

France Praises Successful Iraqi Elections

FRENCH PRESIDENT JACQUES CHIRAC praised the January 30 elections as "an important step in the political reconstruction of Iraq." During a telephone call with U.S. President George W. Bush, Chirac further noted that "the strategy of the terrorist groups has in part failed. The participation rate and good technical organization of the elections were satisfactory." Chirac emphasized that in the future it will be important to include all the groups that renounce violence in the democratic process, and he offered France's help in training Iraq's military police and strengthening its democratic structures.

French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier reiterated President Chirac's declarations when he told Radio Europe 1 that the Iraqi elections were "a victory for the Iraqi people and an important first step that was essential for democracy," as well as being in phase with U.N. Security Council resolution 1546. Barnier stated "we are on the right path, but the path remains long and tenuous."

The phone call between Chirac and Bush is an indication of a move toward warmer relations between France and the United States. Speaking in the presence of six U.S. senators on January 31, Chirac underlined the strength of the French-American friendship, a friendship founded on deep historical links and common values.

Both countries are emphasizing the positive aspects of their relationship and looking to the future (see also our lead article on page 3 regarding Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's visit to Europe). France and the United States share the view that no good can come from an unstable and insurgent Iraq, and that they need to work together toward their common goal of establishing a democratic and stable Iraq. **FF**



French President Jacques Chirac attended the ceremonies commemorating the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in Poland, on January 27 (see our lead article on page 2)



Vincent Riou's boat off Cape Horn, Chile, on January 3.



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France's Vincent Riou won the Vendée Globe after sailing around the world in a record time of 87 days and 10 hours. The Vendée Globe is an annual competition for seasoned sailors who sail solo around the world without stopovers. It was created in 1989 and takes place every 4 years. For more information: www.vendeeglobe.org/uk/

Chirac Calls For International Tax to Fight AIDS

FRENCH PRESIDENT JACQUES CHIRAC advocated radical action against poverty and disease, including the institution of an international tax, on January 26, the first day of the World

Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The tax money would be used to fund antiretroviral drug distribution in developing countries, HIV/AIDS vaccine research, and HIV prevention campaigns. British Prime Minister Tony Blair joined Chirac in calling for a reinvigorated aid effort by the international community, particularly with respect to Africa, where 300 million people are in need of safe drinking water, 3,000 African children under age five die each day from malaria, and 6,000 people die daily of AIDS.

Chirac's proposed tax could take several forms: a tax on international financial transactions, on aviation and maritime fuels, or on capital movements in and out of countries whose bank secrecy laws attract tax evasion. Each option would generate \$10 billion per year to support the fight against AIDS, according to the French president. Chirac also suggested that a \$1 charge be attached to the sale of each of the nearly three billion airline tickets purchased each year.

"What is striking in each of these examples is the disproportion between the modesty of the needed effort and the benefits for all that would result," said Chirac. He added that the project would give a globalized economy that chiefly

promotes the interests of Western countries its "ethical dimension, humanize it, control it, enlarge it to the real dimensions of the world."

Chirac emphasized that the tax was consistent with the Millennium Development Goals that the international community has set, and he added that the "international solidarity levy," as he called it, would not hamper the smooth functioning of markets. In fact, he called for the support of major financial centers throughout the world, as their cooperation would be needed to prevent widespread tax evasion.

The French president received the support of German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who is favorably disposed to the plan. Chirac called on the leaders of the G8 member countries—Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States—to discuss his propositions in July at the summit in Scotland, which is to be hosted by Blair. Chirac recently attended two international summits on development aid in Africa: what he termed the "Davos of Agriculture" in Senegal (from February 2 to 4), and a summit in Congo-Brazzaville (from February 4 to 5). **FF**

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MOBILIZATION FOR FRENCH JOURNALIST AUBENAS

Florence Aubenas, journalist for the French daily *Libération*, and her interpreter, Hussein Hanoun al-Saadi, were last seen in Baghdad on January 5. To bring attention to their plight, large portraits of Aubenas and al-Saadi were set up at the Place de la République in Paris on January 26, in the presence of the journalist's family and colleagues. Mayor Bertrand Delanoë emphasized that "the values of Paris are the values of peace and in placing these portraits in the Place de la République, we send a message of peace and friendship to the Iraqi people." The department of Seine St. Denis, under the direction of Hervé Bramy, announced plans to distribute nearly 20,000 stickers with photos of Aubenas and al-Saadi through the mail. French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier paid tribute to these efforts and declared that the French government is doing everything in its power to find Aubenas and al-Saadi. For more information, visit www.pourflorenceethussein.org.

ASSEMBLY APPROVES REFERENDUM ON E.U. CONSTITUTION

On February 1, the French National Assembly overwhelmingly endorsed, by a vote of 450 to 34, the government's draft for a constitutional revision that would in effect signal France's adoption of a proposed European Constitution. Their endorsement sets the stage for a referendum later this year, in which the French people will be given an opportunity to express themselves in favor, or against, the European constitutional project. The members of France's parliament also supported a bill that would make the future inclusion of new states to the European Union, including Turkey, subject to a referendum.

FRENCH ARMY TO ESTABLISH ISLAMIC CHAPLAINCY

In order to better address the spiritual needs of Muslim recruits, the French armed forces have recently announced the creation of an Islamic chaplaincy in the near future. Lieutenant Colonel Hait Al Hocine will be handling its implementation and expects to present his report by the end of June. Analysts believe a substantial portion of the 5 million Muslims living in France have joined the armed forces. Currently, only Catholic, Jewish and Protestant chaplaincies exist.

