

## In U.S., Sarkozy Reaffirms French-American Ties

*Speaking at Columbia University, the French finance minister insists, "France likes the United States."*

**F**RENCH MINISTER of Finance Nicolas Sarkozy ended his recent visit to the United States with a presentation on October 4 at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs in New York City.

Sarkozy stressed the continued strength of the transatlantic relationship. "If I am here, it is because France likes the United States," he explained. "The dream of French families is to have their children go to American universities. When we go to the movies, it's in order to see American movies, when we turn on our radios, it's to hear American music. And when our children learn languages, the first language they learn is English. We like the United States." Sarkozy explained that, for his part, "the reason I like America so much is because I'm a believer in action," and he expressed his hope that a similar "can-do" attitude will take hold in France.

Sarkozy spoke optimistically about the state of French-American relations, emphasizing that any tensions over the war in Iraq are a thing of the past, "We had a disagreement over Iraq. That is part of our history (...) there are certain unconditional factors in our friendship

that will overcome all tests." He concluded, "Don't look at the world as if it is hostile to the United States. The world admires you, the world respects you."



French Finance Minister Nicolas Sarkozy spoke to Columbia University students on October 4.

Sarkozy came to the U.S. to attend the annual World Bank, IMF and G7 meetings. He also took advantage of the trip to hold meetings with key political figures, including U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and to attend programs to strengthen transatlantic business ties.

Sarkozy was invited to speak at Columbia by the Alliance Program, a unique partnership between Columbia University and three French universities—the Ecole Polytechnique, Sciences Po and the Université Paris I Pantheon Sorbonne—whose goal is to promote a lasting cooperation across academic disciplines. For more information on the Alliance program, please visit [www.alliance-program.org](http://www.alliance-program.org).

### FRANCE CALLS FOR COUNTERNARCOTICS FORCE IN AFGHANISTAN

French Defense Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie called for the creation of an international force that would be in charge of counternarcotics operations in Afghanistan, where the increase in drug production has been a major source of concern (the country now accounts for 75 percent of the total global production of opium). This force would complement the existing NATO force, led by French Lieutenant-General Py, which is in charge of securing the country for the upcoming elections. Alliot-Marie also called for initiatives that would "support the development of substitute crops on a local basis," so as to wean small farmers from their financial dependence on opium. She noted that the international community must "operate cohesively and display a fierce determination to succeed."

## E.U. Commission Favors Turkey Accession Talks

**T**HE EUROPEAN COMMISSION officially recommended on October 6 that the European Union open accession talks with Turkey, provided it continues to address the Union's concerns with its human rights record. For the accession talks to begin, the motion must now be formally approved by the 25 current members of the Union when they hold a summit meeting on December 17. Should it be definitively approved, the entire process of accession will likely take "10 to 15 years" according to French President Jacques Chirac, who supports Turkey's candidacy. Such an extended interval between the start and completion of accession talks is not unusual, as candidate countries must meet several requirements before they can join the Union.

Commission officials were quick to hail the progress Turkey has already made in meeting the Union's entry requirements in the area of human rights. The Commission also praised Turkey's economic progress: it has brought its economy more in

line with international standards, liberalizing its markets and slashing its level of inflation. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the Commission, there are still many areas of improvement remaining. In particular, there is much criticism of the current state of women's rights in Turkey, with discrimination and violence against women being persistent problems. Turkey has also failed to meet the Union's stringent standard of zero-tolerance toward torture. The Turkish government has denounced torture, but the implementation of its policy on the ground has proved difficult.

The European Commission is adamant on making sure that Turkey meets all of the standard requirements for membership, political and economic, before full membership can be considered. The Turkish government has welcomed the Commission's decision, and has promised to comply with the European Union's requirements.

### FRANCE AND BRITAIN SUPPORT U.N. REFORM

Foreign Minister Michel Barnier declared France's support for the creation of new permanent seats on the Security Council during his speech to the U.N. General Assembly in late September. At present, the Security Council has only five permanent members (Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States), but Britain and France would like to see at least four more countries added to the list: Germany and Japan, who supply 28 percent of the U.N. budget, and Brazil and India, who make up one-sixth of the world population. France is also in favor of allocating a permanent seat to an African country, such as Egypt or South Africa.

The two European countries hope that this enlargement would take place in conjunction with the expansion of the Council's total membership to 24, from 15 at present. This would mark the first major reform of the Security Council since the creation of the U.N. in 1945, when the victorious countries in World War II were each awarded a permanent seat. A unanimous vote is needed to accept any new Security Council members, and each of the current permanent member states has the right to veto any such move.

## INSIDE

- 2 **L'événement**  
2005 Budget Priorities
- 3 **France-Amérique**  
Americans Support Louvre Museum
- 4 **Profil**  
"Le Patrimoine," France's Heritage
- 5 **Économie / Science**  
Inexpensive Laptops for College Students
- 6 **Société**  
Urban Renewal Plan
- 7 **Culture**  
"Marie Claire" Marks 50th Anniversary
- 8 **Chez nous**  
The Pont Neuf Unwrapped



**CHIRAC PRAISES RUSSIAN ADOPTION OF KYOTO TREATY**

In a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin, Jacques Chirac commended the Russian government for its approval of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. A minimum number of the treaty's signatories had to ratify the protocol before it could come into force, and its now probable ratification by the Russian Duma means that the global community will soon join forces to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Chirac praised Russia's "determination to fully shoulder her responsibilities as a global player in a matter affecting the future of the whole planet."

**FRANCE AND U.S. INCREASE ANTI-TERRORIST COOPERATION**

French Justice Minister Dominique Perben and U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft signed agreements on September 28 increasing French-American cooperation against terrorism and organized crime. The meeting, which was held in Scheveningen (Netherlands), updated the French-American extradition treaty and eased restraints on the transfer of terror suspects between the two nations. Ashcroft heralded the agreement as "a powerful reaffirmation that we work shoulder to shoulder in defense of freedom." The accords allow agents to pursue their investigations on foreign soil and enable transatlantic interrogations of suspects via video-conferencing.

