

Britain, France Boost Anti-Terrorist Cooperation

FOLLOWING THE JULY terror attacks in London, French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin met with his British counterpart, Tony Blair, on July 25 to discuss Franco-British cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Villepin expressed "the solidarity and the friendship of the French people" toward the British in the wake of the deadly attacks in which more than 50 commuters were killed. The two ministers agreed on several measures that will increase security in both countries, such as exchanging the names of individuals who have been trying to incite Islamic extremism, and sharing information on how to best protect targets like public transportation

networks. The Paris metro system suffered several terror attacks in the eighties and early nineties, and its experience should prove helpful to the London underground. Telecommunication firms will also be required to keep longer records, in order to better track the communications between suspected terrorists.

The two countries also discussed the roots of Islamic extremism and how they can prevent the radicalization of young Muslims. Villepin expressed specific concerns regarding the return to Europe of young Jihadists who have been trained in Bosnia or Afghanistan and who could carry out attacks in the West.

Villepin once again requested the extradition of Rachid Ramda, who is being held in Britain and is accused of being the financial support behind the terrorist attacks in the Paris metro during the summer of 1995.



British Prime Minister Tony Blair and French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin in front of 10 Downing Street

Continued on page 2

PENGUINS MARCH TO BOX OFFICE TRIUMPH



March of the Penguins, a French documentary directed by Luc Jacquet, has just become America's second highest grossing documentary, surpassing Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* (*Fahrenheit 9/11*, also by Moore, continues to hold the number one spot). The film follows a pack of Emperor penguins as they surmount incredible obstacles (including temperatures of 80 below zero, savage storms and leopard seals) to trek 70 miles across Antarctica, find mates and raise their young. The film is the surprise independent hit of the summer, and its U.S. distributor, Warner Brothers, more than doubled the number of North American theaters playing the movie on August 5, from 778 to 1,867.

France Calls on Iran to Suspend Nuclear Activities

FACED WITH IRAN'S decision to resume operations in its Isfahan uranium conversion plant, French Foreign Affairs Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy called on the Iranian government to pursue its negotiations with France, Britain and Germany. He emphasized that Tehran should carefully study the proposals of the European troika and that Europe does not favor U.N. Security Council sanctions, although it has not ruled them out.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom, like the United States, adamantly oppose nuclear proliferation, and have made proposals that would enable the Iranians to suspend their sensitive nuclear activities while pursuing the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

"We think that it is still possible to negotiate so that the Iranians are able to suspend their sensitive nuclear activities," said Douste-Blazy to the press after meeting with his Spanish counterpart about Iran on August 9. "Our hand is still outstretched."

After meeting to discuss the new steps taken by Iran, the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Board of Governors unanimously adopted a resolution on August 11 calling on Iran to once again suspend its uranium conversion activities. Douste-Blazy expressed France's satisfaction with the resolution, which he called "clear, firm, and devoid of any spirit of confrontation. It opens the way for a rapid resumption of talks with Europe."

He noted that its unanimous adoption fully demonstrates the international consensus that exists on the matter, and the need for Iran to prove its peaceful intentions. He added that France will continue to work closely during the coming weeks with its international partners and the IAEA in order to push forward Europe's diplomatic solution to the crisis. "We hope we shall be able to find a common solution to preserve the positive spirit of [last year's] Paris agreement, which may yet be saved," Douste-Blazy said.

ZIDANE, THURAM AND MAKELELE RETURN TO LES BLEUS

Zinédine Zidane, the famed soccer midfielder, announced that he will return to les Bleus, the French national team. Zidane, affectionately known as Zizou, plays for Real Madrid but retired from international competition after France lost to Greece in the quarter finals of the 2004 Euro. Claude Makélélé quickly followed Zidane in returning to les Bleus, as did ace defender Lilian Thuram. The latter explained "France gave me a lot and I would not be grateful by refusing to wear its jersey again." All three players hope to help the struggling French team return to the golden era marked by its 1998 World Cup and 2000 Euro wins. Zidane, a three-time FIFA world player of the year and the winner of numerous soccer awards, said Raymond Domenech, the French national coach, convinced him to return to les Bleus after visiting him several times in Madrid. "I have always said that the French team is the most important thing that has happened to me," Zidane said. "I thought deeply about it and I want to play for France again."



INSIDE

- 2 L'événement**
Franco-Israeli Ties Reinvented
- 3 France-Amérique**
Fighting Aids Benefit in Houston
- 4 Profil**
Gardens "à la Française"
- 5 Économie / Science**
Researchers Allowed to Import Stem Cells
- 6 Société**
Balloon Bonanza
- 7 Culture**
Record Donation for Louvre Islamic Art Annex
- 8 Chez nous**
Matisse: the Fabric of Dreams at the Met



VILLEPIN ANNOUNCES NEW LABOR LAWS

Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin recently announced six new decrees aimed at boosting employment. Among the new measures, which will take effect September 1, the New Recruit Contract permits companies to lay off workers anytime during their first two years of employment without having to provide a reason. The decree would only apply to companies with 20 or fewer employees and employees would still be given two weeks' notice and be entitled to unemployment benefits. President Chirac said the new measures "demonstrate the country's determination to thoroughly modernize itself." The French government hopes that by cutting the costs associated with layoffs (costs which the French employers' group Medef has long cited as a major deterrent against hiring), it can overcome a major obstacle to job creation and build a more competitive labor force. Other measures introduced include government funding to help the smallest companies hire extra staff and a \$1,220 tax credit for young workers who take jobs in sectors with labor shortages.

