



JUDICIAL SYSTEM MONITORING PROGRAMME
PROGRAMA DE MONITORIZAÇÃO DO SISTEMA JUDICIAL

Press Release

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THE SUAI DISTRICT COURT IN THE POST-CRISIS PERIOD

After the crisis occurred in Timor-Leste, we know that all kinds of activities experienced obstacles in their implementation including the justice sector and the like. Now, however, things are starting to run well again although there is still some stagnation, including in the Suai District Court.

On 26-28 February 2007, the Suai District Court commenced to function again as before. Proceedings were advanced to hear all cases arising in the jurisdiction of the Suai Court such as Bobonaro, Same, Ainaro and Suai itself. Minor cases no longer need to be delayed as they have been to date.

In regard to those proceedings, JSMP very much respects the performance of the national judges because even though not accompanied by an international judge, they are able to make just decisions with no legal defects. This is a sign that the national judges, even though they continue to be accompanied by an International Judge, are already able to be autonomous and this indicates positive steps for the justice system in Timor-Leste.

JSMP hopes that work patterns such as these continue to increase so that later, after all the international judges have returned to their own jurisdictions, the National Judges no longer need to be hesitant in discharging their duties and can make decisions without the burden of worrying about how to deal with cases in a calm and patient way and how cases can be resolved without the influence of certain persons who have sway in the community.

The National Judge who is conducting proceedings in the Suai Court is Judge Jose Maria de Araujo, S.H. The Prosecution is represented by Prosecutor Reinato Bere Nahak, S.H. and the defence lawyer is Public Lawyer Sebastião Amado Nheu de Almeida, S.H. They are all from the local area and have strong principles so the judicial system in this region can function smoothly and there is no longer the suspicion that the judicial system in Timor-Leste does not function at all. They want the judicial system, though with limited capacity and facilities, to

be maintained so that members of the community who want to seek justice can find it in the Court.

Although the proceedings that were scheduled previously have not been conducted in accordance with the existing schedule due to lack of sufficient facilities to bring suspects to Court and a lack of good communication between the Police and the Court, JSMP very much respects the punctuality of these court actors. This is a very meaningful development as it is a habit of all Timor-Leste people – including court actors - not to respect time. JSMP notes that with all the existing limitations, these court actors are still determined to implement justice consistently with their tasks.

JSMP recommends to the government to support all national court actors as much as possible so that the courts of Timor-Leste can function again as a place where justice and truth are sought. JSMP hopes that the government can pay proper attention to this issue so that national court actors can be sustained in all existing District Courts; namely, the Suai District Court, the Oe-cusse District Court, the Baucau District Court and the Dili District Court as well as the Timor-Leste High Court, in order to improve and further perfect the judicial system in Timor-Leste as well as better facilitating all citizens making use of the Courts as places where justice and truth are sought based on the principles of speed, justice, low costs and the like.

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