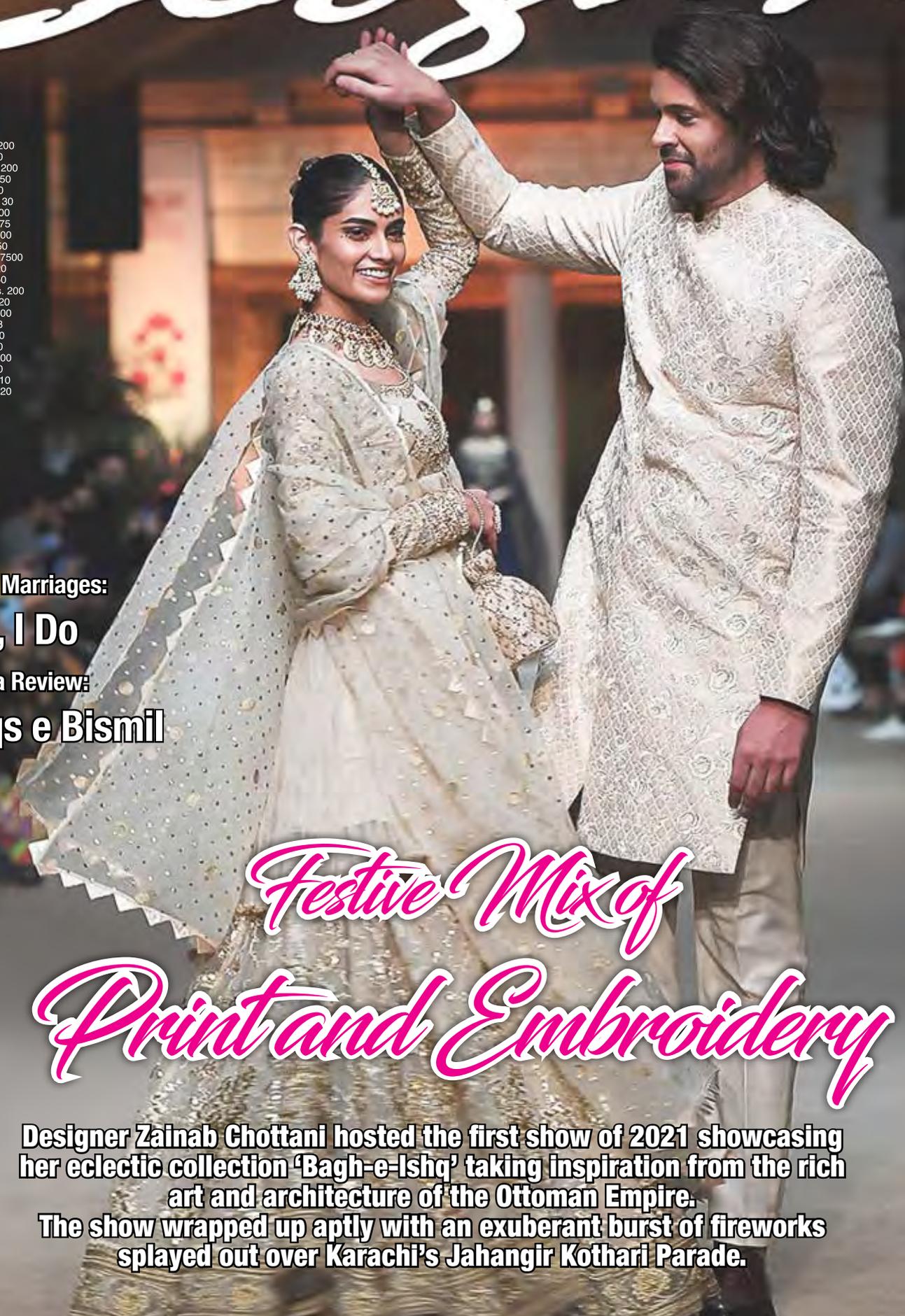


Slogan

Afghanistan	Afg. 200
Australia	AS 20
Bangladesh	Taka 200
Bhutan	NU 150
Canada	CS 20
China	RMB 30
France	FR 100
Hong Kong	HK\$ 75
India	RS. 200
Japan	¥ 1250
Korea	Won 7500
Malaysia	RM 20
Maldives	Rf 150
Nepal	NcRs. 200
New Zealand	NZ\$ 20
Pakistan	RS. 200
Philippines	P 188
Saudi Arabia	SR 40
Singapore	SS 20
Sri Lanka	RS. 300
Thailand	B 250
Turkey	Lira. 10
UAE	AED 20
UK	£ 5
USA	\$ 10



Child Marriages:

Yes, I Do

Drama Review:

Raqs e Bismil

Festive Mix of Print and Embroidery

Designer Zainab Chottani hosted the first show of 2021 showcasing her eclectic collection 'Bagh-e-Ishq' taking inspiration from the rich art and architecture of the Ottoman Empire.

The show wrapped up aptly with an exuberant burst of fireworks splayed out over Karachi's Jahangir Kothari Parade.



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Criminalising Abuse

The road to criminalising domestic violence in Pakistan has been a long one. It has included much persuasion of more conservative parliamentarians and convincing religious-political parties that criminalising domestic violence does not go against religious confines.

The country has now taken a big step towards elimination of this social menace with the last remaining province, which did not have an anti-domestic violence law, also adopting legislation criminalising it. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly has declared the abuse of women by family members an offence, punishable with 1–5 years imprisonment along with a fine. Sindh was the first province where the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2013, was passed in 2013. In Balochistan, the assembly had passed The Balochistan Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2014, in 2014. In Punjab, the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act, 2016, was famously made law in February 2016. The only territory now left without protections against domestic violence is Islamabad, where the government has tabled similar laws this year but they have yet to be passed by the parliament.

This has not been easy—the bill was long delayed due to opposition from some political parties, particularly the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), which had expressed reservations about certain provisions.

