



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

[Finance and support are key to fishers adopting eco-friendly gear, study shows](#)

—Basten Gokkon, *Mongabay*, 3 January 2024

A study conducted in Indonesia reveals that small-scale fishers with improved access to financing, peer group support, and general awareness on environment protection as well as on uncertainties in the climate, weather, and currents, are more likely to adopt eco-friendly fishing practices and use less destructive fishing gears. This shift leads to better catches and reduced capture of egg-bearing female crabs, enhancing both fishers' welfare and the sustainability of targeted stocks. The findings come from a three-month survey of 647 blue

swimming crab fishers on the north coast of the Indonesian island of Java. The study highlights the need for a change in fisher mindsets accompanied by capacity building, peer cooperation, and fair market incentives to overcome the barriers such as buyer pressure and gear complexity. Researchers stress that Indonesian fisheries authorities and policymakers need to invest in the design of effective strategies to encourage this switch to eco-friendly practices to align with the nation's sustainable blue economy goals.

Study: Yulisti, M., Syarip Hidayat, A., Firdausy, C. M., Mu'awanah, U., Kurniasari, N., and Nurjati, E. 2024. [Effects of eco-friendly fishing gears on fishermen's welfare and sustainable fisheries: Lessons learned from Indonesia](#) - ScienceDirect, *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 198, 115888.

[‘Shark dust’ helps researchers ID threatened species in Indonesia fish trade](#)

—Cassie Freund, *Mongabay*, 19 December 2023

Indonesia's shark and ray trade is highly regulated but poorly monitored, opening the door for illegal activity alongside the legal sale and purchase of these fish and their products. Finding an easy and low-cost way to identify which species are being caught and where processing of restricted species occurs would greatly help improve trade monitoring. The findings of a study published in 2023 accomplish just that. Researchers share a new technique of analyzing DNA from tiny fragments of skin and cartilage swept from the floors of fish-processing plants and export warehouses, which they dub “shark dust.” Shark dust provides unprecedented insight into the variety of shark and ray species that have been caught, processed and prepared at a given location. This is a new tool to identify a wide range of threatened and protected sharks found at fish factories in Indonesia. From 28 shark dust samples collected from seven processing plants across Java Island, they found the genetic sequences of 61 shark and ray species. About 84% of these are CITES-listed species, meaning there are official restrictions in place on the international trade in these species.

Study: Prasetyo, P. Andhika, Murray, Joanna M., Kurniawan, Muh. Firdaus A.K., Sales, Naiara G., McDevitt, Allan D., and Mariani, Stefano. 2023. [Shark-dust: Application of high-throughput DNA sequencing of processing residues for trade monitoring of threatened sharks and rays](#). *Conservation Letters*.

[The ex-shark fishermen teaching schoolkids how to protect the environment](#)

—Claire Turrell, *Mongabay*, 15 December 2023

Shark conservationist Kathy Xu joined with Suhardi and 12 ex-shark fishermen on Lombok Island to launch The Dorsal Effect. The eco-enterprise teaches students and visitors about the marine environment through snorkeling trips, coral health checks and beach trash cleanups. Each activity is designed to take participants on an exploratory journey of shark trade and marine conservation through the eyes of the Sasak people. This endeavor provides an alternative source of income for the local fishermen and aims to stop the shark finning trade by becoming eco-friendly tour operators. They drop the anchor away from the reef, serve guests plant-based dishes, and make sure all trash is taken back to shore. It also hires marine biologists to host nightly lectures and help the students with their field surveys. While The Dorsal Effect has been successful, it still faces challenges. When the volcano Mount Rinjani erupted, flights to the island were cancelled and their bookings disappeared. The COVID-19 pandemic also hit hard, but the company still managed to pay the wages of the former shark fishermen.

B. Forests and Land Use

[Reversing progress, Indonesia pulp & paper drives up deforestation rates again](#)

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

After years of declining deforestation in the country, wood-pulp-driven forest loss surged fivefold in 2022 compared to 2017 levels. Ironically, this increase followed the adoption of zero-deforestation commitments by major pulp and paper producers in response to public pressure. The initial commitments led to an 85% reduction in average deforestation rates, however, the recent uptick is attributed to increasing global consumption of wood derivatives like viscose for clothing, driven by new pulp and paper mills. Indonesia's weak regulations and enforcement fail to protect carbon-rich forests including peatlands, and was exacerbated by a 2019 regulation from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry effectively rescinding protection for much of these areas. Previous safeguards, which prohibited exploitation in areas with peat layers over 3 meters deep, were replaced by a loophole that allows exploitation outside designated peat domes, raising concerns. Environment and Forestry Minister Siti Nurbaya Bakar denies any weakening of peat protection.

