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Queen Elizabeth the Second meets representatives from Commonwealth member countries

COMMONWEALTH CELEBRATES 60TH ANNIVERSARY

On March 9, many countries celebrated Commonwealth Day.

The Commonwealth of Nations, also called the Commonwealth, is a group of 53 countries. Its head is the British monarch, Queen Elizabeth the Second. All but one member is a former British colony.

Each year Commonwealth Day is held on the second Monday in March. This year, it also marked the 60th anniversary of the founding of the organization. The event was celebrated with a special ceremony in Westminster Abbey, in London, the capital of Britain.

The Commonwealth was formed in 1949, when the founding members – India, Pakistan, Britain, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), South Africa, Canada, Australia and New Zealand – signed an agreement. More and more British colonies became independent countries after 1949. Most applied to join the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth acts as a club where each member country agrees to help the others. Some people describe it as the world's largest multi-faith organization. Of the nearly two billion people who live in Commonwealth countries, around 800 million are Hindus, 500 million are Muslims and 400 million are Christians.

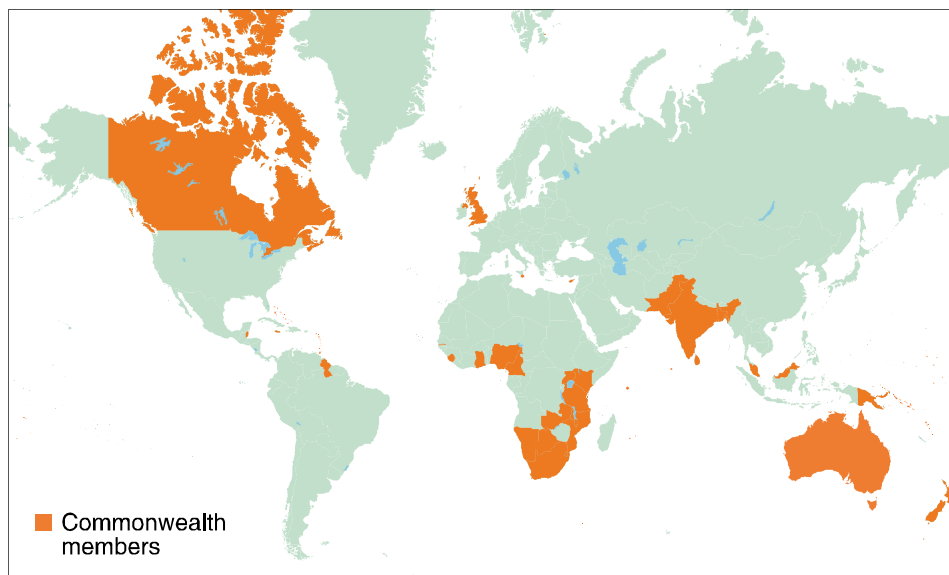
The Commonwealth has few rules. Yet member countries, or those that apply to join, must have political systems that allow for the equality of different races, free speech, democratic elections, free trade and a desire for world peace.

Although Queen Elizabeth the Second is head of the Commonwealth, she doesn't have many real powers. She only acts as its figurehead. The organization is run by a Secretary-General, who is based in the organization's headquarters in London. He or she is selected by all the

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member countries. The current Secretary-General is Kamallesh Sharma, a former Indian diplomat.

It's not unusual for countries not to be invited to join, or members to be expelled. For example, South Africa was not invited to be a member in 1961 when it became fully independent. This was because of the way it segregated the people who lived there based on the color of their skin – a system known as apartheid. In 1994, apartheid was abolished and South Africa became a Commonwealth member.

Zimbabwe was eventually expelled in 2003. This was because of the way the government was treating many of its people. Later Zimbabwe announced it no longer wished to be a member. Fiji was suspended from the Commonwealth in 2006 after its army deposed its elected government and took over the running of the country.

Not all ex-British colonies are members. Some – such as Iraq, Egypt and Myanmar (formerly Burma) – have never wanted to join.

Mozambique is the only Commonwealth member that was not previously part of the British Empire. It is a former Portuguese

colony that joined in 1995. It's thought other African countries are hoping to join in the future.

Commonwealth member countries also compete in the Commonwealth Games – the world's second biggest sporting event after the Olympic Games. The next Commonwealth Games will be held in Delhi, in India, in 2010.

Some people have criticized the Commonwealth. They say it is old-fashioned and does not have any real power. Yet others disagree. They believe it has many advantages, including helping to solve problems in member countries.

Over 2,000 people, from all 53 member countries, attended the event in Westminster Abbey. During her speech, Queen Elizabeth said the theme for the 60th anniversary would be “serving the younger generation”. Many people agreed this is important. Recently, a survey about the Commonwealth was carried out in Britain. Many older people were able to answer questions about the Commonwealth correctly. Yet 18 – 35-year-olds knew little about the organization or even that Queen Elizabeth the Second is head of the Commonwealth. ■

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Woman's Day (IWD) is held to highlight women's achievements in the past, present and future. Each year it is held on March 8.

IWD was first organized to draw attention to inequalities towards women – for example, not being allowed to vote and not being paid a fair amount of money for their work. The day was first marked in Austria, Switzerland, Denmark and Germany in 1911. Originally, it was used for organizations of women workers to campaign for the right to better working conditions and the right to vote.

IWD is marked with celebrations and events. This year there were 970 events in 62 different countries. IWD is also a time when women's organizations highlight the problems of inequality that still exist for many women.

This year's IWD theme is “women and men united to end violence against women and girls”. Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations (U.N.), made a speech on March 8. He said it is not only up to women's organizations to try to stop violence against women, but it is also important for men to teach and show other men that violence against women is a crime.

The U.N. holds a large conference around the time of IWD. During this conference, how to solve the problems facing women in many countries is discussed. This year's conference took place between March 2 and 13, at the U.N.'s headquarters



in New York, in the U.S. Those attending talked about how countries could encourage equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women, especially in looking after children, the elderly and the sick.

In many countries, the illness AIDS is a big problem. AIDS can be treated but many people have died from the disease. AIDS mostly affects adult men and women. In cases where adults have died from AIDS, often grandmothers have to become “mothers” again to their grandchildren. Therefore, one thing the U.N. is discussing is how governments can encourage both men and women to share the responsibility of looking after children whose parents have died from AIDS.

An organization that promotes this theme is Grandmothers to Grandmothers. It is part of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Stephen Lewis is a famous Canadian [humanitarian](#) who works to highlight inequality against women, especially in African countries. Mr. Lewis says getting equal rights for women is “the single most important struggle on the planet”. The “Granny Groups” pair up grandmothers in Canada with grandmothers in African countries, to offer support for women looking after grandchildren whose parents have died because of AIDS. ■

WHEN WERE HORSES FIRST RIDDEN?

Scientists working in Central Asia have announced a discovery about [domesticated](#) horses. The team, working in Kazakhstan, believes horses were first domesticated around 1,000 years earlier than was previously thought.

Humans are believed to have begun “owning” dogs about 15,000 years ago. Yet it’s thought horses and food animals – such as pigs, goats and sheep – were not domesticated until much later. Until now, most historians believed people began riding horses for transport about 4,500 years ago.

The time in which humans first began riding horses is important when studying human history. Once people started riding horses, many things changed. People could travel and hunt over much greater distances. Groups of people who lived far apart could trade with each other and keep in contact. Warfare and fighting also changed. An army riding horses was much more powerful than one on foot, and it could travel very quickly.

The scientists dug up some 5,500-year-old horse bones in ancient settlements used by the Botai people. Historians know these people hunted wild horses for their meat. However, the bones found by the scientists show some horses were domesticated. This means the Botai people rode on horses as well as hunting them for food.



