



Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

2025 Issue 11 — 22 May

*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

[Saving the Maluku Sea from Bombs and Potassium](#)

—Raynard Kristian Bonanio Pardede, *Kompas*, 21 May 2025

In February 2025, researchers from the Jala Ina Foundation discovered alarming coral reef damage in Liang, Salahutu District, Central Maluku, caused not by natural disasters but by destructive fishing practices using bombs and potassium. Diving at three points using the underwater photo transect method, the team found coral cover as low as 1–3 percent—well

below healthy levels—posing a serious threat to marine ecosystems and local livelihoods. Residents report declining fish stocks and fear confronting perpetrators, many of whom come from outside the area and carry weapons. Similar destruction has been reported in the remote Teon Nila Serua (TNS) islands, where illegal fishing persists due to weak enforcement following resident relocation after a 1978 volcanic threat. To address this, Jala Ina has begun installing artificial reefs, while the Maluku Marine Affairs and Fisheries Office is pushing to expand conservation areas, including 13 new zones and local initiatives like Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs). Officials stress the urgency of law enforcement and community involvement to protect both biodiversity and the economic future of coastal communities.

[The Story of Morotai, Traces of the Pacific War and Yellowfin Tuna Diplomacy](#)

—Raynard Kristian Bonanio Pardede, *Kompas*, 18 May 2025

Representatives from the TNI, the U.S. Embassy, and the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) met in Jakarta on May 14 to coordinate a mission to locate the remains of American soldiers missing in action during World War II in Morotai, North Maluku. Morotai, once a critical Allied base during the Pacific War and captured in Operation Tradewind in 1944, played a key role in General Douglas MacArthur's island-hopping campaign to reach the Philippines and disrupt Japanese supply lines. Since 2023, the U.S. has traced its fallen soldiers there, and in April 2025, DPAA deployed a team to interview locals and survey archaeological sites. The mission reflects both humanitarian commitments and strong bilateral cooperation. Alongside its historic military value, Morotai is also gaining renewed attention for its tuna-rich waters. A Marine and Fisheries Integrated Center, funded by JICA with Rp115.7 billion, was inaugurated on 28 April 2025 to support tuna exports and local employment. The Indonesian government also plans to revitalize Morotai's military infrastructure for strategic defense purposes in the Pacific region.

[Coastal and Marine Land Grabbing Takes Away Living Space from Local Communities](#)

—Pradipta Pandu Mustika, *Kompas*, 15 May 2025

On May 15, the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), in collaboration with the Indonesia Ocean Justice Initiative (IOJI), The Samdhana Institute, and the Indonesian Anthropological Association, launched an e-book titled *Seizing the Sea, Seizing the Lives of Fishermen* in Jakarta. The book sheds light on the growing threat of coastal and marine land grabbing in Indonesia and the Philippines—practices driven by economic development ambitions that disregard social and ecological justice. It documents how government-backed projects like sea fences in Tangerang, sand mining in the Riau Islands, and reclamation in Manila Bay have displaced fishing communities and endangered marine ecosystems. Highlighting resistance movements in Bali, Pari, Wakatobi, and Mentawai, the book calls for stronger legal protections and recognition of community-managed coastal areas. Mas Achmad Santosa of IOJI emphasized that these injustices reflect a flawed development paradigm and poor enforcement of environmental laws. BRIN hopes the book will catalyze policy reforms to safeguard coastal communities and promote sustainable development.

[New study maps the fishmeal factories that supply the world's fish farms](#)

—Edward Carver, *Mongabay*, 15 May 2025

A landmark study published in April by researchers from the University of British Columbia (UBC) revealed the first-ever open-source global map of 506 fishmeal and fish oil (FMFO) factories across 60 countries, marking a significant step toward transparency in a controversial industry fueling the global aquaculture boom. The research team verified most

factory locations using satellite data and company sources, identifying key players in a sector that supplies over half the world's seafood. While many factories reported using fish byproducts, the study confirmed that whole fish—mainly small pelagic species like sardines and anchovies—remain the dominant raw material, especially in major producers like Peru and Mauritania. Critics argue this practice threatens marine ecosystems and deprives low-income communities, especially in West Africa, of essential nutrition. The data also revealed that most FMFO is used to feed carnivorous farmed species like salmon, largely for companies in China, Norway, and Chile. The study aims to inform more responsible aquaculture practices and spotlight the industry's environmental, social, and nutritional impacts.

Shea, L. A., et al. (2025). [Spatial distribution of fishmeal and fish oil factories around the globe](#). *Science Advances*, 11(17).

Targeting Ex-Mining Land for Fisheries

—Brigita Maria Lukita G, *Kompas*, 14 May 2025

A former tin mining pit in Air Seruk Village, Sijuk District, Belitung Regency, is being transformed into a freshwater fish farming pond as part of a land rehabilitation initiative launched in 2025 by Berikanesia Lestari, a consortium supported by the GoTo Impact Foundation. This effort aims to restore abandoned mining sites, which often cause environmental damage, into productive ecosystems that boost local food security, economy, and public health—particularly addressing high stunting rates in the area. The selected pit, over 20 years old and 20 meters deep, is being used to cultivate 3,500 red tilapia, with future plans to scale to other sites. Laboratory tests, in collaboration with PT Algatek Karbon Nusantara, confirmed the absence of heavy metals like lead, though issues like ammonia and fluoride are being mitigated with eco-friendly technologies. The fish will be marketed locally at affordable prices and accompanied by nutrition education for mothers. This cross-sector collaboration includes village enterprises and changemakers to prevent illegal mining and ensure sustainable development.

Indonesia's Target of Achieving 30 Percent Marine Conservation Should Not Just Be a Number

—Ichwan Susanto, *Kompas*, 14 May 2025

At the 10th Our Ocean Conference in Busan on May 29, Indonesia reaffirmed its ambitious marine conservation goal—protecting 30% of its marine area by 2045, or 97 million hectares, tripling its current 29.9 million hectares. This 30 x 45 target aligns with Indonesia's centennial independence in 2045 and goes beyond the global 30 x 30 commitment made at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference in December 2022. To meet this goal, Indonesia is embracing OECM, recognizing ecologically beneficial zones managed by communities or private sectors. Experts from the Ministry of Marine Affairs and organizations like RARE Indonesia and Conservation Indonesia stressed that conservation success hinges not just on numbers but on inclusive governance, traditional knowledge, and local partnerships. New tools like EVIKA and innovations from the Rekam Nusantara Foundation—including ocean accounting and AI-based monitoring—are enhancing ecosystem management. As the world's largest archipelago and a key marine biodiversity hub, Indonesia's leadership and consistency are vital to global ocean sustainability and food security.

B. Forests and Land Use

Royal Golden Eagle Group Indicated to be Connected to Network of Companies Triggering Deforestation

—Pradipta Pandu Mustika, *Kompas*, 20 May 2025

Greenpeace released an investigative report titled [Under The Eagle's Shadow](#) on May 20 in Jakarta, alleging that Royal Golden Eagle (RGE) Group is linked to a vast network of shadow companies involved in deforestation across Indonesia. The investigation —conducted with four other environmental organizations— identified 194 Indonesian companies and 63 parent companies abroad suspected of clearing forests for palm oil and timber plantations, some of which overlap with wildlife sanctuaries. Greenpeace found indications of shared ownership, resources, and repeated asset transfers between RGE and these companies, asserting RGE must be held accountable for social and environmental damage. The group also traced raw materials from deforested areas to RGE's supply chain, such as PT Balikpapan Chip Lestari and PT Phoenix Resources International. While acknowledging that deforestation linked to RGE's core companies like APRIL and Toba Pulp Lestari has declined since 2015, Greenpeace claims overall deforestation has surged since 2021 through these alleged affiliates. RGE denies the accusations, reaffirming its commitment to zero deforestation and calling the report speculative and unsupported by verified sources.

