

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	HK\$ 30
India	Rs. 100
Japan	¥ 500
Korea	Won 3000
Malaysia	RM 6
Maldives	Rf 45
Myanmar	MMK10
Nepal	NcRs. 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

daily
showbiz



She is Back

Aamina Sheikh

returns to TV She sees the courtroom drama as an opportunity to empower and educate people on Pakistan's legal system.

Feel the Good Life



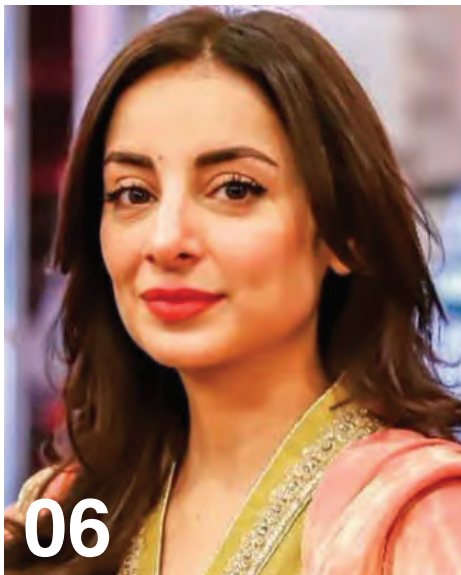
NESTLÉ MILKPAK A2 Milk naturally contains the A2 Protein which makes it easy to digest and keeps you feeling light and good from the inside throughout the day.



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Fall of Pakistani Dramas

There was a time when Pakistani television dramas were our pride and cultural signature. They reflected our emotions, our values, and our language with rare elegance. From Dhoop Kinare to Alpha Bravo Charlie, these productions weren't just local favorites, they were admired across South Asia and beyond, wherever Urdu-speaking audiences lived. But today, that legacy is fading fast. Our screens have become crowded with borrowed plots, artificial emotions, and language that no longer sounds like our own.

In the pursuit of popularity and international attention, Pakistani drama producers and writers have turned increasingly to foreign inspirations. Turkish, Indian, and even Western storylines are now rebranded with local names and settings. yet the essence remains foreign. These plots neither align with our social values nor reflect our cultural context. Characters live in Pakistani homes but behave like they belong to another continent. Their relationships feel superficial, their expressions forced, and their environment oddly alien to the audience they claim to represent.

But imitation is only one part of the problem. The deeper issue lies in the content's growing addiction to toxicity. Many recent dramas glorify arrogance, manipulation, and emotional abuse — presenting them as symbols of strength or “modern attitude.” The hero is often rude; the heroine is perpetually crying; and the family dynamics revolve around jealousy, deceit, and humiliation. What used to be thoughtful moral storytelling has turned into loud, repetitive chaos. Sadly, this shift is not just artistic, it's social. Young viewers subconsciously absorb these patterns, mistaking disrespect for confidence and cruelty for charm.

One of the greatest casualties of this downfall is our language itself. Urdu — once the pride of Pakistani television, now suffers from poor pronunciation, flat delivery, and clumsy accents. Many new actors deliver dialogues as if they're reading from a teleprompter, detached from the emotion and rhythm that Urdu naturally carries. The dialogue writing, too, has lost its balance. Lines once written with literary grace and emotional weight now sound abrupt, uneven, and grammatically uncertain. Where our screens once echoed with poetic expressions and well-crafted metaphors, we now hear slang, borrowed English, and expressions that barely make sense.

Before this creative decline, Pakistani dramas set benchmarks of quality that others tried to emulate. They didn't need extravagant sets or imported ideas — their power came from simplicity, sincerity, and substance.

