

France, India to Reinvigorate Ties

FRENCH PRESIDENT Jacques Chirac and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh signed nine agreements outlining their countries' future cooperation during Chirac's visit to New Delhi on February 19 to 21. Most notable are plans to cooperate on the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, new economic partnerships and major agreements in the defense and aerospace sectors. Chirac emphasized that the document regarding nuclear energy is not a pact, but rather a declaration expressing objectives that can only be reached once certain conditions are met. In addition, France will make sure that any cooperation is placed firmly under IAEA safeguards.



French President Jacques Chirac is greeted by Indian President Abdul Kalam

First, Chirac identified "a moral principle" according to which India must be able to continue to develop economically by finding a solution to its energy problems. Secondly, he spoke of an "environmental principle," referring to India's need to meet its energy demands without emitting dangerous amounts of pollution.

Chirac, recognizing that India is now "one of the main engines of world growth," vowed to engage India more in the economic sphere. Bilateral trade is currently worth \$4.17 billion, and the two countries hope to double this figure over the next five years. France and India plan to achieve their goal by increasing the volume of investment in each other's countries and by encouraging closer business partnerships in priority sectors.

In particular, the two countries took important steps toward cooperation in the defense and aerospace sectors. A contract between the state airline Indian Airlines and Airbus was given the go-ahead, and Kingfisher Airlines agreed to purchase 15 European aircraft. France also entered the global contest to win a contract with the Indian Air Force, which is seeking to purchase a large number of jets.

India and France identified several key areas in which civilian nuclear cooperation would prove fruitful. The declaration foresees research in the fields of nuclear fuel, waste management and nuclear safety, as well as the in exchange of information and expertise. According to a speech given by Chirac during his visit, France's decision to help India pursue its goals in the civilian nuclear arena is based on two prin-

Mayor of Paris Visits Washington



Paris Mayor Delanoë (left) and Ambassador Levitte

PARIS MAYOR Bertrand Delanoë visited Washington, D.C., from February 8 to 10 to take part in a meeting of the Executive Bureau of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), of which he is a co-president. On February 10, Delanoë met with the French community in Washington, at the Embassy of France.

The UCLG meeting this February focused on strengthening local governments and convincing World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz to directly fund projects in poverty-stricken cities. Delanoë pointed out that 80 percent of the world's population now lives in cities.

At the French Embassy, Delanoë also emphasized the strong ties between the

French and American capitals. D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams visited Paris in 2003 and 2004. To deepen their bilateral understanding, Williams and Delanoë are engaged in a dialogue about youth, local democracy, and poverty.

Recent developments in Paris confirm this continuing French-American friendship. A statue of Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin's successor as U.S. Ambassador to France, will be erected near the Musée d'Orsay this summer (Mayor Williams has been invited to attend its unveiling on July 4). Also, on February 13, a new gymnasium in Paris's 14th arrondissement was named Gymnase Rosa Parks.

Delanoë became the mayor of Paris in 2001. In May 2004 Delanoë was elected as co-president of the UCLG, an organization with members in over 100 countries worldwide.

FRANCE CELEBRATES MEDALISTS!

As NFF went to press, the French Olympic delegation in Turin, Italy, had already taken home nine medals, including three gold medals.

One of the most surprising finishes of these Olympic Games was the first place finish of Florence Baverel-Robert in the 7.5 km biathlon sprint. Baverel-Robert has never won a World Cup race, and she was not among the favorites in this race. Her Olympic gold medal is particularly notable because it is the first gold France has ever won in individual biathlon.



Antoine Deneriaz skied to a surprise victory in Alpine skiing on February 12

Another French biathlete, Vincent Defrasne, who was already a favorite in the field (see NFF 06.01), raced to a photo finish in the 12.5 km pursuit. He beat the Norwegian Ole Einar Bjordalen by 2.7 seconds, taking home the gold medal. Defrasne and his teammates also won a bronze medal in the men's 4 x 7.5 km team relay, as did Baverel-Robert and her teammates in the women's 4 x 6 km team relay.

In another surprise upset, Antoine Deneriaz, who smashed his knee 13 months ago and was forced to sit out the World Championship in Bormio, Italy, won gold in men's Alpine Skiing, one of the Games' most prestigious events. His teammate, Joel Chenal, took home the silver medal in the men's giant slalom, the first French medal in this event since 1968! Other medalists include Roddy Darragon (silver in the cross-country men's sprint), Sandra Laoura and Paul-Henri Delerue (bronze in the freestyle moguls and snowboard cross events, respectively).

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CHIRAC VISITS THAILAND



President Chirac is welcomed by the King of Thailand, Bhumibol Adulyadej

On February 17, French President Jacques Chirac became the first French head of state to visit Thailand. Coming to build on over 300 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, he was warmly greeted by Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who called the visit "historic." During his visit, Chirac called for more French investment in Thailand, one of the world's most dynamic economies. In 2004, the two countries agreed on a plan to improve business relations and it is already bringing results. Indeed, trade between Thailand and France grew by 37 percent to \$3.3 billion last year, and the president was accompanied by 30 French business leaders eager to discuss new deals. French retail giant Carrefour is planning to distribute high-quality Thai agricultural products to its stores all over the world. Thai Airways and Bangkok Airways have bought a total of 22 aircraft from France-based Airbus, and Thai Airways is currently negotiating additional purchases.

