



25th Central Zonal Council Meeting in Varanasi

Why in News?

The Union Home Minister and [Minister of Cooperation](#) chaired the 25th Central [Zonal Council](#) meeting in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.

- It was organized by the [Inter-State Council Secretariat](#) in collaboration with the Uttar Pradesh Government.

Key Points

Key Highlights of the Meeting:

- A resolution praising the Prime Minister's strong willpower and the **Indian Armed Forces' bravery** was unanimously approved by the Central Zonal Council.
- The Home Minister highlighted that the Central Zonal Council is the only zonal council where **no issue or dispute exists** between member states, and this is a significant achievement.
- **Between 2004 and 2014**, only 11 Zonal Council meetings and 14 Standing Committee meetings were held, while between 2014 and 2025, 28 Zonal Council meetings and 33 Standing Committee meetings took place, **marking a twofold increase**.
 - A total of 1,287 issues have been resolved in these meetings, reflecting a historic and encouraging achievement.
- A total of 19 issues were discussed including the implementation of [Fast Track Special Courts \(FTSCs\)](#) for the speedy investigation and prompt **disposal of rape cases** against women and children, provision of **brick-and-mortar banking facilities** within the designated radius of every village, and implementation of the **Emergency Response Support System (ERSS-112)**, among other key issues.
 - The Home Minister stressed that all states of the Zonal Council should ensure the [eradication of child malnutrition](#), bring the dropout ratio down to zero, and strengthen the [cooperative sector](#).
 - The Union Home Minister also urged member states to **boost [Gram Panchayat revenues](#)** and create rules to strengthen [India's three-tier Panchayati Raj system](#).

Zonal Councils

- **About:** Zonal Councils are statutory bodies established under the [States Reorganisation Act, 1956](#), as a high-level advisory forum to foster cooperative working among states and to create a healthy inter-State and Centre-State environment.
 - The idea of Zonal Councils was first proposed by former Prime Minister [Jawaharlal Nehru](#) in 1956 during debates on the [States Reorganisation Commission's \(Fazal Ali Commission, 1953\) Report](#).
 - Under Sections 15 to 22 of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956, five Zonal Councils were established.
 - The **seven North Eastern States 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**.

▪ **Composition:**

Zonal Council	States
Central Zonal Council	Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand
Northern Zonal Council	Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, Delhi, Chandigarh
Eastern Zonal Council	Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Sikkim
Western Zonal Council	Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, and Daman & Diu
Southern Zonal Council	Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry

▪ **Organizational Structure:**

- **Chairman:** Union Home Minister (for all 5 Zonal Councils). He is also the ex-officio Chairman of the North Eastern Council (NEC).
- **Vice-Chairman:** Chief Minister of one of the member states (by annual rotation).
- **Members:** The members include the **Chief Ministers**, Lieutenant Governors, or Administrators of the member States and Union Territories.
 - Additionally, from each member state, the **Governor** nominates two ministers as members of the Council.
- **Advisors:** One nominee from **NITI Aayog** (earlier Planning Commission), Chief Secretaries, and Development Commissioners of the member states.
 - Each Zonal Council has a **Permanent Committee** comprising the Chief Secretaries of member states. State-proposed issues are first discussed by this committee, and unresolved matters are then placed before the full Zonal Council for further deliberation.

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 the successful and speedy execution of development projects.

▪ **Functions: Each Zonal Council is an advisory body and may discuss and make recommendations about-**

- 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, 1956.