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BRITANNICA  
Book  
of the Year



Events of  
2009



ENCYCLOPÆDIA  
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2010  
BOOK OF THE YEAR®



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# Foreword

**T**hough the year 2009 was a gloomy one in terms of the deep recession that gripped the globe and the H1N1 flu pandemic that infected hundreds of thousands, the year also offered a chance to reflect upon the 200th anniversary of the births of two historical giants—Abraham Lincoln and Charles Darwin—who were born on the same day in 1809, as well as the 40th anniversary of the musical experience that became known as Woodstock. Though Mexico grappled with ferocious drug wars, Pakistan battled Islamist extremists, and the recruitment of child soldiers remained a scourge, the future looked promising in some respects. China prospered; electric cars geared up; and unmanned aerial vehicles helped fight wars and defend borders. In the sciences, autism therapies were tailored for youngsters, primate research became a key to understanding what it means to be human, and “Ardi,” a possible ancestor older than the hominin skeleton Lucy, captured headlines. All of these topics are featured in Special Reports.

Safety also became a byword during the year as the National Football League adopted new rules to protect players, particularly quarterbacks; central banks and regulatory bodies adopted measures to avert another banking crisis, such as the one experienced in 2008–09; the Chalk River nuclear reactor in Ontario experienced a long-term shutdown (probably into 2010) following a power outage and the detection of heavy water; and the Australian Country Fire Authority urged homeowners to vacate their properties rather than defend them following the deadly bushfires in February that claimed 173 lives on “Black Saturday.” In the swimming world, the advent of nontextile swimwear led to the smashing of hundreds of records. The Cuban Revolution marked a record of its own—a 50-year anniversary. In India, elections gave the governing Congress Party a stronger mandate. Meanwhile, the online microblogging service Twitter became a worldwide sensation as devotees “tweeted” in 140-character submissions, and the service’s users became adept at circumventing censorship, especially during the Iranian elections.

The arts and music world experienced a particularly grave loss of talent with the deaths of American painter Andrew Wyeth, German-born American composer Lukas Foss, American author John Updike, and pop superstar Michael Jackson. Also leaving the scene were Walter Cronkite, the dean of American journalism, and Edward Kennedy, the lion of the U.S. Senate. People in the news include U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Ponzi schemer Bernie Madoff, boxing phenomenon Manny Pacquiao, singing sensations Susan Boyle and Taylor Swift, and first lady Michelle Obama.

I thus offer the *Britannica Book of the Year 2010*—a compilation of those events and milestones of 2009 that stimulated our imaginations and provoked controversy. Was 2009 the end of the decade?

Karen Sparks  
Director and Editor

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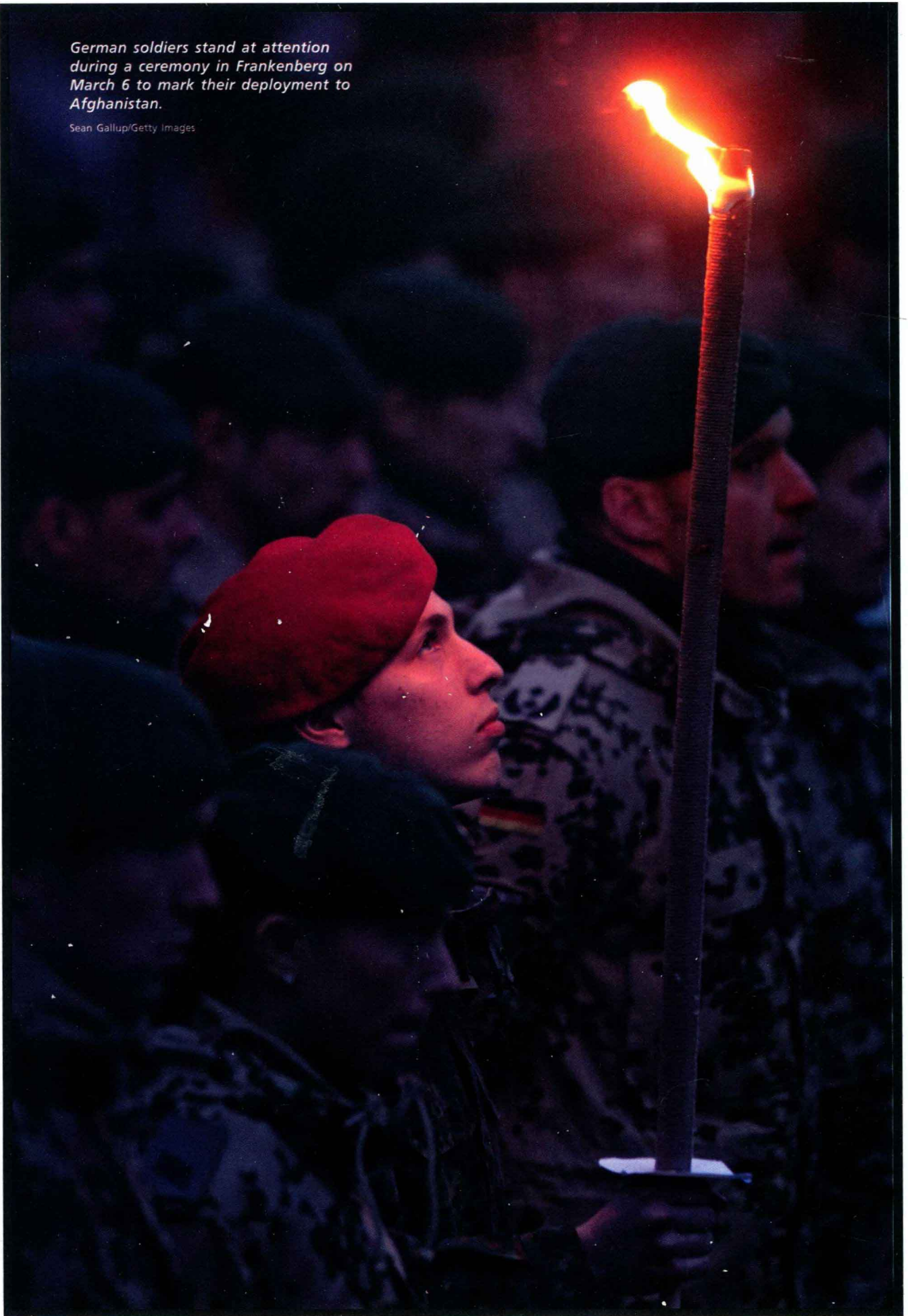
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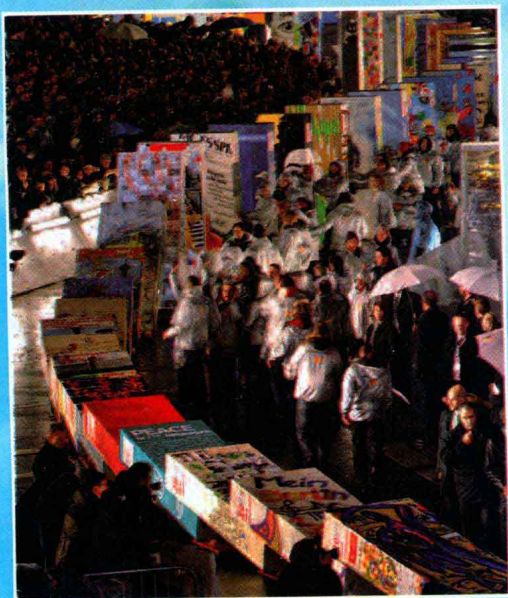
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*German soldiers stand at attention during a ceremony in Frankenberg on March 6 to mark their deployment to Afghanistan.*

