



Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

2024 Issue 20 — 3 October

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

CONTENTS

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

A. Marine and Fisheries

As big supermarkets pursue profits, new research shows growing exploitation of shrimp farmers

Takeaways from AP's report on how shrimp farmers are exploited as supermarkets push for low prices

—David Rising, *AssociatedPress*, 1 October 2024

A new investigation released on September 30 highlights labor exploitation in the shrimp industry across Vietnam, Indonesia, and India, which supply about half of the shrimp to major

global markets like the US, EU, UK, and Japan. The report, compiled by an alliance of NGOs, found that workers face severe wage cuts, unpaid labor, and dangerous conditions due to pressure from Western supermarkets like Walmart, Target, Sainsbury's, and Aldi to lower wholesale prices. Earnings have dropped by 20%-60% since the pandemic, forcing producers to cut labor costs. Workers, mostly women, endure long hours, wage insecurity, and hazardous environments, with some receiving less than minimum wage. Child labor was also reported. Supermarkets have responded, citing commitments to fair labor practices, but the report argues their reliance on uncertified suppliers contradicts these claims. The investigation calls for stronger oversight and fair pricing to prevent further exploitation, noting that raising wages for shrimp farmers wouldn't necessarily increase consumer prices but would lower supermarket profits.

Canned Fish Exports Constrained by Raw Materials

BM Lukita Grahadyarini, *Kompas*, 30 September 2024

Efforts to expand canned fish exports in East Java are hindered by raw material shortages, prompting calls for fish imports. The fish processing center in Muncar, Banyuwangi, aims to grow its canned sardine market but struggles with a lack of lemuru fish, previously abundant in the Bali Strait. Mahfudi, Operational Director of PT Blue Ocean Foods Indonesia (BOFI), reported starting tuna loin exports in February 2024 but plans to enter the canned sardine market in October, targeting 90% of production for export to the Middle East and Africa. The local supply of lemuru fish does not meet demand, leading to proposals for imports. Mahfudi noted that both canned sardines and tuna products face raw material constraints, with suppliers often favoring exports over local processing. Rony Fajar Laksana from CV Pacific Harvest highlighted a reliance on 60-70% imported raw materials for sardines. In response, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries emphasized the need for improved governance and sustainable fishing practices to enhance domestic supply while supporting export markets.

South Korea dune merchant, 72, held over sand mining in Indonesia mangrove forest

—Wahyu Chandra, *Mongabay*, 30 September 2024

The enforcement arm of Indonesia's environment ministry in September arrested a 72-year-old South Korean national for allegedly running an illegal sand-mining operation in a protected forest in the village of Lariang, West Sulawesi. Authorities seized heavy machinery, including excavators and trucks used for sand extraction. The suspect is accused of both financing and managing the illegal operation, which came to light after public complaints. Investigators are reviewing the suspect's network in collaboration with a state agency that reviews financial transactions, but it's not yet unclear whether the sand was sold locally or mined for export. Sand, the world's second most in-demand commodity after water, is crucial for infrastructure but poses significant risks to coastal ecosystems. In May, civil society groups criticized a policy by President Joko Widodo to reverse a two-decade ban on the export of sand dredged from the beaches. Environmental advocates worry that recent policy changes lifting the ban will exacerbate ecosystem damage and corruption in the sector.

Expert Warns of Mud Risk Due to Sea Sand Dredging

—Mahfuzulloh Al Murtadho, *Tempo*, 25 September 2024

Professor Yonvitner, head of the Center for Coastal and Marine Resources Studies at the Bogor Agricultural Institute (IPB), warned that material suction in shallow seas, particularly sea sand, can increase water turbidity and disrupt ecosystems. He stated that extraction near sensitive areas raises suspended solids in the water, affecting marine life. The concerns

come as Indonesia reopens sea sand exports after two decades, facilitated by Government Regulation (PP) Number 26 of 2023. Yonvitner argues that trading sea sand is detrimental, threatening ecological balance and social-economic stability. He explained that sand mining can lead to changes in current patterns and increased water turbidity, which can negatively impact fishing zones and cause coastal erosion. Although President Joko Widodo asserted that exports would focus on sediment deposits to improve navigation, Yonvitner noted that the new regulation lacks ecological considerations and does not include provisions for funding conservation efforts in mining areas. He emphasized the absence of studies assessing the risks to ecosystems and habitats from the new export policies.

Dead Whales Stranded as Sign of Marine Ecosystem Damage

—Stephanus Arinditio, *Kompas*, 25 September 2024

The stranding of dozens of short-finned pilot whales in Alor, East Nusa Tenggara, in September signals a disruption in the marine ecosystem. According to researcher Putu Liza Kusuma Mustika from James Cook University, the cause is likely both anthropogenic (human-made) and natural factors. Human activities like underwater sonar use, water pollution, and plastic debris disrupt whales' navigation systems and weaken their immunity. Natural factors such as disease or old age also contribute to strandings. Over the past 26 years, 568 incidents involving 26 species of whales and dolphins have been reported stranded in Indonesian waters. The Indonesian government, alongside researchers, is studying whale behavior to prevent future strandings. Whale preservation efforts are crucial as these marine mammals are protected species, requiring immediate rescue when stranded and proper handling if deceased. Putu emphasized the need for stronger regulations and public awareness to protect marine ecosystems, including reducing plastic waste and improving guidelines for tourism and industrial activities like oil exploration.

Clock ticks on Indonesia shark skimmers as predator population plunges

—Asad Asnawi, *Mongabay*, 25 September 2024

Fish stocks around the island of Java are in crisis due to years of overfishing by large vessels using purse seine nets. In the fishing port of Brondong, a major landing site in East Java, fishers continue to process dozens of species of sharks, including zebra sharks. After the skin and fins are removed, shark products are transported for local drying, salting, or smoking. As the world's top shark catcher, Indonesia exports shark fins, liver oil, meat, and skin, contributing significantly to the global shark trade. Despite international regulations under CITES to protect endangered species, loopholes and poor monitoring allow shark products to thrive domestically. A 2024 report by TRAFFIC highlights the challenges in shark conservation, with 24% of species at risk of extinction. Weak enforcement and outdated perceptions of shark products fuel demand, particularly in markets like China and Hong Kong. Sharks are vital for marine ecosystems, but their populations have declined by 71% in 50 years due to overfishing. Indonesian law now protects six species of walking sharks, yet illegal shark fishing remains widespread, threatening ocean biodiversity.

