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Nobel Prize for two Swiss astrophysicists

This year's Nobel Prize in Physics has been jointly awarded, with one half going to James Peebles (USA/Canada) and the other to Swiss scientists Didier Queloz and Michel Mayor. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm decided to honour Queloz and Mayor "for contributions to our understanding of the evolution of the universe



and Earth's place in the cosmos". In 1995, the duo detected the first planet outside our solar system, an exoplanet, orbiting a Sun-like star called 51 Pegasi. Their discovery revolutionised astronomy and initiated the field of research into exoplanets. Over 4,000 exoplanets have since been found. The star 51 Pegasi now goes by the fitting name of Helvetios. (MUL)

Dual national loses Swiss citizenship

September saw Switzerland strip a dual national of his Swiss citizenship for the first-ever time. The person in question – a 34-year-old Ticino man who also held a Turkish passport – was sentenced to prison two years ago for spreading propaganda on behalf of a branch of the al-Qaeda terrorist network and for helping to send two jihadists to the Syrian-Iraqi war zone. By revoking his citizenship, the federal government invoked a never-before-used legal provision that says that individuals whose conduct is seriously detrimental to Switzerland's national interests and security may have their Swiss nationality withdrawn. (MUL)

Switzerland drops one place in the WEF rankings

Switzerland continues to lose its competitive edge, according to the annual World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Competitiveness Report. It has dropped one place to fifth in the rankings. Singapore now tops the table, followed by the USA. Switzerland was rated the world's most competitive country back in 2017. (MUL)

Libra: a challenge for Switzerland

The cryptocurrency promoted by Facebook is proving a challenge for Switzerland. As the Libra Association is based in Geneva, it is governed by Swiss law. The initial position adopted by the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority is that Libra must adhere to the "highest international standards" in combating money laundering. The Libra project also contains "bank-like risks", which means "bank-like regulatory requirements" are needed. (MUL)

Successful Swiss peace diplomacy

Swiss ambassador Mirko Manzoni has brokered a peace treaty between the rebels and the government in Mozambique. The treaty is to end a decades-old civil and guerrilla war that has resulted in almost a million fatalities. This is a major success for Swiss peace diplomacy. Manzoni will now monitor the peace process as the Personal Envoy of UN Secretary-General António Guterres. By making this appointment, Guterres has foiled Switzerland's intention to withdraw from the country and downgrade the occasionally unconventional and independent minded Swiss diplomat. (MUL)

Jura conflict rumbles on

Forty years after the founding of the canton of Jura, the Jura conflict remains unresolved: the question of whether Moutier wants to switch to Jura or remain with the canton of Berne has been raised again. In 2017, the town voted in favour of switching canton, albeit by a very small margin. However, the Berne administrative court has now rejected the vote; one of the reasons for its ruling was the excessive propaganda by officials during the voting campaign. The pro-Jura lobby is now urgently calling for another vote. (MUL)

Two mothers – and a leading case

A court in Bern made a significant ruling in September when it ruled that a woman had to pay maintenance to her former partner. The case concerned two women living together as a couple and who conceived a child through a sperm donation. When the relationship broke down, the mother of the child unsuccessfully claimed maintenance from her ex-partner. The court ruled that same-sex parents in a registered partnership must also pay maintenance for any shared children following separation. The ruling thus has far-reaching implications for same-sex parents. (MUL)