

Slogan

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Bangladesh	Taka 200
Bhutan	NU 150
Canada	CS 20
China	RMB 30
France	FR 100
Hong Kong	HK\$ 75
India	Rs. 200
Japan	¥ 1250
Korea	Won 7500
Malaysia	RM 20
Maldives	Rf 150
Nepal	NcRs. 200
New Zealand	NZ\$ 20
Pakistan	Rs. 200
Philippines	P 188
Saudi Arabia	SR 40
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'Strong women are abused too':

Mawra Hocane



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December 2024 Vol. 29 No. 12

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Price: PKR. 200

Slogan is published every month by
Syed Jawaid Iqbal for

JAWZ Communications (Pvt.) Ltd.

and printed by JAWZ Communications, Karachi.

Read complete issue of Slogan on:

www.slogan.com.pk

*The views expressed by the contributors are
not necessarily shared by the editor.*

*Available on
Asianet-Pakistan.*

Is the cinema business under threat?

The much banded about phrase 'revival of the film industry' doesn't seem to hold true anymore. A visit on a public holiday or weekend to Karachi's multiplexes will not give an impression of bustling recreational spots. The business of those who run single or multiple screens now largely depends on Hollywood releases, especially its tent-pole ventures.

The last Pakistani film that made its presence felt in a resounding way was The Legend of Maula Jatt (2022) directed by Bilal Lashari. Ever since, there's been a lull in cinema houses in terms of footfall.

It would be difficult to recall which local movie saw the light of day after Maula Jatt that created a ripple in the placid waters of cinema business. In the last decade or so there have not been many films that raked in considerable chunks of money for their makers. Punjab Nahin Jaongi filled up cinema halls in quick time, but that happened in 2017.

According to one estimate, for 250 million people in this country there are only 60 cinemas and 150 screens. Even if this is hard to corroborate, it wouldn't be wrong to say that for such a huge population the number of cinemas is not sufficient. What also needs to be analysed is whether Pakistani filmmakers have their finger on the public's entertainment pulse.

Arts Council president Ahmed Shah, who hosts discussions on the film industry at the council's flagship events such as the Urdu Conference, said, "To be honest, our industry never sprang back to its feet after Gen Ziaul Haq's era. Until you give liberty to the creative lot to make films on subjects they wish to touch upon, it won't happen. Another important aspect in that regard is that film business is shifting to OTT platforms. Film is no more the medium of the poor or the underprivileged. In the old days, a rickshawala or tonga wala used to save money to go to cinema. Not anymore. It is an elitist affair now. I'm in favour of having more screens, but they should be in neighbourhoods such as Landhi, Korangi and F.B. Area."

Painting a larger picture, Mr Shah pointed out that the overall situation in Karachi is no different arguing not many people stepped out of their houses to watch PSL matches.

This was the sentiment echoed by renowned director and actor Mohammed Ehteshamuddin, who has Superstar and Dum Mastam to his directorial credit, "The film industry reflects society, that is, every other field. In fact, it isn't an industry anymore because no one is willing to invest in it. This just doesn't have to do with the government... there are other factors involved. While film business has been affected all over the world due to new technological devices, they have found ways to counter it. They create magic through IMAX and other experiments etc in a big way which compels people to queue up to watch movies in theatres. We make some good films and some not-so-good ones, but we make so few of them that the ratio doesn't matter."

Will re-permitting Indian movies to screen in Pakistan make a difference? Mr Shah answered, "Indian movies should be screened here. You may remember when they were shown, people used to go to cinema houses in droves. There were houseful shows. As a result of that, people would also have a good look at posters for Pakistani films and watched them."

Ehteshamuddin said, "We live in a global village. We get to see stuff being made in other countries. If we have Indian movies in our country footfall in cinemas will improve (cinema aabaad ho ga). Otherwise, the small number of theatres that we have, they might shut down. In that respect a policy could be made to see which films from across the border can be shown and which can't. The policy should also entail that Indian distributors can screen our films if they want to."

