



# SWISS NATIONAL DAY

The Daily Star

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

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## Ambassador's Message



and agreed to act unitedly against external hostility. The treaty, which was agreed by the people of the three Cantons, still exists and is regarded as the foundation document of the Swiss Confederation. The Swiss National Day, however, was first introduced in 1891 after the establishment of the modern federal state of Switzerland.

Modern day Switzerland is a thriving and stable economy with 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.

Switzerland and Bangladesh have enjoyed good bilateral relations since the latter's independence. Both the countries have a solid basis of friendship and mutual understanding. As the Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh, I take this opportunity to present here the current state of the bilateral relations between our two countries.

Switzerland was one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh after its independence. Ever since, relations between Switzerland and Bangladesh have been very friendly and are based on mutual respect. In the 70's, humanitarian assistance was the priority issue of the rela-

1 August is the Swiss National Day. On this auspicious occasion, it is my pleasure and honour to extend warm and sincere greetings to the government and the people of Bangladesh. I also take this opportunity to offer earnest felicitation to my Swiss compatriots living in this beautiful country.

People generally celebrate their national day to remember and to pay tribute to a historical event that symbolises the birth of the nation. The Swiss National day similarly commemorates an event that took place over seven centuries ago.

According to popular Swiss legend, on the first days of 1291, the people of the Swiss Cantons (administrative units) of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden congregated on the meadow of Rütti above Lake Lucerne to swear the oath of confederation

tions. Currently, both trade and development cooperation are the two major pillars of the bilateral ties.

Trade has been a major pillar of the recent remarkable growth in our relations. Bilateral trade between the two countries is growing fast and stood at CHF 415.3 million in 2013, registering a 7% growth over 2012. It is to be mentioned that the growth in 2013 was slightly lower compared to preceding years due to unfavourable political environment. However, I would like to place emphasis on the fact that the trade volume has almost doubled since 2010, which is a significant achievement. Nevertheless, bilateral trade potentials are still largely untapped. Switzerland can potentially become a major provider of technological solutions to the industries in Bangladesh in the field of cleantech and greentech. At the same time, Bangladesh needs to expand its trade basket for increased exports to Switzerland. But I am confident about the prospects. The fact that two high-level Swiss business delegations had visited Bangladesh last year alone bears witness to the claim that the Swiss government and the Swiss businesses are interested about closer partnership with Bangladesh. We expect to host another business delegation from Switzerland sometime later this year.

Swiss companies have invested in several sectors in Bangladesh. The total Swiss investment however is

not very notable at the moment, specially taking into consideration that Switzerland is a major foreign investor worldwide. According to the Board of Investment, the total Swiss investment in this country amounts to around USD 140 million. Yet, I am delighted to inform you that almost all the big Swiss companies operating in Bangladesh are currently expanding or are actively considering to do so. The Swiss small and medium-sized enterprises are also interested in marking their presence in Bangladesh. I strongly encourage Swiss private sector to explore the potentials and possibilities in Bangladesh and to do business with this emerging country. It is my firm belief that the Swiss investments in Bangladesh will shot up, provided that the business and investment climate is further improved. The Switzerland-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SBCCI), a business body comprising the Swiss investors, Swiss companies, as well as the Bangladeshi companies with close ties with Switzerland, is also working with the Embassy very closely to promote bilateral business relations. It gives me immense pleasure to inform you that in October this year, SBCCI, together with the Embassy, is organising a Bangladesh Trade Fair in Basel, Switzerland to provide a fresh impetus to trade and investment relations between the two countries.

Each year we select one specific topic and present related articles in the Swiss National Day supplement. This year's selected topic is trade and business. The articles in this supplement will inform the Bangladeshi business community, other key stakeholders as well as the interested wider population, about the main features of the Swiss economy and its key sectors, with a view to helping them to identify potential sectors for augmented trade and business cooperation.

