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December 2025 Edition 229
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TIMOR-LESTE WOMEN IN BUSINESS AWARDS

Finalists of the 2025 Women in Business Awards (For more photos and the full list of winners, see inside)

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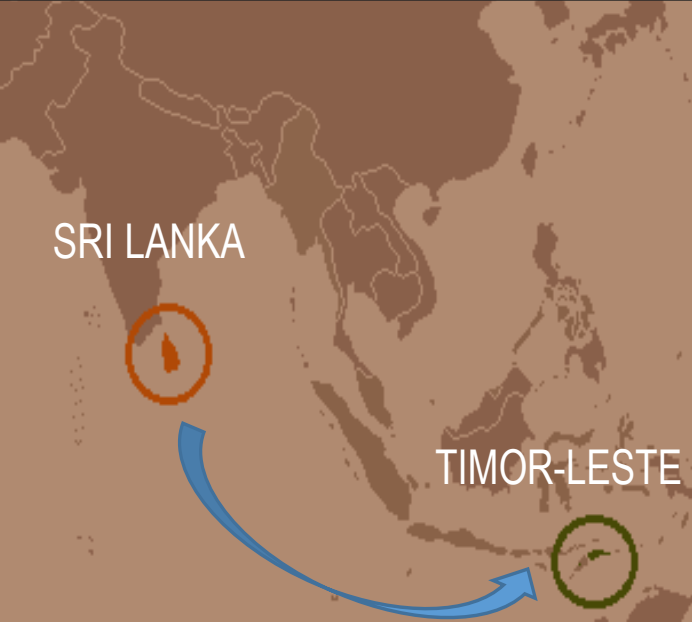
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Celebrating the remarkable women of Timor-Leste at the 2025 Women in Business Awards



In November, the IFC and the Associação Empresarial das Mulheres de Timor-Leste (AEMTL), supported by New Zealand and Australia, hosted the 2025 Women in Business Awards. The event recognised nine exceptional women who are driving jobs, community impact, and inclusive growth. With almost 100 nominations nationwide, this second edition showcased the ambition and talent of Timor-Leste’s women entrepreneurs. Held under the patronage of President Dr José Ramos-Horta, the Awards celebrated the vital role of women-led businesses. Congratulations to all finalists and winners.



Winner: Best Initiative Promoting Economic Empowerment for Women (Organisation/Company):
Konnekto Employment Agency



Winner: Woman Corporate Leader of the Year (Individual) - Ana Paula da Costa Xavier (Similie)

List of Winners:

Best Initiative Promoting Economic Empowerment for Women (Organisation/Company):

Winner: **Konnekto Employment Agency**

Konnekto Employment Agency drives women’s economic empowerment by providing stable jobs, professional skills, and pathways to career advancement, including in male-dominated sectors. Its structured programs strengthen employability and financial independence for women across Timor-Leste.

Best Initiative Promoting Growth of Women-Led Businesses (Organisation/Company):

Winner: **Heineken Women Economic Empowerment Program**

Heineken Timor-Leste champions women-led enterprise growth through comprehensive business support—from financial literacy and mentoring to creative marketing and market access. Its sustainable, multi-stakeholder approach continues to empower women entrepreneurs to expand their businesses and contribute to national economic development.

Top Women-led Business Owner of the Year- Established Business – Dili (Individual):

Winner: **Zeferina Marta Alves (Single Origin Coffee)**

As founder of Single Origin Coffee, a thriving roasting and retail business, Zeferina has driven sustained business growth and regional expansion, alongside workplace innovation and community empowerment. Her mentorship and training initiatives have helped former staff launch their own businesses and supported farmers in improving livelihoods and accessing new markets.

Top Women-led Start-Up of the Year – Dili (Individual):

Winner: **Flora Fidencia Brytes Ximenes (Timor Getaway)**

Flora Fidencia Brytes Ximenes is the founder of Timor Getaway, Timor-Leste’s first digital tourism platform connecting travellers to women-led businesses and rural communities. By integrating digital innovation, training, and destination marketing, she is boosting visibility, income, and inclusive tourism opportunities within the start-up’s first years of growth.

Top Women-led Business Owner of the Year- Established Business – Municipalities (Individual):

Winner: **Junita De Araujo (Pedrojunidar. Unipessoal, Lda.)**

Junita De Araujo has transformed a small start-up into a growing retail business serving markets across Timor-Leste. Her smart use of social media, product diversification, and commitment to reinvestment have enabled her to scale operations and provide employment opportunities locally in Suai.

Top Women-led Start-Up of the Year – Municipalities (Individual):

Winner: **Natália de Almeida da Silva (Quin Café n’ Resto)**

In under three years, Natália de Almeida da Silva has grown Quin Café n’ Resto into Ainaro’s preferred hospitality start-up, using digital systems and creative marketing to expand from a small café into restaurant and catering services. By employing local youth and offering business sharing sessions, she is driving economic diversification and new opportunities in her community.

Woman Corporate Leader of the Year (Individual)

Winner: **Ana Paula da Costa Xavier (Similie)**

As CEO of Similie, Ana Paula da Costa Xavier is driving organisational transformation and innovation in a male-dominated tech industry. Her leadership journey - built on determination, excellence, and advocacy for women - continues to inspire the next generation of female professionals.

Career Role Model of the Year (Individual)

Winner: **Leopoldina Joana Guterres (WithOneSeed + Rai Matak)**

A powerful role model, Leopoldina Joana Guterres has spent over 30 years advancing education, women’s leadership, and climate resilience in rural Timor-Leste. As Director of Rai Matak and co-founder of WithOneSeed, she empowers women farmers and uplifts remote communities, inspiring the next generation of leaders in Timor-Leste.

Outstanding Woman Leader in the Financial Services Sector (Individual)

Winner: **Gracia Albino (Kaebank Investimentu no Finansas)**

A distinguished leader in financial services, Gracia Albino has driven major compliance and governance reforms at Kaebank, including AML/KYC systems and its commercial bank application. Her ethical leadership and commitment to expanding financial access uplift both the institution and the communities it serves.

Credit: IFC & Associação Empresarial Das Mulheres de Timor-Leste (AEMTL)



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Dili Sights of Interest by Jonty Crane

As you go about your daily routine in Dili, it's easy to overlook some of the city's most intriguing spots. Here's another hidden gem worth a closer look.

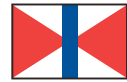
Sentru Estudu Mangrove

About 35 minutes drive east of Dili (but still within the Dili municipality) is a mangrove conservation area. Boardwalks have been installed to allow visitors to explore without damaging the fragile ecosystem. There are two lookouts, one above the sea, the other on a nearby hill, which offer great views. You are likely to see monkeys jumping through the trees. Entry \$1. Note that the mangroves are not easily accessible without your own transport, unless you catch a bus to Baucau and get off early.



