



# Swiss National Day

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## MESSAGE



Bangladesh by establishing diplomatic relations soon after its independence in 1971. Over the last 35 years, relations and exchanges have developed in the field of development cooperation, trade, investment and culture.

These two geographically distant countries have a lot of differences in terms of geography, culture, economy. But at the same time there are similarities, mutual interests and linkages, on the basis of which our relations and friendship have strengthened. In the some of articles provided here, you will find specific features of the economy, political system and culture of Switzerland and where we have similar developments and mutual interests and also where we have different attributes.

Peace promotion, democracy and human rights, poverty reduction and sustainable use of natural resources are the pillars of Switzerland's foreign policy. In this context, Switzerland has continued its development cooperation efforts in Bangladesh for a long time. Economic and trade relations between the two countries are expanding each year, mutually benefiting in complementary sectors, such as garments and textiles. Cultural exchanges are taking place frequently, bringing people of the two countries closer.

I wish to continue working towards further strengthening the ties between the two countries. In this special year of 35 years of friendship, I hope that our relations will continue to grow, bringing mutual benefits to the people of both countries.

**Dr. Dora Rapold**  
Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh

## Power sharing and direct democracy in Switzerland

**S**WITZERLAND is a federal republic with a three-level political structure - the federal government, cantons and communes. The fundamental principles of the confederation's political system are power sharing, proportional representation and regional autonomy, which help to ensure peaceful co-existence of different groups while upholding the rights of minorities. In the Swiss system of direct democracy, the ultimate power lies in the hands of the people. The Federal Government

The duties of the federal government are strictly defined and laid down in the constitution. In many areas the federal government simply legislates and supervises, leaving it to the cantons to carry out the legislation.

The Federal Council, Switzerland's government, has 7 members or councilors (ministers) who are from different regions and from four major political parties. Each year one member of the Federal Council is appointed President of the Confederation, based on a system of rotation. The Federal Council carries out its tasks through consensus decision-

making. It prepares new legislation, submits legislative bills to the Parliament and enacts the ordinances that implement new laws in detail.

**The Cantons**  
Switzerland is made up of 26 autonomous cantons. The Swiss constitution was designed to balance as fairly as possible the interests of the state as a whole with the interests of the individual cantons. The cantons, as federal states enjoy a high degree of freedom in their political decisions and administrative autonomy. Each canton has its own constitution and laws. On

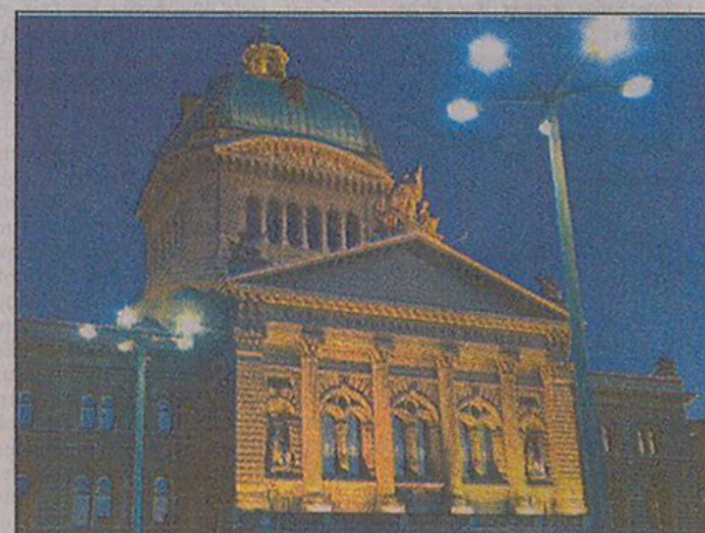
many cases, the cantonal and communal laws follow the broad outlines of federal legislation, yet still allow for particular local needs. **The communes:** The smallest political division

The cantons are divided into communes. All Swiss are first and foremost citizens of a commune. It is from this status that they automatically derive citizenship of a canton and of the country as a whole. The communes, like the cantons, have their own elected administrative authorities. For some local issues they take autonomous decisions; in other cases they carry out decisions of the canton or the confederation. The areas for which they are responsible include security, education, health and transport affairs. They also register births, marriages and deaths, and collect federal, cantonal and local taxes. The details vary from canton to canton.

**The Parliament**  
The Swiss Parliament represents both the cantons as well as the people. The Parliament is made up of two chambers of equal standing: the 'National Council' and the 'Council of States'.

