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■ The Swiss national football team's victory over world champions Spain had a dramatic impact on the statistics of the **FIFA rankings**. Switzerland moved up six places and is now ranked 18th in the world. It has even overtaken France, which ended up in 24th place after its dismal showing in South Africa.

■ **The Glacier Express**, a tourist train, came off the tracks in Fiesch (Valais), leaving one person dead and 40 injured, mainly Japanese. An inquest has established that the derailment of the carriages was due to human error. The train was travelling too fast on a bend and the three rear carriages came off the tracks. The Matterhorn-Gotthard railway announced it would provide compensation for victims of the accident and their families.

■ Viktor R  thlin, aged 35 from Obwalden, won the **marathon at the European Championships** in Barcelona. It is 24 years since Switzerland last won a European title, when Werner G  nth  r triumphed in the shotput. What makes R  thlin's achievement even more incredible is that his life was hanging by a thread in spring 2009 after a double pulmonary embolism.

■ **Gruy  re** has been definitively recognised as a Swiss cheese. The famous Swiss hard cheese has won its battle with the French. It remains the only one to have protected designation of origin status after French producers abandoned attempts to obtain the prestigious label.

■ On a visit to Beijing, Doris Leuthard, Minister of Economic Affairs and Swiss President, obtained the green light from **China** to negotiate a free trade agreement between the two countries from next January. Such an agreement would enable the removal of barriers

"No nation in the world has succeeded in reducing debts of 20 billion Swiss francs as quickly as we have. This seems to have received more acknowledgement abroad than in Switzerland."

Hans-Rudolf Merz, departing Federal Councillor and Finance Minister

"I have never received so many letters and e-mails as on the issue of regulating euthanasia. Many people have clearly been personally affected."

Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, Federal Councillor and Minister of Justice

"Switzerland is still an industrial empire. We outperform others thanks to our large number of small and medium-sized enterprises, the social climate and our traineeships."

Nicolas Hayek, a watch industry pioneer who recently passed away

"Basel likes to vote with the French-speaking Swiss. The people of Basel are the Latins of German-speaking Switzerland. So we'll have to wait a good while for the next Federal Councillor."

Helmut Hubacher, former president of the Swiss Social Democratic Party (SP)

"The proportion of second-generation immigrants among the career officer ranks is surprisingly high. Irrespective of whether they are Sicilians or Finns, they have a strong loyalty to Switzerland."

Karl W. Haltiner, former lecturer at the Military Academy of the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich

"There are indications that the economic elite benefit from a generally healthy climate and social harmony, but shirk social responsibility."

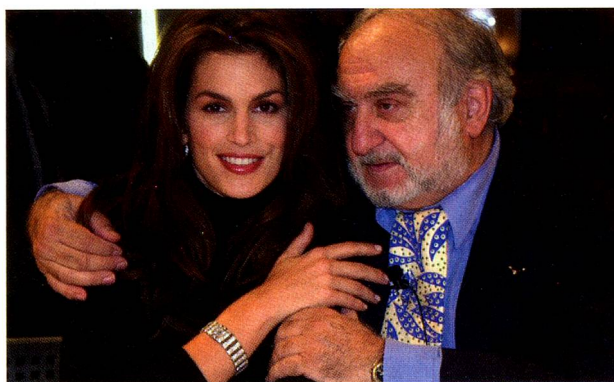
Martin Waser, city councillor and head of the Department of Social Welfare in Zurich

"Hans Gutknecht, who emigrated from Kerzers 318 years ago, is an ancestor of Barack Obama. The local council has already made the President an honorary citizen."

Heinz Etter, president of the council in this village in the Bernese Seeland, home to 1050 people

"Of course I'm staying here. I'm extremely proud to be the coach of the Swiss national football team."

Ottmar Hitzfeld, one of the world's top football coaches



The unforgettable Swiss business magnate Nicolas Hayek (pictured here with supermodel Cindy Crawford) has passed away at the age of 82. This visionary entrepreneur was born in Beirut and came to Switzerland in 1949. He became a business consultant and saved the Swiss watch industry in the 1980s with the foundation of SMH, now the Swatch Group. After passing the company's reins to his son Nick in 2003, Nicolas Hayek, who was never without a cigar and always wore several watches on both wrists, demonstrated his unwavering dedication to innovation with projects such as Belenos. Belenos is focused on the development of fuel cells to power cars which can be recharged with the help of solar power.

such as the 20% tax on the import of luxury goods, which penalises the Swiss watch-making industry.

■ After concluding two rounds of bilateral negotiations, in 1999 and 2004, Switzerland and the European Union have

resumed work on the issue.

Discussions have been held to conclude new agreements in various fields, notably competition, the electricity market, chemical products and the free trade of agricultural products. The Swiss government, which wants to continue the bilateral approach, is not keen on the framework agreement concept discussed extensively with the EU when Doris Leuthard visited Brussels in July. However, with 120 agreements already concluded, the bilateral approach is becoming increasingly difficult. Both sides will continue negotiations until December. The talks have also covered the creation of a court for legal issues and additional payments by Switzerland to European funds to reduce economic disparities. The two sides are still far apart on the issue of taxation.

■ According to EconomieSuisse, **compulsory schooling** is providing inadequate education for pupils in their first language and in maths. The survey, conducted among employers of apprentices and HR managers and in cooperation with cantonal chambers of commerce and industry, also revealed that a good knowledge of these two subjects is fundamentally important to the economy.

■ Following its maiden flight, Bertrand Piccard's solar aircraft **Solar Impulse** has now successfully completed its first night flights. Test pilot Markus Scherdel has already completed around a dozen flights. The second prototype will be constructed in 2011 to carry out longer flights crossing continents without a stopover as well as the Atlantic Ocean.

ALAIN WEY.