



Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

2024 Issue 14 — 11 July

*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.*

CONTENTS

- A. Marine and Fisheries
 - B. Forests and Land Use
 - C. Biodiversity, Conservation and Protected Areas
 - D. Climate Change, Energy and Mining
 - E. Pollution and Waste
 - F. Investment and Finance
 - G. Human Rights and Gender Equality
-
- I. RI General Elections
 - II. Indonesia in Geopolitics

A. Marine and Fisheries

Indonesia and US seal \$35 million coral reef debt swap

—Marc Jones, *The Jakarta Post*, 9 July 2024

Indonesia will commit to reef restoration while local non-profit groups will use conservation fund money to support projects that directly benefit reef ecosystems as well as sustainable livelihoods for those that rely on them. The US has agreed to forgive \$35 million of Indonesian debt over nine years in exchange for Indonesia restoring and preserving its coral reefs. This agreement, the fourth "debt-for-nature" swap since 2009, focuses on the Coral Triangle, particularly the Bird's Head and Lesser Sunda-Banda Seascapes. These areas are home to over three-quarters of all coral species and more than 3,000 marine species. Coral reefs are under threat globally due to climate change, with two-thirds experiencing bleaching last year. Indonesia, which has 5.1 million hectares of coral reefs, has seen significant bleaching damage. The agreement, part of the US Tropical Forest and Coral Reef Conservation Act, involves writing off \$26 million of debt, with additional contributions from CI and TNC. The funds will support reef restoration and sustainable livelihoods for local communities.

Coral bleachings devastate Bali reefs as sea temperatures rise

—Yuddy Cahya Budiman, *Reuters*, 5 July 2024

Indonesian conservationist Nyoman Sugiarto has worked for 16 years to preserve coral reefs in Bali. However, frequent mass coral bleachings, driven by climate change, are devastating his efforts. Last December, 90% of the corals near his village in Bondalem lost their color due to rising sea temperatures. When Nyoman started conservation in 2008, he was told corals could retain their algae, which gives them color, for 10 to 20 years. However, the reefs bleached in less than 10 years. Coral bleaching occurs when coral expels algae due to heat stress, leaving them vulnerable to starvation and disease. The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported in April that 54% of the world's reefs are experiencing bleaching-level heat stress. Indonesia, home to 5.1 million hectares of coral reefs, experienced severe bleaching in late 2023 due to El Niño. Marine conservationist Marthen Welly warns that more frequent bleaching is expected. Despite these challenges, Nyoman remains committed to coral conservation, advocating for younger generations and seeking funds to combat illegal fishing.

Indonesia is The Forefront of The World in Implementing Ocean Accounting

—Editorial Team, *AsiaToday*, 5 July 2024

The Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries launched Indonesian ocean accounting at the 5th Global Dialogue on Sustainable Ocean Development in Bali on July 5. The new Ocean Accounts system will measure the economic, ecological, and social value of marine ecosystems, aiding policy decisions for sustainable management. Minister Sakti Wahyu Trenggono highlighted the system's ability to dynamically process data, supporting sustainable marine management. Meanwhile, Coordinating Minister Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan emphasized the need for sustainable marine governance due to high marine activity and threats from pollution and climate change. Indonesia aims to explore its vast maritime resources and improve the low contribution of the maritime industry. Efforts include large-scale seaweed farming, mangrove rehabilitation, and reducing plastic waste. Indonesia has committed to several global platforms like the G20 Bali Global Blended Finance and the

Archipelagic and Island States Forum to support sustainable oceans. The Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP) praised Indonesia's leadership in ocean accounting, which can serve as a model for other countries.

Indonesia must integrate marine protection with fisheries subsidies, study says

—Basten Gokkon, *Mongabay*, 29 June 2024

A new study emphasizes that Indonesia must integrate marine protection measures into its subsidies for small-scale fishers. Despite criticism that these subsidies harm marine resources' long-term viability, Indonesia claims exemption from the 2022 WTO agreement halting harmful fishing subsidies. Researchers Intan Innayatun Soeparna and Ankiq Taofiqurohman suggest the government must protect marine resources while supporting small-scale fisheries, aligning with the WTO's mandates. Indonesia, a top marine capture producer, has policies promoting both fishers' welfare and marine sustainability. Efforts include public facilities, training, financial systems, disaster protection, and security. The study argues overfishing can be addressed by incentivizing marine conservation and enhancing small-scale fisheries' prosperity. Indonesia's subsidies, much lower than those in developed nations, mainly focus on fuel price support. With 53% of its fisheries fully exploited, stricter monitoring is needed. Despite invoking WTO exemptions, the study proposes allocating subsidies through social protection schemes, which might benefit small-scale fishers and marine conservation. This approach, suggested by Indonesian Traditional Fishers' Union chairman Dani Setiawan, aims to balance financial support and sustainability.

