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**Magazine**

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Instructor Rudi with one of his classes from the Movimentu Kalma Iha Bee Project. (See inside for more details & photos)

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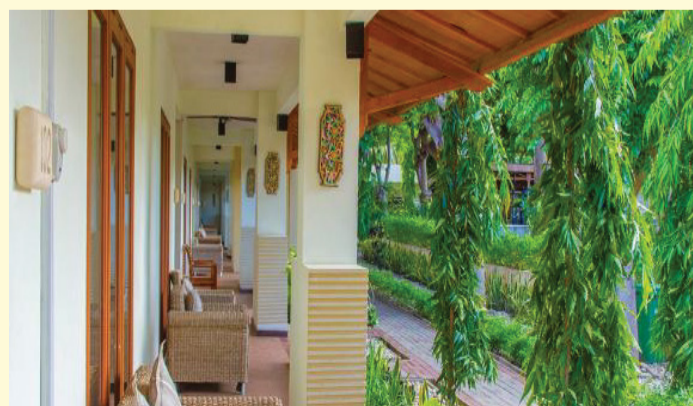
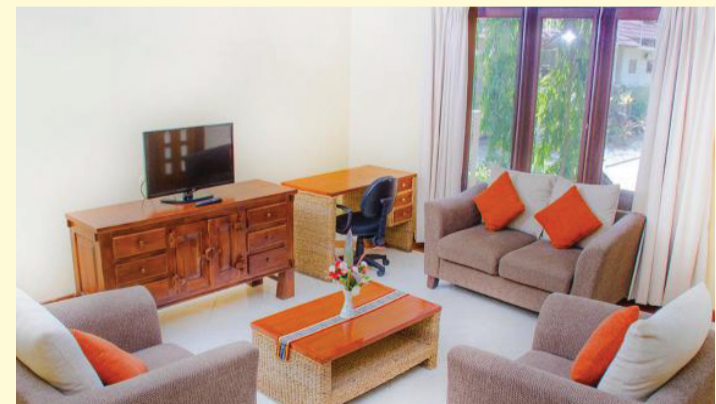


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# Dili International Convention Centre Breaks Ground Ahead of ASEAN 2029

Concept design for the proposed International Convention Centre in Dili.



He said the idea for the convention centre was first proposed nearly two years ago by Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão and members of the government, before moving into the construction phase.

“We started from the initial concept and design, and today we are finally able to launch the groundbreaking of this project,” he said.

The International Convention Centre is designed to host international conferences, high-level ASEAN meetings and regional forums, supported by modern facilities and infrastructure.

Construction will be carried out by Shaanxi Construction Engineering Group Corporation over a two-year period from 2026 to 2028.

Credit: Média-GPM & TATOLI

The Government of Timor-Leste has held a groundbreaking ceremony for the International Convention Centre in Dili. The project, located at the former Port of Dili site, is part of the country’s preparations to assume the ASEAN Chairmanship in 2029.

The foundation stone was jointly laid by Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão, President José Ramos-Horta, Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs, and Minister of Tourism and Environment, Francisco Kalbuadi Lay, ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn, and Australia’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, Richard Marles.

Speaking at the ceremony, Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão said the project forms part of Timor-Leste’s wider strategy to prepare for the responsibilities of chairing ASEAN in 2029.

He said that, as ASEAN’s newest member, Timor-Leste must continue strengthening its infrastructure and institutional capacity to support deeper regional integration and engagement.

ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn said the construction of the International Convention Centre reflected Timor-Leste’s commitment to national development and regional integration.

He said the centre would provide a platform for dialogue, partnership and regional cooperation, while strengthening Timor-Leste’s engagement with ASEAN and the wider international community.

He added that the facility would improve Timor-Leste’s capacity to host regional and international meetings, while also creating opportunities for investment, tourism and economic development.

Deputy Prime Minister Francisco Kalbuadi Lay described the launch of the project as a historic moment, coinciding with the 24th Anniversary of Timor-Leste’s Restoration of Independence.



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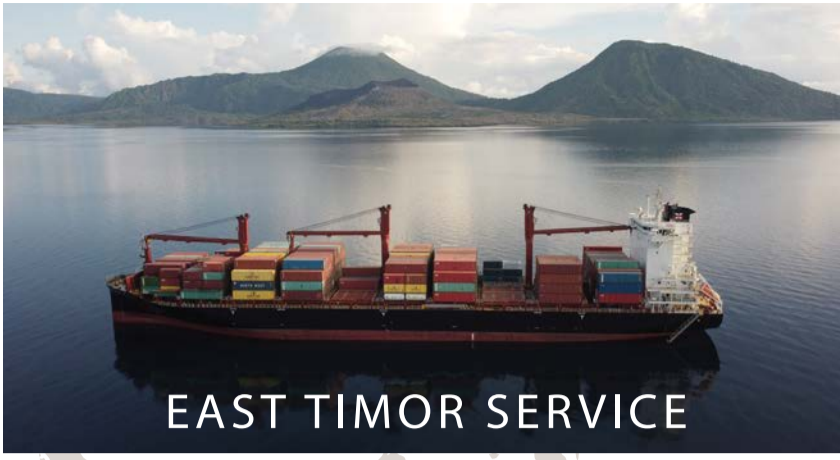
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## A bit about Rocket ... Rodney Dunford

by Tony Haritos

The memory of Rocket, who left us on 10th May 2026 in Darwin, would bring a smile to the dial of old Dili Expats' hands; arriving in Dili in the early 2000s and making his mark by mere force of personality, and also his skill as an all-round tradesman.

The first thing you'd note in those early days was he was an impressive, good-looking fella, tall, well-built. He wasn't shy, said his piece, opinionated, coming from a different angle, laughed fully while kicking his head back. He always presented himself as someone who would not back down to anyone.

I got to know him more back in Darwin in recent years when he was battling throat cancer, but still kicking along. I reckoned he was selling himself short because he was a lot smarter than he came across, which was tending to a rough nut persona, and provincial, which, from northern Tassie, he was. A couple more years of formal education might have brought him up to feeling he could do anything.

Every expat and Timorese would remember at least one big barney they had with Rocket; however, I guarantee the aftertaste is a smile and feeling of affection. His sense of the ridiculous ensured that he was popular with the Timorese men he worked with. He was a skilled tradesman, a jack-of-all-trades, and picked up work easily in Dili in the early days.

I still don't know how he died, but only a couple of days before, he was excited about attending my birthday in Bali next week. I had been pushing him to do a trip up to Thailand and Vietnam for the past year, anything to get him out of his room, to crack the cabin fever he was succumbing to. I think he had lost all confidence in ever getting on another flight or mixing socially, where he went abroad.

