



Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

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The **Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest** is a biweekly collection of summaries of articles related to conservation, the environment, and sustainability in Indonesia that have appeared in print or online in local, regional, and global English-language media. We welcome comments, suggestions, and corrections. To learn more about us and to access previous editions of the News Digest, please visit our website at www.starlingresources.com. If you would like to add colleagues or friends to our distribution list or unsubscribe, please contact us at newsdigest@starlingresources.com.

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A. Marine and Fisheries

Brown Mussels Developed to Support Lobster Cultivation

—BM Lukita Grahadyarini, *Kompas*, 17 August 2024

The Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries is accelerating the cultivation of brown shellfish as raw material for lobster feed as this feed availability has been one of the obstacles in developing lobster cultivation in Indonesia. Bayu Priyambodo, an aquaculture analyst from

Lombok, highlighted the importance of diversifying lobster feed, noting that lobsters prefer bivalves, gastropods, and crustaceans. The successful cultivation of brown clams is seen as a potential solution for lobster farmers, who currently rely on inconsistent and low-quality fish feed. Brown clams, which can be cultivated in 50 to 100 hectares of brackish ponds, grow quickly, producing 25-30 kg of clams per cubic meter within 2-3 months. BPBL Lombok has already produced 200 spat collector shells of brown clams, distributing them to regions like Lampung, Batam, and Karangasem. While brown clams are promising as a sustainable feed source, Bayu cautions that they are an invasive species, capable of growing fast, having high tolerance to new environments and dominating habitat, sunlight and nutrients, which requires careful management.

Last State Address, Jokowi Does Not Mention Maritime Axis

—BM Lukita Grahadyarini, *Kompas*, 16 August 2024

In his State Address on August 16, President Joko Widodo did not mention Indonesia's maritime axis vision, sparking concerns among observers and academics. The vision, initially central to Jokowi's administration in 2014, aimed to establish Indonesia as a global maritime hub. However, this focus has faded, with Jokowi instead highlighting achievements in road and infrastructure development over the past decade, including a reduction in logistics costs. Critics, including Professor Rokhmin Dahuri from IPB University, expressed disappointment at the lack of progress in the maritime sector, which now contributes only 7.9% to the national GDP. The maritime budget remains minimal, reflecting the government's shift away from the sector. Despite the maritime vision being integral to Indonesia's future, its implementation has stalled, with inadequate development in ports and sea toll networks. The government aims to increase the maritime sector's GDP contribution to 12.5% by 2045, but current efforts fall short, leaving the vision largely unrealized.

Japan Exempts Import Duty, Indonesia's Processed Tuna Exports Potential to Increase

—BM Lukita Grahadyarini, *Kompas*, 15 August 2024

Indonesia's tuna exports to Japan are expected to increase by 10-13% following the exemption of import duties on four processed tuna products, thanks to the Protocol on the Amendment of the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA) signed on August 8. This exemption covers canned and processed skipjack and tuna, and the ratification process is targeted for completion in 2025. The Indonesian Tuna Association sees this as a significant boost for the industry, potentially benefiting exports significantly once operational procedures and ratifications are finalized. Japan's imports of Indonesian tuna have been steadily increasing, particularly for non-canned products. Indonesia, the world's largest tuna producer, contributes around 15% of the global supply but is not yet the largest exporter. Despite its top position in production, Indonesia ranked sixth in global tuna exports in 2020. The country's tuna production, which reached 1.5 million tons in 2023, contributed USD 927.2 million, or 16.47% of Indonesia's total fishery export value.

