

**The Secretary of State for the Council of Ministers and  
Official Spokesperson for the Government of Timor-Leste  
Ágio Pereira**

**March 19, 2012  
Díli, Timor-Leste**



**Prime Minister concludes visit to Japan.**

Prime Minister, His Excellency Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão met with the Prime Minister of Japan, His Excellency Yoshihiko Noda, in Tokyo today. In a friendly bilateral meeting Mr. Noda expressed his gratitude for the support of Timor-Leste in international relations and confirmed Japan's endorsement for the smooth transition of Timor-Leste into ASEAN. He noted the calm and peaceful progress of the recent Presidential Election and congratulated Prime Minister Gusmão on his "leadership in the consolidation of democracy."

The Prime Ministers exchanged notes during the meeting concerning the "Yen Loan", a long term, low-interest loan offered by Japan that enables Timor-Leste to bring forward the implementation of a critical infrastructure project identified in the Strategic Development Plan, namely the upgrading of Highway 1. With this funding the 118 kilometers of road between Díli and Baucau will be upgraded to international standards allowing this key corridor for trade and tourism to enjoy a resilient, high quality infrastructure upgrade that will boost economic development and continue to benefit the people of Timor-Leste for many decades to come. The loan will not only allow a better timetable for the project implementation but will also come with skill transfer and capacity building outcomes. That Japan, a fiscally conservative country, has chosen to extend this loan offer is a strong vote of confidence in the future of Timor-Leste.

A signing ceremony after the bilateral meeting saw Timor-Leste's Minister of Finance and her Japanese counterpart sign the loan documents in front of the two Prime Ministers. A further signing ceremony followed with the Vice President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Mr. Izumi Arai

Other meetings held during the day included a lunch with long time supporters of Timor-Leste the Parliamentary Friendship League, discussions with members of the Opposition party, discussions with the Japanese Minister of Defense, a speech and question and answer session at the Japanese Press Club and dinner with Japan's Director General of Foreign Affairs.

In a special meeting with Prime Minister Gusmão the former ambassador to Timor-Leste Mr. Kitahara and his colleague Mr. Takahashi expressed gratitude for the expressions of support extended by Timor-Leste on the occasion of the Great East Japan Earth Quake last year. Heartfelt letters of support written by Timorese students had been highly valued by the Japanese students who had received them.

The Prime Minister now travels to attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> Jakarta International Defense Dialogue in Indonesia. **ENDS**

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