Soeparna, I. I., & Taofiqurohman, A. (2024). [Transversal policy between the protection of marine fishery resources and fisheries subsidies to address overfishing in Indonesia - ScienceDirect](#). *Marine Policy*, 163.

B. Forests and Land Use

Indonesia's oil palm smallholders get a boost in bid for sustainability

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 10 July 2024

Collaborating with smallholder farmers, NGOs introduced guidelines to help oil palm farmers demonstrate that their products are deforestation-free. These guidelines are developed to address global market requirements, such as the EU Deforestation Regulation, ensuring fair market access and sustainable production. Launched on June 24, the deforestation-free smallholder toolkit is a participatory guide for protecting forests and promoting sustainable farming. The toolkit involves six steps: preparation, mapping forests and land, identifying high carbon stock (HCS) and high conservation value (HCV) areas, and creating integrated conservation and land-use plans (ICLUPs). These plans outline how community lands will be used, emphasizing the protection of HCS and HCV areas while promoting sustainable farming practices. Each step requires the smallholders' free, prior, and informed consent to ensure community benefits and prevent disputes. The toolkit, developed through collaboration between several organizations, was piloted in West Kalimantan, showing positive results and proving that smallholders can protect their forests. This toolkit addresses the gap left by existing mechanisms that primarily assist large companies.

Satellite images show deforestation toll of mining in Indonesia

—AFP Team, *TheJakartaPost*, 5 July 2024

Satellite imagery reveals significant deforestation in Indonesia due to mining. Conservation start-up TreeMap used high-resolution satellite images and two decades of Landsat data to map mining activities and related infrastructure, uncovering the clearing of over 700,000 hectares of forest since 2001. This includes 150,000 hectares of primary forest, which is rich in carbon stock and tall trees. TreeMap's Nusantara Atlas illustrates the extensive forest cover loss with time-lapse sequences, showing the development of mines and infrastructure. David Gaveau, TreeMap's founder, explained that open-pit mines are identifiable by their distinctive features and spectral signatures. Their findings were cross-referenced with official maps, local media, and NGO reports, revealing that coal mining caused the most deforestation, followed by gold, tin, and nickel mining. Although deforestation peaked in 2013, it has surged again, with nearly 10,000 hectares of primary forest lost annually by 2023. Indonesia's deforestation from mining is less than that from palm oil and wood plantations but remains a growing concern due to the country's increasing reliance on coal and nickel exploitation for electric vehicle batteries.

Indonesia's Mining Crossroads: New Map Unveils Opportunities for Environmental

—David Gaveau and Douglas Sheil, *NusantaraAtlas*, 3 July 2024

Indonesia's vast mineral wealth, including nickel, gold, and copper, has fueled a major mining boom, especially for materials needed in electric vehicle batteries and coal for industry. While this boom drives economic growth, it comes at a significant environmental cost. Deforestation, habitat degradation, and carbon emissions are increasing, threatening critically endangered species and displacing local communities. One notable impact is on the Hongana Manyawa tribe on Halmahera island, whose ancestral lands are being encroached upon by mining operations. Additionally, mining activities contaminate water sources, disrupt fisheries, and turn coastal waters red with heavy metal contamination, as seen on Obi Island. To monitor these impacts, a new high-resolution map, created using satellite imagery from Sentinel-2, Planet/NICFI, and Landsat, outlines Indonesia's mining footprint as of December 2023. This map shows mines, processing facilities, tailings areas, and roads, revealing that since 2000, mining has cleared 721,000 hectares of forest, including 150,000 hectares of primary forest. This mapping effort aims to promote sustainable mining practices to protect natural heritage while supporting economic development.

