

UNITAID Takes New Steps in the Fight Against AIDS

French Minister of Foreign Affairs Philippe Douste-Blazy joined Former U.S. President Bill Clinton and President of the Indian National Congress, Sonia Gandhi, in New Dehli, India, on November 30 to discuss developments in the global fight against AIDS. The leaders gathered for the inauguration of the Kalawati Saran Children's Hospital on the eve of World AIDS Day.

Mr. Douste-Blazy characterized one of the major obstacles in combating the pandemic during his visit: "All of us here are aware of the global health divide with which we are confronted. This challenge is also an unconscionable injustice. The main victims of malaria, AIDS and tuberculosis are people living in the countries of the South, while we in the countries of the North have access to the appropriate medicines and treatment." UNITAID seeks to reconcile this "divide" (see NFF 06.07.)

Officially launched on September 19, the French Minister defined UNITAID as an organization well on its way to developing "a true globalization of solidarity." By dedicating itself to increasing access to pediatric medicines and alleviating epidemics where relief is most needed, UNITAID has already succeeded in working with 44 countries, 19 of which have already initiated sustainable financing procedures that will make it possible to fund UNITAID.

In his speech before the medical staff at Kalawati Saran Children's Hospital, the French Foreign Minister reflected on the significant progress already under way as a result of UNITAID as well as other contributing foundations, such as the Clinton Foundation, in expanding the availability of treatment: "For the first time since the AIDS virus was identified, a very large num-

ber of HIV-infected children in the South will have access, in the coming months, to treatment specifically tailored to their age and to the stage of their infection. This is a great source of hope and at the same time a major step forward. [...] From its inception in September 2006, UNITAID established a close partnership with the Clinton Foundation, with the goal of increasing

children's access to pediatric medicines. This cooperation has proved to be exemplary — today's announcement is a case in point. Everything must be done to alleviate the situation of children, who have been exceptionally hard-hit by the AIDS epidemic, especially in Africa."

In an important step in the global battle against AIDS, President Bill Clinton announced in his speech that two Indian pharmaceutical companies, Cipla Ltd. and Ranbaxy Laboratories Ltd., have agreed to significantly cut the prices of HIV and AIDS treatment for children, which will help make the crucial drugs more accessible

worldwide. The drugs will be supplied to HIV-positive children at prices as low as 16 cents a day. President Clinton described the development as "a great day, but we have a long way to go. We have to make a new commitment that every child and adult who needs treatment should have access [to the drugs]." Support for the price reduction will come from a coalition of countries, including France, which will provide approximately \$35 million in aid.

"I express the hope that the welcome announcement we are making today will be followed by many others, and I call on all our partners to join us in this endeavor," Minister Douste-Blazy concluded. For more information on other French initiatives to combat the AIDS pandemic, please turn to page 6. 



Inauguration of Kalawati Saran Hospital. Sonia Gandhi (right), Bill Clinton, Min. Douste-Blazy, Anbumani Ramadoss (right)

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New 24 Hour News Channel Launched

A new international French news channel called "France 24" was launched on December 7. The channel strives to foster a fresh perspective on international developments with the aim of ensuring greater pluralism in a multifaceted world where information plays a decisive role. This latest entrant into the around-the-clock international news arena debuted on MHz Networks, one of the leading US TV networks.

France 24's U.S. debut coincided with its worldwide channel launch, starting transmissions of the channel in Washington, D.C., on MHz3 (Comcast Channel 186 as well as free digital broadcast 30-3).

Comprising 170 journalists representing a total of 28 nationalities, France 24 aspires to provide a fresh perspective on world events, driven by debate and respect for the diversity of cultures. "Providing a different angle and contrasting viewpoints on world news, France 24 adds another strong voice to the world stage and is a natural fit to MHz's portfolio. [...] Positioning itself between CNN and the Arab media, France 24 delivers an interesting spectrum of opinions throughout the program" says Frederick Thomas, General Manager and Executive Vice President of MHz Networks.

Designed to inspire cross-cultural understanding and dialogue with informative, entertaining and intellectually stimulating programs, the 24/7 channel for internationally oriented viewers seeks to capture the best programs in news and culture from around the world in one channel. Features of France 24's coverage will include regular talk shows

with international correspondents revealing differences in opinion between countries, in addition to discussions of hot news topics with leading figures three times daily. Two main talk shows, led by leading personalities from the news channel, will focus on current international events and current political developments on Fridays and Sundays, respectively.

France 24 aims to target an audience of "opinion leaders" through multilingual broadcasts. Its programs will be first broadcasted on two channels: one in French, another in English, with Arabic scheduled for 2007. Spanish will follow. Audiences in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, New York and Washington D.C., are among the first to receive televised coverage. MHz Worldview expects to launch coverage nationwide January 1 on PBS stations in leading US cities as well as on the DirecTV and Globecast WorldTV services.

Available via satellite, cable, DSL, Internet and mobile access, France 24 has expressed its dedication to remaining "at the cutting edge of technology to ensure its presence on all available media." Essential to those who may not receive immediate access to France 24 television broadcasts

will be the channel's Web site, featuring live views of the channel and Video On Demand as well as an interactive nature allowing each user to personalize the site to his or her needs. France 24's additional Web site content includes: analytical pieces, newsletters, news alerts, celebrity blogs, forums, etc. For more information, please visit: www.france24.com. 