Seasoned actor Behroz Sabzwari expressed a similar opinion. He said, "The most important thing is we should give a free hand to our filmmakers. Reality-based films always work."



Afghanistan is not Taliban

The global community continues to punish the Taliban at the cost of the overall well-being of the Afghan population. To make this worse, Afghanistan's central bank reserves are frozen owing to a host of undue sanctions, and it is more than an arduous task to transfer money into and out of the country. The people living aboard say the global community imposes no such sanctions to invest in Afghanistan, but in actual fact, it's much more problematic than that. The Taliban are not ready to move on things like girls' education, women's rights, gender inclusivity, etc. The country's population growth is 3 percent per annum and will be 100 million by 2060, and there is a need to make sure its populations don't starve to death because of no access to food. Since the country is still struggling with poverty, opium production, unemployment, terrorism, and human rights abuse, it is incumbent upon the global community to expedite its relief measures and remove sanctions imposed on a war-torn country. After all, Afghanistan is not Taliban.

Abdul Ghani,
Kabul, Afghanistan.

Welcome to Booming Bhutan



Bhutan's tourism sector is booming, thanks to the exemplary leadership of the current Bhutanese regime. Bhutan is the world's only nation that has long prioritized good governance and a balanced yet happy life over financial gain, setting the example for the rest of the world to follow. To achieve happy living and revive its struggling economy, the tiny Himalayan country has embraced cost-conscious travelers, who are more independent yet willing to pursue natural beauty in a tension-free climate. Bhutan is seeing increasing foreign currency reserves and high levels of youth employment, which are significant levers to pull in the country's economic and financial sectors.

T.F. Zelfa,
Thimphu, Bhutan.

On the Path of Economic Recovery

In last year's presidential elections, Dr. Mohamed Muizzu's victory altered the Maldives, political landscape following the massive defeat of the MDP party's former president, Ibrahim Mohamed Salih. Dr. Mohamed Muizzu campaigned based on compelling pledges and issues throughout its presidential campaign. However, in economic recovery, the Maldives' government must secure foreign support to promote foreign direct investment in the archipelago. The most recent of these efforts was the second Maldives Investment Forum in Dubai, the UAE, following the Invest Maldives Forum at the Fuzhou Strait International Convention and Exhibition Centre in Fuzhou, China. Regarding its principled approach to democratic, geopolitical, and liberal priorities, the incumbent government of the Maldives appears to be more conservative than its MDP predecessor. Overall, the Maldives is well on the path of economic recovery, and the rhetoric of Muizzu's government seemingly pursues a nationalistic agenda while accompanying democratic and liberal values.

S. Ahmed Kilbani,
Malé, the Maldives.



Long Way to Go



Having lived through over four centuries of subjugation and colonization, Sri Lanka happens to be the world's only nation that has also experienced over three decades of civil war across the island and a slew of terrorist attacks incited by unruly linguistic, religious, and ethnic factors. To make things worse, a severe economic crisis erupted in 2022, which was primarily caused by poor governance and maladministration by a dynasty-like family-led regime. Although the financial crisis is almost over, and Sri Lanka is back on track, the country has a long way to go to reclaim its lost glory in the international community.

Pramodha Weerasekera,
Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Off-Balance Analysis

This is about the book review of 'Tragedy and Defiance: The Lives and Poetry of Sylvia Plath, Forugh Farrokhzad, and Perveen Shakir' by Mahmood Ali Ayub. The writer Basit Ali reviewed the book. In my opinion, the book reviewer could not do justice to the book, as it was primarily written to pay tribute to the three leading women poets of their eras, and that's why the book 'Tragedy and Defiance: The Lives and Poetry of Sylvia Plath, Forugh Farrokhzad, and Perveen Shakir' was by itself a miscalculated commentary and miserably failed to discuss the three poets on merit. The book can be termed as a blatant attempt to eulogize the women because they are women while casting aspersions on men as, after all, they are men. This logic is totally nonsense. There is a marked difference between authorship and feminisation of literary history. The book is a big letdown and is an off-balance commentary about the three women poets and their literary contributions.

