



**Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest**

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

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## A. The Covid-19 Crisis in Indonesia

### Indonesia reports first Omicron deaths

—Dio Suhenda, *The Jakarta Post*, 24 January 2022

More than a month after Omicron was first discovered in the country, the highly-transmissible variant claimed its first fatalities amid an acceleration of new Covid-19 cases. The first fatality, a 64-year-old man, was unvaccinated and suffered from kidney complications. The second fatality, a 54-year old woman, was vaccinated but diagnosed with severe diabetes. As of 22 January, the total number of recorded Omicron cases had reached 1,161 since the variant was first reported in mid-December. Covid-19 cases in Indonesia are expected to continue to rise before peaking in February or March. Wiku Adisasmito, the Covid-19 Task Force spokesperson, said he government optimistic that the worst-case scenario could be avoided in the coming months, which will include Idul Fitri holiday and *mudik* [returning home] in May. “Whether it’s Omicron or Delta, these strains all put the same groups of people at risk—the elderly and those who have no immunity whether by vaccination or previous infection,” said epidemiologist Dicky Budiman.

### Government shifts to vaccines and treatment as third Covid-19 wave looms

—Dio Suhenda, *The Jakarta Post*, 21 January 2022

The Indonesian government said it will accelerate vaccinations and act to ensure hospitals are well-prepared in anticipation of a third wave of Covid-19 infections fuelled by the Omicron variant. The number of people fully vaccinated in Indonesia reached 122.4 million, representing 44% of the full population. “Enforcement of health protocols and acceleration of vaccination are important,” Coordinating Minister of Maritime Affairs and Investments Luhut Pandjaitan, who leads the government’s Covid-19 response in Java and Bali said. “We will make mobility restrictions the last resort.” Locally-made S-Genie Target Failure (SGTF) polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests that can better detect the Omicron variant will be made available in more labs by February. Inadequate testing and tracing has made it difficult for authorities to gauge the true number of cases, according to Griffith University epidemiologist Dicky Budiman, make it possible that the actual number of [Omicron Covid-19] cases could be eight-to-ten times higher than current reports and estimates, Dicky said.

### Jakarta curbs remain unchanged as Omicron Covid-19 cases spike

—Nina A. Loasana, *The Jakarta Post*, 26 January 2022

Jakarta will remain under the prevailing Covid-19 curbs for now despite a recent case spike that city authorities call “the first battleground” in the fight against the highly-contagious new Omicron variant. Luhut Pandjaitan, the Coordinating Minister of Maritime Affairs and Investments who is coordinating the Covid-19 programs in Java and Bali, said the government would treat Jakarta and the surrounding cities of Depok, Bogor, Bekasi and Tangerang as one unit for the purpose of virus control. Indonesia recorded 4,878 new Covid-19 cases on 25 January, bringing the total to about 24,000 active cases. In Jakarta, the number of active cases nearly tripled over the past week as the presence of the Omicron variant made itself felt. However, Minister Luhut said the fatality rate in Jakarta was lower than the government expected based on models from South Africa’s earlier Omicron outbreak, which he attributed to the city’s high rate of vaccinations and public discipline in registering with the government’s PeduliLindungi contact tracing app.

### [FAO: Undernourishment and stunting of children on the rise in Indonesia](#)

—Dzulfiqar Fathur Raman, *The Jakarta Post*, 23 January 2022

Indonesia has experienced a rise in the prevalence of undernourishment, while the rate of “stunting” among children remains ‘very high’ amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported. The three-year moving average of the national prevalence of undernourishment, a core indicator of hunger, rose to 6.5% in 2020 from 6.4% one year earlier, implying that many as 17.5 million people in the country are undernourished. The Covid-19 pandemic led to the rise in the prevalence of nourishment, the report said. “In parts of the world, the pandemic has triggered brutal recessions, jeopardized access to food, and affected the entire food system, said Rajendra Aryal, the FAO representative for Indonesian and Timor Leste. The prevalence of stunting among children under 5 was estimated to have improved marginally to 31.8% in 2020 from 32.0% a year earlier, but Indonesia remains in the “very high” category for stunting prevalence above 30%, according to a joint report by the World Bank, WHO, and UNICEF.

### [Indonesia to push for new global agency to replace World Health Organization](#)

—AFP via *The Jakarta Post*, 21 January 2022

Indonesia will push for the creation of a new global agency to replace the World Health Organization (WHO) while Indonesia holds the presidency of the G20, President Joko Widodo said at the virtual Davos World Economic Forum, explaining that the new agency’s task would be to “mobilise world health resources, including financing health emergencies, purchasing vaccines, medicines, and medical devices” in order to strengthen the world’s “health resilience” and help make the global health system more inclusive and better able to respond to crises. The existing World Health Organization had exhibited limited capacity to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic, Widodo said. Comparing the proposed new agency to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Widodo said it would formulate standardised protocols for activities such as cross-border travel and boosting manufacturing capacity for medicines and equipment, calling on the world’s major economies to co-finance the initiative and reach an agreement this year. Indonesia, which struggled to procure enough vaccines for its large population, reported more than 144,000 deaths from the pandemic.