[Indonesia promises to fine palm oil companies operating in forests](#)

—Joe Lo, *ClimateChangeNews*, 27 December 2023

Indonesia recently imposed fines totaling US\$310 million on palm oil companies operating in forest areas, penalizing them for encroaching on designated forest lands. However, critics have slammed the fines as insufficient and granting amnesty to companies illegally expanding into forested areas. The lack of transparency regarding company identities and locations is fueling doubts about enforcement and the fines' effectiveness. Greenpeace also argued that the fines, averaging US\$185 per hectare, are pale in comparison to companies' yearly profits, indicating an imbalance in penalty imposition. A Greenpeace Indonesia forest campaigner, suggested that due to concerns about potential exclusion of Indonesian palm oil by new European Union anti-deforestation regulations, both the government and palm oil companies are striving to conceal past illegal forest destruction. In addition to the fines, the government identified 200,000 hectares of oil palm plantations within forest zones for conversion back to forest land, aiming to address governance issues in the industry. However, roughly half of these plantations remain unaccounted for.

[From the Ground Up: How Secure Land Rights Are Improving Livelihoods and Supporting the Climate Agenda in Indonesia](#)

—*TheWorldBank*, 14 December 2023

The global issue of land rights affects 2.5 billion people, with 70% lacking secure land ownership, emphasizing the critical need for defined land use. Indonesia's Agrarian Reform Program, launched in 2015 and backed by the World Bank's \$240 million One Map Project, seeks to redistribute 9 million hectares by 2025. With over 6.6 million rural land parcels already mapped, the program prioritizes community involvement, particularly of indigenous groups and women, as seen in the successful implementation in Pasuruan Regency. Indonesia's focus extends to securing land rights in forest areas, crucial for its climate goals. Initiatives like the \$14 million Strengthening Social Forestry Project aim to issue permits for 61,181 hectares. Challenges persist in defining use rights in State Forest Areas and aligning them with public forest management. The government's efforts to clarify responsibilities, secure tenure for vulnerable communities, and enhance climate-resilient planning, supported by multi-donor trust funds, signal Indonesia's commitment to advancing its climate and rural development objectives.

C. Biodiversity, Conservation, and Protected Area

Sumatran dugong hunter struggles to adapt to changing times

—Dody Hidayat and Yogi Eka Sahputra, *Mongabay*, 3 January 2024

In Bintan island, a cluster of islands between Sumatra and Singapore, those who were once prolific hunters of dugongs in their community, now they have retired from hunting the mammal in response to conservation initiatives. The herbivorous dugong was classed as a vulnerable species in 1982 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Dugongs face threats from habitat destruction, blast fishing, and human predation. Munsa, in his mid-70s, used to receive substantial sums for dugong "tears," considered an aphrodisiac. The decline in dugong populations has prompted conservation efforts, such as the Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project in Bintan. Indonesia's Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries has faced challenges in implementing the Dugong Conservation Action Plan, hindered by budget constraints and the pandemic. While some communities have embraced conservation, Munsa however complains that the family's income has plummeted. He needs the government to provide alternative livelihoods as he faces economic pressures due to depleted fish stocks. The struggle highlights the need for sustainable alternatives and government intervention to protect both marine life and the livelihoods of local communities.

Hope for rare singing gibbons as pair are released into the wild

—Graeme Green, *TheGuardian*, 9 January 2024

Two Siamang gibbons, Jon and Cimung, rescued from the illegal pet trade, have been successfully rehabilitated and released into the wild in South Sumatra, Indonesia. The rare Siamang gibbons (*Symphalangus syndactylus*), known for their distinctive singing, are listed as endangered on IUCN's Red List due to the illegal pet trade and habitat loss. The Aspinall Foundation completed a five-year rehabilitation process, addressing issues like finding food and pair-bonding for the monogamous species. The newly established rehabilitation center in Punt Kayu is the first of its kind for Siamang gibbons. The release is a positive step, with the gibbons adapting well to their surroundings. However, ongoing monitoring will ensure their ability to fend for themselves. The illegal pet trade, deforestation, and inadequate law enforcement pose threats to Siamang gibbons, highlighting the need to reduce demand and raise awareness through public education initiatives in Sumatra.

