



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

As an archipelagic nation, why are so many Indonesian fishermen still poor?

—Antonius Purwanto, *Kompas*, 26 August 2025

Indonesia, with over 17,000 islands and the world's second-longest coastline, holds vast marine wealth, producing 7.71 million tons of capture fishery in 2023 and ranking second globally after China, with fishery exports valued at USD 1.94 billion in early 2025. Yet, this

abundance has not translated into fishermen's welfare: about 3.9 million coastal residents still live in extreme poverty, and fishermen contribute a quarter of the national poverty rate, with vulnerability heightened by fuel price hikes, fluctuating fish prices, and debt dependence on middlemen. In Eastern Indonesia such as Maluku and Papua—key contributors with 1.2 million tons of fishery output worth Rp 34 trillion—poverty rates remain above the national average, with many lacking access to clean water, sanitation, and education, reflected in low Human Development Index scores. Experts note fishermen's reliance on unpredictable marine resources and exploitative financing as poverty traps. To improve coastal welfare, policies must prioritize subsidized fuel, fairer market access, stronger maritime governance, and environmentally sustainable coastal development.

Indonesian Shrimp Exposed to Radioactive Materials Could Erode Global Trust

—Aguido Adri, *Kompas*, 26 August 2025

Radioactive cesium-137 (Cs-137) contamination in Indonesian frozen shrimp products, detected by U.S. Customs at four ports earlier this month, has raised alarm over food safety and the credibility of Indonesia's shrimp exports despite levels being far below the U.S. FDA's intervention threshold of 1,200 Becquerel/kg. The contaminated products, linked to PT Bahari Makmur Sejati in Banten's Modern Cikande Industrial Area, measured only 68 Bq/kg, yet the incident has already disrupted sales for shrimp farmers and risks damaging Indonesia's reputation in the global seafood market. Shrimp Club Indonesia Chairman Andi Tamsil urged the government to conduct a transparent investigation with U.S. authorities to restore international trust, warning that exports may drop significantly in the short term. The Nuclear Energy Regulatory Agency, together with police, has secured contaminated metal in Cikande, while the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries stressed that the case is being handled seriously across sectors. Authorities are still investigating the contamination source amid concerns over environmental safety and trade impacts.

Why Does the National Maritime Policy Need to Be Reviewed?

—Antonius Purwanto and Nurul Intan, *Kompas*, 25 August 2025

Despite being the world's largest archipelagic nation with 17,000 islands, 6.4 million sq km of waters, and the second-longest coastline globally, Indonesia's maritime potential remains underutilized as development continues to prioritize land over sea, experts warn. Rich in biodiversity—home to 37% of the world's fish species, 76% of coral species, and over 8,500 fish varieties—Indonesia is often called the “Amazon of the Seas,” yet its fisheries sector faces declining capture output, while aquaculture and export growth remain sluggish. Poverty persists in coastal areas, where 3.9 million people live in extreme poverty, with fishermen contributing 25% to the national poverty rate. Meanwhile, the shipbuilding industry is weak, with only 250 shipyards nationwide, forcing reliance on imports. Analysts stress that without shifting to ocean-based development—emphasizing maritime infrastructure, cultural revitalization, and sustainable resource management—Indonesia risks falling short of its ambition to become a global maritime axis. Calls are growing to abandon land-centric policies and return to the maritime vision enshrined in the 1957 Djuanda Declaration.

Prabowo sets up agency in charge of giant sea wall

—News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 25 August 2025

President Prabowo Subianto inaugurated the Authority for the Management of the Northern Coast of Java, a new agency tasked with designing, constructing, and managing a giant sea wall project aimed at tackling land subsidence and coastal erosion on August 25. Deputy Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Minister Didit Herdiawan Ashaf was appointed as its head,

assisted by deputies Darwin Trisna Djajawinata, a former Danantara official, and Suhajar Diantoro, former Home Affairs Ministry secretary general. State Secretary Prasetyo Hadi said the long-delayed project, first planned in the 1990s, is part of the government's commitment to protecting Java's vulnerable northern coastline. Prabowo, who has championed the sea wall since his time as defense minister under Joko Widodo, has estimated its cost at up to US\$60 billion. However, environmental watchdogs and researchers warn the megaproject could inflict annual economic losses of Rp 207 billion (US\$13.3 million) on the fisheries sector due to disruptions to crucial marine ecosystems.

Why Is There Exposure to Radioactive Cesium-137 in the Cikande Modern Industrial Area?

—Team, *Kompas*, 24 August 2025

The discovery of radioactive cesium-137 (Cs-137) contamination in the Modern Cikande Industrial Area, Serang, Banten, has sparked public concern after the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) detected traces in frozen shrimp exported from Indonesia, prompting investigations by the Environment Ministry and the Nuclear Energy Regulatory Agency (Bapeten). Authorities found Cs-137, commonly used in industrial measuring devices, scattered in waste materials allegedly from improperly disposed equipment. With a half-life of 30 years, Cs-137 can contaminate soil, water, and food chains, posing long-term health risks such as cancer and genetic disorders, while also threatening Indonesia's trade reputation. Local residents fear for their safety and economic livelihoods, as contamination could spread to food products and ecosystems. Experts warn that weak regulation of radioactive substances in non-nuclear industries leaves Indonesia vulnerable to similar incidents. Bapeten has urged tighter oversight, proper disposal systems, and public awareness to prevent recurrence, stressing that radioactive waste mismanagement is a national alarm for health, environmental protection, and international credibility.

Walmart recalls potentially radioactive shrimp sold in 13 US states

—Associated Press, *TheGuardian*, 20 August 2025

Walmart has recalled three lots of Great Value brand frozen raw shrimp sold in 13 US states after the FDA detected traces of Cesium-137, a radioactive isotope, in shipping containers and a sample of shrimp imported from Indonesia. The recalled products, with lot codes 8005540-1, 8005538-1, and 8005539-1 and best-by dates of March 15, 2027, were distributed in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, and West Virginia. While FDA officials said the contamination poses only a "potential health concern" due to low radiation levels, they advised consumers to discard the shrimp or return it for a refund. The isotope, a byproduct of nuclear reactions, was found at levels below FDA intervention thresholds but could cause health issues with long-term exposure. The FDA is investigating PT Bahari Makmur Sejati (BMS Foods) of Indonesia after US Customs flagged contaminated containers at multiple US ports. Walmart said it acted immediately once notified.

Indonesia's aquafarm revamp sparks fears for fate of farmers and mangroves

—Basten Gokkon and M Ambari, *Mongabay*, 20 August 2025

Indonesia's government has launched a major aquafarm revitalization program in West Java, aiming to transform 78,000 hectares of state-owned ponds into high-yield, sustainable aquaculture zones to boost food security, generate Rp30.65 trillion (\$1.88 billion) in output, and create 119,000 jobs, according to Fisheries Minister Sakti Wahyu Trenggono. The first phase targets 20,400 hectares of "unproductive" ponds, with a focus on shifting to saltwater

tilapia farming. However, small-scale fish farmers like Warno in Karawang, who rent land from state-owned Perhutani, fear losing access to ponds without compensation, saying they already struggle to survive. Environmental groups, including the People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice (KIARA), warn the program could drive mangrove loss, worsen coastal damage, and sideline local communities while benefiting large operators and private investors. Indonesia, home to the world's largest mangrove forests, has already lost 40% of its cover to aquaculture. Critics urge ecological restoration, community consent, and environmental assessments before implementation, warning of constitutional violations and ecosystem risks.