While this is a good step, it must be noted that the passed law is less progressive than the proposed drafts and from its counterparts in other provinces. There are several legal ambiguities—for example, domestic violence does not have an expansive definition. The definition of an aggrieved person is also limited—unlike its counterparts in Sindh and Balochistan, the KP law only uses the word ‘victim’ and that too only to include women, not men or other genders. Perhaps most critically, the law does not cover protections for children, due to controversy over the definition of child, with some members objecting to persons under eighteen years of age included under child.

Despite the reservations, it is still a welcome first step towards improving the lives of disadvantaged groups in the country. It is hoped the law will be improved through amendments over time.



**“ A people that
elect corrupt
politicians,
imposters, thieves
and traitors are
not victims... but
accomplices ”**

– George Orwell



**SOCIETY FOR GLOBAL
MODERATION**

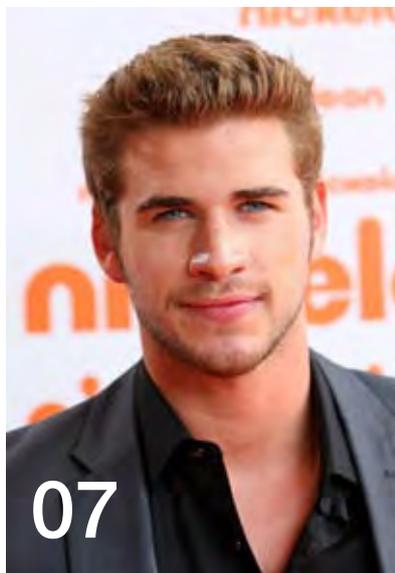
STRENGTHENING TOLERANCE, INTERFAITH HARMONY AND DEMOCRACY

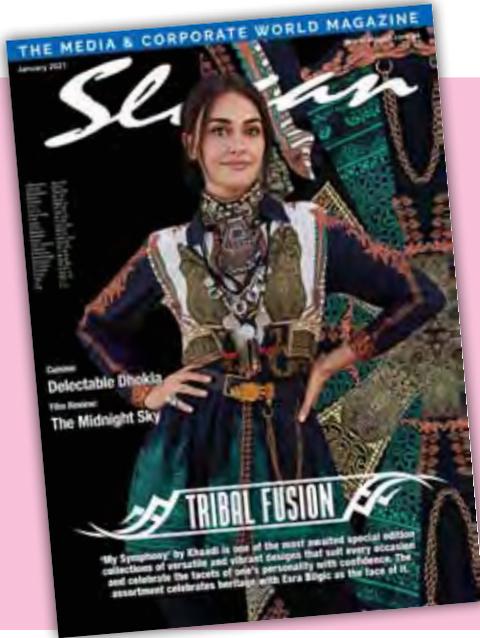


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Celebrating Heritage

This is related to the last month's cover story titled 'Tribal Fusion' featuring the beautiful and talented Turkish actress Esra Bilgic in Khaadi's 'My Symphony' collection. 'My Symphony' is one of the most awaited special edition collection of versatile and vibrant designs that suit every occasion and celebrate the facets of one's personality with confidence. The collection included traditional Pashtun embroidery in vibrant colours with a fusion of modern cuts representing the tribal amalgamation. The assortment celebrates heritage with Esra as the face of it.
*Murad Wasti,
Karachi, Pakistan*



No Foreign Stuff

There is quite a body of critics in Pakistan who do not want foreign entertainment to make it to Pakistani TV screens. They have not welcomed the Turkish serials with open arms. The point is that if these serials are getting popularity in Pakistan, it is because they provide a good level of entertainment – something that the Pakistani public wants. If the critics don't like it, they should better level up their own game. If they lack in capability, why should the audience suffer?
*Naushaba Rizvi,
Karachi, Pakistan*

Karachi Zoos

The Karachi Zoo is facing many cleanliness issues. Being one of the largest zoos in Pakistan, the captive animals are in a miserable state. The cages and closures of animals are not cleaned regularly. A few months ago, a bear's picture went viral showing the bear in a deplorable condition due to hunger and thirst. Because of dirtiness, there are health problems for the animals and some deaths too.



The increasing number of visitors have raised the need for the cleanliness of the zoo. It is visited by around 3,000 people every day. It is disheartening to see spectators throwing stones and garbage into the enclave to grab the animals' attention.

The government and management should pay attention to facilitate the condition of these precious creatures.
*Rehana Ali,
Karachi, Pakistan.*

Social Media Impact

This is with reference to the article 'Plague of Loneliness' by Gulnaz Nawaz about the excessive time people spend on social media rather than interacting with their closed ones. Technology has played a vital role in fast-track communication in the 21st century. While it has certainly proven to be beneficial in many ways, it has also brought along with its consequences that threaten the very fabric of values our society is based on. We must address this. Healthy debate at home and in offices could educate people in a manner that is both friendly and convenient for everyone. The responsibility lies on us.
*Sara Rehman,
Mumbai, India.*





Toll Payments

Around after every 50 KMs, there are 4 - 5 police check posts which have been determined to charge over 500 PKR to per vehicle whereas the drivers, themselves, cannot save 500 but police does. A poor labour excludes his lunch to save a little more money to pay for the treatment, school fees of his children or to buy personal stuffs. There's no denying the fact that the government has created the police force for the service of the nation but the toll is too high. And if drivers deny to give money, they make them park for hours which wastes a lot of time hindering their daily earning.

Taha Abbasi,
Lahore, Pakistan

Be Responsible

Littering is a major issue that is prevalent in our society today. It has become a common sight on roads to see people toss the litter right out of the vehicles they are travelling in, especially public transport. While people have started getting more and more conscious about this issue, unfortunately not many people seem to be taking this seriously as a problem.

Abuse of the usage of plastic and burning waste all contribute to harming our society. This garbage belongs to the trash bin and not conveniently thrown out of the vehicles, pedestrians as well as families who visit public places and leave their garbage there. It is advisable for the society as a whole to take adequate responsibility to build a better, cleaner and healthier environment.

