

**ECONOMIC
REVIEW**
January 1996

LABOUR MIGRATION

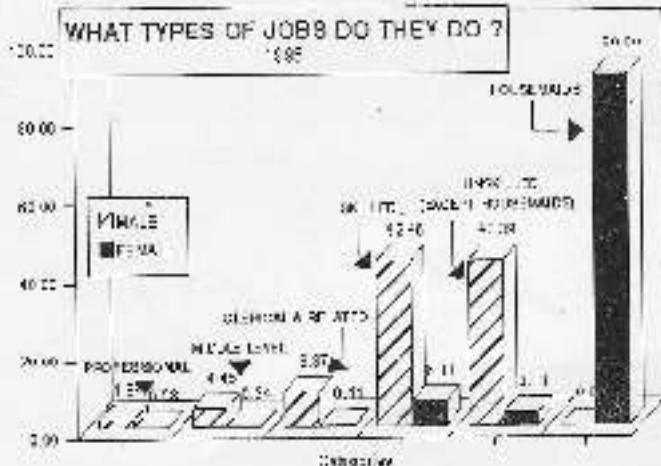
*Special Focus
on
Middle East*



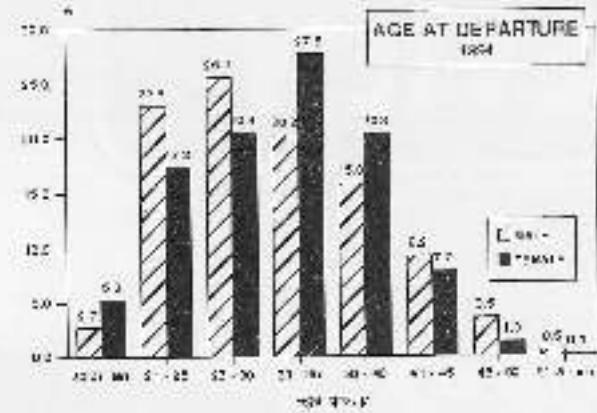
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MEASURES OF MIGRATION

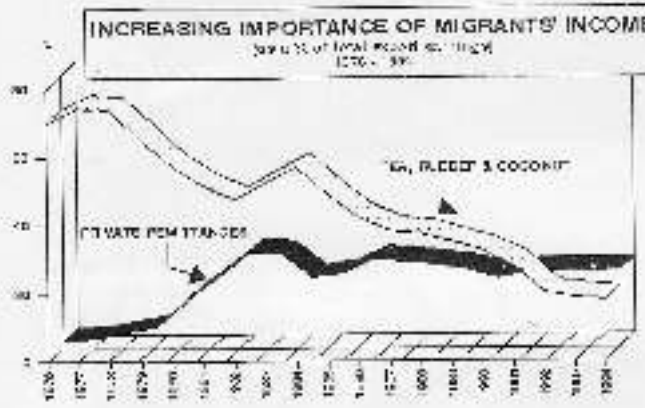
WHAT TYPES OF JOBS DO THEY DO ?
1995



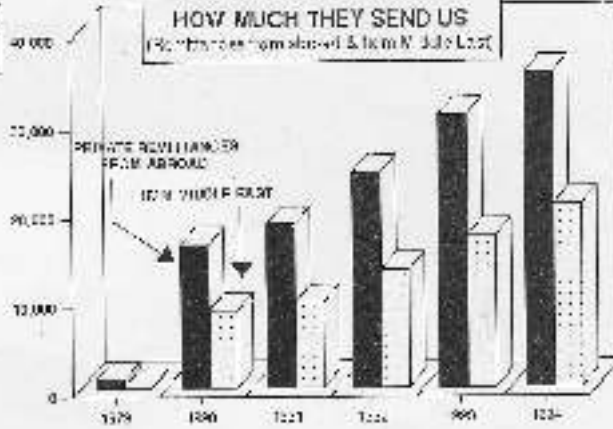
AGE AT DEPARTURE
1994



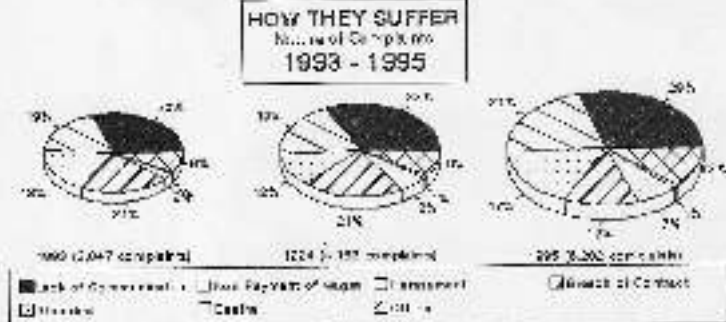
INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF MIGRANTS' INCOME
(% of total export earnings)
1976 - 1995



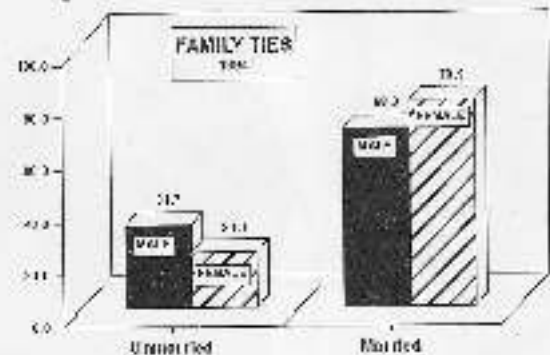
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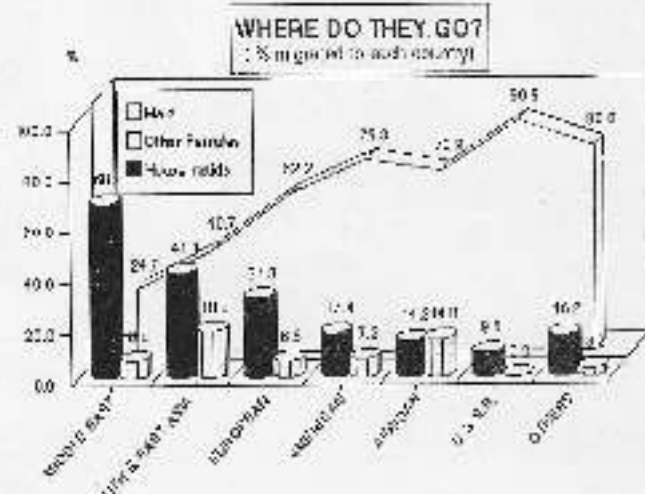
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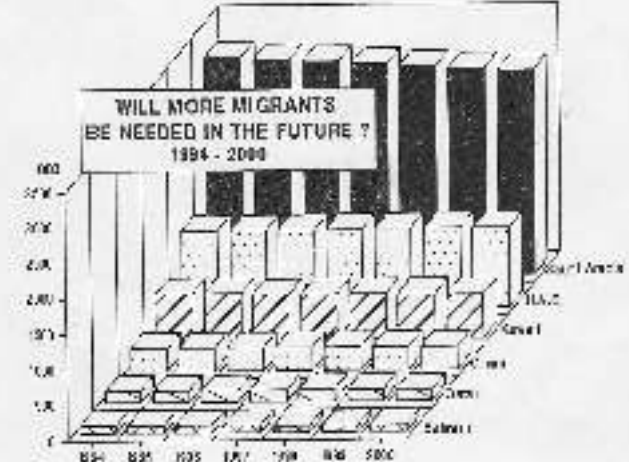
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Impact of Labour Migration

with emphasis on its economic contribution

In 1981, when the Middle East boom attracted an international labour force, the Economic Review published a comprehensive report on the situation of labour migration to the middle eastern countries. These countries with single resources economies encountered many problems associated with the shortage of labour at all levels. From then began the exodus of migrant workers to the oil-rich countries. Labour export to the Middle East was dominated by private labour supply agencies. As these intermediaries adopted various exploitative and unethical means to maximise their profits, the insecurity of the migrant workers emerged as a sensitive human problem, with the increase of overseas migration. Therefore, research-based policy-makers in labour exporting countries were much more concerned with the human and social problems of migration than with its real economic impact. After more than a decade of unorganised international labour movement, increased return migration of contract workers has created reabsorption problems in the local regular labour force.

However, in recent years, most Asian countries including Sri Lanka, have been promoting overseas migration as a new sector of export earnings. Apart from the direct economic repercussions, labour export had many social, cultural and psychological implications as overseas labour migration often disrupts established human and family relationships. Many studies on impact assessment of labour exports have identified positive and negative implications of the fast-growing overseas labour movement.

Sri Lanka in the colonial era imported labour from India to develop export plantations in the country, such as tea, rubber and coconut. Since then, the plantation sector continued to play a dominant role in Sri Lanka's export earnings. However, with the introduction

of open economic policies in the late 1970s, labour export became more important than the export of agricultural commodities, as the inflow of foreign remittances to the country continued to increase. The share of tea, rubber and coconut exports in total export earnings declined from 74.2 per cent in 1977 to 17.8 per cent in 1994. The share of foreign remittances in total export earnings correspondingly increased from 1.3 per cent to 22.3 per cent during the same period. Apart from the increased inflow of foreign remittances, overseas migration had a positive impact on easing domestic unemployment pressures.

The average economic growth recorded for the last decade was insufficient to create employment opportunities in the major sectors of the economy, including the agricultural sector where employment continued to decline. In 1990, 47.7 per cent of the total employed population was in the agricultural sector, but this figure dropped to 38.5 per cent in 1993, and the sector's contribution to GDP declined correspondingly from 23.2 per cent to 20.9 per cent during the same period.

The manufacturing sector which was expected to grow much faster under the open economy, also failed to realise expectations. Its contribution to GDP increased marginally from 17.3 per cent in 1990 to 19.1 per cent in 1993, while the labour force employed declined from 14.1 to 13.2 in the same period. However, the services sector accounted for 49.4 per cent of the GDP in 1990 and this increased to 50.6 per cent in 1993, while labour in the sector increased from 29.2 per cent to 38 per cent. However, with the ongoing privatisation of public organisations and the reduction of employers in private sector organisations, the labour absorption capacity of the service sector is expected to decline. The problem of unemployment in Sri Lanka therefore has to be solved by creating greater employment opportunities in the

manufacturing sector and its main sub-sectors, like the processing of tea, rubber and coconut and the increase of small industries. Of the total labour force engaged in the factory industry, about 80 per cent work in the garments industry. The work force engaged in the processing of tea, rubber and coconut is sixty to eighty per cent in the prospects of the plantation industry do not appear to be particularly promising.

Therefore, exporting labour is believed to be an important means of easing pressure on the major sectors of the economy. The total number of overseas migration in 1994 was more than the number of workers employed in the factory industry including the Free Trade Zones. However, its overall impact has extended beyond direct economic benefits. One of the total overseas migrants, about 70 per cent of contract workers are housemaids (female domestic servants). The large exodus of mainly active female counterparts in the household units of production has affected the entire socio-economic and cultural milieu. Extentiveness of not only female migrant workers but also children in their family units have been affected. Mothers who have played a critical role in caring and educating children left their families to fend for themselves, thereby creating post-migration adjustment difficulties.

Secondly, overseas migration was characterised by navigated and supply-driven labour movements. Push factors associated with economic crises at the family level, exploitation and malpractice of illegal agencies and physical problems encountered once separated from the family unit are some important negative implications of overseas migration. Thirdly, the majority of women migrants as domestic servants have been identified locally as having been unemployed housewives. However, as pointed out in many women's studies, they represent a most active but unpaid family labour

Sri Lankan Labour Migration: Trends and Threats

by
L. K. Ruhunage

The first instance of outflow of Sri Lankans for foreign employment is reportedly in the first half of the 20th century, under the British rule, when the Sri Lankan Tamils emigrated to Malaysia in small numbers. However, it was only after gaining independence in 1948 that this country had clear experiences in the sphere of international labour migration. After the gaining of independence, many people of Burgher origin migrated to Australia and New Zealand. According to statistics available with the Department of Immigration and Emigration, 429,303 Sri Lankans emigrated the country between 1967 and 1971. The purpose of their migration is not recorded. It has also been reported that during the period 1960 and 1968, 188 Sri Lankan doctors were given resident permits in Britain. In 1971 and 1972, 379 professionals left this country in search of greener pastures. Doctors, accountants and university lecturers being among them.¹

The two decades following 1973 showed a definite advancement in the labour migration from this country. In the middle of 1973, the oil exporting OPEC countries decided to increase the price of oil to US \$ 33 per barrel. The resultant economic development in the middle eastern countries had a tremendous impact on the labour market, turning these countries into a virtual open market for migrant labour. They became a haven for not only Arab and Asian workers, but also for workers from European countries. Therefore, the Philippines, Korea, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka entered into the middle eastern employment market by supplying labour.

Labour Migration is a strong factor affecting the social and economic life of the nation

The following table gives the migrants between 1973 and 1994.

Table 1
Sri Lankan Labour Migration - 1973 to 1994

Year	Quantity	
	Official	Total
1972-1973	2,365	-
1973-1978	14,241	-
1979	9,423	26,375
1980	7,602	28,644
1981	15,000	57,347
1982	23,430	-
1983	18,046	-
1984	16,713	-
1985	13,971	-
1986	16,546	30,797 (1)
1987	16,127	-
1988	18,973	-
1989	24,734	-
1990	42,024	58,574 (2)
1991	65,007	86,373 (2)
1992	55,673	124,191
1993	48,743	129,075
1994	80,187	130,027

1. Data for the months of June, July, August, September and December.
2. Airport Survey from March to August.
3. Airport Survey from June to December.

The Ministry of Plan Implementation used the embarkation cards completed by passengers at the airport to obtain statistical information on Sri Lankan migrants. These revealed that a total of 20,980 persons left for employment in 1979, which was twice the number who migrated for employment through official channels as shown by a previous study done by the Ministry, which had placed the numbers at 9,423.

As shown in Table 1, a subsequent study done by the Foreign Employment Bureau and data analysed over a period of six months also revealed a huge gap between the numbers who migrated through official channels and the actual total of migrants. Although the total number which left for employment abroad during the six months surveyed was recorded as 30,797 (those who visited Sri Lanka on vacation were not included), only 7,771 persons, or 25 per cent, emigrated through official channels.

An Airport Survey Unit was introduced in March 1990 by the Foreign Employment Bureau in order to obtain more organised data. One of the important facts revealed here was that total migration is higher percentage wise when compared with migration through official channels. Accordingly, while the total number of migrants in 1992 was 124,494, those who migrated through registered agencies was 55,673 or only 45 per cent. In 1993, the number migrating through official channels declined to 48,743, although the total number of migrants increased to 129,075, thus reducing the number of migrants through official channels to 38 per cent. In 1994, while the total number was around 130,000, migrants through official channels reached a bout 60,000 (approx. 46 per cent).

When analysing the characteristics of labour migration, its outstanding feature is the high percentage of women migrants.

Table 2

Labour Migration - Participation of Women (Total)

Year	Total	Number	%	Number	%
1979	26,973	13,633	50.2	12,943	47.3
1980	28,841	14,101	49.2	14,643	50.8
1981	57,447	27,287	47.5	30,160	52.5
1986*	38,787	9,512	24.5	21,255	54.7
1992	124,494	46,369	37.2	49,365	39.6
1993	129,376	35,196	27.2	93,760	72.8
1994	130,027	27,929	21.5	102,098	78.5

* Only for the months of July, Aug, Sep and Oct.

- 1. Ministry of 1971 International Migration Statistics - 1971, 81 & 82.
- 2. Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment - Emigration and Employment Survey.
- 3. Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment - Airport Survey.

Table 2 shows that of the total number who migrated for employment in 1979, the percentage of women stood at 47.3 and in 1980, the participation of women exceeded that of men for the first time, increasing to 52.5 per cent in 1981 and 83.5 per cent in 1994.

The cause for this high rate of participation had been the social conditions that emerged in the middle eastern countries, along with their economic developments. In this situation, the Arabs sought to employ housemaids from foreign countries for their household work. This was, in a way, a display of social importance.

Although the demand for labour in other categories declined after 1975, the demand for housemaids remained steady. When employing housemaids, preference had been given to Muslim women. Sri Lanka was in an advantageous position in this regard, since other Asian countries (Bangladesh, Pakistan and India) which had Muslims abundantly to meet the demand, were reluctant to send their women. India has totally banned the supply of women for employment as housemaids abroad. Bangladesh and Pakistan, which happen to be strong labour exporting countries in the Asian Region, did not send women to foreign countries as housemaids due to cultural and religious reasons. It was from countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines that Sri Lanka had competition in this sphere. In later years, when regulations were brought in, these countries too started to limit the mi-

gration of women. Sri Lanka thus enjoyed a monopoly in the supply of housemaids for foreign markets. The employment agencies then preferred to send Muslim women, a special factor being that employers bore the travelling expenses of Muslim women, as indicated by David Zeyva who is engaged in management and research work in this field, 'a muslim woman does not have to bear any expenses when migration expenses are accounted'. (Asian Migrants - August 1992).

