



## 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](http://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](mailto:newsdigest@starlingresources.com).

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### A. Marine and Fisheries

#### **Developing mangrove-friendly products bolsters sustainable mangrove ecosystem**

—Front Row, *TheJakartaPost*, 6 August 2024

National Petland and Mangrove Rehabilitation Agency (BRGM) is supporting local communities in developing mangrove-friendly products to ensure their survival and manage mangrove ecosystems sustainably. These products include mangrove-based syrup, cloth

coloring, and eco-tourism ventures. However, these products are not yet well-known, and public support is crucial for their sustainability. At a public dialogue held by BRGM to celebrate World Mangrove Day, various initiatives to support local economies and mangrove conservation were discussed. Andi Wijaya of the Air Force highlighted the importance of sustainable mangrove ecosystems, sharing his experiences with coastal erosion and the need for mangrove restoration. BRGM's 3M strategy focuses on restoring, increasing, and maintaining mangroves by empowering communities. Examples of successful initiatives include Pokdakan Salo Sumbala Sejahtera's silvo-fishery in East Kalimantan and KTH Penghijauan Maju Bersama's ecotourism in North Sumatra. These ventures increase local economic opportunities and involve community members, especially women. Mangrove-based batik production by Zie Batik in Semarang also showcases innovative uses of mangroves. These efforts collectively aim to enhance mangrove conservation and local livelihoods.

### **"Mooring Buoy" Protects the Pots of Raja Ampat Residents**

—Fabio Maria Lopes Costa, *Kompas*, 4 August 2024

In Raja Ampat, the installation of mooring buoys on Friwen and Mioskon Islands aims to protect coral reefs from damage caused by ships. The buoys prevent ships from docking in shallow waters, thus preserving the marine ecosystem, which is vital for local tourism and global biodiversity. The installation ceremony, led by local leader Derek Waiyai, included traditional rituals to seek ancestral protection for the buoys. A collaboration project between Konservasi Indonesia and local government bodies, funded by the Global Fund for Coral Reefs, it marks Indonesia's first use of mooring buoys for conservation. The initiative responds to frequent ship groundings that damage reefs. Each buoy, designed for ships up to 700 GT, consists of heavy anchors, floating buoys, and chains. The successful installation and use of these mooring buoys, demonstrated by a 28-GT motor ship MV Aldo the first to moor its rope in the waters of Mioskun Island, is expected to expand, with plans for 107 moorings in the region. This innovation balances economic benefits with environmental sustainability.

### **Australia Busts Indonesian Fishermen For Shark-Finching**

—News Desk, *MarineLink*, 2 August 2024

Australian authorities intercepted and apprehended an Indonesian vessel engaged in illegal fishing and shark finning near New Year Island, 294 kilometers northeast of Darwin. They seized the vessel along with 50 kilograms of shark fin, 80 kilograms of bait fish, and substantial fishing equipment. The crew of five Indonesian nationals was detained, charged under the Fisheries Management Act 1991, and each pleaded guilty at Darwin Local Court on July 18. They were released on \$1,000 recognizance orders, undertaking good behavior for three years, and have returned to Indonesia. The vessel was destroyed by Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) per Australian biosecurity requirements. AFMA, alongside Maritime Border Command, continues efforts to combat illegal fishing to protect marine resources. Measures include public information campaigns, educational material distribution, targeted social media efforts, and proactive engagement within fishing communities. AFMA General Manager of Fisheries Operations emphasized the ecological importance of sharks and the ongoing focus on prosecuting illegal fishers and Maritime Border Command highlighted that Australian authorities have zero tolerance for any illegal activity.