Remembering the Shoah

EUROPE COMMEMORATED on January 27 the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the infamous Auschwitz death camp, where 1.5 million Jews were killed during World War II. In all, over 6 million Jews lost their lives in concentration camps, victims of a hateful Nazi ideology. President Jacques Chirac, who was present during the poignant ceremony in Auschwitz, Poland, paid tribute to the Holocaust victims and survivors, saying, "you force us to think the unthinkable. You transmit the flame of memory." Chirac declared that the world community had come to the site of these atrocities to express "our desire to witness. Our desire to transmit. Our desire to honor. And our desire to act"

During an extraordinary session at the U.N. General Assembly to commemorate the liberation of the camps, French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier said that "the liberation of the

camps is the liberation of all humankind; and it behooves all of humankind to remember and remain vigilant." Indeed, he stressed the need for "implacable vigilance and intransigence against anti-Semitism, against all forms of racism."



President Jacques Chirac at the inauguration of the Shoah Memorial in Paris (January 25)

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Chirac inaugurated a Shoah memorial located in the Marais section of Paris on January 25, stating that "Anti-Semitism is not an opinion. It is a perversion. A perversion that kills." President Chirac also declared in French and Hebrew, "Remember. Never Forget," calling for the whole country "not to forget what we did not prevent." The Shoah memorial is the result of a three-year project, and consists of a wall where the names of France's 76,000 deported Jews are engraved.

For more information, please visit: www.defense.gouv.fr/sites/commemorations_du_60e

France Hosts Biodiversity Forum

FIVE HUNDRED SCIENTISTS from all over the world attended a conference on preserving the world's biological diversity that was held in Paris from January 23 to 28. The purpose of this forum, co-hosted by UNESCO and the French Presidency, was to propose policy recommendations and establish the biodiversity equivalent of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an international authority on climate change.

President Jacques Chirac, a strong proponent of the urgent need to preserve the world's biological diversity, announced in his opening speech the creation of several national parks on Reunion Island and French Guiana as well as the protection of coral reefs in New Caledonia. Additionally, he also promised to lobby for the establishment of a much-needed international biodiversity authority at the next U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). In 2002, world leaders who attended the CBD agreed to cut back biodiversity loss by the year 2010. Chirac is

optimistic that France, one of the countries richest in biodiversity, will be able to fulfill this pledge.

According to experts, only 10 percent of the world's species are known while an estimated 25,000 to 50,000 species die out each year. Factors such as pollution, over-exploitation, deforestation, and global warming threaten and devastate the flora and fauna upon which humankind depend. Indeed, humanity's reliance on a diverse and vigorous wildlife is often underestimated. As a participating professor noted, "Seventy percent of medical drugs come directly from, or are based on plants."



THE AP/WIDEWORLD

Decimated in the 1930s, wolves have made a comeback in France and now number about 50.

Year of Brazil Launched in France

FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER Michel Barnier, Brazilian Culture Minister Gilberto Gil and French Culture Minister Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres launched the "Year of Brazil in France" on January 18 during a ceremony held in Paris. This celebration of diversity and cross-cultural appreciation will run from March to December, and the two governments hope it will help create a closer Franco-Brazilian relationship. Hundreds of events will be organized into three main categories: classical and baroque music concerts, colloquia on protecting the environment, and seminars on contemporary creations and popular arts. In addition, Brazil's president, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, is scheduled to visit France in July.

In March, the Grand Palais will kick off the festivities of "Raizes do Brasil" ("the Roots of Brazil") by showcasing the "Indian Brazil." The Musée Dapper will for its part explore

Brazil's African roots while the Cité de la Musique will offer various performances. During the summer months, the city of Paris will come alive with multiple street festivals, carnival floats and a concert series known as "Verdade Tropical" ("Tropical Truth"). An exhibit will also premier the works of Brazilian painter, Tarsila do Amaral, whose modernist work is characterized by a tropical flair. The closing theme in autumn will be "Galaxias" ("Galaxies"), an illustration of Brazil's growing contribution to the genres of contemporary dance, theater and art.

Barnier noted that the "Year of Brazil in France" is an open invitation to travel to this South American country to discover its roots, experience its music, follow the path of its history, and explore the secrets of Brazil's expansive culture.

For more information, please visit www.bresilbresils.org (in French only).



Condoleezza Rice Speaks In Paris

NEWLY APPOINTED U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, stopped in Paris on February 8 during her week-long tour of Europe and the Middle East. There, she met with President Jacques Chirac and her French counterpart, Michel Barnier, and delivered a major speech in which she focused on the common values of Europeans and Americans and on the strength that their shared values provide to the Transatlantic Alliance.

Rice chose Paris because of its burgeoning role as a major European center of foreign policy debate and discussion. Indeed, according to State Department spokesman Richard

Boucher, "There's a lot of debate and discussion about the United States, about Europe, about common goals, about

how we achieve our agenda, and [Secretary of State Rice] wanted to be a part of that discussion, that discussion that goes on in Europe, that goes on in France. She wanted to be a part of that discussion and put her ideas into the mix." Indeed, following her speech, Dr. Rice met with leading French academics and intellectuals.

Rice's trip across Europe paved the way for the U.S. President's first European visit of his second term, from February 22 to February 25, when he will meet with Chirac (see boxed text).

BUSH AND CHIRAC TO MEET IN EUROPE

President George W. Bush and President Jacques Chirac will meet for the first time since Bush's reelection at a working dinner in Brussels on February 21. The dinner falls on the eve of a NATO summit, and both Paris and Washington are hoping the dinner will strengthen the French-American relationship. The dinner on February 21 will be followed by a visit to the White House by Chirac in the coming months, his first since November 2001.