A Total of 908 Environmental Crime Cases Handled Throughout 2023

—Pradipta Pandu, *Kompas*, 28 December 2023

Efforts to enforce laws for crimes in the environment and forestry sector were presented in an event to reflect on the achievements and to discuss the challenges faced by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF). Throughout 2023, around 908 environmental crime cases were prosecuted, including 546 cases involving companies and 362 cases committed by individuals. These cases range from forest encroachment, illegal logging, illegal wildlife trade, forest and land fires, to environmental pollution and destruction. Since it was first established in 2015 until now, the MoEF Directorate General of Law Enforcement has handled around 7,870 complaints and lawsuits. Through the law enforcement efforts, it has contributed to increasing non-tax state revenues of up to IDR 1.12 trillion from the environmental compensation fund. The administrative fines have an even much larger financial value of IDR 20.79 trillion. Administrative sanctions are preferred, as opposed to criminal punishment, in order to build a culture of compliance so that natural resources can be utilized wisely and optimally. Meanwhile, criminal punishment will only be applied to provide a deterrent effect to perpetrators of environmental crimes.

[Momentum to Rediscover Biodiversity Wealth](#)

—Pradipta Pandu, *Kompas*, 27 December 2023

Throughout 2023, Indonesia witnessed the discovery of numerous new and rediscovered flora and fauna species. Notably, researchers unearthed a rare subterranean blooming palm species in Kalimantan, documented in a study jointly conducted by the Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG) Kew in England, alongside Indonesian and Malaysian researchers. Named *Pinanga subterranea* due to its unique underground blooming nature, it stands as the sole known palm family (*Arecaceae*) member to predominantly flower and bear fruit below ground. Additionally, three newfound species were identified in diverse Indonesian regions: the Rote *Myzomela irianawidodoae*, an endemic bird on Rote Island; *Hanguana sitinurbayai*, a hairy-parted endemic plant in Borneo's mossy mountain forests; and *Bulbophyllum wiratnoi*, an endemic orchid from West Papua showcasing broad petals. Notably, 2023 witnessed the rediscovery of species once presumed extinct. Among these were Attenborough's long-beaked echidna, residing in Papua's Cyclop Mountains, and the *Chitala lopis* belida fish, last documented on Java Island in 1851. These discoveries offer hope and underscore Indonesia's rich biodiversity, signalling commendable conservation efforts.

[New Species of Tiny Fanged Frog Discovered in Indonesia](#)

—Natali Anderson, *SciNews*, 21 December 2023

Biologists unearthed a new diminutive species of *Limnonectes* frog on Indonesia's Sulawesi Island, boasting the smallest adult size among its island relatives, measuring around 3 cm (1.2 inches) in length. This fanged frog genus, part of the *Dicroglossidae* family, encompasses over 75 species recognized for their toothy appearance, utilized in territorial disputes and prey capture. These frogs, distributed across Southeast Asia, exhibit diverse behaviors. For instance, the newly identified *Limnonectes phyllofolia*, primarily male caretakers, safeguard egg clutches attached to foliage near streams. This unusual reproductive strategy, uncommon in frogs, intrigues scientists who link it to the species' smaller fangs. Dr. Jeffrey Frederick of the Field Museum of Natural History emphasized Sulawesi's biodiversity richness, describing it as comparable to the Amazon. The discovery highlights the need to conserve such unique habitats amidst threats of habitat loss. Understanding these endemic species bolsters conservation efforts for safeguarding these invaluable ecosystems.

