



Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

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

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A. Marine and Fisheries

Polemic of Sea Fence in Tangerang Waters

—Yohanes Mega Hendarto, *Kompas*, 15 January 2025

The construction of a 30.16 km sea fence along Tangerang Regency's coastline in Banten has sparked controversy, with no clear accountability for the project. Allegedly funded by private entities, the fence, costing an estimated Rp 6.5 billion, aims to mitigate tsunamis and coastal erosion but faces backlash over environmental and social impacts. Fishermen report a 50% drop in catches due to restricted sea access, increased fuel costs, and disrupted ocean currents, threatening marine ecosystems and biodiversity. The project lacks permits from the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (KKP), violating Marine Spatial Planning

Regulations. The KKP, under President Prabowo's directive, halted the construction, citing transparency concerns and possible private-government collaboration. Activists and the Ombudsman demand clarity and legal adherence. The controversy also connects to past reclamation projects, like Pantai Indah Kapuk, where environmental impacts and land use disputes arose. Experts urge the government to prioritize transparency, environmental assessments, and fishermen's rights while addressing conflicts over development and conservation in coastal areas, ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth for all stakeholders involved.

Distinguished diplomat, 'UNCLOS Boy' Hasjim Djalal passes away at 90

—Yvette Tanamal, *TheJakartaPost*, 13 January 2025

Indonesia bid farewell to veteran diplomat Hasjim Djalal, who passed away at 90, leaving behind a profound legacy in maritime diplomacy. Known as a pivotal architect of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Hasjim's efforts nearly tripled Indonesia's maritime jurisdiction, solidifying the nation's status as an archipelagic state. Born in 1934 in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, Hasjim rose from humble beginnings to become an international maritime law expert. He earned law degrees from Gadjah Mada University and the University of Virginia, and, alongside former Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, spent over two decades shaping the UNCLOS framework. This landmark treaty granted Indonesia sovereignty over vast maritime areas once considered international waters. At his funeral at Kalibata Heroes Cemetery, Foreign Minister Sugiono honored him as a diplomatic pioneer whose vision continues to inspire. His son Dino Patti Djalal highlighted his father's devotion to public service and his enduring contributions to Indonesia's sovereignty, urging future generations to uphold his legacy.

Chinese and Indonesian coastguards pledge deeper cooperation after first high-level talks

—Wendy Wu, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 11 January 2025

The Chinese and Indonesian coastguards held their first senior-level talks in Beijing, focusing on enhancing maritime security cooperation. The discussions included plans for regular meetings, port calls, and joint capability building to strengthen maritime order and address emergencies. Vice-Admiral Irvansyah, chief of Indonesia's Maritime Security Agency, emphasized the commitment to fostering a safe and prosperous maritime region. The talks occur amid China's growing strategic rivalry with the U.S. and heightened South China Sea tensions. While Indonesia is not a claimant in the South China Sea, its exclusive economic zone in the North Natuna Sea overlaps with China's nine-dash line, leading to recent maritime disputes. Both nations agreed to boost coastguard collaboration and explore joint initiatives in contested areas following Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto's visit to China. Separately, Indonesia recently joined BRICS and continues to advocate for a South China Sea code of conduct through ASEAN. Additionally, Indonesia and Japan expanded their security partnership, with Japan providing high-speed patrol boats to enhance Jakarta's maritime capabilities.

Indonesia adheres to UNCLOS in addressing South China Sea disputes

—Cindy Frishanti Octavia and Yashinta Difa, *AntaraNews*, 10 January 2025

Indonesia reaffirms its commitment to international law, including United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982, to ensure maritime stability and peacefully resolve disputes in the South China Sea, according to Foreign Affairs Minister Sugiono. The convention sets out the legal framework for the seas and the oceans by defining the rights

and obligations of States Parties with respect to the maritime environment. Speaking during an annual statement, he emphasized Indonesia's role in promoting dialogue to finalize the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. With key global shipping routes like the Strait of Malacca and Lombok Strait under its management, Indonesia prioritizes safeguarding its sovereignty while fostering mutually beneficial cooperation. Sugiono reiterated that Indonesia's diplomacy aligns with its 1945 Constitution, aiming to protect the nation's territorial integrity and national interests. Additionally, Sugiono stressed the importance of strengthening global health systems to address evolving disease outbreaks and pandemics. The minister underscored the need for global health issues to unite rather than divide countries, advocating for collaboration over geopolitical competition to prioritize humanitarian efforts.

Fisheries Graduates Association Expected to Advancing Fisheries Industry in Yogyakarta

—Agung Nugroho, *UGMNews*, 6 January 2025

Indonesia, a maritime nation with 6.4 million square kilometers of waters and 108,000 kilometers of coastline, has immense fisheries potential, contributing \$27 billion to GDP in 2019, creating 7 million jobs, and meeting over 50% of the country's animal protein needs. At a recent conference, Dr. Jaka Widada, Dean of Universitas Gadjah Mada's Faculty of Agriculture, emphasized the need for skilled fisheries graduates to manage this sector sustainably. The event also marked the inauguration of the Yogyakarta Regional Board (DPD) of the Indonesian Fisheries Graduates Association (ISPIKANI), a professional organization founded in 1984 to advance fisheries development. Dr. Agus Suherman, Chair of DPD ISPIKANI, highlighted food security as a critical challenge and called for innovative collaboration with stakeholders to achieve sovereignty. ISPIKANI's Yogyakarta chapter, chaired by Professor Alim Isnansetyo, aims to boost the sector's contributions and align with regional maritime visions. The association, now with 31 regional boards, plans a national coordination meeting in 2025 to strategize solutions for fisheries challenges.