FRANCE CALLS FOR RELEASE OF U.S. JOURNALIST

Last week, 30 balloons were released in front of the Eiffel Tower to mark the 30 days that American journalist Jill Carroll has spent in captivity in Iraq. A banner held up by the helium-filled balloons read "Free Jill Carroll." Paris-based Reporters Without Borders organized the demonstration in support of the *Christian Science Monitor's* correspondent, who was kidnapped by Iraqi insurgents on January 7. French actress Juliette Binoche and former French hostage Florence Aubenas attended the event, as did the *Christian Science Monitor's* chief European correspondent, Peter Ford. Another demonstration was held at the Grand Mosque of Paris.

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French Prime Minister Villepin Visits Russia

FRENCH PRIME Minister Dominique de Villepin traveled to Moscow for a two-day visit starting on February 13 to meet with various government officials, including Russian President Vladimir Putin. The two countries also took the opportunity to issue a joint statement outlining their common views on nuclear issues, particularly in the areas of non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. France and the Russian Federation called on governments "to comply with their NPT non proliferation and IAEA safeguards obligations and to develop effective measures aimed at preventing trafficking in nuclear equipment, technology and materials."

They stressed the important role nuclear energy will play for future generations seeking to meet their energy demands as well as the need to

FRANCO-RUSSIAN WWII FIGHTER SQUADRON HONORED

During his official visit to Russia, Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin took a moment on February 14 to award the prestigious Legion of Honor to the surviving members of a Franco-Russian fighter plane squadron. M. Villepin pinned the medal to the flag of the 18th Soviet regiment, which marks the first time in modern French history that the honor has been accorded to a foreign flag. Only a handful of the members of the legendary fighting force were present, as many were killed in action. The first 43 French pilots sent by General de Gaulle arrived in Russia in December of 1942 and integrated themselves into the ranks of the 18th Soviet Regiment. Their air unit, which flew 5,240 missions, was the only Western European one to fight on the eastern front. The French mechanics were soon replaced by Russians, which inspired a strong camaraderie between the French pilots and the Russian soldiers who kept their planes in top condition.

foster the safe development of nuclear energy programs. To this end, France and Russia discussed initiatives to pursue "research and development for safer, cost-effective and proliferation-resistant nuclear energy systems," and international assurances of access to fuel enrichment services.

On the subject of Iran, the two countries reiterated their common desire to see a united and multilateral approach to the resolution of the questions surrounding its nuclear program. They called on Iran to comply fully with the demands put forth by the international community in the February IAEA Board of Governor's resolution (see NFF 06.01), in particular that it fully suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities. While France and Russia recognize the legitimate right of Iran to "develop a safe, sustainable nuclear power generation program proven to be for peaceful purposes," they insist that Iran must first address international concerns.

France Has Best Quality of Life

ACCORDING TO *International Living Magazine*, France has the best quality of life in the world. Switzerland and Australia follow in second and third place respectively, and Iraq brings up the rear. The United States, which had topped the list for the past 21 years, dropped down to seventh place. The criteria used by the world's leading globe-trotting publication to establish its rankings include climate, environment, economic stability, healthcare, cost of life, leisure and culture, safety, infrastructure and freedom.

France received scores of 100 percent in safety, freedom and health, and a 99 percent score in infrastructure. In fact, according to the WHO's latest study, France has the best health care system in the world. The French economy, ranking fourth in world exports and fifth in GDP, is home to many world-class companies and provides the foundation for the country's high quality of life.



The Good Life in France

French culture is also world renowned, as borne out by the 77 million tourists who visited France in 2005 and upheld the country's longstanding position as the number one tourist destination in the world.

For more information on life in France, e-mail *International Living* at France@Internationalliving.com.

Massive Terrorist Attack Simulation Staged in Lyon

IT IS 8:45 PM on a Sunday night in the Gerland quarter of Lyon, and everything is quiet. All of a sudden a bomb explodes underneath a seat in the Lyon metro. The metro station is thrown into darkness and engulfed in smoke. Eight minutes later, a second explosion on the other side of the Rhône River, in the Perrache quarter, occurs when a suicide bomber detonates himself inside a car of the Lyon light rail. In the midst of the panic, a third explosion occurs at 9:30 in Terreaux Square, a busy pedestrian intersection in the center of town.



This was the scene in Lyon on February 13 when an exercise simulating a potential terrorist attack took place. Organized by the prefect of the Rhône-Alpes region, the simu-

lation was staged in order to test the city's civil service personnel and their readiness to handle a terrorist attack should one ever occur. Over 1,600 people, 200 of whom played the role of victims, assisted in staging the exercise, making it the largest civilian security exercise ever organized in France. Actors and volunteers were given roles and makeup, as if they were about to star in a Hollywood movie. They played corpses or victims with critical injuries, while team of doctors, firemen and police officers worked around them. The exercise ended after five hours, and organization officials seemed pleased during their initial debriefing. A similar exercise has already been planned for Paris this summer.



U.S. Encyclopedia of French Thought

FRENCH THOUGHT is alive and well in the United States according to Laurence Kritzman, editor of *The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought*. In this new encyclopedia, published in December, 175 leading French and American intellectuals wrote a total of almost 800 pages to "convince American readers of the importance and radiance of French intelligence."

Kritzman describes "French thought" as not existing in one form but rather as intercrossing and multidisciplinary. The encyclopedia includes essays on gastronomy, fashion, technology and sexuality, as well as philosophy, literature and the more traditional topics that one associates with "French thought."

The Dreyfus Affair and its image of the committed intellectual ("*intellectuel engagé*") as well as the institutionalization of social sciences are two of the important French social movements that Kritzman mentions as having had a profound impact on American society throughout the 20th cen-

ture. Characterizing American academia as being supra-specialized, he sees the more open French approach as a counterbalancing and enhancing force.

