



IN GOOD COMPANY: Union Commerce Minister Kamal Nath with Swiss officials at one of the bilateral meets

Blazing a new trail

Our bilateral ties with Switzerland are set to reach a new high, as both countries are equally keen on engaging themselves even more closely than before, writes **Shraddha Sawhney**



SOMETHING SPECIAL: CIBA Speciality Chemicals unit, Basel

Indo-Swiss relations date back to roughly one and a half centuries! The Swiss East Indian Company established its office in the year 1856. By the time India became independent in 1947, Swiss companies had presence in more than one sector - engineering, commodity trading, pharmaceuticals, food and beverages and power.

The two countries continue to be eager to strengthen and deepen bilateral relations. Indian President Abdul Kalam visited Switzerland in 2005 to strengthen trade ties. The then Swiss President also visited India in 2003 to give impetus to mutual cooperation in the field of science and technology.

On the economic side, the way things are moving, the Indo-Swiss trade is likely to expand. India's exports to Switzerland were worth \$480 million in 2005-06. India imports goods from Switzerland, to the tune of \$6,555 million.

More importantly, the shared deal doesn't cease at the economic front.

Indian films have been in awe of the stunning scenery of Switzerland, and the respective shootings in the exquisite and pleasing locations have always been indirectly boosting the flow of Indian tourists to Switzerland.

India and Switzerland both respect each other's cultural diversity and regularly interact on artistic fronts. Allahabad, Benaras and Kolkata universities had awarded doctorates to the Swiss psycho analyst Carl Gustav Jung way back in 1938. Alice Boner was fascinated by Indian architecture and sculpture in 1978 and carried out great scholarly work in these areas.

"I am really impressed by the economic development achieved by India in the last decade," said former Swiss Federal Councillor Joseph Deiss at a recent meet. Eager to promote bilateral trade between the two nations, this was his second visit to India, after 2002.

Deiss went on to add: "The world is indeed watching the growing econom-

ic strength of India. The current GDP growth of above 8 per cent is remarkable and we all know that the country has the potential to move on to higher growth rates."

As for Switzerland, it draws its muscle from a liberal market economy, centrally positioned location in Europe, a well grown tourism sector, a future-oriented research and development base, excellent infrastructure and a highly productive workforce.

The economy poses some complementarities which gel well with India. With a small domestic market, the proportion of Swiss exports to GDP is much higher in international comparison. The country is a major exporter of chemicals, machinery, precision instruments, clocks and watches, jewellery and vehicles.

Further, the nation deals less in mass production than in the development and production of high-value individual items. Around 99 per cent of registered companies in Switzerland belong to SME (Small



MACHINE POWER: Product of a joint venture on display

and Medium Enterprises) category. These are highly specialised, niche players, flexible and efficient units engaged in producing high quality branded items.

Switzerland is characterised by political stability, excellent infrastructure, high investment in communications and information technology, an efficient energy supply industry and conducive conditions for businesses.

Here's a culturally diverse country with people speaking four distinct languages-German (74 per cent), French (20 per cent), Italian (4 per cent) and Romansh (one per cent). All the ethnic groups intermingle well with each other and yet stick to their cultural roots by celebrating their respective festivals, reading their local newspapers and listen and watch their language-specific radio and television.

On the FDI front, Switzerland has been amongst the most preferred destinations for foreign investors due to a series of advantages. Be it a strategic location in the heart of Europe, long-term stability, legal security, good returns, dedicated professional labour force or a free market economy, reliable and highly developed financial centre, high-tech infrastructure and a modest tax system, Switzerland offers all these. This is the reason why, in spite of a small domestic market, Switzerland has attracted big names from Indian IT companies such as Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Wipro, Satyam and Polaris.



PANORAMIC VIEW: The cable car from Fraekmuentegg to Pilatus Kulm

India and Switzerland both respect each other's cultural diversity and regularly interact on artistic fronts.

