



National Day of SWITZERLAND

Ambassador's Message



low unemployment rate, highly skilled human resources and a per capita GDP larger than that of many other developed economies. It boasts a thriving art scene and a vibrant society. The culture of Switzerland is characterised by its high level of diversity. Switzerland is in a unique situation sharing three major languages of Europe. The Swiss themselves are sometimes puzzled about what they have in common, apart from their passport, what it really is that makes them Swiss. The Swiss say they are held together by the desire and will to stay united.

ON the occasion of the National Day of Switzerland, I would like to convey warm and sincere greetings of the Government of Switzerland to the Government and the people of Bangladesh. I also take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt felicitations to the Swiss nationals residing in Bangladesh.

The event that the Swiss National day commemorates took place almost 720 years ago. According to this legend, on this very day, the cantons (administrative units) of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden rejected the Habsburg oppressors and the representatives of the three cantons met on the meadow of Rütli, high above Lake Lucerne, to swear the oath of confederation, and agreed to act together if their freedom were endangered by outside aggressors. The resulting treaty is still in existence and is regarded as the foundation paper of the Swiss confederation.

Modern day Switzerland is a thriving and stable economy with

Our relation with Bangladesh is based on the five main goals of Swiss foreign policy - promotion of peace and prevention of conflicts; development of human rights and democracy; safeguarding Swiss economic interests abroad; alleviation of poverty in the world; preservation of natural resources. As the Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh, I take this opportunity to look at the present state of our bilateral relations.

Right from the beginning, mutual respect and cooperation were the foundation of this relation. Switzerland was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with Bangladesh after its war of liberation in 1971. Ever since, we have continuously endeavoured to provide assistance in key sectors of poverty alleviation and rural development in Bangladesh.

Despite a modest trade turnover, the economic cooperation between our two countries has immense potential. Switzerland-Bangladesh bilateral trade has witnessed a steady

growth over the last few years. The bilateral trade volume in 2009 amounted to CHF 212 million. Bangladesh's export to Switzerland has surged to CHF 139.1 million in 2009 from CHF 125 million in 2008. This trend is supported by a number of economic agreements. The Double Taxation Agreement between our two countries entered into force in December 2009. In our view this agreement will provide a practical impulse to bilateral trade and commerce.

Swiss companies have made substantial investment in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, chemical, cement and food in Bangladesh. Today, total Swiss direct investments stand at USD 120 million. The Switzerland Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries (SBCCI), a Swiss-Bangladesh business forum established in August 2009, comprising of Swiss investors, Swiss companies, as well as Bangladeshi companies with close ties to Switzerland, is working to take our existing economic relations to a new height. We also encourage Swiss private sector operators to explore the possibilities of investing more and doing business in this country. In the present uncertain global economic setting, Switzerland will continue to work with Bangladesh to promote bilateral trade and Swiss investment in this country.

Switzerland recognises its responsibility to work for global prosperity and extends full support to Bangladesh in this regard. We acknowledge the positive strides Bangladesh has made over the last decades notably in population control, food security, child mortality,

malnutrition and access to education. It gives me great pleasure to say that Switzerland finds itself as a steady partner of Bangladesh in the latter's stride towards development. For the last 39 years, Switzerland has been a committed development partner of Bangladesh. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), a part of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, has been working in Bangladesh since its independence. SDC considers Bangladesh as one of its priority countries to concentrate its long-term development cooperation efforts. SDC contribution to Bangladesh's development sector for year 2010 is projected to stand at USD 20 million.

The SDC Cooperation Strategy Bangladesh 2008-2012, a Swiss government cooperation strategy paper for Bangladesh, identifies two major challenges for Bangladesh: governance and the increasing gap between rich and poor. Therefore, to address these issues, our cooperation strategy focuses on the two thematic areas: Employment and Income Generation and Local Governance. We believe skills development and market access for impoverished section of the population are essential elements to ensure substantial increase in income and employment opportunities. Hence, SDC endeavours to work for improved living conditions of the poor and the poorest by developing their potential, skills and capacities as well as their access to opportunities.