He also addresses the continued importance of French thought in America today, citing for instance France's lead in the U.S. foreign film industry. The steady emergence of French psychoanalysts in America also confirms an American tendency to draw upon the know-how of some of France's *avant-garde* intellectuals.

The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought, Columbia University Press, retails for \$75 (www.columbia.edu). ■

FRANCOPHONIE FETED IN D.C.

For the months of March and April, Washington, D.C., is celebrating the French-speaking world in a "Grande Fête de la Francophonie." More than 30 embassies and associations will celebrate their cultures with lectures, movies, parties, concerts and even circuses to reveal the richness and diversity of French-speaking countries.

Angélique Kidjo, a singer from Benin, will take part in the festival on March 11 at George Washington University's Lisner Auditorium. Her refreshing style mixes traditional West-African music with R&B, funk, jazz and Latin music. On March 30, the Embassy of Canada will show *L'Audition*, a film about a man whose life is turned upside down when he leaves his job as a debt collector to realize his dream of becoming an actor. Music by Prince Eyango of Cameroon will be performed on March 24 at the French Embassy's Maison Française. And these are only a few highlights of the city-wide festival!

For more information, please visit Francophoniedc.org.

important figures and events in U.S. history, and begins with biographies of Martin Luther King Jr. and Benjamin Franklin, America's first ambassador to France, whose tercentenary is currently being celebrated (see NFF 06.01).

The entire *News From France* team congratulates *Echos des USA* on their first issue and wishes our U.S. counterparts the best of luck! *Echos des USA* will be published every two months, and can be received electronically by writing to Echos-USA@amb-usa.fr. ■

"Echos des USA" : "News From France" à l'Américaine

THE EMBASSY of the United States in France unveiled the first issue of its new newsletter, *Echos des USA*, this January. The eight-page newsletter, written in French, is in many ways a mirror image of *News From France*, with both publications hoping to foster better understanding between our two countries.

An opening statement by U.S. Ambassador Craig R. Stapleton introduces the newsletter and emphasizes that France and the United States are cooperating on a range of issues, from Afghanistan to Iran. The newsletter also includes sections on current events, economic news, and cultural events. Unlike *News From France*, *Echos des USA* contains sections on geography and on history. The former showcases different states and regions within the United States, with the state lucky enough to be portrayed first being Connecticut, the Ambassador's state of residence. The latter takes a look at

France Telecom, Intel Partnership Launched

FRANCE TELECOM customers are just beginning to enjoy the fruits of a partnership between the French firm and American microprocessor company Intel. Their partnership, forged in April of last year, is based on Intel's new Viiv technology, and introduces a variety of new and exciting services to subscribers of Wanadoo, France Telecom's internet provider. Viiv is a media platform designed to make it easier to enjoy and manipulate digital media files, whether they are movies, pictures, or songs.

France Telecom's cooperation with Intel allows Wanadoo customers to enjoy four exciting new options on Viiv-compliant computers. With "24/24 VIDEO," subscribers are able to rent recently released movies, television series, documentaries and cartoons for a 24-hour period. "Wanadoo Photos" allows users to access their online photo albums and view them on

other devices, such as televisions. The partnership also created "Wanadoo Jukebox," a legal way to download songs. Customers may preview excerpts for free, and if they like what they hear, buy songs for one euro each. Nearly 1.1 million songs are currently available, and the service is expanding rapidly. Lastly, "Wanadoo Jeux" offers more than 120 video games that can be downloaded onto a computer or television.

For more information, visit www.francetelecom.fr. ■

U.S. AND FRANCE JOIN FORCES TO FIGHT BIRD FLU

A French-American agreement signed on February 6 will bring forces from both countries together to detect early outbreaks of bird flu in an effort to strengthen the world's capacity to respond to a possible human pandemic. The partnership, signed between the Institut Pasteur and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is one of many measures the two nations have taken to combat the threat posed by the avian flu in Asia, Turkey, and possibly Iraq. Immediate projects for the two countries include increased testing in at-risk areas and public-awareness campaigns. The virus, which mainly affects birds, has already claimed 85 human lives.

UMA THURMAN HONORED



France honored American actress Uma Thurman on February 7 by proclaiming her a knight in the Order of Arts and Letters. The award was presented to the actress by the

director of the Cannes Film Festival, Gilles Jacob, on behalf of the French Ministry of Culture. He cited her classic beauty and impressive film repertoire as the reasons for her considerable popularity in France. Thurman is also a spokesperson for haute couture designer Louis Vuitton of France.

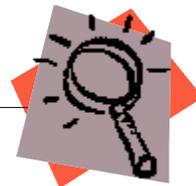
NEW YORKER COLUMNIST WRITES CHILDREN'S BOOK SET IN FRANCE

Adam Gopnik, a well-known columnist for the *New Yorker*, has recently published his new children's book, *The King in the Window*. This is the first time Gopnik, who lived in Paris from 1995 to 2000 and is an avowed Francophile, has written something of this genre.

The story follows Oliver, a 12-year-old American, who in addition to overcoming the daily challenges of being a foreigner in Paris, must deal with angry teachers and the anxieties of young love. His troubles are multiplied when, on the night of Epiphany, he is magically transported to a fairy-tale-like version of Paris. Accompanied by his beautiful neighbor Neige and his friend Charlie from New Jersey, Oliver must cross Paris while battling evil forces hiding in mirrors and windows. Gopnik highlights the cultural differences between the U.S. and France but concludes that the two nations have much to learn from one another if only they, like Oliver, can learn to combine the best of both worlds.