Horse being milked in Central Asia

The scientists were able to work this out because some of the jaw bones showed the horses’ back teeth were worn down. The scientists believe this wearing was caused by a “bit”. A bit is an object placed in the mouth of a horse. It is used for

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EARLIEST “VAMPIRE” DISCOVERED — Archaeologists working in Venice have uncovered what they think is the world’s earliest example of a vampire. A skeleton was found buried with a brick in its mouth. It dates from the 1570s. During this time in Europe, diseases spread quickly and easily. At the time people believed a type of vampire spread disease – especially the plague – by chewing on people’s dead bodies. Therefore, when this suspected vampire was buried, gravediggers put a brick in her mouth to stop her from doing so. Other archaeologists said similar “vampire” burials have been discovered in Poland.

steering and controlling the animal. The jaw bones showed that an object had worn down these animals’ teeth – meaning someone must have been riding the horses.

Some of the leg bones found were also much thinner than those of wild horses. The scientists think this is because the horses with thinner leg bones had been bred by humans.

The scientists also discovered several broken pots, and were able to find out what the contents of the pots had been. Some of them showed they once contained horse’s milk. One scientist said this must mean the horses were domesticated, as it would have been dangerous to try to milk a wild horse!

Today, many people in Central Asia use horses as their main form of transport. In Kazakhstan, and Mongolia mares – or female horses – are still milked. This milk is often used to make a slightly alcoholic drink called koumiss.

After discovering the ancient pots contained horses' milk, the scientists think the tradition of making and drinking koumiss may also go back 5,500 years. ■

GENEVA AUTO SHOW

Each year, in March, the International Geneva Auto Show is held in Geneva, in Switzerland. The first show was held in 1905. This year's auto show opened on March 5, and ran for ten days.



Geneva motor show

Car makers from around the world use the show to introduce their improved technologies and new car designs.

Currently, many of the world's largest car makers are having difficulties. Most are losing money and some may be forced to close down. These difficulties have been caused by worldwide banking problems. Many people have decided to cut down on the amount of money they spend. This is because they are worried about losing their jobs and not being able to find another one.

Fewer and fewer people are deciding to buy new cars. Many car makers are now selling less than 50% of the number of cars they sold a year ago. This means most car companies have had to reduce their number of workers and close factories or, in some cases, stop production for long periods of time.

This causes other problems. For example, car making companies are a very important part of the economies of the U.S., Canada, France, Japan and Germany. Car makers employ many thousands of people and pay part of the money they make in taxes to their governments.

With the continuing problems for car makers, many people wondered what would happen at this year's Geneva Auto Show. The bosses of the three main American car makers – General Motors, Ford and Chrysler – did not attend. These companies are currently being supported by the American government, which has agreed to lend them large amounts of money.

The organizers of the show claimed it was visited by the same numbers of people who went to it last year.

Most European car makers displayed new cars at the event. Volkswagen, from Germany, showed off a "green" car that it claims produces very low amounts of carbon dioxide.

One of the most unusual cars at the show was one that produces no carbon dioxide at all. It is powered by compressed air. The small car has been designed and built by the MDI (Motor Development International)



company from Luxembourg. Called the AirPod, the car can travel 137 miles (220 kilometers) on one tank of compressed air. One reason it can travel so far on one tank is that it is made from very light materials. The whole car only weighs 485 pounds (220 kilograms).

MDI expects the AirPod to sell for around €6,000 (\$7,550). Airline companies in France and The Netherlands will begin to try out the "air" car at some airports in a few months' time. ■

PRESIDENT KILLED IN GUINEA-BISSAU

On March 2, João Bernardo Vieira, Guinea-Bissau's president, was assassinated.



João Bernardo Vieira

Guinea-Bissau is a small country on the west coast of Africa. It has a population of 1.5 million people and is thought to be the world's ninth-poorest country. In the early hours of March 2, soldiers broke into the presidential palace in Bissau, the capital city. They shot and killed President Vieira.

The day before the assassination, General Tagme Na Waie – the head of Guinea-Bissau's army – was also killed in a bomb attack. He and the president were rivals. Most people think the soldiers who broke into the presidential palace blamed the president for the general's death and wanted revenge.

President Vieira had run the country before. In 1999, he was overthrown by the army and forced to live in another country. He came back to Guinea-Bissau in 2005, and won the presidential election.

Many say the leaders of the army, navy and police force in Guinea-Bissau are dishonest and corrupt. The country makes small amounts of money by exporting cashew nuts, but most of the wealth in Guinea-Bissau comes from the illegal trade

of drugs. It's believed the former president was also involved in this drug trade.

Many illegal drugs sold in Europe originally come from South America. Gangs in South America use small planes to fly drugs across the Atlantic Ocean to some countries on the west coast of Africa, including Guinea-Bissau. From there the drugs are loaded into small boats and smuggled into Europe.

After the shooting at the presidential palace, many wondered if the army had decided to take over the country. Yet Army leaders said they had no plans to do this.

Raimundo Pereira is the speaker, or head, of Guinea-Bissau's parliament. According to the rules by which the country is governed, when the president dies the speaker of the parliament takes over. He then has 60 days to organize an election for a new president.

Mr. Pereira said he had asked for help in arranging the elections from Portugal and other African countries. Until 1974, Guinea-Bissau was a Portuguese colony. Mr. Pereira also said there would be an investigation into the president's death.

President Vieira's funeral ceremony was held in the capital city on March 10. ■

SHAKESPEARE'S PORTRAIT?

A painting has been discovered that experts say is a picture of one of the world's best-known writers. On March 9, an expert announced he believes the painting is a picture of William Shakespeare.

William Shakespeare was a famous writer born in England in 1564. Shakespeare was a play-

wright and a poet. He is thought to have written at least 36 plays. These including the world-famous *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night* and *Romeo and Juliet*.



First folio engraving of William Shakespeare

Yet, surprisingly little is known about Shakespeare's life, the way he worked, or what he looked like.

Shakespeare was born in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon in England. He left the town when he was about 20, leaving behind a wife and three children. It is not known what he did for the next seven years. After this period, he worked as an actor and writer of plays in London, the capital city. In 1594, he helped form a new theatre company and wrote plays for the next 20 years. After this he retired to Stratford-upon-Avon where he died in 1616. He is buried in a local church.

Several portraits exist that are supposed to be of Shakespeare. Yet many experts think these paintings are probably pictures of someone else, or were painted at least 100 years after Shakespeare died.

The best likeness is thought to be an **engraving** that appears on the front of the First Folio. This book, containing most of Shakespeare's

plays, was printed in 1623. A **bust**, put up in the church where Shakespeare is buried is also thought to look quite like him.

The Shakespeare expert and the owner of the newly-discovered painting say they are 90% sure it is of William Shakespeare.

Alec Cobbe owns the painting. It has been in his family's possession since the early 1700s. They did not know who the person in the painting was. A few years ago Mr. Cobbe went to a Shakespeare exhibition and saw a painting of Shakespeare called the Janssen portrait. He was amazed by how similar it was to the painting owned by his family.

He took his painting to a Shakespeare expert. Since then it has been dated and X-rayed. They now believe it was painted in 1610, when Shakespeare was 46 years old – six years before he died. Mr. Cobbe thinks he could prove the portrait was originally owned by the Earl of Southampton, who supported Shakespeare when he was writing his plays.



Newly-discovered Shakespeare portrait

Other experts are not so sure it really is a portrait of Shakespeare. This, they say, is because there is no proof the Janssen portrait is actually a picture of Shakespeare either!

