



Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

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Selamat Hari Raya Idul Fitri

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

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A The Covid-19 Crisis in Indonesia

[With Covid-19 rampant, Indonesia braces for the Eid al-Fitr holidays](#)

—Teguh Maulana, *The Diplomat*, 11 May 2021

Long holidays in Indonesia carry the threat of increases in positive Covid-19 infections, so the Eid al-Fitr Islamic holiday festival raises concerns. The government has issued a ban on *mudik* [exodus to home towns] again this year, but in 2020, the Eid holidays saw a 93% increase in the daily Covid-19 caseload and a 66% increase in weekly mortality rates. This is particularly worrying because many hospitals on Java have already been pushed to the brink of collapse. The rollout of vaccinations in Indonesia has so far fallen short of expectations due to limited stocks, in part caused by India's decision to halt vaccine exports to deal with its own mounting pandemic crisis. Indonesia apparently cannot procure vaccines in large quantities from manufacturers such as Pfizer or Moderna. Their vaccines are more expensive than Chinese products, and developed countries in Europe and North America have hoarded stocks from their own producers, giving rise to accusations of vaccine apartheid separating citizens of wealthy countries from the global South.

[Situation update on Covid-19 response in Indonesia on the eve of Eid al-Fitr](#)

—UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 5 May 2021

As of 4 May 2021, Indonesia had recorded a total of 1.69 million confirmed cases of Covid-19, including 99,087 active cases, 46,137 deaths, 1.54 million recoveries, and 77,804 suspected cases. A second shipment of the AstraZeneca vaccine (3.8 million doses) arrived on 26 April, bringing the total number of doses received to 4.9 million. On 30 April, Indonesia had received 6 million more doses in bulk of the Sinovac Biotech vaccine and 482,400 vial doses from the Sinopharm China Pharmaceutical Group. Overall, Indonesia has received 65.5 million doses of the Sinovac bulk vaccine and 8.45 vial doses of from Sinovac, Sinopharm, and the AstraZeneca COVAX facility. Relative to its population, Indonesia has administered 6.8 vaccine doses per 100 people. The National Task Force for the Covid-19 response reported that 86.5% of people observed wore masks while 13.5% did not. Locations where people do not comply include restaurants, shops, sports venues, tourist attractions, and public roads.

[Thousands of *mudik* travellers turned back to stop Idul Fitri exodus](#)

—Ardila Syakriah et al, *The Jakarta Post*, 9 May 2021

Despite government efforts to keep people from visiting their hometowns for the Idul Fitri Islamic holidays, tens of thousands of vehicles have been forced to make U-turns at toll gates, but many others have managed to find ways around the *mudik* (exodus) ban. National Police Traffic Corps Chief Insp. Gen. Istiono said that three days into the ban, police had stopped and turned around 70,000 vehicles at 380 checkpoints across Sumatra, Java and Bali after drivers failed to produce the necessary travel permits. Public officials are allowed to travel for work, but must carry permission letters from supervisors and regional heads as well as entry-and-exit permits. However, travellers on motorcycles travelling at night on secondary roads have been able to avoid checkpoints. “Idul Fitri is a special moment; I’d do anything to see my parents,” said David, a school teacher. Homecoming trips amplified concerns of a possible exponential rise in cases after the Idul Fitri holiday, following the recent discovery in Indonesia of the more transmissible B1617 coronavirus variant.

[Covid: Reused nose swab scam busted in Indonesia airport](#)

—BBC, 6 May 2021

Several employees of the state-owned pharmaceutical company Kimia Farma in North Sumatra were arrested for allegedly washing and reselling used Covid-19 nasal swab test kits. Up to 9,000 passengers that transited Kualanamu airport in Medan since last December may have been tested with reused swabs, police said. The antigen rapid test kits had been supplied by Kimia Farma, which now faces potential law suits on behalf of the affected travellers. The scam was uncovered when police sent a tested undercover police officer to post as a passenger. After he was swabbed and given a positive test result, other officers swooped in to raid the test site, where they found a used test kit that had been recycled. The scam is believed to have generated a return of Rp 1.8 billion (US\$124,800).

