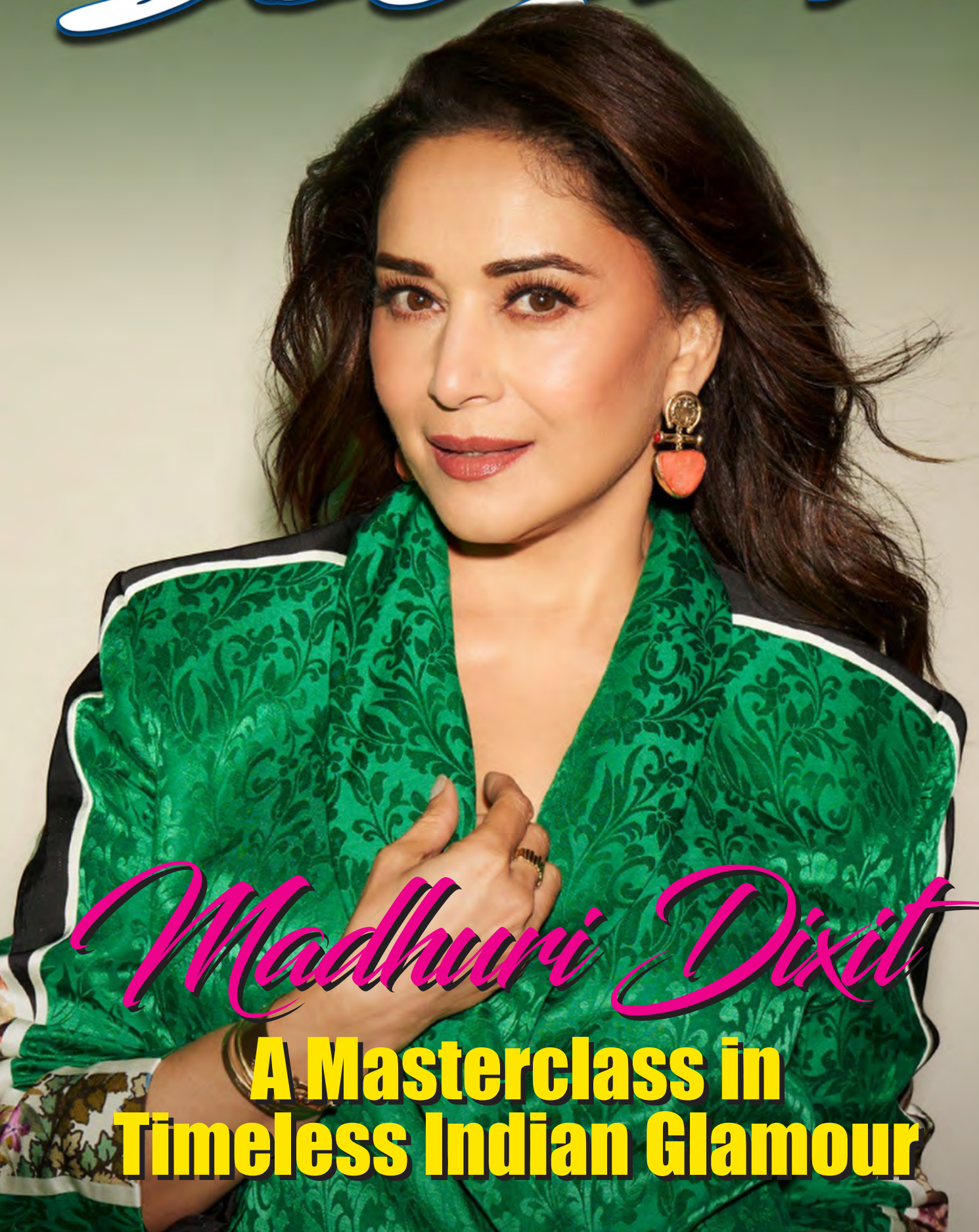


Slogan



Madhuri Dixit

**A Masterclass in
Timeless Indian Glamour**

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Cricket Diplomacy, Pakistan's Restraint, and a Shifting South Asian Order

In South Asia, cricket is often portrayed as a mere sport, yet its treatment by states reveals far deeper political instincts. Pakistan's approach to cricket diplomacy particularly with India has historically been marked by restraint, openness, and a willingness to separate people-to-people engagement from political disputes. Unfortunately, this maturity has not been reciprocated, and the consequences are now visible not only in Pakistan, India relations, but in the broader regional dynamics, including ties with Bangladesh.

