



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

Indonesia targets new fish markets to counter US tariff threat

—Maria Cicilia and Resinta Sulistiyandari, *AntaraNews*, 15 July 2025

Indonesia must diversify its fisheries export markets to mitigate the impact of the United States' 32% reciprocal tariff policy, Marine Affairs and Fisheries Minister Sakti Wahyu Trenggono said. Although the US remains Indonesia's largest fishery export destination,

Trenggono urged exploration of alternative markets like Europe and China to tap into the sector's estimated US\$200 billion potential—far exceeding the current US\$5.5 billion in annual exports. He emphasized that effective, equitable, and sustainable marine spatial planning is crucial to unlocking the maritime economy, preventing land-sea spatial conflicts, and ensuring adaptive development. Meanwhile, Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto confirmed that the tariff hike, initially announced by President Trump to take effect on August 1, has been postponed following negotiations in Washington, D.C., with U.S. officials. The delay provides a window for further talks over the next three weeks to finalize Indonesia's proposal. The government continues promoting Indonesian fishery products abroad, including at trade expos like the recent one in Tokyo.

Australia Fines Indonesian Sea Cucumber Poachers

—News, *MarineLink*, 14 July 2025

Nineteen Indonesian nationals pleaded guilty in Darwin Local Court on 8 July 2025 to illegally fishing in Australian waters, following the interception of one vessel on 22 June in Cobourg Marine Park and two others on 25 June near Maningrida, Northern Territory. Australian Border Force (ABF) detained the crews, seized and destroyed the vessels at sea, and confiscated 130 kg of sea cucumber, 390 kg of salt, and various fishing tools. The fishermen were charged under the Fisheries Management Act 1991, with vessel masters fined A\$6,000 each, 15 crew members fined A\$3,500, and one repeat offender fined A\$4,000—all due within 28 days or risk imprisonment. The ABF will deport all offenders to Indonesia promptly. Australia continues collaborating with the Indonesian Government to combat illegal fishing at its source through community outreach, educational materials, social media, and direct engagement with fishers.

Sharks didn't rebound—so Mark Erdmann is putting them back

—Rhett Ayers Butler, *Mongabay*, 13 July 2025

For over 30 years, marine biologist and conservationist Mark Erdmann has led transformative marine protection efforts in Indonesia, documenting over 220 species and championing community-driven conservation. Beginning his journey in 1991 in South Sulawesi, Erdmann swiftly moved from research to activism after witnessing destructive practices like bomb fishing and shark finning. As Vice President of Asia-Pacific Marine Programs at Conservation International and now Executive Director of ReShark, he played a key role in establishing community-governed marine protected areas in Raja Ampat, resulting in ecological revival and booming eco-tourism. However, rising threats such as over-tourism, governance centralization, and a resurgence of nickel mining challenge these gains. Public backlash, fueled by a viral Greenpeace report, recently prompted the president to revoke four mining permits, highlighting strong local commitment to marine protection. Erdmann's ReShark initiative is pioneering shark rewilding using acoustic tracking, with global expansion underway. Despite setbacks, he remains hopeful, citing resilient reefs and Indonesia's passionate new generation of conservationists as reasons for optimism.

RI Govt, fisheries migrant workers' union discuss crew protection

—Katriana, *AntaraNews*, 9 July 2025

Minister for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (P2MI) Abdul Kadir Karding met with labor union representatives from the fisheries sector to address the urgent need for better protection of Indonesian migrant ship crew members, many of whom work abroad illegally and face high risks, including violence and human trafficking. Karding revealed that although only around 2,000 ship crew members are officially documented, tens of thousands

likely work overseas without oversight. The minister urged the formation of a joint working group involving government, unions, and civil society to map issues and develop solutions. He emphasized legal coordination between the Ministry of Transportation and P2MI following a Constitutional Court ruling that ship crews are classified as migrant workers. Trade union leader Jumhur Hidayat called for equal protection for fishermen at home and abroad and highlighted lax supervision of recruitment companies and the disappearance of monitoring tools like the Overseas Worker Card. Both parties agreed on the need for tighter regulation and cross-sector collaboration to ensure worker safety and prevent trafficking.

Listings of Indonesian islands renew fears of privatization for coastal communities

—Basten Gokkon, *Mongabay*, 8 July 2025

A Canada-based website's listing of Indonesian islands for sale has sparked renewed fears over island privatization and its impact on local communities, as several islands in the Anambas archipelago, Riau Islands, appeared on [Privateislandsonline.com](https://privateislandsonline.com) in June 2025. The Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries denied the legality of the listings, citing national laws that prohibit foreign ownership, though admitting that commercial use with permits is allowed within limits. Minister Nusron Wahid clarified that foreign entities may only obtain land-use rights. Environmentalists and NGOs, including KIARA, warn that such privatization—through investment schemes or land-use rights—often excludes fishers from traditional fishing grounds and may lead to social conflict. As of June 2025, KIARA recorded 254 islands privatized for tourism, mining, aquaculture, and other uses. Critics argue that government efforts to boost non-tax revenue by promoting small-island investment have opened loopholes enabling de facto privatization, especially as many islands remain unmapped and poorly monitored. Activists urge stronger oversight to prevent loss of sovereignty and protect fisherfolk's access to vital coastal resources.

B. Forests and Land Use

EU eases deforestation rules: Indonesian Trade Minister

—Fathur Rochman and Nabil Ihsan, *AntaraNews*, 13 July 2025

The European Union has eased its enforcement stance on the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) toward Indonesia as both parties near the completion of the Indonesia-EU Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IEU-CEPA), Trade Minister Budi Santoso announced during President Prabowo Subianto's state visit to Belgium. Speaking in Brussels, Santoso said the EU's shift reflects its intention to establish a long-term partnership with Indonesia. The prolonged negotiations were driven by complex bargaining dynamics but have now reached the final stage. Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto confirmed that the agreement's substance is finalized, with President Prabowo expected to officially announce the deal's completion soon. Once enacted, the IEU-CEPA will offer Indonesia greater access to European markets and diversified export opportunities, providing a crucial alternative to the U.S. market. Santoso highlighted the EU's global import value of US\$6.6 trillion, double that of the United States, underscoring the strategic importance of this agreement for Indonesia's trade expansion.

Coal Mining in the Unmul Educational Forest: Is There Corporate Involvement?

—Sucipto, *Kompas*, 12 July 2025

Nearly three months after the illegal mining and encroachment of Mulawarman University's Special Purpose Forest Area (KHDTK) in Samarinda, East Kalimantan, police have named one suspect, identified as R, who was arrested on July 4. R is accused of financing and leading unauthorized coal mining on 3.48 hectares of the 299-hectare educational forest without the required mining or forest utilization permits. Investigations reveal R used nearby company haul roads and operated five excavators, some allegedly linked to a family-run business. Authorities, including the Ministry of Forestry's law enforcement unit (Gakkum), are probing further for possible corporate involvement. The KHDTK, designated in 2020, is vital for forestry education and wildlife habitat and plays a critical ecological role in Samarinda. Mulawarman University and legal experts are calling for a full investigation into environmental and economic losses and stress that such activities cannot be carried out by a single individual. They urge authorities to determine whether nearby companies facilitated or benefited from the mining operations.

