

News in brief

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Swiss Personality of the Year

Köbi Kuhn was named "Personality of the Year 2006" at the SwissAwards ceremony in January. Last year's winner was Peter Sauber. Receiving his award, the coach of the Swiss national football team confidently announced that he'd gladly swap his trophy for the 2008 European Championship title.

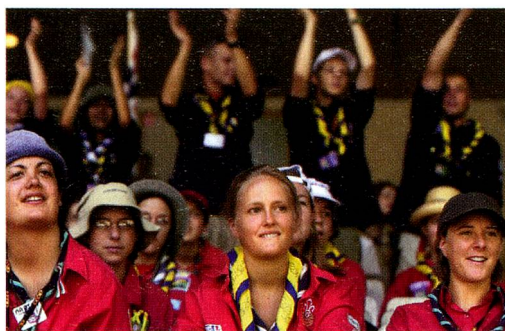
Swissair trial

Five years after the grounding of the Swissair fleet, Switzerland's biggest ever corporate trial took place in Bülach (ZH). Nineteen former managers of the SAirGroup were in the dock, charged with damaging creditors, mismanagement, making false business statements and forging documents following the collapse of the national carrier.

The case was based on 4150 files of evidence and the billions of francs of debt left behind by the bankrupt airline. The defendants included the company's last three chief executives: Mario Corti, Eric Honnegger and Philippe Bruggisser. Prosecutors are demanding tough sentences for all the defendants, and prison for Corti. The verdict is expected in the next few months.

Tranquil WEF

This year's World Economic Forum in Davos carried the motto "The shifting power equation" and ended with a vague appeal for hope and peace. But the two major topics under debate – climate change and the Doha round of liberalisation talks at the World Trade Organisation – did not overshadow the delegates' main concern: economic growth. Meanwhile, opponents of the WEF appear to have lost heart. Security costs, which skyrocketed to CHF 13.5 million in



100 years of the Swiss Guide and Scout Movement

2005, didn't even reach the budgeted figure of CHF 8 million.

Pfadi celebrates its centenary

The Swiss Guide and Scout Movement is 100 years old. With 45,000 members and half a million former members, the SGSM is the largest youth organisation in Switzerland. The numerous celebratory events are a testament to the movement's ongoing dynamism and belie the fact that membership has fallen by a quarter in the last decade. The drop in interest is unfortunate given that the values conveyed by the scout movement could do much to counteract the increasing violence among young Swiss.

Presidential Tour de Suisse

Federal President Micheline Calmy-Rey is planning a tour of Switzerland's regions in 2007. The aim will not be to make official speeches, but rather to take part in approximately two-hour debates with ordinary citizens in the same vein as the events held in Monthey (VS) in January and Wil (SG) in February.

Fiscal wrangling

The European Commission considers the fiscal practices of some Swiss cantons "incompatible" with the 1972 free trade agreement. The Commission is particularly concerned about the tax advantages offered to foreign companies considering settling in the cantons of Zug and Schwyz. Because of threats



Skiing world champion Daniel Albrecht with fans

of "retaliatory measures", Switzerland must now negotiate the matter. The Swiss press has criticised the "pressure" from Brussels, and deems the reasoning of the eurocrats "extremely dubious".

Skiing success

The World Ski Championships in Are, Sweden were a great success for the Swiss squad. Following the debacle in the Italian resort of Bormio two years ago, our athletes came home with six medals this time, including a gold won by Daniel Albrecht in the super combined event.

Record turnover

The Swatch Group posted record turnover of more than CHF 5 billion last year. Net profits rose by 12.3%, with the greatest increase being in sales of luxury watches. The group's star product is the Omega watch worn by James Bond.

Women doing well in local politics

At the end of 2006, women occupied almost 30% of the seats on Switzerland's municipal councils. The proportion of female councillors rose steadily from 6% in 1980, stabilising at about a third in 1994. The city of Berne has the highest proportion, at 42.5%. By comparison, women hold 26% of the seats on the National Council.

Golden run

Swiss bobsleigh teams led by Ivo Rüegg won the gold medal

in the four-man event and the silver medal in the two-man event at the FIBT World Championships in St. Moritz. And in ice skating, withdrawal by Stéphane Lambiel didn't deprive Switzerland of a medal at the European Championships in Warsaw. Sarah Meier from Zurich finished second.

Out with the new, in with the old

Nestlé is reintroducing its traditional paper-and-card packaging for the Cailler brand of chocolate. The new design created by star architect Jean Nouvel had a devastating effect on the brand. Sales fell by 24% in 2006.

Snowboard World Championships

Swiss athletes had amazing success at the FIS Snowboard World Championships in Arosa (GR). They picked up a total of seven medals, including golds for Manuela Pesko in the half-pipe and Simon Schoch in the parallel slalom.

Building boom

In 2006, more than 32,000 applications for building permits were filed. That's both an all-time record, and 3.4% higher than in 2005. The 30,000 mark has therefore been topped for the third year in succession.

200 years of the combustion engine

The first patent for a combustion engine was registered in Paris on 30 January 1807 by François Isaac de Rivaz from Valais.

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