U.K. ORDERS DRONES FROM FRANCE'S THALES

The French defense and electronics group Thales signed a one-billion-euro (\$1.24 billion) contract on August 4 with the British Defense Ministry to produce unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones. Such vehicles give the military advanced aerial reconnaissance and combat abilities without risking the lives of pilots. Also part of the team are Elbit Systems Ltd, Cubic Defense and Boeing. According to British Defense secretary John Reid, the drones, dubbed "Watchkeepers," should be brought into service incrementally starting in 2010.

ARIANE 5 LAUNCHES WORLD'S LARGEST CIVILIAN SATELLITE

An Ariane 5 rocket lifted off from Europe's spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana, on August 11 with the world's largest telecommunications satellite onboard. The 6.5-ton Thaicom 4 (operated by Thailand's Shin Satellite), was successfully deployed in geostationary orbit and will soon provide large swathes of Asia with broadband Internet access. President Jacques Chirac congratulated the European and French Space Agencies for their exploit. Arianespace is the only launch company capable of launching such large satellites.

NEWS FROM FRANCE / August 17, 2005

Franco-Israeli Ties Reinvigorated

ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER Ariel Sharon and French President Jacques Chirac hailed the strong relations between their two countries as Sharon visited France from July 26 to July 28. It was Sharon's first visit to France since July 2001. The two leaders had a very warm two-and-a-half-hour meeting, at the end of which Sharon invited Chirac to visit him in Israel. Sharon also met with Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy and representatives of the French Jewish community.

Both nations share a common interest in reinvigorating their relations in order to achieve peace in the Middle East. New developments in the region, including the election of the moderate Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas and the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, have given a new impetus for peace in the Middle East.

Prime Minister Sharon thanked President Chirac for his staunch fight against anti-Semitism: "I would like to thank the French president for his firm struggle against anti-Semitism. Israel considers Jacques Chirac as one of the world's great leaders." The French Ministry of the Interior

released figures on July 25 showing that the number of attacks and insults directed at Jewish targets has fallen dramatically over the last year. The Israeli government also appreciates France's uncompromising stance toward Iran with regards to its possible development of nuclear weapons.

Chirac praised the Israeli leader for his courageous decision to withdraw from the Gaza Strip, saying that, because of this Israeli initiative, the world "is witnessing a renewal of the peace process, which must lead Israelis to live in peace and security."

According to Douste-Blazy, "Prime Minister Sharon has made a historic and very concrete decision. We told him how much we support this initiative, how much we hope it takes place peacefully."



French President Jacques Chirac welcomes Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to Paris

The two leaders announced their intention to set up a France-Israel foundation that would promote bilateral ties in the fields of business, culture and education. The foundation would start its activities by early 2006, and a "French week" would likely be organized in Israel that same year. Sharon also expressed his desire, seconded by Chirac, to see Israel join the organization of French-speaking countries (known as *la Francophonie*), as Israel is home to a large community of French-speaking Jews.

New Measures Against Terrorism (continued from page 1)

The French government has already taken several measures in the wake of the London attacks. Border controls were reinstated, and the terrorism alert was raised to red—the third level on a scale of four. Villepin also held a meeting with Defense Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie and Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy to discuss other anti-terrorism measures, including increased video surveillance, the monitoring of mobile phone activity and greater identity card security.

Nonetheless, Villepin insisted that "we are anxious to find a balance between the need for security and the need for liberty." He emphasized that the Commission Nationale Informatique et Libertés, an institution that monitors the government's respect of privacy rights, and other interested parties will be consulted before any measures are enacted. "Our ambition is to get a consensus, because our greatest assets against terrorism are democracy and the rule of law."

France Flies Aid to Niger

FRANCE HAS STEPPED up its aid to the west African state of Niger, one of the poorest countries in the world, in response to the devastating famine that is affecting up to one third of the country's 12 million inhabitants. President Jacques Chirac announced on July 30 that France would triple its food aid to \$5.7 million, as well as double its contributions to the World Food Program, of which one million euros will be used to supply school canteens in the most affected regions. French citizens are also increasing their private contributions, and the western city of Rouen declared it would donate 100,000 euros to help children suffering from the food crisis.

As President Chirac made his announcement, French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy arrived in Niger to oversee the distribution of thousands of tons of food and medication and to determine what more is needed. The U.N.'s World Food Program, the French army and the French charity



Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy is welcomed in Tahoua, Niger, on July 30.

