



The News

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by Emma Phillips

Yesterday saw large-scale protest across the country against the government's pension reform. Of course, as is to be expected, there is a discrepancy between the numbers reported by unions and those reported by the Ministry of the Interior. Unions claim that 1.3 million people attended rallies across the country, whereas the Ministry claims this figure was closer to 440,000. The next big strike day is scheduled for March 7, with a call for an unlimited strike from the railway union CGT Cheminots.

Meanwhile, in the Assemblée Nationale, officials have until midnight to debate the pension reform bill. The main issue is article 7, which provides for legally pushing back the retirement start age from 62 to 64. In order to speed up discussions, environmental socialists and communists have decided to withdraw their amendments.

The actor Pierre Palmade has confessed to using cocaine and another type of narcotic drug before taking to the wheel last Friday and getting into a head on collision with another car. Palmade remains in hospital in Melun and is in custody for homicide and involuntary injuries after causing the accident in Seine et Marne that left three people seriously injured and caused the death of an unborn baby. Palmade says he has very little memory of the event.

Ten days after the earthquake, the death toll continues to rise in Turkey and Syria. 41,000 people are now reported dead according to official sources. The World Health Organization has called the event "the worst natural disaster in a century" for a country near the European zone.

The actor Bruce Willis has been diagnosed with frontotemporal dementia. His family released a statement yesterday, saying that it was a relief to finally have a clear diagnosis and thanking fans for their "outpouring of love". Last year, it was announced that 67 year old Bruce was no longer able to play any roles due to a speech disorder called aphasia.

And finally, to football and the first leg of the round of 16 of the Europa League has turned out to be a bit of a mixed bag for the French teams in the tournament. Last night Rennes lost against Shakhtar Donetsk 2-1. Nantes drew playing away to Turin 1-1. The most impressive result of the night came from Monaco who won against German club Bayer Leverkusen 3-2.