B. Forests and Land Use

Indonesia's forest fires, deforestation decline in past 10 years: govt

—Lintang Budiayanti and Raka Adji, *AntaraNews*, 29 September 2024

Environment and Forestry Minister Siti Nurbaya Bakar announced a significant decline in forest fires and deforestation over the past decade. In 2015, forest fires affected 2.6 million hectares, causing transboundary haze for two months, while in 2022, the affected area decreased to just 200,000 hectares. Bakar attributed this improvement to integrated prevention efforts, including timely hotspot monitoring, weather modification, patrols, community participation, and law enforcement. Regarding deforestation, she reported a reduction from 1.09 million hectares in 2014-2015 to only 100,000 hectares in 2023. Additionally, she highlighted the success of implementing a circular economy in reducing plastic waste, noting a drop in marine plastic waste from 438,000 tons in 2018 to 339,000 tons in 2023. Earlier, the National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB) ensured that the forest and land fire handling operation in six priority provinces would continue until November despite the La Nina. Those provinces are Riau, Jambi, South Sumatra, West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, and South Kalimantan. Helicopters for patrols and water bombing as well as water pumps for land spraying among the assistance provided.

Indigenous Peoples Bill Not Passed for 14 Years, Dashed Hopes in Jokowi Era

—Nikson Sinaga, *Kompas*, 28 September 2024

At the end of President and the DPR's term of office for the 2019-2024 period, hopes for the ratification of the Indigenous Peoples Bill were dashed. The Indigenous Peoples Bill has been stalled in the parliament for 14 years, and hopes for its ratification before the end of the term have been dashed. The bill, which is mandated by the 1945 Constitution, aims to protect the rights of indigenous communities, but its fate under the new government remains uncertain. At a recent seminar in Medan, legal experts highlighted that while indigenous communities are recognized, their rights remain unprotected. Despite the bill's importance, it has been repeatedly delayed, while laws serving political elites pass swiftly. With over 20 million indigenous people, unresolved agrarian conflicts and the lack of legal protection have led to social unrest. In some regions, local governments have taken the initiative to create their own regulations to protect indigenous rights. Legal conflicts, such as the case of Sorbatua Siallagan, who was imprisoned for defending his ancestral land, highlight the urgency of passing the Indigenous Peoples Bill to prevent further marginalization and criminalization of indigenous communities.

Why Do Environmental Warriors Need to Be Protected?

—Adhitya Ramadhan, *Kompas*, 27 September 2024

Environmental activists play a critical role in promoting sustainable environmental conservation, yet face significant risks. Damage caused by mining and plantation activities, such as on Obi and Wawonii Islands, leads to environmental destruction, economic losses, and health issues. Despite their efforts, protection for these activists remains low, with hundreds facing criminalization over the past decade. Between 2014 and 2023, at least 126 legal cases involving environmental issues were reported, mostly in the mining and energy sectors. Activists frequently face lawsuits, known as Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP), aimed at silencing them. SLAPPs are often filed under the Information and Electronic Transactions Law (UU ITE) by corporations and officials. Notable cases include activists Haris Azhar and Fatia Maulidiyanti, who were sued after criticizing a government official's involvement in mining. Countries like the U.S., particularly California, have enacted strong anti-SLAPP laws. Implementing similar measures in Indonesia could

offer better protection for environmental defenders and uphold their rights to advocate for sustainable practices.

US consumers may be exposed to deforestation-linked palm oil via dairy: Report

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 24 September 2024

A new report reveals that U.S. consumers may unknowingly be exposed to palm oil linked to deforestation, despite zero-deforestation pledges by major companies. The issue arises from palm oil used in animal feed, particularly for dairy cows, which is not accounted for in many companies' deforestation policies. This palm oil, embedded in products like milk, cheese, and chocolate, makes up 36% of U.S. palm oil imports. The report by Rainforest Action Network (RAN) found that 13 out of 14 major dairy and consumer goods companies — including Mars, Nestlé and Mondelez — fail to track palm oil use in their supply chains. Only Unilever reports minimal palm oil use. The oversight allows deforestation-linked palm oil to continue entering the U.S. market. This issue could pose problems for companies operating in the European Union, where stricter regulations on deforestation-free products will take effect soon. It calls on the Consumer Goods Forum (CGF), of which many of these companies are members, to include embedded palm oil in their deforestation-free policies, similar to the policy for embedded soy.

World's biggest deforestation project gets underway in Papua for sugarcane

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 19 September 2024

Excavators have started clearing land in Indonesia's Papua region for what's considered the world's largest deforestation project. Around 2 million hectares of forests and grasslands in Merauke district will be razed for giant sugarcane plantations. This \$8.4 billion project aims to increase domestic sugar production, with five consortiums, including PT Global Papua Abadi (GPA), participating. Despite government claims to mitigate environmental impacts, satellite monitoring has revealed significant deforestation within GPA's concession. This contradicts official statements that the area lacks natural forests. Furthermore, the project overlaps with areas protected under a moratorium on clearing primary forests. The Trans Fly ecoregion, which is home to unique species, is also being affected. Critics argue that the project undermines Indonesia's efforts to reduce deforestation and risks violating Indigenous Papuans' rights for hunting and gathering, and their overall well-being, as they have been largely excluded from consultation. Activists are calling for the government to reconsider the project, which is expected to primarily produce bioethanol, not food.

