

## NORTH ZONAL COUNCIL DISCUSSES SECURITY

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Union Home Minister Amit Shah chairing a meeting of the Northern Zonal Council in Jaipur on Saturday. PTI-

The Northern Zonal Council deliberated on the issues of internal security, roads, transport, industries, water, power, cyber crime and other subjects of common interests for eight northern States and Union Territories at its meeting held in the Rajasthan capital 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 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, Lt. Governors Vinai Kumar Saxena and Radha Krishna Mathur of Delhi and Ladakh, and Punjab Governor and administrator of Chandigarh Banwarilal Purohit attended the meeting. Senior officials from these States were also present.

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.

Mr. Shah also stressed the need to train police officers, public prosecutors and cutting-edge agencies, including telecom companies and their point of sale agents, with new technology and advanced skills. He called for maximum use of information technology tools to detect cyber crimes and take systematic measures to prevent their recurrence.

On 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.

Rajasthan CM 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 Rs.37,200 crore.

Mr. Gehlot pointed out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promise 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. The national project status will fix the share of the Centre and the State in the expenditure in the ratio of 90:10.

The CM 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 later went to the BJP State headquarters to meet the party leaders. The BJP sources said the Union Home Minister discussed the 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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