

The Zonal Council

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to chair the 31st Southern Zonal Council (SZC) meeting on August 20, 2026, in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu.



The Zonal Councils

- Zonal Councils are high-level statutory deliberative bodies created to promote interstate cooperation, resolve disputes, and ensure coordinated socioeconomic planning among States and Union Territories grouped into distinct geographic zones.

Established In: 1956.

Statutory Genesis: Set up under Part III of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956.

Constitutional Status: Zonal Councils are statutory bodies, not constitutional bodies.

Composition of Zones: The 1956 Act divided the country into five zonal councils—Northern, Central, Eastern, Western, and Southern.

- **Note:** The North-Eastern Council was created separately under the North-Eastern Council Act, 1971.

Aim: To foster cooperative federalism, build emotional integration among states, arrest the growth of acute regionalism/linguism, and provide an institutional platform for the Centre and States to collaborate on common economic, developmental, and security matters.

Key Functions of Zonal Councils:

- **Resolution of Inter-State Boundary & Linguistic Disputes:** Deliberates on and suggests solutions for sensitive inter-state border friction and matters concerning linguistic minorities.
- **Joint Socio-Economic Planning:** Formulates common regional policies across agriculture, health, education, coastal security, and disaster management.
- **Regional Transport & Infrastructure Connectivity:** Coordinates development plans for inter-state highway networks, railway connectivity, and regional energy grids.

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- **Water Sharing & River Valley Coordination:** Discusses mutual agreements regarding inter-state water sharing, irrigation canals, and reservoir operations.
- **Technical Screening via Standing Committees:** Operates through a Standing Committee headed by member States' Chief Secretaries (on rotation) to screen, resolve, and refine administrative issues before they reach the apex ministerial council.

Significance:

- **Strengthens Cooperative Federalism:** Provides a regular forum for the Centre and States to resolve issues collectively and strengthen Team India.
- **Regional Consensus Building:** Helps neighbouring States resolve shared administrative and developmental issues through dialogue rather than litigation.