The Similarities

Don't let the superficial difference of rich and poor take hold. The similarities between the two nations are far too many, despite one being developing and the other being from the developed face of the globe.

Both the nations can take pride in a deep-rooted democratic system. The two also share multi-language and diverse cultural setup, making them more open and acceptable societies. Both have open, market driven economies, though that of Switzerland dates back to a much longer time, as evinced from the fact that it attained an Independent Nation status in the year 1291.

On the academic front, both the countries are blessed with excellent education systems.

Partnerships and alliances are increasing between various industrial sectors of India and Switzerland. These joint cooperations are primarily in the areas of basic and applied sciences, biotechnology, engineering, knowledge based services and R&D.

Kapil Sibal, India's Minister for Science and Technology, met Pascal Couchepin, Swiss Federal Councillor for Home Affairs in November 2006 to discuss future cooperation areas. As a result, joint research projects are being carried out in areas of life sciences, information technology and application and nanoscience and technology. There is also a proposal for the establishment of centres of excellence especially in the areas of micro-engineering at IIT-Delhi and micro-electronics at IIT-Allahabad in collaboration with EPFL (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Lausanne).

Trade Winds

During 2005-06, India's imports from Switzerland grew by 10.4 per cent to reach \$6,555 million. During the previous year 2004-05, India's exports to Switzerland increased by 20 per cent. During the five year period of 2001-02 to 2005-06, the total trade between the two nations has more than doubled from \$3279.85 million in 2001-02 to \$7,035.32 million in 2005-06. These are definitely encouraging figures.

Swiss companies have always found India a lucrative investment destination



RADIOTHERAPY: Cancer treatment using radioactive atomic nuclei



TALL AFFAIR: Basel Messeturm

and a place to set up shop. Swiss origin companies like ABB and Nestle started operations here decades back, even before India attained independence.

Some 140-plus Indo-Swiss alliances are operating in India today, either through the JV (Joint Venture) route or as Indian subsidiaries. These are in diverse fields such as engineering and industrial equipment, chemical and pharmaceutical, precision instruments, services and textile.

Switzerland is the tenth largest foreign investor in India, bringing in \$579 million worth of FDI from 1991 to September 2005. "Actual direct investment inflows from Swiss companies should be in the range of \$3 billion, as many of these investments have been routed through Mauritius and therefore have not been included in the aforesaid official data," said Dominique Dreyer, Swiss Ambassador in India in an exclusive interview to **India Now**.

Swiss technology-driven companies have a major role in trade and investment flows to India, and in the years to come, the partnership is further likely to be strengthened as a strong and vigorous Indian economy is attracting far greater attention of Swiss companies.

Switzerland is interested to be a partner of Indian companies seeking to invest abroad, especially in services and high-tech manufacturing sectors, says Deiss. In fact the Swiss State Secretary Jean-Daniel Gerber visited India last year

Swiss SMEs invest huge amounts of funds to innovate and stay ahead in the market and develop new products and services.

to, among a few other important issues, educate potential Indian investors on investment opportunities and incentives available in Switzerland.

Switzerland is playing a key role in modernisation of Indian textile mills, supplying sophisticated machinery to India with high technology content. The Swiss textile machinery industry is credited with providing realistic, modern and steadfast technology solutions to the Indian textile industry. Last year a delegation of 40 Swiss textile machinery manufacturers toured India and held three symposia in Delhi, Mumbai and Coimbatore. In their presentations, the representatives of 18 Swiss textile machinery companies emphasised the scope of partnership for supplying world class technology to Indian textile indus-

try, in order to provide an increasingly demanding world market with competitive top-class products.

Let's now take a look at research and development initiatives. In a very novel way, India is offering a great pool of R&D facilities for Swiss companies, including Novartis, in the pharmaceuticals sector. Alongside, Indian companies are also keenly exploring R&D alliances in Switzerland.

