

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 Englishlanguage 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

<u>Calculation of Emission Reduction in Marine Affairs is Constrained by Basic Data</u> —Pradipta Pandu, *Kompas*, 20 February 2024

Marine affairs and Fisheries play a crucial role in climate change mitigation, yet a lack of methodology and basic data impedes progress. Presidential Regulation No. 98 of 2021 which focuses on the economic value of carbon including blue carbon ecosystems like mangroves and seagrass beds, requires the development of a methodology for emission reductions for accurate inventorying. Indonesia, with vast blue carbon reserves, faces the challenge of avoiding exploitation by global players while educating communities about its value. Plans include expanding Indonesia's NDC to include maritime sectors. However, challenges remain, such as varied emission factors in ecosystems like seagrass beds, complicating the inventory

process. Collaboration and careful methodology development are vital in harnessing the potential of blue carbon ecosystems while avoiding pitfalls like "blue carbon colonialism."

No sea change on marine policy from candidates as Indonesia heads to polls

—Basten Gokkon, Mongabay, 13 February 2024

Despite being a nation heavily dependent on its marine resources, none of Indonesia's presidential candidates prioritized issues concerning fisher and coastal communities. Indonesia boasts vast coastlines and rich marine biodiversity but faces challenges like illegal fishing and coastal erosion. The failure to prioritize maritime issues is a major omission for the world's biggest archipelagic country. Observers say the interests of fishing communities continue to be subordinated to those of industry and developers when it comes to competition for space and resources. Coastal poverty rates exceed the national average, with one in eight Indonesians living in poverty residing in coastal areas. Meanwhile, coastal ecosystems face threats from land reclamation and tourism development projects, putting millions of fishing households at risk. Despite Indonesia's status as a major marine capture producer, there's a lack of focus on sustainable fisheries management in the candidates' agendas.

Ministry develops area-based modeling to boost aquaculture exports

—Sinta Ambarwati, Cindy Frishanti Octavia and Anton Santoso, ANTARA, 13 February 2024

The Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries is advancing sustainable aquaculture through area-based modeling for five key commodities, namely shrimp, seaweed, tilapia, crab, and lobster. Tb Haeru Rahayu, Director General of Aquaculture, emphasized a focus on environmental sustainability and local employment. The ministry aims to boost shrimp exports to \$2.1 billion by 2024 and seaweed exports to \$658 million through modeling in Wakatobi and upcoming programs in Southeast Maluku and Rote Ndao. Revitalizing shrimp ponds on Java's north coast targets tilapia, aiming for \$77 million in exports. Programs for crab and lobster cultivation seek to increase exports to \$476 million and \$25 million, respectively, by collaborating with experienced nations and attracting investments. Aquaculture is one of the business sectors that has succeeded in gaining the largest portion of investment in the marine and fisheries sector, constituting 27% as per Quarter 3 2023 data.

B. Forests and Land Use

How secrecy jurisdictions enable the destruction of Indonesia's rainforests

—Team, *TheGeckoProject*, 19 February 2024

Indonesia's rainforests face a dire threat from secretive offshore companies, as revealed in recent investigations. These shadowy entities, often based in secrecy jurisdictions like the British Virgin Islands, which are known to facilitate tax evasion and provide anonymity for the owners, are linked to the rampant deforestation in Indonesia, particularly in Borneo. The destruction of crucial orangutan habitat by companies like PT Mayawana Persada and PT Industrial Forest Plantation highlights the devastating impact of these practices. Additionally, the palm oil and pulp sectors, dominated by companies like New Borneo Agri, are driving deforestation, contributing to Indonesia's status as a leading emitter of greenhouse gases. Efforts to enforce transparency, such as Indonesia's requirement for companies to disclose beneficial owners, face challenges due to discrepancies and loopholes. Despite international

pressure, progress on implementing public registers of beneficial owners in offshore territories has been slow. Urgent action is needed to hold accountable the anonymous owners behind rainforest destruction and safeguard Indonesia's precious biodiversity.

