



Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

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*The **Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest** is a biweekly collection of summaries of articles related to conservation, the environment, and sustainability in Indonesia that have appeared in print or online in local, regional, and global English-language media. We welcome comments, suggestions, and corrections. To learn more about us and to access previous editions of the News Digest, please visit our website at www.starlingresources.com. If you would like to add colleagues or friends to our distribution list or unsubscribe, please contact us at newsdigest@starlingresources.com.*

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A. Marine and Fisheries

Valuable Lessons for Fish Farmers in the Case of eFishery

—Brigita Maria Lukita G, *Kompas*, 24 February 2025

The financial report falsification scandal involving Indonesian aquaculture startup eFishery has disrupted the fisheries ecosystem, impacting fish farmers who relied on its technology and marketing network. The fraud, revealed in January 2025 through an FTI Consulting investigation, exposed inflated revenues of nearly \$600 million and a falsely reported profit of

\$16 million, while the company actually suffered a \$35.4 million loss. Farmers like Adrianus Mario in Bogor and Hadi Yudi in Cirebon, who had partnered with eFishery for years, are now struggling. Mario, a tilapia farmer, lost his primary buyer when eFishery reduced purchase prices, forcing him back into an uncertain middleman system. Additionally, the company halted feeder machine maintenance, leaving his automated feeding system in disrepair. Employees also fear mass layoffs, while investors, including SoftBank and Temasek, face losses. The scandal highlights the risks of prioritizing valuation over business fundamentals. Farmers hope for solutions to maintain the technology, which had improved efficiency and yields but is now at risk of becoming obsolete.

Climate-Friendly Shrimp Farm Pilot Project Begins in Donggala

—Zacharias Wuragil, *Tempo*, 20 February 2025

The Indonesian Conservation Foundation and Jala inaugurated the Climate Smart Shrimp Farming (CSSF) project in Lalombi Village, South Banawa, Donggala, Central Sulawesi, on February 19. Touted as the first of its kind in Asia, the initiative integrates shrimp farming with mangrove conservation to enhance sustainability. According to Budiati Prasetiamartati, Ocean Program Director at Indonesian Conservation, CSSF balances pond management with environmental connectivity, using a 6.5-hectare shrimp farm alongside 3.5 hectares of mangroves. Seawater is cycled through wastewater treatment and mangrove areas to neutralize waste before returning to the ocean. The project aims to stabilize shrimp yields while fostering mangrove restoration, with projections estimating a 14-fold increase in carbon absorption. Jala Chairman Aryo Wiryawan emphasized CSSF's distinction from conventional intensive shrimp farms by allocating land for environmental support. With a \$1.2 million investment, the 12-hectare pilot site includes shrimp ponds, labyrinth ponds, and wastewater treatment facilities. The project was launched with a tree-planting ceremony, and four out of seven ponds have already been stocked with shrimp larvae.

Government Revokes 209 Tangerang Sea Fence Certificates

—Fransiskus Wisnu Wardhana Dhany, *Kompas*, 24 February 2025

The Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (ATR/BPN) has revoked 209 land certificates in the coastal fence area of Tangerang Regency, Banten, citing zoning violations. Minister Nusron Wahid announced on Monday (24/2/2025) that all certificates outside the coastline would be canceled to prevent unauthorized use of coastal and marine areas. An ongoing investigation is reviewing 263 building use rights certificates (SHGB) and 17 ownership rights certificates (SHM) related to a 30.16-kilometer sea fence, which lacks a Suitability of Marine Space Utilization Activities (KKPRL) permit. The structure, located in a capture fisheries and energy management zone, has harmed fishermen and coastal ecosystems. Meanwhile, the Criminal Investigation Agency of the Indonesian National Police has named four individuals, including a village official, as suspects in the case. They are accused of falsifying documents for land rights applications related to the sea wall construction. Of the reviewed certificates, 222 were outside the coastline and 58 within it. So far, 209 have been revoked, with 13 still under review. Authorities stress that no illegal fences or structures will be allowed to remain.

Illegal seabed dredging surges as Indonesia resumes sand exports

—M Ambari and Yogi Eka Sahputra, *Mongabay*, 20 February 2025

Reports of illegal seabed dredging in Indonesia have surged following the government's decision to lift a 20-year ban on sea sand exports in May 2023. On February 10, the Navy detained seven boats dredging sand illegally in East Nusa Tenggara, while similar cases

occurred in Jakarta and Riau Islands in recent months. Experts attribute the rise in illegal mining to weak enforcement and increased demand for sand. The Ministry of Fisheries has designated 590,000 hectares for dredging, arguing that sediment removal benefits marine health. However, environmental groups and fishing communities warn of severe ecological damage, including habitat loss, declining fish stocks, and erosion. A CELIOS study [Green Industrial Area Infected by Coal Power Plant](#) estimated that while the government could earn \$10.9 million from exports, losses to fishers could reach \$77.4 million. Critics, including the Indonesia Ocean Justice Initiative, argue the policy contradicts marine protection laws and lacked public consultation. Experts urge a thorough cost-benefit analysis and stronger enforcement to prevent long-term environmental and economic harm, with some calling for the reinstatement of the export ban.

Protecting peatlands and mangroves could halve Southeast Asia's land-use emissions

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 18 February 2025

Southeast Asia's peatlands and mangroves, vital carbon sinks, are disappearing at alarming rates. A new study published in *Nature Communications* finds that conserving and restoring these ecosystems could cut the region's land-use emissions by half—equivalent to 16% of global land-use emissions. Led by the National University of Singapore (NUS), with contributions from Nanyang Technological University and James Cook University, the study highlights that despite covering just 5% of the region's land, these ecosystems hold immense climate mitigation potential. Restoring degraded peatlands and mangroves could reduce 94 million metric tons of CO₂ annually, while combined conservation and restoration efforts could mitigate 770 MtCO₂e each year. Indonesia, home to the largest peat and mangrove areas, has the highest mitigation potential. However, widespread deforestation for palm oil and aquaculture has already led to massive emissions. Scientists urge governments to integrate peatland and mangrove conservation into national climate policies to meet Paris Agreement targets. Without action, lost carbon is largely irrecoverable, worsening climate impacts regionally and globally.

