

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

[On Lombok, rising sea levels force fishers to take different jobs](#)

—Falahi Mubarak, *Mongabay*, 20 February 2023

Sea level rise is swallowing beaches and seaside towns on the island of Lombok, forcing people to abandon fishing for seaweed farming or look for other work, in some cases leaving Indonesia for stable employment in the Middle East. Global warming has contributed to the bleaching of shallow water corals and intensifying the storms that erode coastlines. Flooding was an annual occurrence at Telindung village on Lombok’s eastern coast, but in the 1990s seawater started to enter houses closest to the shore. In 2008, the government built a special housing complex for Telindung fishers to replace homes at the old village which sank into the sea. On the west coast, fisher families in Ampenan are giving up fishing and some have become migrant laborers. The men mostly go to Malaysia; women to Saudi Arabia. The government has built bamboo wave barriers at various sites. In 2008, it set up one One-Stop Services program in Mataram to expedite issuance of travel documents for migrant workers. In 2018, it set up five more.

[End of the tuna FAD? Indonesia hopes so, but EU isn’t giving up just yet](#)

—Basten Gokkon, *Mongabay*, 20 February 2023

The Indonesian government welcomed the decision by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) to curtail the use of controversial drifting fish aggregation devices (dFADs), blamed for a steep decline in Indian Ocean tuna stocks. In 2022, the IOTC declared the Indian Ocean’s bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*) overfished and that skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*) was being fished at unsustainable levels. Fish

school around drifting objects, so dFADs make it easy for fishers to trawl them, including juvenile tuna and non-target species. At the IOTC meeting in early February, Indonesia saved the proposed moratorium after the Kenyan delegation backed down at the last minute. “Indonesia strongly believes that managing DFAD will significantly improve tuna stock status in the Indian Ocean,” said Ridwan Mulyana, Director of Fish Resources Management at the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs (KKP). Pushback against the proposal came largely from the European Union delegation, packed with “advisors” from the fishing industry. The EU tuna fleet hauls in the lion’s share of the Indian Ocean catch.

[IOTC adopts closure period for drifting FADs over EU opposition](#)

—Chris Loew, *SeafoodSource*, 14 February 2023

A contentious special session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) ended on 5 February with developing nations bucking pressure from the European Union (EU) to approve an annual closure period for use of drifting fish aggregation devices (dFADs). The session rejected an EU proposal offering only minor reductions in the number of deployed dFADs and a review clause that would have delayed significant changes to rules governing FAD deployment. When Kenya, the meeting’s host nation unexpectedly withdrew support for its own proposal for a dFAD closure, the proposal’s co-sponsors, led by Indonesia, put forward a proposal calling for a recurrent 72-day prohibition on dFADs, a 150 unit-per-essel limit, and a phase-out of dFAD management vessels. That measure passed with 15 of 26 votes on the last day of the IOTC meeting. Europeche, an organization of national organizations of EU fishing enterprises, characterized the vote as an effort by local countries to expel Europeans from the Indian Ocean since it is European purse-seiners that mainly employ dFADs.

[Tyler Prize recipients call for ban on all fishing on the high seas](#)

—Bhavana Scalia-Bruce, *SeafoodSource*, 22 February 2023

Daniel Pauly and Rashid Sumaila, co-recipients of the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement for their efforts to protect the ocean environment, said they want to use the US\$250,000 prize to spread the message that all fishing on the high seas should be banned. “Banning fishing in the high seas, which is the area outside the 200-nautical mile zones of maritime countries, will create a critically-needed fish bank for the world,” Sumaila said. Sumaila has written multiple papers analyzing global fisheries, including papers warning of fisheries collapse in the East and South China Seas and has been a vocal critic of the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) deal on fishing subsidies. “Our modeling shows that closing the high seas would result in no loss in total global catch—just a more equitable distribution,” Pauly said. “Most commercially-fished species move back and forth between the high seas and coastal areas where they can be caught in a country’s EEZ. Sumaila and Pauly are colleagues at the Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries at the University of British Columbia.

