

SAFETY/SECURITY

Attempted sexual assault on a farm road (Aug. 17)

The Schweinfurt court of lay assessors convicted a 47-year old American for attempted sexual assault, exhibitionism and insult. In April 2011 the man had attempted to force a 20-year old female Soldier to a sexual act. The prosecution and the attorney of the joint plaintiff believed the victim. Both demanded one year and nine months in prison without parole, since he did not make a confession showing remorse, which could have been circumstantial to justify probation. The defense attorney pointed out inconsistencies in the victim's statement and demanded a not-guilty verdict based on doubt. The court of lay assessors did not agree and deemed a one-and-a half year sentence on probation appropriate. Furthermore, the defendant had to pay €3,600 to the charity organization "Women Help Women."

LEADERS & POLITICS

Demographic change in Germany (Aug. 16)

The population in Germany is shrinking and is getting older. Experts predict a continuing decrease in population Germany-wide from presently 82 million to 74 million people by 2030. Lower Franconia will see the effect and some regions, such as the Rhön, will be affected the most.

Old age poverty has been and will remain a big problem in Bavaria (Aug. 10)

The social organization VdK is demanding a considerable increase of basic security at old age. The present amount of €374 per month is not enough to enable older people with small incomes to live a dignified life, said Ulrike Mascher chairwoman of the VdK in Bavaria. The standard calculation provides €4.30 per day for food and beverages. Old age poverty is and remains a big problem in Bavaria, according to Mascher. Bavaria takes a top place in regard to the poverty rate of people age 65 and above. 19 percent of this age group is at risk of poverty—in the case of single women, every fourth one is affected. Furthermore, 9 percent of households of retirees in Bavaria have a monthly income of less than €900 per month. The VdK demands an additional amount of up to €850 per month. However, there are still many hurdles to overcome. Mascher recommends that not only the Federal Government but the Bavarian Government as well should pay a share for the additional "social security" for poor people. She stated: "An economically strong state as Bavaria should be able to afford the money to fight "old age poverty." She counts on the support of Horst Seehofer, Bavarian Minister President.

ECONOMY

Berlin Airport on the verge of bankruptcy? (Aug. 11)

Berlin's new airport was supposed to support the city's growth and prosperity. Now it has become a financial fiasco. The operating company apparently is so broke that it cannot get loans

from any bank anymore. To prevent bankruptcy, the federal government and the governments of Berlin and Brandenburg have to make additional investments: The airport will cost at least €1.17 billion more than initially planned. The opening date which was initially planned for the beginning of June has not been determined yet. All in all the new International Airport Berlin-Brandenburg will cost €4.3 billion instead of €3.1 billion.

Würzburg students win Google award (Aug. 10)

Four students from Würzburg are the European winners of the worldwide Google competition “online marketing challenge.” According to Google, the four students of the University of Applied Sciences in Würzburg have won the competition against hundreds of students from all over Europe. The goal was to achieve the highest accessibility and most sales for an online-shop (that had not been accessible through Google), using the Google Advertisement Platform AdWords and a small budget of 200 Euros. The four students studying E-commerce won the competition with their advertisement campaign for jewelry and watches in their online shop neofab.de. Worldwide, more than 11,000 students and 86 countries participated in the competition. With a budget of \$250, the Würzburg students generated more than \$18,000 within three weeks with their online shop. This won them 2nd place in Europe. Only one team from Poland was better – they took 1st place in the worldwide competition – and consequently made the Würzburg team 1st place in Europe.

HEALTH

Bavarian government promotes vaccinations (Aug. 14)

Bavarian Health Minister Marcel Huber is demanding the population to get vaccinations against severe and contagious diseases. “Getting vaccinations is not only self-protection but also protection of other persons who could contract the disease,” he said. He emphasized that each individual has to be aware of his/her responsibility against their fellow human beings. In contrast to people who are against vaccinations and warn of possible serious side effects, the health minister is convinced that with modern vaccines huge benefits can be achieved with small efforts and risks.

“Hanta” virus spread affecting Lower Franconia (Aug. 10)

The “Hanta” virus is presently strongly spreading in Bavaria. According to the technical health insurance company (TK) 282 cases had been reported by the beginning of August – these are six times as many as in all of 2011. Especially affected are two government districts: Approximately half of the reported infections occurred in Lower Franconia and about a third in Lower Bavaria, according to the health insurance company (TK). The most infected people are from the districts Aschaffenburg (49) and Freyung-Grafenau (38) and Miltenberg (30). The “Hanta” virus is mainly transmitted by “bank voles” (special type of mice). Typical symptoms are sudden fever, nausea and joint pain. More and more often also life-threatening infections of the lungs and kidneys occur. So far no special therapy exists against the disease. People contract the infection through contact with saliva, feces or urine of infected mice. Therefore, it is very dangerous to clean out storage areas, basements or attics – touching or breathing in the excrements that are whirled-up when sweeping. The health insurance company advises to wear masks and gloves for that kind of work.