About the author:

Jonty has published a number of books on Timor-Leste, which can be bought in Dili or online from Amazon, has recorded an **Exploring Timor-Leste** podcast series, developed the website www.exploringtimor.com, and has many videos promoting Timor-Leste on YouTube (@ExploringTimorLeste), and TikTok (@exploringtimor).



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Melbourne Cup Luncheon 2025

The Melbourne Cup Luncheon 2025 delivered a full day of flair, flavour and fun at Panorama Restaurant, Timor Plaza. Guests enjoyed a festive mix of sparkling wine, an international buffet, lively sweepstakes and a thrilling live broadcast of the race.

The room buzzed with colour as guests showed off their style for the Best Hat and Best Dress competitions, with winners taking home fine wines and a luxury hamper courtesy of East Timor Trading. The excitement peaked with the lucky draw — a Dili–Bali return ticket generously provided by Aero Dili.

If you missed out this year, mark your calendar — Melbourne Cup 2026 will be another one to remember.



Credit: Timor Plaza

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Australia and ASEAN: United in Preventing Conflict

By H.E. Ms Caitlin Wilson, Ambassador of Australia to Timor-Leste

Southeast Asia understands all too well the true cost of conflict and the value of peace. Violence and instability disrupt livelihoods, displace communities and undermine economic growth – threatening food and energy security, and placing long-term development and prosperity at risk.

Timor-Leste, like many of its ASEAN neighbours, carries the deep imprint of past conflict – a history that continues to shape its commitment to peace and stability. Timor-Leste's hard-won independence was secured through the courage and resilience of its leaders and the people, alongside international solidarity and multilateral action.

Today, Timor-Leste stands as a global advocate for peacebuilding, drawing on its experience and leading initiatives like the g7+, amplifying the voices of fragile states and shaping international responses to conflict and instability. Timor-Leste's recent accession to ASEAN marks a new chapter in its journey from conflict to peace and cooperation. As ASEAN's newest member, Timor-Leste brings a powerful voice shaped by experience, reminding us that peace is never guaranteed, but always worth pursuing.

In the face of intensifying strategic circumstances, the need for collective leadership has never been greater. ASEAN exemplifies this – fostering trust, promoting peace and stability, and providing a platform for dialogue. That's why Australia is supporting efforts to reinforce ASEAN-led mechanisms that prevent conflict before it begins.

The ASEAN-Australia Joint Leaders' Statement on Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management in the ASEAN-Led Regional Architecture (28 October 2025) reaffirms our recognition that peace and stability in our region are a collective responsibility. It sends a clear signal that, in the face of mounting challenges, we are united in choosing dialogue over confrontation, and cooperation over division.

Conflict is neither inevitable nor easily contained once it begins. For Australia, conflict prevention means fostering a region where sovereignty is respected, disputes are settled peacefully in accordance with international law, and all countries – large and small – can thrive. This requires trust, transparency, and practical tools to de-escalate tensions. We all have a role to play in assuring peace.

ASEAN and its architecture, including the East Asia Summit, are central to this effort. ASEAN's voice is unique and

consequential – shaping norms, setting expectations and influencing behaviours across the region – and underpinned by a pragmatic approach to managing tensions and promoting mutual understanding.

The recent joint declaration between Cambodia and Thailand shows how ASEAN can resolve tough disputes through peaceful means.

ASEAN's commitment to peace, stability and dialogue has long been central to its vision. You see it echoed in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, the ASEAN Charter, and in the forward-looking ASEAN Vision 2045. This same spirit is reflected in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, which will mark its 50th anniversary in 2026.

Building on this foundation, Australia is focused on practical, collective leadership, seen in initiatives like our Conflict Prevention Workshops with ASEAN, co-sponsored by Indonesia and Malaysia. These efforts are not just symbolic, but a direct investment in strengthening ASEAN-led architecture to prevent conflict and manage crises before they escalate.

Australia stands with Southeast Asia not just in principle but through concrete support for the rules and norms that underpin regional stability. This includes our strong support for international legal frameworks, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Frameworks like UNCLOS matter because they help keep the South China Sea stable and secure – critical for the USD4 trillion in trade that flows through its waters each year.

Beyond our borders, we support vital peacekeeping operations, including with Vietnam, where we work alongside personnel deploying to the UN Mission in South Sudan – providing strategic airlift, training, and equipment. And through our current term on the UN Peacebuilding Commission, we're helping strengthen the multilateral system and support efforts to prevent conflict both in our region and across the world.

The ASEAN Leaders' Statement is a call to action. Conflict is not inevitable – but preventing it demands collective leadership, cooperation, and trust. The Statement reflects a commitment to translate shared principles into practical measures that reduce risk, strengthen transparency, and build resilience.

Australia is determined to play our part because we understand the dire cost of conflict and the immense value of peace. Because when diplomacy fails, it's not just ideals that are lost – it's lives, livelihoods and generations of progress.



H.E. Ms Caitlin Wilson,
Ambassador of Australia to Timor-Leste



5th ASEAN-Australia Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Fun with ChatGPT

Me:

Write a short, amusing article about dogs in Timor-Leste.

ChatGPT:

“Dogs of Dili: Who Really Owns Who?”

Every neighbourhood in Dili has that dog. You don't know its name, but it definitely knows yours. It's the one sitting outside the kiosk like it's the manager. It's at the beach before you arrive and somehow still there after you leave. It never looks lost — only mildly disappointed in you.

In Timor-Leste, the line between owned and free-range dogs is beautifully blurry. Some sleep inside homes and wear flea collars. Others nap under parked microlets and scavenge expertly. But all of them seem to have a deep, spiritual understanding of who belongs where — and who doesn't.

Forget CCTV. If you're a stranger walking down a street you don't live on, you will be watched by at least one dog. Not always barked at — that depends on their mood — but definitely noted.

And while technically they're “street dogs,” don't be fooled. Every dog belongs to someone. Maybe not legally. Maybe not officially. But someone is sneaking them bones, tossing leftovers over the fence, or calling them “Rambo!” at 6am with suspicious fondness.

Some dogs join football games. Some follow kids to school. Some randomly escort expats on walks and then disappear back into the shadows. They are self-employed community members with full autonomy and zero interest in your leash laws.

The best part? These dogs develop reputations. “Oh, that's the one that chased a goat into the internet café.” “That one once slept through a whole wedding.” Entire personalities, passed down through local gossip.

So, who really owns who? It's hard to say. But if a dog has claimed your veranda, your sandals, or your heart — congratulations. You've been chosen.

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Funny Holidays in December

- *December 4th – Wear Brown Shoes Day.* Brown shoes. That's it. That's the whole holiday, why make it complicated?
- *December 8th – Pretend to Be a Time Traveller Day.* Wander around confused. Ask for the “year of the great chicken uprising.” Tip: Dress like it's 1887 or 2587. Either works.
- *December 25 – A'Phabet Day (No “L” Day).* Yes. A real thing. You're meant to not use the letter “L” for the day. Why? No idea. “Hope you have a coo– Yuwe tidings.”

