Ramendu Majumder
Making it All Happen

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Ramendu Majumder is one of the pioneering theatre personalities of the neo-theatre movement, which generated after our Liberation War. He is also a great organiser and knows how to make things happen. Under his leadership Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation, a common platform of theatre troupes in Bangladesh, was formed. Later, he initiated to open the Bangladesh Centre of International Theatre Institute in Bangladesh. Over two decades Ramendu Majumder has successfully led ITI, holding several high posts. As recognition of his leadership Majumder has been elected as the president of the International Theatre Institute (ITI) Worldwide Committee.

Majumder is the second Asian to hold the helm position of ITI, an international non-governmental organisation (NGO). ITI was founded in Prague in 1948 by UNESCO and the international theatre community. ITI aims to promote international exchange of knowledge and practice in performing art forms (drama, dance, music) in order to consolidate peace and solidarity between people.

Ramendu Majumder has been elected the president at the 32nd ITI World Congress that was held in Madrid, Spain, last September. He will serve as the president of ITI for the next two years. Prior to becoming the president, Majumder had held the Vice President's post of the institute on three occasions. He has been the Vice-President post of the Institute on three occasions. He is also the current president of Bangladesh Centre of International Theatre Institute (BCITI).

On the reason behind the success an enthusiastic Ramendu Majumder tells The Daily Star, "It's because of the wonderful performance of BCITI and my personal activities as well. When the immediately passed president proposed my name for the next president every member of the 20-member executive committee supported it. I really enjoyed it when theatre activists in Bangladesh who congratulated me, claimed that it was *their* success."

In fact, Majumder's personal interest motivated him to form the BCITI in 1982 and he was the founder general secretary of the organisation. Professor Kabir Chowdhury was the founder president. Subsequently, Ramendu Majumder became the president and Ataur Rahman was elected as the general secretary of BCITI. This duo is still leading the centre and successfully introduced Bangladeshi contemporary theatre amongst the foreign audience using the platform of ITI.

Many ITI delegates including the former presidents and general secretaries visited Bangladesh several times and watched Bangladeshi theatre performances during the executive council meeting held in Dhaka. Everyone appreciated the current trend of Bangladeshi theatre practice and labelled it as a 'theatre of passion' since professionalism has not yet been introduced in Bangladesh.

"BCITI is considered as one of the five most active centres in the world", says Majumder. "It has successfully created a positive image of Bangladeshi contemporary theatre abroad. Moreover, the centre has published World of Theatre, an annual report of theatre activities of the world in English and French, eight times from Bangladesh."

"In fact the strength of the centre especially its publication amazed the other ITI delegates. So far, World of Theatre has been published only 10 times. It's to be mentioned that our centre has published it eight times." he adds.

On Ramnedu's interest for ITI activities theatre personality Ataur Rahman, general secretary of BCITI, says, "He has played an active role to develop theatre activities in several Asian countries such as Nepal and UAE. Ramendu becoming the president is recognition of his great leadership quality. As a theatre leader he is popular internationally."

But many challenges are ahead for Majumder being president at a time when Unesco has decreased logistical support for ITI. The organisation is now facing a fund crisis to initiate it's regular programmes as well as new programmes. Most of ITI activities are Europe-centric. And most of the mainstream theatre activists in the world are not directly involved with ITI.

"Unesco does not give us any support except allowing us to use the office at the Unesco head quarters in Paris. Even the rich countries do not donate as much as they use to do at the earlier stage. The alarming thing is that of the 95 centres of ITI only about 40 centres pay their membership fees regularly", he adds.