Marvel Comics à la Française

FRANCE'S NATIONAL CENTER for Comic Books and Images in Angoulême has just received a donation of about 300,000 comics from Marvel Enterprises. Marvel is home to such famous superheroes as Spiderman, Captain America, the X-Men, and the Hulk. The donation originally comprised nearly a million comic books, but collection manager Jean-Pierre Mercier declined the overwhelming offer and instead chose only the earliest issues, dating back from the early 1950s to the late 1970s. Marvel's donation was made through Gifts in Kind, a U.S. charity that helps distribute donated items.

Some 278,000 comics have already been shipped to western France, and the museum is currently awaiting the arrival of about 8,000 more, including the oldest and rarest, which the publisher is scanning into a digital archive. Marvel specifically requested that Gifts in Kind send the donation "over-

seas to a cultural institution where they could benefit numerous children and numerous people," according to charity volunteer Margaret Mallon-Pujol. For customs purposes, the collection was valued at \$300,000, but experts say its actual value is more difficult to determine.



The comics are to be sorted into five identical collections: two for the museum, one for France's National Library, one for a museum in Amadora, Portugal, and the fifth for a yet to be determined destination. The museum in Angoulême plans to finish sorting and numbering the comics by the end of 2005. No final plan has been

made yet on how they will display their newest collection, but an exhibit on the glory years of Spiderman, the Hulk, the Fantastic Four, and other superheroes is expected.

For more information, please visit www.cnbd.fr (in French only).

Empire to Exile: the Art of Jacques-Louis David

THE NEWLY UNVEILED "Empire to Exile" exhibit at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, CA, will be the first survey of French artist Jacques-Louis David's works in the U.S., and the first to focus on his career after the French revolution. Known as "the Robespierre of the brush," David's depictions of the French Revolution and Napoleon are considered some of the most powerful pieces of propaganda in history.

David served in the French Revolutionary government, and then as the "First Painter to the Emperor" under Napoleon. His work included portraits of leaders and designs for festivals and funerals, but it was his talent for the depiction of historical events that Napoleon recognized and rewarded.

Unfortunately, David's close involvement with the Empire proved a liability when Napoleon fell from power,

and the artist was imprisoned and then exiled to Brussels, Belgium, in 1816 (where he remained until his death in 1825). "Empire to Exile" focuses on his life after this exile, when his work took on a new light. Having resolved to renounce politics and dedicate his life to his art, David's portraits no longer depicted heroic action and moral discipline, but were instead intimate and emotional.

The exhibition, comprised of about 60 works of art—equally divided between drawings and paintings—will be held until April 24. For more information, please visit www.getty.edu.



Self-Portrait (1794), Jacques-Louis David

Courtesy: Musée du Louvre, Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY

LARGE INCREASE IN U.S. STUDENTS GOING TO FRANCE

A recent survey completed by the French consular services in the United States found that the number of student visas issued in 2003 increased 73 percent from the previous year. The fact that so many American students continue to be interested in pursuing their studies in France, even after the Iraqi crisis and the start of the war, suggests that underlying bilateral ties remain strong. For more information on studying in France, please visit www.edufrance.fr/en.

"DA VINCI CODE" TO BE FILMED IN LOUVRE

The director of the world-renowned Louvre museum, Henri Loyrette, announced his conditional approval for the film version of U.S. author Dan Brown's best-selling novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, to be filmed in and around the museum. Storyboard images and script details will need to be presented before final approval. The movie will be directed by Ron Howard and will star Tom Hanks and Audrey Tautou, star of *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*. Filming is scheduled to start in June with a tentative May 2006 release date.

FRENCH COMPANY TO HELP DEVELOP U.S. E-PASSPORTS

A French credit card company, Oberthur, announced on January 17 that it has been selected by the U.S. Government's Printing Office to be a major technology provider for the development of an electronic U.S. passport. The 'e-passports' will not only contain a computer chip capable of storing biometric data, but they will also be compatible with most non-contact chip readers. Oberthur announced that these passports will help reinforce security and speed up border controls. For more information, visit www.oberthur.com.

U.S. DANCER HEADS FRENCH DANCE CENTER

Carolyn Carson, American ballerina and former choreographer at the Paris Opera Ballet, was recently selected to be the director of

the National Choreography Center and was also chosen to be responsible for starting up a dance school for the North Ballet Company in Roubaix. She hopes to establish a school that will welcome dancers of all levels and nationalities. Carson will set up her school in an old factory building and hopes to welcome her first students in early 2007.



Médecins Sans Frontières

Doctors Without Borders: Care and Commitment

MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) was founded in 1971 by a group of French doctors whose goal was to provide medical care to all those in need regardless of their race, religion, creed, or political affiliation. Today, MSF is an international nonprofit humanitarian aid association with sections in 19 countries, including the United States. MSF provides medical aid to victims of armed conflict, epidemics, natural and man-made disasters, as well as others who lack health care due to geographical or social isolation.

The organization's mission is predicated on the fact that the needs of people must supersede geographic boundaries or national controls. MSF was one of the first nonprofit organizations to not only provide aid but also to bear witness to the plights of the populations they serve. In this unique fashion, MSF is able to combine direct medical care with a strong commitment to the public denunciation of the underlying causes of suffering. The organization has adopted a strong stance on the defense of human rights and acts as the voice of those stifled by their political, social or geographic situation.

