

Estrella readies Timor-Leste landmark mineral drilling campaign

By James Pearson, Business News 4 April 2025

[Estrella Resources](#) is about to make history in Timor-Leste with the arrival of the nation's first mineral exploration rig. The company is gearing up to kick off an exploration drilling campaign at its Ira Miri, Sica and Lalena manganese prospects in the country's northwest.

The company has locked in a landmark agreement with Dili-based CoreSearch Minerals and Mining Services, a division of the seasoned H2O group, which has 25 years of experience under its belt and more than 500 production water bores drilled across the state.

Under the terms of the deal, Estrella is fronting US\$200,000 (\$318,000) in capital to mobilise a fully kitted out reverse circulation and diamond drill rig to Timor-Leste. The funding is being treated as an interest-free loan to CoreSearch and will be repaid at US\$10 per metre from the first 20,000m of drill work.

The kit has been sourced from Darwin and Vietnam and is already packed ready for shipping. It is due to land mid-April, just as the developing nation's wet season bows out.

Drilling is expected to kick off in May after the easter break, hitting up the promising high-grade Ira Miri, Sica and Lalena manganese prospects, which have so far lain untouched.

Under the agreement, CoreSearch will deliver an initial 10,000m of reverse circulation and 3000m of diamond drilling to test outcropping manganese horizons. A follow-up program for another 10,000m of reverse circulation drill testing will wait in the wings, pending the results of the company's geological review.

Mindful of maintaining good community relations in the young country, Estrella has been working with locals and its joint-venture partner Murak Rai Timor and is preparing to hire and train local workers for exploration roles.

Estrella has also set up worker accommodation and storage facilities within the local area to ensure long-term support and cooperation.

All necessary environmental approvals are nearing the finish line, with the final tick expected before drilling begins. The company has already secured conditional approval under a Category B licence and has lodged its environmental impact statement and management plan.

[Estrella Resources](#) managing director [Chris Daws](#) said: *"The partnership between Estrella and CoreSearch is poised to make history, representing the first group to break ground in Timor-Leste following its adoption of a modern mining code. With completely undrilled targets that are prospective for high grade manganese, it is a very exciting time for [Estrella Resources](#) shareholders and management."*

Estrella is moving forward in East Timor coincident with the market's new found interest in manganese, due to the metal's inclusion in an updated version of a popular lithium ferro phosphate (LFP) batteries used in electric vehicles.

Adding the metal into a newer lithium manganese ferro phosphate battery has boosted its energy density by 20 per cent, potentially extending EV driving ranges to more than 700 kilometres compared to about 620 km for its LFP counterpart.

Researchers have also discovered that lithium-manganese batteries maintain about 75 per cent capacity at -20 degrees Celsius, while the standard LFP batteries retain only 60-70 per cent. This is a particularly important factor in China, which has the world's biggest EV market.

Not surprisingly, EV car maker BYD - the largest global manufacturer with a 24 per cent market share - is actively involved in commercialising lithium-manganese batteries.

The next generation of BYD's flagship "Blade" battery technology - due to be released this year - is rumoured to be using the technology.

In another sign of confidence in a rising manganese market, seasoned Canadian commodity stock picker Eric Sprott has recently thrown his weight behind two manganese plays with a C\$2m punt on Vancouver-listed Manganese X and a \$3m bet on ASX-listed Euro Manganese.

As global demand for manganese picks up, [Estrella Resources](#) is strategically positioned to capitalise on the metal's growing role in next-generation EV batteries. With groundbreaking exploration underway in Timor-Leste and strong local partnerships, the company appears to be paving an exciting path in the region's emerging mining sector.



CoreSearch managing director Leon Merrington and in-country operations manager Natalino Mendes prepare a drill rig and ancillary equipment for shipping to Estrella Resources' Timor-Leste manganese project.