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Shri Amit Shah chairs the 29th Meeting of the Northern Zonal Council in Chandigarh

Need to establish Forensic Science University to ensure accurate investigation and high conviction: Shri Amit Shah

Government has Zero Tolerance towards offences under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act: Union Home Minister

**North Zone has made important contribution in the Economic Growth of the country:
Shri Amit Shah**

New Delhi, September 20, 2019

Union Minister for Home Affairs, Shri Amit Shah chaired the 29th meeting of the Northern Zonal Council was held at Chandigarh (Haryana) today. The meeting was attended by the Chief Ministers of Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, Administrator of UT of Chandigarh, Lt. Governor of NCT of Delhi, and various Ministers from these States and senior officers from the Central and State Governments including Chief Secretaries and Secretaries to Government of India.

Shri Shah welcomed all the members of the Council to the meeting and hoped that this would be a fruitful meeting where all the issues having Centre-State and inter-State ramifications would be resolved with consensus, after due deliberations. He stressed that such an approach would strengthen the federal structure of the country. He stated that 20% of the area and 13% of the population is covered by the States in this region and North Zone has made important contribution in the economic growth of the country.

Shri Shah requested all the Chief Ministers that in addition to the Zonal Council meetings, regular meetings may also be held among themselves to discuss and resolve issues. He observed that in the Western Zonal Council meeting recently held in Goa about 90% of the issues were resolved.

The Council reviewed the progress of implementation of the recommendations made at the last meeting. The Council among others focused on the following issues:

1. Speedy investigation of cases of sexual offence/rape against women and children. It was decided that no stone should be left unturned to adhere to the time limits of 2 months for investigation and enquiry/trial in keeping with Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018.
2. The Council expressed satisfaction over release of Rs. 47,436 crores under CAMPA funds which was long overdue.
3. Report of Survey of India relating to boundary disputes between Haryana and Himachal Pradesh was presented, on which there was broad consensus on methodology.
4. It was agreed that coverage of all villages which have hitherto remained without any banking facilities within 5 km radial distance by a Bank/India Post Payments Service must be ensured within 3 months.

The Union Home Minister also called upon the States to give their suggestions for improvements in Indian Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code. He urged the Chief Ministers to ensure regular monitoring at the Chief Secretary's level of investigation and prosecution of cases in the courts in case of heinous offences such as Narcotics, POCSO Act,

murders etc. For this purpose, the States should fill the post of Director Prosecution without any further delay. He pointed out that the Government has zero tolerance towards offences under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act. There is a need to establish Forensic Science University to ensure accurate investigation and high conviction, Shri Shah said.

The five Zonal Councils (Northern, Eastern, Northern, Southern and Central Zonal Councils) were set up under the States Reorganization Act, 1956 to foster Inter-State co-operation and co-ordination among the States. The Zonal Councils are mandated to discuss and make recommendations on any matter of common interest in the field of economic and social planning, border disputes, linguistic minorities or inter-State transport etc. They are regional fora of cooperative endeavor for States linked with each other economically, politically and culturally. Being compact high-level bodies, specially meant for looking after the interests of respective Zones, they are capable of focusing attention on specific issues taking into account regional factors, while keeping the national perspective in view.

The deliberations of the Council were warm and cordial, in the true spirit of cooperative federalism and ended with the decision to host the next meeting in Jaipur.

VG/VM