



## Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

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

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### A. Marine and Fisheries

#### [Fisheries cultivation management to counter overfishing: minister](#)

—Muhammad Harianto and Yashinta Difa, *AntaraNews*, 29 December 2024

Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Sakti Wahyu Trenggono, emphasized the importance of managing fisheries cultivation to address the growing threat of overfishing, which

endangers marine ecosystems. During a visit to reviewing a fish processing unit of PT Tilapia Nusantara Jaya in Semarang, Central Java, Trenggono highlighted that while the fisheries sector is crucial to Indonesia's economy, overfishing must be controlled. Over 50,000 ships operate in Indonesian waters daily, even as far as Australia, seeking tuna. Trenggono stressed that sustainable fisheries practices are essential to maintaining ecological balance, as overfishing or the use of harmful fishing tools can disrupt marine life. He also warned of health risks, as fish from open seas can contain harmful substances like mercury and microplastics, a major concern given Indonesia's role as the second-largest marine plastic waste producer. To address these issues, he called for stricter policies, including expanding marine conservation areas, implementing fishing quotas, and involving the private sector, academics, and fishermen in sustainable practices and marine pollution cleanup efforts.

### [Indonesia, UK boost cooperation in sustainable fisheries development](#)

—News Staff, *VietnamPlus*, 26 December 2024

Marine Affairs and Fisheries Minister Sakti Wahyu Trenggono and UK Ambassador Dominic Jermy met to enhance cooperation in blue economy development, focusing on marine and fisheries sustainability. The discussions centered on blue carbon, aquaculture, and sustainable fishing gear. Key initiatives include developing modern and sustainable fishing and surveillance vessels and jointly managing conservation areas critical for carbon absorption and climate change mitigation. The UK's Blue Planet Fund plays a vital role in supporting these efforts, providing a foundation for collaborative solutions in sustainable marine resource management. Trenggono emphasized the importance of conservation areas in addressing global environmental challenges, while Jermy highlighted the alignment of this cooperation with Indonesia's maritime priorities under President Prabowo Subianto's strategic programs. Both parties see significant potential for further collaboration in achieving Indonesia's sustainable blue economy goals, reinforcing efforts to build a comprehensive approach to marine conservation and fisheries development.

### [Indonesia partners with 10 countries to combat illegal fishing](#)

—Muhammad Harianto and Yashinta Difa, *AntaraNews*, 20 December 2024

Indonesia has partnered with 10 countries to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and promote sustainable marine ecosystems under the Regional Plan of Action to Promote Responsible Fishing Practices (RPOA-IUU). Participating nations include Indonesia, Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam. Key efforts include strengthening regional data-sharing mechanisms. The countries agreed to share six data types: protected species, regulations, management plans, IUU vessel lists, vessel movements, and licensing information. The roadmap for this mechanism aims to improve cross-border collaboration in addressing IUU fishing challenges. Indonesia has achieved significant milestones, such as launching surveillance vessels, implementing vessel traffic control, and developing the National Fish Traceability and Logistics System. Law enforcement efforts include handling transnational IUU fishing cases and deploying satellite-based monitoring technologies. This collaboration underscores a joint commitment to eradicate IUU fishing and support the blue economy, ensuring sustainable development in the region.

### [Scientists in Bali find what could be the world's largest coral colony](#)

—Kristine Sabillo, *Mongabay*, 17 December 2024

A massive coral colony of *Galaxea astreata* has been discovered off Bali's popular diving site Nusa Penida, measuring 58 meters wide by 71 meters long, covering over 4,000 square

meters. Announced by coral restoration nonprofit Ocean Gardener, it surpasses the previously largest known coral colony, a *Pavona clavus* in the Solomon Islands, which measures 34 by 32 meters. The coral, located in the nutrient-rich Lombok Strait, thrives in strong currents that feed its polyps. While its size offers resilience and significant reproductive potential, it faces threats from climate change, including its second year of coral bleaching. Ocean Gardener is collaborating with Italy's University of Milano-Bicocca to confirm the colony's status as a single organism through genetic and aging tests, potentially setting a new world record. Eric Brown, a marine ecologist, highlighted the reproductive strength of large colonies in restoring reefs after disturbances, marking this discovery as crucial for reef conservation efforts in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

### [On the Maritime City, Let's Go to Brest to Reflect](#)

—Mukhamad Kurniawan, *Kompas*, 18 December 2024

Brest, a historic port city in western France, exemplifies how maritime cities can integrate economic growth, scientific innovation, and environmental sustainability. As a vital gateway to the Atlantic since the 17th century, Brest has evolved into a leading maritime hub while preserving its rich naval heritage. Brest Métropole, an intercommunal organization, unites eight communes to ensure integrated development across port infrastructure, research, and environmental conservation. Home to prominent marine institutions like Ifremer, SHOM, and Cedre, Brest excels in marine technology, renewable energy research, and combating water pollution. Public attractions like Océanopolis, a marine discovery center, combine education, research, and tourism, fostering ocean conservation awareness among visitors. Annual events, such as the Brest International Maritime Festival, highlight the city's vibrant maritime culture. Indonesia, with its maritime cities like Surabaya and Makassar, can draw inspiration from Brest's balanced approach. Investments in port modernization, integrated planning, and marine research could boost economic growth while preserving the marine environment. Brest's model showcases the potential of maritime cities to thrive sustainably.

