

THE SPARK TIMES

Saturday . May 2, 2026



The 'Big Durian': Jakarta, the World's Largest City

What is the biggest city in the world? If you guessed Tokyo, New York, or London, think again. In **November 2025**, the United Nations officially named **Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, the world's largest city, with 42 million people**, more than the entire population of Canada.

But Jakarta has a major problem: it is sinking. The **city pumps so much water from underground** that the **ground is dropping by up to 25 centimeters per year** in some neighborhoods. Entire streets have fallen below sea level, and walls have been built to hold back the ocean.

The sinking is so serious that Indonesia is **building a brand-new capital from scratch. Called Nusantara**, it is being carved out of rainforest on the island of Borneo, 1,200 kilometers away. The government plans to move there by 2045.

Still, most Jakartans are not leaving. Like New York's Big Apple, they call their city the "Big Durian" named after a spiky fruit that smells terrible yet tastes incredible.

Source: The Guardian

Green Sea Turtles Bounce Back from Endangered List



Green sea turtles have been moved from Endangered to Least Concern after populations grew 28% since the 1970s. Decades of beach protection and fishing regulations drove the recovery. However, leatherback turtles are still struggling, and climate change remains a threat to nesting sites. Source: AP

Giant Ancient Octopus Was 60 Feet Long



Scientists discovered that ancient octopuses grew up to 60 feet long, potentially the largest invertebrates ever. The 100-million-year-old fossils from Japan show powerful jaws that crushed bones and shells. Asymmetric jaw wear suggests these creatures were highly intelligent, like a real-life kraken. Source: CNN

“The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page.” - Saint Augustine

Megacities: What Happens When 42 Million People Live Together?

Imagine a city so big that more people live in it than in all of Canada. That is Jakarta, and it just became the world's largest city.



What Is a Megacity?

A **megacity** is any city with more than 10 million people living in it. Right now there are about **35 megacities** around the world, including **Tokyo, Delhi, and Shanghai**.

But **Jakarta**, the capital of Indonesia, recently took the number one spot with **42 million people**. That is **more than all of Canada**. The United Nations says that by 2030, two out of every three people on Earth will live in a city.



How Do You Feed 42 Million People?

Indonesia is made up of over 17,000 islands, so feeding Jakarta means shipping food across the ocean. **Rice** arrives by boat from farms on **Java and Sumatra**. **Fish** comes from ports scattered across the archipelago.

Once it reaches the city, roughly 50,000 street food vendors - called **kaki lima sellers** - turn it into meals that **cost less than a dollar**. They set up along busy roads, outside schools, and in night markets that stay open until dawn.

For most Jakartans, street food made by these vendors are not a treat. They are breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Living Below Sea Level

Jakarta is sinking fast. But what does that actually look like?

In North Jakarta, **streets flood so often** that **some families have raised their floors three times** to stay above water. A giant sea wall holds back the Java Sea, and when high tides hit, water sometimes pours over it into neighborhoods.

Some schools close for days after heavy rain because the roads turn into rivers. It is one of the biggest challenges any city on Earth faces right now.



Can Megacities Work?

Megacities are not going away. They are **only getting bigger**.

The big challenge is **making them good places to live**: clean water, affordable homes, buses and trains that actually work, and air that is safe to breathe.

Cities like Singapore and Seoul have shown it is possible. Jakarta is learning from them.

THE SPARK TIMES *for mini*

Saturday . May 2, 2026



What Is the Smelliest Fruit?



Imagine a fruit so stinky that it is **banned** on buses, trains, and hotels in some countries. That fruit is called a **durian**! Durians grow in Southeast Asia. They are about the size of a football and covered in sharp spikes. But the really crazy part is the smell. Some people say it smells like stinky socks. Others say it smells like garbage. Some people even plug their nose when they walk past durian!

Here is the surprise: if you can get past the smell, many people say it tastes amazing. Creamy, sweet, and a little bit like vanilla **custard**.

In countries like Indonesia and Thailand, durian is called the King of Fruits. People absolutely love it. Would you be brave enough to try a bite?

Words to remember!

- **durian:** a spiky fruit from Southeast Asia that is famous for its very strong smell
- **banned:** not allowed, against the rules
- **custard:** a creamy, sweet dessert made with eggs and milk

What do you think?

Would you try a food that smelled really bad if someone told you it tasted amazing?
