



Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

2021 Issue 19: 16 September 2021

*The **Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest** is a biweekly collection of brief summaries of English-language articles related to conservation, environment and sustainability that have appeared in print or online in Indonesian, regional or global media. We welcome all comments, suggestions, and corrections.*

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A. The Covid-19 Crisis in Indonesia

Indonesia eases COVID-19 restrictions in Bali, borders to be tightened

— Agustinus Beo Da Costa and Fathin Ungku, *Reuters*, 13 September 2021

Indonesia has begun to ease curbs on mobility, though public activity restrictions (PPKM) remain in place in all provinces, including on the island of Bali, a senior minister said. Luhut Binsar Panjaitan, Coordinating Minister of Maritime Affairs and Investment, said tourism spots on most parts of the island will now accept international visitors provided they comply with stricter protocols on arrival, including confirming their vaccination status on a government-verified phone app. International visitors will still need to undergo 8-days of quarantine in an approved hotel facility before travelling to Bali. Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikan, participating in the same virtual conference, said Indonesia would strengthen entry points for foreign visitors by tightening the quarantine processes. Plans to reopen Bali earlier this year were scrapped when the country was overwhelmed by the highly-infectious Delta variant. After peaking at more than 56,000 cases on 15 July, the number of new Covid-19 infections reported daily has dropped significantly, recording fewer than 3,000 cases nationwide on 13 September.

B. Marine & Fisheries

[A Tale of Three Indonesian Ministers and a Flip-Flopping Fisheries Policy](#)

—Nithin Coca, *Benar News*, 6 September 2021

Three people have served as Minister of Fisheries and Marine Affairs under President Joko Widodo: Susi Pudjiastuti, a tough-talking former seafood exporter whose boat-burning policies made her wildly popular, Edhy Prabowo, a pro-business politician, and now Sakti Wahyu Trenggono. Edhy's time in office ended abruptly after he was arrested for taking IDR 27 billion (US\$ 1.9 million) in bribes and sentenced to five years in prison. In addition to fighting illegal fishing by foreign boats, Minister Susi also pushed for reducing unsustainable fishing practices. Edhy, who had no experience in the fisheries sector, undid a number of Susi's policies, putting a stop to the sinking of illegal foreign boats and restarting the licensing of foreign fishing vessels. "Most Indonesian fisheries are exploited or over-exploited, but [Edhy] re-opened licensing for foreign fishing boats, the same ones Susi cracked down on in 2015," said Arifsyah Nasution, an oceans campaigner at Greenpeace Indonesia. Edhy's successor has taken a more moderate approach, reinstating some of Susi's policies.

[Worked to death: How a Chinese tuna juggernaut crushed its Indonesian workers](#)

—*Mongabay* and The Environmental Reporting Collective, 13 September 2021

One of China's biggest tuna fishing firms, Dalian Ocean Fishing, made headlines last year when four young Indonesian deckhands fell sick and died from unknown illnesses after allegedly being subject to horrible conditions on one of its boats. A new investigation shows that the abuses—including being fed substandard food, given possibly dangerous drinking water, and being made to work excessively — were not limited to one boat, but in fact widespread and systematic across the company's fleet. Moreover, migrant fishers on many boats were subject to beatings and threats to withhold pay if they did not follow orders, the study by Mongabay, Tansa and the Environmental Reporting Collective showed. Many have not received their full salaries or been paid at all. China has the world's largest distant-water fishing fleet, and Indonesia is widely believed to be the industry's biggest supplier of labor. In 2019 and 2020, at least 30 fishers from Indonesia died on Chinese long-haul fishing boats, often from unknown illnesses.

[Twinning aquaculture with marine conservation](#)

—Rob Fletcher, *TheFishSite*, 18 August 2021

Evidence that aquaculture can have positive impacts within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) has been put forward by three case studies by International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), including a detailed study of shrimp farming in brackish ponds in mangrove areas and MPAs in the Derawan Islands of Indonesia “Pond aquaculture is a key activity for local communities in terms of sustainable development and food security,” wrote Francois Simard of the IUCN’s Ecosystem-based Aquaculture Group. “Small-scale, extensive, multi-species pond aquaculture is a relevant and robust [activity] for meeting the development needs of local communities while not hampering mangrove, seagrass bed, and coral reefs conservation efforts. MPA’s are providing natural resources conservation and support sustainable development.” The Coastal and Small Islands Conservation Area of the Derawan Islands and Surrounding Waters (KKP3K KDPS), established in 2016 by then Minister of Fisheries and Marine Affairs Susi Pudjiastuti, covers a marine area of about 285,549 ha located in Berau Regency, East Kalimantan.

