

Slogan

Review:

Baaji

Around Town:

**Alef – Edit II by
Sania Maskatiya**

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	S\$ 20
Sri Lanka	Rs. 300
Thailand	B 250
Turkey	Lira. 10
UAE	AED 20
UK	£ 5
USA	\$ 10

Will Superstar Shine?

Many are already waiting for the release of the film as a number of people applauded it at its trailer launch. Now let's see if it's really worthy enough.



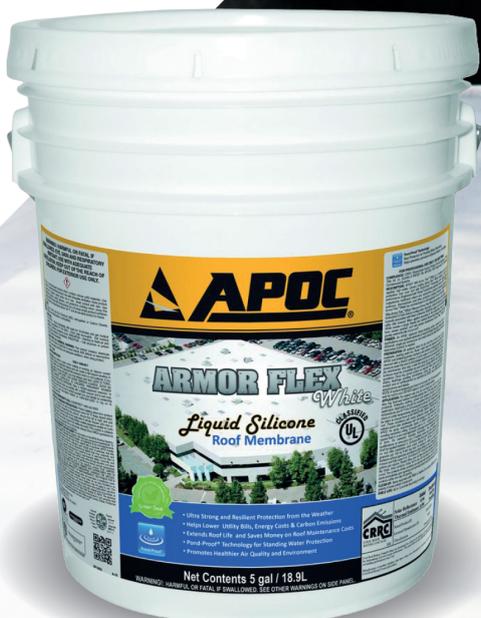
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Going Beyond
100
Years of Excellence

Slogan

August 2019

Vol. 24 No. 8

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Price: PKR. 200

Slogan is published every month by
Syed Jawaid Iqbal for

JAWZ Communications (Pvt.) Ltd.
and printed by Shabbirsons, Karachi.

Read complete issue of Slogan on:
www.slogan.com.pk

The views expressed by the contributors are not
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Available on EBSCO and affiliated international
databases through Asianet-Pakistan.

Storm in Mahira's Cup

The recent brouhaha being made in the press as well as social media over veteran TV artiste Firdous Jamal's remarks about actress Mahira Khan is quite surprising. Does the matter merit such strong reaction by the showbiz fraternity? However, it has, once again, exposed the double standards the showbiz world maintains to subjectively target a few individuals because of their gender identity.

As the story goes, Firdous Jamal recently appeared in a morning show hosted by Faysal Qureshi. During the show, in one of its segments called 'Mashwara Dain,' Qureshi asked Firdous Jamal to give some advice to the new crop of actors and actresses. When Mahira Khan's picture was on display, Jamal quickly passed comments on Mahira Khan. He said, "I am sorry to say that Mahira is not heroine stuff."

Terming her a mediocre sort of a model, Jamal said Mahira Khan is neither a good actress nor a heroine and she had better play the role of a mother, because she is old enough not to play a heroine at her given age. As observed on most occasions, such views are positively taken as candid, fearless and straightforward, especially when these are expressed by females. One cannot forget what Bushra Ansari, a leading TV artiste, described Wasim Akram's face as "lamba sa munh" and that too in a live TV show.

From Inzamam ul Haq's poor English language skills to Misbah-ul-Haq 'tuk tuk' batting style, one can cite a number of such instances when our national cricketers become the easy target of taunt and tease by female TV hosts, such as Nadia Khan. For a long period, she remained the most popular morning show host because of her off-the-cuff witticism and humorous comments that were largely directed towards male celebrities from various walks of life, notably politicians and leading sports personalities. Despite falling under ageism and sexism, however, her remarks failed to move the most sensitive souls who are otherwise trigger-ready to condemn any comments tinged with gender stereotypes and labelling.

Among the other relevant examples, moustaches of former president General Pervez Musharraf and Asif Ali Zardari as well as the prominent baldness of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif have been featured many a times in a number of sloppy jokes and slapdash comments made on-air, but who cares? In the showbiz world too, we often find male figures becoming laughing stocks, mainly because of their physical appearance and old-age looks. For instance, such middle-aged film actors as Mustafa Qureshi and late Sultan Rahi were ridiculed throughout their film careers for the same reasons. Despite his huge fame and popularity, Atif Aslam was recently labelled as 'be sura' by Javeria Abbasi, an actress and former model. But once again, no one came forward to defend the toneless singer, as expected.

The bottom line is that in the modern age every next celebrity or known artiste is subject to memes and trolls without any justifiable rhyme or reason. When cricketer Saif Ahmed's poor captaincy coupled with his jaw-opening yawn during the high-voltage match against India can be ridiculed in the media for an indefinite period than how can Mahira Khan's less than mediocre acting skills be exempt from any criticism?

Obviously, Firdous Jamal should have used a better analogy to let Mahira know where she stands as a performer. However, the way he has been lambasted on account of promoting ageism and perpetuating stereotypes seems to be an act taken out of bias shown toward senior male artistes.

Last but not least, when the likes of Sunny Leone may easily find their defenders in the showbiz community, than an actress like Mahira Khan could certainly be a much better person to stand with her, particularly at times when she desperately needs moral support.



