

## Bush Hosts Chirac in Brussels

*Transatlantic relations a top priority*

**P**RESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH hosted his French counterpart, Jacques Chirac, for dinner on February 21 to discuss global concerns and Europe's relationship with the United States. The dinner was held in Brussels at the 18th-century home of Tom C. Korologos, the American ambassador to Belgium. Bush also met with NATO and European Union officials during his first foreign trip since his re-election, a diplomatic move that signaled his administration's desire to reinvigorate its relationship with Europe.

"Transatlantic relations have always been a top priority because, of all the nations in the world, we share common values," Bush explained in an interview with VRT, a Belgian broadcasting service (please see our page 2 article on NATO). Despite tensions over Iraq, France and the U.S. agree on major issues such as the fight against terrorism, the importance of the Middle East peace process, the need to put an end to Iran's nuclear program, and the desirability of ensuring that Lebanon regains its full sovereignty.

During the dinner, Chirac asked Bush to throw America's support behind a European diplomatic effort aimed at convincing Iran to abandon its nuclear development program. Britain, France and

Germany, the three countries conducting the talks with Iran, are concerned that without U.S. support, their negotiations could fail. Chirac and Bush agreed that a nuclear Iran would represent a serious global threat and that any agreement must be verifiable.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Chirac welcomed America's commitment to revive the stalled peace talks. The French government believes the road to stability in the Middle East region is through a permanent peace settlement between Israel and Palestine.

The two Western leaders also noted that Lebanon risks succumbing to a new bout of instability, and urged full and immediate implementation of UNSCR 1559 in all its aspects, including its call for a sovereign, independent and democratic Lebanon as well as for the consolidation of security under the authority of a Lebanese government free from foreign domination (please see our accompanying front page article).

Finally, Bush and Chirac discussed how to rebuild the violence-stricken country of Iraq. Chirac reminded Bush that France has offered \$20 million to train up to 1,500 Iraqi police officers.

The dinner clearly signaled a renewed willingness on the part of the two long-time allies to work closely together while focusing on their shared values and vision.



French President Jacques Chirac and U.S. President George W. Bush shake hands during their meeting on February 21 in Brussels.

AP/Wide World Photos

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## France and U.S. Denounce Assassination of Rafiq Hariri

**F**RANCE AND THE UNITED STATES are working hand in hand to help resolve the turmoil in Lebanon after the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri, who was killed, along with 16 bystanders, by a car bomb on February 14. Hariri, a businessman turned politician, played a key role in the reconstruction of Lebanon after the country's 1975-1990 civil war. Both France and the U.S. are deeply concerned by the situation in Lebanon, and together they are demanding that a full investigation of Hariri's tragic death be conducted.

In addition, U.S. President George W. Bush and French President Jacques Chirac issued a joint declaration in Brussels on February 21 in which they urged "full and immediate implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1559 in all its aspects, including its call for a sovereign, independent and democratic

Lebanon as well as for the consolidation of security under the authority of a Lebanese government free from foreign domination." The United Nations, with the staunch support of the U.S. and France, is pressing Syria to withdraw its 15,000 troops from Lebanon, where they have been stationed since their intervention at the end of Lebanon's civil war.

French President Jacques Chirac was deeply affected by the attack, as he considered Hariri a very close friend as well as a very capable statesman. Chirac and his wife made an unscheduled trip to Beirut, Lebanon, on February 17 to express their condolences to the Hariri family in person. While presenting him with the Legion of Honor in 1996, Chirac had said, "In life, everyone has highs and lows. Well, my dear friend, I remember that your wife and yourself were present in both the good moments and the difficult hours."



President Jacques Chirac welcomes Rafiq Hariri, then prime minister of Lebanon, on February 14, 2001, during a visit to Paris.

AP/Wide World Photos

**1ST FRANCE-POLAND SUMMIT**

The first summit ever held between France and Poland occurred on February 28 in the French city of Arras. It was held between French President Jacques Chirac and his Polish counterpart Aleksander Kwasniewski. French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier, who visited the Polish capital, Warsaw, last month, spoke of a "new beginning" in bilateral relations between the two countries. France celebrated the Season of Poland in 2004, to mark the East European country's new status as a member of the E.U.

**SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH OF ARIANE 5**

The European Space Agency is celebrating the February 12 launch of its massive Ariane 5 spacecraft which is capable of delivering a nearly 10-ton payload into space. The spacecraft is intended to serve as a delivery system for telecommunications satellites. Its services have been offered to government users in the United States, Spain and other friendly and allied nations. Ariane 5's next flight is scheduled for April 14. It will be carrying both French and Indonesian telecommunications satellites. For more information, videos, and pictures of the launch please visit [www.arianespace.com](http://www.arianespace.com).

**NEW ISRAELI EMBASSY IN PARIS**

French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier and his Israeli counterpart, Silvan Shalom, inaugurated the new Israeli Embassy in Paris on February 14 (the old embassy accidentally burned down in 2002). At the ceremony, Barnier and Shalom spoke of the warming relations between the two countries. Barnier vowed a continued effort to improve relations, to fight repression and anti-Semitism, and to support the peace effort in the Middle East. "We are inaugurating this embassy at a time of optimism," said Shalom, who also praised the renewal of relations with France.