KOUCHNER: THE DUTY TO INTERVENE

"Thanks for intervening in matters that don't concern you," Nelson Mandela once said to Bernard Kouchner, one of the 13 co-founders of Doctors without Borders (MSF). A gastroenterologist by training, Kouchner left MSF in 1979 to pursue a political career. The former health minister and U.N. Secretary General special representative to Kosovo is well known for his progressive, humanitarian efforts and involvement in Third World relief efforts. He was the first to stress that there is a humanitarian duty to intervene in struggling countries where human rights are being sacrificed, and he denounces the traditional policy of non-interference in sovereign affairs. He was also one of the first to call on NGOs to speak out against the horrors they witness. "My political stand is to put forward the national interest of all," explains Kouchner.

"We are by nature an organization that is unable to tolerate indifference. We hope that by heightening awareness and a desire to understand, we will also stir up indignation and stimulate action."
—Rony Brauman, MD, former MSF president.

Serving over 80 countries worldwide, MSF includes 2,500 volunteer doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals as well as 15,000 locally hired staff. Through their dedication and commitment to human rights, MSF has earned a reputation as one of the most active and effective NGOs in the world.

KEY MOMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF MSF

- 1971** A group of French doctors create *Médecins Sans Frontières*
- 1972** *Earthquake in Nicaragua*: First MSF response to a disaster
- 1973** *Hurricane in Honduras*: First long-term MSF assistance mission
- 1976** *War in Lebanon*: First MSF war mission
- 1979** *Soviet invasion of Afghanistan*: MSF must work with Afghan resistance to aid civilians
- 1980** *Civil war in Somalia*: nutritional programs instituted in refugee camps
- 1985** *Earthquake in El Salvador*: MSF provides emergency medical aid
- 1989** *Collapse of Communism*: health programs set up in Eastern Europe
- 1991** *Kurdish refugee crisis*: one of the largest emergency relief operations undertaken.
Civil war in Somalia: MSF is the sole relief agency in Mogadishu
- 1996** *Meningitis outbreak in Nigeria*: MSF provides vaccinations for 4.5 million people
- 1998** *Famine in Southern Sudan*: MSF responds to famine caused by civil war and drought
- 1999** Launch of *Campaign for Access to Essential Medicines*: MSF starts an international effort to push for increased access to medicines for the world's poor.
- 2001** *HIV/AIDS Pandemic*: Antiretroviral therapies provided to AIDS victims in 7 countries.
- 2002** *Famine in Angola*: MSF runs the largest operation in its history, with 200 international volunteers and more than 2,000 local staff.
- 2003** *Heavy combat in the Liberian Capital*: MSF runs feeding centers, clinics, and vaccination campaigns in Sudan and Chad for hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing violence.
- 2005** *South Asian Tsunami disaster*: MSF sends 400 tons of relief materials and over 200 aid workers to assist those affected by the earthquake and resulting tsunami.

TO LEARN MORE OR DONATE:

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NEWS FROM FRANCE / February 9, 2005

Robust Response to Tsunami Disaster

MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES (MSF) responded strongly to the tsunami disaster by sending over 200 international aid workers to provide medical assistance to communities in South Asia that were the hardest hit. MSF is focusing its aid operations on Indonesia and Sri Lanka, two of the countries most devastated by the disaster.

A central concern for MSF is the emergence of life-threatening tetanus infections, particularly in the Aceh province. In order to thwart this threat, MSF began conducting tetanus prevention activities on January 14. Action is being taken to inform the communities at risk of the dangers of tetanus and how they may better protect themselves. Moreover, MSF is participating in the epidemiological surveillance system that will ensure a rapid response to any outbreak of disease or epidemic.

A mobile MSF team composed of doctors and nurses offers citizens first-aid treatments, medical consultations, and important information on tetanus and its prevention. In Aceh province, which is at a heightened risk of tetanus, MSF has dispatched a car equipped with megaphones which tours the destroyed areas with the specific purpose of disseminating information to the population about tetanus and its prevention. MSF is also working hard alongside local hospitals in South Asia and supplying them with medical supplies and infusion materials.

A WHOLE WORLD IN NEED

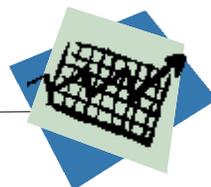
MSF, explaining that it had collected sufficient funds to accommodate its relief effort in the Asian tsunami disaster, issued a counterintuitive public statement discouraging people from donating to their tsunami relief fund. Instead, it urged donors to contribute to its general aid relief fund which provides humanitarian need to over 70 countries worldwide. MSF explains: "It is very important to MSF that we use your contribution as you intend it to be used. This is why we want to let you know that at this time, MSF estimates that we have received sufficient funds for our currently foreseen emergency response in South Asia." This statement was not intended to curb donations but rather to enable MSF to allocate funds and provide effective aid most urgently needed globally.



One of the two helicopters MSF has in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, ferrying staff, supplies and patients

and many have lost all their possessions. MSF, with daily consultations in makeshift emergency settings, is providing victims with the indispensable psychological care they need to rebuild their lives.

Mobile clinics set up by MSF are providing victims of the disaster with both medical and psychosocial support. Indeed, as a result of this widespread tragedy, many displaced people are faced with serious mental traumas as well as physical suffering. Families and communities have been decimated, and many have lost all their possessions. MSF, with daily consultations in makeshift emergency settings, is providing victims with the indispensable psychological care they need to rebuild their lives.



Making Blood

A breakthrough by French scientists heralds the possible synthesis of red blood cells

FRENCH HEMATOLOGISTS from the Armand-Trousseau Hospital have announced that they have successfully created, for the first time, red blood cells *in vitro* from adult stem cells that were found in blood samples extracted from umbilical cords. This major breakthrough opens several promising avenues of research, for instance in genetic therapy and in the treatment of malaria.

