



Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

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

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A. Marine and Fisheries

Navy to bolster Tangerang's maritime security after sea fence removal

—Azmi and Tegar Nurfitra, *AntaraNews*, 13 February 2025

The Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL) is set to strengthen maritime security operations in the northern coastal waters of Tangerang, Banten, following the removal of a controversial 30.16-kilometer illegal sea fence. Earlier on January 23, Major General Hermanto, Maritime Potential Assistant to the TNI-AL Chief of Staff, reaffirmed the military's commitment to preventing similar unauthorized structures that disrupt fishing activities and harm the

economy. The removal operation, which began on January 18, is nearing completion, with only one kilometer of the fence left to be dismantled. Despite weather-related delays, the TNI-AL, in collaboration with local fishermen and the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, has been working to clear the waters, which span 16 villages across six sub-districts. The Agrarian Affairs Minister Nusron Wahid has pledged to revoke land certificates tied to submerged plots, while the Marine Affairs Ministry is supporting affected fishermen through training, equipment, and scholarships. The navy's increased patrols aim to prevent future illegal installations and safeguard Indonesia's maritime resources.

Unchecked illegal trawling pushes Indonesia's small-scale fishers to the brink

—Irsyan Hasyim, *Tempo*, 12 February 2025

Professor Yonvitner from IPB University has highlighted key considerations regarding President Prabowo Subianto's plan to build a 700-kilometer giant sea wall from Banten to East Java. He emphasized its necessity for preventing coastal abrasion, harmonizing land use, and protecting habitats and settlements. However, he noted that a sea wall does not always require reclamation and could take the form of green infrastructure. Yonvitner, who also heads IPB's Center for Coastal and Marine Resource Studies (PKSPL), stressed the need for precise studies, considering sea level rise and land subsidence. He warned that the project could disrupt carbon deposits, ecosystems, and fishing areas, as well as affect accessibility. Prabowo had previously instructed his staff to study a similar project from Jakarta to Cirebon as part of the 2025 National Strategic Program (PSN). While the sea wall aims to mitigate coastal threats, experts caution that its design and environmental impact must be carefully assessed to avoid unintended consequences such as altered sediment flow, displacement and high cost maintenance.

Unchecked illegal trawling pushes Indonesia's small-scale fishers to the brink

—Tonggo Simangunsong, *Mongabay*, 11 February 2025

Illegal trawling is causing severe harm to small-scale fishers across Indonesia, depleting fish stocks and threatening livelihoods. Despite a national ban on trawl fishing since 2015, enforcement remains weak, allowing illegal operators to continue destructive practices in coastal waters. Small-scale fishers, who rely on traditional methods, report declining catches and increasing financial struggles as industrial trawlers sweep up marine resources. In North Sumatra, West Java, and East Kalimantan, affected communities have staged protests, demanding stricter law enforcement and protection of their fishing grounds. "We can't compete with these trawlers," said Abdul Rahman, a fisherman from Java. "They destroy everything, leaving nothing for us." Authorities acknowledge the problem but cite challenges in monitoring vast maritime areas. The Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries has pledged stronger action, including increased patrols and harsher penalties for violators. However, experts argue that without better community engagement and stricter regulations, small fishers will continue to suffer. Environmental groups warn that ongoing illegal trawling could lead to long-term ecological damage and food insecurity.

Govt steps in to help Tangerang fishermen hurt by sea fence

—Azmi and Tegar Nurfitri, *AntaraNews*, 9 February 2025

The Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries has provided training programs and fishing equipment to fishermen impacted by the 30.16-kilometer illegal sea fence in the northern coastal waters of Tangerang District, Banten. Director General of Capture Fisheries Lotharia Latif stated that these initiatives aim to strengthen Indonesia's marine economy, covering both upstream and downstream sectors. The ministry's assistance includes green mussel

cultivation training, fishing safety equipment, and ship repair programs at three fish auction centers in Tanjung Pasir, Kronjo, and Pakuhaji. Additionally, it has distributed 300 life jackets, 600 sailing supply packages, 200 cooler boxes, and three pumps to local fishermen's business communities. Fishermen's wives are also receiving fish processing training, while 10 fishermen's children have been awarded scholarships for free education at the ministry's polytechnics. The initiative follows reports that the sea fence caused Rp24 billion (US\$1.5 million) in losses for 3,888 fishermen. Meanwhile, the Indonesian Navy has removed at least 20 kilometers of the fence, and the Agrarian Affairs Ministry has revoked 50 land certificates tied to the submerged plots.

Certificate of Ownership and HGB Issued in Marine Space

—Fathurrahman Jamil, *Kompas*, 6 February 2025

The Indonesian government is facing scrutiny over the issuance of Building Use Rights (HGB) certificates for 263 land plots in the waters of Tangerang, Banten. The Minister of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (ATR/BPN) Nusron Wahid confirmed the certification during a press conference on January 20, 2025, with 254 plots belonging to two large companies. The public is questioning the legality of granting HGB in maritime areas. According to Indonesian land laws, HGB allows the construction and ownership of buildings on non-owned land for up to 30 years. However, under Government Regulation No. 18/2021, HGB in water areas requires prior approval from the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (KKP), which was reportedly not obtained. The KKP has since sealed the contested area, citing procedural violations. Minister Nusron Wahid has pledged to evaluate the certificates, emphasizing the possibility of cancellation if legal inconsistencies are found. The case highlights concerns over potential maladministration and the need for stricter oversight in land-use policies in coastal areas.

