

Moving the Capital of Indonesia to Kalimantan: Historical Views and Implications for Social and Culture in the Borneo Region

Rozan Yunos¹, Farah Fatinah Haji Ya'akob²
Universiti Brunei Darussalam
Email: rozan.yunos@ubd.edu.bn

Abstract

Capital Relocation or Moving Capitals is not a new phenomenon. Capitals have moved throughout history, both pre-modern and contemporary. Nigeria relocated its capital from Lagos to Abuja in 1991, Myanmar relocated its capital from Yangon to Naypyidaw in 2005, and Brazil relocated its capital from Rio de Janeiro to Brasilia in 1960, all for various reasons. A capital in current times reflects how a country will progress in the future. As the future can be foreseen, none of it is certain until it occurs. As a result, Indonesia's ambition to relocate the historical capital of Jakarta to the evergreen region of Kalimantan is regarded as both audacious and profitable for the country's future. With its declaration in 2019 confirming the proposed relocation, local and western experts, the Javanese, and the Kalimantanans people had diverse reactions. This study uses qualitative research to collect and analyze information about Kalimantan as the new capital of the Republic of Indonesia found in chapters of books, assignments, news websites, and journals. Because the study of Indonesia's migration is new, the research employs the comparison method of written research. This study will compare written studies from the last five (5) years to determine Kalimantan's suitability as Indonesia's next capital. The findings of the investigations will then be compared to local news outlets and newspapers to determine whether the statements made are justified, the outcomes were mixed.

Keywords: *Moving Capitals, Capital Relocation, Kalimantan, Indonesia, Comparison.*

¹ Haji Mohd Rozan bin Dato Haji Mohd Yunos served in the Brunei Government from 1987 to 2017. His highest position was Permanent Secretary at the Prime Minister's Office. Since his retirement, he was appointed as an Adjunct Professor at Centre for Lifelong Learning, Universiti Brunei Darussalam and has lectured at Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali, Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies and Brunei Defence Academy. He is also the current President of The Brunei Historical Society.

² Farah Fatinah Haji Ya'akob is a graduate of Historical and International Studies from Universiti Brunei Darussalam. She is currently the Deputy Managing Editor of Qasrun Nafis Publishing House, Brunei Darussalam, an independent local publishing company and, co-currently a project manager at a non-governmental organization, Projek FEED Management Services, where she is responsible for helping the underprivileged and gained experience in combating social issues.

Introduction

Borneo is located in the centre of Maritime Southeast Asia which is divided into three countries: Malaysia, which consists of East Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak, and Brunei up in the north and Indonesia in the south. Brunei comprises about 1% of Borneo's land while Kalimantan takes up the vast majority of the land area. Borneo is said to be derived from the Sanskrit word, *Varuna* which means water. Borneo is known by many names for instance, Brunei was referred to as Borneo Proper by European explorers, while the local population called the whole island Kalimantan, which is derived from the Sanskrit word, *Kalamanthana*, referring to the hot tropical weather.

Borneo Island in the past had become a trading port where valuable goods can be found such as gold, camphor, beeswax, rattan, bird's nest, and many more. Culturally, Borneo and its people went through various transitions of influence from Majapahit to Ming Dynasty of China before finally being split into two halves of the British Borneo and the Dutch Indonesian Kalimantan. Islam entered Borneo in the 10th century where many indigenous people on the island converted to Islam. Borneo island is also known for its diverse population where its people vary from Dayak, Malay, Chinese and other ethnic groups. As the third largest island in the world, only Brunei Darussalam has its capital city on the island, the other states have only their regional capital cities.

Moving capitals is a common phenomenon in both pre-modern and modern history, with Brazil, Russia, Myanmar, and Malaysia all moving capitals for different reasons. These include national development, regional development, issues of the capital city, rebellion, and the leader's decision (Illman, 2015). The Republic of Indonesia was a colony of the Netherlands from 1800 to 1945 when the Dutch created Batavia on the island of Java. This changed the environment as the local people had to find alternatives to gather water, move around towns, and do their trading with foreign traders. This caused an imbalance of equality and development, such as the problem of water, which is now a problem for Jakarta due to decades of pumping groundwater and making the land buried on top of concrete.