Palm oil deforestation makes comeback in Indonesia after decade-long slump —Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 13 February 2024

Deforestation saw a surprising uptick in 2023, marking a reversal from a decade-long decline, as reported by French technology consultancy TheTreeMap. Indonesia, a top global producer, witnessed a rise in forest clearance to make room for plantations, with 74,100 acres cleared in 2023 compared to 54,400 acres in 2022. A third of the 2023 deforestation occurred on carbon-rich peatlands, raising the potential for massive GHG emissions as these areas are cleared and drained in preparation for planting. Historically, deforestation for plantations was concentrated in Sumatera, but the surge in the past two years has been mostly in Kalimantan and Papua. The analysis identified 53 companies behind this expansion, including First Resources-linked firms like Ciliandry Anky Abadi and New Borneo Agri, with allegations of breaching sustainability standards. A CSOs coalition submitted complaints against First Resources, prompting an ongoing investigation by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). Despite denials of involvement in deforestation, First Resources faces scrutiny. Meanwhile, the industry's emission reduction poses challenges, including efforts like the Simulation of Indonesian Palm Oil Sustainability (SIPOS) that aim to balance economic growth with emissions reduction.

Reforestation of Indonesia's new capital city stumped by haphazard planting —Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 13 February 2024

Efforts to reforest Indonesia's new capital, Nusantara, in eastern Borneo, are facing challenges, hindering progress towards President Joko Widodo's vision. Indonesia prepares to inaugurate its "green forest city" later this year. Officials have acknowledged that progress is off-target, but note that the government is joined by the private sector and NGOs in carrying out tree-planting efforts. Only less than a tenth of the reforestation target for Nusantara has been achieved to date. Key obstacles include a lack of native tree species, a bureaucratic-centric planting practice, poor monitoring, and a general misapplication of reforestation principles so forests are being cleared again for construction. Despite reforesting 3,560 acres since late 2022, far from the 204,828-acre target, haphazard planting methods and a limited budget hamper success. Experts emphasize the need for a master plan, including long-term funding and proper training for workers. Restoring the rainforest ecosystem requires planting diverse native species and strategic management, essential for sustainability.

Indonesia-Norway start funding process from reduced deforestation

—Prisca Triferna V, Resinta Sulistiyandari and Yuni Arisandy Sinaga, *ANTARA*, 12 February 2024

The Indonesian and Norwegian governments initiated their funding process, rewarding Indonesia for its successful reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through decreased deforestation rates from 2019 to 2020. Indonesian Minister of Environment and Forestry, Siti Nurbaya, highlights the start of the performance-based funding, expected to conclude by September, with disbursement estimated in early 2025. The process involves verification and recalculation of emission reductions, emphasizing commitment to climate mitigation. Minister Nurbaya stresses that beyond monetary gains, the acknowledgment of Indonesia's climate efforts by Norway holds paramount importance. Ambassador Rut Kruger Giverin expresses pride in Indonesia's emission reduction achievements, underscoring its global significance.

Norway's previous payments to Indonesia, totaling US\$312 million, reflect ongoing cooperation established in 2022. This funding reinforces Indonesia's strategies towards achieving its Forest and Land Use (FoLU) Net Sink goals. The FoLU Net Sink is a condition when the level of carbon sequestration of the FoLU sector is balanced or higher than the level of emission produced by the sector. It is targeted to be achieved by 2030.

C. Biodiversity, Conservation, and Protected Area

Can ecotourism protect Raja Ampat, the 'Crown Jewel' of New Guinea?

—Mike DiGirolamo, Mongabay, 20 February 2024

Raja Ampat, Indonesia, renowned for its marine biodiversity and conservation efforts, is spotlighted in Mongabay's podcast. Host Mike DiGirolamo explores ecotourism's impact on local communities and endemic species. The region, dubbed the "crown jewel" of New Guinea, boasts vast marine protected areas covering over 20,000 square kilometers. Documentary filmmaker Wahyu Mul discusses ecotourism's benefits and challenges, while Max Ammer, from the Raja Ampat Research and Conservation Centre, highlights community involvement in conservation projects. Benny Mambrasar, a birder, guides the team to Waigeo Island's forests, where endemic birds-of-paradise thrive. Despite the economic boost from ecotourism, concerns arise over preserving ecosystems and safeguarding Papuans amid a government development plan dividing the region into five provinces. Vigilance is crucial to prevent displacement and protect Raja Ampat's ecological treasures.