*Dr. Fayyaz Maqbool,
Karachi, Pakistan.*

Exporting Electricity

For the first time in the South Asian region, a tripartite agreement between Bangladesh, Nepal, and India has recently inaugurated a new phase for energy connectivity among the three countries. This happened in October this year when, under a 5-year deal, Nepal, through the Indian grid, began supplying electricity to Bangladesh. For this purpose, the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission of India permitted the export of electricity from Nepal to Bangladesh through Madhya Pradesh. For a tiny country like Nepal, this is the first time in its history that its energy is being exported to another nation. It's an outstanding achievement indeed, and it says a lot about the significance of cooperation and collaboration, which can reduce the region's several problems and burning issues provided all the countries are ready to cooperate with each other.

*Fareed Ahmed,
Dhaka, Bangladesh.*

Who Said That!



"The U.S. is "like a garbage can" for the rest of the world because of its border policies."

*Donald Trump,
President-elect of the United States*

"The country's economy can progress well when all the stakeholders meet their responsibilities. All sectors should pay taxes to play their role in the national progress."

*Shehbaz Sharif,
Prime Minister of Pakistan*



"India believes in the approaches of 'Back to Basics' and 'March to Future.'"

*Narendra Modi,
Indian Prime Minister*

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia renews its condemnation and categorical rejection of the collective genocide that Israel is committing against the Palestinians."

*Mohammed bin Salman,
Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia*



"Bangladesh and Pakistan should open a 'new page' in their relations to enhance cooperation in various aspects."

*Muhammad Yunus,
Chief Advisor to the Bangladesh Interim Government*

"The Maldives firmly adheres to the one-China policy, stands firmly with China, and firmly supports high-quality Belt and Road cooperation."

*Mohammed Muizzu,
Maldivian President*



"This is probably the last 10 years of my active working life."

*Aamir Khan,
Indian film actor*



Pot Calling the Kettle Black

No nation can beat India, an uncrowned champion in making propaganda, spreading disinformation, and speaking hogwash. The country has an agenda even in fields like sports. India, a country that tops the world's leading countries sponsoring terrorism not only in neighbouring nations but in far-flung countries like Australia and Canada, has once again proved its real side by not visiting Pakistan to play the International Cricket Council (ICC) Champions Trophy 2025. Simply the case of a pot calling the kettle black, an international terrorist like India deserves the trophy of un-sportsmanship, falsity, and deceit. Jai Hind!

Political Engineering at its Peak

Rumours are spreading in political circles that the powers that be are forming another political alliance in Pakistan to steer the course of governance and administration in the coming years. If this rumour stands true, then it will not be a major surprise for the people of the country, who have seen many similar incidents in the past, wherein the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) serves as the most befitting example of the latest yet costly experiment of political engineering. Now, wait and see what is coming from the establishment's hat.



Enjoy the Smog Season

Although Lahore is making headlines for its poor air quality index, the air quality is inadequate not only in Lahore but also in all the major urban areas across the country. The current Punjab government does not know how to reverse the rapidly deteriorating air quality situation, nor does the federal government headed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Heading to a blind spot, what lies ahead is another thick cloud of uncertainty about the future of the millions of people living in these cities engulfed by heavy smog. In such a calamity-like situation, some inevitable measures should have been taken on a war footing. It seems, however, that the current regime has some other priorities while the citizenry has been left at the mercy of its fate.

