

## Australia must end its occupation of Timor Sea: Observer

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Kupang, E Nusa Tenggara (ANTARA News) - Ferdi Tanoni, an observer of the Timor Sea issue, expressed support to the people of Timor Leste for demanding the establishment of maritime boundaries and for urging Australia to end its occupation of Timor Sea.

"The struggle of the people of Timor Leste is similar to that of the West Timor people living in East Nusa Tenggara as 90 percent of the natural resources in Timor Sea, such as oil and gas, are fully under the control of Australia," he informed the press here on Thursday.

In response to this, Tanoni believes that the delimitation of territorial waters using international principles or a median line in Timor Sea was the right choice to ensure that the natural resources in the Timor Gap would benefit the people of both countries.

The author of a book "Skandal Laut Timor, Sebuah Barter Politik Ekonomi Canberra-Jakarta" (Timor Sea Scandal, a Political Economy Barter between Canberra and Jakarta) also urged Canberra to restore the rights of the West Timor people over the Pasir Island cluster, which has been claimed by Australia as part of its natural reservation area.

The Pasir Island cluster, which has abundant oil deposits and marine biota, was considered as a resting place for Indonesian traditional fishermen since centuries, long before Captain Samuel Ashmore from England landed on the cluster of islands in 1811.

Tanoni also urged President Joko Widodo to annul the entire agreement of maritime boundaries between Indonesia and Australia regarding the Timor Sea and Arafuru Sea, which had been reached since 1974-1977 as well as the cooperation agreements between the two countries, which were highly detrimental to the people of Indonesia in West Timor.

"Jakarta and Dili should continue to urge Canberra to permanently set the boundaries in Timor Sea as West Timor has been managed as an independent state, which would influence the maritime boundaries that should be trilaterally negotiated," he affirmed.

Earlier, a group of some five thousand people under the name of the Timor Sea Anti-Occupation Movement staged a demonstration in front of the Australian Embassy in Dili, the capital of Timor Leste, last Tuesday.

The demonstrators urged for a settlement of the sea dispute, referring to the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the center line (median line) as set out in the international law.

The demonstrators claimed that Australia had not respected Timor Leste's sovereignty since it did not demonstrate good will to resolve the boundary dispute between the two countries in Timor Sea.

"Australia must immediately work towards solving the dispute of Timor Gap with the government of Timor Leste. Do not just use its political and economic powers to steal the resources in Timor Sea," the movement's spokesman, Juvinal Dias, stated in his oration.

According to Dias, Australia has been exploiting the resources in Timor Sea for over four decades.

Since 1999 or soon after the polls in East Timor, Australia has managed to earn profit of some US\$5 billion from the Timor Gap, aiming to delay the process of reaching a trilateral negotiation with Timor Leste and Indonesia. (\*)