B. Forests and Land Use

With deforestation rising, is Indonesia missing the forest for the trees?

—Amy Sood, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 9 February 2025

Indonesia lost over 261,575 hectares of forest in 2024, a significant increase from the previous year, according to a report by NGO Auriga Nusantara. The deforestation, primarily in East Kalimantan, is linked to government-backed development, mining, and agricultural expansion. Environmentalists warn that increased nickel mining and large-scale food and energy projects could accelerate forest loss. The report also highlights concerns about the future capital, Nusantara, which could further threaten Borneo's forests. The Indonesian government has criticized the findings, emphasizing its reforestation efforts, but experts argue that replanting does not immediately compensate for lost forests. Greenpeace warns that planned deforestation, particularly in Papua, could further damage ecosystems. Nickel mining, crucial for the global green-energy transition, has driven deforestation in West Papua's Raja Ampat Islands. Activists fear Indonesia may deprioritize climate commitments, citing comments from President Prabowo's brother questioning the relevance of the Paris Agreement. Environmentalists stress that continued deforestation could disproportionately harm rural communities, urging stronger conservation measures to balance development and ecological protection.

Disaster-Responsive Cities Become Long-Term Solutions for Urban Development

—Budiawan Sidik and Zikrina Ratri, *Kompas*, 9 February 2025

Indonesia faces increasing urban disaster risks in early 2025 due to intensified rainfall, particularly under a weak La Niña phase. The National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) reports that hydrometeorological disasters dominate, with major floods affecting Jakarta on January 28-29, submerging 52 neighborhoods. Tidal floods also hit Semarang and Demak in January-February. Jakarta's government has implemented mitigation measures such as weather engineering, installment of 549 pump units, and watergate expansions. Plans for a \$50 billion giant sea wall, initially part of the National Strategic Project, remain under feasibility review. Semarang officials stress the need for improved drainage, vertical drainage systems, and a moratorium on infiltration land conversion. The urgency of resilient urban planning is emphasized, aligning with international frameworks like the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and SNI ISO 37123:2019. Long-term solutions require integrating disaster resilience into urban development, combining infrastructure, governance, and community preparedness to minimize socio-economic and environmental impacts.

Surge in legal land clearing pushes up Indonesia deforestation rate in 2024

—Hans Nicholas Jung, *Mongabay*, 7 February 2025

Indonesia's deforestation reached its highest level since 2021, with 261,575 hectares lost in 2024—four times the size of Jakarta. Alarming, 97% of this occurred within legal concessions, marking a shift from illegal to legally sanctioned deforestation. The primary drivers include palm oil, pulpwood, and nickel mining, with Kalimantan, Sumatra, and Papua facing the heaviest losses. A new pulp mill in Kalimantan is suspected of accelerating land clearing. More than half of the deforestation impacted critical habitats for endangered species like orangutans, tigers, and elephants. Despite a moratorium on new forest-clearance permits, existing concessions remain unprotected, enabling continued forest loss. Environmental group Auriga Nusantara warns that Indonesia's regulatory framework incentivizes companies to clear forests rather than preserve them. Government officials dispute the figures, citing different methodologies that include reforestation efforts. However, conservationists argue that President Prabowo Subianto's stance, which downplays deforestation risks, could further threaten Indonesia's remaining forests. Amid mounting concerns, experts urge stronger policies to safeguard natural ecosystems and biodiversity.

Indonesia targets 2.3m hectares of protected forests for food & biofuel crop production

—Hans Nicholas Jung, *Mongabay*, 6 February 2025

The government plans to convert 2.3 million hectares of protected forests into food and biofuel crop estates, part of a broader effort to develop 20 million hectares of "food and energy estates." This could become the country's largest deforestation project, raising environmental concerns. Forestry Minister Raja Juli Antoni defended the plan, stating that the targeted areas are already degraded due to logging and fires, and agroforestry would rehabilitate them. Critics warn of biodiversity loss and climate risks, arguing that protected forests should be preserved and reforested. The government has yet to disclose exact locations, prompting transparency concerns. Past food estate projects, such as the failed 1990s Mega Rice Project, resulted in ecological disasters. Indonesia, home to the world's third-largest tropical forest area, faces increasing pressure to curb deforestation amid climate commitments. Environmentalists argue that restoring forests is a more effective strategy for reducing emissions. They urge the government to reconsider its top-down planning that

favors agribusiness. Smallholder farmers and Indigenous communities, who have historically contributed more to food security than large-scale industrial plantations, must be prioritized.

C. Biodiversity, Conservation and Protected Area

Concern as orangutan seen roaming Kalimantan coal site

—Dessy Sagita/AFP, *TheJakartaPost*, 13 February 2025

Footage of a confused orangutan wandering a coal mining site in East Kalimantan, Indonesia, has raised fresh concerns over habitat destruction. Captured last month by local resident Ahmad Baihaqi and verified by AFP, the viral video shows the critically endangered primate roaming meters from an excavator. The province is also home to Indonesia's new capital, Nusantara, a project environmentalists fear will accelerate deforestation in one of Asia's last great rainforests. Local environmentalist Mappaselle warned the sighting is proof that wildlife habitats are shrinking due to economic activities. "Our endangered wildlife could go extinct," he said. However, conservation official Ari Wibawanto downplayed concerns, stating it is normal for male orangutans to roam. Authorities relocated the 15-year-old orangutan to a protected forest area. The mining site belongs to Kaltim Prima Coal, Indonesia's largest thermal coal producer, which has yet to comment. Baihaqi hopes the images will raise awareness about environmental destruction. "This animal is almost extinct," he said. "We must protect our forests and wildlife before it's too late."