**IMAMS TO BE TAUGHT FRENCH, BETTER INTEGRATED**

Interior Minister Dominique de Villepin has proposed practical measures to ensure the country's Muslim prayer leaders speak French and understand France's way of life. Villepin announced that as of this coming September, future imams must study law, civics and the history of France. It is estimated that of the 1,200 imams living in France, there are some 400 who do not speak French. Villepin has proposed a permanent training program within a university-style framework.

NEWS FROM FRANCE / March 2, 2005

# Chirac: "Our Cooperation is Exemplary"

*The French President makes two key speeches on the transatlantic alliance in Brussels*

**P**RESIDENT JACQUES CHIRAC opened the February 22 NATO summit in Brussels with a strong call for transatlantic solidarity. He declared, "this is an exceptional Summit, made possible by the U.S. President's determination to demonstrate his attachment to our Alliance right from the start of his second term of office. I want to thank him warmly for this initiative." With the memory of the D-Day commemoration ceremonies—in which France honored the U.S. soldiers who fought and died for its

freedom in World War II—still fresh in his mind, Chirac went on to say that the need for a strong transatlantic partnership remains as essential as ever.

with more than 4,000 soldiers deployed in Afghanistan and Kosovo, will soon step up its efforts in Afghanistan (with increased air support and training) and in Iraq, where it "is concentrating its efforts on consolidating the rule of law and on training for the Iraqi police."

Chirac underlined that the U.S. has nothing to fear from a strong, united Europe, on the contrary. "Europe is steadily building up its defense capability. This development is a positive opportunity for our Alliance, because a stronger, more united Europe plainly means a stronger, more effective Atlantic Alliance." U.S. President George W. Bush agreed, asserting that his administration does not view Europe as a competitor, but as an ally.

Speaking soon afterward at a U.S.-E.U. Summit, Chirac declared, "Our action is never more effective than when Europe and the United States join forces. In the fight against terrorism, our cooperation is exemplary." He identified several areas, such as "climate change, the search for new financial resources for development to combat poverty and major pandemics," in which Europe and the United States can work together in the future. "We live in a single world. No one can solve the world's problems single-handedly. Europe needs the United States, just as the United States needs Europe."

According to Chirac, "the Atlantic Alliance is, and will remain, a foundation stone of our collective security," and he explained that it is thereby essential to continue NATO's modernization process. France, already one of NATO's major contributors,



## Kyoto Protocol Comes Into Effect

*France will seek to go beyond environmental treaty's targets.*

**F**RENCH PRESIDENT Jacques Chirac presided over a February 15 roundtable discussion on the Kyoto Protocol, which came into effect the following day. The protocol was signed in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan, by 141 countries, including 30 industrialized nations. The protocol seeks to ensure that participating industrialized countries reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases to 5 percent less than 1990-levels between 2008 and 2012. Greenhouse gases (such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and hydrofluorocarbons) trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere, and a majority of scientists fear that the resulting rise in global temperatures, if left unchecked, will lead to irreparable environmental damage, including crop losses and coastal flooding.

Chirac was quoted as saying that the protocol represented "only a first step" and that "we must go much further: dividing the greenhouse gas emissions between now and 2050 by four in all industrialized countries." For the French president, this must be accomplished at the international as well as the national level. According to him, it is necessary to "reengage the United States" and to offer aid to developing countries to pursue energy-efficient options. Nationally speaking, France must "try to go beyond the Kyoto requirements" and present itself as "an example" for other industrialized nations. Chirac has therefore asked Serge Lepeltier, minister for ecology and sustainable development, to propose a series of measures that would place France at the vanguard of environmental sustainability.

## France Launches First Ever 50-Year Bond for G7 Country

**O**N FEBRUARY 23, France became the first of the Group of Seven industrialized nations to sell 50-year bonds. Originally planning to sell only 3 billion euros worth of the bonds, the French treasury ended up selling 6 billion euros (or \$7.8 billion) worth of them. The demand for very long-term bonds has been on the rise as aging populations prompt regulators to change the rules governing pension funds. With life spans rising, pension funds have to buy longer-dated securities to match their liabilities.

The introduction of 50-year bonds is intended to help finance France's budget deficit inexpensively, by taking advantage of record low yields on longer-dated European bonds.

According to Agence France Tresor's chief executive, Bertrand de Mazieres, the bonds will open a new frontier in the euro market because there is a structural demand for very long-term maturities. A manager at Union Investment, which purchased the new bonds, confirmed this analysis, saying, "We're at the beginning of a process that will see more and more need for longer bonds. Demand is going to last, and I'm sure that other countries will follow."



## U.S. Pilots Honored for Indochina Service

**S**EVEN AMERICAN PILOTS were awarded the Legion of Honor, France's highest award for service and bravery, nearly 51 years after flying supply missions to besieged French forces at Dien Bien Phu. Six of the seven pilots gathered at French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte's residence for a deeply moving commemoration ceremony. The honorees, Robert L. Brongersma, Roland N. Duke, Willis P. Hobbs, Allen L. Pope, Douglas R. Price, Monson W. Shaver, and Roy F. Watts, are the sole survivors of a crew of 37



Ambassador Jean-David Levitte and the six honored pilots, Allen L. Pope, Monson W. Shaver, Douglas R. Price, Roy F. Watts, Roland N. Duke and Willis P. Hobbs (from left to right).

pilots who put their lives on the line in order to aid French soldiers fighting a communist insurgency in Indochina (present-day Vietnam). Two of the 37 pilots, James B. McGovern and Wallace A. Buford, were killed in action.