What made him more complex was his real love of animals. a juxtaposition to his tough-nut persona. When discussing any trip away, he would always raise the issue of his two pet rabbits and who would look after them. A mutual friend, Martin Breen, said Rocket was upset a couple of weeks back because one of the rabbits had died.

Rocket became close with my mum Helen, who could smell a rat a mile away, a fake, and with all the rough talk, she might have recoiled from Rocket, but he could say all he wanted, how he wanted, and she'd go along with it, giving a bit back in return.

Rocket was suffering in the last year or two, and I think the last six months in particular were pretty hard for him, so he's resting, now he's resting ... A soul that was in the right place was Rocket. Rodney Dunford. Rest in peace.



A few words from friends:

Martin Breen: "A rough diamond who could do any job, big or small. Actually trained as a pastry chef, he was a handyman who could fix almost anything at any time. His Timorese sidekick stuck with him until cancer forced him back to Australia. If you spoke Tetun, you would swear they hated each other, but in fact they worked together for 10 years."

Nigel: "He was a big animal lover, 2 rabbits and a 3-legged dog. Kind-hearted, giving and loyal. Liked getting his hands dirty fixing cars & boats. He used to fix up push bikes for kids in the area. Seeing other people happy made him happy."

Debbie and Duncan: "Our daughter Connie lost her phone and tracked it to the big dodgy block of flats at The Narrows. She was sensibly reluctant to investigate further. Luckily, Rocket was staying there. He knew who and how to ask. He knocked on a couple of doors, and the phone was returned in minutes. Always willing to lend a hand."

His brother John: "Cheers to the best oldest brother I ever had RIP Brother Rocket."

Carmel Bates: "Immediate post-referendum years brought many excellent tradesmen from Australia. One of these was Rodney Dunford, affectionately known as Rocket. Rocket was a rogue and a gentleman."

Michael McGovern: "Multi-talented, could fix anything, no patience, tough as nails..."

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# Ocean Month in Timor-Leste!

**World Ocean Day**, internationally observed on June 8th, is a United Nations-recognized day dedicated to raising awareness on the ocean's vital role in our lives, mobilizing unified global action for marine conservation, biodiversity preservation, and sustainable solutions. As a coastal nation deeply connected to the sea, Timor-Leste embraces its opportunity to collectively showcase the nation's commitment to ocean stewardship. In October 2025, the Council of Ministers of Timor-Leste approved Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão's proposal to establish National Sea Day, celebrated annually on June 5<sup>th</sup>. **We invite you all to join Timor-Leste in celebrating World Ocean Day and National Sea Day for this entire month of June!**

Here are some highlights of participating groups, outlets, programs, and activities happening throughout the month to commemorate our beloved ocean!



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**Turtle Rescue, Conservation & Education Center with public hatchling release sessions**



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**Underwater Cinema Weekly Snorkeling, Freediving & Beach Clean-Ups**




5<sup>th</sup> June : Luku Hamoos Dili - Timorese Divers Special Clean-Up Dive

6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> June : Fun Dives with Underwater Clean-Ups

27<sup>th</sup> June : Underwater Dress-Up Dive & Divers Social



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Dive Against Debris, Beach Clean-Up and BBQ Special (Behau)

Divers Night - Discussing Ocean Conservation in Timor-Leste

World Ocean Month Amateur Photography Competition



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Every Friday & Saturday 7pm: Beachside Cinema - Free seaside movie screenings, with special pre-movie showcase of Timor-Leste ocean short films



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Throughout June: Free Ocean Literacy Workshops for Students (various schools)

23<sup>rd</sup> June: Ocean Happy Hour & Quiz Night @ Hotel Esplanada



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14<sup>th</sup> June: Volunteer Beach Clean Up

20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> June: JL World Bazaar - Special Ocean Talks, Merchandise Pop-Up Stall & Kids Activities



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## Fun with AI

**Me:**

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

**ChatGPT:**

### *When Someone Says 'Come, Sit'*

*In Timor-Leste, "Come, sit" is not a casual suggestion. It is a turning point.*

*You may have been walking somewhere with purpose. You may have had a plan, a destination, even a sense of urgency. But the moment those words are spoken — often with a hand gesture toward a plastic chair — everything changes.*

*You are no longer passing through. You are now staying.*

*The chair appears quickly, sometimes from nowhere. It is placed carefully, often in the shade, positioned just right. Refusing is technically possible, but rarely practical.*

*And so you sit.*

*Conversation begins — where are you going, where have you come from, have you eaten? These are not quick questions. They are invitations to slow down.*

*Time shifts. Someone may return with coffee or water. A neighbour joins. A child watches quietly. The moment grows without effort.*

*At some point, you remember you were on your way somewhere. You consider standing. This is noticed.*

*"Wait."*

*So you stay a little longer.*

*Eventually, you leave — slowly, with proper goodbyes. You return to your path, slightly delayed but somehow better off.*

*Because in Timor-Leste, "Come, sit" is not about stopping you.*

*It's about including you.*

## Upcoming TL National Holidays

- 4th of June – Corpus Christi (variable date public holiday)
- 30th of August – Popular Consultation Day (fixed date public holiday)

## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the June 2026 edition of Guide Post

This month's edition brings together another diverse mix of stories, community updates, and reflections from across Timor-Leste.

We begin with coverage of the groundbreaking ceremony for the proposed new International Conference Centre (ICC) in the old port area of Dili during the recent celebrations marking the 24th Anniversary of Timor-Leste's Restoration of Independence. What do you think of the proposed building design?

With World Ocean Day taking place on 8 June, ocean awareness and conservation are also strong themes this month. Contributor Fizzy has done a fantastic job compiling an "Ocean Month in Timor-Leste" event calendar, bringing together many of the activities and events taking place throughout June.

We were saddened to hear of the recent passing of John Miller, co-founder of the East Timor Action Network (ETAN), who campaigned tirelessly for the self-determination of Timor-Leste. We also remember "Rocket", a well-known expat character from earlier days in Timor-Leste, with friends sharing memories and reflections on his life.

Continuing their regular contributions, Konnekto explores the challenges of "brain drain" in Timor-Leste and some of the ways its effects may be reduced. Meanwhile, regular contributor Ken returns with another light-hearted story, this time sharing his Timorese ATM troubles.

For movie lovers, it is great to see the return of the *Beachside Cinema* season at Beachside Hotel — check page 25 for the full June screening programme.

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,

Dan Conroy, Guide Post - General Manager

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# Scottish photographer who died in Timor-Leste age 29 remembered in exhibition

By Jane Bradley, Arts and culture correspondent for *The Scotsman*

The sister of a Scottish photographer who was killed free diving aged 29 has launched an exhibition of his work to mark the 20th anniversary of his death.

