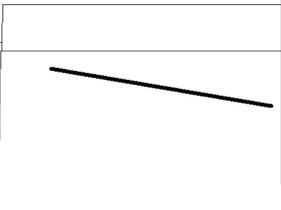


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INDONESIA: Suharto's Third Term

[] //Indonesian President Suharto's reelection to a third five-year term today by the National Assembly comes at a time of heightened tension most recently illustrated by an explosion in the National Congress building on Monday. There does not appear to be any immediate threat to Suharto or to the military leaders who have ruled the country since the Communist coup attempt in 1965. Suharto has demonstrated an ability to weather previous periods of serious tension but, if social and economic problems lead to more open and prolonged opposition and disorder, his position could be in jeopardy.//

[] Since last fall, students at the country's major universities have staged disruptive strikes and demonstrations to protest the Army's role in government and Suharto's alleged toleration of corruption, especially by members of his own family.

[] The President's decision in January to arrest demonstrating students and prevent newspapers from reporting their activities reflects his concern that students could threaten public order and marshal public opinion against his regime. The crackdown, however, may have only worked to Suharto's disadvantage. High school students have joined the ranks of student demonstrators and the government has felt obliged to close several educational institutions. Opposition to Suharto may continue to grow in academic circles.

[] //The severity with which the President reacted to student protest may have been one reason Vice President Sultan Hamengku Buwono decided not to stand with Suharto for reelection. The Vice President has very limited political power but he is a respected civilian whose status gave a democratic appearance to the authoritarian government.//

[] //His departure from the ticket not only embarrassed Suharto but caused disagreement among high-level military officers over the President's choice to replace the Sultan--former Foreign Minister and now Parliament Chairman Adam Malik. Although

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Malik is a well-known civilian who will lend balance to the ticket, his history of disagreeing with government policy--sometimes in public--doubtless concerns some generals.//

[] The President's insistence on obtaining recognition of mysticism as an official religion has alienated many orthodox Muslims. Although Suharto--himself a firm adherent to Javanese mystical beliefs--may have shored up support among Indonesians also steeped in this religion, the Muslim-dominated opposition party's parliamentary protest has caused him embarrassment. The opposition's break with the traditional display of assembly unity by voting against government policies and staging a walk-out may also give rise to future anti-Suharto parliamentary tactics.

[] //This year, the government has had to import 2.5 million tons of rice--one-quarter of total world rice imports--in large part because of drought and disease. The country's foreign exchange earnings from oil are now adequate to cover import needs, but a continued lagging trend in food production could weaken Suharto's position.//

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