

Slogan

Afghanistan	Afg. 150
Australia	A\$ 6
Bangladesh	Taka 100
Bhutan	NU 50
Brazil	BRIL 20
Canada	C\$ 6
China	RMB 30
France	EUR 45
Hong Kong	HK\$ 30
India	Rs. 100
Japan	¥ 500
Korea	Won 3000
Malaysia	RM 6
Maldives	Rf 45
Myanmar	MMK 10
Nepal	NrRs. 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
Turkiye	Lira 2
UAE	AED 10
UK	£ 3
USA	\$ 5



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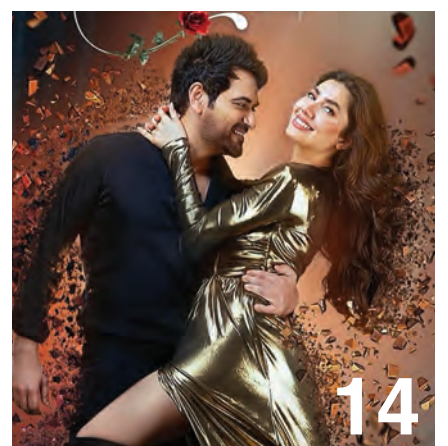
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July 2025

Vol. 30 No. 7

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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.*

Alone in the Spotlight: The Silent Ends of Ayesha Khan and Humaira Asghar

They once lit up screens with grace and talent, loved by millions. But their final moments were far removed from the admiration they once received. Ayesha Khan and Humaira Asghar, both former stars of the entertainment world, died alone in their homes—unnoticed, unclaimed, and heartbreakingly forgotten.

Both women had been living in isolation for years. Despite their fame, they were surrounded by silence in their final days. Their deaths have left behind not just grief, but difficult questions—about our society, our values, and our treatment of those we once celebrated.

Humaira Asghar's case was especially haunting. Her body was found a month after her death, unnoticed by neighbors, friends, or family. But what came next was even more painful. Police revealed that some family members—especially her father—refused to claim her body, a fact that stunned the entertainment industry. In response, fellow actors and the Sindh Culture Department stepped in, offering to arrange her funeral with dignity. Social media saw an outpouring of sorrow and frustration, with many reflecting on loneliness, estrangement, and the heavy cost women pay for choosing independence and ambition. Amid these heartfelt tributes, there was also the inevitable noise—empty sympathies and sensationalism.

Ayesha Khan's death echoed a similar solitude. Though the details remain private, it's clear she too spent her last moments without family or support. A woman who once held the public's attention passed away with no one to hold her hand or check in.

These tragedies go beyond the personal. They expose a society that applauds women when they entertain but isolates them when they step out of line or fall from public view. These women were not just actresses—they were daughters, sisters, and symbols of success. Yet, when their presence no longer served a public appetite, they were left behind—even by their own families.

What causes such abandonment? Is it the clash between tradition and ambition? Is it shame, misunderstanding, or just a failure to maintain human bonds? Whatever the reason, the result is the same: painful isolation that no one deserves.

There are hard lessons to take from this. For the industry: fame is fleeting, but dignity should be lasting. For families: no disagreement or lifestyle choice justifies total abandonment. For neighbors: silence is not neutrality—check in, reach out, care.

And for all of us: those in the spotlight are still human. They need connection, not just claps.

As we reflect on the lonely ends of Ayesha Khan and Humaira Asghar, we must do more than mourn. We must question why such stories keep repeating—and what role we play in them. Because no one, regardless of fame or failure, deserves to leave this world unnoticed and unloved.



Budget For the Rich

Pakistan's 2025–26 budget sharply favors the wealthy while squeezing the poor, salaried, and middle classes. Despite some income-tax relief for salaried workers, the government compensates with new and higher indirect levies—GST hikes, carbon taxes, elevated cash withdrawal fees, and increased bank interest and digital services taxes. Meanwhile, targeted salary and pension increases (7–10 %) fail to offset the rising cost of living. At the same time, subsidies and loopholes benefit the rich. The agricultural elite is lightly taxed, while large landowners and industries enjoy exemptions. A World Bank-PIDE study found that the top 20% capture over a third of utilities, education, and healthcare subsidies. At the same time, the poorest receive little. The real estate, energy, and retail sectors escape meaningful taxation, yet the government proudly extends them incentives, claiming “trickle-down” effects that never materialize. Critics denounce this as an “elitist, anti-people” budget, bleeding the poor to enrich the uber-wealthy. The budget shifts tax burdens downward while preserving perks upward, widening social inequality. It transfers the weight of fiscal austerity onto those least able to bear it, while shielding the privileged and subsidising the affluent, marking it a budget for the rich at the expense of the poor.