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## B. Forests and Land Use

### [Southeast Asia in review: 2024](#)

—Carolyn Cowan and Gerald Flynn, *Mongabay*, 30 December 2024

In 2024, Southeast Asia faced a grim year for conservation, marked by a surge in deforestation driven by infrastructure development, agriculture, logging, and mining, severely impacting vital ecosystems. Indonesia, with its vast tropical forests, saw continued deforestation linked to illegal logging and agricultural expansion. Environmental activists in the region faced escalating risks, including detentions and violence. However, there were notable conservation wins, such as wildlife population recoveries, biodiversity discoveries, and victories by Indigenous communities against harmful development projects. In the face of mounting pressures, grassroots initiatives, like mangrove restoration and sustainable agriculture, emerged as effective nature-based solutions, contributing to biodiversity conservation and improving local livelihoods. Despite these efforts, Southeast Asia's carbon market came under scrutiny, with allegations of human rights abuses in REDD+ projects. Meanwhile, the region's growing demand for minerals for the energy transition led to increased environmental degradation and human rights violations linked to mining. Amidst

these challenges, conservation successes such as the recovery of endangered species, including Siamese crocodiles and tigers, provided hope for the future.

### [Indonesia risks carbon 'backfire' with massive deforestation for sugarcane](#)

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

Indonesia's plan to clear 2 million hectares of forest in Papua for sugarcane plantations has raised serious environmental concerns. A report from the Center of Economic and Law Studies (CELIOS) warns that deforestation would release 782.45 million metric tons of greenhouse gases, nearly doubling the country's current emissions from deforestation. The project, part of a broader food estate initiative, threatens critical ecosystems and would severely impact Indigenous communities, who have already seen their lands shrink. Despite protests, the government insists on proceeding, citing food security. However, activists argue for a restorative economic model that empowers local communities through sustainable livelihoods, like non-timber forest products. CELIOS suggests focusing on sustainable agriculture and empowering small farmers instead of large-scale plantations, which would protect the forests and reduce emissions. The report also highlights the potential for increasing food sovereignty by strengthening land rights and providing training to small farmers, offering a viable alternative that avoids further environmental degradation and conflict with Indigenous populations.

Askar, Media Wahyudi (2024). [vanishing forests and rising emissions: how the merauke food estate speeds up the climate crisis](#) Adhinegara, Yudhistira (Ed). Jakarta: Center of Economic Law Studies.

### [Government takes preemptive action against potential 2025 forest fires](#)

—Prisca T and Tegar Nurfitri, *AntaraNews*, 23 December 2024

The Indonesian government is taking proactive measures to prevent and reduce the risk of forest and land fires in 2025. Environment Minister Hanif Faisol Nurrofiq, following a coordination meeting in Jakarta, emphasized the government's commitment to early preparations. He mentioned that the Ministry of Environment would hold further discussions with Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs Budi Gunawan to synchronize efforts against potential fires. Nurrofiq highlighted the importance of collaboration among the Indonesian National Armed Forces, National Police, ministries, regional governments, and the public to tackle the issue. The government plans to convene a plenary meeting in early January 2025 to ensure readiness on the ground. Although the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency predicts a normal dry season, the government stresses the need for robust preparedness. Nurrofiq also reiterated Indonesia's commitment to combating transboundary haze and the implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP), with the Ministry of Environment now serving as the national coordinator.

### [Indonesia reforestation plan a smoke screen for agriculture project, critics say](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 17 December 2024

Indonesia's government has announced plans to reforest 12.7 million hectares of degraded land, aiming to reduce emissions and meet its 2030 climate goals. However, critics argue this reforestation initiative is a cover-up for deforestation caused by the controversial food estate program, which plans to establish 2 million hectares of sugarcane plantations in Papua. A study estimates the food estate project will release 782.5 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, potentially doubling Indonesia's emissions. Climate envoy Hashim Djojohadikusumo insists the food

program is vital for food security and that reforestation will offset the loss. Critics, including NGOs, warn that reforestation can't replace the ecological value of natural forests and emphasize the long recovery time needed for ecosystems like peatlands. Experts also question the feasibility of reforesting such vast, varied terrains and highlight challenges like insufficient funding and short monitoring periods for existing programs. There are calls for stricter enforcement of rehabilitation by companies with mining concessions and greater transparency to prevent displacement of local communities.

Askar, Media Wahyudi (author) and Adhinegara, Yudhistira (editor). 2024. [Hutan-Lenyap-Emisi-Melejit-Food-Estate-Merauke-Mempercepat-Krisis-Iklim](#). Jakarta: Center of Economic Law Studies.

### **Indonesian forests put at risk by South Korean and Japanese biomass subsidies**

—Annelise Giseburt, *Mongabay*, 12 December 2024

A report by environmental NGOs, published in October 2024, highlights how subsidies for forest biomass energy in Japan and South Korea are contributing to deforestation in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia. The country's biomass industry is rapidly expanding, with wood pellets produced from cleared rainforests in regions like Sulawesi. These pellets are exported to Japan and South Korea, where they are used in power plants, including in co-firing projects. Notably, Japanese trading company Hanwa has confirmed that rainforest is being cleared for energy forest plantations in Sulawesi, although it downplays the significance of the deforestation. The Japanese government, through initiatives like the Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC), is supporting biomass energy projects in Southeast Asia, further fueling the industry's growth. This expansion is driven by subsidies from South Korea's Renewable Energy Certificate program, despite the lack of strict sustainability requirements. Critics argue that burning biomass emits more CO<sub>2</sub> than coal, and the push for biomass exacerbates deforestation. Forest advocates are calling for an end to harmful subsidies, but significant policy change remains elusive.