"Réunir" have joined forces to successfully deliver 2,000 tons of rice, 500 tons of peas, 80 tons of vitamin and mineral-enriched biscuits, 28 tons of oil, and 1.7 tons of medication.

The famine is the result of a terrible drought coupled with a locust invasion in 2004, which provoked the widespread destruction of crops and the outbreak of deadly diseases such as cholera. Poverty and hunger kill one in four children under the age of five in Niger. France hopes to improve the lives of the 800,000 children threatened by famine, of which 150,000 suffer from serious malnutrition.



A World of Friends Fighting AIDS

A BENEFIT DINNER, organized by the Friends of the World Foundation for AIDS Research and Prevention (FWFARP) and presided over by Prince Albert II of Monaco, will be held on September 28 in Houston, Texas. The event, entitled "A World of Friends Fighting AIDS," will be co-hosted by the General Consulate of France and the French-American Chamber of Commerce, and co-chaired by social doyenne Lynn Wyatt.

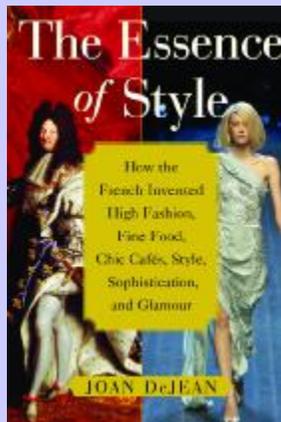


FWFARP, a Houston-based charity, promotes the activities of the World Foundation for AIDS Research and Prevention, an international NGO founded by **Professor Luc Montagnier**, the French co-discoverer of the HIV virus. The foundation seeks to establish clinics and research centers in the areas most affected by the AIDS epidemic. In 2005, a new center in Yaoundé, Cameroon, will be the first step in the extension of its network from its existing center in Abidjan (Ivory Coast).

Both Montagnier and the American co-discoverer of the HIV virus, **Dr. Robert C. Gallo**, who serves on the FWFARP's scientific board, have dedicated their lives to combating the AIDS epidemic. Gallo and Montagnier are working together on the "Families First Africa" project, which is



"THE ESSENCE OF STYLE:" A MUST READ!



Champagne, haute couture, crème brûlée and cafés all epitomize luxury and the good life, and all are also inextricably linked with France in the popular consciousness. In her new book, *The Essence of Style: How the French Invented High Fashion, Fine Food, Chic Cafés, Style, Sophistication, and Glamour*, U.S. author and historian Joan DeJean explains how much that is now synonymous with sophistication originated in France under the reign of Louis XIV, who consciously turned Paris, and by extension France, into the world's center of culture. Through fourteen fact-filled but easy-to-read chapters, DeJean explains how modern concepts of fashion, nightlife and tourism got their start in the Sun King's court. *The Essence of Style* shows how 350-year-old trends continue to influence tastes and styles today. For more information about the book, please visit www.simonsays.com.

aimed at preventing mother-to-child HIV transmission.

Over 250 donors are expected to attend the dinner and silent auction at Houston's Intercontinental Hotel. For more information, or to make a donation, please send an e-mail to worthworldtx@sprintmail.com or call (713) 256-8965. ■■

Nobel Winner to Speak at Memory Conference in D.C.

WASHINGTON, D.C.-AREA science buffs will soon have a chance to deepen their understanding of the complex and ever broadening field of neural studies with two of the greatest scientists in physics today. On September 13 at 6:30 pm, Professor Pierre-Gilles de Gennes, the 1991 Nobel Prize winner in physics, and Professor Jean-Didier Vincent will discuss recent developments in a conference hosted by the CNRS and the Office of Science and Technology at La Maison Française. The conference, presented in English, will focus on the themes of the brain and memory, and specifically on how modern imaging techniques are used to study the mind in ever more detail. Professor de Gennes received the Nobel

Prize for his work on how liquid crystals and polymers behave when transitioning from ordered to disordered states. Vincent is renowned for his work on the interactions between hormones and the nervous system.

To reserve a seat at the conference, please e-mail Elise.Yakuboff@cnrs-usa.org before August 26. ■■

BRUNCH ON THE BRAIN

Can't get enough of the physics of the brain? Come to the "Brunch on the Brain" event on September 17 from 11 am to 1 pm at Le Chat Noir restaurant in Washington, D.C.! Over champagne and a light meal, one American and two French experts, invited by the CNRS and the Office of Science and Technology, will present—and respond to questions regarding—recent findings on brain functions and how they are visualized using techniques such as functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging. The discussion will take place in French, but questions may be asked in English. To make reservations (\$10 per person), please e-mail elise.yakuboff@cnrs-usa.org.



"It is not necessary to sell your soul to succeed in the United States," says Yves Coléon, president of Transmark Partners. "The majority of French professionals have discovered a balance between French culture and the American socioeconomic dynamic."

For two-thirds of those surveyed, the driving factors in their desire to pursue careers in the U.S. were a sense of adventure and the thrill of the American dream.

