



Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

2025 Issue 10 — 8 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.*

CONTENTS

- A. Marine and Fisheries
- B. Forests and Land Use
- C. Biodiversity, Conservation and Protected Areas
- D. Climate Change, Energy and Mining
- E. Pollution, Waste, Water and Disaster
- F. Technology, Investment and Finance
- G. Human Rights, Indigenous People and Gender Equality

- I. Government Priority Program
- II. Indonesia in Politics and Geopolitics

A. Marine and Fisheries

Indonesia targets 200 thousand hectares marine conservation growth

—Ahmad Muzdaffar Fauzan and Yashinta Difa, *Tempo*, 7 May 2025

The Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries announced a new target to expand marine conservation areas by 200,000 hectares by 2025, reaffirming commitments made at the 10th Our Ocean Conference and APEC forums held in South Korea from April 28–30. During a press conference on May 7, Director General of Marine Spatial Planning Kartika Listriana emphasized that this effort aims to boost marine resilience, protect ecosystems, and support

sustainable economic growth. As part of the plan, the ministry will enhance blue carbon management by calculating the carbon value of seagrass beds in 20 conservation zones, launching a blue carbon database, and advancing international collaboration and policy development. The ministry also aims to improve conservation area management effectiveness by 5 percent annually, finalize and ratify inter-regional zoning regulations, and build 15 new marine protected areas by 2027. Additional initiatives include expanding the Seaweed Cultivation Village pilot from Wakatobi to Maluku and Rote Ndao, and constructing an ocean monitoring system. As of 2024, Indonesia's marine conservation areas total 29.9 million hectares, surpassing its 29.3 million-hectare target.

Indonesia parliament set to ratify sea boundary with Vietnam, lawmaker says

—Ananda Teresia and Stanley Widiyanto, *Reuters*, 1 May 2025

Indonesia's parliament is expected to ratify an agreement with Vietnam next week that formally establishes the boundaries of their exclusive economic zones (EEZs) in the South China Sea, following more than a decade of negotiations, lawmaker Nico Siahaan said. Signed in 2022, the maritime deal aims to reduce tensions, particularly over frequent encroachments by Vietnamese fishermen into Indonesian waters. The agreement, which still awaits ratification by Vietnam's parliament, disregards China's sweeping claims over the region, according to international law expert Hikmahanto Juwana. China asserts control over nearly the entire South China Sea, overlapping with the EEZs of Indonesia and several Southeast Asian countries, despite a 2016 international tribunal ruling rejecting its claims. Indonesia's deputy foreign minister, Arif Havas Oegroseno, emphasized the agreement will bring legal clarity for both nations' fishermen and security operations. The move underscores Jakarta's ongoing effort to secure its maritime boundaries without altering its official stance as a non-claimant state in the South China Sea, reaffirmed by the foreign ministry.

Indonesia Pursues 3.3 Million Hectares of Marine Conservation Areas per Year by 2045

—Ichwan Susanto, *Kompas*, 30 April 2025

Indonesia must add 3.38 million hectares of marine conservation areas annually to reach its 2045 target of protecting 30% of national waters, officials said during the 10th Our Ocean Conference on April 30, 2025, in Busan, South Korea. Hendra Yusran Siry, from the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, emphasized that this ambitious goal—totaling 97.5 million hectares—requires joint action from local governments, communities, and the private sector. The government is pursuing this through Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs), with the latter offering a legal path for indigenous, community, and private sector involvement. Rare Indonesia estimates OECMs could contribute 10.4 million hectares. However, only 13 current areas meet "gold" standards under the national effectiveness evaluation system. Experts warned that marine degradation threatens food security, as fisheries supply over half of Indonesia's protein. Panelists stressed that effective conservation requires stronger management, coastal restoration, and capacity building, especially among local women and youth. The target, they concluded, represents a collective responsibility to ensure ocean sustainability.

Fisheries Transparency: The Sea Cannot Be Protected If It Is Not Visible

—Ichwan Susanto, *Kompas*, 30 April 2025

During the 10th Our Ocean Conference in Busan, South Korea, on April 30, 2025, three environmental organizations—Global Fishing Watch (GFW), Oceana, and the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)—called for stronger marine governance through comprehensive vessel transparency. Tony Long, CEO of GFW, emphasized that a major barrier to effective

governance is the lack of awareness about maritime activities, noting that transparent vessel tracking could form the foundation for fair regulations. Beth Lowell from Oceana highlighted the importance of scientific, transparent fisheries management to protect global food security and marine ecosystems. The groups also supported the Global Charter for Fisheries Transparency, a set of principles to promote vessel transparency, now adopted by over 50 organizations and recently by South Korea. Long praised Indonesia for pioneering vessel transparency under former Minister Susi Pudjiastuti. Despite concerns that small fishermen might be disadvantaged, Long explained that their fishing areas could be protected and that collaboration through platforms like OurFish could strengthen market access. The groups stressed that global cooperation is essential for effective marine management.

Protecting coastal waters may be the best investment you've never heard of, says Kristin Rechberger

—Rhett Ayers Butler, *Mongabay*, 29 April 2025

Revive Our Ocean, a new global initiative led by Dynamic Planet with support from National Geographic's Pristine Seas, was launched to help coastal communities establish marine protected areas as a way to restore marine ecosystems and boost local economies. This effort comes as countries face mounting pressure to meet the 2030 target of protecting 30% of the ocean, following a 2023 international biodiversity treaty that remains largely unratified, with only 21 nations onboard so far. Highlighting the slow pace of MPA creation, founder Kristin Rechberger emphasized the need to empower coastal communities, who know their waters best, with tools, policy support, and training. Starting in countries such as the UK, Indonesia, Mexico, and the Philippines, the initiative seeks to overcome legal, awareness, and technical barriers to local marine conservation. With successful examples like Spain's Medes Islands Marine Reserve, the program argues that marine protection not only restores biodiversity but also drives economic growth through tourism and sustainable fishing. As ocean degradation worsens, community-led conservation may be the fastest way forward.

Our Ocean, Our Action: The 10th Our Ocean Conference Opens in Busan, Korea

—Petir Garda Bhwana, *Tempo*, 28 April 2025

The 10th Our Ocean Conference opened on April 28, in Busan, Republic of Korea, uniting global leaders, policymakers, scientists, youth, and civil society under the theme "Our Ocean, Our Action" to advance ocean conservation and climate solutions. Hosted at BEXCO, this milestone event marks a decade of high-impact voluntary action, with over 2,600 commitments made to protect marine biodiversity, tackle illegal fishing, and promote ocean-based climate strategies. Korean Oceans Minister Do-hyung Kang emphasized the dual goals of reflecting on past progress and shaping future international cooperation. For the first time, a full assessment of past pledges shows that over \$133 billion of the \$160 billion promised has been delivered or is underway, including major funding for ocean-climate initiatives. Korea's recent ratification of the High Seas Treaty and creation of new marine protected areas signal renewed commitment. With ocean-based solutions offering up to 35% of needed emissions cuts by 2050, but requiring \$2 trillion in investment, momentum from Busan is expected to influence the upcoming UN Ocean Conference in Nice this June.