<u>Medan Zoo's 5 Tiger Deaths Sparks Widespread Concern, KLHK: We Warned the Management</u>

—Irsyan Hasyim, Najla Nur Fauziyah and Laila Afifa, TEMPO, 16 February 2024

The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) has issued a warning to Medan Zoo following the consecutive deaths of five tigers. The Director General of Natural Resource and Ecosystem Conservation (KSDAE), Satyawan Pudyatmoko, disclosed that the deaths occurred between November 6, 2023, and February 13, 2024, due to incurable illnesses. Despite prior warnings dating back to 2012 about inadequate management, including substandard animal welfare and facilities, the zoo failed to meet conservation standards. KLHK had been monitoring the zoo since April 2023, through an assessment mechanism for a conservation institution at least three years after it operated. The deaths prompted widespread concern, with even the Mayor of Medan and the President's son in law, Bobby Nasution, expressing scrutiny. KLHK aims to address the issue through ongoing evaluation and improvement efforts.

In East Java, social media push against Indonesia shark & ray trade lacks bite

—Asad Asnawi, Mongabay, 8 February 2024

The trade in shark and ray products thrives in Indonesia despite regulations, with traders exploiting legal loopholes and operating illegally. Advertisements for shark and ray products continued to feature on social media platforms despite pledges by companies to prevent users from conducting transactions in wildlife. Facebook's efforts to curb wildlife trafficking online have had limited success, as a brisk trade continues. Craftsmen in East Java profit from selling stingray leather, prized for its value in luxury markets abroad. While some species, like the porcupine ray, are vulnerable, most traded species lack protection. Regulatory oversight is weak, allowing illegal trade to persist. Despite efforts by organizations like the Indonesian Fisheries Resource Center and government agencies, effective

enforcement remains a challenge due to the complex nature of the fisheries trade and the lack of comprehensive regulation. The Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries said more needs to be done to enhance traceability to crack down on trade in protected shark and ray species.

D. Climate Change, Energy, and Mining

Govt prepares to implement incentives for carbon capture projects

—Divya Karyza, TheJakartaPost, 21 February 2024

The Indonesian government is gearing up to incentivize carbon capture storage (CCS) projects with new regulations, building on Presidential Regulation No. 14/2024. Tutuka Ariadji from the Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry revealed plans to collaborate with the Finance Ministry on incentives, storage fees, and royalties. Indonesia boasts substantial potential for CCS, with 572.7 gigatonnes of saline aquifer storage and 4.85 gigatonnes in depleted oil and gas reservoirs. The nation aims to position itself as a regional CCS hub, facilitating cross-border CCS operations and potentially importing carbon for storage. CCS involves capturing atmospheric carbon and storing it permanently in reservoirs to combat climate change. The broader concept of carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) may involve repurposing captured carbon for activities like enhancing oil field production. Singapore has initiated cross-border CCS collaboration with Indonesia, marking a significant step towards bilateral agreements on carbon transportation and storage. Details on carbon tax stipulations are pending, with a focus on initiating CCS operations first.

Indonesian coal to see export slump, possible output cuts: Experts

—Divya Karyza, The Jakarta Post, 18 February 2024

Indonesia's thermal coal exports are projected to decrease in 2024 due to oversupply and moderate global demand. Despite a 15% decline in export value last year, totaling \$59 billion, volume increased by 12% to 550 million tonnes. The government aims to produce 710 million tonnes, 8% less than 2023's record high. Oversupply pressures coal prices, with China's output reaching a record high. Economic slowdowns in China and India are expected to dampen demand, with prices estimated at \$90 to \$100 per tonne. Adaro Energy and Bukit Asam are yet to release production targets, while TBS Energi Utama reduced its target by 9%. Bayan Resources plans a 15-20% output increase. Analysts project a modest 5-6% growth in exports, considering Asia's demand and global energy transition delays. However, Australia's reentry into the Chinese market could hinder Indonesian exports. Thermal coal imports in Asia declined, impacting prices. Prices are forecasted to hover around \$117 per tonne, influenced by China's economic growth and US Federal Reserve policies.