On the Intellectual Property Rights front, patent laws are being modified in India. This is a promising move as it is likely to pave the way for more Swiss investment, especially from the knowledge based sectors. Swiss companies in the service sector would also welcome a further opening in this field. It is well known that the niche based Swiss SMEs invest huge amounts of funds to innovate and stay ahead in the market and develop new products and services.

Undoubtedly biotechnology is one of the main areas of Indo Swiss cooperation. The Indo-Swiss Collaboration in Biotechnology (ISCB) programme was initiated in 1974. In September 1999, India and Switzerland signed a five-year bilateral agreement, which defined the framework for the new ISCB programme. The project received substantial funding from Switzerland and India for the five year period. This agreement is continued in the current phase through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two governments. The

'SWISS MARKET IS OPEN FOR INDIAN GOODS AND SERVICES'

Dominique Dreyer, Swiss Ambassador in India, is quite upbeat on bilateral ties between his country and ours growing from 'strength to strength'.

The following is his response to an INDIA NOW interaction.

India's bilateral trade with Switzerland is on the increase. Are there steps being initiated by your Government to increase the offtake of goods and services from India?

First of all, I would like to mention that the bilateral trade between Switzerland and India is booming. It grew from Swiss Francs 1.16 billion in 2002 to 2.02 billion in 2005, an increase of 75 per cent in three years. In 2006, our bilateral trade flows achieved even greater growth rate, and this trend is continuing. The Swiss economy is heavily dependent upon foreign trade, and there are organisations funded by my government to help increase our foreign trade. Osec Business Network Switzerland with its network partner – Swiss Business Hub in India – is helping Swiss SMEs to establish business partnerships with Indian companies. For promoting import from emerging economies, including India, Swiss Import Promotion Programme (SIPPO) is active, and it has recently signed an MOU with Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) in India to facilitate long term cooperation between Swiss importers and Indian organic shrimp producers. I must add here that the Swiss market is very open for Indian goods and services due to low level of import duties and taxes.

Banking, engineering and pharmaceutical are sectors, among others, in which Switzerland excels. With Indian economy doing extremely well, these are among the areas with tremendous potential for foreign investment and growth. What is Switzerland's take on these?

I am pleased to inform you that many Swiss engineering, chemical and pharmaceutical companies have been present in India for decades; however, since 1991 there has been a good increase in Swiss direct investments in India. At present, some 140-150 joint ventures or 100 per cent subsidiaries of Swiss companies are operating in diverse fields in

India. The Swiss banks are very much interested in the Indian market and some big names are already present here, e.g. UBS, Credit Suisse and Zürich Kantonal Bank. However, Swiss banks are still not active in India's retail banking segment, and would like to have more opening in this area.

Companies like ABB, Nestle etc are household names in India what with their presence being marked here several decades ago. Are there any other leading groups, which are eyeing India? If so, could you please elaborate including about the fields in which they are interested?

As the Indian economy continues to grow robustly, new business opportunities have been emerging in the country since the past many years. Such healthy development has worked as a stimulant to attract foreign investors, including Swiss investors. Talking about other leading groups from Switzerland, I can mention Holcim in the cement sector, and Unique Airport (Zürich) in infrastructure sector. These are some of the new entrants from Switzerland and are looking for greater business opportunities here.

You are well aware that Switzerland is famous for its high-technology and knowledge-based entrepreneurship. Swiss economy is dominated by SMEs (those having employees strength up to 250), which constitute about 99 per cent of the total number of companies. Most of the big companies from Switzerland are already present in India, but lately more and more Swiss SMEs especially engaged in fields such as engineering, services, and food processing are also eyeing the Indian market.

India is an important outsourcing hub. Many companies across the globe and over a broad spectrum of industries are taking advantage of India's tested capabilities in respective fields. Are any such plans in the offing with Swiss compa-



nies outsourcing part of their manufacture to India?

Many Swiss companies are already outsourcing to India in the fields of IT services, and as India's manufacturing capabilities are moving up on quality parameters, there is definitely a greater interest from Swiss companies to outsource to Indian manufacturers. To give a few examples, watch parts, machinery parts and chemicals are currently being outsourced to Indian companies.

