



## Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

2024 Issue 18 — 5 September

*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

#### Measurable Fishing Will Be Hard to Implement by 2025

—BM Lukita Grahadyarini, Kompas, 4 September 2024

The implementation of quota-measured fishing (PIT) policy, set to begin in 2025, faces significant challenges. Key obstacles include difficulties in monitoring and enforcement, particularly with illegal transshipment of fish at sea. The government has secured loans—\$105,000 from Agence Francaise de Developpment (AFD) and €100,000 from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)—to build fishing ports essential for PIT. Assistant Minister

Mohammad Abdi Suhufan notes that PIT rules, including those on transshipment, port locations, and catch quotas, need finalization. Despite efforts, transshipment remains prevalent and unregulated in fishing zones, complicating data accuracy and monitoring. Regional leaders express concerns about inadequate infrastructure, high fuel costs, and the lack of agreements on fish prices affecting PIT effectiveness. Minister Sakti Wahyu Trenggono acknowledges that monitoring private fishing ports remains challenging and emphasizes that building and operating new ports is crucial for PIT's success. Construction of fishing ports with loan funds from AFD includes Bitung (North Sulawesi), Kendari (Southeast Sulawesi), Cilacap (Central Java), and Belawan (North Sumatra). Meanwhile, loans from IsDB for fishing ports in Jembrana, Bali and Cirebon, West Java.

### **Govt to defend local shrimp exporters against US anti-dumping measures**

—Aditya Hadi, *TheJakartaPost*, 3 September 2024

The Indonesian government is preparing to defend its shrimp producers against dumping accusations made by the United States. The Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries has developed arguments to counter the claims, hoping to either have the accusations dropped or to reduce the imposed dumping duties. The US Department of Commerce (USDOC) found no significant evidence of subsidies by the Indonesian government but identified a 6.3% dumping margin for one exporter, leading to the application of the highest duty on all Indonesian shrimp exporters. Indonesia's government has objected to the USDOC's methodology and is preparing for a hearing with the US International Trade Commission. The outcome could significantly impact Indonesia's shrimp industry, which exported \$1.1 billion worth of shrimp to the US last year, potentially affecting over 46,000 shrimp farmers and others in the supply chain.

### **Wildlife-rich mangroves suffer as Indonesia ramps up construction of new capital**

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 3 September 2024

The construction of Indonesia's new capital, Nusantara, has led to significant environmental concerns, particularly the destruction of mangrove forests in Balikpapan Bay, home to endangered species like proboscis monkeys and Irrawaddy dolphins. But the new capital city's footprint overlaps with 41% of their habitat. Primate researcher Tri Atmoko observed that since 2022, large areas of mangroves have been cleared to build ports for transporting construction materials. This development, driven by the rush to complete the capital by 2024, threatens biodiversity, disrupts local ecosystems, and increases conflicts between wildlife and communities. Despite a recently launched biodiversity management plan, experts argue it came too late, with much of the damage already done. Calls for stronger biodiversity planning and legal protections are growing as the project continues to encroach on critical habitats. The government agency overseeing the project insists it's doing what it can to mitigate the impacts on wildlife and ecosystems through planning, as well as cracking down on contractors destroying the mangroves.

### **\$35m debt-for-nature deal aims to protect Indonesia's coral reefs**

—M Ambari, *Mongabay*, 30 Agustus 2024

A new \$35 million debt-for-nature agreement between Indonesia and the U.S. aims to conserve coral reefs in eastern Indonesia over the next nine years, with funds offset by canceled sovereign debt payable to the U.S.. The deal, announced by the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR), marks a milestone in conservation, focusing on areas within Indonesia's

Coral Triangle. Yayasan Konservasi Alam Nusantara (YKAN) and Yayasan Konservasi Cakrawala Indonesia (YKCI), along with their respective international affiliates, The Nature Conservancy and Conservation International, will implement ground programs to protect reefs in key areas, strengthen marine protected areas and support community livelihoods. While the debt swap agreement has been welcomed as a boost for reef protection, environmentalists warn that success hinges on better monitoring and outcome assessment, given past failures in coral restoration efforts. Critics also highlight broader challenges in the Global South, including climate change and contradictory local laws, which could undermine the initiative's impact.