### [Coronavirus turned Gili Trawangan into a desert of abandoned resort](#)

—Haeril Halim, *The Jakarta Post* via AFP, 9 December 2022

Chef Ilhani used to serve up Japanese cuisine for holidaymakers every night; now he makes just US\$3 a day selling fried snacks on the one-bustling Gili Trawangan. The pandemic has shuttered almost all the resorts and restaurants across the Gili islands, situated close to Bali which used to host around 1,500 visitors a day. Ilhani struggles to support his wife and four children. “Life is difficult now,” he said. I sell fried snacks because it is something that locals can afford. In the past, there were tourists who would buy other things, but as you can see, the island is deserted.” Before there were some 800 hotels and resorts with 7,000 rooms across the three islands, but now only 20-30 properties remain open. Staff that once worked in the hotels, restaurants and dive shops have been forced to find other ways to make a living, some turning to fishing to feed their families. Borders were officially re-opened in October, but direct international flights to Bali have yet to resume.

## B. Marine & Fisheries

### Minister proposes fisheries village program

—*Antara News*, 18 January 2022

Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Sakti Wahyu Trenggono presented the fisheries village program to the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI). The program envisions two types of fisheries villages: *Kampung Nelayan Maju*, a village specialized for increasing fishers' welfare, and *Kampung Perikanan Budidaya*, a village focused on aquaculture. "The fishers' villages will be built in 120 locations and aquaculture villages in 130 locations," Trenggono said. Under the *Kampung Nelayan Maju* program, the Ministry will provide facilities such as boats, fishing gear, and boat machinery. The collaboration will also cover fuel and energy, health and workers' security insurance, education, and business institution improvements through fishers' cooperatives. Meanwhile, the *Kampung Perikanan Budidaya* program will be divided into three categories: one for freshwater commodities, such as goldfish, catfish, and shark catfish; second for brackish water commodities such as milkfish and saline tilapia; and third for sea fisheries commodities, such as groupers, snappers, and star pomfret, he added.

### **Fisheries Ministry designates two marine conservation areas**

—*Antara News*, 16 January 2022

<https://en.antaraneews.com/news/209973/fisheries-ministry-designates-two-marine-conservation-areas>

The Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries has designated two new marine conservation areas: Pangandaran waters in West Java and West Pariaman waters in West Sumatra. The designation of the 38,810 hectares of Pangandaran waters as a marine conservation area is aimed at protecting sea turtle and lobster habitat, while the marine conservation area of West Pariaman covering 6,122 hectares of marine area is set to protect coral reef and sea turtle habitat. The ministry's Acting Director General of Marine Spatial Management Pamuji Lestari said that as of 2021, 81 conservation areas covering a total 13.93 million hectares of marine area had been set aside, with a target to increase the marine conservation area by two million more hectares in 2022, she said. The conservation areas would be located in 19 provinces namely West Java, West Sumatra, Maluku, North Kalimantan, Riau Islands, Yogyakarta, West Sulawesi, North Sulawesi, East Kalimantan, West Nusa Tenggara, Riau, Bengkulu, Lampung, Bangka Belitung Islands, East Nusa Tenggara, Central Kalimantan, Southeast Sulawesi, West Sulawesi, and West Papua.

### US imported blue swimming crab prices hit plateau after steep 19-month ascent

—Jason Huffman, *Undercurrent News*, 17 January 2022

Prices on US imports of blue swimming crab are likely to remain high after plateauing in recent weeks following 19 months of steady climbing, sources said. The Urner Barry (UB) price service on 11 January reported average wholesale prices for pasteurized jumbo lump blue swimming crab (BSC) from Southeast Asia ranging from \$44.50 to \$45.25 per pound, the same as on Oct. 28, 2021. But over the past 12 months the average price of BSC has risen 87-98% across all sizes and styles of meat, based on UB data, started in June 2020 when a kilogram of BSC meat from Indonesia, including a mix of sizes, cost only \$7.67 per pound. Indonesia was the leading source of BSC in the US for the first 11 months of 2021, accounting for 12,279 tonnes, nearly half of total swimming crab imports during the period. The Philippines accounted for a distant second with imports of 2,932 tonnes.

