FRANCE is expected to all but grind to a halt next week as large numbers of the country’s workers go on strike yet again.

On Monday, the SNCF, electricians and gas men, postal workers and the tax authorities will all be off work.

Then on Tuesday action will be stepped up further with all transport workers bringing the country to a standstill.

The strikes will affect planes, trains, buses, motorways and postal services and will include staff from France Telecom, the tax authorities and the banque de France.

Strikes forced France into chaos last Tuesday as airports, schools, fire fighters, policemen and bin men stopped work in protest against government plans to make them work for longer to earn a full pension.

**Angry**

In the strongest demonstrations yet against the government’s pension reforms, angry public sector workers took to the streets of Nice last Tuesday.

Some 20,000 protesters marched in the city’s streets, causing huge traffic jams.

The protesters weren’t just those affected by the reforms; workers from the private sector also chose to take the day off to brandish placards bearing the slogan ‘Public, Private all United for 37.5 years’.

Postal services have been badly disrupted and, combined with this month’s public holidays, letters are piling up. While La Poste puts its feet up, important packages are getting lost and severely delayed.

Striking air traffic controllers staged a walk-out and grounded up to 80 per cent of the 4,000 flights which land or take off in France every day, while bin men kicked up a stink by refusing to empty Parisian bins for the second day running on Tuesday.

Teachers are keeping away from the classrooms – unions estimate that up to 60 per cent of teachers had joined the strike which has kept some kids off school for weeks and disrupted exams.

Not only are teachers protesting against the reforms but they are also against plans to decentralise education funding which they fear will cost thousands of classroom assistant and other school jobs.

Patrick Malandin of the CGT/USAC union said, “we have no choice left, the government is not listening to us so if nothing changes we will have to hit harder and for longer.”

**Crippling**

Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin is keen to avoid the fate of France’s last conservative government which lost power in 1997 after crippling strikes forced it to scrap pension reforms.

He has only two weeks to pacify teachers before the bulk of secondary school exams start on June 12. Exams for the vocational BTS certificate have already been hit.

The government insists its reform plans are the only way to save the state-run pension system from a funding crisis when post war baby boomers start hitting retirement age.

“W e cannot retreat on the need for reform,” said Philippe Douste-Blazy, vice president of the ruling UMP party. The plan is due to be given the go-ahead by cabinet on Wednesday and enter parliament on June 10.

Locally, workers are predicted to be on strike on and off for most of June – before taking their annual paid leave in July and August.
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The Riviera Gazette
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Drink in the clink

STAFF at a prison in Meurthe-et-Moselle discovered twelve litres of secretly distilled alcohol in the cell of a prisoner sentenced to 16 years for armed robbery. The booze, made from apples and pears from the prison canteen, was 60 degrees proof and described by the prison governor as “good” even “very good”.

Classy exchange

A GROUP of particularly pretty villages around the Med – dubbed ‘The Six Exceptional Villages of the Mediterranean Countries’ – are to organise student exchange trips and are planning to create a brand for high-quality tourism products. The villages include St Tropez and St Paul de Vence, with Corfu town, Capri, Sidi Boussaid and Porto Fino.

Electric taxi launch

FRANCE’S first electrically powered taxi was launched last week on the island of Porquerolles, off the coast of the Var. Its introduction, along with eleven other ‘green’ cars, is aimed at further reducing pollution on the island, which is noted for its clean air.

Competition stiffens

PHARMACEUTICAL companies Bayer and GSK have introduced an alternative male anti-impotence pill. Levitra has one up on Viagra – it acts after as little as fifteen minutes and is effective for four to five hours.

Asylum seekers up

FIGURES out last week show that 51,087 demanded political asylum in France last year, an increase of eight percent on 2001.

SOVEREIGN

UPDATE

FRENCH PROPERTY – MAXIMISE YOUR INVESTMENT

According to a recent survey, half a million britons own property in France. The overseas property market is booming and on the Côte d’Azur the average price of property is now EUR650,000 – an increase of 50 per cent over the past two years.

