

# First visuals of 41 persons trapped in tunnel emerge

Rescue teams identify the workers using an endoscopic camera sent in through the six-inch pipe which was drilled through the debris; horizontal drilling to create a safe passage resumes

**Ishita Mishra**

NEW DELHI

**T**he first visuals of the 41 workers trapped inside the Silkyara tunnel in Uttarakashi district of Uttarakhand since November 12 emerged on Tuesday after an endoscopic camera was sent in through the six-inch pipe which was drilled through the debris blocking the tunnel on Monday.

In a video released by the rescue agencies, the workers can be seen standing in a line and identifying themselves while rescue workers issue instructions to them. The trapped men are seen placing their ears on the edge of the pipe to hear what is being told by the rescuers.

"Aap theek ho? (Are you fine?)," a rescue team



**Clinging on to hope:** Visuals of workers trapped inside the Silkyara tunnel in Uttarakashi district of Uttarakhand, released by rescuers on Tuesday. PTI

member asks, to which the workers reply in the affirmative. The workers are then told to show themselves in the camera and smile. The rescue teams identified all the trapped workers from the visuals and also shared the same with their family members.

Fruits and other essentials were later sent through the pipe. According to sources, the pipe

was temporarily blocked on Tuesday afternoon when the agencies tried to send cooked food. It was cleared in the evening.

*The Hindu* could not contact Uttarakashi District Magistrate Abhishek Ruhela for comments.

## Drilling resumes

Meanwhile, horizontal drilling through the debris with a U.S.-made auger ma-

chine resumed on Tuesday. The operation was suspended on Friday after the machine encountered hard material. The rescue teams plan to insert a 900-mm pipe through the rubble to create an escape passage for the workers.

**CONTINUED ON**

» **PAGE 14**

**MORE REPORTS**

» **PAGE 16**

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### First visuals emerge of workers inside tunnel

The authorities are planning to place an 800-mm pipe inside the 900-mm one to provide more strength.

In Delhi, National Disaster Management Authority member Lieutenant-General Syed Ata Hasnain (ret'd) said efforts were being made on five fronts to save the workers. He said that two teams of the NDRF were at the site to deal with any contingency.

He maintained that there was no scarcity of oxygen inside the tunnel. "The two-km section of the tunnel, with completed concrete work ensuring the safety of the workers, is the focus of the rescue efforts. In this secured portion of the tunnel, electricity and water supply are operational, and provisions, including food and medicines, are being delivered through a dedicated four-inch compressor pipeline," he said.

Five agencies – ONGC, SJVN, RVNL, NHIDCL, and THDCL – have been assigned specific responsibilities, working collaboratively with occasional task adjustments for operational efficiency. A five-point action plan has been chalked out for the rescue, including vertical drilling, excavating two escape channels/tunnels on both sides of the tunnel, and digging a tunnel from the other end, the Barkot side.

Anurag Jain, Secretary, Road Transport and Highway Ministry, said that vertical drilling was the "second-best option" for the rescue operation.



### Coast Guard gets new Eastern Regional Commander

Inspector General Donny Michael assumed office as the Coast Guard's Eastern Regional Commander, replacing Inspector General Anand Prakash Badola during a ceremonial parade held at the Coast Guard Air Station, Chennai, on Tuesday. Mr. Badola will be taking charge as Deputy Director General (Policy and Plans) at the Coast Guard Headquarters in New Delhi. Mr. Michael, a graduate of Loyola College, joined Indian Coast Guard in July 1990. He was awarded the Coast Guard Gallantry Medal for his display of bravery and leadership in saving a burning merchant vessel near Mumbai in September 2012.



# The author of first Tamil novel and advocate of women's education

Mayuram Samuel Vedanayagam Pillai was a man of many parts. He had served as district munsif, a post in which he discharged his duties with great ability. He was also a composer of many 'keerthanas' set to Carnatic ragas. But he is celebrated more for his prose writing as he is considered the pioneer of modern Tamil prose and novel

B. Kolappan

It was All Souls' Day on November 2. People made a beeline for the cemetery at Mayyaduthurai (once Mayuram) with candles, garlands, and flowers to pay homage to their loved ones resting in peace. Standing at the entrance of the cemetery is the statue of Mayuram Samuel Vedanayagam Pillai, the former district munsif, who was the first Tamil novelist, a composer of many 'keerthanas' set to Carnatic ragas, and a prose writer. Behind the statue lies his memorial, beside that of his mother Arokya Mariammal.

Vedanayagam Pillai (1826-1889) was a contemporary and friend of Tamil scholar UV. Swaminatha Iyer. His ancestors had converted to Christianity. He was well versed in Tamil literature. He also made remarkable achievements as a munsif through his knowledge of English. Like Swaminatha Iyer, he was a student of legendary Tamil scholar Thiruvalluvar Meenakshisundaram Pillai.

