

BASQUE NEWS

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The ex-Lehendakaris Garaikoetxea and Ardanza read a written declaration before the Tree of Gernika.

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The ceremony was organised in support of the Lehendakari and other defendants Seven hundred elected representatives of the government rallied in Gernika against the judicialisation of politics

After learning in October of the decision of the Supreme Court of the Basque Country to proceed with the case presented by the Foro de Ermua against the Lehendakari Ibarretxe for his meeting with members of Batasuna, the reactions from many sectors of our society were not long in coming. The last of these took the form of a rally in support of the Lehendakari, attended recently at the Gernika Assembly House by some 700 elected representatives of PNV, EA and Ezker Batua. This occasion was also used as a token of supporters' solidarity with the ex-President of the Basque Parliament, Juan Mari Atutxa and members of the last Parliamentary Committee, Conchi Bilbao and Gorka Knörr, following the reopening of legal proceedings against them. The meeting was organised by the Presidents of Eudel and the Basque Parliament, as well as the General Councils of Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia, who acted in their capacity as elected members and not in representation of

their respective institutions.

The Gernika ceremony was full of symbolism as it was held before the oak tree that symbolizes Basque liberties and included the reading by the ex-Lehendakaris, Carlos Garaikoetxea and José Antonio Ardanza of a declaration of a "commitment to democracy and the exercise of politics".

The text echoed the "serious concern of Basque citizens who are witnessing the progressive judicialisation of politics, the lack of a respect for democracy and consideration for Basque political institutions", with the general aim of "wrecking efforts to seek harmony in inter-institutional relations".

"Dialogue can never be a crime"

After recalling that, today, the Basque Country "lives in the hope of a new opportunity to overcome decades of violence and suffering and centuries of political strife", the manifesto is catego-

rical in its statement that "dialogue and institutional and political measures to foster just solutions for conflicts, can never be illegal, and much less criminal".

For all these reasons, the elected political representatives present in Gernika reaffirm "their commitment to the decisions adopted by institutions and their legal representatives"; demand an end to the violent acts of ETA; defend the separation of powers as "a fundamental pillar of democracy and the democratic state"; manifest their support for the highest representatives of this country and other political representatives who have been persecuted by judicial means" and express their "permanent commitment to peace and the exercise of politics through dialogue".

The Gernika Declaration, as well as the agreements signed by those attending the rally, will be sent to the Presidents of the Congress and Senate in Madrid, as well as to the General Council for the Judiciary. ►

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Controversial legal decisions

The ceremony held in Gernika is just one more sign of the concern that exists across large sectors of Basque society as a result of the latest legal decisions against representatives of Basque institutions and political parties.

In addition to the decision of the Supreme Court of the Basque Country to charge the Lehendakari for the meeting held last April with members of Batasuna, Arnaldo Otegi, Pernando Barrena and Juan

Joxe Petrikorena, further legal proceedings are to be taken against leaders of the socialist party, Patxi López and Rodolfo Ares, for the same reason, also at the behest of PP and the Foro de Ermua. Both have also received the support of fellow socialists at a ceremony organised by the Socialist Party.

Moreover, in addition to a series of controversial decisions, the Basque Supreme Court has also decided to back the decision of the Madrid Supreme Court to reopen

proceedings against the ex-President of the Basque Parliament, Juan Mari Atutxa and members of the previous Parliamentary Committee, Conchi Bilbao y Gorka Knörr for refusing to break up the parliamentary group Sozialista Abertzaleak (currently disbanded), just one year after being absolved by the Basque Supreme Court of a charge of disobedience. Today, the Madrid Supreme Court has reversed the decision of the Basque Supreme Court and has ordered a retrial.

Ibarretxe declares the recognition of the Basque Country for the victims of terrorism in Andalusia

He took part in a conference in Cordoba, invited by the Association of Andalusia

The Lehendakari, Juan José Ibarretxe, travel recently to Cordoba in response to an invitation from the Association of Andalusia of Victims of Terrorism to take part in the conference, which is organised on a yearly basis.

Before an audience of more than two hundred victims, Ibarretxe passed on a message of recognition and affection for those who have suffered first-hand the scourge of terrorist violence “because I am aware of the suffering you have been subjected to, very often in silence and solitude”. Ibarretxe was selfcritical in his examination of the role played in the past by institutions to deal with the plight of victims, and recognised that they “were not capable at that time of breaking down the invisible barrier

that inhuman violence brings into our lives and prevented you from knowing of our concern and recognition”.

