

The Best Years of Our Lives

by Jimmy Carter

Few people have turned retirement into an opportunity for volunteerism with more enthusiasm than former US President Jimmy Carter. Now 73, he is chairman of the nonprofit Carter Centre in Atlanta, Georgia. In this article, he explains why he spends his time volunteering, and why he finds it so satisfying.

WHEN I retired from the White House in 1980 (four years earlier than planned), Rosalynn and I were faced with deciding how to spend the rest of our lives. We were fairly young — both in our 50s — and unemployed. We went directly from Washington to our home in Plains, Georgia (population 700), where I had not lived since I was elected governor of the state in 1970.

You can imagine that this was not an easy transition. But we agreed that Plains was our home and where we wanted to stay. I had no desire to run again for public office, so we started thinking about how we could use some of the skills and experience we had acquired over the years to work on issues that had always been important to us.

We did a lot of soul-searching that first year. Out of this process came the idea for the Carter Centre (www.cartercenter.org). We envisioned a nonprofit centre, not affiliated with any government or political party, where we could bring people and resources together to promote peace and improve health around the world. We opened our centre on the campus of Emory University in 1983, and moved into our permanent headquarters, adjacent

to the newly built Jimmy Carter Library and Museum, in 1996. Over the years, Rosalynn and I have turned retirement into another career through our work at the Carter Centre. And I have to say that our post-presidential years have been even more fulfilling than our years in public office. On behalf of the Centre, we have traveled to more than 115 countries. In North Korea, Haiti, Nicaragua, Liberia, the Sudan and elsewhere, we have helped resolve conflicts and defuse potentially explosive crises. We've spent weeks in remote villages in Africa, teaching residents how to eradicate Guinea worm disease and handing out free medicine to control river blindness. In other parts of Africa, we've helped farmers increase grain and corn production as much as 4000 per cent using simple, inexpensive agricultural practices. We've advanced human rights and helped Third World countries draft master plans for development.

At home in the United States, Rosalynn has continued her efforts on behalf of the mentally ill, building on her work as First Lady of Georgia and of the United States. We've helped inner city residents in

Atlanta develop strategies to improve their lives, sharing what we've learned with more than 100 other cities. And when we're not working for the Carter Centre, we spend a week each year building homes with other volunteers for Habitat for Humanity in the United States and in other countries.

All these projects have enriched my life in untold ways. I've learned things I never knew as a state senator or governor or even president. While reaching out to others, Rosalynn and I have fielded our own needs to be challenged and to act as productive members of our global community.

Along the way, we've also found others seeking opportunities to lend time, experience and resources to alleviate suffering and improve lives. For example, at the Carter Center, we pool our resources with those of our many partners — including corporations, foundations and individuals. I've visited with employees of donor organizations, including Merck, DuPont and United Parcel Service. Many were moved to tears when I told them how their companies' donations have helped free villages in Africa from Guinea worm disease and river blindness. Or have eased the struggles of a

family in our own country. Let me give you another example of how retirement has changed our view of the world. Rosalynn and I have led Carter Centre teams to observe — and sometimes mediate — free and fair elections in some 15 countries. In 1990, we stood in line with Haitians at the polling place where just three years earlier, dozens of people had been killed by government-sponsored terrorists while trying to vote. Many had risen in the middle of the night to walk ten or 15 miles to stand in that same line — even though they feared for their lives. As we traveled around Port-au-Prince that day, we talked to people who had waited hours just for the opportunity to vote — a sacred privilege we and others often take for granted here in the United States.

We live in a land of opportunity, and our retirement from political life has opened a whole new world of excitement and challenge. For us, retirement has not been the end, but a new beginning. We hope to spend many more years actively making the most of the rest of our lives.

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View from Dhaka The Mantras of the Mighty

by A Husnain

Bosnia was bled to death before the coffins were noticed by US, UN, and NATO. The judgement of the West versus the wisdom of the East! The Yugo president must be an expert in chaanda-baazi!

THE hypocritical foreign policies or grand alliances of the G7 or G8 nations which dictate UN stands is today nakedly overexposed, revealing the paucity of credibility. They do what suits them at any particular period, and feed the Third World (with two-thirds of the globe's inhabitants) twisted and elaborate explanations through IT pipelines, which are at best dubious quasi-pseudo-scientific in nature and contents. This is the age of GINO (garbage in, garbage out), so why blame Dhaka's permanent worldwide exhibitions arranged by DCC for the whole world to take lessons in the art known as the scientific management and processing of garbage. That is the irony of modern life: the LDCs do not have the capability to process reality, not to speak of tinkering with hi-tech GINO.