Javed Ansari
Editor



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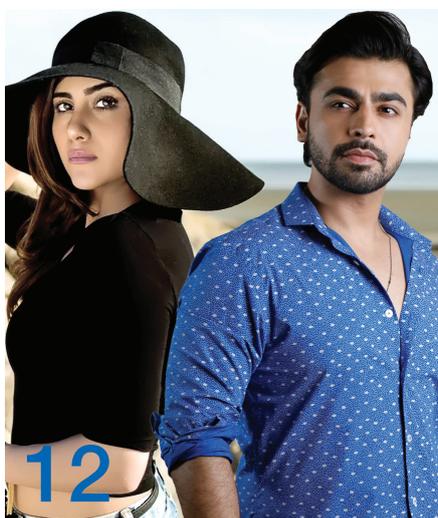
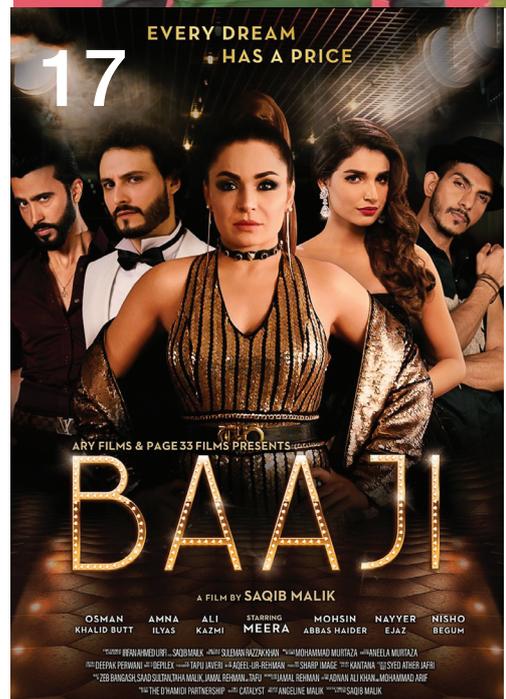
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Lux Style Awards 2019

This is with reference to the last cover story on Lux Style Awards titled 'Of Glitz and Glamour'. Despite the controversy around the nominations of Lux Style Awards, it proved to be a one-of-a-kind event. A number of artists withdraw their names from the nominations but still a huge crowd was present in the event along with artists who grooved to peppy dance numbers. The audience applauded the hard work done by the organisers and of course the artists. The performances were over-whelming and the awards were given to worthy artists. Overall, everything went as it was planned and without any disruption.

*Noman Siddiqui
Lahore*

Social Media Opportunities

Since the partition between India and Pakistan, Kashmir has been a topic of grave concern. It was even the cause of three wars in 1948, 1965 and 1999 but the problem still remains unresolved. Though the area is famous for its extraordinary natural beauty and resources, it is still tangled and entrapped between India and Pakistan. The Kashmiris are suffering with loss of property, money and lives. Both India and Pakistan are nuclear powers and in the case of another war between them, the entire region, including Kashmir, would be destroyed. There is some hope of bilateral talks between the two countries though Modi is still not clear.



*Cami Mendez,
Ontario, Canada*

Sri Lankan Cuisine

This is with reference to the article 'Inspiring Flavours' by Muhammad Omar Iftikhar. I hail from Sri Lanka and after reading the article

I was amazed at how accurately the writer has explained our Sri Lankan cuisine. When it comes to food, Sri Lanka indeed has a variety of cuisines that depict our rich culture, tradition and unity. Seafood is popular in our country and has a speciality in the way it is cooked and served. Over the past years, our cuisine has expanded. The influence of neighbouring countries has further added depth and taste to the already mouth-watering dishes. A large number of condiments with the main food are the reason why tourists love our food and consume it with delight.



*Rashmi Yohan,
Colombo, Sri Lanka*



Health Hazard

Malpractices in hospitals and clinics are the main reason why Pakistan is has become a centre of so many incidences of HIV, AIDS, dialysis, etc. Malpractices occur where there is lack of awareness or an intention exists to save large sums of money which can be funnelled into other areas. Doctors in clinics are common people who become doctors after working for a few months as helpers to doctors. The government in Pakistan needs to look into this with a lot of seriousness because the problem of good health concerns the common man. There needs to be strict control of malpractices.

*Fahad Anwar,
Karachi, Pakistan*



Online Ease

The shift towards e-marketing has increased with the increase of new technologies in today's world. People find it more convenient in looking for their desired things online and ordering them rather than going to a shop to buy it. There is no doubt that e-commerce has taken over the world and people are now finding more ways to make things easier for them. As technology has improved, it has empowered consumers as well. More than 50 percent of the people are now shopping online without any worries as their smallest wishes are just one click away. The increase in e-commerce and the effective buying decision of the consumer has made life easy for everyone.

*Daud Aftab,
Karachi, Pakistan*

Scholarship Opportunities

In a poor city like Turbat, many talented students are disappointed because of the lack of scholarships that can help them in completing their higher education. Whenever students complete their Matriculation, their parents seem unable to send them to colleges and universities where education is too expensive but it must not continue in future. The government should provide them with scholarship opportunities so that they can study in colleges and universities. Education is the only power that can change the world. Pakistan needs to make education a cost-free facility for its youth. This will also help Pakistan to progress.