C. Biodiversity, Conservation, and Protected Area

The Threat that Lurks as Bornean Orangutans Get Closer to Humans

—Sucipto, *Kompas*, 10 July 2024

The expulsion of orangutans from their habitats in East Kalimantan has led to increased encounters with humans, raising concerns about disease transmission. Orangutans share 97% of their DNA with humans, making zoonotic disease transfer a significant risk. If orangutans contract human diseases, they could face high mortality rates, further endangering their species. Recent incidents highlight the severity of human-orangutan conflicts, including an orangutan found with 130 bullets in Kutai National Park. The

Indonesian Veterinary Association underscores that zoonotic transmission can occur through direct contact, bodily fluids, and environmental exposure. Zoonotic diseases, like the Covid-19 pandemic, underscore the potential risks. Encounters between wildlife and humans are escalating due to habitat loss driven by land permits and deforestation. In 2023-2024, several orangutans were seen near human settlements, indicating the urgency of addressing this issue. Efforts are being made to rehabilitate and translocate orangutans, but their natural habitats are shrinking. Ensuring the survival of orangutans is vital for biodiversity, as they help maintain forest ecosystems by dispersing seeds.

House passes long-awaited nature conservation law revision

—News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 10 July 2024

Lawmakers have passed a long-awaited revision to the 1990 Natural Resources and Ecosystem Conservation Law, aiming to provide better legal protection for wildlife and the environment. The House of Representatives, with all nine party factions approving, formalized the revision during a plenary session led by deputy speaker Muhaimin Iskandar of the National Awakening Party). House Commission IV deputy chair Budisatrio Djiwandono of Gerindra Party stated that the update was necessary due to changes in global and national conservation paradigms and international environmental laws. The new law clarifies the roles of public and indigenous communities, and funding for conservation activities. Environment and Forestry Minister Siti Nurbaya Bakar emphasized the importance of the revision for sustainable resource use while supporting people's welfare. The plan to revise the law has been under consideration since 2016, driven by the increasing deaths of protected animals like the Sumatran elephant due to hunting and illegal trading. Initially included in the 2018 National Legislation Program, the bill faced several delays but has now been passed to strengthen Indonesia's conservation efforts.

First assessment finds Borneo elephant is endangered

—AFP Team, *TheJakartaPost*, 29 June 2024

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has classified the Bornean elephant as endangered, with only around 1,000 remaining in the wild. This marks the first assessment of the elephant as a distinct subspecies. Over the past 75 years, extensive logging in Borneo has destroyed much of the elephant's habitat. As the human population in Malaysia's Sabah has grown, elephants increasingly enter human areas in search of food, often leading to conflicts and retribution killings. Ongoing habitat destruction from palm oil cultivation, timber plantations, and mining further endangers the species. The planned Pan Borneo Highway also poses a significant risk. Standing between around eight and ten feet tall, genetic evidence shows Borneo elephants diverged from their cousins in mainland Asia and Sumatra some 300,000 years ago, according to conservation group WWF. Sometimes called Borneo pygmy elephants and known for their larger ears, longer tails, and straighter tusks, these gentle creatures roam primarily in Malaysia's Sabah and sometimes Indonesia's East Kalimantan.

D. Climate Change, Energy, and Mining

Climate Change Signals from July Rain

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 10 July 2024

Heavy rain and floods struck Indonesia in early July 2024, during the peak of the dry season, due to equatorial wave interference with the east monsoon. Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) predicted the peak of the dry season in Java from July to August, typically influenced by dry east monsoon winds from Australia. However, atmospheric dynamics like the Madden Julian Oscillation (MJO), Equatorial Rossby Waves, and Kelvin Waves have intensified rainfall. Heavy rain in western Java, including Banten, Jakarta, and West Java, resulted from the active MJO and other atmospheric waves since late June, causing significant flooding. In South Tangerang, 673 families were affected, while in Cirebon, 16,310 people faced floods. Climate expert Albertus Sulaiman said these weather patterns might indicate climate change, as the climate system seeks a new balance. BMKG's Siswanto noted an increase in short-duration heavy rainfall events over the past century, highlighting the changing rainfall patterns. Climate change can disrupt weather patterns. Heavy rain in Java in July is no longer an anomaly.