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the December 2025 edition of Guide Post

This month's edition brings together another uplifting mix of stories and events from across Timor-Leste. We cover the 2025 Women in Business Awards, where we present the full list of this year's inspiring winners and their contributions to the country's growing business landscape. Later in the issue, we report on the Dili International School graduation ceremony, celebrating the achievements of this year's students.

Enjoy a colourful photo spread from the recent Melbourne Cup Luncheon at Timor Plaza, followed by the remarkable story of Timor-Leste making cricketing history as the first country to field a father-son duo in an international match.

We touch on the unexpected news of Kevin Costner's discussions to play Bill Clinton in a United Nations-themed TV series. A storyline with surprising links to Timor-Leste.

Finally, we bring a snapshot of the OceanXplorer scientific mission, which recently completed its research along our northern coast, to better understand the country's extraordinary marine ecosystems.

As always, we aim to offer something that informs, inspires, or simply entertains — whether you're a long-time resident or new to Timor-Leste.

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Until next month. Cheers! Dan Conroy

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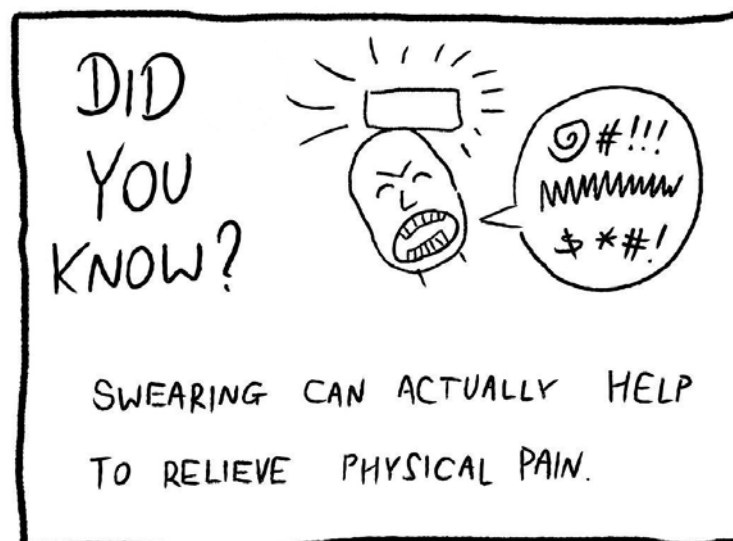
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Timor-Leste creates history to field first father-son duo in international cricket



Timor-Leste creates history to field first father-son duo in international cricket

Cricket witnessed a heartwarming chapter of history as Timor-Leste's Suhail Sattar and Yahya Suhail became the first-ever father and son to play together in the same international match. The historic moment unfolded during Timor-Leste's inaugural T20 International against Indonesia in Bali.

In a story straight out of a sporting fairy tale, Suhail Sattar, the veteran cricketer and team mentor, took the field alongside his son, Yahya Suhail, a promising young batsman making his debut. The two not only shared the pitch but also batted together, creating an emotional and inspiring moment that transcended generations.

For the small Southeast Asian nation, which recently earned its T20I status, the match was more than just a debut; it was a celebration of family, legacy, and the spirit of cricket.

Cricket fans around the world hailed the moment as a reminder of the sport's unique ability to unite people across ages. As one social media post put it, "Timor-Leste didn't just debut in international cricket, they debuted with a story that will live forever."

While the result of the match may soon be forgotten, the sight of a father and son walking out to bat together for their country will be remembered as one of cricket's most touching milestones.

Source: <https://www.daily-sun.com/post/838775>

Tour de Timor and Dili International Marathon scheduled for August 2026

DILI, (TATOLI) – President of the Republic José Ramos-Horta has called on the Timor-Leste Cycling Federation (FSTL) and the Timor-Leste Athletics Federation (FATL) to begin preparations for two major international events: the revival of the Tour de Timor, starting from Indonesia, and the Dili International Marathon, both slated for August 2026.

Afrânio Xavier Amaral, President of FATL, confirmed that the Head of State issued a clear directive urging both federations to begin maximum preparations for the two events.

"We received an official invitation from the President during our meeting, where he asked us to begin drafting a program with fixed, non-negotiable dates. These events are scheduled to take place during the second week of August 2026, right here in Timor-Leste," Afrânio told journalists at the Nicolau Lobato Presidential Palace in Bairro Pite.

He added that both events will be organised in collaboration with ASEAN national federations and global athletic organisations.

"The Dili Marathon will be recognised as an international event on the global calendar, similar to other major activities around the world. We will work closely with ASEAN and international federations to coordinate efforts," he said.

Afrânio emphasised that participation will be open to all, with no registration limits, welcoming both local and international athletes.

Cycling Federation President Herculano dos Santos stated that preparations are underway to relaunch the Tour de Timor, following the President's request to revive the event after a long suspension.

"The President has reiterated the need to prepare for the Tour de Timor. We must coordinate with Indonesia to determine the route," he said.

According to the plan, the Tour de Timor will begin in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), Indonesia, and continue into Timor-Leste. A dedicated commission will work intensively with Indonesian counterparts to secure the necessary authorisations.

Journalist: Hortencio Sanchez

Editor: Cancio Ximenes

Translation: Rafael Ximenes de A. Belo

Get more Timor-Leste news in English from TATOLI at <https://en.tatoli.tl/>

Kevin Costner in Talks to Play Bill Clinton in United Nations TV Series

By Loree Seitz

The TV show centres on the UN mission to East Timor in 1999



Kevin Costner is in talks to play former president Bill Clinton in a United Nations-focused TV series that hails from Leonardo DiCaprio's Appian Way, according to media reports.

Costner is attached to executive produce the series, which is titled "United" and is in early development, alongside DiCaprio. Produced in collaboration with the United Nations, the series will centre on a UN mission to East Timor in 1999, known as the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET), which organised a referendum for the territory to ascertain whether the people of East Timor wanted more autonomy within Indonesia or independence.

David Raymond ("Night Hunter"), who has previously partnered with the UN's Creative Community Outreach Initiative, will write and direct "United." Appian Way will produce the series alongside Onwards Studios and Prime Focus DNEG, with production slated to begin in Atlanta and Spain next year, while Fifth Season handles distribution.

The referendum led to East Timor's (now called Timor-Leste) separation from Indonesia. Though, a subsequent humanitarian crisis and massive violence broke out following the vote, prompting UN intervention in the region. Clinton also played a role in deescalating the conflict.

Source: <https://www.thewrap.com/kevin-costner-bill-clinton-united-nations-series-leonardo-dicaprio-appian-way/>



US President Bill Clinton meets with Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr. Jose Ramos Horta on 13 September, 1999 in Auckland, New Zealand.

