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Timor-Leste celebrates International Day of Yoga with a colourful gathering of around 350 participants. (See inside for more details & photos)

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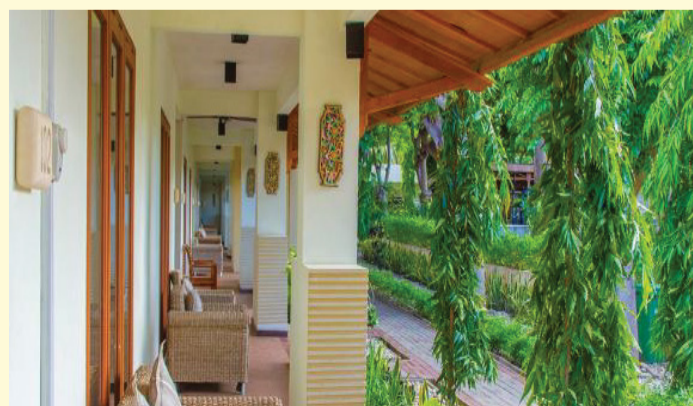
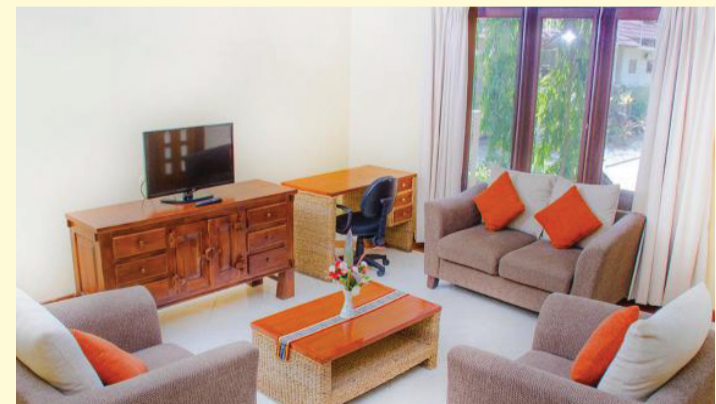
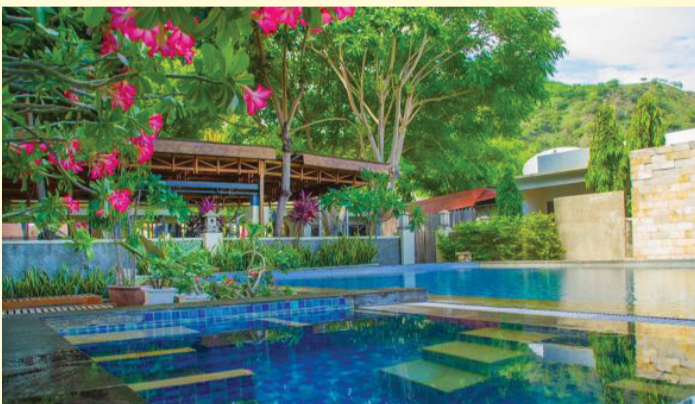


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National Day of the Sea & World Ocean Day 2026

MPA Journey: Promote and Protect the Sea for Sustainability

ATAÚRO ISLAND | 5 JUNE 2026

On 5 June 2026, Beni-Marine Timor-Leste, a private company dedicated to marine education, marine sports, marine conservation, sustainable ocean development and the promotion of the Blue Economy, proudly participated in the celebration of National Day of the Sea and World Ocean Day 2026 on Ataúro Island, under the theme “MPA Journey: Promoting and Protecting the Ocean for Sustainability.”

The event was organised in collaboration with the Ataúro Administrative Authority, the local organising committee and the Atecro community. It brought together government representatives, coastal communities, fishers, youth, religious groups and partner organisations to strengthen marine conservation and Blue Economy awareness in Timor-Leste.

33.21 kg

MARINE DEBRIS COLLECTED

13.46 kg plastic | 9.43 kg fishing gear
Approximately 5 hectares cleaned

CLEANING THE COAST



A coastal clean-up on Ataúro collected 33.21 kg of marine debris.

The programme began with a coastal clean-up campaign involving local fishers, community members, youth and the Beni-Marine team, with a focus on reducing plastic pollution and protecting coastal ecosystems. Together, participants collected, sorted and recorded 33.21 kg of marine debris: 13.46 kg of plastic waste, 10.32 kg of non-plastic waste and 9.43 kg of abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear, including fishing nets and ropes. The clean-up covered approximately five hectares of coastal area and created an important educational opportunity to raise awareness about the impacts of marine pollution on biodiversity, coastal ecosystems and ocean resources. As part of their commitment to environmental sustainability, Beni-Marine Timor-Leste and the local NGO Roman Luan signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen cooperation in marine conservation, plastic pollution reduction and the promotion of a sustainable Blue Economy for local communities and future generations.

Educational activities followed, including marine-themed painting and awareness sessions for students from Atecro Basic School. Community outreach sessions covered responsible Blue Economy practices, plastic waste management and the importance of Marine Protected Areas. Participants also joined snorkelling activities inside the Atecro Marine Protected Area, allowing direct observation of marine biodiversity and ecosystem health. Beni-Marine also facilitated an interactive educational “Fishing Game” simulation, helping participants understand sustainable fisheries management and the importance of MPAs in a practical and enjoyable way. The event concluded with cultural performances, a community celebration and documentation activities featuring local music groups, strengthening unity and awareness for ocean conservation.

This initiative reinforces the collective responsibility to protect marine ecosystems and promote sustainable ocean use for present and future generations. As a marine education company, Beni-Marine Timor-Leste remains committed to empowering communities through ocean literacy, environmental stewardship and sustainable development initiatives.

During the celebration, Beni-Marine Timor-Leste Chief Executive Officer Maria Jerónimo delivered a speech emphasising that the day was not merely a celebration, but an opportunity to strengthen commitment to protecting the ocean, nature, communities and the future of Timor-Leste. She described Ataúro as a place blessed with extraordinary natural beauty. Its clean and clear waters, vibrant coral reefs, colourful fish and rich marine life are precious gifts. The ocean is not only something to admire; it is a source of life, food and culture, and part of the identity of coastal communities. When we speak about the ocean, she said, we are speaking about our own lives.

BENI-MARINE TIMOR-LESTE

OCEAN LITERACY AND THE BLUE ECONOMY



Marine education activities helped students explore sustainable fisheries and MPAs.

The speech also addressed the environmental challenges facing marine ecosystems, including plastic pollution, coral reef degradation, unsustainable fishing practices and climate change. Throwing rubbish into the sea does not only damage the water. It harms fish, destroys coral reefs, affects tourism and ultimately damages the livelihoods of communities that depend on the ocean.

Maria called on everyone to declare with a strong voice that the ocean belongs to all of us, the responsibility belongs to all of us and the future is something we must all safeguard. Ocean protection must begin with simple daily actions: do not throw rubbish carelessly; keep beaches and rivers clean; dispose of waste properly; protect coral reefs; respect marine life; and, most importantly, teach children and young people to love the ocean.

A significant part of the speech focused on the Blue Economy. The ocean must not be viewed merely as a resource to be used, but as natural capital that must be managed wisely, respectfully and responsibly. This is the essence of the Blue Economy, a development approach that links economic growth with environmental protection. Through the Blue Economy, Timor-Leste can create jobs for young people, develop sustainable tourism, support fishing communities, promote environmental education, attract investment and improve the dignity and livelihoods of coastal communities. Good development should not destroy nature. True progress must protect nature, and a strong economy must benefit communities.

Maria highlighted Beni-Marine Timor-Leste’s commitment to supporting sustainable marine development in Atecro, Ataúro, through marine education, marine sports and environmental conservation. The Beni-Marine project in Atecro is not only about infrastructure or tourism activities. It is about the future: education, strengthening the capacity and resilience of young people, creating opportunities for the communities of Ataúro and Timor-Leste, and demonstrating to the country and the world that Ataúro can become a model of sustainable development.

Through Marine Education, Beni-Marine wants students to learn about the ocean, coral reefs, mangroves, seagrasses, fish and marine biodiversity. Young people should understand that the ocean protected today will sustain their lives tomorrow.

Through Marine Sports, young people can gain opportunities to develop discipline, safety awareness, confidence, leadership and respect for nature. Marine sports can become a pathway to health, tourism, employment and national prestige for Timor-Leste.

Through conservation efforts and beach-cleaning campaigns, Beni-Marine aims to build a culture that does not throw waste into the sea, a culture that respects coral reefs, loves nature and regards the ocean as a sacred heritage of the community.

ATAÚRO AT THE HEART OF THE MISSION



CEO Maria Jerónimo called for collective action to protect the ocean.