Razak, T. B., Boström-Einarsson, L., Alisa, C. A., Vida, R. T., & Lamont, T. A. (2022). [Coral reef restoration in Indonesia: A review of policies and projects](#). *Science Direct, Marine Policy*, 137, 104940.

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## B. Forests and Land Use

### World's top timber companies are dropping the ball on ESG reporting: Analysis

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 30 August 2024

A recent analysis of eight years of data by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) reveals a significant decline in transparency and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) reporting among the world's 100 leading tropical timber and pulp companies. Since 2014, ZSL's Sustainability Policy Transparency Toolkit (SPOTT) has assessed these companies, but average scores have dropped from 37.1% in 2017 to 24.1% in 2024. Despite commitments to sustainable production, progress in areas like deforestation monitoring, supply chain transparency, and social responsibility remains low. This decline indicates systemic issues in the industry, which could undermine efforts to achieve sustainable forestry and responsible sourcing. More than half of the 100 assessed companies have commitments to zero deforestation, up from a third in 2017; however, evidence of actual implementation remains sparse, with minimal progress in monitoring deforestation. The lack of accountability poses challenges for achieving global deforestation targets, underscoring the need for greater pressure from buyers and regulators to enforce ESG commitments.

### A one-time illegal logger grows back a forest for his people in Sumatra

—Barita News Lumbanbatu, *Mongabay*, 30 August 2024

Efron Simanjuntak, once a key player in illegal logging in Sumatra, has transformed into a devoted forest protector. Initially drawn to logging for financial reasons, Efron realized the environmental damage it caused, especially to the trees that are crucial to his village's livelihood. After serving prison time for illegal logging, he committed to reforestation, planting over 1,000 trees, including resin-producing species like frankincense and pine. Efron now leads efforts to conserve the forest, fearing its conversion into plantations by companies like Toba Pulp Lestari. Along with civil society organizations, Efron fought for the recognition of his village's customary forest by the government, which was finally achieved in August 2024, giving his community a stronger legal status for protection from outside threats. Efron and his family rely on sustainable farming and resin tapping for income, and with support from Indigenous groups, they also explore medicinal plant cultivation. Despite challenges, Efron

remains determined to preserve his ancestral land for future generations, balancing environmental conservation with economic needs.

### **Indonesia's new 'green' capital drives environmental damage far and wide**

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 27 August 2024

For the first time since its 1945 independence, Indonesia held its national day celebrations outside Jakarta, with events on Aug. 17 in both Jakarta and Nusantara, the new capital in Borneo. President Joko Widodo, known as Jokowi, highlighted Nusantara's new Garuda Palace, designed to symbolize unity and touted as an environmentally friendly "green building." However, architect Tiyok Prasetyoadi and environmental groups question this claim, citing the excessive use of materials like copper and brass, which have significant environmental impacts. Concerns extend to the broader development of Nusantara, with much of the construction material sourced from Sulawesi, leading to increased quarrying that has caused environmental degradation, including flooding and dust pollution. While officials argue that quarrying is conducted responsibly, environmental groups warn that Sulawesi is bearing the burden of Nusantara's development, casting doubt on the "green city" claims. Critics argue that independent assessments are needed to verify the environmental sustainability of the new capital.

### **In Bali, water temple priests guide a sustainable rice production system**

—Elizabeth Sinclair, *Mongabay*, 26 August 2024

In Bali, the ancient subak system, a UNESCO-recognized rice farming method, is deeply intertwined with the island's culture and religion, specifically Agama Tirtha, or the "Religion of Water." This system, originating in the 9th century, uses a network of water temples and intricate irrigation channels to manage water resources, ensuring equitable distribution among farmers. Subak's success lies in its balance of agricultural needs with religious practices, embodying the philosophy of Tri Hita Karana, which harmonizes the spiritual, human, and natural worlds. However, modern challenges, including tourism-driven land conversion and reliance on agrochemicals, threaten this traditional system. Efforts to revitalize subak include organic farming and innovative low-water, low-fertilizer methods that reduce methane emissions while increasing yields. Despite these efforts, the future of subak is uncertain as young Balinese shift away from farming towards tourism. The loss of agricultural land and declining farmer incomes are pressing issues, but ongoing projects aim to preserve this vital cultural and ecological heritage.

