



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

Indonesia reignites lobster larvae exports amid sustainability worries

—News Desk, *UndercurrentNews*, 8 May 2024

Indonesia is reinstating the controversial export of lobster larvae, initially just to Vietnam, to combat rampant smuggling and to foster investment in its lobster-farming sector. The ban has met with controversy since introduction in 2016; a subsequent attempt to lift it failed after the fisheries minister at the time was arrested for taking bribes to issue export permits. The current minister says the lifting this time around is based on pragmatic considerations. Critics

argue that Vietnam's advanced industry will benefit more from the move, exacerbating Indonesia's struggle to develop its own sector. Despite Indonesia's vast lobster potential, challenges like high larval mortality hinder industry growth. The resumption requires companies to partner with local farmers and release 2% of harvests back into the wild. However, concerns persist about overharvesting and corruption, given past scandals. Vietnamese companies are eager to invest, raising questions about their connections and Indonesia's long-term lobster sustainability. Experts caution that without careful management, Indonesia risks losing its lobster population to exports, leaving it behind while other nations profit.

As plastic talks wrap up in Canada, fishers in Indonesia count the costs

—Falahi Mubarak and Yogi Eka Sahputra, *Mongabay*, 8 May 2024

Fishers in the Thousand Islands off Jakarta coast face severe economic losses due to extensive plastic pollution littering their seas. The decline in catch volume and damage to boat engines result in reduced income and productivity. Negotiators at the recent UN Plastic Summit aim to finalize an international agreement in November this year to address global plastic production, which has skyrocketed over the years. Plastic pollution hampers fishing activities, causing costly repairs and decreased catch. Efforts to combat plastic waste are hindered by decentralized governance and require collaborative action. Jakarta implements waste management measures, but challenges persist, especially with riverborne waste. Plastic pollution affects coastal ecosystems and threatens food security. Local fishers like Mustaghfirin are compelled to navigate plastic-infested waters, significantly reducing their catch and income – they now earn less than a decade earlier. International cooperation and local initiatives are essential to mitigate plastic pollution's impact on marine life and livelihoods.

OceanXplorer Expedition Ship on Mission to Fight Climate Change

—Jumarto Yulianus, *Kompas*, 6 May 2024

OceanX, a global marine exploration non-profit, is conducting scientific research expeditions in Southeast Asia to mainly combat climate change. Using the world's most advanced OceanXplorer vessel, the team gathers crucial data to protect the ocean. The ship is also a media production vessel, equipped with cutting-edge technology for surveying various marine environments, including deep-sea, shallow, and coastal habitats. OceanX aims to explore and document marine biodiversity, partnering with regional scientists, government agencies and non-government organizations. The expedition will cover Indonesia and Malaysia, focusing on areas rich in marine biodiversity but still unexplored. Indonesian officials, including Coordinating Minister Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, emphasized the mission's potential to uncover groundbreaking discoveries and support social welfare through innovations in fields like medicine and biotechnology. Key research areas include earthquake and tsunami models, sustainable fisheries, and biodiversity assessments. Educational programs will nurture future marine scientists and engineers, while promoting ocean conservation. (with additional info from [OceanX](#))

Tuna, a Leading Commodity that is Not Yet Competitive

Kompas, 3 May 2024

—BM Lukita Grahadyarini,

World Tuna Day on May 2 highlights Indonesia's need to boost its tuna industry's competitiveness. Despite being the world's largest tuna producer, Indonesia faces challenges such as limited market reach and trade barriers. The government has declared 2024 as the Year of Tuna Indonesia to enhance both global and domestic market competitiveness and

promote sustainable tuna management. Although Indonesian tuna products have received Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) ecolabel certification, meeting stringent European Union requirements remains a challenge. Additionally, Indonesian tuna faces a 20.5% EU import duty, disadvantaging it against competitors. Traditional fishing methods using sustainable tools are under pressure from modern fleets, threatening their future. In 2023, Indonesia produced 1.5 million tons of tuna, contributing 19.1% of the global supply. Efforts to market sustainable MSC-labeled tuna domestically have made strides, with the launch of such products in local supermarkets. The Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries collaborates with MSC to ensure sustainability and traceability, aiming to improve market reach and transaction values at international seafood expos.

