

world

50 children saved after police bust paedophile site: Interpol

● Police are trying to identify an additional 100 in images that had been shared on the internet

● Tokputza, 31, pleaded guilty to 50 counts of abuse of 11 babies and children -- one just 15 months old -- between 2011 and 2018.

AFP | Lyon, France

International police group Interpol said yesterday that nine people had been arrested in Thailand, Australia and the US and 50 children had been rescued after investigators took down an online paedophilia ring. More arrests were expected as police in nearly 60 countries pursue investigations stemming from an Interpol operation launched two years ago into a hidden "dark web" site with 63,000 users worldwide. Fifty children were rescued



Officers collecting evidence from the website's main administrator, Montri Salangam's home (Courtesy of The Straits Times)

following the arrests. Police are trying to identify an additional 100 in images that had been shared on the internet's uncharted corners.

Interpol said its Operation Blackwrist began after it found material that was traced back to a subscription-based site on the dark web, where people can use encrypted software to hide behind layers of secrecy. Interpol enlisted help from

national agencies worldwide, with the US Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) department eventually tracking the site's IP address, where new photos and videos were posted weekly.

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'Child's worst nightmare'

Salangam, whose victims included one of his nephews, was sentenced in June last year to 146 years in prison by Thai courts, while an associate, a preschool teacher, got 36 years.

Tokputza was handed a 40-year prison term at his trial in Australia last Friday, the longest ever for child sex offences in the country.



Dark web sites can't be found through search engines, and users need to have the specific URL address to land on a site.

The HSI's regional attache in Bangkok, Eric McLoughlin, said in the statement that "numerous arrests" had been made in the US. Some held "positions of public trust," he said, and one individual was abusing his two-year-old stepbrother.

"Operation Blackwrist sends a clear message to those abusing children, producing child sexual exploitation material and sharing the images online: We see you, and you will be brought to justice," Interpol's Secretary General Juergen Stock said.

S. Korea scraps joint Olympic hockey team with North

Seoul, South Korea

South Korea are dropping their plan for a joint women's field hockey team with the North at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, officials said Thursday, after Pyongyang failed to co-operate.

Sporting ties triggered a rapid diplomatic thaw on and around the peninsula last year, but are stagnating with the wider process over the North's nuclear arsenal deadlocked.

The two Koreas formed their first-ever unified Olympic team -- a joint women's ice hockey squad -- for the 2018 Winter Games in the South,

where they proved a media sensation despite losing all five of their matches by a combined scoreline of 28-2.

The two Koreas then formed several joint teams for the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia and in February agreed to send unified basketball, judo, field hockey and rowing squads to Tokyo.

But just weeks later a summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump collapsed in disagreement over sanctions relief and what Pyongyang would be willing to give up in return.

Two US navy ships sail though Taiwan Strait Taiwan

Taipei, Taiwan

Two American warships sailed through the Taiwan Strait, the US navy said Thursday, as Washington also kicked off multinational naval drills near Guam in operations bound to provoke a rebuke from Beijing.

The navy said the USS Preble, a destroyer, and USNS Walter S. Diehl, a supply ship, conducted a routine transit "in accordance with international law".

"The ships' transit through the Taiwan Strait demon-

strates the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific," the navy said.

"The U.S. Navy will continue to fly, sail and operate anywhere international law allows."

US warships periodically conduct "freedom of navigation" exercises in the narrow waterway separating the Chinese mainland and Taiwan, triggering angry responses from Beijing every time.

Beijing views any ships passing through the strait as essentially breaching its sovereignty.

Made by foot

Mexican overcomes disability in style

Guadalajara, Mexico

When Adriana Macias graduated from law school, she found no firm was interested in hiring an attorney without arms.

So Macias, a 41-year-old Mexican woman who was born without them, began working as a writer, playwright, motivational speaker and now a fashion designer who has just launched a new clothing line.

She designed it -- as she does nearly everything -- with her feet.

She unveiled her debut collection at Fashion Week Mexico last month, where disabled models strutted the runway -- or rolled down it in wheelchairs -- showing off her fall-winter line of 12 flowing, vibrantly colored designs made so people with disabilities can easily put them on.

She herself uses custom-made clothes that allow her to dress herself using her feet.

"I'm putting out this clothing line with all these details designed to make the clothes accessible, very comfortable, very practical, but also very formal. I wanted (the show) to be inclusive because inclusiveness is a very important issue," she told AFP.

"People should not exist for clothes, clothes should exist for people." No more prosthetic arms



Adriana Macias - who was born without arms - prepares breakfast in Guadalajara, state of Jalisco, Mexico

Macias's parents taught her things other children did with their hands.

Today, she eats, drinks, writes, draws, cooks, cleans and even dresses her three-year-old daughter with her feet and legs.

Sitting cross-legged on her chair, she gestures with her feet when she speaks. Sometimes she rests her chin on her toes, which sport rings and nail polish, or uses them to brush back her long hair.

She used prosthetic arms until she was 20, but had to give them up when the added weight gave her shoulder problems.

"It was tough going off to university without my prostheses, taking off my shoes in class to write. It's considered bad manners to take off your shoes," she said with a smile and her usual lively determination.

She thrived at university anyway, earning a law degree, but got a cold welcome in the professional world.

"No one wanted to hire me," she said.

"Everybody thought it was weird or shocking that someone would show up at an office, take their shoes off and apply for work." That is when she began writing -- she has published three books and a play -- and also working as a motivational speaker and, now, a designer.

She even holds a Guinness world record, for "most birthday candles lit with the feet in one minute": 11.