

Estrella stumbles across massive manganese outcrop in Timor-Leste

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Estrella Resources first mover status in the newly opened for mining country of Timor-Leste appears to be paying dividends after it unearthed a massive outcrop of high grade supergene manganese.

It is one of two outcropping manganese discoveries at Estrella's Lautém project uncovered using the company's predictive modelling of its prospective Noni rock formations.

Management says its Ira Miri and Sica discoveries are around 4.5km apart just outside the town of Lautém, where initial rock-chip samples returned exceptional grades of 57.5 per cent and 63.4 per cent manganese on a portable XRF gun, some of the highest readings recorded at the project to date.

Back in December 2023 Estrella was amongst the first companies ever to pick up an exploration license in Timor-Leste (formally East Timor) as the country emerges from its war torn history.

The company says the newly identified Ira Miri prospect has unearthed a striking 3m-high outcropping bed of supergene manganese understood to be secondary supergene mineralisation.

Meanwhile at the Sica prospect which was first identified in August of this year, additional high-grade manganese has confirmed the same prospective secondary supergene mineralisation in the surrounding hills at the mapped prospect.

Management says the discovery of the massive outcrop was made while geological mapping was taking place.

Estrella Resources Managing Director Chris Daws said: *"We are thrilled to delineate further instances of wide-scale manganese mineralisation in the unexplored nation of Timor-Leste. While it is early exploration work, making discoveries is a numbers game. Identifying a swathe of encouraging prospects gives us a better chance of developing a high-grade manganese deposit.*

Furthermore, I am particularly impressed with the modelling work undertaken by our exploration team. What began with a blank sheet of paper when Estrella was first awarded tenure in December last year has emerged into a detailed and increasingly predictive discovery tool."

The company's decision to pivot to Timor-Leste is looking to be a shrewd move at a time when the government is looking to diversify its tax revenue stream away from its richly-endowed petroleum minerals base, coupled with a newly-enacted mining code for metals exploration.

Estrella's projects now span more than 700 square kilometres and include seven exploration concessions in partnership with the government-controlled Murak Rai Timor. The area is sparsely populated and minimally farmed, which the company says enhances its suitability for exploration.

The region is also well endowed with infrastructure that could support a mining operation and has good proximity to major roads, power infrastructure and direct access to ports that will allow it to enter the fast growing Asian markets that are adopting more and more manganese into EV batteries.

The timing of the discoveries is also opportune given that global manganese supply remains constrained, with recent disruptions such as the cyclone-hit operations in Australia contributing to significant price volatility.

Estrella now plans to expand its geophysical surveying program with a tailored Induced Polarisation (IP) survey.

The IP surveys will also refine the company's priority targets and pave the way for what will no doubt be highly anticipated drill testing it says is planned for 2025.

With Estrella's prosperous modelling approach and a growing list of high-grade discoveries, the company now has the enviable problem of prioritising which of its swathe of prospects is considered superior for drill testing following the Timor-Leste wet season in the new year.



What's underneath ? Estrella Resources managing director Chris Daws next to a massive outcropping lump of manganese at the company's Lautém project in Timor-Leste. Credit: File