

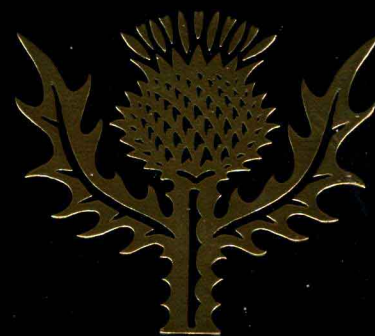


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BRITANNICA
Book
of the Year



Events of
2008



ENCYCLOPÆDIA
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2009

BOOK OF THE YEAR[®]



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Foreword

The year 2008 was one of momentous change and wild uncertainty. Though many concerns were raised about China's prospects for mounting the Olympic Games, Beijing triumphed in spectacular form and staged many of the sporting events in uniquely designed venues. Later in the year, the global economic collapse sent the financial markets plunging and investors scrambling and forced consumers to tighten their belts. Worldwide, populations that were already struggling to meet basic needs were further hampered by soaring food prices. Meanwhile, freegans, individuals dedicated to finding alternatives to a consumerist economy, munched on discarded vegetarian foodstuffs. A fractious U.S. presidential campaign resulted in the election of Democrat Barack Obama, who made history as the first African American to win that office. The presidential campaign highlighted the emergence of "citizen journalists," everyday people who reported the news. In Turkey the government grappled with maintaining a political balance between secular and Islamic influences. The Anglicans, too, faced discontent as a split in the church left the communion fragmented. In India, Mumbai was paralyzed for nearly three days owing to a coordinated terrorist attack. All of these topics are covered in Special Reports.

Early in the year, the price of gasoline soared in the U.S. to unprecedented heights, and worries surfaced about fossil-fuel supplies and petroleum reserves in particular. The environment was also of great concern as scientists pondered the cause of the collapse of millions of honey-bee colonies and, to prepare for an ecological calamity, secured seed samples from a prodigious variety of plants in seed banks for safekeeping. Some observers were worried about CERN's start-up of the Large Hadron Collider, the world's largest and highest-energy particle accelerator, which met delay after an initial successful test operation. The avenue of education called "distance learning" gained strength as students in greater numbers embraced the concept to allow them to gain instruction without entering traditional classrooms. DARPA, a world leader in technical innovation, celebrated its 50th anniversary. The Paralympic Games in Beijing brought world attention to the feats of disabled athletes. In The Sudan, however, strife continued in the Darfur region, where 300,000 people had been killed, many in acts of genocide. These subjects are showcased in Sidebars.

A number of political figures gained new stature during the year, notably U.S. Democrat Barack Obama, who became the country's president-elect; Sarah Palin, the Alaskan governor who ran on the Republican ticket for vice president; and Dmitry Medvedev, the new president of Russia. In a not-so-serious vein, actress Tina Fey delighted television audiences with her spot-on impersonation of Palin, while TV talk-show host Jay Leno poked fun at the entire political campaign. These personalities have profiles in the Biographies section.

Hollywood was hit hard during the year, with the passing of acting legends Paul Scofield, Charlton Heston, Paul Newman, and Van Johnson as well as with the deaths of director-producer Sydney Pollack, dancer-actress Cyd Charisse, and sultry singer Eartha Kitt. The literary world lost Nobel Prize-winning writers Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn of Russia and Britain's Harold Pinter, in addition to American oral historian Studs Terkel. New Zealand explorer Sir Edmund Hillary, pioneering American cardiovascular surgeon Michael DeBakey, and Indonesian strongman Suharto also left the scene. Portraits of these luminaries can be found in the Obituaries section.

An article on the newly independent country of Kosovo makes a debut, along with a statistics page about Kosovo that appears in the World Data section of the volume. The wrap-up of 2008 awaits your perusal and promises to provide a historical look at one of the most memorable years in history.