*Durdana Najam,
Karachi, Pakistan.*

Precise Post-War Analysis

This is with reference to the article titled ‘Shifting Equation’ by Faisal Siddiqui. Based on precise post-war analysis and rational assessment, the article is well-written and merits appreciation. The writer's approach to the fallout of the recent four-day war between Pakistan and India is realistic, shying away from glorifying warfare at the expense of the public good, while reminding Pakistan's adversaries of the emerging power calculus in Asia that now tilts in favour of the key alliance between Pakistan and China, and not the other way round.

*Ejaz Wasay,
Karachi, Pakistan*



Dwindling Political Career

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, once perceived as an unassailable political figure, has been severely undermined following the Pahalgam attack and its fallout. On April 22, the terrorist ambush in Pahalgam killed 26 tourists, exposing a staggering intelligence and security lapse. Reports confirm Modi's government privately admitted the valley had opened to tourists without informing security agencies, prompting harsh criticism from opposition figures like Rahul Gandhi and Asaduddin Owaisi. The crisis sparked a political firestorm: the Congress accused him of “missing” during the crisis for skipping an all-party meeting. At the same time, opposition voices questioned Modi's priorities and ethics, warning the tragedy was being exploited for election gains in Bihar. Analysts argue that the failed “Operation Sindhur” response fractured India's strategic narrative and highlighted the limitations of Modi's leadership. The cumulative effect: Modi's image as a decisive statesman has taken a hit. The post-Pahalgam fallout has eroded public trust and emboldened critics to call for leadership change—a watershed moment suggesting Modi's political career may be entering a vulnerable and uncertain phase.

*Kapil Sabnavis,
Mumbai, India.*



Maldivian Foreign Policy

Maldives' foreign policy under President Mohamed Muizzu has taken a significant turn, especially in its approach toward India. Breaking from the traditional “India First” stance, Muizzu's government has adopted a more assertive, nationalist line, departing from the close strategic and defense ties that defined past administrations. The government has also leaned towards strengthening relations with China and other regional players, signaling a more balanced or non-aligned foreign policy approach. However, economic realities, like tourism dependency and infrastructure support, continue to tether the Maldives to Indian trade and aid. Despite diplomatic tensions, both nations maintain people-to-people exchanges and maritime cooperation. The Muizzu administration walks a tightrope: asserting sovereignty and domestic political capital while avoiding a rupture with India. This evolving dynamic reflects a more independent, interest-driven Maldivian foreign policy in a multipolar regional context.

*Mbot Layaan,
Malé, Maldives.*



Sri Lankan Economy

Sri Lanka's economy has shown cautious progress since emerging from its 2022 financial crisis. Macroeconomic stability has been largely restored, fuel, medicine, and electricity shortages have ended, inflation has fallen into single digits, and growth reached roughly 5% in 2024. Key structural reforms, tax revenue mobilization, debt restructuring (including a \$25 billion deal), and utility tariff adjustments have secured IMF support and unlocked aid from the World Bank. However, growth remains modest (~2–4%), poverty persists above 22–25%, with real wages declining, and many households still struggle. The new government, led by the leftist National People's Power, balanced IMF-mandated austerity with limited social spending, scaling up welfare, health, education investments, and digital initiatives. Challenges continue: high poverty, low investor confidence, and the need to sustain reforms without reversing progress. The economy is on recovery footing, yet remains fragile and reliant on continued governance and fiscal discipline.

*Joseph Fernando,
Colombo, Sri Lanka.*

Happiness For All

Bhutan's unique development philosophy, Gross National Happiness (GNH), places holistic well-being above purely economic growth. GNH is rooted in Buddhist principles and emphasizes four pillars: sustainable development, environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and good governance. This approach has had a profoundly positive impact on Bhutanese society. Unlike GDP-centric models, GNH ensures people-centered policies align with long-term national well-being. As a result, Bhutan maintains high social cohesion, low crime rates, and a strong sense of national identity. Environmental protection is integral—over 70% of the country remains forested, and Bhutan is the world's only carbon-negative nation. Education and healthcare are free, and spiritual values are woven into governance. Internationally, GNH has earned Bhutan admiration for prioritizing human dignity and happiness in policymaking. While economic challenges persist, the GNH model has created a balanced, resilient society focused on collective well-being rather than material wealth alone.

