

Survival International stick to guns in GPC's Meet the Press



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GUWAHATI: Tasked with protecting wildlife, foresters often try to cover up their inefficiency and corruption by terrorizing [indigenous](#) people inhabiting areas near forests. But without taking these people into confidence, it is impossible to preserve forests and wildlife. Expanding on this issue, Sophie Grigg, Senior Research and Advocacy Officer, Survival International, said that merely arming forest [guards](#) with sophisticated weaponry actually complicates the conservation effort. She was addressing city-based scribes from London through video conferencing as part of Guwahati Press Club's 'Meet the Press' programme. Referring to [Kaziranga](#) national park, Ms Grigg however claimed that while a large number of rhinos have been gunned down in the past 5 years, the killing of poachers too "have continued apace".

Coming out strongly against '[shoot](#) at sight' powers foresters are being armed with, she said: "The outcome of shooting down poachers is that the masterminds remain in the [dark](#). And it is the masterminds who keep pushing in new poachers to take the place of those who have fallen to foresters' bullets. By all means, catch poachers alive and prosecute them, but do find out who are pulling the strings". [Conservation](#) policies should also factor in the traditional knowledge of [indigenous](#) people inhabiting forests and surrounding areas, she commented.

It may be recalled that international tribal [rights](#) advocacy organization ‘Survival International’ has been taking up cudgels on behalf of tribals adversely impacted by ham-handed conservation efforts. It strongly supported the [BBC](#) documentary ‘Killing for [Conservation](#)’ which riled the [Kaziranga](#) authority and Indian government last year for claiming long-standing human [rights](#) violation and extra-judicial killings of poachers in the national park in the name of [conservation](#). Moving on to the suspected killing of an American citizen in the Andamans recently by Sentinelese tibals, Ms Grigg appealed to the Indian and [US](#) governments not to send in a party to exhume the body. “This could cause these tribals, hitherto separated from the wider world, to be infected by all sorts of diseases that could result in extermination of the entire community,” she cautioned.

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