Pakistan has repeatedly demonstrated that cricket can be a bridge rather than a battleground. Even amid heightened tensions, Islamabad has signaled readiness for sporting engagement, recognizing that isolation only hardens attitudes. Pakistan hosted international cricket again after years of sacrifice, rebuilt its sporting infrastructure, and welcomed teams with professionalism and security assurances. These efforts underscored Pakistan's belief that sport can restore trust where politics fails.

India, however, has increasingly instrumentalized cricket as an extension of its foreign policy. Bilateral series have been suspended unilaterally, not as a response to cricketing concerns, but as political messaging. This selective engagement—playing Pakistan only at multilateral tournaments while profiting commercially from shared rivalries—reveals a reluctance to normalize relations beyond optics. Cricket, in this framework, becomes a tool of pressure rather than peace.

The impact of this posture extends beyond Pakistan. Bangladesh, once a natural cricketing ally shaped by shared history and early Pakistani support for its cricket development, now finds itself navigating a more polarized regional environment. While Bangladesh has every sovereign right to shape its own diplomatic and sporting priorities, its growing alignment with India's cricketing ecosystem reflects the asymmetries of power in South Asian sport governance.

Yet it is worth recalling that Pakistan consistently supported Bangladesh cricket at formative stages offering competition, exposure, and legitimacy when Bangladesh was still fighting for recognition. Pakistan treated Bangladesh as a sporting equal long before it was commercially convenient. That spirit of regional inclusivity stands in contrast to the emerging bloc politics that risk fragmenting South Asian cricket into spheres of influence.

For Pakistan, the lesson is not bitterness, but clarity. Cricket diplomacy must serve national dignity, not sentimental nostalgia. Pakistan should continue engaging multilaterally, strengthening ties with countries that value sporting merit over political signaling, while remaining open, but not desperate for bilateral normalization. Respect cannot be demanded; it must be enforced through consistency and self-confidence.

At the same time, Bangladesh and the region at large would benefit from a more balanced approach. A South Asian cricketing order dominated by one political narrative diminishes the collective potential of the game. True regional growth requires inclusivity, fairness, and the decoupling of sport from coercive diplomacy.

Ultimately, Pakistan's strength lies in its principled stance: open to engagement, firm on sovereignty, and committed to cricket as a unifying force rather than a weapon. Cricket diplomacy will only succeed when all parties accept that rivalry need not erase respect, and that the game belongs to the people of South Asia, not to the politics of exclusion.



IMF's World Economic Outlook

In today's global economic scenario, the value of a currency is determined not only by the nominal exchange rate but also by the purchasing power parity (PPP). In Pakistan, the US dollar is worth about 280 PKR, while in India, it is limited to 89 Indian rupees. This difference apparently indicates the superiority of the Indian economy. However, in reality, the value of the Indian rupee should be even lower than that of Pakistan because the Indian economy is based on the old base year of 2011-12, and 850 million people are deprived of purchasing power. The IMF's World Economic Outlook report of October 2025 exposes this fraud, proving from authentic sources that the value of the rupee is being artificially kept low due to the manipulation. In marked contrast, the situation in Pakistan is more realistic. Experts believe these figures are "at best unreliable" and the recent growth of 8.2% is also questionable. Due to this old base year (base), India's GDP per capita PPP is shown as \$9,817, which is as of 2024, but in reality, it is 55% lower than the world average. The IMF report clearly states that India's national accounts system is of 'C' grade because it has not been updated for 20 years. The GDP is overestimated by ignoring new economic structures, such as digital transactions, changes in the informal sector, and inflation.

Sanjay Mandke, New Delhi, India.

Might Is Not Right!

After the U.S. invasion of Venezuela, the days ahead for the South American country are extremely difficult. Its institutions are being tested, its people are surrounded by fear and uncertainty, and its politics are at a point where every step is like a pen rising towards history. But perhaps an even greater test is for the international community: does it want to see law subordinate to force, or does it have the courage to bring force under the rule of law? This question will decide the political and moral future of the coming time. The recent forcible ousting of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro is not just a story of military victory or political defeat; it is also a story of the moral bitterness in which powerful states attack whenever they want, prosecute elsewhere, and then disguise this process as peace and stability. If this trend persists, sovereignty will become a symbolic term, and weak nations will need not a constitutional structure but the mood of a great power to guarantee their future.

Dr. Safdar Ali, Lahore, Pakistan.



Heads I Win, Tails You Lose!