Photo by David Scull/Clinton White House Archive

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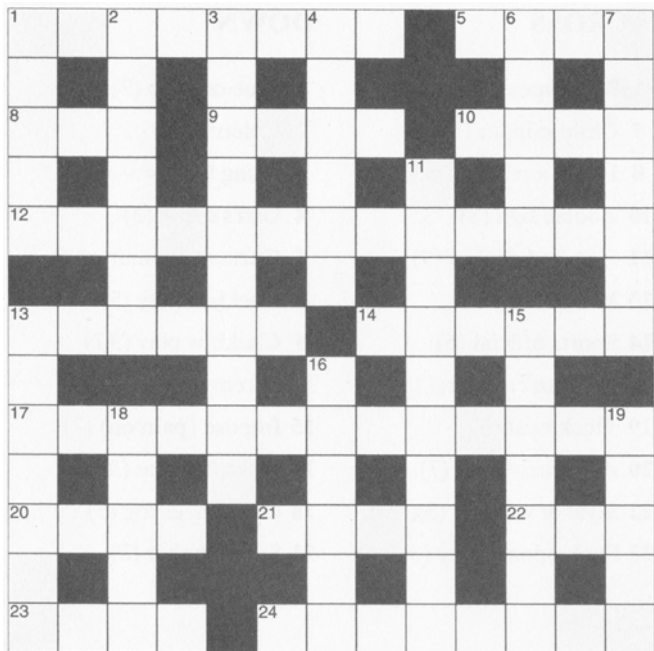
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QUICK CROSSWORD

Solution on page 20



Across:

1. Believing nothing can be known about God (8)
5. Fine dry powder (4)
8. Pub (3)
9. Yellow-brown colour (4)
10. Make healthy again (4)
12. Eloquently persuasive (6-7)
13. Resist (6)
14. Withdraw (from a union) (6)
17. What surrounds a fetus (8,5)
20. Ben — (*Treasure Island*) (4)
21. Italian lake (4)
22. Literary form of "open" (3)
23. (Of door) slightly open (4)
24. Strong black coffee (8)

Down:

1. False identity (5)
2. Preventing sliding (3-4)
3. Car ride smoother (10)
4. Set fire to (6)
6. Australian landmark (5)
7. Foot lever (7)
11. Like a hypocaut (10)
13. Earache (7)
15. Seeking to imitate (7)
16. Prejudiced people (6)
18. Japanese assassin (5)
19. San —; — Garcia (5)

QUICK CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

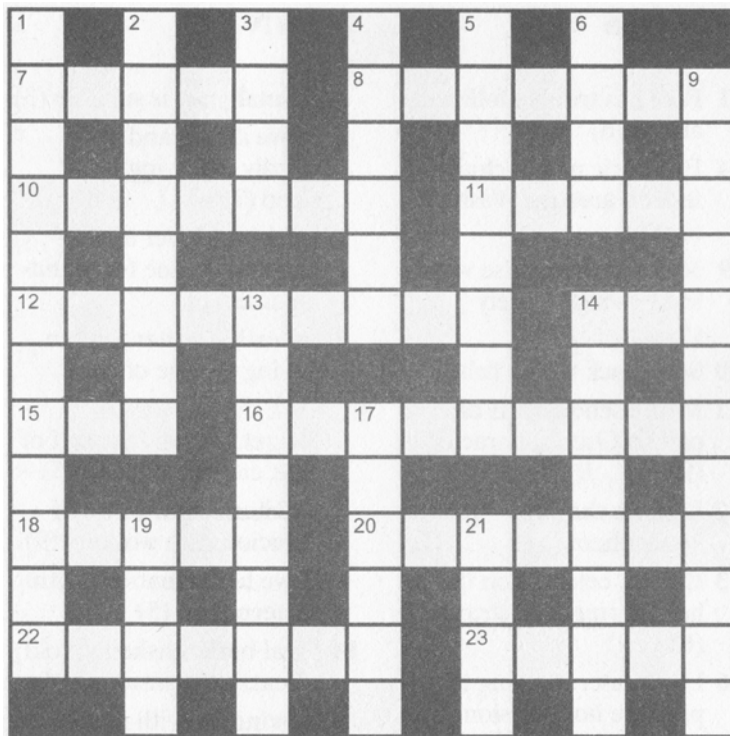
Solution on page 20

Across:

7. Show vicar, English, around university (5)
8. Inability to recall a name is shattering (7)
10. Rough water I had encountered initially in journey (4,3)
11. Average American, our ally regularly (5)
12. Raising points: no flashy stuff! (9)
14. Tips from player confuse aloof official (3)
15. One about to display passion (3)
16. Dogs shown drinks ... (9)
18. ... one, perhaps, fit for corgis' owner to return? (5)
20. Unmissed, like an unfinished cake? (7)
22. Feline's claw — it ultimately scratched badly (7)
23. Composer, European, appearing on day one (5)

Down:

1. Family member runs into trouble with Home Rule (7-2-3)
2. Testimony of French in the course of show (8)
3. Stern parent? (4)
4. Thanks one that is quietly turning up Far East capital (6)
5. Satisfied, eluding chaotic conclusion to eisteddfod (8)
6. Biblical character raised in Joshua's entourage (4)
9. Disorder unfolded, alas, without warning (3,2,1,6)
13. Snake to follow closely in sporting event (4,4)
14. Porter, perhaps, turning up in class move (8)
17. Female tore a covering article (6)
19. Swallow a bit of publicity up (4)
21. It makes no sense to button it! (4)



Crossword Notes:

'THE TIMES' QUIZ

Solution on page 20

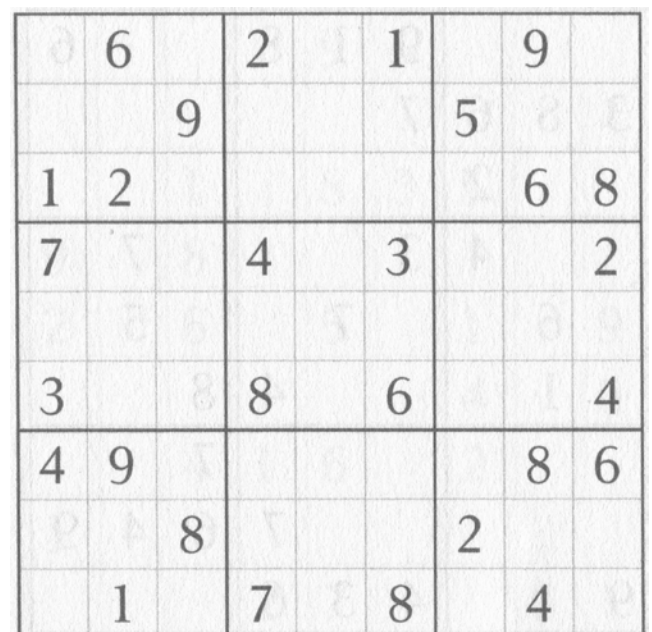
Film

1. In 2000, John Irving won an Oscar for adapting which of his own novels?
2. In 1963, which Austrian-born actress married Tony Curtis after meeting on the set of *Taras Bulba*?
3. The first ever film sequel, *The Fall of a Nation*, is a 1916 follow-up to which movie?
4. Which Terry Gilliam film was inspired by the Chris Marker short *La Jetée*?
5. Which French composer won an Oscar for scoring *A Passage to India*?
6. Which Frenchman directed the cinéma du look films *Diva* (1981) and *Betty Blue* (1986)?
7. *The Cocoanuts* (1929) was which comedy team's first feature-length film?
8. The 2014 New Zealand film *The Dark Horse* is about Genesis Potini, a player of which game?
9. Which German actress dressed up in a gorilla suit for the 1932 film *Blonde Venus*?
10. Which Cameron Crowe film features John Cusack holding up a boombox playing *In Your Eyes* by Peter Dinklage?
11. Which Puerto Rican was the first Hispanic actor to win an Oscar?
12. Which 1986 film featured the Colonial Marines, Vasquez, Hicks, Hudson and Apone?
13. In which 1957 film did famed Broadway singing coach Kay Thompson sing the number *Think Pink*?
14. "Long live the new flesh" is the last line spoken by James Woods in which film?
15. Which Oscar-winning animated film features the inflatable healthcare robot Baymax?
16. Playing the villain Mister Midnight, Christopher Lee performed the song *Name Your Poison* in which 1983 film?
17. Who died on October 10, 1985 — the same day as his *Battle of Neretva* co-star Orson Welles?
18. Which 1968 Western features the struggle for a piece of land called *Sweetwater*?
19. Michael C. Gross designed and artist Brent Boates drew up which logo, as seen on the car *Ecto-1*?
20. Name the French actress pictured (right)



THE TIMES SUDOKU

Solution on page 20



"When you travel back in time, remember not to do anything that may alter things in the present—you know what? Never mind. Go for it."

Voices of change: Children in Maliana are using radio to speak for their rights

By Julio Talimeta Da Silva

Through UNICEF's support, young voices like Terezinha and Samuel are learning, leading, and inspiring others in their communities



© UNICEF Timor-Leste/2025/JTalimeta

Every Saturday afternoon, the community radio station in Maliana comes alive with the sound of young voices. Behind the microphones are ten children, five girls and five boys, who call themselves The Children's Radio Programme Team.

Among them are Terezinha, 16, and Samuel, 13, two bright and curious students who joined the team in 2025.

Together, they use their voices to talk about the issues that matter most to them and their peers. The Children's Radio Programme is a UNICEF-supported initiative implemented in partnership with the National Directorate of Promotion and Development of Media under the Secretariat of State for Social Communication (SECOMS). It provides children from Aileu, Dili, Maliana, Oecusse, and Viqueque with the opportunity to learn, create, and share their voices through community radio. The programme focuses on raising awareness about the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and discussing key issues affecting children in Timor-Leste. Beyond promoting learning and communication, it also helps strengthen children's confidence, teamwork, and understanding of their rights.

Before joining the radio team, neither Terezinha nor Samuel had imagined that one day they would host a radio show. Through short trainings supported by UNICEF, they learned about children's rights, how to prepare interviews, write scripts, and produce engaging radio magazines. They were also introduced to the basics of broadcasting, discovering how to use their voices with confidence and purpose.

"I feel very happy to be part of this program," said Terezinha with a smile. "Here, I've learned so many things that we don't usually learn at school. My favourite topic is on the right to play for every child, because I can share stories about the different games we enjoy together and why these are important for us."



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Each Saturday, after finishing their schoolwork, the children gather at the radio station. They are divided into three teams: the interview team, the team of presenters, and the transcription team, rotating roles every few weeks so that everyone gets the chance to experience each part of radio production.

Terezinha enjoys being a presenter and interviewer. "I like going to the community and asking people questions," she said. "When we talk about children's rights, like the right to identity, breastfeeding, and protection, I feel like I am helping others understand how important these are."

For Samuel, his favourite topic is safe internet use. "I like talking about how to stay safe online and how to use the internet for learning," he explained.

"Children today need to know how to use technology wisely."

But some of their discussions hit closer home. When the team talked about bullying, Samuel shared his own experience.

"I was bullied at school because I am shorter than other people in my class," he said softly. "When I shared my story on the radio, many of my classmates listened. After that, I noticed some changes, they stopped bullying me and started being kinder. That made me happy."



© UNICEF Timor-Leste/2025/JTalimeta

Each episode of the Children's Radio Programme reflects the creativity, empathy, and courage of these young broadcasters. They discuss topics such as climate change, hygiene, parenting, playing, education, and online safety, showing how deeply they understand the world around them.

Their enthusiasm has inspired other children in Maliana to ask how they can join too. "Many of our friends want to be part of the program," said Samuel proudly. "They see how we learn and speak on the radio, and they also want to learn."

By giving children a space to speak, learn, and lead, UNICEF and its partners are helping to build a generation of thoughtful, confident young Timorese, children who know their rights and are ready to shape a better future for their communities.

Source: <https://www.unicef.org/timorleste/stories/voices-change-children-maliana-are-using-radio-speak-their-rights>

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EMPLOYMENT MATTERS!

Edition #62 - Taxes and Payroll

These are **Employment Matters**, which matter to all of us!

As we conclude our focus on the 13th Month Salary and the importance of fairness, compliance, and shared prosperity, it's also the perfect moment to shift our attention to another unavoidable reality: TAXES.



Every December, as organisations wrap up payroll and employees receive their final earnings for the year, it becomes especially important to understand how these payments will impact tax obligations. While we may joke about wishing we could press a “skip button” on taxes, we can't deny that tax contributions fund the essential public services we rely on, from healthcare to education and national infrastructure.

The good news? Understanding and preparing for taxes doesn't have to be overwhelming. With the right information, employers and employees can enter the new year with confidence and compliance.

December Income: What Counts Toward Tax?

December is unique because most employees receive two payments:

- Their regular monthly salary, and
- The 13th Month Salary (Gaji Tiga Belas)

Some may also receive additional payments, such as:

- Annual performance bonuses
- Sales commissions
- Paid leave
- Cash or in-kind benefits

All of these payments, no matter how or when they are paid, are taxable.

So, if your company closes the year with an Annual Bonus, or rewards staff with commissions for surpassing targets, those amounts must be included in the total taxable income for December.

Below is an example to illustrate how December tax calculations work:

Income Type	Amount (USD)
Salary	\$ 115.00
Overtime	\$ 20.00
Annual Leave	\$ 58.56
13th Month Salary	\$ 115.00
Commission on Sales	\$ 500.00
Total	\$ 808.56

Even if these payments come on different days, the total amount is considered December income for tax purposes.

December Tax Calculation:

Tax Bracket	Amount (USD)	Tax
0-500 @ 0%	\$ 500.00	\$ 0.00
Over 500 @ 10%	\$ 308.56	\$ 30.86
Total Tax Due		\$ 30.86

Employees who normally earn USD 115 per month might be surprised to learn that December is often the only month where their total earnings exceed the tax-free threshold of USD 500, making a portion of their pay taxable at 10%.

