



# Malaysia Hunts for More Suspects After Arresting Israeli With Guns



Malaysian police say they are investigating all angles including whether the arrested Israeli is a spy

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) -- Malaysia's security forces have launched a manhunt for more suspects after arresting an Israeli man caught with six handguns and 200 bullets, police said Tuesday. "We are looking for more than two people and it includes both locals and foreigners," police inspector-general Razarudin Husain told reporters. The Israeli man, identified by

he was connected to a crime syndicate. "Police are investigating all angles including whether he is a spy. We want to know his motive of coming to Malaysia and having six handguns," Razarudin said, adding that security has been bolstered for the country's leaders. The guns and bullets were bought from an unemployed Malaysian couple who obtained them from neighboring Thailand, according to Razarudin. The couple and another Malaysian have been arrested. Muslim-majority Malaysia has no diplomatic relations with Israel and has long supported Palestinian statehood. There are about 600 Palestinian refugees in the country, according to the UN refugee agency. In 2018, a Palestinian scientist was shot dead by attackers on a motorbike as he walked to a Kuala Lumpur mosque for dawn prayers. Family and friends of the scientists accused Israel's Mossad spy agency of carrying out the killing but Israel denied the claims. Some media reports have claimed

police as Shalom Avitan, was arrested on March 27 at a hotel in the capital Kuala Lumpur following a tip-off. Police said Avitan arrived from the United Arab Emirates on March 12 with a French travel document. After his arrest, he told authorities he had come to Malaysia to look for another Israeli due to a family dispute. Some media reports have claimed

# India Rejects China's Renaming of 30 Places in Himalayan State



Indian and Chinese soldiers celebrate New Year 2019 on the Arunachal Pradesh border.

NEW DELHI (Reuters) -- India rejected China's renaming of about 30 places in its northeastern Himalayan state of Arunachal Pradesh on Tuesday, calling the move "senseless" and reaffirming that the border province is an "integral" part of India. Beijing says Arunachal Pradesh, which it calls Zangnan, is a part of South Tibet - a claim New Delhi has repeatedly dismissed. China similarly ratcheted up tensions a year ago by giving Chinese names to 11 locations in the state. Troops of the nuclear-armed neighbors engaged in minor scuffles along their disputed frontier in the state in Dec. 2022, and tensions eased after extensive military and diplomatic talks. Yet the state is frequently the cause of friction between the Asian giants whose ties have nosedived since a bloody border clash between their troops in the western Himalayas in 2020. China, in a statement on Saturday, said it had standardized the names of about 30 places in what it calls South Tibet, "in accordance with the relevant regulations on place name management of the State Council". "Assigning invented names will not alter the reality that Arunachal Pradesh is, has been, and will always be an integral

and inalienable part of India," foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on Tuesday. On Monday, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar told reporters that "changing names will not do anything". "If I change the name of your house, does it become my house?" he said. Last month, following a visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the state to inaugurate infrastructure projects, China had said it was opposed to his activities in the region. India termed the arguments "baseless". The U.S. also weighed in on the issue, saying it recognized Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory and "strongly opposed" any unilateral attempts to make claims on it by military or civilian "incursion or encroachments". China had opposed these remarks, saying the matter "has nothing to do with the U.S.". India and China share a 3,800 km (2,400 mile) border - much of it poorly demarcated - over which they also fought a bloody war in 1962. Twenty Indian soldiers and four Chinese troops were killed in hand-to-hand combat in 2020, prompting both countries to fortify positions and deploy extra troops and equipment along the border.

# North Korea Fires Medium-Range Ballistic Missile



The suspected ballistic missile was fired into the Sea of Japan.

SEOUL (AFP) -- North Korea fired a medium-range ballistic missile on Tuesday, Seoul's military said, the latest in a spate of banned weapons tests by Pyongyang this year. Tuesday's launch was the third ballistic missile test of 2024, after a solid-fuel one overseen by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in March and another tipped with a maneuverable hypersonic warhead in January. It also comes less than two weeks after Kim supervised an engine test for a "new-type intermediate-range hypersonic missile", according to North Korean state media, which has also said he oversaw "super large" rocket launcher drills and tank exercises this year. Seoul's military "detected

around 06:53 (2153 GMT) what is presumed to be a medium-range ballistic missile fired from Pyongyang area into the East Sea," the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan. The missile flew about 600 kilometers (373 miles) before splashing down, the JCS said, adding it had "stepped up monitoring and are closely sharing relevant information with the U.S. and Japan". Tokyo confirmed the missile launch, with its coastguard urging vessels to be vigilant and report any fallen objects without approaching them. Japanese public broadcaster NHK, citing unnamed government sources, reported that the missile appeared "to

