

# 2015 in Perspective



Global leaders pledged to reach a legally binding agreement on limiting the temperature rise to 1.5 – 2 degree Celsius at the Paris Climate Change Conference 2015. PHOTO: AFP

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that had kept thousands of people in stateless limbo for almost 68 years.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government stopped cattle from crossing illegally into the Muslim-majority neighbour as part of India's policy banning cow slaughter. Intolerance touched a new high in India in 2015 with Muslims being murdered for storing beef, scholars, celebrities and public speakers being chastised for their intellectual views and saffronisation of public institutions.

#### Bangladesh and Japan

On December 13, Bangladesh signed a deal with Japan for a Tk 86.6 billion loan, the biggest loan in Yen the country has given to Bangladesh, to be spent on six projects including power, health, and infrastructure. The credit, which charges 0.01 percent interest, will have to be repaid in 40 years with a 10-year grace period.

#### Bangladesh and Russia

On December 25, Bangladesh signed its biggest ever contract worth \$12.65 billion with a Russian state-run company to build the Rooppur nuclear power plant that would generate 2,400 megawatts of electricity.

#### INTERNATIONAL – A QUICK GLANCE

##### Syrian Refugee Crisis

More than four million refugees of the Syrian Civil War have left the country during the course of the war. As of February 2015, Turkey became the world's biggest refugee hosting country with 2.2 million Syrian refugees and had spent more than US\$7.6 billion on direct assistance to refugees.

Towards the middle of the year, in August, international conscience was shaken by the picture of a dead child washed up on the shore of the Atlantic. He was one of the hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing the fighting in Syria, and seeking refuge in Europe. There was much dilly-dallying and refusal from

some countries like Italy, Greece, and Hungary to accept them. Germany was the most generous by far, taking in more than a million refugees.

##### Iran Nuclear Deal

Iran and the group of six nations, the United States, UK, France, China, Russia, and Germany, reached a historic agreement to limit Iran's ability to produce a nuclear weapon in exchange for the lifting of crippling economic sanctions. Iran agreed to reduce its stockpile of enriched uranium by 98 percent, place two-thirds of their installed centrifuges under international supervision, give the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) permanent access "where necessary when necessary," and accept a resumption of sanctions if Iran violates any of the terms.

##### Nepal Earthquake

On April 25, a massive 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal, killing over 9,000 people and injuring more than 23,000. It also triggered an avalanche on Mt. Everest, making it the deadliest day on the mountain in its history. Hundreds of thousands of people were left homeless and centuries old, historic buildings collapsed.

##### The Trump Factor

This year saw the rise of Republican candidate Donald Trump, who whipped up a storm during the GOP primaries for his racist, sexist and Islamophobic comments on public platforms. He caused outrage worldwide for his comments suggesting Muslims should be banned from entering the US. Despite this, he continues to lead the opinion polls.

##### Tunisia Quartet wins a Landslide Victory

Four civil society groups known as the National Dialogue Quartet of Tunisia spearheaded a successful democratic movement that culminated in the first free and fair presidential elections since 1956. The Quartet was awarded this year's Nobel

Peace Prize for their remarkable feat.

##### Myanmar Elections

Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won a landslide victory in Myanmar after general elections on November 8. It was the country's first national vote since a nominally civilian government was introduced in 2011, ending nearly 50 years of military rule.

##### Obama visits India

Barack Obama was the first US president to visit India twice during his tenure. The second visit was in January this year, when he was the chief guest at India's Republic Day parade. Several deals were made (*Times of India*, January 26/27, 2015); the important ones were related to the nuclear deal between the two that was struck on account of disagreement on the 'tracing' of raw fuel sold to India.

##### Sustainable Development Goals

World leaders embraced a historic, sweeping 15-year global plan of action to end poverty, reduce inequalities and protect the environment, known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), at the opening of a United Nations special summit.

Titled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" and contained in document A/70/L.1, the agreement on a set of 17 goals and 169 targets would come into effect today, on January 1, 2016, replacing the Millennium Development Goals set in 2000.

##### Paris Agreement

The United Nations Conference on climate change took place in Paris from November 30 to December 11, 2015. 195 countries participated in the talks with the aim to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate that included keeping global warming below 2°C.

##### Russian Intervention in Syria

Following requests by the Syrian government, Russia started its military intervention in the Syrian Civil War on September 30, 2015. The situation, often seen as a proxy war between the US and Russia, and other regional powers, escalated

after a Russian aircraft was shot down by Turkey, the first time a NATO country shot down a Russian plane in 50 years.

##### Terrorist Attacks Across the Globe

On January 7, 2015, the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* became the target of Islamist militants, whose attack on the magazine resulted in the death of 12 persons, including four of the magazine's journalists. Two of the attackers were later killed in a shootout with the police.

Between January 3 and January 7 of 2015, Boko Haram conducted a series of mass killings in the Nigerian town of Baga and its environs. Reports of the death toll range from 150 to 2,000. Baga and at least 16 other towns are thought to have been destroyed as over 35,000 people are reported to have been displaced.

IS attacked Kobani, also known as Ayn al-Arab, with at least one car bomb in an area near the border crossing with Turkey. At least 35 people are said to have been killed in the attack. IS also carried out further attacks throughout the year in Iraq, Egypt and Yemen, killing hundreds.

On June 17, 2015, 21-year-old Dylann Roof carried out a mass shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, a historically black church in Charleston, South Carolina. Roof killed nine people, all of whom were African-American. Roof was eventually indicted on 33 federal hate crime charges.

On November 12, 2015, a pair of suicide bombings struck southern Beirut killing 43 people and leaving 239 wounded. IS claimed responsibility for the attacks.

The next day, a series of coordinated terrorist attacks occurred in Paris and its northern suburb, Saint-Denis. At least 130 people were killed and over 300 people were injured.

##### Editorial Desk

Note: This supplement went to the press on December 28 so we could not include events after that date.