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The symbol of pride and hope



The Nobel Prize is given to those who contribute commendably towards welfare of the people, society and the nation as well as the world at large through their deeds. On 13 October, 2006 Professor Muhammad Yunus, the first Bangladeshi, has been awarded Nobel Peace Prize for establishing peace among the poor people of Bangladesh through his micro credit programme. Dr. Yunus established Grameen Bank in order to help the poor. His aim was to remove poverty. Grameen Bank extended assistance to the poor by giving loans and offering many ideas to solve their problems.

The poor people from remote villages are getting financial assistance by way of loan. Grameen tried its best to fulfil the dream of removing poverty through developing poultry farms, cultivating crops, pisciculture and carrying out other activities out of this loan. Dr. Yunus has really done a remarkable job. He knows the reality of life, he knows how to overcome the financial problem of the poor. He has changed the life style of poor people of Bangladesh by making them self-reliant.

It is really a very great achievement for him and for our nation. This icon has made our country proud.

Nafisul Huq
Eastern Housing Apartment
Siddeswari, Dhaka

The Japanese TV organised a few sessions on who might get the Nobel Peace Prize this year, who are the prospective candidates in Japan, etc. These motivate the young generation. The print media published news on the issue. But, unfortunately, nothing of the sort happened in our own country.

It is very important to gain a positive impression to other nations. Many congratulations to Prof. Yunus and Grameen Bank. I hope he will extend more help to the deprived poor who fail to return the loans due to bad luck.

M. Atiq
University of Dhaka

As one of nearly 14 crore Bangladeshis, I am very glad and would like to convey my warm and hearty CONGRATULATIONS to Prof. Yunus and Grameen Bank for the great honour and award of Nobel Peace Prize 2006.

Dr. Engr. Md. Jamshed Alam
Abu Dhabi, UAE

When there were only sighs of frustration everywhere, then came the news like a blitz: Dr. Yunus has won the Nobel Peace Prize. Thank you, Dr. Yunus for writing the name of our beloved country in the list of great achievements. We are extremely proud of you. I hope all the citizens of Bangladesh should start believing in themselves and

turn these moments into a time of rejuvenation, I congratulate you all.

Parvez Monon Ashraf
Dallas, Texas, USA

Usually, the world media gives coverage on Bangladesh whenever there is a negative event. But not this time. We are really happy.

Monzoor Morshed
Dallas, Texas

Dr. Yunus has been awarded Nobel Prize for peace. This is certainly a historic day for all our countrymen. This is a great honour for any Bangladeshi. Dr. Yunus has been instrumental in inspiring millions of people all around the world to make poverty a history. His indefatigable charisma coupled with his down-to-earth

approach to the economic problems have produced many results and brought benefits to many. His model of micro credit is replicated in many countries now. Our heartfelt felicitations go to him.

Amid all miseries, difficulties and political pandemonium that our country is going through, this news has brought a sigh of relief and gave us a hope for our nation and our people.

Yunus Sir, we thank you and extend our sincere gratitude to you for making our nation proud.

AM Mohiuddin
International University of Japan (IUJ)

I want to be the first man to congratulate the legend of Bangladesh-- Dr. Muhammad Yunus. Dr. Yunus won the world's most prestigious prize for his anti-poverty activities through his Grameen Bank. Dr. Yunus began his micro credit programme in 1976, with \$27 from his own pocket. At that time he was mocked by a few people. Thirty-five years on, the bank has 6.6 million bor-

rowers and of them 97% are women. According to an estimate of the World Bank, almost 10% poverty ridden people are coming out of poverty every year. The borrowers of the bank are too poor to have loans from the conventional banks in the conventional system, the bank gives loan without any collateral. In 2000, the former US first lady Hilary Clinton stated that, it is Yunus who advised Clinton to introduce micro credit programme in Arkansas State.

The prize is the recognition of his works.

Anis Rahman
University of Dhaka

I am studying Masters in Public Economic Management at Birmingham University for this session. On Friday, the 13th October/06, at 2:00pm our session on 'Macroeconomic Indicators' started with the teacher's announcement of the news of Professor Yunus' winning the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize for 'creating economic and social development from below'.