Sean Gallup/Getty Images

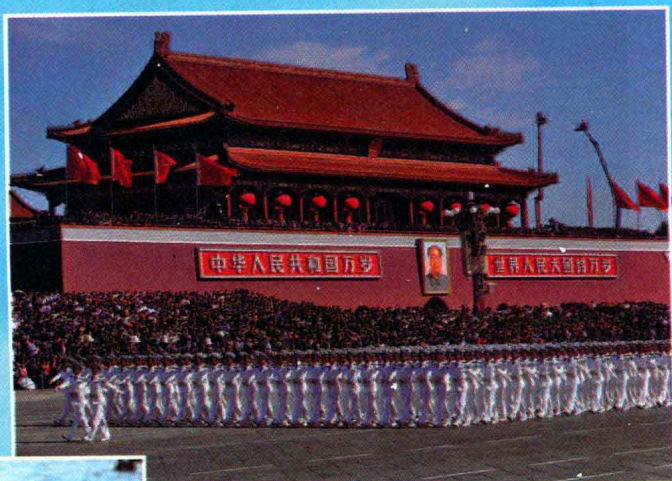


# Dates of 2009



*Giant dominoes (above) placed in front of the Brandenburg Gate fall in a symbolic act during ceremonies on November 9 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Chinese naval personnel (right) march past Tiananmen Square in Beijing on October 1 as part of China's celebrations marking 60 years of communist rule. A Samoan man (below) surveys damage left behind by a tsunami that was generated by a magnitude-8.0 earthquake near Samoa on September 30.*

Photos: (background) Shutterstock; (above) Gero Breloer/AP; (right) AFP/Getty Images; (below) Phil Walter—Getty Images





*Members of the New York Yankees (left) celebrate their title-clinching win over the Philadelphia Phillies in game six of the World Series on November 4. Sri Lankan children (right) participate in a victory procession on May 20 following the capture of the final enclave of the Tamil Tiger rebels and an end to Sri Lanka's long-running civil war.*

Photos: (left) Chris McGrath—Getty Images; (right) Eranga Jayawardena/AP

Photos: (right) Rodolfo Gonzalez/AP; (below) NASA

*Family members (right) of a soldier killed during the November 5 mass shooting at the U.S. Army base at Ft. Hood, Texas, grieve during a memorial service honouring the 13 people who lost their lives. Astronaut Andrew Feustel (below) performs work on the Hubble Space Telescope on May 14.*



# January

*In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned. Our journey has never been one of shortcuts or settling for less.*

U.S. Pres. Barack Obama  
in his inauguration address, January 20

**1** With the beginning of the new year, the Czech Republic, led by Prime Minister Mirek Topolanek, assumes the presidency of the European Union.

Russia ceases shipment of natural gas to Ukraine; the previous day Ukraine had rejected sharp price increases demanded by Russia.

The Green Zone, a 14.5-sq-km (5.6-sq-mi) area in Baghdad that has been the centre of the U.S. occupation, is turned over to Iraqi control.

Two newspapers in Mexico report that more than 5,000 people were killed by gangsters in drug-related violence in 2008, more than twice as many as died in 2007.

**2** The government of Sri Lanka announces that its military has captured the city of Kilinochchi, the administrative centre of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

At a gathering of leaders of a large tribe in Yusufiyah, Iraq, to discuss national rec-

onciliation, a suicide bomber kills at least 24 people.

**3** After a week of aerial and naval assaults against Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip, Israeli troops and tanks cross the border into Gaza, initiating a ground war there.

John Atta Mills is declared the winner of the runoff presidential election held in Ghana in late December 2008.

