

## Malaysia seizes pig-hair brushes after Muslims complain

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysian authorities have seized thousands of paint brushes suspected of containing pig bristles after consumers in the Muslim-majority nation demanded a crackdown, officials said.

Pigs and dogs are considered unclean by many Muslims, who make up some 60 percent of Malaysia's 30 million people. It is illegal in the country to sell products made from any part of a pig or a dog, unless the goods are labelled and kept separately.

Zarif Anwar, an enforcement official with the domestic trade and consumer ministry, said officials nationwide have been inspecting shops selling paint brushes for art and commercial use.

He said the brushes seized were not labelled and found to have a different texture from other brushes and frayed ends, signs that they could be made from pig bristles. In some cases, the brushes had a "halal" certification that had expired, he said. The halal tag is issued by an Islamic government body to certify products safe to be used by Muslims.

The seized brushes will be sent to a lab to be examined, Zarif said.

"We want to protect consumers and we want traders to be aware of the religious sensitivity involved. This is a big offense," Zarif told The Associated Press.

He warned that traders who flout the rule face up to three years in jail, a fine of 100,000 ringgit (\$22,522), or both.

Conservative attitudes have been on the rise in Malaysia. A wide range of products have been certified halal, from mineral



**BAD BRUSHES.** Domestic trade enforcement officers check paint brushes believed to be made from pig bristles at a hardware store outside Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Malaysian authorities have seized thousands of paint brushes suspected to be made from pig bristles and sold without labels, in a crackdown following complaints from Muslim consumers. (AP Photo/Daniel Chan)

water to a newly launched internet browser, to appeal to Muslims.

The Muslim Consumers Association of Malaysia called for stricter enforcement not just for paint brushes, but for other products as well. An official from the group, Nadzim Johan, said the association also received complaints that culinary brushes used in eateries may also contain pig bristles.

"The key issue here is about labelling," he said. "We want Muslim consumers to be forewarned. It's not fair to deceive them."

## North Korea and its long history of using female spies

By Hyung-jin Kim  
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — A South Korean passenger plane that exploded off the coast of Southeast Asia. Army officers lured into sexual encounters. A secret agent spirited back to North Korea in a tiny submarine.

North Korea has a long history of dispatching female spies on some of its most dangerous and deadly assignments. So the arrests of two women in connection with the apparent killing of an exiled member of North Korea's ruling family has helped fuel suspicions that the North was involved in the mysterious death.

South Korea's intelligence agency believes two women poisoned Kim Jong Nam, the half brother of North Korea's ruler, as he stood in a shopping area at the Kuala Lumpur airport. But authorities have so far revealed very little information about Kim's death or the women.

Here is a look at some of North Korea's most famous female spies.

### Kim Hyon-hui

In November 1987, two North Korean agents posing as a father and daughter left a time bomb on a South Korean jetliner when it stopped in Abu Dhabi during a flight from Baghdad to Seoul. The plane exploded off the coast of Myanmar (also known as Burma), killing all 115 people aboard, South Korean investigators say.

When the two, who were travelling with fake Japanese passports, faced arrest at a Bahrain airport, the 72-year-old male agent killed himself by biting a cyanide-tipped Marlboro cigarette. But the woman, Kim Hyon-hui, was stopped just before taking the poison.

After being extradited to Seoul, Kim, then around 25 years old, told investigators that the bombing was intended to disrupt the Seoul Summer Olympics, set to begin 10 months later.

Kim was sentenced to death but was eventually pardoned on the grounds that she was duped by North Korea's leaders. She has written several best-selling books and married one of the South Korean intelligence officers who investigated her.

### Won Jeong-hwa

Won Jeong-hwa, who entered South Korea around 2001 by posing as a defector from the North, was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison in 2008. South Korean authorities said she used sex to extract sensitive information from South Korean military officers and plotted to kill other officers. The South Korean media quickly dubbed her "North Korea's Mata Hari" after the exotic dancer sent to obtain military secrets in World War I.

After her release from prison, Won said her Mata Hari image had been exaggerated by officials and the media, and that she had used sex as a spying tool only once. She said she had fallen in love with a junior army officer.

Won also said she disobeyed orders to kill two of her South Korean military intelligence sources with poison.



AP Photo/Bei-Yeon-Hong, File



AP Photo/Lee Jin-man, File

**FEMALE SPIES.** Kim Hyon-hui, a North Korean who bombed a Korean Air Lines jet in 1987, confesses at a press conference in Seoul, South Korea, in this January 15, 1988 file photo. North Korea has a long history of dispatching female spies on some of its most dangerous and deadly assignments. So the arrests of two women in connection with the apparent killing of an exiled member of North Korea's ruling family has helped fuel suspicions that the North was involved in the mysterious death. In the bottom photo, Won Jeong-hwa, who was sentenced to five years in prison in 2008 for using sex to extract sensitive information from South Korean military officers, wipes her tears during an interview at her apartment in Gunpo, South Korea, in this April 11, 2014 file photo.

Won struggled to make a fresh start after her release from prison, amid allegations that she was just a low-level informant whose role was inflated by South Korean prosecutors. Won, however, insists she was a highly trained spy.

### Lee Sun-sil

In October 1992, South Korea's intelligence agency announced it had arrested 62 people for establishing a secret southern branch of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party. Spearheading the underground political party was 75-year-old Lee Sun-sil, a North Korean woman who Seoul officials say had operated in the South for 10 years.

Lee, reportedly ranked 22nd in the North's political hierarchy, avoided arrest because she had already returned to North Korea by the time the underground party was broken up. A former North Korean agent captured in a separate case in the mid-1990s said he had escorted her to the North in 1990 on board a submersible.

The captured agent said North Korea's founding leader Kim Il Sung, the grandfather of current leader Kim Jong Un, met Lee twice at one of his villas, awarding her an honorary title and giving her a gold watch engraved with his name.

Lee, who also was a member of the North's rubber-stamp parliament, died in 2000 and was buried at Pyongyang's patriots' cemetery, according to South Korean officials.

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The Asian Reporter Foundation's 19th Annual Scholarship & Awards banquet will be held April 20, 2017.

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