*Shakeel Phullan,
Turbat, Pakistan*

The world waits for no one – those who do not learn and evolve can stumble and often fall.
- **HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Ruler of Dubai**



I find doing speeches nerve-wrecking.
- **Kate Middleton, wife of British Prince William**



As a tennis player you can win and you can lose, and you have to be ready for both.
- **Rafael Nadal, Tennis player**



You cannot live in the best city in the world and have people living on the streets.
- **Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London**



The real question is: "Why should we make an exception for billionaire politicians?" We should not.
- **Tulip Siddiq, British politician**



Women are blessed with energy - a power which is unique. I have been very fortunate to have played strong women and explored their strengths through my films.
- **Vidya Balan, Indian actress**



Whatever you do, do with determination. You have one life to live.
- **Alia Bhatt, Indian actress**



SAME MATERIAL?

Among the many challenges that the PML-N is facing these days, some are those created by its current Vice President, Maryam Nawaz. Her differences with her uncle Shahbaz Sharif are already well-known. According to some sources, one reason why the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, went readily into NAB custody and did not even apply for bail-before-arrest was that he did not want to be a part of Maryam's protest rallies. Even Ahsan Iqbal decided not to join a rally led by Maryam Nawaz. This is



impacting the future of PML-N, a party that Maryam's father Nawaz Sharif built with so much effort and which is against the wall these days. Probably Maryam does not see it as a problem because she intends to follow the footsteps of Benazir Bhutto. Is she the same material? ❏

RUDDERLESS PARTY

Was he ever a serious player in Pakistan's politics? Except for a great pedigree – mother Benazir Bhutto, maternal grandfather Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Bilawal Bhutto never emerged as a serious contender to the leadership of Pakistan's People's Party which is, in any case, in its last throes of existence. Whatever was left of the Party was ruined by Asif Ali Zardari who never wanted his son Bilawal to wear the mantle of his mother's successor. In any case, it always appeared that Bilawal Bhutto was only half-heartedly interested in politics. While it may have been expected that after Papa Asif Zardari's arrest, Bilawal would stand up to lead the PPP, the rumour is that he has fled the country to



avoid being arrested himself and the PPP is now left rudderless - or leaderless. ❏

YAWN AND MORE

Now famous for his great 'yawn', in a World Cup 2019 group match, Pakistan cricket captain Sarfaraz Ahmed's innings seem to be coming to an end. Celebrated earlier as a winning skipper, Sarfaraz Ahmed has lost his touch. He has



grown fat and is spotted here and there eating burgers and pizzas, his game has gone bad because he is not a really agile wicketkeeper anymore while he has never stood out as a dependable middle-order batsman and his captaincy is in question because Pakistan is emerging at the losing end much too often in all formats of the game. In fact, questions are now being asked that whether Sarfaraz is fit to lead Pakistan in any format, or whether he is fit to be in the Pakistan team at all? Perhaps he could do with a little breather and stay out of cricket for some time to get his fitness back. ❏

COMEBACK KID

India needs young leadership and Rahul Gandhi of the Congress Party squarely fits the bill. It is another thing though that the scion of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty was severely mauled in the 2019 elections. Old man Narendra Modi and all his rightist supporters got all the votes. This left Rahul Gandhi with no other option but to leave politics. It seems though that the Congress Party will have none of it as it wants Rahul Gandhi and other young people in the Congress Party to come to the fore with more vehemence. The Party leadership feels India's population is young and the political leaders too should be young so that they can better understand what the voters want. Will this inspire Rahul to make a comeback? ❏



Jazz Wins

Jazz won two awards at the Pakistan Digi Awards in the categories of Best Social Media Campaign and Best Digital Campaign for their Mega Super Duper and Super Duper Cards, respectively.

The Pakistan Digi Awards came back for the third time this year to recognize campaigns that left a mark on the Pakistani Digital marketing landscape. A jury panel that consisted of a mix of leaders from the digital marketing and technology industry were presented with case studies sent in by advertisers.

The growing popularity of digital media platforms has resulted in a shift of focus for brands in Pakistan and Jazz, a leader in digital communications, works hard to utilize the digital universe to maximize its brand awareness.

Jazz, along with its creative and digital agencies, Iris Digital, Spark Pakistan and IAL Saatchi & Saatchi, won awards for their respective work. w



Spreading the Vibe

Florent Denecker and Victorien Mulliez or FDVM, the international music group that has performed in major music festivals like Coachella, Burning Man and Tomorrowland, released their official music video for the song 'Spread the Vibe' documenting their exciting journey across Pakistan. The French DJ duo visited Pakistan earlier this year to perform at the Solis Festival 2019 and got a mass following.

'Spread the Vibe' celebrates the rich culture of Pakistan and introduces the international audience to its colourful side like never shown before. In these testing times, where Pakistan is working hard to improve its perception and image in the world, the video will help to portray the soft image of Pakistan and spread the message of peace, love and celebration. More importantly, it will encourage people to visit Pakistan, promote tourism and consequently, will

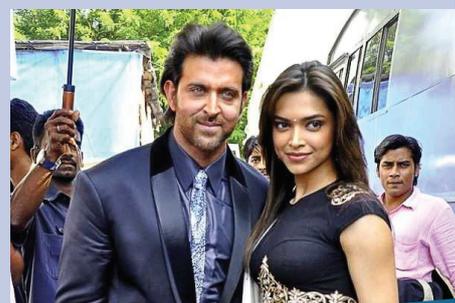


have a positive effect on the local economy.

