

Do Women Have Any Right, at All?

by Dr Sabrina Rashid

When the little girl is sick, she will be treated at home by the quack doctors who are cheap and easily available. She may not recover fully because of this and suffer chronically for the rest of her life. But if her brother is sick he is quickly rushed to the nearby hospital or to a qualified doctor.

the males of the family separately.

After they have had their fill only then, the females will sit, most likely in the kitchen — where the males won't even see what they are eating or if enough is left for them to fill their tummies. Because everything that was cooked was laid out in front of the males and the females only get the leftovers. How pathetically unfair. They don't even have the right to share the family food equally and fairly! Then, when the little girl is sick, she will be treated at home by the quack doctors who are cheap and easily available. She may not recover fully because of this and suffer chronically for the rest of her life. But if her brother is sick he is quickly rushed to the nearby hospital or to a qualified doctor. What injustice!

Again baby girls may be neglected, but baby boys do get their vaccinations. Is it possible that parents love their daughters so much less than their sons? Doesn't she have an equal right to their love even? Next it is time for the little girl to go to school. But who cares. Her brother goes, but why should she? Her place is at home by her mother's side. To help her with the household chores. And when her mother is carrying a baby or is sick the whole household responsibility falls on the little girl. While her brother goes to school, plays outside side or studies at home, she is making sure that food for the family is cooked timely, clothes are washed and everything in the household is maintained properly.

Before she realises it, her childhood is lost in these chores. And even before she steps into adolescence her parents and rest of the family are desperate to get rid of her by marrying her off to whoever they can get — not even making sure whether he is solvent enough to support a family or if at all he is a good man with a decent job. Or whether the age of the groom is appropriate for their little girl (who is still not an adult). Does she have a right to say 'no' to this marriage? Impossible. Nobody even bothers to ask for her opinion, whether she wants to get married at all or not, or whether she is willing to spend her life with the man chosen by her family or whether she has any choice of her own, whom she would like to have as her life-partner? No chance. Her fate is decided and sealed by her guardians while she is in absolute darkness about it.

Well then, off she goes to her new home. Whether she likes it or not or whether she wants it or not, is not important. Over here her rights are further impinged upon. Though she and her husband are a family unit now. They have no say in any matter of the family. All the decisions lie in the hands of her parents-in-law. They will decide what is good or bad for her and her husband. Added to that if her father had failed to meet the dowry demands her father-in-law. She has had it. For her only fate now is to bear the torture — verbal as well as physical — inflicted upon her, by her in-

laws, for no fault of hers at all. Sometimes the torture goes on and on to the extent of sending her back to her father's house or divorce from her husband or his second marriage without even freeing her.

She has to accept whatever her 'fate' dishes out to her. There is nobody or no place for her to go to, to seek justice. Her parents do not like to have her back, but can't even help her to regain her position in her in-laws' house. Nor can the senior villagers or the court. She does not even know, about her rights, if there are any at all. For the court can hardly help poor and helpless women like her, verdict is inevitably given in favour of the stronger party who can hire better lawyers. Who will come forward to fight for this poor woman? Nobody. So now she is homeless too added to all her previous miseries.

With no place to go to, they head for cities in increasing numbers. Where they get trapped in all sorts of horrible trades carried on by pimps. From where they can't even escape and get a child in course of time, whom they use to beg for alms. Sometimes they are lucky enough to get a household job. But even there not all of them can save their dignity, or are treated cruelly or are kept for no pay — just meager food for sustenance. What right has she now? Suppose her father could meet the dowry demand of her in-laws. She gets to stay on there doing all the household chores. In course of time when she conceives she is not spared

even then, and has to carry on with the heavy works and can't even take the required rest needed in pregnancy. Her nutrition is also poor as all the protein and vitamin rich food is given to the males of the family.

