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THE WORLD IN 2008 **DIARY**

Forecasting trends for the year ahead
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January

Slovenia assumes the presidency of the European Union, and Cyprus and Malta both join the EU's euro zone.

Movers and shakers from politics, business and the media meet at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Smoking is banned in France's bars and restaurants, adding to the restrictions already in place in offices and public buildings.

America's presidential hopefuls take their chances with the voters in the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary.

Africa starts its Cup of Nations soccer tournament, depriving European teams of many of their best players.

President George Bush delivers his last state-of-the-union address.

February

Chinese around the world begin the Year of the Rat: supposedly clever, charming and quick-witted.



Brazilians and foreigners alike dance to hedonistic excess at the Rio de Janeiro carnival.

Hollywood, for the 80th time, hands out the Oscars to the film world's finest—one day after the Golden Raspberries for the film world's direst.

On the 5th, a "Super-duper Tuesday", a score of states in America hold primaries that could point to the presidential nominees.

March

Iditarod dog-sled race, in which mushers drive their huskies across more than 1,000 miles of snow-covered Alaska wilderness.

Russians elect a president to succeed term-limited Vladimir Putin.

Zimbabwe holds a presidential election. The last, in 2002, led to charges of fraud and intimidation.

Fifth anniversary of the American-led war in Iraq.

Western Christianity celebrates Easter on the 23rd, the earliest date since 1913.

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July

All but the most minimal amounts of trans fats will be banned in New York restaurants.



France takes over the EU presidency from Slovenia.

Japan hosts the G8 summit in Toyako, Hokkaido.

Cycling's Tour de France, three weeks of drama and drug-testing, starts in Brittany.

August

China plays host to the Beijing Olympics—and the athletes pray for clean air.



After an exhausting primary season, the Democratic Party gathers in Denver to anoint its presidential candidate and lambaste the Republicans.

Scholars, journalists, geeks and other fans of Wikipedia, an open-access internet encyclopedia, meet in Alexandria for Wikimania 2008.

September

The Republican Party holds its pre-election convention in Minneapolis-St Paul to anoint its candidate to succeed President Bush—and to lambaste the Democrats.

Some 4,000 disabled athletes from around the world meet in Beijing for the Paralympic games. The UN General Assembly meets in New York.

Hong Kong elects a new 60-seat Legislative Council—half by direct popular vote and half indirectly.

October

Azerbaijan holds a presidential election; Belarus holds a parliamentary election. International observers will doubtless find electoral imperfections

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April

Environmentalists celebrate Earth Day, to encourage energy efficiency and deplore ecological waste.

No more Harry Potter books, but parents will still celebrate International Children's Book Day.

The *QE2*, destined to become a floating hotel in Dubai, ends its final round-the-world cruise.

May

Workers around the world celebrate May Day.

Cinema people gather for the Cannes film festival—and TV viewers tune in to the kitsch of the Eurovision song contest, live from Serbia.

Israel throws a party for its 60th anniversary; Palestinians mourn the *nakba* (catastrophe).



London elects its mayor, pitting the Labour Party incumbent, Ken Livingstone, against the Conservatives' Boris Johnson.

June

Roger Federer hopes to win the final of the French Open, the only grand-slam tournament so far to have eluded him.

France delights in the Fête de la Musique, free live music in the open air for the whole nation.

America celebrates Gay and Lesbian Pride Month.

UEFA's Euro 2008 football tournament takes place in Austria and Switzerland.

The hurricane season officially begins in the North Atlantic, threatening the Caribbean region in particular.



in both countries.

Lithuanian voters choose a new, four-year parliament.

The Rugby League World Cup, featuring ten teams, begins in Australia. It is the first for the tough types of rugby's 13-a-side code since 2000 in Britain.

The International Salon of Taste opens in Turin, organised by Italy's Slow Food Movement, a group founded in 1986 to protest against the opening of a McDonald's restaurant in Rome's Piazza di Spagna.

The French-speaking world, boasting 200m people in some 68 countries (with French an official language in 32 of them), celebrates *la Francophonie* in Quebec.

November



America chooses a new president. Voters also elect all 435 members of the House of Representatives and a third of the 100-seat Senate. Several states elect governors, too.

The world's tobacco industry meets in Macau for World Tobacco Asia 2008—recognition that while the West persecutes smoking, China, already with 350m smokers, remains a growth market.

In a joint venture with Bharti Enterprises, Wal-Mart opens its first store in India.

December

Signatories to the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (in force since 1997) meet in The Hague: 188 countries have signed the convention, and 182 have ratified it.

Leaded fuel for cars and lorries, already eliminated from developed countries, is due to disappear worldwide, following a programme begun in 2006 to phase out leaded petrol in less developed countries.

End-of-year deadline, after four years, for European Union nations to recover or incinerate 60% by weight of their packaging waste.

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