### Ocean warming hits another record high

—Elizabeth Claire Alberts, *Mongabay*, 13 January 2022

In 2021 the temperature of the world's ocean was the highest ever recorded by humans for the sixth year in a row despite continuation of a La Niña state in the Indo-Pacific basin throughout 2021, which should have cooled down ocean waters. Long-term ocean warming is attributed to anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. Warmer oceans supercharge weather systems, creating more powerful storms, typhoons, hurricanes, and increased precipitation and promote more intense rainfall in all storms, increasing the

risk of flooding, destabilizing marine ecosystems and threatening human livelihoods. Warm-water fish, for example, are increasingly moving into once frigid Arctic waters where they were not previously found. Changes to engineering design, building codes, and modifications to coastal development plans are recommended in anticipation of increased sea levels and increases in extreme precipitation events, which are already being observed. Even if carbon emissions were to stop tomorrow, the world's oceans would still continue to warm and sea levels would continue to rise as heat penetrates deeper into the ocean.

**Paper:** Lijing Cheng et al, "[Another Record: Ocean Warming Continues through 2021 despite La Niña Conditions](#)", *Advances in Atmospheric Sciences* (2022)

### [Climate-impacted reefs still support fisheries providing critical nutrients for human development](#)

—John C. Cannon, *Mongabay*, 21 January 2022

Rising ocean temperatures are devastating the world's coral reefs, inducing corals to jettison the symbiotic photosynthesizing algae living within their tissues, a process that often ends with bleaching and death of the colony. But millions of people in the tropics remain dependent on fish from these damaged and degraded reefs. A study has shown that critical nutrients for human development in reef fishes remain available even after mass bleaching occurs, suggesting climate-impacted reefs can still provide important ecosystem services and should be incorporated in management plans and conservation. The severe 1998 bleaching of corals in the Seychelles killed more than 90% of live corals, but nearly 60% of the reefs eventually recovered. The average Seychellois still gets almost half the animal protein they consume from fish as well as a host of micronutrients critical to healthy physical functioning. In some cases, iron and zinc-rich parrotfish family fishes were even more numerous on bleached reefs that had been colonized by seaweed.

**Paper:** Robinson, J. P. et al, (2022), "[Climate-induced increased micronutrient availability for coral reef fisheries](#)," *One Earth* 8(6) doi:10.1016/j.oneear.2021-12-005

### [Indonesia to strengthen presence on shoal near Malaysia and Singapore 'brick by brick'](#)

—Fadlii, *The Jakarta Post*, 23 January 2022

Indonesia will build a lighthouse on a shoal in the Riau Islands. The latest move to reaffirm sovereignty over territory near the maritime borders with Malaysia and Singapore was announced by Home Minister Tito Karnavian, Deputy Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Muhammad Herindra, Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla) Vice Chief of Staff Adm. Aan Kurnia, and Riau Islands governor Ansar Ahmad. Karang Singa is located off the coast of Bintan Island, near the disputed south ledge which is also claimed by Malaysia and Singapore and near the disputed Pulau Batu Puteh and Middle Rocks. When the dispute was brought before the International Court of Justice in 2008, the ISJ ruled that that Pulau Batu Puteh was Singaporean territory and determined that Middle Rock belonged to Malaysia. "What is important is that we cannot afford a repeat of Sipadan and Ligatan, Minister Tito said, referring to an earlier ISJ ruling that Sipadan and Ligatan were Malaysian territory on the basis of Kuala Lumpur's effective occupation of the islands and Jakarta's tardiness in preparing an effective claim.

## C. Forests & Land Use

### [Spurred by investor-friendly new law, palm oil firms sue to get their plantations licenses back](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 25 January 2022

Two companies in West Papua province are suing a local district head for revoking their palm oil plantation concessions, the second such case since authorities last year rescinded permits covering an area twice the size of Los Angeles county. PT Anugerah Sakti Internusa (ASI) and PT Persada Utama Agromulia (PUA) filed suits against the head of South Sorong district, asking the administrative court in adjacent Papua province to restore concession permits scrapped for a litany of legal violations. The filings came weeks after the same court threw out similar lawsuits against the head of a neighboring

Sorong District whose licenses had been revoked in 2021 for similar reasons. According to an audit, PUA had secured a location permit for 12,100 ha and ASI for 14,667 ha, but neither company had secured a right-to-cultivate (HGU) permit, which is required before planting of oil palm trees. Nicodemus Wamafma, Greenpeace forest campaigner in Papua, says the companies were emboldened by passage of the investor-friendly “Omnibus” law on job creation passed in 2020.

