

#TECH: Why Indonesia moving capital to Nusantara

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Located in eastern Borneo, the world's third-largest island, Nusantara is set to replace sinking and polluted Jakarta as Indonesia's political centre by late 2024.

INDONESIA is relocating its capital city from Jakarta to a site more than 1,000km away in the rainforests of Borneo Island.

The project is set to launch at the end of President Joko Widodo's term in 2024.

Here's why Southeast Asia's largest economy is moving its administrative centre to Nusantara, a lush, biodiverse region home to the world's oldest rainforests.

SINKING CITY

Jakarta is sinking at an alarming rate due to the excessive extraction of groundwater.

A study by Indonesia's Agency for the Assessment and Application of Technology in 2021 found that the sprawling megalopolis sinks about six centimetres on average every year, making it one of the fastest-sinking cities on earth.

"Building a seawall is inevitable because the flood is already here, but over time the dam will sink, and the flood will happen again," Heri Andreas, an earth scientist at the Bandung Institute of Technology, said.

"The best solution to control the land subsidence is by controlling the exploitation of groundwater," he said.

A quarter of the capital's area will be completely submerged by 2050 if no urgent measures are taken, the National Research and Innovation Agency said.

OVERWHELMING BURDEN

Jakarta is one of the world's most overpopulated cities, home to more than 30 million residents living in its greater metropolitan area.

Pollution from its traffic-choked roads and the absence of a rubbish collection system — forcing many to burn their trash — has produced air quality that at times rivals New Delhi and Beijing.

The government estimates that hours-long traffic jams across the city inflict billions of dollars in economic losses for the world's biggest Muslim-majority country every year.

"Jakarta's burden is overwhelmingly heavy," Djoko Setijowarno, a transportation analyst from the Indonesia Transportation Society, said.

WEALTH DISTRIBUTION

With more than 17,000 islands, Indonesia is the largest archipelagic nation on earth.

But its population and economy are mainly concentrated in Jakarta and the wider Java Island, which is home to more than half of the country's 270 million people.

The government says it wants to diversify Indonesia's centres of economic and political power.

"The relocation (of the capital) is for distribution, for fairness," Widodo said in March.

"We have 17,000 islands but 56 per cent of the population are in Java. There are 156 million people in Java."

By comparison, East Kalimantan province — where the new capital Nusantara will be built — has fewer than four million people.

DISASTER-FREE ZONE

Another reason for the capital relocation cited by the government is disaster mitigation.

According to the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency, Jakarta is surrounded by active fault lines, making it vulnerable to earthquakes.

Borneo has the lowest possibility for earthquakes compared with other major Indonesian islands because it is further from active fault lines, the agency said.

Jakarta also deals with frequent flooding because it sits on swamp land.

Researchers believe water supplies may dry out for many in Jakarta and wider Java if Indonesia does not relieve pressure on the megalopolis. *–ETX Daily Up*