born with pure nature. Its parents make it a Jew, a Christian, or an atheist through imparting a particular teaching and providing a particular model through their own conduct." It is also important to understand how we should raise our children and how we should treat them. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, continuously stated that one should treat not only their own children, but the entire younger generation with love, compassion and respect. Furthermore, he said: "Always be kind to your children." The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, has emphasized the importance of respect in the treatment of children as an essential part of their healthy upbringing, because respect gives them confidence and increases them in dignity. He said: "Respect your children and cultivate good manners in them." Undoubtedly, it is a fact that the parents play an important role to make or break their children's character and personality. I would like to conclude this article with a beautiful prayer that Almighty Allah has taught us in the Holy Quran (25:75): "Our Lord, grant us of our wives and children the delight of our eyes, and make us a model for the righteous." Ameen



# In secret videos, Dubai princess says held hostage in barricaded villa, fears for her life

In a video broadcast by the BBC's investigative news program Panorama on February 16, 2021, Sheikha Latifa bint Mohammed Al Maktoum, one of Dubai ruler's daughters, says she is being held captive and fears for her life after a foiled attempt to flee. The daughter of the ruler of Dubai and premier of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), who tried once to flee her home country but was forcibly returned, has secretly recorded a series of videos, saying she is being held against her will at a barricaded villa. "I am a hostage and this villa has been converted into a jail," 35-year-old Sheikha Latifa bint Mohammed al-Maktoum, one of the daughters of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, said in one of the videos broadcast by the BBC's Panorama news program. She added, "All the windows are barred shut, I can't open any window." The UAE princess said she was making the video in the bathroom of the villa, which is the only room she could lock herself into. Appearing alert and speaking calmly, Latifa said there were police officers stationed outside and inside the villa. "I just want to be free," she noted. It was not clear when or where the video was recorded. The Free Latifa campaign, which has lobbied for her release, said it had managed to smuggle a phone to the UAE princess, helping her record videos from the villa over several months. David Haigh, one of the campaign's co-founders and her lawyer, called for Latifa's immediate release and an end to "a horrendous period of parental and human rights abuse that has significantly damaged the reputation of the UAE." UN to grill UAE about Princess Latifa's case Reacting to the revelations, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights suggested that it will raise the detention of Princess Latifa with Emirati officials, after the videos prompted global calls for the world body to investigate the matter. A spokesman said the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention could launch an investi-

gation once Princess Latifa's videos are analyzed, the BBC reported. Princess Latifa drew international attention in 2018, when she announced in a video that she was fleeing the UAE because of mistreatment and restrictions imposed by her family. However, a source close to the Dubai government said on April 17 that year that the runaway princess "was brought back" to the Persian Gulf state. Human Rights Watch (HRW) cited a witness as saying that authorities in the UAE had "intercepted Sheikha Latifa on March 4, 2018, as she tried to flee by sea to a third country, and returned her to the UAE." In the footage shared with the BBC, Princess Latifa recounted how commandos took her back to detention as she was fleeing by boat. She said she tried to fight back by "kicking and fighting" and biting a commando's arm. The princess was, however, drugged and carried on to a private jet back home. On December 24, 2018, the UAE's Foreign Ministry published three low-resolution photos dated December 15, showing Latifa alongside the former UN high commissioner for human rights and Irish president Mary Robinson. "Photographs taken during the afternoon they spent together have been shared, with their consent. During her visit to Dubai, Mary Robinson was reassured that Her Highness Sheikha Latifa is receiving the necessary care and support she requires," the ministry said at the time. The move came after rights groups called on authorities in the UAE to disclose Latifa's whereabouts and condition. Last March, a London High Court judge said he accepted as proved a series of allegations made by the Dubai ruler's former wife, Princess Haya, in a legal battle, including that the sheikh h.

<https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2021/02/17/645448/Dubai-princess-says-she-fears-for-her-life-as-held-hostage-in-barricaded-villa>

# Iran: Female Activists Imprisoned for Attending Protests, Refusing “Virginity Test”

Two imprisoned student activists continue to be persecuted for peacefully protesting unjust policies and practices in Iran, including so-called “virginity tests.” Charged with “assembly and collusion against national security” for peacefully participating in protests, Saha Mortezaei must now serve six years in prison after her sentence was upheld by Branch 54 of the Appeals Court in Tehran.