Nobody even bothers to take her to a doctor for regular prenatal check-ups or give her the required vaccinations etc. Then the delivery is also carried on at home assisted by a senior woman of the village, who does not have even the minimum training or knowledge about it. If it is a normal delivery — lucky for her. But the baby is most likely to be underweight, because of her non-nutritious diet and for other reasons as she never had pre-natal check ups. But if she is unlucky to have a complicated labour, then God help her. For there is nobody around or no facility or will on the part of her in-laws even to take her to a doctor on emergency basis. Where the baby may be delivered by Caesarian Section, or by other means, only possible in a hospital.

After such complicated deliveries, the baby in most of the cases dies and the mother suffers from various types of ailments, which may be temporary if she is lucky, but may even make her suffer for the rest of her life. For example, she might have continuous dribbling of urine, which can only be treated by a major operation, that is if somebody is kind enough to take her to a good hospital. Or worst still, the injury from the complicated labour may even be life-threatening. From which even doctors are unable to save her, despite of all their skills. Recently this writer had the bitter experience of coming across such a patient. She was young and had only her first pregnancy and delivery which by ill luck was complicated. She bled profusely and as there was no doctor or hospital for miles around. She was not given any treatment at all, timely. When finally she was taken to the doctor, it was found that both her kidneys had suffered permanent damage. For this poor woman the only treatment now was dialysis or kidney transplant for renal failure. But who will bear these expensive treatments for her. So she was advised to go home as nothing else could be done to help her recover. After a few days, a relative of hers conveyed the message to the doctor that she had passed away. Taking all her sorrows with her to another world. Maybe with the hope that she will find peace and happiness there after all, which eluded her in this world.

So, this is the story of women's rights in Bangladesh. Can anyone help them? If so, where will he start from? For at every step of life they are treated unfairly, worst of all, even the poor creature herself doesn't know or understand that she also deserves to be given certain rights, as human being at least, if not as a woman. Are the males of our society solely and wholly responsible for the inhuman treatment that the woman in our society gets. Since we all know that ours is mainly a male-dominated society. The solution therefore lies not only in education but enlightenment of both males and females of our society. Only then they will be able to give due respect to each other, rather than dominate or suppress the weaker sex.

Plans for Airspace Management

by Wg Cdr A T M Nazrul Islam psc

A question may arise whether existing air traffic control capacity can meet the anticipated traffic demand in near future. One should remember that aviation itself possesses an international character than any other form of transportation and the air traffic cannot be held in the air.



AIR transportation today has become one of the most convenient means of transportation for the global villagers. Every year the number of air passenger is increasing as well as air transportation business is widening. But how safe is the air travel? Just the other day, 26 September 1997, an Indonesian Airbus aircraft A-300 got into crash killing the 234 lives. Biman's BG 609 crash-landed on Monday last in the most recent example.

An investigation shows that during 1988-94 period, 3,177 people died in 156 commercial aircraft accidents involving controlled flight into terrain. In 1996, world observed the highest recorded death in air accident numbering 1,187. This year, 1997, at least 466 people died in different air accidents. The year 1996 was marked as the year of fear for the air travellers.

However, the most horrifying mid-air collision in the recent past took place 60 miles west of New Delhi in 1996 marking the worst ever for a mid-air collision and the third worst for any air crash. A collision in the air between two commercial aircraft having many watch system both by ground controllers and aircraft on board is very rare and unfortunate but had happened just at our doorstep. There could be many reasons for air accidents but there is an agency who is responsible for airspace management in order to keep the aircraft-free from collision on the ground and in the air.

Like many other transportation, air traffic needs a service, air traffic control service. The main aim of air traffic control is to achieve a collision-free air space within its jurisdiction. It means an air traffic authority may not take the responsibility of an airspace where it cannot exercise its rules and regulations. It is almost like a road traffic system. A sense of uncertainty always remains in a highway where there is no traffic system available. But nobody would dare to think that traffic at any busy point in our city can run without a traffic system. Hence government installs required system to regulate traffic for the convenience of the city-

dwellers and to save their life and property. It is exactly same in the case of air traffic.

