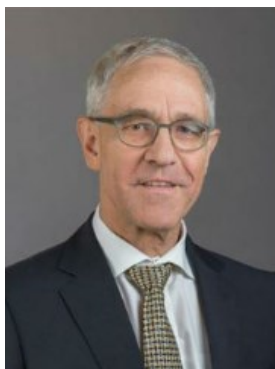


Message from the Ambassador



Dear Readers,

The outgoing 2019 was yet another important year that set new milestones for our bilateral relations. We held the fourth edition of the biennial political consultations between the foreign ministries of Switzerland and Bangladesh in April, discussing priority areas such as economy, the Sustainable Development Goals and humanitarian cooperation. In September, a delegation from the State Secretariat for Migration visited Dhaka for the first time to exchange on labour migration issues in Bangladesh and related regional and multilateral processes.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC has launched a WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) project that will contribute to the institutional development of the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) in Cox's Bazar, provide capacity building and specific on-demand technical WASH expertise, and pilot WASH innovations in the region.


Furthermore, the Embassy organized a roundtable dialogue on democracy, local governance and citizens' participation that brought together experts from government, civil society, media and academia to discuss governance perspectives from Switzerland, Bangladesh and the world.

At the Swiss Night 2019, we celebrated the friendship between Switzerland and Bangladesh with the Swiss community and partners of the Embassy.

I hope you will enjoy reading this latest issue of Swiss Talk. I'm wishing all our readers a very good start into the New Year 2020!

René Holenstein

Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh

 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh

Swiss Night 2019

The Embassy organized the "Swiss Night" on 12 December, a gala event to celebrate the longstanding friendship between Switzerland and Bangladesh. Senior government officials, international and development partners, the business community, members of the civil society and media, cultural actors, as well as Swiss citizens living in Bangladesh participated in this event.

Mr. Kamrul Ahsan, Secretary of Bilateral and Consular Affairs (Europe, Africa & Americas) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was the Chief Guest, while renowned academic and author, Dr. Muhammed Zafar Iqbal, graced the event as Special Guest. They were joined by the Honorable Minister of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, H.E. Mr. Imran Ahmed MP, in placing emphasis on the importance of further strengthening our bilateral relations.



The Embassy proudly conferred the Swiss Embassy Award 2019 to the Human Rights Forum Bangladesh, in recognition of its contribution to the defence and promotion of human rights. Ms. Sheepa Hafiza, Barrister Sara Hossian and Mr. Zakir Hossian received the award on behalf of the Forum.

The guests enjoyed various Swiss culinary delicacies as well as a memorable live music performance by the popular Bangladeshi musician Drockstar Shuvo. The Swiss Night 2019 was organized with the support of our key sponsors KUEHNE + NAGEL Ltd, LafargeHolcim Bangladesh Ltd and Novartis (Bangladesh) Ltd.



Director General of SDC visits Bangladesh

The Director General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Ambassador Manuel Sager, visited Bangladesh on 5-9 January 2020. The objective of the visit was to better understand the key development challenges of the country, including the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Cox's Bazar, and to gain a first-hand impression about Switzerland's development interventions on the ground.



During the visit, Mr. Sager met with senior government officials, development partners and other key stakeholders to discuss about the national SDG-implementation, the current trajectory of socio-economic developments and the Rohingya refugee crisis. On 6 January, he visited the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar to observe the conditions of the refugee population and host communities and meet with district officials and representatives from international and non-governmental organizations. Mr. Sager also visited several SDC co-supported development projects in Gazipur district. Switzerland is a committed and long-standing development partner of Bangladesh, providing assistance in several areas such as income and economic development, democratic governance and safer migration.

Humanitarian and Development Nexus for the Rohingya Crisis

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation is linking humanitarian and development approaches (nexus) in the response to the Rohingya refugee crisis through joint funding of medium-term interventions addressing the needs of both the refugee and host populations. So far, projects have focused on the areas of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), as well as health. These initiatives aim to facilitate peaceful-coexistence and support vulnerable host community groups in getting better access to basic services.

ASHSHASH: SDC Programme Launch

Trafficking victims often experience trauma after returning home, when they are re-victimized through stigmatization by their families and friends. The SDC-programme Ashshash, implemented by Winrock International, aims to restore the dignity and well-being of men and women who have escaped trafficking and helps reintegrate them in society, both economically and socially. The four year project will cover five trafficking prone districts of Chattogram and Khulna divisions.

The programme is designed to provide psycho-social counselling, skills training, legal aid and health support to the survivors. It further focuses on raising awareness on the perils of irregular migration and improve public and private capacities to deliver services to the trafficking survivors.

Swiss Business in Bangladesh

In a meeting with the Executive Chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority BIDA in October, Ambassador Holenstein, exchanged about new areas of economic cooperation such as clean-tech, biotech and renewable energy and discussed about measures to further enhance trade and investment relations between Switzerland and Bangladesh.



Earlier in the month, a Swiss entrepreneurs' delegation visited Bangladesh on a fact finding mission to meet business partners and acquire insights into new investment opportunities. At the Entrepreneurs' Conference, the Ambassador iterated that promoting trade and investment ties is a top priority in the bilateral relations of the two countries. The speakers at the conference noted that more foreign direct investments will flow into Bangladesh once ease of doing business and regulatory predictability is further improved.



Travel App for Swiss Travelers

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) has introduced a new app providing country-specific, customizable checklists to Swiss travelers. "Travel Admin" allows you to contact the FDFA Helpline for immediate assistance and to obtain local emergency numbers for police, ambulance and fire services. If you need a temporary passport to return home, you can use Travel Admin to locate and find the nearest Swiss representation offering the necessary consular services. [Download and learn more about the app here.](#)

Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh

We are currently evaluating the continuation of the Swiss Talk newsletter. Please send your comments and feedback to shafina.alam@eda.admin.ch and

follow us on 