D. Climate Change, Energy, and Mining

[Differing Views of a Nickel Smelter Tragedy in Morowali](#)

—Bagja Hidayat, *TempoWeekly*, 7 January 2024

On December 24, 2023, a furnace at Indonesia Tsingshan Stainless Steel (ITSS) located in the Morowali Industrial Park, Central Sulawesi exploded, taking 21 lives and leaving 59 workers injured. The incident prompted a criminal investigation by the police, though no suspects have been identified. Simultaneously, the Manpower Ministry and the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment conducted separate investigations with conflicting perspectives. The Maritime and Investment Ministry has not reached a conclusion, while the Manpower Ministry uncovered safety procedure violations. Despite completing investigations, final conclusions remain undisclosed. Notably, this is not the first accident of its kind at the ITSS nickel smelter, raising concerns about the industry's safety. The nickel project, a national strategic initiative, is criticized for being capital-intensive with minimal job

opportunities. Moreover, language barriers between Indonesian and Chinese workers pose challenges, such as communication issues leading to potential safety risks in operations.

[Young people fight back against ecoanxiety](#)

—News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 27 December 2023

Young people stand up to fight for their future amid anxiety about the climate crisis and the environmental destruction that will threaten their lives. They call on all politicians to seriously address the environmental problems thoroughly. Some 1,300 youths from across Indonesia gathered in Jakarta on Nov. 25 during a youth conference organized by the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (Walhi). The conference aimed to share stories about the fight for the future amid climate anxiety. They gathered to read "A Charter of Youth to Restore Indonesia", which was formulated out of concerns related to climate change, education and employment. "Today, young people are weighed down with the responsibility of 2045 Golden Indonesia. But our leaders have instead pushed us into an ecological disaster and climate crisis," as stated in the charter. Recognizing the importance of the youth voice in determining the country's development, they have committed to bringing their concerns and ideas within the charter to the prospective leaders by way of formal public debate and informal group discussion. Young people aged between 17 and 39 are expected to make up the majority of voters in the 2024 general election.

[How fossil fuel companies won COP28](#)

—Jack Marley, *TheConversation*, 21 December 2023

COP28 concluded with a landmark agreement to "transition away" from fossil fuels, particularly in energy systems. Despite the omission of a definitive "phase-out" commitment and the allowance for "abated" burning of coal without clear guidelines, over 50 oil companies pledged to address methane leaks. The historic agreement, brokered by a petrostate, is significant, given three decades of negotiations without acknowledging the need to eliminate fossil fuels. The severity of the climate crisis is evident as temperatures surpass the crucial 1.5°C threshold, highlighting inadequate global emission-cutting efforts. However, the non-binding agreement falls short by not limiting fossil fuel extraction and burning. While a loss and damage fund was agreed and established, the commitment from wealthy nations is insufficient compared to the estimated annual cost of climate-related loss and damage in developing countries. The slow adaptation to climate change, particularly in vulnerable regions like small-island countries, underscores the urgency for stronger commitments and actions at COP29.

[Indonesian President Jokowi Proposes Climate Change Actions at AZEC Summit](#)

—Petir Garda Bhwana, *TempoEnglish*, 18 December 2023

President Joko Widodo outlined various workable measures for dealing with climate change at the Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC) Summit in Tokyo. He noted that Indonesia, as the world's third-largest tropical forest country, had taken various measures for overcoming climate change, such as combating deforestation and forest degradation while leveraging mangroves as carbon sinks. He hopes that the AZEC will prioritize forging cooperation in decarbonization through inclusive financing to support carbon capture storage and carbon capture utilization and storage projects in Indonesia. He also highlighted the importance of innovative financing schemes to support the energy transition. He said the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) estimates needing US\$29.4 trillion for a successful energy transition by 2050. He highlighted that sustainable financing could significantly support the energy transition, which in turn would boost economic growth and provide benefits to people. Indonesia has devised various credible innovative financing schemes, such as energy transition financing, green bonds, green Islamic bonds, and IDXCarbon. Jokowi affirmed that

synergy among the government, private actors, and banks is key to providing sufficient funds for projects prioritizing carbon reduction and accelerating the energy transition.