B. Forests and Land Use

Forest Logging and Environmental Damage Trigger Nature's Amok in South Sulawesi

—Reny Sri Ayu Arman, *Kompas*, 10 May 2024

The successive disasters in South Sulawesi are the accumulation of forest logging and damage to river watersheds that have been occurring for a long time, exacerbating hydrometeorological crises. Residents, like Risno and Hj Netti, are forced to flee due to ongoing landslides and flooding, leaving their homes perilously situated on Mount Latimojong's slopes. The series of disasters, claiming 36 lives in less than a month, underscores the urgency of addressing environmental issues. The destruction of forests for agriculture and settlements, coupled with mining activities, has significantly reduced environmental resilience. The region's flood-prone areas are worsened by poor land management and inadequate disaster response. While relocation is challenging, efforts should focus on educating residents and improving disaster mitigation and management strategies. Head of the Center for Environmental Studies at South Sulawesi-based Hasanuddin University Ilham Alimuddin stresses the need for government actions, urging reassessment of spatial planning and proactive measures to mitigate future disasters. He also points out that the current disaster response is poor. There are many aids, but distribution is uneven and slow.

KLHK Says Indonesia's Deforestation Level Drops Significantly at UN Forest Forum

—Najla Nur Fauziyah and Laila Afifa, *Tempo*, 10 May 2024

The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) reported a significant decrease in Indonesia's deforestation levels, citing data from the forest monitoring system. According to Acting Director General of Sustainable Forest Management Agus Justianto, between 2021 and 2022, net deforestation decreased by 8.4%, with gross deforestation reduced by 14.1%. The net deforestation in 2021-2022 was 104,000 hectares, compared to 113,500 hectares in the previous period. This data, obtained through remote sensing and ground inspection, is managed by Indonesia's National Forest Monitoring System (SIMONTANA). Indonesia classifies land cover into 23 types, guiding policies for sustainable forest management. Indonesia attended the 19th United Nations Forum on Forests/UNFF held at the UN headquarters in New York, on May 6-10, 2024. The Indonesian delegation, led by Deputy Minister of Environment and Forestry Alue Dohong, was involved in various discussions regarding forest policy.

Desperation sets in for Indigenous Sumatrans who lost their forests to plantations

—Teguh Suprayitno, *Mongabay*, 9 May 2024

The semi-nomadic Suku Anak Dalam Indigenous people in Jambi province have seen their ancestral lands diminish due to oil palm and rubber plantations, affecting their traditional way of life. Over 2,000 Suku Anak Dalam have lost their land to PT Alam Lestari Nusantara (ALN), a state-owned oil palm and rubber plantation company, which have also led to a loss of the native trees from which community members harvest the crops to sell. The ALN company failed to properly compensate them for their land. Dahwas, a community member, signed an agreement with ALN under false promises, forfeiting his land claims for meager wages. The company's presence has depleted native trees crucial for the community's livelihood, such as those producing forest honey and resin. Conflict over unpaid compensation persists, with many affected families awaiting resolution. ALN's failure to address these grievances underscores broader issues of Indigenous land rights and exploitation by plantation interests, threatening the cultural and economic survival of the Suku Anak Dalam.

Indonesian company defies order, still clearing peatlands in orangutan habitat

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 9 May 2024

Despite a government order to halt clearing, Indonesian pulpwood producer PT Mayawana Persada continues to clear critical Bornean orangutan habitat and carbon-rich peatlands. The company has converted 30,296 hectares of peatland, including 15,560 hectares of protected areas, and cleared 15,643 hectares of orangutan habitat from 2016-2022. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) called for revoking Mayawana Persada's permits, citing violations of peat protection rules and endangerment of high conservation value areas. In a letter dated March 28, the ministry ordered the company to stop all logging activities in logged-over areas, to focus its operation on empty degraded lands and also to restore what it has destroyed. Although the ministry ordered the company to cease logging and focus on degraded lands, Mayawana Persada persisted, clearing 434.33 hectares in April 2024 alone. Despite advocacy efforts and government intervention, conflicts with Indigenous Dayak communities persist, with land grabbing and intimidation reported. NGOs Coalition and the Indigenous Dayak people also filed a report to the national rights commission, Komnas HAM, on April 26. Furthermore, Tarsisius Fendi Susepi, one community member, was summoned 19 times by the police for protesting against Mayawana Persada. These can be seen as intimidations from the company through law enforcers.

