

Tuesday, May 5th, 2020

GENERAL NEWS AND HEADLINES

Jokowi calls for stricter COVID-19 monitoring, prevention

Republika, headline; Koran Tempo, Nasional; Media Indonesia, headline

While national COVID-19 task force head Doni Monardo said several regions in the country had managed to flatten the curve of COVID-19 transmissions, President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo continues to urge regional administrations to continue carrying out stringent monitoring and preventive measures in their respective regions to prevent further infections.

President Jokowi has also called for an evaluation of large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) currently imposed in four provinces and 22 cities to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus. Jokowi added that regional administrations implementing PSBB must also set targets, such as in conducting polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing, to further amp up their COVID-19 response.

Meanwhile, a number of regional administrations, such as Makassar, reportedly plan to tighten the PSBB enforcement in their respective regions due to low compliance rate.

Accurate, well-integrated data deemed necessary

Kompas, p.2

Efforts to utilize big data and/or research findings as a basis in policy-making must start by consolidating and integrating citizenship data into an accurate, single database. In terms of COVID-19 response, data-related issues still reportedly pose major difficulties in the country's COVID-19 management.

Responding to the predicament, statistics professor Asep Saefuddin of Bogor Agricultural University (IPB) urged both the central and regional governments to refer to single citizenship data in formulating and enforcing their COVID-19 policies so that all sectors can be easily monitored. Asep added that the Home

Ministry, as the country's main citizenship data holder, must ensure the validity and quality of the data, which is especially important during critical times like the current COVID-19 pandemic and the upcoming post-pandemic period.

COVID-19 policies could set back legal logging fight

The Jakarta Post, p.1

Activists have noted that the COVID-19 pandemic could be an opportunity to eliminate illicit forestry practices to prevent the future emergence of other unknown pathogens as a result of human incursion into native forests.

Forest rangers patrolling a protected forest in Gowa, South Sulawesi, knew something was amiss when they noticed a middle-aged man loading 2-meter logs on to a yellow truck. The rangers searched the vehicle and found 74 blackboard tree logs in a case of alleged illegal logging. It was the second such attempt to smuggle timber in late April.

The Gowa case is one of numerous illegal logging cases that have emerged since COVID-19 began to spread beyond China in mid-January. The ministry has investigated at least five other similar cases in April, and many more over the last three months.

The number of illegal logging cases reported in Indonesia during the COVID-19 outbreak might only be the tip of the iceberg, said Syahrul Fitra of Auriga Nusantara, recalling the environmental NGO's experiences in Makassar, South Sulawesi, and Sorong, West Papua. He said that the local imposition of large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) would likely force the environment ministry to deploy fewer officers in the field and thus weaken law enforcement against illegal logging.

Law minister appoints new high-ranking officials

Republika, p.2; Media Indonesia, p.3

Law and Human Rights Minister Yasonna Laoly inaugurated two director generals and one inspector general within the ministry on Monday. Two of the three newly-appointed executives are former members of the police force, namely Insp. Gen. Reynhard Saut Poltak Silitonga, who has been appointed as the ministry's correctional affairs director general, and Insp. Gen. Andap Budhi Revianto, who has been appointed the ministry's inspector general.

Reynhard replaces Sri Puguh Utami, who has been transferred to the ministry's research and development agency, while Andap replaces Jhoni Ginting, who was also inaugurated on Monday as the ministry's new immigration director general. Jhoni himself replaces Ronny Sompie, who was dismissed for allegedly giving false information regarding the whereabouts of Harun Masiku, an Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) politician who has been named as a bribery suspect.

Civil groups sue as Jokowi presses ahead with jobs bill

The Jakarta Post, p.3

Civil society groups have filed a lawsuit challenging a presidential letter (Surpres) that President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo sent to the House of Representatives to resume deliberations on the controversial omnibus bill on job creation. The letter also listed the names of ministers the President had appointed to represent the government in the bill's deliberation.

Arguing that the bill was made without public involvement, the Foundation of Indonesian Legal Aid Institute (YLBHI), environmental group Mining Advocacy Network (Jatam), the Agrarian Reform Consortium (KPA) and the All-Indonesia United Workers Confederation (KPBI) as the plaintiffs led the lawsuit on April 30 with the Jakarta State Administrative Court (PTUN).

The groups demanded in the lawsuit that the court declare the letter as legally awed in both substance and procedure. The groups also asked the judicial panel to order the government to revoke the letter from the House and end any ongoing deliberations on the bill.

House Legislation Body (Baleg) chairman Supratman Andi Agtas said that he would respect the rights of civil society groups to legally challenge the Surpres, but questioned whether such a lawsuit was permissible.

BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS NEWS AND HEADLINES

Manufacturing needs immediate support

Bisnis Indonesia, headline

The IHS Markit Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for Indonesia's manufacturing industry fell in April to 27.5 points, the lowest level in history, following a downward trend in March when the country stood at 45.3 points.

Although the index has fallen globally, Indonesia sits at the bottom with the lowest index in Southeast Asia, placed after Myanmar with 29.0 points.

