



SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



**MEDIA
RELEASE**

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Government recognizes World Press Freedom Day

Yesterday the Government of Timor-Leste expressed its support of World Press Freedom Day, proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1993 and celebrated each year since on the 3rd of May.

In a video message the Prime Minister, H.E. Dr. Rui Maria de Araújo, noted that “ensuring public access to information and protecting fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements” was a target of Goal 16 of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Regarding this goal to “promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies”, the Prime Minister said “the Government is committed to work even harder to achieve this goal, with the collaboration and participation of the whole society, including journalists and media.”

Press Freedom in Timor-Leste is guaranteed by the Constitution of Timor-Leste particularly Section 40 regarding “Freedom of speech and information” and Section 41 “Freedom of the press and mass media”. After so many years of media constraint under colonization and occupation those responsible for drafting the constitution understood the importance of press freedom.

Timor-Leste’s Media Law was passed by National Parliament and promulgated on 13 November 2014. The law set out to ensure freedom of the press and promote the necessary balance between the exercise of this fundamental freedom and other constitutionally protected rights and values. As well as seeking to strike the proper balance between rights and responsibilities, media regulations aim to encourage the development of this dynamic sector and support the development of its professional standards.

In March this year the independent Press Council was fully constituted with its five members including two representatives of journalists elected by fellow journalists, two citizens appointed by National Parliament and one representative of media bodies elected by colleagues. Amongst the Press Council’s responsibilities are the promotion of freedom of expression and independence of the media and the support of the development of professional, technical and analytical skills of journalists.

Spokesperson for the Sixth Constitutional Government, Minister of State Agio Pereira noted “The power of media was a key driver in advancing our struggle for self determination. On World Press Freedom Day we recognize the importance of press freedom to our democracy.”**ENDS**



Agio Pereira
+670 77045002
agio.pereira@cdm.gov.tl
govtlmedia@gmail.com
www.timor-leste.gov.tl