Case Study: [“Brackish Water Pond Polyculture in Mangrove Areas in the Marine Protected Area of Derawan Islands and Surrounding Waters”](#), IUCN Aquaculture and Marine Conservation, August 15, 2021.

[Indonesian fishers should be masters in their own country](#)

—Rangga J, Kenzu T, [Antaranews.com](#), 14 September 2021

Indonesian fishers should be masters in their own country and enjoy an improved standard of living and economic prosperity, Presidential Chief of Staff (KSP) Moeldoko said at the signing of a marine and fisheries sector cooperation agreement and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Ministerial Regulation (Permen KP) 58/2020 restricts small fishing boats under 30 GT capacity from fishing in territorial waters from 4 to 12 nautical miles from shore (Lane 2) or entering fishery waters more than 12 nautical miles from shore (Lane 3), but the regulation reportedly created difficulties for fishers forced to cross marine borders to take shelter in nearby islands due to bad weather or because of logistical needs, according to a report by the North Sulawesi province Marine and Fisheries Office. “This policy is expected to increased distribution of local [marine] products from the eastern region so that it is not only focused on Java, said Sakti Wahyu Trenggono, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Affairs (DKP), who was also present at the MoU signing.

[Turtles have to contend with thousands of nets left in the sea. Now there's a new way to help them](#)

—Jane Bardon, *AustraliaBroadcastingCorporation News*, 14 September 2021

Ghost nets are abandoned fishing gear, cut off or lost during bad weather and entanglement. A recent CSIRO study showing that the number of nets arriving in the Gulf of Carpentaria and Torres Strait from Indonesia and other countries has quadrupled over the past 15 years despite the removal of 10,000-15,000 ghost nets from the water. The nets entangle turtles, dugongs, dolphins, and also collect sharks and other pelagic fishes such as grey and Spanish mackerel, and can be from 10 meters in length up to over 100 km. When nets are spotted, it can be difficult and costly to remove them, because the nets are often too heavy for the government's patrol boats to pick up, so it contracts indigenous ranger groups and commercial fishers. "We have partnerships with Indonesia and other countries where the problem is discussed, but we can't wait to tackle this at the source. We need to find ways to remove the ghost nets and discarded fishing gear from the water," Federal Environment's Susan Ley said.

[Researchers train Indonesian scientists in fish reproductive analyses](#)

—*University of Hawaii News*, 14 September 2021

Sustainable fisheries management requires accurate stock assessments, which in turn depend on reliable fish life histories. To strengthen capacity in fish life history studies, scientists from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology (SOEST) and Windward Community College led a three-week specialist training in histology-based reproductive analysis of tropical fishes at Pattimura University in Ambon, Maluku over July and August. "The Indonesian participants were collectively the best group we've ever trained, after teaching these approaches at several locations around the western Pacific, said Erik Franklin, one of the instructors and an associate professor at SOEST. Heather D'Agnes, senior program officer of the Walton Family Foundation (WFF) said the training directly supported the foundation's mission to enhance the capacity of Indonesian scientists to sustainably manage Indonesia's diverse and important fisheries. WFF also equipped Pattimura University with a fully operational histology lab to conduct the training and serve as a foundation for future research.

C. Forests & Land Use

Three pieces about collapse of the US\$1 billion deforestation pact between Indonesia and Norway

[Indonesia ends deforestation pact with Norway citing non-payment](#)

—Bernadette Christina Munthe and Fransiska Nangoy, *Reuters*, 11 September 2021

Indonesia has ended a deal with Norway on cooperation to reduce carbon emissions from deforestation, due to lack of payment, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Last year, Norway announced a US\$56 million contribution to Indonesia, based on its 2016-2017 results on curbing deforestation under a United Nations-backed forest-conservation scheme known as REDD+. In the statement, Indonesia's Foreign Ministry said it decided to terminate the agreement due to "the lack of concrete progress on the implementation of the obligation of the government of Norway," after Indonesia had met its commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions by the equivalent of 11.2 million tonnes of carbon-dioxide emissions in the 2016-2017 period. Under the Paris Agreement, Indonesia committed to reduce carbon emissions 41% by 2030 with international assistance.