B. Forests and Land Use

[New guidelines for verifying legality and sustainability of timber to take effect](#)

—Dini Pramita, *Tempo English*, 20 February 2023

The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KHLK) has announced new standard and verification guidelines for the Legality and Sustainability Verification System (SLVK) to take effect as of 1 March. The new standard and guidelines are designed to increase credibility, transparency, and traceability by using information technology and geolocation and safeguard forest management and exploitation by focusing on sustainability, according to Agus Justianto, Director-General of Sustainable Forest Management at the KLHK. A new logo, “SVLK Indonesia” will be used for forestry products that meet the new standards of legality and sustainability and comply with KHLK Regulation No. 8 of 2021 regarding forest planning and utilization in protected forests. With the passage of the omnibus Job Creation Law 11 of 2020, several different business licenses for producing timber and non-timber forest products were consolidated into a single forest concession business license (PBPH). Companies holding the PBPH will be allowed to engage in timber and non-timber businesses using that single license, bringing non-timber forest products within the scope of the SLVK.

[Failed mangrove tourism project in Sumatra highlights need for community collaboration](#)

—Barita News Lumbanbatu, *Mongabay*, 16 February 2023

Indonesia is estimated to have lost some 40% of its mangroves over the past 30 years, while 60% of mangroves on the east coast of North Sumatra were damaged between 1977 and 2006. That's why the 178-ha Sicanang Mangrove Forest ecosystem project, launched in 2019, was hailed as an initiative that would ensure the natural benefits of mangroves as flood-control barriers and also provide sustainable livelihoods through ecotourism and other mangrove-based income-generating activities. In 2015, the Sumatra-based NGO Yayasan Gajah Sumatera (Yagasu) began assisting the project, which was designated as a community-based mangrove protection area. But in less than two years, the mangrove restoration program in Sicanang and Yagasu's involvement were both terminated. Part of the conservation area became subject to land disputes and Yagasu found itself faced with subpoenas from people claiming land ownership and demands for a share of ecotourism profits. In 2021, Yagasu withdrew and the Sicanang effort collapsed.

[APRIL signs partnership MOU to launch community conservation program in Riau province](#)

—*Inside RGE*, 25 January 2023

Asia Pacific Resources International Holdings Ltd. (APRIL) has signed an MOU with local community partners in Riau province, on the island of Sumatra, to help set up a community-based conservation initiative to support the protection of more than 30,000 ha of forest area. APRIL, through its operating arm PT Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper (PT RAPP) will roll out the Community Conservation and Sustainable Livelihood Program on a pilot basis in five villages in Riau. The program is designed to help ensure the conservation of the remaining natural forest within these community areas. The partnership is supported by the Riau provincial Environment and Forestry Service and the Tasik Besar Serkap Forest Management, both government bodies, as well as the community centered Teluk Meranti Conservation Institute. The program is established as a concrete step to realize the Indonesian Forestry and Land Use (FOLU) Net Sink 2030 plan to make the FOLU sector a "net sink" by more than 140 million tonnes of CO₂ by 2030 through reducing emissions from forest and peatlands degradation.

C. Biodiversity, Conservation, and Protected Areas

[Opinion: The \(not so\) impossible task of archiving Indonesia's mega biodiversity](#)

—Budi Setiadi Faryono, *The Jakarta Post*, 11 February 2023

Among the millions of species living on thousands of islands and in the vast oceans of Indonesia stretched over 282,583 km², we have probably studied less than half. But despite being home to rich biodiversity, we are far behind countries with smaller territories such as the UK and Singapore when it comes to recording and studying its own natural resources. These countries' governments support and prioritize the preservation of their natural riches and their people have a strong sense of belonging and ownership. But we are not starting from zero. Since 2019, the Indonesia Biology Consortium (KOBİ) and Indonesia's Conservation Communication Forum (FKKI) have been working to make an efficient network among biologists across the country to archive species local to their areas. There are 347 biology study programs in educational institutions from Sabang to Merauke, each home to researchers, lecturers, and students ready to be deployed. KOBİ's long-term goal is to create the Indonesia Biodiversity Index, a comprehensive big-data archive of Indonesia's living organisms.