Indonesia braces for forest, land fires ahead of dry season

—Gembong Hanung, *TheJakartaPost*, 17 May 2025

As Indonesia prepares to enter the peak of its dry season between April and August, the government has intensified efforts to prevent forest and land fires, which have already burned over 3,200 hectares in the first five months of 2025, according to the Forestry Ministry's SiPongi platform. The Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) predicts increased wildfire risk due to drier weather, prompting satellite-based hotspot monitoring and joint patrols by the military, police, and fire brigades. Despite fewer hotspots recorded compared to last year, officials warn against complacency. The Environment Ministry launched a wildfire management desk in March, focusing on seven fire-prone provinces, including Riau and Central Kalimantan, known for their vulnerable peatlands. Environment Minister Hanif Faisol Nurofiq, and BMKG Chief Dwikorita Karnawati emphasized proactive mitigation, such as early cloud seeding in Riau, which has already lost nearly 700 hectares to fire. The government aims for zero wildfires this year, a goal backed by President Prabowo Subianto and driven by past transboundary haze crises that impacted neighboring countries during El Niño years.

Ministry of Forestry and UNDP Hold Journalists Workshop to Support Indonesia's FOLU Net Sink Agenda

—Krisdianto and Nabilla Rahmani, *UNDP*, 16 May 2025

The Ministry of Forestry, in collaboration with the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and UNDP, held a two-day workshop on May 16–17 in Jakarta and Bogor to strengthen the role of journalists in supporting Indonesia's FOLU Net Sink 2030 agenda. Officially opened by Secretary General Mahfudz, the event aimed to enhance media understanding of Indonesia's climate strategy, which targets the forestry and land use sector to become a net carbon sink by 2030. Journalists joined stakeholders from government, business, academia, and NGOs, and visited the Rumpin nursery in Bogor to observe reforestation efforts. The FOLU Net Sink 2030 is a key part of Indonesia's Paris Agreement commitments, focusing on reducing deforestation, restoring ecosystems, and promoting

sustainable land management. Challenges such as land conflicts and limited local capacity underscore the importance of public communication. Officials emphasized the media's role in promoting transparency, inspiring community action, and ensuring inclusive climate narratives that uplift local wisdom and vulnerable voices in achieving national climate goals.

[When Land, Forests, and Oceans Can No Longer Absorb Emissions](#)

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 12 May 2025

Global temperatures in April 2025 remained at record highs, marking the 11th consecutive month of unprecedented heat, according to [Climate Bulletins](#) by the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service. Based on billions of global measurements, April 2025 was the second hottest on record, averaging 1.51°C above pre-industrial levels—a threshold set in the Paris Agreement. The warming trend, intensified since mid-2023 due to the El Niño event and compounded by persistent greenhouse gas emissions, has raised alarm among scientists, with projections indicating Earth could permanently breach the 1.5°C limit by 2029 or sooner. Despite the onset of La Niña, which typically cools global temperatures, anomalies remain high. Experts, including Issy Borley of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, likened the planet's carbon balance to a bathtub: emissions are flowing in faster than Earth's ecosystems—our "drain"—can absorb them.

The [study](#) highlighted how drought, wildfires, and ecosystem stress have reduced the capacity of forests, soil, and oceans to sequester carbon. Researchers warn that only a drastic cut in emissions can reverse this trend. Drawing lessons from the successful ozone layer recovery, scientists stress that human action—though currently insufficient—remains central to averting irreversible climate damage.

[Forest Fires Still a Threat, 184 Hotspots Detected](#)

—Pradipta Pandu Mustika, *Kompas*, 12 May 2025

As of May 9, 184 hotspots with potential to trigger forest and land fires (karhutla) have been detected across Indonesia, particularly in Aceh, North Sumatra, and Riau, prompting urgent response measures by central and local governments. Although the number of hotspots has dropped by 61% compared to 2024, Environment Minister Hanif Faisol Nurofiq warned that fire risk remains high due to factors such as agricultural land clearing, conflict-related fires, and peatland vulnerability during the dry season. During a coordination meeting with the Indonesian Palm Oil Entrepreneurs Association (GAPKI) on May 10, Hanif stressed the importance of corporate accountability, with penalties for companies lacking firefighting readiness. The government has identified climate change and extreme weather as key contributors to fire escalation. In response, the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) has deployed weather modification operations in fire-prone Riau, aiming to hydrate peatlands before peak dry months of June–August. With Rp19 trillion in claims under investigation, the government reaffirms its commitment to pursue negligent companies and enhance early warning systems to prevent catastrophic fires.

C. Biodiversity, Conservation and Protected Area

[Doctors from the Forest, Learning Medicine from Chimpanzees and Orangutans](#)

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 15 May 2025

Chimpanzees and orangutans have been observed using forest plants to treat injuries, offering insight into the roots of human medicine, according to two studies published in May 2025. On May 14, Elodie Freymann from Oxford University and her team reported that [Chimpanzees use medicinal leaves to perform first aid](#)—behavior caught on video and recorded over four months. Similarly, a study led by Isabelle Laumer from Germany’s Max Planck Institute, published a study in *Scientific Reports* titled [Active self-treatment of a facial wound with a biologically active plant by a male Sumatran orangutan](#) on May 2, documenting a male Sumatran orangutan applying the sap and chewed leaves of a medicinal vine to facial wounds in Indonesia’s Gunung Leuser National Park. Chemical analysis confirmed the plant’s anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties. These findings strengthen the scientific understanding of *zoopharmacognosy*—animals’ use of natural substances to heal—and suggest such behaviors may have evolutionary ties to human healthcare. Researchers stress that protecting forests is vital not only for biodiversity but also for preserving this untapped medicinal knowledge.

Sumatran tiger protection needs more patrols, tougher penalties, study finds

—Basten Gokkon, *Mongabay*, 15 May 2025

A new study urges stronger efforts to curb poaching and promote sustainable livelihoods in Gunung Leuser National Park, one of the last habitats for the critically endangered Sumatran tiger. Conducted by Adhi Nurul Hadi, a researcher at the University of Indonesia and Forestry Ministry official, the study analyzed patrol data, poaching records, and camera-trap surveys from 2010 to 2020 in the Langkat-Bendahara region of Aceh province. Despite 457 patrols and 780 snares removed between 2015 and 2019, tiger poaching rates remained steady, with law enforcement handling 26 trafficking cases—most escalating to criminal charges only after regulatory reforms in 2013. Researchers warn current deterrents and penalties remain too weak to dissuade poachers, especially amid high profits from the illegal trade. They call for more frequent patrols in high-risk zones, improved law enforcement through community collaboration, and alternative livelihood programs to shift poachers’ mindsets. With Sumatran tiger populations stable but vulnerable, integrated and well-funded conservation efforts are critical for long-term protection of this iconic species and its forest ecosystem.