B. Forests and Land Use

[Deforestation Increases Heat-Exposure Deaths for Forest-Dwelling Populations](#)

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 28 August 2025

Deforestation in tropical countries significantly worsens heat exposure and related mortality, with Indonesia facing the highest excess deaths in Southeast Asia, according to [research published in *Nature Climate Change*](#) (27/8/2025) led by Carly Reddington and Prof. Dominick Spracklen of the University of Leeds. The study found that deforestation-driven warming exposes more than 300 million people to rising temperatures, causing 28,000 heat-related deaths annually, including 15,680 in Indonesia. Vulnerable populations in Sumatra and Kalimantan are most affected, with limited access to healthcare and cooling infrastructure. Forest loss—driven by agriculture, mining, and National Strategic Projects—removes natural climate regulation, accelerates heat accumulation, and worsens air pollution, biodiversity loss, and disease risks. Forest Watch Indonesia reported Indonesia lost 1.47 million hectares of forest annually from 2013–2021, twice the size of Bali, threatening its climate commitments. Experts warn that tropical deforestation not only undermines climate goals but also poses a severe public health crisis, urging urgent forest protection to prevent worsening mortality and ecological collapse.

[Unesco Re-validation of Rinjani Geopark Status, Possibly Announced September 2025](#)

—Editorial Team, *VOI/News*, 27 August 2025

The future of Mount Rinjani's status as a UNESCO Global Geopark will be decided at a reassessment meeting in Chile in September 2025, with results announced in April 2026, according to Geopark Rinjani General Manager Qwadru P. Wicaksono. He confirmed that the evaluation followed a visit by UNESCO assessors to Lombok in June–July 2025, who praised cultural and community aspects but flagged several shortcomings, including incomplete information boards at the Rinjani Geopark Information Center in Sembalun and a lack of promotional materials at Gili Trawangan. Qwadru said management is working to address these issues and expressed optimism that Rinjani will retain its “green card” status, noting it had received strong recognition compared to other geoparks abroad. Designated a UNESCO Global Geopark in 2018, Mount Rinjani, part of Rinjani National Park in West Nusa Tenggara, is renowned for natural attractions such as Segara Anak Lake at 2,010 meters and the Rinjani peak at 3,726 meters above sea level.

[Global brands join drive for deforestation-free palm oil in Indonesia's Aceh](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 22 August 2025

Some of the world's biggest consumer brands, including Nestlé, PepsiCo, and Unilever, have joined forces with palm oil producers and refineries to launch the Aceh Sustainable Palm Oil Working Group on August 13, the first province-level initiative of its kind in Indonesia, aimed at halting deforestation in one of Earth's richest biodiversity hotspots. Coordinated by Dutch-based nonprofit IDH, the group seeks to implement Aceh's 2024 sustainable palm oil road map, which outlines deforestation-free production, forest protection, land restoration, and smallholder support, amid rising forest loss in the Leuser Ecosystem and Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve. Aceh, home to critically endangered elephants, tigers, orangutans, and rhinos, lost more than 41,000 hectares of forest between 2020 and 2024, over half inside Leuser. International backers, including the Dutch and Norwegian embassies, praised the initiative, while Rainforest Action Network called it a "long-overdue step." Civil society groups, however, warned that success hinges on transparency, accountability, and strict monitoring to prevent ongoing illegal clearing and ensure global compliance with new deforestation regulations.

Sustainable biomass certification scheme is flawed, degrades forests, report finds

—Annelise Giseburt, *Mongabay*, 21 August 2025

A coalition of environmental NGOs has accused the Sustainable Biomass Program (SBP), a leading global biomass certification scheme, of greenwashing forest destruction by approving projects that fail genuine sustainability tests despite claiming legality. In a [July 2025 report](#) led by Canadian certification expert Richard Robertson and commissioned by groups including Mighty Earth, Biofuelwatch, and Solutions for Our Climate, SBP was criticized for certifying wood pellets and chips as "sustainable" without field audits, relying instead on paper-based risk assessments and weaker forest certification schemes. The report warns that biomass, heavily subsidized as green energy in Europe and Asia, is more carbon-intensive than coal per unit of energy and contributes to forest loss in the US, Canada, Indonesia, and Vietnam. The UK's Drax power plant alone emitted 13.3 million tons of CO₂ in 2024 while still receiving subsidies under SBP certification. NGOs argue SBP's expansion in Asia risks worsening biodiversity loss in regions with weak safeguards, urging governments to adopt stricter, science-based sustainability standards.

Pulp and paper giant APP moves closer to regaining FSC stamp despite pending review

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

Asia Pulp & Paper (APP), one of the world's largest forestry firms, has been allowed to resume its remedy process with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), paving the way for possible recertification 18 years after being expelled for deforestation and land conflicts. The July decision lifts a suspension imposed in January 2025 following a corporate reshuffle placing APP under the direct control of Jackson Wijaya, who also owns Paper Excellence (now Domtar), North America's largest pulp and paper player. Critics say the move is premature, as an FSC-commissioned legal review into APP and Domtar's shared ownership — which could strip millions of hectares of Canadian forests of FSC certification — remains unfinished. Rights groups accuse FSC of undermining credibility, ignoring stakeholder calls for safeguards, and exposing communities in conflict with APP-linked subsidiaries to further harm, citing recent land seizures and clashes in Sumatra. NGOs are urging FSC to halt the process until the legal review is complete, warning the decision risks enabling large-scale greenwashing.

US demand for RVs fuels deforestation in Kalimantan: NGOs

—News Desk (AFP), *TheJakartaPost*, 20 August 2025

Demand from major US recreational vehicle (RV) brands is driving deforestation in Kalimantan, home to Asia's last great rainforest, according to [a joint investigation report by UK-based Earthsight and Indonesian NGO Auriga Nusantara](#) released August 19. The report revealed that lauan plywood from Indonesian rainforests is being used in the floors, walls, and ceilings of RVs made by companies such as Jayco, Winnebago, and Forest River, with timber traced to Indonesian firm PT Kayu Lapis Asli Murni. Much of the wood, sourced from orangutan habitats cleared for fast-growing timber plantations, was exported in 2024 to US distributors MJB Wood and Tumac Lumber, suppliers to leading RV manufacturers. "Nature-loving RV owners will be horrified to learn that their hobby risks destroying rainforests," said Earthsight director Sam Lawson, urging US RV giants to adopt sustainability standards long in place across other industries. Neither the companies involved nor Indonesia's Environment Ministry responded to requests for comment. Kalimantan's forests host endangered species, including orangutans, clouded leopards, and the world's smallest rhinos.