Another special feature after 1986 is the demand for female garment factory workers. The female migration was strengthened by this and by 1992, it exceeded 50,000.

When analysing the race factor in labour migration, participation of Muslims and Tamils is of special significance. The participation of Tamils prior to 1976 and of Muslims after 1976 is a significant feature. According to the Cabinet Sub-Committee Report of 1974, participation of the Tamil population in migration was 40 per cent, while in 1971, the total was 20.4 per cent. Participation of Muslims increased after 1976 to 81 per cent (see table 3).

The Arabs' employment of housemaids from foreign countries is in a way, a display of social importance



The reasons for the above were the tendency among Tamils to dislike Sri Lankan politics after the predominantly Sinhala politics of 1956. The cultural environment in the Gulf countries facilitated the migration of Muslims and specifically, of muslim women workers. The Airport Survey conducted by the Foreign Employment Bureau is an important source when considering the age structure of migrant labour.

Table 3

Migration for employment by race and sex - July, Sept. 1993

	Female		Male		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sinhalese	8,388	61.8	22,123	58.2	30,511	64.3
Tamil	1,117	9.2	927	2.3	2,044	4.3
Muslim	4,865	37.7	9,344	26.9	14,209	31.2
Other	53	0.3	50	0.2	103	0.2
Total	12,413	100	32,443	100	44,856	100

Source: Airport Survey, Foreign Employment Bureau.

According to the 1994 survey, the majority who went abroad for employment were in the 31 to 35 year group. Among the male workers, the highest percentage was in the 26 to 30 age-group, while among the females it was the 31 to 35 year group. This was due to the fact that Arab countries, when recruiting women, had preferred those above the age of 30 years. (see Table 4).

The marital status of those employed abroad is an important factor in relation to the population increase. The birth rate could decline due to factors such as the migration of married persons, delay in the age of marriage etc. Another influence on the declining birth rate has been that the workers who go for employment abroad on two year contracts, often tend to get their contracts extended many times and overstay their legitimate stay in these countries.

Table 5 shows that the number of married workers has increased from 68.5 per cent in the first survey to 71.2 per cent in the second survey and to 77.1 per cent in the third survey. The majority of migrants at the initial stages were from urban areas. In 1975, 75 per cent of migrants were from the Colombo and Campsba districts, which in 1980 and 1981 declined to 70 per cent and 65 per cent respectively. However, there seems to be a distinctive change in the present migration pattern. During the first three months of 1993, only 33 per cent of the total of 39,179 persons who migrated for employment purposes were from the Colombo district, while only 7 per cent represented the Campsba district.

In the meantime, rural areas such as Kurunegala have come to the fore-front. The statistics of the 1994 Airport Survey show that the participation of the Colombo district has declined further to 17 per cent, while Kurunegala, Kegalle, Galle and Kandy have made an outstanding contribution (see table 6).

This pattern clearly shows that the migration process has now encompassed the entire island.

While Saudi Arabia takes the first place (around 35 per cent) among the recipient countries, of this migrant labour, Kuwait and UAE receive 28 per

Table 4

Age Ratio distribution of migrant workers

Age (years)	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
< 20	870	4.7	5,721	5.3	6,591	4.8
21 - 25	4,872	22.6	18,813	17.4	23,685	18.2
26 - 30	5,424	25.4	22,308	20.4	27,732	21.3
31 - 35	4,289	20.2	29,970	27.6	34,259	28.3
36 - 40	3,860	18.2	22,038	20.3	25,898	19.6
41 - 45	1,954	9.2	8,707	7.9	10,661	8.0
46 - 50	748	3.5	1,419	1.3	2,167	1.7
51 +	97	0.4	65	0.1	162	0.1
Total	21,329	100	109,698	100	131,027	100

Source: Airport Survey, 1994. Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau.

Table 5

Marital Status of Migrant Workers (%)

Marital Status	Survey I			Survey II			Survey III		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Married	68.0	64.6	64.6	67.3	71.7	71.2	68.8	78.91	77.16
Un-married	18.9	19.8	19.2	32.7	25.0	28.6	31.7	21.60	32.82
Un-specified	20.6	16.1	17.3	-	-	-	-	-	-

Survey I - July, August 1985; Survey II - July, October 1988; Survey III - Jan, 1991
Source: Airport Survey, Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau.

Table 6

District-wise Distribution of Migrant Workers (%)

District	Survey I	Survey II	Survey III	Survey IV	Survey V
	1978	1980	1981	1983	1994
Colombo	57.6	63.0	49.5	23.3	17.6
Campsba	15.8	15.9	14.5	7.3	7.0
Katulana	3.8	3.7	4.3	5.4	5.9
Kandy	1.0	5.8	5.5	10.5	9.4
Matale	1.0	1.0	1.2	3.0	2.8
NRIiya	0.4	0.3	0.8	1.0	1.3
Galle	4.0	4.2	4.8	6.1	6.9
Matsara	1.0	0.0	1.3	3.4	2.6
Hambantota	0.7	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.4
Jaffna	4.0	6.8	6.9	160.2	1.0
Mannar	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.3
Vavuniya	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
Mulaniva	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.3	-
Halticalua	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.0	3.9
Kilinochchi	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.4	-
Ampara	3.2	0.3	0.3	1.8	4.3
Tinencaloe	0.6	0.6	0.6	11.0	2.7
Kurunegala	1.3	1.8	7.9	4.2	10.4
Puttalam	1.0	1.5	1.3	2.6	4.7
Apara	0.2	0.2	0.1	1.2	4.0
Pinarawa	0.0	0.0	0.1	1.8	1.7
Dabhilla	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.1	2.9
Misseravala	0.0	0.0	0.1	1.7	0.0
Ratnapura	0.3	0.3	0.3	4.1	1.6
Kegalle	1.0	1.3	1.4	-	5.9
Unspecified	2.0	1.4	1.8	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey I - II - Ministry of Plan Implementation, Labour Migration data 1979-1981; Survey IV - Foreign Employment Bureau - Airport Survey Jan/March 1991; Survey V - Foreign Employment Bureau - Airport Survey Dec 1994.

cent and 14 per cent respectively (table 7).

The main factor that comes to light when analysing the manpower base of these workers is their unskilled nature. Out of the total number of migrant workers in 1992, 76 per cent departed for domestic and labour grade employment. This number increased to 81 per cent in 1993 and 87 per cent in 1994.

Although, with the opening of the middle eastern market, these countries had initially required skilled-grade labour, the demand seems to have turned to unskilled labour subsequently.

Migration could be shown as a strong factor affecting the social and economic life of the nation. Since the wealth earned by foreign employment has in recent years taken the forefront position as a net foreign exchange earning medium, and due to its contribution towards reducing unemployment and income disparities, the service rendered by migrant workers is clearly evident. The substantial increase in private remittances from foreign employment income in 1976 points to the opening up of the middle eastern employment market.

This is evident in the increase in private remittances to Sri Lanka, from Rs 60 m in 1973 to Rs 106 m in 1976. (see table 9).

It is significant that private remittances which had an upward trend since the 1980s surpassed foreign exchange earnings from tea exports, which was hitherto the main income earner. Although it is seen at first glance that private remittances are second only to export earnings from garments, a recent study on garments revealed that when the cost of import of raw materials is deducted from the export income from garments (Rs 53,209 m), its net value would be only 30 per cent (Rs 15,963 m). As such, it could be argued that the main foreign exchange earner during this year is foreign employment. Therefore, foreign employment has become a main source of income in the balance of payments.

Table 7
Distribution of Emigrant Labour
Sri Lanka Airport Survey - 1992, 1993 and 1994

	1992		1993		1994	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Saudi Arabia	41,043	33	51,118	30.9	4,500	34.61
Kuwait	32,388	26	30,362	23.8	33,273	25.59
O.A.F.	22,439	14	19,901	15.1	17,092	13.03
Lebanon	3,148	3	4,380	3.4	7,953	6.12
Oman	3,715	3	5,520	4.3	4,328	3.44
Bahrain	6,226	5	5,884	4.4	5,024	3.82
Jordan	3,511	3	3,329	2.6	1,829	1.41
Qatar	1,656	1	3,114	2.4	4,121	3.17
Maldives	2,480	2	2,208	1.8	2,301	1.74
Singapore	1,775	1	2,065	1.6	1,375	1.05
Cyprus	-	-	608	0.5	-	-
Greece	-	-	132	0.1	-	-
Other	1,118	1	230	0.2	2,360	1.81
Total	124,494	100	129,076	100	130,027	100

Source: Airport Survey, Foreign Employment Bureau.

Table 8
Manpower base-wise Distribution

Manpower Group	1992		1993		1994	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Senior Managers	1,215	01	940	0.3	368	10.3
Medium Manpower	8,226	05	8,478	5	3,138	7.7
Skilled	22,409	18	17,947	14	14,917	11.5
Unskilled (other than housemaids)	8,984	09	16,876	12	9,895	7.6
Housemaids	84,855	68	88,117	69	102,661	78.6
Total	124,494	100	129,076	100	130,027	100

Source: Airport Survey, Foreign Employment Bureau.

Table 9
Private Remittances and Foreign Exchange Earnings in selected areas (1976-94) Rs. Mn.

Year	Private Remittances	Tea	Rubber	Coal products	Garment	Total Exp. earnings	As a %
1976	108	2,109	800	339	79	4,515	2.2
1977	190	2,503	931	496	120	6,839	2.9
1978	810	6,403	2.0	1.2	481	13,208	4.6
1979	936	5,722	2,491	1,099	1,109	16,273	6.1
1980	3,515	6,179	2,580	1,231	1,814	17,598	14.3
1981	4,430	6,440	2,899	1,439	3,000	21,043	21.1
1982	6,024	6,342	2,323	1,498	3,502	21,484	28.1
1983	6,516	5,295	2,852	1,921	4,788	26,096	27.6
1984	7,853	15,784	3,381	2,115	7,588	37,347	20.5
1985	7,920	12,003	2,586	3,003	7,963	36,207	21.9
1986	8,873	2,963	2,622	2,349	9,029	34,072	26.0
1987	10,324	10,654	2,929	2,140	12,997	41,183	25.1
1988	11,346	12,299	3,706	1,639	14,260	40,929	24.3
1989	12,530	13,691	3,112	3,665	17,881	56,175	22.8
1990	16,054	19,823	3,080	2,783	25,163	71,823	21.0
1991	18,311	17,587	2,941	2,619	33,261	83,225	21.8
1992	24,037	14,893	2,950	3,091	53,209	107,665	22.3
1993	30,592	19,911	3,068	2,796	86,159	138,175	22.1
1994	35,845	20,964	3,592	3,761	76,614	158,664	22.3

Source: Central Bank Report 1976 - 84.

When the approximately 125,000 persons who migrated for employment abroad is compared with the approximately 160,000 persons who join the labour force annually, the important role played by foreign employment in reducing unemployment is significant.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka in its 1992 Report has stated that foreign employment is a factor which continues to contribute towards reducing unemployment problems in this country. It has emphasized that the annual supply to the foreign labour market has increased to 125,000 persons. However, 70 per cent of migrant workers comprise housemaids, which is a category not accounted for in the labour force. Therefore, the argument that the impact of these numbers on the labour force and unemployment should be lower, must be taken into consideration.

Several surveys on the subject show that around 7 per cent, to 25 per cent of women who migrated for unskilled jobs had in fact been engaged in some form of income-earning activity.² As such, it is clear that this form of migration cannot be totally dismissed as not affecting the local labour force. On the other hand, according to the estimates of the Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau, the number of Sri Lankans engaged in employment in the middle eastern region has reached 500,000, which is about 6 per cent of the labour force in this country. When compared with the unemployment reports of the Department of Census and Statistics however, it amounts to 39 per cent.



Table 10

Sri Lankan Labour force in foreign countries - 1994 Overseas contract workers		
Country	No. Estimated	%
Saudi Arabia	200,000	40.0
Kuwait	80,000	16.0
UAE	75,000	15.0
Lebanon	25,000	5.0
Oman	25,000	5.0
Bahrain	25,000	5.0
Jordan	15,000	3.0
Qatar	10,000	2.0
Other Middle East countries	10,000	2.0
For Eastern Asian countries	15,000	3.0
African countries	10,000	2.0
Asian countries	10,000	2.0
Total	500,000	100

Source: Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, Statistical Handbook on Foreign Employment 1994 (Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau, Statistical Report on Foreign Employment 1994).

This covers a large number of persons who would become unemployed.

Another social benefit of foreign employment has been its impact on reducing the income disparity. Several surveys reveal that, those employed in middle eastern countries were mainly from low income families. They were able to purchase houses and property, domestic appliances etc. through these new avenues of income. Surveys have also revealed that the average size of these families was about 5 members. Therefore it can be concluded that around 2,500,000 of people are currently dependent on foreign employment, i.e. - around 15 per cent of the total population. This further emphasizes the importance of this sector.

Future of the Industry

The preceding facts indicate that foreign employment has evolved into a "labour exporting industry". With the enactment of the Foreign Employment Bureau Act No. 21 of 1985, the labour exporting industry acquired a more legislative management and became a stable economic activity through the contribution of nearly 150 employment agencies.

In recent times, emphasis was placed on the diversification of the market. This involved entering into labour markets in countries such as Japan, Malaysia, Korea, Singapore instead of depending only on traditional buyers of labour.

Table 11

Labour Supply from other major countries (Labour Migration Statistics)					
Country	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Bangladesh	101,724	108,874	137,131	186,124	244,500
Burma	8,342	8,725	13,912	13,912	-
Indonesia	64,074	96,264	149,732	149,762	-
Korea	63,647	55,774	45,713	84,632	-
Malaysia	56,026	68,012	-	-	-
Philippines	158,626	446,076	616,019	688,481	639,200
Thailand	126,814	83,024	83,849	81,759	138,000
Pakistan	98888	116,520	147,344	191,640	354,000
India	126,768	143,800	117,500	-	-

Source: 1. Asian Migration (1989) Vol. III No. 4 Oct. Dec. Bangladesh Migration Centre, Philippines - pages 171 - 188
 2. Asian Entry (1990) Economic Impact of Gulf Crisis in Pakistan, 1991 - Bangkok - page 28
 3. Asian and Pacific Migration Journal (1992) Vol. 1, No. 2 Southeastern Migration Centre, Philippines p. 258

Remittances from foreign employment were the main foreign exchange earner last year, when considering the fact that the net value of the garment industry, the highest exchange earner, was only 30 percent of its export earnings

Cont'd to page 29

Unskilled Labour Migration to the Middle East

can they really escape the poverty trap?

The price increases of crude oil after the formation of OPEC in the early 1970s and the concomitant flow of 'petro dollars' to the oil-rich Arab countries in the Middle East, enabled these countries to embark on massive development projects unmatched in the history of this region. These countries however could not manage to execute these projects with local manpower alone. Thus, demand for manpower at all levels, i.e. high, middle and lower, was created. At the beginning of this development phase, this demand was met by neighbouring Arab countries such as Yemen, Sudan, Egypt. Later, the labour market was opened to other countries as well. The Philippines, India, Korea, Thailand, Pakistan and Bangladesh responded very early to this demand.

The exodus of unskilled lower-level Sri Lankan labour migration to the Middle East assumed significant proportions only after the introduction of the "free-flow" migration policy by the Sri Lankan Government in the late 1970s. According to recent estimates, nearly 500,000 unskilled Sri Lankan Migrants are working in the Middle East. Hence, the size and impact of International migration have been massive and viable in Sri Lanka today.

This phenomena initially triggered by the backward and almost stagnant economic base, was subsequently increased in response to external stimuli. The growing affluence and improvements in living standards of the local population in the Middle East, raised a special demand for housemaids and nannies. Coupled with these factors was the mushrooming of private

By Dr Chandra Attanayake



institutions and the effectively organised public sector at home and abroad which facilitated these migrants.

Migration "Laws"

Positive effects of migration have been researched and recorded in many parts of the world. An early theorist on migration, E. G. Ravenstein, has elucidated this aspect in the following manner :-

'Migration means life and progress. A sedentary population stagnates.' Furthermore, in his celebrated paper on the 'laws' of migration, presented before the Royal Statistical Society on March 17, 1885, he outlined seven hypotheses on migration which he called "laws". The list of these "laws" postulates the dominance of the economic motive.

"Bad or oppressive laws, heavy taxation, an unattractive climate, unfavourable social surroundings and even compulsion (slave trade, transportation) all have produced and are still producing, currents of migration, but none of these currents can compare in volume with that which arises from the desire inherent in most men to 'better' themselves in material aspects" (p 286)

The 'desire inherent in most people to better themselves in material aspects' seems to be the driving force behind the movement of, especially, unskilled labour to the Middle East. This category of labour is drawn from the lowest economic strata in Sri Lanka. Studies reveal that the monthly income of this category of labour at home was less than Rs. 1,000/- per month. Migration therefore is viewed by them as an escape mechanism from the poverty trap and as the only hope to better themselves in material wealth.