Earth Insight, Auriga Nusantara, Forest Watch Indonesia, Solutions for Our Climate, Trend Asia, and Mighty Earth. (2024). [Unheeded Warnings: Forest Biomass Threats to Tropical Forests in Indonesia and Southeast Asia](#)

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

### **New Species of Giant Pitcher Plant Discovered in Sabah**

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 27 December 2024

A recent discovery in Sabah, Malaysia, has unveiled a new species of giant pitcher plant, *Nepenthes pongoides*, endemic to the Meliau Mountains in central Sabah. This species is characterized by its large size, distinctive bell-shaped upper and lower pitchers, and narrow, upright petals. The pitchers are designed to capture rainwater and insects, aiding the plant's carnivorous diet. The research team, comprising scientists from Malaysia and Australia, published their findings in the December 2024 issue of the *Australian Journal of Botany*. Alviana Damit from the Forest Research Centre, Sabah Forestry Department, led the study. The team identified only 39 mature individuals across two subpopulations, classifying the species as critically endangered due to its small population size, limited range, and threats from poaching for the horticultural trade. The discovery underscores the importance of

targeted exploration in remaining wilderness areas to uncover hidden biodiversity, closing gaps in scientific knowledge, and supporting conservation efforts to reduce the risk of species extinction.

Damit A et al. (2024) [\(PDF\) Sabah's hidden giant: \*Nepenthes pongoides\* \(Nepenthaceae\), a micro-endemic tropical pitcher plant from northern Borneo](#) Australian Journal of Botany 72, BT24050

### [A Bali farm lights up the night with a one-of-a-kind firefly lab](#)

—Claire Turrell, *Mongabay*, 23 December 2024

Balinese conservationist Wayan Wardika has launched the "Bring Back The Light" initiative to conserve fireflies, which are vanishing in Southeast Asia due to habitat loss, pesticide use, light pollution, and climate change. Wardika, inspired by childhood memories of using fireflies as lanterns, opened Indonesia's only firefly conservation lab in 2020. The lab breeds and monitors fireflies, helping to identify eight local species. The project also promotes organic farming, encouraging neighboring farmers to switch to pesticide-free practices. Wardika's farm has become a demonstration plot for firefly-friendly crops like coffee and durian. Despite initial resistance from local farmers, the program has gained support, and four other farms have gone organic. The initiative aims to create a model for firefly conservation in Southeast Asia. Wardika's efforts are backed by collaborations with scientists in Malaysia, Australia, and Indonesian universities. This project not only helps protect fireflies but also promotes eco-tourism and organic farming as viable alternatives to chemical pesticides.

### [Promising outcomes from the summit to conserve and restore mangroves](#)

—William Austin, *TheJakartaPost*, 23 December 2024

Mangroves, vital for carbon storage and coastal resilience, are among the world's most threatened ecosystems. Over 1 million hectares of mangroves have been lost since 1996, but 70% of this damage is restorable. At the world's first international mangrove conservation and restoration conference in Abu Dhabi, a new strategy called the "mangrove breakthrough" was introduced, aiming to stop human-driven mangrove loss, double the area of conserved mangroves, and restore half of recently lost mangroves. A key tool in this effort is Global Mangrove Watch, an online platform that uses remote sensing to track mangrove habitats and carbon stores. Experts emphasized the need for a seascape approach, connecting mangroves with sea grasses, corals, and rivers for holistic ecosystem benefits. Successful community-led restoration projects in countries like Indonesia and Kenya highlighted the importance of local involvement. Additionally, the Global Mangrove Alliance seeks to raise \$4 billion for mangrove restoration, but funding challenges remain due to mismatched timelines between investors and the long-term nature of mangrove projects. The conference emphasized bridging policy, finance, and action to protect mangroves.

### [Officials pledge zoo review after Sumatran elephant is killed in Bali flood](#)

—Luh De Suriyani, *Mongabay*, 19 December 2024

Indonesia's Bali Zoo is under review after a flash flood killed a 45-year-old Sumatran elephant named Molly on December 16. Heavy rains caused a river to swell while Molly was on her routine walk, sweeping her away despite handlers' efforts. Another elephant, Tina, managed to escape the rising waters. Molly's body was found downstream the following day and buried on zoo grounds, where she had lived since 2013. The Bali Natural Resources Conservation Agency is evaluating the zoo's management of its remaining 14 elephants to prevent similar incidents. Zoo officials have also pledged to conduct an internal review of procedures.



Sumatran elephants (*Elephas maximus sumatranus*), critically endangered, face significant threats. Wild populations have declined from 2,400-2,800 in the early 2000s to an estimated 924-1,359 by 2022, according to the Indonesian Elephant Conservation Forum. Climate change-related flash floods and human-wildlife conflict, such as electrified fences in Sumatra, exacerbate these risks, highlighting the urgent need for enhanced conservation measures.

### [World falls short of drought deal at Saudi-hosted talks](#)

—Robbie Corey-Boulet, *AFP/TheJakartaPost*, 15 December 2024

Negotiators at the Saudi-hosted COP16 failed to reach a binding agreement on addressing drought, concluding the 12-day United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) talks with a pledge to finalize a global drought regime at COP17 in Mongolia in 2026. Despite the setback, significant progress was made toward a future framework. Drought, exacerbated by environmental degradation, costs over \$300 billion annually and is projected to affect 75% of the global population by 2050. African nations and Indigenous groups strongly advocated for a binding protocol to enforce government accountability for monitoring, early warning systems, and response plans, but developed nations preferred a less stringent framework. Saudi Arabia, heavily impacted by desertification, launched initiatives like the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership and pledged over \$12 billion with global partners to combat land degradation. Critics noted the nation's previous resistance to phasing out fossil fuels, but activists commended its focus on land-related issues, emphasizing their universal importance in ensuring food security and sustainable ecosystems.