Considering the traffic congestion at a specific airspace, an appropriate air traffic control system is established to prevent collision between aircraft, and between aircraft and obstruction in the manoeuvring area. It also includes to expedite and maintain an orderly flow of air traffic. If you have one or two aircraft per hour probably you need not to think much but what would happen if traffic situation exceeds the air traffic control's capacity? — think about the traffic congestion at the 'Sonargaon round about' or general area of Gulistan and Motijheel traffic points at the peak hour of the day. Bangladesh constitutes a vital part of international and regional air traffic routes. Many South and South-east Asian countries connect their air routes to the West through the Bangladesh Airspace and vice versa. India takes transit while connecting its eastern states with its rest of the states.

Bangladesh has its own traffic too. It consists of both international and domestic flights. Domestic flights include all civil commercial, military and other local flights. The civil commercial flights normally fly from airport to airport while military air traffic operates throughout the available airspace.

The airspace management in every country aimed at optimising maximum utilisation of the given airspace as well as maintaining an orderly flow of air traffic. However, an air traffic needs to adhere with certain rules and regulations to receive the air traffic control services and facilities even flying beyond the jurisdiction of the air traffic control units. As the air traffic builds up at or near an airport, the air space adjacent to the airport becomes the focal point of all traffic. Traffic congestion at the confluence of an air terminal is always more like the road traffic congestion at the Dhaka city entry points like Saidabab, Sadarghat or Amin Bazaar.

The sudden accumulation of air traffic are due to bad weather, noise abatement procedures, night curfews, incoming traffic with insufficient ad-

vance notice etc., and lack of appropriate technique, navigational aids to handle such accumulated traffic. Once congestion starts, it takes time to settle it down like the road traffic congestion in Dhaka that what was happened on the evening of 23 Sep. '97 after a torrential rain. As the congestion increases, the risk probability also increases. As such around the airspace of air terminal the air traffic control is required to be more specific and effective.

Zia International Airport is accommodating hundreds of people everyday for air travel linking the world by air transportation. An air traffic control system is also functioning here. Of these, Instrument Landing System, a Very High Frequency Omni Directional Radio Range (VOR), Distance Measuring Equipment (DME) and a Secondary Surveillance Radar, Runway and Taxiway lighting system, Crash Fire and Rescue system, Communication system etc., may be worth to mention. Probably many of these equipments will become dated soon. A question may arise whether existing air traffic control capacity can meet the anticipated traffic demand in near future. One should remember that aviation itself possesses an international character than any other form of transportation and the air traffic cannot be held in the air. As a result, it enjoys some sort of priority. The Airforce has some air traffic facilities which are mainly used for their purposes. In fact back in 1980, while some of the aviation employees went on strike, Airforce was called in to run the air traffic control system. In many countries aviation system is run jointly by civil and military. Actually many states gained promising results introducing an integrated air traffic system in order to sharing the air space.

Every nation wants to make the air travel as safe as possible. As such a global organisation has been set up in the name of International Civil Aviation Organisation. This organisation has been formulating some procedures for the safety of the air operations. But the growing rate of accident has become a matter of concern. To maintain a safe and orderly flow of air traffic, it also requires some sort of continuous watch and reviewing of its system. In the planning and management of airspace, main aim should be to promote flight safety, provide sufficient capacity to meet traffic demands, ensure maximum utilisation of airspace, ensure compatibility with international standards and balance the requirements of all the users. Our air traffic situation is yet to reach to saturation point; our congestion is still within the limit. To accept the challenges of the anticipated traffic intensity of the coming century, our airspace management plan should include short and long-term plan to increase the air traffic control capacity aiming at ensuring the air travel safe and sound.

Tom and Jerry



Samad Azad terms visit to Nepal 'useful, productive'

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad described his three-day visit to Nepal as "useful, productive and successful," reports BSS.

The foreign minister, who returned home yesterday, expressed the hope that the visit would help further strengthen the cordial relations between the two countries.

"My talks with the Nepalese leadership and government covered practically all areas of bilateral and other matters of mutual interest," he told newsmen in the city.