Lansing, J. S., Kremer, J. N., Suryawan, I. B., Sathiakumar, S., Jacobs, G. S., Chung, N. N., & Artha Wiguna, I. W. (2023). [Adaptive irrigation management by Balinese farmers reduces greenhouse gas emissions and increases rice yields](#). *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 378(1889).

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## **C. Biodiversity, Conservation, and Protected Area**

### **Protected areas in SE Asia could do better with more resources, study finds**

—Spoorthy Raman, *Mongabay*, 3 September 2024

Over the past two decades, nations have been expanding protected areas to meet the "30 by 30" target, aiming to safeguard 30% of Earth's land and seas by 2030. However, a recent

study reveals that more than half of 80 protected areas in Southeast Asia, established between 2007 and 2014, failed to prevent deforestation, losing 72,497 hectares of forests. Only 36 well-managed protected areas prevented 78,910 hectares of deforestation between 2000 and 2020, benefiting endangered species and reducing emissions, while the 44 ineffectively managed protected areas lost nearly the same area of forest cover. Researchers and conservationists say lack of funds and understaffing are leading factors contributing to the problem, with ineffectively managed protected areas needing an estimated \$17 million to prevent deforestation and provide conservation and climate benefits. The study highlights the need for better funding and management to improve the effectiveness of protected areas. Carbon markets and blended financing are suggested as potential solutions, but the study emphasizes the importance of sustained political will and funding for long-term conservation success.

Sreekar, R., Koh, L. P., Lamba, A., Mammides, C., Teo, H. C., Dwiputra, A., & Zeng, Y. (2024). [Conservation opportunities through improved management of recently established protected areas in Southeast Asia](#). *Science Direct. Current Biology*, 34(16), 3830-3835.e3.

### **Wildlife trade now 'serious offence' under Singapore organised crime law**

—AFP Team, *TheJakartaPost*, 31 August 2024

Singapore has classified wildlife trafficking as a "serious offense" under its Organised Crime Act, effective August 30. Offenders linked to organized crime could face up to 20 years in prison. Southeast Asia is "at the epicentre" of much of the multibillion-dollar illicit industry, with Singapore seen as a convenient transshipment route for traffickers because it is a regional commercial hub, environmental group WWF-Singapore said. The move targets offenses including the import and export of endangered species and their transit without a permit issued under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). It also allows authorities to seize profits from traffickers with organized crime group ties. In recent years, Singapore authorities made their biggest seizure of rhino horn, confiscating a US\$830,000 haul from a smuggler arriving from South Africa and intending to travel on to Laos. Singapore also made its largest seizure of smuggled ivory, impounding nearly nine tonnes of contraband tusks from an estimated 300 elephants. The illegal cargo from the Democratic Republic of Congo was bound for Vietnam.

### **Pursuing harmony between humans and orangutans in Kalimantan**

—Sheena Suparman, *AntaraNews*, 23 August 2024

Bornean orangutans, native to Kalimantan Island and sharing 97% of their DNA with humans, have been endangered since 1994 due to hunting, habitat destruction, and human-wildlife conflict. Indonesia's Law No. 9 of 1990 protects these apes, but their numbers continue to decline. The Central Kalimantan Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) attributes this to illegal hunting, habitat loss, and fires. As orangutans invade plantation zones seeking food, conflicts with humans often result in their deaths. A 2016 study estimated about 71,820 orangutans in Indonesia and Malaysia, with 57,350 Bornean orangutans. Efforts to mitigate conflicts include supporting sustainable practices in palm oil and lumber industries and working with NGOs on rehabilitation and release programs. Tahawa Village in Central Kalimantan, now a wildlife-friendly zone, exemplifies community engagement in conservation. The BKSDA aims to establish more such villages, balancing human and wildlife interests while promoting biodiversity and local participation in wildlife tourism.

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## D. Climate Change, Energy, and Mining

### Civil Coalition Pushes Indonesian Govt to Rectify Climate Change Commitment Ahead of SNDC Submission

—Najla Nur Fauziyah, *Tempo*, 30 August 2024

Bornean orangutans, native to Kalimantan Island, are critically endangered due to hunting, illegal trading, and habitat destruction. Despite legal protections, their population has declined, forcing them into human areas, leading to conflicts often resulting in their deaths. A 2016 study estimated 57,350 Bornean orangutans remain in Indonesia and Malaysia. The Central Kalimantan Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) is actively working to conserve orangutan habitats and prevent conflicts by ensuring companies follow sustainability standards and by partnering with NGOs for rescue and rehabilitation. The agency is also promoting "wildlife-friendly villages," like Tahawa, to harmonize human and wildlife coexistence, aiming to expand these initiatives across Kalimantan.

