

# Slogan



Afghanistan	Afg 150
Australia	A\$ 6
Bangladesh	Taka 100
Bhutan	NU 50
Brazil	BRL 20
Canada	C\$ 6
China	RMB 30
France	EUR 45
Hong Kong	HKS 30
India	Rs. 100
Japan	¥ 500
Korea	Won 3000
Malaysia	RM 6
Maldives	Rf 45
Myanmar	MMK 10
Nepal	NepRs. 75
New Zealand	NZ\$ 7
Pakistan	Rs. 250
Philippines	P 75
Saudi Arabia	SR 15
Singapore	S\$ 8
Sri Lanka	Rs. 100
Thailand	B 100
Türkiye	Lira 2
UAE	AED 10
UK	£ 3
USA	\$ 5

## The Oscars 2026

took place amid controversies  
and conspiracy theories



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# Pakistan in the global spotlight

At the ringing shores of Sharm el Sheikh last week, a moment unfolded that signalled a dramatic shift in Pakistan’s global standing. US President Donald Trump paused his own address at the Gaza Peace Summit and handed the microphone to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, inviting him to say a few words. Remember, Shehbaz was the only leader among the 20 gathered in Egypt who Trump asked to speak. Shehbaz responded with lavish praise, calling Trump “a man of peace” and nominating him for the Nobel Peace Prize, thus placing Pakistan at the heart of a critical diplomatic moment in the Middle East.

The optics were unmistakable. Where once Pakistan struggled to get a hearing on the global stage, it now had one of the world’s most powerful men not only acknowledging it, but essentially elevating it. Analysts in Washington believe Trump’s willingness to bring Pakistan into his inner diplomatic circle may reflect a broader shift in the US foreign-policy priorities under Republican influence who values bilateral ties and unconventional alliances over multilateral frameworks.

Why has Pakistan found itself back in the limelight? Several converging factors help explain this resurgence.

First, the change in Washington’s diplomatic mindset. The inbound Republican era does not treat alliances in the classical sense, instead, relationships are transactional, strategic and personality-driven. In this scenario, Pakistan fits the bill. It is a country with military capability, nuclear status, regional complexity and the ability to broker or block access. Under the previous administration, Pakistan often felt sidelined, now, it is back in the conversation.

Second, Pakistan’s operational successes have given it credibility. The capture of a top Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) militant involved in the Abbey Gate bombing helped Pakistan make early inroads in the White House.

Third, the India-Pakistan flare-up in May this year after the Pahalgam attack served as a backdrop that changed perceptions. Trump, who admires displays of strength, met Pakistan’s Chief of Army Staff Syed Asim Munir in June amid the Iran-Israel war. The meeting reportedly left a “deep impression” on Trump, contributing to the renewed warmth between the two.

Those developments have allowed Pakistan to punch above its weight in global diplomacy. Indian diplomats and experts often used to assert, “We are now in a different league; we don’t care about Pakistan. We belong to the G7.” Today, however, Pakistan has strategically forced India into uncomfortable positions. When India hypes the visit of the Afghan Taliban Foreign Minister as a major diplomatic win, it shows where its diplomacy ends up.

Still, all this fanfare is only half the story. The real test lies in how Pakistan translates this elevated strategic posture into tangible, sustainable economic gains. Will Pakistan leverage its moment in the sun into scaled foreign direct investment, favourable trade deals and stronger regional influence? Or will it rest on diplomatic applause, rhetorically praise the world’s loudest peace-broker and earn little in the process? The distinction matters: symbolic relevance is useful, but if it doesn’t produce some material upgrade in lives, jobs and investment, it may fade quickly. Lastly, Pakistan’s positioning with Trump presents both opportunity and risk. On one hand, being in the orbit of US presidential favour (especially of Trump’s type) opens doors, on the other, it ties Pakistan’s global relevance to personalities rather than robust institutional ties. Critics argue that reliance on charm diplomacy skirts the question of national dignity; some call it “psychofancy” while others see it as shrewd real-politik. In a crowded arena of great-power competition, you take any leverage you can get.

