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Snippets from Switzerland... all from July 1999

Scheme to leave farm land fallow advances

Swiss authorities say a programme to leave farm land uncultivated to promote bio-diversity is making progress. The Federal Office for Agriculture and the Environment Agency said more than forty thousand hectares of land had been left fallow last year.

The government wants to let another twenty thousand hectares, or ten percent of all farmland, revert to nature within the next few years.

400 birds stolen in broad daylight

Burglars have stolen four hundred birds from a private home in Basel. Police said the birds, canaries and finches, as well as equipment and other material were taken away in broad daylight from a backroom of a cosmetics shop.

The stolen birds and goods are worth forty-five thousand francs.

Army plans extension of paid soldiers pilot scheme

The Swiss army says a pilot project using paid soldiers has attracted a lot of interest and that it's planning to introduce another model for military service next year.

Since June, one hundred soldiers have been paid to continue their course of training after completing obligatory military service.

The project is designed to help alleviate the lack of trained career military personnel.

From next year, conscripts should be able to perform their entire military service in one go rather than having to return over the course of several years for re-training.

Search continuing for poisoned darts

Investigations are continuing in Zürich into the theft of poisoned

darts belonging to a well-known anthropologist.

Police said they had searched an area on the city suburbs, where Bruno Manser left a quiver with one hundred and fifty arrows tipped with deadly poison. He left his rucksack under a bush while he went shopping, but only reported the theft a few days later.

The poison is used for hunting animals in the jungle and could prove fatal if put into the mouth.

Former publisher given jail sentence for racism

A former publisher has been given a forty-five day prison sentence on charges of racism.

An appeal court in Zürich found Max Wahl guilty of publically making light of the Holocaust.

The defendant, who's already been convicted of similar charges in Germany accused a Jewish leader in a magazine article of lying.

Wahl denied the accusations.

Swiss spend 172 francs a head on lottery in 1998

It's a gamble and the Swiss love it.

They spent one hundred and seventy-two francs a head on the lottery last year, (1998)

In all, players forked out more than one thousand, two hundred billion francs, the latest statistics have revealed.

The figures are slightly down on 1997 which was a record year but spending on the lottery has doubled in the last ten years.

Switzerland increases its competitiveness

The latest competitiveness report from the Geneva-based World Economic forum shows an improvement for Switzerland.

The country has moved up two places in the rankings to sixth place. The forum still rates Singapore's economy the most competitive, de-

spite the Asian financial crisis. The United States is in second position, ahead of Hong Kong.

Opposition to Airport Expansion and New Flight Noise Limits

The expansion of Zurich-Kloten Airport has a good many opponents in more than just Canton Zurich. The Cantonal Council of Schaffhausen refused to approve the so-called Midfield Dock at Kloten Airport.

Canton Schaffhausen is entitled to a voice in airport affairs as part of the legally prescribed consultation process.

The Schaffhausen Council justified its negative stance on the basis of a present lack of sufficient documentation for an informed decision. To be more precise, there is a lack of viable scenarios for the reduction of future airport noise through the establishment of alternative approach and departure routes, higher approach altitudes and a tighter limitation of night flights.

While acknowledging the economic value of the airport, the Schaffhausen Cantonal Council pointed out that the claims of residents to a decent quality of life must not be forgotten.

Swisscom Enters the European Market

Swisscom is purchasing a large interest in the German telecommunications provider Debitel, paying Sfr. 2.6 billion to enter the European market by that route. That is the largest sum Swisscom has ever invested in another company. As Swisscom announced, it is taking over a total of 58% of Debitel shares for 32 euros (Sfr. 51.2) per share and plans to make a public offering for the remaining, publicly held shares. For the Swiss concern, this is an important step toward becoming a major telecommunications provider in the heart of Europe.

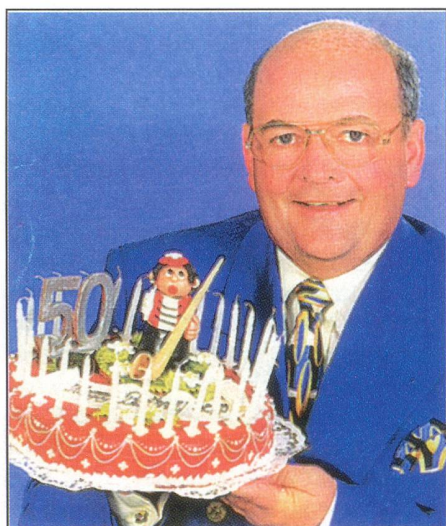


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She calls herself 'Sister Frieda' and says that she works for God only. - Her daily duty, according to a spiritual vision she had some 9 years ago, is to face all train passengers frequenting the main federal railway station Zürich and thereby imparting a blessing on each. She does not allow herself to be interrupted as she says she is in constant spiritual presence with God whose blessing she imparts on all travellers by eye contact only. - SBB-Zürich railway administration is tolerating her presence with respect and guarantees her safety well into the night when she terminates her daily work at 1 am, only to begin her "mission" again in the early hours of the morning.

Sepp Trütsch "Mr. Musigplausch" the well known Radio and TV moderator for folklore music in Switzerland has recently celebrated his 50. Birthday



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