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*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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*Notice to Readers: The remaining issues of the **Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest** for 2021 will appear on the following dates:*

Issue 21 — 27 October

Issue 23 — 24 November

Issue 22 — 10 November

Issue 24 — 8 December

*The **Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest** will resume publication on 6 January 2022.*

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A. The Covid-19 Crisis in Indonesia

Indonesia's Covid Cases Plummet

—Ainur Rohmah, *Asia Sentinel*, 27 September 2021

As recently as mid-July, Indonesia was experiencing the world's highest level of Covid-19 infections, with new cases running up to 56,000 per day, resulting in overcrowded hospitals and daily death tolls of nearly 1,000. But the country now is enjoying a sudden, spectacular respite from the disease, with cases falling by 29% over the past week and deaths dropping by 35% even as cases in neighboring countries spike upward. As of 26 September, the number of new daily cases had dropped to 1,700. "The key is reducing mobility and preventing crowding," said Udayana University virologist Prof. I Gusti Ngurah Kade Mahardika. "That is what the government is doing." But officials warn a third spike might occur sometime early in 2022. Tri Yunis Miko Wahyono, an epidemiologist at the University of Indonesia, predicted the country will again see a new peak in cases—the third wave—driven by the resumption of community mobility with vaccination coverage only 38.6% for the first dose and 22.0% for the second.

Indonesia braces for third wave of Covid-19 infections

—Nina A. Loasana, *The Jakarta Post*, 29 September 2021

Health authorities and hospitals across the archipelago are bracing for a potentially devastating "third wave" of Covid-19 cases as public mobility increases amid the loosening of restrictions and a dip in new cases. Epidemiologists warn that the third wave may strike in December or January, citing Indonesia's slow vaccination rate and the expected increase in public mobility during the year-end holidays. National Covid-19 Task Force spokesperson Siti Nadia Tarmizi

said the Ministry of Health is trying to accelerate vaccine rollouts in areas with higher risks. “We are aiming to jab 70% of people living in agglomeration areas on the islands of Java and Bali with the first dose by the end of September ... and [reaching 70% coverage in other] provincial capitals by October, Siti said. But as of this week, only Bali’s Denpasar and its satellite cities had reached that target. Indonesian Hospital Association (PERSI) officials said hospitals are preparing for the third wave by stockpiling oxygen tanks, medicines, personal protective equipment, and Covid-19 test kits.

B. Marine & Fisheries

For sustainable global fisheries, watchdogs focus on onshore beneficial owners

—Basten Gokkon, *Mongabay*, 17 September 2021

After STS-50 was seized in Indonesian waters in April 2018 and it became known that the vessel had managed to evade authorities by flying eight different flags and as many names, it became the poster child for efforts to reveal the true identity behind owners of illegal fishing vessels. Shore-based owners of global fishing vessels have benefited from the illegal activities of their crews for decades, yet remain largely untouched by law enforcement. Distant water illegal fishing vessels catch valuable fish and endangered marine species in other countries’ territorial waters or on the high seas. Now some international NGOs are working in parallel to map out the onshore networks that fund illegal fishing vessels and book the profits. Analysts for the Norway-based foundation Trygg Mat Tracking (TMT) search global records to identify vessels, beneficial owners, insurers and charters and investigate how companies from the world’s big fishing jurisdictions—Taiwan, China, Spain and Russia—use shell companies, false flags and other corporate schemes to obfuscate the true ownership of illegal fishing vessels.

Indonesia adds patrols after detecting ships in South China Sea

—*Al Jazeera*, 17 September 2021

Indonesia’s navy has increased patrols around its Natuna islands in the South China Sea after Chinese and US vessels were detected in nearby international waters, despite saying there the vessels had not caused any disturbance, western fleet commander Arsyad Abdullah said.

Five navy vessels, assisted by an air patrol, have been deployed in North Natuna Sea to secure the area. In 2017, Indonesia renamed the northern reaches of its exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea to be the North Natuna Sea as part of a push back against China’s maritime territorial ambitions. Arsyad said US and Chinese navy ships have been detected nearby recently but said they were not a disturbance, adding that the vessels were still in

international waters.

