



The News

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by Sarah Heath

French unions are calling for two additional days of protests against pension reforms, scheduled for Tuesday, February the 7th and Saturday, February the 11th. These dates are in the middle of the Zone A school holidays and are aimed at trying to change the government's mind. Yesterday, there were 2.8 million demonstrators across the country according to the CGT although the police calculated the number as being nearer the 1.2 million mark.

Another burning issue for the government is the highly-contested Immigration Bill, which is being defended by the Minister of the Interior, Gérald Darmanin and which will be presented today at the Council of Ministers. The text provides for a series of measures to facilitate the expulsion of "delinquent" foreigners and even a regularization of undocumented workers in sectors that are struggling to hire.

A man and his ex-girlfriend, have been placed in police custody in the Gard. They were arrested yesterday afternoon near Alès as part of the investigation into the disappearance of Sihem, a young woman who has been missing for a week. An investigation for "kidnapping and forcible confinement" is still ongoing.

More than 4 million people are poorly housed in France according to a figure from the Abbé Pierre Foundation report published today. The document states that the number of homeless people has more than doubled in 10 years and is around 330,000 today.

Being February 1st, there are a number of changes being introduced, starting with the rise in the interest rate of the Livret A up by 3%, its highest rate for 15 years. There is also an increase of 15% in the price of electricity, and the new implementation of the unemployment benefit reforms.

And finally, it's one of the most anticipated French films at the beginning of the year: Asterix and Obelix, the Middle Kingdom is released today at the cinema. The film by Guillaume Canet has a cast including Gilles Lellouche, Marion Cotillard and footballer Zlatan Ibrahimovic, rappers BigFlo and Oli but also YouTubers, McFly and Carlito.