President NBP Highlights Path Forward for Pakistan's Financial Sector

In his recent session at The Future Summit, Rehmat Ali Hasnie, President of NBP, emphasized the crucial role of the financial sector in driving Pakistan's economic growth. He highlighted that the financial sector must be viewed as more than just basic banking access, as it forms the foundation for economic resilience and empowerment. He mentioned that integrating everyone into the economic fabric can ensure equitable participation for prosperity.

Despite initiatives like branchless banking improving account ownership rates, nearly half of Pakistan's population remains unbanked. Hasnie noted the need for targeted

interventions and tailored financial solutions to address these challenges.

Empowering citizens through financial inclusion or access to finance transforms them into active economic contributors, strengthening local economies and fueling sustainable growth. He also

emphasized the importance of digital technology, such as mobile banking and e-wallets, in revolutionizing financial access. Furthermore, sharing his view on the subject, he stated that NBP is

facilitating access to finance in the agriculture sector across Pakistan. He



called for collaborative partnerships between banks, government agencies, and fintech startups to scale innovative solutions and ensure a long-term impact. ❏

First Aramco-Branded Retail Station Launched in Pakistan

Aramco recently unveiled its first fuel retail station in Pakistan. It follows Aramco's acquisition of a 40% stake in Gas & Oil Pakistan (GO), a key player in Pakistan's downstream sector with a nationwide network of over 1,200 fuel retail stations.

Aramco is one of the world's leading integrated energy and chemicals companies, and its partnership with GO is expected to introduce high-quality fuels and an elevated consumer experience. Aramco-branded stations will offer the "ProForce" branded premium fuel, high-quality Valvoline lubricants, professional Express Care automotive services, and modern convenience stores designed to provide a seamless customer experience. Aramco plans to expand its retail network in Pakistan and establish a presence in this fast-growing economy.

Yasser M. Mufti, Executive Vice President of Products & Customers at Aramco, said: "This is another milestone in Aramco's downstream growth story, as we launch the first Aramco station in Pakistan — a market

with significant growth potential. Our values of excellence, innovation, and community partnerships sit at the heart of what we do and will act as our guide



as we leverage our extensive global refinery systems to ensure reliable supplies to customers while introducing our complementary world-class retail offerings."

Khalid Riaz, CEO GO echoed these sentiments, stating: "The first Aramco-branded station is a testament to our commitment to excellence and innovation. Together with Aramco we aim to elevate the retail fuel landscape in Pakistan, setting new benchmarks for quality, service, and customer satisfaction." ❏

Babar Azam becomes second highest run scorer in T20I

Pakistan's star batsman, Babar Azam, has ascended to second place in the all-time leading run-



scorer list for men's T20 Internationals, surpassing India's Virat Kohli.

Babar achieved the milestone during the third and final T20I against Australia at Bellerive Oval, scoring 41 runs. Despite his personal achievement, Australia secured a 3-0 series victory after defeating Pakistan in the final match.

With 4,192 T20I runs, Babar has surpassed Kohli, who has 4,188 runs. India's Rohit Sharma remains at the top with 4,231 runs. ❏

Seminar on “China at 75” Held at Chinese Consulate, Karachi

The Chinese Consulate in Karachi hosted a seminar titled “China at 75” on November 27, 2024, attended by dignitaries, professionals, and media representatives.

Key speakers included HE Mr. Yang



Yundong, Chinese Consul General; Dr. Junaid Ahmad, author of China Leads; Dr. Zhang Jiegen from Fudan University; Dr. Guo Xuetang from Shanghai University of International Business and Economics (via video

link); and Dr. Muhammad Ali Shaikh, former Vice Chancellor of SMIU.

The Consul General highlighted China’s remarkable progress, with an annual economic growth rate of 8.9% over 45 years, making it the world’s

largest industrial manufacturer and second-largest economy. Despite these achievements, he acknowledged

that China remains a developing country, with per capita income at 17% of the US. He emphasized China’s commitment to supporting developing nations.