**4** A suicide bomber detonates his weapon among a crowd of pilgrims visiting a Shi'ite shrine in Baghdad; at least 40 people, many of them Iranians, are killed.

For the second time since it halted natural gas delivery to Ukraine, Russia raises the price that it requires Ukraine to pay for delivery of the fuel.

**5** India gives Pakistan evidence that the terrorists who attacked

Mumbai (Bombay) in November 2008 were linked to Pakistan; it demands that those responsible be tried in India.

The new U.S. embassy compound in Baghdad is dedicated; it is the largest U.S. embassy in the world.

At a meeting of the American Astronomical Society, researchers report their finding that the Sun is moving more quickly around the

centre of the Milky Way Galaxy than had been believed, which indicates that the Galaxy is approximately as large as Andromeda, much larger than previously thought.

**6** Some 40 Palestinians are killed by Israeli shelling outside a UN educational facility that was being used as a refuge in the Gaza Strip.

Nearly all natural gas delivered from Russia through Ukraine to Europe and Turkey is halted.

Sheikh Hasina Wazed takes office as prime minister of Bangladesh; she previously held the post in 1996–2001. (Photo left.)

In South Korea opposition lawmakers end a 12-day occupation of the parliament building after successfully blocking a vote on a free-trade agreement with the U.S. as well as other legislation.

U.S. Pres. George W. Bush creates the largest marine reserve in the world, totaling



Qamruzzaman—Xinhua/Landov

505,773 sq km (195,280 sq mi) in area, by designating the Mariana Trench, Pacific Remote Islands, and Rose Atoll as marine national monuments.

At the Macworld Expo trade show in San Francisco, Apple official Philip W. Schiller announces that anti-copying software will be removed from songs in its iTunes Store, that record companies may set a variety of prices for songs, and that users of iPhones will for the first time be able to download songs from iTunes over wireless networks.

**7** B. Ramalinga Raju resigns as chairman of giant outsourcing company Satyam Computer Services in one of India's largest-ever accounting scandals.

North Korea sets legislative elections for March 8; the decision had been postponed for several months.

Violent protests take place in Oakland, Calif., where demonstrators are angry over the slow response to an incident in which an unarmed young black man was shot and killed early on January 1 by a transit policeman on the platform of a Bay Area Rapid Transit station.

The centenary of the U.K.'s domestic intelligence agency, MI5, is marked by the first-ever interview of the agency's head by the press as Jonathan Evans meets with reporters at MI5 headquarters in London.

**8** The Bank of England lowers its benchmark interest rate by half a percentage point, to 1.5%, in an effort to help the economy of the U.K., which is in recession for the first time in 17 years; the interest rate

is at its lowest level since the founding of the bank in 1694.

Venezuela's central bank reports that the country's rate of inflation in 2008 was 30.9%, higher than it had been for more than a decade.

The U.S. Department of Labor releases statistics showing that the number of people receiving unemployment benefits at the end of 2008 reached 4.61 million, the highest number since November 1982.

The University of Florida defeats the University of Oklahoma 24-14 in college football's Bowl Championship Series title game in Miami to win the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision championship.

**9** The *Sirius Star*, a Saudi-owned supertanker that was seized by Somali pirates in November 2008, is released in return for the payment of \$3 million in ransom; however, a boat carrying pirates to shore capsizes, which results in the drowning of five of the pirates and the loss of some of the ransom money.

Julie L. Gerberding resigns her post as head of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Former U.S. treasury secretary Robert E. Rubin resigns as an adviser to the board of banking giant Citigroup, which is negotiating to sell its brokerage business Smith Barney to financial services provider Morgan Stanley.

**10** Israel warns residents of the Gaza Strip that it intends to intensify its operations against Hamas, which

have so far left some 820 Palestinians dead, while heavy rocket fire from Gaza into Israel continues.

**11** At the Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, Calif., best picture honours go to *Slumdog Millionaire* and *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*; the award for best director goes to Danny Boyle for *Slumdog Millionaire*.

**12** Pres. Lee Myung-Bak of South Korea and Prime Minister Taro Aso of Japan agree to embark on a program of economic cooperation in view of the global economic crisis.

An appellate court in South Africa rules that charges against African National Congress (ANC) leader Jacob Zuma should not have been dismissed and thereby makes it possible for the charges to be reinstated.

Health officials in Minnesota report that they have linked an outbreak of salmonella that has affected some 400 people in 43 states with peanut butter that is sold to institutions.

**13** Ethiopian troops complete their withdrawal from Mogadishu, Som.; various Islamist groups, notably al-Shabaab, take over vacated posts, and fighting between Islamist forces and Ethiopian troops leaves at least 15 people dead.

Some 10,000 people demonstrate in Riga to show their unhappiness with the troubled economy and with corruption in government in Latvia; rioting erupts.

Carol Bartz, executive chairman of the design software company Autodesk, is cho-

sen as CEO of Internet company Yahoo!.

**14** Protests against economic conditions in Sofia, Bulg., turn violent.

The U.S. Supreme Court rules that evidence found by arresting officers who had been misled by a computer file that had not been updated into believing that there was an outstanding warrant for the defendant is not subject to the exclusionary rule and can be used in trial.

After several days of severe flooding in Fiji, the country's sugar farms have been decimated, 9,000 people have been evacuated, and at least 11 people have died.

Nortel Networks, once one of the biggest telecommunications equipment makers in the world, files for bankruptcy protection in Canada, where it is based.

**15** Israeli armed forces shell a hospital run by the Palestine Red Crescent Society and the headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in Gaza City; another attack kills Said Siam, the head of Hamas security forces.