Hadi, A. N., Mardhiah, et al. (2025). [Evaluating the efficacy of an integrated law enforcement approach to safeguarding Sumatran tigers and their prey](#). *Journal of Environmental Management*, 378.

Indigenous conservationists lead the fight to save Mentawai’s endangered primates

—Ana Norman Bermudez, *Mongabay*, 15 May 2025

On Mentawai Islands, an Indigenous-led group called *Malinggai Uma Tradisional Mentawai*, founded in 2013 by Damianus “Dami” Tateburuk and friends, is working to save the region’s endangered primates from extinction. Traditionally, Mentawai people hunted primates under spiritual and cultural laws, sparing the Kloss’s gibbon, or *bilou*, believed to be a forest guardian. But as these customs fade and economic pressures grow, primates like the simakobu and langur face steep population declines — with some losing up to 90% in recent decades, according to IUCN data. Logging, both legal and illegal, has devastated habitats and made hunting easier. Despite poverty and resistance from some villagers, Dami’s team now partners with three village councils and 12 schools to revive traditional conservation practices, conduct patrols, and raise awareness. Their long-term goal includes creating a protected area and turning hunters into conservation rangers. Conservationists and

researchers supporting the initiative stress the importance of Indigenous leadership, noting that genuine protection must arise from within the community itself.

Quinten, M., et al. (2014). [Knowledge, attitudes and practices of local people on Siberut Island \(West-Sumatra, Indonesia\) towards primate hunting and conservation](#). *Journal of Threatened Taxa*, 6(11), 6389-6398.

Setiawan, A., et al. (2020). [Distribution survey of Kloss's Gibbons \(*Hylobates klossii*\) in Mentawai Islands, Indonesia](#). *Biodiversitas Journal of Biological Diversity*, 21(5), 2224-2232.

Whittaker, D. J. (2006). [A Conservation Action Plan for the Mentawai Primates](#). *Primate Conservation*, 20, 95-105.

Setiawan, A., & Tateburuk, D. (2023). [Calling from the Wild](#). In S. M. Cheyne et al. (Eds.), *Gibbon Conservation in the Anthropocene* (pp. 124–130). Cambridge University Press.

Anas, Y., et al. (2024). [Characteristics and potential of the extreme poor in the Mentawai Islands Regency, West Sumatra Province](#). *ISAR Journal of Economics and Business Management*, 2(5), 7-18.

Indonesian pangolin trafficking prosecution reveals police involvement — and impunity

—Ayat S Karokaro, *Mongabay*, 14 May 2025

On November 11, 2024, Indonesian police officer Alfi Simatupang, two soldiers, and a civilian were arrested in Asahan district, North Sumatra, for allegedly attempting to traffic nearly 1.2 metric tons of pangolin scales—worth millions on the black market and linked to the killing of around 5,900 critically endangered Sunda pangolins. While the civilian, Amir Simatupang, is currently on trial and the soldiers, Muhammad Yusuf Harahap and Rahmadani Syahputra, face court-martial, Alfi—allegedly the plot's mastermind—has not only avoided prosecution but was inexplicably promoted. Testimonies in court revealed Alfi orchestrated the theft of scales from the police evidence warehouse and planned to sell them, enlisting the others in the operation. The judge overseeing Amir's trial has urged prosecutors to investigate and charge Alfi, citing clear evidence of his involvement. Conservation groups condemned the case as further proof of impunity for law enforcement in wildlife crimes, highlighting the growing sophistication and profitability of Indonesia's illegal pangolin trade, particularly in wildlife crime hotspots like Aceh, North Sumatra, and Riau.

Glaciers Melting Faster, Threatening Ecosystems Worldwide

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 14 May 2025

Glaciers are shrinking at an unprecedented rate due to climate change, threatening biodiversity and global ecosystems, according to a study [Impacts of deglaciation on biodiversity and ecosystem function](#) published in *Nature Reviews Biodiversity*. Led by Gianalberto Losapio of the University of Lausanne, the international research team—including scientists from institutions like the University of Wollongong and British Antarctic Survey—analyzed over 160 studies to reveal how glacier loss affects ecosystems worldwide. They warned that glaciers could lose one-third of their mass by 2050, with tropical glaciers like Indonesia's Puncak Jaya disappearing even sooner—potentially by 2026, as confirmed by BMKG's November 2024 field survey. The melting of ancient glacial ice disrupts water systems, contributes to sea-level rise, alters ocean currents and weather patterns, and threatens thousands of specialized species adapted to cold environments. As generalist species invade newly exposed land, unique glacial ecosystems vanish. With glaciers storing

three-quarters of Earth's freshwater, the rapid decline impacts human and ecological resilience. The United Nations has declared 2025 the International Year of Glacier Preservation to raise awareness of these urgent threats.

D. Climate Change, Energy and Mining

[As Indonesia phases out coal, what happens to people & environments left behind?](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 20 May 2025

As Indonesia moves to retire its coal-fired power plants to address climate change, concerns arise over the overlooked environmental and social impacts on affected communities and ecosystems, according to the Indonesian Center for Environmental Law (ICEL). Current regulations, including the 2009 electricity law, do not require post-operation planning or environmental recovery for coal plants, unlike mining laws, leaving long-term pollution, degraded ecosystems, and lost livelihoods unaddressed. ICEL's review of six plants across Sumatra, Java, and Bali found that environmental impact assessments rarely include post-closure recovery plans, focusing narrowly on demolition impacts. This neglect disproportionately affects local communities and outsourced workers, who lack job security and often are excluded from transition discussions. Bali's Celukan Bawang plant, for example, has harmed coral reefs and fisheries. Government agencies acknowledge the need for justice-centered transition planning that incorporates environmental restoration and economic diversification. ICEL urges Indonesia to adopt bottom-up approaches and learn from international examples like South Africa and New Zealand, where land restitution and Indigenous rights are integral.

[Flawed energy road map may block Indonesia's coal exit, critics warn](#)

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

Indonesia's first official energy transition road map, launched ahead of President Prabowo Subianto's pledge at the 2024 G20 Summit to phase out coal by 2040, faces strong criticism for favoring financial and technical ease over urgent emissions cuts. Unveiled by the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, the plan uses a weighted scoring system that prioritizes donor funding (27%) and grid reliability (13%) while assigning only 9.3% to emissions, raising doubts about its effectiveness. Critics, including CELIOS and CERAH, argue this approach will hinder the early retirement of high-emission coal plants, lacks a clear timeline, and omits specific plants to retire. The roadmap also promotes controversial technologies like cofiring and carbon capture, which experts label as costly "false solutions." Additionally, it fails to define a "just transition," offering no guidance on retraining or community support. While it mandates PLN to retire coal plants and provides legal protection through the business judgment rule, advocates urge immediate action under the JETP to close at least two plants and avoid derailing Indonesia's decarbonization goals.