FDVM is on a mission to spread happiness and positivity across the globe through the belief that music is a powerful way to connect and unite humanity. With their unparalleled ability to skilfully navigate between mainstream and underground music, FDVM serves the crowd with positive sounds. S

Satte Pe Satta Remake

Hrithik Roshan and Deepika Padukone have come together for a Satta Pe Satta remake. Hrithik plays the role of Amitabh Bachchan while



Deepika will be doing Hema Malini's role. Rohit Shetty and Farah Khan are collaborating for the remake. Both of them wanted Deepika to play the lead as they feel that she resembles Hema Malini. Deepika agreed as soon as the script was narrated to her by Farah. This is the first time that Hrithik and Deepika will come together on the screen. S

New Kia Sportage Arrives



The most anticipated SUV, Kia Sportage, is now officially open for booking in Pakistan. All 12 authorized Kia dealerships in 8 cities are waiting for customers. Deliveries will be commencing from this month.

KIA Sportage 2019 is a compact crossover SUV launched in Pakistan with a simple transmission and an elegant interior. It is spacious, comfortable and has smart features that make it a perfect choice. This 4th generation version of Kia Sportage was launched in 2016 at the Frankfurt Auto show and is now being launched in Pakistan in collaboration with Yunus Brother Group. [S](#)

Stylish Bilal Khan

Bilal presented some eyebrow-raising looks on Instagram recently. He isn't afraid of experimenting with his wardrobe and hair!

His style transformation from basic tees to neon jackets and floral button-downs was effortless. He got bored of the suave, dapper style that he had become associated with over the years and especially after playing the character of Shahram in 'Khamoshi'. He enjoys experimenting, not just in fashion but even in things like direction of his music or the colour of his hair.

Bilal's Instagram is right now popping with bright colours, whites, patterns and crazy stuff because it makes him happy and lightens his mood. His new music has a summer vibe. He bought some stuff from Levi's and jackets from Republic by Omar Farooq. His sister hand-painted custom denim



jackets for him which are his prized possessions and which set a nice tone for a shift in his style game. [S](#)

'Aagahi' Nominated

China's awareness series 'Aagahi' has

been nominated at the 66th Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity. The series was a public service campaign to educate women about their legal rights in Pakistan and has been nominated for the Sustainable Development Goals Lions in the Gender Equality category. It was the first Pakistani awareness series to be nominated for Cannes Lions.

Aamina Sheikh has done the viceover for the series. Aagahi has been produced in collaboration with the Women Action Forum. [S](#)



Taylor Swift is Highest Paid



Singer Taylor Swift was named the world's highest-paid entertainer but was closely followed by two members of the wider Kardashian clan Kylie Jenner and Kanye West. The annual Forbes Celebrity 100 list also had soccer stars Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar among the top 10, along with British singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran and 1970s soft rock band The Eagles, who embarked on a new tour in 2018.

Earlier this year Forbes declared Jenner to be the world's youngest billionaire. Forbes compiled its 2019

list by estimating pre-tax earnings from June 2018-June 2019, before deducting fees for managers, based on data from Nielsen, touring trade publication Pollstar, film database IMDB and interviews with industry experts and many of the personalities themselves.

The magazine said the world's 100 highest-paid people pulled in \$6.3 billion pretax over the past 12 months. American boxer Floyd Mayweather and actor George Clooney took the top two spots on last year's list but landed outside the top 10 this time. [S](#)



First Hijabi On Screen

Zoha Rahman, the London-based Pakistani can be seen in the new film 'Spider-Man: Far From Home' along with Tom Holland, Jake Gyllenhaal and Zendaya. She plays the superhero's hijabi classmate who joins him on a school trip to Europe.

Stepping into the professional world of acting came about

after Zoha started modelling and doing commercials. Eventually, she landed a few roles in films. Not much has been revealed yet her character is already breaking barriers. A role in a Marvel film means that she is an important fragment of her community and there is nothing about how she looks. **S**

Jennifer Gates Grows Up

Competing in an elite equestrian competition, Jennifer Gates, the eldest daughter of billionaire Bill Gates is preparing to start medical school later this year.

As team manager of the Paris Panthers, she travels the world taking part in the the lucrative Longines Global Champions Tour (GCT) and the Global Champions League (GCL).

Growing up in the limelight, the 23-year-old tried her hand at a number of different games -- including softball and basketball --

before finding her place in the world of show jumping.

Jennifer graduated from Stanford University in 2018 and took a year out to concentrate on her sporting ambitions, but will soon be returning to her studies.

"Med. school will, of course, be a new challenge, but I love staying mentally active in whatever I'm doing," she added.

She revealed that her father loves the thrill of the event and can also be seen riding in his spare time. **S**



More Drama



Under the banner of 7th Sky Entertainment, producers Abdullah Kadwani and Asad Qureshi have launched 'Ramz-e-Ishq'.