The newly-discovered picture will be displayed on April 23 – Shakespeare's birthday – in Stratford-upon-Avon. ■

KEPLER SPACE PROBE

by Dr. Carol Ballard

On March 6, NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) launched a new space probe from Cape Canaveral in the U.S. The unmanned spacecraft is called Kepler. It will search for rocky planets orbiting stars in a similar way to how the Earth orbits our Sun.

The space probe is named after Johannes Kepler (1571 - 1630). He was a German mathematician and astronomer who worked out some of the basic laws about the orbits of planets.

The Kepler spacecraft has been designed to follow the Earth as it orbits the Sun. Kepler will take between 371 and 372 days to make one orbit. This is longer than the $365 \frac{1}{4}$ days the Earth takes.

This means that, although Kepler is now 950 miles (1,520 kilometers) behind the Earth, the distance between them will gradually get bigger. The reason for NASA choosing this orbit is so Kepler's view of the stars will not be blocked by the Earth.

The spacecraft, which is 15 feet (4.5 meters) tall, is powered by four solar panels. On board are computers and a special device called a photometer. This is one of the most sensitive light-detecting instruments ever made. It is so sensitive that it would be able to detect the change in brightness of a car headlight if a tiny fly flew across it!

When a planet passes in front of its star, this is called a "transit". Kepler will be looking for Earth-like rocky planets using the "transit method". This means it will try to detect the tiny changes in brightness of a star that will occur if a planet comes between the star and Kepler – similar to the fly and the headlight. Kepler will not actually see or photograph the planet, but measure the change in the star's brightness.

Using the transit method astronomers have already found more than 250 giant planets orbiting far away stars. These are thought to be gas planets

similar to those in our solar system such as Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. It's hoped Kepler will be able to detect much smaller, Earth-like rocky planets.

During Kepler's first month in space, scientists will run a series of tests to make sure everything on the spacecraft is working properly. Then they will send commands to make Kepler remove its dust cover. Soon afterwards the spacecraft will begin to search for planets.

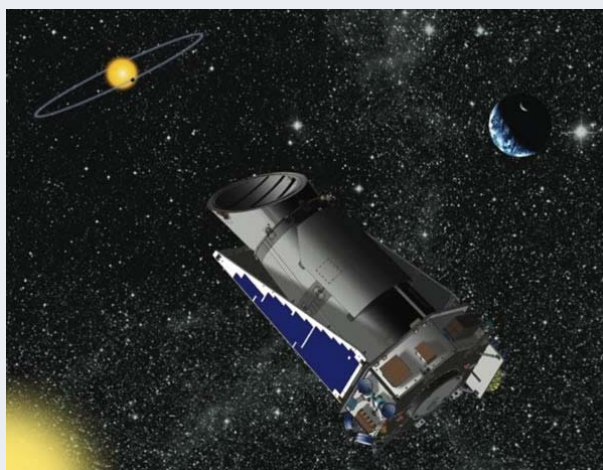
Kepler will position itself so it faces the part of the Milky Way galaxy that contains the constellation of Cygnus, the Swan. The craft will stay in that position throughout its mission, which is

planned to last three and a half years. During this time Kepler will study the light from 100,000 stars. The chance of a star having a rocky planet with an orbit that lines up with Kepler's view is very small. This is why it has been designed to study so many stars.

Kepler will be looking for planets in what astronomers call the "Goldilocks Zone". This is a distance

from a star where it is not too hot and not too cold. This zone could be close to a cool star or further away from a large hot one. Rocky planets in the Goldilocks Zone may have temperatures cool enough for liquid water to exist and warm enough for it not to freeze. Kepler will look for these planets because most scientists think liquid water is necessary for there to be any life.

Kepler will not be able to find life on other planets, but it should be able to detect planets that could support living things. Other space telescopes, and telescopes on Earth, will then be used to look more closely at the rocky planets Kepler discovers. If it finds any, one of the next steps will be to develop satellites to examine the atmosphere around the planets to see if it contains gasses such as oxygen.



Artist's impression of Kepler

PLAN FOR WORLD'S LONGEST SUSPENSION BRIDGE

On March 6, Silvio Berlusconi, the prime minister of Italy, announced a big spending plan. He said Italy will spend €17.8 billion (\$22.4 billion) on public works. This will include building new railways, freeways and tunnels. A large part of the money will be used to build a bridge to connect the mainland of Italy with the island of Sicily.

The suspension bridge will cross the Strait of Messina. It will be about 2.5 miles (four kilometers) long. The bridge will be 200 feet (61 meters) wide and have a six-lane freeway. It will also have a railway line and two pedestrian walkways. The bridge will be supported by two pillars. Each will be 1,306 feet (400 meters) tall – even taller than the Empire State Building, in New York City, in the U.S.

The central part of the bridge will be suspended between the two pillars.

The distance, or span, between them will be two miles (3.3 kilometers). This will make it the longest suspension bridge in the world. Currently, the longest one is in Japan. However, the new “Messina” bridge will have a central span nearly 4,000 feet (1,220 meters) longer than the Japanese bridge.



Artist's impression of new Messina Bridge

There have been plans to build a bridge across the Strait of Messina for many years. Yet no government has agreed to provide the money before.

Not everyone agrees with the plan to build the new bridge. Some say the money should be spent on other things. They believe it would be better for Sicily to remain an island and for people to carry on using the ferry.

Others disagree with the plans for different reasons. The area around the Strait of Messina has frequent high winds, earthquakes and even tidal waves. Yet engineers from the company chosen to build the bridge insist it can be built to withstand these things.

One Italian geologist believes there are other problems the building company has not thought of. He claims Sicily and the Italian mainland are moving – very slowly – in different directions. He says the mainland is rising by 0.08 inches (two millimeters) a year. This is faster than Sicily, which is rising 0.02 inches (0.5 millimeters). The gap between the two land masses is

also growing by 0.12 inches (three millimeters) a year.

Prime Minister Berlusconi says the public works projects, including the bridge, will create 140,000 extra jobs. He believes this is very important. Like other countries, Italy is having money problems and some Italian companies are being forced to close.

The bridge is expected to be completed in 2016. ▣

CHINESE ZODIAC HEADS CAUSE ARGUMENT

Yves Saint Laurent was a famous French fashion designer. He died in 2008. The designer was very wealthy and had a large art collection. Two of the items he owned were put up for sale on February 25. The sale has caused an argument between the governments of France and China.

The two items are the heads of a rabbit and a rat, which are made of bronze. The two heads were originally part of a fountain in the grounds of the Old Summer Palace in Peking (now known as Beijing, the capital of China).

The fountain was a type of water clock – called a clepsydra. Original-



Bronze rat head

ly the water clock had 12 different animal heads, all made of bronze. Each animal represented a year according to the Chinese [zodiac](#). For

example, last year was the Year of the Rat, and this year is the Year of the Ox.

Water flowed out of the mouth of each animal for a two-hour period. Therefore, the clock measured 12 periods of two hours – or one day of

NewsCAST

SMALLER 100-YEAR GIFTS — In Japan, September 15 is Respect for the Aged Day. On this day, people who celebrated their 100th birthday over the last year receive a gift of a silver cup and a signed certificate. The gifts are given to them by the prime minister. Yet now, as so many are reaching their 100th birthdays, the Japanese government has announced the silver cups will be smaller. This, it says, is because it's becoming too expensive to make so many of them. The first year the cups were given out was 1963. 153 people received them. Last year, almost 20,000 people had their 100th birthday.

24 hours. The water clock was built in the 1700s by an Italian [Jesuit](#) missionary for the Qianlong Emperor of China.

