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Magazine

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F-FDTL and Australian Defence Cooperation Program personnel during a week-long field exercise converting seawater into drinking water for Ataúro's most remote communities.



Photo: Kompanhia Enjinaria F-FDTL

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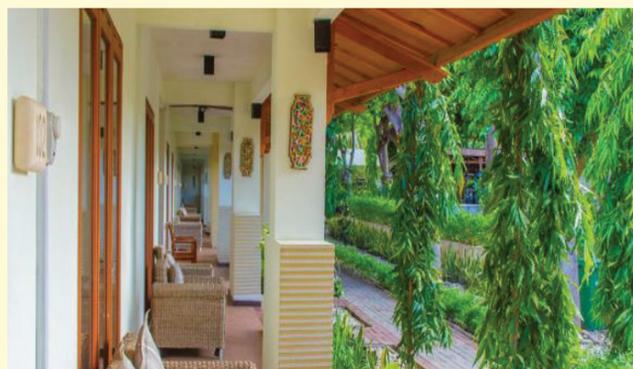


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From Seawater to Drinking Water: F-FDTL Delivers Clean Water to Ataúro Communities with Australian Support

With support from Australia's Defence Cooperation Program, F-FDTL engineers produced and distributed thousands of litres of clean drinking water to remote communities on Ataúro Island while strengthening their disaster response capabilities.

Members of the F-FDTL (Timor-Leste Defence Force) Engineering Company completed a week-long training exercise on Ataúro Island, strengthening their ability to convert seawater into safe drinking water while supporting local communities.

Conducted with support from Australia's Defence Cooperation Program (DCP), the training focused on key operational skills, including identifying suitable seawater collection points, conducting reconnaissance, and maintaining water purification equipment in field conditions.

Throughout the seven-day activity, the team worked closely with communities across Ataúro, producing and distributing thousands of litres of clean drinking water to remote areas including Akrema, Mau Meta, Uaro Ana, Beloi, Douro, and Vatuu.

In total, the operation generated more than 6,000 litres of potable water, providing immediate assistance to communities while serving as a practical training exercise for humanitarian response.

The activity forms part of ongoing efforts to strengthen F-FDTL's Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) capabilities, ensuring the force is better prepared to respond to natural disasters and support vulnerable communities across Timor-Leste.

SGT Heath Crotty, an Engineering Combat Adviser with the Defence Cooperation Program, highlighted the dual impact of the initiative.

"It was not only an excellent training opportunity, but also a rewarding experience supporting some of Timor-Leste's most remote communities," he said.

The training was also attended by senior F-FDTL and international representatives, including Lieutenant Colonel João Bosco Ximenes "Lenok", Commander of the F-FDTL Force Support Command.



Credit: Kompanhia Enjinaria F-FDTL & Australian Embassy, Timor-Leste



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“The Lost World: Timor-Leste Dinosaurs” Exhibition Relocated to UNTL Hera Campus



The exhibition “The Lost World: Timor-Leste Dinosaurs” is a science learning centre that provides opportunities for students, starting from Basic Education (Cycle 3), Secondary Education, up to Higher Education, to visit and learn more about earth science. This initiative aims to serve as a learning space and educational visit site, especially for students studying fields relevant to science, particularly earth science.

The Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO is very pleased with the new exhibition space now located at UNTL Hera Campus, Dili. In addition to the new space at UNTL Hera Campus, this dinosaur exhibition is also established in three municipalities, namely Aileu, Baucau, and Dili.

The exhibition currently at UNTL Hera, Dili, was previously located at Xanana Gusmão Reading Room (SLXG), Lecidere. However, as the SLXG building will soon undergo a rehabilitation process, it was necessary to transfer the exhibition materials in order to facilitate the upcoming construction work.

In response to this situation, the Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO (TLNCU) coordinated with the National University of Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL). Through the Faculty of Engineering, Science and Technology (FEST), UNTL agreed to receive and accommodate the exhibition materials in a new location at UNTL Hera Campus.

This relocation is considered a strategic step to ensure the continuity of this educational programme. Within the university environment, the exhibition is expected to contribute to strengthening the academic atmosphere and opening opportunities for students to gain direct access to sources of scientific knowledge.

Through this transfer, it is hoped that the exhibition “The Lost World: Timor-Leste Dinosaurs” will continue to serve as an important means of fostering students’ interest in science, while at the same time supporting the development of education for the younger generation in Timor-Leste.

Credit: Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO



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Timor-Leste and South Korea honour fallen Peacekeepers

The Government of the Republic of Korea, through its Embassy in Timor-Leste, joined Timorese authorities in a solemn ceremony to honour five South Korean soldiers who lost their lives on March 6, 2003, at Noel-Ekat, Oecusse while serving under the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Timor-Leste.

South Korean Ambassador Chang Hayeon, Minister of Higher Education, Science and Culture José Honório da Costa Pereira Jerónimo, and President of the Special Administrative Region of Oecusse-Ambeno (RAEOA) Régio da Cruz Salu gathered at the Korean Garden Monument in Oébau, Pante Makasar, to light candles and lay flowers in remembrance.

Minister Jerónimo emphasised the enduring gratitude of the Timorese people.

"As Timorese, we must be grateful and proud. We honour them because they were part of Timor's journey when they carried out their mission here. Their sacrifice came at a difficult time, and their contribution to our independence was truly significant. Even though Timor-Leste does not yet send soldiers abroad for peace missions, one day we may do so, and our soldiers too could face hardships as these soldiers did. Their example reminds us of the shared responsibility for peace."

Ambassador Chang emphasised that the soldiers' mission was solely to safeguard peace in Timor-Leste, particularly in Oecusse, and that their sacrifice continues to strengthen the bond between the Korean and Timorese peoples.

"We will never forget their sacrifice. It remains a bridge of solidarity between our nations," he stated.

RAEOA President Régio da Cruz Salu expressed gratitude for the enduring friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

"We bow before these martyrs who gave their lives for our land so that we could govern ourselves. By honouring their strength and sacrifice, we strengthen our nation and our state."

The five soldiers honoured were Lieutenant Colonel Byungjo Min, Lieutenant Colonel Jin Kyu Park, Sergeant Jong Hoon Baek, Sergeant Jeong Joong Kim and Sergeant Hee Choi.

Their memory stands as a symbol of sacrifice, solidarity, and the enduring partnership between Timor-Leste and South Korea.

Journalist: Abilio Elo Nini

Editor: Rafael Ximenes de A. Belo

Credit: Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Timor-Leste, TATOLI



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David John Stewart Boyce

12th May 1938 – 5th March 2026



1993-1996 Motain FC with David the founding Father

Friends, colleagues and communities across Australia, Indonesia and Timor-Leste were saddened to learn of the passing of David Boyce in Darwin, where he had been in hospital for 8 months.

David was born in Potts Point, Sydney, the eldest son of John and Helen Mary Boyce (née Combes). He grew up in Sydney's eastern suburbs, mainly in Vaucluse, in a household that included his mother, grandmother Ethel Combes (née Shields), his aunt Betty Lennon (née Combes), and his cousin Elizabeth Lennon (later Wilcock, and then Dodds). Twin brothers, Stewart and Jim, were born in December 1941.

Following his parents' divorce in 1949, David maintained regular contact with his father, though family life was shaped by the complexities and lingering effects of the war years. From an early age, David showed independence of mind and a strong sense of discipline. At Scots College, Bellevue Hill, he developed a keen interest in geology, choosing to pursue it rather than follow the more traditional academic path. He excelled in the cadet corps, rising to its highest rank. At home, he was known for his meticulous organisation and self-discipline.

David went on to the University of Sydney, where he completed Bachelors (1961) and Masters (1965) degrees in Agricultural Science. During this time, he joined the Sydney University Regiment, ultimately attaining the rank of Major.

He began his career with the New South Wales Department of Agriculture, working in rural development until 1971. His aptitude for working in remote and difficult conditions soon led him overseas, first to Papua New Guinea, where he worked in agricultural and timber development in isolated regions south of Rabaul and along the north coast.

He later moved to Indonesia, working in Aceh, Central Java, and for some 15 years managing a major agricultural development project, funded by the West German government, in the Kutai district of East Kalimantan. In a region where flooding often made roads impassable, the project relied on river transport, including a boat captained by Rusli, one of David's foster sons, who also served as his administrative assistant.

David became deeply embedded in the local community. Beyond his professional work, he supported local initiatives, including the establishment of a football team, providing uniforms featuring the emblem of the Mahakam River's rare freshwater dolphin. He helped develop a playing field and small grandstand, and his riverboat was often used to transport the team to matches.

Though he never married, David became a father figure to six foster sons—five in Kalimantan and, in Timor-Leste, Tony Behar. He supported them generously, including enabling two of his Muslim sons to undertake the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca and assisting others with their education. His foster family remained central to his life.