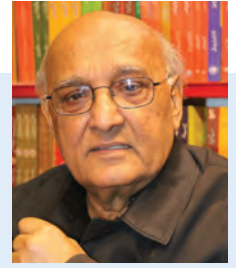
- Dhoop Kinare (1987) portrayed professional ethics and emotional maturity with poetic sensitivity.
- Ankahi (1982) captured ambition and humor with warmth and wit.
- Tanhaiyaan (1985) became a cultural landmark for its family themes and unforgettable dialogue.
- Waris (1979) explored feudal power with realism and depth.
- Aangan Terha (1984) blended satire and social critique while preserving linguistic beauty.
- Alpha Bravo Charlie (1998) inspired patriotism and human values without preachiness.
- Zindagi Gulzar Hai (2012) and • Pyaray Afzal (2013), though modern, revived faith in Urdu dialogue and emotional storytelling.

These dramas didn't just entertain, they educated, refined, and united audiences. Viewers abroad, especially in India, the Gulf, and Europe, admired Pakistan for its ability to tell meaningful stories rooted in culture. They showcased that Urdu, when spoken with honesty and care, could move hearts across borders. The solution is not nostalgia, it's rediscovery. Our writers, directors, and actors must find courage to be authentic again. Pakistan is brimming with stories worth telling: from small-town resilience and urban struggles to tales of compassion, courage, and social change. Instead of copying foreign lives, we must learn to celebrate our own.

Writer and Society

There was also a time when playwrights would write plays, keeping the aspects of reform and training in mind. Whenever Pakistani drama is a topic of discussion, I always refer to the plays of the last century. Writers have a great responsibility. In my humble opinion, a strange kind of love is being promoted in the dramas made in the last few years. Everyone is involved in this unwarranted and unthinking behavior, from the writer to the producer and the actors. We also believe that people are shown what they want to see. Undoubtedly, this era of innovation has further strengthened this idea. However, a writer can change the way society thinks. As Martin Luther said, "If you want to change the world, take up your pen and write." This made it clear that a good writer can bring about a change in people's trends.

Lubna Sajid, Ludhiana, India.



An Editor Par Excellence

Javed Ansari, the former editor of SouthAsia Magazine, died three years ago in November 2022. On his third death anniversary, I want to inform the new generation of readers about the journalistic standards set by the late Javed Ansari, even though he remains a relatively lesser-known figure among Pakistan's well-known journalists. Mr. Ansari was one of those principled newsmen who never tried to come to the limelight at the cost of professional integrity and ethical conduct. Though it takes merely a couple of words to describe every Tom, Dick, and Harry, a journalist par excellence, the case of Javed is different, as his professional credentials were fully demonstrated by the standalone work he kept doing till his last breath. A man of principles, he was one of those rare-to-find editors who never compromised on preserving the integrity of the written word, whether penned by a newbie writer or a well-known journalist. Javed Ansari was a ruthless editor who went the extra mile to maintain the linguistic standards and never accepted anything less than quality work that fully met the classic language rules and journalistic standards. Rest in peace, Javed Ansari. May your spirit rest in eternal tranquility. Amen!

F. Usmani, Karachi, Pakistan.



Pak-Bangladesh Trade Target

Pakistan Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has expressed his determination to increase trade between Pakistan and Bangladesh threefold. This determination can be a harbinger of a new era of economic cooperation between the two countries. At present, the volume of bilateral trade between the two countries is less than one billion dollars annually, although the economies of both countries have immense potential for each other. This volume can easily be doubled or tripled if serious steps are taken. Pakistan has a lot to export to Bangladesh. The partnership between the two countries can be expanded in sectors like cotton, yarn, textiles, agricultural commodities, and machinery. Pakistan also has a special attraction for Bangladesh in terms of defense equipment. On the other hand, Bangladesh has made its mark worldwide in the textile sector, which can open up more avenues for cooperation. For this purpose, it is necessary to make steady progress towards a free trade agreement between the two countries to reduce trade barriers and improve logistics. If the government and the business community work together to promote trade relations with Bangladesh, not only will the people of both countries benefit directly, but it could also open new doors for economic cooperation and stability in the region.

Asif Ali Ashraf, Dhaka, Bangladesh.