Sasmito, S. D., et al. (2025). [Half of land use carbon emissions in Southeast Asia can be mitigated through peat swamp forest and mangrove conservation and restoration](#). *Nature Communications*, 16(1).

B. Forests and Land Use

Indigenous Dayak community makes strides on Borneo toward forest autonomy

—Aseanty Pahlevi, *Mongabay*, 26 February 2025

In Mekar Raya village, West Kalimantan, Indonesia, Yulius Yogi, a Dayak Simpan Indigenous leader, is working to reclaim 2,000 hectares of customary forest. As head of the village forest management institute, Yogi must navigate Indonesia's legal framework to secure a *hutan adat* (Indigenous forest) decree, ensuring official recognition and protection of ancestral lands. The process involves translating Dayak customary law—traditionally passed down orally—into formal documentation required by Jakarta. Indonesia's community forestry program has granted over 8 million hectares for local management, yet *hutan adat* recognition remains complex. The Dayak Simpan aim to build on a 2023 *hutan desa* (village forest) lease by securing greater autonomy through *hutan adat* status. This would allow sustainable development, including agroforestry and water resource

management. With climate change threatening forest-dependent communities, local governance and conservation efforts, supported by organizations like Tropenbos Indonesia and ICCAs, are crucial. “We have a moral and cultural responsibility to maintain this forest,” Yogi affirms, as the community awaits government approval of their claim.

Indonesia signs agrarian reform commitment amid rising land equity woes

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 25 February 2025

The government and civil society organizations signed a joint statement on February 19 at the Asia Land Forum in Jakarta, committing to fast-track agrarian reform. The initiative aims to address land inequality, agrarian conflicts, and food security by redistributing land to marginalized farmers. Indonesia faces severe land concentration, with 68% controlled by 1% of the population. President Prabowo Subianto has emphasized food self-sufficiency but leans toward large-scale agricultural projects, raising concerns over corporate dominance in land use. Critics argue that such projects displace small farmers and favor business interests, such as Jhonlin Group’s controversial food estate project in Papua. Government officials, including Budiman Sudjatmiko, advocate stronger land rights for small farmers, arguing that agrarian reform is key to economic progress. Experts urge President Prabowo to issue a decree prioritizing agrarian reform and directly lead its implementation. While the joint statement marks a step forward, its success depends on political will, concrete policies, and balancing corporate interests with equitable land distribution for national food security.

Rice paddies to mega resorts: declassified spy satellite images reveal Bali’s transformation

—Michael Nielson, *TheGuardian*, 24 February 2025

Extent of decades of development is laid bare as Indonesia grapples with how to curb development in Bali as new satellite images reveal the island’s dramatic transformation over the past six decades. Declassified Cold War-era images from 1965, published by Nusantara Atlas, show how once-sleepy coastal villages like Seminyak and Canggu have become crowded with resorts and shopping strips. Environmental scientist David Gaveau, who led the project, hopes the images will fuel discussions on overtourism and unchecked growth. Bali’s population has doubled since the 1960s, with half a million tourists arriving each month. While officials proposed a two-year moratorium on new tourism developments in October 2024, re-elected Bali Governor Wayan Koster instead vowed stricter regulations. Critics, including parliamentarian Niluh Djelantik, argue for better enforcement of existing rules and proper use of the island’s tourism tax. Environmental advocates warn that Bali’s unique culture and way of life are at risk, as farmers sell land for tourism ventures. “If that is lost, then Bali is no different,” said conservationist Chakra Widia.

Indonesia, Norway extend climate and forestry cooperation

—Prisca Triferina and Raka Adji, *AntaraNews*, 19 February 2025

Indonesia and Norway extended their climate and forestry cooperation through 2030, reaffirming their commitment to tackling climate change. Indonesian Forestry Minister Raja Juli Antoni, following a meeting with Norwegian Climate and Environment Minister Andreas Bjelland Eriksen, highlighted Norway as one of Indonesia’s key forestry partners. Norway has provided \$216 million in result-based funding (RBC) to support Indonesia’s efforts to reduce deforestation and forest degradation. The fourth stage of funding was launched in December 2024, contributing to Indonesia’s Forest and Land Use (FOLU) Net Sink 2030 goal, which aims to make carbon absorption exceed emissions. Funds also support social forestry programs and the Community Fund Service for the Environment, now open for its second

period. Minister Eriksen praised the 75-year diplomatic relationship between both nations, emphasizing Indonesia's progress in reducing deforestation. The Indonesian Environment Fund, backed by Norway, World Bank, and UNDP, plays a crucial role in achieving Indonesia's emission reduction targets and sustainable development goals through forest protection, rehabilitation, and law enforcement.

Reconciliation of Palm Oil Economy and Environmental Sustainability

—Aditya Putra Perdana, *Kompas*, 14 February 2025

The 7th International Conference of Oil Palm and Environment (ICOPE) 2025, held in Sanur, Bali, from February 12-14, focused on integrating palm oil cultivation with biodiversity conservation. Organized by Sinarmas Agribusiness and Food, WWF Indonesia, and Cirad, the event gathered 500 participants to discuss sustainable palm oil practices. Indonesia's crude palm oil (CPO) production reached 44.23 million tons in January-October 2024, a significant rise from 16 million tons in 2006. While the palm oil sector drives economic growth, deforestation and biodiversity loss remain concerns. Saparis Soedarjanto from the Ministry of Forestry emphasized integrating palm plantations with natural ecosystems through agroforestry and wildlife corridors. WWF noted that 40% of plantations are run by smallholders, who need financial support for sustainability certifications. Experts, including CIFOR-ICRAF's Sonya Dewi, advocate agroforestry as a solution to balance economic and environmental needs, while ecological modelling scientist Nimatul Khasanah stressed the need for more in-depth studies to implement agroforestry. Stakeholders hope ICOPE will help shape strategies for sustainable palm oil management, ensuring both industry growth and ecological protection.