C. Biodiversity, Conservation and Protected Area

Thriving Javan gibbon population found in West Java forest

—News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 1 October 2024

An expedition team has discovered a thriving population of 311 endangered Javan gibbons in the forests of Mount Sanggabuana, West Java. Led by Bernard T Wahyu Wiryanta, the 40-day research, which began on July 31, documented 107 groups, primarily consisting of juveniles. Bernard noted that the gibbons are reproducing well, with morning calls heard throughout the forest. The Javan gibbon is an endemic primate of West Java, protected under Ministerial Regulation No. 106/2018 and classified as endangered on the IUCN Red List. It

faces threats from illegal pet trade, hunting, habitat loss, and forest fragmentation, with estimates suggesting fewer than 4,000 remain in the wild. Despite the encouraging findings, Bernard highlighted ongoing threats from poaching and deforestation, as hunting in the area often supplies young animals for the pet trade. The expedition was organized by the Sanggabuana Conservation Foundation, supported by Astra Group. Findings will inform future conservation efforts, emphasizing the need to rehabilitate forest corridors and monitor the habitat for the survival of the Javan gibbon.

Conservation areas are part of national defense: Minister

—Farhan Kenzu and Azis Kurmala, *AntaraNews*, 1 October 2024

Environment and Forestry Minister Siti Nurbaya Bakar declared that conservation areas, including protected forests, serve as the "backline fortress" for Indonesia's defense system. Speaking at the Youth Conservation Fest 2024, she emphasized the ministry's commitment to enhancing the protection of these areas, actively involving the younger generation as key participants in conservation efforts. Minister Bakar noted that Indonesia's youth engagement in conservation is more advanced compared to many other countries she has visited. She praised the commitment of Indonesian young people and highlighted the government's dedication to addressing environmental challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry is reinforcing its conservation framework with the recently enacted Law No. 34 of 2024, which revises Law No. 5 of 1990. This law aims to strengthen regulations for natural conservation efforts, reflecting a commitment to preserving Indonesia's biodiversity and ecosystem for future generations.

BKSDA deploys tiger traps to address recent incidents in N. Bengkulu

—Anggi Mayasari and Aditya Eko Sigit Wicaksono, *AntaraNews*, 29 September 2024

Bengkulu Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) has installed three tiger traps with surveillance cameras in North Bengkulu District's Pinang Raya and Napal Putih sub-districts. This action follows reports of Sumatran tigers entering residential areas and preying on livestock. Said Jauhari, Head of the Conservation Section Region I of Bengkulu BKSDA, stated that the traps are baited with goats and remnants of cows previously consumed by the tigers in Gembung Raya and Kinal Jaya Villages. Monitoring has confirmed the presence of two tigers in the area. Jauhari cautioned the public against taking independent action upon encountering a tiger, as it could pose risks to both individuals and wildlife. Reports indicated that a tiger preyed on livestock in Kinal Village on September 21 and attacked two dogs on September 20 and one dog on September 21. To address these issues, the Bengkulu BKSDA has also conducted outreach programs in Gembung Raya Village to educate residents on managing encounters with Sumatran tigers and preventing negative interactions.

Stranded sperm whale dies after days of evacuation efforts

—N Adri, *TheJakartaPost*, 28 September 2024

A sperm whale stranded at Teritip Beach, near Balikpapan in East Kalimantan, died on Friday after days of failed rescue efforts by local residents and officials. The whale had been trapped in shallow water, with its body only partially submerged, since Monday, September 23. On Thursday, the whale was still alive but weak, according to Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Ministry official Heri Seputro. By Friday morning, it had stopped breathing. Authorities anchored the whale's carcass to prevent it from drifting as they planned a necropsy to determine the cause of death. Due to its 40-tonne weight, the procedure will likely be conducted on the beach, after which the carcass will be sunk at sea. This was the fourth whale stranding in Balikpapan, where previous attempts to save stranded sea mammals also

failed. A local resident expressed the need for a dedicated team to handle such incidents, given the area's challenging tides and history of stranded marine animals.

Another Sumatran tiger dies at Medan Zoo

—Apriadi GUnawan, *TheJakartaPost*, 23 September 2024

Si Manis, a 23-year-old female Sumatran tiger, has died at Medan Zoo in North Sumatra, amid ongoing funding and management issues. As one of the zoo's oldest tigers, Si Manis had been in declining health since May 2024, despite receiving intensive medical care. An autopsy revealed her death resulted from liver, heart, and kidney problems, along with significant fat buildup around her organs. Currently, the zoo houses seven tigers, two of which are critically ill, including a 20-year-old male named Anggi. Staff member Ahmad Arfan expressed concerns about the remaining tigers' conditions worsening, fearing more deaths could follow. Medan Mayor Bobby Nasution attributed Si Manis' decline to her age. Over the past year, the zoo has reported six tiger deaths, including Bintang Sorik, a 13-year-old male, and Nurhaliza, a 9-year-old female, which raised alarms about malnutrition and poor living conditions. The zoo's acting president director cited a financial crisis hindering necessary repairs and improvements, prompting criticism from environmentalists and social media users regarding the administration's handling of the situation.

D. Climate Change, Energy and Mining

Thuggery Behind Climate Action Disbandment

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 2 October 2024

Young people have the greatest right to demand a safe and healthy future for the environment and living space. On September 27, a group intimidated youth holding a peaceful climate protest in Menteng Park, Jakarta, as part of the "Global Climate Strike." The attackers seized their property, including posters and loudspeakers, and demanded they disperse. This non-partisan protest, led by young Indonesians, aimed to raise awareness of the climate crisis and criticize environmental policies under President Joko Widodo. The incident is part of a larger trend of silencing civil society in Indonesia. The following day, a discussion hosted by the Forum Tanah Air was also forcibly disbanded. The Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI) criticized the police for allowing such disruptions, emphasizing that peaceful demonstrations are protected by law. This rise in non-state violence, especially against youth and activists, raises concerns about Indonesia's commitment to democracy as President Widodo's term nears its end. Activists are calling for thorough investigations and accountability for those behind these actions.