Ahmed Farooq,
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

"In fact the experience at Oxford has really helped me later in life."

- **Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan.**



"If we don't lift women, everyone will fall short."

- **Kamala Harris, U.S. Vice President**

"If exposure of body is modernism, then animals are more modern than humans." - **Zakir Naik, Preacher.**



"There is a time and place for publicity, but to stay a sane person, you must have a personal life." - **Liam Hemsworth, Actor**

"We can win the 2021 World Cup by playing fearlessly and confidently." - **Amelia Kerr, New Zealand All-rounder**



"There are all the activist groups on every imaginable topic - solidarity groups, environmental and feminist groups - sectors of these movements do very valuable work."

- **Noam Chomsky, American Linguist**

"Fall in love with souls, not faces."

- **Mehwish Hayat, actress.**



"Music will never stop - it can never stop. I will continue to sing for my fans till the end of time."

- **Sunidhi Chauhan, singer.**



Trump is Stubborn

Donald Trump is the only President in American history to be impeached twice. He was accused of inciting an insurrection. As president, he tried to cling to power by overturning an election that he had unambiguously lost. He spread a big lie to convince his voters that the election was stolen from them. Having failed to force state officials to override the vote, he whipped up a violent mob and sent it to intimidate Congress into giving him what he wanted. His supporters ransacked the Capitol and threatened to hang the vice president, Mr Trump looked on, ignoring lawmakers' pleas for him to come to their aid.

Rescuing Animals

Ayesha Churdrigar's Foundation (ACF) has done excellent work for animal rescue since 2014. A lot of the work carried out by Ayesha and her team came into the mainstream media, particularly during the Karachi rains, and created ripples on social media. Her Instagram account and the ACF Facebook page were used to create awareness about helping animals at ACF's sanctuary and the pet stores of Empress Market in Karachi. Her followers and account also created vibes about animal abuse at zoos located across Pakistan.



Loving Grandma

Maryam Nawaz is considered as an important figure in the PML (N) after Nawaz Sharif. Despite her youthful looks, Maryam is also a grandmother – a Nani (maternal grandmother). She was spotted some time back shopping for toys for her granddaughter. She was also seen in a video in which she was interacting with her granddaughter Serena via facetime. Those who think Maryam is the hard-nosed politician she appears to be, must also remember that she is a grandmother with a heart of gold.

A Tight Slap

Mufti Abdul Qavi made a buzz when his association with the late Qandeel Baloch was revealed. He is back in the news after getting a resounding slap from Hareem Shah, the TikTok girl. She and a friend were, reportedly, together with Mufti Sahib in a room. Mufti Muneeb said something unbecoming to her and in return got a tight slap. Mufti Qavi and Hareem Shah are known to have made TikTok videos together.



Youngest Professionals

Pakistani twin sisters, 10-year old Zara and Zenobia Khan are the youngest persons in the world to win a Microsoft Power platform certification.

The girls had no access to mobile devices or laptops till they were 8. They learned about the certification from their father who works in the tech industry and, due to the pandemic, he had been working from home.

Both the girls learned basic programming online and the necessary skills required for the certification during their free time. They successfully passed the test after six months of preparation, becoming the youngest Microsoft Power Platform certified professionals.

The certification requires no specific experience. However, a basic familiarity with computer technology, the internet, cloud computing and data analytics is needed. 



MINI-SERIES

Ajiz Aslam seems to be on a roll. Not only is he doing TV serials such as 'Log Kya Kahenge' and 'Nand' but has also launched an organic skin and hair care line. His recent short film 'Chambelli' was also quite a hit. He is again venturing in a mini web series with Amna Ilyas. The two actors have been actively posting clips and pictures from their shoot since December.

The web series is about two couples; a young boy falls for an older girl and a young girl falls for an older guy. The mini-series is titled 'Love Square' with Fazal Hussain and Arisha Razi Khan in the cast. 

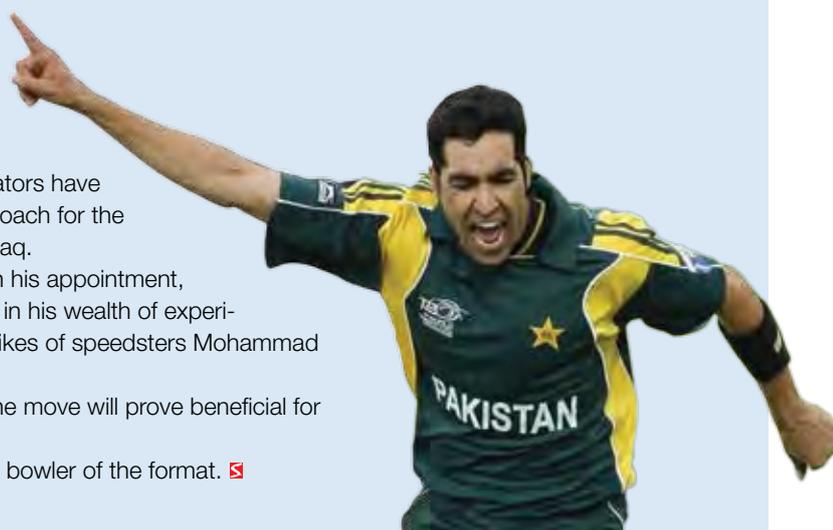
UMAR GUL BOWLING COACH

Former Pakistan Super League champions Quetta Gladiators have signed former Test cricketer Umar Gul as their bowling coach for the sixth edition of PSL. Umar Gul will be replacing Abdur Razzaq.

Quetta Gladiators owner Nadeem Omar praised Umar on his appointment, saying he is delighted to have Gul on board as he will bring in his wealth of experience and his appointment will prove very beneficial for the likes of speedsters Mohammad Hasnain, Naseem Shah and Usman Shinwari.

Quetta Gladiators head coach Moin Khan believes that the move will prove beneficial for the team.

World T20 winner Umar Gul is known as the world's best bowler of the format. 