Indonesia Launches Green Hydrogen Collaboration for Maritime Transport Decarbonization

—Kavitha, *SolarQuarter*, 23 April 2025

Indonesia's state electricity company PT PLN signed a joint study agreement with the Ministry of Transportation, PT HDF Energy Indonesia, and PT ASDP Indonesia Ferry on April 15

during the Global Hydrogen Ecosystem Summit in Jakarta to explore green hydrogen as a marine fuel. The initiative aims to decarbonize the maritime sector, supporting Indonesia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and targeting Net Zero Emissions (NZE) by 2060, aligned with President Prabowo Subianto's Asta Cita vision. Hendri Ginting from the Ministry of Transportation highlighted ongoing efforts to convert conventional vessels into hybrid hydrogen-battery ships, reinforcing low-emission commitments. PLN President Director Darmawan Prasodjo and Corporate Planning Director Hartanto Wibowo emphasized the strategic use of domestically sourced clean energy, initially focusing on Eastern Indonesia's shipping routes. PLN, having already produced 203 tons of green hydrogen through 22 Green Hydrogen Plants, aims to complement its electric vehicle ecosystem with hydrogen-based solutions. PT HDF Energy Indonesia's Mathieu Geze affirmed the company's support in advancing Indonesia's energy transition and showcasing French clean technology globally.

B. Forests and Land Use

Indonesia's deforestation claims under scrutiny over 'cherry-picked' data

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 6 May 2025

Researchers from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) have challenged Indonesia's claim of a 90% reduction in deforestation since 2015, arguing that the figure is misleading due to the use of a skewed baseline and selective data. The report, released in early May 2025, compared official government figures with independent satellite data sets, such as Global Forest Watch, which showed a smaller decline of around 69% from 2016 to 2023. The researchers argue that using 2015—a year of severe El Niño-induced forest fires—as a reference point exaggerates subsequent progress, especially since deforestation that year was historically high. The Indonesian government's use of this baseline likely influenced climate finance negotiations with Norway under the \$1 billion REDD+ partnership. The study also highlights discrepancies in forest definitions and urges transparency, recommending the use of multi year averages for more accurate trend analysis. While deforestation has declined overall, the researchers warn that forest scarcity and rising demand, especially in still-forested eastern regions like Papua, could drive future increases, particularly under growth-driven policies of President Prabowo's new administration.

Heijlen, W., & Duhayon, C. (2024). [An empirical estimate of the land footprint of nickel from laterite mining in Indonesia](#). *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 17, 101421.

The Customary Forest Recognition Sweetener

—Reporter, *Tempo*, 2 May 2025

Forestry Minister Raja Juli Antoni's recent move to form a Task Force to Accelerate the Designation of Customary Forests, announced in Indonesia in 2025, is drawing criticism for potentially repeating past failures without delivering real progress. Although regional governments have designated 5.4 million hectares of customary areas, only 332,505 hectares have been formally recognized by the central government, exposing a major gap rooted in the state's reluctance to fully acknowledge customary law. Critics argue that the task force risks becoming a symbolic gesture unless accompanied by structural reforms, especially since a similar initiative under President Joko Widodo yielded minimal results. The 2012 Constitutional Court ruling clarified that customary forests belong to indigenous peoples, making Article 67 of the Forestry Law obsolete and invalidating the classification of such

forests as state-managed social forestry. Instead of creating more bureaucracy, experts call for a fast, nationally integrated recognition system and institutional strengthening within the Forestry Ministry, supported by active collaboration with civil society, academics, and local governments to ensure constitutional rights and ecological justice are upheld. Read full story in *Tempo* weekly [Environment](#)

Orangutan habitat under siege as palm oil company clears forest in Borneo

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 29 April 2025

A major deforestation threat looms in West Kalimantan, as palm oil firm PT Equator Sumber Rezeki (ESR), part of Jakarta-based First Borneo Group, begins clearing critical orangutan habitat. Between August 2024 and February 2025, ESR cleared over 200 hectares of high-quality forest within its 15,000-hectare concession, with plans to expand further. Conservationists warn that up to 10,000 hectares—home to the critically endangered Bornean orangutan—could be lost, threatening two key orangutan metapopulations. Despite lacking an official high conservation value (HCV) assessment, at least 80% of ESR's concession is believed to overlap with orangutan habitat. Environmental groups, including Mighty Earth and Satya Bumi, are urging the Indonesian government to halt the company's cultivation rights application, citing a violation of forest protection and biodiversity commitments. First Borneo Group's subsidiaries have been linked to aggressive deforestation elsewhere, prompting major brands like Nestlé and Unilever to sever supply ties. However, several global companies may still be sourcing indirectly from the group, raising alarms over deforestation-linked consumer goods in global markets.

Indonesia's EV Ambitions Cause 26,837 Hectares of Deforestation, Greenpeace Warns

—Defara Dhanya, *Tempo*, 29 April 2025

A South Korean consortium led by LG Energy Solution has officially withdrawn from a US\$7.7 billion EV battery development project in Indonesia, Yonhap News Agency reported on April 18. The consortium, which included LG Chem and LX International Corp, had partnered with the Indonesian government and state-owned enterprises to support the country's nickel-based EV battery industry. LG cited unfavorable market conditions and investment climate as reasons for the exit. However, Indonesia's Investment Minister Rosan Roeslani clarified that the government terminated the agreement on January 31. The project was a key component of Indonesia's national strategy to boost its nickel downstream industry and increase the value of nickel exports. However, environmental concerns have intensified, with Greenpeace Indonesia reporting that open-pit nickel mines now cover 45,588 hectares, causing significant deforestation and including 35.6% illegal operations. Sulawesi, especially Morowali regency, has the highest concentration of mining activity. Greenpeace warned of a 600% increase in mine expansion since 2016, highlighting escalating environmental degradation tied to the nickel rush.

Pay attention to three things to reduce forest fires: minister

—Prisca Triferna and Raka Adji, *AntaraNews*, 25 April 2025

Forestry Minister Raja Juli Antoni highlighted three key factors for reducing forest and land fires during the 2025 Forest and Land Fire Jamboree held in Riau on April 25. He emphasized collaboration among government agencies, including the military, police, and communities; strict law enforcement against violations in licensed and forest areas; and active public participation, particularly from the youth. The event aimed to educate young people on preventing fires and haze, aligning with broader national efforts. The Ministry of Environment reported a significant 80% decrease in hotspots compared to the same period last year,

identifying 142 high-risk areas by mid-April 2025. Despite this progress, regions such as Aceh, Riau, Riau Islands, Jambi, West Kalimantan, and Central Kalimantan have still recorded land fires. Environment Minister Hanif Faisol Nurofiq confirmed the data during an April 17 briefing in Jakarta, underscoring the continued need for vigilance. Minister Antoni hopes the jamboree strengthens stakeholder coordination and public awareness to sustain the declining fire trend and mitigate environmental and health impacts.

