

India - Switzerland Relations

India and Switzerland have had cordial and friendly relations since India's Independence, based on shared values of democracy and the rule of law. India's policy of non-alignment and Switzerland's traditional policy of neutrality led to a close understanding between the two countries. Switzerland established diplomatic relations with India soon after Independence. A Treaty of Friendship between India and Switzerland was signed at New Delhi on August 14, 1948, one of the first such treaties to be signed by independent India and an important milestone in Indo-Swiss relations. The Treaty provided for the establishment of diplomatic missions between the two countries and missions were opened in Berne and Delhi soon after. Switzerland established its Consulates General in Mumbai and Bangalore. India has a Consulate General in Geneva. In 2008 India and Switzerland celebrated the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Friendship Treaty. In recognition of the growth of multi-faceted bilateral relations over six decades and to outline areas of mutual interest and cooperation, India and Switzerland decided to establish a Privileged Partnership.

From 1971 to 1976, during and after Bangladesh's struggle for Independence, Switzerland represented India's interests in Pakistan and vice versa. Switzerland celebrated the centenary of setting up the Mumbai Swiss Consulate on 17 July, 2015, which had been opened to help Swiss cotton traders and protect business interests. The celebrations also coincided with 75 years of the Swiss Business Hub in Mumbai. Till last year the Swiss Consulate in Mumbai issued the maximum number of visas by any Swiss Consulate before it was transferred to the Swiss Embassy.

VVIP visits

Exchange of high level visits has provided the impetus to strengthen bilateral cooperation. Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi paid an official visit to Geneva, Switzerland on June 5-6, 2016. This was a historic visit, the first bilateral visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Switzerland in the last several decades. Hon'ble PM was accompanied by a high powered delegation. Prime Minister had a packed program which included highly productive bilateral meetings with the President of the Swiss Confederation H.E. Mr. Johann N. Schneider-Ammann, a Business Round Table with Switzerland's top companies, most of them having significant presence in India, issuing of Press Statements by both the leaders and a meeting with Indian research scholars based at CERN.

Issues like mutual support for our respective bids for the non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council, support for India's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, negotiations with EFTA on TEPA, the need for cooperation to bring tax offenders to justice, conclusion of an agreement on the automatic exchange of information on tax matters, cooperation in skill development and Ayurveda and other bilateral issues were discussed during the meetings. The President of Switzerland announced his country's support for India's NSG membership, a breakthrough. Following PM's visit a number of high-level visits took place in quick succession to follow-up on the impetus provided to bilateral relations, especially on the issue of black money, EFTA and consular issues.

Previous visits

The visit of Swiss President Mr. Flavio Cotti in 1998 was the first ever visit by a Swiss President to India. The President of the Swiss Confederation, Mr. Pascal Couchepin, paid a State Visit to India from 6-12 November, 2003. The last high-level visit to India was that of Swiss President Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey from 5-7 November, 2007. After the State Visit of President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in May 2005, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, President of India visited Switzerland from September 30 to October 4, 2011.

High level visits

There have been regular bilateral ministerial exchanges. Mrs. Simonetta Sommaruga, Federal Councillor for Justice and Police, *and President of Switzerland in 2015*, led a delegation to India on 5-7 October, 2016 and met with Home Minister and Minister for Law and Justice and signed 3 major consular agreements. Ms. Doris Leuthard, Federal Councillor for Environment, Transport, Energy & Communications, *and the next President of Switzerland in 2017*, is also expected to visit India.