Massive songbird seizure highlights Indonesia's unrelenting illegal wildlife trade

—Keith Anthony Fabro, *Mongabay*, 13 February 2025

Indonesian authorities seized 6,860 smuggled songbirds at Tanjung Wangi Port in Banyuwangi, East Java, on February 1, highlighting the persistent illegal songbird trade. The shipment originated from West Nusa Tenggara, reflecting shifting trade routes after an October 2024 bust in Sumatra disrupted supply chains. The birds, packed in 134 boxes, included zebra finches, red avadavats, and streaked weavers. While not legally protected, the shipment violated regulations on capture permits and health certification. Authorities found 579 birds dead. Bird trafficking watchdog FLIGHT warned that traders are increasingly sourcing birds from West Nusa Tenggara, Bali, and Kalimantan. A suspect was arrested but later released, as the birds lacked protected status. Experts stress that weak regulations threaten wild populations and raise public health concerns due to potential zoonotic disease transmission. Indonesia's songbird trade, deeply rooted in Javanese culture, has led to the seizure of at least 300,000 birds over five years. Conservationists urge stronger protections, warning that some species are now rarely seen in the wild.

Javan Rhino Poachers in Ujung Kulon National Park Sentenced to 12 and 11 Years in Prison

—Alif Ilham Fajriadi, *Tempo*, 13 February 2025

Six men convicted of poaching the critically endangered Javan rhinoceros were sentenced to 11 and 12 years in prison by the Pandeglang District Court in Banten, Indonesia, on Wednesday, February 12, 2025. The court sentenced Sahru bin Karnadi, identified as the mastermind, to 12 years, while Karip bin Usup, Atang Damanhuri bin Daman, Leli bin Mudin, Isnén bin Kusnan, and Sayudi bin Lomri each received 11-year sentences. They were also

fined 100 million rupiah, with an additional three-month prison term if unpaid. The case, registered under numbers 171/Pid.Sus-LH/2024/PN Pdl to 176/Pid.Sus-LH/2024/PN Pdl, was presided over by Judges Hendi Reformen Kacaribu, Iskandar Ferian Elisabet, and Anna Maria Stephani Siagian. Ardi Andono, Head of Ujung Kulon National Park, welcomed the verdict, calling it a strong step toward protecting the Javan rhino, which is safeguarded under Indonesia's 2018 conservation law. He emphasized that this sentencing reflects the nation's commitment to enforcing wildlife protection laws and securing the species' survival.

Sun, sand and skulls: Bali tourism trade peddles threatened primate skulls

—Spoorthy Raman, *Mongabay*, 12 February 2025

A new study reveals that primate skulls, including those from endangered species like orangutans, gibbons, and proboscis monkeys, are illegally sold in curio shops across Bali, Indonesia. Conducted between 2013 and 2024 by researchers from Oxford Brookes University, the study recorded 754 skulls sold primarily to foreign tourists. Despite national and international laws prohibiting the trade, vendors openly display and sell the skulls, some intricately carved, with prices ranging from \$25 to \$156. The trade, researchers say, threatens already vulnerable primate populations, as many skulls are sourced from Java and Borneo, suggesting a widespread supply network. Conservationists warn that even small-scale illegal wildlife trade can have devastating effects on biodiversity. Experts urge stronger law enforcement, stricter monitoring, and better tourist education to combat the issue. While Bali is known for its cultural reverence for primates, this thriving illegal trade highlights contradictions in local practices. Authorities are called to act decisively, with conservationists emphasizing that tourists should avoid purchasing such souvenirs and instead opt for ethical keepsakes.

Chavez, J. and Nijman, V. (2024). [The Open Sale of Primate Skulls on Bali Reveal Complex Indonesia-wide Wildlife Trade Networks](#), *Primate Conservation*, 38, pp. 175–184.

Discovery of 98 New Taxa Throughout 2024 Further Enriches Indonesia's Biodiversity

—Deonisia Arlinta, *Kompas*, 12 February 2025

Researchers from Indonesia's National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) identified 98 new taxa in 2024, nearly doubling their initial target of 50. The findings, announced in Jakarta on February 12, highlight Indonesia's rich biodiversity and its conservation significance. The discoveries include 43 new species, one new subspecies, one new variety, and 53 new records across flora, fauna, and microorganisms. Fauna accounted for the highest number of new species (26), followed by flora (11) and microorganisms (6). Notably, 62% of the newly identified taxa originated from Indonesia, with some classified as endemic species. According to Arif Nurkanto, Head of BRIN's Biosystematics and Evolution Research Center, these findings enhance scientific understanding and guide conservation efforts, including species rehabilitation and habitat restoration. BRIN has also collaborated with the University of Indonesia to explore Indonesia's biodiversity, particularly in Kalimantan's tropical forests, through a three-year research expedition. BRIN's ongoing research aims to contribute to sustainable biodiversity management and reinforce Indonesia's role in global conservation efforts.