In 1860, British and French troops fought a brief war with China. During the war the Old Summer Palace was burned down.

Some people think the French soldiers stole all the palace treasures before it was set on fire. Others believe British troops took them. Some have even said a group of Chinese people took them before the French and British troops arrived. Whatever really happened, the treasures of the Palace – including the 12 bronze animal heads from the water clock – disappeared.

Even today, nobody knows where all the bronze animal heads are. Five are in China in a museum. Most of these were bought at [auction](#) by a wealthy Chinese businessman, who then gave them to the museum.

The sale of the rat and rabbit heads was organized by an auction company called Christie's. Before the sale, the Chinese government complained to the French government. It said the two heads had been stolen in 1860, and should be returned. Christie's insisted a French court had said the sale was legal.

The Chinese museum that owns the five heads said it would not bid for the rat and the rabbit. Museum officials say they should not have to pay money to get back things that were stolen 150 years ago.

The two heads were bought by a Chinese man for €14 million (\$17.6 million) each. A few days later, as a protest, he said he would refuse to

pay the money. The Chinese government denied it had asked the man to bid for the animal heads.

The bronze heads are owned by Pierre Bergé, Yves Saint Laurent's former business partner. He said if the Chinese man who made the winning bid did not pay for the rat and rabbit heads, then he would keep them. ■



Bronze rabbit head

PRESIDENT OF SUDAN ACCUSED OF WAR CRIMES

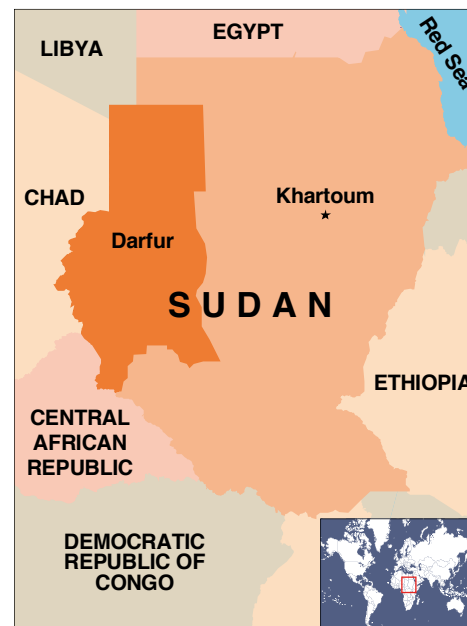
Omar al-Bashir is the president of Sudan. On March 4, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued a [warrant](#) for his arrest.

The court has accused him of war crimes and crimes against humanity. This is the first time the ICC has issued a warrant for the arrest of a ruling leader of a government.

President al-Bashir is accused of organizing a war against the people who live in a region of Sudan called Darfur. It is estimated around 300,000 people, many of them children, have

been killed in Darfur since 2003. Over two million others have been forced to leave their homes.

Much of the fighting in Darfur has been carried out by a group called the Janjaweed. Many people think the Sudanese government has been giving weapons to the Janjaweed and paying the group to attack and kill innocent people in Darfur. The Sudanese government denies this.



NEWSCAST

SNOW FORT A FIRE HAZARD — A man in Canada has been asked to knock down a snow fort he built in his back garden. The fort was over 6.6 feet (two meters) tall and had a Canadian flag on the top. The people who own the building in which the man lives told him the fort was a fire risk. The man had built the fort next to the electricity box on the outside of his home. He said the local electricity company had told him it wasn't dangerous. The man says he won't have the same problem next winter because he plans to move to a new home this year.

The ICC is based in The Hague, a city in The Netherlands. Its job is to put people on trial for war crimes, [genocide](#) or crimes against humanity.

Over 100 countries agreed to set up the ICC in 2002. Other countries have said they want to support it, but have not yet officially agreed to work with the ICC. Some countries, including the U.S., China, and India, disagree with some of the ICC's rules and don't recognize it. For example, the U.S. does not want the ICC to have the right to question American troops who have been involved in wars in other countries. Sudan has also refused to recognize the ICC.

All the countries that have agreed to work with the court must hand over anyone who the ICC wants to

put on trial. This means if President al-Bashir were to travel to any of these countries, they should arrest him. The country's government would then have to send him to the ICC in The Hague.

President al-Bashir claims the ICC's accusations against him are untrue. Many Sudanese people who support him protested about the ICC's announcement on the streets of Khartoum, the capital city.



Omar al-Bashir, president of Sudan

Many international aid agencies have been working in Darfur. They are providing food, shelter and medical care to people affected by the fighting. Soon after the ICC issued a warrant for his arrest, President al-Bashir announced he had ordered ten of these aid agencies to leave the country – including Oxfam and Médecins Sans Frontières.

Several African countries were unhappy about the ICC's announcement. Some that are founding members of the court are threatening not to support it any more. China, which buys nearly all of Sudan's oil, has also asked for the arrest warrant to be canceled. It says putting President al-Bashir on trial will not solve the problems in Darfur. ■

CRICKET TEAM ATTACKED

On March 3, the Sri Lankan cricket team was attacked in Pakistan.

Cricket is the most popular sport in Pakistan. The sport originated

in Britain over 100 years ago. The places in which cricket is most popular – New Zealand, Australia, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, South Africa and the Caribbean Islands (known as the West Indies) are all former parts of the British Empire.

Cricket teams from these countries often visit each other to play matches, called "tests". In Pakistan and India thousands of people try to get tickets to see test matches, while millions more follow them on live television.

Over the last five years there have been several terrorist attacks in India and Pakistan. For example, over 170 people were killed in an attack on the city of Mumbai, in India, last November. One of the buildings attacked was a large hotel often used by visiting international cricket teams. Only one of the attackers was captured. The others were killed by specially-trained Indian soldiers. India insists these terrorists were members of a group from Pakistan.

The English cricket team was due to play some matches in India shortly after the attack on Mumbai. Many people thought the matches should be canceled. Eventually, the English team agreed to play as long as the Indian authorities provided extra police and military-style security.

Recently, the Indian cricket team decided to cancel its trip to play in Pakistan. However, the Sri Lankan cricket team agreed to go to Pakistan in place of the Indian team.

On March 3, the members of the Sri Lankan cricket team were traveling from their hotel to the cricket stadium in the city of Lahore. As their bus approached a roundabout, 12 masked gunmen appeared. They

began firing at the bus as well as the police cars in front and behind it. A smaller bus carrying the umpires was also attacked.

Six cricket players and two coaches were injured. A rocket fired at the bus missed. A **grenade** exploded, but as it had rolled under the bus it didn't harm anybody. The driver saved the cricket players' lives. He quickly drove to the stadium, where the players were taken to safety by helicopter. Six policemen and the driver of the smaller bus were killed in the attack.

All the gunmen got away. Later, police found the attackers' bags. They were full of food and drinks. Some people therefore think the original plan might have been to capture the Sri Lankan cricket team members and hold them hostage.

It is not yet known which militant group carried out the attack. At first, some Pakistanis blamed India. They said it was in retaliation for the attack on Mumbai last year. Few people believe this. Some experts think it was a group called Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). This group admitted to placing a bomb outside a hotel in which the New Zealand cricket team was staying when it was playing in Pakistan in 2002.



Sri Lankan cricket team being taken to safety

LeJ and other militant groups in Pakistan are unhappy the Pakistani government is helping the U.S. and NATO troops in the war in Afghanistan. Some of these militant groups

want to take over the country and turn it into a strict Islamic state.

The attack on the Sri Lankan team means it's unlikely that other international cricket teams will agree to play in Pakistan for many years to come. ■

WITHDRAWING TROOPS FROM IRAQ

At the end of February, Barack Obama, the president of the U.S., announced his plan for withdrawing American troops from Iraq.