Bio Power

In Depth Review **PROFIL**



Organic Foods Winning Over the French

THE FRENCH TODAY are more conscious than ever about the foods they consume and produce. According to an Agence BIO study in 2004, 86 percent of the French have a positive view of organic products, or "*produits bio*" as they are known in France. Thirty-seven percent of respondents regularly buy organic products and 45 percent buy an organic product at least once a month. These numbers are all the more impressive because of the tendency for organic products to be more expensive than their non-organic equivalents.

Strictly defined, organic products are those whose ingredients are almost entirely derived from organic farming, which spurns the use of chemical fertilizers or pesticides. Organically raised animals are fed only natural foods rather than processed feed that could include animal matter. Consumers of organic products—who buy mostly fruits, vegetables and eggs—believe that organic farming safeguards the environment. They also believe that this more natural method is healthier than "industrial" farming since it does not use chemicals. Distrust of genetically modified products as well as fears of disease, though often unwarranted, have helped make organic products extremely attractive in recent years.

Many new organic supermarkets have opened their doors recently to meet this growing demand. Bio Génération, for example, has already opened several supermarkets exclusively for the sale of organic products. In general, organic supermarkets are doing very well, with an average rise in sales of 17 percent in 2005.

The French organic farming industry isn't being left behind! It has already grown into a \$2 billion industry. With 11,000 organic farms and 540,000 hectares of organically farmed land, the industry has taken on significant proportions, even though only 2 percent of France's total farmland is currently being used for

organic production (compared with 8 percent for Italy, for example). These percentages are projected to rise, however, with the increase in support and promotion of organic farming at the national and European levels.

At the national level, France created "Agence Bio" (www.agence-bio.org) in 2001 to promote and facilitate the production and sale of organic foods. Today, the "AB" label is a very recognizable logo found on certified organic foods (pictured). In February 2005, France launched a 10-day national campaign to promote organic produce, which resulted in a 20-year plan for sustainable agricultural policies. Amongst other measures, this plan gives tax rebates to farmers who earn 40 percent or more of their income from organic farming.

European authorities are also mobilizing in favor of organic foods and farming. Europe accounts for 21 percent of the 31 million hectares of organically farmed land worldwide. It is the continent with the second highest production from organic farms, behind only Australia/Oceania. In January 2004, European agriculture commissioner Franz Fischler announced an Action Plan on Organic Farming, which includes 21 goals for the E.U. to help organic farming. Important goals include the harmonization of national standards on what is organic, the creation of an E.U. organic food label, and the better collection of statistics on the marketing and production of organic products. ■ ■



The Era of Organic Wines

THE NEXT TIME you are driving through the wine regions of France, you may be surprised to see an entire vineyard that appears pale, sick and covered with yellow leaves. These vineyards are not actually sick; they simply have not been treated with herbicides. Indeed, a new phenomenon of grape cultivation is occurring in France.



An organically farmed vineyard

From Alsace to Aquitaine, French wineries are now opting to cultivate their grapes using organic methods—organic in the sense that these wine producers do not use the chemicals that would give their grapevines dark green leaves from the added nitrogen.

To combat insects, diseases and climate conditions, vineyards like those of Gaston Huet (Vouvray) administer doses of chamomile, fennel, dandelions or valerian as precautionary measures. Herbicides used on most vineyards also kill the good bacteria and microbacteria that are essential for the grapevine to feed itself. This makes the grapevine more prone to disease and insects, which is why pesticides are then needed. Many wineries now have to use organic methods not because organic wines are *à la mode*, but because after years of being treated with chemicals, the soil needs to recover its essential elements.

In 1996, a French trade association, Biodyvin, was created to promote and regulate the production of organic wines (www.biodyvin.com). Twenty-seven wineries have already become licensed members, all respecting the same culti-

MAKING CARS RUN ON... CABBAGE OIL!

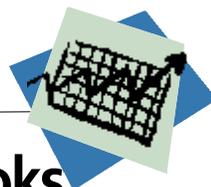


A field of colza in France

lead to global warming. Philippe Tillous-Borde, president of Diester Industrie (www.diester.fr), Europe's leading biodiesel company, is committed to changing this by developing alternative motor fuels. Diester produces a biofuel by extracting the oils from thousands of hectares of colza, a type of cabbage that is massively cultivated in France and in Europe. In 2005, world production of colza was 45 million tons, of which 15.2 million tons were produced in the European Union, and 6 million in France. Colza fields, which are highly recognizable, with their yellow flowers and their sweet smell, make for a wonderful drive through the Burgundy countryside in April.

During the next decade, these yellow fields will continue to become more valuable for France and the European Union. In 2005, France consumed 400,000 tons of biofuels, an 80 percent increase from 2004. However, this accounted for only 1 percent of total fuel consumption. To rectify this, France has adopted ambitious objectives for biofuels in the future. Using tax breaks, it is encouraging biofuel producers in France to invest 250 million euros to create new production facilities over the next few years. In 2008, France hopes to have 5.75 percent of its total fuel consumption originate from bio fuels, climbing to 10 percent by 2015.

vation methods. Their wines are usually more costly, because the organic composts used are more expensive than conventional composts and cheap chemicals. But despite the added costs, several of the wines have already gained a devoted following among elite wine drinkers. The Four Seasons George V's restaurant, for example, lists organic wines such as the Domaine Raoul Cruchon (Echichens) and the Domaine Louis Philippe Bovard (Cully) on their dinner wine menu. ■ ■



Hachette Acquires Time Warner Books

FRENCH COMPANY Lagardère bought the Time Warner Book Group, the United States' fifth largest book publisher, from Time Warner for \$537.5 million on February 6. Lagardère owns Hachette, publishers of *Elle*, *Première* and *Car and Driver* magazines. In 2004, it also bought Hodder Headline, one of the biggest publishing companies in Britain.