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## B. Forests and Land Use

### Indonesia braces up for alarming forest fires during dry season-Xinhua

—Nurul Fitri Ramadhani, *Xinhua*, 5 August 2024

Indonesia has entered a dry season, increasing the risk of forest and peatland fires across several regions. The Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) reported that over 13 provinces, particularly Sumatra, are highly vulnerable, with more than 1,000 hotspots. Residents are warned against activities that could spark fires. The fires are attributed to dry weather, low rainfall, and strong winds, with influences from Rossby Equatorial and Kelvin waves. Recent fires have been reported in North Bintan and Kampar, with significant disruption to local activities. Kampar declared an emergency alert, emphasizing firm action against land burning. In Jambi, fires have burned 6.5 hectares of land. Indonesia, prone to forest and peatland fires, faces exacerbated conditions due to the El Niño phenomenon. From January to October 2023, nearly one million hectares burned, emitting 40.6 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. Historical fires in 2019 affected 3.1 million hectares and neighboring countries. Environment and Forestry Minister Siti Nurbaya Bakar committed to enhancing control and surveillance to prevent cross-border fire spread.

### BMKG warns of potential forest fires, anomalous rain

—News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 31 July 2024

The Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) warned people to be vigilant of potential forest fires in Sumatra during the dry season while also predicting unseasonal rainfall. Southern Indonesia, including Sumatra, Java, Bali, East Nusa Tenggara, West Nusa Tenggara, and southern Kalimantan, is currently experiencing the peak of the dry season with sunny weather over the past three days. The BMKG advised against slash-and-burn farming, particularly on peatlands, which are highly flammable and hard to extinguish. The agency also forecasts strong winds in parts of Sumatra and Kalimantan, known for extensive peatland coverage. Recent incidents include fires burning 5 hectares of plantations in Jambi and 8 hectares in Bintan Regency, Riau Islands, with haze affecting residential areas. Despite the dry season, the BMKG predicts medium to heavy rain and thunderstorms in Sumatra and parts of Java until August 5. The unusual rain is triggered by equatorial Kelvin and Rossby waves and warmer sea surface temperatures in waters around Indonesia that cause rain clouds to build up.

### Climate Crisis Increases Pest Attacks and Forest Fires

—Siti Hadida Hafsyah, *ForestDigest*, 29 July 2024

The climate crisis is intensifying the vulnerability of global forests, leading to increased pest attacks and forest fires, as noted by the FAO in the 2024 State of the World's Forests (SOFO) report. Forest fires, now more frequent and intense, released over 6 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2023, surpassing the EU's fossil fuel emissions. Prolonged droughts have exacerbated fire severity, contributing to almost a quarter of forest fire emissions. Pests also pose a significant threat to forest health. The pine nematode, for example, has severely damaged native pine forests in Asia and North America. FAO Director General QU Dongyu emphasized the need for fact-based innovation in forestry to enhance sustainability and resilience. The SOFO 2024 report suggests five actions to foster innovation: promoting awareness, enhancing skills, forming transformative partnerships, ensuring financial resources, and providing supportive policy environments. Indonesia's collaborative efforts in

forest fire prevention, involving various community elements, highlight the importance of combining traditional and modern approaches. These efforts have contributed to emission reductions, earning incentives from the Green Climate Fund.

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## C. Biodiversity, Conservation and Protected Area

### [Tiny-arm-bone-unlocks-mystery-of-indonesias-extinct-hobbit-people](#)

—AFP, *TheStraitsTimes*, 7 August 2024

On August 6, scientists announced the discovery of a tiny arm bone suggesting that *Homo floresiensis*, known as "hobbits," shrank to their diminutive size only after arriving on Indonesia's Flores Island around a million years ago. First discovered in 2003, these tool-using hominids lived on Flores until about 50,000 years ago. Previous estimates based on teeth and a jawbone indicated they were about 1.06 meters tall. However, the new arm bone and teeth, dated to 700,000 years ago, suggest some were just 1 meter tall. This supports the theory that *Homo floresiensis* evolved from the larger *Homo erectus*, which shrank over time due to island dwarfism. This phenomenon causes larger animals to become smaller in isolated environments. The researchers argue that *Homo erectus* managed to cross deep-sea barriers, possibly via accidental rafting on tsunami debris. Despite their small size, these ancient humans survived for hundreds of thousands of years, showcasing the power of natural selection. The findings further illuminate the evolutionary history of *Homo floresiensis*.

