



Australian ambassador meets VP, discusses executions

Ina Parlina

THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

Vice President Jusuf Kalla said on Tuesday that Indonesia and Australia understood each other's positions regarding Jakarta's plan to execute a number of death row convicts, including two Australians.

Kalla said the execution plan was discussed during a meeting with the new Australian ambassador to Indonesia, Paul Grigson, who paid a visit to Kalla at the vice presidential offices on Tuesday, but the issue was only briefly discussed.

"The two countries understand each other's position. We understand Australia and Australia must understand our position," he told reporters on Tuesday.

Grigson submitted his credentials to President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo earlier last month. At that time, Jokowi told Grigson, along with Philippine Ambassador Maria Lumen Banzon Isleta and four other new foreign ambassadors, not to let Indonesia's execution policy hamper bilateral ties.

Two Australian drug convicts, Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran, as well as Filipina Mary

Jane Fiesta Veloso, are on the list of death row inmates set to be executed soon.

Attorney General M. Prasetyo has said his office is waiting for the results of the legal steps taken by Sukumaran and Chan, as well as the case-review petitions filed by two other drug convicts, Serge Areski Atlaoui of France and Martin Anderson of Ghana, before carrying out the second phase of executions after those in January.

The Supreme Court previously rejected a second case review petition filed by Veloso in a ruling that Prasetyo said cleared the way for the Attorney General's Office (AGO) to carry out executions.

"I think there will always be ups and downs between our two countries. I think the Indonesian government understands the Australian position on the death penalty issue," Grigson said, adding that Australia believed Sukumaran and Chan had changed from the persons they were when caught for drug trafficking.

Grigson also said it was also important to see how the legal process played out.

Both Prasetyo and Cabinet Secretary Andi Widjajanyo said the

government remained on track in its execution plan, rejecting speculation that the executions had been postponed due to pressure, particularly from foreign countries.

Local and international human rights activists have also repeatedly criticized Indonesia's intention to execute death row convicts, particularly those guilty of drug offenses.

"Rest assured there was never any doubt; we never changed our mind. We will carry out the executions of those drug convicts whose cases have reached their final stages," Prasetyo said on Monday.

Prasetyo said the upcoming Asia-Africa Summit, a major event of Asian and African nations where world leaders and countries representatives will be present, would not interfere with his office's execution plan.

Andi, meanwhile, said, "the President's directive on the executions remains the same; there is no change [in plan], including ahead of the Asia-Africa conference."

The Asia-Africa Summit will be held in Jakarta on April 22 and 23, while the commemoration event will be held in Bandung, West Java, on April 24.