

Women as Entrepreneurs

An awareness that women should be integrated into all income generating activities in the society is on the rise. As it is, women have been taking an active part in the production process besides looking after the home. In rural areas, they can also be seen engaging themselves in non-agricultural activities based on various arts and crafts. They are thus adding to the income of the rural economy.

Women have also branched out in different professions. They are giving a good account of themselves as doctors, lawyers, architects, engineers, accountants and office workers. Profession has ceased to be an exclusive domain of the male. Women have found a place in administration, judiciary and law enforcement. And they are in politics, of course.

All these are encouraging trends for the country's human resource development. Yet, there are still other major areas of economic activity where increased participation of women is called for. This is the message emerging out of the workshop on "Women Entrepreneurship Development: Women in Business" organised by the Bangladesh Employers' Association recently. The main thrust of the deliberation at the workshop was that women were being denied their rightful share in business and that an appropriate environment for their active participation in this area was still lacking.

Valuable suggestions for remedying the situation were made on this occasion. The need for a change in the society's attitude, assured access to institutional credit, improved marketing system, entrepreneurial and management training, are some of the issues that figured prominently among the ideas put forward at the workshop.

It is also somewhat interesting to note that one of the leading participants questioned the validity of the concept of class distinction between men and women in the matter of entrepreneurship. There is the only class — that is the entrepreneur class, he is said to have asserted. Maybe he has a point. However, the fact remains that entrepreneurship also needs to be fostered — be it among men or women. And, for now it is women who would need more encouragement to enter the world of business.

Incidentally, it's not that the women's names do not figure altogether among the lists of captains of business in this country even now. Look at the lists of directors of private companies. You would find not an insubstantial number of women figuring as directors of these companies. The public would not know how active they are in running affairs of such business. The general supposition is that they just lend their names. Here is a question of attitude which needs to be changed. Women directors of companies should be active in its affairs. This could be one way for entrepreneurship among women to grow.

Many of the impediments to increased participation of women in business are also common to the society as a whole. As the overall situation improves, so would the prospect for women in business. However, there are selective areas of business where the women have special aptitude and the possibilities for success are better. Such activities should be encouraged. At least, an entrepreneur must not be discriminated against, just because she is a woman. After all, even a housewife knows something of business — through managing the family budget.

Creation of environment for women to participate in business and profession should include setting up such facilities as daycare centres to look after the children of working mothers. Here, the initiative should come from the private sector. This is an area where women entrepreneurs would probably do best.

What a Triumphant Return that Was

It was a most triumphant return for Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. After nine months of internment in a Pakistani prison, one day the prison door opened, and instead of walking to the gallows, Mujib returned to the most tumultuous welcome of his people, on this historic January day, 21 years ago. As his plane door opened, Sheikh Mujib stood at the gateway of his greatest victory. The unbroken sea of people that stretched from the Tejgaon Airport (old airport) to the Suhrawardy Udyan (then called the Race Course), clogging, literally, all roads that led to the street that his motorcade was expected to pass through, was a sight that few others in history could match. It was a grateful nation that was welcoming back to its fold the leader who inspired every single one of us to be bigger and better than we were, so that we could fight to free our country, and save our people from exploitation and oppression.

If there was ever a sight of millions crying together, it happened on that day. Tears of joy flowed through every one's eyes as strangers, enemies, and friends embraced one another just as easily, in a collective expression of happiness that only occurs when a supreme joy overtakes all other emotions, and petty differences take a back seat to the sweeping currents of history. That day Sheikh Mujib was the tallest man ever, in our eyes. A man who dedicated his whole life to the struggle to free us a people, free our culture and our economy, so that we could live as Bangalees, and flourish with a distinctive identity and prosperity of our own. He was a man who spent almost a decade and a half in prison, showing a rare determination, and uncommon courage which made us all proud, and hold our head high up. For everyone who had lived through the turbulent days of late sixties and, especially, the tumultuous days of the liberation war, Bangabandhu was the man of the hour who, by uniting the nation as never before, and by his uncanny ability of galvanizing the multifarious political and ideological trends behind a single demand, turned us all into valiant freedom fighters, at once dedicated and invincible.