Fisheries Sector Growth Tends to Slow Down

—BM Lukita Grahadyarini, *Kompas*, 12 August 2024

The fisheries sector's growth in the first half of 2024 has slowed, even lagging behind early-pandemic levels in 2020. This decline highlights the need for more stable policies to enhance the sector's contribution to the national economy. Despite national GDP growth of 5.05% in Q2 2024, the fisheries sector only grew by 3.05%, down from 9.93% in Q2 2023. Suhana, Vice Rector of Muhammadiyah University of Technology, emphasized the importance of boosting domestic fish consumption, which constitutes 52% of the sector's GDP. Declining

consumer purchasing power and a mere 1% increase in fishery exports further hinder growth. Tony Marta Johan, Chairman of the Indonesian Fish Dried Processing Entrepreneurs Association, noted a 30% drop in production due to reduced fish product purchases. The government's efforts, such as the "Love Eating Fish" program, have had limited success as consumers prioritize other staples. Investment in the sector reached IDR 5.15 trillion, mainly from Hong Kong, China, and Malaysia, but efforts to boost competitiveness, especially among SMEs, are ongoing.

B. Forests and Land Use

Govt of Indonesia Says It Has Managed Forest Fires Well

—Petir Garda Bhwana/Antara, *Tempo*, 20 August 2024

Indonesia's Ministry of Environment and Forestry is actively managing land and forest fires this year through enhanced stakeholder coordination. Secretary General Bambang Hendroyono stated on August 19 that lessons from previous years have informed current strategies to minimize burned areas. The approach now aligns with seasonal shifts, as determined by the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG), which forecasts peak dry conditions in July and August, though some rain is expected in certain regions. The ministry is also factoring in potential weather phenomena like El Niño and La Niña. Cross-sectoral efforts are ongoing, involving various ministries, agencies, and regional governments in preventive actions, fire suppression, and environmental restoration. Hendroyono emphasized the importance of field teams providing continuous updates on hotspots and firespots. Data from the SiPongi monitoring system indicates that 105,539 hectares have burned in 2024, a significant decrease from the 1.16 million hectares burned in 2023.

Indonesia, EU reconcile forest data ahead of new rules on deforestation-free trade

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 8 August 2024

The Indonesian government is working to align its forest and supply chain data with European Union (EU) standards to comply with the new European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). The EUDR, effective by December 2024, bans imports of seven commodities linked to deforestation, including palm oil and timber, unless producers can prove they were not sourced from deforested land post-2020. Discrepancies between Indonesia's forest maps and those used by the EU could complicate compliance, potentially categorizing Indonesia as a high-risk exporter. To address these issues, Indonesia is collaborating with EU authorities and developing an online traceability dashboard to improve transparency in its supply chain. This dashboard, launching in September, will synchronize data on commodities like palm oil and coffee, aiming to ease compliance with the EUDR and other sustainability requirements. However, challenges remain, particularly in achieving full traceability for smallholder farms, which produce a significant portion of Indonesia's palm oil. The initiative is crucial for maintaining access to the European market amidst tightening global sustainability standards.

Indonesia palm oil lobby pushes 1 million hectares of new Sulawesi plantations

—Sarjan Lahay, *Mongabay*, 8 August 2024

A state-owned company and a palm oil industry body have proposed a massive palm oil expansion in Sulawesi, covering around 1 million hectares. The project, named the Sulawesi Palm Oil Belt, aims to boost income for companies and smallholder farmers. However, environmentalists warn it could exacerbate Sulawesi's ecological crisis, which is already strained by extensive mining. Sulawesi has lost over 900,000 hectares of old-growth forest since 2002, threatening its rich biodiversity, including many endemic species. Critics argue that the project could lead to deforestation, undermining Indonesia's climate commitments to reduce emissions. Greenpeace and other NGOs advocate for improving productivity on existing plantations rather than expanding into new areas, highlighting the risks of habitat destruction and land conflicts. The plan also includes developing downstream facilities for palm oil processing, with potential revenue from carbon credits, though this has raised concerns about greenwashing in an industry that contributes significantly to deforestation.