The writer is head of the Indonesian Biology Consortium (KOBİ).

[Endangered durian fruit species conservation and seed germination in Indonesia](#)

Sudarmono Sudarmono et al, *Forest Science and Technology*, 10 February 2023

Wild king fruit (*Durio spp.*) is a threatened native durian fruit tree species in Kalimantan requiring significant and urgent cultivation. The island of Borneo is the most important distribution area for plants of the genus *Durio*. Of twenty different *Durio* species identified in Indonesia, eighteen are found in

Kalimantan (Borneo), seven in Sumatra, and one in Java, Bali, Sulawesi, and Maluku. Fourteen of the eighteen *Durio* species found in Borneo are endemics. Durians are also cultivated by native tribes (Banjar, Kutai, and Dayak) in Central and East Kalimantan, particularly three local species which are pollinated by honeybees and some birds. This study considers the appearance, flavor, and germination rate of four wild durian species cultivated in the Banua Botanical Garden in South Kalimantan and the Bogor Botanic Garden in West Java which have the highest potential to be developed as edible fruits.

[Saltwater crocodile captured at Bali's Legian Beach dies in captivity](#)

—J. M. Daniels, *Bali Discovery*, 7 January 2023

A 3.5-meter-long saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) captured at Legian Beach on Bali's western coast died less than one day later while in the care of the local Agency for the Conservation of Natural Resources (*Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam*, or BKSDA). Agus Budi Santosa, the head of the agency, said officials suspect the animal suffered a combination of "stress, dehydration, and the effect of long-standing wounds." The capture followed the first-ever report of a crocodile at Legian Beach. The animal had been spotted by an on-duty member of Bali's Lifeguard Brigade (*Balawista*). Because of an identical head wound, this crocodile is believed to be the same animal that was previously spotted at Mertasari Beach in Sanur on the opposite eastern coast.

D. Climate Change, Energy, and Mining

[Batang Toru power plant project hits new snags as orangutan conflict intensifies](#)

—Vincent Fabian Thomas, *The Jakarta Post*, 23 February 2023

Orangutan intrusions into villages in South Tapanuli regency have intensified since construction of the Batang Toru hydropower plant began in 2017. The site is inside the habitat of the Tapanuli orangutan (*Pongo tapanuliensis*), a critically-endangered species considered the world's rarest great ape. Fewer than 800 Tapanuli orangutans live in the Batang Toru ecosystem, part of which is the site where the Batu Toru dam is being built, dividing the orangutan habitat into two. Normally tree-bound, the orangutans are forced to intrude on nearby villages and farms by construction and the loss of habitat. The 510-megawatt (MW) Batang Toru hydropower plant project was developed by PT North Sumatra Hydro Energy (NSHE), which is more than 70% owned by the Chinese State Development and Investment Corporation's (SDIC) subsidiary, SDIC power. Indonesia's state-owned electricity monopoly PLN owns another 25% through a subsidiary. Construction was originally planned to be completed by 2022, but progress has been delayed by global protests over impacts on orangutan habitat and financing issues, with operational status now postponed to December 2026.

[China's big firms put reputation at risk in Batang Toru power plant](#)

—Vincent Fabian Thomas, *The Jakarta Post*, 22 February 2023

The Bank of China (BOC) had originally agreed to lend US\$1.68 billion to finance 75% of the Batang Toru power project, but pulled out after a 2019 review of the project over environmental concerns, which dealt a blow to developer and operator PT North Sumatra Hydro Energy (NSHE) and delayed construction for months. NSHE, predominantly owned by Chinese companies, told reporters that the delay was due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but an audit by Indonesia's Supreme Audit Agency (BPK) found that the delay was caused by financing difficulties and changes in financiers after BOC pulled out, which left SDIC Power, a subsidiary of China's State Development and Investment Corporation (SDIC) holding 70% of the shares in NSHE with 25% owned by Indonesia's electric power monopoly PLN. As of October 2020, the project was only 11% complete, and there are questions about whether PLN conducted sufficient due diligence. Environmental groups have criticized the participation of China's big companies in the disputed project.