KPK Asked to Thoroughly Investigate Alleged Mining Permit Corruption in East Kalimantan

—Sucipto, *Kompas*, 1 October 2024

Former East Kalimantan Governor Awang Faroek Ishak was caught up in alleged corruption of mining business permits. The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) has launched an investigation into alleged corruption involving mining business permits in East Kalimantan, following a search of the former Governor's residence. The KPK announced on September 26, that three Indonesian citizens—identified as AFI, DDWT, and ROC—are barred from

traveling abroad as part of this investigation. Orin Gusta Andini of Mulawarman University emphasized the need for a thorough inquiry, highlighting that corruption has long plagued the management of natural resources in the region. Orin also called for transparency and urged that all regional heads involved in issuing mining permits during that period to be investigated. Awang, who served two terms as governor from 2008 to 2018, is accused of accepting bribes related to the issuance of mining permits. KPK has gathered evidence, including documents from Awang's time in office. Tessa Mahardhika Sugiarto, KPK spokesperson, stated the travel ban will last six months to facilitate the investigation.

BNPB Asks for Illegal Mining Activities to be Stopped as They Often Cause Victims

—Yola Sastra, *Kompas*, 28 September 2024

The National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) has called for an immediate halt to all illegal mining activities due to their high risk of causing fatal disasters. The latest incident occurred at an illegal gold mine in Solok Regency, West Sumatra, where a landslide killed 12 people, injured 11, and left two missing. BNPB spokesperson Abdul Muhari emphasized that illegal mining landslides are recurring tragedies, urging stronger law enforcement to prevent future incidents. He also warned the public to stay alert to extreme weather, especially in landslide-prone areas. The landslide in Nagari Sungai Abu was triggered by heavy rains, collapsing a 30-40 meter deep tunnel where miners were working. Over 100 personnel from various agencies are involved in the ongoing search and rescue efforts, but difficult terrain is hampering the process. This disaster is part of a broader pattern of fatal accidents in West Sumatra's illegal mining sites, which have claimed numerous lives in recent years despite repeated police raids and closures.

15 killed after a landslide struck an illegal gold mine on Indonesia's Sumatra island

—John Nedy Niniek Karmini and Edna Tarigan, *AssociatedPress*, 27 September 2024

A landslide triggered by heavy rains hit an illegal gold mining site in Indonesia's West Sumatra province, killing at least 15 people and leaving dozens missing, officials said on Friday, September 27. The disaster occurred Thursday in Solok district, where villagers were searching for gold when mud from nearby hills buried them, according to Irwan Effendi, head of the local disaster mitigation office. Informal mining operations like this are common in Indonesia, despite the high risks of landslides, flooding, collapses of tunnels, and toxic exposure to mercury and cyanide. Workers frequently use little or no protection. Rescue efforts, hindered by mudslides, blackouts, and poor communication, are ongoing, with at least 25 people still trapped. The remote location near Nagari Sungai Abu village requires a four-hour trek on foot to access, complicating the search. Illegal mining accidents are frequent; a similar landslide in July 2024 killed 23 people in Sulawesi, and in April 2022, 12 were killed in North Sumatra. Earlier, in February 2019, more than 40 people were buried after a makeshift wooden structure collapsed in North Sulawesi.

Civil Society to Sue Government Regulation on Mining Permits for Religious Organizations

—Prayogi Dwi Sulistyono, *Kompas*, 27 September 2024

Civil society groups are challenging Government Regulation (PP) No. 25 of 2024, which grants mining concession permits to religious organizations, citing potential negative impacts. They plan to submit a judicial review to the Supreme Court on October 1, 2024. Mareta Sari from East Kalimantan expressed concern over how mining has disrupted local communities, particularly indigenous peoples. She fears the situation will worsen if religious organizations are granted mining authority. The region already faces issues like environmental degradation,

fatalities, and unresolved land disputes. Jatam campaigner Hema Situmorang noted that Indonesia has almost 8,000 mining permits, covering nearly 10 million hectares, with additional expansion in geothermal mining. The government's focus on coal mining contradicts efforts to shift toward renewable energy. The Advocacy Team Against Mining, represented by attorney Wasingatu Zakiyah, argues that the regulation benefits a select few, while harming communities and violating the Mineral and Coal Law. Many view PP No. 25/2024 as part of transactional politics, prioritizing corporate interests over environmental and community well-being.

E. Pollution. Waste and Disaster

BMKG promises tsunami warnings in less than 3 minutes

—News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 2 October 2024

The Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) has pledged to issue tsunami and disaster warnings within three minutes of an earthquake detection. Daryono, head of BMKG's Earthquake and Tsunami Center, emphasized that warnings would reach all levels of society through various channels, including digital television, SMS, radio, and online platforms. BMKG, in collaboration with the Communications and Information Ministry, has upgraded its early warning system to include alerts for earthquakes, tsunamis, forest fires, volcanic activity, and floods. The system integrates four key technologies developed by the National Innovation and Research Agency (BRIN): INA-BUOY, INA CBT, INA-CAT, and PEKA Tsunami, which enhance the detection and prediction of tsunamis and earthquakes. The warnings are verified by experts at BMKG's INATEWS center in Jakarta, and the system is coordinated with agencies such as BNPB and Basarnas. These improvements aim to provide quicker, more accurate warnings to enable timely evacuations and reduce casualties.

Waste Becomes “Gold” with Oil and Gas Technology

—Aditya Putra Perdana, *Kompas*, 30 September 2024

In Balikpapan, there are 380 households that utilize methane gas from waste. At the Manggar Final Waste Processing Site (TPAS) a motto reads, "It is better to live from trash than to live as trash." Each day, 300-400 tons of waste generate methane gas, which local residents use instead of costly LPG. Sitiyah, a local vendor, highlights the benefits of this system, saying she pays just Rp 10,000 monthly for methane gas access, significantly reducing her cooking costs. Since 2019, the "Waste to Energy for Community" (Wasteco) program has provided energy access to 380 households, allowing many micro, small, and medium enterprises to thrive. Managed by a group of seven women, the methane gas distribution system uses adapted oil and gas technology for safety and efficiency. Despite challenges, including maintaining gas supply stability, the community is committed to ensuring the program's sustainability. PT Pertamina Hulu Mahakam supports the initiative as part of its corporate social responsibility, showcasing how waste can be transformed into a valuable resource for energy independence and community empowerment.