However, this mission cannot be achieved alone. Beni-Marine must work together with the Administrative Authority of Ataúro, village and hamlet leaders, traditional leaders, youth, women, students, fishers, families and the entire community. Development that does not involve the community cannot endure. Conservation that does not involve the community cannot be strong. Projects that do not respect the community cannot succeed.

The people of Ataúro are therefore an essential part of Beni-Marine’s vision. Ataúro is not merely a project location. Ataúro is a partner. Ataúro is a home. Ataúro is at the heart of this mission.

Maria called on young people to become guardians of the ocean and future leaders of the Blue Economy. She encouraged local communities to strengthen a culture of cleanliness, unity and responsibility in protecting marine resources. She urged leaders to continue guiding, supporting and promoting development initiatives that respect both the natural environment and the dignity of the people. She also called on all stakeholders to work together to make Ataúro a model of sustainable development and a beacon for Timor-Leste. The ocean, she emphasised, is not only a heritage inherited from previous generations, but also a responsibility that must be preserved and passed on with dignity to future generations.

In closing, CEO Maria Jerónimo expressed her sincere gratitude to the President of the Ataúro Administrative Authority and its structures, the MPA Journey Organising Committee, the people of Ataúro, fishers, youth and all partners who contributed to the success of the event.

She concluded with a strong message of unity and hope:

“If we work together, we can protect the ocean.”

“If we work together, we can create opportunities.”

“If we work together, we can build a better future for our children.”

She ended by reaffirming that collective action is the key to a sustainable future for Ataúro and for Timor-Leste as a whole.



The Chairman of Beni-Marine (Mr.Chunming Li) & President Autoridade adminstrativo Ataúro (Mr.Mateus Belo)

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Timor Plaza Hotel Hosts Food & Travel YouTuber Mark Wiens

Timor Plaza Hotel was proud to welcome renowned food and travel content creator Mark Wiens and his wife to Dili, Timor-Leste. The couple stayed at the hotel for eight nights while exploring the capital's growing food scene, hospitality offerings, and cultural experiences.

Widely recognised as one of the most influential figures in global food tourism and digital travel media, Mark Wiens has spent more than a decade documenting authentic culinary traditions and cultural experiences from around the world. Since beginning his content journey in 2009, he has travelled across Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas, building a global audience passionate about food, culture, and travel discovery.

With over 11.8 million YouTube subscribers, 2.5 million Instagram followers, 2.1 million TikTok followers, and 7.3 million Facebook followers, his food and travel experiences have become a trusted source of inspiration for audiences around the globe.

Timor Plaza Hotel was excited to introduce the couple to the vibrant lifestyle of Dili, Timor-Leste from the hotel's signature Friday Happy Hour and the lively Timor Plaza Saturday Night Market to sampling local Timorese flavours, discovering the local food culture, and experiencing the warm community atmosphere of Dili.

Timor Plaza Hotel appreciated the opportunity to provide Mark Wiens and his wife with the comfort and experience of Dili's leading hospitality destinations. Timor Plaza Hotel also served as a convenient base for exploring the capital while offering direct access to dining, entertainment, and lifestyle experiences within the Timor Plaza complex.

The presence of Mark Wiens in Dili marks another exciting milestone in Timor-Leste's growing connection with international travel media. His visit further reflects the country's rising appeal among global travellers seeking authentic, off-the-beaten-path experiences and meaningful cultural connections.

"It has been an exciting experience for our team at Timor Plaza Hotel to host Mark Wiens and his wife during their stay in Dili. It is truly a privilege to welcome global creators who help share Timor-Leste's culture, cuisine, and hospitality with the world."



Timor Plaza Hotel is incredibly grateful to Mark Wiens and his wife for visiting Timor-Leste and sharing the country's amazing culture, foods, and hospitality with millions of people around the world. Their visit continues to build excitement around Timor-Leste as one of Southeast Asia's emerging travel destinations.

As more travellers search for authentic and hidden gem destinations, Timor-Leste is quickly becoming a place the world is excited to discover.

Credit: Timor Plaza

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08 JUNE UNTIL 19 JULY 2026

The lifeline we share: Why the country needs more voluntary blood donors

Op-ed by Dr Arvind Mathur, WHO Representative

In the corridors of any hospital in Timor Leste, the most frightening words a family sometimes hears are not always a diagnosis. Sometimes, they are far more urgent: "Go and find blood. Find a brother, a cousin, a neighbour, someone with the right blood type." And so, the family scatters to do what the hospital cannot do alone: find blood in time.

This is the unseen reality behind many medical emergencies in Timor-Leste, and behind routine surgeries too. Every day, the blood bank at HNGV, referral hospitals, and often, even Community Health Centres field urgent requests from health workers for patients whose lives depend on timely transfusions. Among them are mothers in difficult labour, people rescued from road accidents and patients undergoing surgery.

For each of them, treatment, and sometimes survival, may depend on blood, a precious resource that cannot be manufactured in a laboratory or factory. It cannot be ordered at the last minute and expected to appear. It comes from people. It comes from planning. And it comes from a culture that recognises blood donation not only as an emergency response, but as an act of shared responsibility.

That is why the theme of this year's World Blood Donor Day, "**One Drop of Humanity. Give Blood. Save Lives,**" speaks so directly to Timor-Leste. It calls on the country to move from blood given in emergencies to a steady culture of regular, voluntary giving. The safest and most dependable supply, everywhere, comes from unpaid donors who return again and again.

The numbers show why this matters.

According to the WHO benchmark, at least one percent of the population should donate blood annually to sustain a safe and reliable blood supply. For Timor-Leste, this means a minimum of 13,000 donors a year.

However, figures from the HNGV Blood Bank show that only 7,204 people came forward to donate blood in 2025, about 55% of the minimum. That leaves the country short by nearly 6,000 donors a year, simply to reach the threshold of a safe and reliable supply.

The gap grows more troubling when you consider the nature of donations. Most of those who gave were replacement donors rather than regular voluntary ones. Replacement donation means families are asked to find someone to donate blood when a patient already needs it. Every donor deserves gratitude, but this model places enormous pressure on families at the worst possible moment. It also leaves the blood supply unpredictable.

A safe health system cannot run on panic; it must run on preparedness. A steady stream of voluntary donors is among the strongest forms of preparedness the country can build. Every blood donation reflects the essence of our common humanity, solidarity, compassion, and care for one another.

Building this culture also means strengthening the system around it. Working with the Ministry of Health, WHO has supported efforts to put a mobile blood donation van on the road, taking blood collection to communities, campuses and workplaces rather than waiting for donors to come to the hospital.

WHO has also supplied equipment and laboratory materials to collect, screen, store and transfuse blood safely, while supporting training for technicians and health workers who recruit donors, separate blood into components, manage storage and support safe transfusion.

Our shared vision with the Ministry of Health is a coordinated national blood system where safe blood is available whenever and wherever it is needed. But even the strongest system cannot function without donors.

"Blood donation is one of the most direct acts of solidarity a person can offer another. A single donation, taking only an hour from a person's day, can help a patient survive, return home, support a family and rejoin the community."

No institution can close this gap alone. The missing 6,000 donors must come from communities and universities, workplaces, faith-based organisations, youth groups, the private sector, and every citizen who believes that no family should have to search for blood in fear.

Thirteen thousand donors a year is a modest ask for a nation of more than a million people, and well within Timor-Leste's reach. What is needed now is a sustained national effort to make voluntary blood donation routine, wider awareness of the life-saving impact of blood and plasma donation, and greater recognition of voluntary donors.

One drop of humanity can save a life, strengthen a community, and inspire hope.

Give blood before there is an emergency. Give regularly. Give voluntarily.



Can I help
save a life?



Source: <https://www.who.int/timorleste/news/detail/15-06-2026-the-lifeline-we-share-why-the-country-needs-more-voluntary-blood-donors>

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“The Moment You Realise Everyone Is Watching the Same Thing”

In Timor-Leste, it does not take much for a crowd to form.

A loud noise. A stalled vehicle. A dog doing something unusual. Someone carrying an object that seems slightly too large for one person. Within moments, people begin to appear — not dramatically, not urgently — just gradually, from all directions.

At first, it's only one or two people standing nearby with mild interest. Then someone slows their motorbike. A kiosk customer turns around. A child stops walking home. Before long, an entire audience has quietly assembled.

What's fascinating is how naturally it happens. Nobody announces it. Nobody asks, “What's going on?” directly. People simply observe together, sharing the moment without needing explanation.

And everyone watches properly.

