



# SWISS NATIONAL DAY

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## MESSAGE

**A**LTHOUGH I came to Bangladesh only in mid-May this year and am still in the process of getting the basic idea about the country, as Charge d'Affaires of Switzerland to Bangladesh it is undoubtedly a privilege for me to be able to address the readers of this newspaper on the occasion of the Swiss National Day. On this very auspicious occasion, I greet all the Bangladeshi people and all the Swiss nationals residing in Bangladesh.

Switzerland has always been considering Bangladesh to be a close and friendly nation. In the coming years I shall do my best to give my personal contribution to further enhance this friendship.

I look forward to having a nice working and personal relationship with the people of Bangladesh during my stay in this country.



Jürg Casserini  
Chargé d'Affaires a.l. of Switzerland

Switzerland, one of the oldest democracies in the world, and Bangladesh, still a young nation, have had a very close relationship ever since the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state. Switzerland actively participates in the development of the Bangladeshi economy through cooperation and investments. Bangladesh is one of the priority countries where Switzerland concentrates its long-term development efforts. Bilateral political and economic relations have always been good between the two countries and

## Swiss cooperation in Bangladesh

Swiss assistance to Bangladesh started immediately after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. In 1976, the two governments signed a framework agreement on technical cooperation. In 1981, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) opened an office in Dhaka with the purpose of ensuring close co-ordination and follow-up of the programmes it was involved in. On several occasions following major disasters SDC provided substantial humanitarian aid to Bangladesh.

Originally, the accent was put on a contribution to food security as well as on the promotion of small-scale and cottage industries. Support was also provided in the construction of rural infrastructures and the provision of safe drinking water integrated with social mobilisation and the promotion of sanitation. A major effort was concentrated on the development, demonstration and market introduction of appropriate

hand pumps and hygienic latrines.

The frame of SDC's cooperation is reflected in its Country Programme for 2003-2007. Following Bangladesh's PRSP it seeks to achieve an effective and sustainable poverty reduction in partnership with other stakeholders. The programme also foresees actions to strengthen local governance.

### SDC's programme in Bangladesh

Until 2001, SDC has spent about 400 million Swiss Francs in Bangladesh. It is planned that disbursements will remain as in the past few years within the range of 20 million Swiss Francs per year, subject to a satisfactory evolution of the programmes.

SDC started its activities in Bangladesh in the early seventies, mainly providing humanitarian aid and technical assistance. Over the years, it widened its scope of work, trying to promote good governance, democracy, human rights and gender equity, transparency and accountability.

### Areas of work

The objective of Non Formal Education (NFE) is to provide education for those for whom formal school-based education has not been possible. These people also have a right to get education. Through NFE, SDC offers them their required education.

NFE works to create an environment for the young child to learn how to lead a life with dignity and to gain basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as other essential life skills. It also provides further educational facilities for poor people to earn money, to improve family wel-

fare and to get involved in shaping decisions which affect their lives on their own terms.

Through Micro and Small Enterprise Promotion (MSEP), SDC in Bangladesh wants to increase the opportunities of employment and earning for the poor people. It helps the poor people to develop small businesses through small loans. MSEP also assists these small businesses to get access to markets and to improve their quality of work. These small businesses create job and income opportunities for the poor.

The Sustainable Land Use (SLU) programme of SDC aims at improving the quality of life of poor farmers. It helps these poor farmers to increase their agro-forestry and vegetable production through improved land use practices and through improvement in production of seeds and saplings. The SLU programme also helps poor farmers in the processing and marketing of their harvested crops, and provides earning facilities for landless people.

The objective of the Local Governance (GOV) programme is to support and encourage active involvement of local people, especially of women, in the local decision making process which affects their lives on their own terms. This involvement of local people contributes to local development and improves effectiveness of governmental bodies.

Human and Institutional Development (HID) is present in all the works of SDC. This is a process that puts the human beings and the way they organise themselves at the centre of all development works. Through

HID, SDC seeks to build up the skills and knowledge of people and the organisations and institutions they belong to. It enables them to take advantage of the opportunities that are available and thus influence the environment they live in.

SDC in Arsenic Mitigation: Arsenic in groundwater is simply termed as a silent killer. Undetectable in its early stages, arsenic poisoning may take between 8 to 14 years to have an impact on health. Underscoring the extent of the problem, the

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has given priority towards arsenic mitigation and therefore decided to address the problem by re-programming its already existing Water and Sanitation Partnership Project (WPP).