Switzerland ranks tenth in the list of countries investing in India. But with less than \$600 million in investment here over the last 15 years, won't you agree there is need for a scale up?

Yes, you are right in mentioning the figure of some \$ 600 million during the last 15 years, but this is the official figure. We believe that the actual direct investment inflows from Swiss companies should be in the range of \$3 billion, as many of these investments have been routed through Mauritius and therefore have not been included in the aforesaid official data. As there is still a big potential to be tapped in India, I am convinced that the Swiss direct investments in India will continue to increase in the years to come.

What are the Swiss government's plan

to woo more tourists, Indian tourists? Also, are there any new initiatives to woo the Indian film industry, which is scouting for location across the globe?

India remains an important emerging market for Switzerland tourism sector, and I am pleased to share with you that during the period January-November 2006, we have witnessed 23 per cent increase in the Indian tourists travelling to Switzerland, as compared to the same period of 2005. The tourism industry in Switzerland is aware about the special needs of Indian travellers, for example Indian vegetarian food is available at many tourist points. Switzerland and Bollywood have a strong and warm relationship nurtured over the past many decades. For Indian film industry, Swiss government has a dedicated unit – Film Location Switzerland - which offers assistance for film shooting. Specifically, there is a “Scouting Package” available to select Indian producers who would like to shoot movies in Switzerland.

Would you like to elaborate on some recent initiatives/developments aimed to strengthen the Swiss-Indian trade and investment relations?

As a part of further strengthening Swiss-Indian trade and economic ties, recently, we have had the visit of a Swiss delegation consisting of representatives of Location Switzerland and Cantonal economic promotion agencies to India (Bangalore and Hyderabad) to explore possibilities of greater presence of Indian biotechnology and ICT companies in Switzerland. We also have had the visit of a delegation from Swiss rail industry, which had useful meetings in Delhi, Mumbai and Lucknow to explore possibilities of collaboration with Indian railways.

Furthermore, Swiss Forum for International Business, an important annual event for Swiss companies engaged in international business, has chosen India as the “partner country” this year. The event will be held in March 2007 in Zürich, and it will provide an excellent platform to help bring closer more and more Swiss and Indian companies.



MEETING IN PROGRESS: Ample scope to increase two-way trade

most promising leads from this phase were followed up in a second phase, which will end this year. The overall responsibility for the programme is held by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in Berne and by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) in New Delhi. The costs of the Indo-Swiss programme are shared between these agencies according to a bilateral agreement. The Programme Management is currently located at the EPF Lausanne.

The main areas of cooperation under the ISCB's mandate are to develop products and biotechnological processes, which have an impact on poverty reduction and sustainable management of natural resources in India, to focus on innovative technologies in agriculture and environmental research and to build capacities and R&D partnerships between Swiss and Indian institutions and private companies with strong economic, social, and ecological relevance.

Distinctively on the agricultural front, collaborations have taken place over the years in improving soil quality, de-

veloping bio pesticides and insect resistance plants for Indian crops and plant disease resistance. Success of all these projects lies in the fact that qualified scientists from both the countries have been tirelessly and consistently working on them over the past few decades. The technology transfer has ensured that farmers practically apply all the solutions and end results of the concerned projects.

In the auto components sector too, the two nations have complementarities. “The innovative technologies and products developed by Swiss automotive producers and the cost competitive facilities in India can be combined to draw mutually beneficial deals”, says Deiss. “In another knowledge-based area, that is information technology, Swiss companies are increasingly accessing Indian high skills in software and related services,” he goes on to add.

Very successful cooperation also exists in the service sector. Swiss companies have transferred valuable know-how to India in such fields as tourism,



MOTOR SHOW: The 73rd Geneva international motor show held at the Palexpo exhibition hall

In the auto components sector too, the two nations have complementarities.

re-insurance and engineering services.

