



# Vote for FRETILIN!

2007 Parliamentary Elections

“Defending From the people, with the people and for the people”

Media release

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## FRETILIN’s strong platform for economic growth

The economy of Timor-Leste (East Timor) will grow by an average of 7% in real terms over the next 5 years, thanks to the strong platform laid by the FRETILIN government, Prime Minister Estanislau Da Silva said today.

Da Silva, a FRETILIN parliamentary candidate for the 30 June parliamentary elections, said the prediction of GDP growth was provided by the Ministry of Planning and Finance.

“The FRETILIN government over the last five years has put in place programs and policies which have laid the platform for strong sustainable economic growth,” he said. “This growth will bring real benefits to the people of Timor-Leste.”

“People often forget that when FRETILIN came to office the government had no money to spend and the country had almost no infrastructure.

“In five years we have succeeded in building, from the ground up, all the State institutions, particularly government agencies to deliver services to the people of Timor-Leste.

“We also had to develop laws to regulate the workings of government.”

### Petroleum Fund

Da Silva said that after successfully negotiating the Timor Sea petroleum agreement, FRETILIN established the Petroleum Fund managed by the independent Banking and Payments Authority.

“We established legal mechanisms to regulate the use of the Petroleum Fund to make it transparent and accountable, so as to guard against corruption and mismanagement,” he said.

“The Timor-Leste Petroleum Fund is regarded internationally as the most transparent in the world”.

### Health care

Da Silva said the FRETILIN government provides every citizen free access to hospitals and basic health services.

He added the government has spent USD\$30 million setting up a national health structure.

“The government is rehabilitating and expanding the national hospital in Dili at a cost of USD\$9 million. Five referral hospitals are being built in the districts of Oecussi (west of Dili), Bobonaro (west of Dili), Ainaro (south of Dili), Baucau (east of Dili) and Covalima (west of Dili) at a cost of USD\$16 million.

The government is also overseeing the building of a national laboratory; 47 health centres and 104 health clinics stations have been built across the country.

Da Silva praised the bilateral health program with Cuba under which the Cuban government has agreed to train 1,000 East Timorese doctors at its universities at no cost to the government of Timor-Leste.

“There are now 698 East Timorese studying medicine in Cuba and the government will send more students in the next few years until the quota of 1,000 students is reached.

“Once all the students return from Cuba, Timor-Leste will have at least one doctor for each of its 442 sucos (administrative levels which cover a group of villages). This is far more than at any time prior to the restoration of independence in 2002.”

Da Silva added that under the bilateral health program Cuba has also sent 228 doctors, 23 nurses, 40 health technicians and 11 Spanish-language teachers to Timor-Leste. He said 105 East Timorese are studying locally under the guidance of Cuban health experts.

### **Schools**

Da Silva said the FRETILIN government has developed primary and secondary school curriculums and abolished parents' contributions for primary schools. “The government is now working to abolish fees for secondary schools,” he said.

“We have also completed the refurbishment of almost all schools and every community now has access to primary education. Eighty percent of Timor-Leste's children are now attending primary school.

“The free primary school feeding program will be extended to all areas nationally next year.

“The government is also working in partnership with the Church to open more secondary schools and is proud to be providing the Church with increased financial assistance to run the Catholic primary and secondary schools and their social programs.

“We are also committed to providing financial assistance for private schools operated by other religious groups.”

### **Adult literacy**

The National Adult Literacy Campaign, recently launched nationwide, aims to halve the illiteracy rate within five years and eradicate illiteracy by 2015. “The launch of the campaign has created 500 new jobs for East Timorese,” Da Silva said.

### **Agriculture**

Da Silva said the government has overseen an increase in agricultural productivity over the last five years.

“For example, we have increased rice production from an average of 1.5 tonnes per hectare to 2.2 tonnes per hectare. In addition, we have recently released new varieties of rice and maize crops to increase food production.

“The proportion of imported rice needed to feed the population has fallen from two thirds to one third of domestic consumption,” he said.

“Despite limited resources we have rehabilitated several major irrigation schemes and provided funding for small scale community based irrigation systems.

“The Ministry of Agriculture this year introduced the Community Development Fund under which each of the 442 sucos will receive USD \$10,000 for community development programs. The total cost of the Community Development Fund is just under USD\$4.7 million.

“The Community Development Fund is an exercise by the government in evaluating community needs and capabilities. The FRETILIN government is now looking at continuing this program for the next five years.

“This program has created jobs and developed community based initiatives in rural areas.”

### **Employment and vocational training**

The FRETILIN government has introduced the Employment and Vocational Training Fund which provides funds for community training centres to deliver vocational training to unemployed people.

“The government has opened Employment Centres in the districts of Baucau, Oecussi, Dili and Bobonaro and will open three more in the next financial year. The employment centres are there to help people find work,” Da Silva said.

“The FRETILIN government’s cash for work/peace program has also created numerous employment opportunities with 37,000 people benefiting so far.”

### **Veterans**

Da Silva said the FRETILIN government is now finalizing regulations to govern the operation of a scheme to pay pensions to veteran soldiers of the resistance.

Parliament passed legislation to establish a legal framework for the scheme last year.

### **Investment**

The FRETILIN government has drawn up sector investment programs that set out priorities for each government and state institution to enable them to develop detailed projects for investment.

Da Silva said this would facilitate accelerated infrastructure development in the next five years.

“We have revised the financial management system as well as reformed the tax system to enable a judicious decentralization of financial responsibility. The legislation establishing both legal frameworks will be submitted for approval by the next parliament.”

### **Electricity**

The FRETILIN government will fully fund construction of the Ira Lalaro Hydro power station in the next five years at a cost of USD\$90-100 million. “This power station will enable us to supply electricity to all parts of the country,” Da Silva said.

“Now that the government has enough money from the petroleum fund, we are providing 31 rural power stations with sufficient fuel for at least six hours operation a day – without any assurance that the cost of providing the fuel will be recovered by the government.”

### **Drinking water**

Da Silva said providing potable water is a key measure to improve people’s health. “Completion of a joint project with the government of Japan to rehabilitate Dili water treatment plants means that Dili now has 10 times more drinking water than was ever the case prior to the restoration of independence.

“Next on the government’s agenda is the rehabilitation and expansion of water treatment plants in the southern central towns of Ainaro and Same.

“It is important to recognize that access to clean water has significantly increased in rural areas in the last 5 years. For instance, 80% of the population of Atauro island off the coast of Dili now have access to clean water, far greater than it used to be prior to the restoration of independence.

### **Telecommunications**

Da Silva said the FRETILIN government has overseen the establishment of a telecommunications network. “This will be improved in coming years so that internet and telephone services can be provided nationally,” he said.

### **For more information, please contact:**

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