

Press Release

The Human Rights Forum demands that the Central government withdraw ongoing efforts to survey and explore the Amrabad Tiger Reserve located in the Nallamala forest of Nagarkurnool district for establishing uranium deposits. We strongly urge the Telangana and Andhra Pradesh governments to reject the survey and exploration proposal and to state clearly and unambiguously that they are against any kind of mining in the Nallamalla forest region.

A nine-member HRF team on Tuesday visited several villages in the Amrabad and Padara mandals and spoke with the local people as well as functionaries of the Political JAC Against Nallamala Uranium. Our visit was prompted by the May 22, 2019 recommendation of in-principle approval for survey and exploration for uranium by an expert panel of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) so as to establish uranium deposits. This is sought to be undertaken in an extent of 83 square kms (about 20,510 acres) in four blocks, located in the Amrabad and Nidugal reserve forest. What is more, a large part of these blocks fall in the core habitat of the Amrabad Tiger Reserve, one of the largest tiger reserves in the country.

Uranium mining, which is the first stage of nuclear cycle, is the messiest and most contaminating stage of the whole nuclear energy process. It is a highly dangerous and destructive enterprise anywhere. To even consider digging for it in an ecological hotspot like the Nallamala is a horrific prospect and truly boggles the mind. The area identified for survey and exploration is a major catchment of the Krishna river. Mining for uranium would deplete the springs and rivulets and will poison the land. Both the Nallavagu and Dindi rivers which flow into the Krishna river, cut through this protected tiger reserve. The exploration and mining will invariably pollute both surface and groundwater in the river's watershed. Due to the very nature of uranium mining, inflows into the river will be contaminated with truly frightening implications for Nagarjuna reservoir. Residents of Hyderabad as well as those in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh relying on the waters of the river will have to bear the consequences.

The Amrabad Tiger Reserve is lush forest holding a rich diversity of wildlife and flora that is in danger of disintegration in the event of mining for exploration. As has been pointed out in several official reports by foresters with experience on the ground, exploration and mining will result in destruction of ecosystems and habitat fragmentation. It will threaten several species listed as protected under Wildlife statutes. The livelihood of the Chenchus, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group, who are the traditional inhabitants of these forests, would be grossly undermined. The human, environmental and social costs of mining in these hills are too high.

HRF believes an environmental catastrophe is waiting to happen if uranium mining is undertaken in the Nallamala forest. There will be irreversible damage to a pristine biodiversity and the scars would be permanent. We are of the opinion that uranium mining for generating nuclear power has to be rejected in principle because it is intrinsically hazardous, extremely dangerous and is a dreadful legacy for future generations. Despite the orchestrated hype all the way from the Prime Minister's Office down to various nuclear energy lobbies that it is the answer to the nation's energy needs, nuclear power is actually more expensive than power from conventional sources.

This is a potentially destructive enterprise that, if not put a stop to immediately, will mutilate a precious habitat. The in-principle approval by the MoEF&CC must be forthwith rescinded.

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