How Indonesian companies dodge fines for forest & peatland fires

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 19 August 2025

Indonesian courts have ordered plantation firms to pay more than Rp21 trillion (\$1.3 billion) in fines for forest and peatland fires—28 times the environment ministry's budget—but most of it remains unpaid, leaving land unrestored and fires recurring each dry season, Mongabay reported. Companies often evade liability by declaring bankruptcy, hiding assets, or ignoring summons, with cases like PT Merbau Pelalawan Lestari's Rp16.2 trillion fine—the largest ever—going unpaid after bankruptcy, according to Environment Minister Hanif Faisol. Other firms, including PT Ricky Kurniawan Kertapersada and PT Waringin Agro Jaya, used bankruptcy filings to dodge hundreds of billions in penalties, while PT Jatim Jaya Perkasa continued profiting from land it was banned from replanting. Only a few, like PT Kallista Alam and PT Bumi Mekar Hijau, have settled fines. Environmental groups such as Walhi and PETIR warn this impunity fuels repeat fires, undermines Indonesia's climate commitments, and reflects a weak legal system that punishes small farmers but spares corporations.

C. Biodiversity, Conservation and Protected Area

Indonesian Authorities Rescue Rare Javan Leopard Trapped in Village Warehouse

—RMN Ivansyah, *TempoNews*, 26 August 2025

A rare Javan leopard (*Panthera pardus melas*) caused panic after being found trapped for up to two days inside a village office warehouse in Kutamandarikan, Maleber District, Kuningan Regency, West Java, before being safely evacuated by authorities, August 26. The animal, discovered by a village official who heard strange noises, likely entered through a hole in the roof and was locked inside, sparking mass curiosity as residents flocked to see the endangered species. Police struggled to control the crowd until a team from the West Java Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA), assisted by a veterinarian, sedated and rescued the three-year-old male leopard, which appeared weak. Officials said the animal will undergo medical checks and possible rehabilitation at a wildlife center before release. Authorities are investigating why the leopard strayed from nearby production forests, just two

kilometers away, and urged residents to stay alert while emphasizing the need for ecosystem preservation to reduce human-wildlife conflict.

Haven, a Second Chance for Orangutans Victims of Conflict and Poaching

—Nikson Sinaga, *Kompas*, 24 August 2025

The Lestari Ecosystem Foundation has established the 48-hectare Orangutan Haven in Pancur Batu, Deli Serdang, North Sumatra, as a sanctuary for rescued Sumatran orangutans that can no longer survive in the wild due to injuries or trauma from hunting and captivity. Opened to the public with strict educational principles, the site houses six orangutans—including Dek Nong, rescued after years as an illegal pet, and Krismon, confined for 19 years in a cramped cage—who now live on artificial islands that mimic their natural habitat, allowing them to climb trees, build nests, and roam freely in a safe environment. Surrounded by forests, bamboo bridges, and eco-trails, Orangutan Haven also serves as a conservation and education center, promoting biodiversity, organic farming, sustainable bamboo construction, and eco-friendly living. Authorities stress its importance amid the critically endangered status of orangutans, with only about 13,700 Sumatran and 800 Tapanuli orangutans left in the wild, making the haven a vital second chance for both the animals and public awareness.

Luxury villas plan for Indonesia's Komodo National Park slammed as 'tourism suicide'

—Resty Woro Yuniar, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 24 August 2025

A government-backed plan to build 619 structures, including 448 luxury villas, on Padar Island in Indonesia's Komodo National Park has triggered strong opposition from environmentalists and local communities, who warn it could damage the fragile ecosystem of the UNESCO World Heritage site and threaten livelihoods. Critics argue the development by Komodo Wildlife Ecotourism, which holds permits for 274 hectares—nearly 20% of the island—contradicts conservation efforts, while locals accuse the process of lacking transparency and excluding key stakeholders. More than 5,500 people have signed a petition urging President Prabowo Subianto, the forestry ministry, and UNESCO to cancel the concessions, saying the project would betray global conservation commitments. The forestry ministry insists construction will be limited to 15.38 hectares and subject to UNESCO and IUCN approval after an environmental impact review, but activists describe the plan as “tourism suicide.” Residents and experts warn the project risks marginalizing indigenous Ata Modo communities, already displaced during the park's establishment, while fueling fears UNESCO may approve it despite local resistance.

Rare Javan leopard sighting renews focus on conservation, monitoring efforts

—Basten Gokkon and Palahi Mubarak, *Mongabay*, 22 August 2025

A rare Javan leopard (*Panthera pardus melas*) has been caught on a camera trap in Mount Lawu's forest in Central Java, sparking renewed conservation efforts for the island's last surviving top predator, which is classified as endangered with only about 350 left in the wild. The recording, confirmed by the KGPA Mangkunagoro I Grand Forest Park (Tahura) following a hiker's report, highlights that the volcano's forests remain a viable habitat for the elusive cat and its prey. Authorities have intensified monitoring with camera traps, patrols, and community partnerships to protect the species from threats such as habitat loss, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict. Conservationists welcomed the sighting as a sign of ecological integrity but warned that Javan leopards have lost over 1,300 km² of habitat between 2000 and 2020, underscoring the urgency for stronger protection and connectivity between fragmented populations. Ongoing island-wide surveys aim to provide the first

comprehensive data by 2026 to guide Indonesia's Javan Leopard Conservation Strategy and Action Plan.

Ariyanto, A. C., et al. (2024). [Range-wide camera traps reveal potential prey species for Javan leopards](#). *Global Ecology and Conservation*, 53.

As'ary, M., et al. (2023). [Analysis of Changes in Habitat Suitability of the Javan Leopard \(*Panthera pardus melas*, Cuvier 1809\) on Java Island, 2000–2020](#). *Diversity*, 15(4), 529.

World Orangutan Day: Ongoing threats & habitat loss haunt these great apes

—Kristine Sabillo, *Mongabay*, 19 August 2025

Orangutans, found only in Borneo and Sumatra, remain critically endangered despite decades of research highlighting their intelligence and complex behavior, with the latest “Primates in Peril” report listing the Tapanuli orangutan (*Pongo tapanuliensis*) among the world's 25 most endangered primates. Fewer than 800 survive in Indonesia's Batang Toru Forest, where threats from mining expansion, habitat fragmentation, and poaching persist. Broader pressures include illegal deforestation for palm oil in Sumatra's Rawa Singkil Wildlife Reserve, acacia planting on damaged peatlands in Borneo, and planned plantation expansions overlapping orangutan habitats—all risking extinction for the Sumatran and Bornean species. While conservationists employ measures like canopy bridges to reduce human-wildlife conflict, studies warn that forced adaptations—such as altered nesting behavior—can compromise orangutans' long-term survival by increasing stress and contact with humans. With World Orangutan Day marked on Aug. 19, experts stress that urgent conservation action is needed to halt further habitat loss and protect the last remaining populations of this iconic great ape.

D. Climate Change

Can a giant seawall save Indonesia's disappearing coast?