C. Biodiversity, Conservation and Protected Area

Illegal Wildlife Trade Increasingly Rampant, Threat of Extinction and Zoonosis in Sight

—Vina Oktavia, *Kompas*, 26 February 2025

Indonesian authorities have intensified efforts to combat illegal wildlife trafficking, particularly the smuggling of wild birds. In the past two months, officers at the Lampung Animal, Fish, and Plant Quarantine Center intercepted three major smuggling attempts, including the discovery of 982 birds hidden in a truck chassis on February 17. Smugglers have shifted from intercity buses to trucks and luxury cars to avoid detection. At a discussion on February 25, officials revealed that most trafficked birds originate from Sumatra and are transported to Java and Yogyakarta. While confiscated birds are released into the wild, experts warn that relocating them outside their natural habitats can disrupt ecosystems. The Executive Director of Flight Protecting Indonesia's Bird, Marison Guciano, reported that 66,075 wild animals were seized in 2024, with Lampung leading in confiscations. He urged stronger upstream enforcement to dismantle trafficking networks. Experts also warned that the illegal wildlife trade increases the risk of zoonotic disease transmission, posing a threat to human health and economic stability. Authorities pledged stricter enforcement to curb the crisis.

Mangrove deforestation for commodities limits conservation funding in SE Asia

—Carolyn Cowan, *Mongabay*, 25 February 2025

Southeast Asia, home to a third of the world's mangroves, faces a significant threat to these crucial carbon-storing ecosystems due to deforestation, cyclones, and rising sea levels, a new study reveals. Published in *Communications Earth & Environment*, the study finds that 1.8 million hectares—85% of the region's mangrove forests viable for blue carbon credit investments—could be lost in the next 25 years due to expansion of aquaculture, oil palm, and rice cultivation. Led by Valerie Kwan from the University of Queensland, researchers warn that these pressures undermine the reliability of blue carbon credits, which fund conservation efforts by allowing companies to offset emissions. The study highlights Indonesia, Cambodia, and the Philippines as deforestation hotspots. While carbon markets alone may not be sufficient, experts suggest blended finance strategies, policy alignment, and expanded protected areas. With just 15% of Indonesia's mangroves safeguarded, conservationists emphasize the need for immediate action to preserve mangroves' role in climate mitigation, biodiversity protection, and coastal resilience.

Kwan, V., Friess, D. A., Sarira, T. V., & Zeng, Y. (2025). [Permanence risks limit blue carbon financing strategies to safeguard Southeast Asian mangroves](#). *Communications Earth & Environment*, 6(1).

Zeng, Y., Friess, D. A., Sarira, T. V., Siman, K., & Koh, L. P. (2021). [Global potential and limits of mangrove blue carbon for climate change mitigation](#). *Current Biology*, 31(8), 1737-1743.e3.

Shot and Threatened by Mining, the Tragic Fate of Orangutans in Kalimantan

—Sucipto, *Kompas*, 20 February 2025

A 17-year-old orangutan was released into Gunung Mesangat Protected Forest in East Kutai, East Kalimantan, after repeatedly appearing in a coal mining area and nearby plantations in February 2025. The East Kalimantan Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA), assisted by the Center for Orangutan Protection (COP), conducted the evacuation due to extensive human activities in the area. The orangutan was first spotted near PT Kaltim Prima Coal's site on February 11. Orangutan habitats in East Kalimantan have been declining due to mining, palm oil plantations, and deforestation, which have fragmented their ecosystems. Research by Liza Niningsih highlights behavioral adaptations of orangutans in mining areas, where they spend less time resting and consume more non-fruit vegetation. Conservationists emphasize that translocation is a temporary measure, advocating for in-situ conservation strategies such as habitat restoration and wildlife corridors. Human-orangutan conflicts persist, with past cases of violence against the primates, including a 2018 incident where an orangutan was shot 130 times. Conservationists stress the urgency of protecting East Kalimantan's remaining forests.

Tiger Trapped in West Coast Cage Released

—Vina Oktavia, *Kompas*, 19 February 2025

A Sumatran tiger (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*) named Laras, captured in a trap cage in Pesisir Barat, Lampung, is set to be released into Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park (TNBBS) to prevent further human-wildlife conflict. The Lampung Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) confirmed the plan on February 19, stating that the release site is deep in the forest to ensure the tiger's safety. Laras was first spotted on a camera trap in December 2024 near the capture site. Over the past three months, she had frequently roamed outside the TNBBS area, preying on livestock and alarming residents. Following community requests, authorities installed trap cages, leading to her capture on February 16. Veterinarians examined Laras before transport, finding her in stable condition with a minor tail wound.

Authorities continue monitoring wildlife interactions, as reports indicate at least four tigers have been sighted near residential areas. Collaborative efforts among conservation agencies and local officials aim to mitigate future conflicts while protecting the endangered species.

