

Hoping for a new dynamics in the Parliament

Author: Guteriano Neves, 4 September 2017

Today is the first plenary for the fourth legislative after a long process of negotiation that involves power bargaining among political elites. Regardless of what lies behind the bars, it is our expectation that for the next five years, we will witness different dynamic in the Parliament. The Parliament where it protects the very principle of power separation, rule of law, holding the executive to be accountable, contesting the programs from the executive and can truly represent or at least channel public concerns.

Parliament is the key institutions in Timor's political system, and any democratic society. Timorese vote to elect the members of the Parliament. And the government is pretty much the outcome of political dynamic from the parliament. Therefore, it is highly expected that the Parliament will hold the executive power to be accountable to the Parliament. This is the very basic notion of the separation of power that is enshrined in Timor's constitution.

Unfortunately, this has not been the case, at least during the last five years. What we have seen during the last five years is that the Parliament is a powerless institution that fails to play its roles based on the constitutional mandates.

We can debate about the underlining arguments that underline this. Politicians tend to mesmerize the public by using the terms like "national interests", or "peace and stability" or Timor's model of democracy. But it is always important to question the interests that underline this dynamic and the the dynamics that we claim to stand on.

The fact of the matter is that many Timorese are not satisfied with the way Parliament functions during the last five years. Just look at the way the budget is being discussed and approved, the productivity of the Parliament, and the quality of the debate that we have been witnessing during the last Parliament.

Indeed, the Parliament is at its lowest performance.

This has some political and economic ramifications for the way the society is being governed. Many policies are not really challenged or at least tested through the existing political system. Parliament tends to be the rubber stamp only for the

interests of the executive power.

This is the reality that we are facing. It is the challenge to our democratic institutions and the democratic values that we claim to stand for.

This is the reality that we have witnessed during the last five years.

And with this election, we need a new dynamic in the Parliament.

We need more constructive debates in the Parliament. The Government's programs need to be examined and tested through healthy and constructive debates in the Parliament.

We need more productive Parliament where the laws are discussed, debated and produced. So far, the output of the Parliament has been on the controversial resolutions that create more problems than addressing it. We need to move away from that. We need a parliament that can speak up what the public minds.

We need a parliament that can play oversight roles for the executive body. The parliament that can really protect the democratic values in the way the society is being governed.

BRAVO Timor-Leste