Robin Taudevin died in 2006 while free diving alone off the coast of Cristo Rei in Timor-Leste during a civil conflict.

His work, documenting human rights and international aid issues, which spanned from covering the first Home Office dawn raids in Glasgow in 2005 to the struggle for independence in Timor-Leste, is being shown in the Glasgow University Memorial Chapel.



Robin Taudevin with one of his pictures. | Robin Taudevin

Julia Taudevin, a theatre maker and co-artistic director of Glasgow-based theatre company Disaster Plan, has curated the exhibition of his photography, entitled *Momentary and Fleeting*, to document what has changed in the 20 years since Mr Taudevin's death.

A graduate of the University of Glasgow, Mr Taudevin worked in international humanitarian aid, documenting conflict and the people and natural world affected by it.

Ms Taudevin said her brother had aimed to expose injustice, understand complexity and inspire compassion.

The siblings grew up in Indonesia where their Lewis-born mother worked as an English teacher. Their father was an Australian diplomat who worked around the region, including in Timor-Leste.

She said: "We came home to my mother's family in Lewis every summer, so a lot of people describe it as quite an idyllic childhood, because we had Hebridean summers and the rest of the time we were in Indonesia.



The head of a palm tree floats across the reef off the coast of Timor-Leste, February 2006 | Robin Taudevin

Source: <https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/scottish-photographer-who-died-age-29-after-capturing-first-glasgow-home-office-raids-remembered-in-exhibition-8550778>

"But actually, we were witness to a lot of conflict and displacement and violence and that white expatriate privilege was heavy on my brother's conscience."

Mr Taudevin returned to Scotland to study at the University of Glasgow.

Ms Taudevin said: "When my brother went to Glasgow uni, he joined two clubs: what was then the East Timor Solidarity movement and the skydiving club. Those two defined his quite young life, because he went on to work in humanitarian aid and moved around the world for different NGOs, but kept going back to Timor-Leste and had a real passion for the place and an affinity with the people.



Mr Taudevin's picture UN Compound Refugees, taken in 2006.

"Then there was the other side of him, the extreme sports person within him, who moved from skydiving to base jumping to free-diving, which is how he died."

He returned to Glasgow in 2005, shortly after the city had signed up to the Dispersal Act, which committed it to taking in 2,000 asylum seekers a year. Keen to make the transition from film to digital camera, he decided to stay to work on home soil using his new equipment and came across the first Home Office raids.

In 2006, Mr Taudevin had been covering the conflict in Timor-Leste when a 12-day ceasefire was called. Fighting had broken out a year after United Nations peacekeepers left the country, initially breaking out due to a dispute within the armed forces and eventually leading to a coup.

"He was out in the hills with the rebel soldiers and coming back and documenting the riots, living the full blown life of a conflict photographer," Ms Taudevin said. "I really believe that he felt that this was the next step, like it was his calling."

An extreme athlete since his teens, Mr Taudevin began free-diving in his late 20s, opening the door to underwater photography.

During the ceasefire, he went to the beach and went free diving alone, where he died. His funeral was attended by people from both sides of the conflict.

"He was very courageous, he had a lot of drive and a lot of purpose," said Ms Taudevin. "One of the big things he wanted was to inspire compassion, so that people will inform themselves. Hopefully the exhibition will do that."

The exhibition is runs until the 2nd of June.

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

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- Beachside Hotel
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- California Cafe
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- Telemor
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- The SPA
- Times Square Hotel
- Timor Gap
- Timor Lodge Hotel
- Timor Plaza & Timor Plaza Hotel
- Timor Resort
- Timor Telecom
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# In Memoriam: John Miller, co-founder of the ETAN

By TAPOL



John Miller, co-founder of the East Timor Action Network (ETAN) which campaigned tirelessly for the self-determination of Timor-Leste, has passed away on 30th April 2026.

A dedicated peace activist from his high school years, John was active in the War Resisters League and War Resisters International during the 1970s and 1980s. After the revelation of the 1991 Santa Cruz Massacre in East Timor, John established ETAN with other activists. He worked tirelessly, often behind scenes, to bring the cause of Timor-Leste to a US and international audience. ETAN expanded rapidly between its founding, to the mid-1990s, with more than 10,000 active supporters, including many local chapters on college campuses.

John's work with his ETAN friends and colleagues contributed to bringing the Santa Cruz Massacre and Indonesia's authoritarian rule under Soeharto to a much wider US audience. The response from the public was shock and revulsion at the abuses committed by the Indonesian military and abetted by the United States Government. This sentiment was key in eventually turning the tide on Timor-Leste – and making the US Government's position as a supporter of Indonesia's dictatorship increasingly untenable.

ETAN was headquartered in John's house in Brooklyn, New York City, and hosted many activist visitors over the years. ETAN and TAPOL often worked together to publicise abuses committed by Soeharto's dictatorship. Even after Timor-Leste's independence, John continued to push for justice, accompanying visitors from Timor-Leste such as survivors of the 1999 Liquiça massacre, to UN Headquarters in New York or to meet representatives in Congress. In recent years, he established the Foreign Bases Project, which sought to challenge the impact of the mushrooming US and other military bases around the world.

In 2005, ETAN changed its name to the East Timor and Indonesia Action Network to reflect the broader focus of its work following Independence. In 2009, John was recognised for his contributions with the award of the John Rumbiak Prize for human rights defence. On behalf of ETAN, John received the Order of Timor, the highest order it bestows, on the 10th anniversary of Timor-Leste's independence in 2012.

We at TAPOL send our deepest condolences to his family and friends and mourn the passing of a committed peace activist dedicated to challenging the abuses of Soeharto's government and the hypocrisy of the regime's Western allies.

*TAPOL campaigns for human rights, peace and democracy in Indonesia. We raise awareness of human rights issues, including in the contested territory of West Papua. Tapol works closely with local organisations to advocate for truth and justice and encourage the international community to take action.*

Source: <https://tapol.org/news/memorial-john-miller-co-founder-etan>

# Timor-Leste to launch national QR payment system "TUQR"

DILI, (TATOLI) — The Central Bank of Timor-Leste (BCTL) plans to launch a national digital payment system, Timor Unique QR (TUQR), in August 2026 as part of broader efforts to modernise the country's payment infrastructure, expand cashless transactions, and reduce the circulation of counterfeit cash.

BCTL Governor Helder Lopes said the initiative aims to encourage a shift in public behaviour towards digital transactions, with mobile phone payments expected to become increasingly common in everyday life.