*Karen Sparks
Director and Editor*

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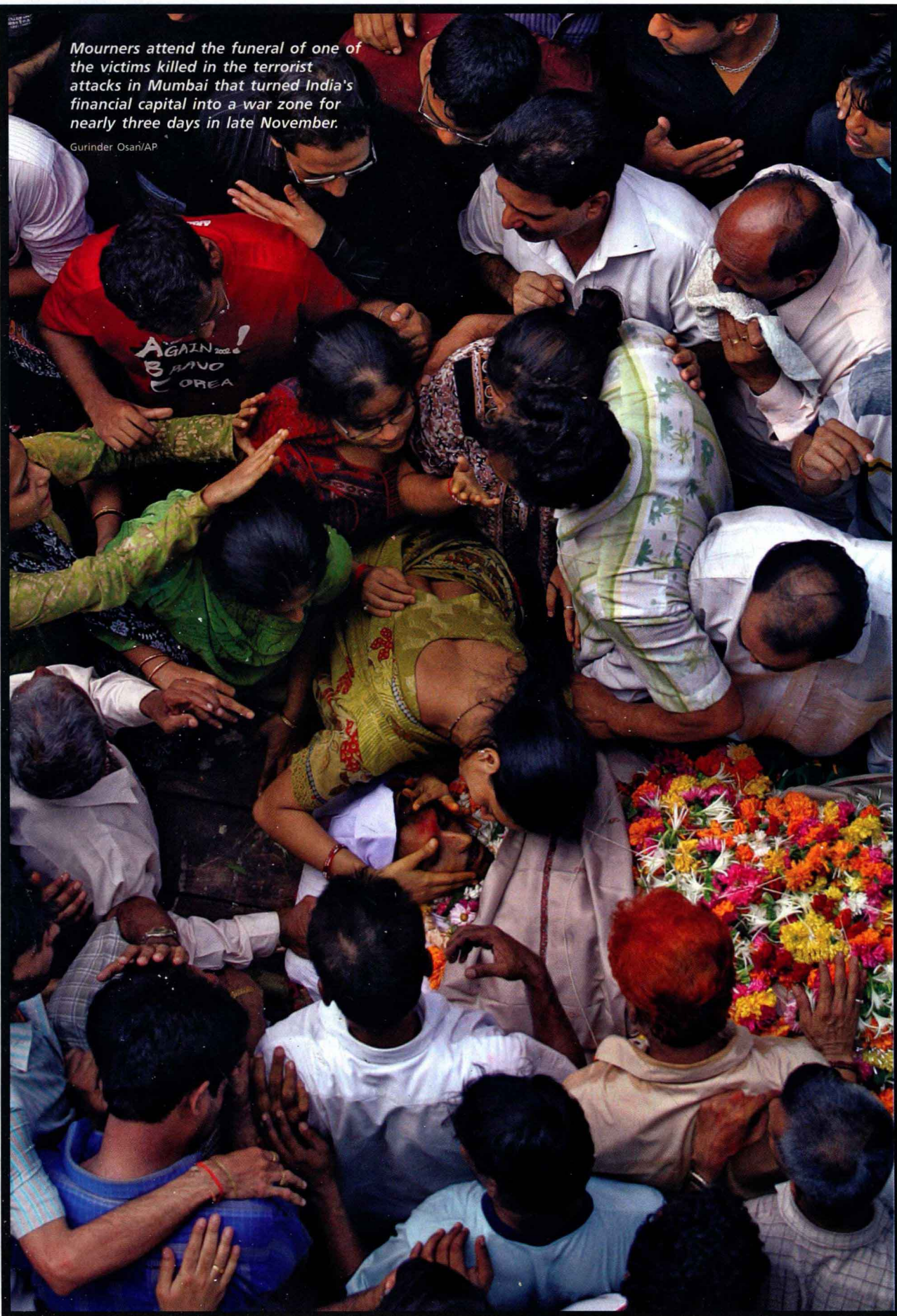
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Mourners attend the funeral of one of the victims killed in the terrorist attacks in Mumbai that turned India's financial capital into a war zone for nearly three days in late November.

Gurinder Osari/AP



Dates of 2008





During the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, performers dance around a giant globe illuminated with images of Olympic athletes.

Fabrice Coffrini—AFP/Getty Images

January

“ *As we meet tonight, our economy is undergoing a period of uncertainty. . . . At kitchen tables across our country, there is a concern about our economic future.* ”

U.S. Pres. George W. Bush,
in his final state of the union address, January 28

1 With the beginning of the new year, Prime Minister Janez Jansa of Slovenia assumes the presidency of the European Union.

The Kenya Assemblies of God church in the village of Kiambaa, where hundreds of Kikuyu people are taking refuge from the violence that broke out after the disputed election of Dec. 27, 2007, is attacked by a mob and set on fire; some 50 people are burned to death.

The government of Pakistan chooses to postpone until February the national and provincial elections scheduled for January 8.

At a house in Baghdad where people are gathered to commemorate a man who had died in a car bombing three days earlier, a suicide bomber detonates his weapon, killing 30 of those present.

The euro replaces the Cypriot pound as Cyprus's currency and the Maltese lira as Malta's currency as the euro zone expands.

2 The military government of Myanmar (Burma) orders the tax on satellite television to be increased by a factor of 160, which brings it to about three times the average annual income; the action effectively cuts off any outside source of news.

The government of Sri Lanka formally annuls a cease-fire with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam that had been agreed to six years earlier; for practical purposes the agreement had not been observed since early 2006.

The price of a barrel of light sweet crude oil for the first time reaches \$100 on the New York Mercantile Exchange, though it closes at \$99.62.

3 A bomb goes off near a shopping mall in Diyarbakir, Tur., killing 5 people and injuring more than 60.

James H. Billington, the U.S. librarian of Congress, announces the appointment of Jon Scieszka, author of *The Stinky Cheese Man* and

Other Fairly Stupid Tales, to the newly created position of ambassador for young people's literature.

4 The movie studio Warner Brothers announces that in future it will release its movies on Sony's Blu-ray discs rather than Toshiba's HD DVDs; industry insiders feel that this has decided which high-definition format will become the industry standard.

The British utility Scottish and Southern Energy agrees to buy Airtricity, Ireland's biggest wind-farm operator, for €1.83 billion (about \$2.7 billion).

The 30th annual Dakar Rally, which was to begin January 5 in Lisbon with some 550 competitors and to end January 20 in Dakar, Senegal, is canceled; organizers say that terrorist organizations had made threats to disrupt the race.

5 Presidential elections called by Pres. Mikheil Saakashvili

after a brief state of emergency in November 2007 are held in Georgia; Saakashvili wins narrowly.