The men were serving as civilian employees of Civil Air Transport, an airline whose undeclared owner was the CIA.

"The pilots of Civil Air Transport flew a variety of deeply covert and often hazardous missions for the CIA," reports retired University of Georgia Professor William M. Leary, who describes them as the true secret soldiers of the Cold War. One of their many missions was to drop supplies to outnumbered and outgunned French soldiers in the valley of Dien Bien Phu. Allen Pope clearly remembers the courage of French troops under fire: "They never raised the white flag. There were men without hands, men without legs, men without feet, men that were blinded. They were catching hell." The French were eventually defeated, and Vietnam became a communist outpost led by Ho Chi Minh.

Levitte extended his heartfelt thanks to the 7 pilots, whom he called true heroes. He said their sacrifice was not in vain, and embodied the strength of the French-American friendship. ■

## In-Depth French-English Medical Dictionary Published

**A**FTER SPENDING SIX YEARS as an associate professor at the Hôpital Européen Georges Pompidou in Paris, Gary S. Hill, a guest professor of pathology at Johns Hopkins University, recently published a 939-page English/French medical dictionary, the *Dictionary of Medical and Biological Terms and Medications*.

The dictionary translates a total of more than 60,000 words and expressions from many scientific disciplines ranging from anatomy, to medicine, to pharmacology. In addition to providing the English equivalent, it also explains the terms and their uses. Furthermore, the dictionary is color-coded to serve as a thesaurus: red indicates synonyms, blue denotes medications, and green signifies prefixes and suffixes.

Dr. Hill's dictionary also devotes 72 pages to French-American cultural differences pertinent to the scientific community. In this section, a person may find an eclectic assortment of information such as the scientific and commercial name for medications, conversion tables for temperature, weight, volume, and a variety of other measures, international abbreviations, and the periodic table. Finally, the dictionary includes "yellow pages" that compile every term relating to a specific topic.

As well as providing the medical community with an advanced reference tool, the dictionary will help bring the two sides of the Atlantic closer. For more information, please visit [medecine.flammarion.com](http://medecine.flammarion.com). ■

## Hope Diamond's French Connection Confirmed

*The world's largest deep blue diamond originally belonged to Louis XIV*

**L**ONGTIME SUSPICION that the Hope diamond was cut from a lost gem—the French Blue—that first belonged to King Louis XIV was recently corroborated by sophisticated computer analysis. Using molds and computer models of the Hope diamond and the French Blue, researchers found that cutting away the triangular sides of the French Blue leaves the exact shape of the Hope, making it clear that the two gems are one and the same.

The 69-carat French Blue was cut from a 115-carat rock that was sold to King Louis XIV in 1668. Perhaps the most spectacular stone in the King's collection, it became known as the "Blue Diamond of the Crown" or as the "French Blue." In 1791, the French Blue, along with all the Crown jewels, was seized by the French government after Louis XVI and Marie-



Antoinette attempted to flee France during the Revolution. In September 1792, the jewels were looted, and the blue diamond disappeared without a trace.

Twenty years after the French Blue's theft, a blue diamond two-thirds its size surfaced in London. Researchers are now convinced that this diamond was cut from the Hope so as to conceal its illegitimate origin. Purchased by Henry Philip Hope, the world's largest deep blue diamond remained in his family's possession until 1901. Pierre Cartier reset the diamond to the liking of famed Washington hostess Evalyn Walsh McLean, who kept it until her death in 1947. It was finally donated to the Smithsonian in 1958 by jeweler Harry Winston. Since then, the Hope diamond has left the Smithsonian only four times, including once in 1962 for an exhibit at the Louvre. ■

## PIERRE BOULEZ CELEBRATES 80TH BIRTHDAY IN U.S.

With the support of the French-American Fund for Contemporary Music and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, internationally-renowned French composer Pierre Boulez will celebrate his 80th birthday with a series of concerts March 3 through April 3 in Chicago, followed by tours in Europe and in New York's Carnegie Hall (May 13-15). Launched in February 2004, the French-American Fund for Contemporary Music seeks to foster cultural exchanges between France and the U.S. It is headed by Emmanuel Morlet, director of music in the French Embassy's Cultural Service. For more information, visit [www.cso.org](http://www.cso.org) and [www.facecouncil.org](http://www.facecouncil.org).

## MONET GIVEN TO U.S. MUSEUM

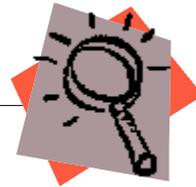
The Dallas Museum of Art announced on February 15 a series of art bequests from leading collectors. According to the museum, one of these new pieces, a 1903 Monet called "Water Lilies - The Clouds," was "the most important Impressionist painting in private hands in Texas." Its donor, a 93-year-old Dallas benefactor named Margaret McDermott, is part of a collective effort to return to the public eye paintings and sculptures by major 20th-century artists. The painting will join six other Monets currently in the museum's permanent collection. For more information, visit [dmaws.dallasmuseumofart.org](http://dmaws.dallasmuseumofart.org).

