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**FOREIGN MINISTERS BACK TIMOR-LESTE ENTRY, PUSH FOR STRONGER TRADE AND ENERGY LINKS AT ASEAN MEET**

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Hariz Baharudin

Asean foreign ministers reaffirmed plans to admit Timor-Leste as the groupings 11th member, and pledged to deepen regional economic integration and energy cooperation at talks in Kuala Lumpur on July 9.

During the 58th Asean Foreign Ministers Meeting (AMM), Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan and his regional counterparts discussed and expressed enthusiasm for Timor-Lestes upcoming accession to the group, said Singapores Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

The South-east Asian nation of 1.3 million people has been waiting to join the grouping since it formally applied for membership in 2011.

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