



'The hikers who were reported missing four days ago after visiting Gua Gajah in Taman Rimba Kenong were found safe in Sungai Tenom, Lipis, yesterday.

Seven missing hikers found safe

STRAYED 4KM: Heavy rains washed away trail marks

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SEVEN people, including two Austrians, who were lost since Friday while on their way to Gua Gajah at the National Park near Sungai Relau, Merapoh, were found safe yesterday.

After surviving some 48 hours on biscuits and drinking water from a stream, the Austrian couple Gias Michele and Susane Stuckler, both 30, Universiti Malaysia Sabah student Yap Chua Meng, 24, Wildlife and National Parks Department (Perhilitan) ranger Mohd Sujaie Abd Aziz, 35, and Universiti Putra Malaysia undergraduates — Rabiatul Adawiyah Jamil, 21, Nadia Mohd Nazam, 24, and Nosorrosah Mohamad, 24, — were found at 9.30am near Chegar, Betong.

They were found by a search-and-rescue team from the Merapoh Perhilitan office.

District police chief Superintendent Abdul Razak Hassan said the team, led by Sujaie, had strayed 4km from their intended destination as temporary trail marks along their route were washed away by a down-

pour on Friday.

"The police were alerted by the Forestry Department before the search-and-rescue operation was mounted at 8am yesterday (Sunday).

"Two teams were deployed, sweeping land and waterways simultaneously."

Razak said the seven victims, who suffered minor cuts and appeared weak, were brought out of the jungle at 2pm yesterday before being taken to the Merapoh Health Clinic for medical checkups.

Meanwhile, the *New Straits Times* went to Rabiatul's parents' house in Kampung Seri Damai, Kuantan, and broke the news that Rabiatul had been found to her mother, Norehan Jamaludin, 58.

Norehan, a former teacher, shed tears of joy before informing her husband, Jamil Ninggal, 61, who hurried home just in time to receive a call from Rabiatul after four days of losing touch.

"We last met Rabiatul on July 19

when we visited her and her two course mates who were in Taman Negara as part of their course requirements," she said, adding that her daughter's interest in forestry was due to her father's previous job as a Felda plantation manager.

Jamil said his daughter was in her second year at UPM and a bright student.

He added that she had received a scholarship from the Public Service Department.

"My wife and I had initially encouraged her to take up medicine, but she was more interested in forestry," he said, thanking God that nothing untoward had

happened to his daughter and her friends.

A Forestry Department spokesman said the missing hikers had not been issued any entry authorisation by the department although they did notify Perhilitan.

He also said the department would normally engage qualified guides to accompany trackers into the areas.

"We last met Rabiatul on July 19 when we visited her and her two course mates... in Taman Negara."
Norehan Jamaludin
Rabiatul's mother