BNPB: Human Activities Primary Causes of Forest Fires in Indonesia

—Dewi Elvia Muthiariny and Petir Garda Bhwana/Antara, *Tempo*, 8 August 2024

The National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB) revealed that human activities are responsible for 99% of forest and land fires (Karhutla) in Indonesia. On August 7, BNPB's Head of Disaster Data, Information, and Communication Center, Abdul Muhari, emphasized the challenge of preventing fires caused by human intent and stressed the need for real-time surveillance and enforcement. He noted that current satellite systems have a 3-6 hour delay in detecting fires, which hampers prevention efforts. In 2023, forest and land fires were the most common disaster in Indonesia, with 2,051 incidents out of 5,400 total disasters. Unlike countries such as the United States, where lightning causes 30% of fires, Indonesia's fires are primarily human-induced. Additionally, weather anomalies further complicate fire management; for instance, Aceh Province can experience both flash floods and forest fires during the peak of the rainy season in February.

C. Biodiversity, Conservation, and Protected Area

Indonesian cabinet reshuffle promotes champions of destructive projects

—Indonesia desk, *Mongabay*, 20 August 2024

President Joko Widodo conducted a cabinet reshuffle on August 19, just two months before his term ends. The reshuffle, Jokowi's fourth in a year, places loyalists of his ally and successor, Prabowo Subianto, in key positions to ensure policy continuity as Prabowo prepares to take office in October. Bahlil Lahadalia, formerly the investment minister, was appointed minister of energy and mines, a role in which he has pledged to boost Indonesia's oil, gas, and natural resource production. Bahlil's past decisions, including controversial projects in Papua and Sumatra, have drawn criticism for their environmental impact and alleged corruption. Rosan Perkasa Roeslani, Prabowo's campaign chief, replaces Bahlil as investment minister and will focus on attracting investors to the new capital city, Nusantara, in East Kalimantan, despite concerns over its environmental consequences. The reshuffle also introduced Supratman Andi Agtas as minister of law and other Gerindra party members to key roles, signaling a strategic alignment ahead of the upcoming administration.

Minister Siti Nurbaya Marks Independence Day with Eagle Release at Mt. Rinjani

—News Team, *JakartaGlobe*, 17 August 2024

To mark Indonesia's 79th Independence Day, Environment and Forestry Minister Siti Nurbaya Bakar released two Brahminy Kites, named Anjani and Jayengrana, into the wild at Mount Rinjani National Park in East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. The Brahminy Kite, known as Elang Bondol in Indonesia, is a culturally significant bird, particularly in Jakarta, where it symbolizes freedom and strength. Minister Siti also engaged with the local community, hiked to an altitude of 1,400 meters, and met with six conservation groups at the Rinjani National Park office, expressing her gratitude for their preservation efforts. While the main Independence Day celebrations were held in Nusantara and Jakarta, President Joko Widodo assigned nine ministers to lead ceremonies in remote regions, with Minister Siti choosing Mount Rinjani. She emphasized that Indonesia's independence should include the freedom to live in a healthy and sustainable environment, and sent warm greetings to national leaders, including President Jokowi and Vice President-elect Prabowo Subianto.

Sumatran tiger confirmed killed by snare in Indonesia's West Sumatra province

—Jaka Hendra Baitri, *Mongabay*, 13 August 2024

A young female Sumatran tiger, one of only 400 left in the wild, was found dead on July 25 in West Sumatra, trapped in a wire snare likely set for wild boar. The tiger, under three years old and without cubs, died from a fractured neck and respiratory failure. Local farmers commonly use snares to protect crops, but these devices pose significant risks to endangered species like the Sumatran tiger. Conservation efforts to capture and relocate the tiger had failed, and this incident highlights the ongoing threat that snares pose to wildlife. The West Sumatra conservation agency reports that four Sumatran tigers have died from snares or illness since 2021. Despite efforts to increase awareness, the illegal trade and habitat encroachment continue to threaten these critically endangered tigers. Conservationists are calling for improved strategies to protect tiger habitats and better regulation of snares. The remains of the tiger were buried near Padang City, where an awareness event was held to mark World Tiger Day. Tiger species endemic to the islands of Java and Bali were declared extinct during the 20th century following decades of hunting and deforestation.

