

News

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NEWS IN BRIEF

20 Januar. No more price watchdog. Werner Marti, the 46-year-old price watchdog from Glarus, has announced his intention to campaign as a candidate for President of the Social Democrats following the resignation of Christiane Brunner. The Federal Department of Economic Affairs is now seeking a successor for the post, which the Swiss People's Party wants to scrap in order to save money.

21 January. A study on "new paths to university funding" is causing a stir in the academic world. Jointly conducted by the Capital and Economy Working Group, Avenir Suisse and *economie-suisse*, the study recommends that university fees, which currently average CHF 1300 per annum, be increased to CHF 5000 a year. Students' unions and a number of university rectors have severely criticised the study.

On 30 January, some six months after his Wimbledon coronation, Roger Federer of Basle wins the Australian Open in Melbourne Park, demolishing Marat Safin by 7:6 (7:3), 6:4, 6:2 in as convincing a way as he did Mark Philippoussis on London's hallowed lawn. With two grand slam titles and the Masters title, Roger Federer is now the undisputed World Number One.

8 February. The people's initiative for "Life-long imprisonment for extremely dangerous violent and sex offenders who are considered incurable" is approved by 56.2% of voters. The counterproposal to the "Avanti" initiative, on the other hand, is thrown out (62.8% No), as is the proposal for a new tenants' law (64% No). Turnout is 45%. Not for almost ten years have voters disagreed so vehemently with the Federal Council and parliament.

10 February. Aargau author Klaus Merz is awarded the 2004 Gottfried Keller Prize. Worth CHF 25,000, it is the oldest and most prestigious prize in Swiss literature after the Schiller Prize. German literature expert Jochen Greven received an honorary citation worth CHF 8000.

Urs Bucher/Imagopress



Coasting to the Number 1 spot: Roger Federer, winner of the Australian Open.

13 February. According to the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), the Swiss population will grow some 2% by 2040. By 2026 it will number 7.556 million, and then drop back again to 7.431 million. The over-65 age group, which currently accounts for 16% of the population, will increase to 25% of the population by 2040. The ratio of foreigners will remain unchanged at around 20%.

17 February. To the accompaniment of fierce protests, airport operator Unique presents the new operating regulations for Kloten airport which it has submitted to the Federal Office for Civil Aviation (FOCA). The regulations introduce changes necessitated by events of recent years, and in particular the overflight limitations stipulated by Germany. The aim is to shift all holding pattern zones which are still over Germany to Swiss territory by the end of February 2005. Unique wants to reduce the number of people who suffer from flight path noise in Germany from 50,000 to 40,000 by 2010.

18 February. Federal Councillor Samuel Schmid and Army Chief of Staff Christophe Keckeis confirm the need for additional downsizing measures for the army. In view of the federal economy drive, the aim is to accelerate the process of liquidating build-

ings, equipment and materials which are now regarded as superfluous within the new Army XX1 context. In addition, 600 jobs will be shed between 2004 and 2006.

22 February. Geneva football team Servette FC escapes bankruptcy by placing its fate in the hands of Marc Roger, the French players' agent. Roger injects an urgently-needed CHF 1.2 million into the troubled club's finances and acquires the operating rights to the stadium complex.

23 February. Daniel Küng is appointed CEO of Osec Business Network Switzerland. Born in 1952, the entrepreneur has worked in the pharmaceuticals sector in Brazil and Portugal. He succeeds Balz Hösly, who resigned in November 2003 in protest against Osec's restructuring measures.

25 February. The Federal Council presents its legislature programme, which (for the first time in the history of the Confederation) has to be approved by parliament. The "action plan", as Swiss President Deiss described the programme, pursues three central objectives: to increase prosperity through sustainable development, to tackle demographic problems, and to strengthen Switzerland's position in the world. IE