B Marine & Fisheries

[Rapid growth in MSC-certified Sustainable Tuna expected over 2020-2021](#)

—*Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)*, 2 May 2021

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), an independent non-profit which certifies sustainably managed fisheries, projects a 38% rise in tuna products carrying the MSC ecolabel in 2021 and an increase in the number of tuna fisheries committing to be sustainable. Almost 30% of the global tuna catch is now MSC-certified, reflecting increased support in retail and food service sectors for sustainably-sourced tuna and on-pack labelling. Global brands committed to sourcing tuna caught by MSC-certified fisheries include Chicken of the Sea, Genova, Natural Value, Walmart Great Value, and Wild Selections. A UN report found that eight tuna stocks had rebuilt to healthy levels over 2014-2019, reducing the number of major tuna stocks experiencing overfishing from thirteen to five. Although 13% of tuna stocks remain below optimal abundance and 22% are over-fished, tuna stocks are faring better than other stocks. The UN FAO estimates 34.2% of global commercial fisheries are currently overfished.

[Report: Overfishing of the world’s major tuna stocks, bycatch and pollution reduced and 18 new areas protecting vulnerable marine ecosystems established](#)

—UN Food and Agriculture Organization/Global Environmental Facility, 29 January 2020

[ISSF calls for conservation measures to rebuild Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stocks](#)

—ISSF, 6 May 2021

The International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) will require member companies to reduce annual sourcing of Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna in the event that the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) fails to take action at its June 2021 meeting to implement IOTC scientific committee (SC) advice on reducing harvests. The most recent IOTC SC advice recommended reducing Indian Ocean yellowfin catches to less than 403,000 tons annually, an 11% reduction from the 2019 harvest, in order to protect

yellowfin stocks and avoid population collapse. The ISSF also called for an effective rebuilding plan for yellowfin tuna stocks that—implemented effectively—would imply reducing annual total catch to between 350,000 and 403,000 tons; managing skipjack fishing to ensure 2021 catch does not exceed the Harvest Control Rule, and adoption of management procedures and permanent Limit and Target Reference Points for tropical and temperate tunas, particularly yellowfin, by 2022.

[*The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) is a regional intergovernmental organization established in 1996 under the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to manage conservation and optimal utilization of tuna and tuna-like species in the Indian Ocean. Members of the IOTC include Indonesia and 29 other Contracting Parties, mostly Indian Ocean coastal nation-states and countries engaged in fishing for tuna in the Indian Ocean.*]

[Indonesian fishers plead with President Joko Widodo on seine nets and policy](#)

—Falahi Mubarak, *Mongabay*, 11 May 2021

Indonesian President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo met with fishers at Brondong National Fisheries Port in East Java’s Lamongan Regency for a discussion on fishing gear policies, infrastructure, and how the Covid-19 pandemic had affected their business. Many fishers in this area who previously used destructive *cantrang* seine trawl nets want to obtain permits to resume using the devices in the wake of lifting the ban on their use last year. The fishers also complained to the president about silting at the port, which prevents their boats from docking at low tide. The fishers told Jokowi that they have been able to go to sea as usual despite the pandemic and that the harvest volumes are the same as before.

[Ed: *Cantrang* trawl nets were banned during Jokowi’s first presidential term, but the ban was lifted by then Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Edhy Prabowo last November, a month before Prabowo’s arrest for corruption and dismissal in an unrelated case.]

[Indonesian researchers study how to help rays released as bycatch to survive](#)

—Basten Gokkon, *Mongabay*, 12 May 2021

Researchers in Indonesia are studying survival rates for mantas and mobula rays released alive after being caught by fishers. Populations of these large rays have been devastated in recent years by targeted and bycatch fisheries as well as growing local demand for their meat and international buyers for body parts like the gills, now popularly used in Chinese medicine. Among fishers who catch these rays, the rays account for only 3% of their catch by volume but almost half their income, dwarfing what fishers can earn from other commercial species. Significant population declines prompted the government to ban the intentional capture and trade of mantas in 2014, but mobula rays were not included. All mantas and most mobulas are classified as threatened on the IUCN Red List and international trade in their body parts is regulated under CITES to help ensure the survival of wild populations. The conservation collective Mobula Project Indonesia has been tracking rays since 2015, including tagging rays caught alive and released.