### [Indonesia clearing less forest for palm oil than before, but it's still not sustainable](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 26 January 2022

The area of forest cleared for oil palm plantations in Indonesia has been reduced since over the past 19 years simply because most existing new plantations in land licensed for palm oil in 2019 were established on land that was not standing forest in 2020, according to Auriga, an NGO. The highest annual rate of deforestation for oil palm plantations since 2000 was in 2012, when 314,937 ha were cleared. After that, the area steadily declined to less than 100,000 per year since 2016. But just because some palm oil is produced on non-deforested land doesn't make it sustainable, according to Syahrul Fitra, a forest campaigner at Greenpeace Indonesia. “You can't just look at palm oil from its canopy. People live under that canopy, indigenous peoples,” Syahrul said. Conflicts with local communities in the plantation sector mostly involve palm oil plantations, according to the Consortium for Agrarian Reform (KPA), because the country has no effective mechanism for resolving conflicts over land between rural communities and palm oil companies.

### [Indonesian research center for medicinal plants displaces traditional incense harvesters](#)

—Barita News Lumbanbatu, *Mongabay*, 13 January 2022

Indonesia's enormous variety of plants with medicinal properties are widely used by both urban and rural populations. In 2021, the Indonesian government announced plans to build a research center to study these plants in Humbang Hasundutan District in North Sumatra. “The president aims to build a world-class herbal research center, which we are developing together with the Agency for the Assessment and Application of Technology [BPPT] and five universities,” said Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, Coordinating Minister for Marine Affairs and Investments minister, adding that the university leading the development is the Del Institute of Technology, which he founded in 2001. Farmers who harvest benzoin, a resin obtained from the bark of *Kemenyan* (*Styrax benzoin*) trees said the research center could put an end to their livelihoods. Avena Matondang, director of Mi-Ethno Research in North Sumatra, said the concept of the research center made little sense since it involved importing plants from around the country and removing them from the context of their natural ecosystems and the locals who understand them best.

### [As Indonesia retakes land from developers, conservation is an afterthought](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 12 January 2022

President Joko Widodo's announcement that it would cancel millions of hectares of illegal, mismanaged or neglected logging, plantation and mining concessions was widely seen as an opportunity to conserve those lands by redistributing them to local and indigenous communities and protecting areas still home to rainforest and other native ecosystems. But some government officials say the concessions should be reissued to other companies to develop and called for opening lands already redistributed to communities to new investors. The affected concessions include 3.13 million mining, logging, plantation and ecotourism operations under the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), 34,448 ha of plantations under the Ministry of Agrarian and Spatial Planning, and 2,078 permits for mines under the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources. A preliminary analysis by Auriga Nusantara, an NGO, shows 2.4 million ha of rainforest still standing on sites covered by revoked KLHK permits. “All these remaining natural forests have to be protected, Auriga Executive Director Timer Manurung said.

### [With 'sustainable' cocoa, Mars pushes climate and market risks onto farmers](#)

—Basten Gokkon, *Mongabay*, 26 January 2022

Corporate strategies tying smallholder farmers into sustainable cocoa cultivation leave them more vulnerable to climate change impacts and economic risks, concluded a study of the practices of US

chocolate giant Mars Inc. in Indonesia, which produces a tenth of the world's cocoa. Dr. Sean Kennedy, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, described the Mars approach as imposing standardized farming practices and creating financial dependencies that leave smallholder farmers beholden to Mars and less able to abandon cocoa and grow other crops or seek other forms of livelihood even as market fluctuations and climate variability make cocoa farming difficult or less remunerative. Being locked into cocoa farming in this way damages the livelihood prospects and climate adaptability of smallholder farmers who historically have been able to flexibly respond to seasonal variations and climatic disruptions. "Mars appears to view climate change and climate impacts through the lens of the commodity rather than the producer," Kennedy told Mongabay.

**Paper:** Kennedy, S. F., "[The power to stay: Climate, cocoa, and the politics of displacement](#)", *Annals of the American Association of Biographers* (2021) Doi:10.1080/24694452.2021.1978839

## D. Energy, Mining and Climate Change

### [Indonesia runs early tests to produce palm oil gasoline](#)

—*Reuters*, 25 January 2022

Indonesia has conducted early tests to produce an automotive gasoline made from palm oil to absorb more of its palm oil output and reduce imports of petroleum-based fuels, the Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources said on 25 January. In 2020, the country launched a mandatory B30 biodiesel which is 30% palm oil. It conducted a test flight using jet fuel mixed with palm oil last year, and plans to do road tests for biodiesel containing 40% palm oil next month. Biodiesel presently accounts for about 38% of the country's domestic palm oil consumption, according to the Indonesian Palm Oil Association. The required bioethanol blend in automotive gasoline was raised from 5% to 10% in 2020. [Ed: It is technically possible treat palm oil using a catalytic cracking process which generates an organic liquid product (OLP) consisting of gasoline, kerosene and diesel, all of which can be used as fuels, but we are not aware of meaningful commercial production of non-diesel automotive gasoline from palm oil at this time.]

