

Snapshot Folk Sounds



Some 180 alphorn players perform during the 11th International Alphorn Festival in Nendaz, southwestern Switzerland, on Sunday. The festival, which ran from Friday to Sunday, included a large procession, an

official competition, a country dance performance, folk group performances and scores of alphorns playing together, making this event a real traditional celebration of local folklore. EPA Photo/Jean-Christophe Bott

Corporate Governance Nell Minow

Independent Chairmen Are Smart Investments For Companies Looking to Avoid Unwanted Risk

We don't let students grade their own exams, but we let CEOs chair their own boards. At 281 of the S&P 500 companies, the chairman is the current chief executive officer. At 38 of the 500, the chairman is a former executive or has some other connection to the CEO or company. And at 72 others, the chairman is listed as an independent outside director, yet a closer look too often reveals relationships that squeezed through loopholes in the "independence" definition set by the stock exchanges, including connections through non-profit groups.

The result is a level of independence that meets the letter of the law yet isn't enough to ensure arms-length oversight, especially when most CEOs decide who sits on the board.

In the United Kingdom, by contrast, almost every board has an independent, outside chairman. This is a revolutionary change considering that, as recently as the 1980s, most British boards were primarily made up of insiders.

In the early 1990s, Adrian Cadbury, the former chairman of Cadbury Schweppes, led a committee that proposed reforms to improve governance and reassure the investor community after a series of high-profile scandals among British companies. One of the recommendations called for independent outside chairmen.

Within a decade, most Britain companies had adopted the recommendation due to pressure from regulators and investors.

Separating the chairman and CEO roles has never been widely accepted in the United States, where CEOs like to pile up titles and don't like answering to someone else. Chief Executive magazine reported in June that 63 percent of CEOs said in a survey that they would recommend a combined role for their replacements, despite the concerns of shareholder groups. The Council of Institutional Investors, for example, calls dual roles "a fundamental conflict of interest."

Over the past decade, the idea of an independent "lead director" has become a popular compromise. Of the S&P 500 boards, 284 have a director with that title. Generally, lead directors act as an ombudsman for the outside directors. They also preside over executive-session meetings (those held without management present) that are required by post-Enron reforms. But a lead director isn't the same as an independent chairman, who sets the agenda and committee assignments and presides over the meetings.

Should it? Academic studies have tried to determine if shareholders benefit when the roles are split, and the results have been inconclusive. That isn't because splitting the jobs is unimportant; it's because we have an imperfect test for determining when the positions are in fact split.

A CEO at a company where the chairman and chief executive jobs were divided once told me off the record that the reason for the separate chairman was that the former CEO had refused to relinquish his position unless he could keep the chairman title. Because he didn't oversee the agenda or preside over meetings, no one was really monitoring management.

This month, Duke Energy made headlines when it split the two titles in a merger, but hours later ushered the new CEO out the door with a \$44 million departure package, handing the CEO title to the chairman.

My company, GMI Ratings, has a new study of 180 large North American corpo-

rations. Most previous studies compared companies that combined the CEO and chairman positions with those that split the roles, finding little or no difference in shareholder returns. But GMI found that CEOs who wear both hats are more expensive than their CEO-only counterparts. They are also associated with significant indicators of risk.

Executives with both titles received a median total compensation of \$16 million, versus \$11 million paid by companies where the CEO and chairman were separate. Companies with independent outside chairmen were less risky in several categories, including problems with Securities and Exchange Commission filings.

Companies that combined the top two roles were also 86 percent more likely to register as "aggressive" in our assessment of their financial reporting.

They showed a greater risk of defaulting on debts, laying off employees, selling assets or restructuring, or taking other steps to deal with a weakened financial condition.

Splitting the two titles, of course, is no guarantee. At Barclays, the independent chairman, the CEO and other top executives all resigned over the Libor rate-fixing scandal (with the chairman returning only to lead the search for a new CEO). Still, genuinely independent oversight is impossible when the chief executive is also the one who sets the board's agenda, makes committee assignments and determines the quantity, quality and timing of information provided to directors. In pure return-on-investment terms, an independent outside chairman is a solid buy.

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Bloomberg

Nell Minow, the co-founder and director of GMI Ratings, which evaluates governance risk at public companies, co-authored the textbook "Corporate Governance," now in its fifth edition.