Indonesia's Forestry Minister Highlights Integrity in Carbon Trading

—Petir Garda Bhwana, *Tempo*, 8 May 2024

Indonesia's Environment and Forestry Minister, Siti Nurbaya Bakar, highlighted the importance of integrity in international carbon trading. She emphasized that maintaining integrity involves state sovereignty and avoiding greenwashing, supported by a new regulation on carbon trading. Key factors include transparency, accuracy, consistency, completeness, and comparability in supervising carbon value. Bakar stated that regulating carbon economic value aims to meet Indonesia's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. She stressed that this goal should remain uncompromised, aligning with Indonesia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Incentives for stakeholders involved in emission reduction are also essential. Addressing misinformation at a Singapore business forum, Bakar underscored that policies are based on Indonesia's 1945 Constitution, existing laws and regulations, and UNFCCC conventions. She warned against misuse of concession agreements by business entities, which could threaten state sovereignty and jurisdiction over forest carbon offsets and land management. The minister reiterated that maintaining environmental integrity is crucial for genuine carbon trading efforts.

C. Biodiversity, Conservation, and Protected Area

Minister calls for joint action to realize healthy environment

—Sean Filo, Raka Adji and Rahmad Nasution, *AntaraNews*, 10 May 2024

Environment and Forestry Minister Siti Nurbaya Bakar urges collective action from all parties to address modern environmental challenges amid rapid economic growth, which can cause sustainability issues. Air pollution, clean water crisis, hazardous waste, loss of biodiversity, and climate change are challenges that are haunting many regions in the modern era that demand attention, as written in the Minister's statement. Land conversion exacerbates these problems, reducing environmental benefits and increasing restoration costs. The ministry initiated the Draft Government Regulation on Environmental Protection and Management Planning (RPP-PPPLH) in 2010, aligning with Law Number 32 of 2009. The regulation addresses crucial aspects like environmental inventory, ecoregion determination, and protection plans. Bakar highlights the need for collaboration among ministries, private sectors, academics, and civil society for effective implementation. The regulation signifies a long-term commitment to environmental sustainability and management, emphasizing the importance of collective efforts for Indonesia's future well-being.

Orangutan is first non-human seen treating wounds with medicinal plant

—Chen Ly, *NewScientist*, 2 May 2024

A groundbreaking observation reveals an orangutan named Rakus applying leaves from a medicinal plant to a facial wound, marking the first recorded instance of a non-human animal using a plant with therapeutic properties for healing. Rakus is a male Sumatran orangutan in Gunung Leuser National Park. Elsewhere in Indonesia, orangutans have been seen rubbing the chewed leaves of a different plant into their skin, possibly to harness its anti-inflammatory properties. Orangutans are known to learn skills from each other through observation. It adds to a growing body of evidence about the way primates use plants to keep healthy, including swallowing whole leaves that have anti-parasitic properties. Previous instances include great apes like gorillas, chimpanzees, and bonobos ingesting leaves for parasite removal, and Gabonese chimpanzees using insects on wounds, possibly as first aid. Isabelle Laumer and colleagues from the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behaviour noted Rakus, with a fresh cheek wound, likely from a territorial dispute. This discovery sheds light on animal self-medication behaviors, emphasizing the resourcefulness and adaptability of non-human primates.

D. Climate Change, Energy, and Mining

Indonesia civil society groups raise concerns over proposed Borneo nuclear reactor

—Irfan Maulana, *Mongabay*, 14 May 2024

Indonesia's largest environmental advocacy group, Walhi, staged protests in Jakarta and West Kalimantan against a proposed nuclear power plant in Bengkayang district. In 2021, a U.S. agency partnered with Indonesia's state-owned power utility to explore a reactor in the province, with current surveys assessing its feasibility and safety. Environmental groups

question the safety and necessity of the plan, citing alternative renewable sources. Walhi's executive director, Hendrikus Adam, highlighted the potential for nuclear disasters, referencing Chernobyl and Fukushima. Despite claims that Kalimantan is less seismically active, local faults pose significant risks. Critics argue that Indonesia should focus on solar and other renewables instead of potentially dangerous nuclear technology. The planned 462-megawatt facility, using NuScale Power's technology, faces controversy over its earthquake resistance. Indonesia's research agency BRIN is conducting seismic studies in Bengkayang as part of global safety protocols. President Joko Widodo has committed to significant emissions reductions, and the debate continues on the best energy transition path for the country.

