



SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



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Government investigates following inspection of fishing vessels

Timor-Leste places a high value on our marine resources, the sustainability of fish stock and the preservation of protected species. The Government also recognizes the importance of properly conducted fishing agreements as an important and positive aspect of our national development and economic diversification.

Currently 15 Chinese fishing vessels are licensed to fish in Timorese waters under specific conditions and within the constraints of Timorese law. The licenses issued for these vessels by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries are valid from the 15th of November 2016 to the 15th of November 2017.

Between the 9th and 12th of February 2017 the National Directorate of Fisheries Inspection carried out a routine inspection of all 15 vessels in the Port of Caravela, Baucau. This inspection revealed the vessels were carrying an estimated 43 ton of shark, potentially contravening Timor-Leste's law and the terms of the fishing license granted by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

In response the Government, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, is following the procedures triggered when an inspection reveals a potential breach of law and/or conditions.

A Working Group comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the General Directorate of Customs, the Naval Component of the F-FDTL, the Maritime Unit of the PNTL, the PNTL Criminal Investigation Services, the Migration Service of the Ministry of the Interior, and the Prime Minister's Office has been established and will proceed with a full investigation. Depending on the results of this investigation further action will be taken as required by the laws of Timor-Leste and the conditions of the license.

The Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries has the exclusive competence under Timor-Leste's law to take these 'further actions' which may include fines and/or the suspension or revocation of a fishing license.

Government Spokesperson, Minister of State Agio Pereira said "the Government will follow the due process to ensure that the license holders are acting correctly and will do so in a manner that balances the rights of the license holders and their responsibilities to abide by the terms of their agreements and the laws of Timor-Leste."**ENDS**



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