Indonesia to Develop Nuclear Energy as Part of Renewable Energy Mix

—Dewi Elvia Muthiariny and Laila Afifa, *Tempo*, 9 July 2024

Indonesia's Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources, Arifin Tasrif, emphasized that nuclear energy is part of the country's renewable energy mix, highlighting its potential to meet Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. He stressed the need for technical reliability, safety, and cost-competitiveness in nuclear power. Nuclear power is included in the Draft Law on New and Renewable Energy, confirmed by Eniya Listiani Dewi, Director General of New, Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation. Indonesia is currently collaborating with the United States to develop a Nuclear Power Plant with a \$2.3 million grant secured for program development. The small modular reactor (SMR) technology is being considered for Pantai Gasong in West Kalimantan. Edi Prio Pambudi, Deputy for International Economic Cooperation Coordination, noted the growing energy demands of Indonesia's smelters and industries, including the semiconductor sector, as a reason for pursuing SMR technology. Additionally, the government is exploring nuclear power plant cooperation with South Korea, another leader in SMR technology.

Indonesia's Climate Policy Crossroads

—Nabiha Shahab and Peter Garda Bhwana, *Tempo*, 9 July 2024

The impacts of climate change are increasingly evident, from erratic weather patterns to rising sea levels. However, efforts to combat these changes are often undermined by conflicting policies that favor polluting industries. The recent US Supreme Court decision to scrap the "Chevron deference" restricts federal agencies' ability to enforce environmental regulations, complicating efforts to mitigate climate change. Indonesia faces similar policy contradictions. Despite preparing an ambitious Second Nationally Determined Contribution (SNDC) targeting a 1.5-degree Celsius limit, its energy sources still heavily rely on fossil fuels. This reliance poses challenges, especially with global renewable energy growth and new regulations like the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) that impose strict emission standards. Indonesia's National Energy Board recently reduced the renewable energy mix target to 17-19% by 2025, down from 23%, highlighting a lack of commitment to clean energy transition. This is particularly concerning as Indonesia aims to develop its nickel industry for electric vehicle batteries, powered mainly by coal-fired plants.

Vice President: Solving the Climate Crisis Must Prioritize the Principles of Justice

—Mawar Kusuma Wulan, *Kompas*, 5 July 2024

Vice President Ma'ruf Amin emphasized the importance of addressing the climate crisis with inclusivity and justice for all generations. At the World Environment Day 2024 celebration in Jakarta, he highlighted the need for innovative solutions to combat land degradation, build resilience to extreme weather, and reduce poverty. Indonesia's climate efforts focus on adhering to the Paris Agreement, aiming to reduce GHG emissions by 31.89% through national efforts and 43.2% with international support by 2030, targeting forestry, energy, waste, industry, and agriculture. Amin praised the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, development partners, community leaders, businesses, media, activists, and academics for their climate change efforts. He stressed fair distribution of burden from climate change impacts and the need for funding and technology transfer from major emitters to affected countries. Minister Siti Nurbaya Bakar reported ongoing environmental restoration activities, including tree planting and coastal cleanups. The event also launched the Ambassador Bamboos Bike Club and concluded with the inauguration of Green TV and Manggala Arboretum Park.

E. Pollution and Waste

USAID Launch Waste Management Program in Indonesia

—Dewi Elvia Muthiariny and Laila Afifa, *Tempo*, 9 July 2024

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Indonesian government launched the USAID SELARAS program on July 9, to address municipal solid waste management challenges. With funding of up to US\$24.7 million over five years, the initiative aims to reduce marine plastic pollution and methane emissions by enhancing waste management and recycling systems across 18 districts and cities in Indonesia. This collaboration seeks to improve environmental health, promote sustainable practices, and bolster community well-being. At the launch, representatives from targeted districts and cities pledged commitment to prioritize waste management through enhanced programs and budgets. USAID emphasized partnerships with local institutions to strengthen governance, expand services, develop plastic waste markets, and foster community engagement. The initiative aligns with Indonesia's national development goals, focusing on socio-cultural and ecological resilience. Discussions at the launch event underscored the importance of integrated waste management strategies from upstream to downstream, aiming for a cleaner and more sustainable Indonesia.

Indonesia launches first EV battery plant

—AFP Team, *TheJakartaPost*, 3 July 2024

Indonesia launched its first electric vehicle battery plant, seeking to position itself as a key player in the global supply chain. The plant is a joint venture between South Korean manufacturers Hyundai Motor Group and LG Energy Solution (LGES) and can produce up to 10 Gigawatt hours (GWh) of battery cells every year. President Jokowi said the plant opening, located in Karawang, marked a new chapter that underscored the resource-rich nation's ambition now has an added value. The plant is part of a \$9.8 billion deal signed in 2020. It will produce batteries for Hyundai's electric vehicles, with 50,000 of its Kona Electric SUV expected to be powered by the Indonesian-made battery. Joint venture company PT HLI Green Power is expected to spend \$2 billion to raise the plant's capacity to 20 GWh. Hyundai executive chairman Euisun Chung said that Indonesia's electric vehicle industry would create new economic opportunities as this country is the biggest automotive market in Southeast

Asia. The vehicles produced and sold here are the standard for the region with 700 million potential customers.

