

Early Bird 3 – 9 Nov. 2012

SAFETY/SECURITY

Suspected Neo Nazis attack young man of German-Thai origin in Würzburg (Nov. 9)

An attack on a young man of German-Thai origin apparently had a racist motive. On his way home from a “Döner” shop the 20-year old man who had been living in Germany since he was 7 years old, was attacked and beaten up by three men before he and his friends were able to flee. In the hospital he was diagnosed with a cranial bruise and a bruised cheek. The young man told the police that this was the first time he had been physically attacked. He gets verbally attacked about four or five times a year, but he does not worry about that. The director of a youth educational center, where the young man is completing a voluntary year of social service, stated that in his opinion the Police does not realize enough how dangerous the situation in Würzburg really is.

In case of a serious incident at the nuclear power plant in Grafenrheinfeld – Schweinfurt will become a restricted zone. The coalition for action against nuclear power plants states: The disaster management plan is insufficient (Nov. 6)

On Monday morning six activists of the Schweinfurt coalition for action against nuclear power plants spontaneously declared Schweinfurt as a restricted zone and posted respective signs on the “Schweinfurt” signs in Oberndorf . The reason for this action was a Germany wide campaign against the continued operation of nine nuclear power plants in Germany, one of them located in Grafenrheinfeld. In case of a serious incident in Grafenrheinfeld, Schweinfurt would become a restricted zone. Spokeswoman of the action group Babs Günther stated that with this action they want to draw the citizens’ attention to the danger that nuclear power plants pose. Every day a disaster could occur in the nuclear power plant just a short distance from Schweinfurt. More people would be affected than anticipated. Based on a model calculation of the Federal Office for Radiation Protection, an accident in Grafenrheinfeld could make areas in a distant of up to 170 kilometers uninhabitable, based on the quantity of radioactivity released and weather conditions. Many people would have to be moved permanently. The disaster management plans which include only a diameter of 25 kilometers around the power plant are insufficient and in case of an emergency hardly helpful. With iodine pills and a disaster management plan such as this, a melt-down could not be survived. According to Günther the action is meant as an eye opener and a demand to shut down all nuclear power plants now.

Intoxicated Soldiers hit 30-year old driver (Nov. 5)

On Sunday morning at approximately 1:35 a.m. a 30-year old driver in a Mitsubishi-Galant who was waiting at the red light on Richard-Wagner-Strasse was hit in the face by a U.S. Soldier for no apparent reason. The Soldier was on the road with two fellow Soldiers and fled after the attack. A little while later the police located the three Soldiers at a fast food restaurant on Niederwerner Street. The 30-year old victim was released from the hospital after he received treatment. All three Soldiers were under the influence of alcohol. The police are looking for witnesses.

LEADERS/POLITICS

Presidential Election – Barack Obama: “The best is yet to come” - Also in Lower Franconia people celebrated the victory of U.S. president Obama (Nov. 8)

The re-election of President Obama was celebrated worldwide - many people in Lower Franconia celebrated also. Martin Heilig from Würzburg who had been an active campaign helper for President Obama during recent weeks, by calling U.S. citizens in the States, motivating them to vote for President Obama, stated: “It’s a sensational feeling”. Klaus Zepke from the German-American society in Würzburg sees Obama’s victory differentiated he stated: “We Europeans have the advantage that we already know who we are dealing with.” However; he is disappointed about Obama’s first term in office. The president was not able to make a real change and now is facing a mountain of challenges. Now the American economy and the job market will have to be dealt with. He stated: “President Obama will have difficulties but I wish him the best of luck.” Zepke talked about an election held in the German-American society before Election Day where 90 per cent of the members voted for Obama. Mary Ritzmann of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, an organization which supports the interests of veterans and has three million members worldwide, stated: “I voted for Obama”. “I think that the election of Obama has positive effects on German-American relations.” Furthermore she said: “The President has a better feeling for Europe, compared to his republican opponent Mitt Romney. Among the Soldiers the results caused different reactions. Some were disappointed they would have wished Mitt Romney would have won the election because they hoped for more money for the Department of Defense.” George Ohl, former Public Affairs Officer of the USAG Schweinfurt hopes that Obama uses his second term in office to further health care and education. Stephen DeSanto an American civilian living in Schweinfurt sees the re-election of President Obama positively and stated: “The Americans are not so extreme right-(wing) as the tea party and other republican groups would like to have it.”

