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GLOBAL UP-TO-DATE

A  Publication

The world around us is changing rapidly. Wars, new turn in global politics, human rights issues are occurring every day, posing new challenges and concerns. Global Up-to-Date is an initiative by Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) which will work as a hub for explaining the contemporary global issues.

The regular briefs will focus and explain the issues related to International Politics, Economy, Security, Human Rights, and Development. There will be a monthly printed version newsletter containing briefs of all the contemporary global important issues. The online version contains regular updates of the pressing issues along with the PDF version of the newsletter.

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From Democracy to Despotism: The Drama of Indonesia's 5th General Election

Marzana Mahnaz



The political drama of the 5th General Election of Indonesia mirrors strongly with the quote "The people have always some champion whom they set over them and nurse into greatness. ...This and no other is the root from which a tyrant springs; when he first appears he is a protector." from "The Plato's Republic." The presidential race of Indonesia came to an end with Probowo Subianto, the son-in-law of the former dictator Suharto, being elected as the next president of the country. Although the country has a reputation for being the 11th most electoral democratic country in Asia, it assumed the democratic process very recently after the fall of Suharto's military regime, the longest-serving president of Indonesia. After Suharto's fall in 1998, Indonesia kept seeing dynastical politics until the previous president Joko Widodo claimed the presidency in 2014 from The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI) with a clean slate in terms of having any political background and won the heart of the citizen with bolstering infrastructure development in the country. This helped him to secure his second-term victory in Indonesia's general elections of 2019. Jokowi's popularity grew over the years and his approval rate went up 82%, the highest of all time. However, Jokowi couldn't continue his tenure and ran for another term due to constitutional cause.

The race for the presidential power mainly took place among three players, Minister of Defense; Prabowo Subianto from Gerindra Party, Governor of DKI Jakarta; Anies Baswedan as independent candidate and Governor of Central Java; Ganjar Pranowo from PDI in the 2024's election. In the previous elections in 2014 and 2019, the current president Probowo Subianto ran against Jokowi and lost the battle twice. After the 2019 election, Subianto was alleged for instigating riots against Jokowi in the hope of a popular uprising that would overthrow Jokowi. After this incident, Jokowi made a shrewd judgment and appointed Subianto as his defense minister, to keep him at bay. Apart from instigating riots against the president, Subianto has numerous allegations against him for violating human rights which goes back to the time of dictator Suharto's ragtime. When protests threatened to bring down Suharto in 1998, Prabowo ordered a special forces team to kidnap various pro-democracy activists.

Subianto being the rival of Jokowi and his stained past didn't matter in terms of getting the approval of the popular and demanding outgoing president. Jokowi endorsed his Minister of Defense Subianto by letting his eldest son Gibran Rakabuming Raka, 36 years old, as Subianto's Vice President. However, the age restriction for running for vice president was 40 until Jokowi put his son on the power table as his successor. A ruling from Indonesia's Constitutional Court came in October, 3 months before the election that younger candidates could run if they had previously been elected to public office. When the decision was taken, the head of the court at the time was Anwar Usman, Jokowi's brother-in-law which made it crystal clear who was the puppeteer of the election.

In the book of Plato's Republic, Plato said that democracy always turns into despotism. At first, people get tired of the oligarchs and start a revolution by choosing a leader amongst themselves, who can represent them. But with time, the Democrats became power-hungry and created a puppet government that served their interest, forgetting about the people who handed them power in the first place. The famous philosopher's words might be old but their relevance of it is timeless. Joko Widodo came from the people, worked for the people, and became the leader of millions from just being an obscurity. He was compared as a new breeze for Indonesian democracy. However, the hunger to leave a legacy behind got the best of him. Subianto, a former military general linked to past human rights violations during the brutal period of the Suharto dictatorship, was once banned from entering the United States for two decades because of his record won the election with the support of the people's beloved leader Jokowi and his successor Gibran Rakabuming Raka proving Plato's words. All the work that Jokowi has done for the people in Indonesia is now in the hands of an authoritarian leader. Indonesia has seen dictatorship twice in the past and with the newly elected president, they might go through the process all again, thanks to the beloved leader Jokowi.