## LANCE AT IT AGAIN

Ending the intense speculation surrounding his decision, Lance Armstrong has confirmed that he will race in this year's Tour de France. His record-breaking sixth win last year leaves him aiming for a seventh straight victory. Early next month, 33-year-old Armstrong will start his season with the Paris-Nice seven-day stage race. While stating that his condition is far from perfect, Armstrong emphasized his excitement at the idea of getting back on the bike in what has become the cycling world's main competition. His training will prepare him for this year's Tour, set to begin July 2, which will feature 21 stages covering nearly 3,600 kilometers.

## FRENCH SOCCER STAR TO PLAY IN U.S.

French soccer icon Youri Djorkaeff is moving to the United States to play for Major League Soccer's New York/New Jersey Metrostars. The 36-year-old striker, who was previously with the Bolton Wanderers and the Blackburn Rovers (in the United Kingdom), is scheduled to play his first game for the Metrostars on April 2 against Real Salt Lake City. A member of France's 1998 and 2000 World Cup-winning teams, Djorkaeff is excited about the move, saying, "Soccer is not well known in America and I want to contribute to making it more popular."



## Amusement Parks, French-style

The French love to have fun, whether in traditional *fêtes foraines* or in highly sophisticated entertainment centers. Throughout France, amusement parks are becoming more and more popular. Here is a selection of some of the most appreciated ones!

### Les Fêtes Foraines, Bringing Merriment from Town to Town

The very first *Fête Foraine* (or funfair) was created over a thousand years ago in 957. *Fêtes Foraines* are the precursors of today's amusement parks. Similar to carnivals found in the United States, these venues travel to different towns in France and set up their rides and entertainment booths for several days.

France's most famous *Fête Foraine*, Foire du Trône, is located directly east of Paris. Each year, it runs for 6 weeks and attracts five million visitors. It offers over 350 attractions for the young and old alike.

Visit [www.foiredutrone.com](http://www.foiredutrone.com) for more information.



### The Magic of Euro Disney

Euro Disney, located near Paris, is the number one European vacation destination, with more than 12 million visits per year. There are a total of 59 attractions to choose from in the Disneyland and Walt Disney Studios parks, and four new attractions are to be completed by 2008. The first, Space Mountain Mission Two, will be completed in April of this year.

Several days are necessary to take in all that the parks have to offer. Among guests' favorite attractions is Sleeping Beauty's Castle, which is said to be the most beautiful and well-designed castle of all the Disney parks found throughout the world. Euro Disney also includes the Disney Village, one of the largest entertainment districts in the Paris region, with 300,000 square meters of themed dining, entertainment, and shopping facilities.

Visit [www.eurodisney.com](http://www.eurodisney.com) for more information.

### Science and Nature at the Heart of Vulcania

Located in the heart of France near Clermont-Ferrand, Vulcania is touted as Europe's one and only volcano park. The park allows visitors to embark on a fun-filled and educational journey to some parts of the earth and universe that are usually inaccessible. Visitors travel to exotic locations, ranging from the center of the Earth, to undersea abysses, to Martian volcanoes.

Vulcania is sculpted in basalt lava flows that are 30,000 years old, and most of its 57-hectare exhibit space is located underground. To introduce earth science and vulcanology in an engaging manner, it uses a variety of innovative technologies such as audiovisual 3D presentations, a giant film screen, and interactive terminals.

Visit [www.vulcania.com](http://www.vulcania.com) for more information.

### The Gallic Flair of Parc Astérix

Based on the famous comic strip (see our brief on page 7), Parc Astérix, located just 35 km outside of Paris, offers visitors several days of fun and immersion in Gallic France. Here, visitors can walk through medieval villages, go on breathtaking rides, watch shows, sample Roman food and famous Gallic specialties, and meet the cherished characters of Astérix.

In addition to roller coasters and water rides, Parc Astérix offers an array of rides suitable for persons of all ages. Its most famous roller coaster, "Tonnerre de Zeus," is Europe's second largest. For visitors who want to catch their breath, the park also offers exciting action-filled shows.

Visit [www.parcasterix.fr](http://www.parcasterix.fr) for more information.

### Film-Tastic Futuroscope

Futuroscope, a 22-building park devoted entirely to imaging, audiovisual techniques, and special effects, is located just north of Poitiers, 90 minutes southwest of Paris on the TGV. Since its opening in 1987, the park has attracted 30 million visitors with its futuristic architecture and its different forms of high-technology film sequences, making it the number two amusement park in France.

The buildings, all of which are a spectacular sight just from the outside, contain auditoriums with the most up-to-date projection systems, some of which are one-of-a-kind. Audiences are transported through land, sea, and space by such state-of-the-art technology as 3D, 360-degree screens, and mobile chairs that toss and turn the



viewer to coincide with the action on screen.

The region around Poitiers, once primarily rural, has flourished

thanks to Futuroscope, which has brought with it training firms, research laboratories, businesses, conference centers, and a university.

Visit their Web site, [www.futuroscope.fr](http://www.futuroscope.fr), for more information.

### Puy du Fou, Fun Through History

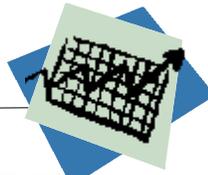
Puy du Fou is located in Vendée, outside Nantes. The park re-creates French history from the Roman Empire to the 19th century with its performances, reenactments, and permanent attractions.