From 1993 to 1996 David worked in Timor-Leste on agricultural aid programs for the Australian government, based in Dili, travelling extensively throughout the country. His effectiveness in building strong relationships with local communities occasionally drew suspicion from Indonesian authorities, and at one point, his visa was not renewed and he was reassigned to Bali.

Collating his extensive environmental, cultural and historical research, in 1995 David self-published a significant 250-page book entitled *“East Timor – Where the Sun Rises Over the Crocodile's Tail”*.

Returning to liberated Timor-Leste in 2000, he worked as an advisor with the National Cooperative Business Association, a role he retained until his retirement in 2020, providing technical support to the coffee farmers' cooperative Cooperativa Café Timor.

While in Timor-Leste, David played a key role in establishing, as Charter President, a Rotary Club under the sponsorship of the Rotary Club of Townsville. He later served as Secretary and Treasurer, and was the driving force in the establishment of the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards and the Rotary Youth program of Enrichment, reflecting his commitment to service and community development.

From 2015 poor health kept David at home, cared for by his Timor foster son Pedro “Tony” Behar who, after years first as protégé and then colleague, became David's carer for the last decade of his life.

David is remembered with respect and gratitude by the many communities he served, and with affection by those who knew him personally. In accordance with his wishes, following cremation in Darwin on 10th April, it is planned that his ashes will be returned to Timor-Leste. He is survived by his brothers.

May you Rest In Peace David.

Text written by Tracey Morgan, with details provided by his family, friends and colleagues.

Fun with Ai

Me:

Write a brief, humorous but respectful piece about everyday life in Timor-Leste.

ChatGPT:

“Why Nobody Walks Past Without Saying Hello”

In Timor-Leste, walking down the street is never just walking down the street. It is a social activity. A commitment. A series of acknowledgements.

You cannot simply pass someone in silence. Not because it's illegal — but because it would feel... incomplete. A small social gap. A missing step in the rhythm of the day.

“Bondia.”

“Botardi.”

“Diak ka lae?”

Even if you don't stop, even if you keep moving, the greeting must happen. It is light, quick, effortless — but important. It says: I see you. You are here. We share this space.

Children shout greetings from verandas. Shop owners nod from behind counters. Motorbike riders slow slightly just to lift a hand. Even people who don't know you will greet you, because in that moment, you are not a stranger — you are simply someone passing through their community.

For newcomers, this can feel surprising. In other countries, silence is normal. Eye contact is optional. Headphones are a shield. In Timor, silence can feel almost rude. Not hostile — just oddly distant.

And the greetings are not transactional. No one expects a long conversation. No one demands your time. A greeting is not an invitation; it is recognition. Five syllables to maintain harmony.

What's beautiful is how it changes the pace of life. You walk more slowly. You notice faces. You begin to belong — not because you own property or speak perfect Tetun, but because you participate in this small daily ritual.

Eventually, you find yourself doing it automatically. Calling out greetings before you realise you've opened your mouth. Feeling slightly unsettled when someone doesn't respond.

Because in Timor-Leste, walking past without saying hello isn't efficient — it's unfinished.

And here, no one likes to leave things unfinished.

Fun Holidays in April

- 3rd April – Find a Rainbow Day – A reminder to look up, not just at your phone.
- 16th April – Wear Your Pyjamas to Work Day – Comfort over credibility.
- 23rd April – Talk Like Shakespeare Day – To add unnecessary drama to ordinary conversations.

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the April 2026 edition of Guide Post

This month's edition brings together a thoughtful mix of stories, reflections, and perspectives from across Timor-Leste.

We begin by acknowledging the sad passing of David Boyce, who had been involved with Timor-Leste since at least 1993 and was a familiar figure to many through his outstanding contributions to Rotary within the country. Inside, we share an obituary recognising his life and impact.

Did you know Timor-Leste has its own dinosaur? Recently relocated, we point you to where you can now find it. It's well worth a visit.

Tourism and connectivity are key themes in this issue. We feature two articles both exploring the challenges and opportunities ahead. One focused on international flights, and the other on what the upcoming ASEAN Summit in Dili could mean for the country. We also welcome another contribution from Ash, who shares his report from the recent Geelong-Viqueque Friendship Schools fundraising dinner.

Alongside these, you'll find a range of additional features, from public health discussions around smoking, to efforts aimed at stopping dog meat production on the island.

As always, this issue includes engaging features, practical advice, and puzzles to keep you thinking. Whether you are a long-time resident or new to Timor-Leste, we hope you will find something here to inform, inspire, or simply enjoy.

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Until next month.

Cheers!

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THE BEST DAY OF MY FATHER'S LIFE



“Did you say you needed a six-pin-to-eight-pin FireWire for a 2006 MacBook?”

In Timor-Leste, tobacco still draws in new smokers

By Zevonia Vieir

Embedded in culture, the habit is hard to break for ASEAN's poorest member



Decades of chewing tobacco together with betel nut has left telltale stains around Madalena Soares' mouth. The Dili resident, 67, has now broken her tobacco habit but still sells it to others from her stall in Taibesi Market in the Timorese capital. (Photo by Silvino Freitas)

DILI -- After decades of chewing tobacco, usually in a form known as betel quid, Madalena Soares, 67, has finally kicked the habit.

But to support herself, she sells dried and pressed tobacco, as well as betel nuts and betel leaves, from a stall in Taibesi Market, a sprawling traditional marketplace in central Dili. Buyers typically spend 50 cents on a packet holding a handful of dried tobacco.

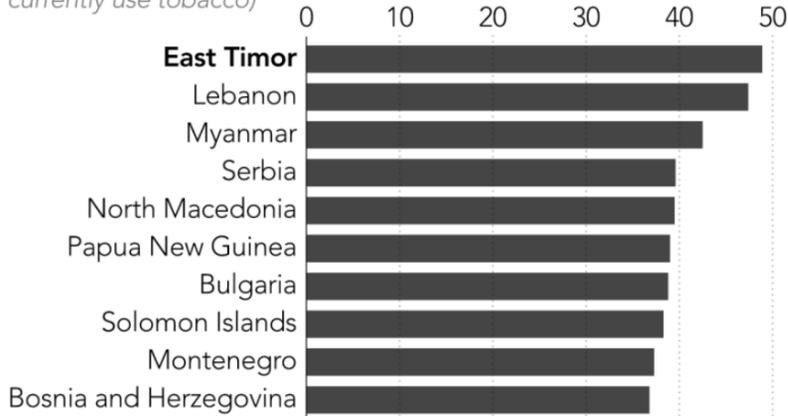
"I don't use tobacco anymore, I only sell tobacco, because it made me feel bad," Soares said. But she still chews tobaccoless betel quid -- that is, dried betel nut dabbed with powdered lime made from crushed seashells or limestone -- even though it, too, is said to cause cancer.

Soares can easily find buyers for her offerings as nearly every other person in Timor-Leste aged 15 and up chews, smokes or sniffs tobacco, a higher proportion than in any other country, according to World Health Organization (WHO) data.

Not only that, but even as tobacco use has fallen steeply in recent decades in Asian nations such as Myanmar, where usage was previously the most prevalent in the world, the rate in Timor-Leste continues to edge upward. With many underage teens picking up the habit, prospects for a decline appear dim.

East Timor leads the world in tobacco use

(Percentage of residents aged 15 and above who currently use tobacco)



Source: World Health Organization, 2025 Global Report on Trends in Prevalence of Tobacco Use

Despite often pioneering ways to combat tobacco use, the Asia-Pacific region now accounts for around two-thirds of the world's remaining consumers of the plant. This lingering dependence is exacting a heavy toll of death and disease. According to data from the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Collaborative Network, tobacco-related diseases now kill 4.95 million people in the region each year.

Timor-Leste, among the region's poorest nations, bears an especially heavy burden. Here, an estimated 1,117 residents die annually from tobacco-related diseases in a country of just 1.34 million people. In addition, smoking-related illnesses cost the country \$25.6 million a year in treatment expenses and productivity losses, according to The Tobacco Atlas database, the equivalent of nearly 1 percentage point of national gross domestic product.

Due to limited medical facilities in Timor-Leste, many residents with tobacco-related diseases are treated partly in Malaysia or Singapore. The Timor-Leste Medical Association estimates that the government, which provides free health care, spends \$4 million to \$7 million a year on overseas treatment of citizens with noncommunicable diseases such as lung cancer.

"Timor-Leste is facing a public health crisis driven in large part by tobacco use, which remains a primary contributor to the high prevalence of noncommunicable diseases," said Sancho Fernandes, executive director of the National Alliance for Tobacco Control in Timor-Leste (ANCT-TL). "The government spends too much money to treat people who are sick, and too little on prevention."