Samad Azad paid the visit at the invitation of his Nepalese counterpart Kamal Thapa. He also met King Birendra and Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa during his stay in Nepal.

Samad Azad handed over a letter of invitation from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to the Nepalese Prime Minister for visiting Bangladesh which was accepted with pleasure.

The two foreign ministers held official talks to further strengthen bilateral, political and economic cooperation.

The two sides also signed an accord on regular consultations

Metropolitan



President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed exchanging greetings with the members of the Christian community at Bangabhaban yesterday on the occasion of Merry Christmas. — PID photo

'Country's rural women aware of socio-economic subordination'

"Rural Bangladeshi women are aware of their socio-economic and political subordination and employ multiple strategies to resist patriarchal domination," reports BSS.

This was observed by Ms. Zebun N Ahmed, a visiting research fellow of the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies (AIBS) at a seminar in the city.

The seminar on the topic "Mapping Rural Women's Perspectives on Non-formal Education Experiences" was jointly organised by the Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh (CDRE) and the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies (AIBS) in the Women's Voluntary Association (WVA) auditorium.

Korean co keen to set up paper industry

A leading Korean company Tuesday expressed its intention to set up a paper industry in Bangladesh using indigenous raw materials, reports UNB.

Chairman of Tae Hung Packaging Bangladesh Ltd Bostun Park said this while talking to Executive Chairman of Board of Investment (BOI) Farook Sobhan here yesterday. Managing Director of the company Ms Ok-Kyung Oh was present.

Farook Sobhan explained to them the present facilities and incentives provided to the foreign investors. He also requested them to avail the services of the "One Stop Cell" recently introduced by the Board of Investment.

The BOI executive chairman mentioned that for real development Bangladesh needs investment in the key sectors like textiles, cement, leather and infrastructure and also utilisation of locally available raw materials and transfer of technology.

Spl ferry, train service for World Ashke-e-Rasul (SM) Conference

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) and Bangladesh Railway have arranged special ferry and train service to facilitate the devotees of the World Ashke-e-Rasul (SM) Conference to be held on December 26 at Dewanbag Darbar Sharif, situated beside the capital city, says a press release.

According to the BIWTC source, the transports of the devotees will carry on priority basis through Nagarbari-Aricha, Dawlatdia-Aricha, Charjanaja-Mawa and Aricha-Nagarbari, Aricha-Dawlatdia, Mawa-Charjanaja route on Dec 24, 25 & 26 and Dec 26 & 27 respectively.

Population boom in South may lead to increased production of rice: IRRI

The population boom in the developing countries is likely to put increased pressure to produce more rice, according to estimates of International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), reports BSS.

Global demand for rice will be 489 million tonnes by the year 2020, with 421 million tonnes consumption alone in Asia. This is substantially more than current production levels, IRRI observed.

The anticipated need for substantially increased rice production will come in spite of the likelihood that per capita income growth in Asia will lead to a shift in diet patterns away from rice to other foods.

A projected jump in Asia's population from 3.1 billion in 1965 to 4.1 billion by the year 2020 will be the major force in the accelerating demand for rice.