Volunteer radio station brings old media to remote Sumatran tiger habitat

—Suryadi, *Mongabay*, 18 February 2025

Rakom Lintas Subayang 107.7 FM, a community radio station in Riau, Sumatra, is bringing critical information to Indigenous communities in Bukit Rimbang Baling Wildlife Sanctuary, a remote forested area home to the endangered Sumatran tiger. Established in 2014 through a collaboration between conservation groups and local NGOs like WWF and Yapeka, the station fills a vital communication gap in villages with limited phone reception. It broadcasts news on conservation, disaster risk, and local commerce. Initially powered by Indigenous volunteers trained with help from Central Java's Rakom Lintas Merapi, the station faced challenges like aging equipment and declining volunteer numbers. To adapt, it partnered with Pekanbaru-based Green Radio Line, transitioning to digital streaming via Spotify and YouTube. The initiative empowers Indigenous youth, offering them a platform to engage with social and economic issues. "Our hope is that young people here have the same rights as urban children," said Green Radio Line founder Sari Indriaty. Rakom Lintas Subayang now plays a crucial role in preserving both the local environment and Indigenous voices.

D. Climate Change, Energy and Mining

Prabowo vows to build giant Java seawall despite budget cuts

—Aditya Hendri, *TheJakartaPost*, 26 February 2025

President Prabowo Subianto has announced that funding is secured for constructing a 700-kilometer seawall along Java's northern coast, from Banten to East Java, to combat land subsidence. Speaking at the Democratic Party's congress on Tuesday, he affirmed his commitment to starting the project as soon as possible. To finance his priority programs, including the free nutritious meal initiative and the sovereign wealth fund Danantara, Prabowo has ordered Rp 306 trillion (US\$18.72 billion) in government budget cuts. The Public Works Ministry's budget was halved from Rp 111 trillion to just over Rp 50 trillion. Investment Minister Rosan Roeslani stated that Japan has been invited to participate, with potential funding structures ranging from business-to-business to government partnerships. Other interested parties include firms from China, South Korea, and the Netherlands. While Prabowo aims to expedite the project by listing it as a national strategic project in 2025, experts warn that a seawall alone may not solve Jakarta's land subsidence and could worsen environmental issues.

Greenpeace Urges Jabodetabek Areas' New Leaders to Address 5 Urgent Issues

—M Faiz Zaki, *Tempo*, 25 February 2025

Greenpeace urged newly elected leaders in Jakarta greater areas, also known as Jabodetabek, to prioritize five critical climate and environmental challenges: air pollution, floods and droughts, lack of green open spaces, rising sea levels, and the urban heat island effect. Greenpeace Campaigner, Jeanny Sirait, highlighted that these issues significantly impact residents' comfort and economic stability. She pointed out that air pollution, primarily

from coal-fired power plants, remains severe, causing 2,500 premature deaths and Rp 5.1 trillion in annual economic losses. Poor coordination between local governments has hindered solutions. The shortage of green open spaces further exacerbates air pollution and urban flooding, with Jakarta and South Tangerang having far below the ideal 30% green space coverage. Meanwhile, extreme weather events have intensified, causing Rp 2.1 trillion in flood-related losses annually. Rising sea levels and land subsidence threaten coastal communities, with Jakarta sinking up to 8.47 cm per year. She warns these issues deepen social inequality and urges local leaders to act swiftly for climate resilience.

Palm Oil Between Two Priority Poles: Food or Energy?

—Aditya Putra Perdana, *Kompas*, 23 February 2025

Indonesia's palm oil industry is facing a growing domestic battle between food and energy needs, with increasing biodiesel mandates set to shift more palm oil away from food production. As of January 2025, the government has raised the biodiesel mix from B35 to B40, requiring 15.6 million kiloliters of biodiesel. The move aims to cut fossil fuel imports and boost renewable energy use. According to the Indonesian Palm Oil Association (Gapki), domestic palm oil consumption reached 19.64 million tons from January to October 2024, with 9.4 million tons for biodiesel—an 8% rise—while food consumption declined by 3.5%. Officials warn that continued productivity declines, from 4.3 tons per hectare in 2010 to 3.3 tons today, could further divert palm oil from food. At the International Conference of Oil Palm and Environment (ICOPE) 2025 in Bali, Deputy Agriculture Minister Sudaryono emphasized the need to increase production sustainably. Experts urge a balanced approach, cautioning against deforestation risks and advocating for optimizing palm oil waste for bioenergy.

US defense think tank warns of China's grip over Indonesian nickel industry

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 20 February 2025

A US-funded think tank, C4ADS, has found that over 75% of Indonesia's nickel refining capacity is controlled by Chinese companies, many linked to the Chinese government. The [Refining Power](#) report, based on an analysis of 33 refining firms, highlights that major players like Tsingshan Holding Group and Jiangsu Delong Nickel Industry Co. Ltd. dominate the sector, raising concerns over Indonesia's economic independence and global supply chain vulnerabilities. China's control could limit Indonesia's ability to set its own pricing and policies while giving Beijing geopolitical leverage over countries reliant on nickel for electric vehicle production. Environmental and labor issues also plague the industry, with extensive deforestation, pollution, and unsafe working conditions—leading to over 90 deaths since 2015. Indonesia has expressed interest in reducing China's dominance but faces structural challenges due to deep financial and political ties. Experts argue that increased foreign investment from other nations could help push for stronger environmental, social, and governance standards in Indonesia's nickel industry.

As Indonesia, US back away from climate goals, hopes fade to retire coal plants early

—Hans Nicholas Jong and Jeff Hutton, *Mongabay*, 20 February 2025

As Southeast Asian leaders prepared to gather in Jakarta last year, Indonesia's state-run electricity provider, PLN, partially shut down the Suralaya-Banten coal-fired power plant to reduce air pollution. However, Jakarta's air quality remained among the worst globally, with President Joko Widodo himself affected. Despite international pledges to support Indonesia's energy transition, the government recently signaled a reversal. Hashim Djojohadikusumo, climate envoy and brother of President-elect Prabowo Subianto, dismissed plans to phase out coal plants within 15 years as "economic suicide." Analysts now consider the Just Energy

Transition Partnership (JETP)—a \$20 billion initiative by G7 nations—effectively defunct. Meanwhile, Indonesia faces economic and political barriers to coal phase-out, including financial risks for state officials and deep ties between policymakers and coal interests. Some progress in renewable energy is visible, such as solar projects in Batam and Cirata. However, restrictive policies and funding uncertainties hinder expansion. While debt swaps may provide alternative financing, Indonesia's clean energy transition remains uncertain, according to CELIOS report [Opportunities and Challenges for Community-Based Renewable Energy Financing](#) last year.

