

# NCST asks States to be wary of pressure to include ‘powerful’ communities

A foolproof process is required to make any recommendations, says the panel’s head Harsh Chouhan

March 07, 2023 05:50 am | Updated 07:26 am IST - BHUBANESWAR

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

 COMMENTS  SHARE

 READ LATER



NCST chairperson Harsh Chouhan. File

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes on Monday advised State governments to use a foolproof mechanism to suggest additions to the list of STs, in order to prevent 'powerful' communities from being included.

"Identification of communities for their inclusion in the ST list requires a foolproof mechanism, otherwise it may lead to powerful communities entering the list to take benefits... A conservative approach is needed while dealing with the issue," NCST chairperson Harsh Chouhan said at a press conference.

A NCST delegation comprising Mr. Chouhan, member Ananta Nayak and secretary Alka Tiwari was in Bhubaneswar to review the implementation of constitutional and legal rights, socio-economic development and protection of Scheduled Tribes in Odisha.

Mr. Chouhan pointed out that the State government should meticulously identify communities and define them within a robust mechanism.

"We have asked State governments to carry out overall impact study and assess eligibility before suggesting inclusion of any community. Our observation is that wrong inclusion would lead to injustice instead of doing justice to existing communities," he said.

"There is an increasing trend in the country where communities are demanding to be recognised as tribal communities. In a democratic set-up, public pressure also works. If powerful communities manage to enter the list through public pressure, the voiceless and deserving communities will be left behind. The recommendations should be made using a well-defined framework," Mr. Chouhan said.

On the issue of excluding the "undeserving" from the list, he said there was no instance of a community being dropped from the list though there was the provision of exclusion.

In Odisha, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has been insisting on the inclusion of more than 160 communities of the State in the Scheduled Tribes list. In a recent letter addressed to Union Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda, Mr. Patnaik said that since 1978, the Odisha government had recommended more than 160 communities of the State to the Ministry for their inclusion in the ST list following the approval of the Tribes Advisory Council.

The Commission has asked the Odisha government to carve out separate department for tribal development as tribes constitute 23% of the State's population. The State government was also asked to frame rules for the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996.

 COMMENTS  SHARE

---

## **Related Topics**

minority group