C. Biodiversity, Conservation and Protected Area

Religious leaders seen as most trusted climate messengers, Purpose survey finds

—Creative Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 6 May 2025

Purpose, a global social impact agency, conducted a nationwide survey from August to September 2024 to understand how Muslim communities in Indonesia perceive climate issues and what drives or hinders their climate action. Partnering with YouGov and Tenggara Strategics, Purpose surveyed 3,000 Muslims and interviewed nearly 100 Islamic leaders. The findings revealed that while environmental issues rank sixth in perceived urgency, 84% of respondents support renewable energy due to alignment with Islamic teachings. Religious leaders emerged as the most trusted climate messengers, yet are underutilized in climate discourse. Purpose's programs like Sedekah Energi and Forest Waqf aim to address climate financing gaps through community-driven Islamic models. Insights from the survey will guide tailored engagement strategies, especially through religious channels like sermons and *pengajian*. The survey also highlighted low awareness of the Just Energy Transition (15%) and a tendency toward individual rather than collective climate actions. Purpose hopes these insights can influence stronger public engagement and pressure policymakers to enact more ambitious climate policies, bridging the gap between public will and governmental action.

Two Sumatran Tiger Cubs Born in Barumon Sanctuary, Symbolize Hope for Conservation

—M Faiz Zaki, *Tempo*, 5 May 2025

The Minister of Forestry, Raja Juli Antoni, announced on May 4 the birth of two Sumatran tiger cubs named Nunuk and Ninik at the Barumon Wildlife Sanctuary in Padang Lawas Regency, North Sumatra, marking renewed hope for the country's wildlife conservation efforts. Born on January 26 to tigress Gadis and tiger Monang, the cubs symbolize the sanctuary's success in preserving endangered species through semi-wild care. Gadis, rescued with a severe leg injury in 2015, and Monang, also saved from a human-wildlife conflict zone in 2017, have now produced their third litter. Their previous cubs, Surya Menggala and Citra Kartini, were released into Kerinci Seblat National Park in 2022, while others remain in the sanctuary. The Barumon Wildlife Sanctuary, established under a 2016 conservation decree and managed by the North Sumatra Natural Resources Conservation Center in partnership with the Bodhicitta Mandala Medan Foundation, serves as a rehabilitation center for tigers impacted by conflict. Antoni emphasized the naming as a public call to action for greater care toward Indonesia's wildlife.

Red Frogs Need “Added Blood” to Avoid Extinction

—Cornelius Helmy Herlambang, *Kompas*, 4 May 2025

Taman Safari Indonesia (TSI) in Bogor, West Java, is leading a crucial conservation effort to save the critically endangered red frog (*Leptophryne cruentata*), also known as the bleeding toad, whose wild population is estimated at fewer than 250 individuals. On April 16, 2025, TSI showcased its specialized Red Frog Breeding Center, the only one of its kind in the world, where assistant curator Arief Mutargan and his team simulate the frog's natural habitat—cool, moist highland forests of Mount Gede Pangrango and Mount Halimun Salak—through dim lighting, artificial rainfall, and native landscaping. Since its accidental rediscovery during a 2022 Javan hawk-eagle survey, researchers have documented key breeding behaviors and dietary preferences, achieving captive reproduction with over 100 tadpoles. The red frog, Indonesia's only legally protected amphibian since 2018, faces threats from habitat loss, tourism, and illegal hunting. Beyond its rarity, the frog is ecologically vital as an insect predator and environmental bioindicator. Conservationists emphasize that human collaboration is essential to prevent its extinction.

The catch in paying fishers to save sharks

—Hollie Booth, *The Jakarta Post*, 29 April 2025

A global team of interdisciplinary researchers, including those based in Indonesia, has spent the past five years studying how to protect endangered sharks and rays—often caught as bycatch in small-scale tropical fisheries—without harming the livelihoods of local fishers. Their new study, published in *Science Advances* and led by researchers from Oxford University, tested a conditional cash payment program launched in May 2022 in Aceh and West Nusa Tenggara. The program offered \$2–7 per fish for safely releasing wedgefish and hammerhead sharks, resulting in over 1,200 live releases and improved fisher satisfaction. However, a controlled experiment with 87 fishing vessels revealed unintended consequences: some fishers increased their catch to gain more compensation. In response, the team revised the payment model and introduced gear swaps to reduce bycatch. These findings highlight both the promise and complexity of using financial incentives to align conservation goals with community needs, stressing the need for rigorous program design and evaluation to prevent perverse outcomes and ensure fair biodiversity protection.

An interview with orangutan conservationist and advocate Gary Shapiro

—Rhett Ayers Butler, *Mongabay*, 25 April 2025

In a career spanning five decades, primatologist Gary L. Shapiro has deeply explored the emotional and cognitive worlds of orangutans, beginning with a pioneering study in the 1970s where he taught a juvenile orangutan symbolic language. Moving his research to Indonesian Borneo, Shapiro conducted the first sign language study with ex-captive orangutans in the wild, notably working with a female named Princess who learned over 30 signs, showcasing both intelligence and emotional connection. His experiences in Borneo exposed him to the widespread destruction of orangutan habitats by logging and palm oil plantations, inspiring him to become a leading conservation advocate and co-founder of organizations dedicated to protecting the species. Shapiro champions the concept of “orangutan personhood,” arguing for legal recognition of their rights to life and liberty, citing milestones like a 2015 Argentine court decision as signs of progress. His work, detailed in [Out of the Cage: My Half Century Journey from Curiosity to Concern for Indonesia's “Persons of the Forest”](#), urges a reevaluation of humanity's relationship with these sentient beings and a call for their dignity and protection.

Read the full interview here: [Orangutan conservation and communication: Gary Shapiro's half-century journey from zoos to the wilds of Borneo](#)

D. Climate Change, Energy and Mining

Searching for the Direction of Nickel Exploitation and Indonesian Foreign Policy

—Laraswati Ariadne Anwar, *Kompas*, 8 Mei 2025

Indonesia's pursuit of membership in the OECD and BRICS, alongside its growing focus on critical mineral development, reflects efforts to balance foreign policy and secure development financing, a panel at the University of Indonesia concluded on Wednesday (7/5/2025) in Depok, West Java. Speakers emphasized the strategic importance of Indonesia's abundant nickel and rare earth metals, with most exports currently going to China. BRIN's Iwan Setiawan noted that while only certain minerals like nickel are processed, others like lithium and cobalt remain under research. UI's Professor Evi Fitriani stressed that Indonesia's OECD bid could enhance investment climate reforms and boost global bargaining power, especially in negotiating fairer mineral trade beyond China. Yet, she cautioned that foreign policy must be grounded in research rather than political personalities or legacy agendas. Lecturer Yeremia Lalisang warned of overproduction risks as China pivots to lithium, raising questions about long-term planning for smelters and workers. Economist Fithra Faisal Hastiadi concluded that BRICS and OECD offer complementary opportunities—resource supply and market access—if Indonesia can assert strategic autonomy.

Green Nickel, New Technology to Extract Low-Emission Nickel

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 5 Mei 2025

On April 30, researchers from the Max Planck Institute for Sustainable Materials (MPI-SusMat) published a breakthrough method for extracting nickel with significantly lower carbon emissions in *Nature* journal, potentially transforming a highly polluting industry crucial to the global energy transition. Nickel is vital for electric vehicle batteries and stainless steel, yet its conventional production emits about 20 tons of CO₂ per ton of metal. Indonesia, which holds 52% of the world's nickel reserves—mostly in ecologically and socially sensitive regions like Sulawesi and North Maluku—faces mounting environmental and social costs from mining, including deforestation, biodiversity loss, and conflicts with Indigenous communities. The new MPI-SusMat method uses hydrogen plasma to extract nickel from low-grade ore in a single, energy-efficient step, reducing CO₂ emissions by up to 84%. While the innovation offers hope for cleaner electrification, especially in transportation and industry, researchers warn that adoption depends on government and industry willingness to prioritize sustainability over short-term profit. The findings raise urgent questions for Indonesia's mining policies amid surging global nickel demand.