Stock market uncertainties have made property an attractive option. But the way in which you purchase your property can have long lasting financial implications, so thoroughly research your options before you buy. Purchasing property overseas may surprise the accountant in the evening capital gains tax, inheritance tax and both, leaving you with an unexpectedly high tax bill.

To maximise your investment, using a legal entity to purchase high-value properties could reduce or even avoid these tax pitfalls. The correct ownership may also provide other benefits including savings on legal fees, transfer taxes, value added taxes and stamp duties on any future sales.

Capital gains tax

Unless you have owned the property for over 22 years, French capital gains tax is payable regardless of your country of residence and is charged for direct ownership or the sale of shares in a property based entity up to 33.3 per cent less relief after two years.

To put this into perspective, a property on the Côte d’Azur purchased two years ago for EUR250,000 may well now be worth over EUR500,000. If you sell the property this would yield a profit of EUR250,000 but also a capital gains tax bill of approximately EUR83,000.

Buying through a structure, however, may mean you can avoid paying capital gains. Using a legal French entity held in a Luxembourg SOPARFI (a special type of company combining the commercial and holding benefits of Luxembourg’s tax treaties), the property is sold through the transfer of shares. This means the capital gain is in Luxembourg where there is currently no tax.

Inheritance tax

Inheritance tax in France is charged up to 40 per cent, depending on the relationship between the deceased and the beneficiary. This is payable regardless of the residency of the owner of the property.

As a company owner dies, this tax can normally be avoided with the correct legal entity ownership structure. This may also provide you with additional planning opportunites for the eventual transfer of the ownership – through a discretionary trust, for example.

Patrimonial tax

This is an annual three per cent tax applicable to French and foreign companies owning real estate in France, where there is no tax treaty and the appropriate declarations have not been made. The charge means that more traditional property holding structures using offshore companies are not recommended. Luxembourg, however, has signed a tax treaty with France permitting an exemption from this charge. So purchasing property through the Luxembourg SOPARFI structure described above, will avoid this charge.

Get advice

Be aware of the tax implications of purchasing property overseas and get advice. If you would like more information on how to minimise the tax planning and asset protection matters, please contact us.

The information provided in this article does not constitute advice and no responsibility will be accepted for any less than carefully or indirectly as a result of persons acting, or refraining from acting, wholly or partially in reliance upon it.

Taxing issues?

Since the 80’s, Sovereign has helped thousands of individuals and companies to protect and maximise their assets and reduce their tax exposure. In a rapidly changing world you need the resources and support of a global organisation to ensure you receive the highest assistance for your needs.

There are many legitimate and highly effective ways for individuals and corporations to reduce their tax bills and we know about most of them. Contact Sovereign – if there’s a legal way to reduce your tax exposure we’ll find it. View our details on www.sovereigngroup.com.

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FRONT OFFICE

Tuesday 29 May 2003

CMYK

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FRONT OFFICE

Tuesday 29 May 2003
Fire ravages classic yacht in Villefranche

A DRAMATIC scene unfolded at port de la Darse in Villefranche-sur-Mer last Saturday night as a newly-restored classic yacht was ravaged by fire.

The 36 metre La Doriana burst into flames at 3:30am, and was completely gutted as twelve fire engines and fifty fire-fighters rushed to the scene.

“The fire wasn’t fully put out until the next afternoon because the firemen could not access the interior of the boat,” the capitainerie’s Adele Desantes, who was at the scene, told The Riviera Gazette.

“The flames were leaping five metres into the air and the fire scorched the varnish on a neighbouring boat, but luckily we woke up the person asleep on board and evacuated them to safety. There wasn’t anyone on La Doriana.

The driver, who had 0.84g blood, was arrested. The legal limit is 0.75g per litre.

