



Kaziah Liz Mejo after being crowned Miss Universe India 2026 on Sunday. Right: A triumphant Kaziah waves to the crowd.

Photos: Instagram/kaziahmejo

UAE-born Kaziah is Miss Universe India

Her upbringing in Abu Dhabi exposed her to a diverse, multicultural environment, which she has credited with helping shape her confidence

By **Devadasan K.P.**
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UAE-born Kaziah Liz Mejo, a 19-year-old from Mavelikkara in Kerala's Alappuzha district, has been crowned Miss Universe India 2026, marking a major milestone for the state. She won the national title at the grand finale held at Zee Studios in Jaipur on Sunday, emerging victorious from a field of 53 contestants representing different parts of India.

Kaziah will now represent India at the 75th Miss Universe pageant, scheduled to take place in Puerto Rico in November. Miss Universe India 2025 Manika Vishwakarma crowned Kaziah as her successor at the finale.

DISTINGUISHED JURY

The grand finale brought together prominent figures from the Indian pageant and entertainment world. The jury included former Miss Universe Sushmita Sen, former Miss Universe India title-holders Urvashi Rautela and Celina Jaitley, Miss Universe India 2024 Rhea Singha and film producer Pragma Kapoor.



Born in 2007, Kaziah spent her formative years in Abu Dhabi, where she completed her schooling at Emirates National School, St Joseph's School and Abu Dhabi Indian School. Her upbringing in the UAE exposed her to a diverse, multicultural environment, which she has credited with helping shape her confidence, communication skills and outlook.

She is currently pursuing a law degree in Bengaluru while also working as a model. Her journey in pageantry began during her teenage years, when she won the Miss Teen Diva

title in 2024. In 2025, she represented India at Miss Teen International, finishing as the first runner-up and gaining valuable international pageant experience.

Kaziah also has a strong background in the performing arts. She is a trained classical dancer and has studied the art form for 12 years.

Her talents extend to music, with the beauty queen also known for singing and playing the drums and violin. She has explored public speaking and acting, making her acting

debut in the Malayalam film, *Shylock*.

OVERCOMING PERSONAL INSECURITIES

Her journey has also involved overcoming personal insecurities, particularly around appearance and confidence. She has spoken about the importance of personal growth, resilience and developing strong communication skills in building confidence.

At the Jaipur finale, Vaishnavi Ganesh of Tamil Nadu was named first runner-up and will represent India at Miss International 2026. Anushri Satavlekar of Gujarat finished second runner-up, while Tejaswini Shrivastava of Maharashtra and Anubha Vashisth Chaudhary of Uttarakhand were named third and fourth runner-up respectively.

From her Kerala roots and childhood in Abu Dhabi to winning India's national crown, Kaziah's journey combines her UAE upbringing, Indian heritage and international pageant experience. She now faces her biggest challenge yet as she prepares to represent India on the Miss Universe stage in Puerto Rico.

— With inputs from ANI