The U.S. Senate votes to allow the release of the second half of the fund created for the rescue of financial institutions affected by the subprime lending debacle.

*Science Express*, the online component of *Science* magazine, publishes a report by a team of scientists who found that the atmosphere of Mars contains methane, a gas that would decompose quickly in the Martian environment; the presence of the gas indicates that the planet is geologically alive or contains biological life.

A U.S. Airways A320 jet loses power in both engines because of bird strikes shortly after taking off from New York City's La Guardia Airport; pilot Chesley B. Sullenberger III successfully lands the plane in the Hudson River, and all 155 aboard are safely rescued. (Photo right.)



**16** A demonstration in Vilnius by thousands of people opposed to proposed adjustments to economic austerity in Lithuania turns into rioting.

A 20-year sentence for corruption imposed in 2003 against Arnaldo Alemán, who was president of Nicaragua in 1997–2002, is overturned by the country's Supreme Court.

The American electronics retailer Circuit City Stores, with 567 outlets and 34,000 employees, announces that it is going out of business.

**17** Israel declares that it will begin a cease-fire early the following day in its operations against Hamas in the Gaza Strip; some 1,200 Palestinians and 13 Israelis have died during the 22-day operation.

The organization Human Rights Watch details massacres in which at least 620 people have been slaughtered by the Lord's Resistance Army militia group in the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the past month.

The Dakar Rally, which began January 3 in Buenos Aires with some 530 teams who followed a 9,574-km (5,949-mi) loop that took them south and into Chile and then back to Buenos Aires, concludes; the winners are South African drivers

er Giniel De Villiers in a Volkswagen automobile, Spanish driver Marc Coma on a KTM motorcycle, Russian driver Firdaus Kabirov in a Kamaz truck, and Czech driver Josef Machacek in a Yamaha ATV.

**18** Prime Minister Vladimir Putin of Russia and Prime Minister Yuliya Tymoshenko of Ukraine reach an agreement on the price that Ukraine will pay for Russian natural gas; previous accords have fallen through, and at least 12 people have been frozen to death while some 20 countries are cut off from gas supplies from Russia.

McKee Foods Corp. recalls Little Debbie brand peanut butter crackers; the previous day the U.S. government had advised consumers to avoid cookies, cakes, and other items made with peanut butter paste, much of which comes from the Blakely, Ga., plant of the Peanut Corp. of America that has been implicated in a large salmonella outbreak.

**19** In the Swat valley in Pakistan, five schools closed for winter vacation are bombed; authorities believe the culprits are Taliban fighters

determined to prevent the education of girls.

Prominent Russian human rights lawyer Stanislav Markelov and a freelance reporter for the independent newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* are shot down in broad daylight in Moscow.

**20** Barack Obama is inaugurated as the 44th president of the United States before what is perhaps the largest crowd ever to attend a presidential inauguration.

A partnership is announced between troubled American car company Chrysler LLC and the Italian automobile manufacturer Fiat, which will acquire a stake in Chrysler and will sell its Fiat and Alfa Romeo brand cars in Chrysler dealerships.

**21** Hillary Rodham Clinton is confirmed as U.S. secretary of state, and Janet Napolitano is sworn in as U.S. secretary of homeland security.

Former KGB agent and now wealthy capitalist Aleksandr Y. Lebedev announces that he will buy a majority stake in the iconic London newspaper *The Evening Standard*.

The online marketplace company eBay reports its first-ever revenue decline.

Richard D. Parsons is named chairman of financial services giant Citigroup.

**22** Japan reports that its export rate in December 2008 fell drastically, while China announces a sharp slowdown in growth in the final quarter of the year, and South Korea says that its economy shrank in the same period; all these results are related to the economic crisis in the U.S. and Europe.

U.S. Pres. Barack Obama signs executive orders requiring that the military prison at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba be closed within a year, insisting that interrogation methods fall within the guidelines of the Army Field Manual, and ending the CIA's secret overseas prison program.

To the surprise of observers, Rwandan military forces capture Laurent Nkunda, the Tutsi warlord who has terrorized the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for several years, during most of which time he was supported by Rwanda.

Prosecutors in India claim that B. Ramalinga Raju, the former head of the outsourcing company Satyam Computer Services, whose clients include a third of the Fortune 500 companies, confessed to falsely claiming more than 10,000 more employees than the company had and buying land with the money paid to the imaginary employees.

The computer software behemoth Microsoft, for the first time in its 34-year history, announces a major lay-off; it plans to shed about 5% of its workforce, amounting to some 5,000 employees.

**23** The British Office for National Statistics releases data showing that the U.K. officially went into recession in the final quarter of 2008, and Spain's National Statistics Institute reveals that the country's unemployment rate during the last quarter of 2008 reached 13.9%, the highest in the euro zone.

The biggest wind-power complex that has been built in Latin America is ceremonially inaugurated along the southern coast of Mexico's Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

DC Comics announces that beginning in April the monthly satiric magazine *Mad* will begin publishing only quarterly.

**24** A suicide car bomber detonates his weapon near an African Union peacekeeping base in Mogadishu, Som., as a public bus is passing; at least 15 people are killed.

Pope Benedict XVI revokes the excommunications of four bishops who were consecrated in 1988 without

Vatican permission by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, who opposed the reforms of the Second Vatican Council; one of the bishops has denied that the Holocaust took place.

**25** A new constitution supported by Pres. Evo Morales is approved in a voter referendum in Bolivia.

The Sri Lankan military reports that it has taken control of Mullaittivu, the last major town controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

**26** The coalition government of Iceland falls, a victim of the collapse of the country's economy.

The Islamist insurgent group al-Shabaab takes control of Baidoa, the seat of Somalia's transitional national government, and the following day announces the imposition of Shari'ah rule.