"In the future, people will pay using their phones or digital systems. As cash becomes less common, opportunities for counterfeiting will also decline because transactions will be fully electronic," Helder said during TATOLI's "Bainaka Kredivel" programme at the Faculty of Social and Political Science of the Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL) in Kaikoli.

Helder said BCTL is currently discussing regulations with relevant ministries, including the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs (MKAE) and the Ministry of Finance (MF), to ensure smooth nationwide implementation.

The regulations will require businesses to provide customers with payment options, allowing both cash and digital transactions.

BCTL said TUQR will be introduced in phases, due to low digital literacy and limited internet access in rural and mountainous regions. "Digital payments require internet and telecommunications infrastructure. In some mountainous areas, internet access is still limited, and people are also not yet accustomed to using phones for digital transactions," Helder said.

Priority sectors for early implementation include tourism, where cashless payments are already commonly used by foreigners. "Hotels and restaurants need to provide digital payment options because many tourists arrive without carrying cash," he added.

Source: <https://en.tatoli.tl/2026/05/11/timor-leste-to-launch-national-qr-payment-system-tuqr/15/>

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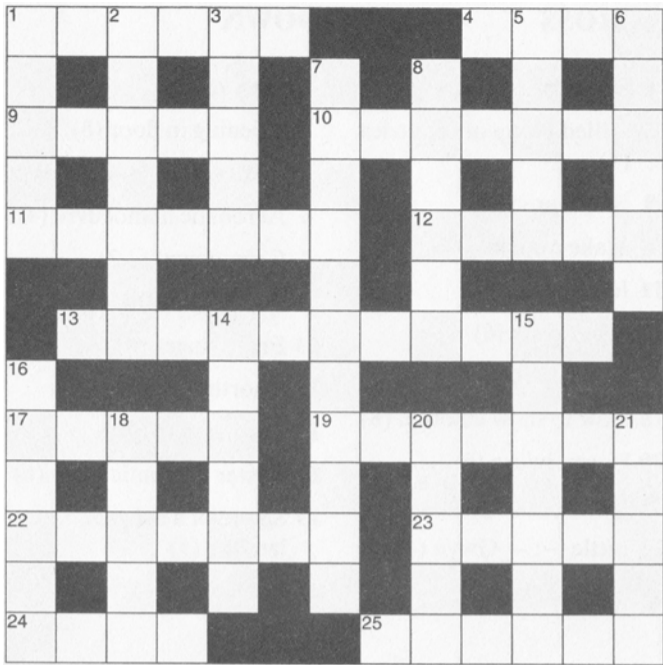
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## QUICK CROSSWORD

Solution on page 18



### Across:

1. Abandon (eg, on an island) (6)
4. Earl —, tea (4)
9. Unfasten (5)
10. Kitchen tool (7)
11. Participant in competition (7)
12. Christmas entertainment (5)
13. Dairy product (5,6)
17. At the correct moment (2,3)
19. Wagner's birthplace (7)
22. Upstart (7)
23. Urge; approach to house (5)
24. Prickly garden plant (4)
25. Edible fish (6)

### Down:

1. Pale purple (5)
2. Something that turns (7)
3. Last Greek letter (5)
5. Out of bed (5)
6. (Of paper) age (6)
7. With many hues (11)
8. Place of worship (6)
14. Grade of exam (1-5)
15. Discrimination on stature (7)
16. Policeman; metal (6)
18. Body of men (5)
20. Indian god (5)
21. Grassy area (5)

## QUICK CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

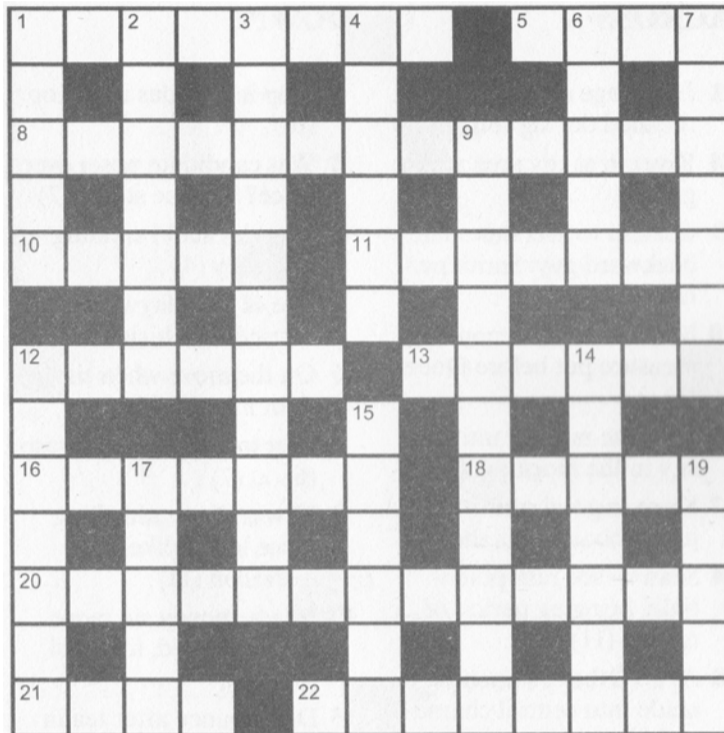
Solution on page 18

### Across:

1. Army, at sea, mutinied in Tudor vessel (4,4)
5. Humble fellow about last in queue (4)
8. Collection of tales arranged very carefully by one in retail outlets (4,2,7)
10. Ladies' man finding note in changing room (5)
11. Long letter from English Saint in stack (7)
12. A doctor tucked into mother's curry (6)
13. Silly mistake dropping a musical (6)
16. Admire, abroad, a dessert wine (7)
18. A Caledonian racecourse (5)
20. Exposed, standing exhausted (3,2,4,4)
21. Drove in together, daily (4)
22. Splendour of Greek urn almost broken by clumsy dean (8)

### Down:

1. Army officer, the elder of two brothers (5)
2. CV coed finally began again (7)
3. Depend on oxygen helping recovery (11)
4. Cross, briefly hugging one's sibling (6)
6. Poet starts to explain lines in old triolet (5)
7. Just beginning climb after noon (7)
9. What's been inherited from Adam that's in eccentric's home? (8,3)
12. Huge insect mother's on top of (7)
14. Pal packing revolutionary weapon (7)
15. Flag of British queen and king (6)
17. Put off, cleaner jilting gent (5)
19. Coach tour rearranged following onset of thunderstorm (5)



