

Philippine volcano spews lava fountains



The danger zone around the crater has been expanded from 6km to 8km, but some residents have still tried to sneak back home.

Legazpi, Philippines

The Philippines' most active volcano spewed fountains of red-hot lava and massive ash plumes anew yesterday in a dazzling but increasingly dangerous eruption that has sent more than 56,000 villagers fleeing to evacuation centres.

Lava fountains gushed up 700 meters above Mount Mayon's crater and ash plumes rose up to 3 kilometres Monday night. At least three major blasts followed yesterday, including an explosion at nightfall that was capped by one of the most massive lava displays since the volcano started acting up more than a week ago, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said.

"We couldn't sleep last night because of the loud rumblings. It sounded like an

airplane that's about to land," Quintin Velardo, a 59-year-old farmer, told *The Associated Press* at an evacuation center in Legazpi city where he took his wife, children and grandchildren yesterday.

Despite the danger, he said he needed to return to his village, about 8 kilometres from the erupting volcano, to take his cow and water buffalo to safety. A few minutes later, the volcano belched a massive column of grayish ash that punched through white clouds into the blue sky. "There it goes again," Velardo said, his family huddled near him.

Authorities warned a violent eruption may occur in hours or days, characterized by more rumblings and pyroclastic flows — superheated gas and volcanic debris that race down the slopes at high speeds,

vaporizing everything in their path.

After Monday's explosion, officials raised Mayon's alert level to four on a scale of five, and the danger zone was expanded to 8 kilometres from the crater, requiring thousands more residents to be evacuated, including at least 12,000 who returned to their homes last week as Mayon's rumblings temporarily eased and then scrambled back to the emergency shelters. (*washingtonpost*)

Mayon volcano spews ash as it erupts anew yesterday, as seen from Legazpi city, Albay province, southeast of Manila, Philippines

Quake hits off Alaska, tsunami threat lifted

Washington

A powerful 7.9-magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Alaska early Tuesday, sparking tsunami warnings along the Pacific coasts of the US and Canada that were later called off.

The quake struck at 12:31 am (0931 GMT) in the Gulf of Alaska, 280 kilometres (175 miles) southeast of the town of Kodiak, the US Geological Survey said, revising a preliminary estimate of 8.2 magnitude.

The epicentre was 10 kilometres under the seabed.

The National Tsunami Warning Center did confirm a tsunami, meaning the water levels were slightly above normal.

Waves of less than one foot (30 centimetres) were detected in parts of southern Alaska, authorities said. As a precaution, officials in those areas encouraged residents to remain at higher ground.

But the monitoring centre later cancelled



Traffic during the tsunami warning in Kodiak, Alaska

warnings and watches for coastal regions in Alaska, Canada's British Columbia and the US West Coast "because additional information and analysis have better defined the threat."

Heather Rand, who was 580 kilometres away in Anchorage, told *CNN* it felt like the longest earthquake she had ever experienced. (*AFP*)

6.1-magnitude quake hits Jakarta

Jakarta

A strong earthquake struck off the southern coast of Java, Indonesia's main island, yesterday, rocking buildings in the country's capital, Jakarta, and sending people fleeing into the streets in panic.

The magnitude-6.1 earthquake struck around 1:34 p.m. about 100 miles southwest of Jakarta, with its epicenter in the Indian Ocean. As of yesterday evening, there were no other official reports of injuries, and no fatalities had been reported.

Reports on social media suggested that buildings in the capital shook for several seconds, with some being evacuated.

Around Jakarta, panicky Indonesians fled schools, office buildings and other high-rises.

"It felt like a giant rock had dropped either in the hallway or just outside the building," said Marcoen Stoop, a Belgian businessman who lives on the 35th floor of an apartment building in Jakarta. "Then, the building



People gathering Tuesday outside the City Tower office building in Jakarta after an earthquake struck 100 miles away, off the southern coast of Java

started swaying and the swaying increased steadily," he added, saying the rocking lasted less than a minute.

Six students at a vocational high school in West Java Province were seriously injured when tiles fell

from the school's roof, according to a statement released by Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, a spokesman for Indonesia's national disaster management agency. Two other students were slightly injured. (*nytimes*)

Avalanche engulfs skiers after volcano erupts

Tokyo

A member of Japan's self-defence forces died and about a dozen skiers were injured after a volcano erupted near a ski resort, triggering an avalanche and sending rocks raining down on the slopes.

The skiers were injured when they became trapped by the avalanche or were hit by falling volcanic rocks from Mount Kusatsu-Shirane, according to local media. Five were seriously injured, but none was in a critical condition, rescuers said.

Five other members of Japan's ground self-defence force who were taking part in training manoeuvres in the area were rescued, some with injuries including fractures.

Three other people caught in the avalanche were also rescued, Japanese media said on Tuesday. Among the injured



Ambulances and fire trucks parked at a ski resort in the town of Kusatsu

were four people hurt by shattered glass while on a gondola at the resort in Gunma, north-west of Tokyo. About 100 people were evacuated from the area.

"There was this huge boom, and a big plume of totally black smoke rose up," one skier told *NHK*. "I had absolutely no idea what had happened." (*theguardian*)