Islamabad must now back its diplomatic rise with hard economic deals, consistent policy follow-through and a willingness to engage across ideological aisles. Because in geopolitics, you don’t win by being seen, you win by being counted.



### Pakistan - Afghanistan War

Pakistan has repeatedly called on the Taliban government to act against terror groups operating from Afghan soil. However, Kabul's continued silence has pushed Pakistan to consider a military response. Since the Taliban returned to power in 2021, the TTP has increased its terrorist activities because it has found a safe haven in Afghan territory. Border disputes between Pakistan and Afghanistan peaked in 2024, with Pakistani forces closing the border and repatriating Afghan refugees. Pakistan's recent airstrikes in Afghanistan have targeted areas where TTP commanders are believed to be hiding. Now, the question is whether these strikes are merely military successes or part of a broader political strategy. Pakistan should focus on diplomacy alongside military actions. Afghanistan is not our enemy; it is our neighbor and fellow Muslim country. We should extend the hand of friendship, but it is also essential to challenge the Taliban's undemocratic rule.

*Prof. Razzaq Zikriya, Charsadda, Pakistan.*

### Fuel Price Hike

The rising tensions in the Middle East have once again put the global economy on the edge of uncertainty. When escalating crude oil prices affected Pakistan's fragile economy, the Pakistan government increased fuel prices all of a sudden, causing economic upheaval. However, this isn't just a price hike; it's a move that will burden millions of families. The government claims this increase was unavoidable due to rising global oil prices. While this explanation seems plausible on the surface, a deeper look reveals a harsh reality. The hike appears to be a deliberate strategy to sustain the ruling class's privileges while shifting the economic burden onto the poor. Currently, Pakistan faces a severe economic crisis. Inflation has eroded people's purchasing power, unemployment has devoured the youth, and the declining rupee has widened the gap between rich and poor. In such a crisis, the government should tighten spending, cut unnecessary expenses, and focus on easing the people's hardships. Instead, the rulers have prioritized their luxury and bureaucratic perks, worsening the plight of the common people.

*Bushra Minhas, Faisalabad, Pakistan.*



### World Peace at Risk

Given the current global situation, there is concern that the world is heading toward World War III. The US-Israel-Iran conflict, the Greater Israel project, and Pakistan's troubled relations with India and Afghanistan pose a threat to global peace. In this context, only effective international institutions, diplomatic solutions, and adherence to the rule of law can prevent the world from falling into another war. The unstable situation in the Middle East is increasing the region's danger. Ignoring the risk of a third world war would be the greatest negligence, because without intervention from major powers, the effects of any local war in the region can be felt worldwide. Only global leadership, the United Nations, and other international organizations can play a crucial role in protecting human lives and maintaining global peace during such times.

*Jamshed Ahmed, Peshawar, Pakistan.*



### Balen, the Winner!

Led by Balendra Shah, a 35-year-old former civil engineer, singer, and rap artist known as "Balen," the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) secured victory in 182 seats within Nepal's 275-member lower house. In February, the RSP issued a manifesto promising to generate 1.2 million jobs and to address forced migration, tackling unemployment and low wages that have compelled many Nepalis to seek opportunities abroad. The party also aspires to elevate Nepal's per capita income from \$1,447 to \$3,000 within five years, to double the national economy to \$100 billion, and to establish social safety nets such as healthcare insurance. It is hoped that Mr. Balendra Shah's ascent to the position of Nepal's new Prime Minister will assist in alleviating the country's profound socioeconomic challenges.