### [Sumatra-community-school-hands-down-ancient-knowledge-to-modern-generation](#)

—Teguh Suprayitno, *Mongabay*, 7 August 2024

A community near an ancient Buddhist archaeological site in Sumatra has established a voluntary school to teach young people history and culture that dates back centuries. The curriculum includes the identification and application of medicinal plants used for generations by traditional healers like Mbok Hawo, a healer in her 60s. She educates local school children about the medicinal uses of plants like turmeric. Healers like Hawo use indigenous knowledge to treat ailments, but modern distractions threaten this cultural heritage. To preserve it, residents formed Rumah Menapo over two decades ago, spearheaded by Mukhtar Hadi. In 2010, they established Nature School, where Indigenous elders teach children to identify and use medicinal plants. This initiative aims to maintain the region's rich history, blending ancient practices with contemporary Islamic culture. Mukhtar emphasizes the importance of preserving local history and environmental stewardship. The school incorporates practical environmental protection, like cleaning the polluted Batanghari River and planting trees. Relying on volunteers, it aims to instill a love for the environment and cultural heritage in children.

### [Javan-rhino-poaching-horn-ujung-kulon-national-park-indonesia-wildlife-trafficking](#)

—Indonesia desk, *Mongabay*, 2 August 2024

A recent investigation revealed that up to 26 Javan rhinos were poached, significantly impacting conservation efforts in Indonesia. This highlights security flaws at Ujung Kulon National Park, the last habitat of this critically endangered species. In June, Mongabay found indications that poaching was orchestrated by organized groups with access to insider information from a former park patrol member about rhino movements. The case centers on

Sunendi bin Karnadi, a convicted poaching kingpin, who was sentenced to 12 years in jail. He, along with his brother Sahru, led gangs responsible for multiple rhino kills. Sunendi's wealth and the use of sophisticated hunting methods raised suspicions. Evidence showed Sunendi had detailed maps and data on rhino locations, likely leaked by an insider known as "M." Despite denials from park officials, evidence suggests that insider information played a crucial role in the poaching operations. The case also raises concerns about discrepancies in the official rhino population count, suggesting that more rhinos may have been poached or gone missing than reported. Despite some arrests, the fate of the missing rhinos remains unresolved.

### **As human-elephant conflicts in Sumatra rise, so does risk from electric fences**

—Junaidi Hanafiah, *Mongabay*, 29 July 2024

In Karang Ampar village, Aceh, farmers like Mak Besan face increasing dangers from Sumatran elephants. These elephants, displaced by habitat loss due to agricultural expansion, including oil palm plantations, frequently enter human areas seeking food. Mak Besan, who avoids her own farm out of fear, works on others' lands to support her family. Encounters between elephants and humans have become common, leading villagers to install electric fences, which have unfortunately resulted in elephant fatalities and heightened human risk. Conservation efforts have been insufficient, prompting residents to take protective measures themselves. The Peusangan River Basin, a critical elephant habitat, has lost significant tree cover, further fragmenting the elephants' environment. Local leaders and conservationists stress the need for government intervention to establish safe boundaries and mitigate conflict, as the ongoing struggle affects both livelihoods and elephant survival. In Indonesia and Sri Lanka, there have been increasing reports of elephant deaths in recent years attributed to electrified fences connected to high-voltage power sources.

Berliani, K., Alikodra, H. S., Masy'ud, B., & Kusri, M. D. (2018). [Evaluation of Human—Elephants \(\*Elephas maximus sumatranus\*\) Conflict in Aceh Province, Indonesia](#). *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 1116, 052014.

