Shanghai Cooperation Organisation – Bishkek Declaration

Why in news?

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's (SCO's) Heads of State summit was recently held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

What is SCO?

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation formed in 2001 in Shanghai, China.
- Currently, the SCO comprises 8 member states, namely India, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- [India and Pakistan were inducted into SCO in 2017.]
- The 4 observer countries are Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia.
- The 6 dialogue partners are Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey, and Sri Lanka.
- The Heads of State Council (HSC) is the supreme decision-making body in the SCO.
- It meets once a year and adopts decisions and guidelines on all important matters of the organisation.
- The SCO Heads of Government Council (HGC) meets once a year –
    i. to discuss on the organisation's multilateral cooperation strategy and priority areas
    ii. to resolve current important economic and other cooperation issues
    iii. to approve the organisation's annual budget
- The SCO's official languages are Russian and Chinese.
- The deliberations of SCO are divided into two portions –
    i. restricted format which is meant for the members
    ii. expanded format in which observers also join the members
- The next summit is to be held in Russia.

What are the key outcomes?

- The Bishkek Declaration was finalised in the summit.
- Member countries signed 14 decisions at the summit, including cooperation in sports, healthcare and environment.
- The anti-narcotic strategy and the programme of action was amongst one of

the documents signed.

- Discussions regarding terrorism, regional cooperation, Afghanistan, and economic issues were carried out during the summit.
- SCO urged the global community to work towards a consensus on adopting the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT).
- It also emphasised the need to launch multilateral talks, at the Conference on Disarmament, on an international convention to combat acts of chemical and biological terrorism.
- SCO called for the international community's joint efforts to counter attempts to involve young people in terrorism, separatism and extremist activities.
- The members committed to counter the use of information and communications technology to undermine political, economic and public security in the SCO countries.
- Opportunities for economic cooperation had a special focus, and SCO countries committed to strengthening economic cooperation.
- Countries also committed to supporting the World Trade Organisation structure.
- Also, building more people-to-people ties, tourism and cultural bonds within the grouping was stressed upon.
- On the sidelines of the summit, some cooperation agreements between SCO and UN-specialised agencies were also signed.

- **Afghanistan** - On Afghanistan, the Bishkek declaration stressed on an inclusive peace process led by "Afghans themselves".

- **India** reiterated its long-held stand towards the peace process in Afghanistan.
- It held the view that Afghanistan should be led, owned, and controlled by Kabul.
- Indian PM Modi also touched upon the topics of connectivity, especially the north-south corridor, Chabahar port and renewable energy.
- He also introduced the acronym HEALTH (during the SCO session) which denotes –
    i. **H**ealthcare Cooperation
    ii. **E**conomic Cooperation
    iii. **A**lternate Energy
    iv. **L**iterature and Culture
    v. **T**errorism-free society
    vi. **H**umanitarian Cooperation
- **India-Pakistan** - Prime Minister Modi and his Pakistani counterpart Imran Khan failed to hold substantive talks at the summit.

- Nevertheless, the occasion provided a setting for them to exchange what India called the “usual pleasantries” at the least.
- Beyond the summit, the two countries are committed to engaging at several other levels, including the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure.
- Pakistan leads the effort to coordinate between the SCO and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.
- **Besides** these, India opposed to China’s Belt and Road Initiative.
- The summit declaration has mentioned only the other countries in a paragraph praising the project.
- On the sidelines of the summit, Mr. Modi held bilateral meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

How significant is SCO to India?

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is becoming vital to India’s Eurasia policy.
- SCO is also a platform for alignments on issues such as energy security, connectivity and trade.
- Besides, India has been indicating, for some time now, the little use for SAARC.
- So, the SCO provides the only multilateral platform for it to deal in close proximity with Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- Going ahead, India’s strategy of balancing the competing interests of SCO and other such multilateral groupings will be tested.

Source: Firstpost, The Hindu

Quick Facts

Bishkek

- Bishkek is the capital of Kyrgyzstan (known from 1862–1926 as Pishpek/Bishkek, and from 1926–91 as Frunze).
- It lies in the Chu River valley near the Kyrgyz Mountains at an elevation of 2,500–3,000 feet (750–900 metres).
- Bishkek is situated along the Alaarcha and Alamedin rivers and intersects in the north with the Bolshoy (Great) Chuysky Canal.
- It’s a gateway to the Kyrgyz Ala-Too mountains and Ala Archa National Park, with glaciers and wildlife trails.



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