

JAYAPURA, 04 April 2006 - Barnabas Suebu was officially named the winner of Papua's direct gubernatorial election following a 10-hour plenary session of the provincial General Elections Commission (KPUD) on Monday. In the March 10 election, former governor Barnabas and his running mate, Golkar Party legislator Alexander Hessegem, garnered 354,763 of the over 1.1 million valid votes. Over 17,000 votes were declared invalid and thrown out.

Barnabas was followed by Lukas Enembe with 333,629 votes, John Ibo with 258,472 votes, Constant Karma with 112,032 votes and Dick Henk Wabiser with 67,678 votes. The plenary session, which started at 9 a.m., was marked by repeated interruptions by four members of Lukas' campaign team, who demanded the Papua KPUD postpone the session until the vote count in Yahukimo regency was repeated.

"The Yahukimo KPUD did not hold a plenary session to count the votes, but the result was simply announced by its chairman ...," said a member of the Lukas camp, Ham Pagawak. The interruptions forced the KPUD members to suspend the session twice before Papua Police chief Insp. Gen. Tommy Jacobus escorted Lukas' campaign members from the room.

Papua KPUD chairman Marthen Ferry Kareth said allegations of fraud should be taken to the Supreme Court, along with any evidence, because the KPUD was not authorized to rule on allegations of irregularities in Yahukimo. "Please raise your objections with the Supreme Court, along with strong evidence," Marthen said. Lukas' camp claims it lost 11,000 votes, which it alleges went to Barnabas.

After it was agreed that all allegations of voting irregularities would be taken to the courts, witnesses for the five gubernatorial candidates signed the vote count reports from the province's 19 regencies and one city. All of the candidates except for Constant Karma and John Ibo attended the session, but Lukas left during the lunch break and did not return until after the session had ended.

Following the session, Barnabas, who was backed by a coalition of five parties, including the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), thanked voters and promised to work with people from all political parties to build the province. "I express my gratitude and appreciation for the trust that has been placed in me. This trust is an honor, an honor that carries a big responsibility," he told journalists.

Responding to the allegation of fraud, Barnabas urged that the matter be taken to court, where he said he was ready to face any charges. Lukas campaign team member Muhammad Musa'ad said his camp would take the matter to court as a "political lesson" for all Papuans. Papua KPUD chairman Marthen said the candidates had three days to challenge the result of the election at the Supreme Court, through the Papua High Court.

"If the legal process changes the result of the election, Papua KPUD is ready to hold another

plenary session. But if the decision of the court is the same (as KPUD's), I ask everyone to respect the Supreme Court's decision," he said.