After the Ceasefire

We welcome the permanent ceasefire agreement between Hamas and Israel, which was signed in Egypt on October 13 by US President Trump, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron, and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, among others, were also present. We welcome the move to the extent that it has stopped the unjust killing, genocide, and loss of innocent human lives of Palestinians. May this peace be permanent.

However, no one expects much from Israel to keep its promise. Be that as it may, this agreement is comprehensive and satisfactory as it does not prioritize the protection of Israeli interests while completely ignoring the right of the Palestinian people to a homeland. We hope that sanity prevails on both sides.

Ali Qasim, Kabul, Afghanistan.



Floods and Food Inflation

The devastating floods in Punjab have displaced millions of people and disrupted the food supply chain by destroying crops and vegetables. Its effects have directly reached major cities where the prices of vegetables and food items continuously increase. Economists are warning that the impact of the floods could soon push prices to new heights. This situation is worrisome for ordinary citizens, but the flood victims feel the worst impact. Those who have already lost their homes, farms, and jobs face inflation. The government must take strict measures to deal with this double crisis. First, immediate action is essential against hoarders and profiteers so that artificial shortages end and basic commodities are available at reasonable prices. The authorities should consider reducing the import duty on vegetables, fruits, and other food items to meet the local shortage.

Kulsoom Humayun, Sialkot, Pakistan.

No One Should Go to Bed Hungry'

The Global Report on Food Crises 2024 confirms the great challenge of achieving the goal of ending hunger by 2030. In 2023, an analysis was conducted on approximately 282 million people in 59 countries. As per the study, over 21.5% of the population faced severe food shortage problems. The question is, can this target be met? And when this target is met, what should be the next target? World Food Day is celebrated every year. However, has anyone ever thought that in the modern and developed era, we have stockpiled weapons, but we have not been able to feed all the hungry? What is the reason for this? In my opinion, there are three reasons for this. First, there is a rapid increase in population every year. Second, there is an inability to produce food in the fields to full capacity. And the third is that much of the food produced is wasted. If the pace of population growth cannot be stopped, then only by increasing food production under modern methods and saving wasted food can we raise the slogan that "no one should go to bed hungry."

S. K. Abhimoda, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Who Said That!



"Pakistan has a direct stake in a peaceful Afghanistan."
Shehbaz Sharif,
Prime Minister of Pakistan



"We deeply appreciate and fully reciprocate President Trump's sentiments and positive assessment of our ties."
Narendra Modi,
Prime Minister of India



"My greatest challenge has been to change the mindset of people."
Muhammad Yunus,
Bangladesh's Chief Advisor



"Don't reject politics, because without politics, you wouldn't be able to change the world, and that's what we have to do."
Harini Amarasuriya,
Sri Lankan Prime Minister



"Through the elections, let the corrupt and criminals not win; let honest and capable people come to power."
Ramchandra Paudel,
Nepalese President



"We don't want conflict with anyone."
Amir Khan Muttaqi,
Afghan Foreign Minister



"Fool me once, but you can't do it again."
Sarwat Gilani,
Pakistani TV Actress



Symbol of Defeat

News is coming that India has finally been forced to kneel before America. New Delhi is now ready to stop buying oil from Russia and will purchase oil from America in the future. The same Narendra Modi who had kept his junta on a pedestal for all the fictitious reasons has now surrendered after the American threat of more economic tariffs and sanctions. This shameful submission marks the end of the Indian Prime Minister, who proudly told his political followers and devotees that he owns a 56-inch chest. Shrinking under U.S. sanctions, the 56-inch chest of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a country with a population of one and a half billion, foreign exchange reserves of six hundred billion dollars, and trade worth billions of dollars, could not withstand the American pressure even for a few days. ❏

Tall Claims

The last four years in Pakistan have proven to be the worst in terms of economic performance, as the government has miserably failed in formulating any viable economic strategy. To make things worse, the situation seems to deteriorate further due to climate change, floods, poor governance, and mismanagement. International organizations call the government's tall claims nothing more than blatant lies. Government institutions in Pakistan are paid six hundred billion rupees directly from the budget every year to stay on their feet, and it is evident that this is not a wise deal. At the same time, the slow pace of privatization is also a matter of concern for international organizations. Despite the government's lofty claims of economic growth, the ground realities show a completely different picture. ❏



