



**Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest**

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## The Coronavirus crisis in Indonesia

### [Covid-19 pandemic: No long holidays for Eid Al Fitr over coronavirus in Indonesia](#)

—Khaleej Times, 27 March 2021

The Indonesian government has decided not to allow people to return home during the Eid Al Fitr holidays this year as the Covid-19 pandemic was still raging, a Minister said. In a statement on Friday, Coordinating Minister for Human Development and Culture Muhadjir Effendy said this policy applies to all Indonesians, including private employees and informal workers, reports Xinhua news agency. Effendy explained that there was further spread of Covid-19 with increasing deaths due to the disease after long holiday seasons in the past, such as the higher bed occupancy rate (BOR) in hospitals following the New Year vacation. Meanwhile, the death toll rose sharply from 1,000 to more than 2,000 cases per month during those long holidays, compared to that in other months which recorded between 50 and 900 fatalities. The homecoming prohibition will be effective on May 6-17. However, the government has also urged people not to leave their areas before and after those dates.

### [\\$450 Million ADB Loan to Help Indonesia Deliver Safe and Effective COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

— Asian Development Bank, 31 March 2021

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$450 million loan to Indonesia to help Bio Farma, a state-owned vaccine supplier, procure and deliver safe and effective vaccines against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The Responsive COVID-19 Vaccines for Recovery (RECOVER) project will fund the purchase of at least 65 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine for priority groups determined by the Indonesian government. The project is supported by ADB's \$9 billion Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility (APVAX), which was launched in December 2020 to offer rapid and equitable vaccine-related support to ADB developing member. "The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on Indonesians. The RECOVER project will help the government protect lives and restore livelihoods," said ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa. "It will help immunize millions of socially and economically vulnerable people at high risk of transmission, as well as public service officers providing critical services. ADB will also help the government and Bio Farma improve logistics management and deliver vaccines more effectively."

## Marine & Fisheries

### [One Indonesian industry has boomed during the pandemic: seaweed farming](#)

—*The Conversation*, 15 March 2021

When COVID-19 hit Indonesia, it devastated industries such as fisheries. However, one sector has gone against the trend: seaweed farming. A research shows seaweed farming in Indonesia is booming during the pandemic. There is a range of possible reasons for this change, including environmental conditions, farming practices and the impacts of COVID-19. The resilience of seaweed farming is important given the nation's status as the world's largest producer of hydrocolloid seaweeds. Indonesia produces two-thirds of the global supply. These seaweeds are

generally not eaten but are sold to factories for processing into a powder used for thickening foods such as ice-cream. For a case study of the mainland coastline of Pangkep in South Sulawesi, they used newly available high-resolution, high-frequency satellite imagery from US-based Earth-imaging firm PlanetLabs to map seaweed farming over time. Environmental conditions, local farming practices and the economic impacts of COVID-19, such as trade disruptions and job losses, may have contributed to this trend.

#### [U.S. imported \\$2.4 billion in illegally fished seafood in 2019, U.S. agency says](#)

—David Lawder, *Reuters*, 19 March 2021

The United States imported \$2.4 billion worth of seafood from illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) in 2019, representing 11% of total U.S. imports, the U.S. International Trade Commission said in a report released. The report, from an investigation requested by the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee in December 2019, found that the removal of IUU seafood imports would increase the total operating income of the U.S. commercial fishing industry by an estimated \$60.8 million. Seafood prices and catch sizes would increase for all species modeled. The U.S. commercial fisheries that would benefit most include those targeting warmwater shrimp, sockeye salmon, bigeye tuna and squid. The International Trade Commission found that over 13 percent of wild-caught seafood imports were derived from IUU fishing. It identified China, Russia, Mexico, Vietnam and Indonesia as “relatively substantial exporters” of illegally caught seafood to the United States. The report also found that IUU seafood is often used to make fishmeal to support aquaculture.

#### [Study calls for a marine reserve in a \\$500m fishing hotspot in Indonesia](#)

—Cassie Freund, *Mongabay*, 23 March 2021

Indonesia’s snapper and grouper fisheries, together called the “deep-slope demersal fishery,” is one of the country’s most valuable fisheries, worth \$500 million. Adult snapper and grouper live at least 50 meters below the ocean surface, and sometimes hundreds of meters, depending on the species. Juvenile fish tend to congregate in shallower seas than the adults. Protecting immature fish is key to keeping any fishery sustainable in the long term. Unfortunately for snapper and grouper, smaller immature fish are in demand because they fit neatly on a plate — which retailers and consumers love. There is no current monitoring of the size of fish caught. Establishing a marine protected area could be an effective way to improve the management of the deep-slope demersal fishery in the Java Sea-Makassar Strait region, where a large proportion of juvenile fish are hauled in, as a priority area for protection. Another expert says imposing an MPA in this key fishing area would be a bureaucratic challenge, and instead suggests introducing an annual close season.