It is six years since George W. Bush, the former American president, ordered American forces to invade Iraq. They were assisted by troops from Britain, Australia and Poland.



American president, Barack Obama

The invasion was ordered because the U.S. claimed Saddam Hussein, Iraq's leader at the time, was developing destructive weapons. These were called "Weapons of Mass Destruction" or WMD. The U.S. and other countries such as Britain believed Saddam Hussein planned to use these weapons to attack other countries.

The invasion was successful and the Iraqi army quickly defeated. Saddam Hussein was captured and put on trial in an Iraqi court. He was found guilty of crimes against his own people and sentenced to death. America helped arrange elections

and the Iraqi people elected their own parliament and prime minister.

However, violence broke out among different Iraqi religious groups. Anti-American militant fighters moved into Iraq. They attacked the American troops, who also became caught up in the fighting among the Iraqi groups. Bomb attacks and shootings happened nearly every day in the larger cities. During 2007, there were months in which over 3,000 Iraqi civilians were killed.

Many Americans wanted their troops to be withdrawn from Iraq immediately. Some countries' leaders – including a former United Nations (U.N.) Secretary-General – argued that the invasion had been illegal. Despite searching, no WMD has ever been found in Iraq.

President Bush decided to send more troops to Iraq. Many disagreed with him, including Mr. Obama. Yet the plan helped to reduce the number of bombings and shootings. Iraqi groups were also persuaded to join the Americans in fighting militants from other countries. Now there are very few violent attacks in Iraq.

Before stepping down as president Mr. Bush agreed with Nouri al-Maliki, the Iraqi prime minister, that all American troops would leave the country by the end of 2011.

President Obama's plan means they will leave sooner. Of the 140,000 American troops in Iraq, he said 50,000 would stay until the end of 2011. The others will leave by the middle of 2010. Those staying will help the new Iraqi army with training and security.

A new election for the Iraqi parliament will be held before the end of this year. Most people think American troops will be needed to help provide security while the election takes place.

President Obama also confirmed the 4,000 British troops still in Iraq will leave within the next four months. ■

STRANDED WHALES AND DOLPHINS RESCUED

Rescuers have saved the lives of over 50 pilot whales and dolphins that became stranded on a beach in Australia.

Almost 200 of the animals became stuck on King Island, on March 1. King Island is between Australia's mainland and the island of Tasmania.

More than 100 people who live on King Island volunteered to help wildlife officials to try to get the animals back out to sea. The rescuers had to wait for the tide to come in. While they waited, they tried to keep the stranded whales and dolphins covered in wet cloths to help them survive. The volunteers dug trenches in the sand so the animals

NEWSCAST

STICKY PROBLEM — A university in Australia has stopped the sale of chewing gum and bubble gum on its campus. Students can no longer buy any kind of gum in shops in the university grounds. University officials say nobody is banned from chewing gum in the university, but they will have to buy it somewhere else. It wants to discourage people from having gum because it causes litter – from the packets, and from people throwing gum on the street and sticking it onto things. University shops say they now have to tell students to go outside the university if they want to buy chewing gum.

would be surrounded by water. People also carried buckets of water up the beach to pour on the whales and dolphins.

Nobody is quite sure why whales and dolphins sometimes get stranded like this in large numbers. It usually happens during migration times when whales are moving to or from the Antarctic Ocean. Most whale strandings in Australian waters happen around Tasmania.

Whales and dolphins use a method called echolocation to navigate through the sea. Echolocation uses sound waves. The whale or dolphin sends out a sound wave into the water. The sound waves bounce off surfaces to give the animal a “picture” of where things are in the water.

Humans use the technology of echolocation in the sea, too. For example, submarines use echolocation to navigate under the sea. Some

people think submarines’ echolocation can interfere with the whales’ and dolphins’ own sound waves. It’s thought this may cause the animals to lose their way and get stranded on beaches.



Stranded pilot whales

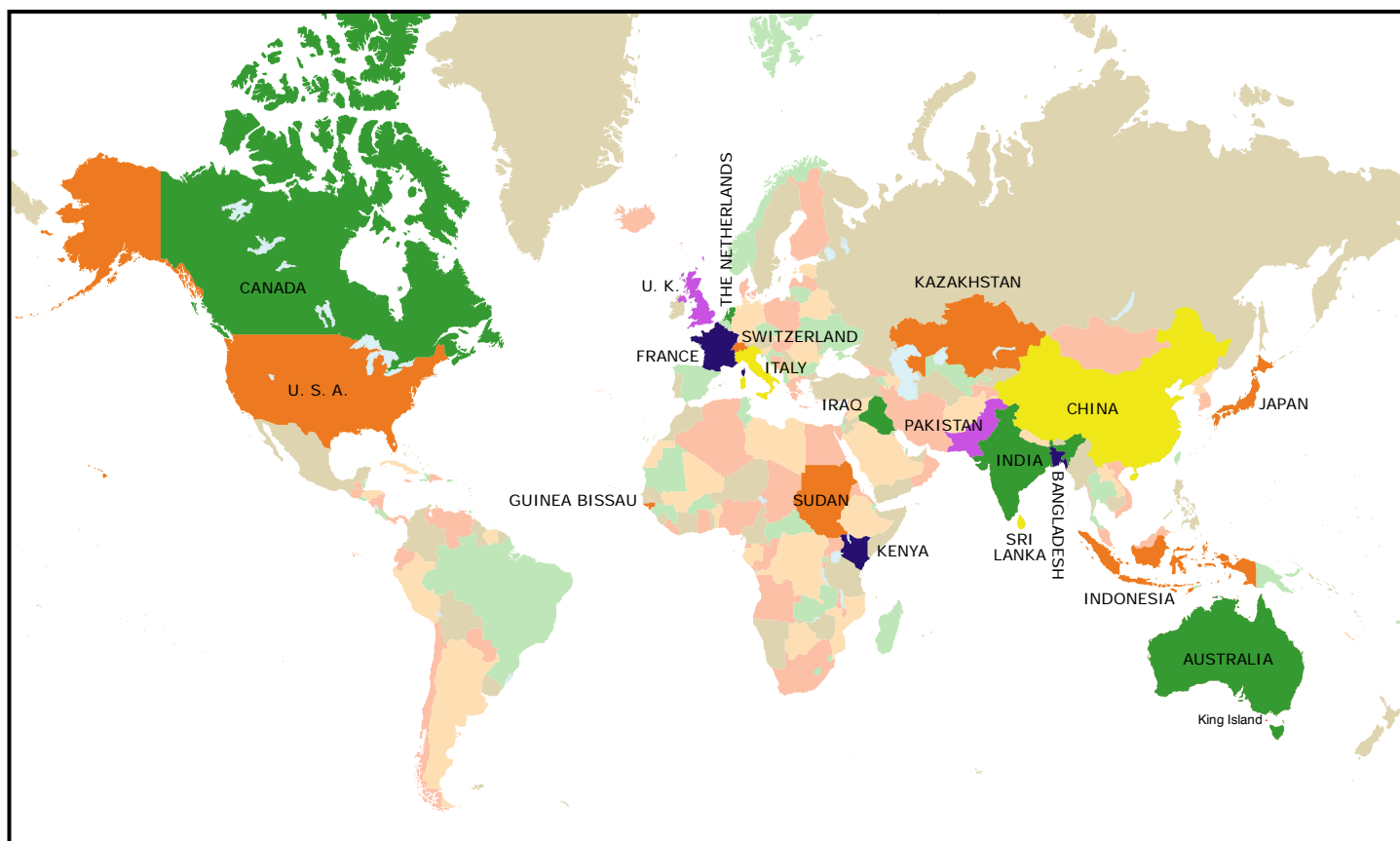
Others say whales and dolphins seem more likely to become confused about where they are in shallow water. They come close to the shore to feed and then become trapped on the beach when the tide goes out.

