Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest—2024 Issue 6: 21 March‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌  ‌

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| Starling_Resources_Logo_Landscape_4d3c77cc_587a14db_29212e8a |

 |

 |

 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest****2024 Issue 6 — 21 March***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*](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcwMg%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)*. If you would like to add colleagues or friends to our distribution list or unsubscribe, please contact us at**newsdigest@starlingresources.com.* |

 |

|  |
| --- |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **CONTENTS****A.      Marine and Fisheries****B.      Forests and Land Use****C.      Biodiversity, Conservation, and Protected Areas****D.      Climate Change, Energy, and Mining****E.      Pollution and Waste****F.      Investment and Finance****G.     Human Rights and Gender Equality****I.       RI Presidential Election****II.      Indonesia in Geopolitics (and Other News)** |

 |

|  |
| --- |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **A. Marine and Fisheries**[**Holds Sea Sand Mining Concession, Government Opens Entrepreneur Registration**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcwMw%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—BM Lukita Grahadyarini, *Kompas*, 17 March 2024The Indonesian government has opened registrations for business communities and entrepreneurs to exploit sea sand, despite its prohibition since 2002 due to its destructive nature. The Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries is offering mining concessions across the Java Sea, Makassar Strait, and North Natuna-Natuna, with a potential yield of 17.64 billion cubic meters. Locations include various regencies in Java, East Kalimantan and Riau islands. Minister Sakti Wahyu Trenggono emphasized coordination and scientific studies in selecting sites. Registrations are open until March 28, 2024, with criteria including expertise in marine sedimentation cleanup and technology equipment. However, environmental concerns persist, with critics warning of threats to coastal communities and fisheries. Despite recommendations to cancel the regulations, the government has proceeded, risking conflicts and environmental degradation. The use of sea sedimentation was prohibited in 2003 on the grounds of preventing wider environmental damage, such as the sinking of small islands, especially around the outermost areas of territorial boundaries. The exploitation also raises concerns about exacerbating the climate crisis and territorial disputes with Singapore. [**Maritime Affairs Minister Ready to Supply Fish if Free Lunch Program Runs**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcwNA%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—Ririe Ranggasari and Laila Afifa, *Tempo*, 8 March 2024Indonesia's Marine Affairs and Fisheries Minister, Sakti Wahyu Trenggono, expressed readiness to provide fish products to support the free school lunch program proposed by presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka when they win. With Indonesia's fisheries production estimated at 12 to 13 million tons, including both captured and farmed fish, Trenggono believes it can meet the program's needs. Meanwhile, Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto suggested funding the program through specific School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds, during a free lunch simulation in Tangerang. The free lunch and free milk program initiated by Prabowo-Gibran targets some 82.9 million schoolchildren and Islamic boarding school students across Indonesia. Based on simulations and planning by Prabowo-Gibran's expert team, this program requires full funding of up to US$ 28,5 billion. [**Govt Claims Fish Supply Sufficient Ahead of Ramadan**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcwNQ%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—Najla Nur Fauziyah and Laila Afifa, *Tempo*, 8 March 2024Fish availability during holy month Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr in 2024 is deemed sufficient, with estimated stocks reaching 3.10 million tons, surpassing the anticipated demand of 2.46 million tons. Budi Sulistiyo from the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries assures the public of safe fish stocks. Overstocking in frozen warehouses has led to price drops, but demand is rising as Ramadan approaches, stabilizing prices. Expectations include a 10% increase in fish demand during Ramadan and 20% ahead of Eid, reflecting high consumer interest. Budi encourages fish consumption during Ramadan for its health benefits, including omega-3 fatty acids, aiding in hunger control and supporting religious practices, according to a study by food practitioners from the Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences, Airlangga University in Surabaya, East Java. |

