

NATIONAL DAY OF FRANCE

The Daily Star

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

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Lille - European capital of culture

CLAUDINE CANETTI

METROPOLITAN Lille in the North of France has the prestigious honour of being "European Capital of Culture" together with Genoa in Italy. It wishes to stress the importance of solidarity and generosity thus making it "the most European Capital of Culture". For the first time since 1985 when 15 members of the European Union created this yearly event it has become a cross border issue. Belgium and the United Kingdom have been invited. Many countries that are more distant have also received a friendly welcome.

There is a festive and surprisingly modern atmosphere, a willingness to engage in an enduring dialogue with the inhabitants of some 150 towns which associate with Lille in a rich and lively programme including exhibitions, concerts, shows, traditional celebrations, films, the renovation of remarkable architectural heritage, thought provoking assemblies and innovative experiences. Martine Aubry the Mayor of Lille and President of "Lille 2004" defines it as being "a new way of doing things together".

Lille has staked a lot on the fact that it is easy to go from one place to the other thanks to a particularly well developed transport network in the heart of a Euro-region that has contributed a lot to this cultural year and will, we hope, continue after 2004. It also relies on the idea of a "colour festival". The Nord-Pas de Calais region with its historic industrial past does not want to be "seen only in black and white". Yet "Lille 2004" started with a spectacular "White Ball" on December 6, 2003 the children's feast day of Saint Nicholas. The main event that evening was the concert given by Lille National Orchestra conducted by

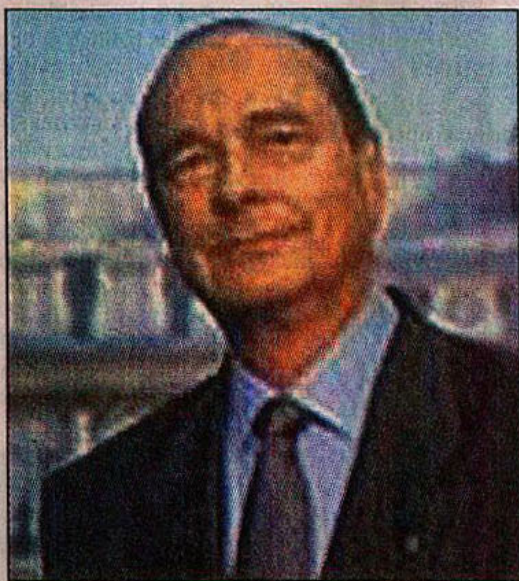
Jean-Claude Casadesus. They played the Chant des Chemins de Fer (Song of the Railroads) composed by Hector Berlioz for the inauguration of the Lille-Flandres Railway Station in 1846 but had been forgotten ever since. This musical revival took place on the square in front of the building all lit up in pink (here are the colours) thanks to surrounding lights and coloured filters placed on the 10,000 square metres of glass roof.

Contemporary artists, designers and inventors received commissions for these "Metamorphoses" of the urban landscape. Another striking metamorphosis consisted in a "suspended forest" with trees hanging upside down 12 metres above ground, an extravagant and polymorphic fountain copied from the characters of a comic strip a "Gallery of mechanical Monsters" in a reconstructed street of Shanghai. There was also a starry roof, a sort of airport for astronauts made up of seven huge archways above the cars and people in the street.

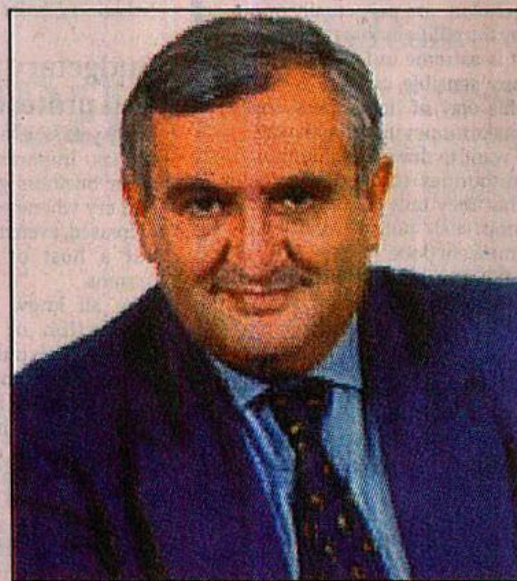
Lille 2004 invented three other innovative cultural events. First "Parallel Worlds" during 33 weekends people will discover the outskirts of New York, Tango dancing, young Polish, Chinese and Canadian artists, water, robots, Jamaica, Marrakech, Graffiti and even the art of cooking soup. Then the "Maisons Folies" twelve outstanding places in old factories or buildings belonging to the architectural heritage where young artists in residence will invite the inhabitants to take part in artistic, cultural and amusing activities.