### Crossword Notes:

## 'THE TIMES' QUIZ

Solution on page 18

### Structures

1. Featuring buildings at Naiku and Geku and the Uji Bridge, which complex is Japan's most sacred Shinto shrine?
2. Which cantilever railway bridge was opened by the future Edward VII on March 4, 1890?
3. Arecibo Observatory, site of the world's largest single-unit radio telescope, is found where?
4. The Hotel Attraction (1908) is an unbuilt design by which Catalan architect?
5. Which chateau, c. 25 miles north of Paris, houses the Musée Condé?
6. The Delta Works, the world's largest flood protection project, is in which country?
7. In the city of York, the Lendal Bridge, Millennium Bridge and Skeldergate Bridge span which river?
8. The Hotel Negresco first opened in 1913 in which French resort city?
9. 60 Andrassy Street was which country's much-feared secret police HQ?
10. Graham Sutherland's tapestry *Christ in Glory* is in which English cathedral?
11. Designed by I.M. Pei, which Hall of Fame sits on the shore of Lake Erie?
12. Which Birmingham Town Hall architect invented a two-wheeled cab in 1834?
13. Eel Marsh House is a haunted abode in which spine-chilling Susan Hill novel?
14. Princess Anne's home Gatcombe Park is in which county?
15. Which New York nightclub opened in 1977 at 254 West 54th Street?
16. Built in 1924, Los Angeles's Ennis House was designed by which architect?
17. Opened in 2002, City Hall, London, was designed by which British architect?
18. Which Spanish architect designed the tallest building in the Nordic countries, the Turning Torso in Malmö?
19. Carved into granite cliffs on the south Cornish coast, which open-air theatre was created by Rowena Cade?
20. Which twin tower skyscraper complex in Mississauga, Canada, is pictured?



## THE TIMES SUDOKU

Solution on page 18



HE KEEPS POINTING TO THE IGNITION COIL, BUT IT'S CLEARLY A SPARK PLUG ISSUE. I GUESS THE PEDIATRICIAN WAS RIGHT, WE DO NEED TO WORK ON HIS MOTOR SKILLS.



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GSA Timor Airways	7724 1156

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JL World Hotel	7378 7195	
Lauhata Beach Escape	7740 1111	
Oceanview Beach Hotel	7723 6041	29W
Plaza Hotel	7723 2438	17J
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Timor Plaza Hotel & Apart.	331 3288	30S
Venture Hotel	7338 2476	20L

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AH Public Accountants	7592 0999	34T
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JJJ Associates	7372 9717	
LEAO Accountant Service	7731 8658	2K
Primos Bo'ot	7831 8131	39S

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Think Forward Consulting 7770 7780  
 Vicenteamaro Consulting 7701 5921

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VSL Oilchem (Timor) Lda	331 2345	

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Delicious Bakery	7723 3415	30S
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see feature advert on Guide Post Magazine

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ASEAN Resto (JL World)	7389 8803	56Z
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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
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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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BNU Bank	330 0000	10H
BRI Bank	331 1372	8H
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# EMPLOYMENT MATTERS!

## Edition #68 - Brain Drain

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

As we continue building on previous discussions about social security rights and worker protection in Timor-Leste, this edition focuses on a growing challenge that directly affects long-term development: Brain Drain.



### What is Brain Drain?

Brain drain refers to the emigration of skilled, educated, and experienced workers to other countries in search of better opportunities, higher wages, and improved living conditions. While migration is a normal part of global labour mobility, sustained loss of talent can weaken national capacity, slow economic growth, and place pressure on public systems including social security.

### Understanding Brain Drain in Context

In small and developing economies, brain drain is especially visible because the number of skilled professionals is limited. When accountants, nurses, teachers, or other skilled professionals leave, the impact is immediate: service delivery weakens, institutions struggle, and productivity declines. However, brain drain is not only about migration. It is also shaped by the conditions that influence whether skilled workers choose to stay or leave.

### Key Causes of Brain Drain

- Limited career progression: unclear or slow promotion systems push professionals to seek structured career pathways abroad.
- Wage gaps and living costs: local salaries often struggle to match international standards, making migration financially attractive.
- Skills mismatch: when workers are underemployed or placed in roles that do not match their qualifications, dissatisfaction increases.
- Limited training opportunities: without continuous professional development, workers feel their skills stagnate.
- Working conditions: weak infrastructure, heavy workloads, and limited institutional support reduce job satisfaction.
- Global recruitment pressure: international demand for skilled workers increases migration opportunities.

### Why Brain Drain Matters for National Development

Brain drain affects more than individual sectors. It leads to:

- Reduced public service capacity
- Slower economic diversification
- Loss of institutional knowledge
- Higher pressure on remaining skilled workers

However, one of the most critical impacts is on the social security system.

### Impact on the Social Security System

The social security system in Timor-Leste relies on contributions from workers (4%) and employers (6%) to fund long-term protection such as pensions, maternity benefits, disability support, and survivor benefits.

Brain drain affects this system in several ways:

- Reduced contributors: fewer formal workers mean fewer monthly contributions.
- Weaker financial sustainability: lower inflows can affect long-term benefit stability.
- Higher dependency pressure: fewer workers support more beneficiaries over time.
- Limited system expansion: reduced formal employment slows coverage growth.
- Institutional capacity loss: skilled administrators leaving weakens system management.

In this sense, brain drain directly affects the long-term resilience of social protection.

### Strategies to Retain Talent

Addressing brain drain requires coordinated action:

- Career pathways: clear and merit-based promotion systems help workers see long-term growth.
- Better compensation and benefits: while salaries may not match global levels, incentives, allowances, and strong social security contributions improve retention.
- Training and development: continuous learning opportunities help workers grow without leaving the country.
- Improved working conditions: better infrastructure, clear job roles, and supportive workplaces increase satisfaction.
- Strong social protection: benefits such as maternity protection, pensions, and disability coverage increase trust in formal employment and encourage long-term workforce participation.
- Talent engagement programs: return and diaspora engagement initiatives can help bring skills back to the country.
- Purpose-driven work: many professionals stay when they feel their work contributes to national development.

### Linking Back to Social Security

As shown in previous editions, social security is both a protection system and a pillar of workforce stability. Brain drain weakens this system by reducing contributors, while a strong social security system helps reduce brain drain by increasing job security and long-term stability.

Together, they are interconnected:

A stable workforce strengthens social security, and strong social security supports workforce retention.

In conclusion, Brain drain is not only a migration issue, but also a development challenge that reflects how well a country supports its workforce.

For Timor-Leste, reducing brain drain requires investing in people: their skills, their careers, and their long-term security. Strengthening career pathways, improving working conditions, and reinforcing social protection systems can transform talent loss into talent retention, supporting both economic growth and a more sustainable social security system.



***For any questions, please email us at [info@konnekto.com](mailto:info@konnekto.com). Your inquiries inspire us to create fresh and informative content!***

# 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...

Who else is having problems with ATMs (automatic teller machines) in Dili?