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

### [Decarbonization in the Shadow of Slow Renewables](#)

—Aditya Putra Perdana, *Kompas*, 27 December 2024

Indonesia faces significant challenges in meeting its renewable energy targets. By the end of 2024, the share of renewables in the primary energy mix is projected to reach only 14.1%, far below the 23% target for 2025. The slow progress stems from high investment needs, technological barriers, and a continued reliance on fossil fuels, which currently dominate the energy mix with coal accounting for 67% of electricity generation. Despite abundant renewable energy potential—estimated at 3,600 GW—installed capacity remains at just 13.8 GW as of mid-2024. Key projects, including geothermal plants such as Lumut Balai and Sorik Merapi, aim to boost capacity but remain insufficient for long-term goals. The government has expressed optimism about achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, earlier than the 2060 target. However, experts highlight ambiguous policies that promote both renewables and fossil fuels. Stronger policy alignment, substantial investment, and a clear roadmap for phasing out coal-fired plants are essential for Indonesia's energy transition and decarbonization efforts.

### [Climate change forces Jakarta fishing families to marry off young daughters](#)

—Kristine Sabillo, *Mongabay*, 23 December 2024

Climate change is pushing families along Indonesia's northern Javanese coast into child marriage as a survival strategy amid declining fish stocks and worsening economic

conditions, according to Mongabay reports. In North Jakarta's Kalibaru neighborhood, sisters Janah and Jaroh, married at 16, earn about \$1-\$2 daily processing fish, a reflection of the hardships fishing communities face. Environmental degradation, overfishing, and climate change have forced fishers to sail farther out for dwindling catches. Green mussel fisher Arifudin in Cilincing highlights that warming waters and increased pollution from factories are making it harder to sustain livelihoods. Families like those of sisters Siti and Azizah resort to child marriage as a way to secure economic support, continuing a cycle where parents like their mother, Raniti, married young to ease financial burdens. Susan Herawati of KIARA notes that reduced fishing incomes often prompt early marriages, further perpetuating the challenges faced by coastal communities already struggling with climate-induced impacts.

### [Farmers cleave to sago as mining industry digs deeper in Indonesia's Maluku](#)

—Mahmud Ichi, *Mongabay*, 26 December 2024

In East Halmahera, many farmers rely on sago trees for food, as an alternative to the widespread consumption of white rice. However, this traditional food source faces a growing threat from the expansion of nickel and other mining operations in the region. Sago trees, which require minimal resources and are resilient to climate change, are at risk due to land-use changes driven by mining. The district has lost over 40,000 ha of old-growth forest in two decades, exacerbating concerns over the future of sago cultivation. Local experts, like Lily Ishak from Khairun University, warn that without protection, sago forests could disappear within a century. A proposal for a research center to conserve sago trees has been submitted to the government. Communities, such as those in Bicoli, fear that mining companies could uproot their sago trees, as happened in nearby areas. For residents like Halik and Fatimun, sago trees are not only a crucial food staple but also a form of economic security for their retirement. Mining threatens longstanding cultural and economic practice.

### [The eternal snow succumbs to climate warming: a glacier that we will soon no longer see](#)

—Amelia Jones, *MeteoGiornale*, 19 December 2024

The tropical glaciers on Puncak Jaya in Papua, Indonesia, known as the "eternal snow," are rapidly melting due to climate change, threatening both the local ecosystem and the cultural heritage of indigenous communities. Once a striking feature, the glaciers are thinning at an alarming rate, with ice thickness dropping from 105 feet in 2010 to just 13 feet today. These glaciers, located on Oceania's highest peak, hold deep cultural significance and are vital for local traditions. Climate change, combined with the El Niño phenomenon, has accelerated their decline, with predictions that they could vanish by 2026. The loss of these glaciers would have severe ecological and cultural consequences, as they host unique ecosystems and provide valuable data on past climate patterns. Experts warn that this crisis highlights the urgent need for global action to combat climate change, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and protect the world's remaining tropical glaciers, marking a significant loss for both Indonesia and the planet.

### [Global demand spurring Indonesia's mining boom comes at a cost for many communities](#)

—Yusuf Wahil and Victoria Milko, *AssociatedPress*, 18 December 2024

Kabaena Island in Southeast Sulawesi is facing severe environmental and health challenges due to extensive nickel mining. Once pristine waters have turned murky, leading to the disappearance of marine life such as octopi and colorful fish, which were vital for local consumption and trade. The Indigenous Bajau community, traditionally reliant on the sea,



now warns their children to avoid swimming due to concerns over skin rashes and lesions. The mining boom, driven by global demand for materials like nickel and cobalt used in stainless steel and electric vehicle batteries, has led to significant deforestation. Between 2001 and 2023, over 3,700 ha of forest, including protected areas, were cleared. Deforestation has disrupted local ecosystems and livelihoods. Residents report health issues linked to contaminated water and seafood, including itchy skin and sore throats. Lab tests have revealed hazardous levels of nickel, lead, and cadmium in water and shellfish, posing serious health risks. Despite a 2024 constitutional court ruling protecting small islands from hazardous activities, mining continues, with forest loss persisting and new permits being issued. Local communities feel helpless as their environment and health deteriorate, with limited response from authorities and mining companies.

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## E. Pollution, Waste and Disaster

### [Microplastic Contamination in the Human Body Increases the Risk of Non-Communicable Diseases](#)

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 31 December 2024

Micro- and nanoplastics (MNPs) are increasingly pervasive in the environment, posing significant health risks. A new study in *TrAC Trends in Analytical Chemistry* reviewed 61 studies on MNP detection in human tissues and 840 toxicological studies. MNPs have been detected in organs like lungs, arteries, testes, and placenta, with higher levels found in damaged tissues, such as inflamed intestines or cancerous growths. Health impacts include oxidative stress, inflammation, and links to conditions like intestinal inflammation, thrombosis, cervical cancer, and chronic diseases such as diabetes and lung disease. Globally, pollution exacerbates non-communicable diseases, responsible for 71% of annual deaths. Humans are exposed to MNPs through food, air, and everyday products, with hotspots of indoor pollution containing up to 50 times more particles than outdoors. Indonesians consume an estimated 15 grams of microplastics monthly, primarily from contaminated food. Researchers emphasize the urgent need for a One Health approach to address this growing issue, calling for collaboration between environmental and medical scientists to mitigate MNP exposure and its health impacts.