[On Climate, Children Await Proof of Parental Love](#)

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 14 May 2025

By 2050, children born in 2025 will face life on a planet over 2.5°C warmer than the pre-industrial era, warns a new *Nature* study [Global emergence of unprecedented lifetime exposure to climate extremes](#) published on May 7 by climate researcher Luke Grant and

colleagues from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. In tropical regions like Indonesia, daily temperatures may regularly exceed 40°C, making outdoor activities unsafe and forcing school closures. Children will endure frequent disasters—crop failures, floods, wildfires, and heatwaves—previously considered seasonal. Indoor refuge won't guarantee comfort as air conditioning becomes a constant need. Under the worst-case SSP5-8.5 scenario, 111 million children born in 2020 could face "unprecedented life" due to extreme heat exposure. Even if warming is limited to 1.5°C, 62 million would still face such conditions. The authors stress this generational injustice, highlighting how children will suffer far more than older generations, even under current policies that project a 2.7°C increase by 2100. Despite ongoing protests and youth-led climate activism, global emissions hit record highs in 2024, and April 2025 was the hottest month yet—underscoring adults' failure to protect future generations.

[Indonesia's gas bet poses risks for economy, health and climate](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 8 May 2025

Experts from Greenpeace Indonesia and the Center of Economic and Law Studies (CELIOS) warned in [Economic, Health, and Environmental Impacts of Gas Plant Expansion](#) report released in Jakarta that Indonesia's aggressive push to expand gas power—adding 22 gigawatts by 2040—could derail its climate goals, entrench fossil fuel dependence, and impose massive economic, health, and environmental costs. The country already operates 26 GW of gas plants, and even partial expansion would significantly increase emissions. The report criticizes the government's framing of gas as a "clean transition fuel," calling it misleading and a distraction from renewable energy. It projects that gas expansion could cost the state up to \$57 billion and risk 6.7 million job losses, while community-led renewables could generate \$159 billion and 96 million jobs. Health impacts alone could cost over \$100 billion. The report also highlights geopolitical risks of dependency on Japan, which promotes gas through the Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC). Greenpeace urges canceling new gas projects, redirecting subsidies to renewables, and prioritizing decentralized energy. Government officials defended gas's reliability but faced criticism for underfunding renewables and risking future gas import dependency.

E. Pollution, Waste, Water and Disaster

[Stop Burning Plastic Waste in Tropodo Tofu Industry](#)

—Runik Sri Astuti, *Kompas*, 19 May 2025

Environmental activists from Ecoton demonstrated at Sidoarjo Square, East Java, on May 19, demanding that tofu producers in Tropodo Village immediately stop burning plastic waste and hazardous materials as fuel due to severe health and environmental risks. Ecoton's studies revealed extremely high dioxin contamination—Tropodo ranks as Asia's second highest dioxin-polluted site—with toxin levels in local chicken eggs 80 times above WHO standards. Air pollution from PM 2.5 reached 1063 µg/m³, far exceeding Indonesia's air quality limits. Microplastics detected in the air also contribute to respiratory illnesses among residents. The government has tolerated limited use of plastic-derived fuel until May 21, 2025, with a plan to eliminate it by mid-June, offering support to shift to eco-friendly alternatives like natural gas. Sidoarjo officials emphasized preserving community livelihoods while enforcing environmental regulations, warning non-compliant producers of police action. Activists urge stricter law enforcement, a halt to plastic waste imports, and government subsidies for clean energy.

solutions to protect public health and the environment from ongoing toxic pollution in the tofu-producing area.

Beverage industry frets over Bali's plastic bottle ban

—Ni Made Tasyarini, *TheJakartaPost*, 16 May 2025

Bali provincial government's ban on single-use plastic bottles under 1 liter, introduced in April 2025 through Circular No. 9/2025 as part of the Bali Clean Waste Movement, has sparked concern among beverage producers about potential sales declines and economic impacts. Triyono Prijosesilo, chairman of the Association of Indonesian Soft Drink Producers (ASRIM), warned that the ban could cause a 5 percent drop in revenue due to Bali's large ready-to-drink market share and may lead to reduced production and distribution. The Industry Ministry plans to coordinate with the Home Ministry to assess the ban's effects. Bali Employers Association (Apindo) chairman I Nengah Nurlaba urged the government to reconsider, highlighting risks to small businesses and community traders. Meanwhile, waste management experts like Indonesian Scavengers Association's Pris Polly Lengkong advocate for improved recycling infrastructure instead of bans. Bali governor I Wayan Koster emphasized the province's waste challenges—producing 3,436 tonnes daily with 17 percent plastic waste—and the urgent need to curb irresponsible dumping, especially to protect the island's beaches from local and external plastic pollution.

Global recycling rates have fallen for eighth year running, report finds

—Damien Gayle, *TheGuardian*, 16 May 2025

Global recycling rates are declining despite rising awareness, as material consumption continues to outpace population growth and recycling capacity, according to [CGR 2025](#) report by Circle Economy. The study found that only 6.9% of the 106 billion tonnes of materials used annually come from recycled sources, down from 9.1% in 2015. Researchers warned that even under ideal conditions, global recycling could only reach 25%, emphasizing that reducing consumption is essential to curb the waste crisis. Ivonne Bojoh, Circle Economy's CEO, stressed the need for systemic change, including sustainable management of biomass, circular use of infrastructure, and an end to landfilling renewable materials. The report revealed that global raw material extraction has tripled over 50 years and is expected to rise another 60% by 2060 without action. High-income countries, particularly in the EU and US, consume six times more resources than low-income nations. Researchers urged the creation of global circular economy targets and an International Materials Agency to guide governments toward more sustainable practices.

Looking for a Solution to Plastic Waste Incineration in the Sidoarjo Tofu Industry, Don't Stop at Recommendations

—Runik Sri Astuti, *Kompas*, 15 May 2025

The tofu industry in Tropodo Village in Sidoarjo Regency, East Java —consisting of 51 SMEs employing mostly local residents—has long burned plastic waste as fuel to cut production costs, despite environmental and health risks. The East Java Environmental Control Center verified that burning plastic produces toxic smoke containing CO₂, NO_x, dioxins, and microplastics, contaminating air, soil, and water, and affecting human health through polluted food chains. The law prohibits such waste incineration without proper standards, yet enforcement remains weak. Local government offered four technical recommendations: taller chimneys, air filtration systems, emission testing, and switching to renewable fuels, but activists and residents demand concrete government intervention, subsidies, and stricter regulation to support SMEs transitioning to cleaner fuels. Although some entrepreneurs have

started using wood fuel, most continue using plastic waste due to cost and accessibility. Experts stress that technical fixes alone are insufficient, urging a multisectoral approach involving government, community, and academia to enforce laws, educate the public, and provide financial and technical aid to eliminate plastic burning and protect public health and the environment.

[Toxic tofu? How plastic waste from the west fuels food factories in Indonesia](#)

—Michael Neilson, *TheGuardian*, 10 May 2025

Plastic waste from wealthy nations—including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, France, the US, and Britain—is being burned to fuel tofu production in Tropodo, East Java, raising alarm over public health and environmental risks. In February 2025, *The Guardian* visited five tofu factories where imported and domestic plastic waste is openly burned in furnaces, replacing more expensive wood. This practice persists despite Indonesia's ban on plastic waste imports and laws prohibiting open burning. Around 60 factories produce 60 tonnes of tofu daily, with distribution across East Java, including Surabaya. Environmental group Ecoton revealed the plastic originates from contaminated scrap paper imports, often discarded by paper mills and diverted to tofu factories. Tests on tofu from the area revealed high levels of microplastics, while eggs from nearby farms exceeded safe dioxin levels by 48 times. Factory owners acknowledge the health risks but cite cost pressures. Activists call for government subsidies for cleaner fuel alternatives and tighter enforcement, condemning the situation as an example of “waste colonialism” by developed nations exploiting lax regulation in the Global South.

