

# FLASHBACK 2017

This was the year of great unravelling, with international orders challenged or broken, with thousands of deaths, political changes, vast flows of refugees and terrorist attacks on some of the most cherished symbols of civilisation, both western and eastern. So much uncertainty, anxiety, so many victims. Myanmar military forces started a major crackdown on the Rohingyas, more than six and a half lakh Rohingya refugees crossed the border into Bangladesh; IS was defeated in Syria and Iraq, truck rammed into cyclists, pedestrians in New York City; Putin eyes election win next year; Pakistan Supreme Court disqualified Nawaz Sharif. Even the earth seemed slightly unhinged – the ice caps melting, huge snowstorms and floods, smogs engulfing cities, and a major earthquake in Mexico. With deaths of so many towering figures and devastating natural disasters, many have dubbed 2017 as the worst ever year in recent memory.



## NOTABLE DEATHS

**MARCH 3**  
Author Paula Fox, who created high art out of imagined chaos, died at 93.

**MARCH 18**  
Chuck Berry, one of the fathers of rock 'n' roll, died aged 90.

**MAY 23**  
Actor Sir Roger Moore, best known for playing James Bond, died at 89.

**MAY 30**  
General Manuel Antonio Noriega, former military leader of Panama, died at 83.

**JUNE 16**  
Helmut Kohl, who served as German chancellor from 1982 to 1998, died at 87.

**JULY 13**  
Liu Xiaobo, Nobel laureate and political prisoner, died at 61 in Chinese custody.

**SEPTEMBER 22**  
Sima Wali, who fled gender apartheid in her homeland of Afghanistan, died at 66.

**DECEMBER 4**  
Veteran actor Shashi Kapoor, a Bollywood matinee idol, died at 73.

## CATALONIA CRISIS

Catalonia's drive for independence has plunged Spain into its biggest political crisis for 40 years. On 21 December pro-independence parties won a narrow majority in a Catalan election that Spain had called in the hope of ending the crisis. So independence remains a possibility. Catalonia is a semi-autonomous region in north-east Spain with a distinct history dating back almost 1,000 years. The wealthy region has about 7.5 million people, with their own language, parliament, flag and anthem.



## TRUMP RECOGNISES JERUSALEM AS ISRAEL'S CAPITAL



President Trump on December 6 formally recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, reversing nearly seven decades of American foreign policy and setting in motion a plan to move the United States Embassy from Tel Aviv to the fiercely contested Holy City. The president cast his decision as a break with decades of failed policy on Jerusalem, which the United States, along with virtually every other nation in the world, has declined to recognize as the capital since Israel's founding in 1948.

## N KOREA'S ICBM THREAT TO US

North Korea claims to have successfully tested a new type of intercontinental ballistic missile, topped with a "super-large heavy warhead," which is capable of striking the US mainland. The country's state media made the announcement after leader Kim Jong Un ordered the launch of the Hwasong-15 missile, which reached the highest altitude ever recorded by a North Korean missile. After the launch, Kim said North Korea had "finally realized the great historic cause of completing the state nuclear force," according to KCNA.



## BREXIT, SAUDI PURGE, MEXICO QUAKE, TRUCK BOMBING IN SOMALIA



(Clockwise from top left) The UK government has formally served divorce papers on the European Union, signaling the beginning of the end of a relationship that has endured for 44 years; Saudi Arabia's future king has tightened his grip with a purge that involved arresting royals and ministers; a 7.1 magnitude earthquake hit Mexico that left over 200 people dead and 512 people killed in massive truck bombing in Somalia's capital.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

## KEY EVENTS

**ISTANBUL ATTACK (JANUARY 01)**  
At least 39 people were killed when a gunman attacked a crowded Istanbul nightclub about an hour after midnight on New Year's Day. IS claimed responsibility for the attack.

**TRUMP TAKES OFFICE (JANUARY 20)**  
Donald John Trump was inaugurated as the 45th president of the US, ushering in a new era that he vowed would shatter the established order and reverse a national decline that he called "this American carnage."

