

## At a glance



LE CABOT DE L'EUROPE...

### ◆ EDF short-changed hard-up families

The electricity supplier EDF has been reprimanded by the energy mediator for wrongly refusing to grant cheap electricity to low-income families. Under the government scheme of 2005, anyone with a monthly income of less than €620.58 and entitled to the Couverture Maladie Universelle should be able to get electricity from 30% to 50% less than the standard rate. EDF has refused applications from 30,000 households. The reduction is worth on average €70 a month.

According to Le Parisien, applications have fallen dramatically, partly because of the complicated procedures and partly because of EDF's attitude to the claims.

The government circular said that families should receive the reduction based on a maximum electrical supply of 9KW. EDF says it thought that meant that anyone with more than 9KW was not entitled to claim. Anyone who last claimed more than a year ago can now reapply.

### ◆ Another case of Dengue

A second case of Dengue fever has been identified in the Nice area. The patient, an 18-year-old male, is a relation of the first victim of the illness. The PACA regional health authority has confirmed that 13 other cases are being monitored but they think there is "only a limited chance of an epidemic". Neither of the two patients is in any danger.

However, local residents are being urged to take care to use insect repellent and to make sure no stagnant water is left to accumulate. Where possible, mosquitoes should be killed. The Ministry of Health says that limiting the spread of the disease should be easier because the Asian Tiger Mosquito does not normally travel more than 50 metres from its place of birth.

Meanwhile, the local authority has brought in specialists from the Entente départementale de démolitions to spray the infected area, the Quartier Ferber-Magnan in the west of Nice, with deltamethrin, hoping to limit the spread of *Aedes albopictus* rather than kill all the insects in the area.

### ◆ Wind machines ablaze

An unexpectedly fierce gust of the Mistral in a wind park near Rochefort-en-Valdine, Drôme, caused two generators to spin out of control and catch fire. Fireman could only watch helplessly as the 45-metre-high éoliennes were wrecked. So far there has been no explanation as to why two out of 23 should have gone out of control. Representatives of the manufacturers at the scene said the generators are equipped with "an automatic hydraulic brake" to avoid precisely this sort of accident.

Apart from saving the towers, the firemen were concerned that the very dry undergrowth might catch fire. In 2004, a blade fell off a generator in the same park, fortunately when no one was around. As a result, all 23 machines had to have their blades changed. In August 2008, the cowl at the top of a generator at Vauvillers, Somme, fell 100 metres, again without injuring anyone. Checks on all 3,000 wind generators are being called for throughout France.

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# Immigration Minister cancels visit to Calais Jungle clean-up

from Tim Finan in Calais

Due to EU pressure over the Roma expulsions, Immigration Minister Éric Besson has cancelled a promised visit to Calais to mark the anniversary of the high-profile razing of the notorious 'Jungle' squat camp. M. Besson was to be shown results of a 12-month clean-up of the French channel port – home for over a decade to illegal migrants from Asia and Africa attempting to stow away on ferries to Britain.

Ahead of the visit, riot police moved in with batons and tear gas last week to clear a former Nazi bunker in the centre of Calais of dozens of Ethiopian squatters. Shocked pupils of a school opposite the German bunker saw an African teenage boy fling himself into a canal to escape police, according to one witness.

Police have also razed mini 'Jungles' inhabited by Afghans and Kurds close to the site of the original Jungle where 300 squatters lived until a year ago. Many of the illegal immigrants are in their teens. In the majority of cases, refugees were arrested and released a few hours later to find all their clothes and possessions burnt.

Police also evicted dozens of Vietnamese refugees who were squatting in a huge Nazi bunker between Calais and Boulogne.

Official statistics put the number of migrants currently in Calais at less than a 100 – two thirds less than a year ago. But charity groups say many more are hiding out in squalid huts and in the dozens of massive Nazi bunkers and concrete pill boxes which line the duned Calais coast. They are regularly

evicted by baton-wielding police, given strict orders to clean up the ferry port prior to the minister's visit this week.

The German defences have become almost invisible – covered with 60 years of brambles – and are perfect hiding places for squatters and people smugglers. But police have used helicopters and dogs to locate the mini squat camps.

Said Charles Frammezele who has befriended and helped many of the migrants, "There are fewer refugees than a year ago. The ones that stayed are terrified of the police now as they have pursued a ruthless campaign. It's true that they have cleaned up the image of Calais." M. Frammezele added that many migrants are heading to other Channel ferry ports like Dunkerque, Boulogne and Cherbourg.

At Cherbourg last week, a squat camp occupied by 34 Afghans was burnt in what is believed to have been a racist attack.

A tented prayer room containing a copy of the Koran was destroyed together with nine other tents.

Cherbourg authorities, much more accommodating than their Calais counterparts, put the homeless refugees up in tourist hotels until alternative arrangements could be made. Officials said the migrants' encampment was empty when the torching occurred. A police investigation was launched to trace the culprits.

The Cherbourg torching was just one of a series of attacks on migrants squatting on the French coast this summer.

Last month British and French border police smashed a major people trafficking network that smuggled hundreds of illegals across the Channel. Twenty-six suspects are alleged to have charged migrants £4,000 each to sneak them onto lorries heading from Calais to Dover.



PHOTO © TIM FINAN/FRANCE

Heading for a new life in London, 47-year-old Ethiopian doctor Karar Mohammed has lived in a squalid Calais squat for seven days....

## France ideally placed to substitute ethanol for petrol and create jobs

By 2020, France will have the potential to replace its fossil gasoline energy requirements with next-generation ethanol, according to a new report prepared by Bloomberg New Energy Finance.

Two reasons are cited: first, France, with 477,000 hectares of land under cultivation, has the largest wheat-producing area within Europe; and second, French farmers achieve high wheat yields, of 7.7 tonnes per hectare. It is the residual wheat straw which will be suitable for next-

generation ethanol production.

According to a conservative estimate, France would be capable of producing 15 billion litres of ethanol by 2020, 12bn of which would be for domestic consumption. To achieve this, 185 new refineries will be required, creating between 156,000 and 185,000 jobs during the next 10 years, with some 45% of jobs being retained after the construction stage. Annual revenues from ethanol would be in the order of €6.3bn.

The report, 'Next Generation

Ethanol & Biochemicals: What's In It For Europe' was commissioned by the Dutch firm Royal DSM NV, a materials and life sciences company, and the Danish Novozymes, a world leader in bio-innovation. It concludes that all EU27 countries would benefit from next-generation ethanol; the five top winners after France would be Germany, Spain, the UK, Italy and Poland.

Brian Warshaw

The full report can be downloaded from <http://tinyurl.com/34xbfvu> or <http://tinyurl.com/37ujv5> and click on the report from there.

## European telecoms face Apple and Google

European mobile phone network operators are becoming increasingly concerned about the impact of Apple's iPhone and Google's Android phone operating system on their customers and revenues. So France Telecom's Chief Executive Stéphane Richard has called a meeting for October 8, to include the bosses of Vodafone, Telefonica and Deutsche Telekom.

One possible solution on the table may be for European network operators to develop their own mobile phone software, pitting them head-to-head with American software giants.

Two previous such competitive endeavours have not had great success: Jacques Chirac's government announced in 2005 a joint venture, including France Telecom and Deutsche Telekom, for a publicly-

funded search system, known as Quaero, to compete with the Google search engine. That project was scrapped in 2007. Then the European version of the GPS navigation system, Galileo, has suffered delays and significant budget overruns. The current estimated cost to the European taxpayer of Galileo will be €5 billion, against an initial estimate of €1.8 billion.

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