Over 140 of the stranded animals died. Yet on March 2, during a high tide, the rescuers managed to get 54 whales and dolphins back out into the water. Small boats and jet skis were used to pull them out to sea. Officials put electronic tags on the rescued whales and dolphins. This means the animals can now be tracked. ■

JAPAN’S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Japan has the second-largest economy in the world. On March 9, Japanese officials announced that the number of Japanese exports has gone down.

Many of the things Japanese companies make are exported to, or sold in, other countries. Japanese companies are famous around the world for making cars, electronic



goods, and [semiconductors](#). Japan's factories are known to be some of the most efficient in the world.

Japan depends on the money it makes from selling goods to other countries. Many of its exports are sold to America – which has the world's largest economy. Now America and other countries are having money problems. This has begun to affect Japan's economy. Some experts think Japan's problems could become worse than those of other countries because it relies on exporting many of the things it makes.

Japanese-made goods are mainly sold to companies and people in the U.S., Europe and Asia. Many companies in these places are now spending less on Japanese-made machinery. People are also buying fewer cars and electronic equipment that have been made by Japanese companies. Many of these companies are therefore now making more items than they can sell. Large numbers of new cars are parked at Japanese ports waiting to be shipped to other countries.

When a country is exporting more things than it imports – or selling more than it has to buy – this is called a trade surplus. “Surplus” is another word for “extra”. Yet, if the total value of things a country imports is greater than the value of its exports, it's called a trade deficit.

The officials announced that in January Japan had a large trade deficit. This was the first time the country had had a trade deficit for 13 years. It was also the largest trade deficit since these figures were first recorded in 1985 – ¥173 billion (\$1.8 billion). Japan exported 50% less than it did in January 2008.

Many Japanese companies are now thinking about closing some

of their factories. Alternatively, they may keep them open, but only let people work for a few days each week.

The car maker Toyota is expected to lose money this year for the first time in 70 years. Honda, a car and motorcycle company, is reducing production. The electronics company Sony will also lose money this year – for the first time in 14 years.

Taro Aso is the prime minister of Japan. He said it was impossible to predict how long the economic problems would last or when Japan's trade deficit would become a surplus again. ■

LENT BEGINS

Many Christians around the world began observing Lent on February 25.

Lent lasts for 40 days. The Bible – the holy book of the Christian religion – describes a 40-day period of [fasting](#) that Jesus spent in the desert.



Pancake race

Some Christians fast during Lent. Others decide to give up eating certain things – usually treats such as candies or chocolate. This is supposed to remind them of the hardship suffered by Jesus in the desert and help them think about things that are necessary and things that are [luxuries](#). This year an Italian bishop suggested young people in

his church should give up text messaging during Lent.

Lent begins on what is known as Ash Wednesday. The day before this is called Shrove Tuesday.



Mardi Gras carnival in New Orleans, U.S.

Shrove Tuesday gets its name from the verb “shrive”. It's an old English word meaning to be forgiven for something. Some Christians take part in a ritual called shriving, when they confess their sins to a priest. When they confess, they are forgiven – or “shriven”.

Traditionally, Christians were expected to give up foods such as fat and eggs during Lent. Therefore, on Shrove Tuesday they needed to use up these foods so they wouldn't go to waste. Shrove Tuesday has become known to many people as Pancake Day. This is because making pancakes uses fat and eggs.

In some countries, Shrove Tuesday is called Mardi Gras. This means “fat Tuesday” in French. Some cities, such as Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil, New Orleans, in the U.S., and Sydney, in Australia, hold large Mardi Gras carnivals.

In Britain, Shrove Tuesday is marked in many towns by pancake races. Competitors have to run along a street with a frying pan containing a pancake. The first person to finish the race having flipped the pancake a certain number of times is the winner.

Other countries have similar traditions of making and eating rich

foods before the fast during Lent. In Iceland, the Monday before Ash Wednesday is known as Bun Day, when people eat rich cream-filled pastries.

Christians believe after his 40 days in the desert, Jesus was imprisoned and crucified. At the end of Lent, Christians celebrate Easter. Easter Sunday marks the day on which they believe Jesus was resurrected. One of the main purpose of Lent is to prepare Christians for this Holy Week, when they commemorate Jesus' death and resurrection. ■

NEW FISH DISCOVERED

A new species of fish has been discovered, and another one found in a completely new place. Both have very unusual characteristics.

The new fish species was discovered by scuba diving instructors. It was found off the coast of an island in Indonesia. The fish is brightly-striped yellow and peach and has blue eyes. It has been named *psychedelica*.



Psychedelica

The fish belongs to a family called frogfish. These fish mostly live among coral in tropical waters. Frogfish have two fins on either side of the lower part of their bodies. Experts think the new species' bright coloring is meant to camouflage it among the corals.

Psychedelica has some characteristics that are different from other frogfish. It uses the two "leg" fins to propel itself along the seabed. It also expels water through small gill-like openings to move it along. This means the fish looks as if it is bouncing on the seabed like a rubber ball.

The fish's body is covered with tough folds of skin. These protect it from sharp corals.

The other fish discovery was made in Australian waters. This fish – called the fangblenny – has never been seen there before.



Fangblenny

This species was seen to change its appearance so it looks like other fish. It does this by changing the color of its body. Scientists think this helps the fish get closer to its prey. The fangblenny feeds on other fish – it swims up close to them and takes small bites out of their fins and scales.

It's possible, the scientists say, that changing color means the fish can also hide from predators in shoals of other fish.

It's the first fish discovered to be able to do this. The only other sea creature that can change color in this way is an octopus.

One thing that surprised scientists was the fish's habit of bending its tail forward to touch its head. They wondered if, unlike other fish, the fangblenny's eyes are able to see different colors. The fish could

therefore be looking at its body to check what color it is.

The scientists found that the fish's scales turned brown when it was taken away from other fish. ■

OLDEST WORDS

Language experts say they've uncovered some of the oldest words in the English language – using the latest computer technology.

The experts carried out the study at a university in Britain. They studied Indo-European languages. These languages and dialects are used in countries in Europe, parts of Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. These languages share some roots and sounds.

Professor Pagel, who led the language study, says the words for numbers are the slowest to change over the centuries. The next slowest to evolve are nouns, then verbs and then adjectives. He said over half the words we use today would be unfamiliar to people of 2,500 years ago. The study shows the oldest words are "I", "we", and the numbers two and three. The word "one" is not quite as old as these others.

The study used a special supercomputer – called ThamesBlue – to track the language changes. The computer can compare words in different languages and find the changes in words and sounds.

The computer was also able to look forward at how words become extinct, or stop being used altogether. The researchers found the less often a word is used, the more likely it is to be replaced by a different word.

The word "dirty", says the professor, has the highest rates of change in Indo-European languages.

What is meant by “dirty” has therefore been described by lots of different words over the last 2,500 years. This, say the scientists, shows the word “dirty” is most likely to become extinct in the future. They suggest it will be replaced by another word that means the same thing. Professor Pagel says this isn’t likely to happen in our lifetimes. It could become extinct over the next 750 years. The words “squeeze” and “guts” were also on the list of words most likely to become extinct. ■

BARBIE’S BIRTHDAY

One of the world’s most famous women celebrated her 50th birthday on March 9.

The Barbie doll was first introduced at a toy fair in New York City, in the U.S., on March 9, 1959.



