

Chirac Calls For Action to Protect Biodiversity

ALARMED BY the accelerating extinction of species, French President Jacques Chirac reiterated his call for the establishment of a "network of global expertise" on biodiversity in an article published in the May 19 issue of the *New Scientist*, a British magazine. The proposed network, which is supported by many prominent members of the scientific community, would be placed under the aegis of the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity. It would be charged with completing an inventory of all living organisms (as of now, only 1.5 million species have been catalogued, out of an estimated total of 5 to 30 million) and with developing a greater understanding of the dynamics of ecosystems. According to Chirac, scientists are just beginning to realize the complex relations that unite and balance ecosystems, but desperately need to improve their knowledge. He is concerned that not enough is being done to save the approximately 16,000 known species

that are currently threatened by extinction.

One of the network's most important aims would be to clarify what impact climate change would have on biodiversity. Chirac hopes an international group focusing on biodiversity might raise awareness among the public and ultimately alert politicians of the imperative to protect the environment and save endangered species, particularly by taking measures to stabilize climate change. Noting that some scientists claim that modern society is provoking the sixth global wave of extinction since the dawn of life on Earth, the French president has challenged the international community to prove them wrong.

The United Nations' underlying objective, originally proclaimed in 2002, is to stop the loss of living species by 2010, but Chirac warns this goal will not be reached unless immediate action is taken. Chirac's message is one of urgency as he believes that ours is the last generation that has the power to reverse today's destructive trends before their damage on biodiversity and the environment becomes permanent. 🇫🇷



A few of the 16,000 species that are endangered

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CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRCRAFT CARRIER TO PAY PORT VISIT TO NORFOLK AFTER JOINT NAVAL EXERCISES

France's nuclear-powered Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier will be paying a port visit to Norfolk, Virginia, from May 27 to June 1. The Charles de Gaulle was commissioned in 2000 and took part in Operation Enduring Freedom (against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan). Since May 4, the Charles de Gaulle carrier group has been conducting military exercises in the Atlantic Ocean and the English Channel in conjunction with its NATO allies. As part of this deployment, three French and U.S. Navy carrier groups have been participating in joint exercises off Norfolk since May 23 in order to practice sea-to-shore power projection operations and to verify fleet interoperability (with a particular emphasis on cross decking exercises, in which planes take off from one carrier to land on another). French Vice Admiral Jacques Mazars has assumed the tactical command of the 18 deployed vessels, including three aircraft carriers (the U.S. Navy's Eisenhower and Roosevelt, as well as the Charles de Gaulle). On Memorial Day, French General Jean-Pierre Kelche will present the Legion of Honor and the Order of Merit to U.S. veterans of World War II.



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Survey Finds Europeans Have More in Common Than They Think

ON MAY 19, only 10 days before France's vote in a referendum on the European Constitution, a poll conducted by TNS Sofres came out highlighting the similarities between Europeans. Respondents from 10 E.U.-member countries, comprising 85 percent of the total E.U. population, were asked what their stands are on a variety of issues, and how they perceive themselves vis-à-vis one another. The poll's results indicate that Europeans share the same economic and social model and, although such a notion is harder to qualify objectively, that they also share the same cultural model. Nevertheless, 49 percent of the people surveyed believe that their values are not really aligned with those of their European neighbors, demonstrating that there is clearly a gap between perceived differences and actual similarities.

Economically speaking, a majority of Europeans favor a market economy, but believe that it must not lose sight of social goals. Similarly, almost three-quarters agree that competition has positive effects on employment while almost as many believe that the pursuit of profit benefits society. A total of 85 percent of those surveyed approve of free universal healthcare and 63 percent are in favor of a minimum wage. In the cultural realm, most Europeans accept homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle, are pro-choice (except in Poland), and against capital punishment. Immigration, however, remains a divisive issue, with 70 percent of Germans reluctant to accept new immigrants whereas most Frenchmen, Italians, Poles, and Finns take a reversed position. 🇫🇷

ANTI-TERRORISM ACTION TO BE REINFORCED

On May 3, Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin set up a committee charged with evaluating France's anti-terrorist action and proposing a new, reinforced anti-terrorist doctrine that would not infringe on human rights and the rule of law. The committee, headed by Minister of the Interior Dominique de Villepin, will release its report in early 2006, paving the way for a parliamentary debate before the enactment of any new laws. The ministries of the interior, foreign affairs, finance, defense, economy and justice are all closely working together on this initiative.

KARZAI VISITS STRASBOURG

Afghan President Hamid Karzai visited Europe, including the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, on May 10. Speaking to the members of the European Parliament, he called on the E.U. and the United States to continue contributing to the reconstruction of Afghanistan and to the eradication of opium crops. Karzai's stop in Strasbourg was part of a European tour, which was followed by a visit to the United States. While in Europe, the Afghan president also stopped at NATO headquarters in Brussels. The International Security Assistance Force, in charge of peace-keeping operations in Afghanistan under a United Nations' mandate, has been under full NATO command since 2003.

ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE EXPANDS IN CHINA, EX-USSR

The Alliance Française, the leading global institute promoting French language and culture, has made China and Russia its two top priorities, according to Alliance officials. Alliance Française Secretary-General Jean-Claude Jacq has said that the institute is expanding its work in China and opening centers "at a frenetic pace" to keep up with overwhelming demand. Most recently, the Alliance Française has opened centers in the Chinese cities of Xian, Chengdu, and Dalian.