[China roils waters in Indonesia's Natuna area.](#)

—Muhammad Zulfikar Rakhmat and M. Habib Pashya, *Asia Sentinel*, 15 September 2021

When the Indonesian Coast Guard intercepted the Xiang Yang Hong 03, a Chinese research vessel, as it entered the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra in January, there were questions about why the vessel had twice deactivated its Automatic Identification System (AIS). Suspicions increased after fishers stumbled onto a Chinese underwater vehicle at a location off South Sulawesi that coincided with the route of the Xiang Yang Hong 03's passage. The vehicle, which was unmarked but carried a trailing antenna, was handed the device over to the police and the Indonesian Navy, which said it could be used to map underwater sea routes for covert submarine activity. This was not the first time China allegedly surreptitiously slipped underwater mapping devices into Indonesian waters. The government in Jakarta would like to maintain strong economic ties with Beijing, but also takes the maritime violations seriously, adding Indonesia to the list of littoral nations concerned over China's insistence that its hegemony extends over the entire South China Sea.

[Overfishing threatens to drive the bowmouth guitarfish to extinction](#)

—Basten Gokkon, Wahyu Mulyono, *Mongabay*, 24 September 2021

The population of the nearly extinct bowmouth guitarfish in Indonesia is being depleted by overfishing, according to a recent study. The bowmouth guitarfish and the white-spotted guitarfish are the most commonly caught wedgefish species in Indonesia. Almost all their body parts are traded, particularly their fins, which supply the shark fin trade and thus command the highest prices on the international market. The study noted that no stock assessment research has been conducted for these two wedgefish species, either in Indonesia or other regions, despite the globally threatened conservation status of both species. Neither is included in Indonesia's protected species list. The researchers called on the government to impose a strict catch quota for both bowmouth and white-spotted guitarfish and full protection of their juvenile populations to prevent them from going extinct in the wild. For the bowmouth guitarfish in particular, the authors strongly urged a substantial reduction in fishing to protect the population in Indonesia's western waters.

Paper: W. Kurniawan et al, "[Population Status of Two Wedgefish Species in Western Indonesian Inner Waters, Inferred from Demographic Models with Limited Data](#)" *Journal of Ichthyology* 61, 433-451 (2021).

C. Forests & Land Use

[Links to coal mining add to palm oil sector's risks for buyers](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 24 September 2021

Six of the top ten palm oil conglomerates in Indonesia also own coal mining businesses, while five of the top ten coal miners have oil palm businesses, a new report shows. This substantial overlap poses reputational and financial risks for consumer goods companies like Unilever, Nestlé and PepsiCo that buy palm oil from Indonesia because they are potentially exposed to environmental and other risks related to mining as well, including deforestation, pollution, human rights abuses, and contributing to climate change. At least 13 corporate groups having both large mining and palm oil businesses, according to the sustainability risk analysis organization Chain Reaction Research (CRR). Indonesia is the world's largest coal exporter and biggest nickel producer. The main environmental and related social risks are tied to climate change due to the mining and burning of coal, managing pollution toxic wastes leftover from mining, the impacts of mining itself on forests and communities, flooding and landslides, abandoned mining pits, and the risks of worsening disasters.

Report: Chain Reaction Research, "[Several Large Indonesian Palm Oil Companies Also Have Risky Mining Businesses](#)" 17 August 2021.

The business groups and their palm oil subsidiaries discussed in this report include: Sinar Mas (Golden Agri-Resources), Keswick family (Astra Agro Lestari), Harita Group (Bumitama), Salim Group (Indofood Agri Resources), KPN Corp (KPN/GAMA Plantation), Bakrie Group (Bakrie Sumatera Plantations), Adaro Energy, Indika Energy (Teladan Prima Agro), the Indonesian government (PTPN), LG Group, Rachmat family (Triputra Agro Persada), Chairil family (Palma Serasih) and Kayan Putra Utama Coal (Kayan Patria Pratama, KPP).

[Three industrial tree plantation group companies responsible for 4,700 ha forest loss in 2021](#)

—Chris Wiggs, *Aidenvironment*, 7 September 2021

Three pulp and paper companies in Indonesia were responsible for clearing 4,700 hectares (ha) of forest during the first half of 2021, indicating Indonesia may soon match the tree plantation deforestation level in 2020 when just five companies were responsible for the loss of 13,000 ha of forest. The three group companies clearing the most forest in 2021 are Nusantara Fiber, Alas Kusuma and the Moorim Group. Nusantara Fiber was the largest deforester in the tree plantation sector in 2020 as well. Alas Kusuma cleared 1,600 ha of forest in West Kalimantan

from January to August 2021. The Moorim Group is a South Korea company operating industrial tree plantations in Indonesia. Moorim's Indonesian subsidiary, PT Plasma Nutfah Marind Papua, was involved in a social conflict with indigenous communities over compensation in 2020, and caused 960 ha of forest loss during the first half of 2021. Over 2016 to 2021, Moorim cleared 3,800 ha, making it the largest industrial tree sector deforester over that timeframe.