E. Pollution and Waste

[Get to know the practice of "Greenwashing" in Indonesia](#)

—Yoesep Budianto, *Kompas*, 9 January 2024

Environmental issues and sustainable development are increasingly attracting public attention. Unfortunately, this has been accompanied by the phenomenon of greenwashing. Initially, this term was used to describe fraudulent practices carried out by certain corporate entities who claimed one-sidedly that their products were environmentally friendly. However, greenwashing also occurs in the implementation of government policies. The revival of sea sand exports, facilitated by Government Regulation No. 26 of 2023, harms marine ecosystems and contradicts sustainable management goals. The food estate program, aimed at boosting national food security, enables deforestation, peatland fires, and social conflicts, exacerbating ecological damage. Additionally, the promotion of electric vehicles, while claiming carbon reduction benefits, is compromised by the predominant use of coal-fired power plants for electricity generation. Sand exports, food estates and electric vehicles are three examples of policies that claim to be green and sustainable, but when examined in detail, this is a form of greenwashing carried out by the government. An educated society will demand manufacturers to create products that are safe and friendly to the environment.

[Sporadic Waste Management, Future President Expected to Be More Caring](#)

—Tatang Mulyana Sinaga, *Kompas*, 23 December 2023

The large number of landfills that caught fire last year shed light on the disturbing reality of poor waste management in the country. The Indonesian Zero Waste Alliance recorded 38 landfills burning during June-October 2023, which resulted in several landfills being closed and rubbish accumulating in temporary disposal sites. Inevitably, trash ended up in rivers, polluting the environment. The waste problem in Indonesia requires emergency status in order to mobilize the necessary resources to overcome the challenges. The 2024 Presidential Election presents an important opportunity for the future leaders to voice their opinions and plans to address this public health issues and climate crisis. Increasing public awareness to reduce waste production and promoting responsible waste sorting by households and the private sector is essential.

F. Investment and Finance

[Sumatra coffee farmers brew natural fertilizer as inflation bites](#)

—Themmy Doaly, *Mongabay*, 4 January 2024

Indonesian farmers, facing rising fertilizer prices, climate challenges, and soil degradation, are applying an adaptation strategy by repurposing farm waste. The farmers in Batutegei Forest, Lampung, Sumatra are making their own organic fertilizer in order to lessen reliance on volatile external supply chains. Amid a decline in soil fertility and rising fertilizer costs, they've turned to agroforestry and diversified the number of crops they grow, interspersing avocado and candlenut trees among crops like coffee and vanilla. The YIARI foundation aids these efforts, by promoting organic fertilizers made from farm waste and fostering agroecological practices to enhance soil health. YIARI's focus on habitat resilience addresses

the root cause of wildlife loss, combating deforestation by integrating agroforestry. Recognized nationally, this community-driven initiative aims for farmer independence by addressing challenges sustainably. Advocates of organic farming believe that techniques like those on display in Lampung can boost yields while countering some of the costs and negative impacts of chemical products.

[Indonesia, S. Korea join hands to develop electric bus ecosystem in Bali](#)

—News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 14 December 2023

Indonesia and South Korea signed an agreement on the development of an electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem for public transportation services in Bali. Indonesia was represented by Vivi Yulaswati, the deputy for maritime affairs and natural resources at the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) while Jaeseung Lee, the country representative of the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), represented South Korea. This electric bus ecosystem will be in the Greater Denpasar metropolitan area, consisting of Denpasar city and the neighboring regencies of Badung, Tabanan and Gianyar, also known by the acronym Sarbagita. The implementation will start in Greater Denpasar because its infrastructure is the most prepared. The development of the electric bus network is a part of Indonesia's target of becoming net-zero by 2060. Transportation is the sector that contributes the second most emissions. The sector is projected to contribute up to 9.93% in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The EV system project in Bali is expected to be worth US\$8.8 million. The GGGI will assist in the project's feasibility studies, implementation, finance, electric bus provisions and ecosystem support until December 2027.

G. Human Rights and Gender Equality

[Indonesia Faces Dilemma on Rohingya Refugees](#)

—Jayanty Nada Shofa, *JakartaGlobe*, 6 January 2024

Indonesia grapples with the Rohingya crisis, as the Muslim minority group fleeing from Myanmar seeks refuge in Aceh, the country's western province. In recent months, numerous boats carrying Rohingya refugees have reached Aceh's shores, triggering local protests as arrival numbers surged. Amid increased arrivals, residents have grown resentful. A large crowd of university students stormed a shelter in Banda Aceh, demanding that the refugees get deported, sparking concerns among humanitarian organizations. President Joko Widodo pledged temporary aid while prioritizing locals' needs. He suspects a human trafficking network had brought the Rohingya into Indonesia. About 10 days later, police named a Rohingya man Muhammad Amin as a suspect. Refugees reportedly need to pay up to US\$1,093 to leave Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar camps for Indonesia. Despite not signing the 1951 Refugee Convention, Indonesia is not legally bound to shelter refugees.