"We have been responding to a very strong demand to learn French in Russia and in all the countries of the former Soviet empire, as well as in China," said Jacq.

FRANCE, CANADA AGREE TO SHARE POTENTIAL OIL FIELDS

On May 14 the French minister for overseas territories, Brigitte Girardin, and the Canadian ambassador to France, Claude Laverdure, signed an agreement on "trans-border oil fields" following four years of negotiations. It stipulates that any oil fields discovered in the St-Pierre-et-Miquelon area which overlap both the French and Canadian economic zones will be jointly administered. The two countries will also conduct joint surveys and hope to find substantial oil reserves.

Chirac Attends Commemorations in Moscow

World leaders gathered in the capital of Russia to mark the 60th anniversary of victory in Europe

AT THE INVITATION OF Russian President Vladimir Putin, French President Jacques Chirac arrived in Moscow on May 9 to take part in the commemoration ceremonies of the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. Chirac began his visit by attending a military parade in Red Square along with 50 other world leaders, including U.S. President George W. Bush.

The French president then spoke at the inauguration of a monument dedicated to Charles de Gaulle in Moscow Square. The memorial, created by Russian sculptor Zurab Tsereteli, honors the French general who, as the leader of the French Resistance, helped strengthen war-time ties between France and Russia. Chirac, who began his career under de Gaulle, spoke of the tremendous respect the general

had for Russia. Chirac also evoked the enormous sacrifices Russians endured in the battle against Fascism.

To commemorate the French-Soviet military alliance, Chirac hung a wreath at the former headquarters of the Normandie-Niemen air squadron. These French pilots fought with their Russian allies on the eastern front from 1942 to 1945.



Russian President Vladimir Putin (middle left) and President Jacques Chirac (middle right) after the inauguration of the statue of General Charles de Gaulle in Moscow.

As well as commemorating the past, Chirac also spoke of the future, in particular of the need for ever closer ties between Russia and the European Union. Now that Russia has resolutely embarked on the path of democratization and peace, Chirac envisions "a Europe reconciled with itself: a Europe whose people, proud of the diversity of their pasts, overcoming for all time the vicissitudes of history and its dramas, build together their common destiny."

France Attracts Record Investments

FRANCE ATTRACTED more international investors than ever before in 2004, according to the French Agency for International Investments (AFII). With 583 new investment projects, the country topped the former record of 563 projects, set in 2000. Overall, investment in the 25 countries of the Union increased 4 percent from 2003 to 2004, but went up 6.6 percent in France. Although it is still too early to declare which European countries have the most attractive economies, France will probably maintain its spot at number two, behind the United Kingdom, said the AFII.

The United States increased its investment in France by 26 percent, maintaining its position as the country's largest foreign investor, and accounting for 28 percent of the jobs creat-

ed by foreign companies (about 550,000 French workers owe their jobs to U.S. companies). France and the U.S. exchange about \$1 billion worth of goods every business day, and French companies provide jobs for about 600,000 Americans.

Although France has always been attractive to outside investors, the present rise in investments is in part due to the successful implementation of new policies. "The lowering of taxes, the establishment of tax credit, the creation of a statute of 'impatriates' [expatriates living in France]... are all good signs sent from the Raffarin government to foreign investors," said Clara Gaynard, AFII's president.

For more information about investing in France, please visit www.investinfrance.org.

Reporters Without Borders Exhibit in Paris

The French NGO, dedicated to the defense of press freedom, is celebrating its 20th anniversary

PHOTOGRAPHS WILL be on exhibit on the gates of the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris from June 1 through August 31, to celebrate the 20 years of Reporters Without Borders, an NGO that fights for press freedom and advocates the rights of reporters. The exhibit will be a "hymn to liberty," announced the organization's co-founder and secretary general, Robert Menard, during a press conference on May 19. It will feature a variety of

photographs submitted by twenty photographers, some famous some not, of all nationalities and ages (from 32 to 95!) to showcase the significance of a free press. Noting that 80 journalists have died and 104 have been imprisoned since the beginning of 2004, Menard says the exhibit hopes to make the public realize that "freedom of press is not only a concern of journalists, but a concern of everyone." For more information, visit www.rsf.org.



Only American Legionnaire in WWII Dies

JOHAN F. "JACK" HASEY, 88, an American captain in the French Foreign Legion during World War II and a senior operations officer with the CIA afterwards, died May 9 in Virginia. Hasey was one of four Americans, including Dwight D. Eisenhower, to have been named a Companion of the Order of the Liberation, France's highest World War II honor.

In 1936, Hasey headed to France, where he intended to study at the Sorbonne. Hasey, a Columbia University graduate, instead decided to become a salesman for the French jeweler Cartier. When the Finnish-Russian War broke out in 1939, Hasey, along with other Americans, formed an ambulance unit and headed to the war front to help the Finnish.

After the war and having recovered from a wound to his arm, Hasey planned to return to his work at Cartier, when World War II broke out. Hasey promptly volunteered

to join the Free French Foreign Legion Corps led by General Charles de Gaulle.

During the 1941 Battle for Syria, Hasey's right jaw and larynx were shot away by enemy fire. He was decorated by de Gaulle as "the first American to shed blood for the liberation of France." After his recovery, Hasey became a liaison between de Gaulle and Eisenhower. In 1950, he joined the CIA and worked in 17 countries until his retirement in 1974.

