



SWISS NATIONAL DAY

The Daily Star

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

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Ambassador's Message

AUGUST 1 is the National Day of Switzerland. On this momentous occasion, I wish to extend, on behalf of the Government of Switzerland, the best wishes and greetings to the people and the Government of Bangladesh. I also seize the opportunity to offer felicitations to my fellow compatriots living in Bangladesh.

A country celebrates its national day by commemorating a historic event of the past which attributes immense significance to the creation of that state. Likewise, the Swiss National Day pays tribute to an event which took place almost 725 years ago. Legend has it that, in the first days of August 1291, the representatives of three Alpine cantons (administrative units) met on the meadow of Rütli to swear the oath of confederation, and agreed to act together if their freedom was at stake by external aggression. However, the Swiss National Day was introduced around 600 years later in 1891, after the formation of the democratic and federal state of Switzerland.

Today, Switzerland boasts a thriving, stable and export oriented economy with low unemployment rate, highly skilled human resources and a per capita GDP larger than that of many other developed economies. The Swiss political system, a combination of semi-direct democracy, decentralization and strong local governance, with four national languages, is quite unique. It also has a vibrant society and a lively art scene. The Swiss businesses, comprising large and well known multinationals and a myriad of small and medium enterprises, constitute the backbone of the Swiss economy.

Research, innovation and technology are the salient features of the Swiss economy. Switzerland is one of the pioneering countries in the field of science, research and technology. In order to maintain its competitive edge, generous investments are made for research and innovation at both public and private level. Swiss researchers are involved in many research programs around the world. One of this ground breaking initiative, which supports the Swiss image as a prodigious nation in the fields of innovation, hi-tech and green-tech industry, is the Solar Impulse 2 project. Two Swiss aviation pioneers have spearheaded this ground breaking project to fly around the world in a zero-fuel, solar-powered plane. Solar Impulse highlights the Swiss commitments towards promoting renewable and clean energy. In this newspaper supplement, the readers will find an article about the Solar Impulse and its current status.

Switzerland has a long history of vocational education and training. The dual-track system, where students work as apprentices in a host company and simultaneously attend classes at a school or college, is an important feature of the Swiss education system. Nowadays, the Swiss dual-track system successfully promotes youth employment and has an excellent reputation. It is an attractive alternative to basic academic education and currently this Swiss model is gaining enormous international attention. The readers will also find an article about the Swiss vocational education system in this supplement.

I would like to take the opportunity to underscore the existing excellent relations between Switzerland and Bangladesh. Switzerland was one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh following its independence. Ever since, relations between Switzerland and Bangladesh have remained very friendly and are based on mutual respect. The relations have witnessed a positive evolution over the years. Humanitarian assistance had been the main element of the bilateral ties in the past. Now, trade and development cooperation are the two major components in the Swiss-Bangladesh relations. Last year, total trade between the two countries stood at around USD 480 million. Switzerland is a long standing development partner of Bangladesh and is one of the priority countries for the Swiss development cooperation. Switzerland's annual development contribution to Bangladesh stands at over USD 30 million. Political and cultural relations are also growing rapidly. I am confident that the multifaceted cooperation with Bangladesh will further deepen in the future.

Lastly, I'd like to avail myself of this opportunity to convey my most sincere wishes to the people of Bangladesh for a prosperous future.



Christian Fotsch
Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh

Solar Impulse – Around the world in a Swiss solar-powered aircraft

SWISS aviation pioneers Bertrand Piccard and André Borschberg have started their expedition to become the first human beings to fly around the world in a solar-powered aircraft. They intend to use this unique adventure to show that with a clear vision we can go beyond what is currently possible, and to campaign for a more sustainable use of resources. This approach is in line with Switzerland's commitment to using increasingly clean energy, which is why the Confederation has supported the project since it began.

Round-the-world solar-powered flight
Solar Impulse took off from Abu Dhabi and will circumnavigate the globe in several legs with landings in Oman, India, Myanmar and China. It flew over Bangladesh on March 19, 2015. The plane crossed the Pacific Ocean (with only one pilot for five consecutive days and nights!), with a stopover in the United States, and will eventually cross the Atlantic Ocean (four consecutive days and nights) towards Southern Europe and North Africa, and fly back to the first point of departure. Since the cockpit is designed for only one pilot, landings will be made to change pilots, and also to organise public events to present the project to governments and scientific institutions.