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## **D. Climate Change, Energy and Mining**

### **Indonesia Unveils Climate-Friendly Cooling Plan**

News Desk, *MirageNews*, 7 August 2024

The Indonesian government launched its first National Cooling Action Plan (I-NCAP) in Bali, addressing a major contributor to global warming and steering the country towards a greener, net-zero future. The I-NCAP targets five critical areas: building space cooling, food cold chains, healthcare cold chains, mobile air conditioning, and process cooling, aligning with enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution. Developed with support from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific/ESCAP, the United Nations Environment Programme/UNEP, and the Cool Coalition, I-NCAP aims to manage increasing cooling demand, improve energy efficiency in cooling appliances, and promote low-global warming potential refrigerants. Dr. Eniya Listiani Dewi, Director General of New, Renewable Energy, and Energy Conservation, highlighted the plan's significance in providing climate-friendly cooling solutions and reducing energy demand and emissions. In 2020, space cooling and food cold chains consumed 79 TWh of electricity, 30% of Indonesia's total consumption. Without intervention, demand could rise by 400% by 2040. I-NCAP aims to

mitigate this increase by 57%. The plan underscores commitment to sustainable cooling and serves as a model for global climate-friendly initiatives.

### **Indonesia's VP urges renewable energy solutions to face climate change**

Benardy Kenzu, *AntaraNews*, 5 August 2024

Vice President Ma'ruf Amin highlighted the need for advancing renewable energy technologies to combat climate change and environmental degradation during the World Environment Day 2024 summit in Jakarta. He called for increased research and development in innovative technologies to restore degraded land and mitigate climate impacts, emphasizing solar, wind, and hydropower to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Amin stressed the importance of building an eco-friendly transportation ecosystem, including electric vehicles, hydrogen cars, and mass transit systems, to minimize carbon emissions. He urged all stakeholders to share responsibility for addressing climate change, considering historical accountability and varying capacities. He called for special funding and technology transfer from high-emission countries to those affected, emphasizing the need to prioritize marginalized communities in climate policies. He also underscored robust land and forest governance, advocating for increased supervision of activities that exacerbate land degradation and integration of land restoration into national development policies. Amin warned of three crises: climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, noting that GHG emissions lead to rising temperatures, extreme weather, and sea level rise, which contribute to biodiversity loss.

### **66 miners interested in sea sand exports: Ministry**

News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 3 August 2024

Sixty-six mining companies have shown interest in permits for sea sand exports, but the Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Ministry stated that no permits would be issued soon due to the need for careful review processes. The President lifted a 20-year ban on sea sand exports last year under Government Regulation No. 26/2023, allowing its use for land reclamation and infrastructure development. Despite expectations for exports to begin early this year, delays have occurred as detailed regulations are pending. Permits will be issued for mining in the Java Sea, Makassar Strait, and Natuna-North Natuna waters, with a potential yield of 17.65 billion cubic meters of sea sand sediment and a depth limit of three meters. The government aims to prioritize local demand to support domestic projects over foreign shipments. Analysts and environmental groups warn of potential irreversible environmental damage, arguing the policy benefits countries importing sea sand, like Singapore and Hong Kong. Trade Minister emphasized the high domestic demand for sea sand for giant seawall projects to address land subsidence in coastal areas.

### **Deep sea mining opponents suffer major setback**

Amélie Bottollier-Depois (AFP), *TheJakartaPost*, 3 August 2024

Opponents of deep sea mining faced a setback as efforts to initiate an international moratorium on the practice failed. The International Seabed Authority (ISA) debated the issue, but a draft proposing a dialogue for marine environment protection didn't advance after a week of talks in Kingston, Jamaica. Delegations, including China and Saudi Arabia, argued that the ISA's 168-member assembly wasn't the right forum for such decisions, suggesting instead that the 36-member Council should decide. Chile withdrew the draft amid persistent opposition. Deep sea mining involves extracting minerals like nickel, cobalt, and copper from

the ocean floor, essential for renewable energy technology. Although not yet commercialized, the ISA has been working on mining regulations, aiming to adopt a code by 2025. Critics, including NGOs and scientists, warn of environmental risks, such as habitat damage and disruption of oceanic carbon absorption. Despite the setback, NGOs celebrated Brazil's Leticia Carvalho's election as ISA's new secretary general, signaling potential reforms. Nauru and The Metals Company continue to push forward with plans for deep sea mining, emphasizing its importance for economic survival.