Record-Keeping for Year-End

As payroll teams close the books for the year, it's important to remember that while the Monthly Tax Form does not require detailed breakdowns, employers must retain supporting documents for up to seven years. These records must be ready for review by the Ministry of Finance's Domestic Tax Department if requested.

With December marking both the end of the financial year and the beginning of tax preparations for the next year, this is an ideal time to ensure accuracy, compliance, and transparency. By managing payroll and tax responsibilities proactively, organisations reinforce trust, fairness, and accountability, values that have guided us throughout our GEDSI journey this year.

For any questions, please email us at info@konnekto.com with any questions. Your inquiries inspire us to create fresh and informative content!



The Malaysian prosecutor who helped Timor-Leste find justice — and a future

By Frankie D'Cruz

Shyamala Alagendra's pursuit of justice has carried a Malaysian conscience across the world.



Voice of conscience: Malaysian international lawyer Shyamala Alagendra, whose pursuit of justice has taken her from the ruins of Timor-Leste to courtrooms worldwide. (Shyamala Alagendra pic)

A quiet circle has closed for Shyamala Alagendra, the Malaysian lawyer who once stood in Dili's courtroom seeking justice for the dead.

When Timor-Leste took its seat as Asean's 11th member, the moment resonated deeply for those who had seen the nation's birth in blood.

Among them was Shyamala, then a young United Nations (UN) prosecutor who arrived just as the killing stopped and stayed long enough to see justice begin.

In 1999, when the people of Timor-Leste voted for independence, their triumph was short-lived.

Pro-Indonesian militias, aided by elements of the Indonesian military, unleashed a wave of violence that left villages burned, families displaced, and thousands dead.

In the ruins of that shattered new state, a second struggle began — the fight for justice.



Roots of integrity: P Alagendra (left) and the late N Saraswathy Devi (seated right) and their family — a household steeped in law, service, and a lifelong belief that justice begins at home. (Anna Poorani Alagendra pic)

Roots of conscience

Shyamala comes from a family where public duty was not a career but a calling.

Her mother, N Saraswathy Devi, was among Malaysia's pioneering women lawyers, a founding member of the Asean Bar Association and president of the International Federation of Women Lawyers in 2005.

She practised law until shortly before her death in 2023, appearing in every level of Malaysia's courts and campaigning for greater gender representation among judges at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Her father, P Alagendra, now 96, was a hockey Olympian and one of Malaysia's most decorated police officers — a man who survived four assassination attempts and helped shape the nation's early sporting identity.

All four daughters became lawyers — Raja Rajeswari, Venkateswari, Anna Poorani and Shyamala — each carrying forward the family's fierce sense of justice.

Shyamala is married to Karim Khan, the chief prosecutor of the ICC.

For the Alagendras, the law has always been a form of service — a way to stand for integrity when power falters.

Prosecuting amid ruins

From 2001 to 2005, Shyamala served as a prosecutor with the Serious Crimes Unit under the UN Transitional Administration in Timor-Leste.

The task was immense: to investigate and prosecute crimes against humanity committed during the 1999 violence.

Justice had to be built from the ground up, often in courtrooms without electricity and in communities still haunted by grief.

During her tenure, she investigated and prosecuted three of the 10 priority cases identified by the UN for their historical and moral weight.

Among them was the Lolotoe case — Timor-Leste's first to charge rape as a crime against humanity — a landmark that redefined how gender-based violence was treated in the country.

She also played a pivotal role in cases indicting senior Indonesian military and police commanders, as well as Timorese militia leaders.

It included atrocities such as the Suai Church massacre, where dozens of civilians seeking sanctuary were slaughtered.

Her work helped establish a cornerstone of modern international justice: that no rank, no uniform and no political shield can place anyone above the law.

Justice in partnership

Shyamala's years in Dili were as collaborative as they were combative.

Working under Timorese general prosecutor Longuinhos Monteiro, she led investigations alongside local prosecutors and police officers, mentoring them in evidence gathering and courtroom advocacy.

"True justice is never imported — it must grow from within," she says. "Partnership, not paternalism, gives it life."

It was in those fragile courtrooms that she learned an enduring truth: justice cannot be parachuted in by foreigners; it must be owned by those who lived its cost.

That belief would guide every chapter of her later work.



An oath for justice: Shyamala Alagendra being sworn in by Sérgio Vieira de Mello, the United Nations transitional administrator in Timor-Leste — a moment that marked the start of her mission to seek justice for a nation rising from violence. (Shyamala Alagendra pic)

The de Mello years

In Timor-Leste, Shyamala was sworn in by Sérgio Vieira de Mello, the visionary UN administrator who guided the nation through its post-war transition.

De Mello embodied the UN's highest ideal — that human rights and sovereignty must walk hand in hand.

In 2003, while serving in Baghdad as the UN's top human rights official, he was killed when a truck bomb ripped through the UN compound.

"His administration taught us that justice is the first act of peace," Shyamala recalls. "His death reminded us that moral courage often carries the highest price."

Returning to Dili

Nearly a decade later, Timor-Leste called her back.

At the invitation of prosecutor José da Costa Ximenes, Shyamala returned to train local judges, prosecutors and defence lawyers on developments in international criminal law.

By then, the country she had once helped stabilise was one of the few in the region to ratify the Rome Statute of the ICC — a powerful signal of its faith in law over vengeance.

Ximenes, reflecting on Timor-Leste's long path to Asean membership, said:

"In the justice sector, we counted on Shyamala's contribution as a Malaysian who helped build the system at the beginning of our independence.

"We also counted on her when she was defence counsel at the ICC, training our judges, prosecutors and lawyers.

"As Timor-Leste becomes a member of Asean, I express my gratitude to Shyamala as one of our big friends."



Full circle of friendship: Shyamala Alagendra with Timor-Leste's founding leader Xanana Gusmão in the early 2000s (left) and with President José Ramos Horta more recently — a bond forged in the struggle for justice and renewed in the dawn of Asean membership. (Shyamala Alagendra pic)

A global legal journey

Timor-Leste was her crucible, but the world became her courtroom.

Shyamala went on to serve as a prosecutor at the Special Court for Sierra Leone and later at the ICC, where she handled some of the most consequential cases of modern times, from Darfur to Libya, the Balkans to Kenya.

Her cases have spanned genocide, crimes against humanity, sexual slavery and the use of child soldiers.

Among the figures she has represented as defence counsel are Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, Kenyan president William Ruto, Fatmir Limaj, former deputy prime minister of Kosovo, and Baghdadi al-Mahmudi, former Libyan prime minister.

In Sierra Leone, she was part of the team that saw Charles Taylor, the former president of Liberia, convicted and sentenced to 50 years in prison, a watershed moment in international law.

In Fiji, as assistant director of prosecution, she secured the country's first life sentences for child rape. And as a senior adviser to UN mandates on sexual and gender-based crimes, she has contributed to justice processes for Sri Lanka and Myanmar.