Dr. Junaid Ahmad underscored



China’s peaceful rise and unwavering support for Pakistan. He urged closer alignment with China, praising its superiority in infrastructure and social development.

Chinese professors detailed the strategies behind China’s progress and its future goals.

Dr. Muhammad Ali Shaikh called for enhanced China-Pakistan collaboration in education, highlighting lessons Pakistan could learn from China’s technical and vocational programs and its near 100% enrollment in compulsory education. He emphasized strengthening ties through educational exchanges and people-to-people contact.

The seminar concluded with an interactive Q&A session. ❏

Mahira Khan’s Recent Statement About Firdous Jamal

Mahira Khan is the biggest star in the country and she has seen a lot in her career of around 2 decades now. She has done films, dramas and live shows and she has faced many controversies in these years. She has never replied in a vile manner and she has maintained her position as a neutral star.



Mahira Khan was a guest at a literary festival where she was asked questions in a rapid fire round and she shared her thoughts on big names like Imran Khan, Shahrukh Khan and Humayun Saeed. She was also questioned about Firdous Jamal. Firdous Jamal has been passing ageist comments about Mahira Khan for a few years now and Hum TV even banned the actor for it. He once again passed remarks on Mahira Khan and now Mahira has given her statement.

Mahira Khan said that she cannot comment on Firdous Jamal as she does not know him. She thought for a second and then said that she cannot pass a comment as she does not know him. ❏

Fawad Khan and Vaani Kapoor’s first film together

The first look of the film has also been released, generating excitement among fans.

The news was confirmed by an overseas entertainment publication, revealing that filming is taking place at various locations in and around London.

Director Aarti S. Bagdi noted, “The film explores the journey of two individuals who unintentionally help each other heal, with love blossoming as an unexpected consequence,” according to Variety.



Producers of Abir Gulaal expressed excitement for the project, stating, “Fawad has a massive global fan base, and we anticipate that audiences and his fans will wholeheartedly embrace this film, as it showcases him in his most endearing role yet. The chemistry between Fawad and Vaani is expected to light up the screen with their captivating performances and undeniable charm.”

Co-produced by Vivek B. Agrawal, Avantika Hari, and Rakesh Sippy, the production is set to continue in the UK throughout October and November, with a release expected by late 2025 or early 2026.

The cast is rumoured to include Malaika Arora and Ridhi Dogra, who are set to join the crew in the U.K. next month. ❏

FROM PAKISTAN TO THE WORLD

With USD 50 million export plans by 2030, Nestlé Pakistan backs govt's economic ambitions

Nestlé has expanded export footprint to 26 countries with USD 23 million in 2024 alone

Nestlé reaffirmed its commitment to government's vision for Pakistan's economic growth by unveiling its USD 50 million packaged food exports vision till 2030.

The announcement came at a ceremony 'Limitless Possibilities' that showcased the company's exports journey over the last few years, expanding to 26 countries and generating USD 23 million in 2024.

Talking about Nestlé's success, Federal Minister for Industries & Production Rana Tanveer Hussain said, "As Pakistan progresses towards economic growth and recovery, the importance of exports cannot be overstated. Given the scale of Nestlé's global operations, we

Addressing the gathering, Jason Avanceña, Chief Executive Officer, Nestlé Pakistan, said "As we celebrate 35 years of operations in Pakistan, we


exciting to see Nestlé playing an important role in the country's economic plans.

Nestlé Pakistan has gone beyond transactional exports by generating demand for its brands through digital communications and robust trade activations. The company's high-quality brands enjoy extraordinary on-shelf presence, ensuring their visibility and appeal to consumers in markets like Afghanistan, USA, UK, UAE, Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, China, France, Germany, Ghana,



Hong Kong, Ireland, Libya, Maldives, Qatar, Reunion, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Tanzania, Turkey, Japan, Mauritius.