### **Muhammadiyah welcomes mining permit policy, sparking grassroots backlash**

Radhiyya Indra, *TheJakartaPost*, 29 July 2024

Muhammadiyah, a major Muslim organization known for its environmentalism, faces backlash from members and activists for supporting a government policy allowing religious groups to manage state-owned mines. After initial hesitation, Muhammadiyah's central board endorsed the policy on July 28, expressing readiness to operate mines responsibly if granted permits. They plan to involve professionals, collaborate with universities, and use environmentally friendly technology. This stance aligns with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which applied for a mining permit in East Kalimantan soon after the policy's announcement. Other religious organizations, like the Indonesian Communion of Churches (PGI) and Indonesian Bishops Conference (KWI), have refused the policy. Environmental watchdogs criticized Muhammadiyah's decision. Zenzi Suhadi of WALHI expressed disappointment, arguing it undermines advocacy against mining's environmental harm. Kader Hijau Muhammadiyah, the organization's environmental community, also condemned the move, doubting Muhammadiyah's capability to manage mines and fearing it could reverse progress on green initiatives. Minister Bahlil Lahadalia defended the policy, claiming religious organizations could model responsible mining practices, but skepticism remains high.

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## **E. Pollution and Waste**

### **Japan Commits to Support Jakarta in Waste Management**

—Najla Nur Fauziah and Laila Afifa, *Tempo*, 1 August 2024

A delegation from the Japanese Standing Committee on Environment visited the Jakarta Recycle Center (JRC) in South Jakarta On August 1 to strengthen cooperation in waste management between Japan and Indonesia. Asep Kuswanto, Head of the Jakarta Environmental Office, expressed gratitude for Japan's continuous support, particularly through JICA, in improving Jakarta's waste management infrastructure. He emphasized Jakarta's commitment to enhancing its waste management system using advanced technology and hoped for expanded collaboration in other environmental areas, such as air pollution and wastewater management. Shunsuke Mutai, Chair of the Japanese House of Representatives' Standing Committee on Environment, praised Jakarta's waste management efforts, suggesting the city could serve as a global example. He highlighted the importance of decarbonization and waste reduction in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and expressed Japan's readiness to share its knowledge with Jakarta. Mutai's remarks underscored Jakarta's potential to lead in decarbonization and waste management innovation, showcasing effective environmental problem-solving in a major city. Japan is ready to share the knowledge with Jakarta.

## **Innovative Approach to Food Waste Management in Bogor Regency: The "Ngupahan" App Socialization and Usability Test**

—News Desk, *PAGE*, 1 August 2024

On July 30, Bogor saw the introduction of the "Ngupahan" mobile app by PAGE Indonesia, in partnership with the Regional Food Agency and the Environment and Forestry Agency. This app aims to tackle food waste and enhance household food security, forming part of the National Youth Ideathon. Indonesia, second only to Saudi Arabia in food waste generation, faces significant challenges, with Bogor alone producing around 428,802 tons of food waste annually. The app, developed in 2024, includes features such as an education corner, food sharing platform, compost bank, and direct sales market. These tools help users learn about food waste, share surplus food, manage waste profitably, and buy or sell food affordably, supporting SDGs. At the socialization event in Gunung Putri Village, over 30 local stakeholders attended, including community members and local authorities. They learned the app's potential to integrate and sustain local food systems. Usability testing allowed participants to interact with the app and provide feedback, ensuring it meets user needs. The official launch is planned for October, aiming to set a precedent for sustainable food management practices.

## **In search of the elusive green nickel premium**

—Andy Home, *Reuters*, 24 July 2024

BHP Group's ambition to create a green nickel hub in Western Australia is on hold as the division goes into care and maintenance. Despite a \$3 billion investment since 2020 to supply nickel sulphate for EV batteries, including a deal with Tesla, low prices have outweighed green credentials. China's investment in Indonesia's nickel industry has led to excess production and low prices, with significant environmental and social costs. Indonesia's nickel production has surged, but it often fails to meet ESG standards. Transparency issues further complicate assessing the environmental impact of nickel used in EV batteries. The London Metal Exchange is working to offer a low-carbon nickel option but lacks a consensus on what constitutes green material. The EU's upcoming Battery Passport will require detailed supply-chain transparency by 2027, posing a challenge for automotive companies relying on Indonesian nickel. As high-standard operators struggle, automakers must ensure they can identify ethically sourced nickel to avoid reputational damage and regulatory issues.

