

Tajuk : Mt Santubong casts spell again
-Bring along adequate nourishment proper equipment

Mt Santubong casts spell again

One mountain climbing Unimas matriculation students won't forget for a long time

By **Gary Adit**
reporters@theborneopost.com

KUCHING: A group of Unimas students had a hike they would not forget so soon when they had to be rescued after failing to make their way down Mount Santubong on Wednesday night.

The 29 matriculation students were part of a group of 37 who had ascended the mountain earlier in the morning and had reached the summit, but were unable to make their way back down the jungle trail when night fell.

The situation was exacerbated by the fact that none of them had brought along torches during the hike, resulting in them stumbling in the darkness during the descent.

Eight of the 37 told reporters they were able to make it to the base of the mountain before nightfall because they made the decision to turn back after realising it was getting late.

"We made it to Checkpoint 11 when we decided to go back down as it was already almost 2pm, and we knew it would take us at least three hours to reach the base," said one of them, who asked not to be named.

"The rest chose to go all the way to the summit at Checkpoint 15," said the student. The student also revealed that it

Hikers should leave their particulars at the nearby police station prior to starting their journey so that we can keep track.

Sergeant Major Rosli Deris, Santubong police station deputy officer-in-charge

was a maiden climb for most of them comprising 10 males and 27 females, and that all except two males were from Peninsular Malaysia.

The plight of the 29 trapped students led to coordinated rescue operation involving the Fire and Rescue Department, Civil Defence Department, police and local Rela members.

State Fire and Rescue Dept operations chief Sabarudin Mohamad said that 49 rescuers were involved in the operation, which began at 8.34pm and ended at 12.15am yesterday.

"Based on information received, the group started their journey at 9am and were supposed to descend by 1pm at the latest, but only did so around 3pm," he said, adding that two sustained minor injuries while the rest suffered from fatigue.



◆ Turn to Page 2, Col 1

HELPING HAND: Rescuers leading some of the students down to the foot of the mountain.

'Bring along adequate nourishment, proper equipment'

◆ From Page 1

"We found the first student at Checkpoint 6, around 1,080 feet above sea level, at 10.13pm and took us about 90 minutes to carry her down to the base, while the others were led down by rescuers."

Meanwhile, Santubong police station deputy officer-in-charge Sergeant Major Rosli Deris advised those who intended to go up Mt Santubong, especially first-timers, to bring along adequate nourishment and proper equipment, as well as seasoned guides to accompany them.

He said incidents of hikers unable to make their way down the mountain happened quite frequently and was often due to lack of proper planning.

"Hikers should leave their particulars at the nearby police station prior to starting their journey so that we can keep track on who have gone up the mountain and whether they have made it back safely," said Rosli.

He also extended his gratitude to Dayang Noorazrima, the proprietor of an eatery at the foot of the mountain, who had jotted down the students' particulars and alerted the police of their plight after realising the group had yet to make it back that evening.

When met, Noorazrima said she was glad the students were able to make it safely down, adding that unseasoned hikers should always keep track of the time and begin their descent by 2pm regardless of which checkpoint they were at, as it required roughly three hours to reach the mountain base.

She also advised hikers to bring along plastic bags to store their rubbish to ensure the cleanliness of the mountain trail.

She also hoped the relevant authorities would maintain or even upgrade facilities along the trail, saying a number of hikers had complained to her that some of the fixtures were in a dilapidated condition.