

Strong quake rocks waters off Simeulue, one killed

A powerful earthquake jolted Simeulue island in Aceh province early on Wednesday, killing one man and sending panicked residents fleeing from homes. No tsunami was generated.

The magnitude 6.4 quake hit about 7:30 a.m. and was centered 28 kilometers northwest of Simeulue regency's capital of Sinabang at a depth of 45 kilometers (28 miles), according to the US Geological Survey.

Sutopo Purwo Nugroho from the National Disaster Management Agency said a 70-year-old man who suffered from hypertension died as he fled in panic and fell down, but there no other casualties were reported.

Twenty buildings were damaged, including mosques, public health centers, schools and local government offices, the agency said.

Suharjono, from Indonesia's Meteorology and Geophysics Agency, said the earthquake had no potential to generate a tsunami. He said a quake that close to the coast would have to be more powerful to generate a giant wave.

Residents of Sinabang said the quake struck as people gathered for pre-dawn meals and prayers during the fasting month of Ramadhan.

"For a few seconds, a strong earthquake shook everything around us," said Ahmadi, a trader at the town's market. "Everybody ran out of their homes ... many screaming in panic, but there was no damage around us," he said as quoted by AP.

The panic extended to several towns and villages in Aceh's neighboring province of North Sumatra. Fearing aftershocks, many refused to go back inside for hours.

A giant quake on Dec. 26, 2004, triggered a tsunami in the Indian Ocean that killed 230,000 people, half of them in Aceh.

Separately, a major flood struck Padang, West Sumatra on Wednesday evening, forcing 1,200 people to flee. Ten people who were reported missing have been found.

"The number of evacuees at disaster preparedness shelters reached 1,200 in two locations – one in Limau Manis district and another Bandar Gadang. Some of them have returned home," Sutopo Purwo said on Wednesday.

The waters had subsided as of Wednesday, he said, adding that his agency had provided flood victims with logistical assistance.

Sjofardi Bachyul contributed to this article from Padang.