

THE FLAT WORLD



LISTS OF THE BEST AND THE WORST OF THE YEAR ARE AS UBIQUITOUS AS RESOLUTIONS AND HANGOVERS

5. "Pirates rule the waves": The pirates of Somalia "netted more than \$30 million in more than 70 hijackings in 2008... such depredation along a critical trade route threatens livelihoods around the world."

come the country's newest humanitarian catastrophe" with instances of "strategic ethnic cleansing"

4. United States helps India build a missile shield: US Defense Secretary Robert Gates "quietly announced negotiations between the US and India to develop a missile defense program on Indian soil... (it) could have long-term implications for US-China relations and regional stability."

5. Russia makes play for Africa: China got the world's attention but Russia is "snatching up gas and oil deals, with an eye on winning greater leverage over the global energy market."

Foreign Policy

Even if you don't live in a war-zone mud hut, impress your intellectual friends with the top underreported stories of the year:

1. The surge in Afghanistan starts early: Obama vowed to pacify Afghanistan with more troops, but the Bush administration has already "boosted US forces in Afghanistan by nearly 85 per cent."

2. Colombian coca production increases: The \$6 billion Plan Colombia launched by the US to reduce the cultivation of the crop has been a giant failure.

3. The next Darfur heats up: Sudan's Southern Kordofan "threatens to be-

The Daily Telegraph

What do people really read? This British newspaper's "most read stories" showed that a woman injecting cooking oil into her face interested more readers than the Mumbai attacks, which was at

number 30.

1. The 101 most useful websites
2. Tree man 'who grew roots' may be cured
3. Barack Obama's lost brother found in Kenya
4. Cosmetic surgery addict injected cooking oil into her face
5. Swedish wrestler throws away medal in Olympic hissy fit

Newsweek

Post-meltdown, this list of the "super-rich and superbad" should come in handy for dartboard practice. In random order:

1. Robert Mugabe and his wife would put Marie Antoinette to shame. The corrupt Zimbabwe tyrant even showed up at the UN World Food Summit. "It's like Poi Pot going to a human rights conference."
2. Bernard Madoff told his sons that his business was a "Ponzi scheme". By

that cute phrase, the money manager meant he defrauded clients of over \$50 billion.

3. Mukesh Ambani is building a 27-storey \$1 billion family home with a helipad in Mumbai.
4. They went to Washington to beg for a multi-billion dollar bailout but instead of taking, say, a bus, the top executives of Detroit's 'Big Three' auto companies arrived in luxury private jets. No spare change?
5. Kathy Fuld, the wife of former Lehman CEO Richard Fuld didn't let the economic crisis interrupt her \$10,000-a-week shopping sprees.

BLOG: Regret the Error

(www.regrettheerror.com)
Journalists beware: you're being read. Prizewinners among 2008's most cringe-worthy goof-ups the world over.

1. Epic organisational failure: Japan's *Mainichi Daily News* had to be



relaunched after admittedly publishing "inappropriate, unchecked" articles. Hopefully, headlines like "The nurse in Japan is lewder than the prostitute" will no longer appear.

2. Error of the Year: *The Los Angeles Times* laboured for six months on article about a 1994 gun attack on slain rapper Tupac Shakur, blaming it on rap star Sean "Diddy" Combs. The website *The Smoking Gun*, however, proved the documents used by the LAT were forged, forcing the paper to issue a retraction.

3. Typo: New Hampshire's *The Valley News* misspelled its own name on the

front-page.

4. **Photo Error:** "The Eastern Daily Press (UK) apologised after confusing the Bishop of Norwich with a serial killer known as the 'Suffolk strangler'."

5. Correction of the Year: Humorist Dave Barry apologised for an error made in an article about badminton in *The Miami Herald*: "I correctly spelled Prapawadee Jaroenrat-natarak, Poompat Sapkulchananart and Pornpip Buranapraseatsuk... by the time I got to Kevin Cordon, my fingers were exhausted."

Asavari Singh