Visit www.transmarkpartners.com/news_fr.html for more information. ■■

French Executives Thriving in the U.S.

MORE AND MORE French businessmen are succeeding in the American market, according to a study by Transmark Partners, a business development and management company. In a survey of 90 French managers working in the U.S., 91 percent said they considered their career in the U.S. a success.

In seeking to identify the key factors in the success of these French businessmen, the study found that it lies in their ability to share American values (particularly a strong work ethic) without forsaking their French heritage or the importance of striking a balance between work and family.

U.S. HOLDING BUYS TAITTINGER AND CRILLON HOTEL

The U.S. real-estate firm Starwood Capital, owner of the Sheraton and Westin hotels, will purchase France's Group Taittinger, which controls Taittinger champagne (as well as the iconic Hotel Crillon in Paris and other high-end French brands) in a deal worth over \$2.59 billion. Starwood says it will develop Taittinger's three budget hotel chains into Europe-wide brands and refurbish the group's luxury hotels, including the Crillon.

U.S. FIRM TO DISTRIBUTE FRENCH ANTICANCER DRUG

The French pharmaceutical group Pierre Fabre announced on July 25 that it has sealed a deal with the California firm Novacea to manufacture and sell its anti-cancer drug, Vinorelbine, in the U.S. and Canada. The drug, synthesized in France in 1974 from a Malagasy plant, kills cancerous cells by attacking the genetic material necessary for proliferation. It has been used in France since 1989 to fight breast, lung and prostate cancer and has been administered to a million patients.

E.U. AND U.S. WINE REGIONS DEFEND APPELLATIONS

Representatives from prominent European wine regions, including the Champagne region in France, and their counterparts from California, Oregon and Washington came together in Napa Valley to forge the "Napa Declaration" on August 2. The pact's goal is to better educate consumers about the different wine regions so that they can learn to avoid wines falsely professing to be from premier regions.

DASSAULT DONATES EXHIBIT TO DETROIT SCIENCE CENTER

French software developer Dassault Systèmes, a subsidiary of Dassault Aviation, will donate an exhibit it created for the French Pavilion at the World Expo 2005 in Japan to the new Detroit Science Center. The \$1 million exhibit, scheduled to open in January, demonstrates the firm's high-tech design and manufacturing software as well as its 3D simulation tools.

LAW AND ORDER, FRENCH STYLE

For the first time ever, a French television station, TF1, has decided to remake an American TV show. The show in question is *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, and the new "Frenchified" version will be based on the original series but will be adapted to the French judicial system. Dick Wolf, the original producer of the American hit, will fly to Paris several times in order to oversee production.



Gardens "à la Française"

The History of French Gardens

THROUGHOUT HIS REIGN, Charlemagne, the first king of France, experimented with plants in his private garden and gave detailed gardening instructions for his numerous royal estates. Since that time, France's gardens have become world-renowned for their beauty, grandeur and innovation.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, gardening was first revived in the Ile-de-France region in the 13th century, culminating in the creation of the famous gardens of Versailles and Villandry during the Renaissance. French Renaissance gardens built upon the Italian model, but created more expansive designs. The French Renaissance style is particularly known for its *parterres*—low plants and shrubs arranged in elaborate pat-



A glimpse of Versailles's gardens.

terns. The highly stylized gardens demonstrated thorough control over nature and were a way for French nobles to show off their wealth, since the gardens required intensive maintenance. Many Renaissance gardens also included large pools, canals, and for those who could afford it, fountains. The graceful tree-lined *allées* that became popular during

this time are still seen in gardens and public spaces all over France.

In the early 18th century, France began to look to England and returned to more natural-looking gardens. Rather than trying to demonstrate man's control over nature, the French sought to rediscover it through "*jardins paysagers*" (landscaped gardens). The winding paths of these gardens led to the trend among the *bourgeois* of strolling through parks as an escape into nature.

By the 19th century these two styles had melded into a uniquely French style that combined orderliness with a natural setting, and which for the first time made flowers an important focal point. Public gardens also became increasingly important to city-dwellers, who were able to find a getaway from the grit and grime characteristic of urban areas.

In the past decades, interest in French gardens has blossomed. New gardens inspired by Asian and Mediterranean landscapes have joined recently renovated historic gardens. As a result, the number of gardens in France has grown exponentially, from 150 gardens listed in the *Guide des Jardins de France* in 1991 to 750 today. ■

SPOTLIGHT: THE FRENCH RENAISSANCE GARDENS OF VILLANDRY

The mere mention of the name Villandry evokes splendor and perfection in the art of gardens. The French Renaissance gardens of this 16th-century chateau were restored in the early 20th century by Dr. Joachim Carvallo. The ornamental gardens, just above the kitchen garden (with its tasty vegetables), can be fully appreciated from the bedrooms of the castle and symbolize an allegory of the "Gardens of Love." The gardens represent four



The ornamental love gardens of Villandry

different types of love—tender, passionate, fickle and tragic. Tender love is symbolized with hearts and flames; passionate love with broken hearts; and fickle love with a dominant yellow color and fans that symbolize the volatile nature of feelings. The very red tragic love garden design represents the blades of daggers and swords used in the duels often provoked by lovers' rivalries.