City of Schweinfurt’s Budget for 2013 – Taking a deficit of 14 million Euros into account (Nov.7)

In a press conference held on Tuesday, Lord Mayor Sebastian Remele and treasurer Martin Baldauf presented the city’s budget for 2013. The budget meetings in the city council will begin on 19 November. The proposed budget of 199.4 million Euros would be 11.1 million Euros below this year’s spending. Despite of savings the spending for 2013 will not be covered by the revenue. Proposed is a funding shortfall of approximately 14 million Euros. This deficit should be covered in equal shares by reserve assets, which will have shrunk from 90 million to 33 million Euros by the end of the year, as well as by new loans. Despite decreased spending the city is planning investments of 20 million Euros, mainly for properties where families can build houses at “Eselshöhe West II” and for the economy (industrial park Maintal). Furthermore, Schweinfurt as a place of education shall be strengthened and downtown Schweinfurt shall become more attractive. Services for the citizens will not be cut. Also the sport clubs, culture associations and charity organizations can count on grants.

The communities Schonungen, Üchtelhausen and Geldersheim transfer tasks of the bureau of vital statistics to the city of Schweinfurt (Nov.7)

Now it is official: The three communities Schonungen, Üchtelhausen and Geldersheim which are located close to the city of Schweinfurt will transfer the task of their bureaus of vital statistics to the city of Schweinfurt effective 1 Jan. 2013. Lord Mayor Remele and the Mayors of the three communities signed the document in the town hall. The reasons for taking this step are finance and personnel related. Another reason was the fact that most babies are born in a Schweinfurt hospital and many people die in Schweinfurt's hospitals so the birth and death certificates have to be issued by the city's registrar's office anyway. It was not the city's initiative but the Mayors of the three communities came to the city after the decisions were made and approved by their community councils and later on also by the Schweinfurt city council. For this service the communities will have to pay the city 1.90 Euro per citizen per year. Initially the county of Schweinfurt also wanted to offer this service to the communities but had to abandon the plan after large communities such as Gerolzhofen and Werneck did not concur.

ECONOMY

“Starbucks” leaves German revenue high and dry. How the American coffee shop giant avoids paying taxes – absolutely legal (Nov. 6)

Since the opening of the first “Starbucks” coffee shop in Berlin ten years ago the company has opened 150 more stores in Germany. Business is booming in Germany, so how is it possible that the American chain has never paid taxes since opening their first store in 2002? The same goes for France where Starbucks first opened a business in 2004 and now operates 60 stores. This case shows how international companies can avoid paying taxes by using tricks, which are totally legal. In 2011 Starbucks had an income of 117 million Euros; still the chain had made a loss of 5.3 million Euros and therefore did not have to pay any taxes, exactly as in previous years since 2002. Who thinks that Starbucks' business is so bad that they do not have to pay taxes is wrong. The company recently published their total revenue of 359 million dollars, and showed an increase of 11 % in the last quarter. Business is so good that the company scaled up their profit expectations. However; for the tax payers in Germany, France and Great Britain, there is nothing or little left.

The core of the problem is that Starbucks is using the possibilities the countries of the European Union (EU) have created and cannot get changed because of the principle of unanimity in tax matters. Therefore the Starbucks subsidiaries in Germany and France pay a license fee to the European Center in the Netherlands, which is 6% of their total revenue as well as an additional 25,000 dollars in fees for each newly opened coffee shop. This way a lot of money is going to foreign countries while the German subsidiaries can reduce their profit relevant for tax purposes. According to the law in the Netherlands license fees can be transferred to third countries, where they are not being taxed or are taxed at the lowest possible rate.

Amazon the online giant from the USA operates eight logistic centers in Germany (Nov. 3)

Amazon, a very American company, opened a new logistic center in Germany. The fulfillment center in Pforzheim is located on an area of 110,000 square meters. It is the newest of eight logistic centers which the online-order company Amazon operates in Germany. The center

provided 100 full time jobs and 600 seasonal jobs which will eventually be increased up to 2,000 jobs for the upcoming Christmas season. According to spokeswoman Ulrike Stöcker from Amazon, based on experience, several hundred of those jobs will become permanent. Within the next few years 1,000 permanent jobs will be created. The city of Pforzheim is happy, since the unemployment rate there is 8.1%, twice as high as the average in Germany.

SPORT

Mighty Dogs received applause for a good game in spite of losing against the EC Peiting 3:4 (Nov. 5)

In spite of losing against the EC Peiting 3:4 last Friday, the fans applauded the team for a good game. On Sunday, they were finally successful, for the first time this season, winning 1:6 against the EV Füssen.