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Visakhapatnam: Former Secretary to Government of India and former Commissioner of Tribal Welfare in [Andhra Pradesh](#), EAS Sarma, has sought the intervention of the National Commission of Scheduled Tribes (NCST) in the issue of inclusion of Boyas, Valmikis and Benthoriyas in the list of STs in Andhra Pradesh.

In a letter addressed to NCST secretary Alka Tiwari here on Saturday, he recalled that on representations received from Boyas, Valmikis and Benthoriyas, the Andhra Pradesh government had constituted a one-man Commission to examine the same and, based on that Commission's report, announced their inclusion in the list of STs in AP.

“Several tribal associations in the State have expressed their dissent, seeking a review of the decision by the State government. In the normal course, the State government ought to have held a prior consultation on the proposal with the NCST as required under Article 338A(9) of the Constitution. To the best of my knowledge, no such consultation has been made to date. The representatives of the tribal associations have contended that the Commission appointed by the State had not sought their views on the subject nor the State government had ever taken them in confidence. It appears that the State government had also not sought the considered views of the Tribal Advisory Council set up under Para 4 of the Fifth Schedule,” he observed.

Dr. Sarma also recalled that the Advisory Committee appointed by the Central Department of Social Security in 1965, headed by Justice Lokur, on the revision of the Lists of SCs and STs, had suggested certain characteristics of Adivasis as an essential requirement to determine whether a group should be recognised as belonging to Scheduled Tribes or not. The criteria suggested by the Lokur Committee included primitive methods of agriculture and other occupations, geographic isolation, a unique culture, and shyness to mix with other groups, he said.

“Perhaps, the NCST may ask the State government to refer the one-man commission's report to a group of outside eminent experts who are professionally familiar with the culture and the lives of the [Adivasis](#). It is also desirable that the NCST asks the State to place the matter before the AP Tribal Advisory Council (TAC) and seek their considered views. In addition, before taking any final decision, it is equally desirable for the State to take the representatives of the local Adivasi associations in confidence, as the inclusion of new groups in the list of STs would undoubtedly impact their opportunities,” he suggested.

Dr. Sarma also stated that the Registrar General of Census Operations, whom the Lokur Committee had consulted in 1965, had reportedly expressed reservations against the present proposal and the NCST might like to consult that office also.

He noted that the inclusion of any group in the list of STs required a Presidential Order under Article 342(1) [as amended by the Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951] of the Constitution, and also urged the Home Ministry and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs to seek the considered views of the NCST on this.

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