Iran Referred to U.N. Security Council

The International Atomic Energy Agency’s Board of Governors decided on February 4, in Vienna, Austria, that Iran will be referred to the U.N. Security Council for refusing to fully cooperate with the Agency and demonstrate its nuclear program’s peaceful intent. Iran resumed work in its uranium conversion facility in Isphahan in August 2005 and decided to restart enrichment activities for research purposes this January.

A decisive majority of the 35-nation board supported the resolution introduced by France, Germany and Great Britain. The United States, Russia and China also supported the resolution. The Security Council will wait one more month to receive the IAEA’s comprehensive report on the Iranian nuclear program.

Support by the Russians and the Chinese for the AIEA resolution was crucial as both countries have close ties with Teheran and are permanent members of the Security Council. As the world community continues to struggle to find a diplomatic resolution, some alternative measures have already been proposed. Russia had proposed to allow Iranians to conduct uranium enrichment in facilities in Russia rather than in Iran. This proposal is aimed at reassuring the world that Iran is conducting nuclear activities for civilian purposes and not for military purposes, and that it is not stockpiling weapons-grade uranium. The Russian proposal gained wide international support, but it is not clear whether Iran is prepared to accept it.

Congress Goes Provençal to Celebrate Year of Cézanne

The Ambassador of France to the United States, Jean-David Levitte, and Jacques Pfister, president of the Marseille-Provence Chamber of Commerce and Industry, honored the Congressional French Caucus during a reception in the Mansfield Room of the U.S. Capitol on February 1. The Congressional French Caucus, created in 2003, is a bicameral, bipartisan congressional member organization dedicated to promoting partnership and cooperation between the United States and France. Since its inception, the caucus has fostered a sustained dialogue with French officials, and its delegations have met with French President Jacques Chirac and commemorated the 60th anniversary of D-Day in Normandy. The caucus is co-chaired in the Senate by Senators Gordon Smith (R-OR) and Mary Landrieu (D-LA) and in the House of Representatives by Reps. Jim Oberstar (D-MN) and John Boozman (R-AR).

Speaking at the February 1 reception, Rep. Boozman emphasized the strong economic ties between France and the United States, which represent hundreds of thousands of American jobs and $1 billion a day in commercial transactions. Rep. Oberstar, who spoke in French, affirmed that despite their differences, the two countries remain close allies. Finally, Pfister, after thanking U.S. veterans for their sacrifice during World War II, invited all those present, and Americans in general, to visit la Provence and savor all it has to offer.

The reception, which featured Provençal cuisine and wine to coincide with the opening of the “Cézanne in Provence” exhibit at the National Gallery of Art (see our article on page 8), was also attended by Senator John Warner, the Honorable Bob Michel, Rep. Russ Carnahan, Rep. Lloyd Doggett, Rep. Dennis Kucinich, French journalists, American and French industry representatives, and congressional staff members. Members of Congress who were unable to attend the reception could take heart: the Senate’s Dirksen Cafeteria and South Buffet featured Provençal cuisine for three days, courtesy of Jean Luc le Formal, of the Le Formal restaurant in Aix-en-Provence, and Dominique Frerard of Les 3 Forts in Marseille.

To learn more about Provence, visit www.provencetourism.com.
FRANCE INCREASES TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN
French Defense Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie announced on December 18 that France will be increasing its presence in Afghanistan by several hundred soldiers in 2006. Currently, there are 600 French troops in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and 200 more participating in the U.S.-led operation, Enduring Freedom. About 450 additional French troops will be deployed to Kabul by the summer of 2006 to join the ISAF as part of NATO’s expanded presence in the region. France will also increase the personnel it devotes to the training of the Afghan National Army. Alliot-Marie’s announcement to the French troops in Kabul airport was a chance for her to reiterate France’s commitment to stability in Afghanistan and its continued firm stance in the fight against international terrorism.

2005 RECORD YEAR FOR BUSINESS CREATION
In a record year for France, 225,000 new companies were created in 2005, proof that France continues to provide fertile ground for new businesses. At this rate, President Jacques Chirac’s inaugural promise of creating more than 1 million new businesses before the end of his mandate in 2007 will be kept and even surpassed. Much of this success can be attributed to government efforts to encourage investment in France, including the Law for Economic Initiative introduced by Minister Renaud Dutreil in 2003, which provides support and security to budding corporations. It is estimated that this economic revival has been responsible for creating 100,000 new jobs each year since 2002. To learn more about doing business in France, please visit www.investinfrance.org.

FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS TURKEY
French Foreign Affairs Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy paid an official visit to Turkey on February 1-2. During his visit, the minister met with the president, vice president and prime minister of the Turkish Republic, as well as various other Turkish officials. Topics such as the situation in Iraq, Iran’s nuclear ambitions, and bird flu were discussed. Douste-Blazy also had the opportunity to lay the first brick of the French High School that is being built in Ankara. The new high school will be a symbol of the long history of French-Turkish cooperation and will involve the participation of the entire French community in Ankara.

Franchise sent the Statue of Liberty as a gift to the U.S. in order to celebrate America’s independence but also to commemorate the emancipation of black slaves. Indeed, the idea for the statue originally came from Edouard de Laboulaye, the president of the French anti-slavery society. France Proclaims May 10 Slavery Abolition Day

FRENCH PRESIDENT Jacques Chirac announced that France will commemorate the abolition of slavery every May 10. The date, proposed by the Committee for the Memory of Slavery, recalls the day in 2001 when France condemned the practice as a crime against humanity:

Annual commemorations will take place in Paris, France’s overseas territories, and Africa. While many of the overseas territories already have such memorial days, this recognition marks an important extension of goodwill.

Chirac sees a direct link between slavery, which was abolished in France in 1848, and racism. “No date will ever replace the day in 2001 when France condemned the practice as a crime against humanity.”

Thus, the principles underlying our deterrence doctrine remain unchanged, but the ways of expressing this doctrine have evolved and keep evolving, so as to enable us to address the context of the 21st century.

The entire speech is available at www.elysee.fr.
Young U.S. Artists Get Fresh Take on France

LAST SEPTEMBER, nine American students were chosen from three prestigious California art schools, the Art Center College of Design, the California Institute of the Arts and the Otis College of Art and Design, to embark on a whirlwind tour of France and seek inspiration for their work. Following their return to America, the students each produced two works representing their reflections and feelings about their trip. These works will be on display from February 23 through March 1 in an exhibition at the M+B Fine Art Gallery in Los Angeles.

The program, christened “Jeunes Talents,” was a joint initiative by the Consulate General of France in Los Angeles and the Maison de la France to set the stage for future artistic and educational exchanges. Three of the students were sent to the eastern department of Alsace to see for themselves and learn about the contrast between cosmopolitan Strasbourg and the hundreds of fairytale-like villages that adorn the Alsatian countryside. In southern Provence, three students were inspired by the natural beauty of the Mediterranean coastline and by the impressive cultural history of a region that has attracted artists such as Paul Cézanne and Henri Matisse. Three other students were sent to western Brittany, whose long history and strong identity have been sculpted by the harbors, coves, and beaches that dot its coastline.

On February 22, during an exhibition preview, one work from each student will be sold at the gallery and the proceeds will be donated to scholarship funds at their respective schools. For more information about the program, visit www.consulfrance-losangeles.org.

Benjamin Franklin’s Tercentenary Celebrated

THIS YEAR MARKS the 300th birthday of Benjamin Franklin, whose work as America’s first diplomat to France has made him a symbol of French-American friendship. In addition to pioneering the invention of electricity, Franklin served in 1776 as part of a commission sent to France to gain its support in the fight for American independence. Events throughout France are celebrating Franklin, in what is France’s first national commemoration of an American citizen.

Once in France, Franklin went above and beyond the call of duty by becoming the most popular of diplomats. Choosing to don plain garments in lieu of the elaborate wigs and robes worn by French aristocrats, the diplomat made quite a splash among the French elites and was soon a favorite among them. He soon forged an alliance between France and the 13 colonies in 1778, and France was the first country to salute the American flag as that of an independent nation.

The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary Commission has organized a variety of events during the next two years spanning both continents. An international traveling exhibition which kicks off in Philadelphia and winds up in Paris includes stops at the Musée Carnavalet and at the Musée des Arts et Métiers. This exhibition will feature artifacts from his diplomatic work, as well as displays commemorating his scientific discoveries. The Monnaie de Paris has also introduced a new series of collector’s coins featuring the engraved face of Franklin to celebrate the friendship he inspired.