Passport to Nowhere

Pakistan's passport has been ranked 103rd out of 106 for the fifth time in a row, finding its favourite place at the bottom of the Henley Passport Index. Just ranked above war-torn nations like Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan, the green booklet is recognised among the world's least powerful passports, allowing its holders to travel visa-free to some unknown, far-flung islands of the world and nowhere beyond. Despite all the official rhetoric, a repeatedly downgraded status of the Pakistani passport mirrors global trust in the country. It also reflects where the country belongs in the comity of nations in terms of good governance, the rule of law and order, top-notch security, trade, tourism, and all that. ❏

Rotary Corporate Dinner Celebrates Philanthropy and Global Impact

A distinguished Rotary Corporate Dinner was graciously hosted by Past TRF Trustee (2020-2024) and PNPPC Chair Aziz Memon in honor of Holger Knaack, Trustee Chair of The Rotary Foundation. The exclusive

Rotary’s global impact in transforming lives across communities. Host Aziz Memon delivered an inspiring talk on the “Art of Giving”, emphasizing the collective responsibility of individuals and institutions to serve humanity



Aziz Memon

Holger Knaack



Holger Knaack and Aziz Memon with other guests in the group photo

gathering took place in Karachi, bringing together diplomats, government officials, business leaders, bankers, media representatives, and members of the Rotary family.

The evening began with a welcome address delivered by District Governor Elect (2026–2027) Shahzad Sabir. A specially curated Rotary Foundation Video was then presented, highlighting

through philanthropy. This was followed by a powerful address on “The Rotary Foundation & Philanthropy” by Mike McGovern, Chair of the International PolioPlus Committee, who commended Pakistan’s unwavering commitment to polio eradication and sustainable development.

The highlight of the evening was Chief Guest Holger Knaack’s keynote

speech. He expressed gratitude for Rotary’s warm hospitality in Pakistan, acknowledged the tireless efforts of local Rotarians in advancing the Rotary Foundation’s mission, and reaffirmed Rotary’s global vision of peace, health, and opportunity for all. The program concluded with a heartfelt Vote of Thanks delivered by Muhammad Faiz Kidwai, RI, Past Director (2022–2024). ❏

CDA, Saudi energy giant ARAMCO explore joint ventures

The Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Saudi Arabia’s ARAMCO are considering joint ventures in Islamabad, focusing on infrastructure and investment projects to transform the capital into a modern city.

Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa met with an ARAMCO delegation to discuss opportunities for collaboration. Member Planning and Design Dr. Khalid Hafiz, Member Finance Tahir Naeem, Deputy Director General Resource, and other senior CDA officials attended the meeting. Randhawa underscored CDA’s commitment to transparency

and sustainable growth, noting that projects under the Joint Venture (JV)



model would attract private investment and generate lasting revenue for the Authority. “All projects will be implemented per PPRA rules, ensuring transparency and merit,” he stressed.

ARAMCO representatives were

briefed during the session on ongoing and planned initiatives, including citizen service upgrades and development schemes to boost economic activity. Randhawa pointed out several strategic sites have been earmarked for private sector investment, such as establishing petrol pumps across Islamabad. The meeting also reviewed progress on a proposed state-of-the-art

slaughterhouse, for which feasibility has already been completed. “The primary objective is to promote meat exports while catering to local demand, thereby supporting the city’s economy and creating jobs,” Randhawa explained. ❏

PBA hosts Saudi Delegation to Advance Strategic Investments in Pakistan

The Pakistan Banks Association (PBA), in collaboration with the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), welcomed a high-level Saudi business delegation led by His Highness Prince Mansour bin Mohammad Al Saud, Chairman of the Saudi-Pakistan Joint Business Council (SPJBC).