Indonesia plans 10 GW nuclear power in major renewable energy push, presidential aide says

—Stefanno Sulaiman, *Reuters*, 1 May 2025

Indonesia plans to expand its power capacity significantly by 2040, targeting an additional 103 GW, including 75 GW from renewable sources like solar, wind, geothermal, and biomass, 10 GW from nuclear energy, and 18 GW from gas, according to President's special energy

envoy, Hashim Djojohadikusumo. In an interview on May 1, Hashim highlighted that contracts for the expansion, particularly nuclear energy, would be awarded in the next five years. The country aims to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050, with nuclear power playing a key role, though Indonesia currently has no nuclear plants. International firms like Russia's Rosatom and China's CNNC have expressed interest in the nuclear projects. Despite these ambitions, Indonesia will phase down fossil fuel use rather than phase it out entirely to avoid economic setbacks. A major step in this transition includes a deal with the Asian Development Bank for the early retirement of the Cirebon-1 coal plant in West Java. Hashim emphasized the need for a balanced approach to energy transition, ensuring economic growth and sustainability.

Climate change takes spice from Ternate clove farms

—Bagus Saragih and Jack Moore (AFP), *TheJakartaPost*, 2 May 2025

Clove farmers on Indonesia's Ternate island are battling worsening climate change impacts, with unpredictable rainfall and extreme weather slashing crop yields and income. Once defying colonial powers to secretly grow the spice, Ternate's farmers—like 61-year-old Jauhar Mahmud—now face dwindling harvests and volatile prices that have dropped from \$7.40 to \$5.30 per kilogram. In 2023, clove yields fell nearly 25% from their 2010 peak, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization. Farmers report longer drying times, more intense but erratic rains, and rising costs, with many taking side jobs or considering leaving the trade. Though Indonesia remains the world's top producer, it has lost its status as the leading exporter to Madagascar. A 2023 Pattimura University study confirmed rising rainfall and extreme weather are harming clove output on nearby Haruku Island. Greenpeace warns that small island communities are especially vulnerable. Despite financial hardship, farmers like Jauhar remain determined to preserve their ancestral legacy. "They planted to bring pride to future generations," he said, urging wealthier nations to address climate threats endangering the centuries-old spice trade.

The hidden cost of Indonesia's nickel boom

—Serdar Vardar and Kiyo Dorrer, *DW*, 30 April 2025

A decade-long investigation by DW, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), and The Gecko Project revealed that Harita Group, a major Indonesian nickel producer, has systematically polluted Kawasi village on Obi Island, North Maluku, since 2012. Internal company emails leaked by transparency group Distributed Denial of Secrets show that highly toxic hexavalent chromium (Cr6) contaminated rivers and springs locals rely on for drinking water, yet the community was never informed. Harita's mining and smelting operations, which supply nickel for electric vehicle (EV) batteries in Europe, China, and the U.S., expanded in 2021 with a joint venture with China's Lygend. Despite internal tests showing Cr6 levels 19 times above legal limits, Harita concealed the data while raising \$660 million through a 2023 IPO. Villagers report stomach aches and continue using the contaminated water, lacking alternatives. Calls for accountability grow, with watchdog IRMA now reviewing Harita's operations, and legal experts suggesting the pollution and cover-up could warrant prosecution under Indonesian environmental law.

Govt urged to disclose coal power plants' emissions data

—Gembong Hanung, *TheJakartaPost*, 30 April 2025

Civil society groups and environmental activists on April 29, urged Indonesia's Environment Ministry to release environmental impact assessments and emissions data for 16 coal-fired power plants across Java amid rising public health concerns linked to air pollution. Jakarta Legal Aid Institute (LBH Jakarta) and UGM environmental law expert I Gusti Agung Made

Wardana submitted a formal request for access to documents such as Amdal and Continuous Emission Monitoring System (CEMS) reports, citing the lack of transparency as a barrier to research and public accountability. The call follows mounting complaints from residents, especially near the Suralaya plant in Banten, where pollution has reportedly caused thousands of respiratory infections in 2023, with economic losses estimated at Rp 15 trillion. Although the Supreme Court has upheld a 2023 ruling ordering state utility PLN to disclose similar documents, the company has yet to comply. Activists argue that public access to pollution data is essential for ensuring environmental rights and supporting Indonesia's transition away from coal, which still dominates 85% of the country's energy mix.

Climate Expert Identifies Main Triggers Behind Earth's Surface Warming

—Irsyan Hasyim, *Tempo*, 23 April 2025

Rising Earth surface temperatures throughout 2024 are caused by a combination of human activities and natural factors, according to a written statement by tropical meteorology expert Rahmat Hidayat from IPB University. Rahmat explained that while events like El Niño, which warms Pacific Ocean sea surfaces, contribute to higher temperatures, the main driver is greenhouse gas emissions from activities like burning fossil fuels and deforestation. As Head of the Meteorology and Atmospheric Pollution Division at IPB, he emphasized that these anthropogenic emissions trap heat, accelerating global warming. Rahmat also linked El Niño to worsening droughts and La Niña to flooding in Indonesia, highlighting that recent floods in areas such as Puncak Bogor and Bekasi were likely caused by heavy rainfall compounded by poor land management. He stressed that tackling climate change requires both adaptation measures, like building dikes, and mitigation actions, such as switching to renewable energy. Rahmat called for collective efforts from governments, communities, and individuals to reduce emissions and protect the environment.

E. Pollution, Waste, Water and Disaster

Landslide deaths again highlight safety failures in Indonesia's nickel industry

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 1 May 2025

A fatal landslide on March 22 at the Indonesia Morowali Industrial Park (IMIP) in Sulawesi has reignited public concern over safety and environmental standards in Indonesia's rapidly growing nickel industry. The landslide occurred at a tailings storage facility managed by PT Morowali Investasi Konstruksi Indonesia (MIKI) for nickel producers PT QMB New Energy Materials and PT Huayue Nickel Cobalt, burying four workers—two confirmed dead, one rescued, and one still missing. While IMIP blamed heavy rain for the incident, environmental activists suspect a tailings dam failure, pointing to structural weaknesses, poor tailings management, and earlier flooding on March 16 potentially caused by a breached dam. The use of high-pressure acid leaching (HPAL) by these companies generates vast volumes of hazardous waste vulnerable to collapse during rainfall. With IMIP previously linked to over 40 worker deaths from industrial accidents since 2015, critics cite systemic failures in occupational health, safety enforcement, and government oversight. Activists demand a transparent investigation, warning that continued negligence threatens both worker safety and the sustainability of Indonesia's key role in the global clean energy transition.