Disaster Response Culture

—Idi Subandy Ibrahim, *Kompas*, 27 September 2024

Hydrometeorological disasters exacerbated by climate change, including storms, extreme rainfall, floods, and droughts, pose increasing challenges in Indonesia. Concurrently, global wars and conflicts impact geopolitics and economies, while domestic issues like corruption, economic instability, and political transitions complicate the situation further. The threat of megathrust earthquakes, potentially reaching magnitudes of 9.2, is also significant, with the BMKG monitoring critical zones such as Mentawai-Siberut and the Sunda Strait. Indonesia recorded 2,205 earthquakes in 2023, making it the world's most earthquake-prone country. Other natural disasters like landslides and floods also threaten many regions, with permanent flooding affecting coastal areas and raising concerns about Jakarta's future submersion. Enhancing disaster preparedness is essential to encourage community participation in disaster response. Educational institutions should redirect research to support disaster mitigation efforts, while the media can raise awareness. Indigenous communities, traditionally environmental stewards, should be heard and involved in sustainability policies, ensuring a collective effort to tackle climate change.

Indonesia's 'bloody nickel' under fire as US flags forced labour concerns

—Resty Woro Yuniar, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 24 September 2024

Indonesia's nickel industry is under scrutiny after being flagged by U.S. authorities for forced labor, raising concerns as Jakarta seeks a critical minerals deal with Washington. The U.S. Department of Labor's report classified Indonesian nickel as tainted by exploitative practices, citing issues such as excessive overtime, unpaid wages, and dangerous working conditions. The report also highlighted abuses faced by Chinese workers at Indonesian nickel smelters, including wage deductions, passport confiscation, and physical abuse. The findings could hinder Indonesia's efforts to play a key role in the U.S. electric vehicle supply chain, as Washington's Inflation Reduction Act restricts minerals linked to China. Analysts warn this could impact Indonesia's ambitions. Critics have long raised concerns over poor safety standards in Chinese-owned nickel smelters in Indonesia. Between 2015 and 2023, 93 incidents led to 91 deaths and 158 injuries in nickel hubs like Morowali. Labor activists are pushing for better oversight, while analysts suggest the report should prompt regulatory reforms. The response from Indonesia's incoming president remains uncertain.

'Convergence' growing on global plastics treaty: UN environment chief

—AFP Agency, *TheJakartaPost*, 23 September 2024

UN Environment Chief Inger Andersen expressed optimism about growing consensus on a global treaty to tackle plastic pollution, despite ongoing disagreements over production caps and a potential plastic fee. Andersen said her team is preparing for final negotiations in late November in Busan, South Korea, where countries aim to finalize the world's first binding treaty on plastic pollution. She noted "convergence" on key issues, including the need for a scientific body, global guidelines on plastic products, waste management, recycling, and addressing existing pollution. However, differences remain, particularly on production caps targeting single-use plastics. Andersen emphasized the importance of refining the conversation beyond a simple "cap or no cap" approach. Discussions also continue around the possibility of a global plastic fee, though Andersen acknowledged that the details may take time to finalize. With plastic production projected to triple by 2060 and over 90% of it unrecycled, the treaty represents a crucial effort to reduce environmental damage from plastic waste.

F. Technology, Investment and Finance

How Much Carbon Emissions Can Carbon Capture and Storage Absorb?

—Pradhipta Oktavianto, *ForestDigest*, 2 October 2024

2023 was recorded as the hottest year on Earth and scientists predict a new record may be set unless significant action is taken. To prevent this, global CO₂-equivalent emissions must be reduced by at least 10 billion tons annually, totaling around 687 billion tons by the century's end. One promising solution is carbon capture and storage (CCS), which involves compressing carbon emissions and storing them underground to prevent their release into the atmosphere. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates CCS could absorb up to 30 billion tons of CO₂ annually. However, a recent study in *Nature Communications* challenges this, suggesting the potential absorption is only about 5-6 billion tons per year due to various barriers. Despite this, there are substantial geological formations that could store 1,000 to 10,000 billion tons of CO₂. While CCS has attracted \$83 billion in investment globally, its current capacity only captures 49 million tons of CO₂ per year, representing just 0.1% of global emissions. Indonesia requires approximately \$1 billion annually to advance its CCS projects, amid challenges like funding limitations and concerns over leaks.

Inbound tourism soars to highest level since 2019: BPS

—Ni Made Tasyarani, *TheJakartaPost*, 1 October 2024

The latest Statistics Indonesia BPS report notes that inbound tourism until August had reached the highest level since 2020, while domestic tourism also saw a comparable increase over the first eight months of the year. Foreign tourist arrivals have reached their highest level since the COVID-19 pandemic, with 1.34 million foreign nationals visiting in August alone, an 18.3% year-on-year increase. From January to August, the total foreign arrivals rose to 9.09 million, marking a 20.4% increase and the highest cumulative figure since 2020. Despite this growth, the numbers remain about 10% below the pre-pandemic levels of over 10 million arrivals in 2019. Malaysians made up the largest share of visitors at 14.1%, followed by Australians and Chinese, who arrived through Ngurah Rai International Airport in Bali and Soekarno-Hatta International Airport. Additionally, domestic tourism is also thriving, with 75.88 million trips recorded, a 29.3% increase year-on-year. Outbound tourism saw 648,000 Indonesians traveling abroad, an 11.7% rise compared to the previous year, with Malaysia being the top destination, followed by Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Thailand.

