

## Centre drops proposal for uranium mining in Telangana forests amid stir

22 September 2021

In May 2019, the Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research sought permission to conduct survey and exploration for uranium ore in Nallamala forests.



The Union ministry of environment and forests (MoEF) has withdrawn the proposal to allow Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research to undertake survey and exploration of Uranium ore in Nallamala forest areas, following strong protests from locals and environmentalists, besides objections from the state government, state forest department officials said on Tuesday.

The decision, which came up for discussion at the meeting of Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) of the MoEF as an additional agenda item on August 16, was conveyed to the Telangana government last week, an official in the state forest department familiar with the development said.

According to the official, the proposal for exploration of Uranium mining in the Nallamala forests was considered by the FAC in its earlier meetings held on May 22, 2019 and also on April 23, 2020.

Subsequently, the FAC deferred the proposal seeking clarity in recommendation from the state government. The observations of the FAC were communicated to the state government, which replied that, neither the State Board of Wildlife nor the the government has recommended the proposal.

“After thorough deliberation and discussions, the FAC recommends that the proposal may be closed, in absence of proper recommendation of the state government,” the FAC said.

In May 2019, the Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMDER), South Central region at Hyderabad, a unit of the Department of Atomic Energy, sought permission to conduct survey and exploration for Uranium ore in the Nallamala forests and the FAC gave in-principle approval for the same in principle agreement in May.

The AMDER sought to conduct the exploration of Uranium over 83 square kilometres of the area, including 76 square kilometres of area encompassing Amrabad Tiger Reserve falling in Nagarkurnool district and another seven square kilometre in Nagarjunasagar area under Nalgonda district.

The AMDER sought to drill 4,000 boreholes in the tiger reserve as part of survey for Uranium deposits. The authorities began drilling exercises in a few places in Amrabad area, which triggered protests from the local tribal groups.

Within no time, the environmentalists with the support of locals launched a Save Nallamala movement. About 60 different organisations, including political parties, several environment activists joined the movement and held a series of meetings to bring pressure on the government to

drop the plans to take up Uranium mining in the tiger reserve. They argued that Uranium mining in the Nallamala forests would also threaten the survival and livelihoods of Chenchus, a primitive tribal group, living in Amrabad forest areas.

“Modern technology like internet and social media also helped us spread our movement fast and more and more people joined the campaign,” noted environmentalist Prof K Purushottam Reddy, who led the Save Nallamala campaign, told HT.

With the pressure mounting on all sides, the Telangana government reacted quickly and announced that there was no question of allowing Uranium mining in the Nallamala forests. On September 16, 2019, the Telangana Legislative Assembly passed a unanimous resolution, urging the Centre not to allow Uranium mining operations in the Nallamala forest region of the state.

While chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao made a statement in the assembly, his son and municipal administration minister K T Rama Rao moved the resolution in the legislative council in this regard.

KTR said the exploration of Uranium would hurt the ecological balance in Nallamala forest region, which is home for Chenchu tribes and also has rich biodiversity, including animals like tigers and Nilgai and rare varieties of plants. “It might also lead to contamination of water in Krishna river flowing through the Nallamala forest range and it would, in turn, affect the drinking water being supplied to Hyderabad,” the government resolution said.

The state government conveyed the resolution to the Centre and answered a series of queries raised by the MoEF over the last two years. “

It is good that the Centre has finally dropped the proposal for Uranium mining. The entire credit goes to the strong people’s movement against the proposal,” Purushottam Reddy added.

Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/centre-drops-proposal-for-uranium-mining-in-telangana-forests-amid-stir-101632249316297.html>