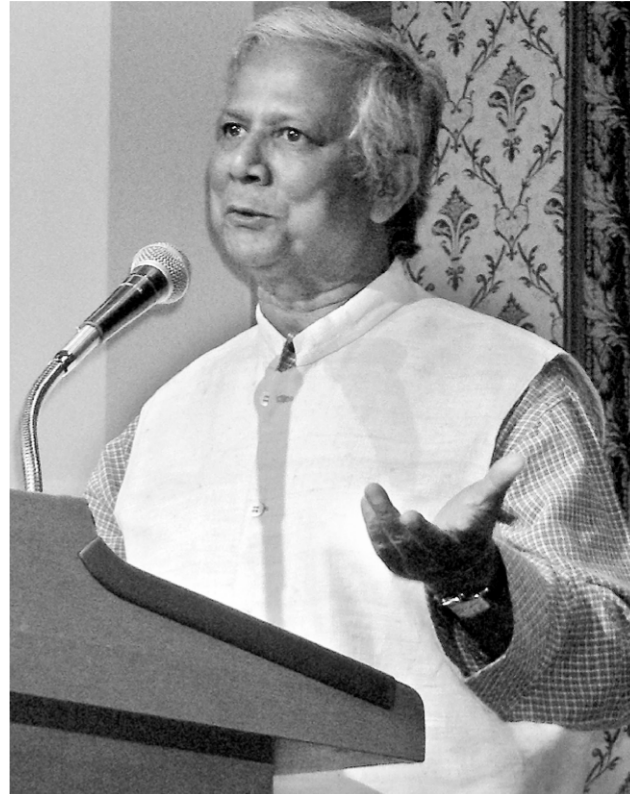


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

# The Nobel Prize and a nation in distress



to use the name of Grameen Bank at halfway stage so that the people might think that the Grameen Bank is busy with publicity only. Hearing this, the chairperson of the meeting commented that this was very normal for Dr. Yunus. He is a great man.

Our hats off to him.  
**Agovernment official, One-mail**

When I came to know about Dr. Yunus winning the Nobel Peace Prize, I immediately remembered Sheikh Mujib. Hearing the news, I became elated with joy, but at the same time depressed with sorrow and bitterness. Let me explain the reason a bit.

It was Sheikh Mujib who gave us identity, an independent country, it's Dr. Yunus who brought pride for Bangladeshis, both at home and abroad. I became overwhelmed with joy and pride because of his greatest achievement but remembering how badly we treated Sheikh Mujib I became depressed with sadness. We tend to be brutal to the people who bring pride and glory for the nation, the recent example of which is merciless beating of Commonwealth Gold medalist Asif. His achievement also raised the profile of our country, even if it was to a much lesser extent than the Nobel Prize. Our civil society is rejoicing over the achievement of Dr. Yunus, but I wonder why they didn't protest vehemently against the attack on Asif. **Kamal Tauseef, Canada**

It was around 7:25am I was driving my daughter to her High School when National Public Radio came on saying [I paraphrase]: "The Nobel Peace has been awarded to a Bangladeshi, Dr. Yunus and the Grameen Bank". I was screaming and almost bumped into the car in front of me, leaving my daughter in disbelief that her mother could lose control with the steering wheel in her hands.

When I reached work, all my friends at IBM were congratulating me, I felt like I was 10 feet tall. When I went home some of my neighbours came over and congratulated me. By his time they all read about micro credit and Dr. Yunus and his achievements. One of them mentioned how humble he was and that just by listening to him you could clearly understand what a great man he is.

Dr. Yunus, thanks for your vision, your relentless efforts, leadership and having faith in the helpless. You are our hero.  
**Shireen Ahmed**  
Software Engineer, Boston, USA

A nation's beauty is not only its sceneries and nature, but its people and their dreams. To bring forward such dreams into reality is a matter of pride. Only the rare take such responsibilities and step closer to humanity. A step for not just the welfare of a country, but the courage and capability to think far for each and every individual. They are not mere names listed down as righteous people, but never to be forgotten legends.

And today, we proudly name Dr. Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Prize winner for Peace, as one of those respected achievers.

Reading newspaper articles, going through the Internet, and watching the news in CNN and BBC, I myself look stunned at how it all turned to be real.

