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FRETILIN

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Fretilin criticises use of national flag on ballot paper

Fretilin, the largest political party in Timor-Leste (East Timor), today criticised the decision by four of the eight candidates in the April 9 presidential election to use the national flag as their symbol on the ballot paper.

The four are Jose Ramos Horta (independent), Avelinho Coelho (PST), Lucia Lobato (PSD) and Xavier Amaral (ASDT). The Fretilin presidential candidate Francisco Guterres “Lu’Olo” will use the party flag as his ballot symbol.

A senior Fretilin official, Filomeno Aleixio said it was dishonest and dangerous for the national flag to be used in this way, since the four candidates are running either as independents or on behalf of a political party.

“Use of the country’s flag on the ballot paper is a deliberate attempt to mislead and deceive an electorate where illiteracy rates are above 50 per cent,” he said.

“We also fail to see how each of these candidates is going to distinguish themselves on the ballot paper if they use the same symbol,” added Aleixo, a member of Fretilin’s national political commission.

He said the decision by the National Electoral Commission to permit the use of the national flag as a ballot symbol seriously undermines the fairness and transparency of the election.

Fretilin asked the Court of Appeal to set aside the Commission’s decision but the court yesterday ruled that the use of the national flag on the ballot paper was not illegal.

Meanwhile, the campaign by Fretilin candidate Lu’Olo continued yesterday in Maliana, Bobonaro district on the border with Indonesia. The rally was a big success drawing around 8000 supporters.

Lu’Olo said the turnout showed he enjoyed strong support in the western districts of Timor-Leste despite attempts to turn the population against Fretilin.

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