



## NORWEGIAN CONSTITUTION DAY

17th May



The Norwegian Royal Family

### MESSAGE FROM THE AMBASSADOR

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to address the people of Bangladesh on the occasion of the Norwegian Constitution Day, 17th of May. Last year was a special year in the relation between



Bangladesh and Norway. First, we commemorated the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen with an extensive programme here in Bangladesh.

Then, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Grameen Bank and Prof. Muhammad Yunus. It has been heartening to observe the joy and pride over the prize expressed by Bangladeshis from all

walks of life, whether living in this country or abroad. Norway was equally proud and happy to be the host of the Nobel Peace Prize. The award to Prof. Yunus has increased the interest for Bangladesh all over Norway, where people are eager to learn more about the culture and people of this country.

It is my sincere hope that the Peace Prize will strengthen Bangladesh and its people in its progress towards development and new opportunities for all people.

This year, we are celebrating the 17th of May 2007 in the spirit of one of the finest Norwegian artists, the composer Edvard Grieg, who died on 4th September 1907, thus commemorating the centenary of his death. Edvard Grieg was an artist whose music, words and ideas are still relevant today. He remains one of

Norway's most important ambassadors, and continues to open doors both in Norway and abroad. An important aim of the Grieg anniversary is to generate renewed interest in the composer's work. Various exhibitions, concerts and seminars will be held in Norway and elsewhere to present Grieg's works and ideas to both old and new audiences. In this regard, we have invited two Norwegian artists to perform in Dhaka this month.

### BANGLADESH AND NORWAY- 35 YEARS OF COOPERATION

Norway was among the first countries to recognize Bangladesh's independence, on 14 April 1972. Thus, 14 April 2007, the same day as Bangladesh celebrated the Bengali New Year 1414, marked 35 years of cooperation between our two countries. For 35 years we have cooperated as partners in many areas, multilaterally as well as bilaterally. The importance of international co-operation through the United Nations is seen by both countries, and both Bangladesh and Norway are among the main contributors to the UN peace keeping forces. Both countries are young as independent nations, but have long and rich history and cultural traditions. During Norway's pre-independence period, many



Norwegian authors and musicians contributed immensely to shaping Norway's identity and strive for peace and independence. Bangladeshi authors and

musicians may also have played a similar role for Bangladesh.

Norway early established a development cooperation programme in Bangladesh. At present, the cooperation includes the areas of governance and human rights - with particular emphasis on

women's rights - education and private sector development. Partnerships between higher education and research institutions are established, and many Bangladeshi nationals have studied in Norway. Cultural cooperation and exchange visits are equally important, and we hope to see more of this in the years to come.

Although Bangladesh, through its impressive social and economic development, have become increasingly independent of foreign assistance, I believe that cooperation with other

countries reinforces a sound and democratic development in any country. The partnership between Bangladesh and Norway is a trusted one, and I am confident that it will continue to play an important role in the years to come.

### CHILDREN, OUR FUTURE AND HOPE

The children represent hope and future in Norway as well as in Bangladesh. The right and access to education is therefore fundamental. Bangladesh has made substantial progress in this regard, and I am happy that Norway is contributing further to this through support to both the government and non-governmental organizations.

The important role of children is manifest in our celebration of the 17th May. It is rightly often called the Children's Day. No matter how small a town or village, children make parades on this day.

In the capital of Oslo, all schools will walk the main street of the city, passing the Royal Palace where the Royal Family will greet them.