### [Indonesia starts construction of US\\$2.3 billion coal gasification plant](#)

—Bernadette Christina, *Reuters*, 24 January 2022

President Joko Widodo launched construction of a US\$2.3 billion coal gasification plant in South Sumatra on 24 January in a bid to slash imports of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) while optimising its extensive coal resources. The plant would use 6 million tonnes of low rank coal to produce dimethyl ether (DME), reducing Indonesia's annual LPG import requirements by 1 million tonnes, according to state coal miner Bukit Asam (PTBA.JK), which is building the plant in partnership with the US firm Air Products and Chemicals Inc. Indonesia consumed 7.95 million tonnes of LPG in 2021, 6.4 million tonnes of which were imported. With the new plant, "we can reduce an [annual] subsidy from the state budget of about 7 trillion rupiah (US\$489 million) while improving our trade balance and current account deficit, the president said. Indonesia's LPG imports are projected to decline dramatically from 2025 as the country ramps up coal gasification, now on a government "priority" investment list. Construction is expected to take 30 months.

### [Opinion: Indonesia's clean energy transition must start with clean rivers](#)

—Warief Djajanto Basorie, *Mongabay*, 11 January 2022

President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo has touted hydropower as key to the transition away from coal, and Indonesia has a wealth of major rivers with the potential to generate significant amount of electricity, but more than half are degraded and polluted. Holding the G20 presidency this year, Jokowi has tried to explain Indonesia's dependence on coal, which accounted for 63% of electricity generation in 2020 while fossil fuels dominated (82%) the power sector, including transportation. Jokowi has said that Indonesia's 4,400 big and medium rivers would help finance the transition away from coal, but most of these rivers are defiled to the point where they no longer support living organisms. The Citarum in West Java is

seriously contaminated by hazardous wastes including phosphates and toxic mercury compounds from factories along its banks. “If watershed conservation is bad, [then] reliability is low, maintenance costly, and the hydropower plant will have a short lifespan, according to Walhi’s Dwi Sawung. But if watershed conservation is good, it will have good reliability.”

*Warief Djajanto Basorie writes on environmental issues for the Jakarta Post, Antara, Mongabay Indonesia, New Naritif, the Bangkok Post, Wall Street Journal, Mainichi Shimbun, and others.*

## E. Pollution and Waste Management

### [Commentary analysis: Innovative sewage solutions: Tackling the global human waste problem](#)

—Sean Mowbray, *Mongabay*, 25 January 2022

Human waste produced by 7.8 billion people grossly impacts human health and the environment, with wastewater adding 6.2 million tons of nitrogen and unknown amounts of other pollutants to coastal water annually. The sewage and wastewater problems are contributing to the destabilization of Earth’s safe operating systems, impacting at least five planetary boundaries: polluting freshwater, oceans, and land with nutrient overloads; harming biodiversity; and adding to climate change. But a plethora of new technologies and innovations are being developed and tested to tackle the crisis, not only to treat wastewater and offer safe sanitation, but also to recover and reuse valuable nutrients and freshwater we flush away daily as waste. The Coral Reef Alliance is one NGO working to catalyze government and multilateral efforts to solve basic sanitation problems, helping communities find sanitation solutions that protect reefs through development of new wastewater treatment facilities. Harnessing decentralized nature-based solutions (NbS) can be effective approaches to addressing grey and green issues like combined sewage overflow (CSO).

### [Chemical pollution has passed safe limit for humanity, scientists say](#)

—Damian Carrington, Environment Editor, *The Guardian*, 18 January 2022

The cocktail of chemical pollution pervading the planet now threatens the stability of global ecosystems upon which humanity depends. Plastics are of particular concern, as are 350,000 other synthetic chemicals including biocides, industrial compounds, and antibiotics. Plastic pollution is now found from the summit of Mount Everest to the deepest ocean trenches, and some toxic chemicals, such as PCBs, are persistent and widespread. Chemical pollution threatens earths’ systems by damaging the biological and physical processes that underpin all life. There has been a fiftyfold increase in production of chemicals since 1950, and this is projected to triple again by 2050, said Patricia Villarrubia-Gomez at the Stockholm Resilience Center (SR). “The pace that societies are producing and releasing new chemicals into the environment is not consistent with staying within a safe operating space for humanity.” Things point in the wrong direction every step of the way. “The total mass of plastics now exceeds the total mass of all living animals, said Prof. Bethanie Carney Almroth at the University of Gothenberg.

**Paper:** Linn Persson et al, “[Outside the Safe Operating Space of the Planetary Boundary for Novel Entities](https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.1c04158)”, *Environmental Science Technology* 2022 (January 18, 2022)  
<https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.1c04158>

## F. Conservation and Protected Areas

### [As animals vanish, the plants they spread can’t keep pace with climate change](#)

—Liz Kimbrough, *Mongabay*, 19 January 2022

As more seed-dispersing birds and mammals die off, some plant species are losing their ability to shift locations to keep pace with escalating climate change. “When you hear headlines about the biodiversity crisis, also called the Sixth Mass Extinction, the decline of bird and animals species also means the decline of seed dispersers, reducing the ability of animal-dispersed plants to track climate change by 60%, a report analysing and comparing IUCN data sets on worldwide animal populations. This first global



analysis of the loss of seed-dispersers demonstrates the interconnectedness of the climate change and biodiversity crises.