New energy rule discourages rooftop solar systems, say users

—Ruth Dea Juwita, The Jakarta Post, 12 February 2024

A recent revision to Energy and Mineral Resources Ministerial Regulation No. 26/2021 for ongrid solar systems and energy distribution businesses will slow solar adoption due to provisions that make installation less attractive and getting on-grid more difficult. The new rule eliminates the ability for residential users to sell surplus solar energy back to the grid. It introduces a quota system based on the State Electricity Company PLN's grid capacity, causing uncertainty for users and hindering solar adoption. Critics argue the regulation

protects PLN from renewable energy risks but undermines solar development. The elimination of net metering further burdens users, prolonging the payback period. This move contrasts with incentives for electric vehicles, highlighting a lack of support for solar energy. The government's shift away from renewable energy targets and struggles with oversupply complicate the situation. The regulation's impact could stifle solar panel installation and hinder Indonesia's renewable energy ambitions.

E. Pollution and Waste

Reduce, reuse, redirect outrage: How plastic makers used recycling as a fig leaf
—Michael Copley, NPR, 15 February 2024

The plastics industry has long promoted recycling as a solution to waste, despite knowing its limitations, according to documents from the Center for Climate Integrity. Former officials admit recycling, partly sourced from scavengers like ones in Indonesia who mainly collect plastic waste in landfills, won't solve the plastic waste crisis economically. Ross Eisenberg of America's Plastic Makers defends industry efforts but acknowledges the goal for all US plastic packaging to be reused or recycled by 2040. The report, "The Fraud of Plastic Recycling," exposes industry deception and coincides with UN talks for a global plastics treaty, where recycling prioritization may hinder substantial waste reduction. Fossil fuel producers, dependent on petrochemicals like plastics, have a vested interest in opposing plastic production cuts. Critics doubt the effectiveness of "advanced recycling" touted by companies like Exxon. Despite recycling campaigns, less than 10% of plastic waste is recycled globally, perpetuating environmental damage. Holding the plastics industry accountable is crucial for finding effective solutions to the plastic waste crisis.

Local administrations urged to recycle campaign banner waste

—News Desk, The Jakarta Post, 12 February 2024

With the campaign season ending, local administrations nationwide are urged to manage campaign waste responsibly to prevent environmental pollution and landfill overflow. The Environment and Forestry Ministry instructed regional administrations to recycle campaign materials instead of disposing of them in landfills. Waste Management Director General Rosa Vivien Ratnawati suggested sorting and shredding recyclable parts like plastic and paper, urging campaign contenders to participate in waste management. This initiative aims to prevent landfill fires, which have occurred due to dry, flammable waste build-up, exacerbated by hot weather. Last year, Rawa Kucing landfill in Tangerang, Banten, burned and fueled by the build-up of methane underneath due to mountains of plastic waste having ignited. The fire caused temporary disruptions to flights from nearby Soekarno-Hatta International Airport. While non-compliance won't result in sanctions for local heads, landfill operators may face criminal charges for improper waste treatment.

F. Investment and Finance

Indonesia taps seasoned banker to manage multibillion-dollar sovereign wealth fund
—A Muh Ibnu Aqil and Dzulfiqar Fathur Rahman, *TheJakartaPost*, 17 February 2024

President Joko Widodo has unveiled the board of directors for Indonesia's newly established sovereign wealth fund, the Indonesia Investment Authority (INA). Led by a seasoned banker of private lender Bank Permata, Ridha DM Wirakusumah, the new Authority aims to attract global investors to stimulate the economy. The fund targets \$100 billion in investments over two years, focusing on infrastructure, tourism, and technology projects. Minister of Finance Sri Mulyani Indrawati highlighted international interest, with commitments totaling \$10 billion. The government plans to accumulate \$5.3 billion in capital by year-end. Concerns over governance, particularly after the 1MDB scandal, prompted rigorous vetting of directors. INA prioritizes toll road projects for their economic impact and plans to collaborate with stateowned companies. Analysts emphasize the need for transparency and accountability to prevent political interference and ensure credibility. Despite technocratic leadership, oversight remains crucial for public trust in the fund's operations.

