

Jong-nam Murder: No Strong Evidence To Arrest Three North Koreans - Khalid

KUALA LUMPUR, March 31 (Bernama) -- The Royal Malaysia Police did not have strong evidence to detain three North Koreans in connection with last month's assassination of Kim Jong-nam, the estranged half-brother of North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un.

Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar said the police had recorded statements from North Korean Embassy Second Secretary, Hyon Kwang-song, 44; Air Koryo employee Kim Uk-il, 37; and, Ri Ji-u or James at the North Korean Embassy building in Jalan Batai, Bukit Damansara here before they left for their country of origin yesterday.

"We did not have concrete evidence to arrest them. They were only called to give their statements to facilitate investigations into the murder case before being allowed to return home," he told a press conference here today.

However, he said the police were awaiting North Korea's cooperation to hand over four other suspects believed to have fled to that country.

According to Khalid, the police have not closed the investigations into Jong-nam's murder.

"I want to stress that the police will not close this murder case as long as we have not recorded statements from the four suspects. So far, there has been no response from North Korea on the four suspects," he said.

The four suspects are Ri Ji-hyon, 33; Hong Song-hac, 34; O Jong-gil, 55; and, Ri Jae-nam, 57. They were believed to have fled the country shortly after Jong-nam's murder.

On Feb 13, two foreign women daubed Jong-nam's face with VX nerve agent at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2 (klia2) while he was waiting for a flight to Macau.

He died on the way to the Putrajaya Hospital.

On March 1, two foreign women - Siti Aisyah, 25, an Indonesian citizen and Doan Thi Huong, 29, a Vietnamese - were charged at the Sepang Magistrate's Court with murdering Jong-nam.

Yesterday, Jong-nam's body was finally flown to North Korea after it was kept for over a month at the National Forensic Medicine Institute, Kuala Lumpur Hospital.

Nine Malaysians who were previously barred from leaving North Korea were granted permission to return home and arrived in Kuala Lumpur early Friday morning.

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