For more information about these various events, visit www.amb-usa.fr/events/2006/bfranklin/events.htm.

Pinch of Stardust for French Laboratories

EVEN FRENCH laboratories will receive samples of “stardust,” or comet and interstellar dust particles, joining a global effort to determine once and for all what comets are made of. After chasing comets over 3 billion miles for the past seven years, the NASA Stardust mission has returned to Earth carrying long awaited comet dust samples. U.S. teams have extracted the particles and sent them to Preliminary Examination Teams all over the world to be analyzed.

Headed by François Robert of the Museum of Natural History in Paris and Louis d’Hendecourt of IAS Orsay, the French teams will study the chemical composition of the stardust to create isotopic maps detailing their makeup. To aid them in their quest, the teams possess a NanoSims 30, an advanced device capable of dissecting even the most microscopic particles. At the heart of their research is the hope that their results will provide insights into the mystery that surrounds the origin of our universe. To learn more about the Stardust mission, visit http://stardust.jpl.nasa.gov.

SAFRAN DONATES ARIANE 4 ENGINE TO SMITHSONIAN

French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte (left) and Roger Launius, chair of the National Air and Space Museum’s Space History Division, and a NASA historian, pose during the ceremony in which French aerospace company Safran (parent company of SNECMA) donated an Ariane 4 Viking engine (right) to the Smithsonian Institution on January 26. This reliable and economical rocket engine was one of the most successful ever deployed, and launched 143 Ariane 4 rockets into space. It will be displayed in the Air & Space Museum’s new Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, VA (www.safran-group.com).

AMERICAN VERTIGO

Not only was he named one of Vanity Fair’s best-dressed men, Bernard-Henri Lévy, French celebrity intellectual and philosopher, is also no stranger to the literary world, with over 30 published works under his belt. His new book, American Vertigo, was just released in the United States, one month before its March release in France, a first for Lévy. Though inspired by Alexis de Tocqueville’s seminal Democracy in America, BHL, which is the name he generally goes by, insists his aspirations are much humbler. The book, written like a philosophy- interspersed travelogue, takes us with Lévy as he explores the social mores and peculiarities of American culture through the eyes of a Frenchman.

FOUR NEW ORLEANS MUSICIANS HEAD TO FRANCE

Four New Orleans musicians will head to Paris in coming weeks to share their music with French audiences, as part of a program funded by the Ministry of Culture. Leading the way are clarinetist Evan Christopher and pianist Tom McDermott, who will play their music for school children, perform at a well-known concert hall, and conduct classes for music students over a period of six weeks. French authorities are hoping to invite 15-25 musicians in all, in an effort to expose France to the uniqueness of New Orleans music, as well as give these artists an opportunity to perform while New Orleans gets back on its feet.

AIR FRANCE VOTED BEST TRANSATLANTIC AIRLINE

Readers of Global Traveler Magazine recently voted Air France the “Best Transatlantic Airline” for 2005. The reader survey was completed primarily by business and luxury travelers, who commented on Air France’s “New Travel Concept” program, which greatly enhances its Business and First Class products. The airline, which posted record profits last year, currently operates 2,000 flights daily and flies from 13 U.S. gateways, providing service to 125 U.S. cities with partners Delta and Continental. Air France was presented with its award earlier this month in New York City. Learn more at www.airfrance.com.
Winter Sports

In just a few days, the world will cast its eyes on Torino, Italy, for the 20th Winter Olympiad. The Winter Games this year will host 2,500 athletes, 85 nationalities, 10,000 members of the media and over 1.5 million spectators. In the course of the 16-day competition, 84 gold medals will be awarded in 16 different disciplines.

Pour l'Amour des Jeux

The French have always loved the Olympics and admired the ideals it stands for. Indeed, a Frenchman, Pierre de Coubertin, founded the modern Olympics and helped organize the first modern games in Athens, Greece, in 1896. On June 5, 2005, almost a million people turned out on the Champs Elysées to participate in a presentation of the different Summer Olympic disciplines, intended to support Paris’s candidature for the 2012 games. Even though Paris lost out to London, the French have not given up. Already Annecy, a ski village in Savoie, has submitted its candidature to host the 2014 Winter Olympics (www.olympiques-nous.com). The final candidate cities for these games will be announced by the International Olympic Committee in late June. France has already hosted the Summer Olympics twice (1900, 1924) and the Winter Olympics three times (1924, 1968, 1992).