Earlier, having completed 35 years of operations in Pakistan, Nestlé committed investment of PKR 2 billion in renewable energy last year, launching multiple solar power plants and biomass boilers at its manufacturing sites in Pakistan. Nestlé Pakistan has also further strengthened its localization journey, moving to over 90% of raw and packaging requirements locally by sourcing 420 million liters of milk, over 7,500 metric tons of wheat and rice and 50,000 tons of local fruits, enhancing local farmers' livelihoods.

Nestlé Pakistan with its four manufacturing sites across the country and a wide range of foods and beverages, are helping bring tasty and balanced diets for millions of Pakistanis. The company served 2 billion fortified servings of value-added nutritious products last year alone across all occasions and life stages. 

are committed to be a force for good throughout our value chain for the future of the country by boosting exports and earning foreign revenues for the country."

"We have also made significant strides in expanding beyond ethnic channels to mainstream channels, securing partnerships with mega chains such as Costco in the US, Sobeys in Canada, and Sainsbury's in the UK. Looking towards the future, Nestlé Pakistan has set ambitious goals for 2030. Our vision is to further expand

our global reach, and to achieve this, streamlined regulatory processes, fair trade agreements, and export incentives are crucial to support our growth," he added.

Claudia Thomas, Chargé d'affaires, Embassy of Switzerland in Pakistan also congratulated Nestlé Pakistan on the achievement and said it was



anticipate that exports from Pakistan will scale up further in the next few years."

"Nestlé Pakistan's vision for export growth, directly contributes to the government's efforts to shore foreign reserves and their success is a testament to the resilience of private sector which is integral to the country's economic prosperity," he added.

**‘Strong women are
abused too’:**

Mawra Hocane

Jafaa sparking a conversation about domestic violence. The actor said her role as a domestic abuse survivor resonated with women in her circle and the entertainment industry.



Mawra Hocane revealed that people she’s known, as well as people from the entertainment industry, reached out to her after she played Dr Zara, a survivor of domestic abuse, in her latest drama Jafaa.

In a recent appearance podcast the actor said powerful women, who people assumed no one could talk back to, disclosed that they had faced domestic abuse, both physical and emotional, at the hands of their spouses.

“It was important to show that, being a doctor and being financially stable may aid in your recovery process and your quality of life is affected, but it’s not like strong, sufficient women aren’t abused or that they can’t be like Dr Zara.”

Hocane continued that the women who shared their stories with her believed she could feel their pain and that the show was relatable, which was a “very big achievement” for her.

“The writer, director, makers and I agreed that the first time there is physical abuse there has to be a reaction



Cover Story



because you cannot brush physical abuse under the carpet [...] it's always grave, even a touch, even a slap," she said about the first instance of abuse Dr Zara faced which led her to temporarily leave her husband, Hasan (played by Mohib Mirza).

The host questioned if a reaction was necessary even if the instance of abuse was unintentional, to which Hocane responded in the affirmative.

"You never unintentionally hit your boss or your parents. Why is it that you're unintentionally — which is advocated a lot in our communities — hitting your wife? Because somewhere in your mind you think you can, and they should be told you can't."

Commenting on the toll the performance took on her, the actor said it was very painful for her to even momentarily imagine herself in a situation where she was rendered completely powerless.

She added that during some shoots, she would want to add a more intense reaction to the portrayed abuse, however, director Danish Nawaz explained that Dr Zara's story was one of every household.

"We would get feedback that 'if Hasan is like this, why doesn't Dr Zara leave him?'

Because the women who reached out to me haven't left their husbands. Because it's very painful for women to leave, and I'm sure it's also painful for men to have their homes broken, but in this situation, I'm speaking of when men are abusive.

"It's very hard for women to walk away and I think it was important to understand that difficult."

She maintained that leaving one's spouse was a gradual process, and although the makers could've shown her leaving at the first instance of abuse and given the message of walking away at the first incident, the feat was easier said than done.

