

## Powerful earthquake rocks Bali, injures 45

A magnitude-6.8 earthquake jolted Bali on Thursday, causing panic in densely populated areas.

Believed to be one of the most powerful ever to hit the island, the tremor injured at least 45 people, mostly students, and damaged several buildings and vehicles.

The earthquake occurred at 11:16 a.m. local time, and 10 aftershocks were recorded, the last one coming at 6:50 p.m. The Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) said the epicenter was 145 kilometers southwest of Nusa Dua, 10 kilometers deep. Reuters reported the tremor as a magnitude-6.2, with a depth of 61.3 kilometers.

Denpasar was jolted just as people were getting ready for lunch. Workers at multistory buildings scrambled to safety as the structures swayed and the windows rattled.

In densely populated areas of the city, panicked housewives and maids rushed out into the streets with their children. In Panjer, traffic was stopped as residents filled the streets to get clear of buildings.

In Kuta, tourists swimming at the beach scurried out of the water, and hotels were deserted as the patrons ran for safer ground.

"Only after we announced that the quake would not cause a tsunami did the situation gradually return to normal," Kuta beach task force chief I.G.N. Tresna said.

Of the 45 people who were admitted to the hospital for injuries after the earthquake, 27 were students and teachers from SMKN 2 vocational high school who were hit by falling roof tiles while evacuating the school.

Bali Governor Made Mangku Pastika called an emergency meeting, directing the provincial disaster mitigation body to assess the damage and assist victims.

Throughout Denpasar, people huddled in front of their houses and offices, discussing the temblor and comparing pictures of damaged vehicles, buildings and roads that were flooding social networks.

Initial assessments indicated that, in Denpasar alone, the quake damaged eight schools, a private hospital, a fire station, the legislative council compound and six houses. A modern hypermarket on Jl. Sunset in Kuta also suffered heavy damage.

A magnitude-5.6 aftershock at 3:52 p.m. again sent people running into the streets.

“No fatalities or injuries were reported [in the aftershock], but, several hospitals, temples and houses were slightly damaged,” Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, the spokesman of the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), said in a statement sent to The Jakarta Post.

“We are continuously updating information from the field,” he said.

Residents in Madura, Jember, Blitar and Surabaya also felt the quake.

The most powerful quake to ever hit Bali occurred in 1862. Unfortunately, the BNPB had no details of the damage or human cost inflicted by that quake.

“In 1917, a very strong earthquake killed around 1,500 people in Bali,” BKMG head Endro Tjahjono added.

A magnitude-6.5 quake shook the island on July 14, 1976, affecting the northern regions of Bali and killing 560 people. A magnitude-6.4 quake on Dec. 17, 1979, killed 25.