First Barbie doll

She was created by Ruth Handler, who first started the toy company Mattel. The original Barbie doll wore a black-and-white striped swimsuit and had either blonde or brown hair. In the first year of the doll’s release, Mattel sold over 300,000 Barbies. Since then, more than one billion Barbie dolls have been sold around the world.

Barbie’s shape and appearance have been criticized by many people. They say the doll’s body, face and hair are an unrealistic picture of what women should look like. Barbie dolls are 11.5 inches (29 centimeters) tall – a $\frac{1}{6}$ scale of a woman 5.75 feet (175 centimeters) tall. Yet if the doll’s waist size is multiplied

by the same amount – six times – the woman’s waist size would be only 18 inches (46 centimeters). Average modern women’s waists measure between 30 and 34 inches (76 and 86 centimeters). Therefore, in 1997, Mattel redesigned the doll to give her a wider waist.



Barbie shop in Shanghai, China

Over the years, the company has produced Barbie dolls of different ethnic origins, such as African American and Hispanic Barbies.

Some say Barbie is a good role model for girls. Special Barbie dolls have been made to represent over 100 different careers, such as a doctor, a teacher, and a pilot. In 2000, the company designed an American President Barbie. Mattel even released

NEWSCAST

MEET THE NEW TEACHER — School pupils in Japan have attended lessons taken by a new teacher – a robot. The robot can take the class roll and set students different tasks to complete. She is made in the shape of a human being. Her motor-controlled face can make different human expressions, such as happiness or anger. The robot – called Saya – can also speak different languages. Her designer has been working on creating the robot for 15 years. Robots are already used to do some jobs in Japan – including directing traffic in the street.

a UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) Barbie – although her UNICEF outfit was a strapless ball gown!

Barbie has become less popular in North America and Europe. Therefore, the Mattel Company plans to increase the number of dolls it sells in China. On March 6, it opened a new six-floor Barbie store in Shanghai, one of the biggest cities in China. The store has a design center where customers can create their own dolls, as well as a café and a special fashion stage.

MUTINY IN BANGLADESH

On February 25, members of the Bangladesh Rifles – also known as the BDR – mutinied in Bangladesh.

The BDR is a paramilitary force of 45,000 men. Its job is to guard the country’s borders and stop smuggling. The BDR’s officers are chosen from Bangladesh’s army. Yet the soldiers of the BDR are not officially part of the army. They are more like an armed police force.

The mutiny happened at the BDR’s headquarters in Dhakar, the capital of Bangladesh. At the time, a meeting of many BDR officers from all over the country was being held there.

The BDR soldiers have several complaints. They want to be paid the same amount of money as soldiers in the army, and to have the same amount of holiday. They also want to be able to take part in United Nations (U.N.) peacekeeping operations in other countries. After Pakistan, Bangladesh supplies more U.N. peacekeeping troops than any other country. While working for the U.N., soldiers in Bangladesh’s

army are paid much more than when based in their own country.

The mutiny started during a discussion about these complaints among thousands of BDR soldiers and senior officers. Suddenly a group of BDR soldiers started firing weapons. Many army officers were shot and killed. The dead included the wives of two officers. Violence spread to BDR camps in other parts of the country.



Sheikh Hasina, prime minister of Bangladesh

Sheikh Hasina is the prime minister of Bangladesh. She became prime minister after her party, the Awami League, won an election at the end of last year. Before this election, the army had run Bangladesh for two years.

At first, Prime Minister Hasina said the BDR soldiers who had taken part in the violence would not be punished if they agreed to surrender. They refused. It was not until two days later that they eventually decided to give up their weapons. This was only after Ms. Hasina had sent army tanks to the BDR headquarters and ordered them to open fire.

It was later discovered that almost 80 officers had been killed. Many others are still missing. Senior commanders in Bangladesh's army were very angry. As many as 300 BDR soldiers tried to escape by changing into civilian clothes and leaving the headquarters. Ms. Hasina said those

who had started the mutiny would be punished. Around 1,000 BDR soldiers, including those who led the mutiny, have been arrested. ■

ANCIENT FOOTPRINTS DISCOVERED

Scientists have discovered a set of footprints made by some of the Earth's very earliest modern human beings – our own ancestors.

The footprints were made in volcanic ash that became **embedded** in rocks. The rocks can be dated to 1.5 million years ago.

The ancient footprints were found in Kenya. More than one set of footprints was found. One trail had seven prints in a row. There was also one much smaller footprint, and the scientists think this may be a child's.

The footprints tell scientists quite a lot about how these early humans looked. The depth of a footprint can show how heavy the person was. A trail of footprints in a row shows a person's height, because of how far apart the footprints are.

The scientists are excited because the footprints are the oldest made by humans that walked in the same way as we do today. Their feet and stride were the same as ours.

The oldest footprints ever found are 3.7 billion years old. These were also found in Africa, in 1978. These footprints were made by very different feet from our own. The feet that made these prints were shaped much more like an ape's feet. The position of the big toe shows it would have still been used to grasp and pick things up. It hadn't yet evolved into the type of feet modern humans have.

This new discovery provides some clues about when humans

began evolving to look as we do today. Climate experts think weather changes in Africa meant our human ancestors – whose limbs and feet were adapted to living in trees – had to go further away to find food. Their feet would therefore have gradually changed to help them travel longer distances.



One of the ancient footprints

Scientists say the footprint discovery is very important because no fossils of foot bones dating to this period have ever been found. One reason for this is that the bones in the foot are very small and can easily be destroyed.

The prints were discovered among other footprints of many different animals. The scientists think the trail probably led to a watering hole. ■

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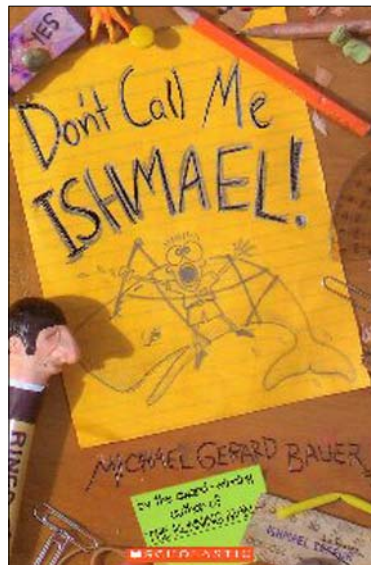
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B O O K R E V I E W

HAVE YOU READ ...?



so himself. You get the idea.

His odd name – which makes him the perfect target for Barry Bagsley, the class bully – is the result of his father's over-the-top antics on the eve of his baby's delivery in the hospital. Ishmael's embarrassed by his parents, and feels overshadowed by his little sister. She's much smarter than him, and as quirky as his parents. One of her proud achievements is creating wooden clothes-peg dolls that look like famous people.

Hope comes in the form of a new student. James Scobie credits surviving a brain-tumor operation with getting rid of his fear – of anything. He's not afraid to stand up to the school bully. He quickly rises to great heights at school when he leads big, poetically-penned cheers at football matches, and recruits students for the school's debate team. He even recruits Ishmael – by promising he won't actually have to debate. Do these things make him cool? You, the reader, will have to decide. Because James Scobie is the book's logical, carefully assertive and persuasive *superhero* – or *guru*.

Ishmael's not alone in his quest to survive the year. One friend is the obnoxious Razza, or "Razzman", a hyperactive member of Ishmael's debate team who can always embarrass him. Razza says he could write Ishmael's pearls of wisdom in large print and double-spaced on the back of a postage stamp "and look, there's still plenty of room for your photo." Bill Kingsley's is also a team member. He is more at home with solitary studying of science

How many 14-year-old boys feel nervous, get embarrassed easily, feel awkward when using words, and are afraid to take chances? Is it really that funny?

