

Union Home Minister & Cooperation Minister, Shri Amit Shah, chaired the 25th meeting of the Western Zonal Council at Diu on the 11th of June, 2022.

Zonal councils provide the platform to discuss the issues affecting one or more states or issues between the centre and states in a structured manner.

In the last 8 years, under the guidance of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the number of meetings of the Zonal Councils and its Standing Committees has increased three times.

18 meetings of the various Zonal Councils and 24 meetings of their Standing Committees were held in the last 8 years as against 6 and 8 meetings respectively in the corresponding previous period.

Out of the 30 issues that were discussed in the 25th Western Zonal Council meeting, 27 issues were resolved and only 3 were retained for further discussion.

This reflects PM Narendra Modi govt's resolve and commitment towards the all-round development of the nation in the spirit of cooperative federalism.

Zonal Councils should be used for sharing of best practices among the member States/UTs
Shri Amit Shah stressed the need for early investigation of rape/sexual offences against women & children and the need for stringent punishment in a time bound manner
UHM has desired that an Addl. DGP level officer, preferably a lady Officer be assigned the responsibility in the Police Headquarters of each State for monitoring all such cases.

Under PM Narendra Modi's guidance, the country has been successfully dealing with Covid-19 pandemic along with ensuring extensive vaccination in the country which has been possible with the active support of the States.

Shri Amit Shah advised that banks including cooperative banks and the India Post Payments Bank should take up the challenge and ensure that each of the remaining unbanked villages of the Western Zone are provided banking facilities within 5 kms in the next year.

All villages in the Western zone be provided mobile connectivity within one year for which private sector players be also roped in.

The cash deposit facility through Common Service Centres be got extended in a time bound manner and all banks be onboarded on the platform

Shri Amit Shah, Hon'ble Union Home Minister & Cooperation Minister chaired the 25th meeting of the Western Zonal Council at Diu on the 11th of June, 2022.

Hon'ble Chief Ministers of Goa, Gujarat and Administrator of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Senior Ministers from Gujarat and Maharashtra, Union Home Secretary, Chief Secretaries from the member States in the Western Zone, Secretary, Inter State Council Secretariat and other senior officers from the States and Central Ministries and Departments participated in the meeting.

It is for the first time that the Western Zonal Council was held in the UT of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu.

Highlighting the importance of Zonal Councils that were established under the States Reorganisation Act in 1956, Union Home Minister & Cooperation Minister referred to the Vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi to leverage cooperative and competitive federalism to achieve all round growth of the country. He mentioned that the Zonal Councils provide the platform to foster such collaboration through a structured

mechanism for dialogue and discussion on a continuous basis on the issues affecting one or more States or between the Centre and the States, in the spirit that strong States make a strong nation. In this context, he also highlighted that under Hon'ble PM Narendra Modi's guidance, the country has been successfully dealing with Covid-19 pandemic along with ensuring extensive vaccination in the country which has been possible with the active support of the States.

Union Home Minister Shi Amit Shah mentioned that, the meetings of different Zonal Councils are now being convened regularly by the Inter State Council Secretariat of the Ministry of Home Affairs with the cooperation of the State Governments. He observed that there has been substantial increase in the number of meetings of the Zonal Councils and its Standing Committees. 18 meetings of the various Zonal Councils and 24 meetings of their Standing Committees were held in the last 8 years as against 6 and 8 meetings respectively in the corresponding previous period.

While appreciating the role of the Zonal Councils, he mentioned that though the Zonal Councils are advisory in character, but through discussions and exchange of views, they help in developing a coordinated approach among the States on important issues of social and economic development. In this regard, Union Home Minister & Cooperation Minister desired that the forum of Zonal Councils should be used for sharing of best practices among the member States/UTs and for this purpose, he advised that success stories and best practices from each State be presented in the Standing Committees of the Zonal Councils and discussed for adopting in the other States/UTs of the Zone.

The Western Zonal Council in the 25th meeting at Diu on 11.6.2022 and its Standing Committee in its 12th meeting at Panaji on 28.01.2022 has discussed over a total of 36 issues. Out of these, 6 issues have been identified as significant at national level and these issues are being discussed and monitored regularly on an ongoing basis in all meetings of different Zonal Councils. These are improvement of banking services in rural areas, monitoring of rape and sexual offences cases against women and children, implementation of Fast Track Courts for such cases, verification of identity of Marine fishermen in high seas, development of local contingency plan by coastal States for Mass Rescue Operation in high seas and encouragement of Make in India initiative through Preference in Public Procurement. Out of the 30 other issues that were discussed in these meetings, 27 issues were resolved and only 3 retained for further deliberation.

Hon'ble Union Home Minister & Cooperation Minister Shri Amit Shah stressed the need for early investigation of rape/sexual offences against women & children and the need for stringent punishment in a time bound manner. He desired that an Addl. DGP level officer, preferably a lady Officer be assigned the responsibility in the Police Headquarters of each State for monitoring all such cases.

The Western Zonal Council also reviewed the action taken on the decisions in its last meeting. Hon'ble Union Home & Cooperation Minister Shri Amit Shah while noting with satisfaction the substantial progress on the issue of QR Code enabled PVC Aadhar Cards to marine fishermen, he urged the coastal States to make efforts to ensure that 100% of the fishermen including migrant and seasonal fishermen going to the high seas should have such Aadhaar cards that can be easily verified.

Highlighting the need for all-inclusive Local Contingency Plan and the role it plays in the Mass Rescue Operation, he advised to identify the existing infrastructure along the coast and integrate them with the Disaster Mitigation Plans.

The Zonal Council also appreciated that in pursuance of the Vision given by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for expansion of banking network in the rural areas, the Department of Posts will be rolling out additional 20,715 India Post Payment Bank live touch points which will provide banking facilities apart from regular postal services. Union Home

Minister and Cooperation Minister Shri Amit Shah advised that banks including cooperative banks and the India Post Payments Bank should take up the challenge and ensure that each of the remaining unbanked villages of the Western Zone are provided banking facilities within 5 kms in the next year.

Stressing the importance of DBT in ensuring that the benefits of Social Security Schemes reach the targeted beneficiaries, Hon'ble Minister advised that the States should onboard all the State schemes, besides the Centrally Sponsored Schemes on the DBT platform. He desired that all villages in the Western zone be provided mobile connectivity within one year for which private sector players be also roped in.

Hon'ble Union Home & Cooperation Minister also advised that the cash deposit facility through Common Service Centres be got extended in a time bound manner and all banks be onboarded on the platform. He advised that this should be reviewed quarterly in a focussed manner.

The Council in the meeting at Diu also resolved the issue of rate of tariff for water supplied to the UT of DNH & DD by the Gujarat Water Supply and Sewerage Board. Further, the deliberations provided a meeting ground between the Railways and the Government of Maharashtra on the issue of pending Forest and Wildlife clearances for the two important ongoing railway projects for gauge conversion on the Akola-Khandwa Section and the new 3rd line Project of the Bortalao-Gondia section.

The Zonal Council also appreciated that on the initiative of its Standing Committee, MoEF&CC had incorporated a window in its Parivesh Portal for uploading notifications of Non-Forest land identified for raising Compensatory Afforestation as Reserved Forests/Protected Forests.

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