“A BRITISH MAN has been sent to prison for four years after knitting his wife in a café in Nice’s Cours Saleya.

Brian Holland, a retired IBM engineer, has been living in Cagnes-sur-Mer for several years.

After an argument with Marlene she left the marital home to stay with a friend in Nice. Holland found her at a café and, angered at her refusal to acknowledge him, stabbed her in the shoulder with a kitchen knife he was carrying at the time.

Holland’s solicitor assured the court that he had been “killed psychologically by what had happened,” but he was nevertheless found guilty of aggravated violence and sent to jail.

Massive Attack coming to Cannes

MASSIVE ATTACK, Asian Dub Foundation and Le Peuple de l’herbe are to headline this year’s Cannes Beach Party.

The event will run from July 19 to 22 in the Palm Beach car park and looks set to be a smash hit.

The 36 metre La Doriana was built in 1930 and was completely restored and has been in the shipyard for the past year and a half. More and more damaged we around the port, which would break free and float up in the waves and be lost.

The yacht had just been completely restored and had been in the shipyard for the past year and a half. Investigators are now trying to ascertain how the blaze started, and owner Eetelka Riffe is said to be in a state of shock.

A SCHOOL bus driver has been caught ferrying school kiddies while over the drink-drive limit.

The driver, who had 0.84g blood, was arrested. The legal limit is 0.75g per litre.

Massive Attack, who were walking with breaks overnight. I have good five full days, eight hours a day.

The bus driver was over the limit.

A SCHOOL bus driver has been caught ferrying school kiddies while over the drink-drive limit.

The driver was stopped by police at Nice St Isidore and the children had to wait while his boss came to replace him.

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Earth moving stuff

AN earthquake that killed over 2,000 in Algeria was felt along the coast of the Riviera last Wednesday night.

Freak waves were reported from Theoule to Menton at 20.53 and again at 21:11 as the tremors reached our shores, and the port at Theoule suffered a bizarre phenomenon as the basin almost emptied of water before filling again.

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Businessman’s walk for charity

A WELL-KNOWN local businessman is setting off on a five day walk to the region’s highest point on Friday.

Peter Johnson, the president of the local British Chamber of Commerce, and London-based businessman Oren Griffiths will walk from sea level at Menton to Cime de Gelas, the highest point in the Alpes-Maritimes at 3,152 metres. The hike is in aid of UNICEF and the region’s highest point on Friday.

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A SWEDISH furniture giant’s plans to open a superstore in Cagnes-sur-Mer came under threat this week.

Local residents are campaigning against the opening of the Ikea store as they say it will mean even more traffic on the already overloaded A8 motorway.

“This is going to be one of the biggest Ikea stores in France. Over a million extra cars will be visiting the area every year,” Vençois told The Riviera Gazette.

“We are collecting as many signatures as possible to show the local council that residents are opposed to the store,” he concluded.

**Vice Admiral pays tribute to war dead**

AMERICANS in the region celebrated Memorial Day last Monday.

The American Embassy in Marseille invited some 500 guests to Draguignan’s Rhône cemetery to pay tribute to the 861 GI’s buried there.

Among the military top brass present was Vice Admiral Scott Fry, commander of the US Navy’s sixth fleet, based in Naples, Italy.

Memorial Day stems from the American civil war and is traditional-ly the day when Americans remember their war dead at home and abroad.

**Taylor’s tears at AIDS charity do**

IT’S TeARS AT AIDS CHARITY DO

Silver screen legend Elizabeth Taylor burst into tears in front of a stunned crowd during a star-stud- ded bash to raise money for Aids in Mougins last Thursday night.

“She’s sorry for getting so emotional. But I know so many people who have died from this,” the actress said, before being helped off stage and leaving before the dinner ended.

She was hosting the 10th annual Cinema Against Aids gala for the American Foundation for Aids Research, which raised more than $1.3m by aucti- oning anything from ten-nis lessons with Monica Seles to a vanity case designed by Sharon Stone.