Forest Exploitation Permits on Sipora Island Deemed to Ignore Small Islands Law

—Yola Sastra, *Kompas*, 11 July 2025

Civil society organizations, including Walhi and the Citra Mandiri Mentawai Foundation, are urging the Indonesian government to halt the forest exploitation plan by PT Sumber Permata Sipora (SPS), which holds a 20,706-hectare permit—over one-third of Sipora Island, West Sumatra. Critics argue the permit violates Law No. 27/2007 on Coastal and Small Island Management, as Sipora, a 615 sq km island, is ecologically vulnerable and home to Indigenous communities. Activists highlighted flawed documents, including misidentified maps and conflicting coordinates, and noted that the concession overlaps with 23,000 hectares of customary forest. They warn the exploitation could worsen disasters like recent floods affecting over 800 families, and contradict Indonesia's climate commitments. Walhi and others demand the island be treated as a conservation zone, not a timber production site. PT SPS and government officials claim operations are lawful and still under environmental review, while locals and experts insist the project undermines Indigenous rights and the fragile ecosystem of small islands.

Forest and land fires in the Lake Toba area continue to recur without a solution

—Nikson Sinaga, *Kompas*, 10 July 2025

Forest and land fires have ravaged multiple areas around Lake Toba, North Sumatra, including Tele and Pusuk Buhit in Samosir, Tongging in Karo, and Sibaganding in Simalungun, destroying over 180 hectares and threatening endemic species, tourism, and residential areas. The fires, recurring annually during the dry season, have disrupted tourism and endangered the Lake Toba ecosystem, which is part of the UNESCO Global Geopark. Environmental activists and experts blame land burning practices, expanding forest encroachment, and lack of enforcement. Activist Wilmar Eliazer Simandjorang urged Governor Bobby Nasution to take direct action, including vegetation replacement, fire hydrant systems, and aerial firefighting support. Authorities face difficulties due to steep terrain and limited access. Fires near geosites such as Tele, Silalahi, and Pusuk Buhit jeopardize the area's re-evaluation by UNESCO. The North Sumatra Environmental Agency confirmed the fires began in early July and emphasized the urgent need for coordinated prevention and response, as the area is a national strategic tourism and conservation zone.

Repossession of Forest Areas Must Not Compromise Residents' Basic Educational Rights

—Norbertus Arya Dwiangga Martiar, Dian Dewi Purnamasari, *Kompas*, 9 July 2025

Since its formation in February 2025, Indonesia's Forest Area Enforcement Task Force (Satgas PKH) has reclaimed 2.09 million hectares of illegally occupied industrial and conservation forests, including 833,413 hectares handed over to state-owned PT Agrinas Palma Nusantara. The operation spans 21 provinces and targets 3 million hectares by August 2025. Major recoveries include Tesso Nilo and Kerinci Seblat National Parks, but the efforts face obstacles like forged land certificates, encroachment, and community resistance. In Tesso Nilo alone, over 1,700 illegal land titles were found, with 400 already revoked. Around 40,000 residents face relocation, impacting dozens of schools and 1,000 students, sparking human rights concerns. Officials stress criminal law is a last resort, while environmental activists call for urgent reforestation and protection. The Ministry of Law and Human Rights emphasized education access must be safeguarded during enforcement. The task force's unprecedented scale and integration of defense, legal, and agrarian agencies reflect a coordinated state effort to restore forest governance and uphold conservation laws.

C. Biodiversity, Conservation and Protected Area

Limestone mine endangers environment, livelihoods on Maluku's Kei Besar Island

—Theresia Sufa, *The Jakarta Post*, 15 July 2025

Residents of Kei Besar Island in Southeast Maluku are facing environmental degradation and economic hardship due to limestone mining that began in August 2024, reportedly under a national strategic project. Local resident Maimuna Renhoran said the quarry has caused flooding, landslides, and marine sedimentation, disrupting the island's hydrological balance and forcing fishers to travel farther offshore—raising fuel costs fivefold. Over 90 hectares, including sacred sites and clean water sources, have been mined, with land leased under unfair terms and unpaid fees. The company also failed to fulfill promises, such as military recruitment aid. Advocacy group AMAN reports the case is part of a broader national crisis, with 687 land conflicts involving over 27 million acres of customary land and nearly 1,000 indigenous people arrested over the past decade. Amid growing concerns, the House of Representatives has pledged to fast-track the long-delayed Indigenous Rights Bill, which aims to legally recognize indigenous land and resources. As of 2024, only 4.9 million of the 30 million hectares claimed by Indigenous groups have formal state recognition.

Indonesia Secures Major Opportunity to Safeguard its Rich Biodiversity and Natural Resources

—Nabilla Rahmani, *UNDP*, 9 July 2025

Indonesia has secured funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for two major biodiversity projects—ENABLE and SPARE—marking a shift toward inclusive, landscape-based, and spatial planning conservation approaches. Endorsed at the recent GEF Council Meeting, these projects will strengthen protected area management, forest governance, and biodiversity protection, especially for endangered species like the Sumatran tiger and Bornean orangutan. ENABLE will improve conservation in three national parks, covering over 3 million hectares, benefiting 2,000 people through sustainable livelihoods. SPARE will enhance spatial forest planning and governance, restoring 4,000 hectares, preventing the loss of 25,000 hectares of high conservation value forest, and avoiding nearly 3 million metric tons of CO₂ emissions. With \$12.7 million in GEF funding, both projects are expected to attract sevenfold additional investment and align with the Kunming-Montreal Global

Biodiversity Framework and Indonesia's 2025–2045 Biodiversity Plan. The initiatives involve UNDP, local communities, and private sectors, emphasizing inclusive, science-based conservation and positioning Indonesia as a global leader in nature-positive development.

Study urges legal protection for Sulawesi's endangered bear cuscus amid habitat loss

—Basten Gokkon, *Mongabay*, 3 July 2025

A new study published in *Oryx* has revealed the first habitat suitability model for the endangered bear cuscus (*Ailurops ursinus*) in South Sulawesi, highlighting the species' fragmented and rapidly shrinking range due to poaching and mining. Once protected by law, the bear cuscus was dropped from Indonesia's protected species list in 2018, despite increasing threats and critical habitat loss—only 12,119 hectares out of 143,682 studied remain suitable for the marsupial. The study, led by researchers from Gadjah Mada University, recorded 209 bear cuscus encounters across key areas like Bantimurung Bulusaraung National Park. Mining expansion, especially limestone and marble extraction, surged sixfold between 2005–2019, while deforestation wiped out 12.5% of forests in southern South Sulawesi since 2000. The researchers and experts call for urgent legal protection, habitat connectivity, and public awareness campaigns. They also stress the bear cuscus's cultural, ecological, and scientific significance, suggesting it could serve as a flagship species to promote conservation. Local authorities have responded positively but concrete action is still awaited.