Dr. Muhammad Yunus, a man who took the first step to make his country rise all the way from below, is a man who not just should be praised, but followed. Thirty years after his struggle he got his place in everyone's heart. People are talking about him all around the globe. And what is the story in Bangladesh? Small children are asking their parents who Dr. Yunus is, teenagers are going about telling their friends about how great the man must be. Elders are reporting the news to everyone they can think of. Some saying, "Hey, it's the same university I attended!" And the elderly sigh with relief and say, "Now the name of Dr. Yunus will be uttered with 'Mother Teresa' and other legends. He has made our passion for the country rise to a flame again which shall glow in the darkness but not burn away."

When the world is flocking for advice and suggestion on poverty reduction model to Professor Yunus, our political leaders must have the wisdom, vision & statesmanship to propel our country into the next stage now by involving our home grown pride - Professor Yunus.

We have missed many opportunities as a nation and I urge our political leaders not to miss this one.  
**Shabbir A Chowdhury**  
Gulshan, Dhaka

A few months back, we were discussing the progress of Dhaka City Beautification programme in a meeting. Mr. Dipak Chandra Barua of Grameen Bank stated that they were planting trees in the places allocated for them. While they started working, some of them wanted to set the Grameen Bank's signboard at the working site. But Dr. Yunus did not allow them to use the name of Grameen Bank until the beautification work was complete i.e., he did not allow his people

Congratulations to Dr. Muhammad Yunus!  
**Rokeya Tasneem**  
Johns Hopkins University, USA

October 13, 2006. In the morning we opened the Internet to watch a cricket match, suddenly a headline news caught my eyes, it was the Nobel Peace Prize! I was delighted with receiving warm greetings from my colleagues.

In my humble opinion, it is high time we had a new set of political leaders as well as parties, since the major political parties while promising a makeover for the sake of the citizens with reforms and initiatives-lapse back and revert to their former (and current) selves as soon as they are elected, ignoring the promises they made to the masses to get elected. I am truly sick and tired of seeing the same two women dominating our boring and dull politics.

I personally think Dr. Yunus should form a new political party. With a background in commerce & finance, he can very well propel Bangladesh way up in the financial markets. So here is another big hand to Dr. Yunus for bringing fame to Bangladesh.

**Sumaiyah Afrin, Kuwait**

I would like to take the opportunity to warmly congratulate Dr. Muhammad Yunus on his winning the Nobel Peace Prize. Indeed, you gave us, the ill-fated Bangladeshi people, a rare moment of pride, joy and confidence. Given the turmoil in the recent years, such moments are hard to find. Dr. Yunus also mentioned recently that he was willing to participate in politics. I think it was a good call to make. We do need honest and capable people in our politics. Our leaders have proven themselves incapable of leading us to prosperity and peace. They have been self-absorbed, ignorant, dishonest and completely unconcerned about people's well being. Hence, it is time we made a change. Now, many people might think Dr. Yunus or people like him might lose their neutral image by entering politics. I, however, think this is precisely what the people of Bangladesh need and want. In recent elections, we have seen people switching from the major political parties into government so that they could make a difference. But it is the same old story.

This scenario will not change until capable and honest candidates get elected.

**Abdullah Al Muhit**  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

What began with a meagre \$ 27 personal loan to poor women has now become an international name in micro credit venture.

Prof. Yunus, the spirit behind the concept of Grameen Bank, has shown to the entire world that creativity is no monopoly of the West. There are people in the developing world who can also think big. It only requires a positive frame of mind, a resolve to do something good & different and an honesty of purpose to achieve what seems unachievable.

Dr. Yunus had all these qualities appropriately amalgamated in his personality and that is why he was able to achieve what many still dream to. Three cheers to this wonder professor from Bangladesh. He surely has brought glory to his country and his countrymen should be proud of him. In my opinion, he should be considered for the highest civil award of his country if not accorded already.

**Faiz Al-Najdi, On e-mail**

Dr. Yunus & Grameen Bank's Nobel Prize winning is a victory for them, for Bangladesh & for the women of Bangladesh.

This proves that we can make a difference and Bengalees still have that creativity.  
**Sitangshu Guha, NY**

Dear Dr. Muhammad Yunus, Sir, I would like

to raise two questions. The first one should be very easy for you to answer. As an innovative banker, you must know the answer by heart. But it is the second question which I would like you to think about and act upon, because that is where we need your help desperately. The long-term viability of our nation depends on it.

So here is my first question: It is widely reported in US media that the Grameen Bank has a default rate of only three percent. In Bangladesh, if you offer loan to predominately uneducated, rural women then ninety seven percent of times the money is repaid. Now, if you extend loans to a group of university educated men and women, how many of them will, you think, pay you back?

