



■ Ms Luthra, fifth from right, with VLCC officials and staff

Women urged to 'push past taboos'

By LAALA KASHEF ALGHATA

FEMALE entrepreneurs need to push past cultural taboos to establish their presence in the workforce, according to a successful business tycoon.

VLCC founder Vandana Luthra, from India, told the *GDN* that there were always "a lot of hurdles" in the way for women in conservative societies.

She is in Bahrain touring two centres in Isa Town and Hidd as part of a GCC-wide visit.

"My father-in-law was very angry when I decided I wanted to start working. He said you should sit at home and cook," she said.

"But I said I wanted to work and that I couldn't keep staying at home - my parents hadn't spent that much money educating me so that I could

stay at home.

"Whenever you're going to start any venture, a lot of hurdles will come your way, especially for women.

"There are very few women entrepreneurs in our culture - in India and GCC, it's the same culture.

"Families don't like women working. My father-in-law used to see me in the house for eight years bringing up my children, he didn't want me to work. But I convinced him with love."

She said that her biggest advice for women who wanted to strike out on their own was to push forward.

"Where there's a will there's a way," Ms Luthra said.

"If you're determined to do something, nothing can stop you. You've got to believe in yourself, which is most important.

"I've always believed that a woman who is a successful manager at home can be a successful entrepreneur.

"We learn everything at home, that's our training school.

"We learn how to balance budgets, learn relationships, manage our children, the way we nurture them, the sacrifice, all that helps when you set up a business.

"When you work with that same sort of passion, and believe in yourself, nothing comes in the way of your success."

Meanwhile, Ms Luthra said customers in Bahrain had told her they wanted to see an increase in equipment and space at her facilities here.

"[The purpose of the visit was] feedback from customers and they want more equipment and space," she said.

"So we're looking at another space for a centre now.

"There was a little political unrest a few years ago, which stopped our expansion plans, otherwise we would've opened six centres by now."

VLCC International chief executive Prafull Dwivedi told the *GDN* that the new centre would likely be set up in Muharraq.

"In the GCC, we have 20 centres and we're still expanding," he said.

"We have plans to set up in Saudi this year. We opened the Bahrain branch in 2008 and we have about 15,000 clients.

"These are the ones who have taken the slimming and beauty packages - if I were to count the ones who come in for just one session or for the other services, that number would more than double."

VLCC is a health and wellness business launched in India in 1989, which now has more than 300 centres in 18 countries.

By NOOR ZAHRA

WAVING a gun around in a Manama hotel lobby has landed a Saudi man with a 12-month prison stretch.

The 53-year-old was sentenced in absentia by the High Criminal Court yesterday after he took out the firearm and threatened to kill staff at the four-star hotel in December last year.

According to court documents, he became enraged when he was informed of the room rates at the hotel.

After pointing a pistol at the heads of the Egyptian and Yemeni receptionists, he then casually walked out of the hotel lobby and drove off in his Lexus, according to witness testimony.

CCTV footage of the incident was shown in the court as evidence.

The defendant, who was previously released on bail, has been convicted of possessing an unlicensed weapon and ammunition, threatening unlawful violence and insulting the hotel employees.

In addition to his jail sentence, he will also be fined BD500 once he is arrested.

"The defendant was convicted of the charges due to his confession and evidence presented by prosecutors," read court verdict documents.

Warrant

"Surveillance footage showed him pointing the gun at the hotel staff.

"An arrest warrant has been issued."

The court earlier heard from the Yemeni receptionist, who described how he had only been working at the hotel for a week when the gunman appeared at 7.30am and threatened him and his colleagues.

They had "feared for their lives", the man said.

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Hotel lobby gun threat man jailed

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■ Students and staff at Bahrain Polytechnic took part in a training and consultancy workshop with industry expert Ahmed Janahi. As co-founder of Hera Consultancy and Events, Mr Janahi is known for introducing new training methods and delivered a talk on his 'Six Thinking Hats' technique, which involves simple, effective parallel thinking processes that help productivity. Above, from left, Bahrain Polytechnic commercial and community initiatives manager Leena Al Mannai presenting Mr Janahi with a token of appreciation after the workshop, alongside another official.