Not with impatience or annoyance, but with deep concentration. Arms folded. Heads slightly tilted. Calm expressions suggesting that whatever is happening deserves full public attention.

Sometimes the event itself is surprisingly small. A cat stuck somewhere awkward. Two men discussing a tyre. Someone attempting to reverse a truck through a very narrow gap. Yet the seriousness of the audience makes it feel like a national operation.

Advice may eventually emerge from the crowd. Not all at once. One person offers a suggestion. Another points quietly. A third steps forward to help, even if they were previously just a spectator.

And somehow, the situation usually improves simply because many people are now involved in watching it.

Then, just as quickly as it formed, the crowd dissolves. The truck moves. The dog escapes. The problem ends. Everyone returns to what they were doing as if nothing unusual happened at all.

Until the next thing appears.

Because in Timor-Leste, life is not always private.

Sometimes, it is gently observed by the whole neighbourhood.

Upcoming TL National Holidays

- 30th of August – Popular Consultation Day (fixed date public holiday)
- 1st of November – All Saints Day (fixed date public holiday)
- 2nd of November – All Souls Day (fixed date public holiday)
- 3rd of November – National Women's Day (fixed date public holiday)

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the July 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 Embassy of India's celebration of the 12th International Day of Yoga in Timor-Leste, which brought together hundreds of participants in Dili to promote health, wellbeing, and harmony through the practice of yoga.

We also feature the recent visit of renowned food and travel YouTuber Mark Wiens, who was hosted by Timor Plaza Hotel during his time in Timor-Leste. His visit helped showcase local cuisine and hospitality to a global audience, highlighting the country's growing appeal as a travel destination.

Health and community wellbeing are also important themes in this issue. We include an insightful opinion piece by Dr Arvind Mathur, WHO Representative in Timor-Leste, exploring the importance of voluntary blood donation and why more donors are needed to help save lives across the country.

Continuing their regular contributions, Konnekt examines the growing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in everyday work and how emerging technologies are already changing the way organisations and individuals operate.

For movie lovers, don't forget that each month's Beachside Cinema screening programme can be found in Guide Post. Check this edition for the latest schedule and enjoy another season of films under the stars.

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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If you would like to receive a reminder when the next edition is released, send an email with the subject line SUBSCRIBE to magazine@guideposttimor.com, and we will add you to our growing mailing list.

Until next month,

Cheers!

Dan Conroy, General Manager, Guide Post

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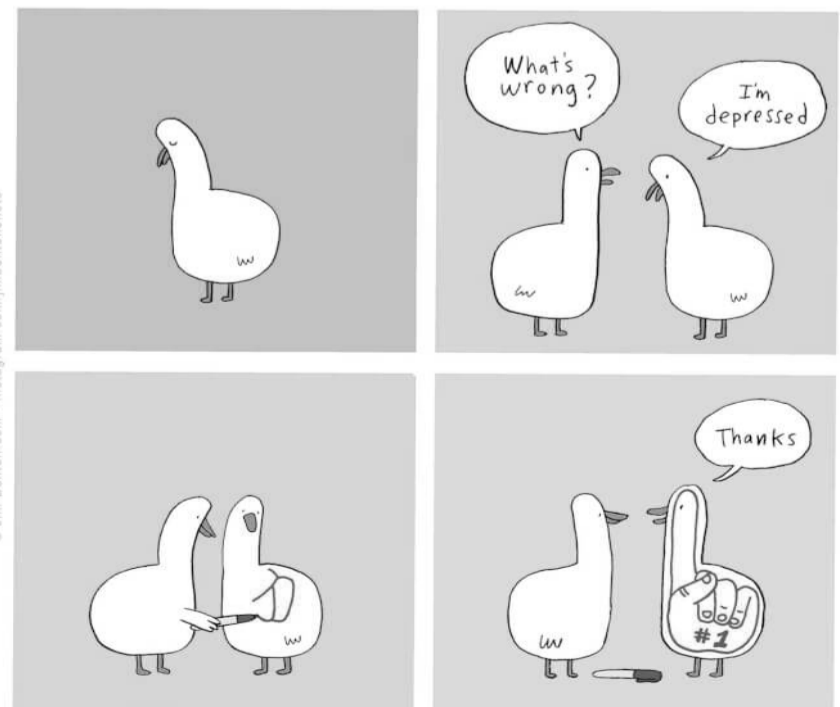
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Age Is No Barrier to Angelita Returning to Education for Her Future

June 2026 (TATOLI): The dream of a young school dropout returning to school is a powerful symbol of hope, restored personal potential, and redemption from the past. This dream reflects a subconscious desire to make up for lost opportunities, overcome the feeling of having fallen behind, and reclaim a future that had been put on hold.

For many people, school is a path to a better future. For others, however, schooling is a luxury that can be difficult to attain. One of them is Angelita Soares, often called Angelita, a 30-year-old mother from Dili who had to drop out of school because of the circumstances she faced.



Angelita Soares. Foto Tatoli/ Osória Marques

While her peers continued their education, Angelita had to leave primary school in 2019 after choosing to start a family. However, her circumstances did not make her give up on returning to education.

To realise her dream, Angelita never gave up in the face of existing challenges. After becoming pregnant, giving birth, and watching her child grow older, Angelita chose to resume her education at school.

"I stopped going to school at the time because my child was still young. But after my child grew older, I had a strong desire to continue my education. I had already planned beforehand that education was important for the future," she told TATOLI during an interview at her home in Becora Mota-Ulun.

This was not an easy decision. Behind her busy life as a homemaker was a strong desire to return to learning.

Her dream began to come true when Angelita's strong desire led her to continue her studies through an equivalency education school. The Ministry of Education specifically designed this program to reach children who had dropped out of school through a flexible learning system that uses digital technology and is supported by encouragement from various parties.



Angelita Soares and other students take part in lessons at the Equivalency Secondary School, held in a classroom at Becora Vocational Secondary School. Photo: Tatoli/Osória Marques

Equivalency education is a non-formal pathway for children or young people who have dropped out of school. The certificates it issues are legally recognised as equivalent to those from formal schools, opening opportunities to continue to higher levels of education or to apply for jobs.

Angelita's dream came true when she returned to school through Ensino Básico Recorrente, commonly known as Recurrent Basic Education, in 2024 and then continued to the Equivalency Secondary School (*Eskola Sekundária Ekivalénsia*), commonly known as the Equivalency Education School.

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At a time when many people regard school as only a memory, this mother wants to continue pursuing a postponed dream and take a small step forward to build a brighter future. That future will not begin anywhere else, but in education.

For many people, time is like the hands of a clock that merely mark the changing days. But for this mother, time is like a river that never stops flowing. She is powerless to change the river's direction, yet she chooses to go against its current. Every morning, between her work as a homemaker and the school uniform she wears, she proves that learning knows no age limit; rather, it is a new page that can be written with the hope of achieving a better future.

To pursue her dream, Angelita walks every day from her home in Becora Mota-Ulun to Becora Terminal in search of knowledge, although the distance is not very far. It usually takes her more than an hour to reach the terminal because the road descends a steep hillside.

For her, the most important thing is to attend school, earn a certificate, find a job, and support herself and her children in the future, rather than complain about the distance and financial difficulties.

"Every time I go to school, I spend US\$2. I use US\$1 for transportation and another US\$1 to buy a drink and food. The money comes from the hard work of my husband, who supports me so I can keep going to school," she explained.

Although he is only a minibus driver earning US\$150 per month, Angelita's husband has never complained about paying for his wife's education as well as their children's.

Angelita acknowledged that since returning to school, she has felt changes in herself. "I can read fluently, I know how to study effectively, and I also have the confidence to take part in classroom discussions," she said.

Angelita's strong determination is supported by her husband, Delfim Amaral. Delfim always motivates his wife by giving Angelita the opportunity and freedom to continue her education.

"The decision to attend school is in her hands," Delfim said. "I support her without hesitation. As husband and wife, we must support each other even though our income is low. For the future of our children and family, we must continue moving forward and supporting each other."

Her difficult journey back to school and the results it has produced have given Angelita great hope. Her ambition is not limited to completing senior secondary school; she is committed to continuing her education at a higher level, at university.

"I will continue my studies at university. That is my biggest dream. I will not stop at senior secondary school, because continuing my studies at university is the best way to change my life by finding a job in the future," she said.

Education Reaches Those Who Need It

In Timor-Leste, children and young people are often forced to leave school because of financial hardship, work, early marriage, or other social factors. Many of them genuinely want to resume their studies but do not know where to begin.

The Equivalency Education School and *Ensino Recorrente* were established to address these challenges. By incorporating technology and being delivered by the government through the Ministry of Education, the program seeks to ensure that every child and young person has a second chance to receive a proper education.

