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## **15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Standing Committee of Eastern Zonal Council Held in Bhubaneswar**

- Eastern Zonal States Reaffirm Commitment to Resolve Pending Issues and Advance Coordinated Development
- Participating States Shared Innovative Best Practices for Strengthening Governance and Public Service Delivery

**Bhubaneswar, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2026:**

The 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee of the Eastern Zonal Council was held today at the State Convention Centre, Lokseva Bhawan, Bhubaneswar. The meeting was organised by the Inter-State Council Secretariat, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, in association with the Government of Odisha.

The meeting was chaired by Smt. Anu Garg, Chief Secretary, Odisha, as the host State. Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal, participated in the meeting. Shri Ashish Srivastava, Secretary, Inter-State Council Secretariat, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India; Shri Pratyaya Amrit, Chief Secretary, Bihar; Shri Ajay Kumar Singh, Development Commissioner, Jharkhand; and Shri Binod Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary to Government, West Bengal, attended the meeting along with senior officers of the participating States and the Inter-State Council Secretariat.

The meeting concluded successfully with a collective resolve to strengthen inter-State coordination, expedite the resolution of pending issues and ensure effective implementation of development programmes across the Eastern Zonal region.

Shri Hemant Sharma, Additional Chief Secretary, Home, Industries, Information and Public Relations Departments, Government of Odisha, delivered the welcome address. A total of 74 agenda items were taken up for discussion. These included 12 pending items carried forward from the previous meeting, 61 new agenda items and one item relating to best practices adopted by the participating States.

The meeting held detailed discussions on a broad range of inter-State, development and governance-related issues. Important matters included inter-State water issues, flood management, infrastructure development, railway projects, rehabilitation and resettlement, compensation, mining activities in ecologically sensitive areas, human-elephant conflict management, cyber security, digital infrastructure, telecom connectivity, banking access in unbanked rural villages and implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes.

The Subarnarekha Multipurpose Project and recurring flood-related concerns affecting Odisha and Jharkhand were deliberated in detail. The Water Resources department Secretaries of Odisha and Jharkhand were asked to hold joint discussions with their respective teams and work out an optimal solution before the next meeting of the Zonal Council. Other inter-State river-related matters of eastern zonal states were also discussed.

The meeting also focused on telecom connectivity issues in Odisha in the presence of ACS, Electronics & Information Technology Department and the Principal Secretary, Finance Department. Issues relating to operationalisation of banking services in unbanked rural villages, network connectivity, infrastructure projects under the National Highways Authority of India and cyber crime investigation were also discussed.

Issues relating to construction of dams in Jharkhand and related rehabilitation, resettlement and compensation matters were deliberated upon. Railway-related issues, including compensation, and the progress of Centrally Sponsored Schemes were also reviewed.

The Standing Committee also discussed food safety parameters and regulatory frameworks, strengthening digital infrastructure, growth of data centres, IT-related initiatives, mandatory biometric updates for children, implementation of the PM-Vidyalaxmi Scheme and IEC activities relating to the scheme were also reviewed.

Other agenda items included auction of major mineral blocks in the Eastern Zonal States, PMGSY road connectivity and achievements, implementation status of JalJeevan Mission 2.0, establishment of Special Courts for speedy disposal of rape and POCSO Act cases, updating of urban master plans, sanction and progress under PMAY 2.0, measures to reduce school dropout rates and cooperative sector initiatives under "Sahakar Se Samridhi".

The afternoon session focused on best practices and innovative initiatives adopted by the participating States.

Odisha presented the AmaSathi WhatsApp chatbot application as a citizen-centric digital governance initiative. The State also highlighted the socio-economic empowerment of women through the Subhadra Scheme, post-evaluation studies of the scheme and the Subhadra-to-Mudra entrepreneurship pathway. Odisha's tourism land bank initiative was also presented during the session.

Bihar presented the BHAVYA health application, a visionary initiative aimed at strengthening the State's healthcare system. Jharkhand presented best practices in the fisheries sector, particularly cage culture in abandoned coal and stone pits. The State also highlighted joint household visits by Sevikas, or Anganwadi Workers, and Sahiyas, or ASHA workers, which have helped improve healthcare services at the family level.

West Bengal presented innovative practices under PM e-VIDYA for promoting creativity and innovation in classrooms, along with research-room-based innovations. The State also shared its best practices in dredging methods, flood management, revenue generation and e-auction models.

Secretary, Inter-State Council Secretariat, MoHA, Government of India, ShriSrivastava, described the meeting as successful and noted that several inter-State and common issues involving the Government of India had been resolved. He stated that the remaining matters, after finalisation, would be placed before the next meeting of the Eastern Zonal Council, to be chaired by the Union Home Minister.

Chief Secretary, Odisha Ms. Garg, emphasised the need for timely and coordinated action on all agenda items. She urged the concerned departments and participating States to work together and ensure visible and substantial progress at the earliest. She also called upon all stakeholders to intensify collective efforts to improve performance and strengthen the development trajectory of the Eastern Zonal region.

Pathani Rout  
PRO to Chief Secretary