El Indio Jamil Maidan Flores

Elephants in Room

Asean is caught between the devil and the South China Sea. It is confronted by two imperatives, the first being the demands of its unity, centrality, credibility and claims to becoming a community with a global outreach. These are bedeviling demands on its performance. They whip the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to be creative, innovative, audacious.

If Asean ignores them it might as well kiss goodbye the driver's seat in the express bus of the larger East Asian region.

The second comprises the demands of stability and comfortable relationships. These prompt Asean to sweep problems under the rug, to portray a simmering cauldron of potential conflicts as a calm lake where no wind blows. And when there is an elephant in the room, not to talk about it.

Much of Asean's life has been spent catering to the second set of demands. But there have been times when Asean boiled with intellectual ferment, took bold initiatives and credibly asserted its centrality in the evolving regional architecture of East Asia. The latest Asean Ministerial Meeting in Phnom Penh during the second week of this month isn't one of them.

What happened in Phnom Penh? I wasn't there so I don't know the details of that fiasco but I have heard enough from those who were there to form a scene in my mind. In that scene, 10 foreign ministers were in a room with two elephants. Nine of the 10 wanted to comment on the pachyderms. One, the chairman, would not even look at them.

One elephant was the discussion by the foreign ministers of the Scarborough Shoal — which the

Philippines wanted reflected in the paragraph on the South China Sea in a joint statement. In the second week of last May there was a standoff between Philippine and Chinese ships near the shoal, which both countries claim. It's not the standoff that the Philippines wanted mentioned but the discussion.

The other was a reference to exclusive economic zones and continental shelves, proposed by Vietnam. Earlier, Vietnam also had a run-in with China in an area claimed by both Vietnam and China.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa tried valiantly to formulate a paragraph that would be acceptable to all, but finally the chairman decided that since the Philippines insisted that there must be a mention of the discussions on the shoal, he would not issue a joint statement.

He argued that these issues, being bilateral, had no place in an Asean statement — never mind the long-established consensus that bilateral issues with regional repercussions, like the border dispute between Thailand and Cambodia itself, could be addressed at the regional level.

Since it is well known that China is loath to discuss the South China Sea in multilateral forums, the decision has been widely interpreted as a diplomatic coup by China at the expense of Asean. For the first time in Asean's 45-year history, no statement came out of a regular ministerial meeting. But soon enough, Marty launched a 36-hour shuttle-and-phone diplomacy that finally produced a joint statement on six basic principles — non-controversial and already long agreed upon — aimed at ensuring peace in the South China Sea. That demonstration of unity repaired Asean's damaged reputation for now.

But it will take more than Marty's extraordinary diplomatic skills to ensure Asean's long-term redemption. Ultimately, Asean must redeem itself by grabbing the devil by the horns and doing what it has to do. It must find ways of ensuring its own unity based on its collective interests, regardless of the wishes of any partner, no matter how powerful — whether it be China or the United States.

And when there's an elephant or two in the room, Asean must have the collective courage to at least give them a nod.

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Jamil Maidan Flores is a poet, fiction writer, playwright and essayist who has worked as a speechwriter for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1992. The views expressed here are his own.



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Snapshot Making a Splash



Natalia Ischenko and Svetlana Romashina of Russia competing on Sunday in the duets free routine synchronized swimming finals during

the European Diving Championships and Synchronized Swimming in Eindhoven, Netherlands. EPA Photo/Robin van Lonkhuijsen

Economics Kevin Steinberg

Report Examines Financing Innovations of Emerging Markets, With Implications for All

A year-long study of leading trends and innovations in emerging-market financial services will be released next week. The report, by the World Economic Forum, will likely turn heads in the corridors of financial institutions worldwide.

The rising stars in the Forum's study are financial firms from emerging economies like Thailand, Brazil, Malaysia, India and China rather than the usual corporate names from Wall Street, the City, and other developed-world financial capitals.

After a decade in which developing countries have taken the lead in driving global economic growth, the financial providers in those countries also now lead the world in investment returns to their shareholders. In addition, those providers now count among the world's most creative financial innovators, as the study's 33 real-world case studies will document.

In short, emerging-market financial providers are growing very large, very quickly. That evolution is changing the facts and the face of financial competition on the world stage.

The report, titled "Redefining the Emerging Market Opportunity: Driving Growth through Financial Services Innovation," will be released on Thursday at the World Economic Forum's East Asia Summit in Bangkok. It was produced by the Forum in collaboration with the Boston Consulting Group, a global management consulting firm, and in cooperation with scores of Forum stakeholders and international financial experts.