Of course, the French do not confine their interest in sports to the Olympics! The Ministry of Youth and Sports reports that 1 out of every 6 people in France are registered in a sports association, or almost 9 million people in all. Seventy-one percent of French citizens over the age of 15 practice a sport at least once a year and 74 percent of those practice a sport at least once a week. Of these, 800,000 are hockey players or figure skaters and 160,000 are skiers or snowboarders. Last year, the Ministry estimates that over 7 million people skied or snowboarded in France, of whom 5 million were French. For more information, visit www.sports.gouv.fr.

A Strong French Delegation Going for the Gold

France, with its 357 winter resorts devoted to skiing, skating and sledging, boasts more ski slopes than anywhere else in the world. And French ski resorts are sure to benefit from their proximity to the Winter Olympics in Torino, Italy. Indeed, most of the competitions will actually take place closer to the French border than they will to Torino. The town of Cesana for instance, home to the bobslag, skeleton and luge events, is only 6 kilometers away from the French border. Spectators can profit from the 59 different ski resorts in the Southern Alps region, not to mention an Olympic-size ice rink in Briançon and world-class cross-country skiing in Dévoluy. All of these places are within a two-hour drive of the Olympic Village in Bardonecchia, Italy. The ski resort of Montgenevre, for instance, is only a few kilometers from the competition venues, and is a great way to enjoy a day of skiing for only 27 euros a day ($33). The resort offers 65 km of ski slopes and 30 ski lifts. For more information, visit www.montgenevre.com.

The Avoriaz ski resort, located in Haute-Savoie (Alps), is one of France’s favorites.

The French are also looking forward to another strong performance from their figure-skating delegation at these games. In the men’s category, the French will have two skaters representing les bleus, one of whom is the 2004 World silver medalist, Brian Joubert. Joubert, who won the bronze medal at the European Championships this year in Lyon, is already considered to be among the favorites at these games. Fédéric Dambier, who was selected to be Joubert’s teammate at these games, is also projected to be among the top skaters, largely due to his fourth place finish at this year’s European Championships. Isabelle Delobel and Olivier Schoenfelder are ready to defend a French gold in ice dancing, following their teammates Marina Anissina and Gwendal Peizerat’s first place finish in Salt Lake City. Delobel and Schoenfelder have been teamed up since 1990 and have competed at eight world championships. Last year the duo placed third at the European Championships followed by a fourth place finish at the World Championships in Moscow. To learn more, visit www.francedympique.com.
**Economic News**

**TECHNOLOGIE**

**Women Linked to Cave Paintings**

By Jean-Michel Chazine of the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) has verified that prehistoric men were not the only cave painters. In the grotto of Gua Masri II in eastern Borneo, Indonesia, 10,000-year-old "negative" handprints (prints made by tracing and coloring around the hands) have indicated that the sexes were equally active as artists.

Chazine’s discovery is the culmination of international efforts to differentiate between hands based on a person’s sex. There are, of course, differences in size (male hands are usually larger than female ones), but such variations are not conclusive. In 2002, British biologist John Manning discovered that, across thousands of different backgrounds, the majority of men had a ring finger slightly longer than their index finger. For most women, the two fingers were the same length.

Working with archeologist and computer scientist Arnaud Nouyr, Chazine created a program that measures the relationship between the two fingers. Chazine and Nouyr applied this technology to the grotto of Gua Masri II, and with it they were able to determine which handprints were made by women and which by men.

The women’s handprints extend far into the grotto, in places thought to be reserved for sacred ceremonies. In this sense, Chazine and Nouyr’s handwork has revealed an equality between prehistoric men and women not only in the frequency of their artwork, but also in their access to these sacred areas.