New Breakfast Show



Abu Dhabi Media (ADM) has announced the launch of a brand new breakfast show on Radio 1.

Listeners in the UAE can tune in to Radio 1, from 6-10 am on week-days, to kick start the day with the dynamic trio Nugget, Naima and Chiara. They'll bring the latest trending news, UAE updates and the chance to win BIG.

The station will also feature 'Live from LA' with Dean McCarthy, an Emmy-nominated presenter and Hollywood correspondent who will bring unprecedented access to Hollywood's biggest A-list events, with interviews with the stars.

The station mixes popular western music with news on the latest trends and celebrities as well as the UAE's most exciting competitions and give-aways. **S**

CUTI-CUTI MALAYSIA

Malaysia's Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) through its agency Tourism Malaysia has launched its Cuti-Cuti Malaysia 'Santai di Zoo' Stimulus Campaign to attract Malaysians to visit zoos nearby. The campaign is a collaboration with Zoo Negara, Zoo Melaka dan Zoo Taiping and Night Safari.



Tourism Malaysia calls on all Malaysians to seize the opportunity and encourage Malaysians to spend time with their families by enjoying the

uniqueness of wildlife as well as exploring the beauty of zoos in Malaysia. The campaign is also aimed to cultivate the interest, awareness and love for nature among Malaysians. **S**

WEDDING MOOD

Ace designer Fahad Hussayn recently made a comeback with a song titled 'Mera Jora' to introduce his signature wedding collection. It features Iqra Aziz as the bride Shahzadi Baraunaq and model Hasnain Lehri as the groom Shehzada Nazardeep.

'Mera Jora' is a visual treat for audiences and synchronises well with Zeb Bangash's melodious voice. It is a musical performance that brings out the art of storytelling.



Produced and directed by Fahad Hussayn with Wahab Shah, the video is a homage to wedding traditions where the bride is anxiously waiting for her wedding dress. As soon as the bridal outfit arrives, the festive mood takes over and she decks up to dance with the groom. **S**

ARMEENA'S SHORT

Streaming portals such as Netflix, Amazon, Disney+ and others have seen an increase in consumption and subscriptions due to the pandemic. Many series, films and short films are being released online.

Armeena Khan's latest British sci-fi short film 'The Achilles Protocol', is available for streaming on Amazon Prime. She plays a very tricky character. The film also includes Mark Hill and Christopher Faith.

The tagline of the film reads, 'A Hacker battles an Artificial Intelligence gone rogue to stop a nuclear



Coke's Water Plants

Coca-Cola Pakistan is partnering with Cantonment Board Clifton, Rotary International and two other organizations to establish 17 water filtration plants to provide clean drinking water for disadvantaged communities in various parts of Karachi. The project is a part of Coca-Cola's 'Karachi is Love' campaign.

The plants will provide safe drinking water to over 383,000 people of low-income communities living in areas like Akhtar Colony, Hazara Colony, Machhar Colony, Lassi Goth, Khadim Solangi Goth and Aatma Colony. One filtration plant will also be established at the Karwan e Hayyat Psychiatric Care and Rehabilitation Center to provide 4000 gallons per day of water for the Center's 100 bed hospital for in-house psychiatric patients.

Coca-Cola pledged in 2006 that by 2030 it will return to nature an equivalent amount of water that it uses in its business, through a diverse range of water conservation projects. The target for Pakistan was to replenish 2.1



billion litres of water by 2019 which the company already achieved by the year 2018.

Three billion litres has been replenished through several long-term projects implemented all over the

country in partnership with the bottling company, Coca-Cola Icecek – Pakistan, UNDP, WWF-Pakistan, Indus Earth Trust, Rotary International and the Mountain & Glacier Development Organization. ❏

Cisco Moves Dave West

Cisco, the world-wide technology leader, has appointed Dave West as its new President for its Asia Pacific, Japan and Greater China business.

Dave has been with Cisco for 20 years and has been in various leadership roles during that period. He has led Cisco's worldwide Enterprise Networking and Security sales.

Most recently, he was the Head of Cisco Japan. Prior to that, Dave was working with Miyuki Suzuki. He has an illustrious career spanning nearly four decades.



Currently based in Tokyo, Dave will relocate to Cisco's Asia Pacific, Japan and Greater China headquarters in Singapore. ❏

HINT OPENS FIRST OUTLET



Hint stepped into the clothing industry in January 2020. It has recently celebrated its first anniversary with an outlet in Bahadurabad.

Hint's online presence is very strong and they deliver their products all over Pakistan as well as globally.

The brand offers innovative designs and good quality fabrics. ❏

'Shaam Ki Chai'

A new digital talk show, 'Shaam Ki Chai' hosted by Pakistani-Canadian Nitasha Syed is on YouTube.

'Shaam Ki Chai' endeavours to break through the traditional media framework, telling stories of Pakistani expats that are making waves all over the globe, along with prominent personalities from Pakistan. The talk show aims to focus on light-hearted conversations over a cup of tea. The show aims to capture warmth and lightheartedness while highlighting the diverse and exciting members of the Pakistani Diaspora all over the world.

It is imperative that positive and constructive content is produced and more people come to hear about the successes and achievements of each other. The concept of the show is to give a sense of connection to those who are away from their homeland.

'Shaam Ki Chai' is a dynamic platform that will feature a wide array of notable personalities without a firm focus on any niche, for a free-flowing conversation with the host. The show will be featuring startup CEOs, artists, tech leaders and journalists. ❏



COLLABORATION WITH TURKEY

A Turkish delegation with Dirili : Ertu rul's executive producer Kamal Tekdin and actor Celal Al met the Prime Minister Imran Khan recently. Pakistani actors Adnan Siddiqui and Humayun Saeed, along with the federal ministers Shibli Faraz and Shaheryar Afridi also attended the meeting in Islamabad. The meeting was about a joint venture between Pakistan and Turkey which will feature actors from both countries.