F. Investment and Finance

Govt to restrict subsidized fuel sales starting Aug 17, Luhut says

—News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 10 July 2024

Indonesia plans to limit subsidized fuel purchases starting August 17, restricting access to eligible beneficiaries to alleviate strain on the state budget. Coordinating Maritime Affairs and Investment Minister Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan announced the move towards targeted subsidies via Pertamina, aiming to curb non-eligible usage of subsidized fuels like Peralite and Solar. This initiative comes after budget overruns due to soaring global oil prices and currency devaluation post-Ukraine conflict. Initially proposed in 2022, the plan involves smartphone registration for vehicle owners to verify eligibility, delayed due to a price hike instead. Luhut also outlined plans to promote bioethanol to cut urban pollution, aiming to reduce sulfur content in gasoline from 500 to 50 parts per million. Pertamina's previous ethanol blending plans were stalled amid concerns over food supply competition and insufficient local production. These measures align with broader efforts to manage fuel subsidies and enhance environmental sustainability in Indonesia's energy sector.

Indonesia's investors fret over Prabowo's free school meals pledge

—Reuters Team, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 8 July 2024

President-elect Prabowo Subianto's proposal to provide free meals to schoolchildren, part of a US\$4.35 billion spending plan, has stirred concerns in financial markets. Despite assurances of fiscal responsibility, Prabowo's pledge to be daring with spending has led to higher bond yields and a depreciating rupiah, exacerbated by a strong US dollar. Market unease reflects a departure from the current government's fiscal prudence under Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati. Uncertainty over future fiscal policies and ministerial changes has prompted cautious portfolio adjustments among investors. Questions persist about funding sources, potential subsidy cuts, and fiscal deficit management. Foreign portfolio outflows have intensified, impacting both government bonds and stocks, amid global economic shifts favoring higher-yielding assets elsewhere. Despite this, some investors remain cautiously optimistic, citing plans to boost revenues and improve tax compliance. Indonesian bonds, though facing increased risk premiums, still attract investors seeking yield. With upcoming debt maturities and external economic pressures, market stability hinges on sustained investor confidence and global monetary policy trends.

G. Human Rights and Gender Equality

Playing an Important Role in Climate Action, Media Faces Threats and Limited Information

—Deonisia Arlinta, *Kompas*, 10 July 2024

The media plays a crucial role in addressing climate change by raising public awareness and supporting decision-making. However, journalists face significant challenges, including threats, intimidation, public distrust, media owner intervention, and safety risks. According to

UNESCO Jakarta Director Maki Katsuno Hayashikawa, a joint effort from media organizations, journalists, civil society groups, and governments is essential to improve climate journalism. UNESCO's latest report reveals that 749 environmental journalists have faced physical violence, online harassment, legal attacks, and murder. Program Director of Partnerships, Rifqi Sjarief Assegaf, highlighted additional challenges such as limited access to data and high threats in environmental reporting, particularly on issues like mining, power plants, and illegal logging. These threats hinder journalists' ability to report accurately on climate impacts. Dewi Safitri, founder of Indonesian Journalists for Climate (IJ4C), emphasized the complexity of climate issues and the need for better support to improve the quality and quantity of climate-related coverage.

Allegations widen against Indonesian palm oil giant Astra Agro Lestari

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

A new report alleges that Indonesia's second-largest palm oil company, PT Astra Agro Lestari (AAL), is involved in extensive illegal activities, including land grabbing, intimidating critics, and operating without permits. US Friends of the Earth, Walhi, and Milieudefensie released the report, expanding on a 2022 investigation. The report reveals that AAL subsidiaries cultivate at least 2,718 acres of oil palms illegally in forest areas and intimidate local communities. Major consumer brands like Kellogg's and Hershey's have cut ties with AAL, while others, including Unilever and General Mills, still source palm oil from AAL subsidiaries. The Norwegian Government Pension Fund and BlackRock have also distanced themselves from AAL due to these allegations. Despite claims of compliance by AAL, the report points out significant permitting irregularities and human rights violations. The Indonesian government is urged to address these issues, and companies are called to cease business with AAL to prevent further environmental and human rights abuses.