Sancho Fernandes, executive director of the National Alliance for Tobacco Control in Timor-Leste, says the country is "facing a public health crisis driven in large part by tobacco use." (Photo by Silvino Freitas)

East Timor's annual tobacco burden

(Estimates based on 2023 data)

Household spending on tobacco	\$40.5 million*
Share of youth exposed to tobacco smoke at home in past week	67.2%**
Deaths attributable to tobacco use	1,117
Share of all deaths attributable to tobacco use	12.3%
Years of healthy life lost to illness, disability and premature death due to tobacco use	35,767
Direct smoking-related health expenses	\$7.3 million
Smoking-related productivity losses	\$18.3 million
Productivity losses as share of GDP	0.9%

*2022 estimate **2019 survey

Source: East Timor Ministry of Finance, Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network, The Tobacco Atlas, World Bank

Tobacco also contributes significantly to Timor-Leste's import imbalance. Although locally grown tobacco has die-hard fans, foreign tobacco and cigarettes together represent one of the country's biggest categories of imports, with around \$2 million of tobacco products entering each month, primarily from Indonesia. Timor-Leste has no significant cigarette factories of its own.

Traders from Portugal, which would later rule Timor-Leste as a colony for about 300 years, are believed to have introduced tobacco to the island around the 16th century. Locals began growing tobacco themselves, using the leaves in ceremonies where passing them out has come to symbolise binding people together on occasions ranging from weddings to conflict resolution sessions.



Dili coffee shop employee Angelo Freitas takes a cigarette break: Smokers in Timor-Leste feel relatively little pressure to quit unless they become seriously ill. (Photo by Zevonia Vieir)

Cigarettes, in both hand-rolled and manufactured form, have embedded tobacco more deeply into Timorese daily life.

Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao, 79, is Timor-Leste's highest-profile smoker. In a radio interview in 1990, when he was leading guerrilla fighters hiding in the jungle from East Timor's Indonesian occupiers, he spoke of how cigarettes were helping him to stay calm and keep going, remarking, "An Indonesian bullet is far more dangerous than smoking."

These days, many Timorese buy cigarettes one stick at a time, bringing the cost down to an affordable 10 cents a go. According to calculations based on WHO data published last year, 78% of Timor-Leste tobacco users smoke cigarettes, either manufactured or hand-rolled. Another 11% smoke tobacco in a pipe or other form, while the remaining 11% chew or sniff.



Loose and pressed tobacco for sale in Madalena Soares's market stall in Dili: A handful-sized bag of loose tobacco sells for 50 cents. (Photo by Silvino Freitas)

Growing up on a tobacco farm in Ainaro, a town 100 kilometres south of Dili, Raymundo Pereira helped his father with the harvest for years before he started smoking himself, initially rolling dried leaf in corn husks.

"Factory-made cigarettes were hard to get, and we had no money," he said. Later, while studying in Dili, he switched to cigarettes, which by then felt affordable to him at 25 to 50 cents a pack.

Now a 65-year-old building renovator, Pereira said, "Although the doctor told me to stop smoking, I continue to smoke Timorese tobacco because it is part of our culture."

"I can go through 20 cigarettes a day," he added. "I feel like I can keep smoking like this for a long time."

Given tobacco's prevalence and acceptance in Timorese culture, smokers like Pereira feel relatively little pressure to quit unless they become seriously ill. Gusmao has served as president or prime minister for 15 of the 24 years since East Timor (now called Timor-Leste) attained independence from Indonesia. During that time, he has repeatedly expressed scepticism about tobacco regulation.

But a year after his last spell in office ended in 2015, the country adopted its first tobacco control law. The legislation bans smoking in most workplaces, on buses and in many other enclosed public spaces; violators can be fined. Advertising and sponsorships promoting tobacco brands are forbidden, and tobacco sales restricted to those aged 17 or over.



Health warnings cover most cigarette packaging in Timor-Leste: Packs, however, remain cheap relative to other Southeast Asian markets. (Photo by Zevonia Vieir)

The law also caps nicotine and tar levels and requires manufactured cigarettes to be sold in packs or cases, which in turn must carry warnings about the health risks of smoking. Further, the authorities are empowered to set floor prices for tobacco products.

While the government has yet to set minimum prices, it approved two consecutive increases in tobacco excise taxes, more than quintupling the tax rate to \$100 per kilogram in January 2023, up from \$19 at the end of 2021. The tax boost had an immediate effect, producing an 18% drop in cigarette sales, according to ANCT-TL's Fernandes.



A young student in Dili holds a "Smoking Kills Us" sign: Officials and activists in Timor-Leste say more public outreach is needed. (World Health Organization)

In parallel, health officials launched public education campaigns to highlight the risks of tobacco use. With funding from the WHO, the government announced it would launch a long-discussed hotline to support those interested in quitting tobacco and set up four smoking cessation centres around the country, deploying counsellors who could prescribe nicotine gum, patches, lozenges and nasal sprays.

But a month after Gusmao returned as prime minister in July 2023, parliament approved his cabinet's proposal to roll the tobacco excise tax back to \$50 as an anti-inflationary measure. Around the same time, the WHO grant ran out: the cessation hotline failed to get off the ground and all the treatment centres closed.

"In Dili alone, we had registered between 2,000 and 4,000 patients, and helped about 400 to quit," said Mario Serekai, a tobacco control officer with the Ministry of Health.

"Most people came because of health problems, and many wanted to stop. ... Many people came for counselling and received nicotine replacement therapy."

Anti-tobacco campaigners like Fernandes fault the government for not putting more effort into enforcing the 2016 tobacco control law. Single cigarettes can still be openly purchased, even by underage children, at many shops and kiosks. Fines for smoking in places where it is legally barred are rarely levied.

"Implementation is weak," admitted Dr. Mateus Hornai Remegio, head of the government's Department of Noncommunicable Disease Control. "There has been limited public outreach about the law, and there are human and financial resource constraints, especially at the grassroots level."

At the level of single cigarette sticks, excise tax increases have had a negligible impact on prices. Even at the pack level, cigarettes remain comparatively cheap in Timor-Leste.

In its rankings of national efforts to reduce tobacco affordability, the Economics for Health program of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health has assigned Timor-Leste a score of 1 for cigarette pricing, far below Southeast Asia's average score of 2.78 on a scale of zero to five. The Tobacco Atlas pegs the baseline price of cigarettes in Timor-Leste now as \$2.25 a pack, compared with \$3.91 in Malaysia.

"Evidence from all over the world shows that higher taxes drive up prices, prompting smokers to quit, reducing youth initiation and preventing relapse, while simultaneously increasing government revenue," said Rui Maria de Araujo, a surgeon who pushed through Timor-Leste's tobacco control law as prime minister, earning him a World No Tobacco Award from the WHO.

"The WHO recommends that tobacco taxes should account for at least 75% of the retail price, and I think Timor-Leste should follow that recommendation," Araujo said.

Nugroho Katjasungkana had quit smoking before he moved to Dili from Jakarta in 1999 to save money but picked the habit back up amid the tensions of his work as a human rights activist. He then quit again in 2004 after his brother-in-law, a doctor, died of throat cancer.

Katjasungkana finally quit for good when he was diagnosed with thyroid cancer in Dili in 2020. "Practising yoga has helped me stay smoke-free," Katjasungkana, now a journalism trainer, said. "When I whistle, it sounds louder. When I exercise or ride a bicycle, my breathing is easier and my lungs feel clearer."

Katjasungkana, who first picked up smoking as a junior high school student, worries that tobacco remains too tempting for Timorese young people, who face limited job opportunities.

"Too many young people lack activities, which creates fertile ground for smoking," he said. "If there are more activities for youth, especially sports, the rate of youth smoking will be lower."

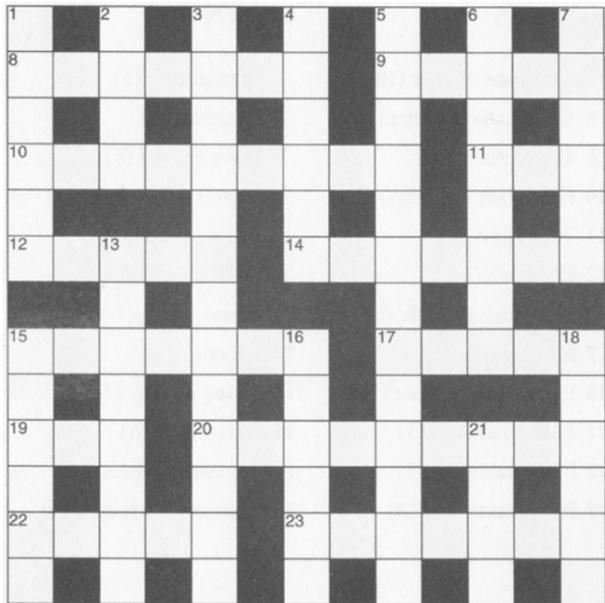
This article is the first in a series looking at Asia's unfinished struggle to rein in tobacco use. Visit <https://asia.nikkei.com/> for more stories.

Zevonia Vieir is a contributing writer.

