Officer Khalil Mahat of the United Nations Civil Police (CivPol) was driving to Viqueque from Dili on the night of 11 May when suddenly he discovered that the bridge he was about to cross was no longer there.

“The Four Kilometers bridge, it’s simply disappeared!” he yelled into his radio to the CivPol base in Viqueque, referring to the main overpass leading into town. “I can’t see it!”

Like Officer Mahat, who sought shelter in his car to pass the night, thousands of people throughout East Timor had to contend with distressing circumstances because of the collapse of the nation’s road network, which has literally been swept away by heavy rains and flash floods.

Given the pivotal role that road transport plays in East Timor, it needs no gainsaying the wider ramifications of the roads’ disaster on the country economy and the communities most immediately affected by the destruction.

“We have never had this kind of rain in 22 years,” said Mateus Soares, an elderly resident of Viqueque, echoing sentiments shared by a number of sources, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) which is now coordinating emergency evacuation for flood victims in West Timor (see side bar).

The UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) quickly mobilized resources to address the problem. “All the engineering elements of PKF are currently working to rehabilitate the roads,” said Col. Imtiaz Ahmed, the Deputy Chief of Staff, Engineering Unit of the UN Peacekeeping Force (UN-PKF).

Sector West, which encompasses the area along the West Timor border and includes Oecussi, is worst affected, Col. Ahmed said. “Los Palos in the East is also cut off,” he added.

“PKF engineers have already been deployed to Suai, Zumalai, Bobonaro and Maliana, while others will soon go to Ermera and Viqueque.”

In fact, the Bangladesh military engineering battalion led by Lt. Col. Arif has already conducted reconnaissance in Viqueque and promises to be on the ground as soon as all the separate parts of the “Bailey bridge” are delivered to the site. (A Bailey bridge is a long-lasting metal bridge that comes in sections and will be built to replace the Four Kilometers crossing.) “Fixing the bridge should not take more than seven days,” Lt. Col. Arif said.

Nationwide, 50 roads are said to be in danger of similar collapse, UN officials said they hope that those thoroughfares should benefit from the current emergency rehabilitation plan.

Experts say, however, that the unprecedented rains pose great challenges. “The roads are collapsing badly and will continue to collapse as long as the rainy season lasts,” said Diego Zorilla, the Deputy Chief of the UN’s Infrastructure Unit. “Weak soil geology, the lack of financing and maintenance, as well as the use of heavy equipment on the roads are all to blame.” The last point, he pointed out, was inevitable given the need to transport heavy military and humanitarian supplies across the country.

Mr. Zorilla was cautious not to prescribe an intervention strategy that was neither viable nor sustainable in the long-term. “It is important to ask ourselves whether it’s normal to have this situation in East Timor during the rainy season,” he said.

On the present rehabilitation work, Mr. Zorilla said the UN would try to attend to the crisis by only carrying out emergency work during the rainy season. “The rest will be done in the dry season,” he continued, “but the long-term development strategy should be dictated by the country’s economic and manpower potential.

“Adopting Western road standards in East Timor simply cannot work because this would require us to spend much more money than East Timor has the capacity to support,” he said.

Tanka Gautam, a Civil Affairs Officer attached to the UNTAET Water Authority, noted that through the Quick Impact Projects

Dili markets getting much needed facelift

The Dili Central Market was thoroughly destroyed last September but is now alive and bustling. Its myriad vendors - hawking fruit and vegetables and canned goods and beer, clothing and cooking oil - amply demonstrate that the Timor economy is on the rebound.

However, the market itself is currently a place of wretched sanitation where few rules apply. Its vendors, many of whom come from far off districts, vie for the choicest spots in burned out structures and on footpaths and sleep in their stalls overnight to protect their goods and secure their sites. Sellers occupy every inch of ground - even overflowing into surrounding streets, clogging them and often bringing traffic to a standstill.

Officials fear that in its current state the market is ripe for crime and corruption and a breeding ground for social tension. This was given weight by the 30 April incident in which five people were injured during gang clashes in the market area, and by the seizure of numerous weapons during subsequent security sweeps.