B. Forests and Land Use

How to utilize forests as food reserves

—Rahmad Nasution, *AntaraNews*, 14 January 2025

President Prabowo Subianto has emphasized food self-sufficiency as a cornerstone of Indonesia's national sovereignty, leveraging the country's abundant natural resources. The government plans to utilize 20 million hectares of reserved forests for food, energy, and water security, focusing on upland rice cultivation and sugar palm plantations for bioethanol production. These initiatives aim to meet food and energy needs while reducing imports. Forestry Minister Raja Juli Antoni clarified that the program would not involve deforestation but would focus on sustainable management. Experts, however, caution against environmental risks, including biodiversity loss, soil degradation, and social conflicts with local communities. They advocate for agroforestry approaches and the rehabilitation of degraded land to balance food production with ecological conservation. Economists and forestry experts stress the need for strict oversight, regular audits, and responsible land use planning. Modern agricultural technologies like vertical farming and hydroponics are recommended to

boost production without expanding land use. The program seeks to align food security with sustainability and equitable benefits for communities.

Mangrove Forests That Provide Food and Protection

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 11 January 2025

Mangrove forests, vital for coastal protection and biodiversity, also serve as a potential food source. The fruit of the *Bruguiera gymnorhiza* mangrove, locally known as *lindur*, is rich in carbohydrates, antioxidants, and nutrients. Found abundantly in Babulu Laut Village, East Kalimantan, *lindur* is traditionally consumed in various Indonesian regions, often as a staple food. Its high amylopectin content ensures prolonged fullness, making it suitable for diabetics and promoting digestive health. Mangrove ecosystems in Babulu Laut, once cleared for fish farming, are now rehabilitated by residents like Wasmin, who integrates mangroves into aquaculture. This practice restores ecological balance, reduces dependence on chemical fertilizers, and improves yields. The village faces severe coastal abrasion and seawater intrusion due to earlier mangrove loss, highlighting the urgent need for conservation. *Lindur*'s adaptability makes it ideal for land rehabilitation and sustainable food production. As a functional food, it offers environmental and health benefits, showcasing mangroves' multifaceted role in addressing food security and climate resilience.

Public Condemns Deforestation for Palm Oil

—Stephanus Aranditio, *Kompas*, 12 January 2025

The Indonesian government's plan to expand oil palm plantations to boost palm oil exports has faced opposition from various parties. Budi Setiadi Daryono, Dean of the Faculty of Biology at Universitas Gadjah Mada, strongly criticizes the expansion, arguing it will lead to further deforestation and biodiversity loss. He highlights that oil palm plantations are not suitable habitats for wildlife, such as orangutans and tigers, and monoculture farming exacerbates human-wildlife conflicts. Daryono also challenges President Prabowo Subianto's statement equating oil palm to natural forest plants. Additionally, while palm oil plantations absorb carbon, their contribution is insufficient to offset the carbon emissions from deforestation. The government is urged to focus on intensifying production rather than expanding plantation areas, with Sawit Watch recommending a limit of 18.15 million hectares. The potential economic and ecological costs of further land conversion could be severe. Experts emphasize the importance of strengthening certification systems and addressing problematic palm oil permits to improve sustainability. Intensification is seen as the more sensible approach to avoid long-term environmental harm.

Indonesian forestry minister proposes 20m hectares of deforestation for crops

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 9 January 2025

The plan to clear 20 million hectares of forests for food and biofuel crops has raised concerns over massive environmental damage, including significant GHG emissions and biodiversity loss. This proposal, which aligns with Prabowo Subianto's goals for food and energy self-sufficiency, could release up to 22 billion metric tons of CO₂, comparable to emissions from 5,300 coal power plants. Critics said previous food estate projects failed and harmed the environment, and that agroforestry alone won't prevent large-scale deforestation. The government's focus on "idle" forestry concessions, which may still contain valuable secondary forests, has also triggered opposition. Environmentalists warn that the expansion of oil palm plantations for biofuel production could worsen deforestation. The project risks agrarian conflicts with local and Indigenous communities, who may lose access to land. Experts urge caution, suggesting that improving existing agricultural practices might achieve food security

without deforestation. Parliament urges the government to explore alternatives, such as increasing yields on existing agricultural lands through technology, enhancing access to fertilizers, and modernizing farming equipment to maximize land use without clearing forests.

The Fallacy of Deforestation for Palm Oil

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 8 January 2025

In Batanghari, Jambi, an experimental "tree island" initiative within a palm oil plantation has shown positive ecological and economic outcomes. Researchers from IPB University and others planted native trees in gaps between oil palms, improving biodiversity and creating cooler microclimates. These tree islands, ranging in size from 5x5 meters to 40x40 meters, demonstrated greater biodiversity than conventional monoculture plantations, with positive impacts on soil, flora, and fauna. The experiment also revealed potential economic alternatives, such as *jengkol* (*Archidendron pauciflorum*) and *durian* (*Durio zibethinus*), alongside palm oil. Despite these findings, President Prabowo Subianto proposed expanding palm oil plantations by clearing more forests, overlooking the long-term environmental costs. The expansion could exacerbate emissions, particularly when palm oil is planted on peatlands, and disrupt hydrological functions. Studies warn that the economic focus on palm oil disregards the vital services forests provide, like soil stabilization and water filtration. Experts advocate for intensifying existing plantations rather than expanding into forests, highlighting the need to balance economic growth with sustainable land use.