Most importantly, however, it promises to solve the problem of blood supplies for transfusions. In fact, when refined for efficient mass production, the process could be used to produce large quantities of blood synthetically, thereby obviating the need for unreliable blood donations. Moreover, the technique not only creates uniformly mature and healthy cells ideal for transfusion but also virtually eliminates the chances of a viral or bacterial infection of the blood supply. And patients requiring frequent transfusions could be given their own blood (produced using their own stem cells), thus eliminating problems of blood type compatibility.

According to the French doctors' research, each adult stem cell is capable of producing two million erythroblasts, which are the precursors of fully functioning red blood cells (reticulocytes). The researchers have developed a three-step growth system that simulates the conditions found in bone marrow, where young blood cells mature and become effective oxygen carriers in the bloodstream. They are now striving to identify the trigger which causes young erythroblasts to mature into functional red blood cells and to make the process medically viable. ■■



German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder (left) and President Jacques Chirac (center) at the unveiling of the Airbus A380 in Toulouse, France.

The European aerospace company, Airbus, unveiled its new A380 aircraft to the international community on January 19 in an elaborate ceremony attended by the leaders of the four European nations (France, Germany, Britain and Spain) whose companies formed the Airbus group. The plane, which will be the world's largest airliner, can carry up to 840 people, or can be equipped with amenities such as gyms, bedrooms and bars (Virgin Atlantic has even promised a casino!). Thirteen airlines have already placed orders for A380s, and on January 28, the first Chinese order (for five planes) was placed by China Southern, bringing the total amount of firm orders to 153. The new super-jumbos should reach an airport near you as soon as early 2006.

and most common cancer for women. The vaccines developed through this project, if indeed able to cure cancerous manifestations of HPV 16 and HPV 18 strains, would be effective in curing close to 70 percent of cases of cervical cancer worldwide. ■■

New Hope for Vaccine Against Uterine Cancer

RESearchers AT THE Pasteur Institute have announced promising results in trials of a therapeutic vaccine for the treatment of cervical (or uterine) cancer caused by "high risk" strains of the human papilloma virus (HPV). Preliminary tests conducted on mice have shown a complete regression of tumors in all subjects after only one injection. The vaccine itself is described by researchers as stable and easy to produce, which bodes well for potential mass production. The researchers hope that upcoming trials on human subjects will yield similarly encouraging results.

The treatment works by training the immune system to recognize cancerous cells as foreign, which results in the body destroying the cells on its own. In this case, a protein from a strand of HPV, present on the surface of pre-cancerous lesions as well as tumors, is coupled with a bacterial protein. The immune system easily identifies the bacterial protein as foreign, and so also marks the HPV protein as undesirable. Thus primed, the immune system can proceed to destroy the HPV viral infection.

According to global WHO statistics, cervical cancer is responsible for approximately 230,000 deaths every year and is the sec-

GOOD NEWS FOR FRENCH ECONOMY

There was a 12 percent increase in the creation of businesses during 2004, resulting in a grand total of 224,000 new endeavors, mostly in the sectors of computer technology, construction and services. Analysts attribute this spectacular increase (business creation had not reached this level since 1994) to the ongoing economic recovery as well as the government's business-friendly policies. The government is now setting its sights on helping start-ups survive (1 in 2 new businesses close doors within 5 years). In other good news, because of increased economic activity, tax revenues were better than expected and the budget deficit in 2004 was reduced by 5 billion euros.

EUROCOPTER SOARS

Helicopter manufacturer Eurocopter announced in Paris on January 25 that the company expected a significant rise in sales in 2005 after reporting a 7 percent gain in 2004. Fabrice Bregier, Eurocopter's CEO, stated, "The company is going to take off in 2005 and 2006." He went on to state that he expected double digit sales growth in the upcoming years. The increased sales in 2004 are due in large part to a sharp increase in military orders, and the company expects this upward sales trend to continue.

CHRISTIAN LACROIX BECOMES AMERICAN

French luxury group LVMH has sold the unprofitable Christian Lacroix fashion house to the privately held Falic Group, the second largest American duty-free retailer. Falic Chairman Simon Falic, declared "We love Lacroix. He is the diamond in our company—he will be our Dior." The deal includes Lacroix's ready-to-wear business, as well as its haute couture pursuits. Falic insisted that, though it is currently unprofitable, Lacroix's "haute couture is going to stay, it's the backbone of the brand."

MONT-SAINT-MICHEL SET TO REGAIN INSULARITY

In early January, work began on an ambitious 190 million-euro project to return Mont-Saint-Michel, the most frequently visited tourist site in France after the Eiffel Tower and Versailles, to its original island form. By 2010, it is hoped that Mont-Saint-Michel will once again be an island, accessible only by crossing a bridge specifically designed for pedestrians and pollution-free buses (the unsightly parking lot located at Mont Saint-Michel's entrance will become a thing of the past). In the meantime, the site will remain open to the over 3.2 million tourists it welcomes every a year.

Titan-esque Mission

THE EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY's Huygens probe successfully landed on Titan, Saturn's largest moon, on January 14, and is already yielding exciting scientific discoveries. In particular, the probe, which is part of a joint Cassini-Huygens mission run by ESA and NASA, has uncovered geological evidence that the physical processes shaping Saturn's largest moon, Titan, are much the same as those that shape Earth.

Six multifunction instruments aboard the probe are gathering geological evidence of precipitation, erosion, mechanical abrasion and other fluvial activity. The images captured by the probe are perhaps what best reveal Titan's remarkably Earth-like geology, including a complex network of narrow drainage channels running from brighter highlands to lower, flatter, dark

regions. Evidence suggests that the liquid that created these channels was methane, which can exist as a liquid or a gas at Titan's glacial -170 degrees Celsius temperatures.

