

Honorable Chief guest, Esteemed dignitaries, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

Thank you for joining us to celebrate Switzerland's National Day. I am most grateful to Honorary Consul Umesh Chowdhury for organizing this splendid party. He manages to transport some of Switzerland's traditional way of celebrating August 1st to Bengal, in a mix of crisp Alpine air and tropical warmth.

He welcomed me so kindly at the airport this afternoon. With him I could have a first glimpse of this extraordinary city, its famous landmarks and heritage sites, and soak in the atmosphere.

What better person to represent Switzerland in Kolkata than Umesh Chowdhury? The match is perfect: a constructor of trains for a country that is passionate about its public railway system and its many tunnels.

This year and next, we are celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Swiss Indian Friendship Treaty. Through a series of events, we want to connect Swiss and Indian smart minds with innovative ideas, on subjects of common interest, such as smart cities or vocational education and training. So you'll see me back in Kolkata soon.

The official launch of "70 years of Swiss-Indian Friendship" will come at the end of August in Delhi, during Swiss President Doris Leuthard's State visit to India. This visit will allow both countries to project their close, broad and longstanding relationship into the future.

Today, over 250 Swiss companies are present in India. They have created more than 100'000 jobs. Switzerland is the 11th biggest foreign investor in India.

To go even further, the two countries are negotiating a new investment protection agreement. Talks are also ongoing towards the introduction of free trade. And Switzerland is supporting India's fight against "black money" by granting automatic exchange of information on fiscal matters.

And of course we are happy that more and more Indians travel to our country to relive some of the Bollywood scenarios, so deeply inscribed in the soul of almost every Indian.

Again, it is great to be here with you. And now let's celebrate together Switzerland's anniversary and Swiss-Indian Friendship!