"For financial providers committed to understanding and unlocking the potential," the report will note, "there is an unparalleled opportunity to build long-term growth and superior shareholder value. At the same time, providers can help empower lower-income people by providing financial access and a potential path from poverty."

The study's researchers, in their quest for "leapfrog" innovations, decided early on to focus on three specific areas of emerging-market finance: consumer financial services, financing for small and medium-size enterprises and corporate bond markets.

There were two powerful reasons for this emphasis. First, all three of these financial service sectors are drivers of economic growth across emerging markets, and therefore the world at large. Because these sectors drive economic growth, they are also, in different ways, keys to boosting employment, prosperity, stability and opportunity. This aspect of the report's research will provide useful context for one of the key questions delegates to the Forum's East Asia Summit will be asked to consider next week: How can the high economic growth economies of Asean help rebalance both the global and the regional economic outlook?

Second, it quickly became apparent that these three sectors also represent the most compelling and powerful opportunities for financial institutions and their investors to achieve long-term business growth and shareholder return.

The report offers surprising and counterintuitive research on the subject of consumer financial services in emerging markets, where the enormous potential of consumers to drive economic growth is barely tapped. The study documents how some financial innovators are already benefiting

by embracing inclusion of the poor and describes the "white space" opportunities for emerging-market growth for providers of mass-market services and products.

The report also breaks new ground on the subject of financing for small and medium-size enterprises. SMEs, as they are known, are a substantial source of employment and economic growth in developed and developing countries alike. Yet traditional banks have long neglected SMEs' credit needs. Now, some enterprising financial institutions in emerging markets are innovating ways to fill this gap, according to the report, which assesses the most compelling of those innovations.

Finally, the report tackles the complex issue of corporate bond markets, which few emerging countries have succeeded in establishing despite the many broad benefits such markets provide. The report assesses recent successes and lays out the sequential path of development these markets require.

As the Forum's report ably documents, many emerging-market financial providers have advanced by adopting highly innovative approaches in their home markets. They have overcome infrastructure limitations and addressed local needs through creative distribution models, risk practices and partnerships. Some institutions, for example, can effectively disburse financing to small business customers within 10 minutes through electronic channels and without documentation or guarantor requirements.

More broadly — by taking the market's pulse in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, emerging Europe and Asia — the report documents the new shape of global competition as emerging market financial players achieve world-class status.

Kevin Steinberg is the chief operating officer of the World Economic Forum USA, based in New York.

El Indio Jamil Maidan Flores

Maps and Bloodlines

When news broke early this month about a gaffe by He Jia, the anchor announcer on China Central Television, I thought: Anybody can make a mistake.

"We all know," she said, "that the Philippines is China's inherent territory and the Philippines belongs to Chinese sovereignty; this is an indisputable fact."

It was, of course, the wrong mistake at the wrong time. The standoff between Philippine and Chinese marine vessels near the Scarborough Shoal had been going on for weeks.

But maybe she thinks she knows something. In fact, there exist two maps of China, one circa 1566, the other drawn in 1600, showing the Philippines at the lower right hand corner, implying that the archipelago was a province of China. I have seen the photos. She might have been referring to these.

Anyone, of course, can draw a map and label it according to his fancy. That's how America got its name, after Amerigo Vespucci the Italian cartographer, instead of being named Columbia after the guy who discovered it.

But you can't draw a map of some place, say the South China Sea, lay down nine-dash lines around it and, presto, you have made an "indisputable" territorial claim.

Let's put the maps aside and talk bloodlines. Then China would have a strong claim — not of sovereignty but of kinship. Although there were only about 50 Chinese in the Philippines when the Spaniards colonized it in 1571, over the decades their numbers grew. Many intermarried with the Indios (Malays) and the Spaniards and produced a social class called Chinese Mestizos. One of them,



Lorenzo Ruiz, who grew up in Manila's Chinatown, suffered martyrdom in Japan in 1637. Canonized in 1987, he is venerated as the first Filipino Catholic saint.

By the middle of the 19th century, most Chinese Mestizos had forgotten the Chinese part of themselves and were conscious only of their being Indios. They went to Europe, called themselves Indios Bravos, and astonished the continent with their intellectual and artistic bravura.