[Ministry releases tens of thousands of lobster seeds in East Java](#)

—M. Razi Rahman and Aria Cindyara, [*Antarnews.com*](#), 9 May 2021

The Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (KKP), through its Coastal and Marine Resources Management Center (BPSPL) in Denpasar, released 21,000 lobster seeds that had been previously seized in the Bansring conservation area of Banyuwangi, East Java. The seeds were recovered in early May when fisheries officers busted a plot to capture the lobster seeds and illegally export them to Vietnam, which would have resulted in economic losses of Rp 1.5 billion. The BPSPL head, Permana Yudianto, explained that the seeds should be released in a well-managed conservation area. Because the seeds had been taken from the Banyuwangi area, that is where they were released. Tb Haeru Rahayu, the Director-General for Marine Resources and Fishery Supervision, said lobster seeds can be cultivated and grown in Indonesia, boosting the economy for the people, fishermen and cultivators. Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Sakti Wahyu Trenggono, reiterated that it is illegal to export lobster seeds.

C Forests & Land Use

[New platform launched in Indonesia for sustainable spice exports to EU](#)

—Gisela Swaragita, *The Jakarta Post*, 9 May 2021

A new platform promising more sustainable and better ways to produce and distribute Indonesian spices was introduced by Netherlands-based global foundation IDH-Sustainable Trade Initiative. The Sustainable Spices Initiative Indonesia (SSI Indonesia) aims to boost spice agriculture and exports with strategic collaboration among stakeholders ranging from small-scale farmers to international traders. The project is particularly focused on the EU market, which accounts for 34% of global spice imports. “This is especially aimed at empowering small-scale farmers and improve access to markets,” said Mushdhalifah Machmud at the office of the Coordinating Economic Minister. The Ministry of Agriculture signed an MOU with SSI Indonesia on the sustainable development of spices and herbs to support exports. Poor agricultural practices, lack of adequate processing facilities and growers switching to high-value crops or jobs have caused concerns around spice production, especially in terms of future supply, food safety and traceability. The sector also deals with sustainability issues, including pesticide use, wastewater management and labor conditions.

[There is hope for Southeast Asia’s beleaguered tropical forests](#)

—Banyan, *The Economist*, 1 May 2021

Clearing land for new plantations has turned Southeast Asia’s forests from carbon sinks into significant sources of emissions over the past two decades. Indonesia and Malaysia, home of the biggest expanses of forest, have lost more than a third of forest cover this century. The good news is that loss of primary forest in these countries slowed for the fourth year in a row in 2020, according to Global Forest Watch, following moratoria on new licenses for palm oil plantations in Indonesia and plantation caps in Malaysia. The LEAP Coalition initiative, launched at US President Joe Biden’s Climate Summit and backed by the US, UK, and Norway along with Amazon, Airbnb and Unilever, will create an international marketplace where carbon credits for avoided deforestation can be sold. LEAP aims to build on the older UN REDD+ while avoiding its pitfalls, according to WRI’s Frances Seymour, one of its architects, using a jurisdictional approach to reduce the risk of shifting deforestation from protected patches to an unprotected ones.

[Belgium-sized swath of forest faces the chop from Indonesian palm oil](#)

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

Although Indonesia banned the issuance of permits to clear land for new oil palm plantations, existing plantation concessions may still be cleared, involving 3.5 million ha of forested land. Companies with concessions are required to develop them within three years after issuance or risk having the land seized by the state and given to another firm, Anggalia Putri of the environmental NGO Madani explained, “[s]o oil palm trees have to be planted and the natural forest [in these concessions] will disappear.” The government’s biodiesel program to replace fossil fuel diesel with a blend containing palm oil has also created new domestic demand for increased crude palm oil production, placing new pressures on existing natural forests and peatland and threatening the government’s goal to turn its forests back into a carbon sink by 2030, she said. Most of the remaining primary forest inside existing concessions is located in Papua and West Papua. A recent Greenpeace report shows 685,388 ha of forests inside oil palm concessions in Papua.

