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■ Switzerland won nine medals at the **Olympic Games in Vancouver**. There was gold for Didier Défago in the downhill, Carlo Janka in the giant slalom, Dario Cologna in the 15 km cross-country skiing, Mike Schmid in ski cross and Simon Ammann in ski jumping in both the normal hill and large hill events. His two medals, combined with his two victories in Salt Lake City in 2002, make Ammann the most decorated Swiss competitor in the history of the Olympic Games. Olivia Nobs in snowboard cross, Silvan Zurbriggen in the super combined and the men's curling team, led by Markus Eggler and Ralf Stöckli, all picked up bronze medals.

■ Alinghi lost the **America's Cup** in Valencia (Spain) to the American Oracle team in the 33rd staging of the race last February. Holders of the periodically contested trophy since 2003, Ernesto Bertarelli's crew had to recognise the supremacy of the challenger which it has been fighting in court for more than two years.

■ Upheaval at the top of **Swiss Post**. Claude Bégli, Chairman of the Management Board, has handed in his resignation to the Federal Council following controversy over his strategic vision and outside activities. While working on a part-time basis (50%) for the Swiss postal service, Bégli, from the canton of Vaud, also held another position for an Indian company based on a 75% level of employment. He has been replaced by Peter Hasler from Zurich.

■ The new "Learning Center" at the Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne has been officially opened. This

"An earthquake, like the one in Haiti, could also strike Basel or Zurich, causing widespread damage, costing billions of francs and claiming thousands of lives."

Stefan Wiemer, Professor of Seismology at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich

"I challenge anyone to try living on CHF 930 in welfare benefits a month. Accommodation and health insurance costs also have to be met. Good luck!"

Hugo Fasel, Director of Caritas Switzerland

"We can't say we experienced a crisis in Switzerland in 2009. Spending power rose sharply, employment increased and major bank UBS was re-structured."

Beat Kappeler, Publicist

"The temperature in the Engadine has increased by 1.6 °C since 1976. As a result, the tree line has risen by 250 metres."

Global Change Newsletter

"Unless the old-age and survivors' insurance (AHV) pension scheme is reformed, we will face a critical situation between 2021 and 2025. There will no longer be any guarantee that all pensioners will receive their money each month."

Yves Rossier, Director of the Federal Social Insurance Office

"The many German employees in the hotel and restaurant industry have improved quality tremendously. They are a blessing for Swiss tourism."

Jürg Schmid, outgoing Director of Switzerland Tourism

"We are one of the last, if not the last hotel in Switzerland to put such great emphasis on old-school etiquette."

Vic Jacob, Hotelier, St. Moritz's luxury Suvretta House



The entire village of Unterwasser turned out to welcome its ski jumper Simon Ammann, winner of two Olympic Gold medals, back from the Olympic Games in Vancouver.

futuristic building, which resembles a giant undulating rectangle, measures 15,000 m², an area greater than two football pitches. This colossal wave, dotted with holes like gruyère cheese, was designed by the Japanese architectural studio Sanaa and contains the Federal Institute's library with half a million books.

■ Daniel Vasella will step

down from his position as CEO of **Novartis**, while remaining Chairman of the Board of Directors. The Basel-based pharmaceutical giant has enjoyed an exceptionally good year in 2009 with a 7% increase in revenues. The American Joe Jimenez will succeed him. The group has taken over the American company Alcon, the global

leader in ophthalmology. At an estimated total cost of USD 49.7 billion, it is the biggest acquisition in Swiss business history.

■ In 2009, applications to carry out **civil service** tripled. More than 7,000 men chose the route that enables them to avoid military service. This is almost certainly due, at least in part, to the abolition of the test on conscientious objection to the duty to perform military service in 2009. However, Andreas Stettbacher, the army's head doctor, believes interest will level out as civil service takes one and a half times longer to complete.

■ After devoting half of his life to working for the **Swiss National Bank (SNB)**, including nine years as its chairman, 63-year-old Valais-born Jean-Pierre Roth left the institution at the end of 2009 to make way for new leadership. "The effects of the crisis will be felt for a long time to come. Economic recovery and the reform of the international financial system will require SNB's fullest attention. A new board, without foreseeable changes, will be able to focus fully on these tasks", explained the architect of the salvation of UBS.

■ Switzerland has its highest level of unemployment for 12 years. In February, around 176,000 people were registered **unemployed**, which is 4.5% of the working population. The situation has worsened significantly since January 2009, with an additional 47,335 people looking for work (+36.9%). Unemployment could reach 5% by the end of 2010, confirmed Serge Gaillard, head of the labour division at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).