A medieval fort is the stage for battles and warfare extravaganzas, complete with hi-tech special effects. Roman games are re-created in a 6,000-seat amphitheater, where gladiators fight, lions are caged and chariot race. In 30 minutes, visitors can relive the Hundred Years' War or travel back to the Belle Epoque at the end of the 19th century.



Perhaps the greatest attribute of Puy du Fou is la Cinéscénie, a one-night performance which the park claims is the best in the world! Set on more than 20 hectares, with thousands of actors, fireworks, floodlights and computerized water jets, la Cinéscénie re-creates history, spanning from the Middle Ages to World War II.

Visit [www.puydufou.com](http://www.puydufou.com)!



# France Announces Economic Program

*French finance minister presents the government's economic policy for the upcoming year*

**I**N A NEWS CONFERENCE, France's minister of finance announced on February 8 a set of initiatives designed to stimulate growth by reviving consumer spending and easing France's tax burden. The minister detailed a set of micro-economic measures that should create new employment opportunities by boosting consumer spending power. "I am staying the course for growth of 2.5 percent this year," he declared, emphasizing that his measures would help achieve this goal.

The measures include allowing retailers to sell products below list prices (a practice which is currently illegal), more flexible mortgage rules to help homeowners finance their consumption, tax breaks for business, several initiatives that

will encourage innovation and research in new technologies, and a proposal to further cut income taxes for middle and working-class populations (in order to fulfill President Jacques Chirac's pledge of reducing income taxes by 30 percent by 2007). The finance minister also unveiled the schedule for France's ambitious privatization program. ■

### THIERRY BRETON NAMED FINANCE MINISTER

Following Hervé Gaymard's decision to resign, President Jacques Chirac appointed Thierry Breton at the helm of the Ministry of Finance and Industry on February 26. Breton, 50, an engineer by training, became France Telecom's CEO in 2002 and had previously led a successful career as the CEO of electronic companies Bull and Thomson.

### DEATH OF SPACE PIONEER HUBERT CURIEN



Hubert Curien, the first president of the European Space Agency, died Sunday, February 6, of heart failure at

the age of 80. He persuaded the Agency's members to develop the Ariane series of rockets, which propelled Europe to the forefront of space flight, alongside the two powerhouses of the time, the United States and the Soviet Union. Curien began his career studying mineralogy, discovering a new form of crystallized gallium, and was named director of France's National Center for Space Studies in 1976. Under Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, Curien won the Legion of Honor, France's most prestigious decoration, while serving as research minister. "France has lost one of its finest servants and one of its great spirits," said Fabius.

## New Initiatives to Attract Overseas Talent

*The government has made attracting foreign students and investors to France a high priority.*

**F**RENCH PRIME MINISTER Jean-Pierre Raffarin chaired a government seminar on February 7 which focused on attracting overseas talent to France. Several new measures intended to appeal to young researchers and entrepreneurs have been put into place. The central aim of these measures is to strengthen France's position as a destination for overseas talent and to encourage French students abroad to return to France after they've completed their studies.

The government will seek to attract the best and brightest foreign students by facilitating their placement in France and by adapting French courses to the specific requirements of international students. Internationally renowned researchers will be appealed to with the establishment of 15 new chairs specifically aimed at them, and a

new support system will be set up to assist French post-doctoral students returning to France from abroad.

Several measures are destined for the business community. France will do a better job receiving highly qualified individuals from abroad, by simplifying entry procedures and work requirements for foreign talent. The tax regime will be made more flexible for new workers in industries deemed "strategic," and the strategic sectors themselves will benefit from more favorable taxation schemes. Creative industries, for instance, have been singled out for special treatment: the production of feature films and other audiovisual works will be promoted, and the overall work conditions of foreign artists will be improved. Finally, French business law will be reformed, with the introduction, for example, of a bill establishing the concept of trusts into French law. ■

### BELLSOUTH CHOOSES ALCATEL FOR ADSL

BellSouth Corporation announced on February 8 that it has chosen the French company Alcatel as a key supplier in its ambitious network modernization program. BellSouth is taking advantage of Alcatel's IP DSLAM technology, which will help the U.S. company provide the high-speed Internet services that consumers increasingly want (specifically, the new technology offers rates of up to 24 megabytes per second). BellSouth is planning to use this technology to release triple-play services, including IP-based video, for its customers.

### SMART CARDS SMART BET

French smart card firms reported excellent earnings for 2004, reinforcing France's leadership in an increasingly important sector. The companies received huge gains from a rebound in the fourth trimester, and their revenues exceeded analysts' expectations. Gemplus International reported a 4.3 increase in sales, Oberthur Card Systems claimed an 8.8 percent rise and Axalto declared an outstanding 30 percent.

### NEW NUMBER FOR INFORMATION SERVICES

The Telecommunications Regulations Authority announced recently that, starting April 3, 2006, France's equivalent of the "411" number, "12" (operated solely by France Telecom), will be phased out and replaced by a selection of numbers starting with the "118" code. Each phone company will be assigned its own number, and callers will thereby be given a choice of information providers, which will further promote competition.