D. Climate Change, Energy and Mining

The Meaning of the Paris Agreement for Indonesia

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 12 February 2025

Following the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, Indonesian officials are questioning the country's commitment to the global climate pact. Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Bahlil Lahadalia and President Prabowo's brother, Hashim Djojohadikusumo, suggested reconsidering Indonesia's participation, citing the U.S. decision as justification. Their statements raise concerns about potential policy shifts away from climate commitments. The Paris Agreement, signed by nearly 200 countries in 2015, aims to keep global temperature rise below 2°C through voluntary emissions reductions. Indonesia pledged a 29% cut in emissions by 2030 (41% with international support), later increasing its target in 2022. Leaving the agreement could jeopardize Indonesia's access to global climate finance, essential for its green transition. While the U.S. exit may ease its funding obligations, Indonesia's departure could undermine its climate action credibility and economic opportunities in the green sector. Critics argue that rather than following the Trump administration's rollback, Indonesia should prioritize sustainability to protect its vulnerable communities from climate-related disasters.

Melting Arctic Accelerates Global Warming, Challenges in Adapting

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 10 February 2025

A new study led by climate scientist James Hansen warns that maintaining long-term global warming below 2°C, as outlined in the Paris Agreement, is now considered impossible. Published on February 3 in *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, the study finds that Earth's climate is more sensitive to rising greenhouse gas emissions than previously thought. Since 2023, global temperatures have exceeded the critical 1.5°C threshold, accelerating Arctic ice melt, permafrost thaw, and extreme weather. Hansen and his team predict a 2°C rise by 2045, with severe consequences, including the potential collapse of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) within 20–30 years, leading to significant sea level rise. Another study published in *Science* on February 6, supports these findings, projecting a 2.7°C rise by 2100 even if all Paris Agreement commitments are met. Scientists stress the need for urgent policy adjustments, local climate action, and individual efforts to slow warming and adapt to the new reality. "We can't stop change, but we can still influence its pace," said Arctic researcher Ted Schuur.

Hansen, J. E. et al. (2025). [Global Warming Has Accelerated: Are the United Nations and the Public Well-Informed?](#) *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, 67(1), 6–44.

Stroeve, Julienne C., et al. (2025). [Disappearing landscapes: The Arctic at +2.7°C global warming](#). *Science*, vol. 387, no. 6734, pp. 616-621.

Disease surges in Indonesia community on frontline of world energy transition

—Rabul Sawal, *Mongabay*, 6 February 2025

The Weda Bay Industrial Park (IWIP) in Halmahera, has brought severe environmental and health consequences to nearby villages, residents say. Hernemus Takuling, a villager from Lelilef Sawai, describes worsening air pollution, requiring locals to wear masks and clean dust daily. Respiratory infections in the village surged from 434 cases in 2020 to 10,579 in 2023, clinic records show. IWIP, a joint venture of Chinese mining giants Huayou, Tsingshan, and Zhenshi, operates smelters fueled by 3,400 MW of coal power, contributing to deforestation and pollution. Research found that 5,331 hectares of tropical forest have been cleared,

releasing 2 million metric tons of greenhouse gases. Despite official claims of regulatory compliance, villagers like Sagea resident Supriyadi say the project has devastated food sources and health. With three new coal plants planned, pollution is expected to rise further. Activists warn of increasing health risks, while 26 worker deaths have been reported since IWIP's launch in 2018. Meanwhile, Indonesia's nickel exports surged from \$800 million to \$6.8 billion in four years, benefiting investors while locals bear the costs.

Indonesia mulls Paris Agreement exit, citing fairness and energy transition costs

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 4 February 2025

Indonesia is considering withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, citing unfairness after the U.S. pulled out again. Special envoy Hashim Djojohadikusumo questioned why Indonesia should comply while major polluters do not, emphasizing its lower per capita emissions. Energy Minister Bahlil Lahadalia warned that U.S. withdrawal could reduce financial support for Indonesia's clean energy transition. Indonesia signed a \$20 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) in 2022, but delays in fund disbursement have fueled frustration. The government argues it cannot phase out coal without adequate funding. President Prabowo Subianto previously pledged a coal phase-out but now prioritizes "energy sovereignty" over full renewable energy adoption. Environmental groups warn that leaving the agreement would harm Indonesia's global standing and economy. Activists argue Indonesia must uphold climate commitments to secure international funding and mitigate climate disasters that have affected millions. Critics also point to government ties to the coal industry. If Indonesia withdraws, it risks losing credibility and access to crucial climate financing for its just energy transition.

Indonesia rushes mining law amendments, raising environmental and governance alarms

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

Indonesia's parliament is fast-tracking amendments to the mining law, allowing universities and religious organizations to acquire permits without bidding. Critics warn this will accelerate deforestation, pollution, and social conflicts, undermining governance and contradicting Indonesia's climate commitments. The amendments, passed in just 12 hours with little transparency, have fueled speculation that business elites and officials with mining ties are behind the changes. Supporters, including legislative committee chair Bob Hasan, argue the revisions will speed up Indonesia's mineral downstreaming to boost self-sufficiency in energy, particularly in nickel, copper, and aluminum for renewable technologies. However, activists caution that including public institutions in mining creates conflicts of interest, weakening their ability to advocate for environmental protection. Bypassing public tenders further raises concerns about corruption and unchecked resource exploitation. With Indonesia already a top global emitter due to coal reliance, critics say the policy shift prioritizes extraction over environmental stewardship. Civil society groups warn the move will worsen land disputes and erode public trust in religious and academic institutions, traditionally seen as moral authorities.