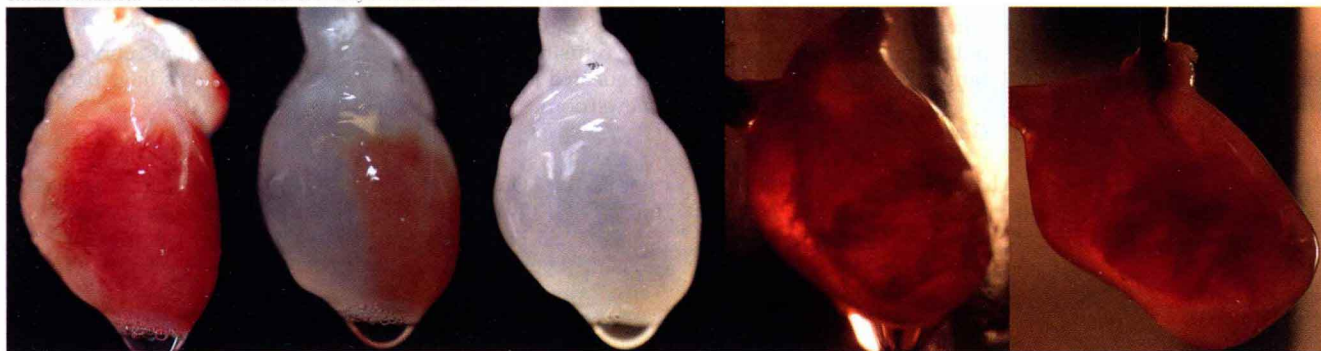
6 The Arab League approves of a plan for a new government in Lebanon, which has been without a president since Nov. 23, 2007.

Near Mexican Hat, Utah, a bus carrying people to Phoenix from a ski trip in Telluride, Colo., goes off the road in the midst of a widespread and heavy storm and rolls down an embankment; at least nine passengers are killed.

7 Italian government troops begin clearing garbage from the streets of Naples, where it has been piling up since municipal dumps began overflowing on Dec. 21, 2007.

The legislature of the Marshall Islands elects Litokwa Tomeing president of the country; he replaces Kessai Note and, unlike Note, opposes the Compact of Free Association with the U.S.

Thomas Matthiesen—The Canadian Press/University of Minnesota/AP



Howard D. Schultz, the chairman of Starbucks Coffee, announces that he is taking over as CEO in place of James L. Donald, saying the company needs to regain focus.

Louisiana State University defeats Ohio State University 38–24 in college football's Bowl Championship Series title game in New Orleans to win the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision (formerly Division I-A) championship.

8 Pres. Mwai Kibaki of Kenya announces his choices for half of the cabinet, and violence breaks out anew in several cities; some 500 people have been killed since violence erupted following the disputed election in 2007.

U.S. troops in Iraq begin a major offensive against Sunni insurgents in Diyala province.

Philippe de Montebello, who has been director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City for 30 years, announces his intention to retire at the end of the year.

9 The legislature of the UN-administered Serbian province of Kosovo chooses the former leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army, Hashim Thaci, to be prime minister.

The World Health Organization publishes a study that estimates the number of Iraqi civilians killed in the war from its inception in 2003 until June 2006 at about 151,000; previously the nongovernmental organization the Iraqi Body Count had estimated the number of deaths during that period at 47,668.

10 Plans to replace older nuclear plants are approved by the government of the U.K.

Shortly before a planned rally outside a courthouse in Lahore to protest the dismissal of Pakistani Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry, a suicide bomber sets off an explosion that kills at least 23 people, nearly all police officers.

Members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) release to emissaries of Venezuelan Pres. Hugo Chávez two Colombian women: Consuelo González de Perdomo, who was a member of the legislature when she was kidnapped in 2001, and Clara Rojas, who was an aide to presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt (herself still a captive) when she was kidnapped in 2002.

11 The government of Nepal sets the election for a con-

stitutional assembly for April 10.

For the first time, the price of gold futures rises above \$900 an ounce before closing at \$898.70 an ounce; it reaches \$914 on January 14 before falling to \$881.25 on January 16.

The Bank of America announces its planned purchase of troubled mortgage company Countrywide Financial Corp.

U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff announces the standards that state identity cards must meet to qualify as identification at airports and federal buildings under the Real ID act; several states refuse to comply with the legislation, for a variety of reasons.

12 Iraq's legislature passes a law to allow former Ba'athist officials to apply for positions in the government; this is the first small step toward meeting the political benchmarks set by the U.S. government for Iraq.

Legislative elections in Taiwan are won by the Nationalist Party, which takes 81 of the 113 seats; Pres. Chen Shui-bian resigns as head of the Democratic Progressive Party.

The legislature of Croatia approves a new centre-right

government under Prime Minister Ivo Sanader.

13 Jackie Selebi resigns as president of Interpol the day after he was put on leave as head of South Africa's police because of the possibility that he will be charged with corruption.

Doris A. Taylor, head of a team of scientists at the University of Minnesota, reports that her team has successfully created new beating hearts by growing heart cells from newborn rats in the heart structure taken from dead rats. (Photo above.)

14 The spacecraft MESSENGER passes within 200 km (124 mi) of Mercury's surface, taking photographs and measurements, in the first of its three passes of the planet, which was last visited by NASA's Mariner 10 in 1975.