In 1996, French President Jacques Chirac named Hasey an officer in the Legion of Honor, and on learning of his death, Chirac sent a letter expressing France's gratitude to Hasey's family. ■ ■

FRANCE DONATES CANNON TO MCCORMICK TRIBUNE FOUNDATION

The McCormick Tribune Foundation marked its 50th anniversary on April 1 by paying tribute to its founder, Colonel Robert C. McCormick, who commanded the First Infantry Division's artillery in the Somme during World War I. On his return to the United States, the colonel founded the *Chicago Herald Tribune*. In recognition of McCormick's role in the battle of Catigny, France has donated one of its remaining "Schneider" cannons to the Foundation. These 155-mm artillery pieces formed the backbone of the allied artillery during the war. The cannon was delivered on March 21 and will be displayed in the First Infantry Division's museum in Wheaton, Illinois, early this autumn. For more information, visit www.mccormicktribune.org.



"Air Warrior II" Joint Exercises



ALARGE-SCALE BILATERAL French-American military exercise took place in Barksdale, Louisiana, from May 12 to May 20. Involving more than 100 French soldiers (a dozen pilots and their support staff, as well as commandos) and four Mirage 2000D, "Air Warrior II" was designed to hone the urban combat skills of the participating forces, with particular emphasis on precision ground strikes. The exercise

reinforced the skills, cohesion, and interoperability of the French and American forces. Two of the French Mirage 2000D jets (one of which is pictured) were also on display during a two-day open house at the Louisiana airbase that attracted over 200,000 visitors. ■ ■

AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES EUROPE WITH STUDENTS



Students Kate Olsen and Carla Infunari listen to Ambassador Levitte

On the occasion of Europe Day (May 9), French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte met with students at Bishop Ireton High School to discuss the construction of the European Union. He explained what a tremendous achievement European unity represents: after a tumultuous history of war and strife, Europe is now uniting peacefully, and what were once relations of distrust and loathing have been transformed into ties of respect and friendship in a remarkably short time span. There is indeed unity in diversity, he concluded. Students and teachers from several other schools also attended the discussion. For more information, visit www.bishopireton.org/NewsItems/AmbassadorLevitteVisit.htm.

publication rather than as an email.

We will share the final results with you as soon as we've completed processing the responses, and in the meantime we would like to thank you again for your continued support! ■ ■

Thank You!!

NFF's survey was a great success.

THE RESPONSE to our survey (see NFF 05.03) has been overwhelming, and we would like to thank all the readers who took the time and trouble to complete our questionnaire! We are still processing your replies, but some clear trends have already emerged. First of all, over 60 percent of those who responded consider *News from France* an excellent newsletter! Our average reader is an American Francophile adult with a keen interest in French culture and diplomacy, and a desire to receive NFF through the tried and true offices of the postal service. Indeed, an irresistible majority (over 90 percent) of respondents would like to continue receiving *News from France* as a print

The French Government Tourist Office has launched a survey of French citizens and Americans with French ancestry living in the United States. Respondents can register to win prizes, including two Air France round-trip tickets to Paris! To participate, visit <http://us.franceguide.com/magazine/article.asp?idc=20691>.

U.S. WWII NURSE WINS LEGION OF HONOR

Rachel Fairbanks Sweitzer of Wilmette, Illinois, was awarded a Legion of Honor for her contribution to the liberation of France during World War II. Sweitzer was a nurse in a surgical unit under General George Patton's 3rd Army and was present at Utah Beach during the Normandy invasion. Graciously accepting the 90th birthday surprise on April 30, Sweitzer said "I'm very delighted to have this, but I feel the people deserving of this are the boys out in France."

MICROSOFT JOINS FRANCE'S PREMIER RESEARCH CAMPUS

Microsoft is collaborating with the National Institute for Research in Computer Science and Control (INRIA) to found a joint laboratory in the Paris area (Orsay) that will focus on making complex software more reliable and secure, as well as on elaborating scientific software for the treatment of complex operations. The laboratory's results will be published in scientific journals, and any prototypes will also be freely available to the scientific community. For more information, visit www.inria.fr.

EADS-RAYTHEON BID FOR PENTAGON CONTRACT

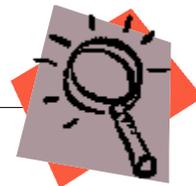
The European Aeronautic Defense and Space Company, the world's largest maker of commercial aircraft and the main shareholder of Airbus, and the American firm Raytheon are teaming up to bid on a U.S. army cargo plane contract worth an estimated \$1 billion according to outside analysts. The Army's Future Cargo program, as it is known, will design planes to fly soldiers and cargo from primitive airfields. This EADS venture follows in a series of other efforts by European defense firms to acquire more business from the U.S. Defense Department.

FRENCH NOVEL ON 9-11 WINS BRITISH PRIZE

The *Independent* newspaper awarded its annual \$19,000 prize for foreign fiction to the English translation of *Windows on the World* by Frederic Beigbeder. The novel recounts the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center through the final hours of a father and his sons, and concentrates on the fear, panic, and affirmations of love that gripped those trapped in the towers.

NASA AWARDS CONTRACT TO SNECMA

Specializing in high-performance composites, Snecma Propulsion Solide, based near Bordeaux, will develop extendable heat shields for NASA under a recently signed \$40-million contract. These shields will ensure the thermal protection of future space vehicles as they re-enter the atmosphere and experience scorching levels of heat.