"We see so many cases all around us and after playing Dr Zara I realised even more, with the amount of women who reached out to me, that this is happening in every household."

Hocane detailed that one of her childhood friends opened up to her only after her role in Jafaa because she felt the actor understood her narrative better.

"It's very hard for women to open up about this and to shame their husbands in front of their friends. And they haven't left their husbands, which makes it harder for them to insult the person they live with and have a child with."

She maintained that actors and show-makers work on such projects to remove the shame from these issues, to help people open up to their parents and friends, and to leave the situation when they can.

Hocane maintained that she agreed to work in Jafaa because of the show's message, and because the people watching her — especially younger girls — were influenced by not just who she was but also by her characters.

"I realised my responsibility." ❏



KABHI MAIN, KABHI TUM

GENDER POLITICS

By Maleeha Faisal Siddiqui

An exceptional watch from the word go, the TV serial 'Kabhi Main, Kabhi Tum' successfully proved how an ordinary story could captivate audiences if told in novel ways. The narrative, though familiar, became a fan favourite due to its nuanced storytelling, compelling performances, and impeccable production.

The cinematography and attention to detail contributed to the show's massive fan following. Every frame was a visual delight, from the vibrant cityscapes to intimate close-ups that captured the subtlest emotions. The directors and production team deserve immense credit for creating a world that felt both familiar and aspirational, drawing viewers into the lives of its characters.

Kabhi Main, Kabhi Tum has all the tropes production houses love to sell us—marriage of convenience, rich brother vs. poor brother, rags-to-riches storylines—yet it manages to stand apart. Despite the reliance on these classic setups, the story itself does an excellent job of holding out its while also pleasing the audience. The TV serial took familiar elements and breathed new life into them through engaging execution and character-driven storytelling.

Fahad Mustafa as Mustafa was a standout in the show. Playing a mediocre, unambitious boy-next-door, Mustafa's portrayal struck a chord with viewers. He easily slipped into the character, making it a treat to watch his journey of self-discovery and personal growth. Mustafa's relatability and understated charm grounded the story, ensuring the audience remained invested in his struggles and triumphs.

Equally remarkable was Naeema Butt's performance as Rubab. Rich,

spoilt, and entitled, Rubab could have easily been a one-dimensional character. However, Butt's intelligent acting brought depth to Rubab, making her endearing despite her flaws. Her transformation throughout the series was believable and heartwarming, demonstrating the




importance of nuanced character development in drama writing.

Hania Amir's portrayal of Sharjeena did not fall far behind Mustafa and Rubab, offering a refreshing take on gender politics rarely seen in Pakistani TV shows. Sharjeena embodied urban, upper-middle-class sensibilities, portrayed with great care and authenticity. Academically gifted, professionally successful, and loved by her parents, Sharjeena possessed more agency than the average female lead in contemporary TV serials. Her well-equipped, informed character was a breath of fresh air, showcasing a progressive and empowering perspective on women's roles in society. For this scribe, Sharjeena's character was the

real highlight of Kabhi Main, Kabhi Tum, challenging stereotypes and redefining expectations.

Adding further complexity to the story was Emmad Irfani as Adeel, the quintessential anti-hero. Well-dressed, handsome, and rich, Adeel had all the makings of someone who should command admiration. Yet, his morally flawed nature made him one of the most unsettling characters of the series. Irfani's portrayal forced viewers to question their own moral compass. How often do charm and good looks buy social impunity, even when someone's actions are far from defensible? Adeel's character demonstrated how appearances can manipulate perceptions, providing a subtle but powerful commentary on societal biases.

The story's ability to balance its layered characters with universally appealing tropes was key to its success. Kabhi Main and Kabhi Tum resonated on multiple levels, whether it was the emotional family dynamics, the realistic portrayal of relationships, or the underlying commentary on class and ambition. By blending convention with thoughtful execution, the serial felt fresh without abandoning its roots in traditional storytelling.