*Dorji Palden,
Thimphu, Bhutan.*

Who Said That!



"Any attempt to stop, reduce, or divert the flow of water belonging to Pakistan under the Indus Waters Treaty would be responded to with full force and might."

Shehbaz Sharif,
Pakistan Prime Minister

"Pakistan will not get water from rivers over which India has rights."

Narendra Modi,
Indian Prime Minister



"Violence is our enemy. Please don't create more enemies."

Muhammad Yunus,
Chief Adviser of Bangladesh

"If the Middle East is unstable, the world will not be at peace."

Xi Jinping,
Chinese President



"We must ensure that this absolute power does not corrupt us absolutely."

Anura Kumara Dissanayake,
Sri Lanka President

"Democracy has no reverse gear."

KP Sharma Oli,
Nepal's Prime Minister



"Playing cricket for Pakistan was always the greatest reward in itself."

Sana Mir,
Pakistan's former cricketer

Where's the Political Leadership?

Facing growing perceptions of irrelevance and insignificance, one needs to find out the whereabouts of Pakistan's current political leadership, whether it exists in reality or is only found on paper. Not only is its failure to assert independent authority manifest on the global stage, but its lack of influence and assertiveness in key decision-making also contributes to Pakistan's diminishing clout as a democratic nation. The unelected institutions now dominate the country's power structure, while the civilian government, along with the erosion of its credibility, is turning out to be a stark reminder of the hybrid regime that calls the shots at the expense of constitutional violations. At a time when the United States, China, Gulf allies, and the IMF tend to get engaged more with non-elected officials than elected ones, why have a civilian government, which is wholly dependent on external actors for both political and financial direction? ❏



Nobel Prize or Oscars?

Nominating U.S. President Donald Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize as a genuine peacemaker is a move that calls for much introspection. What's more troubling is the criterion that makes the current U.S. president fit for the world's most prestigious award, accorded to organizations or individuals who have made outstanding contributions in their respective fields. Since Donald Trump has assumed the U.S. presidency, global peace is now more in tatters than ever. His transactional, 'me-centric' leadership approach makes him more of a CEO of a multinational business conglomerate than a responsible president of the world's most influential country. Considering his knee-jerk presidential hunches laced with White-supremacy-fueled fascism, he often looks like running a reality show in a bid to achieve high TRPs (Television Rating Points) rather than bringing peace to the world. Therefore, Donald Trump could be more suitable for the Oscars than a Nobel Prize for Peace. ❏



Fame at an Early Age

The murder of a teen TikTok star, Sana Yousaf, at the hands of another young TikTok user surprised many. However, the heinous act also raises a red flag for rapidly deteriorating social values. More than a case of masculine trespass, the point at issue is about parental negligence and overall social conduct that revels in glorying instant stardom earned by immature souls, who do so without doing anything meaningful or worthwhile. While it looks exciting to see younger people capturing the headlines, one needs to closely examine the mushroom growth of so-called social media celebrities who also manage to earn a sizeable amount of money with minimal effort, and later serve as role models for the rest of the young population. The vicious cycle goes on with more demerits than merits. ❏



Tribute paid to the artist Meher Afroz

Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi's Fine Art Committee organized a special tribute ceremony for the celebrated artist Meher Afroz and acknowledged her remarkable services to the art world.

Speaking on the occasion, Niilofur Farrukh expressed her gratitude to the Arts Council for recognizing an artist of international acclaim. Zohra Hussain highlighted Meher Afroz's deep knowledge of Urdu and Persian literature, which strongly influenced her

artwork.

Noorjehan Bilgrami recalled the early days of the Arts Council when it was a modest venue but rich in artistic culture, frequented by legends like Bashir Mirza and Sadequain. She also noted her 52-year-long association with Meher Afroz.

In her address, Meher Afroz reflected on her upbringing in Lucknow, where Muharram is observed profoundly. She spoke of the scholarly

and literary richness of the city and mentioned how legendary marsiya writers like Mir Anis brought valor to life through words. "Without role models, a nation becomes fragmented," she noted. "As we grow

older, we tend to lose our sense of self and forget who we truly are."