 |

|  |
| --- |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **B. Forests and Land Use**[**Indonesia braces for wildfires ahead of dry season**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcwNg%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—Alifia Sekar,*TheJakartaPost*, 19 March 2024As Indonesia prepares for the upcoming dry season, the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency, or BMKG, forecasts a start in April in some regions, including East Nusa Tenggara, West Nusa Tenggara and Bali, and then spreading to the rest of the country by May and June. The government initiates preventive measures against forest and peatland fires, anticipating a high risk during peak months of July and August. Despite expectations of a milder dry season compared to the previous year, authorities remain vigilant. Efforts include weather modification technologies and monitoring peatland water levels to prevent fires. Greenpeace urges a focus on land restoration alongside fire mitigation. While the Environment and Forestry Ministry reports reduced emissions from 2019, activists argue that peatland fires may be underestimated, calling for greater transparency in wildfire data. Last year's fires burned over 1.16 million hectares, with South Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, and South Papua most affected. Authorities emphasize early coordination to mitigate fire risks, highlighting the need for comprehensive measures to combat recurring wildfires.[**Fenced in by Sulawesi national park, Indigenous women make forestry breakout**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcwNw%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—Sarjan Lahay, *Mongabay*, 18 March 2024The Moa Indigenous community live in a remote region of Central Sulawesi, on the fringe of a national park. Their customary norms mandate a matrilineal system, where women hold the responsibility for traditional subsistence farming known as “*pampa”*. Pampa fields are dedicated to growing essential crops. Despite traditional barriers, Moa women have successfully been sustaining agricultural knowledge and navigating taboos to ensure their community's sustenance. The creation of Lore Lindu National Park in the 1990s had encroached upon Moa customary lands, prompting adaptation and advocacy efforts. Forestry economics professor at Tadulako University, Syukur Umar, says a crucial change in the national park’s boundary has led to sudden shifts in the community’s forestry. In line with that, by seeking recognition under the government's backed social forestry scheme, the Moa community aims to secure land rights crucial for their agroforestry practices. Such practices, like blending crops and trees, not only regenerate the lands but also serve as a buffer zone between the park and settlements. Moa women's pampa agroforestry stands as a testament to resilience and empowerment, offering a blueprint for sustainable and equitable management of natural resources.[**AHY targets clean and clear IKN land settlement**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcwOA%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 11 March 2024New Agrarian and Spatial Planning Minister Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono has instructed his team to resolve the status of 2,086 hectares of land for the Nusantara Capital City (IKN) project. This directive follows President Jokowi's recent visit to the IKN site, where he stressed the importance of swiftly resolving the land issue. Agus emphasized the necessity of a clean and transparent resolution to instill investor confidence. He has asked for progress reports from officials and pledged to prioritize the IKN megaproject, identifying key plots for infrastructure development. The ministry aims for significant progress this year, potentially allowing for the RI Independence Day Ceremony on 17 August this year to take place at the IKN site. Nine detailed spatial plans have been completed, and 80% of land procurement has been secured, with efforts ongoing to resolve the remaining 20%. Agus is prioritizing these land issues in his first 100 days as minister, aiming for smooth progress in constructing the new capital city. |