The venture is going to be a series based on the Khilafat Movement. The working title of the series is 'Turk Lala' based on Abdur Rehman Peshawari. Turk Lala was very close to Quaid e Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah and as the most significant parts of his life were spent in the pre-partition era, it will be interesting to see how the makers will incorporate other historical figures and events in the show. ❏



The Turkish delegation with Pakistani actors.

AWS Releases 'Darr'

Pakistani pop-rock artist AWS, an acronym for Ahmed Wahab Shah, has released his first single with a thought-provoking video marking a return after a hiatus of 15 years. 'Darr' sheds light on the courage of an acid attack survivor who defied all odds to live her life.

An amalgam of pop, rock and eastern



tones, 'Darr' features some leading musicians from across Pakistan, including Babar Khanna on percussion, Nescafe Basement's Sherry K on guitar, Faisal B on synth, the bass icon Khalid Khan and sitar maestro Rakae Jamil, who has also produced the song. ❏

YES, I DO

By Wajahat Ali Malik

The terms child marriage, early marriage and forced marriage have some common characteristics. Child marriage and early marriage mostly refer to a marriage in which one or both spouses are under 18 years old. However, early marriage is also sometimes used to describe a marriage in which one or both spouses are 18 or older, but without their free and full consent. For example, the marriage of a 19-year-old who is not physically or emotionally mature, or who does not have sufficient ability to make decisions or choices, would be considered an early marriage. Whereas, forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses are unable to give full, free and informed consent about marriage, regardless of their age. Forced marriage can also refer to a union in which one or both spouses are unable to end or leave the marriage. Because, in most countries, since children are not considered able to give legal consent, all child marriages are sometimes considered forced marriages. However, many instances have been reported in which two adolescents under the age of 18 have married each other voluntarily.

Child, early and forced marriage is a human rights violation and is not in line with several international and regional agreements, goals, including Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage, and Registration of Marriage, Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), African Charter on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child, Inter-American Convention on Human Rights, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), etc. International laws call for a uniform age of marriage for both the boy and girl and emphasise the importance of free, full and informed consent to marriage. For example, the CRC recommends that the minimum age of marriage be 18 years, while CEDAW obligates States to ensure, on the basis of equality

between men and women, the right to freely choose a spouse and parties enter into marriage only with their free and full consent. Similarly, in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, one of the goals of 'Gender Equality' (Goal 5), set the target to "eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage by 2030". 193 countries around the world, including Pakistan, have pledged to achieve this goal by 2030.

Child, early and forced marriage place children at high risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse and deprives them of their fundamental right to childhood, education, health and opportunity. It is a global problem which affects both girls and boys, but it affects girls disproportionately, especially in the South Asia region, including Pakistan. South Asia has the highest rate of child marriages in the world. Almost half (45%) of all women aged 20-24 reported being married before the age of 18 and almost one in five girls (17%) are married before the age of 15. According to UNICEF State of the World's Children, 2017 report, 18% of girls in Pakistan are married before their 18th birthday and 4% are married before the age of 15. 5% of boys in Pakistan are married before the age of 18. Pakistan ranks at number six in the world, where a girl child is married before the age of 18.

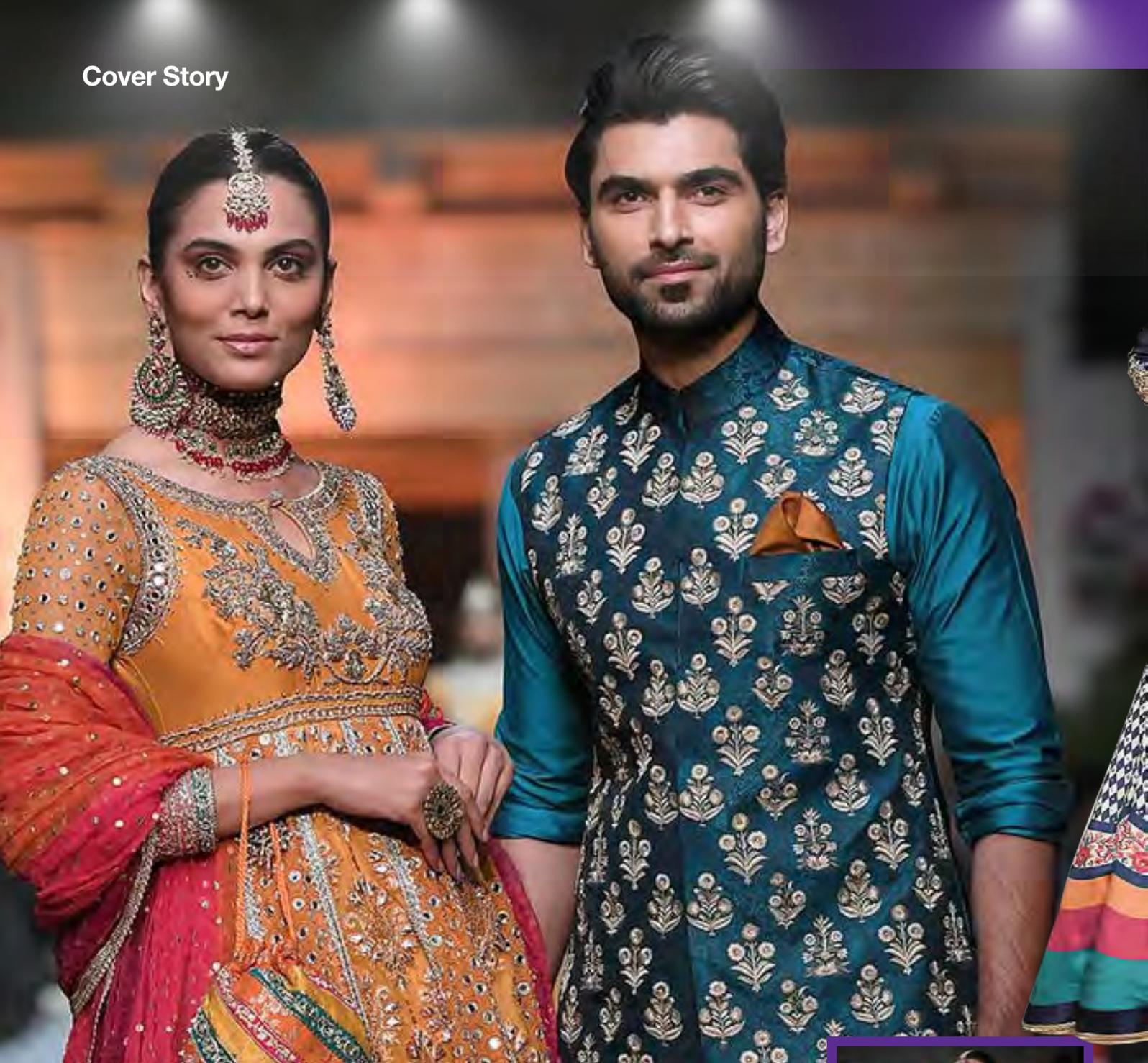
Child, early and forced marriage in Pakistan occurs mostly in rural and low-income households, where education is least important and its highest prevalence is in the Sindh province, where 72% girls and 25% boys become victims of it. Similarly, the practice is also common in Southern Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), former FATA, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Balochistan. In the tribal areas of KPK, 99% girls become victims of this menace. Furthermore, the rate of forced child marriages in Pakistan is increasingly high. A huge proportion of young girls is forced to marry under the age of 18 due to numerous 'socio-economic', 'socio-cultural' and 'religious minorities' reasons in the country. According to the UK's Forced Marriage Unit, in 2017, 439