The visit, spanning October 7–11, 2025, aimed to strengthen bilateral trade and investment cooperation between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in line with both countries' shared vision for enhanced economic integration and long-term strategic partnership. The delegation comprised senior investors and business leaders representing key sectors such as investment holdings, financial services, agriculture and livestock, energy, infrastructure and construction, real estate, hospitality, and food security.

The Lahore session brought together Pakistan's banking leadership, industrialists, and entrepreneurs

across agriculture security and corporate farming, tourism and hospitality, education and healthcare,



Chairman, Pakistan Banks Association (PBA), presenting a souvenir to Prince Mansour bin Mohammad Al Saud, Chairman of the Saudi-Pakistan Joint Business Council (SPJBC).

for direct dialogue with the Saudi delegates. Discussions highlighted Pakistan's comparative advantages and investment-ready opportunities

IT and artificial intelligence. Dedicated business-to-business engagements explored joint ventures and partnerships in these priority areas.

LRBT celebrates 40 remarkable years of service

As the world observes World Sight Day 2025, Layton Rahmatulla Benevolent Trust (LRBT) celebrates 40 remarkable years of service — four decades of restoring vision, dignity, and opportunity to those most in need of it.

Founded with a simple yet powerful mission — “that no man, woman, or child goes blind just because they cannot afford treatment” — LRBT has become one of the world's largest free eye care providers. What began as a humble mobile unit in lower Sindh has grown into a vast network of 20 state-of-the-art hospitals and 63 clinics, covering nearly 80% of Pakistan's population. Over the past 40 years, LRBT has treated more than 60 million patients and performed 5.9 million sight-restoring surgeries, completely free of cost.

Reflecting on this historic milestone, Najmus Saquib Hameed, Chairman

of LRBT, shared his sentiments, “It is heartbreaking to see families forced to



make the impossible choice between putting a meal on the table or seeking treatment for blindness. No one should ever have to make such a choice. It is beyond words to describe the relief and joy of a beneficiary who regains sight after free surgery. When someone sees again, that moment is the true measure of LRBT's impact and the power of collective compassion.”

To commemorate World Sight Day 2025, LRBT has organized a series of activities nationwide. These include awareness campaigns through television and radio, free community screening camps, and school-based programs to educate families about the importance of regular eye check-ups, especially for children. LRBT is also using digital storytelling and media appearances to amplify the theme of this year's World Sight Day: “Inclusive, Accessible and Equitable Eye Care for All.”

Artistic Milestones of Aawaaz Project Highlighted

In August, a distinguished dinner reception was held in Karachi to recognize Professor Saeed Qureshi's outstanding contribution to the RFPI project, a joint initiative of the English-Speaking Union of Pakistan and Queen Mary University of London. The event also served as an opportunity to acknowledge the donors and partners who have supported this important initiative.

Aziz Memon graciously hosted the dinner. Patron-in-Chief, and Pervez Madraswala, President of the English-Speaking Union of Pakistan, and brought together eminent figures from academia, culture, and business. Among the notable attendees was Syed Jawaid Iqbal, Chairman of the Board of Directors at the National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) and a leading figure at CMC. His presence reflected the growing recognition of the deep interconnections between education, culture, and artistic expression in Pakistan,


Afreen Seher, Artistic Director of Aawaaz Audio Theatre and Pakistan Project Lead, was warmly congratulated and appreciated for her remarkable leadership over the past two years.



Seen in the photos are Professor Saeed Qureshi, Mr. Aziz Memon, Mr. Pervez Madraswala, Syed Jawaid Iqbal, Ms. Afreen Seher, and other distinguished guests.

Under her guidance, the Aawaaz Project has flourished, creating innovative platforms for audio theatre, storytelling, and cultural dialogue. The project has been running successfully since 2023 and is now entering its final phase, culminating in November 2025.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of a project video prepared by Afreen Seher, who also served as

the Head of Theatre Arts at NAPA. The video powerfully showcased the achievements of the Aawaaz Project, highlighting its artistic milestones, collaborative initiatives, and community engagement. The audience was visibly moved as the presentation reflected the journey, challenges, and triumphs of an endeavor that has become a cultural benchmark. 

