



Association
des Populations
des Montagnes
du Monde

NO TO URANIUM MINING IN MEGHALAYA, NORTH EAST OF INDIA

Three decades after the discovery of high-grade uranium ore deposits in Meghalaya, the state government has paved the way for India's quest to be an atomic energy powerhouse. Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL) will carry out their pre-development activities.

The proposed ***Kylleng-Pyndengsohiong*** Uranium Project at ***Mawthabah*** in Meghalaya's West Khasi Hills district has been hanging fire ever since the Atomic Minerals Division found 9,500 tons of uranium oxide deposits in 9.22 million tons of ore in 1984. **The site is close to the border with Bangladesh.**

According to UCIL - it abandoned exploration in 1992 following strong opposition from locals - areas within a 20 km radius of Mawthabah account for 16 per cent of India's uranium reserves at present levels. Besides belonging to a superior grade, the Meghalaya ore has a recovery percentage of 0.1 compared to 0.02-0.06 at Jadugoda in Jharkhand.

UCIL couldn't just let go of the best uranium source among four promising sites - the others are Singbhum in Bihar, Bhima Basin area of Karnataka and Yellapur-Peddagattu area of Andhra Pradesh - to meet India's target of producing 20,000 MW of electricity from nuclear power by 2020.

It returned in June 2007 with an Rs 814 crore opencast mining proposal subject to environmental safeguards. This entailed a mandatory public hearing involving the stakeholders in 78 villages spread across 351 hectares.

Since the **government has no control on community-owned land** in Meghalaya, UCIL talked some 500 inhabitants of six villages in the core project area to sell their land to the government at Rs 18 per sq metre.

A series of political upheavals in Meghalaya put paid to UCIL's bid to get started until last month. On August 24, the Congress-led Meghalaya United Alliance government approved UCIL's development package of Rs 209 crore to be spent from the revised project cost.

Uranium in Meghalaya will be mined by surface (open cut) which will contaminate the soil and water before it is sent to a mill usually located close to the mine. At the mill, uranium ore will be crushed and ground to a fine slurry which is leached in sulfuric acid to allow the separation of uranium from the waste rock. It will then be recovered from solution and precipitated as uranium oxide (U₃O₈) concentrate. Mining and

milling operations produce CO₂ associated with use of diesel, natural gas & electricity. Uranium mining is one of the most CO₂ intensive industrial operations in the world. So we can forget about fighting climate change and reducing our carbon emissions.

We would never allow UCIL to mine a radioactive mineral at the cost of the safety of INDIGENOUS people. Ours is a fairly literate (64 per cent) state, and we do not want another jadugoda in Meghalaya on grounds as under:

The Indian government has ratified 6 conventions of the UN and is a signatory of the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**, but till today it has failed to uphold the rights of the people based on the our constitution and the ratified conventions and signed declaration. When will the government listen to the voices of the oppressed? When will the government understand and seek the consensus of the indigenous people? It is time the governments takes its responsibility on developing its own and not depend on superficial investments in the name of development.

WE, WMPA GENERAL ASSEMBLY, UNITE TO SAY 'NO TO URANIUM MINING'
IN MEGHALAYA, NORTH EAST OF INDIA