

March 25th news:

National:

Worlds Longest Sandstone Cave Discovered In Meghalaya

The North-eastern state Meghalaya of India, is home to the longest sandstone cave in the world at 24,583m, with dinosaur fossils from 66-76 million years ago.

The sandstone cave named Krem Puri, near the village of Laitsohum in the Mawsynram, was first discovered in 2016, but during the recent 25-day expedition by the Meghalaya Adventurers' Association (MAA), the actual length of the cave was uncovered. It is 6,000m longer than the currently listed sandstone cave in the world, Cueva El Samán, (18,200m) in Venezuela.

Lalu Prasad sentenced to 14-year prison term in fourth fodder scam

Former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad will be jailed for 14 years in the fourth fodder scam case he has been convicted in, with a special CBI court on 24th March sentencing him to seven years each in two cases under it, and ordering the sentences run consecutively.

Pronouncing the sentence, CBI judge Shivpal Singh sentenced the Rashtriya Janatya Dal (RJD) supremo to seven years rigorous imprisonment on the various sections of the Indian Penal Code he has been charged under and levied a fine of Rs 30 lakh, which if unpaid, would entail a further year's simple imprisonment.

Lalu Prasad was sentenced to a similar sentence and fine on the charges under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The court on March 19 convicted Lalu Prasad in the fourth fodder scam case but acquitted another former Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra. Both Lalu Prasad and Mishra are facing five cases each in the fodder scam in Ranchi. There were 31 accused in this case, of which 19 were convicted and 12 acquitted.

Lalu Prasad was convicted in the first fodder scam case in 2013 and awarded five years in jail. He was convicted by a special CBI court in the second case on December 23, 2017, and awarded three and half years' imprisonment on January 6.

He was convicted in the third case on January 24, related to fraudulent withdrawals from the Chaibasa treasury, and got a five-year jail term.

The multi-million-rupee fodder scam surfaced in the 1990s when Lalu Prasad was Chief Minister of undivided Bihar. The probe was handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation on the Patna High Court's order. The bulk of the cases were transferred to Ranchi after Jharkhand was carved out of Bihar in 2000.

Economy:

Approval for Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme

The government has approved Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme for the period 2017-18 up to 2019-20 to empower rural women through community participation.

Community engagement through College Student Volunteers is envisioned in 115 most backward districts as part of the Block Level initiatives and during FY 2017-18, 50 most backward districts to be covered (8 blocks per district).

Annual budget for block level activities is Rs 35.36 lakh per block. New District Level Centres for Women have also been envisaged for 640 districts to be covered in a phased manner (220 districts during FY 2017-18, 220 more in 2018-19 and remaining 200 in 2019-20).

These centres will serve as a link between village, block and state levels in facilitating women-centric schemes and also give foothold to BBBP at the district level. The annual budget for each District Level Centre for Women is Rs 12.30 lakh.

This information was given by Minister of State for Women and Child Development, Dr. Virendra Kumar in a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha.

Sports:

Pankaj Advani triumphs

Pankaj Advani has defended his Asian Billiards Championships title. In the summit clash at Yangon in Myanmar on 24th March, Advani defeated his practice partner B Bhaskar. With this win, Advani remains the reigning Indian, Asian and world champion in billiards for 2017-18.

This is Advani's 11th gold medal at the Asian level of cue sports. His continental billiards title tally has gone up to seven, in addition to the back-to-back Asian Games gold medals in 2006 and 2010, one 6-red snooker title and a snooker team gold.

Meanwhile, in Snooker, India's Ameet Kamani won the Asian Women's title by blanking her Thai opponent Siripaporn Nuanthakhamjan 3-0.

Manu Bhaker shoots gold in junior World Cup

India's pistol sensation Manu Bhaker claimed the individual Gold in women's 10 metre Air Pistol event, as well as team gold medal at the ISSF Junior World Cup in Sydney on 24th March. Manu shot 235.9 to finish top of the podium in the individual event.

He along with Devanshi Rana and Mahima Agrawal also brought India on top of the team podium. India's Arjun Singh Cheema, Gaurav Rana and Anmol Jain pocketed the men's team gold, beating the Chinese team comprising Liu, Wang and Tang - who claimed the silver. Jawanda, Arya and Adarsh Singh the won bronze in the same event.

India got success in the 10-metre air pistol men's event too with Gaurav Rana winning a silver medal while Anmol Jain grabbed the bronze.

Overall, India was second in the standings with 11 medals, including five gold. China led with 13 podium finishes.

Persons in news:

PV Sindhu: Star shuttler PV Sindhu has been named the flag-bearer of the Indian contingent for the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast next month. Pistol shooter Vijay Kumar was the flag-bearer in last Commonwealth Games.