A suicide bomber attack at the luxury Serena Hotel in Kabul kills at least six people, mostly staff but also a Norwegian journalist and an American.

Malawi ends its diplomatic ties with Taiwan in favour of establishing them with China.

In the field of children's literature, the Newbery Medal

is awarded to Laura Amy Schlitz for *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village*, a series of monologues and dialogues set in the Middle Ages, and Brian Selznick wins the Caldecott Medal for illustration for his long illustrated novel *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*.

15 Hundreds of Islamic militants attack a well-stocked government paramilitary fort in Sararogha in Pakistan's South Waziristan province, killing 22 soldiers and stripping the fort of arms and ammunition.

At the Macworld Expo trade show in San Francisco, Apple CEO Steven P. Jobs introduces the ultralight MacBook Air laptop computer and the ability to rent movies by downloading them through iTunes.

The opposition Democratic Labour Party wins 20 of 30 legislative seats in elections in Barbados; the following day David Thompson replaces Owen Arthur as prime minister.

16 Clemente Mastella resigns as Italy's minister of justice because of allegations of widespread corruption.

The Proceedings of the Royal Society B reports the discovery in Uruguay of fossil evidence of the existence two million to four million years ago of a rodent, named *Josephoartigasia monesi*, which was some 3 m (10 ft) long and weighed up to 1,100 kg (2,200 lb).

17 A three-hour gun battle between drug cartel members and government forces takes place in Tijuana, Mex.,

where two days earlier a police commander and his family had been killed.

Geoscientists report that a natural gas black shale reservoir in the northern Appalachians could hold as much as 15 trillion cu m (516 trillion cu ft) of gas; it would be a huge addition to U.S. reserves.

18 On the first day of the religious festival of 'Ashura', fighting between a millennial militia, the Soldiers of Heaven, and Iraqi government forces in several places in southern Iraq leaves at least 66 dead; nevertheless, millions of pilgrims make their journey to Karbala' unmolested.

Israel closes all border crossings between itself and the Gaza Strip, blocking, among other things, aid shipments, saying the step is intended to discourage rocket attacks from Gaza on Israel.

Élie Doté resigns as prime minister of the Central African Republic; on January 22 Faustin Archange Touadéra is named to replace him.

19 Spanish Interior Minister Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba announces the arrest in Barcelona of 14 people of Pakistani and Indian origin who are believed to have been planning a terrorist attack on the city.

20 Presidential elections in Serbia result in the need for a runoff between Pres. Boris Tadic and Tomislav Nikolic of the Serbian Radical Party.

It is reported that David D. Hiller, publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, has removed

James E. O'Shea as editor for refusing to make requested job cuts in the newsroom.

21 On a visit to Turkey, Sudanese Pres. Omar al-Bashir defends his recent appointment of Musa Hilal as a senior government adviser; Hilal is generally believed to be a leader of the Janjawid militia forces.

Stock markets in cities around the world fall steeply; fear of a U.S. recession is believed to explain the sell-off.

Israel announces that it will offer generous tax incentives as part of a program to support the use of electric cars in conjunction with entrepreneur Shai Agassi and the car company Renault; it is expected that the program will have 100,000 electric cars on the road by the end of 2010.

At Thoroughbred horse racing's 2007 Eclipse Awards, Curlin is named Horse of the Year.

22 Thailand's military junta disbands the day after the first meeting of the country's legislature since the 2006 military coup.

After an emergency meeting the U.S. Federal Reserve lowers its benchmark lending rate three-quarters of a percentage point, to 3.5%, the largest single-day reduction it has ever made; stocks initially plummet but rally robustly.

Serbia announces that the Russian state-owned gas company Gazprom has bought a 51% interest in NIS, the Serbian oil monopoly.

Iraq's legislature adopts a new flag, the same as the

previous one except that the three stars that represent Ba'thist ideals have been removed.

23 Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis of Greece begins a three-day visit to Turkey; it is the first official visit to Turkey by a Greek prime minister since May 1959.

At the divided town of Rafah, members of Hamas break down a portion of the wall closing off Egypt from the Gaza Strip, and thousands of Palestinians pour across the broken partition to purchase supplies. (Photo right.)

In Mosul, Iraq, a house used by insurgents, possibly as a bomb factory, explodes as police approach; at least 34 people are killed, most of them crushed to death in neighbouring buildings that collapse from the force of the explosion.

24 The French banking giant Société Générale announces that a midlevel employee, Jérôme Kerviel, for the past year was a rogue trader and caused the bank to lose €4.9 billion (\$7.2 billion).

The government of Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi falls after a no-confidence vote.

Researchers at the J. Craig Venter Institute report that they have synthesized the genome of a small bacterium (*Mycoplasma genitalium*) by assembling about 100 DNA fragments in a major step toward creating a complete artificial organism.

25 A dusk-to-dawn curfew is imposed in

Mohammed Saber—epa/Corbis



Nakuru, Kenya, in an attempt to contain ethnic violence that has broken out, contributing to a death toll of more than 650 people throughout the country since the disputed election.

26 Members of a criminal gang led by Rondell Rawlins attack the village of Lusignan, Guyana, massacring 11 people, at least 5 of whom are children.

Russian Mariya Sharapova defeats Ana Ivanovic of Serbia to win her first Australian Open women's tennis championship; the following day Novak Djokovic of Serbia defeats Frenchman Jo-Wilfried Tsonga to win his first men's title.