cases of child forced marriage were reported in Pakistan, which ranked it at the highest amid top four 'focused' countries, followed by Bangladesh, Somalia and India.

Pakistan's current legislation on child, early and forced marriage sets different and discriminatory legal marriage ages for boys and girls. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 was the primary law which was adopted in Pakistan in 1947 after independence and is still applicable in ICT, KPK, Balochistan, GB and AJK areas. This law sets the legal marriage age at 16 for girls and 18 for boys which is against the internationally accepted level of age of marriage. Punjab and Sindh have enacted their own laws to address child marriages. Sindh has enacted an exemplary legislation on this subject and sets 18 years of age for both boys and girls and prescribes strict punishments for perpetrators, aiders and abettors of underage marriage. It also declared solemnizing of underage marriage as a cognizable, non-bailable and non-compoundable offence. Punjab retained the legal marriage age at 16 for girls and 18 for boys and introduced a clause declaring underage marriage a bailable offence. The Federal government has tried to amend the child marriage law five times but only once received success in making amendments. It still does not address the child, early and forced marriages completely and does not set the marriageable age for girls at 18. Similarly, the governments of KPK, Balochistan, GB and AJK are also unable to enact any law on these lines to date.

Although, legislation exists to address child, early and forced marriages in Pakistan, but its enforcement and interpretation is missing, because Pakistani courts often apply Shariah (Islamic Law) to decide such cases. They interpret that any girl irrespective of her age, who has gone through puberty or experienced her first menstrual cycle is eligible for marriage. ❌



Festive Mix of Print and Embroidery

After almost a year of the global coronavirus pandemic, Karachi based designer Zainab Ghottani hosted the first show of 2021 and it was a welcome occasion for all. Zainab's solo presentation, an eclectic collection titled 'Bagh-e-Ishq', exhibited at the Jehangir Kothari Parade, Clifton.





'Bagh-e-Ishq' featured sublime mix of 50 different eastern and contemporary silhouettes for both women and men taking inspiration from the rich art and architecture of the Ottoman Empire. Beautiful summer friendly hues that ranged from pretty to expressive, emulated the vivid colors of the central Asian landscape, with embroideries that showcased intricate details with sublime harmony.

There was plenty of bling and colour, and dashes of zardozi, resham, sequins and thread embroideries mingled with digitally printed florals and tiled patterns. Crushed chiffons were followed by silks, subdued whites and

golds preceding bright splashes of colour, classic Eastern silhouettes mixed in with tweaked modern ones. There were embroidered waistcoats, shirts with long embellished necklines, a glittering slim-cut lehnga in peach and pink here and an ombre silk sari there. The men, meanwhile, walked out in sherwanis and kurtas, classic cuts set off often by colour and embroidery.

Many of the designs relied on a festive mix of print and embroidery rather than on the intricate swirls of embellishment that tend to be Zainab's signature. Block prints and screen prints replaced the borders that are often worked with embroideries, and a smattering of sequins preferred over thick layers of handwork. It was pretty but cost-effective and, also, quintes-

entially Zainab, who has always been a designer with a strong eye for business.

Pakistan's top models Sadaf Kanwal and Aimal Khan opened the show as the classic bride and groom while several other models walked down the runway in pairs and showcased the outfits in choreographed twirls, which complimented the essence of romance, togetherness and bridal bliss.

The décor and art direction of the event was by The Social Squad, with choreography by Production 021 and live music by Zia and Mujeeb who flew in from Hunza. Hair and Make-up was by team Nabila and N-Gents. Jewelry for the show by Allure by MHT and shoes for men by The ShoeMakers & Co. Besides being a Covid SOP compliant outdoor event, it was notable that all precautionary measures were implemented.

Zainab Chottani's first solo show wrapped up aptly with an exuberant burst of fireworks, splayed out over Karachi's Jahangir Kothari Parade. 

BETWEEN DREAMS AND REALITIES

Of Hawks and Doves

For most people, Sartaj Aziz needs no introduction. One of our most distinguished sons from the tribal north, Aziz's star-studded career has included positions such as finance minister, foreign minister, long-term senator, and ones involving important work for the United Nations. Although he carefully and comprehensively outlines his perception of Pakistani history and governance dating from the sixties almost to the present day, that type of general outline is well-known to the average, educated Pakistani. This review therefore honours the image of Aziz as he is portrayed in his own words, and gives a sense of the man behind the titles. An astute historian and government servant, Niccolò Machiavelli, noted: 'It is not titles that reflect honour on men but men on their titles.' This is evident from a perusal of Aziz's striking tome.

