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Snippets...

Digital transmitters for cars start up in Switzerland

Digital radio can now be received in cars in some parts of the country. The first transmitters for drivers went into service in cantons Berne and Solothurn recently.

It'll take until 2003 for the whole country to be able to receive Digital Audio Broadcasting - the latest in radio technology.

Until now it's only been possible to receive digital broadcasts via cable or satellite.

DAB provides better quality sound and a wider range of frequencies.

Expo (Landesausstellung) 01 postponed to 2002

A new five-member steering committee has been formally appointed to oversee the planned national exhibition in 2002.

The committee will be headed by the government's representative on the body, the Radical Party president, Franz Steinegger. The board of Expo 01 also handed over most of its powers to the steering committee. Expo was postponed by a year because of management and funding problems.

Switzerland joins neighbours for airforce exercises and US army rookies could soon train in Switzerland

The airforce is to join its French and Austrian counterparts for five days of exercises aimed at strengthening security and co-operation. Dubbed Amadeus 99, the exercises will test how the three countries' airforces respond to an escalating security crisis.

The exercise is intended to replicate situations similar to those the airforces may face during United Nations missions.

Military cooperation is also being stepped up with the United States. American army recruits could soon complete their training here. The Pentagon has decided to recognise military qualifications gained at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich, as part of an on-going educational exchange programme.

The first American officer has already signed up for the new course at the academy in Zürich, which has just begun.

Swiss airline flies to newly opened Pristina airport

Crossair was among four airlines which flew into the newly reopened airport in the Kosovar capital, Pristina, recently. A team of ten experts is examining installations and security measures, with a view to operating up to two weekly flights from Switzerland. A decision on whether to open the route will be made soon.

The flights are mainly intended for the large Kosovo Albanian population living in Switzerland.

Man arrested over smuggling refugees into Switzerland

Police in Italy have arrested a Kosovar-Albanian accused of smuggling more than a thousand refugees into Switzerland. The twenty-five year old man was seized in the town of Como following a request by French justice officials. The French are investigating what they believe to be a massive pan-European smuggling operation. At least eleven people are now in custody.

Health premiums to rise by nearly four percent next year

Health insurance premiums will rise by nearly four percent on average next year.

The authorities have approved, and in some cases amended, the rates put forward by the health insurance companies. There are considerable regional differences: basic insurance will cost between three hundred and twenty francs a month in Geneva and one hundred and thirty francs in Appenzell-Innerrhoden.

The president, Ruth Dreifuss, said health costs had reached a limit for many families and proposed introducing income-related premiums.

Funds for railways and universities

Parliament has approved extra funds for universities to deal with an expected record number of students. The Senate and the House of Representatives voted in favour of granting additional subsidies of thirty-five million francs, despite opposition by the government. In other business, the House approved a credit worth twelve and a half billion francs for new transalpine rail links. The Senate still has to debate the project.

Kloten airport registers record drugs seizures

This year has seen a record amount of cocaine seized at Switzerland's biggest airport, in Zurich. In the first nine months of the year, one hundred and thirty-nine kilogrammes were confiscated - more than twice as much as the same period last year. Cantonal police said passengers had concealed the drugs in a variety of places, including in liquid form in bottles and in the heels of shoes.

Public broadcasting advertising revenues increase

Despite more competition from private television channels, public broadcasters have increased their advertising revenues. They were up more than twenty per cent at the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation's two main German and French channels compared to the same period last year. SBC said the positive result was largely due to an improvement in Switzerland's economy. Only Italian-language television saw a drop in income - about nine percent.

Parliament wraps up autumn session (9/10/99)

Parliament has concluded its last session before the general election later this month.

Both houses gave final approval to forty bills.

They included the bilateral treaties with the European Union, the level of a tax on non-renewable energy, and several people's initiatives.



Auckland Swiss-kiwi yodellers visiting the Pilatus aeroplane factory in Stans.



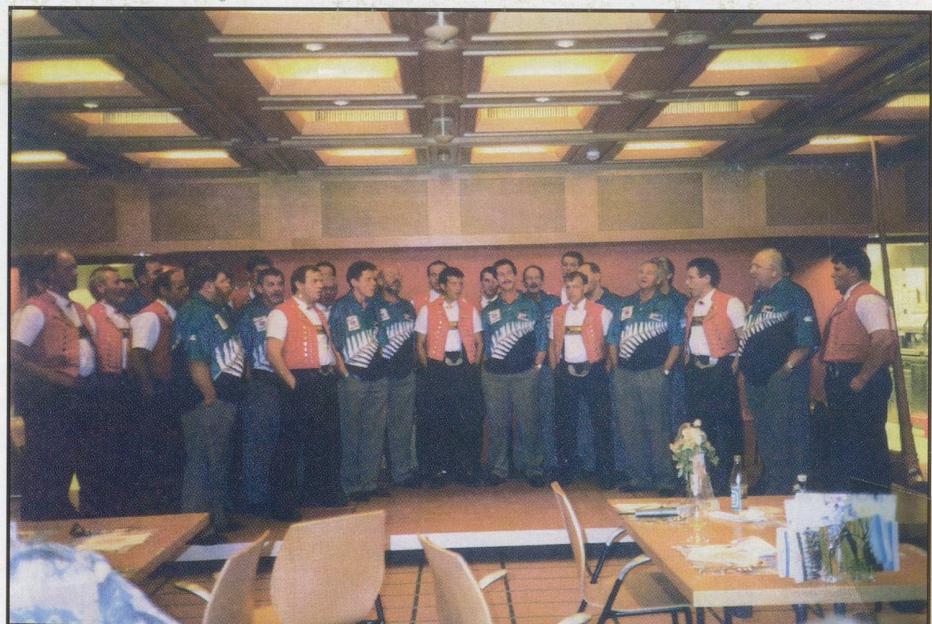
The alphorn blowers of the Auckland Swiss-kiwi yodel group performing while in Switzerland.

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The Auckland Swiss-kiwi yodel group together with Jodelclub Urnäsch as guest artists in the summit restaurant of Säntis mountain.



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