

# Kakodkar meets CM, pitches for Neutrino project in state

## Karunanidhi For Addressing Apprehensions Before Giving Approval

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Chennai: The proposed Indiabased Neutrino Observatory (INO), lying in the cans for the last two years for want of an ideal location, is in the news again. With top scientists in the country pitching for a location in Singara near Mudumalai in the ecologically-sensitive Nilgiris Biosphere, Department of Atomic Energy chairman Anil Kakodkar on Thursday made a personal appeal to chief minister M Karunanidhi when the two met at the secretariat.

Kakodkar briefed the chief minister about the significance of the project, a pioneering study in particle physics. But, Karunanidhi, according to highly-placed sources, is said to have told the DAE chief that while the state would be privileged to have such a world class scientific facility, it was not in a position to disregard public apprehensions.

Citing opposition from environmentalists, forest officials and civil society at large in Nilgiris Biosphere, the chief minister told the DAE chairman that the government had the responsibility of addressing their reservations and was not in a position to take a hasty decision by granting permission immediately.

Karunanidhi apparently made it clear that the project could be approved only after convincing the locals and environmentalists on the need to locate the project in the state without damaging the ecologically sensitive area. The site chosen runs through one of the prime elephant corridors and is also located on the periphery of the core area of the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve. Asserting that the scientists were already working to create awareness on the project, Kakodkar promised to allay fears of the locals.

In fact, it has been a running battle between scientists and environmentalists over the project's location. While the INO has been conceived on a scale larger than any other basic science project in the country — it was proposed to be set up at a cost of Rs 920 crore in the XI and XII Five Year plans —, environmentalists have opposed it saying it would endanger wildlife.

“The observatory will be built under the ground in the middle of the forest, which is home to elephants, tigers and leopards. Since the observatory is to be built at least 1,000 metres under the ground, the tunnelling will cause damage to the environment,” said A C Soundararajan, member, Nilgiris Wildlife Association. “Nearly 25% of the Asian elephant population uses the Singara corridor, the most important corridor from Mudumalai to Sathyamangalam,” said Mohanraj, co-ordinator, Nilgiris Eastern Ghats, WWF.

Neutrinos are sub-atomic particles and are the most numerous particles in the universe. More than 50 scientists from about 15 institutes and universities have come together to promote the INO, believing that neutrinos hold the key to several important and fundamental questions on the origin of the universe and energy production in stars. Singara was chosen on the grounds of safety, accessibility and minimal disturbance (during construction stage) to the environment.

However, environmentalists in Nilgiris have formed an umbrella organisation to fight projects like the INO. “We will never allow INO,” said S Jayachanran, general secretary, Tamil Nadu Green Movement. **Kudankulam to be ready by mid-2009**

Chennai: The 462 MW nuclear power plant at Kudankulam in the southern district of Tirunelveli will be commissioned by mid-2009, department of atomic energy chairman Anil Kakodkar assured chief minister M Karunanidhi on Thursday. The meeting between Karunanidhi and Kakodkar comes in the wake of heightened security for the nuclear installation at Kalpakkam near Chennai. Reacting to Karunanidhi's concerns about the power crisis facing Tamil Nadu and the need for completing the nuclear power projects in the state, Kakodkar said another reactor with a capacity of 463 MW would be ready by the end of the next year. Karunanidhi emphasised the need for expediting work

on the Kudankulam project which would help augment the dwindling power resources in the state. Speaking to reporters later, Kakodkar said the DAE had been taking all efforts to speed up work on the project. Listing all the ongoing expansion projects at various nuclear plants across the country, including the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, Kalpakkam and Kaiga in Karnataka, Kakodkar said development works were at various stages of progress. TNN



AEC chief Anil Kakodkar with chief minister M Karunanidhi