



PRESS RELEASE

Portraits of Coastal Communities in the “Living at the Urban Seafront” Photography Exhibition

Goethe-Institut Indonesien, in collaboration with the Bremen Centre for Building Culture, presents a photography exhibition entitled “Living at the Urban Seafront” running from 6 May to 1 June 2025 at Goethe-Institut Jakarta. The exhibition features 47 works by 17 Indonesian and German photographers, tracing the experiences and conditions of people living on the edge: at the intersection of land and sea—spanning urban shorelines from Jakarta, Bekasi, Gresik, and Makassar, to Bremen (Germany).

The exhibition shows photographs by Aan Melliana, Abyan Madani, Agus Susanto, Arie Basuki, Dikye Ariani, Djuli Pamungkas, Fernando Randy, Idealita Ismanto, Iqro Rinaldi, Muhammad Fauzan, Nafiah Solikhah, Qeis Sulthon, Rejeki Kene, Wiagung Prayudha, and Yuan Adriles from Indonesia in dialogue with pictures by Nikolai Wolff and Kay Michalak (Fotoetage) from Bremen.

The pictures of the fifteen Indonesian photographers were chosen through an open call that received 31 entries, and then selected by six interdisciplinary jury members from Indonesia and Germany: Irene Barlian (photographer/Jakarta), Ulrike Heine (cultural scientist/Kiel), Sigit D. Pratama (exhibition designer/Jakarta), Jan-Philipp Possmann (curator/Mannheim), Elisa Sutanudjaja (urbanist/Jakarta), and Nikolai Wolff (photographer/Bremen).

“Climate change is a global phenomenon that we are compelled to confront with mitigating strategies. One such strategy, in response to rising sea levels, is coastal resilience. The dialogue between such different coastal cities as Bremen and Jakarta reveals the variability of possible responses. As a cultural institute, it is our mission to foster awareness – because it is through shared problem-solving that understanding, connection, and hope can grow,” said Dr. Ingo Schöningh, Head of Cultural Programmes at Goethe-Institut Indonesien during the opening at GoetheHaus Jakarta, on Tuesday, 6 May 2025, which was attended by more than 100 visitors.

Risk and resilience

Over 60% of Indonesia’s population lives along the coast in a nation with the second longest coastline in the world. Yet coastal life is increasingly shaped by uncertainty. Rising seas, land subsidence, erosion, and flooding do not arrive as sudden catastrophes; rather, they unfold through daily routines, slow transformations, and structural neglect.

“The images in the exhibition offer glimpses into how people adapt, endure, and make meaning at the shifting edge between land and sea. Some images reveal efforts to defend against water through embankments, dikes, and pumps. Others show what happens when infrastructure falters, or when it never arrives. Many reflect quieter forms of persistence:



rebuilding homes, carrying water through flooded streets, waiting in uncertainty, or simply playing on ground that may soon be lost,” said Elisa Sutanudjaja as the jury representative.

This is not just an exhibition about the devastating consequences of the climate crisis. It is about reflection far from the tidal floods and receding shorelines: endurance, memory, and everyday life on ground that is, quite literally, disappearing.

Previously, “Living at the Urban Seafront” was exhibited at the Bremen Centre for Building Culture, Germany, from 14 March-30 April 2025. At Goethe-Institut Jakarta, the exhibition, which is part of the GoetheHaus Foyer programme, can be visited every Tuesday to Sunday (closed on Mondays and national holidays) from 12 noon to 8 pm, free of charge.

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About Goethe-Institut

The Goethe-Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany’s cultural institute, active worldwide. We promote the study of German abroad and encourage international cultural exchange. We also provide a comprehensive image of Germany through information on German political, social and cultural life. Our various cultural and educational programmes support intercultural dialogue and enable cultural participation. These various programmes strengthen the structures of civil society and support global mobility.

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