



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

The Government of the Kingdom of Thailand contributes US\$25,000 to the UNDP RESPECT Program and donates 100 tons of Rice to the Timor-Leste Government.

***24 September 2004
Dili, Timor-Leste***

In a signing ceremony held in Dili today Ambassador Kulkumut Singhara Na. Ayudhaya of Thailand contributed USD\$ 25,000 to the UNDP RESPECT project to facilitate and complete the construction of a monument at the National Memorial Park in Metinaro, a town East of Dili, and 100 tons of rice to the Timor-Leste Government. Each donation is embodied in a separate Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Ambassador, Prime Minister Alkatiri and Special Representative of the Secretary General, Sukehiro Hasegawa respectively.

The memorial will commemorate those veterans and ex-combatants who lost their lives during the struggle for independence and the rice is for 'emergency humanitarian assistance in case of natural or man made disaster.'

Prime Minister Alkatiri said today, "I am humbled to receive this rice on behalf of the people of Timor-Leste, many who still suffer from poverty and hardship. My appreciation and thanks go to the people and Government of Thailand for their continued support of the difficult process of building a nation from the ashes of our troubled history. My government is committed to ensuring this rice gets to those people in need."

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The National Memorial Park Project is a national-level RESPECT project with a budget of US\$213,000. The park will consist of a monument and ossuaries, a chapel and cross, park facilities and a nature reserve. Erection of the monument and construction of the ossuaries will give respect and recognition to those who lost their lives fighting for independence, and will give families a physical space for reflection.

The Memorial Park inauguration ceremony was held on 20 August 2004 in the presence of 2000 people, including the President and the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, as well as many other government officials, development partners, veterans, ex-combatants, and community members.

It is planned that the project will be completed by 28 November 2004, the date of recognition of the first declaration of Independence, and will be inaugurated by President Xanana Gusmao and Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri.

Prime Minister Alkatiri also said, "It is satisfying to see the cumulative success of the RESPECT project which is managed by UNDP. The importance of the program is obvious in that we all want to see both the support of, and clear and public recognition of the sacrifices of the people of Timor-Leste in their fight for our country's Independence."

Both the Timor-Leste Government and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) will report the use of these donations to the Government of Thailand.

END

NB: The RESPECT program is the Recovery, Employment and Stability Program for Ex-combatants and community in Timor-Leste

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