[Pertamina Geothermal Energy launches IPO](#)

—Retno Sulistyowati, *Tempo English*, 20 February 2023

Pertamina Geothermal Energy (PGE) is a subsidiary of Pertamina, Indonesia's state-owned oil and natural gas corporation and the largest company in Indonesia. PGE, which carries out geothermal exploration and exploitation, will list its shares on the Indonesia Stock Exchange (IDX) on 24 February, releasing 10.35 billion shares, equivalent to 25% of the issued and paid-up capital, at a price of Rp 875 (US\$0.058) per share. Some of the proceeds of the Initial Public Offering (IPO) will be used for capital expenditures. Deputy Minister of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) Pahala Nugraha Mansury said the IPO would be used to increase the capacity of geothermal power plants (PLPT) in Indonesia by 600 megawatts (MW) through 2027. The company has a purchase power agreement with Indonesia's state-owned monopoly distributor of electric power PLN to absorb all the geothermal electricity produced by PGE power plants. PGE currently manages 13 geothermal working areas with a total installed capacity of 1,877 MW.

[Playing with geothermal fire](#)

—Khairul Anam, *Tempo English*, 20 February 2023

Indonesia's installed geothermal capacity in 2021 was 2.3 gigawatts (GW), the second largest in the world after the US, but the country's reserves are estimated at 29 GW, the largest in the world. Jakarta's Power Supply Business Plan for 2021-2030 targets geothermal to reach 6 GW, 31.9% of the total for new and renewable energy power plants in 2030. But investment in geothermal poses risks. Unlike oil and gas, Indonesia's geothermal energy has only a single buyer—the state electric power monopoly PLN. Selling electricity to PLN accounted for 96% of Pertamina Geothermal Energy's (PGE) revenues in 2022. Since the price is determined through negotiations with PLN, investors want power purchase agreements to be in place prior to exploration, according to Prijandaru Effendi, chair of the Indonesia Geothermal Association. The Ministry of Finance has initiated a Geothermal Resource Risk Mitigation financing facility using the Green Climate Fund (GCF) scheme that promises US\$651 million in funding from the GCF, the World Bank, and other sources, but this facility has not been widely used.

[Indonesia has promised to move to clean energy, but challenges loom](#)

—AP via ChannelNewsAsia, 15 February 2023

In 2021, Indonesia generated 600 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions, the ninth highest in the world. Population and economic growth are expected to triple the country's energy consumption by 2050. Nearly all energy demand is met by fossil fuels, with 60% coming from highly-polluting coal. Indonesia's leaders say they have started to shift policies, but the country's transition to renewable energy lags behind its Southeast Asia peers. "We don't want to be limited in terms of our ability to grow economically," said Rachmat Kaimuddin, Deputy Coordinating Minister of Maritime Affairs and Investment. "Industrialised nations can support us." The US\$20 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) is designed to accelerate the retirement of coal-fired power plants and replacement by renewables by a decade. By one estimate, Indonesia will need up to US\$2.4 trillion in cumulative investment across its energy systems by 2050, far exceeding the sum of existing pledges.

[Mangrove reforestation provides greater blue carbon benefits than afforestation](#)

—Shanshan Song et al, *Nature Communications* 14 (10 February 2023).

Considering the significant potential for carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas offsets, blue carbon ecosystems—such as mangrove forests, saltmarshes, seagrass beds, and upper estuarine tidal wetlands—have gained global prominence for climate mitigation as a nature-based solution. Afforestation sites (e.g., mudflats) may have lower land costs, but the survival rate of seedlings is often low. An analysis of over 370 restoration sites around the world showed that reforestation (reestablishing mangroves where they previously colonized) had a greater carbon storage potential per hectare than afforestation (establishing mangroves in areas that were not previously mangrove). The greater carbon accumulation potential is attributed to favorable intertidal positioning, higher nitrogen availability, and lower salinity at most reforestation sites. Reforestation of all physically feasible areas could promote the uptake of 671.5-688.8 Tg CO₂-eq [million tonnes CO₂ equivalent] globally over a 40-year period, 60% more than afforesting the same global area on tidal flats. Along with avoiding conflicts of habitat

conversion, reforestation should be given priority when designing nature-based solutions for mitigating global climate change.