Pakistan's Election: Shahbaz Sharif Set To Become New Prime Minister

Aong Cha Ching Marma

After a disputed election that occurred on 5 February 2024, Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) finally reached a consensus to form the government together. Nawaz Sharif's brother Shahbaz Sharif is set to become the prime minister of Pakistan for the second time followed by his first term starting from April 2022 to August 2023. In the overdue and controversial poll result, Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party-backed independent candidates won a major portion of seats, 93 out of 266 directly elected seats. On the other hand, PML-N and PPP were only able to secure 75 and 54 seats respectively. Therefore, it was the need of time for these three major political parties to form a coalition government with other parties, including minor parties, or to remain in stalemate and have the army take control of the government for another election to take place.

Pakistani politics has always been heavily influenced by the army. Since the country's inception, Pakistan which translates as "Land of Pure" in Urdu, has always struggled to handle its diverse population which currently comprises over more than twenty recognized languages and three hundred unique dialects. While Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtu, Baluchi, and Seraiki are regarded as primary languages, Urdu and English are the official languages. Lahore Resolution which laid the foundation for the eventual creation of Pakistan, was proposed by Jinnah's political party All India Muslim League in 1940 and prioritized the need for a Muslim-majority state within the Indian subcontinent. Though Muslim-majority states opposed the Two-Nation Idea, questions continue over whether the All-India Muslim League truly represents all Muslims in India.

Followed by much confusion and uncertainty, the Partition finally took place in 1947, giving birth to two new countries, India and Pakistan, merely based on the religious front. However, a great portion of Muslims in then-India remained in India. The violence and communal strife that occurred during the partition are estimated to have taken the lives of between 200,000 and 2,000,000 people. In that partition, four Muslim-majority provinces Punjab, North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Sindh, and Baluchistan were finalized to be included beforehand. Bengal province was also added at the final moment of partition.