“For a while, the security agents had been warning Saha about her sit-in protests [starting in October 2019] against being denied enrollment in the University of Tehran’s doctorate program in political science and international relations,” a source with detailed knowledge of her case told the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) on February 10, 2021. Speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals for speaking publicly, the source added, “When her protests continued into the November 2019 mass demonstrations and riots flared up at the University of Tehran, Saha was arrested on the night of November 17, 2019, at her student dormitory.”

The student activist was put on trial for the trumped-up charge of acting against national security for attending protests. A former secretary of the University Trade Unions’ Council of Iran (UTUCI) at the University of Tehran, Mortezaei was held in Evin Prison’s Ward 2-A, which is under the control of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ (IRGC) Intelligence Organization, and later transferred to Gharchak Prison in Varamin, south of the capital. After going on a hunger strike for 22 days, she was released on bail set at 500 million tomans (\$118,603 USD), on January 22, 2020. Previously, in September 2018, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran had sentenced Mortezaei to six

years in prison and banned her from political activities for two years for peacefully taking part in anti-government protests in December 2017. On appeal, the sentence was reduced to one year in prison. In the latest case, Mortezaei was put on trial with two other student activists—Kamyar Zoghi and Marjan Eshaghi—at Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court presided over by the notorious hardline Judge Abolqasem Salavati on November 9, 2020. All three were charged with “assembly and collusion against national security” but Zoghi and Eshaghi were issued a lighter sentence of one-year in prison. “Saha Mortezaei received a harsher sentence because she had prior conviction and arrests... in connection with protests in 2017 and 2020 and she had been disciplined and banned by the university and because she protested for a long time,” the source with knowledge about her case told CHRI. Meanwhile, a source in Iran confirmed that another imprisoned student activist, Parisa Rafiei, has been charged for complaining about a so-called “virginity test” and sentenced to 15 months in prison—after a judge initially acquitted her. In a global call to eliminate violence against women and girls, the UN Human Rights Office, UN Women, and the World Health Organization called in October 2018 for an end to virginity tests, described as a “medically unnecessary, and often times painful, humiliating and traumatic practice.” In their statement, the UN agencies also explained that the practice has “no scientific or clinical basis” and that “there is no examination that can prove a girl or woman has had sex.”

<https://iranhumanrights.org/2021/02/female-activists-imprisoned-for-attending-protests-refusing-virginity-test/>



# Saudi Arabia's rights activist allegedly harassed in prison – now released after spending 1001 days in prison

Saudi Arabian women's rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul, who was released from prison after three years, has narrated her horrifying ordeal of custodial torture. Hathloul has reportedly alleged that she was raped in prison for three years and was subjected to sexual abuse by multiple people. She was released last month after 1001 days in prison amid persistent international pressure for her release. Hathloul's elder sister broke the news of her release on Twitter saying, "The best day of life, Loujain is at my parent's home". The news of her release was later confirmed by the US President Joe Biden who termed it a 'welcome news'. "She was a powerful advocate for women's rights and releasing her was the right thing to do", President Biden said. Lina, another sister of Hathloul also posted a tweet, "Loujain is at home".

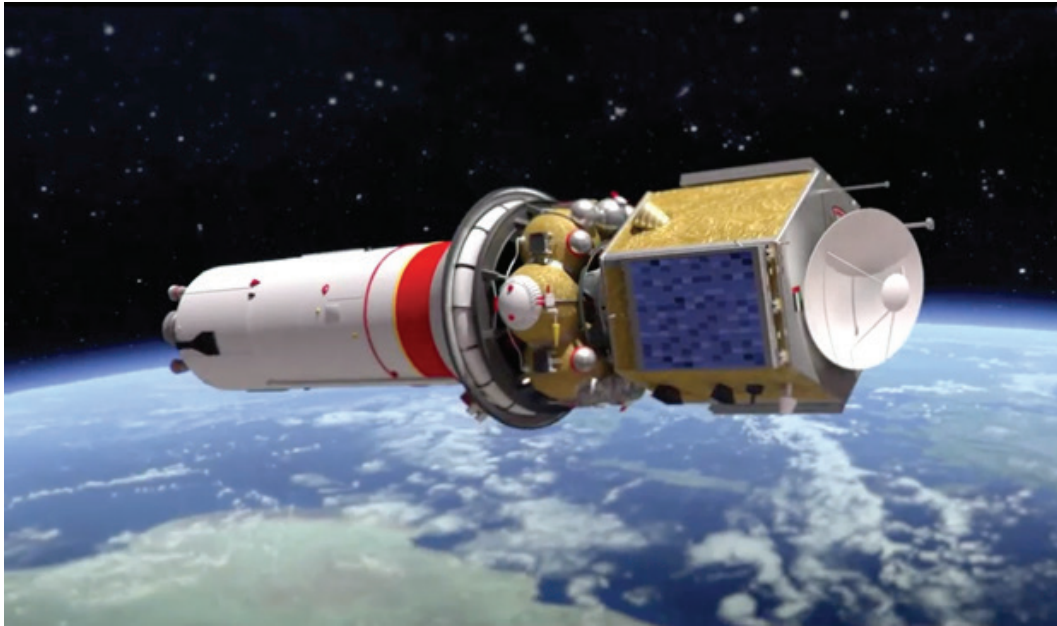
According to reports, Hathloul was imprisoned to almost six years in prison in December last year. She was arrested in May 2018 along with several other women activists. She was released after 2 years and 10 months of