C. Biodiversity, Conservation and Protected Area

5 Marine Mammals Found in Kaimana, Including Killer Whales

—Ichwan Susanto, *Kompas*, 14 January 2025

Researchers have identified five cetacean species in Kaimana waters, West Papua, including the first confirmed sighting of killer whales (*Orcinus orca*), as reported in *Frontiers in Marine Science* on January 10. The study, conducted from 2021 to 2023 by Konservasi Indonesia and Conservation International, highlighted the interactions between marine mammals and lift net (bagan) fisheries, revealing strong ties between Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins and anchovy fishing activities. Kaimana, previously designated an Important Marine Mammal Area (IMMA) in 2018 due to frequent dolphin and whale activity, now holds new significance with documented year-round populations of Australian humpback dolphins, Bryde's whales, and Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins. These findings suggest the area meets additional IMMA criteria. The study used charts as observation platforms, acknowledging potential biases due to coastal focus and weather limitations. Researchers urge improved anchovy stock assessments to ensure sustainable fisheries and protect food sources for marine mammals. They also call on local governments to enhance fisheries management beyond the Kaimana Marine Protected Area to support biodiversity and community livelihoods.

Putra, Mochamad Iqbal Herwata, et al. (2025) [Insights into cetacean sightings, abundance, and feeding associations: observations from the boat lift net fishery in the Kaimana important marine mammal area, Indonesia](#). *Frontiers in Marine Science*, vol. 11.

Wild chimpanzees adapt genetically to different habitats

—Will Dunham, *Reuters/TheJakartaPost*, 12 January 2025

A new study on wild chimpanzees reveals genetic adaptations linked to their habitat, including resistance to pathogens like malaria. Researchers analyzed genetic data from 388 chimpanzees across 18 African countries, uncovering genetic diversity shaped by environmental factors. Forest-dwelling chimpanzees showed signs of adaptation to malaria, with specific genes linked to resistance, similar to human malaria adaptations. However, woodland-savannah chimpanzees lacked evidence of such genetic changes, likely due to lower malaria pressure in these environments. The study emphasizes the importance of understanding these adaptations, as they could inform human genetic research. Chimpanzees share 98.8% of their DNA with humans, making them valuable for comparative evolutionary studies. The findings also highlight the threat of habitat destruction, poaching, and disease to chimpanzees, who are endangered. The study suggests that preserving genetic diversity, including adaptive traits, is crucial for conservation efforts, especially as climate change and habitat loss may affect chimpanzee populations differently based on their environment.

Ostridge, H.J., Fontseré, C., Lizano, E., Soto, D.C., Schmidt, J.M., Saxena, V., Alvarez-Estape, M., Barratt, C.D., Gratton, P. and Andrés, A.M., (2025). [Local genetic adaptation to habitat in wild chimpanzees](#). *Science*, 387(6730).

Tiger Attacks in Mukomuko Linked to Forest Conversion

—Vina Oktavia, *Kompas*, 11 January 2025

The fatal Sumatran tiger attack on January 7 in Mukomuko Regency, Bengkulu, is believed to be linked to deforestation caused by the expansion of monoculture plantations. As forests shrink, tigers encroach on settlements. The Indonesian Environmental Forum Bengkulu's Executive Director, Abdullah Ibrahim Ritonga, highlighted that illegal activities like logging and hunting exacerbate forest destruction. Bengkulu's forest cover has decreased from 645,116 hectares in 2023 to 643,961 hectares in 2024. In Mukomuko, the conversion of production forests for oil palm plantations is a major concern. Ritonga has urged the government to close these plantations. The victim, Ibnu Oktavianto, was attacked while searching for grass near a palm oil plantation. This incident raises alarm about the disruption of tiger habitats due to environmental damage. Although the tiger's origin is unclear, experts suggest that the decline in wild boar populations, caused by African swine fever, may force tigers into human settlements. Authorities have set up traps and cameras to monitor the tiger's movement and prevent further attacks.

Indonesia's voracious songbird trade laps up rare and poisonous pitohuis

—Spoorthy Raman, *Mongabay*, 10 January 2025

The Asian songbird crisis has escalated with the entry of poisonous pitohuis into Indonesia's illegal songbird trade. Native to New Guinea, pitohuis are among the few known poisonous birds, using neurotoxins in their feathers and skin to deter predators. Despite this defense, these birds are now sought for their melodious songs, entering trade markets since 2015. A study in *Bird Conservation International* revealed that nearly 300 pitohuis were traded between 2015 and 2023, both in physical markets and online. Prices ranged from \$66 to \$346, with eastern Java and Bali being major hubs. Often mislabeled to enhance their appeal, pitohuis are smuggled alongside other New Guinean species, such as cockatoos. Although Indonesia's songbird trade is regulated, pitohuis lack protected status or legal trade quotas, making their sale illegal. Conservationists urge stricter enforcement, continuous monitoring, and public awareness to curb this unsustainable practice, warning of potential long-term

impacts on wild populations. Tech companies are also called to act against online wildlife trade.

Marshall, H., Collar, N. J., Lees, A. C., Moss, A., Yuda, P., & Marsden, S. J. (2020). [Spatio-temporal dynamics of consumer demand driving the Asian Songbird Crisis](#). *Biological Conservation*, 241, 108237.

Marshall, H., Collar, N. J., Lees, A. C., Moss, A., Yuda, P., & Marsden, S. J. (2020). [Characterizing bird-keeping user-groups on Java reveals distinct behaviours, profiles and potential for change](#). *People and Nature*, 2(4), 877-888.

Nijman, V., et al. (2024). Poisonous pitohuis as pets. *Bird Conservation International*, 34. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0959270924000297>

Indonesian company defies order, plants acacia in orangutan habitat

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 7 January 2025

Industrial forest concessions holder PT Mayawana Persada shifted focus from clearing peatlands in western Kalimantan to planting acacia on previously cleared lands in defiance of a government order to restore damaged peatlands. Despite a March 2024 directive from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, which called for restoration, the company continues operations in areas designated as protected, raising concerns from environmental activists. The concession overlaps with the critical habitat of Bornean orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*) and ongoing deforestation threatens the species' survival. Satellite data also reveals new acacia plantings and preparations for further expansion. Mayawana Persada has already cleared 33,070 hectares of rainforest since 2021, contributing to biodiversity loss and severe flooding in nearby areas. Environmental groups are demanding stronger government action, including halting all activities until restoration begins and reviewing the company's licenses. Activists argue that rehabilitating the damaged land is crucial for both biodiversity and climate, especially given the area's carbon-rich peatlands. The government has yet to respond to calls for tougher measures.