Luo, Y., Xu, X., Yin, Q., Liu, S., Xing, M., Jin, X., Shu, L., Jiang, Z., Cai, Y., Ouyang, D., Luo, Y., & Zhang, H., 2025. [Mapping micro\(nano\)plastics in various organ systems: their emerging links to human diseases?](#) *TrAC Trends in Analytical Chemistry*, 183, p.118114.

### [A Dangerous New Era: Series of Disasters in 2024 Triggered by Climate Change](#)

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 30 December 2024

In 2024, climate change caused devastating global impacts, marking it as the hottest year on record with atmospheric temperatures averaging 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Extreme heat events, fueled by human-induced climate change, led to 41 extra days of dangerous heat worldwide, disproportionately affecting poorer nations. Some areas endured over 150 days of extreme heat, with fatalities often underreported. Deadly heat waves struck nations such as Saudi Arabia, where 1,300 died during the Hajj pilgrimage as temperatures hit 51.8°C. Concurrently, wildfires ravaged the Americas, and drought in southern Africa left 26 million at risk of starvation. Floods affected diverse regions, from Kenya and Spain to Mayotte in the Indian Ocean, where Typhoon Chino caused catastrophic destruction. Economic losses

from climate-related disasters reached \$310 billion globally, with significant agricultural and infrastructure damage. Researchers emphasize that climate change exacerbates heat, drought, and cyclones, urging swift action to address the accelerating crisis. The year's disasters highlight the urgency of transitioning to renewable energy and mitigating risks.

Otto, F., Giguere, J., Clarke, B., Barnes, C., Zachariah, M., Merz, N., Philip, S., Kew, S., Pinto, I., and Vahlberg, M., 2024. *When risks become reality: extreme weather in 2024*. doi: [10.25561/116443](https://doi.org/10.25561/116443)

### **Authorities struggle against tsunami complacency**

—Radhiyya Indra, *TheJakartaPost*, 26 December 2024

As Aceh marks 20 years since the devastating 2004 earthquake and tsunami, authorities are focused on improving disaster preparedness. The region, historically prone to tsunamis, is working to strengthen its alert systems. In 2004, Aceh lacked the technology to provide timely warnings, but today, Indonesia boasts an advanced tsunami early warning system, including over 500 seismographs and earthquake monitors. Alerts are now sent to mobile phones within three minutes of a major quake, significantly improving response times. However, challenges remain. Many buildings are still vulnerable to earthquakes, and awareness campaigns, though ongoing, lack sufficient impact. In contrast, the Simeulue people's deep-rooted tsunami knowledge, passed through generations, helped minimize casualties during the 2004 disaster. Experts stress the need for cultural integration of disaster awareness and more robust educational efforts. While Indonesia has made strides, it still lags behind international standards for disaster risk reduction, with experts advocating for better disaster mitigation education to enhance public response.

### **Potential for Extreme Weather Still Lurking Towards End of Year**

—Insan Alfajri, *Kompas*, 26 December 2024

Extreme weather is expected to affect the 2025 New Year celebrations, with moderate to heavy rain, lightning, and strong winds forecast across multiple regions from December 27, 2024 to January 2, 2025. The weak La Niña phenomenon, active atmospheric waves, and strengthening Asian Monsoon winds are driving this weather pattern. Affected areas include Riau, Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, East Java, Yogyakarta, Bali, and Sulawesi. Severe conditions have already caused flooding in locations such as Tarakan, Kulon Progo, and Semarang, and landslides in South Sulawesi and West Java. The National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) reported three fatalities in Tarakan due to a landslide, as well as damage to homes and infrastructure. The BMKG urged the public to stay alert for potential hydrometeorological disasters and take precautions such as clearing water channels and avoiding disaster-prone areas. Drivers are advised to reduce speed in rain and remain cautious of landslides and fallen trees, especially in hilly areas.

### **2024 Notes: Three Planetary Crises and a Narrowing Way Out**

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 26 December 2024

The planet is facing three interconnected crises—climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution—with severe implications for ecosystems and humanity. Record-breaking heat in 2024 intensified tropical storms, coral bleaching, and the melting of Puncak Jaya's ice in Papua, which could vanish by 2026. November 2024 saw global temperatures 1.62°C above pre-industrial levels, making 2015–2024 the hottest decade on record. Biodiversity loss remains dire, with 73% of wildlife populations declining since 1970 and one-third of tree species threatened with extinction. Pollution, particularly from plastics, contaminates

ecosystems and human bodies, exacerbating health risks. Global negotiations on climate, biodiversity, and plastic pollution achieved mixed outcomes. The COP29 climate talks in Baku stalled on fossil fuel phase-outs, while plastic treaty negotiations in South Korea failed due to resistance from oil-rich nations. However, biodiversity talks in Colombia recognized indigenous communities in conservation efforts, offering hope amid crises. Despite these developments, insufficient funding and political reluctance hinder meaningful progress, underscoring the urgent need for coordinated global action to combat these planetary emergencies.