## Switzerland at a glance



Official Name: Swiss Confederation  
Capital: Bern  
Area: 41,290 square km  
Population: A little over 7 million  
National Day: 1<sup>st</sup> August (Swiss National Day)  
Currency: Swiss Franc

Switzerland is situated in the mountainous central region of the European continent. For centuries it has been an area of settlement and a transit route for trade between the Mediterranean and the northern Europe, and thus trade and cultural links with other regions have been a part of Swiss life since the earliest of time.

Even though the country has no natural resources (mineral resources and the limited possibility of large-scale agricultural exploitation) and no seaboard, it has a highly developed economy with one of the highest Gross Domestic Product in Europe. Switzerland is one of the most free-market oriented states. This position in the world is clearly reflected in the make-up of Swiss trade relations.

Switzerland has had a tradition of peaceful diplomatic relations with other countries ever since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This tradition was

expanded and defined more precisely in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Switzerland's political and diplomatic commitment in the world community is expressed in its membership in numerous international organisations.

Switzerland is officially known as the "Swiss Confederation". Its political organisation is characterised by a high decentralisation and is based on three levels: the Commune, the Canton and the Confederation. German, French and Italian cultures all coexist within its borders and four different languages are spoken: German by almost 72%, French by 20%, Italian by 8% and Romansh by 0.6%.

Today, Switzerland's founding principles are neutrality, universality, solidarity, and availability.

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## Switzerland says Yes to the United Nations

Switzerland is to become the 190<sup>th</sup> member of the United Nations.

On 3 March 2002, 54.6% of voters decided in favour of membership.

**A**LTHOUGH Switzerland has been a member of several specialised United Nations humanitarian and technical agencies since the creation of the organisation in 1945 and plays an active role in other international bodies such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), its policy of neutrality had kept it back for years from becoming a full member of the UN. The last attempt of the Swiss government to join the organisation was beaten off by the Swiss electorate in 1986.

But on 3 March this year, the Swiss voters took a major step towards ending their political isolation by approving a referendum to join the United Nations. Official figures showed that after a cliff-hanger vote, the "Yes" camp won the double majority required under the Swiss system of direct democracy: 54.6 per cent of the Swiss

voters backed the proposal, which also won the support of a slender majority of 12 of the country's 23 full cantons. Switzerland, as a result, will officially join the UN during the next General Assembly to be held in September 2002.

The Swiss government emphasised that its entry into the UN body does not mean the renunciation of Switzerland's neutrality status, making it clear that the maintaining of neutrality will be stipulated in its application for membership.

Switzerland will practice a policy of moderation within the UN and concentrate on traditional areas such as development aid, promotion of peace, protection of the environment and human rights. On motions to impose economic sanctions, Bern will follow the majority; and when it comes to military sanctions, Switzerland will abstain.



## Switzerland and Austria Joint candidates for the EURO Cup 2008

**T**OGETHER with Austria, Switzerland has offered its candidature to jointly host the United European Football Association (UEFA) EURO Cup 2008. The joint Austro-Swiss bid is running in high gear. The fascinating idea of presenting the best European football players in front of their own doors has triggered enthusiasm in the two Alpine countries.

The governments of both countries are fully behind the candidature and are supporting it financially. The governments' decisions are seen as a way of closing ranks with the bid committee and correspond to the widespread approval that has been accorded by the two countries' population.

In the framework of EURO 2008, the schedule for the Austro-Swiss candidature plans for having 16 matches played in Austria and 15 in Switzerland.

A trump card for the Austro-Swiss candidature for EURO 2008 lies in its stadium. From Vienna to Geneva, the UEFA family will be able to benefit from highly modern arenas which are either newly built or have been set to the latest standards. In the domain of comfort and security, new standards will be established, taking as examples the St. Jakob-Park, in Basle, Switzerland, and the Ernst-Happel-Stadium in Vienna, Austria.

In Switzerland, with the opening in March 2001 of the St. Jakob-Park a new epoch has begun for the Swiss Football Association (SFV), opening the doors to a new generation of state-of-the-art and multifunctional stadiums. In Bern and Geneva new arenas are being built, and in the biggest city of Switzerland, Zurich, the architectural bid for the new stadium has just come to an end.



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