But a long-term project is now underway to change all that. It promises to bring some order and efficiency not only to the Central
Language classes help make communicating easier

For Kenyan Sammy Mwiti, learning Tetun was a matter of survival. “I was living with a family and I needed to be able to communicate to them,” says Mr. Mwiti, who has been in East Timor for ten months and speaks the local language fluently. “I owe my Tetun skills to the children of Viqueque who taught me while we were playing together.”

“Speaking Tetun has opened a whole world of opportunities for me and given me the freedom to socialize with people from various backgrounds,” he adds.

In East Timor, where currently several languages are spoken, knowing one of them opens doors to new friendship, new cultures. A number of language courses have sprung up throughout East Timor to facilitate better communication between Timorese and international staff working in East Timor.

The National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT) is coordinating Portuguese classes, offering intensive and repetition courses. Teachers who were recruited from Portugal are now teaching English language courses in the districts. At the Civil Service Academy in Comoro, English courses are now being taught by teachers from the Australian group AusAid to civil servants, particularly the East Timorese Border Control officers. “Portuguese classes are also planned to start soon,” says Tony Lapsley, Acting Head of the Civil Service Academy.

Timorese have not been the only ones brushing up on their language skills. Many internationals have also taken advantage of studying Tetun.

Since January, TimorAid has been offering individual and group courses. Seven East Timorese, whose knowledge of English is limited, teach about 60 international students.

“This programme is very successful because finally people realize that they need to learn a language if they want to be able to communicate successfully,” says Catharina Maria, the Project Coordinator of the TimorAid courses.

TimorAid has encountered various problems, such as limited room space, lack of transportation at night for its teachers, which is the most popular time for classes; and class interruptions because students are called to work. Despite these difficulties, TimorAid is preparing a second book for the next planned course, as many requests keep pouring in from UNTAET staff working in the districts, UN Civilian Police (CivilPol) and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to continue Tetun classes.
Market but to those in Becora and Comoro and several smaller ones as well. Known as the Dili Market System Rehabilitation Programme, it is a comprehensive plan to renovate the markets and to establish market management committees at the markets. These committees would help develop ways in which space for the sellers is rented on a fair and equitable basis and to ensure that produce is kept at reasonable prices. The committees will also stay on top of routine services, making sure that water and electricity is supplied and that market areas get cleaned and rubbish removed.

The project was the idea of the Dili District Subcommittee on Markets and Cooperatives, which meets weekly and includes long-time sellers, the CNRT and UNTAET officials. They turned to the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to fund the initial stages of the project. JICA in turn enlisted the help of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), a Japanese non-governmental organization (NGO) working in East Timor.

Phase one of the programme started in mid-May when the Dili District Administration enlisted the help of engineers from the Bangladeshi and Portuguese contingents of the UN Peacekeeping Force (UNPK). They were tasked with demolishing all remaining structures and the foundations in the two huge, and heavily destroyed, market areas of Becora and Comoro.

At the Comoro market alone 40 Bangladeshi engineers spent five days taking down the structures. “We brought in stone crushers, a bulldozer and a road grader and lots of large dump trucks,” said Lt. Col. Arif of the Bangladeshi engineering battalion. After carting away 150 truckloads of rubble, the three-hectare market space was completely clear and made ready for a new foundation and market structures to be built.

Already, at both Becora and Comoro, the reconstruction process is well underway, with the market foundation being reinforced and large, modern toilet facilities being built by a local contractor using Timorese labor. One small setback occurred at Comoro when thieves made off with some new tiles and roofing for the toilets, but the local community promptly stepped in, providing security to protect their future market.

Over the next four months, Timorese contractors are expected to build numerous modern market buildings and sales stalls — even tiled areas where vendors can sell fish, meat and poultry in sanitary conditions. Tenders went out for the work in late May.

The Dili Market Committee is hopeful that as the Comoro and Becora markets near completion, their much improved and more secure conditions will act as a magnet for sellers away from the overcrowded Central Market. They are also planning to renovate three smaller markets in the Dili area as added incentive for vendors to at least temporarily leave the chaos of the Central Market.

A key component of the overall rehabilitation plan is to create a market cooperative management system. Local committees are already established at Becora and Comoro and several other small Dili markets.