Company supplying critical EV metal ‘did not disclose’ Erin Brockovich pollutant in drinking water

—Tom Levitt, *TheGuardian*, 30 April 2025

One of Indonesia’s largest nickel-mining companies, Harita Group, failed to disclose that local drinking water near its \$1 billion mining site on Obi Island was contaminated with dangerous levels of hexavalent chromium (Cr6), according to leaked documents reviewed by The Guardian and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) in a joint investigation with the Gecko Project. The toxic chemical, linked to cancer and other health issues, was detected in spring water used by villagers in Kawasi, just 200 meters from the mine. Harita publicly claimed in February 2022 that the water met safety standards, yet internal tests dated the following day showed Cr6 concentrations of 70 parts per billion (ppb)—above Indonesia’s legal limit of 50ppb—with later results rising to 140ppb. Despite the findings, the data was not released to the public. Environmental experts have raised alarm over the health risks and lack of transparency, criticizing both the company and government for inadequate oversight amid Indonesia’s rapidly expanding role as the world’s top nickel producer for electric vehicle components.

UNAIR Professor Suggests This Solution to Overcome Microplastics Impact

—Hanaa Septiana, *Tempo*, 28 April 2025

Professor Lilis Sulistyorini, an Environmental Pollution and Health Sciences expert from Airlangga University Surabaya, highlighted the growing threat of microplastics to human health and the environment, calling for urgent preventive measures in Indonesia. Speaking to the media, Lilis explained that microplastics —plastic fragments under 5 millimeters—originating from plastic waste in the sea, have spread through air, water, and soil, even contaminating river and groundwater used for cooking, as found in her research in Muncar District, Banyuwangi, East Java. These particles, which can infiltrate the human body’s lungs, digestive system, and placenta, carry harmful chemical compounds linked to lung inflammation, reproductive issues, metabolic diseases, and cancer risks. Lilis advised reducing boiled seafood consumption to limit water-related contamination and urged government collaboration with communities to enhance education, implement stronger regulations on single-use plastics, promote recycling, and develop innovative waste management systems. She stressed that both policy and technological solutions are crucial to mitigate the impact of microplastics on public health and the environment.

Govt orders closure of open dumping sites

—Gembong Hanung, *TheJakartaPost*, 25 April 2025

The Environment Ministry has ordered local governments across Indonesia to shut down or upgrade non-compliant landfills within 4–6 months or face criminal charges, in a bid to enforce the 2008 Waste Management Law mandating sanitary waste disposal. As of April 2025, only 20% of the country’s 550 final disposal sites meet sanitary standards, while the rest still use open dumping methods that pose environmental and health hazards, including fire risks and landslides—such as the 2005 Leuwigajah disaster in West Java that killed 150 people. Minister Hanif Faisol Nurofiq emphasized the urgency of compliance, citing the 13 million tonnes of untreated waste—40% of the national total—recorded in 2024. The ministry has already sanctioned 343 sites, demanding they be closed or converted. However, critics, including Walhi and BRIN, warned that the timeline is too short given local governments’ lack of funding, institutional capacity, and reliance on less than 0.5% of their budgets for waste

management. Past shutdowns, such as in Pekalongan, led to crises when alternative waste solutions weren't in place.

Efforts to Hold Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emitters Accountable

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 23 April 2025

On April 23, ecological researchers Christopher W. Callahan and Justin S. Mankin from Dartmouth College published a [Study Lays Out Scientific Path to Recouping Climate Costs](#) in *Nature* revealing that emissions from the world's 111 largest companies have caused \$28 trillion in climate damage, comparable to the U.S.'s annual GDP. Using a new scientific framework, they traced emissions from major fossil fuel producers like Saudi Aramco, Gazprom, Chevron, and ExxonMobil to specific heat-related economic losses, offering communities new grounds for legal action similar to cases against tobacco companies. The research shows that every 1% of greenhouse gases released since 1990 has led to \$502 billion in damages from heat alone. This framework addresses long standing legal challenges in climate accountability by providing robust attribution evidence linking corporate emissions to global warming impacts. While past lawsuits against major emitters, like those against Shell, have largely failed due to attribution issues, Callahan and Mankin's findings could strengthen future legal efforts. Experts, including Friederike Otto from Imperial College London, endorsed the study's methodology as a significant advancement in climate litigation.

Callahan, Christopher W., and Justin S. Mankin. [Carbon majors and the scientific case for climate liability](#). *Nature*, vol. 640, no. 8060, Apr. 2025, pp. 893–901.

F. Technology, Investment and Finance

Sluggish Economic Projections, Can Indonesia Still Become a Developed Country?

—Agustinus Yoga Primantoro, Dimas Waraditya Nugraha, and Yosepha Debrina Ratih Pusparsa, *Kompas*, 5 May 2025

On May 5, Indonesia's Central Statistics Agency (BPS) is set to release the country's first-quarter economic growth data, amid increasingly pessimistic projections. Bloomberg's consensus of 19 institutions forecasts growth at just 4.9 percent, below the 5 percent mark that has historically defined Indonesia's stable trajectory. Echoing this, LPEM FEB UI estimates Q1 growth at 4.93–4.95 percent and annual growth at 4.9–5.0 percent. The IMF and World Bank also lowered their 2025 projections to 4.65 percent and 4.7 percent respectively, citing weakened structural engines like declining purchasing power and productivity. Economist Teuku Riefky noted a drop in consumer-driven sectors during 2024's year-end holidays, with BPS recording slowing growth in transportation and hospitality services. Externally, US-imposed tariffs threaten trade and investment flows, while persistently high US interest rates cloud global market sentiment. Experts warn that to achieve "Golden Indonesia 2045" status, the nation must sustain 5.4 percent annual growth—far above current projections. Economists urge structural reforms, stronger fiscal policies, and improved governance to revive productivity and long-term economic momentum.

Addressing the Internet Access Gap by Engaging Village Communities

—Stephanus Aranditio, *Kompas*, 2 May 2025

Despite rising internet penetration in Indonesia, more than 12,000 villages still lack adequate digital access due to poor infrastructure, high costs, and limited digital literacy, according to the Ministry of Communication and Digital. Speaking at the opening of the “Community Networks” exhibition on May 2, 2025, at Bentara Budaya Jakarta, Gustaff H. Iskandar, Director of the Common Room Network Foundation, emphasized the urgency of inclusive internet access to ensure rural communities are not left behind in the digital era. Organized by Common Room, the Community Internet School (SIK), and the Digital Access Programme (DAP), the exhibition showcased local innovations like bamboo transmission towers and community-managed internet systems in regions such as West Java, North Maluku, Bali, and West Kalimantan. These grassroots efforts, supported by village funds and cultural adaptations, highlight the role of community-led solutions in bridging the digital divide. British Embassy representative Samuel Hayes and government official Mulyadin Malik underscored the importance of community involvement and digital literacy to ensure sustainable, equitable access essential for Indonesia’s inclusive growth.

Busan Raises \$9.1 Billion for Sustainable Ocean Action, Kenya Hosts OOC 2026

—Ichwan Susanto, *Kompas*, 30 April 2025

The 10th Our Ocean Conference, held in Busan, South Korea, concluded on April 30, with a landmark achievement of 277 new commitments worth USD 9.1 billion from over 60 countries and organizations. These pledges focus on six priority areas: blue economy, marine pollution, maritime security, marine protected areas, climate-ocean action, and the introduction of a new “Ocean Digital” agenda, which emphasizes using digital technologies for sustainable ocean management. South Korea’s Minister of Oceans and Fisheries Kang Do-hyung highlighted the role of innovation and cross-sector cooperation in addressing oceanic challenges. Notable commitments included USD 4.5 billion for sustainable marine enterprises and small-scale fisheries, nearly USD 2 billion to tackle plastic pollution, and over 45 pledges to expand marine protected areas. Experts stressed data-driven approaches, maritime law enforcement, and seafood traceability as critical solutions. The conference also spotlighted youth and community voices, with growing support for a global plastic treaty. Kenya was announced as the next host, with Mombasa set to welcome the 11th OOC in 2026, marking the event’s first time on African soil.

