

## MESSAGE



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TO THAILAND

This first of August 2009 is indeed very special for me, as it will be the last Swiss national day I spend here in Thailand. After three and a half years in the Land of Smiles, I will have to say "la kon krap" soon. The end of my assignment in Thailand gives me the opportunity to look back upon what has been an intensive and colourful period of time.

First and foremost, I am truly grateful for having had the honour and privilege to share numerous very special events with the Royal Family of Thailand. To have been able to attend the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's coronation, as well as His Majesty's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary, undoubtedly belong to those rare and unforgettable moments in the career of a diplomat.

Sadly, with the passing away of Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani Vadhana last year, Switzerland also lost a true and close friend. Together with His Majesty the King and their brother, the late King Ananda Mahidol, Princess Galyani Vadhana had spent many years in Switzerland during her youth and remained an admirer of my country throughout her life. We miss her very much.

The personal ties linking the Thai Royal Family to Switzerland are but the most prominent example of the longstanding and strong bilateral relations between our two countries. These vibrant relations were underlined three years ago when we were commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our two countries' official diplomatic relations.

Last year, 143,000 Swiss citizens visited Thailand, which is 16% more than when I first arrived here in 2006. Swiss tourists appreciate good quality services and hospitality, which makes them come back again once they have discovered the 'Thai flavour'. Actually, we know that 75% of the Swiss visitors are not 'first-timers', but have been to Thailand before. This makes me feel confident that Thailand will continue to attract my fellow Swiss citizens in the future, even though the economic outlook currently isn't quite the same as it used to be.

Many Swiss tourists also appreci-

ated the solidarity of the Thai people when they were stuck during the airport closure last November. Our embassy set up an emergency phone line for stranded Swiss citizens and handled more than a thousand information requests and various media enquiries. For instance, thanks to the assistance by the embassy, a pregnant woman could be flown out urgently.

Similarly, in the other direction, Switzerland continues to be a destination of choice for Thai citizens. Last year, 36,000 Thai visitors travelled to Switzerland. Moreover, around 9,000 Thai citizens are currently living in Switzerland, and 6,000 Swiss citizens have settled down in Thailand. These figures, too, have increased roughly by one third since I have begun my assignment in Thailand.

Trade relations have also been intensified during the past years with a number of new Swiss investments and joint-ventures here in Thailand.

I have also witnessed many cultural highlights: twice the Zurich Ballet in the framework of Bangkok's International Festival of Dance & Music, jazz bands, folk music, chamber music by the Swiss Piano Trio in collaboration with the Bangkok Symphony Orchestra BSO, and many others. And this year, See Siang Wong, a young and promising artist with Asian roots living in Zurich, performed in the Kingdom. The embassy has also helped in organising workshops with young Thai musicians, in cooperation with BSO. In March, Switzerland was among the guests of honour at this year's Bangkok International Book Fair, attracting a remarkable crowd of 1.6 million visitors.

Later on this year, during a special 'Swiss focus' at the World Film Festival (6-15 November 2009), Bangkokians will have a unique opportunity to see a selection of recent Swiss film productions on the big screen at Siam Paragon, as well as a retrospective of one of the most famous Swiss filmmakers of all times, Alain Tanner.

It is never easy to leave a place like home, and Thailand has certainly made me feel at home. I am convinced that the friendship between our two countries will continue to prosper under my successor. As for myself, please let me once again thank all of you, Thai and Swiss citizens alike, for your support and friendship. *Khop khun maak krap! Sawadee krap!*

### Embassy of Switzerland

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# Swiss National Day

## The Swiss Economic Presence in Thailand



With no natural resources except water from glaciers, lakes and rivers, and as a small internal market, the Swiss economy is almost totally dependent on exports of products and services which have a high degree of added value. Switzerland is one of the world's top 20 exporters. Swiss industry is particularly competitive in the supply of highly specialised machine tools, high quality chemicals, pharmaceutical products and sophisticated watches, as well as environmental and alternative energy so-

lutions and different sectors of services such as engineering, hotel management and wealth management. Swiss direct investment abroad is the fourth highest in the world as a proportion of gross domestic product.

The trade volume of imports and exports combined between Switzerland and Thailand stands at over 60 billion baht a year and is growing. Switzerland is a major investor in Thailand and among the top 10 foreign direct investors in most ASEAN countries.

Evidencing the good relationship between Switzerland and Thailand, the CEO of the Swiss Trade & Investment Promotion, Mr. Daniel Kueng, visited Thailand in June 2009, together with Regional Director Asia Pacific Mr. Thomas Wicki. The delegation met

with representatives of the Thai government, the business community and the Swiss-Thai Chamber of Commerce ([www.swissthai.com](http://www.swissthai.com)).

"We see an upswing in exports as Swiss SMEs have increased their export activities and increased demand for information about Thailand and other ASEAN countries," said Mr. Kueng. "The Osec website [www.osec.ch](http://www.osec.ch) counts 70,000-75,000 qualified visits each month, so there is an obvious need for our organisation."