 |

|  |
| --- |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **C. Biodiversity, Conservation, and Protected Area**[**Firmer action urged to prevent human-wildlife conflict in Sumatra**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcwOQ%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—Alifia Sekar,*TheJakartaPost*, 16 March 2024In Sumatra's Bandar Negeri Suoh district, clashes erupted between villagers and authorities after a surge in Sumatran tiger attacks. Mobbing and burning down the South Bukit Barisan National Park office, residents demanded immediate action against the tigers. With three recent attacks, including two fatalities, locals blame encroaching farmland for provoking the tigers. Despite the urgency, officials urge restraint and emphasize ongoing efforts to resolve the conflict. Critically endangered, Sumatran tigers face threats from habitat loss and poaching. Activists stress addressing habitat destruction caused by forest concessions to palm oil companies. Suggestions include installing GPS collars on tigers for early warning systems. Greenpeace and Walhi urge authorities to prioritize mitigation strategies, akin to those used for human-elephant conflicts. The Environment and Forestry Ministry vows to address concerns, stressing collaboration among stakeholders. As tensions escalate, activists warn of dwindling trust in government inaction.[**Rangers hunt endangered Sumatran tigers after deadly attacks**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcxMA%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—AFP,*TheJakartaPost*, 15 March 2024Rangers in Lampung Province are hunting critically endangered Sumatran tigers following deadly attacks on villagers. Over recent weeks, four people were attacked while farming in protected reserves, resulting in two deaths. The incidents, suspected to involve multiple tigers, have stoked local anger. Sumatran tigers, with fewer than 400 remaining in the wild, face threats from poaching and habitat loss due to deforestation. A team of 10, including an animal whisperer and a vet, has been deployed to search for the tigers. Villagers, fearing further attacks, demand action, leading to tensions with authorities. After the latest attack injured a farmer, angry villagers torched forest ranger headquarters and damaged resort facilities, urging authorities to capture the tigers to prevent further harm. The hunt involves setting traps and mapping potential routes for the tigers, with a plea for villagers to avoid affected areas.[**Norway pension fund breaks with U.K. conglomerate Jardines over endangered orangutan habitat**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcxMQ%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 12 March 2024The Norwegian state pension fund has divested from UK conglomerate Jardine Matheson (Jardines) due to concerns about its gold mining operations in North Sumatera impacting the habitat of the critically endangered Tapanuli orangutan. The fund, the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, sold its investments in Jardines and related companies, totaling $236 million, following a recommendation from its ethics council. Jardines' Martabe gold mine, lies in the portion of the orangutan’s habitat, the Batang Toru forest, with the largest orangutan population, where the probability of the species’ long-term survival is highest, faces criticism from environmentalists and experts. Despite efforts by Agincourt Resources, the mine's operator, to mitigate environmental impact, concerns persist about habitat loss and plans to expand mining activities. Agincourt's plan to explore new reserves north of the mine in an area recognized as a key biodiversity area has raised alarms among conservationists. The Norwegian fund's decision to disinvest adds pressure on Jardines to reconsider its expansion plans and highlights the need for investors to scrutinize companies' environmental practices to protect endangered species and ecosystems. |

