

**Embassy of India
Bern**

**Remarks by Ambassador on the occasion of the RD Reception
January 26, 2018**

Excellencies, Fellow Diplomats, Friends of India, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to welcome each one of you to celebrate the 69th Republic Day of India.

This is my first Republic Day celebrations in Switzerland. In the last two months, since the presentation of my credential in end November 2017, I met some of you in Bern, some of you in Zurich and Geneva, and many of you in Davos.

During his visit to Switzerland in June 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, I quote: “India and Switzerland have both been the voices of peace, understanding and humanitarian values in the world. In last seven decades, our friendship has consistently seen an upward trajectory.” Unquote.

Among those present here, I see a large number of friends of India, who have contributed to build a solid, vibrant and multifaceted forward looking relationship between India and Switzerland.

This year when we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Treaty of Friendship between India and Switzerland in 1948, I salute each one of you who contributed towards building this relationship.

Political leaders, Industry and Business leaders, Professors and Teachers, Medical and IT professionals, those in financial and banking sectors, health workers, practitioners of Ayurveda and Yoga, scholars, artists and sports lovers, those contributing to vocational training and skill development programmes. I thank each one of them for their support and contributions.

There have seen several high level exchanges between India and Switzerland in the last few years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Switzerland in June 2016, President of Switzerland was on a State visit to India in August 2017. Prime Minister visited Switzerland again in January this year during Davos.

Today, India is undergoing profound transformations. We continue to be the fastest growing democracy in the world. We have a democratically mandated leadership striving to develop an economy driven by smart and sustainable cities, robust farm sector, vibrant manufacturing and dynamic service sector. And, its engines to run on world class network of rail, roads, airports and digital connectivity.

In his budget speech yesterday, Finance Minister said, I quote: IMF, in its latest Update, has forecast that India will grow at 7.4% next year. Manufacturing sector is back on good growth path. The services, mainstay of our growth, have also resumed their high growth rates of 8% plus. We are now firmly on course to achieve high growth of 8% plus. Unquote.

Switzerland is among the most competitive countries in the world and can be partner for India, thanks to its capacity for innovation, its well-trained skilled labour, and high-end technology. We look forward to welcoming more Swiss companies to join India's march to progress.

I am happy to inform you that today we have launched a programme to assist Swiss SMEs to engage with India. I urge you to visit the next room.

I once again welcome each one of you to this evening. I now request Ambassador Mathiassi to say a few words.

Thank you.

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