Higher Education in France

A Unique System Becomes More Aligned With the Rest of Europe

IN SECONDARY SCHOOL, students decide in their *première* and *terminale* (junior and senior) years to focus on specific academic areas in preparation for the *Baccalauréat* (commonly referred to as the Bac). Students can choose to take the L (literary), ES (economics and social sciences) or S (scientific) Bac. There are also Bacs geared toward technological and technical fields, including hotel management, music and dance.



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

At typical scene at the end of a school day (Lyon's Ampère Lycée)

licence professionnelle and the *master professionnel*. If a student elects to apply to one of the *grandes écoles* (see accompanying article), his or her first cycle will consist of preparatory classes for their grueling entrance exams.

In the second cycle, the degree of *licence* is awarded after one additional year of study and is generally considered the equivalent of a Bachelor's degree. The third cycle consists

in intense specialization and research for one year after the *licence* and is known as the *diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées* (DESS). After the *maîtrise*, students who continue their study are awarded a *diplôme d'études approfondies* (DEA), which leads to a doctorate degree. In order to avoid confusion, degrees are often referred to by the number of years of study after the Bac they represent, such as "Bac +5" for the DEA.

The French system is currently becoming progressively aligned with the European scheme of licence, master and doctorate (LMD). Consequently, in early 1999, the French government began introducing reforms inspired by the Bologna Declaration, to allow the French system to be more in tune with those of its European neighbors. Before the recent reforms, French higher education was largely governed by the 1968 Loi d'Orientation d'Education and the Savary Act of 1984, which established greater institutional autonomy, promoted academic and vocational systems of education and encouraged increases in student enrollment.



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

One of the Sorbonne's lecture theatres (Paris)

Les Grandes Ecoles

UNIQUE TO FRANCE, the *grandes écoles* were created in the 19th century in order to prepare students for high-ranking positions in government service. While they are not universities, they function in parallel with the university system. The *grandes écoles* have very selective admissions policies and only admit the brightest and most talented students. Traditionally, admission to the *grandes écoles* has been by competitive examination

after two years of intense preparatory classes. Those students who pass the exam enter a rigorous three-year curriculum. However, in recent years the *grandes écoles* have begun altering their admission requirements and degree durations (by adopting international standards) in order to better accommodate foreign students and compete with the world's other top universities.

Certain *grandes écoles* are public institutions supervised by a government ministry, whereas others are overseen by Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Nevertheless, all curricula for the *grandes écoles*, whether public or private, are set by the Ministry of National Education. The *grandes écoles* award a variety of different degrees to their students. All award master's degrees (5 years of study after the *baccalauréat*), and several also offer specialized engineering degrees (6 years).



ERASMUS

Scene from *L'Auberge Espagnole*

One of the best known programs of international exchange in France is the European-run Erasmus program. Through this program, France has sent a total of 18,149 students (more than any other European country) abroad to study in the 2001-2002 academic year, and has welcomed 18,883 from other European countries. The most common destinations for French students through Erasmus are the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Italy and Ireland. These kinds of exchange programs have been popularized through such films as *L'Auberge Espagnole*. To learn more, visit europa.eu.int/comm/education.

AMERICAN TIMELINE

High School - Senior Year:

American students take their SATs (standardized achievement tests) which are administered by private companies. These tests are widely used by university admission offices as part of their selection process.

University Year 1 - Freshman

U.S. students embark on their college lives, often giving them their first experience of life away from home. Many stay in dorms run by their colleges.

University Year 2 - Sophomore

Students declare a major at the end of the year. It is relatively easy to change majors, or to pursue a double major (even in unrelated fields). *Associate's degree* awarded

University Year 3 - Junior

Students begin their specializations in earnest.

University Year 4 - Senior

Bachelor's degree awarded

FRENCH TIMELINE

Première:

French students still have one year of school left! They must pick a specialization (economy, literature or science) and the first part of their *baccalauréat* exam is held at the end of the year (in French and literature).

Terminale:

At the end of their last year of high school, French students take the dreaded *baccalauréat*, a government-run exam that will determine whether they can enter university.

University Year 1 - First Cycle 1:

French students immediately specialize in a field of study, which is usually related to their high school specialization. They often rent their own apartments, or stay with their parents.

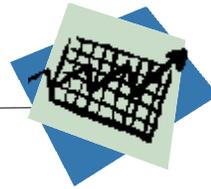
University Year 2 - First Cycle 2:

Diplôme d'études universitaires générales (DEUG) awarded

University Year 3 - Second Cycle:

Licence awarded

Some *grandes écoles* also propose a Master of Business Administration (MBA). Finally, most *grandes écoles* also run doctoral programs. There is the *Diplôme d'études approfondies* (DEA) which is awarded after five years of postsecondary study, and the *Doctorat* which is awarded after eight years of study.



The Flight of the Falcon

FOLLOWING IN THE IMPOSING footsteps of its massive cousin, the Airbus A380, the Dassault Falcon 7X made its maiden flight on May 5. The Falcon 7X, the first of a new series of business jets by Dassault, had been introduced a week earlier in Bordeaux in front of hundreds of guests. Its defining features, according to Dassault, are its high speed (it can cruise just underneath the speed of sound), its 5,700 nautical mile non-stop range (enough to fly from Paris all the way to Los Angeles or Tokyo), its uncompromising cabin comfort, innovative design (it is the first business jet to be equipped with electric flight controls), and unbeatable versatility (it is capable of taking off from over 5,000 small airports in the U.S.).