Top film awards at the annual Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, go to *Frozen River*, *Trouble the Water*, *The Wackness*, and *Fields of Fuel*.

27 Paddy Ashdown of the U.K. withdraws from

consideration for the post of UN special envoy to Afghanistan in the face of opposition from Afghan Pres. Hamid Karzai; Afghanistan objected to the enlarged mandate planned for Ashdown.

Russia's Central Election Commission denies leading opposition presidential candidate Mikhail Kasyanov a place on the ballot.

Indonesia's former president Suharto dies; a week of official mourning is declared.

Yokozuna Hakuho defeats *yokozuna* Asashoryu to win the Emperor's Cup at the New Year Grand Sumo Tournament in Tokyo; the contestants had even records going into the final match.

28 The ruling party in Turkey reaches an agreement on an amendment to the constitution that will allow women who wear head scarves for religious reasons to attend university; the measure must be approved by the legislature.

Officials in the Galapagos Islands report that authorities in Ecuador are investigating the killing of 53 sea lions that have been found with crushed skulls on the island of Pinta in the nature reserve.

U.S. Pres. George W. Bush delivers his final state of the union address; he asks for patience on the Iraq War, addresses economic worries, and presents a modest domestic agenda.

29 King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand ratifies the legislature's selection of Samak Sundaravej as the country's new prime minister.

Hundreds of women rally in Kandahar, Afg., to protest the January 26 kidnapping of American women's aid worker Cyd Mizell and her Afghan driver.

30 Italian Pres. Giorgio Napolitano asks Fran-

co Marini, president of the Senate, to form a temporary government.

The U.S. Federal Reserve Board cuts its benchmark interest rate a further half of a percentage point, to 3%.

31 David Kimutai Too, an opposition lawmaker, is shot to death by a policeman in Eldoret, Kenya; though government officials say the killing was not politically motivated, violence throughout the country intensifies in response to the murder.

The European Union says that if Italy fails to solve the garbage crisis in Naples within a month, it will be in violation of the organization's law and will face legal action.

The World Health Organization reports that programs in which mosquito nets and artemisinin, a new anti-malarial medicine, were widely distributed in several African countries generally cut the number of deaths from malaria in half.

February

For the pain, suffering, and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants, and for their families left behind, we say sorry. . . . And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd,
in his historic apology to the country's Aborigines, February 13

1 Two women suicide bombers, who are possibly mentally disabled, detonate their weapons in the Ghazil animal market in Baghdad, killing some 98 people.

The American oil company Exxon Mobil Corp. reports that it earned \$40.6 billion last year, a new record for the highest profit ever recorded; the previous record high profit was also reported by Exxon Mobil.

Government officials in Japan say that at least 175 people have become ill after eating dumplings imported from China that were tainted with insecticide.

Microsoft makes an unsolicited bid to buy the online search engine company Yahoo! for \$44.6 billion.

2 Rebel troops attempting to overthrow Pres. Idriss Déby enter N'Djamena, the capital of Chad, and surround the presidential palace as Chad's armed forces resist.

Pres. Nicolas Sarkozy of France and the model and pop singer Carla Bruni are married in Paris.

3 Pres. Boris Tadic wins reelection in a runoff presidential election in Serbia; Tadic favours bringing Serbia into the European Union.

In Glendale, Ariz., the New York Giants defeat the New England Patriots 17-14 to win the National Football League's Super Bowl XLII; the Patriots had an undefeated record going into the game.

Hannah Montana & Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds, a concert film shown only in I-Max and other 3-D theatres, tops the North American box office.

4 A suicide bomber kills one person in Dimona, Israel; it is the first attack there and the first suicide attack in Israel since January 2007.

As Sri Lanka celebrates the 60th anniversary of its independence, a roadside bomb in the Welioya region blows up a bus, killing 12 people; the previous day a suicide bomber killed 11 people in Colombo's main railway station, and the day before that a bomb on a bus traveling with Buddhist pilgrims in Dambulla killed 18 people.

The \$250,000 A.M. Turing Award for excellence in computer science is granted to Edmund M. Clarke, E. Allen Emerson, and Joseph Sifakis for their development of model checking, an automated method to discover errors in the design of computer hardware and software.

NASA transmits the Beatles song "Across the Universe" toward Polaris, the North Star, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the agency and of its first satellite, Explorer I; the occasion also marks the 45th anniversary of the Deep Space Network of communication and the 40th anniversary of the recording of the song.

5 The death toll from violence in Kenya since the presidential election in December 2007 passes 1,000 people as officials from the ruling and opposition parties begin negotiations on how to end the crisis.

Fighting in N'Djamena, Chad, abates, which indicates that rebel fighters have retreated from the city.

The Australian company Geodynamics Ltd. completes a production well for deep, dry geothermal energy in the Cooper Basin region of South Australia; the well is intended to be the first hot fractured-rock source of commercial electricity generation.

6 The vice president of Pakistan's Awami National Party is assassinated in Karachi, and rioting erupts.

A large U.S. study of middle-aged and older people with Type II diabetes who are at high risk for heart attack and stroke is halted when it

is found that aggressively lowering their blood sugar levels has clearly increased the number of deaths due to heart disease, a result diametrically opposed to what had been expected.