Tens of thousands of protesters riot in the streets of Antananarivo, Madag., to demand the resignation of the government in response to the shutdown of a television channel owned by the head of the opposition; at least 25 people are killed.

Timothy F. Geithner is confirmed and sworn in as U.S. secretary of the treasury.

A merger of the pharmaceutical companies Pfizer Inc. and Wyeth is announced by Pfizer CEO Jeffrey B. Kindler; some 19,000 people will be laid off in the combined company, which will be the fourth largest in the U.S.

At Thoroughbred horse racing's 2008 Eclipse Awards, Curlin is named Horse of the Year for the second consecutive year.

In the field of children's literature, the Newbery Medal is awarded to Neil Gaiman for *The Graveyard Book*, and Beth Krommes wins the Caldecott Medal for her illustrations for *The House in the Night* by Susan Marie Swanson.

**27** The U.K. offers a package of £2.3 billion (about \$3.2 billion) in aid to the faltering automobile manufacturers Jaguar Land Rover, owned by India's Tata Motors, and Vauxhall, owned by General Motors of the U.S.

Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad is chosen by more than 700 delegates to replace the late Aleksey II as patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church; he is to be enthroned on February 1.

**28** The U.S. House of Representatives passes an \$819 billion economic stimulus package supported by Pres. Barack Obama.

The World Economic Forum convenes in Davos, Switz., in an atmosphere of crisis.

The Peanut Corp. of America expands its recall of goods to include all peanut butter products made since Jan. 1, 2007, at its now-closed plant in Blakely, Ga.; the salmonella outbreak identified as having originated at the plant has caused at least eight deaths.

**29** Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission postpones the country's presidential election until August 20, saying it would be impossible to be ready sooner; the constitution requires that an election be held at least 30 days

before May 22; when Pres. Hamid Karzai's term of office ends.

The Illinois state Senate votes unanimously that Gov. Rod Blagojevich is guilty of abuse of power and removes him from office; Pat Quinn becomes governor in his place.

Ford Motor Co. reports that it suffered a net loss of \$14.6 billion in 2008, a record for the company.

**30** Morgan Tsvangirai agrees to become prime minister of Zimbabwe in a coalition government with Pres. Robert Mugabe; the Southern African Development Community pushed for this solution to the impasse.

North Korea announces the nullification of all of its previous agreements with South Korea.

Grigol Mgaloblishvili resigns as prime minister of Georgia.

**31** In Djibouti, Somalia's transitional legislature elects Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, former head of the Islamic Courts Union, president; the news is greeted with exultation in Mogadishu.

Andry Rajoelina, mayor of Antananarivo, announces that he is now president of Madagascar; Pres. Marc Ravalomanana disagrees.

Elections to provincial councils are held throughout Iraq in relative peace.

American Serena Williams defeats Dinara Safina of Russia to win the Australian Open women's tennis championship; the following day Rafael Nadal of Spain defeats Roger Federer of Switzerland to win the men's title.

# February

“

*Hell in all its fury has visited the good people of Victoria. This is an appalling tragedy.*

”

Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in response to wildfires that have consumed 1,995 sq km (770 sq mi) and left dozens dead, February 8

**1** Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir is sworn in as prime minister of Iceland at the head of a caretaker coalition government.

Michel Desjoyeaux of France crosses the finish line at Les Sables d'Olonne, France, to win the Vendée Globe around-the-world solo sailing race 84 days 3 hr 9 min after he started the 45,549-km (28,303-mi) journey, breaking the race record by more than 3 days; he is the first skipper to have won the race twice. (Photo below.)

In Tampa, Fla., the Pittsburgh Steelers defeat the Arizona Cardinals 27–23 to win the National Football League's Super Bowl XLIII.

**2** A roadside bomb explodes near an African Union peacekeeping base in Mogadishu, Som., killing at least 20 people; the city's deputy mayor says that the peacekeepers responded by firing into a crowd of civilians, killing 39, but the peacekeepers deny that allegation.

At a meeting in Addis Ababa, Eth., Muammar al-Qaddafi of Libya is elected

chairman of the African Union.

Farmers from southern Crete attempt to reach government buildings in Athens with some 300 farm vehicles to demand greater economic help from the government; fighting with riot police takes place.

Eric Holder is confirmed as U.S. attorney general; he is the first African American to hold that position.

A government report in South Korea shows that the country's exports declined by a record 32.8% in January.

**3** Iran announces that it has for the first time launched a satellite into orbit.

In Moscow, Kyrgyz Pres. Kurmanbek Bakiyev announces that he will close the Manas air base used by

the U.S. as a staging area for military forces in Afghanistan.

Carmakers report that new-car sales in the U.S. fell 37% in January in the industry's worst January figures since 1963.

The government of Madagascar removes Mayor Andry Rajoelina of Antananarivo from office; Rajoelina has been attempting to take over the country.

The International Court of Justice creates a new boundary between Romania and Ukraine in the Black Sea; about 80% of the disputed maritime area is awarded to Romania.

The government of Indonesia reports that the previous day it rescued some 200 ethnic Rohingya men who had been drifting in a wooden boat for close to three weeks and that 22 of the boat's passengers had perished during that time.

**4** U.S. Pres. Barack Obama announces new rules that will cap the salary of top executives in companies receiving government financial assis-



Charles Platiau—Reuters/Landov

tance at \$500,000 and impose restrictions on bonus and severance pay for such company leaders.