<u>Jokowi confident INA garnering investors' trust to speed</u>

<u>development</u>
—Desca Natalia, Sri Haryati and Yuni Arisandy
Sinaga, *ANTARA*, 16 February 2024

President Joko Widodo is confident in the Indonesia Investment Authority (INA) gaining trust from both domestic and foreign investors to accelerate national development. He emphasized INA's strong legal foundation, capable board of directors, and international network, envisioning it as a world-class Sovereign Wealth Fund. Widodo urged support from other state institutions for INA's innovative decisions to provide alternative funding for Indonesia's advancement. Established under Government Regulation No. 74 of 2020, INA operates professionally and adheres to legal standards. It aims to bridge the funding gap for development projects, serving as a strategic partner for both domestic and international investors, particularly in infrastructure. Previously, five members were appointed to the INA Advisory Council, with the Minister of Finance Sri Mulyani Indrawati serving as the head of the Board of Supervisors, while the Board of Directors comprises experienced professionals in investment, banking, and risk management sectors.

The Tangled Thread of High Cost Economics in Indonesia

—Agnes Theodora, Kompas, 12 February 2024

Despite various structural reforms, significant infrastructure development and a fourfold increase in actual investment over the last decade, Indonesia's economic growth remains stagnant at around 5%, attributed to high costs rooted in corruption and logistics. Omnibus Law Number 11 of 2020 aimed at streamlining regulations, but hasn't alleviated investment obstacles, according to economist Raden Pardede. Indonesia's Incremental Capital to Output Ratio (ICOR) remains high at 7.6, indicating an inefficient investment environment. Corruption, logistical expenses, and illegal levies contribute to high investment costs. Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Indonesia, Teguh Dartanto, highlights the need for comprehensive policies, infrastructure development, and corruption eradication for inclusive economic growth. Coordinating Minister of Economy Airlangga Hartarto acknowledges the government's insufficient efforts to reduce ICOR to boost economic growth to 6-7%, while emphasizing ongoing infrastructure development to enhance logistics and investment efficiency.

G. Human Rights and Gender Equality

In Indonesia's elections, women and minority candidates face hurdles. Rian Ernest, a Christian running for Jakarta city council, faces constant scrutiny over his faith in the Muslimmajority country. Elections in the country often reveal a tension between pluralism and the power of conservatives from its Muslim majority. Nearly 90% of Indonesia's 277 million people are Muslims. Christians like Ernest hold around 14% of seats in the national legislature, while making up just under 9% of the general population, but they face constant questions about their faith. A national quota system has helped more women win office, but fallen short of its own targets. And in this election, a new party is seeking to win representation for marginalized groups like domestic workers and people with disabilities. Despite quotas, women still struggle for representation. Muharyati, a disabled woman running with the Labor Party, aims to advocate for marginalized groups. Yuni Sri Rahayu, a domestic worker, seeks legislative support for a bill protecting domestic workers' rights. Despite challenges, these candidates aim to amplify the voices of underrepresented groups.

End fossil-fuel era to address colonial injustices, urges prominent historian —Philip Oltermann, *TheGuardian*, 15 February 2024

Belgian historian David Van Reybrouck highlights the importance of cities in the global north addressing carbon emissions as a means of confronting colonial injustices. Van Reybrouck criticises the movement of historical reckoning for being too focused on the past, calling instead for more awareness of the "colonisation of the present and the future". Today's climate change is deeply colonial: it has been largely caused by the temperate zones from the northern hemisphere and mostly felt in the tropics and the Arctic. He criticizes the focus on symbolic gestures like renaming streets and removing statues, advocating instead for a shift towards decarbonization efforts. He emphasizes the colonial nature of climate change and urges former colonial powers to contribute to funds combating the climate crisis in the global south. In his book "Revolusi: Indonesia and the Birth of the Modern World," Van Reybrouck underscores the significance of Indonesia's independence and its influence on other independence movements. A broader understanding of European colonialism and a more coordinated approach to addressing colonial legacies are needed, with the establishment of a European museum of colonialism as a starting point.

