

Swiss Ambassador's Award 2016, New Delhi, 17 March 2016

Address by H.E. Dr. Linus von Castelmur, Ambassador of Switzerland to India and Bhutan

Dear Suresh Narayanan, Managing Director Nestlé India,
dear Ranjit Shahani, President Swiss-Indian Chamber of Commerce,
dear Wolfgang Schanzenbach, Regional Director Asia Pacific S-GE,
dear Kanwar Rameshwar Singh Jamwal, Secretary General of Tata Enterprises,
dear awardees and representatives of Flisom AG, Jivana Vitality and Rieter India Pvt. Ltd.
ladies and gentleman, dear friends,

It is a great privilege for me to welcome, also on behalf of my wife Françoise, once again an illustrious selection of guests to this year's Swiss Ambassador's Award ceremony. The Swiss Ambassador's Award was established by former Ambassador Welti, who bestowed the first two awards to late Yash Chopra in 2010 and to Ratan Tata in 2011. Having been posted to New Delhi for four years myself now, I look back with a certain pride that during my tenure we could make a little tradition of this beautiful idea to honour an Indian personality for a significant contribution to the relationship between India and Switzerland. After having awarded the highly respected and successful entrepreneurs Glenn Saldanha, Raju Kanoria and Azim Premji over the last few years, we have slightly modified the format for this year's edition. This year, also in light of the Year of Swiss Innovation in India as well as in the framework of this week's Swiss Trade and Investment Promotion Road Show organized by the Swiss Business Hub in India, rather than a particular person, we decided to award a company that excelled with an initiative that enables innovative solutions that are highly relevant for India; and not just one company, but three of them, to be more precise.

Let me therefore quickly present the three companies.

The first awarded initiative is related to **Flisom AG**, a company which invented a flexible low cost light weight process for solar modules achieving world record efficiency. Flisom was founded in 2005 as a spin-off of the Laboratory of Solid State Physics of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich). As of 2015, Flisom continues its growth supported by 60+ employees. Flisom's R&D unit and manufacturing facility are both located near Zurich, Switzerland

This great innovation attracted a well-known and highly renowned Indian investor: Tata Industries. Tata Industries today is the main shareholder of Flisom. The fact that Tata invested in a company in Switzerland showcases that regards Switzerland as an important innovation hub. But there is also another highly relevant Swiss-Indian link: The founder & Chairman, Prof. Dr. Ayodhya N. Tiwari, earlier head of Photovoltaic and Thin Film Physics group at ETH Zurich, today professor, is of Indian origin. And while he is obviously well rooted in Switzerland, Professor Tiwari maintains his links with research in India, too. Within the framework of the Indo-Swiss Joint Research Programme Professor Tiwari has a research project with the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi. Together with Professor Bodh Raj Mehta, he is studying kesterite (a sulphide mineral), he is studying kesterite thin film solar cells to improve the efficiency of the solar cell beyond 12%. The eventual aim of the project is to contribute to develop the mineral into a robust, low-cost and sustainable photovoltaic technology. I am therefore very pleased that on behalf of Flisom Professor Tiwari will personally receive the Swiss Ambassador's Award tonight which is to honor this important Indo-Swiss innovation endeavor.

The second initiative which I am pleased to honor tonight focuses on a university driven project which aimed at providing affordable drinking water in semi-urban India. This project again being a fruitful Indo-Swiss collaboration, I was pleased when **Jivana Vitality** was presented to me.

In 2012, Yves Suter, Patrick Schlatter and Pascal Riboni participated in the “Doing Business in India” courses held by Prof. Dr. Roger Moser, Director of the India Competence Center at the University of St.Gallen, Switzerland, and Adjunct Professor at the Indian Institute of Management in Udaipur. There, the three students developed a business concept for a water shop that could potentially contribute to the supply of affordable drinking water in India.

