

At a glance

◆ More suicides at France Telecom

France Telecom has been embarrassed by a further spate of suicides. Five employees have killed themselves in two weeks bringing the total of deaths by suicide so far this year to 23 compared with 19 for the whole of 2009.

◆ Jobs before security

A TNS Sofres opinion poll shows that the first concern of 41% of French people is employment, or unemployment. Pensions concerned 15% the most and only 4% thought law and order was most important.

◆ Electronic parking aid

The City of Toulouse has demonstrated the world's first electronic parking-space finder system. Motorists driving round looking for a place to park cause 60% of pollution in city centres. The new system will tell motorists who subscribe, via their mobile phones, where a space is free. The city authorities intend to extend the system from a single street to a whole neighbourhood in the autumn after a trial period.

◆ Dengue fever in France

The first case of locally contracted dengue fever has been detected in France, in Nice. It is also the first case in Europe. There is a worldwide growth in the spread of the illness, especially in the French Caribbean.

The Institut de veille sanitaire says it is an isolated case and that the risk of an epidemic is limited but possible, owing to the presence in the South-East of France near the Italian border of a large number of Asian tiger mosquitoes, *Aedes aegypti*, which can carry the disease.

The mosquitoes first appeared at Genoa in a cargo of imported tyres in 1990. They have been present in the Alpes-Maritimes since 2004 and in Corsica since 2006.

Dengue is rarely fatal. Since February there have been 38,200 cases in Guadeloupe and five deaths. The illness is carried from human to human by the mosquitoes. There is no cure or vaccination, only prevention and treatment of the symptoms. These occur five to seven days after being bitten and appear as a sudden temperature of 38.5°C with headaches and muscle and eye pain. Complications are rare but can occur in 1% of cases.

The Ministry of Health has urged people living near Nice to make sure they do not leave deposits of stagnant water which are the natural habitat of the mosquitoes, such as in saucers under flower pots. FW



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Animal testing rules stricter

The European parliament has come to the rescue of chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas and orangutans. They will no longer be used in medical or scientific experiments. MEPs did not identify as closely with marmosets and macaques who continue to be subjects for testing.

MEPs voted this week to overhaul the 20-year-old rules governing the use of animals for research in the EU. Under the legislation, experiments on animals will continue to be allowed for a range of scientific reasons as well as for drug testing, species preservation and forensic investigations.

However, all EU countries must now make sure that whenever an alternative form of testing without animals exists and is recognised by European law, it should be used instead. Approval will only be granted to tests which cause the least pain or distress, while still providing satisfactory scientific results. An ethical and scientific review will be

carried out before an experiment is authorised. Anyone carrying out animal tests must also have adequate training and apply for a licence. Governments must check that laboratories are obeying the new rules.

European Green party members said they felt that the bill did not go far enough in protecting animals. However German Christian Democrat

Elisabeth Jeggle, the MEP who supervised the passage of the legislation, said, "The new rules are a breakthrough for the protection of animals while striking a sensible balance to keep medical research in Europe and preventing research projects being moved to non-EU countries with lower standards for animal rights." FW

The anthropomorphic appeal of orangutans may have saved them from future tests



PHOTO © VOLTIGAN INNEBICHLER

Google plans R&D centre in Paris

by Marcus Williamson

Google has announced that it will be establishing a new Research & Development unit in Paris, to include an investment of "millions of dollars" in a "European cultural institute" in the capital. Google's Chief Executive Eric Schmidt met this week with President Nicolas Sarkozy to discuss the plans, which could attract up to 50 software engineering jobs in the first year. Google claims the centre would be a "hub for technology that promotes the past, present and future of pan-European culture".

The move represents an attempt to soften relations with authorities in Europe, which have been concerned over privacy and intellectual property issues. Google has attracted controversy over the use of its Street View system, which gathered Internet users' Wi-Fi data as its vehicles travelled through European cities, taking photographs of homes. Last year, Sarkozy had warned that the Google Books digitisation project could deprive the people of France of their heritage.

In another announcement, Google went live this week with its new Instant Search service for users in France, US, UK, Italy, Germany, Spain and Russia. Google explains that Instant Search takes advantage of our slow typing speed versus the faster speed of the Google search system, so it can out-think us as we formulate our search queries. The result is that Instant Search can, in many cases, anticipate what we humans are looking for, rather like the 'predictive text' feature on mobile phones.

Claude Chabrol, bon vivant film director, dies

Claude Chabrol directed more than 50 films and was one of the instigators of the 'new wave' of French cinema.

Born in Paris on June 24, 1930, he grew up in Sardent (Creuse). As a young boy, he ran a movie club for his friends, showing films in an old barn. He studied pharmacology at the University of Paris, where he met fellow *cinéphiles* François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard, as well as Éric Rohmer, with whom he wrote the book 'Hitchcock' (1957).

After military service and a spell in publicity for 20th Century Fox,

Chabrol decided to embark on making his own films.

His first project as a director was 'Le Beau Serge' (1958), starring Jean-Claude Brialy. The film, partly funded by his wife's inheritance, was a critical success, winning the Prix Jean Vigo. Then came the equally successful 'Les Cousins' (1959).

Perhaps the highlight of his 50-year career is 'Le Boucher' (The Butcher, 1970), nominated by Le Figaro as the "most important film since the liberation" – a homage to Hitchcock which Hitchcock himself said he wished he had made.

Chabrol was known for his generosity and love of life, people, the cinema and actresses. He gave wonderful parts to Isabelle Huppert, Sandrine Bonnaire, Stéphane Audran, Anne Brochet and Virginie Ledoyen, among others.

He is survived by Aurore – his third wife and his script supervisor since the 1960s – and four children. His son Matthieu provided the musical score to many of his films in the 1980s. His last film was 'Bellamy' (2009) starring Gérard Depardieu. Chabrol died on September 12, 2010 in Paris. MW

Europe criticises France over Roma expulsions

The European Union has reacted to France's campaign to expel Eastern European Romas from illegal encampments. The loudest objections have come from the European Parliament which has no power to intervene. The Brussels Commission, which could do something, has been much more cautious. The parliament voted 337 to 245, calling on France to "immediately suspend all expulsions of Romas" which, it said, "amounted to discrimination". In suitably devious

fashion, the Commission was much more circumspect. The President José-Manuel Barroso uttered what have been taken to be veiled criticisms, saying European states should not "reawaken the ghosts of Europe's past". He could have been addressing a number of other countries, including Germany and Italy. In a leaked report, the Commission questioned whether France was meeting EU legal requirements with the deportations, in particular, whether deportees were being assessed case-by-case.

The Commission has a long-running campaign to persuade Eastern European countries to integrate Romas. Treatment in their own countries is so bad that they prefer squalor and hostility in France and elsewhere in Western Europe.

In last year's elections, the far-right Hungarian Jobbik party which got 17% of the vote called for Romas to be put in segregated camps. It is alleged that sterilisation of Roma women in the Czech Republic only ceased in 2003. FW



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