

# Aceh quake rattles Malaysia

NST 12/4/12 MS1

**TSUNAMI ALERT LIFTED:** Meteorological Department to continue monitoring

## KUALA LUMPUR

**A** MASSIVE 8.6-magnitude earthquake hit the Aceh region yesterday, triggering widespread panic and prompting tsunami alerts around the region.

Tremors hit parts of Peninsular Malaysia and even Singapore, following the quake that struck 431km off Banda Aceh, the United States Geological Survey said.

It was followed by an 8.2-magnitude aftershock.

Terrified residents poured into the streets of Banda Aceh, which was devastated by a 9.1-magnitude

quake in 2004 that triggered an Indian Ocean tsunami, killing 230,000 people, including 170,000 in Aceh province.

The 4.39pm earthquake was felt as far away as southern India and Thailand as residents reported the tremors on their Twitter and Facebook accounts.

Malaysian Meteorological Department geophysical and tsunami division head Dr Mohd Rozaidi Che Abas said the department had issued a warning to the public to stay away from beaches in Kedah, Perlis, Langkawi, Penang and Perak.

"We will continue to monitor the movement of the tsunami, if any. If



People fleeing Banda Aceh after the earthquake yesterday. Reuters pic

necessary, we will issue an evacuation warning," he said at 6pm yesterday.

The warning was lifted with another advisory at 10pm.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration had estimated tsunami-wave arrival times for George Town at 9.11pm

yesterday and Port Dickson, 1.43am today.

The centre had also issued an Indian Ocean-wide tsunami watch in effect for Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Australia, Myanmar, Thailand, Maldives, Malaysia, Mauritius, Reunion, Seychelles, Pakistan, Somalia, Oman, Madagascar, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen,

Comores, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Mozambique, Kenya, Crozet Islands, Kerguelen Islands, South Africa and Singapore.

"This bulletin is issued as advice to government agencies. Only national and local government agencies have the authority to make decisions regarding the official state of alert in

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# Malaysian students reported safe

NSR 12/4/12 MS 9.

**ASSURANCE:** They have taken refuge on higher ground

## KUALA LUMPUR

**M**ALAYSIAN students in Indonesia, which was on high alert for tsunami threats yesterday, were safe, according to the Malaysian embassy in Jakarta.

Education attache Ludinata Misnun said there were 5,645 Malaysian students in Indonesia.

Only 573 of these students are located in three of the 10 regions that were issued tsunami warnings by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre: Aceh, Padang and Bali.

Ludinata said the 228 students in Bali, 206 in Aceh and 139 in Padang were told to observe the standard operating procedure after experiencing any natural disaster.

"They are all on higher ground. For the moment, they are safe and none of the students is injured. If the need arises, we will evacuate them to Medan," he added.

The situation was under control, he said.

The tsunami alert had been issued after an 8.6-magnitude earthquake struck the west coast of northern Sumatra.

## INDONESIA QUAKE



Malaysian Embassy in Medan head of chancery Nor Azhar Hajis said the earthquake had happened at 3.38pm western Indonesian time (4.38pm in Malaysia).

The embassy had been in contact with Malaysian students in Aceh who reported that all was well.

For more information, please contact the Malaysian consul general in Medan 24-hour operations room at +62614531342 / +62614535271 / +62614523992.

Alternatively, contact the



Women weeping on a street in Banda Aceh after a strong earthquake struck off Indonesia yesterday. Reuters pic

Malaysian embassy in Jakarta at +622152904081 / +62215224947 ext 3023 or email maljakarta@kln.gov.my.

Meanwhile, *New Straits Times* ad sales executive Shereen Wong Wai See, who had just landed on Thailand's Koh Lipe island (close to Langkawi) yesterday, said everyone

had rushed up to the hills after a tsunami siren was sounded.

When contacted, she had been waiting for more information on top of the hill for three hours and had not seen any sign of a tsunami.

"We had just touched down on the island and people were grab-

bing their luggage and running.

"We had no idea what was happening because everyone was speaking in Thai and we could not converse with them."

Wong and her friends, Lina Lim and Hyda Daut, who were on holiday, had followed the crowd up the hill to the Mountain Resort.

# Chaos reigns in Banda Aceh after quake

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their area and any action to be taken," it stated.

The centre said earthquakes of this size could generate a tsunami that could affect coastlines across the entire Indian Ocean basin.

