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NEWS IN BRIEF

1 July. On its traditional annual excursion the Federal Council is invited by Joseph Deiss to Fribourg. In the afternoon, following a morning visit to the Collège Saint-Michel, the seven Federal Councillors symbolically cross the Röstli trench by traversing a bridge over the River Saane.

4 July. The "NZZ am Sonntag" reports that, in the autumn of this year, iodine tablets were distributed to 1.2 million people living less than 20 kilometers from a nuclear power plant. In the past these tablets were distributed only to 80,000 people living less than 5 kilometers from a nuclear power plant. The reason for the iodine tablet distribution: should radio-activity escape into the environment, the tablets provide prevention against thyroid cancer.

6 July. Singapore is the third major metropolis, after Boston and San Francisco, to boast a Swiss house: a type of scientific consulate that promotes the exchange of know-how in the fields of research, business and education.

12 July. A communiqué from prison guards at Champ-Dollon GE highlights the failings of the penal system. The Geneva prison, designed to accommodate 270 inmates, now regularly "houses" 460 inmates. Discontent among prison guards is growing. They even threaten to strike unless corrective action is taken.

20 July. Start of the Paléo Festival in Nyon (20–25 July), another major open-air event following on from Frauenfeld (25–27 June), Montreux (2–17 July) and Berne's Gurten Festival (15–18 July). The Swiss summer offers a wealth of cultural events the length and breadth of the country, to suit every taste. August highlights include the Locarno Film Festival and the Zurich Street Parade.

27 July. Divorce: Russell Coutts and Ernesto Bertarelli, the heroes of the last America's Cup, end their collaboration. Coutts is given notice "due to multiple breach of duty". What's more, due to a contract clause he is not permitted to take part in the next America's Cup (in Valencia in 2007) with any other team.



The fountain with its 26 jets, in front of the Houses of Parliament in Berne.

31 July. The SUV boom makes headlines in Switzerland. Off-road vehicles now account for 16 percent of Swiss vehicles and are purchased more as a prestige object rather than for travelling on unmade roads. Some groups would like to ban 4-wheel drive vehicles due to their poor environmental and safety record. However, the vast majority see no reason to act: According to a survey conducted by "Le Matin dimanche", only 16 percent of the Swiss population is against SUVs.

1 August. Besides the usual fireworks display and address by the Swiss President, the opening of Berne's new Bundesplatz gives special cause to celebrate this Swiss National Day.

3 August. Social Democrat State Councillor Pierre Chiffelle (VD) is resigning for health reasons. Only last year Philippe Biéler, his fellow Vaud State Councillor, also resigned for health reasons.

7 August. Furore in the Defence Department. The General Secretary resigns – an event that sparks a widespread reaction in the press. Speaking in the French-speaking daily "La Liberté", Federal Councillor Samuel Schmid attributes the media attention to the traditional silly season. He then adds fuel to the fire by launching a debate on

the abolition of the militia army. Other politicians also take advantage of the summer news drought: Moritz Leuenberger talks about the Swiss civil air transport business and Hans-Rudolf Merz about ideas for a linear reduction of the federal budget by 20, 30 or even 40 percent. Federal Councillor Merz then qualifies his statements by saying that they were primarily a form of "brainstorming".

16 August. Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey visits her Dutch colleagues in Den Haag. The Dutch have just taken over the EU Presidency and Switzerland has to formulate conditions governing payment of the CHF 5 billion it has set aside for the promotion of European integration.

28 August. The Olympic Games end in Athens. The final Swiss tally is mixed. Marcel Fischer won a gold in fencing, Karin Thurig a bronze in time-trial cycling. Patrick Heuscher and Stefan Kobel also won a bronze in beach volleyball, Sven Riederer a bronze in the triathlon, and cyclists Bruno Risi and Franco Marvulli a silver. CV

Translated from German.