France24's Vanessa Burggraf being broadcasted

France's Military Commitment in Afghanistan

CHINA EUROPA 2006

The first business convention dedicated to industrial partnerships between China and Europe took place in the French city of Le Havre in early December. The conference, called "China Europa 2006," symbolized an ongoing trade cooperation between China and Europe. The aim of the conference was to establish a "two-way street" through which Europeans and Chinese can simultaneously buy and sell products and services to each other. Representatives from the energy, automobile, aeronautics, and eco-industries were present— "areas that China needs to tap," explained Gerard Mercher, head of the region's development agency. The conference was backed by the trade ministries of both France and China. The French Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade, Christine Lagarde, characterized the conference's importance: "Trade between France and China has seen unprecedented growth. China has become one of France's top economic partners and has been identified as one of five 'priority' countries four our 'Cap Export' plan, which is designed to boost foreign trade." According to organizers, some 6,000 business meetings were scheduled between executives to "sell, export, produce, invest, and form joint ventures in China and in Europe."

FOOTBRIDGE CONNECTS FRANCE AND GERMANY

A world record-breaking footbridge has been installed between France and Germany over the Rhine River, connecting the French town of Huningue and the German town of Weil-am-Rhein. At 814 feet, the pedestrian bridge has the longest freestanding span on the globe. The bridge represents an important link over the Rhine, which more than 50,000 people cross each day. Austrian architect Dietmar Feichtinger designed the structure and envisaged the bridge to "symbolize the bond between France and Germany."

Feichtinger is known for many projects in the region, including the highly touted Simone de Beauvoir footbridge in southeast Paris, which opened earlier this year. The construction of the bridge was an architectural feat for Feichtinger and the companies that realized the project, Max-Bögl and Air Liquide Welding. The design had to take into account the formidable width of the river without congesting its flow and river traffic with too much material. The final result is a 1,000-ton steel structure in the shape of an asymmetrically cross-sectioned arc. The two pillars below the bridge are 230 meters apart to allow the passage of commercial barges and other river craft. The Huningue to Weil-am-Rhein footbridge will be open to pedestrians and cyclists on December 31, 2006.

NEWS FROM FRANCE / December 27, 2006

THE NATO summit in Riga, held on November 28 and 29, was mainly devoted to the situation in Afghanistan. During the summit, French President Jacques Chirac laid out new developments in France's military contribution to operations in that country, as part of a global strategy and a reaffirmed political and economic process.



French soldier patrolling the streets of Kabul to ensure safety for the Sept. 18, 2005 general election

These latest developments are motivated by the will to tailor the French deployment to NATO and Afghan needs.

The military evolutions are threefold. (1) The French military deployment will be reinforced in the Kabul zone, which is under France's command until April 2007. (2) Conditions of the French Forces' deployment outside that zone will be relaxed. Mr. Chirac

announced that French troops could be deployed outside the Kabul zone, if need be, and based on the assessment of the situation and engagement conditions. The decision will be made on a case-by-case basis, in a comparable manner to what is being done with British troops. (3) France's commitment to the training of Afghan Armed Forces will be strengthened.

France is one of the top military contributors in Afghanistan and it currently assumes major command duties, notably in the Kabul area. By not imposing any "caveat" to the operational use of its forces, it can even render them more flexible and mobile. France's new military deployment is part of a global political strategy in Afghanistan, so that progress in terms of security can rapidly lead the way to the implementation of that nation's ongoing development. ■■

OSCE Training Seminar on Responding to Racist Crimes

FRANCE hosted an Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) training seminar in Paris from December 11 to 13. The conference aimed at responding to racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic crimes in the context of the conference held in Paris in 2004 on combating racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic propaganda on the Internet.

The seminar was jointly organized with the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the

Gendarmerie Nationale, which has developed recognized expertise in the past few years in recording and combating these crimes.

Over 25 experts from 13 countries participated in the seminar which focused in particular on crime-scene investigations and the search for perpetrators by gathering and exchanging information. The training was delivered by experts from Canada, Croatia, France (Gendarmerie Nationale), Hungary, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. ■■

French Initiative: "Free Children from War"

UNICEF (The United Nations Children's Fund) and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs are co-organizing a political conference in Paris on February 5 and 6, 2007 to address the fate of child soldiers in armed conflicts around the world. Titled "Free Children from War," the conference aims to set up a reference framework for the international community to prevent children from being recruited as combatants, messengers, informers and sex slaves by armed forces.

The objective is to define a set of action guidelines which could be regrouped into a non-binding declaration for approval at the conference's conclusion.

The "Cape Town Principles and Best Practices," the first significant set of standards concerning children in armed conflicts, were adopted in 1997 at the NGO Working Group Convention "Rights of the Child and UNICEF."

Ten years later, some progress has been achieved, but UNICEF believes the problem of child recruitment into armed forces is worsening in some areas.

A high level government Political impulse is needed to establish a common frame of reference. That is the purpose of the Paris Conference which will rely on UNICEF's year old consultations with NGO and other involved international organizations. The "Paris Declaration" will be based on in depth consultations and discussions conducted all throughout 2006 with the UNICEF, NGOs and government experts.

