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■ The level of unemployment in Switzerland has dropped below 100,000 for the first time in six years. Unemployment fell to 2.4% in May, standing at 3.7% in French-speaking Switzerland and 1.9% in German-speaking Switzerland.

■ With almost 16.8 million overnight stays, the last winter season produced the best results in the history of Swiss tourism, up 6.2% on the previous year.

■ The traditional identity card will be phased out after the introduction of the biometric passport in March 2010. The National Council sealed its fate in June.



■ Five Swiss soldiers

drowned in strong currents during a rafting exercise on the Kander River near Wimmis (Berne). The company's commander is being investigated under military law.

■ Swiss companies: more than half (53%) of senior managers come from abroad. According to the consulting firm Guido Schilling & Partner, the proportion of foreign executives has increased from 32% to 38% in a year. The number of Germans has risen from 30% to 34%. 12% are American and 10% British.

■ From 2010, rent increases will be based on one criterion alone – inflation. The Swiss Tenants' Association (Asloca) is concerned that an inflationary spiral will be triggered as the calculation of inflation takes rents into account.

"I hope Christoph Blocher doesn't miss the opportunity to retire; otherwise he could become a burden for the party."

Peter Spuhler, leading SVP politician and entrepreneur

"Many Swiss people manage to see problems in any joyful occasion. What is wrong with our country? Have we become incapable of being happy?"

Filippo Leuteregger, FDP National Councillor from the Canton of Zurich

"The Swiss are very independent. They are proud of their country and their democracy. We respect their current bilateral approach to Europe."

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, EU Commissioner for External Relations

"If we create a magnificent car that is inexpensive and runs on hydrogen, people will buy it."

Nicolas G. Hayek, on his project for a zero-emission fuel-cell car

"Not all Swiss agricultural products have the same opportunities in the international marketplace. Cheeses and sausages have better opportunities than apples and carrots."

Rolf Büttiker, President of the Swiss Meat Association

"Switzerland has committed itself to significantly reducing the loss of different species of plants and animals by 2010. Yet, unfortunately, not much is actually happening in our country."

Kurt Eichenberger, biodiversity project manager at the WWF

"50 hospitals of the over 300 that exist in Switzerland would be enough. These days, virtually every small hospital does everything, but not always as well as it might."

Manfred Manser, head of the largest health insurance provider, Helsana

"Alcohol has become part of the everyday scene for young people. This is why we are seeing a constant rise in violent crime committed by young people under the influence of alcohol."

Esther Maurer, city councillor in Zurich

"We Swiss players are too nice. At the European Championships you have to do things differently. You cannot give your opponent any opportunity to get into the game."

Patrick Müller, defender in the Swiss national football team, after Switzerland's exit from Euro 2008.

"The national team is something special in Switzerland. The support from the people is greater than in Germany. The Swiss are more patriotic."

Ottmar Hitzfeld, high-profile new coach of the Swiss national football team.

■ The Swiss National Science Foundation spent more than CHF 531 million last year on measures to promote scientific research. This represents an annual increase of CHF 40 million, setting a new record.

■ The trial concerning the Bassersdorf (Zurich) air crash in 2001, in which 24 were killed, has cleared Crossair. The former directors of the airline, Moritz Suter and André Dosé, were

acquitted by the Federal Criminal Court.

■ A foreign team will play in the top division of Swiss football for the first time ever. Having been crowned Challenge League champions,



Vaduz (Liechtenstein) have been promoted to the Swiss Super League.

■ Following losses of CHF 11.5 billion from January to March, UBS has announced plans to cut 5,500 jobs, including 1,500 in Switzerland, between now and mid-2009. The bank is also suspected of having assisted wealthy American clients to evade the tax authorities.



■ Jean-Paul Clozel, founder of the Basel biotech company Actelion, has been crowned **World Entrepreneur of the Year** after being chosen from 48 competitors from 40 countries. This is the first time that a Swiss has won the prize awarded by accountancy and consulting firm Ernst & Young.

■ The Canton of Uri has banned smoking in public places. It is the seventh canton to do so following Ticino, Solothurn, Grisons, Appenzell Ausser-Rhoden, St. Gallen and Geneva. Valais is to vote on the issue soon.

■ Pascal Couchepin has had to explain why in 2007 the Federal Council secretly destroyed 100 federal files filled with sensitive documents on suspected trafficking in nuclear material. Serious doubts surround the legality of the action. The president of the National Council's Foreign Policy Committee, Geri Müller, is demanding an inquiry as he suspects the USA of having put pressure on Switzerland.