### Points of contact abroad: Swiss Business Hubs

Swiss Business Hubs (SBH) are set up as local centres of excellence in growth and key markets in close cooperation with the trade and business services of

Swiss embassies and Swiss chambers of commerce.

SBH ASEAN, present in Bangkok, assists Swiss companies in strengthening and developing their business relations in Southeast Asia. SBH ASEAN is the Swiss government's step-by-step business consulting agency and part of the Office of the Trade and Investment Promotion of Switzerland. It provides support for Swiss SME companies looking to develop their international activities. Swiss SMEs benefit from its widespread network of contacts in the ASEAN region and receive direct access to major business players and experts ([www.PoolOfExperts.ch](http://www.PoolOfExperts.ch)). For more information see [www.osec.ch](http://www.osec.ch).

### SWISS DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

## Small projects sponsored by the Swiss Embassy

The three pillars of the Swiss development cooperation policy aim at reducing poverty, guaranteeing human safety and security and shaping globalisation in a way that fosters development. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has an important regional programme for the Mekong area, with a main focus on Lao PDR.

Notwithstanding the fact that Thailand is about to become a donor state, the Swiss Embassy in Bangkok also supports small projects on a case by case basis. Recent examples of support include a project focussing on the eradication of the abuse of children by the Swiss NGO Lotus Flower Foundation (LFF). LFF is establishing an LFF Academy, a non-profit hub, scheduled to open in Nonthaburi in September 2009. The academy will train shelter care-givers from shelters throughout Thailand that work with abused children 12 and under. The goal of this training is to prevent reoccurring abuse and optimise the orphans' reintegration process into society.



Another example is the embassy's support for the construction of a new permanent compound for the Child Protect and Development Center (CPDC) in Pattaya. The CPDC is committed to safeguarding street and slum children at risk



of abuse, through education, skill training, healthcare recreational activities and nutrition. More information can be found at: [www.thelotusflowerfoundation.org](http://www.thelotusflowerfoundation.org) and [www.hhnthailand.org](http://www.hhnthailand.org).

## The Consular Section of the Embassy of Switzerland

The Swiss Community in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Burma counts more than 6,200 members, in addition to numerous tourists from Switzerland that visit Thailand each month. As such, the Consular Section deals with a variety of issues, including passports, ID cards, visas, legalisation, confirmations of civil status, social welfare, repatriation and others. As a result of the globalisation, the number of cases requiring assistance and consular matters has increased significantly.

In December 2008, Switzerland adhered to the Schengen Area, thereby facilitating travel for Thai citizens visiting both Switzerland and other European countries which are part of Schengen. This has also brought about certain changes in the visa application procedures. Nevertheless, the Visa Section of the embassy has so far issued approximately the same number of visas as before the change.

For more information please visit [www.eda.admin.ch/bangkok](http://www.eda.admin.ch/bangkok).

## Switzerland's direct democracy

Despite its limited territorial area and population size, Switzerland presents an amazing cultural wealth through its diverse religions, cultures and languages. It is a country in which well-rooted traditions characterise each valley and region, thereby enriching the Swiss cultural patchwork.

In view of such diversity, we can wonder how Switzerland managed to go through its seven centuries-long history without falling apart. The strong political involvement from which all citizens benefit through the instruments of direct democracy undoubtedly constitutes an essential element in explaining this astonishing national cohesion.

Thanks to the opportunities offered to Swiss citizens to directly participate in the decision-making process, and due to



the relatively weak central political power, the Swiss people can be considered as the supreme political authority of the country. Thanks to the instruments of 'initiative' and 'referendum', the population has the right either to propose new laws or constitutional amendments or to challenge newly drafted laws by popular vote. If such tools may sometimes have the effect

of delaying the political process, they are also strengthening it by offering the population possibilities to express new ideas stemming from a large variety of different cultural horizons.

In the absence of a real political opposition due to the consensual governmental system prevailing in Switzerland, it is therefore the people themselves who have the last word on all major decisions. Beyond constraining the political actors towards seeking compromises likely to satisfy all involved parties, direct democracy tends also to promote an open dialogue and respect for others' conceptions and ways of living. This long-running process developed over centuries has encouraged the willingness to bridge differences and to respect minorities by safeguarding such diversities within national unity.

## High energy musical performance in Bangkok



The Embassy of Switzerland is proud to present yet another thrilling Swiss music performance this year at Bangkok's 11th International Festival of Dance & Music. Last year, audiences enjoyed the beauty of Zurich Ballet's "Winds in the Void" and the jazz compositions of Bconnected. This year they will get to enjoy the energy of STARCH who will perform in the first part of an Evening of Jazz on 1 October 2009.

Led by Simon Winiger (bass and vocals) and Chris Raxx (sax, vocals, rap), the seven-member group compose their own songs and have developed a style over the past ten years which defies con-



vention. Aptly named "STARCHmusic" by their fans, it is best described as 'funk/rock/jazz/hiphop' delivered with high energy. In the last few years, STARCH has played in more than 200 Swiss shows, including the Montreux Jazz Festival and St. Gallen, and have toured through Europe. This is the first year STARCH will perform outside Europe.