An updated and improved framework through the "Free Children from War" initiative would allow for effective and creative long-term responses in the face of many persisting challenges. ■■

New Safety Regulations at E.U. Airports

THE European Union enacted new initiatives to ensure air-passenger safety as of November 6. These new rules concern the contents of hand baggage of all airline passengers departing from or catching connecting flights at airports within the European Union. Passengers now may only carry small quantities (max. 100 ml per container - 3.38 fl oz.) of liquids such as water and other drinks, pastes, lotions, aerosols, and toiletries such as toothpaste, shaving cream, hair gel, lip gloss, facial creams, mascara and liquid lip balms.

These items must be carried in a re-sealable, transparent plastic bag the volume of which cannot exceed one liter (about one quart). There is a limit of one transparent plastic bag per person. Medicines and baby food needed during the flight are exceptions to these rules.

New rules also apply to duty-free purchases in airports. The retailer must place purchases in a bag which will be sealed and must remain so until the end of the trip. This bag must be accompanied by a receipt that will be checked at inspection points. Purchases in airports outside the E.U. are not authorized for carry-on and will be confiscated.

Passengers will be required to present all liquids separately when passing through security control, in addition to separately presenting all coats, jackets, and laptops.

The European Union appreciates passengers' cooperation in these new protective measures. For more detailed information, please visit the Embassy's Web site at: www.ambafrance-us.org. ■■

Allied Countries Honor One of Greatest Spies

BRTAIN and France paid tribute to Virginia Hall, one of the greatest spies of World War II on Tuesday, December 12. Characterized as a "true hero of the French Resistance," by French President Jacques Chirac, the Baltimore native was honored in a ceremony held at French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte's residence. Amb. Levitte kicked off the ceremony by reading a letter written by Pres. Chirac on behalf of the French Resistance and French combatants that paid tribute to Hall's "indomitable bravery, exceptional selflessness, (...) and leader and organizer who contributed greatly to the Liberation of France." Also during the ceremony, British Ambassador Sir David Manning presented the Royal Warrant signed by King George VI to Hall's niece, Lorna Catling. Other distinguished guests in attendance included Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley and friends and members of Hall's family.

Hall clerked at the American Embassy in Poland and at the Consulate in Izmir, Turkey. She was forced to abandon her plans of entering the Foreign Service, however, due to an injury she sustained from a hunting accident which led to the loss of her left leg from the knee down. Fluent in French, Italian and German, Virginia Hall was working as a journalist for the *Washington Post's* bureau in Paris when WWII broke out. With a German attack on Paris already appearing inevitable, she enlisted in the French army as an ambulance driver, despite her old injury, and found herself in Vichy territory in 1940. From there she escaped to England via Spain. En route, she met a British intelligence agent, which marked the beginning of her recruiting process for the British Special Operations Executive (SOE). As an American woman



Virginia Hall

familiar with France and who spoke French, Virginia Hall was considered to be a great asset to the SOE. The U.S. were non-combatants at the time and the Germans were less suspicious of women. She agreed without hesitation and received training in Morse Code, weaponry, map reading, parachuting...and even the correct way to make tea. Hall traveled back to occupied France on August 23, 1941 as a British SOE agent under the clandestine identity of a French-speaking American journalist for

the *New York Times*, code named: Brigitte La Contre.

Hall remained in Vichy France for 15 months, helping to coordinate the activities of the French Underground and facilitating the escape of Prisoners of War. WANTED posters offering a reward for the capture of "The lady with the limp...the most dangerous of all Allied spies," forced Hall to flee in November 1942. After crossing the Pyrenees Mountains on foot in order to reach safety in Spain for the second time, Hall returned to England once again. From there, the American SOE equivalent, the Office of Strategic Services, recruited Hall and sent her back to occupied France, this time disguised as an old peasant woman. During her second mission, Hall led groups of up to 1,500 Resistance fighters, engaged German soldiers in combat, and sabotaged communications and transportation links.

For her heroic efforts, Ms. Hall was made an official Member of the Order of British Empire in 1943. However, Amb. Manning revealed in his tribute that the British Embassy staff never succeeded in locating Ms. Hall to bestow upon her the prestigious Royal Warrant. Thus, she actually never received the prestigious title signed by King George VI and his mother Queen Mary who was Grand Master of the Order.

The story of one of WWII's least known heroes has been the subject of a recent book: *Wolves at the Door: The True Story of America's Greatest Female Spy*, and a portrait that depicts clandestine Virginia Hall transmitting valuable intelligence to England, titled: *the Daisies will Bloom Tonight*. Catling, a Baltimore native herself, remained unaware of many details of her aunt's life until after her death on Bastille Day, 14 July 1982.

and Sacramento with their American counterparts of the Los Angeles Sheriff Department (LASD), Beverly Hills Police Department (BHPD), California Highway Patrol (CHP), and Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). The French Police Officers will also have the privilege to help and assist the Beverly Hills Police Department during the world famous 2007 Golden Globe Awards.

The Awards ceremony is hosted by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association at the Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills.

