Oman secures release of Indian priest

Muscat

Muscat has secured the release of an Indian priest who was abducted last year during a deadly attack by Islamist militants in Yemen, Oman’s official news agency said yesterday.

Thomas Uzhunnalil had been held captive since March 2016, when jihadists attacked a care home operated by missionaries in the southern port city of Aden, killing 16 people including four nuns.

Uzhunnalil was pictured yesterday wearing local traditional dress and with a flowing but tidy white beard grown while in captivity.

He appeared relatively healthy, standing tall before a portrait of Oman’s Sultan Qaboos.

The news release said Omani authorities “coordinated with Yemeni parties” to free Uzhunnalil, described as a “Vatican employee”, at the request of the sultan.

In video footage from Oman TV, Uzhunnalil is seen arriving in Muscat.

He disembarks from a Royal Air Force of Oman plane unaided, but struggles as he makes his way down the steps to the tarmac.

“I wish first and foremost to thank God Almighty for this day,” the priest said before thanking Sultan Qaboos and those who prayed for his release.

Uzhunnalil, who is in his mid-50s, last appeared in a video circulated online in December 2016, in which he appealed to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pope Francis to secure his freedom.

Yemeni authorities have blamed the Islamic State group for last year’s attack. Al-Qaeda, which is also active in the area, distanced itself from the massacre, saying that it was not involved.

The internationally recognised government in war-torn Yemen is grappling with both an Iran-backed rebellion and a growing jihadist presence.

Al-Qaeda and IS have stepped up attacks in Aden, targeting mainly loyalists and members of a Saudi-led coalition battling Huthi rebels and their allies.

President Abderabbo Mansour Hadi has declared Aden to be Yemen’s temporary capital since Sanaa was seized by the rebels in September 2014. (AFP)

Pak police hunt elder who ordered couple’s electrocution

Karachi

Pakistan police were yesterday hunting a tribal elder who ordered a teenage couple to be electrocuted by their families as punishment for eloping, in the country’s latest gruesome “honour” killing.

The couple, members of the Pashtun ethnic group living in the southern city of Karachi, fell foul of their families after eloping last month. But police said the man’s family persuaded them to return home so they could be married.

A tribal jirga (council) then ordered the couple’s execution after the families had put their case to the influential group of elders.

The couple were tied to a wooden bed and electrocuted by family members. Police said the girl was aged 15 or 16 and the man was around 18 years old.

“The (jirga) decided that the girl would be electrocuted by her own father and uncle and the boy by his father and uncle,” police officer Amanullah Marwat said, adding that the families later buried the bodies in secret.

A 12-year-old girl who and six were missing after a major storm caused flooding in and around Manila last week with treason and espionage in a “secret plan” against the government.

Phnom Penh

The American ambassador to Cambodia yesterday rejected allegations by strongman premier Hun Sen that the US was involved in plotting to overthrow the government, calling the claims a “red herring”.

The accusations followed the arrest of leading opposition politician Kem Sokha, who was charged last week with treason and espionage in a “secret plan” to take power in 2017.

Hun Sen publicly accused the US of involvement in the plot, citing a 2013 speech in which Kem Sokha said he had received American help to build a pro-democracy movement inside Cambodia.

The finger-pointing comes as Hun Sen dramatically escalates his rhetorical attacks on the US -- an ally whose foreign aid has become less vital as Cambodia edges closer to China.

“School segregation harms children’s learning opportunities and is a clear injustice against minority and other vulnerable groups of people, which also perpetuates their marginalisation.”

Nils Muiznieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

A black macaque with a goofy grin snapped itself in photographer. After Slater published the pictures in a book, animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) filed a lawsuit in federal court in San Francisco in 2015 seeking to have the monkey “declared the author and owner of his photograph.”

PETA said the selfies were taken by a six-year-old called Naruto on the island of Sulawesi, although even the identity of the monkey was the subject of legal wranglings.

In filing the lawsuit, PETA argued that “US copyright law doesn’t prohibit an animal from owning a copyright, and since Naruto took the photo, he owns the copyright, as any human would”.

San Francisco

A bizarre two-year court battle over who owns the copyright of a “monkey selfie” which went viral last year has at last been settled on Monday -- in favour of a British nature photographer.

A black macaque with a goofy grin snapped itself in Indonesia while staring down the lens of camera belonging to David Slater in 2011.

After Slater published the pictures in a book, animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) filed a

No more monkeying around: ‘monkey selfie’ case settled

Selfie taken by macaque money

US slams Cambodia’s ‘baseless’ claims of plot

At least four dead as storm hits Philippines

Commuters wade a flooded main street while a passenger bus crosses in Manila main street while a passenger bus crosses in Manila

At least four people died and six were missing after a major storm caused flooding in and around Manila yesterday, forcing schools, government offices and businesses to shut down.

A 12-year-old girl who drowned in a rain-swollen river in a Manila suburb and a three-month old baby who were taken by a landslide southeast of the Philippine capital were among the victims, local officials said.

Most of the dead and missing were poor people forced to live in identified “danger zones” despite government warnings of the risks they face during storms.

“Our local authorities had continuously warned that their place was really prone to landslides but they insisted on staying,” said civil defence officer Ronnie Mateo, after the rain caused a landslide that fatally buried two teenage brothers just east of Manila.

The tropical depression, which left some people wading through chest-deep waters outside the capital, was the latest to hit the Southeast Asian archipelago, which endures about 20 such storms each year.

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PollToday

Police reopen Copenhagen airport after incident

Danish police reopened a terminal at Copenhagen airport two hours after evacuating it as they investigated a suspicious piece of luggage.

Honour killings still exist in remote villages in countries like Pakistan and India. Do you think such incidents could be avoided if they were provided better education?

Yes  No  Cant Say

References

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Hun Sen publicly accused the US of involvement in the plot, citing a 2013 speech in which Kem Sokha said he had received American help to build a pro-democracy movement inside Cambodia.

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