[Indonesia, Norway in blame game over collapsed deforestation pact](#)

—A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil, *The Jakarta Post*, 12 September 2021

Indonesia is blaming Norway for the collapse of a 10-year agreement to reduce carbon emissions from deforestation, citing Norway's failure to pay US\$56 million in grant money. That would have been the first installment of a US\$ 1 billion payment promised by Norway if Indonesia were able to limit its emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. The US\$56 million was based on Norway's assessment that Indonesia had prevented the release of 11.2 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) from 2016 to 2017, more than the 4.8 million tons initially claimed by Indonesia. "But there seems to be no goodwill from the Norwegian government as we have not received a single cent from this agreement," said Deputy Environment and Forestry Minister Alue Dohong. Alue said Norway had set additional requirements which had not been established in the agreement and after the prevented emissions were verified, included requests for documentation on how the money would be spent and other details. "We were wasting our time. Indonesia did its part of the deal in 2016 and 2017 [by reducing emissions]," Alue stated. "The failing party here is the one that could not keep its promise of payment."

[Broken Promises](#)

—The Editorial Board, *The Jakarta Post*, 14 September 2021

The collapse of Norway's US\$1 billion fund to finance reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) in Indonesia marks a dark day in our international relations. The Indonesian government has shown it is capable of making a rash decision to deliberately end an international agreement, regardless of the fact that it is related to forestry, one of our most strategic natural resources, and this involves Norway, a long-time trading partner and strong ally in climate efforts. The result is the loss of the largest source of funding for REDD+, a key mitigation mechanism. It was not easy for Indonesia to carry out REDD+ projects according to international standards. But when expectations

began to build for Indonesia, the government chose to bring it all back to square one. Deputy Minister of Environment and Forestry Ajue Duhong lamented a “lack of goodwill” on Norway’s part by its demand that Indonesia fulfil more requirements before it disburse the payment. Even if the fund disbursement process were unfair, Indonesia should not simply walk away.

Spike in deforestation detected in Papua concession linked to South Korea’s Moorim

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 7 September 2021

Satellite imagery has detected the clearing of 965 ha of trees between January and May 2021 in a concession on land in Papua Province licensed to PT Plasma Nutfah Marine Papua (PNMP) a subsidiary of South Korean paper company Moorim, whose paper has been certified as sustainable by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) since 2007-2008. Two-thirds of the tree loss occurred in mineral soil, indicating the clearing of natural forest, while the rest was on non-forest land, including shrubland, plantation, and/or peat swamp areas. 1,685 ha of tree loss had also been detected on PNMP’s concession in 2020, but 98% of that Franky Samperante, director of the NGO Pusaka, said some of the clearing had taken place in peat swamp areas, based on drone video footage. Franky also said some indigenous communities have been denied the right to give their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) to PNMP’s operations.

Palm oil firms in Papua hit back with lawsuit after permits are revoked

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 3 September 2021

Three palm oil companies—PT Inti Kebun Lestari (IKL), PT Papua Lestari Abadi (PLA) and PT Sorong Agro Sawitindo (SAS)— are suing the head of Sorong District in West Papua Province after their permits were revoked. The companies are suing the district government at the state administrative court in Jayapura, capital of neighboring Papua Province, to reverse the revocation, which they say harmed their interests because it locked them out of a combined 90,031 ha of land in Sorong District, prompting concerns that other firms whose permits were also revoked may follow suit. The government said the companies had failed to fulfil their obligations under the permits; that they lacked “right-to-cultivate” permits, required before palm oil plantation companies are allowed to start planting; and failed to obtain consent from the indigenous communities living in the area, which they are required to do within two years. The violations were uncovered during a province-wide audit of oil palm plantation licenses carried out by the national anti-corruption agency, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, and the Ministry of Agriculture.