—Jack Moore and Taris Iman (AFP), *TheJakartaPost*, 28 August 2025

Indonesia is pushing a \$80 billion plan to build a 700-kilometer seawall along Java's coast to curb rising seas and rapid land subsidence, with President Prabowo Subianto calling it one of the nation's most vital projects and seeking foreign investment to fund it. The plan, first proposed in 1995, comes as villages like Bedono in Central Java have already seen the tide advance over a kilometer inland, displacing residents and submerging roads and homes. While villagers such as Karminah and local leaders say the seawall is desperately needed to stop flooding, experts warn it may worsen erosion, damage ecosystems, and provide only temporary relief, citing global cases from Puerto Rico to Japan. Environmental scientists, including Macquarie University's Melanie Bishop, argue nature-based solutions like mangroves and reefs or partial dikes combined with relocation would be more sustainable. Meanwhile, residents facing daily inundation plead for immediate action, as land along Java's northern coast disappears at up to 20 centimeters per year.

The Climate Bill Needs to Address Issues Faced by Vulnerable Groups

—Pradipta Pandu Mustika, *Kompas*, 27 August 2025

Community representatives at the Indonesia Climate Justice Summit (ICJS) 2025 in Jakarta on August 27 demanded the immediate ratification of the Climate Justice Bill, citing the absence of legal frameworks to protect vulnerable groups from worsening climate impacts. Initiated by the People's Alliance for Climate Justice (ARUKI) after consultations across 14 regions, the draft bill highlights injustices faced by indigenous peoples, farmers, fishermen, women, laborers, the urban poor, youth, and persons with disabilities. Lawmakers, including members of the DPR and DPD, pledged to push the bill into the 2026 National Legislative Program, with hopes for enactment next year. Advocates stressed the bill's necessity to address fragmented policies, weak emission targets, and minimal public participation, while also tackling corporate exploitation and lax law enforcement. The bill seeks to guarantee fair adaptation and mitigation measures, protect ecosystems, and uphold intergenerational rights. Legislators emphasized that strong public pressure is key to ensuring climate justice becomes a national priority.

[Indonesia to Push Carbon Sales Potential at COP30 in Brazil](#)

—M Faiz Zaki, *TempoNews*, 27 August 2025

Indonesia will prioritize carbon trading at the upcoming COP30 UN Climate Conference in Belém, Brazil, this November, by pushing for a special session to link carbon credit sellers and buyers, Deputy Environment Minister Diaz Hendropriyono said Wednesday (27/8). The government plans to promote its carbon sales potential, with Norway and South Korea already showing strong interest. Indonesia is offering Norway 533 million tons of CO₂ credits from 2016–2020, of which 12 million tons may be purchased, potentially tied to renewable projects, while South Korea is exploring credits from palm oil mill effluent initiatives under an existing MoU. Japan has also expressed interest, though no projects or values are finalized, with pricing expected to become clearer at COP30. Officials stress that carbon trading is a market mechanism to reduce emissions under the Paris Agreement, as the world faces warnings that the 1.5°C warming limit is already breached. COP30's agenda will also include the Global Stocktake and six priority pillars, from energy transition to biodiversity conservation.

[Heat is Increasingly Killing Workers and How to Reduce the Risk](#)

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 26 August 2025

The World Health Organization (WHO) and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) have warned that extreme heat events, which reached record highs in 2024, are endangering the health and livelihoods of billions of workers worldwide, especially those in agriculture, construction, and fisheries. Their joint report, [Climate Change and Heat Stress in the Workplace](#), highlights that prolonged exposure to rising temperatures—exacerbated by humidity, poor ventilation, and heavy clothing—can cause dehydration, kidney failure, heart and lung problems, and even death, while also slashing productivity. The International Labour Organization (ILO) previously estimated that over 2.4 billion workers face excessive heat, contributing to more than 22.8 million work-related accidents annually. Vulnerable groups in developing countries, including children, the elderly, and low-income populations, are at greatest risk. In Indonesia, where average temperatures have risen by 0.8°C since 1981, farmers and fishermen are increasingly suffering from heat-related illnesses, with reports of sudden deaths in the fields. WHO, WMO, and ILO urge urgent heat-health strategies, workplace policies, and protective innovations to safeguard workers.

[Trying to keep cool in an increasingly hot world](#)

—Gaia Squarci and Taro Kaneko, *TheGuardian*, 17 August 2025

In Indonesia, rising temperatures and humidity are exposing a stark cooling divide, as documented by *The Cooling Solution*, a project by Gaia Squarci and Jacopo Crimi that studies how people adapt to extreme heat. While air conditioners are increasingly common among wealthier households, millions of lower-income Indonesians must rely on basic fans, shaded verandas, or even polluted water sources for relief. With global demand for cooling expected to reach 5.6 billion air conditioners by 2050—10 sold every second—the issue highlights both inequality and environmental costs. In Jakarta, commuters endure sweltering traffic on scooters, while residents of dense kampungs struggle to cope with limited ventilation and rising electricity costs. Although some innovative architecture and traditional building designs offer passive cooling alternatives, these solutions remain accessible mainly to middle- and upper-income groups. The project underscores how climate change is reshaping daily life in Indonesia, magnifying social disparities and testing communities' resilience against intensifying heat.

E. Energy and Mining

[Research funding gap hampers Indonesia's rare earth ambition](#)

—Divya Karyza, *The Jakarta Post*, 27 August 2025

Indonesia's ambition to harness its rare earth elements (REE) for high-tech, renewable energy, and defense industries is hampered by a chronic lack of research funding, according to National Energy Council (DEN) member Agus Puji Prasetyono, *Kontan* reported via *The Jakarta Post*. While President Prabowo Subianto has launched the Mineral Industry Agency to secure and industrialize critical minerals, Agus warned that Indonesia's research budget remains under 1% of the state budget and only 0.2–0.3% of GDP, far behind China (2.08%), Singapore (1.98%), and Malaysia (1.15%). He said comprehensive data mapping of REE reserves, vital for a clear development roadmap, remains incomplete, while downstream processing demands costly technology and special funding. Indonesia's R&D budget peaked at \$12.1 billion in 2023 but fell to an estimated \$4.5 billion in 2024. Experts stress bridging the funding gap is a strategic necessity to secure Indonesia's place in global value chains, as REEs are key for fighter jet systems, EV engines, wind turbines, and advanced batteries.

[Indonesia's Bajau fishers lament nickel mining's marine pollution](#)

—Kristine Sabillo, *Mongabay*, 21 August 2025

Nickel mining on Kabaena Island, Southeast Sulawesi, has severely disrupted the lives of the nomadic Bajau sea tribe, who recall once swimming and fishing in clear waters before pollution turned the sea red in 2010. A recent [investigation by local NGOs Satya Bumi, Walhi and Sagori](#) found that operations by three companies—PT Arga Morini Indah (AMI), PT Arga Morini Indotama (AMINDO), and PT Anugrah Harisma Barakah (AHB)—have caused extensive deforestation, with AMI and AMINDO clearing 506 and 194 hectares of hilly terrain, raising erosion and landslide risks. The report highlighted sedimentation and pollution that damaged marine ecosystems, forcing fishers to travel farther to find catch, while many residents reported skin irritation and respiratory problems linked to mining dust and contaminated waters. Biodiversity, including Sulawesi's native long-tailed macaques and migrating leatherback turtles, is also threatened. Nearly 70% of residents said companies ignored the legal requirement of free, prior and informed consent, and farmers accused them

of land grabbing without compensation. NGOs urged the government to review all mining permits.