Weather anomaly causes deadly flash flooding, lahars in W. Sumatra

—Radhiyya Indra, *TheJakartaPost*, 13 May 2024

The Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency attributes the recent heavy rainfall in West Sumatra to abnormally warm sea surface temperatures, which generate moisture-laden clouds. Torrential rains and lahars from Mount Marapi over the weekend resulted in 41 deaths and 17 missing persons, and counting, as of May 13. The temperature anomaly, exceeding 1 degree Celsius, was noted across various Indonesian waters, linking the severe weather to climate change. Increased temperatures have been reported across Southeast Asia over the past few weeks, and the international community appears to have missed its target of limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees. Mount Marapi's volcanic deposits from last year's eruption exacerbated the lahars. Historical data shows Marapi has experienced several destructive mudflows, notably in 1979 and 2009. West Sumatra's Agam regency was hit hardest with 19 deaths, over 110 buildings destroyed, and numerous injuries. Tanah Datar recorded 13 deaths, 12 injuries, and significant infrastructure damage. Rescue operations are ongoing, with heavy machinery clearing mud and debris. The Disaster Mitigation Agency has urged residents near Mount Marapi's rivers to stay vigilant for any further disasters.

Paper Money Mixing Waste for "Co-firing" Coal Power Plants in NTB

—Ismail Zakaria, *Kompas*, 13 May 2024

West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) is actively reducing coal use by incorporating biomass in steam power plants. Biomass sources include sawdust, rubbish, corn cobs, and now waste banknotes. Data by the State Electricity Company PLN projects a significant increase in biomass usage, generating 8,267 MWh of electricity in 2023, contributing to 7.21% of NTB's renewable energy production. Since 2016, 7.5 to 8 tons of banknote waste has been produced per month. Banknote waste self-destruction has been regulated in Law Number 7 of 2011 concerning Currency. It is a series of activities to mix, melt, or otherwise destroy the rupiah. PLN seeks more co-firing opportunities, collaborating with stakeholders like Bank Indonesia's NTB office, signing an MOU for co-firing banknote waste. This is in line with the Waste to Energy program. NTB aims for zero emissions by 2050, engaging in a roadmap with renewable energy stakeholders. The province's initiative aligns with national goals, targeting zero emissions by 2060. This integration of biomass and waste management underscores NTB's commitment to sustainable energy and environmental responsibility.

Securing Jakarta's clean water from climate change

—News Desk, *AntaraNews*, 11 May 2024

Climate change in Indonesia is evident through over 700 natural disasters recorded by the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) from January to May 2024, with floods being

the most common. Jakarta, located in lowlands, faces heightened flood risks due to its geographical position. Meanwhile, climate change-induced dry seasons exacerbate water scarcity, impacting clean water access. Subekti, from PERPAMSI, notes that changing hydrological patterns hinder water purification efforts, especially during floods, making water muddy and treatment challenging. Efforts to address these issues include building reservoirs and exploring alternative water sources like wastewater treatment. The Jakarta government prohibits groundwater usage in certain areas due to contamination, emphasizing piped water access. PAM Jaya focuses on expanding piped water coverage, aiming for 100% by 2030. Ensuring clean water availability is crucial for Indonesia's sustainable development and requires collaboration between stakeholders and the community.

Indonesia finalizes early retirement package for 660-MW coal-fired power plant

—Gusty da Costa, *IndonesiaBusinessPost*, 7 May 2024

Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati announced Indonesia's plans to finalize an early retirement package for a 660-megawatt coal-fired power plant, serving as a pilot project for energy transition. She made the statement during the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) 57th Annual Meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia. Mulyani expressed hope for the project's success and its potential replication in other coal-fired plants. Acknowledging the substantial financial requirements for transitioning to renewable energy, she called for international support. Despite the challenges posed by Indonesia's reliance on coal and the high costs of transition, the country remains committed to achieving 66% renewable energy by 2050. To expedite this transition, Indonesia has established an Energy Transition Mechanism (ETM), with ADB's involvement pivotal. A non-binding agreement between ADB, Indonesian entities, and the government aims to accelerate the retirement of the Cirebon-1 coal plant from July 2042 to December 2035, signed during COP28 in December 2023.

