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## Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

2021 Issue 18: 2 September 2021

*The Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest is a biweekly collection of brief summaries of English-language articles related to conservation, environment and sustainability that have appeared in print or online in Indonesian, regional or global media. We welcome all comments, suggestions, and corrections.*

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### A. The Covid-19 Crisis in Indonesia

#### [Covid-19 update for Indonesia](#)

—Reuters, 31 August 2021

The average number of new Covid-19 cases in Indonesia has declined by 21% of the peak level on 18 July to 10,471 new infections, while the number of fatalities has fallen by more than 1,000 to just 58% of its previous peak. Over the past week, daily vaccinations averaged about 1,074,678 doses. Indonesia has now administered at least 98,966,499 doses of Covid-19 vaccine, sufficient to provide two doses to about 18.3% of the population, a significant increase, though the number of persons who actually received two doses is not known. At the current rate of vaccination, it will require 51 days to administer enough doses to cover another 10% of the population. There have been 4.1 million Covid-19 cases in Indonesia since the pandemic began in early 2020, and 133,676 coronavirus-related deaths.

### [Treating Covid-19 as an endemic disease means little to desperate people](#)

—Nur Janti, *The Jakarta Post*, 27 August 2021

The government is considering changing its approach to the Covid-19 pandemic by adopting a strategy living with the coronavirus instead of a zero-sum fight against a disease that has infected over 4 million people and killed more than 130,000 across the country. Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin told media he was in the midst of formulating protocols for treating the coronavirus as an endemic disease, adding that the government would intensify health protocol observance, vaccinations, as well as testing, tracing, and treatment, including by using the *PeduliLindungi* mobile app and imposing multi-tiered activity restrictions (PPKM). Outside of government, however, people say the restrictions have caused more difficulties to their economic well-being than the pandemic. For Covid-19 to be considered an endemic disease, Indonesia would need to meet criteria set out by WHO, including recording fewer than 20 daily new cases and fewer than one death per 100,000 people in a given population per week, experts say, adding that this could only happen in Indonesia after 2022.

### [Indonesian Navy sets sail on maritime vaccination drive](#)

—Agence France Presse via *Barron's*, 25 August 2021

The Indonesian navy is taking its vaccination drive to the sea in a bid to ramp up vaccinations in the world's biggest archipelago. The navy has deployed 60 boats and warships to scour thousands of kilometres of coastline in the hunt for unvaccinated fishers, from Sumatra to Bali to remote Papua. Among their targets, one navy warship deployed a flotilla of rubber dingies with crew and vaccines aboard to jab willing fishers in rickety boats of the coast of Sumatra. About 1,000 fishers have been jabbed since the program began, but authorities admit they don't know how many unvaccinated people are out there. "We are just combing the sea," spokesman Laode Muhamad Halib said as the search area extended to 24 nautical miles off the coast. Indonesia has been hammered by the pandemic, but so far only about 12% of the country's 270 million population have been fully vaccinated. "Our lives depend on the sea," Sumatran fisher Adi Putra Hasibuan, who took up the Navy's offer, said. "We know the government is supplying vaccines on land, but we just don't have time to get one."

### [Scars of Papua conflict weigh on Covid-19 vaccine drive](#)

—Andrea Christiani and Haeril Halim, *Southeast Asia Globe*, 26 August 2021

"William is refusing vaccination against the coronavirus because he fears Indonesia's military will use the inoculation program to poison him and wipe out Papuans. Decades of conflict, racism and human rights abuses are fuelling Covid-19 conspiracy theories at a time when the breakaway region faces a renewed threat from the pandemic. "I won't take a vaccine if its brought here by Indonesia," "William" stated, adding that he would gladly sign up for any dose administered directly by the World Health Organization. Indonesia drafted the military to help run its vaccination drive, including in Papua, but hatred of the Indonesian military runs deep in the region. Security forces have been accused of committing atrocities against civilians during decades of fighting between a rebel independence movement and government troops. Appeals by local activists have done little to lift low vaccination numbers in Papua, which stand at fewer than 30,000—less than 1% of the population. But the region is now threatened by the highly contagious Delta variant.

