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# NEW YORK NEWS

The Voice of People

From New York

## Alexandar Sullivan

As President Donald Trump's shifting threats and power plays rattle allies, China is moving quickly to present itself as the steadier partner, courting governments that once leaned instinctively toward Washington. During a recent visit to Beijing, Ireland's Taoiseach Micheál Martin met President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People,

### HIGHLIGHT

●China courts Western leaders as U.S. policy looks volatile

●Ireland's Micheál Martin met Xi Jinping in Beijing

●Canada's Mark Carney signaled a new China approach, including EV tariffs

●UK's Keir Starmer is set to visit China next week as scrutiny persists

where Xi unexpectedly cited *The Gadfly*, a novel by Irish author Ethel Voynich, as a formative teenage read. "It was unusual that we ended up discussing *The Gadfly*," Martin told reporters, underscoring the personal tone of Beijing's outreach. The diplomatic



Photo: U.S. President Donald J. Trump with President Xi Jinping

Image Source: Online

## Allies Drift Toward China

Trump shocks partners

opening comes as allies reassess risk after tensions tied to Greenland and tariff threats left the U.S. looking less predictable, even as Trump later pulled back from some escalation. Analysts warn that keeping channels open with Beijing may deepen

reliance at a moment when Europe's stated goal is "de-risking." The recalibration is also visible in Canada, where newly elected Prime Minister Mark Carney traveled to Beijing and declared a "new strategic partnership." He moved to lower Canada's tariffs on

Chinese electric vehicles from 100% to 6.1%, a shift that could boost Chinese EV market share despite earlier security and interference concerns. In Britain, Prime Minister Keir Starmer is scheduled to arrive in China next week seeking investment

while facing pressure over human rights and national security. Finland's Petteri Orpo is also set to land in Beijing on Sunday, as Nordic states balance trade interests against unease over China's ties to Russia and the war in Ukraine.

## France Eyes Teen Social Media Ban

Fast-track plan aims for September

### John Paul

Emmanuel Macron said Saturday that France will fast-track legislation to ban social media for children under 15, aiming for the law to take effect by September at the start of the next school year. In a video aired by BFM-TV, Macron said he asked the government to use an accelerated

### HIGHLIGHT

●Emmanuel Macron seeks a fast-tracked ban on social media for children under 15

●Law aims to take effect by September, the next school year

●Move follows concerns over teen mental health and screen time

procedure so the bill can pass the Senate in time. "The brains of our children and our teenagers are not for sale," Macron said, warning against manipulation by foreign platforms and algorithms. The push follows mounting health concerns, with French authorities reporting that nearly 90% of children aged 12 to 17 use smartphones daily and many spend hours on social networks.

The proposal mirrors similar debates abroad, including Australia's ban for under-16s, and comes amid lawsuits in France alleging links between harmful online content and teen suicides. Macron said the rule would provide clarity for families, teachers, and students as France tightens digital safeguards for youth.

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## Life Remembered Amid Dispute

Family challenges federal account

### Lily Anderson

A man shot dead by federal agents during protests in Minneapolis has been identified as Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old intensive care nurse remembered by

### HIGHLIGHT

●Alex Pretti, 37, was an ICU nurse at the Minneapolis VA hospital

●He was shot dead by federal agents during protests in Minneapolis

●Authorities and witnesses offer conflicting accounts of the incident

family and colleagues as compassionate,

politically engaged, and deeply connected to the outdoors.

Pretti worked in the ICU at the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs hospital and was known for long shifts caring for critically ill patients. An avid mountain biker and dog lover, he spent much of his free time exploring trails with his Catahoula Leopard dog, Joule, who died last year. His family said he joined demonstrations following the killing of Renee Good, also 37, who was shot by an ICE agent earlier this month. The Department of Homeland Security said agents fired in self-defense after Pretti resisted and was allegedly armed. His family disputes that account, citing videos they say show he was



Photo: ICU nurse Alex Pretti, 37, killed by federal agents in Minneapolis. Image Source: Reuters/BBC

unarmed when tackled. "Please get the truth out about our son. He was a good man," the family said in a statement. Born in Illinois and raised in Green Bay, Wisconsin, Pretti was

a former Boy Scout, choir member, and high school athlete. Friends described him as warm, civic-minded, and nonviolent. "The idea that he's being labeled a terrorist is galling," said a

colleague. As investigations continue, Pretti's death has intensified scrutiny of federal actions and left a grieving community demanding answers.



# COMMUNITY NEWS

## District 24 Campaign Kickoff

### NYN Desk

Mahtab Khan, the sitting assemblyman for District 24, formally launched his election campaign at Darul Uloom New York, marking the start of his bid to retain the seat in the upcoming race. The campaign kickoff brought together community members, supporters, and local leaders, underscoring Khan's close ties to faith-based and civic institutions across Queens. The choice of venue reflected the district's diversity and the role community centers play



Photo: Mahtab Khan launches his election campaign

in local political engagement. Speaking to attendees, Khan emphasized public service, accessibility, and his continued commitment to representing the needs of working families in the district. Supporters



described the event as both symbolic and practical, signaling an early effort to energize voters and volunteers. The gathering also highlighted the growing political participation of immigrant



and minority communities in New York City, with several attendees noting the importance of seeing familiar neighborhood spaces serve as platforms for civic dialogue. With the campaign now

underway, Khan is expected to continue outreach efforts across District 24, focusing on grassroots organizing and direct engagement with constituents in the months ahead.

## NYC Transit Stays Open



Photo: MTA system to remain operational as NYC experiences big snowfall, Lieber says. Image Source : File photo/Marc A. Hermann, MTA

storm playbook is already in motion. "We have detailed plans in place... to protect the network, to protect our riders and to protect our employees," he said. The MTA plans to deploy snow-fighting trains and de-icing systems to keep 220 miles of outdoor subway track moving, with similar protections for Metro-North and the Long Island Rail Road. Lieber called buses the "major workhorses," noting all active buses will be fitted with chains, while longer articulated buses will be pulled for safety. LIRR President Rob Free said rail leaders begin reassessing operations once snowfall reaches 10 inches, and the agency will staff 1,800 workers overnight Sunday to prepare for Monday commutes. Lieber urged residents to stay home if they can, while Riders Alliance encouraged using transit when travel is necessary.

### Staff Reporter

With New York City facing a potentially historic winter storm, MTA Chair Janno Lieber said the region's transit network is prepared to stay operational as heavy snow is

expected from Sunday into Monday, with forecasts calling for at least 10 inches. Speaking at a Friday briefing, Mayor Zohran Mamdani said the snowfall could be the city's biggest in years. Lieber stressed the agency's

## Teen Missing After Trip

### Senior Reporter

A search is underway for Thomas Medlin, a 15-year-old from Long Island, who has been missing for two weeks after reportedly traveling to meet someone he connected with on Roblox, his family said. According to police, Medlin disappeared on Friday, Jan. 9, after leaving Stony Brook Long Island Rail Road station and appeared to take a train into Manhattan. His family said they have not heard from him since. Medlin's mother, Eva Yan, told News 12 she believes the trip was arranged to meet an online acquaintance and said the behavior was "completely out of character." Police described Medlin as 5-foot-4, 130 pounds, last seen wearing a black jacket with red stripes, dark sweatpants with white stripes, glasses,



Photo : Thomas Medlin, 15, went missing after traveling into Manhattan from his Long Island. Image Source: Suffolk County Police Department

and a black backpack. Investigators have traced his location to Lower Manhattan and later Brooklyn, according to the report. Roblox said it

is "deeply troubled" and is working with law enforcement, citing safety tools designed to limit sharing of personal information.



