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New offices for TimorGAP, new hope for pipeline negotiations



Timor-Leste's national oil company, Timor GAP (Gas and Petroleum), will be moving into new offices at Timor Plaza at the beginning of December, according to President and CEO Francisco da Costa Monteiro. As the newly-created business arm of the Timor-Leste state petroleum sector institutions, Timor GAP will be instrumental in shaping the industry's future – and that of the country's economic development over the coming decades.

TimorGAP's mandate is to participate in oil and gas businesses on behalf of the State. In practical terms, TimorGAP is empowered to participate in oil and gas exploration and development, as operator – either alone or as a joint partner

On the issue of Greater Sunrise: "There is much more hope now than ever before," Monteiro said, "If you look back at 2007, 2008, there was a lot of scepticism about the possibility of bringing in the pipeline". Monteiro explained that concerns about the technical feasibility of constructing the pipeline had been addressed following a Timor-Leste Government initiative to carry out a bathymetric survey, which had shown that the project could, indeed, be realised.

"This is now recognised and acknowledged by Woodside," Monteiro said, adding that the main focus of the negotiations was now centred around the commercial viability of the project. Monteiro said that he believed that the creation of TimorGAP, would open up the negotiation process to more creative commercial solutions: "By having a National Oil Company it will be very, very instrumental because then we can provide different commercial models," he said, "And so all I can say is we are actually moving closer to what we wanted, which is bringing the pipeline onshore".

If the negotiations were successful, Monteiro said, "The impact would be tremendous", adding that apart from the direct and indirect creation of hundreds, and possibly thousands of jobs for Timorese people, the "multiplier effect" of the wealth that could be generated would greatly stimulate the country's economy and development process. Beyond that, Monteiro added, "It would also strengthen the process of nation-building. Our independence is one of the big things that we have dreamed and achieved and we are proud of that. And the next thing is probably this one, and if we succeed, it will be our national pride. It will put into the mind of every Timorese that we can do it!"

Given the prominence of TimorGAP as the national oil company, it was important to find a prestigious location for the new offices. "Frankly speaking, there was no other choice but the Timor Plaza," Monteiro said, "Given the nature of TimorGAP's operations, we have to be professional and presentable. It's not just about presentation, either, but we have to have health, safety and environmental standards that are representative of the industry itself." Monteiro said that he was also impressed by the calibre of the other commercial tenants in the complex: "It will facilitate everything for business, it's very good because we can easily interact with many of the country's biggest companies, all in one building. We think we made a good choice by going into Timor Plaza". Monteiro also said that he expected that delegations of visiting petroleum industry representatives would also appreciate the new location, as they would also be able to lease short-term serviced office space and accommodation in the building.

"It's a one-stop-shop, everything packed under one roof", he said, "It will always be pleasing to work there, to be a part of it, to watch things moving economically. It's a commercial icon in the country."