If the answer is not 97 percent, as is the case with those rural women, then, here is my second question: What type of transformation does occur in our education system, so that the majority of the educated people no longer remain trustworthy?

Of course, the university educated loan takers would take different type of risks and would involve themselves in different type of entrepreneurial ventures and their failure rate could be higher. You should be able to isolate those genuine failures quite easily.

**Anwarul Islam, Michigan, USA**

What you have achieved is great for all Bangladeshis. You have made us proud. But this has increased your duties and responsibilities manifold. You now have to talk out loud against anything and everything that we ordinary people are afraid to talk about. Nobody else has the ability or power to protest the mismanagement going on throughout the country.

You talk loud, we are behind you!  
**Rashed Hasan, On e-mail**

When the political situation of our country was pushing us to the darkness of despair, the news of Professor Yunus and his Grameen Bank being awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize was like a shaft of light which illuminated everything and made us extremely happy and proud. His endeavour made it possible and we are grateful to him for bringing this honour for Bangladesh.

Being a Chittagonian myself, I am doubly delighted and want to say a few words in the dialect of Chittagong. "Ara khub khushi hoi, khushi rakhabar jaiga nai."

**Nur Jahan, On e-mail**

On 13 October 2006 I enthusiastically visited one of my favourite persons. Many times I heard about him from my parents and my youngest uncle. I have learnt from them that he is a very famous person not only in Bangladesh but also in the world. And now this time he made all of us proud by winning the most prestigious award in the world, that is, the Nobel Prize. Although I met him some days back, I could not prevent myself from visiting him again. This time I was emotionally choked to greet the great hero of Bangladesh. At 4:30pm we started from Dhanmondi by our Voxy and reached there at 4:45pm. My eyes were captivated to the Grameen Bank office, the green trees and the home of Dr. Yunus. All these things are good looking. The environment is very calm and perhaps pollution free. When we reached the place, we saw many

people already there to greet him and to interview him.

When I approached him, he was giving interview to the journalists. On seeing me he threw a million dollar smile and said, "How do you feel today?" Presenting a bouquet of flowers, I replied "Great".

**Ms. Rakibul Islam, Sunnydale School Dhanmondi, Dhaka**

At this hour of hapless leadership and hopelessness demonstrated by the elected representatives of our country, it is a common citizen of Bangladesh who has brought the highest acclaim for our country since its independence.

Prof Yunus' innovative endeavour in the field of economics has led to a silent revolution in our eternal fight against poverty and is gradually bringing about a change in social order which will eventually lead to the greater development of our country.

I salute him for taking up and slowly winning a fight which everyone else thought was lost.

**Shafiq. Z. Khan, Dhaka**

It was really exciting to know that a Bangladeshi scholar became a Noble laureate. Soon after the news in BBC that Dr. Yunus and Grameen Bank of Bangladesh were awarded Nobel Peace Prize, 2006, I started to get congratulations from my fellow students and teachers. Even some of the senior faculty members passed on their good wishes in person, particularly those who knew that I had worked with Dr. Yunus at Grameen.

**Ms Mamunur Rahman**  
Institute of Development Studies (IDS)  
University of Sussex, UK

It is indeed a matter of great national pride and achievement that Dr. Yunus has received the Nobel Peace Prize this year. I congratulate Dr. Yunus and his institution for this achievement. This is the best thing that could happen in Bangladesh since independence. It also gives us an enormous confidence about our ability to work and achieve, and should be a great impetus for our young generation. But I feel sorry to note that some people at the government level are trying to claim share of the award and thereby making this national prestige controversial.

The government machineries have the necessary platform to work equally, if not at a higher level, with the Grameen Bank like the Krishi Bank and can launch a number of poverty alleviation programmes through various ministries. I would invite the government to use these machineries to fight the Monga in northern Bangladesh to start with.

**Dr. K. Maudood Elahi**  
Professor, Dept. of Environmental Science  
Stamford University Bangladesh  
Dhaka

I must say the cartoon on the front page of your 23 October issue was fantastic. When all citizens are still rejoicing at the international honour and recognition Professor Yunus has brought to our country by winning the Nobel Prize, Mr. Saifur was out to discredit our national hero. It's disgusting.