According to the report, the slowdown in manufacturing was mainly caused by the restrictions on movement put in place to curb the COVID-19 pandemic, which have led to factory closures, falling demand and a drop in production output.

As a short-term solution, Industry Ministry Agus Gumiwang Kartasasmita said no operational and mobility permits (IOMKI) had been revoked during the large-scale social restrictions (PSBB), so factories could continue to operate while following health protocols.

Meanwhile, as midterm and long-term solutions, the ministry plans to expand the product absorption rate in the global market.

In addition, the Industry Ministry has also mapped the industry sector into three categories: suffering, moderate and high demand. The government is looking for a way to save suffering industries from bankruptcy, while industries experiencing high demand will see their production performance optimized.

Companies halt expansion, keep money in banks

Kontan, headline

Deposit Insurance Corporation (LPS) data shows that personal savings accounts above Rp 5 billion (US\$325,447) have seen the highest growth, increasing 9.2 percent year-to-date (ytd) to Rp 3.1 quadrillion in the first quarter this year.

Meanwhile, savings below Rp 100 million have fared the worst, falling 3 percent ytd to Rp 857 trillion in the same period, followed by savings between Rp 100 million to Rp 1 million that saw 1.6 percent negative growth.

LPS commissioner chief Halim Alamsyah said growth in savings above Rp 5 billion was mainly supported by the government's disbursement of funds to ministries and regional governments as well as corporate fund placements.

Halim said many companies had halted expansion plans due to business volatility induced by the COVID-19 pandemic, driving them to keep their money in banks for safety. However, he added that if the pandemic was prolonged, companies would have to withdraw their funds to pay for operational costs, hurting their liquidity.

Meanwhile, Institute for Development of Economics and Finance (Indef) economist Bhima Yudhistira said there were indications people in the lower-middle income bracket were the most affected. Bhima said the upper class tended to save their money and hold back from their usual consumption. Meanwhile, people in the lower-middle class needed to withdraw cash from savings accounts to purchase short-term needs as they experience declines in income or lose their jobs.

Broadband internet industry thrives amid COVID-19

Investor Daily, headline

The broadband internet and payTV industry has seen an increase in subscribers amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The implementation of large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) has pushed up demand for internet-based services as people studied and worked from home in March to April. Information and communication technology (ICT) industry players are now allocating capital expenditure to expand this year.

PT Link Net CEO Marlo Budiman said the broadband internet industry had great potential in Indonesia. Referring to Media Partner Asia (MPA) data, Marlo said fixed broadband penetration in the country was only 12.8 percent and predicted it to increase to 15.9 percent by 2023. His company has allocated Rp 2 trillion (US\$130 million) this year to expand in big cities in Java.

Furthermore, telecommunication companies have booked an increase in their average revenue per user (ARPU). Telecommunication firm Indosat Ooredoo recorded Rp 29,600 ARPU from 56.2 million users in the first quarter. Meanwhile, XL Axiata reportedly reached Rp 35,000 ARPU and plans to expand with Rp 7.5 trillion in capital expenditure. State-owned telecommunication company PT Telkom also plans to expand with 25 percent of its revenue allocated to capital expenditure.

Govt to create 1 million hectares of rice fields

Koran Tempo, headline

The Agriculture Ministry and State-Owned Enterprises (SOE) Ministry are discussing ways to create hundreds of thousands of rice fields, as requested by President Joko "Jokowi"

Widodo, to anticipate a food crisis amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The government is having trouble realizing the plan because it was not included during the state budget planning.

Agriculture Minister Syahrul Yasin Limpo said his side had made a budget request to the Finance Ministry to create rice fields on 400,000 hectares of peatland and 200,000 of dry land. The converted fields will grow several crops, including rice.

The Agriculture Ministry has joined hands with the SOE Ministry because the latter owns a large amount of underutilized land. The SOE Ministry is currently identifying 50,000 to 100,000 hectares of peatland in Sumatra and Kalimantan that can be converted. In addition, the ministry is also preparing to optimize production of rice fields owned by state-owned agriculture company PT Sang Hyang Seri.

President Jokowi brought up the matter of creating new rice fields during a meeting on April 28 to address a potential food crisis brought on by the disruption to the food supply chain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as reported by the Food Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Personal data at risk as e-commerce booms

The Jakarta Post, headline

A recent data breach jeopardizing more than 15 million user accounts of Indonesian unicorn Tokopedia has exposed the vulnerability of personal data on digital platforms as Indonesians increasingly turn to e-commerce to meet their needs from home.

The cybersecurity research collective Under the Breach told *The Jakarta Post* in an e-mail correspondence that large companies such as Tokopedia were at a disadvantage by having a lot of employees with access to the companies' internal systems.

"Hackers often use social engineering tactics to send phishing emails to employees, which in return allows them access to different systems inside the company," the e-mail reads.

Furthermore, big companies usually rely heavily on third party companies' products that integrate with their systems, which means the third parties have access to the company's internal and sensitive systems further exposing it to the risk of hacking.

Communication & Information System Security Research Center (CISSReC) chairman Pratama Persadha said, "It's possible that other e-commerce platforms have been hacked too." A similar case has happened before to another homegrown e-commerce unicorn Bukalapak back in 2015.

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