At The Hague and beyond

Today, Shyamala lives in The Hague, at the heart of the world's international justice community.

She serves as counsel at the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, where she and her Kuala Lumpur-based sister, Venkateswari, as lead counsel, represent Jakup Krasniqi, the former Kosovo Liberation Army spokesperson.

She is also senior consultant with the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, focusing on sexual and gender-based crimes and crimes against children.

Alongside this, she continues to do pro bono work for victims, often quietly and without recognition.

"The law must serve people, not power," she says. "Justice, at its best, restores dignity before it restores order."



In the halls of justice: At the Kosovo Specialist Chambers in The Hague, Shyamala continues her global pursuit of accountability, representing victims and accused alike in some of the world's most complex trials. (Shyamala Alagendra pic)

A witness and a builder

Her peers describe her not merely as a prosecutor but as a bridge — between systems, survivors and statutes; between the ideal of justice and its imperfect practice.

Professor David Cohen of Stanford University, who monitored the Timor-Leste trials she prosecuted, said:

"I have known none as committed to the cause of justice and the welfare of the Timorese people as Shyamala.

"From her groundbreaking investigations of sexual violence in the 1999 conflict to her continuing work in judicial capacity-building, she has made a lasting contribution."

Her own reflections are more restrained but no less powerful:

"Law alone cannot heal a nation — only compassion can," she says. "In Timor-Leste, I saw forgiveness redefine justice."

The victory of reconciliation

As Timor-Leste now joins Asean, Shyamala's journey comes full circle — not as a chapter closed, but as proof that reconciliation can outlast ruin.

"I have seen firsthand the extraordinary resilience of the Timorese people — their will to rebuild, to forgive and to reconcile after unthinkable suffering," she says.

"Timor-Leste's entry into Asean is more than diplomacy; it is the victory of reconciliation over ruin, and a beacon to our region that true peace is born not of power, but of courage and the indomitable strength of the human spirit."

For Malaysia, her story is both a reminder and an inspiration — that justice, when guided by conscience, can travel far beyond borders.

For Timor-Leste, it is a tribute not etched in monuments, but in memory — the enduring gratitude for a Malaysian who stood by them when their world was broken, and helped them find their voice in the language of law.

Source: <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/10/30/the-malaysian-prosecutor-who-helped-timor-leste-find-justice-and-a-future>

Ken's Two Centavos

Ken calls himself a citizen of the world, and with good reason. Now in his seventies, he's lived a life that has carried him from Denmark to Europe, the United States and Thailand, before choosing Atauro Island as the perfect place to retire.

Each month he shares his thoughts on everyday life — the insights, quirks and small moments that show Timor-Leste to be both familiar and unexpected.

These are Ken's Two Centavos.

This Month Ken thinks Timor-Leste Could Ban Dogs.

It's not so outlandish a concept. Dogs are banned in the Maldives and Antarctica, and are nearly gone from the Netherlands, Ecuador, Trinidad, Venezuela, and Saudi Arabia. Many residential communities ban dogs.

It wouldn't be easy, but it wouldn't be impossible for Timor-Leste to also ban dogs.

Let's look at the pluses and minuses of having dogs run free throughout the country.

Pluses: Supposedly for security, because some dogs bark if a stranger is seen.

Also, they're fun to play with when they're puppies.

Minuses: They poop everywhere, They attack and harm people and other species, sometimes spreading diseases. they bark anytime, day or night, most often for no discernible reason.

Tourism numbers for TL would likely double if dogs were banned. How often have tourists been barked at when they're just walking around, admiring sights? It's rare that any tourist to TL has not been barked at by local dogs. Is that how we want to welcome visitors?

Who, in TL, has not experienced strolling into a shop or home, where there are one or more dogs barking, and the shop-owner or home-owner just grinning, as if he either 'doesn't hear it' or it's just 'dogs being dogs,'

I first came to TL in the summer of 2024,went to Atauro island and was glad to see very few dogs, and those I saw didn't bark at strangers. I had to leave after 2 months, but I came back to TL in summer of 2025. Now, back on Atauro, there are dogs everywhere. Each house seems to have two or three grown dogs and several puppies. This population explosion are barkers.

When I visit Dili, it's how Atauro will be in perhaps 10 years, dogwise. At one hotel I stay at, which shall be nameless, there is a gravel road leading to it which, for me, is like running a gauntlet of aggressively barking dogs. I've found a roundabout back-alley way to it, but even that has barking dogs, though not as virulent as the main entrance. Dogs are bad for other species, as well, and I haven't even gone off about cats, but that's a topic for another day.

In TL, there are few native/wild species. Pets brought by humans are a large reason for the decimation of wild animals. Of course, mankind is the #1 destroyer of habitat, leading to the extinction of other species. Yet, rats and cats, primarily, destroy countless numbers of native birds, reptiles and other species, including their eggs.

Let's phase out dogs in TL. Make it a better place for people. Cats and rats are more indelible, and would be a tougher row to hoe.

Ken Albertsen
kenalberts214@gmail.com

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLE ON PAGE 12

QUICK CROSSWORD

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A S P I U R A
SILVERTONGUED
I N E D L
OPPOSE SECEDE
T I B R M
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LAGER NOTICED
A U A A O A D
WILDCAT SATIE
P E A H E N

'THE TIMES' QUIZ

Answers:

1. The Cider House Rules
2. Christine Kaufmann
3. The Birth of a Nation
4. 12 Monkeys
5. Maurice Jarre
6. Jean-Jacques Beineix
7. Marx Brothers
8. Chess or speed chess
9. Marlene Dietrich
10. Say Anything...
11. José Ferrer — in 1950, for Cyrano de Bergerac
12. Aliens
13. Funny Face
14. Videodrome
15. Big Hero 6
16. The Return of Captain Invincible
17. Yul Brynner
18. Once Upon a Time in the West
19. Ghostbusters 'no ghost' logo
20. Emmanuelle Béart

THE TIMES SUDOKU

5	6	4	2	8	1	7	9	3
8	7	9	6	3	4	5	2	1
1	2	3	9	5	7	4	6	8
7	8	1	4	9	3	6	5	2
9	4	6	5	1	2	8	3	7
3	5	2	8	7	6	9	1	4
4	9	7	3	2	5	1	8	6
6	3	8	1	4	9	2	7	5
2	1	5	7	6	8	3	4	9

"It's a Fact"

KFC is the traditional Christmas dinner in Japan

It's all thanks to a very successful "Kentucky for Christmas" marketing campaign launched in the country in 1974

"Dad Joke"

RIP boiling water, you will be mist.