Switzerland's spirit of innovation and public-private partnership

The solar-powered aircraft Solar Impulse was designed to remain airborne day and night without using a drop of fuel. The plane's exceptional aerodynamic performance and energy efficiency (three times greater than levels for commercial aircraft) make this possible. A team of technicians and scientists from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne, led by the aeronautical engineer Borschberg and the psychiatrist Piccard from the canton of Vaud, worked together on this trailblazing project. It should come as no surprise that innovative projects like this one originate in Switzerland, when you consider the country's long-standing tradition of encouraging investment in the research and development of innovative products. Did you know, for example, that instant coffee, zip fasteners, Velcro, milk chocolate and the computer mouse were invented in Switzerland? Switzerland's high innovation capability has also been recognised in various international rankings in this area (e.g. Global Competitiveness Report and Global Innovation Index), where Switzerland ranked at the top several times in recent years. Innovative projects thrive in the fertile environment of Switzerland's education system (see Times Higher Education Ranking) and its



long tradition of cooperation between the public and private sectors. This cooperation is reflected at various levels.

A more sustainable use of resources

As a geographically small landlocked country in Europe, poor in natural resources, Switzerland has always had to use resources economically and efficiently. In addition, as Europe's water tower, Switzerland is responsible for various sources of large rivers, and therefore manages (water) resources with great care. In this regard, the country is contending,

in particular, with the progressive melting of its glaciers, which is one of the negative consequences of climate change. Switzerland is constantly aware of these negative effects and is responding by developing the sustainable use of resources and climate-friendly energy production.

Small in size, but hugely successful in terms of innovation achievements, Switzerland is continuously working with its partners to make the world a better place to live – Solar Impulse is a perfect example of Switzerland's philosophy.



"I went to Switzerland for my postdoctoral training and came back with excellent experience. Switzerland is a very clean and beautiful country. You can travel easily in Switzerland as the transportation system there is one of the best in the world. The Swiss people are also very friendly. Switzerland tops several world rankings including the innovation and competitiveness index."

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Dr. Khondokar Nasirujaman, one of the recipients of the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship from Bangladesh, went to Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zürich for a postdoctoral course.

Swiss specialty: Vocational education and training

THE Swiss Vocational Education and Training (VET) system enables young people to enter the labour market and ensures that there are enough qualified workers and managers in the future. The VET sector is closely correlated with the labour market and is an integral part of the education system.

A defining feature of the Swiss VET system is its close correlation with the labour market. Training is geared to the actual demand for vocational qualifications and to the jobs available. Thanks to this direct connection to the labour market, Switzerland has one of the lowest rates of youth unemployment in Europe.

VET begins at the upper-secondary level, with pupils having the option of continuing through to tertiary level. It is characterised by a high degree of permeability: pupils may pursue more advanced education and training opportunities and later change the course of their working lives with relative ease.

After completing their compulsory education, around two-thirds of young people in Switzerland opt for the vocational route. Most VET programmes are of the dual-track variety: serving an apprenticeship for three to four days a week to learn the trade in practice, and the rest of the time receiving classroom tuition on the theoretical aspects at a trade (VET) school.

There are around 250 officially recognised basic VET programmes in Switzerland to choose from. The most popular occupations are: commercial employee, retail employee, health care worker, social care worker, electrician, cook and IT specialist. The duration of the programmes varies depending on the occupation but can last from two to four years. These programmes lead to a federal VET diploma or a federal VET certificate, both of which are recognised nationwide.

The next level is professional education and training (PET). It enables holders of a VET qualification to specialise in a given field and prepares them for highly technical and managerial roles. There are around 400 federal PET examinations as well as 52 PET college degree programmes in eight different professional fields. Holders of a federal vocational baccalaureat are entitled to enrol in any of Switzerland's universities of applied sciences without having to take an entrance examination.



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CELEBRATING SWISS NATIONAL DAY

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