Mr. Johann N. Schneider-Ammann, Federal Councillor for Economic Affairs, Education and Research, visited India from 15-17 May, 2015, leading an economic mission of 25 business representatives, federal and cantonal officials and Members of Parliament. He held meetings with Hon'ble Finance Minister, MOS (I/C) for Commerce & Industries and the MOS (I/C) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. He also attended a business meeting arranged by FICCI and visited Bangalore where he officially launched the CTI Market entry, an initiative of the Swiss Government's Mission for Technology and Innovation (CTI) managed by Swissnex India and aimed at encouraging Swiss start-ups to enter the Indian market. He had earlier visited India from 7-9 April, 2011 along with a high level business delegation. Swiss Federal Councillor for Home Alain Berset visited India from October 1-3, 2012 and met Minister of Health & Family Welfare Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad, Minister of Culture Kumari Selja and Minister of S&T, Shri Vayalar Ravi to expand scope of bilateral cooperation in health, culture and S&T. Swiss Federal Councillor for Environment, Transport, Energy & Communications, Doris Leuthard visited India from October 18-20, 2012 primarily to represent Switzerland at the UN Conference on Biological Diversity in Hyderabad. She met and discussed issues of mutual interest and cooperation with Smt. Jayanti Natarajan, Minister for Environment & Forests, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Minister of New & Renewable Energy, Shri C.P. Joshi, Minister of Road Transport & Highways, Shri Kamal Nath, Minister of Urban Development and Shri Ajit Singh, Minister for Civil Aviation. A Protocol to revise the Double Taxation Agreement was signed between the two countries during the visit of Foreign Minister Calmy-Rey in August 2010, which entered into force on 7th October, 2011. Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter visited India from November 11-12, 2013 in connection with ASEM-FMs Meeting in New Delhi. During this visit, Mr. Burkhalter called on EAM.

From the Indian side, there have been several important bilateral ministerial visits. Hon'ble Minister of State (I/C) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy visited Switzerland in June 2016 to address an international congress on vocational and professional education and training and hold discussions with the Swiss

side. Shri Kamal Nath, Minister for Road Transport & Highways led a 5-member delegation to Switzerland on 11-12 August, 2009. A 4-member delegation led by Minister of Textiles, Shri Dayanidhi Maran, visited Switzerland from 25-28 October, 2009. An 18-member Indian Parliamentary Goodwill delegation led by Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Water Resources Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal visited Switzerland from 1-4 April, 2010. Speaker of Lok Sabha, Smt. Sumitra Mahajan, led a high-level Parliamentary delegation to the 135th session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly, held in Geneva from 22-27 October 2016. Smt. Meira Kumar, Speaker, Lok Sabha, led an delegation to Switzerland from 16-17 July, 2010 to attend the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) Sixth Annual Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament in Berne. Later, she visited Berne to participate in the 125th IPU Meeting from 16-19 October, 2011. An Investment Round Table was held in Geneva on 8 April 2013 during the visit of Shri Anand Sharma, Minister of Commerce & Industry. Minister of State (IC) for Sports & Youth Affairs Shri Jitender Singh visited Lausanne from 14-15 May 2013 in connection with the meetings with the International Olympic Committee. The Indian delegation led by EAM Shri Salman Khurshid participated at the Geneva II Conference on Syria held in Montreux on January 22, 2014.

Foreign Secretary and Secretary (West)'s visits

Among official visits, Dr. S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary, visited Switzerland from 10-13 Sept. 2015 for discussions with Swiss State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Yves Rossier on various ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation. He also held discussions with the State Secretary for Economic Affairs. Ms. Sujata Mehta, Secretary (West), visited Switzerland for the 9th round of FOCs on 8 March, 2016 co-chaired by Swiss State Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

Other Secretary level visits

Prof. Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, Department of Science & Technology, visited Switzerland on 16-19 Sept, 2015 to participate in the 3rd meeting of the Indo-Swiss Joint Committee on S&T held on 18 Sept. 2015 in Berne. Secretary (DST) co-chaired the meeting with State Secretary Mauro Dell' Ambrogio, SERI. The meeting reviewed bilateral S&T cooperation and proposed measures to reinforce it. A delegation from the International Cooperation Division of M/o Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, visited Switzerland from 31 August to 8 Sept. 2015 for a study trip cum discussions on modalities of cooperation between the two countries in the field of skill development. In official discussions, the two sides agreed to conclude an MOU which will have specific provisions for setting up a joint working group and funding instrument to take forward bilateral cooperation in skills development. Shri Ajit Mohan Sharan, Secretary, D/o Sports visited Head Quarters of IOC in Lausanne (Switzerland) from 23-25 March, 2015 for working out the modalities for the proposed meeting of the delegation led by Mr. Thomas Bach, President, International Olympic Committee (IOC) with Hon'ble PM of India on 27 April, 2015 to discuss PM's vision on developing sports in India. Shri Shaktikanta Das, Revenue Secretary, led an Indian delegation to Switzerland on 15 October 2014 for talks on information sharing on tax issues with the Swiss State Secretary for Finance, Mr. Jacques de Watteville.

