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## **ANTHROPOLOGY SNIPPET-282**

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## **SC seeks Centre's reply on plea for appointment in SC/ST panels**

### **SC ought a response from the Centre on a plea seeking direction for the appointment of full-term chairman and vice-chairman of the National Commissions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes**

The Supreme Court on Friday sought a response from the Centre on a plea seeking direction for the appointment of full-term chairman and vice-chairman of the National Commissions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The plea said the role of the constitutional bodies was pivotal for taking into account the issues related to atrocities upon the oppressed communities.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian after hearing submissions from advocate Rajesh Inamdar, representing NGO People's Charioteer Organisation, sought response from the Centre and others. The plea has argued that headless-commissions had been reduced to paper-tigers and were fast losing their relevance, becoming non-functional and were reduced to a window-dressing, it claimed.

In a PIL filed through its secretary Ankur Azad, the organisation said there was neither the chairperson or chairman and the vice-chairperson, nor the members in

both the NCSC and the NCST. Similarly, the top posts of such a panel in Uttar Pradesh are lying vacant.

"This shows the total lack of empathy and seriousness, as regards the rights of the SCs and STs and the redressal of the encroachment and transgressions of their rights. The result of it has proved catastrophic to the whole community, extremely vulnerable. They are now bearing the brunt of being targeted systematically by the anti-social elements," it said.

The plea assumed significance in the wake of the alleged gang-rape and subsequent death of a 19-year-old Dalit girl in Hathras, causing massive outrage across the country.

The petition stated that the role of the commissions as constitutional bodies was important, as they take into account the issues related to SC and ST atrocities. They exercise power of a civil court and can also, like the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), approach the appropriate Court for injunction or mandamus to protect the interests of the SCs and STs, it said.

"Owing to glaring vacancies, the Commissions were being run by the bureaucracy, which made them toothless, ineffective and rendered the victims of the atrocities remediless," it said.

The petition said it was the utmost necessary and imperative that this court directed the Central and Uttar

Pradesh governments to make appointments of the respective posts in the concerned Commissions. It also sought a direction for publishing the Annual Reports, within a reasonable time.

The annual report of the NCSC has not been published since October 17, 2016, which was laid in Parliament on August 9, 2018. The Annual report of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has not been published for the years 2018-19 and 2019-20, as of yet.

It pointed out that the data of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) was alarming to its core. The bureau records that there were nearly 45,935 crimes against SCs in 2019, showing an increase of 7.3 per cent over 2018, when 42,793 such cases were recorded. At 11,829 cases, Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest number of crimes against SCs in 2019.