

The Year Gone by - Prominent events of 2019

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The Pulwama Attack - 14th February 2019

On 14 February 2019, a convoy of vehicles carrying security personnel on the Jammu Srinagar National Highway was attacked by a vehicle-borne suicide bomber at Lethpora in the Pulwama district, Jammu and Kashmir, India. The attack resulted in the deaths of 40 Central Reserve Police Force personnel and the attacker.

The Subsequent Balakot Airstrike - 26th February 2019 - The airstrike was conducted by India in the early morning hours of February 26 when Indian warplanes crossed the de facto border in the disputed region of Kashmir, and dropped bombs in the vicinity of the town of Balakot in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan. This was done in retaliation to the Pulwama attacks.

Second Term for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP

In May, world media covered Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resounding election victory as he won a second term. The national polls saw a high-pitched, bitter poll campaign as several opposition parties tried to forge an alliance against the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance that ended up winning a massive majority - 353 seats in 543-member Lok Sabha.

Norte Dame Cathedral Tragedy, France

A massive blaze broke out at the Notre Dame Cathedral on 15th

April 2019, an iconic landmark in the French capital of Paris. Flames were seen shooting out of the roof of the 12th century cathedral and smoke billowed in the air. The spire of the cathedral collapsed in flames.

ICC Cricket World Cup 2019

The ICC Cricket World Cup Final at Lords saw one of the most thrilling and dramatic matches in the history of Cricket World. The match contested by England and New Zealand saw the two teams being tied on 241 runs at the end of 50 overs, resulting in a Super Over being played to break the tie. On the final ball of New Zealand's Super Over, after equaling the 15 runs England managed in their over, Martin Guptill attempted to score the winning run but was run out by wicket-keeper Jos Buttler, meaning the Super Over was also tied. England won on the boundary count back rule, having scored 26 boundaries to New Zealand's 17.

The BREXIT Saga Continues

This is not done yet, but this is something that appears to be done. March 29 was the deadline given to the UK for deciding whether it wanted to leave the EU or not. The vote was once delayed by PM Theresa May, who herself had to abandon the boat midway. Finally, on December 20, the UK decided that it would leave the European Union by January 31, 2020.

Amazon Rainforest Wildfires

This is one of the worst global tragedies of 2019, one that closely concerns the future of human existence on this planet. Amazon rainforests that are considered to be the lungs of planet earth burned like oil wells. While there were talks about climate change and the need to save the environment, the news of Amazon fire came as a shock to the concerned people of the world. The worst part was that the Brazilian authorities initially denied the extent of damage that was done to the forests.

Abhijeet Banerjee wins Nobel Prize for Economics 2019

Indian-American Abhijeet Banerjee, his wife Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer jointly won the 2019 Nobel Economics Prize "for their experimental approach to alleviating global poverty." Banerjee, 58, was educated at the University of Calcutta, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Harvard University, where he received his PhD in 1988. He is currently the Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, according to his profile on the MIT website. In 2003, Banerjee founded the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), along with Duflo and Sendhil Mullainathan, and he remains one of the lab's directors.

Abrogation of Article 370

In the most far-reaching move on Jammu and Kashmir in nearly seven decades, the centre on August 5 scrapped the state's special status and divided it into two union territories - Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Restrictions were put in

place across Jammu

and Kashmir and hundreds of political leaders were detained, including former chief ministers Farooq Abdullah, his son Omar Abdullah and PDP's Mehbooba Mufti. Mobile internet services in many parts of Jammu and Kashmir are still blocked.

Kartarpur Corridor opened for devotees from India

Ahead of Guru Nanak's 550th Prakash Parv celebrations the Kartarpur corridor, connecting Sri Darbar Sahib Dera Baba Nanak in India's Punjab with Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur was thrown open on 9 November 2019 facilitating the first Jatha (batch) of more than 550 pilgrims to travel to the last resting place of Guru Nanak. The Holy Kartarpur Corridor has been opened from both the Indian and Pakistani sides and now, faithful, particularly Sikhs, will be able to visit Kartarpur Sahib without any hassle.