Determinants of Migration

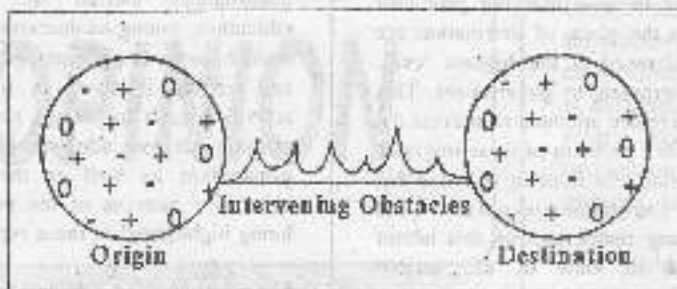
The fact remains however, that everyone in the lowest strata of society does not migrate or for that matter, develop a propensity to migrate. This aspect may be evaluated against the ecological model on migration developed by Everett Lee (1966). The factors which enter into the decision to migrate and the process of migration are summarised under four headings by Lee

1. Factors associated with the area of origin.
2. Factors associated with the area of destination
3. Intervening obstacles
4. Personal factors

LABOUR MIGRATION

The first three are indicated schematically in the figure below: In every area there are countless factors which act to hold people within the area or attract people to it, and there are others which tend to repel them. These are shown in the diagram as + and - signs. These are the O's, to which people are essentially indifferent.

ORIGIN & DESTINATION FACTORS AND INTERVENING OBSTACLES IN MIGRATION



The set of + signs and - signs at both origin and destination is differently defined for every migrant. Migration may result from a comparison of factors at origin and destination. A simple calculus of +s and -s does not decide the act of migration. The balance in favour of the move must be enough to overcome the inertia found in every place of origin.

Obstacles to Migration

Between every point of origin and destination, there stands a set of intervening obstacles which may be slight for some prospective migrants and insurmountable for others. The most researched of these obstacles is distance. Then there are the physical barriers, the immigration laws and the expenses one has to incur in the process of migration which every migrant has to overcome. The effect of a given set of obstacles is distance. The effect of a given set of obstacles depends also upon the impediments with which the migrant is encumbered. For some migrants, surmounting the intervening obstacles could be minimal, but for some others to make the same move, the impediments greatly increase the difficulties posed by intervening obstacles.

Finally, there are many personal factors which affect individuals at different thresholds and facilitate or retard

migration. Some of these personal factors are more or less constant throughout the life of the individual, while others are associated with stages in the life cycle.

This conceptualisation of migration involving a set of factors at origin and destination, a set of intervening

obstacles and a series of personal factors provide a framework for much of what we know about migration today.

The unskilled labour migrants from Sri Lanka would have evaluated the + and - signs of the area of origin and destination before migrating to the Middle East. They would also have overcome the intervening obstacles and found solutions to personal problems before migrating. However, a re-assessment of the whole process sometimes leads to return migration flows. Sometimes, all factors operating in the area of origin and destination could change adversely after migration and the entire effort to better themselves would turn out to be futile.

A small number of these unskilled migrants, especially the males, are employed in the construction sector. A significant component of this labour category - nearly four out of every five persons - comprise females who secure employment as housemaids and nannies

Causative Factors of Unskilled Labour Migration

According to available information, the following causative factors have contributed towards the migration of unskilled labour to the Middle East:

- * the high wages paid in the Middle East countries in comparison with wages paid locally for comparable jobs
- * Socio-cultural attitudes which stand in the way of acceptance of similar types of employment at home
- * the impact of urbanisation, education and modernisation and the concomitant changes in social and cultural values
- * the influence of friends and relations who have made good in these countries
- * easy access to channels of exit
- * fringe benefits such as free food, lodging, clothing and sometimes, free passage. These jobs enable the migrant to save a sizable sum of money even during a short period of work abroad
- * the ability and freedom to send their earnings back home as remittances
- * lack of opportunities in the home country to enter employment channels in order to escape from the poverty trap.



Whatever the causative factor or factors that were eventually responsible for labour migration to the Middle East, the dominance of the economic motive needs no emphasis here. The Sri Lanka

government is able to reap many benefits by adhering to the 'free-flow' migration policy. Apart from alleviating to some degree the problem of unemployment and under-employment in the country, unskilled labour migrants have contributed to the coffers of this country much more than many of those on whom Sri Lanka has spent a fortune for developing their skills. Furthermore, the income disparities within Sri Lanka have been made narrower by the incomes generated via foreign employment by the lowest income strata in Sri Lanka. At the initial stages, these migrants originated from the urban centres but today, they are drawn both from the city as well as from the village and from all districts of Sri Lanka. Hence, the spatial impact of this phenomenon is island-wide. The development of cordial international

relations reveals the strength of the push factors and the dominance of the economic motive behind labour migration, especially among the unskilled category.

Family Life Problems

The problems of labour migration however, are not limited to the place of destination. The migrant is faced with many problems at the place of origin, especially at the family level. It is heartening to note that the problems related to the place of destination are being addressed at the highest level, from government to government. This article therefore attempts to address the 'family-life' problem of these migrants and generate new thinking to solve this problem. The author does not attempt to propose any restrictions on this labour movement in view of the serious

begin to build up in the homes of many migrants. This tension affects both the 'mover' and the 'stayers' and it continues to stay with the family during the period of absence of the migrant, and sometimes beyond his eventual return as a 'changed person'.

The local press and the electronic media often report and highlight various problems the migrant families face. Negligence of the very young, disturbances caused to children's education, young adolescents changing their behaviour patterns, going astray and getting involved in underworld activities such as using, peddling or pushing drugs, adolescent sex and prostitution as well as the unsocial behaviour patterns of the parents are being highlighted in these reports.

Sometimes open discussions about family life problems, for example how it affects the well-being of the family, the problems that have to be encountered in the absence of the migrant, how best the family can face these challenges etc., lead to a smooth functioning of the whole process of migration. Such families are able to reap the best of the benefits from working abroad. Reports of this bright and positive side of migration are not lacking either.

However, regarding most migrant families, the reality is not so illuminating. The long absence of either the mother or the father disturbs family life. The affected individuals seem not to have discussed their 'family life' problems stemming from the departure of one individual in the family. If the entire family is to benefit from such a move, it is imperative that the family members' stereotype roles within the family call for a change. Besides, those left behind may have to take up new and added responsibilities. These migratory moves are limited to a short period in their 'life-cycles'. This man-made 'family life' problem needs to be properly addressed if these families are to obtain the desired benefits from migration. One alternative therefore is to provide counselling services to those families that are unable to solve the 'family-life' problem by themselves.

Studies reveal that unskilled labour to the Middle East earns an average of only Rs 1,000 per month at home

relations with the Middle East countries is yet another positive factor in labour migration. Obviously therefore, the Sri Lankan government has taken a positive approach to facilitate the movement of unskilled labour from Sri Lanka to the Middle East. The government has even moved in to stipulate at least a minimum wage for these migrants. At the place of destination, Sri Lankan embassies provide some services to these migrants.

Despite reports in the local press of humiliations undergone by some of the unskilled labour migrants in these countries, the process persists. They also continue to complain of receiving low wages than was stipulated in the contracts, of excessive work, lack of free time, assault by employers, improper conduct of landlords, low level living arrangements and sometimes, even a lack of food. Although such complaints are being made constantly, these employers have no intention of giving up their jobs. Thus, with no curbs planned on them by the government, this unskilled labour will continue to seek employment abroad, even at the risk of facing hardships and deprivation. This clearly



employment problem prevailing in the country at present.

Unskilled labour migration to the Middle East is a voluntary movement. This movement is preceded by a period where the migrant weighs the pros against the cons in order to develop a propensity to migrate. During this period, the prospective migrant has to overcome intervening obstacles and also to attempt to solve problems related to personal factors, before making the final move.

During this pre migration phase, tension

Women should not be employed in domestic service abroad. They should be trained for professional jobs only, says Victor Ivan

OPINION

Why is it that Asians, especially women, face sexual harassment in the Gulf?

There are many reasons for this, but in my opinion, the rot set in from virtually the very beginning, when less reputable women from our society were sent to the Middle East as a sort of vanguard. When the employment market in the Gulf States was first opened up in the late 1970s and domestic labour was offered on the international market for the first time, conservative Sri Lankan women who are, culturally very domesticated, were afraid to venture into the unknown. This was despite the economic hardships faced at home and the attractive salaries offered in the Gulf. Therefore, by the very nature of their profession, it was the less reputable women, viz. ladies of easy virtue, as well as men from the lower strata of society, viz., pickpockets and drifters who lacked formal employment, who were beguiled by the many private agencies to seek their fortunes overseas. Agencies at the time and even now, were only interested in the commissions earned for bulk recruitment of workers rather than in the quality of workers recruited. Lack of attention to quality seems to be a common problem in Sri Lanka.

Does that mean you are totally against Sri Lankan women seeking employment overseas?

No, I am against Sri Lankan women being employed as domestics abroad, but I believe they should definitely seek employment overseas because of economic considerations stemming from the economy's inability to generate adequate job

opportunities. It is unfair to confine them to Sri Lankan shores if we are unable to provide them with satisfactory economic benefits within the local environment. Given today's open market economy, it is difficult for a family to survive on one person's salary. But they should seek employment in trained professions, by which I mean professions like nursing, salesmanship, the garment industry etc.

The Middle East is a complex region, with its own norms and way of life. Successive governments have failed to understand this, and to provide adequate measures to counteract the pressures faced by our women when they enter such an alien environment. To date, the government has failed to realise the grave need for a legal framework, as was set up by India and the Philippines to protect their workers. Workers from those countries are permitted to enter employment only after they have obtained clearance of their employer through government-controlled mechanisms. When women work as a group, there is safety in numbers, they have a say in many aspects of their lives, which is contrary to a woman working on her own in domestic labour, where she is at the mercy of her employer.

The government does not understand how it could maximise opportunities abroad. It is not necessary for our women to go to the Middle East for domestic employment: there are ample opportunities closer home, in countries like the Fiji islands, for instance, in the garment sector, which pays them adequate wages. I even suggested to Labour Minister Hon. Mahinda Rajapakse to introduce an incentive scheme to private agencies, where the government would pay the agency on a percentage-wise or other basis depending on the category of the job supplied: this would give the necessary impetus to supply jobs of a high calibre not only in the Middle East, but around the world, and encourage accountability for the jobs found. This could even attract reputed agencies from abroad. When the government has an investment of this type in an agency, it has a say in the nature and conditions of the job offered.

The government cannot incur losses from a scheme

of this nature when viewed in terms of the remittances received. In a classic example, it costs the government about Rs 10 lakhs to educate a white collar worker in a scientific profession. It would be more lucrative to train workers in this category for professions like nursing, the garment industry etc. because it costs only Rs one lakh per person to train and send overseas.

By gearing overseas employment opportunities only towards trained employment in the above categories, wouldn't those who are equipped only for domestic labour be at a disadvantage?

No, those who are capable of being trained in domestic employment can easily be trained in sales or in the garment industry. In countries like Greece, Italy, France there are ample job opportunities in professions like sales. In a highly literate country we should gear ourselves to establishing nurses training colleges to train nurses for domestic as well as international labour markets in countries where nurses are in high demand. Usually, developed countries gather data on labour trends and demands and based on these, advertise the jobs available on the local market. For instance, the Olympics are scheduled to be held in Australia in the year 2000. In order to organise this enormous undertaking a labour force of several thousands has to be imported. For the basic construction work alone, much skilled and semi skilled labour is required which has to be planned for well in advance. This is where Sri Lanka can step in. It would be the ideal opportunity for our unemployed engineering graduates to work over there, perhaps with the assistance of the government. However, the government has not as yet envisaged the potential in this undertaking. In order to provide these students with job opportunities in Sri Lanka, the government has to provide an initial outlay of about Rs 10 lakhs. It would cost the government only Rs 1 lakh per person to send for a job opportunity in Australia. In the case of Muslims who seek employment in the Middle East, the recruiting Muslim agents bear the cost of recruitment and their air fare. However, in the case of poor Sinhala villagers the agency does not bear the cost, so it is the middle man who is the financier and it is into his clutches that the villager falls when he borrows at the heavy interest rate of monthly 20%. This ultimately leaves him not much better off than before. It is in such instances that these migrants resort to fair or foul means.

It is therefore the fault of the government and society that these women are compelled to go into prostitution. At present, between 10,000 to 15,000

migrants in the Middle East will not come back to Sri Lanka because they cannot face their families and country due to the manner in which they earn their money to repay their heavy debts incurred at home. Today the economy is sustained by foreign remittance. Foreign remittances in 1993 were Rs 30,590 m. In that year, tea export earnings amounted to Rs 19,911 m, earnings from tourism were only Rs 10,000 m. Earnings from BOT projects were the highest at Rs 76,740 m but when taking into account raw material and other associated costs, the actual profit comes down to Rs 23,000 m : 70 per cent of the earnings are absorbed by the cost of manufacture and manufacturer's profit margins. Despite the massive benefits to the economy, it is unfortunate that governments have paid no attention to the plight of the migrant while abroad. Rather than train migrants for domestic labour, it is training them in the garment industry that would promote their self-esteem in addition to creating fewer problems for them. They should also be educated in the manner in which to spend their hard earned money. In many instances, Middle East migrants have spent all their savings on the purchase of duty free items at the airport.

What would be your suggestions for mitigating the problems faced by labour migrants abroad?

There are several steps which could be taken to ensure that migrants get a fair deal both here and abroad. The state has a key role to play here.

- (a) I suggest that savings schemes should be devised. Migrants should be educated on how to spend their savings. They should also be given incentives to invest in the share market. Take for example the Thatcher government which, when privatising British Telecom, instigated the common man to purchase shares in the company rather than offering the institution to private entrepreneurs. As a result, two million shareholders bought in, following aggressive advertisement and promotion by the government.
- (b) The government should categorise jobs and stipulate the minimum rates payable for each category in the host countries.
- (c) The government should also spend out of its own pocket to send migrants abroad. Expenditure by the government will be more than adequately compensated by remittances by the migrants.
- (d) The government should join hands with banking and other lending institutions to provide loan facilities at low interest rates.

The government could also provide special assistance to returnees to purchase land at reasonable rates. For instance, in the early 1980s, the prices of land escalated with the return of the first batch of migrants in search of land to build homes and settle down.

e) Agencies should safeguard the safety of those recruited and obtain job opportunities for the Sri Lankan migrants. They should not charge a commission from the migrants, but rather, the government should pay the agencies this commission.

f) It is an embarrassment to the government when their people are employed in domestic labour and engage in nefarious activities. Therefore, prospective migrants should be trained to seek more respectable and remunerative employment. They should be trained for specific jobs in the international as well as domestic markets.

Our entire education system has not been geared towards encouraging the youth to prepare for a profession, unlike in other countries where students are taught the importance of focussing on a particular vocation from the primary level.

During the term of the previous government, a grant of US \$ 2 bn to meet the cost of job training was not utilised. Grants of this nature should be utilised to set up training centres in various job categories, like, for eg., in computers, garments, navigation, languages, according to the qualifications and aptitudes of each migrant. English especially should be taught since it is a link language. Therefore an environment for training could be created to attract private companies which would have no hesitation in embarking on schemes supported by the government and would also strive to locate the market potential for specific jobs.

g) At present, there is no monitoring system to assess the migrant's welfare abroad as well as the plight of the families left behind in Sri Lanka. In this situation, the traditional diplomat has a very limited role. It is mainly a welfare officer who can monitor, investigate and coordinate at grass roots level the movements of migrants in the host country. I understand that the Foreign Employment Bureau has initiated a plan which stipulates that a welfare officer is appointed for every country which has more than 25,000 Sri Lankans on its work force. It is also vital that embassy staff are constantly rotated and corrupt officials be summarily dealt with. If not, long standing embassy employees become susceptible to outside corrupt influences and tend to encourage mismanagement within the system.

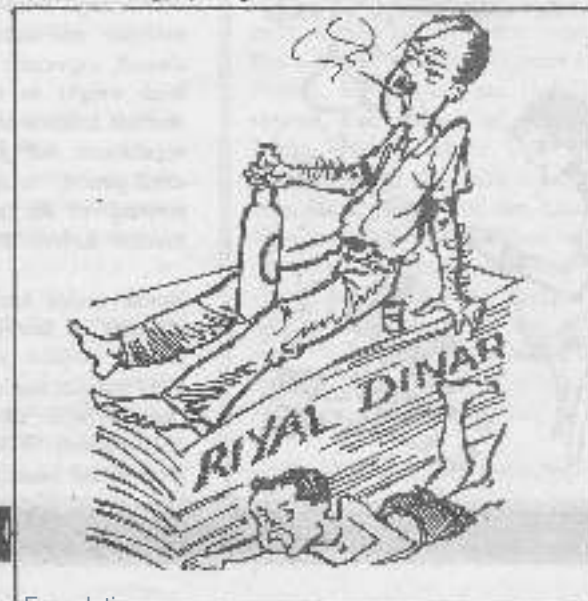
h) It would probably be worthwhile to have a separate ministry to monitor labour migration, since since the Foreign Ministry is unable to solve the many and varied problems of the migrants by virtue of their very magnitude. For this purpose, a separate fund should be set up to repatriate stranded workers abroad. At present, the Sri Lankan government is repatriating stranded workers in the Middle East in batches of 150. But this too is inadequate to meet the present demand.

i) There are many detrimental factors in labour migration. Especially in the case of married women. Very often, their families are neglected. There should be institutions to deal with the problems faced by the migrants and their families. As a social service, officers should be appointed to monitor the needs and progress of the families left behind, eg. welfare of the children, their performance in school etc.

j) Migrants should also be advised on the criteria required to be met when pursuing a particular trade or profession abroad, so as to minimise the hassles they face abroad. For eg. drivers seeking employment abroad should be advised that an international driving license is required to do so. There have been instances where drivers have obtained positions abroad without the required international drivers licenses. They are then compelled to spend several months in the employers home while waiting for their application to be processed, during which time they are forced by their employers to carry out menial tasks in order to pay for their food and lodging.

k) In addition to the insurance cover for permanent disability of migrants presently offered, it is vital that a cover for mental disability be added.