Kalimantan is located in Borneo and was recognised by the Dutch in the 1800s. It has 5 provinces, each with its own capital, governor and history. It has 13 ethnic groups, including Malays, Banjar, Ngaju, Kayan, Dayak, OT Danum, Lawangan, Iban, Maanyan, Punan, Kenyah, Murut, and Bahau (Elliot, 2020). President Joko Widodo proposed to move the capital from Jakarta to Borneo in East Kalimantan, 200 km away from Balikpapan. This proposal is not new to the Indonesian government, as previous presidents have also suggested Palangkarya and Jonggol. Investors from the UAE, China, South Korea, and Taiwan have signed investment commitments, while some European countries have offered to invest (Wartono, 2023). President Widodo has also made incentives to investors, such as up to 100 per cent corporate income tax exemption of between 10 and 30 years for domestic taxpayers that invest in the new capital (Wartono, 2023).

Moving capital from one successful one to a predicatively unknown place is a concern for scholars and politicians, but Indonesia is facing a sunken city in 2050 and thus there is an urgent need to move its capital. This paper will discuss the advantages, disadvantages, reactions, and comparisons of Indonesia's situation.

Methods

The method of analysis for this study will be utilising secondary research conducted by local and international researchers. Since the idea of shifting Indonesia's capitals was officially declared on August 26, 2019, much of the study has been conducted from a local perspective. Scholars from ASEAN, including the Indonesian island of Java, stand out. Based on a review of the literature and interviews obtained from news outlets and newspapers, knowledge and components are retrieved.

Scope and Limitations

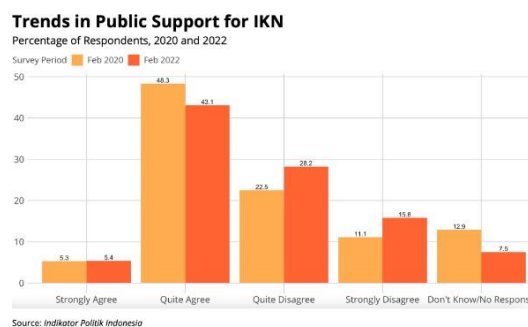
Given the limited time and resources available, this study focuses primarily on the impacts of relocating the capital to Borneo within the Indonesian context. However, it is important to acknowledge that such a significant change can have implications beyond Indonesia's borders, particularly for the independent country of Brunei Darussalam and the Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak, which share the island of Borneo. Brunei Darussalam, as a neighboring country, may experience indirect effects stemming from the relocation

of Indonesia’s capital to Borneo. The increased economic development and infrastructure projects in the region could potentially influence cross-border trade, investment, and cooperation between the two nations. Additionally, the cultural and tourism aspects of Brunei’s relationship with Borneo could also be influenced by the promotion of Borneo’s cultural diversity and heritage. Sabah and Sarawak, the Malaysian states located in Borneo, could be directly impacted by the relocation of Indonesia’s capital. The move could potentially trigger discussions and considerations within the Malaysian government regarding the development and governance of their own territories. Lessons and experiences from Indonesia’s relocation process could inform future decision-making in Malaysia regarding infrastructure development, economic diversification, and the preservation of indigenous cultures.

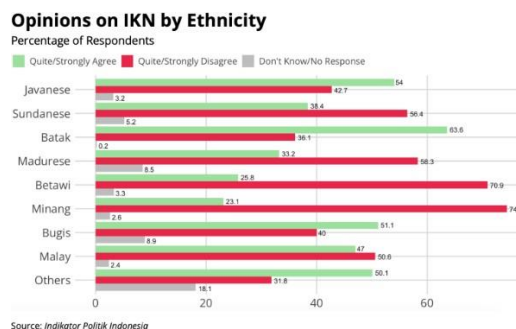
However, comprehensively assessing the specific impacts on Brunei Darussalam and the Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak would require a separate study with dedicated time and resources. Factors such as geopolitical relations, trade dynamics, cultural exchanges, and potential collaborations between these countries would need to be thoroughly examined to gain a comprehensive understanding of the implications of Indonesia’s capital relocation beyond its borders. While this study focuses primarily on the social and cultural impacts within Indonesia, it is acknowledged that the relocation of the capital to Borneo can have broader implications for neighboring countries such as Brunei Darussalam and the Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. Further research would be necessary to assess the specific effects on these regions, considering various factors that may come into play in the context of geopolitical relations, trade dynamics, and cultural exchanges.