Report: [License to Clear: The Dark Side of Permitting in West Papua](#)

Greenpeace International, 6 April 2021

[BlackRock accused of ESG inconsistency over Indonesian palm oil](#)

—Primrose Riordan and Stefania Palma, *The Financial Times*, 5 May 2021

BlackRock, the world’s biggest private investment group, has been accused of joining a shareholder protest against Procter and Gamble over P&G’s wood pulp and palm oil supply chain in Indonesia. P&G

subsequently asked Singapore-based supplier Wilmar International to investigate Astra Agro Lestari (AAL), the Indonesian palm oil subsidiary of Astra International. The AAL probe stemmed from claims by NGOs that three of AAL's subsidiaries were involved in seizing land from local farmers in Central Sulawesi. But rights groups and sustainable investment advocates are now focusing on the fact the BlackRock itself is Astra International's third-largest investor, with holdings worth almost US\$350 million, as well as a smaller direct holding in AAL. Green finance groups said BlackRock has been inconsistent in living up to its 2020 pledges regarding environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles and sustainable investing. This poses problems for the US\$8.7 trillion passive investor, which cannot easily sell holdings in problem companies across its index and exchange-traded funds.

Interview: [BlackRock's former head of sustainable investing says ESG and sustainability investing are distractions from needed systemic solutions](#)

Interview with Tariq Fancy, former Chief Investment Officer for Sustainable Investing at BlackRock by Peter McKillop, *GreenBiz*, 28 April 2021.

[Mangroves marred by mining mud](#)

—Abdul Manan, *Tempo English*, 10 May 2021

Local communities are protesting against pollution of mangrove forests from nickel ore mines in Tanjung Moronopo, Buli Bay, Halmahera, North Maluku. Mangroves in this area were planted 16 years ago, but mining sludge has inundated the coastline, covering the mangrove trees, damaging coral reefs and turning seawater yellow. Locals claim the sludge originates from nickel mines operated by sub-contractors of state-owned Aneka Tambang (Antam). Fachruddin Tukuboya, chief of the North Maluku Environment Agency, said the flow of mine waste sediment occurred because the mining companies' containment wall is damaged. The mangrove area in Moronopo extends for 700 meters along the coast. In the past, hundreds of small-scale fishers made their living in Buli Bay catching small pelagic fish, anchovies and carp, but everything changed after the mine started operating intensively ten years ago. There are 3.31 million ha of mangrove areas in the country, with the largest in Papua province, accounting for 1.4 million ha. Of the total, 600,000 ha are in critical condition.

[Relocating mangroves for Java highway 'not that easy', expert warns](#)

—L. Darmawan, *Mongabay*, 4 May 2021

An environment expert has warned against a government plan to relocate mangrove forests on the north coast of Java to make way for a highway and levee project. The US\$557 million project, extending 27 km from Semarang, the capital of Central Java, to Demak, covering almost 540 ha, and including intact mangrove forest is intended as a solution to coastal flooding in the area. The project would relocate mangrove trees from three sites in the project area to help offset environmental impacts of the highway. However, Rudhi Pribadi, a marine researcher at Diponegoro University in Semarang, warned against the project. "You can't just relocate mangroves and expect them to continue to grow." Mangroves require specific ecosystem conditions and criteria to stay alive. "It's not easy to meet those criteria, Rudhi said, adding that much of the mangrove ecosystem along Java's north coast has already been damaged by other infrastructure projects. Another study found the project could exacerbate land subsidence issues and noted key omissions from the environmental impact assessment.