One big challenge is to begin bringing some order to the Central Market chaos. Officials are planning to move many of the vendors who clog the edges of the market at least temporarily into interior sections where there is available space, and to begin a major clean-up of the entire market. It’s essential that this clean-up process take place. It’s all part of a scheme to make the Central Market a more inviting and secure place for Timorese and internationals alike, many of whom currently avoid venturing into the middle sections because of fear of crime and the general uncleanliness.

The final phase, of course, is to begin a major renovation of the Central Market itself. This would include temporarily closing it, shoring up the foundations, which have experienced significant sinking, and then renovating and rebuilding all market structures and stalls. Stage one of the final phase of the Dili Market Rehabilitation Programme, is already underway — that is a search for an international donor to underwrite the project costs. In the long-run, however, the Dili Administration will establish a fund for all the Dili markets, the money coming from government taxes on purchases and registering and rental costs from traders.

Cleaning up the rubble of the huge Comoro Market was light work for the Bangladesh Engineering Battalion, commanded by Col. Faruque. The 531-man battalion “was hand-picked for its expertise in things like structural and foundation design,” says one of the Company commanders, Lt. Col. Arif, who himself served in the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Cambodia. "We’re capable of repairing and stabilizing just about anything," he boasts.

Their specialty, according to Lt. Col. Arif, is vertical and horizontal engineering feats — constructing and working on tall structures, and spanning the wide ones. In East Timor these days, following massive rain storms and flooding, that means mostly replacing bridges and roads that have been washed away.

The Bangladesh engineers, who deployed to East Timor in February and work out of a former convention center on the road to Tibar, west of Dili, do most of their work in Liquica, Ermera, Baucau and Oecussi Districts, as well as around Dili. But they were called in after the major bridge collapse that closed down traffic in and out of Viqueque on 11 May. Now they are working full time to construct a Bailey bridge so that humanitarian and commercial traffic can once again move in and out of that isolated city.
Don’t Be at a Loss for Words in Tetun

Tetun English

Ha’u hakarak hetan tulun mediku lalais
I need immediate medical assistance
Hau sente moras
I feel sick/ill
Ita boot sente moras oinsa?
What are your symptoms?
Hospital/klinikika iha nebe?
Where is the hospital/clinic?
Hakarak hau bolu dotor ka?
Do you want me to call a doctor?
Hau nia ulun/kabun moras
I have a head/stomach ache
Hau dada iis ladun diak
I am having trouble breathing
Hau sente moras iha hirus matan
I have chest pain
Ita boot sente isin manas?
Do you have a fever?
Ita boot muta beibeik?
Have you been vomiting?
Hau sente oin nakukun
I feel dizzy
Ita boot sente laran sa’e?
Do you feel nauseous?
Hau nia nehan moras
I have a toothache
Hahu moras horibainhira?
When did the pain start?
Hau sente moras semana ida ona
I have had pain for a week
Labele hanoiin barak ita tenke kalma
Try to stay calm
Klinikika ida nee iha dotor?
Does the clinic have a doctor?
Agora hau sente diak liu tan
I feel better now
Hau sente aat liu tan
I feel worse
Favor ida ita prense reeseta ne’e ba hau
Please fill this prescription for me
Hau sei sona/fo inijsaun ba ita boot
I will give you an injection
Hau tenke hasai nehan ne’e
I must pull out that tooth
Ne’e moras?
Does that hurt?
Hau nia isin rua
I am pregnant /
Ita boot isin rua?
Are you expecting a baby?
Ita boot hemu aimoruk ruma ona?
Are you taking any medication?
Hau iha moras fuan
I have a heart condition
Hau moras asmha/malaria
I am suffering from asthma/malaria
Hau moras diabetik
I am a diabetic
Ita moras malaria ka dengue dala ruma ona?
Have you ever had malaria or dengue?
Ita boot hemu aimoruk malaria ruma?
Do you take malaria pills?
Ita boot presiza ba ospital
You need to go to the hospital
Hau iha problema isin katar
I have an itching problem
Ita boot me’ar?
Are you coughing?
Hau me’ar ran
I am coughing blood
Ita boot kosar bainhira toba?
Do you have night sweats?
Ita tafui me’ar tasak bainhira ita boot me’ar?
Do you produce mucus when you cough?
Ita boot nia me’ar tasak akompanha ho ran ka?
Do your sputum(mucus) contain blood?
Ita boot hemu aimoruk tradisional ruma?
Are you taking any traditional treatment?
Ita boot hetan isin manas no malirin?
Do you get fever and chills?
Please Post in Visible Spot in Your Community — at the School, the Church, the Hospital, the Market, or Anywhere People Congregate