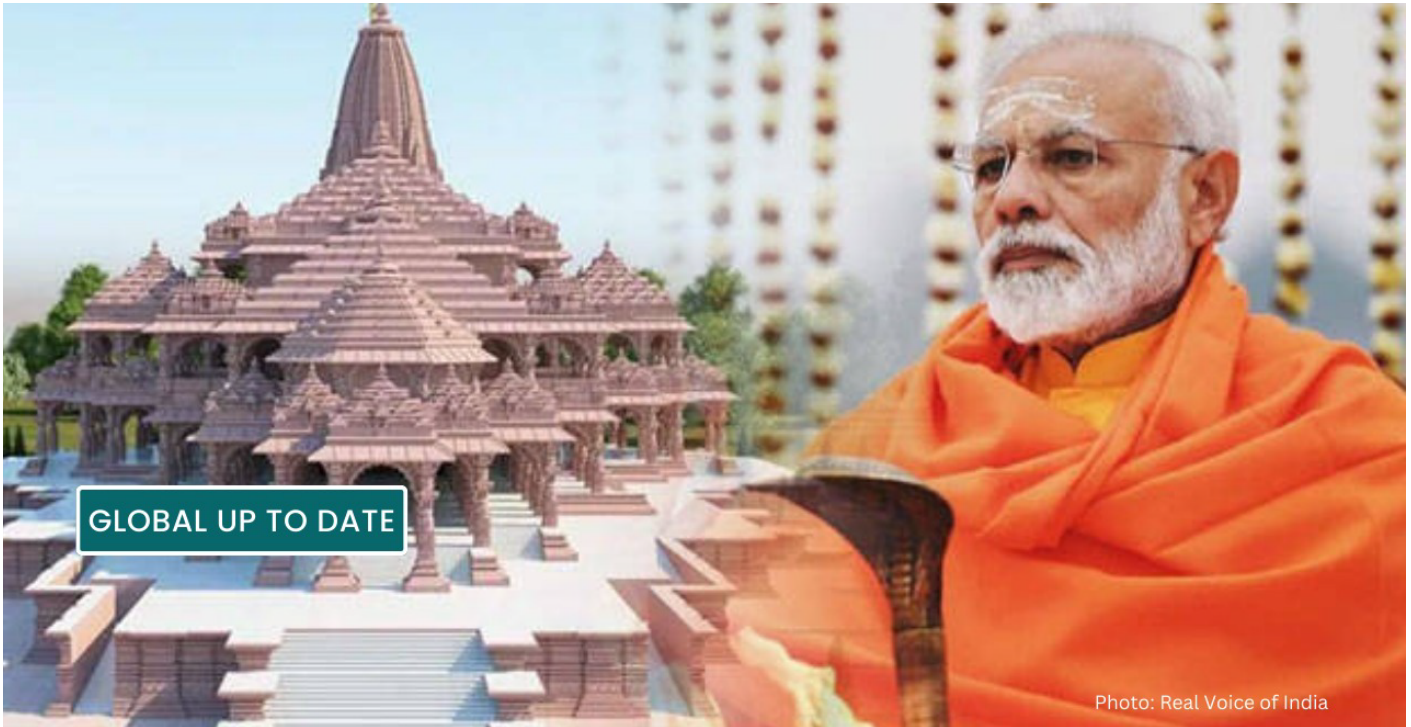


Bengal Province or East Pakistan was geographically distant from the mainland of Pakistan holding 55 percent of the total population of Pakistan. A few months after the partition, war broke out between India and Pakistan over the land issue, primarily over the Kashmir issue. Pakistan initially followed the governance style inherited from British rule. British style governance was officially ended in 1956 claiming to fully become a republic state, officially named the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. In 1952, the Language Movement in East Pakistan stated a firm refusal to accept Urdu as the national language, as East Pakistan's majority of people spoke Bangla. The language movement is just the starting of the upcoming problems that will occur due to the various diversity among Pakistani people. The first military coup that took place in 1958 overthrew Iskander Mirza, then president of Pakistan, turning General Ayub Khan into the new president. In 1971 Under the rule of General Yahya Khan who succeeded Ayub Khan in 1969, the Indo-Pakistani war took place which seceded East Pakistan from Pakistan, and formed a new country called Bangladesh. General Zia Ul Haque staged the second military coup in 1977, initially following the second national election in which the Pakistan People's Party led by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was elected to power. After gaining power, Zia made eight amendments to the 1973 constitution which helped him secure absolute power over the parliamentary body and banned all political parties thereafter. In addition, he put efforts into converting Pakistan into an Islamic Shariat Law following country. Following the 1988 election, Muhammad Khan Junejo became the prime minister with the support of President Zia. A few months later, on May 29, 1988, President Zia removed the prime minister and dissolved the National Assembly, accusing Junejo of a number of offenses. In that year Zia died in a plane crash which paved the way for another election in November. Pakistan People's Party won the November election under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto, daughter of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. However, President Ishaq Khan dismissed Benazir in 1990. 1997 election followed by the election in 1993, Pakistan Muslim League-N or PML-N party won the majority of seats under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif. He amended the constitution to remove the authority of the president over the dismissal of the prime minister. The turn of events occurred when General Musharraf initiated a third Military Coup in 1999 creating a new position named Chief Executive for himself to secure absolute power. After the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in 2007, in the next year's election, the PPP won the majority turning Gilani into the new prime minister. Musharraf resigns from his position in that year due to several allegations and pressures. In the 2013 election, Nawaz Sharif became prime minister for the second time only to resign in 2017 due to allegations against him related Panama Paper Scandal. In the 2018 election, Imran Khan's PTI won the election, again only to force him to resign from his prime minister position in 2022 due to the no-confidence vote against him. Later on, Shahbaz Sharif held the prime minister position after the dismissal of Imran.