E. Pollution, Waste and Disaster

[Trash from Jakarta and Tangerang Washes Up on Untung Jawa Island, Reaching 10 Tons](#)

—M Faiz Zaki, *Tempo*, 24 February 2025

Untung Jawa Island in Kepulauan Seribu faces a severe waste management challenge, not only handling local trash but also large amounts of incoming debris from North Jakarta, Tangerang waters, and other areas. Syaripudin, the island's waste management officer, reported that up to 10 tons of waste can wash ashore in a single day. The phenomenon typically occurs between March and May, but in recent years, the pattern has become unpredictable. The waste includes plastic, wood, tree branches, bamboo, mattresses, and even sofas. It is initially sorted on the beach when possible before being transported to a Temporary Processing Site (TPS). Every two weeks, waste transport ships from the Jakarta Environmental Agency carry the non-recyclable waste to the Bantargebang Final Disposal Site in Bekasi. Recyclable materials are processed locally. Tourist activity further contributes to waste accumulation, particularly during holidays and weekends. Limited equipment and space make waste management challenging, with transport relying on motorcycles with carts. Organic waste, such as food scraps, is processed using maggots to reduce landfill dependency.

[Misguided Solutions to the Waste Emergency A Quick Fix for PLTSa Cost and Delays](#)

—Irsyan Hasyim, *Tempo*, 24 February 2025

Jakarta is shifting to Refuse-Derived Fuel (RDF) for waste management as waste-to-energy plants prove costly and time-consuming. After abandoning landfill-based waste management, the government is now focusing on two new systems: energy recovery and material recovery. Energy recovery includes technologies like RDF that generate electricity from waste, while material recovery involves recycling centers and waste banks that support a circular economy by turning plastic waste into new products and organic waste into compost or maggots. Minister of Environment Hanif Faisol Nurofiq has warned that Rawa Kucing landfill and 305 others operating under the open dumping system risk closure. The Jakarta Government has been directed to improve waste management, with Jakarta Environmental Agency Head Asep Kuswanto meeting stakeholders on February 7 to discuss a roadmap. The nearly operational RDF Plant in Rorotan, North Jakarta, will help reduce waste shipments to Bantargebang landfill. However, environmental groups like WALHI criticize the policy's heavy reliance on RDF and waste-to-energy, arguing that effective waste management should start with reduction at the source rather than end-of-pipe solutions.

Thick, smelly smoke from Jakarta's new waste-to-energy plant raises concerns

—News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 17 February 2025

A test run at Jakarta's newly built refuse-derived fuel (RDF) plant in Rorotan, North Jakarta, caused thick, foul-smelling smoke last week, raising concerns among nearby residents. State-owned construction firm PT Wijaya Karya (WIKA), which built the facility, apologized, citing a technical error in early February that prevented the odor-control system from functioning optimally. Project manager Angga Bagus assured the public that corrective measures were in place to prevent future issues. Scheduled for full operations by mid-March, the Rp 1.2 trillion (US\$73.97 million) plant will process a third of Jakarta's daily 8,000 tonnes of waste, converting 35–40% into alternative fuel for cement and coal-fired power plants. The facility follows the RDF plant at Bantargebang landfill, which opened in 2023. However, environmental group Walhi warns of pollution risks, particularly toxic dioxins from burning plastic-based RDF pellets. Jakarta's Environment Agency confirmed that cement firms PT Indocement Tunggul Prakarsa and PT Solusi Bangun Indonesia will be the primary off-takers, generating significant revenue from the fuel.

Toxic tides: life in Indonesia's most polluted village

—Ken Kwek, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 17 February 2025

Tanjung Uma, a coastal village in Batam, Indonesia, is grappling with severe pollution and environmental degradation, exacerbated by rapid urban expansion and government neglect. Once a thriving fishing hamlet, the village has become overwhelmed by waste, industrial runoff, and seasonal storms that flood homes with toxic sewage. Residents, such as Dewi Puspalani and her family, struggle with frequent flooding, water shortages, and health issues caused by contaminated surroundings. With Batam's population surging from 47,000 in 1980 to over 1.2 million today, waste management has failed to keep pace, turning Tanjung Uma into one of Indonesia's most polluted villages. Fishermen, once reliant on abundant marine resources, now face dwindling catches due to habitat destruction. Government initiatives to address the crisis have been hindered by limited funding, corruption, and land-rights disputes, while community-driven recycling programs have faltered due to low incentives. Despite these setbacks, NGOs like Seven Clean Seas continue cleanup efforts, employing locals to collect waste and proposing long-term solutions, underscoring the urgent need for coordinated intervention.

Bandung Declares Waste Emergency; Mayor Discusses Waste Management Strategy with Unpad

—Fuza Nihayatul Chusna, *Tempo*, 17 February 2025

Bandung is facing a waste emergency, with the Sarimukti Landfill reaching its capacity by handling 1,250 tons of waste daily. In response, newly elected Mayor Muhammad Farhan met with experts at Padjadjaran University (Unpad) on February 12, to discuss waste management strategies. The meeting at Unpad's Rectorate Building emphasized integrating technology and social engineering to tackle the crisis. Farhan highlighted the need to consider sociological, legal, psychological, and economic aspects in waste management. Unpad has proposed a system categorizing waste into food, recyclable, and residual types while leveraging IoT technology for monitoring. The university also supports community engagement through education and initiatives like a female mascot symbolizing the role of housewives in waste reduction. The Bandung City Government and Unpad plan to develop a detailed roadmap to implement innovative waste solutions. This collaboration aims to create a

sustainable, community-driven approach, strengthening the Waste-Free Zone (KBS) program and ensuring a cleaner, more environmentally friendly Bandung.