The 'National Council' is made up of 200 representatives of the People. A proportional voting system is used for the National Council, which means the number of parliamentary seats granted to political parties is in direct proportion to the number of votes each party gets as a whole.

The 'Council of States' is made up of 46 representatives of the cantons. Each canton has 2 seats. The election of the members of the Council is the responsibility of the cantons. Regional interests are guaranteed at the central level irrespective of population size of



Federal Parliament Building, Bern

each canton. Canton Uri with a population of 35,000 has the same 'voice' as canton Zurich (population 1.3 million people).

Members of the parliament are not full time politicians, but also have another occupation, from where they earn their income. This 'Militia' characteristic of the Swiss Parliament is rooted in the understanding that serving the state is a citizen's duty. The parliament convenes for four three-week sessions every year and decides on a wide variety of business. **Direct Democracy and the Citizens**

As in all democratic countries, in

Switzerland, the citizens elect representatives to act on their behalf. But Switzerland gives its citizens the chance to take a direct part in decision-making as well. Swiss citizens can both propose legislation of their own, or thwart legislation already approved by parliament.

There are two different ways to consult the people, depending on the nature of the issue: the popular initiative, and the referendum. In the popular initiative, any Swiss citizen has the right to propose new legislation by launching an initiative - although normally initiatives

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Swiss National Day celebrations at Ruetliwiese, Birthplace of Switzerland, Canton Uri

## Swiss machinery: A success story

**I**NHABITED by about 7 million people, Switzerland ranks among the small countries of the world. Small though it is, Switzerland holds an impressive 8th position among the machinery-exporting countries, the position being even more eminent in certain specific sectors, such as textile machinery

industry. Thus mechanical and electrical engineering products account for 41% of total Swiss exports (2005), and the engineering industry exports more than two thirds of its total output. In some sectors, such as textile and graphic machinery, up to 95% and more of total production are sold abroad. For example, textile

machineries have carved a niche in the Bangladesh market. Exports to Bangladesh are increasing each year (see table). Other major sectors with high export ratios are precision instruments, machine tools, pumps and compressors, oil hydraulics and pneumatics, food processing and packaging machines, power generation and

electrical equipment. In 2005, the Swiss engineering industry's exports totaled 49 billion US\$, of which 66% went to the European, 15% to Asian and 11% to North American markets.

**The success story**  
The industry's 2,500 companies featuring small subcontracting firms as well as large multinational organizations employ about 53% of all industrial workers in Switzerland, a majority of them in small and medium-sized private enterprises. Certainly, the highly qualified and motivated workforce plays a vital part in the Swiss success story. Also, Switzerland is a politically stable democracy with a good working climate and hardly any strikes. But a key element in explaining the global success of our industry lies in the deep commitment to research & development (R&D) activities, because keeping abreast with state-of-the-art technology is vital. Continuous technological progress and the international competitiveness of industry hinge on training, research and development. Thus the mechanical and electrical engineering industries accounted with US\$ 27214 million for 35% of all private-sector expenditure in Switzerland alone on R&D in 2004. R&D outlay in Switzerland and abroad amounted to US\$ 77774 million.

Still, a major drawback had to be compensated for: The lack of raw materials and the small home market taught the Swiss the need to survive from the work of their own hands. Mass produced goods, asking for large quantities of imported raw material and a huge number of buyers, could neither be manufactured nor sold in a country with a small population. Moreover, mass production would not compete against the output coming from larger countries. The Swiss therefore adopted another strategy. They specialized in producing high-quality and sophisticated goods which found acceptance and appreciation in the whole world. Doing business abroad, co-operating with foreign governments, companies or even individuals is a long lived tradition in Switzerland. Comparatively new is the tendency to get closer to markets and customers by establishing plants and affiliated companies in various countries.

Contact between customers and suppliers becomes even easier nowadays: The Internet Homepage of Swissmem (an association of machinery industries) contains broad information about the Swiss

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Heartiest  
Felicitations and Best Wishes  
on the Occasion of

Swiss National Day

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Nestlé Bangladesh Limited wishes  
all the best on the occasion of  
Swiss National Day

Nestlé, a name which epitomizes quality food, nutrition and well-being, has been successfully serving the people of Bangladesh through Nestlé Bangladesh Limited, a fully owned subsidiary of Nestlé S.A. of Switzerland. Nestlé started its manufacturing in Bangladesh in 1994 and today Nestlé Bangladesh is a well-established company catering to the specific needs of Bangladeshi consumers.

On the occasion of Swiss National Day, Nestlé proudly reiterates its commitment towards Bangladeshi consumers and the development of the economy.



Good Food, Good Life