*Samanvita Keshav, Kathmandu, Nepal.*



## Who Said That!

### Long Live Iran

No one knows when the ongoing Iran-Israel war will end or what the outcome will be. The kind of estimates once made to overthrow the Iranian regime and establish a new system now seem to have failed. However, in this war, a simple way to measure the opponents' success is visible. If Tehran refuses to surrender and its resistance persists, then it will consider this a victory despite all the human and military losses. Conversely, the American and Israeli victory does not depend on how much destruction they cause inside Iran or how many civilian lives they destroy. Their measure of success is the removal of the regime or political system under the shadow of Iran's religious leadership. Since Iran's political system remains intact, no one can see any sign of it collapsing. The system, which is rooted in the country under the supervision of the Revolutionary Guards, has support from many segments of the public, from the lowest levels to the highest decision-makers, in industry and the economy. Though there are opponents of the system within Iran, when it comes to Iran's security and stability, all Iranians will stand with their country. No Iranian, regardless of their opposition to the regime, can see their country divided into separate pieces.

*Idrees Kazem,  
Tehran, Iran.*

### Red Line Dream

Creating modern public transportation in Karachi remains a distant goal. The Karachi Red Line BRT project is designed along the city's main artery, stretching approximately 26 kilometers from Malir Halt to Numaish to serve millions of commuters. However, the question arises: who bears the cost of this delayed project? Initially estimated at over Rs 78 billion, the project's cost has risen to Rs 103 billion, more than Rs 4 billion per kilometer. In a country where many lack basic civic amenities, with about 29% of the population living below the poverty line, roughly 70 million people are unable to meet their needs, and one in three Pakistanis is under the poverty line; this figure is staggering. Is such an expensive project truly necessary? The government has set a new deadline of 2026 to finish the Red Line project. However, it still doesn't appear that the project will be completed this year.

*Rashid Ali Khan,  
Karachi, Pakistan.*



*"To stabilise the economy, we have taken difficult decisions."  
Shehbaz Sharif,  
Pakistan's Prime Minister*



*"The entire world knows today that if you want to be part of the future, you must connect with and be in India."  
Narendra Modi,  
Prime Minister of India*



*"Some people try to create confusion with sweet words. We must remain alert against those who want to create instability in the country."  
Tarique Rahman,  
Bangladesh's Prime Minister*



*"Our system has only allowed for gradual reforms, normally two steps backwards and one step forward."  
Anura Kumara Dissanayake,  
Sri Lankan President*



*"The international community must go beyond words of condemnation and ensure that international law is applied impartially."  
Dr. Mohamed Muizzu,  
President of the Maldives*



*"We may hit it (Iran's Kharg Island) a few more times just for fun."  
Donald Trump,  
US President*



*"It has been the greatest honour of my life to represent Pakistan."  
Sarfaraz Ahmed,  
Pakistan's Former Cricketer*

## *Koi Sharm Hoti Hai, Koi Haya Hoti Hai!*

At the height of the Pakistan-Afghan war, the Iran-Israel conflict, and the ongoing Ukraine-Russia crisis, only a few notice the silent, undeclared war on the poor. For the world's fifth-most populous country, with 259.3 million people, nearly half of whom are now considered poor, the Rs. 55-per-liter increase in fuel prices was just another routine move for the ruling class. Clearly, public interest was once again shamelessly sacrificed to placate the oil mafia and meet FBR's formidable tax collection targets. And of course, those in power are enjoying their rule to the fullest, with no opposition or public backlash in sight. At this miserable time, when an ordinary person is struggling to get a proper meal a day, in stark contrast, a luxury vehicle worth Rs. 90 million is being bought for the Senate chairman from the Senate's budget, as well as the purchase of a luxury 19-seater aircraft costing Rs. 11.7 billion for Her Highness Punjab's CM tells a different story. In the name of life, the general people, by and large, are dragging their hand-to-mouth existence every day, while the ruling elite is busy making the most of state freebies as their birthright. One wonders if they really have a word called 'morality' in their dictionaries. ❏



