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All 41 tunnel workers freed after 17 days

TRAPPED INDIANS RESCUED THROUGH
A PASSAGEWAY MADE OF WELDED PIPES

UTTARKASHI, INDIA

Indian rescuers yesterday pulled out all 41 construction workers trapped inside a collapsed tunnel in the Himalayas for 17 days, hours after drilling through the debris of rock, concrete and earth to reach them, officials said.

The government deployed so-called rat-hole miners to excavate a narrow passageway toward the trapped workers.

The evacuation of the men — low-wage workers from some of India's poorest states — began more than six hours after rescuers broke through the debris in the tunnel in Uttarakhand state, which caved in on Nov. 12.

They were pulled out on wheeled stretchers through a 90 centimetre (3 feet) wide steel pipe, with the entire process being completed in about an hour.

Rousing welcome

The first to be evacuated, a short man wearing a dark grey winter jacket and a yellow hard-hat, was garlanded with marigold flowers and welcomed in traditional Indian style inside the tunnel by state chief minister

'RAT-HOLE MINING'

'Rat-hole mining' is a primitive, hazardous and controversial method used in India mostly to remove coal deposits through narrow passages. It is a method of extracting coal by digging very small pits, not more than 4 feet wide. In rat-hole mining, workers enter the mines and use hand-held tools to dig.

—Agencies

Pushkar Singh Dhami and federal deputy highways minister V.K. Singh. Ambulances with their lights flashing had earlier lined up at the mouth of the tunnel to transport the workers to a hospital about 30 km away.

Local residents gathered outside the tunnel set off fire-crackers, distributed sweets and shouted slogans hailing Mother India. The 41 men have been getting food, water, light, oxygen and medicines through a pipe but efforts to dig a tunnel to rescue them with high-powered drilling machines were frustrated by a series of snags.

— Reuters

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Jessica Smith runs alongside Shaikh Hamdan Bin Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum at the Dubai Run 2023.
Courtesy: Instagram / @faz3

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