#### [Indonesia sinks 8 Malaysian vessels for illegal fishing](#)

— Nicky Aulia Widadio, *Anadolu Agency*, 19 March 2021

Indonesia sank eight Malaysian-flagged vessels this week for fishing in its exclusive economic zone, authorities said on Friday. Six boats were sunk by the Belawan District Prosecutor’s Office in North Sumatra on March 16. “We hope this will have a deterrent effect on foreign ships,” Ikeu Bachtiar, head of the prosecutor’s office, said in a written statement on Friday. Two more fishing vessels were destroyed by the Banda Aceh District Prosecutor’s Office on Thursday. The two boats were confiscated by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries in 2019 for illegally fishing in Indonesian waters without valid permit documents and using fishing gear prohibited by Indonesia. Their crew members -- all of them Thai citizens -- were arrested and their captains, Surriyon Jannok and Winai Bunpichit, have been convicted. Indonesia has sunk more than 550 vessels related to illegal fishing between October 2014 to 2020. The penalty for illegal fishing under Indonesian law is a maximum jail term of six years and a fine of up to 20 billion Indonesian rupiahs (\$1.3 million).

### [Fishery SOEs eye robust growth after planned merger this year](#)

— Dzulfiqar Fathur Rahman, *The Jakarta Post*, 15 March 2021

Perum Perikanan Indonesia (Perindo) and PT Perikanan Nusantara (Perinus), the country's top state-owned fishery companies, are eyeing a 26 percent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) over five years after completing their government-ordered merger by June this year. The growth estimate takes into account the combination of Perinus's capture fishery business and Perindo's fishery port management and aquaculture businesses, according to Raenhat Tiranto Hutabarat, the director of operations at Perindo. The CAGR was expected to reach 15 percent for port services and 22 percent for fishery trade in five years' time, in line with the two companies' capacities and market opportunities. For the fish cultivation business, Perindo operates 38 hectares of fish ponds, floating net cages and a fish and shrimp feed factory that produces 6 tons of feed per hour. Perinus president director Farida Mokodompit said the two companies would renew and improve production facilities to improve productivity after the merger.

### [Pandjaitan and foreign envoys conduct coral reef planting in Bali](#)

—*Antara News*, 27 March 2021

Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment, Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, and several foreign ambassadors recently carried out coral reef transplantation at Nusa Dua beach, Bali, according to a press statement issued here on Saturday. During the event, Pandjaitan also promoted the government's National Economic Recovery (PEN) program, which includes labor-intensive coral reef restoration activities. "The coral reef restoration program, apart from bringing positive benefits to the environment, has also provided benefits to Balinese people who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially those living in coastal areas," he said. "And this program has run for four months from October, 2020 to January, 2021, funded by a State Budget (APBN) of Rp111.2 billion, and the area to be restored has reached 74.3 hectares," he said. The coral reef restoration program is planned to be continued in 2021 in three Super Priority Tourist Destinations (DPSP) and six Marine Tourism and Marine Conservation Destinations.

## Forestry & Land Use

### [Oil palm growers' misdeeds allow an opportunity to save West Papua's forests](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, Mongabay, 24 March 2021

A government review has identified a massive area of forest in Indonesia's West Papua province that has been earmarked for oil palm plantations but that can still be saved. Keeping this forested area standing could potentially prevent the release of greenhouse gases equivalent to two-fifths of Indonesia's total annual emissions, experts say — if the concession holders can be made to relinquish their hold over the land. Twenty-four palm oil companies control a combined 576,090 hectares of land in West Papua, of which 383,431 hectares is intact forest. A recently concluded government review of oil palm license holders has determined that this area remains untouched because of a litany of administrative and legal violations by the companies that prevents them from clearing the forest and starting to cultivate oil palms. This gives local authorities leverage to win back control of the concessions

from the companies on administrative and procedural grounds, although officials say the process could take at least a year, even if the companies relinquish the land voluntarily.

### [In Indonesia, pulp and paper firms stoke demand that may drive deforestation](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 23 March 2021

Plans for expansion by the pulp and paper industry in Indonesia threaten to reverse a declining rate of deforestation for pulpwood plantations, according to a NGO analysis. An increasing number of producers and buyers of wood pulp and paper have adopted zero-deforestation commitments in recent years. This has contributed to a drop in forest-clearing for the industry in Indonesia, according to analysis of data from Trase, a supply chain transparency initiative. But this decline might not last long, given that at least six new pulp mills have recently started operating, according to data from the Ministry of Industry, which points to an increase in demand for pulpwood and thus for new plantations to feed them. Activists, therefore, have called on the government to provide protection for all natural forests in Indonesia from such an expansion. With much of the forests in Sumatra and Borneo cleared for pulpwood, palm oil and mines, the anticipated expansion of the pulpwood industry would likely be in Papua.