Indonesia Shows Breakthrough in Financing for Coral Reef Rescue

—Ichwan Susanto, *Kompas*, 30 April 2025

The OOC in Busan concluded with 277 new commitments worth USD 9.1 billion from over 60 countries and organizations to tackle global ocean challenges. The commitments span six key areas: blue economy, marine pollution, maritime security, conservation, sustainable fisheries, and climate-ocean action. South Korea’s Oceans and Fisheries Minister Kang Do-hyung introduced “Ocean Digital,” emphasizing technology’s role in ocean governance, while experts highlighted AI, satellite monitoring, and transparency as tools for marine sustainability and security. Notable pledges included USD 4.5 billion for sustainable marine businesses and small-scale fisheries, and nearly USD 2 billion to fight plastic pollution. Commitments also backed expanding marine protected areas and advancing the High Seas Treaty. Kenya will host the 11th OOC in 2026, marking the first time the conference will be held in Africa. Kenyan representative Ali Hassan Joho pledged to elevate Africa’s blue economy agenda and promote marine sustainability aligned with justice and equity.

Feature: China's solar tech companies eye for Indonesian market

—Hayati Nupus and Cao Kai, *Xinhua*, 26 April 2025

Solartech Indonesia 2025, one of ASEAN's largest solar energy trade exhibitions, concluded with Chinese exhibitors drawing strong attention for showcasing advanced photovoltaic technologies and expressing optimism about expanding partnerships in the region. Held in Indonesia, the event highlighted growing opportunities in the country's solar sector, particularly rooftop solar systems and energy storage, driven by Indonesia's strategic location on the equator and its renewable energy targets. Jinko Solar's Allen Fu emphasized Indonesia's market potential amid plans to add 4.68 GW of solar power capacity by 2030 and a 5,746 MW rooftop solar quota for 2024–2028. With 17,000 islands and many off-grid areas, companies like Dyness and Jolywood Sunwatt showcased solutions for remote electrification and announced investment plans, including factory development. Chinese firms, known for their technological edge, are increasingly viewing Indonesia as a strategic market and production base aligned with its Net Zero Emissions goal by 2060. Indonesian distributors and visitors expressed enthusiasm for adopting affordable and high-quality Chinese solar technologies to meet the country's growing renewable energy demand.

G. Human Rights, Indigenous People and Gender Equality

Women Become the Spearhead of Marine Justice in the Blue Economy Era

—Ichwan Susanto, *Kompas*, 30 April 2025

At the 10th Our Ocean Conference held on April 29, 2025, in Busan, South Korea, a discussion titled Women in Blue Foods: Pathways to Achieve Justice for Human, Environment, and Future Generations spotlighted the critical yet often overlooked role of women in marine ecosystem conservation and blue economy development. Speakers including Meizani Irmadhiany from Conservation Indonesia and Stephanie Juwana from the Indonesian Ocean Justice Initiative emphasized that coastal women are key actors in household economies, marine product processing, and environmental stewardship, yet remain underrepresented in policy and decision-making. Field stories—from Papua's customary marine zoning and the women-led Waifuna group to policy advocacy in Central Java—showcased growing efforts to involve women in ocean governance. Community-based programs like Rare's savings clubs and Blue Alliance's female-led marine conservation in Banggai further demonstrated women's leadership in sustainability. Grassroots voices, such as Asmania from Pari Island, underscored the need for inclusive policies that address gender justice, environmental protection, and intergenerational equity in the face of climate and corporate threats.

Sending “Naughty” Children to Military Barracks Threatens Children's Rights

—Stephanus Aranditio, *Kompas*, 30 April 2025

West Java Governor Dedi Mulyadi's proposal to send students with disciplinary issues to military barracks for six months sparked sharp criticism on Tuesday (April 29, 2025), with education and child rights advocates warning the plan violates legal protections and educational principles. The Executive Director of the Cahaya Guru Foundation, Muhammad Mukhlisin, said the policy is not only pedagogically unsound but also risks infringing on children's rights as outlined in Indonesia's Child Protection Law No. 35/2014, which guarantees access to education and protection from violence. Mukhlisin urged the governor to instead strengthen existing violence prevention mechanisms in schools, particularly the Task Forces operating in West Java's 27 regencies. He also recommended reviving local

wisdom-based education through the "Jabar Masagi" program. While Dedi insisted that the students will not be treated like soldiers and will continue attending school while undergoing discipline training, critics argue that the barracks environment may expose children to physical and psychological abuse and deprive them of meaningful learning opportunities. The policy's legality and potential human rights violations remain under scrutiny.

Military-backed plantation project in Indonesian Papua triggers rights concerns

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 30 April 2025

Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) has uncovered serious legal and human rights violations in the government-backed food estate project in Merauke, Papua, following a 2023 complaint by four Indigenous tribes—the Malind, Maklew, Khimaima, and Yei. The project, designated a strategic national priority, aims to clear 3 million hectares for sugarcane and rice plantations. Komnas HAM found that the government failed to obtain free, prior, and informed consent from affected communities and did not recognize their customary land rights. Violations included land grabbing, environmental degradation, militarization, and the exclusion of Indigenous voices. A 2,000-troop deployment and intensified military presence have raised fears among locals, with Komnas HAM identifying breaches of five key rights: land, environment, food security, participation, and security. The commission urged inclusive consultation, legal recognition of Indigenous territories, and a review of permits on customary lands. However, NGOs like Satya Bumi called for the project's termination, warning it endangers forests, livelihoods, and social fabric. Critics say the project reflects a top-down development model that marginalizes Indigenous Papuans in favor of investors.

Amnesty says Indonesia suppresses free speech with crackdowns on public protests

—NinieK Karmini, *APNews*, 29 April 2025

Amnesty International on Tuesday criticized the Indonesian government for escalating human rights violations in 2024, citing excessive crackdowns on peaceful protests, assaults on journalists and activists, and the continued use of spyware against dissidents. In its annual report released in Jakarta, the rights group documented at least 344 protest-related arrests, 152 physical assaults, and 17 tear gas injuries, with 65 victims experiencing multiple forms of abuse, including 15 university students who were hospitalized. A major August protest erupted over a proposed election law change that would have allowed Kaesang Pangarep, son of former President Joko Widodo, to bypass age requirements for candidacy—a bill later withdrawn following backlash. Amnesty also recorded 123 physical assaults and 288 digital threats against media and rights workers, including 11 journalists in Jakarta. Despite a new data protection law passed in October, enforcement remains absent, and spyware use reportedly persists. Amnesty Indonesia's Director Usman Hamid warned of an impending "epidemic of human rights violations" and urged President Prabowo Subianto's administration to prioritize human rights in policymaking. The Law Ministry has not responded to the allegations.