F. Technology, Investment and Finance

Danantara may crowd out private investment

—Aditya Hadi, *TheJakartaPost*, 26 February 2025

Danantara, Indonesia's newly established sovereign wealth fund, risks stifling private investment rather than driving economic growth, analysts warn. Launched by President Prabowo Subianto on February 24, the fund consolidates seven major state-owned enterprises (SOEs) across energy, mining, telecom, and banking, with plans to manage \$900 billion in assets. Prabowo envisions Danantara as a key driver to boost GDP growth from 5.03% to 8% by 2029. However, analysts argue its structure could crowd out private sector investments, contradicting Prabowo's earlier calls for private-led growth. CSIS researcher Riandy Laksono cautioned that Danantara's domestic focus may squeeze out private businesses, limiting overall investment. Economist Ronny P. Sasmita raised concerns over regulatory favoritism, noting that key government figures, including Investment Minister Rosan Roeslani as CEO, now lead the fund. Meanwhile, Celios economist Nailul Huda urged for private sector inclusion in SOE-led projects to ensure balanced growth. The uncertainty over Danantara's investment strategy—whether prioritizing profits or national development—adds to concerns about its long-term impact on Indonesia's economic landscape.

The Most Accepted and Feared Jobs If Replaced by AI

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 22 February 2025

A recent study by the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Germany explores global perceptions of AI replacing human jobs. Published in *American Psychologist* in December 2024, the study surveyed over 10,000 participants from 20 countries, assessing AI's role in six professions: judges, doctors, managers, caregivers, religious leaders, and journalists. Findings indicate that public fear of AI varies by job and country. Judges were the most feared AI replacement, with concerns over fairness and moral judgment, particularly in the U.S., India, and Saudi Arabia. In contrast, AI journalists were the most accepted, likely due to their perceived neutrality. Cultural attitudes and media narratives also shaped responses, with Japan, Turkey, and China expressing lower fear levels. While AI integration in various fields is inevitable, researchers emphasize minimizing negative impacts while maximizing benefits. Experts caution against risks such as bias and misinformation, particularly in journalism and legal decisions. The debate continues as AI increasingly influences human work, with some, like Elon Musk, predicting AI will eventually replace all jobs.

Dong, M., Conway, J. R., Bonnefon, J.-F., Shariff, A., & Rahwan, I. (2024). [Fears about artificial intelligence across 20 countries and six domains of application](#). *American Psychologist Association*.

Indonesia's funding plan for new investment arm sparks backlash, transparency concerns

—Resty Woro Yuniar, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 19 February 2025

Indonesia's plan to fund its new sovereign wealth fund, Danantara, through sweeping austerity measures has sparked public backlash over transparency concerns. President Prabowo Subianto announced that 750 trillion rupiah (US\$44 billion) would be raised by cutting public sector budgets, affecting ministry spending, disaster preparedness, and civil servants' wages. Of this, 325 trillion rupiah will fund Danantara's investment arm. Set to launch soon, Danantara aims to generate higher returns from state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and attract foreign investment. However, critics warn that a revised SOE law could shield the fund from audits, raising corruption risks. Student protests erupted in Surabaya, condemning budget cuts prioritizing Danantara over social programs like Prabowo's free meals initiative. Danantara, modeled after Singapore's Temasek, will consolidate seven major SOEs worth US\$570 billion. Experts caution that political influence and lack of oversight could deter investors. While proponents argue its independent structure prevents meddling, analysts warn mismanagement could undermine Prabowo's administration and Indonesia's economic stability.

Theft of Earthquake and Tsunami Monitoring Equipment is Rampant in Disaster-Prone Zones

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 16 February 2025

The theft and vandalism of earthquake and tsunami monitoring equipment in Indonesia have escalated, endangering public safety. In the past 1.5 months, BMKG's monitoring station in Buae Village, Sidrap, South Sulawesi, has been targeted four times, with thieves stealing batteries and solar panels essential for earthquake detection. The latest incident occurred on February 12, 2025, forcing BMKG to remove remaining equipment, rendering the monitoring system non-operational. BMKG's Earthquake and Tsunami Center head, Daryono, warned that this area, located on the active Walanae Fault, is highly seismic, capable of triggering earthquakes up to magnitude 7.1. Previous disasters, including the 1997 earthquake and the 1967 tsunami, have caused significant casualties. BMKG has reported at least ten similar cases of equipment theft since 2015 across Indonesia. Daryono urged the public and local governments to protect monitoring stations, emphasizing that replacing stolen equipment is costly and critical for disaster mitigation. Without functioning sensors, BMKG's ability to provide timely earthquake and tsunami warnings is compromised, putting lives at risk.

2025, Credit to Downstream Projects Still Banking's Favorite

—Agustinus Yoga Primantoro, *Kompas*, 14 February 2025

The banking sector is expected to drive Indonesia's credit growth in 2025, with corporate loans, particularly for downstream projects, projected to remain the main contributor at 9-11% growth. Banks see opportunities in financing these government-priority projects, aimed at adding value to domestic industries. BNI President Director Royke Tumilaar confirmed the bank's commitment, with its downstream sector portfolio reaching IDR 60 trillion. He suggested loosening liquidity through a reduction in the Minimum Statutory Reserves (GWM) to enhance credit distribution. Similarly, Bank Danamon's Head of Transaction Banking, Andrew Suhandinata, expressed hopes for increased corporate participation in downstream projects to boost economic growth. The Financial Services Authority (OJK) highlighted the need for strong risk mitigation, given the scale of corporate financing. As of December 2024, corporate credit stood at IDR 4,185.1 trillion, growing 14.8% annually. Experts emphasized the role of ESG-based financing in attracting foreign investment and ensuring sustainable growth. The success of Indonesia's downstream program will depend on policy consistency, financing innovation, and market adaptability.