D. Energy, Mining and Climate Change

[Indonesia still clinging to coal despite phaseout pledge, new plan shows](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 10 September 2021

The Indonesian government has walked back an earlier pledge to phase out all coal-fired power plants, saying it will keep them running but fit them with carbon capture technology. Indonesia's *Long-term Strategy on Low Carbon and Climate Resilience 2050* says coal-fired power plants will still generate a large percentage of the country's electricity until 2060. The government policy paper calls for fitting three-quarters of Indonesia's coal-fired power plants with carbon capture and storage (CCS) and carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) technologies—approaches experts say are unproven or untested at utility scales and even if they work, may be prohibitively expensive, according to the Institute for Essential Services Reform (IESR). "Even with CCS, emissions from burning coal must still be higher than renewables," IESR's Lisa Wijayani said. "Will coal plants with CCS be economically viable or not?" asked Fabby Tumiwa, Executive Director of IESR. Indonesia has become the fossil fuel's final frontier due to its continued reliance on the commodity, with the country currently ranked as the second-biggest coal producer in the world.

[Report: Indonesia Long-term Strategy for Low Carbon and Climate Resilience 2050](#) (2021)

[Southeast Asia's biggest wind farm to break ground in Sukabumi, West Java](#)

—Divya Karyza, *The Jakarta Post*, 15 September 2021

UPC Renewables announced that construction would soon begin on a 150-MW wind farm in Sukabumi, West Java, targeted for completion in 2024. The facility would contribute renewable electric power to the Java-Bali grid, helping Indonesia reach its target of a 23% share for renewables in the national energy mix by 2025. "The Sukabumi wind farm will likely be the largest in Southeast Asia," West Java Deputy Governor Uu Ruzhanul Ulum said. Valued at Rp 3.3 trillion (US\$231.8 million), the project could generate up to 1,000 new jobs. State-owned electricity monopoly PLN and UPC Renewables signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the Sukabumi project, witnessed by President Joko Widodo, in 2015 in Washington, D.C. UPC Renewables previously developed the 75 MW Sidrap wind farm in South Sulawesi, consisting of 30 wind turbines, which was Indonesia's first utility-scale wind power installation, which has been in commercial operation since March 2018.

[World Bank approves US\\$380 million loan for Indonesia's first pumped storage hydro power plant](#)

—Agatha Victoria, Uyu Liman, *Antaranews*, 12 September 2021

The World Bank's Board of Directors has approved a loan of US\$380 million to build a pumped storage hydro power plant (PLTA) on the upper reaches of the Cisokan River between Jakarta and Bandung. The plant will have a generating capacity of 1,040 MW, is intended to increase power generation capacity at periods of peak demand. "This will be the first pumped storage PLTA in Indonesia," World Bank Country Director for Indonesia and Timor-Leste Satu Kahkonen said. "It represents a turning point in efforts toward decarbonization in Indonesia." At present, more than 80% of electricity supplied to the Java-Bali power grid, which provides energy for 70% of Indonesia's total population, comes from coal and other fossil fuels. Establishing energy storage facilities like will allow integration of renewable energy sources into the grid. "The pumped storage hydroelectric power plant plays an important role in this effort, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Arifin Tasrif said.

[Solar energy can be Indonesia's trump card to provide electricity to its most remote regions](#)

—Budi Prayogo Sunariyanto, Vivi Fitriyanti, *The Conversation*, 8 September 2021

As solar photovoltaic generation systems have become more affordable, their use has grown throughout the world. In Indonesia, the cost of solar panels has fallen by 90% to around US\$900-US\$1,200 per kilowatt-peak (kWp) over the past ten years. Total solar power capacity has expanded by 250% in the last five years, from 43.1 MW in 2016 to 153,5 MW in 2020. The government plans to increase this 14-fold to 2.14 GW by 2030. However, in 2020, five Indonesian provinces had an electrification ratio of less than 95%, namely Central Kalimantan, Southeast Sulawesi, Maluku, Papua, and East Nusa Tenggara. The government must consider solar power not just as a means to accelerate the transition to renewable energy, but also as a way to ensure access to electric power in all regions, including distant and undeveloped communities and remote islands. Straddling the equator, Indonesia has a solar irradiance intensity that varies from 36 kWh to 6.0 kWh per square meter per day. This ample sunlight makes solar generation highly suitable for regions that are off the grid or where connecting to the grid would be expensive or impractical.