Eventually, most of them would play a role in the revolution that led to the establishment in 1898 of the first republic

“You can't draw a map of some place, lay down nine-dash lines around it and, presto, you have made an 'indisputable' territorial claim

in Asia. One revolutionary general was a full-blooded Chinese, Ignacio Pua. Down south, at the time of the revolution, the rising leader of the Maguindanaons was a half-Chinese, Datu Piang.

Today, Filipino-Chinese are fondly called Chinoys, an amalgam of Chino and Pinoy, a term of endearment for Filipino. President Benigno Aquino III, who calls himself PNoy for President Noynoy (his nickname), is actually a fifth-generation Chino. Last September, on a state visit to China, he dropped by his ancestral village, Hongjian in Fujian province, from which came 85 percent of the Chinese who migrated to the Philippines. There he called on an assemblage of cousins, uncles and aunts as did his mother, the late former President Corazon Aquino, 23 years before.

The greatest Chino of them all is national hero Dr. Jose P. Rizal, whose ancestral village is Siongue, also in Fujian. By blood three-fourths Chinese, he thought he was full-blooded Indio. Yet he was the first Filipino, the first to teach his countrymen — whatever their race or ethnicity — that they belong to a single Filipino nation. Without him, "Filipino" would still mean a Spaniard born in the Philippines. Through his writings, advocacy and sacrifice, he single-handedly changed that.

Does it mean anything that many Filipinos have Chinese blood? Yes, it's history's gift to the nation.

Years ago, a Filipino-Chinese banker, one of the Gaisano brothers, good-naturedly teased me, "Don't let your Malay good looks fool you. You must have Chinese blood. Otherwise you're not a Filipino."

That may be a bit overstated. But I'm comfortable with it. As long as no maps are involved.

Jamil Maidan Flores is a poet, fiction writer, playwright and essayist who has worked as a speechwriter for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1992. The views expressed here are his own.

Snapshot Mud, mud, glorious mud

People play in mud, which is said to have health benefits, during the Boryeong Mud Festival at Daecheon beach in Boryeong, about 190 kilometers southwest of Seoul,

on Sunday. Two to three million domestic and international tourists visit the beach during the annual mud festival, according to the festival organizers. Reuters Photo/Lee Jae-Won

Environment Roger Bradbury

While We Can't Save the World's Coral Reefs, We Can Prepare for What Will Replace Them

It's past time to tell the truth about the state of the world's coral reefs, the nurseries of tropical coastal fish stocks. They have become zombie ecosystems, neither dead nor truly alive in any functional sense, and on a trajectory to collapse within a human generation. There will be remnants here and there, but the global coral reef ecosystem — with its storehouse of biodiversity and fisheries supporting millions of the world's poor — will cease to be.

Overfishing, ocean acidification and pollution are pushing coral reefs into oblivion. Each of those forces alone is fully capable of causing the global collapse of coral reefs; together, they assure it. The scientific evidence for this is compelling and unequivocal, but there seems to be a collective reluctance to accept the logical conclusion — that there is no hope of saving the global coral reef ecosystem.

What we hear instead is an airbrushed view of the crisis — a view endorsed by coral reef scientists, amplified by environmentalists and accepted by governments. Coral reefs, like rain forests, are a symbol of biodiversity. And, like rain forests, they are portrayed as existentially threatened — but salvageable. The message is: "There is yet hope."

Indeed, this view is echoed in the "consensus statement" of the just-concluded International Coral Reef Symposium, which called "on all governments to ensure the future of coral reefs." It was signed by more than 2,000 scientists, officials and conservationists.

This is less a conspiracy than a sort of institutional inertia. Governments don't want to be blamed for disasters on their watch, conservationists apparently value hope over truth, and scientists often don't see the reefs for the corals.

But by persisting in the false belief that coral reefs have a future, we grossly misallocate the funds needed to cope with the fallout from their collapse. Money isn't spent to study what to do after the reefs are gone — on what sort of ecosystems will replace coral reefs and what opportunities there will be to nudge these into providing people with food and other useful ecosystem products and services. Nor is money spent to preserve some of the genetic

resources of coral reefs by transferring them into systems that are not coral reefs. And money isn't spent to make the economic structural adjustment that communities and industries that depend on coral reefs urgently need. We have focused too much on the state of the reefs rather than the rate of the processes killing them.

