

India Urged To Leave The Sentinel Islanders Alone

NEW DELHI: A rights group that works to protect tribal people has urged Indian authorities to abandon efforts to recover the body of an American who was killed by inhabitants of an island where outsiders are effectively forbidden by Indian law.

The group, Survival International, said the islanders could be exposed to deadly diseases if rescuers set foot on North Sentinel Island, where John Allen Chau was killed earlier this month. Chau travelled to the island by

paying fishermen to smuggle him. The fishermen told authorities they saw the Sentinelese bury Chau's body on the beach.

Notes that Chau left behind say he wanted to bring Christianity to the islanders. Indian officials have travelled repeatedly in recent days near the remote island but have not set foot on it.

Scholars believe the Sentinelese are descendants of Africans who migrated to the area about 50,000 years ago and survive on the small, forested island

by hunting, fishing and gathering wild plants. Almost nothing is known of their lives, except that they attack outsiders with spears or bows and arrows.

Survival International's director, Stephen Corry, said in a statement Monday that any efforts to recover the body would be "incredibly dangerous" for both Indian officials and the Sentinelese, who face being wiped out if any outside diseases are introduced.

"The risk of a deadly epidemic of flu, measles or other outside

disease is very real, and increases with every such contact. Such efforts in similar cases in the past have ended with the Sentinelese attempting to defend their island by force," Corry said. He said the body of Chau "should be left alone as should be the Sentinelese."

He was critical of Indian's relaxation of controls over visitors to such islands. "The weakening of the restrictions on visiting the islands must be revoked, and the exclusion zone around the island

properly enforced," he said.

An Indian police official said they do not want to disturb the islanders. "They are a treasure," said Dependera Pathak, director-general of police on the Andaman and Nicobar island groups. "We cannot go and force our way in. We don't want to harm them."

There has been no contact with the Sentinelese for generations. Anthropologists used to occasionally drop off gifts of coconuts and bananas, but even those visits were stopped years ago.

Another Record Launch Of Satellites By ISRO

SRIHARIKOTA: India on Thursday put into orbit its own earth observation satellite with a sharp eye, the Hyper Spectral Imaging Satellite (HysIS), and 30 other foreign satellites in textbook style.

In the process, India has crossed the milestone of lifting and putting into orbit over 250 foreign satellites. India has till date has put into orbit 269 foreign satellites. The notable aspect of the rocket mission is the placing of the satellites in two different orbits -- one at a higher altitude and the others in a lower one.

After the successful launch, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman K. Sivan said: "Once again Indian space scientists showed their excellence. The PSLV injected the HysIS first and later the 30 foreign satellites. The HysIS is a state-of-the-art satellite with a critical

chip called the optical imaging detector array chip was designed by Satellite Applications Centre (SAC) and fabricated by Semiconductor Laboratory of ISRO.

Sivan said the first unmanned mission -- a prelude to the manned one -- will happen in December 2020. There will be another mission later again ahead of the human space mission by 2022.

In 2019 ISRO will be launching a micro-satellite, Chandrayaan-2 (moon mission), RISAT and Cartosat satellites.

All the foreign satellites were placed in a 504 km orbit. While 23 satellites are from the US, the rest are from Australia, Canada, Columbia, Finland, Malaysia, the Netherlands and Spain.

These satellites have been commercially contracted for launch through Antrix Corporation Limited, the commercial arm of ISRO.

Many Killed In Kabul Attacks

KABUL: Taliban insurgents staged a co-ordinated attack targeting a security firm in the eastern part of the capital on Wednesday, killing at least 10 people and wounding 19 others when a suicide bomber detonated his explosives and fighters engaged security forces in a gun battle, Afghan officials said.

A British national also died.

The attack came hours after provincial officials said at least 30 civilians were killed along with 16 Taliban fighters during an overnight battle between Afghan government forces and insurgents in southern Helmand province.

The attacks were the latest in a series of brutal and near-daily Taliban assaults on military and police forces and government and other installations throughout the country. The resurgent Taliban, who in recent years have taken over nearly half of Afghanistan,

claimed the attack in Kabul.

Najib Danish, spokesman for the Interior Ministry, said the Kabul attack took place when a suicide bomber detonated his explosives and then other insurgents started a gun battle with security forces in the area.

Charlie Burbridge, the managing director of G4S Risk Management Group, said 32 employees of the company were also wounded in the attack, five of them seriously.

Meanwhile, in Washington, the Pentagon has released the names of three U.S. servicemen killed pm Tuesday by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan. They are Army Capt. Andrew Patrick Ross, age 29, of Lexington, Virginia; Army Sgt. 1st Class Eric Michael Emond, age 39, of Brush Prairie, Washington; and Air Force Staff Sgt. Dylan J. Elchin, age 25, of Hookstown, Pennsylvania.

Modi At Guru Nanak Jayanti Celebrations



Prime Minister Narendra Modi attending the Guru Nanak Jayanti celebrations at the residence of Union Minister for Food Processing Industries, Harsimrat Kaur Badal, in New Delhi on November 23, 2018.

Thousands At Bengaluru 'Comic Con'



Fans dressed as different comic characters get together to pose for photographs at the recent Bengaluru Comic Con in Bangalore. Thousands of fans cheered and clicked pictures with their favorite comic characters at the two-day annual comic book fest. (AP Photo/Aijaz Rahi)

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Sri Lanka MPs Bar Rajapaksa From Using State Funds

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan lawmakers on Thursday approved a motion barring disputed Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa from using state funds after he lost two no-confidence votes, in an escalation of the country's political crisis.

The motion was passed with 123 votes in the 225-member Parliament as Rajapaksa supporters boycotted the proceedings for a third day, accusing Speaker Karu Jayasuriya of bias and breaching parliamentary rules.

The passage of the motion was a setback for Rajapaksa because it demonstrated that a majority of lawmakers oppose the former strongman, who ruled Sri Lanka as president from 2005 to 2015.

Sri Lanka has been in a political crisis since Oct. 26, when President Maithripala Sirisena

abruptly fired Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and appointed Rajapaksa. Both claim to be the legitimate officeholder, with Wickremesinghe saying he has majority support in Parliament and his firing was invalid.

Rajapaksa has moved into the prime minister's office, while Wickremesinghe has refused to leave the premier's official residence.

Parliament has passed two no-confidence motions against Rajapaksa and the speaker has declared that Rajapaksa is no longer prime minister and his government has been dissolved.

But Rajapaksa continues to function as prime minister with the backing of Sirisena, who has dismissed the no-confidence votes, saying proper procedures were not followed.

16 Die In Nepal Bus Crash

KATHMANDU: A bus packed with people returning from a village fair drove off a mountain highway in Nepal on Thursday, killing 16 people and injuring 20.

The bus rolled about 300 metres (984 feet) down a mountain slope before it slammed near a river in west Nepal, administrator

Karunakar Awasthi said. Rescuers were struggling because of darkness and remoteness of the area but recovered the bodies and took the injured to hospitals.

Awasthi said the bus appeared to have dragged on the road before veering off, indicating there could be a brake failure.