a Health or Medical Emergency

With the intent of safeguarding the health and well-being of the community, Tais Timor presents a collection of key phrases in four languages, including Portuguese and Indonesian. These phrases are essential in times of health or medical emergencies. Feel free to post them at schools, clinics, hospitals, markets, or anywhere people congregate.

Portuguese

- Preciso de assistência médica com urgência (I need urgent medical assistance)
- Estou-me a sentir mal/doente (I am feeling sick)
- Quais são os sintomas? (What are the symptoms?)
- Onde é o hospital/clínica? (Where is the hospital/clinic?)
- Quer que eu chame um médico? (Do you want me to call a doctor?)
- Tenho uma dor-de-cabeça/estômago (I have a headache/stomach ache)
- Não consigo respirar (I cannot breathe)
- Tenho dores no peito (I have chest pains)
- Tenho um problema com a respiração (I have a breathing problem)
- Junte-se a calmarr-se (Stay calm)
- Esta clínica tem médicos? (Does this clinic have doctors?)
- Por favor, pode preencher esta receita (Please fill out this prescription)
- Vou dar-lhe uma injecção (I will give you an injection)
- Onde é o hospital/Preciso de assistência médica (Where is the hospital/needed medical assistance)
- Estou a sentir dores há uma semana (I have been feeling in pain for a week)
- Tente acalmar-se (Try to calm down)
- Esta clínica tem médicos? (Does this clinic have doctors?)
- Mohon anda memberikan resep obat ini kepada saya (Please give me this prescription)
- Anda merasa sakit (You are feeling sick)
- Saya membutuhkan bantuan medis secepatnya (I need medical help as soon as possible)
- Saya merasa sakit (I am feeling sick)
- Bagaimana gejala sakit anda (What are your symptoms?)
- Dimana rumah sakit/klinik (Where is the hospital/clinic?)
- Anda mau saya panggil dokter (Do you want me to call a doctor?)
- Saya merasa kepala/permut sakit (I have a headache)
- Saya susah bernafas (I have difficulty breathing)
- Saya merasa sakit di dada (I have chest pain)
- Anda merasa badan panas (You feel hot)
- Saya merasa mual dan munt daher (I feel nauseous and want to vomit)
- Saya merasa pusing (I feel dizzy)
- Anda merasa sakit (You are feeling in pain)
- Gigi saya sakit (My tooth hurts)
- Kapan anda merasa gigi anda sakit? (When did you feel your tooth pain?)
- Anda merasa sakit sudah satu minggu (You have been feeling in pain for a week)
- Jangan banyak pikiran, harus sabar (Don’t think too much, you must be patient)
- Apakah di klinik ini ada dokter? (Is there a doctor in this clinic?)
- Sekarang saya sudah merasa lebih baik (Now I feel better)
- Saya merasa lebih buruk (I am feeling worse)
- Mohon anda memberikan resep obat ini kepada saya (Please give me this prescription)
- Saya akan menyuntik anda (I will give you an injection)
- Saya akan mencabut keluar gigi itu (I will pull out this tooth)
- Sakit?/Anda merasa sakit? (Sick?/You are feeling sick)
- Anda merasa sakit? (You are feeling in pain)
- Anda merasa sakit (You are feeling in pain)
- Saya hamil/Saya sudah hamil (I am pregnant/I have been pregnant)
- Apakah anda sedang hamil? (Are you pregnant?)
- Apakah anda sudah melakukan pemeriksaan? (Have you done any examination?)
- Saya menderita penyakit jantung (I have heart disease)
- Saya menderita penyakit asma/malaria (I have asthma/malaria)
- Saya menderita penyakit asma/malaria (I have asthma/malaria)
- Saya menderita penyakit diabetes (I have diabetes)
- Apakah anda menderita malaria atau demam berdarah? (Are you suffering from malaria or dengue?)
- Apakah anda sudah minum obat malaria? (Have you taken malaria medication?)
- Anda perlu pergi ke rumah sakit (You must go to the hospital)
- Saya ada penyakit kulit (I have skin problems)
- Apakah anda batuk? (Do you have a cough?)
- Saya menderita batuk berdarah (I have bloody cough)
- Apakah anda berkeringat waktu tidur? (Do you sweat while sleeping?)
- Apakah anda mengeluarkan lendir ketika batuk? (Do you cough up phlegm when you cough?)
- Apakah anda lendir anda disertai darah? (Is there blood in your snot?)
- Apakah anda sedang menjalani pengobatan tradisional? (Are you undergoing traditional treatment?)
- Apakah anda menderita penyakit panas dan mengigil? (Do you have fever and shivering?)