Pakistan's continuum of re-election and dismissal of the leaders prompts global speculation about the 2024 election too. Imran Khan's Party PTI intended to remain a strong opposition party in the parliament. On the other hand, PML-N and PPP are walking their way together to form a new government. The lack of a strong political leader or party that can make firm decisions for the country and maintain stability always puts the country in a state of political crisis. The political crisis makes the Pakistan administration dependent on the army to hold stability which eventually harms the democracy of the country.

Ayodhya's Ram Mandir Inauguration and Its Impact on Indian Politics

Sadia Tasneem



On January 22, 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially unveiled a substantial Hindu temple in Ayodhya, India. The temple, also called Ram Mandir, is being built on the site of Babri Mosque that dates back to the 16th century. For almost 150 years, there has been a burning conflict between the Muslims and Hindus of India over Ayodhya. Muslims claim it to be a historically significant site of devotion, however Hindus proclaim that the mosque was constructed by the Mughal emperor Babur on the location of an earlier temple dedicated to Ram's birthplace.

In 1853, a Hindu sect claimed that, the Babri Masjid was constructed in 1528 on the site of a temple. The court battle over the mosque starts in 1885. Mahant Raghubir Das filed the first lawsuit in an attempt to develop a temple on the property next to the mosque. The district magistrate of Faizabad, however, declined to provide consent. In 1949 right after the independence, Lord Ram was said to be appeared in dreams under the Masjid's main dome, according to a Hindu priest named Abhiram Das. The Hindu devotees began praying after idols emerged inside the mosque on the evening of 22 December 1949, thinking it to be a sign from God. On 23 December 1949, however, then-UP CM Govind Ballabh Pant was notified by then-DM of Faizabad, KK Nayar, about a group of Hindus entering the location and placing the idol. The property was attached by the city magistrate after a formal complaint was filed. From 1950-1961, four civil lawsuits have been filed within the court, ranging from a Muslim organization requesting ownership and proclamation of the site to the ability to conduct Hindu rites there.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and other far-right Hindu organizations organize a committee to lead the building of a Hindu temple in 1984. In 1990, Lal Krishna Advani, a prominent member of the BJP, was spearheading a national initiative to replace the mosque with a temple. Advani's arrest in the eastern state of Bihar was the outcome of a countrywide campaign that left a path of bloodshed in its wake. On 6 December 1992, far-right Hindu rioters destroyed the mosque, sparking widespread Hindu-Muslim riots that claimed the lives of over 2,000 people, the most of them were Muslims.

The contentious ownership issue between Muslims and Hindus came to a conclusion in 2019. On 9 November 2019, in a historic decision that was made public under increased security around the nation, the Indian Supreme Court granted Hindu's ownership of the antagonistic holy site of Ayodhya so they may build a temple there. And Muslims will receive five acres of land at a different location in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, near Ayodhya. The verdict comes just six months after India's prime leader, Narendra Modi, and his Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) administration won a landslide election. The BJP government has made the reconstruction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya a central goal of its Hindu nationalist platform.

India has witnessed widening social and religious divides ever since the Hindu nationalist BJP, led by Narendra Modi, first came to power in 2014. Since the BJP came to power, MPs, ministers, and other party leaders have been the leading voices in favor of building a Hindu temple at Ayodhya. Textbooks used in schools no longer include any history of Muslims. Many individuals have been killed by vigilantes as a result of restrictions on the sale and slaughter of cows, which are revered by most Hindus as holy animal. The bulk of the victims were Muslims who were transporting livestock. Tension between the religions has also been exacerbated by the unrestrained exhibition of strong Hindu nationalism in other places. The Modi administration's action in August 2019, that resulted in Kashmir losing its long-standing semi-autonomy was also perceived as a direct attack on the Muslim community. The nation's home minister, Amit Shah, most recently declared that he will expunge "illegal migrants", who are presumed to be Muslims from the nation via a government program that has just been implemented in the northeastern state of Assam.