### Seas Warming and Rising Faster, SOS from Pacific Islands

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 30 August 2024

In 2023, sea levels reached a record high due to accelerated air and ocean warming, posing severe risks to Pacific-island nations and coastal cities in Indonesia. UN Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted the urgency of addressing this issue, citing greenhouse gas emissions as the primary cause. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) reported that global temperatures in 2023 were 1.45°C above pre-industrial levels, with ocean warming and ice loss contributing to an average sea level rise of 4.77 mm per year from 2014 to 2023. Pacific islands, with their low elevations and dense coastal populations, face three impacts of the climate crisis, namely the accelerated rise of sea levels, global warming, and acidification of the ocean. They have posed a threat to small islands, especially archipelagic countries in the Pacific. They are facing increasing threats to their social-economic sustainability and even their existence. The WMO report details how sea level rise in the Pacific region, including the Indonesian Islands, is above the global average. It underscores the need for urgent action to mitigate climate impacts and protect vulnerable coastal areas.

### Government releases Climate Change Education Guidebook

—Hana Kenzu, *AntaraNews*, 28 August 2024

The Educational Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency (BSKAP) has launched the Climate Change Education Guidebook as part of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum to enhance students' awareness and resilience in addressing climate change. The Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Nadiem Anwar Makarim emphasized the importance of fostering an environmentally friendly lifestyle and preparing the next generation for the green economy. The guidebook, introduced as an optional theme in character-building subjects (P5), aims to instill climate change understanding from an early age, enabling children to take active roles in combating the crisis. BSKAP Head Anindito Aditomo underscored the importance of early understanding and awareness of climate change, which is triggered by human activities. Developed through collaboration with various stakeholders since June 2023, the guidebook follows the "FRIENDLY" principles—Relevant, Effective, Based on Science, Real Actions, and Holistic.

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## E. Pollution and Waste

### World pumps out 57 million tons of plastic pollution yearly and most comes in Global South

—Jennifer McDermott and Seth Borenstein, *Associated Press*, 4 September 2024

A new study reveals that the world generates 57 million tons of plastic pollution annually, impacting environments from oceans to mountaintops and infiltrating human bodies. The research highlights that over two-thirds of this pollution originates from the Global South. Major contributors include India, which produces 10.2 million tons annually, followed by Nigeria, Indonesia, and China. The study, published in *Nature*, focused on plastic waste improperly burned or dumped, emphasizing the risks of microplastics to human health. The United States and the United Kingdom rank 90th and 135th in plastic pollution, respectively. While most nations agreed to a legally binding plastic pollution treaty in 2022, the study's narrow focus on pollution, rather than production, has drawn criticism for potentially overlooking broader issues like greenhouse gas emissions and global plastic waste trade. The final treaty negotiations are set for November in South Korea.

### The world is burning an alarming amount of plastic, scientists say

Simon Ducroquet, Shannon Osaka and Rebecca Tan, *TheWashingtonPost*, 4 September 2024

A new study published in *Nature* reveals that 12% of global plastic waste is burned openly, posing severe health risks and highlighting failures in waste management. Annually, cities produce about 250 million tons of plastic waste, with a significant portion unmanaged. Of this, 21% is not properly disposed of, and 57% of that unmanaged waste is burned, releasing toxic chemicals and contributing to respiratory and neurological issues. Countries in the Global South, like India and Indonesia, are major contributors, with India burning approximately 5.8 million tons of plastic in 2020. The study, based on data from over 500 municipalities, emphasizes the urgent need for improved waste management to address this issue. Open burning of plastic is linked to serious health problems, including cancer and birth defects. The study aims to inform international negotiations on plastic waste management and highlight the need for effective disposal solutions before plastic waste becomes an environmental hazard.