Nugraha, R., & Marlina, S. N. (2025). [A species under siege: modelling habitat suitability for the bear cuscus *Ailurops ursinus* in South Sulawesi](#). *Oryx*, 1-12.

D. Climate Change, Energy and Mining

Indonesia to champion climate finance, leadership at COP30

—Arie Novarina, *AntaraNews*, 15 July 2025

Indonesia will focus on climate finance and global leadership for climate resilience at the 30th UN Climate Change Conference (COP30) in Brazil this November, according to Deputy Minister of Environment Diaz Hendropriyono. In a Jakarta briefing on July 14, Diaz emphasized the urgency of developed nations fulfilling their US\$100 billion annual climate finance pledge, noting that only US\$67 billion had materialized by 2022. He stated that Indonesia sees this as a sign of persistent climate injustice. As part of the Indonesian delegation, representatives from multiple ministries will contribute to advancing national and global climate goals across 12 key agenda items, including loss and damage, food security, carbon markets, and indigenous rights. Indonesia is preparing a National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and actively advocating for fairer benefit-sharing under Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement. Diaz stressed that Indonesia's role is not only to demand fair climate funding but also to demonstrate leadership in transitioning toward a low-emissions, climate-resilient future, urging strong cross-ministerial collaboration to amplify Indonesia's voice globally.

Heat Waves, Melting Glaciers, and the Rise of Ancient Pathogens

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 11 July 2025

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) warns that extreme heatwaves driven by climate change are endangering public health globally, especially among the elderly, and

accelerating glacier melt, which could revive ancient pathogens and release toxic chemicals. The [Frontiers 2025 report](#), released July 10, outlines how annual heat-related deaths among seniors have surged by 85% since the 1990s, as rising urban temperatures, air pollution, and coastal flooding disproportionately affect aging populations. The report also highlights the growing threat of “zombie microbes” from melting permafrost, antimicrobial resistance, and the remobilization of long-banned toxic chemicals during floods. Heatwaves in Europe between June and early July saw temperatures soar above 46°C and an estimated 2,300 deaths. UNEP calls for urgent action through urban greening, inclusive disaster planning, improved data access, and reducing emissions, including black carbon from fires and diesel. The report also advocates removing aging dams to restore river ecosystems and mitigating risks to communities and biodiversity. UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen emphasized that solutions exist to protect vulnerable populations and ecosystems if action is taken now.

Why is July Rain a Signal of Climate Change?

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 11 July 2025

Jakarta and its surrounding areas experienced the largest flood of the dry season in early July 2025, impacting 62 neighborhood units across 17 sub-districts, with similar events in South Tangerang, Lombok, and Bali, causing multiple fatalities. Heavy rainfall exceeding 100 mm per day—classified as extreme—was recorded in Bogor and several other regions, despite July typically being the driest month. BMKG attributed this anomaly to weakened Australian monsoon winds, unusually warm seas, and atmospheric phenomena like the Quasi-Biennial Oscillation and Madden-Julian Oscillation, all exacerbated by climate change. Only 30% of Indonesia had entered the dry season by late June, far below the climatological norm of 64%. The IPCC and UNEP warn that such extremes—including floods in Texas and deadly heatwaves in Europe—are global signs of a climate crisis. With rising sea and air temperatures fueling extreme weather, scientists urge urgent mitigation through emission cuts and deforestation control, alongside adaptation strategies like resilient urban planning, public health protection, and climate literacy for vulnerable populations.

Melting Atlantic Ice Changes Monsoon and Rain Patterns in Indonesia

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 10 July 2025

Rapid Arctic ice melt due to global warming is intensifying the Indo-Australian monsoon, making northern Australia and nearby regions wetter while causing the Northern Hemisphere’s rainy seasons to weaken, leading to drier conditions across Southeast Asia, including parts of Indonesia. This conclusion comes from a study led by Professor Michael Bird of James Cook University, based on 150,000-year-old pollen records from lagoon core samples in Northern Australia. The [research](#) links increased rainfall with historical “Heinrich events”—massive freshwater influxes into the Atlantic from melting polar ice. The findings suggest that similar climate shifts could intensify due to the weakening Gulf Stream. A related study in *Quaternary Science Reviews* shows that monsoon rainfall patterns are historically tied to shifting coastlines and sea levels, affecting ecosystems in both Australia and East Asia. BMKG projections also indicate that Java, Bali, and parts of Indonesia will likely become drier by 2100. Experts warn that this emerging climate pattern is not an anomaly but a consequence of accelerating global warming.

Bali Challenges Itself to Achieve Net Zero Emissions by 2045

—Ni Kadek Trisna Cintya Dewi, *TempoNews*, 16 July 2025

The Bali Provincial Government has set an ambitious target to achieve Net Zero Emissions (NZE) by 2045—five years ahead of Indonesia’s national goal—through a comprehensive

clean energy roadmap developed with the Institute for Essential Services Reform (IESR). Launched on July 15, 2025, the Bali NZE 2045 Electricity Roadmap outlines a four-phase transition to 100% renewable electricity, balancing short-term reliance on gas-fired plants to address surging power demand driven by tourism and economic growth. Despite challenges like blackouts and energy insecurity, Bali plans to utilize its vast renewable energy potential—estimated at 22 GW, mostly from solar, wind, and bioenergy—to meet projected 2045 electricity needs of 44.71 TWh. The roadmap includes \$5.8 billion in early investments (2025–2029) and up to \$34.9 billion by 2045, aiming to reduce millions of tons of CO₂. Officials and experts emphasized policy consistency and inclusivity, ensuring energy transition benefits all, particularly women. The UK has expressed ongoing support, aligning with its broader strategic partnership with Indonesia.

Green Energy Acceleration in 10 Years: Ambitions, Obstacles, and Hopes

—Aditya Putra Perdana, *Kompas*, 12 July 2025

President Prabowo Subianto's ambitious target for Indonesia to achieve 100 percent renewable energy within 10–15 years signals a bold acceleration in the country's green energy transition, despite major challenges. Speaking alongside Brazilian President Lula da Silva in Brasília on July 9, Prabowo highlighted plans to adopt Brazil's bioethanol model and send technical teams for knowledge exchange. Currently, renewable energy contributes only 14.7% to Indonesia's energy mix—well below the 23% target for 2025. Experts warn that significant investment, regulatory reform, and cross-sectoral coordination are needed to overcome technological and fossil fuel dependence. The Energy Ministry estimates 3,600 GW in renewable potential, mostly solar. Recent efforts include inaugurating 55 projects across 15 provinces, combining solar and geothermal capacity, and preparing Indonesia's Second Nationally Determined Contribution (SNDC) for stronger climate targets. Economists view Prabowo's pledge as a hopeful shift toward energy resilience and green industrialization, but stress that land acquisition, regulatory bottlenecks, and market alignment remain key obstacles to delivering a just and effective energy transition.