E. Pollution and Waste

Anticipating Air Pollution in Jakarta Ahead of the Peak of the Dry Season

—Atiek Ishlahiyah al Hamasy, *Kompas*, 14 May 2024

Jakarta is preparing for a decline in air quality as it enters the dry season, anticipated to peak in June 2024. To combat air pollution, the Jakarta Provincial Government is enhancing public education and increasing the number of low-cost air sensors. Currently, there are 23 sensors and five reference monitoring stations providing quality data on pollution levels. The government has launched the "Clean Air for Jakarta" campaign, emphasizing collective behavioral changes, such as using public transport, walking short distances, and avoiding waste burning. They are also integrating air quality and health data systems to better manage emissions. Key initiatives include developing an early warning system, studying disincentive parking schemes, and improving transportation management. Collaborative efforts with various stakeholders aim to address the increased pollution from transportation and industrial sectors. With global climate phenomena like El Niño affecting PM 2.5 levels, these measures are part of a broader strategy to maintain air quality and mitigate pollution impacts during the dry season.

At its fourth summit, 170 nations strive toward a global plastics treaty by 2025

—Charles Pekow, *Mongabay*, 7 May 2024

The fourth session of the UN International Negotiating Committee (INC-4) in Ottawa saw progress but left environmentalists cautiously optimistic. Representatives from 170 nations condensed a lengthy draft text and agreed on the need for further intersessional work. Disagreements arose, notably over Peru and Rwanda's proposal to reduce primary plastic production by 40% in 15 years, which faced opposition from developed nations. For the first time ever though, fishing gear pollution gained attention, with proposals for an international database. The pollution of so-called “Ghost gear”, includes a variety of fishing equipment such as plastic traps, nets, lines, ropes and artificial baits left floating in the seas, considered harmful to marine life. Overall, environmentalists say the atmosphere in Ottawa was better and more cooperative, with more achieved than at the third meeting, which bogged down in procedural disagreements. Delegates advanced discussions but didn't finalize a revised text, authorizing two committees to work on draft language for discussion and possible adoption at the potentially final treaty session, scheduled for late November 2024 in Busan, South Korea. The goal is to achieve a plastic pollution treaty by 2025.

Taking plastics full circle: Creating a sustainable future in Indonesia

—Arun Rajamani and Kar Min Lim, *TheJakartaPost*, 2 May 2024

Plastics, originally developed as eco-friendly substitutes for materials like ivory, have become crucial yet problematic in modern life due to their long decomposition time and environmental impact. Jakarta faces significant air pollution challenges, exacerbated during the dry season, necessitating urgent measures. The Jakarta Provincial Government is enhancing public education on reducing air pollution and increasing the number of low-cost air sensors, currently at 23, with five additional reference monitoring stations. Initiatives include the "Clean Air for Jakarta" campaign, promoting behavioral changes like using public transport and avoiding waste burning. The government is integrating air quality and health data systems and developing early warning systems for pollution exposure. Despite challenges, including low recycling rates and high costs of recycled plastics, Indonesia is implementing strategies like the National Action Plan on Marine Plastic Debris and extended producer responsibility (EPR) systems. Collaboration across stakeholders, rigorous EPR enforcement, and public participation in sorting waste and reducing single-use plastics are essential for advancing plastic circularity and sustainability.

F. Investment and Finance

Indonesia's Prabowo plans to increase growth, 'be daring' with debt

—Stanley Widiyanto and Stefano Sulaiman, *Reuters*, 15 May 2024

Indonesia's President-elect Prabowo Subianto has suggested that the country should take on more debt to boost its economy, targeting an annual growth rate of 8%. Prabowo, who won the February election by a large margin and will succeed President Joko Widodo in October, believes Indonesia's current debt-to-GDP ratio of just under 40% provides room for increased borrowing. Last year's fiscal deficit was 1.65% of GDP. Prabowo's ambitious plans, including a \$30 billion free lunch program for school students and continuing the \$32 billion project to move the capital to Nusantara, have raised concerns among investors about fiscal space.

Despite this, he maintains that Indonesia can achieve higher growth by focusing on boosting food and energy production, particularly plant-based biofuel output. While Prabowo is confident in achieving 8% growth within 2-3 years, analysts from Fitch Ratings and S&P Global Ratings predict the growth will remain around 5% and expect the budget deficit to increase but stay within legal limits.

