

Ceremony of the Project for the Construction of Upriver Comoro Bridge

Dili, 12 October 2018

H.E. Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, Gen. Taur Matan Ruak and spouse,

H.E. Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. Taro Kono and spouse,

Her Exc. The Vice President of the National Parliament, Mrs. Angelina Sarmento,

H.E. State Minister for Presidency of Council of Ministers and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Timor-Leste, Mr. Agio Pereira,

His Excellency the Ambassador of Japan to Timor-Leste, Mr. Hiroshi Minami and spouse,

Distinguished Chief Representative of the Japan International Cooperation Agency in Timor-Leste,

Excellency Members of the Government,

Distinguished Members of the National Parliament,

Excellency Ambassadors and Especial Representatives of Diplomatic Mission in Timor-Leste,

Distinguished Representatives of General Prosecutor, High Court, F-FDTL and PNTL's Commanders.

Former Government Members,

General and National Directors, Local Authorities and Civil Society Representatives,

Your Excellences, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here in Comoro with you all today and with H.E. Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. Taro Kono and Spouse on their first visit to Timor-Leste, our warm welcome to you both! It is also a great honour to speak to you all, as today we celebrate the completion of the Project for the Construction of the upriver Comoro Bridge.

It has been decided that this bridge shall be re-named Hinode Bridge as a symbol of the connection between our two countries. The Japanese word '*hinode*' means 'sunrise' in English or '*loro sae*' in Tetum, and sunrise is significant to the names of both our countries in our own languages: in Tetum, Timor-Leste is called *Timor Lorosa'e* and, in Japanese, Japan is called *Nihon*, which loosely translates as 'the Land of the Rising Sun'. *Hinode* is a sign of hope and Hinode Bridge is an important link between us.

The population of Dili was over 250,000 as of 2015 and has an annual growth rate of 1.55%. Over 20% of the total national population live in Dili, making it the largest urban center in Timor-Leste.

According to the Timor-Leste National Road Master Plan 2010-2019, both the amount of vehicle ownership and traffic are predicted to increase greatly in the future. In order to mitigate the congestion in the urban area, it is important to develop city infrastructure that can enhance connectivity between the western side and eastern side of Dili.

Your Excellences, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As an advocate of establishing sustainable development and as one of Timor-Leste's oldest development partners, JICA has been providing support for the development of quality infrastructure in Timor-Leste through Grant Aid since 2000. Concurrently, their technical cooperation has been promoting maintenance and management of such infrastructure through human resource development and guidance on appropriate policy implementation.

The Hinode Bridge and access roads are a very good example of a project implemented using a comprehensive approach. Totalling a commitment of 2.6 billion Japanese Yen, which is equivalent to 23.7 million U.S. Dollars, the Hinode Bridge and access roads were constructed within the capital city of Timor-Leste in order to support the Dili urban area development.

The goal of the project is simple: to promote economic activities by ameliorating the flow of traffic going east and west through Dili urban area. We are expecting to see immediate positive socioeconomic changes as a result of the newly constructed Hinode Bridge and access roads.

From the stimulation, it will achieve locally as an urban trunk road, to the furthest reach of the project as a connection for transportation routes to the New Tibar Port and the International Airport, this symbolic bridge is a very suitable gateway to Timor-Leste.

Your Excellences, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In order for you to better understand what an achievement this bridge represents, I would like to give you an idea about the scale of this bridge project:

The main superstructure is a six-span continuous prestressed-concrete box girder bridge with a total length of 250 m and a total width of 11.55 m including footpaths for pedestrians. The bridge is supported on a substructure consisting of five oval piers and has bored pile foundations with foot protection blocks.

In addition to the structure itself, there is a total length of 3.76 km of two-lane access roads complete with drainage facilities, embankment works, footpaths, bus lay-bys, street lights, road signs and markings. These access roads connect to the Banana Road on the east side, link to the national road heading west towards the New Tibar Port, and extend to the Presidente Nicolau Lobato International Airport in the north-west.

A project of this size could only be accomplished with significant manpower and through cooperation. Over the 26 months that it has taken to complete this project, there have been a total of 121,000 man-days' value of work, which, on average, is equivalent to 150 to 200 people on site every day. As for cooperation, it is because of those people, of which 57% were Timorese, 3% were Japanese and 40% were other nationalities including Indonesian and Filipino, and because of their collaboration that this project was able to make such significant progress.

Now that we have completed the construction stage, we are entering into the operation phase. I am committed that we will provide the strong leadership needed to effectively coordinate all the relevant institutions into taking ownership so that this bridge can remain fully and sustainably functional.

Your Excellences, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to conclude by thanking, specifically the previous government for having to initiate the plan and the implementation of it, all other government entities, exclusively Our Directorate General for Public Works for their hard work, and to all local authorities and the community for their cooperation prior to and during the construction, and in advance for their care and commitment towards managing this bridge hereafter.

I also would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to JICA, the Government of Japan and the people of Japan for their continuing support, as well as the Japanese consultants and contractors whose tireless efforts resulted in the successful completion of the project.

I believe that the Hinode Bridge has an important role in the stability and prosperity of Timor-Leste, and we look forward to working together towards these goals and to the enhancement of friendly relations between our two countries.

Thank you very much. *Arigatou Gozaimashita*

Arc. Salvador Eugénio Soares dos Reis Pires

Minister of Public Works

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