PRIME
MINISTER

ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO

ON THE OCCASION OF THE SWEARING-IN CEREMONY OF 12 THIRD-CLASS JUDGES AND JUDGE ADMINISTRATORS

Dili Court of First Instance
11 November 2026

Palácio do Governo,
Avenida Presidente Nicolau Lobato,
Dili, Timor-Leste

Excellency, the President of the Court of Appeal and President of the Superior Council of the Judiciary,

Minister of Justice,

Members of the Government and Other Organs of Sovereignty,

Distinguished Members of the Judiciary,

Coordinator of the Working Group on Justice Sector Reform,

Director of the Legal and Judicial Training Centre,

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to join you at this ceremony, and a source of great pride to reflect on how far our State has come.

It is particularly significant to witness today the swearing-in of 12 Third-Class Judges, following the completion of the probationary period of the Seventh Initial Training Course for entry into the judicial career, as well as the swearing-in of the Judge Administrators.

Today marks another lasting milestone in the consolidation of justice in Timor-Leste.

As established by our Constitution and the Law on Judicial Organisation, enshrined in Law No. 25/2021, as amended, the administration of justice is not merely an exercise of sovereign authority. Above all, it is a sacred pillar of our State, exercised in the name of the people and requiring absolute independence from all other branches of State power.

The twelve judges taking office here today have completed a demanding stage of preparation and are formally embarking on a new phase of their professional careers.

Under Article 40 of Decree-Law No. 10/2020 of 25 March, as amended by Decree-Law No. 28/2024 of 3 July, successful completion of the probationary period leads to your permanent appointment as Third-Class Judges and your entry into active service.

This is the well-deserved culmination of years of effort, learning and rigorous training at the Legal and Judicial Training Centre (CFJJ). It marks the assumption of full autonomy, which is meaningful only when guided by impartiality, independence and an unwavering commitment to ethical and legal principles.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To be a judge in Timor-Leste, in light of our history and the sacrifices we have endured to achieve freedom, is not simply to practise a profession. It is to be a guardian of the rights, freedoms and guarantees of every citizen.

Your independence was not granted to you as a personal or professional privilege. It was entrusted to you by the Timorese people, through the Constitution and the law, as the strongest guarantee that every dispute, every uncertainty and every injustice will be addressed strictly in accordance with the law and your own conscience.

We are well aware of the challenges ahead. The volume of cases, the complexity of disputes brought before the courts and the legitimate expectations of our society demand swift, transparent and efficient responses.

In this context, the role of the Judge Administrators who are taking up their respective appointments today, in accordance with the Law on Judicial Organisation, is particularly important.

To the Judge Administrators, I ask you to look beyond case management. You are also responsible for the organisation and proper functioning of the courts, through responsible leadership and by setting an example.

It is essential to ensure that our courts remain institutions whose doors are open to every citizen – places where ordinary people never experience delayed justice because of failures in management or planning. The success of our justice system depends on your ability to combine technical rigour with approachable, dynamic and forward-looking leadership.

Dear Newly Appointed Third-Class Judges,

As you put on your judicial robes in your new capacity as judges in active service, remember that they do not conceal who you are. On the contrary, they highlight your

responsibility to society. The judicial robe symbolises the scales of fairness and the shield of democratic legality. The entire country places great hope in you.

The path you now begin to follow independently will demand great intellectual courage, profound human sensitivity and unwavering moral integrity. The decisions you make will shape lives, help resolve conflicts within neighbourhoods and communities, and build our people's trust in their institutions, day by day.

I therefore wish to express my profound appreciation and gratitude to the Superior Council of the Judiciary, the Court of Appeal and the Legal and Judicial Training Centre for their tireless work in assessment and training, which has made this day possible.

I conclude by addressing all those taking office today – Third-Class Judges and Judge Administrators – to offer my warmest congratulations and wish you strength and courage in fulfilling your responsibilities.

May your journey always be illuminated by the Constitution and the laws of our Republic and guided by the profound dignity that the People of Timor-Leste have always demonstrated and so richly deserve.

Thank you very much.
Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão