

## OTHER STATES

# Northern Zonal Council discusses security, water sharing

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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## Amit Shah, who heads the Council, presided over the meeting



The Northern Zonal Council deliberated on the issues of internal security, road, transport, industries, water, power, cyber crime and other subjects of common interests for eight northern States and Union Territories at its 30th meeting held here on Saturday. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who heads the Council, presided over the meeting.

The Chief Ministers, Lt. Governors and other functionaries representing the States and Union Territories highlighted the need for mutual coordination in the spirit of cooperative federalism to deal with the emerging threats to internal security. Mr. Shah laid emphasis on an effective cooperation among all States to control organised crime.

In addition to Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, Chief Ministers Manohar Lal Khattar and Jai Ram Thakur of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh respectively, Lt. Governors Vinai Kumar Saxena and Radha Krishna Mathur of Delhi and Ladakh respectively, and Punjab Governor and administrator of Chandigarh Banwarilal Purohit attended the meeting. Senior officers from these States were also present.

## Kejriwal, Mann skip meeting

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann skipped the meeting. A government official said that Mr. Mann had confirmed his participation but was represented by Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema instead. Apart from the Delhi Lt. Governor, Deputy CM Manish Sisodia represented the National Capital Territory.

No official from Jammu and Kashmir attended the meeting because of the flash floods on the Amarnath Yatra route which have claimed more than a dozen lives so far.

Mr. Shah called upon the States and Union Territories to conduct awareness campaigns on cyber-vigilance through various platforms in view of the impact of cyber crimes on national security, public order and economic activity. He asked the State agencies to use the common software developed by the Home Ministry to work together to identify the issues of concern and trace the offenders.

Mr. Shah also stressed the need to train police officers, public prosecutors and technical services' agencies, including telecom companies and their point-of-sale agents. He called for the use of information technology tools to detect cyber crime and take systematic measures to prevent their recurrence.

Referring to the issue of river water sharing, Mr. Shah asked the States to adopt a "cordial approach" and find a time-bound solution. "All the stakeholders should come together to establish a strong cooperative mechanism for development, for which purpose the Regional Councils were created," he said.

A total of 47 issues were discussed at the meeting. Official sources said that four of them were identified as important topics at the national level and were being discussed in the meetings of various Zonal Councils. These include improving banking services in rural areas, monitoring cases of rape and sexual offences against women and children, setting up fast track courts for such cases and implementing the Direct Benefit Transfer programmes.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Mr. Gehlot sought the creation of the post for a member from Rajasthan in the Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) and raised the demand for grant of national project status to the State's ambitious Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP), which will benefit 13 districts through interlinking of three rivers. The project's cost is at present estimated at ₹37,200 crore.

Mr. Gehlot pointed out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised to declare ERCP as a national project in his rallies held in Jaipur and Ajmer before the 2018 State Assembly election. He said the State had been raising the issue continuously at the Central level. A national project status would fix the share of the Centre and the State in the expenditure in the ratio of 90:10.

The Chief Minister also said that the State governments should get more rights to control cooperative societies and the registration of multi-State cooperative societies by the Centre should be banned. He sought a revision in the funding pattern for the execution of schemes under the Jal Jeevan Mission in view of the State's difficult geography.

Mr. Shah, who arrived in a special aircraft here to attend the meeting, later went to the BJP State headquarters to meet the party leaders. BJP sources said Mr. Shah discussed preparations for the 2023 Assembly election with State president Satish Poonia, former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje and other leaders.

*(With inputs from Vijaita Singh in New Delhi)*

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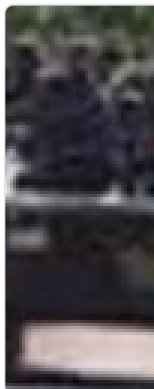
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