### [Hartarto: President is leading rapid handling of Covid-19 pandemic](#)

—Indra AP, Resinta S, *Antara*, 28 August 2021

Airlangga Hartarto, Chairman of the Golkar Party, said that rapid handling of the Covid-19 pandemic is being directly led by President Joko Widodo. "We tried to handle it from lower administration, but it did not work out, so it is better to be led directly by the President with the help of TNI – Polri [Indonesian Armed forces and the National Police], Hartarto remarked during President Widodo's meeting with leader of coalition political parties. Communication and Informatics Minister Johnny G. Plate stated that mutual cooperation has been crucial to Indonesia's success in overcoming difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic and strengthened collaboration among all political parties would further help the nation overcome this challenge. Plate used the occasion to

announce that the National Mandate Party (PAN) headed by Zulkifli Hasan had joined President Widodo's pro-government alliance of parties, bringing the coalition's strength up to include 82% of the members of parliament, with only the Partai Demokrat and Justice Welfare Party (PKS) still in opposition.

#### [Prolonged crisis puts President Joko Widodo in a bind](#)

—A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil, *The Jakarta Post*, 30 August 2021

President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's approval rating has dropped below 60% as public discontent over prolonged social restrictions policies put in place to contain the deadly Delta variant-induced second wave in June. While a majority of people still approve of Jokowi's performance, analysts say he risks a further decline in popularity should he fail to ease social restrictions and reopen the economy. The waning approval by the public came amid allegations that Jokowi was seeking to extend his second administration through a constitutional amendment to amend the provision limiting a president to two five-year terms, and in a major move to consolidate his power, Jokowi has added the National Mandate Party (PAN) to the "ruling coalition", which now controls more than 80% of the House of Representatives. But analysts say Jokowi's popularity could rebound if he manages to speed up vaccinations and revive the economy.

## **B. Marine & Fisheries**

#### [Study shows how sustainable livelihood programs for Indonesian fishers can succeed](#)

—Cassie Freund, *Mongabay*, 26 August 2021

Over the past few decades, many conservation and sustainable development organizations working across the archipelago have developed alternative-livelihoods programs to help fishing communities enhance or diversify their incomes and protect their environmental resources. A new study has synthesized for conservation and development practitioners what makes successful sustainable livelihoods interventions tick. They found that projects were more likely to be successful if they engaged with local NGOs, government agencies and project facilitators; worked in partnership with local people to develop their skills and leverage traditional resource-management knowledge; and linked project participants with markets where they could sell the products they produced, among other factors. Alternative-livelihoods projects that failed to understand the social context including gender dynamics, resource and land-tenure systems, and the desires of local fishers, generally were unsuccessful. Projects with unclear links between activities and goals; that did not engage with existing government priorities and policies; and that had timelines that were too short to create lasting change, also tended not to achieve their goals.

**Paper:** Natasha Stacey, et al, "[Developing sustainable small-scale fisheries livelihoods in Indonesia: Trends, enabling and constraining factors, and future opportunities](#)", in *Marine Policy* 132 (October 2021) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2021.104654>

#### [Minister: Measured fishing policy aims to balance ecological and economic aspect of fishing](#)

—Razi Rahman, Uyu Liman, *Antaranews*, 23 August 2021

Marine Affairs and Fisheries Minister Sakti Wahyu Trenggono has said that the implementation of the measured fishing policy prepared by his administration could ensure a balance between the ecological and economic aspects of fishing, describing the policy as a model for implementing the Blue Economy principles, which is expected to help maintain Indonesia's position as the world's major fish supplier. "Moreover, we will also implement a trade limit regarding the size of exported fish. The measured fishing policy intends to measure the result of fishery resources management, he explained. The policy will assess the production rate and fishing limits which would indicate ecosystem resilience to support food security, he said. In addition, the policy will assess the value of fisheries production as well as the income and welfare of fishermen and regulate fishing areas, the number of fish caught, the number of vessels allowed to do fishing, ports where fish shipments can land, as well as the types of fishing equipment allowed to be used, the minister said.