Indonesia tests shows blood mercury rising at ground zero of world energy transition

—Rabul Sawal, *Mongabay*, 9 July 2025

Nearly half of residents tested near Indonesia's Weda Bay Industrial Estate (IWIP) in Halmahera were found to have unsafe levels of mercury and one-third had harmful arsenic exposure, raising alarm over the long-term health and environmental impact of the nickel industry. A [joint study by Tadulako University and NGO Nexus3](#) found 47% of blood samples exceeded safe mercury thresholds, while 32% surpassed arsenic limits. Fish from nearby waters also showed dangerously high arsenic concentrations, with some samples containing up to 20 times more than levels recorded in 2007. IWIP, established by Chinese firms in 2018, processes 30,000 metric tons of nickel ore annually and powers its operations with coal. Despite evidence of pollution and ecosystem degradation, some local officials disputed the findings, citing separate seawater tests. Critics, including Jatam, condemned the government's defensive stance and urged urgent health monitoring and environmental enforcement. Researchers warn that heavy metal contamination has entered the food chain, with mangrove loss and declining fisheries further jeopardizing livelihoods and public safety in the region.

Indonesian civil society urges probe after payout for mine recovery that never happened

—Muhubar Sobary Ardan, *Mongabay*, 9 July 2025

The prosecution of Amrullah, former head of East Kalimantan's mining agency, may expose systemic misuse of environmental restoration funds in Indonesia's top coal-producing province, experts warn. Charged over his role in disbursing reclamation guarantees to coal miner CV Arjuna without evidence of rehabilitation, Amrullah allegedly caused state losses of 15.7 billion rupiah (\$967,000) and enabled severe environmental damage in Makroman village. The case—believed to be the first involving corruption of reclamation funds in East Kalimantan—comes amid rising concern over the 1,735 abandoned mining pits in the province, many near homes, which have caused at least 39 deaths, mostly children. Environmental lawyer Muhammad Muhdar and NGO Jatam urge a full audit, citing the wider dangers of unrehabilitated mines, from water pollution to fatal accidents. Satellite data suggest over 3,000 abandoned pits exist nationwide. The scandal highlights longstanding governance failures, with reports of expired or fake bank guarantees and a lack of enforcement against noncompliant miners. A 2021 flood disaster linked to deforestation and mining further underscores the urgent need for reform.

Five Years of UK-Indonesia Celebrating the Clean Energy "Mentari"

—Dionisius Reynaldo Triwibowo, *Kompas*, 3 July 2025

The UK-Indonesia Mentari Program, aimed at promoting a low-carbon energy transition, has brought transformative change to Mata Redi and Mata Woga villages in Central Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara, over the past five years. Once completely without electricity, 238 families now access solar power via a 95 kWp mini-grid, illuminating homes, health posts, schools, and microenterprises. This has improved livelihoods, education, and gender roles—many solar operators are now trained women. Residents like Jeny Rambu Leku and teacher Piras Rija Wada shared how electricity enabled business growth and better learning conditions. Launched in 2020, Mentari addresses not only energy poverty but also entrenched social challenges, including poverty, gender inequality, and limited education. The program includes financial training, inclusive development, and has helped unlock IDR 210 billion in clean energy investment through a Viability Gap Fund. UK Deputy Ambassador Matthew Downing emphasized the importance of aligning clean energy efforts with local traditions and community empowerment. Indonesia's Energy Ministry plans to expand such collaborations to accelerate electrification in Eastern Indonesia.

E. Pollution, Waste and Disaster

Residents Request Involvement in Monitoring the Rorotan RDF Plant

—Raynard Kristian Bonanio Pardede, *Kompas*, 15 July 2025

Since its launch in February, Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) waste processing facility in Rorotan, North Jakarta, has drawn resident complaints over smoke, odor, and health issues affecting 18 neighborhood units in Jakarta Garden City housing. Concerns peaked with reports of respiratory and eye problems, falling property values, and paper fragments from the plant's emissions, prompting temporary closure and protests. In response, Jakarta's Environmental Agency installed emission control systems—deodorizers, baghouse filters, wet scrubbers, and activated carbon units—to reduce pollution. An agreement was reached with residents to reopen the facility, emphasizing transparency, health safeguards, and regular monitoring. The plant is expected to resume operations in August 2025, gradually increasing capacity to process 2,500 tons of wet waste daily, potentially serving neighboring Bekasi as well. Officials

frame RDF Rorotan as part of Jakarta's modern, eco-friendly waste strategy, complementing existing RDF operations at Bantargebang. Residents support the initiative conditionally, demanding that environmental and public health standards be strictly enforced to prevent further disruption.

Toxic Chemicals, the Hidden Dangers of Plastic

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 13 July 2025

A groundbreaking study published by *Nature* on July 9, reveals that plastic products contain over 16,000 chemical compounds, with more than 4,200 identified as hazardous to human health and the environment. Led by Laura Monclús from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, the research—[Mapping the chemical complexity of plastics](#)—exposes the lack of transparency in the global plastics industry, long shielded by patents and lax regulation. These toxic substances, including PFAS, flame retardants, and hormone-disrupting agents, are found in everyday items such as food packaging, toys, and medical devices. Alarming, harmful micro-and nanoplastics are now detected in human blood, lungs, and placentas. Scientists call for urgent reform: halting the use of toxic additives, enforcing full chemical disclosure, and creating safer, simpler plastic formulas. With negotiations on a global plastic treaty scheduled for August in Switzerland under UNEP, researchers urge governments to prioritize safety in plastic production, not just recycling. Consumers are also advised to avoid heating food in plastic and reduce single-use plastic reliance.

The Rugged Path of Muara Badak Blood Clam Fishermen to Fight for Environmental Rights

—Sucipto, *Kompas*, 13 July 2025

Nearly 300 blood cockle farmers in Muara Badak, East Kalimantan, suffered a devastating crop failure in December 2024, with estimated losses reaching Rp 69 billion. Residents suspect environmental pollution from oil and gas company PT Pertamina Hulu Sanga-Sanga (PHSS) as the cause, citing repeated failures to restore cultivation despite re-seeding attempts. The community, reliant on this livelihood, protested in February and later filed a formal complaint with the East Kalimantan Regional Police in June. Four residents were summoned by police over the protest but not yet investigated, prompting accusations of criminalization and legal intimidation. The Coalition for the Care of Blood Clam Fishermen has requested legal protection from the Environment Ministry. PT PHSS denied wrongdoing, stating its operations comply with environmental standards and regulations. The company acknowledged the farmers' hardship and claimed to have provided support alongside the local government. The case has spotlighted tensions between industrial development and community environmental rights in resource-rich but ecologically vulnerable coastal regions.