I wonder what can the country expect from people like him who do not have the magnanimity to recognise, value and appreciate

talent & competence. I think Professor Yunus' only mistake was in stating that if necessary he would form a political party to lead our country which has unnerved the political power mongers as they feel that power is the natural birth right of our two honourable women and their followers, while the rest of the countrymen should act and behave as their obedient servants.

Move on, Professor Yunus, the silent majority of the country is behind you.  
**S.A. Chowdhury, Sylhet**

In the phone-in programme of the BBC Bengali service, we heard two different views regarding Nobel laureate Professor Yunus' prospect of joining in politics at home. Without going into any detailed analysis, one would request him not to venture into party politics.

The country is seriously suffering from the poverty of moral standards. Prof. Yunus could make more significant and fundamental contribution in organising a neutral and respected civil society which enjoys the confidence of the people.

**A reader, USA**

I'm a Bangladeshi living abroad for studies. Like me many Bangladeshis living in England we are highly delighted and overwhelmed by the news that Prof. Yunus and Grameen Bank have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. We feel honoured. It's really a huge recognition for our nation. Prof. Yunus is our hero, our pride, and our identity. Please convey my heartfelt congratulations to Prof Yunus and every member of Grameen Bank whose relentless efforts over the years have put this organisation at global level. Journalists, academicians, researchers, ordinary people and financial executives are now keen to know about the Yunus model. We are marching forward!

**Ashad, On e-mail**

What now is the most popular story of Bangladesh, will be history one day and we can perceive from here that how much the future generation of us will be glad and feel honoured with that history as we are now. Undoubtedly, it is a matter of great honour to be part of a great story of grand success. One of our citizens is now a Nobel laureate, who has made the world know Bangladesh anew as a country of tremendous possibility. Prof. Yunus, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, 2006, has not only won the most prestigious award of the world but also offered the whole Bangladesh an occasion to celebrate.

**Ms. Maidul Islam**  
University of Dhaka

Recognising that poor people in small villages in Bangladesh, and in fact throughout the world, had no access to the capital that would enable them to earn an honest living, Prof Yunus dedicated his life to rectifying the situation. In 1983, nearly six years after his first loan, he founded Grameen Bank, an 'upside-down' bank that lends to the poorest rural villagers, enabling them to start small businesses to support their families.

As a result, today he has earned the most prestigious award in the world. It was actually long overdue for him. Interestingly, he has earned the award at a time when Bangladesh, along with many other Muslim countries is presented to the international community as a

There are many countries around the globe that are, unfortunately, under foreign occupation. People in those countries have no social life, no prospect of a bright future they don't even know if they will be alive in the next five minutes! Bangladesh, on the other hand, is a free, independent country. Yet at the moment we are witnessing a war in our country. Our people are just as scared to go out as the people of Iraq or Afghanistan. Our children's education will be disrupted, foreign investors will leave us, properties will be destroyed and the country's economy will make losses of billions of dollars. We are also very worried about all those innocent bystanders who will be

killed in this war. But who is this war for? Certainly not for us or for our country. Just look at some of the pledges of AL and BNP. Harital and student politics are killing our country. Yet there is no mention of ending harital or student politics. Hundreds of AL/BNP "fronts" (criminal organisations) are terrorising our people, yet there is no mention of dissolving them. And despite having so much corruption, the AL/BNP made no efforts, not even superficial efforts, to end their corrupt practices. And they don't even want to talk about reforming their dynastic, dictatorial parties. So who is this election, this voter list, the caretaker government, this war, etc., for? Not for us.

During the last five years, millions of people have sent innumerable requests to Hasina to join the parliament and play a constructive role. She never listened. Yet when the AL lawmakers' parliamentary membership was about to expire (which would have resulted in loss of some very handsome wages and lots of perks), Hasina and her party men were more than happy to attend the parliament! Similarly, we have all been requesting Hasina and Khaleda to make some concessions and come to a positive conclusion at the end of their so-called dialogue. Sadly, neither of them listened. But don't you think this dialogue would have been successful if Hasina/Khaleda knew

that they would be punished if their dialogue failed? The thing is, both of these ladies know that they are untouchable in Bangladesh. They can do whatever they feel like and they will never be held accountable. And that is precisely the reason why we have a war in our country, even though we are not at war with any country!

This poor country will not be able to take three long months of violence, murder, vandalism, total shutdown and political anarchy. We didn't fight for this country so that Mujib and Zia families can use it as their family business and personal battlefield.

**Azad Miah**  
Oldham, UK



# Our country, their war