**Breathing Better with Vanilla**

According to a new study conducted by the CNRS at the University of Strasbourg hospital, vanilla can help reduce respiratory problems for infants born prematurely. Babies born weeks, or months, before their respiratory systems have been able to fully develop often encounter life-threatening breathing problems. Luc Marlier, a researcher at the Center for Applied Physiology in Strasbourg, found that incubators perfumed with vanilla reduced problems with apnea and spontaneous shortness of breath by 36 percent on average. The study tested a variety of different odors, studying babies’ reactions to a highly diluted q-tip for a period of 10 seconds. Unpleasant odors actually slowed down the respiratory system, while pleasant ones accelerated it. The results also showed that even the most premature baby is as sensitive to odor as an adult. The researchers will now determine whether other odors are more effective than vanilla.

**French Chef Cooks for the Stars**

The European Space Agency has asked Alain Ducasse, a leading French chef, to “spice-up” the menu for Europe’s astronauts. ESA is focusing on eight or nine main ingredients which could be grown in the cramped confines of a spaceship. These include onions, potatoes, rice, lettuce and spinach. Mr. Ducasse’s food academy will be working with these few ingredients to develop an astronomical menu for long-term missions.

**Breathing Better with Vanilla**

**French Chef Cooks for the Stars**

**Renault’s Logan Surprise Hit in France**

How do you produce a best-selling car? You gather a team of 50 top-class designers, engineers and car parts specialists, you make them work together in one place for a year and a half, with one objective: cutting costs. You end up with the Renault Logan, a no-frills 5-passenger vehicle with a sticker price of only $6,400. "The only driving force for the car’s conception was cost," explained Renault executive Gérard Detourbet. Relying exclusively on computer design tools, Renault engineers focused on the basics, eliminating all superfluous features.

Originally destined for emerging markets (see NFF 04.08), the car has been getting a lot of attention from buyers all across Europe, who are not deterred by waiting lists of more than three months. In its first six months on the market, 145,000 Logans have been sold worldwide, including 13,719 in Western Europe. Delighted Renault officials are now planning to expand into the Austrian, Belgian and Swiss markets. For more information, visit www.renault.com.

**First Earth-like Planet Discovered**

As part of an international effort, France’s Jean-Philippe Beaulieu of the Institut d’Astrophysique in Paris announced the first discovery of an Earthlike planet outside our solar system in the January 26 issue of Nature. The icy and rocky planet, temporarily christened OGLE-2005-BLG-390 Lb, orbits a star about 28,000 light-years away from our solar system. The discovery was made possible through a special technique called gravitational microlensing, which can indirectly locate planets by the effect they have on a star’s light (they create “a small brightening” or “blip” in the observation, according to Beaulieu). Beaulieu noted that the technique also allowed them to determine its size, which is about five and a half times the mass of Earth, from which they could deduce its temperature (a nippy -364 degrees Fahrenheit) and rocky Earth-like features. The new technique may allow scientists to discover a handful of medium-size rocky planets per year, bringing us closer to answering the question of whether or not we are alone.

**Quaero: A New European Search Engine**

President Jacques Chirac began 2006 with a bang by declaring one of his main goals for the year to be the creation of a European search engine to rival the American giant, Google. The Quaero project, which means “I seek” in Latin, was first announced last summer by Chirac and should be initiated this summer. With the support of Thomson, France Telecom, and Deutsche Telecom, as well as several startups and research organizations, the project will offer full multimedia search capabilities. For example, a search for “Chirac” could yield video clips, photographs, recorded speeches and even entire written works. The search engine is slated to hit cyberspace in three years.

**Michelin’s New X-One Tires Boost Record Sales in U.S.**

Though Michelin, famously secretive, refused to reveal exact figures, it recently announced that sales in the U.S. of its new X-One tires have increased by a factor of 5 since January 2003. These large tires, which can replace the two smaller parallel tires usually found on trucks, were specially developed for North America and help cut gasoline consumption by 5 to 10 percent (for savings equivalent to 1,320 gallons per truck per year). For more information, visit www.michelin.com.

**Airbus Keeps Number 1 Spot**

Toulouse-based Airbus announced a record number of jet orders for 2005, unexpectedly beating Boeing’s total orders for a fifth straight year. Airbus unveiled a total of 1,055 orders, versus Boeing’s 1,002. The 2005 net orders defied predictions as Airbus only had 687 firm orders by November 30. Airbus CEO Gustav Humbert summed up December 2005 in two words: “very busy.” Even though the European manufacturer beat its American counterpart in sales, Airbus conceded that it had lost its market leadership in value terms (45 percent vs. Boeing’s 55 percent). For more information, visit www.airbus.com.

