

Speech
by Ambassador Tetsuya KIMURA
on the occasion of Award Ceremony for Ambassador Kimura
at the Presidential Palace
December 16, 2025

H.E. President Dr. Jose Ramos-Horta,
Members of the Government of Timor-Leste
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Our Timorese friends,
Members of the Japanese community,
Journalists present here today,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

○ It is a great honor for me to receive this decoration today. I am deeply grateful for the kind consideration from H.E. Mr. President. It is a truly moving moment for me after three years of service in Timor-Leste.

○ I would like to express my sincere gratitude once again to Mr. President for the guidance and assistance extended to me during my tenure in Timor-Leste and the continuous support towards Japan and the Japanese people over a longer period of time, even since before my tenure.

○ Looking back the last three years, it was a privilege to witness the historic moment of Timor-Leste's official accession to the ASEAN.

○ I first visited Timor-Leste in 2000 as a young diplomat posted to our Embassy in Jakarta. I revisited Timor-Leste in 2008 when Japan led the discussion on Timor-Leste at the UN Security Council. Through my assignment as the Ambassador, which started in 2022, I have been fortunate to personally observe Timor-Leste's nation-building process up until the accession to the ASEAN. Japan has been assisting Timor-Leste's nation-building efforts since 1999 and will continue walking side by side to address Timor-Leste's future endeavors.

○ Bilateral relations between our two countries have further developed through the high-ranking visits, starting with the visit to Japan by Prime Minister, H.E. Xanana Gusmão in December 2023. The prime ministers of our two countries agreed to elevate the relationship to a “Comprehensive Partnership”, which was further strengthened by Mr. President’s visit to Japan in August this year. Personally, accompanying Your Excellency, Mr. President, your visit to Japan was the highlight of my diplomatic career. It was a supreme pleasure to together experience Japanese food, daily life, and history with a President, who possesses such a deep knowledge of Japanese culture, who is also a fan of Director Akira Kurosawa, and with good understanding of the “samurai” spirit - courtesy towards others, keeping one's word, and the importance of integrity.

○ It is difficult to reflect on three years in a brief address, but one thing I consciously endeavored to do was to visit rural areas as much as possible. Upon recounting, it turns out that I visited over 90 villages across every municipality during the past three years. I made these visits on such occasions as inaugurations for school buildings, health centers and water facilities. I have also visited farmers, especially women's groups, who work for the cultivation of fresh flowers or vegetables. Over 155 local infrastructure were constructed during my three-year tenure, and these efforts will continue even after my departure. The warm welcomes extended to me by the residents in many villages will remain as unforgettable memories.

○ Some important projects are advancing between our two countries, including the construction of a passenger terminal at the Presidente Nicolau Lobato International Airport, the Guido Valadares National Hospital project, and private investment initiatives such as shipbuilding and a mega solar power plant. I sincerely appreciate the members of the Government of Timor-Leste for their dedication and close partnership. While we were not able to complete all the preparations during my tenure, I look forward to visiting Timor-Leste again as a tourist after my retirement to see these projects completed and witnessing Timor-Leste's further development with my own eyes.

○ People to people exchange is also our priority. Technical Intern Trainee Program has started in Japan for Timor-Leste. Increased number of Timorese youths are now taking Japanese language courses. Through our scholarship and youth exchange programs, we expect that more Timorese and Japanese youths will strengthen their friendship in the future.

○ To conclude, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude once again for the friendship, cooperation, and support extended to me and my family by so many partners during my stay. My wife and I are very grateful for the kindness and close friendship shown to us by the members of the diplomatic corps. I recall at times seeing some of you more frequently than my own family. I also received much encouragement and advice from numerous Timorese government officials regarding the implementation of cooperative projects. To the members of the Japanese community, thank you for the close cooperation through the activities conducive to the society in Timor-Leste and for the participation at such events as the Japan Festival. I truly respect the long-standing efforts of each Japanese citizen, working together with the Timorese people at the community level. Furthermore, we have many Timorese friends, who are dedicated to people-to-people exchanges between our two countries. I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to our Timorese friends. I wholeheartedly thank also all the journalists for covering many of our Embassy activities including those in remote areas.

Last but not least, my appreciation goes to the Timorese and Japanese colleagues of my Embassy and JICA. Without their support, I could not have completed my three-year assignment. Finally, I am deeply grateful to my wife and our daughter for living with me in Timor-Leste, enjoying our time here, participating in many exchanges, and introducing Japanese culture. I would like to mention that my wife participated in Ikebana, flower arrangement, workshops not only in Dili but also in municipalities, fostering friendships with many local women. She wishes to continue these workshops in the future.

○ Timor-Leste has reached a turning point with acceding to the ASEAN, gaining a significant opportunity for development through the

integration process. I am confident that Timor-Leste will make the most of this opportunity to achieve sustainable growth. Japan will continue walking alongside Timor-Leste as a trustful and heart to heart partner. I wish happiness and good health to each and every one of you present here today and all the people in Timor-Leste.

Viva Povu Timor-Leste!