## *Austerity For You, Luxury For Me!*

True leadership demands leading by example, not by exception. Pakistan government preaches austerity measures, including shorter workdays, school closures, fuel conservation, and the like. In marked contrast, VIP convoys roll on, government petrol flows freely, elite privileges remain untouched, and the prime minister, by himself, is always found to be on a foreign tour. Citizens endure inflation, power cuts, and rising costs with quiet patience. But patience has limits. If sacrifice is truly national, it must begin at the top, not be reserved exclusively for the bottom. A government that demands belt-tightening from the poor while protecting the perks of the powerful is not practicing austerity but hypocrisy. ❏



## *After 25 years of Waiting... Still Waiting*

The term 'rebuilding' was repeatedly used by the Pakistan Cricket Board gurus following Pakistan's defeat in the 1999 Cricket World Cup final against Australia. After Pakistan's recent premature exit from the T20 World Cup in February, the notion of 'rebuilding' has reemerged with significant urgency. Given the frustration with an ongoing process that has persisted for over 25 years, we anticipate that this rebuilding effort will ultimately bear fruit. Best of luck, Pakistan cricket! ❏



# Pakistan's iconic brand HBL, unveils Refreshed Brand identity

**H**BL, one of Pakistan's most iconic brands, unveiled its refreshed brand identity, marking a defining moment in its evolution as Pakistan's premier financial services group.

For more than eight decades, HBL has shaped Pakistan's financial landscape and contributed meaningfully to the country's economic development. The refreshed identity honours this heritage while expressing clarity of purpose and confidence in the future.

The 'HBL' wordmark remains unchanged, preserving the trust and institutional equity built over generations. The addition of a distinctive design device, inspired by the calligraphic precision of the HBL mark, introduces a contemporary visual language that conveys clarity, movement and progress.

HBL's signature 'Turquoise' color continues to anchor the identity, complemented by 'Light Lemon Yellow' color to enhance vibrancy while remaining unmistakably HBL. Together,

these elements create a unified and cohesive visual system across the institution.

The refreshed identity will be implemented across branches, ATMs, digital platforms, mobile applications, websites and customer-facing environments over the coming months, ensuring consistency and recognisability at every touchpoint.

The Refreshed Brand identity will also be rolled out across HBL's subsidiaries, including HBL Microfinance Bank, HBL Asset Management, HBL Zarai Services Limited, HBL Currency Exchange, and HBL Bank UK.

The brand refresh is not a reinvention of HBL. It is a sharper expression of who it is today.



## Stranded Iranian sailors put Sri Lanka, India in diplomatic dilemma

**S**ri Lanka and India are providing sanctuary to 434 sailors from three Iranian naval vessels targeted or threatened by the United States, a diplomatic conundrum as the US-Israel attack on Iran and the

subsequent war spills into the Indian Ocean.

The ships had taken part in a naval exercise organised by India off the coast of Visakhapatnam when the US and Israel began bombing Iran.

For Sri Lanka and India, wary of a US response, the dilemma of what to do with the ships and crew has sent legal officials scouring conventions and the laws of the sea.

IRIS Dena, a frigate, was sunk with a torpedo fired by a US submarine, just outside Sri Lanka's territorial waters. Between 130 and 180 sailors were on board, and at least 84

were killed.

Sri Lanka rescued 32 survivors, many of whom have since been discharged from the hospital to be hosted at the Koggala air force base in the island's south.

IRIS Lavan, an amphibious landing ship, docked in India's southern port of Kochi. It had 183 sailors aboard, now hosted in naval facilities.

IRIS Bushehr, a supply vessel, entered Sri Lankan waters, carrying 219 crew members.

Among those, 15 remain onboard to assist Sri Lanka's navy, which has taken full control of the vessel. The total of Iranian sailors hosted by Sri Lanka is currently 251.



# Iran war puts Trump's Gaza disarmament plan on hold

Talks to advance President Donald Trump's plan to end the Gaza war have been on hold since last week, when the US and Israel jointly attacked Iran, sparking a broader Middle East war, three sources with direct knowledge of the negotiations said.

