

larger and nicer with modern furniture and equipment. He is a busy man with streams of visitors from the Grameen enterprises and other visitors from home and abroad. However, he remains the simple and unassuming man that he was when I met him sixteen years ago.

This time, the 2007 general elections have been postponed and the country remains uncertain of the future. Though I was paying a courtesy call on him, I did wish to generally discuss the current situation in Bangladesh, his future development programmes in the country and my idea of a possible international effort led by him, in collaboration with other eminent international personages, for prevention of conflict and maintenance of peace in the world.

During about a forty minute discussion he was as candid, direct and forceful in the articulation of his views as one can be. He was untouched and undaunted by any high honour or the limitations that it often imposes on the recipient. He said he remained a man of Bangladesh and felt that it was his duty to express opinions as he thought fit.

About the Bangladesh situation, he was for continued peace and stability. Free and fair elections should bring about a practice of politics and democracy consistent with peoples' aspirations for their own development and progress. 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. Progress of the people must not be jeopardised for selfish personal or party aggrandisement.

To my question about raising the people not only from abject poverty through micro credit, but to a higher level of income, health and education, Dr Yunus felt that people's enterprise has been let loose and they themselves, given the environment and the facility, as has already been witnessed in the traditional as well as non-traditional agriculture and other sectors, would aspire and achieve better quality of life and existence. It is neither necessary nor possible for him to take all the initiatives. The country has ample talent and organisations-they should and would come forward with newer and innovative ideas.

He did mention his recent initiatives in establishing a large number of Shakti Dai (yogurt) factories in collaboration with Dannone of France for the betterment of the rural young. A number of eye hospitals will also be coming up. These enterprises are examples of what Dr. Yunus calls 'social businesses'. These would be profit making but both the enterprise and its profits would be for social good of a large number of people and not for only money making by a few entrepreneurs.

In view of some of Dr Yunus' recent statements on war and peace in the world, I ventured to suggest to him to take up the cause of peace in the world and prevention of periodic conflagrations. I requested him to consider joining hands with other Nobel Peace awardees like Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela and President Carter in an effort to create an international awareness for and peoples' movement to ensure world peace. He did not directly respond to the suggestion but seemed interested in the idea.

I came back with a good feeling about the Nobel laureate's uncompromising stand for the advancement of the common people of Bangladesh. I feel confident that Bangladesh and the world will further benefit from the work and wisdom of Dr Yunus, our pride. ■