The school does not focus solely on completing formal education. It also rebuilds students' self-confidence, character, and hope so that they can face the future more successfully.

António Justino Guterres, a teacher at the Equivalency Secondary School, said the implementation of Equivalency Secondary Education is in its pilot phase, with 50 young people and adults enrolled and participating in the National Secondary Education Equivalency Program at Becora Vocational Secondary School.

At the school, he said, students face many challenges, including economic pressures, time constraints, learning difficulties, technology and access issues, as well as psychological and social challenges.

He explained that many students at the school struggle to balance education, work, and family. "Students at this school have dual responsibilities: they are students, but they must also work and take responsibility for their families. Therefore, students who are already married have difficulty dividing their time between studying and working," he said.

This article was originally published in Indonesian at: <https://id.tatoli.tl/2026/06/16/usia-bukan-halangan-bagi-angelita-kembali-mengenyam-pendidikan-demi-masa-depan/>



António Justino Guterres, a teacher at the Equivalency Secondary School.
Photo: Tatoli/Osória Marques

In addition to these challenges, students also experience difficulties in the learning process, particularly when studying English and Portuguese. "On average, the students attending this school are from the Indonesian era," he said.

However, he said, the National Directorate of Continuing Education, through the Community Learning Centre (SKA) structure and together with teachers, always strives to help students complete their education.

Responding to this, Alfredo de Araújo, National Director of Continuing Education at the Ministry of Education, said that the implementation of this pilot project features three types of classes.

"This school uses face-to-face classes, semi-face-to-face classes, and distance classes. Students must attend face-to-face classes according to the schedule. Semi-face-to-face classes are compulsory for students who work on projects and attend classes, while distance classes are compulsory for students who do not come to class and will be facilitated online," he explained.

The director said that the learning process must begin with general subjects in phase one because the secondary school equivalency program takes two years and consists of phases one and two. Phase one includes general subjects such as Portuguese, Tetum, Indonesian, civics, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Six subjects will begin in the first phase this year.

He explained that the implementation of Secondary Equivalency Education is a pilot project that was first launched in Dili and uses Becora Vocational Secondary School.

According to Alfredo, this year the Ministry of Education has prepared two classrooms that can accommodate 50 students, including students with special needs. This is a pilot project for the first phase, while the second phase will be implemented in January 2027 with specialised subjects such as mathematics, social sciences, and natural sciences.



Alfredo de Araújo, National Director of Continuing Education at the Ministry of Education. Photo: Tatoli/Osória Marques

The National Equivalency Program for Secondary Education was approved by the Council of Ministers on April 1, 2026, and launched on May 29, 2026.

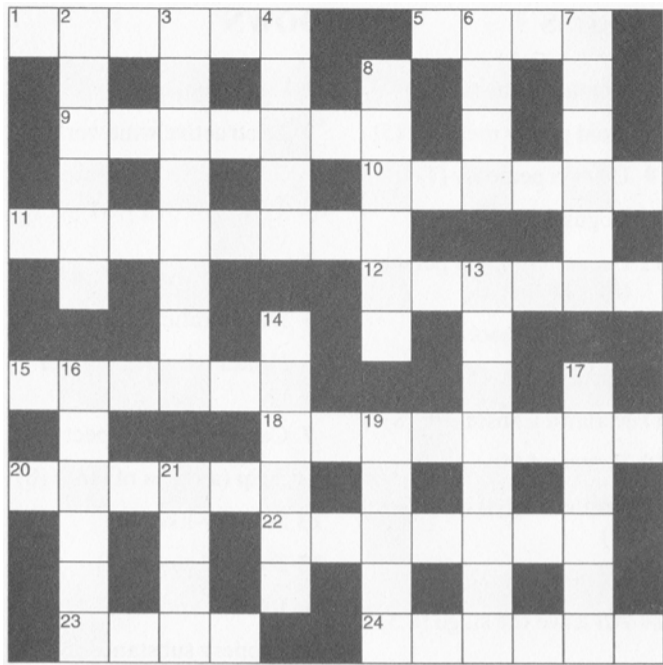
Angelita's strong desire to return to school sends a message to us all: no dream is ever truly lost as long as there is still an opportunity to learn.

When one young person returns to school, a new hope is born. From that new hope, we are slowly building a better future for Timor-Leste.

Reporter: Osória Marques Editor: Armandina Moniz

QUICK CROSSWORD

Solution on page 20



Across:

1. Subatomic particle (6)
5. Allied group of countries (4)
9. Beach area (7)
10. Make available (6)
11. Idle person (8)
12. A curiosity (6)
15. Build up (6)
18. Slow to show emotion (8)
20. Harm, injure (6)
22. Having enough money (7)
23. Little —; — Gwyn (4)
24. Natural skill (6)

Down:

2. Duty list (6)
3. Opening in floor (8)
4. Unstructured sound (5)
6. Aerobatic manoeuvre (4)
7. Calm down! (4,2)
8. Confer (on) (6)
13. Entry ringer (8)
14. Unorthodox belief (6)
16. Pupa case (6)
17. Buster —, comic actor (6)
19. Sound of a soft wet landing (5)
21. Implement (4)

QUICK CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

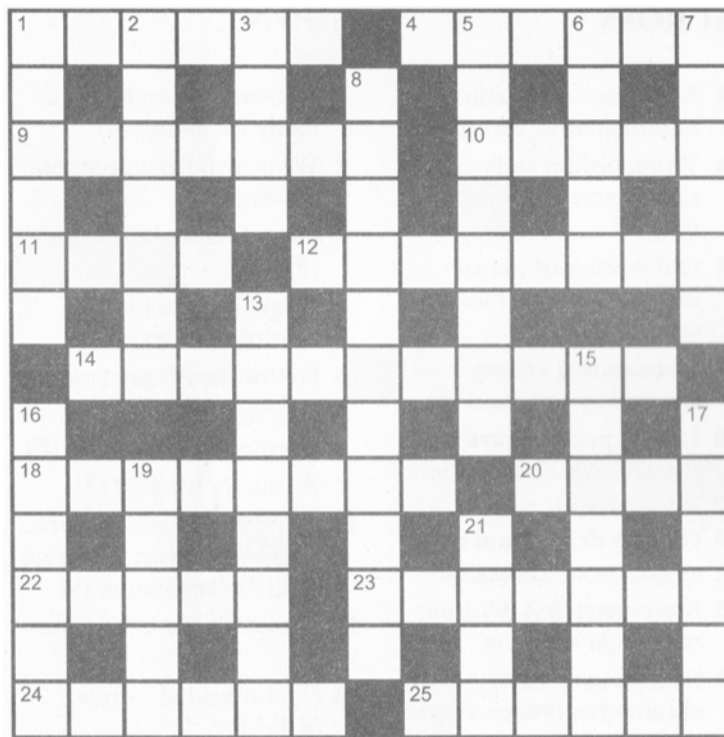
Solution on page 20

Across:

1. Language at home recalled during run (6)
4. River in sandy area makes gap (6)
9. Certain to accommodate backward guy: Smith perhaps? (7)
10. More attractive economy measure put before Queen (5)
11. Join Sue missing university in the morning (4)
12. Keep in good condition page about tennis shot (8)
14. Scan — see rain potentially bringing period of revival (11)
18. A. N. Other I somehow made into central character? (8)
20. Travelling entertainment (quite good) (4)
22. Specialised job using jazz, English (5)
23. Charge in court arising from a period in power, I'm told (7)
24. German switched halves in trough (6)
25. Notice article, get angry (6)

Down:

1. Stop in Rhodes is tip-top (6)
2. Was candidate upset over price? Tell the story! (7)
3. Singular scold creating difficulty (4)
5. Pile of hay playwright carried in vehicle (8)
6. On the move when time is right initially (5)
7. Last to catch or trap wasp (6)
8. New trailer enthralling those left — like some television (11)
13. Ready money, no more than specified, for wool (8)
15. Disturbance after tea in carriage (7)
16. Prohibition on not quite domesticated flier (6)
17. Colour of old mountains (6)
19. Writer Mark featuring old-fashioned couple (5)
21. Teacher and uncle both extremely genuine (4)



Crossword Notes:

'THE TIMES' QUIZ

Solution on page 20

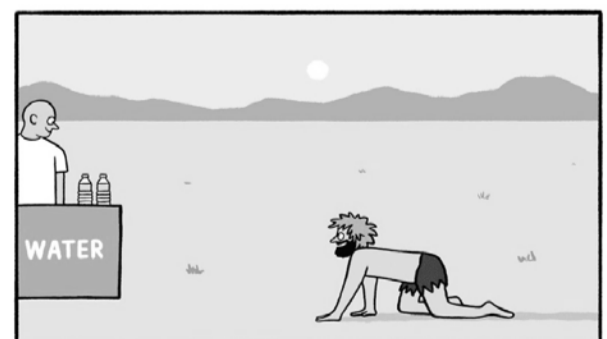
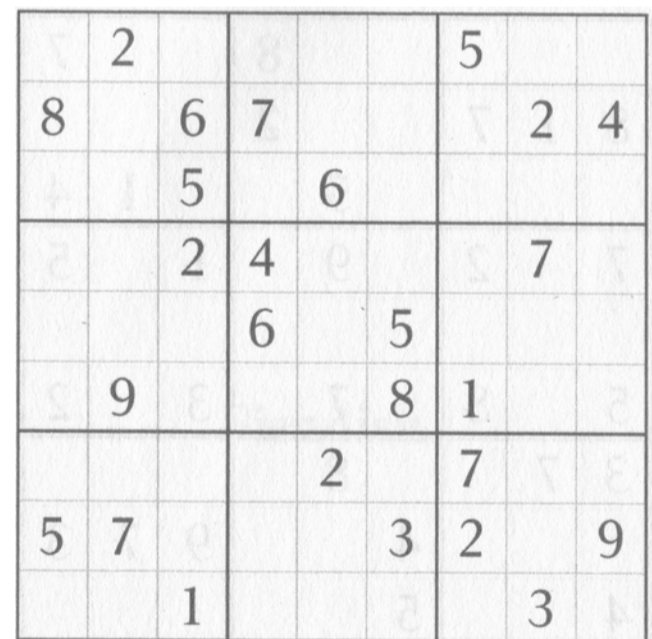
General Knowledge

1. Charles Darwin published which major work in 1871?
2. Who has been Labour MP for both Ormskirk and Knowsley North, UKIP MEP for the East Midlands and leader of Veritas?
3. Which *Coronation Street* character got two spin-offs: *Pardon the Expression* (1965-66) and *Turn Out the Lights* (1967)?
4. In which constellation are the Pleiades and Hyades star clusters?
5. The RICE procedure involves what steps?
6. Dandy Dan and Fat Sam are crime bosses in which musical?
7. The only member of the genus *Satan*, the widemouth blindcat is a type of what?
8. The German word, *backpfeifengesicht*, means "a face in need of..." what?
9. Hearing the Burt Bacharach song *The Look of Love* inspired Mike Myers to create which film character?
10. A *Chilango* is a resident of which capital city in Latin America?
11. The large bird-like creature Garuda is the mount (*vahana*) of which Hindu deity?
12. In 1748, which Swiss mathematician developed the concept of function in his *Introductio in analysin infinitorum*?
13. Philip Roth first used which alter-ego as a narrator in his 1979 novel *The Ghost Writer*?
14. Financed by Sun Myung Moon, which 1981 Korean War film was called "the worst movie ever made" by *Newsweek*?
15. Describing it as "bright, cleansing, and revealing", which colour was called the "great clarifier" by Diana Vreeland?
16. Who was the only child of Mary, Princess Royal, the daughter of Charles I?
17. What is the largest national park in the Canadian Rockies?
18. Which tennis player won his only ATP Masters singles title at the 2003 Paris Masters?
19. Which Sussex and England fast bowler wrote the 1976 autobiography *Cricket Rebel*?
20. Who is the pictured celebrity chef on the right?



THE TIMES SUDOKU

Solution on page 20



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EMPLOYMENT MATTERS!

Edition #69 - Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Everyday Work

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

Workplaces in Timor-Leste and across the region are continuing to evolve, and one of the most noticeable changes today is the growing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in everyday work. What was once seen as a future concept is now becoming part of how organisations operate, communicate, and make decisions.



The rise of AI in everyday work

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a future concept, it is already being used in practical ways across modern workplaces. From recruitment and training to administration and planning, AI is becoming part of everyday work systems. This shift is not limited to one profession or industry; it affects both employers and employees across all sectors. However, one point should be clear: *AI is not replacing people, it is changing how work is done.*

What This Means for Employers

For employers, AI offers clear advantages: improved efficiency, reduced administrative burden, and stronger decision-making. However, these benefits come with important responsibilities.

Employers must ensure that AI is used in a way that is:

- Fair, avoiding bias in decision-making.
- Transparent, so processes are understood.
- Secure, especially when handling employee data.
- Accountable, with humans responsible for final decisions.

What This Means for Employees

For employees, AI creates both opportunities and expectations. On the positive side, employees can benefit from improved access to training, more efficient systems, and better support in their daily work. AI can also open new pathways for skills development and career growth. At the same time, employees are expected to adapt by learning new tools, building digital skills, and being open to changes in how work is performed.

A Shared Responsibility

AI is not just a technological shift, it is a workplace transformation that affects everyone.

Employers must provide guidance, training, and clear policies, while employees must be willing to learn and engage with new systems. At the same time, organisations must maintain a balance between efficiency and human connection.

Skills such as communication, judgment, trust, and empathy remain essential and cannot be replaced by technology.

Balancing Opportunity and Risk

AI brings both benefits and risks. It can improve productivity and streamline processes, but it also raises concerns about fairness, data privacy, and over-reliance on automation.

For this reason, one principle should guide its use: *AI should support decision-making, not replace human responsibility.* Maintaining this balance is key to ensuring trust in the workplace.

Looking Ahead in Timor-Leste

For Timor-Leste, AI presents an opportunity to modernise workplaces, improve efficiency, and support growth. It can enhance operations, expand access to learning, and simplify daily tasks.

However, success will depend on:

- Building digital skills.
- Ensuring appropriate infrastructure.
- Establishing clear and responsible policies.
- Promoting fairness and transparency.

The focus should be on thoughtful and responsible use, not rapid adoption.

AI is no longer a future possibility; it is a permanent part of today's workplace. The real question is not whether it will be used, but how responsibly and effectively it is applied.

The future of work will be shaped by how well people and technology work together. The most successful workplaces will be those that use AI to improve efficiency while ensuring that human judgment, fairness, and accountability remain at the core of every decision.

Ultimately, work is about people. Technology may change how we work, but it does not change why we work. AI should strengthen human potential, not replace it

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On island nation, ‘ancestral bond’ to crocodiles is tested

Conservation International scientist Jafet Potenzo on what it means to live alongside an island nation’s most sacred — and deadly — animal.

By Mary Kate McCoy

Photo: © Jafet Potenzo Lopes



On a small, rugged island nation nestled between Indonesia and Australia, high peaks plunge toward coastal mangroves, river deltas and warm glittering shallows — and into the domain of one of nature’s most formidable predators.

Timor-Leste is crocodile country.

Saltwater crocodiles thrive here, lurking in brackish river mouths, gliding through coastal wetlands and basking on muddy banks baked by equatorial sun. They are the largest reptile on the planet and can live for decades.

For generations, proximity to the creature rarely felt dangerous to the people of Timor-Leste. Crocodiles weren’t something to fear — they were sacred guardians.

That relationship drew the team behind “*Deadly 60*” to the island. This long-running BBC wildlife series recently brought its cameras to document saltwater crocodiles up close, guided by Conservation International marine scientist Jafet Potenzo Lopes.

Yet the waterways that bind these communities to the crocodile are now also the site of a rising tide of crocodile attacks, forcing Timor-Leste to confront a painful question: What happens when your guardian becomes a threat?

Conservation News recently spoke with Potenzo to learn how Conservation International is helping communities find a path forward — one that protects both people and the sacred animals at the heart of their culture.

Conservation News: Let’s start with your experience filming alongside “*Deadly 60*” — give us the highlight reel.

Jafet Potenzo Lopes: My job was to track down the crocodiles using a drone — finding them and monitoring their movements so the crew could get close enough for footage without putting anyone at risk. At one point the drone picks up a huge saltwater crocodile — as long as a pickup truck — just basking in crystal blue coastal waters while fishermen float by in their boats like it’s the most normal thing in the world. That’s the shot that stays with me — a massive crocodile, completely at ease in its habitat.

But my favorite moment of the episode is when the host Steve Backshall picks up a piece of crocodile poo I’d found while out tracking. He’s handling it like a piece of clay, totally unfazed, turning it into an impromptu lesson on how crocodile’s stomach acids are strong enough to dissolve rocks. They eat rocks on purpose, as ballast, to stay weighted underwater while they wait for prey. He’s brave — that stuff smells awful.

And on a more personal note — as a Timorese, it meant a lot to see the episode give space to what crocodiles mean to our culture.

What is the relationship between the people of Timor-Leste and the crocodiles?