Consequent to the push given by the visit of PM Modi for cooperation on exchange of information relating to tax and black-money, several rounds of official level talks were held including the visit of the Swiss State Secretary for International Financial Matters to India. The Swiss State Secretary for International Financial Matters, H.E. Mr. Jacques de Watteville, met his counterparts, Revenue Secretary Hasmukh Adhia, and the Secretary of the Department of Economic Affairs, Shaktikanta Das in New Delhi on 15 June 2016. They discussed bilateral and multilateral tax and financial issues.

A 4-member Swiss Parliamentary delegation visited India on 12 February 2016.

WEF

High-level Indian delegations have participated in the World Economic Forum (WEF) since the early 90s. An official Indian delegation led by Shri Arun Jaitley, Hon'ble Finance Minister, accompanied by Shri Piyush Goyal, Hon'ble MOS (I/C) for Power, Coal and NRE and Shri Devendra G. Fadnavis, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Maharashtra, attended the January 2015 WEF meeting. Shri N. Chandra Babu Naidu, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh also attended the WEF meeting as an invitee and so did Secretary (IPP), DIPP, M/o Commerce and Industries, Chief Economic Advisor, D/o Economic Affairs. Indian industry had a huge presence with 99 Indian companies attending amongst which 55 were represented at the top level. IBEF's 'Make in India' lounge was a huge hit with a number of meetings taking place at the venue. CII also had strong representation at the meeting.

On the sidelines of the WEF 2015, Hon'ble Finance Minister had bilateral meetings with Swiss Federal Councillor of Finance, Ms. Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf and Federal Councillor of Economy, Mr. Johann N. Schneider-Ammann. Hon'ble Finance Minister also had bilateral meetings with Queen Maxima of Netherlands, Prime Minister of New Zealand, Mr. John Key, US Secretary of Treasury and British Chancellor of Exchequer. He also had bilateral meeting with the Chiefs of several multi-national companies and banks. Shri Piyush Goyal, MOS (I/C) for Power, Coal and NRE had bilateral meeting with Federal Councillor for the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications, Ms. Doris Leuthard. The Indian delegation also attended an "India-Investment round table" facilitated by CII and attended by a large number of corporates and company representatives.

At WEF 2016 (January, 2016), the official Indian delegation was again led by Shri Arun Jaitley, Hon'ble Finance Minister. On the sidelines, Hon'ble FM had bilateral meetings with several ministers including the Swiss Federal Councillor for Finance, Mr. Ueli Maurer. Shri Raghuram Rajan, Governor, RBI, also attended the WEF meeting. Shri N. Chandra Babu Naidu, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh also led a high level state official delegation for the WEF. An Andhra investment promotion seminar was organized by the Embassy in Zurich with the help of the Swiss India Chamber of Commerce. As in the past, there was a large participation from the Indian corporate sector spearheaded by CII.

Bilateral Institutional Arrangements

[i] **Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs)** were established in January 1996. The first round of FOCs took place at the level of Secretaries in February 2000. Since then, nine rounds of consultations have been held alternately in Berne and New Delhi in February

2000, January 2003, September 2005, November, 2006, January 2008, December 2009, December 2012 and November 2014 respectively (the last two at JS (CE) level). The last and 9th round of FOC was held in Berne, Switzerland on 8 March, 2016 at Secretary (West) level.

[ii] The **Indo-Swiss Joint Economic Commission** was set up in 1959 to intensify economic and commercial relations. The 13th session of JEC meeting was held in New Delhi from October 4-5, 2012. The 14th Session of JEC was held in New Delhi on 14 May, 2015, co-chaired by Mr. Dammu Ravi, Joint Secretary (FT-Europe), M/o Commerce & Industries from Indian side and Mrs. Livia Leu Agosti, Head of the Bilateral Economic Relations at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs. The 15th Session of India-Switzerland Joint Economic Commission was held in Berne on 25 October, 2016. The Indian side was led by Ms. Anita Praveen, Joint Secretary (Europe), D/o Commerce while the Swiss side by Amb. Mrs. Livia Leu Agosti, Head of Bilateral Economic Relations.

