

Research Paper - Timor-Leste

Introduction and History:

One of the youngest countries in the world, the constitution of Timor-Leste drafted and framed as recently as 2002. On the same day, the country also received its sovereignty, control and power and is known as the 'Restoration of Independence Day'. There is much to delve into when it comes to the history and geography of this newly found country. Other than this, it is also a country with a young government that is structuring itself better and better each day that all began in the early 16th century, the Portuguese decided to begin trade with a small island named Timor. They soon colonized the island and made it theirs. After fighting off the Dutch for several years, a treaty was made in 1859. A border was drawn between the Portuguese Timor, which is presently known as Timor-Leste, and the Dutch Timor, which was then the western part of the island. Between the years 1942 and 1945, Imperial Japan occupied Portuguese Timor but this lasted for a short while. The Portuguese resumed their colonial reign over the island post World War II, after running out the Japanese. The Portuguese continued to rule until 28th November 1975, when East Timor declared itself a free country. This freedom was short lived. Within 9 days of East Timor being free, the Indonesian forces attacked and occupied this part. In July 1976 it became a part of Indonesia and came to be known as *Timor Timur*, which translates into East Timor. This did not bode well with the citizens of Timor-Leste and they ran many a campaign to attain their freedom. 100,000 to 250,000 lives were lost during the two decades they fought for their freedom. Soon, the UN intervened, and on 30th August 1999 they supervised a referendum that showed that a majority of the citizens of Timor-Leste wanted their independence. This led to Timorese militia, a group organized and supported by the Indonesians taking revenge and completely destroying lives, infrastructure, schools, electric grids, livelihoods, irrigation systems and water. The citizens of Timor-Leste finally received aid on 20th September 1999 from the Australian army to end this atrocity. Finally, on 20th May 2002, Timor-Leste became an independent state, free from any invasions. Internal struggles persisted till February 2008 and ever since Timor-Leste has evolved and found itself stabilized.

Timor-Leste, in Portuguese translates to "the rising sun". This holds true for Timor-Leste because it was declared an independent country only 11 years ago. This is country that is just finding its feet. It is a country with heaps of history and battle that started off

Geography:

Timor-Leste is located in the southeastern region of Asia. It lies northwest of Australia. Other than bordering Indonesia, the newly found country also includes the eastern half of the island of Timor, the northwestern part, Oecussi (Ambeno) of the island of Timor and also the islands Pulau Atauro and Pulau Jaco. The capital of Timor-Leste is Dili. Timor-Leste borders Indonesia by a mere 228km. Its area is only a mere 14,874 sq km, which makes it only slightly bigger than Connecticut. This country experiences tropical climatic conditions. It is hot, humid and has very clear rainy and dry seasons. Timor-Leste has a mountainous terrain. Several natural resources are found in this country. They have an abundance of gold, marble, petroleum, manganese and natural gas. If these resources are put to good use they can garner large revenues.

Out of the 14,874 sq. km only 346.5 sq. km is used for irrigation. The largely used slash and burn method of agriculture is the cause of major deforestation and soil erosion. Due to it being surrounded by water, the country is highly prone to floods and tsunamis. It also faces frequent landslides, earthquakes and tropical cyclones.

Government:

The government of Timor-Leste is a republican government with its capital at Dili. Based on the 2012 elections, their President is Taur Matan RAUK and the Prime Minister is Kay Rala Xanana GUSAMO. The cabinet consists of a Council of Ministers. All together form the government of Timor-Leste. The president is elected by a voting system for a five-year term. They celebrate their independence day on 28 November and their national anthem is called Patria.

Economy:

Timor-Leste has a GDP of \$10.63 billion (2012 est.) and a GDPP of \$9500.0. After the destruction caused by the Timorese militia and Indonesia in 1999, Timor-Leste has had to face rebuilding, restructuring and strengthening their infrastructure, civil administration and the job market. Putting their oil and gas reserves to good use in offshore waters has greatly helped with the government revenues. The revenues garnered by the oil and petroleum industries are accounted for about 89% of the GDP. Even with all this oil and gas, jobs remain scarce in this area. The unemployment rate is at a whopping 18.4% and the inflation rate is 13.5%.

Agricultural products like corn, rice, coffee, cassava (manioc), soybeans, sweet potatoes, mangoes, cabbage, vanilla and bananas are prominently grown here. Agriculture provides for about 80% of the population and also sends out 90% in exports. Timor-Leste mainly exports coffee. Small-scale industries play a major role towards revenue collections as well. Industries to manufacture soaps, printing, making handicrafts and weaving cloth add to the money purse of Timor-Leste.

People:

After being fought over for so many years by several countries, Timor-Leste was named an independent state in 2002. The Portuguese stayed in Timor-Leste for a long time. They ruled from the 16th century. The prolonged period has had a major impact culturally on the citizens of Timor-Leste, who are called Timorese. They have three ethnic groups: Papuan, Austronesian, and also a small Chinese minority. Their official language is called Tetum and due to the high influence of Portugal, they also speak Portuguese. Indonesian and English are the other spoken languages in Timor-Leste. The population of the country is 1,172,390, of which the majority of the population is Roman Catholic. They form about 98% of the population, the Muslim's form 1% and the Protestants complete the remaining quota. The population growth rate is 2.47%, the birth rate is 34.85 births/1,000 and the death rate is 6.28-deaths/1,000 population. The migration statistics are extremely low and fall in negative digits. There is improvement in the drinking water since the past few years. Sanitation faculties have become cleaner and have shown great advancement.