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## F. Technology, Investment and Finance

### [Fraud, alleged illegal levying raise questions about free meals program's implementation](#)

—Radhiyya Indra, *TheJakartaPost*, 1 January 2025

The government's free nutritious meals program, a flagship initiative of Prabowo Subianto aimed at improving childhood nutrition, has encountered several setbacks during its pilot tests, raising concerns about its nationwide rollout starting Jan. 2. The program is designed to feed 82 million children, school students, and pregnant women. Issues include allegations of illegal levies, with a viral TikTok video accusing schools of charging for lunch boxes, which the National Nutrition Agency (BGN) quickly denied. Additionally, reports emerged of catering businesses in Kediri, East Java being scammed by fraudsters posing as vendors for the program. Experts criticize the program's lack of public engagement and transparency, suggesting that a centralized model and short trial period have led to confusion and inefficiencies. Budget cuts have also affected meal costs, from Rp 15,000 to Rp 10,000 per serving. A survey revealed concerns about inefficient distribution, corruption, and the nutritional value of the meals. BGN head Dadan Hindayana reassured that the program is under control and will proceed as planned.

### [Indonesia's Apple and Google bans frustrate country's tech fans](#)

—Aisyah Llewellyn, *Aljazeera*, 1 January 2025

Indonesia's ban on iPhone 16 and Google Pixel sales, due to the failure to meet the country's local component requirements (TKDN policy), has frustrated tech enthusiasts. The policy mandates at least 40% local sourcing for smartphones, leading to blocked sales since October 2024. Tech fans like Winston, an Apple loyalist, have faced challenges complying with government rules, including past incidents where imported phones became unusable. Indonesia, home to 190 million smartphone users, largely relies on Chinese brands like Xiaomi and Vivo, alongside Samsung. Lawyer Abdul Soleh highlighted limited opposition to the ban due to the iPhone's high price, while business leader Khairul Mahalli warned of potential trade retaliations if such policies persist. Consumer advocates caution against illegal purchases, urging compliance for buyer protection. Despite Apple's \$100 million investment offer to build facilities in Bandung, the government rejected it, deeming it insufficient compared to larger investments in Vietnam and Thailand. As Indonesia seeks a balance between protecting local industries and meeting consumer demand, tech fans face limited options for accessing banned devices.

### [Minister Rosan Meets Chinese Giants to Accelerate EV Ecosystem Investment](#)

—Front Row Team, *TheJakartaPost*, 31 December 2024

Minister of Investment Rosan Perkasa Roeslani visited three leading Chinese electric vehicle (EV) companies—BYD, CNGR, and CATL—on December 16-17, to advance Indonesia's EV sector and downstream industry. The meetings aimed to accelerate investment, expand production, and strengthen Indonesia's role in the global EV supply chain. BYD plans to expand its Subang EV plant to become Southeast Asia's largest, with production starting by 2026. The project will boost output to 150,000 units annually, create 10,000+ jobs, and position Indonesia as an EV export hub. The government pledged infrastructure support, expedited permits, and incentives. CNGR's plans include the Konasara Green Techno Industrial Zone in North Konawe, integrating nickel smelting and advanced material production. The \$2.6 billion investment focuses on renewable energy materials and workforce development. At CATL, discussions centered on a \$6 billion integrated EV battery ecosystem spanning mining, production, and recycling. Targeted for 2026, the project will enhance local content and affordability, bolstering Indonesia's domestic EV industry and sustainability goals.

### [Prabowo's Statement on Palm Oil May Threaten the Environment, Satya Bumi Says](#)

—Irsyan Hasyim, *Tempo*, 31 December 2024

Environmental campaign group Satya Bumi criticized President Prabowo Subianto's recent statement asserting that expanding palm oil plantations would not lead to deforestation. Executive Director Andi Muttaqien argued that such a statement could be interpreted as a directive to further open up natural forests, potentially causing environmental harm. According to Satya Bumi's research, Indonesia's palm oil industry has already over-expanded, with an upper cap of 18.15 million hectares. While deforestation linked to palm oil plantations decreased between 2018-2021, it spiked in 2022. Muttaqien emphasized the need for intensification rather than expansion, aligning with climate and deforestation control commitments. He criticized Prabowo's understanding of deforestation, explaining that it involves more than just barren land—it includes the loss of diverse, carbon-sequestering natural forests. The conversion of forests into monoculture plantations like palm oil depletes carbon capture capabilities and damages ecosystems. Satya Bumi argues that oil palm cannot replace the complex ecological role of natural forests. Prabowo's call to expand plantations contradicts efforts to protect forests and mitigate climate change.

### [BKPM reveals '2024 Strategic Investment Downstreaming Research'](#)

—Front Row Team, *TheJakartaPost*, 30 December 2024

On December 23, the Ministry of Investment and Downstream Industry/BKPM held the Expose of Strategic Investment Downstreaming Research in Jakarta. The event was attended by 150 participants from government ministries, business associations, and academia. The focus was on advancing Indonesia's downstream industries, aiming to create added value and foster economic growth. The research, part of the 2024 Strategic Investment Downstreaming Road Map, includes three studies: Acceleration, Optimization, and Impact Downstreaming. One key area was the downstreaming of nickel, targeting stainless steel products and electric vehicle batteries. The research highlighted the establishment of a nickel ecosystem, from mining to final products. The Optimization Downstreaming study explored seven commodities, including bauxite, petroleum, and biofuels, identifying areas for improvement. The Road Map projects US\$618.1 billion in investments for the downstream sector by 2040, with significant contributions from minerals, oil and gas, and other sectors. The expected outcomes include \$857.9 billion in export increases, \$235.9 billion in GDP

growth, and 3 million new jobs. In 2024, downstreaming contributed Rp 272.91 trillion (21.6%) to total investment realization.