D. Climate Change, Energy and Mining

Cooperate, not compete: ASEAN's critical mineral strategy for energy transition

—Ryan Wiratama Bhaskara, *TheJakartaPost*, 14 January 2025

Countries worldwide are pushing toward a net-zero emissions goal, with the clean energy transition relying on critical minerals, such as nickel, lithium, and copper, which are essential for technologies like batteries and solar photovoltaics. ASEAN holds significant global reserves of these minerals but faces challenges in processing and downstreaming, as much of the processing is currently dominated by China. The region's strategy for utilizing these resources varies, with some countries, like Indonesia, promoting domestic processing through export bans, while others, like the Philippines, have considered similar moves but faced opposition. These competing national strategies risk hindering ASEAN's ability to fully capitalize on its mineral wealth. Analysts suggest that ASEAN could become a clean-tech powerhouse by strengthening regional cooperation, enhancing supply chain integration, and investing in sustainable mining practices and battery recycling. Adopting a regional framework, such as a Critical Minerals Alliance, would help synchronize efforts, reduce

dependence on external actors like China, and position ASEAN as a global leader in the green economy while fostering economic growth and green jobs.

2024 was the hottest year on record, scientists say

—Kate Abnett and Allison Withers, *Reuters/TheJakartaPost*, 11 January 2025

Global temperatures in 2024 surpassed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels for the first time, a key threshold under the 2015 Paris Agreement aimed at limiting global warming. The World Meteorological Organization confirmed the breach, with the annual average temperature reaching 1.6°C above the 1850-1900 baseline. This milestone highlights the urgent need for climate action, as emphasized by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who called for immediate leadership to prevent further catastrophe. Climate-linked disasters escalated, with wildfires, floods, and heatwaves devastating countries like Bolivia, Nepal, and Sudan. Rising greenhouse gas emissions, primarily from fossil fuels, and the atmospheric water vapor at record highs fueled these impacts. Concentrations of carbon dioxide reached 422 parts per million in 2024. Scientists warn that without swift action to cut emissions, the planet risks exceeding the Paris goal permanently. EU climate commissioner Wopke Hoekstra and experts urge renewed commitment to climate policies, despite shifting political priorities in some regions. With El Niño amplifying warming in 2024, the trajectory remains alarming, but experts stress it's not too late to change course.

Extreme Climate in 2024 Will Overwhelm Global Water Cycle and Trigger Major Disasters

—Tatang Mulyana Sinaga, *Kompas*, 7 January 2025

The year 2024 was the hottest on record, significantly disrupting the global water cycle and triggering widespread climate extremes. Rising temperatures intensified hydrometeorological disasters, including floods, droughts, tropical cyclones, and landslides, which collectively displaced 40 million people, caused over 8,700 fatalities, and resulted in \$550 billion in economic losses. The *Global Water Monitor 2024* report, led by Professor Albert van Dijk, highlighted the severe impacts of climate change. Flash floods in Europe, Asia, and South America claimed lives, while South Africa experienced a 50% drop in corn production due to drought. The Amazon Basin saw record-low river levels and extensive forest fires, affecting ecosystems and hydroelectric power. In China, monsoon-induced floods devastated cities, while Bangladesh faced rice losses of over one million tonnes. The findings emphasize the need for urgent adaptation measures, such as flood defenses, drought-resilient agriculture, and improved early warning systems. Experts stress that combating climate change requires transformative action across all sectors to ensure a habitable planet.

Van Dijk, A.I.J.M., H.E. Beck, E. Boergens, R.A.M. de Jeu, W.A. Dorigo, C. Edirisinghe, E. Forootan, E. Guo, A. Güntner, J. Hou, N. Mehrnegar, S. Mo, W. Preimesberger, J. Rahman, P. Rozas Larraondo (2025). [2024 Summary Report – Global Water Monitor](#). *Global Water Monitor Consortium*.

Indonesia sets 2025 nickel ore mining quota at around 200 million tonnes

—Bernadette Christina, *Reuters/Mining.com*, 10 January 2025

Indonesia has set a nickel ore mining quota of around 200 million metric tons for 2025, according to Tri Winarno, the Director General of Mineral and Coal at the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources. This quota may be reduced if mining companies fail to meet environmental standards and post-mining reclamation requirements. In 2024, Indonesia's nickel ore production reached 215 million tons, but the government is reviewing the quota to

stabilize nickel prices, which have been falling. Energy Minister Bahlil Lahadalia highlighted that the country, one of the world's largest nickel producers, is concerned about the impact of price declines on the industry. In November 2024, the government indicated that violations of environmental and other regulations could lead to a reduction in quotas. Indonesia had initially set annual nickel ore mining quotas of 240 million metric tons through 2026. However, reports from December suggested that authorities were considering cutting the quota to 150 million tons to support nickel prices.