 |

|  |
| --- |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **D. Climate Change, Energy, and Mining**[**BNPB Warns of Wildfires Spike in Sumatra Amid Season Change**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcxMg%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—[Najla Nur Fauziyah](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcxMw%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9) and [Petir Garda Bhwana](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcxNA%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9), *Tempo*, 20 March 2024The National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) warns of a surge in wildfires in Sumatra as seasonal changes occur. Cases have emerged in various regions, including Bener Meriah, Asahan, and Dumai City. Local agency of BMKG (Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics) in Pekanbaru reports fires in West Sumatra, Bengkulu, South Sumatra, Riau Islands, Jambi, and Bangka Belitung since March 12, fortunately quickly extinguished. The movement of an atmospheric phenomenon called Madden Julian Oscillation (MJO) away from Sumatra signals drier weather. The MJO movement has changed the Sumatran weather significantly; from an increasing rain intensity to dry and vulnerable to forest fires. The focus of disaster management at this time is to prevent the wildfires from spreading. BNPB urges regional heads to be proactive, possibly declaring wildfire emergencies. Disaster response and prevention are crucial, including keeping peatlands and mineral lands wet. Acting now is essential, rather than waiting for the predicted peak dry season in July-August. [**Thousands flee homes as massive flooding grips Central Java**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcxNQ%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—News Desk,*TheJakartaPost*, 18 March 2024Thousands have evacuated their homes in Central Java's Demak and Kudus due to severe flooding, resulting in at least five deaths. The Indonesian Red Cross reports over 250,000 affected across 10 regencies. Floodwaters submerged more than 2.1 million hectares of rice fields, with a 15-year-old drowning in Temulus village. A collapsed dam on the Wulan River disrupted the Northern Coastal Highway, hindering transportation despite decreased rainfall. In Demak, over 92,200 residents were affected, prompting nearly 13,000 evacuations. The floods damaged six dams and submerged 88 villages. Emergency aid including food, water, and shelter is being provided, with makeshift rest areas set up for travelers. The Demak and Kudus administrations have established shelters for flood victims, with redirections for affected routes. Jam'iyyatul Hujjaj Kudus building has been prepared as a shelter, according to Kudus acting regional secretary Revlisianto Subekti. [**Extreme weather looms over Indonesia**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcxNg%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—Alifia Sekar and Dio Suhenda,*TheJakartaPost*, 13 March 2024Authorities warn of potential extreme weather across Indonesia as ongoing natural disasters have claimed dozens of lives. Flash flooding and landslides in West Sumatra have killed 32 people, with six missing. Torrential rains have affected 12 regions, leading to states of emergency in five areas. Officials urge preparedness and emphasize expedited relief efforts. In Kendari, South Sulawesi, over 700 houses were flooded, with one reported death. The Meteorology agency forecasts continued heavy rainfall, cautioning against hydrometeorological disasters. Meteorologists attribute recent events to the Asian monsoon and climate crisis-induced temperature rises. El Niño exacerbates intense rainy seasons, while some areas face drought and land fires. According to the 2023 disaster risk index released by the BNPB, hydrometeorological disasters such as extreme weather, flooding, droughts and forest fires showed a significant increase from 1,688 events reported in 2016 to 4,443 in 2021, accounting for 74% of disaster events in Indonesia that year. The surge in natural disasters underscores the need for comprehensive disaster management strategies. [**Java rice farmers suffer crop failure as copper mine pollutes local irrigation**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcxNw%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—Asad Asnawi, *Mongabay*, 11 March 2024Rice farmers in Cokrokembang village, East Java, suspect contamination from a nearby copper mine operated by PT Gemilang Limpah Internusa (GLI) is to blame for recent crop failures. Parno, a farmer in the area, faces declining harvests due to the suspected pollution. His rice plants are stunted and yellowing, contrasting with healthier fields using different water sources. GLI's mine waste has polluted the Kedung Pinihan River, impacting over 200 farmers and 25 hectares of land. Residents conducted tests revealing high copper concentrations, 25 times above standards. GLI plans to address the issue by cleaning existing waste, constructing a reservoir, and providing alternative irrigation sources. However, local authorities and civil society demand accountability and compensation for affected farmers' losses. Parno's rice yield has dramatically decreased from 16 to 6 sacks per harvest, highlighting the severity of the situation. |

 |

|  |
| --- |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **E. Pollution and Waste**[**Indonesia fishing village flooded with tide of rubbish after heavy rains**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcxOA%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—Staff and Agencies,*TheGuardian*, 19 March 2024After heavy rains, Teluk, a fishing village in Indonesia's Banten province, faces a deluge of rubbish, shocking residents. Trash, including plastics and domestic waste, inundates the beach due to rain-induced tides. This annual occurrence exacerbates existing pollution issues, with images showing debris littering the shore. Despite local cleanup efforts, Indonesia struggles with waste management, contributing significantly to global plastic pollution. The unpredictability of weather disrupts fishermen's livelihoods, impacting income and food security, particularly before the Eid al-Fitr festival. Indonesia is expecting a milder dry season this year, according to the meteorological agency BMKG, starting later than usual in May and June for Java. [**Plastic Waste Coalition Publishes New Paper on Extended Producer Responsibility in Indonesia**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcxOQ%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—News Team, *TheConsumerGoodsForum*, 14 March 2024Members of The Consumer Goods Forum Coalition of Action of Plastic Waste (the Coalition) released a paper on 14 March 2024 analysing the opportunities and challenges in implementing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in Indonesia, and drawing upon the Optimal EPR Principles endorsed by 34 global Coalition members. It concludes that optimally-designed EPR policy in Indonesia can directly address the root causes of plastic pollution, thereby accelerating progress towards Indonesia’s waste management targets; can complement existing forms of circular waste management funding; has greater potential to reduce packaging waste and plastic pollution than plastic excise tax or voluntary plastic credits; and needs to reflect the Indonesian context in its design and implementation and must not be an exact replica of models in the Global North. Companies play an important role in reducing plastic packaging pollution. In many countries, they do this via mandatory EPR schemes, where companies that put packaging on the market contribute to the funding of the collection, sorting and recycling of packaging after use, with the goal of increasing collection and recycling rates. |

