

Aussie climber details Mt Kinabalu rescue by local guides
The Malaysian Insider
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Australian Vee Jin Dumlao was among 137 climbers atop Mount Kinabalu in Sabah at dawn when a 5.9 magnitude earthquake rocked the state two days ago.

The 7.15am quake hit Ranau, approximately 20km from the Mount Kinabalu park, with the tremors felt in Tambunan, Pedalaman, Tuaran, Kota Kinabalu and Kota Belud.

Dumlao (pic), a clinical psychologist from Sydney told the ABC that panic set in when the earthquake had destroyed their route back.

"We had just completed the ascent to the peak, and we were making our descent, taking some photos when we heard a loud crash, and felt the ground shaking," she was quoted as saying.

"When our guide took our empty water bottles to be refilled, at perhaps 1pm... they came back with news of massive landslides and the route having been decimated and no certainty of rescue."

Malaysian authorities had said over 200 climbers were trapped on the mountain and added that it could not land a rescue helicopter due to bad weather.

"Fog was quoted as the reason for not rescuing the climbers. That was certainly true earlier in day.

"But the sky cleared beautifully and the air was still by 4pm but they were determined to leave us up there overnight in cold hunger and potential flash-flooding if it rained," Dumlao wrote on her Facebook page.

"Helicopters came to drop off two boxes of supplies but they dropped off over the cliffs onto inaccessible landslide rubble when there was a huge expanse they could have aimed for."

She also called the Malaysian government's emergency response a farce.

"They (emergency workers) congregated in groups sharing smokes and food that were meant for survivors. Help at the critical areas didn't arrive till 9 hours later."

Instead, she hailed the local mountain guides as rescue heroes.

"They risked life and limb and made some difficult decisions that ultimately saved our lives. Many had homes affected in the quake.

"They lost friends and family. Yet they remained with us, guiding us to safety till the very end.

"They could have made it down the mountain quickly on their own with their agility. Yet they stayed and did what they could to meet our needs. They risked continuing tremors and rockfalls to refill our bottles with water from the nearest hut." she said on Facebook.

"I witnessed guides, not emergency workers, securing the injured onto stretchers which they carry down the mountain."

ABC reported that Dumlao and her travelling partner made the perilous trek, followed by the other climbers, down to Laban Rata, a small village rest stop halfway up Mount Kinabalu.

Yesterday, Malaysian authorities confirmed that 13 climbers were dead. – June 7, 2015.

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