

## P'pine climbers give Mt Kinabalu iron steps thumbs up

**Chris Maskilone**

**KOTA KINABALU:** The world's highest *via ferrata* on Mt Kinabalu got the thumbs up from the Philippines Everest Team.

The Filipino team comprises leader, Arturo Tavarro Valdez, Dr Fred Balbastra, Erwin Gabatan, Teofredo Tablan Esguerra and the two women – Carina Gonzaga Dayonda and Janet Menaido Belarmiano, both of whom had scaled and reached the summit of Mt Everest in 2007.

They started their climb on Jan 10 to try the *via ferrata* or iron steps.

According to them they reached the summit early Monday and had waited for sunrise but



The Filipino mountaineers giving the thumbs up with Tengku Adlin (fifth from right)

persisting bad weather did not allow them to do so.

It was the second time for all of them up the Mt Kinabalu but it was the first time for them to be on the *via ferrata*.

Shortly after coming down from the mountain, the team paid a courtesy call to Sabah Tourism Board (STB) Chairman, Tengku Datuk Zainal Adlin.

Apart from praising the beauty of the mountain and *via ferrata*, the team also commended the Government for "having the political will to preserve the environment".

The team was brought in by operator of the *via ferrata*, Mountain Torq Sdn Bhd together with STB, Exotic Adventure Sdn Bhd and Philippine partner, Shroff International Travel.

## P'pine climbers to tackle Mt Kinabalu's via ferrata

**KOTA KINABALU:** The Philippines Everest Team arrived here Friday to tackle the world's highest *via ferrata* and alpine sports/rock climbing at Mount Kinabalu.

*Via ferrata* (or iron road in Italian) is a continuous protected mountain path consisting of steel rungs, rails and cables embedded into the rock face, which opens routes to average hikers that were previously only accessible to experienced rock climbers and mountaineers with specialised gear.

This will be first time that the Philippines

Everest Team led by Arturo Tavarro Valdez, will experience *via ferrata* climbing at Low's Peak Circuit and will have the opportunity to be the first Philippines team to climb up the 500m multi-pitch rock-climbing route at Panar Laban.

Low's Peak Circuit as well as the Panar Laban rock face has been described as Mount Kinabalu's newest adventure attraction.

They will be accompanied by Asia's pioneer *via ferrata* guides comprising Sabahans who have in-depth knowledge of Mount Kinabalu's unique

terrain and characteristics.

The *via ferrata*'s lowest point is at 3,411m while the highest is 3,776m, making it the world's highest *via ferrata*. The highlights of the route include, one of the highest suspension bridge at 3,600m above sea level as well as the three cable Nepalese bridge at 3,580m, also among the highest in the world. The Philippines Everest Team's visit to Sabah is sponsored by Mountain Torq Sdn Bhd, which is the main sponsors with support from the Sabah Tourism Board.