In Puthukkudiiruppu, Sri Lanka, the last operational hospital in the region where government forces are fighting the remnants of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam comes under fire, and patients, doctors, and other staff flee; it is thought that as many as 250,000 Tamil civilians are trapped in the war zone.

India signs an agreement with French energy company Areva that envisions Areva building and supplying a nuclear power plant in Jaitapur, Maharashtra state.

**5** Scientists from Liberia and neighboring countries announce that they will meet to try to find a way to contain a massive infestation of *Achaea catocaloides rena* caterpillars that is devastating forests and crops in northern Liberia.

A suicide bomber near a Shi'ite mosque in Dera Ghazi Khan, Pak., kills at least 24 people.

After the payment of \$3.2 million in ransom, the *Faina*, a Ukrainian ship carrying millions of dollars of military weaponry, is released by the Somali pirates who hijacked it in September 2008; the ship, which had been surrounded by U.S. warships to keep the pirates from unloading the weapons, arrives safely at Mombasa, Kenya, on February 12.

The journal *Nature* publishes a report describing the discovery in Colombia of a giant snake, dubbed *Titanoboa cerrejonensis*, that lived some 60 million years ago and was about 13 m (42 ft) long; the find also sheds light on the climate conditions in the

tropics during a time when the planet was much warmer than it is at present.

Pat Summitt, coach of the University of Tennessee Lady Vols women's basketball team, becomes the first NCAA Division I college basketball coach to win 1,000 games.

**6** The U.S. Department of Labor releases figures showing that job losses in November and December were worse than previously reported, and job losses for January reached 598,000, the worst figure since December 1974; since the recession began in December 2007, 3.6 million jobs have disappeared.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approves a drug made with antithrombin, an anticoagulating protein, extracted from the milk of goats that have been engineered with a human protein by GTC Biotherapeutics; the genetically engineered goats are also approved.

Nika Gilauri is confirmed as Georgia's prime minister by the legislature.

The Aragua Tigers (Tigres) of Venezuela defeat the Mazatlán Deer (Venados) of Mexico 5-3 to win baseball's Caribbean Series.

**7** Supporters of opposition figure Andry Rajoelina clash with government troops in Antananarivo, Madag., and some 25 people are killed; the death toll in political violence is said to have reached 130.

**8** Wildfires race through the Australian state of Victoria for a second day, consuming 1,995 sq km (770 sq mi) of forest and farmland, two towns, and 750 homes

and leaving at least 173 people dead; some of the fires are believed to have been deliberately set.

At the Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, the top winner is British and American duo Robert Plant and Alison Krauss, who win five awards, including album of the year for *Raising Sand* and record of the year for "Please Read the Letter"; the award for song of the year goes to Coldplay's "Viva la Vida," and the best new artist is British singer Adele.

**9** As refugees fleeing the war zone in northern Sri Lanka are being searched by Sri Lankan soldiers at a checkpoint, a suicide bomber detonates her weapon, killing at least 28 people.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel names Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg to replace Michael Glos as minister of the economy.

In Beijing the nearly completed Mandarin Oriental Hotel and China Central Television headquarters, a modernist building designed by Rem Koolhaas, is destroyed by fire; celebratory fireworks are to blame.

Star slugger Alex Rodriguez of the New York Yankees' Major League Baseball team confesses that he used illegal performance-enhancing drugs when he played for the Texas Rangers in 2001-03.

**10** In legislative elections in Israel, the centrist Kadima party wins 28 of the 120 seats, while Likud garners 27; the right-wing Yisrael Beiteinu takes 15, and the Labor Party secures only 13.

U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner

announces a large and complex financial rescue package involving as much as \$2.5 trillion; the markets drop over the lack of details in the presentation.

The U.S. Senate passes an \$838 billion economic stimulus bill and begins talks to reconcile that bill with the one passed by the House of Representatives earlier; the resultant bill is signed into law on February 17.

After gunmen kidnap 9 people in Villa Ahumada, Mex., and murder 6 of them, government forces take pursuit, killing 14 of the suspected drug traffickers; one soldier is also killed.

In Saudi Arabia, Chinese Pres. Hu Jintao signs an agreement for the China Railway Corp. to build a monorail system in Mecca for the use of pilgrims making the hajj.

Clussexx Three D Grinchy Glee wins Best in Show at the Westminster Kennel Club's 133rd dog show; the Sussex spaniel, known as Stump, is at 10 years of age the oldest dog to win the top award at the premier American dog show.

**11** Taliban attackers storm the buildings housing the ministries of justice and education and the prison directorate in a coordinated assault in Kabul, killing at least 26 people.

Pres. Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe swears in Morgan Tsvangirai as prime minister; the previous day Tsvangirai chose Tendai Biti as finance minister.

**12** Officials in Pakistan acknowledge that the terrorist attacks that took place in Mumbai (Bombay) in

November 2008 were partially planned in Pakistan and announce the arrest of six people in connection with the attack.

The Connecticut Opera, based in Hartford, shuts down after 67 seasons, leaving ticket holders stranded.

The David Wills House in Gettysburg, Pa., where U.S. Pres. Abraham Lincoln wrote the Gettysburg Address, opens as part of nationwide celebrations of the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth.

**13** A suicide bomber kills at least 35 Shi'ite pilgrims who were on their way to Karbala', Iraq, for a religious observation.

Somalia's president names Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke to serve as prime minister of the transitional government.

The Peanut Corp. of America, the company whose peanut butter and peanut paste products caused an outbreak of salmonella poisoning, goes out of business.

Researchers at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Germany announce that they have reconstructed the genome of Neanderthals using DNA from bone fragments; analysis of the genome is expected to shed light on many areas of human evolution.