Giljum, S., Maus, V., Kuschnig, N., Luckeneder, S., Tost, M., Sonter, L. J., & Bebbington, A. J. (2022). [A pantropical assessment of deforestation caused by industrial mining](#). *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 119(38).

E. Pollution, Waste and Disaster

Black soldier fly larvae help turn trash into nutrient-rich compost

—Nur Janti, *TheJakartaPost*, 13 February 2025

In Indonesia, where millions of tonnes of waste are sent to landfills daily, a professor has pioneered a method to transform organic waste into compost efficiently. Arief Sabdo Yuwono, an environmental science professor at Bogor Agricultural University (IPB), developed a simple waste disposal method called *sebelas detik aja bio degradasi organik* (SABDO), which translates as "just 11 seconds for bio-organic degradation." The method uses black soldier fly larvae to break down waste in weeks without odor or mess. With Indonesia generating 21.4 million tonnes of household waste in 2024—39 percent of it food waste—Arief's system offers a scalable solution. The flies consume organic waste during their 45-day lifespan, reducing landfill-bound waste while producing nutrient-rich compost. Unlike other flies, black soldier flies do not spread disease. Arief's waste management facility in Bogor serves 25 households for free, and he also trains officials and communities nationwide. Beyond composting, the system promotes recycling and economic benefits, as black soldier fly larvae can be processed into animal feed. "Trash isn't waste—it's money," Arief emphasized, advocating for waste as a resource.

Floods Hit Several Areas in South Sulawesi, Thousands of Residents Evacuated

—Reny Sri Ayu, *Kompas*, 12 February 2025

Severe flooding has displaced thousands of residents in South Sulawesi, particularly in Maros Regency and Makassar City, following heavy rains over the past few days. As of 12 February, over 4,000 families in Maros have been affected, with water levels reaching up to two meters in some areas. All 14 sub-districts in Maros have been inundated, severely disrupting transportation, including paralyzing the Trans Sulawesi road. Evacuation efforts are underway, with over 1,000 displaced residents sheltering in mosques and other facilities. Emergency needs include food, clean water, and medical supplies. Makassar City has also been hit, with 2,164 displaced individuals across 24 evacuation points. The flooding has been exacerbated by the opening of the Bilibili Dam spillway in Gowa due to dangerously high water levels. The National Search and Rescue Agency (Basarnas) continues to assist in evacuations, though efforts are hampered by difficult road access. Authorities warn that extreme weather is expected to persist, raising concerns about further flooding.

Microplastics from Tea Bags, Potential Dangers, and How to Reduce Exposure

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 12 February 2025

A study by Ecological Observation and Wetland Conservations (ECOTON) reveals that tea bags can release billions of microplastics when brewed, raising concerns about contamination in everyday beverages. Conducted in Indonesia, the research tested five commercial tea bag brands and found that all released microplastics, with higher contamination occurring when tea bags were placed in water during heating. The findings align with international studies, including research from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and McGill University, which detected billions of micro and nanoplastic particles in tea brewed with nylon and polypropylene tea bags. These plastics break down under heat, releasing microscopic fragments into the tea. While microplastics' health effects remain debated, studies suggest potential risks to the digestive, respiratory, and cardiovascular systems. Given the high consumption of tea, experts recommend returning to loose-leaf brewing or using tea bags with minimal plastic content. Avoiding prolonged exposure to hot water can also reduce

microplastic contamination. However, regulations on microplastic content in food and beverages remain lacking.

Banaei, G., et al. 2024. [Teabag-derived micro/nanoplastics \(true-to-life MNPLs\) as a surrogate for real-life exposure scenarios - ScienceDirect](#). *Chemosphere*, vol. 368, 143736

Hernandez, Laura M., et al. 2019. [Plastic Teabags Release Billions of Microparticles and Nanoparticles into Tea](#). *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 53, no. 21

Cigarette Smoke Exposure in Children Triggers Changes in Genetic Expression

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 12 February 2025

A study led by the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal) has found that children exposed to cigarette smoke at home experience changes in their epigenome, which can alter gene expression and increase susceptibility to diseases in adulthood. Published in *Environment International*, the research analyzed blood samples from 2,695 children across eight European countries, linking DNA methylation changes to household smoking exposure. The findings highlight that secondhand smoke can leave lasting molecular marks, similar to those seen in active smokers or prenatal exposure. Despite stricter smoking regulations in public spaces, homes remain a significant source of children's exposure. In 2004, an estimated 40% of children globally were affected. Researchers emphasize that reducing secondhand smoke exposure requires comprehensive public health policies, as socioeconomic factors and corporate interests complicate efforts in certain households. Additionally, studies warn about third-hand smoke, which lingers on surfaces and persists in indoor environments long after smoking ceases, posing further health risks. The research underscores the urgent need for stronger measures to protect children from tobacco-related harm.