Photo: Rana Abdelhamid, Mary Jobaida and Diana Moreno at a debate ahead of the Feb. 3 special election. Image Source: Shane O'Brien / QNS.com

## Queens D36 Debate Ends

### Community Desk

Candidates vying to replace Zohran Mamdani in Queens' 36th Assembly District shared more common ground than contrasts during a final debate held Jan. 22 at the Hellenic Cultural Center. The forum, hosted by the Old Astoria Neighborhood Association, featured Diana Moreno, Rana Abdelhamid, and Mary Jobaida. All three backed higher taxes on millionaires, expanded tenant protections, immigrant safeguards, free buses, and universal childcare, reflecting Mamdani's progressive platform. Moreno, the Queens

Democratic Party nominee and a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, stressed her candidacy as part of a broader movement. "I am not running as an individual. I am running as part of a movement," she said, citing ties to Mamdani and other DSA lawmakers. Abdelhamid and Jobaida emphasized their personal roots in the district and long-standing community work. With few policy divisions, the race now turns to turnout. Early voting begins Jan. 24, ahead of the Feb. 3 special election, which will decide who serves out the remainder of Mamdani's term.

### Prayer Time IN New York

FAJR	DHUHR	ASR	MAGHRIB	ISHA
05:52	12:08	02:45	05:06	06:25
05:52	12:09	02:46	05:07	06:26
05:51	12:09	02:47	05:09	06:27
05:50	12:09	02:48	05:10	06:28
05:50	12:09	02:49	05:11	06:29
05:59	12:09	02:50	05:12	06:30
05:58	12:09	02:51	05:14	06:31

# OPINION

## Muslim American Heritage Month in New York: Honoring a Legacy of Faith, Service, and Achievement

— Imam Muhammad Shahidullah

**M**uslim American Heritage Month in New York stands as a historic and meaningful recognition of a community whose contributions have profoundly shaped the social, cultural, economic, and civic life of the state and the nation. With over one million Muslims calling New York home, representing nearly every ethnic, racial, and cultural background, Muslim Americans are an integral part of the state's identity. This month provides an opportunity not only to celebrate achievements, but also to educate, reflect, and reaffirm shared values of diversity, justice, and mutual respect.

Muslim presence in America is not new. It predates the founding of the nation itself. From enslaved African Muslims who preserved literacy and spiritual traditions under brutal conditions, to modern-day leaders in medicine, education, public service, science, arts, and interfaith dialogue, Muslim Americans have continuously contributed to the building of America. New York, as a global crossroads and home to one of the world's most diverse Muslim populations, has been central to this story.

### Early Roots and Historical Contributions

Historians estimate that up to 20 percent of enslaved Africans brought to America

were Muslims. Many were educated, multilingual, and literate in Arabic. Figures such as Omar Ibn Said, an enslaved West African scholar, left behind written manuscripts that stand

today as powerful testimony to the intellectual and spiritual presence of Islam in early America. Despite forced displacement and oppression, these early Muslims contributed to agriculture, craftsmanship, and the moral foundations of African American communities.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Muslim immigrants from the Middle East, South Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa began settling in New York and other urban centers. They established mosques, mutual aid societies, businesses, and newspapers. Leaders such as Mufti Muhammad Sadiq played a vital role in spreading Islam, promoting racial equality, and advocating for social justice. New York City became an early hub for Islamic learning and community organization, laying the groundwork for future generations.

Faith Institutions and Community Building  
 Muslim Americans have built enduring institutions that serve not only Muslims but society at large. Mosques in New York are not only places of worship, but also centers for education, charity, youth development, and civic engagement. Organizations providing

food pantries, disaster relief, refugee assistance, healthcare clinics, and social services exemplify Islam's emphasis on service to humanity. Muslim-led nonprofit organizations and faith-based institutions have partnered with city and state agencies to address homelessness, hunger, domestic violence, and mental health. During times of crisis—such as the COVID-19 pandemic—Muslim doctors, nurses, first responders, and volunteers stood on the front lines, saving lives and serving communities regardless of faith or background.

Achievements in Education and Scholarship  
 Education has always been central to Muslim American life. Muslim educators, scholars, and administrators have contributed significantly to New York's academic landscape. Muslim teachers serve in public and private schools, universities, and seminaries, helping shape future



— Imam Muhammad Shahidullah  
 Vice President, United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA), Queens Chapter

professionals working in emergency medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, and medical research. Muslim scientists have played roles in advancing cancer research, vaccine development, biomedical engineering, and health equity initiatives. In the technology sector, Muslim Americans have contributed to software development, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and digital innovation, helping New York maintain its position as a global center of progress and creativity. Civic Engagement and Political Leadership  
 Muslim American participation in civic life has grown significantly in recent decades. From voting and advocacy to public service and elected office, Muslim New Yorkers are actively shaping democratic institutions. Nationally, Keith Ellison made history as the first Muslim elected to the U.S. Congress, opening doors for

and belonging. In film and television, Muslim actors, directors, and producers have expanded representation and visibility, bringing nuanced narratives to mainstream audiences. Muslim influence is also evident in music—from jazz legends to contemporary hip-hop artists—where themes of spirituality, resistance, and social consciousness resonate deeply. Fashion designers and visual artists have introduced new aesthetics that blend tradition with modern expression. Sports and Global Representation  
 In sports, Muslim Americans have demonstrated excellence, discipline, and leadership. Ibtihaj Muhammad, an Olympic fencer, became the first Muslim American woman to compete in the Olympics wearing hijab and the first to win an Olympic medal. Her achievement inspired millions and challenged assumptions about faith, gender, and athleticism. Muslim athletes across basketball, boxing, football, and martial arts have represented New York and the United States with distinction, serving as role models for youth and symbols of perseverance. Interfaith Leadership and Social Harmony  
 Muslim Americans have

played a critical role in interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding, particularly in a diverse state like New York. Imams, chaplains, scholars, and community leaders regularly collaborate with Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and



Photo: Zohran Mamdani vows to 'reinvent' New York in first speech as mayor  
 Image Source: Online

generations with values of knowledge, ethics, and critical thinking. Muslim scholars have made notable contributions in Islamic studies, history, philosophy, law, science, and public policy. Universities across New York host Muslim faculty whose research advances understanding in fields ranging from medicine and engineering to social sciences and humanities. Muslim students consistently excel academically, contributing to innovation and leadership in classrooms and laboratories. Scientific, Medical, and Technological Contributions  
 Muslim Americans have been pioneers in science, medicine, and engineering. One of the most influential figures was Fazlur Rahman Khan, a structural engineer whose innovations revolutionized modern skyscraper design. His work shaped iconic skylines and transformed architectural engineering worldwide. In healthcare, Muslim American physicians, surgeons, researchers, and public health professionals have made life-saving contributions. Hospitals and clinics across New York benefit daily from Muslim

greater representation. In New York, Muslim Americans have served as city council members, state legislators, commissioners, policy advisors, and community board leaders. Shahana Hanif, the first Muslim woman elected to the New York City Council, represents a milestone for inclusive governance and women's leadership. Muslim Americans also serve as advisors to government agencies, contribute to public policy on education, public safety, housing, and immigration, and work within law enforcement, emergency management, and social services. Their civic engagement reflects a commitment to the common good and constitutional values. Arts, Media, and Cultural Influence  
 Muslim Americans have enriched American culture through art, literature, film, music, fashion, and media. In New York, Muslim artists and creatives have used their platforms to tell authentic stories, challenge stereotypes, and foster cross-cultural understanding. In literature and journalism, Muslim writers and thinkers have shaped public discourse on identity, justice,

other faith communities to promote understanding, combat hate, and respond to acts of violence and bigotry. In times of rising antisemitism, Islamophobia, and racism, Muslim leaders have stood firmly for solidarity, condemning hatred in all forms and affirming shared human dignity. These efforts strengthen the moral fabric of New York and model unity amid diversity. Looking Ahead: A Shared Future  
 Muslim American Heritage Month is not only about honoring the past—it is about inspiring the future. Young Muslim New Yorkers are excelling in schools, leading social justice movements, starting businesses, advancing science, and shaping culture. They carry forward a legacy rooted in faith, resilience, and service. As New York celebrates Muslim American Heritage Month, it affirms a powerful truth: Muslim Americans are not newcomers to the American story—they are co-authors of it. Their achievements enrich the state, strengthen democracy, and embody the promise of a pluralistic society where every community's contributions are recognized and valued.