Indonesia's fight to clean up the Citarum, the 'world's most polluted river'

—DPA, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 12 July 2025

Citarum River, once a vital water source for nearly 30 million people in West Java, remains one of the world's most polluted rivers despite a seven-year clean-up campaign launched in 2018. Decades of untreated industrial waste from over 2,700 factories, along with household rubbish and imported plastic waste from Europe, have turned the 290km river into a toxic dump, with hazardous chemicals, plastic, and garbage choking the waterway. While initiatives under former President Joko Widodo improved water quality through new sewage plants, activists say illegal dumping by factories and lack of proper waste management persist. Local residents, forced to rely on bottled water, still witness mountains of plastic clogging the river. Similar pollution plagues Bali and other Southeast Asian tourist hotspots, driven by poor

infrastructure, overpopulation, and weak regulations. Environmentalists warn that superficial clean-ups are not enough—without addressing root causes like industrial regulation, public education, and sustainable waste systems, the Citarum and Indonesia's broader waste crisis will worsen, threatening ecosystems and public health.

Not Our Trash: Indonesia's Struggle with World's Plastic Waste

—Primagung Dary Riliananda and Garry Lotulung, *FairPlanet*, 9 July 2025

Indonesia is facing a mounting environmental and public health crisis due to the unchecked influx of imported waste, particularly plastic, after China banned foreign waste in 2018. East Java villages like Gedangrowo, Bangun, and Pagak have become dumping grounds for imported trash—much of it from Europe, Australia, and Japan—processed first by local paper mills and later dried and sorted in residential areas. The plastic residue is not only contaminating water sources like the Brantas River but is also burned as fuel in tofu and limestone industries, releasing toxic chemicals into the air and food. Residents suffer from worsening respiratory illnesses, and studies confirm high levels of microplastics and dioxins in local food and rivers. Despite regulations capping plastic contamination at 2% in imported waste, enforcement remains weak, with actual contamination levels reaching up to 35%. Activists and environmental groups urge stronger oversight and international accountability, while grassroots voices like teen activist Aeshnina Azzahra Aqilani demand exporting countries take responsibility for their waste. In response, the Indonesian government announced a ban on plastic scrap imports starting January 2025.

F. Technology, Investment and Finance

Indonesia to press on with US trade talks despite 32% tariff: 'very optimistic'

—Resty Woro Yuniar, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 11 July 2025

Indonesia has vowed to continue trade negotiations with the U.S. despite President Donald Trump's decision to impose 32% tariffs on Indonesian exports starting August 1, a move Jakarta had hoped to avert through pledges to purchase up to US\$34 billion in U.S. goods and greater cooperation on critical minerals. While Indonesia lacks strong leverage, Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto is leading direct talks in Washington, backed by new energy and agricultural deals with U.S. firms. Trump has left room for tariff reduction if Indonesia establishes manufacturing in the U.S. or if bilateral ties strengthen. Analysts warn Indonesia's bargaining power is limited, but commend its diplomatic efforts to seek exemptions or trade carve-outs. Meanwhile, President Prabowo Subianto is intensifying outreach to Brics and Gulf countries, urging them to absorb Indonesian exports and proposing new South-South trade compacts. However, experts note that Brics nations cannot easily replace U.S. markets in the short term due to differences in industrial demand, though long-term diversification may boost Indonesia's resilience.

Chinese tycoons drive Indonesia's aluminium boom, echoing nickel success

—Bloomberg, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 10 July 2025

Chinese investors are rapidly transforming Indonesia's aluminium sector, pouring billions into smelters and refineries amid production curbs in China, sparking comparisons to Indonesia's meteoric rise in global nickel production. Major firms like Tsingshan Holding and China Hongqiao are leading the charge, with Goldman Sachs projecting Indonesia's aluminium

output could increase fivefold by 2030. Three new alumina refineries will begin operations this year, with more underway, backed by cheap coal power and labor. The 2023 bauxite export ban under former President Jokowi, now upheld by President Prabowo, is fueling this downstream push aimed at boosting jobs and state revenue. Analysts warn, however, of challenges including aluminium's energy intensity, unstable prices, and questions over power supply. Critics also point to the environmental and social fallout from the nickel boom. Yet Chinese firms remain undeterred, with some relocating entire plants and financing local ventures. If momentum holds, Indonesia could soon become a top global aluminium producer, reshaping international markets much as it did with nickel.

Indonesian Government Promises Ease of Doing Business

—Aris Prasetyo, *Kompas*, 3 July 2025

At the 9th ASEAN Conference in Singapore on July 3, 2025, Indonesia reaffirmed its commitment to improving investment conditions by offering streamlined licensing processes and reducing bureaucratic barriers to attract foreign investors. Deputy Minister Tirta Nugraha Mursitama from the Ministry of Investment and Downstreaming emphasized the government's responsiveness to investors' complaints, promising faster permit issuance aligned with regulations. The government also plans to promote industrial zones based on investor needs, such as data centers in Batam and health tourism in Sanur. Investment leaders stressed that law enforcement and regulatory consistency remain crucial, warning that frequent policy changes undermine investor confidence. Indonesia's strategic priorities include downstream industries, renewable energy, and digital infrastructure. With foreign direct investment reaching Rp 230.4 trillion in Q1 2025, the metal industry led the sectoral breakdown. Singaporean firm Sembcorp highlighted its renewable energy investments in Nusantara's new capital, reflecting broader interest in energy transition projects. Indonesia's rich natural resources and growing middle class continue to position it as a key investment destination in Southeast Asia.

Danantara and Saudi Arabian Companies Bring in IDR 162 Trillion in Green Energy Investment

—Dimas Waraditya Nugraha, *Kompas*, 3 July 2025

Indonesia's Investment Management Agency, Danantara, signed a memorandum of understanding with Saudi Arabia's ACWA Power in Jeddah on July 2, 2025, to accelerate renewable energy development in Indonesia, targeting up to US\$10 billion in funding. Coinciding with President Prabowo Subianto's visit to Saudi Arabia, the partnership focuses on green hydrogen, combined cycle gas turbines, and desalination projects. Danantara CEO Rosan Roeslani said the collaboration supports Indonesia's renewable energy mix targets of 34% by 2034 and 87% by 2060, while enabling expertise transfer and enhancing energy resilience. ACWA Power also signed a separate deal with PT Pertamina to jointly develop a 500 MW gas power plant, green hydrogen projects, and new power infrastructure. Pertamina President Director Simon Mantiri reaffirmed a dual strategy of energy security and low-carbon transition. Danantara also emphasized supply chain stability as critical for project success. Additional MoUs include an \$800 million petrochemical investment with PT Chandra Asri and cooperation with French miner Eramet to strengthen Indonesia's EV battery supply chain.

G. Human Rights, Indigenous People and Gender Equality

Burning Land and Moving, Ways of Farming by Dayak People Who Are Pressured by Time

—Sucipto, *Kompas*, 4 July 2025

The Dayak Deah community in Sekuan Makmur Village, East Kalimantan, continues practicing traditional *manduk* (land burning) as a crucial part of their upland rice farming cycle, despite growing pressure from state regulations and palm oil expansion. The slash-and-burn method, followed by *menugal* (planting) and harvest rituals, enriches the poor soil of Kalimantan and sustains families year-round without chemical inputs. To prevent wildfires, locals apply *besiat*, a firebreak technique that has long safeguarded surrounding forests. However, shifting cultivation is increasingly threatened by plantation permits encroaching on ancestral lands and by government bans on land burning under Presidential Instruction No. 11/2015. These restrictions often clash with constitutional protections for Indigenous communities and their customary rights. Farmers like Jumadi and Linus explain that burning is the only viable and effective farming method without alternatives. Meanwhile, their land—unrecognized by formal titles—is being claimed for industrial agriculture, risking the erosion of cultural practices and food sovereignty that have persisted for generations in Kalimantan's interior.