New Zealand Mosque Attack

The world learnt great lessons of tolerance and inclusive state policies after the Christchurch Mosque shootout that happened in March 2019. The Gunmen killed 51 people and left 49 injured as he opened fire on the people praying inside the mosques at different location. Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern immediately sprung into action and made sure that Islamophobia does not spread in the country. She attended prayer meets with the families of the victims and spoke strongly against religious bigotry and hatred.

India's Ambitious Moon Mission Suffers Setback

Chandrayaan 2, India's third expedition to a celestial body after Chandrayaan 1 and Mars Orbiter mission, suffered a setback on September 7 when lander Vikram lost communication with the ground station. A successful landing would have made India just the fourth country to achieve a soft landing on the lunar surface. This was nearly a month after the July 22 launch of Rs 970-crore mission. Despite a hard landing, ISRO says it has achieved 95 per cent of the mission's objectives.

The Ayodhya Verdict

On 9 November 2019, the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, announced their final verdict on the long pending Ayodhya Dispute. The Supreme Court vacated all its previous decision and ruled that the land belonged to the government based on tax records. It further ordered the land to be handed over to a trust to build the Hindu temple.

UN Court Stays Kulbhushan Jadhav's Execution

In a big win for India, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled in July that Pakistan must review the death sentence of Kulbhushan

Jadhav. His death sentence “should remain suspended until Pakistan effectively reviews and reconsiders the conviction and sentence,” said the UN court, agreeing with India’s stand that Pakistan had violated the Vienna convention by denying consular access to Jadhav after his conviction in a “farcical” closed trial. 49-year-old Jadhav was arrested by Pakistan in March 2016 and accused of espionage, a charge India has rubbished. A year later, he was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court.

US President Donald Trump’s Impeachment

The impeachment of Donald Trump, the 45th president of the United States, occurred on December 18, 2019, when the House of Representatives approved articles of impeachment on charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. The president’s impeachment came after a formal House inquiry found that he had solicited foreign interference in the 2020 U.S. presidential election to help his re-election bid, and then obstructed the inquiry itself by telling his administration officials to ignore subpoenas for documents and testimony. The inquiry reported that Trump withheld military aid[a] and an invitation to the White House to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in order to influence Ukraine to announce an investigation of Trump’s political rival, Joe Biden, and to promote a discredited conspiracy theory that Ukraine, not Russia, was behind interference in the 2016 presidential election.

Anti-CAA and Anti-NRC Protests across India

This is ongoing and far from over, with daily twists and turns emerging. If you were to search for news from any part of India, the top trending one would be concerning anti-CAA protests. The controversial Citizenship Amendment Act, that seeks to single out Muslims when it comes to giving Indian nationality to persecuted minorities, has irked the human rights activists in India and worldwide. Even the United Nations has expressed its concern over the Act and has urged India to address the issue. Protesters, mainly University students are firmly standing against the controversial Act. According to commentators, this is a defining moment in the history of independent India.

Cyclone Fani ravages the East Coast of India

Cyclone Fani made landfall near Puri in Odisha at around 8 am on May 3 2019, with a sustained wind speed of 175-185 kmph, briefly peaking at 205 kmph, and rains lashing the temple town and adjacent cities. India’s east coast, on which Odisha lies, is no stranger to cyclones, but this is India’s strongest cyclone since the super cyclone of 1999, which claimed 9,843 lives in Odisha.

Year of Floods for India

The country saw devastating floods in most parts of its length and breadth. Beginning with the monsoon months heavy rains lashed almost the entire coastline. This resulted in

floods in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Karnataka and Maharashtra also received their share of floods. So was the case with the eastern part of the country where Bihar was the worst affected. The climate change-linked flooding events acted as a wakeup call for the authorities that, at times, are caught napping.