“The defense of law, dignity, and restraint can no longer be relegated to distant capitals.”

“Cities can function not only as administrative units but as ethical voices within the democratic system.”

# DIPLOMACY

## Costa Rica Welcomes Bangladeshi Ambassador

Credentials presented, future-focused discussions held on trade, democracy, and UN cooperation



### Jessica Morgan

In a significant diplomatic engagement, Ambassador Mushfiqul

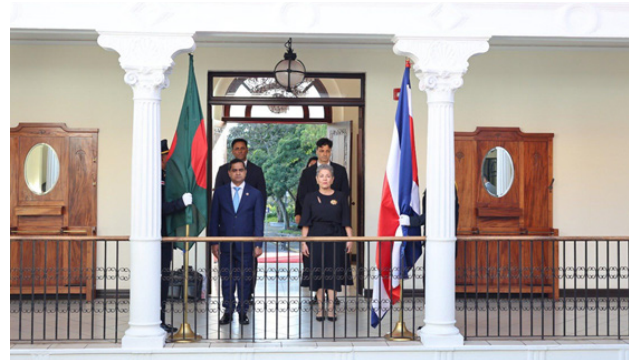
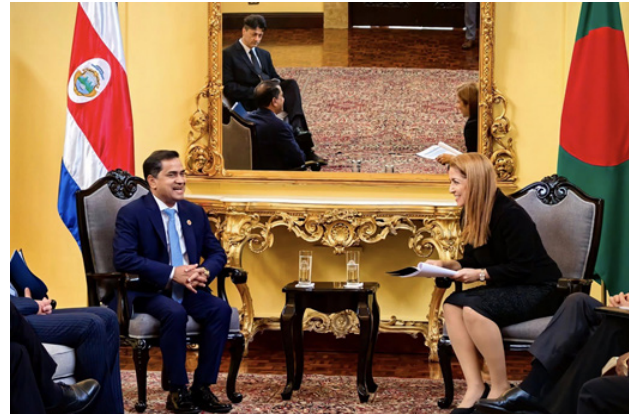
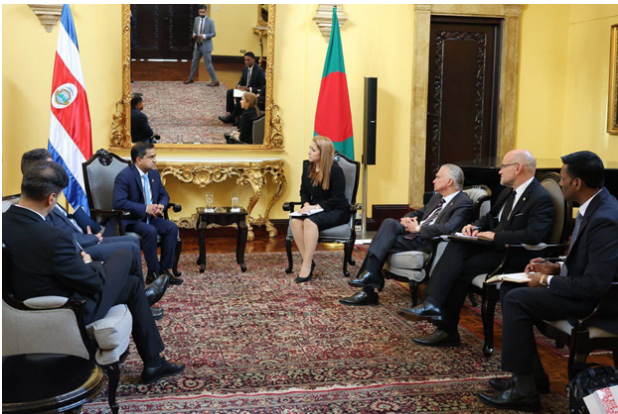
Fazal Ansari, the non-resident Ambassador of Bangladesh to Costa Rica, officially presented his credentials to

Costa Rican Vice President Dr. Mary Munive Angermuller on Thursday, January 23, 2026, at the country's

Ministry of Foreign Affairs in San José. The ceremonial event included a guard of honor and the national anthems of both nations. Following the credential presentation, Ambassador Ansari met with Costa Rican President Rodrigo Chaves Robles at a reception held at the National Theater, where the two discussed opportunities for deepening bilateral ties. President Chaves, recalling his earlier visit to Dhaka as a World Bank official, expressed admiration for Professor Muhammad Yunus, Bangladesh's Nobel Laureate, and acknowledged Bangladesh's progress in social and economic development. Ambassador Ansari highlighted key areas for potential collaboration, particularly in ready-made garments, pharmaceuticals, and climate adaptation.

He emphasized the importance of facilitating business-to-business engagement, and proposed launching talks on a visa waiver agreement for diplomatic and official passport holders, along with easing the visa process for Bangladeshi entrepreneurs. Later, in a separate meeting with Foreign Minister Arnoldo André Tinoco, the Ambassador reiterated Bangladesh's interest in expanding trade and labor cooperation, and encouraged Costa Rican firms to consider Bangladeshi manpower for national development. He also sought Costa Rica's support for Bangladesh's candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council (2031–32). Foreign Minister Tinoco, while expressing appreciation for Bangladesh's role in UN

peacekeeping, noted Costa Rica's support for Rebecca Grynspan for a top UN position and emphasized shared global priorities, including democracy and human rights. Ambassador Ansari also visited MEDIGRAY, a local pharmaceutical firm, encouraging the company to explore import opportunities from Bangladesh, citing the country's robust pharmaceutical capabilities and international standards. The envoy concluded his visit by meeting members of the Bangladeshi expatriate community in San José, assuring them of continued support and engagement from the Bangladesh government. The diplomatic visit is being seen as a stepping stone toward revitalized relations and broader cooperation between the two nations.





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# PHILANTHROPY

## Honoring MLK Through Service

### Zakat Foundation of America Shares Food and Solidarity with All Communities



**James Anderson**  
On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the Zakat Foundation of America honored the civil

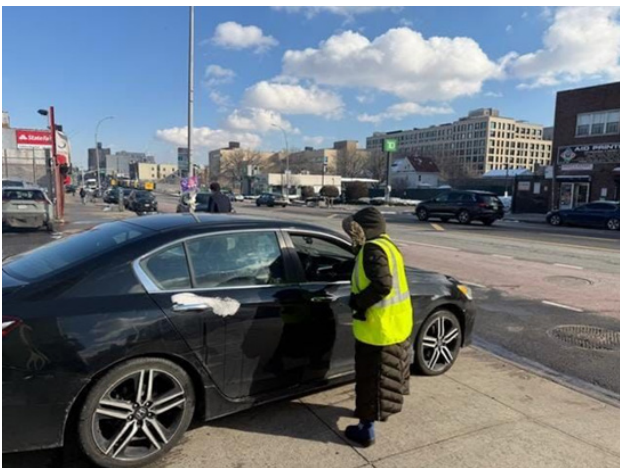
rights icon's enduring legacy with acts of compassion and service, hosting inclusive food distributions on the streets of New York and



to all—Muslims and non-Muslims alike. In the spirit of Dr. King's message of justice, equality, and love, volunteers from the humanitarian organization set up to serve anyone in need, regardless of background, religion, or circumstance. Hot meals and food packages were handed out with care and dignity, turning the national day of reflection into one of action. "The best way to honor Dr. King is not just through words, but through meaningful deeds that bring people together," one organizer shared. "This is about showing that our humanity is shared, and our responsibility to one another is real." At Darul Uloom New

York, community members gathered not just to receive food, but to stand in solidarity with the values Dr. King championed—nonviolence, service, and unity across racial and religious lines. Volunteers engaged warmly with attendees, reinforcing the event's inclusive mission and the foundation's ongoing commitment to serve vulnerable populations. Out on the streets, the initiative met people where they were—offering nourishment to those experiencing hardship during the cold winter months. The distribution was not only about alleviating hunger, but also about embodying the compassion that Dr. King modeled

throughout his life. The Zakat Foundation of America, known for its global and local humanitarian work, continues to highlight how interfaith service can bridge divides and build resilient communities. By organizing events that welcome all, the foundation reinforces the principle that service is a universal language—especially on a day meant to remind Americans of their shared ideals. As families walked away with meals and warm expressions of solidarity, the message was unmistakable: Dr. King's dream lives on—in service, in inclusion, and in everyday acts of care.