[Seeing Nagari Paru's Indigenous Forest Survive Deforestation](#)

—Jaka HB, *Rainforest Journalism Fund*, 17 September 2021

Rattan is a mainstay non-timber forest product in the Nagari Paru forest in Sijunjung Regency, West Sumatra. Rattan is used to build products like furniture, fences, baskets, mats and clotheslines. The community here has been fighting to obtain protected status for its forest since 2001. In 2014, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry finally made it a “forbidden” (*hutan rimbo larangan*) or protected forest (*hutan lindung*). With this status, “we have the right to use the forest without destroying it, such as utilizing non-timber forest products (NTFPs) such as rattan, environmental services, medicinal ingredients, fruits and can be used for ecotourism,” said Iskandar, a local official.

[Can tropical rainforests benefit from surging voluntary carbon markets? The case of Indonesia](#)

—Tiza Mafira and Bruce Muhammad Mecca, *Climate Policy Initiative Blog*, 22 September 2021

The market for voluntary carbon offsets has recently experienced sharp growth over the past five years, but Indonesia's response has been ambiguous. Indonesia is currently drafting an all-encompassing carbon credit presidential regulation and carbon tax law. However, the country simultaneously cancelled self-declared forest carbon projects to prioritize its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) without any clear guidance for private carbon project developers. For a credit-producing country to benefit from voluntary markets, it must have the needed human and institutional capacities to build integrity across the entire forest carbon value chain. Indonesia should view revenues from carbon credit sales should be seen as a promising alternative finance source instead of inherent competition with NDC goals. While continuously improving its Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL) allocation system for jurisdictional and standalone offset projects and ensuring high-quality forest conservation, Indonesia should also focus on increasing transparency, reducing market barriers; simplifying the permit process, and providing incentives such as tax breaks and licensing fee discounts for new investments that will generate quality forest carbon credits.

[New Zealand developer denies key role in giant palm oil project in Papua](#)

—Bonnie Sumner, Melanie Reid, *Mongabay*, 27 September 2021

An area of Papuan rainforest earmarked to become the world's largest oil palm plantation is now in the hands of Neville Mahon, a New Zealand property developer and his Indonesian partners, the Rumangkang family. If fully developed, the 270,000 ha Tanah Merah megaproject in Papua's Boven Digoel district would release an amount of carbon equivalent to Belgium's total annual emissions from burning fossil fuels. "If we lose this forest, then we don't survive climate change," said Grant Rosoman, a senior advisor to Greenpeace International. "Destroying the forests of Papua for the benefit of a few wealthy Indonesian elites or foreign investors like Neville Mahon is not development." A 2018 investigation identified Mahon as the Rumangkang family's chief investment partner and the majority shareholder in the project, claims which Mahon has denied, saying the area is not rainforest. "There's no virgin rainforest in there. The area was cleared out by Malaysians 35 years ago. If this was a rainforest, my partner and my children wouldn't even want to walk out the door."

Report: Malaysiakini, Mongabay, Tempo, The Gecko Project, ["The Secret Deal to Destroy Paradise"](#), Mongabay Series: Indonesia for Sale, Indonesian Forests, Indonesian Palm Oil, 28 November 2018.

[Opinion: Lessons from collapse of RI-Norway REDD+ Plan](#)

—Agus P. Sari, *The Jakarta Post*, 16 September 2021

In September Indonesia terminated its ground-breaking 2010 Letter of Intent (LoI) on carbon emissions reduction with Norway. The LoI had stipulated that Norway would pay Indonesia US\$5 for each ton of emissions from deforestation avoided. The first 11.23 million tons of avoided emissions has been verified, which should have resulted in a payment of US\$56 million as part of Norway's US\$1 billion total commitment, but no payment had been made at the time Indonesia terminated the agreement. Failure of the Indonesia-Norway REDD+ LoI, one of the first to use a results-based payment (RBP) financing method, was not entirely unexpected. Lessons include: (1) The incentives to encourage alternatives to deforestation were not sufficiently high. (2) Earlier agreement on distribution of payment benefits for carbon credits among government, community, NGO and private sector entities was needed. (3) Earlier agreement on methodology for calculating avoided deforestation and safeguards was needed. (4) The Ministry of Finance's fiduciary standards should have been sufficient. (5) Countries entering into international agreements should demonstrate mutual trust. *Agus P. Sari is a lead author on the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).*

