



The News

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by *Emma Phillips*

380,000 homes are currently without electricity in the west of France. Storm Goretti struck the areas of Brittany and Normandy overnight. The English Channel in particular was swept by very strong winds, with windspeeds reaching 213 km/h. Two people have been rushed to hospital in this weather event, the type of which has not been seen since 1987.

This morning, 21 départements in the north-west of the country remain on amber weather alert for strong winds from Hauts-de-France to the Paris region and Charente-Maritime, along with Landes and Pyrénées-Atlantiques. The prefecture in the Pas-de-Calais is calling for travel to be kept to a minimum.

Emmanuel Macron, has announced that France will vote against the free trade agreement with Mercosur. The president said, on his choice to say no, that the agreement was 'from another era' and that too long had been spent on negotiations on outdated grounds. The 27 member states of the European Union are due to vote today on signing of the treaty. The Mercosur free trade agreement has been met with fierce opposition from the French agricultural sector. Yesterday evening, farmers from across the country filed out of Paris after a day of demonstrations organised by the Coordination rurale.

Emotions will be running high in Switzerland today as the country will observe a day of mourning for the victims of the Crans-Montana fire. A minute's silence will be held at 2p.m. this afternoon and bells will ring throughout the country. 40 people lost their lives and 116 were injured in the fire that broke out in the Constellation bar on New Year's Eve.

And finally, a crew at the International Space Station has had their mission cut short and will be making their return to Earth earlier than planned. NASA has said that the crew will make the return journey in the coming days due to a health problem affecting one of the astronauts. The space agency has not given any further details. This is the first time that this type of evacuation has been made from the ISS.