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

### [Palm Oil Workers Group Unveils Harmful Industry Practices Akin to Colonialism](#)

—Irsyan Hasyim, *Tempo*, 27 December 2024

Transnational Palm Oil Labour Solidarity (TPOLS) has outlined six destructive characteristics of the palm oil industry, highlighting ongoing issues faced by plantation workers in Indonesia. These include poor working conditions with low wages, gender-based exploitation, unsafe work environments, flawed Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) certifications, land conflicts, excessive force by authorities, and suppression of labor unions. TPOLS Coordinator Rizal Assalam compared the structures on plantations to colonial-era practices, noting that workers' conditions remain far from ideal. Damar Panca from the Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions (KPBI) pointed to weak state regulations and the Job Creation Law as contributors to worker exploitation. Uli Arta Siagian from Walhi raised concerns about international regulations, such as the EU's Anti-Deforestation Regulation, questioning their effectiveness in protecting workers. Sawit Watch's Hotler Parsaoran highlighted the legal gaps in Indonesia's labor laws for palm oil workers, who face higher workloads and inadequate health and safety provisions. Efforts are being made to pass the Draft Law on Palm Oil Plantation Workers' Protection, advocating for a fair transition towards more ethical practices.

### [Yearender: Police brutality persists on account of impunity](#)

—Nina Loasana, *TheJakartaPost*, 26 December 2024

Two years after National Police chief Gen. Listyo Sigit Prabowo pledged reform following the shocking murder of officer Brig. Nofriansyah Yosua Hutabarat by then-internal affairs chief Ferdy Sambo, reports of police brutality persist. This year alone, several officers were arrested for shooting civilians and colleagues. Notable cases include the murder of a delivery driver by Brig. Anton Kurniawan in Central Kalimantan, the fatal shooting of three students by a Semarang officer, and the killing of a colleague by South Solok Police chief Dadang Iskandar. Amnesty International recorded 116 cases of police brutality, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and intimidation. The persistence of violence is attributed to systemic issues, including a lack of accountability and weak political will. Experts call for structural reforms and more oversight, citing the failure of previous regulations and the impunity enjoyed by officers involved in violent acts. Despite proposed changes to the Police Law, recent bills focus more on expanding police surveillance powers rather than addressing internal violence.

### [Celebrating the women behind Indonesia's fisheries](#)

—Arkienandia Parahita, *TheJakartaPost*, 23 December 2024

Indonesia's Mother's Day highlights the invaluable yet overlooked contributions of women in the fisheries sector, often dubbed "mothers of the ocean." Women play critical roles in strengthening coastal community resilience, advancing the blue economy, and protecting ecosystems. As of 2024, over 221,960 women were employed in fisheries, but this figure underrepresents their diverse and often informal contributions. From managing pre- and post-



harvest activities to integrating traditional knowledge into sustainable practices, these women are central to the sector's operations. Challenges persist, however, including exclusion from social protections, financial support, and decision-making processes. Fisherwomen like Asmania from Pari Island have become front-line defenders of their communities, addressing ecological crises through restoration, ecotourism, and sustainable fishing practices. Yet, Indonesia's gender-neutral legal framework fails to account for the unique roles of fisherwomen, leaving them invisible in policy discourse. To address this disparity, gender-responsive fisheries policies are essential. Formal recognition, tailored capacity-building, and inclusion in policy making could empower fisherwomen, ensuring equitable access to resources and fostering a resilient and sustainable fisheries sector.

### [Indonesia's Indigenous communities sidelined from conservation](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 20 December 2024

New conservation law has sparked concerns by sidelining Indigenous communities, despite their recognized role in biodiversity conservation. Indigenous peoples, globally acknowledged for their effective stewardship of forests, are crucial in maintaining ecosystems and carbon stores. A 2023 study revealed that Indigenous-managed Amazonian forests are key carbon sinks, yet in Indonesia, these communities are at risk of displacement and criminalization due to the law's focus on conservation areas like "preservation zones," which restrict activities such as gathering non-timber resources. Critics argue the law, which lacks provisions for Indigenous land rights and autonomy, contrasts with international commitments to Indigenous rights in biodiversity management. Activists call for a specific law to protect Indigenous territories and practices. A 2020 study found that full property rights are essential for successful forest protection by Indigenous peoples. The law has been criticized for prioritizing corporate interests, like eco-tourism and carbon trading, over Indigenous rights, leading to fears of increased land-grabbing and human rights violations. Indigenous communities remain committed to protecting their lands despite the legal challenges.

Baragwanath, Kathryn and Bayi, Ella. 2020. [Collective property rights reduce deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon](#), *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Fernández-Llamazares, Á., Terraube, J., Gavin, M.C., Pyhälä, A., Siani, S.M.O., Cabeza, M. and Brondizio, E.S., 2020. [Reframing the Wilderness Concept can Bolster Collaborative Conservation](#). *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*.

### [On Indonesia's unique Enggano Island, palm oil takes root in an Indigenous society](#)

—Betty Herlina and Elviza Diana, *Mongabay*, 17 December 2024

Milson Kaitora, a tribal leader of Enggano Island, shares his concerns about environmental and cultural decline in the island. Once a fertile area with sufficient water for agriculture, Enggano is now facing coastal abrasion and freshwater shortages, which have diminished rice harvests from twice to once a year. Since the early 1990s, developers have sought to obtain control over the island, but encountered staunch opposition from its six Indigenous tribes. PT Sumber Enggano Tabarak, which has been linked to the billionaire-owned London Sumatra group, is seeking to establish an oil palm plantation over 15,000 ha. Enggano, an oceanic island home to unique species and rich biodiversity, has been a target for industrial development, starting with logging and shifting to palm oil in 2022. Local communities, led by Kaitora, oppose this expansion, fearing it will further deplete water resources and harm the environment. While some residents have started planting oil palms for financial gain, community leaders like Milson warn of the long-term impacts on both the people and the island's hydrology and biodiversity.



