

Bill Summary

The North- Eastern Council (Amendment) Bill, 2013

- The North-Eastern Council (Amendment) Bill, 2013 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on March 11, 2013 by the Union Minister of State Development of North Eastern Region, Mr. Paban Singh Ghatowar.
- The Bill seeks to amend the North-Eastern Council Act, 1971. The Act sets up the North-Eastern Council (NEC) to ensure balanced and coordinated development among the north eastern states.
- The membership of the NEC is comprised of Governors and Chief Ministers of the constituent states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim.
- The Act was amended in 2002 to (i) redefine the functions of the NEC as a regional planning body for the north eastern region, (ii) include Sikkim as a member state of the NEC and, (iii) provide for three members and the Chairman of the Council to be nominated by the President.
- According to the Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Bill, the 7th Report of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission recommended an amendment to the Act to include conflict resolution as a function of the NEC. This function was included in the Act, but was removed by an amendment in 2002.
- The Bill re-introduces the ‘conflict resolution’ provision to state that functions of the NEC include discussion on matters of common interest to the member states and/or the union government, on issues falling under the fields of: (i) economic and social planning, (ii) inter-state transport and communications, and (iii) power or flood control projects.
- In addition to Governors, Chief Ministers of the states, and Administrators of the union territories, the Act also provided membership to one of the Counsellors to the Administrators to the Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh. In place of the Counsellors, the Bill introduces two non official members to be nominated by the President. Further, it provides for the inclusion of one member of the Planning Commission of India, in charge of the north eastern region.
- The Bill provides that the term of office of a nominated member shall be three years, and may be extended for a further period of two years. The allowances of such members may be determined by the central government.
- The Bill also seeks amendment to the Act to reflect the change in the Department of Development of North-Eastern Region, which was formed within the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2001, and has been upgraded to full-fledged Ministry in 2004.

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