Cosin-Tomas, Marta, et al. 2025. [Association of exposure to second-hand smoke during childhood with blood DNA methylation](#). *Environment International*, vol. 195, 109204

Sleiman, Mohamad, et al. 2014. [Inhalable Constituents of Thirdhand Tobacco Smoke: Chemical Characterization and Health Impact Considerations](#). *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 48, no. 22

La Nina Can't Cool, Earth Experiences Record Heat Again

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 6 February 2025

In January 2025, the Earth's temperature reached a record high despite the onset of La Niña, which typically cools global temperatures. According to the [Copernicus: January 2025 was the warmest on record globally, despite an emerging La Niña](#), this month was 0.09°C warmer than January 2024 and 1.75°C hotter than pre-industrial times. This marks the 18th time in 19 months that global temperatures have neared or exceeded the 1.5°C warming limit set by international agreements. Climate scientist James Hansen warns that global warming is accelerating, with temperatures rising at twice the rate of the previous 40 years. His recent research [Global Warming Has Accelerated: Are the United Nations and the Public Well-Informed?](#) suggests the world will likely surpass 2°C warming by 2045, making the UN's goal of limiting warming below this threshold unrealistic. Greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels remain the primary driver. Arctic temperatures soared, with some areas in Canada reaching 30°C above average, causing unusual ice melt. Scientists fear this warming will disrupt ocean currents, including the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), which is vital for climate stability and marine ecosystems.

F. Technology, Investment and Finance

Learning Lessons from US and Vietnam Government Budget Efficiency

—Rangga Eka Sakti, *Kompas*, 13 February 2025

The Prabowo administration's budget efficiency policy has drawn public scrutiny, echoing similar measures in other countries. While aiming to streamline bureaucracy, concerns arise over potential risks to public services and economic stability. The U.S. experience offers lessons, from Bill Clinton's successful Reinventing Government program in the 1990s to Donald Trump's aggressive budget cuts, including deregulation and the establishment of the Department of Government Efficiency under Elon Musk. Vietnam is also undertaking drastic efficiency measures, planning a 20% public sector job reduction by 2030 to boost economic competitiveness. However, risks include weakened institutional capacity and service disruptions. Critics warn that efficiency efforts must be carefully planned, ensuring transparency and accountability while leveraging technology for sustainable reforms. Lessons from both countries highlight the need for long-term vision, bipartisan support, and a focus on public welfare rather than mere cost-cutting. Unlike private enterprises, governments must balance efficiency with their core mission of serving citizens, ensuring that budget cuts do not undermine essential services or future development.

OJK optimistic of continued positive trend in financial sector in 2025

—Rizka Khaerunnisa and Raka Adji, *AntaraNews*, 11 February 2025

The Financial Services Authority (OJK) remains optimistic about Indonesia's financial sector performance in 2025, despite global uncertainties. OJK Board of Commissioners Chair Mahendra Siregar shared this outlook at the 2025 Annual Meeting of the Financial Service Industry on Tuesday, outlining key projections and policy directions. Bank credit is expected to grow by 9–11%, backed by a 6–8% increase in Third Party Funds. The capital market fundraising target is set at Rp220 trillion (US\$13.4 billion), while insurance, pension fund, and collateral assets are projected to grow by 6–11%. OJK will periodically review these forecasts in line with national economic developments. To maintain stability and support economic growth, OJK is prioritizing policy synergies, investment climate improvements, and regulatory implementation under the Financial Sector Development and Strengthening Law. Key policies focus on enhancing financial sector contributions to government programs, promoting inclusive and sustainable growth, strengthening oversight, and improving consumer protection. These measures align with government strategies to accelerate economic expansion and bolster financial system resilience.

The Prominence of Indonesian Natural Medicines in Foreign Markets

—Mawar Kusuma Wulan, *Kompas*, 9 February 2025

Indonesia's phytopharmaceutical and herbal medicines are gaining global recognition but remain underutilized domestically. Dexa Medica's phytopharmaceuticals, such as Inlacin and Disolf, are prescribed in the Philippines and have been effective in preventing foot amputations in diabetic patients. Similarly, PT Sido Muncul's traditional herbal medicines are in demand in Africa. Despite international success, these medicines are not included in Indonesia's National Health Insurance (JKN) formulary, limiting their domestic use. Dexa Medica's Director of Business Development, Prof. Raymond R. Tjandrawinata, emphasized the need for government support, citing that Indonesian phytopharmaceuticals meet international standards and should be recognized as mainstream medicine. Indonesia imports

95% of pharmaceutical raw materials, primarily from China. Expanding local phytopharmaceutical use could reduce reliance on imports and benefit Indonesian farmers. While global herbal medicine markets thrive—India’s Ayurveda exports reached \$651 million in 2023—Indonesia’s medicinal plant exports remain low. Experts urge stronger government policies to support domestic production and export potential, positioning Indonesian phytopharmaceuticals as a key industry for economic and healthcare growth.

Indonesia prepared for potential impacts of USAID closure: MoFA

—Cindy Frishanti and Resinta Sulistiyandari, *AntaraNews*, 7 February 2025

Indonesia is prepared to handle potential impacts from the closure of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) stated on February 7 in Jakarta. The announcement follows U.S. President Donald Trump’s official decision to shut down USAID on February 3, a move spearheaded by Elon Musk, head of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). MoFA spokesperson Rolliansyah Soemirat noted that Indonesia has yet to receive official details on affected USAID programs, many of which operate under the 2020-2026 Bilateral Development Cooperation Framework. However, he emphasized that Indonesia’s 75-year relationship with the U.S. remains strong and any potential disruptions can be addressed collaboratively. Trump’s decision came after DOGE personnel were denied access to USAID security systems and files, prompting Musk to label the agency a “criminal organization.” Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, acting as USAID director, clarified that programs would not cease entirely. USAID employees worldwide, except for critical staff, have been placed on administrative leave.

