



Silkyara Became the Country's Longest Rescue Operation

Why In News?

On November 28, 2023, 41 labourers trapped in an under-construction tunnel at Silkyara in Uttarkashi district were successfully rescued after 17 days (about 2 and a half weeks) of hard work. With this, Operation Silkyara has become the longest rescue operation in the country to evacuate workers trapped in a tunnel or mine.

Key Points:

- On November 12, 41 labourers were trapped inside an under-construction tunnel at Silkyara in Uttarkashi district due to a landslide on the day of Deepawali. Various agencies were engaged to get them out safely.
- NDRF, SDRF, BRO, RVNL, SJVNL, ONGC, ITBP, NHAIDCL, THDC, Uttarakhand State Government, District Administration, Army, Air Force, workers played an important role in the rescue work in Mission Silkyara.
- It is noteworthy that the 17-day Operation Silkyara has become the longest rescue operation in the country to evacuate the trapped workers in a tunnel or mine. Earlier, such a campaign has also been carried out in the country.
- Raniganj Coal Mine Campaign
- On November 13, 1989, the Mahabir Kolyari Raniganj coal mine in West Bengal was submerged. There were 65 workers trapped in it. A team was formed under the leadership of mining engineer Jaswant Gill to take them out safely. After two days of operation, all the workers were finally safely evacuated.
- In that operation, Gill himself went inside the mine through a steel capsule to save people. In 1991, the then President R. Venkataraman awarded him the Best Life Saving Medal.
- The number of workers in that campaign was more than Silkyara, but it took less time to evacuate them. In Silkyara, the workers could be evacuated after the 13th day passed.
- A similar campaign took place in 2006 in Haldheri village of Kurukshetra, Haryana, where a five-year-old boy fell into a prince borewell. After about 50 hours (about 2 days) of hard work, the rescue teams managed to pull the child out. In this campaign, the child was taken out by connecting another borewell through an iron pipe of three feet diameter.
- Some similar campaigns have also taken place abroad-
- **Thai Cave Expedition:** On June 23, 2018, the Wild Boars football team went to Tham Luang Cave in Thailand and got stuck inside due to waterlogging caused by rain. It was an extremely challenging task to find the players amidst the ever-increasing water in the cave. As many as 90 divers were also deployed in the nearly two-week-long operation. Former Thailand Navy SEAL Saman Kunan lost his life in the rescue operation. It is considered to be one of the most complex rescue operations in the world.
- **Chile mine operation:** On August 5, 2010, 33 workers were buried in the San Jose gold and copper mine that collapsed. It was difficult to contact these workers trapped about 2000 feet (about 609.6 m) below the ground. After 17 days (about 2 and a half weeks) of hard work, food, water, medicine could be sent to the trapped workers by making a lifeline hole under the surface. After 69 days (about 2 and a half months), on October 13, all the workers were taken out of the tunnel one by one.
- **On July 24, 2002,** nine workers were trapped in the Cucreek Mining Inc. mine in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, USA. They were pulled out after 77 hours (about 3 days) with the help of only a

22-inch-wide iron ring.



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