In Borneo village, Indigenous Dayaks leave farming amid stricter fire rules

—Rendy Tisna, *Mongabay*, 24 April 2025

In Central Kalimantan, Indigenous Dayak farmers like Remie are struggling to sustain traditional farming practices due to environmental policies enacted after devastating wildfires in 2015. On April 15, *Mongabay* reported that since the introduction of President Joko Widodo's 2015 Presidential Instruction No. 11 banning biomass burning, farmers in Mantangai subdistrict have faced high seed costs, shrinking harvests, and criminalization for

traditional land clearing methods. A Mongabay analysis found at least 206 farmers prosecuted between 2014 and 2022, many jailed for burning small plots. Critics, including Dayak customary elder Sanyo and NGOs like Save Our Borneo and Walhi, argue the policy unfairly targets Indigenous farmers while fires on industrial plantations cause greater damage. Local livelihoods have collapsed, forcing many to work for companies like PT Kalimantan Lestari Mandiri or migrate. Advocates call for policy reforms that respect Indigenous farming traditions, emphasizing that controlled burns have sustained Dayak communities for generations without causing large-scale forest loss. Farmers insist they are being scapegoated to protect corporate interests exploiting Borneo's natural resources.

No Safe Space for Environmental Human Rights Defenders

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 23 April 2025

At least 33 cases of attacks and threats against 204 individuals and 15 community groups defending land and the environment have occurred across Indonesia in 2024, according to [Annual Report of Environmental Human Rights Defenders in Indonesia 2023](#) by Satya Bumi and Protection International released in Jakarta on April 23. The report reveals that police were involved in 16 cases, while non-state actors like plantation companies and thugs were responsible for 18 incidents, highlighting a worsening climate for environmental human rights defenders amid the political transition from Joko Widodo to Prabowo Subianto. North Sumatra recorded the highest number of cases, with September being the peak month. The main triggers were environmental pollution, agrarian conflicts, and indigenous land rights disputes, with notable examples including the sentencing of activist Daniel Frits Tangkilisan and the arrest of indigenous leader Sorbatua Siallagan. Executive Director Andi Muttaqien warned that authorities' complicity threatens citizens' right to seek environmental justice. The report urges stronger legal protections and reforms to ensure fair treatment and the operationalization of rapid response mechanisms for defender protection.

LinkedIn, UN Women Launch 'Link Women' Program to Tackle Workforce Gender Gap in Indonesia

—Nadira Rahmadini, *JakartaDaily*, 23 April 2025

LinkedIn and UN Women officially will launch the “Link Women” program in Indonesia on May 15, aiming to upskill 2,000 women in digital literacy and job readiness to address the country's persistent gender gap in employment. Timed with Kartini Day, the initiative follows a successful rollout in India and targets women entering or reentering the workforce, offering training in AI literacy, digital marketing, leadership, and access to professional networks. Combining campus roadshows in Jakarta, Banten, and West Java with online learning, the program responds to stark labor disparities—only 56.4% of women participate in Indonesia's workforce compared to 84.7% of men, with 1.7 million young women having exited due to caregiving and social pressures. Lanny Wijaya of LinkedIn Indonesia and UN Women's Ulziisuren Jamsran stressed the urgency of providing both digital and soft skills to ensure women's inclusion in the digital economy. UN Women will also connect participants with employers aligned with the Women's Empowerment Principles, while LinkedIn's platform will offer visibility to over a billion professionals and 70 million companies globally.

I. Government Priority Program

Indonesia launches education initiative to boost learning equality

—Huaxia, *Xinhua*, 3 May 2025

President Prabowo Subianto launched the "Best Results Fast Program," a national education initiative aimed at improving equitable access to quality learning through digital technology across the country. The program was officially introduced at Cimahpar 5 Public Elementary School in Bogor and forms part of the government's broader strategy to promote inclusive, high-quality education, particularly in remote, underdeveloped, and outermost areas. A key component of the initiative involves installing television screens in all schools to facilitate digital-based learning and support students and teachers, especially in regions lacking qualified educators and learning materials. The rollout is expected to begin in the coming months, with a target of full nationwide implementation by mid-2026. Prabowo emphasized that the program would help bridge educational gaps and foster a strong, competitive generation of Indonesians by leveraging technology. The initiative reflects his administration's commitment to using digital tools to tackle systemic challenges in the education sector and ensure no region is left behind in learning opportunities.

Indonesia's food estate push targets self-sufficiency amid growing concerns in Papua

—Amy Sood, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 2 May 2025

President Prabowo Subianto's food self-sufficiency programme, launched in Papua and other underdeveloped regions of Indonesia, is drawing sharp criticism from environmental groups and Indigenous rights advocates. Announced during Prabowo's October 2024 inauguration and reiterated in April 2025, the food estate programme aims to reduce reliance on food imports by expanding large-scale agricultural zones, especially for rice and sugar. In Merauke, South Papua, over 11,000 hectares have already been cleared, with plans to reach more than 3 million hectares—raising fears of massive deforestation and displacement of Indigenous communities. While the government pledges reforestation and rural development, experts warn such measures can't replace old-growth ecosystems or protect local livelihoods rooted in forests. Critics, including Greenpeace and the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, also raise alarm over the military's growing role in civilian land-clearing efforts, citing risks of land grabbing and state violence. Despite national goals to become a global "food barn" and support nutrition programmes, local resistance is rising, with Papuan communities mobilising in March to demand an end to the project and protection of their ancestral lands.

Kompas Research and Development Survey: Public Welcomes People's Schools

—MB Dewi Pancawati, *Kompas*, 2 May 2025

President Prabowo Subianto's newly launched Sekolah Rakyat (People's School) program—announced during the 2025 National Education Day (Hardiknas) on May 2—aims to provide free, high-quality boarding school education for children from underprivileged families across Indonesia. Set to begin operations in the 2025/2026 academic year, with at least 53 schools ready by June 2025 and 200 planned overall, the initiative is led by the Ministry of Social Affairs in coordination with several ministries and private partners. The schools, targeting children from the lowest two welfare deciles, will offer formal education alongside vocational training, character-building, and flexible multi-entry systems. Despite its ambitious goals to reduce dropout rates and break cycles of poverty, a recent Kompas survey (April 7–12, 2025) across 38 provinces revealed low public awareness—75% had never heard of the program—though 94.4% supported it once informed. The initiative aligns with the government's broader vision of "Universal Participation Realizes Quality Education for All" and is expected to

enhance equity in education, boost workforce readiness, and support Indonesia's long-term human development goals for 2045.

President Prabowo calls for thorough planning for Sekolah Rakyat

—Fathur Rochman and Resinta Sulistiyandari, *AntaraNews*, 30 April 2025

President has directed that the government's free education initiative, *Sekolah Rakyat*, be implemented with careful planning and strict eligibility to ensure it effectively reduces poverty, Minister of Social Affairs Saifullah Yusuf said at the Presidential Palace in Jakarta. Aimed at families in extreme poverty (Decile 1), the program will pilot 53 schools in 2025, with plans to expand to 200 locations based on criteria like land availability, poverty levels, and infrastructure. The President emphasized precise execution from planning through graduation and instructed that student enrollment be free from irregularities. The Ministry of Public Works is currently surveying additional potential sites. The program, set to launch in the 2025–2026 academic year, will be funded through the state budget and private-sector support. Teacher recruitment is underway, drawing from civil servants, contract staff, and certified education graduates. The curriculum is being finalized under a team led by Prof. Muhammad Nuh, with teacher training to begin in June. Prabowo met with key ministers, including Finance Minister Sri Mulyani, to assess the program's progress.