In addition to its Renaissance-style flower gardens, Villandry includes kitchen gardens that boast appealing and appetizing vegetable patches, ranging from peppers to pumpkins. This September 10 and 11, Villandry will host the seventh kitchen garden feast, where gardeners organize workshops for visitors and share, literally, the fruit of their labor.

For more information visit www.chateauvillandry.com.

Le Nôtre : the Sun King's Landscaper



FRENCH LANDSCAPER André Le Nôtre (1613-1700) is best known for his garden work and classical designs for Louis XIV at the palace of Versailles. The Sun King was first attracted to Le Nôtre's work because of his extraordinary work at Vaux-le-Vicomte. Indeed, Le Nôtre did much to develop the spacious and formal gardens that expressed the grandeur of his period. Le Nôtre's classical style garden, also known as the French architectural or formal style garden, was based on the principles of perspective and optics and dominated the French garden style in the 17th century.

Le Nôtre, born into a royal French landscape family in 1613, was destined to flourish as a landscape artist. As a third generation landscapist, he was taught the

THE INTERNATIONAL GARDEN FESTIVAL 2005



Massif en Fleurs

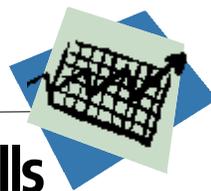
For more than 10 years the Conservatoire International des Parcs et Jardins et du Paysage has celebrated French gardens at a flourishing festival at Chaumont-sur-Loire. This festival offers landscape gardeners and artists from many different backgrounds an opportunity to create their own garden plots. Of the approximately 300 gardens designed, the 150,000 who visit annually find most memorable the walls of plants by Patrick Blanc, the fences of plaited living willows by Ingrid and David Drew, and the square vegetable plots by Jean-Paul Colaert. Through October 25, the International Garden Festival will celebrate the memorable moments gardens evoke with this year's theme, "Gardens Have Memories." For more information, visit www.chaumont-jardin.com.

practice of landscape design at an early age by both his father and grandfather. He received a classical education and academic training, studying architecture and art with Simon Vouet and François Mansart.

The garden designs at both Versailles and Vaux-le-Vicomte perfectly illustrate André Le Nôtre's reliance on classical ideas and his belief in the dominance of man over nature to create a harmonious and picturesque landscape. His celebrated royal gardens possess a standard of geometric and mathematical design, as well as tiers, walls, waterways and pools that create optical illusions of infinite space.

Though his gardens at the palace of Versailles and at Vaux-le-Vicomte constitute his most celebrated works, he also designed gardens for the Tuileries, Saint-Cloud, Marly-le-Roi, Chantilly, Fontainebleau and Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

For more information, visit www.lenotre.culture.gouv.fr. ■



Biologists Allowed to Import Stem Cells

DESPITE REMAINING ethical concerns, French scientific authorities have given biologists the green light for the importation of embryonic stem cells in order to advance scientific research.

Nine decrees from the Ministry of Research and Health, published in the *Journal Officiel*, dated July 24, authorized several research teams at the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), the National Institute for Health and Medical Research (INSERM), and the University Hospital Center of Montpellier, to import stem cell lines.

Originating in the U.S. (Wicell Research Institute) and in Israel (Technion Research and Development Foundation), the

cells were retrieved from discarded human embryos (only a few days old), conceived in vitro in a fertility clinic. Researchers will cultivate them for five years in order to deepen their understanding of auto-renewal mechanisms as well as the process of differentiation that gives these cells the capacity to give rise to all the tissues in the human body.

The legal use of stem cells was granted under the provisions of the French bioethics law of August 8, 2004 (see NFF 04.12). Researchers are, however, still eager for a more sturdy framework under which to work, one that would allow them more control over such studies in the future. They are also hoping to create their own stem cell lines as soon as doing so becomes authorized. **■**

Study Suggests Circumcision Helps Prevent Aids Transmission

CIRCUMCISION MAY be on its way to becoming a bona fide health measure after a study conducted in South Africa concluded that the procedure may help reduce the likelihood of AIDS infections. The study, directed by Bertrand Auvert and his French team at the National Institute for Health and Medical Research (INSERM) in Paris as well as Adrian Puren of the South African National Institute for Communicable Diseases, recruited over 3,000 volunteers between the ages of 18 and 24, half circumcised,

half not. Both groups were given condoms and information on STD prevention. After 21 months, 51 cases of infection were found among the non-circumcised group compared with just 18 in the circumcised group (both groups reported similar sexual behaviors). Researchers say, however, that this preliminary study is not conclusive as it does not explain how the risk of transmission is reduced by circumcision. Additional studies are to be carried out in Kenya and Uganda. To learn more, visit www.inserm.fr. **■**

PERNOD RICARD ACQUISITION EFFECTIVE

Pernod Ricard officially acquired British Allied Domecq on July 25, increasing the French company's turnover from 3.5 billion to 5.6 billion euros and moving it into second place globally in the wine and spirits industry (see NFF 05.05). The Pernod Ricard group comprises numerous labels, including some of the biggest names in the industry, such as Ballantine whisky, Kahlua liquors and Stolichnaya vodka. With 77 million cases sold, Pernod Ricard is the number one liquor company in Europe and Japan. For more information, visit www.pernod-ricard.com.