[Indonesia's electric cars, motorbikes, and politicians](#)

—Khairul Anam, *Tempo English*, 13 February 2023

Astra Honda Motor plans to launch two electric motorcycles (Ems) this year, but Honda won't be the first in the Indonesian market. Electrum, a company developed by TBS Energy (founded by Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment Luhut Binsar Panjaitan) and Chairman of the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce (Kadin) Arsjad Rasjid is marketing an EM called the Alva One. Bambang Soesatyo, Speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) is behind a line of EMs called BS Electric. Given the costs and the lack of facilities for charging or swapping batteries, most consumers would still prefer fuel-run motorbikes, which is why manufacturers hope subsidies, tax exemptions, and other incentives will soon be in place to get the EM market on the road. They need not wait long. On 31 January, Minister Luhut announced that the government would provide a subsidy of Rp 7 million (US\$ 460) per unit. Incentives are necessary to stimulate investment in Ems and ensure that Indonesia's massive expansion of nickel processing capacity will have an adequate host country market.

[Partnership deadlock in the EV batteries sector](#)

—Retno Sulityowati, *Tempo English*, 13 February 2023

Mining Industry Indonesia (Mind Id), a state-owned enterprise (SOE) holding company, comprises nickel miner PT Antam, coal miner PT Bukit Asam, and PT Freeport Indonesia. Mind ID and other SOEs are aggressively establishing partnerships with foreign companies to develop ecosystems for electric vehicle (EV) battery production in Indonesia, but there are questions about the status of the partnership between South Korean EV battery maker LG Solution Ltd. That project had Aneka Tambang (Antam)—a Mind ID subsidiary managing nickel mines—and Indonesia Battery Corporation (IBC), a joint venture among Antam, Pertamina, and the state electricity monopoly PLN building a factory to manufacture EV batteries. LG is now encouraging Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt, a Chinese company, to negotiate with Mind ID's Antam in place of LG, but Mind ID is balking at Huayou replacing LG as its partner. "We still want a consortium that is all-in, all the way to production of EV batteries," Mind ID CEO Hendi Prio Sentoso said.

[Updated advice for purchasers of tropical forest carbon credits](#)

—John Cannon, *Mongabay*, 9 February 2023

Conservation NGOs and Indigenous organizations have collaborated to produce an updated guide for companies looking to invest in tropical forest carbon credits. The guide is co-authored by Conservation International (CI), the Coordinator of the Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin (COICA), the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), the Amazon Environmental Research Institute (IPAM), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), the World Resources Institute (WRI) and WWF. Voluntary carbon credit markets, which make it possible for companies and individuals to offset their emissions by investing in climate change mitigation projects, soared in value to more than US\$2 billion in 2021. Scientists and conservationists stress that avoided tropical forest deforestation can lock in enormous amounts of climate-warming carbon that as well as providing benefits to wildlife habitat, communities, and ecosystem services. However, critics charge that allowing companies to avoid emissions reductions by purchasing credits fails to address climate change threats and amounts to outsourcing climate change mitigation from polluting industrialized countries to less developed countries, or even claim that the carbon credits are essentially worthless.

[Comment: Forest carbon offsets are a tool, not a silver bullet](#)

—Robert Nasi and Pham Thu Thuy, *Mongabay*, 7 February 2023

Companies and individuals seeking to reduce their carbon footprints have turned to carbon offsets which mitigate greenhouse emissions in one place by increasing carbon storage or avoiding emissions in another, including through UN-backed REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) schemes. Some critics have questioned the effectiveness of REDD+ or called carbon

offsetting as “greenwashing” or a “license to emit”. A CIFOR-ICRAF study analyzes experiences in 22 countries. The study shows that REDD+ initiatives have achieved limited but positive outcomes for forests. Impacts on well-being have been modest and mixed, but are more likely to be positive if effective, efficient, and equitable incentives are included. Key elements include protecting intact forests to preserve biodiversity and ecosystem services; better management of production forests; expanding diverse agroforestry systems in agricultural lands; restoring degraded lands; and ensuring participation and equitable benefit sharing with Indigenous peoples and local communities. The bottom line is that we can’t offset our way out of the climate crisis.