She shared a powerful message: "If you are not on the side of truth, it does not matter whether you are in a mosque or a Club — there is no difference." She emphasized that as human beings, our duty is not only to take but also to give. "Without ethics, a human is merely a statue. Integrity and principle are the true sources of happiness and contentment in life," she concluded. 



Pakistan, Turkiye reaffirm commitment to deepen ties

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar called on President of Turkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Istanbul during his visit to attend the 51st session of the OIC CFM. They discussed matters of bilateral and regional interest. He was accompanied by the Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir.

During the meeting, FM Dar underscored the profound importance that Pakistan accords to its enduring bilateral relations with Turkiye. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to deepening and diversifying the longstanding brotherly cooperation between the two countries.



The leaders expressed strong condemnation of the continued Israeli attacks in blatant violation of fundamental principles of international law, reiterated support for Iran's sovereignty, territorial integrity and its right to self-defense under the UN Charter, agreed

to continue diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the situation, and urged the international community to play its part in restoring peace and stability in the region. 

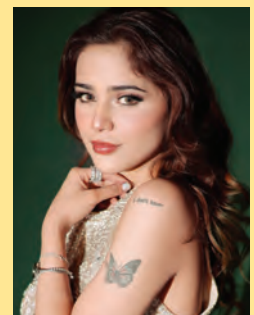
'Enough is enough': Aima Baig

Aima Baig condemned the harrowing murder of 17-year-old content creator Sana Yousaf, saying society had failed to raise boys into men who understood the sanctity of a woman's 'no'.

In a series of Instagram stories, Baig said she was haunted by Yousaf's story, calling her a "young, bright, innocent girl whose life was stolen from her in the most brutal, casual way imaginable."

The singer said she was grateful to see people speaking up and using their platforms to demand justice; however, she couldn't help but question: "How did we let this happen again?"

"Sana should be here today. Smiling. Celebrating. Dreaming. And the fact that she isn't is a tragedy we should never accept as normal. This is not just about justice. It's about transformation. Because enough is enough." 



US officials visit NAPA

A United States counselor staff delegation visited the National Academy of Performing Arts (Napa) on June 20, 2025.

The delegation, led by US Minister Counselor for Public Diplomacy Lisa Swenarski from the Embassy in Islamabad, included a Public Diplomacy Officer from their Karachi consulate, Michael Chadwick, Public Engagement Director Anthony Jones, and Program Management Coordinator (Experiential Learning) Ahsan Afzal.

The team met with Chairman Napa Syed Jawaid Iqbal and COO Sameeta Ahmed. They were briefed about the constitution and the academy's workings. They were also shown a short documentary on Napa.

On the occasion, Napa's Heads of Music and Theater Arts departments,



Hamza Jafri and Afreen Seher, briefed the guests on the workings of their respective departments. The visitors appreciated the programs run by the

academy. Ms Swenarski told the Napa management about the US Student Exchange Program. The visitors were presented with the Napa memento. **S**

HBL'S 'Agahi Program' Drives Agricultural Progress



HBL held the 'Agahi Program' for farmers in Pakpattan, Punjab. The event took place at the Dera of HBL Zarai. State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) also collaborated in the event.

Through this initiative, HBL provided farmers with Agri-finance options, advanced agronomy practices, and efficient farm management techniques. Since 2018, over 30,000 farmers have benefited from the program.

The Bank aims to promote sustainable farming practices and financial inclusion through this initiative, thereby contributing to Pakistan's economic growth. The Bank continues building a stronger, more resilient farming community and agricultural livelihoods. **S**

Nepal sets record for electric vehicle imports

Nepal imported a record-high number of four-wheel electric vehicles (EVs) during the first 11 months of the current 2024-25 fiscal year.

The department said the total number stood at 13,483 by mid-June, with as many as 10,194 from China, or nearly 76 percent of the total imports.



In contrast, the country imported 11,701 EVs in 2023-24.