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## **F. Investment and Finance**

### **Expert: Adjustment of EBT Mix Target Has Negative Impact on Investment Interest**

2024

—Djati Waluyo and Happy Fajrian, *KataDataGreen*, 7 August

The Indonesian government has reduced its renewable energy target for 2025 from 23% to 17-19% through an update to the National Energy Policy (KEN). This adjustment, announced at the Katadata SAFE 2024 event, could deter investment, according to Fabby Tumiwa, Executive Director of the Institute for Essential Services Reform (IESR). Investors prioritize stable regulations, and changing targets may lead to hesitation in funding renewable projects. Indonesia's electricity network currently has the lowest greenhouse gas intensity in Southeast Asia, at 0.8 million tons per kilowatt hour. This could be unattractive to foreign investors, especially with an economic growth target of 8% that necessitates foreign direct investment.



The National Energy Council (DEN) is revising the target to 17-19% in 2025, with a long-term goal of 70-72% renewable energy by 2060. This is a shift from the previous target where 70% of energy was expected to come from fossil fuels by 2050. The revision process, harmonized by the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, aims to adapt to strategic environmental changes and support the energy transition towards carbon neutrality by 2060.

### **Factory in Kendal Will Make Indonesia the Second Largest Lithium Battery Anode Producer in the World**

—Kristi Dwi Utami, *Kompas*, 7 August 2024

President Joko Widodo inaugurated the PT Indonesia BTR New Energy Material lithium battery anode factory in the Kendal Special Economic Zone, Central Java, on August 7. The factory, which will soon start its second construction phase, is set to make Indonesia the world's second-largest producer of lithium battery anodes. The event was attended by several ministers and local officials, including Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan and Airlangga Hartarto. Luhut praised the factory's swift construction, completed in 10 months, with a current production capacity of 80,000 tons per year, sufficient for around 1.5 million electric cars. The second phase, to be completed by March 2025, will double the capacity to 160,000 tons annually, supporting 3 million electric cars. This development is part of Indonesia's broader strategy to establish a comprehensive electric vehicle ecosystem, leveraging local resources like nickel and cobalt. Despite facing international trade disputes, the policy has significantly boosted nickel export values from Rp 33 trillion to Rp 510 trillion. BTR New Material Group's leader, He Xueqin, highlighted significant investments and job creation associated with the factory's construction.

### **Generation Rebuild: Fixing the future, one start-up at a time**

—Ruth Dea Juwita, *TheJakartaPost*, 30 July 2024

In response to the global climate crisis, tech-savvy Generation Z and Millennial entrepreneurs are pioneering innovative environmental solutions. Mirta Khairunissa, co-founder of Tracco, developed an app to help users track and offset their carbon emissions. Tracco also offers consultancy services to help companies manage their carbon footprints, aiming to shift from individual to collective climate consciousness. Sabrina Farah Salsabilla, CMO of Reservoir, created [SolusiBanjir.id](https://solusibanjir.id) to address flood management and later focused on water conservation. She emphasizes the importance of educating the public about long-term water conservation impacts. Bintang Ekananda co-founded Alner to combat single-use plastics with reusable packaging solutions, leveraging digital communication to engage younger audiences. Jonathan Davy, co-founder of Ecoxyztem, highlights the investment gap for Indonesian startups compared to global counterparts. He notes a new wave of promising clean technologies driven by affordability and innovative business models. Lastly, Jessica Novia of CarbonEthics who advocates for policy support to enhance Indonesia's carbon market, leveraging the country's blue carbon potential to combat climate risks. She emphasizes the need for sustainability to become mainstream, with young entrepreneurs leading the charge.