Dr. Robert Nasi is the acting CEO of CIFOR-ICRAF. Dr. Pham Thu Thuy is the senior scientist leading the Climate Change, Energy, and Low-Carbon Development team at CIFOR-ICRAF. The Center for International Forestry and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF) is a global research and development organization focusing on biodiversity loss, climate change, food security, livelihoods, and inequity.

Project Site: CIFOR-ICRAF, [Global Comparative Study on REDD+](#), 2021

E. Pollution and Waste

[Bali waste processing plant plagued with problems](#)

—J. M. Daniels, *Bali Discovery*, 18 February 2023

Test runs for the large and modern Processing Center for Waste and trash Management (*Tempat Pengolahan Sampah Terpadu*, or TPST) on Bali’s east coast have been plagued by misstarts and failures, resulting in delays, especially in light of the imminent closure of Bali’s massive Sarbagirta Temporary Rubbish Dump (*Tempat Penampungan Sementara*, or TPS) in Suwung. The new center was supposed to begin operations in late October, but test trials were halted so that additional modifications could be put in place to handle the methane gas that the TPST will emit as a by-product. The site is close to residential areas, public beaches, and an international school. Tests have been conducted on trash and waste in limited quantities, but there are concerns about the effectiveness of the facility once it becomes fully operational.

[ASEAN’s garbage economy—start-ups turn plastic waste into consumer goods](#)

—Dylan Loh, *Nikkei Asia*, 17 February 2023

Indonesia possesses gems like the island of Bali, but discarded waste has taken the shine off its landscapes. Plastic packaging peppers Indonesia’s rivers and clogs waterways. This led Syukriyatun Niamah to found Robries, a startup that keeps plastic waste out of the ocean by transforming it into furniture and home accessories. The company, which is seeking a Series B funding round of US\$250,000, recycles polypropylene, high-density polyethylene, low-density polyethylene, and high-impact polystyrene. “Compared to the rest of the world, South and Southeast Asia use more single-use plastic,” said Prak Kodali, CEO and co-founder of Singapore-based pFibre, which uses marine plant-based ingredients to make 100% biodegradable packaging films. The Circulate Initiative, a non-profit tackling ocean plastic pollution across the South and Southeast Asian regions, says 11 million tonnes of plastic waste enters the ocean every year, with the volume projected to triple by 2040. Eliminating plastic waste in India and Indonesia alone by 2030 would eliminate 150 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, the organization claims.

F. Investment and Finance

[Indonesia suffers immense losses from illicit financial flows in coal and fishery sectors](#)

—Rizky Deco Praha, *The Jakarta Post*, 20 February 2023

Indonesia has suffered losses of about Rp 74 trillion (US\$5.6 billion) over 2012-2021 through illicit financial flows (IFF), such as tax evasion, money laundering, and theft within the coal and fishery sectors—more than the total amount the country received in development aid, according to a report by Prakarsa. The problem includes underreporting, mis-invoicing, and shifting costs and profits to tax

havens. Using the Gross Export Reversal method, researchers compared Indonesia's total recorded trade values with the values reported by all the partner countries in the coal and fishery sectors. The fisheries and coal mining sectors are significantly undertaxed in that their contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) is far higher than their corresponding tax contribution. In 2021, the steep rise in coal prices led to an increase in coal production, exports, and state revenues but also a steep increase in trade value and mis-invoicing. IFF takes place when funds are illegally earned, transferred and utilized across international borders.

Rizky Deco Praha is a researcher with the Prakarsa Group.

Report: Rizky Deco Praha et al, "[Aliran Keuangan Gelap pada Sektor Perikanan dan Pertambangan Batu Bara serta Produk turunannya di Indonesia](#)" [Illegal Financial Flows in the Fisheries and Coal Mining Sectors and their derivative Products in Indonesia], *Perkumpulan Prakarsa* (2023).