Indonesia pushes nuclear power option amid questions about cost, safety, renewable sources

—Tria Dianti and Ismira Lutfia Tisnadibrata, *BenarNews*, 2 January 2025

Indonesia aims to start producing nuclear power by 2032 to meet its electricity needs and environmental goals, although concerns about cost, safety, and risk remain. The country's first nuclear power plant, located on Kelasa Island in the Bangka Belitung province, is set to be developed by American firm ThorCon, which plans to build a thorium-fueled reactor. The plant, with a 500MW capacity, will make Indonesia the first Southeast Asian nation to officially embrace nuclear energy. However, while nuclear energy advocates highlight its reliability and low carbon emissions, critics point to high costs, potential safety risks, and the environmental footprint of waste management. Environmental groups like Greenpeace argue that nuclear power does not offer a sustainable solution and that Indonesia's abundant renewable energy sources should be prioritized. Additionally, Indonesia's location on the seismically active Pacific Ring of Fire raises concerns about the safety of nuclear plants. The government is working to address these issues, aiming for clearer regulations and a stable political stance to attract private investors.

E. Pollution, Waste and Disaster

Dozens of disasters strike amid wetter rainy season due to La Niña

—Fadli, *TheJakartaPost*, 14 January 2025

Indonesia has experienced a series of hydrometeorological disasters due to the wetter rainy season caused by the La Niña weather phenomenon. Heavy rainfall from Thursday to Monday triggered a deadly landslide in Batam's Tiban Koperasi housing complex, killing four people and injuring 13. The disaster occurred early Monday when a cliff collapsed, flattening five houses. Authorities are providing aid, trauma counseling, and plans to rebuild homes. Flooding has also affected thousands across the country. In Riau Islands, over 800 people fled inundated homes in Tanjung Pinang, while 640 houses on Bintan Island were submerged. In neighboring Riau province, the Subayang River overflowed, flooding nearly all 900 houses in Kuntu village. North Jakarta saw coastal flooding in 10 neighborhoods, disrupting daily life. The National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB) reported 74 disasters this year, mostly floods, impacting 42,000 people. With extreme weather expected until April, the Meteorology Agency warns of increased flooding, landslides, and volcanic mudflows in high-risk regions like Sumatra, Java, and Sulawesi.

Air and Ocean Temperatures Exceed Critical Thresholds, Causing a Series of Climate Disasters

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 13 January 2025

Global temperatures reach record highs in 2024, surpassing the critical 1.5°C threshold above pre-industrial levels. This marks the first year with global temperatures exceeding this limit, driven by human-induced activities. According to WMO, this data is based on multiple sources, including the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), NASA, NOAA, the Japan Meteorological Agency, the UK Meteorological Office, and Berkeley Earth. The WMO's analysis supports climate monitoring and informs the UN negotiation process. The WMO warns that record heat is fueling extreme weather events, including wildfires, floods, and droughts, costing over \$300 billion globally. Ocean temperatures also reached record levels, warming at depths of up to 2,000 meters and driving changes in weather patterns, according to a study published in *Advances in Atmospheric Sciences*. Warmer oceans exacerbate climate impacts by increasing atmospheric water vapor, intensifying storms, and contributing to rising sea levels. Experts emphasize that the oceans, which store 90% of excess heat from global warming, are key to understanding and mitigating climate change. Despite the alarming trends, the WMO and UN leaders stress that long-term climate goals remain achievable with immediate and innovative action. They urge global leaders to act decisively to reduce emissions and prevent catastrophic consequences.

Cheng, L., Abraham, J., Trenberth, K.E. et al. (2025). [Record High Temperatures in the Ocean in 2024](#). *Advances in Atmospheric Sciences*.

Hydro-climate Turmoil Does Not Select Targets, Warning from Los Angeles

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 13 January 2025

The start of 2025 witnessed Southern California's worst wildfire disaster, devastating luxury homes in Los Angeles. Fueled by severe drought, high winds, and hydroclimatic turmoil, over 29,000 hectares burned, claiming at least 16 lives, displacing 180,000 people, and destroying 2,000 buildings, with estimated losses of \$52 billion. Hydroclimate shocks, marked by extreme wet and dry cycles intensified by climate change, are driving such catastrophes globally. Research published in *Nature Reviews Earth & Environment* highlights how periods of heavy rain and snow, like California's wet winter in 2022-2023, lead to vegetation growth that becomes fuel during subsequent droughts. Southern California's rainfall since October 2024 was less than 10% of average, exacerbating the fire risk. Globally, hydroclimate volatility has surged by 31-66% since the mid-20th century. This trend, tied to a warming atmosphere absorbing and releasing more water, threatens food security, health, and disaster resilience. Regions like North Africa, South Asia, and the tropical Pacific face the highest risks, underscoring the urgent need for adaptive strategies and emissions reductions.

Pang, Min. (2025) [Southern California is extremely dry, and that's fueling fires – maps show just how dry](#), The University of California-San Diego's Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes.

Swain, D.L., Prein, A.F., Abatzoglou, J.T. et al. (2025). [Hydroclimate volatility on a warming Earth](#). *Nature Reviews Earth & Environment* 6, 35–50.

Floods remain biggest threat in 2025, disaster agency says

—Dio Suhenda, *TheJakartaPost*, 11 January 2025

Indonesia faced significant hydrometeorological disasters throughout 2024, with 2,107 incidents recorded by the National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB), resulting in 547 deaths, over 6.3 million displaced, and approximately 60,000 homes destroyed. While the total number of incidents was lower than in 2023, this was due to a change in classification

criteria by BNPB. Floods were the most common disaster, accounting for more than half of the incidents. La Niña, which caused wetter weather, led to higher-than-average rainfall, resulting in frequent floods and landslides. Among the deadliest events were a flash flood in West Sumatra and volcanic eruptions in East Nusa Tenggara. The Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) predicted that extreme weather would persist through February, with the BNPB focusing on anticipatory measures like cloud-seeding and improved early warning systems. Disaster management expert Mizan Bisri emphasized the need for better coordination among government ministries, as well as public participation in disaster preparedness.