In conclusion, 'Kabhi Main, Kabhi Tum' delivered on all fronts: strong performances, thoughtful storytelling, and high production values. Its well-rounded characters and meaningful narrative stand as a testament to the potential of Pakistani drama productions to move beyond clichés and offer something truly impactful. By questioning societal norms, exploring gender politics, and presenting morally complex characters, it leaves a lasting impression that will undoubtedly remain etched in the minds of its viewers for years to come. 

IT ENDS WITH US

UNIVERSALLY RELEVANT

By Syed Zain Akhter

It Ends With Us, the much-anticipated 2024 adaptation of Colleen Hoover's bestselling novel, is a heartfelt and deeply emotional cinematic journey that captures the essence of its source material while delivering a fresh, evocative perspective. Directed by Justin Baldoni, the film gracefully tackles complex themes of love, resilience, and the struggle to break cycles of pain, making it a standout romantic drama that will linger in viewers' minds long after the credits roll.

One of the film's most striking achievements is its perfectly cast leads, who bring Hoover's beloved characters to life with authenticity and depth. As Lily Bloom, Blake Lively delivers a powerhouse performance, portraying the nuances of a woman torn between love and self-preservation. Lily is strong, vulnerable, and achingly relatable, ensuring the audience feels every moment of her joy, heartbreak, and triumph.

Opposite her, Justin Baldoni directs and stars as Ryle Kincaid, capturing the charm and complexity of a character whose flaws are central to the story's conflict. Baldoni's portrayal is layered, making Ryle's struggle with his demons both unsettling and deeply human. Brandon Sklenar, as Atlas Corrigan, rounds out the central trio, exuding warmth and reliability that perfectly contrasts Ryle's intensity. The chemistry among the cast is palpable, grounding the film in an emotional realism that enhances its impact.

The screenplay, written by Christy Hall, strikes an impressive balance. While staying true to the book's core

narrative, the film introduces subtle changes that enhance its cinematic appeal without alienating fans of the original. Key scenes are brought to life with stunning attention to detail, including the emotional flashbacks



of Lily and Atlas's youth, which are beautifully interwoven into the present-day narrative.

The story's pacing is well-calibrated, moving fluidly between moments of lighthearted romance and intense drama. Baldoni's direction ensures that even the heaviest scenes are handled carefully, allowing the emotional weight to resonate without veering into melodrama.

The film's visuals are nothing short of breathtaking. Shot against the picturesque backdrop of Boston, Barry Peterson's cinematography captures both the charm of Lily's floral shop and the emotional turbulence of her personal life. The use of color and light mirrors Lily's emotional journey, with soft pastels

representing moments of hope and darker tones reflecting her inner turmoil.

Complementing the visuals is a poignant musical score by composer Rob Simonsen and Duncan

Blickenstaff, whose melodies underscore the film's emotional beats with grace and subtlety. The soundtrack, featuring original songs and carefully chosen tracks, adds another layer of depth, ensuring that every scene resonates visually and aurally.

At its heart, *It Ends With Us* is a story about breaking cycles of abuse and finding the courage to choose oneself. The film does not shy away from the difficult conversations surrounding domestic violence, but it handles them with an unflinching yet sensitive approach.

The film is a faithful adaptation that brings beloved characters and moments to life in vivid detail. For newcomers, the film is an emotional introduction to a universally relevant story.

Justin Baldoni's direction, combined with stellar performances, a compelling screenplay, and exquisite production design, makes the film a cinematic triumph. It is a deeply moving film that will leave audiences reflecting on its themes long after leaving the theater.

It Ends With Us is not just a film; it's an experience. With its heartfelt performances, stunning visuals, and sensitive handling of complex themes, it's a must-watch for fans of romantic dramas and anyone seeking a film that speaks to the resilience of the human spirit. This is storytelling at its finest, a true testament to the power of love, healing, and the strength to end with hope. **S**



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