Unchecked gadget use sparking violence against women: minister

—Asep Firmansyah and Mecca Yumna, *AntaraNews*, 10 July 2025

Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Minister Arifah Fauzi warned that the unregulated use of gadgets and social media is a major contributor to the rise in sexual violence against women and children in Indonesia. As of June 14, 2025, 11,800 cases were reported, escalating to 13,000 by July 7—an alarming 2,000-case surge in just two weeks, with sexual violence being the most dominant. Fauzi cited poor parenting, family issues, and irresponsible gadget use as key causes. She emphasized that preventing such violence requires collective action across ministries, institutions, and the public, echoing President Prabowo's call for collaboration. The government plans to revise Presidential Instruction No. 5/2014 to better integrate prevention, law enforcement, and rehabilitation efforts. Coordinating Minister for Human Development and Culture Pratikno supported this, noting that many overlapping programs across sectors must be unified into a cohesive national initiative. The integrated strategy aims to provide comprehensive protection for women and children and ensure a more effective national response to violence.

Govt stresses commitment to ending violence against women

—Anita Permata Dewi and Resinta Sulistiyandari, *AntaraNews*, 4 July 2025

At the National Consultation Forum for the Final Review of the ASEAN Regional Action Plan on the Elimination of Violence against Women (RPA on EVAW), Indonesia reaffirmed its commitment to combating all forms of violence against women and children. Deputy Minister Desy Andriani emphasized the forum's role in reviewing the 2016–2025 RPA, preparing recommendations for the 2026–2035 plan, and integrating disability inclusion guidelines. Citing the 2024 National Women's Life Experience Survey, she highlighted alarming rates of domestic violence—one in five women face abuse at home, often from intimate partners or family. Data from SIMFONI PPA recorded 12,161 cases involving over 12,000 victims, with physical violence as the most reported. In response, the government has launched three priority programs: Ruang Bersama Indonesia, expansion of the SAPA 129 hotline, and strengthening village-level data collection. Indonesia also reaffirmed its commitment to global

frameworks like CEDAW and the SDGs to promote gender equality and child protection, while thanking ASEAN, UN agencies, and international donors for their support.

I. Government Priority Program

Red and White Cooperative: Netizens Highlight Transparency, Governance, and Human Resource Availability

—Yohanes Advent Krisdamarjati, *Kompas*, 15 July 2025

Set to be inaugurated on July 21, 2025, the *Merah Putih* Cooperative—introduced earlier in March to revive the spirit of mutual cooperation at the village level—has sparked intense debate online. Kompas R&D tracked 13,790 social media conversations in June, revealing mixed sentiments: 38.6% negative, 32.5% positive, and 28.9% neutral. Supporters praised the cooperative’s potential to boost rural economies, stabilize commodity prices, and offer fairer loan alternatives, citing strong government backing from 16 ministries. However, critics raised concerns over corruption, nepotism, and weak human resource capacity. Viral posts expressed fears that cooperative funds—up to Rp 3 billion per unit—could be misused by officials for personal gain, reflecting past mismanagement of village funds. Key negative keywords included “village head,” “audit,” and “government program prone to corruption,” while terms like “village economy” and “cooperative formation” dominated positive discussions. Analysts warn that without transparent audits and accountable leadership, the cooperative risks repeating old failures, despite its promise to empower local communities and combat predatory lending.

Parents place high hopes in Sekolah Rakyat as schools open

—Dio Sudenda and Adi Marsiela, *TheJakartaPost*, 15 July 2025

The President’s flagship program *Sekolah Rakyat* (community school) officially opened 63 boarding schools across Indonesia on July 14, welcoming over 6,000 students from the nation’s poorest households. Housed in repurposed Social Affairs Ministry welfare centers, the schools offer free education, boarding, and life skills training to underserved children, with formal classes set to begin in August after a month-long orientation. Parents expressed both hope and anxiety, sharing stories of financial hardship, educational dreams, and the struggle to keep their children away from negative influences. The program follows the Merdeka curriculum and emphasizes 24-hour character building through a structured environment. Social Affairs Minister Saifullah Yusuf described the initiative as a key tool for poverty alleviation and educational equity, with 37 more campuses due to open this month and a goal of reaching 20,000 students. Despite high aspirations, concerns remain over rushed preparations and long-term quality assurance. The initiative marks a bold move to close the education gap and empower marginalized youth across the country.

People’s Schools start July 14 – ‘Schools to build civilization, but they are made rashly and with minimal study’

—Riana A Ibrahim, Eliazar Robert, Halbert Caniago, Muhammad Ikbal Asra, and Yuli Saputra, *BBCNews*, 14 July 2025

The government’s rollout of the People’s School program has sparked widespread criticism over inadequate planning, rushed execution, and potential psychological harm to students. Launched on July 14, across 63 locations, the program targets children from poor and

extremely poor families, offering free education and dormitory-based learning under the Ministry of Social Affairs. Critics—including education experts and parents—condemn the use of social segregation, the involvement of the Indonesian military, and the repurposing of facilities that displaced children with disabilities. Emotional family separations, reports of student bullying, and concerns over lack of anti-harassment policies further raise alarm. Observers argue the Rp 1.19 trillion budget would be better spent improving public schools nationwide rather than isolating underprivileged students. Although officials tout a blended curriculum, 24-hour character development, and national pride training, many see the program as stigmatizing, poorly researched, and a violation of inclusive education principles. The government plans to expand to 500 schools by 2026, but demands for transparency and careful planning continue to grow.

BGN Requests Extra Rp118 Trillion for President Prabowo's Flagship Meals Program

—Ilham Oktafian, *JakartaGlobe*, 14 July 2025

Indonesia's National Nutrition Agency (BGN) has requested an additional Rp118 trillion (\$7.3 billion) to expand President Prabowo Subianto's flagship free nutritious meals program, aiming to reach 82.9 million schoolchildren and pregnant women by November. The program, launched in January to combat malnutrition, currently feeds 4.89 million people daily. With the proposed increase, the government's total budget for the initiative would rise from Rp71 trillion to Rp171 trillion, though only Rp4.4 trillion has been spent so far. Lawmakers have not approved the request, with Deputy Chair of the DPR Commission IX Yahya Zaini stressing the need for detailed scrutiny to avoid waste and ensure the program addresses long-term nutrition issues. He called for the initiative to not only distribute meals but also transform eating habits, improve local food systems, and boost awareness on balanced diets, especially in remote areas. BGN Head Dadan Hindayana stated the program may need up to Rp25 trillion monthly in 2026 to meet its targets and drive systemic nutrition reform.

