



The News

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by Emma Phillips

Members of the political party les Républicains have until 2pm today to get their vote in to choose the next candidate for the presidential elections. There are five contenders in the running for the coveted spot: Michel Barnier, Xavier Bertrand, Eric Ciotti, Valérie Pécresse and Philippe Juvin. Last night, the participation rate stood at 64%.

Nearly 500,000 new cases of covid-19 were confirmed yesterday across France. Contamination figures continue to climb, as do hospitalisation rates. Yesterday, for the second consecutive day, there were more than 10,000 new hospital admissions. With hospitals under pressure, in some places extreme measures have been necessary. In Mulhouse and Colmar, hospitals have had to trigger the plan blanc, which means that extra staff come onboard and all non-urgent operations are taken off the schedule.

The Omicron variant has officially arrived in the United States. The first case was confirmed in California in an individual returning from South Africa. Like many other countries, the United States has decided to ban entry to people arriving from eight countries in southern Africa.

A new bill to establish bullying as a specific offence has been approved by the Assemblée Nationale. It provides for penalties of up to ten years in prison for the perpetrator and a 150,000 euro fine, in the event harassment leads to a suicide attempt. The text met with unanimous approval from the Assemblée Nationale on its first reading and now leaves for the Senate with a view to it being adopted in February.

And finally, the professional women's tennis association is distancing itself from China. The WTA announced the suspension of tournaments played in the country yesterday. The crux of the issue is the return of Chinese player Peng Shuai to the courts. Peng Shuai was not seen for weeks after she brought rape charges against a politician in China. Her public reappearance last week has not convinced the WTA. It says Peng Shuai seems to have been put under pressure to reconsider her accusations of sexual assault.