

**Address by the President of India  
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND  
AT UNIVERSITY OF BERNE  
ON THE TOPIC: INDIA – SWITZERLAND NEW AGE PARTNERSHIP:  
CONNECTING ALPS WITH HIMALAYAS**

**Berne, September 12, 2019**

1. I am delighted to be here at the University of Berne. It is always a pleasure for me to speak to the youth. You are a bright group of students. Your University counts among the best and the most distinguished. Albert Einstein frequently visited this campus to exchange ideas and theories, and so did many other scholars. And now it is upon you to burnish these high credentials.
  
2. I am going to speak to you on ‘New Age’ Partnership between Switzerland and India. It is an expansive theme. It is natural to be so, for we live in the digital age. The markers of these times are green growth, blue economy, climate change, artificial intelligence, innovation and smart solutions. From Berne to Bengaluru, and from research labs to manufacturing floors, much work is being done in these domains. A lot more will happen as we cruise into the machine-intelligence age. Indo-Swiss future engagements will increasingly be defined by these factors and forces. And as we prepare to build our future partnerships, we will continue to derive inspiration and strength from our past and contemporary partnerships as well as our foundational principles.

Ladies and gentlemen,

3. India and Switzerland have long shared democratic values, pluralism and enterprise. The world looks at both of us with admiration. You are

among the world's oldest democracy wherein more than 2000 communes function democratically. And India the world's largest democracy with a 900 million electorate, out of which over 600 million participated in the largest festival of democracy on this planet, just a few months back.

4. We metaphorically describe the deep foundational connection between the Indian and Swiss thought and values as the 'Connection between the Alps and the Himalayas'. The energy of these mountains has ever drawn our people closer. In 1896, a great son of India Swami Vivekananda travelled to your country with a message to combine the best of the East with that of the West. I am pleased that Switzerland has honoured him with the installation of a bust in the village of Saas Fee. Decades later, you had another important visitor from India. Albert Einstein described him in this manner, and I quote - *"Generations to come will scarce believe, that such a one, as this, ever in flesh and blood, walked upon this earth."* Unquote. This man was no other than Mahatma Gandhi. He visited Switzerland in 1931 on the invitation of Noble Laureate Romain Rolland. This year, we are celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of the Father of our Nation. I am honoured that I will be unveiling a bust of Mahatma Gandhi in the city of Villeneuve day after tomorrow. I will also be planting a magnolia sapling in your campus shortly to mark his legacy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

5. Our rich cultural engagement had set the stage for bilateral cooperation long before we signed our Friendship Treaty. It all began when the Swiss Volkart Trading Company established its office in India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We have come a long way since. The Integral Railway Coach Factory in Chennai set up with Swiss assistance celebrated its diamond jubilee in 2015. Today, there are

over 250 Swiss companies operating in India. And leading Indian tech firms and innovation majors in Zurich, Basel and Berne. Opportunities for us to collaborate and connect are immense. India is aiming to become a 5 trillion dollar economy by 2025. More importantly, our blue print for growth is to build next-generation infrastructure, smart cities and digital i-ways, powered increasingly by clean and green energy. And that is where our new-age partnership strikes the chord.

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. Science, technology and innovation is fast moving to the centre of our ties. Over 80 scientific institutions and 300 researchers from India and Switzerland have connected with each other on joint programmes. Under these, four Virtual Centers of Excellence on Micro-Engineering, Micro-Electronics, Diseases Control and Advanced Materials have been established in India. Earlier this year, Swiss Astrosat 0.2 satellite was set in orbit by India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle. A few weeks ago, our second moon Mission, Chandrayaan 2 was launched. The gains from the Mission are firing the determination of our space scientists to conquer new frontiers. Our accomplishments, indeed, open new possibilities for bilateral collaboration.
7. Switzerland is a world leader on innovation. Inspired by you, we are also making new strides in the fields of Start-ups and smart solutions. India today hosts the third largest start-up network in the world with over 21,000 enterprises working on subjects as varied as robotics and vitiligo. Several Swiss and Indian start-ups have already join hands to create solutions for climate change, human health and more. We look forward to many more such partnerships.
8. The world of innovation and cyberspace go hand in hand. Digital revolution has made public service just a click away and e-commerce

the preferred shopping experience. Financial inclusion and fin-tech services are helping us with greater cashless economy. Opportunities in the digital world are limitless, but it needs an effective security cover. We must strengthen cyber security cooperation, both bilaterally and with the global community.

Ladies and gentlemen,

9. India has an ambitious programme to build 100 smart cities. Swiss expertise in circular economy and resource efficient knowhow can help us to build sustainable urban space, to clean our rivers and to process our food. Indo-Swiss partnership in biotechnology is already supporting climate-resilient agriculture. We are together developing new crop varieties. Our challenge, in India, is how to produce quality food with less input and less water. We have made a beginning with new forms of agriculture-from employing hydroponics to using solar pumps. But we want to do more, to double our farm income and to strengthen our food security.

10. India has nearly 20 percent of the world's population with about 4 percent of the world's renewable water resources. We are reviving traditional methods of water conservation and adopting modern innovations to reduce surface flow. Our new national water Mission – Jal Jeevan Abhiyan – with an investment of over 50 billion US dollars, aims to provide clean tap water to around 146 million households by 2024. The Mission opens new opportunities for Indo-Swiss collaboration. We want to engage you on water governance, water use efficiency and treatment of waste water.