Luskin, M. S., Albert, W. R., & Tobler, M. W. (2017). [Sumatran tiger survival threatened by deforestation despite increasing densities in parks](#). *Nature Communications*, 8(1).

D. Climate Change, Energy, and Mining

Indonesian Islamic behemoth's entry into coal mining sparks youth wing revolt

Asad Asnawi, *Mongabay*, 21 August 2024

Indonesia's second-largest Islamic organization, Muhammadiyah, faces growing backlash after deciding to enter the coal mining industry. Over 1,000 young activists from Trenggalek, a district set to undergo extensive mining, have protested against the move, citing environmental damage, water quality decline, and social conflicts caused by extractive mining. The activists, including members of Muhammadiyah's youth wings, signed a declaration on August 4 urging the organization's leadership to reverse the decision. Trenggalek has seen previous protests against mining, including a 2021 roadblock against a meeting with an Australian mining company. Muhammadiyah's involvement in the industry has sparked internal divisions, with critics arguing that it undermines the organization's charity and advocacy efforts and contradicts its past environmental stances. The controversy comes amid broader concerns about the Indonesian government's decision to allow religious organizations to operate mining concessions, a move seen by some as a political strategy to

secure support for President Joko Widodo's ally in the upcoming election. Critics warn this could weaken Indonesia's democratic integrity and harm local communities.

Indonesian Children Will Bear Burden as They Grow Up Amid Climate Crisis, Ministry Says

—Petir Garda Bhwana/Antara, *Tempo*, 11 August 2024

The Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture highlights that the climate crisis significantly threatens children's rights, stressing the need for urgent action and collaboration. Woro Srihastuti, the ministry's Deputy for Quality Improvement of Children, Women, and Youth, noted that children will bear the long-term impacts of climate change and related issues. A 2021 UNICEF report ranked Indonesia 46th out of 163 countries in the Children's Climate Change Index, indicating high risks for Indonesian children. Indonesia is also prone to climate-triggered disasters like floods, landslides, and fires. In 2023, 99.35% of the 5,400 recorded disasters were hydrometeorological. These events exacerbate health problems, such as respiratory infections and dengue, and lead to challenges in education, poverty, and food insecurity. Srihastuti emphasized the importance of creating safe, inclusive spaces for children to engage in climate action and adaptation. Encouraging active participation from children and youth is essential to addressing these complex issues.

Energy transition, EVs in focus at upcoming Indonesia-Africa forum

Alifia Sekar, *TheJakartaPost*, 11 August 2024

Indonesia is set to advance the just energy transition agenda at the second Indonesia-Africa Forum (IAF) in Bali from Sept. 1-3, 2024. The forum will focus on economic cooperation, particularly in critical minerals like nickel, cobalt, and lithium, essential for clean energy technologies, including electric vehicle (EV) batteries. Deputy Foreign Minister Pahala Mansury emphasized the importance of collaboration with African nations, which hold significant reserves of these minerals, to bolster Indonesia's position in the global EV supply chain. Indonesia, possessing 22% of the world's nickel reserves and 40% of its production, seeks to strengthen ties with Africa, where countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Madagascar dominate cobalt and graphite production. This collaboration is vital amid growing protectionist policies from developed nations, which threaten the progress of developing countries in the green energy sector. In addition to minerals, Indonesia aims to partner with African nations in oil, gas, fertilizers, and health, with expected deals totaling \$3.5 billion, surpassing the \$587 million secured during the first IAF in 2018.