JPL: It is a very strong bond. According to the Timor-Leste creation story, the island was formed when a crocodile sacrificed itself for a boy so his descendants would have a home to live on. In many communities, people think of them as their protectors, even referring to them as their “grandfather.”

That deep respect can translate into a surprising lack of fear. You’ll see fishermen going about their work even when a crocodile is right nearby because they trust that ancestral bond.

But that’s also what makes what’s happening right now so troubling. There’s been an alarming rise in human-crocodile conflict in recent years.

How bad has it gotten?

JPL: It’s a very serious situation — and it’s becoming increasingly controversial. In the last 20 years, Timor-Leste has recorded 173 crocodile attacks on humans. 78 of those were fatal. And the frequency has been picking up over the last decade. Just recently, three people were attacked in the same municipality within two days. We suspect the real number is even higher. The crocodiles are so revered that people are often ashamed to report attacks.

But it’s starting to shift how some locals feel. Some have even begun targeting crocodiles. It’s a really complex, delicate situation.

What’s behind the increase in attacks?

JPL: There’s no single answer — we’re still trying to understand the full picture. But there are clues.

For one, crocodile populations have rebounded since Timor-Leste gained independence in 2002 — after decades of hunting under Portuguese and Indonesian rule had severely depleted their numbers. More crocodiles naturally mean more chances for encounters. It’s possible that attacks were common before crocodiles became a protected species more than 20 years ago, but we don’t have data to know for sure.

Then there’s the reality of daily life here. Timor-Leste is full of rivers and coastline, where many people collect water for drinking, bathing, laundry. And entire communities depend on fishing and agriculture for their livelihoods. That kind of reliance can push people to take risks and go into waters where they know crocodiles are present because they don’t have another option.

Finally, there’s habitat loss and a rapidly growing human population — one of the fastest-growing in the world. As people push further into their diminishing habitat, crocodiles are showing up in places they didn’t used to be. Heavy rainfall during the rainy season makes this worse, with rising water levels allowing crocodiles to move more freely into areas where people are working, gathering wood and tending livestock.

What is Conservation International doing to help?

JPL: Education is one of our most powerful tools. If people understand where and when attacks are more likely to happen, they can make smarter decisions about where to go — and where to avoid.

Through a project funded by the Global Environment Facility, we’re gathering as much data as we can from incident reports and drone imaging to help predict where attacks are most likely to occur. The problem is that data on attacks has historically been scattered and fragmented. So we’re working closely with communities and hospitals to piece together a clearer picture, and to improve the response when someone is attacked. From that data, we can build maps of crocodile hotspots — where they nest, where they bask — and use that to establish no-fishing zones and other safety boundaries.

We’re also focused on restoring the wetland ecosystem more broadly. Slash and burn agriculture and other human activities have degraded crocodile habitat, which is likely pushing them closer to people as they search for new territory. Protecting people and protecting the ecosystem aren’t as separate as they might seem.

For many Timorese, these animals are woven into the origin of this place — ancestrally, spiritually. How do you protect people without threatening that relationship?

JPL: We think about this constantly. The connection Timorese people feel with crocodiles is one of our greatest conservation assets — that reverence has protected the species for generations.

But we also can’t ignore that people are getting hurt. And when that happens, the bond is going to start to fray.

We need to bring communities into our work early. Where boundaries are, how to manage conflict — these are not decisions we can make unilaterally for people. Local knowledge is everything — the people know their waterways, the animals and the risks better than anyone.

What we’re trying to avoid is a situation where mounting attacks push communities to turn on the crocodiles entirely — where fear overtakes everything that came before it. Because once that reverence is gone, it’s very hard to get back. And without it, the crocodile loses a powerful protector.

It’s a delicate balance. But if people feel heard, if they feel like conservation is working for them and not just for the crocodile, we have the chance to get this right.

Source: <https://www.conservation.org/news/on-island-nation-ancestral-bond-to-crocodiles-is-tested>

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...

Window screens and fresh air go together - like spaghetti and tomato sauce
When I stay in a hotel room, I want fresh air to breathe. Granted, most hotels are in cities, and cities aren't known for being strong on fresh air, but bear with me.....

Many hotel rooms have windows which either don't open, or if they do, the opening is not screened (to keep bugs out). A screen for a window opening is not expensive - particularly if it's tacked on to a lightweight wooden frame, with a staple gun - as opposed to a built-in sliding or fixed screen in a store-bought, high-priced window.

It's acknowledged that openable hotel windows can be security issues - if a nefarious person wants to steal. Yet theft by breaching windows is very rare, particularly if the room's window is above the ground floor, and/or there's a metal grating.

The more high-class a hotel, the less likely it is to have room windows which are screened to enable outside air entering. If asked about fresh air, a hotel manager will likely say something like, "No Worries. Our rooms have air conditioning (AC)."

AC is okay for cooling, but doesn't do much for fresh air. AC units are usually closed systems, which circulate air within a room. When occupants breathe in air for oxygen, the exhaled air has less oxygen. A room's air, although cool, is rendered somewhat oxygen-deplete, increasingly so, over time.

If a city is hosting a sporting event, and visiting sportsters from other regions are invited, ...have them spend the night in oxygen-starved rooms - to give the home team an advantage. To compound the sinister plan, arrange for the hotel rooms to have new mattresses and sheets/pillows. Given that new mattresses emit formaldehyde, and it's a debilitating gas, ...you can guess the effect it will have on unsuspecting visitors. Of course, I don't really recommend that, but it's mentioned in order to try and make a point - about the importance of fresh air.

A similar dynamic happens with fans (mechanical, not sports star fans). A fan pushes air around inside a room, and imparts a slight cooling effect on skin. Yet it's essentially the same air. A fan doesn't make air fresher. However, an exhaust fan is different than an inside-room fan. Every cubic cm of air an exhaust fan expels - compels the same amount of air to be brought into a room (even if the room is fully sealed, which is a rarity, outside air will leak in through the sides of the fan blades).

In conclusion, the best hotel room, in terms of oxygenated air, is a room away from a city or any place with bad air, ...which has screens on openable windows. Additionally, an exhaust fan would be cool (pun intended). Even better, would be a second exhaust fan facing backwards, so there's outside air blowing in while stale room air is being blown out.

This concept is particularly prescient for places where industrial cleaning or dust-creating work is being done, ...like a carpentry shop. Even just sweeping a floor - kicks up clouds of dust. Another unsolicited hint which is good for lungs: when sweeping a floor or doing any activity which kicks up dust or bad air, ...inhale before starting, do the activity for a brief period of a minute or so, and then go quickly to a clean area to inhale. I've been a carpenter and a chimney sweep. Both jobs involve a lot of dust. Dust masks help a little bit, but the breathing method, just mentioned, works better. If lungs could talk, they'd say 'Thanks.' Incidentally, 'lung' is the Thai word for 'uncle.'

Ken Albertsen
Atauro Island
kenalberts214@gmail.com

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES ON PAGE 12

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'THE TIMES' QUIZ

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7. Freshwater catfish
8. "... a fist"
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NT Writers Festival launches story of Timorese asylum seekers who took fishing boat to Australia

By Tilda Colling



Jose da Costa sought refuge in Australia after fleeing the Indonesian occupation of East Timor in the 1990s. (ABC News: Tilda Colling)

Jose da Costa was born "in the middle of a war".

It was 1976, one year after Indonesia's invasion of the Portuguese territory then known as East Timor.

"My family ran to the bush to hide," he said.

"I was born in the bush."

Over the 24 years that followed, more than 100,000 Timorese would die in a deadly battle for control of the now-independent nation known since 2002 as Timor-Leste.

In the 1991 Dili Massacre alone, more than 250 Timorese protesters were killed in a confrontation with Indonesian soldiers, sparking further mass protests hundreds of kilometres away in Darwin.



After news of the 1991 Dili Massacre reached Darwin, hundreds of locals protested by lying in the streets. (littledarwin blog)

Back across the Timor Sea, as the occupation continued into the 1980s, Mr da Costa's family spent the first three years of his life hiding in the bush before they were captured while trying to surrender to Indonesian troops.

After his family was banned from returning to their home town or growing crops, and even subjected to home detention, Mr da Costa joined a clandestine youth movement fighting for independence while being guided by older activists.

"Some of them were killed, some of them got arrested and put in prison, so our struggle for independence very much was oppressed, crushed," he said.

Escape on the Good Sea

In 1995, Mr da Costa was part of a group that organised a boat to leave East Timor in search of political asylum so they could continue to push for independence in safety.

He wrote a note to tell his mother he was leaving but could not find anyone he trusted to give it to her.

