



Garma Festival

Sunday, 7 August 2011

10:00AM

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

HIS EXCELLENCY DR JOSÉ RAMOS-HORTA

PRESIDENT OF TIMOR LESTE AND THE 1996 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE RECIPIENT.

President José Ramos Horta (JRH) thanked the Gama Festivals organizers for their invitation and Professor Marcia Langton for the introduction. He then introduced Mr Abel Guterres, the Ambassador of Timor Leste to Australia, the former bus driver of Melbourne, and his staff.

The President said: "Timor Leste's first Music and Cultural Festival was held last year on the highest mountain of Timor Leste, but we did not invite anyone in case we make mistakes." Timor Leste has to learn to improve holding festivals like the Garma Festival in Timor Leste. He said that one of the aims of his visit is also to learn about the cultural capacity and experiences of the indigenous Australians here in Garma. He also appreciated watching indigenous films and has invited the young indigenous film maker to go to Timor Leste to share his knowledge and to encourage the young people in his country who have produced a 30 part series and short stories for Timor Leste Television.

Sharing of the Progress Made After the Referendum

"It is a great pleasure to be here. I would like to share with you the progress made in the past ten years in Timor Leste. Thanks to the people of Australia- from the extreme left to the extreme right- for their solidarity. During the years of our struggle for independence we had made friendships with many people. The 20 May 2002 celebration was the restoration of our independence [which

was declared on 28th November 1975, nine days before the Indonesian massive invasion]. Thanks to the bravery of our people and the wisdom of the Timorese leadership, and the support and solidarity from the international friends and from people of all walks of life who had made it possible". He said that East Timorese historians will have to write the history of Timor Leste from the occupation to freedom particularly of the 1999 events as the most unique historical events in the world for the Timorese in seizing the opportunities as they became available. He acknowledged that it was the critical roles of the media, the mobilization of the media, including email and internet that had led to the international intervention led by the Australians. He recalled that he was in New York pleading for the international solidarity and support to stop the violence in his country after the referendum. Just one day after his appeal, people bombarded the IMF and the World Bank with emails/internets: 400 000 mail threatening Indonesian financial systems. In Melbourne and Sydney tens of thousands Australians, in Portugal and elsewhere hundreds of thousands went to the streets expressing their outrage about the violence in East Timor and demanding immediate international intervention to stop the violence.

In September 1999 during the violence in East Timor, the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Conference) meeting was held in Auckland, New Zealand. Knowing that President Bill Clinton and all the leaders of Asia Pacific were going there, JRH travelled to New Zealand to lobby those leaders. Staying at Ponsonby, a nice little and discreet guesthouse managed by a generous couple, unexpectedly he received a telephone call from the White House saying that President Clinton, whom he had not met before, and would like to meet with him. In spite of the depressing situation, JRH did not lost his sense of humour. He was thinking of making a joke by saying that he has to look at his diary first. But then he decided that it was better not make any joke in this critical moment for fear of his joke being taken seriously and missing that golden opportunity.

President JRH also mentioned briefly that many years ago he entered Burma illegally to train the Burmese resistants. Two Australian film makers wanted to make a film on the training in Burma during the training time. [This was mentioned perhaps due to his upcoming visit this month with the Burmese resistance leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize Recipient].

He said that at the time of the APEC meeting [9-13 September] Xanana Gusmao was still in the house arrest in Jakarta, and that up to that time there was still obsession in Washington with not making trouble in interfering in a far distant and insignificant country like Timor. He said it was very difficult to gain a sympathy from the Congress and the White House, although there were a number of senators and congress men and women who had been sympathetic to the cause of East Timor. But it was the public opinion and outcry that forced President Clinton to make a change. The public opinion and outcry in Australia forced Prime Minister John Howard to convince Clinton to take an immediate

action to stop the violence. JRH said that PM John Howard's message to President Clinton was: "If you don't join us to support the military intervention in East Timor, it will be difficult for us to join your wars in the future."

In Portugal five hundred thousand people took to the street and forced the President of Portugal, Dr Jorge Sampaio, to call President Clinton to join Portugal, a member of NATO, to stop the violence in Timor. All of these were, JRH said, due to the pressure from the public pushing to uphold the sense of justice. JRH thanked the friends and the public in Australia for their solidarity and supports.