Source: <https://asia.nikkei.com/spotlight/big-in-asia/in-east-timor-tobacco-still-draws-in-new-smokers>

QUICK CROSSWORD

Solution on page 20



Across:

8. Very active (2,3,2)
9. Animal and plant life in an area (5)
10. Bad luck (9)
11. Musical note (3)
12. Region of central Africa (5)
14. Send away (7)
15. Greater Manchester city (7)
17. Immerse again (5)
19. Operated (3)
20. Common infection (9)
22. Sculpture of Mary with Christ's body (5)
23. Set up (7)

Down:

1. Universal (6)
2. American Indians (4)
3. Relating to useful applied sciences (13)
4. Swallowed (6)
5. Existing items incorporated into artwork (6,7)
6. Group within orchestra (8)
7. Mexican chips (6)
13. Not any more (2,6)
15. Difficult predicament (6)
16. Stood up to (6)
18. Communist newspaper (6)
21. Fruits; insane (4)

QUICK CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

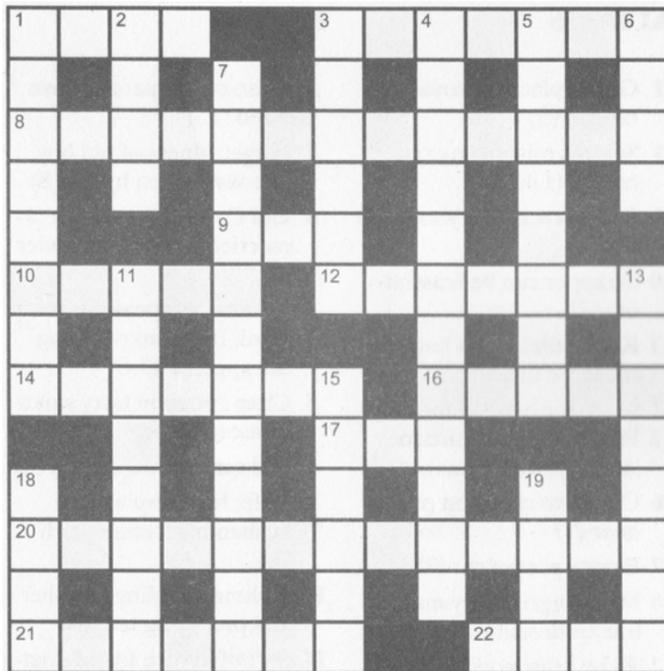
Solution on page 20

Across:

1. Dad's time: it was long ago? (4)
3. Got hold of equipment, given guidance (7)
8. Grub in part of biker's outfit (13)
9. Extra word of farewell (3)
10. Various ideas in words selectively spoken to audience (5)
12. Space for luggage men needed in part of journey (7)
14. Silly dopes wanting editor removed from office (7)
16. Shell that's yellow found by sea in France (5)
17. Group of over-anxious characters rushed (3)
20. Nevertheless, creating a clash in the diary? (2,3,4,4)
21. Decency of style associated with animal accommodation (7)
22. Bird or rabbit? (4)

Down:

1. Fish to cut up — not easy (8)
2. Playwright in Irish: award-winner (4)
3. More than one politician attempts to convey love (6)
4. Holiday resort on coast: clean, surprisingly (7-2-3)
5. Evangelist not a hot-gospeller? Only mildly enthusiastic (8)
6. Partner on an assignation offers fruit (4)
7. Ideal joints for a worker? (3,4,5)
11. Editor excited about peoples' representative brought in (8)
13. Nobleman that is saint: before all others? (8)
15. My dear moving miles away (6)
18. Friend is given minute token of victory (4)
19. Report of attempt to find adherent of religion (4)



Crossword Notes:

'THE TIMES' QUIZ

Solution on page 20

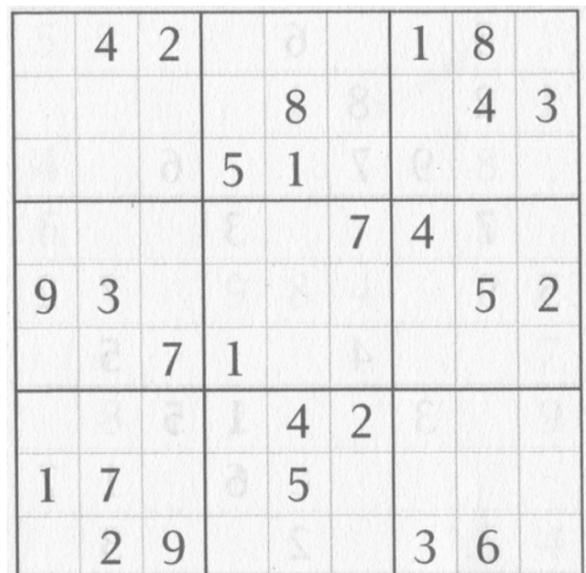
General Knowledge

1. Which Roman governor is associated with the ancient Scottish tree, the Fortingall Yew?
2. Who was King of England during the 1381 Peasants' Revolt?
3. The Dublin criminal Martin Cahill (1949-94) is the subject of which John Boorman film?
4. Torta Setteveli is a seven-layered Italian cake named after which dance?
5. What is the most populous city in the USA?
6. Which German dramatist wrote the play *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*?
7. The Spanish coastal town of Muxia has a monument to which 2002 oil spill?
8. What is the fruit of the rose plant called?
9. Which brothers created the illuminated manuscript, the Trés Riches Heures du Duc de Berry?
10. The world's tallest statue of a woman, *The Motherland Calls*, overlooks which Russian city?
11. The title of which song, traditionally sung at Jewish celebrations, means 'Let us rejoice'?
12. Which Russian composer is the subject of the 2016 Julian Barnes novel *The Noise of Time*?
13. Who once slept in the Cupboard Under the Stairs at 4 Privet Drive in Little Whinging, Surrey?
14. Which Manfred Mann singer wrote the much-covered song *Handbags and Gladrags*?
15. What is Britain's largest protected wetland?
16. Ronald Binge's musical piece *Sailing By* is played before which radio broadcast?
17. Which Stephen Sondheim musical is set in Japan in the year 1853?
18. Which belt was named after the "Yellow Earl" Hugh Cecil Lowther (1857-1944)?
19. Phillip Island is a Grand Prix Circuit in which country?
20. Identify the Inca city site (Pictured right)



THE TIMES SUDOKU

Solution on page 20



Mowing day was the calves' favorite day on Jenkins' farm

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Beachside Hotel	7750 2184	56Y
City 8	7391 8899	29O
Hotel Timor	332 4502	7H
JL World Hotel	7378 7195	
Lauhata Beach Escape	7740 1111	
Oceanview Beach Hotel	7723 6041	29W
Plaza Hotel	7723 2438	17J
Pousada Casa Do Sandalo	7857 2595	18I
Terra Santa Residence	7320 2020	24S
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Venture Hotel	7338 2476	20L

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JJJ Associates	7372 9717	
LEAO Accountant Service	7731 8658	2K
Primos Bo'ot	7831 8131	39S

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Caz Bar	7723 3961	56Y
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Early Sun Cafe	7732 4514	47T
EL Legendario	331 0005	43T
Golden Star Restaurant	7723 3838	19F
Hotel Timor	332 4502	7H
La-Clu-Bar Lounge & Cafe	7806 1999	
Lauhata Beach Escape	7740 1111	
Naris Restaurant	7847 6019	34T
Spooners	7732 4752	31V
Timor Thai Restaurant	7733 2399	
Venture Restaurant	7338 2476	20L
Wabisabi	7362 7788	30S

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EMPLOYMENT MATTERS!

Edition #66 - Social Security - Disability Benefits

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

Following our previous editions on Social Security benefits in Timor-Leste, we now focus on Disability Benefits, which provide essential protection when a worker cannot earn an income due to illness, disability, or work-related injury. These benefits are structured to be inclusive, proportionate, and responsive to each individual's circumstances, whether or not they have contributed to the system.



Timor-Leste's Social Security system offers four main types of disability pensions, each tailored to different circumstances, from partial to total disability and from non-contributors to long-term contributors. Understanding these distinctions ensures that everyone receives the appropriate level of support according to their needs.

Disability Social Pension (Non-Contributory Regime)

The Social Disability Pension (non-contributory) provides a monthly cash benefit to Timor-Leste citizens who are permanently unable to work and have no earning capacity, until they reach the old-age pension age of 60.

Who may claim?

- Citizens with permanent disability
- Individuals not covered by or not meeting the requirements of the contributory regime
- Legal representatives, where applicable

How to claim:

- Submit the application through the relevant Social Security services
- Provide medical certification confirming permanent incapacity
- Attach identification and supporting documentation

Absolute Disability Pension (General Contributory Regime)

This monthly cash benefit supports workers permanently unable to work, with no earning capacity, until they reach the old-age pension age of 60.

Who may claim?

- Registered contributors to the Social Security system
- Workers meeting the minimum contribution period
- Individuals certified as totally and permanently incapacitated
- Legal representatives of the beneficiary

How to claim:

- Complete the disability pension application form
- Provide medical certification confirming total incapacity
- Submit identification and contribution records

Absolute Disability Pension (Integration of the Transitional Regime into the General Contributory Regime)

This monthly cash benefit supports workers permanently unable to work, with no earning capacity, until age 60.

