



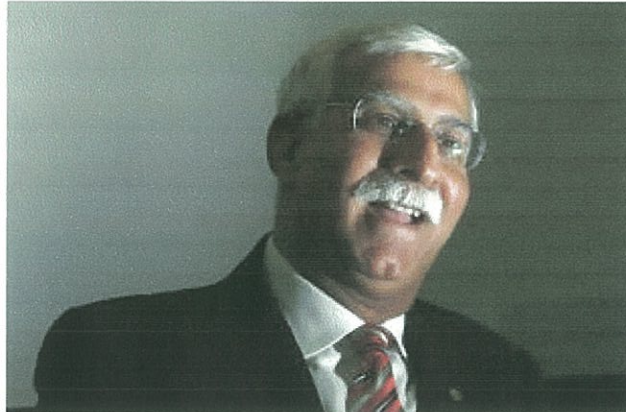
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## Religion

Firoz Rasul, the new president of Aga Khan University in Karachi, Pakistan, was in Houston recently to introduce himself to supporters of the college.

JOHNNY HANSON: FOR THE CHRONICLE



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## Q&A: Bridging a 'chasm' of ignorance

By RICHARD VARA

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*Firoz Rasul, the new president of Aga Khan University in Karachi, Pakistan, was in Houston recently to introduce himself to supporters of the college.*

*The university has 2,000 students from five countries, and extension campuses in Afghanistan and Kenya. It was founded 25 years ago by the Aga Khan, the spiritual leader and imam of the Ismaili Muslim community.*

*The national offices of the Aga Khan Council for the USA are in Sugar Land.*

*One of the Aga Khan's goals is to modernize Islam through education. Of the world's more than 1 billion Muslims, an estimated 20 million are Ismaili.*

*While here, Rasul spoke with religion editor Richard Vara. Excerpts from their conversation follow.*

**Q: The Aga Khan has been speaking out on the tensions and clashes between Islam and the West. What is his position?**

**A:** The clash the Aga Khan has talked about — he uses the words "clash of ignorance" rather than a clash of civilizations. He says he refers to the ignorance on both sides: the ignorance of Islamic civilizations and cultures by the West and the ignorance of Western civilizations by people in the Muslim world. That is the clash he talks about. We see our role as trying to bridge the chasm of the divide that creates this clash in terms of educating the world about Islam.

### RESOURCES

## Firoz Rasul

**Age:** 55

**Education:** Bachelor's degree in industrial engineering from the University of Hertfordshire in England; MBA from McGill University in Montreal

**Background:** Born in Kenya; longtime resident of Vancouver, British Columbia

**Experience:** Previously served as chairman and CEO of Ballard Power Systems and on the University of British Columbia's Board of Governors.