As we recall the occasion of the return of Bangabandhu to the country that he helped to liberate, to the people that he inspired to stand up for their own rights, to the land that he so earnestly wanted to see prosper, we recall a beautiful and rare occasion in our nation's life when a leader and his people became one through a common experience of struggle and sacrifice, of trust and respect, of patriotism and love, and of trial and supreme

WINTER, the coldest season of the year, has traditionally been associated in the Northern Hemisphere with harshness and bleakness. It would bring a time of gloom, sorrow and despair. Wintery smile is just an outward facial expression of glee, devoid of warmth and bonhomie.

With affluence, the Northern Hemisphere has also learnt to make life more comfortable during the long winter, even to wring pleasure out of it. Clothes and other trappings of outfit are being designed, each time nearer perfection to ward off the biting chill of winter, and yet making body movement freer. But there are better ways for moving about outdoors than walking. Travel from place to place in heated transports, instead of slogging around. Homes also would of course be heated. So would be the workplace. It's all a part of elaborate winter indoor comfort. Winter's day, and the night, could be spent in warm cocoons — at home, in office, in shopping malls and in transports, to and fro. Somebody, may be, there would no longer be any need to wear winter outfit — warm clothes, felt-line boots, gloves, fur caps — all that. Will further go out of fashion, giving the animals a respite.

No, winter wear will not go away. Winter sports will be there, and the Winter Olympics. Heated indoor stadiums will provide the venue for only some of the winter games. At least the skiers will be there to brave the outdoor chill. They would need the warmth of outdoor winter outfit. Hunters too will be out to shoot games, in their winter regalia. Many of them would travel in the relative comfort of a snowmobile part of their way.

Winter in the Northern Hemisphere also brings in hazards of nature. You better be dressed for it if you are caught in blizzard — a storm characterized by strong winds, low temperatures, and large amounts of snow. Much less of a hazard but perhaps more of a

Even this relatively mild winter can bring death, particularly

Winter and the Tale of a Tiger Hunt

Our winter bites into the countryside during the month of Magh. In the region in the country's north-east, the villagers would say that even a tiger is afraid of the chill of winter in the month of Magh... Well, the tiger came down to the hills from the higher elevations of the mountain to escape the chill. It met a cruel death.

nuisance, is the sleet — translucent ice pellets raining down from leaden skies, melting as they fall. Then there are snow squalls, accompanied by gusty winds. It would not do even to get into snow flurries unless you are dressed for the winter outdoors.

Nor is it that everybody in the Northern Hemisphere lives in cosy winter indoor comfort. There are less privileged people in an affluent society who cannot afford indoor heating. There also are the homeless. The freezing cold of the winter puts them to the severest test. Many of them die too. The winter takes its toll in other ways also. It's time to remain indoors when it is foggy and drizzly. However, as the foreign news media reports, this is also the time the people in Sarajevo choose to go out on the streets as the weather makes it difficult for the snipers to see. The snipers shoot away and the shells come from the guns sitting atop the hills. So the people, out there to buy their daily necessities, die on a bleak winter's day. And, who knows how many more will die of cold in Bosnia in the fierce Balkan winter this time around. Having lived in the former Yugoslavia for a number of years, I know a bit of how cruel these winters can be.

Our winters are different. It is our coldest season too. But the sun turns mellow. The sun's heat provides a welcome respite from the night's cold. You usually have uninterrupted days of sunshine to warm your bones, to get rid of the night's chills. And, you don't have to worry about floods, storms and cyclones, during the two months of our winter.

Even this relatively mild winter can bring death, particularly

during the cold spells. You live to enjoy the warmth of a winter sun only if you survive the long, cold nights. Not many can afford warm clothing or the luxury of blankets and padded quilts, wrapping them in insulated comfort against the winter's chill. Most people improvise. To the poor, destitute and the shelterless, winter spells suffering and hardship.

Our winter bites into the countryside during the month of Magh, just a few days away now. In the region in the country's north-east I come from, the villagers would say that even a

call of nature. Altogether, it would be trying times from them.

The villagers would usually become aware of the presence of the tiger in a rather curious way. During the cold winter night when it is all quiet around, an eerie shrill whistling sound would emit from the jungles. It would come in somewhat of a long note of *feeo* and then a short *sef*. The eerie sound would wake villagers up from their sleep with a shiver. Simultaneously, all the dogs in the village would burst out barking, sending long howls

One such hunt, I saw.