Findings and Discussion

The Republic of Indonesia’s move will be seen as both advantageous and disadvantageous. A public survey agency, Indonesian Political Indicators (Indikator) carried out two in-person surveys in 2020 and 2021 to gauge public sentiment for the development of Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) (Muhtadi, 2023). In 2020, 53% of residents said they strongly or quite agreed with the idea of moving the capital, but in 2022, this support fell to 48.5%. In contrast to 2020, when just 33.6% of people stated they agreed or strongly agreed, in 2022, 44% of people expressed displeasure. In contrast to 2020, public opinion today is more evenly split between those who support and those who oppose IKN. Public opinion fell because the residents felt that the issue was non-exigent, thinking that other matters, such as the public health crisis and the economic slump due to the pandemic were more important (Muhtadi, 2023).

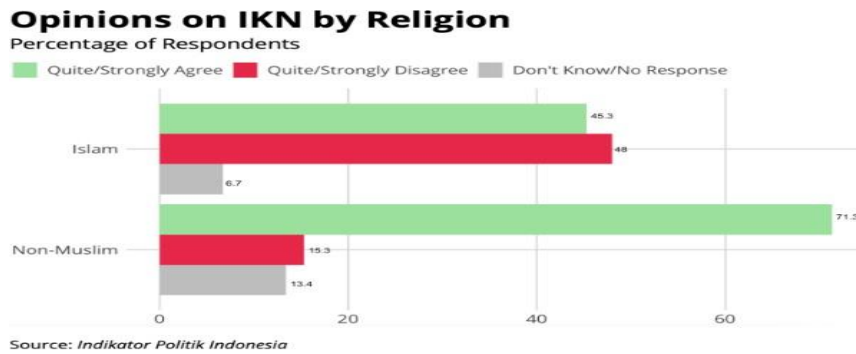


(Muhtadi, 2023)



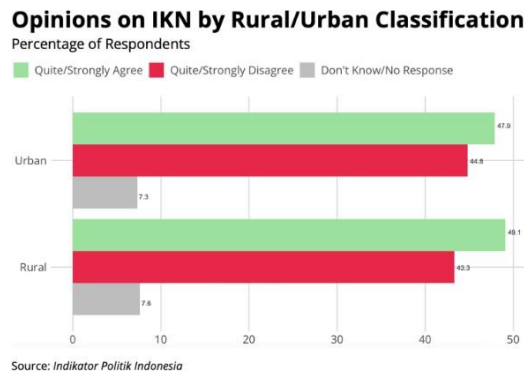
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In terms of ethnicity, the Batak, Javanese and Bugis people agreed to the creation of IKN and the movement of the capital. The Batak and Bugis people are of Sulawesi descent and thus it's understandable that they want the capital to be closer to their islands than the capital being kept on Java Island. And for the Javanese people, these people might be the ones who saw the dangers of the sinking city. Those who disagree with the movement, Minang, Betawi and Madurese people were the ones with the most opposition. These people are from the islands of Sumatra and Java. It is understandable that they opposed the movement and creation of IKN as they don't want their livelihood to change and move to an island that is not developed as Sumatra and Java Island.



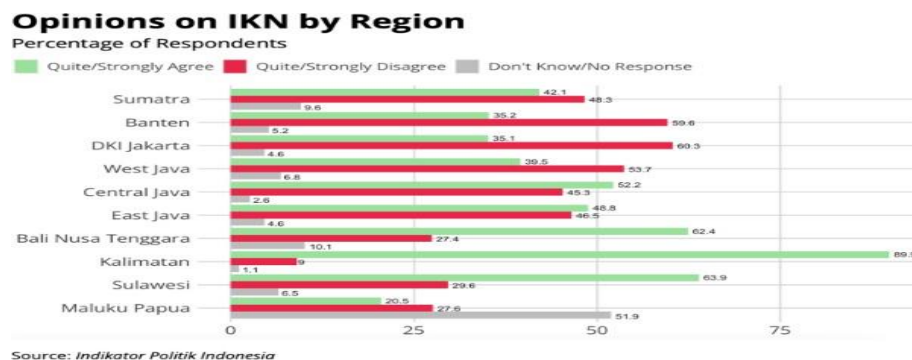
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In terms of religion, the Non-muslims were agreeable to the move of the capital and the creation of IKN. This may be because the island of Java is 97 per cent Muslim, and the non-muslims might think with this change their religion will be put in importance, and those who are practising traditional religion will be assured that their religion will not extinct.