The latest bhai-bhai mantra is being changed by Britain trying to woo Iran, following initial US overtures, using the Rushdie alibi (the CTBT alibi for Kashmir and opening of the one billion market in South Asia). The two countries are said to be going to normalize diplomatic relations, with US to follow suit after watching the teething period. Why? To have an outlet for the huge natural resources (fuel, minerals) of the CIS region. The latter is unstable after stepping out of the Bolshevik shell.

Iraq is also being let off, unofficial stances indicate. In Kosovo, the UN is dilly-dallying and issuing warning after warning (as it did in Bosnia for the first gear for action against elements who are not the ethnic majority in the area. It is the first rule of the game that operational plans are never disclosed or leaked out in warfare, and NATO is doing exactly the opposite.

On the other hand the US (not UN) lighting missile attack on Afghanistan and Sudan were not preceded by any warning. Why, this double standard? No explanation. Bosnia was bled to death before the coffins were noticed by US, UN, and NATO. The judgement of the West versus the wisdom of the East! The Yugo president must be an expert in chaanda-baazi!

When there is no meeting of the minds, why bother with huge bodies such as the UN and spurious satellites to spew lip service on plain living and high thinking? There is an arc of hope in SAARC, but the eclipse is persisting. The signing of the CTBT by Pakistan and India has to be awaited, before SAARC can defend its self-respect, if it has any. Kashmir has been the stumbling block for half a century. Jane Austen, where art thou, with your *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Sense and Sensibility*?

Politics lords over the citizens of the world, but who rules over politics? Perhaps the tropic economists with thick glasses who pore over the quarterly returns and announce 'recession' whenever two consecutive quarterly returns dip even 0.1 per cent. Greenspan is the name of the guru holding the world economy between his lips, with his periodical testimonies, which resemble seances with hoary clairvoyants poring over crystal globes. It reminds me of a hilarious book in my library carrying the title *What They Did Not Teach Me at the Harvard School of Business*. This is the Age of Unlearning.

A gentle reminder to the readers who believe in ahimsa or non-violence: the selling of arms (clandestine or otherwise) is big business and a profitable pastime. That is the problem with western capitalism: the factories have to be kept running, otherwise democracy will die without consumerism, regardless of the unnecessary slaughtering going around by fits and starts. Has the arms market collapsed or is facing a recession due to swarms of UN doves circling the globe on emissary missions? When one arm is twisted, the other arm buys arms. The hawks in Central Europe are driving away the doves, and NATO is in knots: the indecisiveness is seminal! Who gets the benefit of the doubt? The West is teaching mantras to the East!

The Crisis of Urban India

by Navin Chandra Joshi

Delhi and Bombay annually receive 5 to 7 lakh people each, adding to their burden for catering to the growing needs of increasing permanent population. They have essentially to meet the shelter needs of the migrants, apart from all other urban facilities, as also various other social services.

THE grave crisis facing urban India today seems to be nobody's concern with the final report of the National Commission on Urbanisation (NCU) submitted to government ten-year ago apparently gathering dust in the corridors of power.

Today the problems of urban megapolises are compounded by the fact that these cities being the hubs of commercial and industrial activities attract people from far-flung areas of the country in search of work and livelihood.

For instance, Delhi and Bombay annually receive 5 to 7 lakh people each, adding to their burden for catering to the growing needs of increasing permanent population. They have essentially to meet the shelter needs of the migrants, apart from all other urban facilities, as also various other social services.

It is also true that compared to the global urbanisation level of 45 per cent, India's percentage of population living in urban areas — a little over 25 per cent as per 1991 census — is quite low.

The maximum level of 85 per cent is in Australia and New Zealand, followed by 77 per cent in Japan, 75 per cent in Latin American countries and Europe, 66 per cent in CIS countries, 34 per cent in African countries and 32 per cent in Pakistan.

A low level of urbanisation indicates denial of basic facilities to the people and as such the deprived people remain deeply rooted in the backward economic and social environment of the rural society. Obviously, they live in primitive conditions bereft of modernity.