[iii] **The Indo-Swiss Joint Committee on S&T:** The 1st Meeting of the Indo-Swiss Joint Committee on S&T was held on 23 September, 2011 in Berne. The main objective of the meeting was to assess ongoing S&T cooperation between India and Switzerland under the Indo-Swiss Joint Research Programme. On October 1, 2012, the Committee held discussions in New Delhi. The 3rd meeting of the joint Committee on S&T took place in Berne at Secretary level on 18 Sept. 2015. The two sides decided to hold the next round by October, 2017 in India.

[iv] **Consular Dialogue:** A composite dialogue on consular and legal matters was held in New Delhi on March 2 2012 at Joint Secretary level. The 2nd consular dialogue was held in New Delhi back to back with the FOCs on 17 November 2014 at the level of JS (CPV) and Ambassador Johannes Matyassy, Head of Asia-Pacific Division, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. A Swiss delegation from the Federal Department of Justice and Police, State Secretariat of Migration, visited India and held discussions with JS (CPV) on 12 April, 2016.

The 3rd India- Switzerland Consular dialogue was held in Berne, Switzerland, on 10 June, 2016, covering consular and legal issues of mutual interest. The Indian delegation was led by Mr. P. Kumaran, Joint secretary (CPV) and the Swiss delegation by Mr. Johannes Matyassy, Assistant State Secretary for Asia/Pacific, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The issue of return of Tibetans was also discussed. The results of the meeting were positive. The Swiss side appreciated Indian cooperation in the return of illegal Indian migrants from Switzerland.

[v] **India-Switzerland Financial Dialogue:** The MoU was signed on October 3, 2011 during the State Visit. The first Financial Dialogue was held in Berne on July 6, 2012. Indian delegation was led by Shri Gopalan, Secretary, DEA and the Swiss delegation was led by Amb. Michael Ambuhl. The second Financial Dialogue was held in New Delhi in June 2013.

Commercial Relations

Commercial contacts between India and Switzerland date back to the early 19th century when in 1851 the Volkart Trading Co. established its offices in Basel and Mumbai.

It expanded its network, diversifying its activities, and soon becoming the backbone of Switzerland's economic presence in India. The Indo-Swiss Treaty of Friendship laid the foundation for a strong economic content to the bilateral relationship. Article 3 to 6 of this Treaty secured the "most favoured foreign nation treatment" to Switzerland. As provided by the Treaty itself, it has set the pace for further treaties like Double Taxation Treaty in November, 1994, followed by Amendment protocol in 2010, Promotion and Protection of Investment Treaty in July 1997. The first major investment by Swiss companies in India came in the mid-50s. Switzerland is an important trading partner for India outside the EU.

Bilateral Trade

Switzerland is the 5th largest trading partner for India with the total bilateral trade including merchandise exports, bullion and IT services and software exports, amounting to US\$ 23.2 billion in 2014-15 and US\$ 19.32 billion (April-Feb., 2015-16). Bilateral trade has shown generally a positive trend despite the global economic slowdown. India has a share of only about 0.34 % of the Swiss import basket while Indian imports from Switzerland constitute about 4.9% of total Indian imports. Bilateral trade is around US\$ 3-3.5 billion and is overwhelmingly in favour of Switzerland. *The imbalance mainly arises out of export of bullion to India of about US\$ 18 billion a year.* However, trade and investments remain far below their potential.

a) Year-wise mercantile trade figures from Swiss Customs without bullion.

