India at SCO Summit

What is the issue?

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- India is to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit as a full member.
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- The summit gives India an opportunity to showcase the kind of power it wants to be.
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What are the recent geopolitical developments?

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- Both India and Pakistan were admitted to the grouping last year.
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- This was finalised at its summit in Astana, Kazakhstan.
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- From then, world politics has undergone several tectonic shifts.
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- The US has pulled out of the nuclear deal (or **JCPOA**) between the P-5+1 and Iran.
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- US President and **North Korean** leader are scheduled to meet in Singapore.
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- After the Doklam standoff, **India and China** have attempted to reset relations.
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- An informal summit was arranged between Indian PM and Chinese President at **Wuhan**.
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- The US has imposed **sanctions on Russia** under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).
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- This notably affects Indian defence purchases from its strongest defence partner.

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- The **chemical attack** in Salisbury has sharply escalated Russian-western tensions.
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- It led to London and Moscow expelling each other’s diplomats.
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- The US has delivered a public rebuke to **Pakistan** for not cracking down on terrorists.
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- It also suspended military assistance to Pakistan.
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- Indian PM has made historic separate visits to **Israel and Palestine**, completing their de-hyphenation.
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- The India-US-Japan-Australia **quadrilateral** has been revived.
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- This is particularly against the backdrop of Chinese assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific.
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What is the significance of the SCO summit?

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- India has challenges to address and opportunities to harvest in the SCO summit.
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- **Pakistan** - The summit provides an opportunity for the Indian and Pakistani leaders.
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- They could meet informally on the sidelines of a multilateral event.
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- The two sides are obliged to cooperate on issues of mutual interest without bringing in their bilateral disputes.
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- Signing off on joint counter-terrorism exercises will be a new form of engagement between the two militaries.
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- **China** - After the Wuhan meet, the SCO summit will provide another opportunity for cooperation.
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- **Russia** - Russia has been India’s staunchest supporter in the SCO.
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- It has lobbied hard with Beijing for years to ensure India's entry into the grouping.
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- India is clear that its relationship with Moscow would not be impacted by the West’s approach towards it.
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- **Iran** - Iran is an observer state that has applied for full SCO membership.
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- India has a powerful strategic interest in Iran’s Chabahar port.
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- The US administration is hostile to Iran.
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- But India has been seeking to signal to US, the alignment of interests in Chabahar.
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What lies ahead?

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- The “Shanghai Spirit” is the SCO’s driving philosophy.
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- It emphasises
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i. harmony
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ii. working by consensus
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iii. respect for other cultures
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iv. non-interference in the internal affairs of others
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v. non-alignment
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- SCO’s main objective is working cooperatively against terrorism, separatism, and extremism.
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- This notably coordinates well with India's interests as well.

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- The SCO summit thus gives India an opportunity to showcase the kind of power it wants to be.
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Source: Indian Express

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