In the Dragon's Lair, Tourism Faces a Delicate Balancing Act

—Reiza Miftah Wirakusuma, Sarah Gardiner and Alexandra Coghlan, *Tempo*, 27 September 2024

Visitor numbers to Komodo National Park are soaring, creating challenges in balancing tourism with conservation. Home to around 1,300 Komodo dragons, this UNESCO World Heritage site faces increasing pressure as tourists flock to see the world's largest lizard. The Indonesian government plans partial park closures in 2025 to ease the strain. Visitor numbers have quadrupled since 2019, fueled by the country's strategy to boost international tourism. While the influx was initially welcomed for potential conservation funding, the lack of resources to manage crowds has caused concerns. Park managers now struggle with overcrowding, environmental damage, and insufficient infrastructure. Popular national parks worldwide face similar challenges, often responding with entry fees and visitor caps, which

risk limiting access for locals and budget travelers. Komodo's fragile ecosystem and local communities are at risk, with increased boat traffic and waste harming coral reefs and wildlife. Sustainable tourism measures and community involvement are crucial to protecting this unique destination for future generations.

Why is the Government Aggressively Encouraging Downstreaming and Smelter Development?

—Muhammad Fajar Marta, *Kompas*, 26 September 2024

President Jokowi inaugurated several smelters to bolster the downstream mining industry. Notable among them is a copper smelter owned by PT Amman Mineral Industri in West Sumbawa, processing 900,000 tons of copper concentrate annually, and the PT Freeport Indonesia smelter in Gresik, which refines 1.7 million tons and could generate up to Rp 80 trillion in annual revenue for the country. Additionally, the Smelter Grade Alumina Refinery in West Kalimantan, operated by PT Borneo Alumina Indonesia, represents the first bauxite refining facility in the nation, with a capacity of 1 million tons of alumina per year. These initiatives aim to enhance Indonesia's economic value and create jobs by focusing on downstream processing, not only in mining but also in agriculture and fisheries. The government is implementing incentives such as tax holidays and expedited licensing to encourage smelter development. Mining downstreaming is expected to drive economic growth and create jobs in Indonesia.

Indonesia's Prabowo will stick to approved 2025 budget spending, aide says

—Reuters Team, *The Straits Times*, 25 September 2024

Indonesia's President-elect Prabowo Subianto will maintain the 2025 budget spending levels already approved, a senior official from his incoming administration told Reuters, addressing concerns about fiscal prudence. Deputy Finance Minister Thomas Djiwandono, Prabowo's nephew, emphasized that the budget will not require adjustments for Prabowo's key election pledges, including boosting food production and providing free school meals. The 2025 budget, passed by parliament, includes 3,621 trillion rupiah (\$239 billion) in spending, a 6% increase from 2024, with a deficit target of 2.53% of GDP, down from 2.70%. The budget allocates 71 trillion rupiah for free school meals for 20 million students and 15 trillion rupiah for increasing food production. These projects could see further investment depending on their outcomes. Prabowo aims to grow the economy by 8% during his five-year term, up from the current 5%, while promoting foreign investment, particularly in sectors like digitalization and energy transition. Public-private partnerships in infrastructure management are a key focus.

G. Human Rights and Gender Equality

Minister highlights women's vital role in Indonesia's development

—Anita Kenzu, *AntaraNews*, 2 October 2024

Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Bintang Puspayoga highlighted the crucial role of women in national development, emphasizing their potential for driving positive change in society and businesses. In a recent statement, she noted that women in leadership are increasingly relevant, particularly in achieving the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045 amid

complex challenges. Puspayoga praised the progress made by Indonesian women in various fields, including the rise in women holding strategic positions in government and business sectors. She acknowledged that despite the patriarchal culture often hindering women's advancement, significant achievements have been made. The minister pointed out the growing number of women in executive, legislative, and judicial roles, as well as key positions in the corporate world, such as CEOs and managers. Her ministry remains committed to initiatives aimed at enhancing women's capacities, as she believes their contributions are vital to the nation's success. Puspayoga underscored that the future success of companies is closely linked to the leadership of women, who drive necessary transformations for advancement.

Ministry pushes equal parenting to ease women's double burden

—Lintang Budiyantri and Raka Adji, *AntaraNews*, 30 September 2024

The Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture is promoting equal parenting to alleviate the double burden often placed on women. Woro Srihastuti Sulistyanningrum, the ministry's deputy for quality improvement of children, women, and youth, emphasized that in many middle-class families, both parents work, leading to women shouldering extra responsibilities. She called for shared family duties, highlighting the importance of fathers' involvement in raising children to support their psychological well-being. The ministry is developing programs to help women remain productive while balancing family responsibilities, without excessively intervening in family affairs. Sulistyanningrum stressed the need for supportive policies, such as safe public transportation and proper childcare facilities, to ensure women can work comfortably. The government also aims to create environments that prevent sexual harassment and violence, ensuring women's safety and productivity. These efforts, she said, are designed to strengthen families and enhance their quality of life.

ASEAN Gender Outlook 2024 highlights climate change threats to women and girls in Southeast Asia, a warning sign for other regions

—Montira Narkvichien, *UNWomen*, 27 September 2024

The ASEAN Gender Outlook 2024, presented at the UN General Assembly, highlights progress towards several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Southeast Asia, including reduced poverty, food insecurity, and violent crime. However, climate change and environmental degradation disproportionately impact women and girls, especially in areas like food insecurity and access to clean water. Poverty in the region has dropped significantly, yet women are still more likely to be poor, particularly during peak reproductive years. Climate change is projected to push 2.5 million more people into poverty by 2030. Food insecurity remains a concern, with 17% of women and 16% of men lacking sufficient nutrition, and unsustainable farming practices worsening the situation. Women's political participation has increased to 23% in parliaments, but they remain underrepresented in environmental ministries. Climate policies need to be more gender-sensitive, with only three countries addressing this adequately. Despite strides in access to clean water, women are still more likely to die from unsafe water sources. The report calls for increased gender-focused investments to ensure sustainable development and gender equality across the region.