**New Director for CNRS**

Arnold Migus was named the new director general of the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) on January 18, succeeding Bernard Larroutouru. Migus, 57, is a specialist in fusion thermonuclear physics and in laser application studies. He is a graduate of the Polytechnic Institute and has founded the Institute for Laser and Plasmatic Studies, which he headed until now. Migus has worked in the United States, as a researcher for the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, as well as for Bell Telephone Corps. and the Laurence Berkeley Laboratory in California.

**Quaero: A New European Search Engine**

**Michelin’s New X-One Tires Boost Record Sales in U.S.**

**Airbus Keeps Number 1 Spot**

**New Director for CNRS**
Mauresmo wins Australian Open

At 26, French tennis player Amélie Mauresmo has won her first title in a major tournament, the Australian Open. After being the 1999 Melbourne runner-up, Mauresmo emerged victorious after defeating her opponent, Belgium’s Justine Henin-Hardenne, in a 6-1, 2-0 set. Henin-Hardenne pulled out of the second set due to a debilitating stomach-ache illness. “It would probably have been different if the match had gone to the end, but the joy is here,” Mauresmo told a news conference following the match. Now ranked number 2 in the world, Mauresmo also won the WTA Tour Championship last November.

FIRST CHINESE CHURCH IN FRANCE

The first Chinese Catholic Church in France, Notre-Dame-de-Chine, was consecrated on January 8. Located in Paris’s thirteenth arrondissement, the church was consecrated by archbishop of Paris, Mgr André Vingt-Trois. The archbishop’s arrival was accompanied by two dancers disguised as dragons, in order to festively celebrate the church’s inauguration. Paris’s Chinese community continues to grow as many young Chinese immigrants find their way to France.

Mittrand Mania

FORMER PRESIDENT François Mitterrand has been experiencing a surge of popularity on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of his death, a phenomenon that has been termed “Mitterrand Mania.” In the French presidential election of 1981, Mitterrand became the first socialist president of the Fifth Republic, and his government the first left-wing government in 23 years. Though welcomed as a breath of fresh air by much of the left, his political opponents accused him of being opportunistic or even Machiavellian when it came to domestic politics. Throughout his presidency, Mitterrand was a controversial figure, loved by some, hated by others. But all recognized his shrewdness in international affairs and his lasting impact on the construction of Europe.

Jacques Attali, one of the former president’s closest advisors, published a biography of Mitterrand, C’était

MADAME LA PRÉSIDENTE?

WITH LIBERIA AND CHILE having just elected female presidents (for the first time in both countries), and with Germany boasting its first female chancellor, is France next in line? Much progress remains to be done in terms of women holding elected positions in France: currently women only occupy 34 of the 331 seats in the Senate and 71 of the 577 in the National Assembly. Nevertheless, les Françaises have a better chance than ever to see one of their own elected president. Indeed, in a recently released Ifop survey, 94 percent of those polled liked the idea of having a female president. With only 16 months left until the presidential elections, here is a look at the women who might next reside at the Elysée Palace.

The current favorite in the socialist camp is Ségolène Royal, president of the regional council of Poitou-Charentes and deputy in the National Assembly. Fifty-nine percent of the Ifop survey’s respondents said they would consider voting for Ségolène Royal should she decide to run. Others to watch include UMP’s star, Michèle Alliot-Marie, France’s first female defense minister. Also of the UMP, Christine Boutin ran in 2002 and has already declared herself a candidate for 2007. Marie Georges-Buffet, national secretary of the Communist Party in France, is the PCF’s best candidate. Last but not least, Lutte Ouvrière’s Arlette Laguiller, the first female presidential candidate in France, has been a regular on the campaign trail since… 1974!

France: 63 Million Strong and Still Growing

FRANCE CONTINUES to grow, according to the INSEE census report, published in January 2006. There are 62.9 million people now living within the Republic, 367,000 more than the year before, with a third of the new growth due to net immigration. Within Europe, France is only second to Germany in terms of population and second to Ireland in birthrates (the average French woman has 1.94 children in her lifetime, compared with 1.5 for the average European woman).