**NATO EXPANDS TRAINING MISSION IN IRAQ**

NATO allies agreed to send additional military instructors to train Iraq's new armed forces following a September 22 meeting in Brussels. About 300 soldiers will join the 40 already in Iraq

charged with managing a military academy outside of Baghdad. The mission's sole aim will be to provide training, equipment and technical assistance, but will not participate in combat. This mission represents a positive trend toward renewed transatlantic cooperation in the wake of the Iraqi war.

**NEW ANTITERRORIST FINANCIAL BRIGADE**

France recently created a criminal brigade that will bring together various specialists charged with investigating financial transactions and trafficking that could potentially support terrorist networks. The brigade will pay particular attention to Islamic financial networks that, because of their informal, trust-based nature, escape normal financial controls.

# Government Unveils Budget Priorities

*Defense, research, job creation and deficit reduction are on top of the agenda*

**F**RENCH FINANCE MINISTER Nicolas Sarkozy unveiled his budget proposal for the coming fiscal year on September 22. President Jacques Chirac called Sarkozy's plan a good step forward "for employment, for growth, and for the future." Indeed, one of the government's priorities is job creation. Several new tax incentives will help safeguard existing jobs and foster the creation of new ones.

But with Sarkozy calling the need to lower France's public deficit below the 3 percent ceiling an "absolute priority," the new budget focuses primarily on meeting the deficit requirements stipulated by the euro zone's stability and growth pact. The proposed budget should lower the deficit to somewhere around 2.9 percent (down from 3.6 percent). The belt-tightening will be relatively painless: government revenues are up because of France's strong economic performance in 2004, and growth is expected to continue in 2005. In fact, the government will be able to increase its spending on certain high priority ministries while still keeping its deficit in check.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for instance, will receive a total of 4.41 billion euros, equivalent to a 4.5 percent increase over the previous year. The budget increase will be used to support international aid programs, such as the global fight against diseases like AIDS and malaria. The rise in Official Development Assistance (ODA) will help meet France's pledge to bring its total effort to 0.5 percent of its GDP by 2007. International aid already represents almost 50 percent of

the French Foreign Ministry's budget.

Sarkozy also proposed to increase funding for the Ministry of Defense by 2.1 percent, for a total of 32.9 billion euros. Most of the new money will be allocated to the purchase of new equipment (such as 59 Rafale jet fighters, a Horizon-type frigate, Leclerc tanks and Tiger helicopters) and to the development of sophisticated military hardware (particularly a new military transport plane based on the Airbus). Overall, France's research and development budget will get a big boost of 4.7 percent, to 9.27 billion euros.

Education remains, as always, a key priority, and its funding will increase by 2.5 percent. New social programs have been announced (see our lead article on page 6), in particular the launch of a one-billion-euro social cohesion plan, the construction of 90,000 low-cost housing units and the raising of the minimum wage. The Ministry of Culture was awarded the largest increase, with its share going up 5.9 percent to 2.79 billion euros. Its additional funds will mostly be devoted to the preservation and development of France's cultural heritage (see our in-depth section on page 4).

**EUROPEAN GENDARMERIE CREATED**



**French gendarmes**  
(courtesy: Ministry of Defense)

The defense ministers of five European Union countries, meeting in Noordwijk, Netherlands, signed an agreement to form a European gendarmerie on September 17. The French initiative will create an 800-strong European gendarmerie composed of French gendarmes, Italian carabinieri and Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish civil guards. The force is scheduled to move to headquarters in Vincenza, Italy, by late

October, and will be rapidly deployable anywhere in the world within a month. Many other E.U. member-states expressed an interest in the idea but remain somewhat wary of a police force with military status. France, however, views this status as indispensable and French Defense Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie explained the usefulness of a militarized police force: "It's designed to address the situation we find in nearly all crisis-exit scenarios: there's no longer military action and, at the same time, the situation, which appears calm, isn't totally stabilized and can even give rise to considerable violence."

## Chirac Tours Southeast Asia



**President Jacques Chirac is welcomed by Vietnamese children near the French Cultural Center in Hanoi.**

**F**RENCH PRESIDENT Jacques Chirac returned to Paris on October 13 from a week-long visit to three Asian countries. Chirac began his trip with a brief stop in Singapore followed by state visits to Vietnam and China. The tour's salient objective was to promote stronger economic ties between Southeast Asia and France.

In Vietnam, Chirac emphasized that France is committed to providing further economic, educational and developmental assistance to its former colony. About 20 French business representatives, who are involved in projects ranging from a French-language University to the construction of a metro route in Hanoi, accompanied the president. Chirac, after meeting with his Vietnamese counterpart, Tran Duc Luong,

attended the fifth Asia-Europe Meeting in Hanoi which convened the leaders of 15 E.U. states and 10 Asian countries.

The tour concluded in China to kick off its "Year of France." Chinese President Hu Jintao warmly welcomed Chirac, whose entourage included fifty-some CEOs of major French companies. Chirac Spokesman Jérôme Bonnafont affirmed that "growth in China is an opportunity for growth and employment in France." Bonnafont also echoed the president's aspiration to help double the number of French companies in China by 2007. As he has in the past, Chirac used his visit to voice France's concerns over the human rights' situation in China.



# Americans Enlist to Support Louvre

*The new American Friends of the Louvre will help the Louvre museum's outreach in the U.S.*

**T**HE AMERICAN FRIENDS of the Louvre held a reception in New York on September 30 to announce the French museum's ambitious new projects in the United States, including plans to bring some of its treasures directly to American audiences.



The children of New York's Frank Sinatra School of the Arts in front of the Louvre's Pyramid. The American Friends of the Louvre hope to facilitate more such visits.

With François Delattre, France's Consul General in New York, hosting the reception in his splendid 5th Avenue residence, the director of the Louvre, Henry Loyrette, and the chairman of the American Friends of the Louvre, Christopher Forbes, outlined their plans to create a branch of the venerable museum on American soil. Americans form the Louvre's largest contingent of visitors (20 percent of the

total), and the Louvre in fact draws more Americans than any museum in the United States, except for New York's Metropolitan Museum.