**14** A missile attack from U.S. drones against Taliban and al-Qaeda targets in Pakistan's South Waziristan province kills 30 people.

King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia makes changes to the cabinet that include naming a woman as deputy minister

of education and replacing two Wahhabi clerics with members of more-moderate Sunni sects.

The Peruvian film *La teta asustada* (*The Milk of Sorrow*), directed by Claudia Llosa, wins the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival.

**15** Voters in Venezuela approve a ballot measure that will remove term limits for all elected officials, including Pres. Hugo Chávez.

Belgium opens Princess Elisabeth station in East Antarctica; it uses wind and solar power and is the first zero-emission research station on the continent.

In Daytona Beach, Fla., the 51st running of the Daytona 500 NASCAR race, shortened to 152 laps from 200 because of rain, is won by Matt Kenseth.

**16** The government of Pakistan agrees to an accord offered by the Taliban that will allow Shari'ah law in the Swat valley region of the North-West Frontier Province and restrict government military action to responding to attacks, in effect ceding that area to the Taliban.

Japan reports that its real gross domestic product contracted for the third consecutive quarter, shrinking in the most recent quarter at an annual rate of 12.7%.

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission declares that the Stanford Group, parent of Stanford International Bank, may have perpetrated an \$8 billion fraud involving certificates of deposit in its bank in Antigua.

**17** The UN releases a report saying that the number of civilians killed in the war in Afghanistan in 2008 was 2,118, up from 1,523 the previous year, and that 828 of them had been killed by forces of the U.S.-led coalition and Afghan soldiers.

Kaing Guek Eav, known as Duch, becomes the first defendant in the opening trial before a UN-assisted tribunal investigating genocide carried out by members of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia; he had run a particularly brutal prison during the regime.

The automakers General Motors and Chrysler LLC ask for an additional \$14 billion in assistance from the U.S. government, while promising to cut costs; GM pledges to lay off 47,000 workers, close five North American plants, and drop half of its brands.

Shoichi Nakagawa resigns as Japan's finance minister after having appeared to be drunk at a news conference while attending a meeting of the Group of Seven industrialized countries.

**18** The Swiss bank UBS agrees to reveal the names of American holders of secret bank accounts whom U.S. authorities believe culpable of tax evasion.

U.S. Pres. Barack Obama announces a new \$275 billion plan that is intended to help as many as nine million people save their homes from foreclosure or refinance their mortgages.

At the Brit Awards in London, Welsh singer Duffy wins three prizes, including best British album for *Rockferry*; the award for best international album goes to American band Kings of Leon for *Only by the Night*.

**19** The International Atomic Energy Agency reports that it has found that Iran has a third more enriched uranium than the country had disclosed and that the amount of uranium would be sufficient to make an atom bomb.

Officials in Equatorial Guinea say that they have arrested 16 Nigerians who had attempted to overthrow the government in an attack two days earlier; Equatorial Guinea maintains that the attackers belong to the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, but spokesmen for that organization cast the blame on the government of Nigeria.

French Prime Minister François Fillon proposes that the income of the poor of the French overseas territory of Guadeloupe should be increased by \$250 per month; the island had suffered weeks of unrest over the rising cost of living.

LittleBigPlanet, a Sony jumping-and-climbing game for the PlayStation 3 console, wins the prize for game of the year at the 12th annual Interactive Achievement Awards in Las Vegas.

**20** Ivars Godmanis resigns as prime minister of Latvia, as the country's economy suffers a collapse in the face of the global credit crisis.

Israeli Pres. Shimon Peres asks Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the Likud party, to form a government.

A UN-sponsored meeting in Nairobi produces an agreement by 140 countries, including the U.S., to negotiate a treaty to limit the emissions of mercury into the atmosphere; mercury is a neurotoxin.

Matthew Bennett, Bournemouth University—Reuters/Landov

A Chinese official complains that Russia has responded inadequately to a situation in which Russian warships on February 14 fired on and sank a Chinese tanker flying a Sierra Leone flag; seven or eight sailors were lost at sea in the attack.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average falls 100 points, losing 1.3% of its value, to close at 7365.67, its lowest point since Oct. 9, 2002.

The Birgit Nilsson Foundation names Plácido Domingo the recipient of the inaugural Birgit Nilsson Prize for achievement in classical music; the prize carries a cash value of \$1 million and is to be awarded every two to three years.

**21** U.S. military officials concede that an air strike in Afghanistan's Herat province by coalition forces on February 17 killed 13 civilians and 3 militants; the U.S. military had initially said that all the dead were militants.

Police in Athens say that a leftist militant grouping, the Sect of Rebels, has claimed responsibility for a grenade and gun attack on the headquarters of the Alter private television network that took place on February 18.

**22** An attack by Islamist insurgents on an African Union compound in Mogadishu, Som., leaves 11 peacekeepers, all of them from Burundi, dead.

A study published in *Nature Structural & Molecular Biology* describes the engineering of antibodies that attack a portion of the influenza virus that does not mutate, suggesting the possibility of

a single vaccine effective against all strains of flu.

At the 81st Academy Awards presentation, hosted by Hugh Jackman, Oscars are won by, among others, *Slumdog Millionaire* (best picture) and its director, Danny Boyle, and actors Sean Penn, Kate Winslet, Heath Ledger, and Penélope Cruz.

**23** The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam send communications indicating that they would like to participate in an internationally brokered cease-fire.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average falls 250.89 points, to 7114.78, while the Nasdaq composite index loses 3.71% of its value, dropping to 1387.72.