G. Human Rights, Democracy and Gender Equality

Government admits 200 more children may have been wrongly detained as adult people smugglers in Australia

—Christopher Knaus, *TheGuardian*, 26 February 2025

The Australian government has admitted that an additional 220 Indonesian children may have been wrongly detained as adult people smugglers, doubling the initial estimate to 440. The revelation comes as the federal court continues to oversee the distribution of a \$27.5 million compensation package ordered in late 2023 for those unlawfully imprisoned between 2010 and 2012. Authorities had misclassified the children as adults using flawed wrist X-ray techniques, leading to their detention in immigration centers and even maximum-security prisons. Some were as young as 12 and should have been repatriated under Australian policy. A 2022 Guardian investigation exposed how federal police ignored doubts about the X-ray method and altered birth dates on legal documents to facilitate prosecutions. The court heard on Wednesday that new records from the government indicate a larger group may be eligible for compensation. Administrator Mark Barrow is now working to locate those affected. The case highlights ongoing concerns over Australia's strict people-smuggling laws, which mandated five-year sentences, disproportionately impacting impoverished Indonesian youth lured onto smuggling boats.

Calls grow for Prabowo to expedite land conflict resolution

— News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 24 February 2025

The administration faces mounting pressure to resolve Indonesia's widespread agrarian conflicts and land disputes. Environmental groups urge Prabowo to take direct action, citing bureaucratic inefficiencies and overlapping regulations among various ministries, including the Forestry and Agrarian Ministries. Speaking at the 2025 Asia Land Forum in Jakarta on Feb. 19, Agrarian Reform Consortium (KPA) secretary-general Dewi Kartika emphasized the need for national-scale agrarian reform led by the President. Despite existing regulations like the 1960 Agrarian Law and a 2023 presidential regulation, conflicts persist. The KPA reports that 68% of Indonesia's land is controlled by 1% of the population, with 295 land disputes recorded in 2024—a 21% increase from 2023. The majority involved plantations, particularly oil palm, followed by infrastructure projects affecting over 20,000 families. Calls for reform also come from affected communities, including farmers displaced by the Land Bank Authority and indigenous groups fighting for land rights. Experts suggest a presidential decree to streamline land governance and prevent further injustices.

Kezia Fellcia Kurniawan, research, action toward achieving green energy in Indonesia

—Creative Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 24 February 2025

Kezia Fellcia Kurniawan, an 11th-grade student at Jakarta Intercultural School, is making strides in Indonesia's renewable energy sector through her research on biogasoline. Working under the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) and guided by researcher Robert Ronal Widjaya, Kezia explored using aluminum-pillared bentonite (Al-PILC) to improve ethanol-to-gasoline conversion. Her findings showed a significant increase in gasoline selectivity from 0.91% with unmodified bentonite to 51.70% with Al-PILC, presenting a promising alternative for cleaner biofuels. Beyond the lab, Kezia launched *BioFueline*, a public awareness campaign and survey to educate Indonesians on biogasoline. A survey of 200 respondents found that while most were unfamiliar with the term, 67% expressed

willingness to switch to sustainable fuels. Kezia's initiative aligns with Indonesia's climate goals by reducing reliance on fossil fuels and tackling waste management issues. She hopes her research and advocacy will inspire other young innovators to contribute to environmental solutions. "Research only makes an impact if it reaches people who can utilize it," she said.

Baduy uphold asceticism, indigenous wisdom against modern schooling

—Paridhi Bakshi, *The Jakarta Post*, 21 February 2025

The Baduy people, an indigenous Sundanese ethnic group in Banten, reject formal education to preserve their traditional way of life. Living in the remote hills of Lebak Regency, the Baduy adhere to *Sunda Wiwitan*, an ancient belief system, and shun modern technology. The community is divided into two groups: Baduy Dalam (Inner Baduy), who live in strict isolation, and Baduy Luar (Outer Baduy), who have limited contact with the outside world. According to local guide Fahmi Priatna, Baduy elders fear that education and technology would introduce material desires, disrupting their customs. "If children become too smart, they will want modern things, which could change their way of life," he said. Instead, the Baduy pass down knowledge through generations, prioritizing simplicity and self-sufficiency. While Outer Baduy engage in trade and occasionally use phones for business, Inner Baduy maintain a strict rejection of modernity. Visitors, including tourists, marvel at their ascetic lifestyle. As the world modernizes, the Baduy remain steadfast in preserving their traditions, resisting pressures to integrate contemporary education.

Hum the Mamas of the Grime Nawa Valley for its Culture and Nature

—Nasrun Katingka, *Kompas*, 20 February 2025

A traditional song in the Namblong language, lamenting the loss of land and forests, was performed by Rosita Tecuari, Regina Bay, Sopia Bano, and Vebriani Hembring in Benyom Village, Jayapura, Papua, on Sunday (9/2/2025). The song, dating back to the 1960s, reflects the struggles of the Namblong Indigenous community, particularly during the military operations era. Rosita Tecuari, leader of the Namblong Indigenous Women's Organization (Orpa), emphasized that the region's forests are vital for indigenous livelihoods, yet face ongoing threats from illegal logging and palm oil expansion. In response, the community has intensified forest patrols and legal battles to reclaim customary land, with some receiving government certification. Beyond environmental conservation, Orpa and Suara Grina, a youth-led initiative, work to preserve Namblong cultural heritage through a cultural school and digital archiving. Collaborating with Photovoices International, they use participatory photography to document their identity. Rosita warns that without efforts to sustain their heritage, future generations risk losing their cultural roots entirely.

