

HC stays land acquisition for Kovvada nuclear plant

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HYDERABAD: In a relief to protesting villagers, a two-member bench of the AP High Court on Monday restrained the state government from issuing any notification for acquiring land for setting up a nuclear power plant in Kovvada of Ranasthalam mandal in Srikakulam district.

The bench comprising acting Chief Justice NV Ramana and Justice Vilas V Afzalpurkar gave the interim stay on land acquisition in response to a public interest petition filed by Captain J Rama Rao, a social activist. Notices were issued to the state and the central governments to file their counters within two weeks.

'Proposed N-plant poses threat to fishermen's livelihood'

The petition challenged the very idea of setting up a nuclear power plant in the area and the consequent land acquisition proceedings launched by the state.

The proposed land acquisition for the nuclear power plant with six 1000 MW light water reactors to be set up by the Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCIL) will take away the livelihood of scores of fishermen and farmers apart from making the area uninhabitable, the petitioner contended.

"Since no clearance has been obtained from the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), the land acquisition notification issued by the state is an exercise in futility," he said. Till today, the state and the Centre have not obtained clearance from the AERB but the state government is going ahead with its land acquisition process, he contended.

According to the petitioner, the writ petition was filed in the interests of environment and the rights of the poor and innocent people and to get justice for them. The Kovvada villagers have been on a relay hunger strike since December 18, 2012 against the proposed nuclear power plant. The state government issued GO No 42, dated November 1, 2012, approving the notification for acquisition of over 1,900 acres from Ramachandrapuram, Kotapalem and its hamlets, Jeeru Kovvada, Tekkali and Gudem areas.

According to the petition, the risk associated with the setting up of nuclear power plants cannot be compared with any other industry or project. In case of radiation leakage or accidents, the risk transcends not only local borders but also international borders. Further, the radiation can affect not only the present generation but also future generations, the petitioner said.

The judge while directing the authorities to file their counters directed the state not to issue 4(1) notification under the Land Acquisition Act.