However, from the Indus Valley civilisation to the magnificent cities of pre-history mentioned in our epics, to the grand cities that have been founded, India cannot but be proud of the contribution made to its evolution as a modern nation by its glorious urban tradition.

Though the Indian civilisation owes much to this tradition, the metropolitan scene today is marked by confusion, neglect and obsolescence. The confusion is now worse compounded due to the multiplicity of authorities created by the government for urban management.

Paradoxically enough, where there is an independent specialised agency it has led to chaos, complication and delays. Take, for instance, the

case of Delhi where there are authorities like the Delhi Development Authority, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, New Delhi Municipal Council, Delhi Transport Corporation, Delhi Vidyalaya Board, the government of Delhi and the union government which controls police through the Lieutenant Governor.

This medley of organisations is quite confusing for the people at large as they vie with each other to run their writ. The worse part of the situation is that in many cases of urban improvements, responsibility is not only shirked but nobody knows who is to be taken to task for a lapse.

Large tracts of fertile and agricultural land in rural Delhi have been acquired for industrial or commercial uses, reducing the green land to a wasteland. On top of this, urbanisation has uprooted villagers in a way that they have lost their moorings.

Apart from the problems of rapid industrialisation, excessive rural urban migration, inadequate public and private investment in social and economic infrastructure, especially water, power and public transport, and so on most of the urban centres have become victims of unplanned and haphazard growth.

A measure of discipline in land utilisation and timely strengthening of civic authorities enabling them to raise the requisite resources to invest in the required amenities, would have made these cities far more liveable, despite their rapid growth.

The biggest bottlenecks such as shortage of drinking water and lack of public transport. In the absence of public investment in these, there has been a reckless growth of private suppliers with disastrous implications for ecology and environment.

To cite a few examples, while Bangalore is in search of a suitable site to develop a new city to ease the burden of rapid urbanisation on their beautiful capital, Karnataka needs another urban centre and it is wise not to push the burden on Mysore.

Not only is Mysore too close to Bangalore to provide adequate relief to the state's capital but its growth is not going to address the problem of urban dispersal within the state.

North or coastal Karnataka would be a better bet. One can

only hope that the far sightedness of Bangalore's elders will not come up against governmental apathy and that urgent action will be taken to preserve whatever is left of the beauty of what was once famed as a garden city.

The problems that Bangalore faces are not unique to it and are common to almost all urban centres. Indeed, what cities like Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad or Pune face is not as much a problem of rapid growth as unplanned and haphazard growth.

In a prosperous city like Ahmedabad, for instance, the shortfalls of inadequate public transport have been bridged by auto-rickshaws, which use kerosene powered engines with impunity. Not only is subsidised kerosene diverted from poor homes into these three wheelers, but it also pollutes the city harming the health of citizens. No government action is taken because these vehicles are owned by influential people who are able to escape the lethargic arms of the law.

One significant aspect of urbanisation is that the four mega cities of India — Mumbai, Calcutta, Delhi and Chennai — together account for more than one sixth of the total urban population of India.

The question to ponder is why is it that the urban population is gravitating towards big cities. The answer perhaps lies in the neglect of the small towns. In fact, most of the small and medium towns are devoid of anything that can remotely be described as planning.

The infrastructure of these towns remains primitive forcing the inhabitants to migrate to urban areas in search of livelihood. Both the service and industrial sectors of these small towns are not developed to provide enough employment potential to the growing number of educated youth.

And yet, urban governance in India has been neglected, if not completely ignored. It is visible in the complete mess in which our cities are today. Obviously, India does not have an unambiguously articulated urban policy even after 50 years of its independence. Somehow, we have wrongly over-emphasised the cliché that India lives in villages.

Though factually correct, it has become a political euphemism to buttress the focus of policy making on rural development.

Even as rural development

remained the basic foci of social and economic policy ever since independence, it was mired in political chaos.

In the process, while plans for rural development did not have the desired impact, cities got preferential treatment in infrastructural development though quite haphazardly. And while these experiments have been going on, the consequences of city-ward movement of millions of rural people were utterly ignored by the powers-that-be.

Today, therefore, the looming shadow of an urban crisis stares at our face. The Nexus between rural progress and urban development has not been visualised in its correct perspective.

While the number of small towns with a population of less than 10,000 has come down, this loss has not been made up fully by the emergence of new towns in adequate number.