Budi Prayogo Sunariyanto and Vivi Fitriyanti are researchers at the Purnomo Yusgiantoro Center.

[Jet fuel partly derived from palm oil makes late debut in Indonesia](#)

—Norman Harsono, *The Jakarta Post*, 12 September 2021

A consortium has begun tests on an Bioavtur J2.4, an experimental aviation fuel containing 2.4% biofuel refined from palm oil, responding to a government mandate for increased domestic use of palm oil through biofuel blending. The test flight was intended to support the use of palm-oil based fuels in the aerospace industry and to improve energy security, said Gita Amperiawan, from the state-owned aircraft manufacturer PT Dirgantara Indonesia (PTDI). “Producing bioavtur would be good for domestic interests, but as with the biodiesel program, there are issues related to climate change and social conflicts, such as land conflicts—basically, the general issues of the palm oil industry,” Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) energy economist Alloysius Joko Purwanto said. A 2% Bioavtur would be 2.5 – 4.0% more expensive than conventional fuel, Purwanto said, noting that Pertamina’s aviation fuel refining capacity is relatively limited. Norway and Finland have introduced mandatory biofuel blending requirements for aviation fuel, while other European countries and the US are planning similar regulations.

E. Pollution and Waste Management

Not just sea life—freshwater migratory fish, birds and mammals also fall foul of plastic

—Carolyn Cowan, *Mongabay*, 3 September 2021

When we consider the impacts of plastic waste on wildlife, we tend to think of whales entangled in discarded fishing gear or sea turtles that mistake plastic bags for jellyfish. But land- and fresh-water mammals, birds, and fishes are affected through entanglement, ingestion of plastics, accumulation of plastics in the food chain, and use of plastics as nesting materials. A new report from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) focuses on plastic impacts on land and freshwater species in the Asia-Pacific region protected under the 1979 Convention of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). The conclusions are stark: entanglements and direct ingestion of plastics are harming migratory species throughout the region, on land and in the water. In major freshwater systems, marine mammals are particularly at risk from drowning following entanglement in discarded fishing gear, including the Ganges River dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*), Irrawaddy dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*), and dugongs (*Dugong dugon*). Asian elephants have been observed scavenging in trash dumps, while Black-faced spoonbills (*Platalea minor*) and ospreys incorporate plastic and fishing debris into their nests.

Study: Alice A. Horton and Isobelle Blissett, “[Impacts of Plastic Pollution on Freshwater Aquatic, Terrestrial and Avian Migratory Species in the Asia and Pacific Region](#)”, Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), August 2021.

Minister emphasizes Indonesia’s commitment to handle plastic waste

—[Antaranews.com](https://www.antaranews.com), 3 September 2021

Minister of Environment and Forestry Siti Nurbaya Bakar has stressed that Indonesia is working hard to realize its commitment on tackling plastic waste. "Indonesia, at various levels of government, is working to realize the global commitment on tackling plastic pollution," the minister said while attending a High-level Dialogue at the invitation of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), according to a statement released by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) here on Friday. Minister Sisi also discussed Indonesia's new center for Marine Hygiene Capacity Development in Bali and implemented of an Extended Producer Responsibility and circular economy approach. Rosa Vivien Ratnawati, Director General for Waste Management at KLHK, introduced the National Action Plan for Handling Marine Debris, which aims to reduce marine debris 70% by 2025.

[Danone-Aqua opens Bali's largest waste management facility](#)

—*Jakarta Globe*, 12 September 2021

Danone-Aqua, Indonesia's largest bottled water company, has launched Bali's largest integrated waste management site (TPST) in Jimbaran Bali. The facility has the capacity to process 120 tons of used plastic bottles and organic waste per day. In the past, only 48% of the waste was disposed of in landfills, while the rest went on polluting the seas, Badung District Head Nyoman Giri Prasta said. "That is why the Bali Province and Badung District governments have made plastic waste management our main agenda and have issued several new policies, including limiting single-use plastics. Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investments, who inaugurated the facility, said that the government "highly appreciates and supports Danone-Aqua's initiatives to strengthen waste management in Indonesia by adhering to the circular economy principles which can bolster the government's efforts to reduce plastic waste in the ocean by up to 70% in 2025. The TPST was built in collaboration with Reciki Mantap Jaya, which will operate the facility.