7 Edward Lowassa resigns as prime minister of Tanzania because of suspicion of his involvement with a failed energy deal with an American company; the following day Pres. Jakaya Kikwete names Mizengo Pinda to replace him.

France becomes the fifth country to ratify the Lisbon Treaty, a governing package designed to reform the European Union following its recent expansion.

Two studies are published in the journal *Science* showing that the use of biofuels is leading to the clearing of rainforest and scrublands for crops and that in sum the production of biofuels is causing more greenhouse gas emissions than the use of fossil fuels.

Combustible sugar dust causes an enormous explosion at the Dixie Crystal sugar refinery in Port Wentworth, Ga.; at least 13 employees are killed, with dozens seriously injured.

The Licey Tigers (Tigres) defeat the defending champions, the Cibao Eagles (Águilas), 8-2 in the final game of the round-robin tournament in Santiago, Dom.Rep., to win baseball's Caribbean Series with a tournament record of 5-1; for the first time in the history of the event, both teams are from the host country.

8 Dean Barrow is sworn in as the first black prime minister of Belize the day after his United Democratic Party

won 81% of seats in a legislative election.

9 In Abu Dhabi, U.A.E., ground is broken on Masdar, a city that is being built by using renewable energy and that is designed to function without producing carbon emissions; it is expected to be completed in about 10 years and to have a population of 100,000.

A tentative agreement between the Writers Guild of America and movie and television production companies is reached, which indicates a likely end to the writers' strike that began on Nov. 5, 2007, and has stopped production of 63 TV shows; the strike formally ends on February 12.

10 A car bomb kills at least 23 people at a checkpoint outside Balad, Iraq.

The Namdaemun Gate in Seoul, built in 1398 and regarded as South Korea's most important national treasure, is destroyed by fire, in spite of the efforts of hundreds of firefighters. (Photo below.)

Armed thieves enter the Emil Buerhle Collection art museum in Zürich and steal the paintings *Poppies near Vétheuil* by Claude Monet, *Count Lepic and His Daughters* by Edgar Degas, *Chestnut in Bloom* by Vincent van Gogh, and *Boy in a Red Jacket* by Paul Cézanne in the biggest art robbery ever to take place in Switzerland; the Monet and van Gogh paintings are recovered eight days later.

At the Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, the top winner is British vocalist Amy Winehouse, who wins five awards, including both record of the year and song of the year for "Rehab" and the award for best new artist; the surprise choice for album of the year is *River: The Joni Letters* by jazz artist Herbie Hancock.

In Ghana, Egypt defeats Cameroon 1-0 to win the African Cup of Nations in association football (soccer) for a record sixth time.

11 Pres. José Ramos Horta of East Timor is critically injured in an apparent assassination attempt; the coun-

try's prime minister, Xanana Gusmão, is also attacked, but he escapes injury.

The drug company Baxter International announces its suspension of production of heparin, a blood thinner, because some 350 people have reacted badly to it, in some cases fatally.

The Columbus science module, created by the European Space Agency, is successfully attached to the International Space Station, greatly increasing the station's size and doubling its research capability.

12 Pakistan's army chief, Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, orders all military officers in government civil positions to resign from those posts.

A report from a census of tigers in India is released; it finds that the number of tigers since the last census, in 2002, has fallen from 3,642 to only 1,411.

K-Run's Park Me in First wins Best in Show at the Westminster Kennel Club's 132nd dog show; the popu-



Lee Jin-man/AP

lar beagle, known as Uno, is the first of its breed to win the top award at the premier American dog show.

13 Iraq's legislature passes a package bill that includes an outline for defining provincial powers and an amnesty for detainees; the amnesty is one of the benchmarks that the U.S. government has expected from Iraq.

For the first time in the country's history, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd formally apologizes to Australia's Aborigines for the government's past mistreatment of them.

Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi dissolves the legislature, making it necessary to hold elections within the next two months.

14 A gunman enters a lecture hall at Northern Illinois University and begins shooting from the stage; he kills 5 students and wounds 16 others before killing himself.

Kiribati declares a marine protected area that, at 425,300 sq km (164,200 sq mi), is the largest in the world; it preserves a rare oceanic coral archipelago ecosystem.

A U.S. government report shows that the country's trade deficit in December 2007 dropped to \$58.8 billion and that the overall figure for 2007 also dropped by 6.2%; it is the first decrease in the figure since 2001.

15 After several inconclusive elections in the legislature, Vaclav Klaus is narrowly reelected president of the Czech Republic.

Klaus Zumwinkel resigns as the head of Germany's

postal service after he is suspected of having evaded \$1.46 million in taxes in a widespread tax scandal.

Paraguay declares a state of emergency in response to an outbreak of yellow fever in the area of Asunción; the last yellow fever outbreak was in 1974.

Scottish cyclist Mark Beaumont breaks the world record for riding a bicycle around the world when he crosses the finish line in Paris 195 days after he began the 29,000-km (18,000-mi) journey; the previous record of 276 days 19 hr 15 min was set in 2005 by British cyclist Steve Strange.

16 A suicide bomber drives an explosives-laden car into a crowd at a campaign rally in Parachinar, Pak., and detonates it; at least 37 people are killed.

The Brazilian film *Tropa de elite*, directed by José Padilha, wins the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival.