## Chartres, Capital of Cosmetics

*Cosmetic Valley, near Chartres and Orléans, is celebrating its tenth anniversary*

**C**OSMETIC VALLEY, the fragrance Mecca of the world, just celebrated its tenth anniversary. The region, which includes the cities of Chartres and Orléans in central France, is known as Cosmetic Valley because it is home to the largest concentration of perfume producers in the world. Together, they are responsible for 70 percent of France's production of cosmetics and perfumes. Over 200 million bottles of perfumes and creams, soaps, make-up kits and hair-care products are manufactured on-site by 132 companies and 7,400 employees, and their total annual turnover surpasses 1.5 billion euros.



Perfume Paradise

Cosmetic Valley is also an association dedicated to promoting the expertise of the local individuals and businesses that work in the perfume and cosmetics industry. The network created by the association includes names like Guerlain, Dior, Nina Ricci, Yves Saint-Laurent, Shiseido, Lancaster and many more. Today, almost 55 percent of the beauty product businesses in the Valley are members of the association. To celebrate its anniversary, Cosmetic Valley is hosting an exhibition at Le Compa museum in Chartres through August 28. For

more information, please visit [www.cosmetic-valley.com](http://www.cosmetic-valley.com) or [www.lecompa.com](http://www.lecompa.com). ■

## NEW ARCHBISHOP FOR PARIS

The Vatican announced on February 11 the nomination of Archbishop André Vingt-Trois of Tours, to become the new Archbishop of Paris. After a special search committee was unable to decide on a candidate for the position, Vingt-Trois was chosen specifically by the Pope in January. His name was then privately submitted for the approval of the French government—which, under the terms of an accord with the Holy See, must give its formal consent to all Episcopal appointments. Vingt-Trois, who will succeed current archbishop Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustige, will be installed on March 5 at a Mass in Notre Dame Cathedral.

## POPULATION INCREASING FAST

According to the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies, the French population's rate of natural increase (the difference between the birth rate and the death rate) reached a 20-year high in 2004. This increase was due in large part to the noticeable drop in the number of deaths (-7.5 percent) and the high birth rate. As of January 1, 2005, the French population, including metropolitan France and its overseas departments, was estimated at 62.4 million. Total births reached 797,400 in 2004, and at 1.916 children per woman, France's fertility rate remains the second highest in Europe.

## VIVE LE FRANC!

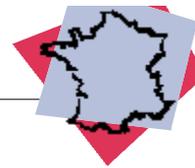
Since France's adoption of the euro on January 1, 2002, French banks have received about seven of the ten billion old franc coins in general circulation, leaving three billion unaccounted for. With February 19, the final deadline to convert these coins into euros, having passed, the franc is guaranteed to stay with us for some time!



Suspected hiding places for the missing coins include tourists' pockets, desk drawers, couch cushions, and car glove compartments. Officials also speculate that many Frenchmen are holding onto their francs to show to their grandchildren one day.

## BIGGER FRENCH FEET

The French, the second biggest shoe consumers in the world (each year the French buy an average of 5.3 new pairs of shoes, compared with 4.8 in the rest of Europe and 6.3 in the U.S.) are not only buying more shoes, they are also buying bigger ones. A recent survey has concluded that the average French foot has grown about 3 centimeters (1.2 inches) in the past 40 years, with the average woman's shoe size rising from a 37 to a 40 (equivalent to a 7 1/2 in the U.S.).



# Free Guide for Proper Pet Care

**I**N FRANCE TODAY, 50 percent of households have a cat or a dog, and a total of 9.7 million cats and 8.6 million dogs have become part of French families. In response to the increasing popularity of pets, the Ministry of Agriculture has just published *The Responsibility Booklet: Campaign for the Protection of Pets* ("Livret de Responsabilisation: Campagne pour la Protection des Animaux de Compagnie"), a publication designed to help pet owners care for their pets.



Dog owners are instructed to establish their dominance without violence, to disapprove of begging at the dinner table, to provide dogs with a bed of their own, to encourage exercise—except immediately after meals—and to avoid at all

costs feeding their pets chocolate. Advice for cat owners features the following recommendations: making sure that collars are loose enough so that cats can wriggle out of them if necessary, spaying or neutering cats early in their lives so as to reduce the risk of mammary tumors developing, and remembering that cats often need time to themselves. For both dogs and cats, the booklet emphasizes that vaccination is very important to the overall health and well-being of a pet. The booklet finally reminds readers that the mistreatment of animals can result in fines ranging from 750 to 30,000 euros and even jail time.

For more information, please visit:

[www.agriculture.gouv.fr/spip/actualites\\_a4390.html](http://www.agriculture.gouv.fr/spip/actualites_a4390.html) ■

## Blogging Takes Off in France

**B**LOGS, short for weblogs, and the people who write them, known as bloggers, have attracted lots of international attention in the past few months. Initially intended as online diaries, blogs have become a way for people all over the world to express opinions, disseminate news, and exchange information in an unmediated environment.

In France, blogs have attracted as much attention as they have here in the United States, and some bloggers, such as Loic Le Meur, have become minor celebrities. Loic Le Meur's blog, [www.loiclemeur.com/english](http://www.loiclemeur.com/english), is one of the most frequently visited and best known blogs in France. He posts daily news and information about blogging and internet technology. His Web site includes links to other prominent French blogs, as

well as links to popular blogs in other countries. Le Meur recently met with an advisor to the Prime Minister to discuss the Internet's progress in France. As in the U.S., politicians in France are beginning to use blogs as a means of expressing their ideas directly to the public.