Indonesia parliament to vote on new Temasek-like investment arm

—Stefanno Sulaiman, *Reuters*, 4 February 2025

Indonesia’s parliament has approved the establishment of the Daya Anagata Nusantara Investment Management Agency, or Danantara, a state investment body modeled after Singapore’s Temasek. Announced shortly after President Prabowo Subianto took office in October, the agency aims to consolidate state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and optimize investment returns. Danantara will receive an initial capital of 1,000 trillion rupiah (US\$61 billion) and oversee holdings in major state firms, including Bank Mandiri, Bank Rakyat Indonesia, Pertamina, and Telkom Indonesia. These companies have combined assets of US\$600 billion, according to CreditSights. State-Owned Enterprises Minister Erick Thohir said Danantara would help achieve Prabowo’s 8% economic growth target by improving dividend and asset management. The agency will create a “superholding” for SOEs and an investment firm to manage dividends. While analysts see potential benefits such as better funding access and operational efficiency, concerns remain over political interference. CreditSights warned that Danantara’s influence on SOEs’ strategic direction could affect investor confidence. The agency has not commented on these concerns.

G. Human Rights, Democracy and Gender Equality

Let indigenous peoples lead just energy transition

—Prabindra Shakya and Simone Galimberti, *TheJakartaPost*, 11 February 2025

Southeast Asia must prioritize a just and fair transition to a net-zero future, ensuring indigenous communities play a central role in decision-making, experts say. While governments claim progress toward reducing emissions, significant challenges remain, especially in protecting indigenous rights as demand for “transition minerals” like nickel and bauxite rises. Studies show that over half of transition mineral projects and many renewable energy sites are on indigenous lands, often developed without their free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC). In response, indigenous leaders and organizations are pushing for change. A regional conference in Bangkok last September, led by the Right Energy Partnership (REP) and other indigenous networks, resulted in a declaration demanding respect for indigenous women and youth in the energy transition. The declaration urges governments and investors to support indigenous-led renewable energy projects that uphold FPIC principles. Despite challenges, small-scale indigenous energy initiatives in Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia show promise. However, advocates warn that the transition must not only be rapid but also equitable, ensuring no community is left behind.

House slams human rights minister for 100 days of poor performance

—News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 7 February 2025

Several lawmakers have criticized Human Rights Minister Natalius Pigai for his lackluster performance in President Prabowo Subianto’s first 100 days in office, questioning his achievements amid his request for a larger budget. During a House Commission XIII meeting on Wednesday, lawmakers, including Mafirion from the National Awakening Party (PKB) and Siti Aisyah from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), highlighted Pigai’s absence in major rights issues such as the Rempang land conflict and illegal sea barriers in Banten and West Java. Pigai, a former Komnas HAM commissioner, previously sought to triple the ministry’s budget from Rp 64 billion to Rp 20 trillion, a request lawmakers said was not justified by his performance. He defended his role, stating that his ministry lacks authority over legal human rights cases. The criticism comes amid speculation of a cabinet reshuffle, with President Prabowo warning ministers to align with his governance goals. Meanwhile, the government faced backlash over an abrupt policy on subsidized LPG, which led to shortages and public frustration.

Juliana, Hacking the Path to Empowerment of Orang Rimba Women

—Irma Tambunan, *Kompas*, 6 February 2025

It’s a story about Juliana (23) who has made history as the first woman from the Orang Rimba indigenous community in Jambi to earn a university degree. Graduating in December 2024 with a Bachelor of Forestry from Muhammadiyah University of Jambi, her achievement marks a breakthrough in a community where formal education, especially for women, is uncommon. Education has long been undervalued among the Orang Rimba, who prioritize survival amid deforestation and cultural preservation. Girls are often expected to marry young, making Juliana’s journey even more extraordinary. Encouraged by her open-minded parents, she pursued her studies despite financial struggles, funding her daily needs by weaving mats and selling forest products. Juliana’s research documented 39 medicinal plants, highlighting the impact of deforestation on biodiversity. She hopes her education will help empower her people and advocate for forest conservation. Her story follows Mijak Tampung, the only other Orang Rimba to graduate from university. Despite challenges, Juliana remains committed to using her knowledge for the betterment of her community.

Indonesia Considers Amnesty for Imprisoned Papuans

—Meenakshi Ganguly, *HumanRightsWatch*, 4 February 2025

The Indonesian government under President Prabowo Subianto is sending conflicting messages regarding a proposed amnesty for Papuans convicted or charged with supporting the armed secessionist movement in West Papua. The lack of clarity is causing confusion instead of addressing long-standing human rights concerns in the region. A low-intensity conflict has persisted in West Papua since the 1960s, following Indonesia's controversial integration of the province. Indonesian security forces have been accused of human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial killings, with little accountability. In January, Minister Yusril Ihza Mahendra stated that President Prabowo planned to grant amnesty to all Papuans convicted or awaiting trial if they renounced violence. However, a week later, Minister Supratman Andi Agtas contradicted this, stating that the proposed amnesty would not apply to those involved in armed insurgencies. West Papuan political groups remain skeptical. Human rights organizations report 83 Papuans imprisoned for separatism, often for peaceful protests. Critics argue that real progress requires acknowledging historical grievances and addressing systemic injustices rather than limited amnesty measures.