France’s largest increase in population came from its overseas departments. French Guiana won the demographic award with a population increase of 3.44 percent per year between 1999 and 2005, followed by Réunion, Guadeloupe, and Martinique. The southern departments of Midi-Pyrénées and Languedoc-Roussillon posted the largest growth in la métropole. As the government has adopted legislation making it easier for women to have children while staying in the workforce, family sizes have increased, though the number of women having children remains stable. Even in Paris, where 12 percent of Parisian women stay at home versus 20 percent of women in the rest of France, women are having more children.

Though France is keeping its population stable, its neighbors (Germany, Spain and Italy) are in danger of experiencing substantial population decreases, as their birth rates are not sufficient to compensate for their death rates. According to the latest U.N. report, Europe as a whole will likely lose 41 million people by 2030. Learn more at www.insee.fr.

Mitterrand Mania

Former presidents Bill Clinton and François Mitterrand

François Mitterrand, that has been on the bestseller list for weeks. One thing is certain: the French have always been interested in history and politics, and the fascination with Mitterrand clearly combines both passions.
Cultural Highlights

"Francoffonies!" Celebrates Diversity

FROM MARCH 16 to October 9, people from all over France will take part in Francoffonies!, a celebration of the vibrantly diverse francophone community that spans every continent. Announced by President Chirac at the 2002 Summit of Francophone Nations in Beirut, the 207-day festival will include poets, choreographers, musicians, playwrights and more. With its International Francophone Day (March 20) and its Week of the French language (March 20-26), the month of March traditionally ushers in a celebration of francophone culture every year.

The festival will include the work of 2,000 artists from the 63 member and observer states of the International Organization of Francophone Nations (OFF). For instance, at the Salon du Livre in Paris, from March 16 to 23, the public will have an opportunity to (re)discover authors from countries such as Morocco, Senegal and Vietnam. Additionally, on June 21, the 25th annual Fête de la musique will celebrate francophone musical innovation.

A series of debates will encourage dialogue on multiculturalism. The first, "Francophonie and Globalization," will take place on April 27 and 28 at the Senate in Paris. A colloquium at the National Assembly on June 26 will be dedicated to Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906-2001), a former Senegalese president and the first African to join the French Academy.

Minister of Cooperation, Development and Francophony Brigitte Girardin explains, "In 10 years, the number of people learning French in the world has increased by more than 16 million. This increase ... is an encouraging sign for our work." For more information, please visit www.francoffonies.fr.

Two Modern Art Museums Reopen Their Doors

THE MAGASIN, a center for contemporary art in Grenoble, and the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris (MAMVP) have both reopened after two years of renovations. Both follow in the footsteps of the Musée Cernuschi and the Petit Palais, which were both refurbished in 2005.

Housed in a hall built by Gustave Eiffel for the Paris World Fair in 1900, the Magasin was converted into a museum in 1986 by architect Patrick Bouchain. The Museum of Modern Art was built for the Universal Exposition of 1937, and a section for contemporary art, ARC, was added in 1967. While the renovations have not drastically changed the layout of either museum, Susan Pagé, director of the Museum of Modern Art, says that the refurbishing allowed her to "rethink the arrangement" of its works.

To celebrate its reopening, the Museum of Modern Art will present two special exhibits: "Artwork, a Pause in Time," featuring paintings and drawings by Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947), and "Celebration Park," with the installations, films and videos of Pierre Huyghe. The museum's permanent collection includes works by Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp and Picasso.

The Magasin's inaugural exhibit, "Cinéma(s)," will run until May 7. It will include films and installations commemorating Grenoble’s appeal to innovative artists such as cinematographer Jean-Luc Godard, who moved there to work in 1973. Additionally, the museum’s long and narrow space, aptly named “la Rue,” features the enormous work “Climate Change,” by British artist Michael Craig-Martin (pictured above).

For more information, visit www.magasin-cnac.org and www.v1.paris.fr/musees/MAMVP.

Record Year for La Cité des Sciences

A CÎTE DES SCIENCES et de l’Industrie of La Villette has become the fourth most-visited museum in all of France, having welcomed 3.18 million visitors in 2005. The number of visitors has grown by 14 percent since 2004. This year, La Cité, built by architect Adrien Fainsilber, will celebrate its 20th anniversary. It opened its doors on March 13, 1986—the night that Halley’s comet appeared in the sky.

