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Indonesian rock star surrenders over web sex clips

AN Indonesian rock star surrendered to police Tuesday after two homemade sex videos of himself with his celebrity girlfriends appeared online, sparking a raging debate about Internet porn.

Singer Nazril Ariel, 28, has been at the centre of the 'Peterporn' scandal, named after his band Peterpan, since the grainy but explicit videos went viral on Indonesian websites earlier this month.

"Ariel surrendered today at 3am (2000 GMT Monday) after police named him a suspect for breaching the anti-pornography law. If he hadn't surrendered we would have arrested him," police deputy spokesman Zainuri Lubis said.

The mainly Muslim country's first celebrity sex video scandal has underscored the widening gulf between traditional values and modern, Internet-driven youth culture in the Southeast Asian archipelago.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has cited the videos in voicing his support for tougher controls on the Internet.

"We have increasingly realised that our nation should not stay naked and be crushed by the information technology frenzy, because there will be many victims," he told reporters on Friday.

The videos were apparently filmed by Ariel and appear to show him having sex with his current girlfriend Luna Maya, 26, and his ex-girlfriend Cut Tari, 32, on separate occasions.

Both women were prominent television personalities but their careers have imploded since the videos were made public and they have been dropped by their corporate sponsors.

Tari, who is married and also could face up to nine months in prison for adultery, is due for another round of questioning later Tuesday, police said.

The celebrities deny uploading the clips but could

still face up to 12 years in jail for breaches of the country's 2008 anti-pornography law.

The case is the first major test of the law, which sets stiff prison sentences for anyone who produces, disseminates, trades or provides pornography.

The law - which defines pornography as all works and "bodily movements" deemed obscene or capable of violating public morality - has been criticised by human rights and civil society groups as a threat to pluralism.

But Yudhoyono said last week the Peterporn scandal highlighted the need for more controls tailored for the Internet, which many see as the main source of pornography even though pirated porn DVDs are widely sold on the streets.

Communications Minister Tifatul Sembiring, of a conservative Islamic party, has jumped on the scandal to revive his pet project - shelved due to broad opposition earlier this year - to filter the Internet for "negative" content.

Sembiring has promised to issue a ministerial decree by the end of the year to "save the young" from Internet porn.

But he was forced to issue an apology on social networking websites after linking the scandal to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

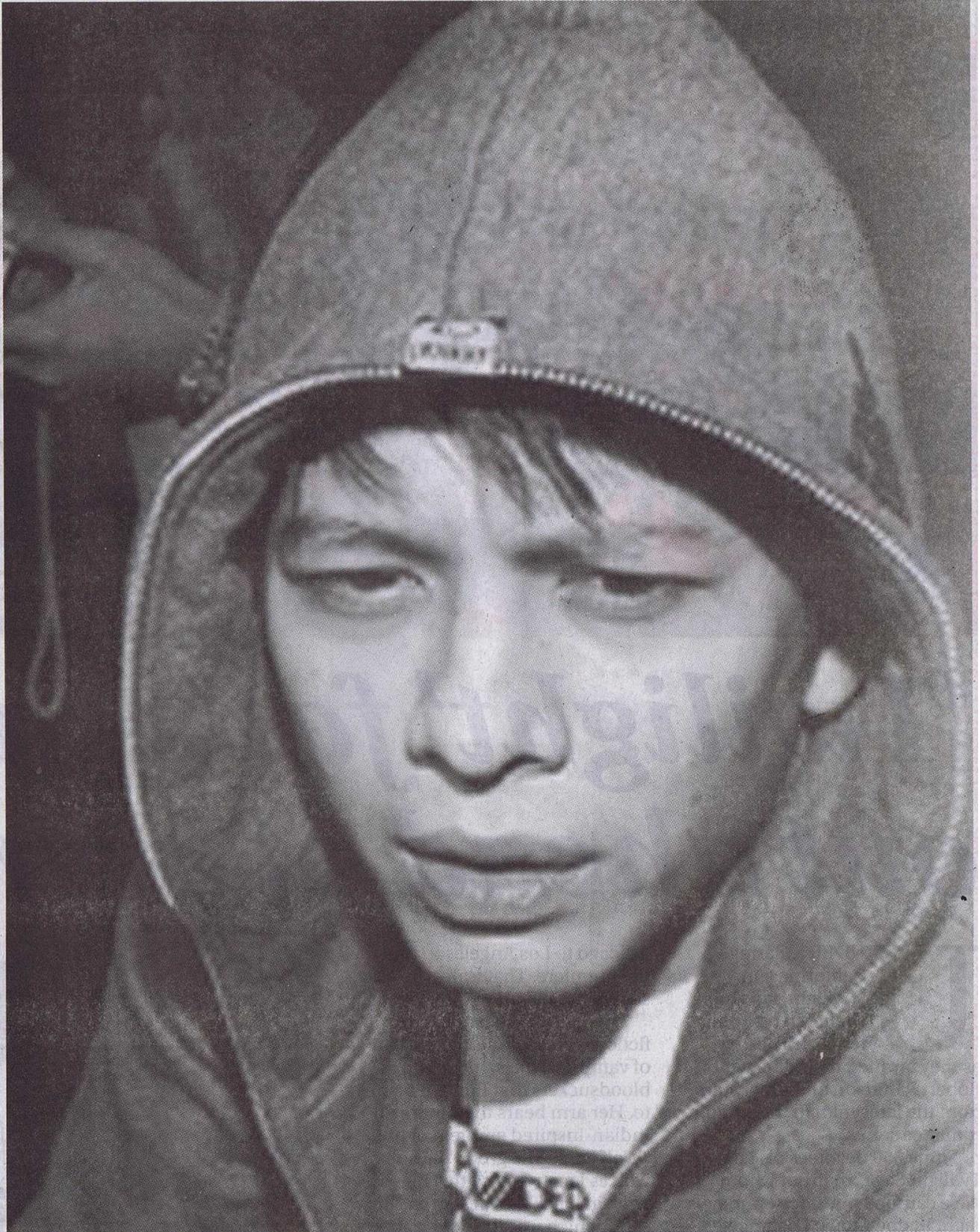
He also linked pornography to HIV-AIDS and said funding to fight the disease was a waste of money.

The country's blogosphere has lit up over the Peterporn debate.

A "Support Ariel" feed on micro-blogging site Twitter included this comment from a fan: "The police are always champions when it comes to arresting people in cases like this. Try getting them to arrest corruptors..."

Indonesia has about 40 million Internet users out of a total population of 240 million, according to official figures.- AFP

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INDONESIAN rock star Nazril Ariel at a function in Jakarta. PHOTO:AFP