The night before, the tiger had broken into the cowshed of a farmer, killed a heifer, dragged it along quite a distance and left the carcass, half eaten, at the foot of a hill. The kill was spotted early at dawn. The villagers knew that the tiger was sitting it out in the hill and would not move until his meal has been digested. Armed with spears, several hundred villagers first surrounded the hill. Another group got busy cutting down all the undergrowth, clearing a considerable area of the forest around the place where the kill lay. They were particularly careful in hacking down the foliage along a broad swath up the slope of the hill just below which the tiger had left its kill. All these activities continued in relative quiet, presumably to avoid alarming the tiger taking its nap.

I was watching the whole operation, in company of some other village youngsters of my age, from atop a hillock — a safe distance away across a ravine. A couple of old men were with us. One of them kept up a running commentary on the different stages of the operation.

Next, the people detailed to clear the undergrowth started piling up all the branches and foliage on the ground, building up two parallel buttresses, shoulder-high, down from the cleared slope of the hill. They kept the intervening space between the two lines of the running mounds of piled-up branches and foliage, completely free of all encumbrances.

This had the effect of providing an open front to the cleared swath on the slope. Then they brought out big net made from inch-thick jute ropes, slightly oblong in shape. The

net was spread on the ground and they carefully placed tiny branches and twigs on it to cover up the ropes. The net was raised up on bamboo poles of varying lengths and placed upright on the space between the parallel buttresses, one end joining the slope, leaving a few feet of cleared space upward. The contraption of the rope platform was designed to resemble a continuation of the slope but decided to look wobbly. That is the idea, the old man explained. When the tiger jumps on to it, the platform would collapse. The net would fold down on itself and the tiger would get ensnared among the ropes.

The hunters then took up their position, on two sides of the net, behind the buttresses. They sat low, a dozen of them on each side, spears ready at hand. There was absolute silence for a moment. Then an enormous uproar rose from around the hill. The villagers who had surrounded the hill since the morning were now coming up the slopes, shouting, beating on canisters — an extraordinary cacophony to drive the tiger toward the spot where the rope net platform had been put up. Suddenly the old man pointed his finger and, there it was, on the clearing just beyond the platform. Then it jumped — a hurling splash of colour — toward the platform of net, the only visible escape route. The contraption collapsed, engulfing the creature in its folds. All I could see for a moment was a writhing mass of ropes and leaves, some hunters driving spears into it. There was complete Pandemonium then. All the villagers around, had rushed to the kill. You could hardly see anything except the throng of people.

Well, the tiger came down to the hills from the higher elevations of the mountain to escape the chill of winter in Magh. It met a cruel death. Yet, the villagers did not kill it for sport. They were just getting rid of an additional menace the winter had brought.

will take off with further liberalisation.

For Washington, India is a major market. Moreover, in the post-Cold War world, the US sees India as a long-term strategic ally and shares its concern over growing Islamic fundamentalism. However, differences over New Delhi's refusal to sign the NPT, which India says is discriminatory, may continue to dog relations.

Closer ties with Washington could weaken US relations with its Cold War ally, Pakistan. Islamabad's importance in US strategic thinking has diminished since the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Another area of tension is US opposition to Islamabad's nuclear weapons programme. For new friends Islamabad may look to its northern neighbours in the newly independent Muslim countries of Central Asia.

Peace is unlikely to come to Afghanistan in the new year. Tribal and ethnic warlords, once called freedom fighters by Western media, will continue to fight to control the drugs and arms trades and deny millions of ordinary Afghans the freedom to live in peace. Some warlords may intensify their intervention in the conflict in neighbouring Tajikistan.

The rise in extreme nationalism in Russia shown by the victory of Vladimir Zhirinovsky, may bring more Russian military intervention in Tajikistan and other parts of what Russians call "near abroad".

Zhirinovsky's reported dream of "Russian soldiers washing their boots in the warm waters of Indian Ocean," has sounded alarm bells in Asia. Just days after the far-right leader's victory, a high-level military delegation from China discussed bilateral security issues in New Delhi, the first such visit in more than 30 years.