# PHILANTHROPY

## Street and School Food Drives Mark MLK Day in New York



## INFLUENCE



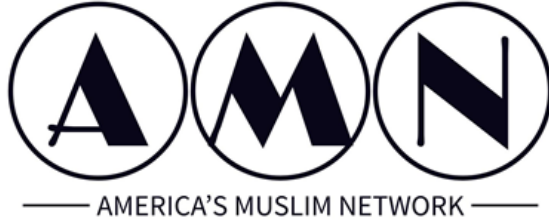
# Top 65 Most Influential Muslims in New York State Honored

More honorees from America's Muslim Network and the work shaping communities statewide

## Carlos Stewart

As part of our ongoing series, we highlight more individuals from America's Muslim Network's Top 65 Most Influential Muslims in New York State, whose leadership and service continue to shape communities across the state. America's Muslim Network has officially unveiled its Top 65 Most Influential Muslims in New York State, a recognition rooted in impact, service, and

meaningful contribution rather than popularity or titles. This list honors individuals whose work continues to shape, strengthen, and uplift Muslim communities across the state through leadership, advocacy, faith, entrepreneurship, education, and civic engagement. New York is home to one of the most diverse Muslim populations in the country, and the individuals recognized reflect that diversity in every sense. They include community



Courtesy : America's Muslim Network

organizers working at the grassroots level, religious leaders guiding congregations, professionals influencing public policy, educators shaping young minds, and entrepreneurs

building institutions that serve far beyond the Muslim community. What unites them is a consistent commitment to showing up for others and translating values into action.

According to America's Muslim Network, this recognition is not a ranking. Each person on the list is acknowledged equally for their unique role and the tangible difference they have made in their respective spaces. The goal is not only to celebrate achievement, but to tell stories that are often overlooked and to amplify voices that inspire progress, unity, and resilience. In this ongoing series, we will highlight a selection of individuals

from this list and explore the work that led to their recognition. By learning more about their journeys, initiatives, and leadership, readers will gain a deeper understanding of the breadth of influence Muslim New Yorkers have across social, civic, and cultural life. Together, these honorees represent a powerful snapshot of a community that continues to contribute, lead, and build for the future.



## Shahid Khan

Shahid Khan is a longtime community advocate with 40+ years of service, widely known for interfaith outreach and sustained efforts to combat Islamophobia through public education, rallies, and civic engagement. He helped establish New York State's first Muslim funeral home services at MDQ Bayshore as Chairman of the Burial Committee. As President of PAANA for over seven years, he helped secure a Pakistan Day Resolution in the New York State Assembly, including the first-ever Assembly opening with Qur'an recitation. He also chaired the Suffolk County Muslim Advisory Board for 11+ years, strengthened community-law enforcement dialogue, founded Voice of Muslim Americans, and led successful advocacy against inaccurate school materials about Islam.



## Jibreel W. Sarij

Jibreel W. Sarij is an entrepreneur and executive, serving as Founder and CEO of Acutis Diagnostics, a New York bio-diagnostic firm that grew from a Long Island start-up to 250 staff, serving 5+ million patients and developing 30+ proprietary diagnostic tests. Previously, he co-founded Capitas Group International, a specialty finance venture with the Islamic Development Bank, building public-private partnerships across the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia. A former Afghan refugee raised in Queens, he credits his faith and heritage for shaping resilience and equity-driven leadership. He holds a B.S. in Industrial Engineering and an MBA from Columbia University and has worked internationally across Europe, Asia, and the Gulf.



## Ammad Sheikh

Ammad Sheikh is a New York community leader known for bridging faith, culture, and civic life through high-impact initiatives. He is the Co-Founder of The Halal Guide, a trusted platform promoting halal living, and the Co-Founder of Muslims of Long Island, a nonprofit providing emergency relief, youth programs, and civic engagement across Nassau and Suffolk. He serves on the Board of Trustees of the Islamic Center of Long Island and holds seats on Nassau County's Asian American Advisory Board and District Advisory Council, advocating for inclusion and public safety. He also founded South Asian Sports, the largest South Asian sports league in North America, and works professionally as Senior Vice President of Operations at Duffy & Duffy.



## Raza Dastgir

Raza Dastgir is a community leader and public-service advocate known for building platforms that strengthen Muslim life and civic participation. He is the Co-founder of The Halal Guide, a trusted resource connecting Muslim consumers and businesses across North America, and also co-founded the largest Halal Food Festival in North America, drawing tens of thousands annually. He helped launch Muslims of Long Island, a nonprofit supporting local families, refugees, and people in need. In public service, he served as a board member of the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office, working to improve trust with underrepresented communities, and has received multiple community service awards. He has also been active in political organizing as General Secretary of PTI New York.



## Rafiq Faiz

Rafiq Faiz is a Mufti and Physician Associate who uniquely blends Islamic scholarship with expertise in psychiatry. Educated in Madinah, Saudi Arabia, he studied Qur'anic exegesis, theology, and hadith under leading scholars, and later earned a master's degree from SUNY Downstate, specializing in psychotherapy and psychopharmacology. He is the author of Secrets of the Quran and a contributor to research spanning medicine, Islamic jurisprudence, and biochemistry. Through his work, Mufti Rafiq focuses on bridging faith and science while delivering compassionate, evidence-based mental health care that empowers individuals and future leaders.



## Ali Rashid

Ali Rashid is the Founder and President of the American Pakistani Advocacy Group (APAG) and CEO of Kingsland Properties, known for bridging community service with civic advocacy. A CUNY Baruch College Honors graduate with a BBA in Finance and Investments, he previously served as a Vice President at HSBC Bank. Through APAG, he has advanced protections for Muslim and immigrant communities, helping support the Religious Scarf Bill to prohibit discrimination against religious attire and advocating for halal food access in public schools, including a \$1 million halal and kosher lunch allocation. He also leads year-round service programs such as Ramadan food drives, back-to-school distributions, and COVID-era relief.



## Dr. Hasib Mikael Sarij, M.D.

Dr. Hasib Mikael Sarij, M.D. is a physician specializing in Anti-Aging and Regenerative Medicine at Evolve Medical (Deer Park, NY), combining neuromuscular treatments, regenerative biologics, and aesthetic medicine to restore vitality and function. Trained and board-certified in Internal Medicine and Interventional Pain Management, he integrates innovative therapies such as stem cell and peptide therapy, bioidentical hormone replacement (BHRT), ozone therapy, chelation, and hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT). He is a Fellow of the American Board of Anti-Aging and Regenerative Medicine, a board-certified member of the American Academy of Stem Cell Physicians, and holds specialized training from AABB and certification from the American Academy of Procedural Medicine. His approach emphasizes personalized, precision-based care focused on root causes of aging and disease.



## Zahid Syed

Zahid Syed is a longtime civic and labor leader with 30+ years of work across community, political, labor, and human rights issues. He currently serves as Executive Director of the Town of Hempstead Office of Community Affairs and previously held leadership roles in state and county government. In 2010, he became Nassau County's first Asian-American Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights and helped establish key initiatives including the Asian-American Advisory Board, Anti-Bias Crime Task Force, and Muslim Advisory Board, while expanding interfaith and cultural events countywide. He is now 1st Vice Chairman/Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission, founder and chair of SAPAC, and has earned numerous awards from the U.S. Senate, Congress, New York State, and local officials for his service.



