



# CURRENT AFFAIRS



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## IRAN'S INDUCTION IN SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION

*This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Shanghai Cooperation Organization". The topic "Shanghai Cooperation Organization" has relevance in the "International Relations" section of the UPSC CSE exam.*

### **For Prelims:**

*What is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization? Who are SCO's members?*

### **For Mains:**

*GS2: SCO as an organization of importance for India's geopolitical interests*

### **Why in the news?**

Recently, Iran joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as its ninth member at the New Delhi Summit of SCO.

### **Shanghai Cooperation Organization:**

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is an organization formed by China and Russia in 2001. It focuses on politics, economics, international security, and defense in Eurasia.

The SCO is the largest regional organization in the world, covering about 60% of Eurasia's area and 40% of the global population. In 2021, its combined GDP accounted for roughly 20% of the global GDP.

### **Membership of SCO:**

#### **Members:**

**China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan and Iran.**

#### **Observers:**

Afghanistan, **Belarus**, and Mongolia

#### **Dialogue Partners:**

The list of current and incipient dialogue partners includes Azerbaijan, Armenia, Egypt, Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

### **Origins of SCO:**

- The SCO was formed from the original '**Shanghai Five**' alliance, which consisted of **Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan**.
- The purpose of this alliance, established in 1996 after the Soviet era, was to address regional security concerns, reduce border troop presence, and combat terrorism.
- In **2001**, the Shanghai Five welcomed **Uzbekistan** into the group and renamed it the SCO.
- In June **2017**, it expanded to eight states, **with India and Pakistan**.
- **Iran joined the group in July 2023.**

### **Institutional Framework:**

- The SCO is governed by the Heads of State Council (HSC), its supreme decision-making body, which meets once a year.
- The organization is supported by two permanent bodies: the **SCO Secretariat located in Beijing** and the **Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure based in Tashkent**.
- **The official languages of the SCO are Chinese and Russian.**

### **Objectives of the SCO:**

- Strengthening mutual trust and neighborliness among member states
- Promoting effective **cooperation in various areas including politics, trade, economy, research and technology, culture, education, energy, transport, tourism, and environmental protection**
- Making joint efforts to maintain peace, security, and stability in the region
- Working towards the establishment of a democratic, fair, and rational new international political and economic order.

### **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS):**

- The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) Executive Committee, based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is a permanent body of the SCO.
- Its main purpose is to facilitate cooperation among member states in combating the three evils of terrorism, separatism, and extremism.
- The Director of the SCO RATS Executive Committee is elected for a three-year term.
- Each member state appoints a permanent representative to RATS to ensure continuous communication and coordination.

### **SCO and India:**

#### **Economic Cooperation:**

- The SCO offers India a platform to enhance economic cooperation with Central Asian countries, which are rich in natural resources.
- India seeks to expand trade and investment ties with SCO member states like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to access their oil, gas, and mineral resources.

#### **Energy Security:**

- Central Asian countries within the SCO possess vast reserves of oil and gas, providing India with opportunities to enhance its energy security.
- India is exploring energy cooperation with SCO members like Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, considering projects like the **Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline**.

#### **Connectivity and Infrastructure Development:**

- The SCO promotes connectivity initiatives and infrastructure development, aligning with India's priorities.
- India's participation in SCO-led projects like the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** and the Chabahar Port in Iran enhances regional connectivity and trade.

#### **Counterterrorism and Security Cooperation:**

- The SCO focuses on counterterrorism cooperation, which is crucial for India's security concerns.
- India collaborates with SCO members to address cross-border terrorism, intelligence sharing, and joint military exercises.

#### **Cultural Exchange and People-to-People Contacts:**

- The SCO facilitates cultural exchange and people-to-people contacts, fostering better understanding and cooperation.
- The SCO member countries have initiated a rotating program to designate one city as the tourism and cultural capital each year.
- **Varanasi (Kashi) has been designated as the first cultural capital of the SCO** under this initiative.
- **Regional Diplomacy and Multilateral Engagement:**
- The SCO provides India with a platform for regional diplomacy and multilateral engagement in Eurasia.

#### **Significance of Iran's Induction:**

- Iran's induction into the SCO holds significant importance due to the organization's recent **focus on connectivity in the region**, aligning with India's connectivity strategy.
- Iran's presence in the SCO supports India's efforts to **bypass land-based trade routes through Pakistan**, which has hindered transit trade for India.
- **Central Asian states**, including Uzbekistan, aim to establish a multimodal trade route via Afghanistan to ports in Pakistan and Iran, **providing India with additional trade opportunities in the region**.
- Iran's inclusion in the SCO enables India to engage in trade with Central Asia while **avoiding dependency on China's Belt and Road Initiative**.
- Iran's historical closeness to India and shared concerns regarding terrorism from Pakistan and Afghanistan **strengthen India's position in advocating for an end to terror safe havens**.

#### **Challenges with Inclusion of Iran:**

- India may face challenges due to the **SCO being perceived as an "anti-West" forum** and Iran's sanctions, along with the U.S. accusing Iran of supplying weapons to Russia.
- As India strengthens ties with the Quad, the induction of Belarus into the SCO next year could further **complicate India's balancing act between different international alliances**.

