

Early Bird 10 – 16 March

SAFETY/SECURITY

Tragic accident in a Swiss tunnel (March 15)

Twenty-eight people were killed — 22 of whom children — in one of the most serious bus accidents in Swiss history. Both bus drivers and four other adults died at the scene. On Tuesday evening, the bus carrying 52 passengers ran into a wall inside a tunnel on A 9 near Siders in Wallis, Switzerland. In the bus were two school classes from Belgium on their way home from a ski trip to Val d'Anniviers. The cause of the accident is still unknown. Twenty-four children were injured, three of them are in critical condition, stated a physician at a press conference. Among the survivors was one German youth. The children were wearing seatbelts but the impact of the collision was so strong that the seats were pulled out of their anchorage. Belgium's Prime Minister, Elio Di Rupo came from Brussels to pay his respect.

Thefts in Lower Franconia on the rise (March 10)

Theft in Lower Franconia is on the rise, though violent offenses and drug-related deaths has decreased, according to recent statistics. Last year 3,000 police officers in Lower Franconia had to deal with 57,269 theft offenses. Nevertheless, the government district is still one of the safest in Bavaria, according to Police President Liliane Matthes. She stated: "During the past 10 years the number of offenses has not declined so clearly in any of the government districts as it has in Lower Franconia where it decreased by 17.2 percent from last year. Violent offenses have decreased for the fifth year in a row and thanks to intensive controls; narcotics officers identified 15.6 percent more offenses, but lesser drug related deaths than in ten years."

LEADERS & POLITICS

Distinguished professor steps down (March 16)

Professor Heribert Weber, President of the university for applied sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt (FHWS) is stepping down after 12 ½ years. Weber, 59, will teach at the FHWS for another seven years before he will retire. But he is ending his third term as president of the FHWS. Within the next 12 months Weber will work in a research institute in Munich and as Professor at the FHWS Schweinfurt. "I would do the same again. Everything went different than I thought," he said.

Ambulance service more transports than ever before (March 14)

Last year the ambulances drove more kilometers in the city and county of Schweinfurt than ever before. According to a press release by the Bavarian Red Cross, the ambulance vehicles covered 461,314 kilometers in 2011. The emergency doctors travel 75,089 kilometers and the rescue vehicles 147,004 kilometers and the patient transport vehicles drove 122 521 kilometers. A single operator of a patient transport vehicle for extreme heavy patients (up to 300 kilograms) traveled 26,700 kilometers. The ambulance/rescue services were performed by full-time employees as well as volunteers. This service could not be provided without a combination of paid employees and volunteers.

Rottmann wins Schonungen, Germany's youngest mayor (March 12)

Schonungen — about 10 minutes from Schweinfurt — now has the youngest mayor in Germany. The 25-year old Stefan Rottmann (SPD) won by three votes against his opponent Martin Oßwald (CSU). Participation in the mayor's election was high - 74.4 percent. Rottmann attributes his victory to his engagement in election tours. During the last two weeks he again took 2 weeks unpaid leave to go from house to house to talk to the citizens. Rottmann will officially take over the office from his predecessor Kilian Hartmann May 1.

Remembering the mega-disaster, nuclear plants close in Germany (March 12)

With a minute of silence and prayers the citizens of Japan commemorate the 19,000 people who were killed or were missing after the earth quake, tsunami and nuclear disaster one year ago. At 2:46 p.m. local time people in Japan bowed their heads in the destroyed coast regions, in temples and other places to commemorate the disaster that occurred one year ago. The earth quake, a 9.0 on the Richter scale caused a tsunami and a core melt accident at the nuclear power plant Fukushima. While in Japan the victims of the tsunami were in the foreground of the commemorations, in Germany and other countries mainly the nuclear power disaster was remembered. In Germany thousands of people demanded a quick power turn around and a new start in dealing with radioactive waste material. Claudia Roth, Fraction Chief of the Green party stated: "We will demonstrate until the last nuclear power plant is of the net, but not only in Germany."

ECONOMY

One in four earns less than 9.15 Euro per hour (March 15)

About 8 million people in Germany, that is almost a quarter of all people employed, have to work for less than 9.15 Euros per hour (before taxes), according by a study conducted by the institute for employment and qualifications at the university of Duisburg-Essen. The number of low wage earners increased by more than 2.3 million between 1995 and 2010. A calculation shows that almost 800,000 full time employees earn less than 6 Euros. They have monthly incomes of less than 1,000 Euros (before taxes). The vice president of the Federal SPD Fraction Hubertus Heil blamed the Federal Ministry of Labor for closing their eyes and not seeing the reality. Germany needs legal minimum wages, Heil said.

Too much food wasted (March 14)

Every year about 11 million tons of food is thrown away. According to a study conducted by the University of Stuttgart more than 60 percent of this food is being thrown away by private households. A statistic reveals that each German throws away 81.6 kilograms of food each year and spends about 235 Euro for fruit, vegetables and other food items that he does not eat. In all, about 21 billion Euros is wasted per year on wasted food costs. "We live in a throwaway society," criticized Ilse Aigner of the consumer protection department. 6.7 million tons of food is being thrown away in private households alone. Large consumers, such as hotels, restaurants, clinics or schools throw away 1.9 million tons of food every year. In the food processing industry 2 million tons and in retail 55,000 tons of food is wasted. With the campaign "too good for the trash can," the department for consumer protection wants to promote a higher consciousness

when dealing with food. The food retailers also started ordering less fresh food and vegetables for their stores to prevent waste.

Railroad freight transportation at highest level in 19 years (March 12)

Due to the recovery of the German economy, the goods transported on the railroad reached a level not seen since 1992. In 2011 railroad companies moved a total of 375 million tons of goods. That was an increase of 5.4 percent to the previous year and a total increase of 14 percent during the past two years. With this increase the massive drop of the economic crisis year 2009 has been balanced.

Deutsche Bank growing in the region, Würzburg (March 12)

The “Deutsche Bank” in Würzburg looks back at a successful business year 2011. Christoph Schulz, responsible for private and business clients explained that during the last year his clients were mainly interested in security and counseling. Real property still plays the most important role when planning for old age. Eighty-two million Euros were invested for financing of houses. Also the development in short term investments shows that the clients are looking for security.

Schlecker seeks closure of 50 stores in Lower Franconia (March 10)

The insolvent drug store chain Schlecker wants to close 343 of its 745 stores in Bavaria, about 50 of 120 in Lower Franconia. The closure list will be reviewed by labor union Ver.di. Negotiations will follow pertaining to the number of store closures.

Labor costs higher than ever before (March 10)

Last year labor costs in Germany increased above average. Compared to 2010 the factor work increased by 3.2 percent, according to the Federal Statistics Office. This is the highest increase since implementation of the labor cost index in 1997. In 2010 with an increase of 0.5 percent the costs remained almost the same. Reasons for recent developments are tariff increases and extra bonuses, which caused an above average increase of labor costs of 4.3 percent mainly in the industry. A European comparison for the first three Quarters of 2011 shows a 3.0 percent increase for Germany compared to a European average increase of 2.6 percent. The other European states increased by 2.7 percent.

SPORTS/ATHLETICS

Schweinfurt soccer (March 12)

FC 05 Schweinfurt loses against TSV 1860 Rosenheim 1:3