

Switzerland tops innovation rankings for fourth year

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File photo of Swiss army knives in a shop in Montreux

rankings, with Cote d'Ivoire recording the biggest jump among the 143 economies surveyed.

"Sub-Saharan Africa now has more 'innovation learner' economies than any other region, with five African economies joining that status in 2014: Burkina Faso, Gambia, Malawi, Mozambique, and Rwanda," the researchers said.

They also found that growth in research and development funding was slowing as governments reduce public spending, and amid firms' cautious attitudes towards investing in new projects.

Asian countries—particularly China, South Korea and India—were expected to buck the trend and boost their support for research and development programmes, the researchers said.

Switzerland has claimed the top spot on the Global Innovation Index for the fourth-straight year while Sub-Saharan Africa "posted significant regional improvement". © 2014 AFP

The annual rankings, which this year focused on the role people play in the innovation process, found that Switzerland and other top-ranked countries Britain, Sweden and Finland, had strong all-round support systems that led to "high levels of creativity".

BRICS nations such China, Brazil and India were catching up with the developed countries, the researchers from Cornell University, INSEAD and the World Intellectual Property Organization said in a statement.

"China significantly outperforms the average score of high-income economies across the combined quality indicators," they added in a report released on the sidelines of a G20 trade ministers' meeting in Sydney.

The Sub-Saharan Africa region also moved up the

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