



EXOTIC & ILLEGAL. Deputy customs director Abdull Wahid Sulong shows off seized Ploughshare, right, and Indian Star, left, tortoises after a press conference at the customs office in Sepang, Malaysia. Malaysian authorities say they seized 330 exotic tortoises from Madagascar worth 1.2 million ringgit (\$276,721) in the latest heist of illegal wildlife and animal parts being smuggled into the country. (AP Photo/Daniel Chan)

Malaysia seizes 330 exotic tortoises from Madagascar

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysian authorities have seized 330 exotic tortoises from Madagascar worth 1.2 million ringgit (\$276,721), in the latest heist of illegal wildlife and animal parts being smuggled into the country.

Deputy customs director Abdull Wahid Sulong said that 325 Indian Star tortoises and five Ploughshare tortoises were packed into five boxes and labelled as stones. He said the live tortoises, usually kept as pets, arrived via Etihad Airways from Antanaviro Airport in Madagascar.

Customs officials found the boxes at the Kuala Lumpur airport cargo warehouse on the same day based on a tip, Abdull Wahid said.

The import of exotic tortoises requires a special permit from Malaysia's Wildlife Department. No arrests were made and the case is still under investigation, Abdull Wahid said.

In May, airport customs officials seized African pangolin scales worth \$2.1 million at the airport cargo warehouse. In April, they confiscated 18 rhino horns worth \$3.1 million believed to have been flown in from Mozambique and declared as art objects.

Philippines arrests 25 Koreans over alleged internet fraud

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — Philippine authorities have arrested 25 South Koreans for alleged internet fraud and illegal online gambling.

The Bureau of Immigration said 12 of them are wanted back home for allegedly operating an online business scam duping their compatriots into investing money in bogus real estate projects in the Philippines.

Their arrests in a posh condominium in the capital of Manila followed the apprehension of four other South Koreans for alleged internet fraud.

The National Bureau of Investigation also presented to the media five South Korean nationals arrested for suspected online gambling operations. It said four South Korean women operating a secret online casino inside a mall were also apprehended.

Scientists find 38 million pieces of trash on Pacific island

By Nick Perry
The Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — When researchers travelled to a tiny, uninhabited island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, they were astonished to find an estimated 38 million pieces of trash washed up on the beaches.

Almost all of the garbage they found on Henderson Island was made from plastic. There were toy soldiers, dominos, toothbrushes, and hundreds of hardhats of every shape, size, and color.

The researchers say the density of trash was the highest recorded anywhere in the world, despite Henderson Island's extreme remoteness. The island is located about halfway between New Zealand and Chile and is recognized as a UNESCO world heritage site.

Jennifer Lavers, a research scientist at Australia's University of Tasmania, was lead author of the report, which was published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Lavers said Henderson Island is at the edge of a vortex of ocean currents known as the South Pacific gyre, which tends to capture and hold floating trash.

"The quantity of plastic there is truly alarming," Lavers told The Associated Press. "It's both beautiful and terrifying."

She said she sometimes found herself getting mesmerized by the variety and colors of the plastic that litter the island before the tragedy of it would sink in again.

Lavers and six others stayed on the island for three-and-a-half months in 2015 while conducting the study. They found the trash weighed an estimated 17.6 tons and that more than two-thirds of it was buried in shallow sediment on the beaches.

Lavers said she noticed green toy soldiers that looked identical to those her brother played with as a child in the early 1980s, as well as red motels from the Monopoly board game.

She said the most common items they found were cigarette lighters and toothbrushes. One of the



PERVASIVE PLASTIC. In these 2015 photos provided by Jennifer Lavers, plastic debris is strewn on the beach on Henderson Island. When researchers travelled to the tiny, uninhabited island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, they were astonished to find an estimated 38 million pieces of trash washed up on the beaches. (Jennifer Lavers via AP)

strangest was a baby pacifier.

She said they found a sea turtle that had died after getting caught in an abandoned fishing net and a crab that was living in a cosmetics container.

By clearing a part of a beach of trash and then watching new pieces accumulate, Lavers said they were able to estimate that more than 13,000 pieces of trash wash up every day on the island, which is about six miles long and three miles wide.

Henderson Island is part of the Pitcairn Islands group, a British dependency. It is so remote that Lavers said she missed her own wedding after the boat coming to collect the group was delayed.

Luckily, she said, the guests were still in Tahiti, in French Polynesia, when she showed up three days late, and she still got married.

Lavers said she is so appalled by the amount of plastic in the oceans that she has taken to using a bamboo iPhone case and toothbrush.

"We need to drastically rethink our relationship with plastic," she said. "It's something that's designed to last forever, but is often only used for a few fleeting moments and then tossed away."

Melissa Bowen, an oceanographer at the University of Auckland in New Zealand who was not involved in the study, said that winds and currents

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