Featuring a dramatic love story, Mikhaal Zulfiqar and Hiba Bukhari provide an emotional representation of love developed over many years and lost within seconds. Other incredible members of the cast include Abid Ali, Aijaz Aslam, Kiran Haq, Zainab Qayyum, Gohar Rasheed, Nida Mumtaz, Shabbir Jan, Azra Mohiuddin, Shaista Jabeen, Faryal Mehmood and Manzoor Qureshi.

'Ramz-e-Ishq' is a story of heartbreak and of the influences of family pressure on the success and failure of relationships. With exceptional direction by Siraj-ul-Haque, the storyline of the serial has been created by Misbah Nosheen. **S**

Armstrong's spacesuit restored



The spacesuit that Apollo 11's Neil Armstrong wore for that one small step on the moon is back on display. The 76-pound suit had been out of view and needed to be rehabbed before it was put on display again at the Air and Space Museum in Washington. ❏



Farhan and Sohaili in 'Prem Gali'

Farhan Saeed and Sohaili Ali Abro will be seen in the drama serial 'Prem Gali'. They have done it together in 'De Ijazat Jo Tu.' The serial is being directed by Qasim Ali and the script is written by Faiza Iftikhar. Nadeem Baig will give his creative inputs.

It is a family love story, based on the street known as 'Prem Gali'. It will feature various aspects of love. ❏

Young Smokers

Some 53 per cent of smokers in the world belong to the age group of 20 to 30 years, according to a survey. It says most of them resort to smoking to cope with stress.

According to figures, 56 per cent thought that smoking helped them get relief from stress while 55 per cent admitted that they are aware of its ill-effects and were anxious about their health but continue to smoke anyway. Apart from this, 55 per cent had tried to quit smoking but failed, underlying the strong addictive nature of smoking leading to difficulties in giving up.

India is one of those countries reeling under a huge burden of high mortality and

morbidity linked with tobacco addiction. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), India is home to 12 per cent of the world's smokers.

"While government policies in India have always been designed carefully around the targeted awareness programmes, the survey figures indicate that it's time to sit up and fine-tune strategies to address the issue more effectively. ❏



The Marvel Cinematic Universe has proven this year once again to be very dependable at the box office. Earlier this year, there was "Captain Marvel," the solo female hero picture starring Brie Larson, debut to \$175 million. "Avengers: Endgame," the hero ensemble follow-up to last year's "Infinity War," was no surprise as the biggest hit of the year for making \$357 million for its first weekend. And now there is "Spider-Man: Far From Home" as the third MCU film this year. And it has not disappointed.

The film debuted to an opening box office of \$185 million. For one weekend alone, the film made \$93 million, which is impressive. Even more impressive is that worldwide the film has already made half a billion dollars at the box office. This is the strongest debut for a Spider-Man film which is saying something for how many Spider-Man films have been produced in the past. ❏

Statement Pieces

Sania Maskatiya is constantly upping her game. From showing twice at the New York Fashion Week (NYFW) to coming up with collections that fit the style quotient for many, there's always a surprise waiting. Staying true to the brand aesthetic as well as trying something new has always been a famed ethos of the Sania Maskatiya brand.

The multi-award winning fashion house recently launched their latest formal wear collection with the name 'Alef – Edit II' which also has a line of printed saris available in several options. The collection has statement pieces, both Eastern and Western, for all the ladies out there who are in need of a statement piece for their events.

Alef Edit II combines Sania Maskatiya's signature compositions of cut, colour and embellishment while also staying true to the whole look. The pieces are what accentuates femininity and are current. The accentuated sleeves, Swarovski crystals, embroidered florals, tassel detailing, print ruffle blouse and of course embroidered draped saree-dresses are all worth buying. The collection comprises over 18 distinct designs available in size options and colours online and in-store at Sania Maskatiya Flagship outlets. 



Truly Komal

The 'Under theKomal Rizvi recently launched a makeup line called 'Truly Komal'. The products were designed in Spain especially for the Asian skin. The range includes nourishing whitening cream, glow serum and sunblock. Whitening cream hydrates and nourishes the skin with antioxidants and protects it from the environment. It also corrects pigmentation, dark spots, uneven skin tones and brightens it. The glow serum improves collagen production, prevents toxicity and fine lines and works as an anti-ageing, plumping agent and firms the skin. Sunblock protects the skin from the harsh sun and prevents pigmentation and early wrinkles. Komal will later add more products to her line.

A number of beauty lovers gathered for the launch. Among them were Zara Noor Abbas, Yasir Hussain, Alicia Dias, Shaista Lodhi, Meera, Sultana Siddiqui, Javaid Sheikh and Zeba Bakhtiar as well as makeup artists, stylists and beauty bloggers such as Mona J, Sana

Jafri, Beenish Pervaiz, Wajid Khan, Tehreem Zuberi, Saman Zubair, Azeema Tasleem, Sabeen Maniar, Tanzeela Hashwani, etc.

The range is available all over Pakistan at premium stores and salons and online at www.trulykomal.com. 





Many are already waiting for the release of the film as a number of people applauded it at its trailer launch. Now let's see if it's really worthy enough.