Patrick Hamon, Chief of communication at the Police Nationale, agrees that this unprecedented operation with California Law Enforcement Authorities is crucial to French-American relations and cooperation in the maintenance of safety and protection of civilians. France and the United States have a historic alliance in sharing intelligence and law enforcement strategies.

ambassador Sir David Manning pay tribute to Virginia Hall's wartime contributions



Amb. Levitte (left) and Sir David Manning pay tribute to Virginia Hall's wartime contributions

FRENCH VOLUNTEERISM IN U.S.

This past November, a group of 12 young French professionals took two weeks off from their jobs to travel to the U.S. and serve as volunteers in the reconstruction of the Gulf Coast Region which was devastated in August 2005 by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. This team, organized by Nicolas Gauthier who works for the French Embassy in Washington, D.C., coordinated the travel of 11 young professionals from France to the U.S. to contribute to the area's Habitat for Humanity reconstruction initiative. The 12 French volunteers gutted houses damaged by the hurricanes as well as built new homes in New Orleans and Saint Bernard's Parish, Louisiana. While a project of private initiative, this group's assistance is another example of the support that the French people continue to extend to the citizens of Louisiana (see NFF 06.12). New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity homes are sold to partner families at cost (no profit to Habitat) with a no-interest mortgage. Future homeowners (known as partner families) contribute in the form of "sweat equity" and house payments can be transferred to build additional abodes in the area. For more information, please visit: www.habitat-nola.org.

AMERICAN FIRM TO BUILD PARIS SKYSCRAPER

American Thom Mayne, whose company, Morphosis, is based in Los Angeles, has been chosen to build Paris's skyscraper. To be located in the business district of La Défense, the building will rise to 300 meters (900 feet), 68-stories. The office building, dubbed *La Phare* (The Beacon,) will combine a rectangular base with a body that twists asymmetrically upward. It will also be eco-friendly: the designer hopes that it will be a "prototype for a green building." The "green" features include a visually distinctive wind farm on the roof to generate the clean alternative energy to power the building's natural ventilation system—the fully self-sufficient system will cool the building for half of the year without using any outside energy sources or any supplemental heating or cooling. The south façade of the building features a curvilinear double skin that minimizes heat gain and glare, while the flat, clear-glazed north façade maximizes interior exposures to year-round natural daylight. A double skin is at work at all times to maximize energy efficiency. *La Phare* is scheduled to be completed in 2012. Mayne is known for his cutting-edge work, which includes the Sun Tower in Seoul, Korea. Thom Mayne was named the Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate in 2005, the profession's highest honor.



Rendition of Le Phare

Los Angeles and French Police Forces Team Up

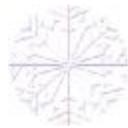
FOR the first time in history and in an effort to promote French-American relations and cooperation, a delegation from the National French Police, comprising 30 motorcycle Police officers and eight coordinators, has been invited by the state of California Law Enforcement agencies to participate in a 10-day-long event which will include training techniques, strategic alliances and participation in the 2007 Golden Globe Awards.

The French officers delegation - which consists of 30 motorcycle Police officers from the National Police and whose main duties in France include serving and protecting as well as escorting personalities such as French President Jacques Chirac—will exchange their experience and savoir-faire on their recruiting and training methods, on their equipment and operational techniques, and will participate together in several patrols and demonstrations in Los Angeles, Malibu



Christophe Delalandes, French National Police

Christmas in France



This is the season to be jolly, and across the world, people are beginning to feel the holiday spirit. Though the United States and France share many similar Christmas traditions, differences still exist between the countries' holiday celebrations. Even within France, people celebrate by partaking in traditions unique to their region.

Much like in the United States, people throughout France show signs of holiday cheer through decorations. Strings of lights adorn outdoor trees and buildings, while ornamented Christmas trees can be found in shops, offices, public squares, and homes. Paris is especially brilliant from mid-December to mid-January "in light" of the City Hall-sponsored initiative "Paris lights up Paris", which brings festive light displays to the capital city. Illuminated department stores, such as the famous Galeries Lafayette in Paris, attract holiday shoppers and children with their *vitrines de Noël* — large Christmas windows containing elaborate displays of the latest holiday toys and trinkets.

On Christmas Eve, families prepare a large Christmas Eve dinner, known as *réveillon*. This dinner is usually served very late at night after Midnight Mass, and often features such savory delicacies as oysters, foie gras and onion soup. After dinner, children will begin eagerly awaiting the presents which *Père Noël* (Father Christmas) will bring. In the

North of France, *Père Noël* traditionally brings small gifts for good children on St. Nicholas Eve (December 6), filling shoes and stockings they have left by the fireplace. The *Père Noël* will then visit again on Christmas day, sometimes accompanied, as legend has it, by his negative counterpart, *Père Fouettard*, who spansks naughty children. Though some practices are ubiquitous in France, they also differ by region.



Christmas illuminations, Galeries Lafayette, Paris

Christmas in Provence

On Christmas day in Provence, a Christmas Feast composed of turkey or roast ham leads to a grand finale comprised of 13 desserts. The desserts, which are meant to symbolize Christ and the 12 apostles, include special fruits and cakes from the region. Often found among the deserts is the traditional *bûche de Noël*. Traditionally burned in the hearth on Christmas Eve, the favored holiday desert is a sponge cake filled with *crème* and chocolate, then rolled and shaped to make it look like a Yule log.