Volunteers clean up Bali's beach from "worst" monsoon-driven trash

—AFP, *France24*, 4 January 2025

Approximately 600 volunteers participated in a beach cleanup effort at Kedonganan beach, Bali where monsoon rains brought a record amount of plastic waste, described by activists as “the worst” they had seen. The cleanup, organized by Sungai Watch, was prompted by the seasonal influx of trash, particularly from November to March, as plastic waste and debris are carried into the ocean by monsoon winds and rains. Bali, a popular tourist destination, is significantly affected by marine pollution, with much of the garbage coming from other regions, especially neighboring Java. The volunteers, including locals, hospitality workers, and tourists, collected an astonishing 25 tons of waste in just six days. The garbage, which included plastic cups, straws, cutlery, and coffee sachets, was mixed with plant and wood debris. Sungai Watch founder Gary Benchehib emphasized the scale of the problem, noting that plastic waste was piled up to a meter thick on the sand. Volunteers like Russian tourist Tatiana Komelova, shocked by the sight, expressed a renewed commitment to reducing plastic use in their daily lives.

F. Technology, Investment and Finance

Government vows to complete AI regulation in three months

—Deni Ghifari, *TheJakartaPost*, 14 January 2025

Indonesia plans to draft a regulation on artificial intelligence (AI) within three months, led by Second Deputy Communications Minister Nezar Patria, according to Communications and Digital Minister Meutya Hafid. The government has already issued a temporary circular on ethical AI use, making Indonesia one of the first Southeast Asian nations to address AI legislation. This move, initiated under President Prabowo Subianto’s administration, aims to manage AI’s risks while promoting transparency, accountability, and humanity. AI holds significant economic potential for Indonesia, with Google estimating a \$167 billion contribution to its economy by 2030, equivalent to 13% of its 2022 GDP. However, Indonesia risks lagging in the global AI race without investments in infrastructure, cloud computing, and human capital. The country ranks low in AI readiness, behind regional peers like Singapore and Malaysia. While AI offers opportunities, it also poses challenges, including high energy demands, environmental concerns, and job disruptions. Experts emphasize the need for balanced, strategic policies to ensure AI benefits Indonesia without compromising its competitiveness.

Businesses fret over extended export earnings lockup

—Deni Ghifari, *TheJakartaPost*, 14 January 2025

Indonesian businesses are concerned about a new regulation requiring exporters to deposit at least 30% of their earnings in Indonesia for a minimum of three months, extending to one year for receipts over US\$250,000. The Indonesian Employers Association (Apindo) argues that the policy disrupts cash flow and threatens competitiveness, as exporters often face delays in receiving payments and struggle to finance production cycles. Exporters in sectors like mining, plantations, and fisheries are particularly affected. Some companies have already reduced exports to comply, increasing shipping costs and making Indonesian goods less competitive. Despite government incentives such as favorable loan interest rates, critics like the Indonesian Fishery Producers Association argue that the policy increases capital costs. Apindo suggests a more flexible approach, such as excluding firms with liquidity issues or lowering the percentage of earnings to be deposited. Meanwhile, proponents, like Bhima Yudhistira from Celios, argue that the regulation helps address Indonesia's foreign exchange needs, especially amid a strong US dollar. The idea behind the policy is to beef up the state's foreign exchange reserves.

WTO favours EU over Indonesia on palm oil restrictions

—Radhiyya Indra, *TheJakartaPost*, 11 January 2025

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has largely upheld European Union (EU) restrictions on palm oil use in biofuels, following a complaint by Indonesia, the world's largest palm oil producer. The dispute stems from the EU Renewable Energy Directive 2018 (RED II), which limits crop-based biofuels' eligibility for renewable energy targets and phases out palm oil-based biofuels by 2030, citing sustainability concerns. While the WTO panel supported the EU's measures, it identified shortcomings in how the restrictions were prepared, published, and administered. This decision follows a similar ruling last year on Malaysia's complaint, highlighting ongoing tensions between palm oil producers and the EU over environmental and trade policies. Indonesia and Malaysia dominate global palm oil production, with the oil widely used in food, cosmetics, and biofuels. However, environmentalists criticize palm oil production for driving deforestation and biodiversity loss, as rainforests have been cleared for plantations. The ruling underscores the challenges of balancing trade, sustainability, and environmental protection in global markets.

Indonesia-EU Trade Pact Deadline Pushed to First Half of 2025

—Jayanty Nada Shofa, *JakartaGlobe*, 6 January 2025

Indonesia has postponed the deadline for finalizing its trade agreement with the European Union (EU), targeting completion by mid-2025. Negotiations for the Indonesia-EU Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) have been ongoing since 2016, with 85% of the deal reportedly concluded. However, discussions have been delayed, requiring 19 rounds of talks, with issues such as export-import restrictions and investment conditions still unresolved. Indonesia's Trade Minister, Budi Santoso, did not specify the reasons for the delay. The most recent talks in Bogor in 2024 showed both sides were unable to reach a consensus. Indonesia is targeting nearly \$294.5 billion in exports for 2025, including \$19.3 billion from micro, small, and medium businesses. In 2023, Indonesia's trade with the EU reached \$30.8 billion, with a surplus of \$2.6 billion, primarily from palm oil exports. However, the EU's anti-deforestation policy, EUDR, which requires proof that palm oil does not come from deforested land, has caused tensions. President Prabowo Subianto suggested Indonesia may stop exporting palm oil to Europe, which he claims would disrupt European industries.

Did or Didn't Indonesia's VAT Rise to 12% on 1 January 2025? Government Presents Incentive Policy Packages?

