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Federal Councillor Deiss: office fatigue

To the nation's complete surprise, Federal Councillor Joseph Deiss announced his resignation at the beginning of May. CVP President and National Councillor Doris Leuthard is tipped to succeed him in mid-June.

Free movement

On 1 April 2006 Switzerland opened its labour market to citizens of the new EU member states. Last autumn the Swiss electorate voted to extend free movement of persons to these countries. Workers from Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Slovakia are subject to restrictions on immigration and salary controls.

Swiss Roots

The Federal Charter of 1291 will be on show in a Philadelphia museum from 10 to 30 June. This exhibition is part of the "Swiss Roots" project under the aegis of Presence Switzerland, the aim of which is to familiarise Americans with Swiss roots with their forefathers' home country.

Rise in overnight stays

Last year the Swiss hotel industry registered 857,000 more overnight stays than in 2003. According to the Federal Office of Statistics, the overall rise of 2.7% is primarily accounted for by an increase in visitors from abroad (+6.8%).

Doctors take to the streets

For the first time ever, Swiss doctors and medical staff demonstrated on Berne's Bundesplatz to protest against poor working conditions. The 301,000 signatures to the petition

"Against cutbacks in GP health-care and the growing lack of GPs" were brought on stretchers to the Houses of Parliament. One week later the monitoring unit of santésuisse, the umbrella organisation of Swiss health insurers, reported that in 2004 some 4% of doctors presented bills that were up to one third higher than bills from colleagues in the same canton.



Acrobatics on ice

Stéphane Lambiel was crowned World Figure Skating Champion for the second consecutive year. After winning a silver medal in the Winter Olympics in Turin, the skater from Saxon in the canton of Valais outshone the competition at the World Championships in the Canadian city of Calgary.

FC Basle out of the UEFA Cup

The Swiss champions failed by a whisker to qualify for a historic UEFA Cup semi-final. In the home game FC Basle won 2:0 against Middlesbrough, but was unable to seize the offensive in England, losing by 4:1.

Flooding

Due to heavy rainfall, several Swiss lakes and rivers burst their banks at the beginning of April. Dozens of cellars were under water, and roads and rail routes were closed off. In the canton of Schaffhausen, a three-year-old girl drowned in a stream swollen with rainwater. According to MeteoSwiss, the Swiss Meteorological Institute, the amount of

rain that fell within the space of 36 hours was equivalent to the normal rainfall for the entire month of April.

Crystal for the Red Cross

The red crystal, the new emblem of the Red Cross, will soon be a protected brand in Switzerland. The National Council approved a protocol that recognises this symbol, along with the red cros-

cent and the red cross, as a protected Red Cross emblem.

World cheese champion

Switzerland came first in the World Cheesemaking Championships in the USA, thanks largely to a Bernese Emmentaler and a Fribourg Gruyère. Although this competition has been held for the past fifty years or so, this is the first time Switzerland has won.

Pasta lovers

Last year the Swiss consumed 75,348 tons of pasta – 3.2 percent more than in 2004 – equivalent to 10.06 kilograms or some one hundred portions per person. Within Europe, Switzerland comes second only to Italy (annual per capita consumption of 24 kilograms) in the pasta stakes.

Doctor honoris causa

Claude Nobs, founder of the Montreux Jazz Festival, was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Federal Institute of Technology of Lausanne for his services "in promoting the Lake Geneva region". This year the 70-year-old, a chef by profession, will be attending the 40th Festival, whose initial budget was only CHF 8000 (now the budget is CHF 17 million!).

New special "Houses of Parliament" coin

As the seat of the government and parliament, the Houses of Parliament in Berne are a national monument sine qua non, and for the past 104 years have played a key role in Swiss political affairs. Now the building has been immortalised in silver. A special "Houses of Parliament" coin with a denomination of CHF 20 has just been issued. The coin was designed by Bernese graphic artist Benjamin Pfäffli and minted in swissmint, the Federal Mint in Berne. The artist's aim was to convey as authentic and detailed an image of the building as possible.



FC Sion once more cup-winners

If ever a victory confirmed a series, it was FC Sion's win against FC Young Boys in the Swiss Cup final. The current leader of the Challenge League beat one of the best teams in the Super League in a penalty shoot-out. Sion has made it to the final ten times and never lost.

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