her arrest and her sentences was applied retrospectively since May 2018. Hathloul demanded women's right to drive and also the abolition of Saudi Arabia's restrictive male guardianship system that limits women's right to movement. Even after her release Hathloul, however, will be under probation and is banned from travelling. It has been alleged by the family of Hathloul that she was given electric shocks and sexually harassed in prison. A letter written by human rights lawyer Baroness Kennedy reportedly stated that Hathloul was raped many times in Saudi Arabia's prison. Before that, she was also allegedly raped several times during interrogation. Kennedy further alleged that she was shown pornographic films during interrogation and that she was hung from a ceiling, severely beaten and given electric shock multiple times during her imprisonment.

<https://www.opindia.com/2021/02/saudi-arabia-womens-rights-activist-was-allegedly-raped-in-prison/>



# UAE's Mars Probe Reaches the Farthest Point



announcement that it had successfully entered Mars' orbit. He added, "We celebrate today a group of Emirati youth who presented the world with an honorable example of the unlimited ambitions of our country and the Arab world, who have performed their duties towards their nation with

ABU DHABI — Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan stressed that the journey of the Emirates Mars Mission (Hope Probe) represented an honorable example of the strong will of the Emiratis and Arab youth. In his exclusive statements on the occasion, he stated that the Hope Probe reached the furthest point that an Arab had ever reached, underscoring that the ambitions of the UAE have no limits and that defying the impossible has become a lifestyle and an approach of the journey in the next 50 years. He pointed out that the journey of the Emirates Mars Mission involved tremendous challenges, but the Emirati youth and the members of working teams managed to overcome them, starting with the completion of the project in a record time of six years, as compared to other similar projects whose periods bypassed a decade. The second challenge consisted of the process of transferring the Hope Probe from Dubai to Japan, which took place in over 83 hours, and the monitoring of the probe's journey to the Red Planet, which was crowned by the

high efficiency and dedication, proving to the world that our process of development for the upcoming 50 years is unique and inspiring." He stressed that the achievements of the Emirates Mars Mission are the outcomes of the vision of the Founding Father, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan who met with experts from NASA in 1976 and nursed this ambition. The wise leadership was keen to establish the foundations of a professional system of comprehensive action in the space sector and trusted and supported Emirati cadres who led this project successfully. Sheikh Abdullah highlighted the fact that the Hope Probe is a success story not only for the Emiratis but for all Arabs while calling on Arab minds to look forward to the future. "We extend our pride, appreciation, and gratitude to members of the "Hope Probe" project as they were part of the great achievement, and you have proved your worth for the wise leadership's trust. From here, we will continue our beloved country's achievements thanks to your efforts," he added. — WAM