Sri Mulyani: It is Necessary to Mobilize Trillions of US Dollars to Handle Climate Change

—Erdy Nasrul, *Republika*, 6 May 2024

Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati emphasized the urgency of mobilizing trillions of US dollars to combat climate change and promote resilient development during the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Annual Meeting. She praised ADB's increased commitment to providing \$100 billion in climate finance for member countries from 2019 to 2030. Mulyani stressed the importance of quality and effective climate projects over mere financial allocation. She urged collaboration between governments, private sectors, philanthropists, and other financial sources for optimal blended finance solutions. Additionally, she advocated for reforming ADB to enhance its effectiveness and financial capabilities. Despite ASEAN's economic resilience, both the region and the world face significant climate challenges requiring substantial investments and operational efficiency. Mulyani's remarks underscored the shared responsibility in addressing climate change and the imperative for strategic partnerships and innovative financing mechanisms to achieve impactful outcomes.

G. Human Rights and Gender Equality

On a Borneo mountainside, Indigenous Dayak women hold fire and defend forest

—Riyad Dafhi Rizki, *Mongabay*, 15 May 2024

Indigenous Dayak Pitap women in South Kalimantan often combine domestic responsibilities with food cultivation through swidden agriculture, known locally as “behuma”. This traditional practice involves burning off discarded biomass to fertilize soil and limit pest infestations. But a law enforcement campaign against wildfires has led to the prosecution of at least 11 women between 2018-2022 for using this method. Although small farmers (those who cultivate food on less than 2 hectares) are exempted according to Indonesia’s 2009 Environment Law, other laws have been used to charge them. Dayak cultural safeguards have historically prevented fire spread, and the community views farming as essential to their identity and well-being. Violations of these practices, like abandoning farming, are believed to invite misfortune. Traditional farming faces challenges from legal actions and potential land exploitation by plantation and mining companies. The Dayak community in general resist selling their land, valuing their traditional way of life and environmental stewardship over monetary gain.

May riot victims seek closure from incoming govt

—Radhiyya Indra and Alifia Sekar, *TheJakartaPost*, 13 May 2024

Victims and families affected by the 1998 riots struggle for closure as they commemorate the 26th anniversary. Despite promises from successive administrations, justice remains elusive. Sarmah Ameh, who lost two children in the City Plaza Klender Mall arson, reflects on

enduring sorrow. Another mourner, Raden Mulia “Iwang” Awangga, mourns his brother, a victim of the Trisakti University violence. Although named national heroes, no one has been held accountable for their deaths. The joint fact-finding team concluded the violence was systematic. Over 1,200 lives were lost, with activists and ethnic Chinese Indonesians among the victims. President Jokowi’s symbolic regret and non-judicial settlements fell short of expectations. Victims’ families seek judicial redress, hoping for justice under Prabowo’s presidency. Prabowo’s past, including alleged involvement in rights abuses, raises concerns. Students call for accountability, emphasizing the need to prevent future violations. Komnas Perempuan underscores the importance of remembering past tragedies to prevent their recurrence.

Earth and Journalism, Coverage of Environmental Issues is Increasingly Dangerous for Journalists

—Mahdi Muhammad, *Kompas*, 12 May 2024

A UNESCO report highlights the increasing danger faced by environmental journalists worldwide. Over 700 journalists covering environmental issues have experienced violence, harassment, and even murder from 2009 to 2023. Attacks surged by 42% between 2014 and 2018, with 44 investigative journalists killed in the past 15 years, yielding a 90% impunity rate. Female journalists face heightened online harassment. India and Cambodia fall under the category of being dangerous for environmental journalists. In India, half of the 28 journalists killed were covering environmental issues, according to Reporters Without Borders Asia-Pacific Bureau, Shataakshi Verma, speaking at the Press Freedom Conference in South Sumatra on May 3. Rising global temperatures exacerbate environmental crises, necessitating accurate reporting. However, threats and violence against journalists hinder this vital work. Journalists and media workers do not hope that harassment, threats, and intimidation turn into worse actions, such as murder. Reporting on changes in the environment, including environmental destruction, is solely to ensure that this earth remains suitable to inhabit and enjoyed by future generations.

