

an Inspiration to all

by HASINA SAJUN



Mumtaz Maker

It was a pleasure to meet Mumtaz Maker, the Chairperson of Royal Group, an export oriented business house. Well-known for its export of non-traditional items to non-traditional markets, the group was awarded the Export Trophy by The Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries as leading exporter of non traditional products in 2002 and two trophies in 2003.

Mumtaz was awarded the Best Business Woman's Award on May 4th on behalf of the Commerce Ministry by President Musharraf and June 4th by the FPCCI.

How did they venture into this field of non-traditional products, I wanted to know, and so I got to hear Mumtaz's most interesting experience. Mumtaz was born into a family of twelve children. Growing up in Nairobi, she moved to England where she met her husband. They came to Karachi and lead a life of leisure. Their business in the 60s was manufacturing the finest of chiffon saris and other fabrics.

In 1975-76, when they lost not only their family business but their house and car as well, Mumtaz took up teaching Class 3 at Karachi Grammar School, having done substitute teaching in England after her own A levels.

At the same time, in the afternoons, she used an old typewriter and the list of export items and countries from the magazine published by the Export Promotion Bureau, to write letters to as many African countries as she could, dispatching samples of things from the market here.

Mumtaz received orders on the basis of the letters she had sent off and started by supplying hair extensions, hairpieces and wigs, along with hair dyes. They were very popular in Africa and we had plenty to supply. Another early item which was very much in demand was Stillman's face cream which was locally manufactured. About the same time, she discovered a lady in Hyderabad who made and supplied her hand embroidered motifs. These, too, were very popular.

She remembers how many of these motifs, lace, braids, safety pins, needles and threads she has exported. Cotton wool, shopping bags, towels, and everything it seems from candies to carpets!

Mumtaz, herself, had been very impressed with the lovely shoes available in our market and so reasonably priced, too. She was happy to

have got an order for shoes from Nigeria but that was one business where she was defrauded.

She does not lament like a lot of Pakistani business people, who in spite of doing well for themselves and for Pakistan, always run down everything in the home country! Mumtaz says she is very fortunate in her staff - many of them have been working for them since the beginning.

Quite early in the business, Mumtaz's husband joined her as he was in the *zari* business with another partner when she started her export venture. Later, their son returned from his studies in England and began working with the parents as well. The Makers have a daughter and a son and two grandsons from each of their kids. One wall of their living room displays the family photos.

achieved because they have cheap labor. Designer houses have some articles like brassieres made in China!" She says that only if we had better organization and time management and integrity in all government departments, we would be far ahead today.

Mumtaz's company has a staff of 120 but there is no clean water available for them. The route to her work place, which should take eight minutes, takes six times more. A locality which is full of warehouses and supply trucks is nothing more than a dirt track, not even a traffic policeman is assigned there. Reaching one's work place, hot, tired and frustrated, then the electricity cuts... how can men work without electricity, without water? The KESC has not been upgraded for the last twenty years or more!



Mumtaz meets with President Musharraf at an event hosted by the Commerce Ministry.

Today they are exporting to 35 countries, mostly in Africa but including the Middle East, Far East, South America, Chile as well. Mumtaz is an outspoken person who speaks her mind wherever and whenever she sees some right must be fought for and is a passionate Pakistani and a feminist.

Mumtaz encourages other young women in business and feels that no amount of lectures and examples will help women as much as empowering them with the proper infrastructure and aid with subsidies to all commercial ventures in the country. She talks ardently about all the natural resources gifted to our country. We have the forests, the mines, the desert, the flowers, the foliage, the herbs... she says, the list is endless and most of all - our human resource, who are intelligent and have great potential if they are given the opportunity. Our craftsmen can reproduce anything and everything we give them, whether it's garments or glass, ceramic, wood or artifacts!

She says, "See what Korea and China have

Eighty percent of the population is in Karachi, 80% of the industries are here, 80% of the taxes are received from here and nothing is done to improve the plight of commerce and industry or give any shelter or food to the poor without money and if they help to improve the commerce and industry will flourish, the government will have the money for everything - but no one is concerned!

India was giving subsidies thirty years ago, and their goods used to go to Africa on their national carrier, which gave them a 25% subsidy.

I was impressed with the energetic, enterprising resourcefulness of Mumtaz Maker. The Royal Group now boasts a textile division, a general trading division, along with glass, pharmaceuticals, matches and food divisions among others with international repute of quality goods at competitive prices.

It is hard work, determination, integrity and good management practices that bring such success in its wake. Congratulations to Mumtaz Maker, who is an inspiring example to us all. ●