### [Indonesia's newly-minted investigators go after illegal fishing money launderers](#)

—Basten Gokkon, *Mongabay*, 1 September 2021

Indonesia is scaling up its fight against fisheries-related crimes thanks to a recent Constitutional Court decision has given civil service investigators, including investigators from the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (DKP) and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (HKLK) the authority to participate in tracking the assets of persons involved in money-laundering crimes. Previously, only police, prosecutors, and investigators from the Independent Commission Against Corruption (KPK) were allowed to do so. "Civil servant investigators can now follow the trail of assets of the criminals in the fisheries and marine sector for signs of money laundering," Adin Nurawaluddin, the DKP's Director General of Marine and Fisheries Resources Monitoring, said. Perpetrators behind organized crime in the fisheries industry are often companies with complex operational activities in many countries. Some of these crimes are corporate in nature, as in the laundering of criminal proceeds through offshore financial centers. The Indonesia Ocean Justice Initiative estimates that IUU fishing costs Indonesia \$4 billion per year in lost revenue.

### [Climate Justice: Why adaptation to warming oceans won't lift all fishing](#)

—Dyna Rochmyaningsih, *Christian Science Monitor*, 26 August 2021

The need for adaptation is a mantra in climate debates, what happens when it fails to outrun a rapidly warming planet and its devastating effects on livelihoods. For fishing communities in archipelagic countries like Indonesia, there may be no easy solutions, only hard questions for industrialized countries whose emissions led the planet down a perilous path of extreme weather. "Climate change is a global phenomenon that affects the livelihoods of vulnerable communities [so] it is justifiable for them to demand justice from governments of richer countries reluctant to cut their emissions," says Linda Yanti Sulistiawati, an associate law professor at Gadjah Mada University and a lead author of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (UN IPCC) latest report. For fishers in Mekar, Sulawesi, the eastern monsoon winds that used to end in June now linger as late as August with the easterlies becoming more dominant and bigger waves more common. "Small-scale fishers are the first ones to see the impact of climate change, said Faisal Habibi, a scientist at Indonesia's BMKG, the meteorological agency.

## C. Forests & Land Use

### [Indonesian pulpwood firms required to protect degraded peatlands do the opposite](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 20 August 2021

Pulpwood companies legally obliged to restore degraded peatlands inside their concessions which have adopted sustainability pledges such as "no deforestation, no peatland, no exploitation" or NDPE are instead continuing to clear natural forests, cultivate the land, and planting new acacia trees in areas that were supposed to be restored as wetlands, according to a new report, which identifies PT Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper (RAPP), part of the APRIL conglomerate, as one of the offending companies. Jikalahari investigators found signs of planting activity inside protected conservation peat zones in RAPP's Meranti Islands concession, as well as young acacia trees, drainage canals, newly-harvested acacia logs in red zones, and an excavator being used to clean canals and build a road to transport logs. Another company, PT Arara Abadi (AA), a subsidiary of Asia Pulp and Paper (APP), is also highlighted for harvesting acacia in red zones, replanting in previously-burned areas, and a reported clash between AA and the Sakai Indigenous community in Riau over disputed claims to AA's 292,262 concession.

**Report:** WALHI Riau, WALHI Jambi, WALHI Sumsel, Point Kabar, "[Dibalik rusaknya hutan Indonesia](#)" (Behind the destruction of Indonesia's forests), *Jikalahari* (2021).

### [Properly executed mangrove restoration can have clear economic and ecological benefits](#)

—Sheryl Lee Tian Tong, *Mongabay*, 31 August 2021

Despite the adaptability of mangrove trees, mangrove restoration projects have some of the highest failure rates in conservation. Misguided restoration efforts, planting the wrong species in the wrong places at incorrect density, can go awry. “There’s a common misconception that mangroves love seawater,” explained Dan Friess, head of the Mangrove Lab at the National University of Singapore. “But they’re just tolerating it. That’s why many mangrove restoration efforts fail.” Despite the difficulties, mangrove restoration can provide ecological as well as economic benefits, from ecotourism income to coastal protection. A new meta-study shows that ecosystem functions of restored mangroves are higher than unvegetated tidal flats, but lower than natural mangroves. Protecting and maintaining existing mangroves is still the most cost-effective. “Conservation should always be the first step, Friess said. Mangroves also sequester up to four times as much carbon as rainforests, making them attractive potential solutions in booming carbon offsets markets. Indonesia’s Mangrove Restoration Agency is targeting the restoration of 600,000 ha of mangrove forests by 2024.