Other initiatives were announced, including educational programs with American institutions such as the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, the Terra Foundation in Chicago, the Milwaukee Art Museum and the Davis Museum at Wellesley College. The American Friends of the Louvre, along with the American Express Foundation, have also been providing financial and logistical support to translate the explanatory texts that accompany the Louvre's works of art. And the two organizations are contributing to the completion of the English and Spanish versions of the Louvre's Web site, [www.louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr).

The American Friends of the Louvre will host their first fundraising event, featuring a presentation of *haute couture* designs by Ralph Rucci, in Houston on November 8. ■ ■

## "THE DA VINCI CODE" ENTHRALLS FRANCE

Dan Brown's popular novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, has remained strong at number 1 on French best-seller lists since its release in France last March. The novel, which is largely set in Paris and suggests that the first Kings of France were descended from Jesus and Mary Magdalene, has inspired a flurry of commercial activity as tour operators and historians seek to capitalize on its success. Californian real-estate agent Olivia Hsu Decker, for instance, is offering a one-week Da Vinci Code Tour of her property, the Chateau de Villette (which plays a prominent role in the book) at the very reasonable price of \$55,000! Even the venerable Louvre Museum has succumbed to the book's appeal and used it as a marketing tool with potential American donors (see facing article). In its review, the women's magazine *Marie-Claire* gushes, "you will drink till the dregs from this irresistible chalice." Clearly, the French appreciate a well-told tale, especially if it takes place in France!

on the Ritz for France!" will feature chefs from the Cordon Bleu. A round table on French-American relations, moderated by Jean-Louis Turlin of the *Figaro's* special weekly *France-Amérique*, is also scheduled for the weekend and participants will include Dr. Christopher Pinet, editor in Chief of the *French Review*, and Dr. Tom Bishop, former chair of the New York University French Department.

The Alliance Française network, boasting a membership of 30,000 and 110 chapters throughout the United States, plays a key role in the promotion of French culture in North America. For more information, please call 1-800-6FRANCE or visit the Federation's Web site, [www.afusa.org](http://www.afusa.org). ■ ■

## Alliance Française to Hold General Assembly in D.C.

**T**HE GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the Federation of Alliances Françaises will convene on October 21 through 23 in Washington, D.C., for its annual meeting. Nearly 150 delegates and members of affiliated chapters are expected to attend the meeting, which will feature numerous workshops, exhibits, and other activities.

Ambassador and Madame Levitte will be in attendance throughout the weekend, after hosting an inaugural reception at their residence on Thursday evening. The Ambassador will address the event's participants during a luncheon on Friday, October 22, and will be present at the Charbonnier Award Tribute Dinner, which will pay homage to Pierre Cardin, head of the venerable Cardin fashion empire. The dinner, "Puttin'

## French Chefs Cook Up a Storm in America

**W**HEN ALAIN DUCASSE braved the Atlantic in the summer of 2000 to establish his first restaurant in the United States, the American press was unconvinced that such a highly priced oddity of the culinary landscape would have any success with the American public. Now, four years later, with menus starting at \$165 or \$250 per person before the wine, the Alain Ducasse restaurant at the Essex House in Manhattan has become increasingly popular with the corporate lunch clientele as well as the upscale dinner crowd, keeping its leather-bound reservation books filled months in advance.

Monsieur Ducasse is not alone. Many of France's most celebrated chefs have established themselves in New York City, Los Angeles and, more recently, Las Vegas. Indeed, in an effort to create a more upscale image, Las Vegas has enticed French chefs such as Joel Robuchon, Guy Savoy and Daniel Boulud, as well as Alain Ducasse, with a high-end *Brasserie* opening this November. All four were called in to cater to high rollers and to the increasingly cosmopolitan clientele Las Vegas is attracting. This migration of chefs promises to establish Las Vegas not only as a gambling Mecca but also as an island of *avant-garde* gastronomy in the middle of the Nevada desert. ■ ■



## JAMES CONLON HONORED

Conductor James Conlon, 54, who left as permanent chief and musical adviser of the Paris National Opera this summer after an eight-year stint, was awarded the rank of Commander in the Ordre des Arts et Lettres on September 21 by French Minister for Culture Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres. Born in New York City, James Conlon is one of the preeminent conductors of his generation.

## NATIONAL LIBRARIES LAUNCH FRENCH HERITAGE WEB SITE

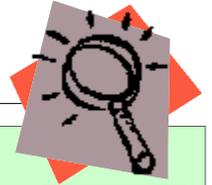
The National Library of France (Bibliothèque Nationale) and the U.S. Library of Congress will join forces to create a bilingual Web site dedicated to France's influence in North America. On September 23, James H. Billington, the Librarian of Congress, and Jean Noël Jeanneney, director of the Bibliothèque Nationale, agreed to digitize and place online archival documents—such as manuscripts, maps, photographs and audio samples—that bear witness to the French heritage in North America. A pilot version of the Web site is expected to be unveiled in early 2005.

## TWO AMERICAN NIGHTS IN PARIS

In light of the upcoming U.S. presidential elections, the town hall of the 3rd *arrondissement* of Paris will organize two nights of cultural programming to explore the United States. The event will be launched on October 15, and includes several indoor and outdoor activities, including screenings of American classics ("American Beauty," "Citizen Kane..."), a demonstration of American football, and Hip-Hop and Gospel performances. Conferences about the presidential election, the U.S. legal system and the role of the media in America are also on the program. For more information, please visit [www.mairie3.paris.fr](http://www.mairie3.paris.fr).

## MODERN FRENCH POETRY TRANSLATED TO ENGLISH

With the release of the bilingual *Yale Anthology of Twentieth-Century French Poetry*, a vast selection of modern French poetry has become accessible to the English-speaking public. From Guillaume Apollinaire to contemporary author Michel Houellebecq, the entire pantheon of celebrated 20th-century French poets makes an appearance in this volume. Indeed, editor Mary Ann Caws has chosen works by more than 100 poets, including many women. For more information, please visit [www.yalebooks.com](http://www.yalebooks.com).



