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TN village chosen for setting up Neutrino Observatory: Kakodkar

PTI

CHENNAI: Pushep, a small village in Tamil Nadu's Nilgiris hills, has been chosen as the "best location" to set up a Neutrino Observatory (INO), an underground detector to test particles, Atomic Energy Commission chairman Anil Kakodkar said on Friday.

An expert group of the INO selected *Pushep* located near Udhagamandalam (Ooty), said that the atomic officer met chief minister for the state's approval for the observatory, adding that he supported the DMK leader's view that that the people living in the area had to be taken into confidence.

"The advantage of that place is that it has all the geographical features and is ecologically best... it has an existing road," he said.

"It does not affect anything and we are even aware of the elephant corridor nearby.., but our assessment is that the traffic required is insignificant," even though there is lot of tourist activity, he said.

To set up a neutrino detector, essential geographical requirements are a 360 degree curve, rock-mass for at least a km, mountain feature which was at least a km or km and a half tall, little or no gorge area among others, and these were found here, he said.

"The expert group of INO, which is multi-institutional, has gone through various sites and as per their conclusion this is the best location to set up an underground detector," Kakodkar said.

The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) funded project also had the Department of Science and Technology (DST) as one of the stakeholders, he said.

According to details posted on INO and related websites, neutrino is the "least understood" particles in nature and scientists have overwhelmingly supported Pushep as the ideal place to locate the underground workshop for studying it.

Kakodkar ,on Thursday, met Karunanidhi and sought his support for the project.

Kakodkar said the chief minister had told him it was an "important project which he supports."

It is learnt that while Karunanidhi was told by Kakodkar about the importance of the facility for scientists, the chief minister said that people living in the area had to be taken into confidence as their consent was important.

"Yes. We have to take everybody on board.. he is correct," Kakodkar said. However, if there was a better site, that could also be considered, he said.

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