This is with reference to the cover story 'Small Is Beautiful' that appeared in the January 2026 edition. The matter regarding the creation of more provinces in Pakistan was well discussed by the writers. The piece by Nikhat Sattar was excellent, but she should have been given more space to argue more extensively. The article by Dr Moonis Ahmar was also not lacking in ideas, and arguments were well delineated. However, the column penned by Ishtiaq Mekri manifested the system and populace in words; Paulo Coelho is the crux of the matter. However, I will sum up Mekhri's article in a quote, which is vulgar in Sindhi slang, that you might not be familiar with. It says, "Jahay bi Jahan Khan, faislo be karay Jahan Khan." In English, "Heads I win, tails you lose."

Aftab Qureshi, Karachi.



Ongoing Protests in Iran

Iran, once a regional power with Gulf oil wealth, is now in the throes of a severe economic crisis. The real reason for the protests is continuing economic hardship. Iran's recent protests began on December 28, 2025, in Tehran's Grand Bazaar, where shopkeepers went on strike. The Iranian currency's value has fallen to a million to the dollar, a record low. Inflation has reached up to 52 per cent to 60 per cent, coupled with severe electricity and gas shortages, and imported goods have also become scarce. Exacerbated by Western sanctions, the trade deficit, liquidity crisis, and foreign exchange shortages have been present for months. Protests, which began in December 2025, are not about social issues like the hijab, but about everyday inflation, the depreciation of the rial currency, and unemployment. The current Iranian regime must look at the overall picture critically and take immediate measures to come out of the stagnating crisis.

Abdul Rehman, Kabul, Afghanistan.



Who Said That!

Flawed Electoral System

Pakistan's electoral system does not reflect the majority will of the electorate, as it lacks mechanisms such as referendums or minimum voter turnout requirements. In modern democracies, countries such as Germany, Sweden, and Australia employ proportional representation systems, in which political parties receive seats in proportion to the percentage of votes they secure. France follows a two-round electoral system, where a second round is held if no candidate obtains 50 percent of the vote in the first round, and the leading candidate then competes to secure a majority. Ideally, only candidates who secure the support of at least 50 percent of registered voters in a constituency should be declared eligible; otherwise, a second round of voting or the formation of a coalition government should be required. While such reforms are constitutionally possible through amendments, they are resisted by the political elite, as they threaten entrenched interests. This situation contributes significantly to ongoing political instability.

Naeem Ahmed,
Gujranwala, Pakistan.

Dirty International Politics

More than a diplomatic move, Israel's recognition of Somaliland is part of a broader geopolitical engineering by breaking weak Muslim states from within and reshaping the Muslim geography in a way that maximizes the protection of Zionist interests on the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the sensitive routes of the Middle East. A vulnerable, war-torn state like Somalia seems to be forced to pay the highest price for this new international game, as the country's territorial integrity and a significant part of its coastal control are gradually slipping out of its hands. Israel's recognition of Somaliland depicts the fact that when the interests of world powers are at stake, principles such as international law, the UN Charter, and the sovereignty of states take a backseat, and pacts like the Abraham Accords become tools for unilaterally shifting the balance of power in the name of peace.

Iqbal Nafees,
Dhaka, Bangladesh.



"I want to tell the enemy today that if you threaten to hold our water, then keep this in mind that you cannot snatch even one drop from Pakistan."

Shehbaz Sharif,
Prime Minister of Pakistan



"India will never allow illegal immigrants to loot its people and the services that belong to the poor."

Narendra Modi,
Prime Minister of India



"Bangladesh's interim government has intensified efforts to revive SAARC, which has not held a summit in over a decade."

Muhammad Yunus,
Bangladesh's Chief Advisor



"History has shown that those countries attempting to interfere in other nations' affairs will only suffer the consequences."

Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund,
Afghan Prime Minister



"As an island nation, we in the Maldives know too well the fragility of existence in a rapidly changing world."

Dr. Mohamed Muizzu,
President of the Republic of Maldives



"Yeah, there is one thing. My own morality. My own mind. It's the only thing that can stop me."

Donald Trump,
U.S. President



"My heart goes out to everyone and anyone who is silently fighting within themselves."

Sanam Saeed,
Pakistani TV Actress

Double Standards

Spending extravagantly on marriage functions could be the norm for the filthy rich, but a sense of humanity must always prevail among the public representatives. However, the recent wedding of Junaid Safdar, son of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, turned out to be just another unapologetic parade of excess, characterised by glittering jewelry, custom-stitched bridal wear, and the most expensive finery beyond the wildest imaginations of the people of the country, where almost half of its population is reeling below the poverty line. Though the Chief Minister stole the show all alone, the ceremony was not merely a private indulgence for the obscenely wealthy, as such a flagrant fanfare was exhibited by those who masquerade as servants of the people and sermonize them about austerity measures, patience, and sacrifice. What message does such a shameless display send to those who have been



literally crushed under hyperinflation, unbearable taxes, rising unemployment, and ever-ending despair? When millions struggle to afford a single decent meal every day, the recent pageantry was reduced to a public insult, as well as a loud declaration of how distant power has grown from the people it claims to represent. ❏

Wonder Boy is Coming!