F. Technology, Investment and Finance

[Is it true that Indonesia's upstream oil and gas industry is approaching its twilight?](#)

—Aditya Putra Perdana and Aris Prasetyo, *Kompas*, 20 May 2025

Indonesia's upstream oil and gas sector, especially crude oil production, continues to decline due to aging fields and insufficient new exploration, with 2024 crude oil lifting projected at 579,700 barrels per day, down from 612,300 BOPD in 2022. This decline has led to increasing reliance on imports to meet growing domestic demand fueled by economic growth, despite a slight 10.68% drop in crude imports in 2024 caused by reduced refinery intake, not higher local production. To counter this, the government and industry are pushing forward strategic projects such as the Forel and Terubuk fields in the Riau Islands, launched by President Prabowo Subianto in May 2025, adding 20,000 BOPD and 60 MMSCFD of gas, with investments totaling \$600 million and full national workforce participation. Natural gas offers hope for energy resilience, with new significant discoveries in East Kalimantan and Maluku, including the Masela Abadi LNG project expected to boost output. Experts emphasize that oil and gas remain essential in the near term, urging innovation, exploration, and stakeholder collaboration to stabilize supply and support Indonesia's energy transition without an imminent end to the industry.

[Technology Can Help Overcome “Fatherless” in Indonesia](#)

—Stephanus Aranditio, *Kompas*, 18 May 2025

Around 80 percent of children experience fatherlessness—defined not only as physical absence but also emotional detachment—according to the Ministry of Population and Family

Development. This issue, highlighted by Minister Wihaji in Jakarta on May 5, has raised concerns over the long-term psychological and social impacts on children, including emotional vulnerability and weakened leadership traits. Rahmat Hidayat, Dean of the Faculty of Psychology at Universitas Gadjah Mada, emphasized on May 17 that fathers play a crucial role in shaping a child's character, and their absence—often due to economic demands, migration, or work outside the city—can hinder healthy development. While technology enables distant fathers to maintain emotional bonds through video calls and messaging, Rahmat stressed that physical presence remains irreplaceable, especially during important milestones in a child's life. He also urged parents to actively monitor their children's digital habits and ensure emotional nurturing beyond material provision. Solutions include redefining gender roles in parenting, improving urban transportation, creating local job opportunities, and leveraging alternative role models like uncles or mentors to support children emotionally.

RI ups palm oil export levy to 10% as govt boosts biofuel, replanting efforts

—Divya Karyza, *TheJakartaPost*, 15 May 2025

The Indonesian government will increase its crude palm oil (CPO) export levy from 7.5 to 10 percent starting May 17, as announced by the Finance Ministry on May 14, to fund the country's biodiesel program and palm oil replanting efforts. As the world's top palm oil producer, Indonesia is heavily subsidizing its B40 biodiesel mandate, which requires blending 40 percent palm oil into diesel fuel, to offset the high conversion costs amid a price gap between palm oil and crude oil. The increased levy, along with existing export duties and domestic market obligations, could make Indonesian palm oil less competitive globally, according to Eddy Martono, chairman of the Indonesian Palm Oil Association (GAPKI), who estimated the current cost burden at \$221 per metric tonne. The policy takes effect amid falling CPO production, which dropped from 50.1 million tonnes in 2023 to 47.8 million in 2024. Despite these challenges, the Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry projects the B40 program could yield Rp147.5 trillion in fuel import savings and create nearly 2 million jobs by 2025, while cutting carbon emissions by over 41 million tonnes.

Jakarta conference explores future with AI technologies in Indonesia

—Leonardus Jegho, *ChinaDaily*, 15 May 2025

At the AI Innovation Conference 2025 held in Jakarta on May 15, experts highlighted Indonesia's vast potential as a major market for artificial intelligence, citing its 280 million population and ongoing digital development. Speakers, including Irvan Bastian Arief of [tiket.com](https://www.tiket.com) and Dito Eka Cahya of the National Research and Innovation Agency, stressed that AI adoption would not cause mass unemployment but instead create new job opportunities—provided stakeholders collaborate to overcome barriers such as low digital literacy and resistance to new technologies. The event, attended by around 800 participants from state firms, private banks, tech companies, and universities, revealed that many Indonesians remain unfamiliar with AI. However, optimism prevailed as speakers shared successful AI use cases in business operations, such as remote worker testing in Papua and AI-driven automation in Jakarta's government offices. The conference also emphasized Indonesia's growing collaboration with China to expand digital infrastructure and boost the country's digital economy. Organizers included ALGORITMA Data Science School, upertype, and *Tempo* Magazine.

Indonesia thug groups hinder investment

—Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja, *TheStraitsTimes*, 12 May 2025

On April 26, a video surfaced showing members of the community group Grib (Gerakan Rakyat Indonesia Bersatu) hanging a banner to shut down a rubber factory in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, allegedly to collect a debt on behalf of a client—highlighting long-standing extortion practices by community organizations. The incident, which quickly went viral, prompted police investigations and renewed national scrutiny of ormas-linked thuggery that disrupts businesses and deters foreign investment. West Java Governor Dedi Mulyadi vowed to crack down on these groups after Grib members burned police cars in Cimanggis on April 18, prompting threats from Grib leaders. Legislators, including Eddy Soeparno, have warned of similar intimidation targeting investors like BYD, a Chinese EV firm building a massive plant in Subang. Business associations report increased ormas activity, especially during Eid, partly driven by rising unemployment and budget cuts to social programs. With over 550,000 registered ormas—some linked to political elites—the government, led by Investment Minister Rosan Roeslani, now seeks tighter coordination with local officials to curb the damaging influence of these groups.

G. Human Rights, Indigenous People and Gender Equality

Support to Get Rid of Trauma and Not Live in Misery

—Fabio Lopes Costa, Saiful Rijal Yunus, Sucipto and Defri Werdiono, *Kompas*, 21 May 2025

On May 20 National Awakening Day, education challenges in Indonesia came into sharp focus as students and teachers across the country grappled with displacement, intimidation, and job insecurity. In Bandung, West Java, 18-year-old Mira Weya, a visually impaired student originally from conflict-ridden Timika, Papua, was among 48 students from SLBN A Pajajaran abruptly relocated to SLBN Cicendo after their school was designated to host a new “people’s school.” The sudden move, during exam season and without preparation, disrupted learning and sparked concerns over student well-being. Meanwhile, in Baubau, Southeast Sulawesi, students under the Kartu Indonesia Pintar (KIP) program reported extortion and harassment by campus authorities, threatening their safety and education. In Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, lecturers and education staff at the State Polytechnic protested the stalled transition from contract workers (PPPK) to civil servants (PNS), citing career stagnation due to overlapping regulations. These incidents highlight systemic inequalities and call into question the government’s commitment to ensuring inclusive, safe, and fair education for all.