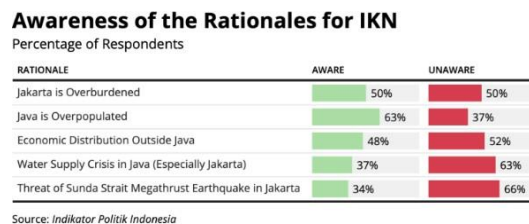
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In terms of classification, there is a mixed reaction from both rural and urban groups. Those who agree and disagree to the move of capital and the creation of IKN are almost of equal value. However, what's interesting is those who do not know or have a response are also at equal value.



(Muhtadi, 2023)

In terms of region, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Bali Nusa Tenggara were agreeable to the change. Interestingly Kalimantan, even if the province would be the one that will be overcome with the most changes, physically, politically, socially and economically, had almost a 90 per cent agreement rate. Sulawesi and Bali Nusa Tenggara might have agreed to the change because they are the most southern and eastern part of the Republic of Indonesia. DKI Jakarta, Banten and West Java were the ones with the most disagreement. It is understandable that they opposed the movement and creation of IKN as they don't want their livelihood to change and move to an island that is not developed as Sumatra and Java Island.



(Muhtadi, 2023)

In terms of awareness of the rationales, about 50 per cent of the population saw that Jakarta is overburdened and about 63 per cent of the population saw that the island of Java is overpopulated. As stated above, the people of Indonesia do not realise that there is a water supply crisis in Java and a problem with economic distribution outside Java.

A paper by Hana Dwi Djayanti, Gede Sumertha and Anang Puji Utama titled *'The Potential of Social Conflict in Capital Relocation of the Republic of Indonesia'* gave reasons why the move could cause problems. One of the problems is a migrating exodus from Jakarta, which would create social and cultural conflicts. Another problem is the existential problem of cultural acts, as there is no specific customary act/court that dictates how the people of Kalimantan should act. If there is no representative from the cultural groups, the community and identity would be left behind and modernisation could easily come in and eradicate those who have been left behind (Djayanti et al., 2022).

Because East Kalimantan is mostly made up of migrants, the shift would not cause many complications. Transmigration to East Kalimantan began in the 1950s, and by 1984, around 26,789 families had arrived. East Kalimantan migration was tied to regional growth (Clauss et al., 1988). This means that the people who migrated here are flexible to change. Many of the transmigrants who migrated from Jakarta to Kalimantan participated in the program because they were impoverished, despairing, and had few economic options in Java (Clauss et al., 1988). In the transmigration zone, they hoped for a better life for themselves and their children. However, not everyone who moved to Kalimantan was in a desperate condition. Some transmigrant families possessed land, but it was insufficient to provide an adequate income and education for all of their children (Clauss et al., 1988). Another group would be those who perceived better opportunities for economic progress in Kalimantan due to land resources and labor demand (Clauss et al., 1988). There would be little protests from the people of East Kalimantan because they have already experienced transmigration and can re-experience relocation to Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN).

The fast deforestation and displacement of natives is a second worry of those involved in the establishment of IKN. Around 20,000 people would be affected and displaced, the majority of whom are Dayaks who fled from the highlands to the inlands or river lands. The creation of IKN is to be done in stages, 2022-2024 will initiate the transfer of selected government offices, 2025-2029 will strengthen Nusantara's core areas by expanding housing, office, and commercial zones, 2030-2034 will develop education sectors, health sectors and high-tech industry, 2035-2039 will build the infrastructure and three-city ecosystem to accelerate Kalimantan's development and in 2040-2045 will establish a reputation as *'The World City for All'* (Masengi & Aljufri, n.d). A master plan outlining the government's development strategy has been created, and the master plan calls for the disturbance of 256,142 hectares of land and 68,189 hectares of territorial waters (& Partners, 2022). Nonetheless, there is good amid great sacrifices. By 2035, 1.5-1.9 billion people will live in IKN, compared to 831,460 (2020) in Samarinda and 852,046 (2019) in Balikpapan, the two largest cities in East Kalimantan, and 4.8 billion will work in IKN by 2045 (Muhtadi, 2023).