2024 'increasingly likely' to be warmest on record: EU monitor

Chloé Farand (AFP), *TheJakartaPost*, 10 August 2024

Last month the global average temperature was 16.91 degrees Celsius, only 0.04 degrees below July 2023, although "the overall context hasn't changed, our climate continues to warm. The EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) reported that 2024 is "increasingly likely" to be the hottest year on record. Although July ended a 13-month streak of monthly temperature records, it was still the second warmest July since 1940, only slightly cooler. From January to July 2024, global temperatures were 0.70°C above the 1991-2020 average. Despite a slight cooling in July compared to the previous year, the overall trend remains one of warming. July 2024 was 1.48°C warmer than the pre-industrial average (1850-1900), leading to severe heat waves, record-breaking temperatures, and extreme weather events like intense rainfall, wildfires, and hurricanes. July also saw the two hottest days on record, with global temperatures reaching 17.6°C. Ocean temperatures were also the second warmest for July, indicating ongoing heat absorption. Scientists stress that urgent action is

needed to address climate change, highlighting the need for reduced fossil fuel use and increased renewable energy.

E. Pollution and Waste

Finance Ministry cancels plan for plastic products excise

—Divya Karyza, *TheJakartaPost*, 19 August 2024

Indonesia's Finance Ministry has decided to abandon plans for a plastic products tax set for next year but remains committed to implementing an excise tax on sweetened beverages. Febrio Kacaribu, head of the Ministry's Fiscal Policy Agency (BKF), announced that the proposal to cancel the plastics excise would soon be discussed with the House of Representatives. Instead, the focus will shift to addressing the health risks associated with high sugar consumption, as the country grapples with a significant rise in diabetes cases. The International Diabetes Federation reported that Indonesia had around 19.5 million diabetic adults in 2021, making it one of the top five countries with the highest number of diabetes patients globally. Plans for excise taxes on plastics and sweetened beverages have been in the works since 2016, with revenue targets set in recent budgets. However, no regulations specifying the taxed products have been issued yet. The government is preparing to implement the excise in 2025, potentially sooner, depending on conditions. The proposed excise would apply to ready-to-drink beverages and retail-packaged concentrates.

Sumatran province brings hammer down on illegal oil wells after fatal blasts

—Taufik Wijaya, *Mongabay*, 15 August 2024

A law enforcement crackdown in South Sumatra has led to the closure of at least 95 illegal oil wells following a series of fatal incidents. The province was the site of some of the archipelago's largest oil discoveries by U.S. and Dutch companies during the early 20th century. After many wells were abandoned in the 1990s, thousands of farmers who previously tapped rubber moved into freelance oil extraction. A fire on June 27, caused by deliberate damage to an oil pipe in Sungai Lilin, resulted in an explosion that killed four people. Less than a month later, another fire claimed a life. Authorities have arrested two individuals in connection with these incidents. The illegal oil industry, involving an estimated 10,000 wells in the Musi Banyuasin district, has been linked to environmental damage, fatalities, and significant financial losses for the government. Despite the risks, the illegal oil economy supports a substantial portion of the local population. South Sumatra's police and government are intensifying efforts to curb these activities, with the acting governor issuing a decree to crack down on the sector.

F. Investment and Finance

Financing a Key Factor in Renewable Energy Development

—Aditya Putra Perdana, Nikson Sinaga and Erika Kurnia, *Kompas*, 22 August 2024

Financing is crucial for advancing renewable energy projects like the Batang Toru Hydroelectric Power Plant in South Tapanuli, North Sumatra, which has faced funding challenges. This 510-megawatt plant, with a \$1.67 billion investment, aims to operate by December 31, 2026. It's part of Indonesia's 35,000 MW power plant initiative and is managed

by PT North Sumatera Hydro Energy (NSHE). The project has encountered delays due to financial issues and biodiversity concerns. Initially halted by funding shortages exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, it resumed in October 2020 with support from a syndicate of seven banks. One open access to financing is through partnerships, which offers operational flexibility, but requires large investments. The plant, which involves significant hydrological and ecological impacts, is now 62% complete. Environmentalists have raised concerns about its impact on the Tapanuli orangutan habitat and local ecology, prompting NSHE to implement conservation measures, such as arboreal bridges for wildlife. Despite these efforts, the project's location in an earthquake-prone area also raises safety concerns.