“Don’t be cheap tonight,” please bid a lot,” designer Donatella Versace begged the audience. “It’s not a free dinner, you’re supposed to spend money here.”

And this was certainly no freebie, with tickets cost- ing from €25,000 to €100,000 for a table. But that didn’t stop 300 guests still turning up at the exclu- sive Moulin de Mougins restaurant where the gala was held.

Big-hearted celebs delved deep into their wallets with Sir Elton John paying $35,000 for a pair of diamond ear- rings and Cult film director Luc Besson splurging the same amount on a Beetle cabriolet – twice its normal price.

A Helmut Newton photogra- ph of Liz Taylor was bought by an anonymous bidder for $45,000.

Then Lionel Ritchie and Elton John took to the stage and wowed the crowd with an impromptu duet.

Gravel-voiced crooner Mary Gray also had a turn, sporting baggy black trainers under her black and silver evening gown.

Other stars at the glitter- ing event included Liz Hurley, dressed in a stun- ning fuschia evening dress with jewellery by Chopard.

Not to be out-classed, De Beers called up icon Iman who arrived at the restau- rant in their wildflower couture- necklace, a bargain at $200,000.

**Scandal men bailed**

TWO men suspected of involvement in the Nice city hall kickbacks scandal have been released on bail. René Dalo and Henri Baecht are out of prison but will have to appear in court again on June 4.

**Spending money here**

Elton John took to the stage and leaving before the dinner ended.

**The Riviera Gazette**

**Euro surges ahead**

TUE euro hit a new peak against the dollar this week. A euro now costs $1.1914 - its lowest point was at 90.36 cents in April 2000.

**Robbery at festival**

JEWELLERY worth €5,000 was stolen from a villa rented by Cannes film fes- tival goers last Friday.

Thieves swooped in between four and five in the morning without wak- ing any of the 20 houseguests or get- ting off the burglar alarm.

**Win return tickets to Warsaw with LOT Polish Airlines and The Riviera Gazette**

Warsaw, often called the “Paris of the north”, is a short flight from the Riviera, and now LOT Polish Airlines flies there direct from Nice Côte d’Azur airport six days a week.

LOT’s brand new Boeing and Airbus aircraft also offer fast and convenient connections from Warsaw onwards to hundreds of destinations worldwide. And, of course, you benefit from- fron- famous Polish hospitality en-route and a chance to pick up duty-free goods – after all, Poland isn’t in the EU quite yet!

To be in with a chance of winning a pair of return tickets to Warsaw, simply answer the following question. **What time of day does LOT fly out of Nice?**

Email your answer and your name and address to lotmagaz@lot.pl, or post to: **Win a generous LOT!** The Riviera Gazette, 732 Route Notre Dame, Cote d’Azur, France.

**Cannes riot cruise organiser sentenced**

THE organiser of a cruise that ended in a riot in Cannes was handed an eight month suspended sentence in an Aix court last week.

The uprising took place in May 1998 when passengers on board La France protested that events they had paid for were not provided.

They were promised tickets to the closing party for the Cannes film fes- tival, a gala dinner with French actor Gerard Depardieu and director Francis Ford Coppola, and a screening of the film Godzilla.

**Gays welcome**

MONTEPELLIER, Lhte and Le Mans are the most gay-friendly cities in France, according to a survey released in the June issue of gay magazine’Ietu.

**New build apartments set in private gardens, in the heart of old Antibes**

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**Monsieur les passagers du bateau – à bord, passagers – Au revoir!”**
and playing music with a broomstick and tea chest... We also went to Café Bruin in Biot – partly because Jane’s nephew and niece run it, but also because it’s so convivial, with the kind of atmosphere you can’t manufacture, like an English pub.