**Paper:** Fricke, E. C., et al, "[The effects of defaunation on plants capacity to track climate change](#)", *Science* 375 (6577), 210-214, doi:10.1126/science.abk3510 (13 January 2022)  
DOI:10.1126/science.abk351

[Thirteen endangered snake-necked turtles repatriated back to Indonesia](#)  
—Isabelle Liew, *The Strait Times*, 19 January 2022

Thirteen critically endangered Roti Island snake-necked turtles were successfully repatriated from Singapore back to their native country, Indonesia, last September. The turtles - experts believe they may be extinct in the wild - were initially sent to the Singapore Zoo in 2015 from breeding programmes in the United States and Austria. This is the first repatriation of the species, marking a major milestone in efforts to boost the wild population, conservation organisation Mandai Nature, Wildlife Conservation Society - Indonesia Programme (WCS-IP) and Singapore Zoo said on Wednesday (Jan 19). The efforts are led by Indonesia's Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MOEF) and Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BBKSDA) in the East Nusa Tenggara province. The turtles, which have settled in a breeding facility in Kupang in the province, are now part of the first structured conservation breeding programme in Indonesia. The offspring will be raised under human care from egg development, with the aim of reintroducing them into their native wild habitats.

## G. Sustainable funding and finance

[OJK launches green finance taxonomy](#)  
—Vincent Fabian Thomas, *The Jakarta Post*, 24 January 2022

Indonesia's Financial Services Authority (OJK) has launched a "green finance taxonomy" to serve as guidelines for financiers wanting to invest in Indonesia's green economy as the government seeks to build up the country's green investment credentials. Launched on 20 January, the taxonomy lays out terms to determine the degree to which a business's operations are to be considered environmentally damaging, classified into three tiers: green (operation that protect or improve the environment; yellow (operations which do no significant harm nor provide major benefits; and red (for business activities considered environmentally harmful). The taxonomy will be launched by the president to serve as a guide for policy-making, incentives and disincentives for various ministries and institutions, including the OJK, according to OJK Chairman Wimboh Santoso. The first draft will cover 919 business sectors and subsectors, but subsequent revisions are expected to address all sectors and subsectors under the Indonesia Standard Industrial Classification.

## H. Other

[NGO: Indigenous people could be expelled from land for new Indonesian capital](#)  
—Agencies via *The Jakarta Post*, 23 January 2022

Tens of thousands of indigenous people are at risk of being expelled from their lands to make way for the construction of a new capital city, to be called Nusantara, on jungle-clad East Kalimantan province, warned the Indigenous People's Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN), a human rights group. At least 20,000 people from 21 separate indigenous tribes live in the area designated for construction of the capital, the group warned, noting that existing laws do not provide sufficient protection for communities' land rights. "The project will trigger problems such as confiscation of customary lands and criminalisation of indigenous people when they try to defend their rights," warned Muhammad Arman, AMAN's Policy, Law and Human Rights Director. "They will also lose their traditional livelihoods such as farming. Indigenous communities in Kalimantan are already locked in on-going conflicts with corporations, which have received plantations concessions covering about 30,000 ha that overlaps with customary lands of indigenous communities. The new state capital law provides a legal framework for President Widodo's

ambitious US\$32 billion megaproject and stipulates how development of the capital is to be funded and governed. The proposed new city will cover 56,180 ha out of a total of 25,142 ha set aside for the project. Environmentalists have criticized the development plan, warning it could damage local ecosystems in the region where mining and oil palm plantations have already threatened rainforests home to endangered species, including orangutans.

### [Widodo riding high as his legacy comes into view](#)

—John McBeth, *AsiaTimes*, 24 January 2022

Far from being relegated to lame-duck status, President Joko Widodo's endorsement is shaping up to be a key factor when Indonesia goes to the polls in 2024 to elect a new president. The latest opinion poll by *Indikator Politik Indonesia* shows Widodo with a popularity rating of 72%, the highest since 2018. Hosting the G20 Summit in October will rank as a major milestone in his presidency, but more important is his determination to press ahead with the US\$33 billion plan to move the national capital from Jakarta to East Kalimantan. The Covid-19 pandemic appeared to leave the ambitious project dead in the water, but Widodo clearly wants to make this the crowning achievement of a presidency marked by historic advances in infrastructure and industrial development. Apart from flooding and other environmental issues, Widodo has cited the need to rebalance national development and correct growing inequality among the 270 million population of the archipelago. There may also be a political dimension to the move which gained momentum after the closely-fought 2019 race showed the extent of the hold Islamists have on West Java, the country's largest province surrounding Jakarta.

