'Swiss Films on Wheels' Initiated To Strengthen Ties Between Bhutan And Switzerland

The friendship bus ‘Swiss Films on Wheels’, is expected to travel across 17 places in the country.

(Source: Facebook/Embassy of Switzerland to India and Bhutan)

By Choki Wangmo | Kuensel

To further strengthen the political, economic, and cultural ties between Switzerland and Bhutan, the 728th Swiss National day was observed in Thimphu on 1 Aug.

The day was marked with the launch of the friendship bus ‘Swiss Films on Wheels’, which is expected to travel across 17 places in the country.

‘Swiss Films on Wheels’ uses film as a medium to cut across cultural borders and to bring the two countries together.

Photo: Facebook/Embassy of Switzerland to India and Bhutan

Yesterday, Heidi was screened in the conference Hall of the Royal University of Bhutan. The film will be screened within the next three weeks, with the aim of spreading the message of friendship.

The Ambassador of Switzerland to India and Bhutan, the Honorary Consul of Switzerland, dignitaries from the government and about 250 school children attended the event.
Why was the film ‘Heidi’ chosen?

The Ambassador, Andrea Baum (PhD) said that the story of Heidi had become part of the Swiss cultural heritage.

“The movie shows an idealised version of Switzerland. It also illustrates the hard side of life. It is about growing up, family, the opposition between rural and urban lives, and rebellion of a free spirit against conservative norms.”

According to Madhura Phatak, the Cultural Programme officer with the Embassy of Switzerland in India, Heidi is a symbol of friendship. It is a story of a young 8-year-old girl who travels from the Swiss Alps to Frankfurt to be a friend with a sick girl called Clara.

The story is about the magic of friendship between Heidi and Karla. The film will inspire friendship, respect and trust among communities, societies and across cultures.

“I cannot imagine a better country to share this movie than Bhutan,” said the Ambassador, Andrea Baum.

The film will be screened in collaboration with local schools, NGOs and other partners in the country.

In an effort to encourage students to better appreciate ‘Heidi’, after each film screening, they can participate in a photo contest with the standee of characters in the film and win prizes.

Close ties between Bhutan and Switzerland

The close ties of Bhutan and Switzerland began with the friendship between His Majesty the Third King and a Swiss businessman, Fritz von Schulthess, who initiated a series of developmental activities in the country.

Bhutan and Switzerland established formal diplomatic relations in 1985. Since then, under various Swiss projects, such as the Swiss Red Cross, Helvetas, and Swiss Development Cooperation, several developmental projects were carried out in Bhutan.

Last year, Switzerland established an Honorary Consulate in Thimphu with the intention to further strengthen political, economic and cultural ties.

“Swiss Films on Wheels” is another step towards fulfilling this commitment.