Am I the only one having issues? There are about 70 ATMs in Dili. About 20% don't work at all. Another 40% are self-limiting in their functions. The remaining 40% are inconsistent. Some folks reading this will claim that it can't be the ATMs that are faulty - it must be the plastic card itself or bank account quirks pertaining to the person inserting the card into the ATM. Any one, or a combination of the aforementioned, can be true.

ATM cards, like credit cards, have a magnetic tape strip on their backs. Magnetic tape is what was used for sound recordings between the 1930s and 2000s. It's an old technology. When I used to do studio music recordings, we'd have to occasionally clean the tape reading 'heads' on the recording machine with alcohol. ...not to be confused with: cleaning the musicians' heads with...., oh never mind

With ATMs, the tape reading 'heads' are just inside where the card is inserted. Granted, everything nowadays is crunched to digital. Also, there are some places where 'readers' use a digital chip embedded into the plastic card, ....but that tech hasn't yet come to Dili, as far as I can tell

On the back of every ATM and credit card, there should be one or more phone numbers to call - if assistance is needed. After a series of talking to an AI robot, a caller may get lucky enough to get to talk to a person with a heartbeat, though the process to get to that point may take up to 28 minutes.

Support personnel are usually kind and knowledgeable, but can't always lead to a solution. With my seldom-functioning ATM card, I've heard various reasons why it's not working. The most common is: the card has been 'flagged.' Why? Because I'm using it in a faraway country like Timor-Leste? It shouldn't be problematic, because the card I use (issued by a US-based bank) works about 3% of the time I use it. In other words, for every 100 times I stick it into an ATM and press the correct password, it works about three times, over a period of, let's say, 99 days. I ordered a new card to be sent to Dili's central Correos post office, but three months later, ....no mail

The nice worker at Dili's post office told me that all mail going in and out, to or from foreign addresses, has to go through Darwin and Sydney, Australia. Could some errant koala have snuck into the Aussie p.o. and made off with the letter from my bank, thinking it was a sumptuous eucalyptus leaf? Doubtful.

There are other possible reasons why ATMs in Dili often don't work: A foreigner using more than one ATM may prompt a bank's AI to yellow-flag the card. Alternatively, some ATM machines may not be properly maintained. In the early days of ATMs, prior to AI, a person could use ATMs multiple times in all S.E. Asian countries. The two main reasons, in my opinion, that ATMs are causing such difficulties are: #1. AI, and #2. The proliferation of online/digital thieves has compelled banks to continually increase security. The resultant victims are often the bank account holders whose ATM cards get yellow-flagged for the slightest reasons. If anyone can shed informed light on this issue, it's appreciated. In the meantime, thwarted ATM users in Dili - will continue to be frustrated.

Ken Albertsen  
Atauro Island  
kenalberts214@gmail.com

## SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES ON PAGE 12

### QUICK CROSSWORD

MAROON GREY  
A O M M T I E  
UNTIE UTENSIL  
V A G L M E L  
ENTRANT PANTO  
O I L W  
CREAM CHEESE  
C L O I  
ONCUE LEIPZIG  
P O V O N E R  
PARVENU DRIVE  
E P L R R S E  
ROSE SALMON

### QUICK CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

MARYROSE MEAN  
A E E I L A  
JUSTSOSTORIES  
O U T T R O C  
ROMEO EPISTLE  
E R R G N  
MADRAS KISMET  
A T B N A  
MADEIRA ASCOT  
M E O N L H U  
OUTONONESFEET  
T E E I T O  
HERD GRANDEUR

### 'THE TIMES' QUIZ

#### Answers:

1. Ise Grand Shrine or Ise Jingu
2. Forth Bridge
3. Puerto Rico — or 10 miles south of the town of Arecibo in Puerto Rico
4. Antoni Gaudi
5. Château de Chantilly
6. Netherlands
7. River Ouse
8. Nice
9. Hungary — in Budapest
10. Coventry Cathedral
11. Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio
12. Joseph Aloysius Hansom
13. *The Woman in Black*
14. Gloucestershire
15. Studio 54
16. Frank Lloyd Wright
17. Norman Foster
18. Santiago Calatrava
19. Minack Theatre
20. Absolute World aka the Marilyn Monroe Towers

### THE TIMES SUDOKU

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

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# Building a Tourism Industry Without Selling Our Soul: Timor-Leste's Wager on Dignified Travel

By Maun Jere | Chairman, HOTL Association ([www.hotl.tl](http://www.hotl.tl))

There is a version of tourism development that many countries have chosen — and quietly come to regret.

It begins with a beautiful coastline, a compelling story, and an urgent need for foreign exchange. It attracts investors with deep pockets and short timelines. It builds fast — resorts, transfer vans, curated experiences designed for maximum throughput. And then, somewhere between the first five-star opening and the tenth tour bus unloading at a sacred site, something irreplaceable is lost. The culture that made the destination worth visiting becomes a backdrop. The communities that shaped it become spectators. The soul of the place is mortgaged, quietly and efficiently, in the name of growth.

Timor-Leste is at a crossroads. And as an industry, we have a choice to make right now — before the momentum builds beyond our ability to shape it.

## What "Dignified Travel" Actually Means

The phrase gets used loosely, so let me be precise about what I mean.

Dignified travel is not eco-tourism rebranded. It is not a premium price point dressed up in bamboo architecture. It is not a CSR footnote in a resort's annual report.

Dignified travel is a design philosophy. It asks a foundational question at every stage of tourism development: *who benefits, and on what terms?*

It means that the fisherman who takes visitors out on his boat earns a fair wage — not a token — and retains the right to refuse when the sea is rough or the season is sacred. It means that the weaver in Atauro whose textile ends up in a hotel lobby gift shop is credited, compensated, and celebrated. It means that the young Timorese hotel graduate is trained for a career, not just a role — with a trajectory that leads to management, ownership, and leadership.

In short, dignified travel means that tourism serves the people of Timor-Leste, not the other way around.

## Why This Is the Right Moment

Timor-Leste's tourism industry is still, by global standards, small. Visitor numbers remain modest. Infrastructure is developing. The major investment wave has not yet arrived.

This is not a weakness. This is the window.

Countries that get tourism right do so early — when the regulations are still being written, when the investment incentives are still being negotiated, when the cultural norms around hospitality are still being established. Once the industry reaches critical mass, course corrections become exponentially harder. Vested interests calcify. Margins drive decisions. The long game loses to the quarterly report.

We have — at a generous estimate — a decade to embed the right values into the architecture of this industry. A decade to write the standards, train the workforce, attract the right investors, and build the infrastructure that serves both visitors and hosts with equal dignity.

HOTL is not waiting for that decade to begin. It has already started.