# Le Patrimoine

## What Is "Le Patrimoine?"

**T**HE *PATRIMOINE* is a multifaceted French term that embodies a certain vision of what it means to be French. Often translated as "heritage," it has a strong collective and cultural connotation that emphasizes the importance of the objects it designates. In effect, the *patrimoine* is the collective cultural and historical heritage of the French nation, and as such, it must be protected and preserved for future generations and for the world at large. Examples of *le patrimoine* include everything from



Lyon's Roman Theatre

*chateaux* to cathedrals, from the Arc of Triumph to prehistoric caves, from military forts and citadels to gardens and parks.

The French nation's fascination with its *patrimoine* has led to major state actions aimed at preserving, but also developing, the buildings and sites it encompasses. The French government strives not only to protect constructions and properties that it deems significant (because of their cultural or historic value), but also everything from urban centers to areas of the

### FRENCH "PATRIMOINE" AS WORLD HERITAGE

French efforts to preserve notable historical and cultural sites have long been bolstered by the international community. For years, France has signed on to international charters outlining steps to preserve and restore sites. Since the 1970s, France's closest partner has been UNESCO, whose mission is to identify, preserve and protect cultural heritage sites around the world considered to be of value to humanity. Under the aegis of this organization, 28 French landmarks, such as the Chartres cathedral and the Pont du Gard, have been named World Heritage sites. With UNESCO's recognition, these sites are placed in a broader, international context that only goes to confirm the value of France's hard work to safeguard its *patrimoine*. For more information, [whc.unesco.org](http://whc.unesco.org).



### RECORD ATTENDANCE FOR "JOURNÉES DU PATRIMOINE"

The French came out in droves to visit the thousands of historical and cultural sites opened to the public for the 21st annual "Journées du Patrimoine" ("Heritage Days"). With nearly 12 million participants—half a million more than in 2003—the program, held on September 18 and 19, was undoubtedly a great success. As part of this year's science theme, numerous research institutions and restoration projects were among the weekend's highlights. Another main attraction was the infrequently displayed Edict of Nantes at the Ministry of Culture. Signed in 1598 by Henry IV to end the Wars of Religion, this document is a lasting testimony to French religious tolerance. Popular sites around the country included the Abbey of Mont Saint-Michel (13,058 visitors), the Chateau du Haut-Koenigsberg (7,987 visitors) and the Abbey of Cluny (5,400 visitors). For more information, [www.journeesdupatrimoine.culture.fr](http://www.journeesdupatrimoine.culture.fr).



The *salon doré* (gilded salon) in Evian's town hall.

(Courtesy: Evian Tourist Office)

countryside. The notion of *patrimoine* even extends as far as the art, tapestries, vases or furniture that are located inside the protected buildings, or the environments that surround them.

Several government agencies are involved in the conservation of France's *patrimoine*, including the Center for National Monuments (under the Ministry of Culture) and the Department of Architecture and Heritage. Organizations even exist to train individuals on the nuances of *patrimoine*, such as the École Nationale du Patrimoine. Today around 40,000 areas are classified as historic monuments and are therefore protected by the French government.

## A Long, Cherished Tradition of Protection

**T**HE FRENCH STATE'S direct involvement in the protection of the nation's *patrimoine* stemmed from the French Revolution, when the revolutionaries decided that the holdings of the aristocracy, the royal family, and the church would become property of the state and thus accessible to all. They did this to save these precious holdings from destruction, and also to reinforce the ideals of community and common heritage among the citizens of France. The idea of *patrimoine* was present during Napoleon's reign and was first politicized during the July Monarchy (1830-1848), when Minister François Guizot appointed the first curator of historical monuments, laying the foundation for



Etretat cliffs (Haute-Normandie)

one of the world's first Historical Monument Departments. However, it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that France began to pass an array of legislation protecting historical monuments and natural sites, a process that still continues today. These laws included protecting sites with artistic, historical, or scientific significance, as well as sites renowned for their picturesque landscapes or for their connection to traditional legends (1930), and national treasures, such as paintings (2000). In 1964, André Malraux, famous

author and also the first minister of cultural affairs, launched a general inventory of French monuments and artistic treasures, a vast operation that is still in progress. Throughout the 20th century, the idea of *patrimoine* has progressively taken on a more expansive outlook. For example, *patrimoine* now includes both material and immaterial objects, such as customs and knowledge.



*Patrimoine*, old and new.

The Louvre courtyard and pyramid in Paris

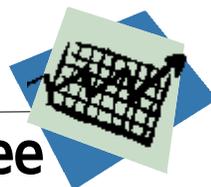
(Courtesy: Frédéric Eberhardt - Foreign Ministry)

### PONTS AND CHAUSSÉES CELEBRATES 200 YEARS

From September to November, one of the oldest institutions in the French government, the Conseil Général des Ponts et Chaussées (CGPC), will be celebrating its bicentennial. Created in 1804, the CGPC has played an active role in countless public works projects ranging from post-war reconstruction to engineering feats like the pont de Millau. In a series of events and colloquiums across France, visitors will have the opportunity to meet the men and women who make this work possible and to discover their vision for the future of France.



Chenonceaux, château of the Loire.



# Laptops for the Price of Daily Coffee

*New government program will help put notebook computers in the hands of university students*

**M**INISTER OF EDUCATION François Fillon unveiled on September 28 a new government program that has as its ambitious goal nothing less than putting a notebook computer in the hands of every French university student. During a highly anticipated press conference, Fillon explained that providing students with their own computers and high-speed Internet access is indispensable if they are to thrive in the future global economy. Though 85 percent of French students regularly use the Internet, only 8 percent own a notebook computer.