Also in Provence, in certain churches near the seashore, Midnight Mass ends with a procession of fishermen who place a basket full of fish in front of the church to symbolize respect for Jesus.

The Provençal custom of the manger, *la crèche*, originated in 12th-century France. Initially, the manger itself resembled an altar and was placed either inside the church



Santons can be representations of the Holy family as well as members of the village

or before the door. While the custom of placing a real infant on hay in the manger is no longer observed, living *crèches* in the form of plays and puppet shows based on the Nativity are still commonly performed. The popular manger often seen in homes was introduced in Avignon between 1216 and 1334, but it was not until the 16th century that it became a widespread tradition.

In Provence today, families arrange mangers on small stages. Children bring rocks, branches, and moss to make a setting for the manger. Little terra-cotta figures, known as *santons*, or "little saints," huddle around the manger to represent the Nativity scene. A Provençal craft dating back to the seventeenth century, the *santons* are usually representations of the holy family as well as the people of the village: the mayor, the priest, the baker, the farmer, the butcher, policeman, and the miller. In large *crèches*, almost the entire population of a village is represented, making the scene a tribute to the Nativity as well as to Provence as a region.

The place best known for its *santons* is the little town of Aubagne, but since 1803 the largest fair for the sale of *santons* has been held in Marseille.

Christmas in Alsace

Every Christmas, the fairs known to the French as the *marchés de Noël* festively illuminate streets and squares throughout the city. Vendor booths offer diverse wares, from homemade crafts and traditional decorations for the *crèche* to mulled wine, spice-cakes, and other culinary delicacies. The oldest and most famous of these fairs is organized every year in Strasbourg, in the Alsace-Lorraine region in Northeastern France.

Also unique to the history of Alsace is the Christmas tree's first recorded appearance in France. The tree, known to the French as the *sapin de Noël*, first appeared in 1546 in the city of Sélestat, which authorized the cutting of evergreens for Christmas during the night of Saint Thomas on December 21. These early Christmas trees, meant to symbolize the tree in the Garden of Eden, were originally decorated with artificially colored roses symbolizing the Virgin, as well as apples representing Adam and Eve. The practice of decorating Christmas trees with light began during the 17th and 18th centuries, using oil in shells with lit wicks in the center.

The Christmas tree also has a royal history. *Le sapin de Noël* made its debut at Versailles in 1738 at the behest of Queen Marie Leszcynska, wife of Louis XV. In 1837, Héléne de Mecklembourg, duchess of Orléans, originally from Germany, decorated the first Christmas tree established at the Tuileries Gardens in Paris.

After the war of 1870, the tradition of the Christmas tree spread throughout France as the people who emigrated from the Alsace-Lorraine region brought it with them as they settled in different regions of France. By the end of the 19th century the whole country adopted the tradition that is now celebrated.

Christmas celebrations in the home today often begin with the decoration of the *sapin de Noël* a few days before December 25 with candles, lights, tinsel and colored stars. On Christmas Eve, when the children are asleep, grownups hang little toys, candies and fruit on the branches of the tree as a supplement to the gifts *Père Noël* traditionally leaves in the shoes before the fireplace. For more information on tourism and how Christmas is celebrated throughout France, please visit: www.franceguide.com.



Giant Christmas tree, Place Kléber, Strasbourg

Alcatel and Lucent Technologies Unite

FRENCH company Alcatel and U.S.-based company Lucent Technologies announced the completion of their merger transaction on November 30. The new company, called Alcatel-Lucent, is expected to have one of the largest R&D capabilities in communications and the broadcast wireless, wireline and services portfolios in the industry. Shortly after the completion of their merger, the new company announced on December 1 the creation of Lucent Government Solutions (LGS), an independent subsidiary that will be completely dedicated to serving the U.S. Government community. An ensemble of employees from Lucent's Government Solutions business unit, Alcatel Government Solutions, Inc., and Lucent's Bell Labs Government Communications Lab, LGS will become the

sole sales and contracting channel for all classified and unclassified business contracted from U.S. federal agencies and departments, both military and civilian. Ron Iverson, who recently joined Lucent from Northrop Grumman, will lead LGS as CEO. Alcatel-Lucent, with executive offices located in Paris and approximately 79,000 employees in more than 130 countries, provides solutions that enable service providers, enterprises and governments worldwide, to deliver voice, data and video communication services to end-users at home, at work and on the move. Headquartered in Vienna, Virginia, within the Washington D.C., metropolitan area, LGS is currently finalizing its operational structure and processes, which are planned for completion in early January of 2007.



SAINT-GOBAIN AND SHELL TO PRODUCE NEW SOLAR PANELS



Leipziger Land Solar Powerplant, Germany

The French glass company Saint-Gobain announced on November 27 that it will join forces with and Anglo-Dutch oil company Shell to produce and market a new generation of solar panels. The panels will be made of a mix of copper, indium and selenium on glass instead of silicon as used in standard photovoltaic cells. Developed by Shell, this so-called CIS technology offers high electrical efficiency and is potentially very cost competitive. Saint-Gobain's contribution to this 50-50 joint venture called Avancis is its in-depth know-how of thin-film coating and glass processing. The joint endeavor is intended to pave the way for the production of more cost-effective, environmentally friendly alternatives to fossil fuels.