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## F. Investment and Finance

### Agreement reached on Indonesia 2025 budget assumptions, set for parliament vote

—Reuters Team, *TheStraitsTimes*, 4 September 2024

An Indonesian parliamentary committee and the government have agreed on key economic assumptions for the 2025 budget under the incoming administration of Prabowo Subianto. Most of the budget proposals from outgoing President Joko Widodo were approved, with notable adjustments. The rupiah exchange rate assumption was strengthened to 16,000 per dollar from 16,100, and the oil-lifting target was increased to 605,000 barrels per day from 600,000. The 10-year bond yield target was reduced to 7% from 7.1%. GDP growth is

projected at 5.2% and inflation at 2.5%, with an average Indonesian crude price forecast of \$82 per barrel and natural gas lifting at 1.005 million BOEPD. Revenue is set at 3,005.13 trillion rupiah (\$194 billion), with spending at 3,621.31 trillion rupiah, maintaining a budget deficit forecast of 2.53% of GDP, an improvement from 2024's 2.7%. A full parliamentary vote is expected later this month or in October.

### **Indonesia-EU CEPA negotiations 90% complete: minister**

—Aji C and Tegar Nurfitri, *AntaraNews*, 4 September 2024

Negotiations on the Indonesia-European Union Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IEU-CEPA) are nearly 90% complete, with finalization expected this month, according to Trade Minister Zulkifli Hasan. The minister emphasized the urgency of concluding the talks before the new government, led by President-elect Prabowo Subianto, takes office in October. The IEU-CEPA, which has been under negotiation for nine years, aims to strengthen Indonesia's trade surplus by addressing barriers through diplomatic agreements. The European Union, with its huge market, has been a crucial trading partner of Indonesia and vice versa. Therefore, the two parties have stated their commitment to finishing the negotiations soon. Once implemented, the agreement is expected to exempt Indonesian products from import duties in European markets. It will also help bridge differing views on the EU Deforestation Regulation and Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism.

### **Indonesia-Africa Forum concludes with 32 business deals**

—Aditya Hadi, *TheJakartaPost*, 4 September 2024

The Indonesia-Africa Forum (IAF) 2024 concluded with the signing of 32 business partnerships across various sectors, including health, renewable energy, and strategic industries. Key deals include a \$1.5 billion agreement in the energy sector, where Pertamina acquired a 60% stake in Tanzania's Mnazi Bay gas block and signed a contract with Namibia's Petrofund. PLN also secured deals to develop 225 MW of geothermal power in Tanzania. The food sector saw \$1.2 billion in deals, with PT Essa Industries planning an ammonia factory in Tanzania, and PT Saputra Global Harvest selling coal fertilizer machines to Nigeria. Strategic industries, such as defense and aerospace, contributed \$173.5 million in deals, including PT Pindad's agreement to supply weapons to South Africa and PT Dirgantara Indonesia's aircraft deliveries to Congo and Senegal. The health sector added \$94.1 million in agreements, including Biofarma's deals with several African countries for vaccines, technology transfers, and training programs.

### **Indonesia and Malaysia to Defend Palm Oil Industry Against EUDR in Brussels Talks**

—Wahyu Setyowati, *JakartaGlobe*, 29 Agustus 2024

Indonesia is ramping up efforts to address the European Union's Deforestation-Free Regulation (EUDR), which aims to block products linked to deforestation from entering the EU market. Indonesia and Malaysia, major palm oil producers, will send a delegation to Brussels in September 2024 to negotiate with the EU, expressing concerns that the regulation unfairly targets their products. Eddy Martono, Chairman of the Indonesian Palm Oil Association, emphasized that the government supports this push and highlighted that small-scale farmers could be disproportionately affected, unlike large companies already facing moratoriums. The EUDR, set to take effect by the end of December 2024, could impact not only palm oil but also other Indonesian forestry commodities such as cocoa, coffee, rubber, and wood products. The upcoming Joint Task Force meeting on September 12, will be the third such discussion involving Indonesia, Malaysia, and the EU.



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## G. Human Rights and Gender Equality

### Roadblocks to gender equality remain in Indonesian schools

—Georgina Giannopoulos, *AsiaForum*, 4 September 2024

Despite Indonesia's legal reforms aimed at gender equality in education, significant challenges persist, particularly in conservative regions. The country has made strides with laws ensuring educational access and gender quotas in politics, and Indonesian girls generally outperform boys in literacy and academics. However, the UN's 2021 report highlights ongoing issues, with declining gender parity in primary education and stark regional disparities. Cultural and social norms, including child marriage and traditional views on women's roles, hinder progress. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues, particularly in poorer regions. Educational barriers for girls include sexual violence and gender stereotyping in curricula. Efforts to improve gender parity face obstacles from regional autonomy laws that conflict with national objectives. Addressing deep-rooted gender biases and enforcing consistent regional laws are crucial for advancing educational equality.