(In Million Swiss Francs)

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016 Jan-Sept
India's Exports	800.1	1010.4	1303.4	1400	1524	1615.4	1256.3	1083.0
India's Imports	2156.1	2156.4	2986.4	2600	2010	1742.0	1790.6	1332.9
Total Trade	2956.2	3166.8	4289.8	4000	3534	3357.4	3046.9	2415.9

b) Financial-Year-wise total trade figures from DGFT:

(Figures in US\$ millions)

Year	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
India's Exports	689.79	1095.34	1117.28	1796.95	1068.58	977.17	401.87
India's Imports	24802.00	34758.96	32166.54	19311.01	22133.16	19299.49	5971.95
Total Trade	25491.79	35854.30	33283.82	21107.96	23201.74	20276.66	6373.82
% Growth		40.65	-7.17	-36.58	9.92		

Swiss exports to India have declined in recent years due to adverse currency rate movements and slowdown in the Indian economy. India's merchandise exports have more than doubled from 2009 (CHF 800.1 million) to 2014 (CHF 1615.4). According to Swiss Customs, bilateral trade was at CHF 3357.4 million in 2014 (calendar year – January to December) showing a decline by 5% over 2013, with Swiss exports to India showing a decline by 13.3% to a total of CHF 1742 million in 2014 as against CHF 2010 million in

2013. However, India's exports to Switzerland continued to grow by 6% in 2014 over the previous year (CHF 1615 million against CHF 1524 million in 2013).

India's export figures to Switzerland given by Swiss Customs do not include figures for Indian Software and services exports. Similarly, Swiss export figures do not include bullion as well as war material exports to India. According to the Electronic & Computer Software Export Promotion Council, during 2014-15 India exported Computer Software and Services to Switzerland worth USD 454.70 million as compared to USD 201.11 million in 2013-14, USD 369.86 in 2012-13 and USD 433.98 million in 2011-12. In 2014 Swiss exports of bullion were CHF 17.55 billion in 2014, as against CHF 21.9 billion in 2013. Gold and bullion exports were CHF 18.5 billion in 2015.

The balance of trade has remained in favour of Switzerland. The major items of Indian exports to Switzerland are textiles and garments, organic chemicals, pearls, precious stones and jewellery, dyestuffs, non-electrical machinery and parts, leather products, shoes and shoe uppers, cotton, plastics, coffee, tea and hand-knotted carpets. Besides bullion, Swiss exports to India consist of chemicals & pharmaceuticals, machinery, transport equipments, precision engineering products and watches.

Bilateral Investment

From April 2000 to Sept. 2015, Switzerland invested approximately USD 3.18 billion in India, thus becoming the 11th largest investor and accounting for about 1.2% of total FDI in India during this period. As a large part of FDI in India, is routed through other countries, actual Swiss FDI in India is much higher, with overall Swiss investment inflows into India pegged at above USD 7 billion upto 2013-14. More than 250 Swiss companies have a presence in India through their own subsidiaries and joint ventures. In terms of industry-wise distribution of Swiss investments in India, traditional sectors of Swiss excellence, e.g. engineering and industrial equipment, services (tourism, financial, logistics etc.), precision instruments, chemicals and pharmaceuticals continue to maintain top positions. Most of the Swiss multinational companies like Nestle, ABB, Novartis, Roche UBS and Credit Suisse etc. have their operations in India. As per Swiss government data, Swiss enterprises have created over one lakh jobs in India.

On the other hand, about 100 Indian companies have invested about USD 1.2 billion between 2012 and 2014 in Switzerland, placing it among the top five European investment destinations and top-ten places globally for Indian investors. Major Indian IT companies including TCS, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, etc. have their offices here and provide services to major Swiss pharma companies, banks and insurance firms. Recently, Swiss luxury goods firm Lux was taken over by Eureka Forbes and earlier in 2010 M/s. Steiner, a construction company was taken over by HCC Ltd. Rajesh Exports acquired the world's largest gold refiner in Switzerland European Gold Refineries for US \$400 million in 2015. Indian companies in pharma and life science sectors are also present.

EFTA-India Free trade agreement: Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)

At their meeting in Davos on 26 January 2008, Commerce/Trade Ministers from India and the European Free Trade Area (EFTA, which includes Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, agreed to launch negotiations on a comprehensive Trade and Investment Agreement as per the recommendations of the Joint EFTA-India Study Group established on 1 December 2006. Both sides successfully negotiated upto 98% of the tariff lines, according to which EFTA would offer 11,186 lines to India while India would offer 9414 tariff lines. Legal vetting was also done on the agreed text. However, there are a few areas where two sides have not been able to find common ground. EFTA is seeking concessions primarily on TRIPS plus in IPRs while for India Data Security status and movement of skilled people are important.