# University Of Cincinnati's Basketball Player, Nesma Khalifa, Represents Muslim Women On Court

Nesma Khalifa – a junior in the University of Cincinnati's College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning (DAAP) and an international student-athlete from Alexandria, Egypt – is the only D1 basketball player to wear a hijab in the American Athletic Conference. Khalifa has dreamed of playing basketball in America since she was eight years old. "Since then, I did not leave the court," she said. Before coming to America to play basketball, Khalifa played in many different countries. While overseas, she played on the Egyptian national team. But, a few years ago, FIBA (The International Basketball Federation) wouldn't let her play with her hijab. She had to decide between two options; take her hijab off, or sacrifice playing the game. "I don't have to choose between my religion, me playing and achieving my dream," said Khalifa. In 2017, she chose not to play for the national team, but the following

for its national championship reputation. After a year of attending Tallahassee community college, she transferred to the University of Cincinnati. At UC, she received abundant support from her teammates and coaches on and off the court. However, her dream of playing basketball in America was almost put on hold due to the pandemic. In June of 2020, Khalifa went back home to Egypt. "It was a risk because we didn't know if I was able to come back from the airport," she said. Although there was a huge possibility of not being able to carry on with pursuing her



year she was approved to wear her hijab around the same time frame Nike started producing them. As a result, she was asked to play for the Egyptian national team again. Her team played in the African championship and went to the World Cup in Italy, where they were the first Egyptian women's team to win a game. Her journey of playing basketball in the U.S started when Khalifa attended Tallahassee Community College in Florida, known

dream, at that moment, she knew that she needed to be with her family. Even though Khalifa and her family were scared because they were not sure what was coming next, she was thankful that she eventually was able to come back to the U.S. later on in the summer. [https://www.newsrecord.org/news/breaking-barriers-uc-basketball-player-represents-muslim-women-on-court/article\\_5f666f18-6763-11eb-9598-179ea5975b49.html](https://www.newsrecord.org/news/breaking-barriers-uc-basketball-player-represents-muslim-women-on-court/article_5f666f18-6763-11eb-9598-179ea5975b49.html)

# Hopes, dreams and fears of mother-to-be in Afghanistan

KABUL — A mother in Afghanistan has been talking about the hopes and fears for her unborn daughter in a country where the birth of a girl can often be a curse rather than a blessing. Women and girls, in particular, often suffer abuse at the hands of men in a male-driven society where boys are sometimes valued above girls. Arfia Omid works for the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Afghanistan where one in three girls are married before their 18th birthday and only 19 percent of females under 15 years old are literate.

She has written this letter to her unborn child. "My lovely baby, I haven't met you yet, but I already know how beautiful you are — with your dark eyes, smiling face, soft, brown hair and golden heart. I have dreamed of having



you my entire life. I count the days and nights until I will finally hold you in my arms and love you as much as I can. Now you are only seven months and I can feel you when you move. 'Naughty daughter', I laugh quietly to myself. Do you know, before you were even in my womb, I went to buy clothes for your brothers, and I saw a baby girl's dress in the market? I stopped there for a while and wished to God to give you to me. You know what? I bought that dress. I knew that my next child would be a girl. I can't wait to see you in it; you will be an Afghan princess. But with all the happiness and excitement that I have, I am also nervous for you and your future in this country. I hear such sad stories about Afghan girls, but I also see how strong they are — so do not be afraid. You will also be strong.

Together, we will help more women realize their promise and potential. This is my dream for you. The suffering of Afghan mothers Afghanistan is a tough place to be a girl. Just two months ago, I cried for a mother who had just given birth to a baby girl. The father killed his wife because she delivered a baby girl. He escaped with the baby. I really can't process the suffering and fear this mother endured. She had the most painful time delivering her baby — I know how hard it is for a woman to deliver at home without any healthcare facilities.

Then, after enduring labor and birth, she waited for her husband and relatives to congratulate her. Instead, her partner killed her with his own hands. Nobody knows where the baby is — or if she's alive. I worry about

how she's surviving without breast milk. Or if her father really cares for her, or if he sold her? I hear such sad stories about Afghan girls, but I also see how strong they are — so do not be afraid. You will also be strong I thank God that our circumstances are different. Your father loves you, as I love you. And your brothers love you. Together, we will protect you. When I went for the sonogram with your father, the doctor asked me, 'What do you want? A boy or a girl?' I said, 'I want a baby girl'. She said, 'Do you know, you're the first mother I hear that wants a girl'? Then she told me that the woman who came before me came from a remote area. She told the doctor that if this time she gives birth to a girl, her husband will leave her and get married to another woman. 'Luckiest baby and mother in Afghanistan'