## Visit to Thiruvavaduthurai Mutt

In his memoir, *En Charithram* (My History), Swaminatha Iyer recalls Vedanayagam Pillai's visit to the Thiruvavaduthurai Mutt with poems composed in praise of Subramania Desikar, its head. "I used to read them in public. They would be so simple in style that everyone would understand them at once and appreciate them. Wasn't it a rare thing for a Christian gentleman to sing the praises of the head of the Saiva monastery? And people were amazed all the more since the author of the panegyrics was a person who was by nature not a flatterer, and who occupied a post of high rank in government," writes Swaminatha Iyer.

Swaminatha Iyer's observation is confirmed by an obituary reference in *The Hindu* in 1889. It says that as a district munsif, Pillai was very popular and discharged his duties with great credit and ability at a time when munsifs of the present type were rare.

Vedanayagam Pillai was also a great connoisseur of Carnatic music and used to meet Gopalakrishna Bharathiyar, the author of *Nandan Charithram*. His collection of songs, *Sarva*



**A son of the soil:** The statue of Mayuram Samuel Vedanayagam Pillai stands at the entrance of the cemetery at Mayyaduthurai. He was buried next to his mother Arokya Mariammal. B. Sivasithi

*Sarvasa Samarasu Keerthasigal*, are simple and drenched in devotion similar to the songs penned by the Hindu composers.

"Although Vedanayagam Pillai claimed that his songs would appeal to all faiths, a closer look at their style and contents reveals a clear Hindu and Christian bias, for he refers to the feet of the God and addresses Him in masculine term," says Sascha Ebeling, Associate Professor at the University of Chicago, in his afterword to the



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Associate Professor at the University of Chicago.

Vedanayagam Pillai's novel, *Prathapa Mudaliar Charithram*, which was translated into English by Meenakshi Tyagarajan.

In the song, *Chittam Eppadiyo* in raga *Nadanamakriya*, he wonders whether *Karthar* (Jesus) would uplift him or give up on him, while *Oho Kaalam* in *Sahana* extols the greatness of time and was popularised by M.M. Dhandapani Desikar.

## 'Want of prose works'

But he is celebrated more for his prose writing as he is considered the pioneer of modern Tamil prose and novel. *Prathapa Mudaliar Charithram* was published in 1879 with an additional English title, *The Life and Adventures in Tamil of Prathapa Mudaliar*. Prose as a medium of the future was one of the primary motives behind the writing of this novel, though poetry was a celebrated medium during his time.

"My objective in writing this work of fiction is to supply the want of prose works in Tamil, a want which is admitted and lamented by all, and also to give a practical illustration of maxims and morality contained in my former works."

Vedanayagam Pillai says his preface to the work:

Though it was the time when Indians were learning English with feverish pace to land government jobs, Gnanambal, the heroine of the novel, was furious about the trend. "Under the British, other officials and other scholars are ignoring native languages. Like the saying about the visiting devil driving out the resident devil, foreign languages like English and French flourish, while the languages of the land

languish," complains Gnanambal, who symbolises the modern women in the 19th Century.

The feeling of the character explains that Vedanayagam Pillai's religious faith had not diminished his love for his mother tongue. Swaminatha Iyer also makes a reference to a poem written in praise of the head of the Thiruvavaduthurai Mutt, in which he says, "At the time when the English language raises its head, you [Subramania Desikar] have come forward with a cord of the vow to protect Tamil and make it thrive."

## Purity of expression

According to *The Hindu*, the great merit of his works was the purity of expression and the moral precepts, of which they are full.

His second novel was *Suguna Sundari Charithram*. But it remains a prose narrative that characterises 'once upon a time, there was a king' fabric as in a *Purana* or *fable*.

"Critics have evaluated the novel as a mere tale, a *kathai*, and reasoned that Pillai packed so much into the first novel that he had little left to say. However, this *kathai*'s claim of being 'novel' or new was authenticated to an extent by how it stylised the mythical stories and classics into believable, 'realistic' events," explains Aadharan Pazhani, a Ph.D candidate, with the thesis on the Emergence of Modern Prose and Novel in Tamil, at Goldsmiths' College, University of London.

His two prose works *Pen Kalvi* and *Pen Manava* advocate education for women and show him as a social reformer. He explains how widow remarriage had become acceptable in European countries and comes down on dowry and child marriage among the Brahmins.

His religious works are *Kochakappu*, *Mana Padikamal*, *Tayavarokanni*, *Deva Thiruvavilai*, *Tiruvural Malai*, *Deva Mata Antari*, and *Tiruvural Antari*. His musical works include *Sarva Samaya Samayasa Kirtaval*, *Saraya Veta Kirtaval*, *Periyumayaki Amma Padikam*, and *Pen Mari Malai*.

"His ambition was to create a good Tamil literature, so as to suit the modern taste of his countrymen, in which he attained eminent success," wrote *The Hindu* in its obituary reference to Vedanayagam Pillai.