Health Issues:

Timor-Leste spends only 9.1% of its GDP on health issues. This is not enough as this country is at a very high risk of major infectious diseases. Food or waterborne diseases like protozoal diarrhea, bacterial diarrhea, typhoid fever and hepatitis A are very prominent in this region. Malaria, dengue fever, chikungunya and other such vector borne diseases are prevalent in this country. Health is a major worry in Timor-Leste. 45.3% of the children under the age of 5 are underweight and malnourished. This puts Timor-Leste in the number one country for undernourished children in the world. The government also needs to improve health conditions and medications for the people of this country. Help from organizations like 'Doctors without Borders' should be taken. Vaccinations must be provided at regular intervals for the betterment of the citizens of Timor-Leste.

Education:

10.1% of the GDP in Timor-Leste is spent on education. About 58.6% of the total population falls under the literate category. The school life expectancy is only 11 years. The basic education provided by the country is in principle free to the children, but many families fail to meet the basic needs for items like school uniforms, transportation and books. Starting to work at a young age in developing countries is inevitable, but a way a balance between education and jobs is required. E-learning is one such tool that could add value to the country's education system. Knowledge about how the Internet can help should be made aware to the citizens. Only 2,100 people in the country use the Internet. Basic knowledge of how one can search for information and check and reply to emails should be provided. Basic education should be made a compulsion for every child in Timor-Leste. Schools set up by the government should be sufficiently equipped to provide the basics for a student. The teachers must have good knowledge of the subject they are teaching. Using computers must be encouraged. Different opportunities from different fields should be presented to the students. Education must be especially made aware to women. They should have basic skills on how to survive and be independent. A basic knowledge of English and computer skills should be implemented upon every child. Scholarships and funding should be awarded to encourage academic growth in children.

Methods to raise economy:

Timor-Leste needs revenues. To do this, services could be sold globally from Timor-Leste. It can make itself available as an offshore production warehouse. This will make way for a lot of jobs and will garner revenue. As China did, they too have potential to attract companies like Apple. They must set themselves up as a place that could help with the production and manufacture for major companies. This would help in creating jobs, thus leading to an increase in the employment rate of the country. Another additional point in using Timor-Leste as an offshore production warehouse is that this region is surrounded by water. With direct access to the shore, it is a convenient place to carry out shipments.

China, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Australia are all countries that attract many tourists all around the year. As Timor-Leste is located right in the middle of these countries, it

can be promoted for tourism. The presence of the beautiful beaches can make this place a great vacation spot. By advertising themselves as a tourist spot, they can attract hoteliers to build up resorts and similar properties like the ones in Bali, Indonesia etc. Timor-Leste, due to its shoreline, can also become one of the ports to stop by for cruise ships. This will again be very helpful to gather revenue and provide jobs in the hospitality sector. The major urban area of Timor-Leste is Dili. They have beautiful beaches where tourists can enjoy activities like diving and snorkeling. There is also a big statue of Jesus Christ that stands atop Cape Fatucama. Such locales must be advertised on the Internet, television and other similar mediums so as to let people know of the sights of this country. The usage of social networking websites like Facebook, twitter, tumblr, tripadvisor etc is one such method via the Internet to connect with the people around the globe.

Organizations working with Timor-Leste:

Many organizations are trying to help Timor-Leste combat various issues like development of the country, dealing with poverty, environmental issues and how to preventing conflicts. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) started the “Country Programme Action Plan” (CPAP) in 2009. This has been helping Timor-Leste build security and maintaining a stable government. The CPAP is also helping with the development of Timor-Leste with regards to poverty, environment and is also helping them improve leadership. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has also taken a keen interest in helping Timor-Leste in three main programs:

- 1) Democracy and Governance
- 2) Economic growth
- 3) Investment in health and education.

With regards to the democracy and governance, USAID wants to focus on Governing justly and democratically and also maintain the peace and security of the country. They are also helping the government by providing them training on political analysis and proper budgeting, and also helping them with form legal reforms. USAID, with the help of the government of Timor-Leste, is trying to combat corruption by taking responsibility for the citizens of the country.

With regards to the country’s economic growth, the aim is to utilize the resources of the country. Petroleum is one such example. USAID also wants to investigate further into the cause of lack of proper food and solve issues like poverty. USAID is aiming at improving the environment as well. Their aim is to implement private-sector business competitiveness and also increase safety and improve hygienic livelihood opportunities. Their focus is to make an impact on the job market. By increasing the job market, they would be able to improve the economy. They also want to get producers to make a connection with the information services and local market. Coming to healthcare and education, USAID is trying to focus on making the women and the children of Timor-Leste healthier and increase literacy amongst them. They want to help strengthen the health care systems with the help of donors like World Bank, EU and many more other countries. Since Timor-Leste has a high fertility rate (one of the highest in the world), USAID is implementing a plan for educating people about planned reproduction, safe sex and childcare. The latest development took place on 7th May 2013. USAID has sent new members to

the Timor-Leste Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) with funding to fight AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. An Australian organization called Save the Children who are funded by The Charitable Foundation (TCF) have started a 2-year project to address the problem that only 5-10% of the children in Timor-Leste have access to pre-primary education. This project will help a total of about 700 children who are currently attending school, and another 700 students, who will begin to attend school soon.

Conclusion and Abstract:

Being a recently developed country, there is great potential in Timor-Leste. Every sector has major scope to improve, develop and progress. With the help of organizations like USAID, UNDP and other similar bodies, the country can grow in every field. By utilizing available resources, technology and media simultaneously, Timor-Leste can establish itself as a fast-developing country, which thrives in sectors like tourism, politics, employment, health as well as education. The aim of the paper is to put forth some suggestions and critically analyze the current situation of Timor-Leste. There is much to discuss when it comes to methods that could be implemented to improve the government, poverty, education and welfare of Timor-Leste. This paper looks at reviewing a few facts, and also at some factors that could contribute in improving the state of affairs in Timor-Leste.

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