Indonesian

- Saya membutuhkan bantuan medis secepatnya (I need medical help as soon as possible)
- Saya merasa sakit (I am feeling sick)
- Bagaimana gejala sakit anda (What are your symptoms?)
- Dimana rumah sakit/klinik (Where is the hospital/clinic?)
- Anda mau saya panggil dokter (Do you want me to call a doctor?)
- Saya merasa kepala/permut sakit (I have a headache)
- Saya susah bernafas (I have difficulty breathing)
- Saya merasa sakit di dada (I have chest pain)
- Anda merasa badan panas (You feel hot)
- Anda merasa mual dan munt daher (I feel nauseous and want to vomit)
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- Sakit?/Anda merasa sakit? (Sick?/You are feeling sick)
- Anda merasa sakit (You are feeling in pain)
- Anda merasa sakit (You are feeling in pain)
- Saya hamil/Saya sudah hamil (I am pregnant/I have been pregnant)
- Apakah anda sedang hamil? (Are you pregnant?)
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- Apakah anda menderita penyakit panas dan mengigil? (Do you have fever and shivering?)
Bishop visits Republic of Korea: Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo went to the Republic of Korea on 16 May to participate in an international conference commemorating the 20th anniversary of the democratic uprising in Kwangju.

Bishop Belo then gave a closing speech the next day on “the direction of the human rights movement in the third millennium.” Before leaving for Taiwan on 18 May, the Bishop also gave a special lecture in Kwanju and met President Kim.

August trial for Suharto: Former Indonesian President Suharto, who is suspected of embezzling millions of dollars during his 32 years in power, is expected to be brought to trial in August, the country’s top prosecutor said on 19 May.

Attorney General Marzuki Darusman also said that the situation was under control, allaying doubts about an emergency scenario. As Japanese encephalitis would pose critical humanitarian challenges. However Mr. Rahman has been proven that the encephalitis-carrying mosquito is likely to bite unsuspecting victims after carrying the germs from infected pigs.

Preventive measures advocated by medical experts include cleaning up the environment to minimize damp conditions where the vector thrives. “We are advising people to clean up the drainage systems near their homes and clear the stagnant waters because they provide breeding grounds for the disease causing organism,” said Shafiur Rahman, a Social Affairs Officer (Health) based in Viqueque. Isolating pigs from human beings is also recommended because it has been proven that the encephalitis-carrying mosquito is likely to bite unsuspecting victims after carrying the germs from infected pigs.

The virtual breakdown of the road transport network in Viqueque has cut off many residents from basic social services, including health, raising fears that an epidemic outbreak such as Japanese encephalitis would pose critical humanitarian challenges. However Mr. Rahman said that the situation was under control, allaying doubts about an emergency scenario.
Olé European Cup final set to be an all-Spanish affair

Real Madrid will be facing Spanish cohorts Valencia in an all-Spanish final despite losing 2:1 to Bayern Munich because of an away goal scored in the away game in Munich Olympic Stadion.