In what has become a model of public-private partnership, the government has enlisted the support of nine major computer makers, ten software publishers, six banks and 80 percent of France's universities to provide students with

inexpensive, all-inclusive notebook packages. The participating companies (including Apple, Dell, HP, IBM, Intel, and Microsoft from the U.S.) will offer discounts and special services. The universities will provide technical support and free Internet access through wireless WiFi networks, and the banks will arrange financing adapted to the needs of impecunious students.

Thirty notebook models, specifically designed for students and all equipped with essential software as well as WiFi Internet capabilities, will be available for as little as 1 euro a day over a 36-month period. The government itself will spend about 4.5 million euros, primarily on a publicity campaign.

For more information (in French), please visit the government's Web site [www.delegation.internet.gouv.fr](http://www.delegation.internet.gouv.fr). ■

## TREE GENOME DECODED FOR FIRST TIME

The French National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA) announced late September that the 40,000 genes of the poplar tree have been identified and inventoried. Two hundred scientists working in teams from around the world, including four teams from France and Belgium, presented their findings at the INRA in Orléans. The scientists hope to learn more about wood formation, nutrition, and resistance to drought and pathogens.

## RENAULT DRINKS FROM FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

French carmaker Renault has announced that it will hire 10,000 new employees in 2005, half of whom will be from countries other than France. The new recruits will work in all areas of the company, and the majority will be young, with less than three years' experience. The new employees are part of an effort to both internationalize and rejuvenate the company. Countries such as Russia, Slovenia, and Turkey, where Renault owns factories, will especially benefit from this rush of new jobs.

## ALSTOM TO BUILD NEW CRUISE LINERS

French shipbuilder Alstom has won an 800-million-euro contract to build two cruise ships for the Italian company MSC Cruises. The contract for the 1,275-cabin ships, to be delivered in 2006 and 2007, is the first of its kind for the company in over three years. Both ships will carry up to 3,000 passengers and 1,000 crew and are intended for cruises in the Mediterranean and the Caribbean.

## OMNIPRESENT TOUCH-SCREENS

Imagine changing the channel on your coffee table or turning on the lights by touching the wall! A startup firm out of the University of Paris is on the brink of commercializing technology that can turn any object into a touchscreen device. Sensitive Object has developed piezo-electric sensors—which can be integrated into most materials—that can analyze the acoustic messages sent by tapping fingers. For more information: [www.sensitive-object.com](http://www.sensitive-object.com).

## CLIPPERTON ADVENTURE

French explorer Jean-Louis Etienne and his team announced that they will set off to Clipperton, a French atoll in the northern Pacific, on an "inventory adventure" in December. They will be studying the flora and fauna both on land and in the ocean in hopes of learning more about the unique biodiversity of this uninhabited atoll. Etienne will be keeping a daily journal of his observations on his Web site, [www.jeanlouisetienne.fr](http://www.jeanlouisetienne.fr).

## Riding on Air—Or Not... Michelin Unveils Prototype Wheels

**M**ICHELIN, the world's leading tire manufacturer, recently announced that it is developing two new wheels that are non-pneumatic, meaning they don't require air. Designed with certain types of roads and driving

conditions in mind, such as pothole-filled streets and rough terrain, they will be especially suitable for the emerging needs of countries with a growing driving population but with less developed transport infrastructures, such as China and India.

The two models, the "Airless" and the

"Tweel," incorporate innovative technologies that will make them more resistant to tough driving conditions while using fewer raw materials. The "Airless" uses hoops in the cross section of the tires that absorb shocks (making it almost maintenance-free), and the "Tweel" is an easy to mount wheel with flexible spokes and a puncture-proof, retreadable surface (it can be scaled down to fit wheelchairs).

The prototypes were showcased at the Paris Auto Show, from September 15 to October 10 (see NFF issue 04.10). Another Michelin innovation presented at the show was the "Active Wheel" concept, which actually houses its own electric engine, making it extremely responsive to road conditions. Equipped with an active suspension system, it is designed specifically for electric fuel-cell vehicles (clean-running fuel cells will likely replace gasoline-powered engines in the future). The French company hopes these tires will become widely available within the next 15 years. ■



Credit: Michelin

**Now that's a wheel.** Michelin's new "Active Wheel" includes its own engine for more responsiveness.

## Neolithic Family Burial Site Found

**A**FRANCO-BRITISH archeological team recently discovered a family of six, along with ceramic objects, in a 6,000-year-old funerary chamber. For the past ten years, the team, funded by the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, has been meticulously excavating a large prehistoric burial barrow located at Prissé-la-Charrière (in western France, near La Rochelle). The archeologists have already uncovered three funerary chambers and expect to continue working for another five years on the site, which seems to have been built in three different stages over a period of 400 years.

The newly uncovered funerary chamber contains the near-perfectly

preserved bodies of two men, a woman, and three children. Next to them were placed two ceramic objects as well as a pearl and a boar's tusk carved into a jewelry piece. The team hopes that these new finds will offer clues to the lives of the Paleolithic men who lived in what is now France. Much is known of their diets, as well as their domestication of animals and their agricultural skills, but much less is known of their society and religious beliefs. The chamber, which has remained untouched for thousands of years, may provide some insight into their views on death and the afterlife, as well as on their funerary customs. ■

## STRAP ON YOUR BEER GOGGLES

Since September, a driving school in Bron (a suburb of Lyon) has incorporated goggles that simulate the effects of inebriation in its training classes. Produced by the U.S. company Fatal Vision, the goggles alter the wearer's field of vision, allowing novice drivers to experience the effects of drunkenness while remaining sober. Bron's auto school houses an obstacle course that students must negotiate in order to reach a car, before shuffling through a set of car keys, opening the car and, last but not least, fastening their seatbelt. Though apparently straightforward, goggle-clad students find this exercise extremely hard going, and thereby come to realize how dangerous driving under the influence really is. The Center for Education and Highway Safety hopes this realization will dissuade them from drinking and driving, and so curtail the number of car-related deaths, 31 percent of which involve excessive alcohol consumption. The goggles will soon be adopted by all of the Center's 1,100 agencies. For more information, please visit [www.fatalvision.com](http://www.fatalvision.com).

