

# INTERNATIONAL THE NEWS

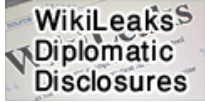
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Fashion Focus

## Bridal bonanza to kick off in Lahore tomorrow

Here's a sneak peak into the 1st PFDC L'Oreal Paris Bridal Week

Maliha Rehman

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The prodigiously named PFDC L'Oreal Paris Bridal Week is all set to make its debut into the crowded coterie of Pakistani fashion weeks. At the risk of defying the age-old argument that all shaadi-wear ultimately looks the same and therefore, bridal fashion shows tend to get mundane; this particular bridal week has been a long time coming. While ready-to-wear clothes may have their proponents, nothing sells more quickly in the subcontinent than bridal wear and a bridal fashion week – by an organization like the PFDC, which has a track record for orchestrating the country's most successful, business-oriented fashion weeks – makes sense. Hopefully, the PFDC L'Oreal Paris Bridal Week will be just the thing for the heavy-pocketed begums in the audience as well as riveting enough for the fashion lovers amongst us.



Taking a break from fashion week fixtures, different stylist teams have been taken on board, one for each day. Khawar Riaz, Redah Misbah at Depilex, Toni & Guy, Ather Shahzad and Nabila have all been enlisted to bedeck the catwalk. It's an interesting mix; while all are well-renowned in the market for bridal make-up, this is the first time Nabila will be taking on bridals in a fashion show. "I've stayed away from bridals because I feel that people use weddings to produce the same results year after year, simply milking clients of their money," observes Nabila. "In this bridal fashion week, I want to show my vision of the modern-day bride. This is how I'd want the Pakistani bride to be, how I'd even want to dress my sons' brides! Aside from styling the models for designers, I'll also be taking part in a ten-minute segment with Zaheer Abbas called 'Gold to Bold'. We will basically be taking inspirations from past traditions and interpreting them in a modern way. I just want to show that a bride doesn't need to be over the top – she can be either traditional or completely modern, in an intelligent, sophisticated way." Knowing Nabila's penchant for artistic, aesthetically beautiful styling, there'll certainly be quite a few avant-garde brides blazing their way down the ramp!



Three different jewelry designers have also been taken on board: Reama Malik with Gold, Kiran Aman with Kiran Fine Jewellery and Damas, who are also sponsoring the 'black' carpet. And then there are the designers – the PFDC has managed to amass an eclectic mix ranging from the new to the seasoned, the traditional to the slightly more revolutionary couturiers. Some prominent names are glaringly missing but still, the list is diverse enough to promise the regular ghararas, shararas, saris amidst a few radical shockers that are what make fashion weeks fun. And even as the ever-efficient Lotus team sets about their tedious PR duties and the innovative Hamza Tarrar designs the sets at the venue. Here we present to you the usual suspects, the people who make PFDC the force that it is. HSY has been accommodated with a bridal collection at the last minute. There is his best friend Maheen Kardar whose label Karma is showing. She decided to not show at PFDC Sunsilk Fashion Week because she recognized bridals and bling are the mainstay of her brand. There is Maria B, who is getting super savvy about ready to

wear by the fashion week, giving bridals a try. Then there are the bright young sparks, Ali Xeeshan, Fahad Hussayn, Nida Azwer that will they be able to outshine the big guns. And we give you the token controversy: Nomi Ansari, by far one of the most popular eastern wear designers going had to bow out at the last minute. Mismanagement or fashion politics, we'll let you decide...

HSY: HSY's being rather secretive about what he's bringing forth to the catwalk which makes us all the more inquisitive! It's going to be embellished, definitely, but in a new, unprecedented way. "I love our indigenous embroideries but I don't believe that they can only work well in one particular kind of outfit," he reveals obtusely. "I am going to be mixing textures and embroideries on a palette of my own choice. It's something new and not something people expect from HSY. Don't expect any dupattas on the head, is all I can say!"