The census data reveals that there has been a significant increase in the number of big cities and towns in the last decade. But the small towns have an important role to play in our urban system. The smaller satellite towns near big cities help in spatial urban diffusion and the small towns adjoining the rural areas relieve the population pressure in the neighbourhood besides serving other purposes as well.

The emerging trends towards urbanisation, particularly in a more spatially dispersed pattern in the Indian context, is not only welcome, but also a clear indication of success achieved in more diffused economic growth. Such a development involved reduction of labour force in agriculture which contributes less to national income than before and a corresponding increase in the non-farm employment in rural and urban areas.

To the extent this has not been the case, it is clear that urbanisation could not be spurred by the growth of large industries in mega towns. Therefore, India needs decentralised economic development in the country so that there is town dominated urban growth in our states, rather than very big metropolitan cities becoming the focal point of economic growth with all the concomitant ills of urbanisation let loose in the most perverted sense. — APB/PJT features

The writer is former Reader, Delhi University.

Mary Finds Success in the Tealeaves

When Mary Lyongaabe left jail she started a tea plantation and employed other women ex-convicts. It has been a great success and today she is selling over 1,000 tons of tea a year. Gemini News Service reports on a development story with a difference from Cameroon. Peter N Efande writes from Yaounde

AN unexpected twist came in the life of 25-year-old Ebeye Angeline when her fiancé, a top civil servant in the Ministry of National Education, accused her of stealing his salary.

Despite repeated pleas of innocence, he bundled her off to the police station. Without any money to hire a defence attorney, she was found guilty and jailed for a year. That was in 1995.

Two months after serving her sentence she met the ex-fiance in a bus. He apologised and revealed that he faked the charges because he suspected she was unfaithful.

The case of 23-year-old Pamela Doutous is more dramatic. She lost her father and three brothers in a car accident in 1996. Her mother became mentally ill.

Left without anyone in the family to sponsor her, Doutous dropped out of college and, curiously, fell in love with an armed robber. The man was killed a short while after the police and she was jailed for being in love with a dangerous man.

She was freed last April after two years in a woman's prison in Buea, capital of Cameroon's South west province.

When Gemini News visited the prison, the 21 inmates had doleful stories like these to tell. But one former inmate, Mary Lyongaabe, has had a different experience. She has made life after jail exciting and rewarding for some of the women ex-convicts. She now runs a tea plantation of 700 hectares in the village of Soppo, 15 kilometres away.

After two years in jail for misappropriating public funds, she invested part of the funds in the tea business.

She said: "I bought land in 1980s for two million CFA francs from the villagers and used three million CFA francs to buy seedlings, pay planters and clearers."

"Initially I wanted to trade in second-hand clothes, but my husband convinced me to go into the tea business."

Lyongaabe refuses to reveal how much she misappropriated while she was a cashier in the Defunct Produce Marketing Board, but is quick to say she sells an annual production of 1,100 tons of tea to the Cameroon Development Corporation.

Women ex-convicts make up 80 per cent of the 25 permanent workforce. They are involved in all stages of production — as tea pluckers, section heads, supervisors, weeder, Lyongaabe finds the women "wonderful, with an inherent sense of responsibility, receptivity to training and endurance."