F. Conservation and Protected Areas

[Rewilding a charismatic shark species in the Bird's Head Seascape: Zebra Sharks to be hatched in Raja Ampat](#)

—Maureen Shimlock, *Bird's Head Seascape Blog Post*, 9 September 2021

Zebra sharks (*Stegostoma tigrinum*), currently classified as globally "Endangered" by the IUCN, were overfished in the Raja Ampat archipelago during the 1990s and early 2000s to the point that the population is now too low and geographically fragmented to recover the way other shark species managed after the shark fishing ban in the area went into effect in 2013. Because of its well-developed

network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), Raja Ampat has been selected as the initial “rewilding” site for re-introduction of zebra sharks using egg cases from captive-bred aquarium-raised sharks. Supported by a grant from the Switzerland-based Fondation Segré and other donors, the StAR (*S. tigrinum* Augmentation and Recovery Project) will commence in 2022 when the first shipment of zebra shark egg cases arrives in Raja Ampat. Dr. Charlie Heatubun, Head of the Research and Development Agency of West Papua Province, said rewilding zebra sharks in Raja Ampat will benefit local communities as well as the environment. Dr. Fahmi, Senior Researcher at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, said StAR can help restore an endangered species with lasting benefits for Indonesian scientists and conservationists.

[Komodo dragons are now endangered and moving towards extinction](#)

—Marion Renault, *New York Times*, 8 September 2021

The threat of extinction just ticked closer for Indonesia’s Komodo dragon (*Varanus komodoensis*). The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) just reclassified its status from “Vulnerable” to “Endangered”. Twenty-five years ago, as many as 8,000 Komodo dragons still roamed the earth, but that population has been reduced to only 1,380 adults and about 2,000 juveniles, mostly living on just three small islands in Indonesia’s Komodo National Park and in western Flores. Suitable dragon habitat is likely to shrink by at least 30% more over the next 45 years, the IUCN says. If the population drops past critically endangered, the giant reptile predators could become “extinct in the wild”, surviving only in captivity in a handful of zoos. Komodo dragons are particularly vulnerable to climate or other environmental changes, as they inhabit a limited belt of land between these islands coasts and forested hills, and are dependent on a relatively small number of prey species, including deer, boars, water buffalo—and other dragons.

[Indonesia lays out plan to rescue fifteen lakes under pressure from human activity](#)

—Basten Gokkon, *Mongabay*, 10 September 2021

Indonesia has announced a plan to restore fifteen lakes whose ecosystems have been degraded by human activities by 2024. The lakes have been hit by pollution, logging, and destructive fishing practices, impacting local communities who rely on them as a source of fresh water, for flood control, and as sites for fish farming, tourism and recreation. “Saving these national priority lakes is an effort to control damage, maintain, restore, and recover the conditions and functions of lake water bodies, water catchment areas, and lake borders so that they are beneficial for the welfare of the communities in a sustainable way,” says the decree signed by President Joko Widodo in June. A presidential task force has been formed to implement the plan, headed by Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, the Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investments.

[Scientists describe new tree frog in push to catalogue Indonesia's amphibians](#)

—Grace Dungey, *Mongabay*, 2 September 2021

A team of student researchers from the Bogor Institute of Agriculture (IPB) on a national database of reptiles and amphibians came across five frogs near a small pond within the Sancang Nature Reserve, a degraded lowland tropical rainforest on the southwest coast of Java. After extensive laboratory analysis of the specimens, the IPB students and researchers from Kyoto University in Japan determined that the frogs are members of a new species, *Chirixalus pantaiselatan*, named after Java's southern coast. Their research findings, published in the *Raffles Bulletin of Zoology*, describe the species as a small tree frog with a distinctive call. It is now known to be found in the Jayanti Nature Reserve as well as the Sancang Nature Reserve, but it remains possible that the newly-discovered frog may be limited to only a few populations and that the species may be critically endangered. Of the more than 400 frog species in Indonesia, only one amphibian, the bleeding toad (*Leptophryne cruentata*), is currently listed as an Indonesian protected species.