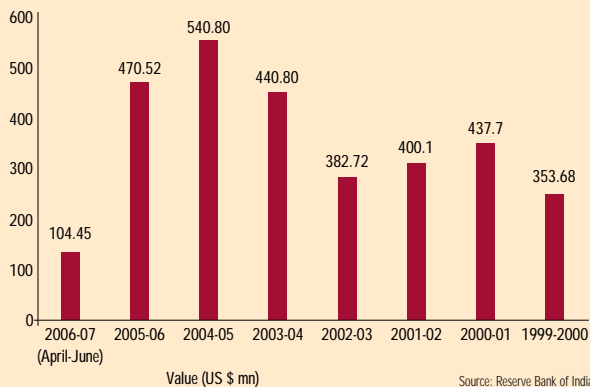
India's insurance market offers great potential, with premiums between now and 2010 forecast to grow at an average real rate of 8.3 per cent per annum in the non-life sector and an average real rate of 13.5 per cent per annum in the life sector. Non-life insurance penetration in India stands at about 0.55 per cent and life insurance penetration at about 1.77 per cent.

In December last year, SwissRe, the world's leading reinsurer company, signed an agreement with TTK Group and India Value Funds Advisors (IVF)

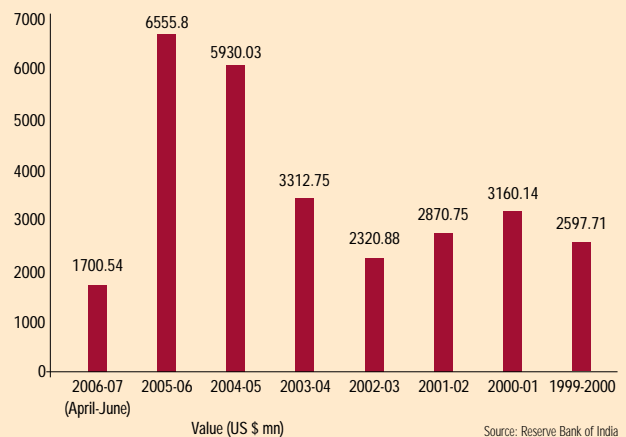
to purchase a 26 per cent stake in TTK Healthcare Services Pvt Ltd (TTKHCS), one of India's leading health insurance third party administrators. Martyn Parker, Member of SwissRe's Executive Board and CEO for Asia added, "The move represents our commitment to the region and a milestone in SwissRe's strategy to enter the medical reinsurance business in Asia. We look forward to broadening our offering and providing further support to our clients." The company started its Indian operations in 1998.

Coming over to Switzerland and India's cooperation in the context of WTO,

India's exports to Switzerland



India's imports from Switzerland





RETAIL TALE: Naturaplan products displayed at Coop retail group of Switzerland

services and geographical indication represent two common areas of interest. “Indeed, India plays a very constructive role in the ongoing negotiation on services and I am grateful to Minister Nath, as one of the main promoters of that negotiation, for his active participation in this process,” says Deiss. He goes on to add, “In the field of geographical indications, India and Switzerland both want to achieve a better protection of their original products by extending the higher protection currently reserved to wines and spirits to all other products. Our common goal is to give an added

value and competitive advantage in the international markets to our traditional quality products which are special due to their geographical origin. I am thinking in particular of goods such as rice, tea and spices—obviously of particular interest to you—or watches and cheese, which are among our most appreciated consumer products.”

Today, Swiss companies like Nestle, Ciba, ABB, Basel pharma industry, Sulzer, EMS Inventa, Specialty Chemicals, Rieter, Electrowatt, Novartis, Alusuisse, Bühler, etc. are household names in India. Kuoni in the tourism sector and

SwissRe in insurance are making a profound impact in their respective fields. “Moreover, with the opening of the insurance sector and the encouragement of foreign institutional investment into India, the Swiss insurance, re-insurance and wealth management businesses, though relative newcomers to the Indian scene, are now present,” expresses Sushil K. Premchand, managing director of Preroy AG, a Zurich based consulting firm trying to bridge the gap between Indian firms and Swiss SMEs.