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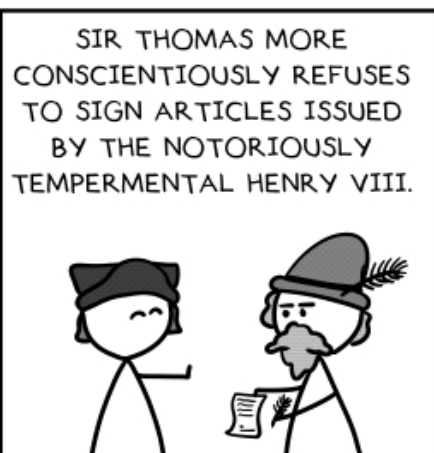
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"3 Panels Plays"

SIR THOMAS MORE (in 3 Panels)



Promoting Strawberry Cultivation in Bobonaro



The TOMAK field team, together with farmers and local extension workers in Aldeia Laktil, Suku Bobonaro, Municipality of Bobonaro is supporting local farmers in exploring strawberry cultivation — a promising horticultural activity suited to the region's cool climate at 700–900 meters above sea level.

The first seeds, sourced from Maubisse, were introduced to Bobonaro with an initial batch of 150 seedlings. These were planted near homes to encourage local participation and observation. Once the plants produced runners, they were transferred to polybags and nurseries for adaptation and further growth.

With proper care and good soil quality, strawberries can be harvested within 2–3 months, providing farmers with a new source of income and promoting agricultural diversification in the highlands of Timor-Leste.

TOMAK is an agriculture livelihoods program funded by the Australian government. TOMAK works with government, NGO, and private sector partners to improve agriculture and nutrition for farming families in Baucau, Bobonaro, and Viqueque.



Source: TOMAK Timor-Leste

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KTON Company exports 11.8 tons of coffee to the United States of America

TradelInvest Timor-Leste, represented by the Director of External Relations and Marketing, Mr. Roberto Lai, participated in an inspection ceremony marking the first coffee export by KTON, SA to the United States of America.

KTON (Kafe Timor Organiku e Natural) is a Timorese company actively engaged in coffee production and processing and is strongly committed to expanding its presence in international markets, including the United States. Assisted by the ASL Logistik company, in this initial shipment, the company successfully exported 11.8 tons of coffee, with plans to steadily increase export volumes in the coming years.

During the event, Mr. Lai reaffirmed TradelInvest Timor-Leste's commitment to continue facilitating KTON, SA in future processes with relevant ministries and authorities—particularly in ensuring compliance with export procedures and regulations—to further streamline their export activities.

Prior to shipment, the coffee underwent inspection by the Directorate of National Quarantine and Biosecurity's technical team, as part of the export process.

The manager of KTON, SA expressed pride in this achievement and extended appreciation to TradelInvest Timor-Leste and all relevant authorities for their continued support, which has made it possible for the company to successfully enter the U.S. market with its coffee products.



Credit: TradelInvest Timor-Leste

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OceanX Scientific Mission Explores Timor-Leste's Marine Ecosystem



Prime Minister Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão visited the research vessel *OceanXplorer* when it docked last month at the Port of Tibar in Liquiçá municipality. The visit marked the launch of “*OceanX Timor-Leste 2025: Exploring the Edge – The Timor Passage*”, an international scientific mission along the northern coast of Timor-Leste and the waters around Ataúro Island.

The expedition was a partnership between OceanX, a US-based non-profit organisation supported by Dalio Philanthropies, and the Government of Timor-Leste, through the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock, and Forestry.

During the tour of the vessel, the Prime Minister was accompanied by Vice Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister of Economic Affairs Francisco Kalbuadi Lay, the Minister of Tourism and Environment, and other members of the Government and the National Parliament.

The delegation learned about the *OceanXplorer*'s technological capabilities and received explanations from the scientific team about the mission's objectives, which combined marine science, technology, education, and communication to expand knowledge of the ocean and support its sustainable management.

The *OceanXplorer* is regarded as one of the most advanced oceanographic research vessels in the world, equipped with:

- State-of-the-art wet and dry laboratories
- Submersibles capable of reaching 6,000 metres
- Aerial and underwater drones
- High-resolution imaging systems
- Artificial intelligence systems for species identification and real-time data analysis

The *OceanX Timor-Leste 2025* expedition investigated the deep waters north of Dili and Ataúro Island—part of the Coral Triangle, one of the world's most biodiverse marine regions. Researchers gathered data on:

- Marine biodiversity
- Deep-sea habitats and ecosystems
- Ocean currents
- Species distribution and behaviour

These findings will help to build a stronger scientific foundation for understanding Timor-Leste's marine environment and support future policies on conservation, sustainable resource use, and ocean governance.

OceanX also opened the *OceanXplorer* to Timorese students, researchers, and journalists, offering guided tours that showcased the educational and scientific potential of the programme.



Credit: Média-GPM & OceanX

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O

Optic

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DIS Honours the 2025 VCE Graduates as It Enters Its 23rd Year of Educational Leadership in Timor-Leste



Dili International School (DIS) has proudly celebrated its 2025 Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE, Australia) graduation ceremony at Hotel Timor, recognising the achievements of this year's cohort of seventeen students representing six nationalities. Their success adds to the growing group of DIS graduates who, for more than a decade, have pursued university study and global career pathways through the internationally recognised VCE program.

This year's ceremony came at a meaningful moment in Timor-Leste's history, following the nation's full accession to ASEAN. As Timor-Leste strengthens its place within the regional community, DIS's 23-year role as the country's leading English-language international school remains vital. Since 2002, the school has supported Timorese and expatriate students to develop the academic skills, international mindedness, and English proficiency needed to participate confidently in regional and global settings.

Across these 23 years, DIS has remained at the forefront of educational innovation, blending global standards with local context and supporting young people to pursue their aspirations. Its alumni continue to study in Australia, New Zealand, Portugal, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Malaysia, China, and beyond, entering varied fields such as engineering, medicine, social sciences, business, technology, and the creative arts.

This year's ceremony was attended by distinguished guests, including Her Excellency Ms Caitlin Wilson, Ambassador of Australia to Timor-Leste, and Mr Gary Van Den Elsen, Haileybury College's Director of International Operations and representative of DIS's long-standing Australian partner school. Their presence highlighted the strong educational ties between Timor-Leste and Australia, as well as the ongoing commitment to expanding opportunities for young people in the region. Her Excellency Dra Dulce de Jesus Soares, Minister of Education also joined the celebrations

In his address, DIS Principal Tim Blackman reflected on the school's long-term mission and its contribution to the nation's development. He noted that the achievements of the Class of 2025 stand not only as a personal milestone for each graduate, but also as a continuation of the school's broader purpose, which reflects DIS's vision and mission: to deliver an academically rigorous and internationally recognised education that nurtures curious, capable, and internationally minded learners who act with integrity and contribute positively to their communities.

The ceremony also honoured the dedication of DIS teachers, staff, and families, whose guidance and support have been essential in each student's educational journey.

As the Class of 2025 embarks on the next stage of their lives, Dili International School reaffirms its commitment to excellence, international standards, and the enrichment of education in Timor-Leste.

For more information and enrolment inquiries, visit www.distimor.org

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