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## **G. Human Rights, Indigenous People and Gender Equality**

### **Magnate's visit to Indonesia's untouched Aru Islands revives Indigenous concerns**

—Christ Belseran, *Mongabay*, 31 July 2024

On May 13, the arrival of a ship named "J7Explorer" on the Aru Islands sparked local concern, with residents mistaking it for an Indonesian warship. The ship, owned by coal magnate Andi Syamsuddin Arsyad, also known as Haji Isam, renewed fears about large-scale land development on the islands. Haji Isam, a powerful businessman with political connections, plans to convert 60,000 hectares of the archipelago into a cattle ranch. This project threatens to clear significant rainforest areas and disrupt local communities. Historically, Aru faced similar threats in the late 2000s when plans for sugar plantations were proposed, leading to widespread protests and the eventual cancellation of the project. Current anxieties echo those earlier fears, with locals and activists opposing the cattle ranch development due to its potential environmental and social impacts. Despite assurances of mere surveys, the arrival of Haji Isam and his entourage has heightened suspicions of imminent large-scale industrial farming, prompting protests from students and youth organizations. The community continues to resist efforts that jeopardize their traditional lands and way of life.

### **Sugarcane Project Threatens Papua's Forests and Indigenous Communities**

—News Desk, *ForestDigest*, 21 July 2024

The Indonesian government plans to establish 2 million hectares of sugarcane plantations in eastern Papua as part of President Joko Widodo's 2020 food estate project, aiming to reduce sugar imports and develop bioethanol as a clean fuel. Investment Minister Bahlil Lahadalia will lead this \$8.6 billion project, starting with converting 419,000 hectares of forest into non-forest areas, simplifying licensing for participating companies. This project involves several Indonesian and foreign consortiums engaged in plantation, factory construction, and power plants. However, large-scale deforestation threatens Papua's rich biodiversity, including over 20,000 plant species and numerous wildlife species, and impacts indigenous communities dependent on forests. The government assures indigenous rights protection through Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and fair compensation. Bahlil promises benefits for locals through a plasma profit-sharing scheme, allocating one-fifth of the plantation to small farmers with support from companies. Previous similar projects, like the 2011 Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate, resulted in land acquisition without proper FPIC or compensation, causing local communities to lose their rights and face debt.

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## **I. RI General Elections**

### **Political alliances could push popular candidates out of November races**

—Radhiyya Indra, *TheJakartaPost*, 5 August 2024

In preparation for Indonesia's simultaneous regional elections in November, political parties are forming large alliances and jointly nominating candidates, reducing competition. The Jakarta gubernatorial race sees significant activity, with the Onward Indonesia Coalition (KIM), which supports president and vice-president-elect Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka, planning to endorse former West Java governor Ridwan Kamil. This move might challenge the popular hopeful Anies Baswedan's candidacy. The KIM, consisting of major parties like Gerindra, Golkar, Democratic Party, and PAN, has also endorsed Dedi Mulyadi for West Java governor. Analysts view these alliances as attempts to minimize competition, which they argue is unhealthy. Additionally, the Onward Banten Coalition,

primarily KIM parties, has nominated Gerindra's Andra Soni for Banten governor. Concerns are rising over potential uncontested races, as alliances might leave some elections with only one candidate, allowing voters to choose a blank box on the ballot. The PDI-P, KIM's rival, is actively seeking to field candidates to ensure contested elections in key provinces.

### **Presidential Election Coalition Consolidation in Regional Elections Increases Potential for Single Candidates**

—Iqbal Basyari, *Kompas*, 5 August 2024

The practice of exchanging support for candidacies between one region and another is feared to cause the phenomenon of single candidates to re-emerge in the 2024 simultaneous regional head elections. There's concern that coalition agreements for the 2024 Presidential Election are influencing regional elections, potentially leading to single candidates. To prevent this, the public must demand political parties commit to nominating their best cadres. Titi Anggraini from the University of Indonesia highlights that the proximity of the presidential and regional elections strengthens coalition continuity, as seen with the Indonesia Maju Coalition. This coalition supports candidates in several regions, meeting the 20% seat threshold in the Regional People's Representative Council. The trend of single candidates has been increasing, with nearly 10% of regions seeing only one candidate in recent elections. Most single candidates are incumbents or political dynasties. Heavy nomination requirements and lack of cadre development contribute to this issue. The public needs to press for political diversity through petitions and direct engagement with parties.

