

Odisha issues notification for Gram Sabha in Niyamgiri area

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BHUBANESWAR: Expediting the follow up action on Supreme Court's landmark judgement on the proposed bauxite mining at Niyamgiri Hills, Odisha government today instructed the district collectors of Kalahandi and Rayagada to initiate action within three months for completing Gram Sabhas (village council meeting) for extraction of the mineral.



The [state government](#) issued a notification in this regard where the authorities of Kalahandi and Rayagada were also asked to start receiving fresh claims of individual, community and religious rights of local inhabitants under the provisions of the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

Earlier, the state government had urged the [Orissa High Court](#) to nominate a [district judge level judicial officer](#) to supervise the proposed public hearing to be conducted in 12 Niyamgiri Hill slope villages located in jurisdiction of Kalahandi and Rayagada districts.

Sources said the ST and SC development department issued notification after [Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik](#) gave final approval for conducting the Gram Sabha in 12 villages.

The High Court has sought certain clarification from the state's scheduled tribe and scheduled caste development department.

The apex court in its April 18 judgement had observed that the local tribal inhabitants would take a decision whether the proposed mining would be allowed at Niyamgiri Hills.

The proposed mining at Niyamgiri Hills is significant as the state government had committed to [Vedanta Group](#) to supply required bauxite to its refinery from Niyamgiri Hills. However, local people are opposed to such an idea as they considered the Hill as their God.

The state government, on the other hand maintained that the seat of tribals Niyam Raja (tribals presiding deity) would not be affected due to mining with the proposed mining venue was located about 10 km from the seat of Niyam Raja.

The state has apprised [Odisha Governor S C Jamir](#) on the states taken so far regarding the order of the [Supreme Court](#).

Of the 12 villages on the slopes of the hill, five are located in Kalahandi district while rest seven are in Rayagada district.