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Maneka slams proposal to construct observatory in sanctuary

New Delhi, Oct 21 (PTI) Animal rights activist Maneka Gandhi has slammed the government's proposal to construct Rs 900 crore Neutrino Observatory in Mudumalai sanctuary in Tamil Nadu, saying it would destroy the region's flora and fauna.

The BJP MP voiced concern over the location of the science project on the buffer zone of the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve and the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, which, she said, was a "prime elephant and tiger habitat."

Maneka, who had been recently nominated as the member of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), told PTI that the "project is an ill-conceived idea just to keep some of the retired scientists busy."

But those backing the project are not looking at the environmental destruction it would cause in the long-term, she added.

The NTCA, in its recent meeting chaired by Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh, had strongly opposed the INO, planned to be built a km under the surface and to be funded by the Department of Atomic Energy, the Department of Science and Technology and the UGC.

"NTCA member secretary Ramesh Gopal will soon visit the proposed site which is home to 15 threatened species. But we would ensure that it does not come up at whatever cost," she said.

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