



National Day of Switzerland

The Daily Star

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

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Message from the Embassy of Switzerland

SWITZERLAND celebrates its National Day on 1 August. On this special occasion, I wish to extend my warm greetings to our Bangladeshi friends and to my fellow Swiss citizens living in this beautiful country. As the world is struggling with the COVID-19 crisis, the Eid festival and the Swiss National Day give us a well-needed break and time to reflect and appreciate what is important!

To all of you who want to join us in celebrating our national day safely from home, we encourage you to visit our online meeting place specially designed for the occasion. Here, you can explore many Swiss do-it-yourself activities or even improve your yodelling skills: visit www.missionelagosto.org

Switzerland is not all about watches, cheese, chocolate and mountains. Diversity, solidarity, innovation and entrepreneurship, rule of law, strong institutions and federalism are at the core of what my country stands for. These values and aspirations also create the foundation of our strong commitment for multilateralism and our candidacy for a seat at the UN Security Council in 2023-2024.

Switzerland is proud to have enjoyed robust and forward-looking relations with Bangladesh for almost five decades. Our relations are rooted in solidarity, partnership and a common vision of prosperity and sustainable development. We have nurtured and grown close collaboration in many areas including economic and international cooperation, humanitarian aid, as well as cultural and political exchanges. I am confident that our two countries will continue to explore new avenues

of cooperation, particularly on trade and investment and the Sustainable Development Goals. We will also continue to mutually benefit from sharing experiences on good governance and the promotion of human rights. It is my goal to further strengthen the ties between our two nations.

We are in an unprecedented crisis. The whole world is greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and related challenges. Both our countries have stood by each other as friends in difficult times. To contribute to the fight against COVID-19 in Bangladesh, Switzerland has earmarked over 70 crore BDT and is working in close partnership with government agencies, national and international organizations, the private sector and the civil society. Many Swiss companies are also contributing with donations as well as innovative technologies and services.

To my fellow Swiss citizens living in Bangladesh, our Embassy stands ready to continue helping you in this challenging time. Please visit our website for further information.

I arrived in Dhaka in May, as the COVID-19 crisis took hold, to take up my new function at the helm of the Swiss Embassy. Unfortunately, I have not yet had the opportunity to explore the country. I am therefore very much looking forward to getting to know and experiencing first-hand the land and the people of Bangladesh.

I hope you will enjoy reading this special supplement. I wish you, your family and your friends all the best in these trying times. Let's celebrate Eid and the Swiss National Day by staying strong together, healthy and safe!



Nathalie Chuard
Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh

Switzerland stands by Bangladesh during COVID-19

AS nations and people around the globe struggle with COVID-19, Switzerland partners in solidarity with Bangladesh to overcome this unprecedented crisis. Switzerland has so far earmarked over 8 Million Swiss Francs, or 70 Crore BDT, for immediate response activities, which are implemented through local and international partner organizations in close collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh. Our action, which consists of more than 20 projects, is designed to benefit vulnerable communities, reach out to remote areas and support organizations and institutions working at the frontline of the fight against the pandemic.

People living in hard-to-reach areas often do not have adequate access to services even under normal circumstances. With two floating hospitals, the NGO "Friendship" provides critical COVID-19 protection and healthcare to the far-flung Northern Char region in Bangladesh. Switzerland supports Friendship to expand its services with additional 1'500 volunteers and paramedics, prepare isolation centres and distribute PPEs among health workers. The project also includes the establishment of walk-in testing booths as well as the distribution of vitamins and food packages to 9'000 people.

In the Cox's Bazar area, Switzerland assists the Rohingya refugees and host communities through a number of interventions. The Swiss Red Cross (SRC) is scaling up the capacity of primary health centres for about 200'000 refugees in the camps. The support also goes towards the construction of isolation facilities and treatment of COVID-19 patients in the camps and the host communities.

Switzerland has also joined a UNICEF-led action to bolster the



A simple but innovative washing station at Para Centre in Chittagong.

PHOTO: UNICEF

Government with its COVID-19 response in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene sector. This will directly benefit at least 23 million people and reduce their risk-exposure by securing uninterrupted water supply and creating improved public water and handwashing facilities. Providing better access to sanitation is particularly important for women and children. The project also includes a public awareness campaign on WHO-recommended prevention measures, reaching 84 million people through religious leaders, social media platforms and community radios.

The ultra-poor and vulnerable population, including indigenous

people, sex workers and other marginalized communities, bear the brunt of the economic fallout of COVID-19. Switzerland supports the relief organization HEKS/EPER with providing emergency food, hygiene and livelihood assistance to around 10'000 families of vulnerable communities in different parts of the country. Similar to other Swiss-sponsored initiatives, this project is designed to smoothly transition from immediate emergency relief to rehabilitation and longer-term development activities.

Local government institutions are at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic. Switzerland teamed

up with Denmark and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support the Local Government Division of Bangladesh. Under this partnership, the Efficient and Accountable Local Government (EALG) project reaches out to 500'000 people from 9 districts, by raising awareness, distributing protective equipment and installing handwashing facilities.

These are just some of the efforts that the government and civil society are undertaking now in collaboration with Switzerland and the broader international community. Together and in solidarity, we will overcome this crisis.



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HAPPY SWISS NATIONAL DAY



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