### [New Indonesian capital evokes Indonesia's archipelagic character](#)

—Philip Bowring, *Asia Sentinel*, 20 January 2022

The name of the new Indonesian capital on Borneo, Nusantara, has generally been simply translated as "archipelago", but the origins of the name stem from one of the most glorious eras of the history of these islands. "*Nusa*" means island (and sometimes homeland), while "*antara*" means among, so the combined term essentially means "island realm".

The world first came into use during the Majapahit era in the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries to describe the realm of the East Java-based empire's area of regional sway. As described in the 1365 chronicle *Negara-Kertagama*, the heartland of that empire was Java but its maritime realm extended (in varying degrees) to islands and coasts from Timor, Butuan in Mindanao (now part of the Philippines), to Pasay near Aceh, Temasek (Singapore, Langasuka (on the Malay peninsula) and Champa (now southern Vietnam).

Nusantara was subsequently proposed as a name by nationalists struggling for the independence of the Dutch East Indies, an area also often referred to as the Malay Archipelago. Sunda, a Sanskrit name, evoked the Sunda Strait itself but also all the islands from Sumatra to Timor comprising the Greater and Lesser Sunda Islands. Jakarta was once known as Sunda Kelapa, and the old port district of the city still bears that name. But the majority of the nationalists opted for "Indonesia", an 18<sup>th</sup> century English-origin construct, literally meaning "Indian Islands" or the "isles of the Indies."

President Widodo often speaks about Indonesia's maritime history and the importance of protecting its seas, maritime resources, and the integrity of the archipelago. In fact, the very existence of the politico-legal concept of an archipelago in the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) stemmed, after a long fight, from Indonesia's 1957 declaration of its own archipelagic national identity to be one with rights over the waters linking together its islands.

Whatever the name, Indonesia today is very Java-centered. Holding together this sprawling archipelago will require effort to counter the pull and power of Java and Jakarta, which is literally sinking under its own weight.

Whether the choice of a site for the new capital halfway between Balikpapan and Samarinda, close to the sea and roughly 1250 km from Jakarta may continue to be debated, but the reality is that Jakarta has long been an almost ungovernable city, beset by traffic, pollution, and overcrowding. It is difficult to argue against any major effort to better balance population distribution, adding to the mere 17 million who now inhabit Indonesian Kalimantan, an area almost the size of France, and develop its economy away from the extractive industries of coal, oil, and timber.

### [Bali bids King Pemecutan goodbye in grand cremation ceremony](#)

—*The Jakarta Post* via AFP, 23 January 2022

Thousands of Balinese braved pandemic restrictions to throng the streets of the island's capital to send off the late King Ida Cokorda Pemecuan XI, whose real name was Anak Agung Ngurah Manik Parasara, following his death in December at the age of 76, in a lavish cremation ceremony. Members of the royal family paraded past shaded by gilded black umbrellas while men in traditional Balinese dress carried the king's body in a colourful 10-meter high wood tower and a massive Ogoh-ogoh, or demon statue. The remains of Parasara were cremated and the ashes will be thrown into the sea. Parasara was known as a spiritual leader and advocate of religious tolerance, but in 2004 he was found guilty of murder for stabbing his step-brother to death in a family feud, serving a one year sentence in Bali's Kerobokan Prison.

### **Twelve years after the Montara oil spill, Indonesian seaweed farmers are still fighting to be heard**

—Ben Doherty, *The Guardian*, 15 January 2021

One morning in September 2009, Daniel Sanda woke to find his seaweed farm on the island of Rote coated with oil. Within days, the crop his family depended on had been destroyed. Sanda and thousands of others, victims of one of Australia's worst environmental disasters, are still waiting for acknowledgment and compensation.

A 2010 Australian government inquiry found that the Montara oil spill was no misfortune but rather the result of corporate neglect, ruling that the effort to plug one of the four wells in PTTEPAA's newly-drilled Montara field was done carelessly and incompetently: the company did not come "within a bull's roar of sensible oilfield practice." Three control barriers used to cap the well had not been tested; all were deficient, and one had not been properly installed. The commission ruled that the Australian subsidiary of the Thai oil company PTTEP was negligent in its operation of the Montara oil platform 250 km off the coast of Australia, which spewed for than 2,500 barrels of oil into the Timor Sea every day for 74 days, destroying fishing grounds, killing seaweed farms, and polluting a marine area larger than 90,000 km<sup>2</sup> (9 million ha), an area bigger than Tasmania. In 2021, a federal court ordered the Australian subsidiary PTTEP Australasia to pay Sanda, the lead plaintiff in a class action suit representing 15,483 seaweed farmers, a little more than A\$34,000 in damages.