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# LEADERSHIP

# Democracy in Uniform

## BAPA conducts first-ever online election with overwhelming participation



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*Congratulations!*

**The Newly Elected Executive Committee**

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 Media Relations Coordinator Sgt. Jasim Mia	 Community Outreach Coordinator Sgt. Md. Latif	 Sergeant-at-Arms Sgt. Sibbir Ahmed	 Corresponding Secretary TS. Mohiuddin Ahmed

### Ashley Reed

In a historic moment for the Bangladeshi American Police Association (BAPA), members turned out in large numbers on January 23, 2026, to elect their new leadership through the association's first-ever online election. In a resounding victory, Captain A.K.M. Prince Alam was elected President, securing 537 votes, while Detective Jamil Sarwar won the position of General Secretary with 455 votes. The digital election saw 612 out of 805 registered members casting their ballots, reflecting a remarkable 76% turnout that has been widely praised as a sign of growing engagement, transparency, and democratic maturity within the organization. Captain Alam defeated Lieutenant Sujat Khan, while Detective Sarwar surpassed Sergeant Mehedi Mamun. Both races were closely watched, and their results mark a new chapter for BAPA, which

represents Bangladeshi-origin officers in the New York Police Department (NYPD) and other law enforcement agencies across the U.S. Other elected officials include Sergeant Detective Squad (SDS) Ershad Siddique as First Vice President, Traffic Supervisor Mohammad Ali Chowdhury as Second Vice President, and Lieutenant Sheikh Murad Ahmed as Treasurer. Sergeant Sonia Barua was elected Assistant Treasurer, while Sergeant Sibbir Ahmed won the post of Sergeant-at-Arms. The newly elected Media Liaison is Sergeant Jashim Miah, with Police Officer Mohammad Islam Ripon selected as Event Coordinator. Sergeant Md. Latif will serve as Community Outreach Coordinator, and Traffic Supervisor Mahiuddin Ahmed as Corresponding Secretary. The election was overseen by the BAPA Election Commission, consisting of Lieutenant Mohammad F. Khan, Captain Hossain Islam, and Sergeant K.M.

Hasnat, who ensured the process was peaceful, transparent, and well-organized. The commission extended heartfelt thanks to all candidates, voters, and volunteers who made the election a success. This election is being hailed as a milestone in BAPA's democratic journey, reflecting not only the members' trust in the process but also their commitment to the association's mission. The newly elected leaders have pledged to strengthen unity, advance professional development, and enhance the organization's role in serving both its members and the broader Bangladeshi-American community. The oath-taking ceremony for the new committee is scheduled for Monday, marking the formal beginning of a term expected to focus on transparency, service, and continued excellence.



**Elhaam Academy**

Collage of photos showing various events and activities:

- UN DAY 2024 Celebration
- World Space Week 2024
- Learning Basic Chemical Reactions
- Math-Fun-STEAM CLASS SUCCESS!
- STEAM PROGRAM
- ELHAAM JUNIOR AMBASSADOR EVENT
- WORLD SPACE WEEK 2024
- ELHAAM ACADEMY
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- Math-Fun-STEAM CLASS SUCCESS!
- STEAM PROGRAM
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# EDUCATION

## Language and Legacy Intertwine at Elhaam Academy

Arabic learners explore heritage through family tree projects

**William Henry**

In a colorful and meaningful display of learning and identity, students at Elhaam Academy recently showcased their growing command of the Arabic language through a unique classroom project—family tree presentations designed entirely in Arabic. The project, part of the school's Arabic language curriculum, asked students to create visual family trees, using Arabic vocabulary to label relatives and describe relationships. What emerged was a vibrant collection of charts, drawings, and posters that not only demonstrated language acquisition but also reflected each student's cultural background and creativity. Students proudly stood before their peers and



teachers to present their family trees, confidently using Arabic terms for family members such as abu (father), umm (mother), jadd (grandfather), and ukht (sister). The exercise

offered a practical and personal way to practice vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structure, while also helping students draw meaningful connections

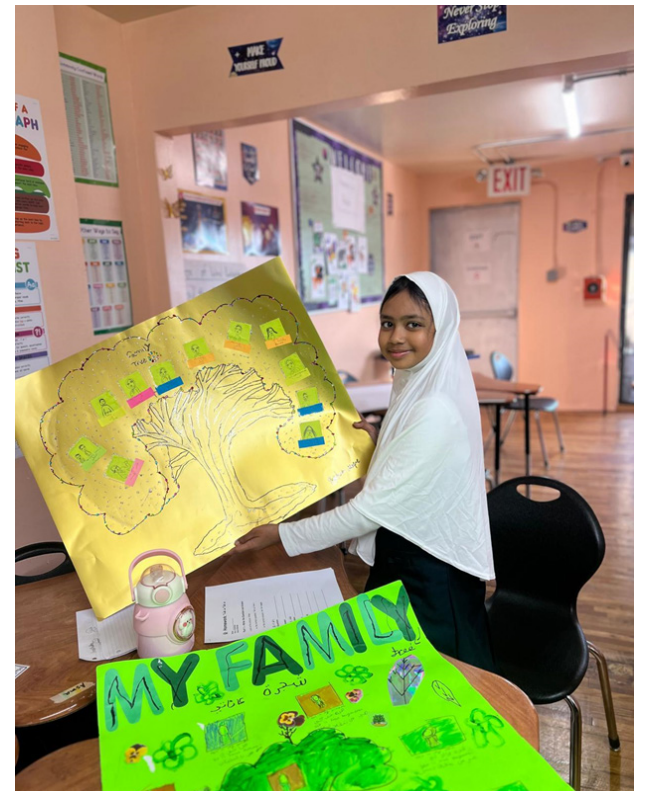
between language and heritage. "This project brought together language, identity, and creativity," said one Arabic instructor. "It gave students a chance to

apply what they've learned in a real-world context, and the results were thoughtful and impressive." Beyond the academic benefits, the family tree presentations also helped foster a deeper appreciation for family traditions and cultural roots. Many students expressed excitement about discussing their family histories at

the exercise not only improved students' Arabic comprehension, but also boosted their confidence in speaking and presenting in front of others—a critical skill in language learning. The classroom was filled with encouragement and applause as each student proudly explained their family connections using newly acquired Arabic vocabulary. As Elhaam Academy continues to emphasize holistic, culturally enriched education, projects like this stand out as a testament to the school's commitment to nurturing both academic excellence and self-expression. For these young language learners, building a family tree was more than a classroom activity—it was a journey through language, identity, and pride.

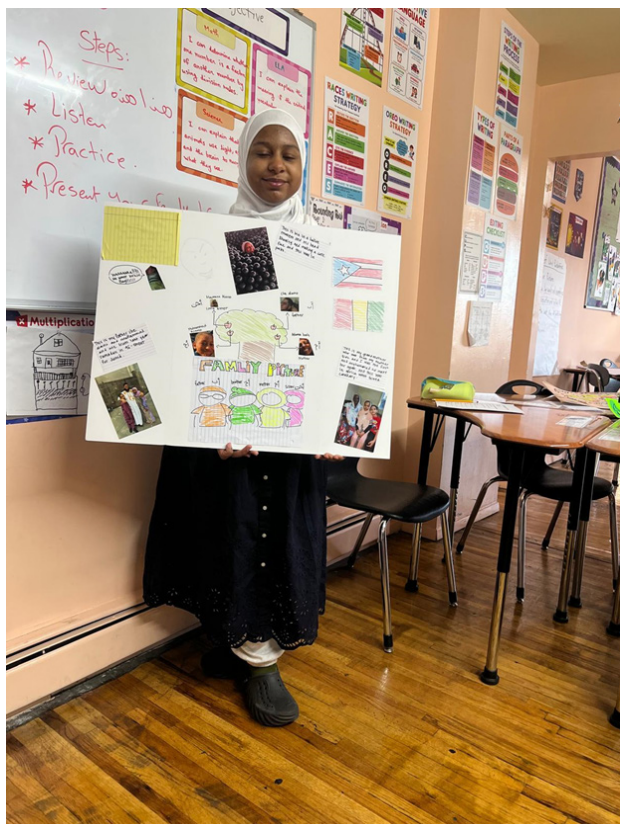


home, while others shared how the project sparked conversations with parents and grandparents about ancestry. Teachers noted that



# EDUCATION




## Arabic class project helps students build vocabulary and confidence



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# FAITH

## Preparing for Ramadan: Lessons from the Month of Sha'ban

Elhaam Academy's teachings emphasize mindful worship and reflection



known as a month of spiritual preparation, is frequently neglected due to its placement in the Islamic calendar. Recognizing this, Elhaam's instructors took the opportunity to highlight its unique merits and the wisdom in utilizing it as a stepping stone toward



“Neglecting it means missing a chance to realign our intentions and increase our worship before Ramadan arrives.” Students were introduced to the Prophetic tradition of fasting during Sha'ban and the practice of increasing acts of devotion and repentance. The discussion encouraged them to begin cultivating habits of prayer, charity, and self-discipline in anticipation of the spiritually intense days of Ramadan. The session was not only informative but also interactive. Students shared their own strategies for preparing for Ramadan, with many expressing a renewed sense of purpose and eagerness to begin

early. The teaching emphasized that true readiness for Ramadan doesn't begin on the first day of fasting—it starts in the weeks leading up to it. By placing importance on Sha'ban, Elhaam Academy continues its mission of grounding students in Islamic knowledge that connects theology with daily life. The teachings served as a reminder that even in the lesser-known times of the year, there are opportunities for growth, reflection, and increased devotion. With Ramadan approaching, the session reinforced a key lesson: spiritual preparation is a process, not a moment—and Sha'ban is a prime opportunity to begin.