To download the full report: [Cultivating Conflict: How Astra Agro Lestari, Brands, and Big Finance Capitalize on Indonesia's Governance Gaps](#)

BASF, Eramet drop \$2.6b Indonesian nickel project that threatens isolated tribe

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 1 July 2024

Germany's BASF and France's Eramet abandoned plans for a \$2.6 billion green energy project in Halmahera island, attributing the decision to changing supply dynamics and concerns over its impact on the Forest Tobelo tribe, one of the last Indigenous groups in voluntary isolation. The Sonic Bay project aimed to build a nickel and cobalt refinery linked to the Weda Bay Nickel mine, potentially threatening the tribe's lands and lifestyle. BASF cited eased market conditions for battery-grade nickel as a reason for withdrawal, but environmental and social risks also played a role, highlighted by poor environmental performance ratings for Weda Bay Nickel. Advocates call for a no-go zone to protect their habitat, urging global companies like Tesla, linked to Indonesian suppliers, to adopt responsible sourcing practices. Activists also welcome the withdrawal as a respite for the Forest Tobelo, but this could be temporary, as the investment minister says the government is still negotiating with BASF and Eramet to return to the project.

I. RI General Elections

MK Urged to Set Prohibition Preventing President's Intervention in Regional Elections

—Susana Rita Kumalasanti, *Kompas*, 10 July 2024

Two students from Sahid University Jakarta, M Fauzi Azhar and Aditya Ramadhan, have urged the Constitutional Court to prohibit the president, vice president, ministers, deputy ministers, and heads of state institutions from participating in regional election campaigns. Accompanied by their legal representative, Viktor Santoso Tandiasa, they argued that Article 70 Paragraph (1) Letter b of Law Number 10 of 2016 concerning Regional Elections should include these officials to prevent abuse of authority and ensure fair competition. Currently, the law bans civil servants, police, and military members from campaigning, but not high-ranking state officials. Viktor emphasized that this omission undermines the dignity of state officials and poses risks of ethical violations and power abuse. With the 2024 elections approaching, they called for an immediate review to prevent high-ranking officials from influencing the campaigns, especially given the familial ties among potential candidates. The Constitutional Court is reviewing 12 cases related to the Regional Elections Law, with four already heard and more scheduled for hearings.

Jokowi gives nod to Kaesang's possible run in governor race

—Yerica Lai, *TheJakartaPost*, 10 July 2024

President Joko Widodo hinted at supporting his youngest son, Kaesang Pangarep, in the upcoming local elections. Kaesang, who will turn 30 in December this year, became eligible to run due to an amendment by the General Elections Commission, which allows candidates to be 30 at the time of inauguration. Kaesang, who only made his political debut late last year when he assumed the leadership of the small, self-styled youth Indonesian Solidarity Party party, has recently begun touring to meet political party leaders and supporters. His political safari is aimed to boost his profile. While some parties consider him a potential candidate for governor or deputy governor of Jakarta, polls suggest he has stronger support in Central Java. Kaesang remains non-committal about his candidacy, suggesting a decision will come in August. He also explored cooperation with other parties, including the opposition Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). When asked about the possibility of supporting Kaesang on a joint ticket, PKS leader described him as an “interesting” choice but stressed that any change needs to be discussed with the high council.

Disagreement emerges among pro-Prabowo parties over regional election candidates

—Yerica Lai, *TheJakartaPost*, 7 July 2024

Political parties backing Indonesia's president-elect Prabowo Subianto face challenges in agreeing on joint nominations for the November regional elections. The Onward Indonesia Coalition (KIM), led by Prabowo's Gerindra Party, aims to form a "permanent coalition" to ensure regional support for the central government. However, disagreements have emerged, with parties like Gerindra and Golkar endorsing different candidates in key regions such as Banten. Gerindra recently announced Andra Soni and PKS lawmaker Achmad Dimiyati Natakusumah as its Banten governor candidates, diverging from Golkar's preferences. Similar disagreements are seen in South Tangerang and other regions. Golkar is pushing for former West Java governor Ridwan Kamil for re-election, while Gerindra supports him for Jakarta governor. Analyst Agung Baskoro notes that differing political landscapes and interests at national and regional levels make a unified KIM approach challenging. Negotiations are ongoing for candidates in strategic provinces, with Democratic Party chairman Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono emphasizing the complexity of aligning regional election strategies with national coalitions.