Petronela Merauje, Women's Expression in Protecting Mangrove Forests

—Nasrun Katingka, *Kompas*, 11 May 2024

Petronela Merauje, known as Mama Nela, champions the protection of mangrove forests, emphasizing the pivotal role of women in their preservation. In Enggros Village, Papua, these forests, dubbed “women’s forests,” are managed by women, serving as a vital source of livelihood and a space for expression. Mama Nela advocates for environmental conservation, empowering Enggros women to utilize mangrove resources sustainably. However, rapid urban development threatens the ecosystem, prompting Mama Nela’s activism. She founded initiatives like Ibayauw Studio, utilizing mangrove products and recycled waste, and Monj Hen Wani Community for waste management. Mama Nela’s efforts earned her the Kalpataru award for environmental preservation. She envisions women’s forests as exclusive tourism spots, promoting natural therapy and economic opportunities. Through her endeavors, Mama Nela aims to mobilize women across generations to safeguard these vital ecosystems for future sustainability and prosperity.

Pro-business parties accused of holding back Indonesia’s Indigenous rights bill

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 7 May 2024

Indonesia's parliament delays passing an Indigenous rights bill due to fears of losing control over natural resources to Indigenous communities, activists say. Proposed in 2012, the bill has faced obstacles, including reluctance from the entire ruling coalition, namely seven parties that control 82% of seats in parliament, especially major parties like PDI-P and Golkar. Activists allege that these pro-business political parties have deliberately stalled the passage of an Indigenous rights bill for more than a decade. If enacted, the bill would require investors to obtain Indigenous consent before turning customary lands and forests into commercial, industrial and infrastructure projects. However, politicians perceive it as anti-development. The failure to pass the bill leaves Indigenous communities vulnerable to displacement and criminalization, as seen in land grabbing cases. Despite calls for action, the bill's passage remains uncertain, with a new parliament and cabinet operating in October. Efforts to prioritize the bill, including lawsuits and appeals to President Joko Widodo, have yielded little response. The delay reflects entrenched pro-business sentiment in parliament, where many lawmakers have vested interests in industries conflicting with Indigenous rights.

I. RI General Elections

Domination of Political Parties Triggers Low Interest in Individual Candidates

—Willy Medi Christian Nababan, *Kompas*, 13 May 2024

Interest in individual candidacy for the 2024 Regional Head Election is low due to stringent voter support requirements and the dominance of political parties. Only five out of 168 prospective candidate pairs have met all support conditions. The decline in independent candidate enthusiasm has been ongoing since 2017, attributed to tough nomination requirements and weaker electability compared to party-backed candidates. In previous elections, independent candidates struggled to win due to party dominance. For the 2024 elections, independent candidates must gather 6.5-10% support from voters, a challenging task within a short submission deadline. KPU member Idham Holik acknowledges the difficulty, citing past instances where unprepared candidates opted not to register. This trend indicates a shift towards stronger party-backed candidates in regional elections.

Prabowo 'grows impatient' while courting the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle

—Yerica Lai, *AsiaNewsNetwork*, 12 May 2024

President-elect Prabowo Subianto's recent remarks indicate a growing impatience in his efforts to form a coalition government, particularly with the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P). Prabowo asserted Indonesia's founding principles, drawing a line against hindering his administration's work. Despite reactions from PDI-P, Prabowo's camp emphasizes a commitment to democratic values and welcomes criticism. However, analysts see it differently. Analyst Agung Baskoro of Trias Politika Strategis believed that Prabowo's thinly veiled swipe at the PDI-P highlighted a "communication breakdown" between the newly-elect president and PDI-P matron Megawati Soekarnoputri amid efforts to stage a post-election meeting of the two leaders. Furthermore, Burhanuddin Muhtadi of pollster Indikator Politik Indonesia said Prabowo should refrain from discouraging potential coalition partners, acknowledging the importance of diverse political voices in governance and seen as

beneficial for democracy. He also said that “political opponents” should not be equated with “enemies”.

'Either You're With Us or Watch Us Working': Prabowo

—Alfida Rizky Febrianna, *JakartaGlobe*, 10 May 2024

President-elect Prabowo Subianto urges unity for his upcoming administration, emphasizing cooperation to address challenges and create prosperity. At a National Mandate Party (PAN) meeting on May 9, he highlights his child hunger elimination project and warns against obstructing progress. Prabowo stresses that Indonesia's elites must collaborate for national advancement, criticizing past lack of cooperation hindering resource management. Despite opposition pledges, including from former Central Java governor Ganjar Pranowo and the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), Prabowo calls for collective effort. Some members of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), which supported former Jakarta governor Anies Baswedan for president, have commended Ganjar's oppositional stance and said the Islamist party should follow suit. Prabowo's call for unity underscores his vision for inclusive governance, urging all stakeholders to contribute to Indonesia's development. Yet, a number of senior politicians and political parties have pledged to remain in the opposition once Prabowo is inaugurated as president in October.

