



SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



MEDIA RELEASE

2 June, 2015
Dili, Timor-Leste

The loss of a National Hero

“The youth must love this country and work hard for it”

The last words of La Sama

It is with deep regret that the Government of Timor-Leste received news this morning of the unexpected passing of Minister of State H.E. Fernando La Sama de Araújo. On behalf of the Government, Prime Minister H.E. Dr. Rui Maria de Araújo offered his heartfelt condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the Minister of State on this sad day for Timor-Leste.

Minister of State H.E. Fernando de Araújo was a leading historical figure in Timor-Leste's struggle for self-determination and went on to serve the country after the restoration of independence as Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation [2001-2002], President of National Parliament [2007-2012] and as senior member of Government since 2012. At the time of his passing His Excellency was Minister of State, Coordinating Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of Education.

Fernando La-Sama de Araújo was born to farming parents in Ainaro on the 26 of February 1963. His calm and traditional upbringing was forever interrupted by the 1975 occupation of Timor-Leste. In that year his family was massacred and life as part of a refugee community in the mountains began. As a 12 year-old boy he became deeply conscious of principles that would guide his actions for the rest of his life - the right to life and freedom from torture, fear and injustice.

After completing his secondary education in Dili, La Sama went onto study literature at the University of Udayana in Bali. He used this platform to begin organizing student movements in Bali against the Soeharto regime and the occupation of Timor-Leste. In 1988 along with some of his colleagues, La Sama formed *Resistência Nacional dos Estudantes de Timor-Leste*, the student resistance movement usually referred to as RENETIL. This group was a critical part of the resistance movement and the eventual restoration of independence.

In 1991 La Sama was arrested by the Indonesian Military and in 1992 convicted of subversion against the state. He was imprisoned until his conditional release in 1998.

La Sama then played a key role in the 1999 Referendum and the Restoration of Timor-Leste's



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independence in 2002. He established and was President of the Democratic Party since its formation in 2000. In 2001 he served in the II UNTAET Transitional Government as Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.

Between 2007 and 2012 La Sama served as the President of National Parliament and then 2012, with the Democratic Party as a part of a coalition Government, he served as Vice Prime Minister and Coordinator of Social Affairs. In the Sixth Constitutional Government, sworn into office in February this year, he was appointed as Minister of State, Coordinating Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of Education.

Spokesperson for the Government of Timor-Leste, Minister of State Agio Pereira noted “today Timor-Leste has lost a National Hero. The unexpected passing of La Sama is a great loss. His closeness to the suffering and hopes of our people motivated a life of service, humility, honesty and simplicity. He served us well, with class and compassion, and will forever have a place in our history, and in our hearts”. **ENDS**



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