



# National Day of Switzerland

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## MESSAGE

**O**n the occasion of the Swiss National Day, I extend my warmest greetings and best wishes to fellow Swiss citizens living here and the people of Bangladesh.

Swiss National Day commemorates an event that took place 704 years ago. The day was chosen because August 1st 1291 was the date on which three Alpine cantons swore the oath of confederation, an act which later came to be regarded as the foundation of Switzerland. The representatives of 3 cantons (Schwyz, Unterwalden and Uri) met on the Rütli field, high above Lake Lucerne, to swear a bond of brotherhood, and agreed to act jointly if their freedoms were threatened by outside aggressors.

When an increasing number of cantons joined the confederation and peace among them was threatened by wars in Europe, neutrality was adopted as a principle of foreign policy to protect peace and unity between the cantons. Neutrality serves to preserve Switzerland's independence and the invulnerability of its national territory. In parallel, Switzerland undertakes not to take part in wars between other states. In principle, neutrality is not an obstacle to membership of international organizations such as the United Nations (UN). Formation of UN Human Rights Council in 2006 stems from a Swiss initiative.

As Switzerland's Ambassador to Bangladesh since June 2005, I take this opportunity to look at the present state of our bilateral relations. Right from the beginning, our relations have been based on mutual respect and cooperation and have developed in a range of areas.

Since 36 years Switzerland has provided develop-

ment assistance in key sectors of rural development in Bangladesh. For the first couple of decades development cooperation has been the main area of bilateral relations. I am very pleased that in June of this year the Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation (SDC) has confirmed its continued commitment for development assistance to Bangladesh for another 5 years (2008-2012) with a focus on employment and income generation for the poor and poorest and local governance, in line with Bangladesh's PRSP.

Over the last two decades, the economic relations between Switzerland and Bangladesh have become an important pillar in our bilateral relations. Switzerland is a country with no virtually mineral resources. This has forced us to find development options and to develop competitive sectors and niches. The lack of natural resources has been compensated by innovations, know-how and quality.

In 2006, Switzerland was ranked number one in The Global Competitiveness Report out of 125 countries. Swiss economy is characterized by its sound institutional environment, excellent infrastructure, efficient markets and high levels of technological innovation. Our economy is dependent on foreign trade, which represents a very high proportion of GDP. Since 1960, the share of exports in GDP has grown from 25 to around 44%. In this context, trade and investment is an important area in our bilateral relations. Bangladesh has made significant strides in the economic sectors. Our bilateral trade has increased steadily over the last years. The two-way trade exceeded a total of 200 million Swiss francs in 2006 and is balanced. The largest Swiss multinational companies have investments in Bangladesh in important sectors like pharmaceuticals, food, cement and technical services. In addition, over 100 Swiss companies are represented in Bangladesh by themselves or by agents. Furthermore, to foster bilateral trade and investment between the two countries, Switzerland-Bangladesh Business Forum (SBBF) was formed in 2004. Currently SBBF has 32 members. I am pleased to say that a Double Taxation agreement between Bangladesh and Switzerland is expected to be signed soon. It will contribute to favourable conditions for Swiss investments into Bangladesh.

Switzerland and Bangladesh always have had excellent relations based on mutual understanding and trust. It is my endeavour and honour to contribute to the continuation and strengthening of such good cooperation between our two countries.

Once again, I convey my sincere and warm regards to the friendly people of Bangladesh.

Dr. Dora Rapold

Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh

## The watch industry in Switzerland

**I**n the conquest of space or major sporting events, where time has to be measured to the millisecond, Swiss watches and chronometers will regularly be found at the forefront. The impeccable reputation of Swiss products in this sector has been founded on a high degree of inventiveness and long-standing sense of high quality workmanship. It was Huguenot refugees at the end of 16th century whose technical expertise instigated the development of watch-making in Switzerland. Geneva was the home of the first guild of watchmakers at the beginning of the 17th century and the industry finally extended right along the Jura chain from Geneva to Schaffhausen. 1845 saw the arrival of the first machines capable of producing identical parts, thus creating the concept of mass production and turning craftsmanship into industry in one fell swoop. Thanks to mechanization, the Swiss left their competitors behind, and for more than a century dominated the world market.

In 2003, 40,000 workers employed in the industry produced 24.6 million finished watches. Of these exported, for a total value of CHF 10.2 billion, more than half were mechanical. In terms of numbers, however, quartz watches predominated, accounting for more than 90 percent. The 'Swiss-made' label is based both on high quality of the products and on continuous improvements to the components, as well as after-sales service. Almost all the major pioneering developments in watchmaking have come from Switzerland, which has become a synonym for timing. As early as 1921 the Swiss Laboratory of Horological Research was set up, followed by the Centre for Electronic Horology in 1962 and the Swiss Centre for Electronics and Microtechnology SA, in Neuchâtel, in 1983. The latter concentrated on research into the possibilities of miniaturization (microelectronics) and, in addition in 1987 it produced the world's first quartz watch. Another important element is the world's only body certifying chronometers the highly accurate time-keepers used especially in sports.

thickness of just 0.98mm. Despite all these pioneering achievements, Japanese and other Asian manufacturers managed to outdistance Switzerland with their cheap quartz watches. Along with the recession that hit the country's economy in the mid '70s this upheaval brought the whole Swiss



watch industry to the brink of ruin. The number of jobs shrank dramatically. A quartz watch is in fact made up of far fewer components than a mechanical watch, and assembly is often automated.

The turning point came only when the two largest watchmaking groups, which had fallen into financial difficulties, merged in one 1993 to form what is now the Swatch Group. Swatch, a plastic watch which has become a fashion accessory and cult object thanks to ingenious advertising efforts, brought the industry high-volume sales again.

For a few years now mechanical watches, which have no battery, have enjoyed a comeback. Watches in the top ranges, in particular, are often fitted with a mechanical movement and their sales are very little affected by fluctuations in the economy. Here, and even more markedly so with richly-jeweled prestige watches which have a wide array of functions and can cost up to several million francs, the Swiss manufacturers supply almost the entire world market.

## How Swiss chocolate conquered the world

**M**ENTION Switzerland abroad, and the person you're talking to may start dreaming of mouth-watering chocolate. If there is one thing that represents Switzerland in the eyes of the world, it must be chocolate. Yet at first there was nothing to suggest that Swiss chocolatiers were destined to tread a special path. Thanks to the matchless quality of their products, inventive curiosity and groundbreaking innovations, they honed the manufacture of chocolate to perfection. Today



chocolate "made in Switzerland" dominates foreign markets, and export volumes have risen sharply since 2003.

The first cocoa bean was brought to Europe from South America in the 16th Century, but it took two hundred years before the first chocolate bar was produced. The delicacy first conquered Europe's royal households in the form of a drink mixed with honey and herbs. It was then discovered by confectioners, who used it in their creations. In the 18th Century, Italy became a centre of confectionery and chocolate-making, drawing practitioners from around Europe. Many chocolatiers from Switzerland had learnt their trade in Turin, Milan and Venice. Their know-how flowed back to Switzerland's chocolate pioneers, who gradually began opening the first factories and eventually turned Switzerland into the Number One chocolate nation by the early 20th Century.

One of these pioneers was François-Louis Cailler (1796-1852) from Vevey. He learned this craft in Turin. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 23**

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

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

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