The pause threatens to stall implementation of Trump's flagship Middle East peace initiative, which he has cast as a major foreign policy objective. It comes less than a month after he secured billions of dollars in pledges for Gaza from Gulf Arab states — countries that are now facing Iranian attacks as the conflict widens.

Trump's Gaza plan has hinged in part on whether Hamas would lay down their arms in exchange for amnesty, a step intended to pave the way for reconstruction and further Israeli military with-drawals. White House mediators have been backchanneling between Israel and Hamas on the disarmament question.

Negotiations on this and other issues were paused when the Iran war began on Feb 28, the three sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive talks. The pause in disarmament talks has not been previously reported.

Zaha Hassan, of the Washington-



based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said countries, including the UAE and Qatar, which pledged funds for Trump's 'Board of Peace' mission, may be questioning if this is "really money well spent now that they are dodging rocket fire".

## Paltry growth in exports to EU

Pakistan's exports to European countries experienced a modest year-on-year growth of 1.32 per cent in the first seven months of 2025-26, mainly due to increased shipments to southern and eastern European nations.

Official data showed that, in absolute terms, export earnings from the European Union increased to \$5.436 billion in July-January, up from \$5.365bn during the same period last year, according to figures compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan.

In FY25, exports to the EU increased by 7.44pc to \$8.863bn, up from \$8.249bn in the preceding fiscal year. In FY24, exports declined by 3.12pc to \$8.240bn despite its GSP+ status, which allows duty-free entry into most European markets. Western Europe, which includes countries like Germany, the Netherlands, France, Italy, and Belgium, accounts for the largest share of Pakistan's exports to the EU. Exports to this region decreased marginally by 3.14pc to \$2.622bn in 7MFY26, from \$2.707bn in FY25.

There will be a greater challenge for exporters to retain market share

following the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, coupled with rising input costs in the country. Exports to northern Europe also slightly declined by 1.12pc to \$435.085m in 7MFY26, from \$439.998m in the same period last



year. However, there is a slight increase in exports to eastern and southern Europe.

Exports to southern Europe increased by 7.21pc to \$1.920bn in 7MFY26, up from \$1.791bn in the same period last year. Within this region, exports to Spain rose 8.93pc to \$933.85m in 7MFY26, from \$857.27m a year ago. Exports to Italy increased 5.02pc to \$698.33m in 7MFY26 compared to \$664.96m in the same period last

year. Exports to Greece recorded an 8.45pc decline to \$74.71m, down from \$81.61m in the previous year. However, exports to Eastern Europe increased by 7.59pc to \$459.293m in 7MFY26 from \$426.885m in the same period last year.

Before Brexit, Pakistan's major export destination was the United Kingdom. In the post-Brexit period, Pakistan's exports to the UK slightly decreased to \$1.272bn in 7MFY26 from \$1.273bn over the corresponding period last year, a decline of 0.07pc. In FY25, Pakistan's exports to the UK increased by 7.19pc to \$2.160bn from \$2.015bn in the preceding year. Pakistan's exports to western Europe slightly declined by 3.14pc to \$2.622bn in 7MFY26, from \$2.707bn last year.

Exports to Germany dipped 1.76pc to \$987.30m in 7MFY26 from \$1.005bn. Similarly, exports to the Netherlands, the second-largest market for Pakistani goods, fell by 1.82pc to \$866.05m in 7MFY26 from \$882.08m over the corresponding period last year. Exports to France fell by 2.89pc to \$320.21m in 7MFY26 from \$329.76m, followed by a 3.29pc decline to Belgium's \$332.77m against \$344.12m.

# New Nepal govt faces same old challenges

**N**epal's rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah is set to become the next prime minister after his centrist Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP) won a commanding majority in parliamentary elections.

His meteoric rise, propelled by anti-establishment sentiment and youth anger over corruption, marks one of the most dramatic shifts in Nepal's political landscape in decades. The high-stakes March 5 election came six months after deadly protests that toppled the government, in which 77 people were killed.