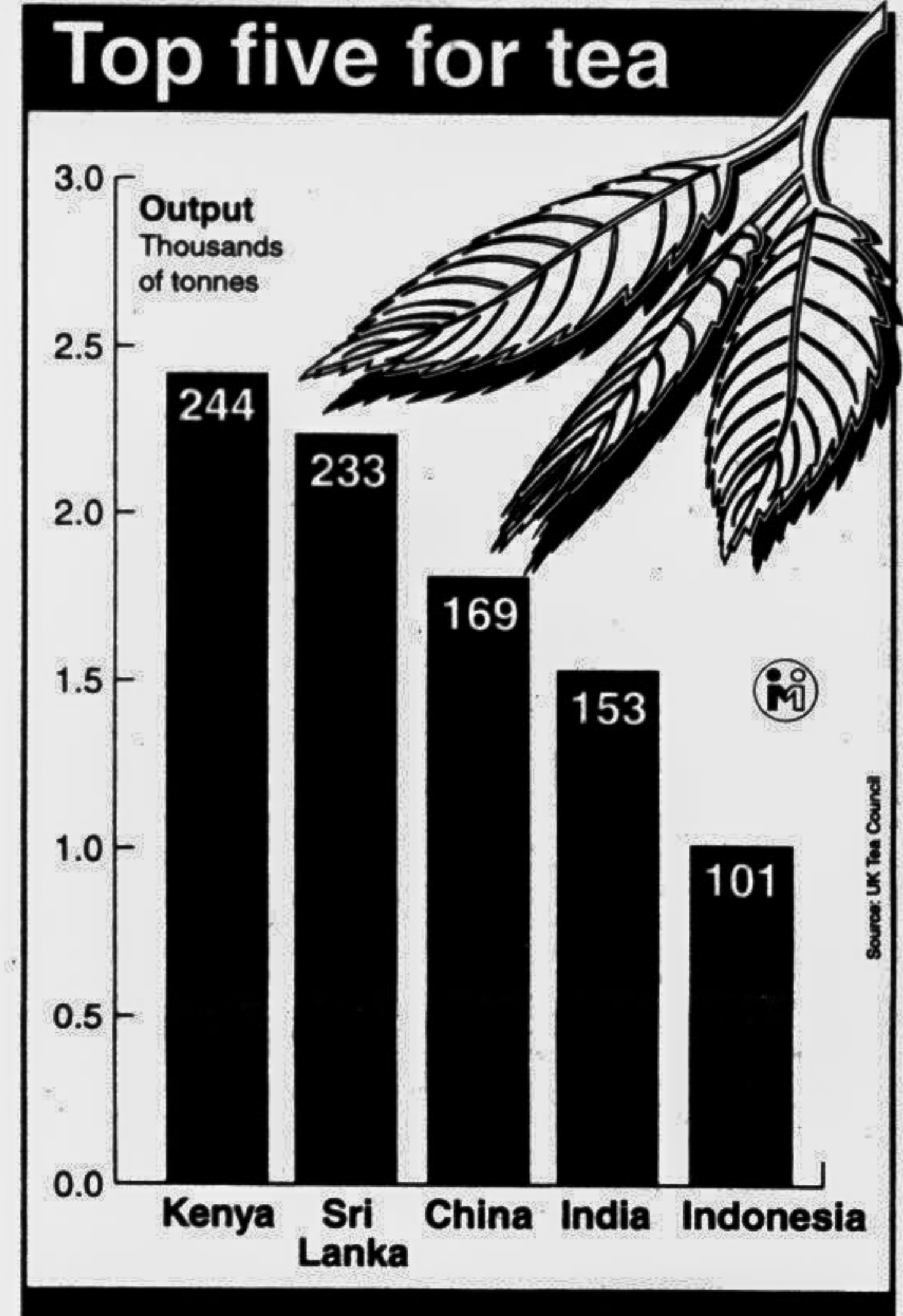
She explains how she handles the women ex-convicts: "Life does not end when you are a convict. Life starts when you are out of prison. I've been with some of them and fully understand the mental torments they've gone through."

"My success story is a poignant reminder to women who have been justly or unjustly convicted that they can make ends meet and live comfortable lives out of crime. It just needs a bit of money and serious planning."

Most of the women are unmarried and aged between 25 and 55. Life on the plantation is not easy for Lyongaabe and her workers. She says: "The women are often pregnant. After they give birth, they are off-duty for three months. This is unprofitable because during this period I'm short of labour and the tealeaves rot. I also have to put up the fluctuating prices of tea in the world market."

Gloria Ladifatu, aged 35 and mother of four, is elated, but she says she is "a contract worker and I don't benefit from things like cooking oil or soap which are distributed to permanent workers. And at times our salaries come late."

Mercy Ndatik, 29 and



mother of five, has been plucking tea for five years and finds the job rewarding: "I get up at 5am each day, take my bath and breakfast, then set off for the plantation with my basket and knife. I spend eight hours in the fields and pluck about 50 kilograms each day. I receive 25 CFA francs a kilogram."

Like most of her colleagues, she takes home about 37,000 CFA francs a month — "just enough to keep body and soul together and send my children to school."

Yongaabe remains tight-lipped about her annual. She laconically says that "after paying my workers, I have just enough left to keep my business moving."

The quality of her tea is evaluated by Florence Ngayi, professional tea-taster with the Agro-Industrial Cameroon De-

velopment Corporation, who was trained by tea brokers in London. In world terms, Cameroon is a small tea grower, being mostly a coffee producer.

