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Snippets form Switzerland.....

Author moves world's great mysteries to Interlaken

The best selling Swiss author, Erich von Däniken, has recently taken another step closer to realising his dream of creating a theme park outside Interlaken to showcase what he calls the "Mysteries of the World".

Lego to close Swiss factory with loss of 390 jobs

Europe's largest toy-maker, Lego, is to close its production site at Baar in canton Zug with the loss of 390 jobs. The Danish company announced recently that it plans to shut the site by the middle of next year.

Parliament rejects shorter working week

The Swiss House of Representatives has come out against a trade union proposal to reduce the working week to 36 hours. Voters are to be given a final say on the initiative at the ballot box.

Computer programmers stop snow in its tracks

Computer scientists in Geneva have developed a new programme which helps to determine the most effective places for avalanche barriers. The system works by predicting how snow is carried by the wind and how it is deposited.

Most Swiss sceptical about Expo.02

Expo.02 director, Nelly Wenger, plans to better inform the Swiss about the project

Less than half of Swiss people are in favour of the national exhibition, Expo.02, according to a survey by the Konso Institute. Organisers, however, can take comfort from the fact that more people than ever expressed their intention to visit the exhibition.

The results of the survey, which were broadcast recently on French-speaking television, showed that 50,3 per cent of those polled were sceptical about Expo.02, which opens to the public in just over one year. Despite the fact that the exhibition has been located in western Switzerland, the poll showed that the French-speaking Swiss are the most sceptical about the project. Some 62,4 per cent of them said they did not want the project to proceed, and 53 per cent of Ticinese agreed. "I was a bit surprised by the results because the majority of projects come from French and Italian-speaking parts of the country," said Nelly Wenger, the director of Expo.02 "Now they are the ones who are the most sceptical." The German-speaking Swiss proved to be more supportive of the national exhibition, as 53,9 per cent said they were in favour of the scheme.

Expo's president, Franz Steinegger, said that he was satisfied with the fact that 45 per cent of the 1239 people polled said they would visit the exhibition.

Steinegger said he was personally

seeing to it that the exhibition will open its doors to the public next year: "I have told the government that Expo.02 will start on May 15 2002 with a budget of SFr1.4 billion." (approx. \$ 2 billion NZ.)

The financial well-being of the project has come into question after two major backers, SAirGroup and Orange, (a private Telephone Company operating in Switzerland) last month pulled out of their sponsorship deals.

The organisers originally budgeted that 5 per cent of Expo's capital would come from the private sector. Now just one third of their financing will come from the private sphere, one third will come from the state and another third from sales. Steinegger said the cost of the scheme would be the same whether they decided to pursue the exhibition or cut its life short.

The survey also showed that a majority of Swiss, 67,7 per cent, are ill-informed about what will be on show next year. French-speaking Swiss once again showed the least interest, with 80 per cent professing to have no idea about the contents of Expo.02. Further, 73,4 per cent of Swiss people were unable to cite one example of an attraction that is scheduled to feature at Expo.02.

Director Nelly Wenger said she was aware of this ignorance. "We have always intended on launching an information campaign in advance of May 15. We have to go directly to the people, and perhaps sooner than planned," Wenger said.

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Muslims celebrate Feast of Sacrifice

Switzerland's 200,000-strong Muslim community has been celebrating Islam's most important feast day, Eid-al-Adha. This Feast of Sacrifice was unaffected by Europe-wide concerns about foot and mouth disease.

Anthology of Chagall art in Lugano

A new exhibition showcasing the works of Marc Chagall opens at the Museum of Modern Art in Lugano on March 8 (and runs to July 1). The organisers say it may be the largest-ever exhibition of the Russian artist's works.

Alberto Nessi: In search of mystery in Ticino

Alberto Nessi is one of the writers and poets who best represents Italian-speaking Switzerland. In his works, he speaks of the lives and feelings of ordinary people, dwelling with great sensitivity on the many facets of daily life.