Superstar is an upcoming romantic drama film and the most awaited film of this year. Starring Mahira Khan and Bilal Ashraf in the main lead, the film has been written by Ali and Mustafa Afridi and directed by Ehteshammudin, this film has everyone waiting in anticipation. Another main attraction of this film is that Azaan Sami Khan is in charge of the music, he has also written the screenplay of the film.

The trailer of the film has been liked by everyone because it offers everything a film should offer. Looks like Superstar will be a story somewhat similar to that of the Indian film 'Taal'. It will be the story of a young lady who goes out to make it big in the industry.

Many stars are making guest appearances in this star-studded film. The big





names include Kubra Khan, Syra Sheh-roze, Hania Aamir, Osman Khalid Butt and Fahim Burney. The trailer of the film has been put together with great caution without giving the main story away; the team has managed to grab the attention of the viewers. The music of the film seems to be

one of the best things about it. Bilal Ashraf also makes his presence felt in this trailer and Mahira Khan yet again looks charming.

Apart from Superstar, Parey Hut Love is going to be another big film which will be

releasing soon. There is tough competition between the films but this trailer has given Superstar a definite edge. The trailer launch of the film was a star-studded affair. The celebrities poured out their positive feedback at the trailer launch and urged the cinema goers to watch the film. **S**

BITTER PILLS: THE GLOBAL WAR ON COUNTERFEIT DRUGS

Bitter Realities

By Taha Kehar

Conventional wisdom would have us believe that advancements in modern medicine could help us save millions of lives. But the problem of substandard and counterfeit drugs has dampened all hope that a sincere attempt is being made to guarantee transparency in the supply of drugs.

Contrary to popular perception, this crisis is not restricted to developing countries where health systems are hampered by inefficiencies and regulation is heavily compromised. If expert opinions are anything to go by, this menace has seeped into the developed world, leaving health infrastructures across the globe in a vulnerable position.

At this critical juncture, tough and cogent academic writing is needed to generate a public debate on the issue, raise awareness about the vulnerabilities in drug supply and offer plausible solutions. *Bitter Pills: The Global War on Counterfeit Drugs* by Muhammad Hamid Zaman promises to be a much-awaited primer on the subject and provides fascinating insights and solutions.

Published by Oxford University Press, the book offers shrewd observations on the menace of substandard and counterfeit drugs without relying on jargon and compromising on research. In little over 200 pages, the author draws attention to the challenges that this public health scourge has presented in an inherently globalized world that is fuelled by internet commerce and increasingly relies on pharmaceutical use.

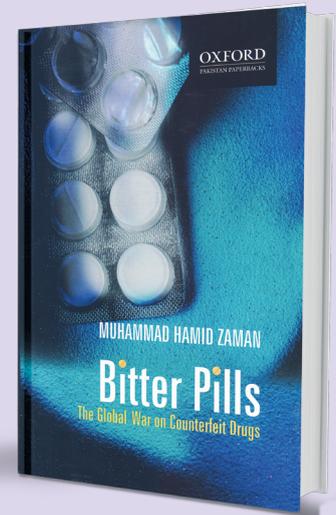
Since he is a professor of biomedical engineering and international health, Muhammad Hamid Zaman is well-placed to comment on the matter. But the author's academic credentials aren't the only factor that inspired him to pen *Bitter Pills*. Zaman's interest in a seemingly neglected topic is rooted in his curiosity about elusive notions, such as trust and

the hierarchy of quality, that drive the sale of drugs and influence the menace of falsified medicines.

A quick glance at the acknowledgments section reveals that this book is "ultimately... about hope for a better and more equitable world". The author's underlying purpose to build awareness about this public health issue and encourage people to safeguard themselves against it seems to have influenced the manner in which he has written *Bitter Pills*. Buoyed up by a gripping style that favours brevity over needless complexity, the book comes through as a manual of sorts that can enable people to think more critically about the quality of the medicines they consume.

With its emphasis on research and scrupulous attention to detail, Zaman shows readers that even an ostensibly remote "crisis of bad drugs" can impact them in a globalized world. While it is easy to dismiss such claims as attempts to raise alarm, the author manages to substantiate his ideas with references and concrete examples. The extensive use of local and international case studies lends credibility to his work and paints a nuanced portrait of the problem.

Bitter Pills can be aptly described as an audacious effort because it chooses a subject that is seldom discussed in mainstream discourse, even though it could impact the global population in unpredictable ways. Zaman tackles the issue with gusto and doesn't pull his punches. Instead, the writer presents a holistic account that highlights the magnitude of this public health concern. This is evident from the fact that the book never shies away from examining the adverse effects of using poor-quality drugs. Zaman writes: "The modern drug, even in its tiny size, is a composition of dozens of compounds and materials, some of which are used only in trace amounts, yet could be deadly if used in the wrong concentration or substituted by



similar but toxic analogues".

The author also seamlessly situates the problem of substandard and counterfeit drugs in a historical and economic context. The sections of the book that deal with these concerns are informative, engaging and highlight the implications of vulnerabilities in drug supply.

Throughout the book, there is a strong emphasis on suitable interventions that can help the world address this public health scourge through sustainable and effective policy initiatives. A robust regulatory framework that can ensure quality control for drugs is based on competence and a willingness to understand the complexities of the problems triggered by substandard and falsified medicine. The author's insights and observations reinforce this fact.