have fallen in waters outside Japan's exclusive economic zone". The launch comes just days after a Russian veto at the United Nations ended UN expert monitoring of North Korean sanctions violations, amid a probe into alleged arms transfers between Moscow and Pyongyang. North Korea has yet to comment on the development. It also comes just over a week before South Korea votes in a general election, in which the party of hawkish President Yoon Suk Yeol, who has taken a tough line with Pyongyang, is seeking to win back control of the parliament. Pyongyang has been under a raft of sanctions since its second nuclear test in 2009, but the development of its nuclear and weapons programs has continued unabated. So far this year, the nuclear-armed North has declared South Korea its "principal enemy", repositioned agencies dedicated to justification and outreach, and threatened war over "even 0.001 mm" of territorial infringement. The Tuesday launch "appears to be part of Pyongyang's missile development blueprint, including hypersonic weapons," said Han Kwon-hee of the Korea Association of Defense Industry Studies. It seems Kim is developing such technology domestically, rather than with Russian help "given the sensitive nature of the weapons", he added.

# Putin Ally: NATO 'De-Facto Party' to Ukraine War



Russian President Vladimir Putin (R) and Nikolai Patrushev fly on a helicopter to visit a military outpost in Nalchik on Feb. 4, 2008.

MOSCOW (Reuters) -- A powerful ally of President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday that NATO was basically fighting Russia in Ukraine and that the U.S.-led military alliance had helped organize strikes on sovereign Russian territory. Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev, one of Putin's most powerful allies, said that the 75 years of NATO history since its founding on April 4, 1949 had shown it to be a long term source of "danger, crisis and conflict". "The North Atlantic Alliance is de-facto a party to the Ukrainian conflict and is actively involved in organizing the shelling of Russian territories," Patrushev told the Argumenty i Fakty newspaper. "Within its framework, collective decisions are being made on new arms supplies with an increase in their technical and long-range capabilities, and NATO instructors in several countries are training mercenaries and saboteurs for their participation in anti-Russian operations." Ukraine has struck deep into Russian territory over the past year, bombing oil refineries and weapons factories with drones and repeatedly shelling Russian border regions. Ukrainian drones attacked Russia's third largest oil refinery on Tuesday about 1,300 km (800 miles) from the front lines, hitting a core unit which processes about 155,000 barrels of crude refining per day.

Putin last month warned the West that a direct conflict between Russia and NATO would mean the planet was one step away from World War Three and said that some NATO military personnel were present already in Ukraine. Patrushev described NATO as an instrument of the United States which he said wanted to ultimately destroy Russia and steal its vast natural resources. "The West considered the collapse of the Soviet Union only as one of the stages of the confrontation with Russia," Patrushev said. "The weakening of our country as an economic and political competitor, and its subsequent removal from the political map of the world through dismemberment, are the long-term strategic goals of Washington, London and the countries of the collective West controlled by them." NATO, founded with 12 core members in 1949 to provide Western security against the Soviet Union, now has 32 members, enlarging after the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union and the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. NATO accepted the former Warsaw Pact states of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland as members in 1999, and in 2004 it accepted the eastern European states of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia in 2004. Finland joined in 2023 and Sweden in 2024.

# First Images of Human Brains Produced by MRI Scanner

SACLAY, France (AFP) -- The world's most powerful MRI scanner has delivered its first images of human brains, reaching a new level of precision that is hoped will shed more light on our mysterious minds -- and the illnesses that haunt them. Researchers at France's Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) first used the machine to scan a pumpkin back in 2021. But health authorities recently gave them the green light to scan humans. Over the past few months, around 20 healthy volunteers have become the first to enter the maw of the magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine, which is located in the Plateau de Saclay area south of Paris, home to many technology companies and universities. "We have seen a level of precision never reached before at CEA," said Alexandre Vignaud, a physicist working on the project. The magnetic field created by the scanner is a whopping 11.7 teslas, a

unit of measurement named after inventor Nikola Tesla. This power allows the machine to scan images with 10 times more precision than the MRIs commonly used in hospitals, whose power does not normally exceed three teslas. On a computer screen, Vignaud compared images taken by this mighty scanner, dubbed Iseult, with those from a normal MRI. "With this machine, we can see the tiny vessels which feed the cerebral cortex, or details of the cerebellum which were almost invisible until now," he said. France's research minister Sylvie Retailleau, herself a physicist, said "the precision is hardly believable!" "This world-first will allow better detection and treatment for pathologies of the brain," she said in a statement to AFP. Inside a cylinder that is five meters (16 feet) long and tall, the machine houses a 132-tonne magnet powered by a coil carrying a current of 1,500 amps.