The Government Shifts Housing Priorities for 2026, From Construction to Renovation

—Yosepha Debrina Ratih Pusparisa, *Kompas*, 14 July 2025

The government will prioritize home renovation over subsidized housing construction in 2026, allocating 91.37% of the proposed Rp 49.85 trillion housing budget to the Self-Help Housing Stimulus Assistance (BSPS) program targeting 2 million units. This shift has drawn criticism from developers and experts, who argue that subsidized housing through the Housing Finance Liquidity Facility (FLPP) has greater economic and social impacts amid a housing backlog estimated at 15 to 26 million units. As of mid-2025, FLPP absorption remains low—only 35.6% of the revised 350,000-unit target has been realized, prompting concerns from Real Estate Indonesia and Apersi about the efficacy and accountability of renovation schemes. Analysts, including CBRE's Anton Sitorus, question the move, urging a reevaluation of FLPP rather than shifting focus, as renovations benefit current homeowners, not those without housing. Minister Maruarar Sirait defended the plan, citing social benefits, while Commission V of the DPR expressed conditional support amid rising infrastructure funding gaps threatening national competitiveness.

Indonesia Issues Regulation on Compensation for Sexual Violence Victims

—Nabilla Azzahra, *TempoNews*, 13 July 2025

Indonesia has enacted Government Regulation No. 29/2025, signed by President Prabowo Subianto, to operationalize a state-funded Victim Assistance Fund for Sexual Violence Crimes (DBK-TPKS), aimed at compensating survivors when perpetrators are unable to fulfill court-ordered restitution. Managed by the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK), the

fund became effective on June 18, 2025, under the mandate of the 2022 Sexual Violence Law. The fund covers both material and immaterial losses and supports victims' recovery, including physical, psychological, and social rehabilitation. It draws resources from the state budget, public donations, CSR contributions, and other non-binding sources. Restitution must be disbursed within 30 days of a final court ruling, while approved recovery assistance must be paid within 30 days of LPSK approval. The regulation underscores the state's active role in upholding victims' rights beyond punishing perpetrators. Critics and officials alike say it closes a major gap in justice by ensuring victims are not left behind when offenders lack assets or refuse to pay, reinforcing victim-centered justice.

Indonesia's 'updated' history books stoke fears of buried truth about anti-Chinese riots

—AFP, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 13 July 2025

The government's plan to release a new 10-volume history book series has drawn sharp criticism over fears it will omit the 1998 anti-Chinese riots and other gross human rights abuses, sparking accusations of historical revisionism. Commissioned under the President — himself accused of past rights violations—the draft outlines seen by AFP make no mention of the 1998 violence that led to Suharto's fall, nor other atrocities acknowledged by former President Joko Widodo in 2023. Culture Minister Fadli Zon downplayed the May 1998 events as “small,” while project editor Jajat Burhanudin claimed the books would still cover them. Critics, including historians, civil society leaders, and survivors' families, warn the project risks whitewashing history and misleading future generations. At least one academic has resigned from the effort, citing government control over editorial content. Amnesty International and former Attorney General Marzuki Darusman have called for transparency and warned against propaganda, insisting that the documentation of Indonesia's past should be left to independent scholars, not state-directed narratives.

Govt starts rolling out free health screening for schoolchildren

—Nina A Loasana, *TheJakartaPost*, 10 July 2025

The government has launched a nationwide free health screening program targeting around 53 million schoolchildren to promote early disease detection and improve public health, starting with students in 63 new *Sekolah Rakyat* boarding schools for underprivileged children. The screenings will expand to over 282,000 schools across the country starting August 1, covering elementary, junior high, and high schools under the Education and Religious Affairs ministries. Students not enrolled in formal education can access the program through local health centers. Screenings will include checks for 15 health indicators such as nutrition, blood pressure, anemia, tuberculosis, thalassemia, dental and reproductive health, and mental health. President Prabowo Subianto mandated that students must recover from any diagnosed illness before beginning school. Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin emphasized the program's dual purpose: early intervention and health education. As part of Prabowo's flagship initiative launched in February, the government has already screened over 11 million people and aims to reach 50 million citizens by year's end, with an eventual goal of annual screenings for all 280 million Indonesians.

Government Plans to Disburse KUR for Migrant Workers Without Collateral

—Caecilia Mediana, *Kompas*, 3 July 2025

The government will roll out the People's Business Credit (KUR) program for migrant workers in August, allocating Rp 201 billion to support 2,769 individuals with loans of up to Rp 100 million each. The credit can be used for training, competency upgrades, and departure costs.

This initiative is a collaboration between the Ministry for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers and the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs, with technical guidelines set for completion by the end of July. The government is also planning mortgage incentives and 20,000 housing units for migrant workers. However, the program faces criticism from rights groups. Migran Care and Komnas HAM warn of potential debt traps and mismanagement, noting the persistent failure of past KUR schemes and the lack of direct access for migrant workers—who often rely on placement companies to secure credit. Critics urge thorough evaluation and strategy reform to avoid repeating past mistakes. As of May 2025, 22,406 Indonesian migrant workers were placed abroad, mostly in informal sectors across Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Japan.

II. Indonesia in Politics and Geopolitics

Deputy ministers' double jobs risk govt's performance

—Yerica Lai, *TheJakartaPost*, 16 July 2025

The appointment of at least 30 out of 55 deputy ministers in President Prabowo Subianto's cabinet as commissioners in state-owned enterprises (SOEs) has raised serious concerns over potential conflicts of interest, governance risks, and declining cabinet performance. Experts like UGM's Yance Arizona warn that dual roles blur the lines between regulatory duties and profit-driven business interests, potentially violating existing laws that bar public officials from business roles. Despite a 2019 Constitutional Court ruling reinforcing this prohibition, presidential spokespersons argue there is legal ambiguity. Analysts suggest the practice serves to supplement deputy ministers' relatively low salaries or as political rewards. The absence of a clear mechanism for evaluating underperforming ministers—compounded by Prabowo's reluctance to reshuffle—further amplifies accountability concerns. UI's Aditya Perdana stresses that while reshuffles may disrupt political harmony, transparency and good governance must take precedence. Critics urge Prabowo to end the practice and uphold professionalism in public service, while some officials, such as Deputy Trade Minister Dyah Roro Esti, defend the dual appointments as manageable.

EU Grants Indonesia Multi-Entry Schengen Visa as Landmark Trade Deal Nears Completion

—Heru Andriyanto, *JakartaGlobe*, 13 July 2025

The European Union has granted multi-entry Schengen visa privileges to Indonesian nationals visiting the region for a second time, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced during a meeting with President Prabowo Subianto in Brussels. The decision, hailed as a milestone in EU-Indonesia relations, coincides with the conclusion of a decade-long negotiation on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which will eliminate most tariffs on Indonesian imports into the EU and is now ready for ratification. The new visa cascade policy allows eligible Indonesian travelers to receive multi-entry visas valid for up to five years, enabling travel across 29 European countries without internal border checks. Von der Leyen emphasized that this move will strengthen economic, academic, and cultural ties, making it easier for Indonesians to visit, study, invest, and connect with Europe. She also underscored shared democratic values and joint commitments

to inclusive clean energy transitions, calling the EU-Indonesia Just Energy Transition Partnership a success.

