



magazine for the youth

logistics



Women in Logistics and Transport



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Seminar Women in Logistics & Transport "Breaking Barriers"

17th January, 2020, at Regent Plaza, Karachi

Breaking
barriers
in logistics





Breaking barriers in logistics

By Shermeen Zuberi

Pakistan ranked 151 out of 153 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index Report 2020 index (World Economic Forum). Not really keeping up with Jinnah's ideology, are we? Not realising we as a nation cannot prosper until we have women participating side by side with men.

One forum that is driving the change and showing what can be achieved when the women aim high is WILAT (Women in Logistics and Transport). Unlike popular opinion, nearly every sphere of human activity is affected directly or indirectly by the logistics process whether it is a household, a business, an organisation, or an institution. Logistics is the strategic function, the accelerator for good man-

agement, economic development and growth, and transport is the means. It is unfortunate that the industry is male-dominated especially when the need to improve logistical skills has become even more acute with ecommerce and global customer market.

Aruna Hussain, Managing Director Maersk Pakistan, breaks it down for *Us* on breaking barriers in logistics and transport.



Aruna Hussain, Managing Director Maersk Pakistan

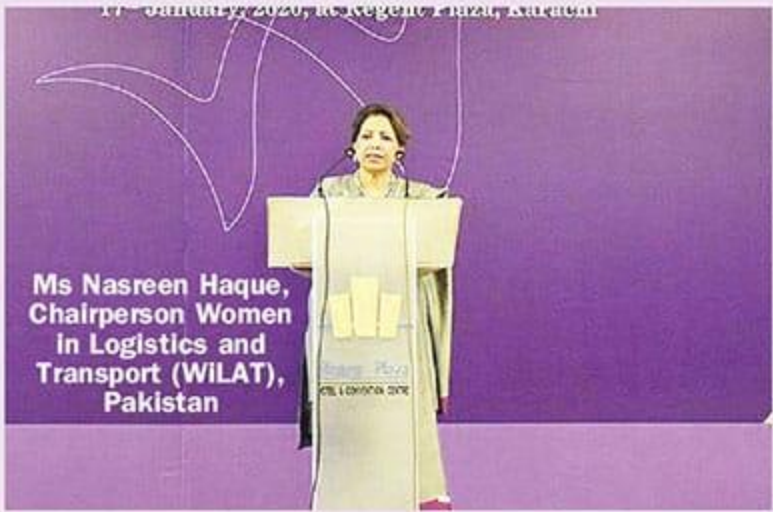
inspired me. I know people want to stay in their comfort zone. Men, in particular, are afraid because the culture changes as soon as a woman enters the office. The language, the style of speaking is altered and they don't want that. Looking back, I'm so glad I made the decision to make a mark in this industry. I took that remark as a challenge, gave the test, and cleared it!"

Sharpen the saw

"I feel my own values and Maersk's values kind of matched. The organisation appreciates diversity and talent; gradually, I saw a change in terms of their approach towards women. On my part, I tried to learn all the ropes of the business. I joined the marketing department and then moved into all different functions one by one. I did well. As a result, Maersk rewarded me with more. One shouldn't be afraid to try new things, especially if it's going to help you understand the entire chain of the business. That is the only way to grow. I did that – within a span of eight years, I had worked in all the different functions in Pakistan and then worked in the UK. And the organisation acknowledged my efforts; I was made the head of the logistics company within the Maersk group. I became the youngest female CEO of a logistics company in

Never be swayed by perceptions

"I grew up in Karachi but transport and logistics was never top of my mind as a career choice. I started with advertising, but four months later I was quitting and applying to Maersk, a company I did not know anything about back then. (Maersk is the largest container transport group in the world since last year and the largest shipping and supply chain company in Pakistan with 23 percent market share in the ocean.) When I entered their office for the very first time to sit for the test, what struck me was there were only males. A person actually asked me, "What are you doing here? *Yeh aurton ki jaga nahi hai* (this is no place for women)." What was intended to discourage me actually



Ms Nasreen Haque, Chairperson Women in Logistics and Transport (WILAT), Pakistan



Pakistan and that, too, within 10 years. It was a moment of pride for me and also for my country because I was able to represent it within the Maersk group."

Speak up against bullying

"It's common for some things to happen in male-dominated societies. It's imperative that one speaks about them as well. During my first few months, a person used to come to office to work on some systems and he would make all sorts of sneering comments. He made me uncomfortable. I know many times women are afraid to go into such industries precisely because of such incidents. I either had the choice of staying silent or to speak up. I

chose the latter. I went to the general manager and told him about it. I had no idea how it would turn out. The GM was supportive. He had a very long conversa-

tion with the gentleman and since then he made sure nothing like this happened again.