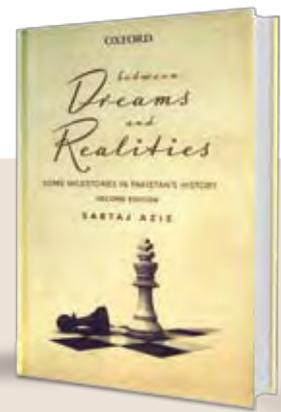
Hailing from Mardan—his birthplace—where his father held notable positions, such as tehsildar, Aziz comes from a highly respected Pakhtun family that values sound character and education over and above ambition. Although he lost his mother at a tender age, Aziz speaks with genuine affection and respect for his stepmother, who raised him and his sister as if they were her own. A life-altering meeting during a prize winning ceremony with the great M A Jinnah inspired the young man to devote his life to a career of public service. Instead of pursuing law (which his father ardently desired for him), Aziz entered the development sector, and by means of the civil service, cemented his early career. He was paramount, both nationally and internationally, in working in areas such as food and agriculture, but his undeniable financial acumen led him to serve as a remarkably competent finance minister, and his diplomatic skills (respected by the Indians, Chinese, Americans, and obviously Pakistanis) enabled him to serve the country's foreign policy interests with dedication and a staunch display of ethics in his capacity as finance minister.

Perhaps his closest and most influential relationship was with former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, but even others such as Muhammad Khan Junejo acknowledged (indeed just after a single meeting over dinner) that Aziz's vision for the country's betterment was both sincere and practical. His delineation

of the clash between Ghulam Ishaq Khan's rule-oriented mentality and Nawaz Sharif's imperious autocratic attitude is especially intriguing and well-laid out. Although generally tactful, Aziz does not mince words when needed, stating that had Benazir not adopted a confrontational stance towards acquiring power in the Punjab (which was impossible for her, given Sharif's popular political dominance in the province) her association with both Nawaz Sharif and his supporters would have been far more harmonious. He exhibits loyalty towards Sharif not simply because the latter recognized and fully utilized his potential but also because he provided a measure of stability to the country over the course of three terms, until he was besieged towards the tail-end of his career.

Always a pacifist at heart, Aziz understood the need for the country's nuclear development program but was inordinately (and sensibly) restrained when it came to advocating nuclear conflict with India. Indeed, he was truly horrified at the loss of life in the Kargil conflict, not simply because the offensive violated the Lahore Declaration he had worked so hard with A B Vajpayee's team to establish, but also because the army in general and President (General) Musharraf in particular did not seem to view the massive 'carpet bombing' of Pakistanis by Indians as much more than necessary collateral damage. On a lighter note, at one point in the book he makes a distinction between doves (that advocate peace), hawks (that advocate aggression) and 'Hoves' (that fall somewhere in between and have the unhappy task of sitting on the fence regarding military and security matters). Be that as it may, along with being a virtuously dove-like pacifist, he is very much a civilian at heart and while his knowledge of security matters is finely tuned, there are examples throughout the book of his subtle, ideological differences with the military.

This point just illustrates that one man's meat is another man's poison and his underscoring of financial tensions and troubles during Imran Khan's regime highlight the fact that his financial acumen was much stronger than that of many members of Prime Minister Khan's government. Earlier in the book, he even makes note of Benazir's mistake in not appointing an actual finance



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minister and trying to handle the country's portfolio herself, with V A Jaffery simply serving as a financial advisor. He is also critical of the fact that security and intel experts under President Asif Zardari's government may well have known that Osama Bin Laden was residing a stone's throw from the Kakul Military Academy but chose to be apathetic about the matter until the Americans stepped in aggressively.

This laundry list of chosen comments here underlies an enormous amount of work done by Aziz in liaising with China and the United States on foreign policy issues, working towards vital Senate matters (about the fine points of which he displayed both intuitive and experiential understanding), and furthering the development of the country while remaining true to Jinnah's overarching vision.

Aziz's interpersonal skills appear to be cut from the same cloth as those of the charismatic and refined Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. A highly accomplished linguist (fluent in English, Urdu, Pushto, Punjabi, Persian, and Italian), he was able to converse in Pushto with Mullah Omar (never an easy person to deal with) in order to retrieve the dead bodies of nine Iranis who were killed in the Mazar-e-Sharif attack. He equally readily charmed Rouhani of Iran at a later date by speaking eloquently to him in Persian, and gradually won the respect of international leaders as diverse as Bill Clinton, Hamid Karzai and Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Unassuming and modest, Aziz shies throughout the book from praising himself, but it is impossible for him to write a truthful account of his career without bringing to light some of the hard-won high regard in which he was held by many. His pertinent comments on FATA reforms towards the end of the book bring one back full circle to the tribal north of which he now (in his tenth decade of life) deserves to be regarded as an especially proud and worthy son. Given the intrinsic pride and virtue inherent in the Pakhtun people, that is no mean compliment. ■

THE QUEEN'S GAMBIT

Chess Rivals

By Maryam J. Kherulla

One jumped when 'The Queen's Gambit' became Netflix's most watched series. The lockdown was in full throttle and there was great buzz about the film.

Based on the novel of the same name by Walter Tevis, the first episode where the young 8 year old Beth Harmon is left orphaned due to an accident engineered by her disturbed single mother, made one feel as if walking into a dark psychological drama.

It could have been a story of abuse at the Kentucky orphanage but one was pleasantly wooed by the role of the custodian Mr. Shaibal, played convincingly by Bill Camp, who intrigued Beth's imagination when she saw him playing

chess in the basement of the orphanage. Learning to play from the stoic man, Beth pored over books about the game and amazed the custodian with her genius.