The cultural displacements would be the third societal concern of relocating capitals to Kalimantan. Bambang Susantono, Project Chief of IKN, stated that the requirements of the relocated people will be satisfied. In an interview with Al-Jazeera, Indonesia capital: Indigenous Borneo islanders face displacements, he said,

“I think we need to respect them, the indigenous people, the local wisdom, the way that they are living, working, and learning. That should be part of our development process, and that is why we have some, inclusive forum for example, trying to have a lot of dialogue, with all the stakeholders in this area, so that they will be part of our development path in the future.”

Additional support will be provided to individuals who are relocating, moving to Kalimantan, and those who are staying. According to the Al-Jazeera YouTube channel, residents would be offered initiatives to assist them work around the construction of the new capital, such as digital skills and advanced farming practices. Sri Suluwati, a local who moved to East Kalimantan in the 1970s, said the new capital will benefit her and her neighbors because they are being given attention and assistance with their enterprises.

She mentioned, *“Let’s be grateful that we would be part of the new capital. Before the new capital plan, we never got any attention because our village is far from town, and no one knows it.”*

The Balik Tribe, who live in Sepaku, East Kalimantan, wanted to ensure their rights. The city is identified as a component to IKN’s growth. Atim, a local Balik Tribe member, expressed his disappointment with the proposal, but stated that he accepts and supports the new capital, but his only request is that the government consider declaring the Balik Tribe’s rights inside the new IKN (Al Jazeera English, 2023). He wanted to emphasize the rights of the Balik Tribe, who have resided in Sepaku for hundreds of years, and those who dwell there should not be dismissed. (Al Jazeera English, 2023).

A video produced by the Straits Times in Singapore in 2019 displays various examples of people who will continue to practice their culture and belong to their social group even after the establishment of IKN. The Pampang Cultural Village, Pampang, East Kalimantan is located 40 kilometers north of Samarinda. The Dayak town was established in the early 1970s when the Dayak Kenyah and Dayak Kayan tribes relocated downstream from the remote Apokayan hills (De’Gigant Tours, n.d). The Pampang Cultural Village holds regular celebrations like the one depicted in the video. Every Sunday from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., the public is invited to witness the cultural dances, art, and culture (Straits Times, 2019). They performed 11 various dances, including the ever-popular Hornbill dance, in which the traditional costume is a cap made of a hornbill head and its feathers (Straits Times, 2019). An elder of the Dayak Kenyah tribe described how he and his family relocated from Apokayan, and how there is a distinction between living in the highlands and in the city of Pampang. He stated that changes are allowed in the community, which implies that excellent possibilities will come for his children and future generations, and even if the Dayak culture underwent too many changes, they would still have ownership in Apokayan. That is, the Dayak people will still be able to return to Apokayan to rediscover and reexperience Dayak culture (2019, The Straits Times). Another cultural leader of the Pampang Cultural Village, Laing Along mentioned that with the creation of IKN, the city of Pampang and surrounding areas will not be left behind. With IKN, they can move into the city and fill up the city with their cultural insights (The Straits Times, 2019).

A news article titled *‘Villagers fear Indonesia’s new capital will bury their culture’* by writers Abdallah Naem and Aisyah Llewellyn in Nikkei Asia, 2022 mentioned a conversation with Balik Tribe leader, Jubain, who expressed concern that the indigenous culture would be increasingly marginalized following the move, which would involve razing or moving entire villages.

He mentions his worries about this as the local community, Balik culture is on the wane and he and the community are ensuring it does not vanish altogether. An example given in the article was the erosion of traditional Mulung healing ceremonies due to the deforestation of forests around their village. Many of the main ingredients or materials were lost due to deforestation (Naem & Llewellyn, 2022). Also due to deforestation, many people do not believe in local remedies as finding the ingredients are now hard to find. Other than the fear of culture being lost, language is also seen as an extinction matter (Naem & Llewellyn, 2022). About 1.5-1.9 million people are to accompany the government’s move to East Kalimantan, causing a ripping domino effect as more people will be speaking Bahasa Indonesia as that is the common language spoken between each other. Thus, making the Balik language precarious.

