

Commerce stronger than politics

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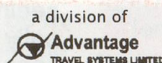
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WORLD CHAMPION AMONGST CYCLING COURIERS

Due to ever increasing traffic jams in European cities, the job of cycling couriers is becoming more and more important. It is a sign of our modern life that delivery times within cities are being drastically reduced by reverting back to the good old push-bike instead of using cars or even motobikes.

The great advantage of the push-bike is its manoeuvrability within city traffic and especially in traffic jams, its light weight which allows it to be lifted on to pavements or carried over obstacles and its ease of parking. You can lean it against a tree, a wall, a house or even a shop window while you quickly make a delivery. What you perhaps lose in time against motorised transport to get from A to B, you certainly gain back twice over when you get to your destination. By the time the motorised courier eventually has found a parking spot, you have long ago made your delivery and are already on your next job.

So jobs as cycling couriers are getting more and more popular in Europe and it is therefore not surprising that sooner or later, someone had to come up with the idea of staging a championship for this type of activity.

When the 18 year old student from Basle, Ursi Hänni, who is working as a cycling courier in her home town to pay for her studies, heard about a world championship being staged in Berlin, she promptly decided to enter. To her greatest surprise she also won the race.

The competition was not simply a road race but involved quite a few other tasks as well. The contestants had to climb over obstacles with their bikes,

weave in and out of a staged traffic jam, run up some stairs to deliver a parcel and change a tyre on the way as well. And all along, they had to carry in their bag a raw egg which they had to be careful not to break.

And so a new world champion was born in a work-related sporting activity which could be put alongside the old wine waiters' street race, the wheelbarrow pushing or gumboot throwing.

COMMERCE STRONGER THAN POLITICS

In a recent speech, the Swiss Federal Councillor Kaspar Villiger acknowledged that international commerce and trade is getting more important than politics. The proof is that trade embargoes imposed for political reasons by some countries on others are quite often ignored by international traders. Similarly, commercial relationships often flourish between two countries although no mutual diplomatic representations exist, in other words, between two countries which politically do not recognise one another's existence.

With general globalisation of markets, international trade will become more and more predominant at the expense of politics which gets gradually pushed into the background.

WORLD LANGUAGES

German is still one of the ten most spoken languages in the world according to the following statistics:

(Number of people speaking this language as their mother tongue)

| | |
|------------|-----|
| Chinese | 792 |
| Hindi | 404 |
| English | 329 |
| Spanish | 325 |
| Russian | 210 |
| Arabic | 198 |
| Bengali | 180 |
| Portuguese | 164 |
| Japanese | 124 |
| German | 91 |

Wonder where the French, the Italian and the Schwyzerdütsch lie?



Ursi Hänni on her job in Basle as a fast courier flitting through slow moving traffic on her fast bike.