[Even as the IUCN Congress closes, the conservation debate heats up](#)

—Manipadma Jena, *Inter Press Service News Agency*, 15 September 2021

Indigenous people's rights were among the leading issues at the Congress of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Marseille, France. A Marseille Manifesto called for giving higher prominence to indigenous people by committing to an ambitious, site-based conservation network representing all areas of importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services "that recognizes the roles and custodianship of indigenous people and local communities", while a separate indigenous summit presented demands for "secure recognition and respect for collective indigenous rights and governance of lands, territories, waters, coastal seas and natural resources." Another hotly debated issue concerned designation of 30% of the planet's land and water areas under protection (and at least 20% under restoration) by 2030. But other activists attacked the "so-called 30x30 plan" and called for conservation to be "decolonised". "It's no more than a massive land grab, green lies," Survival International's Sophie Grig said. "History has shown that promises are made, but gradually living for forest dwellers is made impossible until they are evicted from their generational homes of centuries."

Other

[Impact of Taliban victory in Afghanistan on Indonesia's Jemaah Islamiyah](#)

—*Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict*, 7 September 2021

The immediate blowback to Indonesia from the Taliban victory in Afghanistan is likely to be greater from pro-ISIS groups than from Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), the organization with the strongest ties to al-Qaeda. Weakened by some 200 arrests over the past two years, JI has shown little interest in attacks, though it remains committed to military training. A more militant splinter, angered by arrests and inspired by the Taliban success, could emerge, but a bigger risk is that one of the many pro-ISIS cells could be inspired by the Kabul airport attack of ISIS-K to attempt violence.

Little is known about the internal JI reaction to the Taliban victory, but according to police officers who questioned JI detainees, many members were euphoric. “They say that the Taliban success was due to two factors: by applying shari’a in full, they fulfilled the requirement for assistance from Allah for victory, and they also met the practical conditions for victory such as sufficient human resources, support of the population, appropriate war tactics and adequate weapons and so on.” The success convinced them of the validity of the war strategy known as *nikayah wal inhak* or *harbu intizab*, which is to gradually weaken the enemy until victory becomes inevitable.

The report notes that the last direct communication between JI in Indonesia and the al-Qaeda leadership took place in Bangkok in 2010, when JI rejected an offer to work together against targets in Southeast Asia. “All indications are that in the short-term, JI does not pose a significant threat,” said Sana Jaffrey, IPAC director. “But this is an organisation that has shown extraordinary resilience, and whether inspired by the Taliban or its own sense of history, we are likely to see regeneration. No one should rule it out. ... The likely priority, however, will be on rebuilding at home. The pro-ISIS groups remain the ones to watch.

[Freedom of religion at risk](#)

—Editorial Board, *The Jakarta Post*, 13 September 2021

The reform movement more than 20 years ago in Indonesia led to significant changes to the state’s commitment to protect human rights, including freedom of religion. The Constitution was amended to affirm every citizen’s right to choose their faith and have the freedom to practice the religion of their choice. But a recent attack on a mosque belonging to the minority Ahmadiyah community in Sintang, West Kalimantan shows the prevailing gap between this principle and its implementation, something post-New Order governments have failed to address. Clearly an act of violence against people because of their belief is a blatant violation of the constitution.

There is no denying that religious minorities have for decades been living under the so-called tyranny of the majority, who would like to force its will and define what is right and wrong. Apart from Ahmadiyah followers, the Shiite community, indigenous belief adherents and other minority groups have come under the constant threat of discrimination.

We therefore support calls for revocation of the 2008 joint decree by the Minister of Home Affairs, Minister of Religious Affairs, and the Attorney General which only works to legitimize violent attacks against the Ahmadiyah. As long as the decree remains in place, another attack on the Ahmadis will occur in the future. The next step would be for Minister of Religious Affairs Yaquut Cholil Qoumas to scrap regulations and laws that undermine freedom of religion such as the joint ministerial decree on building houses of worship and the obsolete Religious Blasphemy Law.