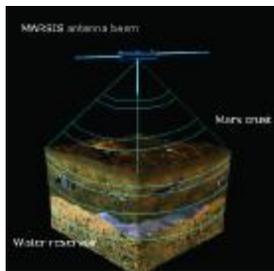
The Falcon 7X

"The first flight of the Falcon 7X was a success," said Kerherve who is the senior test pilot for Dassault Aviation. "The aircraft performed beautifully, and we're on track to start the rigorous 15 months of flight testing that lie ahead." The Falcon 7X faces long range and endurance trials, interior sound level validation and 1,200 flight test hours before final certification by the FAA and EASA, which is expected in late 2006. Fifty orders (each at \$37.5 million) have already been placed for the plane.

In addition to being the leading manufacturer of high-end business aircraft (with a 50 percent share of the market), Dassault also builds the Mirage and Rafale jetfighters. For more information, please visit www.dassault.com.

Mars Express Probe to Peer Underneath Red Planet's Surface

ON MAY 10, European Space Agency (ESA) flight controllers successfully completed the deployment of the first boom of the Mars Express Sub-Surface Sounding Radar Altimeter (MARSIS) radar which is on board the Mars Express spacecraft. Although the ESA flight controllers had encountered some difficulty with the original deployment attempt, which was initiated on May 4, they resolved the problem and now expect the boom to be fully functional. The second boom's deployment, however, has been postponed, to give engineers time to analyze the anomaly that occurred during the first deployment. Once fully deployed, the two booms will have a combined length of 40 meters.



et, which will be reflected in different ways by the underground surfaces they hit. By analyzing the resulting information, the MARSIS team plans to map the sub-surface structure of the planet to a depth of a few kilometers. In particular, researchers hope to find evidence of subterranean water or ice, which would strengthen the case of those who believe that Mars may have harbored primitive life at some point.

MARSIS is one of the seven science experiments on board the Mars Express probe, which was launched on June 2, 2003, and entered Mars orbit in December of the same year. For more information, please visit mars.esa.int.

WATCH OUT FOR ANT TRAPS!

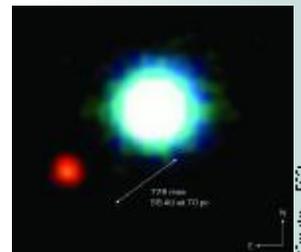
Researchers from the University of Toulouse's Laboratory for Biological Evolution and Diversity (a joint laboratory with the National Center for Scientific Research) have discovered that a certain tropical ant species builds traps to capture its prey. The ant, *Allomerus decemarticulatus*, is a mere two millimeters in length and lives exclusively in a particular tree species in the Amazon. The ants gather in groups and create the trap with a leaf. The leaf is systematically stripped of some of its spines and made inherently less stable. When a larger insect lands on the compromised leaf, the ants that are hiding underneath attach themselves to their prey's feet and hold it until the rest of the band arrives and paralyzes the future meal with their venom. According to researchers, this discovery could be revolutionary because the only comparable social trap-building by insects is the spinning of a web by social spiders, but in the case of the spiders, the material used is produced by the spiders themselves (silk), whereas the ants use outside materials.

ning of the trial in February, the software has reduced the amount of time it takes to deliver mail by 10 percent and has cut the distance traveled by postmen by 20 percent. On a countrywide basis, this could lead to savings of several million euros! For more information, visit www.eurobios.com.

BETTER TREATMENT FOR BREAST CANCER

In spite of being on the cutting edge of medical science and research, breast cancer is still the leading cause of death for women in developed countries. The spreading of the cancer through the lymph system has proved to be one of the disease's most deadly characteristics. In the past, doctors have treated breast cancer by performing mastectomies and removing as many lymph nodes as possible. Unfortunately, their removal results in several undesirable side effects, and doctors have instead been trying to selectively remove only sentinel nodes, which are more prone to becoming cancerous. A team from Strasbourg's Institute for Subatomic Research has developed a new imaging technique that will allow doctors to locate all sentinel lymph nodes, and to verify that they have all been removed after the operation.

FIRST EXTRA-SOLAR PLANET PHOTO CONFIRMED



A French-U.S. team of scientists has confirmed the sighting of an exoplanet (a planet that orbits a star other than our sun) five times the mass of Jupiter. This marks the first time a planet outside our solar system has been photographed. The original images, released in late 2004, showed a star (blue) and a smaller body next to the star (red). The French scientist who released those images has since confirmed that the smaller object is indeed orbiting the star, which would confirm its planetary nature. The exoplanet orbits a brown dwarf at a distance double that of the distance from Neptune to the sun and boasts a surface temperature of 1,500 degrees Celsius.

CEGETEL AND NEUF TELECOM TO MERGE

Telecom operators Cegetel and Neuf Telecom announced their decision to merge May 11, after more than a year of talks. With a combined revenue of \$3 billion, they will form France's second largest carrier, after France Telecom. Neuf-Cegetel will be the telecom incumbent's only rival in the traditional voice market, as well as an emerging force in the broadband market. The merger should be completed by the end of August, and Jacques Veyrat, currently CEO of Neuf, will become the new group's CEO.

