

Pakistan Citizenship Amendment Act 2026

The National Assembly of Pakistan has formalized an important clarification to Pakistan's citizenship framework through the Pakistan Citizenship Amendment Act, 2026. While the amendment is concise in drafting, its practical impact is significant, mainly for individuals whose citizenship status has been delayed due to technical interpretation issues relating to parentage and nationality.

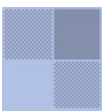
The Amendment revisits the section 5 of Pakistan Citizenship Act, 1951, which governs citizenship by descent. Historically, the law referred specifically to citizenship passing through the "father". However through the Pakistan Citizenship Amendment Ordinance, 2000, the word "father" was replaced with the broader and inclusive term "parent", thereby recognizing the citizenship rights through either the mother or the father.

Despite this change administrative complication continued to arise for individuals born before 18 April 2000, particularly where the father was a foreign national and the mother was Pakistani. In multiple such cases, passport applications were differed, even though many applications have already been issued Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs) by NADRA. This created a practical contradiction: individuals were recognized domestically for identification purposes, yet faced barriers while seeking passports.

This issue gained further clarity through judgment of the Peshawar High Court and the Sindh High Court, where the courts held that the 2000 amendment should be interpreted retrospectively. In effect, children born to a Pakistani parent, whether mother or father should be treated as Pakistani Citizen regardless of their date of birth. NADRA also relied on this interpretation while issuing CNICs to such applicants.

To resolve this inconsistency legislatively, the 2026 amendment inserts a new subsection (2) into Section 5. The provision expressly states that the substitution of the word "parent" for "father" made by the 2000 Ordinance "shall always been so done on and from the commencement" of the original Act. In simple terms, the amendment gives statutory retrospective recognition to citizenship through either parent through outset, removing ambiguity for affected individuals.

This change is particularly important for applicants facing delays in passport issuance, inheritance documentation, immigration matters, and identity verification. It also strengthens the principle of



gender equality in citizenship law by ensuring maternal citizenship carries equal weight, rather than being treated as later exception.

From a policy perspective, the amendment reflects a broader move towards consistency and administrative fairness. Rather than leaving such matters to case by case court intervention. Parliament has now codified the position, reducing uncertainty for citizens and public authorities alike.

Even though the amendment is narrow in scope, it addresses a long standing issue affecting many families and reinforces a fundamental principle: citizenship by descent should not depend on whether the Pakistani parent is mother or the father. By removing this ambiguity, the Pakistan Citizenship Amendment Act, 2026 brings both clarity and fairness to essential area of personal legal status.