French blogs have been created to serve all sorts of purposes. While political commentary may be their most prominent use, blogs have also been set up to raise funds for tsunami relief, to promote products, and simply to express one's innermost desires. With an estimated 34.5 million blogs posted on the net worldwide, there seems to be one for just about everything imaginable. ■

## Country Clubbing

*The clubbing scene in France is going rural*

**N**IGHT LIFE IN FRANCE has changed dramatically over the past 15 years. Rather than dance at the local discothèque or have a drink at the pub in



Rustic Reveling

town, the French are flocking to enormous clubbing complexes that are springing up all over the country. Surprisingly, these massive complexes are usually found outside city limits, and clubbers are willing to drive to suburban or even rural areas for the entertainment they provide. Of the 3,400 establishments currently in business, 72 percent are in the countryside.

Not only do the clubs have several dance floors, but they

also generally host several different types of restaurants—from fine dining to cheeseburgers and fries. Macumba, for example, a complex near Grenoble, has 12 dance floors and seven restaurants within 17 different themed areas. This concept of themed rooms, with a certain décor and music dedicated to a specific culture or era, has become very popular.

These trends constitute a dramatic change for the owners as well as the patrons. There is less profit to be made from private dinner parties, and more to be made by extending business until the early morning hours. Indeed, typical business hours are now from 7:00 P.M. to 4:00 A.M.

Local bars and discos are not going to go out of business anytime soon, but the idea of large entertainment complexes is certainly spreading quickly throughout France, and youths are eagerly traveling farther from home to meet more people, dance later, and just have an overall "bigger" experience. ■



# Romanesque France

*An exhibition at the Louvre retraces the art of France's Capetian era (987-1152)*

**I**N A FIRST for the Louvre, and in cooperation with the National Library of France, museum goers will be treated to an exhibition of the art of France's Capetian era (987-1152). This exhibition will feature 300 world-



© Musée de la Ville de Paris

*"Saint Michel terrassant le dragon"*  
(Saint Michel felling the dragon")

renowned pieces of art, including sculptures, objects of daily life, and manuscripts, some of which have not been exhibited for almost 50 years. The works of art will be placed in their historical and regional contexts to give visitors the opportunity to study how art was affected by the political, social, economic, and religious events of the time. The two main objectives of the exhibit are to show visitors the impact Roman civilization had on France, and to show the artistic

uniqueness of each province. In addition, several of the new techniques that were developed in the 12th century are on view (exquisitely made medallions, for example, depict the discovery of the art of enameling).

When strolling through the exhibit, the viewer will discover many works of art that indicate the importance of religion in France during this time period. Visitors can examine stained glass windows from Trinity Abbey in Vendôme, the impressive funeral slab of abbot Isarn who is buried at St-Victor in Marseille, a porphyry- and silver-gilded vase from Suger that illustrates the power of Saint Denis, and much more. With the onset of the crusades, the influence of the Ottoman Empire can also be observed: statues, paintings and other precious objects reveal the cultural significance of music and monsters.

The artwork will be exhibited from March 10 to June 6. For more information, please visit [www.louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr).

## BRITISH SWALLOW PRIDE AND HUNT IN FRANCE



A historic fox hunt near Pau, in south-western France, is being revitalized by the influx of British sportsmen caused by the ban, as of February 18, of this centuries-old blood sport in England and Wales. The Pau Hunt, first discovered by the British in 1814 (by officers from the Duke of Wellington's army), has since attracted riders and huntsmen such as Winston Churchill, James Gordon Bennet and Franklin D Roosevelt. Following the ban on fox hunting in England, two prestigious English hunts have made plans with the British owner of the Chateau de Sombrun, near Pau, to bring back the old English tradition and continue the hunt, this time on the fields of France—against the majestic backdrop of the snow-capped Pyrénées. The move is welcomed by the town's mayor, who, anticipating an increase in tourism, has applied for a European Union subsidy to renovate the chateau and stables. Member of the hunt Jeffrey Quirk says a ban on hunting in Pau is unlikely: "fox hunting is a tradition here, and in France tradition is higher than the law."

A historic fox hunt near Pau, in south-western France, is being revitalized by the influx of British sportsmen caused by the ban, as of February 18, of this centuries-old blood sport in England and

# Remembering Montesquieu

*The political theorist behind the principle of checks and balances died 250 years ago, leaving a defining legacy*

**F**EBRUARY 10 marked the 250th anniversary of the death of the Baron de Montesquieu, one of the best known and most popular writers of the Enlightenment.



A portrait of Montesquieu by an anonymous artist

Montesquieu's work was the basis for much of the philosophy upon which the founding fathers built the United States, and he also heavily influenced French political thinkers. For instance, Montesquieu held that governmental powers should be separated and balanced to guarantee individual rights and freedom.

Montesquieu first became prominent as a writer with his *Persian*

Letters (1721); in this work, through the device of letters writ-

ten to and by two aristocratic Persian travelers in Europe, Montesquieu satirized contemporary French politics, social conditions, ecclesiastical matters, and literature. One of the earliest works of the Enlightenment, its criticism of French institutions under the Bourbon monarchy, helped bring about the French Revolution. The reputation he gained from the *Persian Letters* and lesser works led to Montesquieu's appointment to the French Academy in 1728. His second significant work, *Thoughts on the Causes of the Greatness and the Downfall of the Romans* (1734) is credited as being one of the first important pieces of historical philosophy. However, Montesquieu is best known for his masterpiece, *The Spirit of Laws* (1748). In this work, he examines the three main types of government—republics, monarchies, and despotisms—and ventures that a relationship exists between a country's climate, geography, and general circumstances and the form of government that it adopts.

