

**Biak, Papua. The government on Monday officially returned to Japan the remains of 291 Japanese soldiers who died in the Biak region during World War II.**

**The hand over was conducted at a ceremony at the World War II memorial monument at Parai village in Biak city with Home Affairs Ministry official Masykur representing Indonesia and Manabu Mishikabo representing Japan.**

Also present at the occasion were Biak district deputy head Alimuddin Sabe, an official from the Japanese Embassy in Jakarta and representatives of the deceased's families and the local community.

Masykur said the remains had been recovered and collected to enable the Japanese government to honor its citizens who had died while serving their country in the war against the Allied forces.

"By returning the Japanese soldiers' remains to their families and the Japanese government, it is hoped that the spirits of those killed in the line of duty to their state and nation during the war can finally rest in peace," Masykur said.

Masykur also expressed his gratitude to the Biak administration, the Papua provincial government and the local community who supported the implementation of the cooperation program between the Indonesian and Japanese governments.

"On behalf of the central government, I also would like to thank all the parties involved for having conducted the recovery and collection activities smoothly and according to schedule," he said.

Alimuddin said he hoped the program to recover and return the Japanese war dead's remains would have a positive impact on the local community.

He asked the Japanese government to assist the Indonesian government in fighting poverty and ignorance and underdevelopment, especially in Biak and its surroundings.

"I hope the cooperation that has been in existence since April 1993 will have a positive effect on Papua's society and development, especially in Biak Numfor," he said.

Kimihiko Yokoyama, a representative of the deceased soldiers' families, said the return of their remains to Japan was a matter of great relief for the families and the Japanese government.

"On behalf of my family and the government, I would like to express my gratitude to the local community and governments for helping to get our soldiers' remains sent back to Japan," Yokoyama said.