## NEW EFFORTS TO FIGHT DISCRIMINATION

The National Assembly adopted a bill on October 6 to create a High Authority against discrimination. The High Authority, which will be set up in January 2005, will have jurisdiction over all issues of discrimination based on sex, race, religion, age, sexual orientation and disabilities. Anyone who feels that he or she has been the victim of discrimination will be able to refer the case to the High Authority, which will either recommend mediation or launch legal proceedings.

## MOVIE THEATER FOR THE BLIND AND DEAF IN PARIS

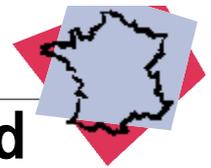
A Parisian theater has been equipped to serve blind and deaf moviegoers, a first in France. Paris's Arlequin theater is now offering special screenings of films with both subtitles and audio descriptions piped through individual headphones to complement the dialogue. The thousands of blind and deaf people in the Paris region, who had until now made do with subtitled foreign films, can now see four or five new French films a year. Funding for this project is provided by the city of Paris.

## FIRST GAY FAMILY OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED

A Paris judge has for the first time given legal rights to a homosexual couple raising three daughters. The lesbian couple, identified only as Carla and Marie-Laure, will now share parental authority for the children born to Marie-Laure. This decision, which was delivered after four years of legal proceedings, was achieved after a complicated procedure in which Carla won adoptive rights and then converted these into joint custody. For the Association of Gay and Lesbian Parents, this ruling is a milestone that may inspire other homosexual couples to follow suit.

## DISTANCE LEARNING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Technology will soon play a greater role in France's distance learning programs. The National Center for Distance Learning (CNED) recently announced the expansion of its online learning programs. It hopes the Internet will gradually replace postal correspondence, improving the speed and efficiency of communication between its students and teachers. The CNED has also begun implementing extracurricular programs for students who do not take distance learning but who could benefit from online support while at home. Established in 1939, CNED provided schooling for 323,000 students in 2003-4.



# Vast Urban Renewal Plan Proposed

**F**RENCH LABOR Minister Jean-Louis Borloo unveiled a \$22 billion proposal in September aimed at combating the growing problems associated with France's less affluent regions. Issues such as unemployment, religious extremism and alienation have become increasingly prevalent in France's poorer areas, and the purpose of Borloo's plan is to cure these social afflictions by fully reintegrating the inhabitants of these neighborhoods into society. Borloo declared that the purpose of the program is "to prepare for the future while nursing immediate wounds."

Often compared to the Marshall Plan (the U.S. program of comprehensive economic aid given to Europe during its post-WWII reconstruction) but perhaps more akin to President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, Borloo's proposal is centered

around improving employment and housing, and will seek to create one million new jobs and half a million new homes. It will involve regional governments but also nonprofit organizations, charities and private companies.

The plan is particularly targeted at the large number of disaffected youths who often have little prospect of employment. Through public service projects, the Borloo Plan hopes to prevent further alienation among the youths as well as tackle the high levels of unemployment that they have endured for the past few years.

President Jacques Chirac has already given his support for the plan, stating that it would improve the job market for France's most impoverished. Borloo's proposal is set to be debated in the Parliament in October and is likely to be approved, given the ruling party's large majority in Parliament. 

## Athletes Overcome Disabilities in 2004 Paralympic Games

**F**ORTY-FOUR YEARS after the first Paralympic Games were held in Rome, Athens welcomed their 12th edition from September 17 to 28, following its hosting of the Olympic Games this summer. With 3,969 paralympic



Assia el-Hannouni, guided by Guy Morminmé, beats the 400-meter race world record and wins her fourth gold medal

athletes from 136 countries participating, these were the most successful paralympic games ever. After two weeks of competition in 18 different sports between the best disabled athletes in the world, France finished sixth, with a total medal haul of 74 (China came in first, with 141 medals, the United States fourth, with 88, and Canada seventh, with 72). With 18 gold, 26 silver and

30 bronze medals, "the assessment is satisfying," estimated the president of the French Handisport Federation (FFH), André Auberger.

French women brought back 10 of France's 18 gold medals. With her four gold medals (in the 100-meter, 200-meter, 400-meter and 800-meter races), the visually challenged Parisian sprinter, Assia El Hannouni, was particularly impressive. As for the Alsatian paraplegic swimmer Béatrice Hess, 42, she brought home two gold and three silver medals (giving her a grand total of 13 Olympic gold medals over three Games!). Other noteworthy performances included French flag bearer Joel Jeannot's gold in the 10,000-meter armchair race, and amputee Clavel Kayitare's silver medals in the 100- and 200-meter races.

For more information, please visit: [www.paralympic.org](http://www.paralympic.org). 



FRENCH "SPIDERMAN" MOUNTS MONTPARNASSE

Solo urban climber Alain Robert scaled the 59-story Montparnasse Tower in Paris on September 22 using only his bare hands. The 42-year-old, billing himself as the French Spiderman, accomplished the awe-inspiring feat without any safety apparatus. The 700-foot-tall office building, France's tallest skyscraper, is one of more than 30 edifices on Robert's impressive résumé, which includes the Eiffel Tower and the Empire State Building. Spiderman ascends these structures while overcoming a case of vertigo and other aftereffects of his two serious training accidents. For more information, please visit Alain Robert's Web site at [www.alainrobert.com](http://www.alainrobert.com).

## Parisians Consulted on Future of City

**I**N LATE SEPTEMBER, Paris Mayor Bertrand Delanoë announced the results of the quality of life survey sent to 800,000 Parisians early last summer. This survey shed light on Parisians' priorities with regard to new construction and the use of space in the French capital. Fifteen percent, or 121,000, of the surveys were completed and returned, and, fortunately, the demographic profile of the respondents closely matched the makeup of the city as a whole, making the exercise statistically valid.

