

Indonesian volcano evacuation ordered

May 11 2006



Indonesian officials have ordered the evacuation of about 17,000 residents of the island of Java as Mount Merapi spews more lava and poisonous smoke.

Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla's order was issued after he toured the slopes of the volcano, which has been threatening to erupt for weeks, the BBC reported Thursday.

"I ask that immediate safety steps are taken, beginning by taking at least 50 percent of the total population from the danger zone," Kalla told Indonesia's state-run Antara news agency.

Kalla, who also heads Indonesia's emergency situations board, says an eruption is only a matter of time.

At least 60 people were killed in Mount Merapi's last major eruption in 1994 and approximately 1,300 people died when the volcano erupted in 1930.

Scientists say Mount Merapi is the most active of about 129 Indonesian volcanoes.

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