Nepal has been encouraging EVs in recent years as it produces surplus hydropower, especially during the monsoon season. The country aims to increase the sales of EVs to 90 percent of all private passenger vehicles and 70 percent of all public passenger vehicles by 2030, including two-wheelers. **S**

Director WWF visits Sheikhupura manufacturing facility of Nestlé Pakistan

Muhammad Masood Raza, Director, Workers' Welfare Fund (WWF), recently visited the Sheikhupura manufacturing facility of Nestlé Pakistan. The visit aimed to review industrial operations and

During the visit, Mr. Masood Raza was provided with a comprehensive presentation on the factory's operational processes, safety standards, employee welfare measures, and the company's ongoing commitment to environmental

to international best practices in manufacturing and occupational health and safety. To commemorate the visit, a ceremonial tree plantation was held, symbolizing the shared commitment to sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

Mr. Masood Raza highlighted the critical role of industrial contributions to the Workers' Welfare Fund, which enables the Government to implement various welfare schemes to improve the living standards of workers and their families across the country. He appreciated the active participation of Nestlé Pakistan in fulfilling its statutory obligations and contributing to national welfare objectives. The management of Nestlé Pakistan acknowledged the continued efforts of the Workers' Welfare Fund in promoting the welfare of the labor force and assured their ongoing support and cooperation in future welfare initiatives..



strengthen collaboration between the Workers' Welfare Fund and the contributing industrial establishments.

and social responsibility. A detailed tour of the production units was also conducted to observe the adherence

China-Sri Lanka-Maldives Tourism Forum kicks off

The week-long China-Sri Lanka-Maldives Tourism Forum opened here, with over 100 participants, including officials, representatives from the tourism and aviation sectors, experts, and scholars.

In her opening address, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya expressed her heartfelt gratitude to China for its valuable support of Sri Lanka in infrastructure, people-to-people exchanges, education, culture, and cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative.

She expressed the hope that the forum would deepen regional mutual trust, translate visions into dialogue and dialogue into action, and further promote understanding among the peoples of the three nations.

Chinese Ambassador to Sri Lanka Qi Zhenhong said that tourism cooperation

business negotiations.

The forum is co-hosted by the Ministry



between China, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives is not merely a simple aggregate but an elevation through complementary strengths.

The forum will also feature a series of activities, including seminars, presentations, promotions, and

of Culture and Tourism of China, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment and Tourism of Sri Lanka, the Ministry of Tourism and Environment of the Maldives, the Chinese Embassy in Sri Lanka, and the Chinese Embassy in the Maldives. 🇨🇳



Bridging Borders Through Cinema

SARDAARji3

Brings Pakistan and India Closer

When the news broke that Pakistani starlet Hania Aamir would share the screen with Indian heartthrob Diljit Dosanjh in *Sardar Ji 3*, fans on both sides of the border rejoiced. At a time when politics remains tense and cross-border exchanges are scarce, the collaboration between two celebrated

stars marks not only a cinematic event but a cultural thaw in South Asia's icy standoff.

Set to release later this year, *Sardar Ji 3* is more than just a sequel to one of Punjabi cinema's most beloved franchises — it's a symbol of hope for a region desperate for shared stories and laughter. The film's production and star cast have generated buzz from Lahore to Ludhiana, Karachi to Chandigarh, and

Bollywood to Lollywood.

A Cross-Border Chemistry

The inclusion of Hania Aamir, one of Pakistan's most dynamic young actors, is being hailed as a masterstroke. Known for her charming screen presence, expressive eyes, and effortless humor, Hania brings a fresh vibe to the franchise. Diljit, meanwhile, returns as the lovable, ghost-busting, mischief-making Sardar who has made

audiences laugh for nearly a decade.

Their pairing has already lit up social media. Behind-the-scenes videos from the sets in London and Dubai — neutral grounds for the joint production — have gone viral. A scene of Hania and Diljit dancing in traditional Punjabi attire in front of Tower Bridge has been viewed millions of times, sparking a wave of fan edits and memes celebrating the “Pak-Indo Jodi of the Year.”

“I’ve always wanted to work across the border,” Hania said in a recent interview. “Art should never be hostage to politics. Working with Diljit has been magical — he’s humble, hilarious, and incredibly talented.”

Diljit echoed her sentiments: “Cinema is a shared language in Punjab. Whether you’re in Lahore or Amritsar, the rhythm of the dhol, the flavor of our jokes, the spirit of the people — it’s all the same.”

Plot Peek: Love, Laughter, and Lahore

While details of the plot are being tightly guarded, sources reveal that *Sardaar Ji 3* revolves around an Indo-Pak love story layered with fantasy, comedy, and a touch of supernatural whimsy — just like the earlier films in the series.

In this installment, Diljit’s character is lured into Lahore by a mysterious spirit (played by Hania) who is more than she seems. What starts as a ghost-chasing mission soon evolves into a tale of friendship, cross-cultural discovery, and love that transcends boundaries.