 |

|  |
| --- |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **F. Investment and Finance**[**How Will Chinese Investors Navigate Indonesia’s Post-election Risks?**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcyMA%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—Ahmad Syarif, *TheDiplomat*, 7 March 2024Chinese investors in Indonesia face uncertainties amid the transition of power following President Joko Widodo's tenure. Over the past decade, China has become a significant investor in Indonesia, primarily in infrastructure and private sector ventures. However, with the election victory of Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto, Chinese firms are cautious about potential changes in government policies and appointments. They have traditionally relied on close ties with figures like Luhut Binsar Panjaitan, who facilitated their operations. Concerns arose when Luhut fell ill, highlighting the need for alternative connections in the incoming administration. Chinese companies plan to forge new alliances with influential officials and leverage partnerships with local conglomerates aligned with the new government. However, navigating Indonesia's democratic landscape poses challenges for Chinese investors accustomed to state support. Constructing robust mechanisms to manage political uncertainties will be crucial for safeguarding their investments. The upcoming transition represents a significant test for Chinese private investors, determining their ability to adapt and thrive in Indonesia's evolving political environment. [**EV, capital city among points in Indonesia, Australia talks**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcyMQ%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—Yvette Tanamal, *TheJakartaPost*, 7 March 2024President Jokowi Widodo announces a new electric vehicle (EV) collaboration agreement with Australia during talks with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in Melbourne. The deal builds on existing cooperation in EV battery manufacturing, utilizing Australian lithium to leverage Indonesia's nickel resources. Jokowi emphasizes prioritizing collaboration over competition in nickel production. However, discussions also highlight challenges facing Indonesia's new capital project, Nusantara, with significant budget shortfalls and limited foreign investment. Despite this, an MoU for citizen exchange and joint studies is signed. Both leaders affirm commitments to financial cooperation, market access, and people-to-people connections. Jokowi's visit underscores Indonesia's strategic partnership with Australia, aiming to maintain stability in the region. In the past two years, Albanese’s ascent as Canberra’s top official has put Indonesia among Australia’s top diplomatic priorities. Australia and Indonesia’s embracing tone is expressed by both Albanese and Jokowi. Australia is a strategic partner of Indonesia and vice versa, in a region where the two share a future and a joint responsibility to maintain stability. |

 |

|  |
| --- |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **G. Human Rights and Gender Equality**[**Indonesia accused of avoiding human rights issues**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcyMg%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—Yvette Tanamal,*TheJakartaPost*, 18 March 2024Activists in Jakarta criticize Indonesia's response to human rights questions raised during the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) session in Geneva. They assert that the government's answers were defensive and lacking accountability, particularly regarding issues like violence in Papua and past human rights violations. Amnesty International Indonesia's deputy director expresses disappointment, noting a lack of meaningful engagement. Some questions, including inquiries about President Joko Widodo’s alleged partisanship in the recent election, were left unanswered. While the Indonesian delegation cites time constraints, activists highlight concerns about the transparency of the government's reparations process for past abuses, emphasizing the need for civil society involvement. The ICCPR hearing is part of a periodic dialogue between the United Nations’ Human Rights Council and its members. The meetings are voluntary and not legally binding or lack legal enforcement. [**Hundreds of Women Take to the Streets to Celebrate International Women's Day**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcyMw%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—Sonya Hellen Sinombor, *Kompas*, 8 March 2024Hundreds of women across Indonesia took to the streets to mark International Women's Day 2024, advocating for women's rights and democracy. In Jakarta, members of the Indonesian Women's Alliance marched from the Election Supervisory Agency Office to the National Monument area, demanding attention to women's issues. Clad in black and purple, they held banners calling for accountability from President Joko Widodo's government and voiced concerns about democratic erosion. The protesters highlighted various challenges faced by women, including systemic violence and discriminatory policies. They called for the enforcement of democracy, the rule of law, and the approval of bills protecting domestic workers, indigenous peoples, and against discrimination. Separately, the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation emphasized the state's negligence in protecting women's rights, citing threats to human rights defenders and discriminatory laws that disadvantage women. International Women's Day serves as a crucial moment for women to resist oppressive policies and advocate for gender equality. |