Although *Bitter Pills* underscores the importance of improved governance, suitable regulation and political will, it doesn't ignore the effects that public engagement can have in tackling the menace of counterfeit drugs. Zaman's account is especially important because it examines the need for a technological solution that could help experts take suitable action to prevent the sale of poor-quality drugs. With its command over key issues, debates and challenges posed by the provision of falsified medicines, *Bitter Pills* has all the necessary insights that can help policymakers and global health practitioners develop new strategies and concrete solutions. ❏

BAAJI

Meera's Truth

By Syeda Maham Rasheed

Pakistani cinema is going through cultural renewal with the old order dying. The transition seems to be a good one as several acceptable Pakistani films are coming to the fore. One such is 'Baaji' where Meera depicts a woman at the verge of losing it all. It would be disturbing for any actor to be in this situation knowing that their work is the only thing that feeds their soul. The first scene of the film tells all, Shameera is dancing to a song and suddenly she loses balance and breaks her leg. Yasir Hussain, playing a cameo role, delivers the next line that reveals the bottom-line of the film. 'Star hain nahin, theen. Das saal pehley theen.'

When the teaser of the film came out, many were of the view that 'Baaji' was about Meera herself but the makers were not positive about their views. Yes, 'Baaji' is indeed a film about Meera and it was commendable of her to relive the traumatic experiences and some of her worst insecurities on-screen through her character. Other films that can be mentioned in this regard are Madhur Bhandarkar's 'Fashion' (Priyanka Chopra) and 'Heroine' (Karina Kapoor).

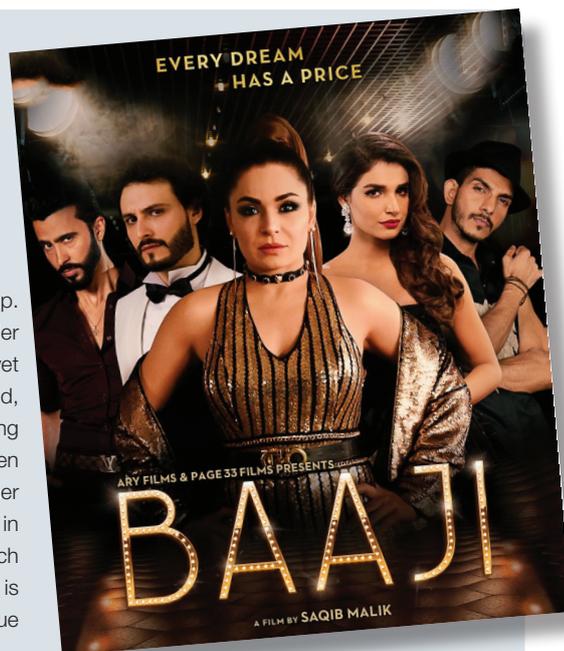
Directed by Saqib Malik, Baaji very accurately portrays the dark reality of the film industry where actors have to deal with many things to entertain audiences while maintaining their position as well as their career. The film industry discards actors

without remorse when age catches up. Shameera is facing the same situation. Her life, much like Meera's, is glamorous yet controversial, naive but misunderstood, relentless and unfaltering. She is trying hard to make a comeback on screen while dealing with the revelation of her fake nikahnama and her replacement in the song 'Gangster Guriya' with the much younger Mehwish Hayat. Her situation is so confusing that she doubts who her true friends are.

Neha (Amna Ilyas), the second main lead of the film and a young girl from Lahore, now enters the story. Neha works at a parlour as a manicurist and has big dreams. Her brief meeting with Shameera gets her a job as her secretary and manager. Neha's professional way of dealing with sleazy casting agents wins the people's hearts. Then there is Rohail Khan (Osman Khalid Butt), a Hollywood director, who has come to Lahore looking for a classic face for his next film. Shameera's beauty and grace mesmerises him and he aspires to re-launch her career with a story of desire, ambition and betrayal.

Meera perfectly portrays the many layers her character has to offer without any effort as she has till now kept the interest of her audience alive. The film is her best performance to date. Amna is subtle and brilliant with her screen presence, line delivery and expressions. Osman Khalid Butt as Rohail amuses with his kind nature but there's a twist at the end that reveals there's more to his kindness. Although given lesser space, Mohsin Abbas also impresses.

Ali Kazmi as Ramy and Shameera's beau is desperate and short-tempered but loves his girlfriend. He is the kind of villain you'll have a soft corner for, a rare character indeed. Nayyar Ejaz stands out throughout the film. He is a gay casting agent and Shameera's ex-manager who announces her declining prowess and ushers Mehwish to replace



her in a song. Playing a homosexual is not easy but Nayyar Ejaz looks confident and comfortable. He owns the role like it was tailor-made for him. Many people from the fashion and film industry add further freshness to the film.

'Baaji' is a true masterpiece from Saqib. His vision while making the film seems to be very clear and so is the plot, screenplay and every detail of the project. Though the film is Saqib's first cinematic venture, he has been a prolific maker of advertising commercials for a while. His grip is solid throughout the film and his experience is visible in every frame.