He previously served as deputy chair of Indonesia's REDD+ Management Agency and co-chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action on the UNFCCC REDD+ Finance Work Program.

Remnant forests struggle to survive amid oil palm plantations

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 23 September 2021

Most forest trees that persist in areas dominated by oil palm plantations die before they can mature, a new study shows, emphasizing the urgency of conserving or restoring forested areas to ensure the promotion of biodiversity and other ecosystem services, according to a new study. The researchers examined the density and distribution of forest trees across a 1,120 ha oil palm plantation area in lowland Sumatra. The disappearance of these forest trees in oil palm landscapes means the loss of multiple ecosystem services, such as promotion of biodiversity, the report said. However, preserving forest trees in an oil palm landscape is even more crucial because they can support secondary forests and recover biomass and biodiversity, but only if they're allowed to grow to maturity.

Paper: Yevgeniya Korol, et al, [**"Scattered trees in an oil palm landscape: Density, size, and distribution"**](#) *Global Ecology and Conservation* 28 (August 2021).

Alternate routes for planned mining road that would could through Harapan forest identified

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 28 September 2021

Researchers have identified alternative routes for a mining road utilizing existing road networks that would cut through the Harapan forest, the largest surviving lowland tropical rainforest on the island of Sumatra, potentially saving up to 3,321 ha of forest loss due to human encroachment by traversing nearby areas that are already largely degraded and deforested, and could also be less expensive than the original route planned by PT Marga Barga Jaya (MBJ). "The area around the Harapan has already been extensively cleared, there is no need to build through the forest," said Jayden Engert, a James Cook University doctoral student and lead author of the study. The Harapan forest spans 76,900 hectares in South Sumatra and Jambi provinces and is home to critically endangered species such as tigers, orangutans and elephants. One possible explanation for MBJ's higher cost original plan is that the company intentionally planned to increase access to areas inside the Harapan forest, which is still legally classified by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry as a production forest.

D. Energy, Mining and Climate Change

[Analysis: China's pledge to cut project finance is the "new normal" for coal](#)

—Melanie Burton and Fransiska Nangoy, *Reuters*, 24 September 2021

Australia and Indonesia, the world's biggest coal exporters, face an accelerated decline in global demand for their coal shipments after China said it would stop building coal-fired power plants overseas, analysts, environmental groups and industry officials said. The pledge, announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the UN General Assembly, is the latest blow for Australian and Indonesian coal miners as more energy systems globally shift to renewables. For more than a decade, Australia and Indonesia have been the dominant global coal exporters, accounting for more than half of all coal shipments. "I think it's the new normal," said Pandu Sjahrir, Chairman of the Indonesia Coal Miners Association. "Australia's coal industry has been gambling on increasing coal-fired power generation in developing countries to replace declining long-term demand in places like Japan, South Korea and Taiwan," said Market Forces' Julien Vincent. The pledge also puts at risk 29 GW of coal-fired power plants that had been expected to be built in Indonesia beyond 2025.

[Coal power projects in doubt as Chinese funding dries up](#)

—Divya Karyza, *The Jakarta Post*, 29 September 2021

China's pledge to stop building new coal-fired power plants overseas has thrown a spanner into Indonesia's coal energy development. Local stakeholders said the decision would disrupt plans to build new coal power plants in Indonesia, but projects already included in the electricity procurement plan (RUTL) and those with completed power purchase agreements (PPAs) would continue. Experts are recommending that the state-owned electricity company PLN and the Ministry of Energy and Mineral resources review the RUPTL and planned coal energy projects which would now find it difficult to obtain international funding. Wood Mackenzie coal market analyst Shirley Zhang said most affected projects would be those lacking financial commitments and which rely heavily on foreign investment, including coal power plants totaling 29 GW capacity set to start operating after 2025. Erika Hamdi, Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA), said that funding for new coal plants would be hard to come by as more than 180 global financial institutions had announced their exit from coal investments.

