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The Swiss U17s football team – all the players are still under 17 years of age – became world champions in Nigeria last November after an outstanding performance. They defeated Brazil, Germany, Italy, Columbia and Nigeria in turn to see Switzerland crowned football world champions for the first time ever. The team was honoured in a reception at the Federal Palace.

■ Researchers at CERN in Geneva can stop agonising. After more than a year of repair work, the **largest particle accelerator** (LHC) ever built has been put back into operation without any hitches. The scientists are aiming to detect traces of the **invisible "dark matter"** believed to make up more than 96% of the universe.

■ The Federal Minister of Economic Affairs, Doris Leuthard, who was elected Swiss President in December, is planning to apply the safeguard clause **to protect the Swiss labour market** from 2010. The Federal Council had decided against using this instrument in May 2009. She told the "NZZ am Sonntag" that the government had to look at ways of making Switzerland a less attractive destination for EU citizens in 2010 and 2011. Last October, unemployment in Switzerland rose to 4%, its highest level for more than four years.

■ The **Competition Commission** (Comco) has imposed a CHF 220 million fine on Swisscom. The operator overcharged its competitors (Sunrise, Tele2, etc.) for high-speed Internet services over several years. This prevented its operator customers from operating their ADSL services profitably.

■ A third of Switzerland's 4.28 million workforce is **employed part-time**. This proportion is almost unparalleled in Europe, where only the Netherlands is ahead of Switzerland with a rate of 48%. This phenomenon mainly concerns women.

■ Roger Federer finished 2009 as **world number 1**, regaining his crown after victory at Wimbledon. He also helped Switzerland to retain its place in the Davis Cup world group

"We have pursued a policy that has made us the most competitive nation in the world and the most innovative in Europe. We are still the world's seventh most important financial centre."

Doris Leuthard, President Elect of the Confederation for 2010 and Economics Minister

"I have no problem with Muslim women wearing head scarves. In the more remote valleys of Grisons you will still see older women wearing head scarves." Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, Federal Councillor and Justice Minister

"Should Switzerland join the European Union? I wouldn't entertain any illusions. Switzerland is very much in the thick of it and dependent on the EU in all sorts of ways. Everything would have been much easier with the European Economic Area (EEA)."

Joschka Fischer, former German Foreign Minister

"The longer Switzerland maintains a political distance from the rest of Europe, and yet profits from the most important achievements of the EU, the less willing it will be to risk EU accession."

Michael Herman, political scientist

"According to our predictions, unemployment will fall gradually from 2011. Once the economy picks up again Switzerland will return to its traditionally very low rates of unemployment."

Serge Gaillard, head of the Labour Directorate at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs

"Swiss-based asset management for foreign clients will continue to be very much in demand."

Brady Dougan, American CEO of Credit Suisse

"Why do we have up to 400,000 Muslims in Switzerland, mainly from the Balkans and Turkey? Because we brought them in as workers and then they brought their families."

Rudolf Strahm, commentator and former Price Inspector

"The arrest of film director Roman Polanski may have been legally inevitable, but politically it was senseless."

Martin Senti, editor of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", on the worldwide protests following this arrest

by making a decisive contribution in the play-off match against Italy.

■ The vaccination campaign to counter the **H1N1** flu is set to cost almost CHF 130 million and will be met by the federal government. It was launched at the end of September for

persons at risk and then extended to the rest of the population.

■ After Germany, Switzerland is the **most attractive location in the world** for companies according to a study conducted by the consultants Ernst & Young. Of the 700 multi-

national company directors surveyed, 20% would choose Switzerland if they had to relocate their business. In contrast, the Swiss tax system has lost some of its appeal, dropping from 4th position worldwide in 2007 to 11th in 2009.

■ Having retired early from the Federal Council, **Pascal Couchepin** can now dedicate his time to his passion for history.

He is to become President of the Foundation of the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece as well as the Hardt Foundation for the Study of Classical Antiquity in Vandoeuvres (canton of Geneva). He is also responsible for promoting French as the official language of the Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

■ In the first nine months of 2009, the **number of companies going bankrupt** in Switzerland increased by 28.9% to reach a total of 3,872 companies. A dismal record number of 1,387 companies went into liquidation in the third quarter alone.

■ Chemist Michael Grätzel, a professor at the Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, is one of four people to be awarded the 2009 **Balzan Prize**. He will receive CHF 1 million for inventing a new type of photovoltaic cell which will be used in Bertrand Piccard's "Solar Impulse".

■ The **GaultMillau guide** to Swiss gastronomy has named Andreas Caminada "Chef of the Year". The 32-year-old chef at the Hotel Schauenstein in Fürsteneau (Grisons) was previously named "Newcomer of the Year" in 2007. His "magical and audacious" cuisine and a score of 19 out of 20 have seen him enter the exclusive club of "la crème de la crème des cuisiniers", which has eight members in Switzerland, including Philippe Rochat from the canton of Vaud.