As MotoGP heads to Indonesia, Indigenous Sasak brace for another weekend of repression

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 26 September 2024

Motorcycle racing's biggest show, the MotoGP championship, is on the Indonesian island of Lombok this weekend, where top racers will battle it out on a track built on land taken by force

from Indigenous Sasak communities. As Lombok hosts the MotoGP, former residents of the Mandalika International Circuit brace for repression. Over 2,700 police have been deployed, not just for event security but to prevent protests by displaced local communities. The Mandalika project, which aims to transform the area into a major tourism hub, has faced criticism for displacing Indigenous Sasak communities without proper compensation. United Nations experts have called for the suspension of a \$248 million loan from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) until the impacts on displaced communities are fully assessed. They argue the project has caused irreparable harm, violating Indigenous rights and international standards. Despite these concerns, authorities claim all compensation issues are resolved, though critics highlight numerous unresolved land disputes and reports of intimidation.

Walhi: Thousands of Environmental Activists Criminalized in Jokowi Era, Including Children

—Stephanus Arinditio, *Kompas*, 25 September 2024

Violence against environmental activists tends to peak in the third year after elections and drop as elections approach. In the past decade, 1,131 individuals, including children, have faced violence and criminalization for defending their environment, according to the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (Walhi). Nearly half of these cases were prosecuted in criminal courts. The data, covering 2014-2024, indicates that the majority of affected individuals—1,086 men and 34 women, including 11 children—experienced incidents primarily related to the plantation industry (548 cases), mining (243), and tourism projects (292). Common charges include accusations of violence during protests and theft in plantations. Despite the introduction of the anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) regulation in August 2024, the lack of enforcement guidelines for police remains a concern. The National Police Commission acknowledged the need for police to adopt an environmental perspective in handling cases involving activists, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing environmental law enforcement.

I. RI General Elections

East Java Gubernatorial Candidate Meets Fishermen, Visits Ulama, and Campaigns for Infrastructure

—Runik Sri Astuti and Ambrosius Harto Manumoyoso, *Kompas*, 26 September 2024

On the second day of campaigning for the East Java governor and deputy governor elections, candidates engaged in various activities to connect with voters. The incumbent pair, Khofifah Indar Parawansa and Emil Elestianto Dardak, met with fishermen at the Brondong Fish Auction Place in Lamongan and visited Larangan Market in Sidoarjo to hear traders' concerns. Emil emphasized the importance of maintaining price stability to support both consumers and traders. Candidate pair Luluk Nur Hamidah and Lukmanul Khakim visited Assaidiyah 2 Bahrul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Jombang, seeking support from religious leaders. Their vision focuses on eradicating poverty and fostering inclusive development in East Java. Tri Rismaharini, running with Sahrul Azhar Asumta, stressed the importance of infrastructure for economic growth, citing the need for better roads in the fisheries-rich Tuban-Lamongan-Gresik area to enhance distribution and support agricultural

connectivity. Risma highlighted her experience in building over 1,000 kilometers of new roads during her tenure as Mayor of Surabaya.

All eyes on Prabowo's next steps after Jokowi's deft balancing act

—Leonard C. Sebastian and Januar Aditya Pratama, *The Straits Times*, 26 September 2024

As Indonesia transitions from President Joko Widodo to Prabowo Subianto's leadership, the narrative of "democratic backsliding" oversimplifies the country's governance dynamics. Critics label Widodo's governance as authoritarian, but this misses key drivers of Indonesia's political and economic strategies. The 2023 energy export deal with Singapore exemplifies an assertive executive approach with regulatory flexibility, raising questions about balancing authoritarian pragmatism with a modern, competitive economy. Prabowo's leadership is expected to continue Widodo's governance model, reminiscent of Suharto's era, emphasizing rapid economic growth. This style has earned both praise for effectiveness and criticism for authoritarian tendencies. The energy deal, Indonesia's first renewable energy export, highlights this strategy. Bahlil's appointment to the project is seen as a move to manage opposition within the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), amid rising tensions with Widodo. This shift may concentrate power and marginalize dissent, raising concerns about the sustainability of this governance model during future crises.

Tensions simmer as campaign season for regional races begins

—Dio Suhenda and Apriadi Gunawan, *The Jakarta Post*, 25 September 2024

The official campaign period for Indonesia's regional head elections began on Wednesday, revealing heightened tensions among competing factions, particularly involving outgoing President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo. Candidates are campaigning ahead of the first-ever nationwide simultaneous local elections, set for two months from now. In North Sumatra, gubernatorial candidates Medan Mayor Bobby Nasution, Jokowi's son-in-law, and former governor Edy Rahmayadi exchanged criticisms during a ballot drawing. Bobby highlighted Edy's failures on a major road project, while Edy blamed the central government, led by Jokowi, for the issue. Bobby's coalition holds a majority in the local legislature, while Edy is backed by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), which challenges the coalition's dominance. Similar tensions arose in East Java, where former governor Khofifah Indar Parawansa faced jeers due to her ties to Jokowi. Analysts note that the scrutiny of Jokowi and his family has intensified since February's presidential election, leading to increased pressure on candidates to avoid missteps that could be exploited by their opponents.

Bawaslu highlights five provinces prone to fraud in November local elections

—Dio Suhenda, *The Jakarta Post*, 25 September 2024

The Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) has identified five provinces at high risk of electoral fraud ahead of Indonesia's first simultaneous regional elections on Nov. 27. These provinces—East Java, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), East Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, and Central Sulawesi—were deemed most vulnerable based on Bawaslu's Election Vulnerability Index (IKP), which assesses 27 indicators such as socio-political conditions and potential fraud risks during voting and vote-counting. NTT topped the list with 19 risk indicators, followed by East Kalimantan (18) and East Java (17). Bawaslu will focus on monitoring these provinces closely. Key issues include partisanship among government employees and poll workers, vote-buying, sectarian politics, and misinformation. Themis Indonesia Law Firm also identified 10 provinces, including West Java and Jakarta, as high-risk due to their large number of civil servants. Candidates nationwide have committed to peaceful campaigns, with

gubernatorial candidates in Jakarta and across Java marking the start of the campaign season, which runs until Nov. 23.