## What the Industry Is Already Doing

Across Timor-Leste's hospitality sector, there are operators — many of them HOTL members — who are already living this philosophy in practice.

Guesthouses in Atauro that employ entirely local staff and source entirely local food. Dive operators who work directly with village communities to protect reef ecosystems that would otherwise be unguarded. Tour companies building itineraries around authentic cultural encounters — not performance, not pageantry, but genuine access to Timorese life, offered on Timorese terms.

These operators are not sacrificing commercial viability for principle. In many cases, they are outperforming conventional competitors — because the traveller who seeks out Timor-Leste is not looking for a packaged resort holiday. They are looking for something real. And real, in this market, commands a premium.

The opportunity is to scale what is already working — to make dignified travel not the exception practised by a few principled operators, but the standard expectation of every visitor who sets foot in this country.

## The Role of Policy and Partnership

The private sector cannot do this alone.

Dignified travel at scale requires policy alignment. It requires government partners who understand that quality of tourism matters as much as quantity — that ten high-value visitors who sleep in locally-owned guesthouses, eat at local restaurants, and engage with local guides generate more economic dignity than a hundred who never leave an all-inclusive resort.

It requires investment partners who think in decades, not quarters — development finance institutions, impact investors, and sovereign funds who are willing to back the infrastructure that makes dignified travel possible: trained hospitality workers, community-based tourism enterprises, sustainable transport, and digital connectivity that reaches beyond Dili.

And it requires a regional conversation. Timor-Leste is not building its tourism industry in isolation. We sit at the edge of one of the world's great travel regions. The standards we set, the partnerships we forge, and the story we tell will determine whether we join that region as a full and sovereign participant — or as a dependency of someone else's itinerary.

## Our Wager

Every choice in tourism development is, ultimately, a wager on the future.

Some countries have wagered on volume — and won short-term growth at the cost of long-term identity. Others have wagered on exclusivity — and built beautiful industries that serve the few and employ even fewer.

Timor-Leste's wager is different. We are betting that authenticity, community, and dignity are not constraints on growth — they are the source of it. We are betting that the travellers who will define the next generation of global tourism are precisely the travellers who will choose us, if we build what they are looking for.

We are betting, in other words, on our people. On their creativity, their resilience, their extraordinary capacity for welcome. On the culture that survived occupation and built a nation. On the landscapes that the rest of the world has barely begun to discover.

That is a wager I am proud to make. And as an industry, it is the only one worth taking.

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# Sayur, Sambal and Starting Over: A Kitchen in Timor-Leste Builds a Community

By Andrea Empamano



Egha, an Indonesian migrant in Timor-Leste, built a well-loved warung in Dili, where food, shared work and community have helped others find a place to begin again.

Photo: IOM/Andrea Empamano

By 7 a.m., Egha's kitchen is already alive. The air carries the sharp scent of sambal, the richness of roasting peanuts, and the warmth of morning tea. Pots are simmering, hands are moving, and, in the middle of it all, Egha is doing what she has done every day since moving to Dili: cooking food that tastes like home.

Egha grew up in her mother's kitchen in Indonesia, learning to cook long before she could name the spices she used. By watching, tasting and adjusting, she learned recipes, but also a way of caring for others through food.

She carried that knowledge with her when she moved to Timor-Leste with her husband for his work. In a new country, with a new language and an unfamiliar rhythm to daily life, the kitchen became her safe space.

"Moving here was an adjustment," explains Egha. "At first, everything felt unfamiliar, but I found comfort in the kitchen because it was something I knew well."



Ingredients are crushed into a sambal paste while vegetables are blanched, part of the careful preparation behind one of Indonesia's most beloved dishes.

Photo: IOM/Andrea Empamano

Her husband encouraged her to share her culinary passion and skills with others. Then, suddenly, he passed away. Shocked and grieving, Egha returned to Indonesia.

But even in that loss, she carried with her the encouragement he had given her. In time, finding the strength to keep going, she returned to Dili and started cooking again.

"In the beginning, it was just me selling my home-cooked food to neighbours and friends," she recalls. "I kept getting compliments and encouragement, and over time, more people became interested in trying my food."

What began as small-scale cooking grew into a full-time catering business, and later into her first *warung*, a small, family-owned food business. Indonesian dishes such as beef *rendang*, a slow-cooked dry curry with coconut milk and spices, and *ayam krispi*, or crispy fried chicken, became part of the daily menu, with rotating dishes that gave regulars a reason to keep coming back. On most days, everything sold out by lunchtime.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic arrived. Many businesses across Dili, like the rest of the world, were affected. Migrants who had built quiet, stable lives suddenly found themselves without work and without options.

This story was written by Andrea Empamano, Media and Communications Officer with IOM Timor-Leste.

Source: <https://storyteller.iom.int/stories/sayur-sambal-and-starting-over-kitchen-timor-leste-builds-community>

Egha, who had rebuilt her life once before, opened the doors to her kitchen wider and began taking in fellow migrants who had lost their jobs and had nowhere else to turn. She offered them work, shared her skills and gave them a place to begin again.

"I took them in, taught them the recipes we make, and gradually the team grew into what it is today," she explains.

Egha's kitchen became something much larger than a place to cook: it sustained customers and supported the people behind the stove.

If there's any dish that captures the soul of this warung best, it is *gado-gado*. At first glance, it looks like a simple salad: vegetables, hard-boiled eggs, fried tofu and tempeh. But the dish comes together through its peanut sauce – rich, creamy, warm and fragrant – that pulls every element into something greater than the sum of its parts.



A complete plate of gado-gado brings together blanched vegetables, fried tofu and tempeh, boiled eggs and kerupuk, all topped with peanut sauce. Photo: IOM/Andrea Empamano

A traditional Indonesian dish from Java, gado-gado has found a following in Dili, where it has become a local favorite.

"The sauce takes the most time," she explains. "We start by crushing the peanuts and spices together in a large wok, cook them slowly with coconut milk, then leave the mixture to simmer until ready. Only when the sauce is ready can we prepare the plate."

The name gado-gado means "mix-mix" in Bahasa Indonesian. There is no single definitive version. The dish changes depending on what ingredients are available. Different ingredients, textures and origins are brought together under the same sauce. Each step matters, and each ingredient plays its part.



Egha and her kitchen staff prepare Indonesian staples that have earned a loyal following in Dili, building community through food, shared work and daily routine. Photo: IOM/Andrea Empamano

For Egha, that reflects the community she has built in Dili: people from different places, with different experiences, coming together in her kitchen. Through shared work and meals, they have built a sense of stability, connection and purpose.

