

A YEAR OF COUPS

On February 1, Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi is arrested in a coup that ends the country's decade-long experiment with democracy. More than 1,100 people have since been killed and thousands arrested during the violent suppression of mass protests against the military junta. Suu Kyi is sentenced in December to two years in prison for inciting public unrest and violating health rules and faces decades in jail if convicted in other trials. On May 24, Mali strongman Colonel Assimi Goita carries out the West African country's second coup in 10 months. In Tunisia in July, President Kais Saied takes wide-ranging powers. Guinea's president Alpha Conde is overthrown in a military coup on September 5. And in Sudan, in November Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok is reinstated, but the army tightens its grip after the previous month's coup.



In 2021, world has launched a fight back against the Covid-19 pandemic. However, distressing scenes of people struggling to get medicine, vaccines and necessary oxygen around the world, specially in India and poorer countries, exposed the weakness of our healthcare systems. The year has seen power changes in Western world as well as a number of coups, natural disasters and heightened geopolitical tensions among world powers. Here is a look back on the key events of 2021:



COVID NOT GOING AWAY

More than five million people die from the virus despite eight and a half billion vaccine shots being given, with poor countries still struggling to get their hands on doses. Borders slowly reopen and the Olympics take place in Tokyo a year late to empty stadiums. The world sees a resurgence of the pandemic late in the year, as the highly infectious Omicron strain spreads at an unprecedented rate. With initial vaccine immunity wearing off, nations try to counter the virus with booster shots and a return to restrictions.



TALIBAN RETURN TO POWER

The Taliban enter Kabul on August 15, following a lightning offensive after the withdrawal of US and Nato troops, retaking power 20 years after being driven out by a US-led coalition. At least 123,000 diplomats, foreigners and Afghans are flown out in a chaotic evacuation. The last remaining troops pull out on August 30, marking the dramatic end of the United States' longest war.

HAMAS-ISRAEL WAR

On May 3, violence explodes between Israel and the Palestinians after clashes in the east Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah, sparked by a years-long bid by Jewish settlers to take over Arab homes. Violence spreads to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and the occupied West Bank. A week after the first clashes, the Islamist movement Hamas, which rules in the Gaza Strip, fires rockets at Israel, which hits

NOTABLE DEATHS

JANUARY 23

Larry King, the braces-sporting US talk host who interviewed everyone who was anyone, dies at 87.



APRIL 9

Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, the 99-year-old husband of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, dies.



JUNE 29

Former US defense secretary



Donald Rumsfeld, the architect of the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan after the World Trade Center attack of 2001, dies aged 88.

JULY 7

Much-loved Bollywood veteran Dillip Kumar passes away at 98.



NOVEMBER 11:

FW de Klerk, the last president of apartheid South Africa, dies aged 85.



DECEMBER 26

South Africa's anti-apartheid icon Archbishop Desmond Tutu, dies aged 90.

US-CHINA STANDOFF

Faced with mounting incursions by Chinese warplanes into Taiwan's air defence identification zone, Biden warns that Washington strongly opposes moves to "undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait". Chinese leader Xi Jinping cautions Biden in November that encouraging Taiwanese independence would be "playing with fire." In early December, the US, Canada, Australia and Britain announce a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics in February, in response to alleged rights abuses by China, notably against the Uyghur minority in Xinjiang.

US CAPITOL RIOT

Hundreds of supporters of Donald Trump storm the Capitol, the seat of American democracy, on January 6 attempting to block the confirmation of Joe Biden's presidential election victory over the tycoon two months earlier. Biden is sworn in as the 46th US president two weeks later, with Trump refusing to attend the inauguration. On February 13, Trump is acquitted on charges of inciting the Capitol insurrection at a historic second impeachment trial, but only after Senate Republicans close ranks.



EXTREME CLIMATE EVENTS

Prolonged global warming beyond the 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.6 degrees Fahrenheit) agreed under the Paris accord could produce "centuries long and... irreversible consequences" UN experts tell AFP in June. Extreme climate events multiply across the world, from catastrophic floods in Germany and Belgium to devastating and long-running wildfires in the US, Russia, Turkey, Greece, Spain and Algeria. A so-called "heat dome" in June in western Canada and the US West kills hundreds. In November, the COP26 summit in Glasgow pledges to accelerate the fight against rising temperatures. But commitments fall short of what scientists say is needed to contain dangerous rises. In December, dozens of tornadoes tear through six US states, killing at least 88.

Flashback 2021

