



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Zonal Council

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Why is in news? 13th meeting of Standing Committee of Eastern Zonal Council concludes in Patna

- The 13th meeting of Standing Committee of the Eastern Zonal Council concluded in Patna.
- Delegates from **Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal and other stakeholders**, such as Union ministries and departments deliberated several inter-state issues during the meeting.
- It was chaired by Chief Secretary of Bihar. During the meeting, officials of Odisha, West Bengal and Bihar showcased several good practices.
- Sources said the delegates from Bihar and Jharkhand also discussed contentious issues related to bifurcation of assets and liabilities of the Bihar State Construction Corporation Limited.
- During the meeting, issues related to **Direct Benefits Transfer (DBT), Fast Track Special Courts, Farakka Barrage, Construction of Indrapuri Reservoir project, land acquisition for proposed broad gauge Daniyawan- Biharsharif-Barbigha-Sheikhpura rail line** were also discussed.

Zonal Council:

- The **idea of creation of Zonal Councils was mooted by the first Prime Minister of India**, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1956 when during the course of debate on the **report of the States Re-organisation Commission**, he suggested that the States proposed to be reorganised may be grouped into four or five zones having an Advisory Council 'to develop the habit of cooperative working' among these States.
- Each Zonal Council is an **advisory body** and may discuss any matter in which some or all of the States represented in that Council, or the Union and one or more of the States represented in that Council, have a common interest and advise the Central Government and the Government of each State concerned as to the action to be taken on any such matter.
- In the light of the vision of Nehru, **five Zonal Councils were set up vide Part-III of the States Re-organisation Act, 1956**. The present composition of each of these Zonal Councils is as under:

Composition:

- **Northern Zonal Council**- Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh;
- **Central Zonal Council** - Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh;
- **Eastern Zonal Council** - Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Sikkim and West Bengal;
- **Western Zonal Council** - Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli;
- **Southern Zonal Council** - Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry
- The **North Eastern States** i.e. (i) Assam (ii) Arunachal Pradesh (iii) Manipur (iv) Tripura (v) Mizoram (vi) Meghalaya and (vii) Nagaland are not included in the Zonal Councils and their special problems are looked after by the **North Eastern Council**, set up under the **North Eastern Council Act, 1972**.
- The **State of Sikkim has also been included** in the North Eastern Council vide **North Eastern Council (Amendment) Act, 2002** notified on 23rd December 2002. Consequently, action for exclusion of Sikkim as member of Eastern Zonal Council has been initiated by Ministry of Home Affairs.

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- Each Zonal Council has set up a **Standing Committee** consisting of Chief Secretaries of the member States of their respective Zonal Councils. These Standing Committees meet from time to time to resolve the issues or to do necessary ground work for further meetings of the Zonal Councils.

Main objectives of Zonal Councils:

- Bringing out national integration;
- Arresting the growth of acute State consciousness, regionalism, linguism and particularistic tendencies;
- Enabling the Centre and the States to co-operate and exchange ideas and experiences;
- Establishing a climate of co-operation amongst the States for successful and speedy execution of development projects.

Organisational Structure:

Senior Officers of the Planning Commission and other Central Ministries are also associated with the meetings depending upon necessity. :

- **Chairman** - The **Union Home Minister** is the Chairman of each of these Councils.
- **Vice Chairman** - The Chief Ministers of the States included in each zone act as Vice-Chairman of the Zonal Council for that zone by rotation, each holding office for a period of one year at a time.
- **Members**- Chief Minister and two other Ministers as nominated by the Governor from each of the States and two members from Union Territories included in the zone.
- **Advisers**- One person nominated by the Planning Commission for each of the Zonal Councils, Chief Secretaries and another officer/Development Commissioner nominated by each of the States included in the Zone
- Union Ministers are also invited to participate in the meetings of Zonal Councils depending upon necessity.

Functions of the council:

- any matter of common interest in the field of economic and social planning;
- any matter concerning border disputes, linguistic minorities or inter-State transport;
- any matter connected with or arising out of, the re-organization of the States under the States Reorganisation Act.
- As per **Section 17(1) of States Re-organisation Act**, each Zonal Council **shall meet at such time** as the Chairman of the Council may appoint in this behalf. Since their inception in 1957, the Zonal Councils **have met 106 times**.