Prabowo Creates New Mineral Industry Agency, Taps Brian Yulianto as Leader

—Nandito Putra, *TempoNews*, 25 August 2025

President Prabowo Subianto inaugurated the newly established Mineral Industry Agency and appointed Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Technology Brian Yulianto as its head through Presidential Decree No. 77/2025 at the State Palace, Jakarta on August 25. While the agency's specific scope and authority remain undefined, Brian's appointment marks a significant expansion of his role in government just months after he replaced Satryo Soemantri Brodjonegoro as minister. Brian, a professor of nano and quantum technology at ITB, has an extensive academic and research background, including a doctorate from the University of Tokyo, leadership roles at ITB, and international recognition such as the 2024 Habibie Prize and inclusion in the World's Top 2% Scientists list. He has also contributed to national development planning, including SEZ JIPE and Patimban. Alongside Brian, Prabowo also swore in other officials, including the Chief Justice, leaders of the North Java Coastal Authority Board, heads of BNN and BNPT, and several new ambassadors.

F. Pollution, Waste and Disaster

No more plastic promises

—Editorial, *TheJakartaPost*, 25 August 2025

Global negotiations in Geneva aimed at creating the first legally binding treaty to curb plastic pollution collapsed after 11 days, as fossil fuel-producing nations pushed to limit the deal to waste management while others sought to cut production, leaving no compromise. The deadlock drew sharp criticism in Indonesia, where environmentalists accused the government of siding with industry interests over public health by refusing to commit to reducing plastic production, despite research showing people ingest microplastics equivalent to an ATM card each month, heightening cancer risks. Instead, Indonesia pledged only to meet waste-processing targets for its 10 million tonnes of annual plastic waste, with Environment Minister Hanif Faisol Nurofiq seeking up to US\$21 billion investment for waste facilities under a circular economy scheme. Critics called the plan weak “greenwashing,” stressing that recycling rates remain below 10 percent globally and the health-related economic losses from plastic pollution reach US\$1.5 trillion annually, urging President Prabowo's administration to lead in protecting citizens from plastics.

ECOBLOX Panel Walls Utilize Baby Diaper and Corn Cob Waste

—Ester Lince Napitupulu, *Kompas*, 24 August 2025

A team of lecturers from Gorontalo State University (UNG) has developed ECOBLOX, an innovative modular wall panel made from used baby diapers and corn cobs to promote zero-waste housing solutions while addressing climate change and waste problems. Showcased at the 2025 Indonesia Science, Technology, and Industry Convention in Bandung, the 50x50 cm panels are designed to be energy-efficient, earthquake-resistant, and sustainable, reducing reliance on air conditioning by lowering heat conductivity. Indonesia produces 65.9 million tons of waste annually, 5–10 percent from baby diapers, while Gorontalo generates over 530,000 tons of corn yearly, with cobs often discarded. The waste diapers, collected from

families and waste banks at Rp 2,000 each, are sterilized, chopped, and combined with ground corn cob powder, cement, and additives before being molded into interlocking blocks. Early tests show ECOBLOX can withstand 14 MPa pressure—double the standard for housing—while cutting production costs below Rp 20,000 per unit. Researchers plan to develop prototype earthquake-resistant houses in three years.

Greenpeace Indonesia: Waste Banks Not Key Solution to Solving Plastic Pollution

—Defara Dhanya, *TempoNews*, 22 August 2025

Greenpeace Indonesia stressed that waste banks cannot be the main solution to plastic pollution, urging the government to prioritize upstream reduction and reuse instead. Campaigner Atha Rasyadi noted that most waste banks, managed by community groups with limited resources, cannot absorb all types of waste and should focus more on organic and household waste, which accounts for nearly half of Indonesia's total waste volume. He argued that success should be measured by reduced landfill disposal, not just the number of waste banks. As of February 2025, Indonesia had 371 main waste banks and nearly 25,000 units serving over 892,000 customers across 447 regions. The government, while acknowledging waste banks as important within the circular economy framework, agreed they must be part of an integrated waste management system. This stance aligns with Indonesia's commitment to the Global Plastics Treaty, discussed at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee 5.2 in Geneva this month, where waste banks were highlighted as part of circular economy strategies.

New coalition focuses on 'reuse' to tackle top polluter Indonesia's plastic waste problem

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 21 August 2025

Thirteen organizations and businesses have formed the Indonesian Reuse Association (AGUNI) to advance reuse-based solutions in tackling Indonesia's worsening waste crisis, particularly plastic pollution that sees 1.3 million metric tons leak into the ocean annually. AGUNI members, ranging from small enterprises to startups, already operate over 1,000 refill and reuse access points nationwide, offering returnable packaging, reusable event items, and bulk distribution systems. The coalition builds on a 2022 initiative by the Indonesia Plastic Bag Diet Movement and Enviu and seeks to mainstream reuse as a systemic alternative to single-use packaging, strengthen business models, and promote standards aligned with a circular economy. Advocates argue reuse reduces waste leakage, raw material demand, and energy use compared to recycling. According to AGUNI, scaling up reuse could yield economic benefits of Rp 1.5 trillion (\$93 million) while fostering responsible consumer behavior. Members like YAGI Natural and TAKSU Reuse highlight that reuse not only protects ecosystems but also creates sustainable economic opportunities.

Air quality study of East Java waste-to-energy plant sparks dispute, health warnings

—Petrus Riski, *Mongabay*, 16 August 2025

A 54-day monitoring by Indonesian NGO Walhi around the Benowo waste-to-energy plant in Surabaya found frequent air quality breaches exceeding World Health Organization safety limits, raising health concerns for nearby communities. Using AirBeam3 devices between November 2024 and January 2025, Walhi reported PM2.5 concentrations averaging 26.78 µg/m³—above the WHO's 15 µg/m³ threshold—with peaks up to 78 µg/m³, while PM10 levels surpassed 150 µg/m³ in some stations, far beyond the 45 µg/m³ limit. The group recorded more than half of monitoring days in “moderate” zones and up to 30% in “unhealthy” categories, with spikes occurring during incinerator operation hours and pollution drifting into

residential areas, markets, and schools. Walhi warned of long-term risks including asthma, stroke, and cancer, urging a shift from incineration to zero-waste community systems and independent audits. Surabaya's environmental agency and the plant operator dismissed the findings, claiming compliance with standards, though they withheld monitoring data. Experts stressed incinerators inevitably pose health risks, especially when located near dense neighborhoods.