The U.S. government describes its intention to give \$900 million to non-governmental organizations to help rebuilding efforts in the Gaza Strip.

**24** The leader of the Taliban in the Swat valley region of Pakistan declares an indefinite cease-fire.

U.S. Pres. Barack Obama makes a nationally televised speech before both houses of Congress in which he lays out his plans and describes the goals of his budget.

**25** Pakistan's Supreme Court rules that Nawaz Sharif is ineligible to hold elective office.

At a conference of the Bangladesh Rifles, a paramilitary border guard organization, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, hundreds of troops mutiny, leading to a lengthy gun battle between the mutineers and army troops

in which at least 50 people are killed.

Indigenous rights activist Mick Dodson, a member of the Yawuru people of Western Australia, is recognized as Australian of the Year.

**26** At reconciliation talks in Cairo, leaders of the Palestinian parties Fatah and Hamas announce that committees have been established to find a way to form a unity government and to work out many other issues.

U.S. Pres. Barack Obama proposes a sweeping 10-year budget that would overhaul health care, push back global warming, and reverse a 30-year trend of increasing economic inequality.

The Royal Bank of Scotland posts an annual loss of £24.1 billion (about \$34.8 billion), the largest in British history, and immediately seeks to join the U.K.'s program for protecting bank assets.

The American computer company Dell Inc. reports that its net income in the most recent quarter fell 48% from the same quarter a year earlier.

The Fox television network declares that it has renewed the animated comedy series *The Simpsons* for two more seasons; *The Simpsons* is currently tied with *Gunslinger* as the longest-running scripted prime-time show.

**27** The U.S. Department of Commerce announces that the country's economy in the final quarter of 2008 contracted at a rate of 6.2%, not 3.8% as previously stated; also, the Department of the Treasury says that it is expanding its stake in the banking giant Citigroup from 8% to 36%.



A report published in the journal *Science* describes fossilized footprints found near Lake Turkana in Kenya that were made some 1.5 million years ago, probably by *Homo erectus* individuals, that show that *H. erectus* had both a gait and feet that are very similar to those of modern humans. (Photo above.)

The final issue of the *Rocky Mountain News* is published in Denver; the newspaper was founded in April 1859 and had been owned by the E.W. Scripps Co. since 1926, but Scripps had been unsuccessfully trying to sell it and felt it could not afford to keep publishing.

**28** Two days of military consultations between China and the U.S. conclude with an agreement that high-level discussions about military issues between the two countries will be resumed.

Pres. Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan orders that presidential elections be held in accordance with the constitution, in April or May, not, as now scheduled, in August; it had been deemed logistically impossible to stage elections earlier than August.

# March

“ *From here, God willing, the fate of this nation will change. From here, a journey of development will start. From here, a revolution will come.* ”

Pakistani opposition leader Nawaz Sharif, on the reinstatement of Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry as chief justice, March 16

**1** More than 1,000 of the paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles border guards are charged with murder after it was learned that some 148 people, mostly officers, were massacred in the uprising on February 25.

The U.S. government agrees to allow American International Group (AIG) to draw as much as \$30 billion from the Troubled Asset Relief Program; it is the fourth time the government has had to intervene to save the insurance giant from bankruptcy.

**2** Pres. João Bernardo Vieira of Guinea-Bissau is killed by army troops; the previous day the army chief of staff had died in a bomb attack.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average drops below 7,000 for the first time since October 1997, losing 4.2% of its value, while the major British stock index falls 5.3% and that in Italy sinks 6%.

**3** Twelve well-armed gunmen ambush a bus carrying the Sri

Lankan cricket team to a match in Lahore, Pak.; six police officers escorting the bus and two bystanders are killed, six cricketers are wounded, and the attackers all escape.

Sales figures for automobiles in the U.S. reveal that sales throughout the industry in February were 41% lower than in the previous February.

The government of Armenia announces that it will let its currency, the dram, fall and is asking for a loan from the International Monetary Fund; the announcement creates panic among the populace.

**4** The International Criminal Court issues an international warrant for the arrest of Pres. Omar al-Bashir of The Sudan to face charges relating to atrocities in the Darfur region; Bashir almost immediately expels several international aid groups working in Darfur.

Nigeria's health minister reveals that more than 5,000

people have become ill in a meningitis outbreak that has left 333 people dead in the past three months.

**5** The European Central Bank lowers its key interest rate by half a percentage point, to 1.5%, its lowest level since its inception, and for the first time forecasts that the economy of the 16 euro-zone countries is likely to shrink in the coming year.

The Bank of England lowers its key interest rate to a record low of 0.5% and announces that it will add £75 billion (\$106 billion) of liquidity to the banking system.

Relief organizations in Sri Lanka say that some 150,000–200,000 civilians are trapped in a 26-sq-km (10-sq-mi) war zone in northern Sri Lanka.

Scientists from the Whitehead Institute in Cambridge, Mass., report in the journal *Cell* that they have changed skin cells from people who have Parkinson disease into dopamine-producing neu-

rons; they hope to learn the causes of the disease and possibly develop a treatment.

Jim Scherr abruptly resigns as head of the United States Olympic Committee.

**6** U.S. government data show that the unemployment rate in February reached 8.1%, its highest level in 25 years.

NASA successfully launches its Kepler spacecraft into space; Kepler will scan the cosmos for planets that are about the size of the Earth and that are at distances from their stars that would allow water to remain in liquid form.

**7** Salam Fayad submits his resignation as prime minister of the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority.

Gunmen attack a British army base in Antrim, N.Ire., killing two soldiers and wounding two soldiers and two pizza deliverymen; the dissident group the Real IRA claims responsibility for the