

Zonal Councils

September 23, 2019

Source: *Ministry of Home Affairs*

Recently the Union Home Minister Chaired the Northern Zonal Council meeting in Chandigarh

Background

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, he suggested that the States proposed to be reorganized may be grouped into four or five zones having an Advisory Council 'to develop the habit of cooperative working" among these States. This suggestion was made by Pandit Nehru at a time when linguistic hostilities and bitterness as a result of the States on the linguistic pattern were threatening the very fabric of our nation.

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.

Composition of Zonal Councils

In the light of the vision of Pandit Nehru, 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
- **The Central Zonal Council**, comprising the States of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh
- **The Eastern Zonal Council**, comprising the States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Sikkim, and West Bengal
- **The Western Zonal Council**, comprising the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli
- **The Southern Zonal Council**, comprising the States of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, 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.

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.

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.