Speeding Up Snail Mail

THE PARIS-BASED professional services company, Eurobios, has developed a software solution for the infamous "traveling-salesman problem." Although this phrase is well-known among door-to-door salesmen, postal workers and other mobile professionals, it is not common knowledge. The problem stems from the overwhelming complexity of calculating the most efficient route from one home to another. Eurobios's new software addresses this challenge in a novel manner: it automatically reduces the number of possible routes using heuristics, or rules of thumb, to quickly eliminate impractical itineraries. It then calculates a near optimum route by repetitively modifying randomly generated routes and keeping only the changes that result in shorter delivery times. The new software recently made its debut in Denmark, where the Danish postal service is using it to determine the most efficient delivery routes on Fyn island. Since the begin-

FRANCE MAY BECOME MOST POPULOUS COUNTRY IN E.U.

France's National Institute of Demographic Studies forecasts that France's population will reach 75 million by 2050 (compared with 61.5 million at present), which would make it the European Union's most populous country (populations are declining in other major E.U. countries). This new estimate, released on May 11, is based on rising fertility and immigration rates as well as increasing life expectancies. Minister for Capital Works Gilles de Robien argues that the trend is a result of government policies that encourage women to have more children, and that make it easier for mothers to continue pursuing their careers.

NATIONAL DATABASE TO HELP PROTECT CHILDREN

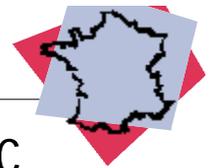
A national database of sex offenders, expected to include more than 20,000 names, will be launched in France on July 1. The database information will be accessible by police and government officials in order to do a background check on anyone in a profession involving children. The names of those who have committed an offense punishable by 10 or more years in prison will remain in the database for 30 years. The names of all others will be included for 20 years. Every year, convicted sex offenders must contact the government to confirm their address. Failing to do so is punishable by two years in prison and a 30,000 euro fine.

OPEN-SOURCE MAKES HEADWAY

Government authorities in France are increasingly pushing for the adoption of open-source software in order to cut costs and

improve security (because the software's internal code is visible to all, it is generally more reliable and secure than proprietary software). On May 25, Minister for

the Civil Service Renaud Dutreil will award a prize for the open-source solution with the greatest potential. Meanwhile, the city of Paris has already announced its intention to gradually switch all of its 18,000 computers to Linux, one of the best known open-source operating systems. The European Commission is also very active in this field, having recently launched a vast open-source research program with several major European companies, including Finland's Nokia, Germany's Siemens and France's Thales.



La Pérouse Wreck Identified in Pacific

A FRENCH EXPEDITION, in what marks the seventh attempt to determine the fate of 18th-century France's explorer Jean-Francois de Galaup de La Pérouse, formally identified the undersea remains of *La Boussole*, one of La Pérouse's two vessels, on May 10.

La Pérouse mysteriously disappeared in the Solomon Islands archipelago in 1788, during his quest to chart the globe. He had been charged with opening new maritime routes by French King Louis XVI, and he'd left France on August 1, 1785, with two frigates, *La Boussole* and *L'Astrolabe*. He disappeared sometime after March 10, 1788, when he sent a message from Botany Bay in Australia in which he wrote that he expected to be back in France by December 1788. He was never heard from again.



Louis XVI (seated) gives instructions to La Pérouse (left) for his trip around the world. Artist: Monsiau Nicolas André (1817)

Though the wreck in question had long been discovered, divers have only just now managed to recover an item (a sextant marked with the inscription "Mercier") that firmly establishes the ship's identity. Indeed, documents of the time indicate that La Pérouse owned a sextant built by Master Mercier, which he'd brought aboard his ship.

France's ministries of defense, culture and research are all supporting the expedition, which left Noumea on April 17. About 70 people, including archeologists, an entomologist, a linguist, a painter and a geophysicist, are onboard the *Jacques Cartier*, the French navy vessel conducting the research.

Historians speculate that had La Pérouse successfully accomplished his trip, he could have claimed Australia for France!

Fair Trade Gains Momentum in France

THE FAIR TRADE movement has been gaining international support over the past few years, and studies now show that nearly half of French consumers would pay more for a product if they knew it was bought using fair trade practices. Such practices include, for instance, paying above-market rates for raw materials to help small farmers in developing countries. In order to further promote "commerce

équitable" (fair trade) in France, Christian Jacob, minister for small and medium enterprises, announced on May 3 that he will work on the development of a government-sanctioned label that would ensure that companies claiming to follow fair trade practices do indeed abide by certain basic standards. Jacob will work with his German counterpart, Reynate Künast, as well as the E.U. commissioner for consumer affairs, to propose a European norm.

Other ministries have also shown an interest in the fair trade concept. Xavier Carcos, minister delegate for cooperation, met with major players in the fair trade arena to celebrate "Fair Trade Fortnight" on May 10. He reaffirmed his ministry's commitment to the fair trade movement, and spoke of the successful initiative that it helped set up with seven major French distributors and industrialists to promote fair trade in the cotton industry. Overall, the French state has donated more than 7 million euros to fair trade associations in the past decade.

JAPANESE LOVEBIRDS FLOCK TO SAINT-AMOUR



and hope this love boom will continue in the future. In many ways, Saint-Amour embodies the strong cultural and economic ties that exist between Japan and France. For instance, Japan is now the Beaujolais region's top foreign client, having imported over 15 million bottles in 2004 alone.

The small French town of Saint-Amour (literally, Saint Love), a wine-producing village located in France's Beaujolais region, has received over 1,000 requests in the past three years from Japanese couples asking for written confirmation of their wedding vows from this now famous "village of love." Two hundred couples have visited the town to receive a certificate that is marked with the village seal and accompanied with a glass of Beaujolais. The practice seems to be picking up steam, and May 1 marked the first time the village's mayor, Paul Spay, participated in a wedding confirmation ceremony. Saint-Amour officials are certainly pleased with the attention

Tagueurs: if You Can't Beat Them, Join Them!