Musicfestival on a mountain high

The sounds of spring was music to the ears of holidaymakers heading for the Upper Engadine in eastern Switzerland. At the end of March, 18 classical concerts were part of the "Snow and Symphony" festival to mark the end of winter.

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Swissair to restructure....

Around 2,000 employees at Swissair are likely to lose their jobs, according to a report published today (19.3.001) in the Swiss Sunday newspaper, SonntagsZeitung. The paper says that the job cuts, which amount to around a quarter of the airline's workforce, are a consequence of the restructuring programme underway at Swissair's holding company, SAir-Group. It estimates that in a worst-case scenario, Swissair will be forced to shed 2,268 jobs. SAirGroup is estimated to have lost as much as SFr2.5 billion in the past year. The management board announced its mass resignation on March 9, taking collective responsibility for the company's financial problems. The Swiss government has announced its intention to keep its three per cent stake in the company. Newly-appointed SAirGroup chairman, Mario Corti, will lay out the future direction of the company at a press conference on April 2. He has already hinted that severe cost-cutting measures are on the table. He suggested he was looking towards an eventual Merger of Swissair with its regional subsidiary, Crossair.



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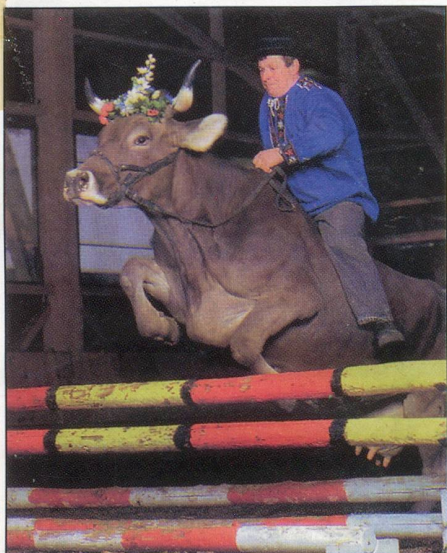
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Bruno Isliker of Winterthur/ Switzerland loves his animals. That is how he is able to have much fun with his cow 'Sybille' and his Donkey, Sheep and Dog.

In answer to the critics of the animal protection society Bruno maintains that there is nothing to worry about. The 'jumping cow Sybille' for example loves to perform and it took barely two months for Sybille to learn jumping as high as 80 centimeters.

The Zürich animal protection league is happy with Isliker's 'dressage' since it is convinced that he loves the animals in his care and that he avoids any kind of force to get the animals to perform.

Isliker's experience with animals stretches back to 1970 when he began

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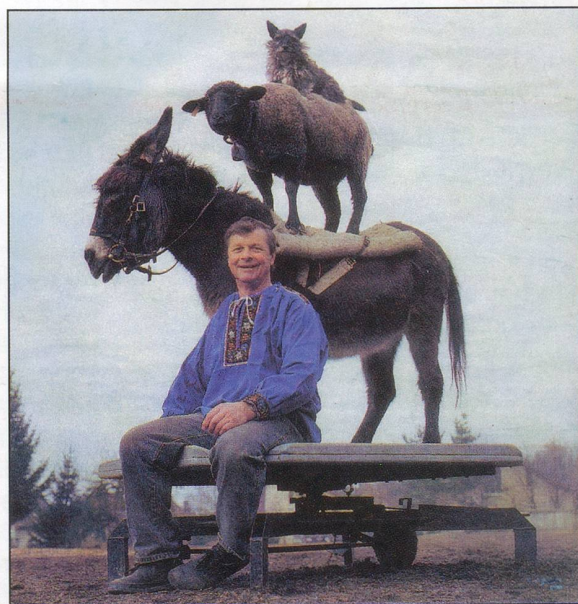
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to provide 'a place of retirement' for old horses. In 1980 he opened a private school for equestrian dressage.

With donkey, sheep and dog on top of each other Bruno Isliker is imitating the "Town musicians of Bremen" from 'Grimm's Fairytale' of the same name.

Bruno is confident that one day he will complete this picture with a rooster sitting atop of the dog. In the meantime he keeps on loving



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