13 rounds of India-EFTA trade negotiations have been held. As a follow up to the discussions on India-EFTA TEPA between the Indian PM and Swiss President. The EFTA delegation was led by **the Swiss State Secretary, Ms. Marie Gabriel Ineichen Fleisch** visited Delhi on 10 June 2016, for a stocktaking meeting between the Chief Negotiators of India and EFTA on TEPA. The meeting was held in an amicable and constructive environment with both sides expressing their willingness to jointly address the major outstanding issues and agreeing to an early resumption of negotiations and concluding a balanced agreement in a time-bound manner. Consequent to the stock-taking meeting, a meeting on services track has been fixed between the experts from both sides to be held on 14 Sept. 2016 in New Delhi. An Indian delegation led by Joint Secretary (Europe), M/o Commerce, visited Geneva for the **14th Round of India-EFTA TEPA Negotiations** on 26-28 October, 2016.

Skill Development

Swiss initiatives to introduce the Swiss Dual Vocational Educational System at a mass level in India are contributing to India's development. Among them are:

1. The Rajendra and Ursula Joshi Foundation Vocational Education and Training (VET) Projects have established the Bharatiya Skills Development Campus, which will impart vocational education and training to Indian apprentices according to the Swiss VET system, and have signed an MOU with the Rajasthan Govt. to establish the Rajasthan Skills Education University
2. The Swiss Indian Chamber of Commerce in April 2016 is setting up the Indo-Swiss Centre of Excellence, Pune, India. The project also includes showcasing cleantech solutions and products from Switzerland in India in low energy buildings, sustainable water and waste solutions and renewable energy.
3. Up to January 2015, the private sector Swiss organization which has equity and loan from NSDC SkillSonics had trained about 3400 persons and placed above 90% of them.

As a follow up to the meeting on 15 May, 2015 between the Swiss Minister for Economic Affairs, Education and Research and Indian Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, at the Swiss invitation Shri Pawan Agarwal, Joint Secretary (IC), MSDE visited Switzerland, for a study-cum-discussion trip from 30 August to 8th September, 2015 on cooperation in the skill development sector. In official discussions with Dr. Therese Steffen Gerber, Head, International Cooperation in Education at the Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation, it was in principle decided to

broaden and deepen the engagement with Switzerland in the area of vocational education and the training. It was suggested that it is now an opportune time to significantly scale up this initiative and undertake activities beyond SkillSonics involving various entities in India and Switzerland for curriculum development, training of trainers and assessors, adopting Swiss dual system of vocational training with apprenticeship with suitable adaptation, establishing Centres of Excellence in different areas where Switzerland has strengths. Possibility of setting up Indo-Swiss institutions for Skill Development with technical knowhow from Switzerland could also be explored and enhanced cooperation would particularly help to expand the pilot project on adopting the Swiss dual track apprenticeship training. Swiss counterparts suggested that a draft MoU may be shared with them so that they could get internal approvals which could lead to formation of a Joint Working Group.

Switzerland's first International Congress on Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) was held in Winterthur on 15-18 September, 2014. Mr. S. Ramadorai, Chairman of the National Skill Development Agency, Chairman of the National Skill Development Corporation and Chairman of the Tata Consultancy Services attended the event in his private capacity. Minister of State (I/C) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Mr. Rajiv Pratap Rudy, visited Switzerland to participate in the 2nd International VPET Congress from 20-22 June, 2016 at Winterthur, Switzerland. He addressed the Congress on the topic – "Skill Development in India: Opportunities and Challenges" on 21 June, 2016. He also held a bilateral meeting with Mr. Mauro Dell'Ambrogio, State Secretary for the Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) on 22 June, 2016 and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to institutionalize bilateral cooperation between our countries in the areas of skills development and vocational education and training.

