Remains found buried in cave

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KUALA LUMPUR: Skeletal remains, believed to be that of missing French tourist Stephanie Foray, were found in a cave in Kampung Tekek on Pulau Tioman yesterday afternoon.

The remains, which were covered with a mattress, were buried in a three-metre deep grave.

A police team from Malacca was led to the remains by one of the suspects who has been in custody for the past two weeks.

Pahang Criminal Investigation Department chief Senior Assistant Commissioner T. Naresnanegaran said the police party first found a blue backpack, which fitted the description of Foray's, in the cave.

"We then found some clothes which we believe were Foray's before the suspect pointed to the spot where the remains were buried," Naresnanegaran told the New Straits Times.

The suspect is a 36-year-old man who runs a small fruit orchard on the island. He was arrested about two weeks ago after police found Foray's handphone and several Sri Lankan currency notes on him.

Following his arrest, police nabbed a second suspect, a 44-year-old businessman, who operates a cafe and a chalet on the island.

Both suspects are cousins.

Naresnanegaran said the cave where the remains were found was about 100 metres behind the first suspect's house in Kampung Tokok. He said the police party reached the cave at about noon and started digging at the site where the body was believed to be buried.

Stephanie Foray arrived in Malaysia on May 5 and was seen in Tioman five days later.

"After digging for about four hours, and at a depth of about three metres, we found a mattress. Below it were the remains. The skeletal remains were intact. However, we are waiting for DNA tests to confirm the identity," he said.

The remains were kept overnight at the Tioman health clinic before being sent to the Kuantan Hospital today for the post-mortem.

"We are still investigating whether the suspect murdered the victim alone or if he had an accomplice," Naresnanegaran added.

It is learnt that Foray's family in France had been notified by the French embassy here.

This brings to close the search for the missing woman, a 30-year-old from the French civil service, who had been on holiday here.

Foray arrived in Kuala Lumpur on May 5 after spending several months touring India and Sri Lanka.

She stayed here for two days before leaving for Malacca where she befriended two local men.

In her last email to her family, Foray said she went to a man's home to use his Internet and had dinner of oysters, omelette and beer with another man.

Her last email, dated May 8 was sent from Malacca. That was the last time the family heard from Foray as they could not even reach her on her handphone.

In June, the French embassy here reported her disappearance and immediately a task force was set up by Malacca police to track down the French woman.

The NST also followed the French woman's trail to Malacca and then to Pulau Tioman.

On July 29, at Pulau Tioman, the NST learnt that Foray arrived on the island by ferry on May 10 and was last seen by locals at Kampung Tekek.

Checks with the Marine Department revealed that Foray was among 91 passengers who took the 2.30pm ferry on May 10 from Mersing.

There are no records of her leaving the island, either by sea or by air.

A resident also said Foray was spotted on several occasions in Kampung Tekek.

She allegedly stayed in a run-down chalet and was seen at a nearby cafe.