My little girl, I know that we are the luckiest baby and mother in Afghanistan. And I want you to know that things will be better for you than they were for me, just as they were better for me than for my mother. When my mother gave birth to me, she did so in a poor family. We didn't even have our own home. When she was in second year of university, your uncle was born. Despite her hard work and dreams, she couldn't continue her lessons. She sacrificed her life to support and protect her children. So, years later, I found a way to thank her. When I was in second year of university, I searched for a month and found her documents from the Ministry of Higher Education and her university. Then, I sought a permission letter from the Ministry to support her to join a private university. I gave her the registration paper of the new university as a gift for Mother's Day. I remember, she cried and laughed at the same time. She joined the university and graduated with her diploma just two years later. I can't tell you how proud I felt. That day, she was the happiest woman in the world. So, my lovely daughter, your grandmother is your reason to hope and to believe in change. Every day, Afghan women like her battle against the odds to bring their dreams to life. They empower each other, hand-in-hand, step-by-step. You will join that tradition, as I did. Together, we will help more women realize their promise and potential. This is my dream for you. And just as I turned my mother's dream into reality, I think you will breathe life into mine. I think about this at night when you keep me awake with your wriggling. I pray to God for a future where women and men have equal rights; and for blessed peace so I can send you to school without fear. I pray for your health and happiness. Mostly, I pray for you to be bold and courageous.

<https://saudigazette.com.sa/article/603270/World/Asia/Hopes-and-fears-of-mother-to-be-in-Afghanistan>

## Saudi crown prince has surgery for appendicitis



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto ruler, has had successful surgery for appendicitis, state media reported late on Wednesday. The 35-year-old prince had "successful laparoscopic surgery (Wednesday) morning for appendicitis at King Faisal Specialist Hospital" in Riyadh, the official Saudi Press Agency reported. SPA tweeted footage of the prince walking out of the hospital with an entourage and getting into the front passenger seat of a car. The prince has overseen the most fundamental transformation of Saudi Arabia in its modern history, shaking up the ultraconservative oil giant with an array of economic and social reforms. But he has also presided over a crackdown on critics including prominent clerics, activists, and royal family members. He faced a storm of condemnation over the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside the kingdom's Istanbul consulate in October 2018.

A US intelligence report — soon-to-be released — is believed to have concluded that Prince Mohammed was behind the killing. The White House has said US President Joe Biden will speak with King Salman, not his son the crown prince, when he makes his first telephone call to Saudi leaders. Biden has not yet spoken to the king but is expected to do so "soon".

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1609337>

# CRICKET: THE SIX IS IN

By: **Khalid H Khan**



As the incredibly popular HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) gets under way with its sixth edition, the biggest hype is actually not about the potentially scintillating cricket to come. For the moment, the buzz is about the 34-fixture tournament being confined to just the country's biggest two cities — Karachi and Lahore — thanks to the coronavirus pandemic. Unlike at the back-end of the preliminary phase last March and indeed, the eventual play-offs of Season Five in November, the competition's real stakeholders, ie the fans, will be allowed entry to the matches. Or at least some of them. Twenty per cent of the capacity of the stadia can be filled by ticket-holders, under the guidance set forth by the National Command Operation Centre (NCOC). This means that 7,500 spectators on each of the match days can show up at the 34,000-plus National Stadium of Karachi (NSK), while Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium, which can accommodate roughly 27,000 spectators, can welcome some 5,500 zealous supporters of the sport. The presence of the spectators, even in much smaller numbers than before, will surely infuse more atmosphere into the spectacle. Given the fact that there are nine days of double-header action ahead, with no less than two-thirds of them in Karachi, approximately 165,500 ticket-holders are expected to turn up at the biggest two cricketing centres of the country, a welcome respite for cricket-starved fans. In normal circumstances the coffers of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) would have swelled up considerably through gate money, since the turnouts would have been around 775,000 at these venues if full capacity had been allowed. But we mustn't overlook the fact that these are not normal circumstances, and everything has had to be meticulously planned out. Even the opening ceremony had a chunk of the predominantly music-based entertainment pre-re-