—News Team, *IndonesiaInvestments*, 5 January 2025

The Indonesian government's plan to raise the Value-Added Tax (VAT) rate from 11% to 12% has caused confusion. Law Number 7 of 2021 mandated a VAT increase to 11% in April 2022 and another 1% hike to 12% by January 2025. Initially, it was expected that all formal products and services would be subject to the 12% VAT from January 2025. However, a last-minute change on December 31, 2024, altered these plans. Indonesian Finance Minister Sri Mulyani emphasized that the VAT hike is part of fiscal reforms aimed at boosting state revenues for critical sectors like infrastructure, health, and social protection, which are necessary for the country's economic growth. The VAT increase is also intended to support public development programs, including a costly free nutritious meal program for school children, aimed at combating stunting. This program, which targets 82.9 million beneficiaries, carries a budget of IDR 800 billion (\$50 million) per day, putting significant pressure on the government's budget.

G. Human Rights, Democracy and Gender Equality

Deforestation for Food and Energy in South Kalimantan is Prone to Triggering Disasters

—Jumarto Yulianus, *Kompas*, 15 January 2025

The Indonesian government's plan to open 20 million hectares of forest for food and energy projects has sparked significant ecological and social concerns. Critics, including the Indonesian Environmental Forum (Walhi), warn that deforestation could lead to severe ecological damage, such as hydrometeorological disasters and biodiversity loss. In South Kalimantan, the government aims to develop 500,000 hectares of rice fields over four years as part of a broader strategy for food self-sufficiency, yet past projects like the Jejangkit rice field initiative have failed, leaving lands degraded and vulnerable to climate impacts. Walhi highlights that South Kalimantan, burdened by extensive forest utilization permits for mining and palm oil, has already lost much of its forest cover, intensifying ecological crises. Critics argue that the government's approach lacks community involvement and primarily benefits corporate interests. They urge sustainable strategies that do not sacrifice forests, emphasizing that these ecosystems are vital for national identity and global biodiversity. Activists also highlight the risks of conflicts between farming communities and industries and call for halting deforestation-driven projects.

Indonesian scientist under fire for revealing extent of illegal tin mining

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 14 January 2025

Indonesian environmental forensic expert Bambang Hero Saharjo is facing a new legal challenge after testifying as a state witness in a high-profile tin laundering case. Lawyer Andi Kusuma filed a police report on January 8, accusing Bambang of lacking the competence to assess environmental damages in a corruption scheme involving illegal mining in the Bangka-Belitung Islands. Bambang estimated the environmental damage at 271 trillion rupiah (\$16.6 billion) and the corruption-related loss at 30 trillion rupiah (\$1.8 billion). Kusuma, claiming to represent the local community, criticized Bambang for damaging the reputation of the local tin

industry. Bambang has previously defended his findings in other environmental cases, including those related to forest fires. Environmental NGOs, including Greenpeace, argue that these lawsuits are a form of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP), aimed at silencing environmental defenders. Bambang's work is essential in exposing environmental crimes and supporting legal action. Activists warn that rising threats against defenders undermine efforts to tackle Indonesia's environmental crisis.

Women in the 2024 Regional Elections, Between Structural Barriers and Costly Politics

—Denty Piawai Nastitie, *Kompas*, 12 January 2025

Women's representation in Indonesia's regional leadership remains limited despite increased participation in the 2024 regional elections (Pilkada). Female candidates nearly doubled from 161 in 2020 to 308 in 2024, yet they represent only 10 percent of total candidates. Out of 545 regions, only 45 women were elected as regional heads, accounting for 8.26 percent of leaders. Structural barriers, double burdens, financial challenges, and misogynistic campaigns hinder women's participation. Unlike legislative elections, which mandate 30 percent female representation per electoral district, regional elections lack binding rules for gender quotas. The electoral system's reliance on party coalitions limits opportunities for independent women candidates, with significant financial backing often required to compete. Female candidates face stigmatization through sexist campaigns questioning their leadership abilities. The Women's Coalition advocates for a mandatory 30 percent gender quota and more inclusive electoral reforms to enhance women's representation. Despite Indonesia's pool of qualified women leaders, systemic challenges, including high-cost politics and entrenched stereotypes, continue to obstruct their path to regional leadership.

Indonesia launches free meals program to feed children and pregnant women to fight malnutrition

—NinieK Karmuni and Dita Alangkara, *AssociatedPress*, 6 January 2025

Indonesia's new government launched an ambitious \$28 billion initiative to combat malnutrition, targeting nearly 90 million children and pregnant women through its Free Nutritious Meal program. The program aims to tackle the high rate of stunting, affecting 21.5% of children under 5, and raise farmers' incomes. This initiative, fulfilling President Prabowo Subianto's campaign promise, also seeks to provide free school lunches and milk to 83 million students. However, critics question its affordability, with concerns over state finances and economic impact. The program, set to cost 450 trillion rupiah by 2029, plans to reach 19.5 million people by 2025 with a budget of \$4.3 billion. The program involves cooperatives to supply food, with meals provided daily to students, covering one-third of their caloric needs. Critics, including economists and analysts, warn that the scale of the program may strain Indonesia's budget, increase national debt, and negatively affect economic growth targets. Despite progress, the country still struggles with high child malnutrition rates, hindering long-term development.

Unshackled Indonesian court made pro-democracy ruling on presidential nominations possible

—Tria Dianti, *BenarNews*, 3 January 2025

The Constitutional Court ruled 7-2 to abolish a regulation requiring political parties to have a minimum number of votes or legislative seats to nominate a presidential candidate. This decision, made in response to a petition by four students, is seen as a move toward more inclusive presidential elections. Titi Anggraini, a University of Indonesia lecturer, praised the ruling, emphasizing that it was a victory for voters rather than political parties. Bivitri Susanti,

a constitutional law expert, stressed the importance of transparency in the legislative process, urging lawmakers to implement the ruling openly. They noted that the court's decision reflects its independence from political pressures, marking a shift from past decisions influenced by the ruling regime. This ruling is final and binding, meaning the legislature must revise the regulation before the 2029 presidential election. While political parties have yet to fully respond, watchdogs are hopeful that this decision will lead to more democratic elections. However, there are concerns that lawmakers may attempt to reverse the ruling, as they did with a similar decision for regional elections in 2024.