Today, Egha employs around 10 people at her warung, many of them migrants. It supports her family, as well as the families of those who work alongside her. For many employees, it is more than a workplace. It is a place of belonging, where they can rebuild their lives and support one another.

"Every morning when I step into the kitchen, I feel I have a purpose," Egha says. "This is what I was meant to do."

In Dili, far from where her journey began, Egha continues to share Indonesian food and welcome others into her kitchen with warmth and compassion, creating a place where people can find a sense of home, one meal at a time.

## Marco's Life-Changing Story: From Hardship to Independence



Beneficiary Marco and his wife in Mahata, Oecusse. Photo: Fokupers Lens

Marco, father of five children from Mahata Village, Oecusse, and Secretary of the Anhapi Bisoni Savings and Production Group, has transformed his life through the EU-funded Promotion of Women through Economic Empowerment and Rights (POWER) Project with the support of Fundasaun Esperansa Enklave Oecusse (FEEO).

Before joining the group, Marco and his family struggled with low and unreliable agricultural income, food failures from pests and droughts often left them unable to meet daily needs. "Our income was not enough to meet our family's needs," he shared.

In 2025, Marco helped form the Anhapi Bisoni Group, where members save regularly and access small loans to support activities that generate \$50 loan income, Marco started selling Bua-malus and now earns about \$6 per day, helping to improve his family's stability.

In addition to income, the program also changed his mindset. Through training on financial management and family well-being, Marco learned about gender equality at home, and it also made him confident to manage finances and plan for the future so that he can build a suitable home for himself and his family.

"I used to think housework was only for women, now I help my wife and share the responsibility," he said.

Marco's wife added, "After the POWER Program, we both attended the training. My eldest son has made many changes in sharing household responsibilities. Our family now lives in harmony and without violence.

Today, Marco dreams of expanding his business into jam production and hopes that his children will complete their university education and live in a peaceful and harmonious family.

His story shows how savings, learning, and solidarity can turn hardship into hope.

Source: <https://www.fokupers.org/marcos-life-changing-story-from-hardship-to-independence/>

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# A Lifeline in the Sky for Atauro

For 30 years, Manuel Pereira has served as a nurse on Atauro Island. He spoke of the challenging time before MAF came to offer life-changing medical evacuation flights.

“When there was no MAF, we relied entirely on boats for transportation,” said Manuel Pereira, head of the health centre in Atauro Island. “When the sea was rough, the boats could not travel at all. Even when the sea was calm, the journey still took a long time,” he said.

“Sometimes the journey took so long that patients sadly passed away while still at sea. There were also times when the sea conditions were too rough, making it impossible to evacuate patients.”

Manuel explained that during those moments, they could only do their best with the limited resources available to try to save the patients while waiting for the sea to become calm.

MAF began operations in Timor-Leste in 2007 and helped to reopen the Atauro airstrip. In close partnership with the Ministry of Health, MAF provides medical evacuation services to communities all across the nation, flying an average of one medevac almost every day.

It is very good that MAF is operating in Atauro. MAF can help patients very quickly,” Manuel said.



Credit: Mission Aviation Fellowship Timor-Leste

# La Rende: From History to Adventure Tourism in Timor-Leste



Australia’s Market Development Facility (MDF) and Maddog Adventures recently premiered *La Rende*, a documentary co-produced with adventure filmmaker Beau Miles. The film follows a five-day trail run along a World War II route through remote mountain communities, highlighting Timor-Leste’s landscapes, cultural heritage, and adventure tourism potential, a part of MDF’s work with local operators to raise the country’s profile in international markets.

The launch included a panel on adventure tourism opportunities and challenges such as skills development, safety standards, and market access, moderated by Dr Fabia Shah, the Counsellor for Governance and Economy Development. Discussions highlighted how adventure tourism can drive inclusive growth for local businesses and rural communities.

To watch the film, copy this link into your browser:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jArAaGj3LUM>  
or search for 'I Went Running But Found a War Story' on YouTube.



Credit: Australian Embassy, Timor-Leste



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## 'Cinema on the Beach' Returns to Beachside Hotel



The movie season at Beachside Hotel is starting once again, with *Beachside Cinema's* full June screening programme listed below.

Movies will be shown on Friday and Saturday nights, starting after sunset at around 7pm. However, we recommend arriving from about 6.30pm to find a good spot and settle in.

Order sunset drinks, snacks, or even dinner before the film begins, then relax with your feet in the sand.

The season usually runs until the wet season at the end of the year.

*Photo Credit: Beachside Hotel and Cafe Dili*

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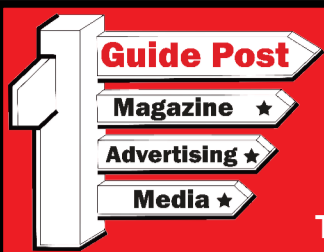
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# Yellow Dove Australia Completes Landmark Aquatic Safety Project on Atauro Island



Underwater Cinema and Lenuk Tasi complete their Royal Lifesaving Society Bronze Medallion, with Ryan Chapman, Founder and Director - Yellow Dove Australia.  
Photo credit: Underwater Cinema

Yellow Dove Australia has successfully completed the *Movimentu Kalma Iha Bee* Project across Atauro Island, Timor-Leste, delivering the island's first dedicated aquatic safety and drowning prevention initiative. Across the month of May, the project reached an outstanding 800+ participants through practical water safety education, survival swimming skills, lifejacket awareness, rescue techniques, and emergency response training.

Delivered in partnership with **ATKOMA** on the ground and proudly sponsored by **The Phillips Foundation**, the project focused on empowering local Timorese communities with practical, life-saving skills delivered through culturally responsive and community-led education.

A major milestone of the project was the training of 10 Atauro Island staff members, who successfully obtained their **Royal Life Saving Society Bronze Medallion Award**, equipping them with internationally recognised lifesaving and rescue qualifications to support aquatic safety initiatives within their communities.

Looking beyond the project, Yellow Dove Australia is focused on creating sustainable pathways for these trained local staff to access future employment opportunities linked to tourism, water safety, and community services, helping keep Atauro Island safe for both residents and visitors.

During the project period, Ryan Chapman (Yellow Dove Founder) also travelled briefly to Dili to collaborate with the Underwater Cinema and Lenuk Tasi, delivering a further 25 **Royal Life Saving Society Bronze Medallion Awards** to participants undertaking advanced lifesaving and rescue training.

The project marks an important milestone for Atauro Island and highlights the impact of strong partnerships, local leadership, and community-based safety education initiatives across Timor-Leste.

For more information about Yellow Dove Australia, check out their website: [www.yellowdoveaustralia.com.au](http://www.yellowdoveaustralia.com.au)



Credit: Yellow Dove Australia

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