

Malaysia seizes endangered Madagascan tortoises

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File photo shows a type of Galapagos tortoise. Malaysian authorities said Monday they had seized hundreds of critically endangered live Madagascan tortoises bound for pet shops.

Malaysian authorities said Monday they had seized hundreds of critically endangered live tortoises bound for pet shops.

The 300 spider and radiated tortoises were discovered at Kuala Lumpur's international airport last week after being flown in from Madagascar, Malaysia's wildlife and national parks department deputy chief Mislihah Mohamad Basir told AFP.

The [reptiles](#) were packed among shredded paper in two suitcases and were found by customs officials who spotted movement in one of the bags.

"Nobody came to collect the luggage and upon inspection by custom officials, they found the live tortoises," Mislihah said.

"The luggage was destined for Kuala Lumpur," she said, adding she believed the tortoises were to be sold to pet shops. No one has been arrested so far.

The Madagascan spider and radiated tortoises are classified as critically endangered under the UN's Convention on International Trade in [Endangered Species](#) (CITES). Both are hunted for their meat and for the exotic [pet trade](#).

Despite efforts by Southeast Asian authorities to crack down on illegal animal smuggling and trade, the practice still persists in the region, posing a threat to several species, anti-trafficking activists say.

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