## **Energy, Climate Change, Mining & Pollution**

### [Indonesia mulls net-zero emissions target by 2070](#)

—A.Muhlbn Aqil, *The Jakarta Post*, 22 March 2021

Indonesia is considering setting a net-zero emissions target by 2070 as part of its long-term strategy in the country's fight against climate change. Environment and Forestry Ministry Climate Change Management Director General Ruandha Agung Sugardiman

explained that the 2070 net-zero emissions target was part of the three climate-mitigation scenarios that Indonesia would put in its long-term strategy, which will be submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) prior to this year's climate summit, or COP26, in Glasgow, the United Kingdom, in November. Ruandha said the net-zero emissions target by 2070 was a realistic one for Indonesia based on several models tested by the Environment and Forestry Ministry and the Energy and Natural Resources Ministry. The UNFCCC says that up to 30 countries have communicated their long-term strategy, with most aiming to have net-zero emissions by 2050. While the Indonesian government has revealed little to no detail about its planned net-zero emissions goal, some climate campaigner said the goal might be "too late".

### [Indonesian community seeks World Bank mediation against Chinese-owned zinc mine - China Dialogue](#)

—Tonggo Simangunsong, *China Dialogue*, 22 March 2021

Villagers in North Sumatra, Indonesia, are waiting to hear if the World Bank will support their struggle against a zinc mine owner's plans to build a tailings dam on unstable volcanic soils near their homes. Back in October 2019, the community sent their complaint, against mining company PT Dairi Prima Mineral (DPM), to the World Bank's private finance arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC). In March last year, the IFC accepted the complaint because of the miner's links to an IFC client, the Postal Savings Bank of China. With DPM seeking to expand the mine beyond the scope of its original plans, villagers are increasingly worried about the environmental and health impacts it will have once fully operational.

At the heart of the community complaint is a tailings dam for by-products from the mine. Initially located next to the mine's processing facility, DPM's plans have now changed, moving its location to within a few hundred metres of the nearest village. The move could result in a deadly disaster, warn international analysts.

### [Indonesian campaigners triumph against a coal mine in top court](#)

— Della Syahni, *Mongabay*, 23 March 2021

Environmentalists in Indonesia's South Kalimantan province have emerged victorious after a three-year legal battle against a company that planned to displace thousands of people and mine coal in a rich, mountainous rainforest. The Supreme Court rejected last month the coal company's final appeal in a lawsuit that argued the former minister of energy and mines should not have given an operating permit to PT Mantimin Coal Mining (MCM) because it had not produced an environmental permit first. "This is good news in the midst of the ecological disaster that's happening in South Kalimantan," said Kisworo Dwi Cahyono, director of the provincial chapter of Indonesian environmental NGO Walhi. "The people of South Kalimantan awaited this decision after going through a long process and twice unsuccessfully suing in lower courts. Finally, the people's voice was heard, and we won." Walhi has also asked President Joko Widodo to immediately evaluate problematic mining permits in the province, especially after a disastrous flood this year was tied to operating and abandoned mines.

### [Oil Refinery in Indonesia Catches Fire, Prompting an Evacuation](#)

—Dera Menra Sijabat and Richard C. Paddock, *The New York Times*, 29 March 2021

An oil refinery on the Indonesian island of Java caught fire early Monday, sending flames and smoke towering into the sky, seriously injuring six people and prompting an evacuation of nearly 1,000 nearby residents. The blaze at the Balongan refinery in West Java Province started shortly after midnight and burned through the night and all day Monday. Pertamina, the state-owned company that operates the refinery, said it could not estimate when firefighters would be able to extinguish the fire, which was visible for miles. Hundreds of houses near the refinery were damaged when the explosion caused windows to shatter, prompting the mass evacuation, Pertamina said. "The cause of the fire is not known with certainty, but at the time of the incident, it was raining heavily accompanied by lightning," the company said in a statement.

### [Indonesia launches EV battery holding company](#)

— *The Jakarta Post*, 29 March 2021

Indonesia Battery Corporation (IBC) is one step closer to becoming a reality after four large state-owned enterprises (SOEs) signed a shareholders' agreement on the company's ownership structure on March 16. Under the agreement, state-owned oil giant Pertamina, electricity monopoly PLN, mining holding company MIND ID and nickel and gold miner PT Aneka Tambang (Antam) will each own 25 percent of IBC, an electric vehicle (EV) battery holding company. IBC plans to partner with other companies, most notably China's CATL and South Korea's LG Chem, the world's top two EV battery producers, to establish several joint ventures to create an end-to-end EV battery supply chain in Indonesia. "The work is not yet done. This is still on paper. We hope to implement this by 2022 or 2023, in terms of producing [batteries] domestically," said SOEs Minister Erick Thohir. The government established IBC to penetrate the highly lucrative global EV market, which according to MIND ID's estimates will nearly quadruple in size over the next six years.

