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2013 State Budget begins in National Parliament with approval in Generality after three days

The plenary session devoted to debating the 2013 General State Budget has begun in National Parliament. In line with the commitment of the V Constitutional Government to transparency and provision of public information the debate is being broadcast live on radio and television with ample media access to this important process.

The Prime Minister, His Excellency Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, opened the plenary with an address to the Members of Parliament, setting out the context of this State Budget as a part of the five year program of the V Constitutional Government which in turn has been developed to align with the twenty year Strategic Development Plan of Timor-Leste: “a plan to implement, to transform Timor-Leste from the poor country it is today into an upper-middle income country by 2030, with a safe, healthy, educated and productive population.”

Prime Minister Gusmão noted the priority of eradicating poverty in the short, medium and long term in Timor-Leste, “a complex challenge requiring strong economic growth, better infrastructure and a skilled labor.” He emphasized that “economic growth may only be considered a favorable indicator of national development if it observes two fundamental principles: inclusiveness and equity.”

Priorities for 2013 supported by the proposed budget include the supply of basic education and health services, employment creation with investment in economic sectors and improvement in administrative and financial management to ensure good governance.

The Budget for 2013 would see a total of \$1,797.52 million invested to meet the needs of Timor-Leste, giving priority to Infrastructure, Agriculture, Health and Education. In comparison with 2012 the investment in Agriculture has been increased by 28%, the investment in Education is up by 12% and the investment in Health is by 15%. Investment in social policies to protect the most vulnerable is continued and allocations have been made to improve the working conditions of the PNTL and F-FDTL.



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The 2013 budget is to be primarily funded by a \$1,198 million withdrawal from the Petroleum Fund, representing a significant reduction on the \$1,495 million withdrawn in 2012. Forecasted domestic revenue receipts for 2013 represent a 9% increase on those collected in 2012.

The Prime Minister concluded his presentation highlighting the significance of 2013 in the journey of Timor-Leste.

“Today’, he said, ‘more than ever, we are responsible for the path we want our country to follow. We must walk this journey step by step, looking back to see how far we have come, correcting our stride whenever necessary and constantly reassessing the path still ahead of us. In this collective effort no one should be left behind. More importantly still, we cannot ‘cheat’ our traveling companions.”

After the presentation of the Prime Minister other party leaders made their opening statements to begin the three days of discussions on the budget in generality.

On the evening of the 6th of February a vote to approve the Budget in general was passed in the National Parliament with 40 in favor and 25 abstentions.

The next two weeks will see the debate go into the specific details of expenditure amongst each entity with a final vote scheduled for the 20th of February. **ENDS**