17 The UN-administered Serbian province of Kosovo unilaterally declares its independence; the following day the U.S., France, and Germany, among others, recognize its sovereignty, but Russia, Spain, and Serbia are among those that refuse recognition.

A suicide bomber detonates his weapon at a dogfighting match outside Kandahar, Afg., killing at least 80 people, including a prominent anti-Taliban police chief.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announces the recall of 65 million kg (143 million lb) of ground beef from a Westland/Hallmark Meat Co. slaughterhouse in California

where operations have been suspended owing to inhumane handling of its animals; a video made by the Humane Society and released on January 30 showed downer cattle—those that cannot walk—being forcibly taken to slaughter, though downer cattle are forbidden in the food supply.

The first round of presidential elections in the Republic of Cyprus produces the need for a runoff between Dimitris Christofias of the Communist Party and Ioannis Kasoulides of the Democratic Rally party; the incumbent, Tassos Papadopoulos, loses.

In Daytona Beach, Fla., Ryan Newman wins the 50th running of the Daytona 500, the premier NASCAR race, by 0.092 second in an upset victory.

18 Legislative elections in Pakistan result in a pronounced victory for the Pakistan People's Party (once led by Benazir Bhutto), with 120 seats, and the Pakistan Muslim League-N of Nawaz Sharif, with 90, and an equally pronounced defeat for Pres. Pervez Musharraf's party, which wins only 51 seats.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown holds a news conference to explain and defend the government's decision to nationalize the failing mortgage lender Northern Rock.

The BBC transmits its final English-language shortwave radio broadcast in Europe; the service began 75 years earlier with an inaugural transmission by King George V.

19 Prime Minister Serzh Sarkisyan handily wins election as president of Arme-

nia; the following day thousands of people demonstrate in Yerevan against the election results, which they believe to have been rigged.

Fidel Castro announces his official retirement, saying he does not want another term as president of Cuba.

Toshiba announces that it will phase out the production of HD DVD players and other products, leaving Sony's Blu-ray the sole new optical media format.

The 111-year-old Dow Jones industrial average replaces the Altria Group and Honeywell International with the Bank of America Corp. and the Chevron Corp. on its listing; it is the first change to the 30-stock index since April 2004.

20 Zimbabwe's statistics office reports that the official rate of inflation in January reached 100,580%.

A U.S. missile interceptor successfully strikes a falling spy satellite, destroying its fuel tank as planned.

Both the high-end unique gadgetry store Sharper Image and the catalog housewares retailer Lillian Vernon file for bankruptcy protection.

21 Thousands of demonstrators angry about Kosovo's declaration of independence attack and set fire to the U.S. embassy in Belgrade, Serbia.

U.S. Pres. George W. Bush arrives in Liberia at the end of a six-day, five-country tour of Africa; he is the first sitting president since Jimmy Carter to visit the country, and he is greeted warmly.

Brazil's central bank reveals that in January Brazil for

the first time became a net creditor country.

22 Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda orders a review of the structure of the Ministry of Defense because of criticism arising from its handling of an incident on February 19 in which its most advanced destroyer rammed into and destroyed a small fishing boat in spite of having spotted it.

In Iraq the Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr extends the cease-fire being observed by his Mahdi Army militia a further six months.

Officials of the open-wheel automobile Indy Racing League announce an agreement with the rival Champ Car World Series to merge the two into a single series; it will extend the IndyCar Series from 16 to 19 events.

23 The Ugandan government reaches a formal cease-fire agreement with the rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army.

A team of scientists and engineers composed entirely of women guides the Mars exploration rover Spirit; the event, the first time an all-women team has guided a major NASA mission, is organized in recognition of the coming Women's History Month celebration in March.

24 Dimitris Christofias wins the runoff election for president of Cyprus; he immediately agrees to meet the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mehmet Ali Talat, to renew efforts at reunification of the island.

At the 80th Academy Awards presentation, hosted by Jon Stewart, Oscars are won by,

among others, *No Country for Old Men* (best picture) and its directors, Joel and Ethan Coen, and actors Daniel Day-Lewis, Marion Cotillard, Javier Bardem, and Tilda Swinton.

25 Flemish and Walloon leaders in Belgium agree on a series of reforms, including giving more powers to the regions, that should make it possible for a new government to be formed after close to nine months of disagreement.

Lee Myung-bak is sworn in as president of South Korea.

A spokesman for the Taliban in Afghanistan publicly announces a demand that all cell phone companies halt service between the hours of 5:00 PM and 7:00 AM; the purpose of the sought curfew is to erode the ability of NATO and U.S. forces to trace the positions of Taliban fighters through cell phone signals.

26 A panel of judges in Nigeria upholds the election of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua as president in a challenge brought by the two opposition candidates in the election of April 2007.

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault in the Norwegian Arctic is ceremonially opened with its first consignment of seeds; the depository is intended to safeguard samples of all known food crop seeds against any human or natural disaster. (Photo right.)

The New York Philharmonic plays a concert in Pyongyang, N.Kor., that includes Antonin Dvorak's *Symphony Number 9 in E Minor (From the New World)*, George Gershwin's *An American in Paris*, and the Korean folk song "Arirang."

Starbucks closes 7,100 stores for three hours for retraining of its employees.

27 Former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra returns to Thailand after spending 17 months in exile; he is wanted on charges of corruption.