The government should assume overall responsibility for its citizens, whether here or abroad. It can carefully plan out a strategy to mitigate the problems faced by the migrants abroad and work out the approach step by step.



Migrant Labour Exploitation: does anyone have the housemaids' welfare at heart?

several institutions have been set up to monitor migrant welfare, the question of the day is, are they doing enough?

The post-oil boom affluence in the Middle East which created a demand for labour and manpower, particularly in the unskilled and semiskilled categories, provided a relatively easy way out for Sri Lanka's employment problems. It was in pursuing this policy that the government provided several incentives to those seeking employment abroad, for example, the liberalising of laws governing the issue of passports.

The government policy of the post 1977 era was one of permitting the private sector to spearhead the sourcing of employment overseas, but although the supply of employment opportunities was handed by the private sector, in order to exercise a degree of control over private employment agencies, the overall policy for migrant labour was laid down by the state.

Despite the fact that foreign remittances are now the major foreign exchange

earner however, the picture is not altogether rosy for the remitters themselves. It is obvious that the export of human cargo cannot be equated to the export of goods and chattels. By virtue of its susceptibility to the outside environment and the unpredictability of human behaviour, the export of labour must be subjected to many conditions, conceived to ensure the well-being of the individual.

As is the case in Sri Lanka, labour laws in host countries, especially in the Middle East, do not protect domestic labour. There is an aspect of domestic labour akin to medieval slavery, where employers, especially in the Gulf countries assume that they own the housemaids, body and soul, merely because they hold the purse strings.

The many instances of exploitation, violence and abuse of Asian workers abroad, especially in the Middle East, lend weight to this observation and warrant a tightening up of the rules and regulations that govern their overseas employment, coupled with a closer scrutiny of the institutions set up to monitor migrant welfare.

House maids are by far the largest category of labour migrants from Sri Lanka. Airport surveys conducted in 1994 indicate that of the total of 103,027 migrants who left our shores for new employment, 78.9 per cent (102,661) were house maids. 13,240 house maids

were employed in Saudi Arabia, 4,382 in the U.A.E., 13,963 in Kuwait and 1,168 in Oman, Bahrain 850, which adds up to a total of 33,603, which is nearly double the figure in 1990, which totalled 19,571, seven-fold from 1986 statistics 4,898.

Evidence points to the fact that state involvement and mediation on behalf of their nationals employed abroad, serves to a great extent in mitigating explosive situations and at times, in entirely redirecting the course of events.

Take the case of 16 year-old Filipino Sarah Balabagan, who falsified her birth date to 28 years in order to obtain employment in Abu Dhabi. She was subsequently sentenced to death by firing squad for stabbing her employer to death after being raped by him. Following widespread appeals for clemency by the Philippine government and several human rights and women's organisations, her death sentence was revoked to a compensation payment of an undisclosed sum of 'blood money' - an ancient Bedouin method of solving disputes among clans - and 20 lashes per day for a specified period.

On the other hand, the tragic hanging of Filipino Flor Contemplacion in Singapore, for an alleged double murder, may have been averted if the Ramos government had taken more steps to defend her, since there was evidence that she may have been framed by her employer.

Sri Lanka has more than her fair share of



tragic deaths in the Middle East, several of them could be due to misunderstanding or the lack of understanding of the middle eastern culture.

There is the sad case of 19-year-old Sathiyi Babina in the U.A.E, who was put to death by firing squad last April for allegedly stabbing her employer's child to death with a pair of scissors. Her alleged admission in prison, that she had promised to albeit falsely confess to the crime on the promise that she would then be released and sent back to Sri Lanka, was never investigated by Sri Lankan officials, who merely maintained that they had no means of mitigating her sentence nor intervening on her behalf until after her trial, since she had confessed to the crime in court. The testimony at the time by a Sri Lankan, who said he witnessed the child's death as having been due to an accidental fall from a balcony, when the child's mother (Sathiyi's mistress) had accidentally caused the child to fall, had not been investigated either. Even notifying her family of her imprisonment and her subsequent execution was done by local contact in the U.A.E and not carried out by either the Ministry or diplomatic mission officials. Nor were mission officials or her family were allowed access to her, despite the fact that mission officials should have been permitted the right of access, by perhaps exercising their authority. Altogether, the case has not been satisfactorily solved, and many loose threads remain to be secured to this day.

Again, in April 1995, two women's bodies were returned to Sri Lanka from Lebanon, with no satisfactory explanation.

Complaints from Migrants during 1995

Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon	1,800 approx.
Kuwait	2,100 do
Alu Dhabi	900 do
Qatar	100 do

15 to 20 deaths have been reported in middle eastern countries.

Compensation differs according to the religion and sex of the victim. Muslims receive 100 per cent compensation and Christians, 50 per cent. During the period January to October 1995, Sri

Lanka received Rs 7.8 m as compensation.

It is of note that most of the complaints are against employees who work in the armed forces, viz., Army, Police.

Kalyaan, a London-based organisation which claims to have assisted about 4,000 workers in the Middle East, stated that of 755 women interviewed, 88 per cent complained of verbal abuse, 38 per cent of being beaten, 55 per cent of not being paid the wages regularly 42 per cent of not being given a bed to sleep in and 10 per cent of being raped.



Expanded Role of Sri Lankan Missions Overseas

Sri Lankan missions abroad, particularly those in the Middle East, play an important role in promoting employment opportunities for their nationals, although this is not a customary function of a diplomatic mission.

The functions of Diplomatic Missions, according to the International Convention on Diplomacy are to:

- (a) represent the sending state in the receiving state
- (b) protect in the receiving state, the interests of the sending state and of its nationals within the limits permitted by International Law
- (c) negotiate with the government of the receiving state
- (d) ascertain by all lawful means, conditions and developments in the receiving state and report thereon to the government of

the sending state

- (e) To promote friendly relations between the sending state and the receiving state and to develop their economic cultural and scientific relations

Following the rapid advancement of international relations and the recent fostering of interdependence, there has been a considerable expansion in the area and scope of activities of diplomatic missions.

In the post 1977 era when the government launched economic programmes with a view to opening up the economy and promoting interaction with foreign countries, a deliberate policy of Sri Lankan Missions abroad to serve the interests of the economic programmes of the government was initiated. Diplomatic missions were then required to address a broader spectrum of subjects like promoting foreign employment opportunities among nationals.

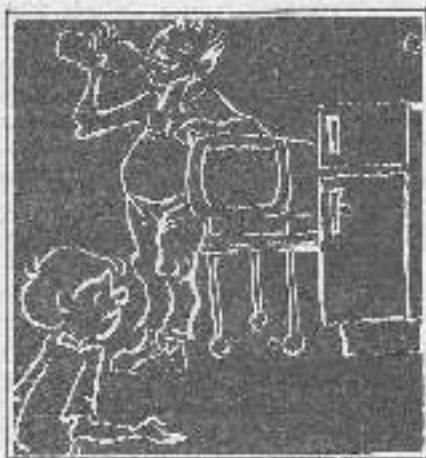
The provision of employment to large numbers of the unemployed was a high priority in the economic recovery programme. Since the resources within the economy and those obtained from outside, were unable to absorb the unemployed, a policy of encouraging employment abroad was started. This became particularly important as the target groups were the unskilled or semi-skilled for whom the prospect of obtaining employment locally were not bright.

In this scenario, Sri Lankan diplomatic missions evolved into serving the interests of the large numbers of people migrating for employment to the Middle East. It was following this requirement that missions in the target areas of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the U.A.E. were opened. The opening of additional Sri Lanka Missions in the Gulf area was necessitated by the sudden influx of a very large number of Sri Lankans in these countries. This was done not just to promote employment opportunities, but rather, to look after the interests of Sri Lankan nationals. Of course, the older missions opened in Baghdad and Cairo in the Middle East, were set up in an earlier era due to different priorities.

Firstly, the missions were required to

alert the host country on the availability of labour in Sri Lanka. Host country officials expected to be notified include prospective entrepreneurs, industrialists and recruiting agencies of the respective countries.

The types of people the Middle East employment market attracted, gave rise to a variety of other services to be performed by diplomatic missions, over and above their usual services rendered to their nationals abroad. The majority of those who went for employment to the Middle East came from rural areas in Sri Lanka. Unlike those in earlier eras who sought employment in developed countries in the West, due to the closed cultural and geographical confines these new entrants to the job market came from, greater care and attention was needed to ensure their welfare. More often than not, these migrants are unaware of any agreements with their prospective employers nor the conditions in the country they seek employment. The situation is thus ripe for exploitation, not only in domestic employment, but in employment in industries like the garment industry



Another factor that increased the welfare role of the embassies was the nature of employment obtained. The majority who sought employment were in the unskilled category, mainly as domestic workers and labourers. This type of employment, where the employee is totally dependent on the employer for his well being, often creates situations of exploitation and harassment which lead to problems with regard to working hours, wages, facilities offered etc., and redress was required of

diplomatic missions, since they were the most accessible institutions to the migrants.

Embassies however, suffer from a shortage of resources and are therefore ill-equipped to meet the needs of the migrants in the case of an emergency.

In order to meet the need in this critical area, Sri Lanka is to establish more consulates to handle migrant problems in 8 other Middle East countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar, Bahrain, Jeddah and Doha.

At present, there are five labour welfare officers acting as coordinators in four embassies, namely, in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Abu Dhabi and Oman. Steps are being taken to appoint welfare officers in all countries with over 25,000 labour migrants. They are, however, empowered to act only on employee complaints or following agency intervention and referrals.

Although diplomatic missions do play a significant role in promoting the welfare of labour migrants, they must be more active in seeking out employment opportunities abroad, by studying the category of labour in demand in the host country.

A mission is also in the enviable position of being able to act as mediator in employment situations where misunderstandings arise. For instance, in the event of disputes arising between employer and employee, the mission could take a more active role by intervening and striving impartially to help both parties reach an amicable settlement, whenever such situations are brought to the embassy's notice. This function, apart from being instrumental in creating a safe and propitious environment for housemaids etc, can earn the confidence and goodwill of the host country officials, which could contribute towards perhaps, a marked preference for employing Sri Lankans.

Accountability of the Foreign Ministry

It is noteworthy to mention that the Sri Lankan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry under whose purview these

overseas migrants come, has no special responsibility towards local labour migrants. Nor have any laws been effected to protect the rights of the worker overseas. Labour migrants come under the jurisdiction of laws and regulations generally applicable to all Sri Lankan workers, whether working locally or abroad; all cases of migrant exploitation referred to the Ministry have redress only to the extent of their being Sri Lankan nationals.

It is imperative that steps be taken to provide the ministry with more authority to intervene in altercations between Sri Lankan migrants and nationals of their host countries. As was pointed out in the case of Sighthly Pathirana, more active intervention by the Ministry may have contributed to, perhaps, a changed verdict.

Where does the Foreign Employment Bureau(FEB) come in?

The objects of the Foreign Employment Bureau as set out in Section 15 of the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment Act No. 21 of 1985 are as:

- (a) promote and develop employment opportunities outside Sri Lanka, for Sri Lankans;
- (b) assist and support foreign employment agencies in their growth and development;
- (c) undertake measures to develop overseas markets for skills available in Sri Lanka;
- (d) assist licences in the negotiation of terms and conditions of employment with agencies abroad;
- (e) regulate the business of foreign employment agencies and recruit Sri Lankans for employment outside Sri Lanka;
- (f) issue licences to foreign employment agencies for conducting the business of recruitment for employment outside Sri Lanka and to determine the terms and conditions of such licences;
- (g) set standards for and to negotiate contracts of employment.

Cont'd to page 20

Occurrences of Family erosion as a result of a family member having migrated for employment overseas

This analysis has been done on the basis of news items reported in the 'Yokkadeva', 'Divayana', 'Dinamika' and assorted English newspapers between 1st Oct. 1995 and 31st Dec. 1995. Sinhala newspapers have been mainly used in the survey due to the fact that they provide a wider coverage of such incidents.

Within this period 28 migration related incidents were reported, mainly from rural areas in 13 districts. 42.9 per cent were reported from the Gampaha, Kandy and Kalutara districts, 32.1 per cent were from Colombo, Kurunegala and Matale. 18 per cent were from Galle, Anuradhapura, Monragala, Hambantota and Ampara, while 7.1 per cent from Polonnaruwa.

Type of Incident	No.	%
Deaths	10	20.4
Migrant	2	4.1
Children	7	14.3
Wife	1	2.0
Suicides	13	26.5
Migrant	1	2.0
Children	2	4.1
Husbands	9	18.4
Wife	1	2.0
Attempted suicides	3	6.1
Children left home	5	10.2
Children mentally depressed	3	6.1
Clandestine love affairs	6	12.2
Husbands	5	10.2
Wife	1	2.0
Underage girls migrated with false documents	2	4.1
Returned to Sri Lanka by employer	1	2.0
Imprisoned	2	4.1
Husband (a drug addict)	1	2.0
Mother-in-law (Chastity)	1	2.0
(sold illegal liquor to feed the children)		
Drunkards	2	4.1
Kidnapped	1	2.0
(Kidnapped by the son to take Rs.100,000 sent by mother from Middle East)		
No. of persons involved	49	100.0

Cause for deaths	No.	%
Migrant (women)	2	20.0
Beaten returned from overseas, reason unknown		
Migrant's wife	1	10.0
Murdered by a lover (Sri Lanka)		
Children	7	70.0
Murdered by father (couldn't cope with wife's migration)	4	40.0
Negligence of guardian	3	30.0
Total deaths	15	100.0

Among these migrants, 26.4 per cent were females and 89.3 per cent were married with children. The migration of the mother, who is the mainstay of the family in our culture and society, leads to problems and conflicts within the family. The highest rate of incidents reported such as suicides (26.5%) mainly of the husband (69.2% of total suicides) increase the damage to the family unit. Incidents of migration of underage girls with false documents, their experience of harassment at a young age, results in the ruin of their future and disruptions to their mental stability. An occurrence such as a father being kidnapped by a son to obtain a ransom of Rs.100,000 sent by the mother working in the Middle East as a housemaid, reflects the extent of family erosion and the breakdown of the family unit as a result of migration.

Marital status of migrants

Status	No.	%
Married	26	92.9
Male	1	3.6
Female	25	89.3
Unmarried	2	7.1
Male	0	0.0
Female	2	7.1
Total	28	100.0

Cause for Suicides	No.	%
Migrant	1	7.7
Boy found him married during her absence	1	7.7
Children	2	15.4
Loneliness	2	15.4
Husband	9	69.2
Love affair	1	7.7
Drunkardness (wife sent money to children, not to husband because of his drunkardness)	3	23.1
Indebtedness	1	7.7
Tried to send the wife back (wife has sent gifts to children, but only a towel to him)	3	23.1
Wife	1	7.7
Opposed to wife's migration	1	7.7
Total Suicides	13	100.0

by Sepalika Fernando

Harrowing tale of housemaid

Gokaralle — Mrs. W. A. Ramyalatha (28), of Kandalama, Dambulla, who is at present working as a house maid in Kuwait, having found employment through an agent at

night leg was fractured and the left leg was severely injured. Now, I am under medical treatment at the Razi Hospital Kuwait," she states in her letter sent to her husband.

"Although I brought this matter to the notice of the Employment and the Foreign Employment Bureau, action has yet been kindly request of the Employment to make arrangements to bring my wife to Sri Lanka. My husband said,

Women Violence

death sentence for a young P... rights the problem of a...

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According to Prof. Nandasana Palnana, University of Sri Jayawardenapura,

107 daughters were raped by their fathers. Among them, 67 of their mothers had migrated for employment overseas.

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MIDDLE-EAST BUSINESS

West Asian employees HIV infection

creasing at the receiving ends. This situation not only harms the individual migrant worker but also the business relationship of the concerned local and foreign agent. Eventually the scenario will have a bad impact on the industry in general.