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## I. Indonesia in Geopolitics

### [Navigating 2025: Five issues matter most to Indonesia](#)

—Tia Mutiasari, *AntaraNews*, 30 December 2024

As we enter 2025, Indonesia faces five critical challenges amid global instability marked by geopolitical tensions, economic fragmentation, and escalating conflicts. Defense analyst Muhammad Teguh Ariffaiz Nasution highlights the implications of Donald Trump's return as U.S. President, which could intensify U.S.-China tensions and reignite trade conflicts, requiring Indonesia to maintain a careful diplomatic balance. The risk of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan by 2027 also looms, threatening regional stability and the safety of over 280,000 Indonesians in Taiwan, underscoring the need for robust contingency planning. In the South China Sea, increasing Chinese incursions into Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) demand a firm stance based on UNCLOS 1982 and strengthened maritime defense. The prolonged Russia-Ukraine war continues to disrupt global supply chains and energy markets, necessitating strategic responses to economic impacts. Meanwhile, the Gaza crisis and broader Middle East tensions, including Israel-Iran hostilities and Red Sea trade disruptions, highlight the need to uphold its support for Palestine while addressing potential regional and global ramifications. Proactive preparation is essential to navigate these complex dynamics.

### [Prabowo's corruption amnesty plan panned by Indonesia's anti-graft activists](#)

—Amy Sood, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 26 December 2024

President Prabowo Subianto's proposal to pardon corruption offenders who return stolen assets has sparked skepticism among legal experts and activists. Critics argue that it could undermine Indonesia's anti-corruption efforts, which have struggled due to institutional weaknesses, including the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK). Prabowo's plan, which allows offenders to regain freedom by returning ill-gotten gains by August 1, 2025, aims to ease prison overcrowding but lacks transparency, raising concerns over the integrity of the process. Some experts, like Nicky Fahrizal, argue that this approach could weaken the rule of law and erode public confidence. Meanwhile, former minister Mohammad Mahfud cautioned about the lack of guarantees for the full return of stolen assets. Prabowo, who has been criticized for his links to the political manipulation of the legal system, has also proposed increasing state officials' salaries to curb corruption. His international efforts, including the repatriation of foreign drug convicts, aim to improve his global reputation.

### [Revolution, elections and a baby hippo, this was the year in Asia](#)

—Aidan Jones, Maria Siow, Amy Sood & Kimberly Lim, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 24 December 2024

From climate change to political storms and a Taylor Swift world tour, Asia in 2024 was characterised by turbulence and surprises. From Indonesia, former defence minister Prabowo Subianto emerged victorious in February's general election after President Joko Widodo's eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, joined Prabowo's ticket as vice-president. Despite his popularity and the title of "infrastructure president", Widodo left office facing some criticism for democratic backsliding. Indonesia has also been in a back-and-forth with tech giant Apple, banning sales of the new iPhone 16 in October for failing to meet the country's content requirements. Last month, the government rejected a US\$100 million investment proposal from the California-based company, calling it insufficient and inconsistent with Apple's

commitments in other Southeast Asian nations. However, Apple has since come back with a US\$1 billion pledge, which Prabowo reportedly approved last week.

### **BRICS Geopolitical Challenges from Donald Trump's Victory**

—Budiawan Sidik and Nurul Intan, *Kompas*, 22 December 2024

Donald Trump's aggressive and traditionalist character seems to make him not hesitate to impose economic sanctions on a number of countries affiliated with BRICS. Trump's return to the White House could significantly impact BRICS' efforts for de-dollarization. Trump's aggressive stance on international trade and protectionism, under slogans like "Make America Great Again" and "America First," may lead to sanctions on countries in BRICS that oppose the US dollar. His win in the 2024 election, with over 300 electoral votes, reflects his strong position. As president, Trump is expected to revive protectionist policies, including raising import tariffs by 10-20%, which could disrupt global trade, including Indonesia's exports. BRICS, which represents 45% of the world's population and 35% of global GDP, has been growing and challenging US hegemony, particularly through de-dollarization. However, Trump's policies may counteract this trend by imposing high tariffs on non-dollar transactions. Indonesia's interest in joining BRICS could lead to diplomatic tensions with the US, especially given its close economic ties with China, which Trump seeks to undermine. This geopolitical uncertainty poses challenges for Indonesia's foreign policy.

### **Joint Development of RI-China Fisheries in Overlapping Claim Areas**

—Zaki Mubarak, *Kompas*, 16 December 2024

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto's first state visits to China and the U.S. highlight Indonesia's strategic efforts to balance relations between the two Indo-Pacific powers. During his visit to China, President Prabowo and President Xi Jinping signed a joint statement emphasizing cooperation in fisheries, conservation, and the sustainable use of resources. The agreement, framed as "joint development," focuses on areas with overlapping claims but is bound by international law, including UNCLOS 1982, and national laws. This cooperation aims to establish provisional arrangements without conflicting with maritime boundary principles. Indonesia, situated at the crossroads of two oceans and continents, seeks stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific, necessitating balanced relations with China and the U.S. Prabowo's subsequent visit to the U.S. underscores Indonesia's intent to maintain geopolitical equilibrium. The joint statement also underscores the importance of conservation and sustainable fisheries management, adhering to principles like allowable catch and access agreements, while emphasizing compliance with national and international regulations. This approach aims to align economic development with environmental sustainability and maritime legal standards.

**End**