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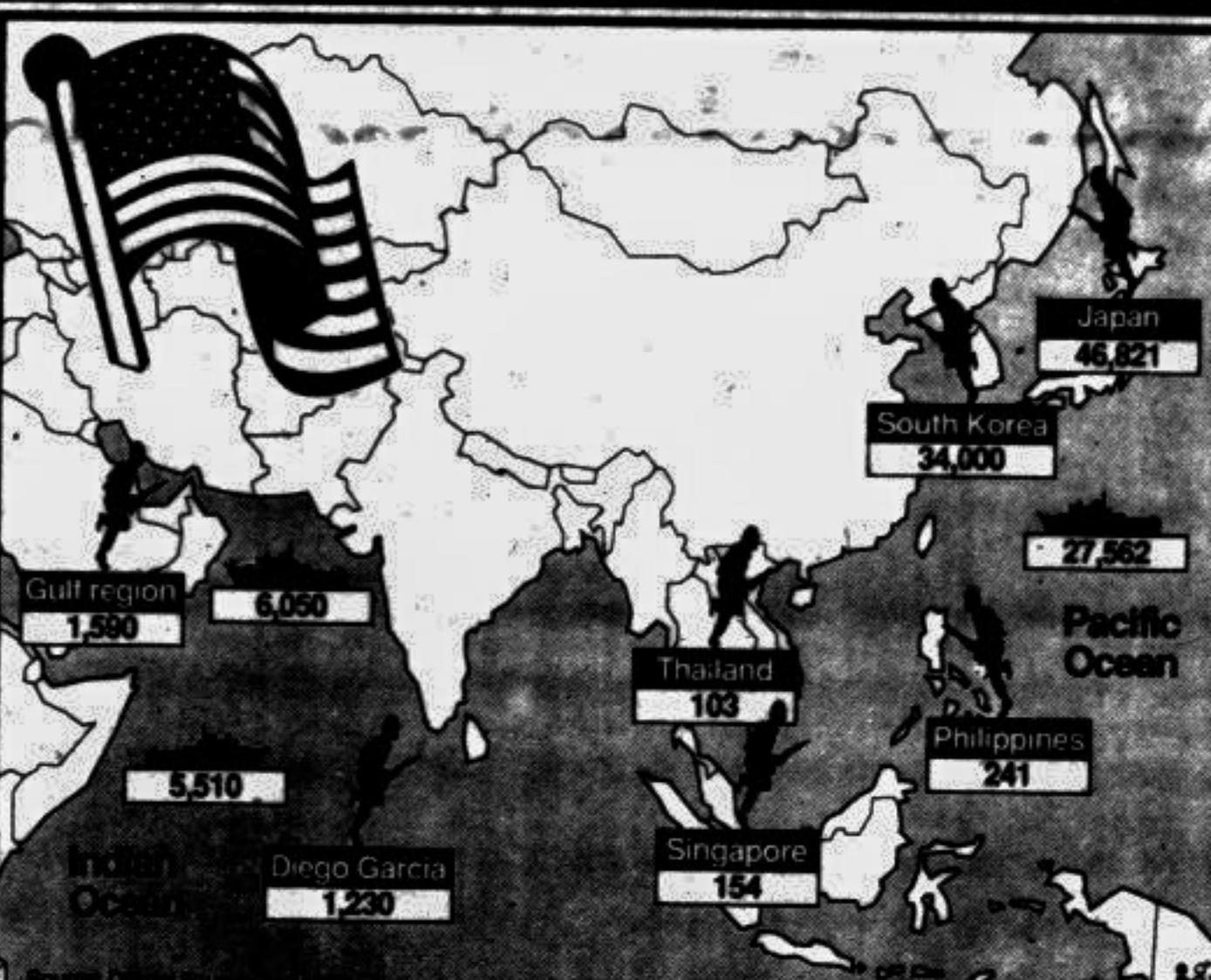
LOOKING INTO 1994 — ASIA

Search is on for a New Security System

by Daya Kishan Thussu

An economically resurgent Asia is increasingly concerned about its security. The United States, which has provided security for the so-called Asian Tigers since World War Two, now wants to cut its defence commitments. New regional structures are being proposed. In South Asia the new year began on a hopeful note as India and Pakistan agreed to talk peace.

American troops in Asia



wants to cut its military presence. Currently it has more than 100,000 US troops in the region.

Although it has closed its base in the Philippines, the US is still keen to maintain enough military muscle to safeguard its economic and strategic interests. To this end, Washington has signed new defence agreements with Indonesia and Malaysia.

With the dissolution of SEATO and CENTO, Asia no longer has security arrangements like the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE).

A major concern for Asian

countries is the uncertainty following the withdrawal of US forces. Smaller countries are wary of the economically resurgent Chinese giant on their doorstep.

One issue is China's claim over the Spratly Islands, which is disputed by the ASEAN countries and Vietnam. Apart from their strategic importance, there may be oil and gas reserves under the islands.