I. Indonesia in Geopolitics

The future is Oranje: Kluivert arrival underpins Indonesia's Dutch shift

—John Duerden, *TheGuardian*, 14 January 2025

Indonesia's national football team has undergone significant transformation, fueled by a rapid naturalization policy aimed at boosting its performance. Eight of the starting XI in their recent World Cup qualifier against Saudi Arabia were born in the Netherlands, a legacy of the country's colonial history. Despite notable progress under South Korean head coach Shin Tae-yong, including climbing 50 places in FIFA rankings and remaining competitive in the 2026 World Cup qualifiers, Shin was controversially replaced by Dutch football legend Patrick Kluivert. Shin's firing was attributed to communication challenges with foreign-born players and the team's need for a coach aligned with evolving strategies. Critics argue Shin was treated unfairly, given his achievements. Kluivert, though inexperienced as a head coach, is expected to attract higher-caliber talent to Team Garuda. PSSI Chairman Erick Thohir defends the naturalization strategy as a long-term policy but faces concerns about sidelining local players. With Indonesia eyeing World Cup qualification, Kluivert's success or failure will shape the future of Indonesian football and Thohir's political aspirations.

With Indonesia, Brics is adding Southeast Asia to its power base

—Riaz Khokhar, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 12 January 2025

Indonesia has become the first Southeast Asian country to join BRICS as a full member, following an invitation alongside Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam in October 2024. Indonesia's membership is significant due to its status as the world's largest nickel producer, essential for electric vehicle batteries. BRICS' expansion now includes countries rich in critical minerals, bolstering its influence in global commodity markets. The bloc aims to enhance cooperation on resource production, particularly for clean tech products like solar panels and electric vehicles. BRICS' consensus-based decision-making allows its members to align policies and resist Western influence, particularly in areas like economic development, trade reforms, and climate change. Southeast Asian BRICS members strengthen their collective voice, opposing Western-led alliances like the US-led Mineral Security Partnership. Additionally, BRICS supports nuclear non-proliferation and has endorsed the Global South's push for a bigger role in security matters. Indonesia's full membership reflects a broader trend of Global South countries seeking platforms for economic and political influence, distinct from Western-led institutions.

Indonesia aims for bolder non-alignment policy

—Yvette Tanamal, *TheJakartaPost*, 11 January 2025

Indonesia's Foreign Minister Sugiono outlined a bold, free, and active foreign policy vision under Prabowo Subianto during his first annual speech. The strategy prioritizes economic growth, self-sufficiency, and upholding ASEAN centrality, guided by Prabowo's eight-point Asta Cita program. Key goals include advancing green and blue economies, infrastructure development, and critical industry downstreaming. Sugiono emphasized Indonesia's non-alignment stance, highlighting its recent entry into BRICS as an embodiment of independent foreign policy, focused on championing Global South rights and reshaping the global financial system. He pledged diplomatic efforts to maintain ASEAN centrality amid rising Indo-Pacific tensions and reiterated Indonesia's commitment to international law in the South China Sea. Acknowledging global crises and a failing multilateral system, Sugiono called for anticipatory and visionary diplomacy rooted in Pancasila values. He lauded Indonesia's aspirations to be a trusted partner and regional leader while addressing concerns over ASEAN relations under Prabowo's leadership. The administration's proactive global engagement contrasts with former President Jokowi's domestically focused approach.

Indonesia's admission to BRICS raises concerns about impact on Jakarta-West relations

—Tria Dianti, *BenarNews*, 8 January 2025

Indonesia's recent induction into the BRICS economic bloc has sparked mixed reactions. While some analysts believe it offers access to new markets, others worry it could harm Jakarta's relations with the U.S. under a potential new Trump administration. BRICS, which started with Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, now includes Indonesia, Southeast Asia's largest economy. However, some experts, like Vinsensio Dugis, question the economic benefits, pointing out Indonesia already has strong ties with BRICS members like China and India. Concerns have also arisen about potential U.S. retaliation, with Trump threatening tariffs on BRICS imports if they challenge the U.S. dollar. Indonesian lawmakers, however, view BRICS membership as a strategic move to enhance global cooperation, not as a challenge to Western dominance. Despite concerns, BRICS membership offers Indonesia an opportunity to expand into non-traditional markets and bolster its geopolitical influence. Experts note that Indonesia's membership is a significant step for the bloc, enhancing its global economic presence.

Indonesia is admitted to the BRICS bloc of developing nations

—Gabriela Sa Pessoa, *AssociatedPress*, 7 January 2025

Indonesia has officially joined the BRICS bloc of developing economies, following its endorsement in August 2023 and the formation of its new government. BRICS, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, aims to reform global governance and foster South-South cooperation. Indonesia's addition reflects its growing role in global affairs and commitment to multilateral cooperation. The country, with the largest population and economy in Southeast Asia, sees its membership as a strategic move to deepen collaboration with other developing nations based on principles of equality, mutual respect, and sustainable development. BRICS was initially formed in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India, and China, with South Africa joining in 2010. The bloc has expanded in recent years to include Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the UAE, and Saudi Arabia has been invited. With Indonesia's membership, BRICS now represents nearly 45% of the global population and 35% of the world's GDP, positioning it as a significant counterweight to the developed nations of the Group of Seven.

End

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