 |

|  |
| --- |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **I. RI General Elections**[**Hundreds protest in Jakarta demanding president’s ouster for alleged interference in election**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcyNQ%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9) —Pizaro Gozali Idrus, Dandy Koswaraputra and Eko Siswono Toyudho, *BenarNews*, 18 March 2024Hundreds staged a protest in Jakarta demanding President Joko Widodo's removal over alleged electoral fraud. The protest by the National Coalition to Save Democracy accused Jokowi of meddling in the February election, favoring his former opponent Prabowo Subianto and his son Gibran Rakabuming Raka. Prabowo, who had contested the presidential polls twice before and lost to Jokowi, won the February election by [a landslide](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcyNg%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9), unofficial but reliable vote counts showed. He is set to be inaugurated on Oct. 20, when Jokowi makes way for him after a decade as president. The longstanding rivalry between Prabowo and Jokowi came to a surprising halt in 2019 when Jokowi invited Prabowo to serve as his defense minister. Although peaceful, protesters called for the president’s impeachment and the election officials' dismissal. Concerns about democratic backsliding under the current administration have grown, with accusations of interference in the judiciary and suppression of free speech. The electoral process has faced criticism, labeled the worst since Indonesia's transition to democracy, prompting opposition figures to contest the results in court. The protests reflect broader dissatisfaction with the elections, highlighting public concerns about democratic integrity. [**Govt Reacts to UN Panel's Concern on Jokowi's Neutrality in 2024 Election**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcyNw%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—[Dewi Elvia Muthiariny](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcyOA%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9) and [Laila Afifa](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDcyOQ%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9), *Tempo*, 18 March 2024The Indonesian Foreign Affairs Ministry addressed inquiries from the United Nations Human Rights Committee (especially Covenant on Civil and Political Rights/CCPR) regarding President Joko Widodo's alleged intervention in the 2024 Presidential Election during a recent session in Geneva. CCPR Member Bacre Waly Ndiaye raised concerns about Jokowi's son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, becoming Prabowo Subianto's running mate after a Constitutional Court ruling. The Ministry clarified that the CCPR session aims to identify capacity-building needs rather than judge human rights implementation. The Human Rights Committee comprises independent experts and Indonesia's participation reflects its commitment to the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Lalu Muhammad Iqbal, Ministry spokesperson, noted the Committee's appreciation for Indonesia's engagement. However, due to time constraints, not all questions were addressed during the session, a common occurrence in such dialogues. [**Indonesian presidential rivals allege fraud, plan to contest official election results**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDczMA%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—[Niniek Karmini, *Associated Press*](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDczMQ%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)*/PBSNewsHour*, 18 March 2024The defeated camps of Indonesia's recent presidential election plan to contest the official results, alleging widespread fraud. Prabowo Subianto, 72, a retired Army general, a businessman, the incumbent Defense Minister, and third-time presidential candidate, claimed victory on election day, but official tallies show him leading with 58.82% of the vote. The opposing candidates, Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo, refuse to concede and cite electoral irregularities. The official vote-counting process, expected to conclude by March 20, may take up to 35 days. Legal challenges will be filed in the Constitutional Court, addressing alleged irregularities before, during, and after the polls. Difficulty in obtaining witnesses and intimidation tactics pose challenges for the petitioners. The court has previously rejected Subianto's claims of fraud in past elections. Baswedan's team aims to ensure that irregularities are addressed, signaling a commitment to uphold electoral integrity. The outcome of these legal disputes will determine the legitimacy of Indonesia's electoral process.  |