PROFESSOR LÉNA WINS ERASMUS AWARD



Professor Pierre Léna, an internationally acclaimed astrophysicist, will be awarded the Erasmus medal on September 22.

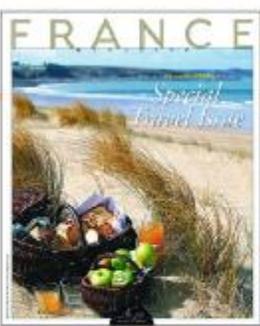
The medal, awarded by the Academia Europaea, goes to a European scholar who has made a profound contribution to international scholarship. Professor Léna helped develop a new type of astronomy based on infra-red radiation and created tools that make it possible to study the surface of stars and the interstellar environment. To learn more, visit www.acadeuro.org.

FRENCH-GERMAN JOINT IMAGERY NETWORK

CNES, the French space agency, and DLR, the German aerospace center, have come together to create an Earth observation research center that will process and analyze satellite data. A department that specializes in image processing at ENST, the French national school of telecommunications, will chair the new network while CNES and DLR will provide R&D support. The new network will be able to automatically process and extract information from high-resolution satellite imagery.

SFR SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH SONY

Cell phone operator SFR has entered into an exclusive deal with Sony BMG Music to distribute the label's catalogue to SFR subscribers via cell phones and personal computers. This new agreement adds to pre-existing agreements with Warner, EMI and Universal Music Group (see NFF 05.09), making SFR the first service provider in Europe to give its subscribers access to all four major music labels. Subscribers will be able to choose from a catalogue of over 500,000 titles to download to third-generation (3G) cell phones or PCs.



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France Telecom Buys Spanish Mobile Operator Amena

FRANCE TELECOM expanded its foothold in Europe with the announcement of its \$7.7 billion acquisition of 80 percent of Amena, Spain's third-largest mobile telephone operator, with 9.7 million clients and a 24 percent market share. The deal will make France Telecom the second-largest operator in Spain, after Telefonica.

Spain is Europe's fifth largest telecommunications market with an estimated growth potential over the next three years of approximately 6 percent for mobiles and more than 10 percent for data and internet services (higher than the forecast European average in both cases).

"The merger of France Telecom España and Amena confirms our strategy as an integrated European operator," said Didier Lombard, France Telecom's chief executive. France Telecom is also present in Belgium, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Poland.

After the sale of Amena's cable operations, France Telecom will merge Amena and its Spanish subsidiary, France Telecom España. It is likely the new company will take the Orange name used in France Telecom's other markets. By 2008, the acquisition should generate more than 130 million euros in free cash flow. **■**

DEATH OF JUDGE THIERRY JEAN-PIERRE

Thierry Jean-Pierre, the French judge who was among the first to fight corruption in the political system in the 1990s, died July 27 at the age of 49, having succumbed to cancer. During his judicial career, he resisted the obstructionism of his superiors and unveiled political dishonesty at the highest levels. A right-wing politician and conservative liberal, Jean-Pierre was elected to the European Parliament in 1994. He wrote several books, including *Taiwan Connection*.

HARRY POTTER GETS FRENCH KIDS TO READ ENGLISH

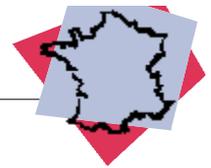
Rather than waiting for the translation of *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*, many young French fans have decided to read it in English. Indeed, the English-language version is currently the 5th best-selling book in France. This situation is of particular interest to English-language teachers in France, who have happily used the series' strong appeal to teach English to their students. Unfortunately, reading one book in English does not necessarily lead to an interest in reading more books in the language of Shakespeare!

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL

Looking into the mirror is a feel-good factor for the majority of French people, who check out their looks in

a mirror at least once a day. Indeed, 8 out of 10 French people look in the mirror at least once a day and like what they see, according to a poll recently released by BVA. The poll also revealed that women do more looking than men—

81 percent versus 74 percent—and while a whopping 88 percent of men were delighted with the man in the mirror, women were a bit less self-satisfied, with 73 percent declaring themselves pleased with their image. Of all the age groups, 18- to 24-year-olds proved to be the most narcissistic, with 84 percent consulting a mirror at least once a day. Despite high levels of overall satisfaction, 70 percent of those surveyed said they worried about their weight, and 42 percent want to lose weight. For the majority, however, this desire arose from health concerns, rather than anxiety about appearances.