Who may claim?

- Individuals previously covered under the transitional regime
- Beneficiaries meeting the conditions for integration into the general contributory regime
- Legal representatives, where applicable

How to claim:

- Submit the relevant application for integration and disability pension
- Provide documentation confirming prior coverage under the transitional regime
- Include medical certification and identification documents

Relative Disability Pension (General Contributory Regime)

This monthly cash benefit supports workers with permanent partial disabilities who can earn no more than one-third of their usual income and are unlikely to regain half their normal earnings within three years, helping them maintain a basic standard of living while remaining economically active.

Who may claim?

- Registered contributors under the Social Security system
- Workers with medically certified partial incapacity
- Legal representatives, where applicable

How to claim:

- Complete the disability benefit application form
- Provide medical certification confirming the degree of incapacity
- Attach identification and contribution records

Claims for disability benefits can be submitted in the following ways:

- In person at Social Security Centres located in Dili, other municipalities, or RAEOA.
- Through Timor-Leste embassies or consulates abroad.
- By email, by sending signed forms along with scanned supporting documents.

Disability benefits ensure that individuals unable to work due to long-term health conditions or work-related injuries receive the support they need. By covering both contributory and non-contributory regimes and addressing partial and total incapacity, the system promotes fairness, inclusion, and social protection, helping workers and employers navigate it effectively.

For detailed guidance, forms, and updates, visit the official Social Security website: <https://segurancasocial.gov.tl/indexen> or visit a Social Security office.

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



Livelihood transition program on the Indonesian side of Timor Island helps local drive to end the dog meat trade

Humane World for Animals, JAAN and local government say the dog meat trade jeopardises animal welfare and rabies prevention



An Indonesian dog meat slaughterhouse, pre-closure. Photo Credit: Forddhanto Bimantoro

A dog slaughterhouse owner and a dog meat restaurant owner in Nusa Tenggara Timur province, Indonesia, who between them have been slaughtering or serving up dogs for more than 45 years, have closed their businesses for good as part of a local drive to end the dog meat trade. The traders worked with Humane World for Animals as part of its Models for Change program which already helps dog and cat meat traders in South Korea, Vietnam and India switch to more sustainable livelihoods that don't jeopardise animal welfare and human health. Ten dogs found alive at the slaughterhouse were also rescued by Humane World for Animals and local partners Jakarta Animal Aid Network.

NTT province is a dog meat hotspot, with thousands of dogs a year snatched from streets and homes in NTT and neighbouring provinces and trafficked in large numbers. As well as being incredibly cruel, this mass movement of dogs of unknown disease status facilitates the spread of deadly rabies across NTT, which is transmitted primarily through dog bites. NTT reports some of the highest rabies numbers in the country, with 78 confirmed human cases in 2025.

The Models for Change program is implemented in agreement with the NTT provincial government, representatives from which attended the closures. The program directly contributes to the government's goal of making NTT a rabies-free province by 2030.

Julie Sanders, Ending Dog and Cat Meat campaign director for Humane World for Animals, who also attended the closure, said: "Every dog or cat meat business that shuts down as part of Models for Change represents a tangible step toward eliminating this cruel trade, safeguarding animal welfare and protecting communities nationwide from the risk of rabies transmission. Most people across Indonesia don't eat dogs and cats and there is a growing national momentum to end the trade.

"Around 1 million dogs a year suffer appalling brutality for Indonesia's meat trade. The 10 dogs who we rescued here came very close to being a part of that horrifying statistic but thankfully they will now get the love and veterinary care they need to recover before starting their search for loving families."

Humane World for Animals and JAAN supported the two traders in Kupang City with a one-off grant to get them established in a new trade. Mr. Petrus Boly, who ran a dog slaughterhouse for more than 15 years, plans to open a convenience store or warung selling daily necessities such as rice, soap and household items. Dog meat restaurant owner Mr. Akim, who purchased dog meat from Mr. Boly to sell to diners, is planning on selling building materials. Both men were able to realise their goal of leaving the dog meat trade behind them thanks to financial and business planning support from Humane World for Animals and JAAN.

Mr. Boly said: "When I think about the thousands of dogs I have killed in the last 15 years or more, it makes me very sad and I'm very happy to be moving out of the trade. I know that dog slaughter is also dangerous due to the risk of contracting rabies so this opportunity came at just the right time in my life. I am now looking forward to opening my general store supplying all the things our community needs, but no more dog meat! I really hope the 10 rescued dogs will go on to have happy lives in families that look after them."

Mr. Akim said: "At one time I used to slaughter around five dogs every day to cook at my restaurant, but after a big rabies outbreak in Kupang city in 2023, customer demand dropped sharply. My family has been keen for me to stop doing this trade for some time, and I have been increasingly worried about the link between the dog meat trade and the spread of rabies which is a big problem here. But I couldn't have made the switch without the Models for Change program, so I am very grateful for that. I now feel I have a brighter future for me and my family."

Humane World for Animals and JAAN hope the closures and the rescue of dogs will help foster greater compassion for animals within the wider community as well as raise awareness about the public-health risks associated with the dog meat trade. By increasing public demand for an end to the trade, the local government in turn will be in a stronger position to introduce a ban across NTT.

Dr. Melky Angsar, who is in charge of animal health and veterinary public health at the Animal Husbandry Office in Nusa Tenggara Timur, attended the closures and said: "The dog meat trade poses a significant and serious public health threat to our communities here in NTT due to the spread of rabies. Our communities will be safer and healthier without the dog meat trade. Projects like Models for Change are turning that into a reality by providing a practical way to move people out of the trade and into sustainable futures for them and their families."

Following the closures, the 10 dogs rescued were taken to Kupang Animal Clinic for vaccinations and veterinary care. After a quarantine period, they will be flown to JAAN's shelter in Jakarta to fully recover physically and emotionally before they are found local adoptive homes.

Kerin Franken, director of JAAN said: "These closures demonstrate that if financial and business support is provided, people are willing and keen to move out of the cruel and dangerous dog meat trade. With these closures, not only have we rescued 10 vulnerable dogs out of harm's way but we have ensured that thousands more will no longer suffer and die at these premises. It's programs like this, combined with legislation and enforcement, that will end Indonesia's dog and cat meat trade for good."

Humane World for Animals (formerly called Humane Society International) has been campaigning for years for an end to Indonesia's dog and cat meat trade, as founding members of the Dog Meat Free Indonesia coalition. The organisation works across Asia to end the dog and cat meat trade. In South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, China and India, we pursue change through legislation, public awareness, community engagement, animal rescue, rabies vaccination and livelihood transition programs, working both directly and with local partners.

Facts

- Kupang is in the western part of Nusa Tenggara Timur province. It sits on the north-western coast of Timor Island and serves as the capital city of East Nusa Tenggara. Kupang is the main administrative, economic, and transport hub of the province, with an airport and seaport connecting it to other parts of Indonesia.
- The mass movement of unvaccinated dogs for human consumption facilitates the spread of rabies, undermining disease surveillance and bringing infected dogs into previously rabies-free areas. Dog thieves also remove vaccinated dogs from communities, breaking down 'herd' immunity achieved when at least 70% of dogs are vaccinated in a given area. Herd immunity helps stop the spread of rabies.
- The Animal Welfare and Protection Bill, introduced in September 2025, has received cross-party support including from the Golkar Party Faction, National Democratic Party Faction, National Mandate Party Faction and Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle Faction.
- A Nielsen opinion poll in January 2021, commissioned by DMFI, revealed that 93% of Indonesians support a national dog meat ban, and just 5% have ever consumed dog meat

Source: <https://www.humaneworld.org/en/news/livelihood-transition-program>

High Airfares to Dili: A Major Challenge for Tourism and Local Economy

Timor-Leste has great potential to become an attractive tourism destination in Southeast Asia. The country offers beautiful beaches, untouched nature, rich culture, and warm hospitality. However, one major obstacle continues to limit the growth of tourism and travel: the very high airfare to and from Dili.

For example, a one-way ticket from Dili to Denpasar should ideally not cost more than around \$150. However, travellers are currently paying around \$400 to \$450 for a return ticket. With the same amount of money, a traveller can easily fly from Bali to other major destinations such as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, or even Bangkok.

This comparison clearly shows that the Dili route is unusually expensive.

One of the main reasons for these high prices is the limited number of airlines operating flights to Timor-Leste. When there are only one or two operators on a route, ticket prices often remain high because there is little competition. In the past, Batik Air offered relatively reasonable fares between Dili and Kuala Lumpur, which allowed travellers more affordable access to international destinations. However, prices often fluctuate due to limited airline options.

There is some hope that the situation may improve. Aero Dili is expected to start flights between Dili and Kuala Lumpur soon. This could provide more travel choices and possibly help reduce ticket prices through competition. In addition, Aero Dili is also planning to open flights between Dili and Darwin. Currently, flights on this route operated by Qantas are often quite expensive.

