

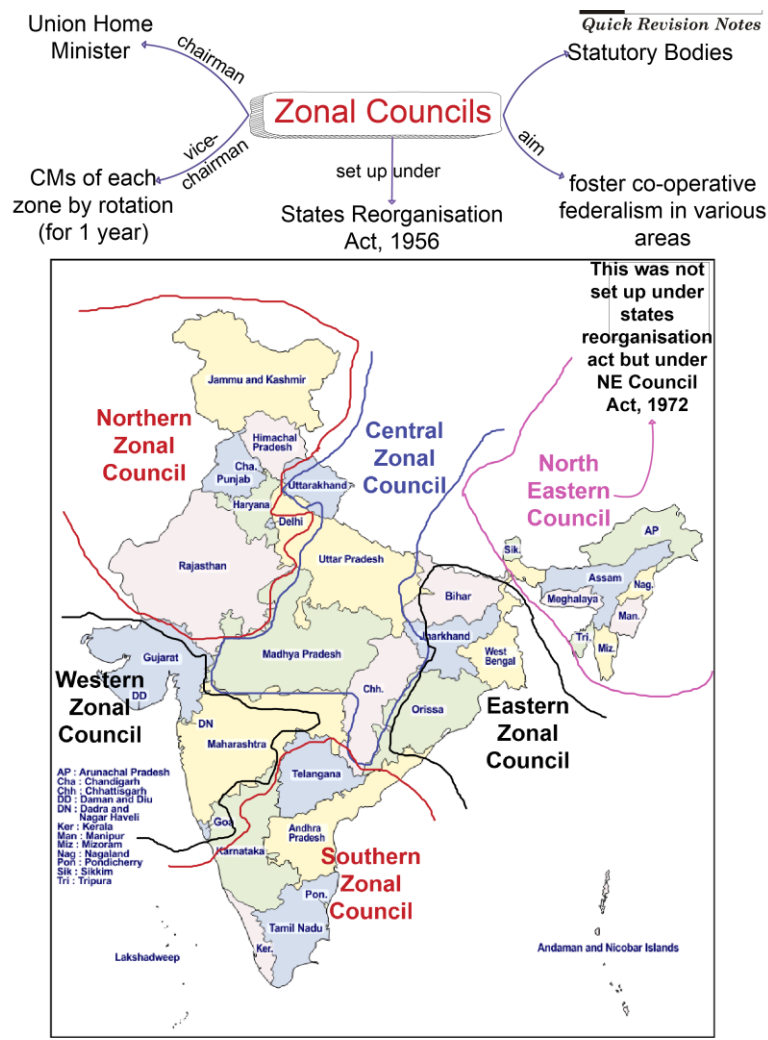
3. Zonal Councils

Prelims Syllabus: Governance

Mains Syllabus: GS-II Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Why in News?

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah will chair the 24th meeting of the Eastern Zonal Council, comprising States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal, scheduled to be held in Bhubaneswar.



Highlights:

- Issues such as inter-State water dispute, power transmission, coal royalty, forest clearance for railway and other infrastructure projects and extension of banking and telecom services in rural pockets will figure in the discussion.

- 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 North Eastern states are not covered by any of the Zonal Councils and their special problems are addressed by another statutory body, the North Eastern Council, created by the North Eastern Council Act, 1971.

Various Zonal Councils:

- The Northern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, 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, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

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 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.

Objectives and Functions:

- The main objectives of setting up of Zonal Councils are as under:
- **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.
- **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.