Several Indian companies are also making their mark in Switzerland such as TATA AG, Birla AG, Ramco, Infosys, Wipro and TCS.

From time to time, Swiss Government has also provided the grants to various Indian projects, for the private sector and NGOs. For instance, in 2005, Neriymangalam Hydro Electricity Project of Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) was implemented under the Swiss Mixed Credit Agreement towards a credit disbursement of \$20 million.

Labour Force

It’s no longer a secret that India has a pool of highly skilled labour force, including that of computer scientists and programmers. Global standards of Indian universities and technical and engineering schools have stood the test of time

India and Switzerland

Year	Event
1948	Establishment of diplomatic relations
1959	Indo Swiss Joint Commission (ISJC) established
1966	Indo-Swiss Agreement on Technical and Scientific Cooperation
1974	Indo-Swiss Collaboration in Biotechnology (ISCB) programme initiated
1995	Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation signed
1997	Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement
1999	Agreement on Indo-Swiss Collaboration in Biotechnology
2000	Agreement for Promotion and Protection of Investments (APPI)
2001	Agreement relating to cooperation in Air Services
2003	Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology
2004	Ninth meeting of ISJC held in New Delhi
2006	Executive programme of cooperation (POC) for the period 2006-2010
2008	Two countries to celebrate 60th anniversary of bilateral ties

* Source: Indian High Commission, Switzerland and Swiss Embassy, New Delhi.

THE ROLEX AWARDS FOR ENTERPRISE

The programme reflects the company's long-held commitment to individual excellence and its tradition of supporting talent and achievement



ROLEX LAUREATE: Chanda Shroff with filmmaker Mira Nair

THE Rolex Awards for Enterprise, presented every two years to ten enterprising individuals - Laureates and Associate Laureates—aim to encourage a spirit of enterprise in visionary men and women around the globe by providing the financial support and recognition they need to implement innovative, working projects that advance human knowledge and well-being.

Rolex established the Awards in 1976 to mark the 50th anniversary of its own greatest innovation, the Oyster chronometer, the world's first waterproof wrist watch. For each series, Rolex commits a total of US\$ 675,000 in prize money towards the 10 awards.

The prize-winners' wide-ranging projects share the common goal of improving life on our planet. Selected by an independent panel of experts, the Laureates are recognised for their contributions to science, technology, the environment, exploration and cultural heritage. According to Patrick Heiniger, chief executive officer of Rolex SA and chairman of the Awards Selection Committee, "It is this invincible spirit that underpins the Rolex Awards and makes us proud of our association with these enterprising men and women."

In judging applications, the Selection Committee determines primarily whether the candidates show exceptional spirit of enterprise. Projects are also judged on the basis of their feasibility, originality, and potential impact on the world and on society. Finally, the Selection Committee also considers the extent to which a Rolex Award will contribute to the completion of the project. Applications for the Rolex Awards for Enterprise can be submitted by anyone of any age or nationality.

Chanda Shroff was chosen as a Laureate of the Rolex Awards, 2006, for starting a movement through 'Shrujan' an organisation set up to help revive the dying craft of embroidery and create a sustainable income for rural women in the region of Kutch, Gujarat.

In the past, two Indians have been selected as Associate Laureates in the Rolex Awards for Enterprise. Capt. Gopinath, the founder of Air Deccan won the Award in 1996 for his project on ecological silk farming. In 2004, Wildlife Film-maker, Shekhar Dattatri, was honoured for using his camera to bring attention to the fate of India's forests and natural heritage.

In India, the world's second most populous country, the fate of forests, wilderness and wild creatures often hangs by a thread in the face of human need and shortsighted exploitation. Based in Chennai, independent filmmaker Shekar Dattatri, creator of poignant nature documentaries, has turned his camera to the cause of informing his fellow citizens and government of what must be done to save the remnants of India's natural heritage.