Pakistan to Flatten Roosevelt Hotel for Skyscraper Dreams


Pakistan is considering demolishing New York's historic Roosevelt Hotel to pave the way for a potential skyscraper, a move linked to its commitments under the \$7 billion IMF loan program.

The iconic Midtown Manhattan property, named after former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, has been owned by Pakistan since 2000 and is one of its most prized international assets. The 1,000-room hotel was shuttered in 2020 after financial losses and briefly reopened as

a shelter for migrants. In July, Pakistan approved a joint venture model for the site, ruling out a direct sale in favor of a



structure to maximize long-term returns.

Muhammad Ali, the Prime Minister's advisor on privatization, said that the government is exploring two main options: a joint venture to redevelop the site — possibly into a skyscraper — or retaining the hotel if it's deemed financially viable. "We're keen on a joint venture where Pakistan provides the land and the partner brings in the equity," Ali said. "We'll have clarity in the coming months after finalizing the JV partner and completing market assessments." 

Nestlé Pakistan extends 63000 liters of water to PRCS

Nestlé Pakistan extended a donation of 63,000 liters of drinking water, under the employees' voluntary program Nestlé Cares, to support Pakistan Red Crescent Society's (PRCS) relief efforts for flood-affected vulnerable communities.

Talking at the event, Jason Avanceña, CEO, Nestlé Pakistan, said, "Our contribution to PRCS is a result of an internal voluntary donation drive by employees under our Nestlé Care's programme, which was matched 1:1 by the company. Staying true to our values of being a force for good, Nestlé and its employees care deeply for the communities affected by floods, and we believe we have an essential role to play during times of crisis," he said.

"Access to clean drinking water is the biggest concern for communities displaced by flooding, and that is

where we have focused the bulk of our efforts. Earlier, in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority and respective provincial disaster management authorities, we



mobilized 320,000 liters of clean drinking water and 200,000 glasses of milk to local district administrations in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan, and Punjab," he said.

As part of its philosophy of Creating Shared Value, 'Nestlé Cares', the company's voluntary program provides

the opportunity to engage and assist underprivileged communities through direct and indirect participation. Nestlé has been active in supporting and providing humanitarian assistance to

vulnerable communities where needed in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of 6 and 17.

Nestlé has collaborated with PRCS over the last many years, from organizing blood donations to partnering for COVID-19 donations to flood efforts in 2022.

First Lady & Health Minister Visit SICHN SBA

The First Lady, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, along with Minister for Health & Population Welfare, Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho, visited Sindh Institute of Child Health and Neonatology (SICHN), Shaheed Benazirabad Unit. They were received by Prof. Syed Jamal Raza, Executive Director SICHN, and Dr. Shahid, Chief Operating Officer SICHN, who briefed them about the state-of-the-art Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) established to provide free-of-cost, specialized care for critically ill newborns and children.



During the visit, the First Lady expressed her admiration for the efforts to improve child healthcare services in the region and emphasized the importance of providing accessible, high-quality care to every child, especially in rural and underserved areas. Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho also highlighted the provincial government's commitment to expanding healthcare infrastructure and ensuring that no child is deprived of medical attention due to financial constraints.

The visit ended with a tour of the hospital's facilities, where both leaders interacted with staff and patients, showing their support for the ongoing healthcare initiatives.

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Aamina Sheikh's return to TV with Case No. 9 is a case of doing the right thing at the right time

She sees the courtroom drama as an opportunity to empower and educate people on Pakistan's legal system.

After seven long years away from television, Aamina Sheikh is finally back and she's returning with not one, but two major projects. Her first on-screen comeback is Case No. 9, a courtroom drama that takes on one of the most pressing issues in our society: rape cases and how they move through the justice system. She will also be seen in Pakistan's first Netflix original, Jo Bachay Hain Sang Samait Lo, which was the first project she shot after her hiatus and will soon bring Pakistani narratives to a global platform.