Just like in the past, there is, once again, a rumour in the town that the regime change in the capital is about to happen, possibly after the end of Holy Ramzan. As they say, a wonder boy is coming with a bang to replace the old faces who have yet again turned out to be consummate failures when it comes to good governance and economic uplift. Almost in every era, this question has been significant, whether the government has failed to deliver or is not being allowed to do so. As before, this question has gained momentum again. Some people are referring to changing the Prime Minister, while some pundits foresee a sea change in the entire governance system. Connecting the dots, political pundits are making predictions, while others are making explanations and justifications by making plus-minus



formulas. If the nation's memory serves it right, it has already seen the rise and fall of many a playboy and wonder boy before. If any of these boys turn out to be the wonder boy everyone is talking about, what else do we need to call the beloved country a wonderland, where every unforeseeable thing can happen for better or worse? Anyhow, just fasten your seatbelts, as the 'Wonder Boy' is coming! ❏

Wonder Boy is Coming!

In the public eye, Fawad Khan is one of Pakistan's biggest stars. From performing in super-hit dramas to making a name for himself with films in both India and Pakistan, everyone knows about his professional exploits. Behind the scenes, Fawad is a family man, happily married for 21 years. He celebrated his anniversary recently with his wife, Sadaf Fawad Khan, reliving the magic of Pakistani weddings with friends and family. In a series of pictures posted by the event's organisers, the couple can be seen sitting on a stage covered in orange marigolds with garlands around their necks. Fawad is dressed in all-black casuals, layered with a leather jacket, while Sadaf is wearing a plain, cinnamon-brown suit paired with a gorgeous green dupatta. One of the pictures shows the pair staring dreamily into each other's eyes, while another shows them with their son Ayaan, who is draped in a tasteful orange shawl. No desi wedding is complete without a joota chupai (shoe-hiding), and we have pictures of Fawad's

white sneaker and of the star himself taking out his wallet to pay the ransom for his footwear. ❏



Pakistan, Bangladesh step up military engagement

Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan, Chief of Air Staff, Bangladesh Air Force, called on Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF, at General Headquarters (GHQ), Rawalpindi, in January.

According to a press release issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), during the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional security dynamics, and avenues for enhancing bilateral defence and military cooperation were discussed. Both sides underscored the importance of strengthening professional collaboration, training exchanges, and defence ties between the Armed Forces of Pakistan and Bangladesh. The visiting dignitary lauded the professionalism of the Pakistan Armed Forces and appreciated their contributions towards regional peace and stability. The COAS & CDF reiterated Pakistan's commitment to fostering enduring defence relations

with Bangladesh.

The meeting concluded, reflecting the longstanding and strong bonds between the two brotherly countries. Also, Chief of Air Staff, Bangladesh Air Force, Air



Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan, called on Admiral Naveed Ashraf, NI, NI (M), T Bt, Chief of the Naval Staff, at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad. Upon arrival at Naval Headquarters, the

visiting dignitary was received by the Chief of the Naval Staff.

During the meeting, matters of mutual professional interest, evolving regional security paradigm, and avenues for further strengthening bilateral defence cooperation were discussed. Naval Chief highlighted Pakistan Navy's commitment to regional maritime peace and stability through its various initiatives. Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan acknowledged the high professional standards of the Pakistan Navy and expressed his desire to enhance collaboration between the two brotherly nations' armed forces. The dignitaries agreed on the importance of increasing the frequency of high-level exchanges and joint training exercises to foster greater synergy.

The visit of the Bangladesh Air Chief underscores the deepening defence ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh, following the significant visit of Admiral Naveed Ashraf to Dhaka in late 2025. ❏

Fitch affirms Pakistan's debt ratings

Fitch Ratings, one of the world's top three agencies, affirmed Pakistan's long-term debt ratings at 'B-' (B-negative), which it had upgraded in April last year, and assigned a Recovery Rating of 'RR4' following the removal of the ratings from Under Criteria Observation (UCO).

In a statement issued from its regional office in Hong Kong, the agency said the rating actions reflect the application of Fitch's new Sovereign Rating Criteria, effective September 2025, and the inclusion of recovery assumptions into sovereign debt ratings for the first time.