However, it remains uncertain whether the new flights will offer affordable ticket prices for ordinary travellers.

The government of Timor-Leste should play a stronger role in addressing this issue. Air connectivity is not just about transportation; it is directly linked to tourism, trade, investment, and economic development. When airfares are too high, tourists choose other destinations where travel is cheaper and easier.

At the same time, ordinary citizens are forced to pay high prices from their own pockets whenever they need to travel for business, education, or family reasons. As a result, a large amount of money leaves the country and goes directly into the pockets of foreign airline companies.

This means the local economy loses potential income that could otherwise circulate within the country through tourism and business activities.

The government could consider several practical solutions. Encouraging more international airlines to operate flights to Dili would create competition and help stabilise prices. Aviation agreements with neighbouring countries could also be expanded to increase flight frequency. Additionally, the government may consider policies that ensure fair and reasonable ticket pricing for key routes.

If Timor-Leste truly wants to develop its tourism industry and strengthen its economy, improving air accessibility must become a national priority.

Affordable airfares will not only attract more tourists but will also benefit local businesses, create jobs, and allow the people of Timor-Leste to travel more freely.

Without addressing the issue of high airfares, the country risks limiting its own growth while the financial benefits continue to flow primarily to airline companies instead of the local economy

*Noman Fatemi
Dili, Timor-Leste.*

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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...

Telegraph, then telephones, then computers, then mobile phones, ...all came to Timor-Leste, in succession. Included in that list: CDs, USB thumb drives, video games, ATMs,on and on. We've come a long way from the abacus (along with 'aardvark,' one of the first words in the English dictionary).

Now AI is inserting itself throughout the world - wherever humans have a digital presence. AI is also in the Antarctic and out in space, orbiting just outside the stratosphere.

AI relies on chips that are about as small and dense as humanly possible to construct. They're denser than the densest coal, and nearly as dense as granite. Really.

The machines making the latest chips are bigger than school buses, and weigh as much as a house. ...fabricating chips about the size of a thin slice of garbanzo bean.

The reason the tech appears to be at its limit is that the light used to etch the chips is at the smallest wavelength. To produce that UV light entails a two-step zapping of minuscule tin drops at a fast clip. There are multiple mirrors used in the process, each one costing more than a VW bug. Indeed, everything about processing AI chips involves superlatives. Biggest / cleanest / smallest / most precise, etc.

The data that can be packed into one chip rivals the data in 20 large libraries.

...which brings us to the precipice: just because the little chips are faster, denser, and can pack more data than any chips which preceded them, ...does that make them required for everyone?

Here's a comparison: The speed of cars has increased, year by year. By the end of the 19th century, 130 years ago, the fastest car raced along at about 20 km/hr. 100 years later, the fastest car is like a rocket with four wheels which needs flaps to keep it earthbound, so it doesn't soar like a, ...well, ...like a rocket through the air. Should everyone (and every business) have a rocket-propelled car because the technology exists to build one? You tell me.

The point here is: Just because the newest digital chips are ultra-fast and at the cutting edge of what's technically possible, does that mean we should all have one, ...and all businesses should get them?

I could ramble on at book-length about the problems, current and projected, which ensue (and will emanate) from AI. The problems I've personally encountered, with business / banking / having online accounts nixed, etc, could fill a second book, which I've already started writing. There is a new chapter each month. AI is the genie out of the bottle, and it can't be put back in, even if 99% of world citizens wanted to do so. Nuclear holocaust couldn't kill AI. It's part of the earth's surface, as much as man-made toxicity.

Ken Albertsen
Atauro Island
kenalberts214@gmail.com

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLE ON PAGE 12

QUICK CROSSWORD

C	U	T	D	O	W	N
O	N	T	H	E	G	O
S	E	C	W	J	O	C
M	I	S	C	H	A	N
C	O	N	G	O	D	I
O	L	D	I	S	M	I
S	A	L	F	O	R	D
C	O	G	E	O	R	
R	A	N	I	N	F	L
A	G	C	I	V	U	V
P	I	E	T	A	E	R
E	R	L	D	S	S	A

QUICK CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

P	A	S	T	T	A	C	K	L	E	D
I	H	T	O	L	U	A				
L	E	A	T	H	E	R	J	A	C	K
C	W	E	I	C	E	E				
H		B	Y	E	T	W				
A	S	I	D	E	S	T	O	R	A	G
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P	R	N	E	S	S	I				
A	T	T	H	E	S	A	M	E	T	I
L	E	E	M	A	K	S				
M	O	D	E	S	T	Y		C	H	A

'THE TIMES' QUIZ

Answers:

- Pontius Pilate
- Richard II
- The General*
- Salome's Dance of the Seven Veils
- New York City
- Bertolt Brecht
- Prestige* oil tanker spill
- Rose hip (aka rose haw or rose hep)
- The Limbourg brothers (Herman, Paul and Johan)
- Volgograd, formerly Stalingrad
- Hava Nagila*
- Dmitri Shostakovich
- Harry Potter
- Mike d'Abo
- The Broads or Norfolk and Suffolk Broads
- Radio 4's late-night Shipping Forecast
- Pacific Overtures*
- British boxing's Lonsdale Belt (he was the 5th Earl of Lonsdale)
- Australia
- Machu Picchu

THE TIMES SUDOKU

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

"It's a Fact"

Most ginger cats are male.

There are roughly three ginger male cats to one ginger female.

"Dad Joke"

I asked my dog, "What's two minus two?"

He said nothing.

"3 Panels Plays"

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE (in 3 Panels)



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Japanese Picture Books for Children Translated into Tetun

On March 8, Timorese youth studying Japanese language, Japanese students at Sophia University, and Japanese residents in Dili translated Japanese picture books for children into Tetun. CWP, a Japanese NGO, imported a mobile library donated by Izumi-city, Kagoshima, and picture books donated by Second Life, a reuse/recycle project run by another Japanese NGO with the support of THE SOCIETY for Promotion of Japanese Diplomacy and Kansei Co. The library will start visiting various neighbourhoods once they have enough books translated into Tetun.



Source: Embassy of Japan in Timor-Leste

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Northern Ireland First Minister Michelle O'Neill steps behind the mic to capture migrant mother's powerful life story

By Lauren Harte, Live News Network

The First Minister turned interviewer to encourage more migrant women to come forward and have their stories heard and preserved.



First Minister Michelle O'Neill with Domingas Gusmão, originally from Timor-Leste and now living in Dungannon for 14 years

Michelle O'Neill has stepped behind the microphone for a change to capture the powerful life story of a migrant mother who moved to Dungannon more than 14 years ago.

Ahead of International Women's Day, the First Minister interviewed Domingas Gusmão for *Heritage Journeys: Voices of Migrant Women in Mid Ulster*, an initiative led by First Steps Women's Centre in Dungannon, which has been funded by a £231,000 award from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The project is preserving the stories of 100 migrant women who have made Mid Ulster their home and contributed to life in the area between 2000 and 2024, through interviews and cultural material which will then be archived at the Linen Hall Library in Belfast, as a legacy for future generations.

Having lived in Mid Ulster all her life and, as MLA for the area, the First Minister agreed to the role of interviewer to encourage more migrant women to come forward and have their stories heard and preserved.

The interview with Domingas, a mother of three originally from Timor-Leste, was recorded at Michelle O'Neill's constituency office in Cookstown, Co Tyrone.

Domingas came to Dungannon 14 years ago to join her husband, who was working at Moy Park. All three of Domingas's children were born in Northern Ireland.

During the emotional interview, the two women connected over motherhood and family, before the First Minister explored with Domingas the challenges she faced in adapting to a new country and whether she felt part of the community.

Domingas said: "Not everybody accepts and understands what we've been facing. We're not here just for fun or a holiday. They wonder why we're here. We want to give our children the best life.

"We want to contribute to life here. We have to ignore it. We have to control how we react, and it's often better not to do anything."

Following up, the First Minister asked: "Is that something that concerns you all the time? Are you worried about hate and racism?" Domingas told her: "Even if it happens somewhere else, I can feel afraid to go out. I have younger kids, and it concerns me, but I am lucky, and my neighbourhood is amazing."

In the interview, Domingas also tells the First Minister about missing her family, including her father, who is now seriously unwell. She has not seen him since returning home briefly in 2017 because she cannot afford the trip back.

In another moving moment, Domingas, spoke of the joy she felt when her son, who has autism, first called her "mummy" at the age of five.

Now settled in Dungannon, Domingas describes Mid Ulster as home, and emphasised the importance of finding support through the First Steps Women's Centre, where she attended classes and gradually built confidence and fluency in English.

Alongside raising her family, she continues to practise traditional music, cooking, and crafts from Timor-Leste and has established a small business creating and selling her hand-crocheted items.