I. RI General Elections

[From military leader to 'harmless grandpa': the rebranding of Indonesia's Prabowo](#)

—Rebecca Ratcliffe and Randy Mulyanto, *TheGuardian*, 9 January 2024

Prabowo Subianto, a former general and the frontrunner in Indonesia's upcoming election, is attracting young voters through a surprising Instagram and Tiktok persona featuring cat-related posts and awkward dance videos. Despite a controversial past involving allegations of human rights abuses and a ban from traveling to the US, Prabowo's campaign focuses on a

softer image, emphasizing his role as a harmless grandpa. The elections, marked by potential political dynasties, sees Prabowo leading in polls, capturing the support of younger voters who prioritize issues like job opportunities and unemployment over concerns about democracy or past abuses. Prabowo's link with President Joko Widodo contributes to his popularity, promising to continue Jokowi's policies, including the construction of a new capital city. Meanwhile, competitors Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo adopt personal touches on social media to connect with voters. As the election approaches, nearly 29% of voters remain undecided, making the race highly competitive.

[A defensive debate](#)

—Editorial, *TheJakartaPost*, 8 January 2024

Amid a myriad of global crises, voters learned what the three presidential candidates had to offer. The debate on Jan 7, which focused on global politics, defense and security, was of particular note because the current presidential frontrunner, Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto found himself on the defensive. Only minutes after the debate kicked off, Prabowo defended himself against an opening salvo from opposition candidate Anies Baswedan. Anies criticized Prabowo's spending spree, saying that while billions of dollars had gone toward state-of-the-art weaponry, a large number of military personnel lacked adequate housing. Beyond the personal back-and-forth, the debate revealed contrasting approaches to international politics. Prabowo places primacy on assertive foreign policy backed by military muscle. He frequently reiterated his perspective that Indonesia should buy more and better weapons. Anies opted for soft power, which he said could improve Indonesia's standing in the world. Ganjar outlined a more case-by-case approach to global politics and was willing to go beyond ASEAN, which he criticized as being too cumbersome.

[A President's Son Is in Indonesia's Election Picture. Is It Democracy or Dynasty?](#)

—Richard C. Paddock and Muktita Suhartono, *NewYorkTimes*, 6 January 2024

The eldest son of Indonesian President Joko Widodo, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, has transitioned from a catering businessman turned mayor to an even more prominent figure in a burgeoning political dynasty. A recent high court ruling, spearheaded by his uncle, positions Gibran, 36, as the frontrunner for vice president alongside Prabowo Subianto (a former general and current defense minister who has faced accusations of human rights abuses and previously lost two elections to Joko), in the upcoming national elections. Analysts accuse Joko of orchestrating such a spectacle from behind the scenes for years, seeking to extend his influence past the end of his presidency. If successful, Gibran would become Indonesia's youngest vice president. Critics express concern over perceived family maneuvering, fearing it undermines democratic reforms instituted after decades of dictatorship. These reforms played a pivotal role in Joko's own presidential victory in 2014 and 2019. The political developments have sparked controversy, with three candidates vying to succeed Joko in the February 14 general elections.

[Tainted elections?](#)

—Editorial, *TheJakartaPost*, 20 December 2023

The Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center (PPATK) reveals concerning findings that suggest illegal money from illegal mining operations and misappropriated micro business loans might be funneling into the 2024 general election campaigns. PPATK records a significant jump in suspicious transactions after the start of the campaign period on Nov 28. The revelations have cast doubt on the upcoming polls' integrity, prompting demands for extensive investigations, with rival camps pointing fingers at each other. However, the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) intends to treat this information as "preliminary" and

will scrutinize candidates' campaign finance reports due on Jan 7. This delay will likely give the offenders enough time to cover their tracks. With Bawaslu appearing noncommittal about addressing these findings, there is a growing distrust of the state apparatus. Already, significant concerns have been raised about the country's ability to pull off, fairly and transparently, the world's biggest simultaneous elections.