Karma: Maheen Kardar Ali is also being very vague about her collection, all we know is that it's called 'Enchanted' and emulates dark fairy tales a la Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, etc. "I've given our traditional bridal trousseau a dark twist," describes Maheen. This ought to be an entertaining show: bridal-wear is Karma's niche and judging from past fashion installations, Maheen likes to create entire sets and backdrops to complement the outfits. A fairytale wonderland, albeit a dark one – what fun!

Maria B.: 'From Paris to Lahore', promises this line-up and from the name alone, we can predict just how Maria's planning to go about this particular fashion show. The first segment features flowing Western cuts with Chantilly lace motifs, can-cans and headgear merged with Eastern embroideries. The second segment is completely Eastern. "There are just three bridals in the collection while the rest of the clothes are formal but hip outfits, reflecting the same embellishments that are on the main bridal dress," says Maria. Maria wowed us with her ready-to-wear line at the PFDC Sunsilk Fashion Week in October – let's see what she has in store with her bridals.

Umar Sayeed: This is how this collection has been described by its designer: "It's colorful, eclectic and very Umar Sayeed." And vague though it may be, that's enough description for us! Umar Sayeed's bridals have always been sumptuous, elegant creations and we're hoping his latest offerings won't disappoint.

Asifa and Nabeel: This duo like their bridals glittery and embellished and considering that their PFDC L'Oreal Paris Bridal Week collection is inspired by the Ottomans, we're expecting a lot of bling from this line-up. The color palette strays from blues to blacks, reds and beiges and the embroideries are inspired by the Ottoman jewels and Bahadur Shah Zafar's peacock throne.

Rouge: In a collection dedicated to their mother, Faraz and Sundas Manan of Rouge have created bridals which, according to them, includes jewel-based embellishments, Persian embroidery and vintage ganga-jamini. "We know that women usually opt for voluminous bridal clothes but we also wanted to highlight the female silhouette," says Faraz. "A lot of the clothes we have designed are sheer but voluminous with a darker, fitted silhouette in the inside." Again, we think this is going to be sellable, typically pretty bridal trousseau.

Fahad Hussayn: Fahad's all set to revolutionize Pakistani bridals by bringing forth an array of black bridal dresses that somehow just won't look morbid. As most of the designer's creations, we're expecting them to be rather classy. "It's an edgy collection," reveals Fahad. "I have used different fabrics like net, velvet, suede and cotton, blending different textures. A lot of different colors have been merged with black and the embroidery, if any, has been done with black crystals." Titled 'Raat Raakh', the collection includes gowns, lehngas, saris and short shirts with shalwars. Fahad has apparently designed clothes for the Parsi bride, Christian bride and the Muslim bride and her posse of friends. This is one line-up that we're excited about!

Crimson by Ali Xeeshan: Ali's gone off and done the unimaginable by designing bridal couture that isn't heavily laden with embellishments. Titled 'Pahalgam', the collection is inspired by the Kashmiri city of the same name, and includes bridal shawls embellished with tilla that has been imported from India, Kashmiri kurtas and two bridals that are almost entirely made with formal fabric with no embroidery. "I have clients who particularly ask me to design fuss-free, lightly embellished and yet formal, beautiful bridals for them," says Ali. "My Pahalgam collection is formal yet economical and effective; my vision for bridals in 2012!"

Nida Azwer: Nida's collection is inspired by the early eighteenth century courts of Awadh where, apparently, a woman's wealth was measured by the volume of her dress! Naturally, then, this line-up will have its fair share of ghararas, shararas and multi-layered angarkhas, adorned with Nida's trademark miniature embroidered scenes. According to Nida, her formal children's wear line will also be



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 snowcased as well as her first foray into menswear. Pretty, no doubt, but probably nothing earth-shattering in terms of design and cuts.