Ayush

Indian Ayurveda Products continue to face barriers in Switzerland because of Swiss restrictions on import of medicinal products. Most health insurance companies refuse to cover Ayurveda treatment even for those having supplementary coverage for alternative therapies. However, the Indian Bachelor of Ayurveda Medicine along with 3 other traditional systems of medicine i.e. Chinese, European and homeopathy, has recently been approved for federally recognized national diploma examination whereby their degrees / diplomas could be recognised. This solves the problem faced by India only partially. Ayurveda has therapeutic value like Tibetan medicine. Tibetan medicine is already recognized by Swiss Government and has market access in Switzerland. The matter was discussed at the last JEC but so far no concrete guidelines have been agreed upon. Prime Minister urged the Swiss President to recognise Ayurveda products and it was agreed to constitute an expert group to take the matter forward.

Cultural relations & people to people contacts

The two countries do not have an institutional arrangement on cultural cooperation like Cultural Cooperation Agreement or CEP. ICCR troupes regularly visit the country.

To mark the International Day of Peace and Non-Violence a statue of Mahatma Gandhi was installed in Ariana Park, Geneva on 14 Nov. 2007. The statue was jointly

unveiled by the Mayor of the City of Geneva, Ambassador in charge of the political division, dealing with Asia in the Swiss Foreign Office and the Indian Ambassador.

The 150th Birth Centenary celebrations of Swami Vivekananda were held in Saas Fee, a picturesque town in the Alps on 30th August 2013 with the unveiling of a plaque at Hotel Grand Metropole where Swami Vivekananda stayed in 1896. A bronze bust was also unveiled at a prominent location in the town.

A Tagore Chair has been set up at University of Lausanne (UNIL) for Hindi in 2011, which has successfully completed 4 sessions with professors deputed by ICCR, as per MOU's validity. Recently, on 9 June, 2016 in Lausanne, the two sides have extended the MOU for another three years based on ICCR's new model of cost sharing for Chairs.

The International Day of Yoga (IDY) was celebrated on 21 June, 2015 at Waisenhausplatz in the City Centre of Berne and in Culture Centre, Gasometer, Liechtenstein with participation of about 100 and 30 participants respectively. In other Swiss cities like Zurich, Berne and Baden, mass yoga practices were also held under the aegis of different Yoga schools where about 30-40 people participated in each place. At the Berne event, Mrs. Von Sury-Thomas Susan, a PIO and Member of Legislative Assembly, Canton of Solothurn, participated.

The Mission celebrated the 2nd IDY Berne on 18 June, 2016. Several yoga sessions guided and supervised by the local Yoga Gurus throughout the day. All the sessions were well attended. At the end, a Kathak dance performance illustrating the yoga inspired poses was performed by Swiss dancers, Gauri and Meera, exponents of classical Kathak who have studied their art under Pt. Ravi Shankar Mishra.

A 10-member Kathak Dance troupe, led by Smt. Aruna Kelkar from Pune based "Niritya Bharti Academy" and sponsored by ICCR visited Switzerland between 24-26 March, 2015 and showcased its performances in Berne and Zurich). The shows were well received.

A performance and lecture-demonstration on Kathak was organised in Zurich on May 16 2014 by an ICCR sponsored 6-member Kathak troupe led by Ms Rujuta Soman to Switzerland.

Indian community

The Indian community in Switzerland comprises of approximately 18,000 Indians including over 6300 persons of Indian origin (Swiss passport holders). Most of them are professionals in Engineering, IT, pharmaceuticals and paramedical fields. Few are deployed in the International Organisations like UN, UPU and other prestigious Swiss institutes like Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich and EPFL, Lausanne. The Indian community is concentrated in Zurich, Geneva, Basel, Baden, Berne and Lausanne in that order. A number of Indian associations actively organise cultural activities and celebrate Indian national days. In 2014 there were about 850 Swiss nationals living in India.

Extension of e-Tourist Visa scheme to Switzerland

Government extended the e-tourist visa facility to 37 more countries from 26th February 2016 including Switzerland, covering 150 countries. Henceforth, Swiss nationals visiting India for *tourism purposes* can avail this e-visa facility with immediate effect. There has been a slow but steady uptake of e-visas.

Useful Resources

www.indembassybern.ch – Home page of Embassy of India, Berne

<https://www.news.admin.ch/> - Information about Switzerland

<http://www.fdfa.ch/eda/en/home.html.html> - Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/newdelhi> - Swiss Embassy in New Delhi

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