The whole class was cheered up by this great news. Our motherland and her poor but struggling people have been honoured in an uneven situation. I and my fellow Bangladeshi students expressed our heartfelt thanks to the teacher and the students of different countries. Students from other disciplines enthusiastically uttered the words like 'Bangladesh -- Prof Yunus -- Micro credit'.

It was a pleasant surprise to observe that most of the students particularly, those from Asia and Africa were more or less familiar with the micro credit programmes of Grameen Bank and many of them knew Dr. Yunus well. He

has made us all proud.

S. Barua
Birmingham University, UK

He has made the country and its citizens proud. He is a role model to the future generations and I strongly feel that this is a turning point for Bangladesh. Congratulations to Dr Yunus, but as he correctly said that the work is still not complete. There is a lot to be done and this great man deserves all the support that he can get. Dr. Yunus needs the support of the government as the government is the largest organisation operating in Bangladesh.

It is necessary for the government to support him with all that he needs as he is at this point of time our only light at the end of the tunnel.

Sheikh Tanjeb Islam
Monash University

The birth of Bangladesh as a sovereign country in the world map was the greatest achievement in the history of Bengalees. After independence, the

be careful that such recognition doesn't become an occasion for celebration only. We must turn it into a source of great inspiration for nation-building.

Ajmiry Ahmed, Goettingen, Germany

Prof. Yunus has made every Bangladeshi and anti-poverty campaigner - like myself - proud by winning this year's Nobel Peace Prize along with Grameen Bank. This is indeed the biggest achievement for our country since our independence in 1971 and restoring democracy in 1991.

It was high time Prof. Yunus received this great recognition for his inspirational work to alleviate poverty by introducing the micro credit system, which is followed in numerous developing countries globally and in some states in the USA. His achievement in lifting over 6 million people out of poverty and giving economic independence to rural women will be (or rather - has been) recognised and remembered for being one of the greatest achievements by any single person in our lifetime.

The fact that this year's Nobel Peace Prize went to an economist, evidently and rightly, proves the relation between poverty and peace. More people die of poverty and malnutrition than in war and therefore reducing poverty is the most effective way to create a peaceful society.

This is indeed one of the proudest days of Bangladesh. Every Bangladeshi should be proud of calling the "world's banker to the poor" as "one of us".

Congratulations, Dr. Yunus! Keep up the great work going.

Aranya Syed
University of London, London, UK

First and foremost, please kindly accept my congratulations for winning the "Nobel Peace Prize"-2006. Bangladesh as a country is relatively young, just three years senior to me. We have many problems: poverty; corruption; political instability et cetera, but we also do have the brightest and most visionary people in the world. Of course, not everyone is born a visionary, in fact very few people are. A country's success is based on pragmatic vision blended with patriotism and intellect. When a patriotic and visionary person can turn his intellectual vision into reality, he becomes a pragmatic LEADER. Dr. Yunus, you are such a person, you are our dearest LEADER.

Muhammad Mizanur Rahaman
Finland

May I take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Yunus for winning the most prestigious laurel in the world today - the Nobel Prize for Peace.

Indeed, this news is a ray of optimism for all of us, a rejuvenation from the darkness that seems to have submerged the country lately.

You truly deserved it, Sir! Your triumph is a torch of hope and direction for all of us who look up to you with respect and pride.

Mehtab Ghazi Rahman
St. Bartholomew's and the Royal London Medical School (QMUL)
University of London, United Kingdom

This is a great achievement but we must

Why should we vote?

A simple question to both the ruling and the opposition parties: please tell us why we should vote at all. Do you think we should vote so that you rise to your thrones of power and corruption and make our lives more miserable? Both of you might find it audacious that we dare to ask such a question, but believe me, we have reached a situation where we can take this no more. Our living condition is deteriorating and we need to know why we should trust you.

It is hilarious that you sit behind closed doors for a "dialogue" that would decide our fate and the fate of our children. How do we know that you are not discussing your respective "benefits" We trust you no more. I can guess what your answers would be. You will both threaten us about the grave situation that will arise if the "dialogue" failed. In fact, by saying that you are both confessing that you are very dangerous people. And we need to vote for some dangerous people to demonstrate our democratic responsibilities. What a fate for us!