Yet, another thing Beth discovered at the orphanage, which left its mark was an initiation to tranquilizers. Goaded by the effect of the medicine, she played chess games in her head by using the ceiling as her chessboard.

The story was punctuated by flashbacks of Beth's memories as a child with her mother and how the two coped with life in a trailer and without a father, which takes

a toll. As the series progressed, so did the viewers' knowledge of the young girl's uneasy background.

Beth was adopted at 15 by a childless couple and life seemed to take another unexpected turn as the young girl now had to cope with peer pressure at high school. Still

driven by the 64-piece game played on a checker board, she entered a state championship where she astounded everyone with her determined prodigal win.

The beauty of the period drama is the seamless intertwining of the glamour and costumes of

the 60s, meshed with the history of great chess players and the complicated moves of the cerebral game. From the USA to Mexico, Paris and Russia, the visual aesthetics are portrayed magnificently.

Even though the game's rules and range of openings talked about in the series were all Greek and Latin to the viewer, yet the editing, background score and pace was so mesmerizing that one couldn't help but be hooked. The chess sequences were electrifying and made one hold one's breath, squeal, laugh and cry-- sometimes all at the same time.



The role of Beth Harmon played by Anya Taylor Joy was in itself a tale of acting mastery where she conveyed to perfection the loneliness she felt; her obsession with the game and her struggles with drug abuse and alcoholism.

The role of her adoptive mother played by Marielle Heller was a breath of fresh air and her unexpected support to her sporting career made one fall in love with her. The train of chess rivals who later become allies were all enthralling performances by stellar actors – Harry Melling, Thomas Brodie Sangster and Jacob Fortune Lloyd (to mention the most important). They won the viewer over. Yet, the proverbial cherry on top was the intensity of the last episode where Beth vied for the world championship and went head to head with the Russian Grandmaster, Borgov, which had one whooping in triumph and weeping for joy.

The feminist viewer loved Beth's audacity at defeating men at a man's game; while the aspect of getting what one wanted through sheer hard work and perseverance, despite a natural gift, was a chord that needed to resound loudly with the current generation. Oscar nominated director Scott Frank's brilliance stayed with one long after the last scene closed. **S**

FILM

RAQS E BISMIL

Matters of the Heart

By Muhammad Ali Khan

The TV serial sector in Pakistan seems to be quite busy. While 2020 was known for 'Mere Paas Tum Ho', 2021 might be known for 'Raqs e Bismil'.

Since the poster of 'Raqs e Bismil' came out, the serial is making waves and its clips are being widely circulated online on social media platforms. Produced by Shazia Wajahat and MD Productions, 'Raqs e Bismil' is seen on HUM TV. With Imran Ashraf and Sarah Khan as lead characters, the serial is a treat as the two actors are together on-screen for the first time.

Directed by Wajahat Rauf and written by Hashim Nadeem, the serial is an unconventional take on the love and drama that revolves around two characters who have different ideologies and understanding of love, life and relations. Just like most of Nadeem's writings, there is an underlining message that deals with matters of the heart and love, coupled with the love of God. While Rauf has returned to television after a long time, Nadeem comes back after 'Khuda aur Muhabbat'.

The story of Raqs e Bismil starts with the introduction of the patriarch of Kashana-e-Pira, Peer Qudrat Ullah Shah (Mehmood Aslam) who heads a Syed household. His sons are Moosa (Imran Ashraf) and Essa (Momin Saqib). When the two come to know that their cousin Sakina (Anoushay Abbasi) is secretly getting married to a man who is not a Syed, they gatecrash her nikah and forcibly take her home as their dogmatic beliefs do not allow anyone to marry out of the Syed gharana.

While Moosa seems to be a heartless and hot-headed man, his brother Essa has a soft corner for Sakina. When his father arranges his marriage with Sakina, he not only acknowledges that

she is older than him but also realises that she is more educated and, most importantly, is in love with another man.

This shows how the two brothers might have turned out differently with a different upbringing.

An angry Sakina then curses Moosa, saying, "Khuda karey tumhe bhi kisi say pyar ho aur woh tumhe na miley". Things take their course and eventually Moosa is witnessed falling for Zohra (Sarah Khan) without knowing much about her. He thinks Zohra is a pious girl whom no namehram has ever seen. But the truth is otherwise. While Moosa belongs to an orthodox line of noble peers, Zohra is a dancer at private events. From his denial and disbelief to acceptance of his love while facing opposition from his family, Imran Ashraf showcases his inner turmoil brilliantly.

Sarah Khan as Zohra carries an abaya and veil with perfection. With her kohleid black eyes, she creates magic on-screen. Anoushey Abbas as Sakina plays a pivotal but manipulative role in the story. Peer Qudratullah Shah as Mehmood Aslam plays the character of a patriarch having a misogynistic mindset. His transition from his most famous role as the silly Mehmood Saab of 'Bulbulay' to Peer Qudratullah Shah is quite impressive. Gul-e-Rana is another brilliant choice who can make any role her own. Her character as Anna Ji is a delight for the eyes. The drama also includes model Zara Sheikh, for the first time, Furqan Qureshi, Rashid Farooqui, Juveria Abbasi, Saleem Mairaj and Nida

Mumtaz.

The drama portrays the harsh realities of society where many people still



do not consult their children about their marriage. Just like in the story, women have no say in matters of life and death and are merely showpieces who must be guarded to protect the family's pride and honour. The serial clearly shows double standards: Moosa chooses his wife but never allows his cousin Sakina to do so.

With a strong plot, intelligent direction and good cinematography, everything is well put together and attention to detail is visible. It is refreshing to see a different story on television. Nida Mumtaz and Javeria Abbasi support each other, irrespective of the fact that the former is the wife of a patriarch and the latter is a widow. Even the character of Sakina, who is bold, confident and not afraid to speak her mind, exists in such a suffocating environment. There is no unnecessary bitterness, drama and ill-will to get more ratings. The drama's great production quality and the actors' strong performances make 'Raqs e Bismil' captivating. ■



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