Overfishing, ocean acidification and pollution have two features in common. First, they are accelerating. They are growing broadly in line with global economic growth, so they can double in size every couple of decades. Second, they have extreme inertia — there is no real prospect of changing their trajectories in less than 20 to 50 years. In short, these forces are unstoppable and irreversible. And it is these two features — acceleration and inertia — that have blindsided us.

Overfishing can bring down reefs because fish are one of the key functional groups that hold reefs together. Detailed forensic studies of the global fish catch by Daniel Pauly's lab at the University of British Columbia confirm that global fishing pressure is still accelerating even as the global fish catch is declining. Overfishing is already damaging reefs worldwide, and it is set to double and double again over the next few decades.

Ocean acidification can also bring down reefs because it affects the corals themselves. Corals can make their calcareous skeletons only within a special range of temperature and acidity of the surrounding seawater. But the oceans are acidifying as they absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Research led by Ove Hoegh-Guldberg of the University of Queensland shows that corals will be pushed outside their temperature-acidity envelope in the next 20 to 30 years, absent

“ Governments don't want to be blamed for disasters on their watch, conservationists value hope over truth, and scientists often don't see the reefs for the corals

effective action on emissions.

We have less of a handle on pollution. We do know that nutrients, particularly nitrogenous ones, are increasing not only in coastal waters but also in the open ocean. This change is accelerating. And we know that coral reefs just can't survive in nutrient-rich waters. These conditions only encourage the microbes and jellyfish that will replace coral reefs in coastal waters. We can say, though, with somewhat less certainty than for overfishing or ocean acidification that unstoppable pollution will force reefs beyond their survival envelope by midcentury.

This is not a story that gives me any pleasure to tell. But it needs to be told urgently and widely because it will be a disaster for the hundreds of millions of people in poor, tropical countries like Indonesia and the Philippines who depend on coral reefs for food. It will also threaten the tourism industry of rich countries with coral reefs, like the United States, Australia and Japan. Countries like Mexico and Thailand will have both their food security and tourism industries badly damaged. And, almost an afterthought, it will be a tragedy for global conservation as hot spots of biodiversity are destroyed.

What we will be left with is an algal-dominated hard ocean bottom, as the remains of the limestone reefs slowly break up, with lots of microbial life soaking up the sun's energy by photosynthesis, few fish but lots of jellyfish grazing on the microbes. It will be slimy and look a lot like the ecosystems of the Precambrian era, which ended more than 500 million years ago and well before fish evolved.

Coral reefs will be the first major ecosystem to succumb to the Anthropocene — the new geological epoch now emerging. That is why we need an enormous reallocation of research, government and environmental effort to understand what has happened so we can respond the next time we face a disaster of this magnitude. It will be no bad thing to learn how to do such ecological engineering now.

The New York Times

Roger Bradbury, an ecologist, is a researcher at the Australian National University.

El Indio Jamil Maidan Flores

The Lady's Dilemma

Aung San Suu Kyi is in a fix — because of the Rohingya, the world's most persecuted people.

Centuries ago, they crossed from Bangladesh to next-door Arakan (now Rakhine) in Myanmar. Labeled pejoratively as "Bengali," they have never been accepted by the other ethnic groups of that country — because they are Muslims in an overwhelmingly Buddhist land, and because of their dark Indian looks. In 1980 the then-strongman Ne Win stripped them of their citizenship. Military rule, harsh on all Myanmar, is particularly crushing to the Rohingya: they had been shorn not only of their citizenship but also of their worth as human beings.

Hundreds of them have sought refuge in Bangladesh but they're not wanted there: they've also been turned back by the hundreds. As many as 24,000 have found their way to Malaysia. Hundreds more to India, Indonesia and Thailand.

Last month in Australia, the government pushed for legislation allowing an exchange of 800 Rohingya asylum seekers for 4,000 genuine refugees already processed in Malaysia — the so-called "Malaysia solution." The conservative opposition, committed to a policy of turning back every boatload of asylum seekers from anywhere, shot down the measure. While the Australians were debating the Malaysia solution, two boatloads of asylum seekers sank in waters between Indonesia and Australia's Christmas Island. In Myanmar a government helicopter fired on three boats crossing over to Bangladesh, killing 50 Rohingya on board.

Meanwhile the Bangladeshi government justified its own heartlessness to Rohingya refugees by arguing that if it allowed them in, it would only be relieving Myanmar of its responsibility.