Switzerland has a long history and experience of having a functional and efficient local government system. As a result, our local

governance interventions in Bangladesh are aimed at supporting and advancing participatory local governance for effective and performing bodies of elected representatives at local level. In the domain of Local Governance, SDC puts emphasis on innovative, action-research based programmes. Switzerland realises Bangladesh's vulnerability in the face of natural hazards and disasters. In Bangladesh, the risk for major hydro-meteorological disasters is increasing. Owing to this, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) has become a special theme of SDC's cooperation strategy for this country. After the cyclonic storm Sidr and Aila, Switzerland responded quickly with emergency relief and subsequently introduced 'cash for work', 'cash for livelihood' and 'cyclone shelter construction' programmes. It is noteworthy to mention that this year we are supporting the introduction of a new Masters Programme on DRR at Dhaka University and the course is expected to commence this month.

We opt to use new avenues to deepen Swiss-Bangladesh cooperation. Cultural activities, in our view, play an important role in furthering cooperation and diversifying bilateral engagements. The embassy associated itself with the 11th Dhaka International Film Festival by providing support in January 2010. Four Swiss films were also screened during the film festival. In March, 2010, the famous Swiss mime group Mummenschanz visited Bangladesh and enthralled local audiences. Over 1500 people watched the shows which reinforces the point

that there is tremendous interest among Bangladeshi people to know about the culture of Switzerland. This provides us with a fresh impetus to organise similar events in coming years.

Very recently, we supported the organisation of an advanced national level training workshop on technical issues for capacity development of theatre professionals in Dhaka. The enthusiasm and interest, that we have witnessed, make us optimistic to pursue similar paths in the coming days. We were also very happy to share the excitement and thrill of the FIFA World Cup 2010 with the people of Bangladesh. During the World Cup, we jointly organised public screening of live football matches in Dhaka. Our Bangladeshi friends joined us there to cheer for the Swiss national football team!

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. I remain absolutely confident in further strengthening the multi-faceted cooperation and partnership bonds between Switzerland and Bangladesh. To conclude, I take this opportunity to convey my most sincere wishes to the people of Bangladesh for a prosperous future. I express the hope of a continued enhancing of the friendly relations between our two countries.

Dr. Urs Herren
Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh

Local governance in Switzerland

SWITZERLAND has been a pioneering country in establishing local government mechanisms. The role of local governments in Switzerland at the grassroots-level (villages and towns) cannot be properly understood with-

out a look at Swiss federalism in general and the position of cantons in particular. The Swiss polity is a federalist three-tier system, composed of the national state (the 'Confederation'), federated states (cantons) and localities (communes).

Switzerland is divided into 26 cantons, three of which are divided into half-cantons. The cantons are also divided into communes and there are currently about 2,900 communes in Switzerland. Communes are the smallest

administrative units represented by the local government bodies.

The cantons, second tier local government bodies, vary greatly as to size and character. Not all the cantons are single territorial entities: some have small exclaves completely surrounded by the territory of other cantons. Each canton has its own constitution, its government, its parliament, its courts and its laws, though they must, of course, be compatible with those of the Confederation. The cantons enjoy a great deal of administrative autonomy and freedom of decision-making. They have independent control over their education systems and social services, and each has its own police force. Each canton also sets its own level of taxation. In two of the smaller cantons - Appenzell Inner-Rhodes and Glarus - the people meet annually in a popular assembly, the Landsgemeinde, where each citizen can vote personally on local issues. In the other cantons decisions are taken by elected representatives. Cantons exert decisive influence on the affairs of the federation; majority of the cantons decide on any new competency of the central government.

Regional intergovernmental conferences deal with matters of importance to their particular region. The directors of departments at cantonal level - such as education - meet in the relevant cantonal directors' conferences to discuss coordination among and/or between them. The governments of all the cantons are represented in the Conference of Cantonal Governments, set up in 1983, to mediate between the cantons and the federal government and to help in the division of responsibilities between them.

Heartiest Felicitations and Best Wishes on the Occasion of Swiss National Day

OUR PRINCIPAL	PRODUCTS
 Benninger AG, Switzerland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cold Pad Batch Machine Bleaching & Dyeing Machine Mercerizing & Washing Machine
 Amsler Tex AG, Switzerland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ring Slub System. Open End Slub System. Amsler Tex Core System.
 Norsel Textile Machine AG, Switzerland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On fabric labeling system for piece tracking through all textile process. Printer controller for bar coding Thermo transfer printer
 cerlikon textile components GmbH, Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texparts Drafting System & Spindles Accotex Cots & Aprons. Accotex Tangential Belt & Spindle Tape.
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