While many visitors to the city are awed by the beauty of its numerous parks and monuments, Parisians believe that there is still room for improvement. Green spaces played an important role in the survey, with almost 95 percent of Parisians in favor of building new parks and planting more trees in the streets. New ideas for improving traffic included

the creation of more reserved lanes for buses and limiting the amount of cars in the city, with over 80 percent of respondents in favor of both proposals. And 62 percent declared themselves opposed to granting waivers allowing buildings to exceed the 37-meter (121-foot) height limit that makes Paris one of the few capitals without major skyscrapers. The results of the survey will be submitted to the City Council in early 2005, which will use them to propose a new 20-year urban development blueprint. 



# "Marie Claire" Celebrates 50th Anniversary

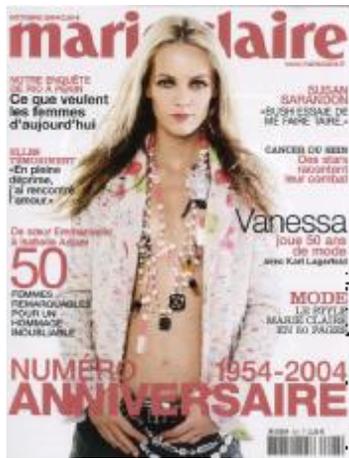
Leading ladies' magazine helped paved the way for the rights of women

**L**AUNCHED IN its modern incarnation in October 1954, the French monthly *Marie Claire* has proved so successful that it is now published in 14 languages in 25 different editions worldwide. The magazine actually first appeared in 1937 as a weekly review, and it clearly met pent-up demand: readers were so enthusiastic on the day of its first release that police officers had to intervene to control the large crowds forming at newsstands!

Unlike most women's magazines at the time, *Marie Claire* started to discuss subjects that interested women not as mothers

or housewives, but rather as enlightened, independent individuals. The magazine covers traditional topics such as fashion and beauty without ignoring more controversial ones like abortion, homosexuality or prostitution. For 50 years, the magazine has considered itself to be a mirror of French society, reflecting the evolution of the status of women and their fight toward emancipation.

*Marie Claire* is now an international group running several other periodicals, in particular *Cosmopolitan*. In France, *Marie Claire* is one of the leading magazines among women's publications, with more than three million readers a month. The U.S. issue of *Marie Claire* is also very successful: it is America's best-selling fashion magazine. ■



The anniversary issue, devoted to "50 Remarkable Women," features French singer Vanessa Paradis on its cover.



Marie Claire's first cover (October 1954).

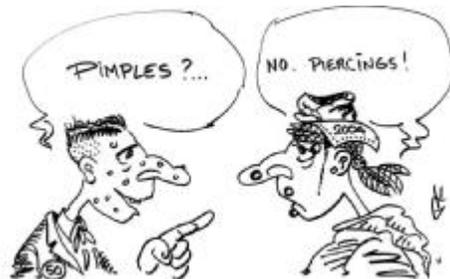
Photo: Marie Claire

## Back to Basics: TV Reality Show Recreates 1950's School

**F**RENCH AUDIENCES are tuning in to a new reality television show that takes 24 students aged 14 to 16, and sends them to a 1950's style disciplinarian boarding school in the town of Chavagnes-en-Paillers, near Nantes. Taught by certified educators, and immersed into the harsh French public school system of the fifties, the students toil through exams and disciplinarian exercises (but are spared corporal punishment) to complete a fictitious "certificate of studies"—the real certificate having been abandoned by the French educational system 15 years ago. The teenagers, who have relinquished all their modern possessions, have to wear unflattering uniforms, drink cod liver oil every morning, and endure daily morality lessons

The show, playing on private channel M6, has enjoyed immense popularity among younger viewers, all the more so since it comes in the midst of a heated debate on education reform. In the last half century, the French public school system has become more liberal and has espoused, according to some critics, an attitude of *laissez-faire* in its disciplinary functions, leading to what they believe is an increasingly lax atmosphere for learning. Many parents in France now wish that some form of stricter discipline be restored into the public school system, whether by imposing uniforms or using more disciplinarian teaching techniques.

Meanwhile, most commentators have welcomed the new show's contribution to the debate: by illustrating the best and worst of the old system for a vast audience, it sheds light on what the future could hold for public education in France. ■



## Sounds and Lights in the Centre Pompidou

**M**ODERN ART is not always simply a feast for the eyes but can be a banquet for the ears as well. Such is the idea behind the exposition "Sound and Light" which opened in Paris's Centre Pompidou on September 22 and will run till January 3. The exhibit includes more than 400 pieces from artists the world over and spanning the entire 20th century. The exhibit took seven years to plan, and features works of art that have never been shown before in France.

Many of the pieces demonstrate how one can enhance the visual art experience by accompanying it with an appropriate piece of music. One such example is the exhibit by British artist Duncan Grant, who in 1914 created a rotating cylinder,

adorned with geometric patterns, that is meant to be viewed while listening to compositions by Johann Sebastian Bach. A piece that may strike a chord with modern audiences is the one by Germany's Oskar Fischinger, who created a Fantasia-esque piece combining white dancing figures on a black background accompanied by Paul Dukas's "The Sorcerer's Apprentice." Some works have a direct psychological effect on the observer: "Nœuds de couloir" by Bill Viola produces extremely low frequency sounds that can actually provoke dizziness. After such a jolt, one may calm down with Pierre Huyghe's "Box of Light," a cube filled with colored smoke, accompanied by the soothing notes of Satie's "Gymnopédie."

For more information, please visit [www.cnac-gp.fr](http://www.cnac-gp.fr). ■

### CULTURE PASS FOR STUDENTS

The city of Paris is making culture and leisure more accessible for its students. The new "Etudiant de Paris" card will be provided this year to some 180,000 students who attend six of Paris's universities, before being extended to all of the city's universities and their 300,000-strong student body. The card provides free access to 15 museums, as well as discounts in theaters and sports facilities. It will soon also give students the right to borrow books from university libraries throughout the city.