According to FIFA rules Real Madrid’s away goal gave them three goals in all, one better than Bayern Munich. For rookie coaches Del Basque of Real Madrid and Hector Raul Cuper of Valencia, it’s a great end to their first year at the helm of both clubs, taking the two clubs to the finals of the top European clubs final on 20 May in Paris.

Galatasaray writes new chapter in Turkey’s football history while fans clash in Copenhagen

Galatasaray made history by becoming the first Turkish club to win one of the European club competitions, coming through in a penalty kick shootout to capture the UEFA Cup after playing to a scoreless tie with Arsenal.

In the penalty shootout, Davor Suker and Patrick Vieira failed to cash in on their opportunities to give Arsenal a second title like they did before when the Gunners beat Parma in the 1994 Cup Winner Cup.

Former Brazilian goalkeeper Claudio Taffarel, who was “the man of the match”, made several important saves during the match on scoring chances by Mare Over Mars and Thierry Henry of Arsenal. Hakan Sukur, George Hagi and Popescu also created a lot of important chances for Galatasaray but were turned away by Arsenal goalie David Seaman.

On 17 May there was a clash between the fans of the two clubs in Copenhagen which left another two fans stabbed, one from each side.

Spanish First Division

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x denotes League Champion

May 13 & 14 games:
- Atlético Madrid 1, Sevilla 1; Real Betis 0, Real Madrid 2; Real Zaragoza 3, Malaga 2; Real Sociedad 0, Barcelona 0; Racing Santander 0, Deportivo Coruna 0; Valladolid 2, Mallorca 1; Celta Vigo 0, Valencia 0; Alaves 2, Numancia 2; Espanyol 0, Athletic Bilbao 0; Rayo Vallecano 1, Oviedo 2

Dutch League

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x denotes League Champion

April 30 games:
- PSV 7, RKC 1; Vitesse 3, Ajax 0; Feyenoord 5, AZ 3; Cambuur 0, Herenveen 2; MVV 2, NEC 0; De Graafschap 2, Sparta 3; Den Bosch 0, Fortuna 2; FC Utrecht 1, Willem II 1; Roda JC 3, Twente 1

French League

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x denotes League Champion

German Bundesliga

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<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>GP</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>Pts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>xBayern Munich</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>58</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
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</table>

x denotes League Champion

May 13 games:
- SSV Ulm 2, VFL Wolfsburg 0; Bayer Leverkusen 4, Eintracht Frankfurt 1; Arminia Bielefeld 0, Bayern Munich 3; Borussia Dortmund 1, Schalke 04 1; SC Freiburg 2, Kaiserslautern 1; TSV 1860 Munich 2, Hertha Berlin 1; Hamburg SV 3, Unteraching 0; Hansa Rostock 1, VFB Stuttgart 4; Werder Bremen 4, MSV Duisburg 0

Portuguese League

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
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<th>W</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>L</th>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>48</td>
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European Football League Standings

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<td>10</td>
<td>58</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

x denotes League Champion

May 14 games:
- Lazio 3, Reggina 0; Juventus 0, Perugia 1; AC Milan 4, Udinese 0; Parma 4, Lecce 1; Cagliari 0, Inter Milan 2; Fiorentina 3, Venezia 0; Verona 2, AS Roma 2; Bari 1, Bologna 1; Torino 2, Piacenza 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Premier League</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>GP</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>D</th>
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<td>11</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

x denotes League Champion

May 2 & 14 games:
- Arsenal 2, West Ham United 1; Middlesbrough 2; Newcastle 2; Bradford 1; Liverpool 0; Southampton 2; Wembley 0; Aston Villa 0; Man United 2; West Ham United 0; Leeds United 0; Newcastle 4; Arsenal 2; Chelsea 4; Derby County 0; Everton 0; Middlesbrough 2; Sheffield Wednesday 4; Leicester 0; Tottenham Hotspur 3, Sunderland 1; Walford 1, Coventry 0
Tiu answers questions about... East Timor’s official language

Dear readers, it seems like everywhere I go now, people keep asking, “Tiu, what’s the official language going to be in Timor Lorosa’e?” They still seem quite confused as to whether it will be Tetun, Portuguese or Indonesian.