Ladies and gentlemen,

11. Switzerland and India are leading global action on Climate Change. India is on course to meet its commitments under the Paris

accord to reduce energy intensity of its growth and to achieve 40 percent of its energy use from non-fossil sources. We have taken the lead on the International Solar Alliance to promote solar energy worldwide. So far, 75 countries have become its member. We look forward to Switzerland joining the Alliance soon. Our joint work on Glaciology is helping us understand the impact of climate change on the Alpine and Himalayan ecosystems. As a result of our collaboration, all the 12 Indian Himalayan states have worked out their climate vulnerability maps.

12. Swiss clean technology and Indian green energy requirements are smart suitors to each other. Today, India has one of the world's largest renewable energy expansion programmes. Our target is to have 175 Giga Watts of renewable power capacity by the year 2022.

13. India has a large young population. We need to skill and educate them. We value ongoing Indo-Swiss knowledge partnerships and look forward to accelerating them. The Indo-Swiss Centre of Excellence in Pune is helping us learn from your Vocational Education System. Over a 1000 Indian researchers and students are presently based in Switzerland. Our innovators are helping each other to write the codes of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution, and our researchers collaborating to generate the power of hydrogen from splitting water.

Dear Students,

14. The world is fast moving towards sustainable choices. The shared Indo-Swiss reverence and respect for nature pulls us even closer to them. I am happy that Ayurveda has found a home in Switzerland. We can combine the power of our traditional knowledge to add value to our health and happiness.

15. The knowledge society that we are building seeks equal space for women. India remains committed to doing more for them. Our university results each year have a growing number of women achievers. This is the new normal for us. Our private sector is also catching up. We have an increasing number of our companies with women in leadership roles. Our empowerment programme Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao that is Save Daughter, Educate Daughter is yielding impressive results.

Ladies and gentlemen,

16. No word on Indo-Swiss partnership, past, present or future, is complete without our people-to-people ties. Bollywood has taken Switzerland to every nook and corner of India. Whether it is the snow clad Jungfrau or the ITU Monument in front of the Einstein Museum in Berne, the Indian movie industry has captured it all. The scenes from Indian movies can be as effective as Google Maps in understanding the topography of Switzerland!

17. With those words, let me thank the Rector of the University for organizing this address today. It was a pleasure putting my thoughts before you. I hope that our new-age partnership flourishes and prospers, for the welfare of our people and for the well-being of the global community.

Thank you.

## **PRESIDENT OF INDIA IN SWITZERLAND; DELIVERS LECTURE ON “NEW AGE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SWITZERLAND AND INDIA” AT UNIVERSITY OF BERNE; CALLS FOR GREATER COLLABORATION BETWEEN INDIA AND SWITZERLAND IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, reached Switzerland yesterday evening (September 11, 2019) on the second leg of his visit to - Iceland, Switzerland and Slovenia.

This morning (September 12, 2019), the President visited the University of Berne where he addressed students, faculty and members of the diplomatic corps. The topic of his address was “India - Switzerland new age partnership: connecting Alps with Himalayas”.

Speaking on the occasion, the President said that India and Switzerland have long shared democratic values, pluralism and enterprise. The world looks at both India and Switzerland with admiration. Switzerland is among the world’s oldest democracy wherein more than 2000 communes function democratically. And India is the world’s largest democracy with a 900 million electorate.

The President said that India-Switzerland rich cultural engagement had set the stage for bilateral cooperation long before we signed our Friendship Treaty. Today, there are over 250 Swiss companies operating in India and leading Indian tech firms and innovation majors in Zurich, Basel and Berne. Opportunities for us to collaborate and connect are immense.

Highlighting some important areas of collaboration between India and Switzerland, the President said that science, technology and innovation is fast moving to the centre of our ties. Over 80 scientific institutions and 300 researchers from India and Switzerland have connected with each other on joint programmes.

The President said that Switzerland is a world leader on innovation. India is also making new strides in the fields of Start-ups and smart solutions. India today hosts the third largest start-up network in the world with over 21,000 enterprises working on subjects as varied as robotics and vitiligo. Several Swiss and Indian start-ups have already join hands to create solutions for climate change, human health and more. India looks forward to many more such partnerships with Switzerland.

The President said that India has an ambitious programme to build 100 smart cities. Swiss expertise in circular economy and resource efficient knowhow can help us to build sustainable urban space, to clean our rivers and to process our food. Swiss clean technology and Indian green energy requirements are smart suitors to each other. Today, India has one of the world's largest renewable energy expansion programmes. Our target is to have 175 Giga Watts of renewable power capacity by the year 2022.

The President said that India has nearly 20 percent of the world's population with about 4 percent of the world's renewable water resources. We are reviving traditional methods of water conservation and adopting modern innovations to reduce surface flow. Our new national water Mission - Jal Jeevan Abhiyan - with an investment of over 50 billion US dollars, aims to provide clean tap water to around 146 million households by 2024. The Mission opens new opportunities for Indo-Swiss collaboration. India wants to engage Switzerland on water governance, water use efficiency and treatment of waste water.

Later in the evening, the President will address the Indian Community and Friends of India at a reception hosted by Shri Sibi George, Ambassador of India to Switzerland in Berne.