While Titan's geological processes are strikingly Earth-like, they operate on exotic materials in an alien environment. On Titan, volcanoes spew ice, not lava, methane replaces water and instead of dirt, hydrocarbon particles settle out of the atmosphere.

Scientists have worked tirelessly since the landing, analyzing the thrilling data received from Huygens. In fact, the mission's manager, Jean-Pierre Lebreton, noted, "This is only the beginning, these data will live for many years to come and they will keep the scientists very very busy."

For more information, please visit www.esa.int. ■■

PARIS REMAINS LEADING TOURIST CITY

According to the city's office on tourism and conferences, Paris remained the world's most frequently visited city in 2004. The city had 25 million tourists, compared with 24.5 million in 2003, of which 1,410,000 were American, 1,380,000 British, 790,000 Italian, and 400,000 Chinese. Paris also hosted 272 conferences, compared with 228 in 2003, far outstripping the competition offered by Vienna and Geneva, with 188 conferences each.

FRENCHWOMAN TO ROW ACROSS PACIFIC

Maud Fontenoy, a 26-year-old French national, set off alone by rowboat on January 12 from Callao, Peru, on a 8,000-kilometer crossing of the Pacific. Fontenoy, who is the first woman to have rowed alone across the North Atlantic Ocean, plans to arrive in Polynesia in May or June. She expects to spend the next four to five months in her 7.5-meter cedar-framed, fiberglass and kevlar rowboat, the Ocoer, equipped with satellite communication and GPS navigation. Her regimen during the following months will include meals of freeze-dried paella and fresh fish, 20-minute naps, and intensive rowing.

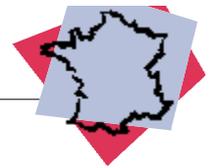
25 MILLION EUROS FOR HANDICAP ACCESSIBILITY

Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin recently announced that 25 million euros will go to making French public buildings handicap-accessible in 2005. This reform, starting with the prime minister's own Hotel de Matignon (in which a handicap-accessible elevator was installed), will primarily apply to government buildings and historical sites. Raffarin has also asked each minister to have at least one handicap-accessible meeting room in every ministry building.

RARE WHITE LIONS BORN IN FRANCE



Two white lion cubs with blue eyes, Baron and Empereur, were recently born at Prein Circus in southwestern France. The offspring of the same father, they were born within two hours of each other and were both rejected by their mothers, forcing Anita Prein, the manager's wife, to bottle-feed them. "If they were albino, they would have red eyes. But what no one understands is that they have the same father, Siam, but different mothers, Zemba and Islam. It's a double rarity," noted circus manager Clogençon.



"Mon Quotidien" Fetes 10th Anniversary

DELIVERED EVERY weekday morning, *Mon Quotidien* is geared toward children 10 to 14 and has a readership of nearly 60,000. Its editor-in-chief, François Dufour, attributes the success of the newspaper to what he refers to as the virtuous triangle: children who enjoy reading news that is directed at their interests, parents who encourage their children to read, and teachers who encourage material that supplements their curriculum.

The eight-page paper is chock-full of brief news stories, cartoons and novelty items like the word of the day. Since the attention span of most children toward the end of a hard day's school work is barely 10 minutes, *Mon Quotidien* is designed to be read quickly. While there is a strong emphasis on environment, science, and humorous tidbits, Dufour emphasizes that their motto is to "show the truth." To further its connec-

tion with its readership, *Mon Quotidien* invites several children to its editorial meetings, which are held twice weekly. The staff present a list of foreign and domestic stories that are being considered, and the children provide their input.

Mon Quotidien, along with its sister papers, *Le Petit Quotidien*, *l'Actu* and *Quoti* and an online broadcast news program, enjoy daily sales that surprisingly put them ahead of such big-name papers as the national daily *Libération*. To further the habit of reading, the paper's parent company, Play Bac Press, is now in final negotiations to test a children's paper in the United States (stay tuned!).



NEW MARIANNE STAMP HITS THE STREETS

France's stamp, featuring Marianne, has had a makeover. Designed by Parisian Thierry Lamouche, the new design was chosen in July by President Jacques Chirac from the



top ten finalists in a national online contest held by the Post Office. The new Marianne made its first appearance January 14 on a stamp dedicated to the relief effort in Asia (launched in association with the French Red Cross). The stamp will be sold for 70 euro cents, with 20 going to the Red Cross. The Post Office hopes to collect 1 million euros to donate to the Red Cross, which would mostly be devoted to the treatment and distribution of potable water in Lhokseumawe, Indonesia. For more information, please visit www.laposte.fr.

Parkour Taking Off

A new urban extreme sport has been launched in France and is spreading fast!

PARKOUR (also called PK or Free Running) is the latest French export to hit the global scene. The basic goal of this extreme sport is to clear all obstacles in one's path without stopping. However, the ultimate goal of a *traceur* (free runner) is to "flow" along one's path in an attempt to make the entire journey one fluid motion. Part dance, part martial art, part extreme sport, Parkour is inspired by creating freedom in an urban environment originally designed to trap.

David Belle and Sebastian Foucon, the founders of the sport, grew up in a Paris suburb playing ninja games on the roof of their school. Inspiration also came from Belle's father, a former soldier who practiced George Hébert's "Natural Method of Physical Culture." In fact, the word Parkour comes from Hébert's phrase for obstacle courses, "*parcours du combattant*" ("the fighter's course"). Through these influences, Parkour has developed into an international sport that emphasizes elegance of movement and harmony with the obstacles one faces.