[Malaysian firm loses bid to clear rainforest in Papua, but deforestation persists](#)

—Philip Jacobson and Tom Johnson, *Mongabay*, 29 April 2021

A Jayapura court ruled against a Malaysian logging and property conglomerate firm seeking to retain rights to clear part of the world's third-largest rainforest for an oil palm plantation, but deforestation is continuing anyway. The ruling against Maxim Global stated that the land in question remains zoned for conversion to oil palm, but awarded the rights to a different company, Digoel Agri Group, which has already cleared 228 ha of forest at the site, despite opposition from local Indigenous communities. If completed, the Tanah Merah project could result in clearance of 280,000 ha of rainforest, potentially making it the world's largest oil palm plantation and releasing immense volumes of greenhouse gases. Digoel Agri was founded by relatives of Ventje Rumangan, an influential Indonesian politician and

businessman who died in 2020. In 2018, New Zealand property developer Neville Mahon became the majority shareholder in the group.

D Energy, Mining and Climate Change

[Indonesia's state-owned electricity monopoly pledges carbon neutrality by 2050](#)

—Dzulfiqar Fathur Rahman, *The Jakarta Post*, 8 May 2021

Indonesia's state-owned electricity monopoly PLN has pledged to become carbon neutral by 2050 by phasing out fossil fuel power plants and using more renewable energy. PLN president director Zulkifli Zaini said the company planned to develop new solar and wind power plants, mix biomass with coal—so-called “co-firing”—in existing coal facilities, and convert diesel-fired power plants to renewable energy-based plants. “After we finish developing the 35,000 megawatts [of additional power generating capacity], we will fulfil Indonesia's electricity needs using only renewable energy,” he said. However, Zulkifli did not specify what CO2 emission level would be the benchmark used to measure carbon neutrality. PLN plans to convert diesel-fired power plants with an installed capacity of 2 GW into renewable energy power plants, and Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Arifin Tasrif said there were additional plans to phase out 23 aging coal plants with a combined 5,655 MW of installed capacity.

[Capturing clean energy](#)

—Vindry Florentin, *Tempo English*, 3 May 2021

Indonesian fossil energy companies are exploring the idea of increasing their utilization of new and renewable energy to help reduce carbon emissions. State oil company Pertamina has expanded its green business portfolio with the goal of increasing renewables' share in its energy mix to 30% by 2035, including a microalgae biomass processing project in North Sumatra. The company is also developing geothermal power and is increasing its solar, wind, and hydropower generating capacity. Medco Power Indonesia is actively developing geothermal power, including the Sarulla plant in North Tapanuli, North Sumatra (330 MW) and the Blawan Ijen plant in East Java (110 MW), as well as solar power facilities in Sumbawa and Bali. However, Medo Power CEO Eka Satria said growth of renewable energy will require an ecosystem to optimize clean energy development, regulations to support investment, and support from financial institutions. GE Gas power Indonesia leader George Johan said his company is developing turbine gas technology to balance the intermittent nature of renewables with lower emissions.

[Asian Development Bank proposes ending financing of coal, upstream oil and gas](#)

—*Agence France-Presse* (Manila), 10 May 2021

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will no longer finance coal mining or oil and natural gas exploration, drilling or extraction under a draft policy announced on 7 May. “Coal and other fossil fuels have played a large part in ensuring access to energy for the region's economic development, but they have not solved the energy access challenge, and their use harms the environment and accelerates climate change,” the ADB stated. On 4 May, US Climate Envoy John Kerry called on the ADB to adopt a “more restrictive fossil fuel financing policy,” warning that island nations faced a situation “beyond existential” due to climate change. A final version of the energy policy will be submitted to the ADB Board of Directors in October. [Ed: Indonesia is the bank's sixth largest shareholder and one of its largest sovereign borrowers since the ADB's founding in 1966. Cumulative ADB lending, grant and technical assistance commitments to Indonesia totalled US\$39.18 billion as of year-end 2018, of which \$7.38 billion (18.8%) was for energy sector projects.

[Commentary: Indonesia's coal industry is on its last legs](#)

—Tata Mustasya, *ChannelNewsAsia*, 10 May 2021

Indonesia's coal industry is running out of options as the pot of money for coal power is drying up. Historically, pro-coal market controls and state support for intensive coal marketing in Indonesia made fossil fuels cheap and abundant. Coal makes up almost 40% of the country's energy mix. Politicians

argue coal allows Indonesia to be energy independent, but this ignores the financial structure Indonesia's coal industry relies on, which is in global decline. In April, South Korea announced it will no longer provide financing for coal projects, and Japan's major banks have signaled an end to coal investment. China may be the only country willing to provide the immense financial aid Indonesia's bloated coal industry needs. While other countries made moves to diversify their national energy mix, Indonesia doubled down on coal and neglected the potential for renewable energy development. Vietnam's solar sector has seen exponential growth and is a hub for foreign investment in 2020. Meanwhile, coal exports and domestic coal consumption in Indonesia has fallen short of targets.