While Suu Kyi was touring Europe last month, a Buddhist girl was raped and killed by three Muslim men. In retaliation a Buddhist mob attacked a busload of Rohingya, killing 10. A communal war then erupted resulting in 60 dead, according to the government. According to other sources, 6,000 Rohingya were slaughtered, many of them systematically by government forces.

A few days ago Myanmar President Thein Sein urged the United Nations to set up a Rohingya refugee camp in a willing

third country. The UN turned down the preposterous idea, but activists of Suu Kyi's National League of Democracy support the plan. After all, they claim, the Rohingya are infiltrators from Bangladesh.

That claim makes no sense: why would any Bangladeshi move from his country where he is safe to where he is sure to be persecuted or killed because he has no rights there?

And poor Suu Kyi: asked in London about the plight of the Rohingya, she could only say she didn't know whether the Rohingya were "Burmese" or not. That time she did not sound like the democracy and human rights icon that I like to think she still is.

On the other hand if she spoke loud and clear for the human rights of the Rohingya, she risked losing the support of the activists in the NLD who are dripping with hatred for these "non-Burmese." Therein lies her quandary. So what to do?

I say, Lady, this is no time to quibble on the legal niceties of citizenship. We have a raging humanitarian tragedy. Seize both horns of the dilemma. The Bangladeshis and some NLD activists are washing off their own guilt by citing the guilt of others — don't play that game. Go back to your models, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. You know in your heart what they would do in your situation.

Lady, you no longer belong only to the NLD or to "Burma." Speak for all humankind. So that all concerned will be touched by the better angels of our nature.

And tell the world to let the remaining sanctions on Burma stay in place until the government does the decent thing about the Rohingya.

Jamil Maidan Flores is a poet, fiction writer, playwright and essayist who has worked as a speechwriter for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1992. The views expressed here are his own.

Eyewitness Grim Tidings



Indonesian soldiers gesturing to a helicopter to indicate that the body of a victim of Wednesday's plane crash had been secured at the crash site on Mount Salak in Bogor on Saturday. Clearer weather over the weekend

finally allowed helicopters to land and retrieve some remains of the 45 people on board a Russian-made plane that crashed during a demonstration flight. JG Photo/Rezza Estily

See the full slideshow at www.thejakartaglobe.com/eyewitness

My Jakarta Siswanto, volunteer nail collector

'I'm Proud So Many People Have Joined Us as Volunteers Considering This Is Dangerous Work'

Getting a flat tire on your way to the office can be a pain. You may think it's just bad luck, but 38-year-old Siswanto and his friends know all too well that criminal gangs are out there peppering Jakarta's streets with nails so they can make a killing by fixing flats.

Siswanto established Saber to help clean up the streets. Unlike most volunteer groups whose members help only on weekends, this community patrols the streets almost every day, braving the traffic in an effort to keep your tires safe.

How many times did you fall victim to these 'nail traps' before you decided to do something about it?

Over and over again in the same area. I got sick and tired of being taken advantage of and couldn't stop thinking about how much money I was spending a month just to fix my flat tires. So I talked to some friends about what was going on, and when we figured out that most people who used the same road had the same problem, we decided to do something about it.

Where do you usually look for nails and sharp objects?

The hot spots are around Grogol, in front of Roxy near the overpass, Harmoni, Cideng, Gadjah Mada, around the Presidential Palace and Senen. Anyone who drives through those areas should be careful because the roads are full of nails and traps.

How many other people have joined forces with you to help sweep the roads clear for drivers?

Saber is now around 18 people strong, all folks from various backgrounds with most of them from lower parts of society, like ojek [motorcycle taxi] drivers, office boys, personal drivers and so on. I myself am a construction worker when I'm not



doing this. I'm proud that so many people have joined our group as volunteers, considering that this is tiring and dangerous unpaid physical work.

When was this community officially formed?

We have been doing this since August 5, 2011, but some of our members have been picking up nails and sharp objects from streets for more than a year. And besides sweeping up nails and other sharp objects, we also provide free services, including fixing flat tires, whenever our organization has an event.

We all know that the tambal ban, the roadside tire repair stalls, benefit from having nails on the road and the ensuing flats. But exactly how much do they benefit from this?

Most of them will charge around Rp 40,000 to Rp 60,000 [\$4 to \$6] to patch up a flat tire for you. Crazy, isn't it?

Do you have any tips to help motorists avoid these traps?

There is this trick that if you are going less than 30 kilometers per hour then the nails and other sharp objects won't puncture the tire.