This new acquisition makes Hachette the third largest book publisher in the world, behind Pearson and Bertelsmann, the German company that owns Random House. It is part of the French company's efforts to expand its presence in the U.S. Sixty percent of Lagardère's sales already take place outside of France, including 45 percent in the Anglo-American world.

Robert Broadwater, the director of Veronis Suhler Stevenson, a media industry investment bank, commented that

"Lagardère could make better use of the company because its global book business gives it better opportunities to exploit the purchasing of rights from authors." For instance, Hachette was able to buy the rights to Dan Brown's first four books (Brown is the best-selling author of *The Da Vinci Code*). Richard Parsons, the chairman and chief executive of Time Warner, agrees, saying that the Warner book group "needs the scale and other advantages that come from being part of a larger, more global publisher."

French publishing companies seem to be booming, as Lagardère and Editis, the second-largest publisher in France, both plan to announce a 10 percent increase in sales at a time when the publishing market is experiencing a global slump of 0.5 percent.

For more information, visit www.hachette.com. ■■

LEADING EUROPE IN PC SALES

Personal computer sales soared in 2005, with a 20.2 percent increase over the previous year, placing France well ahead of the European pack (the Africa-Europe-Middle East market, the world's most dynamic, grew by 16.9 percent as a whole). Over 15 million homes in France (one out of every two) owned a PC at the end of 2005. The French prefer laptops over desktops, with sales of the former rising by 36 percent, versus 15 percent for desktops. Hewlett-Packard, NEC and Dell are the best-selling brands. Industry experts have issued optimistic forecasts for 2006.

RECORD PASSENGERS FOR PARIS AIRPORTS

The Parisian Airport Group reported a record number of passengers in 2005, with 78.7 million people passing through Charles de Gaulle and Orly airports. From Paris, accessibility to Europe is growing, further establishing the city as a key hub in Western Europe. Within the last year, Paris-Charles de Gaulle has experienced a 5 percent growth in traffic, and Paris-Orly has experienced a 3 percent growth, surpassing their European rivals. Aéroports de Paris, which will soon be privatized, has announced investments of 2.5 billion euros over the next five years to further enhance its competitiveness. Visit www.adp.fr for more information.

ALCATEL POSTS RECORD PROFITS

French telecommunications company Alcatel announced on February 3 a net profit of 930 million euros (\$1.1 billion) for 2005, almost double that of 2004. Alcatel provides communications solutions to telecommunication carriers, Internet service providers and enterprises for delivery of voice, data and video applications to their customers or employees. Alcatel operates in more than 130 countries, and boasted sales of 13.1 billion euros and 58,000 employees in 2005. Learn more at www.alcatel.com.

BUBBLING BUBBLY SALES

The results are in: French champagne estates sold over 300 million bottles and reported a 2 percent rise in sales for the year 2005. Gradually, champagne sales are becoming evenly distributed between the export and domestic markets. The Asian market in particular has grown significantly, and in Australia sales rose by 24 percent (the "lucky country" bought 2 million bottles for a population of 20 million!). The British remain the leading foreign consumers of French champagne, and purchased 13 percent more than in 2004.

Prehistoric Cave Drawings Found in Charente

THE DISCOVERY of ancient prehistoric cave drawings in the Charente region, in western France, was announced on February 4 by Henri de Marcellus, mayor of the town of Vilhonneur, near where the drawings were discovered. They are thought to be older than those in the famed caves of Lascaux. Indeed, a preliminary analysis of the cave paintings suggests that they were made 25,000 years ago, during the Cro-Magnon period, which would make them 8,000 years older than the Lascaux paintings, though further analysis is needed to be certain.

The cave drawings were first discovered in November by 63-year-old amateur spelunker Gérard Jourdy, but were kept secret until now to protect the site from damaging intrusions. The art work, which comprises six paintings, including a hand

and possibly a face, is not nearly as sophisticated as that found in the Lascaux or Chauvet caves. However, the discovery is still



A painted horse in Lascaux Cave, France's best known prehistoric art site

very significant, especially if the human bones found in the cave are also dated to the Cro-Magnon period. If so, this would be one of only three prehistoric burial grounds ever discovered with paintings (the other two are in Cussac, Dordogne, and Del Romito, Italy).

The famous 17,000-year-old drawings of Lascaux Cave, discovered in 1940 in the Dordogne region (100 km to the southeast of Vilhonneur), have

long been considered some of the best preserved and finest examples of cave paintings. The Chauvet cave, discovered in the mid-1900s in southeast France, features 300 examples of Paleolithic animal art estimated to be about 31,000 years old. ■■

Research on Human Embryos Allowed

FRENCH LAW regarding bioethics was revised on February 7 through the publication of a decree authorizing limited research on human embryos, under very stringent conditions. Stem cells, the building blocks of our bodies, can be extracted from very young embryos before they have differentiated into specialized cells. France's government believes the enormous life-saving potential of stem cell research justifies such research for a limited five-year period. Indeed stem cells can potentially produce every other type of cell and thereby be used to reconstitute damaged tissues such as the heart, muscle, nervous system, etc... Stem cell research could also lead to a better understanding of human biology, and to more accurate drug testing.