The recovery rating RR4 denotes 'average' recovery expectation from default in a scale of six categories, starting from RR1 for outstanding, RR2

for superior, RR3 for good, and RR4 for average. RR5 follows this for below average, and RR6 for poor.

The senior unsecured long-term debt ratings of Pakistan and The Pakistan Global Sukuk Programme Company



Ltd are equalised with Pakistan's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR), reflecting Fitch's expectation of average recovery

prospects in a default scenario, given Pakistan's high levels of general government debt and interest payments as a percentage of revenue, and the absence of any other clearly identifiable criteria factors that would cause us to notch the debt ratings up or down from the IDR.

On April 15, 2025, Fitch upgraded Pakistan's Long-Term Foreign-Currency IDR to 'B-' with a stable outlook, from 'CCC+'. In terms of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) key rating drivers for the Long-Term Foreign-Currency IDR and, in turn, the debt ratings, Pakistan has an ESG Relevance Score of '5' for political stability and rights and for the rule of law, institutional and regulatory quality, and control of corruption, as is the case for all sovereigns. ❏

Gul Plaza fire death toll rises, many still missing

On the night of 17 January 2026 at 10:15 pm, a major fire broke out at the Gul Plaza shopping centre on Muhammad Ali Jinnah Road in Karachi. The blaze spread rapidly through the multi-story commercial building, resulting in over 70 deaths, injuries, and extensive damage.

A committee formed by the Sindh government to investigate the circumstances that led to the devastating fire at the Gul Plaza shopping mall initiated its probe as the death toll reached 78 at the writing of this news release, but the final toll remains inclusive. The Sindh chief secretary had formed the body, comprising Karachi Commissioner Syed Hassan Naqvi and the Karachi additional inspector general, directing that a report be submitted within seven days.

Meanwhile, Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab said that based on the KMC's audit of various buildings, the SBCA had started to "take action." The SBCA letter attached to the post and addressed to the Abad chairman said that the KMC's fire department had conducted a fire safety audit and identified

owners/builders who had failed to meet safety requirements. On Monday, January 19, Mayor Murtaza Wahab said that the tally thus far showed that 65 people were missing.

A timeline of major blazes in Karachi

Below is a timeline of major fire incidents in Karachi in 2025-26.

- January 16, 2026: At least 20 containers were destroyed when a fire erupted at the Karachi International Container Terminal (KICT) at the Karachi Port Trust (KPT).
- December 22, 2025: A fire broke out at the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) in Landhi and was brought under control after several hours.
- December 4, 2025: The building of a

garment factory in the EPZ collapsed after a fire erupted there, injuring two firefighters.

- November 23, 2025: A fire that broke out in a freight train at Cantt Station destroyed dried fruits, solar inverters, and batteries inside the two bogies that were completely gutted. The same day, two people became unconscious due to smoke inhalation when a fire erupted in a high-rise building in the Soldier Bazaar area.
- November 2, 2025: No casualties were reported when a fire erupted near Munawar Chowrangji in Gulistan-e-Jauhar, although more than 300 huts were destroyed, along with motorcycles and sewing machines, while some goats were also killed.



- October 27, 2025: One person was killed in a fire outside Karachi University, which engulfed a nearby graveyard, damaged some graves, and destroyed around 10-20 huts (makeshift houses).
- October 15, 2025: Five people, including two children, suffered burns when a fire erupted in a candle factory in the Sher Shah area, while a falling structure injured one person. The fire destroyed the industrial unit, as well as two nearby warehouses and four residential properties.
- October 8, 2025: No casualties were reported after a fire erupted in a plastic factory in Liaquatabad.
- September 27, 2025: Two women

died of suffocation, and nine people were injured in a fire that erupted in a four-storey building in the Defence Housing Authority (DHA).

- September 9, 2025: At least four firemen and one cameraman of a private TV channel were injured when a fire destroyed a garment factory in New Karachi Industrial Area.
- August 21, 2025: Six people died, and 33 were injured when a fire broke out in a warehouse near Karachi's Taj Medical Complex on MA Jinnah Road.
- August 7, 2025: Eight people were injured in a massive factory fire at the EPZ that damaged three other factories.
- June 17, 2025: A massive fire that erupted in Millennium Mall, ostensibly due to an electrical short circuit, destroyed several hundred shops.
 - June 1, 2025: Eleven people were rescued, and no loss of life was reported when a fire broke out at the 12-storey Al-Rahim Tower on I.I. Chundrigar Road.
 - April 10, 2025: A massive fire erupted in a factory inside the EPZ. All raw material inside the factory, which was a plastic manufacturing industrial unit, was destroyed.
- March 10, 2025: A massive fire triggered by a cylinder explosion in an eatery in the afternoon destroyed 150 shops of a timber market on the Superhighway.
- February 15, 2025: Five members of the same family suffered critical burn wounds in an explosion caused by a leakage in a gas geyser in a four-storey house in Federal B Area's Block 2 near Al-Falah Masjid.
- February 12, 2025: An abandoned restaurant at Do Darya in DHA Phase 8 was engulfed in a massive fire, which spread rapidly due to the restaurant's wooden structure. ❌