So, without telling his family, he became one of 18 asylum seekers, including a six-month-old baby, who boarded a small fishing boat — the Tasi Diak, meaning "good sea" — and headed for Australia.

"It was the most frightening journey at that time," he said.

"One of the most frightening things was we could not swim.

"We didn't have any life jackets, [and] we only relied on a small engine with one piston, so if the machine breaks down that [was] very much the end of our life."

After six nights aboard the small boat, the group arrived in Darwin and the trip remains the only successful crossing between the two countries during the 24 years of Indonesian rule.

'Political mission' detailed in new book

Their perilous journey has now been chronicled in a new book, *The Good Sea*, the culmination of 10 years of research by author and Curtin University historian Vanessa Hearman.



Jose da Costa returned to Darwin with Vanessa Hearman for this year's NT Writers Festival after the pair first met in Melbourne in the 1990s. (ABC News: Tilda Colling)

"I had become involved in the Timor solidarity movement in 1991 after the Dili Massacre," she said.

"I thought if people are doing this in the name of Indonesia and Indonesian people, me being Indonesian-born, I wanted to do something about this in Australia."

After arriving in Darwin, and a stint in a Western Australian detention centre, some members of the Tasi Diak group flew to Melbourne to live on bridging visas.

It was there amid the Timorese resistance movement that Hearman met some of the refugees, including Mr da Costa, but it was not until many years later that she began to think about the story of their journey in depth.

After reconnecting with Mr da Costa, now a filmmaker, Hearman watched his animated documentary about the boat trip, *Jose's Story*.

"It was a political mission by the East Timorese resistance," she said.

"I think it's important that Australians remember the history of our relationship with both Indonesia and Timor-Leste — the good and the bad."

The Good Sea was officially launched at the NT Writers Festival.



Vanessa Hearman says she wrote *The Good Sea* after joining the Australian Timor solidarity movement following the Dili Massacre. (ABC News: Tilda Colling)

Source: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-05-31/timorese-asylum-seekers-jose-da-costa-vanessa-hearman-good-sea/106737190>



SPE WA - Timor-Leste DL Extravaganza Q2'26



Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL) Hera Auditorium

The Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) is the largest energy society in the world with 130,000+ members across all geographic regions. It includes 200 professional Sections and over 400 student Chapters. Supported by SPE Western Australia (SPE WA), a Timor-Leste student Chapter was formally launched with much fanfare in May 2023 by H.E. President José Ramos-Horta, and soon became one of the largest SPE student bodies globally with circa 700 students. In Nov 2024, the SPE Timor-Leste professional Section was officially established at an event attended by H.E. Francisco Monteiro, Minister of Petroleum & Mineral Resources and many other dignitaries.

In May 2026, as part of a mission to provide the petroleum engineering and geology students of Timor-Leste with much needed global insights, SPE Western Australia (SPE WA) organised the 12th quarterly meeting in Dili featuring international speakers since inception. It was held at the beautiful UNTL Hera Auditorium and marked the 3rd SPE Distinguished Lecturer (DL) Extravaganza, on this occasion starring 2 DL's from Houston and Perth. Over that same period, SPE WA has awarded 58 scholarships to Timorese energy students. Each scholarship includes a 1-week program in Perth (featuring half-day visits to many sponsors), as well as a laptop computer and cash stipend. These awards are particularly impactful, some say life-changing, because they open potential opportunities, plus the vast majority of winners have never ventured outside the island of Timor.



360 SPE Timor-Leste student members attend a presentation by an SPE International Distinguished Lecturer from the United States.

The excitement in Timor-Leste surrounding these quarterly events has always been palpable, and this DL Extravaganza attracted around 350 SPE Timor-Leste Student Chapter members from the 4 universities in Dili offering petroleum engineering, petroleum management and/or geology degrees. It's always heartening to witness the students from DIT, UNTL, UNDIL, & UNITAL proudly wearing their distinct university blazers in a myriad of colours, many with their departments embroidered on the back. In addition, around 10 professionals including academic staff attended the event to enhance their industry knowledge. MC's and Student Chapter Officers Cezania da Costa (DIT) and Olavio Silva (UNTL) kicked-off proceedings by welcoming everyone, followed by the audience standing to sing "Pátria", the National Anthem of Timor-Leste, which is always elevating.

SPE WA Chair of Timor-Leste Initiatives and BD Director of AWT, ODSI and RESL, Steve McBride, delivered a summary of the key SPE initiatives to support Timorese students, the most eagerly awaited of course being the annual scholarships. Each applicant must submit a 1-minute selfie-video answering a specific question, which for 2026 was: "How can the O&G industry earn public trust, correct misconceptions, and effectively share its sustainability efforts with younger generations?" Around 100 applications had been submitted, each individually assessed by a panel of judges across 5-6 criteria such as creativity, answering the question etc. 2026 is a record year for sponsorship of our Timor-Leste initiatives with SPE WA able to award 18 scholarships. McBride showed the audience 2 of the best winning video submissions this year by Ms. Débora Maia from DIT and Mr. Tito Lemos from UNTL, as well as video compilation of the 3 Perth visits to date in 2023, 2024 and 2025 accompanied by some inspiring Timorese music, "Timor Hau Inan Hau Rain" by Neurtura. He ended with a short quiz, awarding 4 First Aid Kits as prizes thanks to Tim Scarrott, Time Critical and St John in Perth.

The first of our DL's, Dr. Gang Han, a Senior Petroleum Engineering Consultant based in Houston inspired everyone with his talk "When 'Geo' Meets 'Mechanics'". Commencing from "Geo" (geoscience) and ending at "Mechanics" (engineering), Dr Han highlighted that the value of geomechanics lies in the integration of geoscience and engineering. Our second DL, Mr. Diego Vazquez, Managing Director of APES Energy Evolution in Perth, show-cased "CO₂ Storage Risks & Cost: Busting Perceptions & Myths". This examined a range of successful global Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) projects and business models, highlighting how effective site selection, operational management, and legacy well considerations influence the risk, cost, and scalability of commercial CO₂ storage. CCS is a highly trending approach globally including in Timor-Leste on the Bayu-Undan Field.

Newly appointed President of the SPE Timor-Leste Student Chapter, Ms Laurita Boavida (DIT), delivered a speech thanking the 2 Lecturers, our 2026 sponsors and the student members attending who represent the future of the nation. The SPE Timor-Leste Chapter presented colourful traditional Timorese Tais to Gan, Vazquez and McBride as a gesture of appreciation for today's event. McBride wrapped-up, reflecting on these remarkable occasions with a pledge to continue transferring knowledge and a genuine desire to deliver career opportunities. Next up will be "An Introduction to the Energy Transition" in August. The finale signalled the students to politely request a tsunami of selfies, a national passion, followed by a delicious Timorese lunch on the Hera mezzanine veranda.

By Steve McBride, SPE WA Chair of Timor-Leste Initiatives



CONGRATULATIONS! 18 Timor-Leste Scholarship Winners

(in alphabetical order)

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From Timor-Leste to Bedford: The community builder honoured by the King



Bedford's first-ever Timor-Leste Independence Day celebration.
Image: Queen's Park Community Organisation (QPCO)

When Azito Da Silva arrived in Bedford, United Kingdom in 2016, he could never have imagined that less than a decade later, he would be attending a Royal Garden Party in recognition of his contribution to community life.

Yet for many within Bedford's Timor-Leste community, the invitation felt richly deserved.

Building a new life in Bedford

Azito was the first Timorese resident to settle in Bedford, arriving after studying and working in Northern Ireland. What began as a search for opportunity soon became something much bigger.

Drawing on strong connections within the Timor-Leste community and a reputation for hard work, Azito helped others find employment and settle in Bedford.

Over the years, families followed, friendships formed, and a new community quietly took root in the town.

Today, more than 100 Timorese residents call Bedford home. Many work in essential industries, have bought homes, enrolled children in local schools, and become part of the everyday life of the town.

Through football, cultural gatherings, volunteering and community events, they have brought energy, resilience and cultural richness to Bedford.

Keeping culture and heritage alive



Bedford's Timor-Leste Independence Day Flag Raising Ceremony at Harpur Square on 20 May 2026. Image: Queen's Park Community Organisation (QPCO).

For Azito, preserving heritage has always been just as important as building a future. "Our culture is our memory," he says. "Even children born here should know their roots. May your faith be your culture."

That commitment to identity and belonging has helped shape a strong and visible Timor-Leste community in Bedford.

From shared celebrations to everyday gatherings, culture remains at the heart of how the community stays connected across generations.