[Analysis: Indonesia today is more corrupt than when Joko Widodo became president](#)

—Tenggara Strategics, *The Jakarta Post*, 20 February 2022

When President Joko Widodo steps down from the presidency in October 2024, Indonesia will be a more corrupt country than when he moved into the presidential palace a decade earlier, according to the latest Corruption Perception Index (CPI) by Transparency International. One of the most drastic steps Widodo has taken was dismantling the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), set up in 2004 to go after large-scale corruption by people in high positions, including top judges, powerful politicians, cabinet members, and police generals. Widodo's predecessor as president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, used his power to block attempts by politicians in the House of Representatives (DPR) to dissolve the KPK. Widodo allowed the DPR to push ahead with amending the KPK Law, resulting in defanging the commission in 2021. The DPR has also used its power to determine who gets to sit on the commission and pick those considered friendly and unthreatening. On 7 February, President Widodo stated that he believed Indonesia's deteriorating CPI score will not affect the investment climate because investors will think about profit and loss.

G. Human Rights and Gender Equality

[US Secretary of State Antony Blinken conveys US concern over Indonesia's new criminal code](#)

—Reuters via *The Jakarta Post*, 17 February 2023

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed Washington's concern over certain provisions in Indonesia's new criminal code in a call with Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, the State Department said. The new criminal code, enacted on 6 December, bans sex outside of marriage and prohibits cohabitation by unmarried couples. The United Nations (UN) has said the new laws threaten freedom, privacy, and human rights. Human Rights Watch, a non-government organization, said the new code violates the rights of women, religious minorities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. However, Indonesian officials defended the code as reflective of the country's identity. In their call on 17 February, Blinken and Retno also discussed US support for Indonesia's chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

I. Armed Papuan group abducts New Zealand pilot

[Papuan armed group releases video, photos of New Zealand pilot](#)

—A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil, *The Jakarta Post*, 16 February 2023

An armed separatist group in Papua province released video footage and photographs of a man identified as Phillip Mehrrens, a New Zealand pilot working for Susi Air who was reportedly abducted on 7 February by a group from West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB), the militant wing of the Free Papua Movement (OPM), led by Egianus Kogoya, acting Nduga regent Namia Gwijangge said. The plane was seized shortly after landing on an airstrip in Paro, a district in the remote and mountainous Nduga

regency, and set afire. Five passengers were released because they were all Indigenous Papuans, TPNPB spokesman Sebby Sambon, who released the video and photos said. A video showed a man identified as Mehrstens surrounded by men armed with rifles, spears, or bows and arrows. This is the first incident in the Papua region to involve a foreign hostage since 1966.

[Editorial: Politics holds Papua Hostage](#)

—Editorial Board, *The Jakarta Posts*, 16 February 2023

Coordinating Political, Legal, and Security Affairs Minister Mahfud MD said the government was exploring every path to release Phillip Mehrstens, the pilot, and also reiterated that Papua was part of Indonesia. But there are reasons to worry. In 1966, the Army's Special Forces (Kopassus) led by then Brigadier General Prabowo Subianto launched an operation to free 11 researchers, including four Britons and two Dutch in an area now part of Nduga. Two hostages were killed in the operation. With two military commands (Kodam) and an Army Strategic Reserves Command (Kostrad) brigade, plus military task forces assigned along the borders with Papua New Guinea and around the Freeport gold mine and other facilities, the military deployment in Papua far exceeds that in other provinces. At the same time, the government has continued to force its will on the Papuans, as most recently evident in the formation of new provinces and regencies without proper and meaningful consultation with local people. Unless this decades-long approach changes, conflicts will continue, hostage takings will recur and the cycle of violence will persist.