Kartini, Role Model for the Future

—Dahlia Irawati, *Kompas*, 20 May 2025

The Book Discussion “Kartini Trilogy” held at Malang State University (UM) on May 19, underscored the enduring relevance of national heroine Kartini’s ideas on human rights, gender equality, and women’s empowerment. Featured speaker and author Wardiman Djojonegoro—former Minister of Education and Culture—presented his three-part book chronicling Kartini’s letters, life, and her forward-thinking ideals. Wardiman emphasized three key lessons from Kartini: the importance of respecting human rights, promoting gender justice, and economically empowering women to break cycles of poverty. He also outlined eight principles for achieving gender equality, including equal access to education and healthcare, and confronting patriarchal culture. UM Rector Hariyono echoed these views, stressing that Kartini’s legacy is not bound by tradition or time but instead challenges

stagnant norms and champions humanitarian values. The event also featured readings of Kartini's letters and a call to expand women's opportunities beyond traditional roles. The discussion served as a reminder that Kartini's legacy must live on through concrete action toward justice and equality, not just symbolic commemoration.

[Rethinking Indonesia's commitment to UN Women's agenda](#)

—Vrameswari Omega Wati, *The Jakarta Post*, 17 May 2025

Nearly 25 years after the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), concerns are rising globally—and in Indonesia—about the weakening of state commitments to women's roles in peacebuilding and security. Despite past milestones, such as the U.S.'s bipartisan WPS Act in 2017 and Indonesia's 2020 leadership in UNSC Resolution 2538, setbacks like U.S. program cuts in April 2025 and Indonesia's lack of gender emphasis under Foreign Minister Sugiono raise alarm. While Indonesia previously championed WPS through national action plans and peacekeeping contributions, the current administration has yet to articulate gender equality as a foreign policy priority. With 2,752 Indonesian personnel in UN peacekeeping missions—only 7 percent women—the gender gap persists. Experts argue that the WPS agenda is vital not only for inclusivity but also for effective governance and sustainable peace. As Indonesia navigates its foreign policy under Prabowo Subianto's administration, the question remains whether it will uphold its commitments or allow the WPS agenda to fade amid global conflict and rising authoritarianism.

[Eighteen separatists killed in Papua region, Indonesian military says](#)

—Ananda Teresia, *Reuters*, 16 May 2025

Eighteen Papuan separatists and three civilians were killed during a military operation in Indonesia's easternmost Papua region on May 15, according to a statement released by military spokesperson Kristomei Sianturi. The Indonesian military, which reported no casualties on its side, seized weapons including an assault rifle, bows and arrows, and a homemade device. A spokesperson for the separatist group, Sebby Sambom, confirmed three rebel deaths. A prominent church group, citing local reports, said the attack occurred while villagers were sleeping and called for an independent investigation, noting that nearly 1,000 people had been evacuated. The group condemned harm to civilians, including a child injured by a stray bullet. The violence underscores the long-standing conflict in Papua, where separatists have waged a low-level insurgency since the region's controversial 1969 integration into Indonesia following Dutch colonial rule. The military said it remains deployed to prevent further rebel movements. The latest clashes follow last month's rebel claim of killing over 17 alleged soldiers disguised as gold miners, highlighting escalating tensions in the resource-rich region.

[Coastal Women, The Face and Future of Our Oceans](#)

—Ichwan Susanto, *Kompas*, 14 May 2025

At the 10th Our Ocean Conference held in Busan, South Korea, women's crucial but often overlooked role in marine conservation took center stage in a session titled *Women in Blue Foods*. Speakers from Indonesia and global NGOs highlighted how women contribute to coastal economies—not only by going to sea and processing catches, but also by leading environmental education and marine protection efforts. Stephanie Juwana from the Indonesian Ocean Justice Initiative criticized the blue economy narrative for reinforcing gender inequality, as women in Indonesia are frequently excluded from official recognition and access to resources due to male-centric definitions of "fishermen." Initiatives by

Conservation Indonesia and RARE are working to reverse this, with efforts such as training women in diving, forming marine tourism groups, and creating over 900 women-led savings clubs. Stories like that of Asmania from Pari Island—who plants mangroves in response to climate threats—underline how women are not passive victims but powerful agents of change. Speakers called for inclusive policy reforms and state support to ensure women can lead in shaping the future of ocean conservation.

I. Government Priority Program

[The Irony of the Steep Road of Literacy](#)

—Tatang Mulyana Sinaga, *Kompas*, 20 May 2025

Indonesia's literacy movement continues to struggle due to low reading habits, limited access to quality books, and fragmented national book management, despite government efforts to distribute millions of books annually. Chairman of the Indonesian Publishers Association (Ikapi), Arys Hilman Nugraha, emphasized that while Indonesian children show interest in reading, the habit has yet to be nurtured due to uneven book access, bookstore closures, and unaffordable prices. Libraries often prioritize quantity over quality, leaving readers uninspired. At the National Library's 45th anniversary on May 16, its head Prof. E Aminudin Aziz announced a continued effort to distribute 10 million books and provide technical support to community libraries. Supporting initiatives like the Literacy Community Volunteers and university collaborations aim to strengthen reading culture. Yet Arys warned that without strong leadership and integrated governance, these programs may falter. He stressed that national progress is impossible without fostering a culture of reading, citing UNESCO data that only 1 in 1,000 Indonesians are avid readers, and called on government leadership to prioritize meaningful literacy reform.

[Civil coalition rejects govt's rewriting of history project](#)

—Radhiyya Indra, *TheJakartaPost*, 20 May 2025

On May 20, rights activists, historians, and lawmakers convened at the House of Representatives in Senayan, Jakarta, to oppose the government's plan to produce a 10-volume official history of Indonesia by August 17, the country's 80th Independence Day. The Indonesian Historical Transparency Alliance (AKSI), backed by over 50 public figures, warned that the Culture Ministry-led project—allegedly involving over 100 historians—risks whitewashing the nation's darkest episodes, particularly human rights violations linked to Prabowo Subianto and former dictator Soeharto. AKSI criticized the lack of transparency and historical omissions in a leaked 30-page draft, which excludes several gross human rights abuses. Activists, including Marzuki Darusman and Jaleswari Pramodhawardani, denounced the effort as an authoritarian attempt to monopolize Indonesia's national narrative. Commission X Chair Hetifah Sjaifudian admitted they were not properly consulted and pledged to meet with the Culture Ministry to halt the book's official designation and protect historical integrity. Amnesty International warned the move echoes propaganda strategies of fascist regimes, raising alarm over democratic backsliding in Indonesia.

[Government Affirms Prioritizing Dialogical Approach for Papua](#)

—Iqbal Basyari, *Kompas*, 17 May 2025

On May 13–14, a violent gunfight erupted in several villages of Sugapa District, Intan Jaya, Central Papua, between Indonesian military forces and Armed Criminal Groups (KKB), resulting in the deaths of 18 KKB members and at least five civilians, including local leaders and clergy, though official civilian casualty data remains unclear. The Indonesian government, represented by Presidential Communication Office Head Hasan Nasbi in Jakarta on May 17, emphasized its commitment to dialogue as the preferred conflict resolution approach in Papua but acknowledged that security forces must respond when public order and services are disrupted. Despite this stated dialogical priority, analysts like CSIS senior researcher Vidhyandika Djati Perkasa argue the recurring violence shows no shift from a militaristic strategy favored by President Prabowo Subianto's administration. Vidhyandika criticized the exclusion of customary Papuan institutions and local leaders from peace efforts, suggesting the conflict is perceived mainly as a military clash rather than addressing underlying justice and human rights issues, thus perpetuating local suffering and mistrust toward external actors.