Vaults, rolls, and drops are essential "moves" in the repertoire of a *traceur*. However, the sport emphasizes freedom of movement and improvisation rather than reliance on prede-



BRITISH ZOOKEEPERS GO APE OVER FRENCH

English zookeepers at Port Lympne Wild Animal Park in Hythe, Kent, have had to revisit their high school French lessons after a recent donation of 19 Guinea baboons from the Paris Zoo. While the monkeys sit scratching their heads when addressed in English, they readily understand simple French words such as "*déjeuner*" and "*bonjour*" (particularly *déjeuner*, which gets them running to the feeders). "Obviously they don't understand the word as such, but it's the sound they recognize. The keepers have all been brushing up on their language skills and it seems to have done the trick," says the zoo's marketing manager, Veronica Chrisp.

finer movements. The best *traceurs* have been known to jump between buildings and drop whole stories at a time, but Parkour is a sport that anyone can learn. All you need to become a *traceur*, are a good pair of shoes, lots of energy, and a vivid imagination. For videos, pictures, and descriptions of how to perform basic Parkour moves, please visit the Web site www.Le-Parkour.com.





New AIDS Memorial in Paris

Sixteen thousand painted ceramic squares will soon be unveiled in the Parc de la Villette

THE PARC DE LA VILLETTE, one of the most frequently visited sites in Paris, will soon be home to a new art exhibition dedicated to the fight against AIDS and the celebration of those living with the disease. Sidaction, a French organization that supports HIV/AIDS medical research, hired artist Fabrice Hyber for the project.

Hyber envisioned his project, *Artere*, as an "anti-memorial," to raise awareness, rather than to memorialize the victims of AIDS. He is transforming the 80-meter-long, 20-meter-wide public space into a representation of the past 20 years of the disease. When complete, a giant puzzle of ceramic squares, fifty great images intertwined with Hyber's other works, will cover the ground. The inspiration for Hyber's design was the red AIDS ribbon. One side reflects the emotional battles and hopes of patients, relatives, doctors, and

volunteers, and the other side represents the scientific strides made in combating the disease.



A section of "L'Artère," by Fabrice Hyber.

L'Artère, which was supported by the Ministry of Culture, represents to date two and a half years of work, and consists of 16,000 ceramic squares and 10,000 drawings. It is scheduled to open in April and any profit from the sale of Hyber's works will go entirely to Sidaction.

L'Artere, it is hoped, will become a powerful way to capture the public's attention, and to reach a diverse international audience (indeed, over three million people visit the park every year). The work will also include a bench 13 meters long engraved with accurate and updated HIV information in five languages (English, Arabic, Chinese, French, and Swahili).

For more information, visit www.villette.com or www.sidaction.org.

New Edition of Fashion Bible Released

THE FRENCH PUBLISHING COMPANY, Editions du Regard, released the new edition of the *Dictionnaire International de la Mode* (*International Fashion Dictionary*) on January 18 in Paris. When compared with its predecessor, the *Dictionary of Fashion in the 20th Century*, the new edition clearly illustrates how much the fashion industry has evolved and grown since 1994. The 600-page tome, published only in French, complements its entries with around a thousand high-quality photos.

One of the work's editors, fashion historian Lydia Kamitsis, believes the principal change is the new edition's international flavor. "Over the past 10 years, we have above all seen just how much the fashion world has been internationalized," she

explains. "Back in 1994, the entries for Gucci and Prada were very short; today, the two labels have turned into major groups."



An Inviting Book Cover

Bruno Remaury, an editor for both editions of the dictionary, believes the dictionary reflects the volatile nature of the fashion world and attributes the change to globalization and the rise of large, powerful retail groups.

Remaury and Kamitsis are among the 80 people from a variety of disciplines who worked together to compile the extensive dictionary, which has entries varying from Aaage Thaarup, a veteran Danish Fashion House, to Zucchi, the number one European group for household linen, and which includes American designers Rick Owens and Alber Elbaz, as well as France's Hedi Slimane.

Happy Birthday Christian Dior

THIS YEAR MARKS the 100th anniversary of world renowned French fashion designer Christian Dior. Born in Granville, Normandy, Dior studied political science at his parent's insistence. After military service and years of self-exploration, he began his career by selling sketches in Paris in 1935. Initially, his hat sketches sold better than his dress designs. However, he persevered, and he was eventually hired by Robert Piguet three years later. At the onset of World War II, he went to fight in the south of France and was hired by Lucien Lelong after he returned. In 1946, Dior established his own house, backed by textile manufacturer Marcel Boussac.

One year later, Dior unveiled his first collection and most famous design, the "New Look." This featured delicate shoulders, a cinched waist and a full skirt, embodying the look of feminine elegance. His opulent clothing style con-

trasted with post-war reality and helped to re-establish Paris as the capital of world fashion. Throughout the 1950s, Dior dictated style in Europe.

Dior was also the first to arrange licensed productions of his designs in regional production centers around the world, thereby diffusing his brand name globally. In 1953, he hired Yves Saint Laurent, who became head designer in 1957 after Dior's sudden death. Yves Saint Laurent went on to establish his own house and was succeeded at Dior by Britain's John Galiano in 1996.

Dior's fashion legacy includes designing the H, A and Y-lines, classic suits, and ballarina-length skirts.



CALCUTTA LITERARY FESTIVAL HONORS FRANCE

France was invited as a guest of honor to attend the Calcutta Literary Festival, the largest of its kind in Asia. Organizers of the festival sent the honorary invitation in recognition of France's efforts to spread its literature in India, where French authors are experiencing a growing success. The festival, held from January 26 to February 6, attracted more than three million visitors and included almost 1,700 French books, covering a wide variety of topics. Many of the works on display are now being sold in local bookstores at discounted rates.