It was the writer, and author of our national



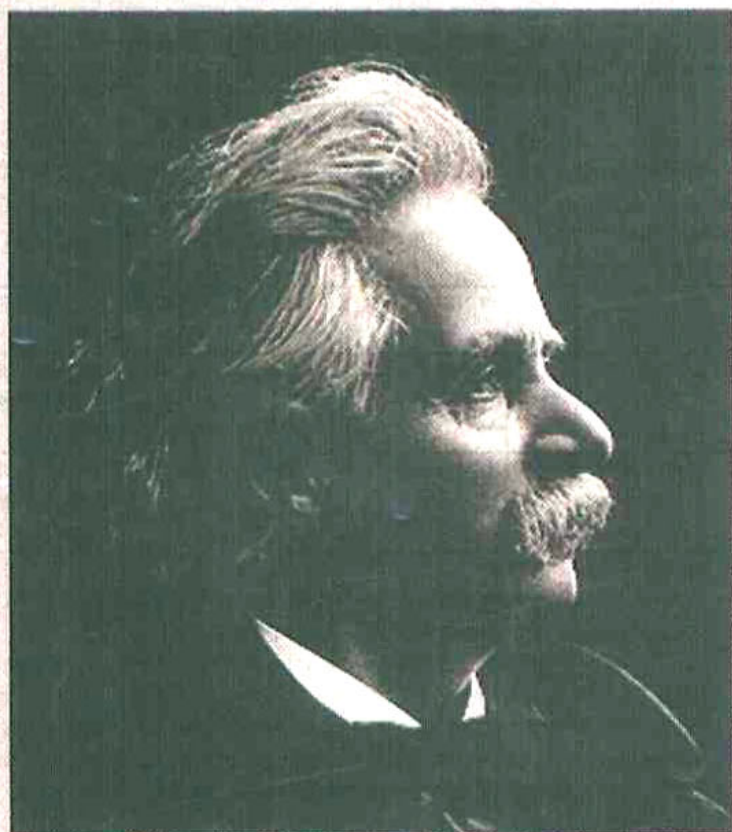
anthem, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, a contemporary of Ibsen and Grieg, who organised the first children's parade in Oslo in 1870. He was inspired by another Norwegian poet, Henrik Wergeland, who had written a special anthem to the children of Norway.

"We, we may be only two feet tall - but we are also a nation!"

Today, Norwegians all over the world will celebrate the 17th of May, our Constitution Day. It is a pleasure for me to celebrate the day here in Bangladesh.

Ingebjørg Støfring

Ingebjørg Støfring  
Ambassador of Norway to Bangladesh



## EDVARD GRIEG

1843 - 1907

In 2007 we commemorate the Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg, one of Norway's finest musicians of all times.

Edvard Grieg was born in Bergen on 15 June 1843. Although small in stature, he had a great artistic heart that beat for justice, truth and solidarity. He was a strong defender of freedom, democracy, justice and rule of law, both in his attitude and his actions. He maintained that artists play a key role in the fight against discrimination and exclusion.

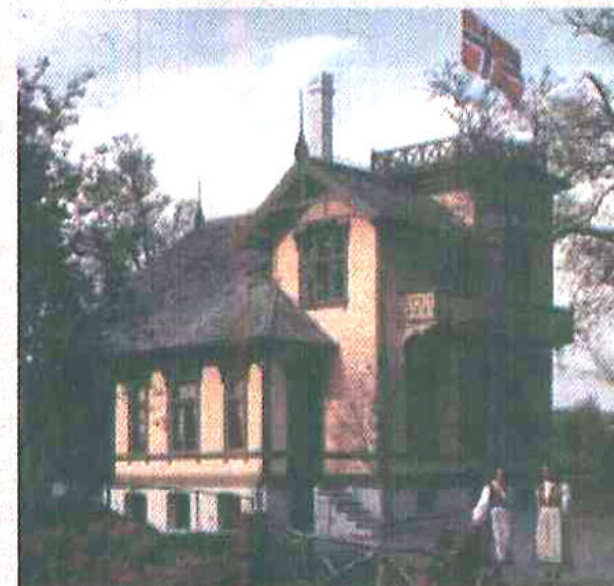
Grieg strongly believed in the importance of music in society. He held free concerts for Laborers and the poor on several occasions. He claimed that there was no upper or lower class

in art, and that art could therefore have a educating effect on society.

Like many composers of his time, Grieg took an interest in collecting sounds he heard in nature and in folk music. This was an expression of a process of national awakening and identity-building. Birdsong,

waterfalls, rain and mountains all found a place in his compositions, and listeners are given a genuine experience of nature through his music.

Grieg was a close friend of the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, and composed music to one of Ibsen's plays, Peer Gynt.



Edvard Grieg's house

**A spirit held high for 193 years**  
Congratulating all the Norwegians on their Constitution Day