Nestlé Announces USD 60 Million Additional Investment in Pakistan at WEF Business Roundtable

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chaired a high-level Business Roundtable on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos, bringing together Chief Executive Officers and senior leaders of leading global corporations to discuss Pakistan's reform trajectory, investment climate, and long-term growth potential.

The roundtable formed part of the Government of Pakistan's ongoing engagement with multinational investors to promote policy predictability, economic formalization, and sustainable, export-oriented growth.

A significant highlight of the discussion was the announcement by Mr. Remy Ejel, Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer for Asia, Oceania, and Africa at Nestlé, of an

additional investment of USD 60 million in Pakistan. Mr. Ejel stated that Nestlé will undertake a robust expansion of its



operations in the country, reaffirming its long-term commitment to Pakistan.

He further announced that Nestlé

intends to use Pakistan as a regional manufacturing and export hub, exporting products to 26 countries from Pakistan. Expressing strong confidence in Pakistan's economic outlook, Mr. Ejel foresaw robust growth in Nestlé's business in Pakistan in the coming years.

The announcement builds on Nestlé's recent engagement with the Finance Minister in Islamabad, where the company had outlined its strategy centered on localization, advanced manufacturing, sustainability, and agricultural transformation. Nestlé has made significant progress in technology-driven manufacturing, with highly automated facilities, expanded use of renewable energy, improved packaging solutions, and digitized supply chains, strengthening efficiency while reducing environmental impact. ❏

Ambreen Jan becomes the first woman to head PEMRA

Ambreen Jan has been selected as the new chairperson of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), becoming the first woman to head the electronic media regulator.

A former Grade-22 officer and a former federal secretary for information, Ambreen Jan brings decades of administrative and policy experience to the position. In addition to serving as secretary of information, she has held several key posts, including director general of Radio Pakistan and managing director of PTV. She also served as press counsellor in Dhaka, Bangladesh, during the period of strained bilateral relations from 2011 to 2018. A graduate of Kinnaird College in Lahore, she has been awarded the Sitara-i-Imtiaz by the government.



Ambreen Jan was among five shortlisted candidates considered for the post, along with retired Brigadier Anwar Ahmed, Mateen Haider, Irfan Ashraf, and Dr Hamid Khan. ❏

Pakistan-born named Disney's chief marketing and brand officer

The Walt Disney Company has announced the creation of a new enterprise-wide marketing and brand organisation and named Pakistan-born executive Asad Ayaz as its first chief marketing and brand officer, a role that will place him among the most senior leaders at the global entertainment giant.

Ayaz, who was born in Pakistan in 1978, spent part of his childhood in the Middle East when his father served as Pakistan's ambassador to Syria and Lebanon, before immigrating with his family to the United States as a teenager.

Disney said the new organisation is aimed at aligning marketing teams across its businesses more closely and strengthening how the company connects with consumers worldwide.

In his new role, Ayaz will lead marketing and brand strategy across Disney's studios, streaming platforms, theme parks, and consumer products.

Ayaz's appointment adds him to a small but growing list of senior executives of Pakistani origin holding top leadership positions at major US corporations. ❏





Madhuri Dixit

A Masterclass in Timeless Indian Glamour

Few figures in Indian cinema possess a sartorial legacy as enduring as Madhuri Dixit Nene's. Across decades—on screen, on stage, and in the public eye—her style has remained remarkably consistent in its philosophy: elegance over excess, tradition refined rather than reinvented, and an instinctive understanding of how craft, movement, and presence come together. Her appearance in an emerald green silk sari by Jayanti Reddy is yet another reminder that true glamour lies not in novelty, but in nuance.