"Pregnancy after arrival in the foreign country has been reported, while carrying some sexually transmitted diseases... Although there is room to contact diseases during the short interval... medical examinations and de-employment, in the pro-medical ex-

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Situation is bac

Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Javid Yusuf responded to questions posed by The Sunday Times in an issue

Q: Mr. Ambassador, the question of Sri Lankan housemaids in Saudi Arabia is worsening from what we have heard in the headlines reveal that unscrupulous job agents are using some... for work there. What do you have to say?

A: The situation is very bad indeed. It being so in the area, the picture is very distressing. We have seen some young as even 12-12 years old... with their passports showing their ages as... thousands to be recruited for...

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Behind the purdah

It provides a great service... offering one day... services. No... provides the... and a... The... angle...

se girls their sponsors were good... bussy and even provide them with... way from their Employers and... process of obtaining tickets... and other housemaids out... ket out their own money... to distant parts of the... men who have been... Saudi Arabia... hope for that this... Controlling... of Labour ap... we given... on the... job... help

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workers on the move මිනිසවන් නොබල

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start in a foreign country... men and women have had to temporary, seasonal or permanent, features of the world of work.

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Cont'd from page 16

- (h) enter into agreements with relevant foreign authorities, employers and employment agencies in order to formalize recruitment agreements;
- (i) formulate and implement a model contract of employment which ensures fair wages and standards of employment;
- (j) examine the authenticity of documentation issued to Sri Lankan recruits going abroad for employment;
- (k) undertake research and studies into employment opportunities outside Sri Lanka, for Sri Lankans;
- (l) establish and maintain an Information Data Bank to monitor the flow of Sri Lankans for employment outside Sri Lanka and their return after such employment;
- (m) undertake the welfare and protection of Sri Lankans employed outside Sri Lanka;
- (n) establish a Workers' Welfare Fund;
- (o) undertake in collaboration with licences, the training and orientation of Sri Lankan recruits going abroad for employment;
- (p) provide assistance to Sri Lankan recruits going abroad for employment;
- (q) receive donations and contributions from Sri Lankans employed outside Sri Lanka and use such donations and contributions for the rehabilitation, guidance and counselling of, and the provision of information and assistance to, the families of such Sri Lankans;
- (r) undertake investments on behalf of Sri Lankans employed outside Sri Lanka;
- (s) undertake programmes for the rehabilitation of Sri Lankans who return to Sri Lanka after employment outside Sri Lanka.

Despite the fact that these objectives encompassed every aspect of labour migration, from migration to the host country, to rehabilitation of returnees, the FEB has not detracted significantly from

its main role as a manpower recruiting agency. This failure on the part of the organisation which was set up primarily to deal with, and only with, every contingency arising from labour migration, can be attributed to the lack of resources, both human and capital which prevent the Bureau from reaching its true potential.

Agency Involvement

At present, about 500 agencies operate in Sri Lanka, 477 agencies had been licensed with the Bureau in 1995. Although agencies are supposed to be accountable for the migrants to whom they provide jobs, no clear-cut lines of accountability are demarcated: only vague assertions of their accountability have been made by the Foreign Employment Bureau (FEB) and the Foreign Ministry, but little or no attempts have been made to guarantee this.

Many of the horrifying experiences of labour migrants have stemmed from the

callous conduct of employment agencies, which fraudulently extract money from impoverished prospective migrants, with false promises of lucrative employment abroad.

It is also imperative that Sri Lanka implement a migration policy on the lines of India and the Philippines, which get clearance from the host country prior to sending their nationals for employment abroad, through agencies stationed in the host countries. If on inquiry, any agency is blacklisted, a national of the respective countries will be prohibited from obtaining employment through them.

The FEB is presently taking steps in order to ensure some degree of responsibility of the agencies, by requiring compulsory registration of legitimate agencies at the Bureau and by blacklisting agencies following complaints by welfare officers, diplomatic missions as well as the migrants themselves: agencies not registered are deemed illegal. Two Sri Lankan agencies were blacklisted last year.



CASE STUDIES - SRI LANKAN

Compiled by *Saptha Fernando, Karuna Guneratne, & Renuka Jayasinghe*

Case Study 1

Subject is a 36-year-old female, married and has been employed as a housemaid for 10 years in the United Arab Emirates as well as the Middle East. Her present employer is Saudi Arabia. Her conditions varied between the 1970s and 1980s.

The subject's husband is a first generation migrant from the island of Ceylon. He is the father of 10 children, 6 of whom are presently living in Saudi Arabia and 4 in Sri Lanka. His earnings are modest. His wife does not work, mainly because he does not have a family of one and has an aged daughter with no income of her own.

The subject was working employed in Sri Lanka as Technical Officer at the National Seeds Corporation, Colombo, Sri Lanka. She was employed in the same position for 10 years and was paid a salary of 1000 Sri Lanka Rupees per month.

She was employed in the construction work in a government project in Sri Lanka. She was employed in this employment and had no record of service was there.

The subject's husband is a first generation migrant from the island of Ceylon. She is a housewife and has been employed in the same position for 10 years. She was employed in the same position for 10 years and was paid a salary of 1000 Sri Lanka Rupees per month. She was employed in the same position for 10 years and was paid a salary of 1000 Sri Lanka Rupees per month.

Case Study 2

Subject is female aged 30 years, single, educated upto tertiary level standard. She had a couple of years and had worked for over 10 years in a textile factory in Sri Lanka. She was employed in the factory in Sri Lanka. She was employed in the factory in Sri Lanka. She was employed in the factory in Sri Lanka.

The subject was married with three children. She was employed in the factory in Sri Lanka. She was employed in the factory in Sri Lanka. She was employed in the factory in Sri Lanka.

Reason for seeking overseas employment

Subject was employed by a contractor who was doing some construction work. She was employed in this employment and had no record of service was there.

She was employed in Sri Lanka as a housemaid. She was employed in this employment and had no record of service was there.

When in Sri Lanka, she was employed as a housemaid. She was employed in this employment and had no record of service was there.

The conditions of factory workers in Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan were found to be very poor. There was no record of service was there.

The subject was employed in Sri Lanka. She was employed in this employment and had no record of service was there.

Subject was employed in Sri Lanka. She was employed in this employment and had no record of service was there.

Her husband had been doing some construction work. She was employed in this employment and had no record of service was there.

Case Study 3

Subject is a 36-year-old female, married and has been employed as a housemaid for 10 years in the United Arab Emirates as well as the Middle East. Her present employer is Saudi Arabia. Her conditions varied between the 1970s and 1980s.

She was employed in Sri Lanka as a housemaid. She was employed in this employment and had no record of service was there.

in 1980, subject was employed in Sri Lanka. She was employed in this employment and had no record of service was there.

On their return to Sri Lanka after a 12-year stay in Kuwait, her husband died in a motorcycle accident. Subject is now preparing to return to Kuwait in order to provide her sons with a sound education. She plans to board her older child at school and leave the younger with her mother-in-law in order to do so.

Achievements: purchased coconut lands in Kurunegala. Has completed a single storeyed house with modern amenities and wall to wall carpeting.

Observations: by the subject's own admission and judging by her experiences in Kuwait, the Kuwaiti work environment is more conducive to employing Muslim women than is Sri Lanka. However, it must be admitted that the subject seems efficient, intelligent, a quick learner, amiable, which are unusual qualities for a Muslim woman, since Muslim women are normally very conservative and introverted. The fact that she is Muslim enabled her to identify herself with the culture, language, religion and pattern of family life in the Arab world. Her claim that Arabs preferred to eat food cooked by Muslims is a case in point. Her approach to employment abroad is that it is the speediest means towards earning to meet the status and financial requirements of her in-laws, which stemmed mainly from their condemnation of her for being poorer than themselves.

She is now accepted on equal terms by her in-laws. There was no interruption in her child's education because the extended family system which is predominant among Muslims in particular. Her children are supportive of their mother's efforts to earn abroad.

Case study 4

Subject is a Sinhalese, aged 30 years, had failed her G.C.E. Ordinary level examination, having qualified only in 5 subjects. She has one daughter aged 5 years. Her husband is a carpenter, earning between Rs 2,500 to 4,000 p.m. It was a marriage between cross cousins, therefore the bond between their families was stronger than most. They had been living in a small cadjan hut situated on encroached land. Because of their dream to own their house and property, she was beguiled by a "middleman", who recruited for job agencies, who impressed on her the wealth and glories to be found in the Middle East.

She went to Kuwait despite opposition from her husband and parents, leaving her child in her mother's care. The child was well looked after. She worked for a family of 13, of which one offspring was married. Her employer was an army officer, his wife was unemployed.

Her daily routine commenced at 4 a.m., ending at 11 p.m. Daily she washed the house the clothes of the entire family (according to her, she was required to first hand wash the clothes for the entire household and machine wash them afterwards). She very unhappy there, being unable to adjust to the Arab lifestyle or to learn the language. She found the different meal times i.e. breakfast was at 11 a.m., and lunch at 3 p.m., particularly upsetting. Her wages were paid only during the first two months.

Altogether, subject's stay could be subdivided into groups of two months: the first two months when she received her pay and which were considered an apprenticeship period by her employers. She had a relatively peaceable time with her employers, the next two months during which time no pay was received and she was mercilessly abused, both physically and mentally by her employers, and the next two months which she spent in hospital as a result of the abuse. Subject complained to her employers of the work being too heavy. Due to her complaints, from about the third month, the master of the house began hitting her and her wages were withheld. Her arm would not function following the first assault. When she appealed for medication for her arm, they did not provide her with any. She then escaped to the Sri Lankan Embassy, which contacted the private agency through which she came and, on her plea that she could not go back to her employers, found her another house. However, her new employers demanded that the agency reimburse the money paid them for recruiting the girl if they wished to retain her. Since they were not prepared to do so, she was forced to return to her former employers. On her return, she was severely assaulted again: burnt and beaten to the extent of causing head injuries. She then escaped back to the Embassy, whereupon the Embassy officials reported her injuries to the *datchma* police, as was required by law. The police conducted an inquiry and subsequently admitted her to a psychiatric ward where she remained for two months, after which time she was transported back to Sri Lanka with only her hospital garb. By now, she had reached a point of acute physical and psychological trauma: her body had swollen, she had retreated into herself.

Financially, she was back to where had she started, perhaps to an even lower point on the scale of prosperity since she was now burdened with the heavy debts incurred to meet the cost of her air fare to Kuwait, and the fact that she returned with not even the clothing she had taken to Kuwait.

It should be emphasised here that the agency played a very irresponsible and unscrupulous role. Firstly, it withheld her family's request

to search for her during the two months she was missing; it was only at the point when her family resorted to violent threats, that their request was faxed to the agency's counterpart in Kuwait and events were set in motion.

Observations: subject is lethargic, unidy in appearance, slow reflexes; one has to determine whether her lethargy is a natural characteristic or if it is brought on by the trauma she underwent in Kuwait. Evidence in fact points to the former: prior to going abroad, she was engaged in making comb brushes (for which she was paid @ Rs 1 per brush). On average, 100 brushes can be made daily, but her maximum output was only 40 per day.

Case study 5

Subject is a male aged 36 years, the father of three - two sons and a daughter. He has passed his G.C.E. Ordinary Level examination. He worked in Saudi Arabia as a heavy vehicle driver for 5 years, then went on to the Aruba islands where he was employed as a concrete worker for one year.

Reason for seeking overseas employment: he was married at the young age of 17 years to a schoolmate and was the father of a child by age 19. Due partly to his early marriage, he was unable to accept the responsibilities of family life, a fact which motivated him to seek jobs away from home. Therefore, at the age of 23, he worked at the Mahaweli project in Randenigala as a construction worker for about 4 years.

He went to Saudi in 1988 as a driver, despite his wife's objections to his departure. He earned Riyal 600 as the starting salary, returning to Sri Lanka in 1993. On his return, his family life deteriorated and he was divorced from his wife soon after. In November 1994, he worked for a year in the Dutch administered Aruba islands as a concrete worker. Although, his Sri Lankan job agent had signed him to a starting salary of Dutch \$ 300 p.m., he was awarded a salary of Dutch \$ 500 when he took up his job in Aruba, in accordance to the minimum age requirement stipulation of that country. By the end of his contract, he was earning approx. Dutch \$ 1,422 (approx. Rs 40,000).

Observations: subject seems an egoistic person who dislikes responsibility. By his own admission, he adapted well to the overseas lifestyle because of the respite from family obligations and associated responsibilities it offered him. He had several illicit relationships, which contributed towards his dissatisfaction with his wife. In this context, it is noteworthy to mention his attitude towards

isolation is believed that the woman's illness was the result of a long period of overwork in the steel plant, especially during the time she had to work several hours a day for the night shift and work seven hours in the afternoon period a day to work on the night shift. This already could be considered as the basis for her illness. The work and labour in the Lanka had to do as to work hard to support her family and to work on the night shift along with the day shift work.

Accidents. Although occasionally some people who had suffered an accident probably have been injured by falls or blown up children caused by a gas explosion. However, the family's long period of a physical and mental strain can be seen as a major cause for the illness. Some of the other causes are:

Case Study 1

A family in Sri Lanka, consisting of a husband, wife and two children. The husband had worked as a government employee at a factory and was now retired. His wife worked in a steel plant producing a variety of iron and steel. She had a salary of 2,000 p.m. She was a mother of two children, one boy and one girl, both of whom were in school. The husband was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work. He was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work. He was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work.

While in the Middle East, she was very busy with her work and had to work in order to complete the house and a new life for her. She was very busy with her work and had to work in order to complete the house and a new life for her. She was very busy with her work and had to work in order to complete the house and a new life for her.

The death of the husband was a tragedy for the wife and children. She was very busy with her work and had to work in order to complete the house and a new life for her. She was very busy with her work and had to work in order to complete the house and a new life for her.

with a salary of 2,000 p.m. She was a mother of two children, one boy and one girl, both of whom were in school. The husband was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work. He was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work.

Case Study 2

The husband was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work. He was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work. He was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work.

although she was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work. He was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work. He was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work.

Case Study 3 is a typical of those who were employed in a steel plant. She was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work. He was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work.

Case Study 4 is a typical of those who were employed in a steel plant. She was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work. He was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work.

Case Study 5 is a typical of those who were employed in a steel plant. She was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work. He was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work.

Case Study 6 is a typical of those who were employed in a steel plant. She was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work. He was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work.

Case Study 7 is a typical of those who were employed in a steel plant. She was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work. He was a member of a political party and was actively engaged in the party's work.



Labour Trends in Gulf Countries

Whether or not Asian countries can succeed in improving or even maintaining their share in the lucrative Middle East labour market will depend on their ability to compete with other countries, both Asian and non-Asian, in providing the various categories of manpower for which the Gulf region is most likely to remain dependent on expatriate labour. This will also determine whether the Asian region can retain, or perhaps even increase, its share in what has been during the last few years a declining labour market. It is therefore important to assess the future demand for imported manpower by skill category and identify the factors which will determine the selection of the source of these imports.

SAUDI ARABIA

An overwhelming majority of Asian workers in Saudi Arabia have been semi-skilled and unskilled labourers employed mostly as construction, agricultural and service workers, including domestic servants.

The employment of women is restricted to three fields: health, education, and general services including domestic servants.

Trends among male workers during the past five years in which oil revenues have declined substantially:

- The share of Bangladeshis has shown the most marked increase.
- The shares of Indians, Indonesians and Filipinos have also gone up.
- There has been an increase in the share of Pakistanis and Thais.
- The shares of Sri Lankans and South Koreans have fallen upto 1994 and rapidly increased in 1995, from 10,483 to 18,238.

Among female workers the pattern has varied.

- There has been an increase in the shares of Bangladeshis, Filipinos, Indians and Indonesians. However,

there was slight drop in Filipino employment in 1994.

- The shares of South Koreans, Pakistanis and Thais have fallen.
- The shares of Sri Lankans declined in the mid 1980s but increased drastically, from 13,978 in 1994 to 40,978 in 1995.

Of the various factors which can explain the changes that have taken place in the shares of different nationalities, three can be distinguished as being the main ones:

- (a) Cost competitiveness
- (b) Structural changes
- (c) Government regulations

The data (pertaining to the final year of the Third Development Plan, 1984/85) show that workers from the sub-continent are the lowest paid. Workers from the Far East countries are only marginally more expensive, except in the unskilled category where their cost is higher by 14 per cent. The cost differences including fringe benefits would be even wider.

BAHRAIN

Bahrain had been able to counter the effects of the oil slump until 1985. In the following years, however, the Bahraini economy was hit by the oil-generated recession. The already growing awareness of the need to reduce dependence on expatriate manpower, symbolised by the 'Ten Thousand Programme' launched in 1980 with the aim of replacing expatriates occupying 10,000 identified jobs with suitably qualified Bahrainis, received added impetus with the onset of recessionary conditions. For the first time in six years, the number of labour permits issued to foreigners registered a decline in 1985. In 1986, the acting Prime Minister emphasised that all available Bahrain expertise should be used before foreigners were recruited.

Asian countries accounted for 78 per cent of Bahrain's total expatriate work force in 1985. Of these, India was by far the

largest contributor, meeting 44 per cent of Bahrain's total requirements of foreign manpower. Pakistan accounted for 19 per cent and other Asian countries for another 15 per cent.