### Emily Parker

In a recent Islamic studies session at Elhaam Academy, students were encouraged to reflect

on the often-overlooked month of Sha'ban, a spiritually significant period nestled between the sacred month of Rajab and the holy month of Ramadan. The

lesson served as both a gentle reminder and a motivational guide, urging students not to let this valuable time pass unnoticed. Sha'ban, traditionally

Ramadan. “Sha'ban is a bridge between two blessed months, and it carries its own importance in the life of a believer,” one teacher explained.





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# BUSINESS

## Community Applauds Ahad&Co CPA's Continued Expansion

New headquarters launch hailed as a win for the Bangladeshi-American business ecosystem



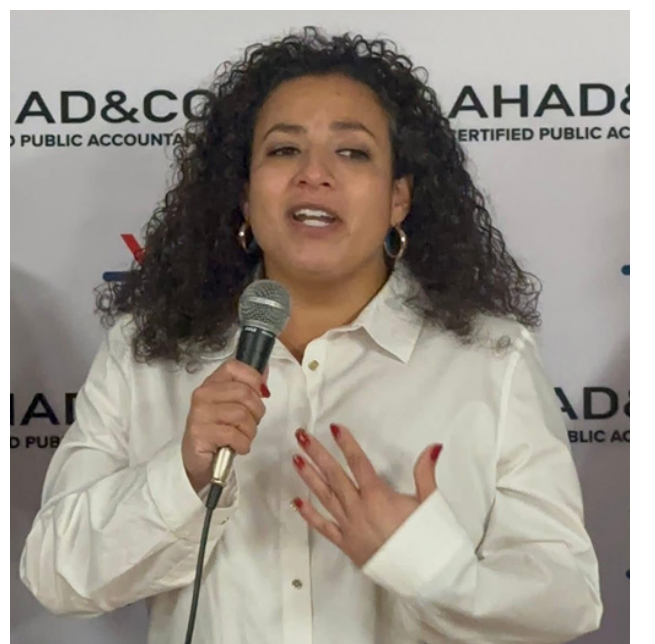
### Noah Presley

In a celebration marked by community pride and entrepreneurial achievement, Ahad&Co CPA officially opened the doors to its new Bronx headquarters, its third office and a testament to the firm's impressive trajectory of growth. The grand opening event, held recently in The Bronx, brought together business leaders, community members, and supporters to honor this latest chapter in the firm's journey. Ahad Ali, the Founder & CEO of Ahad&Co, was at the center of the celebration, recognized for his unwavering commitment to professional excellence and community engagement. Known for providing trusted financial services to small businesses and individuals, Ahad&Co has built a reputation rooted in integrity and



innovation—qualities reflected in the success of this expansion. "This new office is more than just a physical space," said one attendee. "It's a symbol of what's possible when vision, service, and community come together." Representatives from the U.S. Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (USBCCI) were present at the event, extending heartfelt congratulations on behalf of the broader business community. In a statement, the organization applauded Ahad&Co for setting "a powerful example for aspiring entrepreneurs" and reaffirmed the firm's

role in fortifying the Bangladeshi-American business ecosystem. Guests toured the new facility, met with team members, and shared in a collective sense of pride and optimism. The well-attended event reflected the growing trust that the firm has cultivated among clients and peers alike. As Ahad&Co continues to grow, its latest expansion into a new Bronx headquarters not only enhances its capacity to serve clients but also reaffirms its roots in community-driven business practices. The grand opening was not just a celebration of space—it was a celebration of success, service, and the shared values that fuel lasting impact. With this milestone, Ahad&Co CPA steps confidently into a future of continued service and leadership.



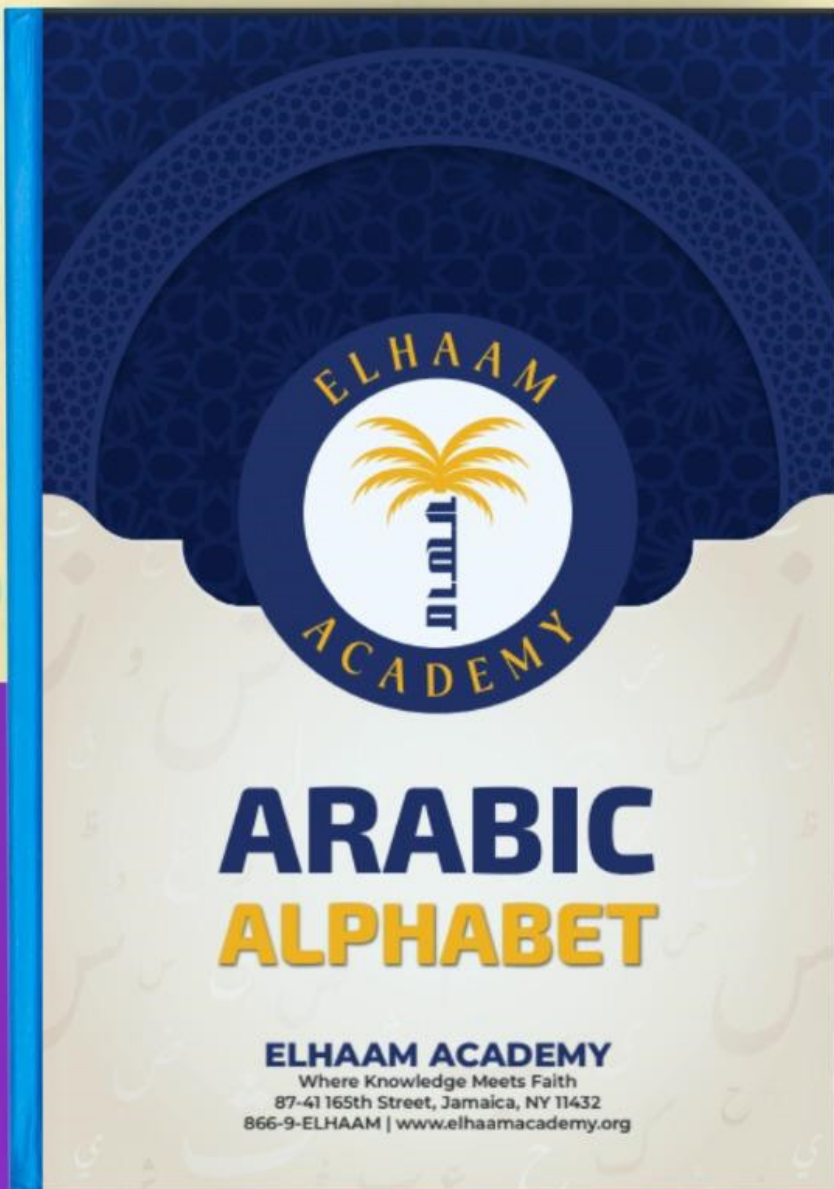
# ARABIC ALPHABET BOOK



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Handwriting practice sheet for the letter 'ب'. It includes the Elhaam Academy logo, the letter 'ب' in large green font, and a grid of 20 boxes for tracing and writing. The letter is shown in its isolated form and then in various connected forms (ba, ba-ya, ba-ta).