Constitutional Court starts hearing petitions on blank boxes petition in regional races

—Dio Suhenda, *TheJakartaPost*, 23 September 2024

Allowing a blank box on the ballots will allow voters to exercise political protest and create healthier competitions, plaintiffs have said in the preliminary hearing for their petitions. Plaintiffs in a judicial review petition have requested that a blank box be included on the ballots of all regional elections. The Constitutional Court began hearing the case ahead of the November 27 elections, where voters will elect governors, mayors, and regents in over 500 regions. In some uncontested races, where only one candidate pair is running, voters can choose between the candidate or a blank box, which would count as a valid vote. The petitioners argue that many candidates are chosen through political deals rather than genuinely representing voters' interests. By adding a blank box option, they believe voters could express dissatisfaction with all candidates. The court ordered the plaintiffs to revise their arguments by October 8. Election law expert Titi Anggraini supports the blank box option, stating that it could promote healthier political competition and increase voter turnout by providing an alternative to abstention. If a sole candidate fails to win a majority, a revote will be held next year.

II. Indonesia in Geopolitics

Indonesian Islamic leader urges continuous boycott against companies over Israel-Gaza war —SCMP Asia's Desk, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 1 October 2024

Indonesia's top Islamic scholar body, the Indonesian Council of Ulema (MUI), has urged citizens to continue boycotting products linked to Israel, citing the ongoing conflict in Gaza. Cholil Nafis, MUI chairman, called the boycott a commitment to supporting Palestinian independence and fighting against "genocide." Brands like KFC, McDonald's, and Starbucks have been affected by the boycott, especially in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia and Malaysia. Cholil emphasized the importance of this movement, saying it's a humanitarian cause. He also highlighted that the boycott serves as real evidence of Indonesia's support for Palestine. Indonesia's Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi reiterated the country's backing for Palestinian sovereignty at the UN General Assembly, calling for the recognition of Palestinian statehood as a step toward a two-state solution. Indonesia, along with several nations, walked out during Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech at the UN, protesting Israel's military actions in Gaza.

Indonesia ratifies five bilateral defense cooperation agreements

—Melalusa S and Tegar Nurfitra, *AntaraNews*, 30 September 2024

The House of Representatives (DPR) has ratified five bilateral defense cooperation agreements with Cambodia, India, France, the United Arab Emirates, and Brazil. During a plenary meeting in Jakarta on Monday, DPR Speaker Puan Maharani asked lawmakers if they approved the ratification, to which all legislators responded positively. Meutya Hafid, Speaker of DPR's Commission I, reported that her commission had reached an agreement with the government to proceed with the legislation during a work meeting on September 25. She noted that these agreements reflect Indonesia's successful defense diplomacy, aiming to mitigate security threats and enhance the national defense industry. Law and Human Rights

Minister Supratman Andi Agtas, on behalf of President Joko Widodo, expressed government support for the ratification, emphasizing that it provides the legal basis for implementing these defense agreements. Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto highlighted the importance of cooperation with these partner countries, particularly noting the significant roles and technologies that India and France offer, including their nuclear capabilities.

Indonesia runs for UN Security Council non-permanent seat 2029-2030

—Suwanti and Yashinta Difa, *AntaraNews*, 29 September 2024

Indonesia is vying for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2029-2030 term, as announced by Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi at the UN General Assembly on September 28. She emphasized that this candidacy reflects Indonesia's commitment to global peace and security, highlighting the country's previous terms on the Council in 1974-1975, 1995-1996, 2007-2008, and 2019-2020. Retno stated that justice and humanity are central to Indonesia's foreign policy, asserting that global leadership must be earned through collective efforts. She expressed confidence that Indonesia's dedication to common peace and security would continue across administrations. Critiquing the current leadership of the Security Council, Retno noted that many global issues, such as the Palestine conflict, remain unresolved. She underscored the necessity for reform, advocating for a more democratic decision-making process and greater representation of diverse voices in the Council, rather than just a few dominant countries.

Diplomacy still Indonesia's greatest strength in region: Study

—Yvette Tanamal, *TheJakartaPost*, 25 September 2024

Among other middle powers in Asia, Indonesia saw an increase in its diplomatic influence despite the limited resources, according to a think tank the Lowy Institute. The 2024 Asia Power Index by the Lowy Institute ranked Indonesia ninth among 27 countries, noting a 2.3-point increase from 2023, with significant gains in cultural power. The U.S. and China were ranked first and second, respectively, while India, Japan, and Australia followed. Susannah Patton, a director at the Lowy Institute, emphasized Indonesia's active engagement in multilateral forums, including its leadership of the G20 in 2022, which culminated in a joint statement condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While military capabilities remain relatively weak, the report highlighted improvements in economic relationships and foreign investment attraction. Analysts express optimism about the future of Indonesia's diplomacy, especially under the president-elect Prabowo Subianto, who has already begun engaging with global leaders. Patton underscored the importance of maintaining the quality of Indonesia's diplomatic contributions as it takes on a more prominent role in ASEAN.

Indonesia formally requests to join Trans-Pacific trade pact

—Reuters Team, *TheStraitsTimes*, 25 September 2024

Indonesia has formally requested to join the Trans-Pacific trade pact to widen its export markets, said its chief economic minister on September 25, according to a report by state news agency *Antara*. Indonesia has sent a letter requesting the accession to New Zealand, as the depositary for the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), said Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto. "This is a decision we take to structurally reform our economy and open up market access for Indonesia's economy," Mr Airlangga said. In May, Jakarta announced its intention to join the free trade agreement that already groups 12 countries, hoping to attract investment by widening export market access. CPTPP members are Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United Kingdom and Vietnam.

Indonesia's President-elect Prabowo Subianto supported the request, Mr Airlangga said. Mr Prabowo Subianto will take over from outgoing President Joko Widodo on October 20.