**Paper:** Jie Su, Daniel A. Friess, Alexandros Gasparatos, “[A meta-analysis of the ecological and economic outcomes of mangrove restoration](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-021-25349-1)”, *Nature Communications* 12, 19 August 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-021-25349-1>.

## D. Energy, Mining and Climate Change

### [ADB, PLN consider plans to retire Indonesian coal power plants early](#)

—Norman Harsono, *The Jakarta Post*, 24 August 2021

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is working on a scheme to buy coal-fired power plants and retire them early to expedite the energy transition in one of the world’s top source of carbon emissions. The ADB, state-owned electric power monopoly PLN, and other stakeholders are finalizing a study of an Energy Transition Mechanism (ETM) to tackle the key obstacle to reaching net zero emissions at an earlier date: the long remaining lifespan of domestic coal plants. PLN now operates coal plants with a combined generating capacity of 32,924 MW, 45% of Indonesia’s total installed capacity, with more plants are in the pipeline. Electric Power Director General Energy Rida Mulyana said the government could not afford to compensate owners to retire their coal-fired plants early. Under the scheme, the ETM would raise capital, purchase the plants, and operate them for 15 years or less to partly recoup costs. But economist Erika Hamdi said the ETM will not be able to replace all the coal plants in the system. “That would cost hundreds of billions of dollars.”

### [Facing climate change, Indonesia still wants growth](#)

—Tivara Tanudjaja, *Indonesia Water Portal*, 22 August 2021

When it comes to climate change, Indonesian President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo wants to have it both ways. He has announced a plan to combat climate change—albeit a very weak one—but at the same time, he is trying to boost the nation’s economy by developing infrastructure in ways that harm the climate. Jokowi’s carbon emissions reduction targets, offering to reach carbon neutrality by 2070, have been called “highly insufficient” His targets are in line with global warming of 3-4° C, while the Paris Agreement’s goal is to keep warming below 2° C. Ruandha Agung Sugardiman, Director-General of Climate Change Management at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, said that 2070 is a “logical” timeline for Indonesia to reach carbon neutrality. “We need to consider our national development to maintain economic growth at 5-7% as well as the population size,” he said. To do this, the government adopted the Omnibus Law on Job Creation to reduce red tape to attract more foreign investment, but the bill has weakened environmental protection.

### [Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati: Indonesia needs Rp 3,779 trillion to tackle climate change](#)

—Agatha Olivia victoria, Katria, *Antaranews*, 4 August 2021

Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati said Indonesia will need investment of Rp3,779 trillion (US\$365 billion) instead of Rp 3,461 trillion by 2030 to tackle climate change. “It is an extraordinary high number, and that’s only for needs in Indonesia, but if we wanted to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by up to 41%, then the investment requirement

would reach US\$479 billion. Because the State Budget (APBN) cannot meet climate change commitments, this will require funding from the domestic and global private sector, including the World Bank, said Indrawati, a former managing director of the World Bank. This makes it necessary for the government to formulate policies to attract more investment to develop key sectors, including forestry, energy, transportation, waste, agriculture and industry. The government is mulling possible solutions including policies on carbon pricing, carbon markets, and carbon taxes, the Minister said. The Minister stressed that the Omnibus Law, which changed the investment climate, will have positive effects to allow Indonesia to attract investment and technology for sustainable development.

## E. Pollution and Waste Management

### [Cleaning up Indonesia's Citarum River, one of world's most polluted waterways](#)

—Monash Lens, *Mirage*, 26 August 2021

The Citarum is the biggest river in West Java, running 270km through thousands of communities to connect people, villages and landscapes of Indonesia's most populous province, but it is also one of the most polluted rivers in the world. In 2018, the Indonesian government established the Citarum Harum, a seven-year river revitalisation program with the goal of making the Citarum's water drinkable by 2025. Supported by the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank, the program includes reforestation surrounding mountains, extracting toxic sediments, regulating wastewater discharge, and environmental education. Soldiers have been assigned to clean allocated sections of the river and install rubbish and water treatment facilities. Local universities and environmental agencies have worked to identify sources of contamination and investigate solutions. To address these challenges, Monash University has adopted cross-disciplinary thinking that integrates urban design, urban transformation through water-sensitive and circular economy approaches, and sustainability transition theory through social innovations and experimentation.