In the opinion of the Lehendakari, there is still time “to say sorry” and to “fill that void that opened one day with the victims”, as, if we wish to face the future in liberty “we cannot do so based on a desire to forget or close one's eyes to what occurred in the past - we must be critical of what happened”. For that reason, Ibarretxe undertook to “bear witness” to the “unjust suffering of innocent people”, and to make reparations for that suffering. “The victims and their families have every right to rebuild their lives and to look forward to the future, and

public institutions are obliged to respond to that right”, he stated.

In this sense, and after pointing out that “you, the victims, are the best messengers of peace”, Ibarretxe alluded to the Peace and Coexistence Plan drawn up by the Basque Government (see no. 89 of Basque News), based on a recollection of the past, a respect for human rights and on a recognition of the victims. He also announced the forthcoming presentation in the Basque Parliament of the Solidarity with the Victims of Terrorism Law, created with the aim of making this the “moral base” on which to consolidate the measures taken by the Basque Government in order to support victims.



The Lehendakari attended the speech by the Mayoress of Cordoba, together with the other guests at the ceremony.

Two Basque centres are doing pioneering research into stems cells

Inbiobank will be the first adult cell bank and the CIC bioGUNE will fight against Parkinson's disease with embryonic cells

The Basque Country already has a bank of adult stem cells –Inbiobank– located on the Miramón Technology Park, in Donostia, which will become the second centre of this type currently in operation in the State. Moreover, another leading Basque laboratory, located in this case on the Zamudio Technology Park in Bizkaia, will lead research into Parkinson's disease, through the use of embryonic stem cells. Both initiatives make the Basque Country an attractive location for researchers, in view of the important applications that these trials may have for the treatment of diseases, as well as the manufacture of new medicines.

The new cell bank is an initiative of the Inbiomed Foundation and has two objectives: produce cells from research developed within the same centre and supply these cells to technology, hospital and pharmaceutical centres.

Sheets of human skin for subsequent implants

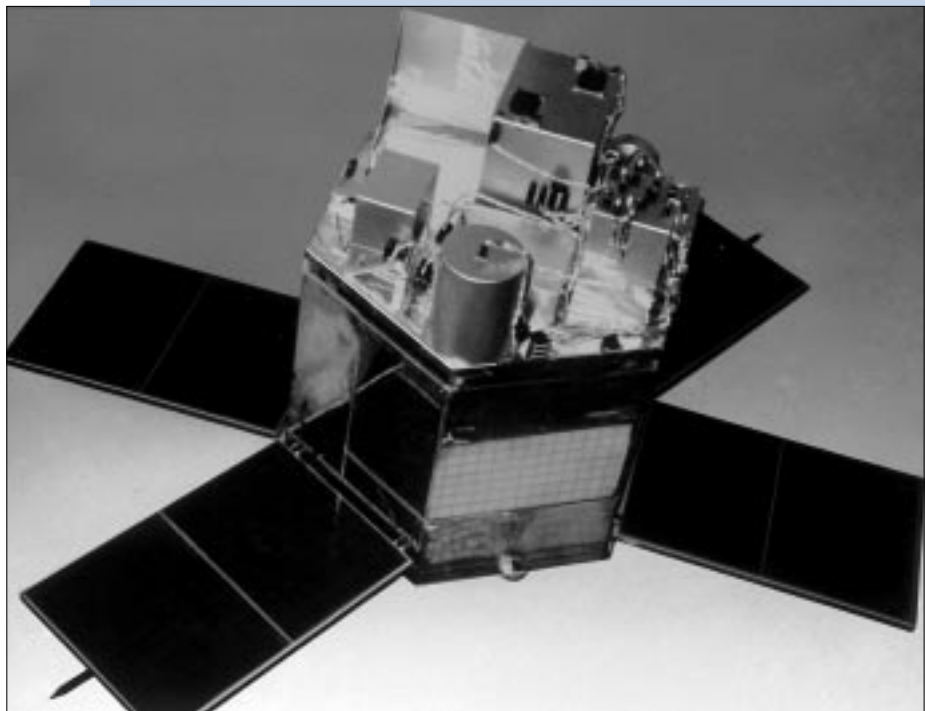
Thanks to their therapeutic and regenerative potential, adult stem cells offer multiple possibilities for treating a wide range of illnesses, from fistulas to myocardial infarction, although, at present, the 19 scientists who are currently working at Inbiobank are channelling their research towards growing sheets of human skin for subsequent implants in patients with extensive burns or with diseases of genetic origin. Specifically, the centre is experimenting in the new treatment with twelve patients affected with the so-called butterfly boy disease, a rare congenital illness that causes the formation of blisters and wounds on the skin as a result of the slightest contact and which may lead to skin