II. Indonesia in Geopolitics

Indonesia's Prabowo reiterates 'Asian Way' to defuse tension, Al Jazeera says

—Dewi Kurniawati and Clarence Fernandez, *Reuters*, 12 May 2024

Indonesia's incoming president, Prabowo Subianto, signals a more assertive foreign policy, emphasizing diplomacy and the "Asian Way" to address regional tensions. He won February's election by a wide margin, advocating for non-alignment and open relations with both China and the United States. Prabowo stresses Indonesia's history of resolving conflicts internally, without foreign interference. Despite concerns about democratic erosion, he cites Indonesia's peaceful governance transitions. Regarding Papua's separatist conflict, he asserts that national interests will guide policy. Prabowo's recent visits to China, Japan, and Malaysia underscore his commitment to international engagement. He reaffirms Indonesia's non-alignment stance, welcoming partnerships with various nations while addressing internal challenges like corruption. As he prepares to assume office, Prabowo's foreign policy approach signals a departure from the status quo, prioritizing sovereignty and regional stability.

Hundreds of campuses in Indonesia inspired by global student protests to renew rallies against Israel

—Johannes Nugroho, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 9 May 2024

Hundreds of campuses in Indonesia staged coordinated rallies against Israel, echoing global student protests. Inspired by international demonstrations, 172 Muhammadiyah-affiliated schools protested, reflecting Indonesia's strong support for Palestinians. The rallies demanded an immediate ceasefire, condemning Western nations' support for Israel.

Indonesian protesters targeted Israeli surveillance tools, advocating for oversight mechanisms to prevent misuse. Boycotts against Israeli-affiliated businesses have gained traction, impacting multinational companies. The protests, sanctioned by Muhammadiyah, aimed to sustain public awareness of Palestine's plight. While supported by many, some Indonesians prioritize domestic issues over international conflicts. Meanwhile, economic repercussions from boycotts demonstrate widespread solidarity with Palestine. Palestinian students in Indonesia expressed gratitude for the rallies, hoping for independence and unity at Al Aqsa Mosque. Israel's conflict with Gaza has claimed thousands of lives, predominantly civilians, prompting global solidarity movements.

Elon Musk's Starlink granted licences to operate in Indonesia

—AFP News, *TheJakartaPost*, 9 May 2024

Elon Musk's Starlink satellite company has been granted business licences to operate in Indonesia, a vast archipelago of more than 17,000 islands and whose millions of its population are not hooked up to reliable internet services. According to the World Bank, only two-thirds of Indonesia's more than 270 million people had access to the internet by 2022. Starlink's network of low Earth orbit satellites can provide internet to remote locations or areas that have had normal communications infrastructure disabled. Starlink now "has the right to operate in providing telecommunication services" across Indonesia, said Usman Kansong, the Director General of Information and Public Communication. The firm's services will be on trial in the newly planned capital Nusantara on the island of Kalimantan, which will open its doors in August. The government is moving the capital from Jakarta, where large areas could be underwater by 2050 due to rising sea levels and land subsidence, according to some researchers. Starlink is already available in the Southeast Asia region in Malaysia and the Philippines.

Indonesia's rights groups call for transparency in nation's purchases of foreign spyware: 'anyone can be a target'

—Resty Woro Yuniar, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 8 May 2024

Indonesia's rights groups demand transparency regarding the nation's procurement of foreign spyware, including Israel's Pegasus, which can extensively monitor mobile phones. Amnesty International's investigation reveals state agencies purchased spyware from Israel, Malaysia, and Singapore between 2017 and 2023. The complex network of vendors and intermediaries complicates oversight. Andreas Harsono of Human Rights Watch urges Indonesia to establish oversight mechanisms for surveillance tool procurement and usage. The lack of transparency fosters fear and self-censorship, threatening democracy. Spyware targeted individuals and organizations, including political opposition and media in Papua, exacerbating surveillance concerns. Nenden Sekar Arum from SAFENet emphasizes citizens' right to information on state-funded surveillance tools. The urgency for oversight grows amid ongoing surveillance revelations and the potential erosion of public trust in the media.

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