A tsunami is a series of waves and the time between successive waves can be between minutes and one hour.

The *Jakarta Globe* reported that Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said that there was "no tsunami threat, although we are on alert".

Indonesian National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho said the earthquake was not likely to produce a tsunami as in past quakes.

He said the earthquake yesterday had caused the earth to shift horizontally along fault lines in what was called a slip-slide motion.

He added that the 2004 quake triggered a tsunami because the earth's

crust moved vertically in what was called a megathrust motion

"The potentials for a tsunami is not as big as it was in 2004," he said.

However, he said, tsunami warnings for western Indonesia would stay in effect.

"The tsunami warnings along the western coasts of Aceh and northern Sumatra had lasted for an hour, in West Sumatra, 1½ hours, and in Lampung, between two and 2½ hours."

Indonesia's Meteorology and Geophysics Agency issued a tsunami warning for Aceh, western Sumatra, northern Sumatra, Lampung and Bengkulu after the quake was reported.

Residents in Banda Aceh reported the ground shaking violently.

"It began as a mild tremor and then got stronger," an AFP corre-

spondent said. He said the ground shook for five minutes, and telephone connections went down briefly.

"There are people trying to evacuate the city. Some are praying, and children in a school were panicking as teachers tried to get them out.

There are traffic jams everywhere as people try to get away from the coast; many are on motorcycles."

Live coverage from Metro TV reported power and Internet outages in Banda Aceh.

Between 8.15pm and 8.30pm, signs of calm emerged.

Compared with the 2004 quake, the latest

scare coincided with the fast transmission of data and images, resulting in a proliferation of dispatches.

NST reporter Nancy Nais, who was in the Maldives, sent this SMS at

8.30pm: "5.25pm local time. Occupancy rate at the 211-room Bandos Island resort is 95 per cent. Earlier, staff went calling and knocking on all doors. Tsunami alert has been withdrawn, but everyone has been told to stay alert. Coast guards still patrolling."

Penang's Batu Feringghi was deserted, with most people making sure they were on higher ground in anticipation of a tsunami.

Hundreds of shoppers ran out of Gurney Plaza and Komtar building after feeling the tremor.

Civil defence personnel asked people to stay away from the waterfront promenade.

On the mainland, in Kota Kuala Muda, the settlement worst hit by the tsunami in 2004, most of the 1,000 residents from five villages vacated their homes and assembled at the nearby Dewan Tunku Shafinaz Intan hall.

The National Security Council clarified that it had ordered Kuala Muda residents to stay away from

the beach, following satellite images showing people heading for the beach despite the tsunami alert.

Commenting on reports that the residents were ordered to evacuate the area because of a potential tsunami, council director Datuk Mohamed Tajudeen Abdul Wahab said residents had misunderstood its instructions.

The council had ordered the people to move away from the beach, and not evacuate their homes, as there was still a risk of a tsunami occurring along the coasts of Kedah, Perlis, Penang and Perak.

Shukri Ismail, the imam of Taman Permatang Katong near Kuala Muda, said he received information by word of mouth that the residents of Kampung Kepala Jalan, Keda, Tepi Sungai, Hujung Matang, Mata, Masjid and other villages in the area had been ordered to evacuate.

However, he told Bernama that he was not sure if the tsunami siren in Kota Kuala Muda had been sounded.

**"The potential for a tsunami is not as big as it was in 2004"**

**Sutopo Purwo Nugroho**

*Indonesian National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman*

## Recent earthquakes in the region

INFOGRAPHIC: NST



# On alert after tremors

**TSUNAMI WORRY:**  
Shoppers rush out, people warned not to go to beaches

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**T**HE popular Straits Quay Mall was almost deserted last night with most of the outlets shut down for the day. Although the tsunami warning was lifted, the traders were not taking chances as they packed up early, expecting a tsunami to hit Penang shores at 9.11pm. A drive along the Promenade also



**Workers from a textile factory in Solok Pinang milling about after the factory ordered its 1,500 workers to vacate the building yesterday.**

## Twitter users share feelings

**KUALA LUMPUR:** As news of the 8.6-magnitude earthquake struck northern Sumatra at 4.50pm yesterday, almost everyone turned to their electronic device to share condolences and prayers.