It should be highlighted, however, that social assimilation and social transmigration can occur anywhere. Even from one region to the next. As an example, the Apokayan people from the highlands to the Balik tribe at the river. It is not about how capital will move, but about how the government can facilitate capital mobility and people transmigration (Farida, 2021). The government will need to cooperate closely with the people of Kalimantan to explain the shift and the developers' procedure and progress. Priority should be given to those assimilating so that they can integrate into the community as naturally as possible (Farida, 2021). The project team would need to hold informative sessions on what to expect for both sides, Kalimantan and those moving in. Allow enough time and stages for both groups to interact. Finally, provide affirmative discipline in which everyone understands their role in the community, and anticipates potential conflicts. Moving 1.5-1.9 million people by 2035 would be a significant social, cultural, and economic challenge.

General Discussions

There are obviously substantial social and cultural ramifications of moving Indonesia's capital from Jakarta to Borneo. The potential for social integration, cultural preservation, and equitable growth are three clear benefits of this decision. As pointed out above, the choice to relocate Indonesia's capital from Jakarta to Borneo has profound effects on the country's social and cultural fabric. The following are discussions of the benefits of moving the capital to Borneo, with a particular emphasis on social integration, cultural preservation, and equitable development.

The ability to lessen congestion and inequality in Jakarta is one of the main benefits of relocating the capital to Borneo. Rapid urbanization in Jakarta has created serious socioeconomic problems like traffic, substandard housing, and unequal access to essential services. The new city can be better planned to accommodate the expanding population by moving the capital to Borneo, opening up chances for inexpensive housing, a better infrastructure, and enhanced access to healthcare and education. As a result, a more inclusive and equal society encourages social integration.

Moving the capital to Borneo not only offers the opportunity to preserve indigenous cultures but also provides a platform to promote social cohesiveness and strengthen national identity in Indonesia. The establishment of a new capital instills a sense of togetherness and shared purpose among the populace, as they collaborate to build a brand-new city. This collective endeavor creates a common goal that transcends regional and cultural differences, fostering the development of a strong and stable society. The process of relocating the capital promotes communication and cooperation among diverse communities. People from different backgrounds and regions come together, exchanging ideas, sharing experiences, and collaborating on the construction and administration of the new capital. This interaction and collaboration contribute to bridging gaps, promoting understanding, and forging connections between Indonesians. Through these interactions, a sense of unity and shared identity can flourish, fostering social harmony and solidarity.

Furthermore, the relocation of the capital offers an opportunity for the integration of various cultural elements into the urban fabric and governance structure. By incorporating indigenous viewpoints, traditions, and practices into the design and administration of the new capital, a diverse range of perspectives are acknowledged and celebrated. This inclusiveness helps to strengthen the fabric of Indonesian society, emphasizing the importance of cultural diversity and promoting a sense of belonging for all citizens. Overall, the move to Borneo as the new capital not only presents practical benefits but also serves as a catalyst for fostering social cohesiveness, national unity, and a stronger sense of shared identity among Indonesians. By working together towards a common goal and embracing the diversity of the nation, the relocation process can create a foundation for a more harmonious and prosperous future.

Indigenous cultures in Borneo are rich in abundance and diversity, and it is crucial to safeguard and maintain them. Relocating the nation's capital to Borneo presents an opportunity for Indonesia to ensure the preservation of regional customs, dialects, and traditions. By incorporating indigenous viewpoints into urban design and politics, this move can promote cultural diversity and inclusiveness. Moreover, establishing the capital in Borneo can contribute to raising awareness and funding for cultural heritage initiatives. This, in turn, would support the long-term viability of indigenous tribes and their cultural practices. By highlighting Borneo's significance as the capital, attention is drawn to the importance of protecting and sustaining indigenous cultures in the region.