Just 35, Shah rose from mayor of the capital Kathmandu to defeat veteran four-time prime minister KP Sharma Oli in his own constituency. But the new government now faces the far harder

task of fixing the Himalayan nation's ailing economy.

Shah faces the difficult transition from disruptive political outsider to governing leader.

"A serious challenge for the RSP is implementing the promises it has made in its manifesto, given the country's limited resources, infrastructure, and policy capacity," political analyst Krishna Khanal said.

"Now the party cannot blame anyone, because it has a majority government. From the day it forms the government, it must go into action."

## SBP maintains policy rate at 10.5pc

**T**he State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) in March maintained its key policy rate at 10.5 per cent.

The announcement was posted on the central bank's X account. A detailed statement by the central bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) was issued late.

In its statement, the MPC said that while the incoming data was largely consistent with the macroeconomic projections shared after the January meeting, it was observed that the macroeconomic outlook had become "quite uncertain following the outbreak of the war in the Middle East".



It noted that the conflict had led to a sharp increase in global fuel prices as well as freight and insurance costs, while also affecting cross-border trade and travel.

"Given the evolving nature of events, the MPC observed that the intensity and duration of the conflict will both be important determinants of the impact on the domestic economy," the statement said.

The MPC also acknowledged the "important role of the prudent monetary and fiscal policies in increasing the economy's resilience to shocks". It noted that the country's macroeconomic fundamentals were better compared to the start of the Russia-Ukraine war in early 2022.

## Shipping lines increase war-risk surcharges

**P**akistani exporters are facing mounting cost pressures as new surcharges imposed by global shipping lines and air cargo handlers — triggered by the Middle East conflict — threaten to erode competitiveness, disrupt supply chains, and deepen external-sector risks.

Shipping giant Maersk has announced an increase in its Emergency Contingency Surcharge (ECS) for shipments from Pakistan and the wider subcontinent to West Africa, effective April 1.

Menzies RAS and Gerry's Dnata imposed Rs25-50 per kg "ad hoc charges" on export cargo, in addition to heavy war risk and emergency conflict charges by shipping lines.



A UAE-based airline has also announced supplementary freight charges of \$0.70 per kg on exports from Pakistan, effective March 19, 2026, citing changes in market conditions.

The outbreak of war in the Middle East has led to the imposition of war-risk and emergency conflict surcharges ranging from \$3,500 to \$4,000 per twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEU), depending on the shipping line.



# The Oscars 2026

## took place amid controversies and conspiracy theories

**H**ollywood's best and brightest have been honoured with the most coveted awards in the film industry, the Oscars.

*One Battle After Another* was named best picture at the 98th Oscars held in March. That film took home six Oscars in total. Paul Thomas Anderson also won the award for best directing and best adapted screenplay, marking his first-ever wins. Sean Penn, who wasn't at the ceremony, won best supporting actor for *One Battle After Another*, setting a record with his win. *One Battle* also landed an Oscar for best film editing for Andy Jurgensen.

This year, the Oscars added a new category, the first since best animated feature was introduced in 2002, recognizing best casting. Cassandra Kulukundis won the Oscar for *One Battle*.

Elsewhere, *Sinners* took home four Oscars. Michael B. Jordan was named



best actor, while Ryan Coogler won best original screenplay for his film, which also nabbed the award for best original score for Ludwig Goransson and best cinematography for Autumn Durald Arkapaw, who became the first woman to ever win the award. *One Battle* and *Sinners* powered Warner Bros. to a record night. Jessie Buckley was named best actress for *Hamnet*.

Amy Madigan won best supporting actress for her role in *Weapons*.

