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Timor-Leste Commemorates the 13th Anniversary of the Restoration of Independence

Today Timor-Leste commemorated the 13th Anniversary of the restoration of Independence. Leaders gathered in Maliana, in the western district of Bobonaro for a special ceremony honoring the National Flag, community leaders and international individuals and organizations who assisted in the struggle for independence.

President of the Republic, Taur Matan Ruak, President of National Parliament, Vicente Guterres, Prime Minister, Dr. Rui Maria de Araújo, President of the Court of Appeal, Guilhermino da Silva, Commander of the F-FDTL, Major General Lere Anan Timur and members of National Parliament and Government along with Church, Community, Private Sector and Civil Society representatives assembled on the soccer field in Maliana to witness the National Flag Raising Ceremony at 9:00am.

During the Commemoration President Taur Matan Ruak delivered awards to Chiefs of Sucos who received them on behalf of winning Sucos in a competition aimed at improving healthy living standards and supporting best practices in nutrition. Winning Sucos have all seen marked improvement in health and nutrition through community action and education combined with Government services.

Awards were also presented to international individuals and organizations “for their contribution and support for Timor-Leste’s self-determination struggle.” The necklace of Timor-Leste was awarded to the group of Portuguese Speaking African Countries [PALOP], writer Noam Chomsky, Portuguese lawyer and politician João Soares, and posthumously to Anglican Priest Walter Lini, the founding Prime Minister of Vanuatu.

Those decorated with the medal of Timor-Leste included Kirsty Sword Gusmão, the former first lady, Gary Cunningham, the journalist killed in Balibó in 1975, and Bishop Manuel da Silva Martins. Several Australian and Portuguese activists were also recognized along with organizations such as the Asia Pacific Coalition for East Timor/Initiatives for International Dialogue (APCET/IID), the Friendship Association of Portugal and East Timor (APPTL), the East Timor Action Network (ETAN) of Canada, the East Timor Ireland Solidarity Campaign (ETISC) and the International Platform of Jurists for East Timor (PIJTTL).



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Australian activist Janelle Saffin expressed the appreciation of her fellow awardees saying that they were “very touched by the generosity of spirit of their Timorese friends and hosts.” She said that the people of Timor-Leste “have responded to the challenge of rebuilding the state and shattered lives with optimism, hope and hard work” and that it was “a very special day” to be awarded by a state “which was so long denied.”

Many people from surrounding communities attended and joined in joyful celebrations with traditional singing and dancing at the conclusion of the flag raising ceremony.

Spokesperson for the Government of Timor-Leste, Minister of State Agio Pereira noted “it is only right that on this special day we honor those who struggled for our independence. First of course we think of the National Liberation Combatants, many who lost their lives in the struggle and others who are sadly no longer with us. It is right that we also recognize those from other nations who were our brothers and sisters in the struggle. Today marked our thirteenth year. We must never forget the price paid by so many for our liberation and honor the sacrifice of those who have gone before us by an unwavering commitment to the sovereignty and development of our nation, a Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste many of them were never able to see become a reality.”**ENDS**



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