When can we see you in action, in case the millions of motorists out there want to thank you personally?

I start early in the morning, from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m., before I go to work. I then continue at night after work, sometimes until 9 p.m. and sometimes even until dawn. It has become a regular part of my day. I always bring my magnet wherever I go so that I can pick up nails whenever I see them.

What's your record for picking up nails in a day?

The most I've ever collected in a single day was 10 kilos. This was before I set up the volunteer group.

What do you do with all the bits of sharp metal you collect?

Out of the 300 kilos we've collected in the last five months, we have sold close to 100 kilos to people who want to buy it. It's worth around Rp 7,000 per kilo for reusable nails, Rp 4,000 for bent nails.

How can we help?

It's easy, you can contact me at 021 930 50356. But anyone who wants to volunteer needs to remember that we only want people who are going to throw themselves into the work wholeheartedly. Plus, people have to understand the risks. This is not easy because we work on the streets with all the cars and motorcycles speeding past.

That's why we usually bring a flashlight and megaphone along so we can warn road users when we're risking our lives to save your tires.

Siswanto was talking to Maya Martini.

El Indio Jamil Maidan Flores

A Gentle Warhorse

The young man from that half of an island east of Indonesia had a lot of information to share about his little-known homeland, a hoard of dreams for his people, a fistful of questions about Indonesia's intentions and no money. His name, he said, was Jose Ramos-Horta and he was in Jakarta on a mission for one of the East Timorese political factions.

He was a good news source and Sabam Siagian, deputy editor of the Jakarta daily Sinar Harapan, felt kindly toward him, gave him some money, then showed him a map of Southeast Asia where East Timor was half a dot on the right-hand side.

"What does this map tell you?" asked Sabam.

"That Indonesia will swallow up East Timor?"

"No. This is Southeast Asia and it is telling you that you must join Asean."

Sabam also advised him that since Malay was spoken in most member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the East Timorese had better learn Bahasa Indonesia.

It was mid-1974. The Carnation Revolution had just ended half a century of dictatorship in Portugal. In the former colony of East Timor (Timor-Leste in Portuguese), political factions scrambling for power wondered if Indonesia would invade. Ramos-Horta secured a written assurance from then-Foreign Minister Adam Malik that Indonesia had only benign intentions toward East Timor. That proved to be a bum steer.

Before the leaders of the East Timorese political mainstream could move to join Asean, Indonesia invaded in late 1975, beginning some 23 years of repressive rule.

Abroad, Ramos-Horta became so effective as



the face and voice of East Timorese resistance that he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996. He tangled with Indonesia's best diplomats: on television he debated Makarim Wibisono and then Dino Patti Djalal. In seminars, Jose Tavares, himself of East Timorese descent, would rebut his condemnations of Indonesian brutality by citing Fretilin atrocities.

When Ramos-Horta became president in 2007, East Timor was on the brink of civil war. Today it enjoys peace and security.

One opponent he highly respected was the late Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, whom he described as "the right diplomat from the wrong country." Ramos-Horta was sure that if the East Timor issue had not

been an albatross around Alatas's neck, he could have made UN secretary general. "I like Ali Alatas," he once said wryly. "But he doesn't like me." On this he was wrong. Alatas liked Xanana Gusmao so much nobody noticed he also liked Ramos-Horta.

After the Santa Cruz massacre in Dili in November 1991, the East Timorese clearly had the moral high ground. Eventually they extricated themselves from Indonesia in a 1999 referendum. Diplomacy has scrubbed any rancor between the countries.

When Ramos-Horta was elected president in 2007, East Timor was on the brink of civil war. Today it enjoys peace and security. It has recorded double-digit growth during the past five years and is hoping for \$5,000 per-capita GDP in the next five. It has zero national debt.

As to the dream of East Timor becoming a member of Asean, Ramos-Horta will not see that realized during his tenure as president, which ends a few days from now. But with Indonesia pushing that dream, he's sure to see it come true as early as next year. Bahasa Indonesia, spoken by 36 percent of East Timor's population, is one of the country's working languages and could become an official language one day.

Ramos-Horta has served as foreign minister, prime minister and president of East Timor and has survived an assassination attempt. Great as a revolutionary, diplomat and public servant, he's not so deft at party politics. Last month, he lost his bid for re-election — as expected. But the old warhorse is not yet ready to be turned into glue. He will be a factor in the parliamentary elections in June, and a valuable presence as long as he lives.

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