 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **I. Indonesia in Geopolitics (and Other News)**[**AI must complement democracy, Indonesia says**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDczMg%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—Yvette Tanamal,*TheJakartaPost*, 20 March 2024Indonesia emphasizes the need for Artificial Intelligence (AI) to bolster democracy amid concerns about its potential misuse for manipulation and disinformation. Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi underscores the importance of regulating AI at a Summit for Democracy. On the first day of the conference, hosted by South Korea on 18 March, representatives from over 100 countries gathered mostly online to discuss the global trend of democratic backsliding. The third installment of the conference addresses digital threats like deep fakes. The meeting came as 60 countries head to the polls to elect new leaders, putting candidates and voters in danger of technological disinformation. While some tech companies pledge to combat AI misuse, Indonesia faces criticism for its inadequate regulations. Current guidelines lack teeth, prompting calls for binding legislation to safeguard democracy. The government aims to introduce a more robust AI regulation by year-end, but concerns linger about its efficacy and timeliness. Experts stress the need for swift action to prevent AI from undermining democratic principles while acknowledging its potential to empower citizens if properly regulated.[**Prabowo's Free Lunch Becomes Fitch's Note**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDczMw%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—FX Laksana Agung Saputra, *Kompas*, 17 March 2024Fitch Ratings assessed Indonesia's economy, highlighting concerns over campaign promises like free lunches and milk by the Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka, the last election winning running mates, likely straining state finances. Despite maintaining Indonesia's debt rating at BBB, Fitch pointed out medium-term fiscal uncertainty due to costly campaign pledges. They noted the potential impact on the government's debt-to-GDP ratio and revenue. Fitch emphasized continuity in economic policies but highlighted challenges, including fiscal risks and slowing export growth due to weakened global demand. They forecasted economic growth to slow to 4.9% in 2024, with a rebound to 5.3% in 2025 driven by strengthened investments post-election. Fitch projected controlled inflation and anticipated Bank Indonesia to lower benchmark interest rates in response to US trends, aiming for 5.25% by 2024's end and 4.5% by 2025. The report underscores the need for prudent fiscal management amidst campaign-driven spending pressures. [**Indonesia opens inquiry after pilots fell asleep on flight carrying 153 people**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDczNA%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)—Agence France-Presse in Jakarta, *TheGuardian*, 9 March 2024Indonesia launches an inquiry after two pilots dozed off mid-flight, leaving the Airbus A320 on autopilot for nearly 30 minutes. The incident occurred during a Batik Air flight carrying 153 passengers from Sulawesi to Jakarta on January 25. Although no harm was caused, navigation errors ensued. The National Transportation Safety Committee (KNKT) highlights inadequate rest for one pilot prior to the flight. Both pilots, aged 32 and 28, were suspended. The investigation urges Batik Air to improve fatigue risk management and conduct regular cockpit checks. The transport ministry admonishes Batik Air and vows to review night flight operations for all airlines, emphasizing crew rest. Batik Air assures adherence to safety protocols. The KNKT report, released in late February, outlines the sequence of events, including the co-pilot's inadvertent sleep due to familial responsibilities. The captain's timely awakening averted a potential disaster, and KNKT underscores the importance of crew rest and vigilance to prevent such incidents. [**World Bank Rep Satu Kahkonen Faces Backlash for Opposition to 'Free Lunch' Policy**](https://s8334258.sendpul.se/sl/MjE3MDczNQ%3D%3D/f489914e5ff168098e645608ec068597467ces9)                        —Ibti Mesuk, *InternationalBusinessTimesUK*, 5 March 2024sendSatu Kahkonen, the World Bank's Indonesia country representative, faces criticism for opposing President-elect Prabowo Subianto's plan for free school lunch and milk. Despite Indonesia's economic growth, malnutrition persists, affecting 21% of under-18s. Subianto's proposal was popular, winning him over 60% of votes. Kahkonen's remarks were seen as politically motivated, sparking backlash on social media. Critics argue that her stance disregards the urgent need to address malnutrition. Indonesia's finance minister warns of fiscal deficits, aligning with neoliberal policies unpopular among voters. Indonesians prioritize state intervention and protectionism for poverty reduction. The World Bank's mandate prohibits political interference, raising concerns about Kahkonen's comments. Economists advocate targeted investments in child well-being as economic assets. Indonesians emphasize the importance of domestic policy making over external advice. |

 |

 |

 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **End** |

 |

 |

 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
|  |

 |

 |

 |

 |

 |