Indonesia Submits 34 Energy Transition Projects to Secure Funding from Japan

—Petir Garda Bhwana/Antara, *Tempo*, 22 August 2024

Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto announced that Indonesia has submitted 34 energy transition projects to the ASEAN Zero Emission Community (AZEC) to seek funding from Japan on August 21. AZEC is part of an emission reduction initiative introduced during COP26 in Glasgow. It was officially launched at the G20 Summit in 2022 by President Joko Widodo and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to support regional efforts towards zero emissions. This submission is the largest among member countries, which include Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Brunei, and Australia. The projects range from those ready for implementation, such as the Muara Laboh geothermal project and the Legok Nangka Waste Power Plant, to potential projects still in the feasibility study phase, like peatland management and the Java-Sumatra transmission network. Last year, Indonesia submitted 120 projects to AZEC, according to the ministry's director general of new, renewable energy and energy conservation, Eniya Listiani Dewi. The current focus includes several memorandums of understanding and initiatives that require further review.

Indonesia searches for ways to balance domestic industries with surging Chinese imports

Edna Tarigan and Jintamas Saksornchai, *AP News*, 21 August 2024

A surge in Chinese imports has severely impacted Indonesian manufacturers, prompting the government to consider protective measures. On July 21, 2024, Trade Minister Zulkifli Hasan announced plans to impose import tariffs of up to 200% on Chinese textiles, clothing, footwear, electronics, ceramics, and cosmetics to shield local businesses and prevent layoffs. This decision follows protests from garment makers struggling with market share losses due to low-cost Chinese goods, exacerbated by online purchases. China is Indonesia's largest trading partner, with trade exceeding \$127 billion in 2023. While higher tariffs might protect local industries, they could provoke retaliation from China, potentially affecting investments in Indonesia. From January to July 2024, 12 textile factories closed, leading to over 12,000 job losses, and output from home-based industries fell by 70%. Indonesia had previously tightened monitoring of imports but reversed this after complaints from local industries about disruptions in raw material supplies. Big factories, like PT Eksonindo Multi Product Industry, support higher tariffs on finished goods but not on raw materials, essential for their production.

G. Human Rights, Indigenous People and Gender Equality

Indonesia expands IPLC land recognition — but the pace is too slow, critics say

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 21 August 2024

President Joko Widodo has awarded Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) over 1 million hectares of land titles through his social forestry program, bringing the total recognized to 8 million hectares nationwide. However, activists argue that the pace of recognition is too slow compared to the 30.1 million hectares of Indigenous lands mapped by the Ancestral Domain Registration Agency (BRWA). The most delayed recognition is for customary forests, where only 265,250 hectares have been officially recognized, despite 23.2 million hectares being identified as potential customary forests. The Indigenous Peoples' Alliance (AMAN) and other advocates are pushing for the long-stalled Indigenous rights bill, which would provide a legal framework to accelerate land recognition. The forestry ministry aims to recognize 3.3 million hectares of customary forests by 2027 and has simplified the process for communities to gain recognition. Recently, six Indigenous communities in North Tapanuli received formal recognition for 15,879 hectares of ancestral forests, marking progress in the government's efforts to protect Indigenous lands.