So far, however, Sanda and the other seaweed farmers have not received anything, nor have others affected by the spill—fishers, farmers, and their families.

In December 2021, the company lodged an appeal, arguing that there was insufficient evidence that the oil that damaged coastal areas of Rote and Kupang in Indonesia came from the Montara blowout. The federal court's decision in the case was limited to the regions of Rote and Kupang, but PTTEP now argues that oil from the spill never reached Indonesia, or if it did, that the concentration was insufficiently toxic to destroy the seaweed crops.

In 2012, PTTEPAA was fined A\$510,000 for breaches of the Offshore Petroleum Act. In 2013 the company conducted an environmental survey that concluded "no oil reached the Indonesian coast" and that 98.6% of the spilled oil remained within Australian territorial waters. The company was not given permission to survey any Indonesian islands.

### **Brawl and fire in West Papua nightclub leaves at least 18 dead**

—*CNN and other news agencies*, 26 January 2022

At least 19 people were killed in a clash at the Double O karaoke bar and nightclub in Sorong city, West Papua province, police said, with one person stabbed to death, but most deaths occurring after the venue caught fire. The incident began with a brawl between two rival youth gangs armed with machetes, bows and arrows, and Molotov cocktails, but was believed to not involve residents of West Papua and not to be related to the separatist insurgency that has affected other parts of West Papua and Papua provinces. Dedi Prasetyo, a spokesman for Indonesia's national police, said the brawl was between two rival gangs from the nearby province of Maluku.

### **Diminished Autonomy and the Risk of New Flashpoints in Papua**

—*Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict*, IPAC Report No. 74, 23 December 2021

The long-planned revision of the Special Autonomy (Otsus) Law offered a chance to reset the deteriorating relationship between Jakarta and Papua. But President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo’s government, like its predecessors, insisted that higher income and better infrastructure would make the demands for independence go away. Blaming corruption and mismanagement by Papuan elites for slow economic progress, the government sought to recentralize power by supervising spending and diffusing opposition to its own properties in Papua.

Papuan activists, meanwhile, have long contended that development alone cannot address what are fundamentally political grievances, with two distinct views on the future of Otsus in Papua. One group, led by the Papuan Peoples Council (*Majelis Rakyat Papua, MRP*) called for an exhaustive evaluation of the Otsus law through public consultations. A rejectionist camp, represented by the West Papua National Committee (*Komite Nasional Papua Barat, KNPB*), organized a mass petition to discard the special autonomy law in its entirety and demanded a referendum on independence.

The new Otsus Law, passed in July 2021, adopts the government’s proposal for recentralization and curtails Papua’s autonomy in three ways: First, it undermines the authority of provincial governors by recognizing local governments (*kabupaten/kota*) as direct recipients of Otsus funds and empowers the central government to carve out new provinces and districts in Papua without the approval of the MRP or provincial governments. Second, it allows the central government to supervise and control the allocation and disbursement of Otsus funds, a power previously reserved for the provincial government(s). Third, it removes the provision for institutional representation of indigenous Papuans through local political parties and replaces it with quotas in local legislatures and preferential access to government-funded programs.

The unilateral process through which the new law was drafted triggered widespread protests. The MRP, which by the term of the 2001 Otsus Law must be consulted on any revisions, was largely shut out of the deliberations and provincial officials were also side-lined. Tensions were running high in December 2021. The MRP has challenged the process and substance of the new law in the Constitutional Court, where the case is still pending. The Jokowi government is pushing ahead with implementation, including the most contentious provision of further carving up Papua into new administrative units, including the creation of Papua Selatan (“South Papua”) as a third province.

The violence that has gripped the province since August 2019 exposed the failure of Otsus in addressing entrenched racism and discrimination against Papuans and showed Jakarta’s tenuous grip on security in the most heavily militarized part of the country, raising questions about the utility of pouring a staggering US\$95 billion in Otsus funds into Papua over the past two decades.

While Jakarta’s unilateral approach to Otsus revision was clear throughout the process, there was also a glaring lack of leadership on the issue in Papua. The MRP held consultations but never formulated an alternative list of proposals, and provincial governments provided no concrete inputs. The Papua governor’s office was in a state of disarray throughout the process due to the prolonged illness of incumbent governor Enembe and the death of the deputy governor, while the provincial legislature of Papua Barat held most of its discussions out of the public view given the mounting mass protests against the new law.

The new Otsus law may increase efficiency and accountability, but it will also increase friction between Papua and Jakarta, and it ignores long-standing Papuan demands for limiting migration into the provinces, protecting human rights, and political power. More importantly, it lacks legitimacy.

**Ends**