Development Has Not Been Without Huge Challenges

The President told the audience that a few meetings of the leaders of Timor Leste had been held in Hera, near Dili, recently chaired by Bishop of Baucau to discuss the 2012 elections- presidential and parliamentary elections- to ensure that they will run fairly and peacefully. In concluding remarks of those meetings JRH called for the need for creating Timor Leste as nation of peace. Witnessing conflicts around the world, such as, in El Salvador, Colombia, the Philippines and other nations, JRH was proud of the Timor Leste record.

Despite of the atrocities committed against the Timorese by the Indonesian military, there hasn't any violence and demonisation or humiliation of the Indonesian citizens. Not a single Indonesian citizen was killed as a retaliation for the killing of nearly 200 thousand Timorese and other forms of brutality committed by the Indonesian military. The Indonesian military cemetery in Dili is still there across the road of the famous Santa Cruz Public Cemetery, and it is not demonised. He pointed out that many Timorese were Indonesian collaborators, but none of them have been persecuted. While collaborators in other countries were and are lucky to be alive, the collaborators in Timor Leste are not ostracized, let alone executed. Some of them are even given significant positions in the government. Some of the military and police collaborators are put back in the military and police forces.

The Baptism of Dili as City of Peace----*Cidade da Paz*

Dili the city of Peace was launched by President JRH, the 1996 Nobel Peace Laureate, in Becora, a poor part of Dili, known for its past violence. The act of forgiveness towards the former enemies and their collaborators mentioned above matches the baptism of Dili as the City of Peace. During this launch JRH pleaded the audience and the people of Timor Leste not to demonize the Indonesians. He asked the audience as whether any of them had helped the poor people on the streets, had taken the hungry to share meal at home. There was no

answer but a silence. “Have you seen an illegal migrant? Have you seen any Bangladesh? How the hell the Bangladesh ended up in Timor Leste.” There are many Chinese citizens- coming from China. He said that he can tell right away that they are not local Chinese Timorese. “Countries like the USA and Australia, with all their faults, made up by the migrants. In the US, there are many migrants workers, migrants scientists, doctors, etc., and many Asian faces. Many countries are built by migrants. Los Angeles would be crippled if the Latinos in LA went on strikes. In Australia, the former Major of the City of Melbourne whom he met several years ago comes from Tiananmen and speaks English with an accent.”

He told the audience about his experience of living in exile in Australia, how he came to and stayed in Australia as a young man escaping from the conscript in the Portuguese Timor [near the end of Salazar’s dictatorial regime]. He and others went to Darwin by boat. They went first to Catharine, a small town near Darwin, and they were mesmerized by that “big city”. They met a bank manager who then gave them a lift to Brisbane through Toowoomba via Garden of Tourism, and then he made it to Sydney. This hospitality has the lasting impression on him and makes him think not to ever resent people who for various reasons come to his country. “A migrant doesn’t take job from us, they create jobs”, he said. In Becore - a suburb of Dili - he asked the audience during the launch of *Dili Cidade da Paz* (Dili the City of Peace) whether a migrant has taken a job from them. The answer was silence meaning NO. He asked them why did they [the migrants] come here to Timor Leste. In a speech delivered at the UNSW, he said “I told the audience that when the Europeans arrived in Australia, they just walked into Australia without visas.” He said “that was the most undiplomatic statement he ever made.”

His dreams is to build not only Dili as a City of Peace but also the whole Timor Leste as a nation of peace, based on humanity and solidarity in which the poor, the elderly, the homeless are helped, in which peace prevails, home are free from domestic violence, and in which streets and home are free from violence and fear of violence of any sort. He dreams of creating a caring atmosphere at home and at school where the children feel that they are being loved by the family members and by their teachers and other children. “A society of peace is what we trying to build today”, he said. He mentioned about the violence in February 2008 in Dili when he himself was also shoot and he expressed his deep gratitude to the life-giver and to those who helped save his life: “I thank God that I am still alive today and I forgive those who were trying to kill me. Doctors could not understand that I still survive today. We want to create a compassionate state to heal the wounds of the past.”

Talking about the diplomatic effort he has put into making Timor Leste a permanent member of the ASEAN, he said “Indonesia is number one among the ASEAN countries to support us in becoming a permanent member of the ASEAN”.

He said that “It is the act of solidarity of people like you that makes us free today.”

He brief mentioned about the United States and Australia being accomplices of the crimes committed by the Indonesian military.

Managing Petroleum Fund and Pro-Poor Programs.