The most recent and only Laureate (Capt Gopinath and Shekhar Dattatri were Associate Laureates) from India so far, Chanda Shroff is determined to bequeath a legacy that will survive for thousands of years to come, a magnificent art form that provides, in her words, "a support system for home-based women, as well as a reminder of the creativity and potential inherent in all women."

The painstaking and beautiful craft of hand embroidery dates back several thousand years. Known for its intricate and diverse styles, Kutchi embroidery has, since the 1960s, suffered a decline due to a modern emphasis on speed and profit, and a growing reliance on machinery and synthetic fabrics. Chanda Shroff, aged 73, has worked tirelessly and voluntarily for almost four decades to reverse this decline. Today 'Shrujan', based near Bhuj, the capital of Kutch, has directly benefited more than 22,000 women from 120 villages, and all castes across Kutch. Shroff is also organising self-help groups to train craftswomen to gradually assume the roles of designers, saleswomen, entrepreneurs and teachers.

'Shrujan' has given them a platform to express their hidden inner strengths. In a traditionally patriarchal society, the income they now earn means male dominance is starting to decrease; women who previously had to live their entire lives within four walls are now standing up for them-



selves and saying that they will now go out, not only from their houses, but also their villages.

A cornerstone of Shroff's vision has been an unwavering commitment to the quality that is central to the Kutchi embroidery tradition, despite the conditions in which many of the people live. "I was deeply shaken by the plight of the Kutchi people and especially the women," she says of her initial encounters with them. "Here were a people reduced to utter helplessness and dependency, even while they possessed in their hands and minds skills such as few others could claim." Rejecting the modern preference for synthetic materials, the craftswomen primarily use silk and cotton to create high-quality products for fashion and decoration.

Each craftswoman is encouraged to stitch her name into each piece of embroidery, and, in doing so her role as artist and guardian of a unique cultural heritage is reinforced. The national recognition they now receive and the income from the sale of the embroidery have brought them deep respect in their communities. The steady flow of revenue from outside customers whom Shroff has found to buy the products is slowly uplifting the status of wom-

en, allowing them to invest in land, pay for health care and improve their families' nutrition levels.

Chanda Shroff plans to invest the Rolex Awards prize money in a mobile resource centre, being set up by her to take selected panels to the craftswomen, many of whom are not permitted to leave their villages. Trained facilitators will accompany the unit, and videos, photographs and monographs will be prepared for each embroidery style, including demonstrations on how to execute the designs, explanations of the natural and cultural influences that inform these styles, and biographies of the craftswomen.

A preliminary collection of 50 panels has already been taken to nine villages. "This seemingly ordinary act has had a dramatic – almost explosive – impact on the village communities," Shroff explains. "Exhibiting the panels led the women, both young and old, to look at themselves and their skills in an entirely new way. That Kutchi embroidery could be so rich and diverse in expression, that such exquisite work is possible in present times, that women like themselves could produce such high-quality work – this has been a revelation to the villagers."

'COMBINE THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS'



Q&A with Ravi Uppal, Vice Chairman & Managing Director, ABB India, and Head – South Asia-Pacific region

ABB has got a long standing presence in India. How has the company evolved itself over the years? What is ABB's presence and main lines of business in India today?

The company's origins in India go back over half a century. We have grown with India through tough times and the good years. We have brought many new technologies to India, be it to help build the power infrastructure or facilitate Indian industry in becoming globally competitive.

Today ABB is rated among India's blue-chip companies and recognised as a market leader in power and automation technologies. The company is listed on major Indian stock exchanges, is among the Nifty 50 and has over 5,000 employees. The operations include an extensive local manufacturing presence across 10 units, 28 marketing offices, 8 service centres and a national network of over 750 channel partners, ensuring geographical reach and penetration for its standard products across the country. ABB has a corporate R&D centre and a global engineering

centre in Bangalore as well. ABB's entire business portfolio is represented in India, across all five divisions—Power Products, Power Systems, Automation Products, Building Solutions, Process Automation and Robotics.

