

News in brief

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Lucerne director wins Golden Leopard

The Swiss film "Das Fräulein" walked away with a Golden Leopard at the 59th International Film Festival in Locarno. The CHF 90,000 first prize therefore went to the debut film by Andrea Staka, a young woman from ex-Yugoslavia now living in Lucerne. The last Swiss winner of this prestigious award was Fredi M. Murer's "Höhenfeuer" in 1985.

Pope visits Great St. Bernard

During his holidays in the Aosta Valley, Pope Benedict XVI paid a surprise visit to the monks and their famous dogs in the hospice on the Swiss side of the Great St. Bernard Pass. More than 200 tourists gathered at the monastery to welcome the pontiff.



World champion aluminium recycler

It's official: With almost nine aluminium cans in ten recycled, Switzerland leads the way in recycling. 88% of the cans used in Switzerland are recycled, compared with 87% in Finland and the other Nordic countries. The separation of household rubbish introduced in Switzerland in the 1980s has enabled six waste incineration plants to be closed.

Swiss return from the Lebanon

More than 850 Swiss nationals were able to flee the war in Lebanon with the aid of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, which played a very active role during the crisis. Since the outbreak of hostilities, Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey vigorously urged the warring parties to respect the Geneva Conventions – so much so that her de-

mands for "active neutrality" sparked outrage from the right. The last straw: The head of the DFA suggested Switzerland should request a seat on the UN Security Council. The Swiss People's Party (SVP) was furious.

1 August from New York to Mont-sur-Rolle

The first day of August found Pascal Couchepin on Ellis Island in New York, where Swiss-Americans celebrate their national holiday in remembrance of the fact that the island

was the gateway to the New World for so many of their forefathers. By contrast, Christoph Blocher was in Mont-sur-Rolle, where wine growers dedicated a special cuvee with caricatured wine labels to him, bringing a smile to the Federal Councillor's face. Swiss President Moritz Leuenberger was not present at the Rütliwiese, thus sparing the event from any violence by right-wing extremists.

Fissures in the Eiger

A rock face on the Eiger in the Bernese Oberland has a 250 metre-long fissure. Almost 2 million cubic metres of rock now threaten to fall off. An initial 300,000 cubic metre chunk of rock separated in mid-July, creating a dust cloud that spread all the way to Grindelwald.

Orienteering World Championships

Simone Niggli-Luder's hunger for victory is insatiable. The Bernese runner picked up her 11th World Orienteering Championship title in Denmark. Marc Lauenstein from Neuchâtel won the silver medal in the men's race.

Marathon medal

32-year-old Viktor Röthlin from Obwalden won the silver medal in the marathon at the European Athletics Championships in Gothenburg, Sweden. It is the best result ever at this level for a Swiss marathon runner.

Farewell to Joseph Deiss

Joseph Deiss bid farewell to the Federal Council and passed the baton to Doris Leuthard. Following his election by the people of Freiburg in 1999, Deiss headed first the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and then the Federal Department of Economic Affairs. His successes: Switzerland joining the United Nations and the signing of bilateral agreements with the European Union.

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Asteroid attracts star-gazers

An asteroid with a diameter of 800 metres passing relatively close to the Earth at 18km/s was recorded by Peter Kocher, the technical director of the Ependes Observatory (FR). If you missed it, you'll now have to wait until 2021 to see a celestial body this close to the blue planet.

The Rolling Stones in Switzerland

The Rolling Stones gave the biggest concert ever held in Switzerland at Dübendorf Airport (ZH). The event attracted 70,000 spectators and cost CHF 10 million to stage. Federal Councillor Samuel Schmid, a Stones fan since the very beginning, even got a chance to exchange a few words with Mick Jagger and the rest of the band.

Federal budget

The Federal Council has approved the budget for 2007 and the financial plan for 2008-2010. Thanks to cost-cutting measures, the budget finished with a surplus of CHF 918 million. According to the government, the financial plans will meet demands to reduce the national debt. But centre-right parties are demanding even greater cuts in spending and public debt.

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