### Indonesia's Farwiza Farhan among Ramon Magsaysay awardees for protecting Leuser Ecosystem

—Lusia Arumintyas and Sapariah Satari, *Mongabay*, 3 September 2024

Indonesian conservationist Farwiza Farhan has been awarded the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award for her leadership in environmental conservation, particularly for her work in protecting the Leuser Ecosystem in Sumatra. As the founder of the Forest, Nature, and Environment of Aceh Foundation (HAKA), Farwiza has focused on conserving this critical habitat, home to endangered species like Sumatran tigers and rhinos. HAKA's efforts have led to significant victories, including halting a dam project and securing a \$26 million fine against a palm oil company for forest destruction. Farwiza remains committed to empowering women in conservation and aims to build a conservation school in Leuser. The Magsaysay Foundation recognized Farwiza for her dedication to social justice, responsible citizenship, and raising awareness about the urgent need to protect natural resources. The award also highlights Farwiza's efforts to overcome gender-based discrimination and involve women in conservation activities in the most staunchly conservative province in Indonesia.

### How a 16-year-old turned rattan seeds into a massive conservation project

—Sheena Suparman, *TheJakartaPost*, 23 August 2024

Kiranamulya “Kirana” Budi Arthanti, a 16-year-old student from Global Jaya School, has initiated a significant environmental project focused on rattan planting in South Kalimantan's Meratus Mountains. The project, which began as a school assignment, gained traction after she held an exhibition of rattan furniture, raising Rp 5 million to purchase 1,400 rattan seedlings. Encouraged by her teacher, Kirana entered and won the International Baccalaureate's Global Youth Action Fund competition, receiving \$3,000. She used the funds to buy an additional 6,000 seedlings and hire professionals to support the project. The initiative, supported by local environmentalists and the HST government, aims to promote conservation and sustainable income for the Meratus community. Kirana hopes her project will inspire others to protect Indonesia's natural resources.

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## I. RI General Elections

### **Perludem: Provisions Make it Difficult for New Candidates to Emerge in Regions with Single Candidates**

—Denty Piawai Nastitie and Dian Dewi Purnamasari, *Kompas*, 4 September 2024

As of September 4, 2024, no new candidates have registered for regional head elections in 43 areas with single candidates, despite an extended registration period. The Association for Elections and Democracy (Perludem) attributes this to strict KPU regulations, particularly KPU Regulation No. 1229 of 2024, which requires approval from the candidate's previous coalition to change support. This rule complicates the emergence of challengers and new candidates, potentially hindering fair competition. In Dharmasraya, West Sumatra, the only registered candidate pair is Annisa Suci Ramadhani and Leli Arni. The situation raises concerns about democratic competition in the 2024 Pilkada.

### **Indonesia's election candidates woo voters with road rage car whispers, football fervour, money**

—Arlina Arshad, *The Straits Times*, 3 September 2024

Jakarta gubernatorial candidate Ridwan Kamil is proposing a unique solution for the city's traffic woes: a mobile therapy unit called "mobil curhat" equipped with psychologists and clerics to help ease drivers' frustrations. Ridwan, a former West Java governor, is also pledging to support Jakarta's local football team, Persija. His controversial traffic solution has drawn criticism, with some questioning its practicality and effectiveness. In East Java, Rijanto and his running mate, businessman Beky Herdihansah, made a splash by arriving on a Harley-Davidson to submit their candidacy, and later distributed cash to voters. The official campaign period for Indonesia's regional elections begins on September 25, involving simultaneous elections for governors, mayors, and regents across the country. Ridwan, ranked third in opinion polls, faces strong competition from other candidates. Critics argue that while populist policies like "mobil curhat" may appeal to voters, they may not address underlying issues or prove effective in the long term.