The new law on bioethics was first enacted in August 2004 (see NFF 04.08), but research on embryos was initially put on

hold, to give law-makers and ethicists more time to consider the issue and work out a comprehensive regulatory framework. Scientists can now conduct research on stem cells derived from frozen supernumerary embryos, which are embryos that no longer have any parental or adoption potential. But many restrictions have been instated to prevent abuses. Research on embryos is authorized only when it is capable of enabling major therapeutic advances that could not be achieved by alternative means. In addition, parents must give their written consent after a three-month long waiting period before any research can be conducted on their embryos. The newly created Agency of Biomedicine (05.07), assisted by a panel of experts and ethicists, will have the final say on whether to authorize specific research proposals. ■■

JOAN OF ARC ASHES TO BE ANALYZED

French doctors plan to study the presumed ashes of Joan of Arc to determine if they could actually be hers. Joan of Arc was a 19-year-old maiden-warrior who helped rally French troops during the Hundred Years' War against the British in the 15th century, after being inspired by what she believed were divine voices. She was burned at the stake for heresy by the British in 1431. Although Joan of Arc's specific DNA is unknown, modern carbon dating techniques will be able to determine the age of the remains down to the exact month. Philippe Charlier, the forensic scientist heading the project, will examine bone fragments, human tissue, and wood from the French heroine's purported relics.

MEN'S LINGERIE HITS BIG TIME



Women aren't the only ones concerned about what they're wearing. The Salon International de la Lingerie, held in Paris from February 2 to 5, showcased 46

brands of lingerie for men. This figure is up from 24 in 2005, and is three times more than the 12 brands shown in 2004. This year also marked the first time the Salon held a men's lingerie runway show. What explains this increasing interest? The French Federation of Lingerie-Producing Industries says that the market is changing "because of an influx of new designers from women's lingerie, sportswear and ready-to-wear clothing." Additionally, men have come to be counted on as consumers, the organizers of the Salon said. The 2006 Salon gathered 570 brands from 33 different countries. For more information, visit www.lingerie-paris.com.

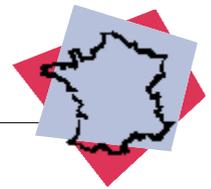
NEW BRIDGE FOR PARIS



© Mairie de Paris, B-Pedretti

Paris, divided by the Seine, will soon see the completion of its 37th bridge. The Passerelle Simone-de-Beauvoir, opening in July, will be reserved for pedestrians, inline skaters and cyclists. Designed by Austrian architect Dietmar Feichtinger and transported from Alsace, the metallic bridge will connect the François Mitterrand Library and Bercy Park. The bridge commemorates Simone de Beauvoir, French feminist and author of *Le Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex*).

NEWS FROM FRANCE / March 1, 2006



Diversity Viewed as Asset for French

ACCORDING TO A STUDY published earlier this month by CSA, an independent French polling agency, 72 percent of the French believe that a diverse population is an asset for the country. Of the 1,001 people polled across France, 34 percent regarded immigration as entirely beneficial for French society, while 38 percent considered it to be in some ways disadvantageous but overall a benefit for the country. In fact, many of the respondents were direct beneficiaries of immigration themselves: according to French experts, one out of every four French citizens has at least one immigrant parent or grandparent.

France's current diversity is the product of a long history of immigration. Indeed, France, at the crossroads of Europe, has always been a land of immigration and during the "Trente Glorieuses" (literally, the "Thirty Glorious Years," 1945-1973),

immigration was seen as an integral part of the building and rejuvenation of the French economy and culture after the devastation of World War II. This period also marked the beginning of a new trend, with ever increasing numbers of overseas immigrants making their way to France (whereas previous immigrants had mostly hailed from other European countries, such as Italy, Spain and Portugal).

In 2004, 133,454 immigrants entered France, 42.7 percent of whom were from North Africa, 17.9 percent from sub-Saharan Africa, 15.8 percent from Europe, 10.6 percent from Asia and the Middle East, and 8.9 percent from America. Their contributions and heritage will be celebrated in a new museum on the history of immigration in France, which is scheduled to open in the spring of 2007 (www.histoire-immigration.fr).

MISTER FRANCE 2006

On February 14, 25-year-old William Bege, Mister Ile de la Reunion, became Mister France in the very manly equivalent of Miss France (see NFF 05.14). Twenty-six men, 18 to 30, representing regions all across France, put their virility on show in three different outfits, including bathing suits, and then displayed their special talents in front of a panel presided over by the founder of the Mister France committee, Rachel Quesney. Stephan Excoffier, Mister Rhône-Alpes, and last year's Mister France, handed over his official banner to Bege in the Casino de Paris.



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Growing Up... and Sideways!

IN THE PAST 35 YEARS, the average height of French men has grown by over five centimeters (2 inches), and that of women has grown by two centimeters (0.8"). Furthermore, the average weight of French men has increased from 72 kilograms to 77.4 (170.6 lb), and that of women has increased from 60.6 kilograms to 62.4 (137.5 lb). These figures were gleaned from a survey of over 11,000 people between the ages of five and seventy, in which an x-ray unit was used to precisely determine their shape and size.

The results of this survey, commissioned by a fashion industry association, will help designers make sizes that are



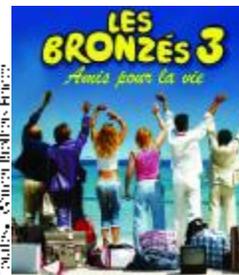
more comfortable and flattering for the average person. The industry's last major measurement took place in 1970, making France's current sizes very out of date! Statisticians cite a more diverse population due to immigration, better access to sports, and eating habits that include richer foods as reasons for this gradual growth in size of the French population. This phenomenon is taking place not only in France, but in other countries as well, including the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Belgium, where the average person has grown in height and girth.