I. Indonesia in Geopolitics

Mulyani warns broader ASEAN impact from Trump's import tariff policy

—Imamatul Silfia and Yashinta Difa, *AntaraNews*, 13 February 2025

Indonesian Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati warned on February 12 that U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's proposed high import tariffs could impact Southeast Asian economies, including Vietnam and Indonesia. Speaking at a parliamentary session in Jakarta, she noted that Trump's protectionist policies, similar to those from his 2017-2021 term, would likely target trade surplus nations. Trump's fiscal strategy is expected to be expansionary, with rising U.S. Treasury yields and a stronger dollar reflecting market expectations of increased government spending and corporate tax cuts. His administration's approach to climate change is also expected to be less aggressive than President Joe Biden's, potentially affecting global efforts to curb carbon emissions. Sri Mulyani highlighted concerns over Trump's push for greater domestic oil production, which could lower international oil prices but disrupt energy markets. She previously addressed these risks in a press conference, emphasizing their implications for global climate commitments and supply chains, including electric vehicles. Indonesia is closely monitoring these developments to mitigate economic uncertainties.

Indonesia focuses on global partnerships for economic growth

— Bayu S and Tegar Nurfitri, *AntaraNews*, 13 February 2025

Indonesia remains committed to fostering international collaboration for sustainable economic growth, Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto said at the World Governments Summit 2025 in Dubai on Feb 12. Speaking at a panel discussion on "The Emergence of Multiple Economic Blocs," Hartarto emphasized Indonesia's economic strength, citing its \$1.4 trillion GDP and 280 million population as key assets for global partnerships. He highlighted ASEAN and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as emerging economic blocs that align with Indonesia's strategic goals. Hartarto noted that rising global tensions have led to the formation of new economic alliances, impacting trade, investment, and geopolitical stability. He stressed ASEAN's role in shielding its members from the U.S.-

China trade war's economic fallout. Indonesia is optimistic about a free trade agreement with the GCC and seeks cooperation in energy, finance, and infrastructure to strengthen its position in global trade and achieve its 8% economic growth target. The session included UAE Minister of Economy Abdulla Bin Touq, Turkish Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek, and Saudi Economy Minister Faisal Alibrahim.

Amid global trade upheaval, Jakarta sticks to China+1 strategy

—Ruth Dea Juwita, *TheJakartaPost*, 12 February 2025

Indonesia is positioning itself as an alternative hub for export-focused factories amid heightened U.S. tariffs on China. However, experts warn that the benefits of the *China+1* strategy are diminishing as global trade shifts. The U.S., under former President Donald Trump, imposed a 10% tariff on Chinese goods, prompting firms to seek manufacturing alternatives. While countries like Vietnam and Indonesia previously benefited, the focus has now expanded to “Made by China” rather than just “Made in China,” affecting Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI). Indonesia hopes to attract Chinese firms seeking to bypass U.S. tariffs, particularly in Batam’s Special Economic Zone. However, researchers argue that Indonesia still lags behind Vietnam in competitiveness and policy efficiency. With Washington tightening trade rules to close tariff loopholes, attracting Chinese investment is becoming more difficult. Analysts suggest Indonesia should diversify its trade by strengthening free-trade agreements with Australia, Canada, and the EU. Meanwhile, intra-Asia trade is growing, positioning Indonesia’s manufacturing sector to serve both export and domestic markets, despite evolving global supply chains.

Indonesia’s Prabowo launches another ‘quick-win priority’ – free health checks

—Resty Woro Yuniar, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 12 February 2025

Indonesia has launched a nationwide free health screening program, a key initiative under President Prabowo Subianto’s administration, aimed at improving preventive healthcare. Announced on February 10, the program provides free annual check-ups for all 280 million Indonesians, costing Rp4.7 trillion (US\$287.3 million) in its first year. Citizens can claim vouchers for screenings at 10,000 public health centers and 15,000 clinics on their birthday or within 30 days after. Health Minister Budi Sadikin stated the initiative targets early detection of chronic diseases, including cancer, stroke, and heart conditions. The government aims to screen 60 million people in the first year, with nearly 17,000 participating on day one. While experts commend the effort, they warn of challenges such as limited access in rural areas, stigma around certain diseases, and strained healthcare resources. The program is expected to ease pressure on the National Health Insurance scheme, which faced a Rp9.56 trillion deficit in 2023. Experts emphasize the need for follow-up treatments and increased healthcare funding to ensure its long-term success.

Leaders of Indonesia and Turkey hold talks on defense and economic ties

—NinieK Karmini and Andi Jatmiko, *APNews*, 12 February 2025

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto on Wednesday in Bogor to strengthen economic and defense ties between the two Muslim-majority nations. The visit marked Erdogan’s second stop on a four-day tour, which also includes Malaysia and Pakistan. The leaders held the first High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council summit, established after the 2022 G20 Summit in Bali, discussing regional and global issues, particularly the war in Gaza. Both nations reaffirmed their support for a cease-fire and a two-state solution. Erdogan praised Indonesia’s firm stance on Palestine and called for Israel to finance Gaza’s reconstruction, estimating war damages at nearly \$100 billion.

The meeting resulted in a dozen agreements covering trade, investment, education, energy, agriculture, health, and religious services. A key deal was signed for joint development of a Baykar combat-drone factory in Indonesia, and Erdogan pledged investment in Indonesia's new capital on Borneo. Erdogan and Subianto have strengthened ties since their previous meeting in Ankara last July. Erdogan will continue his tour in Pakistan on February 12.