As for the Belfries, Belfrois de la Culture, twelve cities that have no museum will hold an exhibition for one month in the belfry in connection with an artist or a particular theme (portraits and self portraits

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Jacques Chirac
President of the Republic of France



Jean-Pierre Raffarin
Prime Minister of the Republic of France

Architects highlight the French cultural heritage

ANNIK BIANCHINI

THROUGHOUT France there is a network of "Heritage Architects" who are specialised in the conservation of historic buildings. They are in charge of all the services related to research design and implementation regarding architectural, urban and landscape settings. They are graduates of the "Centre des Hautes Etudes de Chaillot" (CEDHEC) and endeavour to promote all that concerns the national heritage they develop exchanges and relationships with their foreign colleagues.

"Heritage Architects" specialise in the upkeep of the French historic buildings. They carry out projects and give advice in all the fields concerning architecture, town

planning and urban development. They are present all over the country and obey the rules and regulations regarding architects and their profession. They include independent architects, head architects in charge of historic buildings, a large number of state architects and town planners who have officially become the Architects of the Buildings of France and the State Town Planners since 1993.

Prosper Mérimée whose bicentenary was recently celebrated was certainly one of those who invented the idea of "Ancient Monuments". He was a writer, a politician, an art lover and a protector of the national heritage giving as much importance to each of his passions. He began to prepare the ground for a policy concerning the protection of

historic buildings and created a real public institution that came into being in 1913 at the same time as the law concerning these monuments. This law is still enforced today.

These architects use their know how to restore, develop, restructure rehabilitate and

reconstruct the buildings listed on the Supplementary Inventory of Historic Monuments in conservation areas or districts concerned by a safeguarding and enhancing scheme and neighbourhoods concerned by the preservation of the architectural, urban and landscape heritage. They mainly deal with projects contracted by the state, local authorities and private owners.

"The whole idea is to keep the right balance between the building materials and a respect for the surrounding buildings," Jean-Paul Mauduit, the president of the

Association of Heritage Architects explains. However, before starting on a project a detailed research is necessary in order to understand the problems relating to the building and the area. "The renovation and extension of the Marceau Secondary School in

Chartres right in the middle of a conservation area next to the buildings of the "Saint

Père" Abbey, a listed monument, will provide coherence between two very different units" adds Jean-Paul Mauduit who is in charge of the project.

The rehabilitation of the former Delesme barracks for the Poitiers Education

Authorities in the Poitou-Charentes region (to the west of central France) and the construction of a technical capacity for the Chateau Gontier Hospital (an extension of the old "Hotel Dieu" Hospital) in the Mayenne (north-west of France) are also two projects corresponding to the "High Quality Environment" requirements. In the Paris region the town of Sceaux has just finished the rehabilitation of the covered market which is the exact copy of the one built by Baltard (the famous nineteenth century architect who often used metal structures). Wood-Potet, the project managers, reconstructed the ancient market dating back to 1889. The metal structure was visible, the spaces were filled up with decorative bricks and a copy of the former pediment was restored. "The structures were preserved and restored but it conformed to all the present day standards. This is compulsory when there is a re-use of a building," Véronique Wood, vice-president of the Association of Heritage Architects, says.

