



FEATURES

Bildwar Cave Mishap: a Lesson to the Authorities

It was 4th of March 2012, when the last time I went to this cave called Bildwar Gufa, which was located in Tamor Pingla wild life sanctuary 350 kms north from the state capital, Raipur, and 22 kms from my home town Ambikapur (23°19'14.3"N 83°12'15.1"E). It was an ancient, beautiful and a religious cave as a piece of stalagmite worshiped here as Lord Shiva inside the cave, with a good traffic of devotional visitors. I found it as a great picnic spot, though a bit risky because I noticed some cracks in the walls of cave, for which the local people said they've informed the authorities. Strangely cave was surrounded by coal mines being the reason for cracks.

After few couple of months, on 23rd October I found in newspaper that some part of the cave collapsed due to those open cast mining. There were no casualties. I thought authorities will take proper action to make the place safer. But on 4th April 2014, the unfortunate day, 11 people went inside the cave for a visit, and cave which already had cracks, suddenly collapsed upon them killing almost 8 of them on the spot. The place was so isolated that rescue operation took time to come and was unable to work after sunset. Things gone worse when rescue team started using diggers and JCBs which mutilated the bodies, which made their identification even harder and also gave nightmares to the locals watching all these. There were three girl students and others where labourers, three were rescued safely in that operation. Authorities explained the reason for the incident saying that the cave was made of sedimentary rocks which developed the cracks, also the coal mines may be one of the reason but being an ancient cave it was bound to collapse as

sedimentary rocks are weak. I just want to know that, if the cave was bound to collapse, then why it was opened to public, was there no way that the walls of cave can be strengthened to retain and resist the shocks.

Finally the government announced compensation of about 1.5-2 lakhs for the deceased family. But why to let this happen. If government can pay compensation, why not use that amount before to renovate the place. It's huge loss to common people, to management and to humanity. We are in 2014, things should change. I wish that higher authorities everywhere could learn a lesson, so that at least our other heritages can be secured, also not taking people's life as a granted.

Currently the cave is totally collapsed and is set as a restricted area. That beautiful cave, along with the precious lives of 8 people, left us behind some unanswered questions. Hope we will find the answers and it will not be repeated again.

Sumeet Shrivastava

National Institute of Technology, Trichy
Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu
sumeetshrivastava.16@gmail.com

Longest/Deepest Limestone Caves of Indian Sub Continent: March 2014.

It is now the completion of two complete decades that the caves from all over the world are visiting to Meghalaya for cave expeditions. It is an ongoing part of an international project, "Caving in the Abode of the Clouds Project" under which the exploration of the hidden subterranean passages of Meghalaya is going on. During this tenure more than more than 1000 km of subterranean passages have been mapped and which could be estimated as only 5% of the total subterranean passages exist alone in state Meghalaya of India.

During this expedition, we enlisted

FEATURES

various Meghalayan caves in the world's map of longest and deepest caves. However, excluding the Glacier Ice caves a list of Longest/Deepest Limestone Caves till date explored under the same project in Indian Sub Continent are presenting here.

Longest

	Cave Name	State	Length
1	Krem LIAT PRAH/UMIM/LABBITM / RUBONG	Meghalaya	30,397m
2	Krem TYNGHENG/DIENGJEM	Meghalaya	21,775m
3	Krem KOTSATI/UMLAWAN	Meghalaya	21,530m
4	Krem UMTHLOO-SYNRANG LABBIT	Meghalaya	18,181m
5	Synrang PAMIANG	Meghalaya	14,157m
6	PIELKLIENG-SIELKAN POUK	Meghalaya	12,434m
7	Krem SHRIEH	Meghalaya	8,862m
8	Krem LABIT KSEH	Meghalaya	7,499m
9	Krem KHUNG	Meghalaya	7,349m
10	Krem MAWKHYRDOP (Mawmluh)	Meghalaya	7,194m

Deepest (Glacier Ice Caves omitted)

	Cave Name	State	Vertical Range/Depth
1	Synrang PAMIANG	Meghalaya	317m (+4m/-313m)
2	Krem KOTSATI	Meghalaya	215m (+6m/-209m)
3	Krem UMJASEW	Meghalaya	197m (-197m)
4	Krem UMTHLOO	Meghalaya	188m (-188m)
5	PIELKHLIENG-SIELKAN POUK	Meghalaya	180m (-180m)
6	PAKAW PUK	Meghalaya	170m (-170m)
7	Krem SHRIEH	Meghalaya	169m (-169m)
8	Krem RISANG	Meghalaya	154m (-154m)
9	Krem WAH SER	Meghalaya	145m (-145m)
10	Krem SHIEN KHLIEH	Meghalaya	143m (-143m)

Simon Brooks

Simonj.Brooks@btopenworld.com

April 2014