BPOM laments limited role in free meal program amid rampant food poisonings

—News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 17 May 2025

The Food and Drug Monitoring Agency (BPOM) raised alarm over its limited role in overseeing the free meal program, which has seen at least 17 food poisoning incidents across 10 provinces since its launch in January. During a House of Representatives hearing, BPOM Chair Taruna Ikrar revealed that although BPOM signed an agreement with the National Nutrition Agency (BGN) to supervise 13 critical aspects of the program, it has only been involved in two—developing training modules and responding to poisoning cases. BPOM's exclusion from inspecting kitchens and raw ingredients has hindered its ability to enforce food safety protocols, despite having the expertise and resources. The poisoning cases, affecting over 1,500 students, were linked to poor hygiene, improper cooking practices, and storage issues. The BGN, under public scrutiny, has pledged to tighten safety measures across over 1,000 kitchens serving 3.8 million students, including quarterly food safety training and enhanced sensory testing. Taruna urged for expanded BPOM involvement to prevent future outbreaks and ensure the meals meet health standards.

Bogor declares health emergency after mass food poisoning linked to free meal program

—News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 14 May 2025

The Bogor administration in West Java declared a health emergency after over 200 students fell ill from food poisoning linked to the government's free meal program, marking the second such emergency since the initiative began in January. The first cases emerged on May 7, when 171 students and teachers from nine schools reported symptoms including diarrhea, vomiting, and fever after consuming meals prepared by the Bosowa Bina Insani Nutrition Fulfillment Service Unit. Lab tests confirmed contamination of eggs and vegetables with *E. coli* and *Salmonella*. As of May 11, 214 people had been affected, with dozens hospitalized. Similar outbreaks have been reported in other regions, including a Cianjur incident on April 22 that sickened nearly 190 students due to contaminated reusable trays. In response to growing criticism, National Nutrition Agency (BGN) Head Dadan Hindayana vowed to tighten food safety measures across 1,000+ kitchens, including quarterly training and organoleptic testing. He also announced plans for student insurance coverage, though public policy experts warn this could divert funds and primarily benefit insurers rather than addressing systemic safety failures.

II. Indonesia in Politics and Geopolitics

[27 Years of Reform, Handling of 1998 Human Rights Violations Cases Still Hanging \(6\)](#)

—Dian Dewi Purnamasari, *Kompas*, 21 May 2025

Hundreds of Trisakti University students marched on May 14 to the May 12 Reform Monument in Grogol, West Jakarta, to commemorate the 27th anniversary of the 1998 student shootings that catalyzed Indonesia's democratic reform. Dressed in academic jackets and carrying portraits of four fallen students—Elang Mulya Lesmana, Hafidhin Royan, Hery Hartanto, and Henriawan Sie—participants sang “Darah Juang” and scattered flowers in tribute. The event, titled *Malam Gelora, #MenolakLupa Tragedi 12 Mei*, included documentary screenings and discussions featuring activists and academics. Student leader Faiz Nabawi Mulya decried the stalled justice process and voiced five demands, including designating the slain students as national heroes. Despite 17 cases of alleged past human rights violations having been investigated by Komnas HAM, including Trisakti, no prosecutions have moved forward. Officials cite legal deadlocks, unclear parliamentary procedures, and expired mandates of past reconciliation efforts. With democracy seen as regressing, students insist that the state must deliver justice and preserve historical truth to prevent recurrence and uphold victims' rights.

[The Steep Road of Civil Society Struggle Post-1998 Reformation \(5\)](#)

—Hidayat Salam and Willy Medi Christian Nababan, *Kompas*, 21 May 2025

On March 15, civil society activists Andrie Yunus and Javier Maramba Pandin from KontraS were reported to the police after protesting a meeting on the revision of the Military Law at the Fairmont Hotel, Jakarta, triggering concerns over the shrinking space for public dissent. They were accused of disturbing public order and insulting authorities. Andrie, who later faced phone harassment, likened the intimidation to tactics used during Indonesia's authoritarian New Order regime. This incident is part of a wider pattern: several students across Bandung, Jakarta, and Semarang were arrested in May 2025 for peaceful protests or online criticism, including an ITB student, SSS, for posting a meme of President Prabowo. Civil society coalitions, including the Alliance of Student Executive Bodies, have condemned these arrests as signs of democratic regression. Veteran reform activists like Ray Rangkuti and younger leaders like Herianto warn that Indonesia's 27-year-old democratic reforms are under threat, urging the youth to continue advocating for freedom and constitutional rights.

[Corruption Eradication, the Mandate of the 1998 Reformation that is Struggling to be Realized \(4\)](#)

—Norbertus Arya Dwiangga Martiar, *Kompas*, 21 May 2025

The fight against corruption in Indonesia has faltered since the 2019 revision of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) Law under President Joko Widodo's administration, weakening the institution's independence and effectiveness. According to Transparency International Indonesia's Secretary General Danang Widoyoko, Indonesia's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) dropped from 40 in 2019 to 34 in 2022, rebounding slightly to 37 in 2024—still below pre-revision levels. The 2021 Supreme Court repeal of Government Regulation No. 99/2012 further hampered deterrence by easing remission rules for graft convicts. High political costs, vote buying, and oligarchic influence continue to fuel elite corruption, with fewer politicians named suspects. Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) reported a sharp decline in hand-catching operations (OTT), with only 8 out of 48 cases in

2023 using that method. Meanwhile, compliance with official wealth reporting (LHKPN) remains low, especially among legislators. Experts blame the stalled Asset Forfeiture Bill and light sentencing as signs of weak elite commitment to reform, undermining public trust and democratic accountability.

Political Parties Fail to Grow with Reform (3)

—Nikolaus Harbowo, *Kompas*, 21 May 2025

Since Indonesia's Reformasi began over two decades ago, the country has held six elections and undergone repeated changes to its electoral system, yet democracy has steadily declined—ironically due to political parties, which should uphold it. After BJ Habibie expedited the 1999 elections, shifting power from Suharto's New Order, the country saw milestones like the direct election of legislative and presidential candidates in 2004. However, since the adoption of a fully open proportional system in 2009, transactional politics have flourished, turning parties into elitist cartels focused on short-term gains. Experts like Professor Ramlan Surbakti and election law lecturer Titi Anggraini blame this failure on weak internal governance, lack of cadre development, and the dominance of party elites and financiers. Recent democracy indices, including V-Dem 2025 and The Economist Intelligence Unit, now classify Indonesia as an electoral autocracy. Deputy Minister Bima Arya and others urge urgent revision of the Political Party Law to restore internal democracy, ensure accountable funding, and rescue Indonesia's democratic future.

