

Quake study in five districts

NSC 28.9.2017 4
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KOTA KINABALU: An elaborate study on possible earthquake threats is being conducted in five districts in Sabah.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) geologist, Prof Dr Felix Tongkul who is leading the study said their attention would focus on Lahad Datu, Tawau, Kunak, Ranau and Kundasang.

He disclosed that studies on the matter had begun more than 10 years, when no one saw any quake threat in Sabah until the 2015 earthquake which struck Ranau.

The magnitude of 6.0 on the Richter scale on June 5 that year lasted for 30 seconds, and was the strongest to affect Malaysia since 1976.

Dr Felix said that quake studies would be a continuous effort with no time frame in sight.

"It has to be continuous with constant monitoring with indepth study carried out," he said after receiving research grant of RM50,000.

The time-consuming study needs funding to pay for assistant researchers, he told reporters here after receiving the research award at UMS here yesterday.

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Dr Felix and Prof Dr. Awang Bono were two top-notch researchers who received the RM50,0000 grant each.

According to him, the five districts are identified as potential high-risk quake hotspots.

Nevertheless, he said other areas could also be a potential quake threats.

From his studies, he said nearly the whole of Sabah has potential to be quake hotspots but the risk level defers based on the seismic activity.

He added that a deeper understanding of the quake threats calls for indepth studies. The outcome would be important for the authorities to make early preparations in disaster management.

Dr Felix said the research work would be in collaboration with several universities like Cambridge University which has experts on the subject along with the Malaysia Meteorological Department.

He advised the people not to worry about tremors of quake, but those staying in high risk areas must be prepared.

"What is important is for the community to have more knowledge about earthquake and as of now, the knowledge is very minimal," he said, adding that early education on earthquake would be good for pupils and students.

On the award, Dr Felix said it was a top accolade given to UMS researchers. Other awards were given to Social Science research category through researcher Dr. Muhammad Idris Bullare and Assoc. Prof Dr Kenneth Francis Rodrigues (Science category). The duo received a certificate and research grant of RM30,000 each.

Other recipients included Eko Prayitno Joko (social science) Dr. Ching Fui Fui @ Faihana Ching Abdullah (science) with each receiving RM20,000 grant. The grants were presented by UMS vice-chancellor Prof Dr D. Kamarudin D Mudin.