### [Three Indonesia cities listed in the Top 10 most polluted cities in South-East Asia, says IQAir quality report | The Star](#)

— *The Star*, 20 March 2021

Three Indonesian cities were listed in the top 10 most polluted cities in South-East Asia, according to IQAir quality report in 2020. South Tangerang in Banten province claimed first place. The city with a population of 1.8 million recorded an average PM2.5 level of 74.9 throughout 2020, much higher than the World Health Organisation's recommended level of 10. It was followed by Pai in Thailand, which recorded a 53 PM2.5 average, Bekasi of Indonesia with a level of 48.1, and three other Thai cities. Jakarta was listed as the seventh most polluted city with a score of 39.6 PM2.5 on average. The IQAir report stated that the region faces challenges in air pollution caused by population explosion and robust economic growth. The PM2.5 emissions in South-East Asian countries were mainly caused by construction and industrial activities, as well as transportation.

## Conservation & Protected Areas

### [In Indonesia, an illegal leopard trade thrives out of sight, new study shows](#)

—Claudia Geib, *Mongabay*, 24 March 2021

This is the story of how Indonesia is losing its spots. In a recent paper published in *Nature Conservation*, researchers found that the archipelagic nation has a significant illegal trade in two regional leopard species: the Javan leopard (*Panthera pardus melas*) and the Sunda clouded leopard (*Neofelis diardi*). This trafficking could pose a serious threat to two species that are already facing extinction — especially as it remains largely unrecognized as a problem. The researchers collected 41 records of leopard parts or living animals seized by authorities between 2011 and 2019. They estimate that the products of these seizures — including skins, teeth, claws, paws, skulls, taxidermy products, and live cubs — represent at least 83 animals, comprising 51 Javan leopards and 32 Sunda clouded leopards. While the majority of these seizures occurred within Indonesia, the authors also documented three seized international shipments that originated in Indonesia: one to Russia, one to Kuwait, and one to the United Kingdom.

### [Secretive group found to have cleared orangutan habitat in Indonesia: Report](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 22 March 2021

A new report has identified the secretive Nusantara Fiber group as being responsible for the most deforestation by the industrial forestry industry in Indonesia in the past five years. The group's six subsidiaries cleared a combined 26,000 hectares of forest in Indonesian Borneo from 2016 to 2020 to plant pulpwood, timber and biomass trees, according to the report by the NGO Aidenvironment. Little is known about the group, but historical records suggest possible ties to the pulpwood and palm oil conglomerate Royal Golden Eagle; the latter has denied any such connection. Aidenvironment has called for a halt to the deforestation, which has cleared habitat of the critically endangered Bornean orangutan, and for greater transparency on the ownership structures of both groups, as well as the application of zero-deforestation policies.

## Other

### [UMD study suggests supporting Indonesian women in conservation supports biodiversity](#)

— University of Mariland, *EurekAlert*, 30 March 2021

In a new study published in *Conservation Science and Practice*, researchers at the University of Maryland (UMD) partnered with Indonesian experts to explore the motivations and challenges of women pursuing a career in conservation sciences in Indonesia. Conservation work remains male-dominated in Indonesia, especially fieldwork, so gaining a better understanding of the cultural norms and barriers in place for Indonesian women aspiring to a career in conservation represents an important step in supporting women in this field. Erin Poor, postdoctoral researcher in Environmental Science and Technology developed and facilitated a workshop in Riau Province, central Sumatra. Working closely with Indonesian leaders at the World Wildlife Fund-Indonesia (WWF) and the Universitas Gadjah Mada, Poor and the UMD team identified a need for culturally appropriate training and mentorship for women wanting to conduct conservation fieldwork. "

### [Green Party seeks authorization for 2024 election run - National](#)

—A. Muh.Ibnu Aqil, The Jakarta Post, 29 March 2021

Activists are seeking to establish an electorally viable political party to bring environmental issues to the forefront of Indonesian politics, a strategy that has been attempted before in the country. Members of Green Party Indonesia (PHI) declared their intention to register to run in the 2024 elections at the party's first national congress in late February of this year. The party's co-president, John Muhammad, said Indonesia urgently needed a green party as severe environmental issues threatened the country and its people. A central component of the party's platform is ensuring the significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, as proposed in the 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report. The panel urged all nations to work to prevent global temperatures from rising more than 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2030. Otherwise, the report noted, the climate crisis would trigger deadly catastrophes.