The sari itself is a study in restraint and richness. Rendered in deep emerald silk, the fabric carries a quiet luminosity—one that glows rather than shines. Framing it is a wide zardozi border, worked densely in gold thread with a patience that speaks of heritage craftsmanship rather than seasonal trend. The embroidery traces the pallu in a continuous sweep before carrying forward along the hem, creating an unbroken visual rhythm that anchors the entire drape. There is no competing motif, no unnecessary interruption—just silk, gold, and the discipline of traditional handwork. Draped by Supriya Mohite, the sari falls long over one shoulder, allowing the zardozi border to remain consistently visible. The drape is deliberate, almost architectural,



brown lip grounds the look with understated depth. The skin is left luminous and even, reflecting Madhuri's long-standing beauty philosophy: let confidence and clarity do the talking. Hair by Sheetal F Khan is worn loose, styled into gentle waves that mirror the softness of the silk drape. There is no rigid styling here—only ease, polish, and a sense of quiet assurance. This approach to fashion is deeply in sync with Madhuri Dixit Nene's broader style journey. Over the years, whether in resplendent anarkalis on Dance Deewane, sculpted saris at international film festivals, or understated handlooms at cultural events, she has consistently championed Indian craftsmanship while adapting it to contemporary silhouettes. Designers often speak of her innate understanding of proportion and detail—an instinct that cannot be taught, only refined through time.

yet soft enough to respond to movement. This balance—between structure and fluidity—is something Madhuri Dixit has mastered both as a dancer and as a style icon. The sari does not wear her; it moves with her, echoing the grace that has defined her public persona since the late 1980s.

The blouse offers a compelling counterpoint. Fully embroidered to match the sari, it is tighter and more compact in its detailing, intensifying the visual texture. The deep neckline at the front introduces the only pause in an otherwise continuous surface of craftsmanship, while the open back—secured with a classic tie-up dori—adds a whisper of sensuality without breaking the traditional vocabulary. It is this controlled contrast that elevates the ensemble: opulence that never tips into

ornamentation for its own sake.

Styled by Disha C Punjabi, the look remains firmly rooted in Indian aesthetics. Jewellery choices are thoughtful and restrained, allowing the sari's embroidery to lead. Dangling jhumkas from Khurana Jewellery House bring movement near the face, catching light with every turn. A kundan bangle and a statement ring from Maya Sanghavi complete the ensemble, chosen not to overwhelm but to punctuate. The effect is cohesive rather than curated—a look that feels lived-in, not assembled.

Makeup by Ritika Turakhia leans into warmth and luminosity. Brown tones contour the eyes softly, enhancing rather than defining, while a reddish-

Fashion associate Manglien Gangte of Vogue India articulates the philosophy succinctly:

“Keep the ring but leave the wrists bare; the embroidery is already doing the heavy lifting. If you still want to, a couple of slinky gold bangles should just hit the right spot. Add an embroidered gold potli with tassels to introduce light movement to the look.”

It is advice that mirrors Madhuri's own approach—knowing when to stop. In an era where maximalism often blurs into noise, her emerald sari moment stands as a reminder that true luxury is measured, intentional, and deeply personal. In emerald silk and zardozi gold, Madhuri Dixit Nene does what she has always done best: she doesn't chase relevance, she defines it. ✶

PLURIBUS

A Virus Called Happiness

By Maleeha Faisal Siddiqui

Set in an apocalyptic world, *Pluribus*, an American post-apocalyptic science fiction television series, offers a welcome take on Darwinian evolution, imagining not just the collapse of society but the radical transformation that follows it. Rather than leaning on familiar post-apocalyptic tropes of scarcity, violence, and survivalism, the series dares to ask a more unsettling question: what happens when humanity doesn't conflict? The series explores the extremes of utopia, and somehow, the most miserable disdained woman is the only one immune to it. We see what she sees.

In this world, everyone knows everything about everyone. One mind. One faulty genotype can alter the course of the human race. This conceit becomes the show's philosophical backbone. Privacy, individuality, secrecy — all the things that once defined human complexity — dissolve into a collective consciousness that promises harmony but quietly courts catastrophe. The hive mind isn't presented as inherently evil; instead, it's disturbingly efficient, smooth, and eerily peaceful. Conflict no longer erupts outwardly, but it mutates inward, into questions of consent, autonomy, and genetic essentials.

In *Pluribus*, happiness isn't the free, blissful paradise one would hope. Instead, it is subservience to a cleverly positioned force. An extreme abundance of happiness

becomes a form of tyranny, flattening emotional nuance and erasing dissent. The series smartly challenges the idea that happiness, when engineered and enforced, is necessarily virtuous. What does it mean to suffer in a world that no longer allows sadness? And what happens to empathy when pain is treated as a defect to be corrected?