A historic celebration for Bedford

That spirit was on full display last November 2025, when Queen's Park Community Organisation (QPCO), in partnership with Bedford's Timor-Leste community, hosted Bedford's first-ever Timor-Leste Independence Day celebration.

Marking 50 years since Timor-Leste's proclamation of independence, the event brought together hundreds of residents for a day of traditional dance, music, storytelling and food.

The celebration was more than a cultural event. It was a moment of visibility and pride for a community that has helped shape modern Bedford while remaining deeply connected to its roots.

Dignitaries, including the Timor-Leste Ambassador, the High Sheriff of Bedfordshire, Deputy Lieutenant Hannan Ali, and local civic leaders, attended in support, reflecting the growing recognition of the community's contribution to the town.

The momentum continued this year with Bedford's Timor-Leste Independence Day Flag Raising Ceremony at Harpur Square on 20 May 2026.

Attended by the Deputy Lieutenant Robert Oakley, High Sheriff of Bedfordshire Ismail Anilmis, and Mayor of Bedford Tom Wootton (Conservative), the ceremony marked another proud milestone for a community that has become an increasingly visible and valued part of Bedford life.

Royal recognition for community leadership



Azito Da Silva (I) and guests at a Royal Garden Party. Image: Azito Da Silva

Following the success of the event, Azito received an invitation to attend the King's Garden Party. A moment that symbolised not only personal recognition, but recognition for an entire community.

For many in Bedford, it reflected the positive contribution migrant communities continue to make to the town's social, cultural and economic life.

From one man arriving in Bedford with hope for a better future, to a thriving community celebrated at the highest level, the story of Bedford's Timor-Leste community is ultimately a story about belonging, contribution and the strength found in diversity.

Looking ahead, the community's journey continues with even greater ambition and pride. QPCO and Bedford's Timor-Leste community are now preparing to welcome Timorese communities from across the UK to Bedford for a major cultural festival and football tournament on 22 August 2026.

A celebration that promises to further strengthen friendships, cultural pride and Bedford's reputation as a town where communities come together.

Source: <https://www.bedfordindependent.co.uk/monthly-column-from-timor-leste-to-bedford-the-community-builder-honoured-by-the-king/>



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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.

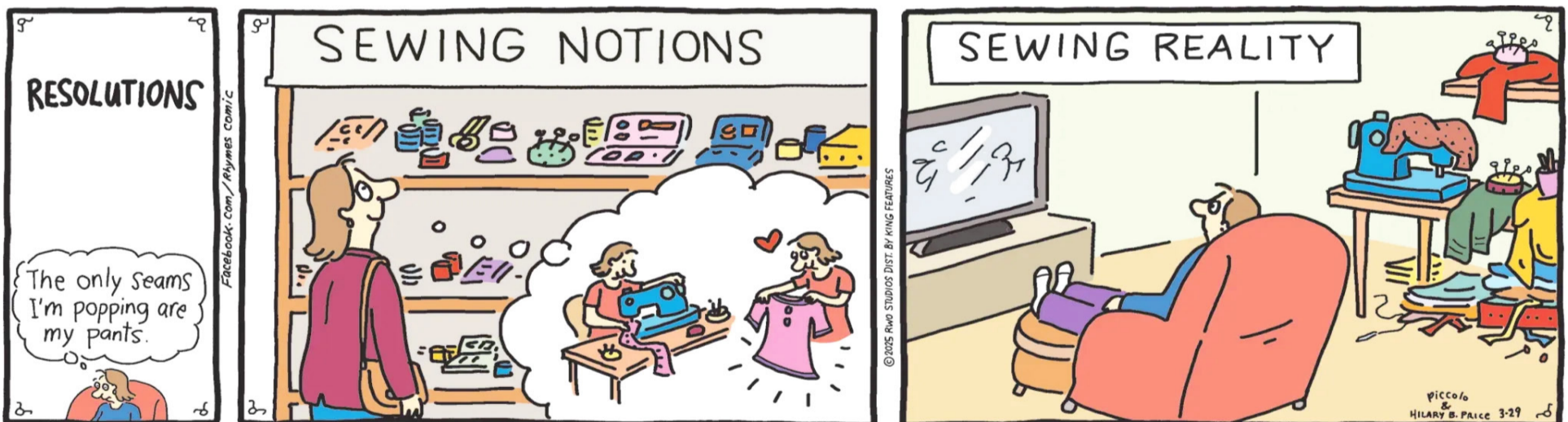
Statue of Francisco Xavier do Amaral

The roundabout outside the Dili Convention Centre has a statue of Francisco Xavier do Amaral, the first President of Timor-Leste, who died in 2012. It was inaugurated in 2017. Locals refer to it as the pointy man statue, as the President is shown in the same pose as an iconic picture taken at the Proclamation of Independence on the 28th of November 1975. Take Mikrolet #1, #2, #4, #5, #6, #7, #8, or #9.



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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Embassy of India Celebrates the 12th International Day of Yoga in Timor-Leste



The Embassy of India in Dili celebrated the 12th International Day of Yoga (IDY) with great enthusiasm and participation of about 350 Yoga enthusiasts, comprising of government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, representatives of international organisations, members of the Indian community, and friends of India in Timor-Leste.

The event was graced by the presence of Honourable Minister of Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture, Mr. Nelyo Isaac Sarmento, as the Chief Guest, alongside His Excellency the Ambassador of India to Timor-Leste.

The program commenced with opening remarks by the Ambassador, who highlighted the significance of yoga as India's ancient gift to humanity and emphasised its role in promoting physical health, mental well-being, harmony, and sustainable living. The Ambassador also recalled the Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision behind the declaration of 21 June as the International Day of Yoga by the United Nations General Assembly, reflecting the universal appeal of yoga across cultures and societies.

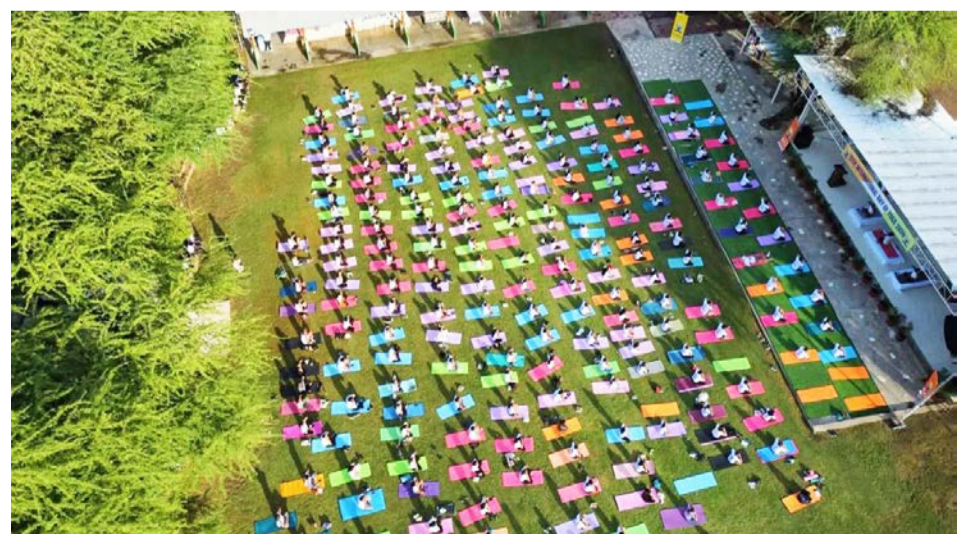
In his remarks, Honourable Minister Mr. Nelyo Isaac Sarmento underscored the importance of sports, physical activity, and wellness in fostering healthy communities. He appreciated the growing popularity of yoga worldwide and welcomed initiatives that encourage healthier lifestyles and greater well-being among people.

A special video highlighting the evolution and global significance of the celebration of International Day of Yoga was screened during the event. It traced the remarkable journey of IDY from its inaugural celebration to the 11th edition, showcasing how yoga—an ancient Indian tradition and gift to humanity—has evolved into a global movement, inspiring millions of people worldwide to embrace a healthier, more balanced, and harmonious way of life.

The celebration continued with a guided yoga session led by trained Timorese Yoga instructors. Participants enthusiastically performed yoga practices and breathing exercises aimed at enhancing physical fitness, mental clarity, and inner balance.

The event concluded with healthy refreshments, including fresh coconuts and seasonal fruits, reflecting the spirit of wellness and healthy living associated with yoga.

The Embassy of India expressed its gratitude to all participants, partners, volunteers, and supporters whose contributions made the event a success. The celebration reaffirmed the shared commitment of India and Timor-Leste to promoting health, harmony, and holistic well-being through the practice of yoga.



Credit: Embassy of India, Dili, Timor-Leste

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