In order to become a heritage architect one must attend a post-graduate course at the Chaillot Architectural Institute (CEDHEC) also called "Ecole de Chaillot". It provides advanced classes in history, maintenance, conservation, rehabilitation and the use of ancient monuments. Only architects with a French degree or some other recognised foreign degree are admitted. The course covers a period of two academic years with two days of tuition every two weeks, which allows the students to keep their job. About a hundred students attend.

At every session, the "Ecole de Chaillot" enrolls several foreign architects for a postgraduate course. It organises seminars and workshops on existing sites gathering students from institutes in other countries such as Scotland and Romania (Ion Mincu Institute of Architecture). "It is field work we are faced with real issues," Florence Babic, the vice president of the Association of Heritage Architects points out.

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MESSAGE

ON the 14th of July, France celebrates her National Day in remembrance of the storming of the Bastille in 1789 which put an end to royal absolutism and to the Festival of Federation a year later which symbolises the unity of the Nation.

The celebration of the French National Day provides a good opportunity to recall how ancient and strong are the bonds which link France and Bangladesh. They can be dated back to the end of the 17th century when the first French traders arrived in this part of Bengal. A more recent milestone in these relations occurred during the War of Liberation in 1971 when France sided with the people of this country fighting for their independence.

During the last year our bilateral relations have experienced new developments. It has to be recalled that, in February, the stone-laying ceremony of the Lafarge Surma Cement Plant in Chhatak was graced with the presence of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, thus recognizing the importance of this investment for the economy of Bangladesh. We are now busy preparing a visit by

a group of high-level French businessmen later this year with a view to explore possibilities of new investments. The same period has shown a further increase in the trade between our two countries mainly due to the dynamism of the local garment exporters. But, in order to diversify your exports, a Bangladesh single country Fair was held in Paris in November 2003 and it met with remarkable success according to all the participants.

Our cultural and technical cooperation has been steadily pursued in particular in the field of public administration, civil aviation, medicine and biology. The team of French archeologists who came again to Mahasthangarh this year found new evidence of the long presence of human settlements in this part of Bengal and uncovered a few remarkable works of art which are now under the custody of the local Museum. The relations between the Dhaka National Museum and the Guimet Museum in Paris have been further strengthened with the aim of improving the display of the many treasures owned by the former with the assistance of

the latter. It is also worth mentioning the « French April in Dhaka » when three exhibitions of French artists were organised, notably one at the Alliance Française in Dhaka where works by celebrated artists like Matisse and Picasso were for the first time shown in this country.

As a conclusion I would like to reiterate my expression of friendship and respect for the people of Bangladesh, the confidence in the democratic future of this country and in its social and economic development.



Michel Lammann
Ambassador of France to Bangladesh

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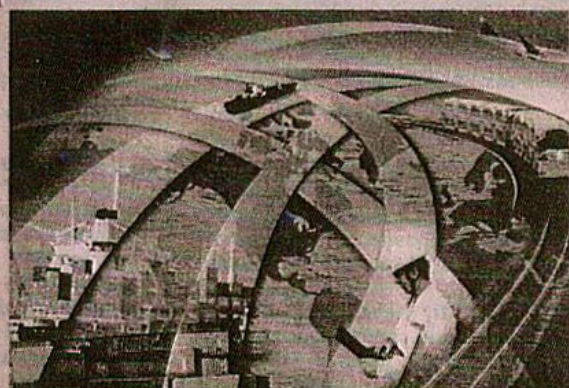
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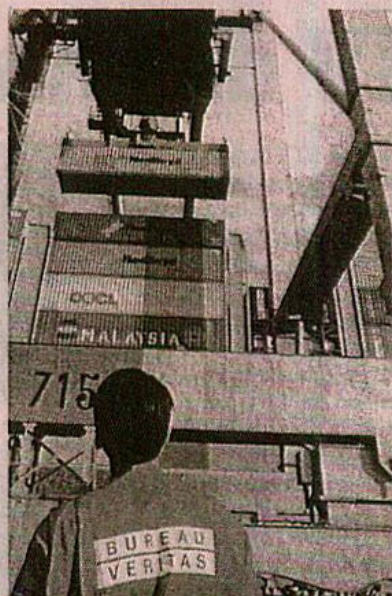
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