In this book, it is.

Our neurotic narrator is Ishmael Leseur (*Le Sewer* to his enemies). He thinks of himself as a screw-up, a dork... he has no outstanding abilities, and he can't help others accomplish anything well – let alone do

fiction and fantasy books and movies. The crisis of the book comes when Ishmael and the other two misfits have to come through in a debate competition without Scobie's brilliance – it's a tense read to find out how they get on.

This part is one of the highlights of the book for me. The events that unfold before a full crowd (and Ishmael's crush, Kelly Faulkner) at the competition are painfully hilarious. It's a really clever set-up, from the moment Ishmael rushes to leave the house in his school uniform pulled fresh from the clothes-line.

There's support from Miss Tarango, a sympathetic English teacher. She shows everyone the power of words in her very first lesson, when she manages to put Barry in his place just using language.

Words win the day in the end, after Barry goes too far in bullying Kingsley. As Ishmael and The Razzman put their final plan for revenge in motion, the novel *Moby Dick* inspires Ishmael's development as a school hero. On the day of the "traditional end-of-year assembly/mass/prize-giving/speech night/extravaganza thingy", revenge is reached with the power of words – no blood is spilled or punches punched. I loved the ending – it couldn't have been better!

This book's for readers of 14 years or over. There are different editions for the U.S. and Australia. The Australian version replaces a football match with rugby, but the Australian setting shows through in a lot of the language and settings. Teen readers should get a kick out of it just about anywhere.

Don't Call Me Ishmael by Michael Gerard Bauer. Scholastic Australia.

Reviewed by **Craig Purdon**

WANT US TO REVIEW A BOOK THAT YOU HAVE READ AND ENJOYED?

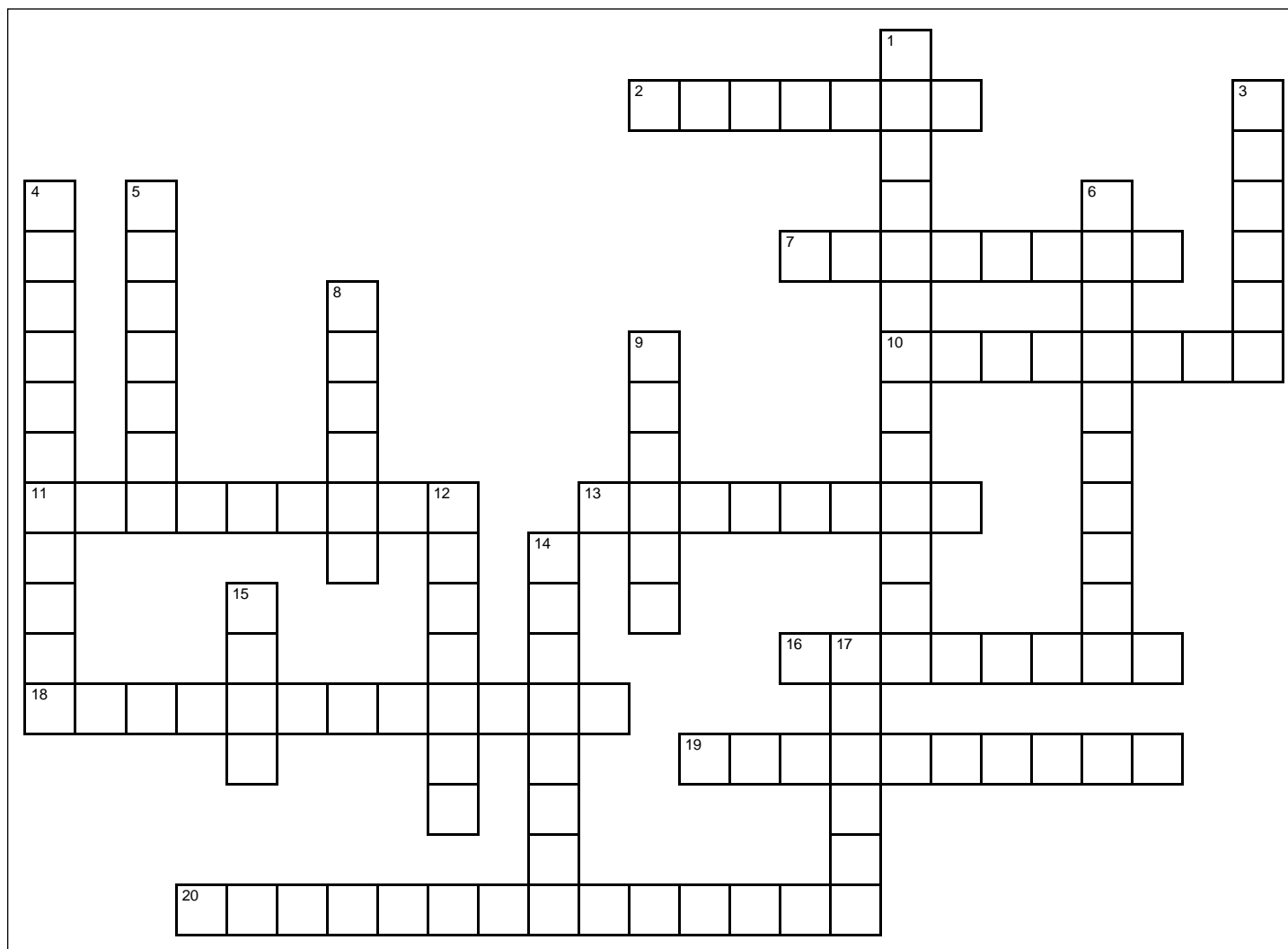
If you do, look for the "recommended book" link in your subscriber menu when you log in to our website.

Complete the form and tell us why you enjoyed the book. If we review your choice, we'll mention your name and include some of your comments.

GLOSSARY

PRIZE COMPETITION

INSTRUCTIONS: ① Complete the crossword. The answers are highlighted in orange in the news stories. There are 25 words highlighted and you need 20 of them to complete the crossword. ② Once you have solved the crossword find the 20 words in the word search on the next page ➡



Across

- 2 Noun** A public sale where items are sold to the highest bidder (7)
7 Verb When a group of people, especially soldiers or sailors, refused to obey orders (8)
10 Noun (Plural) Things that are wanted but not necessarily needed (8)
11 Noun A picture printed onto paper from a piece of wood or metal that has a design cut into it (9)
13 Noun (Plural) Versions of a language common to a specific group of people (8)
16 Noun The murder of a large number of people from a particular ethnic group or country (8)
18 Verb To have brought animals or plants under human control for transport, food, power or companionship (12)
19 Adjective Describes something that has been pressed into a smaller space (10)
20 Noun (Plural) Electronic devices made from silicon (14)

Down

- 1 Noun** A group of stars in the night sky that appear to form a pattern and have been given a name (13)
3 Noun The buildings of a university or college and the land that surrounds them (6)
4 Verb Brought back to life (11)
5 Verb Going without food (7)
6 Verb When people are forced to be separated because of their race or religion (10)
8 Noun A Roman Catholic priest who is a member of the Society of Jesus, a religious group begun in 1540 (6)
9 Noun Area of the night sky, divided into twelve equal parts each with a name or symbol, through which the sun, moon and most of the planets appear to move (6)
12 Noun An exploding weapon thrown by hand or shot from a gun (7)
14 Verb Fixed into the surface of something (8)
15 Noun A sculpture or model of a person's head and shoulders (4)
17 Verb Forces to leave or move out (6)

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