

Family reunited with second child 10 years after tsunami

PAYAKUMBUH (Indonesia) — An Indonesian couple reunited with their daughter 10 years after a tsunami snatched her from their arms claimed yesterday to have found their son, who was also swept away in the disaster.

Jamaliah and her husband Septi Rangkuti had an emotional reunion on Monday with the teenager they believe is their long-lost son, bringing their family together for the first time in 10 years.

Arif Pratama Rangkuti, now 17, was carried off with his younger sister when the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami slammed into Indonesia's westernmost Aceh province, killing more than 170,000 people there and tens of thousands in other countries.

Arif's sister Raudhatul Jannah was reunited with the parents in June after a relative spotted a girl in an Aceh village who bore a striking resemblance to her.

Yesterday the couple said their son had now also been returned, thanks to this month's huge media coverage of their "miracle" reunion with their daughter.

"It's true, he's our son. We're now preparing to take him home," Rangkuti told AFP, explaining that the boy had lived for years as a street kid in Sumatra.

Jamaliah, speaking in the town of Payakumbuh in West Sumatra province, wept as she clutched

the teenager, who seemed shy and overwhelmed.

"I prayed every night, because inside I believed that my child was still alive," she told reporters.

"My husband has always been restless at home because of this. He would say that our son is still alive."

The family were reunited at the home of a couple who found the boy one night asleep outside the Internet cafe they run in Paya-

kumbuh.

The teenager has lived homeless for years, sleeping in outdoor markets and abandoned shops.

Lana Bestari and Windu Fajri let the boy sleep at their Internet cafe for several months, giving him food and clothes on his regular visits.

Bestari got in touch with the family after she saw a photograph of Arif as a child on television. — AFP



Surrogate babies that Thai police suspect were fathered by a Japanese businessman who has fled from Thailand are shown on a screen during a news conference at the headquarters of the Royal Thai Police in Bangkok on August 12, 2014. — Picture by Reuters

Japanese man in Thai baby scandal gives DNA

BANGKOK — Thai authorities said yesterday that they were testing the DNA of a Japanese man at the centre of a "baby factory" scandal to determine if he is the biological father of the nine infants.

Thai police are seeking to question the man — who has since left the country but voluntarily sent the DNA sample — about the mysterious discovery earlier this month of the nine babies in a Bangkok apartment.

Five other babies previously cared for at the same property are thought to have already been taken out of the country.

Police Major General Naiyawat Phadernchit said officials were awaiting the result of the DNA test. "The police investigators sent it to the forensic experts of the national police to check and compare," he told reporters.

According to Japanese magazine *Shukan Post*, the man is the son of

a Japanese IT millionaire.

His lawyer Kong Suriyamonit submitted the DNA sample on his behalf to Thai police on Monday.

The sample was collected in Japan "by a respected relevant organisation", Kong added.

Kong said he had also submitted a written explanation from the Japanese man to the police, without divulging the content.

Police Colonel Witawat Chinkham said that the Japanese

man claimed to be the father of all the babies.

The case is the latest twist in a widening surrogacy scandal initially triggered by accusations that an Australian couple abandoned a baby born with Down's syndrome with his Thai surrogate mother — but took his healthy twin sister.

David Farnell, 56, and his wife have denied deliberately leaving the boy, called Gammy, with the surrogate mother, who was paid

around US\$15,000 (RM47,295) to carry the twins.

Paid surrogacy is illegal in Thailand and the kingdom's army rulers have vowed to introduce a new law that could result in 10 years' imprisonment for anyone found guilty of involvement in the trade.

Australia has asked Thailand to make "transitional arrangements" to help any of its citizens who have already entered into surrogacy arrangements. — AFP