Handwriting practice sheet for the letter 'ب'. It includes a grid of 20 boxes for tracing and writing. Below the grid, it says 'find the letter: ب' and lists words: 'بِسْمَةِ . بِنْتِ . تَحِبُّ . الْكُتُبِ'. The Elhaam Academy logo and contact information are at the bottom.

Handwriting practice sheet titled 'Match And Color'. It features a grid of 10 circles containing Arabic letters: ط, م, ن, ح, ج, د, خ, ح, خ. A dashed line connects the letter 'ج' in the second row to the letter 'ج' in the bottom row. The Elhaam Academy logo and contact information are at the bottom.

Handwriting practice sheet for the letter 'م'. It includes a grid of 20 boxes for tracing and writing. Below the grid, it says 'find the letter: م' and lists words: 'شَمْسٍ . نَمَلٍ . مَوْزٍ . فَمٍ'. The Elhaam Academy logo and contact information are at the bottom.

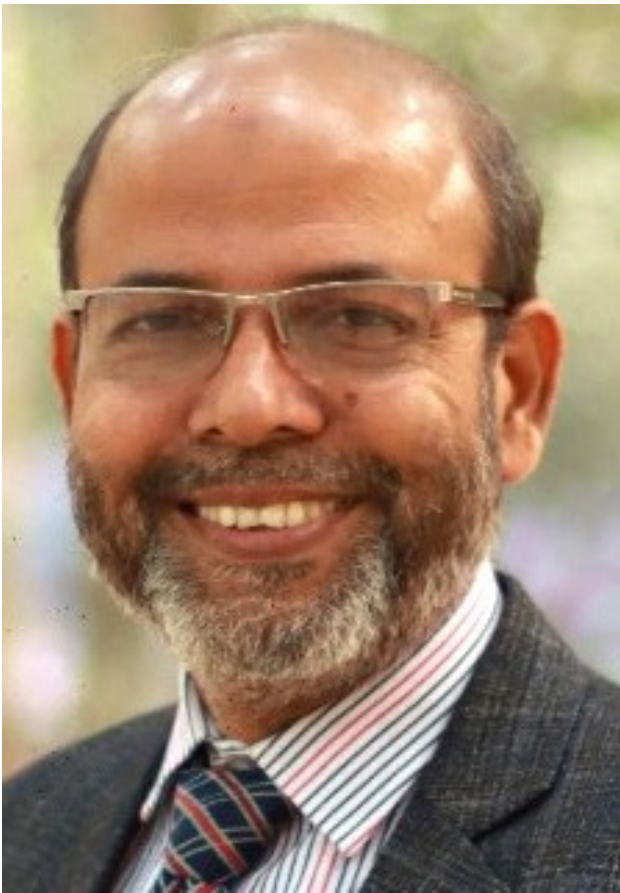
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## VOICES

# Muslim American Heritage Month: Legacy of Diversity and Harmony

Prof. Dr. Md. Iqbal Hossain, Interfaith USA

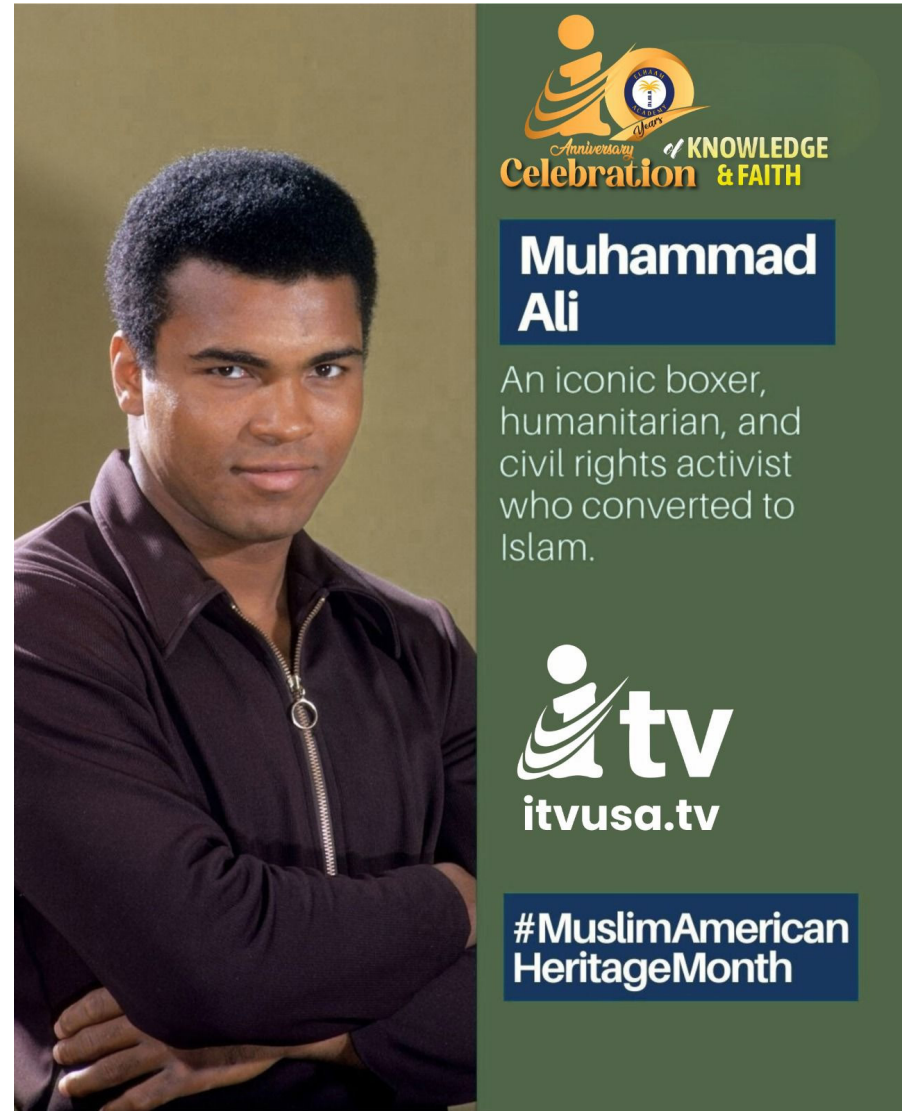


New York State Governor Kathy Hochul officially declared January 2026 as Muslim Heritage Month. This historic recognition reflects the deep-rooted presence, rich contributions, and growing influence of Muslim communities across New York State, especially in New York City. It also underscores the importance of fostering mutual respect, interfaith understanding, and social harmony in one of the world's most diverse regions. Muslims in New York have a history dating back to the early twentieth century. Some of the earliest Muslim settlers were African American converts influenced by Dayees (Islamic Scholars). Later, immigrants from South Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, Turkey, and parts of Eastern Europe arrived in large numbers, particularly after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which eased restrictions on immigration. New York City became a major destination for Muslim immigrants seeking education, employment, and economic opportunity. Neighborhoods such as Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and parts of Manhattan gradually developed vibrant Muslim communities. Over time, these areas became cultural and religious hubs where mosques, community centers,

and halal businesses flourished. Diversity has enriched New York's social fabric. Different languages, traditions, cuisines, and cultural practices coexist within the Muslim community, making it one of the most multicultural religious communities in the United States. Despite their differences, Muslims in New York are united by shared values of faith, family, education, and community service. Muslims play a significant role in the state's economy. They are entrepreneurs, physicians, engineers, teachers, taxi drivers, shop owners, IT professionals, corporate and Interfaith leaders. Thousands of small businesses, including grocery stores, restaurants, clothing shops, and technology firms, are owned and operated by Muslims. These enterprises create jobs, generate revenue, and contribute to local economic growth. New York is home to hundreds of mosques and Islamic centers, ranging from small neighborhood prayer spaces to large institutions. The mosques serve not only as places of worship but also as centers for education, counseling, charity, and social services. Islamic schools and weekend madrasas play an important role in preserving religious identity and moral values among younger

generations. Many full-time Islamic schools provide high-quality academic education alongside Islamic studies. These institutions help students become responsible citizens who contribute positively to American society.