## Alarming countdown

All nations must strive for net zero carbon emissions

The title of the United Nations' latest report, Broken Record, is a clever pun. Not only does it suggest that previous warnings of the consequences of rising greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) are being ignored but also that new ceilings are being breached. The annual emissions report, usually timed close to the beginning of the climate talks, reiterates in sharper language that progress, since the Paris Agreement (PA) of 2015, has been tardy. The stated goal was to keep temperatures from rising over 2°C, and 'as far as possible' below 1.5°C, of pre-industrial levels. In the last few years, much of the consensus has been that we should be directing all our efforts towards keeping it below 1.5°C. The Broken Record report, however, suggests that accounting for all commitments made by countries, as per the PA, to minimise their economies' reliance on fossil fuel, temperatures would still result in an overshoot of 2.5°C-2.9°C by the end of the century. To keep temperature below 2°C, emissions by 2030 must be cut 28% and for 1.5°C, they need to be shaved by 42%. Despite many countries having promised to be 'net zero,' meaning no net carbon emissions, the report does not think these promises are 'credible' and even in the most optimistic scenarios, the likelihood of keeping emissions below 1.5°C are 14%.

However, it is not as if the PA has been infructuous. GHG emissions in 2030 based on policies in place were projected to increase by 16% at the time of the adoption of the PA. Today, the projected increase is 3%. To keep temperatures below 1.5°C, annual emissions must reduce every year, until 2030, by 8.7%. What the report says is that the world collectively emitted 57.4 billion tonnes in 2022, an increase of 1.2% over 2021. The pandemic saw 4.7% drop in emissions but the projections for 2023 suggest that the globe is nearly back to pre-pandemic emission levels. The consequences of the globe's tardiness are writ large. As of October this year, 86 days were recorded with temperatures over 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. September was the hottest recorded month ever, with global average temperatures 1.8°C above pre-industrial levels. In terms of solutions, the report repeats sage advice that has been offered for years: the richest countries and those historically responsible for gobbling sparse atmospheric capacity for carbon must commit to greater and faster reductions. While legalese and nit-picking have been characteristic of climate summits, precious little time remains for the world to get its act together.

## Parochial law

States need to implement labour rights uniformly and not rely on protectionism

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has done the right thing by quashing the Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act, 2020 that provides for 75% reservation to State domiciles in the private sector in jobs that provide a monthly salary of less than ₹30,000. The court stated that it was beyond the purview of the State to legislate on the issue and restrict private employers from recruiting people from the open market. It also held that the Act was violative of equality guaranteed under Article 14 and freedom under Article 19 of the Constitution. The court said that by allotting 75% reservation for "locals", the Act militates against the rights of citizens of the rest of the country, and that such acts could lead to other States coming up with similar enactments, in effect putting up "artificial walls" throughout India. It argued that the Act was imposing unreasonable restrictions on workers' right to move freely throughout the territory of India. The court termed the requirements on private employers stipulated in the Act as akin to those under "Inspector Raj".

Other States such as Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand have also enacted similar legislation. The Andhra Pradesh High Court observed that the State's Bill, passed in 2019, "may be unconstitutional", but it is yet to hear the case on merits. Workers move to other States seeking job opportunities that are relevant to their skills and abilities. If States build walls and impose restrictions that prevent job seekers from other States from accessing opportunities, citizens of poorer States will have to eke out a living within their own regions. This will affect the economy of the entire country. While legislation that seeks to reserve blue collar jobs for locals is problematic and unconstitutional, there is a reason why there is resentment among locals in better-off States over their jobs being taken up by "migrant" workers and which has compelled their governments to come up with knee-jerk protectionist measures. There are more than a few private employers who exploit the migrant labour market as such workers tend to work long hours for low wages with little or no social protection and benefits. This creates a segmentation of the labour market with low-wage migrant workers on the one side and local workers with better bargaining power on the other. If States are truly concerned about protecting workers' rights, they should ensure that migrant workers in all establishments enjoy basic labour rights that are legally due to them, thereby creating a level playing field for all workers. This will also be a curb on exploitative practices by employers. Protectionism in the labour market is not the answer.

## Advani wins World title for the 26th time



**Hallmark of success:** Advani rallied to defeat Kothari in a rematch of last year's title clash in Kuala Lumpur. PTI

### BILLIARDS

**Press Trust of India**  
DOHA

Indian cueist Pankaj Advani rallied to win the IBSF World Billiards Championship title here on Tuesday for a staggering 26th time, beating compatriot Sourav Kothari in the final.

Trailing 26-180 in the first hour, Advani rallied to defeat the 2018 world champion Kothari 1000-416 in a rematch of last year's title clash in Kuala Lumpur.

Playing back-to-back matches, Kothari took the initial lead and was going strong but faltered on a couple of easy chances to allow Advani recover from the deficit.

From there, it got a little scrappy with both players exchanging visits between them and a couple of 150-

plus breaks by Advani helped him stretch the lead while Kothari could not fully capitalise on the chances he got.

Advani fired in a break of 214, the highest of the match, and looked unstoppable after that.

Advani maintained a healthy 250-point lead for the better part of the match.

A 99 from Kothari brought the difference down to 150.

The ace from Bengaluru then switched gears to extend the lead and reach the 1000-mark with an unfinished break of 199 to end the proceedings.

Describing the feeling as "unreal", Advani said: "I have won before so I know how it feels, but to repeat it year on year is what makes all those hours of work on skill, body and mind totally worth it."