



Zonal Councils

For Prelims: Zonal Councils, its structure, objectives and functions

For Mains: Cooperative Federalism, States Reorganisation Act of 1956

Why in News?

Recently, the Minister of Home Affairs chaired the 25th meeting of the **Western Zonal Council** at **Diu**.

What are the Issues discussed in the Meeting?

- Improvement of **banking services in rural areas**.
- Monitoring of rape and sexual offences cases against women and children, implementation of **Fast Track Courts** for such cases.
- Verification of identity of **Marine fishermen** in high seas.
- Development of local contingency plan by coastal States for Mass Rescue Operation in high seas and encouragement of **Make in India initiative** through Preference in Public Procurement.
- Various issues related to boundary, security, infrastructure transport, and industries pertaining to western States.

What are Zonal Councils?

- **About:**
 - Zonal Councils are the **statutory (and not the constitutional) bodies**.
 - They are established by an **Act of the Parliament, that is, States Reorganisation Act of 1956**.
 - The act divided the country into **five zones- Northern, Central, Eastern, Western and Southern** and provided a zonal council for each zone.
 - While forming these zones, **several factors have been taken into account which include:**
 - The natural divisions of the country.
 - The river systems and means of communication.
 - The cultural and linguistic affinity.
 - The requirements of economic development, security and law and order.
 - In addition to the above mentioned Zonal Councils, a **North-Eastern Council was created by a separate Act of Parliament**, the North-Eastern Council Act of 1971.
 - Its members include **Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura and Sikkim**.
 - These are **advisory bodies that make recommendations with regard to any matter of common interest** in the field of economic and social planning between the Centre and States border disputes, linguistic minorities, inter-State transport or matters connected with the reorganisation of States.
- **Composition:**
 - **The Northern Zonal Council:** It comprises the States of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh,

Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh,

- **The Central Zonal Council:** It comprises the States of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh,
- **The Eastern Zonal Council:** It comprises the States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Sikkim and West Bengal,
- **The Western Zonal Council:** It comprises the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli,
- **The Southern Zonal Council:** It comprises the States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

▪ **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 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.

▪ **Objectives:**

- 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.

▪ **Functions of the Councils:**

- 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 reorganization of the States** under the States Reorganisation Act.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Q. Which of the following bodies does not/do not find mention in the Constitution? (2013)

1. National Development Council
2. Planning Commission
3. Zonal Councils

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (d)

Source: PIB

