

NORWEGIAN CONSTITUTION DAY

17th May



The Norwegian Royal Family

MESSAGE FROM THE AMBASSADOR



It gives me great pleasure and honour to address the people of Bangladesh on the occasion of the Norwegian Constitution Day, 17th of May.

We want to celebrate the 17th of May 2006 in the spirit of the great Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen. He died on the 23rd of May 1906 and thus 2006 marks the 100 years anniversary of his death.

I have noted with great interest and satisfaction that Henrik Ibsen is very well known in Bangladesh, and I am proud to see the extensive commemoration programme that is being organized in many parts of Bangladesh. As Ambassador of Norway to Bangladesh I see the Ibsen year as a unique opportunity to show Bangladesh the best of Norwegian culture, and maybe more important: The Ibsen Commemoration gives the Bangladeshi the opportunity to show the Norwegians their perception of Ibsen and his works. And what I have seen, have truly impressed me and opened my eyes to new and different interpretations of his plays.

We should also not forget the influence Henrik Ibsen had on the great Bengali Rabindranath Tagore, who contrary to Ibsen won the Nobel Prize for literature (in 1913).

BANGLADESHI-NORWEGIAN RELATIONS

The features of Bangladesh and Norway are different, but there are also similarities:

Both countries are young as independent nations, but both have long and rich history and traditions. Both countries see the importance of international co-operation through the United Nations, seen in the fact that both Bangladesh and Norway are among the main contributors to the UN Peace Keeping Forces.

Norway was among the first to recognize Bangladesh, and after the independence these two countries have been co-operating as development partners. Our main areas of co-operation are good governance, human rights, education and private sector. These are vital areas for a sound and democratic development in any country, and we believe that through our co-operation we can make an impact in Bangladesh.



17th May children's parade in Oslo

CHILDREN

The children represent hope and the future as well in Norway as in Bangladesh. To secure the right and the access to education for all is therefore fundamental. Bangladesh has made a lot of progress in this area, and I am happy that Norway can contribute to the further improvements, both in quality and quantity, in the educational sector.

The important role of children is manifest in our celebration of the 17th of May. It is rightly called the Children's Day as it is the children's parade most Norwegians have come to associate with the Constitution Day. No matter how small a town or a village, the children will parade. And in the capital, Oslo, all schools will walk the main street of the city up to the Royal Palace where the Royal Family will greet them.

It was Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, a contemporary of Ibsen, who organized the first children's 17th of May Parade in Oslo in 1870. Bjørnson is also the author of our national anthem, but it was another great Norwegian poet that had inspired him to organize a children's parade; namely Henrik Wergeland, who had written an anthem to the children of Norway:

"We, too, are a nation- even we who are only two feet tall!"

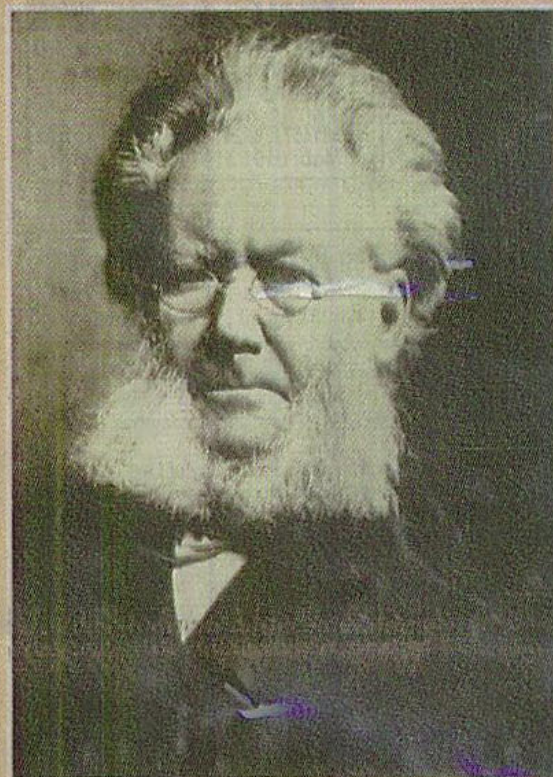
Every 17th of May is special. Last year we marked Norway's 100 years as an independent nation. This year we observe the 100 years anniversary for our great playwright Henrik Ibsen. Norwegians all over the world will celebrate the 17th of May as our Constitution Day, and it is a pleasure for me to invite all Bangladeshis to join us in the celebration of our Constitution Day and of the anniversary of Henrik Ibsen.

Aud Lise Norheim
Ambassador
Royal Norwegian Embassy
Dhaka, Bangladesh

IBSEN COMMEMORATION 2006, BANGLADESH

The Ibsen Commemoration 2006 in Bangladesh is part of a worldwide celebration initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo, to mark the 100th death anniversary of famous Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. This international commemoration includes more than four thousand performances in 72 countries. The Royal Norwegian Embassy has been assisted by Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and Centre for Asian Theatre in organizing and co-ordinating the extensive commemoration programme in Bangladesh.

