

Council comes out against partition of Papua for West Irian Jaya province

Jayapura — Nethy Dharma Somba

The Papuan Legislative Council announced Friday it would oppose the partitioning of Papua to create West Irian Jaya province.

The decision, which was reached during a plenary session presided over by council deputy speaker Komarudin Watubun, will be brought to Jakarta for discussion at a Feb. 20 meeting between representatives of the proposed West Irian Jaya province, Papua province and the central government.

During the session Friday, the councillors concluded there was no need at present to divide Papua, and any future divisions would have to be done according to Article 76 of the 2001 Papua Special Autonomy Law. The article states that any partition of the province must first be approved by the Papuan People's Assembly (MRP).

If the central government insists on establishing West Irian Jaya province outside of the conditions laid down by the 2001 law, the Papuan council said it would call another plenary session to determine its next move.

However, four factions in the council said their only objection to the establishment of West Irian Jaya, which is already operating as a de facto province, was that the government circumvented the 2001 law in forming the territory.

Members of the Prosperous Peace Party faction said West Irian Jaya province could not be officially established until the central government issued an instructional regulation on the implementation of articles in the 2001 special autonomy law, including the one on the partitioning of Papua province.

The Joint Faction expressed its full support for the decision to oppose the establishment of West Irian Jaya, while waiting for an instructional regulation in line with the 2001 law.

Albert Yogi, chairman of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle faction, said what the legislative council was opposed to was the process by which the new province was created.

The MRP, in an earlier report to the legislative council, said now was not the appropriate time to partition Papua province, and any future partition had to be done according to Article 76 of the 2001 law.

If the central government insists on moving forward with creation of the new province, the MRP will submit seven requirements the government must meet.

These requirements include a promise not to increase the flow of immigration to Papua, an assurance that Papua will still constitute one economic and sociocultural entity, and the promise of development for Papuans under their special autonomy status.

Source: The Jakarta Post