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Zonal Councils discuss broad issues relating to

## infrastructure, mining, environment and forests, food security parameters and other subjects of common interest at the regional level

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Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah, will chair the 27th meeting of the Western Zonal Council on Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2025 at Pune, Maharashtra. The Western Zonal Council comprises the states of Gujarat, Goa, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu. Maharashtra Government is hosting the meeting which is being organized by the Inter State Council Secretariat under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, in collaboration with the Government of Maharashtra.

The 27th meeting of the Western Zonal Council will be attended by the Chief Ministers of the member states and the Administrator of the Union Territories, along with two senior ministers from each state. The Chief Secretaries, Advisors and other senior officers of the State Governments and Union Territories and Union Home Secretary, Secretary, Inter State Council and other senior officers of the Central Government will also participate in the meeting.

Five Zonal Councils were established in the year 1957 under Section 15-22 of the States Reorganization Act, 1956. Union Home Minister is the Chairman of these five Zonal Councils, while the Chief Ministers of the States included in the respective Zonal Council and the Administrator/Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territories are its members. Chief Ministers of the states included in Zonal Council become vice-its chairman by turn. Two more ministers from each state are nominated by the Governor as members of the council. Each Zonal Council has also constituted a Standing Committee at the level of Chief Secretaries.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has stressed the need to leverage cooperative and competitive federalism for the all-round development of the country. In the spirit that strong States make strong nations, Zonal Councils provide a platform to enhance cooperation through a systematic mechanism for regular dialogue and discussion on issues affecting two or more states or the Center and the States.

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah, has stressed on the cooperative federalism approach to empower states and promote better understanding between the Centre and the States. In the Modi Government, role of

Zonal Councils has been changed from advisory to action platform to make them effective. Meetings of respective standing committees of all five Zonal Councils, except Southern Council, were organized last year.

The Zonal Councils take up issues involving the Centre and the States and between one or more States in the region. Thus, the Zonal Councils provide an excellent platform for resolving disputes and issues between the Centre and the States and between the several States in the region. The Zonal Councils hold discussions on a wide range of issues including speedy investigation of cases of sexual offence/rape against women and children and implementation of Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) for expeditious disposal of such cases, facilitation of banks/India Post Payment Bank branches within 5 kms in each village, implementation of Emergency Response Support System (ERSS-112), issues relating to infrastructure, mining, environment and forests, food security parameters and other subjects of common interest at the regional level.

Many issues of national importance are also discussed in each meeting of the Zonal Councils. These include power operations, urban master plan, eliminating malnutrition among children through POSHAN Abhiyan, discussion on reducing the dropout rate of school children, participation of government hospitals in Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, strengthening Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) and other issues of common interest.

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