[Opinion: Solar is the solution to reach emission goal](#)

—David Luo, *The Jakarta Post*, 16 September 2021

[Solar market poised for unprecedented growth](#)

—BloombergNEF, 9 September 2021

To achieve the goal of ensuring that Indonesia’s carbon emissions peak by 2030, emissions per unit of GDP must decrease much faster than the annual growth rate of GDP over the next 10 years. Solar renewable energy is the best way to accomplish this. The construction period and costs of solar systems are much less than coal, geothermal or hydro-powered power plants, and the levelized cost for solar could outcompete new coal plants by 2022. A recent report by the Institute for Essential Services Reform (IESR), BloombergNEF, and Bloomberg Philanthropies, endorsed by Minister of energy and Mineral Resources Arifin Tasrif, outlines a roadmap for Indonesia to expand its solar capacity and shows how a national program with a 18GW solar generating capacity target could help Indonesia attract US\$14.4 billion in investment and support the country’s goal of reaching 23% renewable energy in its total mix by 2025.

David Luo is the chief technology officer of the digital energy business PT Huawei Indonesia.

BloombergNEF is a strategic research provider covering global commodity markets and the disruptive technologies driving the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Report: Daniel Kurniawan, Fabby Tumiwa, “[Scaling up Solar in Indonesia: Reform and Opportunity](#)”, Institute for Essential Services Reform (IESR), 9 September 2021

[China’s Chengxin, Tsingshan team up for US\\$350 million lithium project](#)

—Tom Daly, Min Zhang, *Reuters*, 24 September 2021

China’s Shenzhen Chengxin Lithium Group Co Ltd and an affiliate of steel and nickel giant Tsingshan Holding Group will invest in a US\$350 million Indonesian lithium project to capture demand from the electric vehicle (EV) battery sector. Tsingshan, which shook up the global nickel market by rapidly increasing production at low cost in Indonesia, is moving into lithium at a time when prices for the commodity are soaring. The plant, which would have the capacity to produce 50,000 tons a year of lithium hydroxide and 10,000 tons a year of lithium carbonate, will be developed at the Morowali Industrial Park on Sulawesi. Chengxin would own 65% of the joint venture and Singapore-incorporated Stellar Investment Pte, a Tsingshan affiliate, would hold the remaining 35%. Analysts said it was likely the plant would source its raw materials from Australia. Last week, South Korea’s LG Energy Solution and the Hyundai Motor Group started construction of a US\$1.1 billion plant to make EV batteries in West Java province.

E. Pollution and Waste Management

[The apps helping Indonesia's waste collectors](#)

—Alya Nurbaiti, *China Dialogue*, 16 September 2021

Indonesia generates nearly 7 million tonnes of plastic waste each year but only 10% of that is recycled. To help informal waste collectors do their jobs and receive better payment, several apps have sprung up linking them directly to customers and redrawing negative stereotypes prevalent in Indonesia. Among them is waste management start-up Waste4Change, which provides services in ten cities across the country; the E-Recycle app in Jakarta; the Rapel app in Yogyakarta and Central Java; the Kepul app in North Sumatera's Medan; and the Octopus app in eastern Indonesia, Bali and West Java. Apps like E-Recycle, Rapel and Octopus allow users to exchange recyclable waste for cash or points that can be redeemed as vouchers, or transferred to an e-wallet. Registered pickers visit users who post their plastic waste and an address on the app. Different apps accept different types of waste. Octopus only takes plastic bottles made of PET (polyethylene terephthalate), while Rapel accepts plastic, paper, metal, electronic and cooking oil waste.

F. Conservation and Protected Areas

[With coral cover halved, curbing climate change is the only way to slow the loss](#)

—Malavika Vyawahare, *Mongabay*, 17 September 2021

A new study estimates that global coral cover has been reduced half what it was 70 years ago, with much of that loss linked to human-driven climate change. The shrinking coral cover has translated into a 60% loss in reef biodiversity. Reef fish catches peaked in 2002 and have been declining ever since, taking a toll on coastal populations, especially Indigenous communities most dependent on seafood for subsistence. About 6 million fishers, many of whom belong to Indigenous communities, rely on coral reef fisheries. The latter consume 15 times more seafood than non-Indigenous groups. Coral reefs' capacity to provide ecosystem services has also declined by half since the 1950s. "We all expected there to be declines in biodiversity and fisheries, but we didn't expect them to be as big as they are," said Tyler Eddy at Memorial University of Newfoundland in Canada, lead author of the study. "The study highlights how places like Indonesia, which showed high catch but major drops in catch per unit effort, may be on the precipice of coral reef fisheries collapse," said Joshua E. Cinner of James Cook University.