The film subtly tackles themes of identity, nostalgia, and the shared history of Punjab before Partition: a territory once united, now split by politics but stitched together by song, cinema, and sentiment.

Entertainment Industry Moves Forward

The *Sardaar Ji 3* project is one of the most high-profile Indo-Pak collaborations in recent memory. While artists from both countries have historically worked together — think Rahat Fateh Ali Khan’s Bollywood hits or Fawad Khan’s brief Bollywood rise — such projects have

often been interrupted by political flare-ups.

But now, thanks to the rise of OTT platforms, private producers, and international filming locations, cross-border collaborations are quietly making a comeback. Streaming giants like Netflix and Zee5 have begun exploring



content that appeals to South Asian audiences globally, sidestepping regional restrictions.

The film is being co-produced by banners from both countries under an international distribution model. This has allowed it to avoid the usual red tape, with post-production work being done in Turkey and sound mixing in the UAE.

A senior producer from the Indian side noted, “The audiences don’t care about politics — they care about good stories. And with Hania and Diljit, we’re telling a story that’s fun, emotional, and rooted in our shared culture.”

From Pakistan, the project was facilitated by private media groups that have been pushing for greater engagement in the arts. A top executive from the Pakistani production side said: “We believe in people-to-people contact. And cinema is the most powerful medium to bring hearts closer.”

Audience Reaction and Cultural Ripple Effects

The announcement of Hania’s casting generated massive attention on both Pakistani and Indian media outlets. YouTube channels, film critics, and entertainment pages have all weighed in on what this collaboration could mean for the future.

Pakistani fans have praised Hania’s “bold yet graceful” decision to work in an Indian film despite past political sensitivities. Meanwhile, Indian audiences have welcomed her with open arms, especially impressed by her work in dramas like *Mere Humsafar* and *Parde Mein Rehne Do*.

There’s also been growing appreciation for how the film treats Punjabi culture not as something divided by national lines but as a shared inheritance. Social media users from across Punjab have commented on how refreshing it is to see both Lahori and Amritsari dialects, food, and music in one frame.

Cultural observers believe the impact of *Sardaar Ji 3* could extend far beyond the screen. If successful, it could encourage more film exchanges, joint festivals, and even cross-border training

workshops for young artists.

Challenges Remain

Despite the positivity, the road to the film’s release hasn’t been entirely smooth. Political objections were raised by fringe groups on both sides, questioning the “appropriateness” of such collaboration given current diplomatic tensions.

But so far, producers have successfully navigated these challenges. The actors, too, have responded with grace and focus, emphasizing the need to separate art from politics.

As Hania put it: “We’re not here to make a political statement. We’re telling a story — and hopefully, we’re reminding people that laughter, love, and art are universal.”

A Cinematic Step Toward Peace

Sardaar Ji 3 is more than just a film. It’s a quiet, powerful gesture of what’s possible when art is allowed to breathe across borders. At a time when the world feels divided, this film brings a reminder of unity — not in slogans, but in shared laughter, music, and human connection.

As the curtain rises and audiences fill cinemas this winter, *Sardaar Ji 3* may not change the world. But it will, at least for two hours, bring it a little closer together. 

LAWRENCE IN LAHORE

Ajoka the Great!

By Beenish Mahmood

The play *Lawrence in Lahore* was recently staged at the Alhamra Arts Council in Lahore. It was an Ajoka production based on the historical figure T.E. Lawrence.

The play was a delight to watch. With excellent music and dance, there was not a single moment of boredom that the audience might have faced. *Lawrence of Arabia*, a British spy, created a dispute amongst countries. He appeared in many disguises. He helped lead the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire during World War 1.

He frequented the famous Nedou's hotel, owned by a Kashmiri woman, Akbar Jahan. He secretly married her and was forced to divorce her by the wrestling champion Gama Pehlwan. Lawrence was ordered to leave the country by the British government because of spreading mischief in Afghanistan at the behest of the British government. However, the fiery religious leader Sir Karam Shah, whose religious sermons fuelled the Pashtuns against King Amanullah, disappeared mysteriously; he was in fact Lawrence.

Akbar Jahan was distressed by Lawrence's sudden disappearances. As the play neared the end, she questioned who Lawrence was. What was his identity? She inquired: "Am I married to a sympathiser or a spy?"