President JRH said that next week there will be a conference in Dili -organized by the World Bank and Transparency International regarding Petroleum Fund Performance. He said as of today “Timor Leste performance is number two in the World and number one in Asia” in regard to the management of the Petroleum Fund. The government does not have access to the Fund. The government only allocates the fund to any project after an approval by the Parliament through a long process of discussion. It is Timor Leste’s Parliament, not the government, that manages the Petroleum Fund. The President was proud of the management of the natural resources, but humbly acknowledged that they are created by God. He said that income increases with the increasing prize of oil. This, however, has an impact on the rising costs of living. He has created a program for direct cash distribution to Timorese over age of 60, each person gets \$30 per month and is distributed every six month - to benefit particularly the poor and those living in extremely remote areas. It is his view that during the economic crisis, it is the poor who suffers most. He travels around the country to distribute the money in the remote areas. Surprisingly, he said with a sense of humour, that in some districts like Oecussi more than a thousand people who were still under 60 have registered as being over 60. There is also money for the handicapped, the widows, and the orphans. Many have a doubt about this direct handout cash. Against this scepticism, the president argued that the elderly person and the poor will not immediately use this small handout money for holiday in Bali and for luxurious needs, but will spend it to meet daily basic necessities.

Fast Economic Growth

The President said that in 2011 Timor Leste is nominated as the 9th fastest economic growth in the world because of the injection of the money to the poor citizens.

Timor Leste is facing challenges in education and health:

- Reducing birth mortality: 50% of the birth mortality has been reduced.
- Increasing life-expectancy: life-expectancy has gone up to 62.5 years.
- School enrolments have increased.

- Elimination of illiteracy. It is the government target that “by 2015 there will be no more illiteracy in Timor Leste.” Adult literacy is being helped by the Cuban educators since early 2006 adopting program known in Cuba and other parts of Latin America: “**Yo! Si Puedo**” (Yes, I can). The President said: “Four districts including Oecussi, Manututu and two others are being declared free of illiteracy.” He said: “We hold ourselves responsible for our school enrolment for example to provide free water and free lunch. Although free lunch was provided, half of the school children in Watuberlico, a remote mountainous area, were not eating during lunch time simply because the lack of plates and spoons.”

He also mentioned without a further comment that Timor Leste still lacks of human resources.

The International Aid, he made mention, also has failed. As it is always the case, in his speeches he likes to entertain his audience with jokes. He referred to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd but he meant Prime Minister Julia Gillard. He said just hours after his meeting with PM Kevin Rudd, the latter unexpectedly had to resign and was replaced by the now current Prime Minister Gillard. “A few years ago I had a meeting with the Italian President Romano Prodi in the morning. In the afternoon he was forced out. I met with a Prime Minister of Japan. A few weeks later he was forced to resign. Shortly after my meeting with the Thailand Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, he was overthrown. I said to myself: Why don’t I go to North Korea! And why don’t I go back again to Canberra.” It is no wonder Barack Obama is reluctant to meet with him.

He reminded the audience not to undermine people’s capabilities to bring about changes.

The Significance of reconciliation and forgiveness.

President JRH said that many people cannot accept his position and that of President Xanana a few years ago, regarding forgiveness of the former enemies and opposition to the trial of the perpetrators. He said that President of Indonesia, SBY, paid a visit to the cemetery of the Indonesian soldiers in Dili a few years ago. Surprisingly, many Timorese who were there at the cemetery did not protest and demand justice but had gathered to forgive. After that he and the President SBY were driven passed the Parliament House which locates just the across the street from the National University of Timor Leste. With a sense of humour he said to the President SBY that in Dili students do not need transport to come to protest at the Parliament. And he told the President that there will be a lot of students in front of the university. As they were passing through the street between the University and the Parliament House everybody greeted President SBY in the Indonesian language: “*Selamat Pagi, Bapak Presiden*” (Good Morning, Mr President)

Many UN experts and the head of the UN in Dili who was a Japanese and international expert demanded justice. But President JRH said "I told them that they may have it in Japan or elsewhere, but not here in Dili". "The greatest act of justice is that we are here free today," he maintained. He encourages his people to look forward to a bright future instead of looking back to the past and being enchained by the darkness of the past.

After the President's speech, Professor Marcia Langton explained that His Excellency Mr Abel Gutterres, the Ambassador of Timor Leste to Australia, was not only a bus driver but also a resistance leader in Melbourne.

The most important gesture and moment of President JRH's visit to the 2011 Garma is The Signing of the **Memorandum of Understanding of Friendship** between Timor Leste and the Indigenous Australians by the President of Timor Leste and the Chairman of Youthu Yindi Foundation , **Galarrwuy Yunupingu AM**, right after the Presidents address.