Return of the Cult Comedy "Les Bronzés"

IN THE INITIAL MONTHS of 2006, the most anticipated event in France was not the Winter Olympics in Turin, Italy, or the Euro Championships of handball, but the release of *Les Bronzés 3: Amis Pour la Vie*, the third film in the Bronzés trilogy. A comedy à la française, *Les Bronzés 3* is a film that can be enjoyed by adolescents and adults alike. It follows the tribulations of six acquaintances who spend their holidays together, desperate for some fun and relaxation, and become friends. Twenty-seven years have passed since the last Bronzé film, *Les Bronzés 2: Les Bronzés Font du Ski*, was released. Based on preliminary box office results, it is obvious that the French have eagerly waited for the Bronzés to make their comeback.

The night before the release of *Les Bronzés 3*, 12 million people tuned in to TF1 to watch a telecast of *Les Bronzés 2*.

Within the first five days of the film's release, 3.2 million people had attended a screening, a record in France! The producers of the film estimate that over 10 million people will see the film in theaters. *Les Bronzés* is not just any comedy; it is a cult film much like *Austin Powers* or the *Lord of the Rings* films in the United States. The six principal performers in the film are very highly regarded in France. Known as the *Splendid* troupe, they often star in the same movies with one another. The group includes actors Thierry Lhermitte (very popular as a result of his role in *The Dinner Game*) and Gérard Jugnot (best known as the music director in the acclaimed film, *The Chorus*).



For more information, visit www.lesbronzes3.com.



French Music and Film Exports Surging

FRENCH FILMS AND MUSIC are doing well not only in France but also worldwide. In 2005, French cinema attracted 73.6 million foreign spectators, an increase of nearly 50 percent since 2004. The past year also marked the first time that French movies were viewed by more foreign spectators than French ones! Similarly, French music continues to attract listeners of different tastes around the globe.

The boom of French cinema is due largely to the success and subsequent Oscar nominations of three films: *Joyeux Noël* (Best Foreign Language Film), *March of the Penguins* (Best Documentary Feature) and *Darwin's Nightmare* (Best Documentary Feature). In 2005, *March of the Penguins* alone earned \$92 million and had more than 16 million viewers, 12.8 million of whom were American. The film replaced Luc Besson's *The Fifth Element* as the best-selling French film ever in the United States. French

Culture Minister Renaud Donnedieu said that these nominations "are new proof of the vitality of French cinema and the dissemination of its talents abroad."

French music, too, is increasingly successful around the world. Particularly well recognized by music lovers are the duos Air, known for its dreamy sound, and Daft Punk, creators of the "French touch" electronic sound. French hip hop also sells well thanks to talented rappers such as MC Solaar. With artists such as Grammy-nominated Malian duo Amadou & Mariam and Paris native Camille, French music has broadened its international base by experimenting with different sounds. "There is a generation of French artists who include an export strategy in their vision of their careers," Eric Morand, president of the French Music Export Office said. "They are more open to different things and listen to a wider range of music."

To learn more about French movie and music exports, visit www.unifrance.org and www.french-music.org. 

FRENCH ACTRESS EVA GREEN TO PLAY NEXT "BOND GIRL"



The next James Bond movie, *Casino Royale*, will star up-and-coming French actress Eva Green as 007's femme fatale. Green's film credits

include the 2003 European collaboration *The Dreamers*, and last year's crusades blockbuster *Kingdom of Heaven*. The French actress beat out several high-profile contenders in landing the role, including Charlize Theron and Thandie Newton. Her character Vesper Lynd will be joined by English actor Daniel Craig in his first performance as James Bond. The film has begun filming in Prague and is slated for release in November 2006. Learn more at www.sonypictures.com.

FRENCH SCULPTOR IPOUSTÉGUY REMEMBERED

French sculptor Ipoüstéguy died at the age of 86 on February 8. The artist, painter, writer and poet from the Lorraine region "was most of all an inventor," praised Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, the French minister of culture and communication, who went on to call Jean Robert, known as Ipoüstéguy, "one of the most important sculptors of our time." The work of this "surrealist fanatic" has been celebrated and recognized worldwide. One of his gilded statues, *A la Lumière de Chacun* (*To Everyone's Insight*) is located at the Embassy of France in Washington, D.C. The work, completed in 1983, is one of three Ipoüstéguy's exhibited in Washington; the other two ("David and Goliath" and "Man Entering Door") are installed in the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden of the Smithsonian Institution.

FUTUROSCOPE GOES ROBOTIC

Futuroscope, the Poitiers theme park, announced that the theme of its 2006 season will be robots. It has invested 7 million euros in new attractions, including a robotic menagerie of six robo-animals, a virtual ride where passengers are moved upside down and side to side to match the choreography of a dance troupe of recon-verted robots from the automobile industry, and a performance featuring several Aibos, the robotic dogs designed by Sony. Futuroscope, which will be celebrating its 20th birthday next year, has already attracted 30 million visitors since its opening and hopes to attract at least 1.5 million this season. Learn more at www.futuroscope.com.