During a visit to Belgium, President Prabowo aims to make Europe a strategic trading partner

—Nino Citra Anugrahanto, *Kompas*, 13 July 2025

President Prabowo Subianto continued his state visit to Belgium following his Brazil trip, aiming to strengthen trade ties with Europe as a strategic partner amid global geopolitical uncertainty. Arriving in Brussels on July 12 with key economic ministers, Prabowo is meeting European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, European Council President Charles Michel, and King Philippe of Belgium. The visit focuses on finalizing the long-awaited Indonesia-EU Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which is expected to eliminate tariffs on Indonesian exports and be signed in Jakarta in Q3 2025. Coordinating Minister Airlangga Hartarto described the deal as a milestone, made possible by overcoming prior obstacles and by Indonesia's growing appeal as a stable, OECD-aspiring economy. Trade Minister Budi Santoso noted CEPA could ease EU regulatory hurdles such as the Deforestation Regulation and unlock broader economic collaboration. With Europe's annual import value at \$6.6 trillion, Budi emphasized the EU as a major alternative market for Indonesian exports, reinforcing the deal's strategic importance.

Rubio in bind as he seeks to reassure south-east Asia, even as it faces Trump tariffs

—Rebecca Ratcliffe, *TheGuardian*, 11 July 2025

Amid escalating trade tensions, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio visited Malaysia to reassure Southeast Asian nations of Washington's commitment, even as President Trump's renewed tariff threats loom over eight of the ten ASEAN members, including Indonesia. Rubio told regional leaders the US "has no intention of abandoning" the region and hinted some countries might secure "better" tariff rates. However, ASEAN members, particularly Indonesia, which faces a proposed 32% levy despite its \$34 billion US import pledge, remain skeptical. Malaysian PM Anwar Ibrahim condemned the tariffs, warning they reflect a new global economic reality. China, seizing the moment, finalized expanded trade ties with ASEAN and positioned itself as a reliable partner. Analysts say Rubio faces a credibility gap, as Trump's unpredictable policies drive Southeast Asian nations to consider alternatives. Vietnam, which reached a partial deal with the US, still faces steep tariffs, while Thailand risks GDP growth plunging below 1% if its 36% tariff isn't averted. The shifting dynamics may significantly benefit China's influence in the region.

Prabowo seeks closer ties with Brazil amid external pressures

—Yerica Lai, *TheJakartaPost*, 11 July 2025

President Prabowo Subianto concluded his state visit to Brazil by reaffirming his commitment to deepening bilateral cooperation in agriculture, energy, defense, and investment, amid mounting global trade tensions and U.S. tariff threats. Following his debut at the BRICS Summit in Rio, Prabowo met Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brasília, where both leaders pledged closer ties, including joint military production and renewable energy collaboration. Inspired by Brazil's success in biofuels, Indonesia plans to send experts to study its innovations and aims for 100% renewable energy before 2040. State fund Danantara will help drive bilateral investment, particularly in agriculture and food industries. Lula, pledging to attend the ASEAN Summit in October, praised Indonesia's leadership in promoting a just international order and signaled renewed Mercosur-Indonesia free trade talks. The visit came as Trump announced steep tariffs on both countries—50% on Brazilian

goods and 32% on Indonesian exports unless trade deals are reached by August 1—raising concerns over US pressure on BRICS-aligned nations.

Indonesian police criticised for showcasing robots, sidestepping bigger issues

—Resty Woro Yuniar, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 11 July 2025

Indonesia's national police faced backlash after showcasing 25 high-tech robots, including RoboCop-style humanoids and robodogs, during their 79th anniversary parade in Jakarta, attended by President Prabowo Subianto. While the force claimed the robots—imported from China and priced up to US\$16,000—would aid in search and rescue, explosives handling, and forensics, critics argued the display reflects misplaced priorities amid a deep-rooted culture of impunity and stalled reforms. Civil society groups, including the Police Reform Coalition and Transparency International Indonesia, questioned the urgency and transparency of the procurement, especially as the police requested an additional Rp63.7 trillion (US\$3.9 billion) in budget without detailing robotic expenditures. Observers noted that real reform—curbing arbitrary violence, bribery, and internal silence codes—remains unaddressed. A 2020 report revealed 41% of citizens who dealt with the police had paid bribes, while 3,197 cases of police violence have been recorded since 2020. The police also launched a new video platform, PoliceTube, to increase transparency, though skeptics called for deeper cultural and structural reform.

Gibran appointed to solve problems in Papua – What does Gibran need to do?

—Faisal Irfani, *BBCNews*, 8 July 2025

The President has reportedly tasked Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka with directly addressing the complex and long-standing issues in Papua, including development and human rights, by working from an office based in the region. Coordinating Minister Yusril Ihza Mahendra said this marks the first time a vice president will be stationed in Papua, signaling a more focused government approach. However, critics argue that past efforts—such as infrastructure development under former President Jokowi, military deployment, and special autonomy funds—have failed to resolve grievances and instead deepened distrust among Indigenous Papuans (OAP). Civil society, researchers, and Papuan activists stress that dialogue, not militarization or extractive development, is the key to peace. Environmental degradation, lack of consultation on land use, and displacement from projects like food estates have triggered protests. Groups like West Papua National Liberation Army TPNPB-OPM reject Gibran's appointment absent political negotiations, while observers question his qualifications. As many Indigenous Papuans remain marginalized and unheard, doubts grow over whether this latest move will bring meaningful change or repeat past failures.

Director of Indonesia Hospital in Gaza killed in Israeli airstrike

—Radhiyya Indra, *TheJakartaPost*, 3 July 2025

The government and humanitarian group MER-C have condemned the Israeli airstrike that killed Dr. Marwan al-Sultan, director of Indonesia Hospital in Gaza, along with his wife and children, in a residential bombing that also hit a school, leaving at least seven Palestinians dead. Dr. Marwan, an interventional cardiologist who had served at the hospital since 2016, was praised for his tireless efforts to provide emergency medical care despite repeated Israeli attacks and resource shortages. The Foreign Ministry mourned his death, hailing his humanitarian commitment and reiterating Indonesia's firm stance supporting Palestine and calling for an immediate ceasefire. MER-C, which funds the hospital, called the bombing a grave violation of humanitarian principles. Meanwhile, President Prabowo Subianto reaffirmed solidarity with Palestine during a recent visit to Saudi Arabia, jointly condemning Israel's

blockade tactics and forced relocations with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The war, ongoing since October 2023, has devastated Gaza, displacing over two million people. Despite new ceasefire proposals, Israel has intensified its military campaign, with Netanyahu vowing to eliminate Hamas.