### **KPU delays announcing legislative seats as court receives fresh disputes**

—Radhiyya Indra, *TheJakartaPost*, 1 August 2024

The General Elections Commission (KPU) has delayed converting votes from February's legislative elections into seats for the upcoming regional elections in November, due to fresh petitions on election disputes received by the Constitutional Court. The KPU was to announce seat allocations on July 31 but postponed it indefinitely after political parties, including NasDem and the Democratic Party, filed petitions challenging vote shares from certified revotes. This delay affects determining if a party can nominate a candidate independently or must ally with others. KPU commissioner Idham Holik apologized for the delay, emphasizing the need to fast-track court hearings, as candidate registration opens in late August. By law, parties must control at least 20% of seats in local legislatures to nominate candidates. The KPU conducted revotes in over a dozen regions following annulments of February's results. The Golkar Party, PAN, and PSI also filed petitions against legislative revotes in five provinces. The Constitutional Court has 30 days to decide on the petitions after their registration, with hearings anticipated before candidate registration begins.

## **II. Indonesia in Geopolitics**

### **China follows 'path of peaceful development', Jakarta forum hears**

—Leonardus Jegho, *ChinaDaily*, 7 August 2024

China continues to pursue an independent and peaceful foreign policy towards ASEAN countries, as emphasized by Fu Fengshan, chargé d'affaires of the Chinese Mission to ASEAN, during a forum in Jakarta on July 6. This approach aligns with the recent third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee, which highlighted comprehensive reforms in various sectors. Fu underscored China's commitment to peaceful development and support for countries seeking modernization based on their national conditions. China and ASEAN are each other's largest trading partners, with a strong foundation of agreements such as the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area and the ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership established in 2021. Wang Boyong, minister counsellor at the Chinese Mission to ASEAN, stated that China will further open its market, especially to least developed countries, enhancing access for ASEAN products. The dialogue also stressed the importance of multilateralism in global governance, as advocated by Chinese leadership. Researchers from The Habibie Center and Universitas Indonesia called for ASEAN to learn from China's economic reforms, innovation, and technological advancements to boost competitiveness.

### **CPC delegation visits Indonesia**

—Xinhua, *ChinaDaily*, 4 August 2024

On July 28, a delegation from the Communist Party of China (CPC), led by Sun Haiyan, deputy head of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, visited Indonesia. The delegation met with Prabowo Subianto, president-elect and general chairman of the Great Indonesia Movement Party. They also engaged with other key Indonesian political leaders, including Megawati Sukarnoputri, chairperson of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle and former president, and Airlangga Hartarto, general chairman of the Party of Functional Groups and coordinating minister for economic affairs. Discussions were held with representatives of Indonesian think tanks and universities as well. The delegation discussed China-Indonesia relations and inter-party cooperation, highlighting the outcomes of the recent third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee. Indonesian leaders expressed their desire to strengthen exchanges and cooperation across various fields with China, aiming for mutual development and modernization.

### **Indonesia president begins working from new capital despite construction delays**

—Richaldo Hariandja and agencies, *TheGuardian*, 30 July 2024

Indonesian President Joko Widodo has started working from the new administrative capital, Nusantara, in East Kalimantan, marking a significant step in his flagship project. Announced in 2019, the \$33 billion project aims to move the capital from Jakarta, but it has faced delays. Jokowi, as he is known, spent his first night at the 90% complete palace, where thousands of workers are still active. Nusantara is set to host its first Indonesia Independence Day celebration on August 17, signaling the official transfer of the capital. However, construction delays have impacted plans to relocate 12,000 civil servants, and most buildings remain unfinished. Jokowi's administration has relied on private investment for the city's development, with the state covering 20% of costs. A recent presidential regulation offers land rights to attract investors. The city currently has a 10-megawatt solar power plant and sufficient water supply from a nearby reservoir. Despite progress, formal relocation awaits an official decree, potentially to be issued by president-elect Prabowo Subianto after his inauguration on October 20. Concerns remain over the project's pace and infrastructure readiness.