

THE YEAR AHEAD

JANUARY

Bulgaria and Romania are admitted to the European Union – taking membership of the bloc to 27 countries – on condition that they tackle crime and corruption

Violent political unrest will intensify when parliamentary elections are held in Bangladesh, one of the world's most impoverished countries

FEBRUARY

In an historic shift, the Vatican may announce on the 20th anniversary of the publication of the *Donum Vitae* – the document detailing the Roman Catholic church's stance on contraceptives – that the use of condoms is acceptable to prevent the spread of AIDS

MARCH

Australia hopes to retain the *Cricket World Cup* when the West Indies hosts the four-yearly event over 47 days with 16 participating teams

APRIL

Landmark elections in Nigeria will see the first handover from one democratic government to another since Africa's most populous nation gained independence in 1960

The 400th anniversary of the founding of *Jamestown*, Virginia, America's first English settlement

MAY

Socialist candidate *Segolene Royal* could become France's first woman president, succeeding *Jacques Chirac*, when the country votes for its new leader

Turkey's secular rule will be a key focus when the mainly Muslim country elects a new president. Many believe Islamist influence has increased under Premier *Tayyip Erdogan*

JUNE

Iraq expects to take over security command from the United States, a move which may precipitate the withdrawal of U.S. troops

JULY

Fans predict publication of the seventh and final *Harry Potter* book on the numerologically-significant 7/7/07. The fifth film, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, is released on July 13

AUGUST

Scouting, the world's largest voluntary youth movement, involving 28 million people around the globe, celebrates 100 years

SEPTEMBER

Iran's first nuclear power plant, which Tehran says is to meet its energy needs but the U.S. believes is to make weapons, goes online at *Bushehr*

Will the Southern Hemisphere regain the *Rugby World Cup*

OCTOBER

The term of office of Pakistan's President, *Pervez Musharraf*, a key ally in the U.S.'s so-called war on terror, comes to an end

NOVEMBER

The *International Court of Justice* hears a dispute between Malaysia and Singapore over sovereignty of the tiny but strategically important *Pulau Batu Puteh* island

DECEMBER

A film version of *The Rape of Nanking*, *Iris Chang's* international bestseller, makes its debut in China as the 70th anniversary of the *Nanjing Massacre* by Japanese troops, the event on which the book is based, is commemorated

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