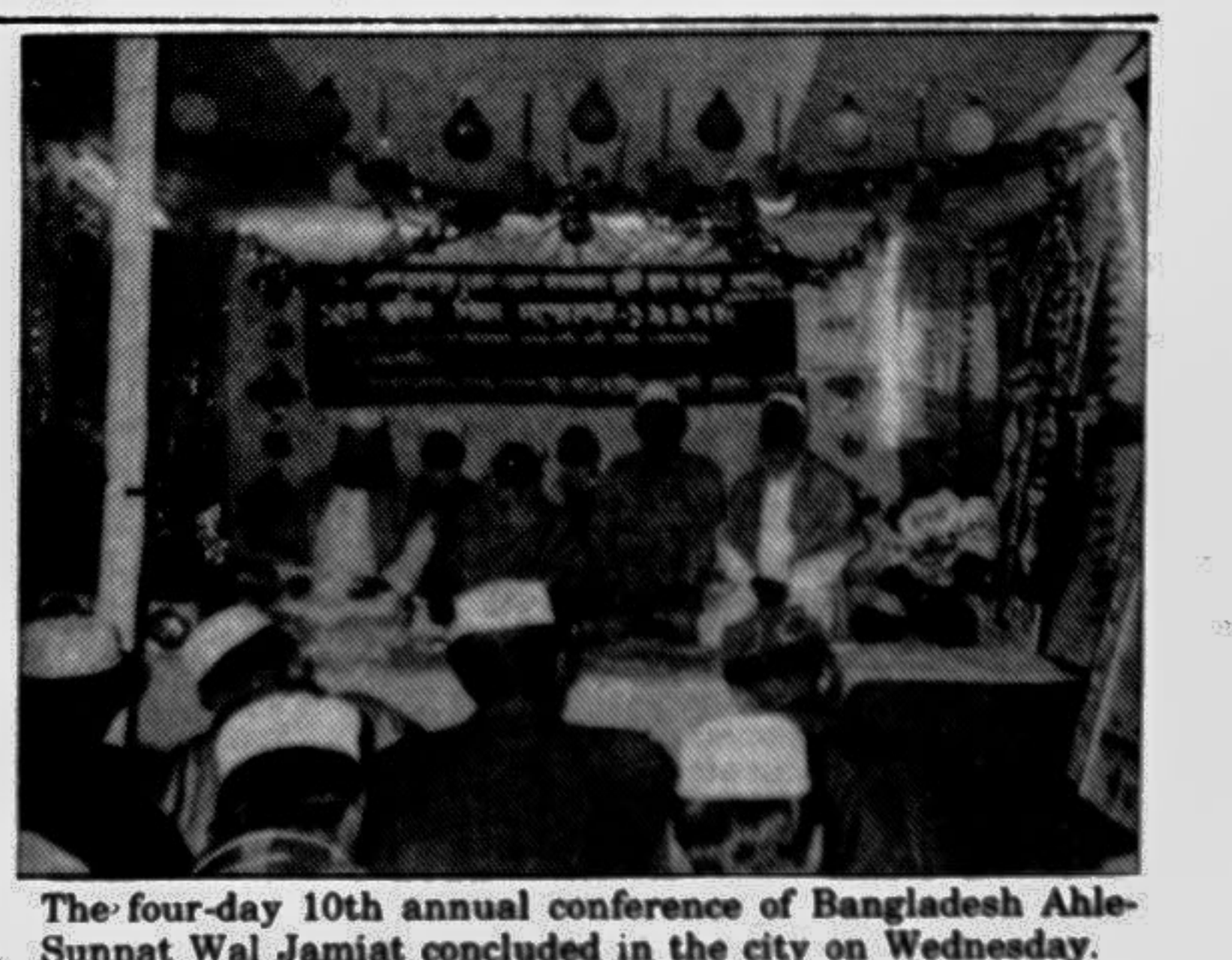
The greatest growth in demand is expected to come from the lower income nations of Asia, such as Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, the Philippines and Vietnam.

As with several other soft commodities, there has been considerable speculation that the current e-nino (abnormal weather system) which has been blamed for widespread drought across Asia, might damage rice crops this season.

However, one of the world's leading rice producers, Thailand which last year exported more than five million tonnes of rice, so far seems to be unharmed. Thailand's agriculture ministry forecast output of 21.24 million tonnes for 1997-98.

Meanwhile, the economists' intelligence unit has suggested that total world trade in rice this year will reach 17 million tonnes, some two million tonnes lower than in 1996.

The global rice trade is likely to expand to 20 million tonnes in 1998, and perhaps 21 million tonnes in 1999.



The four-day 10th annual conference of Bangladesh Ahle-Sunnat Wal Jamiat concluded in the city on Wednesday.



Visitors at an exhibition of art work on earthen pot-cover at Gallery 21 organised by Fulki which opened Wednesday. — Star photo