Tata Mustasya is the Regional Climate and Energy Campaign Coordinator for Greenpeace Southeast Asia, based in Jakarta.

[Indonesia says no more new coal plants after next 100 or so are completed in 2023](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 12 May 2021

Zulkifli Zaini, CEO of Indonesia's state-owned electricity utility PLN, said no more new thermal coal plants would be built after the ongoing plans to add 35,000 megawatts (MW) and an additional 7,000 more MW capacity to the national grid is completed, probably in 2023. "After these are done, we are committed to add electricity in the future by focusing only on new and renewable energy," Zulkifli said. Indonesia's renewable energy sector trails far behind its Southeast Asia neighbors, making up only 11.5% of the country's electricity grid power as of 2020. Coal accounts for 40% of the electric power mix in Indonesia, which is also the world's biggest exporter of thermal coal used for power generation. "After 2027, solar power plants and wind power plants will generate cheaper electricity than coal plants, so if PLN keeps building new coal plants without pause, the potential for those plants to become stranded assets is huge," according to Fabby Tumiwa of the Institute for Essential Services Reform (IESR), a private policy think tank.

[Water crisis in Indonesia's East Nusa Tenggara \(NTT\) linked to mining](#)

—Ebed de Rosary, *Mongabay*, 5 May 2021

Clean water is hard to come by in Indonesia's arid East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) province. Water shortages affecting both rural and urban areas, from Flores to Rote and the provincial capital Kupang and the savanna island of Solor, where local women walk barefoot over rocky hills to fill buckets and jerrycans at brackish, failing wells. Uumbu Tamu Ridi Djawamara, with the local chapter of Walhi, Indonesia's biggest environmental NGO, attributes the water problems to environmental damage in water catchment areas, including from mining activity, noting that dozens of mining permits overlap with protected forest areas and watersheds. Thirty percent of the province's largest watershed, that of the Benanain River on Timor, has been handed to mining companies, Uumbu said, calling on local authorities to audit mining companies and devise policies to protect water catchment areas. Dewa Ayu Putu Eva Wishanti, a lecturer at Indonesia's Brawijaya University who conducted fieldwork in the area in 2017, said 48 of 51 sub-districts in Kupang suffered from major water shortages.

[At least seven people killed in landslide at Indonesian gold mine](#)

—*ChannelNewsAsia*, 11 May 2021

At least seven people were killed and one reported missing after torrential rains triggered a landslide at a goldmine in South Solok Regency, West Sumatra. Rescuers managed to save nine survivors. The accident occurred just two weeks after another landslide hit the China-backed Batang Toru hydropower plant in North Sumatra, killing ten people and leaving three more people missing. At least two children and one Chinese worker were among the victims. Fatal landslides are common during the rainy season. However, the disasters are often partly caused by deforestation and poor mitigation planning of mines and construction projects, environmentalists say. The Batang Toru hydropower project, part of China's trillion-dollar Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, has raised opposition because it is being built in an areas of rainforest that is the only known habitat of the critically-endangered Tapanuli Orangutan, the world's most endangered great ape.

E Pollution and Waste Management

[Leaders tackle plastic waste in Indonesia](#)

—Clay Hallee, *The Borgen Project*, 23 April 2021

Indonesia currently produces 6.8 million tons of plastic waste per year, with only about 10% ending up in recycling centers. About 625,000 tons of annual plastic waste ends up in the oceans, while landfills are typically close to communities, leading to toxic wastewater leaching into nearby farmland and hindering growth of crops. Plastic waste also flows into rivers, impacting the livelihoods of those who depend on rivers and damaging marine fisheries. National and local governments have taken some action. The island of Bali banned single-use plastics in 2018, while the capital of Jakarta banned single-use plastic in shopping centers and street markets in 2020. The national government has adopted a plan to reduce marine plastic waste by 70% by 20225 and be entirely rid of plastic pollution by 2040. The plan prioritizes reducing single-use plastic packaging, doubling current plastic waste collection to 80% by 2025, double current recycling capacity through infrastructure investments, and expanding waste disposal infrastructure to process an additional 3.3 million tons of plastic waste annually.