[A kidnapping puts Papua on a razor's edge](#)

—John McBeth, *Asia Times*, 15 February 2023

Former Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) commander Andika Perkasa's hearts-and-minds campaign in Papua's rebellious Central Highlands appears doomed to failure, underscored by the abduction of a New Zealand pilot and the torching of his plane on a remote jungle airstrip on 8 February. Confronted by well-armed rebel bands, governance in some of the eight regencies in the newly divided province has broken down. The kidnapping of Phillip Mehrstens, a pilot for frontier airline Susi Air, raised fears that the rebels now threaten air operations that provide the only lifeline to small towns and villages across the largely roadless region. Light aircraft belonging to Susi Air, Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF), which serves far-flung religious missions, and about eight other small carriers are increasingly taking random groundfire now that automatic weapons have replaced bows and arrows in rebel hands. The entire territory of Papua has 283 airports, most of them dirt airstrips like Paro in Nduga regency, where gunmen stormed Mehrstens' Pilatus Porter PC6 plane. Susi Air is owned by former fisheries minister Susi Pudjiastuti.

II. DPR to pass emergency regulation replacing “omnibus” Jobs Creation Law

[House to pass Perppu on job creation after returning from recess](#)

—Yerica Lai, *The Jakarta Post*, 16 February 2023

The House of Representatives (DPR) is set to pass a controversial “government regulation in lieu of law” (*Peraturan Pemerintah Pengganti Undang-undang, or Perppu*) on job creation on return from recess in March, after securing an endorsement from the House Legislation Body (*Baleg*), despite criticisms that deliberations were being rushed. President Joko Widodo signed the *Perppu* in December to resuscitate the original Jobs Law, which the Constitutional Court declared “conditionally unconstitutional” in 2021 because it used an unrecognized omnibus method to revise dozens of laws at once and was deliberated with minimal public participation. That court ordered the government and the DPR to redo the legislative process within two years. Instead, the government issued the *Perppu* after enacting another law to legalize the use of omnibus methods. The *Perppu* secured majority support from *Baleg* at the end of a two-day meeting on 14 February. Now the *Perppu* must be passed by a plenary session of the DPR to become permanent law. Critics have described the process as “a constitutional disaster”.

III. Indonesia, Vietnam, and China's maneuvers in the South China Sea

China and Indonesia agree to keep South China Sea peaceful

—Yvette Tanamal, *The Jakarta Post*, 23 February 2023

Qin Gang, China's Minister of Foreign Affairs, met with Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno L. P. Marsudi in Jakarta. The two leaders issued a joint statement in which China committed to "synergizing" with Southeast Asian countries to keep the South China Sea peaceful and stable and pledged to uphold contributions to regional security and intensify dialogue." Both China and Indonesia ... will work with other ASEAN countries to fully and effectively ... speed up consultations on the [proposed Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea] COC to jointly safeguard peace and stability in the South China Sea," Qin said. "Indonesia and ASEAN would like to produce an effective, substantive, and actionable code," Retno said. "Indonesia would like to see a peaceful and stable South China Sea. Respect toward international laws, especially the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) would be key, she added. It was Qin's first overseas visit since becoming Minister of Foreign Affairs in December. Advancing the COC is among Indonesia's top priorities as ASEAN chair this year.

Indonesia-Vietnam EEZ pact rejects China's "Nine-Dashed Line"

—Bich Tran, *Asia Times*, 17 February 2022

Meeting in December 2022 following twelve years of negotiations, Indonesia and Vietnam agreed to delimit their respective Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), thereby resolving the longstanding and overlapping EEZ claims surrounding the Natuna islands in the South China Sea. The agreement makes it possible for the two countries to assert their respective sovereign international rights and enforce their maritime interests, including combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in their respective EEZs. The agreement will also facilitate Indonesia's plans to export natural gas from the Tuna offshore bloc under Indonesia's continental shelf and therefore within Indonesia's EEZ, but close to Vietnam's EEZ border. In a 2021 statement, Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi stated: "Indonesia will continue to reject claims that are not based on international law," while Vietnam's ambassador to the UN Dang Hoang Giang has similarly emphasized the importance of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). In 2016, a tribunal arbitrating the boundary dispute between China and the Philippines issued a binding ruling that China's claims to much of the South China Sea under the so-called "nine-dashed-line" are invalid, but China rejected the decision, despite being a signatory to UNCLOS.

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