1998 Reformation, between Hope and Reality (2)

—Yohanes Mega Hendarto, *Kompas*, 21 May 2025

Public trust in Indonesia's reform agenda has significantly declined, according to a *Kompas* poll conducted on April 21–24, comparing public opinion with data from 2018. The poll evaluated the fulfillment of the seven demands of the 1998 Reformasi movement, sparked by the fall of Suharto's New Order regime. While the decentralization of power has led to partial successes—such as the establishment of nine new provinces and some progress in regional autonomy—concerns over decentralized corruption and political dynasties persist. Public satisfaction with basic commodity prices has slightly improved, but confidence in anti-corruption efforts and freedom of speech has dropped sharply. Only 4.2% believe corruption eradication has been achieved, down from 2018, while satisfaction with free expression fell from 49.1% to 32.6%. The influence of Suharto-era elites and unresolved human rights abuses from 1998 continue to erode optimism. With only a slim margin between optimists and pessimists, the findings signal a pressing need for the government to deliver concrete outcomes and rebuild public trust.

Critical Voices Keep the Pulse of 1998 Reformation (1)

—Nino Citra Anugrahanto, *Kompas*, 21 May 2025

On May 21, Indonesians marked 27 years since the Reformasi movement that toppled President Soeharto, igniting hopes for democracy. However, current data and expert assessments reveal a troubling democratic regression. According to The Economist Intelligence Unit, Indonesia's democracy index declined to 6.44 in 2024, placing it 59th out of 167 countries and categorizing it as a “flawed democracy.” Public sentiment captured by a *Kompas* R&D poll shows that 66.7% believe reform goals remain unmet, particularly due to entrenched corruption, nepotism, and weakened law enforcement. Experts like Aditya Perdana from UI and Bivitri Susanti from Jentera Law School attribute this to enduring political dynasties, weak deterrents for corruption, and the manipulation of laws, including revisions to the KPK and TNI laws, to serve power interests. Public expression is also

increasingly restricted, exemplified by the arrest of an ITB student over a meme. While the reform spirit persists, analysts urge a collective push for civic education and critical engagement to restore democratic ideals.

[Demands to Revise Election Law Grow Stronger, from Money Politics to "E-Voting"](#)

—Nikolaus Harbowo, *Kompas*, 20 May 2025

The government and the DPR are being urged to immediately discuss the revision of Law No. 7/2017 on Elections, as experts and stakeholders warn that delaying the process could result in rushed implementation ahead of the 2029 elections. During the “Proclamation Democracy Forum” held on May 19 at the Democratic Party headquarters in Jakarta, Titi Anggraini of Perludem emphasized the law’s urgency, citing that it has been tested 159 times in the Constitutional Court—more than any other law. Key issues proposed for revision include electoral system reform, enhanced oversight against money politics, and digital voting mechanisms. Vice Chair of the DPR’s Legislative Body, Ahmad Doli Kurnia, stressed that the bill must be finalized by July 2026 to align with the August 2026 start of election preparations. KPU Chairman Mochamad Afifuddin and Deputy Minister of Home Affairs Bima Arya supported immediate revisions, proposing measures such as codification of stages, a two-year gap between national and regional elections, and removal of nomination thresholds. Experts also warned about the high prevalence of money politics under the current open proportional system.

[Seeking Marginal Voices in the Mainstream of International Law](#)

—Mahdi Muhammad, *Kompas*, 17 May 2025

On May 9, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the nomination of two legal scholars — Prof. Eddy Pratomo for a judge position at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and Prof. Hikmahanto Juwana for membership in the UN’s International Law Commission (ILC). The move aims to strengthen Indonesia’s voice and representation in international legal institutions, especially as an archipelagic and developing nation. Hamburg-based ITLOS handles maritime disputes under UNCLOS, while the ILC reviews and formulates international legal norms. Indonesia, a party to UNCLOS since 1982, has never had representation at ITLOS, and its officials emphasize the need to reflect Global South perspectives on issues like illegal fishing, climate-induced sea-level rise, and maritime boundary shifts. Deputy Foreign Minister Arif Havas Oegroseno highlighted the urgency of involving Indonesia in shaping evolving legal norms to address new realities, especially those affecting island nations. The nominations also underscore the country’s broader commitment to influence international lawmaking beyond a Western-centric framework.

[Indonesia defends TB vaccine trial as Bill Gates conspiracy theories spread: ‘not guinea pigs’](#)

—Resty Woro Yuniar, *SCMP*, 15 May 2025

Indonesia’s involvement in the clinical trial of a new tuberculosis (TB) vaccine, M72/AS01E, has sparked a wave of misinformation and conspiracy theories after President Prabowo Subianto met Bill Gates in Jakarta on May 7 and announced the country would host vaccine trials. Social media users falsely accused Gates of testing unsafe vaccines on Indonesians, prompting clarifications from officials. Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin stressed the trial—funded by the Gates Foundation but developed by GlaxoSmithKline—is scientifically rigorous, with over 20,000 participants globally and 2,100 in Indonesia. Professor Erlina Burhan, the trial’s lead in Indonesia, condemned the “guinea pig” narrative, explaining that all ethical and regulatory approvals were obtained. The trial aims to tackle Indonesia’s TB crisis, with

889,000 cases and 125,000 deaths recorded last year, making it the world's second-highest burden after India. Experts highlighted the urgent need for an effective vaccine, as the century-old BCG vaccine is limited to protecting children. Officials called for clearer public communication to counter stigma and prevent deadly misinformation.

[Australian leader visits Indonesia seeking deeper economic and defense ties](#)

—NinieK Karmini and Andi Jatmiko/Associated Press, *ABCNews*, 14 May 2025

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese met Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto in Jakarta on May 15 during his first overseas trip after securing a second term in office, reaffirming Indonesia as Australia's most important bilateral relationship. The visit aimed to deepen economic and defense cooperation between the neighboring countries, with both leaders highlighting shared interests in regional security and trade. Albanese emphasized Indonesia's rising global economic role, projecting it to become the world's fifth-largest economy by 2040, and reiterated support for Indonesia's bids to join the OECD and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Although Albanese did not address reports about Russia's alleged interest in basing warplanes in Papua, Indonesia reassured that no such plan would be allowed. The leaders also reflected on last year's landmark Defense Cooperation Agreement, which expanded joint activities in maritime security, counterterrorism, and humanitarian efforts. Albanese's trip follows tradition for newly elected Australian leaders to prioritize Indonesia, underscoring the countries' longstanding strategic and defense ties.

[Harvard study: Indonesia ranked world's most flourishing country](#)

—Zetta Hannany and Dhika Priambodo, *IDNFinancials*, 8 Mei 2025

Indonesia has been ranked as the country where people flourish the most, according to the new [Global Flourishing Study](#) released by researchers from Harvard and Baylor universities in May 2025. The study, based on data from over 200,000 people in 22 countries collected by Gallup over five years, assessed well-being across factors such as happiness, health, life satisfaction, purpose, virtue, and social relationships. Indonesia, a middle-income nation, topped the list ahead of Israel, the Philippines, and Mexico, outperforming wealthier nations where social connection and meaning often lag. Researchers noted that 75% of Indonesians attend religious services weekly, contributing to stronger social bonds. While richer countries scored higher on financial stability, they trailed in areas like purpose and relationship quality. The study emphasizes that flourishing encompasses more than personal happiness—it includes the quality of one's environment and societal context. The findings challenge traditional development narratives, suggesting that economic growth alone doesn't guarantee a fulfilling life. The research also revealed younger people globally are flourishing less, with social disconnection and uncertainty undermining well-being among 18- to 29-year-olds.