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■ **Chocolate** knows no crises. In 2008, the 18 companies making up the Swiss chocolate industry (ChocoSuisse) set a fifth consecutive sales record with revenues of CHF 1.8 billion, representing an increase of 9.3% in a year. Some 185,000 tonnes were sold last year.

■ The **alpine glaciers** are shrinking in depth as well as length. In Switzerland in 2007, the ice thinned by 1.3 m on the Silvretta (Grisons) and by 1.7 m on the Gries (Valais).

■ The **Zurich Lions** won ice hockey's Champions League, beating Russian team Metallurg Magnitogorsk. After performing well in the group stages, Zurich knocked out top Finnish side Espoo Blues in the semi-final.

■ While the debate rages on about bonus payments totalling CHF 2 billion, **UBS** has announced losses of CHF 20 billion for 2008 with CHF 8.1 billion coming in the fourth quarter alone. Net capital withdrawals were CHF 85.8 billion in the last three months of 2008 and amounted to CHF 226 billion for the full year. Credit Suisse lost CHF 8.2 billion in 2008.

■ The Swiss Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) says the country should take advantage of the recession to develop **public transport**. The capacity of rail and urban transport has reached its limit, as any commuter will agree. The solutions proposed by the SFTU involve public investment of at least CHF 5 billion.

■ Minister for Economic Affairs Doris Leuthard has met one of the SFTU's other demands, increasing the **duration of short-time work** from 12 to 18 months, effective from 1 April.

■ 52% of Zurich voters endorsed the abolition of **flat-**



The Swiss ski team has brought home a haul of 6 medals from the World Ski Championships in Val d'Isère: a Gold (Super-G) and Silver (Downhill) for Didier Cuche, a Gold (Giant Slalom) and Bronze (Downhill) for Carlo Janka, and two Silvers (Super Combined and Downhill) for 17-year-old Lara Gut.

“Since the bilateral agreements, we have had more well-educated young people from Switzerland settling in France for career reasons. In 1973, I had great difficulty obtaining work and residence permits despite the support of my employer.” Jean-Paul Aeschlimann, Honorary Consul in Montpellier and Vice-President of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad

“It would be a disgrace if, instead of deploying our army, we had to pay foreign soldiers to protect our ships at sea from pirates.”

Micheline Calmy-Rey, Federal Councillor and Foreign Affairs Minister

“If every Swiss citizen were to make one less visit to the doctor over the next six months, the healthcare cost issue would be resolved. Whether health insurance premiums increase depends on the people, not the Federal Council.”

Pascal Couchepin, Federal Councillor and Interior Minister

“The difference in salaries between the banking sector and the rest of the business world has become too great. Banker salaries need to be lowered.”

Doris Leuthard, Federal Councillor and Economic Affairs Minister

“44% of Switzerland's national income is earned abroad. If the markets in Germany, France and the USA collapse at the same time, there will be far-reaching consequences for our economy.”

Jean-Daniel Gerber, Director of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs

“The fact that younger workers fear they will not receive a sufficient AHV pension is understandable but unwarranted.”

Bernd Schips, former Professor of Economics at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich

“Our two countries share remarkable similarities. Or do you know of another country where the staff apologise if a train is running late?”

Ichiro Komatsu, Japanese Ambassador to Switzerland

“Switzerland has consistently proved itself capable of reform. But we have reform deadlock in national government due to its quasi-geriatric make-up.”

Rudolf Strahm, former National Councillor and Price Supervisor, on the ageing membership of the Federal Council

rate tax for wealthy foreigners. This decision may give other cantons the same idea, such as Vaud which has around 1,200 rich foreigners within its confines.

■ According to the weekly German newspaper “Sonntag”, a survey has revealed that the authorities in at least 20 cantons are planning, or have taken, **measures to counter the economic crisis** at a total cost of CHF 1.16 billion.

■ Moritz Leuenberger has received the **European Railway Award** for his railway policy and, in particular, for the transfer of freight traffic from the road to the railways.

■ A week after winning the Wengen downhill, skier Didier Defago from Morgins was victorious at the Streif de Kitzbühel in Austria. This double triumph makes him a skiing legend. With 22 podium finishes and 10 wins this season (1 February), **Swiss skiing** is in good shape. Both men and women are enjoying success, with Carlo Janka, Lara Gut, Dominique Gisin and Fabienne Suter all doing well.

■ **Albert Einstein** is the most famous Swiss person of all time according to a survey by the “SonntagsZeitung”. The Nobel Prize-winning physicist, who became a naturalised Swiss citizen in 1901, has been the subject of a permanent exhibition at Berne's History Museum since 2005.

■ The number of people looking for work in Switzerland could reach 160,000 or 4.5% in 2009, according to Klaus Wellershoff, chief economist at UBS. The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) said the rate of **unemployment** rose to 3.3% in January compared to 3% in December 2008, taking the jobless total to almost 130,000. ALAIN WEY