[Turning the Tide: How can Indonesia close the loop on plastic waste](#)

—Eli Patton and Ruyu Li, *NewSecurityBeat*, 29 April 2021

Indonesia is now second behind China as a source of ocean plastic, responsible for 10% of global plastic leakage. 60% of plastic waste is mismanaged, 80% of which ends up burned or buried, with only 10% being recycled. Local governments are nominally responsible for waste management, a difficult task with limited land and tax revenues across thousands of islands. Regional cooperation among municipalities could expand the web of waste management services. According to Ocean Conservancy, the bulk of plastic waste comes from food packaging, straws, bottles and bottle caps, plastic bags, and small sachet pouches. Grassroots groups and innovators are opening bulk stores where consumers bring their own containers for products while NGOs and companies are setting up waste banks to reduce ocean plastic leakage. International programs, such as USAID's Municipal Waste Recycling Program and the Clean Cities Blue Ocean Initiative work to build waste management capacity. The Minderoo Foundation's Global Plastic Watch is working with partners using satellites to help track and map plastic leakage hotspots.

F Conservation and Protected Areas

[Time is running out for embattled Pacific leatherback sea turtles](#)

—Marlowe Starling, *Mongabay*, 30 April 2021

Marine biologists warn that the western Pacific leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) could go extinct without immediate conservation measures and transnational cooperation. While the global species is classified by the IUCN as “vulnerable”, the Western Pacific sub-population has decreased at a rate of 5.6% a year over 28 years, an overall decline of 80%, and should be considered critically endangered. While the foraging range of this population extends to the US West Coast and New Zealand, the biggest remaining nesting grounds are located in Indonesia's West Papua Province and Papua New Guinea. The population is expected to decline 96% by 2040 due to fisheries bycatch, direct harvest of leatherback eggs and meat, and loss of nesting habitat, putting it at high risk of extinction, according to a recent study. Successful recovery of western Pacific leatherbacks will require Pacific-wide measures and multi-national coordination to reduce impacts.

[Paper: A long-term decline in the abundance of endangered leatherback turtles, *Dermochelys coriacea*, at a foraging ground in the California current ecosystem](#)

—Scott R. Benson et al, *Global Ecology and Conservation*, December 2020

[Sumatran rhinos show low inbreeding, but collapse will be quick when it happens](#)

—Carolyn Cowan, *Mongabay*, 29 April 2021

Fewer than 100 Sumatran rhinos (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis sumatrensis*) are known to survive on Earth, and the species faces dire threats due to low birthrate, habitat loss and fragmentation, and poaching. A new study found that despite its small size, the population retains significant genetic diversity that could help it survive threats like climate change or disease. “If we were to reverse the trend [of poaching and habitat destruction], and manage to get rhino numbers back up again, then hopefully we can preserve quite a lot of the genetic diversity, which is going to be very helpful for them in the longer run,” Love Dalén, a professor of evolutionary genetics and a co-author of the study said. However, an analysis of another sub-population in Malaysia that recently became extinct showed that a rapid spike of inbreeding preceded extinction. In light of low natural birth rates and ever-decreasing numbers of rhinos, experts have reached a consensus that human intervention is necessary to stave off extinction.