### **All-women contest in East Java as PKB-NU rift widens**

—Yerica Lai and Wahyoe Boediwardhana, *The Jakarta Post*, 31 August 2024

East Java's upcoming gubernatorial race is historic, with three women—Khofifah Indar Parawansa, Tri Rismaharini, and Luluk Nur Hamida—competing for the position. East Java, a traditional base of the influential Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Islamic group, is crucial for winning support. Khofifah, a former governor and NU's women's wing chair, is backed by a broad coalition and seen as a frontrunner. Risma, the Social Affairs Minister and former Surabaya mayor, is a strong PDI-P candidate, while Luluk, supported by the PKB, represents a fresh, youthful alternative. Experts view this race as a significant step forward for female leadership in Indonesia, particularly in a region deeply rooted in Islamic traditions. The election also highlights an ongoing rivalry between NU and PKB elites, adding another layer of complexity to the contest.

### **'Emergency Warning' trending on social media following House, MK standoff**

—News Desk, *The Jakarta Post*, 22 August 2024

Social media users are reacting to a recent move by Indonesia's House of Representatives, which is seen as undermining a Constitutional Court ruling that lowered the electoral threshold for November's regional elections. The controversy began when the House revised the 2016 Regional Elections Law, lowering the nomination threshold only for small parties with no legislative seats, contrary to the court's ruling that applied to all parties. This move, along with changes allowing candidates to meet age requirements at the time of inauguration rather than registration, has sparked widespread criticism. A mock emergency alert image, originally from a 2022 horror movie video, has gone viral as a symbol of protest, with notable figures like former KPK chairman Abraham Samad and writer Okky Madasari condemning the actions. Protests have erupted in several cities, and hashtags like #KawalPutusanMK are trending. Civil groups argue that the House's actions are a direct challenge to the Constitution and the court's authority.

## II. Indonesia in Geopolitics

### Interfaith groups welcome Pope Francis with delight

—Yvette Tanamal, *TheJakartaPost*, 4 September 2024

Pope Francis began his Asia-Pacific tour with a visit to Indonesia, highlighting the country's interfaith harmony. The 87-year-old pontiff, on his longest trip since becoming pope, received a warm welcome upon landing in Jakarta. His visit is seen as a significant move to promote tolerance, peace, and humanity in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation. Interfaith groups, including Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, praised the visit's potential to strengthen religious harmony. While Pope Francis's focus is on humanity and fraternity, there are hopes he will address pressing global issues like human rights and climate change. He is scheduled to visit the Istiqlal Mosque and lead a Mass at Gelora Bung Karno Stadium, expected to draw over 80,000 attendees.

### Pope arrives in Indonesia, the first stop on longest tour of his papacy

—Agence France-Presse Team, *TheGuardian*, 3 September 2024

Pope Francis, at 87, began his Asia-Pacific tour in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, appearing in good health despite concerns about the impact of the 12-day trip on his health. This three-day visit, part of the longest trip of his papacy, includes stops in Papua New Guinea, East Timor, and Singapore. In Jakarta, he met with President Joko Widodo and emphasized the importance of interfaith dialogue to combat extremism and intolerance. The visit highlights the significance of inter-religious ties, with the Pope set to meet representatives of six religions at the Istiqlal Mosque. The trip also includes a mass at Jakarta's national football stadium, expected to draw a large Catholic congregation.

### Rwanda, Liberia praise Indonesia's agricultural performance

—Muhammad H and Tegar Nurfitri, *AntaraNews*, 3 September 2024

Rwandan President Paul Kagame and Liberia's Agriculture Minister Alexander Nuetah praised Indonesia for its success in boosting agricultural productivity, despite challenges posed by El Niño. Speaking after the 2nd Indonesia-Africa Forum, Kagame admired Indonesia's rapid agricultural development. Meanwhile, Nuetah expressed hope that Indonesian experts could assist other countries in improving rice production, which remains at

just 1.2 tons per hectare. Nuetah also presented a Liberian agricultural agenda to Indonesian Agriculture Minister Andi Amran Sulaiman, who pledged to enhance cooperation, including drafting a memorandum of understanding. Earlier, President Joko Widodo, accompanied by the Agriculture Minister, received the Agricola Medal from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) at the State Palace, Jakarta, on August 30. The FAO presents the award to global figures and leaders for their notable contributions and staunch commitment to elevating people's living standards and their great support for the organization's vision of achieving universal food resilience. Indonesia aims to expand its rice fields by three million hectares to support food self-sufficiency.