I. Indonesia in Geopolitics

Russia and Indonesia hold talks to strengthen ties on defense and security

—Niniek Karmini and Andi Jatmiko, *APNews*, 25 February 2025

Russia and Indonesia are deepening their defense ties following a high-level meeting in Jakarta on February 25 between Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu and Indonesia's Defense Minister Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin. The talks, part of Shoigu's five-day Asia tour, come as Russia seeks to expand its defense partnerships in Southeast Asia amid its

ongoing war in Ukraine. Shoigu and Sjamsoeddin discussed military cooperation and other mutual interests, reflecting Moscow's commitment to strengthening bilateral ties. Shoigu is also scheduled to meet President Prabowo Subianto before departing for Malaysia. Indonesia, recently admitted as a full member of BRICS—a bloc co-founded by Russia—has historically maintained a neutral stance on the Ukraine war. Jakarta has purchased Russian military equipment, including Sukhoi fighter jets and armored vehicles, and held joint naval drills with Russia last November. Under Subianto's leadership, Indonesia aims to bolster its military by acquiring submarines, frigates, and additional fighter jets while expanding defense collaboration with global partners. His visit to the Kremlin last August signaled continued strategic engagement with Moscow.

Danantara snubs megaproject Nusantara in investment priorities: State Palace

—Ruth Dea Juwita, *TheJakartaPost*, 25 February 2025

Indonesia's newly launched sovereign wealth fund, Danantara, will not prioritize funding for the development of Nusantara, the future capital in East Kalimantan, presidential spokesman Hasan Nasbi said on Monday. Instead, the fund will focus on downstream industrial development to accelerate economic growth. President Prabowo Subianto launched Danantara on February 24, managing over \$900 billion in assets to support his ambitious target of 8 percent economic growth. With an initial capital of \$20 billion, the fund will invest in strategic sectors, including nickel, bauxite, and copper processing, AI data centers, oil refineries, petrochemicals, food production, and renewable energy. Danantara CEO Rosan Roeslani stated that the fund would operate through a holding company and an investment arm, aiming to attract foreign investors. Meanwhile, Nusantara Capital City Authority head Basuki Hadimuljono expressed hope for funding but had yet to submit a formal request. Despite Prabowo's public support for Nusantara, its construction has not been a top priority, as his administration focuses on other major projects while managing budget constraints.

Students Lead 'Dark Indonesia' Protests Against Budget Cuts

—Budi Satriawan, Yuddy Cahya, Ananda Teresia & Stanley Widiyanto, *Reuters*, 20 February 2025

Four months into his presidency, Prabowo Subianto is facing his first nationwide student protests against budget cuts and key policy decisions. Thousands of students staged demonstrations in major cities, including Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Medan, voicing concerns over austerity measures, cabinet appointments, and military involvement in civilian affairs. Protesters condemned Prabowo's \$19 billion cost-cutting drive, fearing it could weaken social support, particularly in education, as funds are redirected to flagship programs like free school lunches. Despite government assurances that education spending and teacher welfare will not be affected, students remain skeptical. The movement has gained traction on social media, "Dark Indonesia" symbolizing discontent and "Just Escape First" reflecting young Indonesians' growing interest in emigrating. Protesters also criticized reduced subsidies for cooking gas and called for a mass strike. Although Prabowo enjoys high approval ratings, analysts warn that public dissatisfaction over economic policies could erode support, especially among the shrinking middle class. The protests are the largest since last August, signaling growing unrest.

Indonesia aims to create its version of DeepSeek in bid to become AI hub

—SCMP Asia's Desk, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 19 February 2025

Indonesia is advancing efforts to develop a local version of Chinese AI startup DeepSeek's technology, aiming to boost its position as a Southeast Asian tech leader. President's senior

economic adviser, Luhut Pandjaitan, revealed the plan at the Indonesia Economic Summit in Jakarta describing that a team is building an open-source large language model (LLM) capable of responding in Bahasa Indonesia and English. The chatbot, set to be presented to Prabowo early next month, is expected to enhance efficiency across sectors. Luhut, a former minister, declined to disclose development costs but emphasized affordability. DeepSeek, which launched its R1 chatbot last month, claims its AI rivals OpenAI's ChatGPT at a fraction of the cost. Indonesia is drafting AI regulations, with officials considering DeepSeek's role in the digital ecosystem. Meanwhile, business leaders, including Indonesian Chamber of Commerce Chairman Arsjad Rasjid, urge collaboration between the private sector and the government to spur AI innovation. The region's AI boom has already drawn over \$30 billion in investments in Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia in 2023.

Government considers amnesty for Papuan armed groups

—News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 18 February 2025

The Indonesian government is open to granting amnesty to Papuan separatist groups, officially referred to as armed criminal groups (KKB), despite previously excluding them from planned pardons. Law Minister Supratman Andi Agtas stated on February 17 that while the current mass amnesty plan focuses on drug users and defamation convicts, KKB members could be pardoned if they pledge allegiance to Indonesia and reintegrate into society. The proposal came in response to NasDem Party lawmaker Tonny Tesar, who highlighted seven imprisoned KKB members in Makassar willing to leave the separatist movement. Supratman compared the situation to Aceh, where former rebels of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) were granted amnesty in 2005 to promote national unity. President Prabowo Subianto's administration is reviewing 44,500 convicts for amnesty, with 19,000 potentially eligible. However, rights groups warn that resolving Papua's conflict requires addressing discrimination, human rights abuses, and poverty, not just pardons. The final list of amnesty recipients is expected to be issued next month.