Fears were aroused when, in 1988, China built an airport on the Paracel Islands to the north, though Beijing denied it was for military purposes.

Not surprisingly, China makes its neighbours nervous. Given its huge human and natural resources, and a staggering growth rate of more than 13 per cent, China has the potential to dominate world markets.

According to World Bank estimates, by 2015 China will be the world's largest economy. Under the new GATT deal, China is likely to be the biggest winner after the European Union. By 2002, it will be earning \$37 billion a year from the trade liberalisation.

A more aggressive foreign policy may be one result of this new economic power. China is likely to take a stronger position as spokesman for the developing world at the United Nations Security Council. Beijing's already strained relations with Britain may worsen in the new year as China robustly undermines belated British attempts to bring democracy to Hong Kong.

The showdown on the Korean peninsula is likely to continue in the new year. The isolated communist regime in North Korea may, under US pressure, reconsider its decision to leave the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1993.

Asia's biggest economy, Japan, will be trying further to enhance its international profile in the new year. For the first time, in 1993 Japan shouldered global responsibility when it successfully conducted the first multiparty elections in Cambodia

under UN auspices. Tokyo may cite this in support of its claims to a permanent seat at the UN Security Council.

Another Asian country which will intensify lobbying within the Non-aligned Movement and other international forums for a coveted seat is India. Now that it has mended fences with the US, which effectively runs the UN, it seems not such a distant possibility.

New Delhi is now actively participating in UN operations. The Indian contingent currently in Somalia has won praise. A BBC correspondent there reported that unlike the Americans the Indians were "more sensitive" towards the Somalis.

South Asia's two main countries, India and Pakistan, began the year on a positive note with their officials meeting in Islamabad to discuss the Kashmir issue, which has bedeviled relations and led to three wars. As long as the Kashmir issue is unresolved, the arms race in South Asia, which has debilitated the region's economies, will continue.

Internationally, the region may witness a further improvement in New Delhi's relations with Washington. Already, India has carried out joint naval exercises with US forces. During the seven years of GATT negotiations, India was opposed to US demands for inclusion of intellectual property rights into the talks. Now it has conceded to US pressure, hoping the economy

minister BGS cadres; the committee then may be renamed BCS-29 Cadre Action Committee.

Md Abdus Sattar Molla
SME, IER, DU

Tourism

Sir, Bangladesh is a land of natural beauty. In the past, many world famous historians and tourists visited this land and were simply charmed and fascinated by its gracious variety. Hundreds of years have passed and so many changes occurred, but still our poor country remains rich and gorgeous in nature. She has the longest sea beach in the world and the mangrove forest only of its kind in the world, the Sunderbans — the abode of the famous Royal Bengal Tigers. But with all her beauty and exclusiveness, Bangladesh still remains at the dark bottom of tourism industry. It's really a sad state of affairs for us. We hope our present government will do all that is needed for attaining a position in the forefront of world tourism industry.

Payerz Rahman
Masdar, Narayanganj

To the Editor...

Price of newsprint

Sir, Modern civilization is the result of a gradual process where paper and printing industry played a vital role. People now-a-days can't move even a single step forward without paper and ink. Lot of books, numerous journals and magazines, as well as myriads of other publications prove to be indispensable for a human being in his/her day to day life and activities. And in that the paper called "newsprint" plays the major role. Bangladesh is a land rich in such natural resources as bamboo, sugarcane, fibre plants, shrubs and other necessary raw material producing plants upon which the newsprint industry is systematically established. The whole structure of newsprint industry is categorically designed and is, no doubt, a natural resource oriented project.

Very recently the price of newspaper has soared up. Albeit not exorbitant to some extent, nonetheless the abrupt hike in the price of the newsprint is alarmingly jeopardising the printing and publication industry countrywide. A good number of publication authorities do not purchase

newsprint from the mills or the mill gate. They are obliged to purchase it from the open market due to many reasons there in. Hence the sudden price hike caused them until suffering as well as severe hardship.

A good number of specific reasons may be brought into focus in connection with the recent increased price of newsprint, such as — deterred communication, inadequate supply of raw materials, abrupt closure of some small ventures, labour unrest, power disruption etc. But, we tend suggest, if such incidences occur for a long time or probability of such occurrences may not be wiped out, the government should better import the balancing amount of newsprint from the overseas markets. This may go for a definite time till the remedies to the internal deterrence