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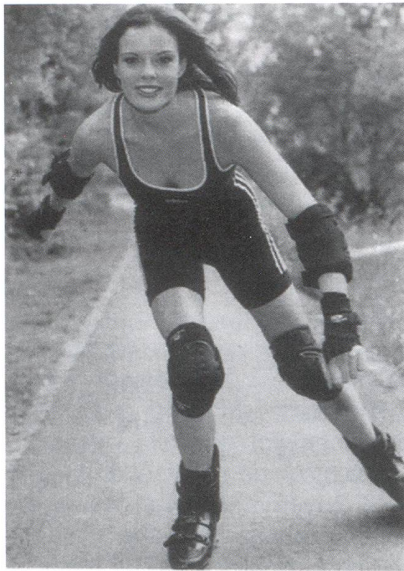
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Would You Believe This?

Over 800,000 Swiss people are participating in the sport of Inline-Skating!!!

This must be good business for the manufacturers of the roller skates!!

Mergers Free From Interference

(Feb 1999)

The government has rejected calls to interfere in business mergers. A statement said the success of mergers was in the hands of the individual companies. It adds that companies usually heeded their social responsibilities and cooperated with trade unions. The statement comes in response to the planned merger of the Al-Group with the German conglomerate, Viag.

Reciprocal Visit

(Feb 1999)

Switzerland has invited the president of South Korea, Kim Dae-jung, for an official visit.

The economics minister, Pascal Couchepin, made the offer during a meeting with Mr Kim in Seoul. Officials said the talks focussed on bilateral trade relations and Swiss efforts to help reduce tensions on the Korean peninsula.

Swisscom to lengthen phone numbers

(Feb 1999)

Plans are going ahead to introduce nine-digit phone numbers. The federal authorities have rejected criticism by a telecommunications lobby group that the changes come too early and are too costly. The authorities say the new system, to be in place in 2001, is needed to increase the numbers available in a liberalised market.

Dishonest Manager

(Feb 1999)

A former manager of Swisscom has been found guilty of fraud and falsifying documents. A court in Zürich handed down an eighteen month suspended prison sentence. The head of the accountancy department siphoned off one and a half million francs and spent it on gold ingots, shares and luxury items.

Worldwide Problem

(Feb 1999)

Drunken driving is the most common traffic violation in Switzerland. Figures for 1996 show nearly half of the thirty-five thousand penalties were linked to drunkenness. The Federal Statistics Office says compared to the rising number of vehicles, the ratio of offences for drunken driving has remained stable since the 1960s. The report also shows that every third man gets sentenced by a court for traffic violation at least once in his life. The ratio for women stands at six per cent.

A Milestone in Health Care

(Feb 1999)

As of the year 2000, all out-patient medical treatment in Switzerland is to be performed according to a uniform schedule of fees covering doctors and hospitals. Announced jointly in Bern on Thursday by Swiss physicians' and hospital associations and health insurers, the new fee structure upgrades the value of basic medical services over high-tech procedures. The new fees will supposedly have no impact on the overall costs of medical care here, but general practitioners can expect to earn somewhat more in future, while medical specialists can figure on some loss of income.

Upcoming Swiss Cultural Events in New Zealand

(As indicated by the Swiss Embassy - Wellington)

The Swiss Embassy in co-operation with 'Pro Helvetia-Arts Council of Switzerland' is pleased to announce the Photographic Exhibition of 'The Patient Planet/So Many Worlds' for 1999.

Dunedin	Otago Museum	27 February - 11 April 1999
Christchurch	Canterbury Museum	5 May - 7 June 1999
Palmerston North	Manawatu Art Gallery	19 June - 1 August 1999
Wellington	Dowse Art Gallery (Lower Hutt)	21 August - 21 November 1999
Auckland	Auckland Art Gallery	11 Dec. 1999 - 23 Jan. 2000

The Patient Planet/So Many Worlds is a remarkable exhibition of photographs which tells the story of the major political and human events of the second half of the twentieth century. Turbulent, yet touching, the 255 images tell individual stories with formidable authenticity, a factor which is frequently overlooked in today's art-directed or manipulated images. Nearly all the renowned names of humanistic photojournalism are represented including Switzerland's Werner Bischof, together with Henri Cartier-Bresson, René Burri, Robert Frank and many others. This is an important exhibition, brought to New Zealand by Pro Helvetia, Arts Council of Switzerland, and should be of great interest to every age group - it is a photographic history of the world that is our's.