Rhea Seehorn is a treat to watch as the best-selling author Carol Surka, anchoring the show with a performance that is both razor-



sharp and deeply human. Seehorn excels at portraying contradiction: Carol is cynical yet compassionate, withdrawn yet piercingly observant. In a world where emotions have been streamlined into collective contentment, Carol's misery becomes a form of rebellion. Her grief, anger, and dissatisfaction - emotions once deemed as weaknesses - emerge as vital signals that something has gone terribly wrong. It is an incredibly refreshing angle to take where the makers explore the full spectrum of the human instinct and make a case for why and how even our supposed flaws are our biggest

strengths. Like anger, for instance. Often marketed as a setback, it is actually a defense mechanism - the part of us that protects us. But without anger and only happiness, no one wins.

Visually, *Pluribus* mirrors its themes. The world is clean, softly lit, and deceptively serene - an aesthetic that reinforces the unease. The absence of chaos becomes its own undoing. The direction favors lingering shots and deliberate pacing, encouraging

the viewer to sit with discomfort rather than escape it. While some episodes move slowly, the patience feels intentional, reflecting a society that has sacrificed urgency in favor of equilibrium.

Where *Pluribus* truly succeeds is in its refusal to offer easy answers. The hive mind is not simply a villain, nor is individualism presented as a cure-all. Instead, the show operates in moral gray zones, interrogating

the cost of evolution itself. Is suffering an evolutionary flaw - or is it the very thing that propels growth, creativity, and moral choice?

In an era oversaturated with apocalyptic narratives, *Pluribus* stands out by making its apocalypse quiet, consensual, and eerily benevolent. It's a show less concerned with the end of the world than with what humanity might willingly become after it. Thought-provoking, unsettling, and anchored by a formidable central performance, *Pluribus* doesn't just imagine the future - it questions whether we're already drifting towards it. ✂

PEOPLE WE MEET ON VACATION

Love That Feels Like Home

By Amna Ilyas

People We Meet on Vacation” is like the perfect summer film, slow and steady, which makes you feel like everything is going to be okay; it’s not just a love story but a blend of love, confusion, fun, thrill, realization, new experiences, and much more.

This is the story of how two opposites become each other’s home. Starring Emily Bader as the bright and energetic Poppy Wright and Tom Blyth as the quiet and buttoned-up Alex Nielsen, the film takes us through a 10-year summer journey that ultimately leads to the love that was always there.

Their journey began many years ago on a fun car ride. The first thing that tied them together was the same College and a giant, dirty burrito. After that, they agreed to travel together every summer, and the film takes us to amazing places. One of their first big adventures was hiking in Squamish, Canada.

It’s all about green forests and tranquil lakes, Poppy is a little confused and Alex is a little stiff, but they hit it off when they go hiking and sit by the water, and interact with strangers and had fun it’s one of those “simple” trips where you realize you don’t need a fancy hotel to have a good time, you just need each other and a tent.

Then there was a trip to New Orleans, which was really fun. They walked around the French Quarter, ate too many beignets at Café du Monde, and even lied about being newlyweds just to get something for free. They danced at the bar, where Poppy was impressed by her fake husband’s dancing skills. But the real heart of the film is what happens when things aren’t perfect, when, just

before their planned trip to Norway, Poppy falls ill and asks Alex to leave without her.

Of course, there are difficulties in any relationship, In Palm Springs, California, where Poppy and her current boyfriend invite Alex and his girlfriend Sarah, they both are in relationship with different person but somehow, they had unknown feelings

in a beautiful clifftop garden, the air conditioning in Poppy’s room is broken, it’s terribly hot, and everything seems dirty, but that’s when they finally stop running.

This is the most suspenseful part of the film, where Alex tells Poppy that he has broken off his engagement with Sarah. Poppy confesses her love, they have their romantic




for each other, feelings that no one is here to confess for in their words they are best friends but now the friendship is much more than being friend and they totally aware from that.

During Alex and Poppy’s “Tuscany” trip, tension arises between them, when they shared a romantic kiss “A conscious and unconscious release of the feelings they had been hiding—but they panicked and stopped before it became even more intense”, Terrified of ruining their friendship, they pulled apart, and after that trip, Alex ghosted Poppy for two years.

Later, things finally come to a head in Barcelona, Spain, where they reunite for Alex’s brother’s wedding

moment there, but somehow, she still can’t get rid of the habit of running away, and she leaves Alex there and moves back to New York. Back in the city, the silence is deafening. Poppy realizes that no matter where she flies or what she writes, the “dream life” is empty without the one person who truly knows her. She stops running and makes the most crucial decision of her life.

She goes back to Ohio. She finds Alex and tells him she’s done escaping. She chooses him, not just for the vacations, but for the everyday, the film ends with the beautiful realization that home is everywhere, even on vacation. 

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