I. RI General Elections

Indonesia Hosts World's Largest Single-Day Elections, Says Home Minister

—Yustinus Paat, JakartaGlobe, 21 February 2024

Indonesia's Home Affairs Minister Tito Karnavian highlighted the country's distinction for hosting the world's largest single-day elections, managing over 200 million registered voters electing various officials on a centralized system overseen by the General Election Commission (KPU). Tito contrasted Indonesia's complex process with India's multi-month elections and the United States' extended period facilitated by absentee voting. Despite the intricate nature, Tito acknowledged challenges, including discrepancies in vote tallies and compromised ballots, emphasizing the absence of widespread election manipulation. Polling stations can arrange repeat polls for proven mistakes or fraud, with oversight bodies like Bawaslu and the Constitutional Court addressing complaints. The recent presidential and legislative elections saw Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto leading in quick counts, with the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle expected to maintain its status as the largest

political party in the House, albeit with a decreased share. Indonesia will hold another election in November for governors, mayors, and regents.

<u>Prabowo Subianto: Once banned from the US, this fiery ex-army general is poised to lead Indonesia</u>

—Heather Chen Kathleen Magramo and Angus Watson, CNN, 19 February 2024

Prabowo Subianto, a former general in Indonesia's presidential race, exudes confidence despite not yet securing enough votes. At 72, he's poised to lead, boasting 60% early support. Despite his controversial past and age gap with rivals, he promises readiness for leadership. Speculation abounds about his presidency's impact on democracy, given his military background and fiery demeanor. While he presents himself as an ally to the outgoing president, differences between them are stark. Prabowo's foreign policy, notably with China and the US, and his approach to military involvement raise concerns. His potential presidency raises fears of regression in human rights and democratic reforms, particularly in regions like Papua. Despite international scrutiny, Prabowo's landslide victory suggests he will wield significant influence both domestically and abroad.

<u>Indonesia's presidential election has high stakes for US and China and their rivalry in</u> the region

—Niniek Karmini, Edna Tarigan Jim Gomez and David Rising, *TheWashingtonPost/AssociatedPress*, 13 February 2024

The Indonesian presidential election carries significant implications for the United States and China, amid their escalating rivalry in the region. Indonesia's non-aligned foreign policy has allowed for substantial trade and investment from China while maintaining defense ties with the U.S. The front-runner, Prabowo Subianto, advocates for neutrality, acknowledging the historical significance of both the U.S. and China. However, other candidates like Anies Baswedan aim to shift Indonesia's foreign policy towards principles like human rights and environmental protection. Former foreign minister Marty Natalegawa hopes elected leaders will contribute to stabilizing U.S.-China relations. The U.S. and China have witnessed how regional leaders' emergence can impact their interests, exemplified by the contrasting approaches of former Philippine President Duterte and his successor Marcos Jr. The South China Sea issue remains contentious within ASEAN, with criticisms of China often diluted due to member states' alignments.

How Muslim teachings support political dynasties in Indonesia

—Anggi Azzuhri & Musa Alkadzim, TheConversation, 13 February 2024

President Joko Widodo's attempt to establish a political dynasty in Indonesia, exemplified by his son Gibran Rakabuming Raka's candidacy for vice president, reflects a broader trend of dynastic politics in the country. The practice, deeply rooted in Indonesian culture and history, has persisted from ancient monarchies to modern democratic governance. Religion plays a pivotal role, with Islam shaping perceptions of leadership and reinforcing the belief in hereditary authority. Religious teachings often idealize leaders with divine qualities, fostering the notion that leadership traits are inherited, perpetuating dynastic tendencies. Muslim preachers further contribute to this narrative, emphasizing moral perfection and divine guidance in leadership. As a result, dynastic politics continues to be culturally and morally accepted, posing challenges to the evolution of democratic governance in Indonesia without proper education on democratic leadership within a religious context.