### [Vice Minister: Waste management collective responsibility across sectors](#)

—Prisca Violleta, Fadhli Ruhman, *Antara*, 30 August 2021

Waste management is a collective responsibility for government, businesses, communities, as well as individuals, according to Vice Minister of Environment and Forestry Alue Dohong. A mapping exercise performed by the Ministry of Environment and Forest has found that 54% of plastic waste and 55% of paper waste is still being discarded into the environment or not recycled, he said. Garbage management improves citizens' health and the quality of the environment and can turn garbage into a resource. Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, the Coordinating Minister of Maritime Affairs and Investment, said that the government is currently aiming to realize 100% garbage management by 2025, with 30% of efforts focused on garbage reduction and 70% on management. "To realize the remaining target by 2025, we have to work harder, especially during the pandemic which has led to increasing volumes of plastic garbage and medical waste."

### [Electronic trash: The Indonesians fighting e-waste and educating people](#)

—The Jakarta Post, 1 September 2021

Electronic waste (or e-waste) is created when electronic products are discarded at the end of their useful length. To date, however, Indonesia's efforts to deal with e-waste have been limited. Despite the existence of a national regulation, it remains unclear which government agencies should be responsible for dealing with it. EWasteRJ is a non-profit organization that has emerged as a leading e-waste management initiative in Indonesia. Its starting point in 2014 was the gross negligence of tech companies and the lack of oversight by the government regarding electronic waste. "The main challenge is that there are still so many informal e-waste recyclers, [mostly] individuals who lack basic knowledge about recycling and who do not have protection gear," an organizer said. The team provides drop boxes for household e-waste disposal across Java island, educating people, collecting e-waste and passing the waste on to a material recovery company certified by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry.

## F. Conservation and Protected Areas

### Captive breeding of Sumatran rhinos: Where the program stands today

—Mongabay, 31 August 2021

Indonesia is home to the last holdout populations of Sumatran rhinos (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*), a species that once ranged across much of southern Asia. Official figures put the total population at fewer than 80 individuals, which may be optimistic. Most are in three habitats: up to 50 in northern Sumatra's Leuser Ecosystem, up to 20 in Way Kambas National Park in southern Sumatra, and 10 in parts of Kalimantan, or Indonesian Borneo. A consensus now exists that efforts to breed Sumatran rhinos in captivity must be intensified, but the Covid-19 pandemic has caused complications and delays. Two calves have been born at the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary at Way Kambas since 2012. Plans to carry out breeding with a female captured in 2018 at the Kelian Lestari sanctuary in East Kalimantan are currently on hold. In the Leuser Ecosystem, home to the largest remaining population of wild Sumatran rhinos, plans to capture rhinos and open a new captive breeding facility have also been put on hold due to the pandemic.

### More than 30% of the world's wild tree species at risk of extinction

—Oliver Griffin, *Reuters* (via *The Jakarta Post*), 1 September 2021

Almost a third of the world's tree species are at risk of extinction, with hundreds on the brink, according to Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI). The report said 17,500 tree species are at risk, while 440 species have fewer than 50 living individuals left in the wild and at least 142 species were recorded as extinct. The most at-risk tree species include magnolias and dipterocarps, commonly found in Southeast Asian rainforests. Thousands of varieties in the world's top six countries for tree-species diversity are at risk, including 1,788 threatened tree species in Brazil and 1,306 species in Indonesia. Factors impacting tree biodiversity include ecosystem collapse, unprecedented forest fires, drought, heat stress, and increasing incidence of pests and diseases, in large part linked to climate change. According to the IUCN Red List, at a global scale, anthropogenic threats include the expansion of agriculture, affecting 29% of tree species, logging (27%), livestock farming (14%), residential and commercial development (13%), energy production and mining (9%), and wood and pulp plantations (6%).

**Report:** Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), [\*State of the World's Trees \(September 2021\)\*](#).

