

5 people detained over earthquake rumors in China

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Beijing, PAB-Online

Five people have been detained for spreading an earthquake rumor that sparked widespread panic across northern China, state media said Thursday.

Tens of thousands of frightened people fled outdoors last weekend after word spread that an earthquake was imminent in Shanxi province.

Warnings that an imminent earthquake was about to strike were spread by phone, Internet and text message, while some frightened villagers used public address systems to order residents to rush outside.

The five detained, most of them migrant workers in their early twenties, confessed to spreading the rumor via an Internet forum and text messaging, the Xinhua News Agency reported.

They were ordered held for five to 10 days and two of them fined 500 yuan (\$74) each, the report said.

It wasn't clear if the five knew each other and no motive for their actions was given.(JP/IP)