Of the total increment in the foreign work force, Asians accounted for 91 per cent during 1981 to 1985, as against 86 per cent during the preceding four-year period. Whether or not this trend can be sustained will depend on the ability of the Asian countries to compete with others in meeting Bahrain's demand for foreign labour.

Future prospects of foreign manpower

Bahrain does not formulate comprehensive development plans and a biennial budget serves as the main instrument through which the Government works for national economic development. As such, the Government does not announce the setting of a growth target either for the economy as a whole or for individual sectors. Major policy announcements indicate and set the future course of the economy.

The effects of the economic slowdown on the demand for expatriate labour had already started becoming evident in 1985. Towards the end of 1985, the Director of Labour admitted that the 'government's "hire Bahrain policy" will dislocate many of the expatriates'.

Another significant aspect of the Bahrain employment market is the participation of Bahrain women, whose participation in economic activity is known to be increasing.

Encouraged by the possibility of not only restricting further increases in expatriate manpower but also reducing the number of foreign workers, the Bahraini government introduced tighter guidelines for the recruitment of expatriates in April 1986. Efforts to increase the share of Bahrain nationals in the labour force and to improve their " " have subsequently been stepped up.

These trends show that cost has been the main determinant of nationality preference. While the falling share of South Koreans and Thais reflects a slow-down in construction activity, the share of low-cost 'other Asians' has continued to increase rapidly.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)

The economy of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), being heavily dependent on oil has been hard hit by the oil slump of the 1980s. Export earnings from oil which peaked at US\$ 19.4 bn in 1980 declined gradually to US\$ 10.5 bn in 1985. In the following year, they fell drastically by nearly 40 per cent, to US\$ 6.4 bn. Nevertheless, the recent Federal Budgets, due to uncertainties surrounding revenue forecasts, provide for a lower level of both revenues and expenditures.

Asian workers

It is clear that more than three-fourths of the workers have been provided by Asian countries, Indians have accounted for over 40 per cent of the expatriate work force, Bangladesh (4.0 per cent), Philippines (2.0 per cent), Sri Lanka (1.2 per cent), South Korea (1.0 per cent), and Thailand (0.6 per cent).

Other Asian countries, namely Bangladesh, the Philippines and Sri Lanka improved their shares with substantial net inflows during the 1980s and 1990s.

Recent trends in manpower demand

Demand for expatriate manpower has been increasing for all occupational categories except production process workers and labourers. Large absolute reductions were reported in this category during recent years.

There are prospects of the UAE continuing to import manpower, not only to meet its limited requirements of additional labour but also in its attempt to substitute cheaper labour and thus reduce wage costs. It is likely that the UAE will increasingly opt for the cheapest sources to meet its requirements not only of unskilled and middle-level manpower, but also of highly qualified professionals. Past experience clearly demonstrates an increasing tendency to substitute workers of lower-paid nationalities for those of higher-paid nationalities. This tendency is likely to persist and countries which can supply manpower at less than the prevailing wage rates would be able to capture an increasing share of the labour market.

KUWAIT

The decline in oil prices and revenues in the Kuwait economy gradually accentuated after 1982. Having remained relatively steady during the years 1983 and 1984, the real rate of economic growth declined sharply - falling to -10.9 per cent in 1985 and 16.7 per cent in 1986. This decline, coupled with the Gulf War, resulted in an unprecedented economic slowdown. Kuwait's development planners viewed this slowdown as an opportunity to reduce dependence on non-national workers who constituted 81.5 per cent of the total work force in 1985. The highest priority of the Development Plan covering the years 1985/86-1989/90 was to move towards changing the population and labour market imbalance in favour of Kuwait nationals. The Plan's additional manpower requirements were by Kuwaitis to the extent of 30 per cent, as such reducing the share of foreign workers in the total labour force to about 75 per cent by 1990.

Until 1980, workers from other Arab countries constituted more than half the foreign work force of Kuwait. Among non-Arab countries, India, Pakistan and Iran were the leading contributors to Kuwait's expatriate manpower. Since then the balance has changed and in 1985 workers from Asian countries accounted for 52 per cent of Kuwait's total foreign work force. Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans together constituted 83 per cent of the total strength of Asian workers.

The recent trends show that the pace of increase in demand for certain categories of manpower has slowed down considerably.

There is strong evidence of an increasing preference for Asian workers who until 1975 accounted for only 30 per cent of Kuwait's foreign work force. Their share gradually increased to 52 per cent in 1985, aided by an increasing tendency to substitute Asian workers for Arab workers.

It is however known that wages have been on the decline since the last three to four years, both as a result of the increasing proportion of lower-paid nationalities such as Bangladeshis and because of a lowering of wage rates in the wake of the increasing availability of cheap labour. The only available indicator of falling wages is the lowering of the approved minimum wage by various Asian governments.

There are prospects of Kuwait continuing to import manpower not only to meet its requirements of additional labour but also in its attempt to substitute cheaper labour and thus reduce wage costs.

OMAN

Until 1985, Oman was able to counter the effects of falling oil prices by increasing its production levels. Unlike the other Gulf oil-exporting countries which, as members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), had to comply with its decisions on pricing and production quotas, Oman enjoyed the freedom of increasing its production levels as well as offering price discounts on its exports of crude oil. Hence, while other Gulf countries were faced with declining oil revenues after 1982, Oman's oil revenues continued to increase and amounted to RO 1.51 bn in 1985, an increase of 23 per cent over 1984. In 1986 however, as a result of a further decline in oil prices and pressures from neighbouring OPEC members to curtail production, Oman's oil revenues dropped to RO 928.9 m, a 38 per cent decline despite a devaluation of the rial by 10 per cent in January 1986. This forced a scaling down of the Third Development Plan (1986-1990) by 14 per cent in 1986 and again by 10 per cent in mid-1987 with subsequent cuts in government project expenditures. The annual net inflow of migrant workers which had been consistently positive since the start of the oil boom in 1973, gave way to a net outflow of about 17,000 in 1986, or about 5 per cent of the expatriate work force in 1985.

Asian countries provided 95 per cent of Oman's increasing number of foreign workers over the past fifteen years. Four South Asian countries - India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka - accounted for nearly 90 per cent of the 313,000 foreign workers employed in Oman in 1985. In the private sector, which employs more than 90 per cent of Oman's total expatriate work force, 96.4 per cent of the workers were from Asian countries.

It is clear that the increase in the foreign work force slowed down after 1983. The decline was most marked in the category - production process workers. An important factor in this decline was the slowing down of the rate of expansion in construction activity. The downward trend in addition to the foreign work force has continued.

Official pronouncements on the policy reducing expatriate manpower have been complemented with increased efforts at upgrading and diversifying the education and training programmes so as to facilitate 'Omanisation' of the work force.

In addition to the highly qualified foreign professionals which it will continue to require, Oman will have to retain a sizeable number of various other categories of middle and low level manpower.

NJR

Bureau's entry into housemaid recruitment protects women job seekers from agency exploitation,

says Nissanka Wijeratne

Face to Face

Why was the Foreign Employment Bureau setup, despite the fact that a foreign employment division in the Department of Labour was already in operation?

Until 1985, the foreign employment business was administrated by the Foreign Employment Division of the Department of Labour and was upgraded in 1978 from its former function as the Foreign Employment Unit.

By mid-1980 however, in the face of the rapidly escalating workload, the division proved to be impractical to operate: it was neither powerful enough as a regulatory tool to cope with the newly emerging trends, nor did it have the administrative strength to organise and monitor the process.

By 1985, the average outflow of migrant workers reached 50,000 and was still expanding. The number of agencies registered with the department rose to about 500, which warranted a tough monitoring system. Several illegal and unauthorised recruitment agencies also emerged to take advantage of the boom, and the situation needed the immediate attention of an efficient controlling body. The significant contribution made towards the Sri Lanka's foreign exchange reserves by way of private remittances and the

solution to the country's unemployment problem that it offered, emphasised the importance of strengthening manpower recruitment overseas in a more organised manner.

A better set of guidelines and an international promotional programme were also deemed necessary to compete with the other labour exporters in order to expand the Sri Lanka share.

Concerned about these new developments, policy makers and planners urged that new mechanisms be established to manage and operate the progress towards a "manpower exporting industry". It was also accepted that an independent body should be created to cut through the red tape of government departments. These special requirements led to the setting up of the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment in 1985 by the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment Act No.21.

What are the objectives of the Foreign Employment Bureau ?

The main objectives of the Bureau as stipulated in Section 15 of the Act could be summarized into 3 broad areas:

- (1) Promote overseas employment for Sri Lankans by exploring the maximum potential for job opportunities .
- (2) Regulate the business of foreign employment .
- (3) Undertake measures for the welfare and protection of the migrant worker .
- (4) Undertake recruitment for employment abroad .

To what extent is the Bureau accountable to the migrant?

As indicated in Act No. 21, the Bureau's main concerns in respect of the migrant worker are:

- (1) protection while in employment abroad .
- (2) regulation of agency activities so as to protect migrant workers form cheating and malpractice .
- (3) provision of conciliation and welfare assistance in the event of migrant workers and family members being in distress .
- (4) maintain better follow up on terms and conditions, thereby safeguarding the interests of migrants .
- (5) provide guidance and counselling assistance to migrant workers

As stipulated in Section 15m of the Act, the FEB is empowered, 'to undertake the welfare and protection of Sri Lankan employed outside Sri Lanka.' This clause has been made deliberately vague in order that it could be interpreted according to the action required in any specific situation.

The Bureau can regulate agencies by imposing terms and conditions, for eg.- compulsory service contracts which are entered into between the Bureau and agencies, and subject agencies to specific terms and conditions imposed under Section 15m.

What percentage of workers obtain employment through the Bureau?

Although the Bureau is empowered to directly recruit persons for overseas employment, it does not act as the sole recruiting agency since it has a more comprehensive package of obligations

towards the industry, especially in the area of policy planning and implementation. However in recent times, it has changed this policy to some extent and tried to upgrade direct recruitment, which resulted in the recruitment of housemaids as well being channelled through the Bureau.

Why cannot the Bureau act as the sole recruiting agency?

The Bureau does not have the resources to carry out the work presently undertaken by the approx. 500 agencies stationed here. Also, acting as the sole recruiting agency would be contrary to the open economic policies of the government, which aim at providing equal opportunities for business enterprise.

The main reason for the Bureau's entry into the arena of housemaid recruitment was to protect women job seekers from exploitation in the hands of job agents. As a result, migration crisis in relation to housemaids came down drastically, compelling recruitment agents to follow the terms and conditions set out by the Bureau if they want to attract women for the jobs offered.

Table 1

Year	No. Deployed by Bureau	No. Deployed by Licensed Agents	% recruited by Bureau
1990	457	42,168	1.1
1991	263	64,805	0.4
1992	274	44,378	0.6
1993	130	48,623	0.3
1994	280	59,887	0.5
1995 June	491	40,613	1.2

At this point, the average number of recruitment done by licensed agencies throughout the above period should also be studied.

The above figures show that, as a single recruitment authority, the Bureau was predominant throughout the years except in 1991 and 1993.

Are there any specific instances of exploitation which have been mitigated by the intervention of the Bureau?

The main area of exploitation is at the stage of issuing tickets for travel to the Middle East to take up employment. Although the prospective employees send their air fare, agents insist that this is not so, thereby recovering the full cost of the fare, twice over. Often, most of the poor labour migrants are compelled to sell or mortgage their houses and land in order to meet this cost. The Bureau steps in here by offering the prospective migrant free air passage if he accepts employment through the Bureau. When this system was initially introduced, there was a mass flocking of migrants to the Bureau, and agencies suffered as a result. Therefore, this measure compelled agencies to toe the line by offering free air passage too, in order to compete with the Bureau.

What are the measures taken by diplomatic missions to promote the welfare of migrants?

In addition to the above, diplomatic attaches already functioning under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Labour, coordinate with the Bureau in

solving the disputes and complaints of migrant workers. The Bureau in its next year plan has included the appointments of 8 representatives to Sri Lankan Embassies in the Middle East and those Asian countries where Sri Lankans are employed.

The Cabinet recently approved a project to employ 8 welfare officers in

countries which employ over 25,000 Sri Lankans.

In cases of reported abuses of migrants workers, what authority does the Bureau have in order to intervene?

In a situation where violence and murder has been reported, the Bureau, in collaboration with the Foreign Ministry, initiates action against such cases. As the law related to this type of matters comes under the purview of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the matters are taken up at the highest level.

Why was compulsory registration of all migrant workers deemed necessary?

Compulsory registration aims at curbing illegal agency activities. By registering all migrant workers, the Bureau ensures that particulars of the source of employment, namely the employer is provided.

An official visit to the Middle East by a delegation headed by Hon. Minister of Labour and Vocational Training last April, found that the majority of workers who seek assistance from our embassies were not registered with the Bureau, and the unregistered job

agencies which recruited them were impossible to trace. So they were unable to avail themselves of the benefits of welfare assistance such as insurance, free repatriation etc., which were provided for registered workers. Therefore, it was decided to introduce the system of compulsory registration. Furthermore,

It is also considered important to have

Table II

Year	No. Deployed	No. Agencies	Average per Agency
1990	42,169	220	192
1991	64,805	237	273
1992	44,378	273	163
1993	48,623	250	194
1994	59,887	322	186
1995-June	40,613	364	112

a good database of migrants leaving for overseas employment.

Has this measure been successful?

Yes, to a great extent, it has. Before this registration system was introduced, the average outflow as reported by our existing registration system was around 5,000 per month. This has reached around 15,000 after the new system came into operation in May last year, registrations reached 15,954 escalating to 16,408 last June.

Are there any problems regarding its implementation?

There was some criticism of the registration fee charged in respect of those who travel back to overseas employment after vacationing in Sri Lanka. Taking into consideration argument, the Hon. Minister has gazetted a reduced fee of Rs 3,200 with effect from 24th Oct. 1995 for those who travel after vacationing, irrespective of their salary scales.

What are the benefits of the Suraksha insurance scheme introduced by you for labour migrants?

The Suraksha Insurance scheme which came into operation since 15th October 1994, has proved to be very beneficial to most of the migrant workers in many ways. The significant feature of this scheme is that no extra money is levied on the migrant workers. The premium of Rs 480 per person was originally shared between the agent and the Bureau, but a recent decision, exempted the agent from

contributions and the sole financial responsibility was taken over by the Bureau.

A further extension of this scheme was introduced in July last year so as to insure the family members of the migrant workers against the medical and educational expenses of the migrant worker.

Is insurance compulsory for all migrants?

Insurance is a free facility provided for every migrant worker who registers with the Bureau. Since registration is

compulsory, insurance is automatically activated in favour of the migrant workers on registration.

Under this scheme, 104,005 migrant workers have been provided with insurance policies as at end September 1995, (see table 3), for which a sum of Rs 28.7 m was spent. Of this sum, almost Rs 15 m was borne by the Bureau.

Cont'd to page 29

Table III

MIGRANTS INSURED UNDER SURAKSHA SCHEME ON A MONTHLY BASIS

1994	October	2,523
	November	5,002
	December	6,015
1995	January	7,754
	February	5,634
	March	4,452
	April	6,975
	May	10,535
	June	10,318
	July	11,819
	August	14,078
	September	18,900
Total		104,005

Cont'd from page 7

It has been reported from time to time that several gigantic development projects in the Middle East which required foreign labour are now completed and also that their attempts to engage indigenous workers have decreased the demand for foreign labour. However, this trend would not affect Sri Lanka very much, as most of the employment opportunities available in this region is for housemaids. The demand for housemaids will continue to exist in these countries due to the social distinction of having them. The emerging signs of political stability in the Middle East are also favourable for foreign employment activities in the future, following the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Lebanese civil war. Furthermore, it will be politically more favourable for Arab countries to recruit Asian workers for the vacancies created by the exportation of Palestinian, Sudanese, Yemen and Libyan nationalities in large numbers from

Kuwait and other friendly nations after the Kuwait invasion.

According to estimates of foreign manpower requirements, upto the year 2000, foreign labour participation between 1994 and 2000 declined by only 5 per cent.

Although there will not be a drastic change in the demand for labour ac-

cording to these statistics, it is possible that a competition for the supply of labour could arise. In this situation, Sri Lanka will face severe competition from the Philippines, Thailand and Bangladesh.

Notes:

1. Maithripala Senarathne Cabinet Sub-Committee Report-1974
2. Arjapwanan D.M. (1989), Korala R.S.M. (1989) and Perera P.D.K. (1985).

Table 12

Estimated Labour force requirements in Gulf Cooperation Countries (foreign workers '000)							
Country	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Saudi Arabia	2104.4	2075.4	2044.8	2010.8	2972.8	2930.9	2896.2
Kuwait	614.2	638.9	635.4	630.8	635.4	626.0	614.5
Bahrain	109.1	107.0	104.8	102.5	100.0	97.5	94.8
Qatar	153.0	153.0	152.9	152.5	152.7	152.5	152.5
O.A.R.	1086.7	1100.4	1104.4	1107.6	1117.1	1114.5	1117.7
Oman	321.8	323.9	322.9	321.8	320.1	316.1	316.1
Total	6441.2	6400.0	6365.2	6326.6	6297.6	6288.8	6181.1

Source: Javed Ansari (1992) Policies and Labour demand in G.C.C. countries

Cont'd from page 28

Have there been any beneficiaries to date?