There is a 90-centimetre (three-foot) opening for humans to slide into. The design is the result of two decades of research by a partnership between French and German engineers. The United States and South Korea are working on similarly powerful MRI machines, but have not yet started scanning images of humans. One of the main goals of such a powerful scanner is to refine our understanding of the anatomy of the brain and which areas are activated when it carries out particular tasks. Scientists have already used MRIs to show that when the brain recognizes particular things -- such as faces, places or words -- distinct regions of the cerebral cortex kick into gear. Harnessing the power of 11.7 teslas will help Iseult to "better understand the relationship between the brain's structure and cognitive functions, for example when we read a book or carry out a mental calculation," said Nicolas Boulant, the project's scientific director.

MOSCOW (Reuters) -- The Kremlin said on Tuesday that a visit by Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro to Russia was being prepared, a sign of continued close ties between the two major oil-producing nations which are both at odds with the United States. In a call with reporters, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that the visit was at "a high degree of preparation," and that all that remained was to agree a date. Venezuela has in recent years maintained close relations with Russia, offering Moscow a degree of diplomatic support for its campaign in Ukraine. Russia has supported Maduro's government amid an extended confrontation with the United States and prolonged domestic unrest.

PARIS (AFP) -- Indonesia has ordered two Scorpene-class attack submarines from France's Naval Group as part of a defense cooperation agreement signed with Paris in 2021, the company said Tuesday. The diesel-electric submarines, capable of carrying 18 torpedoes and missiles, will be built at the PT PAL shipyard in Indonesia, Naval Group said in a statement. Under the deal, Naval Group will transfer its technological know-how while "the management, operation and maintenance will be conducted in Indonesia" by Indonesians, the company said. The agreement will create thousands of long-term, high-skill jobs, Naval Group added. "Naval Group is very honored to be part of this new chapter in the strategic alliance between Indonesia and France," said the French firm's chief executive, Pierre Eric Pommellet. The vessels "will strengthen the country's maritime sovereignty and support the Indonesian Navy in achieving regional superiority at sea," he said. "In addition to the submarines, our strategic partnership with PT PAL will also support the Indonesian defense industry to actively prepare the future of naval warfare in the country," Pommellet added.

BERLIN (AFP) -- The alleged ringleaders of a suspected far-right plot to attack the German parliament and overthrow the government will go on trial in Frankfurt from May, a court said on Tuesday. Nine suspected members of the "terror group" behind the planned coup will stand trial from May 21, a court in the city said. Among the defendants will be the two men alleged to have led the plot -- the aristocrat and businessman Prince Heinrich XIII Reuss and a former army officer named as Ruediger v.P. Birgit Malsack-Winkemann, a judge and former member of parliament for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, will also stand trial. The Frankfurt trial, which will last until early 2025 at least, is just one element of the sprawling case against the alleged coup plotters. In all, 26 people are accused of belonging to a nationwide extremist network allegedly led by Reuss, and one woman is alleged to have supported the group.

OSAKA (Guardian) -- Japanese citizens will all have the same family name in 500 years' time unless married couples are permitted to use separate surnames, a new study has suggested as part of a campaign to update a civil code dating back to the late 1800s. The study, led by Hiroshi Yoshida, a professor of economy at Tohoku University, projected that if Japan continues to insist that couples select a single surname, every single Japanese person will be known as "Sato-san" by 2531. Sato already tops the list of Japanese surnames, accounting for 1.3% of the total population, according to a March 2023 survey, with Suzuki a close second. A nation of Satos "will not only be inconvenient but also undermine individual dignity," he said, according to the Asahi Shimbun, adding that the trend would also lead to the loss of family and regional heritage.

MANILA (AFP) -- Hundreds of schools in the Philippines, including dozens in the capital Manila, suspended in-person classes on Tuesday due to dangerous levels of heat, education officials said. The country's heat index measures what a temperature feels like, taking into account humidity. The index was expected to reach the "danger" level of 42 degrees Celsius in Manila on Tuesday and 43C on Wednesday, with similar levels in a dozen other areas of the country, the state weather forecaster said. The actual highest recorded temperature for the metropolis on Tuesday was 35.7C, below the record of 38.6C reached on May 17, 1915. Local officials across the main island of Luzon, the central islands, and the southern island of Mindanao suspended in-person classes or shortened school hours to avoid the hottest part of the day, education ministry officials said.

WINDHOEK (AFP) -- Namibian authorities stepped up an anti-poaching alert after announcing that 28 rhinoceros had been killed by poachers since the start of the year, including 19 at the country's largest animal reserve. The southern African country's environment ministry said an "urgent high-level meeting" with security officials had been called to plan measures to combat the "barbaric" poaching wave. The ministry also appealed for public help "in this difficult fight" against a phenomenon surging again across southern Africa. No arrests have been made so far, the ministry added. Namibia's Etosha Park has been particularly hard hit by the new wave of killings. Of the 19 rhinos slaughtered in the park, 10 were found during a campaign in March to dehorn rhinos to reduce the risk of them becoming poaching targets, the ministry said. The horns are used in traditional medicine in Asian markets after the animal is killed.