"Another incident occurred at port while I was giving a presentation to an important customer. A van pulled up with a person of authority who asked me what I was doing there. I started to explain my purpose but he stopped me and asked again, adding that women were not allowed in the port. I had been working with the company for some time and not realised that women were not allowed in the port! To him, the idea was unfathomable: "What if a container falls on you?" I knew then there was no point arguing that a container

could just as easily fall on a man, too. I was speechless at the moment but seeing women who are crane operators, etc. I know we have come a long way

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"Leadership is trying to demonstrate your capability that everybody can attain a better result by paying more attention to what you do. We need to develop a team of people that can deliver," Vicky Koo, Deputy Global Chairperson/ Chairperson Wilat Hong Kong on empowerment of women in the logistics and transport sector.

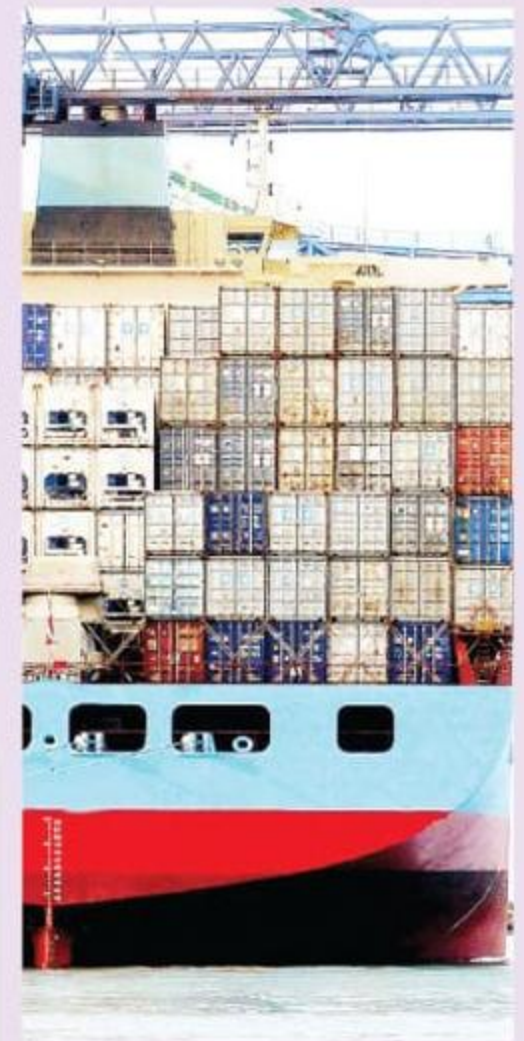
since then."

Think outside the box

"Credit must be given where it is due. In my case, for example, I was able to tackle workplace issues because of the support extended by my general manager, who is a male. The point is for women to overcome challenges, it is important for men in the positions of authority in company to support women and provide them a safe place to work. I was the only girl in Maersk when I started working there and in the last few years the gender ratio has gone up to 25 percent (i.e. one in four employees is a woman already). While it means there are still plenty of job opportunities for women, employers need to step up and realise all the work they have to do in order to bridge the gap and see there is equal participation of women in the workforce."

"SZABIST is the first university in Pakistan that has introduced a course on logistics. It's about technology, about operations, about supply chain; it connects in so many ways with how the world is functioning today," Ms Shahnaz Wazir Ali, President SZABIST, on the scope of the subject in Pakistan.

According to Ms Nasreen Haque, Chairperson Women in Logistics and Transport (WiLAT), Pakistan, WiLAT aims for a better and more sustainable future for all. Its work is concentrated in four key areas – leadership, mentorship, entrepreneurship, and empowerment – and within these areas it works to bring change to the industry and the wider economy, thereby achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals, including food security, good health, gender



equality, and full and productive employment for all.

The logistics and transport sector in Pakistan contributes to 22.3 percent of the services sector GDP. It accounts for approximately six percent of the total employment. With the development of Gwadar Port, there is a dire need for effective logistical arrangements on global standards to cope with the traffic. Hutchison Port Pakistan, country's first and only deepwater container terminal, has encouraged female participation. Companies like Pink Taxi and Roshni Rides are developing transportation services for women and these are also run by the women. Economic experts are unanimous in the view that Pakistan's sustained economic recovery and growth hinges on a robust, integrated, efficient, and competitive logistics sector. But without trained man and woman power all efforts would go to waste.