

5.2 quake jolts Ranau

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KOTA KINABALU: Hundreds of people dashed out of their homes as a powerful 5.2 magnitude earthquake hit Ranau at 9.06pm.

Over a hundred climbers at Mount Kinabalu were immediately evacuated from their hostels close to the 4,095 summit to safety area of a helipad minutes after the earthquake hit the district.

"All are safe in Mount Kinabalu. They have all gathered at the assembly area," Sabah Parks Director Jamili Nais said in an immediate response to tremors. An immediate operation was conducted to bring down the climbers to safety.

Police, firemen and other agencies are combing through the Ranau district to check on damages and any casualties though immediate checks found no serious damages within the areas.

"Everything started shaking and lasted a few seconds. I just ran out of my chalet. It was very strong," said Lee Kuat Hou, a guest at Taman Kinabalu in Kundasang who saw others also coming out of their accommodations.

A Ranau civil servant, S. Jocelyna said that the three seconds or so of shaking was very violent.

"My homestay was shaking very violently. I am still shocked and it's really frightening," said Tracy, a guest at Kundasang homestay.

A 2.8 magnitude aftershock was recorded at 9.27pm.

As of 10pm, both police and the Fire and Rescue Department said there were no immediate reports of



ABOVE: The products knocked off the shelves at a supermarket last night.



The climbers at Laban Rata gathering at the helipad for safety.

serious damages or casualties as they continue to receive feedback from various areas.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) geologist, Dr Felix Tongkul confirmed that this was a new earthquake, and not a follow up of the June 2015 quake.

The Malaysian Meteorological Department (MMD) issued a preliminary statement last night that the 9.06pm quake occurred at a depth of 5km, while the United State Geological Society (USGS)

saw a preliminary result of a depth of 10km with the epicentre located in Ranau (6.037°N 116.606°E).

MMD stated that there was no tsunami warning.

The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment, Datuk Seri Panglima Masidi Manjun later tweeted that he has ordered a temporary suspension on all climbing activities on Mount Kinabalu and that all climbers and mountain guides are to return to Sabah Park Headquarters imme-

diately, based on advice by Sabah Parks Director.

While Ranau and Kundasang area felt more violent shakes, it could not be immediately ascertained if there were rockfalls or landslides at Mount Kinabalu summit or areas around it.

In June 2015, 18 climbers and guides were killed in the 6.1 magnitude earthquake that hit the western side of Mount Kinabalu itself and triggered severe damages across Ranau and Kundasang

which is still recovering in its aftermath.

The latest earthquake tremors were also felt on the western face of the Mount Kinabalu from Kota Belud, Tamparuli, Kiulu and the city here while residents in further areas like Penampang and Papar also reported experiencing the tremors.

Supermarkets in Kota Belud and Tamparuli reported that the shaking had knocked a large number of its products off the shelves.