Yes, by September 1995, 665 migrant workers were repatriated under the scheme which provided them with the cost of their air tickets, while five deaths were compensated with payments of approximately Rs 125,000 each. The total sum of money involved in worker welfare was Rs 10.1 m.

We understand that several training centres were set up under the auspices of the Bureau. What types of training do they provide?

There are 13 training centres functioning under the Bureau to date. A further 12 centers throughout the country will be established shortly.

Training for housemaids covers the various aspects of housekeeping which include cooking and the use of modern kitchen equipment, social and cultural adjustment, a basic knowledge of Arabic and English, banking functions, especially savings.

As the training certificate for housemaids was made compulsory with effect from last December, intensifying training facilities was considered a must. It is intended to train about 65,000 prospective migrant women per year, by these centres.

Vocational training for juki operators for the garment industry is carried out in centres situated in Kegalle and Kurungala.

The present centers are located in Colombo, Galle, Matara, Tangalle, Badulla, Ratnapura, Kandy, Matale, Kegalle, Kurunegala, Chilaw, Moorigama and Anuradhapura.

What are the Bureau's future plans, if any?

The Bureau intends to go beyond its function as a mere manpower recruitment agency. Future plans include the intended re-organisation of the Bureau into an Authority, which will give us more powers. A high-powered committee has been appointed by the Minister of Labour to study and report the necessary amendments to the

existing Foreign Employment Bureau Act. It is also intended to close the loopholes of the present Act. There will be more constructive policy decisions regarding administration of the industry, procurement of recruitment and stipulations of the terms and conditions of employment. Some of the other future plans of the Bureau for 1996 are as follows:

- (1) Appointment of a Bureau representative to key Middle East and Far Eastern countries.
- (2) Raise the number of training centres to 30.
- (3) Create an Overseas Workers Welfare Fund for the benefit of migrant workers and their family members.
- (4) Recruitment to be raised to 150,000 during 1996.
- (5) Establish and operate the Foreign Employment Promotional Fund.

The Trauma of Change

Focus on the social and psychological impact of labour migration on the woman migrant and her family

In the gross outflow of unskilled labour migration, women far outnumber men. Statistics indicate that in 1994 alone, 130,027 women went to the Gulf region on contractual employment as housemaids, which amounts to 78.9 per cent of the total unskilled labour force. Surveys indicate that these women are from the lower strata of society, for whom the economic motive is uppermost in their search for a better standard of living for their families.

One of the most dominant factors which prompt the exodus to the Middle East is the perception of the riches that await them: this perception, whether true or false, is strong enough to relegate the primary considerations of family welfare, temporarily to a secondary role in the hope of future betterment. Surveys conducted by the Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka have ascertained that most of these women have dependant families exceeding six members, earning an average monthly income of Rs 1,000.

More often than not, it is women with husbands who are not holding down a regular job, who seek contractual employment overseas, and among those who do have a relatively steady job, many have a lesser sense of responsibility towards their families. It is also, unfortunately, women in this category who mainly lack the social support system that is vital when leaving their families to the mercies of society.

Most of the women who seek employment overseas are between the ages of 18 and 45 years, that is, the reproductive period of their lives. Since the women labour migrants are relatively young, the children they leave behind are on average, between 5 and 15 years of age. A study done by Dr L.W. Jayasekera established the fact that of a total of 274 children left behind by their mothers, 80 per cent were under 15 years of age. Therefore, a strong support

system is vital in order to ensure minimum disruption of the family unit. This support more often than not, is unavailable to many women working overseas, which aggravates the social and psychological problems faced by herself and her family.



The social and psychological impact of this exodus of young mothers could be attributed to changes within both the intimate functionally inter-dependent family unit as well as the changes in the personalities and values of these young mothers and wives as a consequence of exposure to an alien environment for which they were insufficiently prepared.

Although the woman's contribution towards her family is not quantified in economic terms, she is the cornerstone of the domestic empire. The employment market overseas, particularly in the Middle East, opened up hitherto undreamed-of opportunities for women, which resulted in a mass exodus in search of petro dollars in order to alleviate their straitened circumstances. According to eminent Child Psychologist Dr Hemamali Perera, 'the mother is the key attachment in our culture, -providing the emotional content in the family. It is she who keeps

the family together, playing multiple roles as teacher, guardian, guide to her children, and helpmate, sexual partner to her husband, in addition to her functions as housekeeper and cook.' Thus, her leaving causes a void in the fabric of the family, a disruption in the family unit which in turn, has repercussions on society, giving rise to several social issues, both here and abroad. This also results in a reversal of roles within the family unit, from subservient partner to chief breadwinner and the normally two-parent family is now reduced to a one-parent family, which in the best of times, is a less than ideal arrangement.

Apart from the immediate problem of inadequate care arrangements, the migration of mothers has a detrimental effect on the personality development of the child. When bereft of his mother for a period of not less than two years during the formative period of his life, the child is more vulnerable to the influences of the outside world because the basic protection offered by her presence is lost. Dr Hemamali Perera stresses that it is therefore essential that the lines of communication between mother and child be unbroken: the child should be allowed to communicate with the mother, either by letter or telephone. This contact to a great extent, serves to mitigate the sense of isolation the child feels during the mother's absence. An extended family system often prevalent in Asian countries, is a fairly satisfactory, albeit temporary, substitute in such situations, which contributes to a great extent towards minimising these adverse effects of the mother's absence. The absence of the mother could cause feelings of isolation in the child, stemming from a lack of security, which could give rise to a range of emotional and behavioral disturbances like thumb sucking, rebellion, temper tantrums, complaints of non-existent physical ailments and anxiety states. The

child may also resort to anti-social behaviour like eating, alcoholism, smoking, homo-sexuality, drug addiction.

Several children of labour migrants end up in probate courts either because of the negligence of adults to whose care they were entrusted, which could be in the form of either ill-treatment or abandonment, or sexual abuse by a male member of the household or by somebody in the locality. It is usually a lack of foresight rather than callousness, which has resulted in the mother leaving her children in the care of irresponsible people.



There are also instances of mothers who have been compelled to leave isolated infants, for better opportunities overseas. Due to their ignorance, coupled with the immediacy of the economic motive and the unsympathetic attitudes of employers and agents. The emotional shock and deprivation experienced by an infant in such a situation when compelled to replace the warmth of the mother with a bottle, could have serious consequences in his adult life.

The difference between the sexes is not merely a physical one. A wide abyss separates them psychologically too. Motherhood is an inherent characteristic of the feminine psyche. The mother's focus is usually introspective, towards her family's welfare, on which even her meager resources would be spent. She usually applies any additional income received for their betterment. But in the case of the male, he is more outward-

oriented by nature, his focus being more towards the society at large, and any additional income received is often applied in the pursuit of personal gratification, viz - alcohol abuse, womanising, gambling etc.

In the event of the wife leaving for employment overseas, the male's role changes, from one of relatively light responsibility towards his family to one of being compelled to shoulder heavy responsibility, although this shift in responsibility is compensated by the petro dollars received from his wife. The woman's assumption of the predominant role as breadwinner relegates the dominant male to a subservient role of child raising and keeping house, duties formerly relegated to his wife. Many react to these changes by leaving regular jobs, purportedly to supervise the construction of the house which is, of course, being financed from the Middle East. Many men fail to cope with the situation of their wives' absence, and resort to activities detrimental to the family's well-being. There have been several instances where the wife has returned on completion of her period of employment abroad in the expectation that her hard earned money has been used productively, only to discover to her dismay that it has been frittered away by an irresponsible husband or other family member. Or her husband may have abandoned the children or may have taken another wife. Many are the harrowing tales told of women who have come back to depression and suicide and of men who have committed suicide when unable to cope with the demands of their new roles.

The reversal of roles in the family hierarchy, from dominance to dependence, very often prompts the male member to strive towards creating an atmosphere of sympathy towards him in order to compensate for his new role by inveigling money from his wife which money he uses mainly for his personal pleasures.

By contrast, children have been observed as being more intuitive, realising that their mother left them for overseas employment in order that they, as a

family, could better themselves economically.

Generally, in the conservative Sri Lankan culture, especially the lower economic strata in rural areas, male domination is exercised by violence and abuse of the female partner, which often leads to the neglect of the family. This again, prompts the woman to choose the lesser of the evils, to choose between temporary disruption of the family and a better standard of living by escaping the vicious poverty bind.

Other than their persistent desire to travel abroad, these women have little or no knowledge of the living conditions of foreign countries. Coupled with this ignorance is the trauma of adjusting to the restrictive culture of countries in, say the Gulf. Being mainly uneducated, these women's only source of information is from peer groups which have returned from similar jobs. The resultant culture shock is therefore great. This, coupled with the emotional trauma of leaving their children and families behind, aggravates the trauma and exacerbates their difficulties in adjusting to the different language, religion, clothes, food and culture.

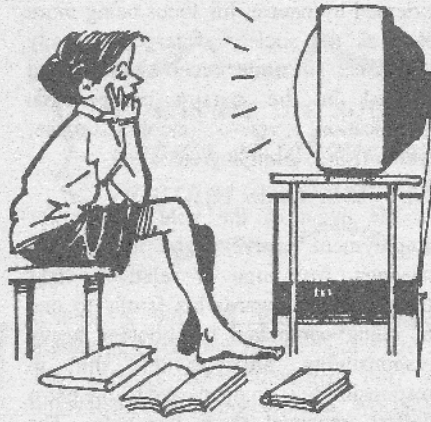
Their trauma is worsened by their unfamiliarity with the Arabic language, their inexperience with modern electrical kitchen and household equipment, their lack of knowledge of basic housekeeping in a wealthy household. The uncertainties of home interfere with their work while overseas, resulting in low performance in their job. In many instances, they also suffer from long hours of work, exploitation, non-payment of salaries and even sexual harassment. Sexual harassment, although not present in every instance, in such instances as they are present, could lead to unwanted pregnancies and be detrimental to the victim's family life in the future. 'Due to the psychological trauma faced by them, even the woman who decides to exploit the situation by earning money through (illegal) means should not be blamed,' says Psychologist Ruslika Amarasokera. 'The situation is so complex that nobody can take a moral stand on the issue.'

Coupled with these traumas is the psychological adjustment that these women must make to accepting a lowly position as servant in a household. Although poor, many of these women would not have accepted similar positions in their own countries, by virtue of its poor social status. This latter factor is one of the most contributory towards not accepting similar employment in Sri Lanka, far outweighing salary considerations: at present, there is only a fairly narrow gap between salaries paid here and West Asia. A housemaid in Sri Lanka could now earn between Rs 2,000 and Rs 5,000 in Sri Lanka. On average, housemaids in the Gulf countries earn Rs 4,000 to Rs 5,000. It is a fact that Sri Lankans are the lowest paid Asians in the Gulf. Therefore, understandably, the experience of working overseas is not psychologically satisfactory to many women.

In 1995, the Airport Medical Centre, Katunayake, through which all indisposed migrants are referred to hospitals and family care, recorded 71 cases of insanity and depression in housemaids returning from the Gulf, as against just two men who had also been employed in that region. Of the 71 cases of insanity, 45 were married women and 26, unmarried women. The mortality rate of labour migrants in the Gulf region rose to 68 in 1995.

Counselling Services as a solution

These unskilled labour migrants are drawn from all over Sri Lanka. The problem therefore is spatially widespread. Further, those facing the "family-life" problem belong to different ethnic and religious groups. The complexity of the problem is now apparent. Before problems are aggravated further, it is best if counselling can be given to the homes of the affected families. Awareness creation of the availability of such counselling services may need high priority. Mass media can be effectively used for this purpose. Considering the contribution these migrants make to our economy, their services should perhaps be given free of charge to needy families. Awareness creation alone may not be sufficient to bring together the service provider and the beneficiary;



Some suggestions for improving the present situation:

a) A register which records details of the families of all mothers leaving for labour migration should be maintained, and social welfare officers be appointed to provide assistance to their families and to monitor their conditions of living during the mother's absence.

b) Remedial measure adopted by other countries should be studied and a system appropriate to Sri Lanka be adapted. For eg., in Pakistan, the Overseas Pakistan Foundation has been established to ensure the welfare of the migrants. Under the rules and regulations of this

Foundation, migrant workers are required to deposit a sum in a welfare fund when leaving the country. This sum is then spent on the education and social security of their families.

c) Enact laws which ensure the safe return of migrants at the completion of their contract. This should also be activated in situations where migrants are stranded in foreign countries by fraudulent job agents who have extracted money from them but failed to provide them with jobs.

d) Enforce minimum wage rates for specific job categories in the different countries and equalize the salaries offered by the diverse agencies.

e) Establish a forum for labour supplying countries which will enable them to stipulate uniformity of wages and better welfare facilities.

f) Create an awareness among the women regarding conditions and hazards in their countries of employment

g) Provide training to housemaids, on the use of electric equipment, a knowledge of the Arabic language and the Islamic culture etc. Although this is being carried out to some extent, it is still inadequate to meet the demand.

RJR

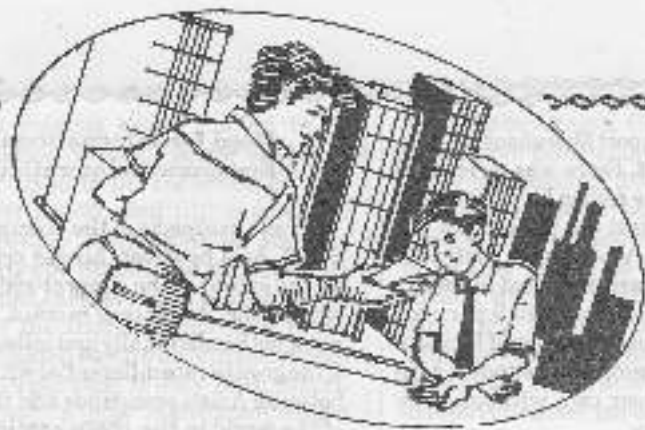
some kind of persuasion may also be necessary.

In order to provide the proposed counselling service, the government may be able to draw personnel from within the infrastructure facilities already in place throughout Sri Lanka. Such persons include the field officers of the department of social services, officers of the department of labour, heads of educational institutions, religious dignitaries and volunteer social workers. Drawing suitable individuals from these existing institutions, the government should attempt to organise committees at the grass-root level. These committee members may then be given a training in family life counselling which must coincide with an intensive publicity campaign in order to make the migrant aware of the new counselling service and also to encourage families to use this service. These counsellors could act as mentors.

Such mentors may be assigned to a single family or a group of families. One may have to take note of the fact that the implementation of any new programmes of action or an idea is bound to face resistance and run into problems initially. However, considering the gravity of the "family-life" problem of these migrants and the negative impact it is found to have in society, it seems worth the attempt.

About the Writer

Dr Chandra Attanayake is a senior lecturer at the Department of Geography, University of Sri Jayewardenapura. Her specialty is in the areas of geography, demography and statistics. She conducted lectures in migration and statistics at the DTRU (Demographic Training and Research Unit). Dr Attanayake obtained her post-graduate qualifications from the University of Wisconsin.



Structural reforms and adjustment measures are currently in place in most of the developing countries. In many cases, the results have also begun to show in the form of a substantial improvement in their overall economic situation. However, what is often forgotten is that sustainable world growth can never be achieved in isolation. In fact, the prospects of a strong global economic outlook crucially hinges upon a commitment to foster international economic cooperation. This is critical, not only for those developing economies which are in transition and want to move on to the next stage of development, but also for the developed nations which want to come out of the protracted phase of sluggish growth and continuing recession.

In this context, South-South Co-operation has made considerable progress following the Programme of Action adopted by the High-level Conference on Economic Co-operation among developing countries held in Caracas in May 1981. In more recent years, co-operation has taken a rich character, responding to the developments in the world economy and the policy evolutions in industrialized countries. Developing countries have viewed the imperative need for the expansion of trade among themselves without assuming an inward orientation. The setting up of SAARC by South-Asian economies is, for instance, a step towards promoting trade expansion in the region.

Prospects for Cooperation in South Asia

The countries of South Asia comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar may aptly be described as economies in transition, transition from administered regimes to regimes where market orientations predominate. As is inevitable, the adoption of a market-friendly approach would reflect in the arena of trade and investment.

The reforms implied in the transition are fortunately facilitated by the fact that the economic performance of South Asia was robust in 1992. The South Asian economies experienced a smart recovery in economic growth with

TRADE AND INVESTMENT PROSPECTS IN SOUTH ASIA

by
Dr. D. R. Mehta

4.7 per cent in 1992, from 2.1 per cent in the previous year. This looks all the more impressive in the context of the low rate of growth in world output in 1992, placed at 1.7 per cent. Economic growth is expected to gather further momentum, with the economies of South Asia projected to grow by 5.3 per cent in 1993 and 6.0 per cent in 1994, as shown by the Asian Development Bank's annual document, the Asian Development Outlook, 1993.