In addition to close door "negotiations", both of you are holding rallies and public meetings; therefore, we would assume that you probably want our support. I use the word assume, because in most of your actions, it has been evident that you probably do not know who we are, nor do you care. We are the faceless, nameless "public". Well, let us also remind you that we are those small people who elect you and help you to attain your place of "fame" and "honour".

Reverting to my question, why should we vote? What exactly will you change for us? What are you planning to do with our lives and our children's? Do you have well thought out plans? If you have any plans that are for our benefit, explain them to us. Please tell us in concrete terms how you will take care of the corruption, price hike, power cuts, and all other problems that plague our lives. Do not just tell us "what" you plan to do but "how" you plan to do things and by "when" you plan to achieve them in short and long term. We have been hearing all kinds of flowery promises for so many years, it is time for results. In fact, neither of you have duly explained to us how you would like to work for the benefit of the "public" and how you plan to show the results. You talk about us as if you know our problems. You speak at us in public meetings with meaningless promises that evaporate in thin air. The problem is, as soon as you attain the stature of a "political leader" by whatever means, you think you know everything about what is beneficial for the public. You have not yet talked to us. It is time you started doing that.

You probably think we were too simple minded to understand intricate matters. Believe me, we would understand! We would understand because it affects our lives, and perhaps our lives only. When the law and order situation deteriorates, our children are unsafe. When there is no electricity, our children cannot study in the evening. When the costs of things increase, we have to cut down our consumption. When the education, medical services are unavailable, we suffer. We are not all dim-witted also. What we would want to know is whether you know how to do your job, which is to ensure our rights.

In such a state, people like me, who are living lives numbed and crippled with fear of tyranny, have nothing to do. However, if there is an election, why do we have to vote unless we are absolutely convinced it will bring real change? If we do not turn up to vote, there is every possibility that someone else will put a seal on a ballot paper in my place. Therefore, I think we should go to the polling booth and stamp on an edge of the ballot paper as a mark of our dissent. How worse can it become, we are living in hell anyway!

Christina Rozario
Development Activist
Niketon, Gulshan 1, Dhaka

Brac's success

I want to focus on the contribution of Brac in our socio-economic development. I was out of education when I was a child because of poverty and it was in 1993 when Brac established a school in Baliadanga village, under

Aboyanagar thana in Jessore district, which opened the door of education for me. Now I am a student of BBA programme in Dhaka University. In want to carry the message of Brac's success to other countries in the world.

Brac's comprehensive interventions are touching the lives of over 150 million people in Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka and I am proud to be one of them and want to express my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. FH Abed, the architect of Brac's success.

Md. Sahabuddin
University of Dhaka

Customer service at airports

I was pleasantly surprised by the overall service of the airport officials at Zia International Airport (ZIA) when I visited Dhaka last year. I must admit I was quiet apprehensive about the customer service at ZIA. Even though we hear horror stories of misbehaviour and mistreatment of passengers at the airport, I was impressed by the overall cleanliness and systematic handling of incoming and outgoing passengers.

I must add though that there is still a lot that can be done to improve the customer service and performance of immigration officials at our airports. I myself have experienced unnecessary harassment and questioning in the past at ZIA which just leaves a sour taste in your mouth.

Unfortunately, I have noticed a trend of rude and unhelpful attitude of airport personnel at airports worldwide. In France, Germany and the Middle East, and even at Heathrow Airport in London passengers are being treated with utmost disrespect every day.

I would say that they all of them need to go through an extensive 'customer service training' once they are hired and be somehow made accountable for the poor service they provide to the passengers that move through their airports.

Halimul Mannan
Monroe, Louisiana, USA

Parliamentary and electoral reform

As a scientist, I would like to propose a scientific and logical solution to the present debate on the election. Firstly, the voter list, as prepared by the Election Commission (EC), could be checked by a joint committee of the EC and a representative from each of the major political parties and corrected, if necessary, as far as possible. Ideally speaking, every voter should have an identity card, with photo (to be revised every five years). As this is not possible now, immediate actions should be initiated for obtaining birth certificate of all voters and their addresses should be registered with the EC and it will be the responsibility of the voters to inform the EC of any change of address. Secondly, the proposed committee should prepare some rules (they already exist but in some cases, revision may be necessary), which should be strictly obeyed. All parties contesting the election must accept, in writing, the election results prepared by the EC.