As they had understood how strategically important social capital is in India, they had chosen Udaipur as the location for the pilot project. The academic relationship of the University of St.Gallen with IIM Udaipur offered the students the opportunity to benefit from the initial support of Prof. Janat Shah, Director of the Indian Institute of Management in Udaipur. In early 2014, the three students landed for the first time in Udaipur and started with the implementation of their business case for a water shop there. For this purpose they established a company in Switzerland and a subsidiary in India. Today, the water shop is successfully operating and offers the local population of Udaipur high quality drinking water at affordable prices. It thus also contributes to better health and consequently a better quality of life altogether of its consumers.

It deserves to be mentioned that this project is not only about water supply as such, but about doing so in a sustainable way preserving the long term availability of this precious source of life. By pairing their international expertise with the involvement of the local communities and integrating their knowledge and needs, Jivana Vitality managed to address the growing challenge of water scarcity in new innovative ways. By conferring the Swiss Ambassador’s award to this promising company I hope to add to their motivation to go much further than the long way they have already come.

Last but not least, to **Rieter India Pvt. Ltd.** As one of world’s leading textile machinery manufacturers and innovation leaders, the company has been connected to India for decades. Continuous large sales to India over years and the size of India as the second largest textile market triggered the decision at the beginning of 2005 to substantially invest into a manufacturing facility in this key market for the spinning industry.

A sophisticated, state-of-the-art production facility with efficient manufacturing processes is key to reach high levels of productivity. But it is not sufficient. To operate it according to the quality standards of a renowned multinational company and to match the output with customers’ demands in the industry also requires a highly qualified workforce. It is only natural then that with the decision for this significant investment in India, Rieter also foresaw the implementation of an in-house manufacturing skills training programme in order to build up a workforce with a thorough understanding of the Rieter production philosophy and quality requirements.

It was a happy coincidence that parallel to the setting up of the Rieter factory in Pune the so called Swiss Vocational Education and Training Initiative pilot project was launched in India by the Swiss authorities and the Swiss-Indian Chamber of Commerce (SICC), in order to explore whether the dual-based vocational education and training system practiced in Switzerland could be introduced to India. Rieter India Pvt. Ltd. was among the pioneering Swiss companies that participated in the pilot project from its inception. With partners like Swissmem and Skillsonics Rieter “walked the talk” of its continuous commitment to train multi-skilled production technicians, welders, electricians and CNC programmers in its on-site apprentice-workshop. More than 110 workers, including the current apprentices, have benefitted from this training since this programme started in 2008, thus acquiring and enhancing relevant skills. Reason enough for me to bestow the Swiss Ambassador’s Award to Rieter India Pvt. Ltd. for a highly effective implementation of the Swiss VET programme.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are so many facets to innovation as well as to Indo-Swiss collaboration. The three awardees of tonight only reflect a small portion of the wide variety of undertakings between people and institutions of our two countries. But I believe they are quite representative for some of the main challenges India is facing and for which so many individuals and groups try to find solutions. India needs more and cleaner energy, India needs clean and sufficient drinking water, a healthier population and a skilled workforce open for innovation.

You might argue that we are still talking of very small numbers here when compared to the sheer size of India's population. But remember that every sea started off as a small rivulet. When standing at its source, it is hard to imagine what it will grow into, the ocean it will eventually become. I firmly believe that the three companies and the visionary minds behind them that we are honouring tonight have embarked on potentially game changing journeys and it is only fair to give them, if not a decisive push, which is hardly what such an award can do, but at least a well-deserved recognition.

As you were told by our Master of Ceremony Deepti Sharma, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw unfortunately fell sick on a trip abroad and to our and her own great regret is therefore impeded from travelling to Delhi and giving us her laudatory speech. But Suresh Narayanan, Managing Director of Nestlé India agreed to pitch in on a very short notice. I am extremely grateful for this noble gesture, so a big thank you to you, Suresh.

Ladies and gentlemen, it's a big pleasure having you with us tonight! I hope that you will enjoy the evening. And with that, dear Suresh, over to you.