Balloon Bonanza

IN AN UNPRECEDENTED record in hot-air balloon history, exactly 261 hot-air balloons took to the sky simultaneously as part of the July 24 kickoff of the ninth ballooning event in Chambley, France. Chambley, with its biannual "Mondial Air Balloons" show, is the site of one of the largest gatherings of hot-air balloons in the world. About 10,000 spectators watched with delight as the sky filled with colorful orbs and the amazing display entered record books.

The 261 balloons formed a line that stretched nearly two miles along a former American military base. The base's large size and the area's generally favorable weather conditions permitted such a large synchronized flight. Albuquerque, New Mexico, is the only other major ballooning center with similar favorable conditions for mass takeoffs.

"The exercise isn't without its risks," explained Thierry Villey, the flight director. "The wind conditions must be ideal so



A record 261 balloons take off at once on July 23

that all of the balloons leave at the same time and in the same direction; if one takes off faster than the others, the wind could make it deviate from its course

and put it at risk of a collision with its neighbor."

Ballooning teams came from all over the world to participate in the events, which also included a re-enactment of the Montgolfier brothers' first hot-air balloon flight in 1783. The French inventors were the first to demonstrate practical lighter-than-air flight, and hot-air balloons are still called *montgolfières* in France in their honor.

To learn more, visit www.pilatre-de-rozier.com.

Beurger King Launched

Burger King, a new fast-food restaurant launched this summer in the Paris suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois, is catering directly to France's large Islamic population. The restaurant's name is a play on both the huge American chain and the French word *beur*, slang for a second-generation North African living in France.

The menu at Beurger King Muslim (BKM) offers standard fast-food burgers and fries; however, the beef and chicken burgers are all *halal*—made with meat butchered and prepared in accordance with Islamic dietary laws. The waitresses don't sport baseball caps with a flashy logo, instead they wear plain Islamic head scarves, just like many of their customers.

SCRABBLE: A FRENCH CHAMPION

In this year's edition of the francophone Scrabble World Championship in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, Frenchman Antonin Michel came out triumphant in a field of 800 contestants from 15 different countries. At this high level of competition, the chance factor is eliminated as each competitor receives the same letters and has to come up with the best combination in 2.5 minutes every round. The French version of scrabble was developed by Belgians, and quickly became dominated by the French. Only in 1978, and between 2002 and 2004, have non-French players won the competition. To learn more, visit www.scrabble2005.ch.

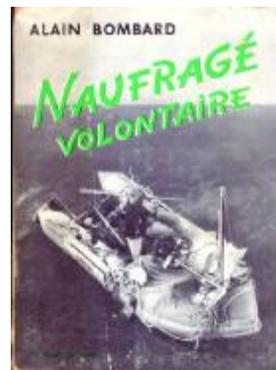
Three Muslim friends from near Paris saw a need for a clean, family-friendly *halal* fast-food restaurant and started this restaurant after seeing the success of similar ones in Thailand and Algeria. Although Muslim fast food can be found throughout France, BKM is the first to recreate the décor and atmosphere of the American-style fast food joints that are so popular with French youths.

Beurger King has already met with success: its stocks have tripled in its first three months of operation, and its managers expect to add eight new employees to its staff of 20 this fall.

Revolutionary Maritime Researcher Alain Bombard Dies

DR. ALAIN BOMBARD, a French biologist famous for having voluntarily journeyed solo across the Atlantic without food or water to prove the potential resilience of shipwrecked sailors and passengers, died July 19 at the age of 80. The Paris-born doctor, inspired after witnessing the aftermath of a shipwreck off the coast of northern France, set off to sea in 1952 in a blow-up raft he called *l'Herétique* to prove that it is possible to survive off only plankton and sea water.

He completed his sail between the Canary Islands and Barbados (in the Caribbean) in 65 days and later published a memoir, *The Bombard Story*, which received worldwide acclaim. His research led to vast



Cover of the French edition of *The Bombard Story*

improvements in standard safety equipment onboard ships and brought hope to thousands in a time when a shipwreck often meant imminent doom for those involved.

"He saved hundreds, if not thousands, of people at the risk of his honor," said French navigator Jo Le Guen, remembering Bombard. "When he talked of surviving at sea in this way, people made fun of him, no one took him seriously, they thought him a joker."

In his fifties, he entered politics, serving briefly as secretary of state for the environment under president Mitterrand in 1981, and later as a European deputy from 1981 to 1994. Bombard received France's prestigious Legion of Honor.



Saudi Prince Donates \$21 Million for Islamic Art Wing at the Louvre

THE LOUVRE, the world's largest museum, announced it will open a new wing to showcase its vast collection of Islamic art. The project was born at the instigation of French President Jacques Chirac. One-third of the \$69 million project will be financed through a multi-million-dollar gift, one of the largest in French history, from Saudi Prince Al-Walid Bin Talal, while the French state will contribute 26 million euros and French oil company Total 4 million euros. Prince Bin Talal is a generous philanthropist who says he wants to mend ties between Arabs and the West, an imperative that he considers all the more pressing since the September 11 terror attacks. French Culture Minister Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres thanked the prince for his gift, saying "your gesture is a testament to the generosity of the Islamic world." This gift, he added, "expresses the special friendship between France and Saudi Arabia."