The song 'Yeh Aaj Mujhko' is a treat for everyone while the jazz number featuring Zeb Bangash takes the limelight. From its art direction and set design to makeup and wardrobe, everything is on point. The editor too does a great job of limiting the film's duration to 2 hours 12 minutes.

The spoken lines throughout the film, written by Saqib and Irfan Urfi, are commendable. People only remember Meera as a butt of jokes, her scandals and her poor English. That's not what Meera is; she is a bundle of talent and is full of capability. Her final line in the film is a proof of that. She says, 'Love me or hate me, but you can never replace me.' That's for sure. No one has the aura she carries.

'Baaji' offers something entirely different from films in its league. It is a delightful cinematic experience that brings back the nostalgia of the 90s. It is full of glamour, intrigue and mystery that viewers always yearn for and which is mostly missing. 

FILM

ANNABELLE COMES HOME

Creepy Doll

By Muhammad Ali Khan

‘Annabelle Comes Home’ is basically the third Annabelle film following ‘Annabelle’ (2014) and ‘Annabelle Creation’ (2017) and the seventh film in the Conjuring Horror franchise. The events started to unfold with James Wan’s ‘The Conjuring’ in 2013, which is the most terrifying horror films of the 21st century that discusses cursed objects and malevolent spirits and is the one that initially introduces the demonic doll Annabelle. The film also introduces us to Ed and Lorraine Warren, the paranormal investigators, who takes the evil doll in their own family pile of mysterious conduits placing her safely behind the sacred glass and enlisting a priest’s holy blessing. As Ed puts it, it is better to keep the genie in the bottle instead of destroying the doll. The characters of Ed and Lorraine in the entire Conjuring franchise are played by Patrick Wilson and Vera Farmiga.

The film starts with exactly where the opening scene of ‘The Conjuring’ left. The Warrens are returning after wrapping up the 1971 case and they bring the Annabelle doll with them that they carefully lock away from the eyes of their 10-year-old daughter Judy (Mckenna Grace). Soon they are working on a new case for which they had to go out for a night leaving their young and well-behaved daughter Judy home along with their trustworthy babysitter Mary Ellen (Madison Iseman). The whole focus in the film is on Judy as she inherits her mother’s ability to communicate with the dead and appears positive about her views on death and afterlife. Though her ability to see spirits results in no one being friends with her, the little girl finds solace in her babysitter who very happily agrees to look after her overnight.

Shortly, Mary’s friend Daniela (Katie Sarife) joins them and things start to turn

upside down. Daniela, who recently lost her father, comes over to seek spiritual reconnection with her dad thinking that the Warrens can provide guidance. But after learning that Ed and Lorraine are not home, she steals the key from Ed’s study and sneaks into their artifacts room. She touches everything in the room but her biggest mistake is to release Annabelle even though the warning on its case clearly says, ‘Positively Do Not Open’. Soon Annabelle starts wreaking havoc in the form of killer brides, creepy priests and Ferryman and its influence is felt throughout the house. Judy too learns that the house possesses evil spirits including that of the demonic doll.

There were high expectations from the cast of the film but the acting turns out to be a real disappointment. The characters are somewhat slow on their part. The babysitter Mary only screams like an idiot while her friend Daniela only does stupid things, like unveiling the glass case of Annabelle. The reasons to justify her inconsistent behaviour on emotional grounds are also irrelevant. Only Mckenna Grace as Judy, the shy daughter of Ed and Lorraine, shines throughout as she projects confidence and astuteness beyond her years when she comes face to face with the fact that she has some of the same abilities as her parents. Ed and Lorraine are barely in the film which makes you miss their intelligence badly.

Dauberman has previously written screenplays for ‘Annabelle’, ‘It’ and ‘The Nun’ and with ‘Annabelle Comes Home’, he is making his directorial debut. Though he does a fine job of conjuring up the old-school horror with suspense, the storytelling is not up to the mark with some questionable character decisions and their odd stylistic choices. What made the first Conjuring so successful was director James Wan’s clear vision



for classic horror focusing on slow-burn terror. Dauberman should also have had the same vision to make the film a masterpiece. Michael Burgess’ cinematography and Joseph Bishara’s slithering score saves the film from sinking.

After establishing the Annabelle doll as a toy with whom no one messes up, it was a great idea to set it loose in the paranormal investigator Warren’s house. But it seems like the Conjuring series is stuck somewhere as both ‘The Nun’ (2018) and ‘Annabelle Creation’ were just average films. The actual problem with the Annabelle film is that the doll doesn’t talk or walk and just appears in different places, which is no more scary since the very first appearance as there is nothing new in the demonic doll. What needs to be clear is that Annabelle is not possessed but a conduit. As the Warrens put it, ‘She’s a beacon for other spirits’. In the film as well, the doll itself takes a back seat for most of the time, letting the other spirits take charge. Though the film has its sheer amount of scare sequences but the sequel never gets to the killer concept.

The film might not chill you to the bones, as was probably expected, but it has an old-school vibe of the carnival’s haunted house. It lacks the ability to draw the audience’s attention with the doll behaving like a mechanical robot rather than an evil creature. The film is slow and straight and proves that it’s perhaps time to put the genie back in the bottle by bringing an end to this creepy doll series. **S**



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

– George Orwell



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