

Geologist suggests more tsunami siren installed in Tawau

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TAWAU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah geologist Prof Dr Felix Tongkul has suggested for more tsunami siren to be installed along the coast in Tawau because of the risk of being threatened by the seismic seawave due to its location near the tsunami source, namely Indonesia and the Philippines.

He said he would bring the matter up to the Malaysian Meteorological Department.

"Tsunami can reach Tawau in half an hour and the only preparation we have is the siren, where there is only one, which is not enough.

"It is better to have the siren at all places because where there is a tsunami, everybody hears the warning siren," he told reporters after presenting a paper on 'Tsunami Disaster in Tawau' in conjunction with a public education programme on Tawau Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster here yesterday.

Earlier, when presenting the paper, Tongkul said tsunami,



Prof Dr Felix Tongkul

just like earthquake, could not be predicted when it would strike.

"Tsunami can be produced along the Manila Trench, Mindoro Trench, Cotabato Trench in the Philippines, as well as the North Sulawesi Trench in Indonesia, while underwater landslide can happen at the slopes of the Sabah seabed in the South China Sea,"

he added.

He said a tsunami simulation showed that the tsunami waves reached Sabah between 30 and 120 minutes with the waves between one and five metre high.

On the tsunami threat in Tawau, he said it depended on the width of the seabed in Tawau, as well as its distance from the tsunami source.

"A shallow seabed slow down the speed of the tsunami waves and unfortunately, Tawau has a narrow seabed (10 to 20km width) and Tawau is located about 300 km from the nearest tsunami source, which is the Sulawesi Trench," he added.

Tongkul also expressed the need for a detailed mapping of high-risk areas to identify areas for evacuation and the routes.

He said a computer simulation to predict the arrival of a tsunami and height of its waves, as well as distance to enter land, should be done as accurately as possible.