MARC LÉVY BEST-SELLING FRENCH AUTHOR IN 2004

Marc Lévy was the best-selling author of French fiction in 2004, according to recently released sales data. Lévy is the author of *Et si C'était Vrai...* (*And if it Was True...*), *Où Es-Tu* (*Where Are You?*) and *Sept Jours pour une Éternité* (*Seven Days for an Eternity*). His first novel, the story of a woman in a coma who haunts the narrator's bathroom, has been translated into 32 languages and its film rights were bought by Steven Spielberg for \$2 million. Lévy, along with Bernard Werber, Amélie Nothomb, and Fred Vargas (listed in descending order), have all sold more than one million copies of their books in 2004.

KUSTURICA TO LEAD CANNES FESTIVAL JURY

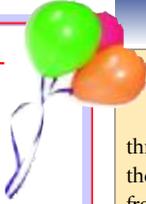
Serbian director Emir Kusturica has been selected to preside over the jury at the 58th Cannes Film Festival to be held from May 11 to 22. Kusturica is a two-time *palme d'or* recipient ("Papa est en voyage d'affaires," 1985; "Underground," 1995) as well as the winner of the award for best direction for his 1989 film "Le temps des gitans." Kusturica is one of only four directors to have won the *palme d'or* twice.

TINTIN TOPS SURVEY

According to an Ifop survey that appeared in the daily "Dimanche Ouest-France," Tintin was voted France's favorite comic book character by 22 percent of participants. Tintin, the beloved reporter for the "Petit Vingtième," edged out fellow comic book personality, Astérix, by 2 percent. Other characters cited included Lucky Luke, Gaston Lagaffe, Titeuf, Mickey, Boule and Bill, Spirou and Fantasio, Obélix, Corto Maltese and Blake and Mortimer.



News from France is celebrating its **20th anniversary!!** Our first issue came out on **January 18, 1985.** We've changed quite a bit since then, adding pictures and color, but we're still faithful to our founding principle: providing our readers with insightful, interesting News from France! To see how well we are doing, a survey will be included in the next issue. Please take the time to fill it out!



THE GATES IN CENTRAL PARK

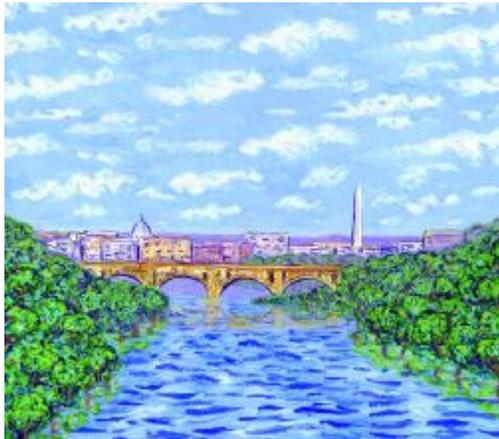
Paris native Jeanne-Claude and her partner Christo will reveal "The Gates: Central Park, New York, 1979-2005," from February 12 through February 27. The dates of the title represent the number of years they spent persuading city officials to allow them to elaborate the project. Billed as the largest artwork since the Sphinx, "The Gates" will consist of 7,500 gates placed along the walk-ways of the park, from which will hang billowing panels of saffron-colored vinyl. Each gate will be secured into steel bases weighing around 600 pounds; in total the project will use two thirds of the amount of steel in the Eiffel Tower. The couple wants to create an artwork that highlights Frederick Law Olmsted's thoughtful landscaping and illuminates the beauty of the park. They stress that they are funding the project independently with money raised from the sale of Christo's preliminary sketches of the project. Each part of the artwork will be completely recycled and entrance is free to the public. For more information visit: www.christojeanneclaude.net.

Paris on the Potomac

FROM VALENTINE'S DAY through Memorial Day, Washington D.C., will commemorate its longstanding cultural ties to Paris, France, with more than 80 events with a French theme. Made possible by the cooperation of various cultural organizations, such as the American Experience Foundation and the Embassy of France's Cultural Service, the event will pay tribute to the inspiration that brings together the two world capitals. Indeed, French architect Pierre Charles L'Enfant, commissioned by President George Washington, set the stage for the city of Washington to become the impressive, dynamic place it is today.

The festival will boast special exhibitions, lecture series, customized walking tours, concerts, dance and theater performances coupled with romantic hotel packages and enticing restaurant offerings throughout the capital area. The Alexandria Symphony Orchestra, for instance, will partner with the National Gallery of Art for a concert on April 2, inspired by the Gallery's exhibition "Toulouse-Lautrec in Montmartre," which depicts the artist's vibrant Bohemian lifestyle. Also on April 2, the Smithsonian Associates will delve

into the evolution of French cuisine in the United States with an event that will include celebrity chefs Jacques Pepin, Jacques Torres, Andre Soltner and Alain Sailhac.



Painting created by Jim Siemer.

Since 2005 happens to be the centenary of the Fauve movement, the National Gallery will also highlight its Fauvist works (see our previous issue, NFF 04.14), complemented by the photography of André Kertész. The Carlyle House Historic Park will re-create the "Grandest Congress" and present a French and Indian War military encampment on April 9. Also participating in the festivities, the Black Fashion Museum will be honoring Carol Mongó, the first African American to be appointed director of the Parsons School of Design and a long-time resident of Paris, through its exhibit, "Une

Américaine à Paris: 25 Years in the French Capital." For a complete listing of galleries, theaters, hotels and restaurants involved, contact the Washington, D.C., Convention and Tourism Corporation at (202) 789-7000 or visit their Web site at www.washington.org. Additional information can be found on the Web site of the French Embassy's Cultural Service, www.la-maison-francaise.org.

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