

**Zeitschrift:** Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad  
**Herausgeber:** Organisation of the Swiss Abroad  
**Band:** 32 (2005)  
**Heft:** 1

**Rubrik:** News

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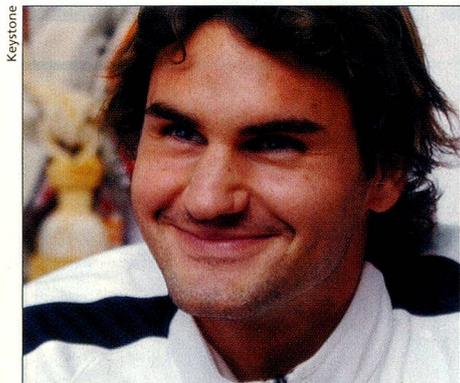
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## NEWS IN BRIEF

**8 November.** The Federal Institute of Technology (ETHZ) is ranked tenth on the list of the world's best universities compiled by the British "Times" newspaper.

**15 November.** Swiss glaciers are melting faster than has been assumed to date. According to a survey conducted by the University of Zurich, their surface area has shrunk by one-fifth over the past 15 years. Experts estimate that they may have receded by as much as 30% by 2010.

**20 November.** Roger Federer scores a resounding win over Lleyton Hewitt in the Masters Cup final in Houston: the culmination of a fantastic season during which the 23-year-old tennis ace from Basle region won 11 ATP titles, including three Grand Slam titles. Of the 80 matches he played, Federer won 74.



Roger Federer

**26 November.** The Swiss love the movies: In 2003, Swiss cinemagoers watched more than 1400 films, according to statistics published by the Federal Office of Statistics. With an average of 2.56 admissions per capita, Switzerland boasts one of the highest rates of cinema-going. Of its neighbouring countries, only the French go to the movies more often.

**28 November.** The results of the federal referendum: Yes to the law on stem cell research, yes to the reform of the federal system and the division of tasks between the Confederation and cantons, yes to the renewed government mandate to levy taxes. By voting three times in line with the rec-

ommendations of the Federal Council and parliament, voters somewhat improved their negative record in 2004. But negative votes are on the upswing: In the 13 proposals put to the ballot last year, voters voted eight times against the Federal Council's and parliament's recommendations.

**6 December.** As of 1 January 2006, naturalisation fees will correspond to the effective costs incurred by authorities in handling the application. Charges currently levied, amounting to several thousand francs, will no longer be permitted, according to the Federal Office of Justice.

**7 December.** Credit Suisse adopts a single-bank strategy and aims to integrate the banking operations of Credit Suisse and Credit Suisse First Boston over the next two years.

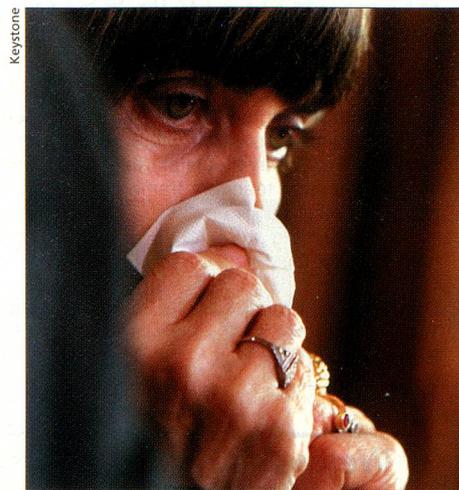
**8 December.** Federal Councillor Samuel Schmid takes over from Joseph Deiss as Federal President for 2005.

**12 December.** The most extensive SBB timetable change since 1982 is successfully implemented: the first stage of the Bahn 2000 project started in 1987 is launched, with a view to increasing rail mobility and connections to the high-speed rail network.

**16 December.** Endless suspense: the sale of the SNB's surplus gold would have netted CHF 14 billion for the cantons and CHF 7 billion for the Swiss Confederation. But the Federal Council blocked the procedure just before Christmas. The drama continues...

**17 December.** At the traditional vote at the end of the winter session, the National Council and Council of States approve all Bilateral II agreements. Opponents of Schengen and free movement of persons can now officially begin collecting signatures for the two referenda they have announced, which will probably be held in June 2005.

**26 December.** Sea quake in Asia: among the victims are several hundred Swiss nationals. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SCD) hotline is permanently overloaded and receives more than 7000 calls. On 10 January 2005, the SCD has recorded 23 Swiss deaths; nothing has been



Micheline Calmy-Rey

heard from another 280, and 90 are reported missing. The Federal Council authorizes CHF 27 million in immediate aid for the affected regions, 80 Swiss experts are sent to the disaster region. Federal Councillor Micheline Calmy-Rey visits Thailand and Sri Lanka between 2 and 4 January 2005 as a gesture of Switzerland's solidarity and to find out for herself the needs of people affected by the quake. In Switzerland and throughout the world, people demonstrate an unprecedented level of solidarity and give generously: Swiss Solidarity, the charity, collects almost CHF 140 million in donations. A new record.

**31 December.** 51-year-old Lotti Latrous is voted "Swiss of the Year" at the Swiss Awards. "Lotti la Blanche", who looks after people suffering from AIDS in the slums of Abidjan, was selected by TV viewers from a short-list of 18 candidates. *Alain Wey*

Translated from French.



Lotti Latrous