TAGUEURS, whose art consists in writing their names in ever more elaborate ways, have been exercising their craft in France for the past 20 years, and they are especially prominent in the Parisian metro. Tired of being the involuntary showcase of their unconventionally artistic graffiti, the RATP (the Parisian metro authority) has taken a new tack: instead of fighting *tagueurs*, it is seeking to welcome them, so long as they display their creativity in specially designated areas. By recognizing graffiti as a form of personal artistic expression, the RATP wishes to show that it is youth-minded and that it encourages cultural activities. Nevertheless, it also emphasizes that it continues to disapprove of spray

bombs and the unauthorized defacement of property that costs it over 20 million euros a year to repair.

To encourage *tagueurs*, often thought to be young and unruly, to participate in this initiative, the RATP is presently hosting a Writing Battle contest in which the winner will receive a 1,500-euro prize and see his or her work displayed (the winner will be announced in June 2005). Whether the RATP manages to fuse together the *tagueurs'* unruly art with the orderly needs of one of the world's largest transit systems remains to be seen, but it hopes that it will persuade the youths that their art's rightful place is in the gallery, not the metro.



Culture & Business Intertwined at Cannes

AT THE RISK OF CONTRIBUTING to the media hype surrounding the *Festival de Cannes*, it is undeniable that this event, which was held from May 11 to 21, has become a huge commercial success, as well as the world's greatest celebration of film. Nine thousand film professionals, including producers, buyers and vendors, made an appearance this year (up from 8,500 in 2004) to discuss 2,860 films (a hundred more than last year). And, of course, the festival continues to attract well-known directors and actors alike.

The Palme d'Or went to *The Child*, by the Belgian brothers Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne. The second prize Grand Prix was awarded to Jim Jarmusch for *Broken Flowers*, featuring Bill Murray. Tommy Lee Jones was named the best actor, for *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*, which he also directed, and Hanna Laslo won as best actress for the Israeli movie *Free Zone*. One of the most anticipated events was the screening of the sixth and final installment of George Lucas's *Star Wars* epic, which made its world premiere in Cannes on May 15.

The festival has done wonders for the economic well-being of this southeastern resort city. Cannes, with a population of about 70,000, accommodates nearly 210,000 during the festival. According to David Lisnard, the city's official in charge of economic development, "Cannes's economic health depends on the image offered by the film festival, and the different economic and cultural events planned in Cannes during the year represent over 12,000 jobs and 700 million euros." The two-week festival alone represents a windfall of over 110 million euros for the city's coffers.

For more information, visit www.festival-cannes.fr.



NANCY'S PLACE STANISLAS GETS MAKEOVER FOR 250TH ANNIVERSARY

Place Stanislas, located in the historical center of the city of Nancy, was reopened to the public on May 4, after 10 months of work to transform it into a pedestrian square. Place Stanislas was created in 1755 by the Duke of Lorraine and former king of Poland, Stanislas Leszczynski, to honor King Louis XV, who was Stanislas's son-in-law. To mark Place Stanislas's 250th anniversary, Nancy is holding year-long celebrations. For more information, visit www.nancy2005.fr.

FORMER HOSTAGES PUBLISH MEMOIRS

Four months after their liberation, the two French journalists who were taken hostage in Iraq have published a book entitled *Mémoires d'Otages*, which presents a thorough account of their 124 days in captivity. The first part of the book provides details on their experience as hostages, including the harrowing moments they endured when they believed their execution was imminent, but also periods of hope and even humor. The book's second part deals with their investigation into the secret negotiations that led to their release on December 21, 2004. The two journalists have dedicated their book to "all hostages who are unfairly being retained in captivity throughout the world" with a special mention for Florence Aubenat (pictured), a French journalist for the daily *Liberation*, who has been held hostage in Iraq, along with her Iraqi interpreter Hussein Hanoun al-Saadi, since January 5.



However, the exhibit's organizers also noted the significant national differences in wardrobes during this period. Toward the end of the century, for instance, English fashion acquired a greater simplicity of form, boasting sober colors and modest sophistication.

To learn more, visit www.paris.fr/musees/musee_galliera.

MUSIC FESTIVAL ELECTRIFIES LYON

For the third year in a row, Lyon hosted an electronic music festival called "*Nuits sonores*," which took place from May 4 to May 8. Known as the French capital of electronic music, Lyon, then, provided a perfect location for the festival. Over 80 groups and artists were in attendance, and the event attracted over 30,000 visitors from France and abroad during its successful four-day run. Electronic music is gradually acquiring greater legitimacy in France, and authorities are proving much more receptive to its trademark fan get-togethers than they were in the past. Indeed, "*Nuits sonores*" received support from the city of Lyon, the Rhône-Alpes region as well as the French Ministry of Culture.

"MARIE CLAIRE" NAMED MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

The Syndicat de la Presse Magazine et d'Information awarded *Marie Claire* with the title of France's "Magazine of the Year" in its third annual contest. The magazine also gained recognition as the "Best Feminine Magazine." The awards coincided with



the 50th anniversary of the magazine (see NFF 04.11). Judges reviewed magazines based on editorial quality, creativity and concept. In addition to its acclaim within France, *Marie Claire* has achieved international success with 25 editions worldwide and over 15 million readers each month.