It has indeed been impressive to observe the great number and large variety of Ibsen performances, seminars and activities in Bangladesh 2006, starting off with the screening of Erik Skjoldbjærg's 'An Enemy of the People', a modern film version of



Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906)

Henrik Ibsen's classic stage play with the same title, during the 9th Dhaka International Film Festival in January. In the course of the first few months of the year, several universities in Bangladesh have proved their great knowledge and deep devotion to Henrik Ibsen. In January, Theatre Institute Chittagong in co-operation with University of Chittagong staged 'Wilful Death', a play based on Henrik Ibsen's famous drama 'Rosmersholm'. Khulna University followed with their performance of 'Ganashatru', an adaptation of 'An Enemy of the People'. Next in line were Rajshahi University and Jahangir Nagar University with performances of 'John Gabriel Borkman' and 'Shakhi Vhalobasha Kare Koy' (based on Ibsen's 'Love's Comedy') respectively. Finally, two departments of the University of Dhaka; Department of Theatre and Music and Department of English, have staged 'The Lady from the Sea' and 'A Doll's House'.

Even though Ibsen's literature is more than a hundred years old, innovative approaches to his works will entertain the Bangladeshi audience this year. In this regard it is relevant to mention the play 'Resurrection' written and directed by Secretary General and Artistic Director of Center for Asian Theatre, Mr. Kamaluddin Nilu, a musical with impressive and innovative stage effects based on Ibsen's life and works. Furthermore, open-air performances of 'The Lady from the Sea' in Dhaka and of 'An Enemy of the People' in Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat and Dinajpur with local artists have been organized in a highly impressive way by Space and Acting Research Centre Bangladesh and Advancing Public Interest Trust, Dhaka. A locally produced art exhibition named Images of Ibsen's Life and Plays is a pioneer work that involves more than thirty Bangladeshi artists, and a series of in-depth articles on various aspects of Ibsen and his work has been published in New Age starting already from last year. And last but not least, three book publications in Bangla need to be mentioned here. Two by Professor Selina Hossain: 'Ibsener Natok O Kobita' on Ibsen's Plays and Poetry and 'Ibsener Natok Nari' on female characters in Ibsen's plays. The third one is 'Ibsener Kobita' a collection of Ibsen's poems translated to Bangla from English by Anisur Rahman.

However, the International Ibsen Conference and Theatre Festival in Dhaka 11 - 20 May, organized by Centre for Asian Theatre, comprises the most comprehensive programme, featuring Ibsen experts among others from Bangladesh, Japan and Norway, and theatre groups from Bangladesh, India, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan and Taiwan. In addition to seminars and stage productions by Bangladeshi and foreign groups, a touring exhibition from Norway as well as a local art exhibition, film shows including a documentary 'Ibsen in Bangladesh' produced jointly by Mahbuba Begum Hena and Faridur Rahman, AveCue Ltd., and an Ibsen Award ceremony, are on the agenda.

Looking at all the enthusiasm and hard work that have been demonstrated so abundantly in all the activities mentioned above, the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Dhaka, would like to take this opportunity to extend its gratitude to each and everyone who has contributed in making the Ibsen Commemoration 2006 in Bangladesh such a great success.

THE RELEVANCE OF HENRIK IBSEN - 100 years after

Norseman brother, let thy song soar wending
fairly on the fell;
wing thy freedom-lust aloft ascending
where the dusk-lights dwell!
Let thy joyful anthem there be mated
in memorial's choir
honouring those who through past perils dire
thy dear freehold rights have liberated.

But, besides, a pious vow should louder
with thy lay combine:
promise to extend and make yet prouder
thy memorial-line-
promise strong to stand, like staked defences,
for thy legacy-
watch it well with spirit's lucid eye,
firmly fend it from thy foes' offences.

Yes, your deeds shall honour this your owing,
tell the tidings North,
that the glorious seed of foretime's growing
fresh on fell bursts forth!
Hail, then, Norway's noble spring-convention!
In its freedom see
not a gaudy, rootless Maytree,
but a sturdy spruce of great intention!



Henrik Ibsen's childhood home in Norway

This "Song for 17th May" was written by Henrik Ibsen in 1858. And nothing seems more appropriate for the celebration of 17th of May 2006 than this poem of Ibsen, as 2006 marks the 100 years' anniversary of his death. An anniversary that is commemorated all over the world, Bangladesh included.

Henrik Ibsen is probably the most famous Norwegian in the world of all times. Second only to Shakespeare, his plays are the most frequently performed on the world stage. One of the main reasons for Ibsen being renowned around the globe even 100 years after his death, is that his work stands out as not being confined to any specific country or specific political and historical tradition. Henrik Ibsen writes about individual freedom, personal and public morality, equality and freedom of expression, political power and corruption, and in his plays he deals with the interface between the local and the global. All these are issues that are relevant in all parts and cultures of today's world. Ibsen is among the first playwrights to put women's rights on the agenda: A Doll's House was written and first performed in 1879, and is still among his most frequently played and best known plays - also in Bangladesh.

Through his writing Henrik Ibsen wanted to "awaken his fellow countrymen and inspire them to think about bigger issues". This statement also has its relevance today, not only for the Norwegians, but for most of the world's population. Ibsen wants us to look beyond our own borders and he wants us to question and not to accept what is considered to be a universal truth.