Just yesterday, three young Timorese friends stopped by looking for answers. Let’s listen in:

Sico: Bondia Tiu, Diak ka la’e (how are you)?
Tiu: Di’ak (good), but how are you my friends? I haven’t seen you with such long faces in some time. How come?
Sico: It’s just that we’re a bit upset about all this uncertainty as to what language we are going to speak. You know it’s a very sensitive issue for the people of Timor Lorosa’e at the moment.
Tiu: You’re certainly right, but tell me what you’re thinking, and I’ll see if I can help you.

Sico: Tiu, you know there’ve been all these rumors swirling around about the official language. It’s going to be Portuguese or Tetun. It might even be Indonesian. Clear up the confusion, Tiu, what’s it going to be?
Tiu: Well, it is confusing. But what I can tell you is that Xanana Gusmao, the CNRT president, has addressed the issue on a number of occasions in press conferences and the like. In fact, I was at a town meeting in Baucau recently when he was asked by a priest if there would be a vote to decide the country’s official language.

Antoneta: What did he say?
Tiu: He said that Portuguese was going to be the official language and that it was a political decision. Xanana added, of course, that Tetun is our mother tongue. It’s just that Tetun is not yet developed enough to be the official language. You know, it currently doesn’t have a lot of technical and scientific terms. And, Antoneta, there just aren’t a lot of books available in Tetun. But Xanana also said that if Tetun really develops as a language in the next decade, then there’s the real possibility that it would be adopted as the official language of Timor Lorosa’e.

Domingas: Who ultimately decides on which language we use?
Tiu: It hasn’t been formally decided yet because it’s a very sensitive and difficult decision. But as I told you, for the interim, until we have an independent government, Xanana, as the President of the CNRT has indicated that the official language is Portuguese. Eventually, perhaps, representatives of all the different Timorese groups and political parties will hold a national meeting to debate the merits of each language — why it should be Portuguese or Tetun — or even Indonesian, for that matter.

It’s interesting, Domingas, even when the President of Portugal, Jorge Sampaio, was here he said “it is a big decision to decide that Portuguese should be the official language, but it is also important that the decision be made by the people.”

Sica: You think he’s right, Tiu?
Tiu: Absolutely. You know the country now has lots of East Timorese who are Indonesian university graduates. They feel the Indonesian language is important. They’re comfortable with it. And lots of people want Tetun, even with its limitations, because it’s the dominant national language. There are even people who think it should be English given that it is the language of international commerce.

Sico: Tiu, is there any on-going discussion on the official language?
Tiu: Well, recently there was a language conference run by a local NGO called Fundasaun Naroman with the cooperation of IMPETTU. The conference was called “The Official Language for the New Timor Lorosa’e.” As you might expect, there was both criticism and support for Portuguese, as there was for Tetun. It was also suggested that the Portuguese language be the temporary official language until Tetun is ready to be adopted as the official language. And then, of course, there was a suggestion to retain the Indonesian language as the official language since so many people in East Timor speak it, and a proposal that a national vote ultimately determine the language.

Sico: So much opinion, so little decision, eh Tiu?
Tiu: True enough my friend, but remember, I haven’t told you anything more about the official language than that Xanana thinks it should be Portuguese in the interim, as, by the way, did the Fretilin national congress recently. But the National Consultative Council (NCC), the highest decision-making body in East Timor, hasn’t even taken a decision yet on the question, so don’t go spreading rumors.

Sico: Okay, Tiu, that’s wise advice and thanks for the help on clearing things up.
Tiu: Adeus, and I look forward to chatting with you guys again soon, and, hopefully, it’ll be in the official language of Timor Lorosa’e, whatever that turns out to be.

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East Timorese Prison Staff in Training

Prisons at Becora and Gleno are now renovated and operating, and a vigorous training program is underway to train prison officers. On 18 May, six prison officers on loan from the New Zealand Corrections Department began a one-week training course for 26 new Timorese at Becora prison in Dili. All officers will continue to get four hours of additional training per week while on the job. Mark Fletcher, a prison officer with the New Zealand training group teaches control and restraint measures (above) to East Timorese newest prison staff. Six other New Zealanders are scheduled to train East Timorese in Baucau.