At-risk groups in Indonesia demand greater say in climate policymaking

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 15 August 2024

Civil society groups in Indonesia are urging the government to include them in climate policy decision-making, particularly in the revision of the country's nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. These groups, representing the urban poor, disabled, and other vulnerable communities, criticize the lack of meaningful involvement in drafting climate goals. Indonesia's government has submitted its NDCs twice since 2015, with the latest revision targeting a 31.89% emissions reduction by 2030, or 53.2% with international support. Activists argue that previous NDCs failed to adequately consider at-risk groups like women, children, disabled individuals, and traditional fishers, leaving them more vulnerable to climate impacts. They call for a more inclusive process in the upcoming NDC, which is due by the end of 2024. Despite promises of improvements, including higher emissions reduction targets and the inclusion of hydrofluorocarbons and the marine sector, activists emphasize the need for participatory and fair climate actions to prevent exacerbating social inequalities.

Indonesia committed to implementing CEDAW

—Agatha Kenzu, *Antara*, 13 August 2024

Indonesia is committed to implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In a workshop marking the 40th anniversary of CEDAW, Law and Human Rights Ministry Director General Dhahana Putra highlighted the 60 recommendations received during the 2021 dialogue with the CEDAW Committee. These include promoting gender equality and addressing gender-based violence. As part of its commitment, Indonesia has integrated women's rights into the 2020-2024 National Action Plan for Human Rights and ratified the Law on the Crimes of Sexual Violence (TPKS) in May 2022. The government is also drafting seven derivative regulations from the TPKS Law, focusing on victim support and sexual violence prevention. Putra acknowledged the existence of discriminatory policies against women and discussed these issues with the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Ministry and Women National Commission. The ministry also introduced Regulation Number 16 of 2024 to ensure human rights are considered in the

creation of laws, aiming to reduce discriminatory legal products. The workshop was organized by the PPPA Ministry and UN Women.

I. RI General Elections

House subverts Constitutional Court on regional election rules

—Radhiyya Indra, *TheJakartaPost*, 22 August 2024

Lawmakers have rushed to revise Indonesia's Regional Elections Law, aiming to override two recent Constitutional Court rulings on candidate nomination requirements, just a week before the candidate registration period starts on August 27. The House of Representatives Legislation Body (Baleg) conducted three meetings on August 21. They also met with Home Minister Tito Karnavian and Law and Human Rights Minister Supratman Andi Agtas to discuss changes to the law, including the nomination threshold and age restrictions for regional head candidates. The Constitutional Court recently lowered the nomination threshold from 25% to between 6.5% and 10%, which could influence the dominance of the Gerindra-led Onward Indonesia Coalition (KIM). The Court also set the minimum age for gubernatorial candidates at 30, which may disqualify potential candidates like Kaesang Pangarep, son of outgoing President Joko Widodo. In response, Baleg proposed adjusting the threshold and age requirements, but the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) opposed these changes. It also drew criticism from experts and activists who argue that bypassing the court's rulings undermines the rule of law. Protests are planned against the bill, highlighting widespread discontent with the perceived undermining of judicial authority.

When the Authorities No Longer Listen, the Civil Disobedience Movement Flares Up

—Mahdi Muhammad, *Kompas*, 22 August 2024

Civil disobedience, a mass movement aimed at bringing about change by civilians through non-parliamentary means, has a long history, with roots traced back to the 1840s when Henry David Thoreau advocated tax refusal. This concept gained prominence in the 1960s through figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Muhammad Ali. It typically involves non-violent resistance to unjust laws or systems. This movement occurs when the legal and state systems are deemed no longer functional. There have been quite a number of civil disobedience movements over the last century, including the civil disobedience movement carried out by the world figure from India, Mahatma Gandhi, through the salt-march and salt-satyagraha movements. Some of the civil disobedience movements around the world include: Myanmar (2021), Iran (2022), Hong Kong (2019-2020), and Arab Spring (2011), which sparked by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia, this wave of protests spread across the Arab world, leading to the fall of several regimes, including those in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya.

