

MESSAGE FROM THE EMBASSY OF SWITZERLAND



supplement, you can learn more about some of our related projects.

The pandemic has made person-to-person contacts more complicated. But thanks to digital and social media platforms, we have found other ways to connect and exchange ideas. The Embassy has remained engaged very frequently and regularly with the people of Bangladesh, especially the youth, via our social media and other online platforms. I am happy to report that our audience has constantly shown a keen interest to learn more about our country!

Now, I am also extremely pleased to inform you that we recently revamped the Swiss Corner at the Bangladesh National Museum and I would like to invite you to visit this "small piece of Switzerland" once the museum reopens. I really hope that you will enjoy your visit. I am certain that this Swiss Corner will give you a good idea about what my country stands for: a dynamic, prosperous and liberal society that thrives on innovation and an active player in global affairs, committed to social and environmental responsibilities. If you are in a rush and cannot wait to know more about Switzerland, please scan the QR code below to watch a video featuring some of our colleagues from the Embassy. Together, we are proud to introduce our Switzerland to you.

This year is very special for Bangladesh and its people. Not only is the country celebrating its 50th anniversary, it is also well on course for its LDC graduation in 2026. Over the last five decades, Switzerland has been a reliable partner of Bangladesh in development and economic progress and we remain committed to the country's journey towards a stable, just and prosperous future that leaves no one behind. It is also our intention to strengthen our collaboration in multilateral fora. Switzerland is candidate for a seat on the United Nations Security Council for the period 2023-2024. This will be a great opportunity to work together for global peace and security.

To our Bangladeshi friends and to my fellow Swiss compatriots living in this wonderful country, I want to offer my warm greetings and I wish you, your family and your friends, a happy Swiss National Day! Stay healthy and stay safe!

Nathalie Chuard
Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh

In early August 1291, people of three alpine cantons found that they were stronger together and they signed a Charter forging an alliance of mutual protection. This moment is considered as the very beginning of the Swiss Confederation and the First of August has become our National Day.

This is, of course, a day of festivities. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has kept us from celebrating the way we used to. Over the last months, we have had to adapt our behaviours and even our traditions. For the second year in a row, we have moved the Swiss National Day celebration online and I would be delighted if you visit www.missione1agosto.org to enjoy this moment virtually with us.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, our entire world, including both our countries, has been going through an extraordinary period and facing great challenges. Our societies are shaken to their cores by this

deadly virus.

The three initial cantons, which swore eternal allegiance to one another, promised mutual help and assistance, were later joined by 23 others. Today, on our National Day, we continue to celebrate our attachment to our common values, such as our direct democracy, our federalism, our diversity, and our culture of consensus. In these trying times, I take inspiration from this founding event, more than seven centuries ago, and remain convinced that we are stronger together. Solidarity and humanity are more than just words, they are values that help us navigate and overcome crises, including the one we are in now.

With COVID-19, our days and routines have changed. For instance, we are used to wearing masks, maintaining physical distancing and, often, we are limited in our movements. That said, this new situation has also taught us about the importance of supporting each other and remaining resilient.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Switzerland has been firmly standing by Bangladesh and my country has committed 17 million Swiss Francs (BDT 160 crore) to reinforce the immediate response of the most vulnerable communities and strengthen their socio-economic resilience. In this



Switzerland boosts COVID-19 resilience in Bangladesh

As the COVID-19 pandemic imperils lives and livelihoods, Switzerland has provided additional 9.8 million Swiss Francs (approximately 90 crore taka) to Bangladesh to scale up its support for an effective community-based response to the pandemic. With these additional funds, Switzerland has earmarked a total of more than 17 million Swiss Francs (160 crore taka) for over 20 projects across Bangladesh since the outbreak of the pandemic in April last year. With this comprehensive package, Switzerland broadens its engagement with national and international partner organizations, in close collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh, to help local communities curb the spread of the pandemic and reinforce their socioeconomic resilience. A snap-shot of a few of these crucial COVID-19 interventions are highlighted here:

The pandemic has disproportionately affected women, impacting their health and their socio-economic wellbeing. Aparajitas - the elected female representatives of the Union Councils - have stepped up to help their constituents

who are infected with COVID-19, providing them with necessary support, including for hospitalisation and covering medical expenses. With Swiss funding, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation works with the Aparajitas to strengthen resilience among local communities in this difficult times. Kudos to all Aparajitas working on the frontline of the pandemic!

The economic impact of COVID-19 is extremely severe among the most marginalised population and different minority groups, due to their higher exposure to poverty and other vulnerabilities. Through the Human Rights Programme of UNDP Bangladesh, Switzerland has provided food and other support packages to different ethnic minority groups, transgender people, persons with disabilities as well as other vulnerable communities whose livelihoods have been impacted during the crisis.

Chapai Nawabganj, arguably the "mango capital" of Bangladesh, has been badly affected by the latest wave of COVID-19. Mango farmers have been

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



Eight handwashing basins are installed at a mango market in Chapainawabganj.



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Happy Swiss Day



May the bridge of our friendship stay as strong as Tamina bridge

