



National Seminar on “Transparency and Purity in Elections of Multi-State Cooperative Societies” held in New Delhi

Reforms in cooperative sector advancing the vision of “Sahkar se Samriddhi” under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and guidance of Union Home & Cooperation Minister Amit Shah

Cooperative Election Authority has conducted around 240 elections so far; strengthening democratic governance in cooperatives

Around 70 elections currently underway; Cooperative Election Authority expected to conduct about 130 more elections next year

Reservation for women and SC/ST members strengthening inclusiveness and diversity in cooperative governance

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A national seminar on “**Transparency and Purity in Elections of Multi-State Cooperative Societies**” was organised today at **Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi** by the **Cooperative Election Authority (CEA)** under the Ministry of Cooperation. The seminar brought together a wide range of stakeholders including Chairpersons, Chief Executive Officers and members of the Boards of Directors of Multi-State Cooperative Societies, Returning Officers, District Magistrates, Chairpersons of State Cooperative Election Authorities, experts from the cooperative sector, and senior officers from the Central and State Governments.

Addressing the gathering, Minister of State for Cooperation Shri Krishan Pal Gurjar said that the programme organised by the Cooperative Election Authority is historic and will prove to be a milestone for the cooperative movement. He noted that for the first time representatives of Multi-State Cooperative Societies from across the country have gathered on a single platform to deliberate on strengthening transparency and integrity in cooperative elections. Shri Gurjar said that under the vision of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi of “Sahkar se Samriddhi” and the leadership of Union Minister of Home Affairs and Cooperation Shri Amit Shah, the Government of India is continuously working to strengthen the cooperative ecosystem and create an enabling environment for sustainable cooperative development so that cooperatives can play an important role in achieving the goal of a self-reliant and developed India by 2047.

The Minister of State for Cooperation highlighted that several important reforms have been introduced through the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (Amendment) Act, 2023 to make cooperative institutions more transparent, accountable and democratic. He said that one of the most significant reforms under the amended Act was the establishment of an independent Cooperative Election Authority, formally notified on 11 March 2024, which has been entrusted with ensuring free, fair and transparent elections in Multi-State Cooperative Societies. Another key reform, he said, relates to fixing the tenure of Boards of Directors of Multi-State Cooperative Societies and removing provisions that allowed boards to continue indefinitely until elections were conducted, thereby bringing greater discipline in governance and preventing delays in the conduct of elections.

Shri Krishan Pal Gurjar said that the reforms introduced by the Government aim to strengthen democratic governance and accountability within cooperative institutions. He informed that the Cooperative Election Authority has successfully conducted around 240 elections so far, while about 70 elections are currently underway, and around 130 additional elections are expected to be conducted in the coming financial year. He also highlighted that the amended Act provides for reservation of two seats for women and one seat each for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the Boards of Multi-State Cooperative Societies, ensuring greater diversity and inclusiveness in cooperative governance. He noted that six seats reserved for women and thirteen seats reserved for SC/ST categories remain vacant in elections conducted so far and the Ministry of Cooperation is taking necessary steps to fill these vacancies.

The Minister of State for Cooperation further said that the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2025 has aligned the tenure of boards of cooperative banks, including Multi-State Cooperative Banks, with the provisions of Article 243ZJ of the Constitution, thereby strengthening democratic governance in the cooperative banking sector. He also noted that the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (Amendment) Act, 2023 has introduced provisions to enhance transparency and accountability in cooperative banks by mandating that such banks appoint auditors from a panel approved by the Central Registrar of Cooperative Societies. In addition, amendments to the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 provide that directors of Multi-State Cooperative Banks cannot hold office for more than ten consecutive years, thereby creating opportunities for new and younger leadership in cooperative institutions.

Shri Krishan Pal Gurjar further stated that cooperative societies are founded on cooperative principles, which provide a strong framework for the development and strengthening of the cooperative movement. These principles ensure that members contribute equitably and exercise democratic control over the capital and functioning of cooperatives, enabling them to actively participate in policy formulation and decision-making. Emphasising the need to strengthen public trust in the cooperative system, he underlined that cooperative societies must develop transparent and accountable administrative structures. He said that transparent and merit-based systems for recruitment as well as procurement of products and services are essential so that cooperatives function as professionally managed institutions capable of contributing meaningfully to the vision of a developed India.

The Minister of State for Cooperation also highlighted that following the amendments to the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002, the Government notified the appointment of a Cooperative Ombudsman through a Gazette Notification dated 5 March 2024 to safeguard the interests of members of cooperative societies. The Ombudsman examines complaints filed by members and also acts as the appellate authority for appeals against the orders of Cooperative Information Officers of societies. He informed that more than 38,000 complaints have been received so far, and a significant number of these grievances have been addressed through orders passed by the Cooperative Ombudsman.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairperson of the Cooperative Election Authority Shri Devendra Kumar Singh said that the Authority is now entering its third year of functioning and has gained valuable experience in conducting elections across a wide range of cooperative institutions. He emphasised that cooperative

societies operate on the principle of democratic member control, and therefore the electoral process must remain transparent, participatory and credible.

The Chairperson underlined that clarity in the bye-laws of cooperative societies is essential to avoid disputes during elections. He stressed the need for clearly defining aspects such as voting rights, active membership and eligibility criteria for contesting elections, so that the electoral process remains fair and free from ambiguity. He further stated that in large multi-state cooperative societies operating across several states and districts, representation on the Board should reflect the diversity of membership and remain truly representative of members' interests.

Earlier in the day, two technical sessions were organised on the themes "Promoting Transparency through Elections" and "Strengthening Purity and Integrity in Electoral Processes." The sessions witnessed active participation and meaningful deliberations among stakeholders on various aspects of cooperative election management.

The seminar concluded with a collective resolve to further strengthen transparency, fairness and democratic participation in cooperative elections, thereby reinforcing the cooperative movement as a key pillar of India's socio-economic development and advancing the Government's vision of "Sahkar se Samriddhi" and Viksit Bharat by 2047.

AKAP

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