*KPop Demon Hunters* won the Oscar for best animated feature, while the film's "Golden" became the first K-pop song to ever win an Oscar, for best original song. *Frankenstein* scooped up a trio of wins, for costume design, for makeup and hairstyling, and for production design. In the live-action

## Cover Story



short category, there was a rare tie. Norway's *Sentimental Value* was named best international feature, and *Mr. Nobody Against Putin* won the Oscar for best documentary feature. Also this year, the Academy has decided to feature live performances of two nominated songs — "Golden" from *KPop Demon Hunters* and "I Lied to You" from *Sinners* — citing a desire to keep the show moving and end on time. (Read all about the 2026 Oscars.)

In addition, a star-studded lineup of presenters, including past winners, past nominees, and even past hosts, will take the stage Sunday. Among them are last year's acting winners, Mikey Madison, Adrien Brody, Kieran Culkin and Zoe Saldaña. Other presenters will include Will Arnett, Javier Bardem, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Anna Wintour, Anne Hathaway, Chase Ininiti, Paul Mescal, Demi Moore, Kumail Nanjiani, Gwyneth Paltrow, Nicole Kidman, Jimmy Kimmel, Delroy Lindo, Ewan McGregor, Wagner Moura, Pedro Pascal, Bill Pullman, Lewis Pullman, Channing Tatum, and Sigourney Weaver. Also, a special *Bridesmaids* reunion took place, including current Oscar nominee Rose Byrne, Ellie Kemper, Kristen Wiig, Maya Rudolph, and Melissa McCarthy. There was also a *Marvel* reunion with Robert Downey Jr. and Chris Evans.

The show also featured tributes to several stars who died within the past year, including Rob Reiner, Robert Redford, Diane Keaton, and Catherine O'Hara. The 98th edition of the awards, hosted by Conan O'Brien for the second year in a row, aired live on ABC and Hulu from the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. [S](#)



## THE COLOUR OF MY HEART

# Many Lives of Mohyeddin

By Beenish Mahmood

**T**he Colour of My Heart, directed by Umer Riaz, is an Urdu documentary with a runtime of 1 hour and 40 minutes. It was released in Pakistan on the 6th of February and isn't meant just for intellectual people. It is a reimagined and reworked version of his 2018 documentary *Some Lover to Some Beloved*.

The documentary is based on the life of Zia Mohyeddin, who was a venerated actor and a cultural icon. It portrays both his personal and professional lives in an effective and rousing manner.

As Zia Mohyeddin tries to resurrect the glamour of Urdu poetry and to pass it on to the coming generation, he touches upon the lives of significant Urdu poets such as Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ghalib, and Arfa Syeda Zehra. He also interviews Faiz's daughter, Saleema Hashmi, and Moneeza Hashmi, as well as his mentor, Daud Rahbar.

Zia explains the true essence of a ghazal. A Ghazal is not simply poetry, but it addresses the beloved, a beloved that is invisible. The documentary also delves deep into memory and nostalgia. It is about personal longing, history, and selections. Zia married thrice. He married Nahid Siddique, a classical dancer, Azra, and Sarwar.

When the wives were questioned about what Zia was like, each one had a different perspective. Nahid Siddique was afraid of his

anger, and Sarwar was tired of his perfectionism. Azra complained of his rigid punctuality. Zia was replete with idiosyncrasies. He was a difficult man to live with. As Sarwar says, even if his tea was a

attention. The film comes across as a celebration of Eastern culture.

Dr. Zehra, a human rights activist and educationist, acts as the narrator and binds together a recollection of Zia's life. The film is structured into chapters, and Dr. Zehra introduces each chapter to the spectator.

The chapter on Faiz Ahmed Faiz is perhaps the best part of the documentary. His poetry is deep and touches the very soul of the person. Aaj bazaar Mai Papa Jaulan Chalo is the most popular and profound ghazal he has penned. He wrote this after having been imprisoned for 4 years.

The Colour of My Heart is not the story of a hero or villain; it is the story of the common man, who rises from the depths of misery to the pinnacle of success.