Within hours of the tremor in the Aceh province, Twitter saw a deluge of tweets that had "PrayForSumatra", "Magnitude8.9" and "ImPrayingForYou" trending worldwide.

Many tweets such as "Earthquake with an magnitude of 8.7 has struck under the sea off Indonesia's northern Aceh province", "Earthquake triggers panic in Indonesia", and "Indonesia issues a tsunami warning".

Malaysian Twitter users, too, were

showed only a few people, a far cry from other nights as it was a popular spot for tourists and locals.

The sea remained calm throughout with security guards preventing anyone from getting close to the seaside.

Earlier, hundreds of people ran out of shopping complexes and apartments, while those enjoying the breezy evening at the Esplanade and Batu Feringghi were told to move away from the sea following tremors and tsunami alerts, after an 8.6 magnitude earthquake struck off Aceh yesterday.

There were also reports that the tremor caused waters to spill out from a swimming pool at the Penang Turf Club in Batu Gantung. Hotels located along Batu Feringghi were reported to have issued alerts to their guests of a possible tsunami.

Hard Rock Hotel's marketing communications manager Elisa Saw said its security department head and security personnel were on standby to evacuate guests from the beach area as a precaution after receiving tsunami alerts.

"We are monitoring the situation for safety reasons and the welfare of our guests," Saw said.

Hydro Hotel general manager M.

Kumar said the hotel had alerted staff and guests on the earthquake and put up notices warning guests not to go to the beach area.

Batu Feringghi was deserted with most people moving to higher ground fearing a tsunami.

Checks showed police, civil defence and volunteer corps personnel busy evacuating people from the beach, although some chose to ignore the warnings and continued to stroll on the beach.

Meanwhile, a textile factory in Solok Pinang, here, was reported to have ordered its 1,500 workers out of the plant.

In **Kepala Batas**, the authorities had issued a warning to residents along the Kuala Muda coastline to avoid the beaches.

Police and the Fire Rescue Department personnel were on standby at the location.

Kota Kuala Muda, Kedah, the settlement worst hit by the tsunami in 2004, was almost deserted yesterday as soon as tremors were felt in five villages.

Most of the residents from the five villages vacated their homes and assembled at the Dewan Tunku Shafinaz Intan multi purpose hall.

The residents — from Kampung Tepi Sungai, Kampung Masjid,



*People running out of a shopping complex in George Town after a tremor struck yesterday evening. Pic by Mohd Kamil Rahim*

Kampung Padang Salim, Kampung Keda Tepi Sungai and Kampung Kepala Jalan — moved out on their accord after their villages were hit by tremors, which started at 4.50pm and lasted for 20 seconds.

Meanwhile, more than 200 fishermen and their families have been relocated to Kuah, Belanga Pecah and Temuju following the earthquake.

Fishermen Committee leader Asri Shaaban, 52, said colleagues, who were out at sea, were notified of the event and told to return.

Risk areas have been identified in Kuala Chenang, Chenang beach,

Keriang and Pulau Melaka. Those living there had been evacuated.

Asri said they had taken precautionary steps since the tsunami incident in 2004.

An operations centre had also been opened.

He said the second quake, which occurred at 7pm in Indonesia was felt more acutely than the first one at 4pm.

However, he expressed confidence that everything would be all right as they had taken precautionary measures.

Ferry services to and from Langkawi were halted after the first level tsunami warning was issued.

praying for the safety of the people in northern Sumatera.

Mzulfadly wrote: "Today timeline have no drama. All twitterians busy tweeting about the Earthquake and Tsunami".

Natnatdidi tweeted: "Earthquake happens in Indonesia magnitude 8.6 and I hope everyone is doing fine and no one gets hurt, God knows best! #PrayForSumatera".

Indonesian WidyaPratiwi said: "Let's pray for everyone's safety in Indonesia. So sorry about the earthquake".

Fauzaton\_maris added: "God, save them from the worst thing that I felt 8 years ago. I hope it will never happened anymore."

"God please safe our country, please safe our life, please safe Sumatera," tweeted shallala9.

On Facebook, many updated their statuses, raising concerns and warned people to stay away from the beach.

Hamli Sanai Razali said: "I was sitting when I felt a slight tremor. Is it an earthquake? Saw facebook status from friends who said they felt the same."

Navindran Palasendaram said: "Earthquake reported around Penang area. Please take care. Seek additional information incase of emergency."