A 16-century Iranian carpet from the Louvre's collection

COURTESY: RENAUD DONNEDIEU DE VABRES

The new wing is scheduled to open in 2009 and will be built by architects Mario Bellini from Italy and Rudi Ricciotti of France; the 43,000-square-foot wing will be located in the Visconti Court and will host the museum's 10,000-piece collection of art from the Islamic world, considered one of the largest in the world. Only 1,300 objects from the Louvre's Islamic collection are currently on display. It is the newest department in the museum, created in 2003 with pieces spanning 13 centuries and three continents, showing the spread of Islamic civilization from

Spain to India. The collection is especially strong in the areas of medieval Persian and Arab art, as well as in works from the Ottoman Empire, and it claims one of the world's most prestigious collections of ancient oriental carpets.

For more information, visit www.louvre.fr.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF PARIS READY-TO-WEAR SHOW



The Paris ready-to-wear show will celebrate its 50th anniversary and 100th show in September. Twice a year, some 42,000 visitors flock to the show to get a glimpse of the latest fashion trends.

According to Jean-Pierre

Mocho, president of the French ready-to-wear federation, the show is aimed at feeding the thoughts and reflections of the buyers, journalists, stylists and all those curious trend-seekers. "Our role is to represent French fashion while also opening it up to competition from abroad," said Mocho. The show, which gathered 20 fashion houses for its first show in Paris in June 1956, now brings together 1,500 labels, 60 percent from abroad. To help celebrate its success, a book called *World Briefs*, written by fashion historian Lydia Kamitsis, will be published, outlining the major fashion movements of the past half-century. September's show

will organize a host of special events, including a major exhibition of Hanbok and traditional Korean costumes, as well as fashion parades. For more information, visit www.pret-paris.com.

"ROCK EN SEINE" MUSIC FESTIVAL

Paris is once again opening its doors to the rock music festival "Rock en Seine," scheduled for August 25 and 26. The festival, which has become a favorite in France since its debut three years ago, offers a diverse assortment of bands from the United States, France and the U.K. Last year it brought together bands such as the Roots and the White Stripes. This year it will feature 28 bands, including the Foo Fighters, the Pixies, Queens of the Stone Age and Franz Ferdinand. The two-day event will take place at Saint-Cloud Park. For more information and to buy tickets, visit www.rockenseine.com.

"Les Visiteurs:" Mixing Modern and Traditional Treasures

CULTURE MINISTER Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres declared the summer of 2005 a time to celebrate France's heritage and contemporary art with the launch of modern art exhibits in 20 historical buildings throughout France. This series of exhibits, entitled "*Les Visiteurs*" ("The Visitors"), encourages people to participate in both the old and the new through the autumn of 2006 (exact dates vary for each venue).

Works of contemporary art will be displayed thematically in castles, palaces, fortresses and monasteries. These exhibitions seek to establish relationships between the past and the present, as well as between history, architecture and contemporary fine arts. Indeed, special attention was given to the choice of the sites and works in order to best establish a dialogue between the archi-

ecture and history of the selected buildings and the contemporary nature of the works of art.

Examples include the exposition "*Chassez le Naturel...*" at the Chambord chateau, which explores the themes of the forest and of nature in an imaginative style. At the radiant and airy Chateau of Tarascon (in southeastern France), the theme of space and light is examined through works by artists James Lee Byars, Jeppe Hein and Bernard Moninot. The artwork on display at the palace of Tau in Rheims constantly alludes to the cathedral's emblem, the angel. To learn more, visit www.lesvisiteurs.culture.fr.



Jazz at la Villette Celebrates John Coltrane

THIS SUMMER the "Jazz à la Villette" festival pays tribute to both legendary U.S. saxophonist John Coltrane and to the new wave of jazz influenced by electronic, rock and hip hop music. From August 30 through September 10, the Cité de la Musique in Paris's Parc de la Villette will present some of the biggest stars in the world of jazz, along with numerous up-and-coming artists. Performances will take place both inside the renovated factory and in the open, beneath the night sky. The festival will also host several documentary showings, workshops and master classes.

Ravi and Alice Coltrane will headline the festival. Son and wife of the late John Coltrane, Ravi and his quartet, accompa-



U.S. Saxophonist John Coltrane

nied by his mother, Alice, on the piano, will perform their unique blend of jazz and classical Indian music. Other highlights include the Saxophone Summit, a saxophone trio that will pay tribute to their mentor Coltrane; Jeff Sharel and Julien Lourau, who will perform a mix of jazz, house and techno; and the Anthony Baxton Trio from Chicago.

Coltrane's influence will be obvious throughout the festival. Coltrane, who, despite his short career was a prolific recorder, has inspired generations of jazz musicians with his dedication to his art and constant experimentation.

For a detailed schedule or to find out more information about the festival, please visit www.villette.com.