Plastics Talks End Without Consensus

—Ahmad Arif, *Kompas*, 15 August 2025

Global negotiations on a plastic pollution treaty at the UN Office in Geneva ended on August 15, without consensus, as nearly 100 of the 184 participating countries rejected the latest draft for lacking ambition, binding global obligations, and measures to curb plastic production. The Colombian delegation was the first to object, with representative Sebastián Rodríguez calling the text “completely unacceptable” for being unbalanced and failing to address the root causes of plastic pollution. The plenary map showed that major oil and gas producing countries still dominated and resisted any limits on plastic production, as such restrictions would affect their economies. This left the draft focusing only on downstream solutions such as waste management and recycling, rather than production cuts. While around 90 countries led by Switzerland and Mexico demanded stricter rules on hazardous chemicals, transparency, and a just transition fund, opposition from Saudi Arabia and its allies blocked progress. Small island states voiced frustration at bearing disproportionate burdens, while Indonesia urged the use of the Busan draft and informal talks before the next round. Environmental groups including GAIA, Greenpeace, and IPEN warned against accepting a weak deal that reflects fossil fuel interests undermining global ambitions. UNEP acknowledged disappointment but said the talks helped clarify national positions, though the path forward remains uncertain.

G. Technology, Investment and Finance

Indonesia urges TikTok, Meta to act against harmful online content

— Ananda Teresia and Stefano Sulaiman; *Reuters*, 27 August 2025

Indonesia has summoned Meta, TikTok, and other major social media platforms to demand stronger content moderation amid rising online disinformation that has fueled public anger and protests, Deputy Communications Minister Angga Raka Prabowo said Wednesday. The government instructed platforms to immediately curb harmful content, including disinformation, pornography, and online gambling, without waiting for official requests. Angga warned that penalties could range from fines and suspensions to revocation of access or removal from Indonesia's electronic platform registry. He cited recent false content, including a deep fake of Finance Minister Sri Mulyani claiming teachers were a burden and mislabelled videos of past riots presented as recent unrest, which helped mobilize youth protests in Jakarta this week where hundreds were detained. Separate meetings with Meta and TikTok are planned, while invitations will also be extended to YouTube and X. With TikTok and Instagram each exceeding 100 million Indonesian users, officials stressed swift compliance to protect national stability.

Komdigi: AI Rules are being Drafted

—Caecilia Mediana, *Kompas*, 27 August 2025

The Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs has submitted an initiative permit to the Ministry of State Secretariat to draft a presidential regulation on artificial intelligence (AI), which will include a national AI roadmap, regulatory framework, and ethical guidelines. Minister Meutya Hafid, speaking at the Indonesia Summit 2025 in Jakarta on August 27, said the rapid growth of AI, from generative to robotic systems, requires collective preparedness through government, private sector, and academic collaboration. The ministry has also extended public consultations on the draft White Paper of the AI Roadmap and ethical guidelines until August 29, involving 443 task force members and identifying 10 priority areas, including food security, health, education, and bureaucratic reform. The regulation is expected to be finalized by early 2026, serving as a basis for state budget allocations to AI innovation. While adoption in Indonesia remains low, experts emphasize opportunities in developing practical AI-based applications rather than competing with global leaders on complex models.

Regional Transfer Funds Cut, Local Governments Brainstorm to Explore PAD Potential

—Dian Dewi Purnamasari, *Kompas*, 26 August 2025

The central government has proposed Rp 650 trillion in regional transfer funds in the 2026 State Budget Draft, a 24.7% cut from 2025's Rp 864.1 trillion and the lowest in five years, prompting regional governments to seek alternative revenues and boost fiscal independence. Local leaders, including Apkasi Chairman and Lahat Regent Bursah Zarnubi, are developing innovations such as extracting resources from old oil wells, producing mine safety shoes, expanding coffee markets, and building regional livestock companies, while Situbondo Regent Yusuf Rio Wahyu Prayogo is holding investor exhibitions to attract private capital. Deputy Minister of Home Affairs Bima Arya Sugiarto urged regions to optimize options such as public-private partnerships, bonds, crowdfunding, CSR, philanthropy, and asset utilization, noting that only a small fraction of provinces, districts, and cities have strong fiscal capacity. Experts warn that tax hikes are politically and economically difficult, so regions must strengthen efficiency, digital payment systems, BUMD professionalism, tourism, and sustainable investments to ensure fiscal resilience.

Is Prabowo's big budget for Indonesia achievable or overly ambitious?

—Resty Woro Yuniar, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 19 August 2025

President Prabowo Subianto has proposed Indonesia's 2026 draft budget of 3.79 quadrillion rupiah (USD 233.9 billion), targeting 5.4% GDP growth while keeping the deficit at 2.48% of GDP, below the legal 3% ceiling. The plan prioritizes human development, led by a USD 20.6 billion free meals programme for 82 million children and expectant mothers, alongside record education spending of USD 46.2 billion for teacher salaries, school revitalization, and digital learning. Supporters see the budget as a bold step to reduce inequality and boost productivity, but economists warn revenue projections—3.147 quadrillion rupiah (USD 194 billion), with 13.5% tax growth—may be overly optimistic amid slowing global demand and falling export prices for coal, palm oil, and nickel. With debt repayments of USD 49.3 billion due in 2026, critics fear social programs could be squeezed, and question food safety and efficiency risks in the free meals plan. Analysts urge broader tax reforms, but the budget is expected to pass parliament, given Prabowo's coalition majority.

Govt banks on 'ambitious' revenue growth in 2026 budget

—Deni Ghifari and Ni Made Tasyarini, *TheJakartaPost*, 15 August 2025

President Prabowo Subianto has set an ambitious target to raise Indonesia's 2026 state revenue by 9.8 percent to Rp 3.14 quadrillion (US\$194.5 billion) despite sluggish tax collection, aiming to fund flagship programs on food, energy, economy, and defense resilience. Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati acknowledged the 13.5 percent year-on-year tax revenue growth needed was "rather high," but said it was attainable given GDP and inflation projections of 5.4 and 2.5 percent, supported by reforms to the Coretax system and targeting the shadow economy. The budget allocates Rp 3.13 quadrillion in spending, including Rp 335 trillion for the free meals program—nearly triple this year's budget—and Rp 402.4 trillion for energy self-sufficiency, with Prabowo pledging to achieve 100 percent renewable power within a decade. The fiscal deficit is set at 2.48 percent of GDP, down from 2.78 percent, though economists warned shortfalls and regional budget cuts of 24.8 percent could strain local services, widen inequality, and undermine growth if revenue targets fall short.

H. Human Rights, Indigenous People and Gender Equality

[Cars over people? Sidewalk cuts in South Jakarta draw backlash](#)

—Maretha Uli, *TheJakartaPost*, 26 August 2025

The Jakarta administration's plan to trim sidewalks along the congested TB Simatupang road in South Jakarta has sparked backlash from pedestrian advocacy groups, who argue the move undermines pedestrian rights and contradicts the city's sustainable mobility agenda. Governor Pramono Anung instructed the measure as a short-term fix to ease severe traffic worsened by ongoing water pipe works that reduced lanes, with his staff urging residents to switch to public transport. Critics, including the Road Safety Association Indonesia and the Pedestrian Coalition, warned the policy reflects knee-jerk reactions to social media pressure and prioritizes cars over people, with Alfred Sitorus calling it a "setback" to Jakarta's decades-long push for sustainable urban transport and highlighting the city's unfulfilled 2017 pledge to build 1,600 km of sidewalks. Amid mounting criticism, Pramono clarified the measure would only apply temporarily to sidewalks already blocked by construction, while the city also expanded Transjakarta services and considered longer-term fixes like underpasses or flyovers.