Sheikh has always been a rare presence in the industry: authentic,

articulate and deeply thoughtful in her craft. From Bhaag Amina Bhaag to Pakeeza, her roles have carried weight and meaning, which makes her return to stories with substance all the more fitting.

To talk about this long-awaited return, I sat down with Sheikh for a conversation that unfolds in two parts: a written Q&A and a video interview, each with its own set of questions. The actor told me about her comeback, her Netflix debut and what it feels like to step back into acting after seven years away.

Q. After seven years away from television, what made you say yes to Case No. 9?

It was a matter of doing the right thing

at the right time for me.

Beenish Ali, the character offered to me, is a prosecutor. She leads the legal battle for a rape victim in the courtroom. Through her, we navigate the justice system of Pakistan and the legal nuances of rape cases. The audience will finally receive detailed awareness of the laws, as well as knowledge of the progressions that have taken place in the legal system with regard to rape cases. Actual rape cases from our recent legal history will be referenced, put into context and explained in a way that helps the audience understand them. The legal developments that have taken place in Pakistan to empower victims and disempower rapists will be

fully explored in this courtroom drama.

It's a matter so relevant to our society, so needed in this moment and such a real opportunity to empower people through a dramatic narrative. When Case No. 9 came my way, I couldn't refuse.

Equally important was the timing. Personally, it came at a point when I could finally step away from my nest and dedicate myself to a project of this magnitude. On top of that, the concept and script were penned by one of the leading news journalists of our time [Shahzeb Khanzada], someone who has had firsthand insight into numerous cases and has deeply studied the legal system, which brings authenticity and credibility to the project. His vision, backed by a leading production house, Pakistan's pioneering TV channel, an ace director and an ensemble of seasoned, powerhouse actors, further cemented the project's premium quality and ensured its potential reach and impact. So yes, for me, the answer was inevitable.

Q. Was it difficult stepping back into character work after such a long break, or did it feel like coming home?

My first return to set after my hiatus was actually in 2024, for the Netflix series Jo Bachay Hain Sang Samait Lo, which hasn't been released yet. That project truly felt like coming home. My muscle memory, much to my pleasant surprise, kicked in and I picked up where I had left off, easing into the character and thoroughly enjoying myself.

Case No. 9, however, was a completely different ballgame. I had the fright, the jitters, the cold feet, the nerves, you name it. It felt like an uphill task to tackle such extensive and complex hearings. As lawyers, getting into our uniforms and taking our designated spots day in and day out, in a stately courtroom with all its main players in place as we took centre stage, felt daunting and overwhelming. It also gave its fair share of an adrenaline rush, realising that we are actually doing this and it all feels so incredibly real. It was a daily win for us all as a production to move through



the tedious motions of each hearing so strategically and intricately in the courtroom for days on end till its final completion.

Q. Did you miss acting, or was the break intentional?

The hiatus was very intentional on my part. I needed a break. I wanted to recalibrate and rebuild my family life, nurture and raise my children in their early years. The nest I built then required my complete attention and time, and it was important to focus on that. It has done us well as a family.

Before that, I had been working nonstop for 15 years with full dedication and drive, leaving no stone unturned. So, no, I didn't miss acting during the break; the same dedication and drive were simply redirected to another important aspect of my life. The personal growth that came with this has been exponential and invaluable. Now, I feel more well-rounded and expanded as a human being, capable of offering more.

Q. Your first step back onto a set was for a Netflix project that hasn't aired yet. How did that project come about and what was the experience

like working on it? Was it different from being on a drama set?

Yes, as I mentioned earlier, that was my real comeback on set, as opposed to Case No. 9, which is my real comeback on screen. Jo Bachay Hain Sang Samait Lo was offered to me in 2023 and I joined the shoot a few months later in 2024.

It's a special gateway project for our entertainment industry: Pakistan's first original Netflix series. That in itself carries a huge moment of pride for the fraternity, a milestone in our collective history as we crossover globally on a platform like Netflix. It opens doors and gives the world an opportunity to see our homegrown talent rise to premium global standards, making way for more exchanges and crossovers.