In closing the interview, Michelle O'Neill told Domingas: "I can say to you, as your First Minister, I want to build a society and a home for everybody that's inclusive, where everybody is welcome, and where we celebrate our difference and our diversity, and that we all recognise we are stronger for it."

The recording also captured the moment Domingas gifted the First Minister a hand-crocheted red-and-green table centrepiece, which the First Minister said she would be proud to use on her table on Christmas Day. Domingas also crocheted a gift for Deputy First Minister, Emma Little Pengelly.

Domingas added: "It meant a great deal to me to be interviewed by our First Minister and local MLA. I am used to seeing her on television being interviewed, so to suddenly have her asking about my life was very special.

"She really put me at ease, and I was surprised by how many shared experiences we had around things like getting lists of jobs to do after school when we were children, and raising teenage children. I feel privileged to be part of this project and of First Steps Women's Centre in Dungannon.

"Knowing my story, and the stories of so many other women of my generation, will be preserved in The Linen Hall Library, so that my children and grandchildren can one day hear about our journeys to make a home in Mid Ulster, means a great deal to me."

Ms O'Neill said of her turn behind the microphone: "I don't think I'll be stepping behind the microphone permanently, but it has been such an enjoyable privilege to be able to explore Domingas' journey to Mid Ulster with her and to hear about all the fears and hopes she had and has.

"Domingas and her family are valuable members of our society in Mid Ulster, and our community is better and more diverse as a result.

"I urge any woman from another country who has come to live in Mid Ulster to get in touch with First Steps Women's Centre in Dungannon to ensure their stories are also recorded and stored for future generations.

"I wish everyone the best of luck in gathering and treasuring these valuable oral histories, which are a vital part of life here and which deserve to be celebrated."

Further information on First Steps Women's Centre is available at www.firststepswomenscentre.org.

Source: <https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/michelle-oneill-steps-behind-mic-33530642>

Guide Post Delivery Locations

Every month Guide Post Magazine is delivered to over 140 locations across Dili, including:

Ala-ala Café
Alola Foundation
ANZ Bank
Arbiru Beach Resort
Asia Development Bank
Asia Foundation
Australian Defense (DCP)
Australian Embassy
Australian Volunteers
Bay View Hills
Beachside Hotel
BNU
Burger King Colmera
Cafe Letefoho
California Cafe
Castaway Bar
Caz Bar
Centro de Informação Turística
City 8
Compass Diving
CRA Timor
Dili International School
El Legendario
ETDA
EU Commission
Fatima Cafe
Federal Insurance
Gloria Jeans Timor Plaza
GMNTV
Golgota Hotel
Ha Ha Kafe
Heineken
Hotel California
Hotel The Ramelau
Hotel Timor
Inovar4
ISAT
Jack's of Timor-Leste
JICA
JL World
KOICA
Konnekto
Kura Hao Pharmacy
Little Pattaya
Lucky Cake House
Mag & Co Fashion & Beauty
Malaysian Embassy
Malinamoc Paradise
Mandiri Bank
Meratus Lines
Minco
Naris Restaurant
Nova Costa
Novo Turismo Hotel
Oceanview Bar & Restaurant
OLE Bar & Tapas
Padaria Brasao
Palm Springs Hotel
Pau de Canela
Páteo Supermarket
Pelican Grammar School
Plaza Hotel
Post Office (Dili Main Branch)
QSI School
Rolls & Bowls (Vinod Patel)
Rentlo Car Hire
RMS Engineering & Construction
Sancar Residence
Shah Gardens
Spooners Bar & Grill
Talho Moris
Tatoli
Telemor
Telkomcel
Terra Santa Residences
The SPA
Times Square Hotel
Timor Gap
Timor Lodge Hotel
Timor Plaza & Timor Plaza Hotel
Timor Resort
Timor Telecom
Uma Knua
UN House
US Navy Compound (Seebees)
Venture Hotel
VSL Oilchem (Timor)
Wabisabi
Western Union
World Bank Office
Xanana Reading Room

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Geelong–Viqueque Friendship Schools Host Fundraising Dinner in Australia

March 13 witnessed a grandiose occasion at Waurin Ponds Estate, right next door to Deakin University’s huge, bird-filled campus in Waurin Ponds in Geelong, a neighbouring city of Melbourne in Victoria, Australia. Geelong-Viqueque Friendship Schools (GVFS) chose this slick, modern function centre to host a major fundraising dinner, which quickly sold out. GVFS is one of the many organisations in Australia that have a “sister city” relationship with towns in Timor-Leste, another being Friends of Aileu, also in Melbourne.

For 16 years, GVFS, a non-profit organisation, has been establishing partnerships between schools in Geelong and Viqueque, a city in Timor-Leste’s south-east. Currently, through their work, ten “State, Catholic and Independent schools have paired with ten schools within the district of Viqueque”. This work paid off last year – a concert held by The Boite in August, featuring hundreds of Melbourne school children singing traditional songs of Timor-Leste in Melbourne’s lavish Town Hall, was attended by the President of Timor-Leste, His Excellency Dr José Ramos-Horta. It was during this visit that GVFS was awarded the Order of Timor-Leste Medal, currently the country’s highest honour, in recognition of the various Friendship Groups that have worked with and for the people of Timor-Leste.



GVFS President Aisha Kristiansen with the Order of Timor-Leste Medal

Getting back to the fundraising dinner, the keynote speaker was Ornella Byak, Founder and CEO of BETTER Timor, and Bakhita School of Excellence in Same (a town a couple of hours’ south of the capital Dili), and a fellow Order of Timor Medal Recipient.

Byak was an excellent choice of “headliner”, to put it in musical terms, as her presentation set the scene, mood and context for most of the evening. Her stories formed a wonderful segue into the world of the GVFS, the kind of universe that it works in, and the kind of work that it does on a local, human level.

She defined ‘friendship’ as “trust, consistency and willingness to have your life changed by others”, and these sentiments would be recurring themes throughout the night, from her and many others, *especially* the notion of trust. She and many others stressed the need for this, and its delicacy while forming, but its strength when formed. She highlighted the necessity to listen to people, to “hear the history behind their hesitation”, to give a “hand up, not hand out”, and to be “building something strong enough that you are no longer needed”.



Writer Ash Brom with Ornella Byak, founder and CEO of BETTER Timor

Following Byak was a panel discussion featuring four interviewees – Sara Kristiansen, a student from Kardinia International College; Graham Barton, a teacher from Christian College Geelong; Julie Kos, a Professor at Deakin; and Chris Hansen, a retired teacher and active member of the Viqueque community.

They were asked to share some experiences that showed the real impacts of GVFS’ intercultural friendships, and children were often mentioned in their answers, particularly the unrivalled joy they can get from the simplest things, which echoed things that I saw myself in Dili – for instance, three children, five or six years old, on a construction site playing with a paper plane like it was the most amazing thing they’d ever seen. Oh, the forgotten beauty and wonder of simplicity. The joy that books bring to children appears to be ageless and universal, which can be seen in any children’s book shop or library in Australia, and equally in kid’s eyes whenever a new edition of Lafaek gets published in Timor-Leste (I’ve heard first hand how that book has opened children’s eyes and improved their lives, especially when it’s the only book in the whole village. Books really do change lives).

Many speakers at the dinner mentioned the character of Timor-Leste’s people, especially how communal they are. For instance, they have community networks that span entire municipalities – they can seemingly go anywhere and find a friend’s place to sleep in. One speaker noted how they appear to have little social hierarchy – in town meetings, for instance, everyone has an equal voice. Some noted that when a new skill comes into the family, for instance the English language, both the kids and the parents learn together. They help, encourage and correct each other so that the whole family, and community, benefits. Adjectives such as resourceful, intelligent and resilient were also common.



Organisers, speakers and stars of GVFS Fundraising Evening

All in all, it was an entertaining and successful evening. A last note is that GVFS assists not just with resources like furniture and books, but also, more importantly, assisting with teacher training, curriculum development, and student sponsorships for tertiary education. Additionally, in Geelong, they put studies of Timor-Leste in high school curriculums to give students an “understanding of the conditions and challenges of a developing country” and, most excitingly, “immersion programs to Timor-Leste”. This country showed me a gorgeous nation with incredible people; I hope many more Australians give Timor-Leste the love, care and respect that she deserves.

Ash Brom is an Australian writer, editor, publisher and English teacher.

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Other useful Links:

- <https://geelongviqueque.wordpress.com/about-us-draft/>
- <https://bettertimor.org/>
- <https://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/living-in-merri-bek/community-services/get-involved/friends-of-aileu/>
- <https://www.boite.com.au/boite-schools-chorus>
- <https://www.lafaek.tl/>

ASEAN 2029: A Deadline, Not Just a Meeting

By Maun Jeremiah

In 2029, Timor-Leste will take centre stage as the host of the ASEAN Summit. For most nations, this is a rotational diplomatic duty. For Timor-Leste, it is a high-stakes debut—a "forcing function" that compels the nation to solve decades-old infrastructure bottlenecks in just three years.