[Female PKK Cadres: A Social Bastion Against Radicalism](#)

—Adhitya Ramadhan, *Kompas*, 24 August 2025

Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK) cadres, often dismissed as minor players in community programs, are emerging as key actors in countering radicalism by supporting families of suspected terrorists and engaging intolerant groups. In Bangselok Village, East Java, cadres assisted the isolated wife and child of a terror suspect with food aid and scholarships, helping her reintegrate into society. Similar efforts are seen in West Java, where cadres trained by SeRVE Indonesia since 2022 have gained confidence in detecting seeds of radicalism, approaching exclusive religious groups, and aiding families abandoned by radicalized members. Setara Institute recorded 217 cases of religious freedom violations nationwide in 2023, with West Java topping the list at 47 cases, underscoring the program's urgency. SeRVE director Dete Aliah said PKK's grassroots structure makes it ideal for prevention efforts, though sustainability often depends on local administrations' priorities. Despite

challenges, their involvement has reframed PKK women as vital agents of peacebuilding and resilience in vulnerable communities.

The Constitutional Court was asked to order the DPR to prioritize women in filling AKD leadership positions.

—Susana Rita Kumalasanti, *Kompas*, 24 August 2025

The Constitutional Court is being urged to reaffirm women's representation in the leadership of the House of Representatives (DPR) and its supporting bodies (AKD), as mandated in a 2014 ruling but later disregarded when the MD3 Law was revised in 2017, removing the clause prioritizing women's roles. The current judicial review of Law No. 17/2014, filed by Perludem, the Indonesian Women's Coalition, Kalyanamitra, and Titi Anggraini, challenges the lack of gender equality in filling AKD leadership, with a decision pending after hearings concluded in July 2025. Former legislator Eva Kusuma Sundari said political parties remain the main barrier, perpetuating patriarchal practices that sideline women, despite their proven contributions to landmark laws such as those on domestic violence, elections, and human trafficking when they held AKD leadership roles. BRIN researcher Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi and academic Anna Margret Lumban Gaol stressed that women's leadership in AKD is strategic, as it shapes agendas, policy direction, and legislative priorities in parliament.

Indonesian Women Still Experience Violence and Limited Access to Technology

—Sonya Hellen Sinombor, *Kompas*, 16 August 2025

Despite 80 years of independence, Indonesian women continue to face persistent challenges, including domestic violence, low representation in leadership, limited digital access in rural areas, and vulnerability to online loan scams, according to Business and Professional Women (BPW) Indonesia. BPW chair Giwo Rubianto Wiyogo stressed that these issues reflect unfulfilled independence and urged reforms to empower women as producers and leaders in the digital economy, not just consumers. She criticized the neglect of protective laws, such as the long-delayed Domestic Workers Protection Law, while political and economic regulations advance more easily. The group has partnered with BNI and the Financial Services Authority to boost financial literacy and will host an international forum on AI and green business on August 20. Supporting the call, Women's Empowerment Minister Arifatul Choiri Fauzi highlighted the digital gender gap, with male internet users at 72.07 percent versus women's 66.35 percent, and urged massive financial literacy programs, echoed by Bank Indonesia Deputy Governor Destry Damayanti.

80 Years of Indonesian Independence. Past Serious Human Rights Cases Still Await Resolution

—Dian Dewi Purnamasari, *Kompas*, 15 August 2025

As Indonesia nears its 80th independence anniversary, human rights activists and survivors of past atrocities renewed calls for justice, warning that independence is meaningless without resolving serious human rights violations. At a public forum in Jakarta, Suciwati, widow of murdered activist Munir Said Thalib, condemned the state's failure to address cases like her husband's killing and accused the government of attempting to rewrite history to whitewash past abuses. Former attorney general Marzuki Darusman, who led the fact-finding team on the May 1998 riots, criticized the planned history rewrite—now postponed to November—as political manipulation and urged recognition of documented mass rapes and racial violence. Survivors of the 1965 tragedy, such as Uchikowatie Fauzia, testified to ongoing stigma and discrimination, while younger activists stressed the need to preserve memory against state erasure. Although some victims accepted non-judicial settlement initiatives under President

Joko Widodo, speakers insisted that legal accountability remains essential for truth and reconciliation.

I. Government Priority Program

Prabowo's Star of Merit and Circle of Life History

—Kurnia Yunita Rahayu and Nina Susilo, *Kompas*, 26 August 2025

President Prabowo Subianto on Monday (25/8/2025) awarded state honors to 119 figures at the State Palace—twice as many as in the final year of Joko Widodo's presidency— spanning politicians, ministers, artists, military figures, and community leaders, with the total number set to reach 141 by Heroes' Day in November. The awards, including the Star of the Republic of Indonesia and the Mahaputera Star, were given after assessment by the Council of Titles, Decorations, and Honors, with 15 individuals receiving the nation's highest order. Recipients included Prabowo's brother Hashim Djojohadikusumo, Gerindra Party elites, coalition politicians such as Golkar's Bahlil Lahadalia, PAN's Zulkifli Hasan, Democrat leader Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono, and PKB's Muhaimin Iskandar, as well as loyalists from his campaign and military past, including East Timor partisans. Cultural icons like Waldjinah, I Nyoman Nuarta, and vaccine scientist Carina Citra Dewi Joe were also honored. The recognition, framed as an effort to unite the nation's diverse talents in Indonesia's 80th independence year, has drawn both praise and scrutiny over political considerations.

Hundreds hit with food poisoning in Indonesia after eating free meals from president's flagship program

—Reuters, *TheGuardian*, 15 August 2025

More than 360 people in Sragen, Central Java, were hospitalized after consuming school lunches from President Prabowo Subianto's flagship free meals programme, officials confirmed on Thursday, marking the largest food poisoning incident since the policy's launch in January. Local authorities said 365 people fell ill after eating turmeric rice, omelette ribbons, fried tempeh, salad, apple slices, and milk prepared in a central kitchen, which has been ordered to suspend operations pending lab results. The programme, a key campaign promise and multibillion-dollar policy, has faced repeated safety lapses, with over 1,000 people nationwide falling sick, including more than 200 students in West Java earlier this year where Salmonella and E. coli were detected. Despite measures to tighten kitchen standards, the mass poisonings raise questions over the government's ability to safely scale up the programme, which has already reached 15 million recipients and aims to feed 83 million Indonesians by year-end at a cost of 171 trillion rupiah (\$10.62 billion).

