

# 01 THE HUDDLE 01

## WASAC POLITICAL NEWSLETTER

Dear WASAC,

Welcome to the first edition of our political newsletter, *The Huddle*! *The Huddle* is intended to be a space for us to reflect on current events throughout South Asia as a community. Every issue will feature two focus issues and an overview of headlines from South Asian countries. The countries highlighted will rotate with each issue. We will also feature insight from South Asian faculty across the college and lastly, a section highlighting upcoming events for South Asian organizations on campus. This issue, we'll be looking at the violence that has been unfolding in Manipur and the earthquake in Afghanistan. We're also so lucky to be featuring Professor Faisal Ahmed of the Political Science department for our Professor's Corner. We hope you enjoy our inaugural edition of *The Huddle*!

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## RECENT HEADLINES

### Highlighting Climate Dangers With High Altitude Race



As South Asia's only carbon-negative nation, Bhutan is holding a cross-country high-altitude race of 29 racers from across the world in an effort to highlight the risks that a climate disaster could have on the economy and livelihoods of its people.

### Orders of Mass Deportation on Migrant Afghans



Pakistan's government has ordered all foreign citizens living without documents to leave the country by Nov. 1, an order that has seemingly targets the 1.7 million Afghan migrants in the country and signals tension between the Pakistan government and Taliban authority.

### Violent Clashes in Dhaka Anti-Government Protest



2 people were killed along with dozens injured, policemen included, in protests calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Hasina, accused of vote rigging and dissent suppression. Her government rejected calls to step down and allow elections under a neutral government.

### Hindu-Muslim Clashes in Nepalgunj, Nepal



Uncommon communal violence between Hindu and Muslim residents of Nepalgunj, a town in Nepal, led to a town-wide lockdown. This came following protests and rallies sparked by discriminatory social media posts by some residents.

### Financial Assistance for Sri Lanka's Economy



After Sri Lanka's foreign exchange hit record lows last year, leading to the nation having to default on its foreign debts, the IMF and other multilateral agencies have approved loans to help alleviate the financial strain.

### Maldives Presidential Candidate Muiz Wins



Newly-elected President Mohamed Muiz promises to remove Indian troops from Maldives and balance trade relations; his anti-India stance will have implications for which regional powers (India and China) influence Maldives.



# FOCUS ISSUES



The Indian state of Manipur has been embroiled in a bitter conflict since May. This was sparked by tensions between the dominant ethnic group, the Meiteis, and the Kukis, a tribal group. On May 3rd, Kuki activists launched a protest against a Supreme Court ruling that would extend protected benefits (namely, economic subsidies and quotas reserved for tribal groups) to the Meiteis, who have historically experienced more economic prosperity and employment opportunities. The violence that broke out in response to the protests has escalated since May, leading to over 180 deaths as of September. Rising Hindu nationalist influences and tensions in the state along with Prime Minister Modi's lack of action led to opposition parties issuing a no-confidence motion against him, which did not pass. The situation remains precarious, with implications for the upcoming election year in India.

## **VIOLENCE IN MANIPUR**

## **6.1 MAGNITUDE EARTHQUAKE IN AFGHANISTAN**

On October 8th 2023, an intense earthquake of magnitude 6.1 hit northwestern Afghanistan, in the city of Herat, killing more 2,400 people. This is just one of the many deadly earthquakes that hit the country in recent years due to Afghanistan's location on two major active fault lines of the Indian plate. The city of Herat has historically not experienced many earthquakes, as the majority tend to occur in the north of Kabul. The extensive damage is due partly to the structural vulnerability of housing and crippling cuts to Afghanistan's healthcare system. In the span of a week, multiple powerful earthquakes struck the damaged region again, rendering schools, health clinics and other community spaces destroyed. The humanitarian crisis will be further discussed below by Professor Faisal Ahmed.

# PROFESSOR'S CORNER

By: Professor Faisal Ahmed



For any government – whether in a developed or developing country setting – providing relief to its citizens following a natural disaster is extremely challenging. (This was abundantly clear from my experiences as an economist at the Council Economic Advisers during the time of Hurricane Katrina.) Tragically for Afghans in Herat, the Taliban's response thus far has been stifled by its lack of human expertise in disaster management and capacity to deliver assistance. This largely stems from the government's pre-crisis political decisions, such as the expulsion of disaster and logistic experts (who worked with American and NATO forces), the absence of female aid workers (who can more effectively provide help to Afghan women and children), and the Taliban's contentious relationship with foreign NGOs and multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations. Furthermore, existing research

from political economists suggests that nondemocratic governments (such as the Taliban) are likely to administer relief selectively, in favor of individuals who support the government and at the expense of those most in need; a pattern observed in neighboring Pakistan after a series of floods in 2010. In short, while limited economic resources places tremendous strain on Afghanistan's ability to provide disaster relief, political factors at the both the domestic and international levels, tragically, further adds to the plight of many Afghans.

## CONCLUSION

Thank you all for reading the first edition of *The Huddle*. First, we'd like to extend our gratitude to Professor Ahmed, whose insights have been invaluable to this edition—thank you for taking the time to contribute in such a meaningful way! Thank you as well to the WASAC E-board, who have been incredibly supportive. Below we've included some upcoming events hosted by the various South Asian orgs on campus. Our next edition of this newsletter will be published in December, so if you have any stories you'd like us to feature or anything you would like to contribute, please reach out to us at [ak118@wellesley.edu](mailto:ak118@wellesley.edu) and [ab131@wellesley.edu](mailto:ab131@wellesley.edu). Thanks for reading!



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## **SAHELI FUNDRAISER**

Help South Asian survivors of domestic abuse gain personal security due to linguistic, cultural, transportation and resource barriers.

Come join WASAC and the Boston Study Group to discuss the intersectionality of caste and gender next week!

## **CASTE AND GENDER PANEL**

## **BSA'S BANGLA TABLE**



Join BSA to converse in Bangla in an informal, fun setting over dinner! Beginners are welcome, so come connect with other Bangla-speaking students

Watch Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt in the newest Karan Johar film hosted by PSA, BSA, and ISA.  
Screening in Collins on November 10th!

## **ROCKY AUR RANI MOVIE SCREENING**



## **QTSAC MAILING LIST**



Interested in join a safe space for Queer, Trans South Asian sibs on campus? Sign up for QTSACs [mailing list](#) to be informed of future events!

[Deadly Situation for Afghan Women After Quake](#)  
[Gender Transformative Climate Literacy in Bhutan](#)  
[What to Expect from Maldives New President](#)

## **FURTHER READINGS**