Free meals program lacks public transparency, accountability: ICW

—Radhiyya Indra, *TheJakartaPost*, 30 April 2025

Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) has found that President Prabowo Subianto's flagship free nutritious meal program lacks transparency, accountability, and key governance principles, raising concerns about mismanagement and food safety. Based on a survey conducted from March 12 to April 24 in 30 Jakarta schools and visits to six operational kitchens, ICW uncovered serious implementation flaws, including late meal deliveries disrupting classes, inconsistent nutrition standards, and poor sanitation—such as meals containing rotten eggs or delivered in plastic bags. The watchdog also criticized the program's lack of openness to feedback and the difficulty in accessing basic information about which schools were participating. ICW researcher Eva Nurcahyani noted that feedback from students and principals was often ignored, while FIAN Indonesia's Marthin Hadiwinata flagged a lack of clarity on how nutritionists monitor food quality. These findings come amid a spike in food poisoning cases linked to the program, including incidents in West and Central Java. In response, the National Nutrition Agency pledged to improve food safety standards in over 1,000 kitchens to prevent future health risks.

Mass food poisonings cast shadow over Indonesia's free school meals

—Koh Ewe and Hanna Samosir, *BBCNews*, 24 April 2025

Nearly 80 high school students in Cianjur, West Java fell ill this week after consuming free school meals provided under the President's flagship program, prompting fresh scrutiny over food safety and implementation. The incident, linked to suspected negligence in food preparation, is the latest in a series of food poisoning cases since the initiative began in January 2025, reaching over 550,000 students across 26 provinces. Launched to combat child stunting and boost Prabowo's populist appeal, the \$10 billion program—the costliest of its kind globally—has drawn sharp criticism for rushed planning, quality issues, and potential corruption. Authorities have launched investigations, questioned food handlers, and pledged to improve safety protocols. Public dissatisfaction has grown amid deep budget cuts to ministries and universities to fund the program, sparking protests and canceled scholarships. Experts and anti-corruption bodies have warned of fraud risks and structural weaknesses in

oversight. Despite mounting backlash, Prabowo has defended the program, vowing to protect public funds and maintain its long-term goals.

II. Indonesia in Politics and Geopolitics

Indonesia, France Forge Partnership for Sustainable Mining Practices

—Annisa Lisya Bazlina, *Tempo*, 3 May 2025

From April 22-24, the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and the French Bureau of Geological and Mining Research (BRGM) hosted a seminar in Jakarta, collaborating with the Indonesian Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (MEMR) and Badan Geologi to promote sustainable and post-mining best practices. The seminar aimed to foster dialogue between Indonesian and French stakeholders, focusing on responsible mining practices, environmental remediation, and mining waste valorization. AFD's Indonesia Energy Transition Facility, supported by a 14.7 million euro grant from the European Union, helps the Indonesian government enhance environmental and social governance in the mining sector, particularly in light of Indonesia's significant nickel and cobalt reserves. The seminar discussed key topics such as mine lifecycle risk management, closure, and governance, with BRGM experts sharing French mining practices. Julian Ambassador of MEMR emphasized the seminar's role in providing an overview of best practices, while AFD's Nurrahman Waluyo highlighted the event's importance in strengthening Indonesia's capacity for sustainable mineral resource management.

Indonesia should approach BRICS with caution

—Yvette Tanamal, *The Jakarta Post*, 2 May 2025

At the BRICS foreign ministers meeting in Rio de Janeiro from April 22-24, Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Retno Marsudi, made her debut, but the event concluded without a joint statement due to internal disagreements. While the meeting was initially expected to produce a unified stance against Western policies, such as the U.S.'s "reciprocal tariff" policy, the outcome was a less specific chair statement from Brazil, citing concerns over unilateral protectionist measures but omitting direct mention of the U.S. Tensions among BRICS members, including China's stance on tariffs and differing opinions on UN reforms, led to the bloc's failure to present a united voice. As a newly admitted member, Indonesia emphasized its long-standing priorities like peace in Gaza and more funding for developing countries, but refrained from releasing an official statement, suggesting a cautious approach. Experts advise Indonesia to focus on multilateral platforms like ASEAN rather than overly relying on BRICS, given the group's fragmented nature and its potential to complicate Indonesia's relations with Western powers.

Indonesia Accuses Israel of Violating International Law at ICJ

—Savero Aristia Wienanto, *Tempo*, 1 May 2025

On April 30, Indonesian Foreign Minister Sugiono delivered a statement at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, emphasizing Indonesia's firm rejection of Israel's occupation of Palestine. Speaking during a session at the request of the United Nations General Assembly, Sugiono argued that Israel's actions in the occupied Palestinian territories violate international law, including blocking humanitarian aid, destroying civilian infrastructure, and expelling Palestinians. He condemned these actions as illegal and inhumane, stressing

that Israel's disregard for its legal obligations under the UN Charter and the Geneva Conventions weakens the global legal system. Sugiono also highlighted Israel's attack on an Indonesian hospital in Gaza in 2023, underscoring the need to protect medical facilities in conflict zones. He called on the ICJ to uphold the right of Palestinians to self-determination and urged Israel to allow humanitarian access. Sugiono concluded by asserting that a ruling in favor of international law could guide the UN in achieving justice for Palestinians.

IMF, World Bank transformation needed for global stability: Indonesia

—Imamatul Silfia and Yashinta Difa, *AntaraNews*, 29 April 2025

During the 2025 Spring Meetings of the World Bank Group and the IMF in Washington, D.C., Indonesia's Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati called for the transformation of the IMF and the World Bank to ensure global stability and sustainable development. In a meeting with external advisors Patrick Achi and Mark Malloch-Brown, Indrawati highlighted the challenges posed by fragmented global conditions and emphasized the importance of these institutions in maintaining stability amid economic uncertainty. She stressed the need for the IMF and the World Bank to become more responsive, agile, and adaptive to global developments. Indrawati expressed hope that the discussions would contribute to transforming the institutions, allowing them to better address future challenges. She concluded by reinforcing Indonesia's commitment to supporting the institutions in their mission to foster stability and sustainable development worldwide.

Bandung's spirit powerful call amid global uncertainty, Indonesian diplomat says

—Huaxia, *Xinhua*, 25 April 2025

Indonesia's newly-appointed ambassador to Kenya, Tyas Baskoro Her Witjaksono Adji, emphasized the relevance of the Bandung Conference's values in addressing rising protectionism and global uncertainties during an interview with Xinhua. He highlighted the 1955 conference as a pivotal moment when newly independent nations united for justice and fairness in the global system, relying on solidarity rather than power. Witjaksono stressed that these lessons remain crucial today, urging developing nations in Asia and Africa to continue fostering cooperation for a more stable and equitable world. As he prepares to begin his diplomatic career in Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and several UN organizations, Witjaksono emphasized Indonesia's intent to strengthen its political and economic ties with Africa. Through initiatives like the Indonesia-Africa Forum, Indonesia aims to deepen partnerships, focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals and mutual economic benefits, with opportunities for collaboration with China and other interested nations to boost economic relations in Africa.