### Infrastructure for Indonesia's new capital in East Kalimantan could threaten Heart of Borneo

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/08/highway-cutting-through-heart-of-borneo-poised-to-be-very-very-bad/>

—Sheryl Lee Tian Tong, *Mongabay*, 23 August 2021

Migration of species is critical to Borneo's ecosystems, which are some of the richest in the world. They cross forests but also national borders: Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei all own parts of Borneo, making it one of the largest transboundary rainforests on the planet. In 2007, the three countries signed a voluntary pact to conserve one-third of its land: a mostly intact, 22-million-hectare stretch named the Heart of Borneo. Now, this agreement is breaking up as they pursue a new collective ambition: the Pan Borneo Highway, a 5,324-kilometer road network that will link Sabah and Sarawak in Malaysia to Kalimantan in Indonesia, and Brunei. While the new highway could spur economic development in remote villages, it also carves into protected areas in the Heart of Borneo, opening them up for resource extraction. In particular, the roads could fast-track development of a new "oil palm belt," with disastrous consequences for both wildlife and Indigenous people in Borneo, experts say.

### Halt alarming recurrence of human-tiger conflicts in Aceh

—Rahmad Nasution, *Antara*, 28 August 2021

Human-wildlife conflicts in the Indonesian province of Aceh have become a serious problem that must be promptly, properly, and comprehensively handled to preserve endangered wild animals that are native to the island of Sumatra. This week, three Sumatran tigers (*Pantera Tigris Sumatrae*), including two 10-month cubs, were

found dead after being caught in several wild boar traps that a poacher had apparently set in a conservation area in South Aceh District. The District Head Tgk Amran deplored the deaths of these critically-endangered animals that are native to the island of Sumatra and urged the local police to investigate the case. Amran claimed that local residents, who rely on forests for feeding their families, do not set any trap that may harm endangered wild animals. In response to the recurrences of human-wildlife conflicts in Aceh, Yahdi Hasan, a member of Aceh Province's legislative body, had also highlighted the importance of protecting and preserving the natural habitats of wild animals.

## G. Other

### [Editorial: Food security or disruption?](#)

—Editorial board, *The Jakarta Post*, 2 September 2021

The government has finally established a National Food Agency, responsible for coordinating, formulating and implementing policy on food availability, prices, security, diversification, safety and supply, and nutrition, cooperating with state-owned enterprises (SOEs) that operate in food production and trade to manage the national food supply. With one stroke, the regulation has banned private companies from importing staple foods, which means they are no longer able to collude with officials at agriculture and trade ministries to obtain food import quotas. Food commodity imports had become a lucrative business due to high profit margins based on the higher price of locally-produced foods. Now the new agency will have to rely on SOEs such as Bulog (responsible for managing rice supply), cattle and poultry farm PT Berdikari, and food traders PT Rajawali Nusantara and PT Perusahaan. But it is too early to say whether these SOEs will be able to perform in importing food for national supply management, which will require a lot of financing. Nor is it clear who will bear inherent losses of food supply management, especially for highly perishable commodities like chilis, onion and garlic. But the most challenging and sensitive issue is how the new agency will cooperate and coordinate with the Ministry of Agriculture, previously responsible for determining food import quotas, and the Ministry of Trade which issued import licenses.

### [First ancient human DNA found from key Asian migration route in Wallacea](#)

—Bianca Nogrady, *Nature*, 26 August 2021

The 7,000 year-old skeleton of a teenage hunter-gatherer could be the first remains found from a mysterious ancient culture known as the Tolean people, enigmatic hunter-gatherers who inhabited Sulawesi before Neolithic farmers from East Asia, or “Austronesians”, spread into Wallacea around 4,000 years ago. [Wallacea refers to mostly Indonesian islands that are separated by deep-straits from the continental Sunda and Sahul shelves. It includes the islands of Sulawesi, Lombok, Sumbawa, Flores, Sumba, Timor, Halmahera, Buru, and Seram.]

The largely complete remains of the Stone Age woman was found by archeologists from Hasanuddin University in Makassar, in 2015, buried in a fetal position in the Leang Panninge limestone cave on South Sulawesi. DNA evidence suggests the woman shared ancestry with New Guineans and aboriginal Australians as well as with an extinct species of ancient human. The remains were found alongside Tolean-type tools. Wallacea is the gateway through which the ancestors of modern Papuan and aboriginal Australians travelled, but few ancient human remains have been found except for the famous ‘Hobbit’ remains of the early human species *Homo floresiensis* on the island of Flores, south of Sulawesi.