The Cité’s popularity is no doubt due in part to the 11 new exhibits presented in 2005, most notably one revealing the secrets of the Star Wars saga’s making (see NFF 05.13). This exposition, which will run until August 27, explains the films’ special effects, director George Lucas’ imaginary universe, and the science behind it all.

Other exhibits in 2005 addressed topics such as the comics of André Franquin, the theories of Einstein and the historical and scientific origins of the cell phone. Many of the exhibits appeal specifically to children and young adults, by blending education and fun. Additionally, the Cité des Enfants, which includes a media center and cinema for children, offers kids between 3 and 12 the chance to learn about animals, biology, mechanics and more.

For more information, please visit www.cite-sciences.fr.

2007 Tour de France to Begin in London

France’s legendary cycling competition will kick off in the British capital next year after its bid of $2.68 million was accepted by the Tour’s organizers. London officials hope that the event will attract tourists and motivate people to cycle in the British capital. After a welcome ceremony on July 6, the first stage of the race will take place in London on July 8, 2007, before the cyclists are transported to France. The exact route for the athletes has not yet been determined. The Tour regularly starts off from one of France’s neighbors, but this will be the first time it will launch from Britain, and only the third time it will pass through the country. For more information, visit www.letour.fr.

Francoffonies! Celebrates Diversity

Record Year for La Cité des Sciences

Two Modern Art Museums Reopen Their Doors

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Celebrating Cézanne at the National Gallery

A HUNDRED YEARS after his death, the world celebrates the life and work of artist Paul Cézanne (1839-1906). One hundred and eighteen of Cézanne's oil paintings and watercolors will be on display at Washington D.C.'s National Gallery of Art through May 7. The exhibit, "Cézanne in Provence," focuses on pieces of work from his hometown of Aix-en-Provence, in the southeast of France.

Unlike many of his contemporaries who painted urban scenes, Cézanne preferred to paint his countryside surroundings, reinterpreting the same subject over and over again. He painted his beloved mountain, Sainte-Victoire, 80 times over the course of his lifetime, drawn to it by its "momentum" and its interaction with the sun and sky. Fifteen of these paintings are on display in Washington.

In one, Montagne Sainte-Victoire Above the Route du Tholonet, Cézanne's quality as the "Father of Modern art" is evident. The revolutionary two-dimensionality of his subject is striking. The mountain and trees portrayed become mere shapes and colors. This same approach is even more glaring when Cézanne uses it on a classical subject: the female nude. His famous Large Bathers are reduced to flat geometric forms. "A picture represents nothing, and must represent nothing at first but colors," explained Cézanne. For him, the subject is irrelevant.

This turn toward shape and color as the heart of representation lay the foundation for 20th-century cubism. Picasso would be inspired by Cézanne and called the French artist "the father of us all."

Cézanne is in constant celebration in Washington, with a permanent collection of 22 oil paintings and 88 works on paper at the National Gallery. In 1986, the National Gallery purchased a collection of 15,000 items from art historian John Rewald, who spent his life creating an extensive reference library on the artist. In addition, eight oil paintings by the French artist hang in the White House, and two more are displayed at Washington's Phillips Collection.

With paintings borrowed from places as diverse as St. Petersburg (Russia), Stockholm (Sweden) and London for the duration of the exhibit, it is clear that Washington is not the only city in the world to hold Cézanne in such veneration. There is none so proud, however, as Cézanne's home city of Aix-en-Provence.

From Washington, "Cézanne in Provence" will travel to the Musée Granet in Cézanne's hometown, where a year-long celebration was launched in his honor by the French Ministry of Culture on January 3. For "Cézanne 2006," Aix-en-Provence has organized an entire season of festivals and special events for its beloved artist and fellow Aixois. 2006 is the "Year of Cézanne," but the celebration of this artist as a great master began long before 2006 and will last for long afterward.

For more information about this major exhibit, please visit the National Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. To find out more about other events marking the centenary of Cézanne's death, or to learn more about the French artist in general, please visit the official Cézanne 2006 site at www.cezanne-2006.com.