Montesquieu is buried at the Saint Sulpice church in Paris. ■ ■

## 20TH EDITION OF THE FRENCH "GRAMMYS"

The French equivalent of the Grammy Awards, "*Les Victoires de la Musique*," will be held on March 5. Several different *Victoires* ceremonies are held every year, to recognize various kinds of music, and this year marks the 20th anniversary of the Variety edition (the Classical and Jazz categories, meanwhile, will celebrate their 12th and 3rd anniversaries, respectively). French singers M and Calogero received the most nominations and are expected to carry off some trophies. For more information, visit [lesvictoires.com](http://lesvictoires.com).

## MITTERRAND MOVIE

For the first time in French history, a modern-day French leader is being depicted in a feature film. The movie, "*Le Promeneur du Champs-de-Mars*" (literally, "The Walker in the Champs-de-Mars"), which has become a hit since its release on February 16, portrays the last two years of the life of socialist president Francois Mitterrand, who died in 1996. The film's title alludes to the long walks Mitterrand took in the years preceding his death. Michel Bouquet, a renowned stage actor, stars, and Robert Guediguian directs.

## NEW ASTERIX ALBUM

The next installment of the comic book series *Astérix* (which has been translated into 110 languages and dialects) will hit store shelves on October 14. It has been four years since *Astérix* had his last adventure, "*Astérix et Latraviata*," and fans of the famous Gallic hero have been impatiently counting down the days until the new release. For more information, please visit [www.asterix.fr](http://www.asterix.fr).



## MARIE-ANTOINETTE'S TREE CHOPPED DOWN



An oak tree planted in the gardens of Versailles in 1681 was taken

down on February 9 because of overexposure to the sun's rays, which caused irreparable damage. The oak had previously been sheltered from the elements by a cluster of other trees which were destroyed in a massive storm in 1999. The tree was known as Marie-Antoinette's oak because the French Queen often took advantage of the shade it provided. It will be replaced with another tree, an English oak, sometime in March.



Molière's "The School For Wives" will be performed from March 11 to May 14 by A Noise Within, a theater group based in Glendale, California. "The School For Wives" is just one of Molière's many satirical comedies whose universality still makes modern crowds laugh, centuries after it was written. The play revolves around Arnolphe, who believes that the key to happiness in love is to be with an ignorant woman. For more information, visit [www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org).

FRENCH FILM FESTS

The Film Society at Lincoln Center will host "Rendez-vous with French Cinéma" from March 11 to 20. The Walter Reade Theater will entice New York's most passionate film-lovers and Francophiles alike with America's leading festival of French films. The festival will feature prominent actors such as Catherine Deneuve, Olivier Assayas, Claire Denis, Benoît Jacquot, and Bertrand Tavernier. In total, 17 films will be screened, including 12 U.S. premieres and 3 New York premieres. For more information, please visit: [www.filmlinc.com](http://www.filmlinc.com).

Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C., the Smithsonian Associates and the Francophony Committee/DC will join to celebrate the cultural diversity of the French-speaking world with screenings on March 8, 15, 22, and 29. The screenings are centered on the International Day of Francophony, March 21. Celebrated on five continents, the festival is organized by the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie. All films are in French with English sub-titles.

For more information, including movie titles, please visit [residentassociates.org/perf-arts/franco\\_films.asp](http://residentassociates.org/perf-arts/franco_films.asp).



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Passion for French Drawing

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM of Art is hosting "Passion for Drawing: Poussin to Cézanne, Works from the Prat Collection," an exhibit dedicated entirely to French drawing. Pieces in this exhibition, displayed through April 3, were selected from the private collection of Louis-Antoine and Véronique Prat of Paris. For the first time in nearly 15 years, the Prats have given permission for 100 drawings by 66 artists from their collection, which is renowned as the world's leading privately-owned collection of French drawings, to be displayed for the public.

"Passion for Drawing" demonstrates the progression of French art from the Late Mannerist style to the peak of Impressionism, a period spanning roughly the early seventeenth to late nineteenth centuries. The selection includes portraits and landscapes, as well as literary, mythological and biblical motifs dis-



Bacchus by François Boucher (1703-1770).

Black, red and white chalk and stump on cream paper

played in a variety of forms, from sketches or *pensées* ("first thoughts") to highly finished drawings, and using a wide assortment of techniques (including pen and ink, lead pencil, and red and black chalk).

Highlights in this exhibition comprise well-known works such as Nicolas Poussin's chef d'oeuvre *Pluto Abducting Proserpine* and Claude Lorrain's *Magdalene in the Desert*, as well as skillful works by lesser-known artists, such as *Rape of Europa* by Laurent de La Hyre and *Head of Christ* by Charles de La Fosse. The Toledo Museum of Art also permanently exhibits 26 paintings by 20 of the artists displayed in "Passion for Drawing," including Eugene Delacroix, François Boucher, Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas, and Paul Cézanne.

For more information on the exhibition please visit the Toledo Museum's Web site at:

[www.toledomuseum.org](http://www.toledomuseum.org)



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