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## SNIPPETS

**15 May:** A year ago today, Expo.02 opened its doors. The national exhibition held in the three-lake region at the foot of the southern Jura chain found favour with most visitors.

**18 May:** Two Yeses and seven Nos: the result of the ninefold people's referendum. Only the army and population protection reforms were accepted. Proposals on nuclear energy, health insurance, tenants' rights and vocational training were rejected.

**20 May:** Federal Councillor Calmy-Rey is the first member of a foreign government to cross the border between South and North Korea. "I hope this small step will be a giant step for peace in the region," says the Foreign Minister.

**21 May:** Fifty percent of all 9000 pension plans are underfunded. The Federal Council calls for increased contributions from social partners, a lower interest rate on retirement capital, and a contribution from pensioners.

**22 May:** According to the authorities, strict controls of heavy-goods traffic on the Gotthard following the tunnel disaster in 2001 have proved successful. Last year 5.8 million vehicles drove through Switzerland's most important North-South traverse.

**23 May:** Around ten percent of Switzerland's population is living below the poverty line. Single parents, foreigners and large families make up the majority. One child in ten is growing up in poverty, according to the National Conference on Poverty.

**24 May:** The canton of Ticino celebrates its 200th anniversary in Bellinzona. The parliament of the Italian-speaking canton created by Napoleon's mediation act met for the first time on 20 May 1803. The city has been the cantonal capital for 125 years.

**24 May:** The Mystery Park is opened in Interlaken. The brainchild of Erich von Däniken, this theme park documents the mysteries of the world and aims to attract half a million visitors a year.



imagopress / Patrick Lüthy

The Mystery Park in Interlaken is the brainchild of Erich von Däniken. The picture shows the "MegaStones" pavilion.

**26 May:** Swiss President Pascal Couchepin publishes reports on the future of social security mechanisms. They recommend raising the AHV retirement age to 66 in 2015 and 67 in 2025. This proposal attracts severe criticism from all sides.

**27 May:** General Chief of Staff Keckeis outlines the order for the army's basic state of readiness. The emphasis is now on addressing the most probable risks, while readiness for open warfare takes a back seat.

**31 May:** Geneva and Lausanne have a difficult weekend due to the G-8 summit in Evian. The large security force of 25,000 troops mustered on both shores of Lake Geneva and the Rhone was unable to prevent violent demonstrations.

**3 June:** Almost 15 years after its final voyage, the legendary Trans-Europe Express (TEE) train "Gottardo" is once more on the tracks. TEE trains were regarded as pioneering examples of Swiss industry. The revamped vintage TEE will be used for 30 special trips a year.

**5 June:** The Swiss economy declined in the first two quarters of this year, as a result of which our country now finds itself in recession. Exports were particularly hard hit. Investors and consumers are reluctant to spend.

**6 June:** According to the most recent census, young people are studying for longer, while older people are leaving the job market ear-

lier – either willingly or unwillingly. "This trend would be regarded as dramatic were it not for the fact that mothers returning to work are more than offsetting the numbers leaving the job market."

**10 June:** South Africa's President Mbeki visits Switzerland. He confirms his opposition to class actions against Swiss industry to compensate victims of apartheid. US courts, he says, should not pass judgment on past history.

**12 June:** Maternity insurance is looking increasingly likely. The Council of States followed the National Council in voting in favour of a proposal to grant mothers in employment 14 weeks' maternity leave on 80 percent of their pay.

**17 June:** According to a survey, three quarters of the Swiss population is in favour of facilitating the naturalisation process for foreigners who have grown up in our country. The Federal Council proposes automatic naturalisation for third-generation foreigners.

**17 June:** Internationally acclaimed theatre director Christoph Marthaler and his chief dramaturge Stefanie Carp are to leave the Zurich Theatre in 2005. According to Marthaler, the savings required by the Board of Directors would have led to job losses.

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Translated from German.