Months ahead of the general elections, the opening of the temple is perceived as a sign of religious triumphalism. This is expected to further polarize politics and help the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for upcoming election. According to general people, Ayodhya is just the beginning. Disagreements and legal battles over mosques are also raging in Mathura and Varanasi, which are both known to locals by the former name, Kashi.

Rising Temperatures, Falling Ice: Antarctica's Warning Signs

Kazi Rhid

As if the sky was crying, torrents of rain poured down on the California coast from atmospheric rivers, long bands of clouds that carry water vapor from the tropics to higher latitudes. These events wreaked havoc on the land, causing floods, landslides, and infrastructure damage, and they are likely to become more common and severe as the climate changes. Other forms of extreme weather, such as wildfires, floods, and hurricanes, are also becoming more frequent and intense. The governor of California declared a state of emergency in February in response to the series of powerful storms brought by the atmospheric rivers.

Meanwhile, Chile faced a fiery inferno, as the worst wildfires in its history ravaged the country, claiming at least 34 lives and destroying more than 1.5 million hectares of land. The fires were driven by a perfect storm of factors, such as drought, high temperatures, strong winds, and human activity, all of which are connected to climate change. While a historic winter heat wave broke hundreds of U.S. records, bringing temperatures up to 40°F above average for this time of year and sparking massive wildfires in Texas, where they recorded more than 300 heat-related deaths.

The Doomsday Clock, a symbolic representation of how close humanity is to a global disaster, ticked 20 seconds closer to midnight, the closest it has ever been since it was created in 1947. The clock is maintained by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, who cited the dangers of nuclear war and climate change as the main reasons for the latest update. Antarctic sea ice reached its second-lowest summer minimum on record on February 20, 2024, shrinking to 768,000 square miles (1.99 million square kilometers). The National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) reported that Antarctic Sea ice extent (the area of ocean with at least 15 percent sea ice concentration) had its third consecutive annual minimum below 2 million square kilometers (772,000 square miles). The 2024 minimum was statistically tied with the 2022 minimum for second lowest in the satellite record, behind the record holder of 2023.



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Photo: Natacha Pisarenko/AP/File

African apes are already feeling the effects of climate change, and will face more extreme events such as wildfires, heat waves and flooding in the next 30 years, according to a study published February 28 in the open-access journal PLOS Climate by Razak Kiribou and colleagues from Haramaya University in Ethiopia. To better understand how African great apes will be impacted by climate change, the researchers examined past and future climate for 363 sites across Africa. They measured temperature and rainfall at each site between 1981 and 2010. Using two climate change scenarios, they projected how often apes would encounter climate change impacts in the near future (2021–2050) and the long term (2071–2099). They estimated the probability of extreme events that could affect apes directly or indirectly, such as droughts, flooding, wildfires, and crop failure. Between 2007 and 2016, almost half of the sites had experienced higher than average temperatures, and eastern chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii*) endured the most extreme temperatures. No matter what the climate scenario, temperatures were set to soar across the globe, and most places would face frequent wildfires and crop failures in the near future.

A climate model that warned of a disastrous collapse of ocean systems due to climate change was challenged by British scientists. They argued that the model relied on unrealistic scenarios and ignored the complexity and diversity of the ocean. At the same time, Prince Harry was seen boarding a private jet to Canada despite his talk about climate change. The duplicity of celebrities and the media has been a constant trend that has been condemned on social media platforms. A new study exposed that climate change deniers are changing their tactics to spread misinformation online. Instead of rejecting the reality or causes of climate change, they are now questioning the solutions, activists, and scientists, and using more covert and clever methods to influence public opinion. Another survey revealed that more Americans than ever before acknowledge that climate change is happening. However, there is still a gap between belief and action, as many Americans are reluctant to change their lifestyles or support policies to address climate change.