

# RI, Timor Leste agree to boost ties, border talks

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Indonesia and Timor Leste agreed to enhance what they both called already-strong bilateral ties on President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's first state visit to Dili, and also reiterated a commitment to speeding up land and maritime border resolutions.

Jokowi was in Dili on Tuesday, his first trip abroad this year, and met with Timor Leste Prime Minister Rui Maria de Araujo and President Taur Matan Ruak.

Jokowi said that not only did Indonesia share a similar desire to Timor Leste to enhance the existing close friendship between the two neighboring countries, but that Jakarta had reaffirmed its "commitment as the main partner in the development of Timor Leste".

Indonesia and Timor Leste have been negotiating border issues since 2002, soon after the latter formalized its independence from Indonesia following a UN-supervised referendum held in 1999. Indonesia and Timor Leste have agreed on more than 900 coordinates as border points, but two land border areas — Noel Besi-Citrana and Bijael Sunan-Oben — remain unresolved.

"Indonesia and Timor Leste are committed to speeding up negotiations on borders; in terms of land borders, to immediately solve the two unresolved segments; in terms of maritime borders, to start talks on the segment in northern Timor Leste in the first quarter of 2016," Jokowi told a press conference after meeting with Araujo.

The two remaining unresolved land border segments are still under ongoing negotiation, although, during a bilateral meeting between the Jokowi and Araujo in Jakarta late last year, the two countries agreed to seek to resolve the two segments by the end of last year. At that time, Jakarta and Dili also agreed to begin negotiating the delimitation of maritime boundaries.

Technical teams from the two countries have also met to negotiate the land border issues.

According to Araujo, the two countries were indeed committed to resolving the land border issues "in the spirit of goodwill and solidarity", adding, "We are confident this can be achieved very quickly."

Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said that a joint field survey — which aimed to get input from customary groups with the rights to land in unresolved land border segments — was expected to be held next month or in March.

On Tuesday, the two neighboring countries also signed 5 memorandums of understanding, covering: cooperation on energy, including joint research and study; illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; youth and sports, including capacity and entrepreneurship building; climatology and geophysics; and archives.

Araujo said that Jokowi's visit reflected an enhanced, strong and positive bond between the two nations.

"While we have had a difficult past, today Timor Leste and Indonesia are global models for reconciliation and peace in an increasingly divided world. We share an island and we share a future," he added.