Paper: Tyler D. Eddy, et al, "[Global decline in capacity of coral reefs to provide ecosystem services](#)", *One Earth* 4:9, 1278-1285, 17 September 2021

[As tigers dwindle, Indonesia takes aim at poaching ring](#)

—Junaidi Hanafiah, *Mongabay*, 27 September 2021

Law enforcers are working to disrupt a wildlife trafficking ring connected to a man arrested last month with the skins and bones of three Sumatran tigers (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*), a critically-endangered species. “To stop the illegal trade in live animals and their body parts, we must pursue the financiers and main buyers,” said Subhan, head of the North Sumatra office of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry’s Law Enforcement division. “But dismantling this is not easy—their network is quite strong.” A 2015 survey found that only 200 tigers remain in the Leuser Ecosystem spanning the provinces of North Sumatra and Aceh. “The main buyers of animal parts are smart and difficult to detect,” said Panut Hadisiswoyo, head of Orangutan Information Network, an NGO that combats wildlife trafficking. “They don’t involve themselves directly, instead working through intermediaries who are very professional.” AS, the man arrested with tiger parts, faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a fine of Rp 100 million (US\$7,012).

[Sea turtles: Can these great marine migrators navigate rising human threats?](#)

—Elizabeth Devitt, *Mongabay*, 20 September 2021

Humanity is quickly crossing critical planetary boundaries that threaten sea turtle populations, their ecosystems and, ultimately, the “safe operating space” for human existence. Sea turtles have survived millions of years, but marathon migrations put them at increasing risk for the additive impacts of adverse anthropogenic activity on land and at sea, including impacts from biodiversity loss, climate change, ocean acidification, land-use change, pollution (especially plastics), and more. The synergistic effects of anthropogenic threats and the return on conservation interventions are largely unknown. But analysts understand that their efforts will need to focus on both nesting beaches and ocean migration routes, while acting on a host of adverse impacts across many of the nine known planetary boundaries. Avoiding extinction will require adaptation by turtles and people, and the evolution of new, innovative conservation practices. Key strategies: boosting populations to weather growing threats, rethinking how humanity fishes, studying turtle life cycles (especially at sea), safeguarding habitat, and deeply engaging local communities.

G. Other

[Nine philanthropic donors commit US\\$5 billion to protect biodiversity](#)

—Maxwell Radwin, *Mongabay*, 24 September 2021

A group of nine philanthropic donors and organizations have come together to pledge US\$5 billion for the creation and expansion of protected areas across the planet, one of the largest private investments in environmental conservation ever. The group includes the Bezos Earth Fund, Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, Nia Tero, The Rainforest Trust, Re:Wild, the Arcadia Fund, the Rob and Melani Walton Foundation, and the Wyss Foundation. The fund will support various conservation projects in places like Africa, Asia and Latin America, including land titling for Indigenous territories, the creation of government-protected areas, and land purchases for private reserves, among other projects. The Protecting Our Planet Challenge will attempt to meet the goals of the 30 x 30 Initiative, which aims to protect 30% of the world's most important biodiverse areas by 2030, which is also separately supported by the IUCN. "A global 30x30 conservation target is not an arbitrary aspiration—it is a scientific and moral necessity," said Antha Williams, who heads the climate and environment programs at Bloomberg Philanthropies. "We need increased political leadership and funding to slow the alarming loss of coral reefs, mangroves and other ecosystems critical to mitigating and adapting to climate change."

[Azis' arrest spotlights persistent graft culture in political parties](#)

—A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil, *The Jakarta Post*, 26 September 2021

The recent arrest of House of Representatives deputy speaker and senior Golkar Party politician Azis Syamsuddin by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) has put a spotlight on the systemic failure of political parties to root out the plague of corruption within their ranks. He was named suspect for allegedly paying Rp 3.1 billion (US\$216,371) in bribes to then investigator Stepanus Robin Pattuju and lawyer Maskur Husain last year to prevent his name and another Golkar cadre from showing up in a KPK investigation into a graft case in Central Lampung. According to the KPK, some of the bribes were wired several times by Azis to the lawyer, who allegedly also acted as a middleman, while some were handed directly by Azis to Stepanus in the former's official residence in several batches. Both Stepanus and the lawyer currently stand trial for their involvement in the case. Before Azis' case, other government officials who were also senior politicians had recently been found guilty of corruption.