The scale is daunting. We are not just talking about conference rooms; we are talking about international-standard MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) venues, a surge in 5-star hotel capacity, and a seamless logistics chain from the airport to the boardroom.

The question facing Dili today is simple: **Are we building a week-long party, or a thirty-year legacy?**

The "Labuan Bajo" Blueprint: Success by Design

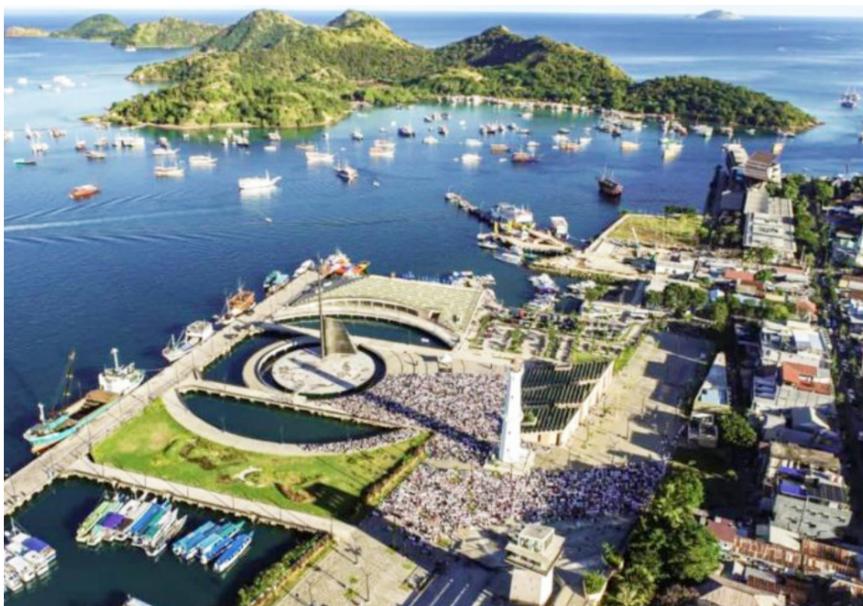
We need only look across the border to see how a summit can serve as a nation-building engine. When Indonesia hosted the 2023 summit in Labuan Bajo, they didn't just "set the table"; they rebuilt the house.

Before the summit, Labuan Bajo was a charming but infrastructure-starved fishing town. By the time the delegates arrived, the Indonesian government had constructed 25km of new bypass roads, expanded the airport for international jets, and built a world-class marina.

The secret wasn't just spending money; it was **alignment**. Every road was designed to serve the tourism industry for the next thirty years. Today, it is a premier global destination. The summit wasn't the goal—it was the **excuse** to build what was already necessary.



Labuan Bajo (Before)



Labuan Bajo (After)

The Warning: The "White Elephant" Graveyard

History is littered with specialised infrastructure that became a permanent financial scar. If Timor-Leste builds for the event rather than the future, we risk these "ghost projects":

- **The "Empty" Terminal (Sri Lanka):** Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport was built for prestige in a remote area. Today, it is often called the "world's emptiest airport," with more staff than passengers and crushing maintenance costs.
- **The Rotting Arenas (Athens 2004):** Greece spent over \$11 billion on specialised venues like softball stadiums. Today, they are fenced-off wastelands of weeds and rotting plastic, contributing significantly to the Greek debt crisis.
- **The "Elephant" Stadiums (Brazil 2014):** The Arena da Amazônia cost \$300 million to build in the rainforest. It now costs \$250,000 a month to maintain, despite having no local team to fill its 40,000 seats.

The Lesson: If a building cannot be repurposed as a school, a community hub, or a commercially viable hotel by 2031, **do not build it.**

Fact Box: The 2029 Readiness Dashboard

Metric	Current Status (2026)	2029 Target	Post-Summit Use Case
Airport Capacity	250k passengers/year	1M passengers/year	Regional tourism & trade hub
MICE Venues	Cap: 200-300 people	Dili Int. Conf. Centre	Regional mediation/NGO hub
Connectivity	3 flights/week (KL)	Daily Regional Hubs	Lower logistics costs for SMEs
Hotels	~2-3 Star Average	5-Star MICE Standards	High-end eco-tourism magnet

Five Strategic Recommendations for 2026–2029

1. **The "2035 Test":** Every dollar spent must answer: *Is this useful six years after the delegates leave?* Focus on modular convention spaces that can be partitioned for local weddings and trade fairs.
2. **Infrastructure as Nation-Building:** Prioritise "unsexy" essentials—waste management, urban drainage, and stable fibre-optic internet. These benefit the Timorese people 365 days a year.
3. **Crowd In Private Investment:** The state should provide the "bones" (land, utilities, and policy). Let private investors build the "flesh" (hotels and services). If the private sector won't invest, the project is likely a white elephant.
4. **Phase the Build (2026–2027):** Complete core infrastructure early. We cannot afford "emergency spending" in 2028, which leads to inflated costs and poor construction quality.
5. **Build a "Conference Economy":** Position Dili as the "Geneva of the East"—a neutral, strategic location for regional mediation and corporate retreats long after the 2029 flags are taken down.

The Final Thought

Hosting ASEAN is like being given a hard deadline by the world. It forces us to decide what kind of country we want to become. If we choose wisely, 2029 won't just be the year we hosted a summit—it will be the year we finally unlocked our future.

About the Author:

Maun Jeremiah is the Chairman of HOTL Association and CEO of Island Explorer Holidays.



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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.

Statue of Breaking the Chains of Colonialism

In Jardim 5 de Maio close to Hotel Timor, there is a statue showing the Timorese breaking the chains of colonialism, which was a "gift" from the Indonesian colonisers. Originally plain, it was painted and reinaugurated by Dr. José Ramos-Horta in 2009. Use Mikrolet #3, #4, #7, #9, or #10.



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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Timor-Leste's history brought back to life through its media archives

By Fiona Churchman



Archival footage on the big screen. (Supplied: ABCID)

Huddled around an old computer, a group of Timor-Leste archivists shared a moment of celebration as they watched a tape of old news footage, capturing the early days of their nation.

It marked a significant step in the long-term effort to unlock the country's history.



Nailand observing at a computer. (Supplied: ABCID)

Media and archive organisation, Centro Audiovisual Max Stahl Timor-Leste (CAMSTL), assisted by ABC archives and digitisation specialist, Michael Nailand, were behind the meticulous process of cleaning and processing tapes, dating back more than two decades.

"These tapes hold the story of Timor-Leste's journey since independence and a vital record of the country's culture, resilience and democracy," said Mr Nailand.

"Seeing stalled footage finally appear was energising for everyone involved."

The culturally significant archive of tapes originated from Radio and Television Timor-Leste (RTTL) and were being recovered and restored under ABC International Development's (ABCID) Timor-Leste Media Development program.

President of the RTTL Board of Directors Elizeu Isaac said the digitalisation work was an important way of preserving collective memories as well as tracking the country's progress.

"So, we can look back on it one day and see how (far) RTTL and the people have come."

Preserving the past

Around 24,000 hours of content was stored on the collection of old and damaged tapes, which document Timor-Leste's post-independence history, including its people, politics, sport and culture.

When floods struck Dili in 2021, thousands of these recordings were soaked, warped and left vulnerable to mould and decay.

Mr Nailand described how many were also stored in rooms without optimal temperature control, covered in dust and without a functioning database to record their contents.

"My brief: establish best practice cleaning and preservation, embed a practical cataloguing process as material is transferred, and advise on long-term preservation of tapes and data," he said.

"Our goal is to help save as many as possible before they're lost forever."



Michael Nailand at work (Supplied: ABCID)

Equipment challenges

The archival specialist brought with him some necessary tools from Sydney, including three VHS players still in their original boxes, donated by the National Archives of Australia.

Michael Nailand praised the CAMSTL team's high standards, especially because it was working with outdated equipment.

"The capture computer is about 13 years old and still on Windows 7, the FireWire card is well past its use-by-date, and even basic office supplies are thin," he said.

"At one point we shared a single very blunt pair of scissors and rationed sticky tape."



Michael Nailand (Supplied: ABCID)

CAMSTL was set up by filmmaker and journalist Max Stahl, who filmed the massacre at Dili's Santa Cruz cemetery in 1991, where 270 people died.

His work brought Timor-Leste's struggle for independence to world attention, and thousands of hours of his archival footage have been preserved at the centre.

CAMSTL Executive Director, Eddy Pinto described the week as "the most outstanding support we have ever received".

"My team has gained a great deal of new knowledge and valuable, hands-on experience in restoration and digitalisation" he said.

The week-long mission laid the groundwork for CAMSTL's long-term digitisation effort, to ensure Timor-Leste's audiovisual history can be accessed and celebrated by future generations.

ABC International Development's Timor-Leste Media Development Program is funded by the Australian Government's Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy.

Source: <https://www.abc.net.au/abc-international-development/timor-leste-digitisation/106101586>

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