SPONSOR A VERSAILLES STATUE

In order to preserve the largest open-air sculpture garden in the world, the Château de Versailles and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Versailles Val d'Oise-Yvelines have developed a program giving small and mid-sized corporate benefactors the chance to "adopt" a statue. For donations from 3,000 to 30,000 euros, companies can sponsor one of the many 17th-century sculptures at Versailles. Participating French companies will benefit from a 60 percent tax credit on the sums they donate, and their names will be marked on the statue's pedestal. For more information, visit www.chateauversailles.fr.

AVIATION MUSEUM TO BE BUILT IN TOULOUSE

To commemorate the heritage of modern aviation, the mayor of Toulouse, Jean-Luc Moudenc, partnered with the descendants of aviation pioneers Jean Mermoz and Didier Daurat to launch the establishment of an interactive museum that will showcase antique planes and provide a historical look at aeronautics in France, from old Blériots to the Airbus. The museum will be built in the former airfield of Montaudran, which was once home to the famous Aéropostale airline, one of the world's first airmail carriers when it was founded in 1919. Other notable pioneers that will be honored at this site include Pierre Latécoère, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and Henri Guillaumet. Thirty acres will be dedicated to the museum, while the remainder of the airfield will be employed to build new homes and an aerospace business hub.

French Style Fashions 1700s

THE 18TH CENTURY was a veritable showcase for French design and style. Anyone who was anyone in European circles wore the latest French fashions constructed of Lyonnais embroidered silks, and often decorated with bows and frills. This French style is being celebrated in an exhibition at the Galliera Museum in Paris until August 21 (it will then move to the Gemeentemuseum in



Caraco (late 18th century) from the Galliera Collection.

The Hague, Netherlands, until March 2006). Over 130 men's and women's outfits are on display. As well as featuring both casual and formal wear, the exhibit also includes artworks and documents that describe how the clothes were worn.

More than a simple celebration of French fashion, the exhibition is also an investigation into the wide influence of these fashions in Europe. Indeed, French clothes were widely replicated by neighboring countries. Pascale Gourguet-Ballesteros, curator of the Galliera exhibit, explains, "in the 18th century we saw the hegemony of French fashion, and we wanted to try to measure how widely it had been imitated." French women's dresses, in particular, were popular throughout Europe due to their elegant three-piece design.



"TROPICAL HOUSE" ON DISPLAY IN YALE

French architect Jean Prouvé's Tropical House was recently rebuilt by five people at Yale University. It took two weeks to reconstruct the lightweight metallic building that Prouvé created at the end of World War II. The Tropical House was the ultimate culmination of Prouvé's unique building system. It incorporates complex details with large structural elements to accommodate the extreme tropical climate in Africa, for which the house was designed.

Prouvé is known for his belief that conception and fabrication must always take precedent over style and aesthetics. He began his work before World War II, creating demountable vacation homes and army barracks, and at the end of the war he received an order for 400 to 500 housing units for the homeless. Each home, when disassembled, fit on one truck and could be constructed by four men in one day.

The Tropical House sits on a one-meter grid system with portico supports of bent steel. Every piece is as flat as possible in order to fit in the hold of a cargo plane. Prouvé used the smallest possible number of different parts and manufactured all but the largest elements in aluminum.

Today, the house travels once or twice a year, and will continue to do so for the next three years, overcoming different logistical challenges every time. Before heading to Japan in 2006, the Tropical House will be in Los Angeles this fall. While in Yale, it will be open to public viewing on June 4, 11 and 18. For more information, visit www.architecture.yale.edu/tropical_house.

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Stellar Speakers Secured for Upcoming Season

AS EVERY YEAR, the Délégation Générale of the Alliance Française has invited many Francophone personalities from literary, scientific and political circles to give lectures throughout the United States. The list of those participating in the upcoming 2005-2006 season has just been released, so that Alliance Française chapters and their local American partners (such as universities, foundations and businesses) can begin selecting which lecturers they wish to invite.

Many of the speakers will touch on major political and social debates that are currently riveting France. Jean-Louis Bourlanges, a member of the European parliament, for instance, will discuss the results of the imminent French referendum on the E.U. constitution. Chahdhortt Djavann, a French-Iranian writer, will enliven the debate about secularism and political Islam. The famous Plantu, whose cartoons grace *Le Monde's* front page, will give a more offbeat presentation, with live demonstrations of his



Courtesy: Plantu

creative process. The question of whether France should adopt America's policy of affirmative action will be broached by Patrick Weil, director of research at the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), and Alexandre Adler, writer and geopolitical analyst, will give an overview of global geopolitics in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

For more information, please write to dgc@alliance-us.org.

October	Jean-Louis Bourlanges Chahdhortt Djavann	Analysis of the E.U. Constitution Referendum Secularism and Political Islam in France.
November	Jacques Attali Louise Beaudoin Dominique Wolton	Globalization and Third World Aid Linguistic and Cultural Diversity. Relations Between Communication and Democracy
January	Jean Plantu	Editorial Cartooning (live drawing)
February	Patrick Weil Alexandre Adler	Can Affirmative Action Work in France? <i>L'Odyssée américaine</i> , the aftermath of 09/11
March	Hélène Carrère d'Encausse Klaus Happlecht	<i>Francophonie</i> Franco-German Friendship
April	Jacques Toubon	Museum for the Memory of Immigration Project

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