Paper: [Genomic insights into the conservation status of the world’s last remaining Sumatran rhinoceros populations](#)

—Johanna von Seth et al, *Nature Communications*, 26 April 2021

G Other

[Ruling on dress code in state schools threatens religious freedom](#)

—A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil, *The Jakarta Post*, 9 May 2021

Rights activists and experts have criticized the recent ruling of the Supreme Court to revoke a joint ministerial decree banning state schools from prescribing religious attire for students. The Court ruled in favour of petitioners from the Minangkabau Customary Institution, a West Sumatra administration-sanctioned organization to declare the decree null and void. The decree, issued on February 3 ordered state schools and local administrations to revoke any regulations requiring or banning students from wearing religious attire as part of their uniform, with the exception of Aceh, came after a controversy in January over a state school in Padang, West Sumatra, that had made wearing the hijab mandatory for all female students. “The ruling is a huge setback for religious freedom and expression in Indonesia, especially for school girls and female teachers in state schools,” Human Rights Watch Indonesia researcher Andreas Harsono said.

[Indonesian police arrest Papuan independence figure for suspected treason](#)

—*Reuters*, 10 May 2021

Indonesian authorities have arrested Papuan independence leader Victor Yeimo over accusations that he orchestrated some of the most serious civil unrest in decades that broke out in 2019, police said. Tension has reignited in Indonesia’s easternmost provinces with President Joko Widodo calling for a crackdown after a senior intelligence figure [general] was shot dead late last month, with an additional 400 troops deployed there. Yeimo, 38, is the international spokesperson of the West Papua National Committee. Protests convulsed Papua and West Papua provinces for several weeks in August 2019 after a mob taunted Papuan students in Surabaya, on the island of Java, with racial epithets, calling them “monkeys” over allegations they had desecrated a national flag. In late April, the Indonesian government officially designated the West Papua National Liberation Army, an armed separatist group, as a terrorist organization, making it possible to prosecute members of the group under the counterterrorism law.

[Indonesia deploys 400 more troops to troubled Papua](#)

—Kate Lamb, *Reuters*, 6 May 2021

Indonesia has deployed 400 more soldiers to Papua, an army spokesperson announced, as an exiled separatist leader warned that the military looked set to launch the biggest security operations in the region in decades. In late April, President Joko Widodo ordered a crackdown on Papuan separatists after an intelligence chief was shot dead in an ambush. The 315/Garuda Battalion, described as “battle hardened” and known as “Satan troops” for their role in bloody conflicts in East Timor after the Indonesian invasion in 1975, were being brought in after a breakdown in the dialogue with separatists, said army spokesman Brigadier General Prantara Santosa. “They are only trained infantry troops, not special

forces,” Santosa said. “Jokowi is burning the bridges for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in West Papua, and more displacement will take place,” Indonesian human rights lawyer Veronica Koman said of the move. “There are at least 40,000 internally displaced people in Papua due to armed conflict already.”

[Killing of Papua Intelligence Chief spurs steps to prevent Papuan Independence](#)

—Devv Ernis, *Tempo English*, 10 May 2021

Maj. Gen. I Gusti Putu Danny Nugraha Karya, Chief of the Papua Office of the State Intelligence Agency (BIN), was killed in a shootout on a visit to a village in Puncak Regency in Papua on 25 April. The next day, President Joko Widodo ordered firm action against the armed group that killed Putu Danny, but Jokowi also asked that no human rights violations be committed. Later, on 29 April, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Mahfud Md declared the armed organizations in Papua to be terrorists on the grounds that the armed groups have inflicted massive casualties and damaged public facilities. However, some disagreed with the measure, including representatives of the national police, who reportedly consider that armed groups in Papua do not possess a terrorist ideology comparable to Al Qaeda or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Papua Governor Lukas Enembe has also called for the government to review its decision to classify Papuan armed separatists as terrorists. Mahfuk Md refuted the claim that the government is not unanimous on the issue.

The government has mapped a number of armed groups in Papua that are allegedly involved in violence and murder of civilians or military and police personnel and operating under the umbrella banner of the West Papua National Liberation Army-Free Papua Organization (TNBPB-OPM). These groups include:

- Lekagak Telenggen Group Puncak Regency
- Murib Military Group Puncak and Intan Jaya Regencies
- Sabianus Waker Group Mimika Regency
- Egianus Kogeya Group Nduga regency
- Goliat Tabuni Group Puncak Jaya Regency
- Joni Botak Group Mimika Regency, Kali Kopi (Timika) region