Is Prabowo Subianto fit to lead Indonesia? Surgery sparks health speculation

—Amy Sood, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 1 July 2024

Rumours about the president-elect's health 'reflect anxieties' about the chance his 36-year-old vice-president may have to take over, analysts say. Indonesia's president-elect Prabowo Subianto, 72, recently underwent major surgery for a leg injury from his military service, sparking renewed health concerns. In an Instagram post, Prabowo assured the public that the procedure was successful and emphasized his readiness to serve the nation. Outgoing President Joko Widodo visited him during his recovery. Prabowo, who won the February election, is set to take office in October. However, rumors about his health persist, exacerbating anxieties about his ability to govern. Analysts noted potential tensions between the two over concerns that Widodo is hoping to maintain his influence in the political sphere. If Prabowo is unable to complete his term, his 36-year-old vice-president-elect, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, would assume the presidency. Gibran's nomination was controversial, involving a constitutional court exemption facilitated by Widodo's brother-in-law. Analysts suggest that if Gibran takes over, Widodo may continue to exert significant influence in Indonesian politics.

II. Indonesia in Geopolitics

Vice President and Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar Push to Fight Islamophobia

—Mawar Kusuma Wulan, *Kompas*, 11 July 2024

Vice President Ma'ruf Amin met with Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Muhammad Ahmad at Tayyeb Al-Hassani, at the Vice President's Palace in Jakarta on July 10. They discussed combating Islamophobia using state political powers and promoting the *wasathiyah* (moderate) Islamic movement. The Grand Sheikh's visit is part of his Southeast Asia tour, including Malaysia and Thailand. Vice President Amin emphasized that Islam is a religion of love, tolerance, and respect, advocating for better understanding of Islam among non-Muslims and firm action against Islamophobic acts. Grand Sheikh Al-Azhar highlighted the need to spread moderate Islamic teachings in the West to foster harmony between Eastern and Western worlds and to combat Islamophobia, especially among youth. He called for global conferences to unify the Islamic world's message of peace. The meeting reinforced Indonesia's commitment to peace and understanding of Islam internationally. They also discussed the conflict in Gaza, with the Grand Sheikh appreciating Indonesia's efforts towards Middle Eastern peace.

Preparations pick up for Pope's busy visit to Indonesia

—Yvette Tanamal, *TheJakartaPost*, 10 July 2024

Preparations for Pope Francis' first visit to Indonesia are intensifying ahead of his early September arrival. Government bodies and the Apostolic Nunciature are coordinating efforts, while Catholic churches organize congregations for a Mass at Gelora Bung Karno stadium in Jakarta on September 5, expecting 70,000 attendees. The 87-year-old Pope arrives on September 3, with a formal welcome from President Joko Widodo on September 4, and plans to deliver speeches at the Jakarta Cathedral. He will also sign a declaration of humanity with Istiqlal Grand Imam Nasaruddin Umar. The government has ramped up efforts to ensure the Pope's well being due to his health concerns. The Bishop's Conference of Indonesia (KWI) reports intense preparations requiring physical, spiritual, and technical planning. The trip is part of the Pope's two-week Asia-Oceania tour, his longest foreign trip. Pope Francis is the third Pope to visit Indonesia, following Pope Paul VI in 1970 and Pope John Paul II in 1989. His visit aims to promote religious tolerance and unity.

'Not enough jobs': Indonesia's 10 million Gen Z face looming unemployment crisis

—Amy Sood, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 1 July 2024

With so many young Indonesians neither working nor studying, experts warn of demographic challenges in the coming years. Ferdy Susanto, a 23-year-old tech graduate from Indonesia, has applied for 20 jobs over the past year without success. He's among 10 million unemployed Gen Z, not enrolled in formal education or training, according to Statistics Indonesia. Unemployment among those aged 20-24 rose from 12.86% in 2015 to 17.02% in 2022, significantly higher than the national average of 5.45%. Indonesia is currently experiencing a demographic dividend, with more than 70 percent of its population in the 15-64 "prime working age" group. In March, President Jokowi said the government was determined to capitalize on this dividend. It hopes to reach the status of a developed country, under its "Golden Indonesia 2045" vision and is counting on young people to drive economic growth. Experts highlight a job market mismatch, with education not aligning with industry needs, especially in digitalization and tech. Initiatives like the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka and Prakerja Card aim to address youth unemployment, but many graduates like Ferdy still face a tough job market.