Muslims in New York have been actively involved in interfaith dialogue and cooperation. Through partnerships with churches, synagogues, temples, and civic organizations, Muslim leaders and institutions regularly participate in joint programs, peace initiatives, and community service projects. Interfaith activities include open mosque days, shared iftar programs during Ramadan, joint prayers for peace, disaster relief efforts, and social justice campaigns. These initiatives foster trust, reduce misunderstandings, and build bridges among people of different faiths and backgrounds. New York has become a model for how religious diversity can strengthen social unity. New York has produced many successful Muslim leaders who have contributed to public life, education, business, and social justice. A recent milestone in the long history of Muslim contributions to society and national development is Zohran Mamdani's election as Mayor of New York City, a rare event in United States history. Under his leadership, people of all faiths are working together sincerely in City Hall. Muslim American Heritage Month encourages education and awareness of all aspects of life. Different bodies of Islamic Schools, libraries, museums, and community organizations can organize lectures, exhibitions, and cultural programs that highlight the true values of Islamic peace, compassion, justice, and service to humanity. I firmly believe that Muslim Americans' Heritage Month will restore confidence of the Muslim community and inspire them to work side by side with people of all backgrounds to promote social harmony and national prosperity.



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# WEATHER

## NYC Blanketed by Winter Storm with Up to 12 Inches of Snow

Mayor Mamdani urges caution as freezing temps and sleet threaten safety

**Alex Mason**

New York City was pummeled by a fierce winter storm on Sunday, January 21, with snowfall expected to reach up to 12 inches before transitioning to sleet later in the day. According to the National Weather Service, the brunt of the storm will persist through the afternoon, with frigid temperatures and dangerous wind chills expected to follow. "All signs are pointing to accumulations between 9 and 12 inches for New York City," said Allison Santarelli, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service. "But what's just as concerning is the extreme cold and icy conditions coming right after." Amid the worsening conditions, Mayor Zohran Mamdani appeared live on The Weather Channel with meteorologist Jim Cantore, offering updates on the city's response and urging residents to remain indoors. "We're seeing snowfall at a rate of



about an inch per hour," Mamdani said. "Our sanitation teams are working around the clock, and we've deployed more than 2,500 workers with 700 salt spreaders and 2,000 plows across the city." The mayor also announced that public schools will move to remote learning on Monday, citing a dangerous mix of snow, sleet, and freezing temperatures. "It's not just the snowfall," he explained. "It's

the combination of precipitation and cold that creates serious hazards." Officials confirmed at least five deaths are being investigated in connection to the storm, although causes remain undetermined pending autopsy results. "We mourn those we've lost," Mamdani said, adding that 10 warming centers have been opened—two in each borough—to protect vulnerable populations. City outreach teams are

canvassing every two hours to bring homeless New Yorkers to shelter, bypassing typical intake procedures. With plows active and emergency crews deployed, the mayor reiterated one key message: "Stay home. Let our workers do their jobs. The quicker the streets clear, the faster we all return to safety." As the storm progresses, the City of New York has issued a Hazardous Travel Advisory for Thursday,

January 25, and Friday, January 26. Officials warn that roads may be dangerous, icy, and wet, with strong winds increasing the risk of power outages. New Yorkers are urged to avoid unnecessary travel and keep roads clear to support emergency and snow operations. "Empty roads, empty sidewalks — exactly how it should be today, Queens," Mamdani said in a statement. "Stay home, stay warm,

and stay safe. Let our sanitation workers and other first responders do their jobs so we can all get back to business tomorrow." To support those in need of shelter, two warming centers have been opened in Queens:  
 ●Jamaica Educational Campus at 167-01 Gothic Drive  
 ●Long Island City High School at 14-30 Broadway  
 Additionally, NYC Alternate Side Parking (NYCASP) rules will be suspended on Monday, January 26, to allow for snow operations, though parking meters will remain in effect. New Yorkers are strongly advised to use mass transit, allow extra travel time, and be cautious when walking or biking due to slippery roads and low visibility. As Mamdani emphasized, "We can only get through this if we get through it together. Everybody has a role to play—and right now, that role is staying safe."





# America First Shockwaves

## Partners rethink old bargains



Photos: U.S. President Donald J. Trump  
Image Source: Online

### Nassr Al Shams

A sense of geopolitical backsliding sharpened after President Donald Trump pressed allies

over Greenland and signaled an America First posture that prizes leverage over institutions. Speaking at the World Economic

Forum in Davos, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney warned that “middle powers” face a stark new reality: “If you’re not at the

table, you’re on the menu.” The moment has stirred fresh anxiety in Europe and Canada, which suddenly find themselves subject to the kind of U.S. pressure long familiar to parts of the Global South. The debate is also reviving scrutiny of past American interventions under a broad reading of the Monroe Doctrine, from Guatemala to Grenada and Panama. Yet Greenland appears to have hardened resolve among allies. In Davos, Carney’s remarks drew a rare standing ovation, reflecting a push for collective resilience as trust in the post-World War II rules-based system frays.



Photo: The Beckhams' comments arrive at a time of ongoing public tension with Brooklyn.  
Image Source : AP / Online

# Beckham Rift Rekindled

Wedding dance dispute returns to headlines

### Amkel Nourush

A fresh round of scrutiny has hit the Beckham family after conflicting accounts resurfaced about a controversial dance at Brooklyn Beckham’s wedding to Nicola Peltz, reigniting debate over whether the moment was harmless celebration or a painful flashpoint in an ongoing rift.

Brooklyn, 26, recently claimed his mother, Victoria Beckham, “hijacked” what he expected to be a romantic dance with his bride during the 2022 wedding, describing the episode as humiliating in front of 500 guests. According to reporting cited in the accounts, singer Marc Anthony called Brooklyn to the stage and invited the “most beautiful woman in the room” to join him, with Victoria stepping in while Peltz reportedly left the room in tears. A friend of Victoria, 51, pushed back sharply, saying she “has nothing to apologize for” and has been “vilified” over the dance for years.

The friend argued the music was an upbeat salsa track, not an intimate slow song, and portrayed the Beckhams as a physically affectionate family rather than one crossing boundaries.

DJ Fat Tony, who performed at the wedding, suggested the awkwardness stemmed largely from Anthony’s stage direction, recalling that he encouraged Brooklyn to place his hands on his mother’s hips, calling it “a Latin thing.” The renewed storm has also driven memes and viral clips, while fans streamed Victoria’s solo music, briefly boosting old tracks.

Against that backdrop, Victoria and David Beckham offered a rare public glimpse of warmth by commenting on nostalgic family photos online, even as reports say Brooklyn has indicated he does not seek reconciliation—underscoring how a single wedding-floor moment has become shorthand for deeper family strain.

# Honnold Defies Gravity

## Free solo ascent of Taipei 101


### Adrian Smith

American climber Alex Honnold scaled Taipei 101 in Taipei, Taiwan, completing a rope-free ascent of the 508-meter (1,667-foot) skyscraper in 1 hour, 31 minutes. The climb, delayed from Saturday due to wet weather, was streamed live on Netflix with a safety delay as crowds cheered from below. Honnold used small ledges and architectural protrusions to climb the

101-floor tower, battling heat and strong wind near the top. Afterward, he called the view “incredible” and summed up the feat with one word: “Sick.” Taiwan’s Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim congratulated him, admitting it was hard to watch. Honnold is the first to climb the tower without a rope, surpassing earlier ascents such as Alain Robert’s 2004 climb, which used ropes and a harness.




Photo: Alex Honnold raises his fist atop Taipei 101 after completing the climb.  
Image Source: AP Photo/Chiang Ying-ying




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