ANNIVERSARY OF WORLD'S FIRST FACE TRANSPLANT

Exactly one year after Isabelle Dinoire underwent the world's first partial face transplant at a hospital in Amiens, northern France, the medical team in charge of the operation issued a new photo and statement on November 27. "The tolerance of the transplant is excellent," the team reported on Dinoire's immune system's acceptance of the transplant. They have confirmed "the anatomical and functional success of this first partial face transplant." Last year the team transplanted the lips, nose and chin of a donor onto Dinoire. Today she says she is gaining more sensitivity and facial mobility, and she has also made great improvement in her ability to speak. Residing in Valenciennes, northern France, Dinoire says that apart from her weekly medical consultations she "leads a normal life" and expects to return to work soon: "It's been a very strange year, but I don't regret anything. I can feel just about everything as I did before. It may be someone else's face, but when I look in the mirror I see me."



Organizers and guest lecturers

Seminar Explores Science of Taste

AMATEURS and experts alike had their tastebuds tickled on December 8 at the Savory Science Seminar held at the

American experts led the savorious discussion, which reflected the diverse landscapes of taste and its place in their work as scientists, cooks, and oenologists. The French lecturers hailed from the Academy of Sciences, the Pasteur Institute, the Institute of Wine and Vine Sciences, University of Bordeaux and the National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA). American guests included professors from Yale University, Michigan State University and a well-known cook and author. The event also featured a film and a photo exposition on the unique Alpine bread "Pain Boulli," which was specially brought in from Villar d'Arène to taste during the reception.

Maison Française of the Embassy of France in Washington, D.C. The program, jointly organized by the CNRS Office for the United States and Canada, the Office for Science and Technology as well as the Agriculture Division of the Economic Department of the Embassy of France, devoted the afternoon to an exploration of taste from a variety of thematic perspectives including neuroscience, agriculture, ethics and social sciences. For example, neuroscience provides an understanding of how taste materializes from sensory receptors. The agronomical sciences explain how the properties of different soils, varietal selection and diverse climates have savory influences. The globalization of trade, the use of genetically modified organisms and the standardization of products call into question the necessity to consider ethical concerns surrounding taste and its protection. Last but not least, the social sciences demonstrate the importance of the cultural heritage concerning the make-up, the development and the transmission of taste for future generations. Four French and three

SCIENTISTS EXPLORE EMPLOYMENT IN EUROPE

The French Embassy in Washington, D.C. organized a colloquium on December 13 during which French expatriates working in the scientific community discussed and shared their experiences of living and working abroad. The informal gathering assembled representatives from various French research organizations, a member of the Delegation of the European Commission, senior scientists and approximately 40 young French scientists. The participants engaged in constructive dialogue regarding employment opportunities in France, as well as opportunities for scholarships and financing in Europe. For more information on research opportunities in Europe, please visit: www.eracareers.fr

Low-Fare Airlines Really Taking Off

AIR France-KLM announced on November 27 the creation of a new low-cost tourist airline which will fly to dozens of Mediterranean destinations. The new carrier, called "Transavia.com," will serve both Internet customers and as a charter for tourist operations. The main destinations to which Transavia.com will offer flights will be Morocco, Tunisia, Spain, Italy, and Egypt. Sixty percent of the budget carrier will be owned by Air France and 40 percent by Transavia, a Dutch-based company under the umbrella of KLM. For more information, please visit: www.transavia.com.

seats instead of the usual 200 all-class layout. The operating company owned by Elysair, will offer flights between Paris's second-largest airport, Orly, and Newark, N.J., the second-largest intercontinental airport serving New York. For more information, please visit: www.lavion.com



New low-fare business class airline expects to launch operations in early January 2007

REDUCED PRICED CONDOMS LAUNCHED TO ENCOURAGE SAFER SEX

The French government announced that it plans to make 10 million reduced-cost condoms available in 20,000 outlets nationwide by early 2007 in an effort to reduce the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, namely HIV. The condoms will cost approximately 25 cents and will be available in hospitals, nightclubs, movie theaters, high schools, pharmacies, newsstands and tobacco shops. The condom campaign is intended to increase safe-sex practices and provide greater access to preventive devices. According to Health Minister Xavier Bertrand, the condom campaign is being launched amid efforts to promote safe sex as a "reflex" among the population. Effective HIV prevention includes both accurate information on condoms and measures to increase awareness about their proper usage.

BOATS: A SPORTING EVOLUTION

Paris held its 45th annual edition of the *Salon Nautique* (Boat Show) at the *Porte de Versailles* between December 2 and 11. This year, the show welcomed 1,400 exhibitors from 23 countries with 1,200 sail- and motorboats. The Salon was launched by Transport Minister Dominique Perben. All kinds of boats, from sea kayaks to yachts, were on display. Visitors could also take a look at the new Lagoon catamaran, which runs on hybrid electricity, as the wind power from the sails recharges the battery. In Marseille, the "Top Cruise" show, which gathers cruise operators, travel agents, and port managers, gave a glimpse of the liner of the future. Royal Caribbean Cruise presented its latest creation, the Freedom of the Seas, which stretches 1,140 feet and has room for 4,200 passengers. Bernard Echevarria, representative of RCC in France, said, "In 2008-2009, we will move on to 'Genesis' cruise liners which will be able to take up to 6,000 passengers."