Ngayi holds a first school-leaving certificate. She is the first female tea taster in Cameroon and one of the few in Africa.

Lyongaabe's tea is grade one quality, says Ngayi. She admires her courage and conscientiousness. Ngayi says: "She's strict without being hard and motherly without being weak. I'll like to be a business magnate like her."

This is wishful thinking, for Ngayi has one great handicap: her insatiable appetite for beer and peppered barbecue.

The writer is the copy editor of Cameroon Tribune, the only bilingual daily in Cameroon.

Cartoon strip featuring Tom and Jerry, James Bond, and a character with a bun. Includes text like 'YOU WISH A CASKET FOR YOUR SOON TO BE DEPARTED LITTLE FRIEND?', 'NOT EXACTLY.', 'MORE LIKE A BUN.', 'IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, THE TOP-SECRET DRONE SUBMARINE IS BEING SHADOWED ON ITS TEST RUN BY AN ASW HELICOPTER CRAMMED WITH SUB-DETECTION GEAR...', 'COPTER MAINTAINING STEADY CONTACT, SIR... TRACKING COURSE!', 'BUT THE COPTER AND MOTHER SHIP AREN'T THE ONLY MONITORS KEEPING TAB ON 'SEA SLAVE'', and 'BE-BEEP BE-BEEP BE-BEEP'.

How Long to Continue with Dowry Culture?

by Rashida Sultana Shumi

Even at the end of the twentieth century most of the women in this country live a life of slaves. The problem is that the victims cannot protest nor fight against their oppressors. They think or are made to believe that everything is written in their fate, so they should tolerate everything.

making dowry part of the marriage rituals. But they don't think about the poor father who is living almost hand to mouth and just cannot afford any dowry for his daughter. That father either cannot arrange a bridegroom for his daughter or even if he can get one, his daughter has to tolerate acerbity and physical torture at her husband's house, which sometimes lead to her ultimate destination — 'death'.

Sometimes she has to return back to her father's house with divorce from her husband just because of dowry. And also in her father's house, neglect, deprivation, acrimonious remarks of relatives make her life hell as she is looked at as a burden. Some women can not get married for the whole life only because of dowry. They live a life of extreme neglect and deprivation.

But there is also exception. There are few excellently motivated parents who bear an anti-dowry attitude and also inculcate this into their children which is a bliss for our society. But this is a picture often seen generally in the urban areas.

The condition of our villages are more pitiable. A daughter's

father has to sell even his last asset to fulfil the demand of dowry. But that's not the end. Demand for dowry from his daughter-in-law's family increases day by day. Here also when the father cannot afford to comply with the increasing demand for dowry, his daughter's life is made horrible and intolerable by oppression and violence. Sometimes the poor woman, victim of dowry, commits suicide, sometimes she becomes mentally imbalanced, and sometimes becomes the victim of murder by her husband's family. Yet there is little effective protestation. Nowadays our villages a marriage cannot be imagined without dowry.

Misfortune and depression are common features of today's Bangladeshi women. Many a brilliant girl gets born in this country. But the socio-economic conditions give them neither chance to bloom with their brilliance nor flourish with their personality.

Even at the end of the twentieth century most of the women in this country live a life of slaves. The problem is that the victims cannot protest nor fight against their oppressors. They think or are made to

believe that everything is written in their fate, so they should tolerate everything. As women are deprived of nutrition, education, healthcare etc, so they think themselves as weak, sub-standard and male (father, husband, son) controlled creatures.

Their appalling condition must be changed. An important measure is to create awareness in every woman about her rights and potentials. The government has passed a law against violence and oppression of women where provision for anti-terrorism is also a part of it. But there should be a separate law as well as its appropriate enforcement against violence to women. The picture can also be changed if giving and receiving dowry is treated as hateful and illegal in practice.

An anti-dowry attitude among all classes of society can bring in a change in the situation. Newspaper, television, radio — all mass media can play an effective role in this regard, besides the legal measures.

Newspapers should not cease publishing bit by bit follow-up of every dowry victim case. TV and radio should take up an anti-dowry propaganda. Moreover, if anti-dowry story, short play etc are included in the primary school syllabus then it might help to change the attitude of mass people.

But the patriarchal characteristic of our society belittles serious issues like dowry which is still increasing the inequalities between men and women day by day. In this case the social, religious and political leaders have a painstaking role to play. Should they?