Songs from their recent album *Music* and their previous album *Freak City* (2006) will be performed. For *Music* they spent several months writing, choosing and rehearsing the songs in the Swiss Alps as well as in an old mill in the middle of nowhere in France. Together with the exceptional studio work of Ralf Christian Mayer (Die Fantastischen Vier, Clueso...), the album succeeds in showing their authentic sound and character.

STARCH will perform during Bangkok's 11th International Festival of Dance & Music, in the first part of an Evening of Jazz on 1 October 2009. The show starts at 7.30 pm. The venue is the Thailand Cultural Centre. For more information, please visit [www.bangkokfestivals.com](http://www.bangkokfestivals.com).

## The Top of Europe – Jungfrauoch World Heritage region

The Jungfrauoch in the Bernese Oberland lies in the heart of the Jungfrau-Aletsch-Bietschhorn region, one of ten UNESCO World Heritage sites in Switzerland. It is the largest glacial area in the Alps and includes the Aletsch Glacier which, at 22 km is the longest ice stream in Eurasia.

The Jungfrau-Aletsch-Bietschhorn region contains a wide range of Alpine and sub-Alpine habitats and provides superb examples of ecological succession, for example the characteristic upper and lower tree line of the Aletsch forest. The Aletsch Glacier is of significant scientific interest in the context of glacial history and ongoing processes, particularly in terms of climate change.

The impressive landscape of the region has always played an important role in European literature, art, mountaineering and Alpine tourism. The area's aesthetic beauty has long attracted an international clientele and is acclaimed as one of the most spectacular mountain regions in the entire world.

The unforgettable trip to the high-Alpine wonderland of eternal ice and snow is the true highlight of a visit to Switzerland. At an amazing 3,454 metres, this is also Europe's highest-altitude railway station. Superb views



extend as far as the summits of the Vosges Mountains in France and the Black Forest in Germany.

See more about Jungfrauoch at <http://www.jungfraubahn.ch/>.



For information about all 10 UNESCO world heritage sites in Switzerland, visit <http://www.welterbe.ch/en/sites.html>. Learn more about travelling to Switzerland at [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com).

## Higher education in Switzerland

Education has always been a priority in Switzerland. Switzerland's unique dual education and training system provides a vast range of educational options, from vocational training and apprenticeships to university level courses.

Higher education in Switzerland, fitting into the general dual system, covers the range from academic to applied studies. Two types of institutions carry out different training tasks. Twelve universities, including the Federal Institutes of Technology in Zurich and Lausanne, offer theoretically oriented, scientific bachelor's, master's and PhD degrees. They are located in Basel, Berne, Fribourg, Lausanne, Lucerne, Neuchâtel, St. Gallen, Lugano and Zurich.

Professionally oriented studies are offered at the nine universities of applied science and at the 14 teacher training universities.

All the different types of universities offer degrees according to the Bologna Declaration. An increasing number of degrees are now also being taught in English language, alongside the Swiss national languages of German, French and Italian.

The modern and diversified system of Swiss higher education is well suited to the needs of students, the scientific community, modern society and the

economy. It is also directly compatible with other European and international educational systems.

Moreover, quality of life in Switzerland is among the best in the world. Excellent infrastructure, safety, and political and economic stability are all good extra reasons why Switzerland is a great place to study and conduct research. Besides,

studying in Switzerland is relatively inexpensive since education – including higher education – is to a large extent publicly funded.

International students can apply for scholarships provided by the Swiss government (see box) or from the universities themselves.

[www.crus.ch](http://www.crus.ch) / [www.swissuniversity.ch](http://www.swissuniversity.ch)

## Scholarships for postgraduates and research programmes in Switzerland

Every year, the Swiss Federal Government offers a number of scholarships to foreign postgraduate students (Master's degree holders only) at a Swiss university or at the Federal Institute of Technology.

The scholarships are granted mainly for subjects which cannot be studied in Thailand, but are considered important for the country. The candidates must be less than 35 years old and have a good knowledge of one of the Swiss national languages. Students intending to study in the faculty of liberal arts, economic and social sciences or law, must have an excellent knowledge of either French or German. The candidates must attend the language test and an interview arranged by the Swiss Embassy.

For the academic year 2009/2010, the

Swiss Federal Government provided scholarships to two Thai students. They will receive financial support for participating in masters programmes in economics and communication/international tourism at the University of Lugano and in French language studies at the University of Lausanne.

All qualified candidates are welcomed to send their application for a scholarship in the academic year 2010/2011 to the Swiss Embassy no later than 20 November 2009. Further information on application procedures may be found on the website of the Swiss Embassy ([www.eda.admin.ch/bangkok](http://www.eda.admin.ch/bangkok)) and [http://www.sbf.admin.ch/hm/themen/bildung/stipendien/eskas\\_en.html](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/hm/themen/bildung/stipendien/eskas_en.html).