QUADRIPLEGIC ENGINEER

Thomas Pieplu, a 41-year-old man from Caen who has suffered from a degenerative and paralyzing disease since 1998, is showing that the advanced case of ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) that keeps him bed-ridden will not keep him from exercising his active mind. Pieplu was recently chosen for a prestigious post in the historical wing of national research agency CNRS to head a project studying WWII, with a focus on a resistance cell in Le Havre. Pieplu has an engineering degree, a doctorate in chemistry, and received his masters in history in 2004. Pieplu works with the necessary equipment from his hospital bed and communicates through a computer that registers signals transmitted from the movements of his eyes.

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Southwestern French Wines Boost Longevity

TRADITIONALLY made wines from Southwestern France and Sardinia boast the highest concentration of complex chemical compounds containing anti-oxidant characteristics, called "polyphenols," which are linked to longevity, according to a study published November 23 by the science journal *Nature*.

Previous studies have indicated that a glass of red wine every day helps to prevent health and circulatory disease by dilating blood vessels. However, not all red wines have the same kind of polyphenols or the same amount of concentration thereof.

Wines from the *Gers* department, at the foothills of the French Pyrenees, and from the Nuoro province on the Italian island of Sardinia, where men from these regions are



Grapes being harvested in Southwest France

famous for their longevity, were found to have extremely high levels of the most active members of the polyphenol family, called procyanidins. These high levels were often five to 10 times higher than those of wines that were tested from Australia, South Africa and the United States.

The Sardinian and *Gers* wines are rich in polyphenols in part because of the type of grape seeds that grow there as well as the region's time-honored wine growing methods. "The traditional production methods used in Sardinia and Southwestern France ensure that the beneficial compounds, procyanidins are efficiently extracted," said Robert Corder from Queen Mary's William Harvey Research Institute in London, co-author of the study. 

Paris Photo Festival Celebrates 10th Anniversary

PARIS Photo, one of the main international photography festivals, celebrated its 10th anniversary last month.

Enthusiasts flock to Paris Photo every year to see works or groups of works that are rare, exceptional or new. Opening night, in the Carousel du Louvre, beneath I.M. Pei's glass pyramid, drew hundreds of Parisians. This event is increasingly becoming a smash hit with American art enthusiasts every year. More than 40,800 people overall attended this year's event.

The Paris Photo four-day festival represents only one leg in the monthlong exhibition during *le Mois de la Photo* (Photo Month). Other highlights from Photo Month included Candida Höfer's series of library interiors at the Louvre, photographs by Maurice Denis held at the Musée d'Orsay, and Robert Doisneau's Paris on display at the Hôtel de Ville. The festival's theme surrounding this year was "the photograph and the printed page," and more than 60 expositions took place throughout the city. For more than 20 years, Photo Month has helped earn Paris recognition as the world's capital of photography. 



Paris Photo 2006

New Technologies Used in Classroom to Enhance Learning

SCHOOLS in France are using technology more frequently as an instrument of learning for their students. Smartboard® technology, sometimes also known as whiteboards, are interactive devices that have a touch sensitive display which can be connected to the Internet or computer programs. Used in the place of conventional blackboards, the user draws on the dry-erase board-like device in the same manner as with the blackboard. Thousands of tiny sensors record a digital image of what is being drawn on the board, allowing the teacher's handwritten notes to be printed or digitally stored and e-mailed to students. Users can also access the Internet by using their fingers as a mouse cursor: by simply tapping the board twice on the image or link that the user would like to access, the board responds as a computer would to the double click of a mouse. Stéphane Pic-Paris, General Commissioner for Educative (a professional trade

show of ICT usages and applications for education), said that classroom technologies have the capacity to "adapt to all levels and permit a more fun and more interactive learning process."

Technology has proved especially beneficial for students suffering from behavioral or attention problems. Frédéric Kochman, a child psychiatrist and the director of a center for adolescents in Lille, explained that "Internet and computer software tools call upon many senses like hearing, sight, and touch, so one can optimize the capacity for attention." Interactive white boards have gained the enthusiasm of many teachers: in a study led by the French Ministry of Education on the use of the technology among primary school teachers, 95.6 percent of the educators interviewed said that they had observed a significant improvement in the motivation of their students. 



Smartboard® technology is increasingly used in classrooms



Afghan Treasures Presumed Lost Go on Exhibit

A collection of 220 Afghan archeological objects that had been feared lost is now on display at the *Musée des Arts Asiatiques Guimet*. The trove of Afghan treasures was discovered in a central-bank vault in Kabul, protected by an intricate system of locks. The delicate collection, which was excavated a year before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, was hidden at some point in the late 1980s in light of political turmoil that engulfed the country. The secret of these artifacts was kept for years through a code of silence by the still-unknown group that chose to hide them.



Portrait of a woman wearing a Greek crown, National Museum of Kabul

France and Afghanistan have had strong archeological ties since the first French excavation in the country in 1922. The collection found its way to France as a result of presidential coordination: in 2002, French President Jacques Chirac and Afghan President Hamid Karzai collaborated on an earlier exhibition in Paris highlighting Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage. At the time, there were rumors that the treasures of the Kabul museum had survived, so misters Chirac and Karzai discussed the idea of displaying the items one day in the *Musée Guimet*. Together, the two countries overcame hurdles to

realize this plan: when the initial insurance cost of transport turned out to be astronomical, the French contingent of NATO offered military planes to bring the delicate artifacts to Paris. The exhibit will run at the *Musée Guimet* through April 30, 2007 .