Through Lawrence's figure, the play connected South Asian history with that of the Middle East. The seeds of fundamentalism, the bloody massacre of Partition, and divisive nationalism were sown. To this day, the region is suffering from the threat of terrorism and war

between nations. The founder of Ajoka, Shahid Nadeem, wrote the play in collaboration with US-based scholar Dr. Fawzia Afzal Khan.

The play was staged on Ajoka's 41st birthday. Ajoka is setting a new trend in theatre by mixing



history with myths, fact with fiction, romance with rebellion. It is essential to recognise that Ajoka constantly recruits young talent, paving the way for progress and evolution.

Although the cast delivered well, Akbar Jahan (Erum Navee) stole the limelight. Her demeanour was mesmerising, and her gestures, facial expressions, and dance touched the spectators' hearts. Lawrence's remark 'Kashmiri women are beautiful' is followed by

Akbar Jahan's witty dialogue: "She knows how to fight like a tiger."

As shown in the play, Akbar Jahan epitomized courage and wit and responded with a burning fire to Lawrence's flirtatious behaviour. Akbar Jahan was no dumb blonde and knew how and when to act or make a decision.

The play was a mix of entertainment, visual delight, dance, and music. Embedded within the fun and pleasure was also the Kashmir freedom struggle. The play ends with the query: "Kia haqeeqi azaadi mehaz aik khawab hai?"

The play ended at this point and didn't answer the question; rather, it left it open-ended, allowing the audience to form their own perspective and opinion.

In conclusion, the play was worth watching. What is unique about Ajoka is that it



was not a ticketed event and was open to people from all walks of life. Although the play 'Monkey Business' was being staged at the same time as *Lawrence in Lahore*, the scribe still chose to watch the former. It was a play pregnant with meaning.

The play was staged in New York, Abu Dhabi, and New Jersey earlier. 'Lawrence in Lahore' deserves appreciation, and to understand the play fully, it is imperative to read the book *Lawrence of Arabia*. 📖

LOVE GURU

Treat to Watch

By Beenish Mahmood

The newly released film Love Guru, directed by Nadeem Baig and produced by Six Stigma Productions, features such seasoned artistes as Humayun Saeed (Adil) and Mahira Khan (Sophia Khan) as the lead actors. Love Guru is the second collaboration between Mahira and Humayun after Bin Roye in 2015.

The Love Guru's plot is a love triangle between Sophia, Adil aka Hamza and Ahmad Ali (Ahmad Ali Butt). Sophia's father is against Sophia's love marriage with Ahmad Ali and contacts a marriage bureau to break their marriage. Hamza enters the scene and agrees to help Sophia's father in return for a huge amount of money. But in this process, Hamza falls for Sophia. Who is Hamza? Hamza is the love guru. He becomes every girl's heartthrob and uses his charm and wit to woo a girl before she says 'qabool hai.'

As the story unfolds, the relationship between Sophia and Hamza becomes intimate. Sophia, too, falls for Hamza, only to have her heart broken by him when she finds out the truth. Sophia and Hamza share the same interest in coffee. Not only are they both concerned about the well-being of the environment, but they are also fond of poetry. It's almost as if they were made for each other. So many coincidences happen where fate indicates that Sophia and Hamza are meant to be together.

The film is light-hearted and entertaining—a good break from the harsh monotony of life. The dialogues and script lines are comical, sending the audience into squeals of laughter. A romantic comedy, the film lifted the spirits of

Humayun Saeed and Mahira Khan delivered their roles flawlessly. Mahira's dressing is immaculate, and her costumes are trendy, skimpy, and attractive.

Humayun has always played the hero who comes to rescue in times

of distress. The chemistry between Hamza and Sophia is electrifying. Aware yet unaware of the love that was sprouting between them, both changed within themselves positively.

Now, regarding the composition of the music, the songs are upbeat. The lyrics are beautiful, and the melody is catchy. Sung in a melodious voice, the songs win the hearts.

The film is packed with laughter, jokes, and a promising love story. Although it did not do well at the box office, it made an impact on the audience. The audience doesn't want horror or harsh reality; it wants entertainment, and Love Guru succeeds in providing it. Love Guru doesn't invite hostilities from international borders. It is a film of love and peace, and gives a reason to trust Pakistani cinema again.

A great film that deserves to be seen. Pakistani cinema is doing well, and our films should be promoted and screened worldwide. Hats off to the cast and crew for coming up with such a fantastic film! Love Guru is a treat to watch! Despite

the lengthy time span, it kept the audience engaged without a dull moment! 📺



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