An Alava-based company invents a device to turn space satellites

A Basque company based on the Miñano Technology Park in Alava has created a new piece of equipment that improves the performance of artificial satellites sent into space and has aroused the interest of the European Space Agency and NASA. Specifically, a team of engineers from the company, ADS, has designed a device to turn satellites, quadruplicating the performance of existing devices currently on the market, in addition to bringing about a substantial

weight reduction. The company has already initiated contacts with several aerospace companies and has undertaken to supply them with a gyroscope capable of complying with these specifications in 2009.

To do this, the company has received support and aid from a number of Basque institutions, conscious of the importance that the success of this new device on the world aerospace market would have for Alava and the Basque Country.



cancer in young children.

The fight against Parkinson's disease

At the same time, in another Basque research centre, the CIC bioGuNE, an important line of research is to be initiated in the fight against Parkinson's disease. On this occasion, embryonic cells are to be used (blank

cells that can be converted into kidney cells, liver cells, heart cells, etc.). This laboratory will be the only one to carry out these tests in the State and will dedicate fifteen work teams to this project. The aim will be to obtain dopamine neurons, which are the neurons affected in Parkinson's disease, a disorder of the central nervous system caused by the degeneration of a cell situated in the central nucleus.

Ikastolas receive an award from the Duke of Edinburgh

The Duke of Edinburgh, husband of the Queen of England, presented the Federation of Ikastolas with an award at a ceremony held at Buckingham Palace in mid-November. The scheme aims to provide awards for the best English teaching material produced in the area of new technologies.

It is the first time that a non-British publishing house has received an award of this type. On this occasion, the prize was awarded to a computerised and interactive programme for children of between 9 and 10 years of age "which deals with the most boring things in an entertaining manner and which allows children to enjoy English by playing, singing and doing games", according to the makers.



On their return to the Basque Country, the award winners pose with the trophy just before being received by the Lehendakari.

Santimamiñe closes its doors

At the same time, new cave paintings are discovered in Deba

Cave paintings were news recently for different reasons. At the beginning of October, the discovery was announced of cave paintings and ritual pendants in a cave located in the lower Deba River basin, between Deba and Mendaro. Coinciding with this discovery, specialists from the Provincial Council of Bizkaia announced the definitive closure of the Santimamiñe caves, in order to ensure their conservation.

Since their discovery in 1916, these well-known caves, situated in the town of Kortezubi in Bizkaia and famous for their Palaeolithic figures, have been visited by more than one million people. This has contributed to their deterioration over a long period of time and now those responsible for this site consider the problem to be very "worrying".

A great amount of work is to be done on the caves, consisting of the removal of handrails, stairways, electrical wiring and lamps and following this, all organic remains will be cleared away.

It is planned to reopen Santimamiñe to the public in 2007, although access will be limited to the area illuminated by natural light which contains the archaeological site. The remaining treasures pertaining to the caves can be examined through a virtual tour that will allow visitors to see the paintings and walk through the 400-m-long caves.

Discovery of new cave paintings and ritual pendants

While Santimamiñe was being closed to the public, a new finding has revolutionised the theories of researchers following the discovery of the remains of paintings dating from the upper Palaeolithic at the Praileaitz Cave in Deba. These involve cave paintings and a total of 29 pendants, arranged in the form of necklaces, used 18,000 years ago for ritual purposes. Archaeologists have also found ochre crayons probably used to colour these pendants.

Subijana obtains his third star

The San Sebastián-based chef Pedro Subijana, owner of the restaurant Akelarre, was delighted to discover recently that his establishment has received the third star granted by the prestigious Michelin Guide, considered to be the gourmet's bible.

As a result of this award, there are now three chefs in San Sebastián (Pedro Subijana, Juan Mari Arzak and Martín Berasategi) who have received this top culinary award and raised the capital of Gipuzkoa to the pinnacle of gastronomic excellence. San Sebastián has now become, together with Paris, the only city with three Michelin star restaurants, the only difference being that San Sebastián is considerably smaller than the French capital.

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THE BASQUE GOVERNMENT. PRESIDENCY
PRESS AND COMMUNICATION OFFICE
Tel. (34) 945-01.79.72 - Fax (34) 945-01.78.32
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