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News: Modi to attend SCO meeting with Xi, Putin

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will travel to Samarkand in Uzbekistan this week to attend the first in person summit of the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) countries since the COVID–19 pandemic, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

- Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent Eurasian political, economic and military intergovernmental organization aiming to maintain peace, security and stability in the region.
- SCO was established on 15th June 2001 with its headquarters in Beijing, China.
- Previously it was known as Shanghai-Five. With the inclusion of Uzbekistan in 15th June 2001, the grouping became Shanghai Cooperation Organization.
- India and Pakistan joined as full members in the SCO on 9th June 2017 at Astana summit, Kazakhstan.
- Iran was granted full membership at the 21st summit held virtually on 2021.

- Members of the organisation are Iran, India, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and China.
- Observers of the group are Afghanistan, Belarus and Mongolia. Belarus recently applied for the membership also.
- Dialogue Partners are Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey and Sri Lanka.
- Culture has become an important element of SCO.
- SCO is the largest regional organization in the world in terms of geographical coverage and population, covering three-fifths of the Eurasian continent and nearly half of the human population.
- Officially accepted languages in the group are Russian and Chinese.
- Recent meet of Prosecutors General hosted by India, adopted a protocol to strengthen cooperation in preventing and combating growing menace of human trafficking, especially women and children.
- Recently, Varanasi has been selected as the SCO regions first “Tourism and Cultural Capital”.
- Varanasi’ “Cultural and Tourism Capital” has been decided under a new rotating initiative to promote people-to-people contacts and tourism among the member states.

- Each year a city of the cultural heritage of a member country that will take over the rotating Presidency of the organisation will get the title to highlight its prominence.
- The new initiative will come into force after the Samarkand summit (2022) following which India will take over the Presidency and host the next Heads of the State summit.

Objectives

- Strengthening mutual trust and neighborliness among the member states.
- Promoting effective cooperation in -politics, trade & economy, research & technology and culture.
- Enhancing ties in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, etc.
- Maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region.
- Establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political & economic order.
- Guiding Principle – Based on Shanghai Spirit.
- Internal policy based on the principles of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, mutual consultations, respect for cultural diversity, and a desire for common development.

- External policy in accordance with the **principles of non-alignment**, non-targeting any third country, and openness.

Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

- **Heads of State Council** – **The supreme SCO body which decides its internal functioning and its interaction with other States** & international organisations, and considers international issues.
- **Heads of Government Council** – **Approves the budget, considers and decides upon issues related economic spheres** of interaction within SCO.
- **Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs** – Considers issues related to day-to-day activities.
- **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** – Established to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism.
- **SCO Secretariat** – Based in Beijing to provide informational, analytical & organisational support.

Importance for India

- India's membership of SCO can help in **achieving regional integration**, promote connectivity and stability across borders.

Security

- India through RATS can **improve its counterterrorism** abilities by working toward intelligence sharing, law enforcement and developing best practices and technologies.
- Through the SCO, India can also work on **anti-drug trafficking** and small arms proliferation.
- Cooperation on common challenges of **terrorism and radicalization**.

Energy

- **India being an energy deficient country** with increasing demands for energy, **SCO provides it with an opportunity to meet its energy** requirements through regional diplomacy.
- Talks on the construction of stalled pipelines like the **TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) pipeline; IPI (Iran-Pakistan-India) pipeline** can get a much needed push through the SCO.

Trade

- SCO provides **direct access to Central Asia** – overcoming the main hindrance in flourishing of trade between India and Central Asia.
- SCO acts as an **alternative route to Central Asia**.

- Economic Ties - Central Asian countries provides India with a market for its IT, telecommunications, banking, finance and pharmaceutical industries.

Geopolitical

- Central Asia is a part of India's Extended Neighborhood – SCO provides India an opportunity to pursue the “Connect Central Asian Policy”.
- Helps India fulfil its aspiration of playing an active role in its extended neighborhood as well as checking the ever growing influence of China in Eurasia.
- Platform for India to simultaneously engage with its traditional friend Russia as well as its rivals, China and Pakistan.

Challenges of SCO Membership for India

- Pakistan’s inclusion in SCO poses potential difficulties for India.
- India’s ability to assert itself would be limited and it may have to play second fiddle since China and Russia are co-founders of SCO and its dominant powers.
- India may also have to either dilute its growing partnership with the West or engage in a delicate balancing act - as SCO has traditionally adopted an anti-Western posture.

Wonders of SCO

- India- Statue of Unity
- Kazakhstan- Archaeological Landscape of Tamgaly
- China- Daming imperial palace complex
- Kyrgyzstan- Lake Issyk-Kul
- Pakistan- The Great Mughal's heritage, Lahore
- Russia- The Golden Ring cities
- Tajikistan- Palace of Nowruz
- Uzbekistan- the Poi Kalon complex.

News: Pradhan Manthri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan

- President recently launched the Pradhan Manthri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan.

Pradhan Manthri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan

- Pradhan Manthri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan is an **initiative of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) to accelerate the country's progress towards TB elimination by 2025.**

Objectives

- **Provide additional patient support** to improve treatment outcomes of TB patients
- **Augment community involvement** in meeting India's commitment to end TB by 2025.
- **Leverage Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** activities.

Components

- **Nikshay Mitra Initiative:** It is to ensure **additional diagnostic, nutritional, and vocational support** to those on TB treatment.
- **Nikshay Mitras (Donor)** are those **who can support by adopting health facilities (for individual donor), blocks/urban wards/districts/states for accelerating response against TB** to complement government efforts.
- **Nikshay Digital Portal:** It will **provide a platform for community support** for persons with TB.

News: Third stealth frigate of Project 17A Taragiri launched in Mumbai

- Taragiri, the third stealth frigate of the Project 17A, was launched on Sunday by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd. (MDL).
- The ship has been built using integrated construction methodology which involves hull blocks construction in different geographical locations and integration / erection on slipway at MDL.

Project 17 A Frigates

- Project 17A frigates are follow-on of the P17 Frigates (Shivalik Class) with improved stealth features, advanced weapons and sensors and platform management systems.
- A total of seven ships are being constructed, four at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders (MDL), Mumbai and three at Garden Reach Ship Builders Limited (GRSE), Kolkata.

Features

- The main advanced stealth features of P-17A pertain to the smaller Radar cross-section of the ship achieved through the use of a special super structure shape which reduces radar wave reflections.

- Another important feature is regarding the ship's low acoustic noise emanating from propellers, operating machinery like Diesel Generators etc., which hinders sonars on other ships to detect its presence.
- Such stealth features play an important role in improving the ship's survivability in any hostile environment during operations.
- Recently, third ship of the class INS Udaygiri was launched. First ships of the class INS Nilgiri (launched on September 2019) and INS Himgiri (launched on December 2020) is under sea trials.
- The 4th ship of the class INS Dunagiri was launched in July 2022.
- The 5th ship of the class INS Taragiri was launched in September 2022.