Bonnard Exhibit at the Modern Art Museum of Paris

AFTER HAVING closed its doors to complete a much-needed two-year face lift, the Modern Art Museum of Paris in the Palace of Tokyo reopened to the public on

February 1 (see NFF 06.01). To commemorate this occasion, Suzanne Pagé, director of the museum, unveiled an exhibition of 90 works by Pierre Bonnard, a 20th-century French painter of modern art. The exhibition, which was designed to resituate Bonnard among the "classic" painters of the period, is the largest exhibition of Bonnard assembled since 1983. Bonnard was a contemporary of Picasso and Matisse and is recognized as being an heir of Manet and Degas. Fascinated with the nude feminine figure, Bonnard often used his wife Marthe as a model in his paintings. After the death of Marthe in 1942, Bonnard's female figures took on a much more somber and melancholic persona.



Baignoire by Pierre Bonnard (1925)

Bonnard never played to conventional painting compositions, instead, he preferred to portray women in unflattering positions such as lying nude in a bathtub or sitting in a hunched-

over position. The paintings themselves are undefined, limitless, and open to interpretation. Bonnard was always suggestive, never definitive. As he once said, "before painting I reflect and I dream." Everything Bonnard painted was drawn from registered images in his memory. Bonnard, also recognized for the bright colors on his canvases and the influence of Japanese lithographs in his paintings, always questioned and challenged the meaning of subject in paintings. A perfectionist, he was known to return to museums to touch up his paintings while friends distracted the guards!

The Bonnard exhibition will be on display until May 7. For more information, please visit www.mam.paris.fr. 

The Splendors of Saxony in Versailles

AN EXHIBITION entitled "Splendeurs de la Cour de Saxe" currently at the Palace of Versailles provides a glimpse of the splendors of the 18th-century Saxon Court. The exhibition is a collaborative project between the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden and the Versailles palace museum, and is another important contribution to Franco-German cultural exchanges. French President Jacques Chirac and newly elected German Chancellor Angela Merkel emphasized the cultural links between their two countries by attending its opening together on January 23.

The Dresden Court in Saxony was said, in the words of Voltaire, to be "the most beautiful in Europe," second only

to that of Louis XIV's. It was ruled by the King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, Frederick August I. As a young prince, he had visited the palace of Versailles and much of the décor at the Saxon Court was inspired by this experience. The collection at Versailles showcases more than 256 pieces on loan from six Dresden museums, including rare pieces of silver furniture, fine jewelry, firearms, and paintings illustrating extravagant court life. A highlight of the exhibition is the first showing outside Dresden of the Obeliscus Augustalis, a Baroque monument including 240 gems and gold figures, which has been restored specifically for the exhibition.

The exhibition will run through April 24. For more information, please visit www.chateauversailles.fr. 



Obeliscus Augustalis



FAREWELL AND WELCOME

The NFF team is pleased to welcome Thomas Rottcher, who will be our next managing editor. We wish him the best of luck!

After two and half great years at the Embassy, Amaury Laporte is leaving *News from France* to pursue other opportunities. He would like to thank all of our readers for their encouragements, and his colleagues for their support and kindness!

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Dada at the National Gallery of Art in D.C.

AMERICA'S FIRST major museum exhibition on the Dada movement is taking place at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., until May 14. Over 400 different works are on display, including paintings, sculptures, photographs, ready-mades, collages, and films.

The Dada movement was a brief but revolutionary movement that mainly took place in Western Europe after World War I. The Dadaists' nihilistic views rejected the belief that traditional art is useful or meaningful, after having seen civilization descend so quickly into barbarism. Dada art is, ironically, anti-art.

French artist Marcel Duchamp, who has 14 of his pieces on display in the exhibition, was at the forefront of the Dada movement. His 1917 *L.H.O.O.Q.* is a reproduction of Leonardo Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* to which he added a moustache and goatee, reflecting the Dada disregard for traditional art.



L.H.O.O.Q. by Marcel Duchamp (1919)

L.H.O.O.Q. is an example of the new "ready-made" genre, which was pioneered by Duchamp and completely redefined art. He believed that an object that involved no manual work at all could become art merely through an artist's decision to call it art. These objects are interposed throughout the exhibit, and include a reproduction of Duchamp's lost *Fountain* (1917), which was simply a urinal he purchased and signed.

"Thought is made in the mouth," claimed Tristan Tzara, another French artist on display in the exhibition. In other words, there is no meaning in words, only sounds. This claim prefigures the surrealism of the 1920s that would grow out of Dadaism.

Having stolen meaning away from art, it seems only the defiant sounds of Dadaism now resonate through the National Gallery (www.nga.gov).

Modernism on Display at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston

THE EXHIBITION "Degas to Picasso," currently running at the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston, offers a panoramic view of European art from 1900 to the 1960s. The ambitious collection fills three of the museum's galleries and includes more than 280 modernist works.

Prominently featured French artists include Degas, Matisse, Gauguin and Rodin. Among the works displayed, the delicate pastel drawing *Dancers in Rose* (1900), depicts Degas's favorite subjects—ballerinas—gracefully moving through a forest. Works by Matisse include the bold painting *Carmelina* (1903) and the charcoal drawing *Reclining Nude* (1946).



Dancers in Rose by Edgar Degas (1900)

As its name indicates, the exhibit also offers a look at the many media and styles used by Pablo Picasso. Born in southern Spain, he moved to Paris in 1904 and joined the School of Paris, a loosely affiliated group of non-native artists. In the MFA's exhibit, Picasso's featured works include *Woman at the Window* (1952), a boldly patterned portrait.

Featured American expatriates to France include Calder, famous for his mobiles, and Man Ray, who experimented with artistically manipulating photographs. Other artists with works in the exhibit include Spaniards Dali and Miró and Belgium's Magritte. Presented together, these and the other artists' works form a comprehensive view of modernism. "Degas to Picasso" will run through July 23. Learn more at www.mfa.org.

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