My second suggestion is that all Members of Parliament (MP) should constitute the government, which will need a drastic Constitutional Amendment. They will elect a President (not a Parliament Member) and a Speaker (An MP). The Prime Minister will be selected by the President from the party forming majority in the Parliament. The President will form the Cabinet, in consultation with the Prime Minister, from all political parties in proportion to their number in the Parliament and perhaps not more than 10% Technocrat Members (not MPs). The Cabinet will consult the Parliament on all major national issues. This will resolve the problem of the struggle now going on for power as all MPs will together form the Government and will be free to take part in the Parliamentary debate. No MP can be expelled from the party. The MPs should primarily address the problems of his/her constituency for solution by the minister concerned. There will thus be no Opposition Party and neglect of the constitu-

ency belonging to opposition.

Dr. Anwar Hossain

Bara Maghbazar, Dhaka

A letter to the health minister

I watch the health programme on BTV (apnar sasthanya) and each time I applaud you for the noble gesture. What makes the programme interesting is the patience and trouble you take to answer the questions. You are well versed and answer the questions like a pro (unlike most of the ministers who I would say follow the "Yes Minister", routine).

The latest topic was herbal medicines. Sir, this is one sector I believe, has a lot of potential but has not yet been steered in the right direction. I'm an allopathic doctor who had had the privilege of working at the Government Unani and Ayurvedic Degree College for long nine years. The students are eager and intelligent but they have a sort of frustration working inside them. They do not want to be called hakim or kabiraj, they want to be called doctors. This I felt was sad as the whole idea was to bring this branch of medicine forward and give it due respect and recognition. Many may not agree with me but I feel if you call them by these names (hakim and kabiraj) the first thing that comes to mind is that it's an alternative medicine. So people are aware of what kind of a practitioner they are going to, and side-by-side the existence of alternative medicine is aptly recognised. The other thing that I would like to mention is the quality of teachers (Unani and Ayurvedic) we have for these students. I feel for at least the next 5 years we need reputable teachers from abroad (India, China etc) to come and teach not only the students but the teachers as well. Sending the teachers abroad doesn't really help much. To adjust to the new environment and to grasp the subject matter takes time. They come back a little wiser but not enlightened. The syllabus that's followed also needs to be rectified. Even though allopathic doctors teach basic subjects, the students also have to go through basic subjects taught in the light of Unani and Ayurvedic which doesn't really make much sense, especially in the case of anatomy. Before I left we had somehow managed to get things changed a bit. Now it has been several years and I cannot give you the real picture. Unani and Ayurvedic medicines have been a part of the treatment procedure in our subcontinent for a long time. We need to uphold its prestige, make people aware of it, have faith in it and give it due respect. All this will be possible only if people like you take a personal interest and look into the curriculum and help strengthen the existing teaching staff, so that they can do justice to this branch of medicine, to the patients and above all to themselves.

Dr. Nazneen Anwar
Public health Specialist
Institute of Public Health
Mohakhali, Dhaka

Schools for street children

The report "Open air schools for street children" by Imrul Hasan published on August 2 drew my attention. Thank you Imrul Hassan for presenting such good news. Really, when street children should go to school, they collect rubbish and fulfill their hunger by eating garbage. But they have the right to be educated; they have the right to enjoy re-creation. Besides this, when I walk by the side of any road, I can notice the poor lifestyle of refugees on footpaths.

But nothing is being done to alleviate their sufferings.

Senjuti Shuvo Ahmed
North Hall, Dhaka College, Dhaka

Border tension



Unresolved border issues that result in frequent fierce skirmishes cause casualties to the innocent people living near the borders. In recent days, many border incidents took place in various parts of Bangladesh border with India. Asad Ali, a septuagenarian impoverished farmer, was wounded by the BSF when he was returning home after cultivating farmlands adjacent to the border. BSF fired targeting BDR personnel at Atgram under Zakigonj Upazila in Sylhet As a result, residents of at least 15 villages near Atgram, Biabail, Uttarkul and Amolshid frontier villages of the upazila were compelled to leave their houses and have yet to return to their respective homesteads. They fear that a skirmish might erupt at any moment as tension is prevailing between the two border security forces.

We, the common people, fail to understand why the BSF attacks us without any provocation.

Emdadul Amin Chowdhury
Subid Bazar, Sylhet