**QUEEN MAKES HISTORY (FEBRUARY 6)**  
Queen Elizabeth II becomes first British monarch to reach 65 years of reign. Her Sapphire Jubilee has been marked with ceremonial gun salutes at London's Green Park and the Tower of London.

**KIM JONG-NAM MURDER (FEBRUARY 13)**  
Kim Jong-Nam, half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, was murdered by two women who attacked him with VX nerve agent at Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Malaysia.

**TRUMP'S WIRE TAPPING CLAIM (MARCH 4)**  
Trump claimed in a series of tweets that Obama ordered Trump's phones wiretapped during the 2016 presidential campaign. The White House has refused to provide evidence to back up Trump's claims.

**MACRON BECOMES FRENCH LEADER (MAY 7)**  
Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron has decisively won the French presidential election, defeating far-right candidate Marine Le Pen. His win ended the decades-long dominance of left-wing and right-wing parties.

**RANSOMWARE ATTACK (MAY 12)**  
Hospitals, major companies and government offices have been hit by a massive wave of cyberattacks across the globe that seize control of computers until the victims pay a ransom.

**US QUITS PARIS DEAL (JUNE 1)**  
President Donald Trump has announced that US is withdrawing from the 2015 Paris climate agreement. He said moves to negotiate a new "fair" deal that would not disadvantage US businesses and workers would begin.



**DOKLAM STAND-OFF (JUNE 16)**  
Indian and Chinese troops confronted each other at the Doklam plateau after Chinese troops with construction vehicles began extending an existing road southward, a territory claimed by both China and Bhutan.

**INDIA IMPLEMENTS GST (JULY 1)**  
India underwent a sweeping tax reform when the government passed the Goods and Service Tax (GST) to replace the broader federal taxes. GST replaced a slew of indirect taxes with a unified tax.



**PHILIPPINES STORM KILLS 200 (DECEMBER 23)**  
More than 200 people were killed and scores went missing in the southern Philippines after a tropical storm triggered severe flooding and landslides that also wrecked Christmas for tens of thousands of survivors.

## 65 JURNOS KILLED WORLDWIDE

At least 65 media workers around the world have been killed doing their jobs this year, media freedom organization Reporters Without Borders said. Among the dead were 50 professional journalists, seven citizen journalists and eight other media workers. The five most dangerous countries were Syria, Mexico, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Philippines. Of those killed, 35 died in regions where armed conflict is ongoing while 30 were killed outside of such areas. Thirty-nine of those killed were targeted for their journalistic work such as reporting on political corruption or organized crime while the other 26 were killed while working due to shelling and bomb attacks, for example. "It's alarming that so many journalists were murdered outside of war zones," said Katja Gloger, a board member of Reporters Without Borders.



## XI JINPING'S EXTRAORDINARY RISE

Xi Jinping has been consecrated as China's most powerful leader since Mao Zedong after a new body of political thought carrying his name was added to the Communist party's constitution. The symbolic move came on the final day of a week-long political summit in Beijing – the 19th party congress – at which Xi has pledged to lead the world's second largest economy into a "new era" of international power and influence. At a closing ceremony in the Mao-era Great Hall of the People on October 24, it was announced that Xi's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era had been written into the party charter.



## IS FIGHTERS SPREAD ALL OVER THE WORLD

An estimated 40,000 people traveled from around the world to take up arms for the Islamic State group as it occupied territory in Syria and Iraq and declared a caliphate in 2014. A few hundred are believed to still be fighting as IS struggles to survive, having lost most of its territory to campaigns by Western-backed Syrian and Iraqi coalition armies. Many thousands were certainly killed in the intense fighting, but U.S. experts believe many have survived, posing a formidable threat going ahead. In France, officials say, around 1,700 people went to Iraq and Syria since 2013 to join IS. Of those, 400 to 450 have been killed, and 250 returned to France. Local people in the northern Afghanistan province of Jowzjan have told AFP that French-speaking IS veterans – from France or northern African countries – have recently set up camp there.