[For Indonesian MPs, Indigenous rights may be bad for business](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 17 September 2021

A long-delayed bill on Indigenous rights continues to languish in parliament because most lawmakers have business interests that are threatened by the acknowledgement of Indigenous

land rights, activists say. The bill, a perennial priority for legislation for several years, is meant to be the follow-up to a landmark Constitutional Court ruling in 2013 that rescinded state control over Indigenous lands and gave it back to Indonesia's Indigenous peoples. It would provide recognition of the land rights of Indigenous communities — if only parliament would pass it. But it's hard to see that happening when nearly six in 10 members of parliament own or are involved in businesses that could potentially be affected by the bill's passage, a new report says. The inaction on the bill is in stark contrast to the rapid passage last year of two pro-business bills — one a slate of deregulatory measures, and the other an amended mining law — that will make it easier for companies and the government to seize Indigenous lands, among other points.

Report: [“Menakar Perkembangan Ruu Masyarakat Hukum Adat”](#) (Measuring the Development of the Law Society Bill), Madani, 2 August 2021

[Indonesia faces scrutiny of its activities in Papua](#)

—Dian Septiari and Nur Janti, *The Jakarta Post*, 28 September 2021

Indonesia was included in a list of 45 countries cited as culpable for intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders seeking to cooperate with the UN, according to an annual report from the UN Secretary General's Office distributed on 17 September. The report named five individuals seeking to cooperate with UN human rights agencies between May 2020 and this April who were “subject to threats, harassment and surveillance by government non-state and private actors, including business enterprises and local political actors.” The report, which is under discussion at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, noted that the Indonesian government responded, rejecting the allegation that Victor Yeimo—one of the five—had been arrested for his cooperation with the UN, stating that his case “strictly concerned his alleged involvement in the incitement of mass riots ... on 19 August 2019, and his advocacy of separatism and secession.” Yeimo, 39, a spokesman for the West Papua National Committee, was arrested in May and charged with treason and inciting violence.

The UN General Assembly also saw Indonesia faced another barrage of accusations from Vanuatu, whose Prime Minister, Bob Loughman Weibur, called on the international community to address alleged human rights violations in Papua through appropriate UN-led processes and called on the government to allow the UN Human Rights Commissioner to visit Papua and West Papua to assess the human rights situation there.

Meanwhile, fighting continued in Papua with a shootout between security forces and armed rebel groups at the Police Headquarters of Kiwirok District on 26 September left one police officer dead, following a rebel attack on public services in Kiwirok on 13 September which resulted in the tragic death of an Indonesian nurse and the death of an Indonesian soldier.

[Papua needs more than junior diplomacy](#)

—Editorial Board, *The Jakarta Post*, 30 September

During the just-completed UN General Assembly just ended, apart from President Joko Widodo's pre-recorded speech, Indonesia's only mark was related to alleged human rights abuses in Papua. It was clearly a slap in Indonesia's face when UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres included in his annual report alleged rights abuses against Papuan Activists, naming Indonesia among 45 countries accused of intimidating and retaliating against human rights defenders. The government's repeated denials will only increase international misperceptions, simply because Papua has long been declared a closed territory to foreigners for security reasons. As long as the alleged human rights abuses and exploitation of natural resources in Papua remain unaddressed, resentment of local people toward the government will grow stronger. When Indonesia again assigned a junior diplomat to counter Vanuatu Prime Minister Bob Loughman Weibur's harsh criticism this year, Indonesia only humiliated itself, because this stunt is no different from that often pulled by undemocratic states like North Korea. The choice of a junior diplomat for the job reflects Jakarta's arrogance, indeed lack of seriousness, in addressing the Papua problems. It is true that the situation in the two provinces is confusing for outsiders. Are the ongoing armed clashes between the security force and rebels genuine? Whatever the motives, people at the grass roots pay the price. Assigning junior diplomats to stave off criticism does not help the international community comprehend Papua better.

ENDS