We also like to go to the cinema in Valbonne because it’s essentially in English with French subtitles. However, it’s not foolproof – we recently saw Sweet-nothings, a film set in Glasgow, and we couldn’t understand the thick Scottish accents and didn’t have a clue what was going on at all. All the French people did, though, as they were merely reading the subtitles!

One of the funny things here is everything seems to be a contradiction. The area is very built-up but I’ve noticed you always tend to keep up the countryside. And you have the frenetic energy of the motorway, crossed with people racing around Bar-sur-Loup and they were merrily reading the English subtitles.

Of course, also enjoy exploring our new home – we’re enjoying going for a drive, often up around Bar-sur-Loup and Tourrettes and the area beyond. Well, I also like to visit as many vineyards in the Var as possible...

We do like to eat out, especially at Pierre au Four in Valbonne. It’s very French, with a charming waitress and very reasonable priced food.

My Riviera

Ted Turner tells Jenny Paul about retiring to the Riviera and playing music with a broomstick and tea chest...

NO REGRETS... Retiree Ted and wife Jane have found plenty to do
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Classifieds

**Classifieds**

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Thursday 29

One of the most famous car races in the world, the Monaco Grand Prix, starts today on the streets of Monte Carlo. In the 1931 race, when Charles Leveque had won the crown, this race is one of the principal's main social events and, unusually, tickets for this year’s race are available from the Automobile Club Monte Carlo, Prices start at €250. Tel: 03 99 93 15 26 24.

An exhibition of paintings by three Chinese artists is opening to the public until late May in Eze. The trio have lived in France for more than a year and half, showcasing their interpretation of traditional Chinese and European art together with their own innovative artistic techniques. Viewing is at the Salles des Fêtes in the village. Tel: 04 93 41 20 20.

Starting this evening for three nights, RADA, the Riviera Avant-Garde Dramatic Association is staging Alarms and Excursions. These eight short plays by Michael Frayn examine the difficulties modern technology has added to our lives. Performances start at 20:30 at the Mougins School. Tickets are available at €30 from the English Book Centre in Yvoire or from P student of children’s books. (including but not limited to text, photographs and illustrations) is owned by or licensed to the publishers. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part of any text, photograph or illustration is strictly prohibited without prior written permission from the publisher or publisher's representative. The Riviera Gazette name and logo are trademarks belonging to The Riviera Gazette. Neither the Riviera Gazette nor its representatives are responsible for any clerical or typographical errors or omissions. Published by The Riviera Gazette SARL. All material in this issue is available in print and on-line. Submission of articles, pictures or other materials does not guarantee publication. All Intellectual Property Rights are reserved. For further details email rivieragazette@bluewin.ch.

Monday 2

Finals of the Draguignan Bowls Championships to be held at the Boulodrome Jardin des Plantes, Draguignan, at 14:00. Tel: 04 94 10 15 05.

LOT Flies to Copenhagen, Gdansk, Krakow, Lisbon, Malta, Milan, Prague, Warsaw and Valencia at 16:30.

Tuesday 3

Monaco USA, the club for Americans and friends of the US, is holding its first Tuesday of the Month Get-together at the Métropole Beach Plaza, avenue Princesse Grace at 19:00. For further details call Isabelle or Merrell. Tel: 06 78 43 56 75.

Wednesday 4

The British Association of the Alpes Maritimes and the Var is holding an annual family lunch at Le Baraquin in Anges. They provide the food and plenty of wine; guests bring their own cutlery, plates and glasses. Price is €12 for members and €24 for guests. Tel: 04 99 73 32 02.

Over 150 painters and sculptors from Provence are exhibiting and selling their work in the centre of St Remy de Provence, near Avignon, today. Lots of different styles and techniques will be on show with prices to suit every pocket.

LOT Flies to Copenhagen, Gdansk, Krakow and Warsaw at 16:30.

Friday 30

The International School of Nice is holding an annual gala dinner and dance today with proceeds to be presented with diplomas and individual awards for achievements in various disciplines. Tel: 04 94 01 21 04.