'Historical amnesia': Indonesia's fight over plan to amend history books

—Michael Nielson, *TheGuardian*, 15 August 2025

Indonesia has postponed the release of a 10-volume "official history" project to November after strong backlash from historians and activists who accused the government of attempting to whitewash past atrocities and promote "historical amnesia." Initially set for launch on 17 August, the books—championed by Culture Minister Fadli Zon to remove colonial bias and instill national pride—have been criticized for downplaying human rights abuses, including the 1965–66 anti-communist massacres, the 1998 riots targeting ethnic Chinese, and allegations

involving President Prabowo Subianto's past role in the kidnapping of pro-democracy activists. Critics argue the project reflects a broader trend of revisionism under Prabowo, who has faced criticism for efforts to rehabilitate Suharto's legacy, with some warning of a return to tightly controlled narratives reminiscent of the dictatorship. The controversy coincides with youth protests marked by the hoisting of black "One Piece" pirate flags ahead of Independence Day, a symbolic critique of democratic backsliding, media restrictions, and the military's growing influence under Prabowo's leadership.

II. Indonesia in Politics and Geopolitics

[In Prabowo's Indonesia, the military is quietly creeping back into civilian life](#)

—Kate Lamb and Ben Doherty, *TheGuardian*, 28 August 2025

President Prabowo Subianto has established 100 new army battalions, with plans for 500 more in five years, sparking criticism that the military's growing role in civilian affairs signals a democratic backslide reminiscent of Suharto's authoritarian era. The new units, officially tasked with agriculture, food security, and disaster relief rather than combat, come alongside laws allowing military officers to hold civilian posts and initiatives placing the armed forces in pharmaceutical production and land reclamation. Analysts warn the expansion dilutes professionalism, revives the defunct *dwifungsi* (dual function) doctrine, and could be used to consolidate political power, particularly as special forces expand into Papua. The government defends the move as necessary to safeguard Indonesia's sovereignty across its vast archipelago of 17,000 islands, with a proposed 2026 defence budget of 335 trillion rupiah (\$22bn), a 37% hike. Critics argue the policy weakens civilian institutions and risks inefficiency, while rising militarisation coincides with austerity-driven protests nationwide.

[Protests erupt in Indonesia over privileges for parliament members and 'corrupt elites'](#)

—Kate Lamb and agencies, *TheGuardian*, 26 August 2025

Riot police clashed with thousands of protesters in Jakarta, firing teargas and water cannons as students, workers, and activists rallied against lavish parliamentary allowances and growing military influence under President Prabowo Subianto. Demonstrators demanded the abolition of MPs' monthly housing allowance of 50 million rupiah (\$US3,075), nearly 10 times Jakarta's minimum wage, calling lawmakers and officials "corrupt elites" who favor conglomerates and the military. The unrest reflects broader anger over austerity measures, including cuts to education, health, and public works, as well as recent policies expanding the military's role in civilian life. Protesters, some waving a pirate flag from the manga *One Piece* as a symbol of resistance, hurled rocks and bottles at police and set fires near parliament, while authorities blocked major roads, causing traffic chaos. More than 1,200 security personnel were deployed, though no injuries were immediately reported. Analysts warn the protests, following similar unrest in Central Java and Sulawesi, signal rising dissent against Prabowo's government.

[Family pleads Prabowo to reopen investigation into diplomat's death](#)

—News Desk, *TheJakartaPost*, 26 August 2025

The family of Indonesian diplomat Arya Daru Pangayunan, found dead on July 8 in his Central Jakarta boarding house with his head wrapped in plastic and duct tape, has urged

President Prabowo Subianto to order a reinvestigation, insisting he was murdered despite police ruling out foul play. Police concluded the 39-year-old junior diplomat, who was preparing for a new posting in Finland, died from airway obstruction with no outside involvement, citing his fingerprints on the tape and past emails suggesting suicidal thoughts. However, the family and their lawyer argue key evidence was overlooked, including injuries on Arya's body, the presence of sedatives in his system, suspicious activity on his missing phone after death, and a mysterious package delivered to his home. They also questioned the logic of suicide given Arya's career prospects and family plans. The case has raised doubts over the investigation's credibility, with the family demanding answers and justice for what they believe was a homicide.

[Indonesia, US start 13-nation 'Super Garuda Shield' military drills](#)

—Agence France-Presse and Associated Press, *SouthChinaMorningPost*, 25 August 2025

Indonesia and the United States launched the largest-ever "Super Garuda Shield" joint military drills, involving more than 4,100 Indonesian and 1,300 American troops alongside forces from 11 other nations, in Jakarta, Sumatra, and the Riau archipelago until September 4. The exercises, which include cyber defence, staff training, and live-fire events, aim to strengthen regional stability and deterrence amid rising tensions in the Asia-Pacific. US Indo-Pacific Commander Samuel Paparo said the drills demonstrate collective resolve to uphold sovereignty and respond swiftly to challenges, while Indonesian Armed Forces Deputy Commander Tandyo Budi Revita emphasized building deeper trust among partners. Although Washington and allies like Australia have voiced concern over China's assertiveness in the Pacific, both sides stress the drills are not directed at Beijing. Still, China criticized the exercises as efforts to form an "Asian NATO." Analysts say Indonesia balances its growing defence cooperation with Western powers while maintaining economic ties with China, reflecting a strategic policy of "defence diversification, not alignment."

[Indonesia working on details of plan to treat 2,000 people from Gaza amid concerns about right to return](#)

—Kate Lamb, *TheGuardian*, 22 August 2025

Indonesia is exploring plans to provide temporary medical treatment for 2,000 Palestinians from war-torn Gaza, with inter-ministerial discussions underway to assess logistics, legality, and foreign policy implications, officials said. Galang Island, once used for Vietnamese refugees and as a pandemic hospital, has been identified as a potential site alongside alternatives in West and Central Java, Jakarta's military hospitals, or even Jordan. Deputy parliament commission chair Dave Laksono confirmed discussions cover feasibility, medical readiness, and legal frameworks, while Foreign Ministry official Abdul Kadir Jailani stressed the plan must respect Palestinians' right of return and receive approval from Palestinian authorities and regional partners. Officials acknowledge the political sensitivity, with some Islamic leaders warning against misinterpretation, but maintain the goal is care, not resettlement. Indonesia, a strong supporter of Palestinian statehood, recently conducted humanitarian airdrops over Gaza with Jordan's help. While any permanent relocation would be controversial, criticism remains muted domestically as the proposal is still in the exploratory stage.

[German foreign minister backs Israel and Palestine two-state solution during Indonesia visit](#)

—NinieK Karmini, *APNews*, 20 August 2025

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul and Indonesian Foreign Minister Sugiono jointly called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the release of hostages held by Hamas, stressing that a two-state solution is the only path to ending the conflict. Speaking in Jakarta, Wadephul acknowledged Germany's responsibility as Israel's close partner while urging measures to ease Gaza's humanitarian crisis, while Sugiono reiterated Indonesia's long-standing support for Palestine, noting the country does not recognize Israel. The ministers also discussed broader geopolitical challenges, trade barriers, and plans to strengthen economic ties, with bilateral trade reaching \$6.15 billion in 2024 and German investment exceeding \$343 million. Negotiations on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement are expected to conclude by 2026, alongside Germany's €1.6 billion (\$1.8 billion) pledge to Indonesia's clean energy transition through the Just Energy Transition Partnership. Wadephul, on a five-day trip to Indonesia and Japan, also praised Indonesia's stabilizing role in ASEAN and regional conflict mediation.