How does India fit into ABB's global strategy?

ABB in India is among the fastest growing operations in the Group and an important part of the company's global footprint. India has also been designated as the hub for the South Asia region. Besides maximising the promising market opportunity presented by India, ABB remains committed to leverage the Indian operations for projects, products and services within the country and globally.

When it comes to Asia as an investment destination, how do you compare India to China?

For ABB, it's a case of India and China. Both countries have their respective strengths and are emerging as global economic superpowers. While India derives strength from its efficient private sec-

tor, high quality human capital and slow but functional institutions, China on the other hand has been more successful in attracting higher foreign direct investment, implementing faster infrastructure development and sustaining high exports to the West.

Considering the tremendous impetus given by the last two successive Indian Governments to the infrastructure sector including power, what do you see as the key priorities for the Indian power sector?

The Indian power sector is at crucial crossroads today and radical change is now inevitable. India has an installed capacity of less than 150,000 MW (including captive) and among the lowest per capita consumption in the world (about 500 units compared with a global average of 2600 units and China at 1100 units). Only 55 per cent of households across the country have access to electricity and more than 100,000 villages are still to be electrified. So the demand side is clear.

Though capacity addition is of importance, it is equally important for the country to utilise power efficiently and conserve energy because power is an expensive and highly capital intensive proposition – be it generation, transmission or distribution.

What is your advice to Swiss companies who are planning to invest in India?

For any international company investing in India, this is without doubt a promising destination. India has much to offer - as a market, as a sourcing base and, of course, as a knowledge and human resource centre. Our financial system, patent regime, manpower strengths and competitive positioning can all be leveraged alongwith what promises to be one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Of course one needs to be patient, especially with the infrastructure challenges which are also being resolved, slowly though surely. Swiss companies will particularly find synergies with India's technical orientation, managerial acumen and work ethic, providing a strong corporate mindset. The best advice is to combine the best of both worlds by bringing many of the strengths, which have made Swiss businesses world-class and at the same time leveraging the many advantages that India has to offer.



POWER PLAY: Windturbines, courtesy BKW FMB Energy Ltd

in churning out more than 200,000 computer science graduates each year.

“The father of modern India, Nehru, was the one who developed and promoted computer science training,” says the head of the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC) in New Delhi, Kurt Fögele.

India is home to six urban technical colleges – similar to Switzerland’s Federal Institutes of Technology in Lausanne and Zurich – as well as 32 regional engineering schools.

Tourism Sector

Recent reports suggest that Switzerland Tourism is aggressively targeting South India to increase the number of arrivals from this region to Switzerland. During December last year, a team of a dozen plus corporate representatives from Interlaken Tourism, Mystry Park Glacier Express, Zurich Airport and Swiss International Airlines, among others, came to India on a promotional campaign. The number of Indian tourists to Switzer-

At present, some 140-150 joint ventures or 100 per cent subsidiaries of Swiss companies are operating in diverse fields in India.

land is steadily increasing in the range of 15-20 per cent every year for the past 2-3 years. Needless to say, apart from tourists, Switzerland is a hot destination for Indian film producers, specially for those scouting for romantic and beautiful scenery.

The Road Ahead

Thus Switzerland and India have a lot to gain in working together at different levels. The two together have to find more and more mutually beneficial business deals, expanding trade and investment in both directions.

“A significant area of opportunity that needs to be addressed in more detail is the need for the Swiss SMEs to expand their presence in India,” feels Premchand, who is also President of the Swiss-Indian Chamber of Commerce (SICC).

Future potential areas of cooperation could also be business process outsourcing, agri-food processing and health. As India gets transformed into an industrialised nation, there are plenty of opportunities for alliances with the Swiss nation.

“India and Switzerland have the potential to increase mutual trade and investment by a stupendous 200 per cent in the coming three years,” sums up Deiss. Something worth the wait! 🌈