Point pop-up comedians Kit and the Widow are performing at the Antiba Theatre tonight and tomorrow for their seventh appearance in Antibes. In place of the usual, the duo are frankly desperate: “What, oh what, can we do to entertain the audience of so-called fans. And even Alan Titchmarsh – Ordeal or Ragwort?” To gate the pair: book early to ensure disappointment. Tickets are €25. Tel: 06 91 86 01 21.

LOT Flies to Copenhagen, Gdansk, Prague, Stockholm and Warsaw at 16:30.

Saturday 31

Antibes’ annual Battle of the Flowers takes place today in the streets of Juan-les-Pins, Vieux Port and Attraits Pont Vauban. Tel: 04 94 35 79 89.

La Côte aux Loups Model Salon starting today is a two day exhibition of model toys, cars and planes at the Parc Intermontain des Sports. Tel: 04 99 32 82 86.

Choose lovers should head for Enterre today for the Pâques du Fourrage at La Cave aux Six Marches. It’s a chance to mingle with regional producers of cheese, bread, wine and beef. A picnic area will be laid out with chairs, tablecloths, plates, glasses and offer a variety of local dishes. The day starts at 10:00 and carries on into the evening when Irish band from Eire will be performing at 20:00. Tel: 04 94 05 49 82.

For jazz fans Le Passe Muraille in Vieux Vence is featuring a show with the Trio Franco Durand and press there were still tickets available from 10:00. Tel: 06 81 43 66 33 includes a three course dinner. For reservations call the restaurant. Tel: 04 99 58 10 21.

Niki Banius Cafe in port Camille Rayon Gollé is having its eightieth birthday party from midnight till the early hours of the morning. Tel: 04 93 91 67 79.

LOT Flies to Gdansk, Warsaw and Wrocław at 16:30.

Continuing today are Alarms and Excursions, Kit and the Widow and the Monaco Grand Prix. Sunday 1

Monaco’s Formula One Grand Prix takes place from today 1:00. The Gazette went to press to see that tickets are still available at €320 from the Automobile Club Monaco; the race will also be screened live on FTI. Tel: 03 99 93 15 26.

Menton’s annual garden month starts today and continues until the end of June. Gardens open to the public include the seven hectares Serre de la Madone with its rare species grown between the ponds and statues, and Val Rahmeh with over 700 species of plants and trees including, kiwi, avocado, banana, and a very rare sacred lophophora. Taranto from Easter Island is currently in full bloom. The Maria Serena vines and gardens are on the sea front, the last house before the Italian border. The vine is surrounded by a hedge and a shah of gardens, where tropical and sub-tropical plants thrive alongside a large collection of palm trees and cycads. Tel: 04 92 41 76 78.

Dog and country lovers should head for Bar and the top of the annual dog show, organised by the Hunting Association. Between 09:00 and 19:00 at La Papeterie there will be working dog trials for owners and dogs to show off their skills, demonstrations of rescue dogs at work, and even a competition to see who can do the best buried bone.

Mouans Sartoux is holding its annual Fête de la Forêt in the Plan Sarren forest. Local firemen will demonstrate how they put out forest fires and other events include archery competitions, horse and pony rides, and La Gambade de la Forêt, a 10km working race in the woods. Tickets to join in the race are available from the tourist office and include a pasta afterlunch. Prices are €11 if you pay in advance, €19 on the day. Events, weather and prices will be on display in the note of the Day. Tel: 04 93 95 77 16.

Bealessier-ster has an all day second-hand market in the Port de Planasence starting at 10:00. Tel: 04 93 95 24 21.

Riviera Singles is having its regular get-together this evening on Île Sainte Marguerite, a short boat trip from Cannes. For further details email rivierasingles@yahoo.co.uk.

LOT Flies to Copenhagen, Gdansk, Krakow, Stockholm and Warsaw at 16:30.