

Zonal Councils

August 23, 2022

In news- The Union Home has recently chaired the 23rd meeting of Central Zonal Council in Bhopal.

About Zonal Councils-

- **Zonal Councils** are advisory councils and are made up of the states of India that have been grouped into five zones to foster cooperation among them. These were set up vide Part-III of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956.
- **The idea of creation of Zonal Councils was mooted by the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru in 1956** when during the course of debate on the report of the States Re-organisation Commission.
- 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.
- The Secretariat of the Zonal Councils has also been created by the statute itself. Section 19 of the States Re-organisation Act deals with the staff of Zonal Councils whereas Section 20 deals with office of the Council and its administrative expenses.
- As per Section 20(1) of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956 the office of Zonal Council for each zone shall be located at such place within the zone as may be determined by the Council.
- However, since 1963, a single Secretariat looking after the affairs of all Zonal Councils is functioning from New Delhi. The Secretariat is located at Jamnagar House, New Delhi and functioning under administrative control of Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The Zonal Councils Secretariat explores centre-State, inter-State and zonal issues which are to be deliberated by the Councils or the Standing Committees.
- The Secretariat also follows up on the recommendations

of the Councils/Standing Committees, if necessary drawing the attention of the Chairman and other Central Ministers/Chief Ministers.

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.

Organizational structure-

- **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 (Now By Niti Aayog) 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.

Composition of Zonal Councils-

Five Zonal Councils were set up under the States Re-organisation Act, 1956. **The present composition of each of these Zonal Councils is as under:**

- **The Northern Zonal Council**, comprising the States of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir (presently UTs of J&K and Ladakh), Punjab, Rajasthan, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh. **Its Head Quarters is New Delhi.**
- **The Central Zonal Council**, comprising the States of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. **Its Head Quarters is Allahabad (now known as Prayagraj).**
- **The Eastern Zonal Council**, comprising the States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Sikkim, and West Bengal. **Its Head Quarters is Kolkata.**
- **The Western Zonal Council**, comprising the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli. **Its Head Quarters is Mumbai.**
- **The Southern Zonal Council**, comprising the States of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry. **Its Head Quarters is Chennai.**
- **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. **Its Head Quarters is Shillong.**
- The State of Sikkim has also been included in the North Eastern Council vide North Eastern Council (Amendment) Act, 2002.
- **The union territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep are not members of any of the Zonal Councils.** However, they are presently special invitees to the Southern Zonal Council.

Functions of Zonal Councils-

- **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 particular, a Zonal Council may discuss, and make recommendations with regard to:
 - 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.