corded at a dedicated studio in Turkey. Therefore, it doesn't really matter which among the celebrated list of performers — singer Atif Aslam, rap artist Imran Khan, the model-turned-actress Humaima Malick or the PSL 6 anthem team of Naseebo Lal, Aima Baig and Young Stunners — won over more fans through their intonations. Away from the glamorous attractions of the music world, it is important to recap more serious issues. It is a miracle that the concerned authorities have managed to complete an exhausting schedule of domestic tournaments without much hassle, and the PCB must be saluted for being the only cricket board in the world to achieve this distinction. In between, they not just successfully hosted South Africa in recent weeks for the first time in more than 13 years, but also Zimbabwe late last year. The return of top flight international cricket to the country is, of course, based on the unqualified success of the franchise-based PSL. The latest jamboree is the second straight one to be held entirely on home soil under the now-customary parameters of watertight security measures, but the first full edition to be staged under the Covid-19 'bubble' protocols. Everything in the world now seems rather surreal. Despite the enforced restrictions, the battle on the playing field over the next four weeks is likely to be as exhilarating as one can wish. Irrespective of who will ultimately emerge as the champions of PSL 6, the presence of the overseas contingent in one of the most competitive T20 leagues is a major attraction every year. The biggest draw is the Afghanistan spin wizard Rashid Khan who will be making an appearance for the first time in the PSL, for the Lahore Qalandars. And for good reason. The 22-year-old is currently ranked the top T20 bowler at the international level. Apart from Rashid, his countrymen and fellow spinners Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Qais Ahmed are also



certain to play pivotal roles for Peshawar Zalmi and the Quetta Gladiators, respectively. The rest of the overseas cast are the usual suspects, barring Colin Munro, who has pulled out of the two-time former champions Islamabad United's squad owing to the quarantine laws of his native New Zealand. If the left-handed opening batsman had made himself available, he wouldn't have been able to get home until the middle of May, some seven weeks after the PSL concludes, with the March 22 final in Lahore! Among the local stars, Pakistan's all-format captain Babar Azam's form with the bat definitely holds the key for Karachi Kings. The Kings will be desperate to avoid being champions for the shortest-ever duration in PSL history. That is what would happen if they fumble in their title defence. They only became champions on November 17 last year, after humbling archrivals Lahore Qalandars in the final at the National Stadium. On that occasion, it was Babar who had starred in the tricky 135-run chase, with an assured, 49-ball, undefeated knock of 63, as the Kings were crowned winners for the first time with just eight deliveries to spare. Lahore Qalandars, arguably the most sought-after franchise, finally overcame the jinx last year of finishing at the bottom in each of the first four editions. They qualified for their play-offs for the first time and then even reached the final. They'll surely hope to go one better in PSL 6. That could be a dream-come-true moment for the side, which thrives on its ever-popular anthem of 'Dama Dam Mast Qalandar', with a final in their hometown. Sarfaraz Ahmed's best chance of showcasing himself as a cricketer still worthy of competing at the top level is to lead from the front as the captain of the 2019 PSL winners Quetta Gladiators. The Gladiators missed out on the play-offs for the first time in 2020 and ended up only ahead of the last-placed Islamabad United. The embattled wicketkeeper-batsman has the unique honour of being the solitary player to skipper his franchise for the sixth year running, under the guidance of legendary Sir Vivian Richards as the mentor.

Quetta Gladiators, meanwhile, would be without ex-West Indies opener Chris Gayle for their early fixtures. His partial replacement is Faf du Plessis, the former South Africa skipper who recently toured Pakistan for the Test series, before Gayle arrives for the back-end of the Karachi leg and the fixtures in Lahore. Du Plessis had previously played during the PSL 5 play-offs for Peshawar Zalmi. With Darren Sammy now as their head coach, Peshawar Zalmi have always been among the favourites and, along with Karachi Kings, have never finished outside the play-offs in all past seasons. They captured the trophy in 2017 under Sammy's leadership and finished as runners-up in the subsequent two editions, losing out to Islamabad United and Quetta Gladiators in that order. Now it all depends on how Wahab Riaz inspires Peshawar Zalmi in his first full season as their captain. Multan Sultans could count themselves as extremely unfortunate during PSL 5. They cruised to the top of the six-team standings after chalking up seven victories, but the eight-month hiatus because of the pandemic severely hampered their momentum. They lost the Qualifier against the Karachi Kings in a Super Over during the play-offs, before Lahore Qalandars brushed past Shan Masood's men in the second Eliminator. Meanwhile, among the greenhorns likely to emerge as future Pakistan stars are Qasim Akram, a batting all-rounder who came to prominence during the domestic competitions this season and who has been bought by Karachi Kings, and 18-year-old Saim Ayub, a promising left-handed batsman who is in the Quetta Gladiators squad. Another name to watch for is Peshawar Zalmi's Mohammad Imran, who hails from the scenic valley of Swat and, at the age of just 20, is rated highly as a left-arm seamer.

The writer is a member of staff

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1608269>



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