### AU REVOIR, TRISTESSE

Françoise Sagan, whose novel *Bonjour Tristesse* (1954) made her an instant celebrity, died on September 24 in a Normandy hospital at the age of 69. After publishing *Bonjour Tristesse* when she was only 18, Sagan was hailed as the spokeswoman of her generation. The work created a national furor and eventually sold two million copies worldwide. She went on to publish 30 novels and nine plays. Numerous newspaper tributes honored Sagan, recognizing her as "more than a writing phenomenon: a writer, a woman, an era" and the "Bardot of literature."

### NAPOLÉON'S JEWELS OF LOVE

Napoleon was no miser when it came to showing his affection, as demonstrated by an astounding display of jewelry at the Chaumet Jewelers' private museum. The exhibition, "Napoléon Amoureux, Bijoux de l'Empire, des Aigles et du Cœur," includes pieces that Napoleon commissioned (often from Chaumet) for his famous love, Joséphine de Beauharnais, as well as the emperor's own personal adornments and gifts that he handed to his friends and loyal generals. Readings of the love letters Napoleon wrote to Joséphine are piped through exhibition rooms that faithfully replicate the Emperor's salons (Chaumet Jewelers, 12 place Vendôme, Paris, till the end of December).

### IONESCO REMEMBERED

Ten years have passed since the death of celebrated French-Romanian playwright Eugène Ionesco. The Parisian drama world marked his passing with the 15,000th performance of "La Cantatrice Chauve," perhaps his most famous work, in July. Various theaters throughout Paris will be producing Ionesco's plays, including the Hébertot theater and the Théâtre de la Ville which is launching its 2004-2005 season with the Ionesco classic, "Rhinoceros." The Huchette theater, a veritable temple to Ionesco, is holding continuous runs of "La Leçon" and "La Cantatrice Chauve."



Courtesy: Samuel Courbaud Trust, Courbaud Institute of Art, London

Paul Cézanne's "Still Life with Apples, Bottle, Glass and Chair Back," (estimated 1904-06).

**MOVING WATERCOLOR STILL LIVES BY CÉZANNE**

Art lovers in Los Angeles will be able to explore a lesser-known side of Paul Cézanne's body of work at the J. Paul Getty Museum's new exhibition, "Cézanne in the Studio: Still Life in Watercolors." More than 20 watercolor still lifes, as well as sketches and exploratory studies, will be on display until January 2, 2005. Drawn from institutions around the world, many of the paintings have never before been loaned because of their medium's fragile nature. Cézanne's watercolors reveal a more human side of the artist, who was just as concerned with the interior world of his studio as he was with the landscapes for which he is better known. These works vividly depict humble items, including pots, bottles and tapestries, from the rustic world of Provence that Cézanne called home. By bringing attention to this more personal side of Cézanne, the Getty hopes to offer a better understanding of the artist and his creative process. For more information, please visit [www.getty.edu](http://www.getty.edu).

**That's a Wrap**

*An exhibit at the Portland Art Museum examines the wrapping of Paris's Pont Neuf*

**F**OR HALF A CENTURY, artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude have been creating provocative works of temporary art with post-industrial materials. Using fabric, they have surrounded islands off the coast of Florida, constructed the 25-mile "Running Fence" in California and wrapped famous buildings such as the Reichstag in Berlin. For the first time, Americans have the opportunity to trace the course of one of their projects in the exhibit "The Pont Neuf Wrapped, Paris 1975-85," at Oregon's Portland Art Museum. Until January 2, 2005, visitors will be able to examine the drawings, collages, photographs and correspondence that tell the complex story of how this project was realized, from its first conception to the final transformation of the structure.



Photo: Wolfgang Voigt

**The Pont Neuf Wrapped, Paris 1985, by Christo & Jeanne-Claude**

Over a period of ten years, Christo and Jeanne-Claude worked to transform one of Paris's most famous landmarks into one of the largest temporary artworks of all time. For 14 days in 1985, the Pont Neuf was wrapped in 454,178 square feet of gold-

en polyamide fabric to become the center of the avant-garde art world. The fabric, which was held down to the bridge's surface by 42,900 feet of rope and steel chains encircling the base of each tower, clung closely to the shape of the Pont Neuf. Even as it was transformed into a sculpture, the Pont Neuf remained a functioning piece of architecture. Boats continued to travel under it and pedestrians walked on the fabric covering the sidewalks. In this way, the bridge was once again made the social heart of Paris—just as it had been 400 years ago.

This exhibit will also prepare American audiences for Christo and Jeanne-Claude's next highly anticipated project, "The Gates, Central Park, New York 1979-2005," scheduled for February 2005. For 16 days, fabric will be hung from structures along Central Park's footpaths, creating a "golden river appearing and disappearing beneath the bare branches of the trees." Those who have witnessed the transformation of the Pont Neuf will not want to miss this one-of-a-kind event. For more information, please visit: [www.portlandartmuseum.org](http://www.portlandartmuseum.org) and [www.christojeanneclaude.net](http://www.christojeanneclaude.net).

**News from FRANCE**

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Nathalie Loiseau

**EDITOR**

Emmanuel Gagniarre

**MANAGING EDITOR**

Amaury Laporte

**SENIOR WRITER**

Aude Rabault

**WRITERS**

Sarah Allard, Kate Arcieri, Maureen Denoual, Julien Duprat, Katie Kirkpatrick, Carine Morin, Eric Sacco, Julia Sprague

To change your address, subscribe (for free) or unsubscribe, please contact:

**NEWS FROM FRANCE**

**FRENCH EMBASSY PRESS & INFORMATION SERVICE**

4101 Reservoir Road, NW  
Washington, DC 20007-2182  
Tel: (202) 944-6060  
Fax: (202) 944-6072

**E-mail:**

[info@ambafrance-us.org](mailto:info@ambafrance-us.org)

<http://www.ambafrance-us.org>

<http://www.france.diplomatie.fr>

PRESORTED  
FIRST CLASS PERMIT  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Washington, DC  
Permit No. 7030

French Embassy Press and Information Service  
4101 Reservoir Road, NW  
Washington, DC 20007-2182