The relics in the exhibit, called "Afghanistan, Rediscovered Treasures — Collections from the National Museum of Kabul," include pieces that represent the many civilizations that had an influence on Afghanistan along the "Silk Road," which linked China and Rome. On display are Indian ivories, Hellenistic bronzes, and Greco-Roman glass found at a site about 37 miles north of Kabul, showing Afghanistan's position at a multicultural crossroads. Perhaps even more of an architectural gem is the group of artifacts known as the "Hoard of Bactrian Gold," collected at the site of Tillya Tepe, where archeologists uncovered six Bactrian princely tombs. These items are dazzling jewelry or burial decorations, some encrusted with precious stones, in the form of pendants, belts, rings and crown.

84-year-old Designer Pierre Cardin Opens New Museum

AFTER 60 years as a fashion designer, 84-year-old Pierre Cardin has decided to open a new museum of his fashion collections chronicling his most famous designs. His museum is based in a former garage at Saint-Ouen in the northern outskirts of Paris.

Cardin is known for his experimental designs, such as the "bubble dress," which he introduced in 1954. "I'm a sculptor, in all ways, I could do it in wood or in metal or in synthetic materials," said Cardin, who started his own design house in 1949 after having worked for Christian Dior for 3 years.

Cardin was born on July 7, 1922, and moved to Paris in 1945. There he studied architecture. He is known for his avant-

garde style and his space-age designs. He enjoys incorporating geometric shapes and motifs, and has advanced into unisex fashion.

Renée Taponier, curator of the yet-to-be-named museum, said the clothes on exhibition are just a small part of Cardin's archive. All together, there are 140 designs displayed. In addition to clothing designs and several men's outfits, there are also several pieces of furniture on display. The museum will also provide insight into his inspirations, fabrics, and techniques.

When asked what his favorite piece is, Cardin replied, "It's the one I'll do tomorrow."

Operas Throughout Europe Launch Educational Initiative

OPERA houses across Europe are working together to launch a new initiative to share their art with the public. An organization called "Opera Europa" is organizing nearly 100 operatic establishments to offer visitors a "behind-the-scenes" look between February 16 and 18, 2007. The February weekend will be packed with festivities, including guided tours, workshops, and



Bastille Opera, Paris

open rehearsals. It will also coincide with the 400th anniversary of Claudio Monteverdi's "L'Orfeo," considered to be the first opera. Chairman of Opera Europa, Bernard Focroulle, discussed the efforts of the various opera houses, saying, "Never in four centuries of opera have we seen a dynamic that is comparable to today." In France, 26 operas will participate in the event. *L'Opéra National de Paris* (National Opera of Paris)

is hosting a conference that will discuss both the past and future of opera in Europe. Peter Gelb, the General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, will be among the many contributors to the discussion. The Paris Opera has been working to open its doors to a broader audience with various programs. Such initiatives include a collaboration with *La Comédie-Française* that provides young people with opportunities to explore the two theatrical institutions. Natalie Dessay, a soprano from Lyon, France, expressed her enthusiasm for the mission of such public-outreach efforts, saying "I want to share something not only with an initiated public, and to say that the beauty is not reserved to an elite."

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF TINTIN'S CREATOR

The Pompidou Center in Paris is honoring the 100th anniversary of the birth of Hergé (born Georges Rémi), the creator of the celebrated comic book, *Tintin*. From December 20, 2006 to February 19, 2007, the Center will display a tribute to Rémi. The exhibition, organized by a joint effort of the Pompidou Center and the Hergé Foundation, includes hundreds of drawings, original plates and newspapers that ran the work of Hergé, and letters from the pen of the cartoonist. Hergé was born in 1907 in Etterbeek, Brussels, and he created the character of Tintin, a young Belgian reporter in 1929. The adventures of Tintin and his faithful fox terrier, Milou (Snowy) have been translated into 60 languages and have sold more than 200 million copies worldwide.

PHOTOGRAPHY BRINGS NEW MEANING TO "EYE CANDY"



"Chocolat" 2006, Frédéric Lebain

Thanks to Frédéric Lebain, it's now possible to satisfy your chocolate cravings while viewing photographs! "Freddie and the chocolate factory," a chocolate-photography exhibition, ran at the Galerie Philippe Chaume in Paris from November 23- December 23. Born in 1966, Frédéric Lebain was trained as a cook, then as a food-stylist and finally as a photographer.

Using a confectionery technique traditionally used with chocolate-coated cakes, Freddie froze several objects picked out from his childhood, such as a disco ball, a porcelain dog, and a dial phone. After the objects were selected, he sprayed hot chocolate on them using an airbrush. These entirely chocolate-coated objects then were photographed. It was the idea of "do not touch" that led to the creation of these chocolate masterpieces. This is the second time that the gallery Phillippe Chaume dedicated an exposition to Lebain.

"Freddie and the chocolate factory" is edited into small and large photograph formats. Although Lebain's pictures cannot be consumed, his chocolates remain a delicious form of eye-candy!