**Source:**

Explained | Iran's induction in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation – The Hindu  
Shanghai Cooperation Organisation | SCO (sectSCO.org)

#### **Q1. With reference to Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), consider the following statements:**

1. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an alliance of Eurasian countries, with Russia and China as its leading members.
2. English and Russian serve as the official working languages of the SCO.
3. India has been a member of the SCO since its establishment.

#### **Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Answer: (a)**

#### **Q2. Consider the following pairs:**

##### **Country – Capital**

1. Kazakhstan – Tashkent

2. Uzbekistan – Astana
3. Turkmenistan – Ashgabat
4. Belarus – Minsk

**How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?**

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

**Answer: (b)**

**Q3. Analyze the significance of Iran's inclusion in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) from the perspective of India's interests.**

Gaurav Nikumbh

## BHARAT 6G ALLIANCE

*This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Bharat 6G Alliance". The topic "Bharat 6G Alliance" has relevance in the Science and technology section of the UPSC CSE exam.*

### **For Prelims:**

*What is Bharat 6G Alliance?*

### **For Mains:**

*GS 3: Science and technology*

*Importance of Bharat 6G Alliance?*

*6G Technology?*

*Evolution of India's Telecom Sector in Recent Years?*

*Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) Scheme?*

### **Why in the news?**

Union Minister of Communications and Electronics & Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnaw, announced the introduction of the Bharat 6G Alliance, a groundbreaking initiative aimed at launching the next-generation technology in India following the successful implementation of 5G.

### **About Bharat 6G Alliance (B6GA):**

The B6GA is a collaborative platform comprising public and private companies, academia, research institutions, and standards development organizations.

The alliance aims to facilitate international collaboration and knowledge exchange by forging partnerships and synergies with other 6G global alliances.

### **Objective:**

- The primary objective of the B6GA is to understand the business and societal needs of 6G technology.
- It aims to foster consensus and drive high-impact research and development initiatives related to 6G technology.

**Importance:**

- **Development and Adoption Leadership:** The B6GA will enable India to take a lead role in the development and adoption of 6G technology globally.
- **Economic Impact:** The advancement of 6G technology is expected to have a significant positive impact on India's economy, driving growth and innovation across various sectors.
- **Societal Impact:** 6G technology has the potential to transform society by enabling new applications and services, improving connectivity, and empowering individuals and businesses.
- **Environmental Impact:** By embracing 6G technology, India can leverage its potential to develop sustainable and eco-friendly solutions, contributing to environmental conservation efforts.
- **Avoid drain of Talent Pool:** India's large talent pool in fields like engineering, computer science, and telecommunications will be utilised in the research, development, and deployment of 6G technology.

**6G Technology:**

- 6G technology is the successor of 5G technology, offering even higher speeds and advanced capabilities.
- It is expected to provide speeds up to 100 times faster than 5G, ultra-low latency, high reliability, and massive connectivity.
- 6G technology unlocks transformative applications: holographic communication for immersive experiences, brain-computer interfaces for mind-controlled devices, quantum internet for secure and high-speed communication, and artificial intelligence advancements.
- Holographic communication refers to the transmission and reception of real-time 3D holographic images for immersive communication experiences.
- Brain-computer interface is a technology that allows users to control computers and devices with their thoughts.
- 6G technology aims to utilize the terahertz band of frequency, which is currently unutilized, to achieve high data rates.

**Evolution of India's Telecom Sector in Recent Years:**

- India is the world's second-largest telecommunications market with a subscriber base of 1,170.38 million as of December 2022.
- There have been significant reductions in data costs, from Rs. 300/GB in 2014 to Rs. 10/GB in 2023.
- Regulatory processes have improved, including a reduction in the Right of Way permission duration from 230 to 9 days.
- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the telecom sector has increased, amounting to 24 billion dollars.
- Spectrum allocation to Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) has been streamlined, with allocations happening within 24 hours.
- India has aligned with Japan on the Digital Payment system.
- India has successfully exported technology to 12 countries, including the USA.

**Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) Scheme:**

- The TTDF Scheme was launched by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT)/Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) in 2022.
- Under this scheme, 5% of annual collections from USOF are allocated for funding research and development of telecom technologies, products, and services.
- The scheme aims to bridge the digital divide by developing and manufacturing state-of-the-art technologies.
- It encourages synergies among academia, start-ups, research institutes, and the industry to build and develop the telecom ecosystem.



**Source:**

<https://www.businesstoday.in/technology/news/story/centre-launches-bharat-6g-alliance-as-india-acquires-200-patents-relating-to-6g-388053-2023-07-04>

**Q.1 Which alliance aims to foster international collaboration and drive research and development initiatives for the advancement of 6G technology?**

- (a) B6GA
- (b) G7
- (c) BRICS
- (d) NATO

**Answer: (a)**

**Q.2 What are some potential applications of 6G technology that could revolutionize industries and everyday life?**

- (a) Holographic communication
- (b) Brain-computer interface
- (c) Quantum internet
- (d) All of the above

**Answer: (d)**

**Q.3 Discuss the potential impact of 6G technology on society, economy, and environment, highlighting its transformative applications and the opportunities it presents for India.**

**Rishabh**