I would also like to inform our readers about the development cooperation between Switzerland and Bangladesh. As a wealthy and developed country, Switzerland has always lived up to its responsibility towards the less developed countries. It also has a vital interest in global stability and security. These two objectives explain the fact that Bangladesh is since long a priority country of Switzerland's development cooperation. Annual Swiss development contributions to Bangladesh stand at around USD 30 million. The Swiss Cooperation Strategy for Bangladesh (2013-2017) identifies the following areas where Switzerland supports Bangladesh: Skills Development, Market Development and Local Governance. In the global development landscape, Bangladesh and Switzerland are also working very closely. For instance, the two countries are jointly leading a global platform to discuss migration and development

issues in the Post-MDG process.

Political relations between the two countries have also been strengthened over the past years. A high-level delegation comprising Swiss Members of the Parliament is expected to visit Bangladesh in November this year. The second edition of the foreign office consultation between the two countries is expected to be held next year, the first consultation took place last year in Dhaka. I firmly believe that cultural cooperation and exchanges bring two nations and people closer. In this realisation, it has been our constant endeavour to promote and organise cultural events in Bangladesh. Swiss films are regularly being screened in various film festivals in this country. A world famous Swiss tap dancing group will visit Bangladesh in September this year to perform in front of the Dhaka audience.

I can confidently say that I am very much positive about the future course of the bilateral relations between the two countries. As the Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh, it is my endeavour and honour to contribute to the strengthening of such good relations. I would like to seize this opportunity to convey my sincere wishes to the people of Bangladesh for a prosperous future.

Christian Fotsch  
Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh

## From watches to medical technology

Switzerland is home to large corporations as well as small and middle-sized companies (SMEs)

**A**n exciting mix of internationally significant industry clusters form the backbone of Switzerland's economy – networks of producers, suppliers, research institutes and service providers. These are closely interwoven through links between purchasers and suppliers or shared technologies and skills, facilitated by an excellent environment for research and technology, an efficient registration and certification system and well-educated, technically

skilled and often multilingual employees. Whilst the large companies' brands are mostly well-known, they often rely on local small and middle-sized companies to fulfill important supply function for special niche products. This is a quick overview:

**Automotive:** Switzerland has a network of highly specialized suppliers of components for a variety of applications, namely in the fields of precision and micro-mechanics, materials and plastics technology as

well as from the textile industry.  
**Building technology:** Siemens Building Technology's international headquarters in Zug takes advantage of the regional building technology cluster. For instance, fire alarm systems or energy efficiency installations are being developed in the Lake Zug area. This cluster in central Switzerland greatly facilitates the acquisition of expertise and promotes competitiveness.

**Cleantech:** Switzerland



has become a world leader in the development of environmentally friendly technology and systems for efficient energy use, playing a leading role in the reduction of CO2 emissions and recycling in particular.

**Information technology:** As a business location, Switzerland is an important hub for the IT and communications sector. You will find Google's largest engineering office in Europe as well as Dacuda, a 25 people business that produces and exports a scanner mouse which is used in

150 countries.

**Luxury watch industry:** In recent years, Swiss watch manufacturers have succeeded in boosting their leading position in the

global market to more than two percent of the market in the upper price segment.

**Machinery, electronics and metals industries:** With companies such as ABB, Bühler, Georg Fischer and Schindler, Switzerland is one of the best workplaces in the world in almost all sectors including also companies like Ganser CRS. With its 10 employees it is a pioneer in the field of common-rail injection technology for diesel engines and

delivers systems for diesel locomotives of the Indian State Railways.

**Medical technology:** In Switzerland, investment in research and the growth rates of med tech companies are above average. Along with well-known companies such as Synthes and Sonova the country is also home to smaller businesses like Maxon medical global manufacturer of drive systems, gearheads and encoders for medical technology.

**Commodities trading:**

Historically, Switzerland was a major transportation hub where several European trading routes met. Today it is one of the most important transhipment points for commodities. Geneva has become an important platform for crude oil and grain trading. Zug, where the two major companies Xstrata and Glencore are located, has established itself as a global trading center for mining products.

The article is contributed by Switzerland Global Enterprise



Happy Swiss National Day 2014 !

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