Trade and Investment Outlook for South Asia

The South Asian economies have embarked on economic reforms programmes, a major component of which is trade policy reform. The liberalised trade regime is sought to be achieved through relaxation of quantitative restrictions and a thorough rationalisation of the tariff structure. The virtual elimination of quantitative in conjunction with the rationalisation of the tariff structure is expected to generate

additional trade opportunities, improve allocative efficiency and raise growth rates in the countries of the region. An important condition for success of trade reforms is that they need to be complemented by an array of measures in a wide spectrum of areas - exchange rate, industry, banking and finance, fiscal policy, and labour and technology.

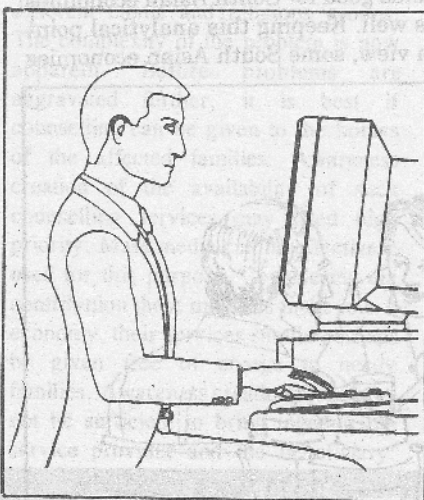
Responding favourably to the liberalised trade and foreign exchange regimes, the aggregate exports of South Asian economies in dollar terms, grew by 6.8 per cent in 1992 as against 4.8 per cent in 1991. Exports of South Asian economies are projected to grow by 10 per cent in 1993 and 16.1 per cent in 1994.

Export growth cannot take place perpetually if overall growth rates are weak. The theoretical proposition that imports would have to rise if growth rates should increase and be sustained holds good for South Asian economies as well. Keeping this analytical point in view, some South Asian economies



have adopted import liberalisation policies. As a result, there was a rebound in imports in the region by 7.1 per cent in 1992 as against 6.6 per cent in the preceding year. According to ADB estimates, imports are projected to rise by 8.0 per cent in 1993 and 10.9 per cent in 1994. This augurs well and leaves a distinct impression that exports cannot stand on their own without some import intensity.

The South Asian countries have been increasingly aiming at promoting intra-regional trade, not only to raise their own economic standards but also to counter the challenge thrown by the emergence of trading blocs in other regions. In this regard, it is well known that the East Asian countries have been more successful than those in South Asia. This is so in spite of the setting up of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985 to promote the flow of intra-regional trade. Excepting Maldives and Myanmar (and for Nepal during 1985 to 1988), the shares of intra-region exports of other South Asian countries to their total exports have been in the range of 2 to 6 per cent in recent years. India's exports to the region accounted for about 3 per cent of her total exports during the period. Barring India, Myanmar and Pakistan, the share of intra-region imports of other South Asian countries to their total imports were relatively high. The shares of Nepal and Maldives were generally more than 10 per cent in most years between 1985 and 1992. India has enjoyed a positive trade balance with Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

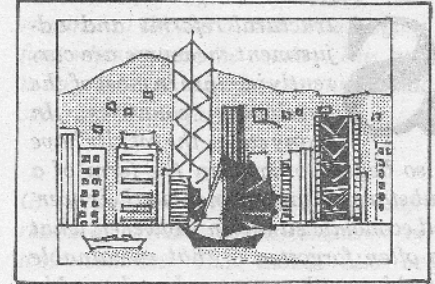


Need for International Economic Cooperation

Trade prospects of the economies of South Asia however, hinges critically on the extent of the generalised recovery in the developed market economies, both individually and collectively. If the growth rate differential witnessed between Asian economies and the rest of the world in the 1980s continues to exist, the Asian economies are expected to emerge as the world's largest market with purchasing power exceeding that of North-America and Western Europe. In the emerging economic milieu, India for instance, with its growing economy, has the potential of providing a large market for the NIEs and Japan. The perceptible increase in intra-South Asian trade is thus within the realm of possibility.

The successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round has brightened the prospects of further integration of the economies of South Asia with the global trading system. With the gradual elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers, these economies would be much more competitive. This assumes crucial significance as the existence of high trade barriers have inhibited the growth of intra-South Asian trade. Gradual phasing out of the Multi-Fibre Arrangements (MFA) would also improve the prospects of textile exports to North America and Western Europe, as these economies have got the comparative advantage in textiles.

The emergence of powerful trading blocs, especially the Single European market and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in recent years, has assumed significance beyond what one could perceive. It is widely acknowledged that there are both opportunities and threats for Asian exports implied in such an impact. Significant benefits would emanate from the enlargement of markets resulting from regional integration. Restructuring of industries within the trading blocs also offers opportunities to Asian economies, whose exports are being eased out because of the lack of competitiveness. On the negative side, regional integration may result in increased protection through non-tariff barriers with a view to overcoming the



painful nature of the adjustment process for firms within the trading blocs emanating primarily from greater competitive impulses generated by integration policies.

Foreign Direct Investment as a catalyst

In developing countries which have natural resources but not the capital or marketing and/or management skills, FDI can indeed work as a catalyst. As FDI is more often accompanied by the transfer of current/state-of-the-art technology, marketing systems, etc., its flow is generally found to be concentrated in manufacturing and in economies within the comparatively large manufacturing sector. Since the 1980s, there has been a change in the attitude of the South Asian countries towards foreign direct investment, with most of those economies welcoming the inflow of foreign investment and technology.

Among the NIEs, Singapore has been the most active in encouraging foreign equity participation fairly early in her development process, to promote and develop the manufacturing sector because of the paucity of domestic entrepreneurship. FDI in Malaysia, Thailand and China has also been high, ranging between US \$ 1 bn and US \$ 2bn in recent times. In contrast, the South Asian countries lagged behind in attracting foreign investment, largely because of their inward-looking trade policies. However, due to recent shifts in policies in South Asian countries, FDI inflows have augmented, recording a quantum jump from US \$ 345m in 1986 to US \$ 556 million in 1991.

While the academic debate regarding the welfare effects of FDI would be inconclusive as before, there is, robust empirical evidence to support the view that foreign private investment has

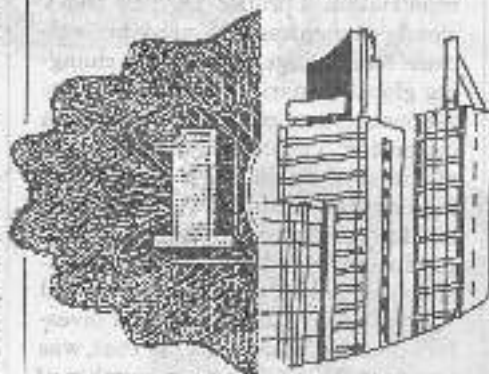
contributed to the growth of several new industrialising countries, viz. Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. There is also a consensus view that FDI could be harmful to the recipient country if the country is highly protected and FDI is put through behind high tariff walls. What is needed is direct foreign investment, very transparent and professionalised, and not of the tariff-jumping variety. Now that the Uruguay Round has come to an end with trade-related investment measures (TRIMS) built into it, the prospects for flows of foreign investment into South Asian countries appear brighter than ever before.

India's Economic Readjustment

I would now like to take this opportunity to mention about India's experience with economic readjustment particularly in respect of trade reform and non-debt creating foreign investment policy. Considerable progress has been achieved in the stabilisation efforts and structural adjustments undertaken over the last 2 1/2 years. The reform programme aims at improving the economic efficiency and performance of the system. A market orientation is being provided and business and industry are being compelled to become competitive and modern. The financial sector is being strengthened and restructured so as to provide adequate support to the growth efforts in the industrial, trade and agricultural sectors. There is also a consciousness that the economy truly needs to be exposed to enhanced competition. The changes in the import-export policy have been combined with bold adjustments in the exchange rate system so as to stimulate exports and improve India's external competitiveness. Foreign investment, both direct and portfolio has also come to occupy an important role in this task.

Until recently, India's trade policy was guided by an import substitution strategy. While this served well at a particular point of time, it brought to the fore the inherent limitations of an inward-oriented import substituting trade regime. In July 1991, the Government initiated broad ranging trade reforms in order to provide a strategic outward orientation to India's international economic policies.

The reforms relate mainly to (i) elimination of public sector monopolisation of imports (ii) reduction of high nominal tariffs, and (iii) removal of quantitative restrictions on imports and exports. Significant adjustments were also carried out in the exchange rate of the Indian rupee. The rupee was adjusted downwards in two stages by 18-19 per cent, in July 1991. Simultaneously, a new instrument called the EXIM scrip was introduced linking imports with exports. Subsequently, the EXIM scrip was abolished and the



Liberalised Exchange Rate Management System (LERMS) or dual exchange rate system too was introduced effective March 1, 1992. A quick and a smooth switch over took place next year, to the unified exchange rate. Today, the exchange rate of the rupee is determined by market forces of demand and supply.

The EXIM policy of 1992, covers the five year period upto 1997. It has considerably eliminated licensing, quantitative restrictions and other regulatory and discretionary controls. Exports and imports are now allowed freely subject only to negative lists which have been further narrowed down. The list of canalised items, imported or exported through public sector agencies has been drastically reduced. The restricted items of imports are mainly consumer goods, which require licenses. The thrust of the modified EXIM policy is on enhancing export capabilities of agriculture and service sectors. In general, the tariff regime has become less onerous. The maximum customs tariff rate on goods other than capital goods which was reduced from 150 per cent to 110 per cent in the Budget for 1992-93, was further brought down to 85 per cent in the 1993-94 Budget, except for a few items including passenger baggage and

alcoholic beverages. Capital goods imports have been subjected to a relatively low customs duty averaging 35 per cent of the invoice value in the 1993-94 Budget. However, with a maximum duty rate of 85 per cent, India's custom duty structure still remains very high. Several developing countries have in recent times reduced the level of the duty rates for most items, except consumer goods to between 10 to 20 per cent.

The Government has already broadly indicated the future tariff reform agenda which includes (a) liberalisation of duties and import restrictions on consumer items, except those disallowed for health, environmental and other reasons. However, given the Government's commitment to bring about a substantial reduction in the overall fiscal deficit, over the medium term, it will perhaps be necessary to ensure that tariff level to around 25 per cent with maximum rates at around 50 per cent, and (c) doing away with end-use specific exemptions, excepting inputs used for export products.

India's trade deficit during the first nine months of the current year has narrowed down to US \$ 741 m as compared with US \$ 3,555 m last year. Some improvement in the invisible account is also expected as earnings from tourism revive and inward remittances increase in response to the exchange rate. Thus, the current account deficit during 1993-94 is expected to be considerably lower than in 1992-93, reflecting mainly the improvement in the trade account. In US dollar terms, exports at US \$ 15,682 m rose sharply by 19.9 per cent during April-December 1993. This was against a modest increase of 3.4 per cent during the same period of the previous year. Imports, declined by 1.3 per cent to US \$ 16,413 m, contrasting with a rise of 16.5 per cent during the comparable period of last year. Over the medium term, export growth of the order of 15

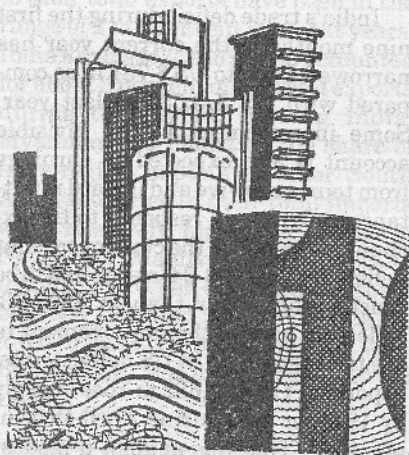


per cent per annum however is necessary, to ensure a continuing narrowing down of the trade deficit. The external financing requirement on current account alone can thus be expected to decline. Further, as the fundamentals of the Indian economy improve and the level of foreign exchange reserves remain at a reasonable level, it should also be possible for India to return to the international commercial markets.

Foreign Investment Policy in India

India, while continuing to make all efforts to contain current account deficits at levels that can be financed or sustained by normal capital flows, has also begun to focus on the extent to which financing of the deficit can be met by non-debt creating flows in the form of direct foreign investment. Thus far, non-debt creating flows had played only a minimal role.

Direct foreign investment plays even now an important role as far as developed countries are concerned. In fact,



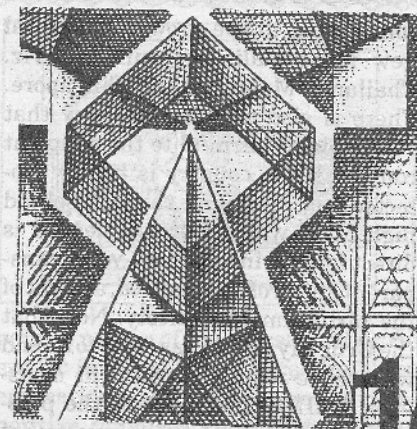
bulk of the global foreign investment occurs within the developed countries. Out of an estimated current annual flow of US\$ 170.2 bn including reinvested earning in 1991, approximately US\$ 105.7 bn was within the developed countries. Developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America accounted for US\$ 34.0 bn or 20.0 per cent of the total. Even within these country-groups, foreign direct investment has played only a minor role in the total capital flows, even though there has been some improvement in the more recent period.

In tune with the other changes in economic policy all of which are aimed at introducing an element of competition in the system and imparting thereby greater efficiency, the July 1991 statement on India's Industrial Policy ushered in some significant changes in the policy towards foreign investment. Even in the past the policy was non-discriminatory. Once the investment was permitted, there was no discrimination between local firms and the foreign firms in the same sector. No restrictions were imposed on the repatriation of profits. The new policy clearly recognises the need to 'welcome' foreign investment in the changing global scenario. Direct foreign investment is now 'promoted' rather than 'permitted'. The statement also speaks of the need to establish a more 'dynamic relationship between domestic and foreign industry'. The long-standing demand that the normally permissible limit of 40 per cent of the total equity in a company by foreign investors must be raised to 51 per cent, was accepted. In a fairly large number of industries, foreign investment was also reflected in the constitution of the Foreign Investment Promotion Board to scrutinise applications and take initiatives to attract and negotiate with international firms and approve direct foreign investment in select areas.

Recent Trends

The change in stance towards foreign direct investment is fully reflected in the speed with which approvals have been given since the launch of the new policy in 1991. Total approvals for foreign direct investment, including equity investment by NRIs constituting US\$ 5,417.88 m, have been granted between August 1991 and January 1994. Against this there has been an inflow of US\$ 953.31 m. It is interesting to note that the majority of foreign investment approvals have been in the core sectors of power, fuels, oil refineries, food processing, chemicals and electrical equipments.

The inflow of foreign investment though showing a rising trend, has been modest. The reported inflow of foreign direct investment, including NRI investment, which was US\$ 154.5 m in 1991, rose to US\$ 231.24 m in 1992. During 1993, an inflow of US\$



567.53 m has come in. Looking at the actual inflows under RBI's automatic scheme, the bulk of it has come into six major industries: electrical equipment/electronics; chemicals; food processing; transportation; industrial machinery and industrial instruments. The sector-wise analysis of actual inflows of foreign investment under various Government approvals, shows that the major recipients of foreign direct investment flows were: chemicals/pharmaceuticals, followed by engineering, food-processing, electrical equipment/electronics and transport. Country-wise classification based on the total approvals granted reveals that the United States continues to lead, followed by Switzerland, U.K., Germany, France and Japan.

Foreign capital inflows have also occurred through the access allowed to reputed foreign institutional investors (FIIs) from January 1993. 138 FIIs have been permitted to operate in the Indian Stock Markets so far. Up to February 1994, around US \$ 1.25 bn had come in for portfolio investment through these FIIs. Another recent trend has been the success Indian corporates have had in accessing euro markets. 20 Indian firms have launched GDR/FCCB issues and collected US \$ 2.78 bn. Of this, US \$ 1.11 bn has been repatriated to India.

About the Writer

The above paper was presented by Dr. Mahjo, Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India at the conference on South-South Cooperation in the Asia Pacific Region sponsored by Colombo Plan, Sri Lanka, and the OECD Development Centre, Paris.

LABOUR MIGRATION

Escape of the!

Waiting for Credit

Silence of the lambs



A Maldivian girl working in the Middle East, becomes her fiancée in the hands of her depressed employer

Dancing with troubles

Arbitrary Rights

1. A housemaid who has taught her Sri Lankan employer, for a her employer's to miss out, is being recruited by the employer
2. A housemaid fleeing from the harassment of her employer, waits at dawn for the Sri Lankan Embassy to open
3. The free life style of some Sri Lankan women from the Middle East, is being followed by their fellow female counterparts
4. Sri Lankan factory workers living in crowded conditions of the Middle East

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