The experience on set was surreal. The team felt like home. Technically speaking, yes, there were certain guidelines to follow that were different from our local releases. At its core, however, it was a culmination of the best of what Pakistan's drama industry has to offer — especially in storytelling and narrative, which is what we're known for. 🇵🇰

THE LIFE OF A SHOWGIRL

Behind the Gloss and Glitter

By Maleeha Faisal Siddiqi

Taylor Swift's *The Life of a Showgirl* is one of the most polarizing releases of her career - and that in itself says something. Marketed by Swift as a behind-the-scenes peek into the chaos and candor of her Eras Tour life, the record promised honesty, vulnerability, and reinvention. What it delivers instead is a complex, sometimes uneven blend of glossy pop and self-referential storytelling. It's a spectacle of self-awareness, but one that has garnered massive criticism for being her weakest work yet.

The album opens with *The Fate of Ophelia*, an ambitious, moody track that sets a literary tone. Drawing on Shakespeare's tragic heroine, Swift uses Ophelia as a mirror for the artist's own loss of control—the way adoration, expectation, and overexposure can drown a woman who was once in command of her own story. It's a striking opening that hints at the depth the rest of the album sometimes struggles to maintain.

What follows is a series of tracks that toggle between the confessional and the performative. The pop production is crisp, catchy, and recognizably Swiftian - the same glossy sound she perfected on *1989* and *Midnights*. There's a carefree confidence in the way she still builds hooks that feel instantly familiar, yet some of the emotional sharpness of her previous work is missing. This time, Swift seems more interested in dramatizing the act of being Taylor Swift than in exposing the person beneath the spotlight.

Still, moments of brilliance glimmer through. *Father Figure*, one of the

record's most lyrically interesting songs, is written from a mentor's perspective, addressing a former protégé who has wronged them. It's cold, cutting, and layered with moral fatigue - a departure from Swift's usual self-referential narratives. The mentor-protégé dynamic allows her to explore betrayal and disappointment from a distance, transforming what could have been a personal track into a more universal meditation on trust and power. The controlled anger in her voice makes



it one of the record's rare emotionally resonant moments.

Then there's *Cancelled*, perhaps the album's most quotable track. With its biting humor and playful defiance, Swift dismantles public scrutiny with the casual swagger of someone long past caring. "Good thing I like my friends cancelled," she sings, "I like 'em cloaked in Gucci and in scandal." It's a sharp, tongue-in-cheek rejection of moral policing and reputation anxiety - and an unapologetic nod to loyalty over image. The song is quintessential Swift: clever, confident, and laced with just enough irony to remind the

listener she's in on the joke.

Somewhere between the introspection of *Father Figure* and the bravado of *Cancelled* sits *Elizabeth Taylor*, the album's most thematically rich track. Here, Swift calls out to the Hollywood legend not as an idol but as a kindred spirit - another woman dissected by public fascination. Drawing parallels between Taylor's multiple marriages and her own cyclical reinventions, Swift sings with both admiration and fatigue. "You wore diamonds like defiance," she intones, layering reverence with critique. The song becomes a conversation across time about survival, spectacle, and the price of being endlessly watched. In a record obsessed with image and illusion, *Elizabeth Taylor* is its emotional spine - the moment Swift stops performing long enough to reflect on what that performance costs.

Thematically, *The Life of a Showgirl* wrestles with identity, image, and endurance - what it means to be a woman constantly observed, consumed, and mythologized. Yet for all its ambition, the album sometimes feels emotionally detached, more concept than confession. The songwriting brilliance that defined her best work flickers but never fully ignites.

Still, even at her weakest, Taylor Swift remains an artiste worth watching. *The Life of a Showgirl* might not soar as high as her masterpieces, but it's an intriguing act of self-mythologizing - part performance, part reckoning. It's the sound of an artiste taking stock of her empire, sequins and all, and daring to ask what it costs to keep shining beneath the lights. **S**

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