A recently passed law calling for provincial elections by October and granting greater powers to provincial governments is vetoed by Iraq's presidency council, which consists of Pres. Jalal Talabani and two vice presidents.

28 Kenyan Pres. Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga reach an agreement on a power-sharing government in which Kibaki remains president, Odinga becomes a powerful prime minister, and cabinet appointments are split between the parties.

Street demonstrations in cities and towns in Cameroon continue to grow, with at least 20 deaths reported; the protesters are angry about rising fuel costs and about a proposed change to the constitution

that lengthens the presidential term of office.

Rioting over rising food and fuel prices takes place in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; similar riots have taken place in other towns.

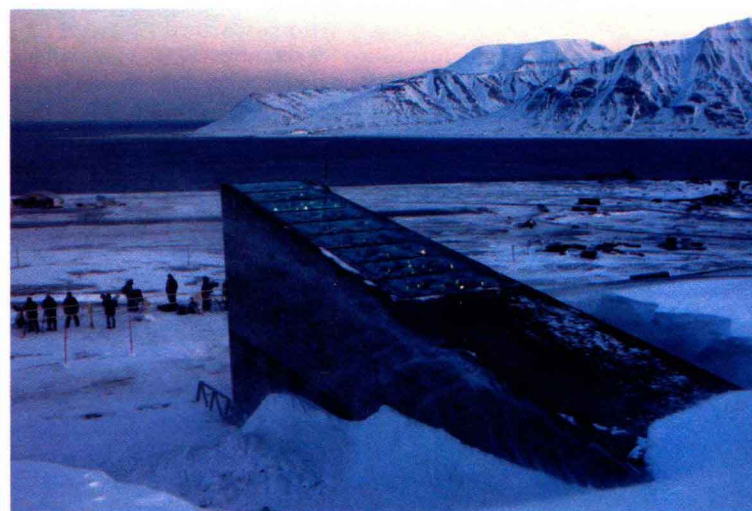
The Pew Center on the States releases a report showing that for the first time more than 1% of American adults are behind bars, with close to 2.3 million adults incarcerated at the beginning of 2008.

The first 30,000 pages of the Web-based Encyclopedia of Life go live; the encyclopaedia, which intends to catalog all living species by organizing information that is already available, is expected to grow to 1.77 million pages.

29 Turkey ends its eight-day incursion into northern Iraq, withdrawing its troops to the Turkish side of the border.

The government of India passes a budget that includes a provision to cancel all the debt owed by the country's small farmers.

A suicide bomber kills at least 46 people at a funeral in Mingora in northwestern Pakistan.



John McConico/AP

March

*“First and foremost, you must vote.
Every single person
must exercise his or her franchise.”*

King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk of Bhutan,
exhorting his subjects to vote in the following day's election
that will end his absolute rule, March 23

1 Colombian armed forces attack a Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) camp in Ecuador, killing 24 people, including the organization's second-in-command, Raúl Reyes.

AOL ceases its support for Netscape Navigator, which was the dominant Internet Web browser in the mid-1990s; it recommends that customers switch to Firefox or Flock.

2 Pres. Robert Kocharyan declares a state of emergency in Armenia after protests the previous day over the results of the February 19 election turned violent, leaving eight people dead.

At a gathering of tribal elders who convened in Darra Adamkhel, Pak., in order to discuss forming a force to fight local militants, a bomb kills 42 people and injures 58 others.

As expected, Dmitry Medvedev is elected president of Russia.

3 Israeli troops withdraw from Gaza after a two-day offensive that left 116 Palestinians dead, and Hamas holds a victory rally.

The price of oil reaches \$103.95 a barrel, breaking the record that was set in August 1980 when that price, \$39.50, is adjusted for inflation.

Ecuador breaks off diplomatic relations with Colombia in response to the raid that Colombia made two days earlier against Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas in Ecuador.

4 Ian Paisley announces that he will retire in May as first minister of Northern Ireland's power-sharing government and as head of the Democratic Unionist Party.

Longtime Green Bay Packers quarterback Brett Favre, who set several records in his 17-year career, announces his retirement from professional football.

5 The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of Hawaii release a study saying that barren areas of the Pacific and Atlantic oceans have increased some 15% since 1998.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration reports that heparin associated with bad reactions, including 19 deaths, was produced with ingredients made in China and contained a contaminant that effectively mimicked the active ingredient in genuine heparin.

6 A gunman invades the well-known Mercav Harav yeshiva in Jerusalem and opens fire, killing at least eight students.

Two bombs explode in sequence in a shopping district in Baghdad; at least 68 people are killed.

Mexico's Senate approves a sweeping reform of the country's criminal justice system that, among other things, introduces open tri-

als; the reform was previously approved in the Chamber of Deputies and must also be approved by a majority of state legislatures.

The U.S. Federal Reserve Board reports that in the second quarter of 2007, for the first time since the board began tracking data in 1945, the amount of equity Americans own in their homes fell below 50%.

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration fines Southwest Airlines a record \$10.2 million for flying older Boeing 737 planes that had not yet been inspected, in contravention of FAA rules.

In New York City the winners of the National Book Critics Circle Awards are announced as Junot Díaz for *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (fiction), Harriet Washington for *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (nonfiction), Tim Jeal for *Stanley: The Impossible Life of Africa's Greatest Explorer* (biography), Edwidge Danti-