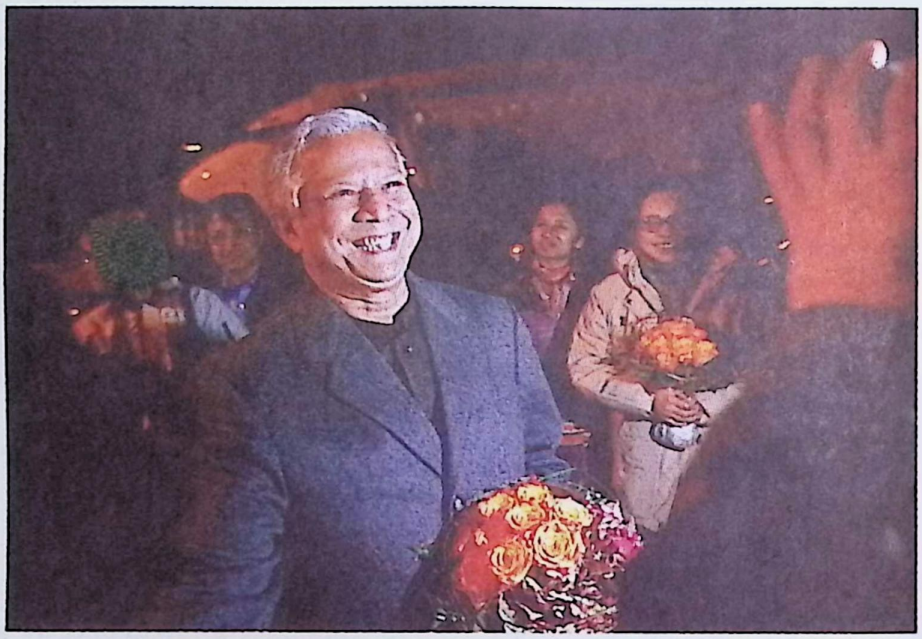
Meeting the Nobel Laureate

AZIZUL JALIL

EVER so modest, Dr Yunus quickly agreed to give me some of his precious time for a one on one meeting on January 25, 2007 at his Grameen Bank office. We had last met during a reception in his honour on November, 2006 in Washington after he won the Nobel Prize. With all the messages pouring in from across the world from kings, presidents and prime ministers at the time, I was amazed when he mentioned that he had time to read my article in the Star Magazine "Euphoria in Bethesda" concerning our feelings and private celebration in Washington about the Nobel Peace award , 2007. He had graciously asked me to see him when I visit Dhaka next.



I had similarly met him in the Grameen Bank in 1991 soon after the general elections and reintroduction of democracy in Bangladesh. It was in a six storey brick building and when I entered his office, I saw a small room with a wooden table, a few straight backed wooden chairs and a black board. There was no curtain in the room and I doubt if there was a peon sitting outside the office. Even though he and his work on micro credit was known by that time all over the world, he had a simple unassuming manner and great, practical ideas for the betterment of the people. I had gone to learn about the Grameen Bank activities and he patiently gave me all the time I needed to quench my thirst. I came back inspired and full of confidence in the common man's enterprise to improve his own lot and his trustworthiness. Following that experience and with the encouragement of Dr Yunus, my son, Asif came on leave from his work in Washington and spent a month as an intern at the Grameen Bank. Asif still talks about that experience, particularly the two days he spent in a village called Saturia near Dhaka in a field level office of the Bank.

Since then, the Grameen office complex has grown much bigger, with an 18 floor tower behind the old office building. The area is green with young trees all around and lot of flowers. The office of Dr Yunus on the fourth floor is now much

> Given peace and in the absence of man-made impediments, Bangladeshi people, as they have already shown in the last fifteen years, would continue to demonstrate their initiative and enterprise in every field and forge ahead.