The woman’s ancestors may have been part of a movement of people migrating through Sulawesi to Australia and New Guinea around 50,000-60,000 years ago, but her lineage would have formed an offshoot population that remained in Sulawesi for millennia. The woman’s genome also contained Denisovan DNA from the extinct sub-species of ancient human known only through fossil discoveries in Siberia and on the Tibetan Plateau, suggesting that Wallacea may have been a region where Denisovans and the ancestors of modern humans intermingled and interbred. Indonesian scientists have named the woman Bessé, the Bugis word for “young woman”. No trace of the woman’s genetic lineage has been found in DNA samples from modern-day inhabitants of Sulawesi, but it is possible that “descendants of these Tolean peoples survived and lived on in parts of South Sulawesi until recently, and their genes could still be surviving today, though their culture disappeared thousands of years ago.”



**Paper:** Selina Carlhoff, Adam Brumm, et al, "[Genome of a middle Holocene hunter-gatherer from Wallacea](#)," *Nature* 596, 25 August 2021

### [Facebook and Google announce three international subsea data cable projects for Indonesia](#)

—Divya Karyza, *The Jakarta Post*, 1 September 2021

US-based tech companies Facebook and Google have announced three new international subsea data cable projects to bolster Indonesia's internet capacity with the wider Asia-Pacific region and North America. On 28 March, Facebook announced plans to build Echo and Bifrost to link Singapore to the US, with branches to Indonesia, the Philippines and Guam. Google announced its participation in Echo one day later. In August, the two companies announced they would also develop Apricot to connect Singapore, Japan, Guam, the Philippines, Taiwan and Indonesia.

The Echo, Bifrost and Apricot subsea cables using Securing Sea *Cable* Communication System (SKKL) optical cable infrastructure have a combined length of 43,000 km. Scheduled for completion over 2023-2024, the system's Indonesia landing stations will be in Manado, North Sulawesi and Batam in the Riau Islands. While 73% of Indonesia's population have some online access, most access the web via mobile data. Less than 10% use fixed broadband connections at home, offices, or public spaces. Indonesia currently ranks 57<sup>th</sup> out of 100 countries in the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)'s 2020 Inclusive Internet Index, which is commissioned by Facebook.

### [eHAC hacked: Authorities probes suspected data breach of 1.3 million system users](#)

—Divya Karyza, *The Jakarta Post*, 31 August 2021

The Ministry of Health, National police, and the Communications and Information Ministry said they were investigating a suspected data breach of the Indonesian Health Alert Card (eHac) system which has jeopardized the data of around 1.3 million users. The potential breach included contact details, ID card details, and Covid-19 test results. Anas Ma-Ruf, head of the Data and Information Center at the Ministry of Health, said the flawed eHac system had been inoperative since 2 July and that the new eHac system integrated into the Covid-19 tracking app *PeduliLindungi* was not affected. "The government asks everyone to uninstall and delete the old and separate eHac app, Ma'ruf said. The breach was discovered in July by encryption provider vpnMentor, which blamed the developers for failing to implement adequate data-privacy protocols. "The massive amount of data collected and exposed or each individual using the eHAC left them incredibly vulnerable to a wide range of attacks and scams," the provider said.

### [The Taliban Effect](#)

—[Tempo.co](#), 30 August 2021

There are indications that the return to power of the Taliban in Afghanistan is triggering a revival of euphoria among 'radical Islamic' groups in Indonesia. The Indonesian government is working to anticipate the possible domestic impacts of recent developments in Afghanistan. The Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Prof. Mahfud MD, has convened a meeting to discuss Indonesia's position on the Taliban's return to power. The meeting did not categorize the Taliban in Afghanistan as a terrorist group, but it discussed the movements of domestic radical and terrorist groups following the Taliban's return to power in Kabul. There is concern about sympathizers with Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), which has sent personnel to Afghanistan in the past, and concerning groups sympathetic to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS. In August, the National Police Counterterrorism Special Detachment 88 unit arrested 53 suspected terrorists in a number of regions of the country. Of these, 50 were JI sympathizers and the rest were supporters of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah, which is affiliated with ISIS.

Ends