Zia Mohyeddin was a rare Pakistani graduate of RADA, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in England. He performed in theatre in The Lawrence of Arabia and A Passage

to India. Thereafter, he retired to his homeland. He yearned for his country and its soil. His love for the Urdu language would always pull him towards home. And that is when he started the Zia Mohyeddin show, also called the poor man's David Frost Show, which put a halo of stardom on his head.

Zia recounts the haunting memories of the terrorist blasts in Pakistan. He shows Pakistan as a dangerous country where chaos ensues, and riots erupt, and cars burn. ❏



minute late, he would not drink it.

The documentary also focuses on how Lahore has transformed over time, with new developments in infrastructure changing the entire map of Lahore.

The documentary is well directed. The prowess of the film shows through the sounds and visuals selected to depict a particular scene in a gripping and heart-wrenching manner.

Despite the lack of a simple narrative, the film runs a poetic discourse, which grips the viewer's

JUJJI

# Slice of Rawalpindi Life

By Rimsha Kamran

With *Jujji*, Pakistani cinema stakes a compelling claim in the realm of gritty, character-driven thrillers.

Directed and co-produced by Habib Shahzad, written by Ahmad Umar Ayaz, and produced under the independent banner BHM Films in collaboration with Yügen Studios and Lollipop, *Jujji* is a taut, psychologically charged portrait of crime, conscience, and the high price of justice.

Released globally on streaming platforms like Amazon Prime Video and Verizon Fios in November 2025, and anticipated for wider distribution, including Pakistan, in early 2026, *Jujji* represents both a stylistic and thematic evolution in Pakistan's film landscape — away from broad entertainment and toward immersive, emotionally complex storytelling.

Set in the densely populated streets of Rawalpindi, *Jujji* begins with a seemingly isolated murder: a homeless shoe-shiner is found dead under mysterious circumstances. Assigned to the case are Mustafa Rizvi as Sub-Inspector Naveed and Anjum Habibi as Constable Arshad, partners whose professional integrity and personal vulnerabilities quickly become central to the unraveling investigation.

Their suspect is a methodical and chilling figure known only as *Jujji*, played by Muhammad Arslan, whose crimes — inspired by real-world events — display an unsettling precision. As Naveed and Arshad chase leads and sift through clues, the narrative shifts from procedural intrigue to a haunting psychological

journey. The officers find themselves navigating not only the killer's trail but their own questions of duty, morality, and redemption.

Unlike many crime thrillers that rely

in pursuit of the killer as he is in pursuit of his own sense of worth. Anjum Habibi's Constable Arshad serves as a grounded counterpoint, his calm pragmatism offsetting



on sensational spectacle, *Jujji* unfolds with measured restraint. Suspense is built not through flashy set pieces but through the accumulation of small, intense moments — an eerie silence in a dim alley, a suspicious glance in a crowded market, or the mounting frustration of a detective haunted by past failures. This grounded approach gives the film a feeling of grim authenticity.

Muhammad Arslan's portrayal of the killer is chillingly understated. Without resorting to exaggerated theatrics, he conveys a disturbing normalcy that becomes deeply unsettling — a technique that makes his presence linger long after the scene fades. Mustafa Rizvi, as SI Naveed, delivers one of the film's most compelling performances. He balances professional dedication with personal torment, embodying an investigator who is as much

Naveed's simmering determination. Supporting roles — from Mahnoor Nawab as Naveed's concerned wife to Arfa Nadeem as his daughter — add emotional texture that enriches the protagonist's internal conflicts. The ensemble cast brings a slice of everyday Rawalpindi life to the fore, making the city feel like a living, breathing character in the film's gritty tapestry.

*Jujji* is more than just a crime thriller — it's a study of moral ambiguity, a meditation on duty, and a rare cinematic experience that challenges its audience rather than placates them. Its deliberate pacing and introspective tone may not satisfy viewers craving conventional action, but for those who appreciate nuanced character work and atmospheric tension, *Jujji* stands as one of Pakistan's most compelling films of recent years. [✉](#)



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