Borneo serves as a prime example of Indonesia's remarkable cultural diversity, and relocating the capital to this region presents a unique opportunity to highlight its rich cultural heritage and distinctive characteristics. The establishment of cultural hubs, museums, and exhibition spaces in the new capital can serve as focal points for celebrating and promoting the diverse customs, traditions, and artistic expressions of Borneo's communities. These dedicated spaces would provide platforms for showcasing traditional arts, crafts, music, dances, and other cultural practices, enhancing appreciation and understanding among both locals and visitors. The creation of such cultural hubs and the subsequent promotion of Borneo's cultural heritage can have positive economic impacts. By attracting tourists and visitors interested in experiencing the unique cultural offerings, the region can benefit from increased revenue and job opportunities. Local artisans, performers, and entrepreneurs would have a platform to showcase and sell their creations, contributing to the growth of local industries and the overall economy. Additionally, cultural interaction and exchange can foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Borneo's cultural diversity, promoting harmony and inclusivity within the broader Indonesian society.

In addition to its cultural significance, Borneo is home to numerous endangered animal species. Moving the capital to this region can serve as a catalyst for promoting conservation efforts and increasing awareness about the environmental challenges faced by these species. The new capital can facilitate the establishment of conservation centers, research facilities, and educational institutions focused on biodiversity and ecological preservation. By raising awareness and promoting responsible environmental practices, the relocation can contribute to the protection and restoration of Borneo's unique ecosystems, benefiting not only the local population but also the global community concerned with environmental sustainability. Overall, by relocating the capital to Borneo, Indonesia can highlight the region's vibrant cultural diversity and create opportunities for economic growth, tourism, and cultural exchange. Simultaneously, the move can provide a platform for addressing environmental concerns and promoting conservation efforts. This integrated approach fosters the well-being of both the local population and the environment, ensuring a sustainable future for Borneo and the nation as a whole.

The move to Borneo provides an opportunity for the government to strategically distribute economic development initiatives across different parts of the country. Infrastructure projects, investment incentives, and business opportunities can be directed towards the new capital and its surrounding regions. This would not only stimulate economic growth in Borneo but also create a ripple effect, attracting investments and fostering development in other nearby areas both in Kalimantan as well as in the country of Brunei and the Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. By decentralizing economic activities, the government can address regional imbalances, reduce disparities, and promote more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. Furthermore, relocating the capital to Borneo can stimulate local economies, generate employment opportunities, and encourage the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the region. The establishment of government offices, public institutions, and supporting infrastructure in Borneo would create a demand for various goods and services, leading to increased economic activity. This, in turn, can drive entrepreneurship, innovation, and the development of local industries, contributing to the overall economic diversification and resilience of the region.

The move to Borneo also has the potential to attract domestic and international investment to the region. With the capital situated in Borneo, businesses and investors may be incentivized to explore new opportunities outside of Jakarta. The government can leverage this momentum by implementing investment-friendly policies, offering tax incentives, and providing necessary infrastructure to facilitate business growth and development in Borneo. This deliberate effort to promote economic activities in the new capital and surrounding areas would contribute to a more balanced regional development trajectory. In summary, relocating the capital to Borneo is in line with Indonesia's objective of fostering balanced regional development. By shifting the focus away from Jakarta, the government can encourage economic growth, attract investments, and promote inclusive development in Borneo and other regions. This strategic approach aims to reduce regional inequities, create employment opportunities, and distribute resources more evenly, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and prosperous Indonesia.

Conclusion

The relocation of Indonesia's capital from Jakarta to Kalimantan is an intriguing topic because the island of Borneo and the provinces of Kalimantan are less well-known to the rest of the world than Java and Jakarta.

Although this casts doubt on the migration, it appears from a social and cultural standpoint that Kalimantan and its cultural and social environment will remain unaffected, because Kalimantan and Java have separate religious and ethnic roots that cannot be readily washed away. The relocation from Jakarta to Ibu Kota Nusantara is, nonetheless, open and largely welcomed, as shown by the surveys, comparisons, and interviews conducted. And there is no doubt that the administration of the Republic of Indonesia has meticulously planned and prepared for the relocation. The relocation was also made better prepared with the help of the global pandemic, since the intended move of 2021 was pushed back to 2022, allowing local communities and transmigrant to naturally engage with one another. It's true that local communities' cultural and social livelihoods will be disrupted, but with the government's planning, these contexts can be preserved and passed down to further future generations rather than it being gone by the capital move. President Joko Widodo noted in his announcements of the plan that this is not a choice, but a necessity (BBC News, 2019).

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