Indonesia president says he respects institutions amid power struggle over court ruling

—Reuters Team, *TheStraitsTimes*, 21 August 2024

Indonesia's President Joko Widodo addressed a political tension on August 21, where his allies in Parliament sought to reverse a Constitutional Court decision that altered qualification

criteria for regional elections. The court ruling, made on August 20, lowered the minimum percentage of parliamentary seats required for a candidate's nomination, potentially allowing former Jakarta governor Anies Baswedan to run in the upcoming election, despite efforts to block his candidacy. This decision sparked a power struggle between Parliament, which backs President-elect Prabowo Subianto, and the judiciary. Widodo, who has supported Prabowo, stated he respects the judiciary's decisions, emphasizing the constitutional process. The court also upheld a minimum age requirement for candidates, barring Widodo's 29-year-old son, Kaesang Pangarep, from contesting a regional election. The developments are seen as part of a broader strategy by Prabowo and his allies to consolidate power, with some analysts suggesting it aims to limit Anies' future political opportunities.

II. Indonesia in Geopolitics

Australia and Indonesia to deepen military ties after striking 'historic' security pact

—Daniel Hurst, *TheGuardian*, 20 August 2024

Australia and Indonesia formalized a significant new defense pact during a visit by Indonesian Defence Minister and President-elect Prabowo Subianto to Canberra on August 20. The agreement, which includes joint drills and deployments, marks a deepening of cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. Prabowo, who will assume office on October 20, described the pact as a "very good outcome" and emphasized its future benefits for both nations. Prabowo, who has shown greater interest in foreign affairs than his predecessor Joko Widodo, also expressed hopes for increased Australian involvement in Indonesia's economy, agriculture, and efforts against drug trafficking. Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles hailed the agreement as one of the most significant between the two countries, with maritime cooperation likely a key focus. The pact is part of Australia's broader strategy to bolster ties with Southeast Asian and Pacific neighbors amid growing regional competition with China. However, Human Rights Watch has called for safeguards, urging Australia to address human rights concerns related to Indonesia, particularly in West Papua, where reports of abuses persist.

Independence Day celebrated in Indonesia

—Lenonardus Jegho and Prime Sarmiento, *ChinaDaily*, 19 August 2024

President Joko Widodo celebrated the country's 79th Independence Day in Nusantara, the planned new capital located in East Kalimantan Province. This symbolic event highlights Indonesia's goal of balanced regional development and a greener future. Nusantara, set to replace Jakarta by 2045, aims to address Jakarta's severe environmental issues, such as flooding and subsidence. The new capital, carved from rainforest and situated 1,260 kilometers north of Jakarta, features a State Palace and is envisioned as a smart city with advanced public transport and green energy. However, challenges persist, including construction delays and funding gaps, with the capital's estimated cost exceeding \$30 billion. As of August 12, \$3.58 billion has been invested. Experts acknowledge the project's potential but caution about obstacles in attracting foreign investment and resolving land management issues. Despite these hurdles, the government's commitment to creating a high-quality, sustainable city is seen as a step towards equitable development across Indonesia.

Indonesia's leader highlights economic and infrastructure developments in his final state of nation

—Edna Tarigan (AP), *ABCNews*, 16 August 2024

In his final State of the Nation address, outgoing President Joko Widodo highlighted his administration's economic and infrastructure achievements over the past decade. Widodo noted successes in controlling inflation, reducing unemployment and poverty, and building infrastructure in remote areas. He also emphasized Indonesia's resilience in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic and addressing climate change. Widodo's tenure saw Indonesia become a key player in regional dynamics, particularly regarding economic and political tensions in Southeast Asia. He also emphasized the importance of Indonesia's green energy transition, given the country's significant environmental challenges. The president pointed to developments in the processing industries for key commodities like nickel, which have created jobs and boosted state revenues. However, he acknowledged that 10 years was insufficient to achieve all the government's goals. As Widodo prepares to leave office in October, he urged his successor, President-elect Prabowo Subianto, to continue leading Indonesia toward its "2045 Golden Indonesia" vision, aiming for a sovereign and prosperous nation by its centennial of independence.