Emraan Rajput: Emraan Rajput has a predilection for royal, regal clothes and we're predicting that his latest collection, 'Vedas', will be all about ornate shaadi-wear for the groom and his host of buddies. The color palette, according to Emraan, is varied and the line-up includes sherwanis, kurtas, turbans, chooridars, et al. There will also be two bridal lehngas, keeping their pace next to Emraan's stately grooms.

Sara Rohail Asghar: This is Sara's first foray onto the bridal catwalk and she promises it to be a visual feast of "traditional grandeur". A PIFD graduate from 2006, Sara's honed her skills while working as a designer for Nilofer Shahid and stocking under her eponymous label at the PFDC (Lahore) and L'atelier in Islamabad. Her PFDC L'Oreal Paris Bridal Week collection, she says, emulates the festivity of the wedding season, complemented by a range of colors and intricate detailing using dabka, stones and gems. This sounds like a conventional bridal collection. Let's see how Sara fares in her debut.

Sonia Azhar: According to Sonia, this is a collection inspired by nature, titled 'Enlightenment'. The show will be divided into six color-based segments, with three to four outfits in each part. "The silhouettes are mostly flowing, long and formal and I have tried to revive ancient embroideries, combining workmanship from the Victorian and Mughal eras with modern cuts," informs Sonia. There's an opal collection inspired, obviously, by the opal stone, a monochromatic array emulating pink rays of light, aquamarine, sunset, red (deriving colors by the red rose) and a midnight blue sky line-up. With a varied color palette and the kind of cuts that are already selling well in the market,

Sonia's collection may not hold too many surprises, but will probably still please her steady clientele.

### **'Rani Baagh' no more: Nomi Ansari bows out**

Nomi Ansari's 'Rani Baagh' collection was all set to be shown at the PFDC L'Oreal Paris Bridal Week. The clothes were ready and the designer had invested in props and accessories to complement his bridal finery on the ramp. It was unarguably going to be one of the highlights of the event. After all, Nomi Ansari has no shortage of admirers - women who are entranced by his creative interplay of colors, textures and embroideries to create bridals that are utterly breathtaking and unique.

Unfortunately, as luck - and fashion council politics - would have it, Nomi's no longer a part of the bridal week designers' entourage. The designer was planning to fly in from Karachi for his show and since he was busy on all the other days, the PFDC had assigned him a convenient date, in writing. And then, at the ninth hour, when Nomi's collection and props were all ready to be jettisoned off to Lahore, the council asked him to change his date. "Somebody else wanted my slot at the fashion week but I was unable to show on any of the other days. I believe in fulfilling my commitments and I invested my money, time and effort in preparing for this show. However, the organizers simply had no misgivings about switching me with a designer of their preference. I had no option but to back out," explains Nomi.

The entire experience has left Nomi miffed, to put things kindly. "I just think that I am going to be very careful the next time I consider being part of any fashion week," says the designer, who is a member of Fashion Pakistan (FP), the more or less dormant Karachi-based fashion council. "I don't need to be part of any event where commitment and hard work is not valued. When people abroad ask me what I do, I tell them I make clothes. I don't want to say that I am a Pakistani designer because I don't want to associate myself with a fraternity where people act unprofessionally just in order to give precedence to their friends. I work hard, design clothes for my clients and I am glad that I am judged by the work I do and not on the basis of my contacts or social standing."

But even as Nomi disappointedly mulls over the thousands' worth of props wasted away for a show that is no longer taking place, we feel that the loss is really of the bridal week's. Nomi Ansari's recent 'Threads of Unity' collection at the UAE's Independence Day anniversary show in Karachi had given us a whiff of the splendor and razzmatazz that was bound to unfold in the 'Rani Baagh' show. But even without a fashion week showcasing, the collection is bound to sell well amongst Nomi's steady clientele. On the other hand, the PFDC L'Oreal Paris Bridal Week has certainly lost out on one of Pakistan's most popular bridal couturiers in its debuting fashion week.

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